

WAC 44-14-03003 Index of records. State and local agencies are required by RCW 42.56.070 to provide an index for certain categories of records. An agency is not required to index every record it creates. Since agencies maintain records in a wide variety of ways, agency indices will also vary. An agency cannot use, rely on, or cite to as precedent a public record unless it was indexed or made available to the parties affected by it. RCW 42.56.070(6). An agency should post its index on its website.

The index requirements differ for state and local agencies.

A state agency must index only two categories of records:

(1) All records, if any, issued before July 1, 1990 for which the agency has maintained an index; and

(2) Final orders, declaratory orders, interpretive statements, and statements of policy issued after June 30, 1990. RCW 42.56.070(5).

A state agency must adopt a rule governing its index.

A local agency may opt out of the indexing requirement if it issues a formal order specifying the reasons why doing so would "unduly burden or interfere with agency operations." RCW 42.56.070 (4)(a). To lawfully opt out of the index requirement, a local agency must actually issue an order or adopt an ordinance specifying the reasons it cannot maintain an index.

The index requirements of the act were enacted in 1972 when agencies had far fewer records, the vast majority of records were paper, and an index was easier to maintain. However, technology allows agencies to map out, archive, and then electronically search for electronic documents. Agency resources vary greatly so not every agency can afford to utilize this technology. However, agencies should explore the feasibility of electronic indexing and retrieval to assist both the agency and requestor in locating public records. Agencies could also consider using their records retention schedules as their index, or direct requestors to the schedules as a way to describe the types of records an agency retains and for what periods of time. See chapter 40.14 RCW and WAC 44-14-03005.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.56.570. WSR 18-06-051, § 44-14-03003, filed 3/2/18, effective 4/2/18. Statutory Authority: 2005 c 483 § 4, RCW 42.17.348. WSR 06-04-079, § 44-14-03003, filed 1/31/06, effective 3/3/06.]