



# Policy – Management of Electronic Information

## 6003.00.20

**Issued By:** The Informatics Policy Council

### 1. Effective Date

This policy took effect on February 4, 2015. The revisions to this policy take effect on the date approved below.

### 2. Application

This policy applies to all government bodies as identified in the *Archives Act*.

### 3. Context

This policy establishes government-wide direction on the management of information in the electronic environment, including electronic mail. It assigns responsibility for managing electronic information to the government body that creates or receives the information. Electronic information must be classified according to approved classification systems and disposed of according to approved disposition authorities.

### 4. Statement

Information is a valuable asset which the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) must manage as a public trust on behalf of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Effective information management makes government program and service delivery more efficient, and supports transparency, collaboration across organizations, informed decision-making and accountability in government operations, and preserves historically valuable information.

The Policy – Recorded Information Management (6003.00.18) establishes the framework for the GNWT to manage the recorded information in its custody and control throughout the lifecycle of the records from creation or receipt until final disposition.

Business conducted in the electronic environment needs to be documented appropriately to meet a variety of operational and accountability requirements. This involves creating and maintaining records in the electronic environment. The management of electronic information is essential to the success of the GNWT's goals for information management and technology.

To that end, government bodies will manage electronic information in their custody or under their control in a way that is consistent with this policy and complies with the *Archives Act*, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Electronic Transactions Act*, the *Financial Administration Act*, and all other NWT legislation.

### 5. Principles

The Government of the Northwest Territories will follow the following principles when

implementing this policy.

#### **5.1. Electronic information are records**

All electronic information and electronic mail, created or received in the course of conducting government business, are government records, subject to the same legislation, audit and legal processes as records in other formats.

Government bodies may consent to create, receive, store, and use recorded information in an electronic format.

#### **5.2. Responsibilities of government employees**

Each government employee is responsible for:

- a) Recording all actions, transactions, and decisions of government.
- b) Adhering to legislation, policies, directives, standards, guidelines, and procedures that concern the management of all recorded information.

#### **5.3. Management of electronic information**

Management of electronic information must be built into business processes and support tools.

This should be undertaken during business process re-engineering exercises and when information systems are replaced or upgraded. Electronic information systems should conform to government-wide recorded information management policies, directives, standards, and guidelines.

#### **5.4. Creation of recorded information**

Recorded information used to conduct government business must be created and managed in a way that maintains its usefulness, authenticity, and reliability, as a complete record of government activity, in order to meet legal admissibility requirements. Recorded information must support government accountability and transparency,

- a) To protect the government's legal and fiscal interests.
- b) To preserve a historical record of government operations.
- c) To provide public access to information.
- d) To protect the privacy and other rights of individual citizens.

#### **5.5. Business must be documented**

Business conducted by electronic means must be adequately documented to satisfy legislated and other accountability requirements and business needs.

- a) Government bodies must ensure and be able to demonstrate that the integrity of electronic information continues from the time the final version of the original is made, it remains accessible, and is capable of being retained so as to be useable for subsequent purposes.

- b) Government bodies must ensure and be able to demonstrate that electronic information remains complete and unaltered, apart from the introduction of any changes that arise in the normal course of communication, storage and display.
- c) Government bodies should ensure that electronic information systems capture and preserve appropriate metadata about records, including, if any existed, metadata that identifies the origin and destination of the information, and the date and time when it was sent or received.

#### **5.6. Use of electronic systems**

Electronic systems that create or maintain recorded information in electronic form should be used as the preferred means of using and managing electronic information.

#### **5.7. Electronic recordkeeping systems**

Electronic recordkeeping systems must be documented:

- a) Government bodies should assign responsibilities regarding the development, modification, operation and use of electronic recordkeeping systems to ensure that electronic information remains accessible, retrievable and readable over time for as long as a business need exists or as long as legislative, policy and archival requirements exist.
- b) Recordkeeping requirements for electronic records, including operational business needs, legal requirements and archival requirements, should be identified and determined at the point of system design, and built into the system to minimize the unnecessary retention of records that are not required and to ensure that records of continuing value are identified, preserved and migrated. Final disposition for electronic records is according to approved records disposition authorities.
- c) In the case of systems that have already been designed, recordkeeping requirements should be determined at the point of review, upgrade or migration.
- d) Responsibility for identifying recordkeeping requirements is shared between the business manager for the system, the government body's records coordinator, Corporate Information Management, Department of Infrastructure, and NWT Archives. Recordkeeping requirements determine the degree to which business activities need to be supported by reliable and authentic records and how long the records should be retained.

#### **5.8. Information security**

Departments should establish systems to protect electronic information in accordance with the Policy - Electronic Information Security (6003.00.26).

**6. Responsibilities**

The Informatics Policy Council is responsible for the general supervision of recorded information management, including electronic information, within the Government of the Northwest Territories.

**7. References**

The management of electronic information is subject to a number of provisions, as established by the Acts, policies, international standards and best practices outlined in Appendix B.

**8. Monitoring and Reporting**

There are no monitoring or reporting requirements.

**9. Enquiries**

All enquiries regarding this policy should be directed to the Department of Infrastructure, Corporate Information Management Division.

**10. Approval**

This policy is effective from the date approved below.

| Chair, Informatics Policy Council | Signature | Date       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Chair                             |           | 2018-09-12 |

## Appendix A

### Definitions

**Authentic** means that the record is what it purports to be and that it is free from tampering or corruption.

**Control** refers to the government body's power or authority to direct and make decisions about the management and use of recorded information.

**Custody** means safekeeping or care.

**Data** is the smallest meaningful units of recorded information.

**Electronic mail (e-mail) messages** (also known as Outlook data files) are communications created, sent, or received on an electronic mail system and include the content of the communication, any attachments transmitted with the message as well as the associated transmission and receipt data. E-mail messages include those sent or received internally or externally.

**Electronic record** is an analogue or digital record that is carried by an electrical conductor and requires the use of electronic equipment to be intelligible by a person.

**Information systems** store and provide access to information or data.

**Integrity** refers to the record being complete and unaltered in all essential respects.

**Metadata** refers to data describing content, structure, and context of records and their management through time. Metadata can be divided into one of three categories:

- Descriptive metadata describes a resource for purposes such as discovery and identification. Metadata in this area can include such elements as author, title, and description.
- Structural metadata indicates how compound objects are put together. It identifies data format, media format, or the type of data representation and file types, hardware and software needed to render the data, and the compression method and encryption algorithms used, if any.
- Administrative metadata provides information to help manage a resource, such as when and how it was created, and who can access it.

**Migration** refers to the process of moving recorded information from one information system configuration to another.

**Preservation** refers to systems that manage the creation, capture, storage, use, maintenance and disposition of recorded information and their metadata.

**Record** is a record of information, regardless of its form and characteristics, the means by which it was created and the media on which it may be stored and, without limited the generality of the foregoing, include (a) a document, book, ledger, photograph, image, audio-visual recording, x-ray, map and drawing, and (b) a record created or stored in digital or other intangible form by electronic means, but does not include software or a mechanism that produces records.

**Recorded information** see Record.

**Records Disposition Authority (RDA)** a plan respecting the preservation and destruction of public records as described in the *Archives Regulations*, which must (a) include a comprehensive description of each class of public records; (b) specify the criteria for determining whether a class of public records should be preserved or destroyed; and (c) specify the minimum periods during which the government body must retain each class of records that it intends to destroy.

**Structure** identifies the logical and physical relationships of data elements in the records.

**Transitory records** are records that are needed only for a limited time for the completion of a routine action or to prepare a subsequent record. Transitory records do not include records required by government organizations to control, support, or document the delivery of programs, to carry out operations, to make decisions, or to account for activities of the government.

## Appendix B

### References

**Archives Act** sets the legal framework for disposing, transfer, custody and access to records;

**Electronic Transactions Act** establishes the legal authority of digital records in regards to transactions;

**Financial Administration Act** establishes principles, accountabilities, and responsibilities for responsible fiscal and resource management for the GNWT;

**Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act** provides public access to records and protects against unauthorized use or disclosure of personal information by public bodies;

**Education, Culture and Employment Establishment Policy** (71.00) establishes and sets the mandate for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment;

**Finance Establishment Policy** (15.00) establishes and sets the mandate for the Department of Finance;

**Infrastructure Establishment Policy** (31.00) establishes and sets the mandate for the Department of Infrastructure;

**Recorded Information Management Policy** (6003.00.18) guides government bodies in the management of their recorded information (regardless of format) and defines the authority and accountability framework;

**Electronic Information Security Policy** (6003.00.26) guides government bodies in the security of electronic information;

**CAN/CGSB-72.34-2017, Electronic Records as Documentary Evidence** is a Canadian national standard for the management of electronic information;

**ISO 15489-1:2016, Information and documentation - Records management - Part 1: Concepts and Principles** is an international standard for records management programs;

**ISO/TR 15801:2009, Document management - Information stored electronically - Recommendations for trustworthiness and reliability** is an international standard for the management of electronic information;

**ISO 23081-1:2006, Information and documentation - Records management processes - Metadata for records - Part 1: Principles** is an international standard for the capture of metadata about records;

**ISO 23081-2:2009, Information and documentation - Records management processes - Metadata for records - Part 2: Conceptual and implementation issues** is an international standard for the capture of metadata about records.