Building an Effective Paperless Records Management Governance Structure

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1. Introduction
The entire world is rapidly shifting its orientation into an Information Technology (IT) based environment, which emphasizes the use of technology for assembling, transferring, and analyzing information. This information era is made possible by the advent of affordable information technology and evolving computer, network, and software capabilities. In the midst of this technological shift, “Paperless Records” becomes a reality.

Most of government and business records are being created electronically. This electronic age buried and eliminated the use of paper. Digitization technology provides easy dissemination of records; it enables convenient copying and retrieval. Digitization allows high density storage and enables multiple users to access the same information at the same time. This creates more silos of information which in role is creates a wider variety of records and reports. So, much information is on hand, but rapid growth and change of technology with the huge amount of information created new challenges for scheduling, filing, storing, retaining, and retrieving records. The previous policies, infrastructure, and business processes were designed for paper records. Therefore, Governments and agencies should build an effective governance structure to set new policies and laws to address and adapt this shift from paper to paperless records. This paper defines governance and its importance to the success of IT projects, the objective of this governance, the governance bodies and their responsibilities. Finally, this paper describes the essential factors for a success and effective paperless records governance.

2. Records Environment
2.1. What is a Record?
A “record” means a book, letter, document, paper, map, plan, photograph, film, card, tape, recording, electronic data, or other documentary material regardless of physical form or
characteristics, that is prepared, owned, received, or retained by a governmental entity or political subdivision, and where all of the information in the original is reproducible by photocopy or other mechanical or electronic means. Thereafter, The Government Records and Access and Management Act (GRAMA) listed some things that are not defined as records like personal e-mail and the telephone conversation.\(^1\)

Records are the outputs that record each and every business and administrative transaction of an agency and details about employees, customers, and all its external contacts. They are essential resource for agency’s effective continuation. They also form its references that must be available for future needs as an evidence for a previous work. The record represents the end of the document and business process, which would not be changed across the time after it is confirmed and needed for future uses.\(^2\) Figure 1. Illustrates record processing.

\textbf{Figure 1.} What is a Record?

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\end{center}

The source (JISC infoNet. \url{http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/records-management/what-is-a-record})

\(^1\) The Government Records and Access and Management Act (GRAMA), UCA 63G-2-103(22)(a)

\(^2\) What is a Record? \url{http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/records-management/what-is-a-record}
2.2. Paperless Records (PR)

Paperless records are synonym for electronic records which are defined as any combination of text, graphics, data, audio, pictorial or information in digital form created, modified, maintained, archived, retrieved or distributed by a computer system, eliminating use of paper. There are many formats of electronic records, data bases, data sets, e-mail, digital images, web sites, audio recordings, work station files, spreadsheets, text messages, compact discs, jump drives, hardware, and software.\(^3\)

2.3. Records Management (RM)

Currently, Electronic Records ER are known as Paperless Records PR. Electronic Records Management ERM and Paperless Records Management PRM are synonymous. Records Management is the process of systematic management of records and its content of information and data, whether it is retained in paper or electronic format. It is the management of the lifecycle of information from creation to disposition\(^4\). The goal of records management is to: Meet internal business needs, maintain the record compliant with the regulatory requirements, defend the agency and its customers against the external demands, provide a legal evidence for a previous work and business, meet the environmental requirements when disposed, and Store records in an economical way.\(^5\)

\(^3\) National Archives and Record Administration (NARA)

\(^4\) JISC infoNet. What is Record Management, http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/records-management/what-is-records-mgt

\(^5\) JISC infoNet. What is Record Management, http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/records-management/what-is-records-mgt
Therefore, good records management is based on good governance which reviews, controls, retains, and disposes the process of records management. Also, good records management leads to good governance.

2.4. Significance of Records Management (RM)

Records management is essential because government and all of agencies are operating in a complex legal and regulatory world. Non compliance with the regulations leads to harsh penalties. The individual and staff recall about the past work and business processes is becoming less reliable due to increasing staff turnover and the agencies are rapidly growing and change their structure frequently. And the records management increases the executive efficiency.\(^6\)

In addition, paperless records management is necessitated because of large volume of information is produced electronically, frequent change of executive leadership happened in the last period, and Compliance with regulations is becoming a top priority for executives across all industries due to the recent effort and introduction of the newer regulations, such as Sarbanes-Oxley.\(^7\)

3. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA): Determine record by the content, categorize records into record series. Additional basic records management concepts in the GRAMA are that government records are the property of the state.

\(^6\) JISC infoNet. Why Records Management is necessary now. http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/records-management/what-is-records-mgt

\(^7\) Records Management In an Electronic Age, http://www.csus.edu/aba/finserv/RecordsManagementInAnElectronicAge.pdf
Records must be retained and destroyed according to an approved schedule. And, it is unlawful to destroy or damage records in infringement to an approved schedule. Records officers have stewardship but not ownership of records and information. This applies to paperless records as well as paper.  

- The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA): is the managing partner for the ERM E-Gov Initiative. NARA's ERM Initiative provides a policy framework and guidance for electronic records management applicable government-wide. NARA's ERM Initiative is intended to promote effective management and access to federal agency information in support of accelerated decision making.  

Currently, most of records are produced electronically; this creates new challenges for records storage, filing and retrieval. Policies, infrastructure, and business processes which were designed for paper-based records became obsolete, so building an effective governance structure comes to be a necessary a head step to set laws and policies that would adapt these changes. To achieve an effective records management, agencies should establish a solid infrastructure in terms of enforceable rights, accountable financial system, equitable judicial system, and good governance.

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4. Governance Structure

4.1. Governance

Governance can be applied to the public arena (i.e., governments), corporate entities, and information technology (IT).\(^\text{10}\) Governance is the process by which power and authority is exercised in a society by which government, the private sector and citizens’ groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences, and exercise their legal rights and obligations. (Fukuda-Parr and Ponzio, 2002).\(^\text{11}\) Governance is a process for reconciling the ambitions of the individual or group with the need to preserve and develop a ‘common weal’ which binds through shared interests. (Davies, 1999)\(^\text{12}\)

4.2. Corporate governance

Corporate Governance is the set of processes, customs, policies, laws and institutions affecting the way a corporation is directed, administered or controlled. Corporate governance also includes the relationships among the many stakeholders involved and the goals for which the corporation is governed. The principal stakeholders are the shareholders, management and the board of directors. Other stakeholders include employees, suppliers, customers, banks and other lenders, regulators, the environment and the community at large. Corporate governance is a system by which business corporations are directed and controlled. (OECD, 2004)\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^{11}\) PowerPoint Presentation from www.hatii.arts.gla.ac.uk

\(^{12}\) PowerPoint Presentation from www.hatii.arts.gla.ac.uk

\(^{13}\) Corporate Governance, http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Corporate-governance
4.3. IT Governance

Information Technology (IT) Governance is a discipline of Corporate Governance focused on information technology (IT) systems and their performance and risk management. The rising interest in IT governance is partly due to compliance initiatives, like Sarbanes-Oxley in the USA as well as the acknowledgment that IT projects can easily get out of control and profoundly affect the performance of an organization.\(^{14}\) Also, IT Governance means "as the set of organizational regulations and standards exercised by management to provide strategic direction and ensure that objectives are achieved, risks are managed appropriately, and resources are used responsibly."\(^{15}\)

4.4. Objectives of IT Governance

Governance is accomplished through organizational structure and performance measurement, which define boundaries, authorities, responsibilities, and tasks (United States Army, n.d.). The goal is to create an enterprise structure for managing IT that will advance the strategic mission of the agency, setting priorities for IT projects that are aligned with the agency's objectives, and funding projects that are highly valued by the agency, its staff, and the public. On the project level, a governance model identifies the activities and relationships among groups established to ensure that projects such as Paperless Record Management (PRM) are successfully implemented and continue to function over time, with enhancements made to continuously improve an agency's approach to PRM. It establishes the decision-making authority of those groups and


makes them accountable for their undertaking. This structure facilitates abundant consideration of ownership and access concerns likely to arise throughout the information lifecycle (production, collection, use, management, maintenance, preservation, and disposal or permanent retention). \textsuperscript{16} Appendix A describes the tips for good PRM governance.

\textbf{4.5 Significance of Governance Structure}

IT projects are achieved considering political, organizational, legal, technical, cultural, and personnel issues which are best managed by a team whose goal is a successful outcome of those projects. By assigning each project to a series of questions designed to assess different projects, governing bodies can compare projects against agency priorities, and allocate resources accordingly. \textsuperscript{17}

Proper governance processes are important to managing IT projects properly. Paperless Records Management governance structures and policies assist leadership in making critical decisions to guide the work. Stakeholder’s boards working with IT professionals to ensure that the PRM solution meets the needs of the agency, in terms of regulatory requirements, and all its users. \textsuperscript{18}

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4.6 Benefits of Paperless Records Management (PRM) Governance

- Share responsibility for planning and executing PRM, clearer understanding of objectives and expectations for PRM, and clearer visibility of issues and priorities associated with PRM.

- Alignment of PRM with business needs of the agency, and Management of records management-related risks.

- Optimized costs for IT investments in PRM solution and improved quality of service to retrieve required records efficiently.

- Assure that all IT projects further the goals of the agency, and ensure that corrective actions are taken to reduce the number of failures.

- Set the policies equally across all projects which will minimize the conflicts that may arise when the roles not clearly defined.

Figure 2. Benefits of having an IT governance structure

4.7 Governance Boards

An effective structure for PRM governance consists of three gears: One has a role of the strategic decisions for PRM; another responsible for operations, including the development of procedures related to PRM; and a third that addresses technical issues associated with the PRM solution. To achieve effective PRM governance; each of the aforementioned boards has to work on their own responsibilities and roles as described below:20

4.7.1 Executive Board

The executive board sets vision, scope, and objectives for enterprise PRM, making key decisions by allocating adequate financial resources and properly trained staff, sanction tasks and timetables, and setting meaningful, measurable targets for the project. This board oversees the planning, implementation, operation, and management of PRM.21

4.7.2. Operational Board

The operational board, such as a records council, defines PRM for the agency from a business perspective. Its members understand the role PRM plays in allowing the agency to function effectively and efficiently. The operational board develops an agency's PRM policy infrastructure, obtaining the executive committee's approval for the initial project design. Over


time, this board is responsible for recommending enhancements to the system. The operational board updates processes to comply with document and records management standards.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{4.7.3 Technical Board}

The technical board assesses the current technical environment and the technical policies and solutions that enable PRM. They are monitoring daily activities regarding PRM as well as monitoring system performance, making recommendations concerning systems improvements and enhancements from a technical standpoint. Technical board integrates the PRM solution into agency’s existing information architecture, ensuring that it works well with the agency's other systems. The technical board makes recommendations to the executive board about the technical staff needed for the PRM. Also, technical board helps in avoiding the future problems may arise in IT projects.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{4.8. Essential factors for Success of Paperless RM Governance}

\textbf{4.8.1. Leadership}

Provides direction and guidance on how an agency will employ PRM. The executive board provides a leadership role by setting goals for PRM that are align with the agency's business needs and priorities. Executive board drives the PRM project forward, removing hurdles to successful implementation. The operational board provides leadership by developing plans for


PRM. The technical board provides leadership role by setting technical policies and solutions that make PRM possible.\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{4.8.2. Accountability}

Accountability is very essential at all levels of enterprise Paperless RM governance. Responsibilities for all members of all boards involved in an enterprise IT project such as PRM must be clearly understood, and the tasks of each should be documented. Tasks should be accomplished within the required timeframes and allowable budget.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{4.8.3. Oversight}

Oversight of Paperless RM projects is provided by senior management teams, often subsets of the executive board, who ensures that IT projects realized the efficient and improved services from a strategic and tactical point. Those teams review the expected outcomes of a project against the realities, Verify compliance with procedures, standards, and requirements, legislative, and monitor expenditures for IT project.\textsuperscript{26}

Oversight for PRM projects is mainly the responsibility of records managers who must define proper management processes for agency staff, defining the additional procedures required for PRM. Records managers, in cooperation with IT, will adapt the existing training for PRM as the


new system is accessible on-line. Figure 2 provides a summary of the Leadership, Accountability, and Oversight responsibilities for each of the governance bodies.

**Figure 2. Responsibilities of Governance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Body</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Oversight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Sets goals for PRM in line with agency's business needs and priorities</td>
<td>Defining roles and responsibilities of each group and the way in which the groups interact with one another</td>
<td>Review the expected outcomes of a project against the realities and monitor expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Develops specific plans for PRM implementation in the agency</td>
<td>Updates procedures, sees that the training deemed necessary for ERM at the agency is carried out, and makes all of this information available to the agency through a shared mechanism</td>
<td>Monitor compliance by proper management processes for agency staff (document and records producers and users), specifying the additional procedures required for ERM, such as metadata tagging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Sets in place technical policies and solutions that make PRM possible</td>
<td>Smooth operation of the PRM solution, whether managed in-house or outsourced</td>
<td>Oversee contractors and vendor activity, including any customization of COTS product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Summary

Paperless records are records which are defined as any combination of text, graphics, data, audio, pictorial or information in digital form created, modified, maintained, archived, retrieved or distributed by a computer system. Records Management is the process of systematic management of records and its content of information and data, whether it is retained in paper or electronic format.

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Governance is the set of organizational regulations and standards exercised by management to provide strategic direction, ensuring that objectives are achieved, risks are managed properly, and resources are used responsibly. Governance structure is different from agency to agency based on the nature of the agency’s work and information. IT governance is the structure that defines the power and decision-making structure that an agency has set to direct the implementation of an IT project. Setting up IT governance guidelines helps to align projects such as PRM with the enterprise architecture, align solutions to business objectives, and ensure that expectations for IT are met, its resources are managed and risks alleviated.

Effective governance mechanisms are those that have been actively designed, create collaboration between stakeholders, IT professionals, and users. Also those that coordinate many IT projects and balance the conflicting needs. Effective governance mechanisms are used to organize the process of on-going leadership and oversight of PRM projects, ensuring that each person’s role and responsibility.

Paperless records governance structure comprises three gears, executive board addressing the strategic issues, operational board defining procedures, and the technical board addressing system challenges of PRM. Three essential factors are to be considered for continuity and success of PRM projects; leadership, accountability, and oversight. Paperless Records Management governance structure projects should align within the IT governance structure that already exists in the agency. The most effective governance structures are that tackling the relationship among groups providing strategic direction and program oversight, noting the responsibilities and work of each, as well as meeting schedules.
Appendix A: Tips for good ERM project governance

- Develop a compelling business case for your ERM project, a set of business and functional requirements for ERM, and specify programs and record types/formats that are both in- and out-of-scope.

- Build on existing IT project governance structures that guide and oversee their strategic and operational missions within your agency.

- Actively design IT governance structures (as opposed to letting governance occur by default). This ensures that those who ought to have input into the decision-making process are included (senior management; IT; records managers, producers, and users).

- Develop a system for communicating project status and developments reporting to the ERM team, management, and stakeholders (producers and users of agency records).

- Maintaining a central repository for decisions made with regard to your ERM project will help newcomers to the team understand the rationale for prior decisions.

- Adopt simple governance structures that are easily understood by all. This encourages people to utilize the mechanisms in place to resolve any issues that may arise during the project (e.g., ownership of and access to records).

- Limit the number of decision-making structures to minimize confusion as to whom to consult when.

- Resist frequent redesigns of your governance structure so that staff can easily remember those with whom they need to confer/consult.

- Establish specific project deliverables and a timetable for delivery that has been agreed to by all staff affected by the shift to ERM at your agency.

- Design processes for handling exceptions so that all major decisions relating to the project will be made within the governance structure.

- Educate managers as to how to use governance mechanisms.
