Government of South Australia

State Records of South Australia

Adequate Records Management - Creation, Capture & Control

Outcome 4: Records are created, captured and controlled

Official records must be created, captured and controlled in accordance with legislative and business requirements.

Good records management begins before records are created, with an understanding of the records agencies need to create in order to satisfy legislative and business obligations. Documentation of these requirements within a Business Classification Scheme or thesaurus, which is then incorporated into a recordkeeping system, is a key component of an adequate records management program.

Capture and control of records allows an agency to protect its legal interests and deliver mandated services. Review and update of creation, capture and control requirements is essential in times of administrative or legislative change, to ensure that agencies maintain compliance.

How can my agency meet the requirements of Outcome 4?

Agencies must satisfy a number of requirements to achieve adequacy in relation to Outcome 4 of the *Adequate Records Management (ARM) Standard*:

- Plans, policies and procedures relevant to records creation, capture and control should be approved, implemented, and adhered to.

- Senior management are aware of and support the need for effective creation and capture of records in line with legislative and business needs.

- Responsibility for records' creation, capture and control has been assigned to staff within the agency and this is documented within policies and procedures.

- Business processes and legislative obligations have been reviewed to map the requirements of creation, capture and control. Those requirements have been documented within a Business Classification Scheme (BCS)/thesaurus.

- Records are created and captured in line with business and legislative needs, and recordkeeping/business systems are in place that capture and control official records.

- Recordkeeping/business systems apply the agency's Business Classification Scheme (BCS)/thesaurus to records, and capture relevant metadata.

What are the benefits of creation, capture and control?

Creation has the benefits of:

- enabling the agency to re-examine past decisions

- ensuring that government is accountable to the public for the actions that it takes

- reducing risks to accountability that can result in financial penalties or public distrust.

Capture helps to ensure that official records are:

- accessible to those who require them, subject to any restrictions that may apply

- controlled and managed in accordance with policies and procedures

- secured against tampering, unauthorised access or unlawful deletion

- disposed of promptly in accordance with legal authority.

The classification of official records ensures the structured organisation and consistent description of records, which results in:

- increased consistency of access to records
- reduction in the time taken to search for official records.

What does creating records mean?

Official records are created as a direct consequence of the conduct of the business of government. The records:

- provide proof that certain actions or events occurred
- meet specific legislative requirements concerning the creation of records
- enable the agency to see what has happened in the past and act as an information source to guide future actions.

Official records should be created as business is transacted or as soon as possible thereafter.

As part of records management planning activities, agencies should conduct a business process analysis that identifies and documents the points at which records are and should be created.

What does capturing records mean?

The intent of capturing records into a recordkeeping system is to:

- establish a relationship between the record, creator and business context
- place the record and its relationship within a recordkeeping system
- link the record to other records.

The process of capturing records into a recordkeeping system includes:

- registration, which provides evidence of the records' existence
- classification and indexing, which allow appropriate linking, grouping, naming, security, user permissions and retrieval, disposition and identifying vital records
- arrangement in a logical structure and sequence, whether a physical file or an electronic directory, which facilitates subsequent use and reference.

All of the above require allocation of metadata by embedding, attaching or associating it with the specific record, irrespective of its format.

What does controlling records mean?

Control of official records is maintained through classification and application of other metadata. Compliance with the *Adequate Records Management Standard* requires that systems apply their BCS/thesaurus to records as well as capture mandatory metadata identified in the *South Australian Recordkeeping Metadata Standard* (SARKMS).

Records classification is the systematic identification and arrangement of business activities and/or records into categories according to logically structured conventions, methods, and procedural rules represented in a classification system (*Australian Standard AS ISO 15489 2002*). Classification facilitates description, control, links and determinations of disposal and access status.

How can records be created and captured?

Records may be created and captured into recordkeeping systems by manual, semi-automated and fully automated methods:

- Manual capture of a record may involve placing a hard copy of a letter on a correspondence file.

- Automated creation and capture into a business system is evident in a system that keeps a copy of a sent message.

- Semi-automated capture occurs where creation of a record may complete some steps required, but additional action on the part of the user is required to complete the process. For example, a document management system that captures a copy of an e-mail but which requires the user to complete data fields in a metadata profile.

Each agency needs to determine which official records it must capture, and how they will be captured, into their recordkeeping systems. Systems need to be compliant with State Records' standards.

Agency staff are responsible for the capture of the official records that they create. This is dependent on:

- the technology in use by the agency

- the records management procedures and practices in place within the agency

- the presence, or not, of dedicated records management staff.

What is a recordkeeping system?

A recordkeeping system can be any system of arrangement, identification and storage of records. The key characteristic will be that controls, rules and procedures exist for capturing records into the system. These controls relate to the naming, numbering and arrangement of records within the system.

A recordkeeping system also ensures that records documenting similar business actions are stored together. For example, client management files are stored separately from the stores and equipment records of the agency.

Examples of official recordkeeping systems include paper-based filing systems, electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) and business systems.

What tools are available for controlling records?

Business Classification Scheme (BCS)

A BCS lays out the functions and activities of an agency and is derived from a business process analysis of the agency. The BCS contains terms and scope notes that represent and describe functions, activities, transactions or other elements and shows their relationships. The number of levels within the scheme can vary depending on the level of refinement required and how the scheme will be used. The structure of the scheme is hierarchical, moving from the general to the specific.

An agency specific BCS should be incorporated into the agency's recordkeeping system and, if appropriate, business systems.

A BCS is not based on the organisational structure. The reasoning behind this is that organisational structures are fluid and subject to change, whereas the functions and activities of an agency are more stable and generally remain the same over time.

Thesauri

A thesaurus is based on a Business Classification Scheme, and is an alphabetical listing of terms, arranged hierarchically and showing relationships between terms. It prescribes what terms can and cannot be used when classifying records, through use of scope notes, non-preferred terms, related terms, broader and narrower terms. As it contains a controlled vocabulary, consistency of classification is ensured throughout a recordkeeping system. The thesaurus is usually structured so that the first two levels relate to functions and supporting activities. The third level may be free text or controlled subject descriptors.

As thesauri for records management purposes are based on business functions, they enable records to be classified according to the context in which they are created and used. Records are therefore classified according to why they exist, whereas a subject based approach would only indicate what they are about. This gives records meaning and context.

There are two types of thesauri that allow classification of records according to function:

- a general administrative thesaurus for records common to multiple agencies
- a functional thesaurus for agency specific records.

State Records has endorsed Keyword AAA (developed by State Records of New South Wales) as a thesaurus of general administrative terms for use by the South Australian Government. Keyword AAA is *not* used to classify records specific to an agency or authority. Each agency will benefit from the development of a thesaurus that relates to the particular to that agency.

The use of an agency specific thesaurus in conjunction with Keyword AAA will ensure that all official records of the agency can be adequately classified. Consideration can be given to combining the two thesauri into what is known as a merged thesaurus, applicable to all of the official records of the agency.

Further information on the classification of records and development of a thesaurus can be found on the State Records website.

Metadata

In recordkeeping, metadata describes the context, content and structure of records and their management. Metadata elements that are mandated to be captured and applied in SA Government are detailed in the *South Australian Recordkeeping Metadata Standard* (SARKMS).

Metadata will include registration and classification metadata, usually applied when a record is created and captured into the recordkeeping system. In addition, there will be metadata that describes the content, structure and context of the records; and recordkeeping process metadata that provides information about the processes a record has undergone, such as access, review and disposal.

Disposal schedules

In records management software, classification assigned to a record can be linked to disposal schedules that exist for an agency. This results in a record is registered being assigned a retention period on registration. This has the advantage of reducing the effort required to ensure that official records are sentenced appropriately. All such pre-assigned sentences, however, need to be reviewed prior to the disposal of the records.

Further information

Adequate Records Management Standard, State Records of South Australia

State Records has produced a number of Standards, Guidelines and Recordkeeping Information Sheets relevant to the creation, capture and control of official records. Please refer to the State Records website.

Version control

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