

Recommended Practice

A thorough feasibility and business analysis must be completed and approved by the program's ministry prior to starting the digitization project. Carefully thinking through the many components of a digitization project will go a long way towards ensuring a successful outcome.

Follow ministry specific policies and guidelines regarding project management and business analysis to ensure that the digitization project will meet the ministries requirements.

Ministries must also ensure that each digitization project meets ministry specific imaging or digitization directives or policies. This includes ensuring that appropriate stakeholders are involved in the project, in accordance with the roles and responsibilities identified in applicable directives or policies.

Questions to explore include:

- What is the scope of the project?
- What is the business rationale?
- Is digitization the only option?
- How does the project fit into the ministry's IMT strategic plan?
- What efficiencies can be gained?
- Are other systems and/or business processes affected?
- Can the LOB (line of Business) Application be integrated with the digitized records repository to ensure a seamless experience for the end user?
- How will legal, privacy and records management requirements be addressed?

Potential advantages and disadvantages of implementing a digitization program

Ministries must consider whether a digitization program is suitable for their needs. Depending on the nature of the records and how the records will be used, a digitization program can have advantages or disadvantages.

Advantages include:

- Ability to use digital media instead of paper.
- Instantaneous retrieval time when the digital records are well indexed.
- Greater sharing of information between ministries and programs.
- Multiple consecutive users and user access levels are possible.
- Ease of information dissemination.
- Ease of use of digitized business records in vital records and disaster recovery plans.
- Ready access to digitized records, which may assist organizations needing to retrieve information efficiently during litigation and discovery.
- No loss of digital record quality from generation to generation. Well-made copies and derivatives can be as good as the original digital records.

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Disadvantages include:

- Digital records are not readable without computer equipment.
- Potentially significant equipment costs, including hardware and software.
- Potential for hardware and software obsolescence.
- Indexing requirements may be more extensive than is required with other formats. Unless records are arranged in a logical sequence or clearly indexed, it may be difficult to identify a series or to use groups of records as a series.
- Different types of scanners may be required to scan text, oversize items, photographic prints, slides, and other formats.
- Digital quality control and both image and metadata capture and management are complex, time-consuming processes requiring expertise.
- Complex closure criteria and disposition rules may mean potential problems in implementing disposition which must be addressed and can include the following:
 - If records are stored without regard to retention periods on an individual disk or in an individual directory, each record must be individually selected for destruction or moved to offline storage.

Thorough consideration of the above advantages and disadvantages and a review of how the project fits into the ministry's strategic and operational objectives should be considered and documented.

What to include in the business analysis

In considering how digitization fits into your ministry's overall strategic plan, IT strategy, and project management methodology, consider these questions and document the relevant responses.

- What is your purpose in digitizing business records?
- Does the project support the ministry's mission?
- What are the intended uses of the digitized business records?
- Who are the intended users inside and outside the GoA? Should they be involved in the project?
- Who owns the digitization project?
- What are the physical characteristics of the original records collection (refer to Selection of Documents section)?
- What is the project's timeframe?
- How is the project being funded?
- Who will be responsible at each stage of the project?

Provide a clear outline of the business rationale to digitize records, including:

- Identification of business drivers,
- Objectives,
- Scope
- Constraints of the project and

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- Risk assessment

Documenting the business analysis

All decisions and rationale for those decisions must be documented. This will help future employees understand why certain decisions were made and assist in proving that the records and the digitization project were handled in the most appropriate manner.

Items to include in the documentation include:

- Research (including reference to relevant standards, guidelines or policies)
- Analysis
- Conclusions and rationale
- Cost benefit and other relevant financial reports
- Legal or FOIP opinions
- Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) if applicable
- Records management recommendations.