

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		NUMBER: 1620-1
SUBJECT: USDA Colocation Policy	DATE: December 12, 1986	
	OPI: Office of Operations Real Property Management Division	

1 PURPOSE

This document sets out the Department's policy regarding the colocation of Department of Agriculture (USDA) field offices; provides for the integration of the colocation initiative with other related and/or complementary efforts; and assigns responsibilities for implementation of this policy.

2 BACKGROUND

USDA has had a formal policy and program for colocating the field offices of farm service agencies for more than 40 years. The recent thrust toward streamlining the Department's field offices into a common sense, economical, business-like management structure revitalizes the colocation effort to provide the farmer and rural resident with convenient, centralized services. The effort emphasizes improved resource sharing which leads to reduced overall program delivery costs.

3 POLICY

It is the policy of this Department to colocate the field offices of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Soil Conservation Service, and the Farmers Home Administration at the state and county level at locations which most efficiently and cost effectively meet the needs of the public. Where practical, other USDA agencies with field offices in the same community will be subject to this policy. A review and determination of the feasibility of colocating USDA agencies shall be made whenever a field office is to be established or moved. First consideration shall be given to federally controlled space which meets program requirements.

Colocation is defined as space occupied by two or more USDA agencies which occupy:

- (a) contiguous or nearby space on the same floor in a building, or
- (b) noncontiguous space on the same floor or on different floors in the same or adjacent buildings.

The USDA goal for colocation is to meet the first criterion stated above. For operational reasons county and district offices of an agency are not usually colocated in the same building with their state offices and may be excluded from that requirement.

When the space needs of colocated agencies dictate a move, all agencies shall move to a new colocation except as provided elsewhere in this document. Within colocated facilities, the benefits of colocation will be realized through the sharing of personnel and other resources such as automated data processing equipment, conference facilities, mail and supply rooms, copiers and other office equipment, reception areas, and storage space.

Where colocation does not appear feasible, the agencies will request an exception from the provisions of this policy. A request for exception will be considered when agencies show that costs would be significantly increased by colocation and would offset any savings that may otherwise accrue from the sharing of resources, or that service to the public would be impaired by colocation. All requests for exception must include information concerning available existing space and estimated relocation costs for eligible employees.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility for oversight and coordination for colocation rests with the Assistant Secretary for Administration. The head of each USDA agency is responsible for implementing this policy.

The Agricultural Field Facilities Committee (AFFC) will resolve interagency issues that are not resolved at the state level and will consider documented requests for exceptions to this policy. The committee is convened by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration and is composed of the Administrators of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Farmers Home Administration and the Director of the Office of Operations. Other agency heads shall participate in the decisions made by the committee when their field offices are represented in a given situation.

The Office of Operations has the responsibility for providing assistance to the agencies and for monitoring the implementation of the colocation program for the Office of the Secretary.

The State Food and Agriculture Council (FAC) shall provide leadership for colocation within a state and monitor colocation progress. It shall also resolve interagency differences that cannot be resolved at the county level. In the event that differences are not resolved at the state level, the State FAC will forward the necessary documentation to each affected agencies' Director, Administrative Services Division, at the national headquarters for possible further resolution prior to submission to the AFFC. The State FAC shall submit an annual report on colocation status.

The Local Food and Agriculture Council is responsible for the colocation of county level offices. The Local FAC shall also seek to maximize the sharing of personnel, administrative support services, equipment and facilities. Interagency differences that cannot be resolved at the county level shall be documented and forwarded to the State FAC. A request to the State FAC for exception to the colocation policy shall contain the necessary information stated above.

The responsibilities assigned by this section shall be exercised in accordance with all applicable laws including Section 628 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1986, as made applicable by the House Joint Resolution No. 465, making further continuing appropriations, 1985, Pub.L. No. 99-190, 99 Stat. 1185 (1985).

-END-

(5-8-89) SPECIAL PN

APPENDIX A

COLOCATION OF USDA FIELD OFFICES
OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

December, 1986

Contact Point:
Office of Operations
Real Property Management Division
Washington, D.C.
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(5-8-89) SPECIAL PN

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COLOCATING USDA FIELD OFFICES - OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

I Background

Colocating Department of Agriculture (USDA) field offices has been a longstanding objective of the Department for over 40 years. During the 30's and 40's a number of county agriculture buildings were constructed to house under one roof USDA agencies that were created at different times and for different, but generally complementary, purposes. Many of these facilities still exist and today USDA office locations run the gamut from courthouse basements to modern shopping centers. USDA has about 12,000 field offices located in about 7,000 buildings.

Major colocation participants are Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), and Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Other USDA agencies such as Cooperative Extension Service (CES), Forest Service (FS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are also colocated at selected locations.

From 1978 to 1985, totally colocated counties with offices of ASCS, FmHA and SCS decreased from 1,803 to 1,673. This reduction was due, in part, to the tendency to move away from colocated facilities when staffs increased and existing space was considered inadequate.

II Purpose

These guidelines are to assist each local office and State Food and Agriculture Council (FAC) in achieving - to the highest degree possible - the objective of improved service through colocation. This is consistent with Departmental Regulation DR 1620-1, dated December, 1986, which affirms the nationwide effort to colocate agricultural field offices.

In developing guidelines, it is recognized that a number of factors, including geography, rural population, type and size of farms, and programs, vary among different areas of the country. For those reasons these guidelines are broadly written so that FACs can give proper consideration to the unique conditions that may exist in their states.

In today's environment of having to operate within available funds and resources, the Department seeks opportunities to benefit from the sharing of technical expertise, equipment, data, tasks and, where possible, personnel (See Exhibit One). A way to achieve these benefits is to colocate USDA field offices so that the client can conduct business with several agencies, if so desired, in one trip, thus saving time and resources.

III Definitions

"Colocation" is the process of establishing or retaining the housing of USDA field offices in close proximity. Colocation is achieved if office accommodations meet one of the following criteria:

Level A: Agencies located side-by-side (contiguous) or across a corridor on the same floor of a building. This alternative is considered the best solution and fully meets the intent of the policy. (See exhibit "Level A").

Level B: Agencies at separate locations on the same floor or on different floors of the same or adjacent buildings (See exhibit "Level B").

"Decolocation" is the process of separating agencies from a colocated arrangement. The most common reasons for decolocation are the shortage of space due to the growth of an agency, the acquisition of special equipment which cannot be accommodated in the existing facility, or the expiration of one agency's lease.

IV Implementation

The farm service agencies, ASCS, FmHA, SCS and the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), have similar clients and geographical coverage and their colocating is a natural and common practice. Where practical, other USDA agencies with field offices in the same community shall comply with these guidelines. For operational reasons, county and state offices of the same agency are not usually colocated within the same building and may be excluded from the colocation requirement.

USDA agencies are expected to comply with the colocation initiative for state offices when opportunities allow. The greatest colocation activity, however, will occur at the county office level and these guidelines address the activities that county office personnel can pursue to achieve the highest level of colocation.

V County Office Initiative

The key people responsible for implementing the program to achieve the benefits of colocation at the county office level are the members of the Local FAC. The Local FAC is comprised of designated representatives of each participating USDA and non-USDA entity and provides technical and administrative direction necessary to assure the most effective operation of colocated facilities.

The physical colocation, in and of itself, simply sets the environment for fuller services for client groups. As mentioned earlier in this document, many county offices are currently colocated. For those which are not, here are suggestions for improvement.

Take advantage of lease action opportunities. New leases and lease renewals require market surveys. These surveys are conducted to assure that the Government's interests (including colocation and favorable rental rates) are achieved to the fullest extent. Colocation should be considered a lease requirement of county field offices.

Take advantage of available existing space that an agency may have to accommodate another agency. USDA programs and associated space are not static. They expand and contract. If there is excess space available, use it to accomplish colocation.

Move all agencies to a new location, if it is to the advantage of the colocation program. According to USDA leasing requirements, this must be considered when a colocated agency needs additional space that cannot be accommodated at the current location or when one agency's lease is expiring. Although field offices normally move at lease expiration time, there may be opportunities when lease buyouts are economically feasible. (More on this method of colocation later when we discuss decolocation.

Remember, the goal for colocation is to:

Provide the fullest range of services and expertise within reasonable costs at a single location to USDA clientele and to those concerned with rural development.

When planning your colocation:

First consideration must be given to federally controlled space that accommodates the agencies' programmatic needs and provides easy accessibility for the agencies' clientele.

Select locations at or near trade centers where farmers and rural residents generally conduct business.

Consider the positive aspects of the participation of all other agricultural agencies, including state and county governments.

Solicit the recommendations of clients, county committees, and the local conservation district governing board.

Talk to your colleagues at other colocated offices for suggestions.

Seek the assistance of the space management specialist in your agency.

Strive for common lease expiration dates for all agencies.

Review and abide by the requirements of your State FAC for possible final approval of your recommendations.

VI State Food and Agriculture Council

The State FAC shall provide necessary leadership and direction to assure the implementation of the colocation program. It shall serve as the focal point to receive and disseminate to the field all communications concerning colocated operations within the state. It shall monitor and evaluate operations and provide guidance to maintain the highest operational standards. And finally, the State FAC shall secure through the concerned agencies the necessary design, leasing, and administrative resources to assure a successful program.

VII National Agricultural Field Facilities Committee (AFFC)

The AFFC is convened by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration and is composed of the Administrators of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, the Director of the Office of Operations, and heads of other agencies that participate at a given site. The committee is established to resolve interagency issues which cannot be resolved at the State level. It will also consider documented requests for exception to the colocation policy.

VIII Office of Operations (OO)

OO has the responsibility for providing assistance to the agencies and monitoring the implementation of the colocation program for the Office of the Secretary. When required, OO will prepare background information, analyses and progress reports. As necessary, OO will assist in resolving problems on acquisition of space which may require GSA support.

IX Decolocation

Decolocation is a last resort alternative to maintaining adequate accommodations to meet program needs. Since decolocation is contrary to the intent of the colocation program, maximum effort should be exerted toward retaining colocation through creative space management and cooperation. Decolocation requires the approval of the AFFC in Washington, D.C.

Decolocation requests often occur when an agency determines a need for additional space. Creative space and lease management begins at the county field office level. Before elevating a decolocation request to the State FAC and ultimately to the AFFC, the following questions should be answered:

Is the requirement permanent or temporary? If temporary, can short term additional space be found?

Can space between agencies be adjusted to retain colocation?

Can the lessor (or GSA) expand the currently assigned space to meet the need?

Can all agencies relocate to retain colocation?

Can colocation be retained by staying within the definition? For instance, if currently colocated at a "Level A", will the relocation still meet the criteria of "Level B"? If so, the State FAC has the authority to approve such a move, if justified, without soliciting the approval of the AFFC.

When the State FAC believes that decolocation of a field office is necessary, the following procedures shall be taken:

Forward the request and supporting data asked for in the Request for Decolocation (See Exhibit Two) to each affected agencies' Director, Administrative Services Division, at the national headquarters.

Each national office shall review the request and seek alternative means to retain colocation.

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If each national office concludes that decolocation is necessary, the documentation shall be forwarded to the Assistant Secretary for Administration for ultimate review and determination by the Agricultural Field Facilities Committee.

A response in the form of a final or interim decision will be returned to each affected agencies' national headquarters contact person within 30 days from receipt of the request.

X Reporting

Annual reports to verify the program status will be submitted by the State FACs to the Director, Office of Operations. A sample of the Field Office Colocation Status Report (See Exhibit Three) is attached. The reports are due January 15 for each prior calendar year.

- END -

EXHIBIT ONE

EXAMPLES OF INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Leasing
rental
utilities
janitorial services
building maintenance
parking

Clerical
mail processing and handling
file maintenance
paperwork processing
time and attendance reports
notary service

Interagency
training
emergency disaster assistance
joint committee representation
vehicle use

Information
mailing lists
technical data
aerial photographs

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EXHIBIT TWO
REQUEST FOR DECOLOCATION

Decolocation is the process of abandoning an office arrangement where two or more USDA field offices are located in contiguous or near contiguous space as described in Departmental Regulation Number 1620-1, dated December, 1986.

Since colocation of USDA agencies is a Departmental policy, decolocation is a last resort action requiring the approval of the Agriculture Field Facilities Committee (AFFC) in Washington, D.C. The process for requesting approval for decolocation is outlined in the appendix of the above mentioned departmental regulation.

In order to evaluate a decolocation request, the following information is necessary:

Location (city, state, county):

Agencies currently colocated:

Reason for decolocation request:

Temporary or permanent:

For each agency --

- Current assignment of space (square feet of office, reception, conference, storage, other);
- Number of employees requiring workstations (less county committee people);
- Number of county committee people;
- Current rental costs;
- Future rental costs (if known);
- Floor plans of existing spaces:

Name of lead agency:

Current colocation level (A or B - see guidelines):

Space assignment status (Federal Building, GSA assigned, leased, agency owned, free) and lease expiration dates:

Possibility of --

- redesigning existing space;
- expanding into adjacent space;
- relocating all presently colocated offices;
- housing the decolocated office with another USDA field office in the same community:

Other relevant information:

- END -

EXHIBIT THREE
FIELD OFFICE COLOCATION STATUS REPORT

Purpose: This report is to document the degree and levels of
USDA field office colocations within the states.

Authority: USDA Colocation Policy
Departmental Regulation, DR 1620-1,
dated December, 1986.

Prepared by: State Food and Agriculture Councils

Period: Year to December 31.

Due date: January 15, annually.

Submit to: Director, Office of Operations
Washington. D.C.

Report for Calendar Year 19____:

State: _____ Date: _____

Number of counties: _____

Number of counties with USDA field offices: _____

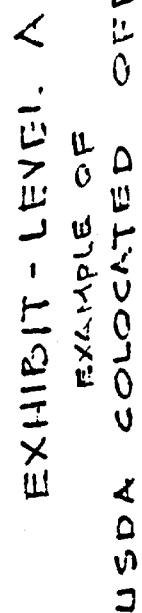
Number of counties with more than one USDA field office: _____

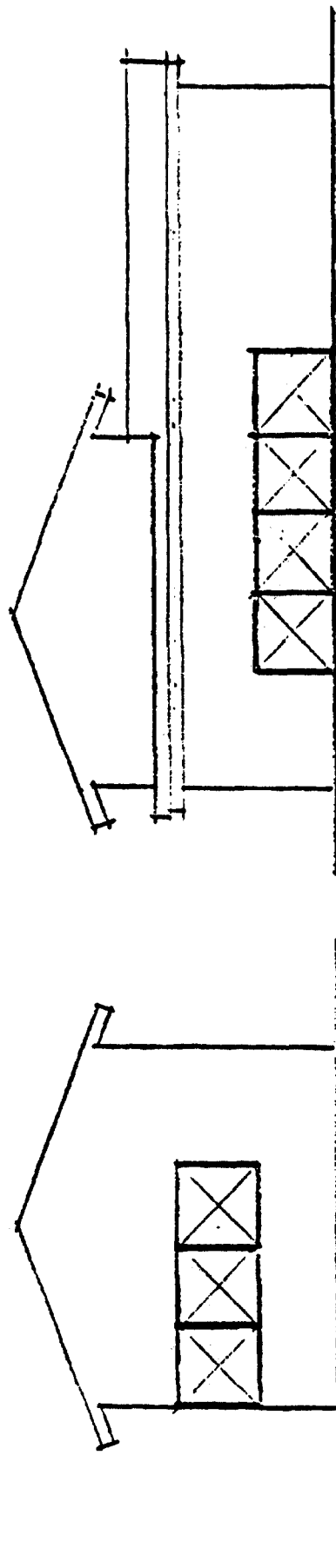
Number of counties colocated at Level "A": _____
at Level "B": _____
Total _____

Number of decolocations during the reporting year: _____

Information from the prior year:

Number of counties colocated at Level "A": _____
at Level "B": _____
Total _____Note: See Appendix to Departmental Regulation Number 1620-1 for
levels A and B colocation definitions._____
State FAC Chairman_____
Telephone



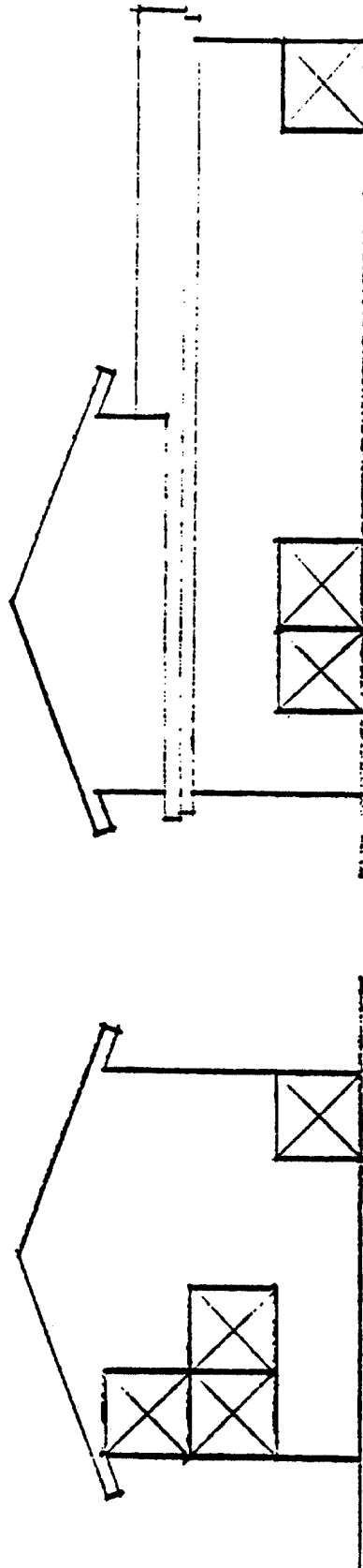


3 AGENCIES CONTIGUOUS

4 AGENCIES CONTIGUOUS

EXAMPLES - LEVEL A COLOCATIONS
CONTIGUOUS SPACE
(WITH OR WITHOUT WALLS BETWEEN AGENCIES)

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EXAMPLES - LEVEL B COLOCATIONS
NON-CONTIGUOUS SPACE