

The United Republic of Tanzania



**President's Office
Public Service Management**

**GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES
FOR MANAGING PERSONNEL
RECORDS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

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Foreword

The Government of Tanzania is committed to improve the management of records in the Public Service as a major source of information that facilitates its transactions. The value of information and the power it has, shapes the way Government business and activities are conducted. Effective use of information, results in good and consistent decision-making, efficient and effective delivery of service, transparency and accountability which cannot be achieved without proper records management. It is for these reasons that the government is keen on improving Human resource information in the Public Service. One way of doing this is to provide clear guidelines and procedures on personnel records management.

These guidelines aim at providing procedures to be followed on day to day management of personnel records in the entire Public Service. Adherence to these guidelines and procedures will streamline personnel records management practices, leading to effectiveness, efficiency, improved service delivery and better management of public servants.

However, these guidelines are not intended to be a training guide for trainers, but a practical guide for records staff and Human Resource officers whose responsibility is the management of personnel records. These guidelines and procedures will supplement government efforts in improving personnel records management and should therefore be used alongside existing policies, laws and regulations governing records management.

In this regard therefore, all Heads of Public Offices are required to ensure that all officers in their institutions observe the guidelines and procedures and put systems in place for managing personnel records.

The continued application of these guidelines and procedures will improve service delivery and better management of Public Servants.



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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The success of the Tanzania public service in discharging its functions depends, among others, on the manner of which personnel records are managed. Effective management of personnel records enables public offices to manage their employees efficiently and equitably. It encourages informed and consistent decision-making, transparency, accountability and facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of employee's performances.

Poor management of personnel records undermines efforts to improve the accuracy of the public service payroll database and the implementation of the Public Service Management and Employment Policy which has introduced performance related promotion and compensations. In line with this policy, public service employers will need improved access to employees' records relating to present and past performance. Better management of personnel records will also reduce delays in processing pension claims for retired staff.

In order to address the requirement of the National Records and Archives Act No. 3 of 2002; the National Records and Archives Management policy of 2011; and the Public Service Management and Employment Policy of 2008, the PO - PSM, has decided to establish guidelines and procedures to facilitate strategic management of personnel records in the public service.

The purpose of these guidelines and procedures is to enable records staff and Human Resource Officers, in the public service, to create,

control and maintain personnel files (Master file and Working file) in a way which insures that the employment history of each public servant is readily available for as long as it is required, and that the information contained in the files supports the work of appointing authorities.

1.1 OBJECTIVE

All public offices generate and hold personnel records. Therefore the objective of these Guidelines and Procedures is to ensure that personnel records in the public service are created, controlled and maintained throughout their life cycle as required by relevant laws, regulations and instructions.

1.2 SCOPE

These guidelines and procedures cover both paper and electronic records and include guidance on managing the personal files of individuals employed by the Government. Guidance is provided for both records staff and human resources (HR) officers. Records staff must follow these Guidelines to ensure that personnel records are managed effectively and efficiently throughout their life cycle and that they remain accessible for as long as needed to support the information needs of HR officers. HR officers, all other creators and users of personnel records must follow these Guidelines and Procedures to ensure that their decisions, actions and communications are fully and accurately documented.

1.3 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Legislative requirements and responsibilities in relation to public records are explained in the National Records and Archives

Management Policy of 2011. In summary, public offices must also ensure that recordkeeping practices comply with the Records and Archives Management Act No.3 of 2002, any other applicable laws and regulations.

Regulation of the human resources management function in government is covered by the Public Service Act No.8 of 2002 (CAP 297) and Public Service (Amendment) Act No.18 of 2007 and Public Service Regulations of 2003, Standing Orders of 2009, and the Public Service Management and Employment Policy of 2008. Section 8(3) of the Public Service Act, 2002 empowers the Permanent Secretary (Establishment) to be responsible for coordinating and ensuring proper upkeep of personnel information of all public servants. Each public office also has a responsibility to ensure that accurate and complete personnel records are kept for the employees in its operational service.

Also these Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the National Records and Archives Management Policy of 2011. The Policy provides a framework to enable public offices to comply with legislative requirements, as well as the international standard for records management (ISO 15489)¹.

1 ISO 15489-1: Information and Documentation – Records Management - Part 1: General; ISO/TR 15489-2 Information and Documentation – Records Management - Part 2: Guidelines.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PERSONNEL RECORDS

Records are needed to support government operations, to provide reliable information about the decisions and actions of public servants and to demonstrate that public servants have acted appropriately. Effective management of personnel records enables the public service to manage its employees efficiently and equitably, encourages informed and consistent decision-making, supports transparency and accountability, and facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of performance. Much of the information that is entered in the Human Capital Management Information System (HCMIS) is derived from personnel records generated in the course of managing individual employees.

2.1 Special Characteristics of Personnel Records

- (i) **Government-wide:** government offices at all levels and locations normally maintain personnel records of some sort. This has implications for communications, duplication and the authenticity of records as evidence of HR events.
- (ii) **Links with other systems:** There are strong links between personnel recordkeeping systems and other government systems, notably payroll and pension management. Personnel records provide the authority to pay salaries and benefits to employees.

- (iii) **Different uses.** Personnel records provide a basis for planning and decision making in every area of personnel work, whether in relation to individual employee, groups or categories of employees or the entire workforce. In common with other types of records, personnel records must be managed so that they can always be located and retrieved when required.
- (iv) **Importance:** Reliable personnel records support the efficient management and use of the government's human resources. However, the quality of personnel records also directly affects government employees and their families. It is extremely important that personnel records are accurate and complete, and that they can be trusted by government and employees. Personnel records document the contractual relationship between employer and employee and the employee's career history. The information held in these records is used to make decisions about promotion, transfer, termination or, in some cases, disciplinary action. These records are also used as authority to determine pay and other benefits, including pension entitlements.
- (v) **Sensitivity:** Most personnel records are sensitive or confidential because they contain personal information about individuals. Access to the records, whether paper or electronic, must be strictly controlled by putting in place security measures that protect them against loss, unauthorised access or unauthorised alteration.
- (vi) **Longevity:** Some personnel records will need to be kept for the entire career of the employee and for a period after the decease, retirement or separation from public service of the employee. This has implications

for storage systems and the lifespan of storage media. Factors such as the longevity of the media, ease and cost of migration of personnel records are particularly relevant when evaluating electronic recordkeeping systems. All personnel records must be retained and disposed of in accordance with approved retention/disposal schedules.

- (vii) **Quantity:** Typically the public service maintains very large quantities of personnel records, the majority of which continue to be held on paper. The failure to manage personnel records appropriately will lead to significant wastage of office space and have major implications in terms of cost and staff time.
- (viii) **Ownership:** Although personnel records may be in the custody of a public office, they are Government records and are kept under the recordkeeping authority of PO-PSM. Personal files, or any of their contents, must be provided to PO-PSM on request and shall not be destroyed without authority as prescribed by the Records and Archives Management Act No.3 of 2002.

2.2 Main Categories of Personnel Records

Employer has a responsibility of maintaining a personnel file for each employee. Documentation of employment history, records of contribution and achievement, disciplinary notices, promotions, performance development plans, and much more, belong in a personnel file. Records management practices in the public service require employers keep more than one personnel file. Because several types of personnel files are recommended, different rules and guidelines are associated with each personnel file. Each type of personnel records outlined below has a different reason for existing, different contents and stored differently based on that reason.

2.2.1 Subject Files

Most public offices maintain subject files relating to the human resource management function. These files cover policy and procedural matters relating to, for example, recruitment, manpower planning, conditions of service, labour relations, schemes of service, training, performance management and discipline. These files should be managed according to standard procedures for all other subject files, as described in the *Registry Procedures Manual*.

2.2.2 Personal Files

Personal files contain the records that document an individual's employment history throughout his or her career in the public service. Personal files must be managed throughout their lifecycle, from creation, through their active and semi-active phase until their final disposal. Some of the information about an individual employee must be kept for a long time, but other records are quickly obsolete and need not be retained for long term. Common practice is to keep two personal files for each individual, one a confidential personal file, and the other open personal file for each appointing authority. This practice, therefore, led to fragmentation, incomplete documents and missing of key information for an individual. Hence a call for a comprehensive guideline to manage personnel records across the public service is necessary.

These guidelines are reviewing record keeping of personal files by establishing a master file which was previously known as a confidential file and working files as an open file.

An objective of maintaining master and working personal files is to ensure that essential personnel records are filed in the master file for long-term retention and other records are kept in a working file, so that they may be destroyed after a specified period. Master files are

maintained by the appointing authority² as a central record, while working files may be kept both by the appointing authority and by the office or unit within which the individual is employed. Throughout the career of a public servant, he/she should have only one confidential file, though the file may exist in several volumes.

A master file system also facilitates information retrieval by ensuring that all essential personnel documents are concentrated in a single file. The working file may include copies of documents from the master file that are needed by public service officials to make decisions. It is emphasised that working files should not contain any original documents that are kept in a master file.

(i) **Master (Confidential) file**

The contents of a master personal file are the single most valuable record of an individual's career within the public service. Many of the documents cannot be replaced, or the data they contain cannot be reconstructed, particularly after the passage of time. The file is a unique and essential source of personal information and should therefore be safeguarded as long as it is needed.

The master file should document the entire period of the individual's public service. It should include the core record of service, basic personal details and all the records that are needed to document the legal and contractual relationship between the employer and employee, such as letters of appointment, confirmation in post, promotion, transfer and separation records.

2 The 'appointing authority' is the authority exercising powers of making appointments to a public service office.

Each employee should have a master paper file held in the confidential registry of the appointing authority. **The master file should be transferred with the individual if he or she is transferred to another appointing authority.** The documents to be held on the master file are listed in **Appendix 1.**

NOTE: A checklist is printed on the left hand side of the master file, beneath the first minute sheet. When a key document is added to the file, the presence of the document should be noted on the checklist. The checklist also serves to verify the completeness and integrity of the file. It is the responsibility of HR officers to ensure that the checklist is up-to-date.

(ii) Working (Open) file

Working personal files contain records that are not critical to the employee's contractual relationship with the employer, for example, annual leave records, travel records, training applications, loan applications and salary arrears documents. Working files may contain *copies* of key documents held on the master file if this is helpful for operational purposes (for example, to avoid the need to consult the master file). However, working files should not contain any *original* personal records of long-term value. Their contents may therefore be retained only for as long as they are required to support a particular personnel function. **The types of some of records found on working personal files are listed in Appendix 2.**

(iii) Back-Up Digital File

The Government of Tanzania shall have a backup of key personnel documents in a digital format. The main purpose of the personnel file in a digital format is to provide a convenient, centrally held resource that, with appropriate permission, may be accessed through the government network and that can serve as a back up to the paper files. Digitisation of the personnel records shall be approved by PO-PSM. The presence of a document category in the electronic file should be noted on an Employee's Documents Check List which should also be scanned as part of the file.

The existence of the digital master file does not remove the need to maintain a paper file. Paper files will continue to be maintained as the legally verifiable record of the contractual relationship between employer and employee and evidence of employment history. Public offices will be required to update the electronic master file when an HR change occurs and new records are generated.

2.2.3 Personal Record Form

Standing Orders, 2009 (D.37) require a Personal Record Form to be maintained for each employee. Both master and working files should contain a personal record form which captures all basic essential information about the employee. The personal record form should be kept at the front of the file on the left hand side as the first document and shall provide inputs to the HCMIS. It is the responsibility of HR officers to ensure that the paper personal record form is kept up to date. (See appendix 3)

