



# P&RCIO NEWSLETTER

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## Why Records Management Matters

### POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Why Records Management Matters
- Changing Landscape of Records Management: Presidential Memorandum on Managing Government Records

### What is Records Management (RM)?

Federal RM is the planning, controlling, directing, organizing, promoting, and managing activities involved in the records life cycle, which has three stages – creation, maintenance and use, and disposition. RM provides for the adequate and proper documentation of the policies and transactions of the Federal Government and effective and economical management of agency operations (44 U.S.C. 2901).

### Who is responsible for RM?

RM is a statutory requirement all Federal agencies must follow (44 U.S.C. Chapter 31). Each agency is responsible for managing its records in compliance with legal requirements and regulations from both the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and General Services Administration (GSA). NARA is the agency responsible for overseeing the adequacy of the Federal records programs and the disposition of Federal records. GSA is responsible for economy and efficiency in RM throughout the Federal government.

All Federal employees, including contractors, are responsible for managing their own documentary materials in an efficient and responsible manner. Every new document, including email, created or received by a Federal employee or government contractor has the potential to become a Federal record.

### Why do we need RM?

RM enables an agency to document its mission requirements and associated actions to successfully execute that mission, and ensures important information is available and accessible when needed for critical decision-making and daily operations.

### What are the benefits of RM?

Aside from maintaining compliance with Federal regulations, a robust RM program provides many benefits to agencies that increase efficiency and improve overall business operations:

#### 1. *Manage Record Creation and Growth*

As the amount of paper and electronic data increases, implementing records life cycle management (LCM) processes (creation, maintenance and use, and disposition) will reduce the amount of obsolete and inactive records, duplicate copies, and space (physical and electronic) required to store records unnecessarily.

#### 2. *Reduce Operating Costs*

Keeping obsolete and inactive records requires physical and electronic storage space, filing equipment, software systems, and manpower; all of which demand valuable financial and physical resources from the agency. A compliant RM program contributes to a more efficient use of resources. Freed resources can be invested into programs or initiatives that directly impact the mission of the organization to support those who have served, are serving, or will serve in our nation's armed forces.

#### 3. *Improve Efficiency and Productivity*

Time spent searching for information can be tedious, frustrating, and unproductive. Applying proper records LCM to record-keeping systems (paper and electronic) helps improve effectiveness and efficiency of an organization's intellectual capital by getting the right information to the right person(s) as fast as possible.

#### 4. *Reduce Liability*

The United States' governance on the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and associated penalties for failure to adhere to those acts are for



the protection of every U.S. citizen. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in fines, legal penalties, or other legal recourse. It is important for organizations to operate a good RM program to ensure compliance and minimize legal penalties and agency liabilities.

#### *5. Increase Trust and Confidence in the Organization*

Proper records LCM will instill a sense of confidence in the organization. Compliant RM fosters openness, transparency, and overall integrity, and protects the rights and interests of the agency, its employees, and its customers.

#### *6. Preserve Organizational History*

An organization's files contain unique insight into its operations, mission execution, and history of significant events, which become important resources for future decisions by leadership, historians, scholars, and authors seeking to capture and report on our nation's story for future generations.

#### *7. Safeguard Vital Information and Ensure Continuity of Operations*

Proper RM provides an organization with the ability to identify and protect its vital records. Proper RM also allows for continuous operations following a disaster or catastrophic event and access from remote off-site locations.

#### *8. Reflect a Professional Environment*

Proper RM can result in a clean, professional, and organized office area; one without clutter or the appearance of disorganization. An organized environment reflects positively on the perceptions of customers, senior leadership, and employees, contributing to an overall stronger and more professional corporate culture.

For more information, visit the Personnel and Readiness Information Management (P&R IM) RM website: [http://www.prim.osd.mil/init/Records\\_Management.html](http://www.prim.osd.mil/init/Records_Management.html).

Contact the P&R IM RM Officer (RMO) for guidance: [PRIMRecordsManagement@osd.pentagon.mil](mailto:PRIMRecordsManagement@osd.pentagon.mil).

## **The Changing Landscape of Records Management (RM): Presidential Memorandum on Managing Government Records**

On November 28, 2011, President Obama issued a memorandum to heads of executive departments and agencies seeking to address current RM challenges and create a 21st century framework for managing government records. This framework will provide a foundation for open government, leverage information to improve agency performance, and reduce unnecessary costs and burdens for Records Managers and public citizens.

The memorandum mandates that agencies develop RM programs, policies, and procedures to reduce redundant efforts, save money, and increase government transparency. The first phase of this effort required each agency to identify and report to the Archivist of the United States (the Archivist) the name of a senior agency official who will supervise an agency-wide evaluation of its RM programs. The second phase begins after the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) receives the agency reports in June 2012. The director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Archivist will issue an RM directive instructing agency heads to take specific steps to reform and improve current RM practices and policies within their agencies.

While the memorandum sets the tone for improving RM practices government-wide, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (OUSD) Personnel and

Readiness (P&R) was already proactive in identifying RM as a key priority. P&R initiated several projects to improve awareness of how RM should be addressed by its workforce. P&R engaged senior leaders from the start and created a dedicated RM task force to assess the organization's compliance with federal, Department of Defense (DoD), and Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) RM requirements. The P&R office established an internal RM Working Group, developed a Plan of Actions and Milestones to monitor progress toward implementing 38 recommendations resulting from P&R RM assessments, and created a website providing RM guidance. P&R also created a program of site visits to its subcomponents to assist all supervisory level staff in improving the lifecycle managements of records.

These continued efforts will result in P&R's compliance with all RM requirements, minimize costs, reduce redundancy, and ensure proper use of P&R's intellectual capital.

A copy of the memorandum can be found at the White House website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/28/presidential-memorandum-managing-government-records>.