

Functional Analysis for Records

Functional analysis for records involves the identification of the business functions and activities of an organization. It provides an understanding of what the organization does and how it carries out its work and links it to the records that are created.

Functional analysis is a useful way to begin many records management projects, particularly when developing records schedules. It is foundational work that will enable other records management activities to happen, as outlined in requirement 2.1 of the [Records and Information Management Framework](#).

Getting Started: Resources and Scope

Analyzing functions and activities is rarely a stand-alone project. It is usually linked to a larger goal, supported by senior management, and should be given the proper resources to be carried out effectively.

It is recommended that the individual leading analysis be a records management professional. If this is a gap in your organization, then the analysis is best done by a program/policy analyst or manager who has an extensive knowledge of the program area's mandate, structure and operations, or the ability to bring together a number of program area staff to work collaboratively.

The scope of the analysis should be clearly defined prior to beginning. Functional analysis can be done in a single program unit or may be scaled to include a branch, a division, or even a department. The bigger the scope, the broader the understanding of the functions and activities (the 'big picture'), but it is more complex and usually requires professional expertise. A narrower scope, suited to the purpose (e.g. developing a file structure for a single program area) is more conducive to drilling down into specific groups of records.

Determining Functions and Activities

A high-level understanding of *what* the organization does and *why* it does it will provide the foundation for understanding *how* it does it. Most managers will have a succinct answer to these questions – and this information is often the basis of briefing materials and submissions.

To support the high-level description you will need to further explore:

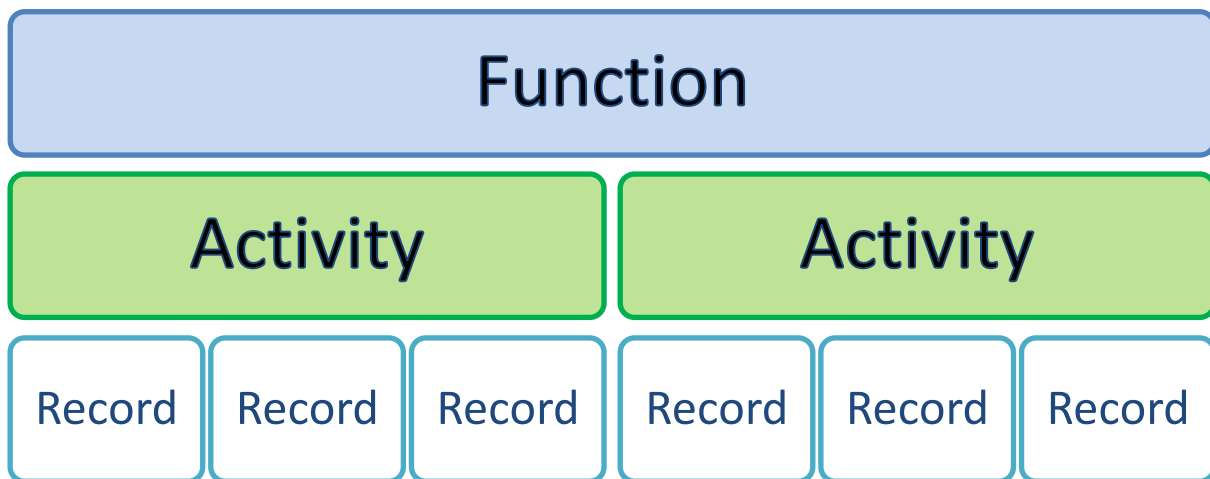
- ✓ What is the purpose of the organization? Is there a mission statement, mandate, or statement of purpose?
- ✓ Are there any relevant pieces of legislation or regulations that govern your activities? Are there any other external forces that dictate the purpose or goals of the organization?

Background information about changes to the organization often signal when functions or activities began, ended, or moved to/from another organization. Some questions to ask are:

- ✓ How long has the program area been in existence?
- ✓ Has the organization changed over time? If so, how has it affected the activities that are being performed?
- ✓ Have there been program name changes? Department changes?

Some references to consult may be annual reports, business plans and other strategic planning documents, organizational histories and charts, audits, reviews, websites and intranet sites, relevant legislation, operational plans and manuals, and other staff members.

Keep in mind that although department, branch, and program names often change, the functions and activities of government tend to remain relatively stable.



FUNCTIONS are the main responsibilities of the organization and are carried out to achieve its mandate. They are a high-level look at what the organization does and why it does it.

**Function -
*what you do and why you do it***

As functions are identified it may be useful to note that most organizations have general administrative functions and more program-specific operational functions.

Administrative functions are common to many organizations: *e.g. 'human resource management', 'financial management', 'strategic planning', and 'workplace health and safety administration'.*

Operational functions relate to the organization's specific purpose and mandate:

e.g. a Department of Public Health might have operational functions such as 'public health protection', 'public health promotion', 'disease monitoring', and 'pandemic management'.

Some government organizations will also have additional functions related to governance which may include activities related to a board of directors, committees, or cross-government working groups.

ACTIVITIES are the actions the organization takes to fulfill its mandate. This is what you do and how you do it.

**Activity -
*what you do and how you do it***

Several activities are usually associated with each function: *e.g. 'financial management' might have activities that include 'auditing', 'budgeting and forecasting', or 'purchasing'.*

Activities may consist of further sub-activities or processes: *e.g. 'auditing' activity might have sub-activities that include 'audit preparation' and 'audit submission'.*



Illustration 1 – an example of the financial management function having multiple activities and each of the activities having sub-activities.

RECORDS are the product of activities - they are created or received in the normal course of business and deliberately captured and 'fixed'. They are defined in terms of their essential purpose and value - which is to provide needed evidence of who did what, when, why and how.

**Record -
 evidence of who did what, when,
 why and how**

A **records series** is a group of records created, received and/or used in a business activity, and maintained together to provide evidence of that activity.

Typical examples include:

- Case Files
- XYZ Program Files
- Hearing Records
- Planning/Policy Files
- ABC Project Files
- Board Minutes
- Director's Office Files
- Administrative Files

Illustration 2 shows how, over time, records that document an activity, or sub-activity, form a records series.



The context of creation is key to understanding a records series and what types of information are contained in the records. For example, many areas create client files. However the context of creation (the functions and activities of an organization) greatly affect our understanding of the records. See the two examples below. Both are considered client files by the program areas, and both may even seem to have some of the same information in the files.

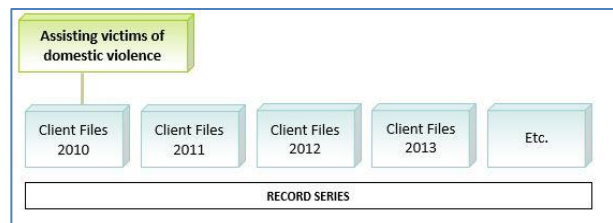


Illustration 3

However, as you can imagine, the context of creation affects our understanding of the content of the records. **Understanding functions and activities provides the necessary context for understanding why the records were created and informs how the records should be managed.**

In the Government of Manitoba, a records series is the basis on which records are scheduled.

Other questions to consider:

Are there any defunct or moved functions or activities that are relevant to the project? For example, does the organization still manage records from activities that they are no longer performing? Did they create these records or did they assume responsibility for them?

Would you consider the activities structured or unstructured? Structured activities are those that follow the same process each time, resulting in a fairly uniform set of records across the different files in the series. Unstructured activities are those that have different trigger points, do not necessarily result in the same final product, and may have different ways of accomplishing the activity. Many managerial and professional activities are unstructured, whereas most administrative, financial, and front line service activities are structured.

Are there particular requirements that dictate format or process? Are there activities or related records series that have certain policies, procedures, regulations, etc. that dictate the format or the process? Are there certain records that must be created or captured? Are there security or accessibility issues that affect how or why the records are created?

Are there activities or records series that are related to each other? How do they interrelate? Does their reliability and value depend on that interrelationship?

The Final Product

The end result should be a detailed, agreed-upon and documented list of the functions, activities, sub-activities (if applicable), and records, that accurately reflect the business processes. The format of the analysis should be tailored to the program area. The formality of the analysis and the level of detail will depend on the purpose of the analysis and the intended audience. See the Appendix (p.6) for an example of documenting the functional analysis for records findings.

Next Steps

If analyzing for the purpose of records scheduling, see [GRO 1: Preparing Records Schedules](#) for next steps. If analyzing for the purpose of developing file structures, see the [File Structures Fact Sheet](#). If analyzing for other purposes, or if you have any questions, contact the Government Records Office for further guidance.

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Government Records Office, Archives of Manitoba
T: 204-945-3971 | E: GRO@gov.mb.ca
Visit our web site to learn more about [Government Recordkeeping](#)



Appendix

Please note: the sample below is meant for illustration purposes only. Information was gathered from the annual report and existing records schedule for Child Abuse Registry records and is not meant to be fulsome or accurate.

~Sample~			
Functions and Records Analysis - Child Protection			
The objective of the Child Protection Branch is to ensure that community and families provide for the safety and well-being of their children under <i>The Child and Family Services Act</i> , <i>The Child and Family Services Authorities Act</i> and <i>The Adoption Act</i> . The mandate includes ...			
Area/Unit	Function	Activity/Sub-Activity	Records
Investigations and Risk Assessment	Investigations of Child Abuse and Sexual Exploitation	The Provincial Investigator is responsible for investigating all reports of alleged abuse, child pornography reports	Investigation case files – police reports, general reports from agencies or individuals, investigative findings...
	Maintenance of Child Abuse Registry Under <i>The Child and Family Services Act</i> (the Act), Part III – Child Protection, the Director of Child and Family Services (the Director) is required to establish and maintain a child abuse registry to record the names of persons known to have abused a child or persons convicted of child abuse by a court and the circumstances of such abuse. The purpose of the Child Abuse Registry is to help child and family services agencies protect children.	Child abuse registration Registering and de-listing names	Child Abuse Registry – Information Entered in CFSIS System Interface Information is maintained in electronic form in the Child and Family Services Information System (CFSIS), and is entered in the system from hard copy case files which contain ... Child Abuse Registry Case Files As mentioned above, the Registry is in electronic form and substantiating documentation in the case file is both in paper and electronically maintained in CFSIS. The case is not completely duplicated electronically ...
	Child abuse registry access – Access to names and information on the Registry is governed by the Act which provides for disclosure of information by the Director upon application by Child and Family Service agencies, adoption agencies, peace officers, employers and others...	Child Abuse Registry Access Files (Organization Files) Organizations may apply to request access to the Child Abuse Registry via the process described below. Files include applications for access to registry information and supporting documentation... Child Abuse Registry Application Files (Child Abuse Registry Checks) These files include a copy of the application with the supporting documentation (where applicable) such as signed consent form, applicant’s information, payment information...	