


Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit

GUIDELINE 6: Developing and Implementing Record Plans for Core Business Functions





The original version of this guideline was prepared by the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) for use by countries around the Pacific. This means that the guideline may refer to things that you are not familiar with or do not use in your country. For example, not all governments have an auditor-general who reviews the financial and other records of government departments. You may find that you need to change some of the advice in this guideline to suit your own government's arrangements. To obtain an editable copy of this guideline, contact the national archives, public record office or other records authority in your country, or contact PARBICA at <http://www.parbica.org>.

CONTENTS

What is a record plan?	2
The importance of good file titling	3
Developing core business record plans	4
Functions and activities	4
Core functions and common functions	4
Why use functions and activities?	6
Getting started	6
Identifying recordkeeping requirements	7
Identifying functions and activities	10
Important tips for developing record plans for core functions	13
Implementing record plans	16
File numbering	16
File registration	18
Transitional arrangements	18

WHAT IS A RECORD PLAN?

A Record Plan is a system for developing titles for files. Good file titling is important for efficient public administration and good decision-making because it makes government information easier to find and use.

Record plans specify how records are to be organised and provide a kind of 'roadmap' to the records of the agency. They describe the types of files an agency has and provide guidance on how staff should title and organise those files. A good record plan is one of the essential components of a recordkeeping system. It will help you to:

- document your activities effectively;
- identify records consistently;
- retrieve records quickly; and
- decide which records are no longer needed.

A record plan gives part of the title of each file, but it lets staff, in consultation with the records management staff, choose file titles that suit the topic of the file. This should mean that staff do not need to put lots of unrelated material on the same file. Instead, they can create a file that is more specifically about the work that they are doing.

The PARBICA Administrative Record Plan only covers administrative actions that all government departments carry out, such as managing staff and finances. As well as using the Administrative Record Plan for its administrative files, each government agency will also need to develop an additional record plan for its own core business areas that no other agency carries out. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will need to develop a record plan for files about diplomatic relations with other governments, as no other ministry is responsible for this area of government work. This guideline provides information about developing record plans for core business functions.

This Record Plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the PARBICA Disposal Schedule. The Disposal Schedule provides guidance on how long governments may need to keep the types of administrative records they create. Using this Record Plan to give titles to administrative files will make it easier to decide how long to keep those files using the Disposal Schedule. You will be able to find the Disposal Schedule on the PARBICA website at <http://www.parbica.org/Toolkit%20pages/ToolkitIntroPage.htm>.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD FILE TITLING

Official recordkeeping systems often fall into disuse when they are too difficult for staff to use. If staff cannot easily find the file with the information they need, they may not be able to access information about past activities to inform their decisions. They may also be reluctant to place current papers on files if they are unsure that they will be able to locate the information again. Poor file-titling systems can also make it difficult for staff to find the correct file on which to place information, meaning that the record of a particular activity is fragmented across a number of files and not easily pieced together.

If government officers can find files quickly, they can be more efficient and not waste valuable time looking for the information they need. Good file titling makes it easier for staff to see if there is already a file on the subject they need. This leads to better decision-making because officers have access to all of the information they need to make the right decisions. It is also easier to make sure that all of the information about a topic is in the one place so that you have the whole history of the process on one file.

If everyone understands the file's title, it is easier to make sure that staff do not create new files when the right file is already available. This Record Plan is designed to help all agencies to create titles for their administrative files so that everyone can understand what each file is about.

One method for making filing systems simpler to use is to create a record plan that describes the activities documented in the filing system in a consistent fashion, using language that is familiar and meaningful to the staff who will use the system.

A record plan can help government agencies to operate more efficiently and accountably. Well-described records are more easily located, providing efficiencies in administration because less time is spent locating vital records. Decision-making is often more effective because officers have access to relevant information about past actions and decisions. Agencies can also be more accountable because full records of their administration of a particular function or activity are able to be kept and used.

Good file titling also helps organisations to make good decisions about which records they need to keep and which ones they no longer need. The PARBICA Administrative Record Plan is designed to be used with the PARBICA Disposal Schedule. A disposal schedule provides a transparent and accountable system for making decisions about how long records need to be retained for administrative, legal or historical purposes. The Disposal Schedule uses the same system for describing records as the one used in this Administrative Record Plan. By using both the Record Plan and the Disposal Schedule it can be easier for government agencies to identify which records they need to keep and which ones are no longer needed.

DEVELOPING CORE BUSINESS RECORD PLANS

The PARBICA Administrative Record Plan only covers administrative actions that all government departments carry out, such as managing staff and finances. As well as using the Administrative Record Plan for its administrative files, each government agency will also need to develop an additional record plan for its own core business areas that no other agency carries out. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will need to develop a record plan for files about diplomatic relations with other governments, as no other ministry is responsible for this area of government work.

Functions and activities

Record plans use an understanding of an organisation's functions and activities to provide headings for file titles. Functions are the broad goals of an organisation, or the purposes they are set up to achieve. Activities are the steps that an organisation uses to perform its functions.

For example, the Ministry of Education might be set up to make sure that the government fulfils roles such as running schools, developing school curriculums and providing scholarships for students to study overseas. These are some of the purposes, or functions, of the Ministry of Education.

To carry out the function of providing scholarships, the Ministry of Education might take steps such as analysing the country's education needs, developing selection criteria for scholarships and calling for applications. These steps, or activities, are carried out to fulfil the function of scholarship administration.

By identifying these functions and activities, you can begin to develop headings for the files that the ministry is likely to create about the work it does. Part of a record plan for the Ministry of Education might look a bit like the example on the next page.

Core functions and common functions

Core functions are the purposes for which a particular agency is set up. They are usually unique to a particular agency. For example, only the Ministry of Resources is likely to issue mining licences, and only the Ministry of Justice is likely to manage courts.

Common functions can also be thought of as administrative functions, corporate functions or support functions. They are the major areas of work that most government agencies need to do to help them carry out the core functions they are set up to do. Both the Ministry of Resources and the Ministry of Justice are likely to need to carry out support functions such as managing finances, people and assets.

The PARBICA Administrative Record Plan is designed to be used for common functions that every government agency is likely to carry out. It should not be used for core functions that are unique to a particular government agency. You can find the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan on the PARBICA website at <http://www.parbica.org/Toolkit%20pages/ToolkitIntroPage.htm>.

Ministry of Education example record plan: Scholarship Administration

The function of determining the nation's education needs and selecting appropriate students to receive funding and other assistance for studies that will meet those needs.

Activity	Description	Examples of tasks	Examples of records
Needs Analysis	The activity of researching the gaps in the qualifications and skills available in the country.	Developing and conducting surveys of students and businesses; researching the courses available in-country and overseas.	Survey forms; research papers; draft reports.
	<i>Example of file titles</i> The third section of the file title should describe the research being carried out. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarship Administration – Needs Analysis – Consultation with Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs on need for fisheries graduates • Strategic Management – Needs Analysis – Survey of employment outcomes of 2008 graduates 		
Scholarship Design	The activity of deciding on the type of scholarship to be provided and the selection criteria for recipients.	Negotiating with universities on entry requirements for courses; drafting selection criteria for scholarships.	Letters, emails, memos and other correspondence with universities; draft and final versions of selection criteria.
	<i>Example of file titles</i> The third section of the file title should describe the scholarship being designed. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarship Administration – Scholarship Design – Minimum entry requirements for students enrolling in Marine Studies at the University of the South Pacific • Scholarship Administration – Scholarship Design – Eligibility criteria for Australian Development Scholarships 		

Sometimes, though, common functions can look very similar to core functions. For example:

- Every agency needs to do some things to manage its buildings, vehicles, furniture and the like, but only a ministry like Home Affairs or Public Works manages these things for the whole government.
- Every agency sometimes deals with external bodies, but only a ministry like Foreign Affairs has responsibility for managing the government's official relations with other governments.
- Every agency is likely to need to manage its money, but only a ministry like Finance and Treasury manages money for the whole government.
- Every agency has some information of its own that it needs to manage, but only agencies like the National Library and the National Archives look after information for the whole government.

- Every agency has staff that it needs to manage, but only organisations like the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Public Service Department manage all of the staff the government employs.

The functions and activities described in the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan should only be used for common functions. Sometimes you will need to think carefully about whether or not a function is a common function that everyone does, or if it is a core function that only one or two agencies are responsible for, before you decide to use the Administrative Record Plan. If the work is a core function of a government agency rather than a common one, you will need to develop a separate record plan for the records of that function. Read the rest of this guideline for information on how to develop a record plan for core functions.

Why use functions and activities?

Functions and activities are a good way of developing headings for file titles because they reflect the work the agency does. Records are evidence of a government or other business transaction. If you do not do any work, you do not have any records because there is no business being carried out for you to document in a record.

By analysing an organisation's functions and activities, you need to understand the work that the organisation does. This in turn helps to understand the kinds of records the organisation will need to create, and you can develop headings for files that reflect what the organisation does.

This approach to developing file titles by using functions and activities is the one recommended by the *International Standard on Records Management* (ISO 15489).

Getting started

The *International Standard on Records Management* (ISO 15489) tells us that we should start to design file-titling and other systems for organising records by first understanding the organisation's recordkeeping requirements.

A recordkeeping requirement is a need to keep evidence of the organisation's actions and decisions. They are usually documented in rules, procedures or other guidelines that show that an organisation might need to create, keep, provide access to, or deal in some special way with a file or other type of record.

For example, a law that the agency is responsible for overseeing might say:

- There shall be a register of licensees.

This suggests that the department responsible for making sure that this law is abided by must keep a register of the people to whom it gives licences. This is an example of a legal requirement that requires the department to create a particular record.

As another example, a government department's procedures for processing a licence application might say:

- Step 1 Desk officer stamps date of receipt on application and forwards to licensing officer.
- Step 2 Licensing officer checks applications for completeness.

Step 3 Approving officer checks that all requirements are met and marks the application as 'Approved' or 'Not approved'.

The desk officer cannot stamp the date of receipt unless there is a record in the form of an application. The licensing officer cannot complete their job unless they receive a record containing the application from the desk officer. The approving officer cannot do their job unless they also have access to a record of the application. In this example, there is a business requirement to have a record of the application – the required process cannot be completed unless the organisation creates a record of each step in the process.

Sometimes recordkeeping requirements can come from the community. Members of the public might expect the government to keep some types of records. For example, imagine reading a story like this in the newspaper:

PUBLIC ANGRY OVER PASSPORT RED TAPE

A local man has complained to the Ombudsman about his treatment by the Passports Office after he was refused a replacement for his lost identity document.

Mr Albert Christian lost his passport when his house burned down last month. When he went to the Passport Office to apply for a new one, he was told that he could not have a new passport until he provided the office with the number of his old passport. 'This is ridiculous,' Mr Christian told *The Times*. 'They gave me the number of the passport in the first place. Surely it is their job to keep a record of what passport number they gave me. Why should I have to remember these things for them? Now I don't see how I will ever get another passport, as my old one is lost and I can't remember the number.'

In this case, the public expects that the organisation will keep records about its activities so that it can serve its clients better in the future.

Understanding recordkeeping requirements like these is the first step to understanding the types of records the organisation is likely to create. This in turn tells you the kinds of headings you will need in a record plan to provide titles for the files the organisation needs to use.

Based on the International Standard, PARBICA has developed detailed guidelines on how to identify recordkeeping requirements. You can find these on the PARBICA website at <http://www.parbica.org/Toolkit%20pages/ToolkitGuideline2.htm>.

You should have a look at the guideline for full information about how to identify recordkeeping requirements. However, below is a short summary of the work that you may need to do.

Identifying recordkeeping requirements

There are three main steps to identifying recordkeeping requirements. They are:

- identifying and collecting sources of requirements;
- recognising recordkeeping requirements; and
- documenting recordkeeping requirements.

Identifying and collecting sources

There are many sources that can tell you what an organisation's recordkeeping requirements are. They can include:

- laws and regulations;
- strategic plans;
- policies;
- procedures;
- reports by parliamentary committees, the auditor-general, the ombudsman or other review bodies;
- reviews and reports by bodies outside government, such as the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank;
- surveys of the department's records or other reviews by the national archives;
- media reports; and
- the organisation's staff.

Anything that tells the organisation how it should carry out its work can be a source of recordkeeping requirements.

Other very important sources include reviews by other government organisations such as:

- the parliament or congress;
- a parliamentary or congressional committee;
- a minister, member of cabinet or other elected representative;
- a government auditor;
- the ombudsman; or
- the Public Service Commission.

Recordkeeping requirements in reviews and reports from these types of organisations are important because they indicate what the government expects the organisation to do. If the organisation does not meet these requirements, the government may take action against it – the organisation could be split up or closed down, or senior staff could be dismissed for not doing their jobs properly.

This does not mean that other sources of recordkeeping requirements are not important. Internal sources, such as policies, procedures and information from staff, can tell you about recordkeeping requirements that are vital for the organisation to be able to do its job. This means that it is important to try to find all of the sources that you can.

Do not forget to look at the PARBICA Guideline on Identifying Recordkeeping Requirements for more information about identifying and collecting sources.

Recognising recordkeeping requirements

Government officers often do not think specifically about recordkeeping issues when they are writing laws, policies and procedures. This means that to find recordkeeping requirements in these documents, you might need to do a bit of detective work.

First, look through each of your sources and find words in them that could relate to records. Some of the terms used in laws, procedures and other documents that might indicate there is a recordkeeping requirement include:

agenda	application	bill	books
copy	document	endorsed	evidence
files	form	information	instructions
log	minutes	note	notice
license	papers	permit	receipt
record	register	report	return
signature	ticket	writing	

Wherever you find a word that suggests there may be a reference to records, read the rest of the section where you found the word until you understand what the section is saying. Sometimes you will find false alarms – for example, the word ‘books’ could refer to the accounting records of a company or it could just refer to library books. For each recordkeeping requirement you have found, make a note of where you found it. Include references, such as page or section numbers, so that you do not have to read the whole document again next time you need to find the reference.

You should also look for ‘hidden’ recordkeeping requirements. Hidden or implicit recordkeeping requirements do not mention a need for records themselves, but describe a situation where a record really would be needed.

Laws are often a good source of hidden recordkeeping requirements. Many laws say what the roles or functions of a particular government agency are. For example, a law setting up a new national library might have a section called ‘functions’, which could list these functions of the national library:

- to collect publications relating to the nation;
- to make its collections available to the public; and
- to provide advice and assistance to other libraries throughout the country.

Even though there is no mention of records here, the government and the community would expect that a national library would keep records about the functions that it is required by law to carry out. This means that even if there are no specific recordkeeping requirements in this Act, there may be a hidden requirement for the library to keep records about collecting publications, making collections available and assisting other libraries.

Policies and procedures may also include hidden recordkeeping requirements. For example, a procedure for investigating complaints about an employee might require the investigating authority to check if there have been any other complaints about that person. Even though there is no mention of any type of record here, there would need to be a record kept of complaints about staff or the investigating authority would have no way of checking if there have been complaints in the past. Hence, there is a hidden requirement to create records that document complaints made about staff.

Each time you find a hidden recordkeeping requirement, make a note of it in the same way you would for other recordkeeping requirements. Make a note of where you found it and include references, such as page or section numbers, so that you do not have to read the whole document again next time you need to find the reference.

Do not forget to look at the PARBICA Guideline on Identifying Recordkeeping Requirements for more information about recognising recordkeeping requirements.

Documenting recordkeeping requirements

Once you have identified all of your organisation's recordkeeping requirements, you will need to write them down in a way that other people will be able to understand and use them. You need to document your organisation's recordkeeping requirements so that:

- you can prove that you have done your job properly and checked the sources you have identified;
- others in the organisation can see what the requirements are and make sure that they are meeting them;
- you do not have to search all of the sources again if you want to update your requirements; and
- you can use the information for other things.

To document your recordkeeping requirements, you will need to organise them into logical groups. This is where you can begin to organise the recordkeeping requirements you have found into information about the functions and activities of the organisation. This will give you the headings you can use to title files about those functions and activities.

Identifying functions and activities

Once you have identified your recordkeeping requirements, you need to organise them into functions and activities.

Functions are the broad purposes or goals that the organisation is set up to achieve. To identify functions, it may help to think about **why** the organisation is doing something. For example, the Ministry of Education researches the country's education needs so that it can give scholarships to the most appropriate people. You might describe this goal of giving scholarships as the function of 'Scholarship Administration'.

Activities are the steps an organisation takes to achieve the goals or functions it is set up to pursue. To identify activities, it may help to think about **how** the organisation does its work. For example, one of the steps the Ministry of Education might take to administer scholarships is to identify the appropriate criteria for choosing who will receive a scholarship. You might describe this work as the activity of 'Scholarship Design'.

Techniques

There are two main techniques for grouping your recordkeeping requirements into functions and activities. These are the 'top-down' or 'hierarchical analysis' technique, and the 'bottom-up' or 'process analysis' technique. It is usually a good idea to use both of these techniques to help you get a full picture of how your organisation's functions and activities fit together.

Top-down technique

A top-down analysis involves first looking at recordkeeping requirements that come from high-level sources such as laws, mission statements, ministerial speeches and corporate plans. These kinds of requirements are likely to give you the 'big picture' of the organisation

and help you to understand **why** the organisation was created and what it is intended to achieve. Understanding the organisation's purpose can help you to identify its functions.

For example, in 2006 the Papua New Guinea Ombudsman gave a speech in which he said that a key part of the work of his Office was to conduct inquiries into allegations of misconduct by leaders. He said that a law on codes of ethics for national leaders gives his office the responsibility to do this.¹

This very broad source gives you some clues about what one of the purposes or functions of the Papua New Guinea Ombudsman's Office might be. By looking at this and other sources you might be able to decide that one of the functions of the Ombudsman's Office could be called 'Misconduct Inquiries'.

Later in his speech, the Ombudsman described some of the ways his Office does this job of 'Misconduct Inquiries'. From his description, you can start to understand some of the processes or activities that are used to carry out these functions, or **how** the Office does this job. They include:

- investigating allegations;
- making reports and recommendations; and
- referring cases to the public prosecutor.

Looking at more detailed sources, such as procedures manuals, work plans and performance standards, would also give you a good picture of the steps the Papua New Guinea Ombudsman's Office might take to carry out the function of 'Misconduct Inquiries'.

From this information, you can start to describe the activities that make up the function of 'Misconduct Inquiries'. We might call these activities:

- investigations;
- reporting; and
- referrals.

Using this technique, part of a record plan for the Papua New Guinea Ombudsman's Office might look something like the example on the next page.

Bottom-up technique

A 'bottom-up' or 'process analysis' technique is really just the reverse of the top-down or hierarchical technique. Using this method you would identify the detailed steps or processes that an organisation uses to do its work by using low-level sources such as procedures manuals and staff instructions. You would then arrange these activities into logical groups according to the reasons why the organisation is taking these steps. Then by looking at high-level sources, such as policies and mission statements, you can begin to understand the functions that these activities are contributing to.

For example, in 2006 the Solomon Islands Minister for Finance and Treasury issued instructions covering the administrative processes operating under the *Goods Tax Act*.² Those instructions say that a body called the Exemption Committee must take steps such as

1 <http://www.paclii.org/pg/OC/Speeches/Speech7.htm>

2 <http://www.commerce.gov.sb/pdf/Goods%20Tax%20Exemption%20Guidelines.pdf>

designing exemption forms, educating the public about new processes and providing quarterly information summaries to the Minister.

Papua New Guinea Ombudsman's Office example record plan: Misconduct Inquiries

The function of looking at allegations about the behaviour of leaders and determining if it is consistent with the parliamentary code of ethics.

Activity	Description	Examples of tasks	Examples of records
Investigations	The activity of considering allegations about the behaviour of leaders and researching the facts relating to each case.	Receiving complaints from the public; receiving requests for investigation from the Auditor-General or other bodies; interviewing people about allegations.	Emails, letters, memos and other documents from the public or other bodies; transcripts of interviews.
	Example of file titles The third section of the file title should describe the allegation being made. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misconduct Inquiries – Investigation – Complaint by member of the public of misuse of government vehicles • Misconduct Inquiries – Investigation – Recommendation by Auditor-General for inquiry into ministerial use of grant funds 		
Reporting	The activity of providing a formal response to an allegation of misconduct.	Drafting final reports of investigations; writing to members of the public to advise of the outcome of their complaints; submitting formal reports to the parliament or the minister.	Letters, emails, memos and other correspondence with members of the public; draft and final versions of investigation reports.
	Example of file titles The third section of the file title should describe the report. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misconduct Inquiries – Reporting – Report on use of government cars by ministers • Misconduct Inquiries – Reporting – Report on disbursement of grant funds by ministers 		

These steps might represent activities that the Committee carries out for the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, and you might describe them like this:

- forms design;
- awareness campaigns; and
- reporting.

These activities explain **how** the Committee does its job. To work out what function the activities relate to, you need to think about **why** the Committee is taking these steps. By looking at higher-level sources, such as the *Goods Tax Act* and the guidelines the Minister has issued, you can see that the steps in this process are carried out to help the Minister decide who can be exempted from paying goods tax. You might describe this function as something like 'Exemption Assessment'. As a result, part of the record plan for the Ministry of Finance and Treasury might look like the example below.

Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance and Treasury example record plan: Exemption Assessment

The function of determining if an applicant is eligible to receive an exemption from paying taxes under the Goods Tax Act.

Activity	Description	Examples of tasks	Examples of records
Forms Design	The activity of developing forms so that the information required to make an assessment is collected.	Consulting with staff to determine what information is required; writing instructions on how to fill out forms.	Minutes and agenda of consultation meetings; draft and final versions of forms; memos, emails, letters and other documents showing that the Exemption Committee has approved forms.
	Example of file titles The third section of the file title should describe the form being designed. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemption Assessment – Forms Design – Consultation with Inland Revenue staff on information requirements for exemption application forms • Exemption Assessment – Forms Design – Register of forms approved by the Exemption Committee 		
Reporting	The activity of providing a formal update on applications for exemptions.	Summarising quarterly statistics; requesting data from other parts of the Ministry; drafting reports to the Minister.	Draft and final reports.
	Example of file titles The third section of the file title should describe the report. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemption Assessment – Reporting – Exemptions granted under the Goods Tax Act January to March 2009 • Exemption Assessment – Reporting – Exemptions granted under the Goods Tax Act April to June 2009 		


Important tips for developing record plans for core functions

Developing a record plan can be a complex and daunting process. Do not worry too much about doing a perfect job. Remember that the main aim of a record plan is to help staff in the

organisation to come up with file titles that they will understand so they can find the file again when they need it.

Here are some things to keep in mind when you are developing a record plan for core functions:

- Do not spend time on administrative functions that all organisations do, such as financial management or external relations. Use the Administrative Record Plan instead. You can find this on PARBICA's website at <http://www.parbica.org/Toolkit%20pages/ToolkitIntroPage.htm>.
- It is important not to use the same words to describe two different functions. If there are two functions with the same heading, staff may become confused about which is the right heading for the document they would like to file. If there is a function heading in the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan that also describes a core function of your organisation, try to think of a different way of describing the core function. For example, the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan uses the heading 'Financial Management'. This might also be a good way of describing some of the work that the Ministry of Finance and Treasury does. Instead of using the same heading twice, try to think of a different way of describing the Ministry's core function, such as 'Treasury Management' or 'Government Finance Administration'.
- You can use the same activity heading under more than one function heading. Some activities are carried out to perform more than one function. For example, you will notice in the Administrative Record Plan that the activity 'Planning' is included for all of the function headings. This is because organisations are likely to create plans for how they will carry out all of their functions. If your organisation uses the same activity for many functions, you can use the same activity description many times. You can also copy activity descriptions from the Administrative Record Plan.
- When you decide on your function headings, try to describe them so that they do not overlap. This can mean that staff will not know which heading to use and they may use the wrong file. For example, having a function heading of 'Primary Industries' as well as 'Forestry' might be confusing because forestry is a type of primary industry.
- Try to make sure you have included all of the activities in each function. If parts of a process are left out, staff may not be able to find a file to put their documents on, and may put records on the wrong file or not file them at all.
- Finding the right 'level' to describe your functions at can be tricky. If you describe functions at too high a level, you will end up with all of your files having the same heading in their titles and staff may have trouble choosing the right title. For example, all of the work of the Ministry of Health could come under a heading of 'Health Management'. This would not be very much use for file titling, though, and you might want to think about describing the functions at a lower level, such as 'Hospital Administration', 'Medical Education', 'Practitioner Regulation' and the like.
- Similarly, describing functions at too low a level can be confusing because staff will have too many files to choose from. For example, the function heading of 'Asset and Resources Management' in the Administrative Record Plan could be split into sub-headings of 'Vehicle Management', 'Building Management', 'Equipment Management' and 'Technology Management'. This would make the Record Plan much more complex, and is not really necessary for most Pacific Island governments.

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- If you are having trouble developing your record plan, organisations such as your national archives may be able to give you some advice.

IMPLEMENTING RECORD PLANS

If your organisation has decided that it would like to use the Administrative Record Plan to title its administrative files, or if you have developed a record plan for your organisation's core functions, there are a few things you will need to think about to prepare for implementation. As with any new system or procedures, you will need to have a plan for how you will make the changes from an old system to a new one.

In particular, there are three areas you will need to think about. They are:

- file numbering;
- file registration; and
- transitional arrangements.

File numbering

It is important that each file your organisation creates has a unique identification code. Most of the time giving files a number is the best way of doing this, although for some types of files, such as personnel files, using the name of the person the file is about makes more sense.

Giving files numbers helps to keep them in the right order so that people can find them again. It is important that each file has a unique number – that is, you need to make sure that you do not give the same number to two different files. If two files have the same number, it can become confusing for staff and they may not always know which is the file that they need to use.

There are many different ways you can allocate numbers to files. If you are using the Administrative Record Plan, PARBICA recommends that you use a multiple number system.

Multiple number systems

To use a multiple number system with the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan, you will need to allocate a number to each of the headings in the Record Plan. It may be easiest to allocate numbers like this:

Number	Heading
01	Asset and Resources Management
02	External Relations
03	Financial Management
04	Information Management
05	Personnel and Establishment
06	Strategic Management

Using this system, all the files your organisation creates using the heading 'Asset and Resources Management' will start with the number 01. All of the files your organisation creates using the heading 'External Relations' will start with the number 02, and so on.

You will then need to allocate numbers to each of the sub-headings under these main headings. These numbers will then become the second part of your file number. For example:

Number	Heading
01	Asset and Resources Management
01/01	Acquisition
01/02	Consultation and Advice
01/03	Disposal

Number	Heading
02	External Relations
02/01	Ceremonies, Events and Visits
02/02	Conferences, Seminars and Workshops
02/03	Complaints and Feedback

Using the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan, each time the organisation creates a new file, a staff member will need to decide what the third part of the file title will be. This should be a running number.

So, the first file the organisation creates using the headings 'Asset and Resources Management – Acquisition' will be numbered 01/01/01, the second file using these headings will be numbered 01/01/02, the third one will be 01/01/03, and so on.

Using this system, your list of file numbers and titles might look like this:

01/01/01	Asset and Resources Management – Acquisition – Photocopiers
01/01/02	Asset and Resources Management – Acquisition – Vehicles
02/01/01	External Relations – Ceremonies, Events and Visits – Official opening of Ministry Building
02/01/02	External Relations – Ceremonies, Events and Visits – Visit by Prime Minister to local schools

Some governments also prefer to put letter codes that relate to the name of the agency the file belongs to in front of each file number, so for example, the Ministry of Home Affairs might have file numbers that look like this:

MHA01/01/01

MHA01/02/01

MHA01/03/01

Unique numbers

As already mentioned, it is important that each file number is unique and is not repeated anywhere within your organisation. This means that if you produce a record plan for your

organisation's core functions, you will need to give the headings in that record plan numbers that are different from the ones you have used for the Administrative Record Plan. The easiest way to do this is probably to give the first heading in your core record plan the number 07, the second heading 08, and so on.

File registration

Registering files involves making a formal record of the title of each file the organisation creates, the number allocated to the file, and the date it was created. Registering files is important in complying with the *International Standard on Records Management* (ISO 15489). Registering files:

- helps the organisation to know what files it has; and
- helps staff to find out if there is already a file about the matter they are dealing with.

Registering files is particularly important if you are using a record plan system. Because staff will be creating file titles according to the type of work they are doing, it is not possible to know in advance what files the organisation will create. File registration is also important for keeping track of what numbers have been allocated to each new file, so that you do not give the same number to two different files.

It is very important that the organisation gives responsibility for creating and registering files to one area or one person within the organisation. If no one has responsibility for file registration, it is likely that no one will do the job. This means that staff throughout the organisation may create many different files about the same work and the organisation as a whole will have no idea what files it has or where they are. If more than one area of the organisation has responsibility for registering files, it will be very difficult to keep track of what files have been created and what numbers have been allocated to them.

Every organisation should appoint a records manager who is responsible for creating and registering all files and for keeping the file register up to date.

PARBICA has created a checklist that organisations can use to see if they have in place all of the things they need to manage their records properly. Assigning responsibility for records management is one of the key tasks on the checklist. You can find the Recordkeeping Capacity Checklist on the PARBICA website at <http://www.parbica.org/Toolkit%20pages/ToolkitGuideline1.htm>.


Transitional arrangements

Just as with any new system, you will need to plan for how you will change from your old file titling system to using the PARBICA Record Plan. Here are some things to think about:

- Have a plan for implementing your record plan. Think about setting a date for everyone to start using the new plan and the instructions you will need to give to staff.
- Staff will probably need some sort of training to help them use the new system. Think about who needs this training and how you might be able to give it to them.
- It is usually not a good idea to change the names of old files when you move to a new system. Instead, close all of your old files and write a note on them that tells staff what the title of the new file for that action is in the new system. Most file covers include a section where you can write this kind of information. Staff can continue to

refer to the old files if they need to see the information that is on them, but they should only put new papers on a new file using the new record plan system.

- It is also usually better not to change file numbers on old files. This is sometimes called 'top-numbering'. Instead of giving new numbers to your old files, consider closing all of them and writing a note on them that tells staff the number of the new file for that action in the new system. Most file covers include a section where you can write this kind of information.
- It is important not to have two files with the same number. If your old filing system uses a numbering system similar to the one suggested for the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan, consider starting the numbering of your new files with the number after the last number in your current system. For example, if you already have files that start with the number 05, you might want to make the 'Asset and Resources Management' heading in the PARBICA Administrative Record Plan number 06. The 'External Relations' heading would then be number 07, and so on.
- Similarly, if you are adding a core record plan to the Administrative Record Plan, give the first heading in your core record plan the first number after the ones you have used for the Administrative Record Plan. For example, if the number for the heading 'Strategic Management' is 06, the first heading in your core record plan would be number 07, the next one would be 08, and so on.
- It is possible to start using the Administrative Record Plan without creating a record plan for your organisation's core functions. This might mean removing headings from your old file-titling system that relate to administrative functions, and instructing staff to no longer use them. They can still, though, use the old headings that relate to your core functions. If you do this, make sure that you have thought about the way you will number your new files so that they do not overlap, and make sure that you provide some instructions for staff so that they know when they should use the old system and when they should use the new one.



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