



Electronic Records Management: Do Agency Meetings Need to Be Recorded?

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on whether to create audio/video recordings of meetings, including those held virtually via Microsoft Teams, Zoom, GoToMeeting, Webex, or other videoconferencing tools.

Do agencies need to record their meetings?

It depends. The fact that an agency has the **ability** to create an audio/video recording of a meeting or conversation does not automatically **obligate** the agency to create one. That said, there may be times when doing so fulfills a requirement or benefits the agency.

Statutory requirements to record meetings

- Some specific types of meetings and hearings are required by statute to be recorded (or to have a verbatim transcript), such as adjudicative proceedings under the Administrative Procedure Act (chapter 34.05 RCW), school board meetings (RCW 42.30.035), etc.
- Typically, however, this is not the case.
- If your agency has a current policy stating that certain meetings will be recorded, it needs to follow that policy for as long as it is in effect.
- If your agency is not sure whether a recording is required to be created by statute or agency policy, please consult your legal counsel.

Possible benefits of recording meetings

Even when there is no requirement to do so, creating a recording of a meeting (instead of, or in addition to, other records such as minutes) may be of benefit to the agency:

- **Meeting a Business Need** – Having a fuller record than just the minutes may help an agency to better understand how and why certain decisions were reached, especially during the implementation and review of those decisions.
- **Satisfying Community Expectations** – Constituents may expect that a recording will be available, especially if the meeting is virtual and/or the subject matter is of particular interest or controversy in the community.
- **Promoting Transparency** – Recordings of meetings can help demonstrate that the meetings and decision-making process were conducted in a fair, equitable, and accountable way.

However, if the logistical and financial costs of creating and retaining recordings exceed the potential benefits above, the agency can certainly choose not to do so. Please note that if an audio/video recording **is** created, the agency is required to retain it in accordance with current records retention schedules, based on the function and content of the record.

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

**www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov**