



ASSET FORFEITURE MANAGEMENT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

A Practical Guide to Building a Consistent and Accountable Program



2027 GUIDE



Asset Forfeiture Is More Than Property Tracking

When an asset is seized, securing and inventorying it is only the beginning.

From there, the forfeiture process can involve identifying owners and interested parties, issuing notices, managing claims and legal proceedings, recording financial activity, and carrying out final disposition. Each activity can generate new information, documents, decisions, deadlines, and responsibilities that must remain associated with the asset and its forfeiture case.

In many agencies, forfeiture information is maintained across multiple systems, spreadsheets, documents, calendars, and departmental records. One system may show where an asset is stored, while another contains information about the related incident, investigation, or underlying case. Deadlines may be tracked in a spreadsheet or personal calendar, documents kept in a shared folder, and financial activity recorded on paper.

These systems and records may each contain part of the information, but none provides a complete view of the asset or its progress through the forfeiture process. Staff must piece together details from multiple locations, creating duplicate work and increasing the risk of errors, omissions, conflicting records, and overlooked deadlines or responsibilities.

A well-managed forfeiture process brings this information together and preserves its connection to the asset and forfeiture case. It gives everyone involved a dependable view of what has happened, where the asset stands, and what work remains.

This guide follows the asset forfeiture lifecycle from initial seizure and intake through legal review, financial activity, final disposition, and reporting. At each stage, it identifies practical ways agencies can improve consistency, visibility, accountability, and control.





Establish a Complete Asset Record at Intake

What an agency captures at intake shapes every step that follows.

A complete intake record helps the agency identify the property, connect it to the correct forfeiture case and related records, identify potential owners and interested parties, track custody and location, manage required actions, and document final disposition.

Missing, incomplete, or inconsistently recorded details can follow the asset throughout the process. Staff may need to return to reports, contact the seizing officer, search other systems, or reconstruct information before the forfeiture case can move forward. The gap may not become apparent until a notice, filing, financial report, audit, or disposition requires it.

An intake record need not capture every conceivable detail. It needs enough information to identify the asset, establish why and how it entered the agency's custody, connect it to the appropriate records and people, and initiate the next required actions. The exact information varies by jurisdiction, agency policy, case type, and asset type, but several categories are fundamental.



Identify the Asset Clearly

Begin the record with a description detailed enough to distinguish the asset from any other property. Depending on the asset type, this may include:

- Asset category and description
- Make, model, year, color, or distinguishing characteristics
- Serial number, VIN, account number, or other unique identifier
- Quantity, currency amount, or other applicable measurement
- Agency-assigned property, evidence, or asset number
- Photographs showing the asset and its condition at intake

Clear identification is especially important when a case involves multiple similar assets or when the property may remain in custody for an extended period.



Document the Seizure

Record when and where the seizure occurred, who conducted it, and the legal authority or supporting documentation involved. Connect the asset to the related incident, offense, or investigation and identify the person from whom it was seized. Include any initial notices or receipts and relevant observations or circumstances.

This information provides context and may establish the starting point for later deadlines and required actions.

Record Owners and Interested Parties

The person possessing an asset at the time of seizure may not be its only owner—or its owner at all. Identify all known people and organizations that may have an ownership or financial interest in the property.

Potential owners or interested parties include the person from whom the asset was seized, registered or titled owners, joint owners, and lienholders or secured parties. Also account for attorneys or authorized representatives and other known claimants or interested parties.

Record available contact information, ownership documentation, and the basis of each party's interest. If ownership has not been confirmed, distinguish verified details from those still under review.

Capture Condition, Value, Custody, and Location

The intake record identifies who received the asset, when it was received, where it is held, its condition, and the person or unit responsible. Photographs, condition notes, identifying numbers, and packaging, seal, or container information help establish its condition at intake. Include temporary transfers or special storage arrangements.

When recording an estimated or appraised value, include the valuation date, source, and method. This context is necessary if the value is later used in financial reports, management decisions, or disposition records.





Use Consistent Fields and Definitions

Standardized fields, required information, controlled selections, and validation rules improve intake quality and consistency while making assets easier to search, compare, report on, and review across cases.

Narrative notes help capture unique circumstances but do not replace structured fields for information the agency must regularly locate or report. Define common terms—especially asset categories, locations, statuses, and disposition types—so staff record information consistently.

Mark unknown information as unknown rather than estimating or assuming it. The record can flag incomplete items for follow-up while preserving what was known at intake.

Asset Intake Checklist

Before an asset moves beyond intake, confirm that the record includes:

- ☐ A clear asset description and unique identifiers
- ☐ An agency-assigned property, evidence, or asset number
- ☐ Photographs and condition information
- ☐ The date, time, location, and circumstances of seizure
- ☐ The seizing agency, unit, and personnel
- ☐ The related incident, underlying case, investigation, and evidence records
- ☐ Known owners, possessors, lienholders, and interested parties
- ☐ Available ownership and supporting documentation
- ☐ The estimated or appraised value and its source, when applicable
- ☐ The current custodian and storage location
- ☐ Notices, receipts, reports, orders, and other available documents
- ☐ Initial deadlines and tasks, with responsibility assigned
- ☐ Any missing information requiring follow-up

A complete intake record gives the agency a dependable starting point for managing the asset, the forfeiture case, and every responsibility that follows.



Track Location, Status, and Activity

Knowing where an asset is does not tell you where it stands in the forfeiture.

An asset can remain in one location while its procedural status and related activity change. It may also move to another location without advancing to a new stage. Agencies need to track both dimensions and preserve the activity that explains how the asset reached its current position.

Together, location, status, and activity provide a complete operational view:

INFORMATION	QUESTION IT ANSWERS	EXAMPLES
Location	Where is the asset now?	Facility, property room, shelf, container, impound space, or off-site location
Status	Where does it stand in the process?	Current status, date the status began, and any pending review, decision, or hold
Activity	What has happened?	Notices, reviews, transfers, filings, valuations, approvals, and other actions

Record Every Change in Location and Custody

Keep the asset's current physical location and custodian visible in the record. When property is moved, transferred, released for examination, or placed with another department or facility, record the previous and new locations, date and time, people releasing and receiving the asset, reason for the movement, related authorization or documentation, and any change in condition, packaging, or seal.

Each entry adds to a continuous history rather than replacing the previous location. This shows where the asset has been, who handled it, and when each transfer occurred.



Make Procedural Status Visible

Location describes where the property is held. Status describes where it stands in the forfeiture process.

Define statuses that reflect the agency's policies, workflows, and jurisdictional requirements, and give each a consistent meaning. Record the asset's current status, when that status began, and any decision or event responsible for the change.

A visible status helps staff distinguish assets that are progressing, waiting for external action, on hold, ready for disposition, or otherwise unresolved. It also lets supervisors see the overall workload without requesting individual updates.

Maintain a Chronological Activity History

The current status alone does not explain what happened. A chronological activity history preserves the notices, reviews, filings, communications, approvals, transfers, financial transactions, and other events associated with the asset.

Each entry identifies what occurred, when, who performed or recorded it, and why when relevant. It also identifies related documents, notes, or authorizations and whether the action changed the asset's status, location, or custody.

Add new information to the history rather than overwriting previous entries. This preserves a complete account of the asset's progression and shows who took each action and when.

Location, Status, and Activity Review

For every asset, confirm that the record shows:

- The current physical location
- The person or department currently responsible for custody
- A complete history of movements and transfers
- The current procedural status
- The date the asset entered its current status
- A chronological history of actions and decisions
- Supporting documents associated with important activity
- Any reason the asset or case is currently on hold

Tracking location, status, and activity provides more than an inventory: it shows where each asset is, where it stands in the forfeiture process, and how it reached its current position.



Stay Ahead of Deadlines and Required Actions

A missed deadline can put an entire forfeiture case at risk.

Asset forfeiture cases involve time-sensitive notices, claims, filings, hearings, reviews, court-directed actions, and disposition requirements. One event may trigger another deadline, creating responsibilities that extend across people and departments. When these responsibilities are tracked in personal calendars, spreadsheets, email, or paper files, staff may struggle to see what is approaching, completed, or overdue. They may know an asset's status without knowing what must happen next or who is responsible.

Requirements vary by jurisdiction, case type, and governing authority. Define agency rules and workflows using applicable policies and guidance from legal counsel, then build them into a visible, repeatable process.

Build Deadlines from Triggering Events

Connect each deadline to the event that caused it. Depending on the case, a triggering event could include a seizure, receipt of a claim, filing of a notice, entry of a court order, completion of a review, or approval of a disposition.

RECORD COMPONENT	INFORMATION TO DOCUMENT
Trigger and authority	The triggering event, the date it occurred, and the applicable rule, policy, or authority
Required response	The required action, the responsible person, role, or department, and the final due date
Calculation and follow-through	The method used to calculate the due date, the reminder and escalation schedule, and the documentation needed to confirm completion

If calculation rules account for business days, holidays, extensions, or other conditions, define and apply them consistently.



Assign Responsibility for Every Action

A due date without a clear assignment leaves responsibility open to interpretation. Assign each required action to a person, role, or department when it is created.

Keep the assignment visible throughout the process. If responsibility changes, record the person, role, or department now responsible and the reassignment date. Give supervisors visibility into unassigned actions so gaps can be resolved before deadlines approach.

Use Reminders and Escalations

One calendar reminder may not adequately protect a critical deadline. Use a sequence of notifications to create visibility before an action becomes urgent.

The sequence can begin when the action is assigned, followed by advance reminders, an approaching-deadline alert, a due-date notification, and an escalation if the action becomes overdue.

Set the timing based on the action's complexity and importance. An action requiring legal review, supporting documents, or coordination with another department may need more lead time than a routine administrative step.

Use alerts to supplement shared dashboards and reports. Staff and supervisors need a way to see upcoming, overdue, unassigned, and recently completed actions without relying solely on individual notifications.

Document Completion, Extensions, and Exceptions

Completing an action creates a record of what was done, when, by whom, and with what supporting documentation. Evidence may include a notice, filing confirmation, receipt, approval, court document, or correspondence.

When a deadline changes, preserve the original date and record the reason, who authorized or recorded the change, when it was made, the revised deadline, and any supporting documentation.

Apply the same approach to exceptions, waived requirements, and actions placed on hold. Preserving the original information and reason for the change creates a complete, dependable history.



Give Supervisors a Clear View

Supervisors need a consolidated view of actions approaching or past due, unassigned actions, cases with no next action, and changed or extended deadlines.

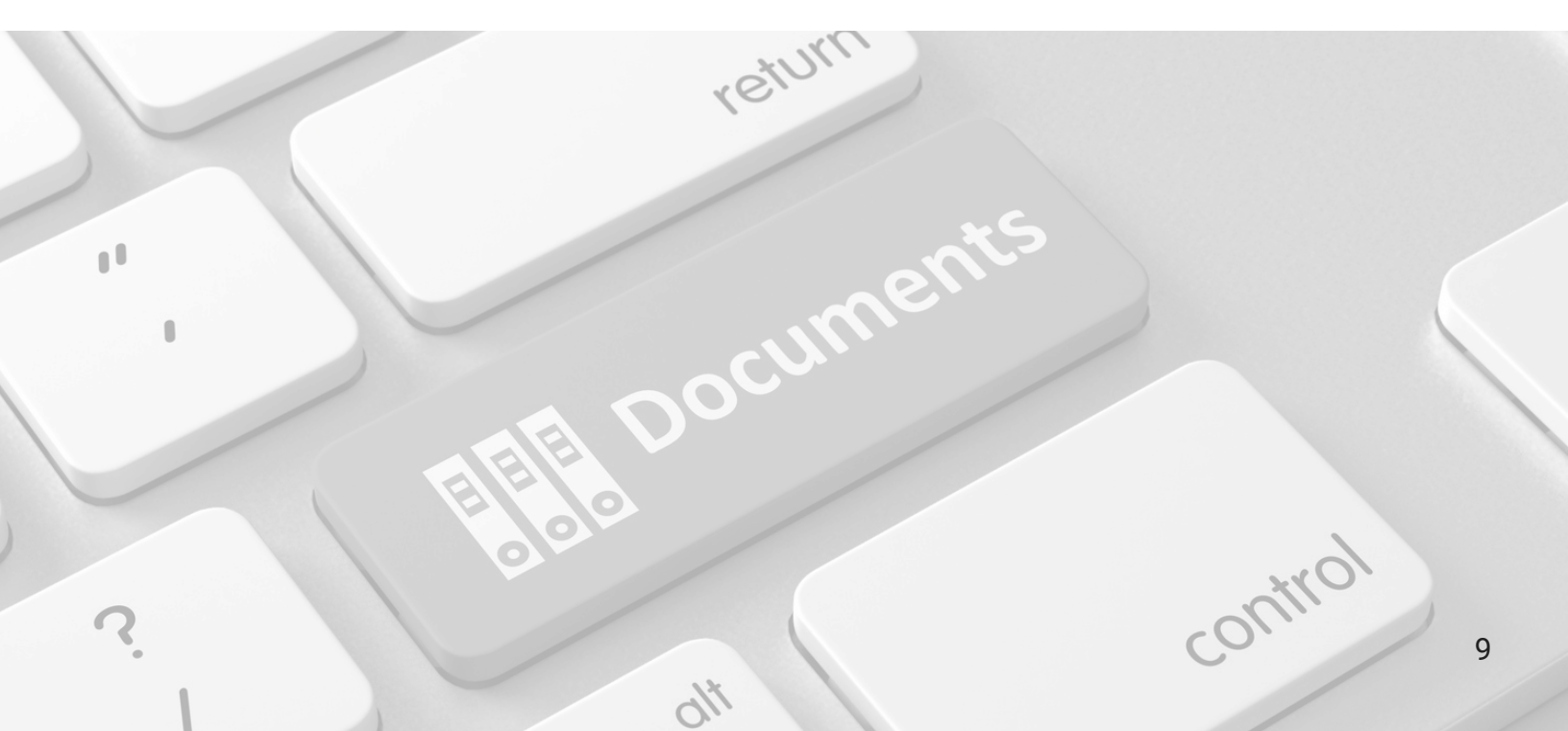
This visibility helps them address problems, redistribute work, and follow up before delays affect a case.

Deadline and Required Action Checklist

For each time-sensitive action, confirm that the record includes:

- ☐ The triggering event and date
- ☐ The required action
- ☐ The applicable authority or agency policy
- ☐ The calculated due date
- ☐ The person, role, or department responsible
- ☐ Advance reminders
- ☐ An escalation path
- ☐ The current status
- ☐ The completion date
- ☐ Supporting documentation
- ☐ Any extension, exception, or revised due date
- ☐ A complete history of changes

Effective deadline management connects each triggering event to the correct action, assigns responsibility, and records every completion or exception in the case history.





Simplify Forms and Supporting Documentation

Enter case information once and reuse it across documents.

Forfeiture cases require forms and supporting documents throughout the process, including notices provided at seizure, letters to owners and interested parties, claim-related documents, legal filings, internal approvals, financial records, court documents, and disposition authorizations.

Creating these documents individually forces staff to copy names, addresses, case numbers, asset descriptions, seizure details, and other information from multiple records. This adds time and increases the risk of transcription errors, inconsistent language, missing information, and conflicting versions.

A structured document process standardizes frequently used materials, populates them with information already captured in the forfeiture case, and preserves a complete record of what was created, reviewed, sent, filed, or received.

Start with Agency-Approved Templates

Create templates that reflect agency policies, jurisdictional requirements, formatting, and approval processes. They may include standard language, instructions, required fields, conditional sections, signature blocks, and agency contact information.

Give each template a clear purpose and descriptive name. Avoid internal abbreviations or vague filenames. Examples include notices of seizure or intent to forfeit, notices to lienholders and interested parties, claim-filing instructions, attorney-representation acknowledgments, prosecutor referrals, court-filing cover letters, and property release or return notices.

Because legal forms and requirements can change, establish a process for reviewing, approving, updating, and retiring templates. Record who maintains each template, along with its version, effective date, approval status, and most recent review.



Populate Templates with Case Information

When a user selects a template, information already stored in the forfeiture case automatically populates the appropriate fields.

Depending on the document, populated information may include:

Information group	Examples
Record identification	Forfeiture case and asset numbers, asset descriptions, identifying information, and related underlying case or court information
People and contacts	Owner and interested-party names, mailing and contact information, and assigned agency personnel
Events and timing	Seizure date and location, important dates, and applicable deadlines
Agency instructions	Agency contact information and response instructions

Using the forfeiture case record reduces repetitive entry, keeps documents consistent, and streamlines notices or correspondence for multiple assets or interested parties.

Automatic population does not eliminate review. Before finalizing, sending, or filing a document, confirm that the selected information is current, complete, and appropriate for its purpose. Make it clear which information was populated automatically, and which content was added or edited by the user.

Use Consistent Document Categories and Naming Standards

Use consistent document categories, filenames, and identifying information so staff can locate the correct document without opening multiple files or guessing which version is current.

For each document, record its type, purpose, creation or receipt date, and author or source. Connect it to the related assets, case, people, or organizations. Show its current version and status, the date it was sent, served, or filed, and any associated deadline or required action.

These standards make documents easier to search, sort, and report on while reducing the risk that staff will use an outdated or incorrect version.



Distinguish Drafts, Approved, and Filed Documents

A forfeiture case may contain drafts, revisions, signed copies, filed versions, and correspondence from outside parties. Without clear version control, staff may not know which document is current or what was ultimately sent or filed.

Use a clear progression for document status: draft, pending review or approval, approved, signed or executed, and sent, served, or filed. Identify superseded, withdrawn, and externally received documents separately.

In the final record, preserve important dates, recipients, delivery or filing methods, approvals, and supporting confirmation. Retain earlier versions when required while clearly distinguishing them from the current document.

Record Document Activity in the Case History

Record each document event in the chronological case history, including when the document was generated, reviewed, approved, changed, sent, filed, or received. If a template was used, identify the template and version from which the document was created.

Forms and Documentation Checklist

For each document, confirm that the record includes:

- ☐ A clearly identified document type and purpose
- ☐ The correct approved template and version
- ☐ Accurate information populated from the case
- ☐ Any necessary user-entered or conditional information
- ☐ Review and approval, when required
- ☐ The final signed, sent, served, or filed version
- ☐ The date and method of delivery or filing
- ☐ The recipient or receiving organization
- ☐ Supporting confirmation or receipt
- ☐ Connections to the relevant asset, person, deadline, and case activity
- ☐ A history of revisions and status changes
- ☐ Appropriate access and retention settings

A streamlined document process creates materials consistently, reuses information already captured, and keeps every version and action connected to the case.



Standardize Workflows and Departmental Handoffs

A successful handoff transfers responsibility—not uncertainty.

Asset forfeiture cases may involve property and evidence personnel, investigators, supervisors, legal staff, prosecutors, finance teams, command staff, and outside agencies. Responsibility can shift several times before the asset reaches final disposition.

Without a defined workflow, these transitions may depend on email, personal knowledge, or informal communication. The recipient may not know that action is required, which documents are available, what has been completed, or when the next deadline occurs. Work can stall while each department assumes another is moving it forward.

Define the Stages of the Process

Map the major stages an asset moves through from intake to final disposition. Although stages vary by jurisdiction and agency policy, base the workflow on how work is actually performed—not simply how it appears in a written procedure.

For each stage, define its purpose and the person, role, or department primarily responsible. Identify the required information, documents, tasks, approvals, and deadlines, along with the conditions for moving forward and the possible next stages or outcomes.

Clearly defined stages show staff where an asset stands and what must occur before it can progress.

Establish Entry and Completion Requirements

Changing the status alone does not complete a stage. The workflow defines the information, actions, and approvals required before responsibility moves to the next person, role, or department.

Before a handoff, complete the required asset and case information, including ownership or interested-party research. Confirm that relevant notices, filings, supporting documents, reviews, and approvals are present. Identify outstanding questions and record the next action, due date, and acknowledgment from the person receiving responsibility.

These requirements prevent incomplete records from moving forward and reduce the need to return cases for missing information.



Make Responsibility Explicit

A complete handoff record identifies the responsibility transferred, who transferred it, who received it, and when the transfer occurred. It lists the information and documents provided, anything incomplete or unresolved, the next required action, and its due date.

The record also shows that the recipient accepted the assignment, creating a clear point when responsibility changed hands.

Accommodate Different Case Paths

Standardization does not force every case through one rigid sequence. Different asset types, claims, legal proceedings, agency decisions, and outcomes may require different paths.

A well-designed workflow supports case-specific stages, conditional tasks and documents, additional reviews or approvals, and cases placed on hold. It also accommodates returning a case to an earlier stage, reassigning responsibility, and using different closeout paths for different disposition outcomes.

Document exceptions rather than handling them outside the process. Explain why the standard path changed, who authorized the change, and what must happen next.

Monitor Work Across Departments

Track cases awaiting departmental acceptance, returned for missing information, or pending review or approval. Show supervisors recently completed handoffs and transfers not yet accepted by the recipient.

This visibility exposes bottlenecks and responsibility gaps before they prevent a case from moving forward.



Sample Responsibility Matrix

The following example illustrates how an agency might assign responsibility across the process. Adjust the roles to reflect the agency's structure and policies.

Stage	Primary responsibility	Required output	Typical next recipient
Intake	Seizing officer or property personnel	Complete asset and seizure record	Investigator or forfeiture coordinator
Initial review	Investigator or forfeiture coordinator	Confirmed case connections, interested parties, and required actions	Legal staff or prosecutor
Legal process	Legal staff, liaison, or prosecutor	Notices, filings, decisions, and supporting documents	Forfeiture coordinator
Financial activity	Finance or designated program personnel	Recorded valuation, expenses, proceeds, or distributions	Forfeiture coordinator or command staff
Disposition	Authorized official and property custodian	Approved and documented disposition	Records or program administrator
Closeout	Forfeiture coordinator or records personnel	Complete record, resolved tasks, and retention assignment	Final supervisory review

Workflow and Handoff Checklist

Before responsibility moves to another person, role, or department, confirm that:

- ☐ The current stage is complete
- ☐ Required information and documents are present
- ☐ Outstanding questions or exceptions are identified
- ☐ Necessary reviews and approvals are documented
- ☐ The next action is clearly defined
- ☐ The next responsible person, role, or department is assigned
- ☐ The applicable deadline is visible
- ☐ The recipient has been notified
- ☐ Acceptance of the assignment is recorded
- ☐ The date and details of the handoff are preserved
- ☐ Supervisors can see who is currently responsible and the current status

A standardized workflow provides a dependable structure for professional judgment and departmental flexibility while ensuring each transition preserves the information, responsibility, and momentum needed to move the case forward.



Strengthen Financial Accountability

Make every dollar associated with a forfeiture case easy to trace and explain.

Financial activity may begin when an asset enters the forfeiture process and continue beyond final disposition. An agency may need to record an asset's estimated value, appraisal costs, storage or maintenance expenses, settlement amounts, proceeds, distributions, returned funds, and other transactions.

When asset and financial records are maintained separately, staff may have to compare spreadsheets, accounting records, bank activity, receipts, and case files to reconstruct the complete financial history. Differences can be time-consuming to explain and difficult to resolve.

A strong financial record connects every transaction to the correct asset and case, explains the activity, preserves supporting records, and shows who entered, reviewed, and approved it.

Distinguish Among Financial Values

An asset may have several different values throughout its lifecycle. Clearly distinguish among these figures rather than recording them as though they represent the same thing.

Depending on the asset and case, the financial record may include:

Financial Category	Examples
Asset valuation	Value estimated at seizure and appraised or market value
Seized or settled funds	Currency or funds seized and settlement amounts
Disposition results	Gross proceeds, amounts returned or distributed, and the net amount received or retained
Expenses and expenditures	Storage, towing, maintenance, appraisal, administrative, and other costs, including applicable expenditures from forfeiture funds
Record adjustments	Adjustments, reversals, and corrections



For each amount, record its source, date, calculation method, and supporting documentation when appropriate. This clarifies whether the figure represents an estimate, expense, payment, or actual receipt.

Connect Every Transaction to the Asset and Case

Connect each financial transaction to the related asset and forfeiture case.

For each transaction, capture:

Record Component	Information to Document
Transaction details	Transaction type, date, amount, purpose, or description
Related records and parties	Related assets and case, source or payer, and recipient or payee
Financial controls	Funding category or account, person entering the transaction, required approval, and

When a transaction applies to multiple assets or cases, document the allocation to preserve the relationship between the financial record and the underlying property.

Maintain Supporting Documentation

Support every significant financial activity with documentation appropriate to the transaction.

Supporting materials may include appraisals, valuation records, invoices, receipts, towing, storage, or maintenance charges, settlement agreements, court orders, disposition authorizations, deposit confirmations, and payment, distribution, sale, transfer, or reimbursement records. Include explanations for adjustments and documentation of required approvals.

Keep these materials connected to the transaction, asset, and case so staff do not have to reconstruct the financial history from separate files.

Establish Review and Approval Controls

Financial accountability requires more than accurate data entry. Define who may create, review, approve, adjust, and reconcile each type of financial activity.

Where feasible, separate transaction entry from approval or reconciliation and align access with each person's role. When a record changes, preserve the original information and record what changed, who made the change, when and why it was made, and who reviewed or approved it.



Reconcile Financial and Operational Records

Regular reconciliation confirms that amounts recorded in the forfeiture case agree with accounting records, deposits, disbursements, and supporting documents.

Use reconciliation to identify transactions missing from one source, differences in amounts, dates, or classifications, and deposits or payments awaiting confirmation. Also identify unsupported expenses or adjustments, transactions connected to the wrong asset or case, unresolved balances, financial activity remaining after disposition, and items requiring follow-up.

Assign responsibility for each discrepancy and track it through resolution. Record the explanation, correction, and approval.

Monthly Financial Reconciliation Checklist

For each reporting period, confirm that:

- ☐ New valuations and financial transactions have been recorded
- ☐ Every transaction is connected to the correct asset and case
- ☐ Amounts agree with accounting and banking records
- ☐ Deposits and payments have been confirmed
- ☐ Required receipts and supporting documents are present
- ☐ Necessary reviews and approvals are documented
- ☐ Expenses, proceeds, returns, and distributions are categorized correctly
- ☐ Adjustments preserve the original transaction and include an explanation
- ☐ Responsibility is assigned for unresolved discrepancies
- ☐ Financial activity is complete for assets reaching final disposition
- ☐ Required management reports have been reviewed

Financial accountability comes from creating a clear, connected history of how each amount was established, received, spent, adjusted, distributed, and ultimately resolved.

Provide Management Visibility

Management reporting gives leaders visibility into individual cases and the overall forfeiture program.

Reports can show asset values, funds held, expenses, settlement amounts, proceeds, returns, and distributions over time. They can also surface unresolved balances, transactions awaiting approval, reconciliation differences, adjustments, and corrections.

This visibility helps agencies monitor financial activity, identify unusual items, and respond efficiently to audits, reporting requests, and management questions.



Document Final Disposition and Close the Record

A forfeiture case is not complete until the asset’s final disposition is fully documented.

Authorization alone does not complete the disposition process. The agency must carry out the approved action, document what happened to the asset, resolve related financial activity and remaining tasks, and preserve the records needed to explain the outcome.

Depending on the case and governing requirements, final disposition may involve returning, transferring, selling, destroying, retaining, or otherwise resolving the property. The record must show how the asset left the agency’s custody or reached its final authorized status.

Record the Disposition Decision

Document the decision authorizing disposition before the physical or financial action occurs.

Record the authorized method and decision date, the person or authority making the decision, and the supporting order, approval, or agreement. Identify the assets covered, any conditions to be satisfied, the person, role, or department responsible for carrying out the disposition, and the completion deadline.

If one decision covers multiple assets, keep each separately identifiable so its outcome can be documented.

Document What Happened to the Asset

Once the authorized action occurs, record exactly how, when, and by whom it was completed. Changing the asset’s status to “closed” or “disposed” is not enough.

Depending on the disposition, the completed record may include:

Record Component	Information to Document
Completion details	Date, location, and method of disposition, including any difference between the authorized and completed action
Participants	Recipient, receiving agency, purchaser, or other party; person releasing the asset; and person accepting or witnessing the disposition
Verification	Condition at release or transfer, identifying information, and related receipts, certificates, photographs, or acknowledgments



Use the final custody entry to show when the agency's physical responsibility for the asset ended or changed, supported by a signed receipt, transfer record, destruction certificate, sale document, or other confirmation.

Complete the Financial Record

Disposition may create or conclude financial activity. Before closing the asset record, confirm that all related transactions are recorded, supported, approved, and reconciled.

Record final storage, towing, maintenance, appraisal, and administrative expenses, along with settlement amounts, sale proceeds and deposits, returns or refunds, payments or distributions, adjustments, corrections, and remaining balances.

Distinguish among gross proceeds, expenses, distributions, and net amounts. Investigate and explain any unresolved balance or difference before closeout.

Resolve Remaining Tasks and Deadlines

Do not close an asset while required work remains incomplete.

The closeout review confirms that notices, correspondence, claims, ownership questions, filings, legal documents, reviews, approvals, financial transactions, custody or location updates, tasks, deadlines, and supporting documents are complete or resolved. It also identifies remaining exceptions or discrepancies.

For each open item, record the required action and assigned responsibility so it does not disappear when the asset's status changes.

Close Each Asset Individually

A single case may include assets that reach disposition at different times or through different outcomes. One may be returned while another remains under review, is transferred, or follows another disposition path.

Give each asset its own disposition and closeout record. Keep the overall case open until every asset and responsibility is resolved—or agency policy allows the remaining work to be managed separately.

Preserve the Complete Record

Closing the record prevents routine changes while keeping the information accessible to authorized users for audits, management reporting, legal questions, public-records requests, or internal review.

At closeout, apply the appropriate retention category and schedule. Preserve the complete activity and custody histories, final documents, and supporting records. Confirm access permissions, protect the record from unauthorized changes, document approved amendments made after closeout, and keep the asset searchable through relevant case, person, and reporting criteria.



Final Disposition and Closeout Checklist

Before closing an asset record, confirm that:

- ☐ The final disposition was authorized
- ☐ The supporting decision, order, or approval is attached
- ☐ All conditions for disposition were satisfied
- ☐ The authorized action was completed
- ☐ The completion date and method were recorded
- ☐ The recipient or receiving organization was identified
- ☐ The final custody or location entry was completed
- ☐ Receipts, certificates, photographs, or other confirmation are present
- ☐ All financial activity was recorded and reconciled
- ☐ Remaining balances or discrepancies were resolved
- ☐ Outstanding tasks and deadlines were completed
- ☐ Required reviews and approvals were documented
- ☐ The final asset status was recorded
- ☐ The appropriate retention schedule was applied
- ☐ The complete record received final review

A properly closed record confirms that the agency can account for the asset, the decisions made, the money involved, and the final outcome—from seizure through the end of its custody and responsibility.

Prepare for Audits and Management Reporting

Audit readiness is built into the record long before an audit begins.

An audit, management review, legal inquiry, or public-records request may require an agency to explain an asset's history from seizure through final disposition—where it was held, who handled it, which actions were taken, how deadlines were managed, what documents were created, how financial activity was recorded, and who authorized the outcome.

An audit-ready process creates that history as the work occurs.

Maintain a Complete Audit History

A complete audit history preserves the changes behind the current record. For each material change, retain the previous and revised information, date, person responsible, reason, and related document or approval.

Add changes to the history rather than erasing prior information so the agency can reconstruct the sequence of events and explain why the record changed.



Review Records Before an Audit Requires Them

Conduct routine quality reviews while information remains available and the people involved can address gaps. Confirm that the agency can trace each asset, explain its progression, and support the related decisions and transactions.

Assign responsibility for each issue and track it through correction. Regular reviews can prevent small documentation gaps from becoming larger audit findings or operational problems.

Use Reporting to Manage the Current Work

Management reporting does more than summarize past activity; it shows supervisors what requires attention now.

Useful operational reporting may include:

Reporting Area	Examples
Asset oversight	Assets by location, status, category, assigned responsibility, or age; assets with no recent activity; and assets approaching disposition
Work management	Upcoming and overdue deadlines, unassigned actions, cases awaiting review or departmental acceptance, and workloads by person, role, or department
Record quality	Missing documents or required information and open exceptions or discrepancies

Dashboards provide a high-level view, while detailed reports show the underlying assets and cases. Let users move from a summary figure to the records behind it.





Define Reports and Measures Consistently

A report is dependable only when users understand what it includes and how its figures are calculated. Define common measures, date fields, statuses, categories, and exclusions so the same question produces the same answer.

For each recurring report, document its purpose, audience, included records, reporting period, and date field. Define the statuses, categories, calculations, exclusions, and special conditions, along with who reviews the report and when it is reviewed or distributed.

Display when each report was produced and preserve the filters or criteria used so the results can be reproduced and explained.

Protect Sensitive Information

Audit and management reports may contain personal, investigative, legal, or financial information. Match access to the user's role and the report's purpose.

Before sharing information, confirm that the recipient is authorized and the report contains only what is needed. Apply required redactions or restrictions, use an appropriate delivery method, document the release when necessary, and handle exported information properly.

Build information protection into the reporting process rather than treating it as a final step.

Audit-Readiness Checklist

Before an audit or formal review, confirm that:

- ☐ Every asset is connected to the correct forfeiture case and related records
- ☐ Location and custody histories are complete
- ☐ Status changes and significant activity are documented
- ☐ Deadlines, assignments, completions, and exceptions are visible
- ☐ Required notices, filings, approvals, and supporting documents are present
- ☐ Financial transactions are supported and reconciled
- ☐ Adjustments preserve the original information and include explanations
- ☐ Final dispositions are authorized and fully documented
- ☐ Closed records have received appropriate review
- ☐ Access and retention requirements have been applied
- ☐ Report definitions and calculations are documented
- ☐ Identified gaps have assigned responsibility and resolution plans

An audit-ready program preserves a complete, connected, and explainable record as the work occurs—and uses the same information to manage the program every day.



Has Your Agency Outgrown Its Current Process?

A process that once worked may no longer provide the visibility, consistency, and control the agency now requires.

The question is not whether the current process still functions, but whether it provides dependable control as responsibilities, reporting expectations, case complexity, and workloads change.

Process-Maturity Assessment

Score each statement as 0 when it is rarely or never true, 1 when it is sometimes or partly true, and 2 when it is frequently or consistently true.

Assessment Statement	Score
Information about the same asset is maintained in multiple locations.	0 / 1 / 2
Staff repeatedly enter or copy the same case information.	0 / 1 / 2
It takes more than one search to determine where an asset is and where it stands.	0 / 1 / 2
Deadlines and required actions depend on personal calendars, spreadsheets, or memory.	0 / 1 / 2
Forms and correspondence are created manually from case information.	0 / 1 / 2
Responsibility becomes unclear when work moves between departments.	0 / 1 / 2
Financial activity is difficult to connect and reconcile with individual assets and cases.	0 / 1 / 2
Supervisors lack a consolidated view of pending, overdue, or stalled work.	0 / 1 / 2
Final disposition and closeout require information to be gathered from several sources.	0 / 1 / 2
Preparing for an audit or management report requires substantial manual effort.	0 / 1 / 2



Interpreting the Results

0–5 points: Generally controlled. The current process provides a workable foundation, although individual gaps may need attention.

6–12 points: Showing signs of strain. Parts of the process rely on manual work or fragmented information. Begin with the highest-scoring areas and identify opportunities to standardize them.

13–20 points: Significant process gaps. The agency may benefit from a connected, end-to-end workflow rather than adding more tools and workarounds.

This assessment guides an operational discussion; it is not a legal, compliance, or audit determination.

Identify the Root Cause

A visible problem may result from a deeper process gap.

Visible Problem	Possible Process Gap
Missed deadline	No defined triggering event, assignment, or escalation path
Missing document	No completion requirement before the case moves forward
Conflicting financial figures	Transactions are recorded separately from assets and cases
Unknown asset location	Incomplete custody or transfer process
Stalled case	Responsibility was not accepted during a departmental handoff

Understanding the underlying cause helps the agency avoid replacing one workaround with another.



Define What an Improved Process Must Provide

Before evaluating a new approach, document the operational capabilities the agency needs.

These may include:

- One dependable record for each asset
- Connections among assets, cases, evidence, people, and documents
- Clearly defined workflow stages
- Visible responsibility and documented departmental handoffs
- Automated deadlines, reminders, and escalations
- Agency-approved document templates populated with case information
- Complete location, custody, status, and activity histories
- Financial transactions connected to the correct assets and cases
- Configurable dashboards and management reports
- Complete audit history
- Role-based access and information protection
- Support for the agency's retention requirements
- Flexibility for different case paths, asset types, and jurisdictional requirements

Also consider how existing information will be transferred, which systems must exchange information, who will maintain templates and workflows, and how staff will be trained.

Measure Improvement

Evaluate a new process by the operational improvements it produces—not simply whether a new tool was implemented.

Efficiency measures can track the time required to complete intake, prepare standard forms and correspondence, reconcile financial records, and produce management or audit reports.

Control and record-quality measures can track the percentage of assets with an assigned next action and the percentage of closed assets with complete disposition documentation. Agencies can also monitor approaching or overdue deadlines, incomplete departmental handoffs, and unresolved location or status questions.

An agency has outgrown its current process when maintaining it requires excessive manual effort, dependable answers require reconstruction, and important responsibilities depend more on individual memory than on a shared, documented workflow.



omnigo

1.866.421.2374
omnigo.com