

VERMONT OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

FY2018 Performance Targets

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The Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), a division of the Office of the Secretary of State is responsible for preserving and providing access to permanent state records in the Vermont State Archives; operating the State Records Center for inactive state paper and microfilm records, including security copies of municipal land records; and issuing retention requirements for state and local government records through the State Records Management Program. In addition, VSARA carries out several administrative functions including but not limited to: recording state deeds and leases; authenticating documents for foreign use; serving in the role of legislative clerk when the General Assembly is in session; processing filings pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act; and certifying vital records that are five years or older on behalf of the Department of Health.

Staff

VSARA is served by 18 full-time permanent employees, including its director – the Vermont State Archivist – and one full-time employee who spends a portion of her time assisting the Secretary of State’s Corporations division with records requests. Staffing increased from 15 to 18 employees after August 2016 following approval from the Secretary of Administration. This increase was due to changes in the State Library unit within the Department of Libraries that resulted in the transfer of state reports and publications, including Supreme Court briefs, and related processing and reference duties to VSARA in the summer of 2016. VSARA currently has two vacancies to fill as of the date of this report.

Populations Served

VSARA has two primary populations it serves. The first is the public. This includes Vermont citizens, corporations and organizations as well as those from other states and countries. The second population served by VSARA is public agencies, most directly Vermont public officials and employees at both the state and local levels.

Mission, Vision & Goals

It is the mission of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration to provide, protect, promote, and preserve Vermont public records, in collaboration with other public agencies, for the benefit of the citizens collectively served. Our vision is that Vermont public records, the cornerstone of government transparency and a knowledgeable and informed populace, are recognized and managed as public assets.

Strategic Goals

VSARA’s goals are:

- 1) The public has access to authentic and reliable records for as long as needed to protect interests and to assure government accountability.

- 2) Public agencies have the tools and resources necessary to manage their records and information in an effective and efficient manner.
- 3) Records of continuing value are preserved and accessible to current and future generations.
- 4) Low-cost, secure repositories for public records, regardless of format, are available at an enterprise or statewide level.

1 Outcomes and Measures

Since its creation in 2008, VSARA continues to grow and progress; nonetheless many of VSARA's activities can only be measured through ways that are qualitative rather than quantitative. In addition, much of VSARA's work is dictated by the demands of the public and public agencies – over which VSARA has little or no control. This means that there is a delicate balance between transactions that need to be performed and having the staff necessary to perform those transactions on a regular – and sometimes daily – basis.

Transactions

VSARA collects statistics for approximately 40 distinct records-related transactions performed by staff on a daily or regular basis. These statistics are used to assess trends and patterns as well as performance. In FY2016, VSARA completed a total of 70,647 records-related transactions, which resulted in a 5% decrease in workload in comparison to the previous fiscal year. This decrease is largely due to the fact that VSARA staff processed more than 13,400 notary public appointments in FY2015 as part of a renewal cycle that occurs once every four years.

Excluding notary public appointments for both FY2015 and FY2016, VSARA completed a total of 68,982 records-related transactions, which resulted in a 13% increase in workload in comparison to the previous fiscal year.

FY2016 Priorities

As with FY2015, VSARA continued to work on areas in which efficiencies could be made such as: (1) training agency records officers and liaisons, as well as municipal offices, on effective records management principles and practices; (2) increasing the preservation of and access to archival public records; and (3) decreasing dependencies on VSARA staff and resources for copies and similar labor-intensive processes, particularly for informational copies of vital records.

To this extent, VSARA met or exceeded its FY2016 targets in several areas. In some areas, however, VSARA did not meet its FY2016 targets – largely due to staffing issues and having to balance multiple demands with limited staff and/or unexpected demands over which VSARA has little control.

1.1 Major Services to the Public

VSARA has two major services to the public that are mandated by statute. They are in the areas of:

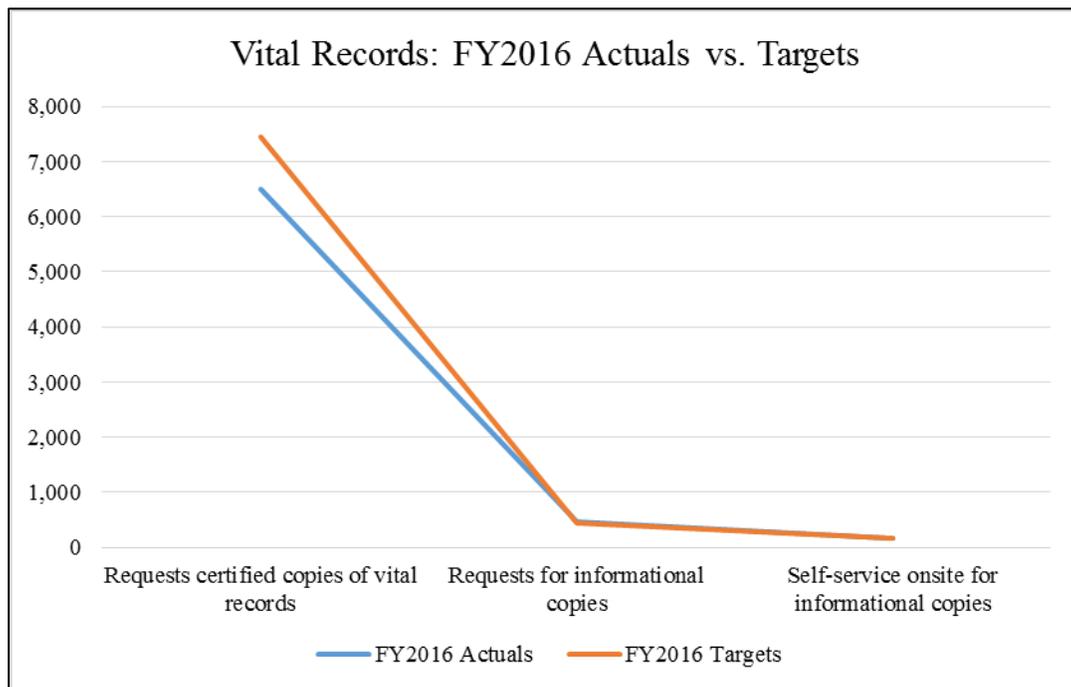
1. Vital Records
2. Archival Records

1.1.1 Vital Records

Pursuant to [18 V.S.A. § 5002](#), the State Archivist is responsible for providing access to vital records transmitted and stored in the State Records Center by the Department of Health (VDH) “for use by the public,” which are currently all vital records that are five (5) years or older (as of January 1, 2017, the records stored in the State Records Center by VDH date from 1760s to 2011). In addition, the State Archivist has the authority to issue certified copies of vital records.

Comparing VSARA’s FY2016 Actuals to Targets, requests for certified copies of vital records was less than projected; however, VSARA was “right on target” for both informational copies and onsite research of vitals. These two measures have been steadily falling, on average, as more researchers discover that they can access and research digitized copies of most vital records online.

FY16 Targets to FY16 Actuals Comparison for Vital Records



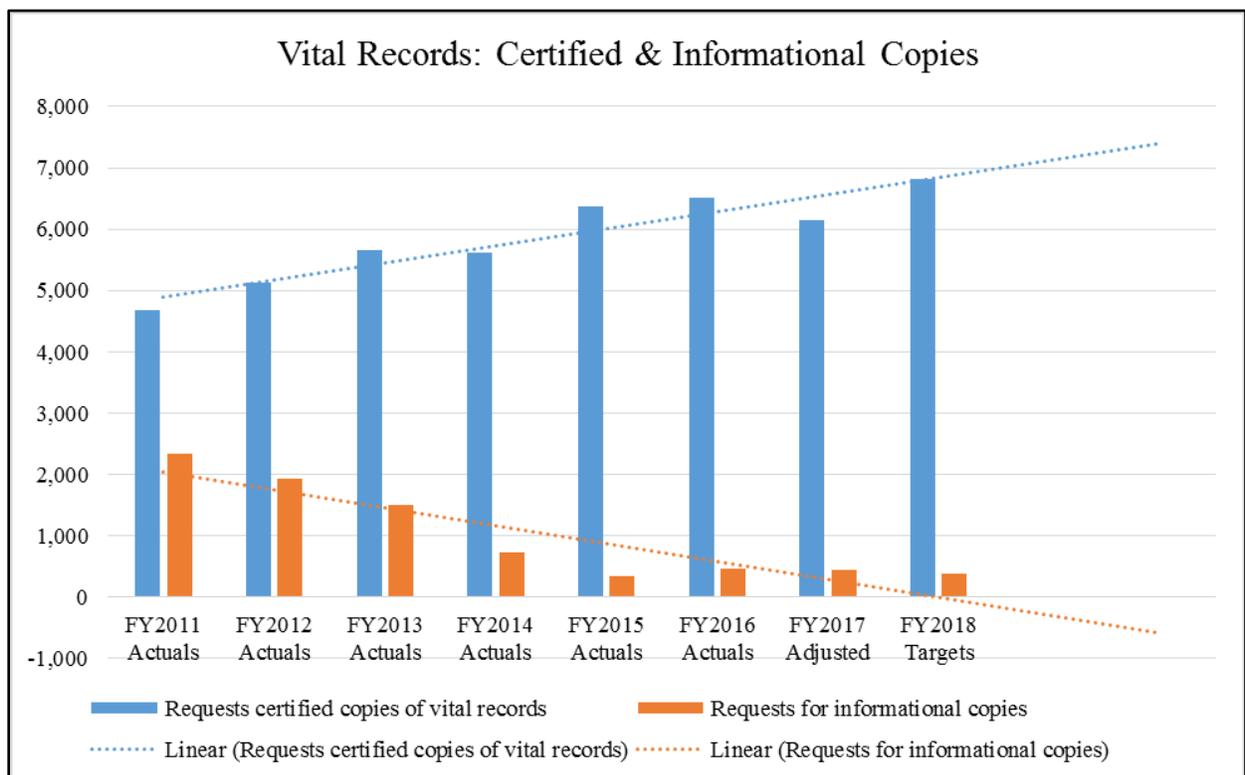
Certified and Informational Copies of Vital Records

When these vital records duties and responsibilities were transferred to VSARA in July 2008 from the Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS), the average wait time to receive a copy of a vital record, whether certified or informational, was 4-6 weeks. Today and for the past several years, VSARA processes vital record certification requests submitted through an online request portal or by mail within one business day. On average, it takes a VSARA staff member about 5-10 minutes to process a request using surrogates, microfilm or digital copies, of the paper vital records stored in the State Records Center by VDH.

Vital Records Performance Measures: Certified & Informational Copies								
	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY2017 Target	FY2018 Target
Certified	4,671	5,133	5,651	5,625	6,369	6511	6,141	6,808
Informational	2,339	1,925	1,496	733	348	473	446	388

Between FY2015 and FY2016:

- 7% increase in requests for Certified Copies.
- 36% increase in requests for Informational Copies.



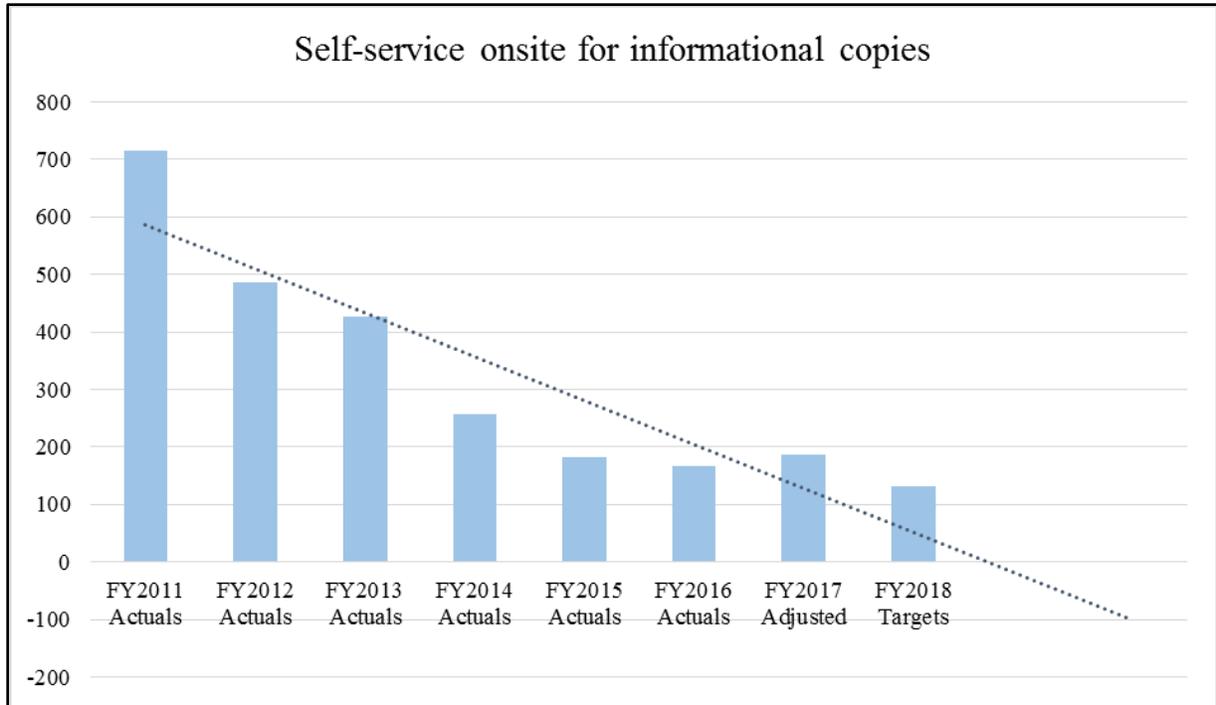
Self-Serve Access Onsite and Online to Vital Records

Although VSARA cannot control the number of requests it receives for certified copies of vital records, it can control requests for informational copies. In 2014, a more focused effort to direct citizens looking for informational copies of vital records to Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org was made – and this strategy has paid off. Between FY2011 and FY2015, VSARA reduced the number of staff hours spent on informational requests from 400+ hours a year to just 58 hours a year. Almost eight hours a week became available for existing staff to provide other services.

Vital Records Performance Measures: Informational Onsite & Online Access								
	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017 Target	FY 2018 Target
Onsite ¹	714	487	427	258	182	167	171	133
Online ²	n/a	n/a	4,320,417	6,157,837	4,722,424	5,678,879	4,800,000	6,635,334

Between FY2015 and FY2016:

- -24% increase in Onsite Access through VSARA’s Reference Room.
- 20% increase in Online Access through Ancestry.com.



¹ Measured by research visit rather than individual records

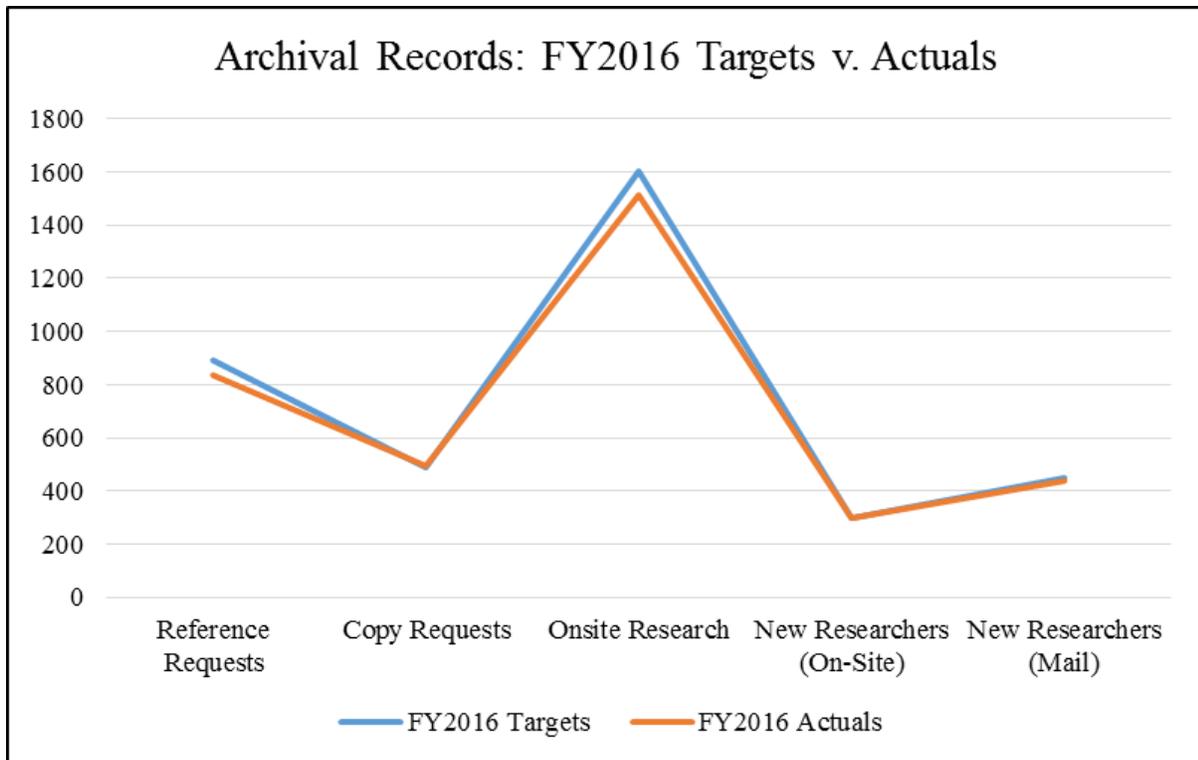
² Measured by individual record page views per calendar vs. fiscal year. This number only reflects records accessed through Ancestry.com as FamilySearch.org does not provided statistical data that can be used for this measure.

1.1.2 Archival Records

Pursuant to [3 V.S.A. § 117](#), the State Archivist shall “take custody of archival records” and “arrange, describe, and preserve archival records, and promote their use by government officials and the public.”

Comparing VSARA’s FY2016 Actuals to Targets, VSARA was largely “right on target” for its core reference services: (1) reference requests; (2) copy requests; (3) onsite research; (4) new researchers (On-Site); and (5) new researchers (Mail).

FY16 Targets to FY16 Actuals Comparison for Archival Records



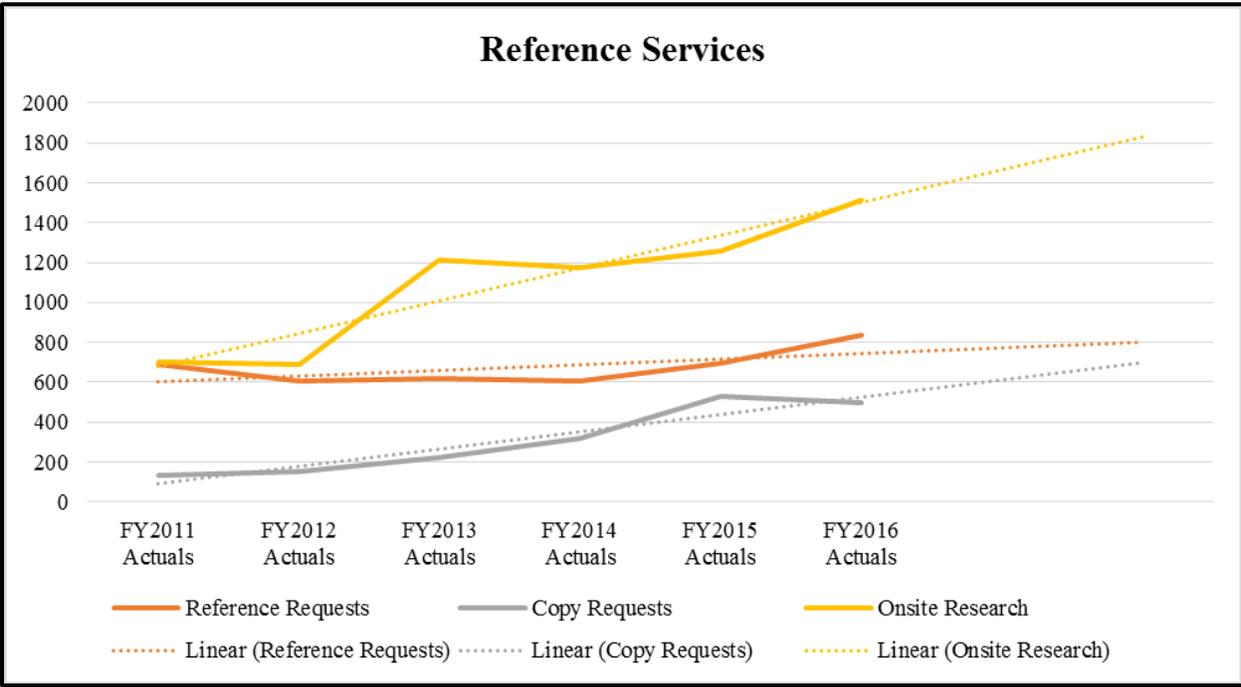
For specific measures and FY2016 priorities, VSARA has been very successful in increasing the use of archival records and reference services through its Reference Room. The Reference Room opened to the public in March 2009 and its use has been steadily growing. Between FY2015 and FY2016, both onsite research and requests for information increased by 20%. As VSARA moves to providing access to more records online, copy requests held steady with just a slight decrease.

Archival Records Performance Measures: Reference Services

Request for:	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY2017 Target	FY2018 Target
Information	689	609	618	607	696	835	1,119	939
Copies	134	153	224	315	528	495	480	623
Inspection	702	687	1,214	1,177	1,261	1515	1706	1833

Between FY2015 and FY2016:

- 20% increase in Requests for Information.
- -6% increase in Requests for Copies.
- 20% increase in Requests for Inspection.



1.2 Major Services to State Agencies

VSARA has two major services to the state agencies that are mandated by statute. They are in the areas of:

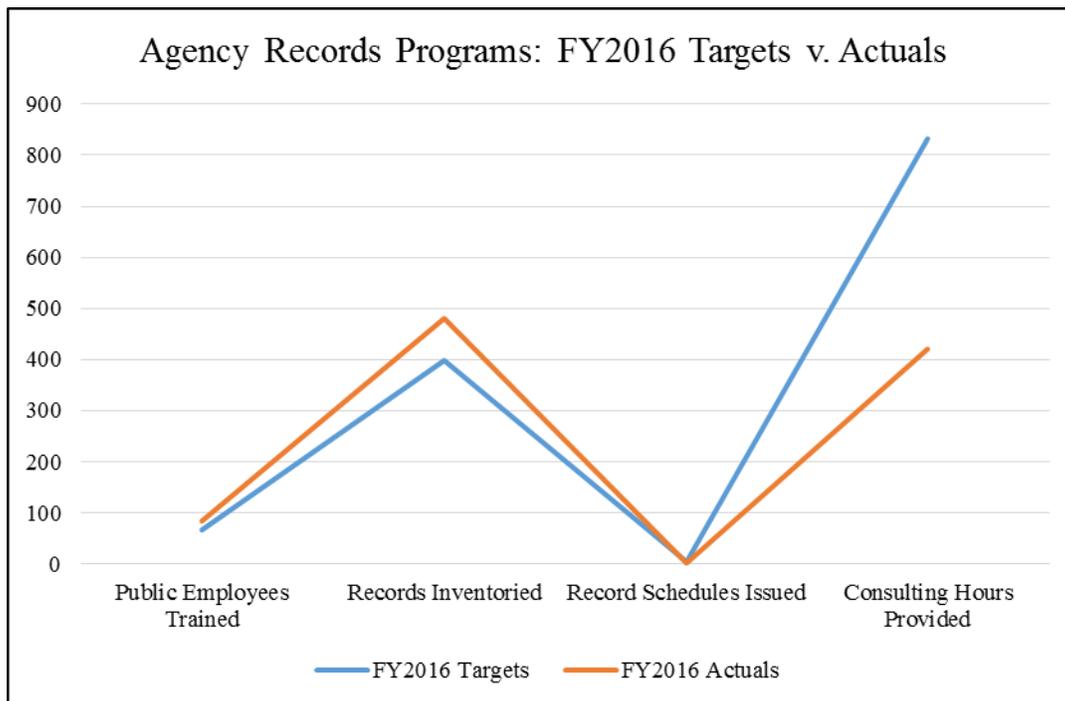
1. Agency Records Management Programs
2. Low-Cost Secure Storage for Agency Records

1.2.1 Agency Records Management Programs

Pursuant to [3 V.S.A. § 218](#), the head of each state agency or department is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and implementing an active and continuing records management program approved by the State Archivist. This includes designating a member of his or her staff as the records officer for his or her agency or department³. Related, the State Archivist shall “cooperate with the heads of State agencies or public bodies to establish and maintain a program for the appraisal and scheduling of public records.”

Comparing VSARA’s FY2016 Actuals to Targets, VSARA fell short in its predictions for two areas, consulting hours and record schedules issued, largely because of an unexpected vacancy in its senior records analyst position. Records analyst positions have proven difficult to fill and the position remains vacant as of January 2017.

FY16 Targets to FY16 Actuals Comparison for Agency Record Programs



Although VSARA fell short of its FY2016 targets, this does not mean that progress had not been made. Between FY2015 and FY2016, VSARA actually increased its: (1) consulting hours by 110%; (2) training by 419%; and (3) record inventorying by 122%.

³ While not required by law, constitutional officers and the judicial and legislative branches have followed the spirit of this law for the past 40+ years.

Records Management Programs Performance Measures: Agency Records

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY2017 Target	FY2018 Target
Inventoried	756	506	1,126	527	217	481	183	493
Scheduled	14	32	25	3	5	1	6	6

Between FY2015 and FY2016:

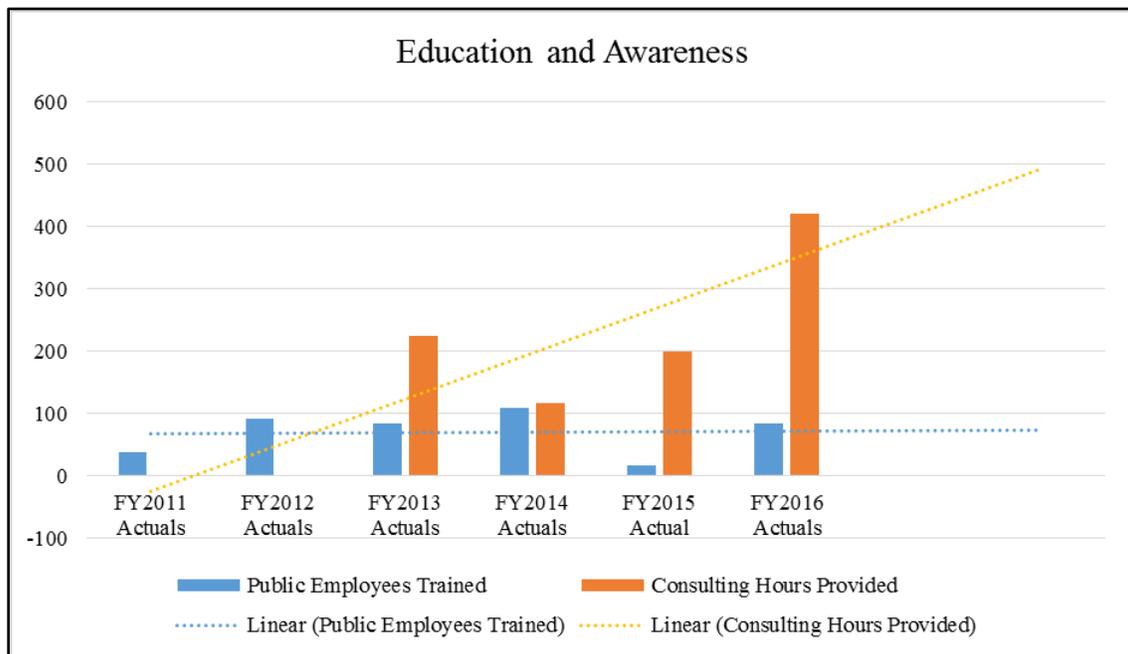
- 122% increase in Records Inventoried.
- -6% increase in Requests for Copies.
- 20% increase in Requests for Inspection.

Records Management Programs Performance Measures: Education & Awareness

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY2017 Target	FY2018 Target
Training	37	92	84	109	16	83	70	70
Consulting	n/a	n/a	224	116	200	420	420	450

Between FY2015 and FY2016:

- 419% increase in Public Employees Trained.
- 110% increase in number of Consulting Hours Provided.



1.2.2 Low-Cost Secure Storage for Agency Records

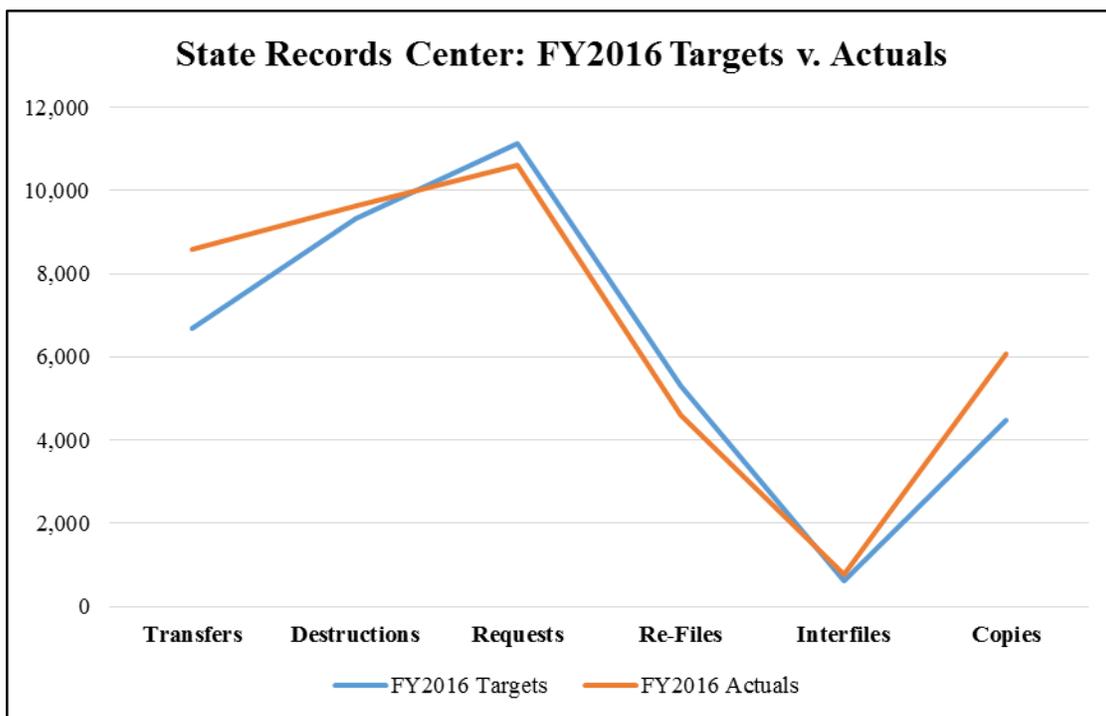
The State Archivist shall “maintain a record center to hold inactive records in accordance with records schedules approved by the State Archivist” ([3 V.S.A. § 117](#)).

As agency records management programs improve, VSARA’s ability to stabilize and predict workflow demands also improve. Nonetheless, VSARA cannot control external factors that impact the use of the State Records Center. Such factors in recent years include natural disasters (e.g. Tropical Storm Irene); office workspace changes (e.g. National Life moves and courthouse consolidations); and legislation (e.g. changes in the state’s expungement laws, which require a significant number of cases to be recalled from storage).

Comparing VSARA’s FY2016 Actuals to Targets, VSARA underestimated the number of incoming records for FY2016; however, this influx was offset by a higher than anticipated number of destructions. Therefore the numbers counterbalanced each other, stabilizing capacity in the State Records Center.

While re-files and requests also came in less than anticipated – and interfiles remained relatively “on target” – requests for copies from microfilm were much higher than projected, largely due to legislation related to criminal cases and expungements.

FY16 Targets to FY16 Actuals Comparison for Stored Agency Records

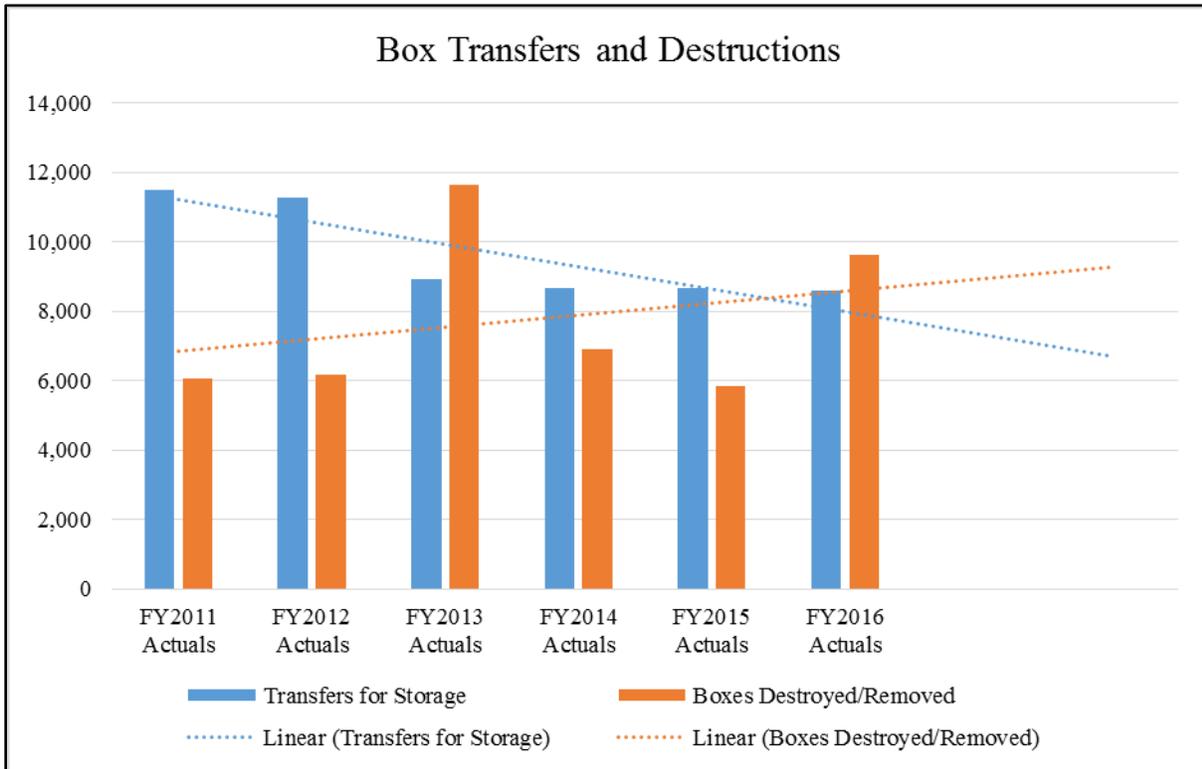


Low-Cost Secure Storage: Boxes of Paper Agency Records

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY2017 Target	FY2018 Target
Transfers	11,487	11,273	8,938	8,665	8,683	8599	8000	8000
Destructions	6,058	6,168	11,642	6,908	5,863	9630	8000	8000

Between FY2015 and FY2016:

- -1% increase in Box Transfers.
- 64% increase in Box Destructions.



Low-Cost Secure Storage: File Services								
	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY2017 Target	FY2018 Target
Re-files	7,292	5,237	4,210	4,625	4,735	4,613	5000	5000
Interfiles	3,447	2,038	1,333	824	854	768	800	800
Requests	9,013	11,416	11,906	11,623	10,487	10,600	10,000	10,000
Copies	8,421	9,804	9,616	6,088	8,141	6078	8,000	8,000
<p>Between FY2015 and FY2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -3% increase in Re-files. • -10% increase in Interfiles. • 1% increase in Requests. • -25% increase in Copies 								

2 Conclusion

The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) performs quite well with very limited staff and resources. Many of the functions performed by VSARA, however, are driven by demands and requests that require immediate attention from staff (e.g. agency records arriving at the loading dock waiting for transfer into the State Records Center; walk-ins by the public for copies of records, including certified copies of vital records; and routine calls from public employees for records management advice and guidance). As a result, performance in areas that are equally important to VSARA’s mission and vision but yet more passive in nature (e.g. archival appraisal and accessioning; records analysis and scheduling; public programming; and general planning) tend to receive less priority – a situation VSARA is always trying to correct.

In addition to vulnerabilities exposed by having fewer staff to manage growing demands, this past year has shown VSARA is also very susceptible to decisions of state government that affect records and information. Often times, these decisions fall short of looking at the broader impact and the processes and procedures necessary to carry out such decisions. Performance by VSARA and the state agencies it seeks to serve would significantly improve if agency records management programs were more advanced and better resourced. While there has been an immense amount of growth in agency records management programs following the creation of VSARA in 2008, several agency programs continue to fall well behind in terms of knowledge and awareness for the effective and efficient management of records and information as well as compliance with the State’s records management and archives laws.