



# U.S. Department of Agriculture

## Personnel Security Bulletin #02-03

### Subject: Use of Microsoft Word® Version of the SF-86 Questionnaire for National Security Positions

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Subject:

Use of Microsoft Word® Version of the SF-86 *Questionnaire for National Security Positions*

Office of the  
Assistant Secretary  
For Administration

Issue:

Presently, USDA contractors and employees must complete the SF-86 by hand. USDA has sought authorization from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to use readily available word processing software to complete the SF-86. This was done in an effort to improve efficiency and reduce the burden on USDA and its employees and contractors

Office of Crisis  
Planning and  
Management  
Mail Stop 9305

1400  
Independence  
Avenue SW  
Washington, DC  
20250-9305

Date Issued:

September 1, 2002

Effective Date:

September 1, 2002

Scope and Effect:

This is an internal advisory document for use by USDA personnel involved in implementing USDA's personnel security program

Supersession:

This Bulletin does not supercede any previous guidance issued.

New Procedure:

Effective September 1, 2002, USDA agencies and staff offices are authorized to use the OPM-approved Microsoft Word® version of the SF-86. The USDA version of the SF-86 contains USDA-centric information on how to properly submit paperwork needed to process a national security background investigation.

While the SF-86 may now be completed electronically, at this time, the subject must print out the document and sign in the appropriate locations and forward the signed hard copy to the servicing office for action. An additional benefit to those who complete the SF-86 utilizing Microsoft Word® is that they can save the complete electronic version. This will facilitate future updating of the information on SF-86.

The Microsoft Word® version of the SF-86 approved for use by USDA employees and contractors can be found at [USDA Personnel Security Web Page](#). From this web site the document can be downloaded and completed.

Except to this  
Procedure:

No exceptions are necessary since this is an option being afforded to those who wish to avail themselves of it.

Background:

In an effort to improve the efficiency of USDA's personnel security program, USDA conducted a search for word processing software that could be used to allow USDA employees and contractors instead of the current practice of completing the SF-86 by hand. OCPM learned that OPM had not approved any electronic version of the SF-86 that could be utilized by USDA.

Word processing version of the SF-86 was sought for two primary purposes. First, and most important, was to reduce the burden on USDA employees and contractors who are required to complete the SF-86. Secondly, OCPM has a strong desire to reduce the number of errors on paperwork received by this office. All paperwork destined for OPM must be error-free or it will be rejected by OPM and returned to USDA for correction. Personnel security paperwork with errors often must be returned to the subject for correction, resulting in significant, yet unnecessary, delays in processing. This is in addition to additional administrative burden on both OCPM and the employee's or contractor's agency or staff office.

As a result of our government-wide search, OCPM was able to locate a Microsoft Word® version of the SF-86 utilized by one of the U.S. Department of Energy's national laboratories. OCPM inquired and determined that OPM had yet to approve the use of this electronic version of the SF-86. USDA requested and successfully secured authority from OPM to make use of the Word® version of the SF-86.

It should be noted that OPM has a significant e-government initiative underway that is expected to result in a web version of the SF-86 being available in June 2003. This will most probably eliminate the need for the Word® version of the SF-86. OCPM is working closely with OPM on this initiative to ensure the e-government imitative personnel security meets the needs of USDA.

Further Information: For further information, please contact OCPM's Personnel Security Division at 202 720-5711.

---