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## **1 Administrative and Financial Management (AFM)**

AFM works in partnership with the REE agencies, their customers and partners, and the public by meeting their administrative and financial management needs and interests through delivery of responsive and effective services in: Facilities Design and Construction, Personal Property, Finance, Travel, Real Estate, Grants and Agreements, Safety, Health, and the Environment, Human Resources, Homeland Security, Small Purchasing, Information Technology needs for Areas and Locations, and Major Contracting and Acquisition.

Office of the Deputy Administrator, AFM (DAAFM)

The DAAFM office, through the Deputy Administrator, Associate Deputy Administrator and the Chief Financial Officer, participates with the Administrator in establishing policies for the overall planning and administration of Agency programs, conducts key assignments for the total Agency and serves as an extension of the Office of Administrator in representing ARS to cooperators and other parties engaged in programs of mutual interest to the Agency.

AFM consists of the following Divisions:

- Acquisition and Property Division (APD)
- Extramural Agreements Division (EAD)
- Facilities Division (FD)
- Financial Management Division (FMD)
- Human Resources Division (HRD)

AFM consists of the following Business Service Centers (BSC):

- Eastern Business Service Center (EBSC)
- Western Business Service Center (WBSC)
- National Capital Region Business Service Center (NCRBSC)

Additional information on AFM is available on the AFM website at [www.afm.ars.usda.gov](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov)

## **2 General AFM Operating Guidelines**

### **2.1 Standing BSC Conference Calls:**

- BSC Leadership within each BSC  
Attendees - Director, Deputies and Branch Chiefs
- Each Area Office serviced by the BSC  
Attendees - Director, Deputies, Area Director (AD) and their team members at the AD's discretion

### **2.2 Standing AFM Leadership Conference Calls:**

- AFM Council meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month – 2:30 pm ET  
Attendees - AFM Council Members
- BSC meeting – every Tuesday 3:30 pm ET - until further notice  
Attendees - BSC Leaders, Associate Administrator, Associate Deputy Administrator
- BSC and AFM Division Directors – every Thursday 3:00 pm ET - until further notice  
Attendees - BSC Leaders, AFM Division Directors, Associate Administrator, Associate Deputy Administrator
- AC calls – participate in general calls, every other Wednesday – 11 am ET  
Attendees - BSC Leaders, AFM Division Directors, Administrators Council members

### **2.3 General Meetings**

All meetings will have an agenda whether standing or on a by meeting basis. The organizer of the meeting is responsible for providing the agenda and call-in number.

Principles of meetings:

- All opinions count
- Adhere to agenda items and timeline
- Meetings are at a management level, not technical

### **2.4 Other general principles**

- Respond to requests in a timely manner
- Share information
- Do the right thing; don't try to shortcut
- Address problems with each other immediately
- Believe others have good intentions
- Respect people's time
- Present a united front

### **3 Administrative Guidance for Employees**

#### **3.1 Flexible Work Schedules – P&P 402.1**

Flexible Work Schedules allow AFM management to balance the individual needs of its employees while meeting the critical needs of the mission. Specific schedules are left to the discretion of the supervisor and needs of the organization based on the established P&P.

##### **3.1.1 Tour of Duty**

The tour of duty defines the limits within which an employee must complete his or her basic work requirement.

##### **3.1.2 Core Time**

Core time is that part of the schedule of hours during the workday, workweek or pay period that is within the tour of duty and during which employees must be present at work or on leave. All employees on a flexible work schedule must have designated core hours with the exception of intermittent employees.

The core times for AFM are from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Exceptions may be approved on a case by case basis for temporary situations, i.e., school schedules or medical accommodation, at the discretion of the supervisor.

##### **3.1.3 Gliding Time**

“Gliding” time allows some minor deviations in an employee’s arrival and departure times without advance supervisory approval. The use of gliding time is viewed as a flexibility to address emergency or unusual situations; it is not to be used as part of a regular recurring schedule. In addition, supervisory notification is required for any deviation of more than 30 minutes.

##### **3.1.4 Regular Day off (RDO)**

Employees, who work an alternative work schedule with an RDO, may request a particular day; the supervisor has final approval for the assigned RDO. In order to maintain an adequate balance of employees within the organization on any particular day, the initial day requested may not be approved.

Switching a RDO requires prior approval by the supervisor. If assignment changes result in conflicts concerning RDOs, the supervisor may have to adjust the employee’s RDO.

##### **3.1.5 Credit Time**

Employees may earn credit hours on any day or night of the week, with supervisory permission. There are no agency-wide restrictions on the number of hours per day or when credit hours may be earned on a given day. The maximum credit time that can be carried is 24 hours.

### **3.1.6 Overtime / Compensatory (Comp) Time – P&P 402.3 v.3**

When employees are required to work more time on the job than is normally required by the job, those employees must be compensated, either through additional pay or through time off. This is also sometimes true in situations when employees are asked to work, travel, or be trained at night, on weekends, or on holidays. Only a supervisor can request an employee to work Overtime/Comp. Overtime/ Comp time must be approved by BSC Directors/ Division Directors; the method for this approval is delegated to the supervisor through their respective BSC/Division. A brief description of the work performed and date of approval must be formally documented as part of the actual premium pay request in WebTA.

This request can apply to specific time periods or to specific work cycles.

If an employee who is covered by Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) or who is not covered but earns below a GS-10 chooses comp time in lieu of overtime, it must be documented and approved via WebTA or indicated in writing using a statement such as the following:

—I request comp time in lieu of overtime \_\_\_\_\_ employee initials \_\_\_\_\_ supervisor initials

If using WebTA to approve comp time worked and the employee has chosen comp time in lieu of overtime, the above statement can be typed into the remarks block of the Edit T&A screen where daily time is entered.

An employee must use accrued compensatory time within 26 pay periods after the pay period in which it was credited to the employee.

Except in emergencies, GS/GM employees (FLSA nonexempt staff excluded) may not earn more than the GS-15, step 10 or Level V of the Executive Schedule for a biweekly salary (in any one pay period). The method for calculation of the biweekly pay limit can be found on the Pay & Leave Website <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/payleave/recomp.htm>

### **3.1.7 Holiday/Travel/Training Time**

Employees are paid for 8 hours on a holiday. If the RDO falls on a holiday or a holiday falls within the pay period, the employee must take 1 hour of leave or adjust their work schedule to make the holiday the 8 hour day.

When preparing to go on travel or to be in training, employees who work 9 hour days should consider changing their work schedule to an 8 hour schedule for that pay period. If the employee's schedule remains the same, he/she will need to extend their work day by 1 hour to make up for the lost time or take leave.

### **3.1.8 Lunch Periods**

It is ARS policy and a FLSA requirement that each approved regular workday of 7 hours must include an unpaid break of no less than 30 minutes. Under Flexible Work Schedules, employees

may adjust their individual schedules, with approval, to include additional time at lunch. For example, if an employee would like to increase their lunch schedule from the required one-half hour to an hour, they may either take approved leave or extend their workday by one-half hour, e.g., instead of working 8-4:30, the schedule would be from 8-5:00.

Skipping lunch in order to come in late or leave early is not an option within AFM.

<b>AFM Quick Reference Guidelines Work Schedules Effective 03/11/2012</b>	
<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>POLICY</b>
Tour of duty (earliest start time and latest end time)	Monday thru Friday 6:00 am. – 6:00 p.m. (local time)
Core time (latest start time and earliest end time)	9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (local time)
Individual Work Schedules	Delegated thru supervisory chain
Gliding time (max deviation from master timesheet schedule within Tour of Duty)	30 minutes
Phone coverage/technical assistance available	No less than 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (local time)
Mealtime	No less than 30 minutes for 7 hours or more worked
Maxiflex schedule	Discretion of the supervisor within P&P regulations
Credit hours	Submit request in advance depending on supervisor’s preference. Supervisors will manage carefully on a case-by-case basis.
Overtime/Comp Time	Submit request in advance depending on supervisor’s preference. Overtime/Comp Time only if it is absolutely needed or required by law
Time accounting	Entry should be on a daily basis. All leave submitted via WebTA. Personal calendars should reflect leave. Validate and affirm timecards by COB second Friday of the pay period cycle.  <b>Note:</b> If credit/comp time is planned for the weekend, complete by Noon on the first Monday

## **3.2 Leave Approval & Use - P&P 402.6**

### **3.2.1 Scheduling and Use of Leave**

In order to better assure adequate office coverage at all times, leave projections will be requested on a periodic basis. When asked to provide leave plans for expanded periods such as during holidays and summer, it is imperative to understand that all leave plans/requests may not be approved to ensure coverage requirements.

Leave is to be submitted and approved/disapproved using WebTA. Unscheduled leave requests will be requested immediately upon return to work. The exact method for reporting unscheduled absences is left to the discretion of the supervisor.

Employees who are in the Use or Lose leave category are responsible for scheduling and using their leave throughout the course of the leave year to avoid any loss at the end of the leave year. Accumulation of use or lose annual leave to facilitate an extended holiday at the end of the year is not acceptable unless specifically authorized by the supervisor.

For those employees who are physically located in a different city than their supervisor, it is important to also advise a staff member of that office when you will not be in the office. The method for this notification is at the discretion of the location coordinator in that physical location.

#### **3.2.1.1 Annual Leave**

Annual leave is to be requested in advance as much as possible. At times, leave may be disapproved or canceled in order to meet work requirements and/or to ensure adequate office coverage. Last minute leave requests should be kept to a minimum.

#### **3.2.1.2 Sick Leave**

Sick leave will be approved for health related absences of the employee or family member as per the P&P. Approval in advance for a planned absence is requested.

Should an employee take sick leave of **over 3 consecutive workdays**, whether for the employee or to care for a family member, the supervisor may request a medical certificate or other acceptable documentation to verify the leave. In some instances, supervisors may request documentation of sick leave for periods of less than 3 consecutive days, but only when management has a reasonable basis to suspect misuse of leave.

#### **3.2.1.3 Time off Awards**

To avoid forfeiture, time off award hours must be scheduled and used prior to the 26th pay period after the effective pay period of the award. Unused time off hours cannot be converted to a cash payment upon separation from Federal service and cannot be transferred when an employee moves from one Federal agency to another. Employees can be awarded no more than

40 hours for a single contribution and no more than 80 hours can be given in a leave year. Time off awards must be used within **one year** of the effective date.

### **3.2.1.4 Web TA schedule**

To help employees, timekeepers and supervisors, the following timetable has been developed to allow the T&A process to run as smoothly as possible.

- **Employees** – validate and affirm timecards.  
**Due: COB second Friday of the pay period cycle**  
**Note: if credit/comp time is planned for the weekend, complete by Noon on the first Monday**
- **Timekeepers** – review and validate timecards.  
**Due: COB first Monday of the new pay period cycle**
- **Supervisors** – review and certify/decertify timecards  
**Due: COB first Tuesday of the new pay period**

### **3.2.2 Excused Absence P&P402.4**

Only the Secretary of Agriculture may grant an excused absence or administrative leave (early dismissal) for holiday-related early dismissals of USDA employees.

When natural disasters, adverse weather conditions, and other emergency situations occur that disrupt Federal government operations, employees should be familiar with the procedures for their location.

## **3.3 Telephone and Office Coverage**

### **3.3.1 Hours of Operation**

Office coverage is required between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. Staff should provide their direct desk number to their customers and be readily accessible to provide advice and assistance.

### **3.3.2 Voicemail**

Employees will update their Voicemail messages on at least a weekly basis. The greeting should be detailed and provide the caller with the date the greeting is recorded; the length of time they will be away from their desk (if an extended period); if you will be absent during the weekday; the day when employee will return to their workstations; and employees will identify who to contact directly for “live” assistance.

### **3.3.3 E-mail notification**

Employees will set up out of office e-mail autoreply for periods when they will be out of the office for an extended period (24 hours) and provide an alternate point of contact.



### **3.4 Telework – P&P 402.5**

Telework is encouraged for all employees who have been notified via their “Notification of Eligibility for Telework” as suitable for telework. Details of the nature of your telework agreement are to be worked out with your supervisor in accordance with the P&P. Supervisors are accountable for all work performed by employees under their supervision. Therefore, managers may use appropriate work tracking and communication tools, provided they are implemented for all their employees regardless of whether they telework.

**Telework employees are reminded that telework should be transparent to the customer.**

### **3.5 Microsoft Office Tools**

#### **3.5.1 Microsoft Outlook**

Your personal calendar should reflect your daily schedule to include meetings, conference calls, travel, and all planned personal leave and flex days (RDO), where applicable. The exception to this will be for unplanned sick leave. Your Branch calendar should also reflect leave plans, travel and flex days (RDO); where applicable. Supervisors will advise their preference on how to reflect changes on the Branch calendar.

#### **3.5.2 Microsoft Office Communicator**

Microsoft Office Communicator (OC) has been installed on all PCs of AFM staff. Office Communicator provides a number of tools, including the ability to use Instant Messaging, or Chat. All employees should link Office Communicator to their Outlook login for seamless startup of the application for those in GWCC and manually logon for those outside of GWCC. OC is a great tool to assist staff and managers working with and managing in the new “virtual” AFM.

### **3.6 Communications/Customer Relations**

We are a service-oriented organization, responsible for providing timely support to our customers. We must be sensitive to our customer’s problems and issues, and be responsive and creative in addressing their needs. We must be as flexible as the law allows, and professional in all our dealings with others.

It is our responsibility to keep our customers well informed of the status of actions and potential problems, and to provide follow-up promptly. AFM staff should not only be available to answer calls, but also proactively keep our customers briefed on important work items. Telephone updates are preferred for sensitive and potentially controversial communications.

### **3.7 Training/IDP’s - P&P 440.1**

All permanent employees should have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in place. IDP’s will generally cover multiple years to allow for sufficient time to attend training and

accommodate budget constraints. Training identified on the IDP will be prioritized based on position needs and employee developmental level. Training will be documented in AgLearn. Courses taken that are external to AgLearn will require the completion of a Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training form (SF-182) in AgLearn to document the training payment and completion thereof. The SF-182 must be approved by the employee's supervisor and the person authorized to expend funds from the account from which the training is being funded (may be the same person).

### **3.8 Office Decorum**

#### **3.8.1 Telephone Usage**

We are a professional organization. Personal telephone calls should be kept to a minimum. Cell phones ringers on cellular phones should be turned off or on vibrate while in the office so as not to disturb others in the workplace.

#### **3.8.2 Personal Electronics**

While it is permissible to use personal electronics at work to listen to music, etc., the volume must be kept at a level where it is neither disruptive nor disturbing to those in the general area.

### **3.9 Personal Computers and Equipment - P&P 253.4 & DR 3300-1**

Office equipment (e.g. computers, printers, fax machines, copiers, etc.) is for official use and should be used in accordance with official guidance noted above.

Use a password protected screen saver to safeguard information on your computer so no one can see your monitor screen when you are away from your workstation, even for brief periods.

### **3.10 Emergency Contact Information**

Each employee is expected to update and keep current their own emergency contact information in the e-OPF system. Supervisors may request employee contact information (name and phone number) for reference purposes in case of an emergency. In the event of an emergency, this information will be used to contact their designee(s) and can be critical to ensuring employees receive appropriate entitlements in the event of a natural disaster (e.g. continuance of salary payments).

### **3.11 Security Responsibilities**

Security is everyone's responsibility. Help protect the security of our people, facilities and information by doing the following:

- Lock up all PII information.
- Maintain control and custody of facility keys.
- Lock up unattended laptops and store in a lockable drawer or room when not in use.

- Report lost LincPass cards or facility keys to your supervisor. He/she will alert the appropriate security official.
- Secure ground floor windows.
- Ensure visitors sign in and are escorted where appropriate.
- Report suspicious activity to management.
- Be aware of your responsibilities in your local COOP or Emergency Occupant Plan.