

WHAT WE DO

The mission of the Department of Records and Information Services is to foster participation in civil society by preserving and providing access to the historical and contemporary records of New York City government. To achieve this, the Department ensures that City records are properly maintained following professional archival and record management practices and makes materials available to diverse communities both online and in person.

The Department's website provides the public with access to more than 1.6 million historical photographs, maps, and a growing online collection of more than 23,000 reports and publications issued by City agencies. The Municipal Archives and Library staff respond to more than 60,000 reference requests annually, and provide the public and City agencies access to approximately 245,000 cubic feet and 185 terabytes of historical City records and photographs, and a collection of more than 400,000 books, government reports, studies and other publications.

The Municipal Records Management Division develops and administers City government's records management policies, operates records storage facilities, provides records management services to 65 government entities and oversees the government's transition to digital records management.

FOCUS ON EQUITY

The Department of Records and Information Services continues to expand outreach to diverse New Yorkers and improve access to City government's historical and contemporary records. This work includes cataloging and digitizing collections documenting populations not traditionally the focus of archival processing. In 2021, the Archives will digitize colonial-era records that provide unique information about enslaved persons and others. Collection inventories available on the agency website enable researchers to easily evaluate holdings related to diverse topics. The collection related to Malcolm X's assassination is one notable example. The agency is conducting outreach to communities of color through our oral history project gathering stories from long-term residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Public programming features diverse speakers, who, in turn, attract more varied audiences. Recent exhibits and programs have examined a variety of topics such as immigrant communities, foodways, women in non-traditional employment and the criminalization of girls in both historical and contemporary contexts.

OUR SERVICES AND GOALS

SERVICE 1 Provide the public and City agencies with access to public records and publications.

- Goal 1a Increase the volume and availability of public records and publications.
- Goal 1b Promptly respond to requests for information.

SERVICE 2 Provide City agencies, the courts and district attorneys with record storage, retrieval and retention scheduling services.

- Goal 2a Retrieve records promptly from off-site facilities upon record owner's request.
- Goal 2b Promptly transfer eligible agency records to off-site storage.
- Goal 2c Dispose of all records according to their scheduled retention period.

HOW WE PERFORMED IN FISCAL 2020

SERVICE 1 Provide the public and City agencies with access to public records and publications.

Goal 1a Increase the volume and availability of public records and publications.

In compliance with New York State and local mandates, the Department altered operations beginning March 16, 2020 and transitioned staff to off-premise work. Most staff continued to work remotely for the remainder of the fiscal year which impacted many agency functions.

The Department continued to encourage agencies to submit reports to the publications portal in accordance with recent amendments to the Charter. During Fiscal 2020, the number of reports submitted electronically increased 21 percent to 3,529, compared to the 2,906 acquired in Fiscal 2019. However, based on a thorough review of local laws, the Department identified additional reports agencies are required to submit to the portal. The increased base number of required reports reduced the percentage submitted during the reporting period to 42 percent compared to 60 percent in Fiscal 2019.

Closure of the Municipal Archives digitization laboratory for more than one full quarter of the year depressed the quantity of items digitized in Fiscal 2020 to 384,134 items. However, the laboratory's output was approximately equal to the 384,823 items digitized during Fiscal 2019. During Fiscal 2020, the laboratory continued digitization of historical marriage license records.

Historical records accessioned into the Municipal Archives decreased 84 percent, from 2,558 cubic feet in Fiscal 2019, to 399 cubic feet in Fiscal 2020. Although the Fiscal 2020 quantity was impacted by the closure, the Fiscal 2019 figure was exceptionally high due to efforts that year to accession a backlog of records identified at agencies that had not been previously transferred.

Until closure of its public facilities in March 2020, the agency continued to promote awareness of its holdings of contemporary and historical records to diverse audiences through exhibitions and related programming. During Fiscal 2020, 1,884 visitors attended programs, 26 percent fewer than the 2,546 attendees in Fiscal 2019. The lower 2020 figure is consistent with closure of the public facilities for one quarter of the fiscal year. The agency presented four exhibitions in Fiscal 2020: "The Lung Block: A New York City Slum & Its Forgotten Italian Immigrant Community," "The Language of the City: Immigrant Voices," "Ebb & Flow: Tapping into the History of New York City's Water" and "Incorrigibles" which focuses on personal narratives of women at the New York State Training School for Girls. The agency also posted online exhibits covering the topics listed above as well as an exhibit sampling Manhattan building plans, Health Care Workers and the reissuance of the Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives book.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Records preserved and digitized	7,422,426	26,778	236,478	1,421,172	1,448,706	260,000	260,000	Down	Up
Number of library items available	371,208	375,919	380,844	384,823	384,134	*	*	Neutral	Up
Publications and reports acquired	10,016	5,596	4,869	5,903	4,455	*	*	Down	Up
Records accessioned by Municipal Archives (cubic ft.)	1,049	797	1,185	2,558	399	*	*	Up	Up
Walk-in and program attendees at the Visitor Center	1,363	1,408	1,542	2,546	1,884	*	*	Up	Up
Percent of required agency reports submitted to the Municipal Library publications portal	60%	60%	60%	60%	42%	100%	100%	Down	Up

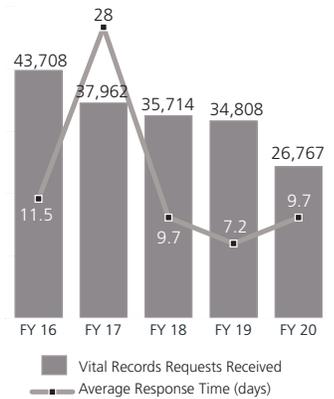
★ Critical Indicator "NA" Not Available ⬆️⬆️ Directional Target * None

Goal 1b Promptly respond to requests for information.

During Fiscal 2020, the average time to respond to requests for copies of vital records returned to the Fiscal 2018 level of 9.7 days, a 35 percent increase compared to the response time of 7.2 days during Fiscal 2019. The related measurement of the percentage of requests responded to within 12 days also lessened, declining to 71 percent in Fiscal 2020 compared to 88 percent in Fiscal 2019. The diminished performance was due to closure of the agency. Staff working remotely were able to supply PDF copies of vital records that were digitized previously, but they could not fulfill certified hard-copy requests, resulting in a backlog that negatively affected the performance measurement.

The time needed to process requests for copies of historical photographs continued to improve in Fiscal 2020, decreasing to 5.4 days from 10.2 days in Fiscal 2019. The better performance is due to the use of the newly digitized "tax photographs" to print copies in place of the labor-intensive darkroom process. The better performance was also enabled by a decrease in the volume of requests for reproductions from 6,698 in Fiscal 2019, to 2,178 in Fiscal 2020. The exceptionally higher Fiscal 2019 number was a result of media stories that year promoting completion of the photograph digitization project and access to the images.

Vital Records Requests and Time to Respond



Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
★ Vital record requests responded to within 12 business days (%)	62%	9%	82%	88%	71%	60%	60%	Up	Up
★ Average response time to vital record requests (days)	11.5	28.0	9.7	7.2	9.7	12.0	12.0	Down	Down
★ Average response time to historical photo requests (days)	22.9	22.7	31.5	10.2	5.4	15.0	15.0	Down	Down
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available		↕ Directional Target	* None					

SERVICE 2 Provide City agencies, the courts and district attorneys with record storage, retrieval and retention scheduling services.

Goal 2a Retrieve records promptly from off-site facilities upon record owner's request.

During Fiscal 2020, the Department's retrieval rate for records from the off-site facilities upon owner-agency request averaged 0.7 days, a 50 percent improvement over the 1.4 days required during Fiscal 2019. Measurement of the related indicator, percentage retrieved within 2 days, also improved, to 87.6 percent in Fiscal 2020 compared to 80.3 percent in Fiscal 2019. The improved performance is due to added staff dedicated to the function. The 28 percent decrease in volume of requests in 2020, which fell to 4,178 records from 5,840 in Fiscal 2019, is consistent with agencies, courts and district attorneys ceasing most operations during the last quarter of the fiscal year.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
★ Average response time to agency requests for inactive records (days)	1.2	1.2	0.7	1.4	0.7	2.0	2.0	Down	Down
Requests for stored records processed within 48 hours (%)	94.0%	91.0%	100.0%	80.3%	87.6%	*	*	Neutral	Up
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available		↕ Directional Target	* None					

Goal 2b Promptly transfer eligible agency records to off-site storage.

The quantity of records transferred into the Municipal Records Center decreased significantly, from 5,121 cubic feet in Fiscal 2019 to 661 feet in Fiscal 2020. The decrease can be attributed to agencies using the City’s requirements contract for their off-site storage needs, the pivot to storing records in digital format, and closure of the Center during the last quarter of the year.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Warehouse capacity available for new accessions (%)	12%	12%	12%	14%	19%	*	*	Up	*
Records transferred into Municipal Records Center (cubic ft.)	6,668	4,703	10,823	5,121	661	*	*	Down	Up
★ Critical Indicator "NA" Not Available ⬆️⬇️ Directional Target * None									

Goal 2c Dispose of all records according to their scheduled retention period.

The volume of obsolete City agency records disposed from the Department’s storage sites decreased to 10,617 cubic feet in Fiscal 2020, compared to 26,785 cubic feet disposed in Fiscal 2019 and 21,529 in Fiscal 2018. The greater volumes reported in Fiscal 2019 and 2018 accrued from agencies focusing on a backlog of disposals in compliance with Mayoral Directive 2015-3 dealing with uniform record management, including disposal of obsolete records. The total volume of records disposed by the Department and all City government entities combined also diminished during Fiscal 2020, falling to 36,539 from 90,686 in Fiscal 2019 and 88,801 cubic feet in Fiscal 2018. The decreased volume is a result of agencies catching up with their disposal backlog and the citywide closure of agencies due to COVID-19.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
★ Average time between records disposal eligibility and application sent to Law Department (months)	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.5	2.0	2.0	Up	Down
★ Average time for Law Department to approve records disposal application (months)	2.8	2.7	1.3	2.0	0.9	3.0	3.0	Down	Down
Total records disposed by City government entities (cubic ft.)	59,232	117,247	88,801	90,686	36,539	*	*	Down	Up
★ Critical Indicator "NA" Not Available ⬆️⬇️ Directional Target * None									

AGENCY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Customer Experience									
Letters responded to in 14 days (%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	*	*	Neutral	Up
E-mails responded to in 14 days (%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	*	*	Neutral	Up
CORE customer experience rating (0-100)	97	100	100	NA	100	*	*	NA	Up
★ Critical Indicator "NA" Not Available ⬆️⬇️ Directional Target * None									

AGENCY RESOURCES

Resource Indicators	Actual ¹					Plan ²		5yr Trend
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	
Expenditures (\$000,000) ³	\$7.7	\$7.7	\$8.0	\$9.8	\$9.9	\$13.0	\$11.6	Up
Revenues (\$000,000)	\$1.0	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.6	\$1.1	\$0.8	Down
Personnel	69	65	72	69	76	83	72	Up
Overtime paid (\$000)	\$0	\$4	\$0	\$0	\$50	\$50	\$0	NA

¹Actual financial amounts for the current fiscal year are not yet final. Final fiscal year actuals, from the Comptroller’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, will be reported in the next PMMR. Refer to the “Indicator Definitions” at nyc.gov/mmr for details. ²Authorized Budget Level ³Expenditures include all funds "NA" - Not Available * None

SPENDING AND BUDGET INFORMATION

Where possible, the relationship between an agency's goals and its expenditures and planned resources, by budgetary unit of appropriation (UA), is shown in the 'Applicable MMR Goals' column. Each relationship is not necessarily exhaustive or exclusive. Any one goal may be connected to multiple UAs, and any UA may be connected to multiple goals.

Unit of Appropriation	Expenditures FY19 ¹ (\$000,000)	Modified Budget FY20 ² (\$000,000)	Applicable MMR Goals ³
100 - Personal Services	\$4.6	\$5.0	All
200 - Other Than Personal Services	\$5.1	\$4.9	All
Agency Total	\$9.8	\$9.9	

¹Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2019. Includes all funds. ²City of New York Adopted Budget for Fiscal 2020, as of June 2020. Includes all funds. ³Refer to agency goals listed at front of chapter. "NA" Not Available *None

NOTEWORTHY CHANGES, ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS

None.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on the agency, please visit: www.nyc.gov/records.

