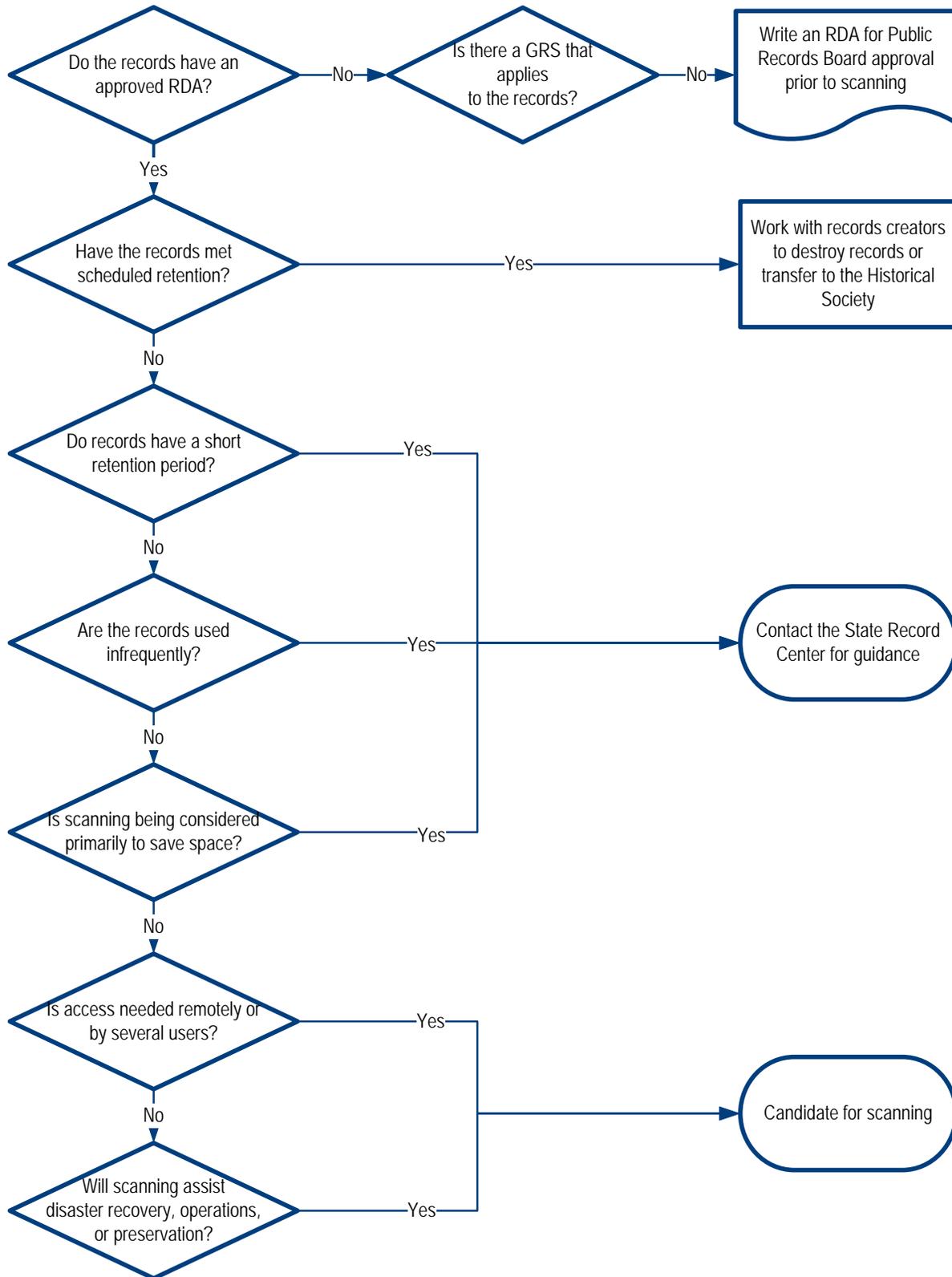




# Scanning Decision Tree



### ***Do the records have an approved RDA?***

A Records Disposition Authorization (RDA) provides information about record content, format, retention time, and disposition. RDAs are approved by the Public Records Board (PRB). All RDAs expire after 10 years and must be resubmitted and re-approved by the PRB if the records are still being created or received. Do not implement scanning projects for records that do not have a current RDA. Add transition language to existing RDAs saying what needs to be done with old paper materials after scanning. For an example of appropriate transition language, see the "*Digitization Project Guidance*" document.

### ***Have the records met their scheduled retention time?***

If the records in question are governed by an RDA which indicates their retention has passed, and the disposition is "destroy", the records should be disposed of. If the disposition is "transfer", they should be transferred to the Wisconsin Historical Society without scanning. If the records have been reevaluated and it is determined that they need a longer retention, *submit an updated RDA to the PRB before proceeding with digitizing.*

### ***Do records have a short retention period?***

Generally, it is not cost effective to scan records with short retention periods if the intention is to replace the paper record with a digital copy. The costs of equipment, scanning, metadata creation, quality control and storage may actually be higher than the cost of storing paper records for ten (or less) years. There may be some cost savings if you are creating lower-resolution digital user-copies for frequently requested items your agency wishes to post on an agency website.

### ***Are the records used infrequently?***

If records are accessed only a few times a year, it is usually not cost effective to scan them. Proper records management of the paper will likely be a more effective strategy. Contact the State Records Center for guidance and to verify if state storage is a more practical alternative.

### ***Are records being scanned to save space?***

While the business decision to scan records and dispose of the paper to "save space" is often used, the costs associated with scanning and the long term storage and maintenance of electronic records may very well be higher than the cost of properly managing and storing records in paper format. Contact the State Records Center for guidance and to verify if state storage is a more practical alternative once the paper records have been reviewed.

### ***Is remote access, or access by multiple people simultaneously, needed?***

Electronic access can be the best method for providing access to several people simultaneously and/or to remote users. It can also allow for increased collaboration among staff. The costs associated with increased productivity may outweigh the costs to scan, add metadata, and create a search interface.

### ***Will scanning assist with business operations, disaster recovery, and/or preservation?***

Before beginning a scanning project, make sure it will benefit the organization in a tangible way. Will the project result in faster or more accurate service to customers? Does the proposed scanning project play a role in disaster recovery planning? Are records being scanned for preservation purposes? If the answers to these questions are generally "yes" the costs connected with scanning and indexing records may be outweighed or justified by these factors.

***For additional help and information***

State Records Center: The State Records Center (SRC) is a secure, low cost facility that offers State agencies and local units of government (near Madison, WI) off-site control over semi-active and inactive records. More information is available on their website: <https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/StateEmployees/StateRecordsCenter.aspx>

Wisconsin Historical Society: Email [govarc@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:govarc@wisconsinhistory.org)

***Resources referenced for this document***

Illinois Secretary of State. *Should I Scan?*. 2013.

[https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/records\\_management/scanningtree.pdf](https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/records_management/scanningtree.pdf) (accessed June 2017).