



Records Managers and the law:

What governmental bodies need to know

National Archives and Records Service of
South Africa

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Who is responsible for sound records management in governmental bodies?

Heads of governmental bodies must recognize their responsibility for the records management practices of the bodies in terms of both the National Archives and Records Service Act, 1996 and the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000. They should ensure that the budget for the records management function is sufficient and that the necessary human and technological resources are allocated to support the records management function as well as to provide access to information contained in records.

Why should heads of governmental bodies appoint records managers?

Section 13(5) of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (No. 43 of 1996 as amended) specifically requires the head of a governmental body to designate an official of the body as the records manager of the body.

The records manager is responsible for promoting the effective, efficient and accountable management of the body's records and ensuring, by inspections and other means, the body's compliance with the Act and all other relevant legislation.

At which level should the records manager be appointed?

The records manager should be a person in the senior management service either dedicated to the records management function or responsible for the oversight of functions such as corporate services, information management and information technology. The records manager should also be a deputy information officer in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000.

What should the qualification and experience of the records manager be?

It is recommended that the records manager should

- be in possession of a
 - relevant Bachelor's degree including records management; or a
 - relevant Technikon qualification including records management; and/or
- have appropriate professional knowledge and experience; and preferably
 - experience in the field of paper-based records management;
 - experience in the field of electronic records management;
- have extensive experience as a manager;
- have successfully completed the

National Archives and Records Service's Records Management Course;

- possess a thorough knowledge of the body's organizational structure, functions and records systems.

How should the records manager manage the records of a governmental body?

Detailed information regarding the management of records is contained in the National Archives and Records Service's publications:

- *Records Management Policy Manual*;
- *Managing electronic records in governmental bodies: Policy, principles and requirements*;
- *Managing electronic records in governmental bodies: Metadata requirements*;
- *Guidelines for the compilation of a records management policy*;
- *Prototype registry procedure manual*;
- *Performance criteria for records managers in governmental bodies*.

These publications are available on the National Archives and Records Service's website

<http://www.national.archives.gov.za>
or can alternatively be requested in hard copy from the Records Management Division of the National Archives and Records Service.

The following is a brief indication of the duties required of records managers:

- Establish and maintain a records management unit
- Formulate and implement a records management strategy and related records management action plans
- Formulate and implement a records management policy and related records management procedures
- Compile and maintain approved records classification system(s) for paper-based and electronic records
- Manage electronic correspondence systems, e-mail and websites with an Integrated Document Management System
- Implement systematic disposal programmes to reduce the storage cost involved in storing records no longer required for administrative, legal and functional purposes after a written disposal authority has been obtained from the National Archivist
- Keep all records in safe custody
- Inspect sub-offices to ensure that sound records management practices are followed
- Ensure that records management and registry staff are trained to apply the proper registry procedures to facilitate sound management of records
- Train creators of records to allocate file reference numbers/subjects to records according to the approved file plan;
- Address information security classification and declassification procedures as prescribed by the information security policy;
- Provide access to information contained in records in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000.

The structure of a records management unit

Ideally and depending on the size of the body, it is recommended that governmental bodies establish a directorate that should keep and manage the general records in all formats. The human resources manager should be designated a deputy records manager to take responsibility for keeping and managing the human resources records in all formats.

Each records management unit should establish a registry for paper-based records and depending on the amount of work should appoint a registry head and sufficient staff to deal with the incoming work.

The records manager is also responsible for the management of the body's electronic records. The records manager should, besides those functions mentioned above:

- conduct regular inspections to ensure that the storage of all records in all formats and media conforms to the legal requirements and to the storage standards for that specific media type;
- conduct regular inspections of all records stored on magnetic, optical and magneto-optical storage media to check for data degradation;
- conduct regular inspections of all records storage areas to ensure that proper access controls are in place;
- ensure that, when providing access to electronic records, read only copies of the information are provided and that users cannot access the original records;
- conduct regular test samples on the electronic records to ensure that migration and long term preservation strategies are adhered to and that the records are kept

accessible;

- ensure that all shortcomings in the safe storage of electronic records are addressed appropriately.

Ideally the records manager should designate the IT Head as a deputy records manager to assist in carrying out these functions since they are technical in nature.

Deputy records managers should report directly to the records manager regarding all records management related issues.

Should a governmental body have regional and district offices, deputy records managers should be appointed in those offices. The deputy records managers should report to the records manager. Registries should be established in the same manner as in the head office and should be staffed sufficiently to carry the workload of the regional or district office. Should the regional offices store records on electronic media those records should also be managed by the deputy records managers in the same manner as mentioned above.

Further information

Further guidance on the appointment of a records manager can be obtained from:

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