ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM No. 128 (revision 1)

SUBJET: SYSTEM TO CONTROL EXPENSES (EARS)

On December 1, 2015 the Secretary General issued a notification, revised on July 28, 2016, advising OAS units of a system of controls to better align OAS expenses with strategic objectives and reduce expenditures in a time of austerity. This memorandum provides updated instructions about the EARS system. Please review the July 28, 2016 memorandum in conjunction with this memorandum. The Secretary General makes all final decisions.

This revised Administrative Memorandum incorporates several changes based on our experience using the EARS system over the past several months:

-- The most significant change is that areas must request approval via EARS for all CPRs, regardless of funding source with a cost of $1,000 or more (CPRs financed by Specific Funds are now included).
-- When requesting approval for a CPR funded by a Specific Fund, areas must specify in the justification the relevant program number in the request.
-- For requested spending related to Specific Funds, in some cases donors require that the OAS seek advance approval for certain expenses, especially travel. In these case, when submitting the request, please include a note in the justification to confirm the donor approves the expense.
-- The Chief of Staff of the Secretary General may also review requests and make recommendations for approval/disapproval to the Secretary General.

We will appreciate additional constructive suggestions to make the system more user-friendly and efficient.

General Policy
This process applies only to requests for approval for costs included in OAS General Secretariat budgets and (for 2017) the spending plan. It is NOT intended as a means to request additional funding for new or existing programs or projects. Units seeking “reinforcement” funding should consult with the Secretariat for Administration and Finance (SAF) about the proper format for those requests.

Expenses approved by the Secretary General remain subject to all existing OAS controls. This process does NOT eliminate the need to process spending requests through other systems, including OASES and RBCS. (For instance, if the Secretary General approves the purchase of specific goods, the Department of Procurement must still issue the contract based on proper competition.)
In all cases, please include a concise justification for the request. Areas should NOT assume expenses will be approved merely because they relate to traditional or continuing activities.

**Automated System** \[http://services/ears/\]

SAF/DOITS created and operates an automated system, the Expenses Authorization Request System (EARS) to facilitate the control process. All units will continue to utilize EARS to submit these requests for authorization. This remains the standard method to route requests to all necessary reviewers prior to the request reaching the Secretary General. *There is no need to send separate or individual requests to the officials who review these requests.* Reviewers may contact the originating office directly for further information concerning individual requests. Once the Secretary General makes a decision to approve or disapprove the requested spending, the person who submits the request will receive an email notification.

If your request is approved, the email will contain an attachment in electronic (PDF) format to document the approval. The originating unit will attach (upload) a copy of the PDF-format approval notification into OASES, the RBCS system (used to request approval for CPRs for individuals) or any other applicable system.

DOITS designed EARS to the same standard as existing applications, so the interface should be familiar to many OAS employees. EARS is available from the OAS Connect home page by selecting the “Online Tools” button (where links to other applications such as LMS and OASES are located).

Per the Department of Evaluation and Planning, the EARS system requires units to enter the Program/Department/Operative Goals for each request. For technical reasons, these still reflect the 2015 OAS organization. For recently reorganized units, please continue to use the categories from 2015. For instance, the Art Museum of the Americas will select Program 09 - SECRETARIAT FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS, Department 09.04 - Art Museum of the Americas and then the relevant Operative Goal.

**CPRs (for Individuals and Entities) Irrespective of the Source of Financing**

For result based contracts (RBCS) for individuals (natural persons) and for results based contract for legal entities (legal CPRs), irrespective of the source of financing, departments/units may submit their requests on a quarterly basis. Entities should when possible submit a single, consolidated request including all CPRs for natural persons for the quarter. If necessary, you may also submit additional single requests when these cannot be included in the quarterly request. Or, an area may find it convenient to submit separate requests which consolidate all the CPRs requested under a single funding source.

When requesting approval for a CPR funded by a Specific Fund, areas must specify in the justification the relevant program number in the request.

To assist areas in preparing CPR requests and conducting their own internal reviews/approvals, we created a simple Excel CPR Request spreadsheet template which you may wish to use. ([http://services/ears/templates/CPRsWorkingTemplate.xls](http://services/ears/templates/CPRsWorkingTemplate.xls)). This spreadsheet has the same...
formatting as the form in the EARS system. Once you complete your list of proposed CPRs using the Excel spreadsheet, you can copy and paste the information into the EARS system.

**Travel Expenses**
The current travel policy ([Administrative Memorandum 122 – Travel Policy](#)) stipulates the need for all areas to submit quarterly travel plans. These plans must detail the individuals who will travel, the official travel itineraries, the purpose of each trip, its justification, the approximate cost, and the expected results. All OAS Official Travel Plans must be formally authorized in advance and in writing by the corresponding area’s highest authority (Director or Secretary, the Chief of Staff or the Secretary General). Travel plans are evaluated and approved in accordance with [Administrative Memorandum No. 79](#), and Chapter VIII of the [Staff Rules - Travel](#). On October 22, 2015 the Department of Procurement informed all areas of an instruction from the Office of the Secretary General that all GS/OAS Official Travel requires a written authorization from the Office of the Secretary General.

- Each area should continue to submit these quarterly travel plans via the new automated system. After obtaining all required internal approvals for the plan, including approval from an official at the director level of above, areas may upload the form to the system for review by the Secretary General.

- Please submit your authorization requests well in advance, at least one month before the start of each quarter (by the end of February for travel in the quarter April to June). Doing so will help SAF process your tickets on time, and at the lowest possible costs.

- For individual travel requests not already authorized in the quarterly plan, please submit requests via the automated system. Units should submit a combined request for all travel expenses related to a specific meeting or event, or a series of trips related to a specific project.

- When requesting approval for travel funded by a Specific Fund, areas must specify in the justification the relevant program number in the request.

- SAF will continue to evaluate and approve emergency or urgent travel, travel which must be initiated within days, on a case by cases basis. To request approval, please submit the completed form (available from SAF) via email to the SAF executive assistant and copy Secretary for Administration and Finance. **If you submit a request for urgent travel, please do NOT submit a separate EARS request.**

- Once travel is approved, either via the automated system of control (for routine travel) or via memorandum from SAF (for urgent/emergency travel) please include an electronic copy of the approval along with the travel-related requisition you submit to the Department of Procurement (SAF/DP). DP will then create the purchase order. DP is not authorized to create a purchase order for travel without the required approval.

This measure affects all GS/OAS official travel, including the trips from staff members that originate outside headquarters. For that reason, SAF reminds all responsible personnel in the field to wait for the duly approved purchase orders before authorizing the issuance of travel tickets.
To assist areas in preparing travel requests and conducting their own internal reviews/approvals, we created a simple Excel spreadsheet template you may wish to use (http://services/oas/templates/TravelWorkingTemplate.xls). This spreadsheet has the same formatting as the form in the EARS system. Once you complete your list of proposed travel using the Excel spreadsheet, you can copy and paste the information into the EARS system.

**Excluded Items**

As noted in the Secretary General’s memo, several categories of expenses are not subject to this approvals process. These include:

- Assistant Secretary General’s travel;
- Purchases in accordance with the terms of awarded bids/contracts;
- Maintenance of buildings/facilities including public utilities services, power, water, gas, heat;
- Essential information technology infrastructure, software and telecommunications services including mandatory licenses
- Consultant services related to internal maintenance services (building maintenance and essential information technology services)
- Common costs including photocopy; LAN, Internet, phone & cellphones (including international call charges); courier and postage; passport issuance;
- Staff statutory benefits, including home leave travel, repatriation benefits, recruitment and mobilization benefits, and education grants;
- Salaries and benefits for Temporary Support Personnel (TSP) and Local Professionals at National Offices;
- Expenses related to utilities and office expenses at National Offices (routine cleaning and driving service contracts at National Offices are NOT exempt and must be requested via EARS);
- Housing, Hospitality, and Representation allowances;
- Reimbursements in accordance with BYOD Policy (Bring Your Own Device);
- Travel for other dependencies arranged by the GS including Inspector General, Board of External Auditors, Commissioners, and Fellowships;
- Honoraria for Commissioners and TRIBAD judges;
- Expenses incurred by the TRIBAD
- Expenses incurred by the Inter-American Juridical Committee
- Ex gratia and medical insurance to former Executives;
- Repayment of debt of the OAS building;
- Subsidies to Specialized Organs.

Original: English
July 29, 2016

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Secretary for Administration and Finance