

Ready to Shutdown Tips

We truly believe that “if you take care of the people, the people will take care of the mission.” With the possibility of another shutdown next week, you might wish to consider these tips as you update your Procedures for a Lapse in Appropriations:

1. Review and refresh your excepted list so see if there are new or different flexibilities available: what OMB guidance has changed, what types of positions do you need to call back, what worked or didn't work?
2. Gather all documents that you created as part of the recent shutdown for easy retrieval to reuse and edit for the next one.
3. Work with the general counsel's office to sort through any issues encountered and not resolved. Examples: the use of the agency's website as a communication tool to employees; travel; training; and guidance on appropriate second jobs.
4. Identify those contracts that support excepted activities and review the funding status for each contract. For those contracts that will require additional funding due to a lapse in appropriations, work with the OCFO to identify contingency sources of funding. Fund those contracts for the planned shutdown length to include a safety level of funding in case the shutdown is longer than expected.
5. Work with local credit unions to have low or no interest loans available.
6. Ensure your HR teams are completely up-to-date on how to apply for unemployment insurance in each state. Remind employees to print a copy of their latest SF-50 or W-2 and furlough notice before the shutdown begins.
7. Continue to build relationships with local community leaders to have space for federal employees to meet on non-appropriated work, such as having unemployment insurance filing procedures explained or other financial resource information. Reach out to federal agencies not affected by shutdown to use their space.
8. Update your Employee Assistance Program offerings, especially financial services help.
9. Continue to communicate to all employees on a regular basis. Update your Continuity of Operations plans to ensure you have both personal emails, phone numbers and personal contact information for every staff member. Pull together FAQs, post them as soon as possible and maintain as living documents through the shutdown.
10. Think about all of the constituencies and their different circumstances and needs: Those who are working and getting paid, those who are working and not getting paid, those who are not working and not getting paid, industrial contractors, independent contractors, detailees and military personnel. If you bucket the categories of workers, you can come up with approaches for each to address their needs and to communicate effectively
11. If you don't have one already, set up an HR hotline for employees to call with issues that have not yet been resolved. If you already have one, make sure it is augmented to deal with the extra call volume. No one has time to wait on hold. If possible, staff it so that employees can call after hours. Maintain this hotline through the shutdown.
12. Have hard copies of day one information and instructions for employees as they enter the workplace. This will address the inability of many employees to access their computers after a prolonged shutdown.
13. Ask employees for input on how to improve resumption of full operations once the next shutdown ends.