

# Policies and procedures



**Metro**

600 NE Grand Ave.  
Portland, OR 97232-2736

**Subject** Creation and Maintenance of Digitized Records  
**Section** Information Services (IS) / Records and Information Management (RIM) program  
**Approved by** Martha Bennett, Chief Operating Officer

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## **POLICY**

*This policy establishes best practices for the creation and maintenance of all digitized records at Metro. Every record should maintain its authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability and should comply with applicable legal and contractual requirements. Metro employees should determine the appropriateness of creating a digital record according to the factors outlined in this policy.*

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## **Applicable to**

All employees, including Metro officials, temporary and seasonal employees, interns, volunteers, contractors, and consultants.

## **Definitions**

Terms used in this document are defined in the *Records and Information Management (RIM) Glossary of Terms* maintained on the RIM program website.

The Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA) defines *electronic record* as any “record created, generated, sent, communicated, received or stored by electronic means.” The UETA recognizes the legal effect and enforceability of electronic records and signatures. *ORS 84.019*.

## **Authority**

Metro will comply with all applicable laws and regulations that relate to the use of electronic signature within the broader context of records and information management, including, but not limited to:

- ORS 84.001 to 84.061 – Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA)
- OAR 166-017-0010 through OAR 166-017-0080
- IRS Procedure 97-22
- Metro Records and Information Management (RIM) Policy

The Chief Operating Officer delegates to the Records Officer the authority to update these rules as circumstances dictate.

## Guidelines

This policy applies to the digitization of Metro's hardcopy records, such as documents, maps, engineering drawings, photographs and slides, for either of these two reasons:

**Accessibility** – Creating an electronic copy of a record for the purpose of:

- Improving public access to the record;
- Improving staff access to the record; and
- Providing redundancy as a preservation best practice in the event of the loss of permanent hardcopy *official records*.

**Official Copy** – Creating an electronic copy of a non-permanent record that exists in hardcopy format only *and* declaring it as Metro's *official record*. In this case, the original hardcopy may be destroyed.

## Advantages

- **Access:** Workgroups can easily share files and better control access;
- **Efficiency:** Electronic workflows and online record retrieval increase employee productivity;
- **Public Service:** Increased access to Metro's records supports Metro's goal of proactive disclosure and enhances public trust;
- **Operational Transparency:** Employees can respond more quickly to public records requests and audits;
- **Reliability:** Records can be managed more consistently; and
- **Sustainability:** Employees can use less paper and fewer resources (e.g. costs associated with on-site and off-site storage).

## PROCEDURES

These procedures provide general guidance to Metro staff in determining whether records should be digitized.

### Determining Whether Records Should Be Digitized

Before starting a digitization project, staff should consider a number of factors to determine whether records should be digitized and to plan the amount of time it will take to both prepare the records for scanning and ensure the quality of the digitized records. In general, it is important to weigh the benefits against the time, effort, and costs required to digitize the records. Here are some factors to consider:

- Physical Factors
  - What types of authentication features on the original document must be captured in scanning?
  - Are there bindings that must be removed?
  - Will employees need to put the records back together after they are scanned?
  - Do the records contain damaged, tattered, torn, or faded pages?
  - Do the records contain pages of odd sizes or odd shapes?
  - Do the records contain varying paper textures or image qualities?
  - What are the current physical storage requirements?
- Access Factors
  - How frequently will the records be accessed?
  - How many people need access to the records?
  - Would the public benefit by having the records easily accessible?

- Retention Factors
  - What are the retention requirements of the records?  
Staff should consider these retention factors relating to maintaining Metro’s official records:
    - Short-term Retention Requirement: Records with a relatively short-term retention requirement may not be good candidates for digitization. For example, records with a two (2) years retention are probably not worth the time and expense to digitize.
    - 10+ Years Retention Requirement: When digitizing records with retention requirements of more than ten years and declaring it Metro’s official record, a migration plan must be documented and implemented to ensure the long-term accessibility of the record.
    - Permanent Records: Currently, Metro’s policy is not to declare a digital image of a permanent record as its official record. Rather, as a best practice, the digitized version of a permanent record serves as secondary copy for both disaster recovery and public access purposes. For guidance on managing permanent records, see *RIM Guidance: Preparing Permanent Records for Archiving* on the RIM MetroNet web page.
- File Formats
  - What are the retention requirements of the records?
  - What are the storage requirements of the digitized records?  
**Note**: Records are required to be accessible for the duration of their lifecycle. For guidance on selecting the correct formats for the records, see: *RIM Guidance: File Formats for Long-Term Retention of Electronic Records* on the RIM MetroNet web page.
- Scanning on Premise or Utilizing Metro’s Contracted Service Provider
  - What is the volume of the records?
  - How soon do the records need to be digitized?
  - Who will be responsible for preparing the records for digitization?
  - Do staff have the training they need to complete the work?
  - Do staff have access to the equipment required to complete the work?
  - Based on staff availability and resources required, would it be more cost-effective to utilize the services of Metro’s contracted vendor to complete the project?  
**Note**: Staff should contact RIM staff to determine if funding is available to complete the digitization project.

Weighing these factors will help determine the benefits of digitization as well as the time, effort, and expense required to scan the records.

In addition, staff should also consider circumstances that may require Metro to maintain a hardcopy of a record, such as:

- Records Series Assigned Permanent Retention  
If the record is assigned permanent retention, the hardcopy needs to be prepared for scanning and entered into Metro’s electronic documents and records management system (EDRMS). The hardcopy also needs to be retained as the official record and stored in Metro’s off-site records storage facility.

- **Legal and Other Restrictions**

The manager of the program responsible for the records is the best source of knowledge of any restrictions that may supersede all other considerations regarding digitization.

Some examples include:

- A given record series is a regular part of transactions with a vendor or agency that will accept only paper records;
- Regulatory requirements;
- Particular audit needs; or
- Instances where parties to a transaction did not agree to conduct transactions by electronic means. ORS 84.013(2).

If needed, managers should contact the Office of the Metro Attorney to request review of legal or contractual requirements.

- **Integrity Concerns**

If digitizing a record will in any way interfere with the authenticity and reliability of that record, a hardcopy should be maintained.

### **Documentation**

If staff determine to proceed with a digitization project, they will need to work in conjunction with RIM staff to complete the *Digitizing and E-filing Worksheet* to document the standards that will be set for the digitization initiative. The official copy of the worksheet should be maintained (and update as needed) by the Program; a reference copy will be maintained by the RIM program.

### **Responsibilities**

All Metro employees are expected to adhere to this policy and set of procedures as part of their records management responsibilities under Metro Records and Information Management (RIM) Policy. RIM staff will advise and answer questions regarding this and any other RIM policies and procedures.

### **References**

- *Metro Records Retention Schedule(RRS)*
- *Metro Records and Information Management (RIM) Policy and Procedures*
- *RIM Guidance: Preparing Permanent Records for Archiving*
- *File Formats for Long-Term Retention of Electronic Records*
- *Digitizing and E-filing Worksheet*

### **Additional Information**

For further information regarding this or any other records and information management (RIM) policy, contact Metro's records officer or refer to the Records and Information Management (RIM) website.