

## 1. Statement

The purpose of this guideline is to provide a standardized methodology for developing a records classification system for identifying, describing, organizing, classifying, managing, and disposing of the operational records of a department. The guideline also describes the acceptable format for Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS).

## 2. Guideline

The methodology described in the attached Guideline for ORCS Development is the recommended methodology for developing operational records classification systems in the Government of the Northwest Territories. The format for a records classification system described in the attached guidelines is the accepted format for a records classification system.

## 3. Supporting Documentation and Information

- a) Policy - Recorded Information Management. 6003.00.18
- b) Policy - Records Scheduling. 6003.00.24
- c) Standard - Operational Records. 6003.05.32
- d) Standard - Administrative Records. 6003.00.19
- e) Attached Guideline - ORCS Development. 6003.00.25

## 4. Implementation

This Guideline applies to all employees defined in the Public Service Act who have been assigned responsibility for developing an ORCS. It also applies to anyone who has been contracted to develop an ORCS on behalf of a GNWT department, board or agency.

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Chairman of the Informatics  
Policy Committee (IPC)

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# Guideline

6003.00.25

GNWT  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
ORCS Development

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## ORCS Development Guidelines

Prepared by

Records Management  
Corporate Services  
*Public Works and Services*



# Guideline

6003.00.25

GNWT  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
ORCS Development

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## Introduction

The purpose of the *ORCS Development Guidelines* is to make available a comprehensive set of instructions and tools for the development of Operational Records Classification Systems for Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) departments and agencies.<sup>1</sup> The *ORCS Development Guidelines* is directed primarily at Departmental Records Coordinators but will also be useful for any administrative staff carrying out records management related activities. The Guidelines describe the steps involved in creating an ORCS. It starts with the planning phase and continues through to final approval. They also look at how the ORCS document will be formatted.

### 1. What is an ORCS?

ORCS stands for “Operational Records Classification System.” In the GNWT, an ORCS is a combined records classification system and records retention schedule for the operational records of a department or agency. A records classification system is a system for identifying, organizing, and retrieving records. A retention schedule sets out a timetable for managing and disposing of records.

An ORCS is also a type of *Records Disposition Authority* (RDA). A RDA is a list of public records that indicates and authorizes how long a group of records should be kept. A RDA also indicates the final disposition, or final action, that will be taken when the records are no longer needed. In other words, a RDA is a records retention schedule.

In summary, an ORCS performs three basic functions:

- It is a classification system. Departments can use it to identify, organize, and retrieve their operational records.
- It is a retention schedule. Departments can use it to schedule the active, semi-active, and final disposition phases of the records life cycle.
- It is a records disposition authority. When reviewed and approved by the Deputy Head, the Records Manager, Public Works and Services, and the Territorial Archivist, Education, Culture and Employment, ORCS give departments the authority to dispose of records that have reached the end of their life cycle.

#### 1.1 Operational vs. Administrative Records

Every organization can sort its records into two broad categories: operational records and administrative records. Operational records are created as part of the organization’s main business or in support of its legislated mandate. In the GNWT, a department creates operational records when it provides a service, runs a program, or performs some other activity that is within its mandate. A department’s mandate is set out in legislation and policy. Operational records are described, classified, and scheduled in an ORCS.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “department” will be used in this manual to mean GNWT departments, agencies, boards, and Crown corporations.

All departments also have administrative records. Administrative records are created as a result of administrative activities, or “housekeeping” functions. Administrative activities are those tasks which are done in order to keep the department running, but which the department does not have a specific mandate to do. Administrative records also include records that are common to all government departments. Some examples of administrative activities include:

- Accounting
- Buying and keeping track of equipment
- Records management

Administrative records are described, classified, and scheduled in ARCS, the Administrative Records Classification System.

<b>Administrative Records</b>	<b>Operational Records</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housekeeping records</li> <li>▪ Used to keep the department running and provide services within the department</li> <li>▪ Common to all departments</li> <li>▪ Not related to a mandated functions</li> <li>▪ Internally directed</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Committee files</li> <li>▪ Accounting records</li> <li>▪ Budgets</li> <li>▪ Furniture inventories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Program and service related records</li> <li>▪ Used to deliver a program or service to external clients (e.g. the public or another department)</li> <li>▪ Unique to each department</li> <li>▪ Related to mandated functions</li> <li>▪ Externally directed</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Client files</li> <li>▪ Project files</li> </ul>

In some cases it may be difficult to tell if a record is administrative or operational. Some administrative records, such as committee records, may have an impact on operational functions. In other cases, operational activities may generate administrative records. This often happens when the government provides funds to individuals or organizations. The function of approving and providing the funds is usually operational, but it produces records that feed into the administrative accounting functions.

A good understanding of operational processes throughout the department is essential to developing a good ORCS.

## 1.2 Classification Systems and Retention Schedules

A **records classification system** is a way to organize records into logical classes, or groups, based on their common features. People naturally group similar records together because it makes the records easier to find later. However, people do not always organize records the same way. It is often difficult for one person to find information in



another person's filing system. Records classification systems are designed to make everyone organize their records in the same way. A classification system makes records easier to find and use.

A **records retention schedule** is a sort of timetable that outlines how long records should be kept by a department. It also identifies how the records will be disposed of. Retention schedules identify how long records should be kept to fulfill business needs, or to meet legal, financial, or audit requirements.

The purpose of a retention schedule is to reduce costs and liabilities by setting up a process that allows a department to systematically get rid of the records that do not need to be kept. If they were kept, these records would use up office space that could be put to better use. They would also make retrieval times slower by making it harder to find the information that you need. At the same time, retention schedules identify the records that departments must keep for a certain length of time, and makes sure that that these records are retained.

An ORCS combines a records classification system and a records retention schedule into a single system for operational records. It is used to both organize and schedule records. This means that every record classified by an ORCS has a retention schedule assigned to it. Not all records management systems make a direct link between classification and retention. The benefit of the ORCS system is that the retention and disposition of a record is known from the moment that the record is created and classified.

When a department uses both ARCS and ORCS, it will have a comprehensive, uniform, system that identifies, classifies, and schedules all of the department's records.

## **2. Benefits of an ORCS**

There are a number of reasons why departments should have and use ORCS to manage their records.

### **1. Better Organization of Records**

ARCS and ORCS provide the basis for the complete, consistent, and logical organization of a division or a department's records. ARCS and ORCS capture and describe all of the records that belong to a department or division. ARCS and ORCS encourage users to organize similar records in the same way every time. This makes it easier to share information and control copies.

### **2. Systematic Movement of Records through their Life Cycle**

The retention schedules in ARCS and ORCS set up a system for regularly closing out files, moving them to lower-cost storage areas, and disposing of them when they are no longer needed. It also sets up a system for separating the department's official, or master, records from copies. The retention schedules make sure that records are available when they are needed, which protects the government and the public from legal and financial risks. At the same time, the retention schedules ensure the timely disposal of records that are no longer useful. The retention schedules identify records

that have historical value to the Territory and set up a process for transferring those records to the NWT Archives. Finally, the retention schedules set up an audit trail for the destruction of records, and provide for the destruction of records in the ordinary and normal course of business.

**3. Improved Support for Management and Decision-Making**

ARCS and ORCS set up a system for better filing and retrieval of records. Records that are organized logically and are easy to find will support management activities and decision-making. As a result, departments are better able to perform their duties and meet their responsibilities. They are also better able to meet their obligations under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

**4. Reduced Costs**

As mentioned above, using ARCS and ORCS can lead to cost savings by lowering the amount of office space, storage equipment, and supplies needed to store records. It can also reduce the time spent looking for and retrieving records. This leads to a more efficient use of staff time.

**5. Support Public Policy**

The GNWT has recognized that its information is of great interest and value to the public. Both the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Archives Act* recognize the public interest in government information. Other legislation also recognizes this interest. ARCS and ORCS support public policy by making it easier to find the information that is needed to meet policy requirements.

## **Chapter 1: Getting Started**

### **1. Services Available**

You do not have to be on your own when you develop an ORCS. Services are available from a variety of sources that will assist throughout the development of an ORCS.

#### **1.1 Public Works and Services, Records Management Section**

Records Analysts in the Records Management Section of Public Works and Services have experience in developing ORCS. They can give help and advice throughout the project. The earlier in the ORCS development that the Records Management Section gets involved, the better the advice that can be given which will result in a more timely review and approval process for the ORCS. Records analysts can help develop project plans, assist with research, and provide advice on designing classification systems and identifying retention schedules. PWS offers courses in developing classification systems and retention schedules. PWS also issues Records Management Bulletins and Records Management Tips that discuss different aspects of ORCS design.

The Records Management Section must be notified when you decide to develop an ORCS.

#### **1.2 Education Culture and Employment, NWT Archives**

Archivists at the NWT Archives can also give assistance and technical advice. The earlier in the ORCS development that the NWT Archives gets involved, the easier it will be for them to identify final disposition actions.

The NWT Archives must be notified when you decide to develop an ORCS.

#### **1.3 Justice, Legal Services**

Departments must request advice and/or a legal review of the ORCS if the records meet one or more of the following:

- The records have been required in a legal matter in the past.
- The records relate to sensitive social policy matters and the welfare of individual members of the public.
- The records relate to environmental or land use matters.
- The records relate to aboriginal matters.
- The records relate to agreements or contractual obligations of the government.

The purpose of the legal review is to identify risks and concerns to the government, limitations on actions, and the probability that records will be required to defend the government in the event of litigation.

*It is the responsibility of the department that is preparing the ORCS to identify legal issues within the ORCS.*

## 1.4 Financial Management Board Secretariat – Audit Bureau

Departments must request advice and/or an audit review of the ORCS if the records meet one or more of the following:

- The records relate to financial transactions, grants, contributions, loans, and similar financial matters.
- The records relate to agreements or contractual obligations of the government.

The purpose of the audit review is to ensure that appropriate records are available for use during financial and program audits.

*It is the responsibility of the department that is preparing the ORCS to identify financial or audit issues within the ORCS.*

## 1.5 Other GNWT Departments

In some cases, it may be beneficial to have the draft ORCS reviewed by other program areas of the GNWT. As an example, an ORCS that includes employee issues may be reviewed by Human Resources, or, an ORCS that includes environmental issues may be reviewed by Environment and Natural Resources.

## 2. Scope of the ORCS

An ORCS can be used to classify and schedule the records of an entire department, or a division or region within the department, or of a work unit or program within a division. Before you begin to develop an ORCS, you need to decide if it will cover all or part of the department's records. If the department is going to have several different ORCS, then they should be designed so that they can work together as a single system and do not overlap. Employees will find the system easier to use if all of the department's ORCS work the same way and if records cannot be classified into many different ORCS.

## 3. Planning

You will find it useful to develop a project plan before you begin to develop an ORCS. Assistance is available from the Records Management Section of Public Works and Services. The purpose of the plan is to organize the work and to identify the resources that will be required to develop the ORCS. A good plan will let management and employees know what they should expect from the ORCS development project.

A project plan usually contains the following components:

- **Mission statement or purpose statement** – A short paragraph that explains the purpose of the project.
- **Goals and Objectives** – Goals are general statements about what the project should achieve. Objectives describe the steps needed to reach a goal. Objectives also identify the criteria that will be used to show that the goal has been reached.

- **Deliverables** – A list of the products that the project will produce. In this case, one or more ORCS.
- **Scope** – The scope sets the limits for the project. The scope of an ORCS development project can be as broad as developing an ORCS for every division and regional office in the department, or as narrow as developing an ORCS for a specific work group or program.
- **Tasks** – A detailed list of the tasks that need to be done in order to finish the project. The tasks should be listed in the order in which they are to be done. The tasks can also be shown as a “Work Breakdown Structure,” which is a sort of tree diagram that shows the tasks that must be done in order to complete each part of the project.
- **Timeline** – A set of dates or deadlines for starting and finishing each task. Timelines can be shown as a simple list of dates that is set against each task, or can be set up in something as complicated as a Gantt or PERT chart.
- **Resources** – A list of the people, equipment, supplies, and funds needed to complete the project.

#### 4. Research

Before developing an ORCS, you must research the mandate and structure of the department. This will give you an overview of the department, which will act as a framework on which to build all of the department’s ORCS. A good understanding of the department will make it easier for you to develop a good ORCS. The research is also useful for developing other components of the records management program. Sources for this research include the following:

- Territorial and Federal legislation
- Territorial and Federal regulations
- Rulings and directives from other regulatory bodies
- Establishment policies
- Annual reports
- Business plans
- Strategic plans
- Organization charts
- The Main Estimates and the Public Accounts

#### **Example of Information Sources**

Sources of information about the Department of Public Works and Services include:

- Legislation
  - *Archives Act*
  - *Boilers and Pressure Vessels Act*
  - *Electrical Protection Act*
  - *Financial Administration Act*
  - *Petroleum Products Tax Act*
- *Public Works Establishment Policy*
- PWS Business Plan
- The Main Estimates
- The Public Accounts
- PWS Internet
- Publications
  - *Client Needs Survey*
  - *Fire Prevention for Public Buildings*
  - *Technical Evaluations of Northern Facilities*
- Departmental Policies
  - Disposal of Improved Real Property
  - Disposal of Goods
- PWS Procedures Manual

- Policies, directives, and guidelines
- Procedures manuals
- Internet and intranet sites
- Publications and brochures that describe the department's programs
- Interviews with management and staff

Research at this stage should focus on identifying the department's mandate, roles, and responsibilities. Interviews with senior management and managers should be done throughout the department in addition to other research. The interviews should cover the following areas:

- The role that the person plays within the department.
- The role of the division within the department.
- The programs that the division offers.
- The legislation and policies that apply to the division
- Any legislation or policies that direct how the division should handle its records
- The types of records that the division produces.

Similar interviews with employees will be necessary later in the ORCS development process. Records Analysts at PWS can help design interview questionnaires. Sample interview questions are included in Appendix B.

Much of this information can be gathered by working with the NWT Archives in a macro-appraisal project. The purpose of a macro-appraisal is to look at a division or department's roles and functions, to see how programs have changed over time, and to identify archival records before they are transferred to the Archives.

## **5. Record Inventories**

Many people find it helpful to conduct a record inventory before they begin to develop an ORCS. A records inventory is a survey of a department or division's records. It is usually done during the research phase. The purpose of the records inventory is not to create a detailed file list. Instead, the inventory is used to identify and describe the different groups of records that a department has. You can use the records inventory to:

- Identify the groups of records that the department has.
- Identify how the records are created and used.
- Identify the records storage media (paper, electronic, audiotape, etc.).
- Identify how the records should be protected and retained.

You may want to create an inventory form to help you conduct the inventory and gather information. You will usually need one form for each series or grouping of records. You can find examples of inventory forms in the GNWT ARCS Manual, in the section on how to implement ARCS. Sample inventory forms are also widely available in records management textbooks and on the Internet. A detailed inventory form will capture the following information:

- Name of the Division, Section, or Work Unit

- The name of the records series, or the grouping of related records
- A description of the purpose of the records
- The date range covered by the records
- The linear measurement of the records
- A physical description of the records
- A description of the storage equipment
- Date of the inventory
- Contact name
- Source of the information
- Related series of records
- A description of how the records move around the organization
- Location of duplicates
- Current retention practices or user recommendations about retention

Inventories should be done in a systematic manner. First, identify all of the places where records are stored. Then, develop a plan for moving through the offices and storage areas in a methodical fashion. This may involve numbering and labelling filing cabinets and other storage equipment, and then proceeding from the first cabinet to the last. The inventory also includes records stored in the Records Centre and in any other off-site locations. Electronic records are more difficult to inventory, and may be most easily identified through interviews with employees.

## **6. Analysis**

This step is sometimes called a *functional analysis* or *business analysis* in records management literature. A business function is a program or major area of activity. The purpose of the analysis is to find out how the department is organized, to understand the legal environment, to identify the different functions that the department does, and to identify how the different divisions relate to one another. The analysis will help you understand the links between the department's records and its business. It will also help you make decisions about how the records should be organized, classified, and scheduled.

The analysis looks at what the department does, but ignores the department's organization chart. Business functions often go across divisional lines. This is especially true in departments that are set up with a head office and several regional offices. The head office might develop a program, but the regional offices deliver it. The regional offices report to the head office on the success or failure of the program. Although several different offices are involved in the program, they are all doing the same function.

Several different formats can be used to write up the analysis. A typical analysis will identify each of the major functions and sub-functions, and provide a short description of each function. A detailed analysis will identify individual tasks carried out under each function. A detailed analysis is useful because records are usually created at the task level.

## Example of a Functional Analysis Form

**Function Number:** 3.0

**Function Title:** Petroleum Products Provision

**Function Description**

The purpose of the petroleum products provision function is to purchase, transport, store, distribute, supply and sell refined petroleum products to residents in the Northwest Territories in a safe, economic, efficient and reliable manner

**Retention Requirements:**

Financial Administration Act: Inquiries into revolving funds must be made every 4 years.

3.1	Fuel Products Procurement
3.2	Transportation Coordination
3.3	Storage
3.4	Distribution



## Chapter 2: Developing a Classification System

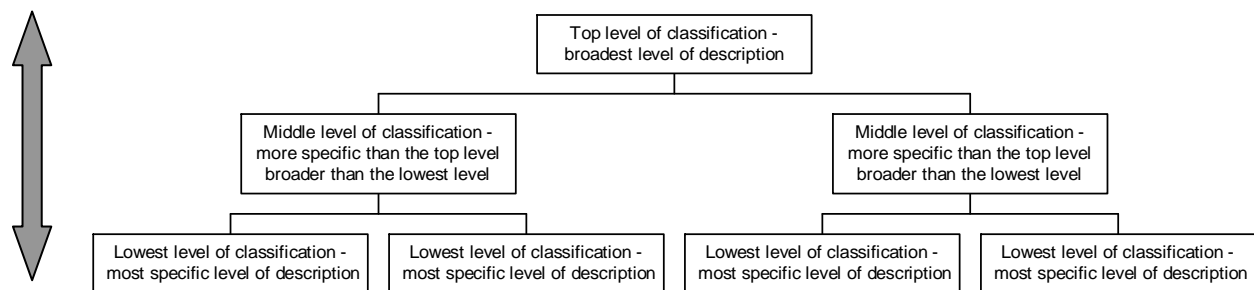
### 1. What is a Records Classification System?

A records classification system is a system for arranging records into related groups, called **classes**.<sup>2</sup> Each class deals with a subject area or business function. Records are assigned to classes through a process called **classification** or **coding**. The classes bring together records that deal with the same topic or function, so that information can be located easily. When classification systems are used to organize records, all of the records on a particular subject or function will be stored in the same location, such as a filing cabinet or computer directory. In addition to making it easier to find specific information, classification systems encourage people to browse for information.

There are many different types of records classification systems. The different systems share a number of basic characteristics:

**Controlled Number of Classes.** All classification systems control the number of classes of records. They also arrange the classes according to some logical system. The simplest method is to arrange the classes alphabetically, which is sometimes known as a dictionary arrangement. An alphabetic system works for small groups of records, but is difficult to use when there are large numbers of records or where the records cover more than one function.

Most systems use a hierarchical, or encyclopaedic, approach to developing classification systems. In a hierarchical approach, related classes are grouped together into larger classes. Each of the classes on a lower part of the hierarchy is part of the broader class above it. A tree structure, like the one shown below, is often used to graphically represent the hierarchy. Hierarchical classification systems usually arrange the classes from the most general topics or functions to the most specific.



**Controlled Vocabulary.** Classification systems use a controlled vocabulary. This means that synonyms are not used to describe the same type of record. For example, if you decide that a file on an employee will be called a personnel file, then the

<sup>2</sup> It has recently become popular to talk about information **taxonomies**, but they are essentially the same thing as a classification system.

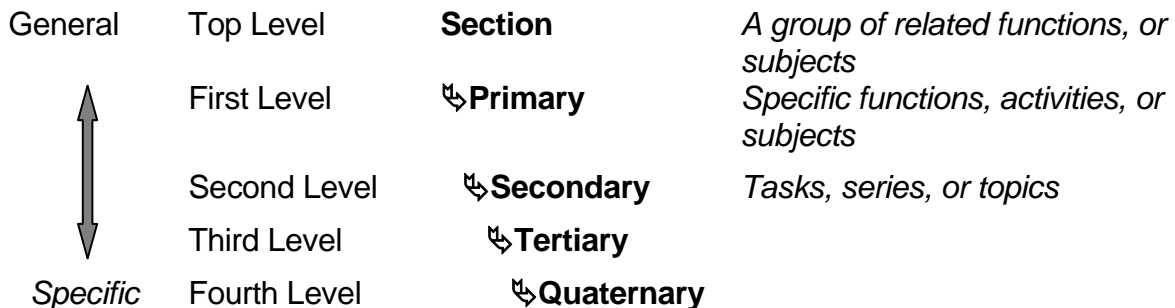
classification system will use the term, “personnel file,” and will not use synonyms like “employee file” or “human resources file.”

**Numbering System.** Another common feature of classification systems is the assignment of an alphabetic, numeric, or alphanumeric code to each class in the system. The codes are used to uniquely identify each class, and to help physically arrange the records. An alphabetic code assigns letters to the different classes. A numeric code assigns a string of numbers to the different classes. An alphanumeric code uses a combination of letters and numbers to identify each class.

In a hierarchical classification system, the numbering system will reflect the hierarchy. A long number means that you are further down in the classification hierarchy, and the topic is more specific. In ORCS, the **block-numeric** numbering system is used.

## 2. Block Numeric System

The **block-numeric system** is the most commonly used records classification system in governments across Canada. It was originally used by the Government of Canada, and was later adopted with variations by most of the provinces and territories. It is the standard for records classification systems in the GNWT. The block-numeric system is a hierarchical classification system. It is based on the idea that as one moves through the system, the description becomes more specific. The main classification levels in the block-numeric system are sections (also called blocks), primaries, and secondaries. Other levels include tertiaries and quaternaries.



### 2.1 Numbering Conventions

In the block-numeric system, each class is assigned a classification number. The numbers are assigned in **blocks**, which is how the system gets its name. Blocks, or ranges, of primary numbers are assigned to each section. Each primary is in turn assigned a block of secondary numbers. Each secondary is assigned a block of tertiary numbers, and so on. For example, the following blocks of primary numbers have been assigned to the sections in the GNWT ARCS, the Administrative Records Classification System:

<b>Block Numbers</b>	<b>Section Title</b>
1000 through 1999	Administration
2000 through 2999	Buildings and Properties
3000 through 3999	Equipment and Supplies
4000 through 4999	Finance
5000 through 5999	Human Resources
6000 through 6999	Information Systems

Each primary in a section takes a number from the range belonging to the section. For example, in the GNWT ARCS, Health and Safety is assigned the primary number 5180, from the block of numbers assigned to the Human Resources section. In the GNWT, primary numbers are four digits long.

Each primary is assigned a block of two digit secondary numbers ranging from 00 through 99. In the block-numeric system, there are two default secondaries that appear in every primary, whether they will be used or not:

- The secondary number 00 is reserved for Policies and Procedures. It exists because policies can be written on any subject.
- The secondary number 01 is reserved for General. The General secondary is needed as a holding place to put information when there is not enough volume to create a secondary and open a file on the topic.<sup>3</sup>

The secondaries 02 through 99 are used for subject and case file secondaries. Subject files are files that deal with a particular subject or topic. Case files are files that deal with a particular time-limited entity, such as a person, place, event, or project. Some jurisdictions reserve secondary numbers for subject files and case files.<sup>4</sup>

When a record is classified in the block-numeric system, it is assigned both a primary and a secondary number. If necessary, it may be assigned tertiary and quaternary numbers as well. Each part of the classification number is separated by a hyphen, e.g. 1000-00, 1000-01, 1000-02-10.

ORCS must be developed at least to the secondary level. The reason for this is that retention schedules are assigned to the secondaries.

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<sup>3</sup> In the original block-numeric classification system, each primary is initially set up with only two secondaries, 00 Policy and Procedures and 01 General. Documents are placed in the general file until three to five documents accumulate on the same subject. At that point, it is reasonable to create a new secondary and open a new file on the subject.

<sup>4</sup> Some jurisdictions reserve blocks of secondary numbers specific types of files. The idea is that information is easier to find if the same type of file is always filed in the same range of secondary numbers. British Columbia and the Yukon reserve 02 through 19 for subject files, and 20 through 99 for case files. Saskatchewan reserves 02 through 49 for subject files and 50 through 99 for case files. In Nova Scotia, 00 through 19 are reserved for common secondaries, 20 through 29 for subject files, and 30 through 99 for case files. Other than 00 and 01, the GNWT does not have reserved secondaries. However, departments can decide to set aside blocks of secondaries for particular types of files.

## 2.2 Organization of the Classification System

In the block-numeric system the first primary in a section is a **General** primary. The General primary is used to classify information that relates to all of the other primaries in the section or information that cannot be classified into a specific primary. For example, a copy of the financial management manual might be classified in the general primary of the finance section because it deals with all of the subject areas covered by the primaries in that section.

Primaries, other than the General primary, are traditionally arranged alphabetically within a section. Other arrangements may be used if they make logical sense to the users. When the primaries are assigned numbers, gaps are left between each primary number so new primaries can be inserted in alphabetical order as the system grows. Gaps of 10 digits are recommended: 0100, 0110, 0120, etc.

Similarly, secondaries other than the reserved secondaries, 00 and 01, are usually arranged alphabetically within each primary. When the secondaries are assigned numbers, gaps are left between each secondary so that new secondaries can be inserted in alphabetical order. Gaps of five to 10 digits are recommended: 0110-10, 0110-20, 0110-30, etc.

Do not assign primary and secondary numbers until you and the employees who use the records agree on the basic organization of the new classification system.

## 2.3 Classifying Records in the Block-Numeric System

To classify a record in the block-numeric system:

1. Review the record and determine its subject matter and purpose.
2. Browse through the classification system to identify the most appropriate section, primary, and secondary.
3. Locate the appropriate tertiary and/or quaternary, or create a new one, if necessary. General files are not usually divided into tertiaries.
4. Assign the full classification number (primary, secondary, tertiary) to the record.

When a record is classified, it is classified to the lowest level in the classification hierarchy. At a minimum, a record will be classified to a primary and then to a secondary. The full classification number for the record is the primary and the secondary number, separated by a hyphen. For example, a file on a department's occupational health and safety program will be classified as 5180-25. If the department divided the secondary into tertiaries and quaternaries on OHS programs and OHS plans, the classification system might look something like this:

<b>Classification Number</b>	<b>Classification Title</b>	<b>Source of Classification Number</b>
5180	Health and Safety	ARCS assigns primary number
5180-25	Occupational Health and Safety	ARCS assigns secondary
5180-25-01	<b>Plans</b>	Department assigns tertiary

5180-25-01-05  
5180-25-01-10  
5180-25-02

**Evacuation Plan**  
**Training Plan**  
**Programs**

Department assigns quaternary  
Department assigns quaternary  
Department assigns tertiary

### **3. Designing the Classification System**

At this juncture of the project, the Records Management Section of Public Works and Services must be contacted. The earlier a Records Analyst is involved in the project the better their understanding of how the classification system works and how it relates to the programs and services delivered by the department or division. This will result in the Records Analyst being able to provide a better level advice and assistance and will expedite the review and approval process.

There are three basic approaches to designing a block-numeric classification system:

- An organizational approach, which bases the structure of the classification system on the department's organizational chart.
- A subject-based approach, which bases the structure of the classification system on the subject matter of the files.
- A function-based approach, which bases the structure of the classification system on the department's business functions.

**Organizational Approach.** Although organizational approaches are very common, there are some risks associated with the approach. Classification systems that are based on the organizational chart have to be revised every time there is reorganization. Since governments reorganize frequently, this approach can become time consuming and impractical.

**Subject-Based Systems.** Subject classification systems are based on the idea that information should be organized according to the subject matter to which it relates. The subject approach assumes that the department's records cover a limited number of topics. Thus, it is possible to identify all of the topics addressed by the records, and organize them into a classification system. With subject classification systems, the activity that created the record is less important than what the record is about. The advantage of a subject-based system is that information on related topics is kept together, which makes it easier to locate information on a single topic. Most traditional and personal filing systems are based on a subject system. The disadvantage to subject-based systems is that new subjects may be added frequently, requiring frequent amendments to the system.

**Function-Based Systems.** Function classification systems are based on the idea that information should be organized according to the business functions or activities it supports. The function-based approach assumes that records are created as a product of business activities, so it is logical to organize the records according to those activities. Function-based systems tend to be more stable than other systems because the basic activities that an organization performs changes very little over time. There is some thought that the functional approach may be more appropriate for handling electronic records than a subject system. A functional classification system can reflect the workflow

used by document management systems more closely than subject systems do. This makes it easier to bring the electronic records into the records management system.

Most GNWT ORCS combine elements of all three systems.

### 3.1 Assigning Blocks of Primary Numbers to an ORCS

Each ORCS that a department creates is assigned a block or range of four-digit primary numbers. ORCS numbers can fall into the following ranges:

- 0000 through 0999
- 7000 through 9999

The range of numbers between 1000 and 6999 are reserved for ARCS.

Most departments decide how many ORCS they will develop and assign the blocks of primary numbers before they begin developing an ORCS. By identifying the ORCS and the blocks of numbers in advance, departments will have a better understanding of how the department's classification system will look when all of the ORCS are completed. The result will be a more consistent classification system.

In most cases, departments develop an ORCS for a particular division or work unit within the department. Less often, they develop ORCS for a program or function, regardless of which division or regional office they are located. The Public Works and Services ORCS scheme is based on the organizational structure of the department. Blocks of primary numbers have been assigned as follows:

<b>Primary Numbers</b>	<b>Division/Section</b>
0100-0199	Petroleum Products
0300-0399	Electrical/Mechanical Safety
0500-0599	Records Management
0600-0699	Asset Management/Regional Offices
0700-0799	Systems and Communications

A function or program arrangement for Public Works and Services might be set up as follows:

<b>Primary Numbers</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>PWS Division/Section</b>
0100-0199	Fuel Services	Petroleum Products
0300-0599	Government Support Services	Regional Offices, Asset Management, Systems and Communications, Records Management
0600-0699	Inspections and Licensing	Asset Management
0800-0899	Property and Facilities	Asset Management, Regional Offices

## Management

Notice that the functional arrangement ignores divisional lines.

ORCS should be assigned blocks of 100 or more primary numbers. Large ranges are needed because the number of primaries in each ORCS will not be known until each ORCS is written. The more functions to be covered by an ORCS, the larger the range of numbers that will be required.

### **3.2 Identifying Primaries and Secondaries**

To start developing the classification system for an ORCS, go back to the records inventory and other information that you gathered when you did the functional analysis (Chapter 1). This information will be used to identify series of records that will then be arranged into primaries and secondaries. Several approaches can be taken to develop the classification system. Two approaches are identified below. In practice, both approaches will be used, depending on the information available.

Find a tool that will help you organize and sort out the classification system. Many people use whiteboards, index cards, or large sheets of paper. Some people prefer to use a spreadsheet or make a list up in MS Word. It is even possible to build a small database to help you sort out the classification structure.

As you develop the classification system, review it a couple of times with the employees who use the records regularly. Make sure that the system being developed makes sense to them.

When the draft classification system is complete, present it to management for review and comments. The purpose of the review is to confirm that all of the records created by the department, division, or section have been identified, and that the descriptions in the scope notes are complete and accurate.

Send the completed draft classification system to Records Management, PWS, and the NWT Archives for review.

#### ***Top-Down Approach***

The top-down approach looks at the department or division as a whole, and then works down to specific series of records.

1. For a function-based system, first list the functions and programs offered by the department. This information can be found through research and interviews. For a subject-based system, list the different major subject areas that can be found in the file lists or that were described during interviews.
2. Identify the groups of records that are generated by each of the functions or programs, or identify the groups of records that relate to each subject area. These will become secondaries.

3. Prepare scope notes for each primary.
4. Organize the primaries and secondaries into alphabetical order.
5. Assign primary and secondary numbers
6. Revise into the ORCS format.

### ***Bottom-Up Approach***

The bottom-up approach reverses the first two steps in the top-down approach.

1. Review file lists and file inventories. Based on the lists, group related files together by subject or business activity. These will become secondaries.
2. Group related secondaries together according to their function or subject matter. These groupings will become primaries.
3. Prepare scope notes for the primaries.
4. Assign primary and secondary numbers.
5. Revise into the ORCS format.

### **3.3 Primaries**

Primaries are used to describe and classify a single subject or functional area. They may describe a single series of records or several related series of records. If you are having trouble deciding if a secondary belongs in one primary or in a different one, then your primaries may be too broad in scope. If a primary contains more than eight secondaries, then it may be too broad in scope or the secondaries may be too narrow in scope.

Primary titles should be short, descriptive, and unique.

Each primary must have a scope note. A scope note is a paragraph or two that describes the subject area or function that is classified by the primary. It is used to help people confirm that they have found the correct primary when they are classifying or retrieving a record. Write your scope notes so that they can be understood by someone who is new to your department and who is not familiar with your department's procedures and terminology. Readers should not be left wondering how one of the secondaries fits into the primary. Scope notes should describe:

- The function or purpose of the records that are to be classified in the primary.
- The types of records that are classified in the primary.
- Those groups of records that are included in the primary.
- Those groups of records that are excluded from the primary.



### 3.4 Secondaries

Secondaries are used to describe and classify a sub-set of the records that are classified into a primary. Usually a secondary will classify a series or sub-series of closely related files.

Make sure that you do not make your secondaries too specific. One common mistake is to name a secondary after a specific file, which means that you can only use that secondary for that one file. Later, if you need a new file on a similar topic, you will have to submit an ORCS amendment for review and approval to add a new secondary. It is better to keep your secondaries broad enough to classify more than one file, and describe individual files at the tertiary level.

Secondary that is Too Narrow	Secondary that is Flexible
Report on the ABC Project	Project Reports This secondary can accommodate both reports as tertiaries.
Report on the XYZ Project	

#### 3.4.1 Subject File Secondaries

Subject files are files that relate to one subject or topic. They are used for correspondence, reports, reference material, and other information that are most often requested by subject. A subject file secondary would be used to classify files that deal with different aspects of a subject. Subject files are easiest to retrieve if they are in alphabetical order by subject.

#### 3.4.2 Case File Secondaries

Case files are files that relate to a specific person, place, organization, client, project, program, event, action, or transaction. The file may contain information on many subjects, but they usually retrieved by the name of the case. The information contained within the case file tends to be similar both within a file and between similar case files. For example, a purchasing file will contain a limited number of types of documents, such as tenders, bids, and contracts. Each individual purchasing file will contain the same types of documents: tenders, bids, and contracts. Depending on the type of case file, it may make sense to retrieve them alphabetically or numerically by a case number.

#### 3.4.3 Other Types of Secondaries

In some cases it may make sense to separate other types of records into different secondaries. Usually the decision to create separate secondaries is based on retrieval or retention requirements for the records that distinguish them from the usual subject and case files. Some examples of records that may be separated into secondaries are as follows:

- **Case Working Papers.** These are reference materials used to support the development of the information in the case file. If these records can be distinguished from the information that belongs in the case file, it may be useful to create a separate secondary with a shorter retention period. Case working paper secondaries should only be created for working papers that do not fit the definition of working papers in the Transitory Records Schedule (RDA 1997-02).

- **Film, Tape, Disk, CD, DVD, etc.** If records are kept in an alternate storage medium – i.e. not in paper or electronically on a computer network, it may be appropriate to list these records as a separate secondary.
- **Maps, Plans, Drawings, and Charts.** Maps, plans, drawings, aerial photographs, and other large-scale materials require special storage equipment. They also require special handling during retention and disposal. In many cases it is physically impossible to file these records in a subject or a case file. In other cases, the retrieval methods for these records do not lend themselves to a subject or case file structure. As a result, it is often necessary to identify these records as a separate secondary.

#### **4. Relationship to ARCS**

In an ideal world, ARCS and ORCS would be mutually exclusive. This means that ARCS and ORCS should not classify the same records. If a department has similar or identical primaries in both ARCS and ORCS, it gives the users too many choices, and increases the chances that records will be classified incorrectly.

There are a number of guidelines to keep in mind while developing an ORCS:

1. Operational records relate directly to a department's legislated mandate. If the records can be found in more than one department, and your department has not been assigned lead responsibility for a function by the Executive Council, then the records belong in ARCS.
2. If a primary exists in ARCS, the records should be filed in ARCS and should not be included in ORCS. Cross-references can be used to direct users from the ORCS to the appropriate ARCS primary.
3. If the retention periods in ARCS do not let the department meet its obligations to its clients or its legal obligations, the records must be included in an ORCS.
4. If the department has records that are not included in the relevant ARCS Primary and cannot be worked into the ARCS system in any fashion, the records must be included in an ORCS.
5. Primary and secondary titles in ORCS should not be the same as primary or secondary titles in ARCS as this is confusing to users.
6. Where ORCS primaries overlap with ARCS primaries, a Note must be made on the ORCS page to tell users when they are to use the ORCS primary and when they are to use the ARCS primary.
7. The department's records management manual must contain a list of all ARCS primaries that have been replaced by an ORCS primary.

8. The department should be prepared to explain its decision to use ORCS instead of ARCS throughout the review and approval process.

### ***5. Relationship to other Records Disposition Authorities***

Departments often create a separate ORCS for each of their divisions. The different ORCS in use within a department should be mutually exclusive. If two divisions have records on the same topic, the division that holds the master record (the Office of Primary Responsibility) would include the records in its ORCS. The other division would be able to classify and schedule the records as copies using the first division's ORCS. If the same record is classified into more than one ORCS, the master file should be identified, and all of the copies be scheduled accordingly.

### ***6. Will it Work?***

Once the classification system has been developed, step back and review it against any file lists that may be available. Find out if all of the files on the file list can be classified into the classification system. If some files cannot be classified, find out why. It may be that something was overlooked when the classification system was put together, or it may be that the existing filing practices need to be changed. Review the classification system with the employees who will be responsible for using and maintaining the system. Do they understand the classification system? Does the terminology and the structure make sense to them? Do the scope notes make sense? Can they find a place for all of their records?

## Chapter 3: Developing the Retention Schedules

This chapter will look at how to develop retention schedules for an ORCS. A retention schedule is a timetable that shows how long a department must keep its records and the method of final disposition. In ORCS, retention schedules are assigned to each secondary in the classification system.

### 1. Requirements Analysis

The first step in developing a retention schedule is to find out how long your department needs to keep its records. This is known as a requirements analysis. The requirements analysis looks at the department's obligations and needs, including its:

- Obligations or need to create records.
- Obligations or need to keep records for particular lengths of time or in a particular format.
- Obligations or need to dispose of records in a certain way or by a certain date.

There are six requirements to consider when developing retention schedules:

- **Administrative Requirements:** This refers to how long the department needs to keep records for business or reference purposes. The length of time that the records are needed will vary from one series of records to the next. This information is usually obtained from interviews with staff and by reviewing departmental procedures.
- **Legal Requirements:** This refers to laws, regulations, and policy that affect which records a department keeps and/or how long records need to be kept. Legislation, regulations, and policies do not usually give specific retention periods. They may identify records that should be created and kept. To obtain this information, read your department's legislation, regulations, and policies, and look for references to documents, records, and retention.<sup>5</sup> *In some cases, it may be necessary to verify legal requirements with a lawyer.*
- **Financial/Audit Requirements:** This refers to requirements for keeping financial records and records that may be used in audits. Financial requirements apply to records that help to show how money was spent or how the department planned to spend it. They may also apply to some program records. The *Financial Administration Act* and the *Financial Administration Manual* are the main source of information about financial requirements. However, other legislation and standards issued by the accounting profession may also set out financial requirements. *In some cases, it may be necessary to verify financial requirements with a finance manager or the Audit Bureau.*

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<sup>5</sup> The Records Management Unit has copies of Datafile's *Records Retention: Statutes and Regulations*, and Anson-Cartwright, Hollingshead and Kennish's *Records Retention: Law and Practice*, which you may find useful.

- **Evidential Requirements:** This refers to the department's need to keep a "corporate memory" or "organizational history." Your department may need to keep some records in order to keep track of decisions or precedents. For example, a commission or tribunal may want to keep records of its decisions for a long time, because past decisions will help it decide future cases.
- **Industry Requirements:** This refers to standards that industries and professions have issued. Industry requirements are a useful guideline because they are often designed to address specific legal risks. Professional associations and national standards organizations can sometimes provide information on recordkeeping requirements.
- **Social Requirements:** This refers to the public's expectation that the government will keep certain types of records. Social requirements should be considered when determining retention periods for records about people, public safety, or long-term issues such as land use and the environment. Social requirements are difficult to determine, but are based on the length of time during which the public can be expected to have an interest in the records. The cost of preserving these records over the long term may be a factor in deciding how much importance should be placed on social requirements.

It is at this juncture of the ORCS development that advice and/or a review be requested by Legal Services or the Audit Bureau. This will result in a more timely review and approval process for the ORCS.

## **2. Developing the Retention Schedule**

### **2.1 Overview**

Retention schedules are based on the department's retention requirements and the retrieval rate of records that have been closed. **For each secondary** in the classification system:

- Determine the event that closes the record. This will usually be the fiscal year or calendar year. Other events include the replacement of a policy or the end of a project.
- Based on the retention requirements, determine how long the records need to be kept **after** they have closed (the total retention period).
- Split the total retention period into active (on site in the office) and semi-active (off site in the Records Centre) storage periods. For greater convenience and efficiency, closed records should be kept in active storage if they are consulted on a monthly basis. Records that are closed but have a high retrieval rate should not be sent to the Records Centre. Consult with the users of the records to determine how frequently records are used.

## 2.2 Format of a Retention Schedule

Retention schedules consist of one or more tables containing a description of the records that are being scheduled and different columns for each of the stages in the life cycle. In ORCS, retention schedules are assigned to every secondary in the classification system.

### *Example of a ORCS Retention Schedule*

SECONDARIES		MASTER FILE			COPY FILE		
		A	SA	FD	A	SA	FD
00	Policy and Procedures	S/O	7	AS/D	S/O	nil	D
01	General	2	nil	D	2	nil	D

Notice that the table is divided into three sections: Secondaries, Master File, and Copy File.

- **Secondaries.** The Secondary section provides the secondary number and the secondary title. This section is used to classify records.
- **Master File.** The Master File section is used for the retention period for the official record, or master record, of the department. The Master File section is divided into three columns, reflecting different stages of the records life cycle and different storage locations:
  - **A**=active (records are closed and stored in the office).
  - **SA**=semi-active (files are stored in lower cost storage, such as a records centre or off-line).
  - **FD**=final disposition.
- **Copy File.** The Copy File section is used for the retention period for any copies of the master records that may exist within the department. The Copy File retention period should not be longer than the master file retention. Copy files are not transferred to the Records Centre for storage.

Retention periods are usually given in years. They are not usually based on weeks or months, because of the work involved in tracking and closing records on these shorter periods. Likewise, a semi-active retention of less than two years should not be used because it creates a great deal of administrative work in a very short period of time.

## 2.3 Determining the Retention Trigger

A retention trigger is a date or event that closes a record. An abbreviation is often included in the retention schedules to tell users what the trigger is. In the GNWT, retention

periods and disposition dates are calculated from the closed date of the file.<sup>6</sup> The most common triggers are:

- The end of the fiscal year (March 31<sup>st</sup>). The fiscal year trigger is not usually abbreviated in the ORCS retention schedules. Instead, the Active column will just show the number of years that the records should be kept after the closed date.
- The record is replaced (superseded) by a new record, or the record is obsolete (out of date). The Superseded/Obsolete trigger is abbreviated as S/O. It is used to indicate an event-based trigger, such as a policy is updated, a project ends, a contract expires, or a case closes.

In ORCS, retention triggers are placed in the Active (A) column of the retention schedules.

***Examples of Retention Trigger Abbreviations***

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
CY	End of the Calendar Year (December 31 <sup>st</sup> of every year)
FY	End of the Fiscal Year (March 31 <sup>st</sup> of every year for departments and most agencies)
S/O	Superseded/Obsolete
S/O*	Superseded/Obsolete – the asterisk (*) indicates that there is a note that describes the event that makes the records superseded or obsolete.

**2.5 Filling Out the Retention Schedule: Active or Semi-Active**

For records that have a **date-based trigger**, the length of time that the records are kept in active storage after they have been closed is shown in the Active (A) column. The Semi-Active (SA) column shows the length of time that the records can be kept in a records centre after the active period has ended. The Active and Semi-Active columns are added together to find the total retention period after the files have closed.

For records that have an **event-based trigger** (such as S/O), the S/O abbreviation is placed in the Active column. S/O files are usually be transferred directly to semi-active storage as soon as they close. Thus, the total retention period is placed in the semi-active (SA) column.

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<sup>6</sup> The retention schedules for some human resources files are exception to this rule. Those retention schedules are calculated from an employee's birth date.

### **Examples of Retention Schedules and Their Interpretation**

<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>FD</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
2	5	D	The records close on the fiscal year, and are kept on-site for another 2 years. The records are then transferred to a records centre and kept for 5 years before they are destroyed. The total retention period after closure is seven years.
S/O	7	D	The records close when an event renders them superseded or obsolete. The records are then transferred to a records centre for 7 years before they are destroyed. The total retention period is seven years after closure.
S/O+1	6	D	The records close when an event renders them superseded or obsolete. They are then kept in active storage in the department for an additional year. At the end of that year, the records are then transferred to a records centre for 6 years before they are destroyed. The total retention period after closure is seven years.
FY+2	5	D	The records close on the fiscal year, and are kept on-site for another 2 years. The records are then transferred to a records centre for 5 years before they are destroyed. The total retention period after closure is seven years.
2	Nil	D	The records close on the fiscal year, and are kept on site for 2 years. The records have a semi-active period of 0 years, and are then destroyed. In practical terms, this means that they are destroyed at the end of the active period.

### **2.5 Final Disposition**

Final disposition refers to the action that will be taken to dispose of the records when they have completed their active and semi-active retention periods. Final disposition is done through destruction, transfer to the NWT Archives for archival appraisal and selection, or transfer to another organization. Departments occasionally designate records for full retention, meaning that the records will be retained indefinitely in the department.

- Destruction is the most common disposition. It is abbreviated in the retention schedules as “D.”
- The abbreviation, “AS/D” (Archival Selection/Destroy) is used to indicate that records should be transferred to the NWT Archives for appraisal at the end of the semi-active period. The records that have not been selected for archival preservation will be destroyed. **The NWT Archives determines which secondaries should be given a disposition of AS/D.**
- Full retention is abbreviated in the retention schedules as “FR.” It means that the records will be retained indefinitely in the department. Records will not be retained



indefinitely in the Records Centre. The GNWT's records centres are not equipped to store permanent records. Your department should put a preservation program in place for any records that have been designated as full retention. The preservation program should be described in the ORCS. If media conversion is required, the schedules can authorize the destruction of originals that have been migrated on to a preservation medium. The process of migrating the records to another medium and destroying the originals should be clearly described in the ORCS, This will allow the review and approval process to be completed in a timely manner.

Departments should avoid designating records for Full Retention as much as possible. Most departments do not have the financial resources or expertise to maintain records indefinitely. Records that are truly of historical value should be transferred to the NWT Archives, where they can be preserved, stored in climate controlled facilities, and made available to future generations.

The Northwest Territories Archives is responsible for determining which records have historical value and will be preserved in the NWT Archives. At this juncture of the project, the NWT Archives of Education Culture and Employment must be contacted. An Archivist will determine which records warrant preservation in the NWT Archives (AS/D). The remaining records can then be assigned a final disposition of "D" for destruction or "FR" full retention in the department.

***Standard Disposition Abbreviations***

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
AS/D	Archival Selection/Destroy. The records are offered to the NWT Archives. An archivist will make a selection of some, all, or none of the records. The records that are not selected will be destroyed.
D	Destroy
FR	Full retention by the department. Records remain in the custody of the department indefinitely. They cannot be destroyed, though they may be migrated to a preservation medium for preservation purposes. Preservation plans should be described in the ORCS so that the destruction of originals can be authorized.
**	Indicates that some other action will be taken at the end of the record's semi-active period. A note to the retention schedule should be included to explain the action.

**3. Will it Work?**

Once the retention schedule has been written, step back and consider how the schedule will be implemented. Do the retention triggers and retention periods reflect how the records are created, organized, and used? Can the retention triggers be applied based on the way that the files are set up or the operating procedures that the department follows? Can all of the records included in a particular secondary be triggered and scheduled in the manner described in the schedule? Does the office have enough space for the volume of records that it must keep on site?

Review the retention schedules with the employees who create and use the records. Confirm with them that the records will be kept long enough to suit their needs. If the schedule covers contracts and other records that may be required for litigation, you must have the schedule reviewed by Legal Services.

## Chapter 4: Format of an ORCS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how an ORCS document will be formatted and presented. Using a standardized format will make the system easier to understand and use. Staff will require less training, because they will only have to learn one system. The ORCS format is identical to the format used for the GNWT ARCS.

Templates are included in an appendix to this manual. Templates may also be obtained from the Records Management Unit, PWS, in MS Word.

### ***1. Review and Approval Page***

The review and approval page contains the signatures of the Records Manager, PWS, Territorial Archivist, ECE, and Deputy Head or designate of the department. The review and approval page contains the following information:

- The records disposition authority number assigned to the ORCS by the Records Management Unit, PWS.
- The name of the department, division(s), section(s), or function(s) covered by the ORCS
- The date on which the schedule was completed by the department.
- Identification of the Records Disposition Authority as an ORCS
- Identification of the Records Disposition Authority as an On-Going Schedule
- Space for signatures of the Records Manager, Territorial Archivist, and Deputy Head or designate and signing date(s).

### ***2. Introductory Material***

Introductory material is used to explain the purpose of the ORCS, its context within the department and within the government, and how it is to be used. The introductory material will include the following elements:

- **Effective Date of the Records Disposition Authority:** The Records Disposition Authority will take effect on this date. Records created after this date will be converted to the new classification system and new retention schedules. A One-Time Records Disposition Authority may be used to schedule records created before this date.
- **Purpose of the Schedule.** This element consists of one or more paragraphs that explain the purpose and benefits of the ORCS.
- **Organizational Profile.** This element consists of one or more paragraphs that explain the mandate of the department or division, and describe the programs whose records are included in the ORCS. The organizational profile is used to place the records disposition authority in its organizational context. It may include an organizational chart in addition to the text description.

- **Regulatory Environment.** The regulatory environment lists all of the legislation and regulations that affect the mandate of the department and which govern the creation of the records included in the ORCS. This information is used to place the records disposition authority in its legal context.
- **Description of the Records.** This element contains one or more paragraphs that briefly describe the records that are covered by the ORCS.
- **External Review and Advice.** This element identifies the external experts that were consulted regarding the retention and disposition schedules contained in the ORCS.
- **Other Records Disposition Authorities.** This element identifies and explains the relationship between any other records disposition authorities that schedule records that are related to the records described in the ORCS, or which are being replaced by the ORCS.
- **Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR).** The OPR is the division or work unit that is responsible and accountable for the records that are described in the ORCS. Exceptions to the OPR should be listed.
- **Definitions.** This is a brief glossary of terms that are used in the ORCS.
- **Abbreviations.** This is a list of abbreviations that are used in the ORCS.
- **Full Retention Plan.** This element will be included if the department has designated any records for full retention. It describes how the department plans to preserve the records over the long term. It should describe any plans to convert records to another medium, and any plans to destroy originals once the records have been converted.
- **How to Use the ORCS.** This is an optional element. It consists of an overview of how the schedule should be read, how to classify a record, and how to apply the retention periods. This information should supplement, but not replace, a departmental procedures manual.

### **3. Sections**

#### **3.1 Section Title Page**

If the ORCS has been divided into sections or blocks, each section will start with a section title page. The title page helps to distinguish one section from the next, and makes the ORCS easier to read. The section title page will contain the following elements:

- The title of the section
- The block of primary numbers assigned to the section (e.g. 0200 – 0299).

- A section scope note that describes those records being classified and scheduled in the section. The scope note will identify the function or purpose of the records, and should give users enough information about the section that they will be able to determine the functions or subjects covered by the primaries within the section.

***Example of a Section Scope Note:***

Section 2, Buildings and Properties, organizes records related to facilities management. It includes the acquisition, construction, alteration, and repair of buildings that are owned, leased, or rented by the GNWT. It also includes records related to the acquisition, development, maintenance, and disposal of lands. In addition, Buildings and Properties organizes records related to the installation and maintenance of utilities, fire prevention, disaster plans, accommodations and the allocation of office space.

### **3.2 Primary Listing**

The primary listing is a list of the primaries within a section or in the ORCS. It is placed on the page after the section title page. The listing is designed to make the ORCS easier to navigate. The primary listing will include the following elements:

- The title of the section
- The block of primary numbers assigned to the section
- The primary number for each primary in the section
- The primary title for each primary in the section

ORCS that are not divided into sections must include a primary listing for all of the primaries in the ORCS. It should follow the introductory material.

## **4. Primaries and Secondaries**

Each primary is given its own page in ORCS. Secondaries, with their retention schedules, are listed on the primary page in a table. The primary and secondaries page include the following elements:

- **Title of the primary.** The title must be prominently displayed at the top of the primary page. The title is bolded and displayed in a larger font than the rest of the primary page. The title is left justified on the page.
- **Primary number.** The primary number must be prominently displayed at the top of the primary page, on the same line as the title of the primary. It is displayed in the same bolded and enlarged font as the title of the primary. The primary number is right justified on the page.
- **Primary scope note.** The primary scope note consists of one or more paragraphs located immediately below the primary number and title. The primary scope note is used to describe the records that are classified in the primary. Its main purpose is to help users identify which primary and secondary they should use, so it must describe the types of records found in every secondary in the primary, other than the reserved secondaries. It should contain as much information as is necessary to make sure that

the correct records are classified in the primary. Be descriptive and use complete sentences. Abbreviations must be spelled out completely at least once in the scope note. At minimum the primary scope note must include the following elements:

- **A function or purpose statement.** This is the first sentence or the first few sentences in the scope note. It describes the purpose or business function for which the records were created. Function or purpose statements usually begin with one of the following phrases:
  - “Records related to . . .”
  - “Records documenting . . .”
  - “Records about . . .”
  - “Contains records related to . . .”
  - “This primary is used for records relating to . . .”

**Example of a Primary Scope Note:**  
Records related to the acquisition, planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of buildings that are owned by the Department. It includes operations and maintenance manuals, floor plans, copies of related contracts and leases, major renovations and expansion projects, fire prevention and mechanical systems, minor repairs, damage to buildings, reports, statistics and building disposal records. It also includes client charges, building occupancy charges, janitorial services, and copies of related contracts.

- **Includes and used for statements.** Includes statements and used for statements provide additional information about the function or subject of the records classified in the primary. Includes statements usually begin with one of the following phrases:
  - “It includes . . .”
  - “It also includes . . .”

Used for statements usually begin with one of the following phrases:

- “It is used for . . .”
- “It is used to . . .”
- “It is also used for . . .”

- **Examples.** Examples identify particular types of documents that are classified in the primary, such as forms, reports, and applications. Examples may also be used to identify particular media that are classified in the primary. Identify forms by the title and form number. Examples statements usually begin with one of the following phrases:
  - “Examples of records include . . .”
  - “Examples: . . .”
- **Excludes statements.** Excludes statements may be used to explain what kind of records do not belong in the primary. They should only be used if stating that a primary does not include something helps to explain what it does include.

- **Cross-references.** Cross-references are used to direct users from one classification to another, either within the same ORCS, to another ORCS, or to ARCS. They are used where similarities between primaries may cause users to misclassify records.

Cross reference statements follow the format: “For <subject or type of record>, see Primary <primary number>.” Each cross-reference must be placed on a new line. Cross-references must be distinguishable from the scope note by using a bolded or italicized font.

- **Notes.** Procedural notes may be used to provide additional information on how records are to be classified and managed.
- **Secondaries table.** Secondaries are set out in a table that is located below the scope notes and cross-references. The table must have the following columns:
  - **Secondary number column.** This is the first column from the left, and is used for the secondary number.
  - **Secondary title column.** This is the second column from the left, and is used for the secondary title. Keep secondary titles short but descriptive. Avoid using abbreviations.
  - **Master file retention schedule.** The master file retention schedule consists of three columns:
    - Active (A). This column is used to show the retention trigger and/or the active storage period.
    - Semi-Active (SA). This column is used to show the length of the semi-active/inactive period.
    - Final Disposition (FD). This column is used for the abbreviation of the final disposition of the records.
  - **Copy file retention schedule.** The copy file retention schedule consists of three columns.
    - Active (A). This column is used to show the retention trigger and/or the active storage period.
    - Semi-Active (SA). This column is used to show the length of the semi-active/inactive period.
    - Final Disposition (FD). This column is used for the abbreviation of the final disposition of the records.

### Example of a Secondary Table

Secondary Classification Information		Secondary Retention Schedules					
SECONDARIES		MASTER FILE			COPY FILE		
		A	SA	FD	A	SA	FD
00	Policy and Procedures	S/O	7	AS/D	S/O	nil	D
01	General	2	nil	D	2	nil	D
10	Project Files	S/O	7	D	3	nil	D
15	Annual Project Reports	2	5	AS/D	2	nil	D

- **Retention and disposition notes.** These are notes used to provide additional information about the retention trigger or the final disposition. They are placed below the secondaries table, and are usually in a smaller font.

**Example of a Retention and Disposition Note:**

SO\* -- retain on site until the project is completed and the project report has been approved.

SO\*\* -- retain on site until license is cancelled.

## 5. Appendices

Appendices are not a required part of an ORCS, but may be included to provide additional information that will assist users in using the schedule. Suggested appendices include:

- **Index to the ORCS.** An index is designed to help users classify their records. The index should contain keywords taken from the ORCS. It may also contain synonyms and related terms that may be used to look up a classification.
- **Overview of electronic information systems.** This appendix would be used to describe information systems that generate records or reports that are scheduled in the ORCS. Examples of information systems are the PeopleSoft system used for human resources management and the FIS system used to manage government finances. The overview should include the following:
  - Name of the department responsible for the system
  - Name of the system
  - Purpose of the system
  - Summary of the content of the system
  - A description of how information is input, processed, and output from the system
  - A description of how the system is maintained



- A list of the related classifications in the ORCS
- **Secondary scope notes.** These are scope notes that are similar in format to a primary scope note, but which are used to provide detailed information on how different secondaries are used.
- **Vital/essential records plan.** This is an overview of how the department plans to identify and preserve its vital records.

## **6. Headers and Footers**

ORCS are formatted with footers. The footer includes the following elements:

- **Abbreviations.** The abbreviations include all abbreviations found on a primary page, including abbreviations in the column headings in the retention schedules, abbreviations for disposition triggers, and abbreviations for final dispositions.
- The title of the ORCS
- The records disposition authority number
- The section title and the block of primary numbers assigned to the section
- The date of the document
- The page number

ORCS are not usually formatted with headers. However, if a department chooses to use headers, the following elements can be included:

- Name of the department
- Name of the division, if applicable
- Document status (e.g. Draft, Approved)
- Version number

## **Chapter 5: The Approval Process**

The purpose of this Chapter is to outline the process on how to submit an ORCS for final review and approval. A process flowchart is included at the end of this chapter.

The following checklist will now be completed:

- The ORCS is complete and is in the format identified in Chapter 4;
- The ORCS has been reviewed and agreed to by the department;
- The records classification and retention has been reviewed by a Records Analyst in the Records Management Section of PWS;
- Legal, audit or other reviews have been completed;
- The NWT Archives has identified the records that they want to collect through final disposition; and
- The director or regional superintendent has signed a letter indicating that he or she wishes to submit the ORCS for approval.

### **1. Submitting the Approval Package**

The approval package will first be submitted for review and approval by the Records Manager, PWS, then the Territorial Archivist, ECE, and finally, the Deputy Head or designate for your department.

The following identifies each of the program areas and what function(s) they will be performing through the review and approval process.

#### **1.1 Records Manager, Public Works and Services**

The Records Manager, PWS will review the approval package to ensure that the retention periods are appropriate for the needs of the department and of the GNWT. By signing the cover sheet the Records Manager is also recommending to the Deputy Head or Designate that the ORCS be approved.

#### **1.2 Territorial Archivist, Education, Culture and Employment**

The Territorial Archivist, ECE will review the approval package to approve the final disposition actions identified in the ORCS. The Territorial Archivist has final disposition approval authority assigned to the position through the Archives Act.

#### **1.3 Deputy Head or Designate of Department**

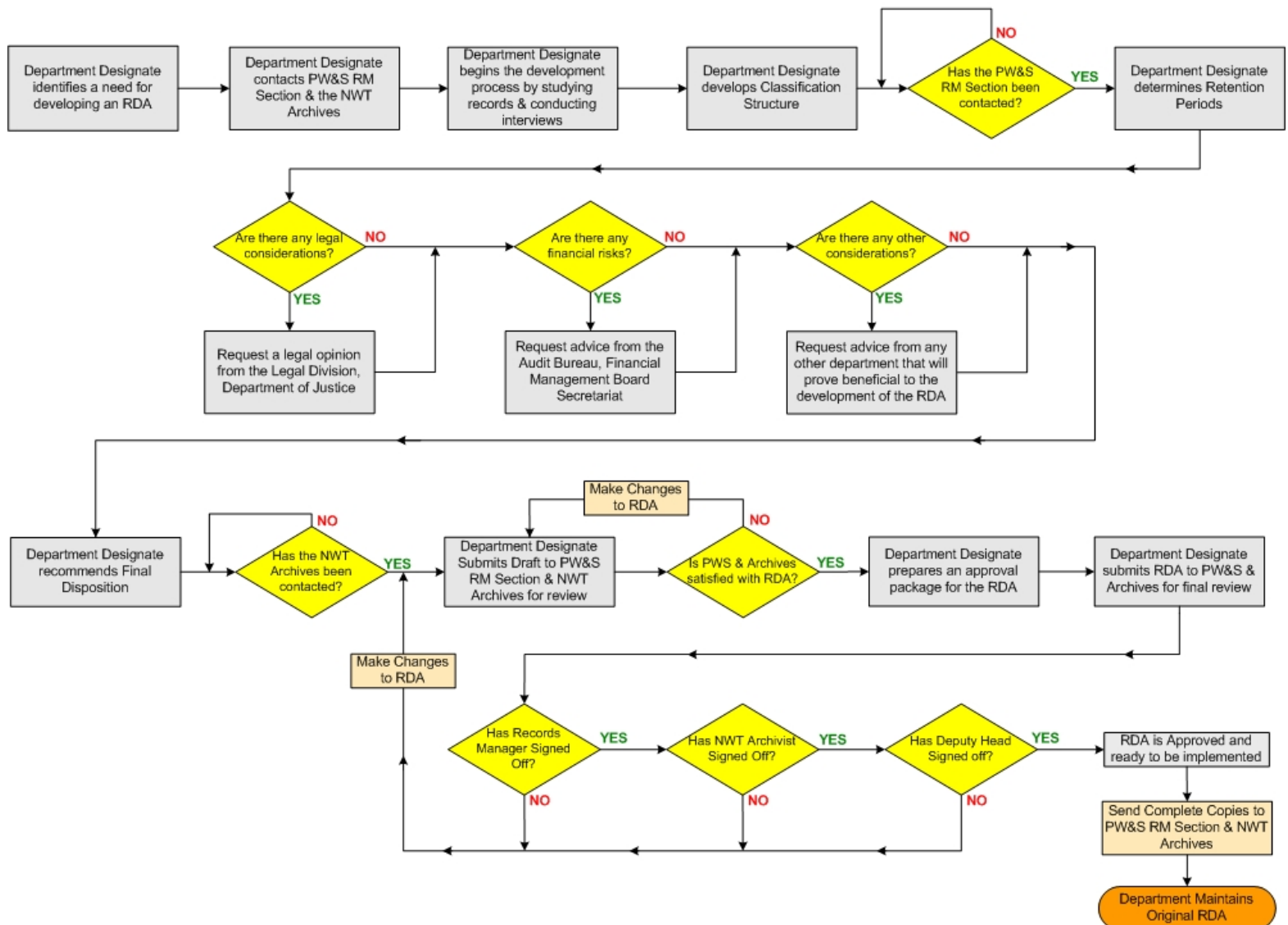
Accountability for the management of the department's information has been assigned to the Deputy Head of the department through the Recorded Information Management Policy. The Deputy Head or Designate is approving the ORCS for use in the department.

## 2. ORCS Approval

Your ORCS is approved for implementation and ongoing use when the signatures have been applied by the Records Manager, PWS, Territorial Archivist, ECE, and the Deputy Head or designate of your department.

Once the Deputy Head or designate from your department has signed the ORCS. Forward one complete copy of the approval package (including signature page) to the Records Management Section of PWS and the NWT Archives of ECE. This will serve as notice to both the Records Management Section and the NWT Archives that the ORCS is complete, approved, and the classification, retention and disposition are ready for implementation within your department.

### ORCS Approval Process



## **Chapter 6: Amendments**

The purpose of this Chapter is to outline the procedure on how to submit an amendment for review and approval. The process of submitting an ORCS amendment is essentially the same as the process used to approve the original ORCS. However, the review and approval process for an amendment will focus its attention on the portions of the ORCS that have changed.

The following checklist will now be completed:

- The ORCS amendments are complete and in the format identified in Chapter 4;
- The ORCS amendments have been reviewed and agreed to by the department;
- The Summary of Changes table<sup>7</sup> has been completed;
- The amendments to records classification and retention have been reviewed by a Records Analyst in the Records Management Section of PWS;
- Legal, audit, or other external reviews have been completed;
- The NWT Archives has identified the records that they want to collect through final disposition; and
- The director or regional superintendent has signed a letter indicating that he or she wishes to submit the ORCS amendments for approval.

### **1. Submitting the ORCS Amendment Package**

The amendment submission must include the entire ORCS, not just the primaries that have been changed, added, or removed.

The approval package will first be submitted for review and approval by the Records Manager, PWS, then the Territorial Archivist, ECE, and finally, the Deputy Head or designate for your department.

The following identifies each of the program areas and what function(s) they will be performing through the review and approval process.

#### **1.1 Records Manager, Public Works and Services**

The Records Manager, PWS will review the approval package to ensure that the retention periods are appropriate for the needs of the department and of the GNWT. By signing the cover sheet the Records Manager is also recommending to the Deputy Head or Designate that the ORCS amendment be approved.

#### **1.2 Territorial Archivist, Education, Culture and Employment**

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<sup>7</sup> Summary of Changes table is located in Appendix A

The Territorial Archivist, ECE will review the approval package to approve the final disposition actions identified in the ORCS. The Territorial Archivist has final disposition approval authority assigned to the position through the Archives Act.

### **1.3 Deputy Head or Designate of Department**

Accountability for the management of the department's information has been assigned to the Deputy Head of the department through the Recorded Information Management Policy. The Deputy Head or Designate is approving the ORCS amendment for use in the department.

## **2. ORCS Amendment Approval**

Your ORCS amendments are approved for implementation and ongoing use when the signatures have been applied by the Records Manager, PWS, Territorial Archivist, ECE, and the Deputy Head or designate of your department.

Once the Deputy Head or designate from your department has signed the ORCS amendments, forward one complete copy of the approval package (including signature page) to the Records Management Section of PWS and the NWT Archives of ECE. This will serve as notice to both the Records Management Section and the NWT Archives that the ORCS amendments are complete, approved, and the classification, retention and disposition are ready for implementation within your department.

## Chapter 7: Cancelling Schedules

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the procedure for cancelling or rescinding an ORCS. An ORCS may be cancelled for several reasons:

- The ORCS no longer meets the requirements of the department and cannot be revised to meet the department's needs.
- The ORCS has been replaced by a new ORCS.
- The records identified in the ORCS have been transferred to another government body or non-government body. Note that, with the exception of transfers of records to Nunavut, the Territorial Archivist must approval all transfers of records to people or organizations that are not part of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

### 1. *The Cancellation Process*

The Department identifies an ORCS that should be cancelled or rescinded for one of the reasons listed above.

The Deputy Head or designate writes a letter to the Territorial Archivist advising that the ORCS should be rescinded. This letter should be copied to the department's Records Coordinator and the Records Manager, PWS.

However, if the ORCS is to be rescinded because the records are being transferred to a non-government body, the Territorial Archivist must approve the transfer. The Territorial Archivist will respond in writing to the deputy head's request. The response will also be copied to the Records Manager, PWS.

#### 1.1 Effect of Rescinding a Records Disposition Authority

In the majority of cases, a rescinded RDA may be used to schedule and dispose of records that were already scheduled by that RDA **before** the date on which it was rescinded. Records that were not previously classified or were created after the date on which the ORCS was rescinded **may not** be scheduled using the rescinded ORCS. In those cases, the records are unscheduled and must be classified to a new ORCS or identified in a One-Time Records Schedule.

## Chapter 8: Implementation

ORCS combines a records classification system with a records retention schedule. Therefore, the retention schedules can only be properly implemented if the classification system has also been implemented. The following chapter provides an overview of the implementation process.

### 1. Senior Management Support

Like any project, ORCS implementation requires the support of senior management. Management support is necessary to make sure that the project has enough resources, in terms of people and equipment, to be completed successfully. In addition, employees will be more likely to support a project that has the support of management and which management has described as a priority.

### 2. Implementation Plan

The second essential ingredient to implementing ORCS is a good implementation plan. An implementation plan sets out the goals of the project, the approach that will be taken, and a timeline for when different tasks will be completed. It also assigns roles and tasks, explains how various tasks will be done, and estimates how much the project will cost. An implementation plan helps you control the work that you and others are doing and measure your success.

An implementation plan is a written document, which usually consists of the following elements:

- **Mission statement or purpose statement** – A short paragraph that explains the purpose of the project.
- **Goals and Objectives** – Goals are general statements about what the project should achieve. Objectives describe the steps needed to reach a goal. Objectives also identify the criteria that will be used to show that the goal has been reached.
- **Deliverables** – A list of the products that the project will produce. In this case, one or more ORCS.
- **Scope** – The scope sets the limits for the project. The scope of an ORCS development project can be as broad as developing an ORCS for every division and regional office in the department, or as narrow as developing an ORCS for a specific work group or program.
- **Tasks** – A detailed list of the tasks that need to be done in order to finish the project. The tasks should be listed in the order in which they are to be done. The tasks can also be shown as a “Work Breakdown Structure,” which is a sort of tree diagram that shows the tasks that must be done in order to complete each part of the project.

- **Timeline** – A set of dates or deadlines for starting and finishing each task. Timelines can be shown as a simple list of dates that is set against each task, or can be set up in something as complicated as a Gantt or PERT chart.
- **Resources** – A list of the people, equipment, supplies, and funds needed to complete the project.

An implementation plan should be as detailed as is necessary to get the job done. Records Management, Public Works and Services, can provide assistance in developing the implementation plan.

### **3. Issues to Consider**

A number of issues will influence the department's decisions on how to implement the ORCS. These issues should be addressed before the implementation plan is developed because they will affect how the implementation is done. The same issues also affect the implementation of ARCS throughout the department.

#### **3.1 Configuration**

Configuration refers to the overall structure of the department's records management program. There are four different ways to organize a departmental records management program. These four models are rooted in paper-based systems, but have parallels in electronic systems.

- **Centralized control with a centralized location.** In this model, the department assigns someone with the responsibility for maintaining all of the department's records. There is usually a central listing of all of the department's records, regardless of which division created them. A majority of the department's records will be physically located in one filing area, and the records management employees control the movement of files through a charge-in, charge-out system. This model produces a high degree of consistency in filing practices. It also does a good job of enforcing access restrictions. The drawback is that records are not conveniently located near most employees' work areas. Consequently, some employees resist having their records included in the central filing system. In addition, regional offices are often missed by the central system.
- **Centralized control with decentralized location.** This model is often seen as having the best of both worlds. A person is assigned responsibility for overseeing the management of all of the department's records, but the records are dispersed throughout the department. Centralized control ensures that records are managed consistently throughout the department, while the decentralized location allows for the storage of records within individual work units. It allows for the integration of regional offices into the department-wide records management system. This system places more filing responsibilities on operational staff.
- **Decentralized control with a centralized location.** In this model, there is a central location for storing records for the entire department, and all employees are



responsible for maintaining the system. This model is frequently a recipe for chaos. It requires a high degree of coordination between the different units that use the central filing area.

- **Decentralized control with a decentralized location.** In this model, each work unit maintains its own files, in its own areas. This can be very effective within a work unit, but it encourages inconsistency and duplication across the department.

Most effective records management programs follow a centralized control approach. They will choose a centralized or decentralized location depending on which system best meets their needs. In some cases, they may use a combination of central and decentralized locations. Issues to consider when choosing the model include:

- The number of dedicated staff.
- The amount of training and experience that the employees have.
- The physical and geographic layout of the department.
- The media used by the department.
- The existing filing equipment.
- Access restrictions.
- The business, service, and operating environment of the department
- The budget.
- The level of authority assigned to staff.

### **3.2 Records Management Procedures**

Procedures should be in place before ORCS is implemented because they will guide the implementation. If the department does not have any procedures in place, then the first stage in the implementation plan may be to develop procedures. Procedures will be needed covering the following areas:

- Creating records and opening files
- Logging and tracking records
- On- and off-site storage of records
- Closing files
- Applying retention and disposition

### **3.3 Authority and Responsibility**

The department should identify those people who will have primary responsibility for implementing and maintaining ORCS and the filing system. In a centralized system with centralized control, these will be the dedicated records management staff. With

decentralized locations, these may be operational staff or support staff that are assigned the task of maintaining the system within their work unit.

Responsibility and accountability is also assigned at the management and senior management levels. Management is responsible for ensuring that complete and accurate records are created for the programs that they direct. They are also responsible for ensuring that employees are following ARCS and ORCS, and implementing records management procedures.

### **3.4 Training**

Employee training requirements should be determined before the system is implemented. Management and end-users will have different training requirements than those employees who have records management responsibilities. Some employees may have taken training in the past, or have prior experience with ORCS. These employees should be identified. Training is a part of any implementation plan, but can only be included in the plan if the training needs are known. Introductory courses are available from the Records Management Unit of Public Works and Services. The department should also provide instruction on department-specific procedures.

### **3.5 Implementation Strategy**

The implementation strategy answers the following questions:

1. Where should the project begin? Should the ORCS be piloted in one division or unit, and then implement it throughout the department, or implemented throughout the division or department from the start?
2. Which tasks need to be completed first? What is the order in which the tasks should be completed? Which tasks depend on other tasks?
3. How much time is available to complete the project? Can all of the tasks be accomplished within the time frame? Do we have enough resources to complete the project within the time frame?
4. Have management and staff “bought in” to the project? Will they be supportive? Are some units more supportive than others are?
5. Is it necessary to convert an old filing system to the new ORCS? Is there a cut-off date for the system? When a cut-off date is set, all of the records created after that date will be converted to the new system, while the records created before that date will either be maintained in the older system, or handled through a separate clean-up project. Will all of the records be converted all at once, or will the department run parallel systems for a period?
6. Are there other opportunities that may be created by the project, such as setting standards within the department?

The answers to these questions will help a records coordinator organize the project and estimate how long it will take.

### **3.6 Approvals and Authorization**

Before writing the implementation plan, a records coordinator should identify the person in the organization who has the authority to approve the plan. A plan that must be approved by the Deputy Minister may have a very different focus than a plan that is approved at a director or managerial level. The records coordinator should also identify how much authority and autonomy he or she will need in order to implement the plan. The project will not be successful if the records coordinator does not have enough authority to make necessary decisions or delegate tasks to other people.

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## Appendix A: ORCS Templates

The following templates are available electronically from Records Management, Public Works and Services.

- Cover Sheet
- Summary of Changes<sup>8</sup>
- Introductory Material
- Section Title Page
- Primary Listing
- Primaries and Secondaries

Note: Places where departments should insert their own text are indicated by text in brackets: e.g. <insert text here>.

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<sup>8</sup> Summary of Changes template is only used to describe what has been added or changed when submitting an ORCS amendment for review and approval.

**RECORDS DISPOSITION AUTHORITY**

**<RDA Number>**

***<Department>, <Division or Program>*  
OPERATIONAL RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM  
ON-GOING SCHEDULE**

This records disposition authority was prepared by the <name of department> in <mmmm dd, yyyy>.

This records disposition authority applies to records created after <mmmm dd, yyyy>.

1. The Records Manager of Public Works and Services has reviewed the ORCS and recommends approval by the Deputy Head or designate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Records Manager, \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Public Works and Services

2. The Territorial Archivist of Education, Culture and Employment approves the final disposition actions identified in this ORCS.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Territorial Archivist, \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Education, Culture and Employment

3. RDA <RDA #> is approved for use, by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Head or Designate \_\_\_\_\_ Date



**GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
RECORDS DISPOSITION AUTHORITY <RDA Number>**

**<Department>  
<Division or Program>**

**ON-GOING SCHEDULE**

***Effective Date of the Records Disposition Authority:***

<MMMM DD, YYYY>

**Purpose of Records Disposition Authority <RDA NUMBER>**

This records disposition authority is an integrated records classification system and records retention schedule for <name of department, division/program>. It follows the Operational Records Classification System (ORCS) standard format. As a classification system, ORCS is used to identify operational records, place them into logical groups, and provide a system for physical arrangement. A records classification system is designed to improve records retrieval and creation. It does this by standardizing the way that records are created, named, and organized by government employees. As a records retention schedule, ORCS assigns a timetable to the life cycle of all of the records described in the classification system. The retention schedules provide for the systematic and timely transfer of records to lower cost storage in a records centre. The retention schedule also provides for regular and systematic disposal of records through transfer to the Northwest Territories Archives, destruction, or another process.

A records management program supports the delivery of the Department's programs and helps to protect both the interests of the public and of the GNWT. ORCS supports the Department's records management program by providing a mechanism for identifying, controlling, and tracking the department's records, and thereby reducing retrieval times. It helps to reduce duplication by identifying the department's master record and by providing a mechanism for disposing of copies in a timely fashion. It supports the Department's mandate by ensuring that records can be located and retrieved when required. ORCS also helps the Department meet its responsibilities under the *Archives Act*, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Financial Administration Act*, and other legislation.

**Organizational Profile**

The <department/division> was established in <date>. It reports to the Deputy Minister. Previously the <division, program> existed as part of <name of old department>. The goals of the <department/division/program> are to <insert goals>. These goals are fulfilled through the delivery of various programs and services, including <list programs/services>. Service delivery is provided in Headquarters (<name of community, e.g. Yellowknife>) by <name of division> and in the regions by <name(s) of regional office(s) or division(s)>.



<Insert organizational chart for department/division>

### **Regulatory Environment**

The following legislation and regulations govern the mandate of the <name of department> and the delivery of programs and services by the department, or otherwise affect the management of records by the Department.

- <list legislation>
- <list regulations associated with the legislation, if applicable.>

The following policies affect the mandate of the department, the delivery programs and services, and the management of records.

- <list policies>

The following standards and guidelines affect the management of records described in this ORCS.

- <list standards and guidelines, e.g. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles>

### **Description of records**

This ORCS describes and schedules records relating to <name of programs, functions or divisions>. It includes records regarding <brief description that points to the different sections and/or primaries>. This ORCS applies to records in all media, as defined by the *Archives Act*.

### **External Review and Advice**

While developing this ORCS, the department identified the requirement to consult with outside experts regarding the retention and disposition of the records. The following experts were asked to review or provide advice regarding this ORCS:

- <name of expert, position title, department or organization>. <Provide a summary of the reason why the expert was consulted.>
- <name of expert, position title, department or organization>. <Provide a summary of the reason why the expert was consulted.>

### **Other records disposition authorities**

The department has the following approved records disposition authorities:

- <list schedules by RDA number, department, and division.>

The following records disposition authorities are repealed by the approval of this ORCS:

- <list schedules by RDA number, department, and division. Indicate if the records created under the old RDA will continue to be scheduled under the old authority, if they will be scheduled under the new ORCS, or if they will be scheduled using a One-Time Records Disposition Authority.>

### **Office of Primary Responsibility**

The Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for this Records Disposition Authority is <name of division/section>.

### **Definitions**

#### **Case File**

A file containing material relating to a specific action, event, person, project, location, etc., and which is filed by that name, project, location, etc. All case files in a particular series usually contain the same type of record material.

#### **Copy File**

A record that is a copy of and is maintained in addition to the master file. A copy file is kept for reference purposes and is not used or relied upon as the department's official record of its actions, business transactions, decisions, policies, and approvals.

#### **Master File**

A record that is created or received, maintained, used, and relied upon as the department's official record. A master file provides evidence of the department's actions, business transactions, decisions, policies, and approvals.

#### **Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR)**

The program unit within a department that has primary responsibility for a category of records or holds the master copy of any records series. The OPR maintains the official master copy of the records in order to satisfy operational, financial, legal, audit, and other requirements. All other copies are considered duplicates and have a shorter retention period.

#### **Record**

Any correspondence, memorandum, book, plan, map, drawing, diagram, pictorial or graphic work, photograph, film, microfilm, sound recording, video tape, machine-readable record, manuscript, inventory, pamphlet, periodical, photographic slide, micrographic, electronic data printout, and any other documentary material, regardless of its physical form or characteristics, held by or under the control of a government body. (*Archives Act*, R.S.N.W.T. 1988, c. A-6, s.1, S.N.W.T 1999, c. 21, s.2(s)).

### **Subject File**

The collection of record material on a specific subject placed together, usually in date order, within a single file folder.

### **Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this ORCS:

<b>A</b>	Active Record	The record is required by the department or division on a regular basis. Because active records are used frequently, they should be kept in the office where they were created.
<b>AS/D</b>	Archival Selection/Destroy	The record will be transferred to the Northwest Territories Archives for selection and appraisal. Those records not selected for archival preservation will be destroyed.
<b>D</b>	Destroy	The record will be destroyed in a manner that will prevent it from being reconstructed.
<b>FD</b>	Final Disposition	The final action taken with regard to a group of records after their semi-active phase has ended.
<b>FR</b>	Full Retention	These records must be retained permanently by the department. The Northwest Territories Archives may also identify a copy of these records for archival preservation.
<b>Nil</b>	Zero Years	The record will not be retained for any length of time during this phase in the life cycle, and proceeds directly to the next phase in its life cycle.
<b>S/O</b>	Superseded or Obsolete	Records for which no active retention period can be assigned because their retention is dependent upon the occurrence of some event.
<b>SA</b>	Semi-Active Record	A record that is no longer required for constant referral in the course of daily business, but which is still of some use to the department. The record may be required for occasional consultation and may be retained because of administrative or legal requirements.

### **Full Retention Plan**

The following secondaries have been designated for full retention by the department:

- <list secondaries. Give the primary number, secondary number, and secondary title.>

At the end of the semi-active period, the department will <describe how the department plans to maintain the records over time, including any plans to convert the records to another medium, such as microfilm, and any plans to destroy originals once they have been converted>.

## HOW TO USE ORCS <RDA number>

### ***Purpose and Scope***

This Operational Records Classification System (ORCS) is a block numeric classification system and records retention schedule for <name of department/division>. ORCS describes and schedules operational records, which are those records that are created or collected in support of the Department's mandated programs, and services. Operational records are contrasted with Administrative records, which are records that support common administrative or "housekeeping" functions, such as finance, human resources, information management, and building and equipment maintenance. Administrative records are classified and scheduled in the Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS). Together ARCS and ORCS provide a comprehensive description, classification system, and retention schedule for all of the records belonging to the Department.

### ***ORCS as a Classification System***

Classification systems are systems for organizing objects, concepts, or records. ORCS is a system for organizing records. ORCS follows the principle that information is classified from the general to the specific. As one moves down through the classification hierarchy, each level become more specific and definitive. This hierarchical structure creates a quick and easy way to access and retrieve information. It has three levels of records classification: sections, primaries, and secondaries. Departments may create lower classification levels, known as tertiaries and quaternaries, but these levels are not identified in the ORCS.

### ***Sections***

This ORCS is divided into <insert number of sections> sections. Sections classify and describe a subject or function at its broadest level, and consist of groups of related primaries. Each section is allotted a block or range of primary numbers. The sections in this ORCS are:

Primary Numbers	Section Title
<xxxx-yyyy>	<insert section title. If the ORCS consists of only one section, give the range of numbers applied to the ORCS and the title of the ORCS>

Other ORCS belonging to the Department contain the following sections:

Primary Numbers	Section Title	RDA Number	Approval Date
<xxxx-yyyy>	<insert section title. If the ORCS consists of only one section, give the range of numbers applied to the ORCS and the title of the ORCS>	<YYYY-##>	<mmmm dd, yyyy>

### **Primaries**

Sections are divided into primaries, which classify specific subjects or functions. Each primary is assigned a unique title that identifies the function or subject matter of the records that are to be classified under the primary. The first primary is the general primary and contains records which cannot be classified into a more specific primary within the section, or which relate to more than one subject or function in the section. Primaries are usually arranged in alphabetical sequence, except for the first primary within the section. Each primary is assigned a four-digit primary number that uniquely identifies the primary. Gaps are left between each primary number so that the alphabetical arrangement of the primaries can be maintained if the ORCS is amended and new primaries are added.

Each primary has a scope note that describes the function or subject of the primary. It identifies the types of records that are to be classified in the primary, and may identify records that should not be classified in the primary. The scope note is designed to help users identify the correct primary and secondary when they classify records.

Cross references, or “see” references, are included in many primaries to point users to the correct primary in cases where there may be confusion between two primaries.

Additional notes may be used to explain how the primary should be used or implemented.

### **Secondaries**

Primaries are divided into secondaries. Secondaries are used to classify specific series or types of records, such as policy and procedures, general and routine files, subject files, and case files. Each secondary is assigned a two-digit classification number. The primary and secondary numbers together create a number that uniquely identifies the secondary. Gaps are left between each secondary to allow for expansion. At minimum, records are classified to a primary and a secondary. Secondaries are usually arranged alphabetically, except for the two reserved secondaries (see below).

The secondaries that belong to each primary are listed in a table on each primary page.

There are two types of secondary numbers within ORCS. They are:

**Reserved Secondary Numbers:** Two secondary numbers have been reserved throughout ORCS. Secondary number -00 is always reserved for “Policy and Procedures” that relate to the function or subject of the primary. Secondary number -01 is always reserved for “General”, which is used to classify records that cannot be classified in one of the specific subject or case file secondaries. General files are not normally divided into tertiaries.

**Prescribed Subject or Case File Secondaries:** Subject secondaries are used for records about specific subjects. A subject file usually brings together records and information on one topic in order to facilitate information retrieval. Case file secondaries series of related pertaining to a specific time-limited entity, such as a person, event, project, transaction, product, or organization. The component records within each file in a case file series are generally standardized. Examples of case files include client files and personnel files. Most of the records created by an organization are case files. Specific secondaries are numbered from -02 through -99.

### **Coded Series and Tertiaries**

Reserved, subject, and case file secondaries may be subdivided using codes or tertiaries.

**Coded Case File Series:** When a case file secondary is coded, the result is a coded case file series. Codes that may be used in a case file series include project numbers, employee numbers, case numbers, or some other code that is assigned to the case to distinguish it from similar records. Case file series are sometimes arranged by the full name or title of the case (e.g. person, event, project, transaction, product, or organization) but are, for the purposes of abbreviation and identification, more commonly arranged by a numeric or alphabetical codes (abbreviations) which correspond to the entities to which the files relate.

**Coded Subject File Series:** When a subject secondary is coded, the result is a coded subject file series. Although case files are the most common example of coded series, codes may also be used to arrange subject secondaries when coding will facilitate retrieval.

**Tertiary Number and Title:** When a reserved, subject, or case file secondary requires further subdivision, a tertiary number may be added. The tertiary number is added to the primary and secondary numbers to form a complete file number. It is important to note that records classified under tertiary numbers must meet the retention requirement of the secondary under which they are classified. If they do not, a new secondary is required.

The 01 General secondary is not usually divided into tertiaries. The usual rule is that if three to five documents on a topic accumulate in the General secondary, a file, or tertiary, should be opened under a specific secondary.

## ***Records Retention and Disposition Schedule***

Retention schedules in ORCS are assigned to each secondary. Schedule information for each secondary is provided in the six columns to the right of the secondary numbers and titles. There are two sets of retention schedule columns: Master File and Copy File. The master file retention schedule is used to schedule the department's master record, while the copy file retention schedule is used to schedule copies other than the master record. Both the master file and copy file retention schedules are divided into three columns. These columns are headed A (active), SA (semi-active), and FD (final disposition). They correspond with the active, semi-active, and inactive phases of the record life cycle.

**Active Retention Period Column:** The active (A) column describes the event that closes a record and the length of time a record should be retained in active storage in the office after the records have closed. Active records are records which are referred to regularly and required constantly for current use in the conduct of business and which need to be retained and maintained in the office space and equipment of the user. Closed records may be kept in active storage for a period because they are needed for reference purposes.

**Semi-Active Retention Period Column:** The semi-active (SA) column indicates the length of time a record should be retained in the semi-active or inactive phase of its life cycle. Semi-active records are records that are not required constantly for current use and need not be maintained in the expensive office space and equipment of the agency responsible for them. Semi-active records retain administrative, operational, fiscal, audit, or legal value. Storage of semi-active records in the Records Centre until all values have lapsed results in considerable savings.

The active and semi-active retention periods ensure that records are kept as long as required to meet any operational, administrative, legal, audit, or other primary values, which the records may hold. By retaining records for the retention periods specified in the retention schedule, departments will comply with statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements to maintain certain types of information and data.

**Final Disposition Column:** The final disposition (FD) column identifies the final action that will be taken when the records have completed their active and semi-active phases. The purpose of the final disposition column is to ensure that those records that have residual historical values are preserved and that those records that have no historical values are destroyed.

## ***How to Read the Records Retention and Disposition Schedule***

An example of a retention schedule is presented below. The first two columns, labeled "Secondaries," contain the secondary classification numbers and secondary titles that belong to the primary. The next three columns are labeled "Master File," and contain the

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master file retention schedules, described above. The final three columns, labeled “Copy File,” contain the copy file retention schedules, also described above. Retention schedules are read across the table from left to right.

The master and copy file retention schedules for the reserved secondaries, -00 and -01, are usually standardized across all of the primaries.

SECONDARIES		MASTER FILE			COPY FILE		
		A	SA	FD	A	SA	FD
00	Policy and Procedures	S/O	7	AS/D	S/O	Nil	D
01	General	2	Nil	D	2	Nil	D
10	License Applications	2	8	D	2	Nil	D
20	Project Files	S/O*	10	AS/D	S/O	Nil	D

S/O\* = project completed or terminated

### **Active Column**

The active (A) column contains an abbreviation, a number, or a combination of an abbreviation and a number. The abbreviation identifies the retention trigger for the records classified into a particular secondary. A retention trigger is an event that closes the records and starts the retention period described in the retention schedule. The two most common triggers are Superseded/Obsolete and End of the Fiscal Year.

**S/O:** Superseded or obsolete. S/O is a retention trigger that describes an event that closes a record. S/O retention triggers are assigned for records for which an active retention period cannot be predetermined because the closure of the file is dependent upon the occurrence of some event. For instance, policy and procedures files close when the policy or procedures is replaced (superseded) or is no longer in effect (obsolete). An asterisk next to the S/O (S/O\*) indicates that there is a note attached to the retention schedule that describes the event that triggers the closing of the record. In the example above, secondary –20 has a retention trigger of S/O\*. A note below the table indicates that the files will remain open until the project has been completed or until the department decides to end the project.

**End of the Fiscal Year:** If the active column only contains a number, then the files close at the end of the fiscal year (March 31<sup>st</sup> for GNWT departments). The files will be retained in active storage after it closes for the number of years shown by the number in the active column. In the example above, secondary -01 closes at

the end of the fiscal year, and is retained for an additional two years in the office before moving on to the next phase in its life cycle.

Occasionally the active column will show both a retention trigger and the number of years that the records should be retained in the office after they have closed, e.g. S/O+2. The purpose of placing both a retention trigger and the length of the active period in the active column is to show that the records should not be transferred to off-site storage as soon as they are closed.

### ***Semi-Active Column***

The semi-active column shows the length of time in years that the records may be kept in off-site storage in a records centre. In the examples above, records classified into secondary -00 can be kept in off-site storage for seven years. If departments do not transfer the records to the Records Centre right away, the length of time that they remain on site after the semi-active phase has begun will be subtracted from the semi-active retention period. For instance, if a department decides to keep closed policy files (-00) in the office for two years after the policy has been superseded; the files will be kept in the records centre for just five years. The records will be kept for a total of seven years after they have closed.

**Nil:** records are retained for zero years during this phase of the life cycle. The records proceed directly from their active phase to final disposition.

### ***Final Disposition***

The final disposition column contains an abbreviation that describes the fate of the records when they have completed the active and semi-active phases of the life cycle. There are three possible final dispositions:

**AS/D:** Archival Selection/Destroy. The records are transferred to the custody of the Northwest Territories Archives, where the records will either be selected for preservation as a historical record or appraised as having no historical value and destroyed.

**D:** Destroy. The records will be destroyed.

**FR:** Full retention by the Department. The Department will take action to permanently preserve the records.

### ***Total Retention Period***

The total retention period for a record consists of the addition of the active and semi-active periods. For instance, in the example above, records classified into secondary -00 are retained for a total of seven years after they have been superseded or have become obsolete (S/O+7 years). A policy file that closes in 2000 will be retained until the year 2007, when it will be transferred to the NWT Archives. License applications are retained for a total of 10 years after the end of the fiscal year during which the records were created

(2 years active + 8 years semi-active). A license application that was created during the 1999/2000 fiscal year closes on March 31, 2000. It becomes eligible for destruction on March 31, 2010.

<Insert Section Title>

<Insert Block of Primary Numbers assigned to Section>

<Insert Section Scope Note. Example: The <section title> section classifies and schedules records relating to <function or subject>. It contains information about <describe significant programs, services or series of records>. It also includes information about <describe less significant programs, services, or series of records>.

<Insert Section cross references. Section cross references should point to another section or records disposition authority>

<Insert Block of Primary Numbers Assigned to Section or ORCS>

LIST OF PRIMARIES

<TITLE OF SECTION OR ORCS>

<primary #> <list primary titles>

<PRIMARY TITLE>

<PRIMARY NUMBER>

<Secondary Scope Note>

<List Cross References>

<NOTE: Insert procedural notes>

SECONDARIES		MASTER FILE			COPY FILE		
		A	SA	FD	A	SA	FD
00	Policy and Procedures	S/O	7	AS/D	S/O	Nil	D
01	General	2	Nil	D	2	Nil	D
<##>							

<insert explanations of retention triggers (S/O\*)>

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**A** Active      **AS/D** Archival Selection/Destroy      **D** Destroy      **FD** Final Disposition  
**FR** Full Retention      **Nil** Zero Years      **S/O** Superseded/Obsolete      **SA** Semi-Active

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## **Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions**

The following are suggested questions for interviewing management and employees. They can be used when preparing the functional analysis and the requirements analysis, and when developing the ORCS. These questions should be tailored to suit the interviewee and the purpose of the interview

1. What is your job title and where does your position fit in the organization chart?
2. How would you describe the mandate (purpose) of your department and your division?
3. How does your department/agency fit into the overall structure of government? Does your department/agency report to a cabinet minister or to a board? If it reports to a board, to which department does the board report?
4. Does your division share programs, services, or projects with another division in the department? Are there other government departments or non-GNWT organizations that you work with regularly to deliver programs? If so, which division or department is primarily responsible for the program?
5. Are there legislation or regulations that affect your divisions or programs?
6. Are there any policies or directives that affect your divisions or programs?
7. Does anything in the legislation or policy affect the records/documents that you have to create or keep? Does it give you any guidance on how long you have to keep these records?
8. What does your work unit do/ what do the work units/sections in your division do?
9. What programs does your division/work unit run? Please describe the programs (what is the purpose of the program, who develops it, who administers it, who are the clients, how are the services accessed, what are the procedures?).
10. Are there any new programs that are being developed? How do they fit into what you are all ready doing?
11. What kinds of records are created for each program or activity?
12. What topics/subjects do the records cover?
13. What kind of reports or statistics do you regularly create?
14. What kind of computer systems does your department use? Do any of these systems generate records?

15. Where are your records located, and how are they organized?
16. How does your division handle e-mail messages and computer files?
17. Does your division have records in media other than ordinary office paper, and how are they stored? (E.g. on tapes, film, photographs, plans and drawings)
18. When would you consider a file closed? What has to take place before a file can be closed?
19. How long do you need to have the records around? What is the furthest back that you have had to go into the files? Why would you have to look into older files?
20. Do you see any issues or problems with the current filing system?
21. How do you think the problems could be fixed?

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<b>A</b> Active	<b>AS/D</b> Archival Selection/Destroy	<b>D</b> Destroy	<b>FD</b> Final Disposition
<b>FR</b> Full Retention	<b>Nil</b> Zero Years	<b>S/O</b> Superseded/Obsolete	<b>SA</b> Semi-Active

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