



File Code: 1580; 1800
Route To:

Date: April 8, 2020

Subject: Accommodating Interruptions from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

Forest Service continues to monitor and examine the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Enclosed is Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memo M-20-17, Administrative Relief for Recipients and Applicants of Federal Financial Assistance Directly Impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) due to Loss of Operations (Enclosure 1). We are writing this letter to provide updated guidance on related impacts to the Grants and Agreements (G&A) community.

Given the rapidly changing situation, proactive and precautionary steps are essential to ensure long-term viability of the workforce and mission delivery, based on comprehensive and continual assessments of workplace, site, and community risks. The agency is following USDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and using a common risk management framework to identify risk factors and mitigation measures as well as to make risk-informed decisions. Social distancing measures are necessary to preserve the health and welfare of our employees, partners, cooperators, families, and local communities. Individuals should observe CDC's [How to Protect Yourself](#) guidance.

Each Region and Station G&A Office should continue to assess its current workload and adjust any required due dates and internal processing deadlines, as needed. Additionally, the WO G&A Policy Office extends the below flexibilities to the field.

Cooperators preparing an application, letter of intent, or partnership proposal:

If the organization is or becomes subject to a shelter-in-place order, deadlines for submitting applications, letters of intent, or other partnership proposals should be extended by 30 days.

Cooperator progress reports:

If the organization is or becomes subject to a shelter-in-place order, progress reports for grants, cooperative agreements, interagency agreements, or partnership agreements may be submitted to the Regions or Stations as soon as possible. The Organization should submit reports no later than 3 months from their due date.

Agreement or award budget revision:

Partners and awardees should work through the project managers and local G&A Offices for all major budget impacts caused by COVID-19 disruptions and where the need for a revised budget occurs. Each G&A Office should take into consideration the situation in



their area for shelter-in-place orders, quarantines, closures, and the project plan when negotiating revised budgets with a cooperator.

Extensions to Periods of Performance, where delays occur due to closure of facilities:

When delays in project performance are created due to closures of facilities or areas where work was to be performed, units may extend impacted projects for up to 1 year from the expiration date of the record in order to complete work that was missed once facilities reopen. The G&A Office does not need to send a policy request for the extension to the inbox for individual record approval but should document the reason for the extension in the notes section of NRM and by uploading a relevant attachment to document this decision in the official file. The modification should still be processed using Form FS-1500-19, Modification of Grant or Agreement, and bi-laterally signed indicating both parties' agreement to the new period of performance.

Changes to cooperator travel plans:

G&A Offices should not consider changes to planned travel caused by the cancellation of meetings, quarantines, closures, or other public health measures to be a change in the scope of an award or agreement requiring agency approval.

If a meeting has been cancelled, cooperators must follow their Organization's travel policies to determine whether costs may be charged to an award. If their policy permits travelers to purchase non-refundable items, including airfare and lodging for example, and does not require travelers to reimburse the Organization for change or cancellation fees, such fees may be charged to an award or agreement. If their policy prohibits the purchase of non-refundable travel or travelers are required to reimburse the Organization for change or cancellation fees, such fees may not be charged to an award or agreement.

Please review the enclosed questions and answers document (Enclosure 2). Partners and awardees should be encouraged to contact the local G&A Office or Program Manager with any concerns or questions regarding COVID-19.

If you have any questions, please contact the Washington Office Grants & Agreement Policy Office at SM.FS.wo_ga_policy@usda.gov.

/s/ Claudette Fernandez
CLAUDETTE FERNANDEZ
Deputy Chief, Business Operations

Enclosures (2)