

CAPIT assessment of the Centralization option:

PROS:

1. Uniformity in expectation and consistency in personnel actions
2. Uniformity in process and management
3. Increased accountability
4. Workload distribution can be adjusted to handle personnel shortages and temporary volume surges (achieve economies of scale without excess personnel capacity)
5. Increased chance of success for a single business process
6. First in First Out management method (except emergencies or priorities as determined by regional director)

CONS:

1. Reduced control of agreement processing by programs in the regions
2. May cause tension between specialists and regional administration
3. Will take strong policy and procedures to ensure that all work and information are shared
4. Possible perceived loss of loyalty of specialists
5. Less control over priorities (not as much as perceived if specialists retain customer service orientation)

Issues from the field regarding the option

Lack of training in agreements: This has led to inconsistency in how agreements are handled in the field.

Outdated guidance. Current agreements manual is over 10 years old. This leaves the field to fend for themselves, or rely on direction from the ASC which is difficult to understand or even get an answer. Guidance requested from ASC, and arriving in email often takes several follow-on calls to understand the guidance. Replies to requests for information take far too long (weeks to months).

Dissemination of Guidance: This is limited to an annual letter which is often times late. Guidance through standard policy does not exist when such guidance is provided to individuals, and not agency wide.

Workload smoothing: Specialists are fully engaged and can not expand their responsibilities. Balancing will shift work away from the assigned person to others. This will mean a loss of the special knowledge that is often required to produce quality agreements.

Change in structure: Will (possibly) require more resources.

Duplication of effort: Is a policy decision and arises due to a lack of general policy and absence of substantive responses from ASC.

Loss of communication: Between the Specialists and the program staff, finance staff, and cooperators if centralized.

Less flexibility: To establish priorities and process based upon those priorities.

ASC: Does not reach out or communicate with the field. Example: ASC has not visited Raleigh since its creation. ASC is inflexible and does not consider new ways of doing things. There is a sense that there is a lack of customer service to the field from the ASC.

Processing: FIFO method will not encourage individual review of each circumstance, creating a lack of compliance. Better control and accountability takes place at the lowest level, also, it is more efficient. Centralization will slow the process down. Oversight is better at lower levels.

No room in regional office: One region stated that there is no available room in the office and that if the position of agreement were centralized it would be the responsibility of the ASC to find room for the position.

Program's believe

- That they will lose control
- Customer service will suffer (responses varied between internal to APHIS and external to the cooperators)
- Will create tension between Specialists and program
- Penalize those who are doing the job correctly
- Overall that the move is damaging
- Not in the best interest of the cooperators
- Fear the ERS model will be created which is unresponsive and has a disconnect between staff and clients