Managing records during administrative change

Most forms of administrative reorganisation within government will require amendment to the intellectual and/or physical management of records as part of the change. Machinery-of-government changes that can affect the Territory include: the movement of functions from one Directorate to another; the introduction of new or amended legislation; or a change of government after an election.

These changes can result in:

- the transfer of a function from one ACT Government administrative unit to another
- the transfer of a function to another government jurisdiction (e.g. from the ACT to the Commonwealth)
- the creation or undertaking of a new function by the ACT Government
- the abolition of a function by the ACT Government.

When such administrative changes take place, a key principal is that responsibility for records relating to the function should always remain with the business area administering the function. This means that when business units administering a function move from one part of government to another, the records both past and current records that document that function should also move. As part of this process, existing Records Management Programs of both the 'losing' and 'gaining' organisations will need to be amended to reflect the changes and be re-authorised by the responsible Principal Officer.

Records for transfer could potentially be in any format, for example:

- registered paper files
- electronic records captured into any system (including unstructured data and records held in shared drives)
- databases and business systems
- maps and plans
- photographs
- microfilm
- obsolete technologies (e.g. DAT tapes).

NOTE: All actions taken as part of the physical and intellectual movement of records must be documented and maintained as a record within itself. A file should be created using the following classification:

RECORDS & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT – Disposal – Restructuring – Transfer of records from*<Name of relinquishing administrative unit> to <name of inheriting administrative unit> <year>*

The file should incorporate all information regarding the transfer of records from one administrative unit to the other, including all file lists and other supporting documentation.

Relinquishing agency records

The records and business information systems (e.g. client management databases, project management systems, EDRMS) associated with the function, and therefore affected by the functional transfer, will need to be identified. This is best achieved by representatives from both the relinquishing and inheriting administrative units to ensure there is a shared understanding of the scope of the transfer (e.g. quantities and formats) and to provide completeness of the capture.

A relinquishing administrative unit may choose to use an administrative change process as an opportunity to conduct a sentencing project so that only records that are still required under a records disposal schedule are transferred to the new unit. This is encouraged, but should be conducted in consultation with the records managers of both administrative units.

For sentencing and disposal see *Retain – Overview of records disposal and destruction* and *Assess – Sentencing of records*.

Key processes

- Determine what control records (such as file lists or indexes) relate to the records to be transferred.
- Create an inventory of the records included as part of the transfer - this can be prepared manually or by generating reports out of an appropriate system (e.g. EDRMS). A copy of the inventories should be provided to the inheriting administrative unit.
- Details of any records held with an approved storage provider, including contractual arrangements and costs, should also be made available.
- Agree with the inheriting administrative unit on a timeframe for the physical and/or intellectual transfer of records to occur. For physical transfer, ensure all records containers are clearly identified with the contents.
- Provide the inheriting administrative unit with all the Records Management Program details covering the affected records (e.g. nominated functional classification and disposal coverage).
- Once records have been physically moved, update control records indicating the new custodial administrative area and the date of transfer – no other original metadata should be altered, including details of the original creator of the records. Care must be taken to retain all provenance metadata.
- Document the decisions, and the rationale for the decisions reached, in the transfer file.
- Revise the Records Management Program to reflect the loss of the function.
- Forward the amended Records Management Program, signed by the responsible Principal Officer to the Territory Records Office (TRO).

NOTE: Records to be relinquished to an external entity, such as another jurisdiction or to the private sector, will include custody and ownership issues. These transfers should be managed in consultation with the Territory Records Office, noting that the Director of Territory Records will be required to approve this form of disposal before any records can be relinquished to the external entity.

Inheriting agency records

The process of transferring records from one administrative unit to another should be planned by the inheriting administrative unit as well as the relinquishing administrative unit. Failure to appropriately plan for the carriage of inherited records could result in the loss of records necessary to perform the new function effectively.

Key processes

- Nominate a liaison officer between the two administrative units – discuss the arrangements of the transfer outlined above with the relinquishing administrative unit.
- Consider the storage arrangements for the records (not currently held with an approved storage provider) when they are physically transferred. The records should be categorised as:
    - required for immediate business use
    - required for business use in the foreseeable future
    - likely infrequent use.
- Use the inventories supplied by the relinquishing administrative unit to review the completeness of the transfer of all records in all formats stated.
- Records should be retained in their original context upon receipt i.e. file covers not changed, control symbols/numbers not to be altered or top numbered, and titles should remain the same as received. If necessary, identify records that can be closed and create new files with intellectual links (relationships) to the inherited records within the control system(s).
- Update arrangements with any approved storage providers that are holding identified inherited records.
- Update all control systems indicating the previous controlling administrative unit and the date of transfer.
- Determine how to integrate transferred records into the existing filing systems of the receiving administrative unit without losing historical information such as the records' original order and metadata. For EDRMS users, this may involve creating a new Record Type (Content Manager/TRIM) or Object (Objective).
- Revise the Records Management Program to reflect the gaining of the function.
- Forward the amended Records Management Program, signed by the responsible Principal Officer to the TRO.

Records required by both administrative units

Some records may be identified as being necessary to both the relinquishing administrative unit and the inheriting administrative unit in order for them to continue their business. In this scenario, the records should remain with the original administrative unit and arrangements made for appropriate access to, or copying of, the records by the inheriting administrative unit.