

Managing information



The right information can completely change the way you look at a problem. Having relevant, complete and accurate information helps to improve decision-making. Sharing information can have a huge impact. Taking time to focus on the technical side of managing information can provide your agency with more reliable reporting.

Quality of data and information

We continued to find widespread shortcomings in data and information throughout the public sector. Some agencies failed to record important decisions or activity. Others did not effectively analyse, use or disseminate the information they held. Some agencies did not model or forecast options and plans effectively. Nonetheless there were positive examples where agencies had good quality data and information.

'[The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's] spatial data has long been recognised for its high quality, and efforts to ensure that it is supported by mature and robust governance and management processes have made it one of Victoria's most valuable and highly used data sources.'
—*Access to Public Sector Information*
(December 2015)

Systems and controls

Today, the public sector does much of its work using information systems. We found examples of out-of-date systems, including those used for financial management and reporting, that undermined efficiency and effectiveness. We found that, although financial reporting systems and controls throughout the public sector are generally sound, many weaknesses remained, including in security controls.

'IT security controls need improvement—IT security control weaknesses account for 68 per cent of all IT audit findings. There is poor management of IT security, particularly relating to user access and alignment with Victorian Government IT security standards.'
—*Financial Systems Controls Report: Information Technology 2014–15*
(October 2015)

Record-keeping

Often, agencies could not show why or how they had spent funds, made decisions or managed risks. However, record-keeping is not just about creating an audit trail. It is a fundamental governance matter because it is about retaining corporate knowledge and improving how the public sector works. Addressing this shortcoming is a straightforward way of improving the public sector's efficiency, economy and effectiveness. We found pervasive inadequacies in record-keeping.

'The absence of documentation for three of the 15 selected projects is a significant issue, as it is impeding effective project governance by agencies and means we have been unable to assess if these projects addressed key elements in the investment lifecycle guidance.'
—*Managing and Reporting on the Performance and Cost of Capital Projects*
(May 2016)

Self-assessment questions

- 1 What information does my agency collect and how does it use it? Is this enough? Could this be improved?
- 2 Are my agency's information and monitoring systems in place, up to date, secure, and meeting users' needs?
- 3 Is my agency committed to record-keeping, including training our staff and allocating enough time and resources to record-keeping? Is it easy to trace decisions and demonstrate activities? Are key processes documented properly?