



Vermont State Archives and Records Administration

Office of the Secretary of State

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RECORDS MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICE FOR ALL PUBLIC AGENCIES

Date Effective: October 1, 2008; Revised: April 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this best practice is to establish a set of statewide recommendations for the responsible management of public records. This best practice is not intended to be a statement of the current ability of public agencies to store, retrieve, and access records. It is a statement of goals and expectations. The realization of such goals and expectations will result in more effective records and information management.

SCOPE

This best practice applies to all records created or received by public agencies.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

Pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 317a, 3 V.S.A. § 117, and 3 V.S.A. § 218, the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (Office of the Secretary of State) is authorized to establish and promulgate standards, procedures and techniques for the effective management of public records.

STATEMENT OF BENEFITS

Sound records management practices and procedures result in a number of benefits: fulfilling legal mandates, improving access and accountability, reducing costs for the retrieval of records, ensuring the creation and management of accurate and reliable records, and reducing the costs of storing records.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Maintaining and providing access to records over time is a shared responsibility. Establishing and operating effective recordkeeping systems and practices requires a multidisciplinary approach. Public agencies should make effective use of the necessary range of expertise available throughout the State of Vermont. This includes expertise in archives, records and information management, information technology, business process management, risk management, and law.

CONTACT

Questions about this best practice may be directed to the Vermont State Archivist and Chief Records Officer.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICE

1) Records should be created and captured for all defined government business functions and activities.

- For the purposes of this best practice, records are defined as “any written or recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which is produced or acquired in the course of agency business” (1 V.S.A. § 317(b)).
- Business functions and activities are defined by Vermont Statutes Annotated and administrative rules.

2) Records should be maintained in reliable recordkeeping systems.

- For the purpose of this best practice, recordkeeping systems are defined as any information system used to capture, maintain and provide access to records over time. Systems may be manual or electronic.
- Recordkeeping systems should meet legal and administrative requirements, national and international standards, and best practices for recordkeeping.
- Recordkeeping systems should have written policies, assigned responsibilities, and formal methodologies that fully and accurately document the overall management of the system.
- Recordkeeping systems should include adequate system controls, such as audit trails, guidelines for classifying and filing records, and procedures for measuring the accuracy of data input and output.

3) Records should be retained or disposed of in accordance with approved record schedules.

- A record schedule is “a policy issued by the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration and approved by the State Archivist governing the life cycle management, retention, and disposition of public records” (3 V.S.A. § 117(a)(6)).
- Custodians of public records shall not destroy any record or records unless authorized by law or under a record schedule approved by the State Archivist (1 V.S.A. § 317a).

4) Work processes and associated business procedures and tools should support the creation and management of records.

- Recordkeeping should be built into the defined business processes and the work environment thereby ensuring that records are captured, understandable and usable.
- Whenever possible, agencies should create models of business processes to determine where and when records are created and used in the course of completing business transactions.

5) Records should be intact and secure.

- Records should be protected from accidental or intentional alteration and from destruction while the record still has value.
- Only authorized personnel should be permitted to create, capture or destroy public records.

6) Records should be preserved without loss of any vital information for as long as required by law, regulation, policy, or best practice.

- Records should be stored in controlled environments that preserve the record for as long as required.
- The future usability of records with long-term value should be ensured through the development of reformatting strategies for copying records to a more stable medium and conversion strategies designed to update hardware, software and storage media.
- Recordkeeping systems should manage and preserve for the useful life of the record both the content of the record as well as the associated metadata that defines or documents the record’s content, context and structure.

7) Records should be accessible and retrievable in a timely manner throughout their retention period.

- Records should be easily accessible in the normal course of all business processes.
- Public records should be searchable and retrievable for legal, administrative, or informational purposes.
- Training and user support programs should be available to ensure that users can access and retrieve records.

8) Access to records should be controlled according to well-defined criteria.

- Recordkeeping systems should ensure that records are protected from unauthorized access.
- Public agencies should take measures to prevent unauthorized access to personal and confidential records as mandated by law and adopt rules or policies governing access to such records.

Deborah Markowitz
Secretary of State

Date

Neale Lunderville
Secretary of Administration

Date

SIGNED DOCUMENT ON FILE

Gregory Sanford
State Archivist

Date

Tom Murray
Chief Information Officer

Date

REVISION HISTORY

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| 2020-04-15 | Replaced header and in Statement of Authority and Contact sections, removed references to the former Department of Information and Innovation; Chief Information Officer; and Agency of Administration statutes. Minor revisions in Section 3 to align with current legal definitions. |
| 2008-12-02 | Corrected citations to State statutes in Section 3 (typographical error). |