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Department of  
Agriculture



Federal Crop  
Insurance  
Corporation

FCIC-14050 (06-2024)

# **EXTERNAL HANDBOOK STANDARDS**

**Effective Upon Approval and  
Until Obsoleted**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION  
RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

<b>TITLE: EXTERNAL HANDBOOK STANDARDS</b>	<b>NUMBER: FCIC-14050</b> <b>OPI: Product Management</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: Effective Upon Approval and Until Obsoleted</b>	<b>ISSUE DATE: June 20, 2024</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>  Provides the standards developing and maintaining RMA external handbooks	<b>APPROVED:</b>  <i>/s/ John W. Underwood for</i>  <b>Deputy Administrator for Product Management</b>

**REASON FOR ISSUANCE**

This handbook provides approved standards for developing and maintaining RMA external handbooks. All RMA external handbooks must be developed and maintained according to this handbook. This handbook replaces FCIC-14050, External Handbook Standards, dated June 28, 2023. This handbook is effective upon approval and until obsoleted.

**SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

Listed below are the significant content changes to the FCIC-14050, External Handbook Standards. All changes and additions are highlighted. Minor changes and corrections are not included in this listing. \*\*\* used throughout the handbook indicate where major deletions occurred.

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>
Cover page	Deleted the blank page after the cover page.
<a href="#">Para. 11B</a>	Deleted language related to the required blank page after the cover page.
<a href="#">Para. 11C</a>	Clarified language to put newest changes at the top of the summary of changes to improve readability.
<a href="#">Para. 21i</a>	Added language for the writer to consider removing tables that are derived from a formula and replacing with just the formula.
<a href="#">Para. 31</a>	Deleted the paragraph related to internal document consistency being more important than strict adherence to any style guide.
<a href="#">Para. 32</a>	Added clarification to acronyms and abbreviations for Exhibit 1 in handbooks.
<a href="#">Para. 33</a>	Added consideration for writers to use the Insert Equation function in Microsoft Word.
<a href="#">Exh. 1</a>	Added statement that the lead-in statement in the exhibit is an example statement that writers may use for their own handbooks.
<a href="#">Exh. 4</a>	Updated examples of transmittal pages.
<a href="#">Exh. 7</a>	Updated related handbook statements, also added Prevented Planting Standards Handbook and Random Path Appraisal Method Standards Handbook to the listing.

# EXTERNAL HANDBOOK STANDARDS

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# PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## 1 General Information

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### A. Purpose and Objective

This handbook provides procedures for developing and maintaining RMA external handbooks. An external handbook is any RMA handbook that is available for the public. The objectives include, but are not limited to:

- (1) producing clear, concise, consistent, complete, and easily understood procedures and instructions presented in a logical manner;
- (2) standardizing format, font, organization, and appearance of all RMA external handbooks;
- (3) providing expeditious and cost-effective channels of communication with stakeholders by eliminating duplicative information within and between handbooks;
- (4) establishing standards to efficiently issue and maintain handbooks; and
- (5) allowing writers to focus on the content rather than the format.

### B. Source of Authority

- (1) Federal programs enacted by Congress and the regulations and policies developed by RMA, USDA, and other Federal agencies provide the:
  - (a) authority for program and administrative operations; and
  - (b) basis for RMA directives.
- (2) Authority for managing a directives system is authorized by:
  - (a) 44 U.S.C., Federal Records Act of 1950;
  - (b) Regulations at:
    - (i) 41 CFR, managing and using Government records; and
    - (ii) 36 CFR Part 1222, documenting agency programs, policies and procedures; and
  - (c) Federal Property Management Regulations.
- (3) Plain Writing Act 5 U.S.C. §301.

## 1 General Information (Continued)

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### C. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

The USDA prohibits discrimination against its customers. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Therefore, programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance must operate in a non-discriminatory manner. Also, a recipient of RMA funding may not retaliate against any person because they opposed an unlawful practice or policy, or made charges, testified, or participated in a complaint under Title VI.

It is the AIPs’ responsibility to ensure that standards, procedures, methods, and instructions, as authorized by FCIC in the sale and service of crop insurance contracts, are implemented in a manner compliant with Title VI. Information regarding Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the program discrimination complaint process is available on the USDA public website at [www.usda.gov/oascr](http://www.usda.gov/oascr). For more information on the RMA Non-Discrimination Statement, see the DSSH.

### D. Related Handbooks

The following table provides handbooks related to this handbook:

Handbook	Relation/Purpose
DSSH	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved form standards for use in the sale and service of any eligible Federal crop insurance policy; required statements and disclosures; and the standards for submission and review of non-reinsured supplemental policies in accordance with the SRA.

### E. Writers

For the purposes of this handbook, “writer” and “writers” refer to RMA writers, contractors, submitters of privately developed products, and RMA contact person(s), as applicable, based on the responsibilities provided in Paragraph 2. See [Exhibit 2](#) for definitions of “writer” and “RMA contact person(s).”

## 2 Responsibilities

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### A. RMA Writers Responsibilities

RMA writers are responsible for:

- (1) ensuring the handbook:
  - (a) is consistent with the standards and instructions in this handbook;
  - (b) complies with all applicable regulations and policy provisions;

**A. RMA Writers Responsibilities (Continued)**

- (c) complies with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
  - (d) is cleared through all applicable divisions and offices utilizing the applicable approved concurrence process;
  - (e) is approved by the approving official;
  - (f) is posted on RMA website after approval, if applicable; and
  - (g) is provided, as an original signed copy, to the Records Management liaison for posting to the Records Management site;
- (2) obtaining a directive number from the Office of DAPM (see [Paragraph 7](#)); and
- (3) notifying the Office of DAPM when an existing handbook is obsoleted.

**B. Submitters of Privately Developed Products Responsibilities**

Submitters of privately developed products are responsible:

- (1) for ensuring the handbook:
- (a) is consistent with the standards and instructions in this handbook;
  - (b) complies with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and
  - (c) complies with all applicable regulations and policy provisions;
- (2) when the handbook is part of a privately developed product, such as a product developed under section 508(h) or 523(d) of the FCIA it will:
- (a) include a completed draft copy of the handbook with the product submission;
  - (b) ensure content is consistent with the FCIC Board of Directors' approval and is submitted in the time frame specified in 7 CFR part 400 subpart V or as otherwise specified in the FCIC Board of Directors' resolution; and
  - (c) ensure the handbook meets all standards as published in the EHS. Submitters are required to complete all requirements before the Office of DAPM will approve.
- (3) when the handbook is part of a product developed under a contract awarded by FCIC or RMA, ensuring the handbook complies with the provisions of the applicable contract; and

**B. Submitters of Privately Developed Products Responsibilities (Continued)**

- (4) for working with the RMA contact person in the development, clearance and posting of the handbook. The RMA contact person is responsible for:
  - (a) working with the submitter of privately developed products to whom they have been assigned to ensure they understand the responsibilities regarding handbook development and standards;
  - (b) acting on behalf of the submitters of privately developed products to:
    - (i) obtain a directive number from F (see [Paragraph 7](#)), if signed by/for DAPM, if applicable;
    - (ii) notify the Office of DAPM when handbook is obsoleted;
    - (iii) clear the handbook through all applicable divisions and offices utilizing the applicable approved concurrence process;
    - (iv) obtain approval from approving official(s);
    - (v) ensure handbook is posted on RMA website after approval, if applicable;
    - (vi) provide the handbook as an original signed copy, to the Records Management liaison for posting to the Records Management site; and
  - (c) working with the submitter of privately developed products to determine handbook title and the best method for maintaining, or reissuing handbook.

**C. Supervisor Responsibilities**

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the RMA writer, privately developed product writer, and RMA contact person, as applicable, have met all the responsibilities for the RMA external handbooks within the supervisor’s area are:

- (1) developed according to the standards and instructions provided in this handbook;
- (2) accurate and complete;
- (3) cleared through all applicable divisions and offices before approving; and
- (4) provided to the appropriate official for final approval.

**D. Approving Official Responsibilities**

Approving officials are responsible for ensuring writers and supervisors have met all the responsibilities and provide the final approval of the handbook.

### 3 Approving Official Signature

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The final PDF version must be provided for signature. The approving official will digitally sign the final PDF version of the handbook. Do not post a digitally signed version of a handbook to the RMA website. Replace the approving official's signature with: */s/ I M Approving Official*.

See the PM Concurrence Guide for more information.

### 4 Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

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Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, ensures everyone has access to useable information regardless of physical ability. It is the writer's responsibility to ensure the handbook is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Information regarding Section 508 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is available at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov). For more information about the Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requirements, RMA employees should contact the [RMA Web Content Team](#) at [RMAWEB.content@usda.gov](mailto:RMAWEB.content@usda.gov).

### 5 Digital Information

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#### A. Naming Convention

The naming convention for digital files is internally used for consistency purposes. The digital file name must include the FCIC directive number, the abbreviated handbook name, and the date the handbook is issued or reissued. Separate each required element with an underscore.

**Format:** DirectiveNumber\_AbbreviatedHandbookName\_YYYYMMDD

**Example:** 14050\_EHS\_20210430

#### B. Metadata

Each writer must complete the following file properties in the Microsoft Word document:

- (1) Title: The handbook title must include the directive number, the full name of the handbook, and the applicable crop year;

**Example:** 14050 External Handbook Standards 2021

- (2) Subject: The handbook subject should be the full name of the handbook;

**Example:** External Handbook Standards

- (3) Author: For all handbooks, the author is USDA Risk Management Agency;

- (4) Company: For all handbooks, the company is USDA Risk Management Agency; and

- (5) Category: For all handbooks, the category is Procedure.



## 6 Obtaining Directive Numbers

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### A. New Directive Numbers

When a product requires a new directive number, send a request to obtain a new directive number to DAPM's Administrative Support Specialist. This request must contain the following, at a minimum:

- (1) the product to be insured;
- (2) the type of handbook (e.g., Loss or Underwriting Handbook); and
- (3) what type of product it is, such as, RMA Pilot, 508 approved product, etc.

The directive number received must be displayed as directed by this handbook.

### B. Obsolete Directive Numbers

The writer must send a notification to DAPM's Administrative Support Specialist when a handbook needs to be obsoleted. This notification must contain the title of the handbook and the current assigned directive number.

## 7 Reissuing and Correcting Handbooks

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### A. Reissuing a Handbook

Handbooks must be reissued when there are significant changes to policy or procedure. The writer must determine whether or not to reissue the handbook. Writers must not issue amendments or slip-sheets and will always reissue the entire handbook.

When the handbook is:

- (1) reissued in the same crop year the FCIC number will be updated to include a version number, for each revision within that crop year;

**Example:** FCIC-14050-1, FCIC-14050-2, etc.

- (2) reissued in a new crop year, then the FCIC number will remain the same.

**Example:** FCIC-14050 (the same as the previous year)

- (3) reissued to correct a technical error, the handbook must be reissued with the same FCIC number, but the date must be the date the corrected handbook was approved. When reissuing due to a technical error, management will need to approve this course of action, and will only be done on a case-by-case basis.

**B. Correcting Errors**

Significant errors in procedure must be corrected in a timely manner. Writers must determine the significance of the error and whether it warrants immediate action to reissue the handbook. Significant errors include, but are not limited to, confusing or misleading information, any language or punctuation that changes the intended message, text that contradicts policy language, or missing information.

The writer must correct non-significant errors the next time the entire handbook is reissued. Non-significant errors include, but are not limited to, typing errors, spelling errors, incorrect cross-references, and incorrect punctuation, unless the error changes the meaning of the associated procedure.

**C. Identifying Changes**

When a handbook requires reissuing for a new crop year or reissuing during a current crop year, all changes, and additions within the text of the handbook procedure must be identified by highlighting the specific text with the turquoise highlight color. Prior highlighting and asterisks should be removed when reissuing the handbook for a new crop year.

Only the significant additions and deletions contained in the new issuance should be identified in the summary of changes, including the reason for the change, and hyperlinked from the Summary of Changes. See [Subparagraph 21J](#) for linking procedures.

- (1) Signify deletions within procedure by inserting three asterisks highlighted in turquoise (\*\*\*) at the end of the subparagraph where the deletion occurs. If an entire paragraph is deleted, then align the three asterisks where the paragraph was located. The asterisks must not be added as a separate text box.
- (2) When reissuing a handbook due to a technical correction, do not make changes to the reason for issuance, but note technical correction in the first row of the summary of changes with a detailed description/reason.

**Note:** See [Subparagraph 11C\(4\)](#) for more information related to creating and formatting the summary of changes table.

8-10 (Reserved)

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## PART 2: COMPONENT, SEGMENT, FORMAT AND FONT STANDARDS

### Section 1: Standard Components and Segments

#### 11 Standard Components

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##### A. Basic Information

Each RMA external handbook is comprised of the same basic components. Each component provides different but related information about the subject of the handbook. This section provides information about each component.

RMA external handbooks are comprised of the following components in order:

- (1) cover page;
- (2) transmittal page(s);
- (3) table of contents;
- (4) standard segments; and
- (5) exhibits.

##### B. Cover Page

###### (1) Content

The handbook cover page must:

- (a) be standard for all RMA external handbooks, including format, font, and style;
- (b) not provide policy, procedure, or the purpose of the handbook; and
- (c) include all of the following:
  - (i) handbook title;
  - (ii) directive number, once approved;
  - (iii) USDA and FCIC emblem;
  - (iv) other information, such as applicable crop years;
  - (v) pilot status, as applicable; and
  - (vi) private product 508(h), as applicable.

Handbook titles must be descriptive of the subject of the handbook and include the word "Handbook." Writers must determine handbook titles. In general, if the title handbook provides standards for readers to follow, the word "standards" should be included in the title.

**B. Cover Page (Continued)**

**Examples:** “Loss Adjustment Manual Standards Handbook” and “Apple Loss Adjustment Standards Handbook.”

Directive numbers are assigned and maintained by the Office of DAPM. The Office of DAPM must be notified when a handbook is developed or obsoleted. See [Paragraph 7](#).

(2) Style

The USDA and FCIC emblems and associated descriptions are displayed on the left-hand side of the cover page from the top of the page to the bottom. The USDA emblem is always on top.

The handbook title and any other needed information are:

- (a) displayed to the right of the emblems;
- (b) separated from the emblems by a solid, vertical ½ point line; and
- (c) located at the top of the page, left-justified. See the [cover page](#) of this handbook as an example and for the USDA and FCIC emblems and associated descriptions.

(3) Font Standards

Item on Page	Standard			
Handbook title	All Capital	Calibri	Bold	40 pt.
Additional information, if applicable		Calibri	Bold	26 pt.
Directive number; and Text for applicable emblems		Calibri	Bold	12 pt.

\*\*\*

**C. Transmittal Page(s)**

The writer must include a Transmittal page(s). Transmittal page(s) must not include any policy or procedure.

**C. Transmittal Page(s) (Continued)**

- (1) The following must be displayed at the top center of the first transmittal page:
  - (a) United States Department of Agriculture;
  - (b) Farm Production and Conservation; and
  - (c) Risk Management Agency.
  
- (2) The transmittal page must provide all the following in the table format provided in [Exhibit 4](#):
  - (a) handbook title;
  - (b) handbook directive number;
  - (c) name of the division responsible for the handbook;
  - (d) effective date;
  - (e) issue date;
  - (f) handbook subject; and
  - (g) approving official title and signature.
  
- (3) The transmittal page(s) must provide the reason for the issuance of the handbook beginning one line below the table.

For all handbooks, the reason for issuance or reissuance should contain the purpose of the handbook and state the effective timeframe in general. If the handbook is not new, the reason for reissuance should additionally contain any statements relating to incorporating or obsoleting Manager’s Bulletins, if applicable. See [Exhibit 4](#) for examples.

- (4) The Summary of Changes must be listed in table format with two or three columns (depending on the issuance type) including headings.
  - (a) Column 1 must be the “Reference” number of the paragraph that has changed, and it will be hyperlinked to the actual change in the handbook. See [Subparagraph 21J](#) for more information on linking within a handbook.
  - (b) Column 2 must be the “Description of Change” and include a brief narrative explanation of the change.
  - (c) Column 3 must be the “Directive Number” for the issuance when the change occurred.

**C. Transmittal Page(s) (Continued)**

If the handbook being reissued is for a new crop year, 4(a) and (b) must be used. If the handbook is being reissued during a crop year, 4(a) through (c) must be used. **When reissuing during a crop year, put the newest changes at the top of the Summary of Changes table.** See [Exhibit 4](#) for an example.

(5) The following are the font standards for the transmittal page:

Item on Page	Font Standard			
All titles	All Capital	Calibri	Bold	12 pt.
All text, not including reason for issuance or other applicable text		Calibri	Bold	12 pt.
Reason for issuance text or other applicable text		Calibri	Regular	12 pt.

See [Exhibit 4](#) for examples of transmittal pages.

**D. Table of Contents**

The title of the handbook must be displayed at the top center of each page of the table of contents. The title “Table of Contents” must be displayed center of the page one line below the handbook title on each page of the table of contents. All items in the table of contents must be linked to the respective place in the handbook.

- (1) The table of contents must list only the following, with applicable page numbers:
  - (a) part numbers and titles;
  - (b) section numbers and titles if the handbook contains sections;
  - (c) paragraph numbers and titles;
  - (d) reserved paragraphs, parts, and sections; and
  - (e) exhibit number(s) and title(s).

**D. Table of Contents (Continued)**

(2) Formatting and Font Standards

Item on Page	Formatting Standard	Font Standard			
Part number header, number, and titles; and Exhibit header	Aligned with left margin	All Capital	Calibri	Bold	12 pt.
Section numbers and titles; Reserved parts, sections, or exhibits; and Exhibit numbers and titles	Aligned ½" from left margin		Calibri	Bold	12 pt.
Paragraph numbers and titles; Sub-exhibit number and titles; Reserved paragraphs and sub-exhibits; and All page numbers	Aligned ½" from left margin		Calibri	Regular	12 pt.

See the table of contents of this handbook for an example.

**Note:** All page numbers are aligned with the right margin.

**(3)** If a table of contents is longer than one page, refrain from splitting a listing of paragraphs between pages. If a listing of paragraphs needs to be split between pages, manually add a “(Continued)” for the applicable part or section at the top of the table of contents on the succeeding page.

**E. Standard Segments**

See [Paragraph 12](#) for information about standard segments.

**F. Exhibits**

Exhibits must be used to provide information that supplements the procedure provided in the various parts of the handbook.

To provide consistency between handbooks and allow readers to know where certain information is located in all RMA external handbooks; [Exhibits 1, 2, and 3](#) are reserved for certain information. See Subparagraphs (1) through (3) below for more information.

Number exhibits consecutively beginning with Exhibit 1. The exhibit number and title must be aligned with the left margin and underlined with the underline extending to the right margin. If an exhibit continues from one page to the next, repeat the exhibit number and title on each page and add “(Continued)” after the title on the second and subsequent pages.

**F. Exhibits (Continued)**

The following are the font standards for Exhibits.

Item on Page	Standard
Exhibit numbers and titles	Calibri Bold 12 pt. underlined from left to right margin
Text in exhibit	Calibri Regular 12 pt.

Writers may reserve exhibit numbers. The number of exhibits reserved is based on the writer’s expectation of future needs. Reserving exhibits decreases the need for renumbering exhibits when adding additional information to an existing handbook. Reserving exhibits is at the discretion of the writer. For more information on reserving exhibits, see [Subparagraph 21E](#).

See [Exhibits 1 through 5](#) of this handbook for examples of exhibits.

(1) Exhibit 1

Exhibit 1 must be titled “Acronyms and Abbreviations” and must provide the approved acronyms and abbreviations used within the handbook. The acronyms and abbreviations and the terms they represent must be listed in alphabetical order. Reserve Exhibit 1 if no acronyms or abbreviations are used in the handbook. For examples on reserving exhibits, see [Subparagraph 21F](#).

**Example:**

Approved Acronym/Abbreviation	Term
AIP	Approved Insurance Provider
FCIC	Federal Crop Insurance Corporation
LAM	Loss Adjustment Manual

Writers must ensure acronyms and abbreviations in the handbook are consistent with the acronyms and abbreviations provided in all other handbooks, policies, the FCIA, LPRA, and the SRA.

(2) Exhibit 2

Exhibit 2 must be titled “Definitions” and must provide the definitions of terms used in the handbook. Define only the terms needed to interpret the context of the handbook. Reserve Exhibit 2 if no definitions are needed. For examples on reserving exhibits, see [Subparagraph 21F](#).

The terms being defined must be listed in alphabetical order, bolded, and underlined, followed by a bolded colon, two spaces, and the definition of the term.

**Example:** The term “annual crop” would be defined as “**Annual crop**: An agricultural commodity that normally must be planted each year.”



**F. Exhibits (Continued)**

Definitions must not be included in the other exhibits or parts of the handbook. When the writer believes it is important to draw the reader’s attention to a definition, refer the reader to Exhibit 2.

Writers must ensure the definitions in the handbook are consistent with the definitions provided in all other handbooks, policies, the FCIA, LPRA, and the SRA. Definitions that exist in the GSH or LAM should not be duplicated in other handbooks. The writer may add a statement to the beginning of Exhibit 2 directing the reader to the GSH for definitions not included in that handbook or may add the term to the definition listing that refers them to the GSH as the definition. See [Exhibit 2](#) for an example.

(3) Exhibit 3 and Subsequent Exhibits

Exhibit 3 must be titled “Form Standards.” Writers must provide subsequent exhibits for each set of form standards within a handbook. At the end of each form standards exhibit, writers must include applicable examples or illustrations.

The DSSH provides the form standards for all forms required by crop insurance programs. Exhibit 3 must contain only the form standards that are not included in the DSSH.

Reserve Exhibit 3 if no form standards are provided in the handbook. For examples on reserving exhibits, see [Subparagraph 21F](#).

Additional Exhibits

Writers must use additional exhibits to provide information that supplements the procedures provided in the various parts of the handbook. Supplemental information in additional exhibits include, but is not limited to:

- (a) maps and diagrams;
- (b) detailed examples of procedure; and
- (c) examples of completed forms or documents.

Additional exhibits must be in the same chronological order as the procedure in the handbook.

**A. General Information**

- (1) Effective writing requires managing the size of the information so that it is easily understood by the reader. Having standardized segments, format, font, and organization allows writers to focus on the content of the handbook rather than the format. Allowing different segments and levels of designation for sentence continuation:
  - (a) assists writers in managing the size of information presented;
  - (b) conveys procedure in an effective, clear, concise manner;
  - (c) assists writers in focusing on presenting information in a logical order; and
  - (d) allows readers to quickly find the information needed.
- (2) RMA external handbooks must be divided into the following segments:
  - (a) parts;
  - (b) sections (optional);
  - (c) paragraphs; and
  - (d) subparagraphs.

In addition, individual sentences that precede or provide for a series or list of multiple items must be broken down into levels of designation to present the information in a clear and logical manner. See [Paragraph 22](#) for more information on levels of designation.

**B. Parts**

- (1) Part 1

RMA external handbooks may have as many parts as needed to convey the applicable information in a clear and logical manner. However, to provide consistency between handbooks and allow readers to know where certain information is located in all RMA external handbooks, Part 1 of each handbook is reserved for general information including, but not limited to, the following.

## B. Parts (Continued)

Information	What to Include
Purpose	Description of general purpose of the handbook.
Source of Authority	List the source(s) of authority for the procedures provided in the handbook, such as the Federal Crop Insurance Act, applicable regulations, FCIC Board action, etc. See <a href="#">Exhibit 6</a> for more information.
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964	<p>Include the following statement:</p> <p>The USDA prohibits discrimination against its customers. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Therefore, programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance must operate in a non-discriminatory manner. Also, a recipient of RMA funding may not retaliate against any person because they opposed an unlawful practice or policy, or made charges, testified, or participated in a complaint under Title VI.</p> <p>It is the AIPs’ responsibility to ensure that standards, procedures, methods, and instructions, as authorized by FCIC in the sale and service of crop insurance contracts, are implemented in a manner compliant with Title VI. Information regarding Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the program discrimination complaint process is available on the USDA public website at <a href="http://www.usda.gov/oascr">www.usda.gov/oascr</a>. For more information on the RMA Non-Discrimination Statement, see the DSSH.</p>
Related Handbooks	List all other handbooks that relate to the particular handbook and include how the other handbook are related. If the entire handbook does not apply, the specific portions that apply or do not apply should be detailed in a subsequent part. See <a href="#">Exhibit 7</a> for a listing of general handbooks and their standard purpose.
Responsibilities	List the general responsibilities, and all specific responsibilities, required by the handbook including, but not limited to RMA, AIP, and field responsibilities.

If applicable, additional general information not provided elsewhere in the handbook must be included in Part 1. Examples of additional information located in Part 1 include, but are not limited to:

- (a) the duration of the handbook, if the handbook provides procedure with an established duration period, such as certain pilot programs; and
- (b) the area of applicability, if the handbook provides procedure for a program/product that is not nationwide in scope.

**B. Parts (Continued)**

(2) Part 2 and Subsequent Parts

Part 2 and subsequent parts must provide the applicable procedure(s) and instructions(s) related to the subject of the handbook. Each part:

- (a) may be further separated by sections;
- (b) must contain at least two paragraphs; and
- (c) may include multiple subparagraphs.

(3) Font Standards

Part numbers and titles must be All Capital, Calibri, Bold, 14 pt., see [Exhibit 5](#).

**C. Sections**

Adding sections under a part of a handbook allows the writer to break the topic of the part into manageable pieces that will provide greater clarity and comprehension for readers.

**Example:** The topic of Part 3 of a handbook provides procedure about the eligibility requirements for three different plans of insurance. To provide more separation and clarity to the reader and better manage the amount of information, the writer decides to separate Part 3 into three sections. Each section provides procedure related to the eligibility requirements of a specific plan of insurance.

**Note:** The use of sections is optional and at the discretion of the writer.

The font standard for section numbers and titles must be in Calibri, Bold, 12 pt., see [Exhibit 5](#).

**D. Paragraphs**

Paragraphs break the topic of the part or section into manageable pieces that provide greater clarity and comprehension for readers. Most paragraphs will require subparagraphs to provide clarity and separation for readers.

The following are font standards for paragraphs:

Item on Page	Standard
Paragraph numbers and titles	Calibri Bold 12 pt. underlined from left to right margin
Subtitles (i.e., examples, exceptions, and notes, etc.)	Calibri Bold 12 pt.
Text in paragraphs	Calibri Regular 12 pt.

**E. Subparagraphs**

Subparagraphs allow the writer to break the topic of a paragraph into smaller manageable pieces. Do not use subparagraphs if all information for a paragraph topic can be clearly provided without dividing the information into subparagraphs.

See [Paragraph 4](#) for an example of a paragraph that is not broken down into subparagraphs. The information provided in Paragraph 4 does not need further separation into subparagraphs to add clarity or additional related information. For information on the further breakdown of subparagraphs by levels of designation, see [Paragraph 22](#).

The following are font standards for subparagraphs:

Item on Page	Standard
Subparagraph alphabetical reference and titles; and Subtitles (i.e., examples, exceptions, and notes, etc.)	Calibri Bold 12 pt.
Text in subparagraphs	Calibri Regular 12 pt.

**13-20 (Reserved)**

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## Section 2: Format and Levels of Designation Standards

### 21 Format Standards

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#### A. Page Format

(1) Margins:

RMA external handbooks must be written in a single column format using:

- (a) one-half inch top and bottom margins; and
- (b) one-half inch left and right margins.

(2) Header:

No information should be entered into the header portion of the page.

(3) Footer (not applicable to cover page):

The date the handbook was issued or reissued must be located at the bottom left of each page, except for the cover page. The date must be spelled out and displayed using month and year. Do not include the day.

The directive number, preceded by "FCIC," must be located at the bottom center of each page.

The page number must be located at the bottom right corner of each page. See Subparagraph B below for information on page numbering for each component of a handbook.

**Example:** Acceptable December 2009

Not acceptable December 2, 2009, or 12/2009

#### B. Page Numbering

All page numbers must be located at the bottom right corner of each page. The following table provides the standards for numbering pages.

Page	How to Number
Cover Page	Do not number.
Transmittal pages	Number consecutively beginning with page 1. Each page number must have a prefix of "TP."  <b>Example:</b> TP 1, TP 2, TP 3.

**B. Page Numbering (Continued)**

Page	How to Number
Table of content pages	Number consecutively beginning with page 1. Each page number must have a prefix of “TC.”  <b>Example:</b> TC 1, TC 2, TC 3.
All pages after the table of contents, including exhibits.	Number consecutively beginning with page 1.

**C. Numbering Segments**

The following table provides standards for numbering handbook segments.

If the handbook segment is a...	Then...
Part	Number consecutively throughout the handbook beginning with Part 1. Place a colon after the number with 2 spaces before the title.  <b>Example: Part 1: General Information</b>
Section (Optional)	Number consecutively within each part beginning with Section 1. Place a colon after the number with 2 spaces before the title.  <b>Example: Section 1: Eligibility</b>
Paragraph	Number consecutively throughout the handbook beginning with Paragraph 1. The first paragraph in each part and section must be an odd number ending in “1.” See <a href="#">Subparagraph 21E</a> for reserving segments within the handbook and ensuring the first paragraph in each part and section is an odd number ending in “1.”
Subparagraph	Identify alphabetically in consecutive order within each paragraph using capital letters followed by a period.

**D. Titling Segments**

- (1) Titles:
  - (a) are used by readers to identify topics that direct them to specific subject matter;
  - (b) should be brief and descriptive of the information provided in the segment; and
  - (c) must not be used as lead-ins.
- (2) The first letter of each word in a title is capitalized. Do not capitalize articles, prepositions, or conjunctions used in a title, unless the first word in the title or used in a part title.

**D. Titling Segments (Continued)**

- (3) Do not repeat segment titles within a handbook at the same level of designation. The same title for a paragraph or subparagraph may be used if the title is not within the same part or paragraph.

The following table provides guidelines for writing titles. See [Paragraph 12](#) for each segment’s font standards.

Segment	Guideline	Location(s) of Title in Handbook
Part	Identify main topic(s) of the part.	Table of Contents.  Part number and title at top center of the first page of the part. All parts start at the beginning of a new page.  <b>Example: PART 2: ELIGIBILITY</b>
Section (Optional)	Identify the topic(s) of the section.	Table of Contents.  Section number and title at the top center of the first page of the section. Display Section 1 and its title immediately after the part and part title. Section 2 and subsequent sections within a part must start at the beginning of a new page.  <b>Example: PART 2: ELIGIBILITY</b>  <b>Section 1: Payment Eligibility Requirements</b>
Paragraph	A specific description of the purpose or function of the information provided in the paragraph.	Table of Contents.  Paragraph number aligned with left margin. Paragraph title indented one-half inch from paragraph number.  <b>Example: <u>11 Eligible Acreage</u></b>  If a paragraph continues from one page to the next, repeat the paragraph number and title on each page and add “(Continued)” after the title on the second and subsequent pages.  <b>Example: <u>11 Eligible Acreage (Continued)</u></b>



**D. Titling Segments (Continued)**

Segment	Guideline	Location(s) of Title in Handbook
Subparagraph	A specific description of the subject matter in the subparagraph. Subject matter must be related to the purpose or function listed in the paragraph title.	<p>Subparagraph alphabetical reference aligned with the first word of paragraph title. Subparagraph title indented one-half inch from subparagraph alphabetical reference.</p> <p><b>Example: <u>11 Eligible Acreage</u></b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>A. Eligible Cropland</b></p> <p>If subparagraph continues from one page to the next, repeat the subparagraph number and title on each page and add “(Continued)” on the second and subsequent pages.</p> <p><b>Example: <u>11 Eligible Acreage (Continued)</u></b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>A. Eligible Cropland (Continued)</b></p>

**E. Reserving Segments**

Reserving segments within a handbook decreases the need to renumber parts, sections, paragraphs, and exhibits when adding future information to an existing handbook. Reserving segments is at the discretion of the writer. The number of segments reserved is based on the writer’s expectation of future needs or anticipated changes. See [Subparagraph 21D](#) for information about how to number segments added to existing handbooks.

The following table provides examples of reserving paragraphs if the last paragraph was Paragraph 26.

If the writer determines there is...	Then the writer could...
A need to add several more paragraphs to that part in the future based on program changes	Reserve Paragraphs 27 through 40. Reserving those paragraph numbers provides the opportunity to expand the part in the future without renumbering paragraphs and results in the first paragraph of the next part being 41.
No need to add a large number of paragraphs to that part in the future	Reserve only Paragraphs 27 through 30. This is the minimum number of paragraphs that can be reserved in this example to result in the first paragraph of the next part being 31.

**F. Examples of reserving paragraphs and exhibits**

Reserving paragraphs at the end of a section/part

**27-40 (Reserved)**

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Reserving exhibits

**Exhibit 3 (Reserved)**

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**Exhibits 4-7 (Reserved)**

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Both the reserved paragraphs and exhibits should be formatted using the same style as a paragraph to ensure it populates the table of contents correctly. Additionally, the writer may reserve multiple exhibits, as shown above, or reserve exhibits individually even if there is more than one exhibit being reserved sequentially.

**G. Adding Segments**

If enough segments are not reserved, writers must renumber segments (parts, sections, paragraphs, etc.) when adding to an existing handbook. Do not use decimals when adding segments.

**Example:** The writer needs to add procedure to Part 3 of the handbook. The procedure must be located between existing Paragraphs 23 and 24. The new procedures comprise three new paragraphs. The writer must number the new Paragraphs as 24, 25, 26, and renumber Paragraph 24 (and any subsequent paragraphs) to 27 and subsequent.

**H. Graphics Format**

Writers may include graphics to aid in the reader's understanding of the procedure. Acceptable graphics include, but are not limited to, an example of a form, a sample of a letter, or a drawing. Do not include tables or text boxes imbedded as graphics.

- (1) Writers should include graphics in exhibits only. The exhibit must reference the applicable paragraph or subparagraph. Writers may place graphics within a paragraph or subparagraph if such placement is necessary to the reader's understanding of the graphic. If graphics are placed within a paragraph or subparagraph, the graphic must be placed immediately after the applicable text related to the graphic.
- (2) Graphics must comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Writers must include alternative text for all graphics. See [Paragraph 5](#) for more information about Section 508 requirements.
- (3) If including a drawing, writers must group all parts of the drawing together. Do not use multiple separate graphics to illustrate the same point.

**H. Graphics Format (Continued)**

- (4) If the graphic is an example of a form or a sample of a letter, it must:
- (a) include a watermark of “EXAMPLE” or “SAMPLE”; or
  - (b) include the word “EXAMPLE” or “SAMPLE” in the title of the completed form or letter.
- Note:** The form shall not include signature blocks/fields or statements, such as Privacy Act and Non-discrimination statements.
- (5) The applicable text related to the form must identify any entries/statements required for the actual form, if not shown in the completed example. See the DSSH for signature requirements, Privacy Act, and Non-Discrimination statements.

**I. Table Format**

Place a table immediately after the text to which it refers. The lead-in to a table should be a complete sentence that provides the purpose or function of the table. Do not embed a table that has been converted to a graphic file or format. A table must be added in its native form.

**Exception 1:** The standard font for text within a table is Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. Writers may use smaller Calibri font of not less than 10 pt. if the smaller font will prevent the table from extending beyond one page. Additionally, tab settings less than one-half inch are allowed inside of tables.

Table border and cell lines should be single solid ½ point line. When no text or data is entered in a cell, the writer may use a 40-percent shade factor to fill the cell.

Writers must avoid any merged and split cells in a table. Consider using a lead in rather than a merged cell at the top of the table. Do not include graphics that appear to be tables. **If a table is derived from a formula, then consider only having a formula, as an unnecessary table only clutters a handbook.**

**Exception 2:** **Form examples or samples and graphics that appear to be tables used to illustrate common results of a formula.**

I. Table Format (Continued)

(1) The following table provides the standards for table width and depth.

Size	Standard
Preferred Width	Align left edge of the table with the left edge of the text to which the table refers. Align right edge of the table with the right margin.
Alternate Width	Align left edge of the table with the left edge of the subparagraph letter of a paragraph number, right edge with the right margin. Use this standard: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) when the preferred width does not provide enough space for all the information;</li> <li>(2) to save space; or</li> <li>(3) to keep the entire table on one page.</li> </ol>
Depth	The depth of the table is determined by the amount of information in the table.

(2) The following table provides standards for table headers.

Item	Standard
Font	Calibri Bold 12 pt.  <b>Exception:</b> Writers may use a smaller Calibri Bold font of not less than 10 pt. if the smaller font will prevent the table from extending beyond one page.
Capitalization	Capitalize the first letter of each word in table headers.  <b>Exception:</b> Do not capitalize articles, conjunctions, and prepositions, unless they are the first word of the header.
Punctuation	Do not use periods or colons in table headers. For “if-then” and “if-and-then” table headers, follow the header with a 3-dot ellipsis.
Alignment	Center the table headers.

**J. Links**

(1) Internal Cross-references

A cross-reference allows the reader to link to other segments of the same document. Writers should use a cross-reference to link a specific text reference to another segment of the handbook. The cross-reference appears as a link that takes the reader to the referenced item. Writers should create a cross-reference link for any specific references to another paragraph, subparagraph, or exhibit in the same handbook. This includes those references listed in the Summary of Changes. The directive number in the footer should also be linked to the first page of the table of contents.

**Exceptions:** Cross-references are not necessary when referring to items within the same level of designation or if the reference is located within two (2) pages of the reference.

When listing a group of exhibits, the writer can link to the first exhibit in the list.

When cross-referencing a level of designation lower than subparagraph, it is appropriate to link to the subparagraph level.

**Example:** See [Subparagraph 11F](#) for more information about acronyms and abbreviations to be listed in [Exhibit 1](#) of the handbook.

(2) External Links

Writers must edit external links to websites to show the basic web address only.

**Example:** Web address: <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/>

Text to display in handbook: [www.ascr.usda.gov](http://www.ascr.usda.gov)

22 Levels of Designation

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**A. Characterization**

The following table provides the hierarchical structure when using levels of designation starting after subparagraph. See [Exhibit 5](#) for a detailed example showing the levels of designation with formatting.

**A. Characterization (Continued)**

Level	Character	Description
1	(1)	A consecutively numbered list beginning with the number “1” shown parenthetically. The parenthetical number is aligned with the same left margin as the text to which level 1 is related. The text of level 1 is indented one-half inch from the parenthetical number.
2	(a)	A consecutively lettered list beginning with the lower-case letter “a” shown parenthetically. The parenthetical letter is aligned with the first word in the level 1 sentence to which level 2 is related. The text of level 2 is indented one-half inch from the parenthetical letter.
3	(i)	A consecutively numbered list beginning with the lower-case Roman numeral “i” shown parenthetically. The parenthetical lower-case Roman numeral is aligned with the first word in the level 2 sentence to which level 3 is related. The text of level 3 is indented one-half inch from the parenthetical lower-case Roman numeral.
4	(A)	A consecutively lettered list beginning with the upper-case letter “A” shown parenthetically. The parenthetical letter is aligned with the first word in the level 3 sentence to which level 4 is related. The text of level 4 is indented one-half inch from the parenthetical letter.

Each writer must determine the appropriate breakdown of information and applicable level of designation necessary to present the information in a clear and logical order that the reader will understand. It is the writer’s discretion to determine if this requires more than the 4 levels of designation provided in the table above. For additional levels of designation not provided in the table above, refer to the example in [Exhibit 5](#).

**B. Punctuation**

The following table provides the punctuation rules when using levels of designation.

If the lead-in is a...	Then use a...
Complete sentence	(1) period after the lead-in sentence; and (2) period after each item is listed.
Clause or sentence fragment	(1) colon after lead-in; (2) semicolon after each item listed except the last item; (3) conjunction such as “and” or “or” as applicable, after the semicolon in the next to last item in the list, or where appropriate; and (4) period after the last item listed.

**B. Punctuation (Continued)**

- (1) Sentences that contain or lead to a series or list of items/information are often difficult to read and can be confusing to readers. Breaking such information into levels of designation to:
  - (a) present the information in a clear and logical order; and
  - (b) list multiple items/information that relate to lead-in sentence or table header immediately preceding the levels of designation.
  
- (2) Levels of designation use an alternating series of numbers and letters, indented accordingly, to provide information that is directly related to the information that precedes the series of numbers and letters. Use levels of designation to:
  - (a) present a series of items in a sentence that would otherwise be separated by commas or semi-colons; and
  - (b) list multiple items/information that relate to a lead-in sentence or table header immediately preceding the levels of designation.
  
- (3) Do not:
  - (a) use levels of designation to list a single item or two single word items.
  - (b) capitalize the first word in a list unless:
    - (i) the first word is a proper noun; or
    - (ii) all the items in the level are simply a list of items being referenced by a lead-in that is a complete sentence by itself.
  
- (4) Items listed using levels of designation:
  - (a) never stand alone;
  - (b) must follow a lead-in or table header; and
  - (c) must form a:
    - (i) complete sentence in combination with the lead-in, when the lead-in is not a complete sentence by itself; or
    - (ii) logical group of words or information related to the lead-in, when the lead-in is a complete sentence by itself.

**C. Examples, Exceptions, and Notes within a Level of Designation**

Examples, exceptions, and notes are aligned under the paragraph, subparagraph, or level of designation for which it applies and has a hanging indent of one inch. This rule does not apply if located inside of a table. Punctuation guidance in Subparagraph 22B applies to examples, exceptions, and notes.

**D. Line Spacing**

Double space all items.

**Example:** Reviews may be conducted at any time to verify:

- (1) compliance with the terms and conditions of the policy; and
- (2) the information provided on the certification form is accurate and meets the requirements of the program.



## PART 3: LANGUAGE USE AND CITATION STANDARDS

### 31 Language Use and Style

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Writers must abide by the requirements and guidance in the Plain Writing Act. Writers can find the requirements and guidance for the Plain Writing Act and Plain Language at [www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov).

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Writing must be gender neutral. Writers must avoid gender pronouns and use “you” or “they” if a pronoun is necessary.

Terms used should be consistent and appropriate throughout a handbook. For instance, the terms “policy” and “contract” could be used interchangeably, as a crop insurance policy is a contract. However, since there are multiple related items affecting a crop insurance policy that are also contracts (e.g., contract price, processor contract, etc.), it is suggested that when referring to a crop insurance policy that you use the word “policy” rather than “contract” for clarity. This would also apply to other forms of the word that would include policy, e.g., companion policy, insurance policy, policy folder instead of companion contract, insurance contract or contract folder.

### 32 Acronym and Abbreviation Use

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Acronyms and program specific abbreviations used within a handbook must be listed in [Exhibit 1](#) of that handbook. See [Subparagraph 11F](#) for more information about acronyms and abbreviations to be listed in [Exhibit 1](#) of a handbook.

Writers must not spell out approved acronyms or abbreviations, including the first time the acronym or abbreviation is used. The first time the acronym “RMA” is used in this handbook is [Subparagraph 1A](#). Readers will refer to [Exhibit 1](#) when unsure what an acronym represents.

Common acronyms and abbreviations (e.g., lbs., min, max, etc.) are not required to be listed in [Exhibit 1](#) of a handbook unless they are being used in a manner different than otherwise commonly used. The listing in [Exhibit 1](#) of a handbook should be program/crop specific acronyms for the particular handbook. Other acronyms that are not defined can normally be found in the GSH.

### 33 Symbol Usage

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The use of symbols is allowed in procedural handbooks. Writers should be consistent when using symbols. If the writer decides to use a symbol that might have more than one option, then the writer must consistently use that symbol throughout the handbook, not switch back and forth.

**Example 1:** dash vs. hyphen

If the writer is using the word in the body of the handbook, then it should be spelled out. If it is used in an equation in the handbook, then a symbol should be used.

**Example 2:** The percentage of beans vs. % of beans

Below is a table showing some examples of symbol usage:

Symbol	Explanation
X vs. ×	The letter X is used as a descriptor, do not use X to indicate multiplication.
* vs. ×	An asterisk (*) is used to signal a footnote, do not use "*" to indicate multiplication.
/ vs. ÷	A solidus (/) is used to indicate per unit (e.g., trees/acre), do not use "/" to indicate division.
- vs. – vs. —	Hyphens (-) are used to join two words or parts of words together while avoiding confusion or ambiguity. Use a hyphen with compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine. The En Dash (–) is used to indicate a range of numbers or a span of time. Neither of these symbols are the same as the minus (−) symbol.
'vs. “	The standard is to use the double quotation mark (“ ”). However, the writer can use a single quotation mark (i.e., apostrophe (')) inside a quotation.

The addition (+), equals (=), percentage (%) and dollar sign (\$) symbols can be taken directly from the writer's keyboard in Microsoft Word. The symbols minus (−), multiplication (×) and division (÷) need to be taken from the “insert symbol” tool in Microsoft Word.

When writing equations there should be spaces between all terms. Otherwise, E-readers will not read the equation properly. Consider using the “Insert Equation” command in Microsoft Word to assist with writing equations.

**Example:**

Incorrect format in equation with no spaces between numbers and symbols:  $\$4+\$9=\$13$ . The E-reader will say, “Dollar four plus dollar nine equals dollar thirteen.”

Correct format in equation with spaces between numbers and symbols:  $\$4 + \$9 = \$13$ . The E-reader will say, “Four dollars plus nine dollars equals thirteen dollars.”

## 34 Citation Standards

### A. Cross Referencing

Write at a level of detail that provides the information the reader needs. However, do not repeat the same procedure in multiple locations. When needed, cross-reference to existing procedure rather than repeat the same procedure in multiple locations.

The following table provides the format for cross-referencing within handbooks. If referencing a different handbook, reference the handbook in general such as, see LAM. See [Subparagraph 21J](#) for more information on cross-reference link formats.

**B. Cross-reference Format**

Segment/ Component of Handbook Being Referenced	Format When Referencing within Same Segment/ Component of Same Handbook	Format When Referencing Within Same Handbook but Different Segment/ Component
The handbook itself	“this Handbook”	“this Handbook”
Part	“this Part”	Identify the specific part.  <b>Example:</b> See Part 3, Section 1
Section	“this Section”	Identify the specific part and section.  <b>Example:</b> See Part 3, Section 1
Paragraph	“this Paragraph” or “this Para.”	Identify the specific paragraph.  <b>Example:</b> See Paragraph 9 or See Para. 9
Subparagraph	“this Subparagraph” or “this Subpara.”	Identify the specific subparagraph.  <b>Example:</b> See Subparagraph 9B or See Subpara. 9B
Exhibit	“this Exhibit” or “this Exh.”	Identify the specific exhibit.  <b>Example:</b> See Exhibit 5 or See Exh. 5

If the writer chooses to abbreviate a cross-reference within the handbook, such as Para., Subpara., or Exh., the writer must include the abbreviation in [Exhibit 1](#).

The following table provides examples of the correct format for cross-referencing laws and other information resources.

Type of Information	Example Format
CFR segments. References are:  (1) Title;  (2) Part;  (3) Section; and Paragraph.	7 CFR is an example of a reference to CFR title.  7 CFR Part 709 is an example of a reference to a CFR title and part.  7 CFR 709.3 is an example of a reference to a CFR title, part, and section.  7 CFR 709.3(b)(1) is an example of a reference to a CFR title, part, section, and paragraph.

## B. Cross-reference Format (Continued)

Type of Information	Example Format
Executive Orders. References are: (1) Executive Order number; and (2) Date it was published in FR.	Executive Order 69432 of March 5, 1990
Public Laws. References are: (1) Congressional session number; and (2) Law number.	Pub. L. 98-100
United States statutes-at-large. References are: (1) Volume number; and (2) Page number.	69 Stat. 868
United States Code. References are: (1) Title; and (2) Section.	30 U.S.C. 226

## EXHIBITS

### Exhibit 1 Acronyms and Abbreviations

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Common acronyms and abbreviations (e.g., lbs., min, max, etc.) are not listed below unless they are being used in a manner different than otherwise commonly used. The listing below are program/crop specific acronyms for this handbook. Other acronyms that are not defined can be found in the GSH. *[This is an example statement that may be used by the writer for Exhibit 1.]*

<b>Approved Acronym/Abbreviation</b>	<b>Term</b>
AIP	Approved Insurance Provider
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DAPM	Deputy Administrator for Product Management
DSSH	Document and Supplemental Standards Handbook
EHS	External Handbook Standards
FCIA	Federal Crop Insurance Act
FCIC	Federal Crop Insurance Corporation
FR	Federal Register
LAM	Loss Adjustment Manual
LPRA	Livestock Price Reinsurance Agreement
NCIS	National Crop Insurance Services
OPI	Office of Primary Interest
RMA	Risk Management Agency
SRA	Standard Reinsurance Agreement
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

## Exhibit 2 Definitions

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Terms in this handbook that are not defined can be found in the GSH. *[This is an example statement that may be used by the writer for Exhibit 2.]*

**External handbook:** A handbook that provides procedures to external RMA customers, such as NCIS and AIPs. External handbooks include handbooks developed by private product submitters and persons under contract with RMA if the handbook provide procedure to external RMA customers. External handbooks do not include handbooks that provide procedure to RMA employees only.

**RMA:** Same as the definition contained in the GSH. *[This is an example of listing a term in the Exhibit and referring them to the GSH for the definition.]*

**RMA contact person:** An RMA employee assigned to work with other writers in the development, clearance, and approval of the other writer's external handbook.

**Writer:** An RMA employee, a contractor, or a submitter of a privately developed product responsible for writing an external handbook.



**Exhibit 4 Example of Transmittal Pages**

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The following is an example of a transmittal page when issuing a new handbook.

<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY</b>		
<b>TITLE: ABC CROP INSURANCE STANDARDS HANDBOOK</b>	<b>NUMBER: FCIC-12345 OPI: Product Management</b>	
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: 20XX and succeeding crop years</b>	<b>ISSUE DATE: XXXX XX, 2024</b>	
<b>SUBJECT:</b>  Provides the approved standards and procedures for administering the ABC Crop Insurance Program	<b>APPROVED:</b>  <i>/s/ IM Approving Official</i>  Deputy Administrator for Product Management	
<b>REASON FOR ISSUANCE</b>  This handbook provides the approved standards and procedures for administering the ABC Crop Insurance Program for the 20XX and succeeding crop years. This handbook is effective upon approval and until obsolete.		
Month 2024	FCIC-12345	TP1



**Exhibit 4 Example of Transmittal Pages (Continued)**

The following is an example of a transmittal page when reissuing an existing handbook in a new crop year.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY	
<b>TITLE: ABC CROP INSURANCE STANDARDS HANDBOOK</b>	<b>NUMBER: FCIC-12345 OPI: Product Management</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: 20XX and succeeding crop years</b>	<b>ISSUE DATE: XXXX XX, 2024</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>  Provides the approved standards and procedures for administering the ABC Crop Insurance Program	<b>APPROVED:</b>  <i>/s/ IM Approving Official</i>  Deputy Administrator for Product Management
<b>REASON FOR ISSUANCE</b>	
<p>This handbook provides the approved standards and procedures for administering the ABC Crop Insurance Program for the 20XX and succeeding crop years. This handbook replaces FCIC-12345 ABC Crop Insurance Standards Dated Month XX, 2024. This handbook is effective upon approval and until obsoleted.</p> <p>This issuance obsoletes Bulleting MGR-XX-XXX with the inclusion of the procedure in Para. X.</p>	
<b>SUMMARY OF CHANGES</b>	
<p>Listed below are the significant content changes to the FCIC-12345 ABC Crop Insurance Standards Handbook. All changes, and additions are highlighted. Minor changes and corrections are not included in this listing. *** used throughout the handbook indicate where major deletions occurred.</p>	
Reference	Description of Change
<a href="#">Para. 1C</a>	Updated related handbook purpose statements.
<a href="#">Para. X</a>	Added procedure previously contained in MGR-XX-XXX.
<a href="#">Exh. 1</a>	Removed general acronyms that already exist in the FCIC-18190 General Standards handbook.
Month 2024	FCIC-12345
	TP1

**Exhibit 4 Example of Transmittal Pages (Continued)**

The following is an example of a transmittal page when reissuing an existing handbook during the same crop year.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY		
<b>TITLE:</b> ABC CROP INSURANCE STANDARDS HANDBOOK	<b>NUMBER:</b> FCIC-12345-1 <b>OPI:</b> Product Management	
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> 20XX and succeeding crop years	<b>ISSUE DATE:</b> XXXX XX, 2024	
<b>SUBJECT:</b>  Provides the approved standards and procedures for administering the ABC Crop Insurance Program	<b>APPROVED:</b>  <i>/s/ IM Approving Official</i>  Deputy Administrator for Product Management	
<b>REASON FOR ISSUANCE</b>		
<p>This handbook provides the approved standards and procedures for administering the ABC Crop Insurance Program for the 20XX and succeeding crop years. This handbook replaces FCIC-12345 ABC Crop Insurance Standards Dated Month XX, 2024. This handbook is effective upon approval and until obsoleted.</p>		
<b>SUMMARY OF CHANGES</b>		
<p>Listed below are the significant content changes to the FCIC-12345-1 ABC Crop Insurance Standards Handbook. All changes, and additions are <b>highlighted</b>. Minor changes and corrections are not included in this listing. <b>***</b> used throughout the handbook indicate where major deletions occurred.</p>		
Reference	Description of Change	Directive
<a href="#">Para. X</a>	Added procedure language to clarify X.	12345-1
<a href="#">Para. 1C</a>	Updated related handbook purpose statements.	12345
<a href="#">Para. X</a>	Added procedure previously contained in MGR-XX-XXX.	12345
<a href="#">Exh. 1</a>	Removed general acronyms that already exist in the FCIC-18190 General Standards handbook.	12345
Month 2024	FCIC-12345	TP1

The following includes formatting examples to assist in issuing a handbook. Refer to [Part 2](#) for more detailed instructions. All margins will be one-half inch. When applicable, always indent one-half inch.

**PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

(Parts are Calibri, Bold, 14 pt., and centered at the top of the first page of reference)

**Section 1: Standard Components and Segments**

(If applicable, Sections are Calibri, Bold, 12 pt., and centered directly under parts)

**1    Paragraph**

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(Paragraphs are Calibri, Bold, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent and underline extending from left to right margin)

**A.    Subparagraph (Subparagraphs are Calibri, Bold, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent)**

- (1)    First level of designation is numeric parenthetical, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.
  - (a)    Second level of designation is lower case alpha parenthetical, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.
    - (i)    Third level of designation is lower case Roman numeral parenthetical, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.
      - (A)    Fourth level of designation is upper case alpha parenthetical, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.
        - 1    Fifth level of designation is numeric underlined, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.
          - a    Sixth level of designation is lower case alpha underlined, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.
            - i    Seventh level of designation is lower case Roman numeral underlined, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.
              - A    Eighth level of designation is upper case alpha underlined, Calibri, Regular, 12 pt. with 0.5" indent.

**Example:**    Examples, exceptions, and notes are Calibri, Bold, 12 pt., and aligned under paragraph, subparagraph, or level of designation for which the example applies and have a hanging indent of one inch. [See Para. 22C for exceptions within tables.](#)

## **Exhibit 6 Source of Authority Listing**

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Sources of authority include, but are not limited to:

- (1) The Federal Crop Insurance Act, 7 U.S.C. 1501 et seq.;
- (2) The Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3801 et seq.;
- (3) Controlled Substance Act of 1970, 21 U.S.C. 801 et seq.;
- (4) Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, 8 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.;
- (5) Privacy Act of 1974, 7 U.S.C. 552a;
- (6) Agriculture General Administrative Regulation, 7 CFR Part 400;
- (7) Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation, 7 CFR Part 12; or
- (8) Standard Reinsurance Agreement and Livestock Price Reinsurance Agreement.

**Exhibit 7 Related Handbook Purpose Statements**

**14000 Program Administration Handbooks**

<b>Directive</b>	<b>Handbook Name</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
14020	Large Claim Standards Handbook	This handbook provides <b>the official</b> FCIC-approved standards and procedures for handling large claims determinations.
14060	Good Farming Practice Determination Standards Handbook	This handbook <b>provides the official</b> FCIC- <b>approved</b> standards and procedures that AIPs, and RMA will follow for <b>conducting</b> good farming practice decisions determinations, and reconsiderations.
14070	Spot Check List Handbook	This handbook provides the official <b>FCIC-approved</b> standards and procedures for administration of the spot check list program.
14080	Program Performance Assessment Standards Handbook	This handbook provides <b>the official</b> FCIC-approved standards and procedures for the program performance assessment process.

**18000 Coverage Plan Handbooks**

<b>Directive</b>	<b>Handbook Name</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
18010	Crop Insurance Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved underwriting standards for policies administered by AIPs for the General Administrative Regulations, Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions, and Area Risk Protection Regulations.
18150	Rainfall Index Insurance Standards Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved underwriting, administration, and review standards for the Rainfall Index plan of insurance.
18160	Whole-Farm Revenue Protection Pilot Handbook	This handbook provides <b>the official FCIC-approved</b> information, procedures and instructions for administering the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection Pilot program, including Micro Farm.
18170	Stacked Income Protection Plan of Insurance Standards Handbook	This handbook provides the <b>official</b> FCIC-approved <b>standards and</b> procedures for administering Stacked Income Protection Plan of Insurance.
18190	General Standards Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved standards for policies administered by AIPs under the General Administrative Regulations, Common Crop Insurance Policy Regulations Basic Provisions, including the Catastrophic Risk Protection Endorsement; the Area Risk Protection Insurance Regulations Basic Provisions; the Stacked Income Protection Plan of Insurance; the Rainfall Index Plan; and the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection Pilot Policy.

**Exhibit 7 Related Handbook Purpose Statements (Continued)**

**24000 Underwriting Handbooks**

<b>Directive</b>	<b>Handbook Name</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
24020	Written Agreement Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved standards and criteria for WAs, and instructions for each RMA RO and AIP to process WA requests.
24040	Document and Supplemental Standards Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved form standards for use in the sale and service of any eligible Federal crop insurance policy; required statements and disclosures; and the standards for submission and review of non-reinsured supplemental policies in accordance with the SRA.
24050	Ineligible Tracking System Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved standards for use in reporting, administering and maintaining the Ineligible Tracking System, identifying and notifying ineligible persons, and implementing RMA and AIP reinstatement.

**25000 Loss Adjustment Standards Handbooks**

<b>Directive</b>	<b>Handbook Name</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
25010	Loss Adjustment Manual Standards Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved general loss adjustment standards for all levels of insurance provided under FCIC unless a publication specifies that none or only specified parts of this handbook apply.
25370	Prevented Planting Standard Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved procedures and instructions for administering the Prevented Planting provisions.
25400	Random Path Appraisal Method Standards Handbook	This handbook provides the official FCIC-approved specific procedural requirements for adjusting tree crop losses. An AIP can authorize the use of the Random Path Appraisal Method Standards in lieu of crop-specific appraisal procedures as authorized in a crop loss adjustment standards handbook.