



Records and Information Management

Filing Procedures

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PREAMBLE

This document describes the manner in which RTI Unit records are to be created/captures, files constructed, records retained, reviewed, archived or disposed. The guidelines are to be used by staff of the RTI Unit.

POLICY SUPPORTED

RTI Unit Records and Information Management Policy and Vanuatu National Policy on Records and Information Management

SCOPE

The guidelines & procedures set out here is applicable to all RTI Unit employees, including contractors, consultants and volunteers.

STANDARDS AND LEGISLATIONS

The RTI Unit is established in the Right to Information Act 13 of 2016 and the RTI Unit is required to observe its legislation including other legislation or policy in the capturing and retention of records. Some other legislation that relates to the recordkeeping requirements for RTI Unit appears in the RTI Unit Records Management Policy.



RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility of the RTI Unit

The RTI Unit is required to comply with the “Right to Information Act” through implementation of records management practices and systems that are in accordance with the RTI Unit Record Management Policy and Records Management Standards endorsed by the National Records and Information Management Committee. The RTI Unit also has an obligation to comply with other legislations that impacts upon the records that are created/captured, managed and kept.

Responsibilities of the Director (Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination)

The Director is responsible for ensuring that the procedures are endorsed, observed and implemented within the RTI Unit. The Director will also contribute to the review of the Records Management Guidelines & Procedure.

Responsibilities of the RTI Unit Manager

The RTI Unit Manager is responsible to ensure that all staffs of the RTI Unit:

- understand their personal responsibilities for compliance with the RTI Unit’s Recordkeeping plan;
- Contribute to the review of the Records Management Guidelines & Procedures.

Responsibilities of the Information and Communication Technology staff

The ICT staff must ensure that: -

- they understand the guidelines & procedures set out in this document;
- they understand the RTI Unit’s recordkeeping plan;
- the Document Management System use by RTI Unit is well maintained and secure; and
- they assist the Records Management Officer to provide training on the Document Management System.

Responsibilities of the Records Management Officer

The Records Management Officer is responsible for advising the RTI Manager on the appropriate ways in which the RTI Unit may comply with relevant legislations on records management.

Under the direction of the Director and the RTI Unit Manager, the Records Management Officer is responsible for the development, writing and implementation of records management policies, guidelines and procedures that are in compliance with the relevant legislations.



The Records management Officer is responsible for the development and implementation of relevant training and awareness programs for recordkeeping.

Responsibilities of all RTI Unit staffs

Each member of staff is responsible for understanding their obligations and responsibilities to create or capture and main RTI Unit records, or send them for archiving/disposal.

MANAGEMENT OF DIFFERENT RECORDS

RTI Unit Record

A record is a record created or captures in any kind of medium, which is required, under the RTI Unit's Record plan to be created/captured, and retained. RTI Unit records stored electronically must be saved onto the RTI Unit's electronic document management system Saperion for safe keeping.

RTI Unit records are those that relate in some way to the Unit's business. Examples of such records are records which:

- Constitute formal communication bet ween staff, or between management and staffs. Often what appears to be an information exchange may develop into a more serious matter requiring formal intervention. A "file note" which briefly records the principal matters discussed, the people involved, and the date and time of the exchange should be made and filed;
- Constitute formal communication between the RTI Unit and another internal or external entity;
- Approve or authorise actions or expenditure;
- Signify changes in policy, or procedure or record policy or procedural development;
- Contain and instruction or advice which will constitute a precedent;
- Involve negotiations on behalf of the RTI Unit;
- Impact upon other members of the RTI Steering Committee or upon other individual related to the RTI Unit.

Audio & Video Records

Audio and video files can be created as part of the awareness programs of the RTI Unit and these audio and video files that are significant to RTI Unit must be digitised and captured onto the electronic document management system Saperion.

Drafts Documents

A draft document should be retained on file, where it represents a version of a final document, which is significantly different from that final version. This allows for tracking of the evolution of an important record. In the case where the draft documents are stored electronically they must be captured onto the electronic document management system Saperion.



Drafts of the following kinds should be retained:

- Drafts relating to the RTI Unit’s policy or procedures, with significant or substantial changes relative to a previous version, or the subsequent version; or continuing annotations made by a senior officer, whose views on the draft are important, or who is the officer who is responsible for the final document;
- Drafts relating to the formulation of legislation or amendments to existing legislation;
- Drafts of legal documents e.g. agreements, contracts, tenders for provision of service

Materials such as spread sheets, minute extracts, budget information and the like which are used to prepare a final document need not be retained, provided they are not originals (or copies which come within the definition of “duplicate copies”).

Duplicate Records

It is the responsibility of the originator of a document that is addressed to multiple recipients to ensure that the original is retained in accordance with the RTI Unit’s Recordkeeping plan.

A recipient of a copy of a communication that clearly has multiple addressees may destroy that copy, unless he recipient has made annotations against his/her copy and addressed them to the originator or a third person. A copy of a record that has annotations or notes constitutes an original record, and cannot be destroyed. It must be retained in and captured onto Saperion.

Ephemeral Records

Records of very short term or only local value are identified as ephemeral records, these records contain information that is of little to no value to the RTI Unit or anyone else, these may be simply email messages asking you to go to lunch, or asking when a meeting is or be a piece of advertising. These records can be later destroyed.

Examples of ephemeral records include records which:

- Are distributed for information purposes e.g. newsletters, circulars, general notices, copies of document extracts;
- Drafts of document (except where they track significant changes which may be referred to in an evidentiary way);
- Are created solely as part of the preparation for other records;
- Personal messages and announcements which are unrelated to official RTI business.

Financial Records

The RTI Unit must comply with the approved disposal authority for financial records for the disposal of these records. In many cases financial records may be incorporated into the administrative records system. All supporting financial documents must be retained for the terms are specified in the *Public Finance and Economic Management Act*.

Electronic Mail (e-mail)

Communication via e-mail constitutes official communication that is conducted electronically. The requirements relating to the capture/creation, retention, archival or destruction of paper copies apply to electronic mail transactions. Letters sent out via emails must be saved onto the RTI shared folder under the correct heading. Copies of emails with evidence of business activities carried out by the RTI Unit must be saved to PDF file onto the RTI shared drive. Saving emails as PDF files will ensure that the content of the information cannot be altered.

Electronic Records

Staffs are encouraged to generate and disseminate information in electronic formats to improve productivity and facilitate timely communication. Such electronic records form part of the RTI Unit's record and will be subject to the same conditions as any other record format. Therefore they must be managed and integrated into the RTI Unit recordkeeping systems just as other record formats are.

The RTI Unit currently does not have an electronic document management system however it has a shared folder which RTI Unit records can be filed onto using the same headings in the *Record and Information Management Plan*. All RTI Unit records created or received electronically; including word processing documents and electronic mail messages should be save onto the shared folder under the correct heading and entered into the index.

Shared folders on the network can continue to be used for now as main storage for electronic files. However shared folders are not safe because information in it can be altered and even deleted without any permission and this can result in loss of information. Staffs using documents in the folder cannot be tracked and therefore poses a risk to the documents in the shared folder so this folder can only be used temporarily until a document management system is established.

As the RTI Unit moves to a more electronically managed information environment appropriate guidance will be developed.



Legal Records

Legal records include, for example, Agreements, Contracts, Memorandum of Understanding, Licences and Legal Certificates. Legal records are considered vital records to the RTI Unit for the period of the title, licence, agreement or contract and short period thereafter. Therefore the records must be protected to ensure they are not lost, modified or damaged in any way.

Mails

Every RTI Unit officer is responsible for ensuring that the records they generate/receive are properly captured onto official recordkeeping systems. It is therefore the responsibility of each Unit staff to scan and save every mails going out into the RTI shared drive. It is important that all files saved must be recorded in the index available.

“Post It” Notes

“Post It” Notes (i.e. note paper which has an adhesive backing) **must not be used** for the writing of annotations, decisions, or actions that have long term value. Such stationary should only be used for conveying **ephemeral** information, which is not required to be retained for evidentiary purposes as described in the RTI Unit’s Recordkeeping Plan.

Notes that contain significant information should be written directly on to the documents, or on separate A4 size sheets that can be attached to the original document.

Where a “Post It” Note has been used to record important information, it **must be** photocopied onto standard A4 size sheets and placed on file; or scanned as a file note (where there is an electronic document management system).

Research Data and Records

Research or surveys conducted by the RTI Unit must be captured and retained for further reference as evidence of the research that has been conducted.

Research data and records are subject to normal retention requirements and thus must not be destroyed unless in accordance to the “*Records and Information Management Plan*”. The RTI Unit Management will approve for any research data and records to be destroyed.



RTI Steering Committee Records

RTI Steering Committee records (policies, procedures, minutes, agendas and attached papers) are important records of the RTI Unit. They record the approval of the recommended courses of action and the decision making process. They are essential for accountability and therefore must be retained.

Any decisions or recommendations for which the RTI Unit may be held accountable are to be adequately documented to meet that accountability requirement, including oral decisions and commitments. Recommendations that are part of the decision making process and all options considered during the process must also be adequately documented, along with the decision maker's reasons for accepting or rejecting them.

Rules for conducting meetings should specify the type of record to be made of those meetings. Arrangements should be made for the decisions of the meeting to be documented and should include a copy of the agenda and all documents considered at, or resulting from, the meeting. Those attending the meeting should be given an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the minutes.

Staff Records

Staff files must be maintained by the administration of the DSPPAC and copies should be kept in the RTI Unit filing system. All original records must be sent to the administration for processing, registration and attachment to official staff files.

Telephone Conversations

In many cases it is necessary to make a file note of a telephone conversation as evidence of the telephone conversation and the matters discussed. File notes should be created where it is necessary to record any decisions or discussions that can be used as evidence of what has been discussed in the telephone conversation.

Details to include as part of the file note are the date and time of the telephone call, whom the call was with and an outline of the telephone conversation, including any verbal decisions and/or agreements made.

Voice mail messages may also contain important information. A voice message that does should be recorded as a file note; or the actual message may be saved as a record.

Web Sites

Official web sites of the RTI Unit are part of the Unit's records as they disseminate information to the wider community including staffs and the general public. This information may be used as evidence of fact and therefore must also be captured and kept as a record.

During the setting up of an electronic document management system the RTI Unit's website **must** be captured and preserved in the format and style that is suitable to the document management system. Since there is currently no document management system



within the RTI Unit and DSPPAC it is recommended that website pages be saved onto the RTI shared folder under the correct heading.

Working Documents

Working papers are to be retained on file, when they document significant decisions, reasons for decisions, and action notes, or contain significant information that is not contained in the final document.

Examples of working documents that must be retained include:

- Working papers/records of a staff member who is working on a project/investigation, where the papers constitute the original, substantive record of the project/investigation (i.e. they contain substantial and valuable information not found elsewhere);
- Papers in an “unofficial” filing system, where a registered file has yet to be created within the RTI Unit’s recordkeeping system. Such papers **must** be sent for filing when the project/investigation is complete.

The destruction of working documents must be in accordance with the RTI Unit’s Record Plan.



FILES AND FILE CREATION

All official records of the RTI Unit **must** be placed on official files. Staff may continue to use working files. However no original RTI Unit records are to be placed on those working files. Files are created using the RTI Unit record plan; staffs must check the index first to see if a file under their heading has been created to prevent duplicating files. The records management officer can assist in this area if needed. The files must be filed in the filing cabinets when created and indexed. Delays in filing information to the core records management system also exposed records to alteration and deletion, ultimately impacting on the integrity and authenticity of the record.



CLASSIFICATION

	File Number	File Subheading	Title	Format	Date	From	To	Keywords
4	RTI-RIM-02-2015	Policy	Records and Information Management Policy	MS Word	01-Dec-15			Records Management Policy
5	RTI-RIM-03-2015	NRIMD Committee	NRIMD Committee Consultation with National Archives	PDF	11-Nov-15	June Naviti	Cathy Nunn; Augustine Tevimule	National Records & Information Management Development Committee
6	RTI-RIM-04-2015	NRIMD Committee	NRIMD Committee Briefing note	MS Word	27-Nov-15	RTI Unit, OGCIO	DG, PMO	National Records & Information Management Development Committee National Records & Information

To ensure official records of the RTI Unit are adequately managed and retrievable all RTI Unit records are to be classified and placed in appropriate files titled in accordance with the RTI Unit’s *Records Management and Information Plan*. This will assist in the overall management of records from the time of creation through its active life and to its final disposition in accordance with the RTI Unit’s Recordkeeping Plan. The Records Management Officer can provide assistance in the Records plan if needed. It is highly recommended that when saving new files onto the shared drive then number the saved documents from 01 upwards. Follow on the next number (02; 03; 04-) when saving another document under the same heading. This will allow the documents to fall in a sequence.



INDEXING

Each record is to be indexed through the allocation of appropriate terms to assist in the retrieval process across classifications and categories of records. A Microsoft access/word or excel database is to be created for the purpose of indexing and must be printed for reference when the electricity turns off. This index document must be saved on the shared RTI folder. Indexing terms can be derived from:

- a) The format or nature of the record,
- b) The title or main heading of the record,
- c) The subject content of the record, usually in accord with the business activity,
- d) The abstract of a record,'
- e) Dates associated with transactions recorded in the record,
- f) Names of clients or organizations,
- g) Particular handling or processing requirements,
- h) Attached documentation not otherwise identified, or
- i) The purpose of the records.

In the event of the RTI Unit establishing an electronic document management system, much of the indexing will be provided by such a system automatically. However specific metadata elements will be required to be entered by the user to assist in the retrieval of those records.

SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

Electronic records must be accessible at all time and the necessary software and hardware required to access electronic records must also be maintained. Alternatively methods to transfer old data to new mediums may be used whereby the data itself is not modified. When electronic records are migrated to other systems the integrity of the record must be preserved, as well as the content, context and metadata. The records must be able to function as it did prior to the migration to the new system or process.

Details of this process **must** be recorded as proof of transfer by the signing of a document detailing the process that has been used and it must be witnessed and signed by the witness of the process.



RECORDS STORAGE

Records must be stored in conditions that ensure that they are readily accessible and retrievable for the length of time they are retained.

- a) Records should be stored in conditions that take into account their physical characteristics, sensitivity, retention period and expected access rate.
- b) The physical environment should be clean and free from dust.
- c) Records should never be exposed to direct sunlight and should be kept away from other sources of direct light and heat as much as possible.
- d) The physical area must be free from insects and rodents.
- e) There should be a minimal risk of damage from natural disaster such as fire, water and mould.
- f) It should be possible to retrieve records accurately and in a time period appropriate to the urgency of the retrieval request.
- g) It must provide adequate security to protect confidential or restricted information

All official records must be stored in such a way as to minimise the potential for unauthorised access.

Inactive Records Storage

Records which are no longer required for day-to-day access that have been identified as having a specific temporary retention period are to be removed from working office areas.



Those inactive records are to be stored in boxes or similar packaging to protect them from light and dust. Only approved boxes may be used to store inactive records. Proper archive boxes can be purchased from Microtech or Sharper Image stationaries. Twisties boxes or other improper boxes must not be used for storing records.

All files or group of records placed into an approved storage box **must be listed** with a brief description of the subject matter (this may be simply the file title) with at least one copy of the list placed in the box and one copy retained on file for retrieval purposes.

Each file listed within a box must have an identified disposal date or be identified as a permanent record that is approved by the RTI Unit management and National Archives for permanent storage. Disposal dates can be determined with the use of the approved “*Records and Information Management Record Plan*” from the National Archives.

The boxes should be clearly marked and identifiable from other boxes with the aid of a unique box reference number and description of the contents.



The RTI Unit is required to store the inactive records in appropriate storage areas. This will ensure the records are preserved for length of time that they are required to be retained by law. Access to storage areas is restricted to staff with appropriate authority.

Records of Continuing/Permanent Value

Records that have been identified as having permanent or continuing value are to be stored in conditions that satisfy minimum standards as provided by the National Archives of Vanuatu records storage. These records can be identified according to the RTI policy, RTI Act and other related legislations.

Those records of permanent value will be transferred to the National Archives of Vanuatu for appropriate storage under controlled conditions.

Disposal of Records

Records may only be disposed of in accordance with the *Records and Information Management Disposal Schedule* and “disposal authority” that have been approved by the National Records and Information Management Committee.

A list of records due for destruction must be created and approved by the RTI Unit Management before records are destroyed. A disposal list must contain a complete listing of all records that are proposed for destruction along with the respective disposal authority reference for each record.

Records must be destroyed adequately so that they may not be recreated in any form and confidentiality of the records must be maintained throughout the destruction process. A copy of all disposal lists must be retained as a permanent record of those records that have been destroyed.

ACCESS AND SECURITY

Records must be securely maintained to prevent unauthorised access, alteration, deletion, damage or removal. All records created by a staff member in the course of their duties must be managed in accordance with confidentiality principles set out by the RTI Unit and DSPPAC. Such records **must not** be divulged or released to unauthorised persons without authorisation from the RTI Unit Manager or Director, DSPPAC. Appropriate procedures must be followed to release information from right to information requests.

Staffs are required to use discretion in regard to release of ephemeral information; as such records may contain confidential information, for example, internal contact information or telephone numbers that are not normally publically available. If in doubt, RTI Unit staff must consult the RTI Unit Manager.



File Access and Exemption

At the time of creation of any new file the access and exemption of that file must be established. A clear identification of who can and cannot have access to the file must be provided with the application for a when creating new files. The *Right to Information Act* gives the right to access and exemptions for access to information.

Clearly mark the file with the exemption notes below from the *Official Secrets Act* and the *Right to Information Act*—

- a) Classified material (as specified in the *Official Secrets Act*)
- b) Personal privacy
- c) Legal privilege
- d) Commercial and Confidential information
- e) Health and safety
- f) Law enforcement
- g) Defence and security
- h) Economic interests of the state

Consult part 5 of the *Right to Information Act* for more details on the exemption of information. All confidential files must be clearly marked and have with them the access permission details on the file.

Access can be provided through the RTI policy and legislation however part 5 of the legislation provides exemptions on providing some information. Any and all requests for confidential files must be checked for authorisation and if a person making the request is not listed as authorised, access must not be given. The person requesting the file may make an application to the file's originator for access to the file. Where access is permitted, in writing, the person may then be added to the access list for that particular file.

Access to Electronic Records

Electronic records must be protected from unauthorised access at all times. Access restrictions created for hard copy records also apply to electronic records. Access to records must only be provided in accordance with the RTI policy and applicable legislations.

Access to Secondary Storage Areas

No access to secondary storage records will be permitted without authorisation from the RTI Unit Management. Access to inactive records will also be subject to supervision by the records management staff at all times during the period of access.

Access to Archived Records

Records archived under the terms of the *National Archives Act* will be accessible for Right to Information purposes, subject to the terms of access contained within the *Right to*

Information Act and any access restriction applied to the records as prescribed also in the *Right to Information Act*.

STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICE ON RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The RTI Unit Records Management will from time to time publish guides and standards to assist with the management of the RTI records in compliance with the RTI Policies, Procedures as well as any other related legislation and standards produced by the National Record and Information Management Committee.



ACRONYMS

DSPPAC	Department of Strategic Planning, Policy and Aid Coordination
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISO	International Standards on Records Management
NAV	National Archives of Vanuatu
RIM	Records and Information Management
RTI Unit	Right to Information Unit



GLOSSARY

Access

The right, opportunity means of finding, using or retrieving information.

Appraisal

The process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be captured and how long the records need to be kept, to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations.

Archives

1. Records of organisations and individuals that have been selected for indefinite retention on a basis of continuing value for legal, administrative, financial or historical research purposes.
2. The name given to the repository in which an archival collection resides.
3. An organisation (or part of an organisation) whose main function is to select, manage, preserve and make archival records available for use.

Capture

Is the process of determining that a record should be made and kept. This includes both records created and received by the RTI Unit. It involves deciding which documents are captured, which in turn implies decisions about who may have the access to those documents and generally how long they are to be retained.

Current Records/Active Records

Records regularly used for the conduct of the current business of an organization. Current records are normally maintained in or near the office of origin and use.

Disposal

A range of processes associated with implementing appraisal decisions. These include the retention, deletion or destruction of records in or from recordkeeping systems. They may also include the migration or transmission of records between recordkeeping systems, and the transfer or custody or ownership of records.

Disposal Authority

A document approved by the National Archives (Archives Act cap 216 section 8) that describes classes of records and defines minimum period of time that records must be kept (retention periods) and consequent permitted disposal actions. The disposal authority covers all records created or received by the RTI Unit regardless of format, location or age.



Electronic Records

Any combination of text, graphics, data, audio, pictorial or other information represented in digital form that is created, modified, maintained, archived, retrieved, or distributed by a computer system.

Ephemeral Records

Records that have short-term value to the RTI Unit with little or no ongoing administrative, fiscal, legal, evidential, or historical value.

Evidence

Means information that tends to prove a fact and supports the business activities of the RTU Unit.

File

An organized assembly of correspondence or documents logically arranged, relating to a specific function or an activity and maintained in a folder. An official file is a registered file and whose existence is documented.

File Classification scheme/ File Plan

A system that identifies related records by functions or subject and subject and places them in their distinctive classes. In a procuring entity’s file classification scheme, procurement is a distinctive function and therefore generates related records, which form unique series.

Indexing

Means the process of establishing access points to facilitate retrieval of records and/or information.

Migration

The transfer of data in electronic form from one hardware or software configuration or generation to another.

Preservation

All actions taken to retard deterioration of or prevent damage to records. It involves controlling the environment and conditions of use, and may include treatment in order to maintain an object as nearly as possible in an unchanging state.

Public records

Records created or received by government agencies.

Record

A document regardless of form or medium created, received, maintained and use by an organization (public or private) or an individual in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business of which it forms a part or provides evidence.

Recordkeeping

Making and maintaining of complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information.

Records management

That area of general administrative management concerned with achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records of an organization throughout their life cycle, and in making the information they contain available in support of the business of that organization.

Records retention/Disposal schedule

A document which specifies the length of time each type of record will be retained, and the applicable disposal action. The disposal action may take the form of preservation in closed records room, transferred to the National Archives or destruction if it is deemed to be valueless upon completion of required retention period.

Registration

Means the act of giving a record a unique identity in a recordkeeping system.

Retention period

In relation to a record, means the period for which the record must be kept before it may be destroyed.

Working Files

Temporary file containing data, computations, documents, drafts, records, rough notes, and sketches employed in the analysis or preparation of plans, projects or other documents.

