Guideline No. 19

Monitoring recordkeeping performance

April 2004

Summary

These guidelines cover the implementation of monitoring for records management programs and recordkeeping within a public office. They provide practical tools and examples to help public offices establish their own program that meets their own recordkeeping objectives.

In these guidelines

Overview

Purpose of the guidelines

This guidance will assist public offices to monitor their own records management performance and to improve recordkeeping in their public office. As good

management practice, public offices have an obligation to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of their recordkeeping systems and processes. This obligation is emphasised in the *Standard on Managing a Records Management Program*.

There is a great deal of literature on monitoring and measuring performance. These guidelines do not attempt to reproduce this but rather to provide some useful guidance and tools for using performance measurement in records management.

Who are the guidelines for?

The guidelines will be useful for records managers or other staff with responsibility for managing the records management program or those responsible for implementing a performance monitoring program for recordkeeping.

Why monitor recordkeeping performance?

There are many reasons for monitoring the performance of your records management program and of recordkeeping within the public office. These include:

- in support of continuous improvement in line with business objectives
- identifying achievements and successes
- complying with State Records' standards
- planning for new services and upgrades to existing tools and services
- as part of an internal audit process
- perhaps in disciplinary cases where there are suspicions of maladministration or fraud.

Note: Don't forget that monitoring is scalable to your needs and resources. If necessary, prioritise areas of concern within your public office, e.g. target high risk business unit/s, and/or target high risk recordkeeping processes, such as disposal, or capturing records.

Tip: Success factors

Monitoring will only be useful if a number of criteria are met. These are:

✓ Clearly defined objectives
✓ Adequate resources to carry out the monitoring
✓ Appropriate performance measures
✓ Senior management support for using results to improve performance
✓ Regular review of objectives and indicators to make sure they remain relevant.

Monitoring recordkeeping performance

Stages in monitoring recordkeeping performance

The table below sets out the stages for establishing a monitoring program for recordkeeping. Whilst the stages are generic to any performance monitoring program, the explanation of each stage gives advice and examples specific to recordkeeping.

Stage	Description
1	Setting performance objectives
2	Developing performance measures
3	Collecting the data
4	Analysing results
5	Implementing performance improvements
6	Reporting and review

Recordkeeping failures

Usually, performance monitoring should be incorporated into regular activities and the objectives for monitoring will be set at the start of the planning cycle. There may also be times when particular recordkeeping events, for example, work to address critical recordkeeping failures, need special monitoring. These events may be brought to the notice of the public office in a number of ways, including through State Records monitoring processes, audit reports by the Audit Office, or informally by staff or members of the public. The performance monitoring stages outlined below can be followed in these instances. Whether part of regular or special purpose monitoring it is important to target your objectives and measures at the issue to be addressed.

Using risk analysis to prioritise activities

Assessing the risks your organisation faces as a result of recordkeeping failures can be a good starting point for identifying performance objectives, and for determining what performance measures you need. You may decide to concentrate on high risk business areas, or on high risk recordkeeping processes, e.g. records creation or disposal.

Stage 1: Setting performance objectives

Clearly define performance objectives and their relationship to the objectives of the records management program. Planning documentation for the records management program should set out the objectives of the program for the period of time covered by the plans. These objectives could relate to very different aspects of the program, including the quality of records management services, and more broadly to recordkeeping across the public office.

Some examples of performance objectives are given below.

Examples of performance objectives
- Staff create and keep full and accurate records   - Staff can find records when they need to   - Records are stored securely   - Records are disposed of accountably   - Records are captured into official recordkeeping systems.

The performance of new recordkeeping systems, tools and processes could be targeted in performance objectives and measures. Project plans could provide useful performance measures for new systems.

Deciding what is good practice

To establish what is good practice for recordkeeping and records management in your public office, you need to know what is good practice in the industry, and also what your public office can achieve. There are a number of ways of determining what is good practice for your public office. The table below sets out some useful resources and the reasons why they may be useful in establishing good practice.

Resource	Reason for use
State Records' standards	Compliance with the standards is mandatory for NSW public offices. See Appendix B for more advice on using the standards as a benchmark.
International best practice, e.g. AS ISO 15489 *Records Management*	The international records management standard is endorsed as a code of best practice in NSW. Compare performance to the international standard. Note: A national compliance standard to support AS ISO 15489 is also in preparation.
Benchmarking within the public office	Compare the records management services to expectations within the public office. There may be like business units against which you can compare aspects of service delivery, e.g. library, publications unit.
Benchmarking outside the public office	Compare the records management program with programs in similar public offices, e.g. departments of similar size, councils of similar demographic/geographic mix, or public offices with the same function in other states.

Stage 2: Developing performance measures

Performance measures are the yardsticks by which you assess whether you have met, or have gone some way towards meeting, your objectives. They can be a mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures but should be scoped to fit your objectives and resources for monitoring. It is no use having 25 measures requiring daily data collection if you don't have the time to collect the data or to analyse and make use of the results. Don't waste resources collecting elaborate statistics that are never used.

Tips to remember:

- Measure what you need to know, not what you would like to know.
- What gets measured gets done – a favourite management slogan.
- Incorporate monitoring into routine operations.
- Don't set too many performance measures – it becomes too much and you do not have time to properly analyse information.

Different types of performance measures are used to measure:

- economy
- efficiency, and

- effectiveness.

What you measure will depend upon the objectives you have set. Usually, it is good to have a mixture of measures that cover the three 'E's above. What you measure will also depend upon the level at which you want to do this, e.g. the high level records management program, a business unit, a particular recordkeeping process or service.

If you are measuring…	Then some examples of relevant measures could be…
Economy	• Cost per record retrieval E.g. Cost = (Storage contract + salaries + RM unit office costs) ÷ no. of boxes/items retrieved. [Note: Decide which cost elements you wish to include. Keep it simple and be consistent.] • Cost per file created • Cost per record managed.
Efficiency	• Speed of retrieval and delivery of records from storage • Enquiries completed within x hours • No. of complaints • Is there a records management policy, procedures, disposal authority, etc.
Effectiveness	• Satisfied customers • Proportion of business units using the records management service • Proportion of new users • Whether staff use records management tools, follow procedures, etc. • Audit queries that relate to recordkeeping • Recordkeeping system/s meeting recordkeeping requirements • Ability to meet external enquiries for records (FOI requests, subpoenas etc).

Using other business performance measures to monitor recordkeeping

Many business processes are underpinned by good recordkeeping and poor performance in these areas can sometimes indicate that there are recordkeeping issues to address. Examples of areas where it may be worth monitoring include financial management, FOI responses, customer services and customer complaints. A high risk area where poor performance is often related to recordkeeping is the ability of the public office to manage any legal challenges (for example, locate subpoenaed records). Note: Not all failures in performance will be caused by recordkeeping.

Establishing the baseline

Baseline data is an example of the close link between planning and monitoring. If you don't know where you are, how can you plan for where you need to get to?

You need to understand where the program, service or system under scrutiny is at in order to monitor any improvements. This 'baseline' should be assessed before you implement any new activities and start program monitoring. This

gives you the starting point for setting appropriate targets and for assessing how effective changes have been. The baseline data you collect will depend upon the performance measures you have decided upon.

Example

Baseline data may be an assessment that 50% of business units are using the corporate records system at the start of the financial year. You may then set an objective to increase this to 70% by the end of the year.

Set performance targets

Set performance targets against the objectives that are achievable, measurable and time-limited. These should reflect where the public office is currently and where it needs to go. For example, it is unlikely that a performance target of 100% of staff receive training in a year will be achieved if the number of staff in your public office is large, there is a high staff turnover and your training program has limited resources.

Some examples of performance targets are given below.

Examples of performance targets

- 95% customer satisfaction
- x% records provided to the user in x amount of time
- x % of recordkeeping systems meeting recordkeeping requirements
- x% reduction in storage costs
- x% of staff receive training
- key staff receive training (key staff being defined by the organisation)
- All user permissions reviewed and updated.

Stage 3: Collecting the data

Do not make obtaining information about performance an onerous task. It should be part of the routine management processes carried out as part of the records management program. Where specific activities do need to be carried out, e.g. customer surveys, make sure that the purpose of these activities is clearly defined and well understood, and that they happen only as often as is necessary.

Collection method

The method chosen should be relevant to the type of information you are collecting. The table below sets out some common methods of collecting data.

No.	Collection method	Data type	Outline methodology
1	Surveys	Qualitative Quantitative	There are different ways of gathering survey data, e.g.: • self-completion by service users, • completion by records management staff or third party

			(e.g. consultants) in - interviews with users - observing staff. Surveys can be qualitative or quantitative. They may contain elements of both. Qualitative surveys are more likely to focus on perceptions, e.g. 'How well…' Quantitative surveys are more likely to focus on facts, e.g. 'Do you have…, How many…' Note: Don't forget that the more people you survey and the more questions asked, the longer it will take to collate and analyse the results. Don't overuse this method. You are unlikely to be the only unit surveying staff and they can get fed up.
2	Focus groups	Qualitative	Organised by records management staff. Useful to get feedback on services, new ideas, post implementation reviews of new systems or tools, etc. Be aware that staff may be reluctant to criticise services even when they are dissatisfied.
3	System monitoring	Quantitative	Use software capabilities to monitor errors and exception reports. Monitor numbers of files created, disposed of, records registered, etc. Most records management software should be able to generate these statistics automatically or in smaller paper systems it can be done manually. Check with IT about size of shared workgroup folders, email accounts, etc.
4	Observation	Qualitative	Formal or informal. Check how records are being managed. Visit business units and look in filing cabinets. Monitor system logs and records entries. Observe staff doing recordkeeping tasks.
5	File audits	Qualitative	Sample files to check that the contents match either what is registered on the recordkeeping system, or fully reflects the business transactions that have taken place. Check that files are in the correct location.

			Check that records are formally attached to files, not just stuck between the file covers. Note: File audits can also be used in conjunction with Interviews. See 6.
6	Interviews	Qualitative	Structured interviews with sample of staff to find out what records they are creating/ receiving, what they do with them, and whether they understand the recordkeeping rules of the public office. Helps to identify any issues and gaps in knowledge. Note: Also use with 5.
7	Informal feedback	Qualitative Quantitative	Anecdotal evidence can be useful in identifying strengths and weaknesses. Training sessions in particular are a good source of feedback on systems and services. (Note: This is in addition to feedback on the quality of training provided). On its own, it is no substitute for a planned program of monitoring.

Stage 4: Analysing results

Having carried out the monitoring, you need to analyse the information you have collected. Check results against current performance targets. It is useful to also review performance against the performance of the records management program in previous years so that you can monitor trends in your services.

If you are getting poor performance results, analyse the records management program elements to find out the cause. Be aware that sometimes the real causes can be beyond the control of the program.

Stage 5: Implementing performance improvements

This is an important stage in the performance measurement process – there is no point monitoring if you are not going to do anything with the results.

Having identified the gaps and the causes of problems then develop strategies to fix these. These may be 'quick wins' or may need to be factored into your longer term planning.

Use the information to report to management and to feed into future planning and review cycles. This is where 'soft' factors may come into play with issues of change management, influencing senior managers to secure adequate resources, to support necessary changes or to upgrade tools.

Having the hard data to back up your analysis will be useful in securing management support. This also reinforces the link to planning, as objectives for the records management program should be closely aligned to higher-level corporate objectives.

Stage 6: Reporting and review

Don't forget this stage. As with any part of a program, you need to make sure that your monitoring activities are focused on the aspects of recordkeeping and the records management program that you need to know about. Do not monitor something just because you always have done in the past. As your public office changes and the records management program develops there will be other aspects about which it becomes more critical to obtain performance data.
Note: Trend data is very useful in demonstrating improvements over time or causes for concern over time. This relies on consistently measuring the same activity over time using the same criteria. Keep these long term measures under review to ensure that they are still relevant to your performance planning.

How do you know if things are going well?

In this section

[How do you know if individuals are following recordkeeping policy and procedures?](#)
[How do you know if recordkeeping systems are performing well?](#)
[How do you know if you are providing quality records management services?](#)
[What if staff aren't using the systems and tools?](#)

How do you know if individuals are following recordkeeping policy and procedures?

Assessing whether individuals are following recordkeeping policy and practice can be difficult. State Records recommends including a statement about the need to create full and accurate records in staff position descriptions and/or in the public office code of conduct. How do you check whether they are meeting this? Some ways of systematically monitoring the recordkeeping performance of individuals are set out below.

For records management staff

The records management staff are responsible for making sure that the systems and tools needed to support individual recordkeeping are in place and operating. In addition, they can:

- Conduct file audits – periodic checks of desks for working files, files not checked out to them, emails printed out and added to files or registered electronically, etc.
- Monitor file creation and document registration statistics – usually for business units but if there are particular problems, then look at individual performance.
- Check sample of file and document titles (if created by the user) to check understanding and appropriate use of corporate language tools.
- Conduct surveys of staff (including records management staff) to identify any training needs, new tools or revisions to existing tools required, etc.

For business managers

As part of routine management and performance management processes, business managers check that business rules and procedures are being followed. This may include checking records for accuracy. Note: Unless particular problems have been identified, the checking of records is likely to be at an aggregate level, e.g. monthly accounting reports, complaints management reports. The presumption is that staff, as a condition of employment in the public office, make accurate records.

How do you know if recordkeeping systems are performing well?

- Check that the recordkeeping requirements of all recordkeeping systems been identified
- Assess systems against recordkeeping requirements and defined functionality, i.e. is the system capturing records of [name of function] transactions, are unique identifiers assigned to records, etc. Note: This is likely to involve interviews with both system managers and business managers.
- Monitor system downtime (electronic systems)
- Check that the metadata automatically applied by systems are correct, e.g. date and time, record creator information, unique transaction numbers, etc.

See Step D of *Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS Manual* for more help with this.

How do you know if you are providing quality records management services?

- Set up a user group to gather feedback on program performance, e.g. the records management software system, tools such as the thesaurus, training courses or material.
- Monitor levels of use of the services. If these drop, it may indicate a problem either with the service itself or promotion of the service.
- Survey customers regularly. Make these purposeful and concise so as not to annoy users.
- Set and monitor service delivery targets.

What if staff aren't using the systems and tools?

Feedback from public offices indicates that a fundamental problem in recordkeeping is that staff do not use the systems and tools provided for them, despite best efforts to make these fit business needs. Performance measures for system use will identify if this is an issue for you. Fixing this problem requires a number of different strategies including:

- promotion of recordkeeping rules and tools
- training programs for management and staff, and
- reviewing systems and tools to make sure that they are doing the right job.

See RIB 32: Promoting better recordkeeping for more information on getting the recordkeeping message heard in your public office.

Appendix A: Examples of performance measures related to particular objectives

Do not use the following table as a checklist – it contains examples which public offices can use to develop their own performance measures. The objectives, activities and performance measures adopted in your public office must be relevant to your corporate objectives and the services you provide.

See Step H of *Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS Manual* for more information on measuring the performance of recordkeeping systems.

Core objective e.g.	Example of performance measure	Target
To capture all corporate records into official recordkeeping systems in a timely manner	Policy/procedures developed and issued – yes/no	Yes
	Recordkeeping requirements for recordkeeping systems are identified.	% of systems
	Recordkeeping requirements for recordkeeping systems are met.	% of systems, % of requirements
	Staff trained	% of total
	Hours of staff trained	x hours
	Records registered during financial year	--
	Files created during financial year	--
To ensure records of high risk business are created and managed	Identified recordkeeping requirements for x business met (system analysis)	All
	Records captured into recordkeeping system (file audits, surveys, interviews)	All
To dispose of corporate records accountably	Does the public office have a disposal authority – Completed? In preparation? Planned for? Reviewed?	Completed
	Are electronic records destroyed in accordance with disposal authorisation?	%
	Do staff understand the rules about disposal of records? (Survey, random sample for interview)	%
	Proportion of physical records awaiting destruction as proportion of whole.	%
	Proportion of physical records destroyed as proportion of those awaiting destruction.	%
To provide access to records in accordance with corporate policy	Storage facilities pass regular inspection (whether in-house or outsourced)	%
	User permissions for recordkeeping systems reviewed regularly	--
	Systems tracking the location of records are used all of the time	--

	Records available to meet [business area] targets Note: Examples of business area could be FOI, audit, customer services.	--
To provide quality records management services	Proportion of business units using records management services	%
	Number of new customers	%
	Number of complaints	Reduce by %
	Percentage of satisfied customers	%
	System downtime	%
	Time to deliver record to requester	% meeting target time
To provide efficient record management services	Cost of service/record stored	$
	Cost of service/record retrieved from outsourced storage	$
To provide user-friendly records management tools, e.g. disposal authority, thesaurus	Tools reviewed and updated in the last year	x of y, %
	Is a [records management tool] in use? - Yes/No	Yes
	Customer use: Do you use [tool]? Was [tool] easy to use? Would you use [tool] again? If not, why not? (Concise survey)	(% satisfied)
To comply with the State Records Act by 2005.	Policy, plans and procedures developed and implemented	Yr 1 - Planned and In progress; Yr 2 - Completed
	Compliance with [standard/s] (survey of relevant standard/s)	%

Appendix B: Using State Records' standards to monitor performance

Compliance with State Records' standards is mandatory for all public offices in NSW. Most of the standards include a compliance checklist that can be used by records management staff to identify gaps in compliance.

More recent revised standards provide some advice on identifying compliance gaps by giving examples of the sorts of records management tools and activities to look for in relation to each minimum compliance requirement.

Brief descriptions of the standards and compliance tools are given below. Contact State Records for more help on using the standards.

Standards

3. Standard on physical storage of State records, 2000

This standard covers the quality of storage facilities and equipment used to keep State records, that is what needs to be in place for good records storage such as location of storage facilities, environment controls, security, etc. The standard contains a compliance checklist, comprising a series of questions directly relating to the compliance requirements and check boxes for indicating compliance.

4. [Standard on electronic recordkeeping for business systems](), 2000

The standard covers the building of recordkeeping requirements into the design of new electronic business systems and the upgrading of existing systems. The standard contains a compliance checklist, comprising a series of questions directly relating to the compliance requirements and check boxes for indicating compliance.

5: [The NSW recordkeeping metadata standard (NRKMS)](), 2001

NRKMS is a technical standard and does not have a compliance checklist. It is useful as a benchmark when implementing new business systems or planning to upgrade existing systems. For general advice on metadata and using the NRKMS see [RIB 18: Introducing recordkeeping metadata]().

The table below directs you to related resources that will assist you in using the NRKMS.

If you are developing or upgrading…	Then see…
simple business systems	Advice on [minimum metadata]() for records
complex business systems	- NRKMS technical specifications - the [mapping of GSAS products]() against NRKMS

6. [Standard on counter disaster strategies for records and recordkeeping systems](), 2002

This standard covers the requirements for planning and preventing disasters to records and recordkeeping systems. The standard contains a compliance checklist, comprising a series of questions directly relating to the compliance requirements and check boxes for indicating compliance.

7. [Standard on full and accurate records](), 2004

This standard covers the principles for making and keeping full and accurate records, that is what are the characteristics of a full and accurate record. The standard contains a number of principles and compliance requirements and an appendix providing advice on how to comply.

8. [Standard on managing a records management program](), 2004

This standard covers the infrastructure needed in a public office to support good recordkeeping, that is policy, planning, staffing, implementation and monitoring. The standard contains a number of principles and compliance requirements and an appendix providing advice on how to comply with these.

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