

Designating Electronic Information as the Official Government Record

Overview

On January 11, 2011 the Government Records Committee (GRC), in response to a departmental request, determined that the GRC does not need to approve a department's intention to designate the electronic version of a record as their official government record. Section 4.1 of the Management of Information Act addresses electronic records. It allows departments to make the decision based on operational, legal or regulatory requirements. What does this mean for your Information Management program?

Advice

- The decision to designate the electronic version of a record as the official government record is a significant one. It usually represents a change in business practice, and requires a process to be developed and communicated that demonstrates not only the full impact of the change but the authority by which the change is occurring. This decision should be presented to the head of a department or other public body (Deputy Minister, CEO, or equivalent) for approval, and the approval documented.
- When electronic records are declared as the official government record they should be classified and scheduled using a Records Retention and Disposal Schedule. If they are created as a result of scanning paper records then the paper records can be treated as transitory records (see definition of transitory records in Section 2(h) of the Management of Information Act), and disposed of accordingly once a quality assurance check is completed on the electronic record.
- The retention of electronic information as an official government record may provide many operational benefits. This includes the ability to access information quickly and to automate management and disposal processes.
- When designating the electronic version of a record as the official government record, operational needs as well as legal and regulatory requirements must be validated to ensure the appropriateness of the electronic format.
- Departments and other public bodies may have to create and/or update organizational level policy or procedures to ensure that management requirements are known and implemented.
- When designating the electronic version as the official government record it is essential that the authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability of the record is retained in the electronic version, as required by Section 4.1 of the Management of Information Act.

Things to Consider When Designating Electronic Information as the Official Government Record

- What is the primary business process that required the creation/receipt of this information?
- What are the benefits of retaining information in electronic format?
- What are the operational, legal and regulatory requirements? Are there any that require retention of paper records rather than electronic records?
- Who will be the lead person responsible for initiating and executing the process of retaining and managing the electronic version as the official government record? Who else will be involved? Is there supporting documentation?
- What are the steps required to complete this process? Are there transitory records created to support this process?
- Are records in paper format, electronic format or both? What is the volume of records?
- Are records scanned into an Electronic Records Management System? Who has responsibility for doing the scanning and quality assurance checks?
- What documentation do you have in place to identify protocols for the retention and disposal of electronic records as the official government record (e.g., Records Retention and Disposal Schedule)?
- How will you securely destroy any transitory paper records?
- Do you have documented approval from the head of your department or other public body for the declaration of the electronic records as the official government record and the destruction of the paper records as transitory?

For questions related to the GRC and its process contact GRLM@gov.nl.ca. General inquiries can be directed via email to IM@gov.nl.ca.

Supporting Materials

POLICY – Information Management and Protection Policy

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/im-im-ip-policy.pdf>

Directive—Transitory Records

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/im/policy-instruments/transitory-records/>

Version History

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