Description of document:	Copy of the Department of Education (ED) Executive Secretariat Handbook, from the employee-only ConnectED internal website. 2017
Requested date:	20-January-2017
Released date:	22-September-2017
Posted date:	02-April-2018
Source of document:	FOIA Request U.S. Department of Education Office of Management Office of the Chief Privacy Officer 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, LBJ 2W218-32 Washington, DC 20202-4536 ATTN: FOIA Public Liaison Fax: (202) 401-0920 Email: EDFOIAManager@ed.gov

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT

Office of the Chief Privacy Officer

September 22, 2017

RE: FOIA Request No. 17-00747-F

This is the final response to your letter dated January 20, 2017, requesting information pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552. Your request was forwarded to the appropriate office to search for documents that may be responsive to your request.

You requested the following:

- A digital/electronic copy of the Executive Secretariat Handbook, which is available to Dept employees on the Connected.ed.gov internal website.

Attached are 83 pages of fully releasable documents responsive to your request. The documents provided are:

- Copy of the Executive Secretariat Handbook, which is available to Dept employees on the Connected.ed.gov internal website.

Provisions of the FOIA allow us to recover the costs pertaining to your request. The Department has concluded that you fall within the category of an "Other" requester. However, the Department has provided you with these responsive documents, at no cost. The Department's release of information at no cost does not constitute the grant of a fee waiver, and does not infer or imply that you will be granted a fee waiver for future requests made under FOIA to the Department.

You have the right to seek further assistance from the Department's FOIA Public Liaison, Robert Wehausen. The Department's FOIA Public Liaison can be reached by e-email at robert.wehausen@ed.gov; by phone at 202-205-0733; by fax at 202-401-0920; or by mail at Office of the Chief Privacy Officer, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, LBJ 2W218-58, Washington, DC 20202-4536, Attn: FOIA Public Liaison.

If you have any questions, please contact the FOIA Service Center at (202) 401-8365 or via e-mail at EDFOIAManager@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Arthur Caliguiran
FOIA Analyst
FOIA Service Center

Attachment

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Topic Index

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Executive Secretariat Staff Listing

Exec Sec Analyst Assignment List

Executive Secretariat main office	**Phone**
Tracey St. Pierre, Director Executive Secretariat	202/401-3067
Deborah Winters, Deputy Director Executive Secretariat	202/401-3067
Laurette Crum	202/401-3067
Margaret West Guenther	202/401-3067
Jim Houser	202/401-3067
Tanya Monroe	202/401-3067
Dianne Naber	202/401-3067
Alexis O'Neill	202/401-3067
Sharon Stevens	202/401-3067
James Webb	202/401-3067
Executive Secretariat correspondence unit	**Phone**
Edgar W. Mayes, Director Correspondence Unit	202/401-2981
Tracy Catoe, Deputy Director	202/401-2981
Tarkishia "Kishia" Kegler	202/401-2981
Darlene Fowler	202/401-2981
Angela Ware	202/401-2981
Darren Murray	202/401-2981
VACANT	202/401-2981
Wendell Washington	202/401-2981

Signature Block

For letters signed in your office, check to see if there is a preference on the signature block. Tab over so the signature block starts near the middle of the page.

For the Secretary

Preferred signature block for the Secretary:

Sincerely,

Secretary

For the Secretary's Chief of Staff

Preferred signature block for the Secretary's Chief of Staff:

Sincerely,

Chief of Staff

For the Deputy Secretary

Preferred signature block for the Deputy Secretary:

Sincerely,

For the Under Secretary

Preferred signature block for the Under Secretary:

Enclosures

If your letter has an enclosure or attachment, note that below the signature block.

Joint Letters

Joint Letters with Other Agencies

Clearance

Contact Exec Sec as soon as the joint letter is first proposed. Send the draft letter to Exec Sec for clearance within the Department, while the other agency or agencies are clearing the document. Make sure the other agencies are clearing the letter with their Executive Secretariats.

Send the final letter to Exec Sec for final approval, before it is signed by any agency.

Signature Block

The closing on joint letters is "Sincerely." Center the closing in the middle of the letter.

Names and titles should be centered under the word "Sincerely." The name and title of the official whose agency has the lead are on the left side. For example, if HHS has the lead:

Sincerely,

Jane Jackson Attorney General	John Doe Secretary of Education	Mary Smith Secretary of Health and Human Services

Letterhead

You may use special project letterhead, such as for a Department reading initiative, but check with Exec Sec first (401-3067).

If each agency's logo will be used, check with Exec Sec before creating letterhead. The agency logos are placed in the same order as the signature blocks.

Joint Letters with non-Federal Organizations

Joint letters with other organizations sometimes raise ethics issues. Provide a draft copy of the letter and any enclosures to Exec Sec. Exec Sec will clear the letter with the OGC Ethics Division.

Follow the procedures listed above for signature blocks and letterhead.

Please send questions, comments, and suggestions to Exec Sec.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

General Information on Memoranda

Types and Uses

Memoranda should be used when there is information your office would like to convey to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary or a matter on which you need a decision.

Included in this section are sample formats on the three types of memoranda you might need to prepare. The formats are set up as Word documents. While viewing the format in your Web browser, you may save it to your personal Word directory. You may then use the format to create your own memorandum.

1. Information Memoranda provide background on something in which the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary might have an interest or need to know. Examples include a report on a Congressional hearing on education legislation, background on an issue affecting the Department that might have been in the newspaper, or a helpful item of information related to education issues, constituencies, or an activity in your office.

2. Action Memoranda are used when a decision or approval is required by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary. Examples include a request for participation in an event, a request to approve international travel, or background and options on a Department issue on which a decision is needed.

3. Regulatory Action Memoranda are used when you want to request approval of regulations your office wishes to forward to OMB or the Federal Register. Your Principal Office forwards these memoranda to Exec Sec through the Office of General Counsel. You can access information on how to prepare Regulatory Action Memoranda on ED's connectED intranet Web site.

Content vs. Format

These formats provide ideas on sections that might be included, but the important thing is for the memo to provide a well-written, informative, and logical discussion of the issues, including all the material needed by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary.

Other Notes

The memo should be on your office's letterhead. Don't date the memo if you are preparing it for the signature of someone outside your immediate office, as there could be a time lag before it is signed; the office signing the memo should date it prior to forwarding it to the Office of the Secretary/Exec Sec. Provide an original copy of action and regulatory action memos, and an original copy of information memos. Exec Sec does not require any copies beyond the original. Also please provide an electronic copy of action and regulatory action memos. Coordinate with your principal office correspondence contact on the process for submitting and clearing internal memoranda within your office and where to send the e-mail containing the electronic files.

If a memo is returned to you for revision, please return the original submission and the comments provided, along with the revised document.

If you have any questions before or during preparation of a memorandum, please call the Executive Secretariat at 202/401-3067 or send an e-mail, and we will be happy to assist. To check the status of a memorandum, you may wish to check first with your principal office's executive secretary, to ensure the memo has been transmitted to the Office of the Secretary.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Recent draft not published Visitors can't see recent changes. Publish this draft.

Publication Start Date: Immediately

Secretary's Scheduling Requests

When submitting scheduling requests to the Secretary, please use the following forms:

For meetings with the Secretary:
OS Meeting Request Form.docx

For events with the Secretary:
OS Event Request Form - 2016.docx

It is the policy of the Secretary's Scheduling Office that meeting or event requests involving the Secretary should be approved by the POC's Assistant Secretary or Chief of Staff. When transmitting the completed form, please note the approval in the transmittal e-mail. Scheduling requests cannot be processed without the approval.

Please e-mail your completed form to John.King@ed.gov.

If you have any questions, please call the Scheduling Office at 202-401-3043

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Guidance on the Department of Education's Exec Sec and DRS Clearance Processes

November 16, 2011

The Executive Secretariat's office (Exec Sec) and the Division of Regulatory Services (DRS) in the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) play critical roles in ensuring that the Department of Education's (Department or ED) policy and legal documents are accurate, of high quality, and consistent with the Administration's policies. This guidance provides guiding principles and procedures for offices to follow through their participation in the DRS and Exec Sec clearance processes. Our goal is to have a collaborative review process that works smoothly and efficiently for offices, and produces high-quality documents within the needed time frame.

Background on DRS, what that office handles, and its clearance process

DRS manages Department clearance of regulatory documents that are published in the *Federal Register*. These include Notices of Proposed Rulemaking, Final Regulations, Notices of Proposed Priorities (NPPs), Notices of Final Priorities (NFPs), and Notices Inviting Applications (NIAs). The goal for the DRS clearance process is to support collaborative decision-making and ensure that program offices consult with reviewing offices to address both policy and legal issues.

DRS ensures that regulatory documents are in compliance with rulemaking requirements, adhere to the format and style of the Office of the Federal Register, and are consistent, to the extent appropriate, across the Department. DRS's Regulatory Quality Manual (RQM) provides detailed instructions and requirements for the drafting of documents, including "boilerplate" language that is included in each document. The RQM can be found on connectED at https://connected.ed.gov/Pages/United%20States%20Department%20of%20Education%20Regulatory%20Quality%20Manual.aspx.

Background on Exec Sec, what that office handles, and its clearance process

Exec Sec serves as the central coordinating point for documents needing the Secretary's or Chief of Staff's signature or that require the Office of the Secretary's review and approval. Exec Sec also coordinates documents needing the Deputy Secretary's signature in addition to a few other types of documents. The following are some examples of the types of documents you need to send to Exec Sec for clearance:

- a letter for the Secretary's signature, such as to Congress, a State official, or others;
- a memorandum for approval, such as for a grant slate your office has developed, policy guidance to States, or a recommended consultant appointment or interagency detail;
- a Dear Colleague letter you are planning to distribute, or a report going to Congress;
- a message your office would like the Secretary to send to attendees at an event, or a certificate for the Secretary's signature;
- a request for approval of international travel or acceptance of payment-in-kind for travel; and
- letters or other documents of a sensitive policy nature or that break new ground that need coordination and review by the Office of the Secretary, regardless of the signature level.

Because of the wide variety of documents Exec Sec handles, its clearance process can vary based on the type of document. A simple thank you letter may be reviewed by Exec Sec staff and the Chief of Staff only. A complex guidance document may go to several offices for clearance. The topic and type of document dictate which offices review it and the process it follows. Exec Sec has prepared FAQs for you and your staff that include more details on its process and contact information for questions at https://share.ed.gov/execsec/Pages/Exec%20Sec%20Clearance%20Process%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.aspx. Exec Sec also has a site on connectED called "Guide to ED Correspondence and Other Documents," with guidelines on preparing letters, templates for different types of memos, and other information at <https://connected.ed.gov/execsec>.

Guiding Principles and Procedures for DRS and Exec Sec Clearance Processes

All offices within the Department have a valuable role to play in the clearance process. Although conflicts may arise in the clearance process, we need to recognize that we function better when we work together as a team, that collaboration can be work, and that everyone is to give their best effort to cooperate and resolve quickly issues that come up during the clearance process.

The office originating a document (originating office) is responsible for drafting a high-quality, well-written, and coherent document that accurately reflects ED policies, priorities, and legal requirements. This is absolutely critical to ensuring that ED's regulations and other documents are clear and comprehensive. If the document is not well drafted and clear from the very beginning, the clearance process will take longer than necessary and unnecessarily consume valuable resources. With respect to discretionary grant competitions, an efficient clearance process is essential to a successful and transparent grant competition.

Guiding Principles and Procedures for Originating Offices to Follow When Submitting Documents for Clearance

Guiding Principles

- Ensure that you have provided a high-quality, well-written, factually accurate document. This streamlines the review process greatly.
- On substantive policy documents, ensure you have coordinated with the key policy and legal staff (such as policy staff in the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (OPEPD) front office, program attorney in OGC, and analyst in the Budget Service) prior to submitting the document for clearance.
- Use the clearance process for final review of a document that has already been well thought out and well written (not for gathering ideas or input, or for help crafting a document not in shape for final review).

Procedures

- If you have certain offices you want to be sure review the document, specify those when you submit the document for clearance. For instance, if the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is submitting a document involving an education research area, it should indicate that the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and the Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS) in OPEPD also should review the document. If there are individuals in certain offices with whom you have already been working, let DRS or Exec Sec know those staff names. If some staff or officials have already reviewed and signed off on the document in the course of your own coordination process, let DRS or Exec Sec know those names.
- If there are background materials or other information that would be helpful for reviewing offices, provide that in your transmittal to DRS or Exec Sec and ask that it be included when the document is distributed. For example, if proposed regulations heavily rely on a body of research, indicate that so reviewing offices can consult that research if they have a question. As another example, if there have been only minor changes from the previous year's document, that would be helpful information for reviewing offices to have.
- When you send the document to DRS or Exec Sec for clearance, indicate who in the originating office has signed off on the document. Most documents submitted to DRS or Exec Sec should have approval by the principal office head personally before being submitted for clearance, though certain documents may be accepted if they have approval by a senior level manager. Also, state a contact person who will be available during the period of review to answer questions from the reviewing offices and who should receive the comments on the document.
- If you are requesting a very short turnaround time for clearance, recognize that it jeopardizes the Department's ability to provide a comprehensive review. Be prepared to tell DRS or Exec Sec what is driving that deadline, and why you are unable to provide clearance offices adequate time for review. Ensure that your office has done its part to prepare the document and submit it timely for clearance, and request expedited processing of only those documents for which it is truly necessary.
- All documents for review need to be submitted in an editable electronic version, such as Word or Excel, unless they are simply for reference.
- **DRS documents only:** Identify for reviewing offices boilerplate language that is generally not changed unless agreed to by DRS. Identify the boilerplate language in the draft of the document circulated for clearance by using a comment box, note, or other signal that the language is boilerplate language.
- **DRS documents only:** Work closely with DRS on the format of the document to ensure that it conforms to DRS' RQM.
- **DRS documents only:** With respect to deadlines, it is helpful for you to have a realistic expectation for turnaround deadlines, particularly in relation to lengthy or detailed technical documents, respecting that staff members reviewing your

document have competing workload demands. DRS will make the final call on its documents as to whether a requested deadline is appropriate. You also may want to work with DRS in advance to establish set timetables for clearance of your office's documents.

- **DRS documents only:** Seek to obtain early agreement on the substance of the document (e.g., regulatory requirements, absolute priorities), particularly for high-profile regulations and, after doing so, make sure that the documents reflect the decisions made through that process. This should be accomplished through the spending plan process for discretionary grant documents. If additional issues arise, work closely with OPEPD (both the front office and the Budget Service), Office of the Under Secretary (OUS) or Office of the Deputy Secretary (ODS), as applicable, and OGC to resolve them. This joint work may best be carried out in meetings rather than numerous e-mail exchanges. Work closely with the program attorney and Budget Service analyst to make sure that the document is consistent with the authorizing statute and regulations. Whenever possible, this effort should be coordinated with the OPEPD front office and OUS or ODS, as applicable, to clarify policy issues.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** When you submit a document, tell Exec Sec if you have a specific requested completion date or time for the Exec Sec review, and the reason for the deadline. For example, if a planned action or event, or a deadline to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) or Congress, is driving a particular due date, provide the specific accurate date and time. Be aware that as Exec Sec works toward your deadline, there will be certain expectations on your staff, such as ensuring that any needed rewrites in response to clearance comments are provided on a timely basis, are responsive to comments, and are of high quality.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** Note that Exec Sec usually provides reviewing offices a three-day due date on routine letters and documents, though it allows as long as ten days on lengthy reports and complex policy documents. Exec Sec is frequently asked to put very short due dates on documents, such as to request a same day or 24-hour turnaround. It is helpful for you to have a realistic expectation for turnaround deadlines, particularly in relation to lengthy or detailed technical documents, respecting that staff members reviewing your document have competing workload demands.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** Do your best to ensure a document or letter needs to move ahead before submitting it for clearance at all. Each document submitted for review involves several people's time, sometimes in multiple offices in the Department. Therefore, it is not a good use of resources when a document is submitted, circulated for clearance, finalized, and approved, only to discover an office decided it was not needed and would not be sent, or that a phone call already took place to handle it. This situation is particularly regrettable with regard to urgent documents that are processed and completed on a rush basis and then withdrawn.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** Documents you submit to Exec Sec for clearance should be complete. For example, if you are requesting a letter for the Secretary's signature to be individually addressed to dozens of addressees, you should submit the draft letter and include the list of addressees in proper format, prepared to the high standard of quality for a letter from the Secretary. If the letter includes enclosures or reference-related documents that will also need clearance, it is desirable that the enclosures and related documents are submitted and reviewed simultaneously, so information is not distributed to clearance offices and reviewed and handled by Exec Sec staff piecemeal.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** If only minor changes are needed after the first round of clearance, Exec Sec staff will make those and share the final version with you for review. Please respond promptly when any questions or redrafts have been submitted to you for review. If comments are more complex, Exec Sec will return them to your office for handling.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** Exec Sec endeavors to ensure that staff in principal offices who submit a document for clearance are aware of the document's status and where it is in the process. If you or other staff members have any questions about the current status of your document, please contact Exec Sec at 202/401-3067, or contact directly the Exec Sec policy analyst assigned to your principal office <https://connected.ed.gov/execsec/Pages/Exec%20Sec%20Analyst%20Assignment%20List.aspx>. If the document is a letter for the Secretary's signature, note that its status may be followed in real time in the Department's correspondence tracking system. You may also view a copy of the final outgoing letter in the correspondence tracking system if your office originated the draft or was a reviewing office on it. Your principal office's correspondence contact <https://connected.ed.gov/execsec/Pages/Correspondence%20Contacts.aspx> can assist if you do not have access to the correspondence tracking system.

Guiding Principles and Procedures for Originating Offices to Follow When Addressing and Reconciling Comments Received During Clearance

Guiding Principles

- Accept/incorporate substantive comments made by cross-cutting reviewing offices in their unique area of responsibility.

- Incorporate, as appropriate, comments from reviewing program offices that address policies and issues relating to their unique area of responsibility.

- Incorporate additional feedback made by reviewing offices that improves the quality, integrity, and clarity of the document.

Procedures

- Contact the reviewing office directly if you have questions or concerns regarding that office's comments.

- Decide what non-substantive style edits to accept if offices have edited the same section differently. Select what seems best from your standpoint.

- You do not need to provide a point-by-point listing of non-substantive comments you accepted or rejected. If you are rejecting a comment or suggestion of a substantive nature, provide a brief sentence or two for DRS or Exec Sec and the commenting office on why it was rejected, or note that you have worked out directly with the commenter the appropriate handling of the comment.

- Be mindful that the nature of the comments received in the first round of clearance, how your office has dealt with them, and the extent to which substantive revisions were incorporated will determine whether or not the second version needs to be circulated to any of the earlier reviewing offices.

- The originating office should make every attempt to resolve differences with the reviewing office(s) directly. However, if there is a disagreement between the originating office and a reviewing office or between reviewing offices on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved within a few days, the originating office should elevate the issue within DRS or Exec Sec.
  - **DRS documents**: DRS must ensure that, among other things, regulatory documents are in compliance with the format and style of the Office of the Federal Register and are consistent, to the extent appropriate, across the Department. Therefore, if there is a dispute between offices on technical or style edits, DRS will make the final decision. For other issues that cannot be resolved despite attempts by the originating office, the originating office should ask the Assistant General Counsel (AGC) for DRS to facilitate a meeting or discussion with the reviewing office(s).
  - **Exec Sec documents**: The originating office should ask the Exec Sec policy analyst to coordinate with the Exec Sec Director to resolve the matter.

- DRS or Exec Sec will confirm that all issues associated with the reviewing offices' unique responsibilities are reflected in a document. If there are remaining conflicts or issues that need resolution, they will be resolved as part of the final approval process. We will put in place a process to ensure that such issues are quickly brought to the attention of and resolved by a Senior Operating Group that includes the Deputy Secretary, the Under Secretary, and the Secretary's Chief of Staff.

- **DRS documents only:** Accept DRS' technical edits, including in cases where they are in conflict with edits from other offices.

Guiding Principles and Procedures for Reviewing Offices to Follow When Reviewing Documents in Clearance

Guiding Principles

- Ensure that comments are constructive and add actionable and specific value. Comments that are general or of an editorial nature are not as helpful.

- Ensure that responses are provided in a timely manner as "front end" delays result in the inefficient operation of the clearance process and contribute to missed deadlines on the "back end."

Procedures

- Provide your comments by the deadline that DRS or Exec Sec has set. Many regulatory documents are very time-sensitive. For instance, many competitions are run under very tight timelines.

- For each document, there may be one or a few offices that we *must* get a response from, while other offices' review of that document is discretionary. Therefore, if a clearance document has been sent to your office for review, and you feel your office's review is not needed, or you wish to defer to another clearance office on the document, please let DRS or Exec Sec know when you receive the document that you will not be providing comments.

- If there are entire categories or types of documents your office is receiving from DRS or Exec Sec for review that you do not believe you should be receiving, please let us know. For DRS, call 202/401-8300. For Exec Sec, call 202/401-3067, or contact directly the Exec Sec policy analyst handling the document or who is assigned to your principal office <https://connected.ed.gov/execsec/Pages/Exec%20Sec%20Analyst%20Assignment%20List.aspx>.

- To assist originating offices in reconciling comments, differentiate your comments, briefly explaining (e.g., in a comment box) whether the rationale is related to your office's unique area of responsibility or aimed more broadly at improving the quality, clarity, and integrity of the document.

- When there are revisions needed in a document you are reviewing, please provide the specific suggested edits whenever possible in red-line or other appropriate format. Including the particular phrase or sentence you believe is needed can help streamline the process, in lieu of providing less-specific comments such as "this paragraph needs work" or "shouldn't we include something about X here?" In certain situations where major revisions are necessary, it may be more efficient if the cross-cutting reviewing offices, such as OGC and the Budget Service, collaborate and jointly submit revised language.

- If there is a specific legal or policy reason for your comments or edits that might otherwise appear to be editorial to the originating office, explain your comments or edits in a comment box.

- Ensure that comments are value-added. Recognize that it can be difficult for the staff member finalizing the document to sort among differing suggestions on particular sentences or paragraphs. Staff members work to select the best and most accurate wording among the differing versions, so not everyone's comments may be incorporated. Comments of an editorial nature may or may not be accepted.

- Make sure that the document is consistent with the area of your office's unique responsibility (for example, OSERS should make sure that the document is consistent with the Department's policies regarding individuals with disabilities; the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) should make sure that the document is consistent with the Department's policies for the State-administered formula grant programs that it administers).

- Make sure that the comments submitted from your office represent the office's official views. Therefore, if a reviewing office has more than one person reviewing the same document, it must establish a process to resolve any differences in the comments before submitting them to Exec Sec or DRS.

- **DRS documents only:** Where feasible, consolidate comments from multiple reviewers in your office and resolve any substantive differences before submitting comments to the originating office. For example, to the extent feasible, OGC program attorneys should consolidate their comments with DRS' comments.

- **DRS documents only:** Do not change the "boilerplate" language without first discussing the change with DRS; the boilerplate language can be changed only if agreed to by DRS.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** Ensure that the staff member who serves as Exec Sec's clearance contact has the knowledge and support to route documents accurately within your office to ensure that the appropriate person reviews them.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** If you are interested in following the progress of a letter for the Secretary's signature, its status may be followed in real time in the Department's correspondence tracking system. You may also view a copy of the final outgoing letter in the correspondence tracking system if your office originated the draft or was a clearance office on it. Your principal office's correspondence contact <https://connected.ed.gov/execsec/Pages/Correspondence%20Contacts.aspx> can assist if you do not have access to the correspondence tracking system. If there is a particular item you are interested in getting a copy of, let Exec Sec staff know that, and the record will be marked for a copy to go back to you when it is completed.

- **Exec Sec documents only:** If a reviewing office believes it is unlikely to meet a deadline, Exec Sec can check with the originating office and notify the reviewing office of any ramifications of receiving a late review, but the general expectation is that reviewing offices will meet the deadline.

Guiding Principles and Procedures for DRS to Follow in the Clearance Process

Guiding Principles

- Manage the clearance process in a manner that yields a high-quality, well-written, and factually and legally accurate document within the needed time frame.

- Maintain ongoing communications with the originating office to ensure staff understand the status of a particular document and the overall clearance process.

- Respond to originating and reviewing office questions in a timely manner.

- Serve offices well and be a problem solver.

Procedures

- When a document is initially submitted to DRS for clearance, quickly evaluate whether it is complete and generally follows the formatting for the document as outlined in the RQM. If it is not complete or does not follow the RQM, contact the originating office and ask the staff to complete the document or reformat it.

- Ensure that the staff member of the originating office has obtained the necessary approval to submit the document for clearance.

- If the originating office is requesting expedited clearance of the document, consult with the AGC for DRS on whether such a request may be granted.

- Ensure that the staff member from the originating office understands the next steps for clearance of the document and what the staff member's responsibilities are at each step of the process. Keep the originating office informed of the status and what happens next.

- Monitor the documents you have in clearance carefully, following up with reviewing offices as needed on clearances to which responses have not been received or on rewrites needed from the originating office. The DRS tracking system will be helpful in doing this. If a response from a specific reviewing office is necessary, and a follow up e-mail gets no reply, contact the AGC for DRS who will contact the reviewing office to determine the status and an expected reply date.

- Determine with the originating office how it wants to receive comments on the document (e.g., at the same time as comments are coming in or in one set after the deadline for comments has closed). Share the comments received on the document with the originating office promptly.

- Remind the originating office that it should use the DRS-edited version of the document to incorporate comments from other reviewing offices.
- If the Privacy, Information and Records Management Service (PIRMS) indicates in its comments that OMB approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act is still needed, ensure that the originating office understands what this means and is working with PIRMS to coordinate submission to OMB.
- Explain to the originating office that it is responsible for responding to the comments and producing the next draft of the document. Also, explain to the originating office that depending on the comments, the originating office's responses, and the nature of the edits, the document may require a further round of clearance.
- Let the originating office know if the document falls within the category of documents that, after completing the clearance process, must still be approved by OS before it can be sent to the Office of the Federal Register for publication.
- Explain to the originating office the timetables for obtaining publication of a document, especially for a particularly lengthy document, in the *Federal Register*.
- Promptly inform the originating office, the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs (OLCA), PIRMS, and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) when you receive a publication date from the Office of the Federal Register.

Guiding Principles and Procedures for Exec Sec to Follow in the Clearance Process

Guiding Principles

- Manage the clearance process in a manner that yields a high-quality, well-written, and factually and legally accurate document within the needed time frame.
- Shepherd the document through the process, and work with the originating office to complete the clearance process as smoothly as possible for them.
- Serve offices well and be a problem solver.

Procedures

- When a document is initially submitted, ensure that the originating office is aware of Exec Sec's need to obtain information to facilitate the review, such as the requesting office's expectation for when the review should be completed; whether there is a specific event or action for which the document is needed, and if so, the specific date and time for that; whether there are specific offices or staff they would like to review the document; whether there are staff or officials who have already signed off on the draft, and who in the originating office has signed off on the document. Depending on the type or complexity of the item, background on or history of the document may be helpful. This type of information may be included as a "Note to Reviewers" when the document is distributed for clearance.
- Early in the process, determine whether or not the document needs to go to OMB or the White House for review, or to the Office of Communications and Outreach (OCO)/Editorial Services for final editing prior to publication. Work with the originating office, OGC, and OCO to determine early how and when in the process that should occur, how much time to allow, and whether deadlines need to be adjusted.
- Ensure that the originating office staff member submitting the document understands what is happening with the document as Exec Sec continues to work on it and what the staff member's responsibilities are at each step of the process. The originating office should be kept informed of the status and what happens next.
- Monitor the documents you have in clearance carefully, following up with reviewing offices as needed on clearances to which responses have not been received or on rewrites needed from the originating office. The correspondence tracking system is helpful in doing this. Determine when it is appropriate to move ahead without a response from a reviewing office, with the goal of keeping the document moving and meeting needed deadlines. If a response from a specific reviewing office is necessary, and a follow up e-mail gets no reply, please call the staff person you believe is to review the document, and determine the status and expected reply date.
- Share the comments received on the document with the originating office and let the staff member know how the process will proceed from there. When all comments are going to be returned to the originating office for handling, ensure you communicate specifically what they need to do next, especially in cases when the process is not yet complete and Exec Sec needs their revised version back. If Exec Sec is going to prepare a revised version based on the reviewing office comments or Exec Sec's own review, when the revised draft is shared with the originating office, explain the rationale for the edits if not apparent.

Correspondence Reports

Reports on the Status of Mail in Principal Offices

The Office of the Secretary (OS) has an automated reporting system that sends each principal office a report listing letters assigned to that office that are still open. The lists include letters assigned from the Office of the Secretary or from the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, as well as letters received directly by and logged in by the principal office.

If your office gives you a list of letters it shows as assigned to you, you should look over it and be sure it is right. If there are letters you have answered or never received, or that you gave to someone else to answer, you need to let the person who gave you the list know.

Details Regarding Reports

The Office of the Secretary (OS) each week runs several correspondence reports for your principal office:

- **Open letters:** This list arrives every week, usually on Monday or Thursday. It lists letters assigned to your office. It will include letters logged to you from the Office of the Secretary or from the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, as well as letters received directly by and logged in by your principal office. You need to look over the list to be sure it is right. If there are letters you have answered or never received, you need to let Exec Sec or the office that sent you the letter know right away. The office where the letter was received will be listed on the report in the "Owner" field.
- **Turnaround time report:** The weekly "turnaround time" report is sent by email from an Exec Sec staff member and tells you the average time it took to answer things your office closed out in the previous four weeks. (So that's the turnaround time on the things that are all done and "closed".) The purpose of the turnaround time chart is to know how long it is taking to answer things ED has responded to recently. It counts the letters your office was responsible for drafting, not clearances you were assigned.
- **Average age of pending letters report:** The weekly turnaround report e-mail also includes a second chart called the "average age of pending letters" report. That chart measures how old the things are that are still awaiting a reply, irrespective of the due date. The purpose of that chart is to know how old the things are that are still pending and to monitor whether or not offices are developing backlogs. Thus, it is measuring the average age of "open" letters, whereas the turnaround time report above is measuring performance on "closed" letters. The average age of pending letters report also counts only the letters your office is responsible for drafting, not clearances you were assigned.

If there are any reports that you are not receiving and that you would like, please contact Exec Sec.

Letterhead

Select the letterhead based on who is signing the letter:

Person(s) signing the letter	Letterhead to use
You, a staff person in your own office, or your senior officer	Use your principal office's letterhead. There may be two kinds of letterhead for your principal office. 1) One might have just your principal office's name (for example, "Office of Postsecondary Education"). 2) A second one may have your office's name along with "The Assistant Secretary" (or your senior officer's title). That one should be used for letters for your senior officer's signature only.
The Secretary	Use plain paper when submitting the draft. When finalized, the Secretary's letters will be printed on "The Secretary of Education" letterhead by the Office of the Secretary/Exec Sec.
The Deputy Secretary	Use plain paper when submitting the draft. When finalized, the Deputy Secretary's letters will be printed on "The Deputy Secretary" letterhead by the Office of the Secretary/Exec Sec.
The Under Secretary	Use plain paper when submitting the draft. When finalized, the Under Secretary's letters will be printed on "The Under Secretary" letterhead by the Office of the Secretary/Exec Sec.
Department's Chief of Staff	Use plain paper when submitting the draft. When finalized, the Chief of Staff's letters will be printed on "Office of the Secretary" letterhead by the Office of the Secretary/Exec Sec.
Two or more Department officials from different principal offices	Use "U.S. Department of Education" letterhead.
An official from your principal office and someone from another agency or from an outside organization	Use your principal office's letterhead or "U.S. Department of Education" as appropriate. **Note:** Letters to be signed by a Department official and someone from an outside organization (not U.S. government) should also be cleared with the Ethics Division in OGC to ensure that the joint signature is permissible and does not violate any rules.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

International or Payment-In-Kind Travel

Requests for international and in-kind travel require approval in the Office of the Secretary. Before you begin planning the trip, you should determine that your travel benefits the Department, and if it is overseas travel, aligns with ED's international strategy. Please be sure to obtain approval for travel ***prior*** to confirming your participation and/or accepting in-kind payment. Please see the required checklist on the International Travel site for overseas trips.

International and in-kind travel requests must be forwarded to the Executive Secretariat (ES) of the Office of the Secretary (OS) **three weeks (15 business days) before the departure date**. You may hand carry a request to Room LBJ-7C116, or fax it to 202/401-3067 or scan the completed package and e-mail it to Dianne Naber and Tanya Monroe. ES is responsible for clearing a request with OS/International Affairs Staff or OGC/Ethics Staff and for obtaining final review by the Office of the Secretary's Chief of Staff. ES notifies the traveler's contact person once a decision has been made.

Further information dated November 12, 2010, from the Chief of Staff regarding travel requests is here.

International Travel

You need to do the following:

- Use the Justification Memo for International Travel. Please submit one memo for the international trip. It should include details and checklists for the traveler(s). Include a description of the different role of and justification for each traveler, if more than one person is proposed to go.
- Make sure the memo is signed by the Senior Officer or the officer's designee.
- Include a detailed itinerary of official business for each traveler, an airline schedule and a complete day-to-day accounting for all times in travel status for the entire trip.
- Include the letter of invitation and materials describing the meeting or activity.

For additional guidance on international travel, required forms, and resources, please visit the International Travel site.

Additional information regarding international travel dated April 27, 2011, from the Chief of Staff is here.

Cash or In-Kind Travel

Before confirming your participation or accepting in-kind travel, you need to do the following:

- Use the Request for Approval to Accept Payment for Official Travel from a Non-Federal Source form.
- Complete the form. Failure to answer all questions will cause a delay.
- Account for all time in travel status - noting any "personal" no cost to the government travel.
- Make sure the form is signed by the Senior Officer or the officer's designee.
- Include the letter of invitation and any pertinent background information.
- Be aware that requests submitted late may be rejected due to time constraints to properly evaluate them. If a commitment needs to be made right away on the trip, you will want to determine if your

office is willing to pay the costs with ED funds if the payment-in-kind request is not approved or if there is simply not enough time to consider it.

Further information on procedures for requesting approval of gifts of travel is contained in a February 2, 2010, memo from the Office of the Secretary.

What a Control Sheet Looks Like

At the top of the control sheet will be the name of the principal office where that particular control originated. For example, if the control sheet says "Office of the Secretary" at the top, that means that the incoming letter was logged in by the Secretary's office. If the control sheet has the name of another principal office at the top, that means that item was logged in by that principal office.

To learn more about the other sections of the control sheet, follow the link for each section:

Control #
Due Date
Document Type
Signature
Writer
Subject
Notes
Assigned To
Action
Keyer and Reader
Related Control Numbers

References

For determining which Department office does what:
Guide to Department of Education Programs

Subject Index to Department of Education Programs

General Information about the Department of Education

The Department's organization chart

A listing of each Department office

Zip Codes
U.S. Postal Service Zip Code Lookup

Area Codes
Area Code Resource

Members of Congress
If you have questions of a general nature, such as the correct mailing address, party affiliation, or the spelling of a first or last name for a Member of Congress or a Senator, you can access such information at:

U.S. House of Representatives Members List

U.S. Senate Members List

Governors
You can access basic information about the Governor of a State or Territory (first and last name, including preferred form of address, State/jurisdiction, party affiliation, length of his or her regular term, the year that term began, number of previous terms, and maximum number of consecutive terms), at:

National Governors Association Governors List

From that site, you also can access an up-to-date list of the mailing addresses for all of the Governors.

Exec Sec maintains a list in Word format of all current governors. If your office needs to send a letter to some or all of them, please contact us before you take the time to type the list yourself.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Retirement Certificates

Principal offices interested in presenting a certificate signed by the Secretary to a retiring employee should send a written request to Exec Sec signed by the principal office's Executive Officer or Chief of Staff. The request should be e-mailed to James Webb and include the retiree's full name and the retirement date. Allow two weeks for processing. Requests for certificates should not be submitted more than 30 calendar days before presentation date of certificate

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Executive Secretariat Office?

The Executive Secretariat (Exec Sec) is a component of the Office of the Secretary. Its purpose is to serve as the Department's central coordinating point for all documents flowing into and out of the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, and Under Secretary's office. The staff also makes sure that an appropriate and orderly decision-making process and response occurs on each of them.

All letters for the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, or Under Secretary's signature receive final review here, just prior to being presented for signature. After approval, the office handles getting all documents signed, and transmitting copies to the appropriate offices. More information.

2. Where is the Executive Secretariat Office located?

In the Office of the Secretary in LBJ (400 Maryland Avenue, SW). Main office: Room 7C116, 202/401-3067
Correspondence unit staff: Room 7E122, 202/401-2981
Mail boxes for principal offices: 7C146

3. How does the Executive Secretariat Office determine what correspondence needs to be responded to?

The staff members review the incoming letter and use their judgment to determine if a letter should be assigned for response or for information only. If you review a letter and disagree with the decision, please contact the individual in your office who handles controlled correspondence.

4. Why is control mail important?

The people who write us are our customers. We must serve them in an outstanding manner. That means:

- providing a high quality, well-written, and informative reply that is responsive to the incoming inquiry, factually accurate, grammatically correct, and that represents the Department and the Administration well; and
- sending a timely reply.

The Department's goal is for a ten-day average response time on letters. A letter someone receives from us may be that individual's only personal contact with the Department of Education or the entire government. Thus, we represent the Secretary, and in the case of letters referred from the White House, the President. Our replies must be of the very highest quality.

5. How does The Executive Secretariat Office determine when a letter is due?

The due date is usually based on the kind of letter it is (the "Doc. Type"). OS, WS, and KEY letters are due in seven days; BK and WB letters are due in ten days. However, due dates may vary based on information stated in the letter.

6. What does the "Action" section on the control sheet mean, "Appropriate Handling," "Direct Reply"?

The "Action" section tells you if the letter needs to be signed by a certain official or not, or if it is for information only.

More information on what you will see on the control sheet and what it means.

7. What do I do once a letter is written? Do I give the response to my group leader or program director?
You need to work with your office and follow their procedures on how to handle letters you have prepared.

Letters for the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, or Under Secretary's signature must ultimately be brought to the Executive Secretariat in the Office of the Secretary. However, you will need to work out with your office how they would like them to be handled, as your principal office will have a process for reviewing them first. Attach the incoming letter and control sheet, and your final outgoing letter printed on plain paper, and put them in a file folder. The computer file of the outgoing letter should be e-mailed to the person in your office who handles controlled correspondence, so any revisions in the letter can be made without returning it to the writer.

8. Once I reply what happens to the letter? Do I mail the letter or does someone else on staff mail the letter?
Work that out with your supervisor or team leader. Some offices may have a process for handling outgoing letters.

9. Once a control letter has been responded to where does a copy of the reply go?
Your principal office is responsible for keeping files on letters it handles directly, maintaining files of replies sent, and keeping them for the required amount of time. You will want to check with your supervisor or team leader on whether you are to retain file copies yourself or if your office maintains copies centrally.

The Executive Secretariat is responsible for keeping the official files of all letters signed by the Secretary. Exec Sec staff will also return a copy of those signed letters to the office that drafted the reply for their information.

When considering disposal of any Department files, including letters you have signed yourself, please contact your principal office's records liaison officer first. The Department's Regulatory Information Management Services in the Office of Management can also advise on the rules on government files - what files we must keep and when we are permitted to destroy files.

What we do

The office of the Director of Executive Secretariat serves as the central coordinating point for documents needing review by the Secretary.

All letters for the Secretary's signature receive final review here, just prior to being presented for signature, to ensure consistency and that the policies of the Secretary and the Administration are accurately conveyed. After approval, the office handles all signing of documents and transmittal of copies to the appropriate offices.

All decision documents (such as proposed regulations or decisions the Secretary needs to make about a Department program) and information memos (such as a report to the Secretary of activities on the Hill) are received in the office from other components of the Department. The documents are then logged in, directed appropriately, tracked and monitored by the office.

Policy analysts on the staff then review them to ensure that policy initiatives of the Secretary and Administration are included and conveyed accurately. Documents are assigned to policy analysts according to the originating POC. Policy analysts also ensure that all appropriate officials who should be involved in an area of policy have had the opportunity to review a document and approve it or offer suggestions. When there are policy differences among offices, the staff works to resolve those differences among the offices, or presents the issues to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary for decision.

Executive Secretariat staff also serve as the Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) contact in the Department, receiving notices of investigations, scheduling appropriate offices for entrance conferences, and handling clearance of responses to GAO reports.

The office also processes all incoming mail addressed to the Secretary and handles letters referred from the White House for Department reply. The staff opens and stamps in the mail, then reviews it in detail to determine which office in the Department should prepare the response, who should sign it, and who should get an FYI copy. All letters are then logged into a computer tracking system, and the staff monitors the system to ensure timely preparation of replies. Incoming letters and responses by the Secretary are scanned into a document imaging system so files can be retrieved electronically.

The Executive Secretariat is also the central repository for certain official files, retaining copies of all documents with the Secretary's signature.

Kinds of documents handled

What documents need to go to Exec Sec? The easy answer for this is "anything needing the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, or Under Secretary's signature." This could include letters, memoranda, or other materials you want them to receive or review, or other items they should officially transmit. Some examples include:

- a letter for the Secretary's signature
- proposed and final regulations requiring the Secretary's signature
- a message your office would like the Secretary to send to an organization your office works with
- a memorandum to the Deputy Secretary requesting review of an issue on which your office needs a decision
- a request for the Secretary's signature on a certificate your office wants to present, or on photos
- a request for approval of international travel or acceptance of payment-in-kind for travel anywhere
- an informational memorandum to the Under Secretary about a meeting a Department official had
- any request to the White House, such as for a letter signed by the President for a program of your office

Submitting Controlled Correspondence for the Secretary's or Deputy Secretary's Signature

To expedite clearance of letters for the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, or Under Secretary's signature:

1. Check with your principal office correspondence contact on the process for submitting and clearing documents within your Principal Office.

2. After a document is cleared within your Principal Office, submit the final package to your principal office correspondence contact in a folder with:

   a. The incoming letter and the OS control sheet on the left side along with any routing slip, control sheet or file box copy that indicates who reviewed the draft response.

   b. The final draft response and any enclosures on the right. Do not run the letter on letterhead. Exec Sec will run the final letter on the appropriate letterhead. Do not send an envelope. Exec Sec will prepare the envelope.

   c. You also need to provide any enclosures and an electronic version of the response and enclosures (if the enclosures are available in electronic form). Exec Sec will need to review all enclosures for a letter with the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, or Under Secretary's signature. Work out with your principal office correspondence contact where to send the e-mail containing the electronic files.

3. Your Principal Office correspondence contact will send the package and an electronic copy of the response to the Office of the Executive Secretariat (Exec Sec).

Additional details for Principal Office Correspondence Contacts on Submitting Letters to Exec Sec

1. E-mail the draft letter to Dianne Naber in the Office of Executive Secretariat (Exec Sec). The e-mail to Exec Sec must include the Control Number.

2. Send the original copy of the incoming letter, the control sheet, and any enclosures to the Exec Sec Controlled Correspondence Unit (CCU). CCU will close the control and assign it to the appropriate Exec Sec policy analyst.

3. You do not need to submit file copies, but Exec Sec needs to know the name of the highest-level person in your Principal Office that approved the response. In your e-mail message, on the control sheet, or on a copy of any routing slips or control sheets used in your office, indicate the name and number of the person Exec Sec can contact for additional information, and the name of the highest-level person that approved the response.

How to Handle E-Mail

Some e-mails addressed to the Secretary or the President may be logged in and assigned to you just like letters. In that case, look on the control sheet with the letter to see whether there are specific instructions for the response or who should sign it. If not, handle it just as you would an incoming letter.

The Office of the Secretary would permit an e-mail reply to an incoming e-mail should your office decide that is appropriate, but check with your supervisor or team leader first to be sure that is o.k. in your office. If you respond by e-mail, be sure to print out a copy of the reply to put with the file, or preserve a copy of the response in some other approved fashion consistent with how your office complies with Department records retention policies.

Each principal office should decide how it wants to handle e-mails received from outside the Department. E-mails from our outside customers often are sent directly to employees, to your office's central mailbox, or to a Department Web site. Some e-mails may need only a brief reply. Others may need a detailed technical or legal reply. Visit with your supervisor about which replies may be sent by e-mail and what review process they may go through before being sent. Your principal office will also determine whether it wishes to maintain a tracking system for e-mails.

Keep in mind that an e-mail response represents the official reply of the Department just like a letter. It should be accurate, of high quality, and represent us well, and be preserved as appropriate consistent with Department records retention schedules.

Information on retention of e-mail records (from OM's Regulatory Information Management Services)

Requests for Extension of the Due Date on Correspondence

Department staff will occasionally contact Exec Sec and ask for an extension of the due date for a particular letter. Exec Sec no longer gives extensions of due dates on correspondence assigned from the Office of the Secretary. If you are interested in the reasons for that, read on.

Correspondence Measures in the Department

Exec Sec assigns a due date on each letter to provide a general guide for when we'd like it to get answered by. Because of the complexity of some letters or the need to coordinate with a number of offices on a response, we recognize that the time frame we'd like might not be possible on each letter. There are some letters that offices are able to respond to rapidly, and some letters that are going to take longer.

The key performance measure for principal offices on correspondence is now overall average turnaround time, and has been for a number of years. The Department's goal is for each principal office to achieve an average turnaround of 10 days on correspondence assigned to it from the Office of the Secretary. We also report the number of letters still pending a response in each office and their average age, in order to monitor whether or not offices are developing backlogs. We do not measure principal offices on the percentage of letters that meet or don't meet the due date.

By using the average turnaround time as a key performance measure for offices (as opposed to the percentage of letters meeting or not meeting their assigned due date), offices are encouraged to respond quickly to the easier letters, which can then counterbalance the letters that are going to take longer. Since we measure the number of days it takes to answer the letter, what the due date is on a particular letter is not actually relevant, except that offices who consistently miss the due date on assigned mail will have a difficult time ever achieving the 10-day average turnaround goal. To give a specific example, a letter assigned to your office on March 5 and completed on March 26 counts as having taken 15 working days, whether the due date was March 12, March 19, or June 4. So even if we were to decide to begin again granting extensions, the letter still counts as having taken 15 days when we calculate how your office performed on turnaround times that week.

Other reason we stopped considering requests for extensions

In years past when Exec Sec had a policy of reviewing and granting extensions, we discovered that an immense amount of staff time was being involved in just the "process" -- staff in principal offices asking for an extension up their correspondence chain, justifying why it was needed, having someone in Exec Sec decide, our communicating that back to the office staff who then communicated that back to the staff assigned to respond to the letter. Given that there can be a few hundred to more than 1,000 letters pending at any one time, we found that our correspondence staff members were spending a considerable amount of time just handling requests for due date extensions, particularly a substantial part of Thursday which was when reports were run. Multiplying that time to principal office and sub-office correspondence staff and writers and supervisors across the Department, it seemed to be a large waste of time on "process" -- time that should be directed instead toward actually answering the letters. Recognizing that we had moved away from measuring offices based on the percentage of letters that were overdue, giving extensions essentially became irrelevant, so we stopped.

Procedure for Requesting Approval of Gifts of Travel (Payment in Kind)

February 2, 2010

MEMORANDUM TO SENIOR OFFICERS

FROM: Margot M. Rogers /s/
Chief of Staff

SUBJECT: Procedure for Requesting Approval of Gifts of Travel (Payment in Kind)

I want to make sure that everyone is aware of the various procedures that are in place and that need to be followed when you or others on your staff receive offers from outside groups to pay for travel to a conference or other event. Such offers are normally considered as gifts to the Department, are evaluated carefully, and ultimately must come forward for final review in the Office of the Secretary. I hope the following information will be helpful.

First, employees proposing that the Department accept gifts of travel expenses from non-Federal sources must submit a formal request, consisting of the attached form ("Request for Approval to Accept Payment for Official Travel from A Non-Federal Source"), a copy of the employee's travel authorization, and documentation of the invitation. The Ethics Division of the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) designed the form to meet the government-wide requirements of the General Services Administration and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, so it is important it is filled out completely.

Second, the employee should submit the request to the employee's principal office senior officer for review. If the request is approved to move forward, the senior officer should sign the form where indicated as the Recommending Principal Office Head (at the bottom of Page 3), and submit it along with the supporting materials mentioned above to the Executive Secretariat, Office of the Secretary, Room 7C116, LBJ. (Note that the Executive Secretariat will handle the reviews required on Page 4 of the form.) As the form notes, requests for approval of gifts of travel should be submitted at least three weeks prior to the proposed travel.

I want to stress the importance of completely and accurately filling out the form and meeting the required three-week deadline for submitting the form to the Executive Secretariat, and I appreciate your cooperation on that. My office and OGC need all of the information requested in order to determine whether acceptance of the gift is in accordance with the Department's policies and the governing regulations, and is appropriate. In particular, the form asks for information about matters affecting the sponsor that may be pending in the traveling employee's principal office. An employee who is not sure whether a sponsor has any matters pending before the employee's principal office should check with the senior officer's chief of staff, the program attorney, or other staff members in the office. Note that failure to submit the form in a timely manner, submission of an incomplete form, or failure to attach the accompanying travel authorization may result in disapproval of the request.

Any employee with questions concerning the approval process or paperwork requirements for payment-in-kind travel requests should contact Dianne Naber, Office of Executive Secretariat, at (202) 401-3067. Questions regarding the information required on the request form itself pertaining to the proposed non-federal funding source (event sponsor) should be directed to the Ethics Division in OGC, at (202) 401-8309.

I would appreciate your distributing copies of this memorandum and form as needed. Any questions or comments you have may be directed to Dianne Naber or Teresa Garland in the Office of the Secretary, Executive Secretariat.

Attachment

cc: Chiefs of Staff
Executive Officers
Susan Winchell, Designated Agency
Ethics Official

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Misassigned Controls

What do I do with Misassigned Controls?

If you are assigned a letter incorrectly, please return it to your colleague who assigned you the letter. If you know which staff person or office should handle the letter, let your colleague know that. Your colleague can then assign the letter to the correct person in your principal office or return the letter to Exec Sec if it should be handled by another principal office.

Please note that a principal office has only five working days to return a misassigned control should it feel that a letter should be handled by another principal office. After five days, you are responsible for answering the letter and will need to coordinate with the appropriate office to draft the reply. It is thus important to review mail assigned to you right away to determine if it belongs to you and, if not, to get it routed to the correct place quickly.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Freedom of Information Act Requests

For helpful information on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, please see OM's Web site:

OM's FOIA Information Site

The Control Mail Process

What is controlled mail?

Controlled mail is correspondence addressed to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary that is assigned a control number and tracked in the correspondence tracking system. This control number enables the Office of the Secretary and your principal office to know where the document is assigned for action. Each letter gets a control sheet that tells you what to do with it. Several principal offices also log in control mail addressed to their assistant secretary so that mail can be similarly tracked. The office listed at the top of the control sheet is the office that originated the control.

Information on the Control Sheet

What is the Control Number and does it mean anything?

The control number looks like this: 09-023087.

The "09" prefix tells you the year it was received (09 is for Year 2009; 08 for Year 2008, etc.).

The "023087" is a sequential number and has no significance beyond that.

What does "Document Type" mean?

The Document Type is a category the Executive Secretariat assigns to each item entered in the correspondence tracking system. The code for each category and what it means are:

Code	What it stands for	What it means
BK	Office of the Secretary Bulk Mail	This is correspondence addressed to the Secretary or the Department that raises issues that generally do not require a reply for the Secretary's signature.
OS	Office of the Secretary Mail	This is correspondence addressed to the Secretary that raises issues that may or may not require the signature of the Secretary or another senior official.
WB	White House Bulk Mail	This is correspondence addressed to the President or another White House official concerning education matters. The White House has referred it to the Department of Education for reply.
INV	Invitations	This is correspondence that invites the Secretary or another Department official to participate in a meeting or event. Invitations addressed to the Secretary are routed to the Secretary's scheduling office. Sometimes they are then routed to other senior officers for consideration.
KEY	Office of the Secretary Key Correspondence	This is correspondence that is of key importance and may require a reply for the Secretary's or a senior official's signature.
AS	Assistant Secretary's mail	This is correspondence addressed to an assistant secretary, often in the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, though

		the "AS" code may be used in other principal offices to indicate mail received directly in that office.
WS	White House Special	This is correspondence that is of key importance to the White House and has been referred to the Department of Education for a draft or final reply.
Other	Any other code is one developed by a principal office for internal use	A principal office might use another code to indicate mail received directly, such as "DIR" for "Director's Mail." If you are unsure what a code means, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.

What does the Signature section mean?

The "Signature" section of the control sheet tells you who should sign the reply to the letter. The codes are:

Description	What it means
Appropriate individual's signature	This designation indicates that you are to develop a reply for the signature of the individual you consider to be the most appropriate person: yourself, another individual in your office, or your senior officer. Each principal office may have its own criteria for "appropriate individual." If you are unsure, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.
Assistant Secretary's signature	This designation indicates that you should develop a reply for your senior officer. Contact the individual responsible for controlled correspondence to determine if your senior officer has specific requirements for formatting correspondence.
Secretary's signature	This designation indicates that you are to develop a response for the Secretary's signature. The response you develop should be routed, reviewed, and cleared according to procedures established in your office. If you are unsure about these procedures, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.
Deputy Secretary's signature	This designation indicates that you are to develop a response for the Deputy Secretary's signature. The response you develop should be routed, reviewed, and cleared according to procedures established in your office. If you are unsure about these procedures, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.
OS Chief of Staff's signature	This designation indicates that you are to develop a response for the signature of the Office of the Secretary's Chief of Staff. The response you develop should be routed, reviewed, and cleared according to procedures established in your office. If you are unsure about these procedures, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.
Senior officer's signature	This designation indicates that you should develop a reply for your office's senior officer. Contact the individual responsible for controlled correspondence to determine if your senior officer has specific requirements for formatting correspondence.
Under Secretary's signature	This designation indicates that you are to develop a response for the Under Secretary's signature. The response you develop should be routed, reviewed, and cleared according to procedures established in your office. If you are unsure about these procedures, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.

Not applicable	This designation means that the letter is probably assigned to you for "Information Only" so no signature is designated.

What's in the "Writer" section?

The Executive Secretariat uses the name of the incoming letter's author to help track correspondence. If multiple authors signed the incoming letter, this is the name of the first individual in that group. The control sheet also lists the writer's title and organization if contained on the incoming letter.

What's in the "Subject" section?

The Executive Secretariat staff reads the incoming letter and provides a brief synopsis here.

What's the "Notes" section for?

It is here that the Executive Secretariat staff notes which offices are receiving an FYI copy of the incoming letter or puts any special notes about it.

How do I know what I'm supposed to do with a letter?

Look on the bottom part of the control sheet. It has a section called "Assigned To." That's the office that is supposed to reply. If your office code is in the "Notes" section instead, you are receiving the document for information only. You are responsible for the document only if your office is listed in the "Assigned To" section.

The next section, called "Action," tells you if the letter needs to be signed by a certain official. Here is a list of what you will see most often in the "Action" section, and what it means:

Description	What it means
Direct reply, appropriate individual's signature	This designation indicates that you are to develop a reply for the signature of the individual you consider to be the most appropriate person: yourself, another individual in your office, or your senior officer. Each principal office may have its own criteria for "direct reply/appropriate individual." If you are unsure about how to handle this document, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.
Appropriate handling	This designation is used to indicate that you should handle the letter as you think best, draft a reply for your own signature or for the signature of the most appropriate individual in your office, or handle the letter by phone or e-mail. Each principal office may have its own criteria for "appropriate handling." If you are unsure about how to handle this document, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.
Direct reply, senior officer's signature	This designation indicates that you should develop a reply for your office's senior officer. Contact the individual responsible for controlled correspondence to determine if your senior officer has specific requirements for formatting correspondence.
Secretary's signature	This designation indicates that you are to develop a response for the Secretary's signature. The response you develop should be routed, reviewed, and cleared according to procedures established in your office. If you are unsure about these procedures, contact the individual in your area who is responsible for controlled correspondence.
Information only	This designation indicates that you are receiving this item for information purposes only. You do not need to develop a reply unless you consider it necessary to do so. You may decide to share this document with others in your area. Items marked "information only" are already closed out in the controlled correspondence system; you are not required to send anything back to the individual responsible for controlled correspondence in your office.

Direct reply with copy	See Direct Reply/Appropriate Individual for how to handle this letter. But after the letter is sent, you need to send a copy of the reply back to the office that assigned the letter to you. If it was answered by phone, provide a brief write-up of how you took care of it.
Clearance or OS Clearance	This designation indicates that you are receiving the incoming letter and draft reply for review.

How do you decide the due date?

The due date is usually based on the kind of letter it is (the "Document Type"). OS, WS, and KEY letters are due in seven days; BK and WB letters are due in ten days. However, due dates may vary based on information stated in the letter.

Do you give extensions of the due date if I am unable to complete it on time?

Department staff will occasionally contact Exec Sec and ask for an extension of the due date for a particular letter. Exec Sec no longer gives extensions of due dates on correspondence assigned from the Office of the Secretary. If you are interested in the reasons for that, we discuss it further here.

What are "Keyer" and "Reader"?

The "Keyer" and "Reader" fields contain the name of the Department staff person who input the letter in the correspondence tracking system (Keyer) and the staff person who reviewed the letter and determined who should respond (Reader).

What is "Related Control Numbers"?

The Executive Secretariat staff notes here the control number of related letters the writer has sent before or that are otherwise somehow related to the current incoming letter.

What do I do with misassigned controls?

Salutation

General Public	Dear Mr. Smith: or Dear Mrs. Smith: or Dear Ms. Smith:
Gender Neutral Names	If the writer does not indicate a title and you cannot tell if the writer is a man or woman, use the first name. Dear Chris:
Young People	Students in high school or below may be addressed by their first name. Dear Chris:
Multiple Writers	Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith: or Dear Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones: or Dear Messrs. Smith and Jones: or Dear Mdmes. Rogers and Young:

Sample forms of address for certain officials

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Travel Requests That Need Office of the Secretary Approval

From: Weiss, Joanne
Sent: Friday, November 12, 2010 4:53 PM
Subject: Travel requests that need Office of the Secretary approval

Hi All,

I'd like to remind everyone that, in accordance with Department policy, there are a couple of kinds of travel requests that need OS approval, and that we need sufficient lead time on them to be able to ensure they are completed and properly reviewed prior to the planned departure.

Kinds of requests that need to come to OS:

- International travel: travel outside of the United States. [1]
- Gifts of travel: airfare or hotels to be paid for by a non-Federal source. [2] Gifts of travel also include waiver of a meeting or conference registration fee by the sponsor when the meeting or conference takes place outside your duty station. (Gifts of travel are sometimes referred to as "payment-in-kind travel.")

Lead time needed:
15 working days (three weeks). This lead time is needed because these kinds of requests are looked at by other offices, such as OGC, which reviews all gifts of travel, and the Office of International Affairs, which reviews all international travel. Also, the White House requires advance notice of seven working days for international travel by certain ED officials. In addition, we must allow time to resolve any complications that may arise as details of a trip are sorted out, before I can provide my final review and decision.

Process:
Requests for international travel and gifts of travel are processed through Exec Sec, and you should forward them via e-mail to Dianne Naber with a cc: to Tanya Monroe, deliver them to 7C116-LBJ, or fax them to 202/401-2854. Even though the travel approval memo is addressed to me, please forward it to Exec Sec, along with the other documentation needed.

Necessary forms and supporting documentation:
There are some differences in what information is required for international travel and what is required for gifts of travel. Those are discussed on Exec Sec's **International or Payment-In-Kind site.** You may address any questions to Dianne Naber at 202/401-3067. Note that failure to submit your request in a timely manner, submission of incomplete information, or failure to forward the accompanying travel authorization may make it not possible to approve the request.

Exec Sec's connectED site also contains templates for the documents you will need to submit for both kinds of requests, along with further details to assist you with the process. Please note that we cannot consider your request until we have all of the documentation needed, including the electronic travel authorization required for each traveler, which must be forwarded to the Executive Secretariat within the Solutions travel system. The documentation and travel authorization must indicate the travel has been approved within the principal office and contain details of the trip. Also please note that not all requests will be approved. They are reviewed carefully to ensure they are, among other things, mission-supportive, appropriate, and a good use of our limited resources.

Requirement following international travel:
There is an additional obligation of those taking international travel to file a trip report within 10 days of returning that discusses the specific outcomes or accomplishments of the travel and assesses implications for ED programs and policies. More information on that requirement and a template are on Exec Sec's connectED site.

Thank you very much for the efforts and cooperation of you and your staff on these travel requests.

[1] Travel to Canada and Mexico and other countries outside the United States is considered international travel and requires OS approval. Travel to the Commonwealths of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the areas of American Samoa and the Virgin Islands, although outside the Continental United States, does not require OS approval.

[2] If another Federal agency is paying the travel expenses, that is not considered in-kind travel and does not need OS approval.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Correspondence Contacts

Office	Executive Secretary	Correspondence Contact	CCCU POC Liaison
FSA	Matthew Boggs UCP 377-3010	Matthew Boggs UCP 377-3010	Darlene Fowler LBJ 401-2043
IES	Teresa Cahalan Capitol Place 219-2007	Ellie Pelaez Capitol Place 219-0644	Wendell Washington LBJ 260-2587
OCFO	Michael Holloway PCP 401-0322	Holly Williams PCP 245-8111 Susan White Britton LBJ 401-0322	Tracy Catoe LBJ 401-2981
OCIO	Sally Budd PCP 245-6424	Angela Butler PCP 245-6259	TBD LBJ
OCO	Cynthia Dorfman LBJ 205-2604	Jeannie Copsey-Maddox LBJ 260-0194 Vanessa McKinney LBJ 453-5552	Darlene Fowler LBJ 401-2043
OCR	TBD LBJ	Sandra Stover LBJ 453-5983	TBD LBJ
ODS	Ashley Barkakati LBJ 401-1218	Michael Johnston LBJ 260-1058	Edgar Mayes LBJ 401-2981
OELA	TBD LBJ	Vernice Diggs LBJ 401-1413	Wendell Washington LBJ 260-2587

OESE	Luz Curet LBJ 205-3728	Luz Curet LBJ 205-3728	Kishia Kegler LBJ 401-1908
OGC	Nels Olson LBJ 453-6056	Nels Olson LBJ 205-0507	Tracy Catoe LBJ 401-1361
OIG	Janet Harmon PCP 245-6076	Janet Harmon PCP 245-6076	Kishia Kegler LBJ 401-2981
OII	Liza Araujo LBJ 260-4008	Dramon Turner LBJ 205-8006	Deborah Johnson LBJ 401-1704
OLCA	Jerine Coley LBJ 401-3406	Jerine Coley LBJ 401-3406	Deborah Johnson LBJ 401-1704
OM	Wanda Davis LBJ 401-0695	Deborah Madison LBJ 453-7260	TBD LBJ
OPE	Richard Jameson K Street 502-7750	Richard Jameson K Street 502-7750	Darlene Fowler LBJ 401-2043
OPEPD	Richard Sheehan LBJ 401-1679	Richard Sheehan LBJ 401-1679	Edgar Mayes LBJ 401-2981
OPEPD/Budget Service	Sandra Johnson LBJ 401-0321	Sandra Johnson LBJ 401-0321	Edgar Mayes LBJ 401-2981
OSERS	Shirley Bryant PCP 245-7285	**Elgin Jennings** PCP 245-7390	Deborah Johnson LBJ 401-1704
OUS	Jon O'Bergh LBJ 453-6363	Jon O'Bergh LBJ 453-6363	Tracy Catoe LBJ 401-1361
OCTAE	Francine Sinclair PCP 245-7712	Francine Sinclair PCP 245-7712	Wendell Washington LBJ 260-2587

Sample Closings

Thank you again for writing.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have further questions or need additional information, please contact (name, phone number, and e-mail address of the person who can provide additional information).

I appreciate your continued support of education for disadvantaged students.

I know that Illinois is working hard to improve education for the students of the State. The contributions of your school district are a very important part of that school improvement effort.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Address Block

Title

Honorable	Use Honorable for any current or past elected official at the local or state level, any current or past official appointed by the President or Governor and confirmed by the Senate or state legislative body.
Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss	Always use the title used by the writer. Do not use a title if it is not specified and the writer's name could be male or female, or the writer included a title after his or her name, such as M.D. or Ph.D. If a woman writer does not specify her title, use Ms.

Address

Post Office Boxes	Post Office Box 176 *or* Box 176 *or* P.O. Box 176
Street Addresses	Spell out Street, Road, Drive, Boulevard, etc. Do not use other abbreviations, except for Northwest, Southeast, etc., which can be abbreviated with or without periods SW, NW, SE, NE or S.W., N.W., S.E., N.E.
Long Addresses	Use two or more lines for long addresses, indenting the second and third line two spaces.
States	Spell out the full name on the letter or use the U.S. Postal Service's standard abbreviation.
Washington, DC	DC or D.C. Be consistent throughout the letter.
Zip Codes	Use one or two spaces between the State and the zip code.
International Addresses	On the envelope, the country name should be on the last line, by itself, in all caps: Ms. Joyce Browning 2045 Royal Road London WIP 6HQ ENGLAND

Sample forms of address

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Content

Style and Tone of Letter

The tone, quality, and responsiveness of correspondence are important. Correspondence must be neat in appearance, correctly formatted, error free, and grammatically correct. Write as formally or informally as the situation requires, but do so with language you might use in speaking. Write in a friendly, direct, responsive, and non-bureaucratic style. Use everyday words as much as possible, and short sentences. Say it plainly whenever you can and always keep the reader in mind when responding.

Abbreviations: Shortened form of a word or phrase

When using an abbreviation that may not be familiar to the reader, spell out the full term along with the abbreviation when it is first used, then use the abbreviation throughout the letter.

"The Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) is responsible for oversight of that area. Staff from OSERS visited... "

Administration programs

When possible, you should relate the subject to an appropriate Administration initiative(s) to inform the writer of any efforts under way related to the writer's concerns.

Coordination among offices

Some responses you are asked to prepare may require coordination with offices other than your own. For example, some letters raise legal issues where it is best to work early in conjunction with the Office of the General Counsel. Other letters, particularly from Congress, can involve difficult or sensitive matters that should be coordinated early with the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs.

Multiple subject letters

When several different issues are raised in a single letter, it is important to address the core concerns of the letter first and other issues as appropriate. When this is not possible, a brief acknowledgement of the other issues should be included in the response.

"Thank you for your letter relaying your concerns about school-based health clinics, sex education, and several other education issues in your community."

(Include next the reply language on school-based health clinics and sex education. Then include prior to the closing paragraph:)

"I also noted your concerns about busing and bilingual education and appreciate your thoughts on all of these issues."

Time References

Try not to use words like "recent" as in "Thank you for your recent letter." By the time the letter is signed, "recent" may not be accurate. Also do not use phrases like "last week" or "last month." When the letter is signed and dated, the reference may be incorrect. Be specific: "Department staff met with your attorney on March 12."

Several Signers on Incoming Letter

When you are responding to a letter signed by several people, if possible, send an individual response to each person who signed the incoming letter. At the end of the opening paragraph of the response, include the sentence: "I have sent a similar reply to all of those who signed your letter."

Capitalization

Federal, State, and Nation: Increasingly, terms such as Federal, State, Nation, and Federal Government are not capitalized. Either form is acceptable as long as you are consistent within the letter.

President, Administration: We require capitalization when referring to the President of the United States or the Obama Administration. When discussing the president of a company or program administration, do not capitalize.

Please note that legal and regulatory documents may have their own guidelines for capitalization.

Web Site References

When referring to a Web site address in a letter, make sure that the URL is correct and that the Web site is active. Also be sure the reference relates to the subject. Enclose the Web address in the symbols "<" and ">" so the address is set apart from other words or punctuation in the sentence.

Example: http://www.ed.gov

Formatting tips for your letter (font, margins, headers).

Exec Sec Clearance Process Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***What kinds of documents need to come to Exec Sec for clearance or review?***

   Exec Sec serves as the central coordinating point for documents needing the Secretary's or Chief of Staff's signature or that require the Office of the Secretary's review and approval. Exec Sec also coordinates documents needing the Deputy Secretary's signature in addition to a few other types of documents. Examples include:
   • a letter for the Secretary's signature to Congress, a state official, or others;
   • a memorandum for approval, such as for a grant slate your office has developed, policy guidance to states, or a recommended consultant appointment or interagency detail;
   • a Dear Colleague letter an assistant secretary is planning to distribute;
   • a message your office would like the Secretary to send to attendees at an event;
   • a response drafted for the Deputy Secretary's signature to a GAO or OIG report;
   • a request for the Secretary's signature on a certificate your office wants to present;
   • a request for approval of international travel or acceptance of payment-in-kind for travel anywhere;
   • a report your office plans to distribute to Congress;
   • any request to the White House, such as for a letter that would be signed by the President or an invitation to the President to appear at an event your office is coordinating;
   • letters or other documents of a sensitive policy nature or that break new ground that need coordination and review by the Office of the Secretary, regardless of the signature level; or
   • proposed and final regulations requiring the Secretary's signature (these are routed to Exec Sec from the Office of the General Counsel).

   If you are unsure whether a particular document needs to go to Exec Sec for clearance, please consult with Exec Sec staff at 202/401-3067 or via e-mail to the Exec Sec policy analyst for your office
   https://connected.ed.gov/execsec/Pages/Exec%20Sec%20Analyst%20Assignment%20List.aspx

2. ***What is the purpose of Exec Sec's clearance process?***

   Each principal office is part of a larger team here at ED. The purpose of Exec Sec's clearance process is to ensure that a collaborative review process occurs among offices with a stake in a document:
   • subject matter experts (program, legal, budget) have the chance to weigh in on factual accuracy and correct wording;
   • offices with some type of policy stake in the document have the chance to weigh in;
   • liaison offices, such as OLCA and OCO, have the chance to weigh in on matters affecting their constituencies;
   • political team members have the chance to weigh in on content and any opinions stated; and
   • as needed, there is coordination with the White House, OMB, and/or other agencies, recognizing that ED is part of a larger team in the government.

   The review process also ensures that documents are high quality, consistent in their content and handling, and represent the Secretary and the Department well.

3. ***Does Exec Sec perform all of the clearance processes for the Department?***

   No. There are other clearance processes in the Department. Some examples of other clearance processes at ED include: a) the process run by the General Counsel's office for Federal Register notices, such as notice of proposed or final program priorities and notices inviting applications, and regulations; b) the Office of Management's handling of documents for ED's Administrative Communications System (ACS Directives); and c) the Office of Communications and Outreach's review of items for publication. Exec Sec handles review of the types of documents listed in #1 above.

4. ***What do I need to do prior to submitting a document for clearance?***

   The clearance process can be greatly streamlined when offices submitting documents for review have done a good job to:
   - prepare a high-quality, well-written, factually accurate document;
   - coordinate ahead with key policy or legal staff in other offices;
   - think ahead and offer suggestions on who should review the document and provide information on who has already been involved;
   - determine the deadline needed for completion, and plan ahead well to be able to meet that deadline while allowing time for review; and
   - put together any helpful background that would assist reviewers.

   Further details on principles for staff submitting documents will be posted to connectED soon.

5. ***To whom do I send documents that need Exec Sec review?***

   Electronic copies of documents should be sent to Dianne Naber, Tanya Monroe, and James Webb, with a copy to your Exec Sec policy analyst if you know who that is. A list of the Exec Sec policy analysts and the offices they handle is on connectED at https://connected.ed.gov/execsec/Pages/Exec%20Sec%20Analyst%20Assignment%20List.aspx. Hard copy documents should be delivered to Exec Sec, 7C116 LBJ; or fax: 202/401-2854. The telephone number is 202/401-3067 if there are any questions.

6. ***What happens during Exec Sec's clearance process?***

   An Exec Sec staff member reviews the document and decides if staff members in other offices need to review it. If so, an Exec Sec staff member sends the document to the Exec Sec clearance contact for each office that needs to review the document, asking that someone look over it. Exec Sec staff assigns a due date for completion of the review and a contact name to whom comments should be sent. The clearance contacts for each office assign the document for review within their office. Comments are returned to Exec Sec, and either Exec Sec will finalize the document and send it forward for final review to the Secretary's front office or other appropriate official, or comments will be returned to the office that originated the document, and staff there will sort through them and submit a revised draft to Exec Sec.

7. ***Does Exec Sec send every document it receives for clearance to all principal offices for review?***

   No. An Exec Sec staff member reviews the content of each document and determines which offices should look at it. We may determine that only one other office needs to review the document, or perhaps four or five offices should review it. We endeavor to be inclusive of offices that may have a stake in the document, while not overburdening offices with no apparent interest. We also appreciate any recommendations from the originating office as to offices that should review the information. Some documents require no clearance circulation, and Exec Sec reviews and finalizes those and sends them forward for approval.

8. ***How does Exec Sec decide what offices a document will get sent to for review?***

Clearance offices are determined by the content of the document. Exec Sec tries to be inclusive of offices that may have a stake in the document. For example, a document from OCR might contain a couple of paragraphs about bullying. In addition to ED's policy and legal offices (OPEPD and OGC), Exec Sec would also send the document to OESE, as ED's safe and drug-free schools staff in that office also works on bullying.

9. ***How long does Exec Sec give reviewing offices to look over a document?***

The time allowed for review depends on the document and the circumstances. The due date is determined by the document's length and complexity and any particular deadline of which we are made aware, such as a planned announcement date or date of expiration of funding. We usually provide reviewing offices a three-day due date on routine letters and documents, though we allow as long as ten days on lengthy reports and complex policy documents. We are frequently asked to put very short due dates on documents, such as to request a same-day or 24-hour turnaround. Although we can ask clearance offices to rush documents when it is absolutely necessary, we like to be respectful of other staff members' time, and their other job duties and priorities. We ask that offices preparing documents needing Exec Sec review and clearance circulation plan ahead sufficiently to allow other staff members a reasonable amount of time to review them.

10. ***How long does the whole Exec Sec clearance process take?***

The review time can depend on a lot of factors including: a) the length and complexity of the document; b) how well coordinated the draft was with key staff in other offices prior to being submitted for clearance; c) overall quality when initially submitted; d) the number and type of comments received in the initial round of review; e) the length of time originating offices take to complete any rewrites, the quality of the rewrite, and the rewrite's responsiveness to comments, and f) workload and competing priorities in Exec Sec and reviewing offices at the time your document is being processed. Thus, the overall review time can be anywhere from a day or two to a week or so on regular documents; or as long as a few weeks for a report or complex letter where there are numerous comments on the content, and more than one round of clearance review is needed. Large reports requiring some reworking and multiple reviews can take even longer.

11. ***What if I receive a clearance circulation from Exec Sec, and I have no interest in reviewing the document?***

If you receive a document for review from Exec Sec, and it is not necessary for your office to review it, please simply respond that your office will not be commenting. Knowing that can save us precious time, as we will not wait to hear from you.

Office of Executive Secretariat

Office of the Secretary

202/401-3067

Revised November 29, 2011

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Sample Forms of Address

Here are examples of how to write the name and address block and salutation for some officials. If the one you need isn't listed, there are other resources on the Web, or you may call your office's correspondence contact for help.

President, Vice President, First Lady, and Spouse of Vice President

President	
The President The White House Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mr./Madam President:
Vice President	
The Vice President United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Mr./Madam Vice President:
First Lady	
Mrs. Jane Roberts Doe The White House Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mrs. Doe/Mr. Doe:
Spouse of Vice President	
Mrs. Jane Roberts Doe Office of the Vice President Washington, DC 20501	Dear Mrs. Doe/Mr. Doe:

Cabinet Members

Note that either "Honorable" or "The Honorable" is acceptable.

Cabinet	
Honorable Jane Doe Secretary of Education Washington, DC 20202	Dear Madam Secretary (or Dear Mr. Secretary):

U.S. House and Senate

Note that either "Honorable" or "The Honorable" is acceptable.

Washington Office	
Honorable Jane Doe United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Senator Doe:
Honorable John Doe House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Doe: (or Dear Congressman Doe:)
District or State Office	
Honorable Jane Doe United States Senator 1234 Long Pike, Suite 567 Denver, Colorado 33333	Dear Senator Doe:
Honorable John Doe U.S. Representative Third District of Virginia 1234 Long Pike Richmond, Virginia 22222	Dear Mr. Doe: (or Dear Congressman Doe:)
President of the Senate or Speaker of the House	
Honorable Jane Doe President of the Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Ms. Doe:
Honorable John Doe Speaker of the House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Speaker/Madam Speaker:
Committee Chairman	
Honorable John Doe Chairman, Committee on Education United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairwoman (or some prefer Madam Chairman):
Honorable John Doe Chairman, Committee on Education House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairwoman (or some prefer Madam Chairman):
Subcommittee Chairman	
Honorable John Doe Chairman, Subcommittee on Education Committee on Labor and Education	Dear Senator Doe:

United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	
Honorable Jane Doe Chairman, Subcommittee on Education Committee on Education House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Ms. Doe: (or Dear Congresswoman Doe:)
Former Member of Congress	
Honorable John Doe Doe, Smith, and Jones 1234 Long Pike Kansas City, Missouri 65555	Dear Mr. Doe:

Exec Sec maintains a list in Word format of all current members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. If your office needs to send a letter to some or all of them, please contact us before you take the time to type the list yourself.

Governors and State Legislators

Note that either "Honorable" or "The Honorable" is acceptable.

Governors	
Honorable John Doe Governor of Illinois Springfield, Illinois 62220	Dear Governor Doe:
State Legislators	
Honorable Jane Doe The State Senate of Illinois Springfield, Illinois 62221	Dear Senator Doe:
Honorable John Doe The Illinois State Assembly (or the Illinois House of Representatives or Illinois House of Delegates) Springfield, Illinois 62222	Dear Mr. Doe:

Exec Sec maintains a list in Word format of all current governors. If your office needs to send a letter to some or all of them, please contact us before you take the time to type the list yourself.

Mayors and City Council Members

Note that either "Honorable" or "The Honorable" is acceptable.

Mayors	
Honorable Jane Doe Mayor of the City of Fort Worth 1234 Long Pike Fort Worth, Texas 75555	Dear Mayor Doe:
City Council Members	
Honorable John Doe Councilman/Councilwoman, City of Fort Worth 1234 Long Pike Fort Worth, Texas 75556	Dear Mr. Doe:

Chief State School Officers

Note that either "Honorable" or "The Honorable" is acceptable.

Chief State School Officers	
Honorable John Doe Commissioner of Education State Department of Education 201 East Colfax Avenue Denver, Colorado 80203-1799	Dear Mr. Doe:

Exec Sec maintains a list in Word format of all current chief state school officers. If your office needs to send a letter to some or all of them, please contact us before you take the time to type the list yourself

Ambassadors

Note that either "Honorable" or "The Honorable" is acceptable.

American Ambassador	
Honorable John Doe American Ambassador City, Country	Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:
Foreign Ambassador in the United States	
His Excellency John Doe Ambassador of (full name of country) (address)	Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:

Others

Degree letters	
John Doe, Ph.D. Director of Research XYZ Corporation 1111 Sandy Junction Road Anytown, VA 22222	Dear Dr. Doe:

Other Resources on the Web for Forms of Address

Infoplease references

Cool Fire Technology Inc.

NIH Exec Sec guide

Adresses for Ambassadors and Other Embassy Staff

Dating a Letter

Do not date a letter that will be signed in another office. After the letter is signed, the correct date will be stamped on the letter or typed in. When you date a letter, center it nicely below the letterhead at the top.

Ethics Issues

Use of Department Stationery and Envelopes

Government stationery and envelopes are for use by employees only to conduct official business of the Department. They are not for personal use. 5 CFR Section 2635.704 states *"Use of Government property. (a) Standard. An employee has a duty to protect and conserve Government property and shall not use such property, or allow its use for other than authorized purposes."* This means that letters relating to personal matters (such as correspondence with your bank about a personal account) must go on personal letterhead or paper. If further clarification is needed, please contact the Office of General Counsel's Ethics Office.

Letters of Recommendation

You may use Department stationery for letters of recommendation only if the subject of the letter is someone you know through your federal position, or the person is seeking a federal job. You should check with the Office of General Counsel's Ethics Office regarding any use of letterhead which might be interpreted not to be for official Department business.

Gifts

Receiving and thanking for gifts given to Department officials or employees can also present ethical problems. You should check with the Office of General Counsel's Ethics Office on those as well to determine if a gift may be accepted, before a letter is sent acknowledging it.

How Exec Sec Works

The office of the Director of Executive Secretariat serves as the central coordinating point for documents needing review by the Secretary.
All letters for the Secretary's signature receive final review here, just prior to being presented for signature, to ensure consistency and that the policies of the Secretary and the Administration are accurately conveyed. After approval, the office handles all signing of documents and transmittal of copies to the appropriate offices.

All decision documents (such as proposed regulations or decisions the Secretary needs to make about a Department program) and information memos (such as a report to the Secretary of activities on the Hill) are received in the office from other components of the Department. The documents are then logged in, directed appropriately, tracked and monitored by the office.

Policy analysts on the staff then review them to ensure that policy initiatives of the Secretary and Administration are included and conveyed accurately. Documents are assigned to policy analysts according to the originating POC. Policy analysts also ensure that all appropriate officials who should be involved in an area of policy have had the opportunity to review a document and approve it or offer suggestions. When there are policy differences among offices, the staff works to resolve those differences among the offices, or presents the issues to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary for decision.

Executive Secretariat staff also serve as the Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) contact in the Department, receiving notices of investigations, scheduling appropriate offices for entrance conferences, and handling clearance of responses to GAO reports.

The office also processes all incoming mail addressed to the Secretary and handles letters referred from the White House for Department reply. The staff opens and stamps in the mail, then reviews it in detail to determine which office in the Department should prepare the response, who should sign it, and who should get an FYI copy. All letters are then logged into a computer tracking system, and the staff monitors the system to ensure timely preparation of replies. Incoming letters and responses by the Secretary are scanned into a document imaging system so files can be retrieved electronically.

The Executive Secretariat is also the central repository for certain official files, retaining copies of all documents with the Secretary's signature.

Kinds of documents handled

What documents need to go to Exec Sec? The easy answer for this is "anything needing the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, or Under Secretary's signature." This could include letters, memoranda, or other materials you want them to receive or review, or other items they should officially transmit. Some examples include:

• a letter for the Secretary's signature

• proposed and final regulations requiring the Secretary's signature

• a message your office would like the Secretary to send to an organization your office works with

• a memorandum to the Deputy Secretary requesting review of an issue on which your office needs a decision

• a request for the Secretary's signature on a certificate your office wants to present, or on photos

• a request for approval of international travel or acceptance of payment-in-kind for travel anywhere

• an informational memorandum to the Under Secretary about a meeting a Department official had

• any request to the White House, such as for a letter signed by the President for a program of your office

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Exec Sec Analyst Assignment List

OFFICE	LEAD ANALYST	BACK UP ANALYST
FSA	Jim Houser	Sharon Stevens
IES	Alexis O'Neill	Sharon Stevens
OCFO	Jim Houser; Contract Actions Distributed via POC	Margaret Guenther
OCIO	Sharon Stevens	Margaret Guenther
OCO	Margaret Guenther	Sharon Stevens
OCR	Margaret Guenther	Sharon Stevens
ODS	Distributed according to subject matter or Margaret Guenther	Alexis O'Neill
OELA	Sharon Stevens	Jim Houser
OESE	Laurette Crum	Sharon Stevens
ISU	Laurette Crum	Jim Houser
OGC	Distributed according to subject matter or Margaret Guenther	Jim Houser
OIG	Sharon Stevens	Alexis O'Neill
OII	Margaret Guenther	Laurette Crum
OLCA	Distribute according to subject matter or Margaret Guenther	Laurette Crum
OM	Sharon Stevens	Margaret Guenther
OPE	Jim Houser	Alexis O'Neill
OPEPD	Alexis O'Neill	Sharon Stevens
OPEPD/Budget Service	Jim Houser	Sharon Stevens
OS/Education Technology	Margaret Guenther	Jim Houser
OS/International Affairs	Margaret Guenther	Alexis O'Neill
OSERS	Alexis O'Neill	Margaret Guenther
OUS/WHIEEH	Alexis O'Neill	Laurette Crum
OUS/FBI	Alexis O'Neill	Laurette Crum
OUS/WHIAAPI	Alexis O'Neill	Laurette Crum
OUS/WHIEEAA	Sharon Stevens	Laurette Crum
OUS/WHIHBCU	Jim Houser	Alexis O'Neill
OUS/WHIAIANE	Laurette Crum	Jim Houser
OCTAE	Sharon Stevens	Margaret Guenther

Plain Language

Writing User-Friendly Documents

Introduction

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 is designed to promote "clear Government communication that the public can understand and use." Plain writing is concise, simple, meaningful, and well-organized. It avoids jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity. It does not contain unnecessary complexity.

Sometimes government documents are confusing for our customers to read. These documents can contain complicated language and government jargon that our customers cannot understand or may not need. In turn, clear and simple communication can eliminate significant barriers to public participation in important programs for benefits and services and should be seen as an essential part of an open, transparent government.

The Act requires that the following documents must be written in plain language:

- documents that are necessary for obtaining any federal government benefit or service, or filing taxes;
- documents that provide information about any federal government benefit or service; or
- documents that explain to the public how to comply with a requirement that the Federal Government administers or enforces.

You can find more information in the Office of Management and Budget memorandum on the Act and the Plain Writing Act.

Goals and tips to communicate with plain language

The following chart contains some goals and tips to keep in mind while communicating with your customer.

Goal	Tip
Engage reader	Speak directly to the customer. Try to structure your document to get the customer the answers that are needed. You may accomplish this task by properly identifying your audience, using pronouns to speak directly to readers, using an active voice and appropriate tone.
Write clearly	Remember that not all customers are technical experts in their field or lawyers. A document full of regulations and jargon can be confusing and difficult to read. Use short sentences, try to write to one customer, use simple tenses, use contractions and try to place your words carefully.

Documents should be visually appealing	Documents should be visually attractive for the customer with information being conveyed as precisely and as unobtrusively as possible. This can be accomplished by using informative headings, short paragraphs that contain one topic, vertical lists and bold and italic highlights within a document.

To find out more information about plain language, see

http://www.plainlanguage.gov/

Communicating with Individuals with Disabilities

As part of our efforts to assist all of our customers, it is important for ED offices to exercise sensitivity when responding to inquiries from the public. Some people, because of a disability, do not use a "standard" telephone or "standard" printed materials. Many Department employees also have disabilities and need accommodations in order to perform their job-related duties. The following information provides important guidelines for interacting with ED customers and employees who have disabilities.

TTY Lines/Telephone-Relay Systems/Sign-Language Interpreter and Other Services

Some offices have installed their own TTY (teletypewriter; also commonly called TDD - Telecommunications Device for the Deaf) lines, which enable individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to communicate over the phone. This communication is possible using text-based technologies; these technologies can take three forms: a stand-alone TTY with a coupler onto which the handset of the telephone is placed; a stand-alone TTY into which the telephone line is directly connected; and computer software (such as NexTalk). Any of these technologies allow messages to be typed back and forth between the parties communicating.

Toll-free telephone-relay systems have been set up in every State and at the Federal level that allow such communication via a communication assistant or operator. We should be sensitive to the needs of ED customers and employees and always provide either a TTY number or the Federal-Relay Service number (1-800/877-8339) when a telephone number is referenced in Departmental correspondence, materials, or publications.

Printed Materials

People who are not able to read printed materials because of a visual impairment or learning disability may request a response from the Department by e-mail, or in alternative format such as large-print, computer diskette, audio cassette, or Braille. It is important for ED offices to make every effort to accommodate such requests whenever possible. For more information, please contact the Department's Alternate Format Center at: (202) 260-0852 or (202) 260-0818, or by e-mail at Frank.Pacheco@ed.gov; the OCIO Assistive Technology Team at (202/260-5055) or OCIO AT TEAM@ed.gov; or ED's Section 504 Coordinator (202/401-0964; 202/453-7267 (TTY)), for more information.

Ensuring that ED Web Sites and Links Are Accessible to Customers and Employees with Disabilities

If you are designing an ED-sponsored Web site or Web Page, it must be accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired and who use screen-reader software to read text. For further information, you can contact the Assistive Technology Team, Room BC-101, LBJ, or call: 202/260-5055. The requirements for accessible software design can be found at: http://www.ed.gov/fund/contract/apply/clibrary/software.html.

Accommodating Visitors Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

If a customer who is deaf or hard of hearing visits the Department, you should first ask the visitor what, if any, accommodation he or she needs: a sign-language interpreter, Assisted Listening Device (ALD), or Communication Assisted Real-time Translation (CART) service. If you're holding a meeting that will include people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, you can contact Darlene Avery in OM (202/260-1396) to request an interpreter, or to request reasonable accommodations, ALDs, or CART services.

White House Scheduling Requests

When should I submit the scheduling request?

Submit the scheduling request at least four weeks before the event. The sooner you submit a request, the better your chances are of having it submitted to the White House for review.

What is the proper format for a scheduling request?

The White House requests certain information about each event, so use the scheduling request format and cover letter.

What do I do if I want to request that the President participate, but if the President cannot, that I would like the Vice President or the First Lady?

Prepare the scheduling request for the President's participation. Let Exec Sec know your wishes as to alternate participants, and we will include that in the cover memo.

How do I address the scheduling request?

For the	Address to
President	Chase M. Cushman, Assistant to the President and Director of Scheduling and Advance
Vice President	Alex Hornbook, Director of Scheduling
First Lady	Andrea K. Mokros, Director of Scheduling and Advance for the First Lady
Dr. Jill Biden	Anthony Bernal, Director of Scheduling for Dr. Jill Biden

What should I include in the scheduling request?

See the sample format. Also include any other background material that explains the event or tells about the group in more detail.

Where do I send the request?

You need to first get the approval of your principal office. Principal office staff should then forward the request to the Executive Secretariat by e-mail to Dianne Naber.

What happens to the request after I submit it to the Executive Secretariat?

1. The Executive Secretariat reviews the document, prepares a transmittal memorandum to the White House, and sends it to the Chief of Staff.
2. The Chief of Staff decides whether or not to send the request to the White House.
3. If the Chief of Staff approves the request, it is e-mailed to the White House.
4. The White House notifies the Department of its decision.

How will I know if the request is approved?

The Chief of Staff's office will let you know whether or not your request is approved.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Opening Paragraph

Sample Openings

Begin the opening paragraph by thanking the writer for the letter. The opening paragraph briefly captures the essence of the incoming correspondence. Some examples are:

Type of Letter	Sample Opening Paragraph
For the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, or Under Secretary's signature, addressed to that official	Thank you for your letter in support of arts education. I appreciated hearing your views on this issue.
For signature in a principal office, addressed to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary	Thank you for your letter to (name of official to whom the letter was addressed) in support of arts education. We appreciated hearing your views on this issue. Your letter was referred to the Office of (name of office) for review, and I am pleased to respond.
For signature in a principal office, referred from the White House	Thank you for your letter to (name of White House Official to whom the letter was addressed) regarding accountability in education. We appreciated hearing your views on this issue. The White House referred your letter to the Department of Education for review, and I am pleased to respond. For letters addressed to President Obama, use "Thank you for your letter to President Barack Obama... ." For letters addressed to Mrs. Obama, use "Thank you for your letter to Mrs. Obama... ."
Multiple Writers	Thank you for your letter requesting information regarding the Department's support for school safety programs. I am sending an identical response to the cosigners of your letter. *Or if there are only one or two cosigners:* I am sending an identical response to Jane Doe and Jim Deer.

Avoid impersonal or bureaucratic-sounding openings such as, "This is in response to your letter of June 15 regarding...," or "I am in receipt of your letter of June 15 regarding ..."

For letters where there has been an inordinate delay in responding, include: "I hope you will excuse the delay in my reply."

When there are complex legal considerations that we know will delay a final reply, send an interim letter to advise the customer that the letter was received and staff are working on it.

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ExecSec Executive Secretariat

Contact us

If you have questions or need further information from Exec Sec, please contact us as follows:

E-mail:	Dianne.Naber@ed.gov
Phone:	202/401-3067
Fax:	202/401-2854
Address:	Office of the Secretary, Executive Secretariat 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, 7C116 Washington, DC 20202

For comments, questions, or problems with the Exec Sec Web site, please contact Sharon Stevens also at 202/401-3067.

FORMAT FOR ACTION MEMORANDUM

PURPOSE: ACTION

DATE: (To be filled in by office of official signing the memo)

TO: The Secretary (or the Deputy Secretary or Under Secretary)
Through: DS _____ (if applicable).
ES _____

FROM: Name and Title of Official (signature)

SUBJECT: Topic of Memorandum

The body of the memorandum should include whatever information is important to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary to make an informed decision on the action requested. It must be well organized, logically presented, and readable. The discussion should be objective, presenting both pros and cons of the action requested, when relevant. If the action memo is in response to a request by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary, you should mention that up front. Also state clearly at the outset exactly what it is you are asking the Secretary to decide or do.

While you should include a separate subheading for your recommendation, include only those additional subheadings you feel are necessary to properly organize the information. Titles of additional subheadings and whether they are included at all will vary based on the kind of action you are requesting (an invitation to an event versus an extensive options paper on a complicated issue). Following are some **possible** subheadings, though you should use your judgment on which are necessary and what they should be called:

ISSUE or SUMMARY could provide a brief summary of what is being requested.

ACTION FORCING EVENT or REASON FOR NEEDED ACTION should be included when the matter is time-sensitive, there is a specific reason why we need to take the action, or a statute requires a decision. State the date by which a decision is needed, and why.

BACKGROUND or DISCUSSION could provide key factors to be considered in making a decision, pros and cons, historical background or practice, or previous decisions that relate.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS or ALTERNATIVES might be included when there are several approaches that might be taken; this section would discuss the options and the programmatic, budgetary, legal, or administrative considerations involved.

COMMENTS BY OTHER OFFICES or CLEARANCES should advise of the other offices that reviewed the issue and whether or not they concurred. If they disagreed, you should highlight the various comments and opinions expressed and attach any dissenting views.

The memo must conclude with your recommendation, followed by decision lines where the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary is to sign, and a contact person should more information be needed.

RECOMMENDATION

(Include your recommendation here.)

DECISION

Approve ________ Signature __________________________ Date _______

Disapprove______ Signature __________________________ Date _______

Other/Comments:

____

____

CONTACT: Name, Office, Room Number and Building, Phone Number

January 18, 2006

Honorable M. C. Congress
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Congress:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary (Last Name of Secretary) in support of the application submitted by the Livingston Education Service Agency for a Head Start program grant.

After further investigation, we have been advised that the Department of Health and Human Services can best assist your constituent as that Department administers the Head Start program. I am forwarding your letter to:

Ms. Jane Doe
Executive Secretariat
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Joe Smith
Director of Programs

cc: Department of Health
and Human Services

June 8, 2001

Honorable Pat Representative
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Representative:

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of (constituent).

I have referred your letter to the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE). That office will look into your constituent's concern, since it falls within their jurisdiction. They will respond directly to you.

In the meantime, if we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe
Assistant Secretary

FORMAT FOR INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

PURPOSE: INFORMATION
REVIEW NEEDED BY: (Indicate here if there's a specific time by which the information should be reviewed. Leave off entirely if there's not.)

DATE: (To be filled in by office of official signing the memo)

TO: The Secretary (or the Deputy Secretary or Under Secretary)
Through: DS _____ (Delete DS if memo is to DS or US only.)
ES _____

FROM: Name and Title of Official (signature)

SUBJECT: Topic of Memorandum

The body of the memorandum should include whatever information you would like to convey to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary. It needs to be well organized, logically presented, and readable.

Include subheadings when you feel they are necessary to properly organize the information. Titles of subheadings and whether they are included at all will vary based on the subject. You should use your judgment on whether they are necessary and what they should be called, though possibilities might be PURPOSE, BACKGROUND, DISCUSSION, ISSUES, FOLLOW-UP ACTION TO BE TAKEN, etc. If it's a relatively short memo, subheadings may not be needed at all.

If the information memo is in response to a request by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Under Secretary you should mention that up front.

Never use information memoranda if there is an action, a decision, or advice that you are seeking through the memo; in those cases, use an action memo.

CONTACT: Name, Office, Room Number and Building, Phone Number

February 2, 2010

MEMORANDUM TO SENIOR OFFICERS

FROM: Margot M. Rogers /s/
Chief of Staff

SUBJECT: Procedure for Requesting Approval of Gifts of Travel (Payment in Kind)

I want to make sure that everyone is aware of the various procedures that are in place and that need to be followed when you or others on your staff receive offers from outside groups to pay for travel to a conference or other event. Such offers are normally considered as gifts to the Department, are evaluated carefully, and ultimately must come forward for final review in the Office of the Secretary. I hope the following information will be helpful.

First, employees proposing that the Department accept gifts of travel expenses from non-Federal sources must submit a formal request, consisting of the attached form ("Request for Approval to Accept Payment for Official Travel from A Non-Federal Source"), a copy of the employee's travel authorization, and documentation of the invitation. The Ethics Division of the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) designed the form to meet the government-wide requirements of the General Services Administration and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, so it is important it is filled out completely.

Second, the employee should submit the request to the employee's principal office senior officer for review. If the request is approved to move forward, the senior officer should sign the form where indicated as the Recommending Principal Office Head (at the bottom of Page 3), and submit it along with the supporting materials mentioned above to the Executive Secretariat, Office of the Secretary, Room 7C116, LBJ. (Note that the Executive Secretariat will handle the reviews required on Page 4 of the form.) As the form notes, requests for approval of gifts of travel should be submitted at least three weeks prior to the proposed travel.

I want to stress the importance of completely and accurately filling out the form and meeting the required three-week deadline for submitting the form to the Executive Secretariat, and I appreciate your cooperation on that. My office and OGC need all of the information requested in order to determine whether acceptance of the gift is in accordance with the Department's policies and the governing regulations, and is appropriate. In particular, the form asks for information about matters affecting the sponsor that may be pending in the traveling employee's principal office. An employee who is not sure whether a sponsor has any matters pending before the employee's principal office should check with the senior officer's chief of staff, the program attorney, or other staff members in the office. Note that failure to submit the form in a timely manner, submission of an incomplete form, or failure to attach the accompanying travel authorization may result in disapproval of the request.

Any employee with questions concerning the approval process or paperwork requirements for payment-in-kind travel requests should contact Dianne Naber, Office of Executive Secretariat, at (202) 401-3067. Questions regarding the information required on the request form itself pertaining to the proposed non-federal funding source (event sponsor) should be directed to the Ethics Division in OGC, at (202) 401-8309.

I would appreciate your distributing copies of this memorandum and form as needed. Any questions or comments you have may be directed to Dianne Naber or Teresa Garland in the Office of the Secretary, Executive Secretariat.

Attachment

cc: Chiefs of Staff
Executive Officers
Susan Winchell, Designated Agency Ethics Official

Justification Memo for International Travel

DATE:

TO: Emma Vadehra
Chief of Staff

THROUGH: Executive Secretariat _____

FROM: ____________________
(Signature and Title of Head of Principal Office)

SUBJECT: Foreign Travel by [name], [principal office] to participate in [name or description of event], [city and country to be held] [dates of travel]

REQUEST

The purpose of this memo is to request approval for travel for [name(s)] to participate in [event, place, dates]. (Include also whether travel is payment-in-kind, invitational travel/at no cost to government.)

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL

What is the purpose of the event/meeting? What is the purpose of this specific individual's participation in the event? What entity, if any, is requesting that this individual travel? (Please be specific.)

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

What initiative or ongoing project, if any, is this part of? Is this one in a series of meetings or events? Has the Department participated before? Has this individual participated before? What other key entities or individuals participate?

Are there particular political, diplomatic, social, or educational factors that affect the desirability of carrying out this travel?

EXPECTED BENEFITS OF TRAVEL

What is expected to be the outcome of the event/meeting? What is the expected outcome of the participation by this individual? How does this travel relate to the Department's priorities? How will this travel benefit the Department? How will it benefit the U.S. government (as appropriate)? How will it benefit students, educators, or others?

How will the traveler continue to be involved in this initiative or project after returning to the Department? What follow up, if any, will be required?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please note additional information and facts, including:

Is this travel part of the Principal Office's annual international travel plan?
Is this travel payment-in-kind, invitational travel and/or at no cost to the government, and who will pay for it?
Does this travel involve annual leave?

List any other pertinent facts.

CHECKLIST FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Please review and check the following list of requirements for international travel:

☐ The traveler will use an **official passport** (not personal passport) for this travel. (Check A or B.)

- ☐ A. The traveler already has an official passport.
- ☐ B. The traveler has applied for an official passport.

☐ The traveler has confirmed whether a **visa** for official travel is required. (Check A, B, or C.)

- ☐ A. A visa is required and the traveler has obtained the visa.
- ☐ B. A visa is required and the traveler will obtain the visa before departure.
- ☐ C. A visa is not required.

☐ The traveler has formally advised the U.S. Embassy in the destination country or countries of his or her travel through the **e-Country clearance** system. Or, if the traveler has not submitted the request because he or she does not yet have an official passport, he or she will submit the request once in possession of an official passport.

☐ The traveler – if a Senate-confirmed appointee – has submitted a separate travel **request letter to the National Security Advisor**.

☐ The traveler acknowledges that he or she must submit a completed **International Trip Report** to the Director of the OS/International Affairs Office within 10 business days of returning from travel, and that failing to do so could negatively affect subsequent requests for international travel.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this request for [no cost to government] travel for [name, event, place, dates] be approved [with the understanding that the cost for accommodations will be borne by (if appropriate)]. The other expenses of travel [airfare, taxis, meals, accommodations] will be paid for by the Department (if appropriate).

DECISION

Travel for [name] is:

APPROVED: ______________________ DATE: ____________

DISAPPROVED: ______________________ DATE: ____________

COMMENTS: ____

[NOTE: If multiple travelers are included on this request, please prepare a DECISION section for each one]

CONTACT: [name, office, phone number]
NOTE: List someone who is familiar with this particular trip and will be available to answer questions from the International Affairs or OGC ethics staff.

ATTACHMENTS [Do not include tabs]

--Detailed itinerary of official business schedule
--Travel authorization form
--Flight itinerary
--Letter of invitation (if applicable)
--Conference agenda (if applicable)
--Request for Approval to Accept Payment for Official Travel from a Non-Federal Source (if applicable)
--Draft letter to National Security Advisor (if you are requesting travel for a Senate-confirmed ED appointee, such as an assistant secretary)

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

April 13, 2011

M-11-15

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: Cass R. Sunstein
Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs

SUBJECT: Final Guidance on Implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010

In his January 21, 2009, Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, President Obama emphasized the importance of establishing "a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration." Plain writing is indispensable to achieving these goals. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 (the Act) (Public Law 111-274), which the President signed into law on October 13, 2010, calls for writing that is clear, concise, and well-organized.[1] This memorandum provides final guidance on implementing the Act and is designed to promote the goals of the President's Open Government Initiative.

As defined in the Act, plain writing is writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and consistent with other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience. Such writing avoids jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity.

Clear and simple communication has many benefits. Avoiding vagueness and unnecessary complexity makes it easier for members of the public to understand and to apply for important benefits and services for which they are eligible. Plain writing can also assist the public in complying with applicable requirements simply because people better understand what they are supposed to do. Plain writing is thus more than just a formal requirement; it can be essential to the successful achievement of legislative and administrative goals, and it also promotes the rule of law.

Experience has also shown that plain writing can:

- improve public understanding of government communications;
- save money and increase efficiency;
- reduce the need for the public to seek clarification from agency staff;
- improve public understanding of agency requirements and thereby assist the public in complying with them;

[1] The Act is also found at 5 U.S.C. § 301.

- reduce resources spent on enforcement;
- improve public understanding of agency forms and applications and thereby assist the public in completing them; and
- reduce the number of errors that are made and thus the amount of time and effort that the agency and the public need to devote to correcting those errors.

This Memorandum rescinds and replaces OMB Memorandum M-11-05, "Preliminary Guidance for the Plain Writing Act of 2010," issued on November 22, 2010. This final guidance does not make significant substantive changes from the preliminary guidance, but it does provide further clarification of key issues. Actions that agencies have taken under the preliminary guidance will provide the foundation for the agencies' implementation of this final guidance and of the Act's requirements.

Implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010

A. Overview.

(1) Applicability. The Act and this guidance apply to all "executive agencies" as defined under 5 U.S.C. § 105.[2]

(2) Deadlines. The Act contains the following specific deadlines and requirements:

- By July 13, 2011 (nine months after enactment), each agency must:
    - designate one or more Senior Officials for Plain Writing who will be responsible for overseeing the agency's implementation of the Act and this guidance;
    - create a plain writing section of the agency website;
    - communicate the Act's requirements to agency employees and train agency employees in plain writing;
    - establish a process by which the agency will oversee its ongoing compliance with the Act's requirements; and
    - publish an initial report, on the plain writing section of the agency's website, that describes the agency's plan for implementing the Act's requirements.

- By October 13, 2011 (one year after enactment), agencies must write all new or substantially revised documents in plain writing.

- By April 13, 2012 (eighteen months after enactment), and annually thereafter, each agency must publish a report that describes its continuing compliance with the Act.

[2] Section 105 defines "executive agency" as an "Executive department, a Government corporation, and an independent establishment." The definitions for "executive department," "government corporation" and "independent establishment" are found in 5 U.S.C. §§ 101, 103, and 104.