

What happens when the Office of Primary Responsibility changes?

What is an Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR)?

For purposes of records management, an OPR is a public body or part thereof (i.e. division, unit, section) that is responsible for the care, custody, and control of a particular series of records (both physical and electronic). Generally, the OPR is considered the “official” holder of the record, although other offices may have copies. The OPR should have the complete version of the records. These are the records generally transferred to the Provincial Archives for preservation according to approved retention and disposition schedules.

Examples of OPR:

- Department of Social Development is the only public body responsible for Income Assistance Client Records. No other public body would create or have custody of those records. As a result, the department is considered the Office of Primary Responsibility for that records series, which would be managed according to a unique *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule*.
- Office of the Auditor General is the public body responsible for the completion of audits. Although other public bodies may have copies of records relating to a specific audit, they would file their records according to the *Classification Plan and Retention Schedule for Common Records (CPRS)*. The Office of the Auditor General has an operational retention and disposition schedule governing the management and disposition of the records pertaining to specific audits.
- Employee Work Plans – A public body’s human resources division is responsible for the management and maintenance of an employee’s performance evaluation and work plan. However, managers as well as employees may choose to keep a copy in their office for reference. In this case, the work plan held by human resources would be considered the “official” record while the employee or manager’s copy would be considered a duplicate non-record. Thus, the Human Resources Division is the OPR.

How do I know if my office is the OPR?

An OPR is identified by determining if your office/division/section is accountable or responsible for a specific function and thus for the care and control of records associated with this function or activity. In some instances, the OPR may be split between offices, such as in the case of agreements and contracts. As a result, there may be more than one OPR for a particular body of records, but they may serve different purposes and be viewed in different contexts. In cases where there is more than one OPR for a particular records series, each public body has a unique retention and disposition schedule governing the records’ lifecycle.

What do I do with the records if the OPR changes?

In the event that the care, custody, and control of a records series is transferred from your office to another, the departmental records manager responsible for the records must:

- ✓ Inform the Corporate Information Management Unit at the Provincial Archives that a series of records is to be transferred to another public entity, providing the name of the entity to which the records are being transferred, the name of the individual who will be responsible for the records, and the records retention and disposition schedule(s) ;
- ✓ Notify staff who may have relevant records in their care of the upcoming transfer and request that they be forwarded to you as the departmental records manager for inventorying (including electronic records);
- ✓ If an inventory of all records does not exist, compile a listing of the records and their respective format - both physical and electronic.
- ✓ Gather all records management information pertaining to the series of records (i.e. *Records Transfer Lists*, relevant retention and disposition schedules, regulatory requirements, special procedures, disposition notices, etc.);
- ✓ Forward the inventory and any pertinent information, as outlined above, to the public entity to which the records are being transferred;
- ✓ Box the records and transfer them to the receiving public entity;
- ✓ Destroy duplicate copies of records and non-records (paper and electronic) once the transfer is complete and verified;
- ✓ Document the transfer of custody and keep a record of this transaction.

The records manager/accountable in the receiving public body must;

- ✓ Acknowledge the receipt of the transfer;
- ✓ Ensure adequate space is available for the incoming records;
- ✓ Notify the Corporate Information Management Unit that the transfer has taken place;

Note: In the event that a public body responsible for the creation and management of a particular records series ceases to exist altogether, and where records for a particular series will no longer be created, please contact the Government Records Archives Unit – provincial.archives@qnb.ca. They will assist public bodies with the transfer and/or disposal of the records.