

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Information Resources Management

Part 387: Forms Management

Chapter 1: Policy and Guidance for Creating, Using, and Maintaining Forms

Originating Office: Office of the Chief Information Officer

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1.1 **Purpose.** The purpose of this chapter is to provide Departmental policy and guidance for forms management, regardless of the medium. Forms management ensures that forms are consistent, follow best practices, and adhere to standards set by the Department.

1.2 **Scope.** The policy and procedures in this chapter apply to all Department of the Interior (DOI) bureaus and offices.

1.3 **Authorities.** The authorities for forms management include:

- A. Federal Records Act (44 U.S.C. 31).
- B. Federal Records and Standard and Optional Forms (41 CFR 101-11).
- C. Standard and Optional Forms (41 CFR 101-26.302).
- D. Standard and Optional Forms Management Program (41 CFR 102).
- E. Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501).
- F. Information Technology Management Reform Act (P.L. 104-106).
- G. Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public (5 CFR Part 1320).
- H. Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA, Pub. L. 105-277).
- I. The Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a).
- J. Homeland Security Presidential Directive-12 (HSPD-12).

K. The Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996, 40 U.S.C. 1401.

L. 43 CFR Public Lands: Interior; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-130, Management of Federal Information Resources.

1.4 Definitions.

A. Form. A form is defined as any arrangement of data fields with space for filling in data in a pre-determined format designed to systematically and repetitively collect, store, extract, and/or transmit the prescribed data, regardless of the medium. A form should not gather redundant information of an already existing form.

B. Non-Official Form. A non-official form is utilized for exclusive use within a single office and is limited in scope (e.g., internal training survey). They may not be an official record; do not need a history of information maintained; and the disposition is transitory or short-term.

C. Official Form. An official form is designed as an instrument used to collect information that supports agency, operational, and mission responsibilities of an organization efficiently and cost effectively. The form is essential to accomplish a mission need. Official forms generally fall into one of the following categories:

(1) Standard/Common and Optional Forms. Standard/Common forms are prescribed by Federal agencies and approved by the General Services Administration (GSA) for mandatory Government-wide use (e.g., Standard Form 71: Request for Leave or Approved Absence). An optional form is developed for use in two or more agencies and approved by GSA for optional use Government-wide.

(2) Other Agency Forms. The forms of other agencies (such as the U.S. Department of Labor or U.S. Postal Service) are authorized for use for functions to which they can be applied.

(3) Department of the Interior Forms (DI). These are forms that eliminate the need to duplicate commonly used forms within bureaus/offices; they can be used by two or more bureaus/offices; and the need for the form cannot be met by other existing forms. The use of DI forms is mandatory, however, exceptions may be made. Guidance for exceptions can be found in the *Forms Development Process Guide*.

(4) Bureau Forms. Forms unique to a single bureau that incorporate all of the bureau requirements and are used bureau-wide.

(5) Departmental Office Forms. When the need for a form is unique to a specific Departmental Office, for example, Office of Wildland Fire, the form will be adopted as an Office Form.

D. Departmental Staff. Departmental staff includes, but is not limited to, employees,

contractors, or volunteers.

1.5 Information Collection Request. An information collection request is a submission to OMB requesting approval for the agency to collect information from 10 or more persons in the public, regardless of whether the collection is mandatory, voluntary, or required to obtain or retain a benefit.

1.6 Stocked and Issued Forms. Stocked and issued forms are a collection of pre-printed items, such as certificates, labels, tags, stickers, booklets, instructions, cover sheets, and log books, that are classified as forms. A stocked and issued form is a pre-printed product that is regularly kept on-hand (i.e., stocked) for distribution.

1.7 Policy. It is the policy of DOI to use efficient, effective, and economical procedures to create, use, and maintain forms.

1.8 Objectives. The objectives of DOI's forms management policy are to:

- A. Improve data collection from filled forms.
- B. Eliminate conflicting, duplicative, and obsolete forms.
- C. Leverage electronic signatures and automated workflows for forms.
- D. Reduce the use of paper for forms.
- E. Provide requirements for a centralized repository for forms.

1.9 Responsibilities.

A. Chief Information Officer (CIO). The CIO is responsible for designating a Departmental Forms Manager.

B. Departmental Forms Manager. The Departmental Forms Manager is responsible for the following:

- (1) Developing and administering policy and guidance for forms management.
- (2) Coordinating bureau and office form needs.
- (3) Establishing, using, and maintaining a centralized DOI forms portal.
- (4) Maintaining an inventory of all current DOI forms.
- (5) Providing guidance and support in centralizing and standardizing

Department-wide forms to the maximum extent practical.

(6) Creating and updating the *Forms Master Style Guide* and *Forms Development Process Guide* and other forms guidance as needed.

C. Heads of Bureaus and Offices. Heads of bureaus and offices are responsible for designating a bureau or office Forms Manager to support DOI's forms program.

D. Bureau and Office Forms Managers. All bureau and office Forms Managers are responsible for:

(1) Ensuring compliance with DOI forms management policies, standards, and guidelines within their bureau or office.

(2) Approving and managing their respective bureau or office forms in a manner consistent with DOI's *Forms Development Process Guide* and *Forms Master Style Guide*.

(3) Maintaining current versions of their bureau or office form in the DOI forms portal in conjunction with the respective form owner.

(4) Managing the collection of data from filled forms and form usage business metrics.

(5) Coordinating with DOI and responsible Records Officers, Section 508 Coordinators, Privacy Officers, Information Collection Clearance Officers (ICCO), and form owners concerning the creation, storage, use, and approval of forms, as outlined in the *Forms Development Process Guide*.

(6) Ensuring the information collected on official forms is necessary and does not duplicate information collected on other existing forms.

(7) Ensuring the assignment of form numbers, edition dates, as well as the format and content of forms are consistent with DOI's published *Forms Master Style Guide*.

(8) Reviewing all forms periodically, at least every 5 years or when an action is initiated to revise, rescind, or consolidate a form(s).

(9) Ensuring all stocked and issued forms are properly identified and controlled for reference, printing, stocking, and distribution.

(10) Facilitating communications with bureau and office users, as appropriate, regarding DOI's forms program.

(11) Coordinating with the Departmental Forms Manager to submit a waiver for forms specific and unique to a bureau or office business need (i.e., a form that is not

applicable for use Department-wide).

E. Managers and Supervisors. Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- (1) Complying with forms management requirements established by the above authorities, Departmental policy, and other Federal requirements.
- (2) Supporting forms management activities within their respective bureau or office.
- (3) Ensuring bureau and office employees and form owners understand their forms management responsibilities.

F. Forms Owners. Forms owners are responsible for:

- (1) Ensuring that forms are up-to-date and remain valid for current business processes.
- (2) Obtaining all necessary approvals from responsible Records Officers, Section 508 Coordinators, Privacy Officers, ICCO, including managers and supervisors to ensure compliance with authorities (e.g., Privacy Act and Paperwork Reduction Act) and DOI guidance.
- (3) Submitting all necessary information to the bureau or office Forms Manager for all forms management needs (e.g., revision or waivers).

G. Departmental Staff. Departmental staff is responsible for following forms management requirements, regardless of the medium.

1.10 **Standards**. The following guidance must be used when developing a DOI, bureau, or office form:

- A. The *Forms Development Process Guide* and *Forms Master Style Guide* will be followed.
- B. In accordance with the *Forms Master Style Guide*, a unique form number must be assigned to a form that meets the form definition criteria.
- C. A form that has not been approved or designated “official” must go through the process identified in 1.10A or be considered for decommissioning.
- D. Under the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, most forms that are to be completed by the public (i.e., individuals, businesses, organizations, foreign citizens and governments, state, local, and tribal governments) require approval by OMB prior to issuance. If OMB approval is required, an Information Collection Request must be submitted to OMB. Bureaus and offices should contact their ICCO for information on the approval process.

1.11 **Requirements.** Forms will be created, reviewed, tested, and automated, according to the *Forms Development Process Guide* and *Forms Master Style Guide*; in addition, all DOI forms will be reviewed by the appropriate Forms Manager (or other approved stakeholder), to determine if they meet the criteria outlined in the *Forms Development Process Guide*. The disposition of forms will be in accordance with the Department Records Schedule.