§ 11.5 Informal review of adverse decisions.

(a) Required informal review of FSA adverse decisions. Except with respect to farm credit programs, a participant must seek an informal review of an adverse decision issued at the field service office level by an officer or employee of FSA, or by any employee of a county or area committee established under section 8(b)(5) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, 16 U.S.C. 590h(b)(5), before NAD will accept an appeal of a FSA adverse decision. Such informal review shall be done by the county or area committee with responsibility for the adverse decision at issue. The procedures for requesting such an informal review before FSA are found in 7 CFR part 780. After receiving a decision upon review by a county or area committee, a participant may seek further informal review by the State FSA committee or may appeal directly to NAD under §11.6(b).

(b) Optional informal review. With respect to adverse decisions issued at the State office level of FSA and adverse decisions of all other agencies, a participant may request an agency informal review of an adverse decision of that agency prior to appealing to NAD. Procedures for requesting such an informal review are found at 7 CFR part 780 (FSA), 7 CFR part 614 (NRCS), 7 CFR part 1900, subpart B (RUS), 7 CFR...
part 1900, subpart B (RBS), and 7 CFR part 1900, subpart B (RHS).

(c) Mediation. A participant also shall have the right to utilize any available alternative dispute resolution (ADR) or mediation program, including any mediation program available under title V of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1987, 7 U.S.C. 5101 et seq., in order to attempt to seek resolution of an adverse decision of an agency prior to a NAD hearing. If a participant:

(1) Requests mediation or ADR prior to filing an appeal with NAD, the participant stops the running of the 30-day period during which a participant may appeal to NAD under §11.6(b)(1), and will have the balance of days remaining in that period to appeal to NAD once mediation or ADR has concluded.

(2) Requests mediation or ADR after having filed an appeal to NAD under §11.6(b), but before the hearing, the participant will be deemed to have waived his right to have a hearing within 45 days under §11.8(c)(1) but shall have a right to have a hearing within 45 days after conclusion of mediation or ADR.

§ 11.6 Director review of agency determination of appealability and right of participants to Division hearing.

(a) Director review of agency determination of appealability. (1) Not later than 30 days after the date on which a participant receives a determination from an agency that an agency decision is not appealable, the participant must submit a written request personally signed by the participant to the Director to review the determination in order to obtain such review by the Director.

(2) The Director shall determine whether the decision is adverse to the individual participant and thus appealable or is a matter of general applicability and thus not subject to appeal, and will issue a final determination notice that upholds or reverses the determination of the agency. This final determination is not appealable. If the Director reverses the determination of the agency, the Director will notify the participant and the agency of that decision and inform the participant of his or her right to proceed with an appeal.

(b) Appeals of adverse decisions. (1) To obtain a hearing under §11.8, a participant personally must request such hearing not later than 30 days after the date on which the participant first received notice of the adverse decision or after the date on which the participant receives notice of the Director’s determination that a decision is appealable. In the case of the failure of an agency to act on the request or right of a recipient, a participant personally must request such hearing not later than 30 days after the participant knew or reasonably should have known that the agency had not acted within the timeframes specified by agency program regulations, or, where such regulations specify no timeframes, not later than 30 days after the participant reasonably should have known of the agency’s failure to act.

(2) A request for a hearing shall be in writing and personally signed by the participant, and shall include a copy of the adverse decision to be reviewed, if available, along with a brief statement of the participant’s reasons for believing that the decision, or the agency’s failure to act, was wrong. The participant also shall send a copy of the request for a hearing to the agency, and may send a copy of the adverse decision to be reviewed to the agency, but failure to do either will not constitute grounds for dismissal of the appeal. Instead of a hearing, the participant may request a record review.

(c) If a participant is represented by an authorized representative, the authorized representative must file a declaration with NAD, executed in accordance with 28 U.S.C. 1746, stating that the participant has duly authorized the declarant in writing to represent the participant for purposes of a specified