Office of the State Archivist

Records of Collaboration Tools FAQs

WHAT IS A COLLABORATION TOOL?

Collaboration tools can be simple file shares or sophisticated virtual workspaces, where users communicate, develop joint policies and guidance, and collaborate on projects. Companies such as Microsoft, Google and Amazon offer collaboration tools in their enterprise software. Tasmanian government collaboration tools include:

- OneDrive for Business
- SharePoint Online
- Microsoft Teams
- Yammer
- Skype for Business
- Outlook Online.

Other common tools include Google Docs, Dropbox, Slack, Webex, and Zoho, and new ones continue to enter the market.

DO COLLABORATION TOOLS HOLD RECORDS?

Almost certainly. Any information created or stored in a collaborative tool is a State record when it is evidence of business activities such as decisions, actions, or provision of services. Your recordkeeping responsibilities under the *Archives Act 1983* (Tas) still apply, so follow your organisational information management policy.

For safety, save key drafts, finalised documents and important decisions in your approved organisational recordkeeping system.

DOES SOMEONE NEED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECORDKEEPING?

The lead agency usually assumes responsibility for recordkeeping. This approach works well for collaboration with other government agencies and external organisations. Within your organisation, the group owner(s) might have this role. It is important that responsibility is allocated to someone.

Whatever approach you take, develop a procedure that everyone understands, and can follow.

THERE ARE SO MANY COLLABORATION TOOLS, HOW DO I CHOOSE?

Use tools approved by your organisation. They may already meet information management requirements or have robust processes to protect information, with added benefits of in-house support and advice.

If you decide to use other non-approved applications, be aware that the risks to information increase.

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WHAT RISKS SHOULD I BE CONSIDERING WHEN CHOOSING / USING A COLLABORATION TOOL AND WHAT PRECAUTIONS SHOULD I BE TAKING?

Collaboration tools are fantastic for productivity but can introduce new risks:

Risk	Problem	Remedies
Unable to meet legislative requirements	Information held in government collaboration tools still needs to comply with privacy, security, right to information (RTI) and recordkeeping requirements, but compliance is not achievable out-of-the-box without additional configuration or extra controls.	Provide clear rules for users about what information they can and can't share in collaboration tools, via policy, training, and technical controls. For example, highly sensitive information may need higher levels of protection than the collaboration tool offers. Sensitive personal information may need to be stored in Australia, or countries with similar privacy laws.
Unauthorised access and unlawful deletion of information	Government organisations are expected to be accountable to the public. Collaboration with multiple users and users external to the organisation increases the risk of accidental changes or deletion of information, or even malicious attacks.	Put additional controls in place to ensure that records are protected from unauthorised access, or from unlawful alteration or deletion. For example, audit log alerts notify the appropriate person if unauthorised access occurs.
Appropriate records not made and kept	Collaboration tools may have multiple owners, causing confusion about who owns the information and who is responsible for recordkeeping and compliance. Some records may have value as State archives.	Clarify ownership and rights over records at the outset, and if necessary, regularly remove records from the collaboration tool and store in an approved recordkeeping system. For example, you may decide to capture key records of decisions and final versions of documents in your organisation's recordkeeping system and leave behind drafts and background research.
Information loss	Service models means that content can be lost if the service changes, or even part of normal services, such as automated deletion.	Unsupported, external collaboration tools may change their service model and not notify their customers. For example, if a provider advises their service will be disabled, move or convert records from that service to one that is being actively managed.

CONTACT US

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Records of Collaboration Tools is part of the *Tasmanian Government Information Management Framework*. It supports the *Information and Records Management Standard*. This is a living document and we will make minor changes as needed. If you notice anything that needs updating, please let us know.

Document Development History

Version	Date	Comments
1.1	28/09/2020	Formatting and typographical corrections
1	16/07/2020	Initial release