imerge CONSULTING

Corporate Records and Information Management Review

TOWN OF Tecumseh ONTARIO · CANADA

Information Management Strategy

FINAL REPORT

February 28, 2023

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Executive Summary

What is the issue?

The Town of Tecumseh has spent over ten years utilizing an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) known as Laserfiche which can be used in conjunction with a published subscription guide to records categorization and recommended record retention periods (TOMRMS). At a time when efficient and comprehensive information management is generally accepted as a crucial component of organizational effectiveness, the Town's electronic information remains partially unmanaged. The most consistent use of these tools has been on the management of records under control of the Town Clerk. However, unstructured information (those documents not part of a data base of columns and rows) comprises the bulk of the electronic content and includes Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, scanned images, email and other document formats. Consequently, the Town finds itself with inconsistent records and information management across departments.

Efficient, information-driven business processes are the core of effective and cost-efficient government. Compliance with legislative obligations require the Town's information in all formats to be maintained, secure, accessible, and preserved. This is critical to the democratic concepts of accountability and transparency. Despite the fact that most of the records are born digital, documents continue to be printed, filed, and used inconsistently as official records, with the digital versions being managed on an ad hoc basis. As the volume of electronic records has grown, the time required for staff members to sort, file and dispose of electronic records makes compliance difficult. While electronic storage costs are in the acceptable range, as the volume of records has grown at an exponential rate, the ability to find the right document, and to trust that the source is authoritative has become a challenge. Long-time employees who are nearing retirement often hold the knowledge of where to find critical information, be it in physical or electronic form, and their departure represents a risk in the ability to locate specific documents.

In summary, the implementation of the existing electronic information management infrastructure does not adequately manage the life cycle (creation to disposition) required of electronic records. After almost twenty years of use, dispositions of electronic records and more comprehensive coverage of content (i.e. inclusion of most emails and electronic files now on network drives) adversely affects the Town's operations and compromises compliance with legislative obligations for all records to be maintained, accessible, secure, and preserved.

Enhanced use of the existing EDRMS, Laserfiche, also offers an opportunity to address these issues by building on the Town's strengths and successes in managing paper-based records to encompass its digital information.

In light of these findings, documented in the prior Current State Report (January 2023), a study was undertaken to review the current state of the Corporate Records and Information Management Program and propose a strategy and implementation plan to manage the current volume of both electronic and paper records.

The study asked a few basic questions and found the following answers.

Does the Town have an information management problem?

The Town does have many of the necessary tools and resources to manage electronic records, however, they have not used the full potential of the existing tools, and staff do not have the training, expertise, and leadership to move forward with managing electronic records by automating the life cycle of records from creation to disposition.

What tools should the Town invest in to address the concerns?

This report identifies a strategy with five components and tasks to address existing information management gaps:

1) Information Governance Model

Provide governance at the senior level to manage unstructured data in order to break down existing information silos, including monitoring and audit to measure compliance and performance. This includes clarification of metrics to establish a baseline of the number of records under life cycle management and monitor net change through addition of records and disposition on an annual basis. Increase in-house staff resources to oversee consolidation of existing repositories of electronic records; automation of the life cycle management of dispositions of electronic records; migration of relevant email and network drive content to a consolidated and automated life cycle records management repository, and potential transfer of software to cloud based service or alternate vendor.

2) Information Management Corporate Practices

Consolidate and simplify records and information management policies and procedures and implement the existing records retention schedule to better address electronic records and improve the findability of information regardless of the format it is stored in, and reduce risk through timely disposition as defined by the existing records retention rules. Automate the disposition process including addition of metadata into document repository and automated update of retention rules as connected to The Ontario Municipal Records Management System (TOMRMS) classification (metadata) for records held in repository.

3) Storage and Security

Review and increase security by identifying Personal Identifiable information, vital records, and distinguish between public, internal and confidential information within the retention schedule and the repository. Consolidate and manage storage of content through content migration into Laserfiche repositories with automated life-cycle management functions. This includes long term preservation of digital records for those electronic documents held over ten years or permanently.

4) Information Management Technology

Test and validate the capacity of existing Laserfiche software to manage electronic documents through the life cycle including disposition and audit trail management. This includes standardizing metadata used across departments to improve access and search results. Establish scanning standards for vital records and for continuously used paper records, and acquire migration software to move electronic records from network drives, email and other repositories into managed document repositories. Finally, address standards and processes for life cycle management of email, to encourage preservation of those emails critical and required to document operational processes and to delete and reduce volume of transitory (those records having no operational value) email records.

5) Communication and Training

Provide more staff training on the records policies and procedures, and software tools. Prepare a communications plan to make sure staff understand the "why and how" this will be accomplished and use change management techniques to support compliance and acceptance of these changes.

The first three actions are leveraged by, or require, a tool such as an Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS/Content Services) to provide the functions and features to manage electronic and paper records and to protect them according to Records Management best practices and the Town's legal and business obligations. This system can also provide valuable metrics to help manage the governance of this type of information. The options to continue use of Laserfiche, move content into a cloud storage model, or transition to a SharePoint based solution or alternative vendor should all be assessed in detail over the next three years. Immediate improvements in use of the existing software in the near term (one to two years) will serve to create a strong base and familiarity using a more complete repository can be used as a good basis on which to consider the options moving forward in the longer term (three to five years). A change of vendor is not recommended at this time until a consolidated repository with a higher percentage of content (from network drives and email) is adapted and accepted by current staff. Familiarity and strong benefits will then make a transition to an alternative vendor more viable.

What will these actions deliver?

Properly implemented, and with sufficient training and ongoing support, these actions will deliver better information management which will enable Tecumseh to:

- Save up to a million dollars per year in staff productivity from managed email, trusted and protected records which are easy to find; reduced paper filing costs;
- Leverage economic opportunities resulting from transforming business to provide digital services and offer faster service transaction times;

- Better compliance with existing legislation such as Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;
- Improve and make consistent information sharing across departments;
- Provide a platform to better manage information security and to be able to audit the integrity of the information;
- Find information faster, and organize information to better meet business needs; and,
- Develop foundational components for future initiatives such as Smart City[1], Open Data[2] and inter-government service delivery.

The Information Management Strategy will provide a roadmap for the implementation of the tools. Implementation will ensure, on an ongoing basis that the management and protection of the Town's unstructured information continues to evolve to meet the Town's needs and to benefit from evolving technologies. This is in addition to activities by the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk, engage department 'liaisons' (proposed designation to serve as a conduit to the Town's records management policies, procedures and tools), under the leadership of a proposed "Records Coordinator". This would add a new role as Records Coordinator under the direction of the Deputy Clerk. The Records Coordinator role would be to maintain the records policies and procedures and to continue to provide staff training and support for managing unstructured data.

What will it cost?

Imerge has developed budget estimates based on the continued use of the existing EDRMS while planning for a transition to a cloud based option to address the Town's future recordkeeping needs. Total **incremental** costs to implement the system over a three year period are estimated at approximately $461,400 dollars for vendor, contractor, and/or services related costs and increased staffing costs, Costs to sustain the system, over time, will include a minimum of one new role (1 FTE) for ongoing internal support of the Information Management Strategy as a Records, Coordinator and 0.5 FTE for the coordination with Technology and Client Services. The risk of only a single person is the ability to find a person with the full range of skills, and the need for backup of this position given the number of tasks in the implementation roadmap. If only one position is available, vendor and or service costs will increase to cover the difference. The expenditure in staff costs will come with benefits in staff productivity, reduced legal risk, the ability to sustain growth, and the tools to support business transformation initiatives and innovation. Estimates of staff productivity is anticipated at approximately $750,000 per year as detailed in the section on Information Management Benefits.

[1] Microsoft smart cities link
[2] City of Waterloo Example of Open Data

What will it look like?

A fully implemented information management program will enable access to all formats and types of records through a single search using consistent rules and controls that only allow access to those who are entitled to view records. It will facilitate sharing between departments in a way that protects the information and provides an audit trail of all operations on versions or copies of a record. It will move from the current "keep everything" approach to keeping only those electronic records of business and historic value. An automated EDMRS system automates the life cycle management of the record, providing tools to facilitate long term transfer to archival status and disposal in compliance with laws and regulations. The integration of access to all record types, formats, access tools and consistent management of records between departments will create the opportunity to improve business processes and undertake service renewals through workflow, collaboration and a sustainable Information Management program.

An updated and comprehensive records by-law and records policies and procedures will ensure consistency in the management of information across departments and over time. It will help staff classify records so they can be located more easily.

A strong Information Management structure will ensure that:

- records policies are implemented;
- the EDRMS is used properly through the life cycle phases and contains information which is stored appropriately to ensure maximum usability;
- information is protected, and where needed, preserved;
- the foundation for smart-city support, with additional data and analytics is provided;
- future integration between the EDMRS and existing applications to further improve staff efficiency and information integrity.

In summary, EDMRS software will be the core of an integrated information management system designed to optimize business efficiency, while facilitating accountability, transparency, and legislative compliance.

How should the Town implement the changes?

Imerge has provided a roadmap of the tasks over a three year period by year and Principle to guide the preparation for, implementation of, and maintenance of an enhanced Information Management strategy. Costs and Benefits are also addressed over this three year time frame. The implementation does not end after the three years, as monitoring compliance with the Records Management policy, further benefits through business process workflow implementation, and auto-categorization tools will create further efficiencies and ease of use in finding and managing information.