

Preparing Electronic Records for Transfer to the State Archives

Version 1.0, created 12/2022

Introduction	1
Prepare your records	2
1. Review records	2
2. Organize records by records schedule number	2
3. Migrate records to accepted file formats	3
4. Normalize filenames	3
Transfer your records	4
Appendix A: Preferred file formats	4
Appendix B: Possible methods of transfer	5
Appendix C: Best practices for filenames	5

Introduction

The following document provides recommendations about how to best prepare electronic records for transfer and permanent storage at the State Archives. The State Archives accepts electronic records from state agencies and local governments with the disposition of “Transfer to the State Archives” or “Review by State Archives for Possible Transfer.” If you have questions about whether something can be transferred to the State Archives, contact the State Archivist.

It is the responsibility of the creating agency to appropriately manage records prior to transfer, with good faith effort made by the records creator or records manager to delete non-records, transitory records, and purely personal material. State Archives staff are not familiar with the inner workings of each state agency, so while State Archives staff will make efforts to screen for those items, that work should be done by the agency prior to transfer. The ultimate goal should be to send only well-managed content that is governed by an approved records schedule designating them for transfer.

Prepare your records

1. Review records

Inventory your records. As you review your electronic records, consider the general records schedule and your agency's specific records retention schedules. It may be helpful to create an inventory and identify the various dispositions of your records. Remember, only records with the disposition of "Transfer to the State Archives" or "Review by State Archives for Possible Transfer" may be transferred to the State Archives.

Identify and remove non-records. While reviewing records, identify and remove non-records that may be lurking amidst those that are eligible for transfer. Schedule items [124-82](#) and [24-60](#) officially define **non-records**, but some electronic non-records that should not be transferred to the State Archives include:

- Materials not created by your agency and saved as a general reference resource
- Extra copies of documents or duplicates saved only for convenience or reference
- Draft/version documents, unless there is a valid business reason for doing otherwise
- Junk mail, spam, "to-do" and task lists that serve as reminders to complete actions
- Email documenting employee fringe activities (carpool locators, employee recreation and welfare activities, blood donors, charitable funds, community notices, holiday and social meetings, etc.)
- .tmp files and .exe files. Temporary files are created by the system and do not need to be saved. Application execution files may be needed to open an application, but you should not need to transfer any applications to the State Archives (*exceptions may be made, please consult State Archivist if you think you need to transfer an application*)
- Empty file folders

Identify records that contain confidential Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or are restricted by statute: Restricted records or those containing PII may be transferred to the State Archives, but they need to be identified as such and handled with care. It may be useful to create a spreadsheet identifying files with confidential or restricted information and to transfer said spreadsheet along with the affected records.

- [Nebraska Revised Statute 87-802](#) defines confidential personal information
- Various statutes may restrict records, but [Nebraska Revised Statute 84-712.05](#) identifies many kinds of records which may be withheld from the public

2. Organize records by records schedule number

Once you have identified the records eligible for transfer to the State Archives, start organizing them. State Archives staff may perform some basic arrangement on your records when they are transferred, but organizing your records prior to transfer will help ensure a smooth transfer process and ensure the records are discoverable by the public. If records do not already have an organization scheme, make an effort to group them in a meaningful way (e.g. chronologically, by

division, by project). Clear folder names are extremely helpful - see [Appendix C](#) for filename best practices.

At the very least, **the top-level folders in the transfer need to be labeled with the schedule item number and title from the relevant records retention schedule.** The file structure beneath this top level will vary depending on the files being transferred, but all the files inside a single top-level folder must belong to the same schedule item.

Example folder structures for transfer:

- 124-72_Meeting_Minutes
 - 2015_Agendas
 - 2015_Minutes
 - 2016_Agendas
 - 2016_Minutes
- 24-67_Reports_Studies
 - Division_X_Studies
 - 2006
 - 2007
 - Division_Y_Studies
 - 2006
 - 2007
 - Project_Z_Reports
 - 2005-2010

3. Migrate records to accepted file formats

While the State Archives can accept many file types, proprietary formats offer a special challenge. If your files are stored in a unique program or application, it may be possible to export or save the information in a more common file format. See [Appendix A](#) for a list of file formats that the State Archives accepts. If you have records that cannot be migrated to one of these formats, contact the State Archivist to discuss your options.

Also note that **the State Archives cannot accept encrypted records or files that are password protected.** Remove password protection or encryption on all files prior to transfer to the State Archives.

4. Normalize filenames

Just as with paper files, it is important to name electronic files so they can be easily identified and accessed. You may have your own file naming structure in place; if needed, send info explaining the structure along with your transfer. Otherwise, see [Appendix C](#) for file naming guidance. You may need to rename files before transferring them to the State Archives if they are especially messy or otherwise not understandable.

Transfer your records

Once you have your records organized and ready for transfer, contact the State Archivist to initiate the transfer process.

You will be asked to fill out a transfer form (see **Transfer of Public Records to State Archives**). In this form, you will inventory your top-level folders and list their schedule item number and title, describe the records and their dates, explain restrictions, and provide each top-level folder’s file size, number of files, and the file formats present.

There are several methods for transferring electronic files to the State Archives. The State Archivist will discuss options with you, depending on your specific circumstance and the size of the files being transferred. See [Appendix B](#) for an overview of the various methods you might expect.

Once the State Archives has received your records and validated that the transfer was successful, you will be asked to delete your copies of the transferred files. This will ensure that there is no confusion regarding which version is the final record copy.

Appendix A: Preferred file formats

Record type	Preferred file formats	Acceptable file formats
Textual documents	PDF/A (.pdf); OpenDocument Text (.odt); Plain text (.txt)	PDF (.pdf); Microsoft Word document (.doc); Microsoft Open XML Document (.docx); Rich Text Format (.rtf)
Structured data	Comma-separated file (.csv); Tab-delimited file (.txt); OpenDocument Spreadsheet (.ods);	Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet (.xls); Microsoft Excel Open XML Spreadsheet (.xlsx)
Presentations	OpenDocument Presentation (.odp); PDF/A (.pdf)	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation (.ppt); Microsoft Open XML PowerPoint Presentation (.pptx); PDF (.pdf)
Email	Microsoft Personal Folders Format (.pst); MBOX Email Format (.mbox); Internet Message Format (.eml)	PDF (.pdf); Microsoft Outlook Message (.msg)

Record type	Preferred file formats	Acceptable file formats
Still images/photos	Tagged Image File Format (.tiff, .tif); Portable Network Graphics (.png)	JPEG (.jpg); Jpeg2000 (.jp2); GIF (.gif)
Audio	Free Lossless Audio Codec (.flac); Broadcast WAVE (.bwf)	Wave Waveform Audio File Format (.wav); Audio Interchange Format (.aiff); Windows Media Audio (.wma); MPEG3 (.mp3)
Video	Audio Video Interleaved Format (.avi); Digital Moving Picture Exchange (.dpx)	MPEG-4 (.mp4); MPEG-2 (.mp2); QuickTime File Format (.mov); Windows Media Video 9 File Format (.wmv)

Appendix B: Possible methods of transfer

- For a large file transfer (>5 GB): Move files to external hard drive(s) provided by the State Archives
- For a medium file transfer (20 MB - 5 GB): Upload via Google Drive link provided by the State Archives
- For a small file transfer (<20 MB): Attach to email sent to an email address provided by the State Archives

Appendix C: Best practices for filenames

- Avoid using special characters in a filename such as \ / : * ? " < > | [] & \$, .
 - These characters can be misinterpreted by computer systems and cause files to be unable to be read.
- Use underscores or dashes instead of periods or spaces
 - Periods and spaces can cause confusion in certain computer systems when used in ways the system isn't expecting, such as within filenames. Periods often denote the beginning of the file extension and therefore can alter filenames if used elsewhere. Spaces can be read as %, which will also alter filenames.
- Add dates and format them consistently, such as YYYYMMDD
 - Dates are often relevant to records. Formatting them inconsistently or written out (such as "January_2015") may cause them to sort in an inconsistent manner. To avoid these issues, format dates as YYYYMMDD (or as specific a date is needed).
- Be brief
 - Long folder or file names can lead to long file paths if files are deeply nested within folders, which can cause files to be inaccessible in certain computer systems.