
CoSA SERI Strategic Plan 2025-2026

(Adopted by the CoSA Board October 23, 2024)

Reasons for Planning Now

The first [CoSA SERI Strategic Plan](#), adopted by the CoSA Board in March 2021, expires in 2024. This aligns with the conclusion of the 3-year IMLS-funded BACKER project, the most recent in significant grant-funded projects supporting the work and research of SERI. The SERI Leadership group and Steering Committee, in agreement with the CoSA Board, saw the opportunity to apply lessons from the first decade of SERI to a new plan and to envision a future for the work of electronic records in government archives.

CoSA Mission:

The Council of State Archivists provides leadership to strengthen and support state and territorial archives leaders and staff in their work to preserve and provide access to government records.

CoSA Mission Statement Adopted by the CoSA Board of Directors and Membership, December 2021

SERI Mission

As a flagship program of CoSA, the SERI Program (State Electronic Records Initiative) strengthens the capacity and capability of government electronic records management, fosters a robust community of practice for state and territorial archival staff, and increases awareness about the value and fragility of digital information, thereby ensuring the longevity of state and territorial electronic records.

CoSA SERI Goals 2025-2026

Goal 1: Increase Capacity and Capability to Facilitate Care and Custodianship of Public Records

Strategy 1. Standards-Based Guidance:

Develop and disseminate best practices and governance frameworks related to improving access to digital records in all forms. Particular attention will focus on areas that will enhance accessibility throughout the lifecycle of a record.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Development and adoption of core digital records governance frameworks
- Contributions to standards and governance frameworks
- Development of a review schedule for digital records governance frameworks

Strategy 2. Training:

Provide ongoing professional development to keep state and territorial archival staff and outside agency staff updated on search, discovery, and dissemination services.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Ensure the training audience reflects the varied needs of state and territory archives.
- Facilitate training that results in noticeable growth and practical application of skills and knowledge.
- Maintain a consistent schedule of professional development sessions to ensure continuous learning and growth.
- Strive for continuous improvement in participant feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of training.
- Enhanced capabilities in electronic records management and preservation as demonstrated through improvements in survey results.

Strategy 3. Surveying and Evaluation:

Conduct regular surveys to assess and enhance state and territorial archives' capabilities in electronic records management and preservation.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Completion rate of surveys conducted.

- Recognition or citation of SERI surveys in academic publications or by stakeholder entities such as NASCIO.

Strategy 4. Direct Assistance:

Continue to provide direct assistance to states/territories in need of bridging the digital preservation gap by helping them create the documentation, workflow, policies, and other materials needed to implement digital preservation activities. SERI consultants and volunteers will identify and work directly with state/territorial archives to develop the foundational documentation needed to start addressing state/territorial electronic records.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Identification of states/territories receiving direct assistance each calendar year.
- Number of SERI consultants and volunteers participating and providing direct assistance.
- Production of shareable deliverables (e.g., workflows, presentations, best practices) as a result of direct assistance
- Feedback from state/territorial archives engaged in direct assistance indicates efforts are effective in enhancing digital preservation activities.

Strategy 5. Communities of Practice:

SERI is committed to creating and facilitating a supportive community of practice between state/territorial archives staff to increase their capacity and capability to manage state electronic records. SERI will continue to strengthen and maintain these networks based on interests, tools, etc.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Number of states/territories involved in community activities (e.g., discussion boards, user groups, working groups, etc.)
- Invitation to external communities of practice (e.g., NASCIO, NASS, NGO, etc.) to participate in relevant conversations or projects
- Feedback from state/territorial archives engaged in communities indicates offerings meet the needs of practitioners.

Goal 2: Confirm the Authority of Archives and Records Management

SERI has brought together the perspectives of 56 state and territorial archives during its existence, and its members have learned that they more often align than differ. Many of these

electronic records programs grew directly out of analog records management and archives programs, but the requirements and expectations of these newer programs cannot rely on previous methodologies. SERI in conjunction with governmental partners, with a unified voice, must affirm that the archives are the right place to preserve and provide access to permanent electronic records, regardless of format.

Strategy 1. Advocacy and Awareness:

SERI is dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of state electronic records through events like Electronic Records Day and stakeholder engagement. SERI will continue to engage and develop a diverse range of stakeholders and partners. By offering engagement sessions, webinars, and drafting best practices documents (*See Goal 1. Strategy 1*), SERI ensures stakeholders understand the complexities of electronic records management and preservation. This strong engagement will help CoSA promote the importance of long-term access to electronic records and why the archives are the right organization for the job.

Possible Success Indicators

- Extent of collaborations SERI creates or joins per advocacy issue each calendar year.
- Proactive engagements with media and allied organizations to provide information on topics about electronic records management and preservation.
- Awareness events (e.g., Electronic Records Day) and stakeholder engagement sessions conducted each calendar year.
- Engagement of stakeholders and partners with electronic records management and preservation issues each calendar year.

Strategy 2. Resource Center:

Maintain and grow a clearinghouse of digital preservation resources. SERI will continue to demonstrate that pragmatic solutions arise from practitioners in state government by gathering the best that the CoSA community has to offer, contextualizing it with industry-standard best practices

Possible Success Indicators:

- Number of resources in resource center; Number of electronic records resources added each calendar year
- Usage statistics indicating access and utilization of the resources each calendar year.
- Engagement with resources, including collaborative editing and soliciting feedback from users on the quality and relevance of resources provided.

Goal 3: Universal Access to Public Records

Strategy 1. Accessibility:

Access to government records is crucial, especially for underserved populations. Many individuals lack physical access to archives due to location and transportation barriers. Others cannot access digital information due to a lack of technology access or understanding. SERI is committed to helping state and territorial archives enhance digital preservation, accessibility, and online access to records.

Possible Success Indicators

- Increased quantity of digital records discoverable online
- Increased quality of descriptions, finding aids, and access pathways
- Development and implementation of alternative access models
- Enhanced compliance with state and federal digital accessibility standards
- Feedback from state/territorial archives about improving access to critical information to under-resourced populations.

Strategy 2. Cultivating a Culture of Service:

SERI is committed to creating and facilitating a supportive community of practice between all state/territorial archives staff to increase their ability and capacity to manage and preserve the electronic records entrusted to their care. Interfaces between archives communities and user communities, especially across regional boundaries, can better draw in ideas and users. Structured mentorship activities can cultivate a culture of service, foster professional growth, build succession planning, and provide leadership development.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Support the establishment and maintenance of active communities of practice to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Develop structured mentorships that enhance skills, knowledge, and professional growth among participants.
- Recruitment of mentors that represent the varied needs, skills, and lived experiences of prospective mentees.
- Attendance at conferences and other professional development opportunities
- Increased cross-state/territory collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Participant feedback to CoSA resources and programs indicating enhanced skills and capacity to manage, preserve, and provide access to state and territorial electronic records.

Goal 4: Sustainability

The quantity of state and territorial electronic records is increasing rapidly. Proper management of these records will remain essential for state and territorial archives. Archival collections must grow, and digital records require continuous maintenance. SERI is dedicated to ensuring that digital archives and preservation programs are sustainable in the face of rising costs, inflation, changing technology and other factors. Digital preservation requires sustained investment. An important part of sustainability in the field is the success and continuation of SERI itself.

Strategy 1. Partnerships and Funding:

SERI will continue to build partnerships with mission-aligned organizations with shared goals and interests. As a major program of CoSA, securing financial support is essential. CoSA will pursue funding for SERI through federal grants and corporate sponsors and seek new sponsors to sustain and advance our work. Through the successful communities of SERI, CoSA will spearhead collaborative, grant-funded projects from which all member institutions can benefit.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Integrate core SERI Program costs into new and/or existing CoSA general operations budget lines by the CoSA Board.
- Amount of funding secured through federal grants, corporate sponsors, and other sources each calendar year.
- State and territorial archives funding levels increase.
- Number of new partnerships established with organizations sharing SERI Program goals and objectives each calendar year.

Strategy 2. Governance and Leadership:

Currently, CoSA's SERI Steering Committee oversees the program, including co-chairs from each subcommittee and other CoSA members. SERI leadership should be regularly rotated, and participation should be a regular obligation of CoSA membership. This ensures sustainability by fostering new leadership and maintaining engagement among state and territorial archival staff. These plans will also guide when and how subcommittee goals should change to better align with volunteer interests, CoSA's mission, and SERI's program objectives.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Implementation of a rotation plan for leadership positions within subcommittees and the steering committee.
- Number of leaders and volunteers engaged annually.
- Continuous alignment of subcommittee plans with CoSA's mission and SERI's goals..
- Increased engagement with key stakeholders outside the state and territorial archives community.

Strategy 3. Staffing Support:

CoSA's SERI Steering Committee manages and oversees the work of the program, working with volunteers from state and territorial archives throughout the nation. Much of the work completed by SERI is performed by volunteers. SERI's work can be performed by a combination of CoSA program staff and volunteers from state and territorial archives.

Possible Success Indicators:

- Hire an individual with designated responsibilities to support SERI programs and operations
- Number of new volunteers recruited each calendar year.
- Retention rate of volunteers actively participating in SERI.
- Volunteer feedback indicating satisfaction and engagement with the program.