

Working Remotely and Recordkeeping Responsibilities

Reliable records are needed by government to function effectively. They provide important evidence of actions taken and decisions made by public officials, and allow government to account for its actions. At all times, but particularly in times of crisis, the public is relying on government information to be accurate and reliable and for government to be accountable and transparent.

Your records management responsibilities are the same whether you are working from the office, from home, or from anywhere else. If you are doing government business, you are creating government records and these records must be managed in accordance with [The Archives and Recordkeeping Act](#). This fact sheet includes basic instructions and helpful tips to ensure you are creating, keeping, using, and managing government records appropriately when you work outside the office.

Recordkeeping obligations

It is the responsibility of all Manitoba public servants to:

- create full and accurate records
- file or capture them in a recordkeeping system as soon as possible
- prevent unauthorized disclosure, loss, or destruction of government records
- protect personal, sensitive, and confidential information
- ensure disposal of records is authorized and properly documented

Managers must ensure:

- staff understand their recordkeeping responsibilities
- workgroups and individuals have the records and information needed to do their work
- protocols are established for creating and saving records remotely – this may include assigning responsibility to individuals for creating and saving particular records (e.g. committee agendas, minutes, etc.)
- staff have access to the technology and tools they need to do their work (whenever possible) so that they are not using unauthorized means (e.g. non-government issued technology, printers, phones) to create and store records
- all records are protected and managed according to records schedules that embody business, legal, and statutory requirements and policies

Department/agency heads are responsible for ensuring compliance with *The Archives and Recordkeeping Act* and Archives of Manitoba standards, policies, and guidelines. Each department/agency must determine and give clear direction on the most effective way to achieve this when staff are working remotely.

Tips and guidance for working remotely

1. **Be aware!** Understand your recordkeeping obligations and the sensitivity of the government records and information you are creating and using.
 - All employees are encouraged to complete the Archives of Manitoba's online training, *Introduction to Records and Information Management in the Manitoba Government*, to ensure they have a basic understanding of government recordkeeping responsibilities. The course is available in the Learning Management System (LMS) at <https://osd.learnflex.net> [password required].

2. **Make records** about the work you are doing. Document your actions, decisions, and the reasons for these decisions.
 - Use government-issued computers, devices, and authorized applications to conduct your work and [create records](#).
 - Avoid using personal email, messaging apps or social media accounts to conduct government business. If these do need to be used to communicate with colleagues, managers, or clients, make sure your manager has authorized this use and the information is properly captured (see: [Text & Instant Messages](#) guidance).
 - When using videoconferencing or teleconferencing services to conduct virtual meetings, remember to create and keep meeting minutes and records of decisions.

3. **Keep records** in an organized way and routinely file them in an appropriate recordkeeping system.
 - Wherever you work, it is important to [capture records](#) in an appropriate system so that your co-workers have access to them. Records are inaccessible when left in individual email folders and on personal drives. Using this approach will help you keep related records together and maintain complete files on specific activities, cases, or topics. This is not possible if records are scattered across various individual email accounts, network drives, and convenience or working files.
 - Speak with your manager if you need to temporarily create or maintain records outside of Government of Manitoba storage locations and put a plan in place to ensure these records are transferred to the appropriate locations as soon as you are able to access them.
 - Avoid saving documents onto portable electronic devices such as laptop or tablet hard drives, smartphones, or removal storage media.
 - Working remotely may result in changed practices or habits. Decisions about what to keep and for how long are management decisions. Work groups may need to review their recordkeeping procedures and records schedules to ensure they are meeting requirements and keeping control documents up-to-date.

- 4. Protect records** to ensure that sensitive government information is secure.
 - Avoid removing records from the office, particularly records that contain personal and confidential information. If they are necessary for your remote work, make sure this has been approved by your manager and the removal is documented.
 - Physically secure government records and information when used outside the office (e.g. locking and/or securing unattended records and devices to prevent unauthorized use, disclosure, theft, damage, or loss).
 - Access information using the government network and/or a government-issued device (e.g. laptop on VPN or mobile phone) whenever possible.
 - Limit the amount of confidential/and or personal information transmitted over email.
 - Protect information, particularly when working in a public environment (e.g. ensuring that information cannot be viewed or accessed by others).

- 5. Return records** you created or were using while working remotely, as soon as possible.
 - Make sure you routinely capture digital records to government systems.
 - Don't throw records away! Remember: disposal must be authorized and there may be legal holds in place. When working remotely, keep everything and return it to the office. This includes paper [transitory records](#).

For related recordkeeping resources, see:

[Creating and Capturing Records](#)

[Electronic Recordkeeping 101: Starting the Conversation](#) *[internal resource]*

[Identifying Government Records](#)

[Introduction to Records and Information Management in the Manitoba Government](#) *[internal online training]*

[Managing Records to Mitigate Risk](#) *[internal resource]*

[Records and Information Management \(RIM\) Framework](#)

[Text & Instant Messages](#)

[Transitory Records](#)

References

Archives of Ontario, Information, Privacy and Archives, *Privacy and Recordkeeping Considerations When Working from Home* (April 2020).

Government of Canada, *Managing government information when working remotely* (April 2020).
<https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/covid-19/managing-government-information-working-remotely.html>

Government of Northwest Territories, *Corporate Information Management Handbook*, “8300 Managing Government Records When Working Remotely” (April 2020).
https://www.inf.gov.nt.ca/sites/inf/files/resources/corporate_information_management_handbook_-_as_posted_to_inf_website_1.pdf

Government Records Service, BC, *Managing your records outside the office* (March 2020).
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/services-policies-for-government/information-management-technology/records-management/guides/managing_records_outside_the_office.pdf

Public Record Office Victoria, *Working remotely – recordkeeping responsibilities* (April 2020).
<https://prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/a-z-topics/working-remotely>

Queensland State Archives, Records Connect Government Recordkeeping Blog, “PJs, dining tables and public records: Working from home and COVID-19” (March 2020).
<https://grkblog.archives.qld.gov.au/2020/03/30/pjs-dining-tables-and-public-records-working-from-home-and-covid-19/>

June 2020

Minor Update: March 2022

Government Records Office, Archives of Manitoba
T: 204-945-3971 | E: GRO@gov.mb.ca
Visit our web site to learn more about [Government Recordkeeping](#)