Guidelines for Determining what Information Should be Filed

File **substantive** records. They document...

1. **The important work functions you or your office are responsible for**

   *Records that describe:*
   
a. How these functions were carried out  
b. The key activities involved in accomplishing them  
c. Significant actions or transaction that occurred (or didn’t occur)  
d. The sequence of these processes  
e. People who were involved or responsible  
f. People who had knowledge of an important event or action

2. **Important deliberations and decisions made in your office**

   *Records that describe:*
   
a. The issues that were at stake  
b. What was recommended/decided and when  
c. The people who were involved and what their roles were  
d. The outcomes of the deliberations or decisions

3. **Policy development and enforcement**

   *Records that explain:*
   
a. Why the policy was developed  
b. The people who were involved or consulted in developing it  
c. The person who approved it and the date of approval  
d. Dates of amendment or update and the changes that were made  
e. The person who approved these changes and date of approval.
4. Projects or programs of your office

*Records that explain:*

a. The objectives and scope of the project or program  
b. How the project/program originated  
c. Who the main stakeholders were  
d. The information was given to external audiences. Publications that were produced.  
e. Training that was given to staff and others.  
f. What the budget was and how money was spent.  
g. What the outcomes were. Was it a success? Why or why not?

5. Records that appear in the *Records Retention Schedule*


**Examples of Substantive Records:**

- Meeting materials (agendas, minutes, handouts, action items)  
- Final versions of reports, advice and recommendations  
- Drafts or revisions with information about a decision or approval that is not available elsewhere  
- Records of contact between an office and its “clients,” (parents of students, parishes, Chancery departments, etc.)  
- Important telephone, email, and face-to-face conversations  
- All records showing that services have been provided or obligations have been satisfied  
- Etc. This is not a complete list.

**Do not file transitory records**

- Are only needed for a short time in order to complete a routine action or prepare a final record  
- Are not necessary to understand office or committee business (do not document policy formation/application, important decisions, or mission related activities/projects of the office)  
- Are duplicates or are maintained by another staff member  
- Do NOT appear in the *Records Retention Schedule*

**Examples of Transitory Records:**

- Transmittal letters/emails that only serve to mention an attachment or enclosure document
• Advertising or outside marketing material
• Meeting or scheduling arrangements
• Announcements or invitations to events
• Unnecessary duplicates
  o Convenience copies
  o CC copies (unless you are the main staff member responsible for the matter)
  o Copies of check requests and other financials that Accounting maintains (unless needed for office business)
• Simple messages resulting from routine interactions (e.g. request to call someone, request for information)
• Drafts and revisions that are not needed to document decisions/approvals
• Outlines, calculations, preliminary notes, etc. once the final document is complete (unless they contain important information that is not available elsewhere)