Departing Employees Records Guidelines

Introduction

These guidelines are intended to assist government institutions in managing public records of former or departing employees to ensure business continuity and smooth transitions during personnel changes. When employees depart from a government institution, or transfer to another position within their current government institution, the public records they created or received must remain with the institution or business unit and be managed according to applicable legislation, standards, policies, and requirements.

In accordance with *The Archives and Public Records Management Act (APRMA)*, public records in any format (paper, electronic, structured and unstructured data, photographs, etc.) are to be maintained by government institutions as per an approved, applicable retention schedule until they are authorized for disposal by the Provincial Archivist. In the absence of an approved records schedule, records must be captured in the institution's record keeping system following current filing practices until a records schedule is developed and the records can be classified, retained, and disposed of accordingly.

Under no circumstances are former or departing government employees permitted to take public records or copies of the records with them when leaving government employment.

Considerations

1. **Education and Communication**

    All government employees need to be aware of their records and information management (RIM) responsibilities. At the beginning of their tenure, employees should be educated on both internal and government-wide RIM practices and policies so that public records are maintained in compliance with all applicable legislation as they are created. This in turn facilitates a more streamlined transition during departures. It is recommended that RIM training is incorporated into the mandatory onboarding training. RIM training provided by the Archives is available online, and RIM staff within each institution should provide assistance and detailed training specific to their organization.

2. **Electronic Records**

    Government employees should work on/within institution-approved IT systems and equipment. If public records are not automatically saved in the institution's records keeping system, these records should be regularly transferred into such a system where they can be classified and maintained in a usable and accessible format for their lifecycle. Data (structured or

unstructured) and information captured in systems, databases, or other IT infrastructure that meets the definition of a public record must also be classified and retained in a manner that is consistent with legislation and internal RIM policies for the institution. It is not advisable to store public records on/in:

- External storage devices and media (e.g., CDs, USB flash drives, etc.)
- Email application software (e.g., Microsoft Outlook and Google Mail)
- Cell phones, laptops, or other portable devices
- Desktops or personal drives

Portable devices and external storage devices can be lost, damaged, mislabeled, or may become obsolete, making the records contained on the devices unreadable. Likewise, storing records on email clients or software, and on personal drives or desktops can result in limited future access or loss of public records in the case that the account becomes inaccessible entirely.

When an employee is departing from an institution, it should be confirmed that all public records have been removed from these locations and transferred to the institution's record keeping system, or if the records have not been transferred, this should occur prior to their departure. This must be done before any accounts (email, etc.) are deleted.

Transitory Electronic Records:

- **Text and Instant Messages -** Many text and instant messages may be simple, informal communications that would be considered transitory records. However, if any text or instant messages exist that document the institution's decision making, policy and procedures, operations, or services, they are considered public records and must be managed as above. Prior to an employee's departure, text and instant messages that are official records need to be extracted along with the messages' associated metadata and placed in the institution's record keeping system.
- **Profile Management -** If all records have been appropriately captured from the departing employee's profile, the remaining information is considered transitory and the profile can be managed and deleted in accordance with internal policies.
- **Backup Data -** Backup data in any format (tapes, cloud, etc.) compiled for system recovery purposes is considered transitory and is not to be used for the management of official records. Backups must never be used to access or store records of departing employees, including emails. This includes the backup data managed by external IT service providers such as the Information Technology Division (ITD) of the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement.
- For more information about transitory records see the *Transitory Records Guidelines.*

3.   **Security**

Government institutions are required to establish safeguards to protect all confidential, personal, and health information contained in their records, according to *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and *The Health Information Protection Act*. Records of departing or former employees that contain confidential and personal information should be maintained in a secure environment with clearly defined access restrictions. Any transitory records containing this type of information should be securely and irreversibly destroyed or deleted in accordance with the institution's internal procedures.

4. **Records Accessibility**

   Public records containing personal or personal health information need to remain protected during times of transition, and accessible to those with appropriate authority. It is necessary to ensure that any access restrictions and permissions (e.g., passwords, encryptions, etc.) on existing records are removed, changed, or passed on to allow future access for designated staff members (e.g., manager, supervisor, project colleague, etc.). Access restrictions for electronic records can also be managed at the file/folder level, rather than on individual documents, for future usage.

5. **Senior Executive Records**

   Public records of Deputy Minsters, Presidents, Chief Executive Officers and other Executives are subject to *APRMA* and should be managed in accordance with these guidelines. However, there may be additional considerations due to the nature and confidentiality of some of these documents.

Assignment of Responsibilities

Below is a list of typical responsibilities carried out to ensure records of departing employees will be captured, maintained and accessible. Please note that the assignment of responsibilities may depend on your internal reporting structure and the allocation of duties. This list is not exhaustive. When developing your internal policy and procedures, you may need to include other activities/tasks to ensure records will be captured and managed.

Departing Employees

The following tasks should be completed by the employee prior to their departure (if they are subject to a notice period) or by an individual designated by management:

- **Consult with RIM staff, IT staff, and supervisors**

Employees should consult with the relevant individuals to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities, and any internal policies and procedures for the capture and management of their records prior to their departure.

- **Return all signed out physical records to the centralized repository**

  Employees should check their workspace to ensure that any records that have been signed out from an internal centralized records repository or off-site records storage center (e.g., the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement Records Centre) are returned prior to their departure or transferred to another employee who can ensure their return once they are no longer needed.

- **Delete/destroy transitory records and obsolete publications**

  Transitory records are not required for retention purposes and should be deleted or destroyed once they are no longer required.

- **Remove/destroy non-work related and personal documents**

  Documents that do not pertain to any aspect of government business and/or are of a personal nature should be deleted, destroyed, or removed from official records keeping systems or government devices and taken by the employee upon their departure. Examples of non-work related, or personal documents include personal resumes, correspondence not related to government business (e.g., individual participation in professional associations and volunteer work), personal photos, etc.

- **Ensure public (official) records are classified and captured appropriately**

  Before they depart, employees should ensure that records are captured in the institution's records keeping system, and physical records are transferred to a storage facility where required. If an approved schedule exists, employees should ensure that public records are classified correctly in accordance with the schedule. If any of the records have met their retention, the employee should consult their RIM staff regarding submitting a disposal request to the Archives for the eligible records.

- **Address records accessibility and security**

  All access restrictions, permissions, or password protections on electronic records should be removed, if possible, changed, or passed on to designated staff in order to ensure records are not lost due to inaccessibility. Records that need to be protected must be identified, secured and only accessible by authorized individuals.

For a quick reference checklist of typically required tasks, see Appendix A.

Executive and Management Responsibilities

When an employee departs, managers/supervisors are responsible for the following:

- Ensure departing employees understand their responsibilities and allocate time to process their records

- Ensure that records management components are included while developing and implementing off boarding policies and processes
- Facilitate consultation between the departing employee and RIM/IT staff to assure all requirements are met and responsibilities are fulfilled.
- Oversee the departing employee's activities related to the review, classification, and capture of public records in the institution's record keeping system and/or preparation of disposal requests.
- Ensure that all access restrictions, permissions, or password protections are removed, changed, or passed on to the appropriate, designated staff members.
- In cases where employees leave suddenly, managers, supervisors, etc. should ensure that the public records of that employee are not lost. In this scenario, the duties usually carried out by the employee as listed below in the "All Employees" section need to be taken on by either the manager/supervisor or other individual designated to complete this task. If records contain personal, personal health or confidential information, only individuals with the necessary security clearance can be assigned to work with the records.

RIM Staff

RIM staff at each institution should develop and establish policies, including those related to departing employees. RIM staff should also communicate and ensure proper implementation and compliance with these policies through the course of their work.

When employees depart, RIM staff are also responsible for the following:

- Provide guidance to the employee and the management on proper implementation and compliance with departing employee policies/procedures and other applicable best practices.
- Advise on the management and destruction of transitory records
- Assist the staff in activities related to records review, classification, and capture in the institution's record keeping system.
- Assist staff in the preparation of disposal requests and submit the requests to the Provincial Archives.
- Coordinate destruction of records or transfer to the Provincial Archives, once authorization from the Provincial Archivist has been received.

Resources

If there are any questions about the processes and classification of departing employee's records, contact your institution's RIM staff or the Information Management Services Unit of the Provincial Archives. Contact information for this unit can be found below.

PROVINCIAL
ARCHIVES OF
SASKATCHEWAN

Information Management Services Unit	**Useful Links**

Phone: 306-787-0734	Basic Records Management for Saskatchewan Government
Email: recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca	Electronic Records Guidelines
Website: saskarchives.com	Transitory Records Guidelines
	Guidelines for Managing Electronic Records in Shared Drives
	RIM Education Resources

Glossary of Terms

Government Institution – For the purpose of these guidelines, this means a government institution subject to *The Archives and Public Records Management Act*

Employee –For the purpose of these guidelines, an employee includes, but may not be limited to: in-scope employees, out-of-scope employees, senior executives (e.g., deputy ministers, chief executive officers, presidents, etc.), contract employees, etc.

Departing employee – An employee who is exiting from Provincial Government service, is transferred to a new business unit or institution within the Provincial Government, or is going on temporary leave (extended leave, parental leave, etc.). Departing employees can also include contractors or consultants, hired to fulfill specific purposes, who are departing due to their contract being fulfilled or terminated (records management obligations that adhere to Government of Saskatchewan requirements should be included in the contract).

Institution's records keeping system – For the purposes of these guidelines, an institution's records keeping system is the official, designated repository for the storage and management of public records for an institution.

Public Record – Also known as official records, or government records. Records or recorded information in any form made or received by government institutions in carrying out their business activities. Official government records document decision-making, set policy or procedures, require a reply or action, or reflect an institution's business activities and processes. An official government record can be the original and only copy of the record or a replacement copy that is designated as official. Only the official record must be classified, retained and disposed of as per the terms of the applicable records retention schedule.

Transitory Record – A record of temporary usefulness that is needed only for a limited period, to complete a routine task or prepare an ongoing document. For further information, please see the *Guidelines for the Management of Transitory Records.*

Appendix A

Departing Employee Checklist	
Consult with RIM staff about RIM responsibilities, policy and procedures, and any approved, applicable records schedules	☐
Consult with a manager/supervisor and IT staff to plan what needs to be done	☐
Delete/destroy or remove non-work-related records and obsolete publications	☐
Delete/destroy transitory records	☐
Transfer any public records from email accounts, external storage media, or any other devices to the designated record keeping system	☐
Organize and classify public records	☐
Provide access to restricted records to a manager, supervisor, or other designated individuals	☐
Return all physical records that have been signed out from an internal centralized records repository or off-site records storage (eg. the SaskBuilds and Procurement Records Centre)	☐
Consult with RIM staff about moving records to off-site storage or disposal (Note: Disposal requests may need to go through additional approvals before being submitted to PAS. Public (official) records can only be disposed of with an approval of the Provincial Archivist.)	☐