

**THE PRESIDENCY**

**CABINET AFFAIRS OFFICE**

**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATION**

**Operation Handbook**

**For Council Documents**

Issued by the Cabinet Affairs Office

Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation

The Presidency

Federal Republic of Nigeria

**December 2014**

****FOREWORD****

The establishment of a formal, coherent policy management and decision-making processes is fundamental to the achievement of the President’s agenda for transforming the Nigerian State. It is in this regard that the Cabinet Affairs Office in the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation has developed two core documents.

The Operation *Manual for Council Documents* provides extensive guidance to Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in the preparation of documents for the Federal Executive Council (FEC) and other advisory Councils. The manual should be referenced by anyone involved in preparing or reviewing Council documents.

An abridged version, the Operation *Handbook for Council Documents* is presented below and provides a quick overview of the Cabinet Memorandum process. The Handbook will be suitable for Ministers, Heads of Departments and Agencies, Permanent Secretaries, Senior Public Service Executives or anyone wishing to understand the basic requirements of the FEC decision-making process.

The development of the Manual and Handbook was informed by the Public Service Rules, FEC practices and prior experience, as well as insights gained from other countries with similar Cabinet processes. It is intended the Manual and Handbook serve as dynamic, living documents that will evolve over time with experience, process improvements and new ideas.

It is my conviction that strict adherence to the guidelines in the Manual and Handbook will enhance the work of the President-in-Council and delivery of the Government’s agenda. I therefore urge all Ministers and Heads of Departments and Agencies to ensure successful implementation of and adherence to the requirements set out in these documents.

**Anyim Pius Anyim, GCON**

Secretary to the Government of the Federation

December 2014

**THE CAO MISSION STATEMENT**

***The Cabinet Affairs Office,***

***Is determined and committed to serve as***

***the main facilitator in the consideration and approval***

***of all Government programmes and projects by the***

***President-in Council through the processing of the Council Memoranda, Notes, Conclusions and discussions of all statutory***

***Councils and Committees***

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Cabinet Affairs Office (CAO) wishes to express profound gratitude to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the President-in-Council, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR for his visionary leadership and support towards the development of the Operational Manual and the Handbook as permanent working Documents for the Federal Executive Council.

The CAO is grateful to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Anyim Pius Anyim, GCON for his foresight and determination in ensuring that the initiation and production of the manual becomes a reality.

The invaluable contributions of Dr. A. K. Mohammed, OON during whose tenure as the Permanent Secretary of the CAO, the idea of producing permanent guide in dealing with Federal Executive Council matters was conceived is commendable. We appreciate Amb. John Alhassan Gana, through whose leadership, commitment, doggedness and dedication as the Permanent Secretary, CAO, the manual was successfully produced.

The CAO will remain indebted to the Federal Public Administration Reform Programme for its guidance, workshops and seminars in the cause of producing the manual, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development which provided support to FEPAR; for giving the impetus needed for the completion of this noble initiative.

Our appreciation goes to staff of CAO for the team spirit exhibited by them under the supervision of the Directors; the relentless commitment of the Technical Committee on FEPAR; and the brilliant contribution of the Administrative Officers.

Finally, we acknowledge all the countries whose Cabinet manuals served as reference guide for the production of this Operation Manual for the Council Documents; UK, Canada, Ghana, Switzerland, etc.

**CABINET AFFAIRS OFFICE**

**ABUJA.**

**15th December, 2014.**

# 1. Purpose

This handbook summarizes the content requirements of an Executive Cabinet Memorandum (ECM) and related documents prepared for the Federal Executive Council (FEC). By providing feasible policy options and high quality analysis, a well-prepared ECM plays an important role in supporting the FEC decision-making process.

For more detailed guidance, consult the *Manual for the Preparation of Federal Executive Council Documents* which provides a comprehensive description of the FEC decision-making process and documentation requirements.

# 2. Executive Cabinet Memorandum

The ECM constitutes the primary decision-making document of the FEC and cannot exceed 5 pages. The ECM is accompanied by a more detailed Analysis Document (15 pages maximum) and Communication Plan (8 pages maximum). The ECM comprises nine sections:

1. Purpose
2. Background
3. Justification and Analysis of Proposal
4. Evidence of Consultation
5. Implementation Plan
6. Communication Plan
7. Funding Sources and Fiscal Impact Assessment
8. Legislative/Regulatory Plan (if applicable)
9. Prayer(s)/Conclusion

Section-by-section instructions on completing the CM are provided below.

## Section 1: Purpose

|  |
| --- |
| *Insert a one-sentence summary of the primary approval being sought from the FEC.* |

## Section 2: Background

|  |
| --- |
| *Briefly describe the background to the issue; i.e., its origin, who and what were involved, and previous resolutions attempted.* |

This section sets out the critical background information needed to understand the present situation, assess available options and make an informed decision. Identify the issue’s significance and its link to the government’s priorities. Summarize any previous commitments made or positions taken on this issue by members of the Government.

## Section 3: Justification and Analysis of Proposal

|  |
| --- |
| *Describe the rationale for government attention/intervention and why the issue is coming before the FEC. Provide a balanced and distinct summary of the substantive alternatives for FEC to consider along with the recommended option, including the consequences of a ‘do nothing’ option.* |

This section explains why the FEC is required to make a decision at this time. The rationale may range from a matter of national security to a statutory deadline to meeting a public commitment. This section also summarizes each option in terms of major elements, key advantages/disadvantages and respective impacts, as well as the consequences of not taking action.

The phrase “**(recommended option)”** should be typed in boldface and parentheses beside the preferred option. Briefly summarize the rationale for choosing this option and how it meets the government’s priorities.

## Section 4: Evidence of Consultation

|  |
| --- |
| *Identify any major issues, particularly if unresolved, arising from inter-ministerial, stakeholder or other consultations, and risks that need to be managed.* |

List the consulted ministries which have agreed with the proposal as well as any ministries with substantive unresolved concerns. Similarly, indicate whether the Cabinet Affairs Office (CAO) raised any concerns. Highlight the ministries for which this proposal will have a major impact.

Include similar information with respect to any consultations with other levels of government or external stakeholders, such as Non-Governmental Organizations, Community-Based Organizations, private sector representatives or professional associations.

Identify any risks raised through the consultation process that will need to be managed.

## Section 5: Implementation Plan

|  |
| --- |
| *Describe how the proposal will be implemented including strategies, steps and timelines. State how the outcomes of the proposed initiative can be measured.* |

Briefly describe the key steps to be taken to implement the proposal. These should clearly detail key short and medium-term deadlines, milestones and delivery responsibilities. If other MDAs or stakeholders are involved in delivering the programme, indicate whether their agreement with the implementation plan has been secured.

## Section 6: Communication Plan

|  |
| --- |
| *Describe how this initiative will be communicated to the public and associated issues managed.* |

This section draws from the more extensive, appended Communication Plan. Briefly summarize the communication goals and key messages, emphasizing how the initiative will support the government’s priorities or other commitments. Indicate any major impacts (e.g., economic, social, regional) on various groups, anticipated reactions, including from media, and the proposed government response. Outline the recommended communications approach and major rollout activities, as well as longer-term communications activities required to sustain the message.

Identify any significant costs associated with the proposed communications approach.

## Section 7: Funding Sources and Fiscal Impact Assessment

|  |
| --- |
| *Provide a snapshot of the financial impact and considerations.* |

Identify the financial and resource impacts related to implementation. These should include expenditures, such as new staffing, capital costs, and infrastructure investments, and/or revenues generated through the initiative. Indicate whether the ministry has sufficient funds in its budgetary allocation to implement this initiative and the status of any discussions with or commitments from the Federal Ministry of Finance.

## Section 8: Legislative/Regulatory Plan (if applicable)

|  |
| --- |
| *Describe legislative or regulatory changes arising from implementation of the proposal and the desired progress.* |

Provide information on the legislative and/or regulatory requirements of the initiative. These may include new or amended legislation or regulations, effects on another ministry’s legislation, complexity of the legislation, and/or legislative timing issues.

## Section 9: Prayer/Conclusion

|  |
| --- |
| *Provide a more detailed list of the policy approvals required from the FEC. This expands on the primary approval identified in section 1.* |

Provide a number of clear and concise statements in summary of the main points for particular attention of Council leading to prayer and approval.

Once finalized, the CM should be signed and dated by the Minister.

# 3. Analysis Document

The Analysis Document (AD) provides the detailed information, analysis, options and impacts which underpin the recommendations contained in the ECM. The AD’s maximum length is 15 pages. It comprises four main sections:

1. Context
2. Options and Impacts
3. Recommended Course of Action
4. Implementation Plan

Instructions on completing the AD are provided below.

## Section 1: Context

|  |
| --- |
| *Describe why the issue is coming to FEC at this time and provide the critical background information. Identify the factors that should be addressed when considering the issue.* |

This section provides a detailed description of why government action is required at this time, ways in which existing policies or programmes are failing to address the problem, what government will achieve by resolving the issue now, and what will be the consequences of delay.

Any past efforts, promises, decisions or commitments, recent developments, or reports regarding the issue should be described. Outline the results of any external consultations and identified risks.

Provide an analysis of ways in which other governments have tackled similar issues and with what results.

## Section 2: Options and Impacts

|  |
| --- |
| *Outline a range of distinct options, their impacts (including significant financial information for each), and their advantages and disadvantages*. |

This section contains the heart of the Analysis Document. It outlines the major options considered, associated impacts, and respective advantages and disadvantages. Each option will be assessed by a range of criteria that may include consistency with the government’s priorities, cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit, severity of impacts, contentiousness, complexity, time requirements, public perception and legal or policy constraints. Typically, three options are assessed in detail.

A thorough assessment of impacts is critical for decision makers. The most significant impacts arising from each option should be identified and compared. A broad range of potential impacts should be considered.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * economic * regulatory * Constitutional/legal * political | * institutional * environmental * gender * social | * community * international/regional * loan/trade agreement * security |

A detailed financial impact assessment is also required so that the budgetary implications can be properly determined by the Federal Ministry of Finance.

## Section 3: Recommended Course of Action

|  |
| --- |
| *Describe the proposed course of action and why it was chosen over the other options.* |

This section outlines which option is recommended and why. The rationale will draw on the analysis presented in the previous section and highlight how the initiative supports the government’s priorities.

## Section 4: Implementation Plan

|  |
| --- |
| *Outline a strategy that details how the proposed course of action will be implemented.* |

The implementation plan sets the detailed timelines and milestones for the recommended course of action. These will include further approvals (e.g., financial, statutory), post-approval consultations, detailed resourcing and operational requirements, stakeholder involvement, and monitoring and evaluation plans.

# 4. Communications Plan

The Communications Plan (CP) outlines how the initiative will be presented to the public. The CP has a maximum length of 8 pages and includes the following information:

* Title of the initiative being communicated;
* MDAs and other stakeholders affected;
* Critical background information;
* Current public perceptions towards the issue;
* Target audiences;
* Need for pre-announcement consultations;
* Positioning and where it fits with respect to the government’s priorities;
* Communications goals and objectives;
* Expected impacts, anticipated reactions and issues management strategies;
* Announcement approach;
* Budget requirement to deliver the communications plan; and
* Monitoring and evaluation methods (e.g., polling, focus groups, media monitoring).

# 5. Review and Approval Process

It is important to understand the key steps and timelines involved in preparing, reviewing and approving the CM and related documents.

## Step 1: Preparing the Draft Executive Cabinet Memorandum

Although any MDA may initiate an ECM, it must be presented by a Minister. Generally, ECMs are prepared to deliver the government’s priorities as set out in key political, strategic or budgetary documents. In order to complete ECM, the Ministry will need to consult, often extensively, with other MDAs, levels of government and external stakeholders. The initiating Ministry will be expected to make every effort to resolve differences before submitting the ECM to the FEC. The Federal Ministries of Finance and Justice and the Attorney General of the Federation have explicit roles in reviewing CM to ensure that the financial, legal and Constitutional implications have been properly identified and taken into account.

Once complete, the ECM is signed by the Initiating Minister and forwarded by the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Affairs Office for review at least 21 days in advance of the FEC meeting date. For urgent matters, the Minister must provide proof to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation before the advance review requirements can be waived.

## Step 2: Review by Cabinet Affairs Office

Upon receipt, the CAO conducts a quality assurance and compliance review to ensure that the ECM meets the approved standards and guidelines for ECM. If the document does not meet these standards, it will be returned to the Initiating Ministry with written guidance for re-submission. The CAO prepares briefing notes to accompany cleared ECM. The briefing notes and the ECM are passed on to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation for consideration as a FEC Agenda item.

## Step 3: Setting the FEC Agenda

ECM that is cleared by the CAO will be discussed by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and the President at the Agenda review meeting. The President may decide to place the ECM on the FEC Meeting Agenda or refer it to a FEC Committee prior to review at the FEC meeting.

## Step 4: FEC Review and Approval

If an ECM is referred for review by a FEC Committee, the process must be completed within 10 working days. If the FEC Committee determines that further work is required, the ECM may be returned to the Initiating Ministry.

Materials for the FEC meeting are distributed 5 working days in advance. The FEC meeting, chaired by the President, is the final step in the approval process. In cases where questions arise during the FEC meeting, items may be referred back to a FEC Committee for further study or to the Initiating Ministry for re-submission. Approved items proceed for implementation.

## Step 5: Follow Up and Implementation

Following approval by the FEC, the formal FEC Decision is drafted and approved. The Cabinet Affairs Office then informs the Ministry in writing. At this point, the steps and measures identified in the appended implementation and communications plans are initiated. In some cases, draft legislation or regulations will be required. The Cabinet Affairs Office monitors and reports on implementation progress to the FEC.

# 6.Policy Development & Review Checklist

This checklist will serve as a guide for MDAs in developing and reviewing an ECM before final submission to the Cabinet Affairs Office.

**Stage 1: Preliminary Considerations**

* Does the issue require FEC consideration?
* Is the issue in conformity with Government policy direction/agenda?
* Is the issue a Government priority?
* Has a work plan been approved?
* Is there need for intra/inter-ministerial consultation and/or collaboration?

**Stage 2: Writing the Executive Council Memorandum**

* Have all consultations been completed?
* Is it written in concise, clear, and simple language?
* Is the information accurate?
* Is the format being followed?
* Is the content complete?

**Executive Council Memorandum**

* Does it comply with the maximum 5-page length?
* Does it reflect the major issues in the Analysis Document and Communications Plan?
* Is the prayer for FEC approval clearly defined?

**Analysis Document**

* Does it comply with the maximum 15-page length?
* Are key issues addressed?
* Are options and impacts analysed?
* Is the recommended option well-supported with clear justifications?
* Is the implementation plan developed in consultation with relevant MDAs?

**Communication Plan**

* Does it comply with the maximum 8-page length?
* Is the subject matter described?
* Has the target audience been identified?
* Are the communication goals and objectives defined?
* Are the communication strategies and announcements planned?
* Are the appropriate budget and funding plans included?

**Stage 3: Final Draft of Executive Council Memorandum**

* Does the ECM contain the Minister’s initials?
* Is the factual information taken from the Analysis Document?
* Do the communications strategies reflect highlights from the Communications Plan?

**Stage 4: Submission to Cabinet Affairs Office**

* Is the ECM dated and initialled by the Minister?
* Is the ECM submitted 21 working days in advance of FEC's consideration?
* Is the ECM stapled as one document consisting of:
  + Executive Council Memorandum;
  + Analysis Document; and
  + Communication Plan?
* Are all pages numbered consecutively and correctly?
* Have the page rules been followed? i.e.,
  + Executive Council Memorandum – maximum 5 pages;
  + Analysis Document– maximum 15 pages; and
  + Communications Plan – maximum 8 pages?
* Has the format been followed?
* Is the content complete?
* Is the ECM submitted in one hard copy and one soft copy?
* Are 163 copies of each of the Annexes submitted?
* Are the contact details of the Desk Officer enclosed?
* Is the ECM enclosed at the back cover of the Initiating Ministry’s policy file?