Electronic Records Management:
What Formats Should I Use for Digital Audio?

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on the suitability of digital audio file formats for transfer and long-term preservation with the Washington State Archives.

When planning for the future of your digital audio content, please consider the formats below and make sure the file(s) are either uncompressed or of the highest possible quality.

	Recommended	Acceptable	Not Recommended
Audio File Formats	WAV (.wav) AIFF (.aif, .aiff)	FLAC (.flac) MP3 (.mp3) Ogg Vorbis (.ogg)	.TRM & other proprietary formats Advanced Audio Coding (.mp4, .m4a, .aac) MP2 (MPEG-1 Audio Layer II) (.mp2)

The Washington State Archives recommends formats that are:

- Open-source
- High quality
- Widely adopted

Each of these characteristics extend the life of your audio and are valuable considerations when making **ALL** formatting decisions.

PLEASE NOTE: Proprietary audio formats make playback of archival or otherwise older recordings difficult or impossible to access in the future. Unless you are able to export the file to a more open format such as WAV or Ogg Vorbis, proprietary formats cannot be readily preserved without significant additional resources and software, and are not recommended.