

For: All FSA National Office Employees

New Clearance and Approval Process for Notices

Approved by: Deputy Administrator for Management



1 Overview

A Background

Notices provide policy and procedural guidance to state and county offices nationwide. It is important that these documents are reviewed and approved for publication in a timely manner. Currently, the clearance and approval process for notices has been accomplished by circulating a paper copy sequentially to reviewers. To improve the efficiency of the directives program, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) is implementing a weekly directives clearance meeting (DCM) to review and approve notices.

B Purpose

This notice:

- announces the new directives clearance and approval process, and
- provides procedures for the DCM process.

Disposal Date	Distribution
June 1, 2017	All FSA National Office employees

Notice AS-2303

2 Establishing the DCM

A Overview

In lieu of circulating paper or electronic copies of documents sequentially for clearance and approval, FSA will conduct a weekly DCM to approve notices. After the meeting, approved documents will be provided to the final approver and then forwarded electronically to the directives staff for publication. The new process is expected to significantly reduce the timeframe for clearance and approval because all reviews will be conducted concurrently.

B Meeting Schedule

Initially, the DCM will be conducted regularly on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Writers and reviewers who are required to attend will receive an e-mail Wednesday with the notices that will be addressed at the Monday meeting, and Monday for the Wednesday meeting.

Note: The meeting schedule will be adjusted, as necessary, to allow sufficient time for reviewers to complete their review and provide approval at the meeting. At least one meeting will be held every week.

C DCM Attendance

Writers, whose notices are being approved, must attend the meeting to respond to questions, if any. Reviewers, or their designees, listed on the FSA-415's, Directives Clearance and Approval Sheet, may:

- provide approval before the DCM by signing and returning the FSA-415 to the directives staff by e-mail to **notices@wdc.usda.gov**, and
- attend the DCM to approve the notice.

Staff from the following areas will be regular meeting invitees:

- all deputy administrator areas,
- associate administrators,
- Economic Policy and Analysis Staff,
- Office of Budget and Finance, and
- Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Staff who attend must be prepared to provide approval for the office represented.

3 Approval of Notices at the DCM

A Providing Notices for the DCM

Writers must:

- seek stakeholder input **before** sending notices to the directives staff to facilitate approval at the DCM, and
- submit notices to the directives staff electronically by e-mail to **notices@wdc.usda.gov**.

Notes: Writers may use either paper or electronic methods for division, field team, or stakeholder reviews; however, notices must be sent to the directives staff electronically.

After editing the notice, the directives staff will return the notice by e-mail to the writer for review. When the writer is ready for the notice to be submitted for the DCM, the notice and an FSA-415 must be sent to the directives staff to send to reviewers. Notices received by 2 pm Wednesday will be approved at the following Monday meeting. Notices received by 2 pm Monday will be approved at the following Wednesday meeting.

B Approval of Notices

The offices listed in subparagraph 2 C will receive a meeting invite with the notices for approval, including the FSA-415, attached. Reviewers listed on the FSA-415 will do either of the following to provide approval of notices:

- sign the FSA-415 included with the notice and return to the directives staff before the DCM by e-mail to **notices@wdc.usda.gov**, or
- attend the DCM.

Notices that have all approvals before the meeting will be forwarded to the final approver for signature and not addressed at the meeting. Reviewers will be notified that the notice will not be discussed in the DCM.

The offices listed in subparagraph 2 C are responsible for forwarding the meeting invite to offices that report to them if their review is needed. These offices may also provide contact information for subordinate offices to the directives staff for this purpose. Directives staff will send the meeting invite directly to offices if contact information is provided. Send contact information to **notices@wdc.usda.gov**.

C Notices Currently Under Review

Any notice currently circulating for approval in a folder or in ECM that is not issued by COB August 31 will complete approvals at the DCM on September 7.

3 Approval of Notices at the DCM (Continued)

D Continued Process Improvement

This process will continue to be evaluated and will be adjusted as needed. FSA's efforts to improve the directives clearance and approval process are being tracked by the department through their signature process improvement (SPI) initiative. Regular reports are a requirement of this initiative to ensure continued progress. Questions about this process improvement can be sent to the e-mail addresses in subparagraph B.