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Most organizations have a variety of records that they create in order to operate. Some have legal importance, some are for financial accountability and some are for the good governance of the organization. Other records document events and the people involved in the organization. They are all important for helping other people (including government regulators, funders, members and clients/audiences) understand what the organization does. But only some have lasting value. Those are the records which should be placed in an archives for long term preservation.

The kinds of records that your organization may be creating that have enduring value fall into the categories mentioned above, and maybe a few others. Not all organizations will create all these types of records – but most will have some of them. The Guidelines below indicate various kinds of records and whether they can be disposed of or archived depending on whether they have enduring value or not. Some records, like financial records, have legal retention periods. **Please note however, each organization is unique in the type of records they produce and how often they refer back to them (i.e. how long a type of record is active or semi-active) and these are guidelines only.** Each organization needs to consider how well these guidelines fit their situation and adapt them as necessary.

If you create a lot of records every year, you may have a box of records to deposit at the archives every year. If however, you only create a few records each year you might want to wait until 2 to three years have passed and you have a complete box of records to deposit. Simply keep the box in your storage area and when you are ready add the next year's records to the box and update the file list of what is included in the box, complete with dates.

Remember, your records will be more meaningful in the future if things are described fully – i.e. for photographs: ideally the people in the photograph should be identified, the event name recorded and the date the photograph was taken (and also the photographer if known). For event programs – make sure the date, year and the people involved are recorded, either in the program or on the file folder. This contextual information for your records will help your organization if you decide to write your history or prepare a display or presentation. It will also help future researchers who are interested in your organization.

Records can come to the Archives in a variety of formats, including digital. The City of Edmonton Archives currently accepts digital records in pdf, jpeg and tiff formats.

Finally, if you have questions, please ask your archivist. They are usually easy to approach and would like to help you. We can be reached at 780-496-8711 or at [cms.archives@edmonton.ca](mailto:cms.archives@edmonton.ca).

City of Edmonton Archives  
Guidelines for an Organizations' Records

**GUIDELINES**

**General Types of Records and Recommendations on How Long To Retain Them**

<b>Record Classification</b>	<b>Type of Record</b>	<b>Length of time to keep active</b>	<b>Length of time to keep semi-active</b>	<b>Archive or Secure Disposal</b>
Legal	Constitution	Until amended or replaced	Until next AGM	Archive
	Bylaws	Until amended or replaced	Until next AGM	Archive
	Policies and Procedures	Until amended or replaced	Until next AGM	Archive
	Contracts (leases, letters of agreement with staff, service arrangements for equipment)	Until expired	7 years (for financial oversight/audit purposes)	Secure Disposal except if it represents something historical (like building your own building – then Archive)
	Corporate Registration (Charitable Registration; Society's Act Registration; Business number/ registration)	Annual renewal documents plus previous year	0 years	Archive
	Lawsuits	Until resolved plus 10 years	1-2 years	Secure Disposal except if it had an effect on the organization's structure (caused a split, name change or other significant change – then Archive)
	Insurance policy documents	Until amended or replaced	1 year	Archive
Administrative	Meeting minutes – Board of Directors, working groups, etc. (include agendas and reports)	Current year plus previous year	3 years	Archive

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	Minutes of Committee(s)	Current year plus previous year	3 years	Archive
	Minutes of Annual General Meeting	Current year plus previous year	3 years	Archive
	Annual Reports	Current year plus previous year	3 years	Archive
	Final Reports	1-2 years	0 years	Archive
	Compliance Audits	1-2 years	0 years	Archive
	Correspondence (incoming / outgoing) – of legal, administrative and/or historic value (relating to: notable events or decisions of the organization, legal cases, etc.)	1 year	1 year	Archive
	Correspondence – special projects	Until end of the project	1 year	Archive
	Correspondence (incoming / outgoing) – General inquiries and current business, newsletters of other organizations, etc.	1 year	1 year	Secure Disposal
	Newsletters of the organization (sent out to members)	1 year	1 year	Archive
	Promotional Materials – programs, brochures, special event media packages, flyers, posters	1 year	1 year	Archive (2 copies)
	Promotional Materials – media releases, ‘give-aways’ (pins, hats, cards)	1 year	1 year	Secure Disposal (can document artifacts with photographs for archives)

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	Lists of members for contact	Current list	1 year	Archive – discretionary (will be available to researchers after the fulfillment of FOIPPA legislation requirements. Copying will be restricted)
	List of Volunteers (Board members, Committee members, project volunteers)	Current list	1 year	Archive – discretionary (will be available to researchers after the fulfillment of FOIPPA legislation requirements. Copying will be restricted)
	Staff / Volunteer job descriptions	Until amended or replaced	1 year	Archive
	Staff / Volunteer security checks	Current	1 year	Secure Disposal
	Organizational structure / change	Until amended or replaced	1 year	Archive
	Operations Manual	Until amended or replaced	1 year	Archive
	Disaster preparedness manuals and procedures	Until amended or replaced	1 year	Archive
Financial	Audited Financial Statements (annual) or Annual Financial Review	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Archive
	Audit working papers	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Secure Disposal
	Monthly financial statements (sent to board – will be archived with Board materials)	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Secure Disposal

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	Accounts Payable / Receivable	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Secure Disposal
	General Ledger	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Archive
	Subscriptions lists	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Secure Disposal
	Banking records	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Secure Disposal
	Budgets (reports of Board)	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Archive
	Budget working papers	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Secure Disposal
	Capital Construction Projects (budgets, allocations, payment reports, change orders, authorizations for payments)	Until end of project	7 years	Archive
	Investment reports annual	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Archive
	Investment reports monthly	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Disposal
	Tax Records	Current year plus previous year	5 years	Disposal
Documentary	History of the organization			Archive (1 copy each version/iteration)
	Photographs (special events etc.)			Archive

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	Audio-visual recordings (performances, oral histories with members, special events)			Archive (2 if possible – master copy and access copy)
	News clippings / scrapbooks			Archive (1 copy each version/ iteration)
	Event calendars / schedules	Current year	Previous year	Archive
	List of records sent to the archives		Permanently	Copy to the archives

### **Suggested Duties of Organization's Records Manager**

Establish retention period and archive/disposal guidelines and obtain Board/Executive approval.

Train office staff / volunteers

- gain compliance for types of records and filing system (maybe colour code for Archival records and others)
- review annually for issues, changes

Annually: (probably after AGM)

- review files,
- remove those destined for secure disposal,
- transfer those destined for archives to boxes (label "Archives" and the year),
- create lists of the contents of those boxes
- transfer to archives (if required – or store for another year)
- update permanent list of records transferred to archives

Periodically: (after major events, when records may have been created/ when a Board member retires)

- ensure records are gathered from creators (committee, volunteers, staff) and properly filed (labeled with records schedule identifier)
- check that documents are properly identified (photographs: dated, people named, events listed; programs have dates, etc.)
- consider documenting special events that created records but do not have a lot of explanation (posters, programs). For example, why was this poster made?
- update the list of duties (or job description) of Records Manager

In case of departure from the position – ensure a replacement – and train them. Consider enshrining the position in the Board members or policies and procedures manual.

If you decide to place your records which have enduring value in an archives, you will need to have the authority to do so. Every donation of records should be accompanied by a motion of the board, and/or a letter from the chair/president stating that it is the wish of the organization to deposit their records for permanent retention. A list of the records included in the donation and the years that they cover would help the archivists process the records more accurately.