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Supersedes: EPA's 1984 Forms Manual

Environmental Protection Agency

Procedures for Forms Management - CIO 2103-P-01.0

1. Purpose.

This manual establishes responsibilities and procedures concerning the process of Agency forms approval and management, regardless of format.

2. Scope and Applicability.

This Policy addresses all management processes for internal administrative use forms and external public use forms. These Procedures apply to all Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Programs, Regions, Labs and Offices.

3. Judicial Review.

These standards are intended to improve the internal management of EPA and are not intended to, and do not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the Agency, its officers or employees, or any other person.

4. Audience.

The audience for this Policy includes all EPA Programs, Regions, Labs and Offices.

5. Background.

The Code of Federal Regulation (41 C.F.R. Section 102-193.20) establishes that the head of each Federal Agency must assign specific responsibility for development and implementation for records management, including forms, and issue a directive establishing program objectives, responsibilities, authorities, standards and guidelines. In addition, the C.F.R. advises Agencies to not create forms that collect information inefficiently or unnecessarily, and states that Agencies should review all existing forms periodically to determine if they can be improved or canceled.

6. Standards.

Objective

The objective of the Forms Management Program is to achieve economic and efficient use of forms in the collection, analysis, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. In achieving this objective, the forms management program promotes and controls the use of forms designed to:

- a. Standardize procedures
- b. Streamline approval process
- c. Standardize data collection and display
- d. Ensure that all internal and external forms are approved
- e. Maintain a centralized and complete inventory of all active EPA forms
- f. Minimize burden

Program Requirements

The Agency Forms Management Program requires responsible officials to:

- a. Establish and implement standards and procedures for the submission, review, approval and identification of Agency forms.
- b. Ensure that all EPA forms are approved prior to use and included in an EPA forms inventory.
- c. Establish and implement standards for the formats in which forms are made available, such as in paper and electronic form, as well as appropriate distribution methods.
- d. Gather essential management information concerning the number, types, formats, and distribution methods used for forms in use.
- e. Provide for the periodic review of all approved forms for need and design and for possible economies in development, reproduction and distribution.

7. Roles and Responsibilities.

- a. Responsibility for the development and implementation of the EPA Forms Management Program is divided between the Office of Administration and Resource Management (OARM) for internal administrative forms and the Office of Environmental Information (OEI) for external public use forms. Two Forms Officers will manage the Agency forms process; an internal administrative use Forms Officer from OARM and an external public use Forms Officer from OEI.
- b. All Assistant Administrators, the General Counsel, the Inspector General, Associate Administrators, Heads of Staff Offices and Regional Administrators provide for implementation of the Forms Management Program in their respective areas. They should:
 1. Assure that the provisions of this document are carried out within their respective areas of jurisdiction.
 2. Designate individuals within their respective areas to act as Forms Liaisons.
- c. As the Agency's Forms Officers, OARM and OEI shall:
 1. Provide technical guidance to Form Owners and designated Forms Liaisons.
 2. Inform Form Owners that they must obtain clearance on all forms that fall under the Privacy Act of 1974, as described in paragraph e.
 3. Provide guidance on the development, reproduction, distribution and availability of all forms.
 4. Maintain a catalog of all approved Agency wide forms.
 5. Maintain a numbering system for forms and track all forms through a Forms Register.
 6. Approve and provide design service for Agency wide forms.
 7. Coordinate report forms and proposals for gathering information from non-Federal sources in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements.
- d. Forms Liaisons

Forms Liaisons in the Offices of the Assistant Administrators, General Counsel, Inspector General, Associate Administrators, and Regional Administrators and in the Staff Offices coordinate forms management activities within their respective offices.

8. Definitions for Purposes of this Manual (in alphabetical order).

- a. **Directive:** Written communication that initiates or governs actions, conduct, or procedures and is usually printed as circulars, notices, regulations, orders and handbooks, and includes material for the insertion of policy, administrative and operation manuals.
- b. **EPA Form:** A form originated within EPA, approved and ready for use.
- c. **External Public Use Form:** A form that is used by EPA to collect information from the public. These forms should be approved by the OEI Forms Officer prior to use. When these forms are intended to collect information from ten or more public respondents on identical items, these forms must also be approved by OMB.
- d. **Form:** Any document, including letters, post cards, and memorandums, printed or otherwise reproduced with space for filling in information, descriptive material, or addresses. Certain printed items without fill-in spaces, such as contract provisions, instruction sheets, notices, tags, labels, and posters, may be identified as forms when it is advantageous to identify and control them as forms for purposes of reference, printing, stocking, distribution, and use with other forms.
- e. **Forms Liaison:** Forms Liaisons coordinate forms management activities within their respective offices or Regions.
- f. **Forms Officer:** Forms Officers are responsible for the development and implementation of the EPA Forms Management Program. A Forms Officer from the OARM will manage the program for internal administrative use forms. A Forms Officer from the OEI will manage the program for external public use forms.
- g. **Form Owner:** Any individual who is updating or developing a form for internal administrative use or external public use.
- h. **Information Collection Request (ICR):** An ICR is a set of documents that describe reporting, record keeping, survey, or other information collection activities involving the public that EPA plans to (continue to) conduct or sponsor. As a general rule, ICRs are required for external public use forms intended to collect information from ten or more public respondents on identical items. Each request to collect information that is subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) must be sent to and approved by the OMB before a collection begins. Among other things, the ICR provides an overview of the collection, and estimates the cost and time for the public to respond.
- i. **Internal Administrative Use Form:** A form originated within EPA for Agency wide use. This type of form should be approved by the Internal Administrative Use Forms Officer prior to use.

9. Procedures.

- a. Form Approval Procedures
 - 1. There are set procedures concerning forms development and approval. All forms are to be approved prior to use. Once approved, forms should not be

modified without going through the approval process again unless provided a waiver by the approved Forms Officer.

2. To initiate the process of developing and revising an internal administrative use or external public use form or renewing the approval of an external public use form, Form Owners should contact the appropriate Forms Officer well in advance of the time that the form needs to be used.
3. Guidance will be provided as well as a form number once the Form Action Request with all appropriate information and signatures has been received.
4. The Form Owner then develops and/or updates the form in accordance with the Forms design specifications unless the appropriate Forms Officer waives the requirement.
5. Once the form is complete, it is submitted to the appropriate Forms Liaison in each EPA Region or at Headquarters. The Forms Liaison will then submit it to the appropriate Forms Officer for final approval. A form should adhere to the design specifications unless the appropriate Forms Officer waives the requirement. Once approval is received, then the forms may be distributed.
6. Approved forms should be made available in suitable formats and distributed using appropriate methods. All forms should receive approval from the appropriate Forms Officer before being distributed. The appropriate Forms Officer may be contacted for further information.
7. When a form is no longer in use and has become obsolete, the appropriate Forms Officer should be informed.

b. Internal Administrative Use Form Approval Procedures

The requesting office submits a completed Form Action Request with the new and/or updated form to their Forms Liaison for approval before it is submitted to the appropriate Forms Officer.

c. External Public Use Form Approval Procedures

1. The requesting office submits a completed Form Action Request with the new and/or updated form to their Forms Liaison for approval before it is submitted to the appropriate Forms Officer.
2. The Form Owner develops and/or updates their form according to the requirements provided by OEI and through OMB guidance.
3. The Form Owner submits their completed form to OEI at the same time that they submit their ICR package.
4. For forms that are subject to the PRA, EPA must comply with applicable PRA requirements regarding display of the OMB control number and expiration date and the PRA Burden Statement.
5. Forms may not be used unless the related ICR has current OMB approval and the OMB control number is properly displayed. Forms that are subject to the PRA and have not been approved by OMB, have expired, or have been discontinued may not be used and must be removed from all distribution channels.
6. Changes to the form may require the Form Owner to file an ICR or a Change Worksheet (OMB Form 83-C) with OEI and receive approval from OMB. Contact your ICR Desk Officer to confirm whether an ICR or Change Worksheet will be necessary.

7. The OEI Forms Officer will review and approve external public use forms based on consistency with design specifications.
- d. Privacy Act
Under the Privacy Act of 1974 (PL-93-579), all forms which request a Social Security Number or other personal information from an individual must contain the following information:
 1. A statement as to whether the disclosure is mandatory or voluntary
 2. The statutory or other authority under which the information is requested
 3. Intended uses of the information (purpose)
 4. What effects, if any, of not providing the information
 5. How information collected will be disclosed (routine uses)
 6. Whether the individual has the opportunity to decline to give the information or consent to its particular uses
- e. Development and Design
OARM and OEI have developed design specifications for internal administrative use and external public use forms to encourage the development of consistent and user-friendly forms.
- f. Electronic Signature
For external public use forms, OEI has provided the legal framework for electronic signatures on forms submitted under any part of Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) by promulgating the Cross-Media Electronic Reporting Rule (CROMERR), finalized as 40 CFR part 3. CROMERR was published as a final rule on October 13, 2005, and specifically provides for electronic signatures in sections 3.4, 3.10, 3.2000(a), 3.2000(b)(5), and 3.2000(c). Additionally, for internal administrative use forms, refer to IRM Policy Manual 2100B8, Chapter 16, EPA Internal Electronic Signatures Policy.
- g. Locating Forms
Making forms readily available to affected parties is the responsibility of the Form Owner. It is strongly encouraged that Form Owners use multiple avenues to distribute forms. These may include using the Internet, distributing forms directly from the Form Owner office or other governmental entities, and using the National Service Center for Environmental Publications for warehousing and distribution.
- h. Printing Forms
Any reproduction of EPA forms for stocking and distribution purposes by the Agency need to be routed through the EPA Printing Shop. All form print requests should receive signed approval from the appropriate Forms Officer.

10. Additional Information.

For further information, please contact OARM's Office of Administrative Services for policy questions concerning internal administrative use forms or OEI's Office of Information Collection for policy questions concerning external public use forms.