

Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs
Written Communication Guide
(February 14, 2018)

Purpose:

The DMVA Written Communications guide provides standards for format and content of various memoranda and accompanying staff packages. It borrows liberally from former DMVA Standard Operating Procedures on this subject and from the United States Air Force's Handbook 33-337, *The Tongue and Quill*, July 27, 2016.

SECTION 1:

Writer Responsibilities

All correspondence should be written using plain, clear, concise, direct, organized language and be prepared in the proper format. Plain language means using logical organization; common, everyday words (except for necessary technical terms); "you" and other pronouns; the active voice; and short sentences. Check <http://www.plainlanguage.gov>, for more plain language techniques.

1. Organize material to help the reader. Identify the audience for the document. Write to get their attention and answer their questions. Always start by putting the main message up front. Burying the main message makes it harder on the reader. Present information in the succeeding paragraphs in a logical order.
2. Avoid words and phrases that the readers might not understand. Spell out each abbreviation or acronym the first time it is used and follow with the abbreviation in parenthesis. For example: Division of Administrative Services (DAS).
3. Avoid ambiguous phrasing, confusing legal terms, and technical jargon that can mislead your reader. Words should be used in a way that does not conflict with their ordinary or accepted usage.
4. Where appropriate, use "you" and other pronouns to speak directly to readers. Do not refer to people as if they are inanimate objects. Address the reader as "you," reinforcing the message that the document is intended for your reader. However, avoid using "you" if it makes your correspondence sound accusatory or insulting.
5. Use "we" in place of your organization name. The use of "we" puts the emphasis on the organization.
6. Active voice is the best way to identify who is responsible for which action. To effectively communicate, write the majority (around 75%) of your sentences in active voice.
7. Numbers less than 10 are spelled out (Example "three"); numbers 10 and above are written as numbers (Example "14"). Avoid using numbers to begin a sentence- whether spelled out or not.
8. Short sentences deliver a clear message. Your sentences should average 15 to 20 words (never make them longer than 40 words). Complex sentences loaded with dependent clauses and

exceptions confuse the reader by losing the main point in the forest of words. Resist the temptation to put everything in one sentence. Cut out words that aren't really necessary.

9. Use conventional rules of English grammar. When dividing a word, separate between syllables. When quoting numbered paragraphs from another document, cite the source and paragraph numbers in your text.

10. Conserve paper. Consider communicating by other means such as a telephone call or an email.

11. Satisfy the minimum distribution requirements only and select the most cost efficient distribution method (Internal Distribution, United States Postal Service [USPS], Private Courier [FedEx, UPS]) that will best meet mission requirements.

12. When appropriate, ensure you ask for negative replies to requests for information or requests for agencies to conduct a review of documents or information.

13. When transmitting sensitive or confidential information, apply safeguards to ensure the information is properly protected.

14. Establish a suspense date only when you need a reply by a specific date. Notify the responding agency of the suspense date as early as possible and provide a reasonable amount of time for a quality response.

15. Apply record keeping requirements listed in the *State of Alaska General Administrative Records Retention Schedule*.

16. Unless referring to a specific person, use gender neutral third person pronouns. Use "s/he" instead of "he" or "she." Use "him/her" instead of "him" or "her."

SECTION 2:

Official Memoranda and Letters

Memoranda are used to communicate throughout the State of Alaska with other State agencies. A formal letter should be used to conduct official business with vendors, contractors, or individuals. Official memoranda may be addressed to specific officials, single offices, multiple offices, multiple offices IN TURN, or to DISTRIBUTION lists. In August 2017, the Office of the Governor revised the format for travel and hiring authorization memoranda; these formats differ from the official memorandum and examples follow later in this section. When signing out matters as The Adjutant General on AK National Guard Joint Staff Headquarters letterhead, the format will again be different; an example also follows later in this section. *When preparing any official memorandum or letter, follow the guidance of this section, beginning with these basic format requirements:*

1. **Coordination:** Correspondence should be coordinated with all parties that have a functional interest in the subject of the correspondence. Coordination should be done during the draft stage to minimize revision of the final version. When appropriate, coordination may be done by telephone or email. DMVA Form 1, Staff Summary Sheet, or an Electronic Staff Summary Sheet (e-SSS) shall be used to record coordination details.

2. Correction of Errors: Correct all typographical errors (spelling or grammar) on all correspondence, but during the staffing process and prior to printing any final documents for action/signature, do not redo routine correspondence to correct minor errors that do not change the writer's intent. Correct these errors neatly and legibly in ink; this allows follow-on reviewers opportunity to see edits recommended to date and avoids unnecessary re-work until the final version is ready.

Format of an Official Memorandum – SOA Letterhead

	<p>THE STATE of ALASKA GOVERNOR BILL WALKER</p>	<p>Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs Division of Administrative Services</p>
		<p>PO Box 5800 JBER, AK 99505-0800 Main: 907.428.6849 Fax: 907.428.6055</p>
<p>¶</p> <p>MEMORANDUM</p> <p>¶</p>		
<p>TO: → → Firstname-Lastname, Title¶ → → Division/Department¶</p>		
<p>¶</p> <p>FROM: → Firstname-Lastname, Title (sender signs next to this section)¶</p>		
<p>¶</p> <p>DATE: → Month DD, YYYY (as close to the date of transmission as possible)¶</p>		
<p>¶</p> <p>SUBJECT: → Capitalize Appropriate Terms and Document Titles¶</p>		
<p>¶</p> <p>Header, Font, Margins, and Basic Formatting¶</p>		
<p>Approved Organizational letterhead will be maintained by each Division's Administrative staff exclusively, and placed on correspondence upon document finalization. Letterhead should not be edited from its original approved format. All typed text will be in Times New Roman font with the exception of header text. The document title "MEMORANDUM" will be in bold, size 12 font, and centered on the first line after the two-inch header margin. Two lines below, "TO" will be typed at the left margin in bold, size 12 font, followed by a colon. Recipient information should be typed in normal font beginning at the two-inch ruler mark (one-inch margin and one-inch indent). The recipient's first name and last name should be followed by a comma and his or her title. If the recipient represents a Division/Department other than that referenced in the header, their organization information should be listed one line under their name, aligned appropriately at the two-inch ruler mark. Follow the same formatting procedure for the "FROM" line. The sender should not include organization information under his or her name, as this information is provided in the document header. Follow the same formatting procedure for the "DATE" line, with the date formatted as shown above: the month spelled out, two-digit day, comma, and four-digit year. Continue two lines below; "SUBJECT" should be typed in bold, size 12 font, followed by a short description of the purpose/nature of the memo, capitalized appropriately.¶</p>		
<p>¶</p> <p>Text Body Requirements¶</p>		
<p>The body of the text should be in regular, single spaced, size 12 font, and begin two lines below the "SUBJECT" line. Only once space should follow a period. If a paragraph is split between two pages, there must be at least two lines from the paragraph on both pages. If body text should extend to a second page, ensure that the first line of the second page contains the name of the recipient (Mr. XXX/Ms. XXX) left justified. The second line should contain the date listed at the top of the first page following a one-inch header margin. The third line should contain the current page number in relation to the total number of pages (page 2 of 2, page 2 of 4, etc.) in the memo.¶</p>		
<p>¶</p> <p>Paragraphs, Bullet Points, Number Lists, and Quotes¶</p>		
<p>Use paragraphs to separate ideas, processes, subjects, or instructions. Paragraphs may be titled in bold, size 12 font, if the content of each paragraph directly supports the title. One reason to ¶</p>		

Mr./Ms. Lastname¶
Month-DD, YYYY¶
Page 2 of 2¶

¶
title paragraphs would be to aid in quick subject matter lookup. Another reason would be to emphasize the information contained in that paragraph. Bullet points and number lists may be used (when indented to the two-inch ruler mark from the left margin and separated from body text by one paragraph space before and after) to list specific features, steps, instructions, or tips. ¶

- 1. → Make bullet points and number lists consistent in structure. ¶
- 2. → Make bullet points and number lists either all sentences, all fragments, or all questions. ¶
- 3. → Appropriately use punctuation in bullet points or number lists. ¶
- 4. → Maintain indentation when a bullet point or number list item exceeds a single line. ¶

¶
Signature Block, Attachments, and Courtesy Copies¶

There should be no signature block on a memo unless approval or acknowledgement of memo content or instruction is requested of the memo recipient. If such is the case, the signature block should begin five line spaces below the last line of the text and either follow “Approved/Disapproved” format or include a line for the recipient to sign their name and date. If attachments (memos tend to be sent electronically) accompany the memo, they should be listed two paragraph spaces below the last line of text (body or signature block) after “Attachment:” or “Attachments:” (depending on quantity) and one tab space. Attachment titles should be short, capitalized appropriately, and contain document transmission dates if the attachment is a letter or email. If more than one attachment is to be listed, they should each be on their own line and indented to match the first line. Attachments should be listed in the order mentioned in the memorandum. If you plan to courtesy copy an agency or individual, “cc:” should be listed two paragraph spaces after last attachments line, followed by one tab space, the recipient’s name, title, and State Department or Division. ¶

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Approved → → → → Disapproved → → → → Date ¶

¶
Attachments: → _____, dated March 1, 2016¶
→ → _____, dated March 10, 2016¶

¶
cc: → Firstname Lastname, Title, Department or Division¶
→ Firstname Lastname, Title, Department or Division¶

Format of a Formal Letter – SOA Letterhead

	<p>THE STATE of ALASKA GOVERNOR BILL WALKER</p>	<p>Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs Division of Administrative Services</p>
		<p>PO Box 5800 JBER, AK 99505-0800 Main: 907.428.6849 Fax: 907.428.6055</p>
<p>Month-DD, YYYY (Date letter is sent out)</p>		
<p>Firstname-Lastname, Title Organization Name Street Address City, State Zip Code</p>		
<p>RE: Capitalize Appropriate Terms and Document Titles</p>		
<p>Certified Mail: 0000-0000-0000-0000-00</p>		
<p>Mr./Ms. Lastname:</p>		
<p>Approved Organizational letterhead will be maintained by Administrative staff exclusively, and placed on correspondence upon document finalization. Letterhead should not be edited from its original approved format. All typed text will be in single spaced size 12 Times New Roman font with the exception of header text. Only one space should follow a period.</p>		
<p>The first line of text should be the date the letter is mailed out, formatted as shown above: left justified, the month spelled out, two-digit day, comma, and four-digit year. Two lines below, the letter recipient's full name should be listed, followed by their title (if applicable). Next, the recipient's organization name (if applicable) should be listed. The line below should list the recipient's street address, followed below by the city, a comma, the two letter state abbreviation, and zip code.</p>		
<p>Below the address block, a paragraph space should appear before the RE: section. This abbreviation for "Regarding" should be capitalized, followed by a colon and two spaces. A short summary of the contents of the letter should follow. Titles and document names should be appropriately capitalized, and text should be kept to one line, if possible. If two lines are required, the second line should begin at the same indentation as the first.</p>		
<p>If the letter is being sent certified (with or without a return receipt), the certified mail line should be formatted as shown above: each word capitalized, a colon, and two spaces before first group of four digits. Two spaces should separate each successive group of numbers.</p>		
<p>The salutation should begin two lines below the last line of text, and should read "Dear" Mr. or Ms., followed by a colon. If you are unsure of the gender of the letter recipient, use their first and last name; no courtesy title.</p>		
<p>Main text body paragraphs should be block style with no indentation. They should be separated by one open space. If a paragraph is split between two pages, there must be at least two lines from the paragraph on both pages. If body text should extend to a second page, ensure that the first line of the second page contains the name of the recipient (Mr. XXX/Ms. XXX) left justified following a one-inch header margin. The second line should contain the date listed at the top of the first page. The third line should contain the current page number in relation to the total number of pages (page 2 of 2, page 2 of 4, etc.) in the letter.</p>		

Mr./Ms. Lastname¶
Month DD, YYYY¶
Page 2 of 2¶

¶
Bullet points and number lists may be used (when indented to the two-inch ruler mark from the left margin and separated from body text by one paragraph space before and after) to list specific features, steps, instructions, or tips.¶

- ¶
- 1.→ Make bullet points and number lists consistent in structure.¶
 - 2.→ Make bullet points and number lists either all sentences, all fragments, or all questions.¶
 - 3.→ Appropriately use punctuation in bullet points or number lists.¶
 - 4.→ Maintain indentation when a bullet point or number list item exceeds a single line.¶

¶
The conclusion of the letter should have its own paragraph, and include your contact information. A standard closing is:¶

¶
If you have any questions, please contact me at (907) xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.¶

¶
Any hyperlinks should be removed (accomplished by right-clicking on the blue link and selecting “remove hyperlink”) and phone numbers should be formatted as shown above with the area code in parenthesis, followed by one space, the first three digits, a hyphen, and the last four digits.¶

¶
The valediction should appear left justified; two paragraph spaces below the last line of text. A standard valediction is “Sincerely,” followed by four paragraph spaces. On the fifth line following “Sincerely,” list your full name (Firstname Lastname), and your position title on the line below. Division/Department information is not included, as it is present in the letterhead. You will sign your name in the space between “Sincerely” and your typed name.¶

¶
If enclosures (letters tend to be mailed) accompany the letter, they should be listed two paragraph spaces below the signature line after “Enclosure:” or “Enclosures:” (depending on quantity) and one tab space. Enclosure titles should be short, capitalized appropriately, and contain document transmission dates if the enclosure is a letter or email. If more than one enclosure is to be listed, they should each be on their own line and indented to match the first line. Enclosures should be listed in the order mentioned in the letter.¶

¶
If you plan to courtesy copy an agency or individual, “cc:” should be listed two paragraph spaces after enclosures, followed by one tab space, the recipient’s name, title, and State/Department or Division.¶

¶
Sincerely,¶

¶
¶
¶
¶
¶
Firstname Lastname¶
Title¶

¶
Enclosures: → _____, dated March 1, 2016¶
→ → _____, dated March 10, 2016¶

¶
cc: → Firstname Lastname, Title, Department or Division¶
→ Firstname Lastname, Title, Department or Division¶

Format of a Travel Authorization Memorandum (In State Travel) – SOA Letterhead

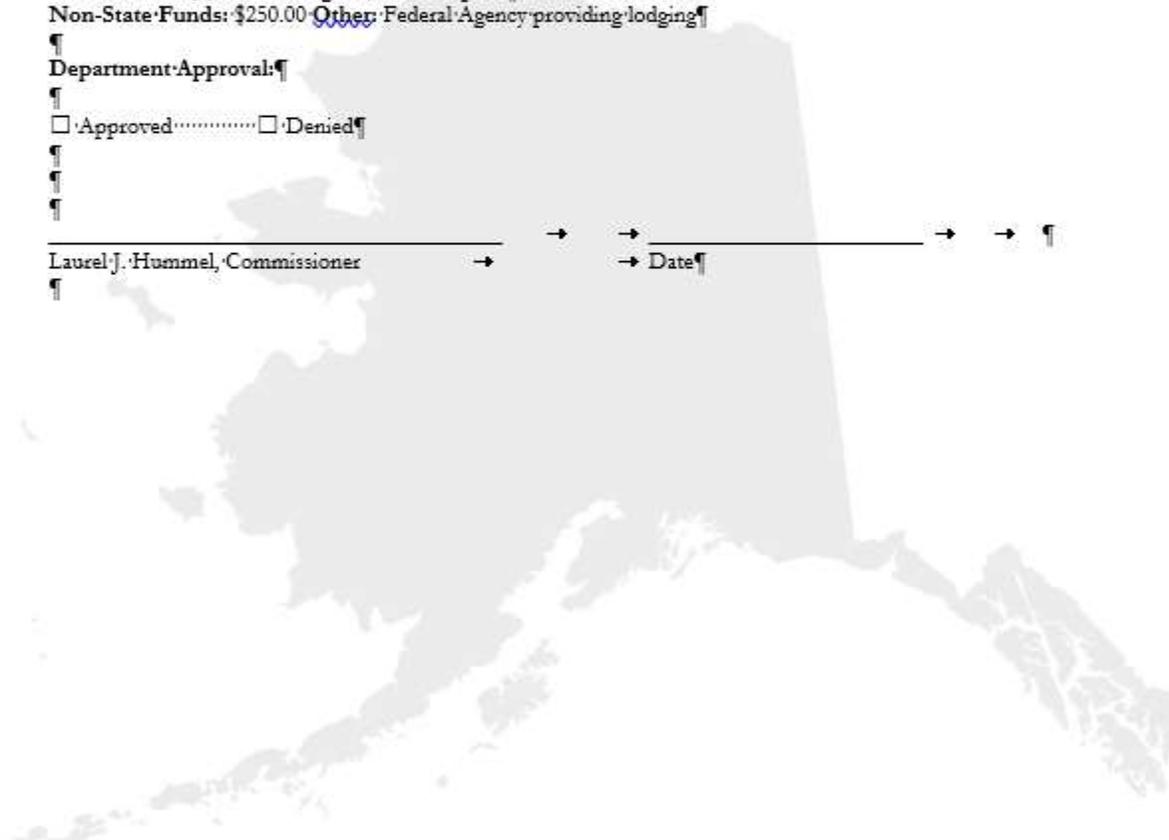
 THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Division of Administrative Services
P.O. Box 6800
JBER, AK 99505-0800
Main: 907.428.6849

TO: → Laurel J. Hummel, Commissioner → → DATE: → 8/14/2017
FROM: → Brian P. Duffy, Director → → TEL: → 907-428-7210
SUBJECT: Travel Authorization to Seattle, WA October 15-18, 2017

¶
Essential Purpose: Background information, mission, what will be accomplished? Why?
¶
What is the immediate operational impact if this travel is denied? Mission failure
¶
Timing: October 15-18, 2017
¶
*Funding Source: 75% General Fund, 25% Federal
General Funds: \$750.00 Designated Funds: \$525.00 Air: \$100.00 Rental Car: \$25.00 Airport Parking: \$50.00
Rental Car Fuel: \$25.00 Mileage to/from Airport
Non-State Funds: \$250.00 Other: Federal Agency providing lodging
¶
Department Approval:
¶
 Approved Denied
¶
¶
¶

Laurel J. Hummel, Commissioner → → → → → Date



Format of a Travel Authorization Memorandum (Out of State Travel) – SOA Letterhead

 THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Division of Administrative Services
P.O. Box 6800
JBER, AK 99505-0800
Main: 907.426.6669

TO: → Laurel J. Hummel, Commissioner → → DATE: → 8/14/2017
FROM: → Brian P. Duffy, Director → → TEL: → 907-428-7210
SUBJECT: Travel Authorization to Seattle, WA October 15-18, 2017

¶
Essential Purpose: Background information, mission; what will be accomplished? Why?
¶
What is the immediate operational impact if this travel is denied? Mission failure
¶
Timing: October 15-18, 2017
¶
*Funding Source: 75% General Fund, 25% Federal
General Funds: \$750.00 Designated Funds: \$525.00 Air: \$100.00 Rental Car: \$25.00 Airport Parking: \$50.00
Rental Car Fuel: \$25.00 Mileage to/from Airport
Non-State Funds: \$250.00 Other: Federal Agency providing lodging
¶
Department Approval:
¶
 Approved Denied
¶
¶
¶

Laurel J. Hummel, Commissioner → → → → Date
¶

Governor's Office Approval: (You may delete this section to keep memo to one page)
¶
 Approved Denied
¶
N/A
¶

Scott Kendall, Chief of Staff → → → → Date
¶
→ ¶

Format of a Hiring Authorization Memorandum – SOA Letterhead

 <p>THE STATE of ALASKA GOVERNOR BILL WALKER</p>	<p>Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs Division of Administrative Services</p> <p>P.O. Box 6800 JBER, AK 99505-0800 Main: 907.428.6869</p>	
<p>TO: → Laurel J. Hummel, Commissioner → → DATE: → 8/14/2017</p>		
<p>FROM: → Brian P. Duffy, Director</p>		
<p>SUBJECT: Hiring Waiver Request → → PCN: 09-XXX</p>		
<p>→ → → Range: XX</p>		
<p>TEL: 907-428-7210 → → Title: Budget Analyst XX</p>		
<p>I respectfully request a hiring restriction waiver to fill the following mission critical position:</p>		
<p>Division and Location: → Division of Administrative Services, M10JBR</p>		
<p>PCN and Title: → → 09-XXX, Budget Analyst XX</p>		
<p>*Base Salary: → → → \$X,XXX /Month, \$XX,XXX /Year</p>		
<p>*Total Cost: → → → \$XX,XXX (Total Salary [XX,XXX] plus total benefits [XX,XXX])</p>		
<p>*Funding Source: → → → 100% General Fund</p>		
<p>Essential Purpose: What does this position do/how does it help fulfill the Department's mission?</p>		
<p>How would the department cope with the specified workload if filling this position is delayed or denied? Describe impacts of the position remaining unfilled</p>		
<p>Timing: Desired fill date</p>		
<p>Department Approval:</p>		
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Denied</p>		
<p>_____ Laurel J. Hummel, Commissioner → → → Date</p>		
<p>Governor's Office Approval: (You may delete this section to keep memo to one page unless this waiver is for an exempt or partially exempt position at or above Range 22)</p>		
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Denied</p>		
<p>N/A</p>		
<p>_____ Scott Kendall, Chief of Staff → → → Date</p>		

Format of an Official Memorandum – AK NG Joint Staff Letterhead



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE
ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD ELEMENT, JOINT FORCES HEADQUARTERS
PO BOX 5800
JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, AK 99505-0800

NGAK-TAG

10 FEB 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE DEFENSE FOR ASIA AND PACIFIC SECURITY AFFAIRS, OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard and the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to Taiwan

1. (U) Executive Summary: Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard and the Commissioner of the Alaskan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs requests approval to send Major General Laurie Hummel to Taiwan, 12-18 March 2017. The purpose of the trip is to observe second iteration of Taiwan's Disaster Preparation and Rescue exercise, conduct site visit relevant to the Adjutant General's portfolio, and meet with interagency representatives in Taiwan.

2. (U) Previous Interactions: None

3. (U) Supporting Reasons: Taiwan is considered by USPACOM as a regional leader in HADR capabilities and expertise. The Nantou Fire Training Center for Excellence (CFE) in Taiwan integrates civilian, military, and local authorities during training and exercises, and provides a perfect location to engage and train regional partners in HADR techniques and doctrine. The visit by both the Director of USPACOM Pacific Outreach and Director of CFE-DH provide an avenue to see firsthand Taiwan's capabilities and discuss opportunities to further enhance regional partner engagement. This would ultimately result in increased regional HADR response capabilities. Attending the joint training HADR exercise will allow both Directors to reinforce Commander USPACOM's message to increase Taiwan's own joint interoperability.

3. (U) Conclusion: USPACOM Commander views Taiwan as one of its most important partners in the Indo-Asia-Pacific Region. This site visit demonstrates continued command-level USPACOM support, advances cooperation goals as outline during General Officer Steering Group 2016, and reinforces Taiwan's own joint interoperability, all the while mitigating the effects of a flag officer visit. For these reasons, USPACOM requests concurrence from OSD for this action.

4. (U) POC for this action is: Lt Col Jeff Meinel, (907) 428-6302, jeffrey.h.meinel.mil@mail.mil

LAUREL J. HUMMEL
Major General, AKNG
The Adjutant General

SECTION 3:

The Staff Package

When you have a staff package that must be coordinated, whether the package is a single page or several volumes, you need something to pull the package together and guide it through the review process. The Staff Summary Sheet (known as “SSS” or “triple-S”) is the first page of a staff package or the body of the e-mail for the electronic SSS (e-SSS).

This discussion here applies to all staff packages where the current version of DMVA Form 001 or its e-mail cousin, the e-SSS, is used; however, regardless of the method used, SSS fundamentals, arrangement, and coordination remain the same.

SSS Fundamentals

The SSS is a versatile tool that introduces, summarizes and coordinates the package through appropriate staff offices and officials using the chain of command. Frequently, the SSS is used to coordinate a package so the last official is fully informed on an issue and can approve the package and/or sign an attachment to implement action associated with the package.

The versatility of the SSS is clear when used in printed form. Printed SSS forms often contain handwritten notes before reaching the approval authority. These notes capture essential thoughts of coordinating officials as it moves through the staff. As a hands-on tool, the SSS form does not require the same level of perfection (such as error-free typing) as the correspondence it covers. In addition to the notes of coordinating officials, the SSS may be corrected neatly and legibly in ink if the content and meaning are still intelligible and clear.

In addition, consider the following fundamentals and guidelines for completing the SSS:

- Use: Use DMVA Form 001 only with the staff package it summarizes; *do not* use the form in place of a memorandum or handwritten note.
- Placement: The SSS is attached to the front of the package since it introduces and summarizes the relevant portions of all attached documents. You should not attach a document if it is not relevant to the package or if it is not mentioned on the SSS.
- Length: The SSS is usually limited to a single page since the form is a single page. If additional coordination or summary space is needed, follow these guidelines:
 - Coordination Overflow: If more than ten offices need coordinate on the package, the first ten offices are listed on the original SSS. Beneath the original SSS, add a second DMVA Form 001 with the “TO” blocks renumbered from 11 to 20 - completed through the subject. The second SSS is attached behind the original SSS.
 - Summary Overflow: Use plain bond paper if additional “Summary” space is needed.

Completing the SSS Form

The coordination section shows the organization(s) and office(s) an action (coord, signature, info) is requested from. The action officer and subject tell readers who generated the SSS and the subject of the package. The summary captures the essence of the package and all attached documents to inform the final official to act or to be ready to act. These sections are broken into blocks that should be completed as follows:

Coordination, Action Officer, Subject and Date

- TO: List offices in the order that they should coordinate, approve or sign.

- **ACTION:** Show the action desired in this column
 - “Coord” for Coordination
 - “Appr” for Approval (normally only one “Appr” and/or one “Sig” entry per SSS)
 - “Sig” for Signature (normally only one “Appr” and/or one “Sig” entry per SSS)
 - “Info” for Information (when the SSS is submitted for information only)
- **SIGNATURE AND DATE:** If you are the addressee and you agree with the proposed action, sign your surname (or enter your initials) and date on the SIGNATURE line aligned with your office symbol. If you are including comments on the proposed action, write “w/comment” next to your signature or initials
- **NAME/TITLE OF ORIGINATOR:** First & last name of action officer
- **SYMBOL:** Enter action officer’s Division and office symbol (e.g., DAS/Finance)
- **PHONE:** The action officer’s telephone number
- **SUSPENSE DATE:** Enter the suspense date, if any, as appropriate.
- **SUBJECT:** Use the same subject noted on the attached correspondence.
- **DATE:** Type or stamp date at time of dispatch from the signing official’s office.

Summary Section

The summary section is heart of the SSS and is adaptable to the purpose or function the package. There are many ways to use the limited space of the summary block efficiently. A common technique is the use of five headings: Purpose, Background, Discussion, Views of Others, and Recommendation. These five headings provide a common baseline for all DMVA personnel in completing the SSS.

Purpose

The purpose statement tells readers what the SSS is trying to accomplish. The purpose statement may simply be a restatement of the subject. If the purpose is more complex, provide readers a clear statement of the issue and what action is being requested. Another technique is to use the purpose to provide the bottom line up front (BLUF) in the form of a purpose statement.

Background

The background section provides readers with pertinent historical or contextual factors that shape the issue. Background information should be presented in a logical order (chronologically, geographically, functionally, etc.) appropriate to the topic and answer key questions (what happened and why it matters) throughout the narrative. Finally, save space by using a writing style with run-in headings and telegraphic statements/bullets.

Discussion

This is the meat of the analysis. Discuss the primary point or outline the main points first. Next, link the background information to the discussion with logical analysis. Lead readers to be able to see the way ahead proposed. Follow the logic and organization as used for the background (chronologically, geographically, functionally, etc.) appropriate to the issue. Also, if there are several options or courses of action available, they should be covered in the discussion. Finally, save space by using a writing style with run-in headings and telegraphic statements/bullets.

Views of Others

The views of others highlight opposing views, how they were considered but not recommended, and why. They are essential for a complete analysis, thorough discussion, and presentation of additional perspective in the staff package. This section requires pre-work to engage other offices impacted by the SSS before formal coordination, but when properly socialized early, the package will have broad support during formal coordination. If there are known disagreements or alternatives, present them here so that there are no secrets and the SSS can move forward rather than back to the originator for

more work. In some cases, the views of others will not be needed, such as when there are no disagreements or when the SSS is used for a routine task. In these situations, the views of others may be marked as either “N/A” or deleted.

Recommendation

State the recommendation for the senior official, including any action necessary to implement it, in such a way the official need only sign an attached document to coordinate, approve or disapprove the recommended action. Use this heading only when SSS is routed for action; do not use the recommendation heading when the SSS is submitted for information only.

Signature block

The signature blocks for DMVA Form 001 and the e-SSS are the same; however, you must take care when sending the staff package so that the signature and the signature block match.

- **DMVA Form 001:** Use the signature block for the action officer or the official designated as the office of primary responsibility (OPR) for the SSS package. The signature block is placed flush with the left margin with “//signed, fml// - DD MMM YY” above the official’s name (First M. Last), duty title, organization, and contact information (telephone and/or e-mail).
- **e-SSS as an e-mail:** The signature block is placed flush with the left margin with “//signed, fml// - DD MMM YY” above the official’s name (First M. Last), duty title, organization, and contact information (telephone and/or e-mail). Do not add slogans, quotes, or other personalization to an official e-mail signature block.

Tabs

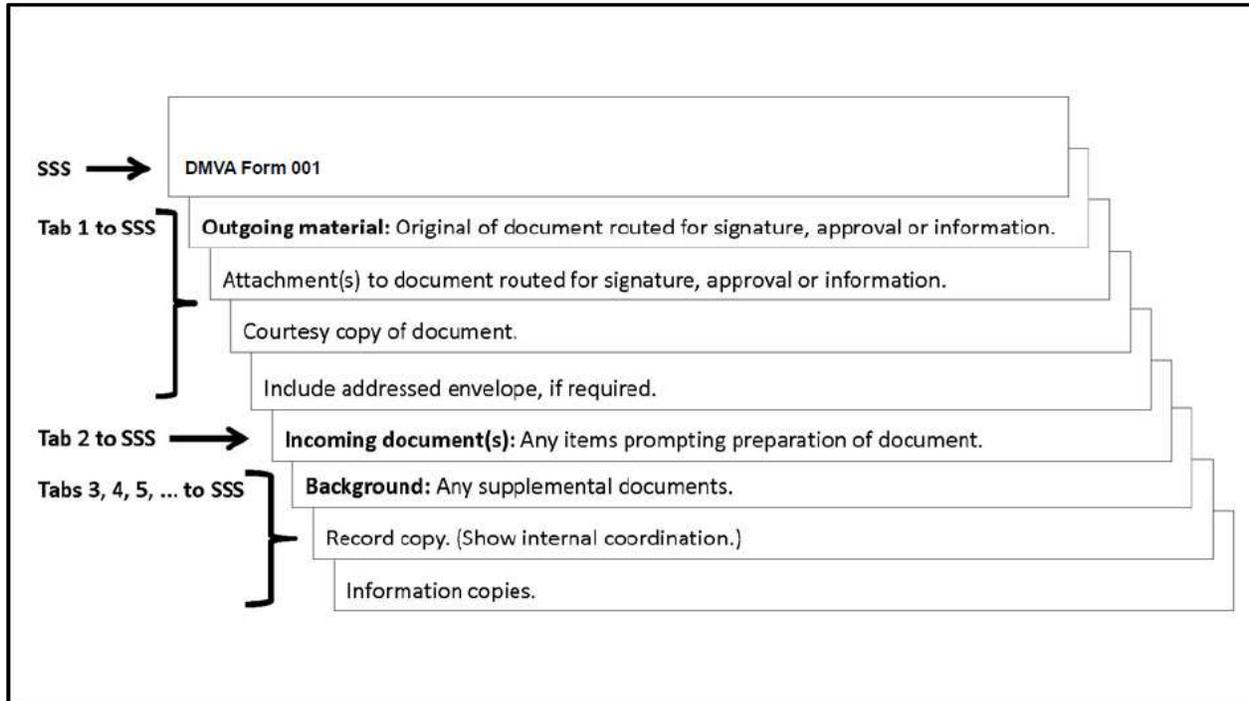
For DMVA Form 001, list Tabs aligned at approximately the center in line with the signature block. For the e-SSS (e-mail), list Tabs flush with the left margin below the signature block with one blank line between the signature block and the Tabs list.

Assembling the Package

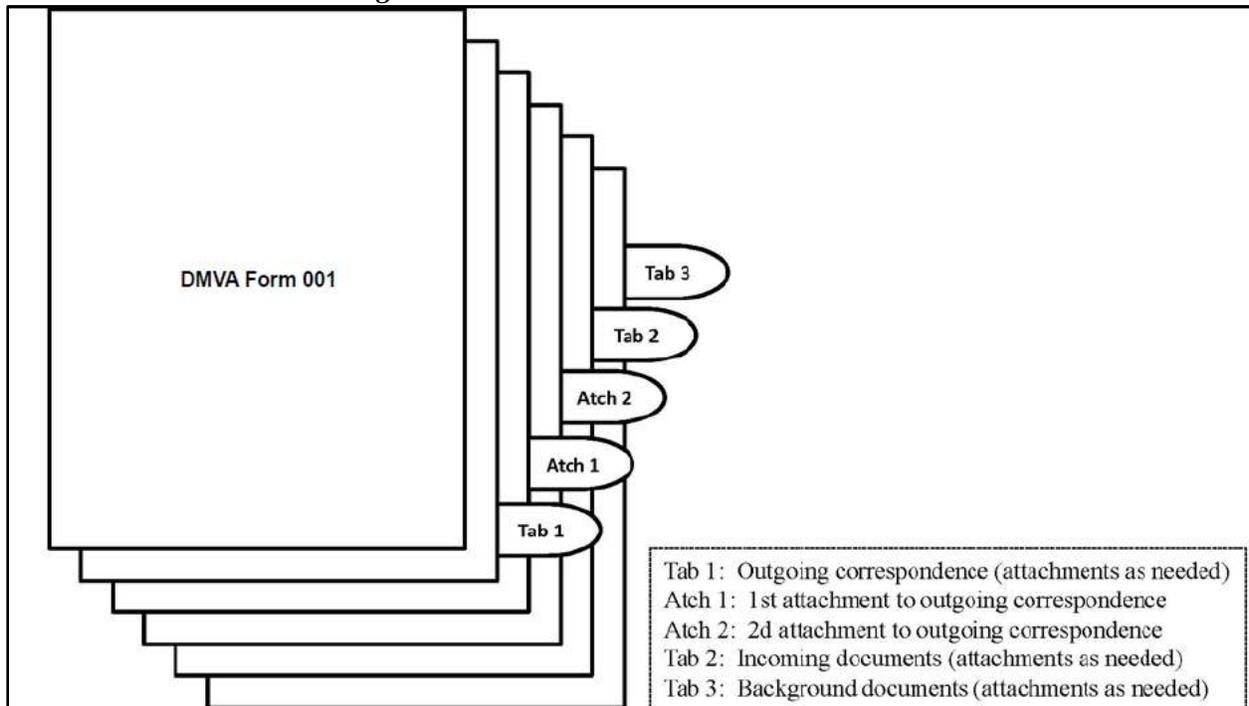
SSS packages are assembled using the same basic logic and process used to assemble and attach tabs to official memoranda. The primary difference for SSS packages is some documents may already have attachments so the entire package must be clearly marked. Clear marking requires differentiating “tabs” from “Tabs.” When “tabs” is written in all lower case letters, it refers to the physical dividers attached to each document or divider page; whereas, “Tabs” with a capital T, refers to the major groups of information attached to the primary SSS. With this in mind, list attachments to the SSS as Tabs or attachments as follows:

- Tab 1: Mark the primary document for action, signature, or approval as Tab 1
 - Attachments to Tab 1: Mark any attachments to the primary document at Tab 1 as attachments (Atch 1, Atch 2, etc.)
 - If you have more than one document for action, mark the second document as Tab 2; the third as Tab 3; and so forth
- Tab 2: List the incoming letter, directive, or other paper that prompted the SSS as Tab 2 (or sequentially after the last action document). Attachments to Tabs are sequentially numbered from “1” for each Tab (Atch 1, Atch 2, etc.)
- Tab 3: List supplemental documents as additional tabs followed by the record or coordination copy and information copies. Attachments are marked as in Tab 2, above
- If non-concurrence is involved, list it and the letter or rebuttal as the last tab

General Order of SSS Documents



Tab Placement on SSS Package Documents



Coordinating the Package

- Agreement:** If you are the addressee and you agree with the proposed action, sign your surname (or enter your initials) and date on the SIGNATURE line aligned with your office symbol. If you are including comments on the proposed action, write “w/ comment” next to your signature or initials

- **Disagreement:** When you do not agree with the proposed action, write a memorandum to the originator office stating your reasons and write in ink “See Memorandum” in the signature column. Attach your memorandum and return it to the action office
- **Resolving differences:** As the action officer, try to resolve all differences when you receive a non-concurrence on a SSS
 - If you cannot resolve the differences, the action officer must write a rebuttal memorandum to the approval authority which states differences discussed with the non-concurring official and explains why you cannot change the proposed action. Attach the rebuttal memorandum and the non-concurrence memorandum as the last tab to the original DMVA Form 001, annotate in pen the additional tab under the list of tabs, and move the package forward to the next addressee shown on the DMVA Form 001
 - If you resolve differences and no changes are made to the DMVA Form 001 or to any attachments, the previously non-concurring official shows concurrence by marking through the statement “See Memorandum” and signing surname (or entering initials), and date. The action officer writes “Differences resolved and no changes needed” on the non-concurrence memorandum, initials the statement, and attaches this memorandum to the record or coordination copy. Then, send the package to the next addressee
 - If you resolve differences and changes are made to the DMVA Form 001 or to any attachments, the action officer must prepare a new DMVA Form 001 and coordinate it as a new package with all offices
- **Closure:** The final reviewer, approval official or signature official sends the package back to the originator to close the task. An option is to include the originator’s office symbol as the final block in the coordination section with “File” as the action to ensure the package is directed to the source for closure

SSS Sample (DMVA Form 001)

		<h2 style="margin: 0;">Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">STAFF SUMMARY SHEET</h3>					
	TO:	ACTION:	SIGNATURE AND-DATE:		TO:	ACTION:	SIGNATURE AND-DATE:
1	Name+ Div./Ofc	Coord		6			
2	Name+ Div./Ofc	Coord		7			
3	Name+ Div./Ofc	Sig		8			
4	Name+ Div./Ofc	Info		9			
5				10			
NAME/TITLE OF ORIGINATOR:				DIVISION:	PHONE:	SUSPENSE DATE:	
Ms Sally B. Jones				DAS	(907) 428-1234	YYYYMMDD	
SUBJECT:						DATE:	
Staff Summary Sheet on Completing a Staff Summary Sheet						YYYYMMDD	
SUMMARY							
1. PURPOSE: Provide a sample staff summary sheet (SSS) for use as a baseline/template.							
2. BACKGROUND: The SSS introduces and summarizes the issue then coordinates the package through the staff with the goal of obtaining approval for action or signature on an attached document.							
a. The "Org/Sym" flows up the chain of command and through appropriate staff offices for coordination/approval.							
b. Actions include "Coord" (Coordination), "Appr" (Approval), "Sig" (Signature), and "Info" (Information); normally, there is only one "Appr" entry and/or one "Sig" entry on the SSS.							
c. The standard summary section heading (purpose, background, discussion, views of others, and recommendation) provide officials a short purpose statement, pertinent background information, a logical discussion of the information and rationale for any action proposed, the views of other officials impacted by the action, and a recommendation for the senior official (headings can be adapted for local needs, recurring tasks, and organizational preferences).							
3. DISCUSSION: The SSS should be a concise (preferably one page) summary of the package.							
a. Organize the discussion chronologically, geographically, functionally, or as appropriate to the issue or action.							
b. If there are several options or courses of action available, they should be covered in the discussion.							
c. Save space with run-in headings and telegraphic statements/bullets.							
d. For additional guidance on the summary section, see the sample SSS and e-SSS in the DMVA Written Communications Guide.							
4. VIEWS OF OTHERS:							
a. Good staff work engages other offices impacted by the SSS before formal coordination.							
b. Make revisions or note disagreements so that the SSS moves forward rather than back to the originator for more work.							
5. RECOMMENDATION: State the recommendation for the senior official, including any action necessary to implement it, in such a way that the official need only sign an attached document to coordinate, approve, or disapprove the recommendation action. Use this heading only when the SSS is routed for action; do not use the RECOMMENDATION heading when the SSS is submitted for information only.							
//signed, fml// --DD-MMM-YY.....2 Tabs							
FIRST-M. LAST.....1. Proposed Memo							
Duty Title.....2. Applicable guidance or reference document							
Organization.....[Tabs are aligned at page center, in line with the sig block]							
(907) 428-4567							
first.last@alaska.gov							

DMVA Form 001, 1-Mar-17

e-SSS Format (Body of an e-mail)

The e-SSS as the body of an e-mail serves the same purpose and has the same elements as the DMVA Form 001. The primary difference is you do not use a form to fill in the required coordination, identification, and summary elements. If the e-SSS format is chosen, the originator or the office assigned primary responsibility transmits the package via e-mail to the first reviewer to review/comment. The first reviewer *forwards* the package, with any comments and all attachments, to the next reviewer. This procedure is repeated until the last reviewer listed in the e-SSS coordination section has coordinated on the package. The last reviewer forwards the entire package back to the originator for final action and/or to close the task. With this in mind, consider the following sample SSS and e-SSS:

- **Format:**
 - Page setup and margins: Typically set by the e-mail application
 - Font/point size: Times New Roman, 12 points
 - Text wrapping: Text for all paragraphs wraps to the left margin
 - Tabs: List Tabs flush with the left margin below the signature block with one blank line between the signature block and the Tabs list. Tabs should be attached to the email using a naming convention which matches the way they're described at the bottom of the e-SSS.
 - Line spacing: Single space within paragraphs (no blank lines), double space between first-level paragraphs (one blank line) and between elements (Originator line to Suspense line; signature block to Tabs, etc), and use four spaces RECOMMENDATION and “//SIGNED//” (just as you would in a hard copy SSS, allowing sufficient space for a real signature)
 - Paragraph numbering: Number or letter all paragraphs at the left margin. Paragraphs may be sub-divided using the same outline structure as for the official memorandum.
- **Content:** All the sections of the SSS are combined in the body of the email. The first section in the e-mail is the coordination section. The second section combines the staff summary with originator contact information and the suspense date. While there are no page limits with the e-SSS per se, you should strive to keep the e-SSS summary concise—no longer than two pages when printed.
- **Signature block:** Use the signature block for the originator or the official designated as having primary responsibility for the SSS package. The signature block is placed flush with the left margin with “//SIGNED//” above the official’s name, duty title, organization, and contact information (telephone or e-mail). Do not add slogans, quotes, or other personalization to an official e-mail signature block.

Expedited (Shotgun) e-SSS Format

Another option to speed routing and coordination of an e-SSS is to use the Expedited, or Shotgun, approach. In cases where actions by successive coordination stops aren’t necessarily reliant on prior ones, the email containing the e-SSS can be forwarded to all coordination stops. While this approach may seem attractive, originators should use tread carefully to avoid needing to potentially weigh through repetitive comments from different offices and having to being the coordination process again.

e-SSS Sample (Body of an e-mail)

From: [e-mail system-generated user information]¶
To: [appropriate organizational account, individuals, or distribution list for ACTION]¶
Cc: [as required for INFORMATION]¶
Subject: SIGN: |Suspense 25 Jun 16; e-SSS Format¶
Date: [e-mail system-generated date-time group]¶
¶
-----COORDINATION-----¶
Office Action Last Name/Rank/Date ¶
Div/Ofc → Coord → Heinz, Mr., 17 Jun 16¶
Div/Ofc → Coord → Heinz, Mr., 18 Jun 16¶
Div/Ofc → Sig → Smith, Mrs., 19 Jun 16¶
¶
-----STAFF SUMMARY-----¶
Originator: Mr First M. Last, Div/Ofc, 907-428-1234¶
¶
SUSPENSE: 25 Jun 16¶
¶
1. PURPOSE: Present perspective and analysis of an issue (answer the “what” question).¶
¶
2. BACKGROUND:¶
a. Pertinent historical or contextual factors that shape the issue; answers “so what?” and “why?”¶
b. Presented in logical order (chronologically, geographically, functionally, etc.) that supports movement through the package from PURPOSE to RECOMMENDATION. ¶
¶
3. DISCUSSION:¶
a. The meat of the analysis with the primary point or outline of main points first.¶
b. Links background with logical analysis; indicates the way ahead; answers “now what?”¶
¶
4. VIEWS OF OTHERS: [“N/A” or delete, if none]¶
a. Highlight opposing views and how they were considered but not recommended and why.¶
b. Complete the thoughts of the discussion (demonstrates proper staffing and analysis).¶
¶
5. RECOMMENDATION: [Official] approve/sign letter at Tab 1.¶
¶
¶
¶
¶
//SIGNED, jbg// 15 Jun 16¶
JOHNNY B. GOODE¶
Duty Title¶
Organization¶
(907) 428-5678¶
first.last@alaska.gov¶
¶
2 Tabs¶
1. Memorandum for signature ¶
2. Applicable guidance document or reference¶