



United States Department of the Interior  
Office of Aviation Services  
300 E Mallard Drive, Suite 200  
Boise, Idaho 83706-3991

**DOI OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES MEMORANDUM (OPM)–70**

**Subject:** Identification of DOI Flight Service Responsibility, funded through cooperative projects and first nation engagements

**Effective Date:** January 1, 2026

**Last Updated:** October 4, 2023

**Expiration Date:** December 31, 2026

1. **Summary of Changes.** None.
2. **Purpose.** This OPM establishes policies and procedures clarifying oversight responsibility for flight services associated cooperative projects and transportation through partnership agreements. This OPM does not prescribe policies and procedures for the use of Cooperator aircraft and pilots (see 351 DM 4).
3. **Introduction.** DOI funds a variety of cooperative projects, internships, and tribal/first nation engagements. Transportation costs are inherent to the agreements established to support these projects and engagements. Aviation managers and cooperative agreement specialists at all levels must be aware of the requirements outlined within this OPM and avoid placing the Department with operational control when it is not appropriate. Attempting to exert any influence on certain aspects of the operation conducted under a cooperative/partnership agreement exposes the Department to risks that would be appropriately managed under a flight services contract. If the provisions of 353 DM 1.2A (3) and this OPM are met, the aircraft will be operated as a civil aircraft and the aviation management principles normally required for aircraft under DOI operational control do not apply. When appropriate, agency personnel must procure qualifying “flight services” through DOI Acquisition Services Directorate (AQD), thus incorporating the use of OAS approved aircraft and pilots.
4. **Authority.** This policy is established by the Director, Department of the Interior, Office of Aviation Services (OAS) in accordance with the provisions of Departmental Manual 112 DM 12, 350 DM 1, 350 DM 2.2A, and Secretarial Order 3322 dated August 23, 2012.
5. **Definitions.**
  - A. Operational Control. An aircraft is under the exclusive direction and control of a government when the government exercises responsibility for:
    - 1) Approving crewmembers and determining that they are qualified to operate the aircraft.
    - 2) Determine the airworthiness and directing maintenance of the aircraft.
    - 3) Dispatching the aircraft, including the times of departure, airports to be used, and type and amount of cargo to be carried.
  - B. Dispatch. To assume operational control through the use of specific times of departure, airports to be used, amounts of people and cargo to be moved, intended time of arrival and/or flight following. Dispatching does not include the specification of windows of opportunity for conservation activities or personnel movement.

6. **Policy.** As stated in 353 DM 1.2A, all "flight services" shall be acquired through DOI AQD with exceptions listed:

A. The following activities are considered flight services:

- 1) Flight(s) under DOI Operational Control (As defined in 5.A. above)
- 2) Flight(s) under DOI Dispatch authority (As defined in 5.B. above). Note: Dispatch authority is more broadly defined than being ordered through agency dispatch centers.
- 3) Flight(s) involving DOI personnel as passengers, including personnel under the direct supervision of DOI personnel.

B. The following activities are exceptions to "flight services".

- 1) Flight(s) involving conservation activities, solely organized, and directed by the third-party (Non DOI) organization.
- 2) Flight(s) supporting first nation engagements absent of DOI supervision or organization.
- 3) Flight(s) supporting internship or student activity absent of DOI supervision or organization.

Aviation managers and cooperative agreement specialists must exercise discretion when funding cooperative projects and first nation engagements. Agreements that solely fund aviation activities may inherently be "flight services" and should incorporate the use of OAS approved aircraft and pilots. For assistance in determining when operations are flight services contact your unit, regional, state or national aviation manager.

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Susan E. Bates  
Director, Office of Aviation Services