

Standard

Minimum recordkeeping metadata requirements

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STATE RECORDS

of South Australia



Government of South Australia
State Records

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Standard – Minimum recordkeeping metadata requirements

The Standard

Authority

This Standard is issued under section 14(1) of the *State Records Act 1997* (State Records Act).

Agencies must manage recordkeeping metadata in accordance with the requirements set out in the State Records Act and this Standard.

Scope

This Standard establishes the minimum recordkeeping metadata requirements for South Australian agencies.

It applies to all systems, either electronic or paper based, used by agencies to store or manage information, including electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS), business systems and collaboration platforms.

In this Standard, 'system' includes a software application, but also the means by which an application is configured and implemented, along with associated procedures.

Executive Summary

The Standard specifies the minimum metadata requirements for:

- » describing individual records and folders (or other aggregations) in systems, including EDRMS
- » records migration to new systems. In addition, relevant factors to consider when migrating records are also highlighted
- » event history / audit trail metadata in any system managing records, including business systems.

The chart of [Minimum metadata elements](#) shows how this Standard must be applied. For business systems comprising data records, such as in structured databases, the type of metadata typically captured about individual records and folders in a records management system may be different. It is also more difficult to distinguish between the data record, and the metadata. Therefore, in these systems, agencies must ensure they are able to create and manage metadata appropriate to the business function, activity and transaction that is occurring in the application.

This Standard should be read in conjunction with the *Standard – Managing digital records in systems*. Other information management standards and guidelines are published on State Records' website.

Business and records management systems should also be established and managed in compliance with the [South Australian Protective Security Framework](#).

Minimum Metadata

Recordkeeping metadata comprises of the details needed to identify, describe, manage and understand records so they act as authoritative evidence of business activity.

Australasian standard

AS/NZS 5478 Recordkeeping metadata property reference set (RMPRS) is the authoritative source for recordkeeping metadata requirements within Australia. The Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities, of which State Records is a member, has agreed to adopt the RMPRS.

The recordkeeping metadata elements in the RMPRS support the description of five entities:

- » records (individual records, and folders or other aggregations)
- » agents (people creating, capturing, viewing, using and managing records)
- » business (functions, activities or processes generating records, including records management processes)
- » mandates (laws, policies, regulations and business rules governing business and authorising people to act)
- » relationships (between the entities).

This enables development of highly structured metadata systems. State Records' archival management system is an example of a structured metadata system because it describes both agents (agencies) and records (series and items) and the relationships between them.

However, it is also possible to flatten the structure and capture metadata about multiple entities in a single profile. For example, a document or folder registration can refer to the people (agents) involved as creators, and the business involved through business classification terms.

This Standard

This Standard focuses on the core elements expected by State Records for the registration and management of individual records, including aggregations of records, in records management systems, and when migrating records. It also identifies core elements required for tracking records management events. Without these minimum elements, records might not be relied upon.

Agencies are encouraged to refer to the RMPRS for more detailed requirements, including metadata about the broader set of entities, that they may need to document for recordkeeping and archival management.

Quality

It is important to consider the source and quality of data values entered or captured as metadata. It may be useful to develop a metadata dictionary defining the sources and standards for each metadata value e.g. the format of dates, the conventions for recording names of people. A metadata dictionary could also identify any structured vocabularies or thesauri that should be used e.g. business classification schemes, security classification schemes, etc.

Much of the metadata that is required to be captured is generated automatically. Records management systems are typically designed to capture this metadata as part of their functionality. Other metadata requirements might need to be 'designed' into the application at configuration. Ideally there should be minimal manual entry of metadata by system users.

Elements

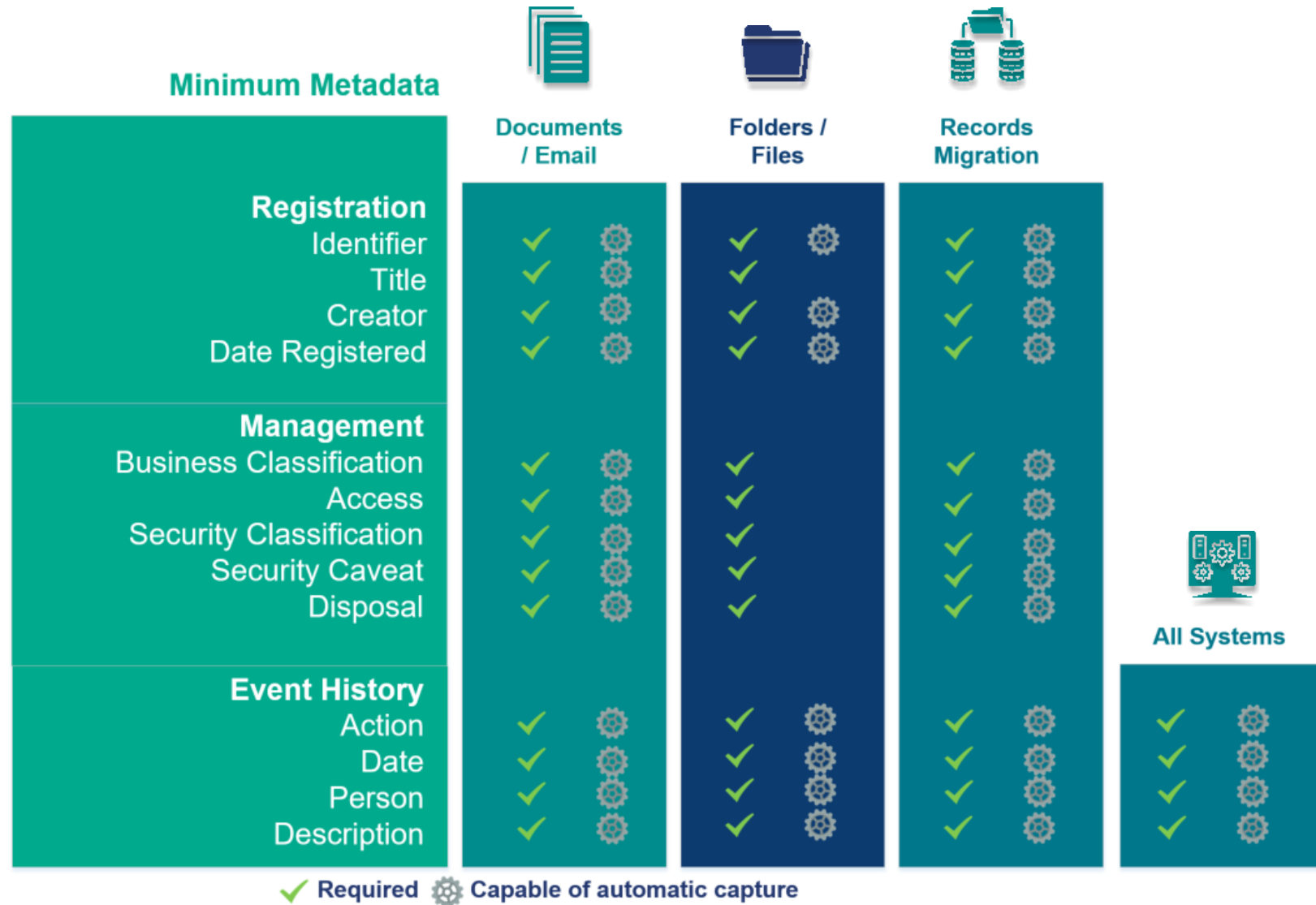
The minimum metadata required comprises the following elements from the RMPRS, as adapted by State Records. These minimum metadata requirements are met when an agency captures metadata that is the same or equivalent to all elements in the minimum set, according to the requirements established in this Standard.

Element	Definition	Source
Registration		
Identifier	A unique identifier for the record or folder, such as an identifier automatically assigned to a document registered into an electronic document and records management system (EDRMS).	RMPRS
Title	The title or name given to the record or folder.	RMPRS (based on Name element)
Creator	The person who captured the record into the application.	SRSA
Date Registered	The date a document is captured in the application.	SRSA
Author	The person responsible for making the content of the record.	SRSA
Date Received	The date a document was received in the agency, such as the date of an email.	SRSA
Management		
Business Classification	The general or agency-specific functions and activities that are documented by the record.	RMPRS (based on Keyword element)
Access	Policies and requirements that govern or restrict non-security related use of and access to records.	RMPRS (based on Rights element)
Security Classification	The specific security classification and sensitivity markings of a record or folder. Note: The SA Information Classification System should be used for accepted values.	RMPRS
Security Caveat	A warning that a record requires special handling, and that access shall be given to people cleared and briefed to see it. Note: The SA Information Classification System should be used for accepted values.	RMPRS
Disposal	Information about current general or records disposal schedules and the disposal actions that relate to the record or folder.	RMPRS

Element	Definition	Source
Event history		
Audit trail information	The history of changes to the document, or its controls, after it has been captured into the business application.	RMPRS (based on Change History element)
Action	The type of action taken on the record e.g. captured, viewed, edited.	SRSA
Date	The date and time the action was taken on the record.	SRSA
Person	The person responsible for taking the action on the record.	SRSA
Description	The details of the action taken, including values replaced.	SRSA

Minimum metadata elements

The following chart shows minimum required metadata.



Metadata about records (documents and folders)

Documents

Recordkeeping metadata is typically added to individual documents when they are captured in a records management system, and at various moments in their management. Metadata may be manually entered, or automatically added by, an application.

The purpose of the metadata is to:

- » Uniquely identify each document in the system
- » Record details of the process of capturing the document into the system
- » Record details that help identify how the record fits within a business activity or work process
- » Manage the record, and document how the record has been managed.

Metadata therefore comprises:

- » Data that facilitates management actions, including functions in a system
- » Records about the management of records.

Often, the metadata required for individual records already exists:

- » In document properties or email headers e.g. Author, Title
- » As a function in the records management system e.g. Date registered, Creator
- » In the metadata for a folder or other container into which a record is added e.g. Business Classification, Disposal
- » In a records control tool implemented in a records management system, or external to the records management system e.g. Access, Security Classification.

Folders

Records are generated by business activity and act as evidence of business activity. Business activity and work processes are rarely completed in a single document.

Folders (or files) are a records management system design element to group (or aggregate) documents relating to the same business activity, to tell the story of a work process such as a grant application, development of a policy, or management of a client case. Sometimes a folder may just be used to group multiple transactions of the same type, such as all invoices processed in one month.

Grouping records makes it easier to manage and apply rules e.g. access controls, security classifications, and disposal.

Metadata applied to the folder or aggregate is considered to be 'inherited' by the individual documents contained in the folder or group.

Inheritance of metadata is especially applicable to the following metadata elements:

- » Business Classification
- » Access
- » Disposal.

Metadata records (event history / audit trail)

Much of the metadata required are records in their own right, documenting records management events.

For example, when a record is created or captured in any application, a record is automatically made of who captured the record (Creator) and when (Date Registered). This is similar to the Author and Date Created properties in a typical network drive.

However, unlike network drives this event history data needs to be maintained rather than overwritten.

Metadata records need to be added to the record (or folder) when actions are taken that impact on the integrity of the record (for example, edits that affect meaning, rather than adjustments to style, changes to security classification, contributions from a new author, publication, or addition of related material.) Tracking these actions is important to be able to trust and rely on records.

These metadata records are effectively an audit trail about what has happened to a record, a chain of evidence of actions taken, and ideally are linked directly to the record or folder rather than in a separate audit log.

Typically, an audit trail records all actions which may be needed for security control, forensic investigation or disaster recovery. However, for records management purposes only records of some actions in an application's audit trail are required. These are the actions to be captured for records management purposes:

- » Creation / Capture (of the record or folder)
- » Edit (changes to content of the record or its metadata that impact on the integrity of the record)
- » Copy (copying of the record)
- » Access (viewing of the record)
- » Use (eg downloading, copying, or referencing the record for others to access)
- » Export (of the record or folder)
- » Disposal (destruction of the record or folder).

Where metadata is used to document the disposal of records it should include the:

- » name or number of the disposal schedule which authorised the disposal
- » specific disposal class in the schedule which authorised the disposal
- » disposal action (e.g. destruction, export / transfer)
- » date of the actual disposal of the record
- » person who authorised the disposal of the record.

Metadata when migrating records

Records migrated to new systems must retain their integrity, minimising the amount of changes as a result of migration.

Metadata associated with a record in a system therefore generally needs to be kept with the record when it is migrated to a new system.

The metadata for a record may be held in multiple places in the system:

- » In the document properties

- » In the record properties (may be called a profile or catalogue)
- » In an audit log.

Upon export

- » Links between metadata and records (documents, emails) must be maintained
- » Codes used in the application must be matched to the full text or definition so meaning is not lost
- » Metadata structures need to be maintained so that essential meaning is not lost

When importing records into a new application

- » Original properties should not change especially values from elements relating to dates and people (eg date received, last updated by)
- » The event of the migration should be captured either as an audit event or in a separate record.

Retention of metadata

Metadata is required to be retained in accordance with general disposal schedules.

Need further assistance?

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