

Information Governance in the Context of Policy Evaluation

Paraphrasing the Oxford English Dictionary on governance there are three meanings:

- (i) the action, manner or fact of governing, (ii) controlling or regulating influence, and (iii) the conduct of life or business.

All of these come into play in information governance to varying degrees when applied to the evaluation of policy initiatives.

Suffusing the whole approach is “doing it right” – that means right by the citizen **and** right by the organisation (government).

Also underlying all aspects of information governance when evaluating policy initiatives are the passage of time and the evolution of risk:

- Policy initiatives include the processing of information over time to achieve the desired outcomes. Information must be timely and fit for purpose at all stages of the realisation of a policy initiative; if not it will at best have no value or at worst be harmful.
- Throughout the process from policy initiatives to desired outcomes there are risks and opportunities associated with the use of information, which need to be balanced as they evolve.

So, what should be the thrust of an evaluation of a policy initiative from an information governance perspective? - Does it use the right information involving the right people using the right processes at the right time – no more and no less?

Why “no more and no less”? Because information is valuable (both to government and the citizen) and should be being used. If we do not need to use it or it is not fit for purpose then it should not be kept or collected. Moreover, we need to be sure that the right people will be dealing with the information and it is not available to anyone else. Failure to observe these matters puts trust at risk.

When evaluating policy initiatives from objectives to outcomes through information processes as affected primarily by people issues but also by information asset issues, a high level set of factors to be considered in the context of the above discussion is:

- Objectives – purpose and scope.
- Outcomes – delivery and performance.
- People – culture, education, roles involved and organisational psychology.
- Process – the information lifecycle: acquisition, validation, management, publishing, updating or disposal.
- Information assets – intellectual property rights; knowledge, information and data; hardware and software.

And finally, it is worth re-emphasising that risk and opportunity need to be examined throughout to achieve an appropriate evaluation of a policy initiative.