



Public Record Office Victoria  
PROS 10/17  
Operations Management

# Guideline

# 2

## Appraisal

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## Acknowledgements

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1.0	14/12/2010	Released
1.1	17/07/2013	Copyright changed to Creative Commons license
1.2	24/12/2015	Guideline extended

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Public Record Office Victoria Standards

Under section 12 of the *Public Records Act 1973*, the Keeper of Public Records ('the Keeper') is responsible for the establishment of Standards for the efficient management of public records and for assisting Victorian government agencies to apply those Standards to records under their control.

Recordkeeping Standards issued by PROV reflect best practice methodology. This includes international Standards issued by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and Australian Standards (AS) issued by Standards Australia in addition to PROV research into current and future trends.

Heads of government agencies are responsible under section 13b of the *Public Records Act 1973* for carrying out, with the advice and assistance of the Keeper, a programme of efficient management of public records that is in accordance with all Standards issued by the Keeper.

In Victoria, a programme of records management is identified as consisting of the following components:

- A Recordkeeping Framework;
- Recordkeeping Procedures, Processes and Practices;
- Records Management Systems and Structures;
- Personnel and Organisational Structure; and
- Resources, including sufficient budget and facilities.

A programme of records management will cover all an agency's records in all formats, media and systems, including business systems.

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this Guideline is to facilitate implementation of requirement seven contained in the *Operations Management Specification*. It provides practical guidance and criteria that will enable Victorian Government employees or consultants to appraise the value of records held by an agency.

Appraisal can be used for a number of different purposes in an agency's records management programme. It is often used as part of record disposal, to determine the minimum length of time records need to be retained for. Appraisal can also be used to determine which records need to be created, provided with special protection, transferred to secondary storage, digitised, preserved, or targeted for audits.

### 1.3 Scope

This Guideline relates to the activity of appraising the purpose and value of records to enable them to be managed appropriately by a government agency. Appraisal isn't a process in itself, but typically part of another records management process, such as a vital records programme or developing a Retention and Disposal Authority (RDA). For guidance on how to develop a Retention & Disposal Authority, refer to *Disposal Guideline 1: Developing an RDA*.

For definitions of terms used within this Guideline, please refer to the *Operations Management Standard*.

### 1.4 Related Documents

This Guideline supports the *Operations Management Standard* (PROS 10/17) and *Specification 1* which are supported by a number of other Guidelines as shown in the following relationship diagram:

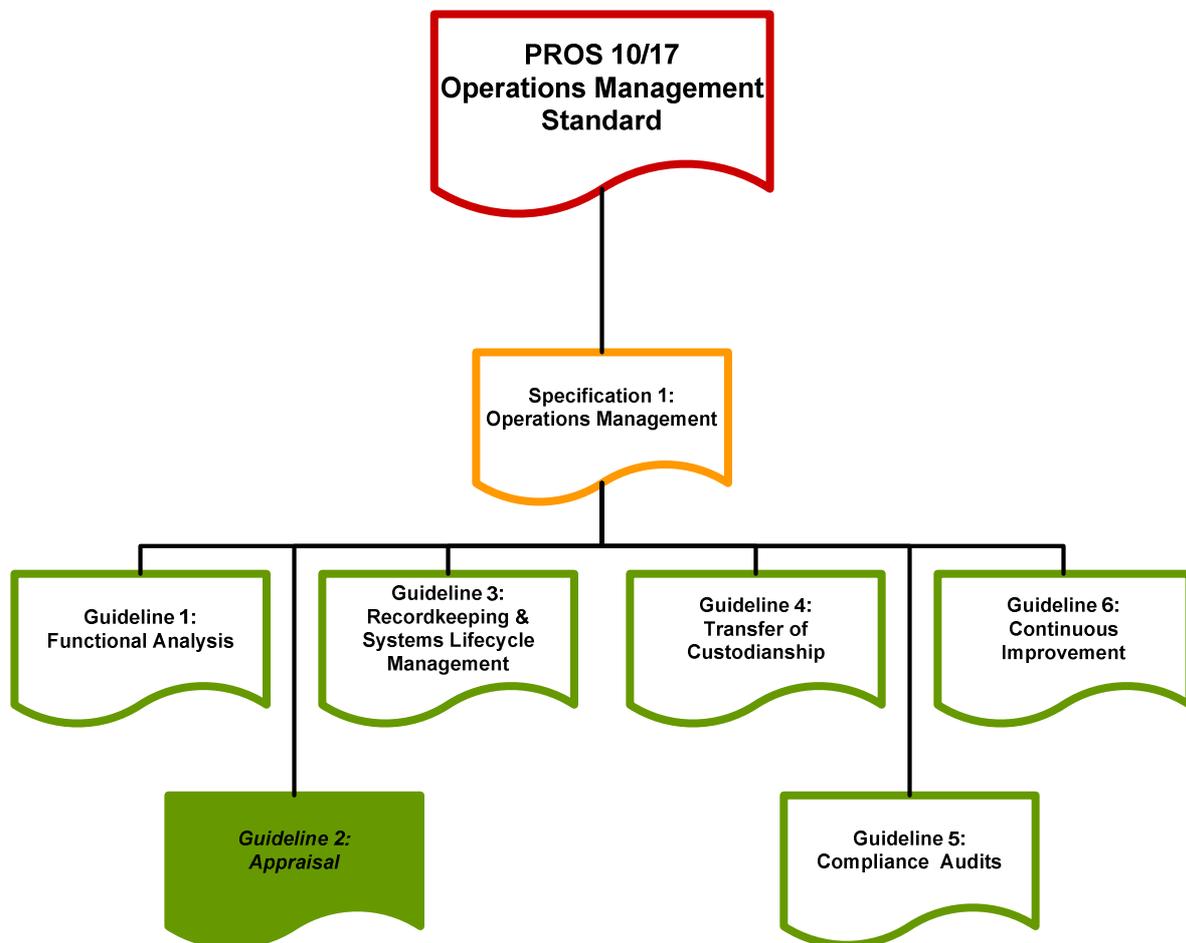


Figure 1: Relationship Diagram

## 2. What is Appraisal?

A public record will typically serve multiple purposes, both within the agency and in the broader community. They can support administrative functions, assist decision-making, and provide evidence. They can also act as a tool for ensuring that agencies are accountable to the Victorian Government, courts of law, clients, the community and future generations.

Appraisal is the activity of evaluating agency business activities to determine the value of the records that are generated by them. It is a methodology which can be used for a range of useful purposes in the agency's records management programme, as detailed in section three. Appraisal assesses the value of records against criteria which take the needs of all stakeholders into account.

There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration when trying to determine the value of a particular group of records. Appraisal is about assessing the value of the record through research, analysis and assessment. The outcome of appraisal should be a reasoned argument based on evidence and input from all stakeholders, on the overall value of the records.

### 3. Why Appraise Records?

Appraisal can be used for a number of purposes in the agency's records management programme. This includes creation, access, storage, digitisation, preservation, internal audit and disposal, as outlined below.

#### *Creation*

Appraisal can be used to identify which records need to be created and kept by the agency to meet government and community needs. The outcomes of appraisal can be used to help ensure that full and accurate records of the agency's business are made and available when required. For further information on creating records, refer to *PROV Capture Standard*.

#### *Access*

Records which are of high value (e.g. commercial-in-confidence or national security information) may also be at a higher risk of theft or unauthorised access. The outcomes of appraisal can be used to inform agency information security risk assessments. For further information on managing access to records, refer to *PROV Access Standard*.

#### *Storage*

Storage of records in office spaces and in online digital storage systems can be a significant cost to the agency. The outcomes of appraisal can be used to identify groups of records which are not highly used in the agency and so are good candidates for transfer to secondary storage areas, or offline digital storage. For further information on the storage of records, refer to *PROV Storage Standard*.

#### *Digitisation*

Appraisal can be used to identify groups of records which are good candidates for digitisation due to their current usefulness to people working in the agency. The outcomes of appraisal can assist with prioritising groups of records for digitisation. For further information on the digitisation of records, refer to *PROV Capture Specification 1: Digitisation*.

#### *Preservation*

Appraisal can be used to identify records which are critical to the ongoing business operation of an agency. These records are often referred to as vital records and should be duplicated or provided with extra protection to ensure ongoing access to them in the event of a disaster. For further information on the preservation of records, refer to *PROV Capture Specification 6: Preservation*.

#### *Internal Audit*

Internal recordkeeping audits generally only assess a sample of records held by the agency. For maximum impact, the outcomes of appraisal can be used to target audit activities to important groups of records in the agency. For further information on conducting internal recordkeeping audits, refer to *PROV Operations Management Guideline 5: Compliance Audits*.

### *Disposal*

When used for disposal, the purpose of appraisal is to decide the minimum length of time particular records need to be retained. For further information on the development of disposal authorities, refer to PROV Disposal *Specification 1: Developing Disposal Authorities*.

## 4. Preparing for Appraisal

Prior to undertaking appraisal, the agency will need to identify:

- The required purpose (or purposes) of the appraisal exercise.
- Key stakeholders that will need to be consulted with as part of appraisal (this could include subject matter experts, managers and external stakeholder groups).
- Key information sources that will need to be reviewed, including legislation, policies, standards, guidelines, instructions, strategic and business plans, existing Retention and Disposal Authorities, etc.
- Recordkeeping systems, including relevant data such as access and retrieval rates.
- Previous enquiries or requests for records, for example Freedom of Information (FOI) requests or subpoenas.
- Any proposed major changes to the legislation with which the agency operates under which may impact upon recordkeeping requirements.

## 5. Appraisal Criteria

The appraisal criteria set out below should be used to determine the value of particular groups of records. When considering these criteria, the needs and expectations of the agency, clients, other government agencies, and the general public need to be taken into account. Start by understanding the purpose of the activity the records relate to and then consider the value of the records based on the appraisal criteria detailed below.

The appraisal criteria provided in this Guideline are not an exhaustive or prescribed set and should not be used as a simple checklist. They are a way to make reasoned judgements about the value of records for both current and future users.

### 5.1 Authority, Foundation & Structure of Government

Do the records identify, create and capture evidence of the source of authority, foundation and structure of the Victorian Government?

Records meeting this criterion would be those that document the establishment, structure and function of government (including all agencies and local government authorities) and define the nature of their jurisdiction, obligations and powers.

**Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:**

- Development and passing of legislation that establishes government agencies because it sets out their purpose and functions and establishes them as a legal entity (including Governor-in-Council records).
- Court judgements which lead to the establishment of agencies.
- Bilateral agreements with other State Government and the Commonwealth regarding responsibility for functions.

### 5.2 Key Functions & Programs of Government

Do the records capture evidence of the key functions and programmes of government?

Records that provide evidence of the agency exercising its administrative responsibility which document the background to, basis for and outcomes of decisions and actions might be required so the context in which decisions are made and actions taken can be understood.

An assessment of the function and programme is required to determine their relative significance and the enduring impact on the community as a whole. Resources to store, maintain, and provide access to records can be considerable so the agency should aim to retain those records that provide evidence of these functions and programs in the most concise form.

Please note this criterion closely intersects with the objective to retain records that document actions of government which have had a significant impact on individuals (see section 5.7 below). In addition to the records that document the development and review of policy and programs and summary case records (e.g. a case register) there may be a reason to retain

individual case records for those function and programs that significantly impact on individuals.

**Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:**

- Formulation and determination of high level policy across whole of government.
- Records documenting the development of, reaction to and impact of Government policies which have a major effect on government and / or the community (e.g. Fairer Victoria).
- Records documenting the development of, reaction to and impact of reports on major social issues i.e. Forgotten Australians.
- Formulation and delivery of policy that impacts the community (e.g. public housing, public education policy and programs, closure and replacement of psychiatric institutions with community based therapy).
- Formulation and delivery of major infrastructure or planning schemes (e.g. Southern Cross Station, Federation Square, Birrarung Marr, Museum Victoria).
- Road safety programs, initiatives and campaigns.
- Registration of regulated professions.
- Local Council Minutes.

### 5.3 Regulatory & Policy Requirements

Is there a requirement set out in legislation, regulations, government policy documents, standards or codes specifying that the records need to be created or kept?

This includes cases where a minimum retention period is specified in formal documents which must be complied with. Determining this will require research and investigation into whether a particular function and the resulting records are subject to these types of regulatory and policy requirements.

Are specific access provisions or storage requirements set out in regulations or policies?

**Examples of records that meet this criterion include:**

- Records documenting the registration of births, deaths, marriages, changes of name and adoptions. The *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996* requires the keeping of registers for recording and preserving information about births, deaths, marriages, changes of name and adoptions in perpetuity.

### 5.4 Proof of Accountability

Which records are required as evidence of your agency's processes, decisions, transactions and actions?

Which records will protect the reputation of the agency, its ministers, its head and management and staff by showing that effective governance and accountability mechanisms had been established and were being properly practiced?

What records might be required to demonstrate and prove that staff have acted properly and with the correct authority?

Which of the agency's records are required by other government agencies to support the administration of their areas of responsibilities? For example, the Office of the Public Prosecutor might have an interest in the records of Victoria Police to support prosecutions.

Records provide evidence of the agency's actions and decisions and support accountability for Government. In considering the questions asked above, you will need to assess the risks associated with the record and the function. Consider the risk if a particular record is not in existence when required. What is the likelihood of the records being required? Does this likelihood diminish over time? What would the impact, effect and cost be if the records were not in existence when required? Does the impact, effect and cost reduce over time?

**Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:**

- Audit records (internal or external).
- Records authorising decisions and documenting approvals.
- Records setting out delegations – who has the authority to do what.
- Records of reviews or investigations.
- Governance frameworks and records showing how these were implemented and practiced.
- Policies and procedures.

## 5.5 Decision-making & Administrative Processes

What records will be required to help the agency or others make good and defensible decisions?

For how long is it likely that the records will be required to enable the agency to carry out its business, services, responsibilities or functions in the most effective and efficient way?

Records are received and created as a product of business processes. The information they contain will be needed for administrative and decision-making processes for a period.

This might be for a very short period or for a very long period. Particular records might be absolutely vital for the management of a program or a project for a short period. They may have no further administrative or decision-making value once a particular action or event has occurred.

When assessing against this criteria it is important to consider the information needs of different areas of the agency.

**Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:**

- Purchasing and payment records such as receipts and invoices.
- Application records, i.e. for inclusion in a program or for funding.
- Research records created when developing policies or procedures.
- Records documenting program or project establishment and management.

## 5.6 Rights & Entitlements

What records are required by others, including organisations, community groups or individual members of the public, to prove their entitlements or rights or ensure their interests are met?

Do the records of the function and activity provide critical evidence of the enduring rights and entitlements of individuals and their interaction with government? Are the records needed on a continuing basis to prove entitlements for descendants beyond the life time of the data subjects?

**Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:**

- Licence records.
- Records of grant application receipt, judgement and selection.
- Requests for tender or quote, contracts, contract variations, contract approvals.
- Birth, death and marriage registration records.
- Adoption or donor conception records.
- Land titles and parish plans which document property rights and entitlements.
- Aboriginal heritage site registration records.
- Probate records.

## 5.7 Significant Impact on Individuals

Do the records of the function and activity provide evidence of the government's actions that have had a significant impact on individuals or groups of people?

Records that provide evidence of the government's interaction with its citizenry might be required where the government's actions alter or change the lives of individuals or groups of people. Example of such actions includes the incarceration of individuals or the placing of children into the State's care. Records might only be required in summary form (e.g. a register) or alternatively the entire case record might be required due to the nature of the relationship with the individual concerned and the need to retain detailed evidence of the government's management of the individual case.

**Examples of records that may meet this criterion include**

- Records of the State's care of children removed from their family.
- Records where the State has acted as guardian.
- Prison admission and discharge records.
- Records of courts' criminal jurisdiction.
- Records of institutionalised persons.

## 5.8 Agency Memory

Do these records provide a history of the agency, such as interesting events, changes, issues and achievements which it might want to retain for its own cultural development, communications or marketing purposes?

For most agencies it is important to develop a good corporate culture and communicate and market their work. One way to do this is by retaining records which document its history, particularly its rituals, achievements and successes.

Some of these records may not be appraised as having the level of value which means they should be transferred to PROV as State Archives, but they may have ongoing value for the agency. The information (including images) they contain could be used in staff induction sessions, in speeches, in media releases, on the agency's website or in public brochures.

**Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:**

- Images and records of agency events i.e. staff award ceremonies, Christmas parties.
- Images of key agency people i.e. heads of agencies.
- Awards received by the agency and its staff.
- Transcripts or recordings of key speeches or presentations.

## 5.9 Significant Contribution to Community Memory

Some records of government functions and activities will significantly contribute to the memory, knowledge and understanding of the society and communities of Victoria. Records that contribute to community memory might also meet the criteria outlined above. The community memory criterion covers records of functions and activities which do not necessarily meet the criteria already discussed above however might have unique historical or heritage interest.

Do the records document functions or activities that resulted in major advances, changes, breakthroughs or achievements, in a particular field or area of endeavour, and the key people or organisations contributing to it?

Do they have value for technical, botanical, scientific, social science, genealogical, medical or other specialist research? Any potential uses must be fully explained and justified in order for this criterion to be applied.

Do the records document functions or activities that significantly add to an understanding of the reality of a particular time for different types of people - how people lived, what they thought, what their major concerns and issues?

An example of the application of this criterion is the Victorian Public Record Series VPRS 14004 Donations of items received by the Education History Unit in celebration of Victoria's sesquicentenary in 1985.

### Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:

- Council rate records.
- School building records.
- Mental health patient records.

## 5.10 Environmental Management & Change

Do the records of the function and activity provide evidence of the government's significant actions in relation to environmental management and change?

Records that provide evidence of the occupation, management and use of land and water might be required so that the history of land use is known as it may impact on the health and well being of the community and natural environment. Records may also contribute to an understanding of climate change and weather patterns.

### Examples of records that may meet this criterion include:

- Land occupation records.
- Records of landfill sites.
- Records of rainfall, temperature, soil characteristics.
- Parish plans.
- Records documenting major changes to land use, such as the establishment of National Parks.
- Hydrographic charts.

## 6. References

Archives New Zealand 2008, *Appraisal policy*, Archives New Zealand, Wellington NZ.

National Archives of Australia 2009, *Glossary of Records Management Terms*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, viewed 12 August 2009, <<http://www.naa.gov.au/records-management/glossary/index.aspx>>.

### Legislation

*Health Records Act 2001* (Vic)

*Public Records Act 1973* (Vic)

All current Victorian legislation is available at <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au>

### Standards

Standards Australia 2002, *AS ISO 15489.1 Australian standard on records management*, pt 1, Standards Australia, Sydney.

### Other Resources

For more information about appraising records, please contact:

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Public Record Office Victoria  
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