



Summary

Reflecting on our work about information

Information plays an essential role in every decision an organisation makes or expects to make. It informs decisions about service delivery, supports evidence-based policy development and decision-making, and helps measure performance and effectiveness.

Recently, we looked at aspects of how well the public sector uses and manages information. We published a report that aims to help public organisations think about using and managing information more strategically. Public organisations are encouraged to consider the matters raised in our report and whether they are using and managing information in ways that allow them to best provide public services.

Some of the matters raised in our report include:

- Public organisations should treat information as a strategic asset. This means that its value is recognised and there is a deliberate strategy for how information is managed and governed.
- How information is collected is important. Public organisations need to understand where relevant information is best collected from, whether the information is complete and reliable, and what systems and processes it needs to collect it effectively and efficiently.
- Legacy information technology and document management systems can create inefficiencies in collecting and storing information. It is important that public organisations keep reviewing their systems and processes for managing information to ensure that systems are still fit for purpose.

- Where public organisations provided services or information online, we saw improvements in people's experience, as well as an improved perception of the reliability of the service or information. Public organisations continue to face challenges, including the need to keep up with expectations as technology develops.
- The public sector is facing a transformative challenge – to work together to design and deliver services. We saw public organisations successfully collaborating to design digital services for people and businesses.
- To maintain trust and confidence in the public sector, people need to know that their personal and commercially sensitive information is kept safe and secure. Legislative mechanisms allow public organisations to share information, and, where services are designed around the needs of individuals, privacy considerations are often embedded in the design process. As public organisations collaborate on designing more integrated and customer-focused services, it will become more important to get the privacy settings right.
- Strong and clear expectations have been set for the management of information security. However, we still see some basic weaknesses in security controls for information systems associated with financial and performance information that we audit. It is essential that public organisations make the changes needed to ensure that their information systems are safe and secure.

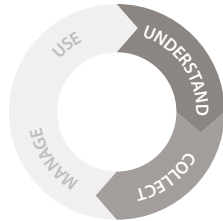


Questions for public organisations to consider

Our report is structured around the phases of the information life cycle. Below are questions, grouped by the phases in this life cycle, that we encourage public organisations to ask themselves when using and managing information.

Understand and collecting the right information

Do you understand and collect the right information for your purposes and objectives?



Do you identify and prioritise that information?

Do those collecting information on your behalf understand its importance?

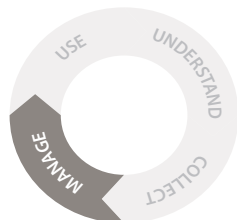
Do you have the necessary systems and processes to collect the information you want and need?

Are you using the most efficient means to help collect your information?

Do you consider the needs of those who will use the information and seek feedback from them?

Managing information effectively

Are your systems and processes for managing information fit for purpose?



Do you use technology to best help manage your information?

Do you regularly review your systems and consider whether requirements have changed?

Do you collaborate with other agencies who work with similar issues or data?

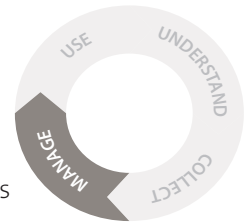
Do your processes and systems facilitate (or hinder) that collaboration?

Do you analyse the information you have and learn from it?

Do you have a plan to enable you to manage your information as a strategic asset for your organisation?

Privacy and security of information

Do you consider how to share information with other agencies to improve the outcomes for individuals or business?



Do you identify and, where possible, remove barriers that prevent you and your staff from sharing information with other agencies?

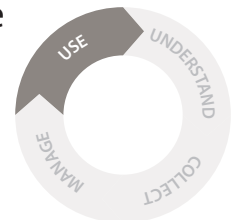
Do you consider and build appropriate privacy settings into the services you provide?

Do you make use of expert guidance when considering privacy issues?

Do you have safe and secure information systems and policies that you regularly review?

Using information to make good decisions

Do you provide your decision-makers with relevant, accurate, and up-to-date information?



Do you provide information to decision-makers in an appropriate form, and do your information systems facilitate that?

Do you learn from your decisions, including what your decisions cost to implement and how effective the decided course of action was?

Do you keep good records about your business activities and decision-making?

Do you actively consider what information you can make available to the public?

Using technology to provide information and services

Do you assess your online services and information to ensure that they are usable and accessible?



As you move to providing services and information online, do you measure benefits and make improvements as a result?



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