

<b>CIRMO Policy: Archival Appraisal of Government Information</b>	
Corporate Information and Records Management Office	Version 1.1 Approved Date: 2023-01-05

## Purpose

Managing Government Information Policy (MGIP) requires that “Archival appraisal of government information must be undertaken by CRO delegates, in accordance with CRO policy and processes.” (MGIP 2.4)

In accordance with this requirement, the CIRMO Archival Appraisal of Government Information policy establishes the principles and criteria that Chief Records Officer (CRO) delegates will use when conducting appraisal to ensure that government information of permanent value is identified and transferred to government archives.

## Application

This policy applies to all recorded information held by government bodies, as defined in the *Information Management Act*. This policy can only be applied by those to whom the Chief Records Officer delegates this responsibility (CRO delegates).

## Authority

- [Information Management Act](#) (SBC 2015, c. 27)
- [Core Policy and Procedures Manual \(CPPM\), c. 12](#)
- [Managing Government Information Policy \(MGIP\)](#)

## Overview

The *Information Management Act (IMA)* mandates the **Chief Records Officer (CRO)** to approve **information schedules** that govern the “archiving and disposal of government information” (s.3[b]). “Archive” means “to transfer information from a government body or court to the digital archives or museum archives of government” (s.1.1). For the purpose of the Act, archival appraisal is the process of deciding which records to transfer to the **government archives** at the end of their **retention period**.

MGIP includes two requirements that specifically address appraisal:

- **Records of Permanent Value:** The Policy Requirements section indicates that efficient and effective IM ensures that government information “... is appropriately transferred to government archives if it is determined to have permanent value.” The glossary defines information of permanent value as critical information, and Section 1.7 requires ministries to “identify critical information in their custody and control”.
- **Responsibility for Appraisal:** Section 2.4 requires that “Archival appraisal of government information must be undertaken by CRO delegates, in accordance with CRO policy and processes”.



By establishing principles and criteria for conducting archival appraisal this policy supports government in meeting the requirements of the MGIP and the IMA.

## 1 POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Archival appraisal in the BC Government is a crucial function that must be undertaken within the following parameters:

- 1.1 Documentation in information schedules:** Archival appraisal decisions are expressed as explanatory notes termed “appraisal notes” in information schedules. An appraisal note usually applies to a class of records relating to a specific **function** or activity.
- 1.2 Implementation:** Archival appraisal decisions are implemented when the records are no longer required for action, use or reference by the government body responsible for them (i.e. the office of primary responsibility), that is, when the **primary value** of records is extinguished. Records that have been appraised for full or selective retention in the government archives may be subject to additional requirements throughout the records lifecycle, as appropriate (e.g. file lists, metadata).
- 1.3 Approval:** The CRO has final approval authority for information schedules and the archival appraisal decisions they express. For more information on information schedule development and approval, see [RIM 201](#).

## 2 Principles to Inform Archival Appraisal

The appraisal of government information must:

- 2.1 Identify legislative and legal requirements:** Appraisal must identify and comply with statutory and other legal obligations for the disposition of government records or their transfer to the government archives.
- 2.2 Support accountability and transparency:** The appraisal process must support openness and transparency and help ensure government is accountable for its actions.
- 2.3 Be informed by the knowledge and perspective of stakeholders:** The rights and interests of stakeholders must inform the appraisal process. Stakeholders will be identified and consulted prior to the approval of the information schedule. Stakeholders include the people of British Columbia, whose records we schedule, and who may rely on them to hold government accountable, to protect their rights, or to tell their story.
- 2.4 Recognize the rights and diversity of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia and support the process of reconciliation and the government’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples:** Appraisal decisions should contribute to the inclusive and meaningful representation of Indigenous Peoples and the process of developing and affirming a supportive relationship.<sup>1</sup> Appraisal will be culturally appropriate and support collaborative custodianship of archival materials with a documented Indigenous community where appropriate. Reciprocal feedback

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<sup>1</sup> See BC’s [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).



on appraisal decisions and processes will be encouraged to ensure practices remain current and relevant.

**2.5 Be planned and consistent:** Appraisal decisions must be based on:

- consistent and transparent criteria which communicate the basis for choosing records for transfer to government archives (see 3 below);
- The context in which the records were created and used;
- The methods, standards, and best practices of the archival profession, both nationally and internationally;
- An understanding of the functions and activities documented in the records; and
- Government's existing archival holdings, as well as related records being created and maintained throughout government.

**2.6 Be justified and documented:** Appraisal decisions must be adequately documented to allow for review. Justification for them should be well informed, take into consideration concerns of relevant staff, stakeholders and subject matter experts, and be based on an understanding of the functions and activities documented in the records.

**2.7 Be mindful of resources:** It is not desirable, affordable or sustainable to keep all government records. Appraisal decisions must reflect government's capacity to preserve the records in question, in terms of financial and other resources.

### 3 Criteria for Archival Appraisal

Archival appraisal decisions should be based on identifying the **enduring value** of records using one or more of the criteria established in the following table, as well as recognized and widely applied archival best practices. The criteria are coded as "F" (relating to function) or "S" (relating to subject or other criteria). The criteria apply to all media and formats of government records.

Appraisal is an evaluative process and some level of subjectivity is inevitable. The criteria in the table provide a reference point to help ensure consistency of approach. For this reason, it is important that all final disposition decisions be informed by them.

No.	CRITERIA	Explanation
F1	<p><b>Establishing and defining the limits of government authority</b></p> <p><i>Retain records that document how government authority has been established, altered, and interpreted, over time.</i></p>	<p>Government establishes and places limits on its powers and functions by means of authorities such as enabling legislation, precedent-setting rulings and statements, the findings of inquiries into government decision making, agreements with other governments, and treaties with First Nations.</p> <p>Appraisal decisions should ensure that government keeps records providing evidence of its structure and authority. Records documenting the following may meet these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The establishment of government’s jurisdiction;</li> <li>• The nature and extent of governmental power, obligations, and functions;</li> <li>• Changes to government’s power, functions, structure, and institutions over time; and</li> <li>• How government’s powers were interpreted.</li> </ul>
F2	<p><b>Regulating the community and the environment</b></p> <p><i>Retain records of government decisions and actions that have a profound, long-term, or widespread impact on the people and environment of the province.</i></p>	<p>Government carries out a wide range of functions that are intended to protect and improve the well-being of the community, such as regulating and funding schools, administering the health care system, operating a social safety net, operating a criminal justice system, maintaining infrastructure, promoting business activity, and protecting the physical environment.</p> <p>Appraisal decisions should ensure that government can be held accountable for actions it has taken that affect people or the environment. The significance of government actions is assessed in relation to how profoundly, how long, and how comprehensively they have influenced the people and environment of British Columbia. Records providing evidence of the following may meet these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive decisions, policies and summary reports;</li> <li>• Precedent-setting records of regulatory decision makers; and</li> <li>• Records of land use and occupation, particularly when that use may impact the health or well-being of the community and natural environment.</li> </ul>

No.	CRITERIA	Explanation
F3	<p><b>Establishing and tracking rights and entitlements</b></p> <p><i>Retain records that document ongoing rights and entitlements of the people of the province.</i></p>	<p>Government registers and guarantees the legal status, rights and entitlements of individuals and groups through such functions as registering births, deaths and marriages; defining groups and the rights associated with members of those groups; and tracking resource and access rights.</p> <p>Appraisal decisions should ensure that government keeps a record sufficient to allow individuals, groups, and their successors to claim enduring rights and entitlements. Records providing evidence of the following may meet these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental changes to an individual’s status,</li> <li>• Agreements on Aboriginal and treaty rights and titles of Indigenous Nations, as well as agreements that use other related terminology),</li> <li>• Decisions on land tenure and access rights, and</li> </ul> <p>Proof of enduring rights and entitlements (i.e., those that extend beyond the usual lifetime of an individual).</p>
S1	<p><b>Information that tells the story of British Columbia</b></p> <p><i>Retain records that provide valuable documentation of the cultural, social, and natural history of the province.</i></p>	<p>In the course of carrying out its usual functions, government gathers diverse information about the people and places that it has jurisdiction over or otherwise interacts with. Appraisal decisions should ensure the retention of records which will substantially contribute to the knowledge and understanding of BC, its history, geography, society, culture and people.</p> <p>No general statement about the source of this information can be made. Instead, what distinguishes such records is that they provide unique insight into people, places, events and phenomena. The following records may meet these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collections of longitudinal data that cover a long period of time, such as annual survey results, regularly updated boundary maps, or datasets;</li> <li>• Original research findings;</li> <li>• Information concerning individuals, organizations and communities that have significantly contributed to British Columbia;</li> <li>• Information concerning the identification, development and management of sites significant to British Columbia’s natural and human history; and</li> <li>• Information concerning the effect of significant events, such as wars and pandemics.</li> </ul>

## 4 Roles & Responsibilities

**GRS archivists** are typically responsible for conducting archival appraisal and supporting the CRO in ensuring archival appraisal decisions allow for the preservation of valuable government information.

**The Director responsible for the GRS appraisal function** is responsible for reviewing and endorsing appraisal recommendations.

**Information Management Advisory Committee** is responsible for reviewing and endorsing information schedules, including the appraisal recommendations they contain.

The **Chief Records Officer** is responsible for final approval of information schedules.

## DEFINITIONS

**Archival appraisal:** Archival appraisal is the process of evaluating recorded information (records) to determine its disposition. Government records are typically appraised by a government archivist under the direction of the Chief Records Officer. Those having permanent value to government and society are preserved and made accessible in the government archives.

Archival appraisal in the BC Government is part of the process of developing an information schedule. It focusses on the information content of the records and the context of their creation and use over time. It takes into consideration the capacity of the records to be used as evidence of activity as well as information on facts, people, and topics of significance to BC society, as expressed in the criteria outlined in the CIRMO Policy for Archival Appraisal of Government Information (this document).

See MGIP and the RIMM Glossary for definitions of the following terms, as well as others: Archives; Chief Records Officer; Evidential value; Final disposition; Full retention; Government archives; Preservation; Recorded information; Retention period; Selective retention

## ADVICE ON THIS POLICY

For questions or comments regarding this policy, please contact:

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 Corporate Information and Records Management Office  
 Ministry of Citizens' Services  
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