

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
July 26, 2023
Hybrid Meeting – Washington, DC**

**Standards Committee: Recommendation to Approve Best Practices
for Archival Term Positions as an SAA External Standard**

(Prepared by: Kira Dietz, co-chair)

BACKGROUND

In May 2023, the Issues & Advocacy Steering Committee submitted the Best Practices for Archival Term Positions for approval as an SAA external standard. This document [<https://osf.io/a4zc8/>] was developed by a working group of archivists from multiple institutions and in a variety of roles. In June 2023, the Standards Committee reviewed this set of best practices and unanimously voted to recommend it for approval.

Relevant links:

- Best Practices for Archival Term Positions [<https://osf.io/a4zc8/>]
- Submission to Standards Committee [[Standards folder](#)] (see also provided documentation)

DISCUSSION

From the submission form, the Issues & Advocacy Steering Committee shared: The Best Practices for Archival Term Positions presents best practices for developing and carrying out temporary archival positions in cultural heritage, memory, and higher learning institutions in the United States. These recommendations are intended for hiring managers, administrators, and employees to support effective working environments and ethical labor practices. Managers should be empowered by their institutions to contribute to discussions related to position development whenever possible and project staff. Supervisors should use this document as guidance in advocating for more ethical term positions. Project staff should be empowered to use these best practices as a tool to advocate for themselves. These recommendations are intended to establish professionally-endorsed ethical labor practices for term positions that advocate for our work and our workers.

The Standards Committee feels that widespread endorsement, particularly by SAA, will encourage implementation of best practices, as appropriate, in the hiring of term labor positions, which has been a topic of discussion in recent years, both in the profession as a whole and at conference, including SAA. The best practices offer basic guidance to institutions and managers

who may find themselves in the position of hiring term labor positions. This best practice also supports SAA strategic goals (see below).

Standards Committee highlights the following from the submission form: “An analysis by Working Group members of job postings on ArchivesGig between 2014-2020 found that 24.2% of jobs posted were term positions; this suggests a high reliance on temporary labor in archival repositories, in which most work is of an ongoing nature. Yet despite this continuing shift in the landscape of archival work toward limited-term positions, no standards or guidelines for term positions are currently endorsed by professional organizations in the field.” Given this information, the committee applauds the initiative of the working group that was created to take on this challenge.

In addition, the working group has a 5-year plan for revision of the best practices, following the SAA model for standards. This will serve to keep the best practices up-to-date and maintain active interest in both the document and the on-going discussion.

To date, the Best Practices for Archival Term Positions has been downloaded more than 350 times since February 2022, and has been the focus of multiple conference sessions and workshops. Endorsement by SAA will strengthen the use and conversation around this important document.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SAA Council accepts the recommendation by the Standards Committee and endorses the Best Practices for Archival Term Positions as an SAA External Standard.

Support Statement:

SAA endorsement of Best Practices for Archival Term Positions as an external standard will promote its use as guidelines for archives, archivists, and other information professionals looking to ethically and fairly hiring and manage term labor positions in archives.

Impact on Strategic Priorities:

The endorsement of this document aligns with multiple aspects of the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. Best Practices for Archival Term Positions supports Goal 1, advocating for archivists as individuals and professionals, as well as advocating for permanent positions whenever possible to support long-term archives’ goals. The best practices support Goal 2 by providing guidance on an important, current topic to help archives, managers, and individuals working in term labor positions. The best practices also support Goal 4 by meeting members’ needs. Although term labor solutions may not be ideal, the fact is that they are a reality, and SAA endorsement means our organization is taking an active role in acknowledging this need.

Fiscal Impact:

No known fiscal impact.