

The following is one example document retention and destruction policy, but there are many factors that should be considered in developing a policy. For example, many laws relating to document retention are state-specific (such as those governing employment/payroll). Also, grants received from the federal government will often have specific requirements for document retention.

Each NFP should examine its specific activities to determine the appropriate document retention policy for its circumstance.

## **Sample Document Retention and Destruction Policy**

### **Document Destruction**

The Document Retention and Destruction Policy identifies the record retention responsibilities of staff, volunteers, members of the board of directors, and outsiders for maintaining and documenting the storage and destruction of the organization's documents and records.

The organization's staff, volunteers, members of the board of directors, committee members and outsiders (independent contractors via agreements with them) are required to honor the following rules:

- a.* Paper or electronic documents indicated under the terms for retention in the following section will be transferred and maintained by (fill in the blank based on the organization's practices);
- b.* All other paper documents will be destroyed after three years;
- c.* All other electronic documents will be deleted from all individual computers, data bases, networks, and back-up storage after one year;
- d.* No paper or electronic documents will be destroyed or deleted if pertinent to any ongoing or anticipated government investigation or proceeding or private litigation (check with legal counsel or the human resources department for any current or foreseen litigation if employees have not been notified); and
- e.* No paper or electronic documents will be destroyed or deleted as required to comply with government auditing standards (Single Audit Act).

## Record Retention

The following table\* indicates the minimum requirements and is provided as guidance to customize in determining your organization's document retention policy. Because statutes of limitations and state and government agency requirements vary from state to state, each organization should carefully consider its requirements and consult with legal counsel before adopting a Document Retention and Destruction Policy. In addition, federal awards and other government grants may provide for a longer period than is required by other statutory requirements.

Type of Document	Minimum Requirement
Accounts payable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Audit reports	Permanently
Bank reconciliations	2 years
Bank statements	3 years
Checks (for important payments and purchases)	Permanently
Contracts, mortgages, notes, and leases (expired)	7 years
Contracts (still in effect)	Contract period
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 records, current accident reports, claims, policies, and so on (active and expired)	Permanently
Internal audit reports	3 years
Inventory records for products, materials, and supplies	3 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

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\* Adapted from National Council of Nonprofits.

Tax returns and worksheets	Permanently
Timesheets	7 years
Trademark registrations and copyrights	Permanently
Withholding tax statements	7 years

*This example is provided for illustrative purposes only.*