

Review of Public Records Training, Consultation, and Grant Programs

2019 JLARC STUDY

In 2017, the Legislature amended the Public Records Act (PRA) to create three programs that assist local governments with their public records management, retention, and disclosure practices. The legislation also directed a JLARC review (ESHB 1594).

The Attorney General's Office and State Archives provide training and other services related to public records management and disclosure

AGO CONSULTATION	ARCHIVES' CONSULTATION AND TRAINING	ARCHIVES' LOCAL RECORDS GRANT
Assists local governments with best practices for managing records requests, incorporating technology into request response, and mitigating costs and liability related to compliance with the Public Records Act.	Provides local governments with advice, guidance, and support related to public records management and retention practices.	Provides funding to local governments for improving public records organization, digitization, and technology tools. \$2.4M awarded 2017-19 biennium

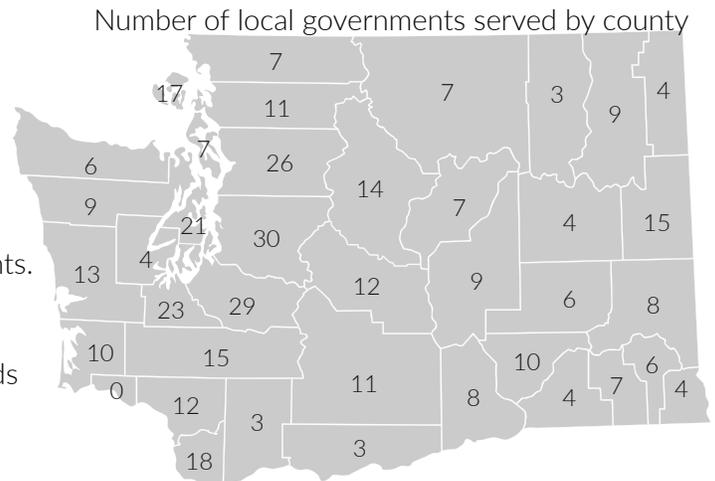
JLARC staff identified 420 local governments served by one or more of their programs.

Participants report the programs have met their needs and they have changed their public records practices

JLARC staff surveyed local government program participants.

76% of survey respondents reported the programs met most or all of their needs.

66% reported their agency made changes to their records management, retention, and disclosure practices.



Some respondents provided specific examples of the changes they made:

- Digitized records or pursued an electronic records management system.
- Changed procedures for records redaction, including use of specific software.
- Reduced costs and time spent on records storage and searches.
- Organized paper files, including disposing of outdated records and transferring records to Archives.

AGO and Archives have yet to develop plans for evaluating long-term impact. Strategic planning could help focus their efforts.

In 2019, the Legislature removed an expiration date for the programs. This provides an opportunity for the AGO and Archives to measure the effect of the programs on local governments' public records management, retention, and disclosure practices and use that information to focus their efforts going forward.

LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Attorney General's Office and State Archives should each produce strategic plans to focus their future efforts and evaluate the impact of ongoing training, consultation, and grants programs on response time, costs, and liability.

