

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a classical government building facade. The image shows several large, white, fluted columns supporting a heavy entablature with decorative moldings. The sky is a clear, deep blue. The text "GOVERNMENT AGENCY RECORDS MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES & SOLUTION" is overlaid in white, uppercase, sans-serif font on the right side of the image.

GOVERNMENT AGENCY RECORDS MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES & SOLUTION

CONTENTS

The Challenges to Government Agency Records Management	3
A Comprehensive ERM Solution for Government Agencies	6

GOVERNMENT AGENCY RECORDS
MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES & SOLUTION

Records pertaining to the conduct and business of government are considered ‘public’ records. Government agencies are required to provide the public with access to these records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and various state Sunshine Laws. This provides transparency into government functions, and ensures the accountability of public servants.

Yet government records management has often been a costly, complex, and painstaking affair. The adoption of electronic communications tools in government offices – especially the latest social media, messaging, and enterprise collaboration platforms – together with the resulting data surge have only exacerbated the situation.

At the end of fiscal year 2020, over 120,000 public records requests had reportedly not been processed in the required time by federal agencies.¹ In this eBook, we outline some of the key challenges to government agency recordkeeping, and detail how Global Relay’s comprehensive electronic records management solution effectively addresses them.

¹ Public Records Requests Fall Victim to the Coronavirus Pandemic by Nate Jones in The Wall Street Journal, October 1, 2020.





The Challenges to Government Agency Records Management

THE CHALLENGES TO GOVERNMENT AGENCY RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Government agency records management is fraught with challenges as many, varied, and interconnected as the types of data and information it seeks to preserve and organize. These challenges include:

LIMITED BUDGET & RESOURCES

Electronic Records Management (ERM) encompasses a wide range of processes. Records storage and retention. Securing confidential information. Risk assessment and mitigation. eDiscovery & legal hold. Records production and disposition. And the list goes on.

Establishing, operating, and maintaining an effective ERM program often requires significant investments in infrastructure and personnel, for which very few government agencies (if any) have the budget, time, and labor resources to spare.

Government IT departments, records managers, and communication teams are under constant pressure to manage the exponential growth of communications data, while addressing shifting agency priorities, decreased agency spending, and human resource capacity constraints.

Federal agencies are required to process FOI requests within 20 working days. State and local government agencies have a similar mandate to respond to records requests within a specified number of days or weeks. However, many agencies are understaffed and/or underfunded, resulting in a huge backlog.

FOI REQUESTS: HOW ARE FEDERAL AGENCIES FARING?

- **120,436 requests not processed** in the required time by end of fiscal year 2020
- **Over 39 days processing time** for 'simple' requests (FOIA requirement: 20 working days)
- **Over 400 days processing time** for 14% of 'complex' requests (FOIA requirement: 20 working days)

Source: The Wall Street Journal

According to The Wall Street Journal, federal agencies failed to process 120,436 requests in the required time by the end of the 2020 fiscal year. In addition, requests identified as 'simple' took more than 39 days to process, while 14% of those requests deemed 'complex' took over 400 days, on average²

Delays in response times can lead to litigation, often the only recourse the public has for getting a timely response to its information request.

Effective Electronic Records Management (ERM) programs require significant investments in infrastructure and personnel, for which very few government agencies have the resources to spare.

¹ Ibid.

FRAGMENTED STORAGE SYSTEMS

Public records are commonly held in multiple data silos consisting of disparate servers, outdated legacy systems, local (employee) computers, and physical media such as CDs, DVDs, and backup tapes – all of which lack a single source of indexing or access.

Without a unified database, it is extremely cumbersome and time-consuming to manage, search for, and produce public records for various types of information requests. Engaging third-party services to retrieve data (assuming it is even retrievable) is costly and can create unnecessary legal, security, and privacy risks.

What's more, (maintaining) disparate storage systems can inhibit work automation and efficiency. Agencies may have to sift through millions of records – stored across multiple archives – every time they need to find information, even if it had been provided as part of a previous FOI request or investigation.

LIMITED DATA CAPTURE & RETENTION

Some agencies still leave critical recordkeeping tasks to the discretion of employees, who manually drag and drop emails and sensitive information into an archive folder. Not only does this affect workplace efficiency and productivity, but it also exposes organizations to unnecessary risks.

Where automated systems are used, they are often outdated and ineffective. Many of the government records management systems in use today were designed for email. As such, they are incapable of capturing social media, instant and text messaging, enterprise collaboration, and other new data types presently redefining digital communication. They also cannot scale for increased user counts and message volumes.

Government agencies risk non-compliance with record retention mandates by relying on archaic solutions that are unable to keep pace in an increasingly digital landscape.

INADEQUATE SEARCH CAPABILITY

Government storage systems typically have a rudimentary search function. Most are incapable of running rapid, granular searches across massive volumes of electronically stored information (ESI) using advanced search criteria.

Storage systems with limited search capabilities can slow down or hinder the conduct of eDiscovery and legacy data searches. They also compromise the ability of government agencies to respond to FOI requests, investigations, and litigation demands.

NO BUILT-IN LEGAL HOLD FUNCTION

Besides having limited search features and functionality, which restricts the ability to find relevant ESI quickly and efficiently, most government records management systems also lack built-in legal hold tools.

Legal hold management tools protect potentially relevant and responsive records from deletion, even after their stipulated retention periods have lapsed. Systems without a built-in legal hold mechanism put relevant data at risk of deletion if it is not segregated on time and defensibly preserved for investigations and litigation.

Storage systems with limited search capabilities can slow down or hinder eDiscovery searches, and compromise government agencies' ability to respond to FOI requests, investigations, and litigation demands.

A Comprehensive ERM Solution for Government Agencies

A COMPREHENSIVE ERM SOLUTION FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Global Relay's comprehensive ERM solution helps government agencies address the many challenges associated with managing electronic records, while meeting the demands of Big Data and the latest communication and collaboration platforms.

REDUCED & PREDICTABLE COSTS

Many government agencies continue to rely on costly, antiquated, and high-maintenance on-premise systems that are inadequate for meeting the requirements of modern-day ERM. By contrast, Global Relay hosts its records retention and management solution entirely in a secure, private cloud, which is available by subscription.

By subscribing to Global Relay services, government agencies avoid traditional capital expenditures (namely software, hardware, and IT support) associated with running an on-premise system. Instead, they pay predictable monthly fees based on number of active users archived.

Global Relay Archive, an industry-leading ERM solution, dynamically scales for changing user counts and data volumes. Government agencies can modify their subscription as their needs change, ensuring the service scales accordingly as demand increases or decreases.

SECURE & UNIFIED DATA ARCHIVING

Global Relay Archive is capable of supporting over 100 data types, including email, IM, text, social media, and enterprise collaboration. All data is captured in its native format and consolidated in a single cloud repository, eliminating the reliance on multiple, fragmented storage systems and increasing search efficiency.

Global Relay Archive is designed to serve as an organization's system of record – the single source of truth for all its communications data and information. This ensures consistent search results for the purpose of eDiscovery, case management, legal hold placement, and records production.

Global Relay Archive preserves a permanent, tamperproof 'gold' copy of every communication, which can be easily searched for, accessed, and retrieved even if the original has been deleted. Role-based controls provide users with the appropriate level of access to information, especially those deemed privileged, personal, or restricted.

Global Relay helps government agencies address the many challenges associated with managing electronic records, while meeting the demands of Big Data and the latest communication and collaboration platforms.

With Global Relay Archive, government agencies can search through millions of records in a matter of seconds (not hours or days), and promptly action open-records requests.

AI/MACHINE LEARNING-ENABLED SEARCH

With up to 1,000x the speed of competitive systems, Global Relay Archive enables government agencies to search through millions of records in a matter of seconds (not hours or days), and promptly action open-records requests.

Records managers can search records and information by data type, sender/recipient, domain, header, subject line, lexicon, and many other advanced criteria. Fully integrated AI/Machine Learning capabilities further streamline the search process by recognizing persistent user commands and recurring search patterns to identify data of potential interest.

Archive users can conveniently download archived information directly to their PC or local file share – or to SFTP or hard-drive, with help from Global Relay's Data Services team.

ANALYTICS & DATA VISUALIZATION

Global Relay Archive provides class-leading analytics and data visualization, so government agencies can promptly respond to information requests, as well as gain critical, real-time business intelligence and actionable insights from their data.

Analytics empowers users to drill down to relevant communications, examine them within their original contexts, and discover the broader story behind the communication.

Data visualization provides valuable supplemental data, such as the top message senders/recipients within the agency and amongst the public and other third parties, communication channels used, and conversation patterns, using diagrams, graphs, and charts.

LEGAL HOLD & CASE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Global Relay Archive's case management tools allow Legal and eDiscovery staff to segregate, classify, and share data pertinent to ongoing or imminent litigation. Cases, folders, and tags simplify data organization and prevent important information from getting lost in the noise.

In addition, built-in legal hold management features give authorized users the ability to efficiently place holds on potentially responsive data – no IT assistance or third-party products required.

Holds override specified retention schedules applicable to the data, protecting it (and all related information) from automatic or manual deletion. Data placed on hold can't be deleted until an authorized user releases the hold.

SECURITY & AVAILABILITY

Government agencies can be confident all their records are secure and accessible 24x7x365. Global Relay continually invests in the security, integrity, and availability of its systems and the data they store. This includes implementing compliance & privacy, cybersecurity, and cryptographic controls, and undertaking independent System Organization Controls (SOC) audits.

Global Relay's cloud service is hosted in two mirrored data centers, with data replicated to the secondary data center in near-real time. Four copies of every message – two in each data center – are preserved, ensuring no messages are ever lost.

Global Relay also maintains a Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity Plan to prevent disruption to its critical operations and the delivery of its services under a wide range of scenarios, including natural disasters.

LOOKING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND DEPENDABLE ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT & MESSAGING SOLUTION?

Global Relay provides cloud-based archiving, information governance, surveillance, eDiscovery, and messaging solutions to over 20,000 organizations in financial services, energy, government, healthcare, retail, media, and more. Global Relay enables you to manage, control, and profit from your electronic communications data.



CONNECT

Connect your electronic communications, voice, social media, trade, and legacy data, and deliver it to your Global Relay Archive or wherever you need it.



COLLABORATE

Chat compliantly with your customers, colleagues, and industry peers via text, voice, WhatsApp, video, or instant message.

Available on iOS, Android, and desktop.



DISCOVER

Enrich, store, manage, and discover your data – all in one system.

- Compliant storage
- Dynamic policies
- Team workspaces
- Real-time AI
- Custom workflows
- Collaboration tools

For more information or a free consultation email info@globalrelay.net or call 866.484.6630 (North America) or +44 (0)20 3206 1850 (Europe) today.

DISCLAIMER:

This guide is subject to Global Relay's [Policies and Terms of Use](#) and does not constitute legal or compliance advice.





For all the latest news, events, and product developments at Global Relay, sign up for our newsletter at www.globalrelay.com/newsletter



globalrelay.com info@globalrelay.net North America: 866 484 6630 Europe: +44 (0) 203 206 1850

[new york](#) [chicago](#) [vancouver](#) [london](#)

© Global Relay 2021. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced without permission. Products or brand names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners.



CM-114