



How the State of Iowa Simplified Compliance, Accessibility, and Records Management with CivicPlus®

Keys to Project: Integrated compliance technology solutions

State: Iowa

Population: 3,193,000

Products: NextRequest Web Accessibility Social Media Archiving

CHALLENGE:

A digital compliance and accessibility audit revealed the need for improvements.

SOLUTION:

An integrated compliance tech stack from CivicPlus.

RESULT:

With the help of CivicPlus, the State of Iowa successfully optimized its entire digital presence and now delivers a more trusted experience.

When the State of Iowa conducted a digital compliance and accessibility audit, Dawn Connet, eGovernment Services Coordinator for the State of Iowa, quickly found a lot to update, maintain, and manage to ensure content and communications remained compliant with evolving regulations and few resources to help.

With websites and several hundred (and some extremely active) social media accounts, each individually managed by state agencies with additional responsibilities, the State needed a dependable process to manage its digital presence that would be straightforward for their agencies to implement.

For large entities with different levels of funding and knowledge across multiple enterprises, maintaining accurate records of all digital communication for each state agency can be incredibly challenging. This was the case for Connet and her team until they turned to a suite of digital compliance, web accessibility, and records management tools that drastically reduced the time, costs, and risks associated with web maintenance and the fulfillment and management of public records requests.

The Situation

Responsible for overseeing the central information technology systems for the State of Iowa, Connet recognized they were having difficulty keeping up with all official digital records from their agencies, especially for their elected officials. One of the biggest hurdles Connet found was an overall lack of awareness of [Iowa social media recordkeeping requirements](#). With no process for archiving, staff relied on taking screenshots of social media posts or kept no records at all.

Each time a new governor is elected, an archive of records needs to be created and given to state archivists. This archive needs to be readily available, and without a social media archiving tool, it can be nearly impossible to obtain.

These gaps in their record inventory made fulfilling requests even more difficult for the State, which was already a strenuous process taking up resources and time. Connet gave an example of one of their agencies with a records center with five employees dedicated to responding to records requests, as they receive about 1,000 a year.

So when online communication and public unrest accelerated with COVID-19 and new state initiatives for increased broadband internet access rolled out, departments quickly found themselves overwhelmed with the addition of unemployment insurance and workers' compensation records requests. "We've had 20-25% more records requests in 2021 than in prior years," Connet said.

“ We rely on these solutions to help us with supporting our agencies. ”

Dawn Connet

eGovernment Services Coordinator State of Iowa

The shift to digital also highlighted the need for a greater focus on accessibility to ensure the information they were sharing was available to everyone in their community. For the State of Iowa, that meant quickly updating and uploading PDFs, many of which needed editing and cross-department collaboration.

"We knew if websites were to be a source of information that it was imperative they were readable, reliable, and accessible," Connet said.

Social Media Archiving

With a digital focus, the State of Iowa concentrated on remote work, utilizing a plan to amplify more information about broadband funding and other legislative initiatives through social media. Concerned about previous incidents with imposter accounts, Connet knew centralized control would be needed and looked to CivicPlus' social media archiving software, formerly ArchiveSocial, to help manage their presence, mitigate any legal risks, and prepare for records requests and audits.


"When you only have a short amount of time because it's not the most important part of your job, you need the big tools to help you do it and see it more clearly," she said.

Web Accessibility

To establish websites as trusted and reliable sources, the State of Iowa needed a way to ensure the information its leaders published would be readable and accessible. With the help of Monsido, CivicPlus' web governance and accessibility partner, Connet said optimizing hundreds of PDFs suddenly became painless.

"It was easier for agencies to become better communicators," she said. "Department teams could be more collaborative with documents, create rules and links, and make content more understandable."

FOIA and Records Request Management

With CivicPlus' all-encompassing records request management software, [NextRequest](#) , departments could finally understand how many requests were coming in and how long they were taking to process.

"You can help and give people a better process when you have a better idea of the metrics," Connet added.

The platform's online portal also offered Iowans another doorway to access the State and its agencies and a quicker way to help them.

"They don't always know who to ask," she explained. "Now, when a request comes in, agencies can either quickly connect the public to the right resources or assign the request to specific employees or departments."

Delivering Results

With the help of CivicPlus, the State of Iowa successfully optimized its entire digital presence and now delivers a more trusted experience. The State is now equipped with reliable metrics and reporting to understand its community better and a suite of tools to streamline compliance and accessibility requirements. But it's the support that stands out to Connet.

"Agencies can run reports and get the exact help and training they need from all three platforms," she explained. "We rely on these solutions to help us with supporting our agencies."


“ When you only have a short amount of time because it's not the only important part of your job, you need the big tools to help you do it and see it more clearly. ”

Dawn Connet

eGovernment Services Coordinator State of Iowa

With CivicPlus' Social Media Archiving software, Iowa has a reliable archive capturing all digital communications across its entire online presence. With social media alerts set up to give State leaders a better understanding of public perceptions on different topics, they can serve their community better.

With NextRequest, the State streamlined its records requests process and now fulfills requests quicker than ever. Its leaders could even leverage the platform remotely so that responding to records requests didn't halt when COVID-19 hit. And with invoice tracking, the State simplified its payment process, saving staff hours. Connet calculated that the State's agencies had saved at least \$15,000 in staff resources by streamlining their workflows.

With Monsido, the State can easily navigate accessibility requirements to become better communicators and ensure their content is available for everyone, saving budget and endless hours. Connet praised the tool's easy functionality, which allowed for quick adoption. Department teams could simplify their workflows, promote collaboration, instantly locate accessibility errors, and [audit PDF documents with quick scans](#)  for quality, proper tagging, remediation, and more.

With the help of these solutions, Connet and her team were able to empower more compliant, inclusive, and open communications across their digital channels.

"It's been a hallmark all three brands came together. The customer service support is great across the board, from the quality of the company and the tools," Connet said.

Key Points

- **Have a Dedicated Archive** to ensure you capture all engagement across your social media platforms, even if communication has been edited, deleted, or hidden, with software like CivicPlus Social Media Archiving that can ensure compliance and protect yourself from legal risk.
- **Ensure Web Accessibility** even if you don't have an employee dedicated to maintaining compliance with tools like Monsido that enhance content readability and bypass human error scans like misspellings to offer your community a flawless online experience.
- **Be Able to Fulfill Requests Remotely** and better inform department managers with a record request management system like NextRequest that enables staff across departments and remote locations to still respond to requests and gives agencies to access metrics they wouldn't usually have.
- **Reduce Team Stress** with a suite of best-in-class tools because sometimes there are too many tasks and not enough time to complete everything, and intuitive tools you can rely on are just what you need to fill the gaps.