



# Appraisal Statement

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**Guiding principles for identifying and assessing the value of information and records**

September 2023

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## Contact for enquiries

Government Recordkeeping Directorate

Archives New Zealand

Phone: +64 4 499 5595

Email: [rkadvice@dia.govt.nz](mailto:rkadvice@dia.govt.nz)

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## 1 Our Role

The Chief Archivist has a legislative responsibility under the *Public Records Act 2005* (the Act), to the government and citizens of New Zealand to provide an integrated framework for the systematic creation, management, disposal and preservation of public sector information and records (including data).

The Act provides regulatory tools to assist and support public sector organisations to achieve voluntary, full and sustained compliance.<sup>1</sup> Through Archives New Zealand's use of these tools and our regulatory activities, we enable government to be held accountable and enhance public trust in the integrity and reliability of central and local government information. Good information management practices are a cornerstone to building this trust.

### 1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Statement is to support consistent and transparent appraisal by outlining a set of guiding principles that public offices and local authorities (public sector organisations) can utilise for identifying and assessing the value of information and records.

### 1.2 MANDATE

The purposes of the Act in section 3 include:

*(c) to enable the New Zealand Government to be held accountable by –*

- (i) ensuring that full and accurate information and records of the affairs of central and local government are created and maintained; and*
- (ii) providing for the preservation of, and public access to, records of long-term value.*

Also, under section 11(1) of the Act:

*The functions of the Chief Archivist, in achieving the purposes of this Act, are –*

- (a) to exercise a leadership role in recordkeeping in public offices and in the management of public archives in New Zealand; and*
- (b) in relation to public records, -*
  - (i) to authorise the disposal of public records.*

Appraisal is a requirement for disposal authorisation to be granted and, as disposal recommendations are an output of the appraisal process, we provide advice and guidance on appraisal.

Under section 27(1)(a), the Chief Archivist may also:

- . . . issue standards in relation to public records or local authority records for-*
  - (ii) their appraisal for disposal.*

### 1.3 AUDIENCE

This Statement is written for:

- public sector organisations so they can meet their statutory obligations and support their business needs;
- Archives New Zealand staff tasked with providing assistance and quality assurance for organisations undertaking appraisal, and advising the Chief Archivist on the authorisation of disposal recommendations; and
- external stakeholders who may wish to know more about the appraisal of information and records.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulatory Statement (16/Sm1)

## 1.4 INCLUSION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities may also use the principles in this Statement in the appraisal of their information and records to select local authority archives and to identify those information and records that have been protected by the Chief Archivist under section 40 of the Act.

## 2 Purpose of Appraisal

Identification and assessment of your organisation's business context, business activities and risks is necessary to determine:

- what information and records you need to create
- what information and records are high-risk, high-value, or both, and
- how long information and records must be managed to meet legislative requirements, and business and community needs and expectations.

This process is traditionally known in the information management profession and by us as "appraisal". Appraisal is a strategic and proactive approach to the creation, capture and management of information and records rather than a reactive one. It combines an understanding of current business functions with the identification of business, regulatory and societal requirements relating to information and records, and the assessment of risks associated with creating and managing these.

## 3 Guiding Principles

As the process of appraisal involves repeatable, evaluative judgements and has serious implications for organisational accountability, efficiency and continuity, it is important to establish guiding rules or principles.

### 3.1 LAWFUL

Decisions on the creation, maintenance and disposal of information and records must comply with statutory or other legislative requirements. You must ensure the appraisal process identifies and complies with any legislative or other legal obligations for the creation, maintenance and disposal of information and records.

### 3.2 ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT

Information and records provide evidence of your organisation's decision-making, performance, transactions and conduct when carrying out its functions on behalf of the government and the community. You should, as far as can be reasonably expected, ensure that information and records that may be required to protect the rights and interests of internal and external stakeholders are identified and maintained in an accessible and authentic state.

### 3.3 COMPREHENSIVE AND JUSTIFIED

You should adequately document the appraisal process to allow informed scrutiny and review. Justifications should be comprehensive, indicating an understanding of the business activities and needs documented in the information and records, and that the expectations of all relevant stakeholders have been given due consideration. The justification and rationale for recommendations on the disposal actions and retention periods of information and records must be well informed and be clear and concise.

### 3.4 CONSISTENT

You should be undertaking appraisal in a planned and systematic manner, following the standards and guidance provided by us and international best practice. Organisations should use the principles in our *Public Sector Archival Selection Statement (19/Sm4)* to identify what information and records to propose for permanent retention as public archives.

### **3.5 CONSIDERATE OF RESOURCES**

You should continually identify and balance associated risks, costs and benefits. Public sector organisations have a responsibility to be prudent in the management of public funds. It is not affordable or sustainable to permanently keep all information and records created or received by your organisation. Appraisal enables you to distinguish information and records of longer term value from information and records of shorter term value so that appropriate, authorised disposal actions can be implemented.

## **4 Benefits of appraisal**

Regular, systematic appraisal is an essential part of effective information and records management and has a range of benefits that arise from having full, accurate and accessible information and records.

### **4.1 ENABLES BUSINESS EFFICIENCY AND CONTINUITY**

Identifying business requirements for information and records supports efficient and effective business performance. It facilitates the use of authoritative information and records as business assets, and helps ensure their availability to manage ongoing operations, to make informed and accountable decisions, and to deliver operational services or programmes.

As a result, your organisation will know what, and how, information and records relate to and support its business functions, activities and processes. The appraisal process helps you put information and records at the centre of business functions, and to be valued and managed as assets. It supports business continuity by identifying and managing high risk and/or high value information and records for immediate and ongoing business needs. It also helps you gain an understanding of the range, volume and types of information and records you will have to manage overtime, and in which physical and digital environments.

### **4.2 ENABLES PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY**

Public sector organisations are accountable for their actions and decisions. The appraisal process assists your organisation in identifying what information and records must be created to document these actions and decisions. Appraisal indicates how long the information and records should be appropriately retained and managed so the public can understand what actions and decisions were made, how, when and why.

### **4.3 FACILITATES DISPOSAL AUTHORISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Act requires that public sector organisations seek approval from the Chief Archivist for the disposal of public or protected information and records. Before formally authorising any disposal, the Chief Archivist must be satisfied that an organisation has undertaken a consistent, objective and accountable appraisal process to make informed judgements on the value and retention of their information and records.

### **4.4 CONTRIBUTES TO NEW ZEALAND'S HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

It is also through the appraisal process that you can identify and select information and records of permanent value. Once transferred to our custody, these public archives are made accessible as appropriate to members of the public who can use them to better understand the history of New Zealand and their own history.