



Compass: Capacity Assessment Tool for Recordkeeping

Introduction

Compass is a capacity assessment tool that is designed to help departments and agencies evaluate and strengthen recordkeeping capacity. **Capacity** means the policies, people, and practices that are needed to enable effective creation, use, and management of records and information.

Compass focuses on the basic enablers for effective recordkeeping in government: leadership, policies, roles and responsibilities, planning, and key areas of practice. The assessment process identifies strengths and gaps and provides practical recommendations for action.

One of the obstacles to strengthening recordkeeping capacity is a lack of understanding of what recordkeeping is even about. Recordkeeping is often seen as a clerical or administrative function involving filing and procedures for disposal of paper records, or as something that can be left to IT. In fact, recordkeeping is first and foremost a **management function** that is much broader in scope. Like financial or human resource management, it requires a strong organizational framework which includes oversight, policies, defined roles, expertise, and standards-based practices at various levels.

Assessment tools assist organizations in measuring current state capacity and provide recommendations so that legislative and policy requirements for managing records and information can be met. This approach **raises awareness** of recordkeeping issues and risks within the organization and provides an analysis that can be used as a basis for **planning and action**.

Compass at a glance

Compass is focused on the **management framework** needed for effective recordkeeping in government and is designed for executives and program managers. Compass evaluates the framework and practices needed for effective government recordkeeping.

- **Framework:** leadership, planning, roles and responsibilities, and policies related to the management of records and information.
- **Practice:** creation, capture, organization, use, management, protection, retention, and disposition of records and information.

Compass incorporates the principles and requirements of current standards for records management set by the International Standards Organization (ISO) and does not require specialist knowledge.

Compass measures a department's capacity against the [Recordkeeping Framework for Departments and Agencies: Policies and Requirements](#).

Compass is a realistic, practical, and complete toolkit. It is *not* an audit or compliance tool, a detailed survey of all employees, or an inventory of information or systems. Compass does survey managers on their knowledge and implementation of recordkeeping policies and practices in their program areas.

Departments should note that:

- The assessment is designed so that a project can be completed at a pace consistent with the government’s resources and competing priorities.
- The scope of a Compass project is normally an entire department but can be scaled to a smaller entity.

Project roles and responsibilities:

The **Project Sponsor** is the Deputy Minister and Executive Management Committee (EMC). They decide to undertake a Compass project and provide visible senior direction and support.

The **Project Manager** is responsible for leading the department’s Compass project and should be the designated Recordkeeping Executive Lead. They will plan and initiate the project; assemble the project team in consultation with department managers; manage project activities; facilitate meetings with the team to analyze the assessment results; participate in preparing the Report and Recommended Actions; and present the report to the Project Sponsor.

The **Government Records Office** (GRO) provides advice and support throughout the Compass project. The Compass Co-ordinator role is built into the process and is filled by a GRO records analyst. The Co-ordinator assists the Project Manager with planning and use of the Compass toolkit; provides expert analysis and insight on the results; drafts the Report and Recommended Actions in consultation with the Project Manager and Team; and assists in presenting the final report to the Project Sponsor.

Key Outcomes

Compass offers three kinds of key outcomes:

- Increased awareness about recordkeeping basics that are relevant to managers.
- An analysis of the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, risks, and opportunities.
- Recommendations for action and priorities in alignment and compliance with the [Recordkeeping Framework for Departments and Agencies: Policies and Requirements](#).

For more information about the assessment tool, contact the Government Records Office.

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