



Adequate Records Management in Perspective - The Planned Management of Official Records

Why does records management need to be planned?

Modern records management is a large and complex series of activities that affect all sections of an agency or authority. Like any other corporate program, records management should be planned, managed and monitored. As part of the planning for a records management program, there are a number of things that should be addressed including the staff that are required to do the job, the equipment and technology needed, accommodation, and budgetary needs.

Adequate records management planning can ensure that:

- the records management program is known in the agency
- the agency is committed to records management as a whole-of-agency program
- adequate resources for records management are identified and secured
- the operational and strategic directions of the records management program are identified.

Official records are a valuable resource and an important business asset. Whilst it may appear that records management does not impact on the public directly, this is not the case.

By ensuring that its records management activities are properly planned an agency will satisfy the requirements of Outcome 7 of the *Adequate Records Management - Meeting the Standard*.

What are some of the components of adequate records management planning?

Adequate records management planning includes:

- **a records management framework** - a framework links records management resources to the business goals of the agency or authority, establishes broad principles for dealing with records and identifies common standards for managing records
- **systematic assessment of records management requirements of the agency** - such an assessment supports comprehensive and more effective approaches to records management planning and records management program developments
- **understanding by managers of their records management responsibilities** - good planning will ensure that diverse groups of managers are aware of, and accountable for, their responsibilities relating to agency wide policies and directives concerning records management¹

¹ Archives of Ontario, Information Bulletin #5, *Information Management and Business Planning*.

- **records management operations and systems are organised according to the needs of the agency**² - good planning will ensure that the records management program takes account of the agency environment, complies with the agency's rules and protocols and supports and meets its needs
- **more clearly identified resource needs** - by identifying the resource needs for records management, at both an operational and strategic level, the agency will be in a better position to support these needs.

Adequate records management planning in an agency will also assist in:

- setting policies and standards
- assigning responsibilities and authorities
- establishing and promulgating procedures and guidelines
- providing a range of services relating to the management and use of official records
- designing, implementing and administering specialised systems for managing official records
- integrating records management into business systems and processes.³

State Records recommends agencies and authorities undertake an independent self-assessment of their current records management practices. This process will assist agencies to identify immediate, intermediate and long-term strategies to progressively address records management deficiencies in their agency.

What types of records management plans are there?

There are essentially three different types of planning documentation: corporate-level plans, strategic plans, and operational or action plans. An agency or authority should have all three types of plans in place.

What are the benefits of adequate records management planning?

Adequate records management planning ensures agencies are able to:

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

² The State Records Authority of New South Wales, *Standard on Full and Accurate Records*.

³ Standards Australia, *AS ISO 15489.1 2002. Records Management Part 1, General*, p. 4.

- provide evidence of business, personal and cultural activity
- establish business, personal and cultural identity
- maintain corporate, personal or collective memory⁴.

What are the consequences of inadequate records management planning?

Inadequate records management planning can result in:

- wasted resources
- records management programs that conflict with the business goals of the agency or authority
- reluctance by staff and managers to support and use the records management programs in place.

Further information

- State Records of South Australia, *Adequate Records Management – Meeting the Standard* (2002).
- State Records of South Australia, Records Management CD ROM.
- State Records Authority of New South Wales, *Standard on Full and Accurate Records* (2004).
- Archives of Ontario, *Information Bulletin # 5, Information Management and Business Planning* (2001).
- Standards Australia, Australian Standard AS ISO 15489-2002, *Records Management* (2002).

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⁴ *ibid.*