



TO: Cultural Education Committee

FROM: Mark Schaming 

SUBJECT: State Archives Programs for Local Government Records Management

DATE: May 31, 2018

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The State Archives provides advisory services and grants to the nearly 4,000 units of local government across New York State. These programs are funded through fees collected by county clerks and maintained in the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund. Staff will update the committee on the benefits and impact of the program and future directions to improve the management and preservation of local government records.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Arts and Cultural Affairs Law Article 57-A is the New York State Local Government Records Law. This article directs the Commissioner of Education to establish standards for the management and preservation of records in local governments and to develop and operate a program of advisory services and technical assistance to support local governments (Arts and Cultural Affairs Law section 57.23). The article establishes the Local Government Records Advisory Council (LGRAC), a 27-member advisory group consisting of local government officials and representatives of local government associations to advise the Commissioner and State Archives on the needs of local government records. The article also establishes a program of grants to support the management and preservation of local government records (Arts and Cultural Affairs Law § 57.35).

Background Information

There are nearly 4,000 units of local government in New York State. These local governments include 62 counties, 62 cities, 932 towns, 551 villages and over 700 school districts. Each of these local governments creates public records.

Public records are essential to the administration of local government. These records contain information which allows government programs to function, provides officials with a basis for making decisions, and ensures continuity with past operations. These records also document the legal responsibility of government, protect the rights of citizens, and provide citizens with a means of monitoring government programs and measuring the performance of public officials. In addition, these records reflect the historical development of the government and of the community it serves. Such records need to be systematically managed to ensure ready access to vital information and to promote the efficient and economical operation of government.

New York's statewide program to support the management of local government records is over 100 years old. Chapter 380 of the laws of 1911 established the office of the Supervisor of Public Records within the Education Department, directing the office to examine the condition of records created and maintained by local governments across New York State. In 1971 when the State Archives was established the responsibility for oversight of local government records was transferred to the State Archives. In 1988 the State Legislature enacted a comprehensive program for the management and preservation of local government records, establishing a dedicated funding source to support the State Archives' programs of training, technical assistance and support, continuing the responsibility to establish records retention regulations for local government records as well as a program of grants to local governments to support efforts to improve their management.

Since 1990, the State Archives has awarded over \$220 million in grants to local governments to improve records management and preservation. Staff provide an average of 7,000 consultations to local officials each year. The State Archives delivers an average of six workshops and webinars each month on records management topics. The program has resulted in nearly universal adoption of basic records management practices by local governments, including retention and disposition schedules and adoption of basic records management policies.

Staff will provide an overview of the program, highlight major initiatives that have had important impacts on records and will describe the challenges and program priorities for the coming years.