

## Using Records Retention Schedules: What are Records Retention Schedules?

**Purpose:** Provide guidance to state agencies and local government entities on the purpose and intended use of records retention schedules.

**Records retention schedules serve the following purposes:**

1. Establish the minimum period of time government agencies must retain the different types of records they create and receive.
2. Authorize government agencies after that minimum retention period has passed to either:
  - a. Destroy records designated as non-archival, or
  - b. Transfer custody of records designated as archival to the State Archives for permanent retention.

### Agencies must use the records retention schedules assigned to them

- **State agencies** need to use:
  1. The *State Government General Records Retention Schedule* (for records common to most state agencies, such as fiscal and personnel records) and
  2. Their agency-unique schedule (for records documenting functions that are only performed by that agency).
- **Local governments** need to use:
  1. The *Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE)* (For records common to most local governments, such as fiscal and personnel records) and
  2. Their sector-unique schedules (For records documenting functions that are only performed by a particular type of local government entity)

### Additional records retention mandates may still apply

The State Archives attempts to identify all statutory and business requirements for records when determining their minimum retention periods. *However:*

1. There may be instances where there are additional federal, state or local statutes setting forth longer retention requirements for certain records that are not yet reflected in the records retention schedules. Agencies should be aware of these mandates and act accordingly.
2. There may be instances where individual agency contracts or written agreements include stipulations requiring the related records to be retained for a longer period than what is listed in the State Archives schedules. Agencies must consider these obligations when applying retention to these types of records.

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