



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES

Sample Application LG-259947-OLS-26
Project Category: National Implementation

Internet Archive

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$297,100
Amount of cost share: \$0

Internet Archive and the Council of State Archivists will launch CWGov, a program designed to nationally scale the preservation of and access to critical local government information. Leveraging the proven framework of the Community Webs program, CWGov will provide training and tools to information professionals tasked with managing digital government information at the state and local level. Through this peer support network, program members will work collaboratively to address the unique legal and technical challenges these records present. The CWGov project will equip state and local government agencies with web archiving and digital preservation training, tools, and support; develop a community of practice and peer support network for state and local government workers engaged in activities related to the preservation and access of digital government information resources; enable public access to state and local government records; and raise awareness and promote use of digital government information resources.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

INTRODUCTION

Internet Archive and the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) seek a National Leadership Grant in the amount of \$297,100 to launch *CWGov*, a program designed to nationally scale the preservation of and access to critical government information. Leveraging the proven framework of the Community Webs (CW) program, *CWGov* will provide training and tools to information professionals tasked with managing digital government information at the state and local level. Through this peer support network, program members will work collaboratively to address the unique legal and technical challenges these records present. Emerging at the intersection of digital preservation strategies, web archiving, and collections stewardship, this project supports IMLS NLG Objective 1.3 by expanding the capacity of libraries and archives to “provide broad access to and preservation of information.” The celebration of our nation’s 250th anniversary is not only a time to look back at the records that established our founding but also a time to plan ahead for the future, ensuring that the vital information being created in digital form by state and local governments across the country is available for future generations of the American public.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Statement of Need

The preservation and access of state and local government information is necessary for serving both immediate operational needs and the long-term historical record. These records establish the legal foundation of our communities and capture unique evidence of local civic life that may otherwise be lost. Digital preservation is also a key component of disaster recovery and can promote operational resilience and efficiency. In a recent study, over 82% of survey respondents considered digital access to information produced by their local government to be essential.¹ By prioritizing the access and preservation of digital records, local governments can build transparency and trust.

State and local government agencies now often provide essential services, policy updates, and public records exclusively through online access points. Without proactive intervention, vital documentation is at risk of disappearing. According to the Pew Research Center, 21% of government webpages contain broken links and this issue is especially likely to be found on city government websites.² Unique web archiving challenges exist for these types of websites and tailored training and access to specialized tools are necessary to equip information professionals with the skills they need to capture them.

¹ [“The Link Between Technology, Government Transparency, and Resident Trust.”](#) CivicPlus, 2023

² [“When Online Content Disappears.”](#) Pew Research Center, 2024.

Although state and local agencies operate under mandates for preservation, many lack the specialized training and technical infrastructure required to preserve complex digital records, particularly ephemeral, web-based content. This means that the integrity of these public records often depend on fluctuating resources of individual local offices. This capacity gap creates significant risk which can undermine transparency, legal compliance, institutional memory, and historical record-keeping.

Current Approaches and Limitations

Since 2017, Internet Archive has been equipping public libraries and other local history organizations with the support they need to preserve the digital heritage of their communities through web archiving and digital preservation. With initial funding from IMLS ([RE-85-17-0060-17](#)), and significant subsequent funding from IMLS, NEH, the Mellon Foundation, and other philanthropic sources, the Community Webs program launched with 26 public libraries and has since expanded to over 300 members representing a range of memory organizations in nearly all 50 states. The urgent need to preserve local government information is a programmatic theme for many Community Webs members who recognize the value of these resources for the communities they serve. The *CWGov* project will leverage Internet Archive's experience building and sustaining a national-scale digital local history preservation program to collaboratively develop a replicable model and support the preservation of local government information nationally.

The Community Webs program has successfully demonstrated that when public librarians are equipped with the right tools, training, and peer support, they can effectively preserve and provide access to web archives and other digital assets. However, government information professionals face unique legal, technical, and archival challenges that require a specialized framework. There is a critical need to adapt the Community Webs model into a dedicated program that addresses the specific lifecycle of government data. While other initiatives exist to support the preservation and access of federal government records, there is no national program tailored to focus on the preservation and access of local government records.

Project Goals and Activities

The *CWGov* project will (a) equip state and local government agencies with web archiving and digital preservation training, tools, and support, (b) develop a community of practice and peer support network for state and local government workers engaged in activities related to the preservation and access of digital government information resources, (c) enable public access to state and local government records, and (d) raise awareness and promote use of digital government information resources.

Internet Archive and CoSA will train and support a total of 100 state and local government agencies from across the US over the course of the grant period. As these participants apply their learning locally, their experience will inform the development of an adaptable, scalable model that agencies nationwide can apply to implement local government information preservation programs in their communities. The model will be disseminated in the form of a *Local Government Information Preservation Toolkit* which will be collaboratively developed by Internet Archive, CoSA, subject area experts, and program participants.

Two key activities that will occur during the grant period will inform and shape the toolkit. As participants complete their training, they will begin local implementation within their agencies. They will be asked to document their experience, reflecting on challenges, successes, and further training and resource needs. These reflections will be incorporated into the toolkit to provide practical examples. The second activity is the National Summit on Government Information, an event that will provide an opportunity for archivists, librarians, records managers, and end users of local government information to collaboratively generate solutions that will be incorporated into the toolkit.

The project will also produce a unified access portal designed to connect users to the web archives and other digital assets from participating state and local government agencies across the nation. Internet Archive and CoSA will develop user guides and lesson plans designed for different user communities including high school and undergraduate students, teachers, scholars, and journalists. The portal will be widely promoted as an innovative research tool.

Drawing on the success of the Community Webs program, the toolkit and training will be particularly mindful of illustrating how government information preservation and access can be supported within locally-focused libraries and archives. Developed in collaboration with state, local, public, and academic libraries, these resources will also benefit information professionals working in a range of roles and settings. The ultimate beneficiaries of the *CWGov* project will be the current and future students, scholars, and citizens whose free access to the unique evidence contained in local government records will be made possible by the librarians and archivists who take action now to ensure long term preservation.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

CWGov will engage in four interconnected initiatives to be completed across three project phases. Each of these initiatives will inform the development of a toolkit that will serve as an adaptable model for libraries and archives pursuing government preservation activities in their communities.

CWGov: A National Program for the Preservation and Access of Local Government Information
IMLS NLG Proposal - Internet Archive and CoSA

Community Program

Internet Archive and CoSA will conduct a nationwide recruitment campaign in collaboration with key professional organizations such as the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA). Membership will be open to all state, county, municipal, and regional agencies, such as state libraries and archives, school districts, port authorities, and individual local and state departments. Furthermore, current Community Webs members engaged in preserving local government information will be invited to participate.

Each year, 2 cohorts of up to 25 participants will complete a specialized training program featuring both live and asynchronous elements. This curriculum, tailored to the unique needs of government entities, will emphasize web archiving and digital preservation best practices and address strategies for overcoming common challenges. Beyond technical skill-building, the program will foster a collaborative network through virtual discussions and peer learning opportunities.

To facilitate the immediate application of these skills, all members will receive free access to Archive-It and Vault. The leading tool for web-based preservation, Archive-It will empower members to systematically capture and provide public access to local government websites and other web-published government information. Members will also receive 1 TB of free storage in Vault, a standards-aligned digital preservation service, ensuring that their digital assets are secured and managed according to professional best practices.

As cohort participants begin implementing the tools and training locally, they will be asked to document their experience. These case studies and reflections will be incorporated into the final project toolkit, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered when pursuing this work in distinct local contexts.

National Summit on Government Information

The National Summit on Government Information will convene archivists, librarians, records managers, end users, and other stakeholders to develop a set of published recommendations for the cultural heritage and government sectors. To maximize accessibility and reach, this free event will be held in conjunction with a relevant national conference such as CoSA, NAGARA, or SAA. The summit will feature facilitated discussions and presentations from cohort members, government officials, and scholars. These sessions will be recorded and integrated into a comprehensive final toolkit to be produced by the project team. Following the event, summit participants will be invited to refine and disseminate this toolkit, ensuring the resulting

CWGov: A National Program for the Preservation and Access of Local Government Information
IMLS NLG Proposal - Internet Archive and CoSA

recommendations support sustainable local partnerships and standardized preservation practices nationwide.

Access Portal

A centralized access portal will be developed in close consultation with CoSA and other stakeholders, bringing together the web archives and other digital assets collected by program participants nationwide. Other partners engaged in preserving local government information, including public and academic libraries, will also be invited to contribute relevant content to the portal. Users will have the ability to search across multiple agencies simultaneously and interact with captured web-based content. This portal will be heavily promoted to end users of government data, including scholars, journalists, students, and citizens, as an essential research tool.

Local Government Information Preservation Toolkit

The *Local Government Information Preservation Toolkit* will be a comprehensive resource for libraries, archives, and other stakeholders engaged in the work of preserving and providing access to government information. Designed to be accessible, versatile, and generalizable, the variety of content included in the toolkit will ensure its applicability to a range of local scenarios. Reports, instructional guides, tip sheets, and documentation examples will support the identification, capture, preservation, and access of born digital government information resources. Case studies produced by program participants will enhance the toolkit with practical illustrations of how this work can be successful in different institutions. Recommendations by participants of the National Summit on Government Information, along with presentation recordings and attendee surveys, will also be included in the toolkit to communicate the perspective of a range of stakeholders.

The open access toolkit will be published online through the Internet Archive making it available and discoverable to users globally. One key audience for the toolkit will be Internet Archive's Community Webs program, a network of over 300 cultural heritage organizations focused on preserving and providing access to local information through web archiving and digital preservation. Community Webs members will be invited to adapt the toolkit locally and use it to inform their own local government preservation projects. These members may produce additional case studies to be added to future editions of the toolkit.

These activities will be carried out across three project phases:

Phase I: Training Development and Recruitment (September 2026 - December 2026)

- A series of listening sessions will be held with stakeholders and industry leaders to gather feedback on recruitment strategies, training topics and delivery methods, design of the access platform and toolkit, and other elements of the project.
- Internet Archive and CoSA will develop a training program to include both asynchronous and live elements.
- A cohort application and recruitment campaign will be developed by Internet Archive and CoSA. Applicants will be recruited through the communication channels of aligned professional organizations such as COSLA and NAGARA as well as direct outreach to state and local government agencies. A series of information sessions will be hosted to provide an overview of the program and to answer questions for potential applicants.
- The first cohort of program participants will be accepted and onboarded into the program.

Phase II: Cohort Training and Toolkit Development (January 2027 - December 2027)

- The first cohort will begin training in January 2027. A total of four cohorts will be recruited and onboarded over the course of Phase II. Each cohort will consist of 25 participants.
- Internet Archive will provide each cohort member with access to Archive-It and Vault. Cohort members will also have access to product support channels.
- Each cohort will participate in a training program which will include live and asynchronous elements. Cohorts will also have opportunities to engage in discussion groups and peer learning.
- After training for each cohort concludes, Internet Archive will continue to provide individualized support to cohort members as they implement the learning acquired in the training locally.
- Over the course of Phase II, Internet Archive and CoSA will develop the toolkit. The toolkit will be informed by the experience of each cohort and will include case studies, examples, and documentation developed by cohort members as they implement tools, policies, and procedures locally.
- Internet Archive will develop a unified access portal during this project phase with feedback from CoSA and cohort members.
- User guides, lesson plans, and other instructional materials for access portal users will be developed by Internet Archive.
- Internet Archive and CoSA will host the National Summit on Government Information. The event, held in conjunction with the 2027 CoSA annual meeting, will bring together archivists, librarians, records managers, and state and local government officials.

Phase III: Dissemination and Sustainability (January 2028 - August 2028)

- After the last cohort concludes training, the toolkit will be finalized.
- Cohort members, subject area experts, and other stakeholders will be invited to review the toolkit prior to its final release.
- The toolkit will be released and widely disseminated through professional channels including CoSA, COSLA, NAGARA, and SAA.
- Internet Archive, CoSA, and cohort members will present on the toolkit and the program at professional conferences such as the annual meeting of NAGARA and SAA.
- Internet Archive will promote use of the access portal and distribute related instructional materials to students, journalists, and scholars. Virtual information sessions on using the portal tailored to different user communities will be hosted.
- Internet Archive staff will transition program members to a sustainable program model and continue recruiting new members to the program.

PROJECT RESULTS

The successful execution of the *CWGov* project will produce three primary results designed to transform the landscape of local government information preservation and access.

A Network of Trained Information Professionals

At the conclusion of the grant period, at least 100 information professionals representing state and local government agencies from across the nation will have received specialized training and access to tools that will support the long term preservation of local government information. This network will continue to engage participants and grow after the grant period concludes. Beyond individual skill-building, the project will result in a formalized network and community of practice. By connecting state, county, and municipal agencies with the broader Community Webs network of public libraries and local history organizations, the project will create a collaborative ecosystem that will transcend institutional silos.

Expanded Public Access to At-Risk Government Information

The project will create an extensive collection of local government data that may otherwise be at risk. Thousands of websites, reports, datasets, and other digital resources will be captured, preserved, and made accessible. This content will aggregate data produced by government agencies across the country into a first-of-its-kind discovery tool that will empower journalists, scholars, and citizens to conduct research, hold local agencies accountable, and track policy changes over time.

A Scalable and Adaptable Model for Local Implementation

The *CWGov* project will serve as a blueprint for local implementation far beyond the initial 100 program participants. The toolkit will provide a scalable roadmap for agencies of any size to adapt to their specific legal and technical requirements and their community's needs. By synthesizing recommendations and experiences, the project will result in the establishment of best practices that will standardize how local government information is identified, captured, and shared.

Dissemination and Sustainability

Internet Archive and CoSA staff will ensure that the project deliverables are widely disseminated across the library, archives, and state and local government sectors. Program members and Summit attendees will be engaged in the dissemination process, connecting project resources to state, regional, and national networks of cultural heritage and local government professionals. Project staff and program members will present the results of the *CWGov* project at library, archives, and local government conferences such as the Society of American Archivists, National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, International Conference on Local Government Leadership and Innovation, Council of State Governments, and state/regional libraries and archives association conferences. The toolkit will also be distributed through the communication channels of these same professional associations as well as the Digital Preservation Coalition, Digital Library Federation, and the International Internet Preservation Consortium. Internet Archive's existing Community Webs program and other partnerships will serve as a conduit for distributing the toolkit to libraries, archives, and agencies that can adapt them in service of their local communities.

The *CWGov* project has been designed with sustainability in mind. All resources produced by this project, including the toolkit and training materials, will be made freely, publicly available online for anyone under a Creative Commons CC-BY license. Users will be encouraged to adapt and use all digital products with only attribution required. These resources will be generalizable and users will be encouraged to support their continued development. The toolkit will be updated regularly to incorporate new findings, tools, and case studies. As more agencies utilize the toolkit, it will evolve into a more thorough and beneficial resource. The access portal will continue to be supported after the grant period concludes. Public, academic, and other libraries tasked with preserving local government information will be invited to contribute collections to the portal. As the collections represented in the portal expand, it will become a vital research tool and the Internet Archive will promote its use and provide examples of its value from users.

CWGov: A National Program for the Preservation and Access of Local Government Information
IMLS NLG Proposal - Internet Archive and CoSA

Internet Archive will continue to support program participants and to expand the network of organizations working to secure local government information. *CWGov* program participants will be transitioned into a sustainable, long-term membership model. Like the Community Webs program upon which *CWGov* is based, the program will continue to grow and expand long after the initial grant funding has concluded.

This collaboration between Internet Archive and CoSA will lay the foundation for further initiatives aimed at ensuring local government information from across the country is preserved. The work carried out over the course of the grant period will establish a national program that will continue to expand and strengthen into the future. Internet Archive is committed to sustaining the partnerships, resources, and momentum generated by the *CWGov* project by incorporating the project's results into its other self-sustaining, long-running, non-profit digital library services and programs. The *CWGov* will advance a model for libraries to preserve and make permanently accessible born-digital, online-published local government information.

The *CWGov* project will empower a national cohort of information professionals to serve as the permanent stewards of our digital democracy. As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States, we must recognize that the records that continue to document our democracy are being created now. By scaling the proven Community Webs framework, Internet Archive and CoSA will ensure that the story of our nation, from the smallest municipality to the largest state agency, remains accessible for the next 250 years.

