

# **Funding Your Records Management Project**

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## **IIMC RECORDS MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL BULLETIN No. 2**



**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL CLERKS**

**NAGARA**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENT  
ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATORS

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## Funding Your Records Management Project

### Introduction

Have you noticed how the best “salespeople” in your organization seem to have the most money for their projects? Those who sit quietly waiting for the budget powers to recognize those needs may never see their projects funded.

This *Technical Bulletin* will help you plan a “sales pitch” to obtain funding for a special records management project—**an optical scanning / document imaging project**. No matter what size your municipality is, the following strategies should help you gain support and funding.

### Develop Your Case

**Identify and prioritize your problems.**

**Have a well-defined goal, plan and price range.**

**Find out what solutions are available, and get cost estimates for each solution.**

- Contact your state's records management / archives agency for guidance.
- Read trade publications (government, technology, and records management, e.g., IIMC's *Document Imaging*.)
- Contact vendors or consultants for estimates.
- Contact other cities or appropriate organizations that have accomplished or implemented what you hope to have endorsed.
- Contact a professional organization (see list at end of publication).

**Consider hiring a consultant** with expertise if you don't have the time available for the project, or if you feel uncomfortable with the process or technology.

**Develop statistics.** Maintain a file of articles and handouts with relevant studies and statistics. Use “activity-based costing” (cost accounting) to substantiate your request:

- Number of copies made and filed of the average document .
- Cost to file each document.
- Number of requests and time taken to fulfill them.
- Cost of locating or reproducing a lost document.
- Charges for off-site storage.

**Focus on the values that are important to the players** that influence funding: Improving customer service levels, providing public more information, avoiding costs for storing paper documents, relieving records storage problems.

**Point out your records management problems;** use them to build your case. Take pictures, where appropriate, to illustrate the issue. Use “horror stories” from newspapers and examples from colleagues in other cities or businesses. Talk about specific workday situations where:

- Important or vital documents are missing.
- It takes your staff four hours (or several weeks) to locate a document needed by the city manager. Calculate the time and cost, including benefits.
- Files are out of order because of a poorly designed classification system.
- You are forced to store records in inconvenient and inappropriate locations.

**Prepare a presentation.** If you are not confident about your speaking skills, team up with a consultant, vendor or colleague.

**Form a task force** or subcommittee to explore the issues and propose solutions.

**Hold a celebration!** Celebrate the anniversary of an important ordinance or law in your city by making a special display and serving refreshments. Issue invitations and hold the party in a location where the problem is visible. Invite your budget sponsors.

**Maintain a professional demeanor;** don’t gripe if you get frustrated during the process! Be optimistic and persistent.

## Pursuing Funding

### **Identify individuals who influence your budget.**

- Department heads; city manager's budget advisor (often the finance director); city's budget officer (often the assistant manager); and policymakers such as the mayor and influential council members.

### **Build a positive relationship with these decisionmakers.**

- Establish rapport. Ask questions. Listen actively. Find common ground.
- Understand *their* needs and issues.
- Use everyday opportunities to build respect and trust.
- No surprises. Managers hate surprises—never “sneak in” projects or requests.

### **Examine funding alternatives.**

- Use funds currently allocated to another less critical project.
- Use funds from a canceled or delayed project.
- Combine funds from several departments.
- Wrap it in another project: Many cities have used document imaging funds to hire a consultant to develop the RFP, assist in selection, and develop a retention schedule, manuals and training for a city-wide records management program.
- Don't wait until budget time! Asking throughout the year gives credibility to your budget request.
- See if a new or increased fee might finance the project.

## Seek Advice and Brainstorm

**Arrange a meeting** before or after the workday starts and interruptions begin. Try a coffee break outside the office.

### **Lead the conversation.**

- Ask for their advice, then explain your problem.
- Explain the solutions you have explored.
- Can they suggest alternatives?
- What are their concerns with the project? How can they be addressed?

- How would they seek funding? Are there any funds from delayed or canceled projects that could be used?

**Focus on mutual interests** and goals identified in the budget.

## **Persistence Pays**

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**Keep asking.** Many clerks report seeking funds for their records management programs for years before they are funded.

**Your goal is to get to “maybe.”** If someone tells you “maybe,” continue to make your requests and needs known at appropriate times.

**“There’s no money” is not always a true statement.** There usually is money hidden or unused somewhere in an organization...if a project warrants it.

**Keep discussing your problems.** Use everyday opportunities to expose the specifics of your problem(s). Highlight the benefits of your project in reports, presentations and conversations.

## **Facts You Can Use**

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**A 1998 Coopers & Lybrand study** showed that records and information systems often represent 50% of the total cost of doing business, and the average office makes 19 copies of each document!

### **Calculating costs.**

- \$20 to file each document.
- \$1.50 to retrieve each document (\$20 x 19 copies = \$380 to file).
- The average office loses 1 out of 20 office documents. It then costs: \$120 to search for the document; \$250 to recreate it, if lost (1 lost document = \$370).

**The typical file grows** at a rate of more than 20% annually.

Since municipal governments have highly skilled labor, **our costs are much higher.**

The Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) estimates that **most offices waste 65 cents of every dollar spent in handling records.** Since 80% of all office activity is recordkeeping, this is an enormous investment.

## Resources and Grants

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### **International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC)**

(909) 592-4462; [www.iimc.org/](http://www.iimc.org/)

### **National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators (NAGARA)**

(513) 225-4284; [www.nagara.org/](http://www.nagara.org/)

### **American Association for State and Local History**

(615) 255-2971; [www.aaslh.org/](http://www.aaslh.org/)

### **National Historical Publications and Records Commission**

**(NHPRC)**, National Archives and Records Administration

(202) 501-5610 (202) 501-5601;

[www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc/nhprc.html](http://www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc/nhprc.html)

### **State Records Management / State Archives Programs**

Many states have grants for municipalities available (i.e., Georgia, Missouri, New York). Refer to *IIMC Records Management Technical Bulletin 1* for a list of state programs.



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*This **Records Management Technical Bulletin** is one of a series, and was compiled by Diane Gladwell, CMC. The Bulletin was edited by IIMC members and staff, and Grace Lessner and Pete Schinkel of the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators.*

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