

ORS Overview

Operational Records Systems (ORS)

Operational Records relate to the operations and services provided by a government organization in carrying out the functions for which it is responsible according to statute, mandate, or policy. Operational records are distinct from administrative records and are unique to each government organization. Operational records usually consist of client files, program files, and subject files applicable or of interest to your government institution.

Because of the unique nature of operational records, ORS cannot be developed in a general format, with common records (as with ARMS). Rather, they are developed on an agency-by-agency basis in consultation with archivists from the Saskatchewan Archives.

The Operational Records retention schedules are designed to be compatible with the Administrative Records Management system (ARMS) in that they are block-numeric systems of classification and numbering. Records are arranged in simple, logical groupings of subjects that allow for organizational changes to be made without affecting the file structure and retention schedule. The classification system is hierarchical in structure, meaning the headings start out very broadly, and become more narrowly defined as needed. The system is based on the function of the record, and is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of records keeping systems.

Benefits

There are many benefits to having an up-to-date operational records retention schedule, including:

- **Legislative Compliance**
The integrated records retention schedule and classification system will allow you to produce information requested under The Freedom of Information Act within the required thirty day period because it:
 - provides a complete up-to-date inventory of all current and stored records;
 - reduces the number of older records to be searched;
 - provides an accurate audit trail of records disposal.

- **Credibility**
The application of proper records management practices, including an

approved up-to-date records retention schedule and classification system, will greatly enhance government agencies abilities to comply with *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

An effective records classification system allows quick retrieval of records requested under F.O.I. legislation. Quick retrieval means more time is available to review the record before deciding on questions of access.

- **Cost Savings**

Poor records management is very costly. It is estimated that a single file cabinet can cost up to \$1,600.00 per year to maintain. Retaining files for longer than necessary can be very costly to the government. An integrated records retention schedule and classification system assists in the efficient management of files and the timely disposal of records that are no longer required by the department.

- **Creating Operational Retention Schedules**

The process for creating or updating records retention schedules is governed by *The Archives Act* and includes the following components:

1. **The Government Institution**

Staff members within each government institution know their own operational records and their functions. They are best placed to inventory operational records and recommend retention periods. Government offices are therefore expected to develop their own schedules.

2. **The Saskatchewan Archives**

Staff at Government Records Branch of the Saskatchewan Archives work in consultation with government departments when developing ORS. Archivists are available to provide advice on various issues including adequate retention periods, to review all drafts of retention schedules, and to help ensure that the schedule presented to the Public Documents Committee for approval is in an acceptable format.

3. **The Public Documents Committee**

All records retention schedules must be approved by the Public Documents Committee. Their role is to ensure that all fiscal and legal requirements are met. The Public Documents Committee reviews all schedule submissions. A representative from the office submitting the schedule is also present to answer any questions. The Public Documents Committee may approve, amend or reject the schedule.

4. **Legislative Assembly**

Approved schedules are forwarded to the Legislative Assembly where

they are referred to the Standing Committee on Communications. The Standing Committee on Communications will approve, amend, or reject the schedule. All records retention schedules must be approved by a motion in the Legislative Assembly.

Please contact our office at 787-0734 or recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca for further information.