

A file plan is the key to improving the records management life cycle of your bureau/office files and the information they contain.  It will help you to:

* Document your programs activities effectively;
* Identify records consistently;
* Retrieve records quickly;
* Properly safeguard vital records;
* Ensure records of continuing historical value are sent to [NARA](https://doiu.doi.gov/FISSA2016/index.html#169536_1); and
* Ensure records of short-term temporary value are disposed of in accordance with approved retention schedules.

A file plan lists all of the records approved by a bureau or office Records Officer, or program staff, and maintained by an employee, contractor, or staff member of that bureau or office.  The office file plan should be applied to records in all media (e.g., paper, non-paper, electronic).

Your bureau or office should already have a file plan.  If your bureau or office does not have a file plan, check with your bureau or office Records Officer or Records Liaison Officer for assistance in setting up a file plan.  A few basic tips for setting up your file plan:

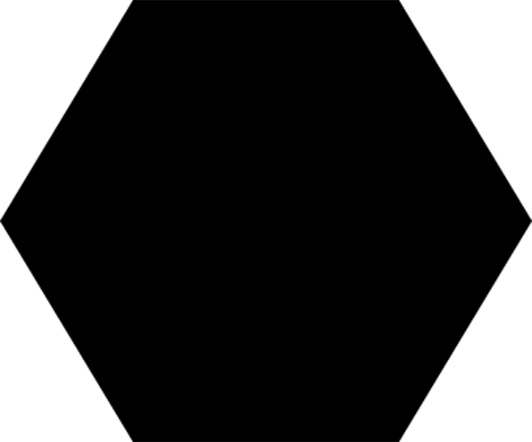
* Establish separate, individual files for each category. If you maintain this separation you will be able to manage your records much more effectively and easily.
* Annotate files/folders with the applicable file plan number or other identifier and the appropriate retention and disposition dates. This ensures easy refiling and reminds you to preserve records that have permanent value and to dispose of records that have temporary value after the specified period of time has elapsed.
* Ask for assistance from your bureau or office Records Officer to ensure that the file plan matches the records you have and lists only those records/files you are maintaining.

The file plan should consist of:

* The file title;
* The file number from the applicable agency or bureau/office records retention schedule;
* The physical file location or electronic file location;
* Brief description of the file; and
* Retention and disposition instructions from corresponding applicable records retention schedule.

Each bureau/office should have designated staff members who serve as Records Liaison Officers (RLOs). He or she should develop program office file plans and submit these file plans to the bureau or office Records Officer for approval.  
  
Ideally, each employee should have their files listed in an approved file plan.   RLOs will be responsible for ensuring implementation of bureau and office records management program objectives.





DOI Staff should take necessary steps to ensure that records are managed in compliance with [NARA](https://doiu.doi.gov/FISSA2016/index.html#62473_1)-approved agency records schedules.  If there is unauthorized removal, alteration, defacing or destruction of Federal records, please contact your bureau records manager and the Departmental Records Officer.