United States Department of Agriculture
Research, Education, and Economics

ARS ʻ CSREES ʻ ERS ʻ NASS

Policies and Procedures

Title: REE Administrative Issuances System

Number: 010

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Originating Office: Information Technology Division, Telecommunications
and Records Branch, AFM/ARS

This Replaces: 010 dated 1/15/97

Distribution: REE Offices in Headquarters, Areas, and Field
Locations

This P&P describes the structure of the
Research, Education, and Economics (REE)
Administrative Issuances System,
including: purpose and types of issuances,
system management, numbering, review
and clearance process, and guidelines on
format.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

This Policies and Procedures issuance (P&P) provides instructions to originators of Research, Education, and Economics (REE) issuances. It describes the structure of the system, the steps involved in writing, clearing and approving issuances, and information on issuance format and style.

Purpose of Issuances. Federal laws and regulations contain guidance to agencies about the management of administrative affairs. As rules come into existence or change, managers and specialists in primary functional areas (budget, personnel, procurement, etc.) need to issue guidance to ensure that (1) internal agency policies adhere to Federal laws and regulations, and (2) employees understand how such laws affect them. Issuances serve a variety of functions:

C   Extract, condense, and interpret important rules and regulations from many sources that significantly affect agency missions and programs.

C   Clarify complex functional procedures. Issuances break down many interrelated activities into simple component parts and provide employees with clear instructions.

C   Explain policies, responsibilities, procedures or other information needed to plan and manage REE programs and administrative functions.

C   Serve as an aid to train and orient new employees in the performance of their jobs.

Management of the Issuance System. The Chief of Administrative and Financial Management's (AFM) Telecommunications and Records Branch (TRB), Information Technology Division (ITD), appoints an Issuances Manager to oversee and maintain the day-to-day operation of the REE Administrative Issuances System.

Relationship to Other Issuance Systems. REE issuances do not cover every subject. Employees should consult Department Regulations if there is no REE issuance on a given subject. Additionally, each agency may have a separate issuance system for internal and programmatic policies which employees should also review.

2. Structure of the Issuance System

The issuance structure in this P&P replaces all directives systems created by ARS, the former Economics Management Staff (ERS, NASS), and the former Cooperative Management Staff (CSRS, ES).

Types of Issuances. There are three types of REE issuances: policies and procedures (P&P's), bulletins, and manuals.

C **Policies and Procedures (permanent issuances).** P&P's contain standing and officially approved policies and procedures governing the functions of the REE agencies. P&P's usually affect all REE agencies; however, when it is necessary to accommodate major differences in policies or procedures, originating offices may create agency-specific versions of P&P's. P&P's will be approved by the Deputy Administrator, AFM, and any affected REE agency heads. Minor agency differences in policy and/or procedures can be incorporated into agency specific paragraphs or sections within the REE P&P. P&P's contain information that will be relevant for more than 1 year, remaining in effect until superseded.

C **Manuals (permanent issuances).** Unlike P&P's, manuals are used to issue lengthy, detailed "how-to" functional procedures to primary-end users. Division Directors may approve manuals developed within their organizations. Manuals remain in effect until superseded.

C **Bulletins (temporary issuances).** Bulletins are used to issue notices, reminders, or changes that require immediate attention. They may be approved by the head of the originating office. Bulletins contain information of a temporary or time-sensitive nature, and expire within 1 year unless given an earlier expiration date.

Numbering System. Numbers for P&P's, manuals, and bulletins are maintained and assigned by the Issuances Manager. With the exception of P&P's and manuals that replace older versions, numbers for **new** P&P's, manuals or for **any** bulletins **must be obtained from the Issuances Manager.**

P&P's and Manuals. P&P's and manuals have three-digit numbers, with the first number indicating the general subject area.

C **000 Series:** Issuances System

C **100 Series:** Administrative/General. All administrative functions that do not require separate functional series, such as committee management, information programs, delegations of authority, organizations, etc.

C **200 Series:** Administrative services functions; i.e., acquisition and supply, personal and real property, extramural agreements, safety, health, and environmental, communications, data and records, facilities management.

C **300 Series:** Budget and finance functions.

C **400 Series:** Human resources functions.

C   **500 Series:**   Agency programs, general. Programs that do not require a separate series and program support functions such as program planning, program redirection, projects, etc.

C   **600 Series:**   Agency research programs.

Usually P&P's apply to all REE agencies; however, if a P&P affects only one agency, or if the policies and procedures of the agencies differ substantially, then that agency's initials will follow the number. For example, P&P 412-ERS would describe only ERS regulations on position management, and P&P 412-CSREES would describe only CSREES regulations on the same subject. The Distribution heading on the cover page of the issuance will also indicate which agencies are affected. In some cases, a P&P may be specific only to the AFM group.

Bulletins. Bulletin numbers consist of the calendar year followed by a sequential 3-digit numbering system. (Example: 96-010). Numbers will reflect a subject classification as follows:

C   **0 - 99.**   REE issuances systems and information management (ITD)
C   **100-149.**   Public information management (Information Staff)
C   **150-199.**   Extramural agreements (EAD)
C   **200-249.**   Procurement and property management (PPD)
C   **250-299.**   Facilities management (FD)
C   **300-399.**   Financial management (FMD)
C   **400-499.**   Human resources management (HRD)
C   **500-600.**   Agency programs

Bulletins that relate to agency-specific missions or programs will use the calendar year, three digits, and the agency's initials; i.e., 97-501-ARS. The following numbers will be assigned for the agency-specific bulletins:

C   **500-524.** ARS
C   **525-549.** NASS
C   **550-574.** CSREES
C   **575-600.** ERS

Effective Dates, Changes, and Cancellations.
All P&P's and manuals are effective on the date issued, unless otherwise specified, and remain in effect until they are superseded or canceled; bulletins expire within 1 year from the date of issuance. As a general rule, P&P's and manuals should be reviewed for relevancy every 3 to 5 years. If information in an issuance changes, then the originating office's director should decide whether to rewrite the entire document, or just make minor changes. If the information in a P&P becomes irrelevant, an originating office may cancel the P&P with the approval of the appropriate division or organizational director. The originating office will be responsible for notifying the Issuances Manager, in writing, of any canceled P&P or manual.

3. Drafting the P&P

Inception. Federal laws and Departmental Regulations contain guidance to agencies about the management of administrative affairs. As rules come into existence or change, managers and specialists in areas of primary interest (budget, personnel, procurement, etc.) need to ensure that: (1) internal agency policies adhere to Federal laws and regulations, and (2) program personnel understand how such laws affect them. When the need arises, managers and specialists need to initiate P&P's. P&P's serve a variety of functions:

- **Extract, condense, and interpret important rules and regulations from many sources.** This eliminates the need for each office to have a complete set of Federal Property Management Regulations, Federal Procurement Regulations, Office of Management and Budget Circulars, etc. Also, P&P's customize relevant information.

- **Provide a blueprint for complex office procedures.** P&P's break down many interrelated activities into simple component parts and provide employees with step-by-step instructions.

- **Give continuous guidance.** When a supervisor is absent or unable to provide assistance, employees can consult P&P's for answers to questions.

- **Provide an institutional memory.** P&P's explain what, when, why, and how things have been done in the organization long after the authors leave.

- **Aid in training.** P&P's help orient new employees and improve their work readiness.

- **Help build consensus about policy and procedures.** Writing issuances helps managers focus on specific policies and procedures. Through the review process, managers often discover discrepancies, conflicts, and omissions. Resolving these issues builds consensus and results in clearer, more consistent guidance.

Researching. Before you begin writing, you need to research thoroughly the topic of the proposed P&P. Managers in your branch probably chose you to write the P&P because you specialize in that subject matter. If you do not, however, you can enhance your knowledge by consulting parts of some of the following documents during your research:

- U. S. Code (USC)
- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)
- Federal Information Resources Management Regulations (FIRMR)
- Federal Acquisition Manual (FAR)
- Federal Property Management Regulations (FPMR)
- Agricultural Property Management Regulations (AGPMR)
- Departmental Directives
- Comptroller General Decisions

Of course, if a P&P already exists on the subject, consult it first to determine the current policies and procedures as practiced by the REE agencies. If you are interested in older versions of a P&P, the REE Issuances Manager maintains current and historical files.

You may also decide to do some oral research by contacting relevant departmental staff and officials in the REE agencies, as well as in other Government agencies such as the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget, and the General Services Administration.

Furthermore, consider another important source of information such as other agency websites for ideas on how to present your subject and contact your coworkers. By talking to employees affected by the P&P, you can learn details of the execution of policy. You may, in the process, resolve discrepancies between the procedural rules and de facto procedures.

Regardless of your sources (formal or informal), keep notes to save time. **Start an official file for your particular P&P.** You will need this file to keep notes, drafts, clearance sheets, and related documents.

Pre-Writing.
Upon completion of your research, you should begin pre-writing. Pre-writing involves two steps: (1) brainstorming and (2) organizing. In order to brainstorm effectively, start by jotting down ideas, key thoughts, and fragments. Do not worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation, or organization at this point; just let your ideas flow. If you prefer, you might do this with a group of people, and use a flipchart. Although you can write down anything, consider these questions:

- What regulations on this subject **directly** affect the REE agencies?
- Which specific organizations/personnel are affected by such regulations?
- Who will need to have a copy of this P&P?
- What are the key points that those affected need to know?
- What responsibilities do those affected need to carry out?
- What are the procedures that people need to follow?
- How will this change current policies and procedures?
- Who is my audience and what are their specific needs?

After you have brain stormed, organize your ideas. As you do, keep in mind that P&P's are formatted into sections with paragraphs. For working purposes, you may want to arrange an outline, knowing that you will make major divisions into section titles and subheadings, and flesh out subordinate items into paragraphs.

When organizing a P&P, order the sections, subheadings, and paragraphs in a logical manner. You may want to include a section entitled, "Introduction" at the beginning, to explain the purpose of the P&P, to make readers familiar with the subject, and/or to explain broad policy. As for the remaining sections, if the P&P explains step-by-step procedures, the text should flow sequentially.

After you have arranged the sections and subheadings, you are required to include a "Summary of Responsibilities" section. This goes immediately after the last numbered section. Also, if you have used special terms, forms, abbreviations, or jargon within the P&P, you will need to create a "Glossary" section that will immediately follow the "Summary of Responsibilities." Further discussion of these sections will follow, but keep these in mind as you prepare to write.

4. Writing and Formatting the P&P

This section gives information to originators on how to enter text and information into the proper format. Originators must have computers attached to the AFM LAN. Originators that do not have access to the LAN should contact the Issuances Manager.

The P&P Macro. In order to write a P&P in the proper format, you must use a specially-designed WordPerfect macro that is available on the AFM LAN. In addition, please make sure your PC keyboard preference is set at WPWin 6.1 (Edit Menu, under Preferences, Keyboard, select WPWin 6.1). Go into WordPerfect 6.1 and follow these instructions:

C   Choose **Macro** from the **Tools** Menu, choose **Play**, then select **P&P Macros** from the Quick List.
C   Select either **p&p.wcm, manual.wcm**, or **bulletin.wcm**. If you are finalizing and preparing the Table of Contents for a P&P or manual, then you should select **p&pcont.wcm** or **mancont.wcm**.
C   Click **Play**.
C   The P&P format macro box will appear. Click **OK**.
C   The macro will automatically play the P&P masthead. Follow the instructions in the status bar. You will be prompted for:

   C   Title:
   C   Number:
   C   Date:
   C   Originating Office:
   C   This Replaces:
   C   Distribution:
   C   Summary Box

As you complete these headings, the macro puts the information in the proper place in the correct size and font, inserting special WordPerfect "codes" throughout the document.

Title, Number, and Replacement. Give the P&P a title that accurately reflects the contents of the P&P. Type the title in **initial** capital letters only. If the P&P will replace an older version, then the title should be as similar to the old version as possible, and you will need to know the issue date of the old version. Type the number of the issuance, the word **dated**, and then the old issue date, like this: **ARS 254.1 dated 2/7/91**.

Distribution.
In most cases the distribution will be to all agencies; however, some P&P's will only apply to certain agencies. Distributions that you should use are indicated in the box below:

> All REE Employees
> REE Employees in Washington, DC Metro Area
> All ARS Employees
> All CSREES Employees
> All ERS Employees
> All Employees, NASS Field Offices
> All Employees, NASS Headquarters
> ARS Headquarters, Areas, Locations
> All AFM Employees
> REE Offices in Washington, DC Metro Area
> AFM Offices
> REE Offices in Headquarters, Areas & Field Locations

If distribution is required for a specific group, indicate the group name in parenthesis following one of the above distribution categories; i.e., All AFM Offices (Timekeepers). The Issuances Manager must always receive a copy of **all** P&P's, including those specific to one agency.

Originating Office.
Enter your organization/division/branch name, followed by your agency; e.g., *Procurement and Property Division, Policy Branch, AFM/ARS.*

Summary Box.
The macro will prompt you to write a summary of the P&P. The summary will appear in an eye-catching, shadowed box, so that readers can quickly determine: (1) if they have the right P&P, and (2) if they need to read further. The summary box should give the gist of the issuance, but may also discuss the need for the P&P, such as a mandate from the Department, the President, or the Congress (as shown in example below). Regardless, be as **concise** as possible.

> In accordance with Executive Order 12759, the REE agencies will comply with the USDA Energy Plan and work to reduce energy consumption. This P&P establishes policy and assigns responsibility for energy.

The Body of the P&P.
Once you have completed all the macro's mandatory headings, you are ready to begin typing the body of the P&P. During this section you are still in the macro. After you complete the Summary Box, a Menu Instructions Box will appear on your screen. Click **OK**. The macro will indicate four choices you can make while entering text:

1. Section Heading
2. Subsection Heading
3. Enter text only
4. Quit the macro

As you begin entering the text of the P&P, you will need to adhere to a few basic conventions. Follow these guidelines to ensure that all P&P's are uniform:

- **Begin with a heading.** Begin your P&P text by clicking on **Section Label**. The macro will automatically enter the number of the heading in the correct font and size. Enter the title of your heading, and press **Control F4.** Press Return to get to the beginning of your first paragraph of text or to your subheading. The macro will enter heading numbers in sequence as you select them.

- **Create subheadings.** You might have text between the heading and the first subheading in order to introduce the section (if necessary) or to indicate whom the section addresses. However, you might want to follow a heading with an immediate subheading. To begin a subheading, click on **Subsection Label**. The macro will set the correct font size and type. All you need do is enter the title of the subheading followed by a period. Press **Control F4** to begin typing text on the same line. Subsection headings are not numbered.

- **Write in paragraph form.** Make your paragraphs as reader-friendly as possible. Remember that you are instructing readers, so avoid giving too much unnecessary information or detail. Be succinct and direct. Also, do not indent paragraphs, but do skip a line between paragraphs. After you type the last line of the last paragraph in a section, **press return three times** before beginning a new section.

- **Use bolding for emphasis.** Remember, however, too much bolding may give the reader the sense that the rest of the document is not important, so use bolding sparingly. **Do not use all capital letters or underlining for emphasis**.

- **Use bullets.** Bullets make information easier to find and digest. Use the small circular bullets.

- **Use F7 to indent, not <tab>. Never use spaces to indent**. If you use the bullets, the indent is automatic.

C **Use tables.** Tables convert easily into html, which is used for the P&P website. Columns do not convert into html. Text that is in the column format should be converted into tables. You may also use text boxes (if they are not created in the macro), and graphics or images.

- **Do not change or erase codes.** WordPerfect allows you to create the P&P in its special format through the use of "codes." As you use the features of the macro, the computer places hidden codes throughout the document. You can see these codes only when you use the Alt F3 **<Reveal Codes>** key. If you type in a straight-forward fashion, you will probably

not need to be aware of the codes. If you make changes to the document, turn your Alt F3 **<Reveal Codes>** on and do not erase any codes.

C Follow the macro instructions in the **status bar at the bottom of the screen**. Contact the Issuances Manager if you have any problems with the macro.

Required Sections.
As mentioned earlier, certain sections are required in **all** P&P's: Title, Number, Distribution, Originating Office, Summary Box, and the Table of Contents. You will also be required to create a **Summary of Responsibilities**, which is located at the back of the P&P.

• **Summary of Responsibilities.** This section is required in all P&P's so that readers can quickly review their responsibilities. An average summary section should be only a page or two. **Broadly** summarize responsibilities for each position affected by the P&P. Use the third person. List the positions in descending order by **rank**: agency head(s), division director(s), supervisors, specific groups of employees, and general employees. Bold each position title, skip a line, and list responsibilities using small circular bullets and verbs such as *coordinate, consult, inform, conduct, establish,* etc.

Summary of Responsibilities

Supervisors

- Write performance elements and standards for each employee.
- Hold progress reviews during the appraisal period.

Employee Relations Specialists, HRD, AFM

- Provide advice and assistance to supervisors regarding the program.

Optional Sections.
P&P's may include the following optional sections:

C **Introduction.** This section explains the purpose of the P&P, introduces important subjects covered, and provides necessary background information.

C **Policy.** The originator should decide if policy needs to be further clarified for the user.

C **Authorities.** If necessary for the user, use this section to cite Executive Orders, laws, acts, or regulations that the P&P implements or supplements. Specific citations or references may either be stated or enclosed in parentheses at the end of the text.

C **Glossary**. The glossary provides readers with an alphabetical reference to terms, jargon, forms, and abbreviations used repeatedly throughout the P&P. Keep your reader in mind; they may not understand jargon like *certificate of eligibles, adverse action, funding unit, summary rating, accountable property, gross negligence,* etc. Use your judgment to

determine which words and phrases belong in the glossary. If you have fewer than five terms, you probably should not have a glossary. When you select "**Quit the Macro**," you will be asked if you have a glossary for the P&P. If you do, the macro automatically sets the correct heading number and label. Put the entries of the glossary in alphabetical order. Place a period after the entry word and bold it. The entry implies "means" or "is," so you do not need to use those words in the entry. You should also list all forms that are referenced in the issuance--list them alphabetically along with the rest of the entries in the glossary. List the title following each form number, and show "(Local Reproduction)" or "(Available in Informs)," if applicable. Verify the currency and accuracy of all forms listed, and ensure that forms are readily available. The glossary must follow the **Summary of Responsibilities.**

AD-700. (Available in Informs). Request for Supplies, Equipment, or Miscellaneous Services.

Contract. An agreement made for open market procurements greater than $25,000.

Delivery Order. Small purchases bought against an existing contract.

RPMB. AFM's Real Property Management Branch.

Glossary Entries

C **Exhibits.** If you need to include supplementary material, you may add exhibits to the back of your P&P. Exhibits should be numbered in the right margin and included in the Table of Contents as a major heading.

Exiting.
Save your document before exiting the macro or WordPerfect. The macro will prompt you to run the spell checker and to print your P&P. After this printer prompt, press "**Ctrl-F4**" (whether you've printed or not). The Save File Box appears. Give your P&P a filename when prompted (you might want to use the P&P number as the filename).   To exit the macro, press **Ctrl-F4**. Select **Quit the Macro** to exit. If you find yourself "stuck" in the document and unable to exit, press the **Esc** button. This will not damage your document or the macro. A box will appear that says, "This execution is being canceled at user request." Click **OK** to exit the macro, and close to exit the document.

Reentering Your File and the Macro.
During the Comments Stage and clearance, you will need to edit the first draft. Do this by selecting the **P&PCont** macro from the macros directory. Follow the instructions in the dialog box. This macro will enable you to put the P&P into the proper format, and will position you at the point where you last entered text. This macro will not prompt you for any of the headings on the cover page. It should be used only to alter the body of the P&P text and to create the Table of Contents. The Menu Instructions Box for the **P&PCont** macro contains four choices you can make while entering text:

1. Section Heading
2. Subsection Heading
3. Enter text only
4. Table of Contents/Quit the macro

As you make changes to the P&P, your text may shift from page to page, thus changing the table of contents. Therefore, you should make sure your Table of Contents is regenerated each time you make changes to the document. The **P&PCont** macro will regenerate the table with new numbers.

Generating the Table of Contents. Before you save or exit the P&P, the macro will ask, "Is the P&P more than 2 pages?" If you select "yes", the Table of Contents menu box will appear on the screen. It will ask if you are ready to generate a Table of Contents. If you select "yes", the macro will automatically generate one for you.

5. Clearance of the P&P

Upon completion of the draft, the P&P must pass through three stages: (1) **Comments**, (2) **Clearance**, and (3) **Final Preparation**. Originating offices oversee all three stages. Heads of originating offices must ensure that the content of P&P's are correct, and that P&P's conform to the standards and format prescribed in this P&P. In order to achieve these goals, managers should follow the process described in this section. For potentially controversial subjects, or for other reasons, heads of originating offices may choose to review a draft P&P before it enters the Comments Stage.

Comments Stage. After preparing a draft, you are ready for the Comments Stage. During this period, you allow other persons in the REE agencies to review and comment on the P&P.

C **Selecting Reviewers.** Make a list of customers to whom you will send a copy of the draft. Consider sending a draft to a representative sampling of actual users to provide feedback on the P&P's effectiveness. You **must** include certain customers (see below); and others you and your unit management may choose. All of these persons are required to receive a draft of the P&P; however, they are not required to make comments. If the P&P applies to only one agency, persons in other serviced agencies do not need to review the P&P. For example, if the P&P applies only to CSREES, ERS employees should not receive a copy.

Mandatory Reviewers:

All ARS Area Administrative Officers (AAO's)
ARS Area union representatives (Ask AGO's to get comments from to their union representatives, if they have one in their Area)
Civil Rights Staff, ARS
Director, ARS Information Staff

Assistant to Administrator, CSREES
Director, Central Operations Staff, ERS
Associate Deputy Administrator for Field Operations, NASS
Assistant Deputy Administrator - Administrative Management
Associate Deputy Administrator - Financial Management
Administrative Officer, NAL
All Division Directors, AFM
Originator's internal chain-of-command
Issuances Manager, AFM

C **The Review.** Attach a draft of the P&P to an "REE Issuance Review Sheet," form ARS-484 (available in the Informs system on the LAN), or to an REE Issuance Review Sheet especially designed for a review by E-mail. (You can obtain copies of this form from the REE Issuances Manager, ITD). The Review Sheet states the originator's name and telephone number, the reason for issuing or reissuing the P&P, and a gives a cut-off date for comments. Ten working days is a good average, but, when appropriate, you may set a different deadline, with a 5-day minimum. When the cutoff day arrives and you have not received responses from some of your reviewers, you are no longer required to accept comments and may move ahead with the process. **Reviewers that do not respond within established deadlines will be assumed to have concurred unless an extension is requested and granted by the originator. However,** consider your customers. You may want to give reviewers who are directly affected by the P&P (particularly those outside of AFM) a courtesy call to remind them of the deadline, or give them a few extra days.

C **Comment Resolution.** Incorporate reviewers' suggestions as much as possible. However, if two or more reviewers disagree on certain issues or language, you should informally negotiate compromises or correct any incorrect perceptions held by reviewers. If you need assistance, you should involve your supervisor.

Internal Clearance. After incorporating comments, create a clearance package consisting of:

C Form ARS-485, "Approval for Final Issuance" (Compile all comment responses and prepare form 485 for signature of head of originating office).

C Form ARS-482, "REE Issuance Clearance Transmittal" (List names of clearing officials for clearance and approvals).

C The new draft and any comments.

Send the package through your internal chain-of-command: section head, branch chief, and division director/head of office. After all have reviewed the draft and initialed the ARS-482, the division director/head of office returns the clearance package to the originator, who makes requested changes if required.

The originator resubmits corrected draft (if required) to director or head of office for approval signature and then sends the clearance package, an original and one copy of the P&P, and an exact electronic copy (WordPerfect 6.1) of the issuance to the REE Issuances Manager in ITD.

DAAFM Clearance.

The Issuances Manager reviews the P&P for compliance with the REE Issuances system and prepares it for clearance through the REE agencies, beginning with the Associate Deputy Administrator for Financial Management (ADAFM) if the issuance pertains to financial management, the Assistant Deputy Administrator for Administrative Management (ADAAM), and to the Deputy Administrator for Administrative and Financial Management (DAAFM). The DAAFM reviews the P&P, checks a concurrence box, dates and signs for final approval, if appropriate.

If the DAAFM checks. . .		The next step is. . .
Concur/No Comments	ö	proceed with REE Agencies clearance
Concur/With Comments	ö	originator should consult supervisor, address comments, make changes, then proceed with REE Agencies clearance
Non-Concur	ö	originator should address comments, make changes as requested, then resubmit a new copy to the divisional chain-of-command

REE Agencies Clearance.

After approving the P&P, the DAAFM sends it to the heads of all agencies to which the P&P applies. Each agency head reviews the P&P, checks one of three boxes on the clearance form, and signs for approval, if appropriate. The agency head then returns the P&P to the REE Issuances Manager.

Final Version.

Upon receiving the P&P, the Issuances Manager prepares it for inclusion in the system. Issuances are then converted to html and posted on the P&P website. The Issuances Manager retains the ARS forms and the final version as permanent records.

The P&P Website.

The P&P website contains the current P&P's, bulletins, and most manuals. Manuals that are not numbered and are not considered part of this system will not be available on this site. Issuances on the website will be the most current.

Distribution. With the availability of all REE issuances on the website, hard copies will not be distributed. However, hard copies can be printed from the website by downloading WordPerfect copies. Printing instructions are available on the page.

Announcing New Issuances. When new issuances are added to the site or major changes to issuances are made, the Issuances Manager will announce these additions or changes by E-mail to REE offices in Headquarters, ERS, NASS, and CSREES Administrative units, AFM Division Directors, and ARS Area and Location Administrative Officers.

Changes to Issuances. Minor changes to issuances will be made to the system by the Issuances Manager. It is the responsibility of the originator of an issuance to notify the Issuances Manager when minor changes need to be made. Comments from reviewers will not be required for minor changes to issuances. Minor changes include: organizational name changes, address changes, changes in formatting, etc. Announcements for minor changes to issuances will not be required. Changes that modify or alter the meaning or content of the issuance are considered major changes and will undergo the review and approval process before they can be made to the issuance. Originators of issuances will determine when major changes are needed and will submit approved changes to the Issuances Manager, who will make the changes to the issuances website and send an E-mail announcement to offices in Headquarters, AFM and REE Administrative offices. Originators of the issuances will be responsible for sending announcements of these changes to any of their specific functional customers, i.e., personnel assistants, budget technicians, etc..

6. Bulletins

Bulletins are temporary in nature and are used to issue notices, reminders, or changes that require immediate attention. Although bulletins only need an abbreviated review and clearance process, draft copies should be sent for comments through the originator's internal chain of command, to the Issuances Manager, and to other people having an interest in the subject. The content and extent of the policies in bulletins should reflect whose signature approval is required, and this decision should be made by the head of the originating office.

Bulletin Format. The bulletin format will be simple and uncomplicated, consisting of block style paragraphs. Section headings within the text of the bulletin are optional and left to the discretion of the originator. A bulletin macro is available on the AFM LAN to format the cover page of bulletins and prompts you for the following headings.

C   **Title:** REE Bulletin.

C   **Subject Title.** The title should accurately reflect the content of the bulletin.

C   **Number.** The number contains the year followed by a sequential 3-digit numbering system that is maintained by the Issuances Manager, ITD. (Example: 97-010). Bulletin numbers must be obtained from the Issuances Manager. See Section 1, "Numbering System", for assigned bulletin numbers.

C   **Date.** Use the date the bulletin is signed/approved.

C   **Originating Office.** The name of the office (Division, Branch, AFM/ARS) responsible for originating the issuance.

- C **Distribution.** Use the P&P distribution list for bulletins. Bulletins may also indicate a specific audience; e.g., ARS Administrative Officers, Contracting Officers, Timekeepers, NASS Field Offices, etc.

- C **Expiration Date.** Make your expiration date as time specific as possible, not to exceed 1 year.

Bulletin Procedures/Responsibilities

Head of Originating Offices (Division Director/Branch Chief):

- C Determine the need for bulletin.
- C Assign development of bulletin to originator (subject specialist).
- C Decide whose signature approval is required for bulletin.

Originator:

- C Prepare draft bulletin. Call the Issuances Manager to obtain a bulletin number. Bulletins should get the message across quickly. Be brief and explain only the essentials.
- C Send draft to reviewers, providing deadline date for return of comments. Where possible, use electronic mail for this process. Reviewers whose comments are required: persons in the originator's internal chain-of-command, Issuances Manager, and any other persons having an interest in the subject.
- C Reconcile comments received from reviewers. Compile all comment responses on form ARS-485.
- C Prepare final version and get final approval and signature on bulletin of the heading of the originating office (AFM division directors in most instances).
- C Submit the final approved bulletin (signed hard copy AND an electronic version) to Issuances Manager for posting on the website and announcing its availability.

Reviewers:

- C Provide feedback/comments on draft bulletins to originators within set deadlines.

Issuances Manager:

- C Keeps log of bulletin numbers.
- C Comments on all bulletins, paying particular attention to format and writing style.
- C Maintains official copies and records of bulletins.
- C Announces posting of new bulletins on website.
- C Provide guidance and assistance.

7. Manuals

Manuals provide extensive "how-to" procedures for specific administrative functions. Originators are encouraged to incorporate procedures into P&P's whenever possible, but when the procedures are extensive, they may prefer to develop a separate manual.

Manual Format. The manual format should resemble the concise, reader-friendly style of a P&P, containing block style paragraphs and sections whenever possible. The section headings and text are left to the discretion of the originator. A macro to assist in the preparation of manuals is available.

Manual Review. Because of the technical nature of manuals, they should be reviewed by a sampling of actual users, the Issuances Manager, and any other key personnel with the need to know, as determined by the originator.

C   If a manual needs approval and clearance from the DAAFM and/or any of the REE agency heads, the P&P clearance process must be followed.

C   If a manual is cleared and approved by the head of the originating office, then it is forwarded to the REE Issuances Manager, who prepares it for inclusion in the system.

8. Grammar, Standard Usage, and Style

To ensure uniformity of style in REE issuances, this section provides a brief summary of some important usage rules, as well as style preferences. Generally, the standard for grammar, usage, and mechanics is the Government Printing Office (GPO) *Style Manual*. The guidelines in this section either amplify or amend the rules established by GPO. If you need information on a topic that is not covered in this section, consult the GPO *Style Manual*. The rules listed in this section pertain only to REE issuances and may not necessarily apply to other agency documents.

Abbreviations. Use abbreviations that are familiar to your customers, and introduce abbreviations the first time you use them.

C   You do not need to introduce abbreviations of any of the REE agencies (ARS, CSREES, ERS, and NASS) or AFM. Likewise, when referring to the Department of Agriculture, abbreviate **USDA** without introduction. If, however, you refer to a subsection of an agency (PPD, ITD) or an agency in USDA other than the REE agencies (Office of Operations, Office of General Counsel), always introduce the abbreviation. For **example:**

        All employees need to complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP). Supervisors should submit IDP's to AFM's Human Resources Division.

C   Do not use an abbreviation if you will use it fewer than five times in the document. But, if

you use an abbreviation more than twice in the same paragraph, abbreviate, even if you do not use it again in the document. If you use an abbreviation five or more times, introduce it the first time and include it in the glossary. You may reintroduce an abbreviation if you have not used it in several pages.

Referencing Forms and Other P&P's.
References are similar to abbreviations in that you need to introduce forms or P&P's to which you refer in a document, particularly the first time. If you refer to a form five or more times in your P&P, you must introduce it the first time and list it in the Glossary. With forms, give the form number and then, set off by commas, the form name. Do not capitalize *form*. With P&P's, give the number and then, set off by commas and quotation marks, its title. After you have referred to a form or a P&P once, you do not need to reintroduce it. For example:

Complete form SF-71, Application for Leave, in advance.

The supervisor must sign form AD-0XX, Permission to Sing on Duty. Forward the AD-0XX to the Secretary of Agriculture.

See P&P 010, "REE Administrative Issuances System," for more information.

Writing Style.
Use a writing style that is "reader-friendly", concise, and direct. Making rules more readable will better serve REE customers. Keep your reader in mind at all times. Refrain from using wordiness and legalese, and try to avoid these words and phrases:

- Data is, Media is (*Data* and *Media* are plural; the correct plural verb to use is *are*.)
- Memorandums (Use *memoranda* instead.)
- Due To
- Shall (Use *must* or *will* instead.)
- For the purpose of evaluating (Change to: *to evaluate*.)
- Pursuant (Use *under* instead.)

Consider the following tips for "plain English" writing:

- Make headings informative. Questions work well: "Why is interest due?"

- Use "you" to speak directly to the reader--a key technique. For example, "If you own operating rights that were transferred...."

- Use verbs in the active (not passive) voice. Write "Test the sample," not "the sample must be tested," or "supervisors submit forms to NFC," not "forms are submitted to NFC."

C Keep words and sentences lean and to the point.
C Use short sections and paragraphs. White space helps readers.

C Check the National Partnership for Reinventing Government's (NPR) Plain Language Action Network website at http://plainlanguage.gov.

Capitalization and Spelling.

In addition to GPO rules, use the following guidelines with respect to REE agencies' issuances:

C Capitalize *agency* **only** when using it as a synonym for a particular agency. Likewise, capitalize *Department* as a synonym for USDA. Do not capitalize *departmental,* **but** *Departmental Regulations.* The same rules apply *for federal, president, congress,* and *government.* For example:

> Each agency must establish guidelines.
> You must have your agency head's approval.
> ARS has established the policy; the Agency will not be moved.

C Do not capitalize titles of a position (branch chief, division director, agency head), unless you are referring to a specific person or position (e.g., *John Jones, Administrator).*

C Use the spell check feature of WordPerfect on the final draft.

9.   Summary of Responsibilities

Agency Heads

• Approve P&P's affecting their agencies.

DAAFM (Deputy Administrator, Administrative and Financial Management)

• Approves all P&P's prior to approval by the heads of REE agencies.
• Recommends areas that REE administrative issuances should address.

ADAFM (Associate Deputy Administrator, Financial Management)

C Reviews all P&P's that pertain to financial management prior to review by ADAAFM.

ADAAFM (Assistant Deputy Administrator, Administrative and Financial Management)

C Reviews all P&P's prior to approval by the DAAFM.

Division Directors, Branch Chiefs, Heads of Originating Offices

- Determine the need for the creation or revision of issuances that affect their areas.
- Determine who will originate P&P's.
- Notify Issuances Manager of the status of all issuances in their areas.
- Ensure that the content and format of issuances originating from their organizations are accurate, complete, and understandable.

Reviewers

- Provide feedback, if desired, on drafts to originators of P&P's within reasonable deadlines.

Originators

- Research and create P&P's on subjects that require explanation of policies and procedures.
- Strive to make issuances as reader-friendly as possible.
- Take responsibility for their written products.
- Provide other key members of the REE agencies with an opportunity to comment on P&P's.
- Reconcile comments as appropriate.
- Coordinate the clearance of those P&P's which they write.

Issuances Manager

- Oversees the tracking, printing, distributing, and recording of all P&P's and bulletins.
- Provides training to originators on how to write and format issuances, and assists originators with issuances when requested.
- Comments on all issuances, paying attention to format and writing style.
- Assigns numbers to all Bulletins and new P&P's.
- Announces the posting of new issuances to REE offices.

10.   Glossary

Bulletin. A temporary publication (expires within 1 year) used to issue notices, reminders, or changes that require immediate attention, page substitutions, additions or deletions to P&P's and/or manuals.

Comments Stage. A time during which originators send out draft P&P's to various personnel in the agencies for comment.

Form ARS-482. REE Issuance Clearance Transmittal.

Form ARS-484. REE Issuance Review Sheet.

Form ARS-485. Approval for Issuance of Final P&P or Bulletin.

Internal Chain-of-Command. The originator's section head, branch chief, and director.

Issuances Manager. A member of TRB who oversees the issuances system, assigns issuance numbers, and coaches originators on format, process, and style.

Manual. Permanent issuance used to issue lengthy, detailed "how-to" functional procedures to primary end users.

Originators. People who use their expertise to research and create P&P's on subjects that require explanation of policies and procedures.

P&P. Permanent issuance that contain standing and officially approved policies and procedures governing the functions of the REE agencies.

Reviewers. Persons in the REE agencies who give feedback to originators of P&P's during the Comments Stage. Originators determine who will comment on a P&P; although, some reviewers are always mandatory.

TRB. Telecommunications and Records Branch, Information and Technology Division, AFM.

W. G. HORNER
Deputy Administrator
Administrative and Financial Management

Exhibit 1

P&P Preparation Checklist

1. Check all information on the cover page (title, number, distribution, etc.) for accuracy.

2. Verify that all authorities and references cited in the issuance are accurately cited.

3. Ensure that all cross-referenced directives/P&P's are still current.

4. Did you contact the necessary cross-functional person(s) to ensure that information is accurate?

5. Is there a Summary of Responsibilities section?

6. Are there jargon, forms, or abbreviations which are referred to frequently? If so, is there a glossary?

7. Do the Table of Contents entries agree with the headings and subheadings in the text?

8. If updating an issuance, ensure that all information has been copied correctly.

9. Are there any unnecessary line breaks, page breaks, or pages?

10. Did you spell check the document?

11. Proofread the document for content, spelling, grammar, phrasing, and overall readability before sending it out for review. Did you use plain language?

12. Use an ARS form 484, "REE Issuance Review Sheet" to send to your selected reviewers. Be sure to include the mandatory reviewers, as well as other pertinent persons. Use an ARS form 485, "Approval for Issuance" to incorporate reviewers' comments. Prepare an ARS form 482, "REE Issuance Clearance Transmittal" for final clearances and approvals.

13. Contact the REE Issuances Manager when questions arise.