

Council of State Archivists: Digital Preservation and Digitization Planning and Access

Statement of National Need and National Impact

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) proposes a three-year \$450,000 National Leadership Project Grant, National Digital Infrastructures and Initiatives category, to develop and deliver new and expanded technical assistance, and educational programming and training to state and territorial government archives to increase their records accessibility and preservation capacities through 1) updated assessment and planning materials for digital preservation programs; and 2) technical assistance to improve digital preservation programs, including digitization planning. This project will provide tools, technology, and training that will increase public discovery and use of vital state/territorial government records of national significance, create policies, and leverage partnerships and collaborations that alleviate barriers to this information.

In 2018, state and territorial archives responded to nearly 530,000 online, in-person, mail, and phone reference requests from citizens, government officials, teachers, students, researchers, policy makers, and others. The current COVID-19 pandemic has limited in-person access to essential government records due to closures or reduced hours in state and territorial archives, underscoring how vulnerable access to government data is, even when that data is in high demand. In response, 97% of state and territorial archives reported expanding their online resources and programs. State and territorial archives know robust access to online records resources is the answer to meeting this growing national information need, but many are challenged by lack of staff, training, technology, or financial resources. Recognizing that state and territorial archives are at varying stages of development with their digital preservation programs, this project creates an overarching framework for CoSA and its members to work collaboratively to increase access to digital government records and expand digital cultural heritage capacity for all users. . CoSA will share and distribute the resources developed during this project beyond the government archives community, to advance digital preservation. CoSA and its members will seek strategic collaborations with other disciplines and groups working on digital heritage projects.

Project Design

This project will focus on three areas, providing: 1) state and territorial archives with assessment **tools and best practices guidelines and templates** for digital preservation and digitization programs in state government archives; 2) **direct technical assistance to state and territorial archives with outdated or no digital preservation plans to develop or update plans**, thus creating the foundation for expanded public access to essential records; and 3) **webinars, video interviews, and virtual mini-conferences** that address digital preservation planning, digitization project planning, and public engagement best practices. Successful completion of these activities will ensure: 1) each state and territory has a current digital preservation plan with a digitization plan component and 2) broad distribution of tools, guidelines, best practices, and educational activities that increase best practices in digital preservation and digitization programs.

1. Tools and Best Practices for Digital Records: At the project's outset, project personnel will work with CoSA member institutions to complete the [Digital Preservation Capability Maturity Model \(DPCMM\)](#) self-assessment survey, a simplified framework to assess compliance with two ISO standards, the [Open Archival Information System \(OAIS\) Reference Model](#) and [Audit and Certification of Trustworthy Digital Repositories](#). Consultants will work with CoSA member institutions to refresh the [SERP Framework](#), a tool developed by CoSA to help state archives improve their digital preservation programs, based on their DPCMM assessment results. The DPCMM and SERP framework were elements of a previous IMLS-funded Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant and a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, both documented in the IMLS-funded publication, [A National Risk: The State of State Electronic Records](#).

2. Direct Assistance to State and Territorial Government Archives. With information from the DPCMM assessment and the SERP framework, project consultants will work with state and territorial archives staff to

create or update individual digital preservation plans with an initial emphasis on states with no plan or plans that have not been updated in the past ten years. Using templates and guidance developed for the CoSA publication, [Digital Best Practice Series: Digitization Projects](#), adaptable templates, virtual training, and one-on-one consultations, project personnel will collaborate with archives staff to create and/or update plans for digitizing high-use and/or significant government records, for preservation planning, and for access to these records. The project team will pay special attention to creating plans that address the need for strategic collaborations through metadata interoperability and networked finding aid information. CoSA will plan to work with the IMLS-funded project, [Building a National Finding Aid Network](#), to ensure increased findability and access to records in state and territorial archives, as well as other collaborators and projects.

3. Accelerate Digital Preservation and Digitization Training for Archives Staff. CoSA will offer educational support for its members and the wider archival community through a series of webinars, videos, and virtual mini-conferences focusing on digital preservation planning and digitization efforts. CoSA will feature wide expertise, specific case studies, in-depth conversations, and detailed interviews in a mix of video presentations and online community forums. These programs will be recorded and distributed through all CoSA's channels and to other collaborators to ensure the widest audience possible.

Project Work Plan

During the three-year grant period (August 1, 2021 – July 30, 2024) CoSA will:

- Convene a team, refine, and develop contracts, and operationalize the project action plan.
- Complete DPCMM self-assessment in states and territories.
- Prioritize states/territories with no existing plans and begin technical assistance for digital preservation and digitization planning.
- Update SERP framework and other best practices and guidelines.
- Plan curriculum and implementation of education and training webinars, mini-conferences, and other offerings to enhance .
- Complete preservation and digitization plans.
- Continue existing and form new collaborations to ensure that information from the project is shared widely.
- Continuously review project goals and activities and adjust with states/territories as needed and complete program evaluation by states/territories and CoSA project team.

Project Personnel

CoSA's staff, members, volunteers, and consultants have demonstrated expertise that will ensure success of this project. Barbara Teague, CoSA Executive Director, will be the Project Director. Michelle Gallinger, CoSA's [State Electronic Records Initiative](#) Coordinator (SERI), will serve as project coordinator. Project consultants are Veronica Martzahl, CoSA consultant on [The State of State Records](#) biennial statistical report; Nick Connizzo, CoSA's [Electronic Records Transfer Project](#) Coordinator, and Lisa Johnston, CoSA Administrative and Webinar Coordinator.

Budget

CoSA requests \$450,000 in IMLS funding for a three-year grant in these categories: contractor PI and PC positions (\$355,000), administrative, website, and IT management (\$60,000); communications and marketing (\$20,000), graphic design (\$7,500), and bookkeeping (\$7,500). Cost share will be contributed from the Project Director and staff from the state and territorial archives. Indirect costs of 10% are requested as part of CoSA's cost-share for the project.