



Adequate Records Management - Planning

Outcome 1: Records management is planned

Records management must be governed and planned in a strategic manner, incorporating the development and implementation of plans, policies and procedures.

A records management plan is one of the central elements of an agency's records management program. Developed in line with the agency's broader strategic and corporate plans, the records management plan provides high level direction and is consistent with legislative and business requirements.

Planning includes the formalisation of good records management practices within policies and procedures. This documentation enables agencies to respond to recordkeeping issues in a consistent manner, ensures responsibility for records management tasks is allocated and supports business continuity.

How can my agency meet the requirements of Outcome 1?

Agencies must satisfy a number of requirements to achieve adequacy in relation to Outcome 1 of the *Adequate Records Management (ARM) Standard*:

- Establish a program of work that is concerned with everything that happens to records throughout their existence.
- Plan for staff with the skills and capacity to do the job, their training, accommodation needs, and equipment, technology and budgetary requirements.
- Develop a records management strategy which establishes goals and priorities reflected in the *South Australian Government Records Management Strategy*.
- Document and promulgate plans, policies and procedures that are regularly reviewed and updated to enable continuous improvement.
- Assign responsibilities for records management activities.
- Gain support of senior management, and integrate records management with business planning, disaster planning and risk management strategies.
- Use systems that manage both hardcopy and electronic records in line with government standards.
- Integrate records management with other business systems and processes.

What are the benefits of records management planning?

Adequate records management planning ensures agencies are able to:

- conduct business efficiently, effectively and accountably
- deliver services consistently and equitably
- document policy formation and support managerial decision making
- provide consistency, continuity and productivity in management and administration
- facilitate the effective performance of business activities throughout an agency
- provide business continuity in the event of a disaster
- meet legislative and regulatory requirements including archival, audit and oversight activities
- provide protection and support in the event of litigation, including the management of risks associated with the existence of, or lack of, evidence of organisational activity

- establish and provide evidence of business, personal and cultural activity
- maintain corporate, personal and collective memory.

What are the elements of records management planning?

Plans, policies and procedures

Records management plans, policies and procedures should be developed to suit agencies' environments and authorised by senior management. They should be implemented and accessible to staff; regularly reviewed; integrated with other guidance by the agency; and define responsibilities and interrelationships.

Documented policies and procedures ensure that the evidentiary, accountability and information needs of the agency or authority are met.

Key issues to be addressed in the records management policies and procedures of an agency include:

- a Records Management Strategy
- planning, scheduling and resourcing for records management activities, including training, contractor services, the disposal program, and implementation and/or maintenance of records management/business systems that manage records
- regular monitoring and review of the agency's records management activities and performance.

Documentation must also address the operational records management outcomes contained in the *ARM Standard*, i.e. creation, capture and control, security and accessibility; and disposal of official records. Documentation should outline:

- definitions of official records
- who is responsible for creation, capture, disposal, etc
- when creation, capture, disposal, etc will occur
- how records will be created, captured, disposed, etc
- the security classifications that apply to official records
- access arrangements
- the tools available for finding official records and who has access to those tools
- the indexing or descriptive data that will be captured and who is responsible for this
- how version control will be managed
- the techniques the agency will use to validate the reliability of its official records.
- protection of vital records.

Disaster management and recovery planning

It is essential to plan and protect records and systems housing records from risk and to enable the continuation of business during a disaster.

A disaster is defined as any event that creates an inability on an organisation's part to provide critical business functions for some predetermined period of time. Disasters affecting records may include natural events such as earthquakes, bushfires, floods, or vermin; structural or building failure; industrial accidents; technological disasters such as viruses and computer equipment failures; criminal behaviours such as theft, arson, espionage, vandalism, riots and terrorism; accidental loss through human error; and unsuitable storage conditions that cause natural decay of materials.

Disaster management consists of four stages; Prevention, Preparation, Response, and Recovery. Planning for these stages in regard to official records and records systems includes:

- Assess the risks that may affect records and records system. Initiate activities to reduce the probability of a disaster and reduce the probability of loss should a disaster occur.
- Develop a disaster response plan to assist the agency to respond to an emergency or disaster event.
- Identify and protect the agency's vital records.
- Plan for sufficient resources and activate them to protect or secure the agency from loss of records or interruption to business operations, so that normal operations can resume as soon as possible.

Additional guidance can be found in the *Records Management Disaster Planning Guideline* and the *Records Management Disaster Planning Toolkit* on the State Records website.

Identification and protection of vital records

Vital records are records, in any format, that contain information essential to the survival of an organisation. If a vital record is lost, damaged, destroyed or otherwise unavailable, the loss will affect critical operations. Vital records should be the main priorities for recovery and salvage efforts when a disaster occurs.

A vital records program should be established within each agency's disaster plan. The program should include the policies, plans and procedures in place and the resources required for:

- identification of vital records
- use of vital records in day-to-day circumstances
- use of vital records in the event of a disaster and during recovery

Finding the gaps

State Records recommends agencies undertake independent self-assessments of their current records management practices. This process will assist agencies to identify immediate, intermediate and long-term planning and strategies required to progressively address records management deficiencies.

Further information

Adequate Records Management Standard and Matrix, State Records of South Australia

State Records has produced a number of other Standards, Guidelines and Recordkeeping Information Sheets relevant to the planned management of official records. Please refer to the State Records website.

Version control

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