Evaluation Checklist:

Records Management

Pre-RFX Supplement | 2026

Who This Is For

This checklist is built for public sector teams evaluating records management capabilities. It is most useful when:

- Your organization relies on a modern collaboration or content platform (for example, Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, or a legacy Enterprise Content Management solution), but the built-in controls do not give you the precision, automation, or reporting you need.
- You are replacing or re-evaluating a legacy records platform.
- Storage growth, public records (FOIA/open records) workload, eDiscovery workload, or audit findings are creating urgency.

How To Use This Checklist

Start with outcomes
Align on what "better" means for public records response time, audit readiness, defensible disposition, and time saved.

Use the checkboxes to define requirements
For each item, decide whether it is required or preferred for this evaluation.

Request evidence
Use the "Evidence to request" prompts during demos and in written responses.

Score Consistently
If you are running a competitive process, translate requirements into a scoring rubric.

Watch for red flags
The "Red flags" prompts help you avoid common failure patterns.

1. Outcomes & Constraints

Define the mission problem first.

What Must Improve

- [ ] Public records requests (FOIA/open records) can be fulfilled faster without heroic effort.
- [ ] The organization can demonstrate audit readiness (retention, holds, disposition, and access controls).
- [ ] Records classification and disposition are consistent across departments.
- [ ] Manual workload for IT and records staff is reduced.
- [ ] The system supports a realistic operating model for the staffing available.

Constraints To Document Up Front

- [ ] Required standards and obligations are documented (for example, state records laws and retention schedules, local ordinances, sector-specific rules like CJIS where applicable, and any guidance your organization is expected to align to).
- [ ] Data residency and environment constraints are defined (cloud, hybrid, and any restricted workloads).
- [ ] Legal hold, litigation, and investigations constraints are defined.
- [ ] The organization's information types and sensitivity levels are defined (PII, law enforcement data, health, student data, etc.).

Evidence To Request

- "Show how the system proves retention and disposition actions were applied correctly."
- "Show the audit trail for a single record from creation through disposition or archival."

Red Flags

- The vendor can describe policy but cannot show end-to-end capability.
- The approach relies on one-time cleanups rather than repeatable controls.

2. Governance & Policy Enforcement

Make policy enforceable at scale.

- [ ] Retention policies can be implemented consistently across the organization's key repositories and systems of record.
- [ ] The system supports policy exceptions with approvals and documentation.
- [ ] Policies can be updated without reworking everything from scratch.
- [ ] Policy enforcement is automated wherever possible, not dependent on user behavior.
- [ ] Ownership and accountability for content are explicit and auditable.

Evidence To Request

- "Demonstrate how retention, holds, and disposition apply to content across the repositories your organization actually uses."
- "Demonstrate how the system handles exceptions and preserves defensibility."

Red Flags

- Governance requires ongoing scripting or manual intervention to remain accurate.
- The solution assumes uniform processes across departments that do not exist in reality.

3. Classification and File Plan Execution

Metadata, automation, and defensibility

- [ ] The organization can implement a practical classification model that maps to its file plan.
- [ ] Metadata standards can be enforced and validated (required fields, controlled vocabularies).
- [ ] Classification can be automated using rules, templates, and pattern-based logic where appropriate.
- [ ] The system supports exception handling without breaking the audit trail.
- [ ] The system can demonstrate consistent classification outcomes across different departments and content types.

Evidence To Request

- "Show how classification is applied at scale, including how errors are detected and corrected."
- "Provide examples of rules and workflows used to reduce manual tagging."

Red Flags

- Classification depends on users consistently doing the right thing.
- The model is too complex to maintain with the organization's staffing.

4. Administration Model

Central accountability, distributed execution.
This section matters when central IT cannot do 100% of the work, but still needs enterprise oversight.

- [ ] Role-based controls support delegated administration.
- [ ] Approvals and controls allow departments to move quickly without bypassing guardrails.
- [ ] Ownership is continuously validated (for example, “orphaned” sites and content can be identified).
- [ ] Access reviews can be performed and tracked.
- [ ] Reporting provides visibility across the enterprise and by department.

Evidence To Request

- “Demonstrate delegated administration with least-privilege access.”
- “Show how the system identifies and remediates orphaned content, collections, or workspaces.”

Red Flags

- Delegation creates shadow administration without oversight.
- Ownership and access reviews are ad hoc and not scheduled.

5. Public Records, eDiscovery, & Audit Workflows

Support the workflow, not just search.

- [ ] Search and collection workflows support public records requests and investigations without exporting everything manually.
- [ ] The system supports chain-of-custody expectations and defensible processes.
- [ ] Legal holds can be applied quickly, consistently, and audibly.
- [ ] Exports and reporting can be generated for stakeholders (legal, records leadership, auditors).
- [ ] The operating workflow is designed for the real work involved in responding, not just retrieval.

Evidence To Request

- “Walk through a public records request scenario end-to-end, including holds, collection, and reporting.”
- “Demonstrate the audit report that proves actions taken and who approved them.”

Red Flags

- The process depends on inboxes, spreadsheets, or one-off exports.
- Reporting cannot answer basic audit questions quickly.

6. Security & Compliance Readiness

Least privilege, monitoring, and continuous assurance.

- [ ] Access controls support least privilege and can be validated continuously.
- [ ] Guest access is governed with clear lifecycle rules.
- [ ] Sensitive data handling requirements are supported (classification, monitoring, sharing controls).
- [ ] The solution aligns to the frameworks and requirements that matter for the organization.

Evidence To Request

- “Show who has access to what, and how to remediate oversharing quickly.”
- “Show compliance reporting that maps to the organization’s control requirements.”

Red Flags

- The solution cannot provide clear, actionable visibility into access risk.
- Controls exist on paper but are not enforced in day-to-day operations.

7. Implementation & Operating Model

Time-to-value and long-term sustainability.

- [ ] The implementation plan includes data discovery and an initial governance baseline.
- [ ] Time-to-value is measured in weeks and months, not only in multi-year roadmaps.
- [ ] Ongoing operations are defined (roles, runbooks, recurring reviews).
- [ ] Training is tailored for IT, records staff, and business owners.
- [ ] The solution can scale across departments without requiring a large central team.

Evidence To Request

- A 90-day plan that includes milestones, owners, and measurable outcomes.
- Example runbooks for routine activities (holds, disposition reviews, access reviews).

Red Flags

- Success depends on one expert administrator or a single department.
- The operating model is unclear after go-live.

8. Evidence To Request in Demos

Shortlist prompts. Use these prompts to force clarity and avoid "PowerPoint compliance."

- [ ] Show a retention policy being applied to real content, then prove it via reporting.
- [ ] Show legal hold and exception handling, including who approved what and when.
- [ ] Show delegated administration in action, including guardrails and audit trails.
- [ ] Show how the system identifies oversharing and remediates it at scale.
- [ ] Show how classification is applied, validated, and corrected.
- [ ] Show how the platform supports a public records request scenario end-to-end.

9. Reference Questions

Validate outcomes, not satisfaction. Ask references questions that verify results:

- [ ] What improved measurably (response time, audit findings, manual hours, storage growth)
- [ ] How did adoption change once governance was enforced?
- [ ] What did implementation require from IT and records staff?
- [ ] What surprised you (hardest part, easiest win)?
- [ ] What would you do differently if starting over?

Optional Module: Storage Lifecycle & Cost Control

This module is useful when storage costs, retention obligations, and growth rates are creating budget risk.

- [ ] The organization can measure storage growth and forecast budget impact.
- [ ] Lifecycle policies can move content to appropriate tiers without breaking compliance.
- [ ] Archiving and disposition are policy-driven, not ad hoc.
- [ ] The solution provides reporting that supports finance and IT planning.

Evidence To Request

- “Show how lifecycle policies reduce growth without creating compliance risk.”
- “Provide reporting that connects policy to measurable storage outcomes.”

Red Flags

- Cost control is treated as a manual clean-up project.
- Archiving breaks discoverability or audit requirements.

Notes For Evaluation Teams (When To Turn This Into an RFX)

Consider issuing a formal solicitation when:

- The organization needs a defensible, repeatable records program that spans departments.
- The current environment is creating unacceptable compliance risk.
- Storage and lifecycle costs are forcing a strategic decision.
- The operating model requires tooling to scale delegated administration with enterprise oversight.

If a formal RFX is not yet appropriate, this checklist can be used to support market research and early vendor conversations.

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