

A State Agency Guide to Records Retention Schedules

Introduction

Maintaining an up-to-date records retention schedule is crucial for managing records effectively. Whether creating a new schedule or updating an existing one, this guide will help Records Officers understand the steps involved and what to expect during the process.

Part 1: Understanding Records Retention Schedules

1. Definition

A records retention schedule outlines how long records must be kept before either being destroyed or transferred to the State Archives for permanent preservation. Retention can range from a few days to permanent. A schedule is designed to ensure the preservation of public records for legal, fiscal, administrative, tribal cultural, and historical purposes. The schedule lists the records which may be found within agencies in groupings called “series.” On a schedule, each records series is listed with a title, the retention period(s) related to it, and the final dispositions (destruction or transfer). On some schedules the series will also include a brief description of what types of records may be found within it.

2. Types of Schedules

- a. **General:** Applies broadly to all government entities of a given type (state agencies, cities, counties, etc.). These schedules are standardized and help simplify the management of commonly held records.
- b. **Special:** Designed for records that are unique to a state agency, and which may not fit into a general schedule due to their specialized nature or significance to the agency, or require a different retention period than the General Schedule.

3. Legal Compliance

Retention schedules play a critical role in mitigating legal risks by ensuring compliance with statutory requirements. Under the Oregon Revised Statutes ([ORS Chapter 192](#)), public agencies are required to manage records appropriately, which includes following established retention schedules.

The Oregon Administrative Rules ([OAR 166](#)) outlines the responsibilities of agencies regarding the retention of records that have not yet met their retention periods. This includes ensuring the prompt destruction of records that no longer hold value.

The Oregon Secretary of State’s Archives Division is responsible for developing and maintaining retention schedules for both state and local government records, thereby supporting compliance with these legal requirements. Retention schedules must be approved by the State Archivist for them to be authorized for use by government entities.

4. Benefits of Using Schedules

State agencies can optimize their records management practices by applying records retention schedules, increasing their efficiency and meeting legal obligations. By using these schedules, agencies can:

- ✓ Retain records for the appropriate time, reducing the risk of non-compliance and legal issues.
- ✓ Legally destroy records once their retention period has reached.

- ✓ Reduce clutter by disposing of records that have met their retention periods, making it easier to locate information and respond to records requests.
- ✓ Eliminate the expense of storing obsolete records, whether physical or digital.
- ✓ Enhance public trust and agency credibility by ensuring transparency in records management practices.
- ✓ Identify and preserve records of historical significance for long-term or permanent preservation.

Part 2: Using the Records Retention Schedule

1. Using a Special Schedule and the State Agency General Schedule

Agencies can manage their records by relying on two types of retention schedules: State Agency General Records Retention Schedule and your agency’s Special Records Retention Schedule. It is important to note that state agencies can only use the State Agency General Schedule and NOT the other general schedules that are designed for local government or other entities. While all agencies must use the State Agency General Schedule, not all have a special schedule. Here’s how each works:

a. State Agency General Records Retention Schedule

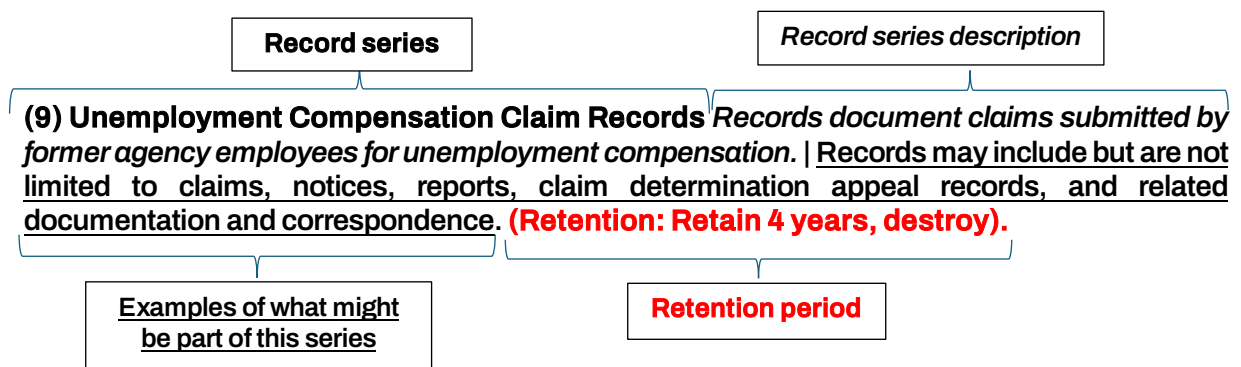
The purpose of this schedule is to cover common records shared across all state agencies, such as administrative, financial, and personnel records, ensuring consistency across agencies of retention of standard record types.

b. State Agency Special Retention Schedule

These are tailored to your agency’s specific needs and designed to handle the unique records of your agency that are not included in the State Agency General Schedule. If you can’t find records listed on your special schedule, look in the State Agency General Schedule to see if the record type is covered there. If the record isn’t listed in either schedule, don’t guess! Contact the State Archives for guidance.

2. Record series format in the State Agency General Schedule

When reviewing record series in the State Agency General Schedule, it’s important to understand the structure and what each part represents. Example:



3. Types of retention periods

- a. Standard: Specifies a flat retention period, where records are kept for a defined length of time before being destroyed or transferred to the Archive. The retention starts ticking from the time of creation of the records.

(13) Cash Receipt Records Records document tabulated and keyed-in transactions for cash received by the agency. Records may include cash register tapes or equivalent, copies of receipts, and batch sheets. SEE ALSO Receipts and Receipt Registers in this section. **(Retention: Retain 6 years, destroy).**

- b. Conditional: this retention depends on a condition or specific event. Once the condition is met, the retention period begins.

(1) Emergency Response Plans and Procedures Records document the development, testing, implementation, and updating of agency plans and procedures for operations during and following emergency or disaster. Records may include but are not limited to disaster preparedness and business resumption plans, procedures to follow in response to specific situations, and correspondence. **(Retention: Retain until superseded or obsolete, destroy).**

4. Records Disposition

- a. Secure Destruction

Secure or defensible destruction refers to the ability to prove that records have been securely and completely destroyed after meeting their retention period. For paper records, use secure shredding instead of recycling. For electronic records, deleting ensuring that data is irretrievable. To create a clear audit trail, keep a log of what was destroyed, including record series title, retention series citation, date range, and destruction date. Generally, destroyed records can be tracked at the folder level, rather than the individual document or file level; use your best judgement as to when to be more specific.

As a Records Officer, you are responsible for overseeing the destruction process and ensuring that the destruction report is created and retained permanently. You must be able to provide destruction reports to the State Archives “periodically.” In current practice, that is “if requested by the State Archivist,” so you’ll need to have them on hand to provide if/when requested. They need to be retained as Destruction Records per the State Agency General Schedule.

- b. Transferring to the Archives

Permanent, historically valuable records should be transferred to the Archives after the period specified on the retention schedule. You can check the [Records Eligible for Transfer](#) page on the Oregon State Archives website and follow the next steps.

Part 3: Establishing and Maintaining State Agency Special Schedule

1. Records Officer

The Records Officer (RO) is a designated individual responsible for overseeing the proper management of records and serving as the key liaison between the agency and the Archives Division, including facilitating updates and maintenance of their agency’s special records retention schedule. The RO ensures smooth communication and coordination, facilitating the process of revising, adding, or removing programs and record series. All state agencies are required by statute

to designate a Records Officer. To learn more about your role, refer to [Naming an Agency Records Officer](#).

To establish a special records retention schedule, first check if an approved schedule already exists for your agency with the Oregon State Archives. You can review the list of schedules on the [State Agency Special Schedules webpage](#). If your agency does not have a schedule, determine whether your agency's records require a unique retention schedule. In some cases, the [State Agency General Records Retention Schedule](#) may adequately cover your records, meaning a separate, special schedule may not be necessary. If you are unsure if a schedule is needed, reach out to us for guidance on beginning your analysis. Please contact us prior to beginning work on any updates.

2. Revising Existing Retention Schedules

Over time, these schedules may need to be updated to reflect changes in business operations, regulations, and standards. Revising existing retention schedules involves regularly reviewing recordkeeping practices at your agency to determine if the series on your schedule are still relevant and compliant with regulatory and business requirements (see Appendix A for sample discussion questions to gather input). Regular reviews ensure that the retention is aligned with the current business structure, policy changes, and operational needs. There are typically two main approaches you can take: full revision or an addendum.

a. Full Revision

A full revision of an existing retention schedule is a comprehensive review and update to schedules that are 5 years or older, or sooner if the agency has undergone a significant reorganization or change in responsibilities. Over time, laws, regulations, and operational needs can change, affecting how records are created and managed. A full revision involves evaluating all records series, retention periods, and program descriptions, as well as incorporating any regulatory updates, organizational changes, or obsolete records series. This will ensure the schedule remains relevant and is up to date.

b. Addendum

An addendum is a focused update that occurs when an agency needs to make minor changes to a single or limited number of existing series or to add or remove a program. An addendum allows agencies to modify, add, or remove series from their existing schedule without conducting a full revision. Please note that addendums still require coordination with a Records Management Analyst and approval from the State Archivist in order to be valid.

3. Creating or updating a schedule

a. Inventory Records

It is important to identify and document all the records your agency holds and to gather the necessary information for building or updating a records retention schedule through the process of creating an inventory. We have a [Records Inventory Template](#) that you can download and use to get you started. Remember to include both physical (paper) and electronic records.

You may need to talk with agency staff who create records, subject matter experts, and IT application administrators in order to complete your inventory. Do your best to identify all possible records, though you will be able to ensure you have a complete inventory when you review the list of proposed series with agency managers and/or records coordinators during the special schedule development process.

b. Analysis and Appraisal

Once the inventory is complete, you will analyze each record type to determine an appropriate retention period. Retention is determined by some combination of assessing the administrative, fiscal, legal, tribal cultural, and historical value of the records. Administrative value is the easiest to determine for most people, but other values may require greater deliberation. The examples below illustrate how these different values may be reflected in the retention schedule.

Administrative: Records that support day-to-day functions and operations of an agency. In short, “how long do you need these to do your job.”

004	Chief Operations Officer Enterprise-wide Project Administration Records Retain 10 years after completion of project, destroy.
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Fiscal: Records that document financial transactions, public funds, expenditures, or the fulfillment of financial obligations. Records with fiscal value will typically, but not always, reside with an agency’s financial units.

042	Trust Returns (a) Retain returns, amendments and appeals 4 years after receipt or last action, whichever is longer, destroy (b) Retain open billings, 1 year after balance paid in full, destroy
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Legal: Records with legal value holds evidence of the legal rights or obligations of the government and its citizens. They demonstrate compliance with laws, regulations, or agreements. Required retention periods for records with legal value can often be found in statute, administrative rule, or applicable case law.

002	Ethics Law/Public Meetings Law/Lobby Law Complaint Records (a) Retain contested case files 15 years, destroy (b) Retain regular case files 10 years, destroy
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Historical: Records documenting the history of government and community capture significant events, decisions, and landmarks. This value is ultimately determined and approved by the State Archivist. Fewer than 5% of all records are designated as historically valuable enough for permanent retention in the State Archives.

001	Marine Board Meeting Minutes, Reports, and Studies, [1957 – present], 10 c.f. Retain permanently, transfer to the State Archives after 10 years
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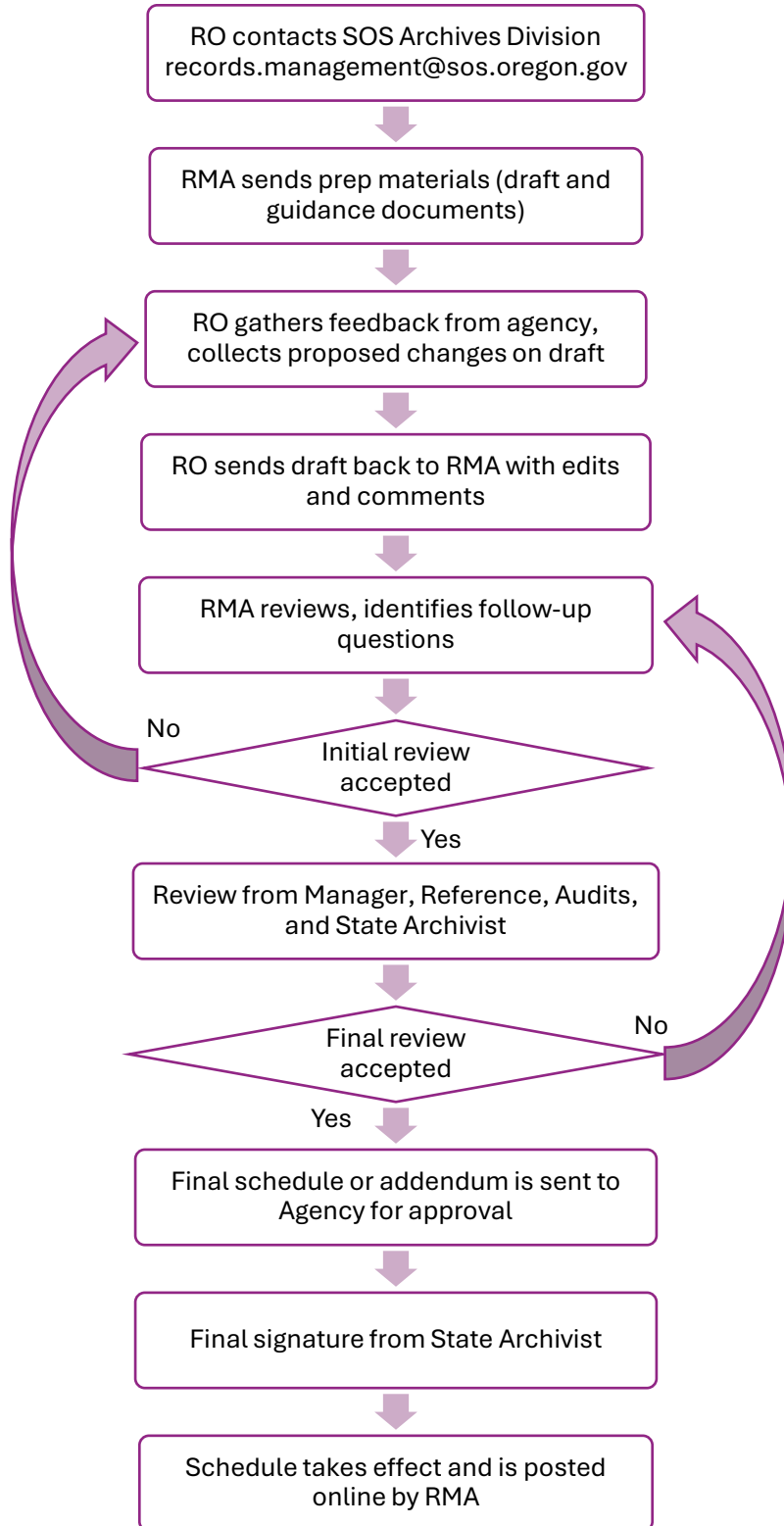
Tribal Cultural: Records with tribal cultural value preserve aspects of the heritage, identity, and traditions of tribes in Oregon. Your agency’s tribal liaison can help you in the process to determine potential tribal cultural value.

001	Indian Water Right Negotiated Settlements, 1991 – [ongoing], 2 c.f. (a) Retain permanently, transfer to State Archives when court agreement is repealed or rescinded, and the court authorizes the removal from Department records
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As you complete each appraisal, you will suggest a retention period based on the analysis of your records and determining the appropriate duration.

c. Obtaining Approval

Records Retention Schedule Review Process



Additional Resources

Archives Division – Chapter 166 <https://secure.sos.state.or.us/oard/displayChapterRules.action>

Naming an Agency Records Officer

<https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Documents/recordsmgmt/rc/naming-an-agency-records-officer.pdf>

ORS 192.108 Retention Schedules https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_192.108

Records Eligible for Transfer <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records/eligible-for-transfer.aspx>

Records Management Guidance <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records-guidance.aspx>

State Agency General Records Retention Schedules

<https://secure.sos.state.or.us/oard/displayDivisionRules.action?selectedDivision=591>

State Agency Special Schedules

https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/state_admin_schedules.aspx

Transferring Records <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/transfer-records.aspx>

Appendix A: Discussion Questions

Requesting input on the schedule:

Guiding questions to use when requesting feedback and insights on the schedule from program managers and subject matter experts.

When editing the draft in Word, use the following collaborative features:

1. *Track Changes*: To record and visualize all edits.
2. *Comments*: To provide contextual feedback and engage in discussions.

Refer to Appendix B for detailed instructions on editing the draft.

For revising an existing schedule:

1. Is the current program description accurate? Use *Track Changes* to indicate added or removed text. The description should contain basic information about the program and any major functions it performs (to help an outside reader to understand roughly what it does). Avoid specifics of procedures or internal requirements.
2. Are the existing records series still active?

If not, add a *Comment* to the series with the year when records for that series stopped being created and the reason (program funding ended, function transferred to another agency, etc.). If all existing records for the series have met retention and have been destroyed, we can remove the series from the schedule. If not, the series will remain on the schedule until all records have met retention and have been destroyed.
3. Are there records that are not accounted for on the current schedule? Make sure to cross-check the general schedule, [OAR 166-300](#), as many common records are listed there. If they are not, you may add them to your schedule.
4. Are the listed retentions still sufficient for current administrative (how long do I need this to do my job?) & legal (is there a retention in statute?) needs? If not, what retention would you suggest and why?
5. Do you receive federal funding in this program? Are there federal retention requirements we need to account for? If so, please list the citation to the CFR or other authority.
6. Are the listed databases/systems of record still accurate?
7. Make sure the hierarchy levels for each section in the schedule are consistent. For example, if you use the levels “Agency/Division/Program/Unit” then the schedule sections needs to follow that hierarchy every time. Do not skip levels in the hierarchy, but not all levels are required for each section. For instance, not every program needs to have units, but you cannot have a division that skips down to a unit without having a program.

For creating a new schedule or adding new programs:

1. Identify the program areas, down to units if appropriate. Generally, each section will have its own page in the Special Schedule. Your Records Officer can advise on where programs or units with similar functions can be grouped together.
2. Identify the major functions of the program. You can list these under Program Description for now, to craft into a narrative paragraph or two later.
3. Under Program Records, list the types of records created for each function based on their content, rather than their format, for example “Case Review Records” instead of “Emails.” Include all types of records in all formats, including paper, electronic, email, databases, etc.
4. Review the State Agencies General Schedule, [OAR 166-300](#). Records that are covered by the General Schedule will not need to be listed under Program Records on your Special Schedule. Instead, they can be moved to the ‘State Agency General Records Retention Schedule Records’ section.
5. For the remaining records series on your Program Records list, identify how long the records are needed for current business needs, to comply with any legal mandates (including any federal requirements), or to meet fiscal obligations. If the records may have tribal cultural value, consult with your agency’s Tribal Liaison for a retention recommendation. If the records may have historic value (permanent retention), add a *Comment* for your Records Officer to consult with the State Archives for review. List suggested retention and add the reason or justification in a *Comment*. For each new records series you may list the retention all together (e.g., “retain 6 years, destroy”) or may split out sub-categories of records using (a), (b), and (c) if needed. See examples in Appendix B.
6. Add to the State Agency General Records Retention Schedule Record list as needed. Follow the format as shown in Appendix B. You do not need to be more specific than the functional areas, such as Administrative Records or Financial Records, but you may if you wish. You do not need to add OAR citations beyond the top functional areas.
7. List any Systems of Record. These are significant relational databases and information systems that contain records for this area. You do not need to list general software like Windows or Microsoft Office, but you may add tools such as “Microsoft Teams” or the name of your shared drive (e.g., “R:\ Drive”) if you wish.



Appendix B: Editing the Draft

A Records Management Analyst (RMA) from the Oregon State Archives will work with you as the State Agency Records Officer to prepare a draft of the agency special schedule for the State Archivist to review and approve. Please consult with the RMA assigned to your special schedule if you have questions about editing the draft that are not answered by this document.

Draft file (.docx):

- Use the file shared with you by the RMA of either your agency's previously approved special schedule or, if no previous schedule existed, the current special schedule template.
- If your draft was shared via a SharePoint link from the RMA do not save new versions of the draft as you make edits or re-save to a new location. Your edits will automatically be saved to the shared file. If your draft was shared as a word document emailed to you, treat that as your master draft to be returned to the RMA when edits are complete.
- If you create new copies to share portions of the draft with program managers and subject matter experts for their review and input, it is your responsibility to copy those suggestions into the draft file shared by the RMA.

Structure of the draft:

- To add a new section, copy the same format from existing pages in the special schedule. For examples of how revisions and new sections should look, refer to the example at the end of this Appendix B.
- Ignore any Table of Contents you may see in the draft. It will be formatted at the end of the process by the RMA.
- If you are editing a previously approved special schedule, please note that you may see "Databases" instead of the currently used term "Systems of Record"

Edits or additions to text:

- Mark all changes on the schedule using the *Track Changes* feature in Word.
- Provide justifications for all changes to the Program Records section using the *Comments* function in Word. Add comments as needed for changes to the Program Description, General Schedule Records list, and Systems of Record list.
- **Do Not re-number**, as this can create confusion when discussing changes and during the State Archivist's review. The schedule will be renumbered by the RMA once all changes have been finalized. For new records series, please enter the number as **XXX**.
- All series with Permanent retentions must have an estimate for volume created per year for Archives to determine future storage needs. For physical records, measure in cubic feet (c.f.) (equivalent to one Banker's Box). For electronic records, measure in Gigabytes (GB) or Megabytes (MB). If this was missed in past versions, add an estimate. If the records series has changed from physical to electronic since the last version of the schedule, update to GB/MB.

Organizational Placement

Schedule Number: XXX-XXXX

Agency: Secretary of State
Division: Archives
Program: Records Management

Program Description

The Records Management program provides advice and assistance on records and information management issues to state and local government agencies, universities, community colleges, educational service districts, school districts, boards and commissions. The program produces and updates special and general records retention schedules for all government agencies and identifies Oregon public records with long-term historical value for permanent retention in the State Archives. ~~The Records Management program produces agency administrative overviews and evaluates state and local records management programs.~~ The program also develops and presents classroom and web-based training materials for state and local agency records officers.

Program Records

- 050 Appraisal Checklists** **5 c.f.**
Retain permanently
- 051 Garten Agency Destruction Reports**
Retain 6 years, destroy
- 052 Records Management Presentations**
Retain ~~20~~ 2 years, destroy
- 053 Records Retention Schedules - Final Product**
Retain 10 years after superseded or obsolete, destroy
- 054 Records Retention Scheduling Project Records**
Retain 1 month after schedule superseded or obsolete, destroy

XXX Advice and Assistance Records

~~Retain 3 years, destroy~~

State Agency General Records Retention Schedule Records

Records include but are not limited to:

Administrative Records (OAR 166-300-0015)

Calendar and Scheduling Records
Conference, Seminar, and Training Program Records
Staff Meeting Records

Systems of Record

~~RC-UPDATE~~
~~ORMS Content Manager (CM)~~

Commented [JM9]: No longer needed by office for 20 years, 2 years is sufficient per program manager. [Example shows explanation of significant change in length of retention.]

Commented [GA11]: New series: Giving advice on interpretation of law and AR, so need to be retained longer than regular tech assistance or reference requests.

Organizational Placement

Schedule Number: XXX-XXXX

Agency: Secretary of State

Division: Archives

Program: Oregon Records Management Solution (ORMS)

Commented [GA12]: New program section

Program Description

The Oregon Records Management Solution is a state-wide program that provides electronic records management tools and assistance to participating agencies at all levels of Oregon government. The Records Management Unit operates ORMS in conjunction with private partners Chaves Consulting and Arikkan, Inc. Members of the records management unit assist agencies in project planning, software configuration, and end user training, and provide ongoing technical support. Members of the unit also create various training materials, aids and guides to assist agency users.

Program Records

XXX Implementation Planning Records

Retain 1 year after agency leaves ORMS, destroy

Commented [GA13]: Needed for context and history while active, loses value after (includes first records/builds/planning sessions/justification, significant technical discussions)

XXX ORMS Support Correspondence

a) Technical troubleshooting, retain 1 year, destroy

b) Requests for security or permission changes or changes in agency roles, retain until superseded, destroy

Commented [GA14]: Mostly technical troubleshooting, routine fixes. Similar to IT.

XXX Technical Training Records

Retain until superseded, destroy

Commented [GA15]: Rapidly changing, no ongoing value after replaced

State Agency General Records Retention Schedule Records

Records include but are not limited to:

Administrative Records (OAR 166-300-0015)

Agency Training and Presentation Records

Calendar and Scheduling Records

Mailing List Records

Systems of Record

ORMS Content Manager (CM)

SharePoint