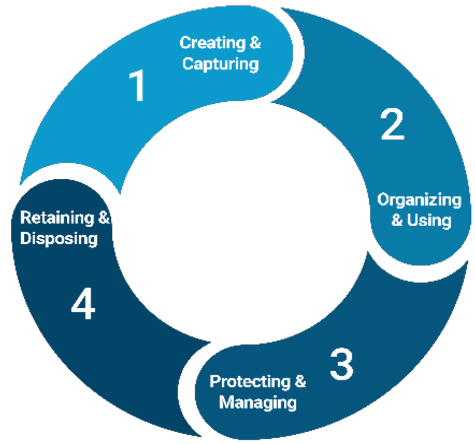
Archives of Manitoba
Government Records Office

Creating and Capturing Records

This fact sheet offers answers to some of the most frequently asked questions from public servants about creating and capturing records.



Creating Records

When records are created or received, it is important to ensure that they provide adequate information to document the activity, action, or decision. The goal is to create trustworthy, accessible, and reliable records that will be there when needed and for as long as required.

What is a record?

Government records are defined as recorded information in any form, created or received in the conduct of government business, and kept as evidence of activities and transactions. This definition covers records in all formats, including digital records. It is what they are *about* (the content) that makes them records, not the form.

Records are an integral part of government business. They are the product of every process in every government office – from the most routine administrative processes to unique program activities and services that government is mandated to perform. Government creates a wide range of records, including:

- correspondence and emails
- briefing and advisory notes, treasury board submissions
- case files
- agendas, minutes, and meeting packages
- invoices, bills, estimates, and budgets
- maps and plans
- photographs, text messages, digital audio and video recordings
- any other documents created/received in the course of government work

Should I make a record?

Most records are created routinely as a result of your work processes. In other cases, you need to decide to make a record to provide evidence of an action or decision. For example, when having a phone call or meeting, a verbal discussion that results in a decision or a client interaction, it should result in a record. If you are not sure whether to make a record, ask yourself these questions:

- Does this discussion or decision need to be recorded for future reference?
- Will I need to show what actions I took/what advice or services I provided?
- Will others need a record of my activity in order to provide service or complete their work?

If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, document the activity and file it to your office recordkeeping system. **If in doubt, create a record.**

What makes a good record?

Good records have certain qualities. They need to have authenticity, integrity, and usability.

Authenticity means that a record can be proven to be what it claims to be. An authentic record clearly documents the creator, the date the record was created and modified, and the purpose of the record. Date stamps, original signatures, identity management, and authentication metadata can help to ensure a record is authentic.

Integrity means that records are complete and unaltered. All of the information/data related to a record is present. For example, case files should have all of the related records filed together. If records are missing or cannot be located, the file has lost its integrity. The integrity of a record is influenced by the system and processes that support recordkeeping. For example, electronic systems that do not track if records are altered, moved, or deleted do not demonstrate integrity.

Usability means that records can be located, retrieved, and used in the course of business. Records must remain legible and accessible for as long as they are needed. For example, records stored in obsolete file formats are not useable.

To keep or not to keep?

After creation, some records only need to be kept for a very short time and others for many years. Decisions about retention should be made by management, communicated to staff, and embodied in up-to-date records schedules. Your role is to create the record and capture it in the organization's recordkeeping system so it can be managed appropriately.

Make your records management decisions as soon as you create and receive information. See Identifying Government Records for further details. You may generally delete ***transitory*** records right away or when you no longer need them. Please see the Transitory Records Fact Sheet for guidance on determining what is transitory.

Capturing Records

What does it mean to capture records?

Capturing records that are created and/or received means keeping them so that they will be accessible for as long as required and will remain trustworthy and reliable.

How should records be captured?

The way we keep records is important. Records should be captured in a recordkeeping system. This can be an electronic system that properly supports authoritative digital records or a paper filing system. The type of recordkeeping system used will depend on the business needs and requirements of the organization and the recordkeeping capabilities that are available. The goal of a recordkeeping system is to:

- make it easy for users to file, locate, and retrieve the records they need
- group related records together so that a 'complete' record of the business activity or case is available
- remove the need for individual or ad hoc decisions on managing records

- help prevent duplication and unmanaged accumulation
- reflect the business activity
- make it possible to apply records and information management rules accountably and comprehensively

See Recordkeeping Systems Fact Sheet for more information.

Records kept outside of a recordkeeping system can result in serious operational risks and consequences such as loss of data, privacy/security breaches, unreliability as evidence, inaccessibility, and business disruption. This is especially important to consider when working remotely. See Working Remotely and Recordkeeping Responsibilities for further guidance.

What should I avoid when capturing records?

Government records are corporate records that should be captured in a shared filing system accessible to your workgroup.

Never use your hard drive (e.g. C: drive, desktop) and try to avoid using personal workspaces (e.g. U: drive, Outlook folder, or OneDrive), Microsoft 365 Teams, or phones for storing electronic documents, except on a temporary basis. Personal workspaces:

- are inaccessible to others
- may not have security back-ups to ensure your documents are protected in the event of a disaster
- are not a managed recordkeeping system

This guidance also aligns with the Electronic Network Usage Policy (ENUP – internal link): personal workspaces should be used to store information *for personal or transitory use only*.

Should I keep draft versions of a document or my working notes?

Usually, offices do not need to keep draft versions once a final version has been filed, so the drafts may be disposed of as transitory. In other cases, drafts may have an operational value or legal significance and should therefore be filed. For example: draft versions of legislation may need to be kept to document the evolution of the statute. Consult with your manager and work group to determine what records are required for your program area.

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