

2019 Report on Information Management

BACKGROUND

The Information Management Branch (IM) is responsible for establishing and promoting an overall framework for the cost-effective and coordinated management of the records and information holdings of the City of Ottawa, regardless of their form (i.e. physical or electronic) and throughout their entire lifecycle, to ensure:

- that all records and information holdings are managed as a corporate asset to support effective decision-making, meet operational requirements (i.e. support the achievement of Corporate strategic and program/service delivery priorities), protect and enforce legal and other rights and obligations including the public's right to access under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), and provide evidence of the Corporation's decisions and actions essential for government accountability;
- that the widest possible use is made of information within the City by ensuring it is organized to facilitate access to those who require it, at the right time, in the right form, and at a reasonable cost, subject to legal, policy and other constraints;
- that records and information holdings in all formats are retained only as long as needed, stored in the most appropriate and cost-effective storage medium and promptly disposed of when no longer required to control the volume of stored records and maximize cost savings; and
- that records and information holdings that serve to reconstruct the evolution of policy and program decisions or have historical or archival importance are identified and conserved.

The overall framework includes an infrastructure of policies, systems, standards and practices that establish operating requirements that in turn give direction to management and functional specialists and provide guidance and tools to facilitate the management of the entire lifecycle of records and information holdings, namely:

- planning;
- collection, creation and receipt;
- organization, use and retrieval;
- storage, protection and retention, and disposition through transfer to the City of Ottawa Archives or destruction; and

- centralized records and information management resource support to the program areas of the Corporation to allow them to meet their Information Management operating requirements.

More specifically, IM helps all City staff meet their current and evolving physical and electronic records management obligations by:

- Maintaining 14 records offices in five locations across the city;
- Maintaining the corporate Records Management Policy and Procedures, the Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS), and the associated *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* (By-law No. 2003-527, as amended);
- Securely disposing of records in accordance with the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law*;
- Providing expertise in the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of records and IM policies, standards and best practices;
- Providing Tier 1 and 2 system support for two records management systems;
- Training staff on the records management applications and IM principles; and
- Assessing business-specific systems for records-related risk.

Three Policy Instruments

IM is responsible for three policy instruments that direct City staff on how to manage their records:

1. The **Corporate Records Management Policy** identifies the requirements and expectations regarding the creation, identification and management of City records.
2. The **Corporate Records Classification Scheme** (CRCS) is a tool that helps organize City records, as well as applies a schedule detailing how long records are kept and how they should be disposed.
3. The ***Records Retention and Disposition By-law*** provides the City with the legal authority to create, manage, and dispose of records. The Archives is the disposition authority for the City and IM staff works in close collaboration with Archives staff.

Three Recordkeeping Systems

The City uses three information management systems to manage its records:

1. Records Management System (RMS) is used to manage physical records.
2. Business Information Management System (BIMS) is used to manage the electronic records.
3. MINISIS controls certain records that have been archived.

DISCUSSION

2019 Summary and Statistics

Reducing Information-related Operational Risk

In 2019, IM continued to reduce information-related operational risk. This work included an analysis of Office of the Auditor General (OAG) reports to determine how IM could better support the broader management capabilities of governance and risk management.

Creating and managing records is connected to compliance and risk management because records are used to prove compliance, avoid penalties, and support and inform business decisions and actions. The analysis of OAG reports showed that 38 per cent of report recommendations could be mitigated by having robust records management practices in place. In other words, a significant benefit to business operations could be provided by:

- documenting policies, process and instructions;
- providing communications or training to staff on the business records requirements; and
- monitoring staff compliance.

This work will continue through 2020 with IM creating a plan for increasing compliance by providing training and communication to clients.

Outreach and Training

The IM Branch works with staff across the corporation. Some examples from 2019 include the following:

- Existing construction records from Stage 1 LRT had to be captured and processes needed to be developed for Stage 2. IM provided guidance and direction on the innovative use of SharePoint sites to manage these records.

- The OAG noted issues in Corporate Real Estate Office (CREO) recordkeeping processes. IM held Intact training sessions, involving all CREO staff, including managers. IM also assisted in updating recordkeeping procedures.
- Human Resources Services (HR) switched to a decentralized model, allowing HR staff to be more mobile, working closer to the teams they support. IM met with HR to discuss security and handling practices for restricted files and recordkeeping processes.
- A full review of Fire Services and its processes was completed. As a result of the review, IM assembled a project team that completed more than 30 tasks, assisting the client in meeting their recordkeeping requirements.
- Social Services staff from four different locations met with IM to discuss, review and update their procedures and standards.

Monitoring our Records

IM regularly performs extensive reviews on the centralized and decentralized records offices and holdings. The reviews ensure that files are accounted for and IM's internal processes are up to date. In 2019, many groups were reviewed, including HR, Payroll, Sexual Health Centre, and Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development.

IM also performed a complete inventory of all physical records held in commercial offsite storage. Records in the RMS database were matched with the holdings in the vendor's database and discrepancies were identified.

Ongoing Declaration Rates

In RMS, 98,175 physical files were created in 2019, compared to 95,214 files in 2018.

In BIMS, the electronic records database, there were 593,367 records declared in 2019, compared to 692,217 in 2018. The decrease in records declarations may be due to an increase in SharePoint Online deployments and anticipation of the upcoming SharePoint records add-on software.

Initiatives for 2020 and Beyond

As noted above, IM will continue to work in 2020 to reduce information-related operational risk. This work will include creating a plan for increasing compliance by providing training and communications to clients. A second priority for 2020 will be two technology renewal projects.

In 2019, Information Technology Services (ITS) rolled out Office 365. SharePoint continues to be rolled out to the entire corporation, with the goal of SharePoint replacing shared drives. IM intends to leverage these tools by replacing BIMS, the current electronic records application, with a SharePoint records add-on software. The project launched in November 2019 and is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2021. The new application will allow for records to be managed 'in place' – meaning that users will be able to manage records in a variety of O365 applications. IM will also continue to work with ITS to build robust SharePoint Online sites that will integrate with the new records software.

RMS is the current physical records application and was built in-house by ITS staff. Originally intended as a temporary solution, RMS has successfully managed the City's physical records for nearly 20 years. This application has reached end of life and is currently being rebuilt in-house on the Office 365 platform.

Records Retention and Disposition By-law (By-law No. 2003-527), Schedule "A" Amendments

Section 255 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* provides that a municipality may, subject to the approval of the municipal auditor, establish retention periods during which the records of the municipality must be retained and preserved. In general, a record of the municipality may be destroyed if a retention period for the record has been established and the retention period has expired.

The *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* (By-law No. 2003-527), as amended, establishes a schedule for the retention and disposition of records in the custody or under the control of the City of Ottawa. In addition, it provides the City with the legal authority to destroy redundant official business records, administrative duplicates and temporary records. Examples of temporary records include, but are not limited to:

- miscellaneous notices or memoranda concerning routine administrative matters or other minor issues not pertaining directly to the work unit receiving the information;
- information copies of widely distributed materials, such as committee minutes, agendas, etc.;
- preliminary drafts of letters, memoranda or reports and other informal notes that do not represent significant steps in the preparation of the final document and do not record decisions; or

- duplicate copies of documents, which are retained only for convenience.

The City's existing *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* was approved by Council in October 2003, and the records retention and disposition component, being Schedule "A", has been revised on an annual basis.

Schedule "A" is comprised of a timetable that plans the life of a record from the time of its creation, through its maintenance stages as an active record (stored either on-site or electronically), to an inactive record (stored either off-site or electronically), to its final disposition through destruction or permanent retention. The records retention and disposition schedule is aligned with the corporate records classification scheme. In short, City departments are required to classify their official business records accordingly. Both Schedule "A" and the classification scheme require ongoing review and modification to accommodate changing legislation, user needs and program changes.

As a result of such routine business developments, proposed modifications to the records retention and disposition schedule are identified by the Office of the City Clerk in the course of its IM service delivery with clients and are brought forward to Council on an annual basis for approval. This process ensures that the City's records management framework is reflective of the organization and the types of official business records the City needs to retain.