

Departmental Records Management Quick Guide

Why Records Management?

- Ensures statutory and regulatory compliance
- Preserves the rights of the Government and citizens
- Supports better decision making
- Safeguards essential information
- Preserves organizational knowledge
- Minimizes litigation risks

What Are Your Records Responsibilities?

- Document your official activities and actions
- Ensure records are managed appropriately and can be accessed by authorized staff
- Identify and transfer records prior to departure
- Do not remove or allow Federal records to be removed from the Department

Who Owns Agency Information?

Records created or acquired in the course of conducting Government business are the property of the United States Government

What is a Record?

Recorded information, in any format, that is:

- created in the course of business
- received for action, or
- needed to document the USDA activities.

What is a Records Control Schedule (RCS)?

A document that describes a records series (types or groups of records) and mandates:

- how long the records are kept (retention), and
- what happens to them at the end of that time period (disposition).

Substantive revisions to the RCS must be approved by NARA before they can be used to authorize records disposition.

What is a File Plan?

A document that lists groups of files in your office, and describes:

- where they are located,
- what record series they belong to and what their retention instructions are, or if they are non-records, and
- whether they contain PII or are essential.

Records Lifecycle

Records management encompasses the entire lifecycle of records, which is the period of time that records are in the Federal government's custody.



- Information is created or received by the USDA.
- Records are kept and used for current business.
- Once a record has lived a useful and active life, it is considered inactive and moves to either retirement (storage) or final disposition.

Records Management Laws and Regulations

[Federal Records Act of 1950](#), as amended (44 U.S.C., Chapters 29, 31 and 33)

[E-Government Act of 2002, Section 207](#)

[Title 36, CFR Parts 1220 through 1239](#)

[Title 18, U.S. Codes § 2071](#) establishes criminal penalties for the unlawful concealment, removal, or destruction of Federal records
[Title 18, U.S. Code § 793, 794 and 798](#)

USDA Policy and Guidance

[DR 3080-001](#), *Records Management*

[DR 3090-001](#), *Litigation Retention Policy for Documentary Materials including Electronically Stored Information*

[DR 3099-001](#), *Records Management Policy for Departing Employees, Contractors, Volunteers and Political Appointees*

How to Identify Records

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, it may be a **record**:

- Are you or your office the creator of the record?
- Did you generate or receive the information to use for your technical/administrative work in conducting business?
- Does it contain informational value as evidence of your organization's functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operation, mission, programs, projects, or activities?
- Is it material that originated in another office or outside USDA, but on which you commented or took some sort of action?
- Does it document business actions, such as: what happened, what was decided, what advice was given, who was involved, when it happened, the order of events, and decisions?
- Is it an original document related to agency business that does not exist elsewhere?
- Records can be in any format, including but not limited to electronic documents, data systems, and email messages. Think content, not format.

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, it may be a **non-record**:

- Is it a draft or interim document that has not been circulated to others or does not contain substantive comments, and for which there is a final version being maintained?
- Is it published or processed information that you received and use as reference?
- Is it a copy of a document or correspondence kept only for convenience of reference on which no action is taken?
- Is it information, which is accumulated and maintained at the workplace, but which does not affect or reflect the transaction of your program business?
- Is it junk mail or documentation that has no work-related informational or evidentiary value?

For further Records Management information, please contact your [Agency Records Officer](#) or the Departmental Records Management Office (USDA/OGC)

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