

Session: I am Now the RMO, Now What?

13 Tips to Share Handout

Panelists: Kathy Montemarano, Lillian Barton, Rosemary Switzer, and Gina Doty

Ideas on where to start and things to think about are in this handout. Some choices you make depend on if you are taking over an existing system or starting a new one from scratch. It can be overwhelming when you start, but remember, there are other RMO's more than willing to help you, so reach out to us at NYALGRO and at NYS Archives. We are resources for one another.

1. **Know your Role in your Organization:** Learn what is expected of you in the RMO role and if you are still unsure, reach out to NYS Archives who oversees the governance of all RMO's in New York and they have vast training program that is free on many courses. Their website is: <http://www.archives.nysed.gov> This NYALGRO conference and the attendee contact listing in your packet to network with others later is another great resource to use.
 - The first 18 months on the job as the new RMO at her campus, Gina attended about 15 of these free NYS Archives educational workshops which was invaluable to her taking aggressive action to get the campus on the right path with records management.
2. **Retention Schedules for Your Organization:** Understand your retention schedule, no need to memorize them, ask NYS Archives for assistance. Your schedule may be on their website. The departments in your organization will depend on you for understanding the records they have and how long to keep them, so this schedule will be your Bible 'so to speak'.
 - Office Retention Schedules: Make and use office retention schedules. The CO-2 schedule can be very daunting to a department. If they only have 10 or 20 items in their office, a short list is easier to deal with.
3. **Department Record Coordinators:** Usually there is one RMO per organization regardless if the organization has 10 employees or 1,000. You will rely on other employees to get the word out about the retention schedules that pertain to their area and this person is the Records Coordinator. Train them on the general scope about records management. You will rely on them often and they with you later on.
4. **Records Management Policy and Procedures:** Your organization cannot function effectively without a record retention policy and procedures that detail how to carry out the policy. The policy needs to be approved at the higher management level of the organization so that it has great importance from the top down. Research other state agencies on what they already have and look at the NYS Archives website for training on writing a strong policy and procedures document. Solicit a few other Record Coordinators in this work so that there is 'buy-in' to adhere to what is the final document.
5. **Committee on Open Government-Freedom of Information Law (FOIL):** Be aware that your role may require that you retrieve and manage records for a FOIL legal process. This site will give you overall guidance: <http://www.dos.ny.gov/coog/>
6. **Establish a Web Site about Records Management:** Having the basic information in one location in your organization on a website that you or the webmaster can edit later is another step to getting your information out to other employees. Look at other agency websites for ideas and use parts of what you see for your particular agency.

7. Disaster Kits for Emergencies in Inactive Record Storage rooms: If your responsibility includes managing a storage area for inactive records that other departments own, ensure there is an emergency kit in that area in case of a flood, power outage or another type of emergency. A list of what Gina has in her three storage room kits will be given to everyone.
8. Legal Hold placed on Records: If you are the person handling FOIL requests or not, you may be a part of the process of putting records on a “Legal Hold” so that they are not destroyed and could require to be kept longer than their retention date. Have a policy and procedure in place to handle this process. Gina’s college campus has this web link for E-discovery and legal holds: <http://web.plattsburgh.edu/policies/administrative/ediscovery.php>
Look at other agency websites on this topic to learn more.
9. Electronic Records Management Systems: Computers are the future of how records are kept now and will be in the future in a larger way, but there is much to learn when you think your organization wants to be ‘paper free’.
 - Find other RMO’s who are using an electronic records system to network with and learn from. The salesperson of any vending company will make their product and processes to use it appear seamless, but there is more than meets the eye.
 - Work with IT department; find out what systems they are using and what they are phasing out.
10. Training in a Large Organization: Gina’s campus uses a software training program called WeComply. It is an online compliance training platform that is owned by Thomson Reuters. WeComply offers a variety of courses which can be customized to the needs of a particular organization. The system allows for automated assignment and reminder emails, tracks completion, and provides certificates of completion for participants. Many SUNY institutions are currently using it as their platform for mandatory compliance training such as records management retention policies and best practices with records. Parties interested can learn more and request a demo at <https://risk.thomsonreuters.com/products/thomson-reuters-compliance-learning>.
 - NYS Archives can give help and advice to any type of problem or question that comes up. Find out what region your organization is located in and each region has their own NYS Archives Regional representative. If you do not know your region, contact NYS Archives to find out.
 - Provide mini trainings: Mini trainings can be very helpful to provide quick, concise information on a variety of issues. Also, input from staff or co-workers can be helpful to a good program.
11. Keep up with the Filing: There is a place for everything and everything should be in its place. A good filing system is important for your office.
 - Keep track of Information for Reports: It’s simpler to fill out reports, either statistical or yearly if the information is on hand.
12. Destroying Records: Be sure to get approvals from Department Heads to destroy records on a timely basis. There can be costs associated with keeping records that are past their retention period.

13. Other Great Ideas: Encourage departments to do a records inventory on paper and for electronic records.

- Promote tours of your facility. Hold an annual open house with new exhibits using some of the historical records you have. People get a visual of where their records are stored and maintained.
- If you handle the FOIL requests for the County or Town; learn who to contact for the information in each department. Work closely with the Legal department.
- Hold training classes and provide refreshments, preferably right in your facility concerning transferring records and touch on the importance of record retention.
- Lastly look into applying for grants which can help budgets and projects. Refer to NYS Archives website the LGRMIF, Disaster Grants and others.