

Council of State Archivists



Strategic Plan Update Framework 2022 - 2026

Approved by the CoSA Board of Directors, December 2021



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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Council of State Archivists successfully pivoted as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded during 2020-21 by continuing to deliver monthly webinars, produce important SERI publications, move annual meeting activities online, and meet fundraising goals. Such accomplishments form the backdrop for a strategic plan update that will guide the organization for the next five years.

The update process included one-on-one conversations with state archivists as part of the annual Calls to the States; focus groups of state archivists and state archives staff; and benchmarking of allied organizations with selected one-on-one interviews of organization leaders with whom CoSA has close collaborations. From these conversations, it was clear that CoSA is highly valued for facilitating a robust peer network and producing a broad array of relevant resources, including comparative data. CoSA is the place to learn what other state archives are doing, which allows for comparison, leverage for funding, program advocacy, and policy development.

Stakeholders also asked CoSA to embrace a wider view of membership and of the diversity and inclusion issues in all aspects of state and territorial archives and records management work. Areas needing particular attention include:

- greater clarity around who CoSA serves in order to elevate equity and inclusiveness within the membership umbrella
- better consistency of communication about scope, process, and outcomes of advocacy efforts to the membership
- revisioning CoSA's organizational structure to most effectively use the talents and time of board members, staff, and volunteers
- expanding the ranks of volunteer committee members to best take advantage of talents across the membership
- what a different relationship with NAGARA could look like
- exploring new or expanded partnerships that would advance aspects of this plan
- more intentional and insightful evaluation of all CoSA's programs and infrastructure

The current plan (2018-2022) was evaluated by board and staff during a series of meetings in the summer and fall. The 2022-2026 strategies are drawn from these discussions.

REASONS FOR PLANNING NOW

COVID-19 and the related social, economic and workplace disruptions of 2020-2021 provided CoSA with opportunities to revise program delivery, member communications, and, now, to update its current strategic plan. Doing so allowed the board, staff, and members to consider the organization's strengths and weaknesses, and contemplate future opportunities and relationships in light of the lessons learned during the last two years.

USING, UPDATING AND REFRESHING THE PLAN

The Strategic Plan Framework forms part of a package of planning and reporting activities. The Framework provides a set of broad goals and specific strategies for achieving them over the next five years, and provides the working tool and basis for:

- Development of annual work plans and meeting agendas

- Development of grant/funding requests
- Identification of future CoSA Board and committee members
- Identification of new or re-visioned committees and task forces, as needed
- Quarterly and annual tracking of strategies and success indicators to support performance reports for the board, staff, and stakeholders (including members, funders and government agencies)

Each year, CoSA will review and refresh this framework. Member, stakeholder and possibly funder input will be sought as needed.

MISSION STATEMENT

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.

CORE VALUES STATEMENT

RELEVANT: CoSA anticipates and responds to developing trends, emerging research, and advocacy issues that meet the evolving needs of state and territorial archives leaders and staff.

INCLUSIVE: CoSA represents all state and territorial archives leaders and staff, encourages all agencies to provide equitable access to state records, and advocates for equity and inclusion within the government records workforce.

COLLABORATIVE: CoSA acknowledges, amplifies, and facilitates the creative strength and extensive knowledge of diverse members, partners, and stakeholders working together.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES 2022 – 2026

EDUCATION and TRAINING: Using the strength of collaboration and partnership to leverage resources, share expertise, and solve problems, CoSA provides scalable, flexible, equitable and inclusive education and training that meet the diverse needs of state and territorial archives leaders and staff.

Strategies
Sustain and nurture the professional development needs of state archives and records management leaders and staff.
Develop and implement education and training programs that balance issues-based explorations (relationships with other organizations, societal issues, professional issues, etc.) and broader workplace issues with practical/technical instruction.
Advocate for state archives and records management careers within undergraduate and graduate archival programs, and internships, emphasizing the need for diverse talent and leadership skill development in the context of government environments.
Continue support of SERI's work to meet the educational and training goals of its strategic plan (see Appendix).

Possible Success Indicators

- A stable and diverse audience is maintained for programming and training over each programmatic year
- Programming and training results in demonstrable growth among participants

RESEARCH: As the source of reliable information about state archives and records management programs, CoSA conducts relevant, current, and useful data collection and analysis appropriate for understanding the evolving field of state and territorial government archives and records management, and for informing professional and public policy development.

Strategies
Develop and promote a biennial research agenda addressing research activities that are relevant, current, and useful to members and the field.
Continually survey/monitor the current diversity and inclusion landscape to identify its impact on the work of state and territorial archives, records management programs, and programmatic partners. Research will be used to amplify best practices that can guide decision making and inform professional development.
Raise awareness among stakeholders, allied organizations, and others about the research work CoSA undertakes.

Possible Success Indicators

- Are we hitting the topics our audiences want?
- Are research activities relevant, current, and useful to members and the field?
- Are links up-to-date?

- How does our research track back to Calls to the States?
- # of downloads of published research

ADVOCACY: CoSA represents member needs among policymakers, funders, allied organizations, and the media in a consistent and timely way, pursuing strategic partnerships relevant to its mission.

Strategies
Assist CoSA members as they promote diversity and eliminate bias in their policies and institutions. <i>(From CoSA’s Statement on Cultural Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access, 2020)</i>
Expand CoSA’s advocacy efforts and resources by helping members elevate the importance of their work within state governments.
Participate in strategic partnerships to increase federal funding for archival programs.
Increase relationship-building with the media and special-interest groups to raise awareness about state archives and records management programs.
Advocate for state archives and records management careers within undergraduate and graduate archival programs, and internships, emphasizing the need for diverse talent and leadership skill development in the context of government environments.

Possible Success Indicators

- Number and extent of collaborations CoSA creates or joins per advocacy issue
- How much the media and allied organization reach out to CoSA for information, seek strategic and tactical advice, and quote us

CoSA SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE: CoSA meets the evolving needs of state and territorial archives and their staff by being an inclusive, equitable, valuable, and agile resource of information and support, and a financially viable organization.

Strategies
Conduct a successful executive director search and leadership transition.
Determine the most sustainable organizational structure for CoSA, addressing governance, leadership, management, staffing, and volunteer structures to better align with accepted nonprofit organizational practices and to support staff and volunteer success.
Clarify the focus and language around who CoSA serves and why, paying particular attention to needs of young and under-represented professionals to underscore the importance of diversity and inclusion to the future of state archives and records management programs and to CoSA

Commit to examining our work and supporting our member organizations as we address societal inequities and build a diverse and inclusive future. <i>(From CoSA's Statement on Cultural Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access, 2020)</i>
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Strengthen financial viability by pursuing new or expanded income streams from new/expanded partnerships, programming, product development, and membership.

Possible Success Indicators

- Projects, activities and initiatives will have a positive return on investment (ROI), which will be measured in impact and/or income
- Demonstrate reach to all 56 state and territorial archives
- Build relationships that translate into greater resources and reach for CoSA and our members

*SERI strategic plan is in the appendix

APPENDICES

I. Planning Participants

- CoSA Board, Staff, and Program Contractors participated in several conversations to evaluate the 2018-2022 plan and create this update:

Eric Emerson (SC), President	Ken Williams (UT), Vice-President/President-Elect	Jami Awalt (TN), Secretary-Treasurer	Cynthia Laframboise (NV)	Beth Golding (FL)
Karen Gray (AK)	Dave Joens (IL)	Allen Ramsey (CT)	Thomas J. Ruller (NY), Immediate Past President	Barbara Teague, Executive Director
Anne W. Ackerson, Communications + Development Coordinator	Michelle Gallinger, SERI Coordinator	Lisa Johnston, Administrative Coordinator	Becky Julson, IT + Program Coordinator	

- Calls to the States:** This annual activity of the CoSA Board included questions about CoSA’s mission, strengths and weaknesses. 73% of state and territorial archivists were contacted.
- Benchmarked Organizations:** From June-July 2021, the following organizations were researched for comparison with CoSA’s organizational structure, programming, and finances. Asterisked organizations indicate a one-on-one interview was also conducted.

ARMA International*	ICMA (International City/County Management Association)	NASBO*	NASCA*
NASCIO*	NASS*	SAA	

- Focus Group Participants and One-on-One Interviews:** Five focus groups and two one-on-one interviews were conducted. Participants included:

Barbara Austen (CT)	John Dougan (MO)	Lisa Lew (CT)	Abbie Norderhaug (WI)	Kris Stenson (OR)
Cindy Bendroth (PA)	Todd Gabriel (CT)	Tamara Martin (CA)	Kate O'Brien (ME)	
Veronica Calder (NJ)	Cathrine Giles (KY)	Kathy Marquis (WY)	Dennis Preisler (AZ)	
David Carmicheal (PA)	Kathy Jordan (VA)	Christine Miller (MO)	Allen Ramsey (CT)	
Alejandra Dean Moutenot (MA)	Joe Klett (NJ)	Steve Murray (AL)	Shawn Rounds (MN)	

II. SERI Strategic Plan

III. Statement on Cultural Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access (October 2020)

CoSA SERI Strategic Plan 2021-2024

(Adopted by the CoSA Board, March 25, 2021)

CoSA Mission:

Using collaborative research, education, and advocacy, the Council of State Archivists provides leadership that strengthens and supports state and territorial archives in their work to preserve and provide access to government records.

CoSA Mission Statement Adopted by the CoSA Board of Directors and Membership, July 12, 2017.

SERI Statement:

The State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI) was established in 2011 to focus on improving management, preservation, and access to state and territorial government electronic records in all 56 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. SERI increases capacity and capability for state electronic records management and provides a robust community of practice for archival staff preserving electronic records. SERI is committed to supporting the communities of practice, documents, guidance, and other resources to help state and territorial archives achieve their missions and increase equitable access to state electronic records. SERI promotes knowledge of the digital lifecycle and requirements for the preservation of state electronic records. SERI advocates for increased awareness and preservation of electronic records. SERI is the flagship program of CoSA.

CoSA SERI Goals 2021-2024:

GOAL: IMPROVE MANAGEMENT, PRESERVATION, AND ACCESS TO STATE AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Guidance and Research: Develop, produce, and disseminate policy, guidance, and best practices documents. Particular attention will be paid to areas that will increase the capacity of state/territorial archives to preserve state electronic records including:

- Transfer
- Collection processing
- System/service migration policies

Training: Provide professional development training opportunities for state/territorial archives staff to broaden their knowledge of digital preservation practices. The preservation of state electronic records continues to be a moving target as new technologies, formats, and needs develop. SERI will continue to provide training materials and opportunities to support state and territorial archives staff in their work to manage, preserve, and provide access to state electronic records.

Resource Center: Maintain and further grow of a community-driven clearinghouse of electronic recordkeeping and digital preservation resources.

Equity: Access to government records is an equity issue. Not all constituents have physical access to archives and records, especially where archives facilities are located outside of urban centers, making them difficult to physically access by public transportation and where populations are scattered over large distances making physical access to the archives difficult, costly, or impossible. Providing better access to electronic records serves under-resourced populations because it reduces barriers to public information, such as access to court and vital records, which may be critical to an individual seeking veteran's benefits, proving citizenship, or gaining a better understanding of the legislative process. SERI's efforts have made a positive and sustained difference to the ability of state and territorial archives to build and maintain digital preservation and access infrastructures. SERI is committed to supporting state and territorial archives in their efforts to provide appropriate online access to state electronic records.

GOAL: INCREASE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY FOR STATE ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Training: SERI will continue to address the need for new training and information regarding digital preservation of state electronic records. The actions needed to preserve state electronic records continue to change. State electronic records continue to evolve; they are coming in an ever-widening array of format types. Practitioners need to keep abreast of new technologies and practices. SERI will continue to offer training to assist state and territorial archives staff in current developments for state electronic records management.

Surveying and Evaluation: Undertake regular surveying to evaluate the state/territorial capabilities for preservation and management of state electronic records. SERI is committed to continuing these efforts and providing longitudinal insights into how archival capabilities grow, shift, and change over time. These surveys and evaluations provide insight to CoSA as to the most important places to focus attention on developing materials and programs to support state/territorial archives.

Direct Assistance: Develop and deliver 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 will identify and work directly with state/territorial archives to develop the foundational documentation needed to start addressing state/territorial electronic records.

GOAL: PROVIDE A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR ARCHIVAL STAFF PRESERVING ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Communities of Practice: SERI facilitates a supportive community of practice between the state/territorial archives staff. SERI is committed to strengthening and maintaining these communities based on interests, tools, etc. SERI is committed to creating and maintaining opportunities for state/territorial archives staff to increase their ability and capacity to manage state electronic records.

Mentoring: SERI is committed to developing and strengthening mentorships between state/territorial archives staff regarding electronic records. SERI will work to leverage the existing community of practice into a more structured mentorship in which states/territories can support each other in the preservation of electronic records. This will help broaden the understanding of how states/territories are managing their electronic records. These mentorships will also provide opportunities for succession planning and training the next generation of state archival leaders. Providing mentorship opportunities from different states will help individuals grow professionally and get ready for the next level of leadership.

GOAL: PROMOTE THE VALUE OF AND CULTIVATE SUPPORT FOR ELECTRONIC RECORDS PROGRAMS

SERI advances the electronic records needs of its members to stakeholders and the public by acting as a clearinghouse for information, participating in policy and funding discussions, developing advocacy and awareness messages, and working in partnership with counterparts in allied organizations. SERI uses the strength of collaboration and partnership to leverage resources, share expertise, and to solve problems.

Electronic Records Day: Electronic Records Day is designed to raise awareness among state government agencies, the general public, related professional organizations, and other stakeholders about the crucial role electronic records play in their world. SERI encourages everyone to:

- Spread the word through social media channels.
- Do a special blog post.
- Engage the public in a presentation on risks to digital content.
- Start a dialog with other entities that work with e-records on a daily basis.
- Host a workshop on good digital preservation practices.

Stakeholder Engagement: SERI will continue to identify and develop a strong cross-section of stakeholders and partners. SERI benefits from other professions and interest groups understanding the complexities of state electronic records management. SERI will continue to offer engagement sessions, webinars, and best practices documents to stakeholders so they can gain a full understanding of issues related to electronic records management, preservation, and ongoing access. Stakeholder groups use this information regularly as well as in their approaches to their constituencies. Strong engagement with stakeholder groups will ensure that CoSA has partners carrying the message of the importance of long-term access to electronic records.

GOAL: SUSTAINABILITY OF SERI

State and territorial electronic records are being created at increasing rates. Properly managing the preservation of and access to electronic records will continue to be a requirement of state/territorial archives for years to come. Therefore, SERI needs to plan to support state/territorial archives in their efforts to manage state electronic records. To address the sustainability of SERI, we are committed to addressing:

Governance and Leadership: CoSA's SERI Steering Committee manages and oversees the work of the initiative. The SERI Steering Committee includes co-chairs of each of the subcommittees (currently Advocacy and Outreach, Education and Programming, and Tools and Resources) and other CoSA members. SERI will work to develop plans for rotation of leadership in the subcommittees as well as in the steering committee. This will help address SERI sustainability by ensuring that we develop new leadership and talent as well as preserve the interest and passion for participation in established state electronic records staff. These materials will also address how and when goals or directions of the various SERI subcommittees should change to better align with the interests of the volunteer participants, the mission of CoSA, and the goals of SERI.

Volunteers: CoSA's SERI Steering Committee manages and oversees the work of the initiative, working with volunteers from state and territorial archives throughout the nation. Volunteers perform the work completed by SERI. SERI is committed to continuing to put out regular calls for new volunteers and provide ongoing support to all volunteers.

Partnerships: SERI will continue to partner with organizations that have strongly aligned interests and similar goals. One such partnership that SERI will focus on will be with the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Electronic Records Section (ERS) to support the CoSA resource center development and maintenance. Additional partnerships to support SERI activities will be pursued as well.

Financial support for SERI: SERI is a major initiative of CoSA and, therefore, is a major financial commitment of CoSA's. SERI will continue to identify core goals and objectives and seek out financial support to achieve these goals. SERI has been supported in part by federal grants and corporate sponsors such as Preservica and AVP. SERI will continue to find areas of mutual interest with Preservica and other sponsors to support the work ahead.



DOCUMENTING GOVERNMENT

PROMOTING HISTORY

SECURING RIGHTS

The Council of State Archivists

Statement on Cultural Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) is committed to examining our work and supporting our member organizations as we address societal inequities and build a diverse and inclusive future.

State and territorial archives, as well as local and federal government archives, are repositories of the permanent records of government. These records document official actions, reflect society at large, and provide a snapshot of thoughts, ideas, and perceptions of the time when the records were created. While each state and territorial archival institution reflects its state's or territory's distinctive history and holds varying types of collections and materials, all state and territorial government archival collections provide a vital window into American history and culture.

Government archives document government functions and activities, reflect the lives of our residents, and provide essential sources and services for researchers desiring to understand society through an examination of the historical record. Government records provide researchers with rich primary-source material to assist in understanding our unique and diverse culture, as well as our nation's troubling and unequal treatment of its citizens and residents. CoSA believes that access to these primary sources is a right of everyone and is essential for promoting understanding of our nation's complex past.

CoSA is committed to assisting its members as they promote diversity and eliminate bias in their policies and institutions. As part of a continuous reexamination of policies and practices, CoSA encourages its members to engage in reflective activities such as:

- Examine historical biases and the role of archives and records management programs in addressing these by reviewing mission, vision, and values statements.
- Examine finding aids, catalogs, and other descriptive materials for outdated or discriminatory language and revise as needed.
- Continue to provide equitable access to materials in archival collections.
- Make records available online to facilitate wider use.
- Identify and promote awareness of collections that uniquely document persons and communities who otherwise are underrepresented in the historical record.
- Examine appraisal approaches and decisions and revise as needed to ensure an inclusive record through collections that fully reflect the experience of all persons and communities.
- Provide inclusive outreach, publications, exhibits, and educational programs.
- Promote open and honest dialogue about the institution's past and plans for its future.
- Develop collaborations and partnerships with constituent communities to establish and improve ongoing communications and information exchange.
- Strive to develop a diverse and inclusive workforce in archives and records management programs.

CoSA reaffirms its commitment to its [Non-Discrimination Policy](#) and its [Code of Conduct Policy](#), which outline our belief in the dignity of the individual and respect for differences as we work toward our common goals of documenting government, promoting history, and securing individual rights.

Approved by the Board of Directors, October, 2020