Mandatory Standards Case Studies

Mandatory Standard 1

2.4 A public record is made and kept digitally by default throughout the lifecycle of the record, whenever practicable.

Scenario

Amaja works for a public authority which has several thousand physical public records stored offsite with a third-party provider. Amaja receives a Right to Information (RTI) request from a member of the public and needs to urgently recall records from offsite to meet statutory timeframes.

This process involves considerable time for Amaja to search for the record on the database, identify the correct retrieval code and place an order with the third-party provider for the record to be delivered. A cost is incurred by the public authority for the provider to locate the physical record, select it, and transport it to the public authority, as well as subsequently returning the record to offsite storage. This results in an inefficient use of worktime for Amaja and multiple costs for the public authority, and it greatly impacts service delivery to the client.

What could Amaja do?

- Investigate processes that generate a lot of paper records e.g. printing documents for physical signatures where digital signatures could be used
- For those records where access is regularly requested, review work processes for recalling offsite records to include the digitisation and disposal of eligible public records under Disposal Authorisation 2074 in the General Retention and Disposal Schedule (GRDS)

Application of 2.4 – Benefits include:

- easier and faster access to digital records
- reduction of costs associated with retrieving the records from offsite, with potential reduction in ongoing long-term physical storage costs
- increased client satisfaction with a more responsive turn around
- streamlining of internal work processes
- Increased ability to leverage e-discovery processes
- increased ability to collaborate and share information efficiently within teams and other public authorities

3.1 Metadata is made and captured to ensure authenticity, meaning and context are associated with the public record.

Scenario

Nadia public authority uses Microsoft 365 to manage their public records. SharePoint is the main program used to manage their public records and share documents within teams or other areas of the organisation.

Standard metadata practices within SharePoint have not been adopted across the organisation. Titles, and other metadata added to public records vary between different work areas based on the team's regular work practices and specialised projects. Collaboration between teams can be difficult as recording metadata for shared work isn't consistent, making relationships between public records unclear. Search and retrieval take longer as staff try multiple keywords and phrases to find a single record. Access controls are difficult to apply as the records are not well described, and the sensitivity and classification of the records are not easy to determine without relevant metadata.

What can Nadia do?

- Investigate if there are gaps in any of the SharePoint generated metadata fields and address these
- Develop a metadata guideline for M365 that utilises the existing framework with additional fields and functionality available in SharePoint
- Introduce implementation material and training to reinforce good titling and how to indicate record relationships
- Consider advocating for investment in a records management plug in for SharePoint
- Undertake regular mini audits of metadata to confirm whether the public authority's metadata guideline (or advice) is being implemented and provide additional targeted training where necessary

Application of 3.1 - Benefits include:

- Minimal change management required - existing knowledge of staff utilised
- Strengthens security, allowing restriction of access to certain public records for specific teams.
- Metadata standardisation ensures consistency, improves discoverability and facilitates efficient access and information sharing
- Upskilling of staff to include any new fields required
- Improved understanding of the value of records by staff

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3.3 Where relevant, metadata is made and captured by Departments for records relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culture, culturally sensitive information and languages.

Scenario

Mei works for a department that regularly works with records relating to land valuations and surveying. They have received a file with various documents from a surveyor, including notes, photographs, surveying data, and a small number of maps that include annotations and hand-drawn borders. The borders are labelled with recognised English names as well as Aboriginal place names. Some of the annotations reference cultural information such as significant sites or language groups. Some of the indigenous place names also have different spellings between the maps.

When Mei is creating the metadata for this map, she is not sure which of the annotations should be captured, or which name and spelling to use for the Aboriginal place name. She knows there are differing opinions around which spelling is “correct” and how much information the department should capture regarding Aboriginal land as part of their business practices.

What can Mei do?

- Capture as much information as possible regarding culturally significant sites and language groups, including multiple versions of place names to cover variations in spelling
- Implement a classification scheme or thesauri that is culturally safe and uses geographic, language and cultural identifiers
- Develop appropriate descriptive metadata and guidelines to capture cultural information related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and languages relevant to the department’s business activities or use other relevant thesauri (e.g. use AIATSIS AustLang as a guide for First Nations place data)

Application of 3.3 – Benefits include:

- Ensures cultural and historical information is preserved for the future and can be accessed by all Queenslanders
- Provides opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to reconnect with communities, culture, and language
- Improves access and retrieval to records, mitigating search issues caused by differences in spelling or classification
- Strengthens trust and connection with the community by allowing greater access to cultural information and facilitating knowledge sharing

Mandatory Standard 2

2.3 When a permanent value record is converted into a different format or migrated to a different system, the source record can only be disposed of in accordance with an applicable disposal authorisation.

Scenario

Caleb works in an organisation that creates a large volume of permanent value public records. Internal business processes currently require these records to be printed and kept in physical format. He often receives internal requests for access to these public records by staff who work remotely and require digital copies.

Each time a digital copy is requested, it takes considerable time for the physical record to be recalled and digitised. Physical storage space onsite is limited, while ongoing costs to store and retrieve the large volume of permanent records is increasing. Digital copies are now being kept in addition to the printed copies of records.

Keeping duplicate public records increases pressure on limited onsite storage and increases online storage costs for the digital version. Records stored physically can be at risk of loss or damage if the storage is not adequate or well maintained, or in the case of natural disaster impacts.

What can Caleb do?

- Develop a new process for the retrieval of permanent records that includes:
    - assessing the physical record for eligibility to be digitised and disposed of with authorisation
    - retaining the digitised copy as the permanent digital record
- Implement an appropriate process to dispose of duplicate public records after digitisation with approval from the Chief Executive of the public authority and a disposal authorisation issued by the State Archivist

Application of 2.3 – Benefits include:

- Reduce risk of significant loss or damage of permanent records during natural disaster
- Enable more appropriate access to high value permanent records
- Reduce ongoing costs for physical storage

3.5 Risk is assessed and reported internally via governance mechanisms, where any public record has exceeded its minimum retention period by five years.

Scenario

Kāhu works for a public authority that regularly receives highly sensitive, personal information such as health records and identity documents, which are digital. They have a large volume of public records, many of which have been held for a long time as they have not had the resources to conduct regular disposal. The executive team is worried about the ongoing rise in data breaches and has asked their records team to undertake a risk assessment of their records.

Kāhu finds that they have over 17,000 records that have been kept for longer than 5 years past their minimum retention period. Many of these records contain highly sensitive information that, in the event of a data breach, would have profoundly negative impacts on the organisation and the public. While Kāhu was also looking at these records, he also found that they had many duplicates of records and incomplete drafts that were eligible for disposal.

Kāhu proposes a disposal project to the executive team. After discussing, Kāhu is informed that they do not currently have capacity to individually assess and dispose of these records.

What can Kāhu do?

- Undertake a small-scale project to identify high-risk records. Immediately implement high-level security controls to lock down access to these records and mark for priority disposal.
- Develop a targeted records survey for staff to fill out to assist in identifying records that are not actively used, may have been stored for a long time or any 'unknowns' e.g. unsure what is in a particular storage area e.g. shipping container or old systems
- Records manager can develop a toolkit/guideline for non- records or information management staff to appraise a record against a set of criteria to more easily identify high-risk records
- Apply batch sentencing practices using the GRDS lite to group records of similar risk or retention periods to streamline detailed sentencing, risk assessment and disposal when resources become available
- Undertake a risk assessment for those records, including a security assessment, and prioritise lawful disposal of highly sensitive and personal records
- Document the risk assessment through the public authority's governance processes, including scheduling a decision review of disposal actions

Application of 3.5 – Benefits include:

- Reduce risk of data breaches and inappropriate access from inside or outside the public authority
- Identify changes to risks over the life of a record and gaps that may not have been identified when the record was created or stored
- Protect records from accidental loss or damage

Note:
Strong records management supports your public authority to meet obligations under other legislation including the:
- *Human Rights Act 2019*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*
- *Local Government Act 2009*