



# Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers

## *ACARM Records Management Guides*

### **2 Policy and Skills/Knowledge**

*This Guide gives advice on the development of records management policies and provides information on the skills and knowledge required in records management work.*

#### **Policy**

##### *Content*

A records management policy is a document that serves as a mandate for managing records in an organisation. It is a statement that describes what the organisation does and intends to do with respect to its records. It underpins a records management programme, giving it authority and emphasising its importance to the organisation.

Organisations should have in place a records management policy that gives authority to the recordkeeping programme, outlines staff and management responsibilities and ensures that the records management function is given due priority. In particular the records management policy:

- Informs staff and management of the importance of records management to the organisation, both strategically and operationally
- Describes in general terms responsibilities for records and in particular refers to the role of the Records Manager
- Provides a basis for accountability
- Ensures compliance with relevant legislation

- Provides for a records management system to meet the organisation's business need for authentic, reliable and usable records

### *Development*

There are seven steps to follow in developing and issuing an effective records management policy.

- 1 Establish Senior Management Support - senior management support is essential to the success of the records management programme. You will need, for example, to convince senior managers of the need for and benefits of records management.
- 2 Research the organisation's current records management practices, resources and attitudes - this will help you to establish a new policy's content, priorities and emphasis. You will need to ensure that the policy is realistic and achievable given the organisational culture and available resources.
- 3 Consult staff - It is important to establish staff views of records management in general and of a policy in particular. Staff will have useful insights into corporate culture as well as recordkeeping.
- 4 Research the organisation's legal and regulatory environment - legal and regulatory environment and obligations are a powerful driver in records management policy. Consider also any community expectations and/or standards and best practices.
- 5 Look at other organisations' records management policies - examples from other organisations – particularly those in the same sector – can be a useful starting point.
- 6 Overall policy framework - the records management policy will be one of a range of organisational policies which it should complement and refer to. It is important to locate and research these other policies to ensure a coherent policy framework.
- 7 Map out Policy - having completed the research draw up the broad parameters of the records management policy.

### *Example*

A sample records management policy statement:

#### **Scope**

- 1 This policy provides for:
  - The requirements that must be met for the records of [*the organisation*] to be considered as a proper record of the activity of the organisation
  - The requirements for systems and processes that deal with records
  - The quality and reliability which must be maintained to provide a valuable information and knowledge resource for the organisation
  - Review of the policy and checking the quality of implementation

- An overall statement of records management policy which is supplemented by detailed procedures

It covers records in all formats, created in the course of the organisation's business, including non-conventional records.

### **Statement**

2 Information is a corporate asset and the records of [*the organisation*] are important sources of administrative, fiscal, legal, evidential and historical information. They are vital to the organisation in its current and future operations, for the purposes of accountability, and for an awareness and understanding of its history. They are the corporate memory of the organisation.

3 In consultation with organisations which may be concerned with the management of its records, [*the organisation*] will create, use, manage and destroy or preserve its records in accordance with all statutory requirements.

4 Systematic records management is fundamental to organisational efficiency. It ensures that the right information is:

- captured, stored, retrieved and destroyed or preserved according to need
- fully exploited to meet current and future needs, and to support change
- accessible to those who need to make use of it

and that the appropriate technical, organisational and human resource elements exist to make this possible.

5 All staff of [*the organization*] who create, use, manage or dispose of records have a duty to protect them and to ensure that any information that they add to the record is accurate, complete and necessary. All staff involved in managing records will receive the necessary training.

6 The records management policy is a specific part of the organisation's overall corporate programme and relates to other policies, such as:

- following best practice  
*Records should be managed in accordance with relevant standards for records management such as ISO 15489, which provides an overall guide to best practice in records management*
- the organisation's Information Services Strategy  
Electronic records will underpin e-business providing records for business use, corporate knowledge management and evidence-based policymaking, evidence for quality and accountability, and historical use
- Data Protection  
*Records need to be managed in accordance with procedures under the Data Protection Act 1998*

- Freedom of Information  
*Records need to be managed in accordance with procedures under the Freedom of Information Act 2000*
- audit policy  
*Records have to meet audit requirements*

### **Accountability**

7 The **Chief Executive** has a duty to ensure that [*the organisation*] complies with the requirements of legislation affecting management of the records, and with supporting regulations and codes.

8 The **Records and Information Manager** will ensure that there is consistency in the management of records and that advice and guidance on good records management practice is provided.

9 **All members of staff** are responsible for documenting their actions and decisions in the records and for maintaining the records in accordance with good records management practice.

### **Monitoring Compliance**

10 [*the organization*] will follow this policy within all relevant procedures and guidance used for operational activities. Interpretation of the policy will be monitored and there will be regular planned inspections to assess how the policy is being put into practice. These inspections will seek to:

- identify areas of good practice which can be used throughout the organisation
- highlight where non-conformance to the procedures is occurring
- if appropriate, recommend a tightening of controls and make recommendations as to how compliance can be achieved

### **References**

- International Standard on Records Management (ISO 15489)
- *Data Protection Act 1998: A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists* (PRO, PRONI, NAS, in association with ODPC, 2000)
- Records Management Standards and Guidance (National Archives, from 1998)

### *Monitoring Compliance*

For the policy to be effective there needs to be a mechanism to monitor compliance. The person to undertake this monitoring role should be the Records Manager. It is also recommended that the records manager should prepare an annual report on the organisation's activities in record keeping.

### *Issue and Implementation*

The records management policy should be published so that all staff can have access to it. It should be issued under the name of the Chief Executive or head of the organisation. It should be made clear to staff that adherence to the policy is mandatory. Implementation strategies and tactics include:

- Briefing sessions for staff to introduce the records management policy and to raise awareness of staff responsibilities
- Ensuring that new staff, including temporary staff and consultants, are made aware of the policy
- Making the policy readily available to staff at all levels of the organisation (for example, on intranets and in libraries)

### *Review*

Any policy will require review since organisations change over time. As organisations change, so do the records that support business operations. The policy should be reviewed at least once every three years.

### **Skills and Knowledge**

A Records Manager should be appointed in all organisations. Their responsibilities would include overall supervision of the record keeping arrangements and provision of a source of advice and guidance on records to the organisation generally. The job specification for such a post might include the following:

- a) Establish, develop and promote the strategy and programme for effective records management in [*the organisation*]
- b) Establish, develop and promote organisation-wide standards for records management
- c) Monitor the level of compliance with organisational standards for records management in all its business areas, and identify and encourage any action required

### Operational Responsibilities:

- Provide written and verbal advice and consultancy to staff at all levels on all aspects of records and information management
- Maintain knowledge of new developments in legislation surrounding records and information management, and in records management systems and technologies
- Liaison with IT staff on electronic record keeping systems
- Develop and maintain links with divisions and departments
- Identify and manage records management projects, identify resources, timescales and budgets as required

### Skills and Knowledge:

- Strong analytical skills, with the ability to absorb and manipulate new information quickly
- Excellent written and oral communication skills. The ability to listen, influence, guide and persuade staff at all levels
- Initiative in developing solutions to new problems. Ability to act independently and think outside the framework of current procedures, and challenge assumptions, producing creative solutions to problems
- Good planning and time management skills
- Computer literacy
- Knowledge of the organisational environment
- Maintain standards: promoting quality improvement throughout the organisation and providing management information as required

In general the skills and knowledge required in records management work might be summarised as follows:

### *Core Competencies*

- Knowledge and history of the organisation
- Knowledge of the relevant public sector environment
- Professionalism
- Communication and the promotion of records management
- Team working
- Planning and time management
- IT literacy
- Flexibility
- Customer care/Client focus

### *Functional Competencies*

- Information policy
- Information management
- Information technology
- Records management and archival practice
- Administration
- Specialist knowledge

## *Managerial Competencies*

- Coaching and development
- Influencing
- Manage performance
- Maintaining standards
- Manage people
- Manage projects

## *All Staff*

In the modern government and business environment all staff will be creating and managing records to a greater or lesser extent, especially when electronic systems are used. All employees are responsible for creating accurate and complete records that adequately document their business activities and meet the organisation's legal, regulatory and accountability requirements. Simple guidance, supported by training and awareness sessions, should set out their responsibilities to:

- Create accurate and complete records of their work in accordance with records management procedures to ensure records are reliable and authentic
- File and/or save records together with other records relating to the activity or transaction to ensure the record is complete and remains in the context of the activity or function it supports
- Document and track paper records removed from the system in support of their work
- Destroy or transfer records only in accordance with relevant disposal authorities and records management procedures
- Liaise with records management staff in the design of current filing systems, development of vital records programmes, disposal authorities and transfer of records to archival storage

## *Training*

Regardless of the organisation's records management staffing structure, there will be an on-going requirement for training and awareness throughout the organisation. The records manager needs to work with in-house training and development staff as well as with the human resources staff to develop and establish training plans. The training will need to be tailored to different categories of staff and whilst some of the required training should be within the capability of the records manager, some may need to be outsourced.

The **Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM)** was founded in 1984 to promote professional development in the field of records and archives management throughout the Commonwealth. It provides a link for Commonwealth archivists, archival institutions and records managers which is especially important because of the common heritage of legal and administrative systems, and hence of record keeping practices, which the countries of the Commonwealth share.

ACARM shares practical solutions to the problems of managing records and archives, and disseminates professional and technical information through its *Newsletter*, listserv and website – [www.acarm.org](http://www.acarm.org)

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