

The Records Management Process

1. Records Inventory

Records holdings must be inventoried before appropriate controls can be instituted. An inventory consists of a complete listing of records by record series, together with descriptions and supporting information. A records series is a group of identical or related records that is normally filed together, and than can be evaluated as a unit to determine how long they should be maintained.

As a general rule the person who creates or maintains records or a file is the one who is the most familiar with it and therefore, is probably most qualified to inventory its contents. This familiarity is helpful to determine the value of the record series, how long it must be retained, and the method of disposition.

The Archives Division's records management analysts are available to assist state agencies in taking inventories of records series, tracing life cycle of records to recommend efficient and economic controls, and recommend records retention periods and disposition. State agencies may contact the records management analysts by calling the State Records Center at 831-6770.

The inventory process does not take long. The inventory is not concerned with the particular details of content of each form, letter, personnel record, etc. The inventory process focuses on the general function and the overall content of records. It also provides for the identification of record medium (e.g. paper, magnetic tape, floppy disk), size, filing method, reference rate, current volume and annual accumulation. All of this information is vital to the development of a sound records retention schedule. Inventory information should be noted on a State of Hawaii Records Inventory Form, ARM 6.

Inventory data is not used exclusively for retention scheduling. Such information becomes crucial to other aspects of managing records.

- Accumulation rates are a factor in deciding whether to microfilm a records series.
- Filing methods may illustrate problems with retrieval.
- Frequency of use, i.e., reference rates, will determine when to place records into storage.

Given the frequency with which data collection and processing requirements change, inventories and schedules should be reviewed every one to three years.

The **RECORDS INVENTORY** identifies and quantifies the records created and received by an organization.

It is a list of each *type* or *series* of records.

The inventory *is not*:

- A document-by-document listing
- A folder-by-folder listing.

2. **Records Retention Schedules**

After records are inventoried, they are placed on “records retention schedules.” Every record series on a schedule must be evaluated for its purpose and value before a retention period is assigned. The scheduling process is ongoing and involves close cooperation between department personnel, Departmental Records Officers, and the Records Management Analysts in the Archives Division.

Evaluation for retention periods is based on: (1) Statutory or regulatory requirements, (2) Audit requirements, and (3) Practical need or value.

Statutory or regulatory requirements for specific records retention periods are infrequent. Records retention may be inferred, however, by the need to provide evidence of a particular action. Audit requirements usually apply only to financial and fiscal records.

Practical need is determined by specific values:

Administrative value. Records which help an agency perform its current work have administrative value. Retention can vary, depending on what the records document.

Evidential value. Records which provide evidence of an agency's organizational structure and functions. These include policies, directives, board minutes, organizational documents, etc.

Informational value. Based on the information contained in the records. Informational value usually decreases over time. Informational value can most often be determined by studying the use of the record series over a period of time.

A records retention and disposition schedule is a management tool used to prescribe the time to retire records to inactive status and eventually the time to destroy or dispose of the records. HRS 94-3 requires each state agency, except Judiciary and Legislative agencies, to submit proposed retention and disposition schedules to the Comptroller (Form SA-1).

Prior to submitting Form SA-1 to the Comptroller via the State Archivist, secure the approval of the department's Director and the department's Records Officer.

After approval of the Comptroller and the State Archivist, Form SA-1 provides the authority to destroy records, transfer to the State Records Center at a designated point in time, or transfer to the State Archives for permanent retention.

Evaluation of records for retention

Is based upon:

- Statutory or regulatory requirements
- Audit requirements
- Practical need or value
 - Administrative value
 - Evidential value
 - Informational value

3. **Records Disposition**

Legal basis for dispositions: The disposition of government records in the State of Hawaii is covered by Sections 92-31 and 94-3, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The State Archivist is designated to receive requests for disposal and to recommend to the State Comptroller the action to be taken. It may be recommended that the: a) records be destroyed, b) records to be retained by the agency, c) non-current, non-permanent records be transferred to the State Records Center, d) historical records to be transferred to the State Archives on the Iolani Palace Grounds, or e) records be microfilmed or be preserved on another long-lasting medium.

Records can be disposed of only upon authorization. This is true for all records, whether stored in the department or in the State Records Center. Furthermore, only scheduled records can be destroyed.

When records become eligible for disposal, Form ARM 7 must be filled out completely and submitted to the Records Management Branch. Form ARM 7 is filed when records have been destroyed, whether they were stored at the agency location or in certain cases, were returned to the agency by the State Records Center for destruction.

Benefits of Compliance

By using mandated, statewide procedures for legal disposition of records, departments gain a consistent policy with uniform standards. The benefits of systematic, authorized disposition include:

- a. Economies in purchasing and maintenance of real estate, equipment and supplies, staff time, and

- b. Increases in efficiency and safety through the removal of unnecessary files.

Liabilities of Noncompliance

- a. Premature disposal of records means their destruction before their retention period expires. The destruction before expiration of the retention period endangers the public interest in the following ways:
 - 1) Unplanned expenses of financial settlement or loss of revenues.
 - 2) Disruption of efficiency due to gaps in information, and,
 - 3) Irretrievable loss of historical legacy.
- b. Retaining records beyond their useful lifespan is also a liability because:
 - 1) There is unnecessary expenditure for equipment, floor space, and supplies to maintain the records.
 - 2) The accumulation of unnecessary records reduces efficiency for retrieval.
 - 3) The lack of systematic storage and disposal increases safety hazards in the area where records are being stored.

Source of Information:

Records Management Manual for the State of Hawaii, Department of Accounting and General Services, State Archives Division, 1988, Honolulu, HI.