

### Basics of Records Management: Benefits of Managing Public Records

**Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on how managing public records through an effective records management program delivers benefits to the agency.**

An effective records management program:

#### 1. Enables the agency to fulfill its mission

The public records of an agency form a critical element of the informational assets of the agency. Having timely access to accurate information is central to an agency being able to fulfill its mission.

#### 2. Promotes cost-effective use of agency resources

Time – Agency staff can work most productively when the *right* people are able to locate the *right* records at the *right* time. In addition, retaining records that document the agency's actions and experiences helps prevent the wasting of time and resources during staff turnover.

Storage costs – Through timely destruction of non-archival records (which have met their minimum retention period) and transfer of archival records to Washington State Archives, agencies are able to make optimal use of the physical space within their facilities and the storage space on their servers.

IT costs – In addition to reducing IT storage costs, the appropriate disposal/transfer of public records also reduces other IT costs associated with the time it takes to backup/restore data and to migrate records.

Litigation costs – By being able to locate all necessary records in a timely manner during litigation, public records requests, and audits, agencies minimize their risks and associated costs.

#### 3. Promotes open and accountable government

Public records are the evidence by which government agencies are able to demonstrate, whether during litigation, public records requests or audits, that they took the *right* action at the *right* time for the *right* reasons.

Demonstrating that public records are organized, controlled, and only disposed of as part of a managed program enhances the professionalism of the agency and the public's confidence in the agency.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from  
Washington State Archives:**