

Metadata

What is metadata?

Metadata is structured or semi-structured descriptive information about a record that enables the management, use and preservation of records through time. It provides context such as creator, date, activity, and relationships.

Metadata answers critical questions about public records. It tells us:

- Who created the public record and when
- If the public record has been changed at any time
- Why it was created and how it relates to other public records.

These elements ensure the public records are authentic, trustworthy, findable and usable.

Metadata is part of the public record

It is important to remember that metadata is part of the public record and must be managed as such. Metadata can be stored separately from the record, (for example, in an EDRMS or SharePoint), but clear and persistent links between both must remain to maintain context and integrity. If records need to be migrated to different systems, always ensure they are migrated with their metadata.

Why does it matter?

Public records need to be described so that people know what they are about, understand their context and purpose, and can find them easily when needed. Metadata can be used to identify, authenticate and contextualise public records and the people, processes and systems that create, maintain and use them.

It allows users to control, manage, find, understand and preserve public records over time.

Metadata helps ensure a public record is:

Authentic: the record is exactly what it claims to be. It was created or sent by the person or organisation it says it came from, at the stated date and time.

Trustworthy: the record is a complete and accurate reflection of the events, actions, or information that created it. It can also be relied on for future business decisions or activities.

Findable: the record can be seamlessly located and retrieved on demand.

Understandable: the record can be presented, interpreted and used in a way that makes sense to both its creator and future users.

Managed: the context of the record (why it was created and how it has been used) is clearly captured to support records management decisions such as access, storage or disposal.

What is 'good metadata'?

"Good metadata" is metadata that:

Clearly describes what the record is, e.g. proper titles or filenames

Informs who is allowed to access the record, e.g. security classifications

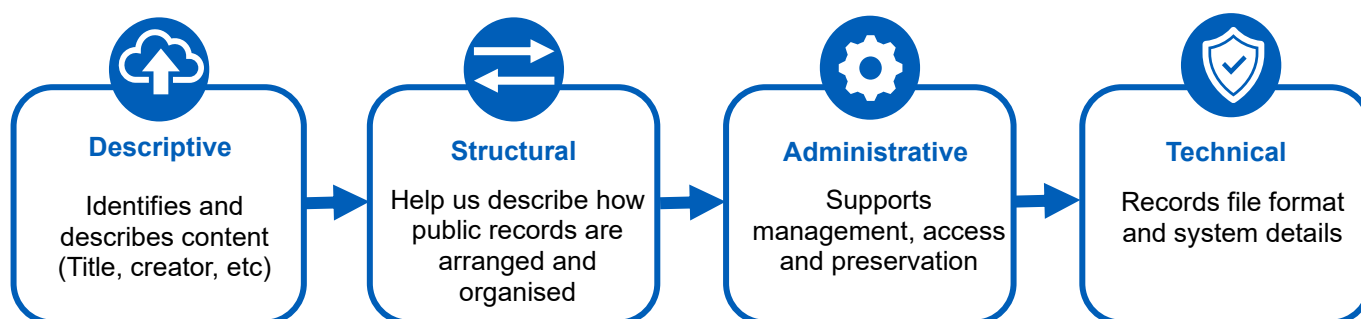
Documents all actions undertaken against the record, e.g. audit trails

Enables us to locate records when moved, e.g. location history

Advises us on how long the record must be kept, e.g. retention labels

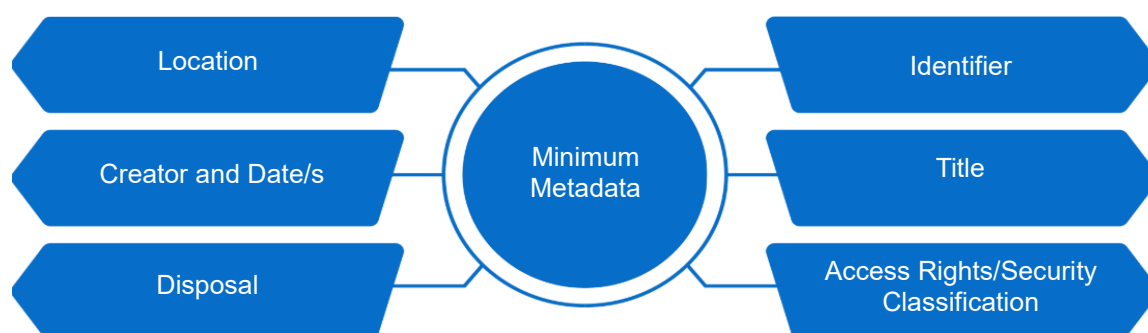
Types of metadata

There are four types of metadata:



Recommended minimum metadata fields

Metadata is made and captured to ensure authenticity, meaning and context are associated with the public record. Queensland State Archives (QSA) [minimum mandatory metadata set](#) is designed to be flexible, and compatible with established metadata standards. It outlines key metadata elements recommended for all records, including:



Additional **optional** metadata fields include event history (audit trails), integrity checks (e.g. checksums), relationships and format

Where do I find more information?

For general guidance on records management, please visit the [Queensland State Archives website](#). For specific queries, please contact us at rkqueries@archives.qld.gov.au or phone us on (07) 3037 6630.