



Forms Coordinator Handbook

Indiana Archives and Records Administration

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WHAT IS A FORM?

A form is a basic business tool (whether printed, electronic, or web-based) for collecting and documenting transactions.

WHAT IS A STATE FORM?

State Forms are used to exchange goods, services, or financial assets. Many internal forms, for example, do not meet this definition.

When determining if a form needs to be considered a State Form, ask the following questions:

1. Was a decision made on which the agency needs to act (e.g., contract, license, et cetera)?
2. Were money or resources spent, and why (invoice, emergency, budget, et cetera)?
3. Is the form required by statutory authority?

Non-Forms

Many items do not fall within the standard definition of a form including posters, envelopes, engraved items, stickers, letterhead, checklists, mailing labels, business cards, newsletters, maps, logo decals, brochures, booklets, packets, annual reports, directories, instructional sheets, and handbooks. Because they do not transact business information, these items are not subject to the [State Form Standards](#).

Unauthorized State Forms

Unauthorized State Forms are those that have not been recorded by the Indiana Archives and Records Administration (IARA), so there is no central documentation of the form's authorization, purpose, or history of revision. Unauthorized State Forms may be duplicates, contain incorrect information, or make unlawful requests all of which are liabilities for the State. Forms Coordinators should be on the lookout for unauthorized forms and bring them to the attention of the form's originator.

Temporary Forms

Forms needed for 180 days or less do not need to be recorded with IARA for either use or design so long as the [State Form Standards](#) are met.

STATE FORM STANDARDS

In accordance with IC 5-15-5.1-6, the Indiana Archives and Records Administration establishes standards for the design, redesign, numbering, standardization, consolidation, and elimination of all forms used by state government. These standards make State Forms easy to read, identify, and understand.

There are five elements to the State Form Standards: State Seal; Title; State Form Number; Revision Code; and Agency Name.



1. The Indiana State Seal should be on the form in the upper left-hand corner. Size should be .625".
2. The Title should be to the right of the State Seal, left aligned and centered on the State Seal. The State Form title should be in 11-point bold Arial in all CAPITAL letters.
3. The State Form number is provided by IARA (please see [Designing a New State Form](#)). The State Form number should be displayed on the form as "State Form #####" in 7-point plain Arial, directly beneath the State Form title.
4. The State Form revision code is based on how many times the form has been revised. It should be displayed on the form within parentheses and in 7-point plain Arial. The State Form revision code sequence is:
 - a. Creation of form = (M-YY)
 - b. First revision = (R / M-YY)
 - c. Second revision = (R2 / M-YY)
 - d. Third revision = (R3 / M-YY), et cetera
5. The agency name should be displayed beneath the State Form number and State Form revision code in 7 or 8 point plain Arial in all capital letters. Agencies may choose to include a division name with the agency name.

NOTE 1:

IARA understands that some of the specific details of how the header elements are displayed may need to be adjusted for your specific needs. For example, in order to meet accessibility best practices, an all-capitalized title may not be ideal, or for web-based State Forms the State Seal may need to be located somewhere other than the upper left-hand corner. IARA recommends that agencies do their best to include all five elements of the standards, even if the agency is not able to adhere exactly to the recommended placement, font, or sizes due to format constraints.

NOTE 2:

If your form requires State Board of Accounts (SBOA) approval, the approval statement provided by SBOA should be displayed on the form beneath the State Form number and revision code, but above the agency and/or division name. For more information on SBOA approval please see [State Board of Accounts Approval](#).

AGENCY FORMS COORDINATORS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

All State agencies are required (IC 5-15-5.1-10) to appoint a representative from their staff to serve as a State Form liaison between the agency and the Indiana Archives and Records Administration.

This person is referred to as the Forms Coordinator. Forms Coordinators are an integral part of successful State Forms management. A Forms Coordinator should be familiar with their agency's forms needs, their agency's internal forms processes, and IARA's processes and standards. Forms Coordinators provide leadership to the agency and help ensure that processes and standards are adhered to, and State Forms meet the agency's needs.

There are three essential duties of a Forms Coordinator:

- Answer questions about the forms of their agency.
- Understand and promote [State Form Standards](#) to their agency.
- [Maintain editable copies of agency forms](#)

To appoint a new Forms Coordinator for your agency please fill out State Form 57302 and submit to fmd@iara.in.gov.

CREATING, REVISING, REACTIVATING, DEACTIVATING STATE FORMS

CREATING A NEW STATE FORM

1. Ensure the new State Form does not already exist and that it meets the definition of a State Form.
2. Upload the new form to the Forms Repository (for more information on admin access please see [State Forms Online Catalog](#)).
3. Maintain an editable copy of the new form so your agency can easily revise it as needed.
4. Retain any supporting documentation and a copy of the State Form for reference under record series GRFRM-1: State Agency Form File.

REVISING A SINGLE EXISTING STATE FORM

1. Record all revisions by redlining or marking up the current form.
2. Upload your revised State Form to the Forms Repository (for more information on admin access please see [State Forms Online Catalog](#)).
3. Maintain an editable copy of the revised form so your agency can easily revise it again as needed.
4. Retain a copy of the marked-up form and any supporting documents for reference under record series GRFRM-1: State Agency Form File.

REACTIVATING A STATE FORM

If you need to reactivate a previously deactivated State Form, email fmd@iara.in.gov to request a new State Form number. Use this new State Form number to create your form and follow the procedures outlined in [Creating a new State Form](#).

DEACTIVATING A STATE FORM

If you need to deactivate a State Form follow these steps:

1. Deactivate the form in the Forms Repository:
 - a. Form Detail tab: Uncheck the Approved box and change Active to Inactive. Save.
 - b. eForm tab: Delete all files by clicking the red X. This will break all links to the form.
 - c. Notes tab: Make a note of the date the form was deactivated and that the eForm file was deleted (if there was a file available to delete). Save.
2. Retain any copies of the form and supporting documents that you have saved outside of the Forms Repository in accordance with record series GRFRM-1: State Agency Form File.

STATE FORMS TRAINING

For training materials, visit iara.in.gov and navigate to State Forms under Services for Government, where you will find a list of all training materials currently offered by IARA.

If you are a new Forms Coordinator and have questions not answered by the training materials on our website, please reach out to fmd@iara.in.gov.

REVISION FREQUENCY

It is a best practice for agencies to avoid revising a State Form shortly before legislative changes that affect the form may go into effect, and then revising it again when the changes go into effect. For example, making minor revisions to a State Form in April and then again in July would not be considered a best practice. It would be better to make all revisions in July.

FORMS IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

It is a best practice to assign a separate State Form number to each translation of a form. If you have a Spanish, Burmese, and English translation of the same form, each version should receive its own form number.

STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTS (SBOA) APPROVAL

State Board of Accounts (SBOA) approval is required for some forms that have a financial impact. This does not apply to forms owned by the Indiana Department of Revenue or the Department of Local Government Finance.

If you are not sure whether your form requires SBOA approval, e-mail Formapproval@sboa.IN.gov and note "Form Question" in the subject line.

If SBOA approval is required, the agency is always responsible for submitting their proposed updates to SBOA.

- SBOA approval must be obtained *before* uploading the form to the Forms Repository.
- Maintain SBOA's approval under record series GRFRM-1: State Agency Form File.
- Please be aware that if the State Form involves money paid by the State, it may also need to be approved by the Auditor of State.
- If your form requires SBOA approval, the approval statement provided by SBOA should be displayed on the form beneath the State Form number and revision code, but above the agency and / or division name.

STATE FORM BEST PRACTICES

The following are best practices for creating and revising Indiana State Forms. These are not requirements and are not mandatory but are recommended. When combined with the State Form Standards, these best practices help people quickly identify a State Form, provide Indiana State Forms with a uniform look and feel, and make State Forms easy to read and easy to understand.

It is best to design State Forms in Word and later convert to a PDF. State Forms should not be designed in Excel unless the final format will be in Excel OR the final format requires formula calculations.

DESIGNING A NEW STATE FORM

When designing a new State Form there are three objectives:

1. Make it easy to enter data on the form.
2. Make it easy to read and use the data after it has been entered.
3. Avoid mechanical and clerical errors.

Step 1: Identify Basics

- Determine the purpose of the form and intended user(s).
- Establish a form title.
- List all the data elements that the form will contain.

Step 2: Outline Key Sections

- Identify the locations for ease of reading by the user of this form.
- Place instructions for completing the form in a clear and easy to see location.
- Look for ideas on other forms serving a similar function.

Step 3: Create a Draft

- Study the data for natural grouping so that the form can be organized into sections.
- Compare related agency forms performing similar functions. Look for new uses of old ideas.
- Share your draft with any other agency stakeholders who will use the form.

Step 4: Study the Draft for Appearance

- Incorporate the [State Form Standards](#).
- Consider adhering to the IARA Form Best Practices laid out in this section.
- Consider any agency branding. Forms should be easily distinguished from one another, yet ideally have a cohesive agency look or style.

Step 5: Finalize Draft

- The form is only complete when it contains the data to be entered on it. Consider a small test run to prove the final design.
- Gather final feedback and approvals from all agency stakeholders.

GENERAL FORMATTING

- Instead of the agency name in the title block or in addition to, the agency may choose to place all their contact information in an **agency information box** in the upper right corner.
 - If Agency name blocks are used, they should appear in the upper right-hand corner of the form. The name of the agency should be 8-point Arial bold in all CAPITAL letters and appear centered in the box. If an address is needed, it should be 8-point Arial plain, centered under the agency name.



- Only use an agency name block if you require a return address or contact information as it may limit the use of the form to one specific division, and any time there is an agency name change or address change, it renders the form obsolete and necessitates redesign and reprinting.
- Avoid using employee contact information as it limits the use of the form to one specific person, and any time there is a staffing change, renders the form obsolete and necessitates redesign and reprinting.
- The **title of the form** should clearly and concisely state the function of the form; the word "form" or "sheet" may not be included.
- If an agency wants to use their logo, they should not use it in place of the State Seal. Instead, the agency logo should be placed in the upper right corner. (Exceptions are granted for quasi-agencies.)
- [Standard margins](#) are two pica (.32"). Agencies may use different margins, but they should not be too large and should be consistent throughout the form. [See tutorial.](#)
- If there is a **distribution list** for the plies / copies of a form, it should be placed in the bottom margin and left aligned.
- If the form has multiple pages, they should be numbered. [Page numbering](#) is 8-point Arial plain, centered on the bottom margin. Recommended format is Page # of ##.

USING TABLES

Tables consist of rows, columns, and cells. The explanatory or instructional text within the rows, columns, and cells is called the "caption." Some tables include headers to introduce new sections.

- Table rows are generally most effective when they are .32" high.
- If the row or cell does not have a caption, the height can be shorter than .32" with .22" being the average.
- Table cell headers are generally .16" high, use bold, 8–9-point font, and font is vertically and horizontally centered.
- When cells have an area below the cell caption for the user to fill in text, use 7-point font for the title of the cell and instructions.
- Instructions on a separate row have a height of .16" and generally 8-point font and are centered in the row.
- Text that comes after a checkbox is generally 8pt.
- When space permits, add a 2–6-point space before and/or after text in a cell or row, and add a 6–8-point space between tables.

- Avoid connecting all tables in a form as this may make it harder to revise later.

STYLE AND FONT

- **Instructions** on how to fill out the form should be italicized, which draws the user's attention to the instructions.
- A **date caption** should include the parenthetical instruction (*month, day, year*) or equivalent such as (*mm / dd / yyyy*).
- An **address caption** should include the parenthetical instruction (*number and street, city, state, and ZIP code*). This may be edited to include PO Boxes and Rural Routes.
- **ZIP** is an acronym and should be in all capital letters.
- **Ampersands (&)** should be avoided and instead spelled out as "and" (unless there are spatial limitations).
- **Contractions** should be avoided.
- **Numbers under 100** should be spelled out with the numerals in parentheses, e.g., twenty-five (25). Numbers 100 and over are acceptable as numerals only. Exception stands when policy or code or similar is cited.
- **Abbreviations, symbols, and undefined acronyms** should be avoided because their meanings are not always clear to all users. Abbreviated words and symbols should be spelled out (e.g., No. and # should be Number). An acronym may be used in the form after it has been spelled out and defined in its first occurrence, e.g., Indiana Archives and Records Administration (IARA). Exceptions can be made in instances of extremely limited space, but this is not recommended.
- Put a space before and after a slash. Like / this.
- Hyphens for words like "e-mail" are optional, depending on the agency's wishes.
- Harvard/Oxford commas are optional, depending on the agency's wishes.
- Be consistent with capitalization. If elsewhere two consecutive cell titles are not capitalized, do not start capitalizing the second word. As in, "Telephone Number" vs "Telephone number," unless it is a formal phrase like "Social Security Number."

FILLABLE FIELDS

- **Fillable text field:**
 - Font size should be 9 or 10 point.
 - In Adobe, be consistent with font type.
 - In Adobe, ensure text wraps or scrolls as needed to make it easier to fill out your form.
- **Checkboxes:**
 - Checkboxes are preferred when there is a list of selections. Checkboxes should be placed in front of their selections: Female Male
 - When providing the option, Yes should come before No.
 - Place check boxes well over from the question or on the next line down.
 - 10-point size check boxes are the most common, and 10-11 point translates well to Adobe for fillable PDFs.
 - When cells have multiple choice check boxes, you can use 8 point next to the check boxes but still use 7 point for the cell title. This is also the case for a "**From** **To**" construction. The **From** and **To** should be at least 8 point.

INSTRUCTIONS

There are two categories of instructions for State Forms:

1. **General instructions** that are embedded in the form, including instructional text at the top or bottom of the form, instructional text in the header of a form table, and instructional text in parentheses accompanying cell titles.
2. Instructions that are on a page or pages **distinct and separate** from the form. These are often cover sheets, grant application instructions, and similar.

General instructions should be at the top of the form where the user can see them before they start using the form. Instructions should be in 8-point Arial italics with the word "*INSTRUCTIONS*" in all caps and should be started 2 pica from the left. Instructions should contain such information as:

- How to fill out the form
- When and where it is to be submitted, if a check is to accompany the form, to whom the check is payable, et cetera.
- When instructions are necessary, list as numbered items or sections. If instructions apply to a specific item, place them as near to the item as possible in the size type as the surrounding format. If the form instructions are very long and detailed, they may be placed at the end of the form.

Instructions that fall into the second category should not have the [State Form header](#) and do not need to use the table format.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

If a form requests confidential information, defined by IC-4-1-6-1, it must include the statement: "This agency is requesting disclosure of confidential information in accordance with IC-4-1-6-2; disclosure is (mandatory / voluntary) and (this record cannot be processed without it / you will not be penalized for refusal)."

Some agencies have their own preferred statements; if your agency already has one in place, continue to use this statement.

If your agency does not have a statement in place or wishes to create a new statement, here are some example confidentiality statement templates:

- **Short Version:** CONFIDENTIAL! PER IC X-X-X-X.X
- **Medium Version:** This form seeks mandatory (OR voluntary) release of Confidential Information per IC X-X-X-X.X.
- **Long Version:** This form seeks mandatory (OR voluntary) release of Confidential Information per IC X-X-X-X.X. The completed form will be treated as a matter of public record (OR as a confidential record).

STATE FORMS ONLINE CATALOG

The State Forms Online Catalog at forms.IN.gov is the central online repository for State Forms and is maintained by the Indiana Archives and Records Administration. The State Forms Online Catalog groups forms first by agency, then by division, if the agency has entered division information.

STATE EMPLOYEE ACCESS

There are two levels of access to the Forms Catalog:

- A. **Basic Access** – these users can access the front-end or public facing portal for the Catalog. They have access to forms that are set to General Public, State Employees Only, and Agency Employees Only. They do not have the ability to upload forms, edit form metadata, delete forms, or reactivate forms.
- B. **Admin Access** – these users have all aspects of Basic Access, but can also upload forms, edit form metadata, delete forms, and reactivate forms. These users have completed the IARA State Forms Training and have been appointed by their agency leadership. If you are a Forms Coordinator and require Admin Access please email fmd@iara.in.gov. If you design and revise State Forms for your agency but are not a Forms Coordinator, please contact your agency's Forms Coordinator and they can help determine whether you need Admin Access or not.

LOGGING INTO THE STATE FORMS CATALOG

State employees can log into the Catalog using the same username and password they enter when logging into their State of Indiana workstation.

LINKING TO STATE FORMS

Agencies may obtain form URLs by searching for their forms on the Catalog, right-clicking on the desired link, and copying the shortcut. The resulting link should be used by agencies any time they make forms available on their websites, brochures, e-mails, etc. as it is a persistent link.

Indiana Administrative Code [60 IAC 3](#), *Electronic Copies of Forms*, requires that agencies use direct links to the State Forms Online Catalog on their individual websites; agencies may not post form files (e.g. .pdf, .doc, .xls) directly to IN.gov pages. When copies of forms are posted on the internet independent of the State Forms Catalog, they are not connected to the central repository and will not update when the forms are revised. This results in additional work by agency web staff, as well as the ongoing availability of outdated copies of forms – which may contain outdated or incorrect information such as instructions, addresses, and fees.

To get a direct link to a State Form, search for it in the Catalog. When a dropdown list appears, right click the State Form you want a direct link to and select "Copy link address." Agencies may hyperlink to that address on their websites and other electronic platforms.

Web-based non-file forms such as HTML-created forms may be produced and published on IN.gov. However, web-based non-file forms may still be considered to be State Forms and must go through the regular form approval process; in addition, the publishing agency should provide a link in the Forms Catalog upon publication of the form.

SEARCHING THE CATALOG

There are four levels of search available in the Catalog:

- **General Public** – There is no restriction as to who may search for the form. It will show in search results for all users.
- **State Employees Only** – Only State employees may search for the form; it will not show in search results for the public.

- **Agency Employees Only** – Only employees of your agency may search for the form; it will not show in search results for the public or to any other State employees.
- **Not Searchable** – The form will not be searchable in the State Forms Online Catalog by any user, except a user with Admin Access. This option is most generally selected either because the form is sensitive in nature (e.g., certificates and licenses), because it is only printed by a vendor, or because it is only available as part of a specialized program/database.

MAINTAINING EDITABLE COPIES OF YOUR AGENCY STATE FORMS

One of the essential duties of a Forms Coordinator is to maintain editable copies of your agency's State Forms. Each time your agency updates a State Form, it is crucial to save an editable copy to a secure, backed up location. An editable copy is defined as a digital file that can be revised and changed as needed by any agency personnel who work on creating or editing State Forms, as well as you the Forms Coordinator.

When planning how best to maintain editable copies there are 5 things to consider: File Format; Storage Location; Passwords for Locking/Unlocking; File Naming Conventions; Historic Copies of old Revisions.

FILE FORMAT

Editable copies are most generally Word or Excel files. However, some agencies may choose to use Adobe products such as Illustrator or Acrobat to create and revise State Forms. The main things to consider when deciding which formats to use as your editable copies are:

1. Do all agency personnel who work with State Form creation and/or revision have access to the software they need to work with your editable copies?
2. Do all agency personnel who work with State Form creation and/or revision know how to use the software they need to work with your editable copies?
3. Are you using the simplest and easiest to provide software? Meaning, if you lost all your State Forms designers today, how hard would it be to provide new staff with software and the training they would need to work with your editable copies?

STORAGE LOCATION

It is up to each agency where they store editable copies of State Forms. Keep in mind the following questions when determining the best storage location.

1. Who needs access to the location? Will the Forms Coordinator be the only one with access and hand copies out to agency personnel as needed? Or will all agency personnel who work on State Forms have access?
2. Is the location secure – meaning is it in a State supported or agency managed server or Cloud storage location?
3. Is the location backed up – do you know how you would recover your editable copies, and how long it would take to recover them in the event of a data loss or other disaster?
4. Are editable copies locked or unlocked?

PASSWORDS FOR LOCKING / UNLOCKING

Agencies should also determine how to maintain passwords used to lock and unlock editable copies. Many agencies upload locked copies of their State Forms to the Forms Catalog in order to prevent unauthorized people from editing, tampering with, or disabling a State Form.

Some questions to ask are:

1. Will you use one password to lock and unlock all State Forms?
2. Will each person who works on your agency's State Forms have their own password?
3. Who will maintain a centralized back up list of all passwords, if anyone?
4. What will you do if you lose a password and cannot unlock a State Form?
5. Will you use a separate password for each State Form?

FILE NAMING CONVENTIONS

IARA recommends adhering to the current file naming conventions, however if you feel strongly about creating your own conventions, we recommend you document them clearly and train people to use them consistently.

The current naming conventions are:

1. Word version = State Form Number
2. PDF (non-fillable) = State Form Number
3. PDF (fillable) = State Form Number + fill-in

ELECTRONIC COPIES OF OLD REVISIONS

Agencies should also decide how to maintain copies of previous revisions and supporting documents under record series GRFRM-1: State Agency Form File. IARA recommends keeping an *electronic* copy of at least the prior revision, just in case you need to revert. If you keep an electronic copy, reverting to the earlier version will be much easier than re-designing an editable copy from scratch.

It is a best practice to indicate the revision code in the file name. For example: 36040 (R16 7-23). This way no one will accidentally begin using it as an editable copy of the current revision.

REVISION HISTORY

Date Revised	Revision Number	Person Revising
April 2022	Second Revision	J. Swihart
June 2022	Third Revision	M. Fukunaga
June 2023	Fourth Revision	M. Fukunaga
August 2023	Fifth Revision	M. Fukunaga
April 2024	Sixth Revision	M. Fukunaga