

**Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT  
OF THE  
RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM**

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**GUIDELINES FOR THE  
RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM**

Approved on behalf of ACC by the  
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**List of Acronyms**

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
ARL	Advance Recoverable Locally
DGO	United Nations Development Group Office
DSA	Daily Subsistence Allowance
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
JCGP	Joint Consultative Group on Programming
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PABX	Private Automatic Branch Exchange (Telephone Exchange)
RCS	Resident Coordinator System
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIC	United Nations Information Center
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNS	United Nations System
WFP	World Food Programme

## **ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM**

### **ACC GUIDELINES FOR THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM**

#### **A. PURPOSE AND DEFINITION**

1. The purpose of this chapter of the ACC Guidelines is to provide guidance to the Resident Coordinator and the UN country team as to how these services might be established, managed or streamlined at the country level. The intention is to stimulate communication and consensus building and to suggest mechanisms for accomplishing this streamlining. It is not the intention to provide a “one size fits all” approach to this issue, since country situations differ greatly and each country team must proceed in accordance with their specific circumstances.
2. Administrative management encompasses the whole range of administrative services required to support the operations of the UN system at a country level.
3. Inter alia, these could include:
  - Financial management, including funds management, treasury, payments, accounts and financial reporting
  - Administration of the ICSC common system: DSA rates, salary surveys, hardship reviews, etc.
  - Application of the UN privileges and immunities
  - Personnel management and administration
  - Procurement, international as well as local
  - Shipping, incl. customs clearance
  - Transport, including both operation and maintenance
  - Travel services
  - Information management
  - General consular and administrative services
  - Security management
  - Library and documentation services
  - Printing and publications
  - Reception
  - PABX and Telephone Operation
  - Local Area Network, including internet and intranets
  - External communications, including pouch services
  - Management of office space
  - UN Dispensary
  - UN Club
  - Other UN Community Services
  - Inter-Agency Support Unit for the Resident Coordinator

## B. TYPOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

4. Apart from individual agency operations, the following are the four areas in which opportunities for collaboration among members of the RCS usually exist and where administrative management of the RCS could be strengthened through common initiatives of country teams :

- **Common Premises**, i.e. shared physical space, individually occupied and paid for accordingly by each UNS organization.
- **Common Space**, i.e. shared physical space, collectively occupied by a group of UNS organizations for the provision of common services.
- **Common Services**, i.e. shared services, jointly financed and managed by a group of UNS organizations.
- **Shared Services**, i.e. shared services, managed by one UNS organization and provided to other UNS organizations, sometimes on a cost-recovery basis.

5. For the purpose of these guidelines, the above will also serve as a definition of the relevant terminology.

## C. BASIC PRINCIPLES

6. Throughout these guidelines, the following basic principles will be applied and should also inform the application of the guidelines at the country level:

- **Costs-Benefits:** Progress in the area of administrative management should lead to demonstrable cost benefits for the UN as a whole. However, any cost-benefit analysis, which might be based on a period of say ten years, should also take into consideration any non-so easily quantifiable benefits yielded by physical proximity, potential common systems and external image. On the other hand, in cases when the establishment and management of common premises and services would lead to cost benefits for the UN system as a whole but results in higher costs for individual participating members of the UN Country Team, the team should endeavor to develop mechanisms which allow all members of the Team to benefit from the overall cost savings.
- **Implementation:** Initiatives in the area of administrative management should be founded on practicability and will depend upon the Resident Coordinator and the Country Team adopting a consensual and flexible approach to planning and implementation. ***Due consideration should be given to the safety of the premises, to their security access and environment. Location of proposed premises in the vicinity of potential terrorist targets or hazardous areas should be fully assessed before being considered for common premises.*** Consistent with this approach, any agency could choose to opt in, or out of, all or part of such initiatives.
- **Governance:** Successful and sustainable collaboration in the field of administrative management will depend critically upon the establishment of a transparent, accountable, collegial and consensual approach to its governance.

- **Accountability:** Whilst the individual members of the Country team will remain financially accountable to their respective organizations, the Resident Coordinator as the leader of the Country Team will have overall accountability for the successful management of all agreed upon elements of common premises and services. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that the service provider is accountable to the service recipients for the provision of timely, equitable and cost-effective quality services.
- **Performance:** To ensure successful and sustainable collaboration in the area of administrative management and common services it is essential that realistic and quantifiable performance targets and service standards are established.
- **Flexibility:** *Depending on the nature of WFP operations, either development oriented or temporary emergency, commitment to adhere to common premises and services may vary.*
- **Funding and Staffing:** A clear, fair and flexible methodology for sharing costs is also essential, combined with a transparent and accountable system for managing the shared funds, as well as the posts.
- **Process and Documentation:** As with other aspects of the Resident Coordinator system, management of administrative services depends upon scrupulous attention to process, and documentation of that process. A priori discussion and decisions, formal inter-agency agreements, as well as agreed minutes of periodic management meetings and decisions are all essential to ensure mutual confidence.
- **Simplicity and Stability:** In establishing and managing any of the arrangements outlined in these guidelines, it is strongly recommended that simplicity of approach be sought wherever possible. Given the complexity of the UN system and the many permutations that are possible, country teams are encouraged to avoid unnecessary complications in terms of cost-sharing formulas or management arrangements. It is important, too, to avoid constant change of the basic arrangements.
- **Uniformity in operational policies and procedures:** It is recognized that for the time being Agencies' rules, regulations and/or procedures governing various administrative areas may not be uniform. Therefore, in the interest to facilitate the administrative management of the RCS, existing differences should be reviewed and reduced at Headquarters' level so that any common service can be managed in a uniform and consistent manner.

#### **D. GOVERNANCE**

7. Oversight of any common premises and services that are created by the country team, should be undertaken by two inter-agency mechanisms, which may already exist in many countries, but which should certainly be established at the outset if they do not.

8. These are:

- The **UN Country Team**, comprising the heads of all resident agencies and meeting at regular intervals, i.e. at least once a quarter, under the chair of the Resident Coordinator. The Heads of Agency meeting would act as the Board of Directors for any common or shared facilities and services, being responsible for overall oversight and policy decisions.
- The **UN Management Committee for Common Premises and Services**, reporting to the UN Country Team and comprising the administrative heads of the participating agencies. This committee should meet regularly, perhaps once a month and should be charged with overseeing day-to-day management of the common or shared facilities and services.

9. The structure outlined above will have to be adjusted to accord with the realities of a given UN system representation. In keeping with the basic principles, both bodies should operate on the basis of consensus decision making. They should also take care to document their process and their decisions in terms of minutes, prepared in draft and circulated immediately after each meeting, and formally approved at the next meeting.

10. It cannot be over-emphasized that the transparent operation of these basic institutions of the Resident Coordinator system at the country level is crucial to the success of any country-level collaboration in the field of administrative management. All agencies must have confidence in the management processes involved, and believe that their individual interests are protected - and must certainly not feel that any such services or facilities are administered to the benefit of any one agency at the expense of another. Good governance is therefore indispensable to administrative management in the Resident Coordinator system.

11. It is in the nature of Shared Services that their basic management is undertaken by one agency, and that the services be provided at the request of another agency. In this sense, the relationship is agency-to-agency, and the supplying agency is solely responsible for administering the service, recruiting and promoting the staff, etc. However, since several agencies are likely to be utilizing the services of the supplying agency, it is appropriate that the UN Country Team also undertake some oversight of such shared services. Moreover, the principles of transparency and accountability necessitate that a clear methodology for calculating the costs, and for accounting for the services being provided be established in a manner acceptable to all participating agencies.

## **E. ACCOUNTABILITY**

12. Accountability in the context of these guidelines should be understood to cover both financial aspects as well as the renewed mandate of UNS organizations to achieve cost savings and increased efficiency through the establishment of common premises and services.

13. The Country Team under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator will be accountable to the Secretary General and Heads of ACC Member Organizations in regard to achieving the expected results of cost savings, increased efficiency and coherence and their performance in this respect would be assessed through the mechanisms established elsewhere in the ACC guidelines for the RCS.

14. At the operational level, accountability will depend on the extent to which common premises and services are established in individual countries, as well as the kind of arrangements which were agreed upon between the participating UNS organizations.

15. Such agreements between individual and/or groups of UNS organizations will include a clear identification of functions and responsibilities of individual staff entrusted with specific management or operational functions and a mechanism agreed upon by the members of the Country Team or participating organizations to review staff performance.

16. To facilitate an objective review of the performance of individuals and the quality and appropriateness of common services, it is essential that realistic and quantifiable performance targets and service standards are established and included within the MOU between the agencies, which forms the basis of the common services agreement.

## **F. COMMON PREMISES AND SPACE**

### **1. COMMON PREMISES**

#### **1.1 Definition**

17. “Shared physical space, individually occupied and paid for accordingly by each UNS organization”

18. **Note:** Such common premises would normally, if they conform to the Secretary-General's United Nations House definition, be named “United Nations House” (see 1.4 below). However, throughout this chapter the generic term of “common premises” is often used, to allow for circumstances in which a designated United Nations House does not exist.

#### **1.2 Implementation and Management**

19. In establishing common premises, there are likely to be substantial advantages, in terms of negotiating strength as well as subsequent coordination, in signing a joint lease agreement. (UNDP frequently fulfills this role, signing a lease on behalf of all participating agencies.) However, in order to avoid any misunderstandings, it is essential to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the participating agencies, stipulating each agency's rights and obligations within the common lease. Indeed, signature of a joint lease agreement on behalf of a group of agencies without such an MOU should not be authorized. A standard contract has been developed for this purpose. Apart from stipulating mechanisms of payment, it is important that this inter-agency agreement also define - indeed, limit - the rights of individual agencies to withdraw from the common lease, since unilateral withdrawal may be at the expense of the other agencies.

20. The undg Sub-Group on Common Premises and Services has developed a methodology for and provides guidance in the process of establishing and management of common premises. The methodology includes elements such as cost/benefit analysis, selection of common premises, ownership and operational and financial management.

21. Consideration should also be given to the inclusion of Common Services and Common Space within the Common Premises, whereupon the inter-agency agreement and financial mechanisms should incorporate the considerations set out below. Under such circumstances, the mechanisms of governance (see F below) gain an even greater importance.

### 1.3 Financial Arrangements

22. By definition, the costs attributable to the space occupied by each agency are paid by that agency. However, in the likely event that there is a common lease, it is also likely that rental payments and even utility charges will most appropriately be paid centrally by one UNS organization on behalf of the participating agencies. In this event, it is essential that this organization coordinate the credits and debits in its account for Advances Recoverable Locally (ARL) so as not to be making an interest-free loan to a fellow agency. Similarly, each participating agency is obligated to make its payments on time.

### 1.4 United Nations House

23. The Secretary-General has endorsed a definition for a United Nations House. This ensures that United Nations Houses (existing and future) can be identified in a universally consistent manner. The definition lays down the necessary minimum conditions for a United Nations House.

24. *Statement of Objective:* The objective is to achieve United Nations common premises in a cost-effective manner at the country level for UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and, as appropriate, WFP, together with the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) and other United Nations entities (action 10 (c) of A/51/950). This objective will serve to create closer ties among United Nations staff and promote a more unified presence at the country level. The United Nations House definition will help identify those buildings that may be designated United Nations Houses.

25. *Designation of a United Nations House:* The name "United Nations House" shall be conferred only by the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General, upon recommendation by the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group, may wish to designate a United Nations House where the following minimum conditions exist:

- (a) Common premises housing the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the offices of all resident Country Directors/Representatives of the member agencies of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group, i.e. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and, as appropriate, WFP.

The United Nations House is not necessarily a stand-alone building, and it may have satellite premises. There will only be one United Nations House in any given country, appropriately identified as such.

- (b) A commitment to develop a framework for cost-effective, high quality and timely common services.

26. Optimally, all member organizations of UNDG will house their resident Country Directors/Representatives in the designated United Nations House. Other United Nations entities and the Bretton Woods Institutions are encouraged to join the United Nations House. The Secretary-General's proposal to integrate UNICs into the Resident Coordinator's office has been adopted by the General Assembly (A/52/12 of 14/11/1997). UNICs will therefore be an integral component of the United Nations House."

## **1.5 Image and Space Configuration**

27. For the cohesion of the UN House, it is essential that the common premises be arranged in a manner which respects the identity and importance of the individual participating members of the Country Team whilst, at the same time, presenting an image of a joint UN presence. The following principles should therefore be applied in configuring the offices:

- The overall impression given to visitors and callers should be that of a UN House, appropriately identified as such. (For example: receptionists and/or telephone operators should address visitors or callers with "United Nations, can I help you?", before directing them to the office of the RC or any specific agency.)
- Common services, such as the PABX, Conference Rooms, etc. should all be designated UN.
- The Office of the Resident Coordinator should be distinctively different from that of UNDP, even if it is located close to a UNDP unit.
- Care should be taken to ensure that all agencies are able to occupy the amount of space, which satisfies their needs, is of equal quality and allows easy access within the premises.

## **2. COMMON SPACE**

### **2.1 Definition**

28. "Shared physical space, collectively occupied by a group of UNS organizations for the provision of common services"

### **2.2 Implementation and Management**

29. Almost certainly some common space will be an integral part of common premises, even when common services are not involved, e.g. common meeting rooms or reception area. However, common services will almost certainly include an element of common space also, i.e. the space occupied by the service itself. In the latter case, the full cost of the space occupied should be included in the cost of the common service. The extent of such common space will naturally depend upon the extent of common services, which are covered in more detail in Section E below.

### **2.3 Financial Arrangements**

30. Depending on whether the use of common space is or is not related to the provision of common services, the sharing of common space costs could be arranged in the following manner:

- In the case of common space not related specifically to a common service, the costs of the space, including rent, utilities and maintenance is apportioned to those agencies sharing the common premises in accordance with the relative share of individual space occupied by each agency.

- Common space related to common services should, as noted above, be added directly to the costs of those services and apportioned to the participating agencies, in accordance with the formula agreed.

## **G. COMMON AND SHARED SERVICES**

### **1. COMMON SERVICES**

#### **1.1 Definition**

31. "Shared services, jointly financed and managed by a group of UNS organizations"

#### **1.2 Implementation and Management**

32. Since one of the guiding principles is the importance of consensus decision-making and an individual agency's right to opt in or out of a given service, it may be necessary to design several different implementation arrangements for the various services, and to account for them separately, depending on which of the following situations applies:

- Common Services shared by all agencies in the common premises
- Common Services shared by some of the agencies in the common premises
- Common Services shared by all agencies, irrespective of whether they share common premises
- Common Services shared by some agencies, only some of which share common premises

33. Although the principles remain the same, the scope of the consultative process with regard to establishment, implementation and management will vary.

34. In any event, Country Teams' decisions regarding the establishment of common services will be based on a comprehensive, comparative study on present and future common/shared services. Such studies should include a cost/benefit analysis and detailed description of the planned common/shared services as well as modalities and responsibilities for implementation.

35. A formal inter-agency MOU specifying all arrangements, ***as well as stipulating each agency's right and obligations***, will be carefully negotiated and signed by all agencies in advance. Provisions will be included for updating and/or revising this agreement at regular intervals, e.g. every two years. In between, in order to ensure stability of management, the agreement will be binding on all signatories.

36. ***However, the MOU should also contain relevant clauses regarding special services and budgetary/personnel implications during an emergency phase.***

### **1.3 Financial and Personnel Arrangements**

37. The specific financial arrangements will depend upon the nature of the common services themselves. However, several principles can be established:

- The costs of the common services will be fully-funded, including any management overhead of the administering agency or company.
- Budgets will be prepared and approved well in advance, so as to enable participating agencies to include provision for their share in their annual budget submissions to their respective headquarters.
- Expenditures will be accounted for at whatever level of detail and frequency the members of the Country Team determine, but audited income and expenditure statements will always be made available to all participating agencies at the end of each calendar/financial year.
- In cases where funds are pooled, it might not be realistic or reasonable for an individual agency to request that independent accounting be provided for the use of its individual contribution, except as a percentage of overall expenditure. The management of and accounting for such pooled funds will be done by the administering agency using accounts designated for the provision of services to other UNS organizations, such as the UNDP Common Services Account.
- Decisions regarding the establishment of posts, definition of post and post profile, recruitment of staff, as well as their promotion and where necessary, termination, should be taken in a collegial and consensual manner, and will never be left exclusively to the administering agency. A joint interview panel would be appropriate.
- In merging individual agency services into a common facility, it is possible that individual agency posts may be eliminated or re-deployed for other purposes. Under such circumstances, extra care should be taken to handle the recruitment of staff in an open and collegial fashion, so as to ensure the service of only the highest quality staff in common service positions and to guarantee that staff of all participating agencies have equal opportunity to apply and be selected.
- For those staff either providing or responsible for the provision of common services, it is recommended that a mechanism be established to facilitate inputs from heads of sister agencies, which are recipients of such services, in assessment of the respective staff members' performance.

38. In order to ensure transparency and to avoid fungibility, it is important that separate accounts be maintained by the administering agency. It is also important that a fair and transparent formula for sharing the costs of common services be established from the outset. While a formula based on actual utilization may seem reasonable, this raises the issue of sharing the risks of non-utilization. It is therefore recommended that a stable formula be agreed from the outset.

39. Such a formula could be based on the following factors:

- The relative share of total office space occupied exclusively by each agency (the simplest and most stable measure).
- The number of staff in each agency (difficult to define and liable to change over time).
- The financial size of each agency's programme (even more difficult to define and variable over time).

40. Since simplicity and stability should be the goal, the use of the first factor may be the most appropriate in the majority of cases. However, for services clearly related to the number of staff covered, such as security, a formula based on the second factor may be more workable. Other formulae could be developed as experience with common services is expanding.

#### **1.4 Pooled Services**

41. A variation of common services might be termed "pooled services". The distinguishing characteristic of such an arrangement is that individual participating agencies would contribute towards the common service in kind rather than in cash. This might take the form, for example, of assigning one or more staff to a common service. Alternatively, space might be provided free of charge, or some other facilities could be made available. Such an arrangement might simplify accounting arrangements, but would still require a common management. Moreover, in all likelihood, recurrent operating costs would have to be shared .

## **2. SHARED SERVICES**

### **2.1 Definition**

42. "Shared services, managed by one UNS organization and provided to other UNS organizations, sometimes on a cost-recovery basis"

43. **Note:** Shared Services differ from Common Services in that they are not jointly managed by the participating agencies. Instead they are managed by an individual agency or the private sector, which sells these services to other interested agencies.

### **2.2 Implementation and Management**

44. It is in the nature of shared services that they can proceed incrementally, by agreement between individual agencies, rather than requiring a collegial process of implementation. However, to avoid misunderstandings, it is recommended that a clear inter-agency agreement be signed, specifying the expectations on both sides, perhaps in the form of a **Memorandum of Understanding**.. Management of the services being shared is the prerogative of the agency providing the service.

45. Although many shared services may continue to be administered by UNDP, as is currently the case, several other modalities could and should be considered on a case-by-case base, bearing in mind comparative advantages and cost-effectiveness. These may be divided into three categories:

- Administered by UNDP
- Administered by another UNS organization
- Out-sourced to the private sector

### **2.3 Financial Arrangements**

46. The basic principle is that of a Service Fee, charged by the managing agency and paid at agreed intervals by the requesting agency. The level of this fee should be established in advance by mutual agreement between the parties and should be based on the full cost of providing the service, including any management overhead. It should be paid by the requesting agency at agreed intervals. Its level should be embodied in the above-mentioned exchange of letters - and should be subject to periodic review.

## **H. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTATION**

47. A great deal of work has already been undertaken in the area of RC administrative management and from which the development of the present guidelines has benefited. Some originated in the common systems of the United Nations, in fields such as those of the ICSC and of security management. Guided by several GA Resolutions, in recent years much work has been done under the auspices of the JCGP. Some work has also been done in this area by UNDP, charged as it is with supporting many aspects of the UN System's work at the country level. Following is a listing of relevant background documentation and guidelines, copies of which should already be available in most resident coordinators' offices. However, where updated or revised versions exist, they can also be obtained from agency headquarters, from the United Nations Development Group Office (DGO) or from UNDP.

- *GA Resolution 2688 (XXV): The Capacity of the United Nations development system, 11December 1970*
- *GA Resolution 32/197 : Restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, 20 December 1977*
- *GA Resolution 41/171: Operational Activities for development, 5 December 1986*
- *GA Resolution 42/196: Operational activities for development, 11 December 1987*
- *Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP): A statement by the Executive Heads: Sharing Common Premises and Services in the U.N. System, July 1988*
- *GA Resolution 43/199: Operational activities for development, 20 December 1988*

- *GA Resolution A/RES/44/211: Comprehensive triennial review of operational activities for development sectors of the United Nations system, 22 December 1989*
- *GA Resolution A/RES/47/199: Triennial policy review of the operational activities of the United Nations development system, 22 December 1992*
- *GA Resolution A/RES/48/209: Operational activities for development: Field offices of the United Nations system dealing with development, 21 December 1993*
- *United Nations Common Premises - General Guidelines, UNDP Division for Administrative and Information Services, February 1995*
- *General Guidelines on UN Common Premises, covering office power/cabling, office automation, LAN networks and communications, UNDP Division for Administrative and Information Services, February 1995*
- *Draft Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Common Service Operations for UN country offices, JCGP, 1996*
- *Guidelines on information technology infrastructures, JCGP*
- *Guidelines on contracting for travel-related services, JCGP*
- *UN Field Security Handbook, UN, January 1995*
- *United Nations Security Operations Manual, UN, September 1995*
- *Guidelines for UN Dispensaries*
- *The United Nations System, Common Premises and Services in the Field, Joint Inspection Unit, 1994*