



Vermont State Archives and Records Administration

Office of the Secretary of State

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RECORDKEEPING METADATA GUIDELINE FOR ALL PUBLIC AGENCIES

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Introduction

The purpose of this guideline is to provide guidance and advice to public agencies in the selection and use of recordkeeping metadata that support the interoperability, management, accessibility, and preservation of government records.

Background

Records management is a statutory obligation of every public agency in the State of Vermont. One resource that facilitates the effective and efficient management of records, while also describing their content, context and structure, is metadata. In general, metadata is information about an asset or resource. It can be used to describe the characteristics of the asset or resource. Where applicable, metadata can also be used to describe the content of an asset or resource.

One example of metadata in which many people are familiar is the library card catalog. A catalog card describes the characteristics of a publication – author, title, dimensions of the publication, number of pages, call number, etc. – and also the content of a publication – subjects. The card catalog compiles the same information about every publication and the catalog itself can be manual or electronic.

Recordkeeping metadata is a combination of descriptive information about the properties of the record itself and the content of the record. Recordkeeping metadata is comprised of elements, which address distinct characteristics or qualities in a record. This guideline includes metadata elements consistent with the requirements of three international standards for managing records: *ISO 15489: Records Management*; *ISO 23081: Records Management Processes – Metadata for Records*; and *ISO/TR 21965: Records Management in Enterprise Architecture*.

Intended Audience

This guideline is intended for any public employee involved in the management of records for his or her agency, department, or office. This guideline is also intended for any public employee responsible for the interoperability, management, accessibility, and preservation of records.

1 SELECTING RECORDKEEPING METADATA

1.1 Business and Recordkeeping Requirements

The selection of recordkeeping metadata elements should be based on business and recordkeeping requirements, which are documented in strategic plans, project charters, record schedules, and related sources. Agencies may also have a need to implement additional metadata for different reasons, such as compliance purposes. If business requirements have not been cross-referenced with recordkeeping requirements, this should be done prior to selecting recordkeeping metadata.

1.2 Interoperability

Recordkeeping metadata is intended to facilitate records management actions such as retrieval pursuant to public records and discovery requests, disposition, and preservation. The recordkeeping metadata selection process requires a clear understanding of the systems – paper, electronic, or a combination of the two -- through which the records are or will be managed. The proliferation of systems used by one agency can significantly complicate the management of records, thus reducing the effectiveness of retrieval and other management actions. It is important to select recordkeeping metadata that can be used to achieve or improve interoperability, particularly records retrieval, among various systems.

1.3 Vermont Functional Classification System (VCLAS)

VCLAS is an interoperability metadata standard developed and maintained by the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) for managing Vermont public records pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 317a, 3 V.S.A. § 117, and 3 V.S.A. § 218. VCLAS defines a standard set of recordkeeping metadata elements for describing and managing Vermont public records. VCLAS is not a replacement for metadata schemes developed or adopted by public agencies. Rather, VCLAS should be used as a guideline to develop a faithful crosswalk between other metadata standards and those used for managing and sharing Vermont public records.

2 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are several other issues, such as existing or planned systems, particularly those classified by the State of Vermont as “enterprise systems,” and associated costs, which need to be considered and addressed beyond selecting recordkeeping metadata.

2.1 Cost-Benefit Analysis

A cost-benefit analysis should be completed before choosing to implement any metadata standard. In conducting the analysis, tangible savings and benefits and intangible benefits should be equally considered.

2.2 Workflow

In most situations, records support current agency functions and activities and therefore need to be readily accessible and searchable. Therefore, the need to assign metadata to records at the point of their creation or receipt should be introduced into the agency’s workflow. Issues to consider include, but are not limited to: how and when metadata will be added; the ability to automate the addition of metadata; and staff awareness, education, and training.

2.3 Existing Use of Metadata

Metadata has already been captured for most, if not all, agency records to some extent. Metadata is regularly being applied to electronic records by software applications and network configurations. Before selecting recordkeeping metadata, an inventory of existing metadata elements applied to records, whether purposely or automatically, should be completed. Proper mapping between old and new metadata will be necessary to ensure that records can be searched and retrieved.

2.4 Controlled Vocabulary

The ability to effectively search and retrieve records is dependent on how well metadata has been applied to the records and if key elements are populated by controlled vocabulary terms. It is important to consider standardizing elements to increase access and retrieval by internal and external users. In addition, agencies should consider embedding metadata in each record; records should not be fully dependent on external metadata, such as databases, for contextual information.

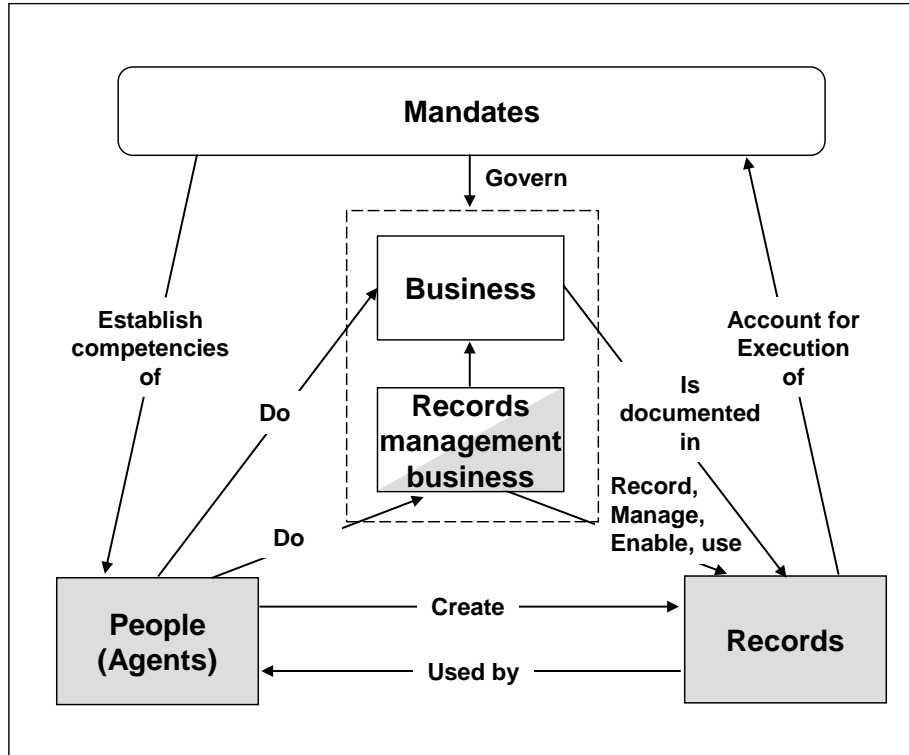
2.5 Sustainability

It is inevitable that metadata will evolve; therefore, metadata needs to be managed as well. Agencies should reflect on the need for additional staff or specialized expertise to sustain their recordkeeping metadata. Agencies should also consider if other entities are already maintaining the metadata they wish to use and if the metadata is widely adopted and applied. If so, the need to internally sustain certain metadata elements for records management purposes will be diminished.

3 PREFERRED RECORDKEEPING METADATA

Below are the preferred recordkeeping metadata entities for records. Entities are defined as physical or abstract objects that exist, did exist, or may have existed. For the purpose of this guideline, recordkeeping metadata entities are defined as: Record; Agent; Business; and Mandate. (Specifications for each entity are outlined in *Section 4: Specifications*.) These preferences do not preclude the use of other metadata to describe the characteristics or content of records.

3.1 Entity Model¹



3.2 Record Entity

The Record Entity describes records and aggregation of records. Metadata may be used to describe a single document, a file or folder, a record series, or a business or information system. Metadata may be inherited from different aggregation levels. A single document, for example, can inherit metadata from a file or record series. Decisions for what level of aggregation is appropriate should be done prior to implementation. Such decisions depend on the systems or systems used or planned for managing records.

¹ This model appears in the *Model Requirements Specification for the Management of Electronic Records*, commonly referred to as MoReq2, and is based on ISO 23081. The shaded portions represent sections of the model covered by MoReq2.

3.3 *Agent Entity*

The Agent Entity describes the individual, workgroup, or agency responsible for some action on the record, such as records creation, receipt, and other management processes. Like the Record Entity, agencies will need to determine what level of aggregation is both appropriate and feasible within existing or planned systems. Metadata may also be inherited.

3.4 *Business Entity*

The Business Entity describes the business functions, activities and transactions that the record supports. When linked to the records, this entity helps define the business context of the records. This entity may also have aggregation levels and should be consistent with an agency's business classification scheme.

3.4 *Mandate Entity*

The Mandate Entity describes the legislative or regulatory basis for an agency to perform a specific business function or create, receive, or manage records. This entity is closely associated with the Business and Agent Entities.

6.5 *Relation Entity*

The Relation Entity describes the relationships among the Record, Agent, Business, and Mandate Entities. This Entity provides the mechanism for documenting the content, context, and structure of records, agents, businesses, and mandates over time. Metadata elements associated with the Relation Entity are found under the other four entities where appropriate.

4 SPECIFICATIONS²

4.1 RECORD ENTITY METADATA ELEMENTS

Name	Description
Record Category Type	Identifies the level of aggregation of the record or group of records being described.
Record Identifier	Provides the unique identifier allocated to a record or aggregation of records, usually at the time of registration.
Record Title	States the name given to a record (or an aggregation of records) as free text. It can also be described with an alternative and/or abbreviated title.
Record Description	Provides a free text description of the contents and/or purpose of a record or aggregation of records.
Record Date	Specifies the date/time or a range of date/times applicable to a record or an aggregation of records.
Record Subject	Identifies the subject keywords, which describe the subject content of the record or aggregation of records.
Record Coverage	Identifies the jurisdiction in which the record is valid (i.e. place name, region, or geographical area) and/or the time period the record covers.
Record Language	Identifies the language in which the record is recorded.
Record Type	Identifies the type of record, its logical form.
Record Format	Identifies the media, data format, extent and physical form of a record or an aggregation of records.
Record Relation	Identifies and defines a relationship or set of relationships that exist between records/agent and functions.
Record Access	Identifies information that governs the accessibility of records. It includes business or legal requirements to prescribe access to records as open or closed to [organization] staff or the public, as appropriate.
Record Disposal	Documents the processes undertaken to ensure the appropriate disposal of a record or aggregation of records.
Record Location	Identifies the physical or virtual location of a record or aggregation of records.
Record Event History	Documents the preservation, retrieval, disposal, control, access or use related activities performed on a record or aggregation of records.
Record Classification	Identifies the business documented in the record or in an aggregation of records.
Record Agent	Identifies the corporate entity or individual responsible for some form of action on a record or aggregation of records.

² The elements listed in this guideline are based on the Queensland State Archives' *Queensland Recordkeeping Metadata Standard and Guideline* (2008). This Standard is the first published standard consistent with ISO 15489 and ISO 23081.

4.2 AGENT ENTITY METADATA ELEMENTS

Name	Description
Agency Category Type	Identifies the type of agent undertaking a business activity with, or on behalf of, [an organization]. That is, is the agent being described an individual; a workgroup; or an organization.
Agent Identifier	States the unique identification of an agent.
Agent Title	States the name of the agent.
Agent Date	Specifies the date or collection of dates applicable to an agent.
Agent Relation	Specifies and identifies the relationship or set of relationships between or among agents/records and functions.
Agent Location/Address	Identifies the physical or virtual address of an agent.
Agent Event History	Documents management events or actions relating to agents.

4.3 BUSINESS ENTITY METADATA ELEMENTS

Name	Description
Business Category Type	Identifies the type or category of function being described, whether it is: a business function – the major responsibilities managed by an organization to fulfill its goals; an activity – the major tasks performed by an organization to accomplish each of its functions; or a transaction – the smallest unit of a business activity.
Business Identifier	Specifies the unique identifier associated with a function, activity, or transaction.
Business Title	States the name of the business function, activity, or transaction.
Business Description	Provides a free text description of the scope and/or purpose of a business function, business activity or transaction group. Also referred to as scope note.
Business Date	Specifies the date or a collection of dates applicable to a function, commonly expressed as a date range.
Business Relation	Specifies and identifies a relationship or set of relationships between and among functions, records and agents.
Business Access	Provides information that governs the accessibility of, and use conditions relating to, business functions, business activities or transaction groups.
Business Location	Identifies the physical or virtual location of a function, business activity or transaction group.
Business Event History	Provides information about events or actions relating to business functions, activities or transaction groups.

4.4 MANDATE ENTITY METADATA ELEMENTS

Name	Description
Mandate Category Type	Identifies the type or category of mandate being described, whether it is: law; regulation; agreement; or policy. Includes both Federal and State mandates.
Mandate Identifier	Specifies the unique identifier associated with a mandate.
Mandate Title	States the name of the mandate.
Mandate Description	Provides a free text description of the scope and/or purpose of a business function, business activity or transaction group. Also referred to as scope note.
Mandate Date	Specifies the date or a collection of dates applicable to a function, commonly expressed as a date range.
Mandate Relation	Specifies and identifies a relationship or set of relationships between and among mandates, agents, business, and records.
Mandate Event History	Provides information about events or actions relating to the mandate.

REVISION HISTORY

2020-04-16	Replaced header. Under Background, added reference to ISO/TR 21965: Records Management in Enterprise Architecture, which was released in 2019. Minor copy editing in other sections, including reviewing and updating citations under References.
2016-10-19	Updated the citation and web address for <i>Queensland Recordkeeping Metadata Standard and Guideline</i> .
2010-10-12	Corrected the title of <i>ISO 15489-2:2001</i> under References to read Part 2 rather than Part 1 (typographical error).
2008-08-29	Approved for issuance by iSTART, a collaborative task force of the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (Office of the Secretary of State) and the Department of Information and Innovation (Agency of Administration).

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