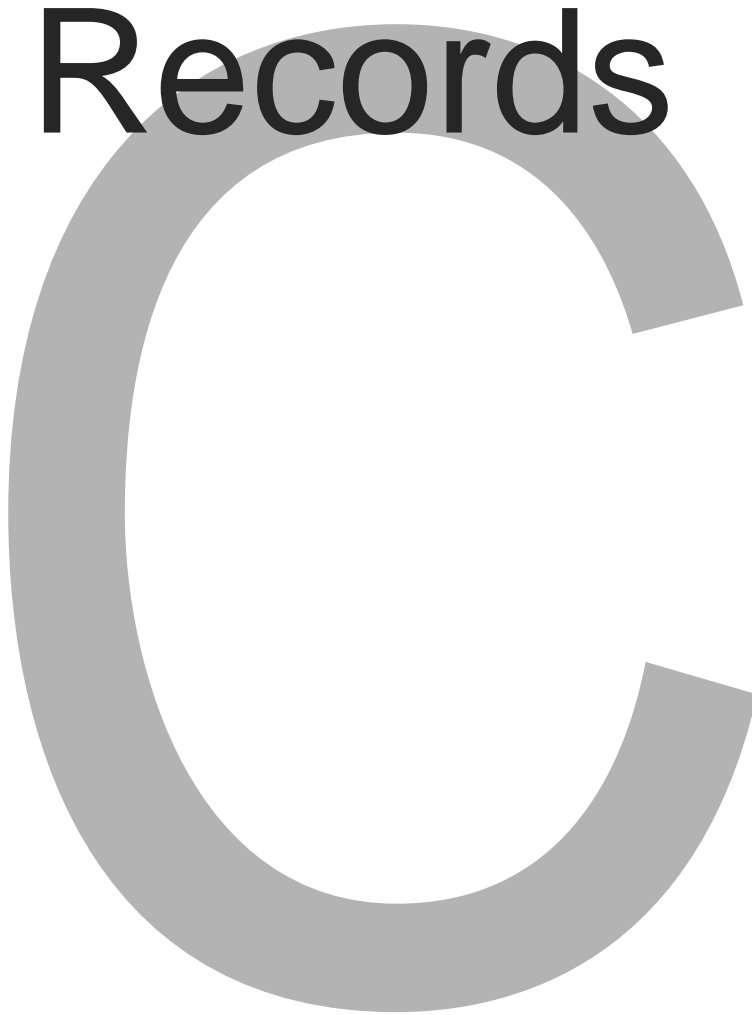


# Inventorizing and Scheduling Records



LOCAL GOVERNMENT BULLETIN C  
MAY 1998

*Comments or complaints regarding the programs and services of the  
Texas State Library and Archives Commission  
may be addressed to:*

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# Inventorying and Scheduling Records

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BULLETIN C

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidelines for inventorying, appraising, and scheduling records, *including*:

- Benefits of the Records Control Schedule.
- Statutory Requirements.
- Objectives of the Records Inventory.
- Basic Inventory Methods.
- Preparation for the Inventory.
- The Records Inventory Worksheet.
- Objectives of Records Appraisal and Scheduling.
- Analysis and Appraisal Process.
- Appraising Records Values.
- Appraisal Resources.
- Approval of the Records Control Schedule.

## Introduction

The goal of local government recordkeeping should be to provide recorded information to those who need it, when they need it, and in the most cost-effective manner—whether those who need the information are the governing body, administrators or staff, or members of the public. This goal can only be accomplished by *records management*; that is, the application of management techniques to the creation, use, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of records for the purposes of reducing costs and improving the efficiency of recordkeeping. An effective local government records management program will provide the systematic control of records throughout their life cycle—from creation, during use and maintenance, to an appropriate final disposition.

The central document in establishing and maintaining control over records by a local government is the *records control schedule*. The schedule is prepared by or under the authority of the records management officer listing the records created or received by an office or department, and specifying how long they are to be retained. To be most useful, the control schedule will also show where and in what manner records are to be maintained while they are active and while inactive, and how they are to be destroyed.

The records control schedule should be developed directly from the *records inventory*, which is the first step in developing an effective records management program. The inventory is a complete listing of the records holdings in an office or department. The inventory is done only once, then updated when there are additions or deletions in the records that are created and maintained.

All records should be inventoried, regardless of the media in which they are maintained, but the inventory is not a document-by-document or folder-by-folder listing of the records in your file cabinets or on your shelves. Rather, an inventory describes the function, content, use, and format of each records series in your office and storage areas. A *records series* is a group of identical or related documents that are normally used or filed as a unit and have the same retention period. A good place to begin understanding the records series concept is to review the local records retention schedules which have been issued by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. For example, Local Schedule GR (Records Common to All Governments) lists records series that are found in most local governments. There are also specialized retention schedules, such as Local Schedule EL (Records of Elections and Voter Registration) and Local Schedule LC (Records of Justice and Municipal Courts). Records series will be discussed further, with specific examples, in the instructions for completing the records inventory worksheet on page 13.

During a records inventory, you may find some types of material in government offices that are not records and do not need to be inventoried. For example, blank forms, stocks of publications, and library and museum materials acquired solely for the purposes of reference or display are specifically excluded from the definition of a local government record. State law defines a *local government record* as “any document, paper, letter, book, map, photograph, sound or video recording, microfilm,

magnetic tape, electronic medium, or other information recording medium, regardless of physical form or characteristic and regardless of whether public access to it is open or restricted under the laws of the state, created or received by a local government or any of its officers or employees pursuant to law, including an ordinance, or in the transaction of public business” (Local Government Code, Section 201.003).

After the records inventory is completed, the records must be appraised. During appraisal, the value of each record you create or receive is determined. Based on the decisions made during appraisal, a records control schedule is completed which can then be used regularly and systematically by your local government to manage its records.

Finding out what records you maintain, appraising their value, and determining how long that value lasts are the essential first steps in the development of a records control schedule and establishment of a sound records management program.

### **Benefits of the Records Control Schedule**

A solid foundation for the local government’s records management program is the foremost benefit of the records control schedule. Other immediate and potential benefits include:

- Efficiently using office space for active records.
- Moving inactive records into less expensive storage areas, if possible.
- Releasing equipment and reusable media for other productive uses.
- Maintaining records in the formats offering the optimum combination of administrative convenience and cost control.
- Providing security for records with confidential or sensitive information.
- Improving protection of vital records.
- Providing an audit trail for records disposition.
- Destroying records that no longer have value to the government.
- Retaining records of permanent value.
- Complying with legal requirements.
- Providing legal protection to the government when destroying records.

## Statutory Requirements

As stated in Local Government Code, Section 203.041(a), each local government must develop a records control schedule and file the schedule with the director and librarian of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, according to these requirements:

- (a) On or before January 4, 1999, the records management officer shall prepare and file with the director and librarian:
  - (1) a records control schedule listing the following records and establishing a retention period for each as provided by Section 203.042:
    - (A) all records created or received by the local government or elective county office;
    - (B) any record no longer created or received by the local government or elective county office that is still in its possession and for which the retention period on a records retention schedule issued by the commission has not expired; and
    - (C) any record no longer created or received by the local government or elective county office that is still in its possession and for which the retention period on a records retention schedule issued by the commission has expired but which will not be destroyed as provided by Section 203.044;
  - (2) the records management officer, in lieu of filing a records control schedule, may file with the director and librarian a written certification of compliance that the local government or the elective county office has adopted records control schedules that comply with the minimum requirements established on records retention schedules issued by the commission.

Section 203.041 also specifies these additional provisions for preparation and filing of the records control schedule:

- At the discretion of the records management officer, the records control schedule may also list and provide retention periods for material that is not defined as a local government record and for records exempted from the destruction request requirement.
- The records control schedule must be amended by the records management officer as needed to reflect new records created or received by the government and revisions to retention periods established in records retention schedules issued by the commission. Amendments to a records control schedule are filed with the director and librarian in the same manner as the original schedule.

- The governing body shall require, in the ordinance or order establishing the records management program, the review or approval of a records control schedule or amended schedule by the officers of the local government it considers necessary. The records control schedule or amended schedule for an elective county office need only be approved by the elective official.
- Records control schedules may be filed by a local government on an office-by-office basis or on a department-by-department basis within each office.

Local Government Code, Section 204.01(a)(2) permits a local government to adopt appropriate schedules issued by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission for use in the government's records management program. While this method satisfies legal requirements concerning the retention of records, we recommend that local governments then proceed, as resources permit, to inventory their records and develop schedules for in-house use that accurately reflect the records created or received by the local government.

### **Objectives of the Records Inventory**

The inventory is the foundation of your records management program, not just an isolated project. It will provide you with significant facts about the records you create and maintain. Implementing a records management program by using information collected through the records inventory will result in both short-term and long-term benefits that include:

- Gathering sufficient information to determine the appropriate retention of records.
- Identifying unnecessary copies of records.
- Providing security for records with confidential or sensitive information.
- Releasing equipment and reusable media for other productive uses.
- Saving space and money.

Ideally, the information gathered during the inventory will be comprehensive and will meet the needs of all aspects of your program. By defining your objectives in advance, you will know what you want to accomplish with the inventory data before you start the process.

Objectives clarify problems and specify desired results. The following should be your objectives for accomplishing the immediate tasks of inventorying records in order to develop and implement the records control schedule:

- Identify all of the local government's records by records series.
- Determine the physical location and format of all records, including the official record copy that will be maintained for the full retention period and any convenience copies that should be retained for a shorter period of time.
- Identify the inclusive dates and quantity of each records series.

Long-term objectives to support the general records management goals of the local government, such as the following, can also be achieved through an inventory:

- Describe current filing and retrieval systems.
- Categorize the types and quantities of equipment and supplies used in the maintenance of records.
- Calculate the amount of floor space dedicated to storage of active and inactive records.
- Evaluate the costs of recordkeeping in the government, including consideration of alternative methods.

### **Basic Inventory Methods**

In addition to specifying the objectives of the inventory, you will also be selecting the inventory method which will give you the appropriate information to begin working toward your objectives. The records inventory may be conducted by means of a physical survey or by use of a questionnaire.

For the physical inventory, a direct examination of the records is conducted throughout the organization by an individual, such as the records management officer, or a group of individuals under the officer's supervision. Departmental staff may conduct the physical inventory, with the coordination and assistance of the records management officer. This approach usually includes appointing a records liaison for each department. A physical inventory can also be undertaken by hiring a consultant or temporary workers or by using volunteers who give the inventory their exclusive attention. The physical inventory is the most thorough and accurate inventory method. Training a small number of personnel, who then conduct the physical survey of the records, speeds the completion of the inventory and ensures consistency in the collected data. For some governments, however, the physical inventory method is not a feasible choice because of insufficient staff and financial resources to complete this time-consuming process.

Another approach to conducting the records inventory is to use a questionnaire and have each department complete its own inventory, with little or no direct examination of the records. This is the fastest method because the inventory form can be distributed to all departments simultaneously, completed by staff knowledgeable about the records, and returned by a specified date. It is also less time-consuming for staff because a thorough physical examination of the records is not undertaken.

However, problems may develop when the questionnaire method is used. The data collected may not be consistently accurate or complete. The wording on the questionnaire must be very specific so that the respondents know what is required of them. The questionnaire may be viewed as an added chore to an already full work schedule, and it may be hastily prepared or departmental staff may procrastinate in completing it. Because the records are not physically examined in detail, the questionnaire method rarely takes fully into account stored records, and a large volume of records may be over-

looked. In addition, inclusive dates and the volume of records series are often simply guesses by persons completing the form.

Each inventory method has its advantages and limitations, but the planning steps required are similar for all the methods. Consider the objectives you hope to accomplish before deciding which method to use.

We do recommend that, if at all possible, a physical inventory be conducted. Not only does the information gathered provide you with the data needed to create the records retention schedule, the quality of information obtained during a physical inventory provides the soundest basis for a quality records management program.

### **Preparation for the Inventory**

In addition to choosing a method for doing the inventory, planning for the inventory should include these preparatory steps, details of which will be discussed below:

- Determining the best strategy to accomplish records management objectives.
- Obtaining top management support.
- Communicating plans to management and staff.
- Selecting personnel for the inventory process.
- Establishing work schedules and completion dates.
- Mapping file locations.

*Determining the best strategy to accomplish records management objectives*—Investigate what may have already been done. For example, someone else may have previously started or completed a records inventory.

Explore the resources available to help with the inventory. Think about the organizational structure of your government and how that may influence the way to accomplish the inventory tasks most easily. Ask yourself questions such as the following:

- How can the work be distributed most efficiently?
- Who knows the most about the records? Who has a particular aptitude for and enjoys working with records?
- How much time do staff have to devote to the inventory? Can extra staff be hired on a temporary basis?
- How will staff be prepared for this task? What training is needed and how will it be provided?

- What other factors should be considered when deciding the timing of the inventory? For example, it is very helpful to get an inventory and appraisal done prior to a move to new office space so that records eligible for destruction can be disposed of instead of moved.

*Obtaining top management support*—Management support is critical to the success of the inventory and to the entire records management program. Although state law requires that the governing body of each local government establish a records management program by ordinance or order, it is still important to obtain directives from top management to ensure that the requirements of the program are met and its purposes realized. Request a directive be sent to middle management or to the entire staff describing the objectives of the inventory and mandating the participation of everyone concerned. With this written commitment, all departments will know that the records inventory is a sanctioned project with an important purpose.

The policy filed by an elected county official in fulfilling a requirement of the Local Government Records Act establishes a records management program in the office, but in larger offices that have been divided into two or more departments headed by deputies, additional written directives from the elected official are advised to ensure that the importance of the program and its procedures are communicated to all employees.

*Communicating plans to management and staff*—Before beginning the inventory, just as before any major records management project, send a memo to all personnel who will be involved. Explain the project. Tell them when the inventory will begin and how it will affect work in progress. You may want to hold a meeting for interested staff as an informal orientation. If your government's records management plan provides for the appointment of records liaison officers, a meeting with these officers is a must. You will receive more support from those affected if they are included in the planning for the inventory and the records management program.

*Selecting personnel for the inventory process*—The records management officer should conduct or oversee the records inventory. If the government does not have specialized records management staff or records liaison officers available to assist with the inventory, other alternatives will have to be considered. In order to expedite the completion of the inventory, explore the possibility of recruiting volunteer assistance or hiring part-time or temporary staff. If the inventory takes too much time, the information collected might not be current when analyzed. Also, without visible results in a reasonable amount of time, management support for the project may be jeopardized.

A successful inventory and records management program depends on informed personnel. Devote sufficient training to cover these aspects of the inventory:

- Purpose of inventory.
- Records management concepts and terminology.

- Use of the inventory worksheet.
- Work schedule and procedures.

*Establishing work schedules and completion dates*—Estimating personnel and time requirements is difficult and depends more on the variety of records and their relative accessibility than on the actual volume of records. The amount of data to be collected will affect the time needed, as will the complexity of the records series involved.

Plan and carry out a quick “walk through” survey; this will give you an idea of the volume and accessibility of records. The task of estimating time will be less difficult with some perspective of the overall amount of records to be inventoried. For example, one person can inventory an average of 20 to 30 cubic feet of records per day. Experienced records personnel, however, may be able to inventory up to 150 cubic feet (approximately 20 file cabinets) daily. Factors influencing this rate are the complexity, organization, and location of the files.

Inventoried the records by department is a popular approach because it is an incremental process and can be easier to keep track of than a government-wide simultaneous effort. The “department-by-department” approach breaks the vastness of the total records holdings into logical divisions.

Draw up a work plan and timetable for the inventory project. Consult with department heads to determine the most convenient times for inventorying their records. Schedule the order in which offices and storage areas will be inventoried, which inventory worker will be responsible for each, and the approximate time needed to complete the inventory in each area. Periodically monitor the progress of the inventory to make certain inventory workers are completing the forms correctly and adhering to the timetable.

Begin your inventory among active records in office areas. The recordkeepers are more familiar with these records than those in storage and will be available to answer the questions of the inventory worker as they arise. By the time the inventory workers move to the storage area, they will be acquainted with the substance of most of the records created or received in the office.

*Mapping file locations*—While beginning the inventory with the files actively used in the office is recommended, it is also crucial to ensure a complete survey of all active and inactive records. For example, records may have been placed in storage so long ago that no current staff member is aware of their existence. One of the goals of records management is ridding valuable office and storage space of obsolete and valueless records. It is important, in advance of the inventory, to know where *all the records* of each office are housed.

We recommend you prepare a floor plan showing the location and types of records in all offices and storage locations. Be certain to include all records, in all formats.

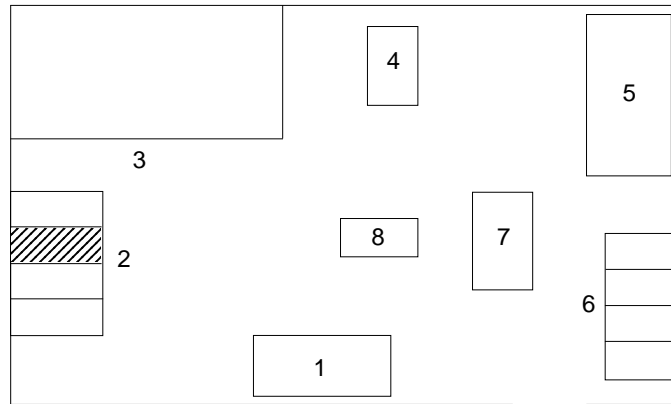


Figure 1

Draw representations of record locations (see Figure 1). Number them clockwise from the main entrance. In the sample map drawn above, the numbers represent these file locations:

*Location 1*—Rack of magnetic computer tapes.

*Location 2*—File cabinets (5 drawer).

*Location 3*—Storage closet.

*Location 4*—Stack of boxed files.

*Location 5*—Metal storage cabinet.

*Location 6*—File cabinets (5 drawer).

*Location 7*—Bookshelf of floppy diskettes.

*Location 8*—Desk, with drawers.

Within each numbered section, units are designated alphabetically left to right as the inventory worker faces them; drawers or shelves are numbered from top to bottom. For example, records stored in the third drawer of the file cabinet shaded in Figure 1 would be given the location number “2-C-3.” If the records were stored on top of the cabinet, the location number would be “2-C-Top.”

By identifying the location of all records, you ensure a complete examination of records holdings. You will be analyzing the data collected during the records inventory to make appraisals and retention decisions. An accurate analysis depends on a thorough collection of information and knowing where to find the record if additional information is needed. That is why determining all file locations is so important.

## The Records Inventory Worksheet

The State and Local Records Management Division of the Texas State Library has developed a Records Inventory and Analysis Form (SLR 503) which local governments can use for their records inventory.

The inventory and analysis form is divided into three parts. The first part (Items 1 to 10), in which the records series is located, identified, and described, is completed by the inventory worker. The second part (Items 11 to 21) is completed by the person who appraises the record. The information completed by the records management officer, in part three (Items 22 to 25), can be transferred directly to the records control schedule. Instructions for completion of the first part of the inventory worksheet begin on page 14. See pages 15 through 18 for a discussion of the analysis sections of the inventory form.

Use of the Records Inventory and Analysis Form is not mandatory. Any inventory form design is appropriate, as long as it meets your needs.

### Inventory Process

*A separate inventory worksheet should be prepared for each records series—*A records series is a group of identical or related documents that are arranged under a single filing system or kept together as a unit because they consist of the same form, relate to the same subject, result from the same activity, document the same transaction, or have a common physical format (e.g., maps and blueprints); and which, because of any of these common characteristics, may be treated as a unit for retention and disposition purposes. A records series is not defined by chronological, numerical, or alphabetical filing considerations.

For example, a city secretary may have a file cabinet full of purchase order and receipt records (purchase orders, requisitions, and receiving reports) that are filed by fiscal year (FY88 to FY93). The chronological arrangement of the files is for the purposes of making access to the records easier and to provide a convenient point to break the files when moving records to inactive storage or removing them for destruction. However, each fiscal year is not a separate records series—the entire group of files is one records series because they all document the same activity and have the same retention period. Therefore, only one inventory form would need to be done for this entire file cabinet of records.

Similarly, the case files of county, district, or city attorneys constitute a records series. Although they are customarily filed alphabetically or by case number and are likely to consist of many different documents, the important points are that they are filed and used together and result from the same activity. Individual case files are simply constituent parts of the larger records series. Retention periods for case files traditionally date from when final judgment was rendered in the case or

proceedings were terminated. While the disposition of the records may involve pulling individual case files when their retention periods expire because the date of the final judgment varies from one case to another, the same total retention period applies to all cases in the records series. One inventory worksheet would be completed for this records series regardless of the number of case files or the varying dates of the records.

*Completing the first section of the records inventory form*—Each space for information on the worksheet is called a field. The fields are numbered as follows:

1. *Records Inventory Taker*—The person who did the inventory and a telephone number to facilitate a follow-up call if needed during the appraisal process. (The entries for this field can be typed on a blank form before duplication.)
2. *Office* and 3. *Department*—The office for which the inventory is being conducted (e.g., County Clerk, Sheriff, Police Department). The name of the department will also be entered, if applicable (e.g., Accounts Payable, Real Property Division). (These entries can be typed on a blank form before duplication.)
4. *Records Series Location*—The location of the records. In our sample, the purchase order and receipt records are located in room 319 of the Brown Building and are in drawers 3 and 4 of the file cabinet shaded in Figure 1. Thus, “Brown Bldg., Rm. 319, 2-C-3 & 4” is entered in this field.
5. *Record Working Title*—The title by which the record is known in the office. Not all records the inventory worker encounters will be labelled or titled, and the worker will have to ask the recordkeeper. In our example, the file drawers were labelled “Purchase Orders.”
6. *Describe Records Series*—The inventory worker should clearly and concisely describe the contents of the records series and indicate its purpose. For many records, their purposes will be self-evident from their contents; but for others the recordkeeper will have to be consulted. The inventory workers should also indicate any pre-printed titles or form numbers that may appear on the records or on individual documents in the records series.
7. *Format and size*—The inventory worker should indicate all of the formats that apply to the records series. In some instances, it is appropriate to complete more than one category.
8. *Inclusive Dates*—Indicate by month and year the earliest and the most recent record in the series. Accurate dating of alphabetically arranged files (e.g., personnel files) may be difficult, but the inventory worker should try by sampling folders at random to be as precise as possible.
9. *Volume*—Indicate in cubic feet the approximate total volume of the records series.
10. *Records Liaison Officer Review*—If the records management plan of the local government provides for the appointment of a records liaison officer for each office or department, the infor-

mation in fields 1 through 9 should be reviewed by the record liaison officer. Field 10 should be initialed and dated by the records liaison officer, even if the inventory taker and the records liaison officer are the same person.

### **Objectives of Records Appraisal and Scheduling**

Records appraisal and scheduling builds on what has been accomplished during the inventory. The records inventory provides you with significant facts about your records. Ideally, the information collected will be comprehensive and will meet the needs of all aspects of your program.

However, the time and effort spent on the inventory will not accomplish your records management goals unless the development of the records control schedule is also well done. The objectives of the records appraisal and scheduling process should include:

- Saving space and money by using office space for active records only, if possible.
- Identifying when records can be moved to less expensive inactive storage.
- Releasing equipment and reusable media for other productive uses.
- Consistently retaining records of value.
- Destroying records that have served their usefulness.
- Identifying confidential or sensitive records and vital records to provide adequate security.
- Complying with legal requirements.

Keeping these objectives in mind will support the implementation of an effective program of records retention.

If your local government has never practiced records management, the analysis which takes place after the inventory usually reveals that many records can be destroyed or moved to inactive storage immediately, upon proper approval.

### **Analysis and Appraisal Process**

The analysis and appraisal of local government records begins with the classification of each records series according to certain characteristics which will be later used to develop and implement the records control schedule. For example, analysis of a records series maintained in a particular department may verify that it is the official record copy and must be kept for the full retention period. There may be convenience copies of the same records in other departments that are needed for only a brief period of time. One of the best ways a records management program can save money

is to identify and destroy redundant copies when they are no longer needed, especially in expensive office space. Analysis may reveal that certain records should be classified as confidential or open records, which will affect the level of security they require. Those records classified as essential or vital to the operations of the government must be protected so as to ensure their availability in the event of a disaster.

*Completing the analysis section of the inventory form*—The following is a brief discussion of each item in the analysis section of the records inventory worksheet to explain the purpose of the information for the appraisal process. The fields in the analysis section are numbered as follows:

*11. Records Liaison Officer*—If the records management plan of the local government provides for the appointment of a records liaison officer for each office or department, the name and telephone number will be provided in this field so that a follow-up call can be made, if needed, during the scheduling process. If there is not a records liaison for the office or department, the analysis section could be completed by the records management officer in consultation with departmental staff.

*12. Record Copy?*—A significant consideration in the analysis of a records series is to determine if the records are the official record copies of documents which must be retained for the full retention period. If not the record copy, any convenience or working copies of records may be discarded as soon as they are no longer needed for their temporary purpose. Convenience copies must be destroyed when the retention period for the record copy expires. *Fields 13 and 14* have related questions to determine the location of either the record copy or convenience duplicates. By analyzing this information, accurate entries for the record series can be made on the records control schedule to show which department has the record copy. By identifying extra copies of records, the departments are more likely to give attention to eliminating unnecessary duplication that wastes space and money. You should decide if duplication is really necessary and if all the duplicates will have the same retention period.

*15. Is the record series obsolete?*—Records that are no longer created are obsolete records and, in the absence of permanent historical value, are almost always prime candidates for removal to storage or immediate destruction.

*16. Vital Record?*—Records necessary to the resumption or continuation of government operations in an emergency or disaster, to the re-creation of the legal and financial status of the government, or to the protection and fulfillment of obligations to the people of the state are defined by statute as essential records (also called vital records). It is very important to identify the records that are essential so that appropriate measures can be taken to protect them.

*17. Access Restricted?*—Proper security measures should be enforced for records which are not generally open to public access under the Public Information Act or another state or federal law or regulation.

*18. State Record Number*—The number assigned to the records series in one of the records retention schedules issued by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. If the records series is composed of different documents which are listed in one or more of the retention schedules or in the manual, an item number would be entered for each document.

*19. State Retention Period*—The mandatory minimum retention period if the records series is listed in one of the records retention schedules issued by the Commission. For a records series composed of different documents, which are listed in one or more retention schedules, enter the mandatory minimum retention period for each document. When the records management officer then assigns a retention period for a records series containing documents with different retention periods, either the longest retention period will be chosen for all the documents in the records series or consideration can be given to reorganizing the records series into groups of documents which share the same retention period.

*20. Department Retention Recommendations*—If the records series is not listed in a retention schedule issued by the Commission or if the department recommends that the records series be kept longer than the mandatory minimum retention, this field should be completed to state the reasons for the recommendation (see page 18 for additional information on determining the appropriate retention for a records series by appraising the values of the records). This field also provides space for dividing the total retention period between office and storage. An active record series is one which is referred to at least once per file drawer per month. Active records need to be maintained in the office where they are immediately available. Many records series are used less often as time passes but may not yet be ready for destruction. If possible, these inactive records should be moved to less expensive storage areas to free office space and equipment for active records.

*21. Department Head Review*—The information in fields 11 through 20 should be reviewed by the department head, who initials and dates fields 21.

*Final completion of the records appraisal*—The next step after analysis of the records series within the department is for the records management officer in cooperation with department heads to officially determine the record number; records series title; retention period in office, in storage, and total; and to identify any disposition and special considerations. This information can be transferred directly to the records control schedule and is included on the Records Inventory and Analysis Form as the last four fields:

*22. Record number*—May be the state record number from field 18 or the government may assign a number based on their recordkeeping system.

*23. Records Series Title*—The records series title that will be entered on the records control schedule. The records series title in field 23 may be the same as the working title in field 5 of the inventory worksheet, but only if it is sufficiently understandable. For example, a record series in your office may have a working title that is a form number. The use of only the form number for the

records series title would not reflect the records series content and might change over time. A better choice for the records series title would be to use the name of the form or a succinct descriptive title. You do not have to use the records series title given on a records retention schedule issued by the Commission; however, we recommend that if you enter the record working title in field 23 you also show the official title from the retention schedule in parenthesis.

*24. Retention Period*—Although the department may recommend and the state may require a minimum retention period, the records management officer must still decide whether to follow that retention or recommend a longer one. Another key decision to be made is at what point in a record's total retention period it should be moved from active office files to inactive storage. In our example, the records management officer, based on a review of the first two parts of the form, has decided to recommend that the purchase order and receipt records be kept for three years after the end of the fiscal year, and that they be moved from office files to the storage area at the end of the fiscal year plus one year.

*25. Disposition and Special Considerations*—Information in this field may be added to clarify specific circumstances; such as, a change in format for a records series at some point during the retention period; justification for a retention period; or to provide other details that will support the effective use of the schedule. Entries in this field are optional.

After completion of the records appraisal, the records management officer should submit the records inventory and analysis forms or a draft records control schedule derived from them for approval. The draft records control schedule must be approved by the records management committee or such other persons as the records management policy of the local government requires before it is used in the government or submitted to the director and librarian.

## **Appraising Records Values**

For those records series that are not listed in any retention schedule issued by the Commission a determination of a realistic retention period can be made by analyzing the value of the records. Even for records which have a minimum mandatory retention period in a Commission schedule, examining the value of the records may indicate that a longer retention than the minimum is appropriate for your local government. The value of records can be broken down into four main categories:

- 1) Administrative.
- 2) Fiscal.
- 3) Legal.
- 4) Historical or research.

*Administrative Value*—Records have administrative value because they aid in the conduct of day-to-day business (sometimes called operational value), define policy and procedure, and ensure administrative consistency and continuity.

Records with administrative value include:

- Information on the creation, consolidation, or termination of local governments.
- Organizational and functional charts.
- Definitions of responsibilities.
- Delegation of authority.

Procedural records, such as the following, are also examples of records with administrative value:

- Manuals.
- Directives.
- Rules and regulations.
- Instructions.
- Memoranda establishing a course of action for the government.

*Fiscal Value*—Records having fiscal value are generally those relating to financial transactions and the movement and expenditure of funds. These include:

- Budget documents.
- Vouchers.
- Accounting records.
- Tax statements.

*Legal Value*—Records that provide proof of government authority and business transactions have legal value to an agency. Legal value also refers to information that forms the basis for legal actions.

Records with legal value include:

- Legal decisions and opinions.
- Financial agreements.
- Leases, titles, contracts.

- Regulations and agreements.
- Records providing additional explanation of a primary legal document.

Statutes, regulations, rules, and policies all affect retention requirements. The records management officer should have general knowledge of all statutes, regulations, rules, and administrative policies affecting the records maintained in the local government. The records management officer does not need to become an expert on statutory interpretation but should have a listing of the pertinent legislation for reference. The records retention schedules issued by the Commission will give the legal citation, if any, for the retention periods of records series that are listed.

It is imperative that you consider the legal requirements of your records. It will make retention scheduling more effective and will protect your office from litigation resulting from improperly discarded or retained records. If available, have your legal department or legal counsel review the retention periods for those records that have legal value to ensure that they are being maintained a sufficient length of time.

*Historical or Research Value*—Documents may be considered to have historical or research value for one or both of the following two reasons:

- 1) They provide evidence of government functions.
- 2) They contain information that is of enduring value to the public.

Records created specifically to serve as evidentiary documents are relatively easy to identify:

- Minutes of governing bodies.
- Ordinances, orders, and resolutions.
- Legal opinions.
- Audit records.
- Civil and criminal court minutes.

Other records provide evidence, but were not specifically created for that purpose and are a little harder to recognize. For example, supporting documentation for actions reflected in minutes, photographs, and correspondence or internal memoranda often (but not always) have historical value, but may be interfiled with materials that do not need to be retained permanently.

Records that should be considered for permanent retention because they may contain information of enduring value include:

- Census records.
- Annual narrative and statistical reports.
- Publications printed by or for a local government.

A record may have an intrinsic value that makes it worth keeping after its legal, fiscal, and administrative purposes have been fulfilled. All records series should be analyzed for historical value.

## **Appraisal Resources**

Decisions on retention of records are based on the types of records, the values of records, and legal considerations. Therefore, a careful appraisal includes consideration of a variety of appraisal resources.

The records retention schedules issued by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission must be consulted first as a resource for mandatory minimum retention periods. The retention schedules are based on research in federal and state statutory law, rules of court, and administrative law. For records series that do not have any legal requirements, the retention periods on the schedules are developed in consultation with local governments and state agencies to establish a reasonable retention. A copy of each of the records retention schedules is available, at no cost to local governments, from the State and Local Records Management Division.

The records retention schedules issued by the commission identify records series that should be retained permanently. Staff of the Archives and Information Services Division of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission are also available to answer questions that may arise concerning the historical value of a records series not listed in the retention schedules (call 512-463-5480).

Even though the records management officer is ultimately responsible for recommending retention periods, it is often helpful to have a records management committee. Members of the committee should be familiar with the different types of records in use in the local government and could include the government's chief fiscal officer to cover the fiscal and audit aspects of records retention, a legal representative, the records management officer, and other personnel whose input has been determined to be necessary. The records management committee's job is to make or approve retention recommendations, to discover and resolve any discrepancies, and to recommend approval of the schedule. The records management committee can also have responsibility for final approval of the records control schedule if provided by the orders or ordinance of the governing body.

As you are considering the retention period for a records series, you may find it helpful to use an appraisal guide, which lists pertinent questions to be asked about each records series. The questions are subdivided into the four value groups: administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical or research

(see page 23 for a sample appraisal guide). Each agency's record holdings are different and not one list will apply to all, so feel free to use or adapt this sample guide. The appraisal guide can be an especially helpful tool for examining all possible values of a records series before you prepare the records control schedule.

Other resources that could be helpful for determining appropriate retention periods include:

- Assistance of the State and Local Records Management Division and its records consultants.
- Discussions with other similar local governments.
- Review of attorney general opinions and legal reference publications.

### **Approval of the Records Control Schedule**

If a local government has adopted records retention schedules issued by the Commission and has conducted an inventory to develop a tailored schedule for internal use, the resulting schedule may take any form that the local government determines best suits its needs.

If a local government will be submitting its records control schedule to the director and librarian of the Texas State Library for approval, rather than adopt Commission schedules, then the use of certain forms is required. The use of the forms is also required if a local government is submitting a records control schedule to take the place of previously adopted Commission schedules.

Use of the Form SLR 500 (Local Government Records Control Schedule), or its equivalent, is required for all local governments. To qualify as an equivalent a form must contain the following minimum information: the name of the local government and the custodial office or department of the records scheduled, a record number (either that assigned to the record in a Texas State Library and Archives Commission records retention schedule or one assigned to the record by the local government), the records series title, and a retention period for each records series listed.

State law requires that records control schedules previously submitted to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission be reviewed periodically by the records management officer and amendments prepared as needed to reflect new records created or received by the local government or changes to retention periods [Local Government Code, Sections 203.041(d) and 203.042(c)].

Amendments may be submitted for filing in two ways. If the records management officer wishes to submit an entirely new schedule for an office or department, Form SLR 500 or its equivalent should be used. If the records management officer wishes to add, delete, or change the retention period or title for a records series on a previously filed records control schedule, Form SLR 520 (Amendment to Local Government Records Control Schedule) or its equivalent, should be used. To qualify as an equivalent to Form SLR 520, a form developed for use in a local government must contain all the

information requested on Form SLR 520, except that the total retention period need not be broken down into the categories of office and storage.

Two copies of Form SLR 540 (Records Control Schedule Transmittal Sheet) must be attached to each records control schedule, amended schedule, or amendment to schedule (Forms SLR 500, 520, or their equivalent) submitted for filing with the Commission. At least one copy of the transmittal sheet must have an original signature.

*Submitting the records control schedule for approval*—Using the required forms, the records control schedule must be submitted to the director and librarian by the records management officer. If the director and librarian or the designee of the director and librarian accepts the records control schedule or amended schedule for filing, it may be used as the basis for the destruction by the local government of records listed on it without additional notice to the director and librarian.

If the schedule is rejected, the reasons for the rejection will be stated in writing within a reasonable time to the records management officer and the schedule will need to be corrected and resubmitted. The director and librarian may make it a condition of acceptance of a records control schedule that a record listed on the schedule be transferred to the custody of the Commission on the expiration of its retention period rather than being destroyed.

### **Sample Appraisal Guide**

The following questions may be used by local government offices or departments and the records management officer to assist in determining the value of a records series.

#### **Administrative Value**

- Are the records used in determining organizational policies?
- Does this records series explain operating procedures or departmental functions?
- Are there definitions of responsibility provided by this records series?
- Does this records series contain information on the creation, consolidation, or termination of local government activities or functions?
- Does the record series document working relationships with other governments?
- How long must this records series be maintained for day-to-day operations?

## **Fiscal Value**

- Does this records series control or document the generation, expenditure, or movement of public funds?
- How long are these records needed to administer the funds?
- What are the audit requirements of the funding authority?
- Are there any regulations covering retention of audited records?
- How long must this records series be kept to meet all fiscal and audit requirements, in total years and months?

## **Legal Value**

- Does this records series prove the local government's claim to property?
- Is this records series necessary for the local government to prosecute or defend against an action?
- Is this records series necessary to protect the rights of a citizen?
- Are these records of local government licenses or regulations? How long are these licenses or regulations valid?
- Are there federal or state regulations covering retention of this records series? The records retention schedules issued by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission establish legally binding minimum retention periods for the records series listed.
- How long must this series be kept to meet all legal retention requirements, in total years and months?

## **Historical and Research Value**

- Is the information in the records series unique? Can it be found elsewhere? For instance, did the local government create or gather the data in the series or is some of it transcribed from another source?
- Has the information been published by the local government or others? Has it been filed with another governmental entity?
- How important is the information? Will researchers now or in the future need to consult the records?
- Does this records series document a particularly important citizen or event?