
Improving Agency Records Management Programs: What are the Leading Practices for Records Management and Retention?

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local governments on Washington State Archives' recommendations as to the leading practices and processes for records management and retention for the purposes of RCW 40.14.026(5)(a).

Washington State Archives considers the leading practices for records management and retention to be:

1. **Responsibility Assigned** – Someone in the agency has overall responsibility for managing and retaining records;
2. **Policies and Procedures Exist** – Agency has written policies and procedures for managing and retaining records;
3. **Tools Available** – Agency has adequate software, hardware and physical storage for managing and retaining records;
4. **Staff Trained** – Agency staff know how to manage and retain their records;
5. **Retention Requirements Understood** – Agency knows how long each type of record needs to be retained;
6. **Records are Inventoried** – Agency knows what records they have, where they are and their formats;
7. **Records are Organized** – Agency keeps records organized to help with access, security and destruction/transfer;
8. **Records are Kept for Required Time Period** – Agency keeps records for the minimum retention period listed in current approved records retention schedules;
9. **Records are Destroyed/Transferred** – Agency destroys “Non-Archival” records and transfers “Archival” records to Washington State Archives at the end of the minimum retention period;
10. **Disaster Preparedness** – Agency has plans and backups of records needed to resume critical operations in the event of a disaster.

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

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