

QUICK START GUIDE FOR DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTIVES

1. The Drafting Process

USDA agencies and staff offices will use the Departmental Directives System to issue policies, procedures, and guidance which have general applicability to employees and two or more USDA agencies or staff offices.

All Departmental directives (Departmental Regulations (DR), Departmental Manual (DM), Departmental Notice (DN), Departmental Guidebooks (DG), and Secretary’s Memorandum (SM)) must be created with Microsoft Word and follow the format requirements provided in the latest version of [DM 0100-001, *Preparing Departmental Directives*](#). Links to the templates for each type of issuance can be found on the [Departmental Directives webpage](#), the [Departmental Forms webpage](#), and at the end of this guide.

The mandatory and optional sections of Departmental directives are described in greater detail in DM 0100-001, Sections 3b and 3c.

Mandatory Sections	Optional Sections
Table of Contents (except SMs)	Background
Purpose	Definitions (Appendix preferred)
Scope	Acronyms and Abbreviations (Appendix preferred)
Special Instructions/Cancellations	Compliance
Policy (for DRs & DNs)	Policy Exceptions
Procedures (for DMs, DGs, and sometimes DNs)	Inquiries
Roles and Responsibilities	
Authorities and References (Appendix preferred)	

The recommended order of the sections for the specific types of directives is detailed in DM 0100-001, Section 3d.

SMs and DNs are effective for 1 year, at which time they either need to be codified into a permanent directive or will expire. DRs should be revised or reissued at least every 5 years; DMs and DGs should be revised or reissued at least every 3 years.

2. The Agency/Staff Office (Informal) Clearance Process

The Office of Primary Interest (OPI; also known as the policy owner or sponsor) or agency/staff office is responsible for establishing their own internal clearance process. The Departmental process may be used as an example, or the OPI may establish a different process.

The OPI is responsible for drafting the directive and clearing it through their organization’s internal clearance process. OPIs may only prepare Departmental directives within the scope

of their delegated authority. Comments received from offices within the organization and other stakeholders throughout the Department should be reviewed, adjudicated, and incorporated as appropriate into the draft directive.

After completing the internal clearance process, the OPI prepares the final draft directive package. The final draft of the directive must:

- Be on the appropriate directive masthead form;
- Be created using the Department's enterprise word processing solution [Microsoft Word];
- Comply with the formatting requirements identified DM 0100-001; and
- Be accompanied by a completed copy of Form AD-116, *Clearance and Approval for Departmental Issuances* and Form AD-3108, *Note to Reviewers for Draft Departmental Directives*.
 - The AD-116 form should include stakeholder reviewer signatures in Section 9.
 - The AD-116 form should include the OPI's agency/staff office executive leadership internal clearance reviewer signatures in Section 10.
 - The AD-116 form must include the OPI's agency/staff office head signature as the final entry in Section 10 to authorize submission of the draft directive into the Departmental formal clearance process.

Detailed agency/staff office process information can be found in DM 0100-001, Section 5a.

3. The Formal Clearance Process

When the DDM receives the draft package, the Form AD-116 will be checked for appropriate clearances and the Form AD-3018 will be checked to determine if a DR or DM revision submission is eligible for the streamlined formal clearance process. The draft directive will be reviewed for compliance with Departmental formatting requirements, numbering, grammar, clarity, and alignment/overlap/conflict with existing guidance. Upon completion of the review, the DDM will return the directive package to the OPI if there are issues to be addressed or will transmit the draft directive package to the next formal clearance official.

The DDM is responsible for tracking and managing the draft directive through the formal review process and will keep the OPI informed as to the progress of the directive through the process.

Detailed formal clearance process information can be found in DM 0100-001, Section 5b.

4. Package Finalization/Signature Authority

For DRs, DMs, DGs, and DN: Once all formal clearance officials have completed their reviews and signed off on the AD-116, the DDM returns the draft package to the OPI to finalize the package (i.e., incorporate final edits, remove any margin notes, comments, line

numbering, or “Draft” watermarks; check the directive for Section 508 compliance; ensure formatting requirements are met) and prepare the directive for the Signature Authority’s approval. Once the package is finalized, the OPI returns the final package to the DDM to submit it for signature.

The DDM will submit the package to the Signature Authority. The Signature Authority signs, either in ink or electronically, in the designated space at the bottom of the AD 116, signifying approval of the directive as written. The directive itself should not be signed or initialed in any way (with the exception of SMs – see below). There must be a signature on the AD116 before the directive can be published to the Departmental Directives web page.

Once the final signature is obtained, the signed AD-116 and the final directive are returned electronically to the DDM. The date the Signature Authority signs the AD-116 will be considered to be the effective date of the directive, unless the DDM is directed otherwise by the Signature Authority.

For SMs: Only the Secretary or Acting Secretary can sign an SM and provide approval by signing the original SM and/or the AD-116. The original copy of an SM must be physically signed in blue or black ink. The signature on the SM serves as the Signature Authority signature on the AD-116, but the Secretary/Acting Secretary has the option to sign both documents.

Once the Secretary/Acting Secretary’s signature is obtained, the following documents need to be returned via email to the DDM:

- A clean scanned copy of the physically signed and dated SM with the assigned directive number (must be suitable for posting on the USDA Departmental Directives web page);
- A clean copy of the SM, in editable enterprise word processing format; and
- The AD-116. The date stamped on the original SM will be considered to be the effective date of the SM, unless the DDM is directed otherwise by the Secretary/Acting Secretary.

Detailed package finalization/signature authority information can be found in DM 0100-001, Section 5c.

5. Posting/Publication

Once a complete directive package has been returned to the DDM, the directive will be converted to PDF and HTML formats for posting on the Departmental Directives web page. The DDM will transmit the final converted documents to the Webmaster for posting. Once posting is confirmed, the DDM will verify the quality of the posts. If the documents need to be adjusted in some way, the DDM will ensure the corrections are made.

Detailed publication information can be found in DM 0100-001, Section 5d.

FORMS/TEMPLATES AND DIRECTIVES

[AD-116](#), *Clearance and Approval for Departmental Issuances*

[AD-778](#), *Secretary's Memorandum*

[AD-811](#), *Departmental Regulation*

[AD-812](#), *Departmental Manual*

[AD-813](#), *Departmental Notice*

[AD-814](#), *Departmental Guidebook*

[AD-3108](#), *Note to Reviewers for Draft Departmental Directives*

[DM 0100-001](#), *Preparing Departmental Directives*

[DR 0100-001](#), *Departmental Directives System*