

Records Officer TOOLKIT

MANAGING GOVERNMENT RECORDS

Guidelines for Records Officers

Changes in the ways records have been kept over the years have greatly influenced the way records officers accomplish their tasks. Originally, most government records were made of paper, a format still widely in use today. The 1930s marked the beginning of microfilm and microfiche became popular in the 1980s and 90s. Today electronic records significantly affect how government does business. Regardless of format, records officers have the responsibility of providing efficient and effective records management.

■ Table of Contents

Why is Your Work as a Records Officer Important?

Guidelines for Records Officers

What Resources are Available?

Why is Your Work as a Records Officer Important?

One of the most important ways government can be accountable to the public is through appropriate management of and access to government records. As a steward of your entity's records, you help provide that critical accountability.

Your conscientious efforts will help your governmental entity:

- Function more efficiently,
- Provide accountable recordkeeping and records access practices,
- Reduce the need for audits and litigation, and
- Affect in a positive way, the documented history of the state.

■ Guidelines for Records Officers

Governmental entities have record responsibilities that assist in fulfilling their missions, comply with the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), manage their records in cost efficient and effective ways, prepare for legal discovery requests, and provide transparency and accountability to the public.

The Utah Code requires the chief administrative officer of each governmental entity to "appoint one or more records officers who will be trained to work with the state archives in the care, maintenance, scheduling, designation, classification, disposal, and preservation of records " (UCA 63A-12-103[2] [2009]).

A records officer is someone in the office who is knowledgeable about office records and who has been authorized to make decisions concerning them. The responsibilities of a records officer include:

1. Developing and providing oversight of records management programs in their agency, including training others in their agency to follow established records management guidelines, policies, and retention schedules.
2. Serving as the contact person with the Archives. The Archives offers in-office agency training and support for records management questions.
3. Inventorying agency records, developing agency retention schedules, and obtaining agency approvals. The latter refers to agency signatures needed before 1) retention schedules may be sent to the State Records Committee for approval, or 2) obsolete records stored at the State Records Center can be destroyed.
4. Implementing State Records Committee approved record retention schedules and documenting authorized destructions of obsolete records.
5. Maintaining information on what record series have been scheduled and conducting periodic reviews to update information as changes occur.
6. Reporting agency classification designations on record series to the State Archives.
7. Maintaining information on record series that have been transferred to the State Records Center to allow for their efficient retrieval.
8. Ensuring records that document the agency's functions, policies, and essential transactions and furnish information to protect the legal and financial rights of persons are maintained.

(UCA 63A-12-103 [2009]).

Records officers should realize that their job is important. Their conscientious efforts will affect the documented history of the State of Utah. Efficient records

management practices also reduce the cost of government. Off-site storage of inactive records frees expensive office space. Maintaining records beyond their approved retention often influences both audit and litigation.

■ What Resources are Available?

New records officers with the question "What should I do first?" will benefit from the following:

1. Make sure your duties and responsibilities as a records officer are listed in your performance plan so you can receive credit for them.
2. Call the State Archives at (801) 531-3863 to provide your contact information and to become acquainted with the records management team and the resources available through the Archives
3. Attend state government training or local government training sessions offered by the State Archives.
4. Make the most of the Records Officer Toolkit which provides helpful background information.
5. Visit the State Archives Web site. Take the Guided Tour of the State Archives Web site.
6. Seek the advice of your entity's chief administrative officer and legal counsel.

The Government Records and Management Act (GRAMA) (UCA 63G-2) is the state's open records law and governs records management and access. Utah Code -- Title 63A -- Chapter 12 -- Archives and Records Service details records management responsibilities for governmental entities. Other state statutes, rules and policies, as well as federal statutes and rules also affect your recordkeeping. The most commonly used are:

1. Your agency's administrative rules, written policies and procedures for managing records.
2. The Utah Code Annotated (UCA) and Utah Administrative Code (UAC) titles for your entity.
3. State and federal statutes, regulations, and court rules that might affect your entity's records such as: Utah Court Rules (UCR), Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), The United States Code (U.S. Code), the Health Portability and Accessibility Act (HIPAA), the Family Education Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).