

Comment themes from ERM survey of state agencies and local governments

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December 2013

Importance of topic; timeliness

System has flaws and needs to be reviewed and updated...good timing committee!

Our records management in general needs work.

Have been looking into software that will allow for better management but will wait to see what this committee will recommend.

Improving ERM is so very important. Not only will it allow my office to increase in efficiency but it will also be cost effective for my county. To allow long term retention of records by electronic means to me is an important change that needs to be made. The strain on my county budget to microfilm files is not available. We then need to store hard files, which takes up precious space, since we are unable to destroy those files.

Because of the lack of definitive direction on electronic records, valuable records may be lost over time as the technology advances and availability of records to citizens will be haphazard because government entities and agencies are all approaching electronic records differently, with different standards and approaches.

The more the state focuses on ECM and ERM the better since an incredible amount of electronic information is being created and maintained regardless and in addition to any "official" records that are being created. The problem is not going away and the storage (size/cost), public information, and e-discovery issues compound daily.

Need for more guidance

It would be nice to have some very clear guidance regarding electronic records retention, which are permanent, etc.

Technology development and advancement make records management difficult to keep up on. There are so many avenues to take in storage and retention that guidance is needed on what would be acceptable.

NO consistent guidelines/education across agencies.

It would be best if the state provided an ERM policy for consistency throughout local governments.

Looking for guidance on how to set retention periods for electronic records v. paper records.

The State needs to tell us or provide us with guidance on what format of technology is the best to store records that will be useable for a period of years or be able to convert to a new format as readily as possible.

Approval for disposal process

When the retention of a record has expired a new request to dispose of the record must be executed. This is a time consuming process that often times leads to records not being destroyed on schedule.

An electronic process for approving disposal requests would greatly speed up the process.

Email

So much is done by email that I think state policies and regulations regarding email communication should be clear.

I would like to see standards set for handling email.

Microfilm/microfiche requirements

The fact that the state only recognized microfilm as long term retention of files, causes increased work load and strains our budget. If statutes were change to make ERM the means of long term retention it would make record storage much easier and cost my county less to store records.

The law currently states we can only destroy the hard copies of permanent records on microfiche. It is very difficult to search and locate information this way.

Need to recognize certain electronic filing systems, other than microfiche, as acceptable to help reduce paper storage.

I would also like to see a PDF or Text File be approved as an official digital record type as I believe right now it is only microfilm??

Digital images vs. microfilm. Why do we still need microfilm if we have the digital image?

Trying to maintain a permanent hybrid of old technology (paper, microfiche, etc.) and more modern electronic technology is not an efficient use of staff time in the current technological climate.

Security

Security of personal information is always a top priority.

Security and privacy issues.

Lots of information within our office has sensitive information (TIN's). Due to security concerns, we have not yet considered moving the paper forms to an electronic version. Would need to understand how other offices have been successful in addressing the security versus access questions.

Record definition; identification

Statutory definitions of public writings, public records, official records, historic records, etc. are often redundant and confusing. Try creating a Venn diagram of all these definitions. It's hard to do. These definitions likely were all created in era before everything was born-digital. What if these definitions were consolidated so that a record was just a record without providing any examples of particular records?

Funding/resources

A huge undertaking for there are boxes and boxes of documents - who has time to go through them??? Where does the FTE come from and funding for same?

We have started small, working on a specific set of records and hope to expand the workflow and procedures to fit more eRecords over time. This will require additional funding and/or infrastructure to make meaningful progress.

In 2009 we had a third party consultant perform a records management assessment. Although some minor changes were made based on this assessment, the decision package we requested to continue improvements was denied so funding continues to be the issue, including FTE to engage and manage this intensive process. The answers in this survey are based on this assessment.

Cost is a huge factor in improvements.

Funding is the biggest factor in records management. We simply do not have the funding to have all of our records converted to electronic.

We don't have the staff to spend the time needed on records management.

Time and resources are needed.

Education/training

Just making sure staff are following the policy.

This effort will require a solid training plan and management buy in to make it work right. How training is conducted and maintained will also be critical to the success of ERM.

While the advancements in technology are great, they are not necessarily less work or a time saver. Staff now really need multiple skill sets to succeed in what is expected of them in terms of records management.

Access

We feel that we can provide better customer service, if we can retrieve information at our finger tips instead of having to send for and go through boxes of information.

On a side note, older records can be almost impossible to decipher or find. There is no uniform standard and each decade or judge varies extremely. To be able to have more ERM tools and a system to incorporate old files could help with that issue tremendously.

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