

# Records Officer

# TOOLKIT

MANAGING GOVERNMENT RECORDS

## Using Retention Schedules to Manage Government Records

The fundamental rule for using record series retention schedule is this: every record a governmental entity creates (regardless of whether the records are kept in paper, microfilm, or electronic format) must either be identified by a unique agency schedule or a general schedule, in the case of common records, before disposal. There are no exceptions (UCA [63G-2-604](#), [63A-12-105\(3\)](#)).

The corollary to the rule is: Records officers who pay diligent attention to their records schedules are well-rewarded. Their work becomes easier and more effective. And they are able to assist their governmental entities carry out their missions and provide accountability to the public. Retention schedules are public so there are no “secret” records undisclosed to the public even if their classification prohibits general access (§ [63G-2-604](#))

Understanding and using unique agency and general schedules is your key to an organized records management program.

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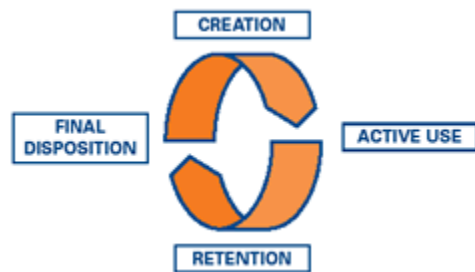
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## ■ The Records Lifecycle: The Secret Life of Records



Unbeknownst to most of us, records have what we call a lifecycle. A record's lifecycle has some similarities to our own and obviously, some differences. Records should be managed at each stage of their lifecycle, from the time they are created to when they cease to hold any administrative, legal, or fiscal value.

There are 4 specific stages: creation, active use, inactive use, and disposition.

**Creation** ➡ **Active Use** ➡ **Inactive Use** ➡ **Disposition**

### **Creation**

Most government records are created electronically though paper is still common. Documents form the bulk of government records; however, many agencies also create maps, photographs, tapes, audio recordings, CDs, databases, and more.

### **Active Use**

Active records are defined as records that are used frequently and need to be available for immediate access. Governmental entities use active records in their daily operations and for administrative purposes. Active records are often a vital part of the decision-making process. They are usually kept in the office or close by so that they can be easily retrieved.

For paper records, this use can be identified in the retention schedule by the length of office time required. For electronic records, the active and inactive uses both usually require office retention. Active electronic records are often kept in one tier of the computer program, while inactive records are kept in another, less expensive tier.

Governmental entities have custody of their active records.

### **Inactive Use**

Inactive records are those no longer used on a consistent basis. Inactive records are generally used once-per-month or less. Inactive records are maintained because they may be needed occasionally for administrative purposes or because they are required for fiscal or legal reasons or by statute.

For paper records, this stage can be identified on the retention schedule by the length of off-site storage time required. The State Records Center is available for off-site storage for state government records. Some agencies have their own off-site storage areas.

The inactive stage of an electronic record is usually kept in the office but in a less expensive tier. However, electronic records with long retention periods may be maintained on tape at an off-site location.

Governmental entities have custody of their inactive records, regardless of where the records are stored.

## **Disposition**

Disposition refers to what happens to the record series following the completion of the total retention period. The possible dispositions are: “retain in office permanently,” “transfer to State Archives” for permanent preservation, or “destroy” (upon completion of the approved retention schedule).

Approximately 5-10 % of records have enduring or historical value or are required by law to be kept permanently; 90-95% of records are destroyed after meeting their retention requirements. All government records must have an approved retention schedule before disposal.

TIP: All government records must have an approved retention schedule before disposal.

Obsolete records whose retention period has been met should be destroyed. Records that have continuing historical or enduring value usually should be transferred to the State Archives. When records are transferred to the State Archives, the custody of the records is also transferred. The State Archives is the official custodian of all noncurrent records of permanent or historic value (§ 63A-12-102).

## **How To Use Your Retention Schedules To Manage Your Records**

After identifying and creating your agency's schedules use your retention schedules to manage your records. Managing your schedules is the key to your success.

In order to manage your schedules you will need a system that allows you to:

- Organize your schedules
- Review retention periods and dispositions
- Update your schedules

### **Organizing your schedules**

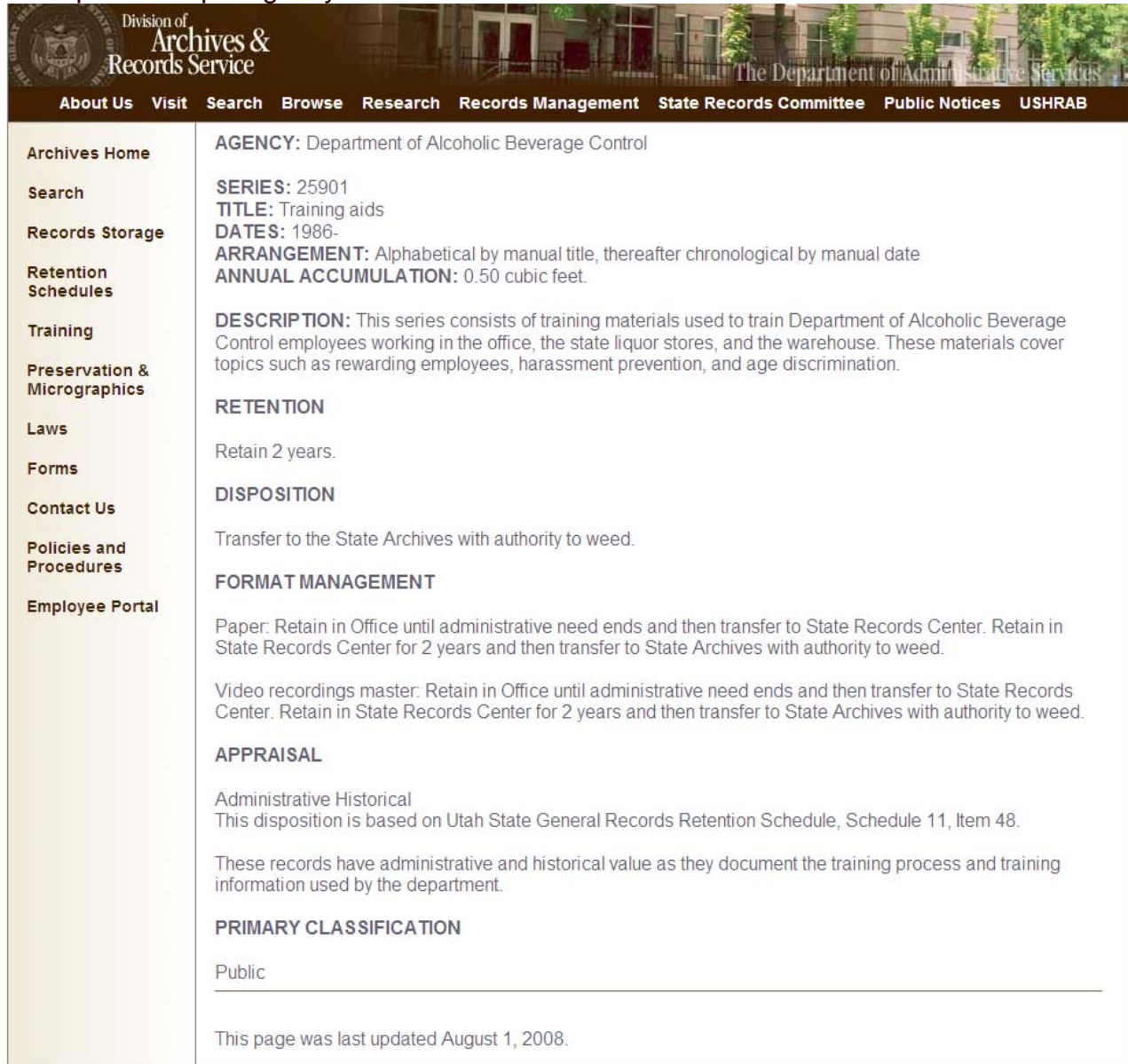
Create a systematic approach for reviewing your records. Some records officers mark their calendars to review their records periodically. Others create a review chart.

You can review your schedules on the State Archives Web site or print a copy. When reviewing, note which schedules need updating and which retention periods and dispositions have been met.

The important thing is to create a system that keeps you organized and able to meet your retention and disposition deadlines.

## Reviewing Schedule Retention Periods and Dispositions

Example of unique agency retention schedule



The screenshot displays the Utah State Archives & Records Service website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: About Us, Visit, Search, Browse, Research, Records Management, State Records Committee, Public Notices, and USHRAB. The main content area is divided into a left sidebar with navigation links and a main content area. The sidebar links include 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:

**AGENCY:** Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control

**SERIES:** 25901  
**TITLE:** Training aids  
**DATES:** 1986-  
**ARRANGEMENT:** Alphabetical by manual title, thereafter chronological by manual date  
**ANNUAL ACCUMULATION:** 0.50 cubic feet.

**DESCRIPTION:** This series consists of training materials used to train Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control employees working in the office, the state liquor stores, and the warehouse. These materials cover topics such as rewarding employees, harassment prevention, and age discrimination.

**RETENTION**

Retain 2 years.

**DISPOSITION**

Transfer to the State Archives with authority to weed.

**FORMAT MANAGEMENT**

Paper: Retain in Office until administrative need ends and then transfer to State Records Center. Retain in State Records Center for 2 years and then transfer to State Archives with authority to weed.

Video recordings master: Retain in Office until administrative need ends and then transfer to State Records Center. Retain in State Records Center for 2 years and then transfer to State Archives with authority to weed.

**APPRAISAL**

Administrative Historical  
This disposition is based on Utah State General Records Retention Schedule, Schedule 11, Item 48.

These records have administrative and historical value as they document the training process and training information used by the department.

**PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION**

Public

This page was last updated August 1, 2008.

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This example displays the retention, disposition, and format management sections from an agency specific schedule.

Explanations for each section below will help you understand what each section means and how to interpret similar information on your own schedules.

## Utah State Archives

**AGENCY:** Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control

**SERIES:** 259013

**TITLE:** Training aids

**DATES:** 1986-

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This section identifies the agency and record series. Is the **agency name** is correct or has it been changed? Are the **title** and **dates** of the records series still correct? If this record series is no longer being created, the dates will need to be end-dated.

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**ARRANGEMENT:** Alphabetical by manual title, thereafter chronological by manual date

**ANNUAL ACCUMULATION:** 0.50 cubic feet.

**DESCRIPTION:**

This series consists of training materials used to train Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control employees working in the office, the state liquor stores, and the warehouse. These materials cover topics such as rewarding employees, harassment prevention, and age discrimination.

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Does the content information still reflect the nature of the record series? Does the **description** need to be changed or broadened to encompass more types of documents that are part of this record series or has a close relationship? This is often the case with electronic records in databases that, where previously were part of several record series, are now one record series.

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**RETENTION:**

Retain 2 years.

**DISPOSITION:**

Transfer to the State Archives with authority to weed.

**STATE RECORDS COMMITTEE STATUS:**

This retention was approved by the State Records Committee on 07/01/1990.

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The **retention** indicates that the governmental entity has custody of records in this series for two years. Custody indicates the responsibility for the care of the records, often based on their physical possession. Custody includes the right to control ownership.

The **disposition** indicates it is to be transferred to the State Archives custody after it completes its retention.

The retention refers to the record copy. Forgetting to delete records that have a short retention period is expensive and can have negative legal consequences.

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#### **FORMAT MANAGEMENT:**

Paper: Retain in Office until administrative need ends and then transfer to State Records Center. Retain in State Records Center for 2 years and then transfer to State Archives with authority to weed.

Video recordings master: Retain in Office until administrative need ends and then transfer to State Records Center. Retain in State Records Center for 2 years and then transfer to State Archives with authority to weed.

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The **format** section lists all the formats the governmental entity uses to keep the records; it tell us what is to be done with each format and when. The system doesn't allow us to determine which format is the record copy, so you will need to maintain that information in your records. The retention period applies to the record-copy.

This is the type of information records officers use to determine their responsibilities. Notice that the paper format has an attached condition: "until administrative need ends." Examples of other such common conditions are: "kept in the office for 1 year after they have been imaged," "retain in office 1 year after case is closed," or "retain in office 1 year and then transfer to State Records Center provided no litigation is pending." Records management is easier without a condition, just a set number of years.

In the case of the sample record series above, the record series exists in two distinct formats: paper and video recordings. The records officer would review this schedule to determine if the records had met their conditional office retention (active use).

After the condition and time period had been met, the officer would then box the records for transfer to the State Records Center as inactive records.

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#### **APPRAISAL:**

Administrative Historical

This disposition is based on Utah State General Records Retention Schedule, Schedule 11, Item 48.

These records have administrative and historical value as they document the training process and training information used by the department.

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A thought-out and well written appraisal assists future records officers and administrators understand the value of this record series.

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#### **PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION:**

Public

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The classification on the record series retention schedule refers to the designated classification or the classification a majority of records in the record series would be given if classified based on a reasonable sample of a record series.

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## ■ What's a record-copy?

A record-copy is the official copy of a record maintained by the creating agency. It is sometimes referred to as the designated original. The record-copy is distinguished from duplicate copies. If your entity keeps a variety of copies for a particular record series, you must decide which one is the record-copy. Records designated as the record-copy are required to follow the specified retention. Duplicate copies may be kept for shorter time periods.

Some offices keep duplicate paper copies. Others keep the record in paper and in an electronic format. Perhaps they also microfilm the records. Your retention schedule should list all of the ways you keep the record. Decide which is to be the record-copy, how long it is to be kept, and where. This will be the official retention period for your series.

# Example: Unique Agency Record Series Description and Retention Schedule

**Division of Archives & Records Service**  
The Department of Administrative Services

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**Archives Home**  
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**Forms**  
**Contact Us**  
**Policies and Procedures**  
**Employee Portal**

**AGENCY:** Department of Community and Culture. Division of Fine Arts

**SERIES:** 20103  
**TITLE:** Personnel files for permanent employees  
**DATES:** 1960-  
**ARRANGEMENT:** Alphabetical by surname  
**DESCRIPTION:** Complete work history of individual while employed by the State. Refer to UCA 67-18-1, et seq. and DHRM standards on accessing, maintaining, and managing employee personnel files. When an employee transfers to another state agency, the official personnel file must be sent to the new agency. The file should include current information on performance evaluations, performance plans, position description, career mobility agreement, insurance benefits notification (ADNT-1), job swap agreement, and overtime agreement where applicable. Also contains application for employment, employees' social security card (copy), Notice of personnel action (DHRM 33), Human resource profile/events (DHRM 34), Termination form (DHRM 35), Employment eligibility verification form, Exit interview form, New employee orientation self-guide, and retirement/deferred compensation plan notification (ADNT-2). May contain documentation on employee withholding, completion of course certificates, conflict of interest letters, incentive award results, letters of commendation, leave records, health records, and leave adjustment reports.

**RETENTION**  
Retain 65 years after separation.

**DISPOSITION**  
Destroy.

**FORMAT MANAGEMENT**  
Paper: Retain in Office until separation and then transfer to State Records Center. Retain in State Records Center for 65 years and then destroy.

**APPRAISAL**  
This disposition is based on Utah State General Records Retention Schedule, Schedule 11, Item 2.

**PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION**  
Private. UCA 63G-2-302 (1)(e) (2008)

**SECONDARY CLASSIFICATION**  
Public. UCA 63G-2-301 (1)(b) (2008)

Agency name changed in 2005.

Total retention period: 65 years after employee leaves state service; destroy records when obsolete

One format (paper) = record-copy

General Schedule means approval by State Records Committee

Designated classifications have appropriate citations

## ■ Updating your retention schedules

As you review your schedules for retention and disposition issues, take some time to notice whether your schedules still meet your entity's needs. If you find that some of the information on your schedules no longer meets your entity's needs, update your schedules.

If certain record series are no longer created by your entity, your series can be ended. If records are now being created in formats not listed on your schedules, the new formats can be added. If the retention period no longer meets your entity's needs, this may also be adjusted.

## ■ Edit an Existing Retention Schedule

To edit an existing retention schedule:

1. Go to the [Archives Web site](#).
2. Click on [Retention Schedules](#).
3. Find [Edit Existing Schedule](#).

Provide the series number in the field.

Division of Archives & Records Service

The Department of Administrative Services

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Home | Records Management Services | Retention Schedules | Edit an Existing Retention Schedule

### Edit an Existing Retention Schedule

To edit an existing retention schedule, please provide the series number in the field below. When you submit this number the existing schedule will appear in a column on the left. The column on the right is where you may indicate changes. If a field does not need to be changed, leave it blank. To copy text into a field, such as the description, use the keyboard shortcuts of Ctrl-C (copy) and Ctrl-P (paste), then edit as needed.

Series number:

When you submit this number the existing schedule will appear in a column on the left. The column on the right is where you may indicate changes. If a field does not need to be changed, leave it blank. To copy text into a field, such as the description, use the keyboard shortcuts of Ctrl-C (copy) and Ctrl-P (paste), then edit as needed.

**Edit Series 13333**

Please provide your contact information.

Name:

Email:

Department:

Division:

Phone:

Send changes to:

**Edit those fields below that you wish to change.**

Currently As Is	Change To
<b>Agency</b>	
Alta Canyon Recreation District (Utah)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Title</b>	
General obligation bonds	<input type="text"/>
<b>Variant Title</b>	
	<input type="text"/>
<b>Dates</b>	
	<input type="text"/>
<b>Arrangement</b>	
Chronological	<input type="checkbox"/> Alphabetical <input type="checkbox"/> Alphanumerical <input type="checkbox"/> Chronological <input type="checkbox"/> Numerical By: <input type="text"/>
<b>Description</b>	
These issued bonds are not payable solely from revenues other than those derived from ad valorem taxes. They constitute a full general obligation of the municipality for the prompt and punctual payment of principal and interest on which the "full faith and credit" of the municipality (UCA 11-14-19).	<input type="text"/>
<b>Total Retention</b>	
	<input type="text"/>
<b>Disposition</b>	
Destroy.	<input type="radio"/> Destroy

Contact the [Archives](http://archives.state.utah.gov) for help updating your records: (801)531-3863 or [recordsmanagement@utah.gov](mailto:recordsmanagement@utah.gov).