

Overview of 'Records by Design'

The ACT Government's *Guiding Best Practice Design and Delivery*, commonly referred to as the Design Practice, is a [toolkit to assist staff](#) across the ACT Government build human centred products and services. The process mandates the use of upfront analyses to ensure that security and privacy considerations are designed into business processes and the systems that support them. A similar approach needs to be taken to ensure that business systems are built to create and properly manage authoritative records of the activities they enable.

The Territory Records Office refers to this as a 'Records by Design' approach. Undertaking such a recordkeeping analysis as part of the design process can help to ensure that the business can account for its actions, meet oversight and transparency obligations such as under the *Freedom of Information Act 2016*, and meet responsibilities under the *Territory Records Act 2002*.

One of the tools used in the ACT Government Design Practice is a [Journey Map](#), that describes the steps taken in a business process by customers and staff, including actions taken, information presented, and 'pain points' encountered throughout the process. These are read in conjunction with a similar 'data journey' map that describes the process steps and how resulting data is gathered and shared between information systems.

A records journey for a process should be a hybrid of the user and data centric journeys. It will describe the interactions and inputs of customers and staff throughout the process and any information gathered. It will also allow us to identify legislation and other requirements governing the business process information, and points that authorisations and sub processes such as the establishment of identity should occur. Like the User and Data Journey maps, a Records Journey map should form part of the specification of design requirements for the business system under development.

Work process analysis for records

The International Standard on Work Process Analysis for Records, ISO/TR 26122:2012, sets out a systematic approach to understanding and improving recordkeeping practices within an organisation. This process is helpful in enabling Records by Design, and can help organisations to identify and address essential recordkeeping needs, leading to more efficient and effective business processes and improved compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Approaches to work process analysis

The international standard describes a methodology for the analysis of business processes to best capture records of those activities. It is intended to be employed to gather information about the transactions, processes and functions of an entity to identify the fundamental requirements for records creation, capture and control.

ISO/TR 26122:2012 identifies two types of analyses:

- functional analysis (Identification of constituent activities and work processes under identified functions), and
- sequential analysis (investigation of the flow of transactions within work processes).

Each approach begins with a preliminary review of context (i.e. mandate and regulatory environment) appropriate for the analysis output. These methodologies are independent of technology (i.e. can be applied regardless of the business environment), however they will be most useful assessing the capability and suitability of business systems and tools that support an organization's work processes.

Sequential analysis

Sequential analysis looks at business processes as the transactional level. Its aim is to identify the constituent pieces of information that result in a complete and accurate record of business activities. This type of work process analysis is particularly useful when designing new or assessing existing business information systems, and can support processes like exporting records for long term/permanent retention.

Sequential analysis can be scaled to analyse processes across a whole organisation or across one or more organisations. Within the context of the ACT Government, it is more likely to be applied at the division or business unit level. It can be used to analyse an aggregate of processes, the transactions which make up a single process, or a single transaction down to the keystrokes, depending on the purpose of the analysis.

Sequential analysis can inform decisions about how evidence of individual transactions might be aggregated to capture key records of a process, how long records created within the system must be retained, which records may be considered duplicate or redundant, and what metadata schemas are required to manage and understand the records.

The key output of a sequential analysis should be a Records Journey Map or similar product that can form part of the design specifications for the business system under development.

Functional analysis

Functional analysis is the grouping together of all the processes undertaken to achieve a specific, strategic, goal of an entity. Functional analysis uncovers relationships between functions, processes and transactions which have implications for managing records.

Functional analysis uses a top-down analytical method which begins with organisational goals and strategies and may descend to the analysis of transactions. It can be used across more than one organisation (within one or more jurisdictions), within one organisation, or one division of an organisation responsible for a function.

The functional approach will be familiar to records managers. It involves identifying high level business functions conducted by an entity, and the activities that support them. Any functions unique to an entity (or a small group of entities carrying out similar functions) should result in the creation of a business classification scheme (BCS) and an associated record disposal schedule (RDS).

Applying work process analyses

Completing a functional records analysis to produce a Records Disposal Schedule will be important for activities that are new to government. Until the Territory Records Office has approved a Schedule that relates to the business process it will not be possible to delete data and records or to retire the business system. The disposal of all ACT Government records is governed by Records Disposal Schedules authorised by the TRO. A functional analysis, leading to a new RDS, may also be important if the business process being documented has changed significantly, or if the existing RDS is more than five years old.

Similarly, completing a sequential records analysis will be important to ensure that existing recordkeeping requirements are built into new or altered business systems. Systems that are designed without a Records by Design analysis may not be able to support important accountability requirements or meet community expectations about transparency and the availability of records. Where a business system cannot support important recordkeeping requirements, particularly those relating to the capture, preservation and accountable disposal of records, it may be necessary to arrange potentially expensive integrations with specialist records management systems, or institute manual workarounds.

References

ISO/TR 26122:2012 - Work process analysis for records



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