

**APHIS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EXCEPTION REQUEST PROCESS**

**1. PURPOSE**

This Directive establishes the APHIS policy and process for the submission and approval of Information Technology (IT) exceptions.

**2. SCOPE**

- a. This Directive applies to all APHIS employees and contractors.
- b. In general, exceptions to mandated policies and configurations can only be granted by the organization who issued the source regulation; therefore, the scope of this policy is limited to those situations where APHIS has the authority to grant exceptions.
- c. This Directive does not apply to classified automated information systems. Refer to applicable Departmental regulations pertaining to classified automated information systems.

**3. BACKGROUND**

There are many Federal, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) policies which mandate specific technical configurations for IT operating systems, platforms, equipment, devices, and environments. Occasionally, if justified, an exception must be granted to a specific mandated configuration. Examples of reasons for such exceptions include: budgetary inability to implement the required configuration; inability to implement the required configuration by the established deadline; inapplicability of the required configuration to the existing environment; and inability to implement the configuration due to technical or business process breakage.

**4. POLICY**

- a. A request for exception must be approved by the user's Information Technology Leadership Advisory Committee (ITLAC) member and the Office of the APHIS Chief Information Officer (CIO) prior to implementation in the APHIS production IT environment.

- b. A request for exception will be submitted in writing (may be electronic via email or automated system, if one exists).
- c. A request for exception will be in the form of a decision memorandum and will include:
  - (1) Indication of Request for Exception.
  - (2) Date of Request.
  - (3) Name of submitting program unit.
  - (4) Name and contact information of submitting person.
  - (5) Information Technology Description. The request must specifically identify the configuration, policy, or standard to which the exception is being requested.
  - (6) Term of Exception. Indicate whether the request is for a TEMPORARY or PERMANENT exception. If temporary, specify a proposed end date for the exception.
  - (7) Justification for the Exception. The request must document the justification for the exception and the impact of granting versus not granting the request. The justification must include the business reasons that show a nonstandard option is in the best interest of the Agency for cyber security, technology development, and expense reduction. If insufficient funding is the reason for the exception, the requester must provide details about the failed attempts to procure funding to help the CIO decide whether to seek funding from another source rather than grant the exception on grounds of insufficient funding.
  - (8) Security Impact. The request must include a statement of security impact if the request is approved.
  - (9) Cost Impact. The request must include a statement of the cost impact of approving the exception. If increased cost is indicated, the request must include an estimate of the increased cost and must identify the funding source for the increased cost.

## **5. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a. The APHIS CIO will:
  - (1) Approve and ensure implementation of this Directive.
  - (2) Approve any modifications to this Directive.

- (3) Review and approve/deny all requests for exception.
- b. Deputy Administrators/Directors of Program Units, and Heads of Major Business Offices will:
  - (1) Disseminate this Directive to their respective staffs.
  - (2) Ensure that the terms of this Directive are followed within their Program.
- c. ITLAC Members will review and approve/deny requests for exception and then forward approved requests to the Office of the APHIS CIO for review and approval/denial of requests.
- d. The Manager, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Systems (MRPBS), Information Technology Division (ITD), Technology Management Branch (TMB), will:
  - (1) Maintain records of all requests for exception.
  - (2) Maintain this Directive, including receiving requests for, and executing, modifications in response to change requests and/or new requirements.
- e. APHIS employees will:
  - (1) Comply with the terms of this Directive.
  - (2) Refrain from procuring and/or implementing excepted configurations until formal approval is received in conformance with the terms of this Directive.

## 6. INQUIRIES

- a. Questions concerning the processes described in this Directive should be directed to the APHIS Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) at 1-800-944-8457.
- b. This Directive can be accessed via the Internet APHIS Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/directives/>

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