TRANSFORMATION AND INFORMATION GOVERNANCE FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES

Case Studies for M-19-21 Compliance

IRON MOUNTAIN®

GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS

PARTNERING TO DELIVER DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

M-19-21 TRANSFORMATIONAL GOALS

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released M-19-21: Transition to Electronic Records in 2019, aiming to accelerate the government's digital transformation efforts. Building upon previous directives, M-19-21 established new deadlines and actions, requiring all federal agencies to move towards electronic recordkeeping, ultimately leading to a more modern, digital government through records and information management. With M-19-21, NARA and OMB clearly defined five main goals:

Drive Digital Transformation – transition agencies away from paper-based records management processes to electronic, digital systems

Implement New Technologies – promote the use of new capabilities such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to enhance decision-making and deliver greater insights

Enable Automation – move from manual, time-consuming processes to a more automated approach

Upskill the Workforce – redeploy resources to manage a new digital environment, enhancing productivity and mission delivery

Realize Cost Savings – significantly decrease the costs associated with analog records storage, real estate, and services, repurposing those funds towards effective electronic records management

Many agencies are feeling the pressure of the M-19-21 directive and are struggling with their digital transformation initiatives in general – each are on their own unique journey. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is one agency that is taking a leading role in modernization and M-19-21 compliance… and is reaping the benefits.

IRON MOUNTAIN AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

DHS is executing on a modernization strategy that includes connecting and moving its components to a more digital operations environment. The M-19-21 mandate, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, underscored the need to move in this direction to ensure DHS employees are able to access the information they need to perform their mission, no matter where they are located. To help deliver on this transformation initiative, DHS is partnering with Iron Mountain on a large-scale digital transformation effort across multiple components to more effectively manage its information lifecycle.

DIGITIZATION TO IMPROVE INVESTIGATIONS AND FREE UP REAL ESTATE

IMPROVED SERVICES THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE RECORDS MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

FIXING INCONSISTENCIES AND FILLING GAPS IN DISASTER RECORDS MANAGEMENT

DIGITIZATION TO IMPROVE INVESTIGATIONS

CHALLENGE

Investigations are a key process for DHS, and have traditionally required a combination of accessing multiple systems, and manual searches of paper files from various locations. One of DHS' Components was spending days, weeks, or even months to obtain physical records, especially outside of their offices. This resulted in a delayed ability to investigate and resolve cases, as well as an overall inefficient workflow. In addition, there was an abundance of physical records being stored in expensive office space that kept expanding as paper documents were created, leading to increased real estate expenses for the Component.

SOLUTION

The Component partnered with Iron Mountain to transform its investigations research process. Leveraging its extensive commercial and government experience and expertise, Iron Mountain supported the digitization of over 5 million documents from legacy paper files held in multiple offices and storage locations. Conversion included optical character recognition, metadata extraction, and migration to a centralized digital repository. This new repository offered advanced search functionality on a variety of fields and keywords, supporting more efficient analysis by investigators.

Once conversion was completed, Iron Mountain worked with the Component to move the physical files from their offices to off-site storage facilities, or to destroy eligible records past their necessary retention dates.

M-19-21 Goal Alignment

- Digital Transformation
- Automation
- Upskilling
- Cost Savings

**Fragmented Data Source** → **Central Data Source**
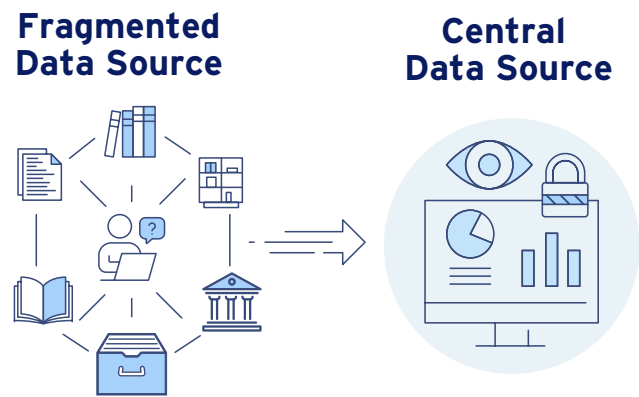
OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

Through the digitization and consolidation of these records, investigators are able to compile a full story in one place, streamlining the process and reducing the complexity and time necessary to complete an investigation.

Documents in digital form are now able to be analyzed in a different way and can eventually utilize AI/ML tools to generate additional insights from the information.

Converted 20,000 square feet of inactive storage to useful workspace
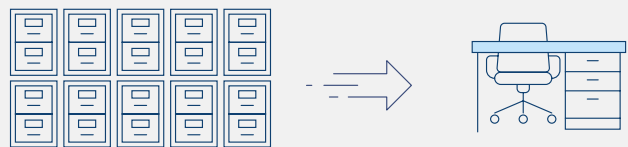
Significant reduction in research time

From Weeks → **To Less then a Day**

COMPREHENSIVE RECORDS MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

CHALLENGE

A large DHS Component relies heavily on physical records to support its mission – specifically for claims administration – which often slows delivery to its constituents. The Components relies on the speedy collection of the claims delivery fees to maintain its mission and level of service. That said, the records populations necessary to achieve this work are ever-expanding and highly active, with long retention periods that leave many years until they are required to be accessioned to NARA.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the Component's ability to deliver on its mission as several government records storage facilities closed, impacting their offsite file storage operations. The Component was not able to retrieve its records at a pace necessary to keep up with its incoming cases, delaying the ability to process claims. Consequently the organization was losing money on delayed fees while also paying high prices for storage with NARA. It needed to find a way to get faster access to its files to support its programs while conserving budget.

SOLUTION

The Component began leveraging Iron Mountain offsite storage solutions in 2014 as a supplement to its own storage facilities as well as with NARA. The organization is currently utilizing Iron Mountain for storage, retrievals, refiles, interfiles, transportation, and destruction, and since COVID-19, has shifted operations to send most of its new immigration records to Iron Mountain to take advantage of its always-available services. Iron Mountain's 24-hour Service Level Agreement (SLA) has ensured that case files are delivered on time so that the claims process keeps up with demand.

M-19-21 Goal Alignment

Upskilling

Cost Savings

OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

Iron Mountain is securely protecting the Component's information. With a full records management solution now in place, the organization is prepared to implement new modernization programs to support claims administration and records.

Iron Mountain's records management program ensures that files are accessible with next day delivery as a standard and the ability to request file delivery within hours, if needed.

Gained reliable records access to support claims processing

24 HOUR

Guaranteed Retrieval SLA

Saved $2M over 3 years

40% **Cost Savings**

MANAGING DISASTER RECORDS

CHALLENGE

Although digital transformation and modernization is a priority, limited resources have impacted the ability of each DHS Component to deliver true transformation. Records management is an area that has often been a secondary task for employees whose expertise lie elsewhere. As a result, records management actions were limited to less value-added tasks, without an opportunity to pursue a comprehensive strategy.

In 2020, NARA released a report that described gaps and inconsistencies in the management of disaster records for one of DHS' Components. This was a result of the records management teams being under resourced, new-to-roles, or simply having key positions unfulfilled.

SOLUTION

Iron Mountain has decades of experience in supporting records management organizations with information governance advisory services. To assist the Component with the remediation plan, Iron Mountain provided information expertise as part of a team tasked with information governance planning.

The team developed and deployed various strategies to address the identified inconsistencies. This included records management oversight, identifying records owners, inventorying records repositories, updating records schedules, as well as educating / training Records Liaison Officers and Records Custodians.

M-19-21 Goal Alignment

Digital Transformation

Automation

Upskilling

OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The Component has improved its posture to not only fill in the gaps and fix the inconsistencies laid out in the report, it is also in a better position to meet the M-19-21 deadline. This was done through updated records inventories, updated and compliant records schedules, policy and procedures documents, communications, and training.

Other Components are utilizing the success of this project to explore updates to their record keeping function and bring modernization strategies to reality throughout DHS.

Addressed reported concerns and positioned for M-19-21

Increased Compliance

Reduced Risk

Increase Preparedness

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER M-19-21 COMPLIANCE

Iron Mountain's partnership with DHS means that Components have access to even more products and services, and the agency is continuously expanding the solutions it is leveraging. Additional Iron Mountain capabilities provide the tools for DHS to accomplish the goals of M-19-21 by enabling modernization and increasing the efficiency of operations to improve mission support.

InSight

Leverage a platform such as Iron Mountain's InSight that will first function as a central, digital repository, and eventually be a hub for information sharing and management of data. In addition, InSight's AI / ML capabilities will enable DHS to unlock value in its records and information, and be a key piece of a modernization strategy.

Secure Shredding Services

Any digitization strategy needs to have a plan for removing paper that is no longer needed. To comply with the overarching principles of M-19-21, agencies need to understand what their options are for destroying paper that is past its retention. Iron Mountain's Secure Shredding capabilities can help DHS create a secure, consistent, and cost-effective program for disposing physical records once they are no longer needed, when they have reached their retention date, or when quality digital copies have been created.

Data Center Colocation

Iron Mountain's colocation data center solutions allow the Components to keep control over their data while getting all the benefits of not maintaining their own data centers. This will make operations more efficient, less costly, and like other solutions provided by Iron Mountain, will assist DHS to focus on its mission. Having a modernized approach to managing data centers "as a service" allows agencies to redeploy resources away from performing data center management activities and towards more value-added tasks such as backup and recovery.

SUMMARY

As the government aims to accelerate its digital transformation efforts through initiatives such as M-19-21, it is important for agencies to keep in mind the overarching goals of modernization. By tying transformation efforts to these goals, agencies can reap the benefits of the transformation in the short term while setting up their organizations for long term, continued success.

Many agencies such as DHS have begun their modernization journeys and have benefited through partnerships with industry organizations such as Iron Mountain. Now is the time for agencies to assess their digital transformation plans alongside their options for supporting partnership, and move forward with solutions to set up for the future.

For further information, please email federal@ironmountain.com

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