



## Legacy Business Records Project

### Generic Plan and Resourcing Template

#### Overview



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Every year, the Government of Canada (GoC) creates volumes of records.

There are the usual ones: correspondence, memos and notes. There are other paper records: books, plans, maps, drawings, diagrams, pictures, and graphics. And there are audio/visual physical records: photos, films, microfilms, sound recordings and videotapes and even such things as rocks, geological samples.

Some have exceeded their useful business life and we are still paying to store them. Some have archival value and should be transferred to the Archives. Some still have business value and we cannot access them. Departments have difficulty meeting the requirements of "Access to Information" legislation. These records need to be properly identified and managed.

With resource cutbacks over the last few years, this has not always happened. There is now a large and growing problem: many government institutions<sup>1</sup> do not even know all the records they have or where they all are.

Records are stored in offices, storage space in office buildings and warehouses. Some of the space belongs to the government; some is rented from private companies. Each department is likely to have several places where they keep their records. Typically there is no central control to know which records are where. As the problem gets bigger, it is getting harder and taking longer to find records when they are needed.

Departments are beginning to recognize and deal with the problem. But this is not easy and it will not be quick. One department, for example, knew they had a problem. They just did not know how big it was. With their freeze on disposing of their records over the last few years, their holdings had grown much faster than they realized. Their final count in one branch was fourteen times the original estimate.

In 2002 – 2003, LAC looked into the problem. Their research indicated that

There are probably **15 million linear feet of records** that are not under proper records management control.

This is not only an ineffective way to operate. It is also expensive. As the problem grows, costs to store and retrieve the records increase. Dealing with the problem may also not be cheap. But not dealing with it costs more. There are an estimated 15M linear feet of legacy business records that cost approximately \$254 million annually to store and access.

This is not just a question of it being inconvenient or expensive. Operating this way is high risk.

**IF A RECORD CANNOT BE FOUND, IT CANNOT BE USED OR PRESERVED.**

**IF A RECORD IS HARD TO FIND, IT COSTS MORE TO RETRIEVE**

**IF A RECORD IS KEPT BEYOND ITS USEFUL LIFE, STORING IT IS AN UNNECESSARY EXPENSE**

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<sup>1</sup> The government institutions include all those covered by the *National Archives of Canada Act*. For more information, please see the consolidated statutes at the Department of Justice website <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/N-2.5/82920.html#rid-82943>

To make it easier to read, in this document we use 'department' to cover all these institutions.

There is a real danger that we are losing key and important records of historical value.. Managers need the records to operate, to respond to Access to Information requests and for legal cases. 'Lost' and mismanaged records reduce the ability to deliver programs effectively.

Without the records, it is also more difficult for the government to demonstrate accountability and to be held accountable. And we all lose when records of our national history and collective memory are not accessible.

## 2 THE LEGACY BUSINESS RECORDS PROJECT

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) plays a lead role in helping the GoC manage its records and control their disposition. In support of its mandate, LAC is undertaking an initiative, Managing Legacy Business Records. The focus is on paper and other physical GoC records. The aims are to:

- enable access and management of still-useful records;
- preserve archival and other important records;
- ensure that the records are maintained by the appropriate institutions; and
- eliminate records that are no longer useful.

The initiative will also improve service and reduce costs.

LAC works in partnership with these government institutions. For the Legacy Business Records Project (LRP), Health Canada, the Department of Justice, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and LAC formed a working group. Their goal was to develop tools that would help any department prepare for a clean-up project. This package is the result of that work.

### 2.1 Project Scope

To keep the projects manageable, the Working Group set clear limits. The project scope was kept to 'legacy business records that are ready for disposition'.

**LEGACY BUSINESS RECORDS  
ARE NO LONGER USED;  
ARE OR CAN BE CLASSIFIED; AND  
ARE OR CAN BE COVERED BY A DISPOSITION AUTHORITY.**

The records are '**no longer used**' if they are 'dormant' or if they have passed their retention period. Dormant records are those to which reference is neither frequent nor urgent enough to warrant maintenance in relatively expensive office space and equipment.

Some records are needed for only a very short time; others are needed for much longer. All records need this 'retention period' before they can be disposed. The periods are set out in a Retention and Disposition Schedule. However, most of the records in the Legacy Business Records Disposition Project are old. The schedules may no longer exist or may not be valid. If the retention period can be set quickly, the records are kept in the project. If it is going to take too long, they go back to on-going Information Management (IM) operations.

The records must be **classified** or there must be a classification system that can be used. Another LAC project is revising the classification system for administrative records. Institutions do not have

to wait for this new classification system. They can use any valid classification system. If the records cannot be classified, they are also sent back to the on-going IM Operations.

The records are **'covered'** if the National Archivist has given the institution permission for their disposition. The National Archivist gives this authority through a Records Disposition Authority (RDA). The RDA can be either a Multi-Institutional Disposition Authority (MIDA) or an Institution Specific Disposition Authority (ISDA). MIDAs apply to multiple institutions. They cover most of the common administration functions. ISDAs cover the programs in a particular institution plus any administrative functions not covered under a MIDA. If there is no valid RDA, the records go back to the on-going IM Operations.

At the start of the project, the legacy business records are sorted by these properties. There are divided into two groups: those that can be included and those that are not yet ready for inclusion. The legacy business records that cannot be classified or that are not covered under an RDA are not part of the project. That does not mean that they are ignored. Responsibility for further action, developing a classification system or negotiating an RDA, is returned to the on-going IM Operations.

## 2.2 Project Goal

**The goal** is to complete the projects quickly, efficiently and inexpensively. This means balancing the process and **managing the risk**. The risk is that a useful or archival document is not correctly disposed. The biggest risk is that one of these records is destroyed. But leaving the records in their present state may be a bigger risk.

The Working Group looked for balance: how to do the work quickly and at a reasonable cost while disposing the records appropriately. They have included tips for 'quick hits' and shortcuts.

## 3 PROJECT TOOLKIT

The Legacy Business Records Project toolkit consists of guides and workbooks to help you plan and cost a Legacy Business Records Project for your institution.

The guides and templates are on MS Office software. You will need at least Word 6.0/95 for the text files and Excel 5.0/95 for the spreadsheets.

If you have other software, check with your IT specialists. They may be able to get you the right software or help you convert the documents.

### 3.1 Using the Toolkit

Records Managers (RM), Information Managers (IM) and Project managers (PM) are most likely to use the tools. To keep things simple, when we describe the process, we write as if you are the RM until the PM is appointed. This happens when the project has been approved to start. After that, we write as if you are the PM.

The tools are a guide. You can use as much of each template as you need and can change the templates to suit your needs.

Your first step is to complete your plan. Using the planning template, you decide which activities you will need to do. The Legacy Business Records Project, Planning Guide has more information on developing your plan.

Once you have decided what you need to do, you can decide who needs to do what. To do this, you use the Roles and Responsibilities matrix.

After you have decided 'what' and 'who', you decide 'how much effort' the activity will take. You use the Effort worksheet in the Costing Template.

You calculate the salary costs from your effort estimates. For more information on what you count and what you may decide not to count, please see Salary Costing below.

You calculate non-salary expenses on a separate worksheet. You add the salary and non-salary costs to create your budget proposal. You also use the information for the Business Case.

### 3.2 Components

The Project Toolkit consists of three guides and three templates.

The guides are:

- Legacy Business Records Project Overview (this document);
- Legacy Business Records Project, Planning Guide; and
- Legacy Business Records Project, Costing Guide'.

The templates are:

- Roles and Responsibilities Workbook;
- Effort and Salary Costing Workbook; and
- Non-salary Dollar Costing Workbook.

This Overview covers why legacy business records need to be addressed. It also has basic information about the toolkit.

The Planning Guide covers all the steps that could be done in order to deal with the records. The steps are shown in a workflow diagram. They are in the logical sequence for doing the project. The Working Group had many discussions about each step. To share their thinking, each step is described.

The Costing Guide divides the process into three parts. The first looks at who is involved in each step. The second helps you cost the effort in terms of salary dollars. The last helps you calculate the non-salary costs for each phase.

The Roles and Responsibilities Worksheet has all the tasks. It also has suggestions for who should participate in each activity. For each person or group that has a role, it shows the responsibilities.

The Effort Costing Worksheet is used first to estimate the effort for each person in terms of person-days. The Salary Costing worksheet is then used to convert the effort into salary dollars.

The Non-salary Dollar Costing Workbook has information to help you estimate the non-salary costs.

### 3.3 Structure

All the templates use the same reference framework. They are all organized around the activities in the plan. For example, activity 52 is 'Revise the retention period'. It is that same number on all documents and all worksheets.

The focus is on what has to be done.

Each activity in the plan is numbered. That number is shown on the workflow diagram. It is also used for the description of the activity.

The same number is then used on the roles and responsibilities chart.

Each activity on the salary costing template uses that same number.

The non-salary dollar costs are built on the plan phases.

### 3.4 Contents

The information is based on the Working Group's experience. More accurate information will be added as projects are completed.

The package has hotlinks to websites where you can find more detailed information. For example, there is a link to the Treasury Board website for information on Business Cases.

Some helpful information is not on a website. Where this is the case, we give the references.

## 4 SUPPORTING THE TOOLKIT

If you have any questions on this package, please contact your Records Manager. If you are the RM / IM, please contact your Archivist or your local Federal Records Centre Manager.

This is a new set of tools. We are very interested in your feedback and suggestions. You can contact us at [imgj@archives.ca](mailto:imgj@archives.ca)

The plan and costing templates are guides not answers.

They help you think your way through the process.

Only you can develop the answers that are right for your institution.