

## GUIDELINE – PHYSICAL RECORDS STORAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

**Guideline (Definition):** OCIO Guidelines derive from **Information Management and Protection Policy, TBM 2009-335** approved by Treasury Board on November 19, 2009. Guidelines are recommended actions, general approaches and operational behaviors. They recommend actions and are not compulsory, as they take into consideration the varying nature of the information management programs. Guidelines are generally a description that clarifies what should be done and how to achieve the objectives set out in policies and directives (source: ISO/IEC 17799:2005).

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## APPROVAL AND SIGN OFF

Executive Director, Information Management Branch			
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**Note:** Questions related to this guideline should be forwarded to [im@gov.nl.ca](mailto:im@gov.nl.ca)

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# **GUIDELINE FOR PHYSICAL RECORDS STORAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE**

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## **1.0 Overview**

Under the [Management of Information Act](#) and Government's Information Management and Protection Policy, departments are responsible for the secure and efficient management of all records, including physical records such as paper, CDs, DVDs, photographs, film, etc. This guideline includes best practices for the development and operation of any physical records storage locations including file rooms, central filing, information service centres, and off-site departmental records storage space.

## **2.0 Scope**

This Guideline applies to or may be used by all public bodies (hereafter referred to as departments), as defined in the [Management of Information Act](#). The audience for this guideline includes all individuals responsible for the operation of an IM program within their department.

## **3.0 Background**

### **3.1 Physical Records**

The [Management of Information Act](#) defines a record as:

a correspondence, memorandum, form, paper, parchment, manuscript, map, plan, drawing, painting, print, photograph, magnetic tape, computer disc, microform, electronically produced document and other documentary material regardless of physical form or characteristic;

Government departments are responsible for the secure and efficient management of all records and information regardless of media. A large portion of active physical records are likely stored at personal workstations. In these cases, the department relies on individual staff to follow best practices for their management. These active records either get destroyed directly by the staff or moved into the department's records management program. Requiring that staff move active records into a central location once they have completed immediate work on them increases the likelihood that they will be managed and disposed of appropriately.

Most departments have at least one (or several) physical storage location. These may include file rooms, storage vaults, registries and service centres. The management of these locations should be overseen by the department's IM division or branch. They may be administered by departmental staff (e.g. administrative assistants) but guidance, best practices and periodic review should be completed by IM practitioners.

### **3.2 Storage and the Record Life Cycle**

Physical records management can be a resource intensive activity. Where possible, it is advantageous for a department to minimize physical records management requirements by

developing and implementing Records Retention and Disposal Schedules (RRDS) as a regular course of business. The inclusion of IM practices in ongoing business activities facilitates the transition of records from active to semi-active to disposal status.

1. **Active** - An active record is a record needed to perform current operations or ongoing business matters. It is consulted frequently, and it must be conveniently available for immediate reference, either manually or via a computer system. Active records may be stored onsite or online to support the flow of business.
2. **Semi-Active** - Semi-Active Records are those records that do not have to be readily available in primary offices but which still need to be kept for the possibility of use or reference. These records should be stored in appropriate offsite storage facilities.
3. **Disposal** - Disposal of records in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador means either secure destruction or the transfer of records at the end of their lifecycle to The Rooms Provincial Archives Division (TRPAD). As required by the [Management of Information Act](#) the recommended disposal authority for government records is a Records Retention and Disposal Schedule, approved by the Government records Committee (GRC). Detailed instruction on disposal is included in the OCIO Guideline *Disposal of Records and Information*.

The Planning and Accommodations Division, Department of Transportation and Works maintains *The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Office Space Standard*. Developed to support the efficient use of government office space. It dictates:

Currently only active records (records which are used on average, once per month) will be accommodated within the allocated space dedicated towards office accommodations. Inactive (semi-active) records will be stored offsite according to guidelines to be developed by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).

When identifying requirements for physical storage it is important to consider that active records should be retained onsite as per the RRDS. If the department determines that the retention period identified in the RRDS is no longer appropriate (e.g. the active period should be increased or decreased) then the RRDS can be modified via a memo to the GRC.

### 3.3 Semi-Active Storage Options

The OCIO promotes two options for the storage of semi-active physical records:

1. *The Provincial Records Centre*: The PRC is operated by the OCIO. It provides secure storage for government records that fall within its mandate. Records accepted by the PRC include:
  - Vital Records: defined as one that is indispensable to a mission critical business operation or essential for the continuation of an organization during or following a disaster;
  - Confidential Records: Records of a sensitive or private nature, where confidentiality is required in storage conditions;
  - Archival Records: Records which, due to their enduring value or historical significance, are to be transferred to TRPAD once they are no longer required by the department or public body;
  - Records which have longer than usual semi-active retention periods may be considered to lessen the burden of storage on departments and public bodies.

Visit the OCIO website for PRC forms and transfer instructions.

2. *Third Party Storage*: Departments are encouraged to use third party offsite storage for the storage of semi-active government records which do not meet the criteria for storage at the provincial Records Centre. Abandoned buildings, hallways, janitorial closets, basements and other similar places should not be used to store semi-active records. The Government Purchasing Agency (GPA) maintains Master Standing Offer Agreements (MSOA) with third parties for the secure storage of records. Contact your departments' financial operations officer to access the most updated MSOAs.

### 3.4 Imaging Active Records for Improved Access

Transforming physical records to electronic format using a scanner and records management software provides immediate access to active records. The value of having records accessible electronically may justify the cost of establishing document scanning in the department. The OCIO Guideline *Record Imaging Services* provides guidance on determining the suitability of records for imaging and establishing an imaging program.

## 4.0 Recommended Approach

Departmental needs for physical records storage locations and use vary depending on the information flow of core business and requirements for access and use and format of records. The following approach has elements that can be adapted to accommodate the upgrade of an existing location; however it has been developed to be used primarily if a department is developing a new storage location.

### 4.1 Complete a Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is required to identify the active records that require onsite physical storage. The department's program plan as described in the OCIO Guideline *Information Management (IM) Program Plan* will contain detailed information about IM services. This may prove useful in determining the role that the storage facility will play in the overall IM program.

Completing an inventory as described in the OCIO Guideline *Records and Information Inventory* is a first step in determining the volume of records that must be accessible to support ongoing operations. Requirements for records to be retained onsite should be documented including:

- Title of record series;
- Records Retention and Disposal Schedule (RRDS) identifier;
- Process or program that creates the records;
- Location of records and users;
- Existing Volume;
- Anticipated annual increase;
- Format of records
- Length of active retention (active);

- Total retention (active + semi active);

## 4.2 Define/Validate Scope and Services Required

Analyze the records to be retained onsite to determine the overall scope of the storage requirement. Use this to outline what types of services will be required to support ongoing access and management. Things to consider when planning onsite storage and support requirements include:

- Purpose of the Storage Location: How will the storage location fit into the overall IM Governance Framework? How will the services complement or support other services? For example, will the centre be a stand alone service that is used to provide access to active records or will the facility act as a processing hub for records being transferred offsite?
- Staffing Requirements: Does staff need to be physically located within the centre? Depending on the types of services required to support the management and use of the records it may be advantageous to physically locate IM staff within the centre.
- Type of Records: What is the business value of the records? If records are critical to business processes and need to be accessible to staff immediately to complete daily functions then there may be a business case for retaining these records securely onsite at individual work stations or offices.
- Location of Users: Where are the anticipated users located? Where the users are located has an impact on the way that service is provided. For example if users are all in the same building there are different distribution options as opposed to geographically distributed users.
- Environmental conditions: Some formats of records require specific environments to ensure the longevity and preservation of the records
- Record Use: How will the records be used? For example if the records will be removed for extended periods of time then consider the need for improved tracking and reporting of files.
- Volume of Records per Year: What is the volume of records generated per year? In determining the amount of space required, understand the existing volume as well as how much the volume increases annually, being sure to factor in the implementation of the RRDS which will result in records being disposed of on a scheduled basis. Maintenance and Storage: How will the records be received by the staff responsible for the storage location? Are there costs associated with the transfer and retrieval of files? What will staff need to do to the records when they arrive? If records are already classified, organized and filed when they arrive it will eliminate work of centre staff. If this is a service that is provided by the centre staff then a processing area will be required as well as additional supplies.
- Media or Format of Records: What is the format of the records? Are the records in paper format or will there be alternative media that needs to be accommodated? Specialized storage may be required for alternative format such as oversized maps and supplies for storage of negatives or photographs may be required. Different format of records are stipulated here, but the scanning section implies that many records should be scanned. Clarification needs to be provided.

- **Retention Requirements:** How long will records be retained onsite? Understanding the retention requirement for onsite storage is necessary to understand the total volume that will be maintained at any one time. This should be documented in the RRDS. For records in several formats, the official format should be identified in the RRDS.
- **Existing Storage Space:** Can the requirements be accommodated with existing storage space? Will the development of new storage eliminate or minimize other decentralized locations? Engage Transportation and Works staff responsible for office space allocation, planning and use to determine whether existing space can be modified or if appropriate alternative space can be identified.
- **Resource Requirements:** What is the estimated cost of establishing and maintaining the storage location? Based on the physical requirements and the service requirements estimate the overall cost of establishing and operating the storage centre. Include the physical upgrade, new shelving as well as ongoing cost for salaries, processing, courier, etc.

### 4.3 Document the Life Cycle

The life cycle refers to the stages through which information is managed. Information management strives to manage the records in a manner that facilitates authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability throughout all stages including:

- Planning;
- Creation and organization;
- Receipt and capture of data;
- Retrieval, processing, dissemination and distribution of data;
- Storage, maintenance and protection;
- Disposal including secure destruction or transfer to TRPAD

Documenting the typical life cycle of the records that will be stored in the location may prove helpful in finalizing requirements and developing operational procedures. [Appendix A, Information Life Cycle Review](#) includes typical questions to consider when documenting the life cycle.

## 4.4 Create Specifications

Working with departmental stakeholders and Transportation and Works staff, and specialized consultants where necessary, use the requirements that have been identified in 4.2 to create detailed physical specifications. Considerations include:

- Physical Location and Layout
- Shelving, Equipment and Supplies

### 4.4.1 Physical Location and Layout

Every department will have different needs when it comes to developing their physical records storage location. Volume of records, types of services, location of users, etc. all impact the layout and design. The following are some of the physical location and layout considerations:

- Storage is best located in centre of a building. This mitigates many issues including:
  - Physical security components;
  - No windows for unauthorized entry;
  - Prevents UV damage to records;
  - Structural weight requirements due to the load of physical records on the floor.
- Avoid locations on the ground floor or in the basement of a building due to the risk of flooding;
- Access: The location must be physically accessible.
  - If services are provided to users at the location, ensure that the location is convenient and the counter space meets accessibility requirements
  - Ensure the access to, and/or emergency exits are adequate and meet fire, safety and other regulations. .
  - The storage location must be accessible by public courier as records may be shipped to it and retrievals made from it.
- Fire suppression requirements must be evaluated and implemented.
  - Ensure the fire suppression system is appropriate for the area.
  - Regulations may affect elements of the floor plan, such as the width of the aisles, the height of the stacks, sprinkler requirements, and placement and specifications of portable fire extinguishers, interior fire hoses, fire alarms, and exits.
- Lighting: Ensure the placement and levels of lighting are conducive to the work performed in the storage location.
- Electrical supply: Ensure that there are sufficient electrical outlets to power equipment. Avoid spreading cords or cables across the floor as these may become health and safety risks.
- Temperature and Humidity: Temperature and humidity levels should be appropriate for the type of media stored within the location. Inappropriate temperature and humidity may lead to the deterioration of records, particularly alternative media such as photographs and film.
- Protective coverings are recommended for open shelving to protect against damage in the event that the sprinkler system is activated, dust accumulation, etc.
- Additional security measures such as an inner secured room located within the storage location for vital or sensitive records.
- A staging area used by staff to receive and process records. The size will be dependant on the anticipated volume of records and the number of staff.

- Allocate space for government standard workstations for all regular staff. Allow for additional space to accommodate temporary workers;
- Space is required for standard office equipment including photocopiers, fax machines, shredders and secure shredding boxes. The amount of space will vary depending on the number of staff and type of services provided.
- Space may need to be allocated for viewing of records depending on the type of records maintained in the storage location and the services provided (e.g. vital records should not be removed from the location and would therefore have to be accessed onsite).
- If mail services are provided from the site then areas will be required for pick-up and processing. Include an after hours mail slot to accommodate all requirements.
- The needs assessment will have identified the record series that will be stored in active storage. Included in the assessment is the existing volume based on the inventory and anticipated annual increase.
  - The height of the ceiling as well as the floor space should be considered. The ratio of 1 cubic foot of records to 1 foot of rise to 1 square foot of floor space is approximately .333 cubic feet. Applying this factor to the known elements, such as cubic-foot measurement of records, square foot measurement of floor space and the height of the shelving stack, a department can determine the approximate space requirements. The following formulas are useful in estimating space requirements for the stack area of the records centre:
 

Volume of records *divided by* Stack height *multiplied by* 0.333 = floor area required

Volume of records *divided by* Floor area *multiplied by* 0.333 = stack height required

Floor area *multiplied by* Stack height *multiplied by* 0.333 = volume capacity
- Based on the estimated volume of records to be maintained, validate that the location can physically withstand the weight of the records. In the estimate, do not forget to include the weight of shelving, cabinetry and equipment.
- Consider the type of signage that will be used to identify the storage location:
  - Hours of operation
  - Emergency contact
  - Directional signs that guide users from elevators, doors, etc.

#### 4.4.2 Shelving, Equipment and Supplies

The type of shelving and equipment required will vary depending on the type of use the location will provide. A storage location that is not staffed and is used infrequently may require that records are filed in folders and stored in boxes. Shelving and tools would be required to accommodate standard size boxes. A storage location that is staffed and actively used may retain files in folders in open shelving thereby requiring additional spacing devices to properly support file folders. Reference Government Standing Offer Agreements to validate that all shelving and equipment has already been identified and meets government and industry standards.

- Floor Space: Ensure sufficient floor space for all shelving and equipment to minimize safety hazards.
- Shelving: Shelving specifications and standards have been identified in SOAs. The vendor of record provides assessment, installation and maintenance services.
- Cabinets: Depending on how records will be retained, cabinetry may be required.
- Supplies: Ensure an adequate supply of office and filing supplies to ensure efficient processing of records. This may require an increase in the regular supply budget of the IM division or branch.
- Printer/Photocopier: the size and complexity of the printer and/or photocopier unit will depend on whether printing or copying services will be provided. The cost for the unit and required space should be factored into the storage location's operating cost.
- Fax: Purchase or lease of fax machine and required space should be included in the cost of the storage location.
- Scanner: If document scanning is included in the services provided by the storage location then this should be included analysis of implementation and operating cost. The scope of the scanning and anticipated volume will impact the amount of equipment and space required to support the service.
- Document Shredder: If document shredding will be completed onsite then this cost should be included in the estimate. It should be noted that bulk shredding should be treated as a separate activity. Due to dust and noise issues, bulk shredding should not take place in the same area as staff work and records storage unless the shredder is separated by a door and has appropriate venting to remove dust.
- Secure Shredding Boxes: The amount of space required for secure shredding boxes will depend on the volume of paper records marked for destruction.

The Department of Transportation and Works is responsible for the buildings used by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador including their physical structure and office space as well as associated capabilities and services, such as lighting, HVAC, humidity control, and fire suppression and any identified requirements should be coordinated through Transportation and Works personnel.

#### 4.5 Develop a Business Case/Requirements

Based on this assessment prepare a description of the physical storage required, services that will be provided and all associated costs. Components may include:

- Business Need
  - Based upon an inventory and assessment of the types and volume of records needed in active storage
- Services to be Provided

- Filing, faxing, mail pick-up processing and delivery, secure disposal, etc.
- Scope of the records to be stored
  - All active records; records of only certain program areas, all media types, etc.
- Staffing Requirements
  - Staffing of the centre or management of the centre through periodic visits for record retrieval or disposal and spot checks as required
- Total Operating Costs Per Year
  - Include supplies, shelving, maintenance costs for equipment such as photocopiers, etc.
- Return on Investment
  - Savings to be accrued by freeing up office space to be used for staff or by cutting costs for commercial storage or shredding services

#### **4.6 Obtain Approval for Physical Storage Development and Use**

Requirements will vary depending on many variables including the existing space allocated (if any), required physical upgrades, and addition of new or modification of existing support services, etc. Ensure approval of the Executive for implementation expenses and ongoing operations. Verify whether other departmental stakeholders need to be engaged including departmental financial operations and human resources.

#### **4.7 Procure Supplies and Services**

Working with departmental stakeholders and Transportation and Works, identify and procure the supplies and services required to complete any upgrades or modifications to the location. There are a number of standing offer agreements related to IM that may be useful or required during this process. For example, there are agreements for shelving that include requirements analysis (e.g., measurements and estimate of number of shelves, cabinets, etc.) and installation to be completed by the vendor. Contact your Manager of Financial Operations for access to the most up to date standing offers.

#### **4.8 Define Procedures**

Establishing consistent procedures is essential in ensuring that records are managed as per legal, regulatory and operations requirement and that services are consistent.

- Services
- Operations
- Security

Considerations for the planning and development of procedures have been included in Appendix B, *Record Storage Locations: Procedural Considerations*.

## 4.9 Communications

Prior to the start of operations and at appropriate intervals thereafter, communicate to departmental staff:

- Purpose of the storage location
- Services offered
- How to access services including after hours (if applicable)
- Hours of operations
- Contact Information

Use the OCIO Guideline *Education and Awareness for Government Employees* to develop a communications strategy. Things to consider:

- Create a unique centre e-mail and phone number
- Ensure that information is readily available (e.g. on the Departmental Intranet if one is available)
- Consider marketing materials (e.g. posters, handouts, etc).

## 5.0 Glossary

### 5.1 Definitions

[Active Record](#)

[Disposal](#)

[Information Management](#)

[Life Cycle](#)

[Semi-Active Record](#)

### 5.2 Acronyms

GPA	Government Purchasing Agency
IM	Information Management
MSOA	Master Standing Offer Agreement
RRDS	Records Retention and Disposal Schedule

## 6.0 References

[Management of Information Act](#)

[The Evidence Act](#)

[Information Management and Protection Policy, TBM 2009-335](#)

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Office Space Standard

Guideline – Disposal of Records and Information

Guideline – Information Management (IM) Education and Awareness for Government Employees

Guideline – Information Management (IM) Program Plan

Guideline – Record Imaging Services

## 7.0 Revision History

Date Reviewed	Reviewed By
2011-04-15	Iris Power, Director of Information Management Services
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## **Appendix A: Information Life Cycle Questions**



Information Life  
Cycle Questions v1.21

## **Appendix B: Record Storage Locations: Procedural Considerations**



Records Storage  
Locations Procedural