

# An introduction to digital continuity for suppliers

## THE DIGITAL CONTINUITY PROJECT

September 2009



This National Archives' fact sheet explains what we mean by digital continuity, why it's important for government and the wider public sector and what we are doing to ensure their digital information remains usable for as long as it is needed.

### The digital challenge

We live in a digital age – and one that is constantly evolving and changing. This has brought opportunities to government and the public sector, enabling dynamic services, greater interaction and faster, clearer communication in more engaging formats. But it's also created a significant challenge for those who have to manage and maintain access to

increasing volumes of information, created in increasingly diverse formats.

That challenge is to achieve **digital continuity**: the ability to use digital information with confidence for as long as it is needed, over time and through change. This isn't currently being addressed anywhere in the public sector in a coherent managed way. Without action throughout the information management lifecycle, digital information could become unusable – a liability not an asset.

### Why the public sector needs digital continuity

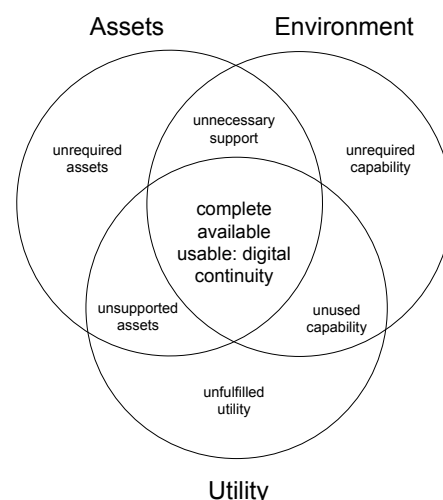
The public sector needs digital continuity because it protects the information it needs to do business. This enables it to operate accountably, effectively and efficiently, protect its reputation, take informed decisions, avoid and save costs, and deliver better public services. As our reliance on digital information increases, the impact of continuity failure becomes greater.

### In practice

Digital continuity needs to be addressed as an integral part of good IT management,

information assurance management and information management. It crosses disciplines because digital continuity requires information that is:

- **Complete** – *everything you need, and its context, is there.*
- **Available** – *you can find what you need.*
- **Usable** – *able to be used in the way that your business needs it.*



As this diagram shows, digital continuity (information that is complete, available and usable) can only be achieved when the public sector understands the business use it needs from its information, and ensures that its information assets and technical environment support that business use. Each of these three components can

move out of alignment particularly during change and over time – and that's when continuity can be lost. This understanding, and the appropriate actions needed at times of change, underpins the service we are developing for the public sector.

## The Digital Continuity service and market

The Digital Continuity project, managed by The National Archives and funded by central government departments, is developing a service that can be used by the whole public sector.

The service will be flexible, combining guidance and a Framework of tools and services.

- **Guidance**, for example on how to undertake digital continuity risk assessments and plan for action, and on specific issues, such as how to ensure you maintain continuity during system migration.
- **A Framework of commercially provided tools and services** that will help the public sector to understand and change its information assets and technical environment as

*necessary. The Framework will include a range of consultancy and other services to support the public sector.*

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## Procurement

We are procuring the Framework of tools and services with [Buying Solutions](#). This Framework will be divided into 'lots' or groups of tools and services. How we structure the lots is currently out for consultation in our [outline requirements](#). We welcome your feedback.

We aim to publish the Pre Qualifying Questionnaire (PQQ) in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) in November 2009. We anticipate that successful suppliers will be able to make their tools and services available via the Framework from mid 2010. Individual customers will then be able to call off products and services as required.

## Benefits of the Framework

- Easier access to the public sector market.
- Lower cost of sales through reduced tendering.
- Support from Buying Solutions.
- Streamlined and standardised processes

- Consistent terms and conditions.
- Quicker access to market as OJEU requirements are already fulfilled.

As a Buying Solutions Framework, the Digital Continuity Framework will be available for use across both central government, and the wider public sector comprising central government, local government, health, education, emergency services, defence, utilities and not for profit sectors. It also extends to devolved administrations and the local government, health, education and emergency services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Framework will also be available for use by any service provider acting on behalf of the above UK Public Sector Contracting Authorities.

We aim to launch the procurement in November 2009. Please monitor the Buying Solutions web-site to ensure you can play your part in this exciting initiative.

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