Records Management Training

Records Retention Schedule Development and Revisions

Overview

Part I – The Records Inventory

- What is a Records Inventory
- Planning the Inventory
- Conducting the Inventory
- Analyzing the Results

Part II – Retention Schedules

- What are Retention Schedules
- General Schedules and Agency Schedules
- How to write a new schedule
- When to write an amendment
- What happens if an agency merges

Part I
The Records Inventory

What is an Inventory

An Inventory is perhaps the most important, often overlooked step in the Records Management process. BUT…if you don't know what you have, how can you properly schedule your records and determine what should stay and what should go.

Think in terms of doing an inventory before you go grocery shopping. What do you have on the shelves? In the "fridge?" Has anything already reached its expiration date so you know you can throw it out; can anything be consolidated; what are new items you need?

The first step in any journey is to START.
It doesn't do any good to think about it, wish you had the time to do it or keep putting it off until all the witches have been liquidated.
You have to BEGIN at the beginning.

What is a Records Inventory

Let's look at the National Archives video

[Word of the Week - Inventory]

Planning the Inventory

Step One
Know your Office Structure - WHAT

What are you doing the inventory for - the entire department, one bureau, a specific office area?

What is the mission, objectives and components of the section for which you will be performing the inventory?

How many offices or sections will you be dealing with – how are things broken down?

Step Two
What is the Purpose of the Inventory - WHY

Define the inventory's goals. Why exactly are you doing the inventory.

- Because it’s never been done!
- Starting a new program
- Updating schedules
- Moving an office
- Moving records to a digital system

Step Three
Plan Your Inventory Team - WHO

You need the right people to get this job done

- Management – include the Director/Commissioner or Head of the Bureau
- Have a planning team (include management) – how is this going to be planned out and how will staff be informed
- The inventory team – who will be conducting the actual inventory
- Support players – will others be involved at regions, IT staff, any contract workers

Present your Case for an Inventory

Have supporting information on why Records Management and a records inventory is important:

- Maine Revised Statute Title 5, Chapter 6: STATE ARCHIVIST
- Chapter 1 Rules – State Agency Records Programs
- State of Maine Policy on Preservation of State Government Records
- GOC Report
- FOAA
- State General Schedules
- Agency Schedules

Getting Management On Board – What is Your Management "type and how will you approach them?

Is management skeptical that an Inventory is necessary?

Meet with them to go over the current schedules and explain how conducting a records inventory is the important first step in knowing what the agency has for records and how to schedule records properly.

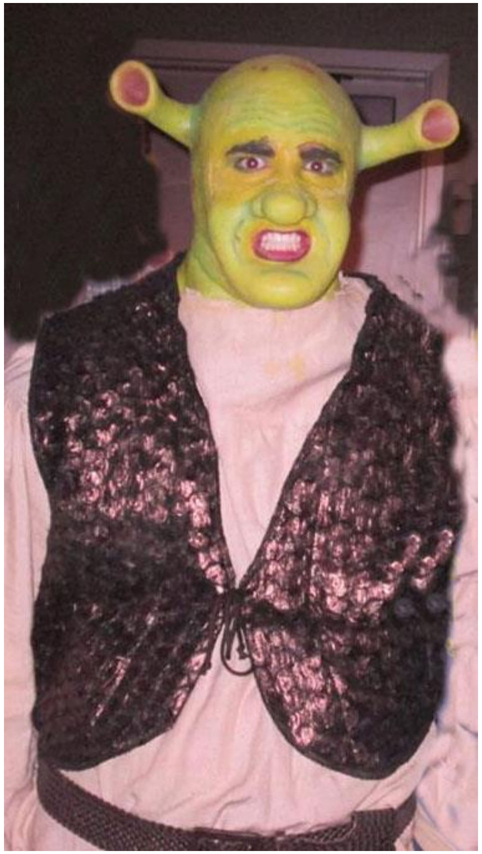
Does management like to be in control?

If your managers or directors like to be in the driver’s seat, make sure you include them from the beginning. Let them know what you are planning and see what they have for ideas and how you can work together.

Does management seem unapproachable?

You want to be sure you have all your facts in place, are organized and can prove the importance of a Records Management program, policy and why they matter to your agency.

Perhaps there is another agency head you can go to as in intermediary. Or you can contact our staff to see if our Director, the State Archivist or Secretary of State can offer some assistance.



Is management unfamiliar to the Records Management program?

Again, provide them with solid information on why Records Management needs to take priority. Perhaps they need to be directed to the Records Management staff, to our website or have training so they understand the process of Records Management and why an established program is important for the agency.

Perhaps your management team is completely on board with Records Management, has a working knowledge of procedures and trust in their staff who recommends needed improvements to agency programs.

GREAT! We all know cooperation from management is a key element in moving forward with any business endeavor – Records Management is no exception.

Whatever the management style is of your office, make sure directors and others are on board and part of your inventory planning team. It will make your job so much easier and will be a vital component when it comes time to create or update a Records Management Policy for the agency.

So be prepared, organized and well informed when you begin your Inventory.

Inform Your Staff

Once you have management support and a planning team, it's important to let staff know an inventory of records will be taking place.

Have the director send out a directive explaining: the importance or records and proper records management within the agency; the role the inventory plays as a first step to effective records management; basic information on how and where the inventory will be conducted (which parts of the agency); and ask for section volunteers.

OR…

Invite staff to a meeting where the records officer and director will explain the process.

Before the work begins, the records officer or a designee might want to visit office supervisors to discuss the project, enlist their cooperation, and make it clear that staff will be conducting a records inventory and will need access to records and/or people to conduct records interviews.

Step Four
Define the Scope of the Inventory – WHERE

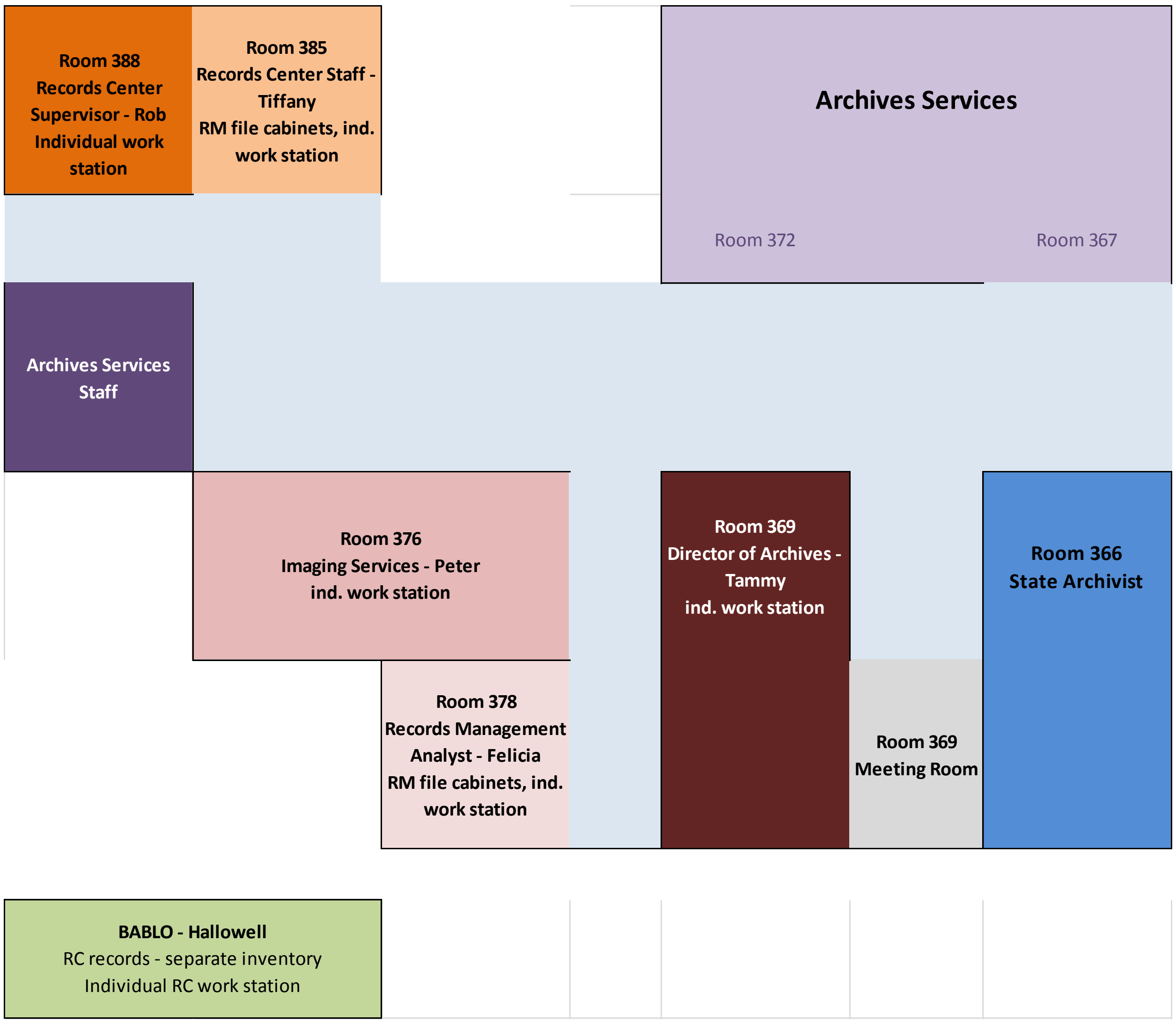
WHERE will the inventory take place and how will it be conducted.

Once you have management and staff involved, determine an inventory method, what information you want to collect, a timetable for the inventory and where that information will be found.

Draw floor plans (or maps) for records:

- Paper, microfilm, other media records - Storage areas, file cabinets, closets, offices, etc.
- Electronic – shared network drives, databases, individual work stations, etc.

Inventory Map



Conducting a Preliminary Survey

You may want to begin by conducting a preliminary survey of all office and storage areas before you begin the actual inventory to:

- identify the location of records
- estimate their total volume
- flag any hazards
- note any problems with space and storage

This will also help you draw out accurate floor plans.

Conducting the Inventory

Step Five
Conducting the Inventory – HOW

HOW to do the actual Inventory

What type of Inventory method do you want to use?
Will your Inventory team be doing all the work or will staff be assisting?

Decide on a method

- "Hands on," direct consultation and evaluation with individual office staff
- Send questionnaires/evaluations to staff for them to complete and return

Factors which can contribute to the type of method you decide to use: number of people involved, number of people on your Inventory team, scope of the Inventory and volume of records (or you can create a unique method that works for you).

Some Things to Consider

- The hands on approach may be more accurate and reliable but can also take longer and requires a greater commitment on your part.

- The questionnaire gets everyone involved but limits your oversight and may require more follow-up to make sure everything is accurate and being interpreted correctly.

- Give staff a specific time in which to complete Inventory tasks.

- Make sure staff are notified ahead of time if you are making visits to their office to conduct any kind of Inventory or assessment.

- Make sure all the Inventory forms you use are consistent and give thorough explanations on how to use them.

Possible Inventory Supplies Needed

Possible inventory supplies needed:

- ✓ organizational charts and any other material that describes the main functions of each office
- ✓ floor plans/maps
- ✓ blank inventory forms
- ✓ a letter-sized lined pad
- ✓ a ball-point pen, a pencil, a felt-tip pen or marker
- ✓ adhesive labels to identify records and containers and to show the record has been inventoried
- ✓ a flashlight, gloves, and a dust mask for storage areas

How to Conduct the Inventory

You will inventory your records as series. Series are kept together because they relate to the same topic, document the same type of transaction or are created by the same business process. It includes all formats.

Record the information you gather on an inventory form.

To help locate specific records in a series at a later date, you may find it helpful to fill out a separate form — omitting recurring data about the series — for each of the locations where records in a series are filed or stored and to consolidate the information from these forms onto a “master” inventory afterwards.

You will eventually use the information from the master inventory to develop your records schedules.

Information to Collect on the Inventory

Inventory records should include the following information (or as much as possible):

- office/program
- location
- title
- date span
- description
- arrangement
- media type
- physical size
- annual rate of accumulation
- file break (when is file closed)
- legal requirements
- vital records (necessary for disaster recovery)
- finding aids (indexes or lists)
- restrictions (confidentiality)
- related records

Information to be Included on the Inventory

For electronic records you should also include the following (or some variation of):

- File type
- Software used
- Network drive or individual work station used
- Specific file path where applicable
- Relationship to non-electronic records
- Other electronic information that would identify these records

What About Non-Records

Non-Record materials do not need to be inventoried. However, it might be a good idea to identify non-record materials and note them where appropriate for the following reasons:

1) to be recognized as such by all staff
2) be destroyed as necessary with no additional authorization
3) noted for common reference purposes

Step 6
Analyzing the Results

Once you've completed the inventory you might have piles of forms, most often organized by the locations and custodians of the files. These forms are like pieces to a puzzle that need to be assembled to create a picture of your unit's documentation. Consolidate similar records into a single record series where the descriptions and necessary retention period are the same.

- Match and Apply Records Retention Schedules - Match the records series inventoried with the records schedules. If a series of records cannot be "matched" with an existing schedule, new schedules/series will need to be created.
- Evaluate the Unscheduled Records – Determine the unscheduled records series values by considering their usefulness in documenting fiscal, legal, administrative, and historical purposes. The result of the evaluation process is to recommend the records as either archival or destroy (kept for some period of time).

Creating Policy

Once an Inventory is created, an agency Records Management Policy can be created including:

- Where records will be kept ("centralized" area, or "decentralized" at individual work stations)
- The type of documents included in the record files
- How draft documents, working papers, and copies will be handled
- Who will be responsible for maintaining the record copy (records custodian)
- How records will be maintained to allow all employees access to find and retrieve what they need
- Standards are in place so all employees are following the same procedures

Inventory Worksheet

Let’s look at the Inventory Worksheet:

1. What is your agency type (large, small, composed of several bureaus/divisions/etc.)?
2. What will you be responsible for inventorying (the whole department, one bureau, one section, etc.)?
3. How many sections or offices within that division – how are things broken down?
4. Are files kept in a central office – at separate work stations – both?
5. Are electronic files kept on a central server – at individual work stations – both?
6. Who can/should be included as part of the management inventory team?
7. What is your manager/director type? How can you get them “on board?”
8. What Records Management information can you use to promote the need for the Inventory?
9. What materials do you need for your inventory?
10. What is your reason for doing an inventory?
11. What is the scope of the inventory?
12. What method will you use to conduct the inventory?
13. Who else will be involved in conducting the inventory?
14. How much time will you allow for the inventory?
15. Who will be involved in analyzing the results?

Inventory Summary

The records inventory will provide valuable information necessary to prepare agency records retention and disposition schedules. A records inventory is an essential first step to providing the foundation for a proper records management program.

- Define the inventory's goals. Why are you conducting this inventory?
- Obtain management support and keep management and staff informed and/or involved.
- Decide how the inventory will be conducted, who will conduct the inventory, and train them properly.
- Learn where the agency's files are located (possible preliminary survey).
- Conduct the inventory.
- Verify and analyze the results.
- Plan to do the inventory every 2-3 years (or as a major event in the agency occurs).

Part II
Record Retention Schedules

Managing Your Records

In order to have the information you need (when it’s required), there has to be a way to identify, manage and retain records for the right amount of time.

A records schedule describes agency records, establishes a period for their retention by the agency, and provides mandatory instructions for what to do with them when they are no longer needed for current Government business.

Records retention schedules serve as an agency's legal authority to retain and purge records and, therefore, hold great importance.

Properly followed schedules will provide a consistency to ensure everyone in the agency is retaining records for the same amount of time.

Regardless of the format of the record or whether they leave your agency, all records need to be on approved retention schedules.

Welcome to Our Department

The Department of

Foods

Featuring:

The Bureau of Candy

The Bureau of Peanuts

The Bureau of Cookies

Creating a New Schedule

Step One
Are Records Covered by General Schedules

Determine if the records match anything that is covered by the State General Schedules.

General Record Schedules - issued by the Maine State Archives to provide retention and disposition standards for records common to most State agencies (currently 17 schedules)

Let’s take a look at the General Schedules

The State General Schedules

Do your records fall under the State General Schedules?

Most of the General Schedules relate to audit, fiscal, correspondence or other administrative office procedures.

If you are retaining records in your office that fall under the General Schedules, an agency schedule is not necessary. If you will be sending records to the Records Center or Archives (Commissioner's Correspondence for example), you will need an agency schedule to provide unique schedule and series identifiers.

Federal laws or other mandates can supersede the State General Schedules and agencies may need to keep records longer than the GS recommended times. An agency schedule would then be necessary.

Step Two
Determine Record Series

Determine what you have for records and if there is more than one series that should be part of the schedule.

What is a Record Series?
A group of related records or records created by the same business process that document the same type of transaction.

Some characteristics of a record series are:

- Produced by the same activity
- Documents a certain kind of transaction
- Relates to a particular subject
- Arranged under a single filing system

Step Three
Determine Retention and Disposition of Your Records

Unfortunately, there is no universal guide to determine retention periods and disposition methods. Each record series needs to be examined individually in regard to usage patterns, departmental needs, historic value and legal issues.

Agency retentions can vary from 6 months to 60 years (or some variation thereof), depending on a number of factors. Even records that may appear similar between two departments can have different usage patterns, and thus require different retention strategies.

Retention and Disposition

So in order to dispose of records at the appropriate time, you need to evaluate them in relation to their period of usefulness to the department.

Questions to ask:

- How long will the records be needed for business purposes, as far as the creating agency is concerned?
- What is the frequency of use?
- What is the record's value?

Total Retention Period

Time kept in your agency **PLUS** Time kept in the Records Center

Things To Consider

- Avoid the "Just in Case" or CYA syndrome.
- Information should be retained if there is a reasonable probability it will be needed at some future time to support legal or business objectives, and the consequences of its absence would be substantial but there must be justification to support your decision.
- Remember, the presence or absence of information can be either helpful or harmful; therefore the best way to minimize the risks is to provide for systematic disposal as soon as records have met their administrative, fiscal or legal requirements.
- A retention period is most likely to be valid if it is based on a consensus of the opinions of persons most knowledgeable about the value of the information – make sure you are getting the right information from the right people who can also support their opinions with fact.

Determining Retention Periods - 4 Part Criteria

1. **Administrative use:** What is the value of the records in carrying out the function of the organization? How long are they needed for immediate retrieval? *Day to day business operation; correspondence, memos, reports – typical need for these records is under 5 years and remain within the agency.*

2. **Legal requirements:** Is a certain period specified for compliance with statutes, agency rules or protection of legal rights and interests of the state? Are Federal retention periods involved? *Records mandated by law or regulation which may be needed as evidence in legal cases or leases, titles, contracts, court case files. Typically there will be specific language stating how long records are required to be retained for legal purposes and the law or statute should be cited.*

3. **Fiscal requirements:** How much time must be allowed for the completion of fiscal activities such as audit or budget? *Document an agency's fiscal responsibilities; invoices, receipts, purchase orders. Typically, audit records are kept 6 or 7 years. Some Federal requirements may be 10 years.*

4. **Historical or research purposes:** Do these records document historical events or the history and development of the organization? *Records documenting history of the agency; board minutes, agency policy decisions, Commissioner's correspondence.*

Record Disposition

Non-archival (non-permanent) retention is based completely on the record’s time-value to the business functions of the agency, including audit or other statutory requirements, and reasonable access by interested parties. (These records will be destroyed once they have met their retention.)

Archival (or what is sometimes referred to as Permanent) retention is based on the record’s value after it no longer serves the agency’s business. Think in terms of the records value in the future. 500 years from now, will someone find these records useful? Will they be needed that far in the future for any legal or historical reasons?

(This also applies to email records.)

Step Four
The Schedule Process

- The Agency Records Officer submits an Application for Records Retention Schedule and Inventory Form (available on our website) with proper justifications for the chosen retention times. Samples are also submitted.
- The application provides general information about each series to be scheduled and the Inventory provides detailed information
- Records Management will review the schedule forms for any initial questions before meeting with the State Archivist for final approval
- Signed copies of the Schedule are sent to the Records Officer once approved

Example from the Department of Fun Food

The Bureau of Candy has *Candy Coating Case Files* that need to be scheduled. They have Blue records, Yellow records, and Red records. They are all similar and related records, so will go on the same SCHEDULE as part of the *Candy Coating Case Files* but will each have their own unique SERIES – Blue, Yellow and Red.

The Candy Coating Case Files are referenced in Title 88, Chapter MM, which states that case files must be retained 10 years after close. All of the Bureau of Candy's files are kept in paper format. These documents are referenced frequently for the first 3 years after close but then rarely after that. There are 10 boxes of records in each color; date of oldest file is 2010; records are arranged alphabetically; retained by calendar year; current storage is filing cabinets; these records are confidential.

Write a Schedule for the Candy Coating Case Files and an Inventory for one of the colors.

Amending Your Schedules

When Do Schedules Need to Be Amended

After a retention schedule has been approved by the Maine State Archives, your agency may need to change it.

You might need to do this because of a change in statute or law, agency policy, in your business needs, or simply because experience with the records tells you they are being accessed more or less frequently than expected when writing the current schedule.

It could be the program has ended and these records are no longer being created and the schedule and series will be made obsolete.

Perhaps your agency is changing from paper to digital records and there will be a change in media and retention times. **Note:** We do not require an amendment for a change of media if it is an "in agency" retention only. However, if it's a change of media which will impact Records Center retention or if the series has a disposition of Archives, an amendment needs to be created.

How to Complete the Amendment

Download the Application for Records Retention Schedule form. Mark the application "amendment" and fill in the following information: series number; series title; new retention periods; schedule number. Be sure to check "change in retention" or "other" as the reason for the amendment. If you choose "other" you need to explain what you are changing.

When changing a record series description, you need to submit the Application for Record Retention Schedule (marked "amendment"), and the Record Series Inventory updated to reflect the change of description.

For any amendments to retention times or records being made obsolete, you must provide JUSTIFICATION for the change.

Where appropriate, include samples of any added/revised documents. You may need to file such an amendment if the documents in the series have changed, which usually happens when the program itself has changed.

Example from the Department of Fun Food

The Bureau of Candy has decided it needs to CHANGE its *Candy Coating Case Files*. There has been a change in Title 88, Chapter MM which has brought about the following:

The Candy Coating Case files no longer need to be retained for 10 years. This retention time has been changed to 7 years after close.

The Red program has shut down so the Red case files series is being made obsolete.

Also, the Bureau of Candy is now keeping all of its records in digital format.

Write an amendment for one of the Candy Coating Case Files

Major Revision/Merge of an Agency

Major Schedule Revisions

This will not be a simple or overnight process. It will take planning and a committed team to get the job done properly.

The first step will still be to conduct an inventory of the records.

You might want to set up an initial meeting with Records Management to put an initial plan in place and make sure you are moving in the right direction.

Meet with management and staff so they are aware of the current schedules.

Compare records from the recently conducted inventory to records from your approved retention schedules.

Consider current record trends, office procedures, structure and policy.

Determine what can stay from the old schedules, what is obsolete and what needs to be consolidated to form a “merged” schedule.

Let’s say the Bureau of Candy

merges with the

Bureau of Peanuts

to become

the Bureau of Peanut Candies

(the Bureau of Cookies don’t

care- they are still doing their own thing!)

Bureau of Candy Record Series

Director Records – 2 years in agency, Archival
Candy Coating Case Files – 10 years in agency
Chocolate Transfer Tax – 6 years in agency
Yummy Survey Reports – 2 years in agency, 5 years in RC, Archival
Who Ate the Last One Investigative Reports – 5 years in agency

Bureau of Peanuts Record Series

Director Records – 2 years in agency, Archival
Shell Expiration Case Files – 5 years in agency, 5 years in RC
Yummy Survey Reports – 2 years in agency, 5 years in RC, Archival
Who Ate the Last One Investigative Reports – 10 years in agency, 50 years in RC
Tough Nut to Crack Ledgers – 6 years in agency

Bureau of Peanut Candies Schedule/Series

Director Records – 2 years in agency, Archival (merged)
Candy Coating Case Files – 10 years in agency (same)
Chocolate Transfer Tax – 6 years in agency (same)
Yummy Survey Reports – 2 years in agency, 5 years in RC, Archival (merged but separate series)

A. Peanut
B. Chocolate

Who Ate the Last One Investigative Reports – *10 years* in agency (merged with updated retention)
Shell Expiration Case Files – 5 years in agency, 5 years in RC (same)
~~Tough Nut to Crack Ledgers – 6 years in agency~~ (made obsolete – no longer produce these)

All series from the Bureau of Candy and Bureau of Peanuts will be made obsolete. Depending on the material's retention and disposition, it may or may not become obsolete.

Sample Schedule

Take a look at your sample Agency Schedule.

What items here can be amended?

- Retention times changed
- Media updated
- Descriptions updated
- Schedule/Series made obsolete

Schedule Worksheet

Let's look at the Schedule Worksheet:

1. When was the last time your schedules were revised?
2. What references, people can you use to make justifications for retention times?
3. What records in your office need to be put on a schedule?
4. What records in your office need to be amended?
5. What records in your office need to be made obsolete?
6. Do you know of records in your office that have met their retention and need to be destroyed/purged?
7. Are there reference materials, forms, or other "non-retention" materials that are taking up office space and need to be destroyed?
8. Are there records on a schedule unnecessarily because they fall under the State General Schedules?
9. Are there records you are maintaining in both paper and electronic format? If so, why?
10. Are there records you are currently keeping in paper format that could be scanned?
11. Are there current schedules in your office that should be updated so they are under the same schedule/series?
12. What is you plan/approach to updating your schedules?
13. Who will help you?
14. What is the first thing you need to do?
15. Set a goal/time for this "first thing."

Schedule Summary

A retention schedule is a document that lists titles of the records series – which are groups of similar records that support similar business processes or other related requirements. A schedule also gives length of time the records will be retained in the office and at the Records Center, the justification for the retention and whether the final disposition of the records will be destroy or archival. All records need a clearly defined plan for retention and disposition. This is a vital component to a successful records management program.

- **Conduct an Inventory** of all records in the agency in all formats
- Appraise the records per 4 part criteria
- Conduct research to support retention times
- Design a final draft (have agency or appropriate personnel review)
- Submit Application for Records Retention Schedule (including the Series Inventory form and sample) to Archives Records Management for approval
- Conduct 2 year reviews of records and schedules

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