

VPDSF INFORMATION SECURITY MANAGEMENT COLLECTION

EXTRACT OF CHAPTER 1 – APPENDIX A

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND EXAMPLE INFORMATION ASSETS

Sample Questions

The below table presents sample questions that organisations may use in a broader questionnaire as part of their information review.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS	COMMENTS
What are the core information assets created or used in each business area?	Request a title and description (overview) of each information asset
What format is information stored in (soft or hard copy)?	For soft copy material, identify what digital format this takes (e.g. .doc, .ppt, .xls)
Where is the information stored? On a shared drive, database, EDRMS, or physical location if in hard copy form?	Request details of the soft copy location (i.e. pathway) or physical storage location of where the material is actively used
Who are nominated owners and custodians of the information asset?	Request a title and contact details for each information asset
What is the status of the information asset?	i.e. is the information actively used, or is the information inactive or considered legacy information?
What is the assessed business impact level (BILs) for the information asset?	This involves an assessment of potential compromise to official information – confidentiality, integrity and availability and applying a BIL rating ¹
Is the information used as input or output of a business process?	Request a brief description of the business processes
Is the information used in a decision making process?	If yes, request a brief description of the business making processes
Is the information used to evaluate a business rule or condition?	If yes, request a brief description of the business rule
Is the information subject to any information sharing agreements or arrangements (this can be formal or informal)	If yes, request a brief description of the agreements or arrangements

¹ See Chapter 2 of this Collection for steps on how to assess the value of information.

Sample Information Assets

The following high level information assets are offered purely as examples.

Depending on how an organisation defines its information assets, as well as its understanding of its information holdings will inform what material is ultimately recorded in the organisational IAR.

SAMPLE INFORMATION ASSETS	COMMENTS
A database of contacts	Each entry in the database may not need to be treated individually; the collection of pieces of data may therefore be considered one information asset. All the pieces of information within the asset will have similar risks associated with privacy and storage of personal information.
All files associated with a specific project	This might include spreadsheets, documents, images, emails to and from project staff and any other form of records. All the individual items may be gathered together and treated the same as they have similar definable content, and the same value, business risk and lifecycle.
All the financial data for an organisation may be considered a single asset	There are very specific risks to the business if this information is mismanaged and you may also have an obligation to provide transparency of information, which could be problematic.
HR records	These can be collections of hard and soft copy communications and documents related to the employment of an employee stored under the person's name or identification number, including but not limited to: forms, letters, memos, reports, lists, e-mails, etc. The records serve as the historical record of information pertaining to an employee from date of hire to separation, and contain some pre-employment and post-employment information. This can also include records covering employment, position classification, wage or salary, employee relations, performance management, training, organisational development, attendance and paid time-off usage, etc.
Budget papers	This may consist of the budget speech, budget highlights, four budget papers, Ministerial statements, and portfolio budget statements. Ministerial media releases and budget kits can also be useful sources of information.

Information that shouldn't be considered an information asset

Systems, applications and databases that collect, manage or store information are not information assets, however the information contained within them is. The level of granularity that an organisation defines its assets may evolve, as the organisation matures in its understanding of what it has. I

It is unlikely that an organisation could treat all the content in its records management system as a single asset as the content is likely to cover a diverse range of unrelated topics, each requiring different maintenance and management. Depending on the content in the system, certain records may be grouped into similar types and ultimately considered an information asset.

It is important to note that 'Unofficial' information (such as personal correspondence) should not be considered an information asset of the business, despite sometimes being captured on official organisational systems (i.e. email systems).