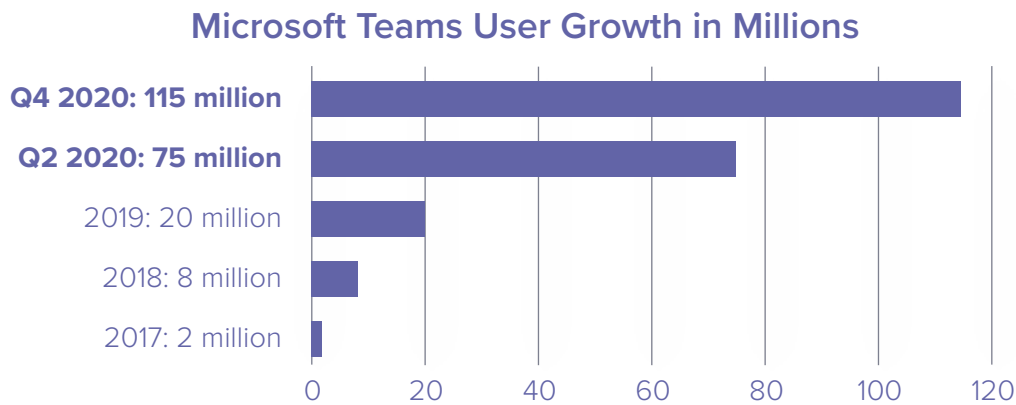


Checklist

Archiving Microsoft Teams Communications for Public Agencies



Microsoft Teams is one of the most widely used, fastest-growing workplace collaboration tools available today. It has been critical to many organizations during the work-from-home era, resulting in a major increase in users from 44 million in March 2020 to 115 million in the final quarter of the same year.¹



Teams is useful in several important ways. It unifies communications, facilitates collaboration and provides a secure platform for sharing files and documents. Users can meet virtually by video or phone, send messages, and share files and other multimedia across multiple teams, projects and devices. Its user-friendly interface and send-and-respond immediacy have made organizations of all types—including government agencies—more efficient.

Microsoft Teams and Public Records

Government organizations are responsible for preserving and producing agency-related communications due to requirements outlined in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and state public records laws. At one time these requirements could be fulfilled by archiving emails. Today, content from dynamic tools like Microsoft Teams are also records that need to be archived.

Enabling employees to stay connected comes with the challenge of preserving new types (and growing volumes) of communications data. Without the right solution in place to govern usage, public organizations face legal, reputational and financial risk when they can't respond to records requests, audits or subpoenas.

If your agency is already using Teams, you've taken the first step toward achieving new levels of employee connectedness, engagement and productivity. The next step is to put guidelines and technology in place that will address the subsequent risks.

This **Archiving Microsoft Teams Communications Checklist** will help you cover all your bases, whether you are:

- Using Teams to support remote work, but not archiving the communications
- Using Teams to support remote work and archiving communications, but not satisfied with your current archiving solution
- Interested in using Teams, but still evaluating tools to support recordkeeping & legal obligations

Find out where you stand today and where you need to be to manage Microsoft Teams effectively, and keep your organization prepared for records requests and legal inquiries.

¹ <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/microsoft-teams-statistics/>

Did You Know?

Government-business-related communications are part of the public record and can be requested as such. This includes email, text messages and content from newer communication technologies, like Microsoft Teams.

Questions to Get Started

Before diving into the checklist, complete the short questionnaire below to see how prepared you are for a public records or legal request that includes content from Teams.

Yes No

Do you know which communications applications your agency's employees are using for government-related business?

Governing the communications tools employees use is more challenging with a distributed workforce. People may be using unauthorized applications for business use—creating security or compliance risks and causing headaches in the event of a public record or legal request.

If you answered no, we recommend you identify which applications and tools your employees are using for work-related purposes so you can put the appropriate guardrails in place.

Yes No

Does your agency have a mobile device policy?

Whether your agency uses government-issued mobile devices, or you enable a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy, employees should be aware of and understand the rules for being compliant with recordkeeping obligations. These rules should be updated to account for any new mobile applications that employees are using to communicate—like Teams.

If you answered no, we recommend you document your mobile device policies, be explicit about allowed and prohibited mobile applications, and share mobile policies with staff regularly.

Yes No

Did you know that Teams messages are subject to public records laws?

Every state has its own public records laws and requirements, but the message is the same across the board: government-business-related communications are part of the public record and can be requested as such. This includes email, text messages and content from newer communication technologies, like Microsoft Teams. **If you answered no**, we recommend you adopt an archiving solution that can support Teams to stay ahead of recordkeeping compliance, now and in the future.

Recommended Reading:

[*How to Pay for a Digital Archiving Solution: A Resource for Public Agencies*](#)



Checklist: Archiving Microsoft Teams Communications

Evaluate your current archiving solution.

Perhaps you're not using an archiving solution and instead use basic forensic methods to collect information when a request comes through (taking screenshots of messages, for example). Or you may be archiving communications but ready to evaluate new solutions.

The variety and complexity of communications data produced across a Microsoft 365-enabled organization make recordkeeping challenging. This trend will continue now that working from home has become more popular. Government organizations will likely require additional archiving functionality to address public records and legal requests that include Teams chats, calls or files, across networks and devices.

A robust archiving solution will be able to support the following:

- One-to-one chats
- Multiparty chats
- Channel messages
- Files in all formats: PDF, document, image, GIF, emoji
- Metadata: network, location, devices
- Transitive data: edits, replies, deleted info

Consider the power and reliability of a centrally managed solution for capturing, archiving and producing complex, potentially high-volume historical content on demand.

Collect and preserve all content that is generated on Teams.

One of Teams' benefits is the diverse range of communication and collaboration it supports. However, many of the subsequent actions people take—editing or deleting Teams messages about a recent city council meeting, sharing details about county policy decisions in a private chat, etc.—are part of the public record and can be material to an investigation. Unfortunately, many tools for capturing message content miss important “event” information or can't store and index content in its native context.

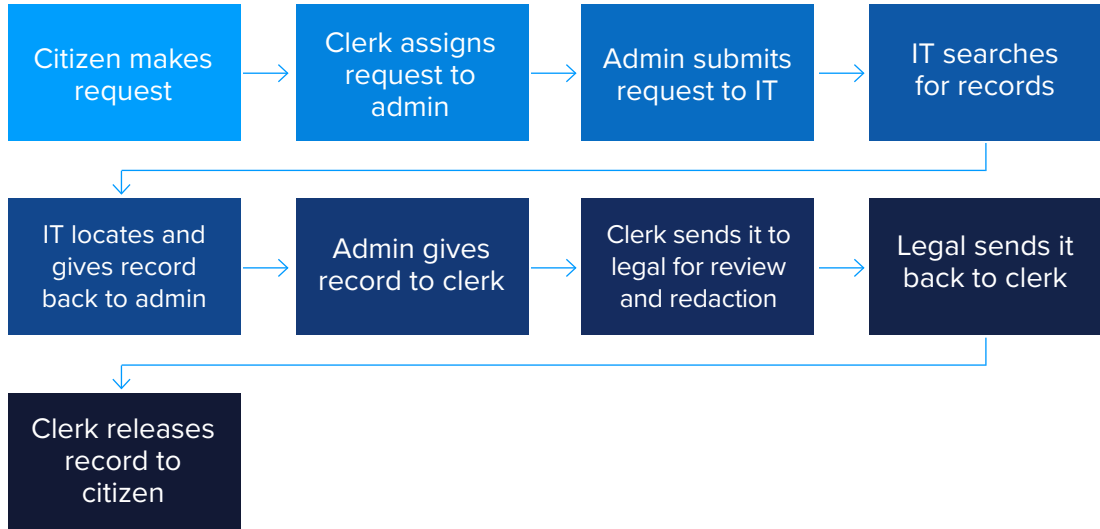
Records managers and legal teams need to be able to search, review and understand the context of an expansive, complex and interactive conversation among an organization's participants. And when it's time to search and retrieve communications content for an investigation or request, it needs to be delivered promptly and comprehensively. This is a laborious, risky process if the data is hard to access and missing key details. A solution that can capture this information directly from the source, in its original format, with quick search capabilities, is the most efficient and reliable way to mitigate risk when the time comes.

Rethink your content retrieval and review process to increase efficiency.

Now think about the process itself and the time and resources it takes to make records requests happen. For many government organizations, this is cumbersome and inefficient.

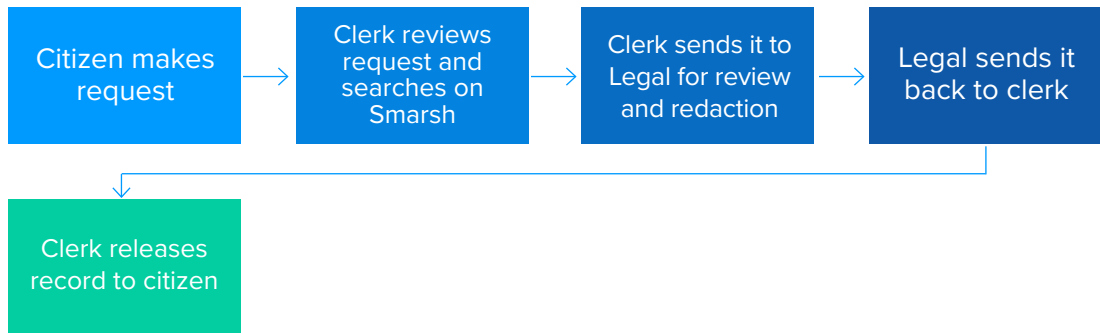
Yes No

Does your content retrieval process look like this?



Yes No

Would you prefer a process that looks more like this?



With a user-friendly archiving solution, any of these people could just sign in and pull the request from a shared interface. No need to hire more staff.

□ Identify the people in your organization who might benefit from a centralized archiving solution for Microsoft Teams.

- **IT:** Your IT organization will be able to automate the archiving of Teams data so it can stay focused on the technology and be relieved from the process of producing records.
- **Records managers:** Can respond to public records requests or legal inquiries thoroughly and efficiently and be the go-to person to provide communications content as a backup for internal audits.
- **Legal:** In addition to responding to open records requests, legal teams can leverage archived Teams data for discovery related to litigation and other legal issues.
- **HR:** Internal employee investigations will be much easier with all employee electronic communications in a centralized, search-ready state. A full comprehensive archive provides recorded proof in the case of conflicting employee reports.

□ Develop and document a training program to address employee use of Microsoft Teams.

Training employees on Teams usage policies early and often is a key part of managing comprehensive compliance and keeping important information secure. Create and document guidelines for how employees should conduct themselves on messaging apps.

Make sure training is explicit and that it outlines both acceptable and prohibited terms of communication. Wherever possible, automate policy enforcement and incorporate it into onboarding processes. If an employee's communications are being captured and supervised, make sure they know it at the outset. Require signed attestation that they have gone through training. Stay engaged with employees as Teams and its integrations evolve, and reassess your policies as needed.



Smarsh & Microsoft Teams: Better Together

While every government agency's recordkeeping needs are different, many will benefit from adding the advanced capabilities of the Smarsh Connected Suite to their Microsoft 365 environment. When leading productivity applications meet specialized capture, archiving and e-discovery solutions, public agencies can quickly and efficiently respond to records requests or litigation events.

A longtime relationship between Smarsh and Microsoft provides a unique vantage point into how to best leverage the investment in Microsoft 365 and enable recordkeeping and legal preparedness for government agencies.



Capture: Smarsh directly captures Teams content from the source through API integration. This includes point-in-time snapshots of joins, leaves, edits, deletes, comments, replies and attachments, which is especially important for collaborative conversations. No matter what type of communications data is produced in Teams, and regardless of a user's device, location or network, Smarsh preserves its chain of custody, context and original format.



Archive: Teams communications can be sent seamlessly to the Smarsh Professional Archive — an immutable and context-aware data store. You can perform an advanced search for Teams-specific records, and data is produced quickly and easily, making the process faster and more accurate. Teams content can be easily added to an existing deployment of Smarsh alongside all other types of archived content — eliminating the need for organizations to seek a separate archiving solution for Teams.



E-discovery and risk mitigation: With Smarsh Discovery applications, users can quickly collect, organize and cull data to enable informed strategic decisions during early case assessment, while managing risk. The combined solution provides a highly secure, defensible and auditable workflow across all electronic communication.



Training: Smarsh has a wealth of resources for risk-mitigation and usage policies. Our Implementation Services, Professional Services and support teams are available to get your staff on track and in compliance. In addition, [Smarsh University](#) offers training courses for the Smarsh Connected Suite family of tools.

Ensure your agency's required communications data is captured, archived and easy to produce with Smarsh and Microsoft Teams.





Smarsh® is the recognized global leader in electronic communications archiving solutions for regulated organizations. The Smarsh Connected Suite provides innovative capture, archiving, e-discovery, and supervision solutions across the industry's widest breadth of communication channels.

Scalable for organizations of all sizes, the Smarsh platform provides customers with compliance built on confidence. It enables them to strategically future-proof as new communication channels are adopted, and to realize more insight and value from the data in their archive. Customers strengthen their compliance and e-discovery initiatives, and benefit from the productive use of email, social media, mobile/text messaging, instant messaging and collaboration, web, and voice channels.

Smarsh serves a global client base that spans the top banks in North America and Europe, along with leading brokerage firms, insurers, and registered investment advisors. Smarsh also enables federal and state government agencies to meet their public records and e-discovery requirements.

For more information, visit www.smarsh.com.

Smarsh provides marketing materials for informational purposes only. Smarsh does not provide legal advice or opinions. You must consult your attorney regarding your compliance with applicable laws and regulations.