

Classification of Project Management Records

Project Management is a controlled approach to managing projects. Part of that control involves preparing detailed documentation relating to the planning, monitoring, ongoing management and closure of a project.

It can be challenging to determine how to appropriately and effectively classify these records using a functional business classification scheme. A functional business classification scheme divides records into categories based on functions, activities and transactions.¹ In contrast, project managers often like to group records according to phases of a project or the project management task they relate to.

This document outlines some options for the classification of project management records and issues to consider when selecting a suitable approach.

Factors influencing the classification approach

When deciding on which approach to use for the classification of project management records, it is important to consider the:

- Types of projects being undertaken by the organisation, for example their size, complexity and level of risk. For example, high risk projects will require more detailed records, and more rigorous control over the records, than low risk projects.
- Scope of projects, for example whether they cut across many functions or usually only relate to a single function.
- Functionality of the electronic document and records management system to accommodate different approaches.
- Extent to which project management methodologies are adopted across the organisation, or just in particular business units. For example, if the entire organisation uses strict project management methodology it may suggest greater scope for aligning classification of records to project management steps.
- Organisational culture. An organisation already accustomed to following defined processes and procedures may adapt more readily to strong controls on classification.
- Needs and input of affected staff.

As with developing a business classification scheme, consultation and negotiation with users is essential to ensure the selected approach meets their needs.

The table below outlines the strengths and weakness of some possible options.

¹ For more information on the benefits of functional business classification schemes, see Public Records Alert 9/05

http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/publications/PublicRecordsBriefs/bus_class_schemes_the_3_1_200505.pdf



Option	Strengths	Weaknesses
Enforce use of the business classification scheme and educate users.	Ensures a consistent and uniform approach to the classification of records across the organisation.	Records may be fragmented across multiple functions and activities. This can be frustrating for end users, particularly if a primary interface is through a hierarchical file plan view.
As for above, but add a different metadata field to capture project name.	As above. Identified field allows for a simple search to identify all relevant files or documents.	As above.
Map the project phases and activities to activities in the business classification scheme. ²	Ensures a consistent and uniform approach to the classification of records across the organisation. Aids users in understanding where project documentation belongs.	Assumes projects relate to a single function. Key documents, such as contracts, may get lost in general or 'bag' files relating to each phase.
Include a specific 'project management' function and related activities in the business classification scheme.	Provides a clear and obvious location in the business classification scheme for project management files and documents.	All projects, regardless of function, end up grouped together. Does not provide any business context for the function and therefore makes it more difficult to link to retention and disposal requirements.
Insert a free text level for project name between the function and activity levels of the business classification scheme.	When using a hierarchical interface, this option means that all project files are visibly grouped together without any major impact on the standard functional approach.	Assumes project relates to only one function. May not work in some eDRMS systems.
Add the name of the project as a top level, followed by function and activity.	All files relating to a project are visibly grouped under the project name. Suitable for projects that involve many functions.	May only be appropriate if the entire organisation has commitment to project management. May require having different file / classification structures for 'project' and 'non-project' parts of the organisation, which may be difficult to implement in certain eDRMS systems.

² For example, project plans would fit in planning, implementation schedules under implementation, checkpoint and exception reports under reporting, etc. This option is based on examples in National Archives of Australia (2003) *Overview of Classification Tools*. Available at http://www.naa.gov.au/Images/classification%20tools_tcm2-1030.pdf.

For more detailed guidance on the management of public records visit the Queensland State Archives' website at <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au>, or contact us on:
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