

# Sample: Document Retention Policy

## POLICY

All short-term and long-term storage of administrative and financial records are provided in a safe, secure, and confidential manner. Depending upon the type of record, the appropriate length of time for retention complies with legal and funder requirements. Records relevant to foreseeable or pending judicial or administrative investigations or proceedings are preserved until the actions are concluded.

## PROCEDURES

### *Physical Records*

At least annually, physical document and files are transferred from active files to inactive storage and retention dates are noted on the files. Confidential files are clearly designated as such. Files in storage are placed in a fire resistant, secure, dry place.

When files are past retention requirements, documents shall be destroyed in a method that maintains confidentiality (i.e., shredding). Do not place in dumpsters.

### *Long-Term Storage of Electronic Records*

All electronic files are backed up daily. Backups are moved off-site monthly. The retention periods are consistent with those for physical records.

The following table provides the minimum requirements. This information is provided as guidance in determining your organization's document retention policy.

Type of Document	Minimum Requirement
Accounts payable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Audit reports	Permanently
Bank reconciliations	2 years
Bank statements	3 years

Type of Document	Minimum Requirement
Checks (for important payments and purchases)	Permanently
Contracts, mortgages, notes, and leases (expired)	7 years
Contracts (still in effect)	Permanently
Correspondence (general)	2 years
Correspondence (legal and important matters)	Permanently
Correspondence (with customers and vendors)	2 years
Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale	Permanently
Depreciation schedules	Permanently
Duplicate deposit slips	2 years
Employment applications	3 years
Expense analyses/expense distribution schedules	7 years
Year-end financial statements	Permanently
Insurance policies (expired)	3 years
Insurance records, current accident reports, claims, policies, etc.	Permanently
Internal audit reports	3 years
Inventories of products, materials, and supplies	7 years
Invoices (to customers, from vendors)	7 years
Minute books, bylaws, and charter	Permanently
Patents and related papers	Permanently
Payroll records and summaries	7 years
Personnel files (terminated employees)	7 years
Retirement and pension records	Permanently

Type of Document	Minimum Requirement
Tax returns and worksheets	Permanently
Timesheets	7 years
Trademark registrations and copyrights	Permanently
Withholding tax statements	7 years

**RESOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

Document compiled from resources on the National Council of Nonprofits – Document Retention Policies for Nonprofits webpage.

<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/document-retention-policies-nonprofits>

**Important Note from NAWA:** This information is provided for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal or technical advice. If you are unsure about anything covered in this sample, we suggest that you contact the appropriate agency or seek professional advice.

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