Alberta's Modified Functional Classification System Model

Discussion Draft
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Alberta
Government

Contents

1.
Introduction

Purpose

The Government of Alberta's Modified Functional Classification approach is the foundation for the development of a records system design methodology and accompanying staff training for records professionals in the Government of Alberta.

The purpose of this guide is to provide understanding and uniformity for records classification structures, records retention and disposition schedules and best practices in Government of Alberta ministries through the implementation of functional classification.

What is the modified functional classification approach?

It is a new way of designing records classification systems and schedules that encompass records managed in electronic information management (EIM) systems while addressing those held in physical formats or in a combination of the two. It provides flexibility to accommodate the needs of individual ministries while assuring structural and regulatory requirements of the Government of Alberta are met.

The development of the modified functional classification approach is an important step in facilitating the management of all information in the Government of Alberta. It supports the management of paper records in a business focused system and positions an organization to make an orderly and efficient transition to an electronic information management system.

This approach builds upon the strong tradition of the block numeric subject classification approach used in the Government of Alberta. It incorporates components of purely functional classification approaches used in Australia and the United Kingdom as well as approaches being introduced in the Government of Canada.

The modified functional classification approach is consistent with the principles of the ISO 15489 international information and records management standard and will help ministries work toward this standard. It is also a key resource to assist ministries in implementing the directives of the corporate Information Management Framework, particularly those associated with the principles of "accessibility" and "integrated approach".

Scope

This guide focuses on tools to enable ministries to capture classification of unstructured content such as electronic documents, e-mails, web documents and hardcopy records for access and lifecycle management. Within this guide, reference to "files" or "documents" includes records in all media.

Structured data such as applications, data warehousing and dynamic web sites will require the application of retention scheduling principles and will be fully addressed at a later date.

This guide does not address the development of thesauri or any other form of controlled vocabulary. There is a strong link between the design of thesauri and classification systems that will require further analysis. This will be addressed at a later date.

Throughout this guide, Alberta Government Services (AGS) examples (and in particular the Consumer Protection program) have been used. The examples and the approach itself will be redefined as it is piloted by AGS and other ministries and as the staff training program is developed.

2.
Design Principles of the Modified Functional Classification Approach

The development of the modified functional classification approach is an important step in facilitating the management of all information in the Government of Alberta. It supports the management of paper records in a business-focused system and positions an organization to make an orderly and efficient transition to an electronic information management environment.

There are several key design principles that the modified approach embodies:

1. It is business driven

2. It positions an organization to manage information electronically

3. It results from a functional analysis of business activities

4. The functional map provides an approach for an organization to implement enhanced records and information management practices

5. It applies to information in all media

6. It is technology neutral

7. It enables portability of the classification structure (when government restructures)

8. It integrates the design of records classification systems with the development of retention and disposition schedules; and

9. It takes advantage of and supports the continued refinement of the Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture (GAEA).

Principle 1. Business Driven

In constructing a functional records classification system, it is the business units that define what they do, how they do it, how they document and retrieve information, and the terminology they use to accomplish their work. Basing records classification

on the operational environment, goals and deliverables of the business has several advantages:

- Business units are provided with the opportunity to critically review what they do and the documents that they need. Often refined business processes result from classification design projects;

- The system is intuitive to users as it employs terms and conventions already used;

- Business unit ownership is more likely to occur as users play a larger role in its construction and are engaged in its success;

- The need for extensive staff training is reduced as staff are involved in its design;

- Improvements in productivity may result, as staff are able to classify and retrieve information faster.

- A forum is provided to discuss the need for sharing information which is sometimes overlooked in normal business planning; and

- With a direct relationship to the daily business of staff, increased accuracy in the classification of information and records should result.

Principle 2. Electronic Information Management (EIM) Prerequisite

A good classification system is fundamental to the implementation of EIM tools. It is a prerequisite.

Implementing an EIM system without an up to date classification system will impede search and retrieval, which leads to user resistance and may lead to system failure.

Traditional classification systems (such as the block-numeric) are focused on managing hardcopy records primarily; and are designed for use by the records technicians. End-users (i.e. business users) most often find those systems non-intuitive and hard to use.

The modified functional classification approach has been developed with the end-user in mind as it is designed as a natural extension of the business processes. In addition, in an electronic environment, end-users are much more engaged with

managing their information directly with the proliferation of document management tools offered at the desktop. Therefore, the modified functional classification approach is seen as a necessary prerequisite of EIM implementation projects.

Principle 3. Functional Analysis

Functions represent the core business, responsibilities or goals for which a government organization is held accountable. They are typically underpinned by legislation, policy or mandate.

A functional records classification is derived from the functional analysis of business activities. Functional analysis brings discipline to the design of records classification systems by using the purpose of a series of records as the basis for classification.

Functional analysis is conducted using information gathered from two key sources:

- Written material such as business goals, policies, procedures and practices that illustrate the mandate and purpose of a business unit. These can be found by reviewing legislation, business plans, annual reports, web sites and other documentation; and

- Questions posed during focus groups and interviews with members of the business units. Engaging those who do the work, as stakeholders in the process will reveal what business is conducted, how it is accomplished and how it is documented and retrieved.

Both types are necessary to derive a picture of an organization and its business functions.

Principle 4. Functional Map

The functional analysis process starts with a high level mapping of all the functions in the organization. This is an important planning tool as it provides an approach to implement information and records management improvements including the implementation of Electronic Information Management (EIM) tools.

Principle 5. Integrated Media Approach

Functional classification systems allow organizations to classify and retain their records based on content rather than on medium. They assist in the management of electronic and paper records or both (mixed media). A function based system views media types as another component of metadata.

Metadata are the properties that describe business objects. Examples of business objects are programs, services, information items, activities, applications and systems. Examples of the properties or metadata related to business objects are:

- Data about data such as might be found in "properties" in a Word Document

- The information on a Records Inventory Listing about a records series (location, date range, etc)

- The descriptive scope note and item number in a classification system.

The medium of a record is inconsequential to how content will be classified. This is an important consideration where different media (e.g. web sites, databases and paper files) all contribute to support a specific business activity.

A computer system may be used for different activities to support a business purpose (program). Information should not be classified on the basis of it being a computer system but on how it fits into each activity performed. Analyzing the system and its relationship to activities carried out identifies what purpose it plays in each activity.

As an example:

In conducting consumer investigations, a computer system called the Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS) is used to track and report on the status of investigations, but paper files are used to hold the materials pertaining to the investigation itself, such as legal advice. However, CATS is also used for business licensing to manage information relating to the license issued to a business. The system has more than one purpose and it is therefore necessary to identify how the different content items in the system relate to different activities being performed by it.

Principle 6. Technology Neutral

The Modified Functional Classification approach has been developed so that it may be deployed using software sold by any of the leaders in the EIM market. It is not product specific, thereby enabling organizations to use the EIM technology that best meets their needs.

Records classification systems should be developed independent of the selection of an EIM solution or existing recordkeeping application. There are two important reasons for this:

- A functional classification system is a representation of an organization's business operational environment and should not be constrained by technology; and

- Technology changes rapidly and "neat" features that have affected the way the classification system was developed may not be available in the next version of the software; conversely constraints may have been removed.

Principle 7. Portability

Functional classification systems are based on business activities not on organizational charts.

Why?

- Organizational structures are subject to frequent change.

  For example, the Consumer Protection function has resided in several departments over the last few decades including Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Municipal Affairs, and Government Services. Within those departments, it has resided in several divisions. The program's mandate may have been modified to a small degree over the years but in essence what it does has remained fairly constant.

- Organizational units may perform more than one function.

  For example, in Alberta Government Services, the Consumer Services Branch administers both the Consumer Protection program and the Foreign Ownership of Land program.

When government reorganizations take place and business functions are transferred to other departments, functional classification systems will facilitate the identification and transfer of record series that belongs to those functions regardless of which business unit they are in. Staff performing those functions can likely continue to use the same records structure. Work does not have to be interrupted and staff do not need to be retrained.

Principle 8. Integrated Classification and Scheduling

The modified functional classification approach is designed to integrate the classification and schedule development process. When a functional classification system is developed, information is gathered and documented that is required on a Records Retention and Disposition Schedule (schedule). Many elements of the schedule are built at the same time as the functional classification system.

- This saves both time and effort by reusing information that has already been captured.

- It assures that the classification system and schedule are harmonized thereby making it easier to determine retention at the classification stage. This is an important component for electronic information management.

- When government reorganization occurs, a well-written schedule can be transferred to the appropriate organization in its entirety without having to separate specific items on the schedule to be moved.

Principle 9. Relationship with Enterprise Architecture

Functional classification and analysis is a concept that has received broad recognition from many communities as the most effective way to conceptualize business activities in an organization. The business architecture component of the Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture (GAEA) has produced a functional analysis of the primary business activities carried out in program areas within the Government of Alberta.

GAEA's aim was to maximize the value of computer applications that are developed to support particular functions in the Government of Alberta. For example, if a computer application is designed to support licensing in one organization, could that application be leveraged to other organizations that have similar needs for an application to assist with licensing?

The GAEA business architecture has identified the steps required to support common activities. The processes already identified in GAEA should serve as a foundation toward identifying individual steps that comprise a business activity in the records classification system.

In the example of licensing, most licenses (driving, fishing, child care workers) will have very similar processes. The business processes outlined in the GAEA

framework defines the granting of a license as *Provide Service – Perform Service Delivery – Manage Service Requests*. The steps in the process are:

- Receive request

- Determine specific service requirements

- Validate request

- Accept/reject request

- Advise requestor

- Forward or terminate request; and

- Follow up to ensure fulfillment.

When using GAEA as a basis for understanding the business processes for licensing, the steps in GAEA could form the baseline to validate how a business unit approaches an activity. This validation would identify:

- Any steps that could be eliminated

- The importance of each step (the validation for a fishing license would be less thorough than that of someone applying for a child care worker's license)

- Any steps that have not been addressed; and

- Whether these are considered distinct activities (receipt is one activity, validation is another activity) or consolidated into one activity.

Steps that are part of a business activity are typically points at which decisions are made or actions taken. Therefore, these steps are also points where records pertaining to the business transaction will most likely occur.

Although the resulting functional classification may differ from the GAEA business architecture, it is important when designing a records classification system to use the GAEA business architecture as a starting point and to liaise with the organization's enterprise architect in the event that learnings could serve to improve GAEA.

The value of the classification system will then be maximized from:

- An organizational perspective – aligning with GAEA which provides the basis for any technology systems that will be used to manage information; and

- A corporate perspective by furthering the Government of Alberta's framework for conceptualizing business activities and contributing to the vitality or refinement of GAEA.

3.
Types of Functions

Functions are the broadest categories in a classification system. In the Government of Alberta there are three types of functions: Support Services, Governance and Mandated functions.

Support Services Functions

Support Services functions are common services that all Alberta Government organizations perform. Although they are not specific to an organization's mandate, they are crucial to keeping it running smoothly.

In the Government of Alberta, these functions may be performed by: ministry staff, Restructuring and Government Efficiency (RGE) shared services staff, the private sector or a combination.

The following table lists the proposed Support Services functions for the Government of Alberta.

Figure 1 - Support Services Functions

➢ Communication Management

➢ Financial Management

➢ Human Resources Management

➢ Information Management

➢ Information Technology Management

➢ Legal Support

➢ Property and Accommodation Management
➢ Security
➢ Supplies and Services Management.

A standard records classification system and retention schedule for these proposed Support Services functions will be developed in the Government of Alberta to replace the current Administrative Records Disposition Authority (ARDA). The ARDA Redevelopment project now underway will serve to confirm the proposed functions.

Governance Functions

There are a number of activities that relate to the governance of each organization. Governance functions generally support the development of strategy and policy at the highest level and involve the leadership of the organization and its accountability. It is not mandate or program specific.

Governance functions may vary from organization to organization but are generally made up of the following elements:

1. Administration of the Ministerial and Executive arms of the organization, such as support to the Minister's office, interactions with Standing Policy Committee and Cabinet Committees, the Deputy Ministers' Committee and the operation of the organization's Executive Committee;

2. Federal, provincial, territorial and other intergovernmental liaison at the ministerial or executive level such as Intergovernmental Relations and Liaison and Partnerships ; and

3. Administration of key activities such as Actions Requests, non-financial (e.g. information sharing) agreements with other organizations and their associated protocols, legislative planning and business planning.

This section will be further defined and revised when the Governance functions is mapped for Alberta Government Services. For agencies, boards and commissions, this would need to be modified to reflect their governance function.

Mandated Functions

Mandated functions are the specific responsibilities assigned to an organization by legislation, policy or mandate. These mandated functions are part of the accountability of the Minister. The activities of a mandated function may receive contributions from one or more business units or organizations or may be the responsibility of only one. Unlike Support Services and Governance functions, these functions will generally be unique to each organization and will represent their core businesses.

As a general rule, most organizations would have less than 15 mandated functions. A mandated function may or may not translate to one program. In some ministries, several programs may support one mandated function or one program may support several mandated functions. Programs should be analyzed in terms of their purpose, the overarching mandate that links the programs together, program perspectives of the mandate, and if there is a cause and effect relationship between the programs. This analysis will help to determine if a program is a function on to itself, if one program has several mandated functions, or if one function is make up of more that one program.

Alberta Government Services, for example, has a variety of mandated functions as illustrated in Figure 2. All of them are anchored in the policy, mandate or legislation administered by the ministry. For Alberta Government Services, each of these functions is also a program.

Figure 2 – Mandated Functions **(Alberta Government Services)**
➢ Consumer Protection ➢ Corporate Access and Privacy ➢ Corporate Information Management ➢ Corporations and Partnership Registration ➢ Foreign Ownership of Land ➢ Land Titles ➢ Motor Vehicle Licensing and Registration ➢ Personal Property Security Registration ➢ Registry Agent Administration ➢ Service Alberta ➢ Vital Statistics

 * Note: this list is currently being validated

Alberta Children's Services has seven mandated functions as illustrated in Figure 3. These functions however, do not translate into seven different programs. Their legislation, *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* identifies several functions that the ministry must undertake with regarding keeping children safe. The enhancement programs and services have links to several mandated functions such as Child Intervention Management, Adoptions Management, Child and Youth Advocacy Management, and Reviews and Appeals, while Child and Family Supports, Outreach/Prevention, and Facility Licensing and Accreditation derive their mandates from the Ministry's other principal legislation.

Figure 3 – Mandated Functions **(Children's Services)**
➢ Child Intervention Management ➢ Adoptions Management ➢ Reviews and Appeals ➢ Child and Youth Advocacy Management ➢ Facility Licensing and Accreditation ➢ Child and Family Supports ➢ Outreach/Prevention

4.
Functional Classification Model

Introduction

Modified functional classification systems are based on a hierarchy of business processes. This section provides an illustration of the functions and the associated sub-functions and activities using the Consumer Protection program of Alberta Government Services to illustrate the model. It also provides design guidance.

Mandated Functions/Programs

This consists of all the mandated functions or programs in an organization for which specific responsibilities are assigned by legislation, policy or mandate. All programs and/or mandated functions should be mapped first before detailed design takes place for each mandated function/program. Findings should be validated with senior management in the organization as a "true" representation of the mandated functions or programs the organization carries out.

There are three important steps in constructing Mandated Functions/Programs:

Mandated Function/Program Titles

- Should broadly describe the mandated function or program performed *NOT* the organization that performs it.

- Should be as concise as possible

- Should be documented in upper and lower case.

To illustrate mandated function/program titles, the full list of programs for Alberta Government Services is included in Figure 2, on page 13.

Mandated Function/Program Order

In the classification system, mandated functions/programs should be listed alphabetically as this will aid users in locating programs for records retrieval, classification and lifecycle management. In Figure 2, for example, please note the alphabetical placement of the Consumer Protection program in relation to other mandated functions/programs.

Mandated Function/Program Description

While the mandated function/program description is essential in schedule development, its development in the classification process assures there is a clear understanding of the mandate of the program.

When describing mandated functions/programs, it is important to capture the mandate of the program and its responsibilities. This will put the records series in context for internal users, as well as external bodies such as the Provincial Archives of Alberta, to make properly informed decisions when appraising the records and the Alberta Records Management Committee to understand the environment in which the records have been created or used.

Information on the mandates of the program can be obtained from published sources such as annual reports, business plans and web sites.

Mandated function/program descriptions need to very clearly include:

- The mandate, goals and high level activities performed

- Brief history of the mandated function/program

- Whether activities are localized to one business unit or if there are other business units or organizations contributing to or involved in the activity

- Any major stakeholders

- Any significant information systems that link to the core activities of the mandated functions/programs and if so, what those linkages are; and

- The acts and regulations associated with the mandated function/program.

Descriptions should be clear, concise and should include bullet points or short paragraphs wherever possible. Long paragraphs are difficult to understand and can bury important information.

Following is a mandated function/program description for the Consumer Protection Program.

Figure 4 - Mandated Function/Program Description

Mandated Function/Program Title
Consumer Protection

Mandate Function/Program Description
The Consumer Protection program supports a fair and effective marketplace in Alberta by providing licensing and registry services and promoting consumer protection. The Consumer Protection program creates and amends legislation and policies to serve as a framework for promoting fair and ethical business transactions. The Fair Trading Act is the principal piece of legislation that regulates Alberta businesses and protects consumers.

Activities
The Consumer Protection program performs the following activities:
- Promotes consumer and business education;
- Supports, regulates and enforces high standards of consumer protection and business practices in the Alberta market place; and
- Provides licensing and registration services for consumer, business and property transactions.

Consumer protection and support is promoted through the following initiatives:
- Consulting with Albertans to ensure legislation remains responsive and effective;
- Drafting any amendments required to the legislation;
- Creating educational products to promote consumer and business awareness of their rights and obligations;
- Addressing consumer concerns;
- Evaluating trends in these concerns;
- Investigating alleged contraventions of the legislation by any Alberta business, tradesperson or landlord;
- Initiating enforcement action where a breach has occurred;
- Registering charities, fund-raising businesses and cooperatives;
- Licensing certain businesses sectors as defined by the Fair Trading Act;
- Proactively inspecting these sectors to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation; and
- Administration of securities.

The Consumer Protection program also monitors and reviews the activities of several delegated regulatory organizations that regulate certain business sectors, including the following:
- Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board (AFSRB);
- Real Estate Council of Alberta (RECA);
- Credit Counseling Services of Alberta (CCSA); and
- Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council (AMVIC).

Brief History
The Province of Alberta established a formal Consumer Protection Program through the passage of the Consumer Bureau Act of 1969. The Consumer Bureau, in the Department of Treasury, became the first office responsible for consumer affairs in Alberta. The Consumer Affairs Act replaced the Consumer Bureau Act in 1970. In 1971, the Branch

transferred to the Department of Labour. Consumer Protection became the focus of a new department when the Department of Consumer Affairs was created in 1973. The Unfair Trading Act was established in 1975, and the program was a major part of the newly created Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

In 1992, government reorganization dissolved the department and Consumer Services was transferred to the Department of Municipal Affairs and became a Branch under the Housing and Consumer Affairs Division. In May 1999, the Consumer Protection Program was transferred to the newly created department of Government Services. 1999 also saw the establishment of the Fair Trading Act, which has become the flagship legislation for the Consumer Protection Program.

Stakeholders:
The program's primary stakeholders are at the municipal, provincial and federal level representing consumer, industry and law enforcement interests, such as

> Alberta Tenancies Advisory Committee;
> Consumers' Association of Canada;
> Co-operative Council of Alberta;
> Association of Fundraising Professionals;
> Alberta Association of Collection Agencies;
> Alberta Securities Commission;
> Edmonton Police Service; and
> Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Systems
The major system used to support these goals is the Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS) which

- Tracks and reports on investigations, enforcements, consumer complaints and inspections; and
- Manages the licensing and registration and all the relevant documentation of organizations regulated by the program.

Sub-Functions

Where mandated functions/programs of an organization outline the high level, overarching rationale of an organization, sub-functions are the high-level business processes that occur within the lifecycle of a specific function in order to fulfill the purpose of the mandated function/program.

A sub-function may be made up of a set of logically related series of activities administered by an organization to accomplish the sub-function. A sub-function represents a discrete area of operational or support responsibility that provides the foundation for carrying out a specific mandated function/program of the organization.

Mandated functions/programs and sub-functions differ from one another in their level of complexity. Business processes or activities can be related and rolled up into larger groups (sub-functions), which are in turn related to a mandated function/program of the organization. Depending on the complexity of the tasks of an organization to complete its mandate, there may be many sub-functions related to one mandated function/program, as illustrated in the diagram below:

<table>
<tr><td align="center">Figure 5 – Sub-functions
Consumer Protection Program</td></tr>
<tr><td>

➤ Business Licensing

➤ Charitable Organization Registration

➤ Co-operative Registration

➤ Securities Administration

</td></tr>
</table>
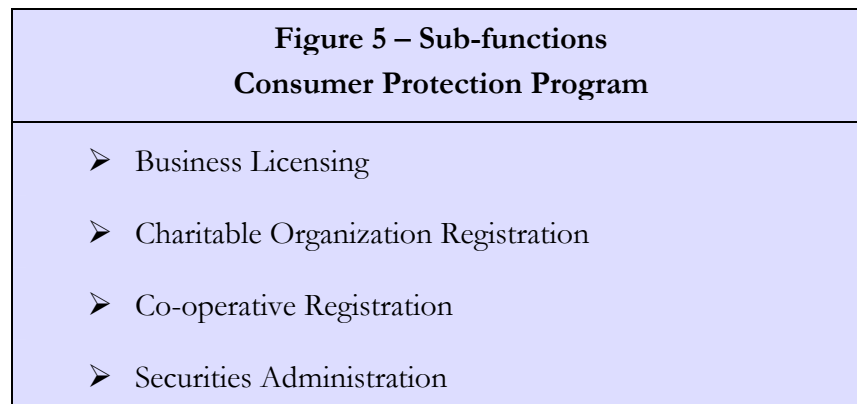
Sub-Function Titles

- Sub-functions are high level business processes used to fulfill a mandated function/program

- Should be as concise as possible

- Should be documented in upper and lower case.

Sub-function Description

When describing sub-functions, it is important to capture the business process and responsibilities that support the sub-function. This will put the records series in

context for internal users as well as external bodies such as the Provincial Archives of Alberta and the Alberta Records Management Committee, thus enabling properly informed decisions.

Sub-function descriptions need to be very clearly defined to include:

- The business process that supports the mandated function/program under which it falls.

- A direct, concise outline of the activities to support the sub-function.

- Relationship to the mandated function/program.

Figure 6 - Sub-function Description

01 Business Licensing

The program issues licenses to businesses such as Auctions Agents, Cemeteries, Cemetery Pre-need Contract Businesses, Cemetery Pre-need Contract Sales people, Collection Agencies, Collectors, Cooperatives, Direct Sellers (Door-to-Door Sellers), Electricity Marketing Firms, Employment Agencies, Natural Gas Marketing Firms, Prepaid Contractors, Retail Home Sales Businesses and Travel Clubs. Businesses may need additional licenses to register as a corporation or operate in a municipality.

License applications are received, validated, accepted or rejected and applicants are advised of their success. Each license application is evaluated to determine if there are reasons a license should not be granted (for example, prior contraventions of the legislation or inability to acquire security).

After a license is issued, it must be renewed through the Program under the terms dictated by the relevant legislation. A license will expire if it is not renewed. A license can be suspended, cancelled or the licensee may be ordered to pay restitution for breaching legislation. A license can be issued with complaints lodged against it. For licenses that have been refused, conditions set, suspended or cancelled, the licensee can request an Appeal Board to review the decisions of the program.

Activities

Activities are the steps that are undertaken by an organization to complete a business process (sub-function). They result from the major tasks or actions performed by an organization to accomplish each step of the business process.

These are the **activities** involved in accomplishing the tasks set out in the **sub-function** that support the legislated mandate of the **mandated function/program.**

Activities can be grouped together or split among related mandated functions/ programs. For example, the Policy Development activity may include the development of ministry's policies in one sub-function while another ministry may place this activity under each specific mandated function/program. Placing the Policy Development together would result in the retention and disposition being the same for policies.

As many mandated functions/programs are comprised of very comparable activities, a list of sample activities has been developed to assist in the design process. This list will help you to identify the types of activities a mandated function/program might carry out and will enable you to identify similar activities in the mandated functions/programs in your organization in order to reuse and standardize descriptors. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and there may be activities in some programs that fall outside of this list.

Figure 7
Sample Mandated Function/Program Activities

Program Planning	Program Audit	Committee Administration
Legislation Review	Stakeholder Liaison	Plan Development
Training Administration	Monitoring and Reporting	Issue Management
Policy Development	Research	Consultation
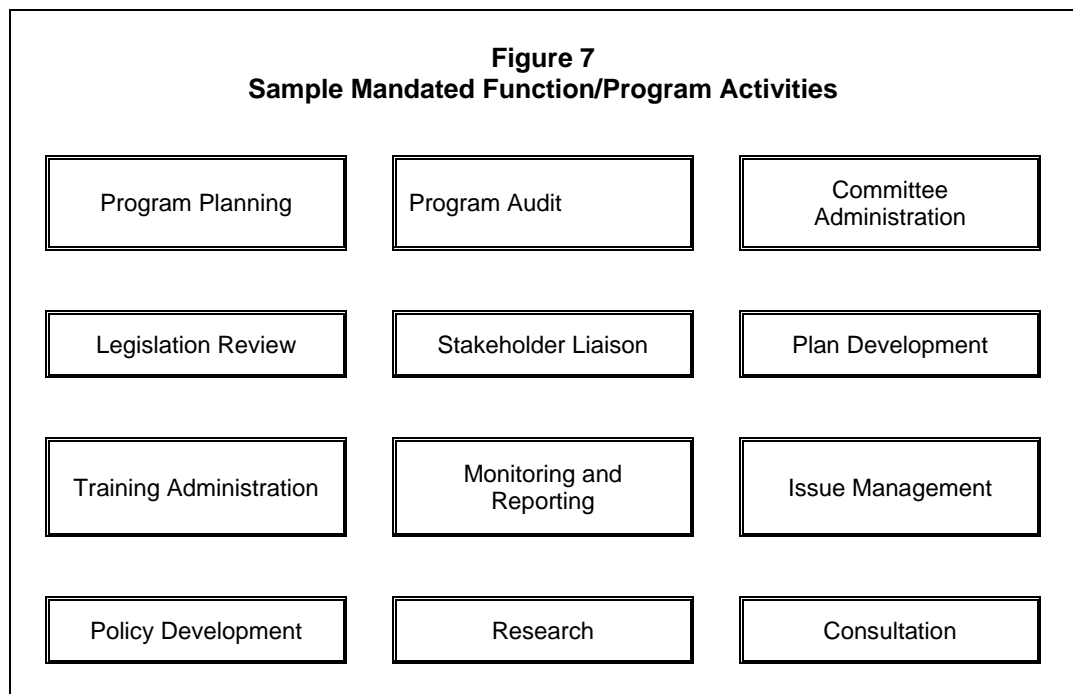
The model below outlines the relationship between activities and sub-functions.

Figure 8 – Activities Example
Consumer Protection Program – Business Licensing

➢ Appeals

➢ License Issuance

➢ Board Appointments
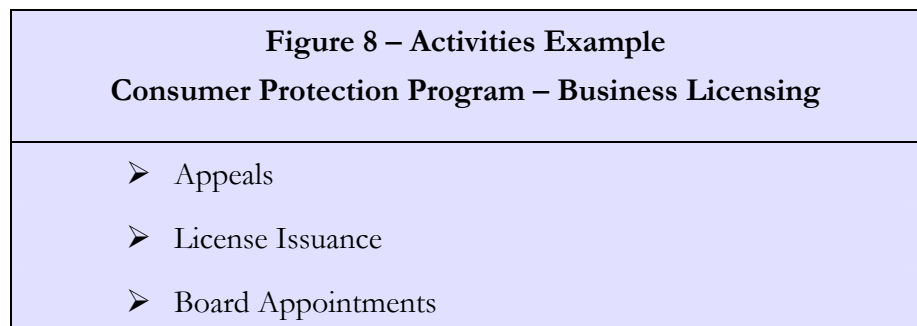
Activity Title

Care should be taken in creating titles, as they are key to retrieval – not just today but in years to come. They should:

- Be as brief as possible

- Clearly define the activity

- Be phrased as a noun; and

- Use an upper and lower case convention

For example, the "License Issuance" activity is not entitled "Issuing Licenses". Putting the most important word first helps facilitate retrieval and understanding of the information.

Activities Order

There are two approaches to deciding how to order activities under a sub-function:

Alphabetical. This is a traditional classification approach.

- Advantage: Simplistic and easy to use

- Disadvantage: May separate the natural progression of activities and may not capture the way a sub-function approaches an activity.

Relationship. This approach groups activities that are related together – it flows with the natural progression of a sub-function and follows the business workflow.

- Advantage: May be more meaningful to the business unit

- Disadvantage: May be confusing for people outside the business unit who may not be familiar with the business process.

Activity Description

An activity description should include the following, where applicable:

- What the activity consists of (what steps or actions are taking place)

- Who the client group involved in the activity is

- How the activity is accomplished

- Where it is carried out

- When it is done (annually, quarterly processes)

Figure 9

Activity Description

01 Business Licensing

The program issues licenses to businesses such as Auctions Agents, Cemeteries, Cemetery Pre-need Contract Businesses, Cemetery Pre-need Contract Sales people, Collection Agencies, Collectors, Cooperatives, Direct Sellers (Door-to-Door Sellers), Electricity Marketing Firms, Employment Agencies, Natural Gas Marketing Firms, Prepaid Contractors, Retail Home Sales Businesses and Travel Clubs. Businesses may need additional licenses to register as a corporation or operate in a municipality.

License applications are received, validated, accepted or rejected and applicants are advised of their success. Each license application is evaluated to determine if there are reasons a license should not be granted (for example, prior contraventions of the legislation or inability to acquire security).

After a license is issued, it must be renewed through the Program under the terms dictated by the relevant legislation. A license will expire if it is not renewed. A license can be suspended, cancelled or the licensee may be ordered to pay restitution for breaching legislation. A license can be issued with complaints lodged against it. For licenses that have been refused, conditions set, suspended or cancelled, the licensee can request an Appeal Board to review the decisions of the program.

01 Business Licensing – License Issuance

Activities relating to managing and processing of business license requests. May include refusal, suspension or cancellation of a license, or conditions attached to the license.

When the activity holds the actual record series directly beneath it, the following needs to be added to the description:

- What is the purpose of these records

- How they are created and used

- Legal implications or restrictions

- Relationship to other items

- Types of documents held in the series

Records Series

Records series are the units or groupings of records organized logically that result from the same activity and are held and evaluated as a unit for scheduling purposes. Records series associated with a specific activity will assume the retention and disposition assigned to the activity. Records series content will be consistently managed throughout their lifecycle together. Records series result in a collection of business documents that are evidence of an activity in a business process.

Activities may have several types of records series depending on the needs of the staff performing them. Each series will consist of a number of specific files or folders, which may in turn be subdivided.

Types of Records Series

There are several types of records series:

- Case

- Subject

- Web site

- Application

Case Records Series

These records series typically exist for program activities that deal with services to people or businesses (e.g. child protection cases, corporate tax cases etc). They contain the same types of documents. They contain information relating to a specific action, event, person, or place with a specific beginning and end date. Records are usually arranged according to a unique piece of information about the event, action, person or place.

Project records are a specific brand of case records series whose purpose is to keep information related to a project together in order to facilitate information retrieval. Most project records series have a beginning and an end date. These records series typically exist in systems development or in engineering construction areas where a formal project methodology is used and the same types of documents are created for each project. They typically contain project terms of reference (or project charter), monitoring or statistical reports, research, project findings and recommendations.

Transaction records series typically exist to provide evidence of an information flow and exchange of information to support one activity. They are usually found in financial activities, such as processing invoices, where one piece of paper will be used to document receipt of inventory; check invoice; and authorize payment. They may also be used in programs that are required to provide evidence of a transaction (process) such as batching, validation and verification of documents for imaging programs.

Subject Records Series

These records typically exist for a series of documents that cannot be filed by any other single filing feature or document characteristic. Subject records are those in which each document relates to a specific subject matter and is arranged according to its informational content or by the mandated function or program/sub-function/activity it supports. The range of topics is wide such as correspondence, reports, clippings, catalogs, research data, product development plans, and inventory lists. A topical arrangement becomes the logical and necessary way to sequence information. Records are retrieved by subject. The result should be the filing of all material on one topic into one file.

Web Site Records Series

These records typically exist to document web site content created by a business unit to support the mandated function/program and communicate to their stakeholders. Web site records series contain information on the purpose of the web site, the type of web site (public facing or internal), the URL address, links to databases and the update cycle.

Application Records Series

These records typically exist to document computer applications used by a business unit to support the mandated function/program. The Privacy Impact Assessment Report done on a specific application is a good source of information. Applications records series contain information on:

- The purpose of the application

- Interfaces with other applications

- Software development and maintenance

- Security (special) Backups

- Type of data stored in the database(s)

- Sources of the data

- Output generated from the data

Record Series Descriptions

A description of the content of the records series should follow the activity description related to it. Where an electronic system or any other alternative media is involved (such as microfiche), it must identify the information that is captured in the system. If there are any other media involved, such as imaging, how these electronic systems integrate with paper records involved in the activity needs to be outlined.

The best resource to use to develop concise records series descriptions is the existing record itself combined with interviews with the main stakeholders of the record.

Below is an example of a records series description. This example shows how all of the functional classifications come together to help create a clear understanding of the information held in this series.

Figure 10

Case Records Series Description

01 Business Licensing

The program issues licenses to businesses such as Auctions Agents, Cemeteries, Cemetery Pre-need Contract Businesses, Cemetery Pre-need Contract Sales People, Collection Agencies, Collectors, Cooperatives, Direct Sellers (Door-to-Door Sellers), Electricity Marketing Firms, Employment Agencies, Natural Gas Marketing Firms, Prepaid Contractors, Retail Home Sales Businesses and Travel Clubs. Businesses may need additional licenses to register as a corporation or operate in a municipality. License applications are received, validated, accepted or rejected and applicants are advised of their success.

02 Business Licensing – License Issuance (Subject Series)

Activities relating to managing and processing of business license requests.

03 Business Licensing – Projects

Records related to managing and improving the program and are unique to Business Licensing. This includes review of Appeal Board remuneration or review of amount of security required for a license.

Records may include: project charter or goals, monitoring or statistical reporting to support findings, research, environmental scans with comparable programs from inside and outside of Canada, and project findings or recommendations.

04 Business Licensing – Case Files

Records related to the licensing of business. Business License Records are managed through the Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS). All fields on the license application form are captured on CATS. All paper records related to the license are imaged and managed by the CATS system including the approved license.

05 Business Licensing – Web Site

The Business Licensing web site is a static internet web site with no links to the business licensing database. Records relate to providing procedures, licensee requirements and any relevant forms to people intending on licensing a business within the Province of Alberta. It is updated on an ad hoc basis when a procedure, licensing requirements or form has changed. The URL address is: http://www3.gov.ab.ca/gs/servcies/business

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06 Business Licensing – Applications

CATS application is used to manage the entire business license process for each business from the application stage to the issuing and renewal of a business license. Information is captured from the license applications. Images of supporting documentation and the actual license are also captured on the system. CATS provides notification of the expiration of a business security and also generates management reports. It is a Coldfusion application using an Oracle database. The database is stored on servers owned by the outsourced IT provider (EDS). These servers are located in Ontario. Backups are on a daily incremental cycle with a full backup weekly.

07 Business Licensing – Business Licensing - Payments

Records documenting the collection of fees paid with the submission of license applications. Includes records documenting the verification of amount paid, issuing of receipts and supporting payment documentation. May also include batch total summaries.

5.
Naming Conventions

The titling of the mandated functions/programs, sub-functions, activities and folders is an important aid to those accessing the record, records management professionals, the Alberta Records Management Committee (ARMC) and the Provincial Archives to aid in their understanding of the records.

The purposes of naming conventions are as follows:

- To assist those accessing the record in their retrieval;

- To provide a data standard for electronic records metadata, categories and attributes to narrow document search criteria thereby narrowing search timeframes;

- To ensure a consistent approach to the way titles are labeled; and

- Provide the basis for developing a thesaurus or other form of controlled vocabulary, or if one already exists, to incorporate and harmonize the terminology used.

Many of the following considerations apply to titles:

- **Purpose**. Titles need to be concise and meaningful to the business unit and individual users but also convey to external bodies such as the ARMC and Provincial Archives the purpose of the mandated function/program. Using jargon, abbreviations or technical terms may hinder understanding of the issues. In some cases this cannot be avoided, therefore ensure that there is a clear description in the appropriate level as to exactly what the terms mean.

- **Terminology**. Where a term has been used to describe an activity at one level, it should be consistently reused throughout the classification system. For example, if using the term "investigation," do not change it to "investigating" in other levels or use the term to mean something else.

- **Endurance**. Avoid using the names of people or work groups in titles so the system is able to withstand organizational change.

- **Synonyms.** It is important to be consistent in titling when using terms that are sometimes used interchangeably such as committee/board/ council/ working group or oil/petroleum. Where there is no consensus on what term should be used to describe an activity or when there are terms considered equivalent, list alternatives as synonyms in the records description. This

could form the foundation of a thesaurus or if one already exists validate or update it.

▪ **Acronyms, truncations and abbreviations**. These should not be used in titles (mandated function/program, sub-function or activity). If an acronym is commonly associated with a title (such as GST), ensure that it is included in brackets after the title the first time it is used. The acronym can be used subsequently in the description.

▪ **Redundancy**. A classification system is designed to assist retrieval of information. No value is added to continually prefix titles with something like Consumer Protection or append descriptions with a program or project title.

Folder Titles: It is important to understand that the title used in a mandated function/program or activity does not have to be identical to the one used on the title of the folder itself. There are certain considerations that do not apply to mandated function/program titles that can affect the title of the folders.

▪ **Length**. It needs to be considered how the number of characters can affect the length of folder titles. The length of titles will be limited by the size of a folder label in a paper environment, but in an electronic environment, long folder titles may limit the number of characters that can be used to name documents.

▪ **Acronyms, truncations and abbreviations**. Although these are not used at the higher levels, they may be appropriate at the folder level due to the size of the label. Keep in mind that it can make it difficult to understand what the contents of a folder are and make searching arduous. Some information management applications may reserve periods as special characters, therefore it is advisable not to use periods at all. If acronyms, truncations and abbreviations are to be used, ensure that there is a well-communicated policy addressing these issues to ensure consistency in an organization's approach to titling folders.

When writing a records series description in a functional classification system, ensure that any titling conventions that will be used for folder titles are included. This will provide linkages back to the system and demonstrate that the problems mentioned above have been considered and addressed. This will also enforce consistency in a business unit's approach to managing their information. These tools will allow titles to be shortened but can also confuse the purpose of the folder. It is important to balance brevity with the need for users, Provincial Archives, other external bodies and future researchers to understand the folder contents.

6.
Cross-References

Cross-references link records sub-functions and/or activities to each other. Cross-references show a relationship between two or more sub-functions or activities. They provide the following benefits:

- Minimize the potential for placing documents under the wrong classification or repository (e.g., folder, etc.);

- Reduce uncertainty over which classification to use for the specific types of information a user is attempting to locate and retrieve; and

- Eliminate need to maintain duplicate copies of documents in several related folders and/or directories.

Cross-references are typically embedded in classification structure and records schedules, including those incorporated within computer databases and/or software programs. They should only be created if truly necessary (i.e., redirecting the user only to those specific classifications that may refer to similar and/or related types of information). The use of cross-references is illustrated in the following example:

Figure 11

Example of Cross-referencing

04 Business Licensing – Case Files

Records related to the licensing of business. Business License Records are managed through the Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS). All fields on the license application form are captured on CATS. All paper records related to the license are imaged and managed by the CATS system including the approved license.

For Annual Reporting, see 4510-03 - Business Licensing – Projects

For Application, see 4510-06 – Business Licensing - Application

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Cross-references are documented in the following manner:

- For 'pertinent sub-function and/or activity' (i.e., identifies the particular concept that the user may wish to refer to); and

- See 'pertinent classification code and title' (i.e., refer the user to the specific classification that relates to the particular mandated function/program and/or activity).

7.
Numbering Schemes

There are a variety of systems that can be used when selecting the scheme for numbering. However, in order take advantage of portability through functional classification, it is important that the Government of Alberta establish a best practice approach to numbering classification structures. Numbers are recommended as they are more flexible and easier to manage in an electronic system. However, number, alpha's or a mixture can continue to be used – whatever suits business unit needs.

Numbering schemes are an important feature of classification systems, as they will

- maintain control of paper and electronic records systems to enable lifecycle management;
- facilitate classification, searching and browsing of folders on shelves and in an electronic environment; and
- uniquely identify records for retrieval and management.

Mandated Function/Program Numbering

Mandated function/program numbers are mandatory and are two digits in length. Allowances are made for support services and governance functions with a range of 01 to 39 assigned to these functions. Mandated function/program numbering should be between 40 and 99. In deciding how the numbers will increment, ensure there is room for expansion of the system.

Sub-function Numbering

Sub-functions numbers is mandatory and two characters in length. The number can range from 00 to 99 or A1 to ZZ. If a particular mandated function/program does not have a sub-function, then 00 should be used.

Activity Numbering

Activity numbers is mandatory and two characters in length. The number can range from 00 to 99 or A1 to ZZ. While activities can repeat between mandated functions/programs and sub-functions, specific activity numbers have not been assigned.

Records Series Numbering

It is only necessary to identify the point at which records series will occur. This facilitates control over the records and provides the linkage between the classification system and the records schedule. If a straight numbering scheme is used, it must make allowances for administrative functions and governance functions (00 – 39) by beginning the numbering scheme after 39.

The number of mandated functions/programs in an organization and their complexity (i.e. number of activities) will dictate the number of characters necessary. Using a 4-digit scheme will limit the number of mandated function/program and sub-functions that can be captured. This is particularly relevant in EIM systems, where changing number conventions are difficult. Organizations with a wide variety of mandated functions/programs with diverse responsibilities could theoretically require 8 characters in their classification scheme – this will allow up to 99 activities to exist under any level, but will result in paper folder labels having to contain a large number of zero's and file numbers will be very complicated and difficult to remember.

In deciding how the numbers below will increment, the numbers of records series under each activity will need to be assessed. Once again, the complexity and number of records series associated with an activity will define the approach. Ensure there is room for expansion of the system.

Illustrated below is a table that summarizes numbering scheme.

Figure 12 –Numbering Scheme			
Classification Level	**Title**	**Classification Number/Code**	**Mandatory or Optional**
Function	Support Services and Governance Mandated Function/ Program	01 – 39 40 – 99	Mandatory
Sub-Function	All	00 – 99 or A1 – ZZ Use 00 if no sub-function	Mandatory
Activity	All	01- 00 or A1 – ZZ	Mandatory
Records Series	Case Subject Transactions	Case number or identifier 01, 02, etc. Numbering may vary	One is mandatory

For example, as a medium-sized department, Alberta Government Services is adopting a 4-character scheme, as it possesses approximately 15 programs. The first two digits represent the mandated function/program and the second set of two digits represents the sub-function. The activity number is separated by dashes. Each records series number is only a unique identifier for that series in order to facilitate control of that series and manage its life cycle.

Figure 13 – Example Records Series Numbering	
Business Licensing Records Series	**Numbering**
Business Licensing – Appeals Roster of Appointments	4510-10-01
Business Licensing – Projects	4510-10-AAA
Business Licensing – Case Records	4510-10-abcd
Business Licensing – Application (Consumer Actions Tracking System)	4510-10-CATS

Folder Identification

Folder identifiers provide means of browsing, retrieval and control of records by organizing the information into logical units and should be defined by business units. The use of special characters in folder titles (such as @, #, *, ^) is not recommended. These are difficult to describe and may cause problems in an electronic environment. There are four main methods with which folders could be identified

- Alphanumeric. This approach includes identifiers generated by a system such as –2123489, applied sequentially (–C01, –C02) or otherwise bringing meaning to the folder for the business unit (–CATS). This is very useful for files that are managed by or hold information that ties in with a computer application.

- Time. Time can be the use of a year (–2004) or could drill down to the day itself (–20050411 or –04112004). Year identifiers would be useful if folders were to be closed at the end of each year or if where a project would occur regularly but not annually, such as a legislative review.

- Geography. This could be the name of a town (–Red Deer), an area (–Highwood), landmark (-Peace River) or other form of Geographic identifier.

This is useful for business units that have divided their areas of operation into defined regions such as Transportation or Land Titles.

- Order of operations. This system would useful for a process that is separated into discrete processes. However, it is not practical to use this for case files, where all related information is stored on one file, as it would separate an activity into individual tasks and spread it over multiple folders.

Although there are a number of ways to identify folders, it is important to remember that the approach should be consistent within each series. If folders are identified by year, than all folders within the series must all be identified by year. It will weaken control over the records keeping system if the system is changed to categorize them by location at a later date. It is good practice to try and be consistent throughout a program.

Figure 14 – Folder Structuring
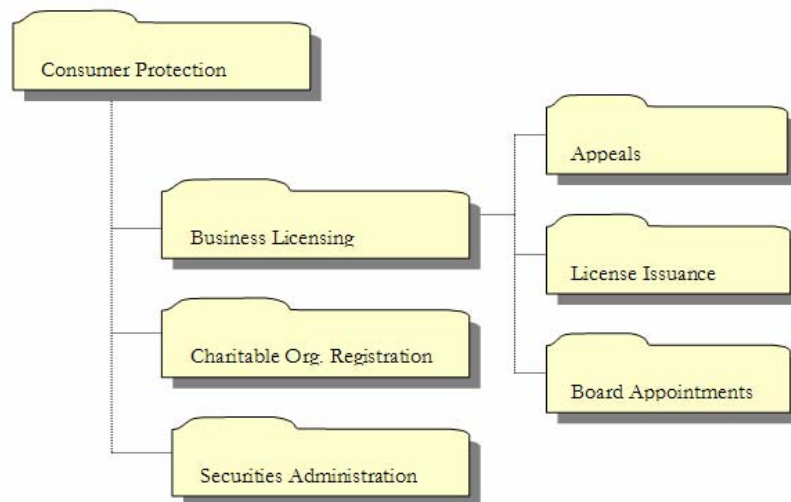
Paper Systems

Constructing a functional classification system creates a tool that both conceptualizes and contextualizes the activities a business unit performs. It is important to remember that it is primarily a tool for users to access the information to do the jobs that they were hired to do. It is also a tool for information management professionals to understand the records that result from business unit activities.

As a tool for staff, it is important to assure information is organized following the methodology in which they do the work. This is why it is essential that analysis and stakeholder engagement take place during the design phase. For information management professionals, the numbering scheme will form the basis for providing linkages between mandated functions/programs and schedules. This will enable the control of record life cycles and the transfer of folders as the organization changes.

The needs of information management professionals differ in that they will also need to see all the activities, sub-functions and mandated functions/programs associated with them for effective management of the classification system and the folders themselves, where business users will mainly use the information in their program areas.

It is also important to stress that the numbering used in a classification scheme does not equate to the number assigned to folders or other identifiers. If the number assigned by the CATS system is used to identify a licensing folder, it would need to be clear that the number generated by CATS is not part of the classification schema but a unique identifier for the folders themselves. It should not be confused with the business classification schema proper.

EIM Systems

The functional breakdown derived during the development of the classification does not equate to the directory levels required on an electronic system. The directories or folders should represent the record series. Users will be able to quickly locate the required record series without needing to wade through multiple directory levels.

The key thing to remember in an EIM system is that file numbers will not take on the same significance as users are more likely to retrieve alphabetically by activity rather than by the series or folder number assigned.

8.
Resources

1. Introduction

This guide contains resources selected to support the development of functional classification systems in the Government of Alberta.

2. Standards

2.1 International Standards

ISO / TR 15489.1 – Information and documentation – Records Management -- Part 1: General.

http://www.arma.org/bookstore/productdetail.cfm?ProductID=1187

This ISO standard was developed to standardize international best practices in records management. It provides guidance on managing records of originating organizations, public or private, for internal and external clients to ensure that adequate records – in all formats and media – are created, captured and managed.

ISO / TR 15489.2 Information and Documentation – Records Management – Part 2: Guidelines

http://www.arma.org/bookstore/productdetail.cfm?ProductID=1188

The international records management standard, ISO 15489-1, specifies the elements of records management and defines the necessary results or outcomes to be achieved. This technical report, ISO/TR 15489-2, is supplementary to the standard, providing further explanation and one methodology for implementation of the standard. Both ISO 15489-1 and this technical report apply to records in any format or media, created or received by any public or private organization during the course of its activities.

2.2 North American Standards

Establishing Alphabetic, Numeric and Subject Filing Systems (ANSI/ARMA 12-2005)

http://www.arma.org/bookstore/productdetail.cfm?ProductID=1519

This standard is intended to aid in the selection and application of a filing system that will enable users to retrieve information when needed. It describes three principal systems: alphabetic filing, subject filing, and numeric filing. In addition, it contains standard rules for indexing alphabetic data.

Used correctly, this standard will establish a uniform files classification system that makes sense to the users while identifying and preserving a set order of records. Three informative appendices include instructions for indexing, factors to consider when using automated indexing systems, and exceptions for alphabetic indexing.

3. Government Information

3.1 Library and Archives Canada

Business Activity Structure Classification Structure (BASCS)

http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/0630_e.html#five

The Business Activity Structure Classification Structure (BASCS) Guidance offers implementation guidance to support function-based classification structure design and implementation by departments. Key concepts and principles are articulated to help IM practitioners apply these concepts and principles to their own unique operational requirements.

3.2 Government of Alberta

Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture

http://www.sharp.gov.ab.ca/ict.cfm?id=2&ep=13

Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture (GAEA), is a set of guidance (i.e. corporate principles, models a.k.a. blueprints, standards, guidelines and transition plans, plus the necessary associated governance/management processes, tools and methods) to support the Government of Alberta's achievement of its ICT strategies by ensuring effective and valued use of the Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture (GAEA) in promoting strategically-aligned corporate Information and Communications Technology (ICT) investment and design decisions.

Information Management Planning

http://www.im.gov.ab.ca/publications/pdf/IMPlanningGuide.pdf

This guide provides assistance to government staff in the assessment of their information and records management programs and in the preparation of information management plans for their organizations. These plans enable

organizations to implement the government's Information Management Framework. A Word version is also available so that organizations can use or customize the planning tools contained in the guide.

Developing Records Retention and Disposition Schedules

http://www.im.gov.ab.ca/publications/pdf/SchedulingGuide.pdf

This guide provides information to staff in Alberta Government organizations about the government's approach to scheduling and techniques for developing quality schedules. It compiles previous guidance on this topic into one source. The guide will be reviewed and revised as the functional approach to classification and scheduling is further developed in the Government of Alberta.

3.3 British Columbia

Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)

http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/arcs/index.htm

Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS) examines the combined classification and records scheduling system, and provides an answer to the question "What are administrative records?" Included are explanations of records classification, policy and procedure files, file lists, finding aids, filing and maintenance procedures, boxing and transfer instructions, ongoing accession numbers and transferring records to off-site storage.

Standard Operational Classification and Scheduling Systems (ORCS)

http://www.mser.gov.bc.ca/crmb/pubs/stdorcsk/sok_ch1.pdf

The Standard ORCS Kit is a manual for BC government staff and consultants to use when developing and amending operational classification and scheduling systems. Use of this manual ensures that ORCS meet government-wide standards required for Legislative approval under the Document Disposal Act (RSBC 1996, c. 99).

3.4 The National Archives – United Kingdom

Business Classification Scheme Design

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/advice/pdf/bcs_toolkit.pdf

This guide explores the issues around strictly functional, hybrid and subject-based approaches to designing Business Classification Schemes.

3.5 National Archives of Australia

Designing and Implementing Records Keeping Systems (DIRKS)

http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/dirks/summary.html

The DIRKS methodology is an eight-step process for agencies to use to improve their recordkeeping and information management practices, including the design and implementation of new recordkeeping systems. The methodology is compliant with, and expands on, the methodological framework of the Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489 – 2002.

3.6 State Records New South Wales

Strategies for Documenting Government Business

http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publicsector/DIRKS/final/downloadable/downloads.htm

This site includes the New South Wales DIRKS manual and other tools to aid in conducting assessment and implementation of Functional Classification. The New South Wales approach is identical in its approach to the National Archives of Australia DIRKS Manual but includes lessons learned and tips in conducting the process.

4. Research Documents

4.1 University of Indiana

Developing a Methodology for Designing New Recordkeeping Systems or Evaluating Existing Information Systems.

http://www.indiana.edu/~libarch/ER/nhprcfinalmethod.doc

One of the major products of the IU Project was a methodology for evaluating information systems in term of the recordkeeping requirements. In essence, this methodology was a response to the question: What set of activities, what type of methodology is required to use and implement the Pitt requirements as a means of reviewing and evaluating information systems?

4.2 Records Management Institute

Function-Based (Records) Classification Systems, by Paul Sabourin

http://www.rmicanada.com/functional_classification.htm

A speech from StatsCan in March 2001 to the Records Management Institute. It explores the different to approaches to functional classification taken in Australian and Europe. It also establishes the basis for the development of Canadian Federal Governments Business Activity Structure Classification Structure (BASCS) (see **3.1 Library and Archives Canada**).