Public Records Glossary

This glossary contains definitions of terms that appear on the State Archives or Public Records Administration webpages.

**Agency -**  
1. “Agency” or “public body” shall mean any executive, legislative, judicial, regulatory, administrative body of the state or any political subdivision thereof; including, but not limited to the leadership of the general assembly, chairman in the house and senate, public officials elected or appointed and any department, division, agency, commission, board, office, bureau, authority, any school, fire, or water district, or other agency or quasi-public agency of state or local government which exercises governmental functions, any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency. [(§42-8.1-2 (1))](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM)

2. “Agency” or “public body” shall mean any executive, legislative, judicial, regulatory, administrative body of the state, or any political subdivision thereof; including, but not limited to, any department, division, agency, commission, board, office, bureau, authority, any school, fire, or water district, or other agency or quasi-public agency of state or local government which exercises government functions, or any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency. [(§38-3-2 (1)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-3/38-3-2.HTM) and [§38-1-1.1 (a))](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-1/38-1-1.1.HTM)

**Archive -**An establishment maintained primarily for the storage, servicing, security, and processing of records that must be preserved permanently for historical, legal or other value and need not be retained in office equipment and space. [(RIGL § 42-8.1-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM)

**Archivist -**The state archivist, the director of the division of state archives. [(RIGL § 42-8.1-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM)

**Authenticated Copies -**Exact copies or reproductions of records or other materials that are certified as such under seal and that need be legally accepted as evidence. [(RIGL § 42-8.1-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM)

**Program -**The public records administration program of the secretary of state. [(RIGL § 38-3-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-3/38-3-2.HTM)

**Public Business -**Any matter over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.[(RIGL § 38-1-1.1)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-1/38-1-1.1.HTM)

**"Public Record"** or **"Public Records"** -  
1. Documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, or other material regardless of physical form or characteristics made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency. [(RIGL § 38-1-1.1)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-1/38-1-1.1.HTM) See also "Record".

2. All documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data processing records, computer stored data (including electronic mail messages, except specifically for any electronic mail messages of or to elected officials with or relating to those they represent and correspondence of or to elected officials in their official capacities) or other material regardless of physical form or characteristics made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency. [(RIGL § 38-2-2(4)(i))](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-2/38-2-2.HTM) See also "Record".

3. Public records as defined in chapter 2 of title 38, "Access to Public Records". [(RIGL § 42-8.1-2(11))](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM) See also "Record".

**Public Records Repository -** The establishment maintained by the program for preservation of those public records determined by the program to have permanent value warranting their continued preservation and which has been accepted by the program for transfer to its custody. [(RIGL § 38-3-2(5))](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-3/38-3-2.HTM) See also "State Record Center".

**Record -** All books, letters, papers, maps, photographs, tapes, films, sound recordings, machine-readable records or any other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any governmental agency in pursuance of law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by the agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the government or because of the value of the official government data contained therein. As used in this part 1, the following are excluded from the definition of records:

(a) Materials preserved or appropriate for preservation because of the value of the data contained therein other than that of an official government nature or because of the historical value of the materials themselves;

(b) Library books, pamphlets, newspapers, or museum material made, acquired, or preserved for reference, historical, or exhibition purposes;

(c) Private papers, manuscripts, letters, diaries, pictures, biographies, books, and maps, including materials and collections previously owned by persons other than the state or any political subdivision thereof;

(d) Extra copies of publications or duplicated documents preserved for convenience of reference;

(e) Stocks of publications.

[(RIGL § 42-8.1-2(12))](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM) See also "Public Record".

**Record Series -** A series is the basic unit for organizing and controlling files. It is a group of files or documents kept together (either physically or intellectually) because they relate to a particular subject or function, result from the same activity, document a specific type of transaction, take a particular physical form, or have some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, maintenance, or use. [(36 CFR 1220.14)](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol3/pdf/CFR-2011-title36-vol3-sec1220-14.pdf)

Each record series must be scheduled for appropriate disposition. The series concept is a flexible one, and programs should create series by organizing documents in ways that facilitate management of the records throughout their life cycle. For example, each record series in hard copy should be physically separated from all other record series. Electronic records should be managed in ways that link records to their disposition authority, within the context of a record keeping system. (National Archives and Records Administration)

**Records Center -** An establishment maintained by the program for the storage, processing, servicing, and security of public records that must be retained for varying periods of time but need not be retained in an agency's office equipment or space. [(RIGL § 38-3-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-3/38-3-2.HTM)

**Records Control Schedule -** A document establishing the official retention, maintenance, and disposal requirements for a series or type of record based on administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical values for the scheduled records.[(RIGL § 38-3-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-3/38-3-2.HTM)

**Records Retention Schedule -** See "Records Control Schedule".

**Records Schedule -** See "Records Control Schedule".

**Retention Schedule -** See "Records Control Schedule".

**Schedule –** See "Records Control Schedule".

**State Archives or archives of the state -** Those official records that have been determined by the archivist to have sufficient historical, legal, or other value to warrant their continued preservation by the state, and have been accepted by the state archivist for deposit in his or her custody. [(RIGL § 42-8.1-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM)

**State Archives -** An establishment maintained by the division for the preservation of those public records that have been determined by the division to have sufficient historical or other value to warrant their continued preservation by the state and have been accepted by the division for deposit in its custody. [(RIGL § 42-8.1-2)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-8.1/42-8.1-2.HTM)

**State Archivist –** See "Archivist".

**State Record Center -** See "Record Center".

**Supervisor of the regulatory body** - Chief or head of a section having enforcement responsibility for a particular statute or set of rules and regulations within a regulatory agency. [(RIGL §38-1-1.1)](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE38/38-1/38-1-1.HTM)