

# Records Officer

# TOOLKIT

MANAGING GOVERNMENT RECORDS

## Records Series and Retention Schedules

Identify the records your agency uses, categorize the records by series, and learn how to create records series.

### Table of Contents

[What is a Record?](#)

[What is Records Management](#)

[Creating a Records Inventory](#)

[What is a Record Series?](#)

[Scheduling Records](#)

[General Retention Schedules](#)

[Unique Agency Schedules](#)

[Instructions for Creating Unique Agency Retention Schedules](#)

[Record Series Submission Form Fields](#)

[Approval Process for the Record Series and Retention Schedule](#)

## ■ What is a Record?

A record is “a book, letter, document, paper, map, plan, photograph, film, card, tape, recording, electronic data, or other documentary material regardless of physical form or characteristics: that is prepared, owned, received, or retained by a governmental entity or political subdivision; and where all of the information in the original is reproducible by photocopy or other mechanical or electronic means.” (UCA 63-2-103).

A record does not mean a temporary draft, daily calendar, or other materials; privately owned, copyrighted, or patented material; notes or internal memorandum prepared as part of a judicial or quasi-judicial deliberative process; proprietary software or computer programs; junk mail or commercial publications received by the governmental entity; and books or other materials available in public libraries (UCA 63-2-103).

TIP: Records are defined in terms of their function, not format. The most important aspect in identifying a record is its content: is the information meaningful in conducting your business and for how long?

Government officials create and maintain public records as part of their official duties. Records are necessary for government to run efficiently. They provide accountability to the public, so that people understand what the government does and why. Records serve as our collective memory and offer future generations details about what we already know. Government uses records to remember the decisions it makes so that it does not need to reinvent the wheel. Records protect the legal rights of citizens. Citizens use government records for a variety of personal, educational, historical, and legal work.

All records created by Utah governmental entities are the property of the state and require specific management procedures.

TIP: Examples of records include minutes, correspondence, payroll records, reports, grant files, and warrant requests.

## ■ What Is Records Management?

Records management is “the systematic and administrative control of records throughout their life cycle to ensure efficiency and economy in their creation, use, handling, control, maintenance, and disposition (*A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, Richard Pearce-Moses).

The Government Records and Management Act (GRAMA) (UCA 63G-2) is the state’s open records law and governs records management and access. Utah Code -- Title 63A -- Chapter 12 -- Archives and Records Service details records management responsibilities for governmental entities. Other state statutes, rules and policies, and some federal statutes and rules also affect your recordkeeping.

## ■ Creating a Records Inventory

You are the new records officer for your agency! It's time to get organized. Review the records created by your agency, and remember that records can be found in many formats, including computer files. Make a list of all the groups of records that you find.

A records inventory is used to identify an agency's records and allows the agency to gain control of its records. The following steps provide one example of how to conduct an inventory of record series:

- Draw a map of all rooms or sections of room(s) that are used to store records and indicate records storage—including filing cabinets, shelves, desks, and any other storage—on the map.
- Start at one end of the room, and work around the perimeter.
- Next, inventory the files stored in the center of the room.
- Double check files on top of and under filing cabinets, desks, shelves, and other furniture.
- Identify electronic records. The records officer will need to know the ITS contacts for the agency's electronic records. The records officer then will work with those individuals to identify the agency's electronic records.
- Check to see if the agency has records in microfilm or microfiche. These, including old computer tapes, might be stored at an off-site location.
- Use the Summary Inventory Sheet or a similar form to account for all of your records.

List the record series that are identified in the inventory. Compare the list to the agency retention schedule available from the Archives Web site.

**TIP:** Any record series found that are not on the retention schedule need to be scheduled with the State Archives.

## ■ What is a Record Series?

A record series “means a group of records that may be treated as a unit for purposes of designation, description, management, or disposition.” (UCA § 63G-2-103[21]) Record series reflect the natural organization of groups of records and their relationships to each other.

Now that you have identified your records, your next step is to review them, making sure they are organized into groups of similar record types. Most offices staff do this naturally. They separate board minutes from employee files and grant applications from annual reports. Records managers call these groups “series.”

TIP: A “series” is a group of records having a similar subject or purpose. An example is board minutes.

## ■ Scheduling Records

Record series retention schedules are the building blocks of our state's government records management system. They may be either general to common government functions or unique to the agency. They describe entity records and list how long they must be maintained by the entity. Often they list all duplicate formats and where records are kept to promote good records management practices.

Retention schedules are posted on the Utah State Archives Web site, available for everyone—providing transparency and accountability in the way government keeps its records.

Governmental entities must create unique agency retention schedules when they store their records at the State Records Center or transfer records of enduring value to the Utah State Archives. The State Archives uses series numbers to track records. They are like library call numbers. Without a tracking number, organizing and locating records would be impossible.

All official government records need to have retention schedules regardless of their format: Paper, microfiche, microfilm, and electronic records.

TIP: If you are a state agency, identify your unique agency schedules first. If you are with a local government agency, general schedules will be your first choice.

If you can't find a general or unique agency schedule to match your series, [contact](#) the Archives for help creating a unique agency schedule.

## ■ General Retention Schedules

A general schedule is a description of commonly used record schedules. Examples include minutes, reports, grants, accounts payable, correspondence, forms, etc. You can use a general schedule to describe your record series if the records are to be kept in the office and not transferred to the State Records Center or State Archives. **All general schedule items have been preapproved by the State Records Committee.**

There are five types of general schedules: State, County, Municipal, School, and Department. Departments having their own general schedules are: Corrections, Higher Education, Human Services, Technology Services, and Workforce Services.

### Example

Administrative...

**TRANSITORY CORRESPONDENCE (Item 1-47)**

Business-related correspondence that is routine or transitory in nature and does not offer unique information about agency functions or programs. These records include acknowledgment files and most day-to-day office and housekeeping correspondence. These records may originate on paper, electronic mail, or other media. This correspondence is filed separately from program and project case files.

**RETENTION**

Record copy: Retain by agency until administrative need ends and then destroy.

Duplicate copies: Retain by agency until administrative need ends and then destroy.

**SUGGESTED PRIMARY DESIGNATION**

Public.

(Approved 02/2005)

**TRANSITORY FILES (Item 1-30)**

Papers of short-term interest which have no documentary or evidential value. Includes quasi-official notices such as for holidays, charity, and fund appeals, bond campaigns, and other similar papers.

**RETENTION**

Retain by agency for 3 months or until administrative need ends and then destroy.

**SUGGESTED PRIMARY DESIGNATION**

Public.

(Approved 07/90)

**VISITOR REGISTRATION RECORDS (Item 1-52)**

Records documenting visits to agencies, usage of materials, and other information about the public's contact with government. Information may include names, home city and state, number in party, and purpose of visit.

**RETENTION**

Retain for 6 months and then destroy.

**SUGGESTED PRIMARY DESIGNATION**

To find General Schedules go to the Archives Web site and click Records Management on the toolbar. Click Retention Schedules, then one of the General Schedules.

Check your inventory list against the schedules listed in the general schedules. A records analyst will be happy to help you identify the schedules you need. Please contact the Archives at (801)531-3863 or [recordsmanagement@utah.gov](mailto:recordsmanagement@utah.gov).

## Unique Agency Schedules

Unique agency records series retention schedules describe specific record series kept by governmental entities. Schedules list the titles, dates, arrangements, formats, descriptions, retentions, dispositions, appraisals, and classifications for each record series.

### Example

The screenshot shows the Utah State Archives & Records Service website. The header includes the Utah.gov logo and a search bar. The navigation menu contains: About Us, Visit, Search, Browse, Research, Records Management, State Records Committee, Public Notices, and USHRAB. The sidebar on the left lists: Archives Home, Search, Records Storage, Retention Schedules, Training, Preservation & Micrographics, Laws, Forms, Contact Us, Policies and Procedures, and Employee Portal. The main content area displays the following information for series 26384:

**AGENCY:** Uintah Transportation Special Service District (Utah)

**SERIES:** 26384  
**TITLE:** Administrative Control Board open meeting minutes  
**DATES:** 1988-  
**ARRANGEMENT:** Chronological by date of board meeting.  
**DESCRIPTION:** This series contains the minutes, agenda, and related documents for open meetings of the Administrative Control Board. The board is composed of a chairman, secretary, and three additional board members appointed by the Uintah County Council. The board reviews district policies and procedures, general administrative needs, and oversees transportation issues for the district. Series information includes meeting times, places, and dates; names of persons present and absent; the substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided; and other related matters.

**RETENTION**  
Retain 10 years.

**DISPOSITION**  
Transfer to the State Archives with authority to weed.

**FORMAT MANAGEMENT**  
Paper: Retain in Office for 3 years and then transfer to State Records Center. Retain in State Records Center for 7 years and then transfer to State Archives with authority to weed.  
Computer data files: Retain in Office for 1 year after record is transcribed and then delete.

**APPRAISAL**  
Administrative Historical  
This disposition is based on Utah Municipal General Records Retention Schedule, Schedule 1, Item 13.  
These records document the decisions of the Administrative Control Board and the administrative history of the Uintah Transportation Special Service District.

**PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION**  
Public

This page was last updated August 1, 2008.

To find your agency's unique agency schedules go to the [Archives Web site](#) and click [Records Management](#) on the toolbar. Click [Retention Schedules](#), then [Unique Agency-Specific Schedules](#).

Type your agency name in the agency keyword box and click on the HTML report.

utah.gov Search all of Utah.gov »


Division of Archives & Records Service The Department of Administrative Services

About Us Visit Search Browse Research Records Management State Records Committee Public Notices USHRAB

Archives Home  
Search  
Records Storage  
Retention Schedules  
Training  
Preservation & Micrographics  
Laws  
Forms  
Contact Us

Home | Records Management Services | Retention Schedules | Retention and Classification Reports

### Retention and Classification Reports by Agency

 The following links will run a report from our database that will list all retention schedules for your agency's records. Some reports are very large (100 or more pages). Each agency name is listed according to library cataloging standards, which means that many will be alphabetized under "Dept. of," "Division of," or "State Office of."

**Search by key words in agency name:**

Agency Name Keywords:

**Do you only want a single retention schedule? type your series number here:**

Series Number:

Match the record series in your office with the record series listed on the Web site. You can print your list and then place a check mark on your inventory sheet for every record series on your inventory sheet that corresponds with a schedule from the Web site.

Division of Archives & Records Service

The Department of Administrative Services

About Us Visit Search Browse Research Records Management State Records Committee Public Notices USHRAB

Archives Home

Search

Records Storage

Retention Schedules

Training

Preservation & Micrographics

Laws

Forms

Contact Us

Policies and Procedures

Employee Portal

Search agency names:

## Department of Administrative Services. Division Archives and Records Service

### Record Series

Information about records created by this agency is available. See the following reports:

**Retention and Classification Report:** This report, used by agencies to assist in records management, is lengthy and includes a full description of each record series, date span, retention, and designated GRAMA classification. Available in [HTML](#) (current records only) or [PDF](#) (includes non-current records).

**Microfilm List:** This report, used by agencies to manage their microfilm, lists each series title with links to existing film. Available in [PDF](#).

**Archives Holdings:** The following records have been fully processed, arranged, and described for ease of use by researchers. Other records created by this agency may also be available. Contact the [Research Center](#) for more information.

Department of Administrative Services. Division Archives and Records Service

Legislative bills copies, i 1963-1986. (Series 7375). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Mexican border campaign service cards, i 1916-1917. (Series 6131). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Military death certificates, i 1941-1953. (Series 3769). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Military separation forms and benefit records, 1917-1979. (Series 2794). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Military service cards, i ca. 1898-1975. (Series 85268). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Oaths of office, i 1903-. (Series 17170). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Official rosters, 1919-1986. (Series 1150). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection service cards, 1898-1902. (Series 24048). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Spanish American War service cards, 1898-1899. (Series 10318). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Territorial criminal case files, i 1851-1858. (Series 24052). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Territorial militia records, 1849-1877; 1905-[ca. 1917]. (Series 2210). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Territorial militia service cards, i 1850-1880. (Series 6195). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Veterans' burial locations, s 1986. (Series 8490). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Veterans' burial locations cards and forms, ca. 1950-ca. 1990. (Series 5339). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

Veterans' educational benefits, 1944-1964. (Series 2789). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

World War I draft board registers, i 1917-1918. (Series 2229). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

World War I service records, 1917-1919. (Series 2793). In [HTML](#) or [XML](#).

## ■ Instructions for Creating Unique Agency Retention Schedules

Here are step-by-step instructions for creating a new, unique agency retention schedule:

1. Go to the [Archives Web site](#).
2. Click on [Records Management](#) on the Toolbar.
3. Find Scheduling Records, and click on [Records Submission Form](#).
4. Fill out the form and submit.

TIP: If you find after reviewing the unique agency and general schedule lists, that you have some record groups that don't match any of the existing lists, it is time to create a new unique agency schedule.

Your [records analyst](#) will receive your form and work with you to create your record series.

Once your record series retention schedule has been created, it will need to be approved. Have your chief administrative officer review the schedule and if he/she approves, sign the form that your analyst will send you.

If your schedule matches a general schedule item (such as correspondence or reports), your analyst will attach the appropriate item to your schedule.

If your schedule does not match a general schedule item, your analyst will send your schedule to the State Records Committee for approval. The State Records Committee approves/ disapproves schedule retentions. *The committee approves only the specific retention period the records must be maintained. The committee does not approve such items such as classification or format management.* The description portions of the retention schedule assist the agency in tracking and maintaining its records.

When the schedule is approved, it will appear on the [Archives Website](#) under the heading of [Unique Agency-Specific Schedules](#). After its approval, records can be transferred to the [State Records Center](#) for inactive storage or, if records of enduring value, [to the State Archives custody](#) for final disposition.

## ■ Record Series Submission Form Fields

A downloadable WordPerfect or Word version is also available. The downloaded form can assist in gathering information. The online version is used to submit the record series to the State Archives.

A form must be completed to set up a retention schedule with the State Archives for *each* newly identified record series. The form may also be used to modify information about an existing record series. (If you are revising a record series, you need only fill out those parts of the form that pertain to your changes.)

The record series submission form has fields that will assist the agency in identifying, tracking, and maintaining the records it creates. The retention period must be approved by the State Records Committee and records may not be destroyed until official approval.

**Agency** — refers to the agency creating the records. Provide the full name of the governmental entity, including the department, division, and/or office and complete mailing address. Provide full contact information of agency records officer and of the person completing the form if different from the agency records officer.

**Series Number** — is the number that identifies the series and allows it to be tracked when records are sent to the State Records Center or the State Archives.

**Title** — refers to a descriptive title of the record series. Do not use abbreviations and acronyms. Simple titles such as "Correspondence," "Administrative records," or "Photographs" do not fully identify the records. Use descriptive titles such as "Director's legislative correspondence," "Foster care program case files," and "Historical bridge photographs." Use sentence case structure for the title.

Include any **variant or alternate titles** (nicknames, form numbers, etc.) by which the record series is known. Abbreviations and acronyms are legitimate here. For example, if the record series is titled "Notice of Personnel Actions," the variant title could be "DHRM-33s." The inclusion of any variant title is optional.

**Record dates** — the date the entity began keeping the records (either exact or approximate year). If an approximation cannot be obtained, provide the date of the earliest records that still exist in the series. An end-date is added when records are no longer being created or is discontinued by the entity.

**Arrangement** — refers to the **filing order** or how the records are arranged in the office. Records are normally kept in numerical, alphabetical, chronological, or alphanumerical. Combinations are common; sometimes records have multiple arrangements or are filed in a type of hierarchy.

Electronic records and databases often have no physical arrangement. Records relationships and reporting functions should be noted in these instances.

**Description** — provides important information explaining what the records are, how they are used, and what information they contain. Provide a complete description of the record series: its purpose (why the record series was created), why the information is collected, how it is used, what agency activities it documents, etc. Also include the name or function of the office that originally created the series and list all other offices or agencies who use this record series. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms unless each is identified in the text. Due to limited space on the form, you may attach a full description on another sheet. List what is contained in the record series (such as correspondence, form names, etc.) and include data elements found on forms.

**Format and Volume** — identifies all the formats found in the record series and how many records exist. Record series may contain many different types of formats or media, including ones that are outdated. List all that exist in this series, including the format of duplicate copies. It is important that the **record-copy**, or official copy, be identified. The record-copy is the record that meets your office or legal needs and must be kept for the retention period. Duplicate copies can be kept for fewer years—as administrative need ends. State whether this record series consists of the record-copy or duplicates only. If the records are duplicates, state where the record-copy can be found. Indicate whether this record series has an index or another type of finding aid. If possible, describe the finding aid.

TIP: If your office uses more than one format for each records series, select your record-copy. This is usually but not always the original copy.

The **annual accumulation** provides information about the volume of existing records and how many records in this series the entity creates each year. For **paper** and other hard copy records, the accumulation refers to cubic feet; for **electronic** records, the volume indicates records storage within the computer systems. To help you gauge quantity, remember that one standard Records Center box holds exactly one cubic foot of records. A standard vertical file cabinet drawer holds 1.5 cubic feet. The agency's IT support can help provide volume for electronic records and can provide valuable information relating to costs of data storage. Electronic data may also be stored on CDs and DVDs.

**Vital records** — indicates if these records are necessary for your office to exist or start again in case of a disaster. For instance, a county treasurer would consider tax rolls as vital, whereas state agencies might consider accounts receivable or major function records (such as road plans or adoption files) as vital. Additionally, vital records are records that document the rights and entitlements of citizens.

**Retention** — provides for how long the record-copy is maintained by the agency. This section also allows for where the records are stored. Identifying a location assists in records management though is not approved by the State Records Committee. This allows you to indicate at what point the records are inactive (used less than once a month) and how long you would like to retain this record series off-site after they have become inactive.

**Disposition** — refers to what happens to the record series following the completion of the total retention period: Either destruction, retained permanently in office, or transferred to the State Archives for permanent preservation.

**Appraisal** — is the process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based on their current administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical value. All records have administrative value. They have fiscal value if they track funding, legal value if they are required by statute, or historical value if they have enduring historical, or other value that warrants continued preservation of records beyond the period required to transact the business of their originating agency or its successor in function, also known as archival value.

Indicate whether the records are subject to audit or litigation. If the records are subject to audit, indicate the audit cycle (i.e., once every three years).

List all legal citations which govern the creation, use, and retention of the record series.

**Classification** — determines if the records series is public or has access restrictions. The accepted classifications are: public, private, controlled, protected, and exempt. The classification reported here is a designated classification which is the classification that a majority of records in the record series would be given if classified. If the classification of the entire records series is public, it can be noted on the record series submission form.

If the records include nonpublic information, a separate Classification Worksheet form must be submitted.

## ■ Approval Process for the Record Series and Retention Schedule

After submitting the Records Series Submission Form, you and your record analyst will review the information and assign a series number.

The analyst will compile the data and generate a retention and classification report for your final review and changes. Return it to your analyst with your signature verifying that it is ready to submit to the State Records Committee.

The record series is submitted to the State Records Committee for approval. Record series that are approved are copied and sent back to you, the records officer. Your records are now scheduled! Any record series that are not approved are discussed with the records officer and areas in question are renegotiated with the agency.

