United States Department of Agriculture
Research, Education, and Economics

ARS ❏ CSREES ❏ ERS ❏ NASS

Policies and Procedures

Title: Correspondence Management Program

Number: 261.2

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Originating Office: General Services Division Information Systems Staff

This Replaces: 261.2, 12/23/81

Distribution: Headquarters, Areas, and Locations

This Directive states the policy and responsibilities for the ARS Correspondence Management Program.

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1. Reference

For detailed information on preparing correspondence, see MANUAL 261.2

2. Abbreviations

*   GSD   -   General Services Division
*   ISS   -   Information Systems Staff, GSD
*   RMO   -   Records Management Officer

3. Authorities

41 CFR 201-45.102
DR 3060-1

4. Definitions

Agency RMO. The Agency RMO is the Chief, ISS, GSD.

Area RMO. The Area Property Management Officer performs or supervises the Area information management functions.

Correspondence. Letters, memorandums, form letters, telegrams, airgrams, endorsements, summary sheets, post cards, memorandum routing slips, and other written or electronically generated communication.

5. Objectives

The objectives of the ARS Correspondence Management Program are to limit correspondence to essential requirements to improve the quality of correspondence, and to provide for its creation in an economical and efficient manner.

6. Policy

It is ARS policy to:

- Create, prepare, transmit, and store correspondence in an efficient, effective, and economical manner.

- Originate letters that are planned, easily read and understood, and responsive to the needs of the recipient.

- Prepare high quality correspondence that is consistent in style and format, neat and attractive in appearance, and editorially correct.

- Respond to incoming correspondence in a timely manner.

- Follow the ARS Correspondence Manual and "U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual" and "word Division Supplement" for preparing correspondence.

7. Responsibilties

The Chief ISS. GSD, is responsible for the ARS Correspondence Management Program. The Chief, ISS, GSD, will:

- Develop policies and procedures to facilitate the efficient, effective, and economical creation, preparation, transmission, and storage of correspondence.

- Standardize correspondence style by publishing the ARS Correspondence Manual.

- Conduct correspondence management reviews and studies.

- Recommend training programs in correspondence techniques such as writing improvement workshops, correspondence preparation, office automation and word processing software, etc.

- Furnish assistance to Headquarters offices to accomplish the objectives of the program.

- Serve as liaison with USDA staff offices and the General Services Administration on matters relating to correspondence management.

The Area RMO's will:

- Furnish assistance to Locations to accomplish the objectives of the program.

- Serve as liaison with the Chief, ISS, GSD, on matters relating to correspondence management practices.

Managers and supervisors will examine correspondence practices to ensure correspondence is created, prepared, transmitted, and stored in an efficient, effective, and economical manner. Specific areas of consideration include:

- Originating letters/memos that are planned, easily read and understood, and responsive to the needs of the recipient.

- Routinely using electronic editing capabilities such as grammar and spelling checks.

- Preclearing correspondence to avoid preparing the "final" copy several times.

- Instituting document management techniques to identify the final electronic version of a document.

- Eliminating the use of tissue copies.

- Using electronic files as appropriate.

- Encouraging professionals to use word processing software and dictation equipment.

- Evaluating the method of transmitting (via U.S. Postal Service, overnight delivery services, fax, electronic mail or other electronic means such as local area network, etc.) documents.

- Using office products such as removable note paper, file labels, tabs/flags, etc.

Lead secretaries will:

- Provide guidance to subordinate offices on the creation, preparation, transmission, and storage of correspondence.

- Keep subordinate offices informed of changes.

All employees will:

- Prepare correspondence that is consistent in style and format, neat and attractive in appearance, and editorially correct.

- Follow the ARS Correspondence Manual and "U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manua" and "word Division Supplement" for preparing correspondence.

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