A Training Programme

Restructuring Current Records Systems:
A Procedures Manual

RESTRUCTURING CURRENT RECORDS: A PROCEDURES MANUAL

MANAGING PUBLIC SECTOR RECORDS

A STUDY PROGRAMME

General Editor, Michael Roper; Managing Editor, Laura Millar

RESTRUCTURING CURRENT RECORDS: A PROCEDURES MANUAL

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The International Records Management Trust would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of the following:

Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA International)

British Council

British High Commission Ghana

British High Commission Kenya

Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD)

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Commonwealth Secretariat

Department for International Development (East Africa)

Department for International Development (UK)

DHL International (UK) Limited

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights Fund

Hays Information Management

International Council on Archives

Nuffield Foundation

Organisation of American States

Royal Bank of Scotland

United Nations Development Program

Restructuring Current Records Systems: A Procedures Manual

Prepared by the staff of the International Records Management Trust.

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INTRODUCTION TO *RESTRUCTURING CURRENT RECORDS SYSTEMS: A PROCEDURES MANUAL*

Well-structured record-keeping systems, designed to support the functions of public sector agencies, are essential if the agencies are to operate efficiently and effectively and are able to account for their decisions and actions. The aim of this manual is to help records and archives staff introduce sound records management systems within records offices (formerly called registries). This introduction of new systems must be done in a planned fashion, on the basis of a clear understanding of the agencies' functions and requirements. Where there has been little previous guidance in this area and control systems have been ineffective or have fallen into disuse, it is likely that large quantities of closed files may have accumulated in valuable office space, making it even more difficult to retrieve records.

This generic procedures manual sets out the phases and steps involved in developing well-structured record-keeping systems and handling backlogs. It describes the means of acquiring relevant data about existing records and their use, clearing the backlog of closed files from active office space while arranging to preserve those with ongoing value, analysing record-keeping requirements and designing, installing and monitoring new systems. Depending on the circumstances of the programme, some steps may come sooner or later than listed. Other steps may take place concurrently or may be omitted altogether if not appropriate.

As new systems are established, records office staff need training in the procedures needed to maintain these systems. These procedures are examined in the module on *Organising and Controlling Current Records* and in a separate manual in this series called *Managing Current Records: A Procedures Manual*. The system of analysing an agency's record-keeping requirement is explored in greater depth in the training module in this programme on *Analysing Business Systems*.

TERMINOLOGY

In this manual, 'records office' is used to refer registries or any unit that creates and maintains current files. The manual refers to 'archival institution', 'records office', 'records centre' and 'records and archives institution' in a generic sense. The body that controls the archival institution, records centre and records offices is referred to as the 'records and archives institution'. In some government or business situations, the archival facility may take on all record-keeping functions. Note that the term 'archives' is displayed in lower case when referring to the materials; the term 'archival institution' is used when referring to the agency itself. Users should apply appropriate terminology for their specific situation, such as 'national archives', 'provincial records centre' or 'corporate records office'.

APPENDICES

The appendices at the end of this manual include specific instructions, forms and samples for the various procedures discussed.

PREPARING FOR THE PROJECT

In the first phase, the terms of reference for the restructuring exercise are defined and agreed, and organisational arrangements put in place.

STEP 1: DEFINING THE PROJECT

1. The head of the records and archives institution, or his or her representative, meets the head of the agency to ensure that the agency is fully committed to the restructuring exercise and that all necessary support will be forthcoming.

2. The head of the records and archives institution and the head of the agency then agree in writing the precise terms of reference and the time scale for the exercise. These are circulated to the agency staff and any other interested parties. They define the following:

   - What is the scope of the exercise and what it will involve?

   - Who is responsible for what?

   - What are the expected outcomes?

   - What is the cost?

   - What is the time scale?

3. The head of the agency is asked to appoint a facilitator for the exercise and to define his or her responsibility in writing (see Appendix 1), and send a copy to the head. No further arrangements should be made until this has been done. The facilitator must be of sufficient seniority to act as a catalyst and mediator throughout the exercise. Once the facilitator is appointed, all requests and queries regarding the project must be co-ordinated through him or her. The facilitator should normally be the person who will be the line manager of the records office once the restructuring exercise is completed.

4. The records and archives institution has overall responsibility for all restructuring exercises. It appoints a restructuring team and a team leader. The composition of the team may vary according to the nature of the task. The roles and responsibilities of the leader and team are outlined in Appendix 1.

5. The team leader and the facilitator meet and discuss the terms of reference for the restructuring exercise, including its scope, timetable and any costs involved.

6. The team leader briefs the restructuring team on the terms of reference and the methods of undertaking the exercise, and introduces the team to the facilitator.

7. If records office staff have not received appropriate training in preparation for the restructuring exercise the team provides training prior to the commencement of the exercise.

8. The team makes a presentation to the senior and middle management of the agency. The head of the agency may wish to be involved in the session. The team leader and the facilitator play key roles in introducing the contents of the presentation.

STEP 2: ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. The team leader draws up a schedule of activities. It can be helpful to use a Gantt chart, where the numbers on the vertical line represent phases or activities and the numbers on the horizontal line represent time in days or dates (see Appendix 2). The schedule should take account of staff leave (both agency and restructuring team), agency activities and public holidays. The chart should cover activities related to each phase of the exercise.

2. The team leader meets the facilitator to explain the schedule, to agree regular meeting times throughout the restructuring exercise and to obtain security clearance for the team members to view confidential files. The facilitator is asked to confirm the security clearance in writing. Weekly meetings of about half an hour are recommended to review progress and resolve problems. It is helpful to keep a file note documenting discussions, with a copy sent to the facilitator.

3. The team leader and the facilitator agree on a designated working area for the team within the agency. They need to agree whether the agency will supply labour to assist with cleaning/painting the records office and moving the furniture and will purchase supplies for this exercise such as paint for the walls, varnish for the desks and, if the team thinks it a good idea, a plant to decorate the records office.

4. The facilitator advises action officers of the nature and objectives of the exercise, time scale and schedule of activities, including the need to carry out interviews. He or she explains that action officers should refer any information or problems to him or her and that during the exercise no records should be moved to another location without the knowledge of the team.

COLLECTING DATA

In this phase, background information about the agency is collected and a survey of the agency's records carried out.

The records survey (also known as a records inventory or audit) provides a picture of the records and information structure of an agency and how the records are, or should be, managed. It is a comprehensive and systematic gathering of information about records created and received by an agency. It enables the restructuring team to

- find out what records exist

- locate the records and understand how they are used

- identify and resolve record-keeping problems

- develop retention schedules

- raise the profile of records work and stimulate interest.

Interviews with senior staff and records staff (see Phase 4, Step 1) may also begin at this stage. This will help the team to understand the agency's functions and operations and its information needs.

STEP 1: COLLECTING BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The team leader and the facilitator collect the following background information to help with the analysis of the structure, functions and records of the agency. All material collected should be dated and the source of the material should be noted. The types of information to be collected include

- histories of the agency and any immediate predecessors

- organisational charts

- work plans

- reports on the work and functions of the agency

- legislation common to all agencies and specific to the agency concerned

- standing orders

- operating directives

- job specifications and descriptions

- key contacts at senior levels or others conversant with policies and procedures

- room locations (with a map if helpful) and telephone numbers of key contacts

- details of agency activities (major/unusual activities, reporting deadlines, courses, and so on that will make staff and other resources unavailable)

- details of staff leave arrangements

- location of all records offices and record storage areas (with a map if helpful) and information about the prevailing physical conditions

- file lists, indexes and other control documents (photocopies should be supplied if possible)

- description of existing record retention practices

- information about perceived shortcomings such as backlogs, complaints, turnovers, and so on

- inventory of all resources, including staff, stationery stock, equipment, supplies and transport (if appropriate) which the agency is willing to allocate to the exercise

- current estimates of expenditure on records services

2. The restructuring team carefully studies all the background material.

STEP 2: RECORDS SURVEY

1. The survey must be carried out systematically to ensure that each office and storage area is covered. This involves careful planning in the context of the schedule and good communication with the facilitator.

2. The team members physically examine the records and records office facilities and storage areas, including users' offices. The aim is to determine the physical condition of the records, to verify the information gathered in the interviews and to obtain further data. The examination should cover the form, quantity, rate of accumulation, frequency of use and physical nature of the records as well as where and how they are stored (see the Records Survey Form in Appendix 4).

3. Once the survey system has started in an agency, it is important to ensure that no records are destroyed or moved without the team's knowledge. At the same time the team must ensure that the survey is completed without undue delay.

4. The team examines procedures for handling current and semi-current records, including

- mail handling

- mail circulation

- creation and classification of files

- filing

- file retrieval

- file movement

- file closure

- retention

- destruction/review (including transfers to the records centre).

5. This information can be obtained by using the following methods:

- records office statistics

- logging (counting the number of items handled and time taken, in a given period)

- observation.

6. On the basis of the team's findings the team leader works with the facilitator and the head of the records office(s) being restructured to order appropriate quantities of supplies. These must be available by the beginning of Phase 5. See the checklist at Appendix 5.

7. The team, working closely with the records office staff, assesses the survey results to determine

- what records can be destroyed (for example duplicates of files which can be destroyed under retention schedules); how these records are to be destroyed; what is their volume

- what records can be closed, listed and transferred to the records centre or the Archives (see Phase 3 on decongestion); what quantities are involved

- whether the filing equipment can be used more efficiently; whether it needs repair or replacing; where surplus furniture will be housed

- whether the layout of the records office(s) and storage areas can be improved

- whether any of the records/information can be consolidated; for example, can temporary files be merged with the originals

- whether the records are protected against unauthorised access/loss; how secure is the current storage.

8. An interim report is prepared for submission to the head of the agency and the head of the records and archives institution.

DECONGESTING OFFICES OF CLOSED FILES

This phase is concerned with processing semi-current and non-current records held in work areas or records offices but no longer required for day-to-day business.

1. Boxes and rubbish bags are made available to the restructuring team.

2. All files that have not been used in over five years in the records office are removed from the system and closed.

3. These files and any other inactive files held anywhere in the agency are sorted by series, arranged in file number order and appraised. Common and ministry specific disposal schedules, if available, are applied and policy files are reviewed one by one.

4. The records and archives institution makes arrangements for the destruction of the records identified to be destroyed. Authorisation for destruction should be confirmed with the head of the agency if disposal schedules are not available.

5. All ephemeral, non-record and library materials should be separated from the records. Published materials which are not required by the agency should be sent to an appropriate library but this should first be cleared with the records and archives institution. Non-record and library materials still required by the agency should be housed in a documentation centre, if there is one, or in a specially designated area in the records office or in a separate lockable room.

6. The files identified for retention are placed in boxes. Where possible, files of similar types and review dates should be boxed together to aid the review process later. Boxes should not be tightly packed. Instructions for sending records to the records centre are provided in *Managing Current Records: A Procedures Manual*.

7. The files are listed on Records Centre Transfer List forms (see Appendix 10). Four copies are made. If carbon paper is used, it is important to ensure the information is clear on all copies. All columns on the form relating to the transfer process should be filled except the last two columns, 'Action Date' and 'Location Number', which will be completed by the records centre. A new list should be started for each box.

8. Action dates are determined by disposal schedules and are entered on the transfer lists by the records centre staff. In the event that the record series is not covered by a schedule, the records and archives institution must authorise transfer to the records centre and assign an 'action category' (destroy, review, preserve permanently) to the records.

9. The consignment of boxes is sent to the records centre with four copies of the transfer list for each box placed inside the box on top of the files.

10. Soon after the consignment is received in the records centre a copy of the transfer list for each box is returned to the originating records office. The records office should keep a registered file for copies of the forms as a basis for retrieving records from the records centre.

INTERVIEWING STAFF, ANALYSING DATA AND DESIGNING THE NEW RECORDS SYSTEMS

Records managers use management analysis techniques to examine organisational structures and operations in order to understand what work is done and why, and what records the organisation needs. They analyse this information in order to recommend practical means of enhancing efficiency and making cost savings through systems design. Organisational charts are used to illustrate how the organisation is structured and how it uses information. This process, called business systems analysis, is described briefly in Appendix 7. The process is explored in greater depth in the module on *Analysing Business Systems.*

Prior to the analysis, interviews are conducted with senior staff of the agency to gather more background data about its functions, operations and information flows. These interviews may already have begun in Phase 2.

STEP 1: INTERVIEWS

1. The team leader arranges interviews with senior personnel, each lasting an average of one hour. Interviews should be completed as soon as possible, preferably with the most senior contacts first, in order to gain a general, then a more detailed, understanding of the agency. The sheets provided at Appendix 3 form the basis for the interviews. These sheets should always be completed.

2. The purpose of the team leader's interviews of senior staff is to understand

    - the functions of the department or division

    - the nature of the work carried out

    - the types of records created and used

    - the nature of the information shared with other divisions or departments

    - the frequency of use of information

- the staffing in the records office.

3. The team leader assigns members of the team to interview relevant members of the agency's staff who deal with the records being surveyed. Whenever possible, these interviews should be carried out in teams of two.

4. The purpose of the team members' interviews with action officers and records office staff is to understand

   - the nature and quantity of the records kept in records office and other offices

   - how the records are organised

   - where and how the records are stored

   - the storage facilities used

   - how frequently the records are used.

5. The team members should observe good interviewing techniques. They should do the following.

   - Explain clearly how and why the information is being collected.

   - Reassure the interviewee that the information is confidential and is being collected in order to improve the records systems.

   - Make it clear that records created by employees during the course of their work are a resource for the whole agency and are, in fact, the property of the state.

   - Avoid the tendency to ask leading questions or anticipate answers and allow the interviewee to express his or her view without interference.

   - Be sensitive to people's fears that the survey may reveal their personal failings.

   - Check back to ensure that the information given and received is clearly understood before submitting a report.

   - Avoid taking the interviewees' comments personally.

6. At the end of each day, the interviewers ensure that the notes of all interviews carried out that day are completed. These notes will include impressions of the interviewees' comments and assessments of the way records are currently kept and used.

7. Any doubts or discrepancies in information should be clarified with the interviewee or raised with the facilitator by the team leader.

STEP 2: ANALYSIS OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS AND RECORDS SURVEY DATA

1. The restructuring team studies the interview and records survey notes and forms; the team asks what work is being done, why, by whom, when and where. The team analyses all the information in order to recommend practical means of enhancing efficiency and making cost savings.

2. The team works closely with the records office staff to determine

    - how many records offices are required to serve the agency's needs

    - whether records offices should be merged

    - how many personnel are required to serve the agency's needs

    - where the records staff should be located

    - how any changes will affect agency staff members.

3. The team lists the functions, activities and transactions carried out by each department or section of the agency. Using this information and the organisation charts, it develops flow charts to illustrate

    - the departments or divisions of the agency as a whole and their inter-relationships (Level 1)

    - units within a department, their internal and external relationships and the flow of information between them (Level 2).

4. A running list of external organisations (their names written correctly and in full) is kept as a key to the abbreviations in the flow charts.

5. The charts are discussed and their accuracy is confirmed with the interviewees or the facilitator before being finalised.

STEP 3: IDENTIFYING THE RECORDS SERIES

1. Based on the activities and information needs of the agency which were identified by the flow charts, the team then determines the record series required. There is usually a different file series for each identifiable function or area of activity of each self-contained administrative unit of an agency. There may also be a file series for a department or division as a whole if certain areas of work involve all or a number of separate sections

2. Further guidance on records series is given in the module on *Organising and Controlling Current Records.*

STEP 4: PREPARING THE CLASSIFICATION AND CODING SCHEME

1. A crucial part of the restructuring process is the design of the classification and coding scheme that will be used to register the files and other records. A controlled vocabulary (also called a keyword list) should be used to ensure consistency in classifying and indexing files.

2. Guided by the rules on constructing a controlled vocabulary (see Appendix 8), the team develops a list of index terms for the agency which reflect its functions and activities, and the names of organisations or geographical locations with which the agency deals, if these are important in retrieving information. The draft controlled vocabulary will form the basis of the file index.

3. The records office staff should understand that no new index terms should be added to the controlled vocabulary without approval by the records and archives institution.

4. The proposed file series and index terms are then circulated to the agency staff via the facilitator, for information and comment by a certain date. Users' comments should be taken very seriously.

INTRODUCING THE NEW SYSTEM

A number of activities are now carried out in preparation for the introduction of the new systems. This involves processing a backlog of non-current records, closing the remaining files, rearranging the records office, installing control systems and opening new files.

STEP 1: PREPARATIONS

1. The team leader prepares, with the facilitator, a schedule for the introduction of the new systems. The schedule indicates the order in which the records offices are to be restructured, if there are more than one, and which records offices are to be merged, if any. The agreed timetable is circulated within the agency, for information.

2. The facilitator is asked to arrange a meeting with the action officers. The purpose is for the team to confirm the users' support, explain the procedures and timing for introducing the new systems and reassure the officers that they will continue to have access to the files created in the old system but that the new papers will now be placed on a new set of files.

3. At the same time the facilitator is to supply labour to assist with cleaning the records office and moving furniture in accordance with the agreement reached in Phase 1. He or she arranges for the office to be painted if this has been agreed and any other maintenance or redecorating work.

4. The team makes arrangements for the transfer of semi-current records from the agency to the records centre.

5. The team checks to ensure that records office staff understand the new systems and procedures.

STEP 2: REDESIGNING THE LAYOUT OF THE RECORDS OFFICE

1. The team estimates the volume of active records to be held in each records office, the number of Records staff needed and the space requirements. The team prepares a provisional improved layout for records services and storage. This is best achieved by producing a scale diagram of the records office showing windows, doors and so on. Cut-out scale desks, chairs, cupboards and other items of furniture or equipment can then be easily moved around on the diagram until the best layout is found.

2. When considering physically restructuring or setting up a new records office, it is important to ensure the location is

   - as close as possible to the officers served
   - ideally with easy access for mail deliveries.

     The accommodation should be

   - of an adequate size to house all the storage equipment, staff, furniture and so on
   - secure with lockable doors and windows, or bars over windows
   - lit by natural light if possible
   - sufficient floor-loading capability to bear the weight of stored files.

   The layout of desks and furniture should

   - allow a continuous 'flow-through' of papers as they are processed. Two-way traffic should be avoided. Lateral shelving is far more space-efficient than four-drawer cabinets for storage. However, if it is not available and it is necessary to use cabinets, then adequate space should be made available to allow cabinets to be opened and accessed without causing disturbance to other staff
   - provide workstations for receiving post (with space for incoming mail sacks), opening post and sorting, post and file registration, post despatch, recording of file movements and control document storage.

3. Plans for physical restructuring should involve consultation with records office staff and close liaison with the facilitator. If repairs are required, for instance if there are broken floorboards or holes where vermin may enter these should be repaired before the move takes place.

STEP 3: INSTALLATION OF THE NEW RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

1. In preparation for closing the active files and opening new ones, the records office staff decide how records will be physically stored in the records office. The basic principle is that the old files will be held as a block in the filing cabine ts, on the shelves or in the pigeon holes, and the new files will be kept separately in a designated storage area. Over time, the new files will steadily grow in number and the old files will gradually be moved out to the records centre. In normal circumstances, these closed files should not be held in the records office for longer than three years, so that within three years of the restructuring exercise they should all be transferred to the records centre.

2. The team finalises its proposal for the layout of the records office(s) in the light of the quantity of records that remain. In some cases it may be cost effective to merge two or more records offices or alternatively to create a new one to better serve the users. These proposals are agreed with the facilitator, and all staff concerned are advised of the changes and the dates when they will occur.

3. The records office is emptied and cleaned thoroughly. The opportunity may be taken to repaint the room. The furniture and equipment are moved to new positions. Arrangements are made for the disposal or storage of excess furniture and equipment.

4. The new file covers, file tags, twine and blank control books ordered in Phase 2 should be ready for use at this point. The team works with the records office staff to set up control documentation for each records office as described in *Managing Current Records: A Procedures Manual*. The books are set up as described below. All of the forms required can be found in *Managing Current Records: A Procedures Manual*. They include

   - *File Diary*: Blank file diary sheets are placed in a ring binder. More than one binder may be needed if the quantity of files is large; these may be organised according to series.

   - *File Transit Books*: Blank transit sheets are placed in the docket book ready to record the existence of each new file that is created. The docket book is labelled. If docket books are not available, index cards or loose sheets in a ring binder can be used, although these are harder to control.

   - *File Index*: Cards (kept in a card index drawer) or pre-printed sheets (kept in a ring binder) should be used.

   - *Bring-up Diary*: A pre-printed desk diary should be used.

   - Inward Correspondence Register, Outward Correspondence Register, Messenger's Despatch Book: Pre-printed registers should be used.

   - *File Census Register*: Blank file census sheets are placed in a ring binder.

The binder is labelled.

- *File Movement Slips*: Pre-printed slips, preferably in tear-off pad form, should be used.

5. All current files, including those held by users, are collected, and sorted in records office number order. They are marked 'closed' on the cover and on the minute sheets. Where files are in use, they should be closed at the officer's desk and left with him or her. The team explains to the records office staff and users that no further material may be placed on a closed file but that the users can still refer to the files.

6. As mail is returned to the records office in the mail folder after circulation to senior staff, new files are opened within the new system in consultation with the users. The team monitors this process carefully. This strategy for opening files guarantees that no new files are opened unnecessarily. An alternative method is open new files for every closed file that was active until an agreed date. A simple rule of thumb is to include only those files that have had papers added to them within the previous month. This strategy, while providing a ready-made filing system for all active subjects, has the disadvantage of opening new files that may never be used.

7. Each new file is assigned a reference number according to the agreed new classification scheme. Files are indexed using the agreed controlled vocabulary, new terms being created as the need arises.

8. Details of the new file created are entered in the control books (see Section 6 of *Managing Current Records: A Procedures Manual*).

9. When a new file is sent to an action officer, any corresponding old file is tied to it. The movement of the new file is recorded in the File Transit Book. If the alternative strategy is being used (all active files reopened in the new system) old files that have had documents added to them within the previous month are tied to the new files and remain with them for a specified period of, say, six months, after which they are separated and placed in closed file storage.

10. Each action officer is given an adequate supply of file movement slips and told that the records office will provide more as required.

STEP 4: PREPARATION OF FINAL REPORT

1. The team leader now compiles a draft final report for discussion with the facilitator. When the report has been agreed, it is formally submitted to the facilitator for approval on behalf of the agency. This report, which provides an account of the entire exercise, is based on the previous reports.

It will include

- Management summary
- Introduction
- Terms of reference
- Scope
- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Phase 4
- Phase 5
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendices.

The purpose of the final report is to give an account of how the exercise progressed, any problems, the outcomes, whether the exercise has fulfilled its terms of reference and whether it was completed within budget and within the agreed time. If the budget or timetable has varied from the proposals this should be explained.

2. When written approval of the final report is received, the facilitator writes to the head of the records and archives institution to confirm that the exercise has been completed, enclosing a copy of the report.

3. The team leader and the facilitator, who should normally be the line manager for the records office, then agree a monitoring schedule for the next six months.

4. The team leader boxes all the project documentation, assigns a retention date and transfers it to the records centre as a deposit by the records and archives institution.

MONITORING THE SYSTEM

After the new systems are installed, it is essential that they are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are achieving their objectives and meeting users' needs. Records office staff will need daily support during at least the first month, particularly in terms of defining file titles and deciding when it is appropriate to open a new file. If all is going well, the monitoring visits can be decreased gradually to once a week, then once a fortnight, then once a month. In addition the team should be called in whenever a problem occurs.

The procedures for monitoring records office performance are set out below.

1. During each monitoring visit the team assesses the systems in terms of

    - accuracy of file titling and filing

    - use of control documents, completeness and uniformity of entries

    - response times: mail from receipt to transmission to action officers, return of mail folders to records office, file retrieval, return of files to records office, return of file movement slips

    - work allocation

    - records storage

    - appearance of the records office

    - records office staff and users' perceptions of the level of service.

2. The team uses several methods of recording information:

    - logging (counting the number of items handled or the tasks performed and the time taken, in a given period)

    - sampling (analysing control books, movements etc)

    - interviews with records office staff and users

    - questionnaires to users

    - observation.

3. Throughout this process the team works with the records office staff to develop standards for performance measurement, which can be illustrated by graphs and charts and displayed prominently in the records office.

4. Each time the team carries out a monitoring visit, it prepares a report for the line manager and any problem areas are discussed with the head of the records office. If problems recur, the head of the records and archives institution will liaise with the head of the agency. Copies of these reports are held in a secure location for three years.

5. Even after the systems are working well, records personnel works closely with the office staff to enhance the systems.

6. The information collected through the monitoring of activities is reviewed at regular intervals. The team should be aware of the symptoms that a records office needs attention. These symptoms include the following.

   - Users lack confidence in the system because papers are not readily available.

   - Users keep files in their own rooms/desks.

   - Users do not understand records office procedures.

   - Users send files to the records office only when they run out of space.

   - The records office has a backlog of filing or indexing.

   - The records office staff are discouraged, and morale is poor.

   - Files become bulky.

   - File titles do not accurately reflect contents.

   - Information is frequently lost.

   - There are no performance measures.

   - There is no awareness of costs involved in handling information.

   - There is a backlog of inactive files that should have been transferred to the records centre.

7. From time to time the record-keeping systems will need to be overhauled. This will be necessary when:

   - activities have increased

   - new functions have been assigned to the agency

   - functions have been withdrawn from the agency

   - the agency has been restructured.

8. Monitoring and review are necessary management functions to ensure the new systems are achieving their objectives and meeting user needs.

SAMPLE LETTER APPOINTING FACILITATOR AND RESTRUCTURING TEAM

File Reference : _____   Date : _____

Facilitator

Records Office Restructuring Project

Ministry of _____

RECORDS OFFICE RESTRUCTURING PROJECT

The records office in the _____is due to be restructured. A team has been formed to carry out the restructuring exercise and is headed by _____.

You are hereby appointed as facilitator to the project, to liaise with the Restructuring Team Leader. Your role and responsibilities and those of the team leader and team members are defined in the enclosed documents.

This is an important project and I would like it to be completed on schedule.

[HEAD OF AGENCY]

encl.

Role and Responsibilities of the Facilitator

The facilitator will

- be available at all times throughout all phases of the restructuring exercise and, in the event of unavoidable absence, delegate decision making to a deputy who is well versed with the exercise

- provide a channel of communication between the team and his or her own agency

- provide such advice and guidance to the team as is appropriate and necessary

- confirm and agree strategic items within the time scale agreed

- arrange such meetings as are required by the team.

Role and Responsibilities of the Records Office Restructuring Team

The team leader will

- draw up the timetable for the restructuring exercise

- ensure that the exercise runs to time and to cost

- meet with the facilitator on a regular basis

- allocate and supervise the work of team members

- collect data by interviewing senior staff of the agency being restructured

- analyse this information together with data collected by team members from their interviews and records surveys

- co-ordinate the design of the new records systems

- lead presentations/seminars

- edit reports

- supervise the introduction of the new systems.

- submit a final report to the head of the agency and the head of the records and archives institution

The team members will

- report to the team leader

- conduct records surveys and associated interviews

- assist the team leader in the analysis and design phases of the exercise

- recommend/draw up the provisional layout for records offices

- undertake, in co-operation with the records office staff, any of the 'hands on' aspects of the exercise such as closing files, opening new ones, setting up control documentation, physically shifting files/ furniture, packing boxes with files, and so on

- assist the team leader with report writing.

SAMPLE GANTT CHART

Project Definition: To restructure the records office in [name of agency]									
Phase:									
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
Date:	**1/2**	**8/2**	**15/2**	**22/2**	**1/3**	**8/3**	**15/3**	**22/3**	**29/3**

Phases of the Project with Time Estimates (Days)			
Phase 1	-	**Phase 4**	-
Phase 2	-	**Phase 5**	-
Phase 3	-	**Phase 6**	

Phase 1	Preparing for the project	Phase 4	Analysing data and designing the new records system
Phase 2	Collecting data	Phase 5	Introducing the new system
Phase 3	Decongestion	Phase 6	Monitoring the system

INTERVIEW SHEETS

Interview Sheets

AGENCY: _____

ACTION OFFICER: _____**TEL NO:**_____

TITLE: _____**LOCATION:** _____

INTERVIEWER: _____**DATE:** _____

Information Needs

1 Agency function/s?	2 Activities	3 Transactions
(List the functions that the agency is expected to fulfil)	(What activities does the agency carry out to fulfil its functions? How are these carried out? Why? Where? By whom?)	(What transactions does the agency undertake in connection with its activities? How are these carried out? Why? Where? By whom?)

Information Flows

4   Does this area/section have relationships with other parts of the agency?

Which areas?	Why?	Nature of relationship?	Who initiates interaction?	When?	How?

Information Flows (cont.)

Does the area/section have working relationships with organisations/individuals outside the agency?

5 Which organisations / individuals?	Nature of relationship?	Who initiates?	When?	How?

Existing Records Systems and Practices

6 Why are records important to the successful operation of the area/section?	What are the particularly important records?	Why?

EXISTING RECORDS SYSTEM AND PRACTICES (cont.)

7 How long has current system been in place?	8 Does the system meet current requirements?	9 Changes needed to improve performance?

RECORDS SURVEY FORM

Records Survey Form

Agency _____ **Unit** _____

Records Office _____ **Tel No** _____

Survey Team Members _____

_____ **Date** _____

STORAGE LOCATIONS		Room Size in metres	Is anything else stored here?
Room No	**Description**		

Record Holdings (Mark classified series '*')

Series/category	Estimated number of records	Total linear metres	Form (files, volumes)	Security adequate?	Condition (good, fair, poor?)

Usage Rates

Series/category	Number of retrievals per week	Number of files created per month	Is the series indexed?	Is the series listed?

Storage Equipment

RACKING

Total number of shelves		Total shelving in linear metres	

PIGEON HOLES

Number of holes		Dimension of holes		Total capacity in linear metres	

FILING CABINETS

Number of 4-drawer		Number of 2-drawer	

OTHER (describe)

LIST OF SUPPLIES REQUIRED TO RESTRUCTURE A RECORDS OFFICE

Following is a list of supplies required to restructure a records office.

- inward and outward correspondence registers
- despatch book
- transit sheets
- index cards/sheets
- bring-up diary
- file census sheets
- file movement slips
- bulk records disposal forms
- records centre transfer list forms
- records centre boxes
- rubbish bags
- file covers (pre-printed are preferred)
- ring binders
- plain paper
- twine
- file tags
- carbon paper
- cleaning materials (dusters, brushes, soap, hand towels and so on)
- paint
- varnish
- insecticide/vermin control (on advice of records and archives institution)
-

INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYSIS AS A TOOL FOR ORGANISING RECORDS LOGICALLY

WHAT IS BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYSIS?

Business system analysis is a means of understanding the functions and activities by which an agency achieves its objectives. In the records management context, business system analysis is a means of ensuring that records are organised in a manner that reflects and serves the functions and activities of the agency that creates them.

Business system analysis provides a basis for organising records logically to correspond to work patterns. It serves to ensure that related records are linked together. It helps to establish an audit trail for business activities. Finally, it helps in the development of criteria for retaining or disposing of different types of records according to their continuing utility and enduring value.

ESTABLISHING RECORD SERIES

Record series are established to support the agency's functions and activities as identified by the data analysis and illustrated by flow charts. The number of record series required will be determined by a number of factors. No precise rules can be established. Rather, this is a matter for judgement in the context of the functions of the agency, the way in which it operates internally, its size, the external groups with which it communicates, its duties and responsibilities, the level and frequency of its activities and tasks, the quantity of records it generates and the sensitivity of the information contained in these records.

As far as possible, a series should be created for the records relating to or documenting each discrete task or group of tasks performed by a discrete group of action officers. In general, a series should be used by the staff of only one functional unit. However, individual records from the series may be passed temporarily to another functional unit for information or to initiate action, or individual records may be referred to relevant authorities. Moreover, not all agencies assign work to officers on a clearly designed functional basis.

The number of record series required will be determined on the basis of the functional analysis, working from the bottom up. Consideration should be given to creating a record series for each type of transaction, but sometimes it may be more helpful to bring together in one series records relating to more than one transaction or more than one activity. However, it would be exceptional to combine records relating to more than one function in a single series.

RELATING BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYSIS TO RECORDS SERIES

In order to relate business systems or processes to record series it is necessary to begin with an understanding of the 'tasks' which make up the business process being examined.

A task is normally related to other tasks that, collectively, form a business system. An example is the task of conducting a review of an application for a licence required for land registration. This task is one of a series of tasks that include 'receiving application', 'reviewing application', 'approving licence', 'issuing licence', and so on. Together, these tasks comprise a work system. This business system may support a function called 'land registration', which is managed by a fictional organisation called the Rural Development Division located in the Ministry of Lands. This division is the agency responsible and accountable for the activity of land registration.

Another example, based on a fictional ministry called Natural Resources, is the task of preparing correspondence for the signature of a senior official. The task of preparing a draft response to an incoming letter may be one of a series of tasks that include 'receipt of letter', 'transmission of letter to appropriate official for response', 'research to prepare response', 'preparation of draft response', 'review and approval of draft response', 'approval and signature of the final version by the senior official', and 'transmission of the final signed response'. This series of tasks comprises a business system tht is much the same in wide range of agencies. (That is, most agencies receive and respond to correspondence on a regular basis.) In this example, the business system supports a function called water management policy, which is the responsibility of an organisational unit called Natural Resources Policy and Evaluation, located in the Corporate Services Directorate of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

A final example, using yet another fictional ministry called Education, is the task of preparing a final report on the results of a project. This task is one of a series of tasks that include the 'development of a project plan', 'approval of the plan', 'initiation of the study', 'conduct of the study', 'analysis of the results of the study', 'preparation of the draft report'; 'review of the draft report', 'approval of the final report', and 'evaluation of the project'. Naturally, in some cases the tasks may comprise sub-tasks such as those associated with the 'initiation of the study (for example, 'design and test survey questionnaires'; 'hire study team' and so on). The important point is that all of these tasks and sub-tasks are inter-related and collectively form a business system. In this example, the work system supports a function called Education Reform, which is managed by an organisation called the Research and Analysis Directorate, located in the Ministry of Education.

The tasks associated with a business system, each of which support a specific function, generate or make use of records. Starting from the bottom up, consideration should be given to whether or not a separate record series should be created for each task or whether the records of certain tasks form part of the same series. For example, in some systems licence applications and licence approvals may need to be filed together.

In some circumstances, the records of an entire business system will form the same series. This would be the case for correspondence relating to the development of water management policy where incoming and outgoing correspondence, internal memoranda, reports and policy statements are all kept together on a policy file in the order that they were generated and received.

CONSTRUCTION OF A CONTROLLED VOCABULARY

WHY IS A CONTROLLED VOCABULARY IMPORTANT?

A controlled vocabulary limits the words used when classifying papers or indexing files and other records. Without such control, there is a danger that people will classify files under terms that conflict or overlap. If this happens, the whole system will rapidly collapse and will not serve the needs of file users.

A controlled index or keyword list should be kept as small as possible without losing precision. In this way, records office staff and users will become familiar with the index terms, which will help speed retrieval and enable the officers to make better use of the information held in the files. The maximum size for a master index should be about 500 entries, although this number does not include proper nouns such as names of individual schools, organisations, ministries, countries and so on.

FORMAT OF TERMS

Index terms can be single words, such as ADMINISTRATION, COMMITTEES, FINANCE, SECURITY.

Index terms may also be two or more words combined as a compound, such as ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, DRUG POLICY, MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS, PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION.

Index terms may consist of a number of words combined as a phrase, such as ASSETS AND LIABILITIES, BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, PORTS AND HARBOURS.

CHOICE OF TERMS

The choice of terms to be included in the controlled vocabulary is important. They can include words borrowed from other languages (for example, SAFARI), trade names (XEROX or IBM) and proper names (TEACHERS AND EDUCATION WORKERS UNION).

Generally, slang words, jargon, abbreviations or acronyms should not be used, though sometimes they cannot be avoided. For example, UNESCO should be used in preference to 'United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation' as the former is more widely recognised.

Care must be taken in the use of words that are spelt the same but have more than one meaning. For example, cells can be prison cells, human body cells, plant cells or electric cells (that is, batteries). Duties can refer either to taxation (import and export duties) or

responsibilities (duties of policemen). Therefore , the word 'DUTIES' should not be used on its own as an index term. The term IMPORT DUTIES gives much greater precision.

Care must also be taken when using words that have the same or a similar meaning, such as

SHIPS and BOATS

CYCLES and BICYCLES

VEHICLES and CARS

CENSUSES and SURVEYS

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE and SCHEMES OF SERVICE.

The choice of terms and the relationships between them are dealt with below.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TERMS IN A CONTROLLED VOCABULARY

Some terms in a controlled vocabulary can be grouped together in 'families', and the relationships between members of these families and other families can be established. There are a number of different relationships between terms, illustrated by the following examples.

Two words refer to the same concept, but one is regarded as the 'preferred term'. For example, ALCOHOL is used in preference to LIQUORS. In this case, under LIQUORS in the index, 'Use ALCOHOL' is entered to indicate that this is the term to be used.

- For example:

- LIQUORS Use ALCOHOL

One index term may be a broader term for any number of narrower terms that are not themselves index terms. For example, DISEASES may cover COMMUNICABLE DISEASES and NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES. In this case, 'Used for COMMUNICABLE DISEASES and NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES' is entered in the list under DISEASES to indicate that the broader term is used to cover both the two narrower terms.

- For example:

- DISEASES Used for COMMUNICABLE DISEASES and NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

One term may be a broader term for several narrower terms that are also index terms in their own right. For example, LIVESTOCK may be a broader term for CATTLE and HORSES, which themselves are included in the controlled vocabulary as index terms.

- For example:

- LIVESTOCK See also CATTLE, HORSES (narrower terms)

- CATTLE See also LIVESTOCK (broader term)

- HORSES See also LIVESTOCK (broader term)

Terms that are closely related but are not necessarily broader or narrower than each other can both be used as index terms. For example, CLINICS and HOSPITALS are different but related terms. In this case, 'See also HOSPITALS' is entered in the list under CLINICS, to indicate that there may also be related information under HOSPITALS. Then 'See also CLINICS' is entered under HOSPITALS.

- For example:

- CLINICS See also HOSPITALS

- HOSPITALS See also CLINICS

The following table provides further examples of 'Use', 'Used for' and 'See also' relationships.

Possible Term	**Preferred Term**
ADVISORY COMMITTEES	Use COMMITTEES
REGULATIONS	Use RULES AND REGULATIONS
MACHINERY	Use EQUIPMENT
PLANT	Use EQUIPMENT
LIQUORS	Use ALCOHOL AND LIQUORS

Index Term	**Subjects Covered**
EQUIPMENT	Used for PLANT and MACHINERY
CLEANING SERVICES	Used for GARBAGE and WASTE DISPOSAL
ACCOMMODATION	BUNGALOWS used for OFFICE BUILDINGS and QUARTERS
TRANSPORT	Used for MOTOR CARS, MOTOR CYCLES and OFFICIAL VEHICLES

Index Term	**Related Terms**
FAMINE	See also DISASTERS
SCHOOLS	See also PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SECONDARY/TECHNICAL SCHOOLS
SEMINARS	See also CONFERENCES, WORKING PARTIES
CONFERENCES	See also SEMINARS, WORKING PARTIES
WORKING PARTIES	See also CONFERENCES, WORKING PARTIES

COMPILING A CONTROLLED VOCABULARY

The system of selecting terms for inclusion in a controlled vocabulary must be carried out with great care. It must be based on a careful study of the functions and responsibilities of a ministry and all its sub-divisions as described in this manual under Phases 1 and 2 and Appendix 7. Wherever possible, terms already on the approved controlled vocabulary of another agency should be used as a starting point when compiling a new list.

DEVELOPING AND VERIFYING THE CONTROLLED VOCABULARY

Step 1

The restructuring team leader is usually nominated as the editor of the controlled vocabulary and should take responsibility for resolving issues that arise over the choice of index terms.

Members of the team should be assigned to identify appropriate terms, then all the index terms should be arranged together in alphabetical order.

Step 2

The keywords should now be examined in order to establish whether there are any clearly identifiable groups that may need to be brought together, and whether there are any similar terms that may overlap with each other.

For example, the following groups of words contain related terms:

> COMMITTEES, CONFERENCES, COMMISSIONS, SUB-COMMITTEES, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, SEMINARS, WORKING PARTIES, WORKSHOPS

> COMMONWEALTH ORGANISATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATIONS

> HOSPITALS, CLINICS, HEALTH CENTRES, MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

> SCHOOLS, SECONDARY SCHOOLS, TECHNICAL SCHOOLS, PRIMARY SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES, TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES

Consideration should be given to using broader terms to cover these groups of related or similar terms or to establish the links between them. There are no firm rules to determine when, for example, a broader term should be used to cover a number of

related terms.

Step 3

In this step, the relationships between terms should be identified and the cross-references and linkages made so that all areas of uncertainty are removed. The system of selecting 'preferred' terms from a pair or group of terms with the same or similar meanings must take account of the wishes of the users of the records. The term selected should either be the one most commonly used, or the one the users prefer. Terms should not be imposed on users.

Similarly, the use of broader terms to cover a range of narrower terms should also be decided. There are no established rules. Decisions should be based on the predicted frequency of use of the narrower terms and whether it would serve a useful purpose to have them as index terms in their own right.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that terms in the vocabulary are consistent. Duplication of entries must be avoided and it will be necessary to ensure that proper nouns (that is, names of bodies, institutions, countries, geographical areas and so on) are not included more than once because of differences of spelling or style. This sometimes happens when abbreviations are used. For example, UNICEF is the same body as the United Nations International Children's Fund; USA, America and the US are all sometimes used to refer to the United States of America. Abbreviations should be used only when they are more familiar and more widely used than the full name of the organisation or area.

When the decision has been taken about which terms are to be used, a record should be made in the controlled vocabulary of the preferred and non-preferred terms. This is a painstaking exercise and must be done carefully. Many non-preferred terms may need to be included in the list as they serve as useful pointers to the correct term and help to remove any uncertainty about the correct term to be used.

It is not possible to establish detailed rules about the inclusion of cross-references in the controlled vocabulary. Cross-references are very helpful to users unfamiliar with the index, but if too many are used the index becomes large and unwieldy.

It may be decided, for example, to bring ALCOHOL and LIQUORS together as one keyword term. In this case, the preferred term will be 'ALCOHOL AND LIQUORS' and a cross-reference will need to be inserted in the list against the non-preferred term 'LIQUORS'.

- For example:

LIQUORS Use ALCOHOL AND LIQUORS.

Similarly, if the draft controlled vocabulary includes the closely related terms 'EQUIPMENT', 'PLANT' and 'MACHINERY', it may be decided to use 'EQUIPMENT' as the preferred term. In this case, the following entries will need to be made in the list:

EQUIPMENT   Used for PLANT and MACHINERY

MACHINERY	Use EQUIPMENT
PLANT	Use EQUIPMENT

Although some groups of related terms will be clearly identified during the initial compilation of the vocabulary, other relationships or areas of uncertainty will come to light as the index is used.

MAINTAINING THE CONTROLLED VOCABULARY

Creating and Introducing New Terms

Over time it will be necessary to make changes to the controlled vocabulary and to introduce new terms to cover new areas of work or responsibilities. However, it is important that any changes or additions are strictly controlled by the nominated senior officer responsible for records management in the agency.

Proposals for new terms should be checked carefully to avoid duplication as the components may already exist. For instance, DROUGHT may be proposed as a new term whereas DISASTERS is already available. Whether DROUGHT is introduced as a new keyword or whether it is decided to include DROUGHT under the preferred term DISASTERS, cross references will be required.

- For example:

DROUGHT	Use DISASTERS
DISASTERS	Used for FAMINE, FLOOD, DROUGHT, EARTHQUAKES
	Or
DROUGHT	See also DISASTERS

Alternatively, a proposed new term may be added to a related term that already exists so that together they cover a new or expanded area of work. For example, the term HOSPITALS may be expanded to become HOSPITALS AND CLINICS so that, because of their close relationship and overlap, records relating to the new area of 'clinics' may be indexed under the same term as 'hospitals'

REDUNDANT KEYWORDS

The business of an agency is never static. Activities which are important during one period may be less important later or may be abandoned altogether. Organisations with which an agency has dealings, or projects in which it is involved, may be wound up. When this occurs the terms used to describe them may no longer be of any use.

The controlled vocabulary should therefore be reviewed at regular intervals and redundant terms eliminated.

RECORDS CENTRE TRANSFER LIST

Records Centre Transfer List

Continuation Page No……………….

Agency _____   Code _____

Unit _____   Consignment No. _____

Record Office _____

Action Category (destroy, review, permanent) _____

For Records Centre Use

Box No.	Title/Description of Records	Ref. Nos.	Covering Dates	Action Date	Records Centre Loc. No.

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

LIST OF PROJECT DOCUMENTATION TO BE FORWARDED TO THE RECORDS CENTRE

- correspondence and file notes
- Gantt charts
- notes relating to team
- survey sheets
- interview notes
- flow charts
- background material
- phase reports
- final report
- retention schedules
- records disposal forms.

MEASURING RECORDS OFFICE PERFORMANCE

MEASURING RECORDS OFFICE PERFORMANCE

Performance measurement helps to

- identify problems at an early stage by monitoring rising or falling performance trends

- support cases for increases (or decreases) in equipment, facilities or labour

- provide a means for evaluating progress toward aims and demonstrating the achievement of objectives

- show how well resources have been used

- keep line management informed

- raise the records office profile by providing a source of publicity about achievements.

Performance measurement is an important tool for providing basic information about the restructured records offices, but there is no point in collecting statistics for their own sake. They must be useful and their use must justify the cost of their collection. The purpose of the information collected must be carefully explained to the records office staff, who should help ensure its accuracy and reliability.

Figures should always be accompanied by a commentary, otherwise senior management may draw unjustified conclusions from them. The monitoring team should investigate all unexplained fluctuations in performance as well as suspiciously consistent figures.

Performance measures should be applied to all of the principal tasks of the records office. These measures include

- efficiency

- unit costs

- effectiveness

- staff utilisation

- work output

- accuracy

- quality of service.

Figures for a given period might be collected for

- numbers of files opened

- time taken to retrieve files

- number of documents filed

- number of user queries answered

- number of bring-up actions

- number of file movements

- number of incoming/outgoing items of correspondence systemed.

Once such data have been collected, simple ratios or performance indicators can be devised to demonstrate efficiency, timeliness, quality of service and so on. For example:

- number of queries answered per day

- time taken to complete the circulation of the mail folder

It is useful to set performance standards or targets against which these measures may be compared.