



DOCUMENT RETENTION AND ARCHIVING POLICY

Balkans Forward Foundation

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Document Retention and Archiving Policy is to ensure that Balkans Forward Foundation (“the Foundation”) creates, stores, retains, protects, and disposes of documents and records in a lawful, secure, organised, and accountable manner.

Proper document retention and archiving support transparency, continuity, institutional memory, legal compliance, donor accountability, and efficient organisational management.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all documents and records created, received, stored, or managed by the Foundation in physical or digital form, regardless of format or location.

It applies to all persons acting on behalf of the Foundation, including the Founder, Board members, Executive Director, staff, consultants, interns, volunteers, and other authorised persons.

3. General Principles

The Foundation shall retain records that are necessary for legal, financial, operational, governance, donor, and historical purposes.

Documents must be stored in a way that protects confidentiality, integrity, accessibility, and security, while ensuring that records can be retrieved when needed.

Documents should not be kept longer than necessary where there is no legal, operational, donor, or organisational reason to retain them.

4. Categories of Records

The Foundation may retain and archive, where relevant, records including but not limited to:

governance and registration documents, policies and internal rules, contracts and agreements, financial and accounting records, donor and grant documentation, procurement records, HR and recruitment records, project documentation, legal correspondence, monitoring and evaluation materials, communications records, safeguarding or compliance-related records, and records relating to partnerships, events, and public activities.

5. Retention Periods

Documents shall be retained for the period required by applicable law, donor rules, contractual obligations, or legitimate organisational need.

Where no specific legal or donor retention period applies, the Foundation shall retain records for a reasonable period based on their nature, importance, and potential future relevance.

Records related to financial reporting, grants, contracts, employment, legal matters, and governance should generally be retained for a longer period than routine operational material.

The Foundation may maintain an internal retention schedule to guide implementation.

6. Storage and Security

All Foundation records must be stored in an organised and secure manner.

Digital records should be stored in secure systems with appropriate access restrictions, backup arrangements, and protection against loss, unauthorised access, alteration, or deletion.

Physical records should be kept in secure locations with access limited to authorised persons where appropriate.

Special care must be taken with confidential, personal, financial, legal, safeguarding, and sensitive organisational information.

7. Access and Responsibility

Access to Foundation records shall be granted only to persons who need the information for legitimate organisational, legal, financial, compliance, or operational purposes.

All persons handling Foundation documents are responsible for maintaining confidentiality, accuracy, and proper filing.

The Executive Director is responsible for overseeing implementation of this policy, while specific record-keeping responsibilities may be assigned internally.

8. Archiving

Documents that are no longer actively used but remain important for legal, historical, operational, donor, or institutional reasons should be archived in an orderly and accessible manner.

Archived records must remain identifiable, retrievable, and protected from damage, loss, or unauthorised access.

Digital archiving should be structured to support continuity and future access.

9. Disposal and Deletion

When documents are no longer required to be retained, they should be disposed of or deleted securely and in a manner appropriate to their sensitivity.

Confidential, personal, legal, financial, or safeguarding-related documents must be destroyed or deleted in a way that prevents unauthorised recovery or disclosure.

No document may be deleted, destroyed, altered, or removed where it may be relevant to an audit, investigation, legal matter, donor review, complaint, or other ongoing process.

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

This policy shall be implemented in line with the Foundation's Data Protection Policy and any applicable legal obligations relating to privacy, confidentiality, and handling of personal data.

Retention and archiving practices must respect the rights of individuals and the Foundation's duty to protect sensitive information.

11. Breach of Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in corrective or disciplinary action, depending on the seriousness of the issue.

Improper destruction, concealment, loss, or unauthorised disclosure of Foundation records may be treated as a serious breach.

12. Related Policies

This policy should be read together with the Data Protection Policy, Financial Policy and Procedures, Code of Conduct, Procurement Policy, Whistleblower Protection Policy, and any applicable donor or legal requirements.

13. Review of the Policy

This policy shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to reflect legal obligations, organisational needs, operational practice, and good governance standards.