



# **CONTINGENCY PLAN**

**Research, Education & Economics  
(REE) & The Office of the Chief  
Scientist (OCS)**

*December 2018*

*Agricultural Research Service (ARS)  
Economic Research Service (ERS)  
National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)  
Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS)*

## Table of Contents

<b>Purpose</b> .....	5
<b>Scope</b> .....	5
<b>Excepted Activities</b> .....	5
<b>General REE Shutdown Procedures</b> .....	5
<b>Communication Plan (Within 4 weeks of a shutdown)</b> .....	5
<b>Employees (Within 3 weeks of a shutdown)</b> .....	5
<b>Managers/Supervisors (Within 3 weeks of a shutdown)</b> .....	6
<b>Administrative and Financial Management (AFM) (Within 2 weeks of a shutdown)</b> .....	6
<b>Office of the Chief Information Officer (Within 2 weeks of a shutdown)</b> .....	8
<b>Day One of Furlough</b> .....	8
Employees.....	8
Supervisors.....	9
Agency Leaders.....	9
Contracting Officers .....	9
Excepted Employees.....	9
<b>ARS Shutdown Plan</b> .....	10
<b>Shutdown Communication</b> .....	10
Supervisors/Employees.....	10
<b>Excepted Duties and Positions</b> .....	10
HQ and Area Excepted Duties .....	10
HQ and Area Excepted Positions .....	10
Location Excepted Duties .....	11
Location Excepted Positions .....	11
<b>Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP)</b> .....	12
<b>Media Requests</b> .....	12
<b>ERS Shutdown Plan</b> .....	12
<b>Shutdown Communication</b> .....	12
Supervisors/Employees.....	12
<b>Excepted Duties and Positions</b> .....	12
<b>Agency Excepted Duties</b> .....	12
Agency Excepted Positions .....	13
<b>Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP)</b> .....	13
<b>Media Requests</b> .....	14
<b>NASS Shutdown Plan</b> .....	14
<b>Shutdown Communication</b> .....	14
Supervisors/Employees.....	14
<b>Excepted Duties and Positions</b> .....	14
<b>Agency Excepted Duties (Excepted duties as listed are not impacted by timing or season of the year.)</b> .....	14
Agency Excepted Positions .....	15
<b>Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP)</b> .....	15
<b>Media Requests</b> .....	16
<b>NIFA Shutdown Plan</b> .....	16
<b>Shutdown Communication</b> .....	16

Supervisors/Employees.....	16
<b>Director, NIFA.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Excepted Duties and Positions.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Agency Excepted Duties (Excepted duties as listed are not impacted by timing or season of the year.).....</b>	<b>16</b>
Agency Positions Not Subject to Furlough .....	17
Agency Excepted Positions .....	17
<b>Emergent Excepted Requirements, Emergency Management and Vulnerability Prevention .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Media Requests.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>OCS Shutdown Plan.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Shutdown Communication .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Supervisors/Employees.....	18
<b>Excepted Duties and Positions.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Office Excepted Duties (Excepted duties as listed are not impacted by timing or season of the year.).....</b>	<b>18</b>
Office Excepted Positions .....	18
<b>Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP) .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Media Requests.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>General REE Start-up Procedures.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Administrative and Financial Management.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Human Resources .....	19
Financial Management, Agreements & Travel .....	20
Acquisition & Personal Property .....	21
Facilities.....	22
<b>Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Startup Plan.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Guidance for the Start-Up of ARS Operations .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Initial Communications Timeline .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Employee Communication.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Information Technology.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Economic Research Service (ERS) Startup Plan .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Guidance for the Start-Up of ERS Operations .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Initial Communications Timeline .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Programmatic activities .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Startup Plan .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Guidance for the Start-Up of NASS Operations.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Initial Communications Timeline .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Customer Service for Start-Up of NASS Operations .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Information Technology.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Startup Plan .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Guidance for the Start-Up of NIFA Operations .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Initial Communications Timeline .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Information Technology.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Grants and Agreements .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) Startup Plan .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Guidance for the Start-Up of OCS Operations .....</b>	<b>32</b>

<b>Initial Communications Timeline .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Information Technology.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix A: ARS Start-Up Committee.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix B: ERS Start-Up Committee .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix C: NASS Start-Up Committee.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendix D: NIFA Start-Up Committee.....</b>	<b>40</b>

## Purpose

This document establishes a plan of action for an orderly termination of Research Education & Economics (REE) operations in the absence of an appropriation or Continuing Resolution (CR) and an orderly start-up of REE operations following appropriation or CR approval. This plan will be enacted through a notification to all employees from the REE Administrators at the direction of the REE Under Secretary.

## Scope

The functions and activities described herein are to be executed in accordance with all applicable statutes, regulations, policies, and delegations of authority.

## Excepted Activities

Excepted activities during a government shutdown include activities to support:

- Preservation and protection of life and property
- Law enforcement, health and safety functions

Excepted activities specific to the REE agencies and the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) are further described in the agency sections of this document.

## General REE Shutdown Procedures

### ***Communication Plan (Within 4 weeks of a shutdown)***

The Deputy Administrator for Administrative and Financial Management (DAAF) and the Director, Human Resources Division (HRD) will coordinate with the USDA Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and other Departmental Management (DM) offices to ensure accurate and timely information is provided to the REE Administrators and Directors in accordance with USDA guidance and timing. Information that is available and approved for release prior to the first morning of a shutdown will be provided to the agencies for sharing with employees as early as possible. REE Administrators will provide information to employees leading up to a potential lapse of funding in order to ensure an orderly shutdown.

### ***Employees (Within 3 weeks of a shutdown)***

Following are recommended actions during the days prior to a potential shutdown.

- Access and print documents that may be needed during a lapse of appropriation such as:
  - Leave & Earning Statement (LES)

- SF-50
- Furlough related guidance or communication from USDA or the agency
- Prioritize workload to ensure urgent requirements that need to be met prior to the potential shutdown are completed.
- Ensure all sensitive documents, hazardous materials and other like items are properly inventoried and stored properly.

### ***Managers/Supervisors (Within 3 weeks of a shutdown)***

Following are recommended actions during the days prior to a potential shutdown.

- Ensure the organizational calling trees to reach employees are up to date with accurate personal phone numbers and personal emails.
  - Personal contact information may be utilized to inform employees of change in furlough status or provide additional information in case of a long-term furlough.
- Ensure employees understand it is their responsibility to check the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website or mobile phone application for information on the government's startup status. Employees should monitor OPM in addition to those outlined in official shutdown communications. Agencies may contact employees through a calling tree or other systems but the official notification is from OPM to inform them to return to work.
- Identify and communicate potential excepted activities and excepted personnel during a potential shutdown through the agency leadership structure.
- Assist employees with the prioritization of workload to ensure urgent requirements that need to be met prior to the potential shutdown are completed.
- Employees that may be excepted may be provided an informal notice but formal notification to excepted employees must be made after USDA and Agency approval with approved documentation.
- Ensure partners and stakeholders information is up to date in the appropriate systems/database.
- Agency leaders should notify stakeholders and university partners the potential impacts of a shutdown in accordance with agency and USDA guidance.

### ***Administrative and Financial Management (AFM) (Within 2 weeks of a shutdown)***

Human Resources Division (HRD)

- In preparation for a potential shutdown, HR specialists are to identify and resolve issues related to temporary positions that may expire during the shutdown in addition to on-board of new hires during the shutdown.
- Hold the final excepted employee list for T&A purposes.
- Coordinate with OHRM and other DM offices and issue all approved and appropriate information/notices on furlough and guidance on orderly shutdown to the REE agencies and bargaining units.

- Provide appropriate notification and instruction to Area Administrative Offices (AAOs) operations on HR activities (i.e. recruitments, prospective Entrance-On-Duty, processing personnel actions, etc.).
- Partner with OHRM on HR actions that occur during the shutdown that require guidance or information for distribution to excepted and/or non-excepted employees.

#### Financial Management & Agreements Division (FMAD)

- Coordinate with the Department to ensure financial business/systems remain available for excepted employees during potential shutdown and be on call to support excepted functions.
- Provide guidance on the limitation of travel in preparation for a potential shutdown.
  - When and to what point in time scheduled travel should be cancelled
  - Instructions on travel arrangement for excepted employees
  - Instructions on travel arrangement for employees on details away from their local commuting areas
- Advise employees that travel planned on or after the furlough date should not commence in the event of a shutdown. Travel orders issued would be considered invalid.
- Advise passport custodians to retrieve all passports held by employees and secure them in the custodian's safe.
- Advise employees to secure all hard copy tickets for travel during the period of lapsed appropriation.
- Advise employees that all Government issued travel charge cards should be in the possession of the individual cardholder or stored in a secure location.
- Advise employees that no travel arrangements or ticket purchases should be made through the applicable Travel System or directly with the TMCs during the period of lapsed appropriation. Additional information for excepted employee travel in support of excepted duties will be provided prior to a potential shutdown.
- Travel System approving officials should not stamp any non-excepted employee related documents in the system during the period of the lapsed appropriation.
- Provide advice and guidance on establishing or continuing existing Extramural Agreements deemed necessary by ARS program managers to support mission critical research or for the purpose of providing adequate care and protection of Government property; i.e., facilities, land, and/or livestock.
- Provide advice and guidance on continuing existing Extramural Agreements that are not impacted by the potential lapse in appropriations.
- Provide advice and guidance on transaction processing procedures to obtain/retain essential cooperator services as noted above.

#### Acquisition and Property Division (APD)

- Provide guidance to Contracting Officers (CO) on how to allow for contracted critical services that preserve and protect property.
- Provide guidance on how to process essential requirements for supply contracts.

- Issue guidance to ensure that personal property and hazardous materials (including equipment and hazardous materials pending disposal actions) are safeguarded to protect against theft and destruction.
- Provide guidance to the Acquisition Workforce to inform service contractors of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under.
- Provide guidance to Purchase Cardholders regarding using and securing purchase cards. Provide specific guidance on the appropriate use of purchase cards in support of excepted activities during a shutdown.
- Provide guidance to secure fleet cards. Include guidance as a reminder to use fleet and fleet cards only in support of excepted activities during a shutdown.

### ***Information Technology Service Division – (Within 2 weeks of a shutdown)***

- Identify agency-wide systems under the responsibility of the agency that will and will not be available to excepted employees during the shutdown. The specific method for blocking access to the identified systems will be determined by the mission area ACIO.
- Prepare guidance for IT security measures to those locations outside the National Capital region, as applicable.
- Prepare employee guidance on the availability and use of IT systems, government furnished IT equipment and proper IT shutdown procedures during the furlough and provide to employees in accordance with USDA and agency guidance.

### ***Day One of Furlough***

#### **Employees**

All employees must be on work status (physically at work or approved telework) to receive furlough communication and guidance. Employees without approved telework agreements may be able to conduct orderly shutdown activities through remote access if pre-approved by their supervisor in the event of a potential shutdown. Employees on travel are to return to their duty stations as soon as practicable. Employees who are on paid leave (annual or sick) will have their leave cancelled and will return to work status. Employees are to engage in orderly shutdown activities such as:

- Update voicemail, email out of office and office signage with authorized verbiage and instructions
- Verify that all sensitive document and hazardous materials are properly inventoried and stored
- Ensure timesheets are validated and certified in accordance with USDA guidance (The National Finance Center (NFC) has doubled the capacity for WebTA usage to resolve the slow system access issue)

Employees who are on leave or in travel status will conduct their shutdown activities as soon as they return to their worksite. Upon completion of all orderly shutdown activities, all furloughed employees will be placed on furlough status.



Furloughed employees must not use Government issued systems such as computers, cell and smart phones, tablets, and/or laptops during the shutdown. If a furloughed employee is designated as “on call” the appropriate supervisor/manager will contact the furloughed employee via personal phone or email and designate the employee as excepted for specific excepted duties.

### **Supervisors**

Supervisors are to ensure that excepted employees are provided appropriate excepted employee communication. Supervisors are to ensure furlough related communication is provided to those employees who are on approved leave and cannot be on work status.

### **Agency Leaders**

Excepted Agency leaders should notify stakeholders and university partners of the government shutdown status in accordance with agency and USDA guidance.

### **Contracting Officers**

Contractors will be notified of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under by the applicable Contracting Officer. Contracting Officers will notify and keep the appropriate Contracting Officer’s Representatives (COR) aware of these activities. CO’s will ensure contractors provide facilities security and maintenance services in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. In addition, updated excepted employees lists for the applicable facility will be shared with security staff in partnership with local excepted government employee(s). Contractors and excepted employees are to forward all facilities issues to the appropriate excepted leader in the applicable agency. All future REE contracts will include language to clarify the contracted activity as excepted or not excepted.

### **Excepted Employees**

Excepted employees are authorized to use Government equipment and communication devices while performing excepted activities. Being designated as excepted employees do not necessarily mean that the excepted employees must be physically at the official worksite every day for a full day. Excepted employees are designated to perform excepted activities as needed.

Excepted employees are to track daily excepted tasks and duration utilizing the Excepted Employee Daily Log which will be provided as part of the communication package to excepted employees.

***Additional specific information will be provided to all employees in accordance with agency and USDA approval by or prior to a potential shutdown.***

## ARS Shutdown Plan

### ***Shutdown Communication***

ARS research and operational activities will be suspended during a shutdown. ARS activities during a shutdown will be limited to the following agency excepted duties.

### **Supervisors/Employees**

Furlough communication will be provided to all ARS employees via the ARS ALL email distribution. The agency will work with USDA to provide communication as early as possible in preparation for a shutdown. Excepted employees will receive information from the Administrator's Council (AC) through the location/office supervisor.

Location leadership is to notify local cooperators of the status of the shutdown on the first day of the shutdown in accordance with agency and USDA guidance. Contractors will be notified of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under by the applicable Contracting Officer.

### ***Excepted Duties and Positions***

#### **HQ and Area Excepted Duties**

- Coordination of data calls and excepted activities throughout the agency needed to accommodate short and long-term shutdown.
- Respond to urgent furlough related issues throughout the agency and with stakeholders and partners.
- Respond to location/office excepted issues. Coordinate with locations/offices with current and emergent excepted requirements.
- Provide communication to excepted and non-excepted employees in accordance with USDA guidance.
- In the event additional excepted employees are needed, additional employees may be designated as excepted employees with the approval of the Administrator's office due to emergent excepted requirements and/or emergency response.
- Coordinate with DM offices, Under Secretary's office and REE agency leadership on furlough related data calls and coordination.
- Coordinate with OHRM and the REE agencies on personnel related items such as time & attendance, benefits during the furlough.
- Coordinate with USDA, Agriculture Security Operations Center (ASOC) on resolution of cybersecurity incidents during the furlough.
- Coordinate with the USDA Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination (OHSEC) Operations Center on any emergencies that may arise.  
Coordinate with USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) Investigations on any criminal law enforcement issues requiring action or attention.

#### **HQ and Area Excepted Positions**

- Administrator

- Associate Administrators
- Deputy Administrator for Administrative & Financial Management / Mission Area Business Center Chief Operating Officer
- Area Directors
- Area Administrative Office Directors
- Director, Human Resources Division
- Director, Acquisition and Property
- Director, Facilities Division
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chief, Travel and Relocation Policy Staff
- Chief, Pay and Leave Staff
- Director, Information Staff
- Assistant Chief Information Officer
- Cybersecurity and IT Infrastructure Specialists

### **Location Excepted Duties**

- Coordinate with Area Director on current and emergent excepted requirements.
- Provide communication to excepted and non-excepted employees in accordance with USDA guidance.
- Designate excepted employees with the approval of the Administrator's office due to emergent excepted requirements and or emergency response.
- Coordinate the work and scheduling of excepted activities.
- Collect, harvest, preserve, protect and analyze irreplaceable, time sensitive and cost prohibitive to replace property (physical& intellectual)/data/crops/animals/cultures/samples and germplasm.
- Continuation of certain human studies to not violate ethics related to human studies, includes but not limited to taking biological samples as needed and continuing experimental protocols.
- Continuation of certain animal wellbeing activities and other animal studies to not violate ethics related to animal studies which might result in animal death or unnecessary extension of experimental protocols.
- Provide building access to non-federal employees in facilities located at cooperating institutions doing work not funded through lapsed appropriations as long as safety and security concerns are addressed.
- Coordination with contractors and or cooperators that are performing excepted duties in preserving and protecting life and property.

### **Location Excepted Positions**

- A leader at each location (Center Director/Location Coordinator/Research Leader)
- Personnel required to perform location excepted duties during the shutdown as identified and approved by the Agency.

## ***Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP)***

Emergency response and COOP officials will not be designated as excepted employees until an emergency situation is identified. When needed, emergency response and COOP officials will be reached through personal phone or email and be activated as excepted employees as approved by the agency.

## ***Media Requests***

All employees must notify and work with the ARS Director of Information Staff prior to engaging in media interviews or other forms of communication with media. Contact information and specific instruction will be provided in preparation for a potential lapse of funds.

## **ERS Shutdown Plan**

### ***Shutdown Communication***

ERS publications, website updates, data products, and Outlook reports will be suspended during a shutdown. ERS activities during a shutdown will be limited to the following agency excepted duties.

### ***Supervisors/Employees***

Furlough communication will be provided to all ERS employees via an all employee email. Excepted employees will receive information from the Administrator's office through their Division Directors.

Agency leaders are to notify applicable stakeholders of the status of the shutdown on the first day of the shutdown in accordance with agency and USDA guidance. Contractors will be notified of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under by the applicable Contracting Officer.

### ***Excepted Duties and Positions***

#### ***Agency Excepted Duties***

- Coordination of furlough related data calls and excepted activities throughout the agency needed to accommodate a shutdown
- Respond to urgent furlough related issues throughout the agency as needed or required by Departmental guidance Respond to Departmental or other excepted issues.
- Excepted employees are authorized to use Government equipment and communication devices while performing excepted activities.
- Unless their presence is required to address agency excepted activities, excepted employees may fulfill their duties away from their headquarters offices.
- Provide communication to excepted and non-excepted employees in accordance with Departmental guidance.

- In the event additional excepted employees are needed, additional employees may be designated as “on-call” excepted employees with the approval of the Administrator’s office to address emergent excepted requirements and/or emergency response. If such a need arises and approval is given, an excepted supervisor will contact the individual(s) on their personal communication devices. The excepted supervisor will provide instructions on the nature of “on-call” work assignments, “on call” worksite during the furlough period, protocol for communication, and any other pertinent information.
- Coordinate with DM offices, Under Secretary’s office and REE agency leadership on furlough related data calls and coordination.
- Coordinate with OHRM and the REE agencies on personnel related items such as time & attendance, benefits during the furlough.
- Maintain agency Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) systems.
- Ensure all systems remain online and functional with unauthorized user access denied during the shutdown.
  - Agency LAN and WAN computer systems are considered critical infrastructure
- Employees will be instructed to report back for duty when they are notified. They will be advised to monitor official notifications from OPM or media sources and only return after appropriations legislation of a Continuing Resolution has been enacted.

### **Agency Excepted Positions**

- Administrator
- Associate Administrator
- Division Directors (four)
- Deputy Administrator for Administrative & Financial Management / Mission Area Business Center Chief Operating Officer
- Director, Human Resources Division (ARS)
- Three Information Technology ERS staff members
- Two ERS COOP Team Members
- Budget Officer

### ***Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP)***

Emergency response and COOP officials will be designated as excepted employees to ensure adequate communications with the USDA Operations Center. COOP team members officials will be reached through their official phones or personal email as needed by the agency. COOP team members required for both readiness activities such as maintaining operable communications as well as any emergency implementation or activation activities, and to ensure adequate communication with the USDA OpsCenter.

## **Media Requests**

All employees must notify and work with the ERS Administrator prior to engaging in media interviews or other forms of communication with media.

## **NASS Shutdown Plan**

### ***Shutdown Communication***

NASS will suspend all program activity, including those funded through Census of Agriculture or Agriculture Estimates. Carryover funds from no year funding will not be used to continue program activities. NASS activities during a shutdown will be limited to the following agency excepted duties.

### **Supervisors/Employees**

Furlough communication will be provided to all NASS employees via an all employee email. Excepted employees will receive information from the Administrator's office through the HQ or regional leadership.

Agency leaders are to notify applicable stakeholders of the status of the shutdown on the first day of the shutdown in accordance with agency and USDA guidance. Contractors will be notified of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under by the applicable Contracting Officer.

### ***Excepted Duties and Positions***

#### ***Agency Excepted Duties (Excepted duties as listed are not impacted by timing or season of the year.)***

- Coordination of data calls and excepted activities throughout the agency needed to accommodate short and long-term shutdown.
- Respond to urgent furlough related issues throughout the agency and with stakeholders and partners.
- Respond to HQ/regional excepted issues.
- Coordinate between HQ & Regions on current and emergent excepted requirements
- Provide communication to excepted and non-excepted employees in accordance with USDA guidance.
- In the event additional excepted employees are needed, additional employees may be designated as excepted employees with the approval of the Administrator's office due to emergent excepted requirements and/or emergency response.
- Coordinate with DM offices, Under Secretary's office and REE agency leadership on furlough related data calls and coordination.
- Coordinate with OHRM and the REE agencies on personnel related items such as time & attendance, benefits during the furlough.
- Move necessary funds during the shutdown.

- Address any NASDA (National Association of State Departments of Agriculture) enumerator issues during the shutdown.
- Ensure all office shutdown activities are complete and closed out.
- Monitor communications and keep HQ informed of any local issues that arise.
- Ensure all systems remain online and functional with user access denied during the shutdown.
- Disconnect all VPN access.
- Disable DMZ applications pointing to the internal databases.
- Disable access to the FTP server.
- Monitor systems during shutdown and be prepared to address any threats to property or infrastructure.
- Ensure all lab specimens are properly secured or organized in a sanitary manner.
- Monitor incoming packages for lab samples.

### **Agency Excepted Positions**

- Administrator
- Associate Administrator
- Senior Executive Team
- Regional Directors
- Chief of Staff
- Deputy Administrator for Administrative & Financial Management / Mission Area Business Center Chief Operating Officer
- Director, Human Resources Division (ARS)
- Twelve IT specialists
  - NASS Employees: NASS Deputy Director, NASS BSSB Chief, Head of Service Design Section, Head of Service Delivery Section, DBA Lead and External WebSite Developer
  - ARS/AFM ITSD Employees: NASS Deputy ACIO, MS Administrator, UNIX/AIX Administrator, Telecom Technician, Firewall/Security Technician and Head of Technical Management Branch
- Director, Public Affairs
- Budget/HR Director
- Lab Specialists

### ***Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP)***

Emergency response and COOP officials will not be designated as excepted employees until an emergency situation is identified. When needed, emergency response and COOP officials will be reached through personal phone or email and be activated as excepted employees as approved by the agency.

## **Media Requests**

All employees must notify and work with the NASS Director of Public Affairs prior to engaging in media interviews or other forms of communication with media.

## **NIFA Shutdown Plan**

### **Shutdown Communication**

NIFA program activities will be suspended during a shutdown. The scope of the activities includes all NIFA extramural funding programs supporting research, education, extension or a combination of two or more of these functions. This includes agency activities associated with competitively awarded, noncompetitive Federal financial assistance payments, capacity and infrastructure, endowment, and all other NIFA grant programs. NIFA activities during a shutdown will be limited to the following agency excepted duties.

#### **Supervisors/Employees**

Furlough communication will be provided to all NIFA employees via an all employee email. Excepted employees will receive information from the Director's office through the Institute/Office leadership.

Agency leaders are to notify applicable stakeholders of the status of the shutdown on the first day of the shutdown in accordance with agency and USDA guidance. Contractors will be notified of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under by the applicable Contracting Officer.

### **Director, NIFA**

The NIFA Director position is a presidentially appointed position. The Director position is exempt from the Annual and Sick Leave Act pursuant to 5 U.S.C 6301 (2) (x). Accordingly, the position is not subject to furlough.

### **Excepted Duties and Positions**

#### **Agency Excepted Duties (Excepted duties as listed are not impacted by timing or season of the year.)**

- Coordination of data calls and excepted activities throughout the agency needed to accommodate short and long-term shutdown.
- Respond to urgent furlough related issues throughout the agency and with stakeholders and partners.
- Respond to agency excepted issues.
- Provide agency financial and grants management support needed to avoid degradation of intellectual property.
- Coordinate with Institutes and Offices on current and emergent excepted requirements.



- Provide communication to excepted and non-excepted employees in accordance with USDA guidance.
- In the event additional excepted employees are needed, additional employees may be designated as excepted employees with the approval of the Office of the Director due to emergent excepted requirements, emergency management or vulnerability prevention.
- Coordinate with DM offices, Under Secretary's office and REE agency leadership on furlough related data calls and coordination.
- Coordinate with OHRM and the REE agencies on personnel related items such as time & attendance, benefits during the furlough.
- Monitoring agency Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) critical infrastructure systems to prevent security breaches and subsequent startup failures.
- Ensure all systems remain online and functional with user access denied during the shutdown.
- Monitor systems during shutdown and be prepared to address any threats to property or infrastructure.

#### **Agency Positions Not Subject to Furlough**

- Director

#### **Agency Excepted Positions**

- Associate Director for Operations
- Chief of Staff
- Administrative and Operations Officer

#### ***Emergent Excepted Requirements, Emergency Management and Vulnerability Prevention***

Three personnel required for emergent excepted requirements, emergency management, and/or vulnerability prevention will function the full first day of the shutdown. After that time, they will be temporarily designated as excepted employees if requirements emerge, an emergency occurs, or a vulnerability is identified. When needed, these individuals will be reached through personal phone or email and be activated as excepted employees as approved by the agency. Emergent excepted requirements may include help with data calls needed to accommodate short a short or long-term shutdown. Emergency management situations may include facility management issues, which would require temporary call to duty of the NIFA Building Advisor or their backup as well as the ARS facilities contact at Waterfront Centre. Vulnerability prevention may include additional information technology professionals temporarily required to prevent cybersecurity incidents during the furlough.

#### ***Media Requests***

All employees must notify and work with the NIFA Office of the Director prior to engaging in media interviews or other forms of communication with media.

## **OCS Shutdown Plan**

### ***Shutdown Communication***

OCS activities will be suspended during a shutdown. OCS activities during a shutdown will be limited to the following agency excepted duties.

### **Supervisors/Employees**

Furlough communication will be provided to all OCS employees via an all employee email. Excepted employees will receive information from the Under Secretary's office.

OCS Director is to notify applicable stakeholders of the status of the shutdown on the first day of the shutdown in accordance with office and USDA guidance.

### ***Excepted Duties and Positions***

#### ***Office Excepted Duties (Excepted duties as listed are not impacted by timing or season of the year.)***

- Coordination of interagency data calls and excepted activities in OCS needed to accommodate short and long-term shutdown.
- Respond to urgent furlough related issues throughout OCS and with stakeholders and partners.
- Respond to OCS excepted issues.
- Coordinate with Institutes and Offices on current and emergent excepted requirements.
- Provide communication to excepted and non-excepted employees in accordance with USDA guidance.
- In the event additional excepted employees are needed, additional employees may be designated as excepted employees with the approval of the Administrator's office due to emergent excepted requirements and/or emergency response.
- Coordinate with DM offices, Under Secretary's office and REE agency leadership on furlough related data calls and coordination.
- Coordinate with OHRM and OSEC on personnel related items such as time & attendance, benefits during the furlough.

#### **Office Excepted Positions**

- Director

#### ***Emergency Response/Continuation of Operations (COOP)***

Emergency response and COOP officials will not be designated as excepted employees until an emergency situation is identified. When needed, emergency response and COOP

officials will be reached through personal phone or email and be activated as excepted employees as approved by the office.

### ***Media Requests***

All employees must notify and work with the OCS Director or REE Director of Communications prior to engaging in media interviews or other forms of communication with media.

## **General REE Start-up Procedures**

Employees are responsible for checking the Office of Personnel (OPM) website and mobile phone applications for information on the government's startup status. Employees should monitor these sources in addition to those outlined in shutdown communications.

Employees are expected to return to work as directed unless it is a regularly scheduled non-duty day or an employee is on approved leave or leave without pay under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Any delay in reporting for duty requires a request for leave that must be approved by the supervisor. Supervisors should authorize liberal leave in the event the CR or appropriation is approved late in the evening and employees need time during the next day to secure childcare or other logistical matters prior to reporting. Telework ready employees will be permitted to telework on the first day, either as part of their Core or Situational telework agreement with supervisory notification and approval of the employee's intent to telework.

All employees are responsible for taking necessary actions to restore the agency to a fully operational status.

Key items to address include, but are not limited to:

- Turn off the out-of-office message for your work email.
- Reset your work voice mail message.
- Remove all signage indicating the office was closed because of the funding lapse.
- Restart computers and other IT devices according to guidance outlined in the Information Technology section of this plan.
- Resume use of transit benefits, if available where you work.
- Resume use of government-issued mobile devices, including cell and smart phones, tablets, and/or laptops for approved purposes.
- Resume use of government purchase, fleet and travel cards for appropriate government use.

## ***Administrative and Financial Management***

### **Human Resources**

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Administrative & Financial Management (AFM) Director, Human Resources Division (HRD) is responsible for all REE Agencies' Human

Resources (HR). As such, the Director of HRD will ensure that all HR services and guidance are provided to the HR professionals and all REE employees, in order to expeditiously return to normal operations after a government shutdown due to a lapse in appropriations.

- Return to Duty After Shutdown
  - If an employee received unemployment compensation and is paid retroactively for time during furlough the employee will be required to repay the unemployment compensation. For further guidance please visit <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/>
- Time and Attendance
  - HRD Pay & Leave staff will provide T&A guidance on behalf of the USDA Office of Personal Management (OHRM) to the REE Agencies' Timekeepers and REE employees in order to expeditiously return to normal operations.
  - Timekeepers may need to follow up with supervisors and employees to determine if corrected timesheets need to be prepared for pay periods affected by the furlough.
- Guidance for HR Staffing Specialist and Assistants
  - Pending and new personnel actions should be processed based on agency priorities. HR specialists should coordinate with the agency POCs to reaffirm the priorities of pending and new actions before proceeding.
  - If a vacancy announcement closed during the furlough, please work quickly to rate, rank, notify applicants of their eligibility & issue a certificate of eligibles.
  - Review expiration dates of open certificates and document the case file. Extend where applicable and restart the job announcement if a certificate expired during the furlough.
  - Document all other appropriate case files that were impacted by the furlough.
- HRD will issue additional guidance as needed on:
  - Retroactive pay and Unemployment compensation
  - Transit Subsidies
  - Research Position Evaluation System (RPES) schedule (ARS)
  - Extension of long-term details
  - Carryover leave
  - Extension of temporary employees
  - Overtime for excepted employees

### **Financial Management, Agreements & Travel**

The ARS AFM CFO serves as the lead for the Financial Management & Agreements Division (FMAD) and is responsible for the REE agencies' financial management, agreements and travel programs. As such, the CFO will ensure that all financial management, agreements and travel services and guidance are provided to the appropriate subject matter experts (SMEs) and all REE employees as appropriate, in order to expeditiously return to normal operations after a government shutdown due to a lapse in appropriations. The CFO will ensure that funding for agency operations is made available in a timely manner, and for ensuring that agency financial operations are properly resumed, including close-out of the previous Fiscal Year (FY) and completion of the financial audit.

- Financial Management Modernization Initiative (FMMI) Accessibility

- The FMMI system is managed by the Department's OCFO. It is anticipated that FMMI will be made available to all USDA agencies throughout any potential government shutdown and continue to be available as business resumes. The interface between FMMI and agency IT systems will be evaluated to ensure that it is functioning properly.
- Questions about FMMI access should be directed to the CFO for resolution.
- Financial Audit
  - The CFO will work with appropriate offices at the Department to assess how to bring applicable financial audits to closure and implement.
  - Any outstanding audit samples should be completed and returned to FMAD as soon as possible, following previously established procedures.
- Agreements
  - Agreements management, processing and oversight will resume immediately as determined by the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) or other Agreements signatory officials.
  - Interagency and other agreements will resume under the existing terms of the agreement.
  - Any modifications to agreements due to the furlough should be worked through the appropriate Grants Management Specialist.
- Travel
  - The CFO will coordinate with the Department's Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) and ensure the travel and financial management systems are fully operational as soon as practicable.
  - The CFO will also work with the OCFO to determine policy regarding timely payment of travel card balances since REE employees did not have access to the travel system during the government shutdown. Once the Department makes its determination, the CFO will communicate the Department's policy and guidance.
  - Travelers should complete any outstanding travel vouchers immediately.
- Issue additional guidance on:
  - Automatic payments in FMMI
  - Travel vouchers for excepted travel
  - Travel vouchers for cancelled travel

### **Acquisition & Personal Property**

The ARS AFM Director, Acquisition & Property Division (APD) is responsible for REE agencies' acquisition and personal property programs. As such, the Director of APD will ensure that all acquisition and personal property services and guidance are provided to the acquisition & property professionals and other REE employees as appropriate, in order to expeditiously return to normal operations after a government shutdown due to a lapse in appropriations.

- Acquisition
  - Contracts under REE Agencies' authority will resume as determined by the appropriate Contracting Officer (CO).

- CO's will issue resume work orders for those contracts that were suspended/stopped during the furlough. CO's will also notify the applicable CORs.
- Personal Property
  - Personal property (vehicles, lab equipment, copiers, etc.) owned or leased by the agency will be made safe, ready and available for use by authorized Federal and/or non-Federal personnel as appropriate.
  - The use of personal property will resume under all applicable guidance and procedures.
- Issue additional guidance on:
  - Availability of procurement and property systems
  - Escalated contractor costs due to the shutdown

## **Facilities**

The ARS AFM Director, Facilities Division (FD) is responsible for various REE agencies' asset management and facilities programs. As such, the Director of FD will ensure that all applicable facilities services and guidance are provided to the facilities professionals and other REE employees as appropriate, in order to expeditiously return to normal operations after a government shutdown due to a lapse in appropriations.

- Real Property
  - Real property (buildings/office space) owned or leased by REE agencies will be made safe and available for use by authorized Federal and non-Federal personnel as applicable.
- Leases
  - Any impact to REE agencies' leases due to the furlough will be resolved by the appropriate FD personnel and/or agency point of contact (POC) as appropriate.

## **Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Startup Plan**

### ***Guidance for the Start-Up of ARS Operations***

A temporary Start-Up Committee ("Committee") will guide the agency's transition from shutdown to full operational status. The Committee will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the start-up plan; providing related policy and procedural direction; ensuring coordination and consistency across functional areas (human resources, financial management, information technology, property and procurement, programmatic, etc.); troubleshooting system and unique challenges; and monitoring progress related to restoring full operational status and in addressing employee, partner, and customer concerns.

Initially, the Committee will meet at least daily to assess progress and issues. As issues are resolved and progress continues, meetings may be less frequent. The Committee also will assess lessons learned from the shutdown and start-up and apply those to normal operations where applicable. The chair will be responsible for reporting progress and issues to the Administrator. The Committee will be disbanded when the Administrator has determined operations are back to normal and any major issues/challenges related to the shutdown have been resolved.

The Associate Administrator for Research Operations will chair the Start-up Committee. The Associate Administrator for National Programs will serve as vice chair. The complete membership of the Committee will be as follows:

- Associate Administrator for Research Operations, Chair
- Associate Administrator for National Programs, Vice Chair
- Area Directors
- Chief of Staff
  
- Deputy Administrator for Administrative & Financial Management / Mission Area Business Center Chief Operating Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- Assistant Chief Information Officer
- Director, Human Resources Division
- Director, Acquisition and Property Division
- Director, Facilities Division
- Director, Budget & Program Management Staff (BPMS)

See Appendix A for a list of the specific duties of the Start-Up Committee.

Other employees may be called upon for assistance as the issues, challenges, and opportunities warrant.

### ***Initial Communications Timeline***

ARS has prepared for an agency start-up following an approval of a CR or FY appropriations. In order to keep the agency informed during the start-up process, the following communications will occur (note: Day 1 is the first full day of operations upon restoration of funding):

- Following approval of CR or appropriation:
  - Federal employees should check OPM and USDA website for information on reporting for work.
- Day 1: 9:30 am EST
  - Meeting of the Start-Up Committee to initiate the Start-Up of ARS Operations Plan
- Day 1: 2:30 pm EST

- Joint Administrator’s Council (AC) and Administrative & Financial Management Council (AFMC) Conference Call
  - The Associate Administrator for Research Operations will brief out on the restart of research operations. The Deputy Administrator, AFM (DAAFM), CFO and Chief Information Officer (CIO) will review the start-up plan, focusing on specific guidance for human resources, contracting, budget and finance, and IT and provide applicable guidance from the Department.
- Day 2: 9:00 am EST
  - The Start-Up Committee will meet to continue implementation of the Start-Up of ARS Operations Plan. Provide guidance and request feedback from the Area Directors (AD’s) as necessary.
- Day 3: 9:00 am EST
  - The Start-Up Committee will meet to continue implementation of the Start-Up of ARS Operations Plan. Provide guidance and request feedback from the Area Directors (AD’s) as necessary.
- Day 3: 1:00 pm EST
  - AC call to review the status of ARS startup
    - Identify, prioritize and manage time sensitive issues that were on hold during the lapse in funding.

### ***Employee Communication***

The Administrator will communicate with all ARS employees via an ARS ALL email within 48 hours of start-up. In addition, the ARS employee on-line feedback program “Your Two Cents” (Y2C) will start a category for agency start-up of operations. Employees can submit shutdown and start-up questions on a 24 hour/7 days per week basis through Y2C. The Y2C Team will monitor the box and ensure that responses are developed and appropriately vetted, and that employees receive responses as rapidly as possible. Questions and answers with broad applicability also will be posted to the agency’s Frequently Asked Questions, which will be accessible to all ARS employees via Y2C.

### ***Information Technology***

The REE Assistant Chief Information Officer (ACIO) is responsible for ensuring that IT systems are available and operating. Upon restoration of funding for the agency:

- ACIO will ensure access is restored to all ARS production IT systems, business tools, and websites to their last known state in order to conduct official ARS business.
- ACIO will provide necessary guidance related to the start-up of all IT systems.
- Employees should retrieve all IT equipment (cell and smart phones, tablets, and/or laptops, etc.) from their secured location in order to conduct official ARS business.
- Employees will restart their computers and other IT devices to ensure all memory, temporary files, and caches are cleaned, giving the computer a fresh start.



- Employees will reset any expired passwords, and ensure that any associated equipment (e.g., smart phone, notebooks, iPad) is also updated.
- Employees should connect computers and laptops to the IT network to ensure all systems are updated with the appropriate security patches and system updates. As a result of IT systems being offline for several days this process may take up to 4 hours to complete. Do not turn off computers while the updates are in progress.
- ACIO will provide ongoing monitoring to ensure availability and proper functionality of agency-wide IT systems throughout the start-up and recovery process.
- ACIO will coordinate with the USDA Agriculture Security Operations Center (ASOC) on any follow-up actions to close out any incidents that may have occurred during the shutdown.
- ACIO will provide help desk support for agency-wide IT systems that support official business such as ARIS, SharePoint, ARS website, ARSnet and eAuthentication...etc.
  - OCIO-ITS Help Desk
    - 1-877-873-0783
    - helpdesk@ars.usda.gov

## Economic Research Service (ERS) Startup Plan

### ***Guidance for the Start-Up of ERS Operations***

A temporary Start-Up Committee (“Committee”) will guide the agency’s transition from shutdown to full operational status. The Committee will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the start-up plan; providing related policy and procedural direction; ensuring coordination and consistency across functional areas (human resources, financial management, information technology, procurement, programmatic, etc.); troubleshooting system and unique challenges; and monitoring progress related to restoring full operational status and in addressing employee, partner, and customer concerns.

Initially, the Committee will meet on at least a daily basis to assess progress and issues. As issues are resolved and progress continues, meetings may be less frequent. The Committee also will assess lessons learned from the shutdown and start-up and apply those to normal operations where applicable, and to plans prepared in the event of a future shutdown/start-up. The chair will be responsible for reporting progress and issues to the Administrator. The Committee will be disbanded when the Administrator has determined operations are back to normal and any major issues/challenges related to the shutdown have been resolved.

The Associate Administrator will chair the Start-up Committee. The complete membership of the Committee will be as follows:

- Associate Administrator, Chair

- Associate Director and IT Director, Information Services Division
- Communications Director
- Director, Administrative and Financial Services Unit
- Associate Director, MTED
- Associate Director, RRED
- Associate Director, RED

See Appendix B for a list of the specific duties of the Start-Up Committee.

### ***Initial Communications Timeline***

ERS has prepared for an agency start-up following an approval of a CR or FY funding. In order to keep the agency informed during this start-up process the following communications will occur (note: Day 1 is the first full day of operations upon restoration of funding):

- Following approval of funding:
  - Federal employees should check OPM and USDA website for information on reporting for work.
- Day 1: 9:00 am and 1:30 pm
  - Meeting of the Start-Up Committee to initiate the Start-Up of ERS Operations Plan. During meeting, review the start-up plan, focusing on specific guidance for human resources, contracting, budget and finance, and information technology (IT), and provide any guidance from the Department.
- Day 1: 2:30 pm
  - SES Meeting – Agency Senior Executives, Administrative & Financial Services Unit Director, Civil Rights Director, Budget Officer, Communications Director, and Training Coordinator meet and review plans and status of time sensitive reports and data.
- Day 2: 9:00 am
  - Meeting of the Start-Up Committee to continue implementation of the Start-Up of ERS Operations Plan. Start –Up Committee will meet daily during week 1 and as needed afterwards.
- Day 2: 1:00 pm
  - Meeting of Agency Budget team to review the start-up plan, focusing on specific guidance for payments and budgets, and provide any guidance from the Department.
- Other Communications:
  - Direct general staff questions to existing Suggestion Box on the Agency intranet, ConnectERS. The Team will monitor the box and ensure that responses are developed and appropriately vetted, and that a response is posted for all employees to view a response. Individual specific questions will be directed to the AFS Director.

- Update FY note to stakeholders on ERS website with updated information for FY. The Communications Director will circulate the draft for final review and clear with OC.

### ***Programmatic activities***

- **Division Directors**
  - Ensure coordination and timely handling of programmatic issues.
  - Provide assessment of the impact of the shutdown on ERS programs and identify activities that were cancelled and need to be rescheduled. The first priority is reports and data that have or will have for dates scheduled on the Agency public calendar.
  - Coordinate with external agencies including the Office of the Chief Economist, World Agricultural Outlook Board, and National Agricultural Statistics Service on schedule changes for their products.

## **National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Startup Plan**

### ***Guidance for the Start-Up of NASS Operations***

A temporary Start-Up Committee (“Committee”) will guide the agency’s transition from shutdown to full operational status. The Committee will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the start-up plan; providing related policy and procedural direction; ensuring coordination and consistency across functional areas (human resources, financial management, information technology, property and procurement, programmatic, etc.); troubleshooting system and unique challenges; and monitoring progress related to restoring full operational status and in addressing employee, partner, and customer concerns.

Initially, the Committee will meet on at least a daily basis to assess progress and issues. As issues are resolved and progress continues, meetings may be less frequent. The Committee also will assess lessons learned from the shutdown and start-up and apply those to normal operations where applicable, and to plans prepared in the event of a future shutdown/start-up. The chair will be responsible for reporting progress and issues to the Administrator. The Committee will be disbanded when the Administrator has determined operations are back to normal and any major issues/challenges related to the shutdown have been resolved.

The Associate Administrator for Operations will chair the Start-up Committee. The complete membership of the Committee will be as follows:

- Associate Administrator, Chair

- Chief of Staff
- Staff Director for Budget and Administrative Services
- IT Director
- Chair and Executive Director of the Agricultural Statistics Board
- All other Division Directors

See Appendix C for a list of the specific duties of the Start-Up Committee. Other positions may be called upon for assistance as the issues, challenges, and opportunities warrant.

### ***Initial Communications Timeline***

NASS has prepared for an agency start-up following an approval of a CR or FY appropriations. In order to keep the agency informed during this start-up process the following communications will occur (note: Day 1 is the first full day of operations upon restoration of funding):

- Following approval of funding:
  - Federal employees should check OPM and USDA website for information on reporting for work.
- Day 1: 9:00 am EST
  - Meeting of the Start-Up Committee to initiate the Start-Up of NASS Operations Plan
- Day 1: 2:30 pm EST
  - Joint HQ – Field Operations Conference Call – The Associate Administrator will brief the agency on the restart of operations. The Committee members will review the start-up plan, focusing on specific guidance for human resources, contracting, budget and finance, and information technology (IT), and provide any guidance from the Department
- Day 2: 9:00 am EST
  - Joint meeting of the Start-Up Committee to continue implementation of the Start-Up of NASS Operations Plan
  - Identify, prioritize and manage time sensitive issues that were on hold during the lapse in funding.

### ***Customer Service for Start-Up of NASS Operations***

The NASS portal will start a category for startup and employees will be notified via NASS Staff. Employees can submit shutdown and start-up questions on a 24 hour/7 days per week basis through NASSshare. The Team will monitor the box and ensure that responses are developed and appropriately vetted, and that employees receive responses as rapidly as possible.

## ***Information Technology***

The NASS IT Director and Deputy Assistant Chief Information Officer is responsible for ensuring that Information Technology (IT) Systems are available and operating. Upon restoration of funding for the agency:

- NASS IT Director and Deputy Assistant Chief Information Officer will restore all NASS production IT systems, business tools, and websites to their last known state in order to conduct official NASS business.
- NASS IT Director and Deputy Assistant Chief Information will coordinate with USDA-OCIO-ITS and NITC to ensure all interdependent and enterprise IT systems are online and available.
- Employees should retrieve all IT equipment (cell and smart phones, tablets, and/or laptops, etc.) from their secured location in order to conduct official NASS business.
- Employees will restart their computers and other IT devices to ensure all memory, temporary files, and caches are cleaned, giving the computer a fresh start.
- Reset any expired passwords, and ensure that any associated equipment (e.g., smart phone, notebooks, iPad) is also updated.
- Employees should connect computers and laptops to the IT network to ensure all systems are updated with the appropriate security patches and system updates. As a result of IT systems being offline for several days this process may take up to 4 hours to complete. Do not turn off computers while the updates are in progress.
- NASS IT Director and Deputy Assistant Chief Information will work with USDA-OCIO-ITS to ensure technical issues submitted to the IT helpdesk are addressed completely and in a timely manner.
- NASS IT Director and Deputy Assistant Chief Information will provide ongoing monitoring to ensure availability and proper functionality of IT systems throughout the start-up and recovery process.
- NASS IT Director and Deputy Assistant Chief Information will provide help desk support for NASS IT systems that support official business.

## **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Startup Plan**

### ***Guidance for the Start-Up of NIFA Operations***

NIFA's Executive Council (EC), chaired by the Director, will guide the agency's transition from shutdown to full operational status. The EC includes Office of the Director staff, all Deputy Directors, and all Office Directors. The EC will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the start-up plan; providing related policy and procedural direction; ensuring coordination and consistency across functional areas (human resources, financial management, grants management, information technology, programmatic, etc.);

troubleshooting system and unique challenges; and monitoring progress related to restoring full operational status and in addressing employee, partner, and customer concerns.

The EC will meet every morning for the first three days of the start-up to assess progress and issues. The EC also will assess lessons learned from the shutdown and start-up and apply those to normal operations where applicable, and to plans prepared in the event of a future shutdown/start-up.

### ***Initial Communications Timeline***

NIFA has prepared for an agency start-up following an approval of FY funding. In order to keep the agency informed during this start-up process the following communications will occur (note: Day 1 is the first full day of operations upon restoration of funding):

- Following approval of CR or FY funding:
  - Federal employees should check OPM and USDA website for information on reporting for work.
- Day 1: 8:00 am EST
  - NIFA director will be at the Waterfront Centre and greet employees.
- Day 1: 9:00 am EST
  - Meeting of NIFA Executive Council, which will serve as the agency start-up committee, to discuss and execute start-up plans. The EC will review the execution of the start-up plan, focusing on specific guidance for human resources, contracting, budget and finance, and information technology (IT), issues regarding grants panels, project directors' meetings, RFAs, reporting and accountability, and NIFA website, and provide any guidance from the Department.
- Day 1: 11:00 am EST
  - A message will be sent to academic partners and other stakeholders.
- Day 1: 1:30 pm EST
  - Office of Grants and Financial Management Deputy Director will review with staff the start-up plan, focusing on specific guidance for capacity and competitive grants programs, budget and finance, and provide any guidance from the Department.
- Day 2: 9:00 am EST
  - Meeting of the NIFA Executive Council to review Day 1 of start-up, status updates, and to address any issues.
- Day 3: 9:00 am EST
  - Meeting of the NIFA Executive Council to review of start-up, status updates, and to address any issues.

## ***Information Technology***

The NIFA's Deputy Assistant Chief Information Officer or designee will be responsible for ensuring that Information Technology (IT) Systems are available and operating. Upon restoration of funding for the agency will:

- Restore all NIFA production IT systems, business tools, and websites to their last known state in order to conduct official NIFA business.
- Coordinate with USDA-OCIO-ITS and NITC to ensure all interdependent and enterprise IT systems are online and available.
- Employees should retrieve all IT equipment (cell and smart phones, tablets, and/or laptops, etc.) from their secure location in order to conduct official NIFA business.
- Employees will restart their computers and other IT devices to ensure all memory, temporary files, and caches are cleaned, giving the computer a fresh start.
- Reset any expired passwords, and ensure that any associated equipment (e.g., smart phone, notebooks, iPad) is also updated.
- Employees should connect computers and laptops to the IT network to ensure all systems are updated with the appropriate security patches and system updates. As a result of IT systems being offline for several days this process may take up to 4 hours to complete. Do not turn off computers while the updates are in progress.
- Work with REE ACIO to ensure technical issues submitted to the IT helpdesk are addressed completely and in a timely manner.
- Provide ongoing monitoring to ensure availability and proper functionality of IT systems throughout the start-up and recovery process.
- Provide help desk support for all NIFA employees and grantees, academic partners, and stakeholders.

## ***Grants and Agreements***

The Office of Grants and Financial Management (OGFM) is responsible for managing the resumption of functions related grants, and agreements. The expectation is that these activities will resume within two (2) working days following agency start-up.

- Grants and Agreements Guidance
  - Grants and Agreements under NIFA authority, and requiring NIFA support, oversight, assistance, will resume as determined by the Assistant Director, OGFM.
  - Interagency and other agreements will resume under the existing terms of the agreement.

## Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) Startup Plan

### ***Guidance for the Start-Up of OCS Operations***

OCS's Director, will guide the office's transition from shutdown to full operational status. The Director will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the start-up plan; providing related policy and procedural direction; ensuring coordination and consistency across functional areas (human resources, financial management, information technology, programmatic, etc.); troubleshooting system and unique challenges; and monitoring progress related to restoring full operational status and in addressing employee, partner, and customer concerns.

The Director will meet with key office staff every morning for the first three days of the start-up to assess progress and issues. The Director also will assess lessons learned from the shutdown and start-up and apply those to normal operations where applicable, and to plans prepared in the event of a future shutdown/start-up.

Key office staff includes:

- Deputy Director
- Secretary

### ***Initial Communications Timeline***

OCS has prepared for an agency start-up following an approval of FY funding. In order to keep the agency informed during this start-up process the following communications will occur (note: Day 1 is the first full day of operations upon restoration of funding):

- Following approval of CR or FY funding:
  - Federal employees should check OPM and USDA website for information on reporting for work.
- Day 1: 9:00 am EST
  - Meeting of the OCS Director and key staff, which will serve as the agency start-up committee, to discuss and execute start-up plans. The Director will review the execution of the start-up plan, focusing on specific guidance for human resources, contracting, budget and finance, and information technology (IT).
- Day 1: 9:30 am EST
  - Meeting of the OCS Director with all OCS staff to review start-up plans and address any issues.
- Day 1: 12:00 pm EST
  - OCS website and online presence is restarted and operational.



- Day 2: 9:00 am EST
  - Meeting of the OCS Director, and OCS start-up committee to review Day 2 of start-up, status updates, and to address any issues.
- Day 3: 9:00 am EST
  - Meeting of the OCS Director, OCS Staff ES and Senior Advisors to review Day 1 of start-up, status updates, and to address any issues.

### ***Information Technology***

The OCS Secretary will work with the applicable CIO's in Departmental Management to ensure that Information Technology (IT) Systems are available and operating. Upon restoration of funding for the office will:

- Restore all OCS production IT systems, business tools, and websites to their last known state in order to conduct official OCS business.
- Coordinate with USDA-OCIO-ITS and NITC to ensure all interdependent and enterprise IT systems are online and available.
- Employees should retrieve all IT equipment (cell and smart phones, tablets, and/or laptops, etc.) from their secure location in order to conduct official OCS business.
- Employees will restart their computers and other IT devices to ensure all memory, temporary files, and caches are cleaned, giving the computer a fresh start.
- Reset any expired passwords, and ensure that any associated equipment (e.g., smart phone, notebooks, iPad) is also updated.
- Employees should connect computers and laptops to the IT network to ensure all systems are updated with the appropriate security patches and system updates. As a result of IT systems being offline for several days this process may take up to 4 hours to complete. Do not turn off computers while the updates are in progress.
- Work with USDA-OCIO-ITS to ensure technical issues submitted to the IT helpdesk are addressed completely and in a timely manner.
- Will provide ongoing monitoring to ensure availability and proper functionality of IT systems throughout the start-up and recovery process.
- Will provide help desk support for all OCS employees.

## Appendix A: ARS Start-Up Committee

The roles and responsibilities of the ARS Start-Up Committee will be as follows:

### **Associate Administrator for Research Operations:**

- Serve as chair of Committee
- Guide implementation of start-up and post shutdown plan
- Ensure coordination across functional areas
- Ensure Administrator is kept informed and elevate issues, challenges, and opportunities, as appropriate
- Lead the application of lessons learned to normal operations, as appropriate
- Ensure communication and coordination in a timely manner with agency leadership

### **Associate Administrator for Research Programs:**

- Serve as chair in absence of Associate Administrator for Research Operations
- Lead input and processes related to ARS National Programs
- Ensure coordination and timely handling of programmatic issues
- Provide assessment, analysis, and reports on the impact of the shutdown on ARS programs;
- Coordinate with ARS CIO and CFO on programmatic IT systems start-up and interoperability
- Coordinate with National Programs Deputy Administrators to assess and report on the impacts of the shut down on research programs and performance measures.

### **Chief of Staff:**

- Facilitate agency communication with employees and lead the Y2C effort.
- Facilitate communication with REE, OCR, other Departmental Offices, and Congressional staff
- Identify issues/opportunities for improvement.

### **Deputy Administrator, AFM:**

- Ensure coordination within AFM to resume administrative & financial management services as quickly as possible
- Identify issues / opportunities for improvement and update the REE Shut Down and Start-up Plans
- Facilitate communication with ASA, OHRM, OPPM, and other Departmental Offices as necessary
- Assign resources to address employee questions as a result of being furloughed

**Chief Financial Officer:**

- Ensure coordination with the Departmental Office of the Chief Financial Officer
- Provide overarching guidance to the agency related to availability of funding based on approved funding levels
- Facilitate the coordination of funding or financial system issues/opportunities with Business Service Centers (BSCs) and Area Directors during the start-up process
- Coordinate with ARS CIO and Associate Administrator for Research Operations for Programs on IT systems start-up and interoperability

**Assistant Chief Information Officer:**

- Ensure communication with the Departmental Office of the Chief Information Officer
- Lead the start-up of IT systems, secure PII and sensitive data
- Coordinate with OCIO-ITS and NITC on the orderly start-up of interdependent and enterprise IT systems, assets and resources
- Monitor ARS IT Systems, tools and website to ensure they are functioning appropriately
- Coordinate with other agency leaders on IT systems start-up and interoperability

**Area Directors:**

- Ensure consistent and timely communication with stakeholders
- Ensure consistency in start-up and follow through across the Area
- Ensure timely identification of research operations and stakeholder issues and consistent handling across the Area
- Collect and report to the Committee on lessons learned from an area perspective
- Gather needed input for any short- and/or long-term assessments of the impact of the shutdown.

## Appendix B: ERS Start-Up Committee

The roles and responsibilities of the Start-Up Committee will be as follows:

### **Associate Administrator**

- Serve as chair of Committee
- Guide implementation of start-up and post shutdown plan
- Ensure coordination across functional areas
- Ensure Administrator is kept informed and elevate issues, challenges, and opportunities, as appropriate
- Lead the application of lessons learned to normal operations, as appropriate
- Ensure communication and coordination in a timely manner with agency leadership
- Lead development of any short- and/or long-term assessment of the impacts of shutdown
- Facilitate communication with AFM, REE, and other Departmental Offices
- Identify issues/opportunities for improvement.

### **Director, Administrative and Financial Services Unit**

- Ensure coordination within HR, budget, and acquisitions area
- Facilitate communication with REE, and other Departmental Offices as necessary
- Assign resources to address employee questions as a result of being furloughed.

### **IT Director**

- Ensure communication with the Departmental Office of the Chief Information Officer
- Lead the start-up of IT systems, secure PII and sensitive data
- Coordinate with OCIO-ITS and NITC on the orderly start-up of interdependent and enterprise IT systems, assets and resources;

### **Communications Director:**

- Prepare note for USDA's Office of Communications about updated release schedule for *Amber Waves*, departmental reports and E-Outlooks. Resume releases with goal to release October AW (and Nov data feature) and pending reports on day 2/3
- Take stock of reports in production—including *Amber Waves*-- and review by the Office of Communication. OC review

### **Associate Division Directors**

- Program related coordination across Divisions with a priority to meet/reschedule upcoming release dates and reschedule reports and data that was on the ERS calendar during the shutdown.
- Ensure that ERS priorities are met through coordination with other agencies on their start-up plans to obtain necessary data and information for ERS releases.
- Develop a prioritized list of meetings to reschedule and implement.

## Appendix C: NASS Start-Up Committee

The roles and responsibilities of the Start-Up Committee will be as follows:

### **Associate Administrator**

- Serve as chair of Committee
- Guide implementation of start-up and post shutdown plan
- Ensure coordination across functional areas
- Ensure Administrator is kept informed and elevate issues, challenges, and opportunities, as appropriate
- Lead the application of lessons learned to normal operations, as appropriate
- Ensure communication and coordination in a timely manner with agency leadership

### **Chief of Staff**

- Serve as chair in absence of Associate Administrator
- Ensure coordination across functional areas
- Ensure coordination and timely handling of programmatic issues
- Provide assessment, analysis, and reports on the impact of the shutdown on NASS programs
- Lead development of any short- and/or long-term assessment of the impacts of shutdown
- Facilitate communication with REE, OCR, other Departmental Offices, and Congressional staff
- Identify issues/opportunities for improvement

### **The Director of Budget and Administrative Service**

- Facilitate communication with AFM , CFO , NFC and other Departmental Offices as necessary
- Assign resources to address employee questions as a result of being furloughed
- Ensure coordination with the Departmental Office of the Chief Financial Officer
- Provide overarching guidance to the agency related to availability of funding based on approved funding levels
- Facilitate the coordination of funding or financial system issues/opportunities with all NASS offices during the start-up process
- Coordinate with NASS CIO on IT systems start-up and interoperability

### **IT Director**

- Ensure communication with the Departmental Office of the Chief Information Officer
- Lead the start-up of IT systems, secure PII and sensitive data
- Coordinate with OCIO-ITS and NITC on the orderly start-up of interdependent and enterprise IT systems, assets and resources
- Monitor IT Systems, tools and website to ensure they are functioning appropriately
- Coordinate with other agency leaders on IT systems start-up and interoperability

### **Agriculture Statistics Board (ASB) Chair and Executive Director**

- Review ASB calendar and determine status of missed and upcoming reports
- Coordinate with Office of the Chief Economist and World Agricultural Outlook Board on impact of lost reports and data
- Prepare ASB notice on status of NASS reports.

### **Division Directors**

- Ensure consistent and timely communication with stakeholders; including the National; Association of State Departments of Agriculture
- Ensure consistency in start-up and follow through across regions and states
- Ensure timely identification of partner issues and consistent handling across regions and states
- Collect and report to the Committee on lessons learned from a customer perspective; and gather needed input for any short- and/or long-term assessments of the impact of the shutdown
- Prepare impact analysis on all operational programs.

## Appendix D: NIFA Start-Up Committee

The roles and responsibilities of the NIFA Start-Up Committee will be as follows:

### **Associate Directors for Programs and Operations:**

- Serve as co-chairs of Committee
- Guide implementation of start-up and post shutdown plan
- Ensure coordination across functional areas
- Ensure Director is kept informed and elevate issues, challenges, and opportunities, as appropriate
- Lead the application of lessons learned to normal operations, as appropriate
- Ensure communication and coordination in a timely manner with agency leadership
- Lead input and processes related to NIFA programs and operations
- Ensure coordination and timely handling of programmatic and operational issues
- Provide assessment, analysis, and reports on the impact of the shutdown on NIFA programs and operations

### **Chief of Staff:**

- Facilitate communication with REE, OCR, other Departmental Offices, and Congressional staff
- Facilitate agency communication with employees and customers/stakeholders
- Ensure coordination across functional areas
- Ensure coordination and timely handling of programmatic and operational issues
- Provide assessment, analysis, and reports on the impact of the shutdown on NIFA programs and operations
- Lead development of any short- and/or long-term assessment of the impacts of shutdown
- Identify issues/opportunities for improvement

### **Administrative and Operations Officer:**

- Facilitate agency communication with employees and customers/stakeholders
- Ensure coordination with AFM to resume administrative & financial management services as quickly as possible
- Facilitate communication with REE, and other Departmental Offices as necessary
- Assign resources to address employee questions as a result of being furloughed
- Ensure coordination across functional areas
- Ensure coordination and timely handling of programmatic and operational issues



- Provide assessment, analysis, and reports on the impact of the shutdown on NIFA programs and operations
- Identify issues/opportunities for improvement and update the REE Shut Down and Start-up Plans

**NIFA Deputy Assistant Chief Information Officer:**

- Ensure communication with the Departmental Office of the Chief Information Officer
- Lead the start-up of IT systems, secure PII and sensitive data
- Coordinate with OCIO-ITS and NITC on the orderly start-up of interdependent and enterprise IT systems, assets and resources
- Monitor NIFA IT Systems, tools and website to ensure they are functioning appropriately
- Coordinate with other agency leaders on IT systems start-up and interoperability

**Deputy/Staff/Center Directors:**

- Ensure consistent and timely communication with staff and customers/stakeholders
- Ensure consistency in start-up and follow through
- Collect and report to the Committee on lessons learned from a unit perspective
- Gather needed input for any short- and/or long-term assessments of the impact of the shutdown
- Ensure that NIFA priorities are met through coordination with other agencies on their start-up plans to obtain necessary data and information for ERS releases.