

Ohio Trustworthy Information Systems Handbook: Section 3

What is a trustworthy information system?

Trustworthiness refers to an information system's integrity and its ability to produce reliable and authentic information and records.

We chose the term *trustworthy* because it denotes integrity, ability and confidence. We use trustworthiness to describe information system accountability. We use the words *reliable* and *authentic* when we talk about the information and records that the information system creates. Reliability indicates a record's authority and is established when a record is created. Authenticity ensures that a record will be reliable throughout its life, whether that lifetime lasts six months, ten years, twenty years, or forever.

Government creates a lot of information and records, in a variety of ways and formats, and for a number of reasons. The most obvious reason that we create records is simply to do our business, whether that business means running the Governor's office, managing the state's welfare system, or keeping track of spending for a county, city, school district, or township.

There's another reason for creating records: government accountability. Information and records generated in the course of government business must reflect government's accountability. Government reports and is accountable to its elected officials, and ultimately to the people. Government records document and provide evidence that government is going about its business wisely or unwisely. They indicate whether government business gets managed and conducted properly in accordance with laws, statutes, regulations, and other requirements. Government records also document the history of our state and nation; they contain valuable information about our citizens and the social, economic, political, and natural environments in which we live.

Government accountability needs to be considered as information systems are developed. Computer-based information systems can do any number of tasks quickly and efficiently, but we don't always know who is accountable for these systems and the information that they create. The computer, unlike a human being, does not bear accountability for itself; people in government make information systems accountable. It follows, then, that in building information systems, we need to establish and create procedures, system documentation, and descriptions of system information as a means to make the system accountable.

Government needs trustworthy information systems to ensure accountability to the people.

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