

Council of State Archivists

Implementing ACCESS: Guiding the Creation, Preservation, and Use of Electronic Records

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) proposes a two-year \$200,000 National Leadership Project Grant to implement critical parts of its 2015 **Archives Collaborating and Cooperating with External Strategic Stakeholders (ACCESS) Action Plan**¹, developed with an IMLS planning grant to deepen engagement with users and producers of government electronic records and digital information. The [ACCESS Action Plan](#) outlines the urgent need for CoSA to collaborate with content creators in government, users of state-produced data, and partner organizations to develop, gather, and share best practices and guidance to improve preservation of and public access to digital government information. This grant will allow CoSA to build on the continued success of its program to improve digital preservation and electronic records management in state archives through the State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI), by increasing strategic collaborations with users and with state agencies, particularly through several partner associations and their members, including the National Governors Association (NGA), the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO), the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA). CoSA will provide vital expertise to these highly influential associations to promote electronic records and digital preservation best practices to their members from each state and territory. CoSA will also work with creators of digital government records to implement best practices that ensure ongoing preservation and broad public accessibility to those records.

Statement of National Need: Implementing ACCESS supports the IMLS priority to promote a National Digital Platform. The ACCESS Action Plan highlights CoSA's central role as a leader in protecting the public's interest in digital government records and information. In less than a decade, state archives' electronic records holdings have grown by 734% to include more than 635 terabytes of permanent records.² In turn, states are under increasing pressure to improve their electronic records management capabilities to meet the demands of state Freedom of Information Acts (FOIA). States often lack resources to deploy sophisticated archiving and retrieval systems, thus increasing the need for CoSA to engage with partners to share its expertise in managing and preserving digital records.

With several allied organizations relying on CoSA to serve as a catalyst in preserving records, CoSA has an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with records creators and others with influence in state government. The ACCESS planning grant and CoSA's successful six-year emphasis on SERI place CoSA in a unique position to collaborate with several national associations to promote electronic records management and digital preservation best practices to their members, as well as engage with users of digital government records. With so much of the country's digital heritage at risk through neglect, lack of funding, or lack of expertise, strengthening CoSA's relationships with partner groups is vital to sharing requirements for digital preservation with state agency officials in crucial roles to influence digital recordkeeping. Short guidance documents, workflows, and case studies need to be created and distributed so that CoSA can share its digital records expertise widely, and increase connections with partner groups and content creators. It is also imperative for CoSA, the partner associations, and their members to create a process for ongoing cooperation and exchange, to share expertise that answers the urgent and continuing need to actively interact with content creators in states and users of state government information.

CoSA is currently working with several of the partners named in this proposal to provide basic guidance to their association members on specific issues, including preservation of records in email format. Even with limited funding, the small amount of work to date shows promise, and points to the great need for additional cooperation.

Work Plan: CoSA will hire a Principal Investigator (PI) and Project Coordinator (PC) who will work with the SERI Steering Committee and partner groups to 1) conduct a survey of CoSA members and partner groups to determine need for guidance documents on specific subjects, and prioritize their completion; 2) create and

¹ https://www.statearchivists.org/files/3314/5383/8754/CoSA_ACCESS_Action_Plan.FINAL.pdf.

² CoSA, *The State of State Records*, 2015, p. 2; https://www.statearchivists.org/files/3114/4837/2004/ARM_Report_Narrative_2014-15.pdf

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distribute case studies, workflows, and governance documentation requested by CoSA members and partners, such as guidance documents to improve digital preservation and access, and best practices guidelines for including preservation and long-term access provisions during content creation; 3) work with named partners, NGA, NASCIO, NASS, and COSLA, and others, to plan outreach efforts for user engagement, and share information regularly through partners' websites, blogs, and newsletters; 4) collaborate with partners to produce and disseminate co-branded publications; 5) add up to three additional partners; 6) attend partner conferences, webinars, and committee meetings; 7) create processes for ongoing collaboration, to continue sharing best practices documentation, presentations, and articles for partner members and users after the grant ends; 8) assess the impact of the project on records creators, participating organizations, and users, and 9) recommend next steps.

CoSA's [Program for Electronic Records Training, Tools, and Standards \(PERTTS\) Portal](#)³ will be the primary distribution method for materials, supplemented by co-branded publications on partner websites. The PI and PC will give presentations and workshops on grant products at archival, library, and partner organization conferences, and will offer webinars, convene in-person and online user focus groups, and conduct user surveys. The PC will also focus on improving ongoing collaboration with content creators and end users, and on developing relationships and creating formal communication processes with partner organizations.

Project Team: CoSA will hire two consultants, Michelle Gallinger, of Gallinger Consulting and former Library of Congress Digital Programs Coordinator, as PI and Barbara Teague, current SERI consultant and retired Kentucky State Archivist, as PC. Ms. Gallinger, the principal author of the ACCESS Action Plan, is familiar with national digital preservation issues and programs, and brings strong technical expertise. Ms. Teague, a former CoSA President, brings long-term knowledge of CoSA, SERI, and partner organizations. Ms. Gallinger and Ms. Teague will work with CoSA's Executive Director and members of CoSA's SERI Steering Committee, including Tim Baker, Maryland State Archivist, and Veronica Martzahl, Massachusetts Electronic Records Archivist, SERI co-chairs; Sarah Koonts, North Carolina State Archivist; Matt Veatch, Kansas State Archivist; and others. Members of SERI subcommittees and other CoSA members, as well as members and staff of partner organizations, will participate in document creation and review, presentations, communication and information sharing, and formal and informal advisory capacities.

Performance Goals and Outcomes: The project will increase knowledge on preserving digital government records and enhance collaboration with national associations representing state officials through: 1) **Engaging records creators and government officials** by assessing needs, then developing and distributing 10 short, one-page guidance documents to increase understanding of digital preservation standards; 2) **Galvanizing external stakeholder groups and users** by issuing 5 collaborative reports, 10 case studies on electronic records or digital preservation issues in state archives, and/or recommendations about electronic records and digital preservation; engage stakeholders via their professional associations at 7 conferences, 4 webinars, and numerous articles and blog posts to get feedback as well as plan collaborative actions; and engage users of government records through focus groups and surveys for feedback on access to information; 3) **Sharing expertise** through documentation, guidance, and best practices created during the grant with other archival and library groups, and professional associations for government officials; and 4) **Creating ongoing processes** with partner groups to continue joint work on improving access to digital government information.

Budget: CoSA requests \$200,000 in IMLS funding for a two-year grant to support 2 contractor PI and PC positions (\$164,000), and their travel to 7 allied organization conferences (\$30,000). Administrative support includes graphic design (\$5000) and bookkeeping (\$1000). Cost share contributions are \$65,600 for Project Director (\$5,600), CoSA Project Team Members (\$40,000), and partner groups (\$20,000). No indirect costs are requested.

³ The PERTTS Portal is available at <https://www.statearchivists.org/pertts/>.