

ENT-302: Enterprise Digitization Guidelines and Best Practices

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Purpose of this Document

This document outlines the guidelines and best practices for digitizing documents in the executive branch agencies of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It focuses on the agency **Digitization Plan** (alternatively, Scanning Plan) and its elements, in the context of the agency’s Document Management program.

Applicability

This document outlines guidelines and best practices for appropriate document handling and applies to all documents and systems under the authority of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. As the Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT) continues to modernize our document handling procedures and systems, we will update and develop this document to reflect any changes.

Commonwealth agencies, users, and associated entities such as vendors shall adhere to the associated policy, standards, and guidelines published in the Commonwealth of Kentucky Enterprise IT Policies. Each version of this document supersedes the previous one. COT recommends reviewing this document for changes at least annually, or when beginning or changing digitization systems or processes.

Definitions and Acronyms

Digitization: The process of converting a hard-copy or non-digital record into digital format. This includes digitizing text, photographs, maps, microfilm, converting analog recordings to digital media, etc. Also known as digital imaging or scanning.

Document Processing: The creation, handling, labeling, and modification of text documents, including indexing methods for text retrieval based on content.

Document Validation: Periodic inspections of documents to ensure the agency is meeting document processing expectations.

FTE: Full Time Equivalent. A unit that indicates the workload of an employed person. For example, a staff member employed full-time would be one FTE, whereas a part-time staff member working half-days would be 0.5 FTE.

FTI: Federal Tax Information

OCR: Optical Character Recognition. Software or features that convert character images into searchable text, and can be used to harvest information or create search index fields.

PHI: Protected Health Information

PII: Personally Identifiable Information. Any data that could potentially identify a specific individual.

PPI: Pixels per inch

Public record or record: All books, papers, maps, photographs, cards, tapes, disks, diskettes, recordings, and other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which are prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public agency

Agency Document Management Plan

Agency documents are an important resource for staff, citizens, and public officials. Agencies keep these documents in numerous formats including paper, imaged copies in various imaging systems, film reels, on-line computer systems, desktop hard drives, and optical media. These documents include timesheets, e-mails, correspondence, contracts, drawings, subdivision plans, reports, minutes, blueprints, digital photographs, videotapes, and recordings.

The CIO-122 Enterprise Document Management Policy requires that executive branch agencies create a **Document Management Plan** that outlines an agency's *document management program*, including security, handling, storing, preservation, and destruction of documents, in accordance with statutory requirements. The plan shall also address privacy, retention, open records, and business needs. These considerations apply as well in the design, development, and operation of IT systems for handling documents and public records.

The Document Management Plan is a living (versioned) document used for ongoing agency analysis, planning, and decision-making, updated at least annually. Some examples of its uses:

- As an agency road map to guide 'rolling-wave' (short-term/long-term) program planning.
- To document conclusions and rationales from various analyses (e.g., needs, feasibility, or cost-benefit analyses) as reference points for downstream planning.
- To provide a structure and format to guide the agency's annual planning process. E.g., for formulating and formally presenting alternative business cases to executive management (e.g., for a program approach or a procurement).
- As a communication tool to ensure that document management team members are well informed and have a voice in the plan, thereby enlisting their buy-in and accountability.

The plan shall address agency management of its entire inventory of documents. A primary focus of the plan is determine whether to retain and store documents in their physical format, to digitize them, or to implement a hybrid solution (some portion in physical format, some portion digitized). Some agencies may not need to digitize all of their documents. Some agencies may need or want to digitize documents but are not able to, owing to overriding business constraints. The plan should document the reasons for these decisions.

Agency Digitization (Scanning) Plan

If agencies determine the business need to digitize documents, ENT-103 Enterprise Digitization Standards requires that they develop and document scanning policies and processes in an agency **Digitization Plan**. (Digitization is often called "scanning;" so these terms may be used interchangeably in this document and the associated policy, standards and guidelines.) The plan covers an agency's *digitization program effort at any given stage of its development*, e.g., whether in its initial investigation stage (still considering its approach to scanning), or in a stage of mature scanning capability. For example:

- Agencies considering scanning can establish and document the business need, feasibility, justification, and roadmap to set up operations.
- Agencies that already have scanning operations can validate and update their business needs, documentation, processes and practices, and can plan next steps.

An agency's Digitization (Scanning) Plan is an integral part of its Document Management Plan. Like the Document Management Plan, the Digitization Plan is a living (versioned) document used for ongoing, scanning-specific analysis, planning, and decision-making, updated at least annually. In addition to the general uses of the Document Management Plan described above, the agency Scanning Plan can be used:

- To identify, document and evaluate alternative scanning solution scenarios
- To build a playbook leading to greater 'paperless process' capability.

The Digitization Plan can serve as a template for a structured approach to guide periodic analysis and planning. It is a framework composed of *seven core elements/factors* that must be planned individually, but have interdependencies. Consequently, they must be revisited as circumstances in agency's operations change; some elements may have more or less relevance or weight at different stages. At minimum, the Scanning Plan shall include the following elements:

1. Business Assessment
2. Document Analysis and Cataloging
3. Document Processing and Personnel
4. Scanning Output Requirements
5. Security Requirements (hard copy and digital data)
6. Storage Repository Planning
7. Hard-copy Document Disposition.

The Digitization Guidelines map directly to this outline of planning elements. Agencies may include other topics in their plan as well. E.g., agency-specific scanning policies, processes, or practices.

Enterprise Digitization Guidelines

The following sections provide guidance and best practices related to the seven digitization planning elements. When an agency is conducting the actual planning process (initially or during an annual review/update), the interdependencies between these elements may require an iterative approach – working back and forth between some of them, perhaps adjusting one in light of a change to another.

1. Business Assessment

If an agency determines to pursue or continue scanning operations, they also need to identify *the best approach* to accomplish their business and scanning goals. Some agencies may choose to perform the scanning operations *themselves*. Other agencies may choose to use *a vendor* to perform those operations. Still other agencies may choose a hybrid form; for example, using a vendor to scan backlog information, while agency staff scan incoming and day-to-day documents.

Business Needs

Agencies may want or need to digitize their documents to improve their operations and to meet their responsibilities to the citizens and customers. Agencies should consider at least the following factors

to determine the needs, benefits, feasibility, and efficacy of a digitization program initiation or improvement effort.

➤ **Public records retention requirements**

Digitization and automation elements of an agency's Document Management Plan can greatly enhance an agency's ability to meet statutory and business requirements related to retention, preservation, and destruction of agency information. Whether or not an agency uses hard-copy or digital documents, COT recommends each agency review their particular retention schedule on a regular basis to determine whether all existing series (record categories) still apply and meet business needs, any new series may be applicable, or retention guidance is needed. Agencies should coordinate with their records retention officers and Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA) to maintain or establish accurate and useful retention schedules.

When considering or establishing a *scanning operation* in particular, an agency's document retention periods can be a deciding factor. For example, when documents' retention periods expire within a relatively short period (e.g., less than 6 months), and depending on their origin and use, the agency may decide not to scan. It may be more cost-effective to simply retain the physical copies until the retention period expires, and then destroy them, rather than incurring the costs of document preparation ('prep'), processing, storage, and associated personnel resources. Conversely, digitization of documents allows agencies to organize and index their documents with information to support their records management and retention efforts – providing automated processing, improved search capabilities, notifications of expiration, destruction, etc. It is a matter of weighing costs versus capabilities.

➤ **Open records requests**

Agencies should consider scanning documents if they receive frequent open records requests. That way they can automate the process of scanning the originals, providing digitized copies for open records requests, and maintaining consistent, redacted versions. This in turn reduces errors and frees up resources from repetitious document handling, while still providing transparency and oversight.

➤ **Document condition**

If an agency has documents that are in poor or worsening physical condition, and the documents need to be retained for a long time or permanently, agencies should digitize them. This will reduce handling of the physical documents while still providing access to the necessary content for business needs.

➤ **Statutory reasons for digitization**

Agencies may need to scan documents to meet specific statutory requirements or to improve their responsiveness to federal, state, and local compliance requirements.

Business Benefits

Agencies should consider the business benefits of digitized documents, enabling them to:

- improve their business processes (more paperless processes)
- increase process automation and workflow
- address access control to the newly available business data
- create opportunities to develop and exploit their business intelligence

- be more responsive to requests for business information
- share the same documents with multiple users simultaneously
- allow greater collaboration
- provide documents in a more accessible format (e.g., readers for the visually impaired)
- access documents in difficult-to-access formats (e.g., large maps or microfilm)
- access high volumes of records frequently
- tailor document security
- reduce physical storage requirements.

Business Case

As part of their business case, agencies should consider and document any operational factors that could impact digitalization planning directly or indirectly. For example:

- Critical to any Digitization Plan is the identification and management of available resources. This includes financial resources, available personnel, hardware/software tools, etc. Agencies should identify the funding needs and available funding.
- The assessment of current operations should include business and workplace changes that have already been, or are in the process of being planned (e.g., building moves, reduction in available office space, funding or personnel, etc.).

The business case is a documented value proposition providing justification for undertaking or further developing a digitization program. It summarizes the rewards, costs, and risks of alternative options (including not taking action), and the rationale for the preferred solution. A value proposition is the sum total of benefits that the agency and its customers can expect to receive.

The agency's digitization planning team should evaluate each of the planning elements with the goal of formulating a solution that provides *the best balance* of attainable accomplishments (maintenance, development, or both) for scheduling in the first or next year's phase of the program. I.e., the big picture of how all the puzzle pieces can best fit together. In short, what the new or next digitization operations plan will look like. By its nature, this is an iterative process.

2. Document Analysis and Cataloging

Document Inventory

Once an agency identifies their business needs that support a scanning initiative, agencies shall conduct a document inventory. Agencies at a minimum should:

- Identify and categorize the various document types in use (e.g., permits, licenses, maps, unique formats such as microfilm or green cards)
- Identify the appropriate retention schedule series and, when feasible, associate the agency's documents with them
- Estimate the volume of documents in each category
- Identify the physical location of the documents (whether local, stored at KDLA, or in other storage locations)
- Identify backlog documents versus new or day-to-day incoming scan requirements.

Agencies should document their inventory findings in the Digitization Plan.

Document Prioritization

After agencies consider their inventory, they should document how they intend to prioritize documents for digitization. They may organize documents by type, case, permit, or other logical configurations. They also should document how they will prioritize any backlog versus new or day-forward scanning needs, ad hoc requests, re-scans, document sets with elevated priorities, and so on.

Document Indexing/Metadata

For effective, efficient, and accurate retrieval of digitized content, agencies should use indexing (or metadata) associated with scanned documents. According to ENT-103 Enterprise Digitization Standards, agencies shall use indexing or a similar method to maintain metadata about scanned documents. While COT does not require agencies to replace or overhaul their existing processes, they shall incorporate document indexing when upgrading or replacing software used in their scanning program.

Agencies may index their content during the capture process or during post-processing. COT recommends documenting the indexing requirements in their agency's scanning process for training, historical, and compliance purposes. Indexing shall include at least the date of the document's origin. Indexing should also include dates of any image edits, and other agency-specific information that supports the agency's business needs (for example, permit numbers, licenses, or case numbers).

3. Document Processing and Personnel

Process Stages and Roles

Agencies should formalize and document their scanning process. The process steps should cover staff retrieval, handling, and preparation of documents for scanning, scanning operations, maintenance operations, post-processing and quality control of digital images, and final document handling, storage, or disposition.

Depending on resource availability, time constraints, and other factors, some agencies may be able to dedicate different staff members to separate roles or functions. Agencies with more limited resources may have staff members serve in multiple roles. The Digitization Plan should reflect how the agency assigns staff to basic roles, such as document handling, document preparation, scanning, post-processing, and quality control. Agencies should also identify the appropriate authority or job title for specific operations; e.g., agencies may assign document preparation to temporary staff. COT recommends that a supervisor or higher conducts the document validation portion of scanning processes. As a minimum agencies shall ensure that a Commonwealth staff member conducts the document validations.

- **Document handling:** Depending on factors such as storage location, available resources, staff skillsets, etc., agencies may need to assign staff to perform document handling. For example, in cases involving retrieval of documents from off-site storage (or in sensitive or access-controlled areas, for example) and delivering them to the agency's scanning location. When the documents are easily accessible and collocated, agencies may include this role with others, such as the document preparation role.

- **Document preparation:** Staff in this role are responsible for preparing sets of documents for input to the scanning operator. Agencies will determine and document the ‘doc prep’ standards and processes to cover such issues as:
 - Removing staples, bindings, paper clips, etc. so that scanners can process each page
 - Determining the order of pages, document types, and how to organize them for the agency’s digital needs
 - Addressing how to handle notes (“sticky notes”) when they are attached to document pages
 - Flattening or straightening documents, and repairing documents if torn or otherwise damaged
 - Handling sensitive, protected, or confidential information
 - Creating and inserting barcoded index sheets, if necessary or desired.

- **Scanning:** The scanning role will be responsible for taking the retrieved and prepared documents and physically scanning the documents. Scanners will ensure that hardware and software settings adhere to the defined image standards depending on the document type. This role may also be responsible for routine maintenance, preliminary quality control, progress or issues reports, etc. As with other roles, depending on the agency’s needs and available resources, staff members may share one or more roles.

- **Post-processing:** This role is responsible for ensuring the scanned images meet image requirements and quality standards. This may require post-processing to convert documents to OCR, or adjusting images for brightness and contrast, image skew, speckling, or other stated requirements. These are discussed later in this document.

- **Quality control/document validation:** Agencies shall incorporate quality control and document validation steps into their scanning processes to ensure the integrity, reliability and utility of the scanned documents for agency use. Agencies may use quality enhancement tools to ensure the quality of the images, and incorporate periodic reviews of scanned images to ensure that documents are complete, legible, useable, and meet the agency’s statutory and business requirements. Agencies shall incorporate processes that identify and remediate discrepancies when scanning errors occur. Agencies shall document their quality control and document validation analysis and processes in the Digitization Plan.

Human Resource Requirements

Agencies should identify and document the available personnel, expertise, job titles that perform particular functions in the digitization process, scheduling requirements, supporting guidance, etc. Agencies may identify these resources in detail, though COT discourages labeling particular individuals. Instead, use job titles or similar descriptions, such as “32 FTEs per day” or “Four state employees, two contractors, and one temp staff member per day.”

As agencies’ resources, requirements, volume, etc. may differ, agencies will need to analyze the optimal solution for *their* needs. As an example, for agencies with high-volume scanning and sufficient resources, it may be most efficient to allocate multiple FTEs to the document preparation task supporting one FTE scanner position. Agencies should consider scanner throughput, maintenance tasks, training, leave, etc., in determining the appropriate level of resources to accomplish their scanning goals.

Service Provider Requirements

After inventorying and analyzing their document management needs, agencies may opt to start or continue scanning operations themselves, or they may choose to use an approved service provider (vendor) to conduct the scanning operations in accordance with state contracts and COT guidance. When agencies use a vendor for their scanning, they should establish requirements, including the following as a minimum:

- Receipts for transfers of documents and files
- Output format
- Timeframe for processing (“turnaround” criteria)
- Prioritization or expediting of documents (exceptions/change requests)
- Security and handling of documents and stored/transmitted images
- Temporary and permanent storage of documents
- Reporting, to include:
 - Boxes or documents processed
 - Date of pickup
 - Date of return
 - Non-routine issues in processing
 - Items lost or damaged **by the vendor**
 - Other agency requests for information
- Electronic file delivery requirements
- Discrepancy mitigation and escalation procedures
- Rework for failing document validation, file corruption, or transport issues
- Explicit requirements on compensation for loss of documents or a failure of the processing.

Agencies should be responsible for the document preparation before scanning. However, if not feasible, agencies shall communicate the explicit requirements for how the vendor should prepare documents for scanning.

Agencies shall ensure agency staff perform data validation to ensure the digital documents meet their business requirements as stated in their contract and statement of work with the vendor.

4. Scanning Output Requirements

A significant concern when scanning agency documents is the resulting image quality and format. Agencies should use COT guidance and standards, and common industry standards, when identifying their requirements. The primary goal for scanning should be to create images that fairly, completely, and accurately portray the original documents. There should be images for all of the source documents; and the resulting images should meet the agency’s business and statutory needs and requirements.

Guidance on key quality and format issues includes:

Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

Agencies may want or need to use OCR or similar technologies for various reasons. They may want to collect content from documents to create indexing taxonomy, maximize search and retrieval tools, incorporate the collected data as business intelligence for decision-making, or recognize trends in their business areas. OCR does add some overhead to digitization processes, so agencies should evaluate

the benefit of OCR compared to the additional requirements, and determine the feasibility of including OCR. Where feasible, agencies should consider using OCR if it supports their business needs and if resources and business processes allow.

Agencies shall document in the Digitization Plan which class of documents, if any, they intend to scan using OCR. Not all document classes may need to be scanned using OCR techniques, so the Plan should outline which classes do require OCR and the reasoning why. Agencies may also include a description for the classes of documents not requiring OCR and the reasoning why not. This information can be used for historical and training purposes, and can provide insight into the agency's document review.

Output Format

Agencies must identify the appropriate output format for the digitized document. The most common formats include PDF, TIFF, JPG, and PNG. COT does not require agencies to replace or overhaul their existing processes and outputs with these formats. However, agencies shall incorporate these format standards in future planning. For specialized scanning applications, hardware, formats, or needs, absent COT standards or guidance, agencies shall adopt broadly accepted industry standards.

Some background and guidance on common formats includes:

➤ ***PDF (Portable Document Format)***

Agencies shall use the PDF format for documents that are primarily textual in nature or that require image-over-text content indexing (e.g., OCR). PDFs are a commonly used and easily read file type; the PDF format is ideal for text documents, forms, and images containing text. Agencies can use specific scanning features or post-processing on PDF documents for OCR, making the documents searchable and editable. Where feasible, agencies should try to scan using multipage PDFs rather than single-page PDFs.

For documents requiring long-term preservation according to statutory or business needs, agencies shall use the PDF/A format or other KDLA-approved format that allows portraying electronic documents in a manner that preserves their visual appearance over time, independent of the tools and systems used for creating, storing or rendering the files.

➤ ***TIFF, TIF (Tagged Image File Format)***

Agencies shall use the TIFF format for low-volume, stand-alone document scanning where the TIFF file can be passed on (manually or via automated workflow) to Enterprise Capture software for additional processing, such as OCR, image enhancement, conversion to PDF/A, etc. TIFFs handle images and data within a single file, saving text as a representation rather than as content of the document. TIFFs hold a great deal of information, so a downside of the format is large file size, which will affect storage and retrieval operations, increasing the costs. However, TIFFs are often needed for detailed scanning efforts, for example when scanning geographic maps.

➤ ***JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group)***

Agencies shall use the JPEG (or JPG) format for non-textual documents that are primarily graphical in nature (e.g., maps, photos, etc.) and do not require extensive detail or editing. The JPEG format is useful for images and compressing large files to a small size. This will speed up

retrieval operations and reduce storage costs, though generally the image quality is less than found in a TIFF file.

➤ **Other special use formats**

Agencies may save documents and images in other formats if those formats better suit agency requirements. These may include PNG (Portable Network Graphics Format), a format similar to JPG format in that they are useful for digitizing images, or GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) which also saves images digitally, similar to JPG and PNG technology. However, GIFs are typically larger, therefore creating similar issues to TIFF technology with storage size and retrieval.

Agencies may also scan to Microsoft Office formats (e.g., DOCX or XLSX) if additional processing or data manipulation is needed post-scanning. Agencies shall include the appropriate formats and requirements in the agency Scanning Plan.

Image Quality

As part of their Scanning Plan, agencies shall identify, document, and implement appropriate image quality controls. Agencies should consider image quality standards that meet statutory and business needs, and should include at least:

- **Color:** When scanning documents, agencies must determine whether to scan in color, gray-scale, or monochrome. Agencies may have requirements or desires to scan using these options, and the choices may change depending on the document type. While color may provide some clarity to certain documents, there can be some overhead costs in processing and storage. Agencies should consider using the appropriate color setting according to statutory requirements and agency business needs to ensure accurate and fair representation of their source documents. Agencies shall document this information in their Digitization Plans.
- **Resolution:** Agencies should check their various document types to determine the quality of their source documents and the legibility of the content, to identify the appropriate settings for their scanning resolution. For fair-to-good quality originals, COT recommends scanning documents at a minimum of 300 ppi. For more poor quality originals, COT recommends scanning at a minimum of 400 ppi. Various document types, such as maps or highly technical text documents, may require agencies to scan at even higher resolutions to achieve the desired resolution for image manipulation or use. Agencies shall document their resolution requirements and supporting analysis in their Digitization Plans.
- **Additional factors:** There are many other scanning factors and configurations to consider when establishing scanning standards and processes. These include skew, speckle, and contrast/brightness standards, for example. Agencies should configure their scanners and processes to address these factors, with the intent to identify the optimal settings to meet statutory and agency requirements in representing original documents accurately in digitized forms. Agencies shall document these settings in their agency processes, and COT recommends including this information in their Digitization Plans.

Scanner Configuration

For agency-led scanning, agencies must identify and document their output requirements (such as output format, resolution, etc.). This information can be used to configure the scanners and the

capture software to ensure the scanning process meets the agency's requirements. Agencies shall document their hardware and software configurations in their digitization processes, and should document high-level analysis and configurations in the agency's Digitization Plan.

5. Security Requirements (hard-copy and digital data)

Agencies are responsible for adhering to COT information security policies as well as federal, state, agency, and local security requirements. Agencies should evaluate their document security for both physical and digital security. Some security considerations that agencies shall document in their Digitization Plan include:

- ***Documents that contain confidential information, such as PII, PHI, FTI, or Criminal Justice information.*** These documents should be protected accordingly. Agencies should identify this confidential information during the document Inventory phase, as it may support or justify the digitization efforts if appropriate storage and access controls are not available.
- ***Existing physical security and controls.*** This includes ensuring that documents are kept in secure cabinets or rooms, have appropriate access controls and logs, etc. This also includes appropriate security of documents during transportation, such as between buildings, agencies or other similar entities, or between the agency and the vendor performing the scanning. Agencies may include other pertinent information such as environmental protection controls (e.g., inadequate fire suppression).
- ***Existing or planned security for information systems, processing, and storage.*** This includes identity and access management controls, encryption in transit or at rest (if appropriate), auditing requirements, etc.

6. Storage Repository Planning

Scanning documents requires storing the digitized files in the appropriate storage repositories. Scanning processes may require some temporary storage of files, and will certainly require a permanent storage repository as well. Agencies shall identify and document the appropriate storage repositories. For more guidance on the appropriate, COT-approved repositories, see [ENT-303 Enterprise Document Storage Guidelines and Best Practice](#). Agencies shall establish appropriate security and access controls for both temporary and permanent storage of those documents.

COT recommends agencies work with COT to select and organize their document repositories for optimal security, retrieval, retention policies, and other document management issues. Agencies shall document their document storage planning in their Digitization Plans.

7. Hard-copy Document Disposition

Agencies shall identify and document how they will dispose of the original hard-copy documents after scanning. Agencies must adhere to statutory requirements, COT and agency policies, KDLA records retention requirements, open records, and litigation hold requirements. Disposition options may include:

- Destruction
- Return to local storage
- Archive with KDLA
- Other agency-provided guidance and requirements.

Other Agency-Specific Topics

The topics above are the minimum plan elements. Agencies may include additional topics. E.g., agency scanning policies, processes, or practices.

Enterprise Digitization Best Practices

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Contact

For more information about digitization guidelines and best practices, please contact COT's Enterprise Content Management Services (ECM) Team, or the Commonwealth Service Desk by email ("Assign ticket to COT's ECM Services Team") or phone (502) 564-7576 or (800) 372-7434.

References

Helpful references can be found on the Enterprise IT Policies webpage.

Commonwealth of Kentucky Office of the Chief Information Officer Enterprise Guidelines	Commonwealth Office of Technology 500 Mero St Frankfort KY 40601
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