

This paper presents an easy to understand foundation for electronic records management considerations. It also presents practical tools that seamlessly integrate into the system design process and result in the identification of technical specifications and opportunities for improving performance through improved access to records. The tools also identify critical management and policy factors that must be in place to support a full system implementation. These tools can be used by any organization to:

1. **Bring the record to the forefront of system design activities.** The tools shift the focus from technology to business processes and the records associated with these activities. They establish the concept of a 'record' as the centerpiece of system design efforts and bring the maintenance and ongoing accessibility of records to the forefront of the system design and development process.
2. **Identify electronic records functionality as part of system design.** The business requirements that underlie the records management requirements drive the selection of appropriate supporting technologies. The tools pose questions associated with ongoing internal and external secondary access to records, support the selection of appropriate technologies, and identify important system migration issues.
3. **Create electronic records that support legal and evidentiary needs.** The tools support the identification of all authenticity requirements tied to a business process including legal admissibility. They reveal how authenticity and evidentiary needs cannot be addressed by technology alone and must be supported by appropriate management practices and organizational policies.
4. **Create electronic records that are accessible and usable over time.** The business process focus of the tools identifies the specific record components that must be captured at each step during the course of a transaction. They address issues associated with ongoing access to records over time, and identify technology, management, and policy strategies to ensure that records are appropriately captured and that they remain accessible for both current and future use.
5. **Integrate diverse document forms and formats into records.** The tools help organizations identify the diversity of forms and formats that a system must accommodate and facilitate the identification of technical strategies that can be used to ensure that the required forms and formats are integrated into a record and accessible over time.
6. **Identify need for internal and external primary and secondary access to records.** The tools help identify access needs from the perspective of internal users during a business transaction, as well as internal and external access needs after a transaction has been completed. The questions are designed to identify the components of a record required by each of these user types as well as their preferred or required mechanisms for accessing them. The tools, therefore, help ensure that the value of information collected and maintained during a business process will be maximized across all user groups and over time.