

**Retention Schedules:
Departmental versus Functional for Managing Organizational Records**

Functional Records Retention Schedule Position Paper

David Farneth, MLS, CRM and Barbara E. Nye, CRM

What is a functional Records Retention Schedule?

- ▶ The functional Records Retention Schedule (RRS) is a model in which the records series are based on the functions (and related activities) of the organization. Records are classified into series by the purpose of the record - the function (or activity) that they document or support in the organization.

Functional RRS position:

- ▶ A Retention Schedule organized by function is better able to support the stated mission of the organization and its business processes.
- ▶ Most documents and records are now created – and often received – as electronic files, and consequently are most effectively managed electronically. Most ERMS rely on a uniform classification scheme for managing retention. Attempting to manage electronic records with departmental schedules is too unwieldy and too complicated for the Information Technology (IT) department to implement.
- ▶ Undertaking a functional analysis of the organization and producing the related documentation helps to position the RMP as a key strategic player in the organization and elevates it from a “support” function. It allows the program to move from outdated, traditional RM to current RIM practices.
- ▶ Enterprise-wide systems are designed to support and automate business functions and the activities that support those functions. The records resulting from these systems, therefore, document the functions and activities and are therefore most efficiently classified by function.
- ▶ The functional model is recognized as a “best practice” as evidenced by its adoption in the ISO 15489 Records Management standard. As increasingly we do business, or collaborate, globally, it is important to be aware of (and to the extent practical, adopt) international standards.
- ▶ Functional classification facilitates implementing DoD 5015.2-compliant systems.

Benefits of a Functional RRS

There are a number of benefits derived from implementing a Functional Retention Schedule and they fall into a number of categories:

Access: the function schedule facilitates retrieval of information across the organization

- Facilitates efficient retrieval of similar information from across the organization. This benefits an almost unlimited number of activities, including legal discovery, organizational evaluation, reporting, communications, etc.

Review and approval: The functional arrangement makes sense to management, legal, and risk management, and it simplifies the review and approval process.

- Supports an efficient legal citation research effort and expedites legal counsel review of the RRS.
- Supports an expedited review and approval cycle, as there is only one RRS (in many cases) to review.

Uniform classification: Common vocabulary and metadata is required to manage electronic records across the organization. The common vocabulary simplifies machine processing and promotes clearer communication between people.

- Uniform records classification is currently the key tool for managing electronic records. IT Departments, Records Managers, and users can deal with managing 100-200 "buckets of information" more effectively than dealing with managing thousands of buckets.
- Promotes standard naming conventions throughout the organization; the use of uniform terminology facilitates clearer communication.
- Can be re-purposed or expanded to support enterprise information management and standardization, such as with the development of a functions thesaurus, business classification schemes, or metadata registries.

Compliance:

- Matches legal citations more precisely, as the law is based on regulating activities (employment, corporate governance, environmental compliance, etc.)
- More effectively supports the legal hold process by having standard naming conventions and thus similar records (with varying names) are assigned to same record series, rather than multiple record series on several departmental RRS.

Limits Liability:

- Eliminates duplication of records series on multiple schedules (due to different names for the same type of records).
- Limits liability by eliminating conflicting retention periods assigned to similar record series.

Vital records management:

- Facilitates the identification of both vital and archival records, because they are typically linked to key or critical mission functions.

The functional analysis is useful to other areas of the organization, such as disaster recovery, digital asset management, and delivery of web content.

Additional benefits:

- ▶ Does not need to be re-done each time the organization changes (business units merging or splitting).
- ▶ Easier to maintain for the Records Manager (approximately 100-200 Records Series, instead of potentially thousands).
- ▶ Users can see all records of the organization on one (relatively short) RRS, so it is easier for them to find records outside their business unit and to know which business unit is responsible for a record series.
- ▶ “One schedule for all” promotes an understanding of corporate ownership of records and uniform records management practices.
- ▶ Management, Legal Departments, and Risk Management Departments are more comfortable with the uniform, functional approach; it also makes their job of reviewing and approving the schedules and reviewing records destruction requests much easier.
- ▶ Developing a functional RRS requires the Records Manager to analyze and understand all functions and activities of the organization. The knowledge gained by this effort, is key to developing and improving the services provided to the organization by the Records Manager.