

The **Functional Requirements** present records management requirements in a way that is understandable to both program managers and technical staff. They are system- and business- process focused, which means that both practitioners and system developers can easily relate to them. The language is clear and, perhaps more important, the requirements constitute a concise set of standards that are readily adoptable by busy managers and professionals across organizational types.

The RRAIT focuses on the business process and business objectives. Practitioners indicated that this manner of presentation enabled them to understand the importance of records management requirements in terms of the issues that are critical to them in conducting their work. Records management professionals stated that this approach helps ensure effective communication with practitioners about records management issues.

The RRAIT directly translates records management requirements into user and system requirements. The responses to the questions in the Business Process and System Levels of the RREC are easily communicated to system developers in terms of technical specifications. Additionally, the questions that focus on the documents or components that constitute a record and on internal and external access to records can be readily translated into data model specifications. The tools call attention to long-term access issues, such as migration strategies and meta data, that should be addressed at the initial system design stage to avoid high costs in the long run, or worse, loss of access to important records.

The RRIC, with its focus on implementation, highlights the importance of developing supporting policy and management strategies - critical elements that often receive little or no attention in system development efforts.

Together, the tools provide a sound framework for identifying and addressing electronic records management issues. However, as is the case with any tool designed to assist organizations in addressing key issues, success depends, in large part, on the environmental context within which the tools are applied. Six guidelines for use of the tools are provided below.

1. **An organization must first recognize the importance of its business records and the costs and risks associated with ignoring them.** Without this foundation, it is unlikely that an organization will invest the time and attention to detail that the tools demand.
2. **The degree to which the tools are effective depends upon the organization's readiness and willingness to change.** Change means more than new information systems; it requires supporting management and policy strategies as well as an understanding of the degree to which records management requirements can be addressed by selected technologies. In short, while the tools support the identification of requirements, the underlying factors that surround their implementation determine the ultimate level of success.
3. **One of the most critical factors for effective use of the tools is getting the appropriate people to answer the questions.** All of the internal and external primary and secondary users of the records that will be created and maintained by an information system should be represented. While only a sample of each user type may be involved in answering the questions, it is critically important that all of the types or groups of users be consulted. It may be necessary to bring legal staff or executive management into the process. Legal staff can assist in the identification of statutory or regulatory requirements, while executive level staff will need to be involved in the development of policy and management strategies. Individuals with knowledge of the professional practices associated with a given process are also important participants. System development or technology experts also play an important role in addressing the questions and providing information about product capabilities to support records management requirements. Not all of the players are required during the entire process; some may be brought in to assist as different questions are being addressed. However, identifying and involving all key players at the appropriate point in the process is critical to the successful use of the tools.
4. **The tools help organizations identify the functionality that is required in a system to support records management requirements.** The tools emphasize the selection of technology solutions that maximize inter-operability and adherence to standards, but they are not designed to support product selection. Selection of specific products to provide the necessary functionality must be based on a number of factors including existing infrastructure (both technical and organizational), cost, and expected benefits.
5. **Several methods can be used to answer the questions in the RRAIT.** We strongly recommend that the Business Process Level questions be answered in the context of a business process analysis or improvement activity. The methods for answering questions in other sections should be selected based on their compatibility with the organization's skills and time schedules, and the method's ability to minimize the total cost of the information collection process.
6. **Technology awareness activities should be conducted in conjunction with the use of the tools.**

## General Guidelines

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Product reviews, vendor presentations, and conferences focused on technology applications are all ways to increase user awareness of technology capabilities and limitations. These types of activities increase understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of technology types and specific products. A broad appreciation of what technology can and cannot do will help the organization make appropriate technology choices.

The complete project report, ***Models for Action: Practical Approaches to Electronic Records Management and Preservation***, CTG Project Report 98-1, is available at:  
[http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/reports/models\\_for\\_action](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/reports/models_for_action).