
Using Records Retention Schedules: How Long Do Records of Nonprofits Need to Be Kept?

Purpose: Provide guidance to nonprofit organizations on their records retention requirements.

A key part of managing the records of any nonprofit organization (such as charities, homeowners' associations, fraternal organizations, religious denominations, etc.) is knowing how long particular records need to be retained.

Does Washington State Archives have records retention schedules for nonprofit organizations?

- **No** – The Archives only issues records retention schedules for state and local government entities, under the authority of chapter 40.14 RCW.
- Nonprofit organizations **may** use these schedules as a guide. However, the retention requirements for government agencies are typically longer and more stringent than those for nonprofits. In addition, there may be retention requirements that are specific to nonprofits and do not appear in retention schedules for government agencies.

Here are several suggested individuals and organizations to contact regarding records retention requirements for nonprofits:

- The accountant for your agency;
- The individual or entity that audits your accounts;
- Legal counsel for your organization;
- Washington Nonprofits, a state association;
- Wayfind Legal (part of Communities Rise), a state organization;
- 501 Commons, a primarily Northwest-focused organization;
- The National Council of Nonprofits;
- The Internal Revenue Service.

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

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