

WINNEBAGO COUNTY PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE
Developed - April 2007

SCHEDULED REVIEW DATE: July 17, 2007 @ 10:30 a.m.

DEPARTMENT: Register of Deeds

DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT:

To record, index, and accurately maintain official records and documents of the county relating to real estate as required by State Statutes. To provide access to those records either within the office or through the Internet.

PROGRAM: Land Records

1. Describe the program, its purpose and goals.

Wis. Stats. 59.43(1) require the local Register of Deeds Office to record, index, and preserve all properly prepared documents (such as plats, condo plats, certified survey maps, deeds, satisfactions, mortgages, etc.) provided for recording and/or filing. The office provides assistance to the public, title companies, attorneys and other county offices with searching real estate documents either in the office through public access terminals or via Internet access. Fees are collected for recording, searching and copying and are distributed to both the County of Winnebago and State of Wisconsin.

2. Who is the program intended to serve? How many are served? The program is intended to serve those who need to record and search real estate and related documents to maintain the history and protect ownership rights of all properties in the County of Winnebago. The populace of Winnebago County and any other interested party outside of Winnebago County is served by this office.

3. Are the program benefits long-lasting and essential to the service populations? The land records of Winnebago County have been preserved by the Register of Deeds office since the inception of Winnebago County. The program is essential and statutorily mandated for recording all real estate transactions that occur in Winnebago County.

4. Is this program directly or indirectly related to or does it support any other program in this department or another department? If so, how? The Register of Deeds Office provides information to Planning, Zoning, GIS, Property Tax Lister, municipalities and the County Treasurer. Each of these offices has Internet access to our records and accesses them regularly for their own specific uses. The monies collected for recording and copy fees are turned over to the Treasurer daily. \$1.00 of each recording fee goes directly into the Land Records Modernization Fund per State Statute. 80% of real estate transfer fees are collected for the State of Wisconsin Dept. of Revenue, while 20% is retained for county use.

5. How does this program make the department or county government more effective or efficient, including any intergovernmental relationship? By providing Internet access to all land records, the Register of Deeds office provides efficiency to all other related county offices, both inside and outside the courthouse.

6. How do you determine/measure if this program has been effectively provided and implemented? The office is very effective in that all new recordings are scanned, indexed and verified daily and are currently up-to-date. All efforts are made to back-scan and index older land records on the computer system.

7. Could the county cost-effectively subcontract this program? No. These duties are required to be performed by an elected Register of Deeds and staff.

8. State the numerical ranking of this program compared to all programs in your department and briefly explain. Land records rank #1 in relation to other duties of the office and are a principal source of

revenue generated for both the State of Wisconsin and Winnebago County through recording fees, copy fees and Internet access contracts.

9. **Are there current alternatives to this program available in the community? Can this program be provided through alternative arrangements with other providers (i.e. private entities, other County departments, other governmental units)?** No. Again, other departments rely on the information the Register of Deeds provides statutorily.
10. **If this program were eliminated, what would be the ramifications for the County (i.e., added risk, liability or legal issues)?** By State Statute, this program could not be eliminated.
11. **What is the program impact and effectiveness related to the program cost? (Provide data if available.)** The Register of Deeds Office historically provides revenues to the County over and above expenses incurred. For instance, over \$600,000 in revenue has been generated yearly for county use in the past five years, in addition to funding the Land Records Modernization Fund.
12. **Is this program currently duplicated by another county department or provider in the community?**
No.
13. **What are your ideas for finding efficiencies in your Department (i.e. reducing duplication of services, better use of technology, reducing waste of resources, opportunities for partnering, opportunities for combining programs, personnel, functions etc, time-saving ideas, identifying 'sacred cows' etc.)? (Note – this question will not be scored).** The Register of Deeds is constantly working on back-scanning and indexing older records that exist only on paper or in out-dated medium. By continually adding older records, the product we provide becomes more comprehensive and useful for our customers and related offices. This also protects the records in the event of a disaster. We become more efficient by having the records available by a touch of the keyboard, rather than by searching both the computer and paper records.

The Register of Deeds is working on obtaining a plat-scanner. This will preserve the paper records that must be kept forever while providing computer access to those records.

The Register of Deeds along with our software vendor, Fidlar, is working on promoting the use of e-recording. This is a paper-less process that also saves postage costs for returning documents.

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DEPARTMENT: Register of Deeds

DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT:

To record, index and accurately maintain official records and documents of the county relating to vital records consisting of birth, death, marriage and military discharges. To issue certified and non-certified to qualified parties and collect the assigned fees.

PROGRAM: Vital Records

1. **Describe the program, its purpose and goals.** Wis. Stats. 59.43(1)(h) and Chapter 69 require the local Register of Deeds to file, index and accurately preserve all birth, death, marriage and military discharge records. The office provides assistance to the public in obtaining certified and non-certified copies, assists genealogists, collects fees on behalf of Winnebago County and the State of Wisconsin and works to protect the public from identity theft and fraud.
2. **Who is the program intended to serve? How many are served?** The program serves anyone who had a vital event occur in Winnebago County and those who wish to research genealogy. The entire populace of Winnebago County is served, as well as those requesting records via the Internet.
3. **Are the program benefits long-lasting and essential to the service populations?** The Register of Deeds has kept vital records since the inception of Winnebago County. The services are essential to the entire public as we provide certified records for use in obtaining driver's licenses, passports, benefits, etc. The collection of fees for these documents provides revenue to both the State of Wisconsin and Winnebago County. The Register of Deeds is also very diligent in working to prevent identity theft and fraud.
4. **Is this program directly or indirectly related to or does it support any other program in this department or another department? If so, how?** The Vitals Department of Register of Deeds works with the Clerk of Courts (providing birth records for passports) and the Child Support Agency (providing birth records for paternity reasons).
5. **How does this program make the department or county government more effective or efficient, including any intergovernmental relationship?** Vital records are now available via the Internet, so that citizens can fill out an application and receive their birth, death or marriage record in the mail versus making a trip to the courthouse.
6. **How do you determine/measure if this program has been effectively provided and implemented?** The office works closely with the State Vital Records Office and provides records as required by State Statute. The Winnebago County Register of Deeds has become vastly more efficient since the installation of the vitals automation. Almost 250,000 vital records have been back-indexed and scanned into the computer, providing staff with greater efficiency in retrieving and making certified copies.
7. **Could the county cost-effectively subcontract this program?** No. State Statutes dictate that the Register of Deeds shall issue vital records.
8. **State the numerical ranking of this program compared to all programs in your department and briefly explain.** Vital records would rank #2 in the duties of the Register of Deeds and are an

important aspect of the office. The public depends on the ability to obtain a vital record in a timely manner. Revenues are also generated for both the State of Wisconsin and Winnebago County.

9. **Are there current alternatives to this program available in the community? Can this program be provided through alternative arrangements with other providers (i.e. private entities, other County departments, other governmental units)?** Vital records are also available through the State Vital Records Office in Madison, but are not available via the Internet. This would require travel to Madison or mailing applications. Where the State Office takes weeks to respond to a vital request, the local Register of Deeds can provide the record within a matter of minutes.
10. **If this program were eliminated, what would be the ramifications for the County (i.e., added risk, liability or legal issues)?** State Statutes again dictate that the local Register of Deeds shall issue vital records.
11. **What is the program impact and effectiveness related to the program cost? (Provide data if available.)** Issuance of certified and non-certified vital records generates approximately \$130,000 in revenues annually.
12. **Is this program currently duplicated by another county department or provider in the community?** No.
13. **What are your ideas for finding efficiencies in your Department (i.e. reducing duplication of services, better use of technology, reducing waste of resources, opportunities for partnering, opportunities for combining programs, personnel, functions etc, time-saving ideas, identifying 'sacred cows' etc.)? (Note – this question will not be scored).** The Register of Deeds Office will continue back-scanning and indexing all existing paper records. The goal is to have vital records preserved and protected in the event of a disaster. The conversion project is about 50% completed. This has already increased our efficiency immeasurably. Land Record staff has assisted with this project, so this has provided further cross-training.

There are several federal mandates that will require an on-line state-wide system for birth records. Winnebago County will be ready for that conversion as well.

I am also the Chair of the Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association Vitals Committee. This enables me to keep up-to-date with any new legislation that affects vital records and to help keep the needs and rights of the public protected.

Once all vital records are on the computer, I would like to combine the physical office space of Land Records and Vitals. Right now, both divisions are on separate floors of the courthouse. We will also be able to store the paper records off-site once the conversion is complete, making more room for staff and the public or allowing another county office to take over the vacated space in the basement.

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DEPARTMENT: Register of Deeds

DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT:

To preserve all land records and vital records recorded and/or filed in the Winnebago County Register of Deeds Office and to develop a disaster recovery plan.

PROGRAM: Preservation

1. **Describe the program, its purpose and goals.** Wis. Stats. 59.43(1)(d). To continue back-scanning and indexing of land records. Records from 1973 to 1985 exist on aperture cards and records prior to 1973 are still in paper indexes and copied on paper form. These records need to be converted to CD format for conversion into the computer. To complete the back-scanning and indexing of the remaining 250,000 vital records not yet done. Once these records are preserved on computer, they will be also available on a replication server, which is located off-site. From that point, a comprehensive disaster recovery program can be designed.
2. **Who is the program intended to serve? How many are served?** Any interested party is entitled to access and/or copy land records. Qualified applicants are entitled to vital records. We serve the entire populace of Winnebago County and beyond.
3. **Are the program benefits long-lasting and essential to the service populations?** Yes, land and vital records must be kept forever.
4. **Is this program directly or indirectly related to or does it support any other program in this department or another department? If so, how?** Yes, Planning, Zoning, GIS, Property Tax Lister, municipalities, Clerk of Courts, Child Support Agency and Treasurer all access information from the Register of Deeds.
5. **How does this program make the department or county government more effective or efficient, including any intergovernmental relationship?** By converting outdated aperture cards and paper records, it makes the office much more efficient because these records can be obtained by the click of a keyboard instead of through manual searches.
6. **How do you determine/measure if this program has been effectively provided and implemented?** The availability of records to staff and the public. By providing more complete records, customers are more willing to purchase Internet access contracts.
7. **Could the county cost-effectively subcontract this program?** Yes. The County would not have the capability to convert these records.
8. **State the numerical ranking of this program compared to all programs in your department and briefly explain.** This program ranks #3 in importance to the Register of Deeds Office. Record preservation is essential for recovery in the event of a disaster and is also required by State Statutes.
9. **Are there current alternatives to this program available in the community? Can this program be provided through alternative arrangements with other providers (i.e. private entities, other County departments, other governmental units)?** No other alternatives exist. We will need to contract out for conversion of paper records and indexes.
10. **If this program were eliminated, what would be the ramifications for the County (i.e., added risk, liability or legal issues)?** It is required pursuant to State Statutes.

- 11. What is the program impact and effectiveness related to the program cost? (Provide data if available.)** It is imperative that all records be converted and preserved. If there were to be a disaster, many of these documents are one-of-a-kind and cannot be duplicated. The costs of the conversion can be taken from the Land Records Modernization Fund. This fund was developed by State law for just these purposes.
- 12. Is this program currently duplicated by another county department or provider in the community?**
No.
- 13. What are your ideas for finding efficiencies in your Department (i.e. reducing duplication of services, better use of technology, reducing waste of resources, opportunities for partnering, opportunities for combining programs, personnel, functions etc, time-saving ideas, identifying 'sacred cows' etc.)? (Note – this question will not be scored).** The Register of Deeds is in the process of purchasing a plat scanner. We will then be able to scan all existing and new plats that are filed in the office. We will no longer have to have the plats sent out for conversion to fiche. The records will be available on-line as well for our customers.

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DEPARTMENT: Register of Deeds

DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT:

To record, index, and accurately maintain official records and documents of the county relating to vital statistics and real estate as required by State Statutes.

PROGRAM: UCC

- 1 Describe the program, its purpose and goals.** Wis. Stats. 59.43(1) require the local Register of Deeds Office to record, index and preserve copies of all realty related Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) documents. The office provides assistance to the public, title companies, attorneys and other county offices with searching real estate documents either in the office through public access terminals or via Internet access.
- 2 Who is the program intended to serve? How many are served?** The program is intended to serve those who need to record and search real estate related documents to maintain the history and protect ownership rights of all properties in the County of Winnebago. The populace of Winnebago County and any other interested party outside of Winnebago County is served by this office.
- 3 Are the program benefits long-lasting and essential to the service populations?** The land records of Winnebago County have been preserved by the Register of Deeds Office since the inception of Winnebago County. The program is essential and statutorily mandated for recording all real estate transactions that occur in Winnebago County.
- 4 Is this program directly or indirectly related to or does it support any other program in this department or another department? If so, how?** The Register of Deeds Office provides information to Planning, Zoning, GIS, Property Tax Lister, municipalities and the County Treasurer. Each of these offices has Internet access to our records and accesses them regularly for their own specific uses.
- 5 How does this program make the department or county government more effective or efficient, including any intergovernmental relationship?** By providing Internet access to all land records, the Register of Deeds office provides efficiency to all other related county offices, both inside and outside the Courthouse.
- 6 How do you determine/measure if this program has been effectively provided and implemented?** The office is very effective in that all new recordings are scanned, indexed and verified daily and are currently up-to-date. All efforts are made to back-scan and index older land records on the computer system.
- 7 Could the county cost-effectively subcontract this program?** No. These duties are required to be performed by an elected Register of Deeds and staff.
- 8 State the numerical ranking of this program compared to all programs in your department and briefly explain.** UCC's rank #4. We record about 10-12 UCC's per week (of the approximately 500-600 documents received weekly).
- 9 Are there current alternatives to this program available in the community? Can this program be provided through alternative arrangements with other providers (i.e. private entities, other**

County departments, other governmental units)? Yes. The State of Wisconsin also keeps these records, but again, we are required to provide this service by State Statute.

- 10 If this program were eliminated, what would be the ramifications for the County (i.e., added risk, liability or legal issues)?** By State Statute, this program could not be eliminated. If the statutes were changed, there would be minimal impact on revenue and costs within the office.
- 11 What is the program impact and effectiveness related to the program cost? (Provide data if available.)** Although revenue is received through recording, there is minimal impact on the overall budget.
- 12 Is this program currently duplicated by another county department or provider in the community?** Yes, through the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue.
- 13 What are your ideas for finding efficiencies in your Department (i.e. reducing duplication of services, better use of technology, reducing waste of resources, opportunities for partnering, opportunities for combining programs, personnel, functions etc, time-saving ideas, identifying 'sacred cows' etc.)? (Note – this question will not be scored).** The Register of Deeds is constantly working on back-scanning and indexing older records that exist only on paper or in out-dated medium. By continually adding older records, the product we provide becomes more comprehensive and useful for our customers and related offices. This also protects the records in the event of a disaster. We become more efficient by having the records available by a touch of the keyboard, rather than by searching both the computer and paper records.

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To record, index, and accurately maintain official records and documents of the county relating to vital statistics and real estate as required by State Statutes.

PROGRAM: CHILD SUPPORT LIEN DOCKET

1. **Describe the program, its purpose and goals.** Wis. Stats. 59.43(1) require the local Register of Deeds Office to record, index, and preserve copies of child support arrears provided for such recording. The office provides assistance to the public and other county offices with searching through public access terminals or via Internet access.
2. **Who is the program intended to serve? How many are served?** The program is intended to serve those who need to record and search child support lien documents in the County of Winnebago. The populace of Winnebago County and any other interested party outside the county is served by this office.
3. **Are the program benefits long-lasting and essential to the service populations?** These records are kept indefinitely with the land records of Winnebago County. The program is essential and statutorily mandated for recording.
4. **Is this program directly or indirectly related to or does it support any other program in this department or another department? If so, how?** No. The State of Wisconsin keeps track of payments and arrears for all court ordered child support. A child support lien docket may or may not be recorded in the Register of Deeds.
5. **How does this program make the department or county government more effective or efficient, including any intergovernmental relationship?** It is just one more place that the public may check for support arrears and a lien associated with them.
6. **How do you determine/measure if this program has been effectively provided and implemented?** The office is very effective in that all new recordings are scanned, indexed and verified daily and are currently up-to-date.
7. **Could the county cost-effectively subcontract this program?** No. These duties are required to be performed by an elected Register of Deeds and staff.
8. **State the numerical ranking of this program compared to all programs in your department and briefly explain.** This program would rank #6. There are only one or two liens recorded each year.
9. **Are there current alternatives to this program available in the community? Can this program be provided through alternative arrangements with other providers (i.e. private entities, other County departments, other governmental units)?** Yes, the State of Wisconsin or Child Support Agency can provide the information. We are, however, statutorily mandated to process those liens that are presented for recording.
10. **If this program were eliminated, what would be the ramifications for the County (i.e., added risk, liability or legal issues)?** By State Statute, this program could not be eliminated. However, if the statutes were changed to allow it, it would have little or no impact on this office.

11. **What is the program impact and effectiveness related to the program cost? (Provide data if available.)** None.
12. **Is this program currently duplicated by another county department or provider in the community?** Yes, the Child Support Agency and State of Wisconsin.
13. **What are your ideas for finding efficiencies in your Department (i.e. reducing duplication of services, better use of technology, reducing waste of resources, opportunities for partnering, opportunities for combining programs, personnel, functions etc, time-saving ideas, identifying 'sacred cows' etc.)? (Note – this question will not be scored).** N/A.