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Department:
Environment & Nature Conservation
NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X6102, Kimberley, 8300, Metlife Towers, T-Floor, Tel: 053 807 7300, Fax: 053 807 7328

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION

RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY 05 FEBRUARY 2014 ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT SERVICES VERSION 02

"A PROSPEROUS AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY LIVING IN HARMONY WITH OUR NATURAL RESOURCES"

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1. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The corporate memory of any organization hinges on good record keeping. In a democracy where governmental bodies are required to account for each and every action, it is obligatory to have good records systems in place. Hence, efficient Records Management provides for the integrity, accessibility and appropriate confidentiality of recorded information.

Information should be equated the same importance to good management as other standard resources like people, money and facilities. The information resources of Department of Environment and Nature Conservation (the department) must therefore be managed as a valuable asset. Therefore, appropriate Records Management will be a vital aspect in maintaining and enhancing the value of this asset.

As a result, Records management will result in the improved use of information resources, giving immediate benefits to the institution, and specific cost avoidance and cost reductions. Savings and efficiencies that derive from improved Records Management techniques are recognized attributes of sound Records Management practices.

1.1 Definitions:

- A20 records** : means valuable records that should be transferred to an appropriate archives repository for permanent preservation twenty years after the end of the year in which the record was created.
- Archives** : means records, with permanent value, which are in the custody of an archives repository or records center.
- Closed volumes of records** : means volumes of records in a current classification plan that have reached a thickness of 3cm or become full, after which a new volume is then opened.
- Disposal** : means the action which takes place when a body transfers permanently valuable archival records (A20 value) to an Archives repository, destroys records that are ephemeral (D value) or transfers any records from one institution to another. The National/Provincial Archivist determines the values of records and no records whatsoever may be transferred or destroyed without written authorization from one of these two officials.
- D records** : means records with little archival value and which may be destroyed after written disposal authority has been obtained from the National/Provincial Archivist.
- Electronic or E-Records** : means records generated electronically and stored by means of computer technology.
- File** : means an organized arrangement of records on the same subject matter in chronological order in the same cover/folder.



- File Plan** : means a classification plan for the identification, arrangement, storage and retrieval of records. It includes the file plan for correspondence, a Records Control Schedule for records other than correspondence files and classification systems for electronic records.
- Governmental body** : means any legislative, executive, judicial or administrative organ of state (including a statutory body).
- Record** : means recorded information, regardless of form or medium, created or received by a governmental body in the execution of its activities.
- Records Management** : means the management of recorded information resource in a manner that makes information easily accessible, securely protected, stored and disposed of when no longer required for administrative, legal, executive and operational purposes.

1.2 Legislative framework

Within the Legislative framework of South Africa, there are certain acts and regulations which impact the way in which government manages its recorded information resources. This legislation is applicable to all public bodies irrespective of size or activity:

- **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act (no. 1 of 1996)**
- **Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (no. 25 of 2002)**
- **National Archives and Record Service Act (no. 43 of 1996) as amended**
- **Minimum Information Security Standards (Second Edition) March 1998**
- **Promotion of Access to Information Act (no. 2 of 2000)**
- **Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (no. 3 of 2000)**
- **Public Finance Management Act (no. 1 of 1999)**

1.3 Relationship with other Policies

This Policy will operate in unison with other documents that cover the unique nature of the broad spectrum of records generated by the department. The aforementioned documents, will be introduced as the need arises and will be managed by the Records Manager.

This policy will operate concurrently with the following policies:

- Electronic Records Management Policy;

Other policies that are closely related to the Records Management Policy are

- The information Security Policy which is managed by the Security Manager.
- The Information and Communications technology Policy which is managed by the Information Technology Manager.
- The ICT Disaster Management Policy which is managed by Information Technology Manager.

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2. POLICY STATEMENT AND APPLICATION SCOPE

The purpose of the National Archives and Records Service Act is to provide for the proper management and care of the records of governmental bodies. Hence, the DENC has ultimately decided to codify a set of principles which will identify and protect its records.

All records that are created or received by the department in the execution of its functions (including electronic records, e.g. e-mail) are public records. Section 32(1)(a) of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to access any information held by the State or held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.

The records of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation will comply with the rules of evidence. This entails, inter alia, that they are managed throughout their life cycle by corporate-wide systems and procedures, that this can be proven, and that they are managed corporately (and NOT in terms of personalized "information management systems").

Consequently, the department considers its records as a valuable asset which will:

- Enable the Department to locate the right information easily and comprehensively;
- Enable the Department to perform its functions successfully and efficiently and in an accountable manner;
- Support the business, legal and accountability requirements of the department
- Ensure the department conducts all its business in an orderly, efficient and accountable manner;
- Ensure the consistent delivery of services;
- Support and document policy formation and administrative decision-making;
- Provide continuity in the event of a disaster (disaster management);
- Protect the interests of the department and the rights of employees, clients and present and future stakeholders;
- Support and document the departments activities, developments and achievements;
- Provide evidence of business in the context of cultural activity and contribute to the cultural identity and collective memory of the Northern Cape Province.

2.1 Policy Objectives

The following broad principles apply to the record keeping and Records Management practices of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation:

- a) To ensure that the Department follows sound procedures for the creation, maintenance, retention and disposal of all records, including electronic records.
- b) To ensure that the Records Management procedures of the Department comply with legal requirements, including those for the provision of evidence.
- c) To ensure that the Department follows sound procedures for the security, privacy and confidentiality of its records.



- d) To ensure that Electronic records in the Department are managed according to the principles promoted by the Provincial Archives and Records Service.
- e) To ensure that the Department has performance measures for all Records Management functions and reviews compliance with these measures.
- f) For this policy to become effective both the Head of Department and the Provincial Archivist have to approve and sign it. A copy has to be submitted to the Provincial Archivist for record and registration purposes.

2.2 Classification Systems and Procedures

There are three file plans in use in the department, namely the Line functions file plan and the two uniform file plans which are the Support and Personnel file plans, which are approved standard file plans.

2.2.1 Files

- i. File requests should be submitted before **09h00** the day the file is needed. Requests received after **09h00** will be dealt with the following day.
- ii. Files should be returned within a day /or on maximum of five working days;
- iii. It is paramount that at all times files be kept behind locked doors,
- iv. Officials who do not return files within the maximum time period will be send reminders to return them with a written report explaining the delay.

2.2.2 Correspondence Records

No correspondence, whether paper-based or electronic/digital, shall leave the Department without an approved reference number. This specifically includes facsimiles and items destined to be delivered by hand. All outgoing and incoming correspondence (whether via hand, post office or facsimile) are only to be handled through the Registry.

No incoming correspondence (whether via hand, post office or facsimile) shall be distributed to the officials for whom it is intended, except on the correct subject file as prescribed by the approved file plans.

Neither the Head of Department (HOD) nor the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) will accept or sign any submissions/letters/ memoranda that do not contain approved reference numbers.

a) Letters

Official letters addressed to persons by name shall be opened by Registry staff and delivered to them in the appropriate manner.

The mailbag is received in the registry, and opened and sorted by at least two officials, to whom this function has been assigned in writing.

Staff members are advised not to use the official postal address for private business as this can lead to their private correspondence being opened unintentionally. The registry accepts no responsibility for private post. In order to ensure that public resources are used exclusively for the purposes for which they were intended, the following procedures pertain to private mail.

- i. A staff member newly appointed in the Department shall be given the privilege of using the Department's private Bag as his/her postal address for a period not exceeding three months.
- ii. After the three month period, it is expected that the official concerned would have secured his/her own postal facilities.
- iii. Once the three month period has passed. All private mail of the official concerned shall be placed in the cardboard box intended for this purpose outside the registry door. The official concerned is responsible him/herself for going through the box to determine which of its contents belong to him/her.
- iv. The above procedure will come into effect for all existing officials in the department on the day that this policy is signed by the HOD and Provincial Archivist. From that date onwards, existing officials will have a three month period in which to make arrangements for their private mail facilities.

b) Electronic Records Management System

Until such time that the department has an Archives approved Electronic Records Management system in place:

- i. All other electronic records (including websites and electronic Management Information Systems) are to be managed as follows:
- ii. The storage medium of records must conform to archival standard and backups that do not overwrite previous versions are to be made weekly.
- iii. Such backups are to be stored as follows:
 - Working copies – dedicated server
 - Security copies – magnetic cassette
 - Master copies – DVD-Worm (off site storage – Frances Baard District Office/ another Department's Head Office is an option)
- iv. All officials conducting correspondence shall have a copy of the approved plans.
- v. No file plans, other than those approved by the Provincial Archivist as prescribed by Act, are to be used in the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation.

- vi. In cases where difficulty allocating reference numbers arises, the Head of the Registry must be contacted.
- vii. All public records must be managed in accordance with determined policy guidelines. More information is available with regard to the handling of e-mails, faxes and hand deliveries in the Registry Manual of the Department.
- viii. All public records must be classified and stored in cabinets/ appropriate steel shelving, so that they are easily accessible to duly authorized officials, thereby facilitating transparency, accountability and efficiency.
- ix. All correspondence records are kept in the Registry only. No correspondence records whatsoever are kept in the offices of individual officials of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation.

2.2.3 Schedule for Records other than correspondence systems

The Records Manager maintains a schedule of all records other than the correspondence system. The schedule contains a description of each set of records other than the correspondence system and indicated the storage location and retention periods of these records regardless of format. The schedule is available on file.

Should records be created/received that are not listed in the schedule, the Records Manager should be contacted to add the records to the schedule.

2.3 Custody

The appropriate physical care of information resources is subjected to fire regulations and by laws of the Sol Plaatje Municipality. Fire extinguishers shall be easily available and in good working condition. All staff members should be in a position to know how to utilize the fire extinguishers when required to do so.

All records shall be kept in storage areas that are appropriate for the type of medium. The National Archives and Records Services guidelines contained in the Records Management Policy Manual shall be applied.

In brief, records shall be protected against fire, water, dust, unauthorized access and removal, harsh light, pests and extremes in temperature and humidity.

All shelving and cabinets shall be constructed from non-flammable materials to provide additional protection and security to records.

A registry procedure Manual is available from Registry and is obtainable from the Head of Registry.

2.4 Registry Security

2.4.1 Access to Registry

The only persons who have an automatic right to access to the registry are:

- a) The Records Manager
- b) Registry Staff
- c) The Security Manager when doing inspections
- d) Personnel from the Provincial Archivist, when conducting inspections/ training interventions.
- e) External security structures: SAPS, SANDF and Intelligence Agencies when conducting inspections

Records storage areas shall at all times be protected against unauthorized access. The following shall apply.

- a) Access to information by personnel of the Department will be limited as relevant registers shall be in place as a mechanism to control access to information/records.
- b) Cleaners must be monitored by registry staff when they clean the registry.
- c) Registry and other records storage areas shall be locked when not in use.
- d) Access to server rooms and storage areas for electronic records media shall be managed with key card access.

2.4.2 **Records Security**

No record may be transferred to another Department or building without the written approval from the Records Manager.

No records shall be removed from paper-based files without explicit permission from the Provincial Archivist.

Records that were placed on files shall not be altered in any way.

No alterations of any kind shall be made to any records without explicit permission of the Provincial Archivist.

Records shall at all times be protected against unauthorized access and tampering to protect their authenticity as evidence of the business of the Department.

Should evidence be obtained of tampering with records, the staff member involved shall be subject to disciplinary action. See, **item 2.7**.

The Department shall have back-ups and off site storage pertaining to electronic (see ICT Disaster Recovery Plan) as well as paper based records. This aspect shall be included in the Departmental contingency plan.

2.4.3 **Physical Security**

General physical security shall be effective and appropriate security systems and measures shall be implemented to secure information, i.e. security doors will be installed.

All staff members who receive or conduct correspondence are to have the appropriate security clearance to view the documents they need for their work. The Records Manager, in conjunction

with the Security Manager, has to ensure that the prescripts of the Minimum Information Security Standard (MISS) document are implemented in this regard. Officials with a clearance to view classified records may only be authorized to do so once the need to know principle is applied.

Security classified records shall be managed in terms of the Information Security Policy which is available from the Security Manager.

No staff member shall remove records that are not available in the public domain from the premises of the Department without the explicit written permission of the Records Manager in consultation with the Security Manager.

Personal information shall be managed in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act until such time that specific protection of privacy legislation is enacted. This act gives effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by the State and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.

When loss of records is discovered, it shall be immediately reported to the Records manager who will then report it to the Provincial Archivist and the Security Manager. (See, **item 2.7**)

2.5 Disposal

It shall be the responsibility of the Department to ensure that a disposal agreement is in place with the Provincial Archives in order to ensure special arrangements regarding the disposal of records. The following procedures must be observed:

- a) No public record may be destroyed, erased or otherwise disposed of without written authorization from the National/ Provincial Archivist.
- b) The Department is to destroy only records identified for destruction in terms of a written authority issued by the National/ Provincial Archivist at least once a year.
- c) Once records have been destroyed, the Records Manager must complete a Destruction Certificate and it must be sent to the Provincial Archivist for record and registration purposes.
- d) All electronic records shall only be disposed of with clear guidelines and written authorization from the Provincial Archivist.

All identified archival records shall be kept for a period of 20 years before they are transferred to the Provincial Archives Repository.

Retention periods for all non-archival (i.e. non-A20) records will be determined by the Records Manager in consultation with the Head of the Department and a legal advisor. The following factors shall be taken into consideration when determining retention periods for non-archival records:

- a) Transparency
- b) Accountability
- c) The requirements for democracy

- d) Any other legal obligations
- e) The office's own functional and administrative needs

The Chief Information Officer shall inform the Records Manager if a request for information necessitates a disposal hold to be placed on records that are due for disposal.

2.6 Implementation Responsibilities

2.6.1 The Head of Department:

- a) is ultimately accountable for the record keeping and Records Management practices on Department of Environment and Nature Conservation.
- b) is committed to enhance accountability, transparency and improvement of service delivery by ensuring that sound Records Management practices are implemented and maintained.
- c) supports the implementation of this policy and requires each staff member to support the values underlying in this policy.
- d) shall designate a manager to be the Records Manager of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation and shall mandate the Records Manager to perform such duties as are necessary to enhance the record keeping and Records Management practices of Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation to enable compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

2.6.2 Senior Managers:

- a) are responsible for the implementation of this policy in their respective units;
- b) shall lead by example and shall themselves maintain good record keeping and Records Managements practices;
- c) shall ensure that all staff are made aware of their record keeping and Records Management responsibilities and obligations;
- d) shall ensure that the management of records is a key responsibility in the performance agreements of all staff in their units.

2.6.3 Records Manager

The Records Manager of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation must be designated by the Deputy Director General as Head of the Department in terms of Section 13(5) of the National Archives of South Africa Act, (Act No. 43 of 1996).

Management of the approved plans is assigned to the Records Manager and is a non-delegable function.

No revisions or additions can be made to the approved plans without the Records Manager's prior approval, and subject to the overall approval of the Provincial Archivist.

The Records Manager is responsible for instituting a Records Management program that will provide for economy and efficiency of operation by:

- a) The establishment of controls in respect of the quantity and quality of records.

- b) The organization of files and other records
- c) The maintenance of files and other records
- d) The disposition of records

The specific duties of the Records Manager are contained in the Records Manager's job description which is filed on his/her SP file.

The Records Manager may from time to time issue circulars and instructions regarding the record keeping and Records Management practices of Department of Environment and Nature Conservation.

The Records Manager shall determine the conditions which warrant a public record to be duplicated. No public record may be duplicated without the approval of the Records Manager.

The Records Manager shall conduct inspections of district offices, and offices of individual officials, to ensure compliance with this policy document and with the prescriptions of any other related directives and legislation.

2.6.4 Registry Staff

- a) Any staff member may create records of transactions while conducting official business.
- b) Every staff member creating such records shall manage those records efficiently and effectively by:
 - i. Allocating reference numbers and subjects to paper-based and electronic records according to the file plan.
 - ii. Sending paper-based records to the Registry for filing.
 - iii. Ensuring that records are destroyed/deleted only in accordance with the written disposal authority issued by the National Archivist.
- c) Records Management responsibilities shall be written into the performance agreements of all staff members to ensure that they are evaluated on their Records Management responsibilities.
- d) No staff member shall disclose personal information of any member of staff or client of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation to any member of the public without consulting the Chief Information Officer first.
- e) An audit trail shall be logged and reported in writing to the Provincial Archivist of all attempts to alter/ edit electronic records and their metadata.

2.6.5 Chief Information Officer

The Chief Information Officer is responsible for approval of requests for information in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act.

No staff member shall provide information and records that are not in the public domain to the public without consulting the Chief Information Officer. Specific guidelines regarding requests for information are contained in the Promotion of Access to Information Policy which is maintained by the Chief Information Officer.

Personal information shall be managed in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act until such time that specific protection of privacy legislation is enacted.

2.6.6 Information Technology Manager

The Electronic communications and transactions act seeks to ensure the legitimacy, accuracy, verifiability and functionality of electronic records.

Hence, the information technology manager shall ensure that all data, metadata, audit trail data, operating systems and application software are backed up on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to enable the recovery of authentic, reliable and accessible records should a disaster occur. (See the Departments Disaster Recovery Plan)

2.7 Offences and Penalties

Any official who willfully damage any public or non-public record under the Control of the DENC or; Otherwise than in accordance with the National Archives and Records Service Act (no. 43 of 1996) as amended, or any other relevant law, removes, destroys or erases such record shall be guilty of an offence, and liable on conviction to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years or both such a fine and imprisonment.

2.8 Application Scope

This policy will apply to all officials of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation.



3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Identification and Consultation of Stakeholders

The policy was presented to staff members by means of e-mails.

3.2 Timeframes

The policy went to the provincial archivist at sports arts and culture in 2006, where it was amended and sent back to the Department. The draft was reviewed, commended and aligned to the provincial template by the policy unit, from 14th July 2008. This policy was revised with the assistance of the Records Manager on the 24th June 2009. The policy development unit revised it again on the 29th June 2009. The latest review of the policy was completed on the 10th December 2009. On the 20th September 2010 the letter head was changed to reflect the new Departmental name.

3.3 Implementation Strategy

An implementation plan will be drawn up two months after the policy is approved.

The implementation date is March 2014

3.4 Financial Implications

This policy will reside in the Records Management Unit of the Department and will rely on the budget of the aforementioned unit.

3.5 Communication

This policy will be communicated through the registry of the Department and the National/ Provincial Archivist office.

3.6 Compliance, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

3.6.1 Inspections by Provincial Archives

The Provincial Archives is required to conduct records inspection in all offices of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation, that is, head office components, as well as district offices.

The purpose of such inspections is to ascertain whether the Department complies with the provisions of the National Archives and Records Service Act, act no 43 of 1996 as amended.

Remedial actions to all records inspection reports must be implemented as soon after the inspections as possible. Follow up inspections will be conducted periodically to ascertain whether the Department is making any improvement in record keeping.

3.6.2 Training

The Records Manager of the Department must be trained in Records Management by the Provincial Archivist. The Records Manager in turn must train the Registry Head. All officials must

also be trained in basic records flow procedures and they should be au fait with the three file plans that have been approved for use in the Department by the Provincial Archivist.

Each District is to identify a District Records Manager, from the management cadre, and send this official on a mandatory Records Management training. Training will be based on paper and electronic records keeping.

The Records Manager shall provide the necessary information sessions to all officials in the Department when a need is identified or when requested to do so. This shall enable all officials to understand the need to comply with all related legislation, policies and directives.

The records manager is mandated to make such training and other interventions as are necessary to ensure that the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation's record keeping and Records Management practices comply with the Records Management principles contained in the National Archives and Records Service Act.

3.6.3 Evaluation

Records Management procedures can only succeed if all officials comply with legislation and regulations which govern Records Management. The Records Manager shall review the record keeping and Records Management practices of the Department on a regular basis and shall adapt them appropriately to ensure that they meet the business and service delivery requirements of the Department.

3.7 Policy Review

This policy shall be reviewed on a regular basis and shall be adapted appropriately. To ensure that it meets the business and service delivery requirements of the Department. It will also consist of a once off amendment period which will be determined by the Legislative development Unit of the department every year.

3.8 Policy Impact

This policy wishes to inform and educate all members of staff on how to utilize the registry and all its resources. It also strives to prepare management to send all relevant personnel for training, and to outline the different functions expected by all registry personnel and relevant stakeholders. The main purpose is to align this departmental policy to the strategic plan of the Department.

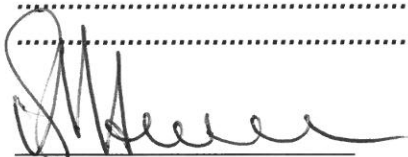
3.9 Interim Measures

The department will continue to use the National archives act no 43 of 1996 as the interim tool for all Records management purposes until this policy is approved by the HOD and MEC.

4. ADOPTION OF POLICY

Approved/~~Not Approved~~
Comments:

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D VAN HEERDEN
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

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DATE