Forms Coordinator Handbook
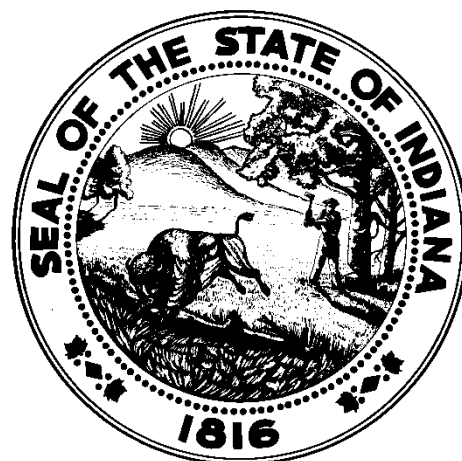
Indiana Archives and Records Administration

Forms Management Program

Revised April 2022

Contents

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?

According to IC 5-15-5.1-1, a State Form is:

> "…every piece of paper, transparent plate, or film containing information printed, generated, or reproduced by whatever means, with blank spaces left for the entry of additional information to be used in any **transaction** involving the state."

Forms that are not used to exchange goods, services, or financial assets would not be considered a State Form. Many internal forms, for example, do not meet this definition. Forms that are primarily instructional, preparatory, documentative (unless tied to a retention schedule), or that are utilized by one party only would not constitute a transaction.

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

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

Forms demand action. They instruct, communicate, record, transmit, and standardize business transactions. Forms record compliance with regulations and are the first component in the life cycle of a record.

Types of forms may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Single (flat or cut) sheets
- Continuous forms
- Certificates / licenses
- Examinations / tests
- Unit sets (carbonless forms)

NON-FORMS

Many items do not fall within the standard definition of a form. These miscellaneous products and publications include 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 do not need a control number and are not subject to Forms Management requirements.

FORMS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Forms Management Program operates within the Indiana Archives and Records Administration (IARA). Forms Management serves as the centralized forms management service for the State of Indiana, providing tailored, cost-effective solutions to agencies, while providing a uniform, centralized repository for citizens and constituents.

The Forms Management Program is defined by IC 5-15-5.1-1 as: "…the program maintained by the administration to provide continuity of forms design procedures from the form's origin up to its completion as a record by determining the form's size, style, and size of type; format; type of construction; number of plies; quality, weight, and type of paper and carbon; and use of the form for data entry as well as the distribution."

The Forms Management Program is charged with the establishment of a central State Form numbering system, and a central cross-index filing system for all State Forms. This involves standardization, consolidation, and elimination, wherever possible, of State Forms.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FORMS MANAGEMENT

Indiana Code 5-15-5.1-6 gives IARA authority to

> design and redesign; number; standardize; consolidate; or eliminate when obsolete; all forms used by state government, and apply the definition of record to any governmental materials so questioned. In performing these functions, IARA shall consult with each affected agency and local government and shall consider each agency's and local government's statutory responsibilities, its relationships with federal or other governmental agencies and the requirements of state law.

Some of the tangible benefits provided by the Forms Management Program:

- It creates a centralized reference point for information regarding all State Forms.
- It controls and assists in the elimination of unneeded recordkeeping by providing professional analysis and design services.
- It offers training for agency personnel involved directly in the operation of designing forms.
- It encourages the elimination of wasteful and ineffective procedures in information processing.

Forms Management is responsible for:

- Reviewing all requests for new State Forms and revision of existing State Forms
- Writing specifications for the printing and manufacture of State Forms
- Online publication of State Forms
- Determining the format, typography, spacing, and graphic elements of State Forms
- Preparing layouts of State Forms for review by agencies
- Providing proofs of the final composition for agency review and approval
- Generating artwork.

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 liaison between the agency and the Indiana Archives and Records Administration.

Large agencies usually appoint separate *Records Coordinators and Forms Coordinators.*

- The *Records* Coordinator works with multiple IARA divisions to manage the agency's records and Records Retention Schedules*.*

- The *Forms* Coordinator works with IARA's Forms Management Program to process, develop, and design forms management systems that suit the agency's needs.

Forms Coordinators are an integral part of Indiana's successful forms management program. By routing all forms issues through the agency Forms Coordinator, management can maximize the efficiency of its recordkeeping functions. A Forms Coordinator should be familiar with forms issues and the records created when those forms are filled out, as well as systems and processes used within his or her agency.

Each Coordinator should work with the Forms Management Program to process, develop, and design forms management systems that suit the agency's needs. The Forms Management Program will look to the Agency Forms Coordinator to provide leadership to the agency in assuring that the standards and procedures of the Forms Management Program and the principles of economic and efficient forms design are carried through.

There are five (5) basic ongoing duties of a Forms Coordinator. Those are:

- To review and sign all form designs prior to sending them to Forms Management.
- To forward all requests for both new and revised forms in their agency to Forms Management.
- To assist in answering questions regarding these requests.
- To inform Forms Management of any changes to existing forms.
- To inform Forms Management of any forms which should / will be discontinued.

TYPES OF STATE FORMS

Unauthorized Forms

Unauthorized forms are those that have not been approved by the Forms Management Program, so there are no records of the form's authorization, purpose, or history of revision. Unauthorized forms may be duplicates of existing approved forms, which may cause confusion for the public. Unauthorized forms may also contain incorrect information or make unlawful requests, which are liabilities for the State. Unauthorized forms must be identified and eliminated, either by deleting them or bringing them into compliance with IC 5-15-5.1-10. The Forms Coordinator should be on the lookout for unauthorized forms and bring them to the immediate attention of the form's originator and the Forms Management Program.

Temporary Forms

Forms needed for 180 days or less do not require approval of the Forms Management program for either use or design so long as the design standards, below, are met.

Emergency Approval

An agency may develop and use a form in response to an emergency or a court or administrative order without prior approval of IARA. The agency shall notify IARA immediately of the need for an emergency form and shall submit a copy of the form with a full explanation of the circumstances in writing within 10 days of implementation. The form will then be immediately studied by IARA and uploaded to the online repository. A permanent format, if necessary, will be devised within six months of implementation.

Can Anyone Design a State Form?

Yes! Simply refer to our Forms Design Standards and Guidelines. However, all State Forms (whether IARA or agency designed) must be sent to IARA by the Agency Forms Coordinator for review and approval before distribution.

REVISING A NEW OR EXISTING STATE FORM

Frequency

Individual forms requests may only be submitted to IARA once per six months. Exceptions will be granted when agencies are requesting the changes in response to statutory or other legal requirements placed on the form owner / agency. Please clearly communicate to Forms Management when this is the case. Forms requests for the same State Form submitted multiple times within one year that do not have a statutory impetus behind them may be reviewed by IARA staff as time allows. If six months has passed since the last form revision, the form request will be considered new and added to the IARA Forms Management queue.

Step One:

Complete State Form 36040, Request for Approval of New / Revised Form (SF 36040), Parts One and Two. Specify whether the form will be designed by IARA or your agency (see below).

If you need to make the same change to multiple State Forms (e.g., a change of address), you may instead complete State Form 53963, Request for Comprehensive Revision of Multiple State Forms, and use it to submit all affected State Forms to Forms Management.

Agency Design Requests

- If your agency designed a new State Form (see template), submit the following:

  o A completed 36040 request marked "to be designed by ☒*Agency*"
  o A final, clean, unlocked Word and / or PDF file of the newly designed form
  o *Optional*, *but strongly preferred*: A fillable Word and / or PDF file of the new form.

- If your agency revised an existing State Form, submit the following:

  o A completed 36040 request marked "to be designed by ☒*Agency*"

  o A redlined / highlighted copy of the form showing where proposed changes / edits were made from one version to the next

  o A final, clean, unlocked Word and / or PDF file of the proposed revised form

  o *Optional*, *but strongly preferred*: A fillable Word and / or PDF file of the revised form.

Note: *All copy (language, content) must be in its final state prior to sending to IARA for design. Once an agency has reviewed a proof of an IARA design, agencies may only request one new change onto an existing request. More than one change will require the agency to submit a new SF 36040 and Forms Management may reassign the request to a lower order in the queue.*

<u>IARA Design Requests</u>

- If your request is for IARA to design a new State Form, attach a mock-up, sketch, draft, or sample of the proposed form showing how you would like the new form to look.

- If your request is for IARA to design a revision of an existing State Form, attach an electronic sample of the current version of the form with the changes noted in red ink.

- If your agency either designed a new State Form or revised an existing State Form, attach a printed sample and e-mail an electronic copy of the form in the authoring program to Forms Management.

Note: *All copy (language, content) must be in its final state prior to sending to IARA for design. Once an agency has reviewed a proof of an IARA design, agencies may only request one new change onto an existing request. More than one change will require the agency to submit a new SF 36040 and IARA may reassign the request to a lower order in the queue.*

Complete Part Three of SF 36040 if the form will be produced by a printing vendor, and include printing specifications so Forms Management has guidelines for writing final printing specifications once the form is approved.

Step Two:

Send the completed SF 36040 and copy of the form to the Forms Management inbox at fmd@iara.in.gov.

Step Three:

Upon receipt of SF 36040, the request will be logged in and assigned to a Forms Management team member.

- If it is an agency design, Forms Management will review the form and either make or have the agency make any necessary changes. Once the form is correct, the Forms Management Program will finalize the form, complete Part Four of the Request, and upload the form to the repository.

- If it is an IARA design, Forms Management will design the form and send a proof to the Forms Coordinator for approval. Once the proof is approved and returned to Forms Management, the Forms Management Program will finalize the form, complete Part Four of the Request, and upload the form to the repository.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF STATE FORM 36040

Take the time to complete the form correctly, as this will reduce the time it takes to fulfill a request. All forms requests must be submitted to the Forms Management Inbox at fmd@iara.in.gov *for review. Agencies have full responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of spelling, grammar, punctuation and copy before submitting the form request to IARA.*

Part One – Agency Information

All requests must be signed by the requestor, the Forms Coordinator, and the appropriate supervisor before submission to IARA. Electronic signatures with accurate date(s) are acceptable.

A. **Printed name of requestor, signature of requestor, telephone number, and date signed.** The requestor is the person within the agency requesting that the form be created / revised.

B. **Name and address of agency and number.** Please be sure to complete this information, with any division name, if applicable. This facilitates IARA's research to see if the form already exists. The Agency Number is the Business Unit Number assigned to your agency by the Auditor of State.

C. **Printed name of agency Forms Coordinator, signature of Forms Coordinator, and date signed.** Telephone number is optional.

D. **Printed name of agency supervisor, signature of supervisor, and date signed.** All form designs submitted to IARA require approval of a supervisor. This confirms to IARA that the agency design has been *vetted* by the agency prior to submission to IARA. Please encourage the supervisor to read and review the changes prior to submission. The supervisor should ideally be that of the requestor.

Part Two – Form Information

A. **Type of request:** For new requests, check your agency records to see if the form already exists. This ensures the form is not being duplicated. For deactivation requests, provide the reason why the form is being deactivated. For reactivation requests, provide as much information as possible about the form. If you need to provide additional information about the form, use the Comments / special instructions section in Part Three.

B. **Form title:** For existing forms, provide the title or a suggested title change. For new forms, provide a suggested title. Forms Management will later approve the final title.

C. **State Form number:** For new requests, leave blank. IARA will assign a State Form number. For revised requests, indicate the existing State Form number only (do not include a revision code).

D. **Form to be designed by:** Indicate by checking the appropriate box whether you wish "IARA" to create / revise your form, or if your agency is submitting your own design ("Agency"). See Revising a New or Existing State Form for details.

E. **Physical measurement of form:** Give the measurements of the form from top to bottom and left to right. If the form has a stub, indicate the measurements including the stub. If the form is continuous feed, indicate the measurements including the pinfeeds.

F. **Number of page / sheets / plies:** Pertains to number of pages for flat sheets, bond sets, booklets, unit sets, or continuous feed forms.

G. **How is form completed?** Check all that apply. This information helps Forms Management choose the best layout for your form.

H. **This form requires:** State Board of Accounts (SBOA) approval is required for some forms that have 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. Include their response with your SF 36040 so Forms Management is aware of their determination. Upon approval, SBOA will e-mail an approval letter to you and to Forms Management. SBOA approval is part of the form's permanent record, so approval must be received before the form can be finalized. If the State Form involves money paid by the State, it may also need to be approved by the Auditor of State. Refer to Appendix A for more information.

I. **Who should have access to this form?** Forms Management will automatically place an electronic copy of the form on the State Forms Catalog, which has three levels of access. If the form should be available to everyone, select "General Public." If the form should be available to all State employees (not to the public), select "State Employees." If the form should be available only to agency employees (not to the public or any other State employees), select "Agency Only." For highly sensitive forms, such as certificates or licenses, select Restricted Access and specify.

J. **In what format should this file be stored?** Most agencies generally only need a PDF version of a form. If your agency requires additional formats, indicate those in the "other" field.

K. **Are you asking for Social Security Number?** If a form requests a mandatory Social Security Number, it must include the statement: "This agency is requesting disclosure of your Social Security Number in accordance with IC 4-1-8-2; disclosure is mandatory and this record cannot be processed without it." If a form requests a voluntary Social Security Number, it must include the statement: "Your Social Security Number is being requested by this state agency to pursue its statutory responsibilities. Disclosure is voluntary and you will not be penalized for refusal." Some agencies have their own slightly different statements; if they already have one in place, it is acceptable.

L. **Are you asking for 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 slightly different statements; if they already have one in place, it is acceptable. Three versions of a Confidential Statement are plausible to fit the space available in the body of the form:

1. *Short Version:* CONFIDENTIAL! PER IC X-X-X-X.X

2. *Medium Version:* This form seeks mandatory (OR voluntary) release of Confidential Information per IC X-X-X-X.X.

3. *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).

Part Three – Printing Information

The following section is only necessary if you intend to have your form produced by a printing vendor. If you only need the form to be accessible electronically, you may skip this section.

A. **Form construction:** Check all that apply.

B. **Type of paper:** Indicate the weight and the type of paper (e.g., 20# bond).

C. **Ply sequence:** If form is a flat sheet, indicate the color of paper in the COLOR column, check appropriate Box F and / or B under COPY to indicate printing on the front and / or back of the form. If the form is a unit set, indicate the color and distribution of each ply and check the appropriate boxes regarding printing on the front and / or back of each ply.

D. **Will the form be padded?** Check one. If yes, number of sheets per pad.

E. **Will the form be perforated?** Check one. If yes, type of perforation.

F. **Will the form be carbonless?** Check one.

G. **Will the form have carbon paper interleaves?** Black carbon paper is standard.

H. **Will the form be numbered?** Check one.

    1. Numbered on:
    2. Beginning number.

I. **Will the form have holes punched?** Check one.

    1. If yes, type of holes: indicate the type of holes needed and send sample to IARA.

J. **Comments:** Make any additional comments regarding the form.

Part Four

A. **Do not write anything in Part Four.** This is to be completed only by IARA, Forms Management Program.

PRINTING

Post Masters / Blue Octopus Printing holds the printing contract for the State, and all printing orders must be placed directly through the Post Masters Online Store. The portal and login instructions can be found on the IDOA website: https://secure.in.gov/idoa/state-purchasing/printing-and-mailing-services/.

If you have any questions or need to request a login, please contact your agency's account representative.

When you place an order to print a State Form with Post Masters / Blue Octopus, your agency's account representative will request artwork and specs from IARA so they can proceed with pricing.

Before actual production of the print job, Post Masters / Blue Octopus will send a proof to both the agency's requestor and Forms Management to conform that the artwork and set-up for the job is correct. Both the agency and Forms Management will review and approve the proof, then Post Masters / Blue Octopus will proceed with production and delivery.

As soon as your agency's order is delivered, please check the print job and confirm that it is correct. If you find that it is not correct, contact Post Masters / Blue Octopus directly to resolve the issue.

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 Forms Management. The State Forms Online Catalog groups forms first by agency, then by division. To ensure accurate display of the forms, agencies should include the division to which the form belongs on the SF 36040.

There are four levels of access available in the Catalog:

- **General Public** – There is no restriction as to who may access the form.

- **State Employees Onl**y – Only State employees may access the form; it will not be available to the public.

- **Agency Employees Only** – Only employees of your agency may access the form; it will not be available to the public or to any other State employees.

- **Restricted access / other** – The form will not be available on the State Forms Online Catalog either because it 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.

Forms Management will upload a State Form to the Catalog as soon as it is finalized.

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 must be used by agencies any time they make forms available on their websites, brochures, e-mails, etc.

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 on 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.

Forms Coordinators must instruct their webmasters to never post copies of State Forms onto the agency websites; webmasters should only post links to State Forms in the Forms Catalog onto the agency websites.

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

FORMS DESIGN – BASIC INSTRUCTION

To go about designing a good form, there are three basic 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.

What follows is a general basis for a workable forms design. Most agencies use simple forms, usually 8.5 x 11-inch single white flat sheets, printed by black ink by the agency's internal printing department or via a third-party vendor. The following standards and guidelines are intended for use on simple forms.

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.
- Categorize placement for ease of locating specific forms after submission.
- Plan instructions for completing the form.
- Look for ideas on other forms serving a similar function.

Step 3: Create a Rough Sketch

- Study the data for importance of the various factors considered in Step 2. Establish priorities.

Step 4: Create a Complete Sketch

- 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.

Step 5: Align Sketch with the IARA State Form Design Style Standards and State Form Style Guide

- Do the first complete sketch, based on what has evolved in steps 1 through 4, by incorporating the style standards and guidelines set forth by IARA. Forms should be easily distinguished from one another, yet have a cohesive agency look or style.

Step 6: Study the First Sketch For…

- The general appearance for a sense of balance and neatness
- Conformity to IARA style and standards
- Use of white space, area outlines, use of check boxes, etc.

Step 7: 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.

- Incorporate steps 1 through 6 into a final draft to send to IARA with SF 36040.

STATE FORM DESIGN STANDARDS

There are several standards that should be applied to all State Forms per 60 IAC 6. The standards make a form easily identifiable as a State Form, easy to read, and easy to understand.

The design principles or features used in developing forms are outlined below. Links to CustomGuide.com are provided throughout this document as well as in a list format at the end. If links appear broken, please contact fmd@iara.in.gov.

Program Software: Forms should <u>not</u> be designed in Excel unless the final format will be in Excel OR the final format requires formula calculations. All forms should preferably be designed using Word and later exported as a PDF. To design forms in Word, you must use the Developer Tab.

Preservation of Records: Records must be maintained, retrieved, stored and disposed of in a timely and systematic manner. Within the area of form preservation, careful consideration should be given to the eventual disposition of the form. Areas of consideration in form preservation are:

1. Availability of storage space; either in the office area or digitally
2. Length of time or retention period of the form
3. Whether the form will be stored in hard copy, electronically or on microfilm
4. How often the form may need to be retrieved.

General Formatting Standards

1. Arial is the standard font for State Forms; agencies may use other fonts, but they must be readable and used throughout the form.

2. Standard margins are two pica (.32"). Agencies may use different margins, but they must not be too large and must be consistent throughout the form. See tutorial.

3. When a State Form has other parts to it that are indicated by a new title and "Part of State Form XXXX," be sure to include the revision number there as well.

4. State Forms should be designed using a box format, which presents information in the form of a table with rows and columns. Tabular format is a clean and convenient way to present a lot of information including repeating data elements. Separate rows and columns should be used for each data set with individual headers identified. For further guidance on how to create tables, see page three of the Word Quick Reference Guide.

Anatomy of a State of Indiana Form

Header Standards

1. The **State Seal** should be on the form. Standard placement is in the upper left-hand corner; standard size is .625". Exceptions are granted for quasi-agencies only. To change the size of the Seal in Word:

   a. Right click the seal.
   b. Click "Size and Position."
   c. Click the "Size" tab at the top.
   d. Change "Height" to "Absolute .625."
   e. Click OK.

2. The **title block** 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, the State Form number should be in 7-point plain Arial, and the agency name should be in 7 or 8 point plain Arial in all capital letters. Additional identification or authority (such as agency name of State Board of Accounts approval) shall be 8-point Arial plain with a 11-point leading.

3. Instead of the agency name in the title block, the agency may choose to place all their contact information in an **agency information box** in the upper right corner.

   a. Agency Name Blocks are discouraged unless it is needed for return address or a source of information (such as e-mail addresses or phone numbers). It limits the use of the form to one specific agency, and any time there is an agency name change or address change, it renders the form obsolete and necessitates redesign and reprinting.

   b. If Agency Name Blocks are used, they should appear in the upper right-hand corner of the form. The name of the agency will appear in 8-point Arial bold in all CAPITAL letters and will appear centered in the box. If an address is needed, it will appear in an 8-point Arial plain, centered under the agency name. Leading should be 10 points. If the agency name is used below the State Form number, it should be 8-point Arial plain in all CAPITAL letters.

   c. *Agency Name Block example:*

   HOME INSPECTORS LICENSING BOARD
   PROFESSIONAL LICENSING AGENCY
   402 West Washington Street, Room W072
   Indianapolis, IN 46204
   Telephone: (317) 234-3031
   E-mail: pla12@pla.in.gov
   www.pla.IN.gov

4. The **title of the form** should clearly and concisely state the function of the form; the word "form" or "sheet" should not be included.

5. If an agency wants to use their logo, they may not use it in place of the State Seal. Instead, their logo should be placed in the upper right corner. Exceptions are granted for quasi-agencies.

6. **General instructions** are to be put at the top of the form, below the state seal and title, 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:

   a. How to fill out the form
   b. When and where it is to be submitted, if a check is to accompany the form, to whom the check is payable, etc.

   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.

7. Any list of races must include *Multiracial* as a choice per IC 5-15-5.1-6.5(c) unless the user may select all races that apply.

Body / Box Design Standards

Formatting standards are in place to ensure consistency across all agencies. Agencies should only deviate from these standards if a justification has been provided to and approved by IARA. The standards are as follows:

1. A **date caption** should always include the parenthetical instruction *(month, day, year)* or equivalent such as *(mm/dd/yyyy)*.

2. An **address caption** should always include the parenthetical instruction *(number and street, city, state, and ZIP code)*. This may be edited to include PO Boxes and Rural Routes.

3. **ZIP** is an acronym and should always be in all capital letters.

4. Always spell out **Telephone Number**; *Phone*, *Cell,* etc. are not acceptable.

5. Ampersands **(&)** should not be used – always spell out as "and" (unless there are spatial limitations).

6. **Contractions** should not be used.

7. **Numbers under 100** should always 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.

8. **Abbreviations, symbols, and undefined acronyms** should never be used because their meanings are not always clear to all users. Abbreviated words and symbols should always 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 Archived and Records Administration (IARA). Exceptions can be made in instances of extremely limited space, but this is not recommended.

STATE FORM STYLE GUIDE

Appearance is an important factor in good forms. The following guidelines outline what good forms design should consist of to improve uniformity. These can be adjusted based on an agency's needs.

General Formatting

- If there is a **distribution list** for the plies / copies of a form, it should be placed in the bottom margin and left aligned.

- When space permits, add a 2–6-point space before and / or after text in a cell or row (Layout>Spacing).

- When space permits add a 6–8-point space between tables.

- Fillable text field font size should be 9-10 point.

- If the cell or row does not have title text, the height can be shorter than .32". .22" is the average.

- When cells have an area for the user to fill in text, use 7-point font for the title of the cell and instructions.

- Forms work best when everything is in a table, including the state seal, title, and instructions. Make a table for these items and hide the lines.

- Box format is preferred for State Forms. Its use allows information to be organized in horizontal sequence, utilizing the maximum available space for entries, and emphasizes the information entered on the form. The boxes should be at least two pica (.32") high; the captions should be 7-point Arial and placed in the upper left corner of the box. If the boxes are larger, 8-point captions are acceptable.

- If the form has multiple pages, they should be numbered. Page numbering is 8-point Arial plain, centered on the bottom margin. Format is Page # of ##.

Body

- Table cell headers are generally .16" high, use bold, 8–9-point font, and are centered in the table row as well as center aligned.

- Other instructions throughout the form should be italicized, which brings the users attention to the instructions.

- Instructions on a separate row have a row height of .16" and generally 8-point font and are centered in the table row.

- When providing the option, Yes always comes before No.

- 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."

- Checkboxes:

  - Checkboxes are preferred when there is a list of selections, primarily because users cannot circle a selection in a fillable form. Checkboxes should always be placed in front of their selections: ☐ Male ☐ Female

  - Place check boxes well over from the question or on the next line down.

  - Agencies generally prefer a 10-point size check box, 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** will be at least 8 point.

Designing in Word

The following resources and tutorials are available to help novice designers learn the basics of designing in Word. For assistance, consider downloading the State Form in Word Template.

(This list is not comprehensive and will be added to ongoingly.)

- Microsoft Word Quick Reference
- How to Enable the Developer Tab
- How to Make a Table
- Changing Column Width in Table
- Table Borders and Shading
- Positioning a Table
- How to Merge and Split Cells
- How to Create Fillable Form
- How to Change Margins
- Formatting Text
- How to Change Page Size
- Headers and Footers
- Add Page Numbers
- How to Add Links

Word Program Tips

- Save work early and often.

- **Combining two separate tables into one:** Select the second table, press Shift + Alt + the up arrow. Press the up arrow until the two tables are combined.

- **Splitting one table into two:** Select the row you'd like to be the first row of your second table. On the ribbon look for the Layout menu (the one for the table, NOT the general Layout menu option). In the Merge section, click Split Table. You now have two tables.

Creating a Fillable PDF

The following resources and tutorials are available to help novice designers learn how to create a fillable PDF after initially designing a Form in Word.

- [Creating Fillable Forms Using Adobe Acrobat Video](#)
- [How to Create a Fillable PDF Step by Step](#)

How to create fillable PDF files:

1. Open Acrobat: Click on the **"Tools"** tab and select **"Prepare Form."**
2. Select a file or scan a document: Acrobat will automatically analyze your document and add form fields.
3. Add new form fields: Use the top toolbar and adjust the layout using tools in the right pane.
4. **Save** your fillable PDF: You can also share it with others or click **Distribute** to collect responses automatically.

After you have converted your Word document to a fillable PDF, ensure that:

1. All fillable fields align with any text boxes, lines, and text. When Acrobat auto prepares a form, the boxes do not always align. The same goes for check boxes.

2. All fillable fields created by Acrobat are not necessary. Acrobat may create fillable fields where they do not need to go, and these can be deleted.

3. Some forms require a "wet" signature. For these forms, ensure signature fields are not fillable by deleting the fillable field box if Adobe has auto generated one during the preparation of the form.

4. The form should have a Reset Form button that corresponds to the following specifications:

   a. **General Tab**: Name = Button1; No tooltip; Visible but doesn't print; 0 degrees

   b. **Appearance**: Border color black; fill color grey; line thickness thin; line style solid; text 10pt; text color black; font Arial bold

   c. **Position:** Place it in the upper right corner when you initially make the button; upper left corner or middle are acceptable if form design doesn't allow the button to fit in the upper right corner.

   d. **Options**: Layout = label only; behavior: invert; state: up; label: Reset Form

   e. **Actions:** Trigger: mouse up; action: reset a form. Click Add, ensure all are checked, close

Adobe Program Tips *(This list is not comprehensive and will be added to ongoingly.)*

- Save work early and often.

- **To wrap text in a comment box in Adobe**, open the properties, options and check multi-line. Also make the font smaller.

- **If the agency designs a Form in Excel and wants it in fillable PDF**, it may need to be redesigned from scratch in Word to get the check boxes and other formatting to align properly.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Helpful Links

- Forms.IN.gov
- Forms used when working with the Forms Management Program
- Additional Forms Management resources

Contact Information

- For general forms inquiries, contact your agency forms coordinator.

APPENDIX A: STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTS CHECKLIST

If the State Form involves money paid to the State, it may need to be reviewed and approved by the State Board of Accounts (SBOA). This does not apply to forms owned by the Indiana Department of Revenue or the Department of Local Government Finance. SBOA has changed their criteria over the years, and they are not reviewing and approving as many forms as they once did. If the request is for a new form that is collecting money, send a copy of the request to SBOA so they can review and determine if their approval is required. If the request is for an existing form that was approved by SBOA in the past, forward the request to SBOA so they can review and determine if the revision will require their approval. If the form is not collecting money contact the requesting agency to ensure SBOA's approval is really needed.

Requesting approval from SBOA is the responsibility of the agency requesting the design / analysis and the following steps should be followed:

- ✓ Agency must request a SF number from IARA in advance of submitting requests to SBOA for review (new forms only).

- ✓ IARA fills out 43776 and sends to the requesting agency.

- ✓ Requesting agency fills out SF 56162.

  - o When filling out the form, note that both preparer and reviewer are internal to the agency making the forms request for approval by SBOA. The preparer is the person at the agency creating the form. They must go through the checklist to ensure the form meets all requirements. Then, whoever the agency has determined should be monitoring the form creation project and responsible for approving the work of IARA must also go through the checklist to ensure that the form is meeting requirements. Both preparer and reviewer sign that they approve work done. This has the dual outcome of providing a second set of eyes to review the correctness of the form and to make sure the form is fulfilling the intended purpose of the agency.

- ✓ Requesting agency sends both forms to SBOA Form Approval: Formapproval@sboa.IN.gov.

- ✓ Agency may supply a cover letter if they wish.

- ✓ Follow ups with SBOA are the responsibility of the requesting agency.

- ✓ Upon SBOA approval, requesting agency submits 36040 request with approval to IARA Forms Management Program fmd@iara.in.gov .

If the State Form involves money paid by the State, it may need to be approved by the Auditor of State. There are very few State Forms that require Auditor approval. If the Agency does not indicate Auditor approval and/or form was not approved by the Auditor in the past, no follow up with the Auditor is necessary.