

How to Establish Records Retention Schedules

South Carolina Department of Archives and History
Archives and Records Management Division

Introduction

A records retention schedule helps you manage your records systematically by specifying how long, where and in what format your records will be kept, and what their final disposition will be. The timeframe the schedule establishes can range anywhere from one year to permanent.

What a schedule includes

The schedule lists the titles of records, describes their contents, gives their retention periods (the length of time the records must be maintained in the office and, in some cases, the length of time they can be kept in inactive storage in a records center), and gives their final dispositions.

Types of schedules

There are general schedules and specific schedules. **General schedules** are designed for records that are common to many government offices; **specific schedules** are designed for records that are unique to one government office. This leaflet will discuss the development of specific records retention schedules only.

The legal justification

The South Carolina Public Records Act, (*Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, Section 30-1-10 through 30-1-140, as amended*) requires the South Carolina Department of Archives and History to help both state and local governments establish and administer a records management program. Section 30-1-90 refers to the development of records retention schedules.

Section 30-1-90

Archives shall assist in creating, filing and preserving records, inventories, and schedules.

(A) . . . When requested by the Archives, agencies and subdivisions must assist the Archives in preparing an inclusive inventory of records in their custody and establishing records schedules mandating a time period for the retention of each series of records

The benefits of using schedules

When governmental bodies use retention schedules to control their records, they increase their efficiency and reduce the possibility of incurring legal action for disposing of records improperly. By using retention schedules, they are able to:

- ◆ Identify and preserve records of permanent historical value.
- ◆ Legally destroy records that have outlived their legal, fiscal, and/or administrative values.
- ◆ Use space effectively and save on the cost of new equipment or construction by systematically removing outdated records from file cabinets and office and storage space.
- ◆ Increase efficiency by no longer having to handle obsolete materials.



Public Records Information Leaflet #18

How can my office establish schedules?

Check with your records officer to see if there are specific or general schedules already approved for your records. If you do not have a records officer, contact either our State Government Records Services Unit or our Local Government Records Services Unit for help.

The inventory

If your records are not covered by retention schedules, you will need to get the information you need to develop them by getting inventory forms and taking an inventory — see our Public Records Information Leaflet No. 17, *How to Conduct a Records Inventory*. We have inventory forms, and our staff can help you with on-site training.

Analysis and appraisal

Once the inventory is complete, you will use the information you have compiled on each record to establish its value and develop its retention period. You will analyze the information to decide, among other things, how long you will need the record for office use; whether or not the information is summarized elsewhere; and what laws or regulations might require you to hold the record for a specified period. You will also appraise the record to establish its administrative, fiscal, legal, or historical value. And since a record often has more than one value, these values are not mutually exclusive.

Administrative value: a record has administrative value if the information it holds is useful to the conduct of daily business.

Fiscal value: a record has fiscal value if the information it holds is needed to document the expenditure of public funds or to fulfill financial obligations.

Legal value: a record has legal value if the information it holds gives evidence of the legal rights or obligations of the government and its citizens or ensures compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

Historical value: a record has historical value if the information it holds documents the history of the government and the community.

When you have completed each appraisal, you will suggest a minimum retention period by completing part 19 on the Record Series Inventory Form. You will then return your completed inventory forms to us, and one of our records analysts will help you finalize your retention schedules.

Final approval

Local government records

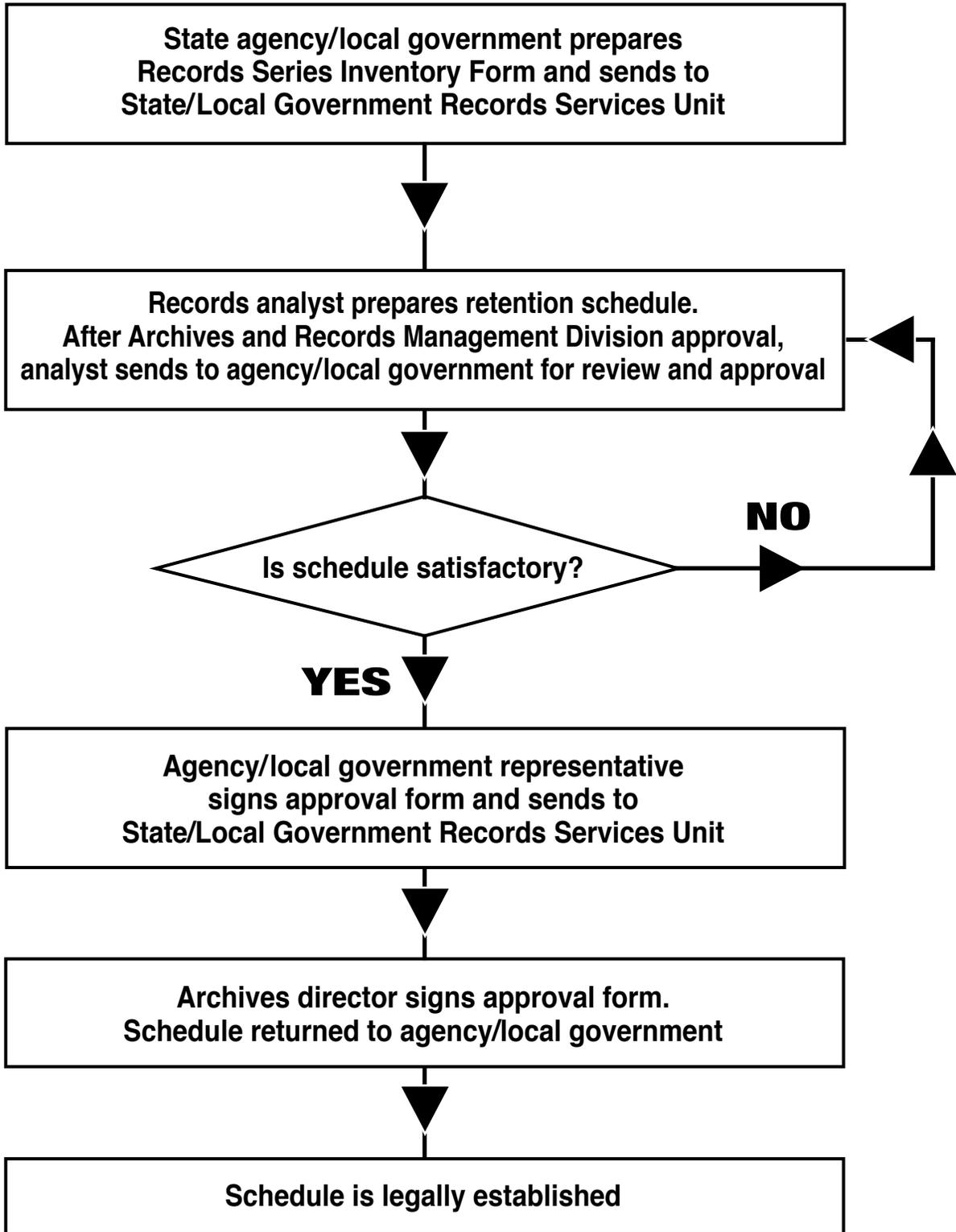
- ◆ Our Local Government Records Services Unit will send the schedule to the local government for both the records custodian or department head and the governing body to approve.
- ◆ The local government will then return the schedule to us for the director of the Archives to approve.
- ◆ We will send an approved copy back to the local government for implementation.

State agency records

- ◆ Our State Government Records Services Unit will send the schedule to the state agency for its director or appointed records officer to approve.
- ◆ The agency will then return the schedule to us for the director of the Archives to approve.
- ◆ We will send an approved copy back to the agency for implementation.



Records Scheduling Process



Public Records Information Leaflet #18



South Carolina Department of Archives and History
Division of Archives and Records Management

RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

CAROLINA COUNTY

RECORD GROUP NUMBER: 47

FINANCE OFFICE

00123 AUDIT REPORTS

Description

Printed reports documenting the annual audit of county funds. These reports, prepared by an outside accounting firm, are categorized by the various county offices and further classified by accounts to which they relate. This series also includes semiannual and special audits. Information includes balance sheet, summary of revenue and expenditures, cash balances, statement of taxes, statement of delinquent taxes, statement of other receipts, statement of fines and fees.

Retention

PERMANENT.

00124 BANKING RECORDS

Description

Cancelled checks and deposit slips written by the county along with the statements issued by the bank. Information includes checks: date, to whom paid, amount, check number, signature of finance officer; bank statements: list of checks for one month period, dates, beginning balance, ending balance; and deposit slips: date, amounts of deposits, and total deposits.

Retention

3 years, then destroy.

00125 RECEIPTS (RECEIPT CARBONS)

Description

Copies of receipts issued by the office to persons turning over funds. Information includes date, receipt number, from whom received, amount, purpose, and authorized signature.

Retention

3 years, then destroy.



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South Carolina Department of Archives and History
Division of Archives and Records Management

RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT
OF PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

RECORD GROUP NUMBER: 700

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

90001 PROJECT FILES

Description

Documents administration of projects designed to improve the agency's special programs. Information includes project proposals, correspondence, project activity reports, related memoranda, project summaries and expenditure reports.

Retention

3 years after submission of final expenditure report, destroy.

90002 GRANT FILES (ACTIVE AND INACTIVE)

Description

Documents grants received by the division to help fund some of its operations. Information includes financial assistance applications, correspondence related to the grant process, grant award letters, copies of agency budget and accounting reports, related contracts, reimbursement requests and guidelines for administering grant activities.

Retention

3 years after completion of grant project, destroy.

90003 MEETING MINUTES AND ATTACHMENTS

Description

Records of official proceedings of the agency's executive management staff. Information includes agenda, date, place, list of attendees, and a summary of discussion and decisions. Official minutes also include all informational attachments such as reports, surveys, proposals, studies and charts distributed to executives for discussion and for use in making internal policy, planning and management decisions.

Retention

Agency: 3 years.
State Archives: PERMANENT.



Public Records Information Leaflet #18

For more information

State agencies, colleges, universities, and technical colleges

Contact the State Government Records Services Unit, Division of Archives and Records Management, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC 29223.

Telephone 803.896.6123 Fax 803.896.6138

Counties, municipalities, school districts, and special purpose districts

Contact the Local Government Records Services Unit, Division of Archives and Records Management, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC 29223.

Telephone 803.896.6122 Fax 803.896.6138

