Northwest Territories

Records Disposition Authorities Series

The Records Disposition Authority series gives you tips on how to develop a records disposition authority.

Implementing the ARCS and ORCS Classification System

Plan, Plan, Plan

Implementing the Administrative and Operational Records Classification Systems (ARCS and ORCS) for the first time is a big job. Many people will start converting to ARCS or ORCS, and then become overwhelmed with the scale of the job. They would have been able to complete the project if they had a plan before they began.

Where to Begin

Before you start a conversion project, consider what you want to accomplish with the project. Set out the scope of the project. Are you converting the entire division, or just one section or office? Are you going to start with hard copy records and then move to the electronic files on the network? Are you going to be consolidating records into a central filing area or a common network directory structure?

Review the goals and scope of the project with management. Managers must agree to any project that involves relocating records or purchasing new equipment.

Next, identify the people who will be involved in the project and make sure that their roles are defined. Usually a few people will convert the files and then train the other employees on how to use the new system. With electronic records, individual employees may be asked to move the records that they are working with into shared folders.

Then, identify any additional resources that you will need. Do you need to order new filing equipment, file folders, or records centre boxes? It will slow the process

Finally, identify the tasks that need to be done, and the order in which they should be accomplished. Also consider the timing of the project. You do not want to perform a conversion during a busy time of year, or when key people are on holidays.

A typical list of conversion tasks looks like this:

- Hold a staff meeting to begin the project. During the meeting, explain the purpose of the conversion project and how it will be done.
- Inventory the hard copy files. This can be a series level inventory or a file-by-file listing.
- Assign classification numbers to the files.
- Set up a central file list or enter the files into DIIMS. Consult with your department's Records Coordinator to find out which method you should use.

- Re-label the files that are in the active phase of the life cycle.

- Identify semi-active and inactive files. Remove these files from the filing system and prepare them for transfer to the Records Centre for storage or disposal.

- Reorganize the files by classification number.

- Train the other employees on how to use the hard copy filing system.

- Set up network directories that match the structure of ARCS and ORCS.

- Move electronic records into the new directory structure.

- Train the other employees on how to save electronic records into the new directory structure.

Write an Implementation Plan

Now that you have figured out what you are going to do, and how you are going to do it, write it all down in an implementation plan. The implementation plan will act as a reference to everyone involved. It will help explain what is being done, and help prevent scope creep. Management should approve the plan before the project begins.

A typical implementation plan will include the following components:

- **A statement of objective or purpose.** This will outline what you intend to accomplish with your plan.

- **Background information or current state**. Background information provides the rationale for the conversion project. It will also help explain the project to the users of the system.

- **Project scope.** The project scope outlines the limits of the project.

- **Deliverables**. A list of deliverables is used to identify the goals of the project, and measure the progress of the project.

- **Recommended approach or work plan**. The plan should describe, in detail, the steps that will be taken to complete the project. The steps should be identified in sequence. Identify any occasions where the start or completion of one step depends on the start or completion of another step. This will help you identify possible roadblocks.

- **Staffing**. Name the people who will be involved in the project, and explain the role that each person will play.

- **Resources**. List the equipment and supplies needed to complete the project.

- **Reporting.** Regular reporting and communication is needed to ensure a successful conversion plan. One effective way to do this is to set up a regular schedule of records management meetings, or to include the project as a standing item on staff meeting agendas.

- **Schedule**. The project schedule sets target dates for the start and completion of each part of the project. It may be included in the work plan.