



# Instant Messaging

## Overview

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Instant messaging technologies are designed to support real-time conversational interactions and are commonly used to facilitate the flow of business. These technologies are not an appropriate medium for record-keeping when managing and searching for data. Instant messages are discoverable for legal, audit or access to information requests and must be managed appropriately.

**Definition:** Instant messaging is a form of real-time, direct communication between two or more parties using personal computers or other devices such as smart phones or tablets. Instant messaging technologies are designed to support real-time conversational interactions. Examples of instant messaging include: Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Text Messaging , Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams.

## Advice

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- For the most part, instant messages tend to be transitory records with short-term value and do not need to be stored and managed in a records management system. Transitory records are of temporary usefulness in any format or medium having no ongoing value beyond an immediate and minor transaction or the preparation of a subsequent record.
- Occasionally, an instant message conversation will evolve into a discussion that has business value and must be managed as a government record.
- If an instant message is determined to be a government record it must be managed appropriately by transferring it to an approved government recordkeeping format. It is the content of a message, not its format, which determines whether it is a government record.
- Once the conversation evolves into information that should be retained as a record, the quickest way to transfer the content to an appropriate medium is to send an email to all those involved in the conversation.

*See Quick Reference—Instant Messaging (Transitioning a Chat Conversation to a Recordkeeping Format)*

- Instant messages retained on a mobile device should be regularly reviewed by the owner of the device. It is not necessary to retain instant messages that have been determined to be transitory. These transitory records can be disposed of without approval from the Government Records Committee (GRC).

# Instant Messaging Technology Descriptions

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## Blackberry Messenger (BBM)

Blackberry Messenger is a proprietary instant messaging application.

## Text Messaging (SMS, MMS and iMessage)

Text messaging is the text communication service component of phone, web or mobile communication systems.

## Skype for Business

Skype for Business is a type of SMS messaging. It is a real-time communications system providing enterprise instant messaging, peer to peer and multiparty voice and video calling. These features are available on government assets, and with external users on the public internet.

## Microsoft Teams

Teams instant messaging technologies such as chat, channels, video and audio conferencing are available on government assets, and with external users on the public internet.

For more information on Instant Messaging contact [IM@gov.nl.ca](mailto:IM@gov.nl.ca).

### Supporting Materials

### Version History

(OCIO Ref. DOC05303/2013)

- POLICY—Information Management and Protection Policy  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/im-im-ip-policy.pdf>
- DIRECTIVE—Instant Messaging  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/directive-instant-messaging.pdf>
- FAQ—Instant Messaging  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/faq-instant-messaging.pdf>
- GUIDELINE—Email Management  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/guideline-email-management.pdf>
- GUIDELINE—Managing Transitory Records  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/guideline-managing-transitory-records.pdf>
- QUICK REFERENCE— Instant Messaging  
Transitioning a Chat Conversation to a Recordkeeping Format  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/quick-reference-instant-messaging.pdf>
- Transitory Records  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/transitory-records>

Version 1	2012 02 01
Version 2	2018 09 24
Version 3	2020 08 20

