



Office of Information Affairs

Departmental Records Management Exit Clearance Procedures Quick Guide

What are “Exit Procedures”?

Prior to transferring, departing, or terminating employment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), **Personnel**, defined as employees, contractors, students, volunteers, interns, Fellows, and Political Appointees, **must complete a set of records clearance actions before departure.**

How does this relate to Records?

Personnel cannot remove USDA records and information without proper approval. With approval, only specific information authorized for release can be taken.

Following the Exit Clearance Procedures allows USDA to ensure that its information remains usable and available after your departure.

What is a Record?

Records are everything and anything created and received on behalf of USDA, in any format.

What is considered Personal?

Information about you, only you, and no one else but you.

Who Owns Records and Information?

Records and information created or received while conducting Government business are the property of the United States Government.

What about Senior Official and Political Appointee records?

Records of USDA senior officials or political appointees are especially important because they document Agency policy and important decisions. Many records of these individuals are considered “permanent” – i.e. subject to preservation by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

Where can you find additional information?

We are here for you! For assistance with records identification, permanent records, personal papers, records disposition schedules and additional information regarding records management, please contact the Departmental Records Management Office at: USDADepartmentalRecords@usda.gov.

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Introduction

Federal records and information may not be removed from Government custody, nor may they be destroyed except in accordance with approved Records Schedules, as approved by your [Agency Records Officer](#) (ARO). The unlawful removal or destruction of Federal records and information is illegal and is punishable by law ([18 U.S.C. 2071](#)).

Records and information are the property of the U.S. Government and cannot be taken with you. There is a process for requesting copies of records and information. You must obtain the proper permissions or approvals per [Departmental Regulation \(DR\) 3099-001, Records Management Policy for Departing Employees, Contractors, Volunteers and Political Appointees](#).

Exit Procedures

Plan ahead! Departing Personnel must be sure to allow enough time to complete the Exit Procedure process before they leave USDA.

Before leaving USDA, you must work with your [Agency Records Officer](#) to:

- Identify all Federal records and information in your possession and ensure they are available and accessible to USDA for government business.
- Identify all record materials that you would like to request copies of, for approved access post USDA departure ([AD-3001](#) – See information below).
- Ensure all personal files have been separated from USDA records and information
- Return any records checked out from offsite storage
- Ensure all electronic records have been transferred from the “desktop,” hard drive, and OneDrive to the Shared Drive or SharePoint, and can be accessed by authorized staff.
- Schedule with your [Agency Records Officer](#) to complete the Exit Clearance Interview, [AD-3001](#) and checklist, and provide all copies of records requested for official review.
- Provide exact location and links to electronic, analog physical USDA records and information to an authorized career employee

Preparing for Departure

- Do any records need to be returned to a central file, or returned to offsite storage?
- Are there any personal materials that can be destroyed, such as your own work evaluations? Personal materials with Personally Identifiable Information (PII) must be securely shredded. Your [Agency Records Officer](#) can assist with secure shredding.
- Who will be the new custodian for the materials that the departing employee leaves behind? Be sure the next custodian is able and authorized to access these inherited materials.
- Forward texts and electronic messages from your Government Furnished Device to your official USDA email account.
- Electronic Messaging - our policy is to not use personal email for official business except in an emergency. However, if you did conduct official business through your personal email or other accounts, you must forward those emails, texts, and electronic messages to your official USDA email account.

Documentation to Complete Before Departure

- In accordance with [DR 3099-001](#), regardless of the type/duration of your appointment or employment, a records management exit interview, must be scheduled with your [Agency Records Officer](#).
- Departing Personnel named in an active litigation hold and/or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, must preserve those records, regardless of format must be preserved in their native format and must be identify their location in the required Exit Clearance Interview.
- During the Exit Interview, you will provide formal acknowledgement on USDA Form [AD-3001, Documentary Materials Removal/Non-Removal Certification and Non-Disclosure Agreement](#), that you have followed the instructions within [DR 3099-001](#), and have not removed documentary materials upon separation. **Submission of USDA Form [AD-3001](#) is required of all departing and transferring USDA Personnel.**