

# MS 341 Non-Emergency Post Closing

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**Effective Date:** 01/30/97, partial revision 10/15/99

**Office:** Office of Chief of Staff

**Supersedes:** MS 341, 7/15/93, 10/4/82, 2/73

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Referenced Manual Sections

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### **Referenced Manual Sections**

MS 218 Applicant, Trainee and Volunteer Travel and Use of Hostels  
MS 223 Volunteer/Trainee Readjustment Allowance  
MS 267 Volunteer Medical Records  
MS 282 Transfers/Reassignments, Reinstatements, and Reenrollments of Trainees and Volunteers  
MS 284 Early Termination of Service  
MS 350 Emergency Action Plans  
MS 710 Year-end Fiscal Close-Out  
MS 714 Fiscal Coding and Report Preparation  
MS 732 Acquisition Regulations, Rules and Procedures -Overseas and U. S.  
MS 743 Procurement of Personal Services of Host Country Residents by Contract  
MS 744 Procurement of Personal Services of Non-residents of Host Country by Contract  
MS 760 Imprest Funds  
MS 777 Billing and Collection Procedures, Debts and Claims  
MS 894 File System for Overseas Staff

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## **1.0 Purpose**

Once a decision has been made to close a Post, there are a number of activities that must be completed to ensure a smooth exit from the country. The policies and administrative procedures in this Manual Section have been designed to accomplish this.

During an emergency evacuation, refer to MS 350, the *Peace Corps Crisis Management Handbook*, the *Evacuation Support Guide*, and the specific Country's *Emergency Action Plan*.

## **2.0 Responsibilities**

### **2.1 Director of the Peace Corps**

The Director is responsible for:

- (a) Determination of final departure date of Volunteers/Trainees (V/Ts) and staff.
- (b) Timing and method of formal notification of departure to be given to the host government through the Ambassador, including a determination regarding the future status of the country agreement.

## **2.2 Regional Director**

The Regional Director is responsible for:

- (a) Determination of specific close-out schedule.
- (b) Documentation of reasons for close-out and of participants in that decision.
- (c) Designation of a liaison officer to coordinate all Peace Corps/Washington support activities and communications regarding close-out.
- (d) Establishment with the Directors of the Counseling and Outreach Unit (OHS/COU), Office of Medical Services (OHS/MS) and the Office of Volunteer Placement (VRS/P) of a policy for V/T reassignments.
- (e) Coordination of Peace Corps/Washington's activities.
- (f) Provision of guidance and technical support to country staff on overall close-out policy and on any other areas requested by the Country Director.
- (g) Communication of close-out progress and problems to the Director of Peace Corps.

## **2.3 Country Director**

(Country staff in a country lacking a Country Director must be guided and assisted by the Regional Director in Peace Corps/Washington.) The Country Director is responsible for coordination up to a year before the phase-out process, if time permits, with U.S., international, and host country agencies, in order to:

- (a) Integrate, as possible, existing Peace Corps programs into host country projects.
- (b) Keep the Peace Corps Director and the Chief of Staff apprised, through the Regional Office, of significant in-country issues related to eventual Post closure, including assessment of potential governmental, institutional, and public reaction. Review and/or devise strategy for in-country and United States notification of Post closure with the Director of Communications (D/ C) at Peace Corps/Washington, and with appropriate in-country Embassy and U. S. Information Service staff (i. e., the Public Affairs Officer).
- (c) Identify and manage project close-out plan and procedures. --Determine technical and personnel assistance needed and request from Peace Corps/Washington.
- (d) Coordinate with the Office of Medical Services (OHS/MS) the return of all medical equipment and supplies.
- (e) Identify, to the extent possible, all financial obligations to be liquidated. If it appears that the Country Director may leave the Post before obligations are liquidated, appoint an in-country U. S. Direct Hire government employee to settle outstanding Peace Corps accounts. Request, through the Regional Director, that the Director of Peace Corps re-

delegate to this U. S. Government employee the authority to settle these accounts or make arrangements with Embassy officials to close accounts under the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) system with the Department of State.

- (f) Regular communications with the Regional Director concerning the initial close-out plan and subsequent progress.
- (g) Collection and delivery to Region of all in-country materials related to Peace Corps programs, approaches, and functions, e. g., development projects, appropriate technology, promotion of volunteerism, etc.
- (h) Review of close-out strategy with the American Embassy.
- (i) Plans for close-out ceremony with the host country, if appropriate.
- (j) Sending letters to all host country persons who have been supportive of Peace Corps.
- (k) Retrieval, and forwarding to Information Collection and Exchange (IO/OTAPS/ICE), of all materials derived from individual or collective V/T experiences as well as staff or contract-generated materials prepared for training or program support purposes.
- (l) Coordination of in-country Foreign Service National (FSN) personnel actions.

### **3.0 Financial Matters**

#### **3.1 Internal Audit**

The Regional Director should decide, after consulting with the Office of Inspector General, on the need for a complete financial audit of the Post during the last two months of operation. Even if the Regional Director decides an audit is not necessary, the Country Director and the Embassy budget and fiscal staff must conduct a review of all outstanding obligations prior to close-out.

#### **3.2 Budget and Fiscal Matters**

The Post should follow these guidelines for closing out budget and fiscal affairs: (See also MS 710, MS 714, MS 732, and the *Fiscal Coding and Report Preparation Handbook*.)

- (a) Review the status of funds (obligations, liquidations, outstanding problems, anticipated expenditures, possible billings after office is closed) and the status of open obligations. De-obligate balances no longer required, for all prior years, as well as current year accounts. Request Embassy Budget and Fiscal Support Office to continue to provide financial reports for open Peace Corps accounts after departure and close-out of the Post.
- (b) Advise the Region of whether additional funding will be required for closing expenses (termination of leases, severance pay, etc.) or whether excess funds will be available for reprogramming. Prepare a detailed listing of all obligations to be liquidated after Post

close-out date. This should serve as a checklist for the Embassy as well as for the Peace Corps.

- (c) Review all accounts receivable. Where appropriate, notify local vendors to submit outstanding bills within 30 days. Review outstanding travel advances and prepayments, e.g., insurance, leases, subscriptions.
- (d) Forward all out-of-country uncollectable accounts receivable that will remain after Post is closed to the Chief Financial Officer (OPBF/CFO) for further action per MS 777. In-country collectible items should be left with the Embassy Budget and Fiscal Officer for collection.
- (e) Notify Embassy Administrative Officer six months before closing that administrative support provided through the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) system will be terminated, and cable Administrative Services (M/AS) and the Office of Planning and Budget (OPBF/PB), which will pass written notification to the appropriate working group at the Department of State.
- (f) Ensure that cash balances of host country contributions are used to cover allowable expenses and reduce the balance to zero. Unused balances must be returned to the host government agency(s), along with an appropriate letter of appreciation.
- (g) Review all open Peace Corps Partnership Project and Small Project Assistance (SPA) accounts. Volunteers must submit all receipts to the Country Director, with a status report on open projects. The Country Director should report the projects' petty cash balances to the Regional Director for proper disposition.
- (h) Review in-country financial obligations and terminate payments when a review reveals that obligation is no longer valid.
- (i) Prepare a detailed list of all outstanding budget or fiscal problems and actions taken to date, with recommendations if appropriate. This list should be submitted to the Budget and Fiscal Officer at the Embassy, the Regional Finance Center, or the office of Fiscal Services (OPBF/F/FS) at Peace Corps/ Washington, as appropriate. A copy should also be sent to the Regional Director.
- (j) Order cash in lieu of Government Transportation Requests (GTRs) for Volunteers who are eligible to receive them.
- (k) Order 1/3 readjustment allowance checks for COSing Volunteers and field exception Early Terminees.

**NOTE:** Posts receiving accounting services as part of the Agency's Practical Independence Project (PIP) should follow the guidance in the *Handbook on PIP Policies and Procedures* available from OPBF/F/FS.

### 3.3 Imprest fund

The procedures listed below should be followed at Post: (See also MS 760.)

- (a) Unless pressing circumstances exist, liquidate the fund at least two weeks before the Post is to be closed.
- (b) Recover all advances to sub-cashiers and/or others.
- (c) Perform audit and correct deficiencies.
- (d) Arrange for the Budget and Fiscal Officer of the Embassy to conduct an unannounced audit to identify deficiencies that must be resolved before the fund can be liquidated.
- (e) Inform the Fiscal Services Division (OPBF/F/FS) by cable that the fund is being liquidated. The Fiscal Services Division will prepare an SF-211, "Request for Change in Imprest Fund," and will forward it to the Department of State U. S. Disbursing Officer, requesting that cashier designations for Principal and Alternate Cashier be revoked. The disbursing officer will close out the imprest fund upon receipt of the SF-211, and the final SF-1129, "Reimbursement Voucher," accounting for the return of any outstanding advance funds. Only after OPBF/F/FS has received an acknowledged copy of the SF-211 from the Department of Treasury, will the cashier( s) be granted relief.
- (f) Notify the disbursing officer from whom the fund was advanced that it is being liquidated, and the date of liquidation.
- (g) If the fund is to be liquidated immediately, instruct the disbursing officer not to send cashier reimbursement checks for any voucher in transit.
- (h) If the fund is to be liquidated over a period of time, submit replenishment vouchers as usual, but instruct the disbursing officer to reduce the cashier's advance of funds by equal increments over a specified period of time until the fund is liquidated.
- (i) Prepare an SF-1129, "Reimbursement Voucher," and submit it, with cash-on-hand, to the disbursing officer, through the local U. S. Embassy or through the regional disbursing officer's account with the local bank.
- (j) Account for the total amount of funds advanced as:
  - (1) vouchers in transit
  - (2) sub-voucher receipts supporting the final voucher being submitted
  - (3) cash and uncashed reimbursement checks
- (k) Obtain a receipt from the disbursing officer after submitting final items.

- (1) Make arrangements with the local U. S. Embassy to make imprest fund payments on the Peace Corps' behalf, charging expenditures to Peace Corps Post appropriation in accordance with MS 760.

## **4.0 Leases and Contracts**

Posts should proceed as follows:

- (a) Review current and recently-terminated contracts and leases to ensure that:
  - (1) Landlords and contractors receive notice of termination, as required by any leases and contracts, and that they provide written acknowledgment of receipt of notice.
  - (2) Deposits or advance rental, utility, and contractor payments have been recovered in advance of close-out. (All deposits or advances should be reviewed by the Embassy's Budget and Fiscal Officer in conjunction with the review of accounts receivable.)
  - (3) Peace Corps furniture and equipment (including computer hardware) has been recovered from Peace Corps-furnished premises.
- (b) Obtain standard signed releases from the landlord and contractors indicating that all outstanding obligations or claims have been satisfied. Copies of all lease acquittals/contract releases should be forwarded to the Embassy's Budget and Fiscal Office and to the Peace Corps liaison officer designated in paragraph 2.2 above.
- (c) Notify contractors, utilities, and landlords in writing that services and billing are to be terminated at the date of lease or contract termination, and obtain a signed acknowledgment from them. Provide written billing instructions and the address for final billing along with release forms. Final payment should be made only after receipt of signed release.

If the cost of lease termination is substantial and the lease allows for subleasing, consideration should be given to subleasing for the remainder of the lease term. In cases where the Embassy would administer such subleases, the Embassy should be consulted for approval prior to entering into any sublease agreement.
- (d) Review termination procedures, including applicable country labor law notice provisions and benefit, for all contracts. Check personal and other services contracts to ensure that correct payment for termination severance payments, etc. are in accordance with local laws. If personal services contractors are to be retained to assist in close-out, their contracts should be amended to revise the statements of work. (See MS 743 and MS 744.)
- (e) Request departing Volunteers to leave their rent receipts with the Peace Corps. Have Volunteers close their bank accounts and fill out certificates of non-indebtedness and accountability of property. Volunteers should obtain written acknowledgment from their

landlords confirming that final payment has been made or how much rent remains outstanding.

- (f) Review all accountable forms, e. g., Government Transportation Requests (GTRs), Government Bills of Lading (GBLs), Deposit or Trust Fund Receipts (SF-459s) etc., to:
  - (1) meet the needs for close-out
  - (2) account for all forms
  - (3) return excess to the Embassy for proper accountability and obtain receipts for these forms
- (g) Notify the Embassy's Budget and Fiscal Officer, or other Embassy Official delegated by the Chief of Mission, to settle outstanding Peace Corps accounts and to cable the Office of Planning, Budget and Finance (OPBF) concerning claims of \$1, 000 or more which are submitted after the Post is closed. OPBF, in consultation with the Regional Director, will determine the validity of such claims.

## **5.0 Personnel**

### **5.1 U. S. Direct Hires**

Discuss with each eligible U. S. direct hire staff member his/her preference for reassignment, either at an overseas Post or in Peace Corps/Washington. Submit a report, based on these discussions, to the Office of Human Resource Management (M/HRM).

### **5.2 Foreign Service National (FSN) Staff**

The Country Director should follow these procedures for FSNs:

- (a) Prepare personnel actions for FSNs, in accordance with requirements of local compensation plans, and submit these to the support agency, if needed, and the payroll center. Personnel actions for local direct-hire FSN employees should be handled directly by the Post and the Embassy. If there is a conflict between the terms of the local compensation plan with respect to termination of local employees and local labor law, inform General Counsel (D/GC) immediately.
- (b) Review leave balances and length of service for terminating FSN direct-hire employees. Calculate any leave, prorated bonus or separation notice owed the terminating employee in accordance with the local compensation plan.
- (c) Calculate any severance liability and submit to the Region any request for use of funds from the FSN Severance Liability Fund. Requests are reviewed by the Region and submitted to OPBF for final approval. 9

- (d) Complete a performance evaluation and a letter of recommendation for each FSN and file these documents with the personnel officer at the Embassy.
- (e) Submit a list of FSNs to the Office of the Peace Corps Director for preparation and issuance of letters of appreciation.

## **6.0 Records**

### **6.1 Program Files**

All files of program importance should be sent to the Regional Director in Washington. These files should include:

- (a) Subjective reports that evaluate program functions;
- (b) Training materials that might prove valuable for other Peace Corps countries;
- (c) Peace Corps Partnership or multilateral program files;
- (d) Technical information that may be of use by other Peace Corps countries and other development agents;
- (e) A history of Peace Corps involvement, relations, and contributions in the host country;
- (f) A listing of key contacts in host country ministries/agencies to assist future program planning (include a list of new program ideas/plans/contacts which have not been developed); and
- (g) Copies of all farewell letters sent to host country persons who have been supportive of Peace Corps.

### **6.2 Volunteer Files (10/15/99)**

Copy and integrate technical and program information from V/T files into program files (see paragraph 6.1 above). Send V/T files, including leave allowance and living allowance records, to the Region for distribution to other Peace Corps/Washington offices. Send V/T health records to the Office of Medical Services (OHS/MS), as described in OHS/MS' Technical Guideline (TG) 330.

### **6.3 Financial Files**

Refer to the *Peace Corps Overseas Financial Management Handbook* and to any additional requirements issued by Peace Corps' Regional Offices to determine which files must be retained at the Embassy or fiscal support agency for the identified specific time periods.

## **6.4 Other Files**

Refer to the *Peace Corps Records Management Handbook* and MS 894 for guidance on the disposition of all other types of files necessary for documentation and review of Post activities. Records in this category may be found in the "Administration," "General Services," and "Personnel" files, for example. Note that while most file copies of Post documents are temporary, Post needs to coordinate with the Regional Office to ensure that all appropriate documents are forwarded to Peace Corps/Washington.

## **7.0 Property**

### **7.1 Non-personal Property**

Request the Embassy General Services Officer (GSO) to personally inspect non-personal property on hand and to recommend specific procedures to facilitate its eventual disposition.

### **7.2 Vehicle Disposition**

Request direction from Administrative Services (M/AS) regarding vehicle inventory and disposal.

### **7.3 Transfer and Disposal of Medical Supplies and Narcotics**

See MS 734 *Medical Supplies and Equipment*.

### **7.4 Documentation of Property Disposal**

Forward documentation of property disposals and all copies of Form SF-459, "Deposit or Trust Fund Receipt," for deposits of proceeds of sales, to Administrative Services (M/AS). Document all activity for audit.

### **7.5 Contractor-held Property**

Recover and account for all government furnished property in the possession of contractors. Then provide contractors with written release of further accountability for returned items or with a written receipt of payment for unaccounted items.

## **8.0 Volunteers**

### **8.1 Medical Issues (10/15/99)**

PCMOs are responsible for conducting V/T health evaluations in accordance with TG 330. The Post is responsible for administering health benefits information and should follow the procedures in the *Overseas Financial Management Handbook*. See also MS 266.

## **8.2 Transfers, Reassignments, Reinstatements, and Reenrollments**

The Country Director will follow the administrative requirements for transfers and reassignments as described in MS 282, paragraph 3.6 and Attachment A.

## **8.3 Volunteer Status (10/15/99)**

Any V/T who decides to stay in-country once the Peace Corps program has terminated must sign a statement that indicates that he/she understands Peace Corps' intent to close the program, that he/she has chosen to stay, and that he/she understands that the Peace Corps and the U. S. Government have no further responsibility for his/her safety, in-country medical or administrative support, or transportation out of the country.

All final readjustment checks should be sent to a U. S. address. Refer to MS 223, paragraph 12.2 for details on distribution of final readjustment allowance checks.

### **8.3.1 Volunteers Within six Months of Close of Service (COS)**

Volunteers who are within six months of their COS date will be considered COS Volunteers and should be processed under normal COS procedures as described in MS 218, and MS 223.

### **8.3.2 Volunteers More Than six Months from COS**

Volunteers whose COS date is more than six months from the date of the scheduled Post closing and who do not accept reassignment shall receive interrupted service status, and be processed according to the procedures outlined in MS 284.

## **8.4 Eligibility for Cash in Lieu of a Government Transportation Request (GTR)**

Those Volunteers who complete their service with either a COS or an interrupted service status are eligible for cash in lieu of a GTR for their return travel to home-of- record. In cases of evacuation for safety or security reasons, the Volunteers may be evacuated to a "safe haven" and then will be eligible to receive cash-in-lieu from that point to their home of record.

## **8.5 Withdrawals from Readjustment Allowance**

All terminating Volunteers are entitled to extraordinary withdrawals from their readjustment allowance if unplanned termination creates unusual financial demands. Requests should be forwarded by cable to Volunteer and Staff Payroll Services (OPBF/F/VSPS) using MS 223, paragraph 6.3.1. The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for assuring that such requests are processed expeditiously and that cash withdrawals are authorized by return cable.

## **9.0 Effective Date**

The effective date is the date of issuance.