

**GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

**ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS**

**CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

**RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSITION SCHEDULE 1995-32**

**JULY 1998  
WITH AMENDMENTS IN 2000, 2002, 2004, AND 2005**

## AMENDMENTS HISTORY

The following is a summary of the amendments to the *GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)*.

Amendments take effect on the approval date. Records created while a previously approved version of ARCS was in place may continue to be classified, scheduled, and disposed of under the classification number and retention periods that were in place at the time that the records were created. Records created following an amendment must use the new classification numbers and retention periods.

	Approval Date	Description of Amendment
1	November 21, 1995	First version of ARCS approved. All pages dated October 1995. Some pages have an amendment date of December 1, 1995, which refers to amendments required by the Public Records Committee at the time of approval.
2	September 16, 1998	Complete revision of sections 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, and 6000. Many primaries and secondaries were consolidated or discontinued. All pages dated June 1998.
3	January 26, 1999	Complete revision of section 5000. Many primaries and secondaries were consolidated or discontinued. All pages dated January 1999.
4	September 27, 2000	Revisions to primaries 1344, 5145, 5150, 5170, 5200, 5205, 5225, 6003, and 6225. The pages that received changes are dated October 2000.
5	March 15, 2002	Revisions to primaries 1015, 1135, 1145, 1155, 1165, 1170, 1185, 1275, 1290, and 1310. The pages that received changes are dated February 2002.
6	June 4, 2002	Revisions to primary 1305. The page is dated May 2002.
7	December 16, 2002	Complete revision of section 4000. Primary 4170 discontinued. All pages dated December 2002.
8	March 17, 2004	Revision to primary 4280. The page is dated March 2004.
9	November 30, 2005	Complete revision of section 6000. Revisions to primaries 1025, 1255, 1343, 1344, and 4167. Primaries 1135 and 6280 discontinued. The pages that received changes are dated November 2005.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System, Records Disposition Authority 1995-32* is based upon similar systems used by the governments of British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

The Records Management unit of the Department of Public Works and Services acknowledges in particular the input and assistance received from the Saskatchewan Archives Board. The Board's willingness to allow the Records Management unit to modify their classification system to meet the requirements of Government of the Northwest Territories departments, boards and agencies drastically reduced the time spent on developing this system for use within the Government.

We would also like to acknowledge the preparatory work undertaken by the Records Working Group in the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment between 1994 and 1995. The Department's of Education, Culture and Employment's draft *Administrative Records Classification System, Records Disposition Authority 1995-28* was also a valuable reference tool.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution and input that departmental records coordinators and subject experts from all departments of the Government of the Northwest Territories have made in helping us to revise and update the *GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System, Records Disposition Authority 1995-32*.

In October 1995, the Public Records Committee approved the *GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System, Records Disposition Authority 1995-32* for use throughout the Government of the Northwest Territories. It was amended in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2005.

In August 2004, the Informatics Policy Committee approved the *GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System, Records Disposition Authority 1995-32* as a government-wide standard for classifying, managing, and disposing of administrative records (IPC Standard 6003.00.19).

Records Management  
Public Works and Services

# INTRODUCTION

The *GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)* is the records classification system and retention and disposition schedule for administrative records belonging to government bodies of the government of the Northwest Territories. It is designed to be used by departments, boards, agencies, and Crown corporations to manage their administrative records.

In August 2004, the Informatics Policy Committee approved ARCS as a government wide standard for the classification, management, and disposal of administrative records in all media. Administrative records are records that are common to all departments, agencies, boards, and Crown corporations. They include “housekeeping” records, such as financial records, human resources records, information management records, as well as other records that are common across the government.

The government creates records in order to document the actions, transactions, and decisions that were made in the course of delivering programs and services to clients, to the public, and to other government departments and agencies. They are a government asset, and should be managed as such. Auditor General and Information and Privacy Commissioner reports have both pointed in recent years to the importance of managing government records in order to provide for public accountability.

Having a comprehensive records management program in place ensures that the information that public servants need to support the government’s programs and make decisions is available. Records give the government the ability to:

- Deliver programs and services in an efficient, consistent, equitable, and accountable manner.
- Support and document its policy decisions.
- Meet legislative requirements.
- Account for the use of funds, equipment, facilities, and other assets.
- Maintain service during and after an emergency or disaster.
- Respond to litigation.
- Protect the interests of the public, the government, and its employees.
- Maintain the government’s corporate memory.
- Reduce costs associated with storing and retrieving obsolete or redundant information.

The classification system and records retention and disposition schedules in the *GNWT Administrative Classification System* are a core component of any departmental records management program. ARCS provides a method for organizing and identifying administrative records in all formats. It provides a timetable that identifies the life cycle for each type of administrative record, and specifies minimums for how long records should be kept in offices and the government’s records centres. It also identifies the mode of final disposition of the records.

ARCS was approved by the Public Records Committee for use by all government departments in 1995. It was revised in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2005. The Records Management unit of Public Works and Services maintains ARCS, and will continue to update it to ensure that it meets the needs of government departments, boards, agencies, and Crown corporations.

# **PURPOSE OF THE GNWT'S ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM, RECORDS DISPOSITION AUTHORITY 1995-32**

The *GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS), Records Disposition Authority 1995-32* has been designed to assist GNWT departments, boards and agencies to organise and manage the administrative records they create or acquire.

The *GNWT's ARCS* outlines the procedures for handling administrative records. *ARCS* indicates how records are to be organised, classified and filed from their creation or receipt until their final disposition. It lists the number of years that administrative records have to be retained on-site for before they can be transferred to a records centre. *ARCS* also lists the number of years administrative records have to be retained for before they are ready for final disposition. *ARCS* also indicates whether records ready for final disposition can be destroyed or must be transferred to the NWT Archives for archival selection/permanent retention.

## **Benefits of using the GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)**

By implementing *ARCS*, GNWT departments, boards and agencies will realise significant benefits, including the effective management of their recorded information, savings in employee time and cost savings.

### **1. Effective Management of Records**

The implementation of *ARCS* will enable departments, boards and agencies to more effectively manage their administrative records from their creation or receipt, until their final disposition. Implementation of *ARCS* will:

- Provide for the accurate and consistent classification of administrative records of a similar nature throughout the GNWT.
- Facilitate the speedy classification of administrative records.
- Enable administrative records series to be stored together as distinct units.
- Allow departments, boards and agencies to locate information more quickly.
- Provide a framework for the audit and review of administrative functions.
- Ensure that departments, boards and agencies meet all legal and fiscal requirements related to records retention and disposition.
- Ensure that records of an historical nature are transferred to the NWT Archives for archival selection/permanent retention.
- Provide proof that records were disposed of according to a records disposition authority that has been approved for use by the Public Records Committee.
- Provide for the identification of vital/essential records.
- Assist departments to develop disaster plans to protect their vital records.
- Allow for the management of administrative records in any format, such as paper, video, microfilm/fiche, sound recordings, photographs, negatives, slides, etc.
- Simplify the transfer of administrative records due to department/division amalgamations.
- Facilitate the exchange of information between departments.

## 2. Savings in Employee Time

Considerable savings in employee time, and therefore costs, can be achieved by implementing ARCS.

- Information is readily available; this should reduce/eliminate the time spent looking for misplaced records.
- Requests for information under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* can be dealt with in a timely basis.
- Implementing a standardised method of managing records throughout the GNWT will reduce time spent training employees who move from one department to another.
- If colour-coded files and open storage shelving units are used, it is estimated that the time spent on shelving and retrieving records will be reduced by up to 35%.
- Using a standardized directory structure based on ARCS will make electronic records easier to retrieve and save, and will more closely link electronic records to related information in hard copy.
- As semi-active records are moved to a records centre, the volume of records on-site is reduced, thereby reducing the time staff spends looking for specific information.

## 3. Cost Savings

The implementation of the GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System will result in considerable cost savings to departments, boards and agencies. Implementation of ARCS will:

- Provide for the timely transfer of records to a records centre. This will reduce the costs associated with storing large volumes of semi-active records in high cost office space.
- Provide for the timely disposition of records, thereby reducing the amount of storage space required, and eliminating the need for ad-hoc storage space.
- Eliminate the costs associated with storing duplicate records.
- Reduce the volume of records stored on-site, thereby reducing the number of filing cabinets or open-storage shelving units required.
- Ensure that vital records are identified and protected, thereby reducing potential downtime costs after a disaster.

# HOW TO USE THE ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (ARCS)

## Purpose and Scope

The *GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)* is a block numeric classification system and records retention schedule for all government departments, boards, agencies, and crown corporations. ARCS describes and schedules administrative records, which are those records that support common administrative or “housekeeping” functions, such as finance, human resources, information management, and building and equipment maintenance. Administrative records are contrasted with operational records, which are those records that are created or collected in support of a department’s mandated programs, and services. Operational records are classified and scheduled in department-specific *Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS)*. Together ARCS and ORCS provide a comprehensive description, classification system, and retention schedule for all of the records belonging to a department.

## ARCS as a Classification System

Classification systems are systems for organizing objects, concepts, or records. ARCS is a system for organizing records. ARCS follows the principle that information is classified from the general to the specific. As one moves down through the classification hierarchy, each level becomes more specific and definitive. This hierarchical structure creates a quick and easy way to access and retrieve information. It has three levels of records classification: sections, primaries, and secondaries. Departments may create lower classification levels, known as tertiaries and quaternaries, but these levels are not identified in the ARCS.

## Sections

ARCS is divided into six sections. Sections classify and describe a subject or function at its broadest level, and consist of groups of related primaries. Each section is allotted a block or range of primary numbers. The sections in ARCS are:

Primary Numbers	Section Title
1000-1999	Administration
2000-2999	Buildings and Properties
3000-3999	Equipment and Supplies
4000-4999	Finance
5000-5999	Human Resources
6000-6999	Information Services

## Primaries

Sections are divided into primaries, which classify specific subjects or functions. Each primary is assigned a unique title that identifies the function or subject matter of the records that are to be classified under the primary. The first primary is the general primary and contains records which cannot be classified into a more specific primary within the section, or which relate to more than one subject or function in the section. Each primary is assigned a four-digit primary number that uniquely identifies the primary. Gaps are left between each primary number so that the logical arrangement of the primaries can be maintained when ARCS is amended and new primaries are added.

Each primary has a scope note that describes the function or subject of the primary. It identifies the types of records that are to be classified in the primary, and may identify records that should not be classified in the primary. The scope note is designed to help users identify the correct primary and secondary when they classify records.

Cross references, or “see” references, are included in many primaries to point users to the correct primary in cases where there may be confusion between two primaries.

Additional notes may be used to explain how the primary should be used or implemented.

## Secondaries

Primaries are divided into secondaries. Secondaries are used to classify specific series or types of records, such as policy and procedures, general and routine files, subject files, and case files. Each secondary is assigned a two-digit classification number. The primary and secondary numbers together create a number that uniquely identifies the secondary. Gaps are left between each secondary to allow for expansion. At minimum, records are classified to a primary and a secondary. The secondaries that belong to each primary are listed in a table on each primary page.

There are two types of secondary numbers within ARCS. They are:

**Reserved Secondary Numbers:** Two secondary numbers have been reserved throughout ARCS. Secondary number -00 is always reserved for “Policy and Procedures” that relate to the function or subject of the primary. Secondary number -01 is always reserved for “General”, which is used to classify records that cannot be classified in one of the specific subject or case file secondaries. General files are not normally divided into tertiaries.

**Prescribed Subject or Case File Secondaries:** Subject secondaries are used for records about specific subjects. A subject file usually brings together records and information on one topic in order to facilitate information retrieval. Case file secondaries series of related pertaining to a specific time-limited entity, such as a person, event, project, transaction, product, or organization. The component records within each file in a case file series are generally standardized. Most of the records

created by an organization are case files. Prescribed secondaries are numbered from -02 through -99.

### **Tertiaries**

Reserved, subject, and case file secondaries may be subdivided using tertiaries. Departments assign tertiary numbers. They are used when the subject matter of the secondary is too broad for effective filing and retrieval, and to uniquely identify individual files. The tertiary number is added to the primary and secondary numbers to form a complete file number. It is important to note that records classified under tertiary numbers inherit the retention period and disposition of the secondary under which they are classified.

The 01 General secondary is not usually divided into tertiaries. The usual rule is that if three to five documents on a topic accumulate in the General secondary, a file, or tertiary, should be opened under a prescribed secondary.

### **Records Retention and Disposition Schedule**

Retention schedules in ARCS are assigned to each secondary. Schedule information for each secondary is provided in the six columns to the right of the secondary numbers and titles. There are two sets of retention schedule columns: Master File and Copy File. The master file retention schedule is used to schedule the department's master record, while the copy file retention schedule is used to schedule copies other than the master record. Both the master file and copy file retention schedules are divided into three columns. These columns are headed A (active), SA (semi-active), and FD (final disposition). They correspond with the active, semi-active, and inactive phases of the record life cycle.

**Active Retention Period Column:** The active (A) column describes the event that closes a record and the length of time a record should be retained in active storage in the office after the records have closed. Active records are records which are referred to regularly and required constantly for current use in the conduct of business and which need to be retained and maintained in the office space and equipment of the user. Closed records may be kept in active storage for a period because they are needed for reference purposes.

**Semi-Active Retention Period Column:** The semi-active (SA) column indicates the length of time a record should be retained in the semi-active or inactive phase of its life cycle. Semi-active records are records that are not required constantly for current use and need not be maintained in the expensive office space and equipment of the agency responsible for them. Semi-active records retain administrative, operational, fiscal, audit, or legal value. Storage of semi-active records in the Records Centre until all values have lapsed results in considerable savings.

The active and semi-active retention periods ensure that records are kept as long as required to meet any operational, administrative, legal, audit, or other primary values,

which the records may hold. By retaining records for the retention periods specified in the retention schedule, departments will comply with statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements to maintain certain types of information and data.

**Final Disposition Column:** The final disposition (FD) column identifies the final action that will be taken when the records have completed their active and semi-active phases. The purpose of the final disposition column is to ensure that those records that have residual historical values are preserved and that those records that have no historical values are destroyed.

**How to Read the Records Retention and Disposition Schedule**

An example of a retention schedule is presented below. The first two columns, labeled “Secondaries,” contain the secondary classification numbers and secondary titles that belong to the primary. The next three columns are labeled “Master File,” and contain the master file retention schedules, described above. The final three columns, labeled “Copy File,” contain the copy file retention schedules, also described above. Retention schedules are read across the table from left to right.

The master and copy file retention schedules for the reserved secondaries, -00 and -01, are usually standardized across all of the primaries.

SECONDARIES		MASTER FILE			COPY FILE		
		A	SA	FD	A	SA	FD
00	Policy and Procedures	S/O	10	AS/D	S/O	nil	D
01	General	2	nil	D	2	nil	D
20	Access to Information / Protection of Privacy Requests	S/O*	10	AS/D	S/O	nil	D
25	Access Commissioner – Orders / Recommendations	S/O*	10	AS/D	S/O	nil	D

S/O\* = retain on-site until all actions related to each request are completed (including decisions on appeals)

**Active Column**

The active (A) column contains an abbreviation, a number, or a combination of an abbreviation and a number. The abbreviation identifies the retention trigger for the records classified into a particular secondary. A retention trigger is an event that closes the records and starts the retention period described in the retention schedule. The two most common triggers are Superseded/Obsolete and End of the Fiscal Year.

**S/O:** Superseded or obsolete. S/O is a retention trigger that describes an event that closes a record. S/O retention triggers are assigned for records for which an active

retention period cannot be predetermined because the closure of the file is dependent upon the occurrence of some event. For instance, policy and procedures files close when the policy or procedures is replaced (superseded) or is no longer in effect (obsolete). An asterisk next to the S/O (S/O\*) indicates that there is a note attached to the retention schedule that describes the event that triggers the closing of the record. In the example above, secondary -20 has a retention trigger of S/O\*. A note below the table indicates that the files will remain open until all actions are completed.

**End of the Fiscal Year:** If the active column only contains a number, then the files close at the end of the fiscal year (March 31<sup>st</sup> for GNWT departments). The files will be retained in active storage after it closes for the number of years shown by the number in the active column. In the example above, secondary -01 closes at the end of the fiscal year, and is retained for an additional two years in the office before moving on to the next phase in its life cycle.

### **Semi-Active Column**

The semi-active column shows the length of time in years that the records may be kept in off-site storage in a records centre. In the examples above, records classified into secondary -00 can be kept in off-site storage for ten years. If departments do not transfer the records to the Records Centre right away, the length of time that they remain on site after the semi-active phase has begun will be subtracted from the semi-active retention period. For instance, if a department decides to keep closed policy files (-00) in the office for two years after the policy has been superseded; the files will be kept in the records centre for just eight years. The records will be kept for a total of ten years after they have closed.

**Nil:** records are retained for zero years during this phase of the life cycle. The records proceed directly from their active phase to final disposition.

### **Final Disposition**

The final disposition column contains an abbreviation that describes the fate of the records when they have completed the active and semi-active phases of the life cycle. There are three possible final dispositions:

**AS/D:** Archival Selection/Destroy. The records are transferred to the custody of the Northwest Territories Archives, where the records will either be selected for preservation as a historical record or appraised as having no historical value and destroyed.

**D:** Destroy. The records will be destroyed.

### **Total Retention Period**

The total retention period for a record consists of the addition of the active and semi-active periods. For instance, in the example above, records classified into secondary -00 are retained for a total of ten years after they have been superseded or have become obsolete (S/O+10 years). A policy file that closed in 2005 will be retained until the year 2015, when it will be transferred to the NWT Archives.

## **HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (ARCS)**

The *GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)* can be used to classify, organize, and manage records in all media, including paper and electronic records. This section will review the process for converting your filing systems to ARCS.

ARCS covers only a portion of the records found in your division. The records that are not covered by ARCS should be classified using an *Operational Records Classification System (ORCS)*. Contact your department's records coordinator or the Records Management section of Public Works and Services for information about your division's ORCS.

Your department's records coordinator and the Records Management section of Public Works and Services are available to help you convert your records. Records Management also offers training courses on how to use and implement ARCS. For a list of courses, see the PWS website at <http://www.pws.gov.nt.ca/records/>.

ORCS combines a records classification system with a records retention schedule. Therefore, the retention schedules can only be properly implemented if the classification system has also been implemented. The following chapter provides an overview of the implementation process.

### **Senior Management Support**

Like any project, ARCS implementation requires the support of senior management. Management support is necessary to make sure that the project has enough resources, in terms of people and equipment, to be completed successfully. In addition, employees will be more likely to support a project that has the support of management and which management has described as a priority.

### **Implementation Plan**

The second essential ingredient to implementing ARCS is a good implementation plan. An implementation plan sets out the goals of the project, the approach that will be taken, and a timeline for when different tasks will be completed. It also assigns roles and tasks, explains how various tasks will be done, and estimates how much the project will cost. An implementation plan helps you control the work that you and others are doing and measure your success.

An implementation plan is a written document, which usually consists of the following elements:

- ***Mission statement or purpose statement*** – A short paragraph that explains the purpose of the project.
- ***Goals and Objectives*** – Goals are general statements about what the project should achieve. Objectives describe the steps needed to reach a goal. Objectives also identify the criteria that will be used to show that the goal has been reached
- ***Deliverables*** – A list of the products that the project will produce. In this case, conversion to ARCS.
- ***Scope*** – The scope sets the limits for the project. The scope of an ARCS development project can be as broad as implementing ARCS in every division and regional office in the department, or as narrow as implementing ARCS in a single office.
- ***Tasks*** – A detailed list of the tasks that need to be done in order to finish the project. The tasks should be listed in the order in which they are to be done. The tasks can also be shown as a “Work Breakdown Structure,” which is a sort of tree diagram that shows the tasks that must be done in order to complete each part of the project.
- ***Timeline*** – A set of dates or deadlines for starting and finishing each task. Timelines can be shown as a simple list of dates that is set against each task, or can be set up in something as complicated as a Gantt or PERT chart.
- ***Resources*** – A list of the people, equipment, supplies, and funds needed to complete the project.

An implementation plan should be as detailed as is necessary to get the job done. Records Management, Public Works and Services, can provide assistance in developing the implementation plan.

## **Issues to Consider**

A number of issues will influence the department’s decisions on how to implement the ARCS. These issues should be addressed before the implementation plan is developed because they will affect how the implementation is done.

### **Configuration**

Configuration refers to the overall structure of the department’s records management program. There are four different ways to organize a departmental records management program. These four models are rooted in paper-based systems, but have parallels in electronic systems.

- **Centralized control with a centralized location.** In this model, the department assigns someone with the responsibility for maintaining all of the department’s records. There is

usually a central listing of all of the department's records, regardless of which division created them. A majority of the department's records will be physically located in one filing area, and the records management employees control the movement of files through a charge-in, charge-out system. This model produces a high degree of consistency in filing practices. It also does a good job of enforcing access restrictions. The drawback is that records are not conveniently located near most employees' work areas. Consequently, some employees resist having their records included in the central filing system. In addition, regional offices are often missed by the central system.

- **Centralized control with decentralized location.** This model is often seen as having the best of both worlds. A person is assigned responsibility for overseeing the management of all of the department's records, but the records are dispersed throughout the department. Centralized control ensures that records are managed consistently throughout the department, while the decentralized location allows for the storage of records within individual work units. It allows for the integration of regional offices into the department-wide records management system. This system places more filing responsibilities on operational staff.
- **Decentralized control with a centralized location.** In this model, there is a central location for storing records for the entire department, and all employees are responsible for maintaining the system. This model is frequently a recipe for chaos. It requires a high degree of coordination between the different units that use the central filing area.
- **Decentralized control with a decentralized location.** In this model, each work unit maintains its own files, in its own areas. This can be very effective within a work unit, but it encourages inconsistency and duplication across the department.

Most effective records management programs follow a centralized control approach. They will choose a centralized or decentralized location depending on which system best meets their needs. In some cases, they may use a combination of central and decentralized locations. Issues to consider when choosing the model include:

- The number of dedicated staff.
- The amount of training and experience that the employees have.
- The physical and geographic layout of the department.
- The media used by the department.
- The existing filing equipment.
- Access restrictions.

- The business, service, and operating environment of the department
- The budget.
- The level of authority assigned to staff.

### **Records Management Procedures**

Procedures should be in place before ARCS is implemented because they will guide the implementation. If the department does not have any procedures in place, then the first stage in the implementation plan may be to develop procedures. Procedures will be needed covering the following areas:

- Creating records and opening files
- Logging and tracking records
- On- and off-site storage of records
- Closing files
- Applying retention and disposition

### **Authority and Responsibility**

The department should identify those people who will have primary responsibility for implementing and maintaining the filing system. In a centralized system with centralized control, these will be the dedicated records management staff. With decentralized locations, these may be operational staff or support staff who are assigned the task of maintaining the system within their work unit.

Responsibility and accountability is also assigned at the management and senior management levels. Management is responsible for ensuring that complete and accurate records are created for the programs that they direct. They are also responsible for ensuring that employees are following ARCS and ORCS, and implementing records management procedures.

### **Training**

Employee training requirements should be determined before the system is implemented. Management and end-users will have different training requirements than those employees who have records management responsibilities. Some employees may have taken training in the past, or have prior experience with ARCS. These employees should be identified. Training is a part of any implementation plan, but can only be included in the plan if the training needs are known. Introductory courses are available from the Records Management Unit of Public Works and Services. The department should also provide instruction on department-specific procedures.

## **Implementation Strategy**

The implementation strategy answers the following questions:

1. Where should the project begin? Should ARCS be implemented in one division or unit, and then gradually introduced throughout the department, or implemented throughout the department from the start?
2. Which tasks need to be completed first? What is the order in which the tasks should be completed? Which tasks depend on other tasks?
3. How much time is available to complete the project? Can all of the tasks be accomplished within the time frame? Do we have enough resources to complete the project within the time frame?
4. Have management and staff “bought in” to the project? Will they be supportive? Are some units more supportive than others are?
5. Is it necessary to convert an old filing system to the new ARCS? Is there a cut-off date for the system? When a cut-off date is set, all of the records created after that date will be converted to the new system, while the records created before that date will either be maintained in the older system, or handled through a separate clean-up project. Will all of the records be converted all at once, or will the department run parallel systems for a period?
6. Are there other opportunities that may be created by the project, such as setting standards within the department?

The answers to these questions will help a records coordinator organize the project and estimate how long it will take.

## **Approvals and Authorization**

Before you write the implementation plan, you should identify the person in the organization who has the authority to approve the plan. A plan that must be approved by the Deputy Minister may have a very different focus than a plan that is approved at a director or managerial level. You should also identify how much authority and autonomy you will need in order to implement the plan. The project will not be successful if you do not have enough authority to make necessary decisions or delegate tasks to other people.

## Getting Started

Purchase filing supplies and equipment, if needed. If colour-coded files and open storage units are to be used, order supplies at least a month before the planned start date. Some of these supplies may have to be ordered from a supplier outside your community.

## Purge Transitory Records

With help from employees who are familiar with the records, remove any non-record materials from the filing cabinets. Consult the *Transitory Records Schedule* (Records Disposition Authority 1997-02) for a list of materials that can be purged.

## Conduct a Records Inventory

A records inventory is a survey of your division's file collection. It is used to identify which records should be converted, and how they will be converted.

An inventory will identify the following:

- The volume and location of records in the department.
- Whether records are originals or duplicates.
- All administrative records series. A series is a group of related records.
- All operational records series.
- The date range of the records.
- The physical format and media of the records; e.g., paper, microfilm, videos, audio cassettes, computer disks, electronic database.

In addition, a records inventory will provide you with detailed information about the following:

- The types of information contained in the records.
- The types of records, and the functions that create them.
- Who produces the records and why.
- Who uses the records and why.
- The information needs of the records users.
- Information, such as program histories or the identification of sensitive or long-term records, which will aid in determining retention periods.

## Conducting the Records Inventory

To conduct an inventory:

- Number each record storage unit in the department; not only filing cabinets, but also open shelving, bookcases, and desk drawers. Use a masking tape tag to affix consecutive numbers to all units.
- Begin the inventory with the general office files before proceeding into individual offices. This will give the staff time to prepare for the inventory and to become accustomed to the inventory process.

- When inventorying records in individual offices, be sure to ask the staff about the records.
- Go through each records storage unit in a methodical way. Rather than a file-by-file inventory, try to get a sense of the types of records in each drawer (government building lease files, fishing licenses), and a reasonable sampling of dates (1985-1987 and 1990-1994). If a drawer contains many different types of records, it may be necessary to do a more detailed file-by-file listing of the contents. Be sure to provide all the information required on the inventory form.
- Record information legibly. Use a laptop computer if one is available.
- Take frequent breaks. Doing an inventory can be boring, and it is important to stay focussed.

### **Inventory Form**

Record the following information on an inventory form. A sample form is provided on the following page.

Information on the form:

1. *Department*: the full name of the department
2. *Division / Section*: the full name of the division and section
3. *Building / Floor / Office*: the full address
4. *Equipment Type*: for example, 4-drawer vertical cabinet, or 5-drawer lateral cabinet, or 3-shelf bookshelf
5. *Department Number*: the inventory number(s) that were applied to the cabinets, shelves, and other storage units
6. *Date*: the date the inventory was completed
7. *Inventoried by*: the name(s) of all person(s) who conducted the inventory
8. *Phone No.*: the number for the divisional contact who completed the inventory
9. *Community*: the community where records are located
10. *Drawer / Shelf No.*: for example, drawer 3 or shelf 1
11. *Volume*: whether drawer is  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , or  $\frac{3}{4}$  full; or full
12. *Type of Filing*: how the files are arranged; for example, alphabetically by name, by invoice date, by date of application, or by a pre-assigned number
13. *Media Type*: for example, paper, electronic records, audiotapes
14. *Record Series*: the records series or groups of records in each drawer / shelf. Be specific. For example, 'student loan files' is more descriptive than simply 'client files'
15. *Originals / Duplicates*: note whether the records are originals or copies
16. *Administrative / Operational*: note whether the records are administrative or operational
17. *Date Range*: note the earliest and most recent dates; for example, Jan. 1990 – March 1994
18. *Page x of y page*: number pages of inventory form for tracking purposes

Attach any other information that may be useful to your project.

## RECORDS SERIES INVENTORY

Department <b>1</b> ECE			Division/Section <b>2</b> Corporate Services			Building/Floor/Office <b>3</b> Laing 6		
Equipment Type <b>4</b> Lateral File Cabinet			Dept. Number <b>5</b> 6-14			Date <b>6</b> May 23, 2005		
Inventoried by <b>7</b> Ron McDonald			Phone No. <b>8</b> 873-7451			Community <b>9</b> Yellowknife		
Drawer/ Shelf No. <b>10</b>	Volume (¼, ½, ¾, full) <b>11</b>	Type of Filing (Alpha, numeric) <b>12</b>	Media Type (e.g., Paper, microfiche) <b>13</b>	Record Series (e.g., purchase orders, employee files, client files) <b>14</b>	Originals/ Duplicates <b>15</b>	Administrative/ Operational <b>16</b>	Date Range <b>17</b>	
14-1	3/4 full	Alpha	Paper	- Terminated employees files	Copy	Admin-HR	1993-95	
14-2	Full	Alpha	Paper	- Employee files (active)	Copy	Admin-HR	current	
14-3	Full	Alpha	Paper	- T4's, attendance registers, payroll distribution reports	Original	Admin-HR	1991-95	
14-4	3/4 full	Alpha	Paper	- Leave and attendance	Original	Admin-HR	current	

## **File-by-File Records Inventory**

File by file inventories are necessary when a filing cabinet or computer directory contains mix of unrelated files. In a file-by-file inventory, you will list every file folder in the filing cabinet. A sample file-by-file inventory form is on the next page.

Information on the form:

1. *Department & Area Name*: the name of the department, division and section
2. *Inventoried by*: the name(s) of the person(s) who conducted the inventory
3. *Phone*: the telephone number of the person who completed the inventory
4. *Date*: the date the inventory was completed
5. *File number*: the number or other description used on the file or record
6. *Volume*: the volume number of the file
7. *Title*: the full title of each file or record. Do not use abbreviations
8. *Contents / Description*: a brief description of the contents of each file. It is important to capture the purpose and value of the records. Major reports and original documents such as licenses, drawings, certificates, or plans should also be highlighted
9. *Date Range*: the earliest and most recent dates of the records
10. *Remarks*: any information that may be useful in processing the records; for example, if the records are ready for disposition according to an approved records schedule. The departmental Records Coordinator and GNWT Records Management will verify all retention periods prior to any disposition action
11. *Page x of y pages*: number the pages of the inventory form for tracking purposes

## FILE-BY-FILE RECORDS INVENTORY

Department & Area Name: <b>1</b>		Building Maintenance-Utility Group		Inventoried by: <b>2</b> Vicky Filer	Phone: <b>3</b> 873-7627	Date: May 22, 2005 Done: <b>4</b>
File Number	Volume	Title	Content/Description	Date Range	Remarks	
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	
2000-20	2	Building Directory	- A listing of all GNWT owned buildings, addresses and locations throughout the NWT.	1994	Archival Selection	
2000-30	5	Conference Room Bookings	- Records of conference room bookings and usage statistics.	Apr 93 - Mar 95		
2020-45	3	Requests for Space	- Requests for space and allocation of office space, work sites for current and future needs.	Jan 82 - Dec 95		
2075-30	1	Janitorial Services	- Correspondence on janitorial service needs, types of janitorial services, maintenance and servicing of Government buildings and facilities.	Apr 93 - Mar 95		
2085-45	1	Snow Removal	- Correspondence on snow removal including complaints of icy sidewalks due to lack of snow removal.	Feb 94 - Mar 95		
2125-25	6	Heating	- Problems with old heating system, concerns Re: heating costs, installation of new heating system and controls.	Nov 94 - Oct 95		

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GNWT ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM  
RECORDS DISPOSITION AUTHORITY 1995-32

## Converting the Files

### Analyzing the Inventory

Review the completed inventories with the users of the records.

- Review all records against existing records disposition authorities, such as ARCS or ORCS. Many of the records may be ready for destruction, transfer to a records centre, or transfer to the NWT Archives.
- Establish a cut-off date for converting the records to ARCS. Records created or received *before* that date should not be converted. Exceptions may include such records as contract files, agreements, or committee records that are still open and being used on a regular basis. Records created or received *after* the cut-off date must be converted to ARCS. Records that are not converted to ARCS should be removed from the filing cabinets, boxed, and scheduled with a One-Time Records Schedule.

### Assigning File Numbers

Using the inventory forms, assign ARCS primary and secondary numbers to every series of administrative records. Decide if tertiary numbers will be used. If you are using tertiary numbers, decide how they will be assigned for each series of records. For example, will the tertiaries be numbered consecutively or will you use another numbering or alphabetic scheme to identify individual files?

Show the file numbers to the users of the records after you have finished assigning them. Make sure that the users understand why the classification numbers were chosen.

### Prepare a File List or Enter files into iRIMS

After you have reviewed the classification numbers with the users of the records, list each individual file folder on a file list, or enter them into iRIMS. iRIMS is an electronic records management system that manages files, folders, and boxes. At this time, assign tertiary numbers to individual folders. On each folder, write the classification number. At minimum, the file list should contain the following information:

1. ARCS file number (primary-secondary-tertiary).
2. The title of each file.
3. The volume number, if the file is broken into several volumes.
4. The open date of the file.
5. The closed date of the file, if appropriate.
6. Whether the file is a master file or a copy.
7. The old file number, if any.

Save the file list in a shared network directory, where all users can access it. IRIMS training is available from the Records Management section of Public Works and Services.

## **Preparing Labels**

Active files, or files that will be remaining in the department, must be relabelled. Labels should contain the following information:

- ARCS file number (primary-secondary-tertiary).
- The title of each file.
- The volume number, if the file is broken into several volumes.
- The open date of the file.
- The closed date of the file, if appropriate.

It is useful to include the retention period on the file label.

If your files and folders are entered into iRIMS, you can use iRIMS to print folder labels.

Here are a few tips for using colour-coded alphabetic or numeric labels on your folders:

- Use coloured labels with restraint. Too much colour reduces their effectiveness.
- Date labels should indicate the month or year that the file was **opened**.
- Use file guides to identify where a primary starts.
- Use colour-coded labels for secondary and/or tertiary numbers only. Using colour-coded labels for the primary, secondary, and tertiary classification numbers is confusing to the eye.

## **Training Staff to Use the New Filing System**

After you have finished converting the filing system, give users an orientation to the system. Explain how the classification numbers were assigned. Teach them to use the ARCS manual and how to identify the classification numbers that they will use frequently. Teach them how to look up files on the file list. Provide procedures on how to open and close files. Also provide procedures on how to charge out files and track their location.

Follow up with users every couple of months to find out if there are any concerns with the conversion.

## **Converting Electronic Records**

Set up folders on a shared directory for each section in ARCS. Next, set up sub-folders for each of the primaries that are being used in the paper system. It is not necessary to create a folder for every primary in ARCS. At minimum, set up folders to the primary level. Additional sub-folders can be set up for secondaries and tertiaries, as necessary.

Example:

- 📁 Administration
  - 📁 1025 Planning and Organization
    - 📁 Work Plans
  - 📁 1145 Committees – GNWT
    - 📁 Communications Working Group
    - 📁 Information Technology Advisory Committee
    - 📁 Public Records Committee
    - 📁 Recorded Information Management Committee
- 📁 Buildings and Properties
- 📁 Equipment and Supplies
- 📁 Finance
  - 📁 4240 Budgets – Planning
    - 📁 Department Business Plan
- 📁 Human Resources
- 📁 Information Services

Move electronic documents into the appropriate folders. Delete any transitory information.

Once you have finished moving or renaming the folders, review the new directory structure with the users of the records. Explain how the classification numbers were assigned. Teach them to use the ARCS manual to look up records and create new directories. Provide procedures on how to create new directories.

Contact your records coordinator or the Records Management section of Public Works and Services for more information on how to classify and manage electronic records.

# DISPOSITION OF RECORDS

## Records Disposition

Disposition is the final stage in a record's life cycle. When administrative records reach the end of their full retention period according to *the GNWT's Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)*, and they are no longer required by the organisation that created them, they may be disposed of. Disposition takes place in one of two ways: destruction or transfer to the NWT Archives.

- **Records destruction**

Destruction refers to the actual physical destruction of records. Paper records are shredded, burned or recycled. Microforms are shredded or macerated and recycled. The information stored on such electronic records as computer disks, sound recordings, film reels, etc. can be wiped (i.e. overwritten multiple times) or the storage media can be shredded.

- **Transferring records to the NWT Archives**

Administrative records that have '*archival selection*' (AS/D) as their final disposition are transferred to the NWT Archives for review. Administrative records selected by the Archives for permanent preservation become part of their permanent collection. This enables information essential to the government to be preserved. Although departments can still access their records, custody and ownership of the records is transferred to the Archives.

According to the *Archives Act*, a person can be fined up to \$5,000 for destroying government records without appropriate authorization. ARCS has been approved as a records disposition authority for administrative records. This approval provides the government with the authority to dispose of administrative records that have reached the end of the retention periods specified in ARCS.

## Advantages of Final Disposition

The following advantages result from carrying out final disposition:

- Cost savings.
- Preservation of the documentary heritage of the Government of the Northwest Territories.
- Reduction in the volume of unnecessary records stored in departments and records centres.
- Protection of the legal and financial interests of the GNWT.

## Criteria for Final Disposition

Before administrative records can be destroyed or transferred to the NWT Archives, the records must:

- Be covered by *ARCS*.
- Be properly prepared, boxed and listed.
- Have met their retention period as specified under *ARCS*, and have no further value to the originating organisation.
- Have been approved for destruction or transfer to the NWT Archives by the program

director, the departmental records coordinator, and the GNWT Records Management Section.

### **Final Disposition Process – Records in Departments**

The following steps are followed to dispose of physical records that have reached the end of their retention period while still located in your department:

- Separate the files into boxes according to the means of final disposition: destroy or archival selection.
- Separate the boxes into separate groups, called transfers, according to the means of final disposition: destroy or archival selection.
- List the files on *Box Inventory Forms*. Send the forms to your department's records coordinator for review. The records coordinator will send the lists and a disposition approval letter from your Director or Regional Superintendent to the Records Management unit, Public Works and Services.
- The Records Management unit will send disposition labels to you. Place the labels on the boxes. After you have put the labels on the boxes, contact Records Management to arrange to have the boxes shipped to the Records Centre.
- Boxes that have a final disposition of Archival Selection will be offered to the Northwest Territories Archives. Any records that the Territorial Archivist does not select will be destroyed.
- Records Management will advertise the destruction of the boxes in the Northwest Territories Gazette. They will also notify Nunavut of the destruction of any records created before April 1, 1999.
- If there are no requests to view the records as a result of the NWT Gazette advertisement, and if Nunavut does not request any of the records, then the records will be destroyed. Requests to review the records as a result of the NWT Gazette advertisement will be forwarded to your department. Request for records from Nunavut will be reviewed with your Records Coordinator prior to sending the files to Nunavut.

### **Final Disposition Process – Records in Records Centre**

The following steps are followed to dispose of physical records that have reached the end of their retention period while in storage in the Records Centre:

- Once a year, the Records Management unit of Public Works and Services will advise your department's records coordinator of boxes in the Records Centre that are eligible for disposition. This information can be requested from the Records Management unit at any time.
- Your records coordinator will obtain a disposition approval letter from your Director or Regional Superintendent. Your records coordinator will send this letter to the Records Management unit, Public Works and Services.
- The Records Management unit will offer any boxes that have a final disposition of Archival Selection will be offered to the Northwest Territories Archives. Any records that the Territorial Archivist does not select will be destroyed.
- Records Management will advertise the destruction of the boxes in the Northwest Territories Gazette. They will also notify Nunavut of the destruction of any records created before April 1, 1999.
- If there are no requests to view the records as a result of the NWT Gazette advertisement, and if Nunavut does not request any of the records, then the records will be destroyed. Requests to review the records as a result of the NWT Gazette advertisement will be

forwarded to your department. Request for records from Nunavut will be reviewed with your Records Coordinator prior to sending the files to Nunavut.

### **Final Disposition Process – Electronic Records**

The following steps are followed to dispose of electronic records that have reached the end of their retention period while stored in iRIMS or a document management system:

- Obtain a report of all electronic records that are eligible for final disposition from the system administrator.
- Your records coordinator will obtain a disposition approval letter from your Director or Regional Superintendent. Your records coordinator will send this letter and a list of the electronic records to the Records Management unit, Public Works and Services.
- The Records Management unit will offer any electronic records that have a final disposition of Archival Selection will be offered to the Northwest Territories Archives. Any electronic records that the Territorial Archivist does not select will be destroyed.
- Records Management will advertise the destruction of the boxes in the Northwest Territories Gazette. They will also notify Nunavut of the destruction of any records created before April 1, 1999.
- If there are no requests to view the electronic records as a result of the NWT Gazette advertisement, and if Nunavut does not request any of the electronic records, then the records may be destroyed. Requests to review the records as a result of the NWT Gazette advertisement will be forwarded to your department. Request for electronic records from Nunavut will be reviewed with your Records Coordinator prior to sending the electronic to Nunavut.
- Records Management will advise the system administrator that the electronic records may be erased from the system.

## ***OPERATIONAL RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (ORCS)***

Every department, board or agency creates and receives records related to general administrative, facilities, supply, financial, personnel, and information service functions. These administrative records are managed under the *Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)*. The same departments, boards and agencies create and receive operational records that relate to the specific programs and services they provide according the statute, mandate, or policy.

Because they are generated in the carrying out of the specific functions of a department, board or agency, operational records are unique to each department. As such, they cannot be managed under a single, standard classification system. Rather, a separate *Operational Records Classification System (ORCS)* must be developed to accommodate the operational records that relate to the particular programs and services.

The development of an *Operational Records Classification System (ORCS)* is the responsibility of each department, board or agency. Contact your records coordinator to determine if your department already has an *ORCS*. Each department, board or agency is also responsible for ensuring that the retention periods and dispositions assigned to operational records meet all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. The Records Management unit of Public Works and Services can provide advice and assistance in the development of an *ORCS*.

An *ORCS* is a subject or function-based disposition authority that incorporates the same two elements found in *ARCS*: a block numeric classification system and a retention schedule.

As a classification system, an *ORCS* assigns a 4-digit numeric code to primaries of related records. The primary numbers reserved for all operational schedules range from 0100 to 0999, and from 7000 and up. (Numbers between 1000 and 6999 are reserved for *ARCS*.) Secondaries within each primary are assigned a 2-digit numeric identifier.

As a retention schedule, an *ORCS* includes scope notes that describe the records included in each primary, specifies the retention periods for the active and semi-active phases in each secondary, and indicates the final disposition for those records.

Although the content of each *ORCS* is specific, the structure of an *ORCS* is essentially the same as that of *ARCS*. To become familiar with this structure, review the “How to Use the *Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)*” section of this manual.

Records Management reviews each *ORCS* that is developed by a department, board or agency, and then submits it to the Public Records Committee (PRC). The PRC ensures

that each *ORCS* meets the legal, fiscal and administrative requirements of the GNWT, and confirms whether the final disposition of included records is to be destruction or archival selection. The PRC's approval of an *ORCS* is required before the records it manages can be destroyed or transferred to the NWT Archives.

New programs are often developed within a department, or existing programs may be amended, cancelled or transferred to another department. The organizational structure of a department, board or agency may be changed to facilitate the delivery of new programs or services. New legislation may specify the retention of additional records, or increase existing retention periods. All of these changes can affect the management of operational records, and may necessitate revising an *ORCS* to accommodate them. The departmental record coordinator should ensure that all existing *ORCS* are still valid and can be used or require amendments.