

AMS Directive 3130.4

6/24/02

Distribution: AMS

Originating Office: S&T/ITG

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## **TECHNICAL APPROVAL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS**

### **I. PURPOSE**

This Directive provides AMS with guidance on acquiring Information Technology (IT) investments through the technical approval process.

### **II. AUTHORITY AND BACKGROUND**

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 and the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 have had a profound impact on the Federal Government's acquisition of information technology within the last decade. The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 focuses on the planning process, including budget, procurement and management of IT resources throughout the lifecycle. The Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 requires agencies to use a disciplined capital planning and investment control process to acquire, use, maintain and dispose of information technology. Whereas AMS Directive 3130.1, Capital Planning and Investment Control Process, focuses on planning, this Directive focuses on acquiring IT investments.

### **III. POLICY**

Technical approvals (TA) are required for all IT investments estimated at or above \$2,500. TA's are required for all telecommunication and processor investments regardless of the dollar amount.

### **IV. DEFINITIONS**

A. *Information Technology (IT) investment* is the allocation of Government resources (e.g., staffing, funds) into electronic automated systems including hardware, software, and servers that support the business needs of the Agency.

B. *Telecommunications* consists of, but is not limited to, cellular phones, wireless service, telephones, telephone service, routers, modems, frame relay switches, packet switches, and pagers.

C. *Life cycle costs* are the purchase price, time value of money (e.g., inflation, discount factors), operating costs (e.g., staff resources) and maintenance costs expended on an IT investment during its planning, implementation, operation and retirement.

### **V. TECHNICAL APPROVAL PROCESS OF IT INVESTMENTS**

#### **A. Basis for Approval**

Technical approvals are granted by the AMS Chief Information Officer (CIO) on the basis of the investment's technical feasibility, business objectives, measurable outcomes, security features, accessibility requirements, and compatibility with the AMS-wide infrastructure and established standards.

## B. Review Process

To assist each program in obtaining all necessary approvals for IT investments, the IT investment review process is summarized below. For an illustration of the process from a program perspective, refer to the flow chart in Attachment 1.

1. Program submits documentation (described in Section VII., below) for IT investments estimated at or above \$2,500 to the Information Technology Group (ITG) for approval, or for any telecommunications or processor, regardless of cost.
2. For investments estimated at or above \$100,000, ITG compares the requirement to the approved Technology Investment Plan (TIP).
3. ITG provides the requestor with comments and allows modifications to the statement of work (SOW) or AD-700 when necessary.
4. AMS CIO renders a technical approval decision for investments.
5. ITG forwards technically approved requests to the procurement office.
6. ITG returns denied requests to the requestor with an explanation.

## VI. **DEVIATION FROM AMS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS**

Each program is responsible for adhering to the current Agency standards for desktop operating systems, network operating systems, desktop applications and hardware. The ITG publishes these standards as an Administrative Notice. If deviations are proposed, regardless of the dollar amount, the program shall submit the justification for deviation to the ITG via the technical approval process.

## VII. **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION NEEDED FOR APPROVAL**

It is important to note that some or all of the supporting documentation listed below may need to be submitted with an investment package. Templates of several of the supporting documents are available in AMS Public Folders via AMS IT Policies/References and the Intranet for your use via <http://insideams.intranet>.

### A. Technical Approval Form

Requests for technical approval shall be submitted using the Technical Approval Request Form for Information Technology (Attachment 2). *For investments with life cycle costs estimated below \$100,000*, include a brief statement of the business objective that justifies the investment.

### B. Technology Investment Plan

As part the AMS Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC) process, all new investments *with life cycle costs estimated at or above \$100,000*, are approved in accordance with the policy set forth in AMS Directive 3130.1. New investments are assigned a unique AMS Technology Investment Plan (TIP) control number. This control number is recorded on the Technical Approval Request Form for Information Technology when requesting technical approval.

### C. Funding Document (e.g., AD-700, AD-672)

Attach a copy of the funding document to the Technical Approval Request Form. The funding document must be signed by the program's appropriate authorizing official.

### D. Price Quotes

If the requestor has obtained price quotes, they should be included with the request.

E. Performance-Based Statement of Work (SOW)

If support services are needed, a performance-based SOW must be prepared. Guidance on how to prepare a performance-based SOW is available in the AMS Public Folders, AMS IT Policies/References, in Outlook and the Intranet. *Use of this guidance will facilitate the technical approval process.* It is important to note that the technical approval is considered void if modifications are later made to the SOW that impact the requirements, performance standards, or measurable outcome. In this situation, the SOW must be returned to the CIO for approval.

F. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Determination

Section 508, as amended, requires that when Federal agencies develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology, they ensure that system users with disabilities are able to access and use information and data comparable to the access privileges of system users without disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency. Refer to AMS Directive 3130.2, Section 508 Information Access Requirements, for details regarding documentation of Section 508 determination, including forms to be submitted with the procurement requests.

G. Program Approval

The Deputy Administrator shall sign the Technical Approval Request Form (ST-14) for procurement requests valued at or above \$25,000 (per order).

H. USDA IT Acquisition Waiver

A USDA IT acquisition waiver is necessary for a technically approved investment with a system life cycle cost estimated at or above \$250,000. Waivers are granted by USDA's Office of the Chief Information Officer. As with technical approvals, waivers are based on the technical feasibility of the investment, its measurable return on investment, an impact analysis, and its telecommunications, security and accessibility requirements. The ITG staff will use the Technology Investment Plan and work with programs to prepare the waiver request for the Department. Allow 5-7 weeks from the date of submission to the Department for approval.

I. Justification for Other than Full and Open Competition (JOFOC)

A JOFOC is required for investments estimated at or above \$2,500 when a specific source, other than an 8a-certified small business, is requested. The JOFOC request must provide written justification that the recommended source is the only one capable of meeting the program's needs. Submit this justification to the AMS IT Group as part of the request for Technical Approval. The JOFOC will be forwarded to procurement, by ITG, as part of the technically approved procurement request package. APHIS procurement officials are authorized to approve the JOFOC. Processing time will vary depending on the degree of complexity.

## **VIII. RESPONSIBILITY OF PROCUREMENT ACTIONS**

A. The Technical Approval process is critical to AMS in maintaining its authority as delegated by the Department to manage its IT investments. To assure Agency review over this process, only the ITG shall forward technically approved investment documentation to the procurement venue specified by the program. If a procurement office is not specified, the investment will be forwarded to APHIS.

B. It is ultimately the responsibility of the program, regardless of the procurement venue, to ensure that the Contracting Officer adheres to all Department and Agency requirements for technical approval identified in this Directive. The program must ensure that the contract action is not awarded until all approvals are received.

## **IX. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**

Allow a minimum of 5 business days from the date ITG receives your technical approval request for approval or follow-up contact. The actual review time will vary, especially with support services. The annual cut-off period for accepting new investments to be awarded within the given fiscal year is August 15<sup>th</sup>. This provides time to properly review investment documentation and seek non-agency approvals that may be necessary for award. It is highly recommended that all statements of work be forwarded electronically to accommodate the review process.

In most cases, IT will forward technically approved investments to APHIS' Specialized Contracting Service Center and notify you of the date that the Center receives it. Specific telecommunication investments will be ordered by the ITG Telecommunications Mission Area Control Officer (TMACO), who will work with the program as necessary to ensure that requirements are met. For planning purposes, refer to the following table for IT customer service standards.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Initial Estimated Work Days Review Time</b>
1	IT Investments under \$100,000	5 days
2	IT Investments over \$100,000, with Executive Information Technology Investment Review Board (EITIRB) Approved Technical Investment Plan	5 days
3	IT investments over \$100,000, <u>without</u> EITIRB Approved Technical Investment Plan	40 days (30 days for EITIRB approval and 10 days for ITG approval)

## **X. QUESTIONS**

For all inquiries and concerns, please contact Science and Technology; Information Technology Group; Policy, Planning and Analysis Branch on (202) 720-4569.

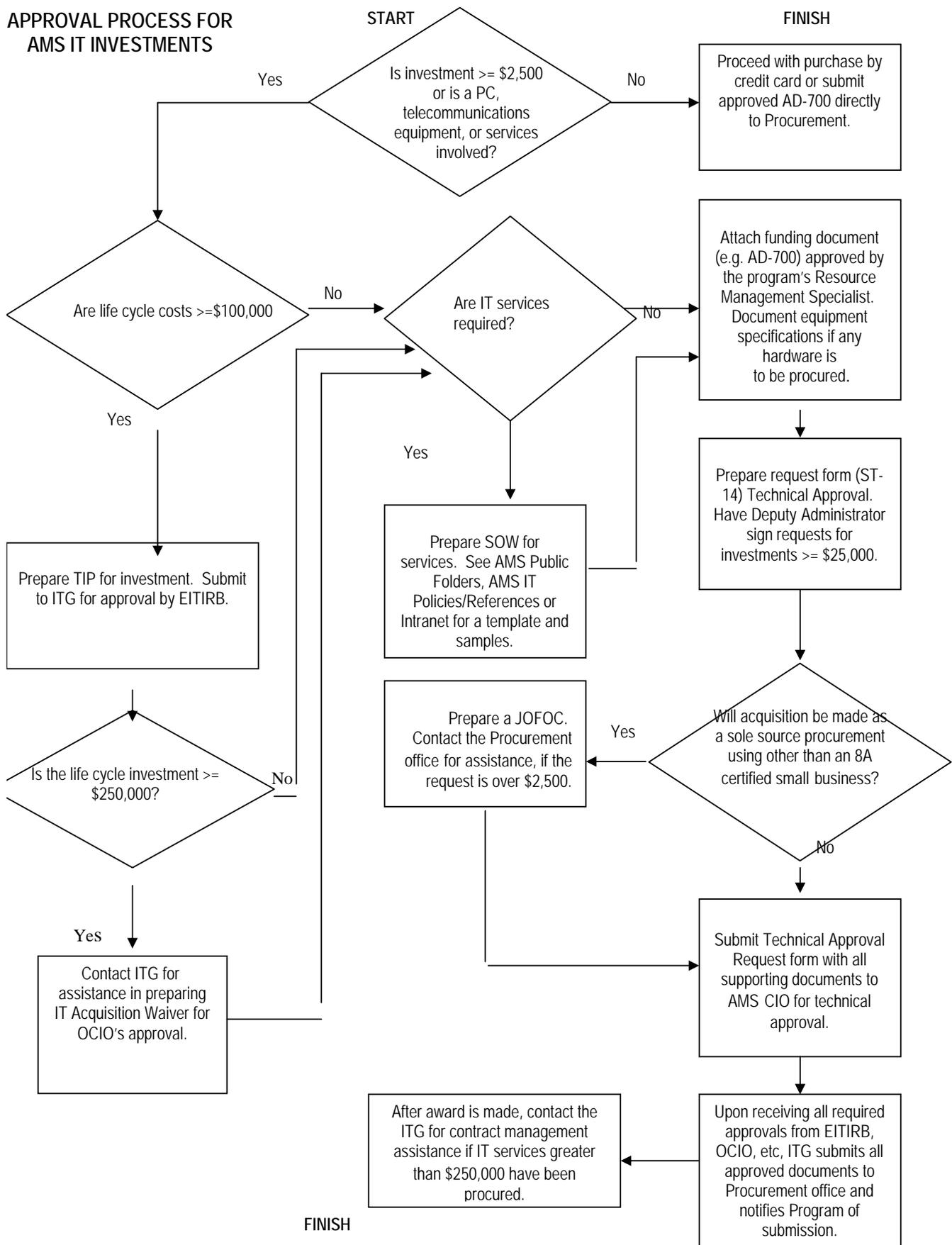
/s/

A. J. Yates  
Administrator

Attachments:  
Flowchart of the Approval Process (Attachment 1)  
Technical Approval Form (Attachment 2)

AMS Directive 3130.4  
Attachment 1

**APPROVAL PROCESS FOR AMS IT INVESTMENTS**





AMS Directive 3130.4  
Attachment 2

Form ST-14, Technical Approval Request Form  
(Click on the link under “3130.4” on the Table of Contents to access this form.)