UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®

Post Office Express Administrative Guide

Handbook PO-120

June 2008
Transmittal Letter

A. **Purpose.** This is an internal Postal Service management guide. It outlines the processes and guidelines to follow when evaluating the need for and establishment of a Post Office Express retail location.

B. **Explanation.** All existing financial count, accounting, and regulatory procedures contained in the following publications apply:

- Handbook F-1, *Post Office Accounting Procedures.*

- *Postmaster/Field Guide.*

- Handbook F-15, *Travel and Relocation.*

- Postal Operations Manual.

- *Administrative Support Manual.*

- Handbook AS-503, *Standard Design Criteria.*

For staffing and employee management, follow national and local agreements for Finance Unit operations.

C. **Availability.** This handbook is available to Postal Service personnel as follows:

- **Intranet:** Accessible at *http://blue.usps.gov/cpim* (click on HBKS, then PO-120).

D. **Questions and Comments.** Address questions or comments regarding the content of this handbook to:

MANAGER RETAIL ACCESS CHANNELS
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW ROOM 7540
WASHINGTON, DC 20260-7540
202-268-2468

E. **Effective Date.** This material is effective immediately.

Kathy Ainsworth
Vice President
Retail Operations

Contents

1 Post Office Express Overview

11   Overview

This handbook guides Post Office Express (POE) team members through the complete process of evaluating, constructing, opening, and managing a POE. A funding commitment from the district manager or other authorizing office is required to execute this program. A POE should be considered only after all other avenues of alternate access have been considered.

12   Definitions

121   Post Office Express

A POE is a finance unit located within a commercial retail store — typically a large, busy supermarket — and operated by Postal Service employees. The POE offers additional access to U.S. Postal Service products and services and is an extension of the Postal Service. POEs were created and designed to reach consumers who are already shopping, such as in a grocery store.

Most POE retail locations are open seven days a week with evening and weekend hours that reflect local shopping patterns. A POE is a good solution for additional Postal Service presence in the absence of traditional brick and mortar facilities in high-growth areas.

122   The POE Team

The POE team should include the following:

a.   Postmaster/installation head or designee.

b.   District marketing manager.

c.   District retail specialist/POE coordinator.

d.   District Automated Postal Center (APC) coordinator (as necessary).

e.   District Point of Service (POS) coordinator.

f.   District finance/internal control group.

g.   Facility Service Office (FSO) real estate specialist (RES) and design and construction (D&C) project manager.

The POE team may also include representatives from:

a.   U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

    b.   Headquarters Offices.

        (1)   Retail Operations.

        (2)   Retail Access Channels.

        (3)   Facilities.

        (4)   Labor Relations.

13   Authority

131   Vice Presidents, Area Operations

Vice presidents of area operations or their designees have the authority to approve the establishment of a POE where needed within the customer service district of a Post Office and within the limitations of Handbook F-66.

132   District Managers

District managers have the authority to:

a.   Initiate approval of a POE.

b.   Approve plans to establish a POE where needed within the customer service district of a Post Office and within the limitations of Handbook F-66, *General Investment Policies and Procedures.*

c.   Sign the POE request package.

d.   Approve funding up to a certain amount. If the cost exceeds established limits, area vice president of operations must approve.

133   Manager, Retail Access Channels

The manager of retail access channels at headquarters, or a designee, has the authority to approve the establishment of a POE based on demonstrated need and value to the consumer and to the Postal Service.

14   Steps to Initiate a POE

141   Initiating a POE

The following processes are required to initiate a POE.

Marketing manager determines the need for a POE.

Marketing manager completes POE request package and submits the completed request package to Manager, Retail Access Channels.

142   Approval of a POE

If the Manager, Retail Access Channels, approves the POE, that office returns the approved plans to the district for action, such as a local team meeting. The FSO develops a purchase plan and initiates the required site selection process (i.,e., alternate retail location requirements per the *Community Relations Regulations,* U.S. Title 39 CFR Part 241).

15 Restrictions and Special Considerations

151 Post Office Box or Caller Service

A POE will not provide Post Office Box or caller services. Providing these services at a POE location is a tacit commitment to the customer that delivery service will be available. This commitment can make it difficult to relocate or close the POE if market conditions change.

152 Access for Persons with Disabilities

All POE retail locations must be readily accessible to all consumers. For specific requirements, see Handbook RE-4, *Standards for Facility Accessibility,* available on the Postal Service Intranet at *http://blue.usps.gov/cpim/hbkid.htm*.

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2 Determining the Need for a POE

21   When is a POE Necessary?

Establish a POE only after you have considered all other options. Consider the benefits of a POE when determining if a POE is the appropriate avenue for expanded access to postal services.

You may propose a POE when one or more of the following conditions are present:

a.   A newly developed community requires postal retail services, but does not yet warrant a Postal Service facility.

b.   Present retail Postal Service units are not able to serve customers efficiently because of limited space (for example, insufficient parking and retail space with no ability to expand) or high customer demand.

c.   A solicitation for a Contract Postal Unit (CPU) has not produced any qualified candidates.

d.   Extended service hours are needed.

e.   The Postal Service will realize service, scheduling, or other benefits.

f.   Other low-cost strategies for selling stamps, such as Stamps on Consignment, Stamps by Mail, and Stamps On-Line, have been considered and determined not feasible.

22   Benefits to Customers

A POE should benefit customers by providing:

a.   Expanded access to postal products and services at postal prices.

b.   Convenient additional locations.

c.   Extended hours (weekends and evenings).

23   Benefits to Retailers

A POE should benefit retailers by:

a.   Generating additional sales through customer traffic.

b.   Making customers aware of POE locations and thereby increasing traffic to the retailer.

c.   Improving customer service and satisfaction.

d.   Making the selected location more appealing to customers than other businesses offering the same services.

24   Benefits to Postal Service

A POE should provide a cost-effective process for providing postal products and services.

3 Preparing the POE Request Package

31   General

The POE request package includes the Post Office Express — Summary Statement (Exhibit 31) and the *Retail Facility Start-up Questionnaire* (RSUQ).

311   Post Office Express — Summary Statement

The administrative Post Office provides the district retail specialist/POE coordinator with a complete POE needs analysis. The analysis should include a description of the retail conditions at the administrative Post Office or vicinity station(s) or branches, including the following:

a.   Are hours sufficient?

b.   Is area coverage sufficient?

c.   How is customer satisfaction?

d.   How is Mystery Shopper performance?

e.   Inspection Service evaluation.

f.   Are there no other options for a retail outlet?

g.   What do we hear from consumers?

h.   Would this location benefit the Postal Service?

i.   How would this location affect existing classified offices?

312   Retail Facility Start-up Questionnaire

The RSUQ is required when planning the replacement or renovation of a facility. The district retail office must make these determinations, using all available analytical tools. Both the RSUQ and the Post Office Express — Summary Statement are available on the POE Web page at: *http://blue.usps.gov/delret/L4RetAccChs_POExprs.htm*.

Exhibit 31
Post Office Express — Summary Statement

Area: District:
_____   _____

Name of Post Office Express

Address of POE Location (Proper/Complete Street Address)

City   State   ZIP + 4

Business Name of Host Business/Landlord

Local Contact Name for Host Business/Landlord   Local Contact Phone Number (Include Area Code)

Mon	Tue:	Wed:	Thu:	Fri:	Sat:	Sun

Proposed Days and Hours of Operation

Provide a condition statement for each of the following as it relates to the proposed POE and neighboring USPS retail locations:

- Full Service Retail Hours: (Impact on existing/nearby classified offices)

- Retail Coverage: (Impact on existing/nearby classified offices)

- Customer Satisfaction: (Impact on existing/nearby classified offices)

- Consumer feedback: (As available)

- Overview of Retail Operations:

32   How to Determine Estimated POE Revenue

To estimate POE revenue, get the retail productivity figure for the Post Office(s) within five miles of the proposed location of the POE or the Post Office(s) that will be most affected by the proposed POE. These locations will be identified from your research to complete the RSUQ for the POE request package. This information can be found in the Accounting Data Mart.

33   POE Deviation Request Process

Headquarters offices of Retail Access Channels, Customer Service Operations, Retail Marketing, or all three must approve all deviations the process request.

331   Types of Deviations

The two types of deviations from the process are:

a.   POE Policy.

Postal Service policy requires a build-out for all new POEs. A deviation is required when you do not intend to follow Postal Service policy or choose not to do a build-out.

b.   POE Design Standards (A deviation is required in the following circumstances:

(1)   You want to make significant changes from the plan prototype drawings.

(2)   You want to use nonstandard counters (any counter other than USPS provided).

(3)   You want to omit slat walls.

(4)   You want to change the color scheme.

(5)   You want to use non-standard signage.

332   POE Checklist

A checklist intended to be used as a guide is included in Exhibit 332.

Exhibit 332
Post Office Express – Checklist

- ■ Request Package
- ■ POE Summary Statement (Cover page to RSUQ)
- ■ Retail Facility Start-Up Questionnaire (RSUQ)

  Supporting documentation
  - ■ Mapping (ROAM)
  - ■ Wait Time in Line Report (Mystery Shopper Report)
  - ■ Customer Satisfaction Measurement

- ■ Identify Team members: Retail specialist/POE coordinator, Postmaster or installation head of Post Office, FSO real estate specialist, FSO design and construction project manager, Customer Relations coordinator, Public Affairs and Communications representative, Labor Relations, Finance/internal control group, Inspection Service, and any others necessary to assist in this effort.
- ■ Arrange training according to predetermined staffing requirements (as necessary).
- ■ Create a design and construction project plan with timelines.
- ■ Order counter(s), writing desks, lobby wall slats (as designed), building exterior and interior signage.
- ■ Order POS retail equipment, POP signage, door signage (days and hours open), customer forms, and retail packaging and mailing supplies.
- ■ Develop a communication plan to announce location, days of service, hours of operation
- ■ Meet or have teleconferences so all team members receive the same information and know the status of POE efforts. Create a status report. Solicit district, area, and headquarters participation and include in distribution of status reports.

Automated Postal Center (APC):

- ■ The APC program office must approved requests for an APC. This approval must be completed in alignment with the POE request.
- ■ Requirements and procedures for APC placement and relocation can be found on their Web page: *http://blue.usps.gov/delret/L4RetSrvEqp_Aut_Pstl_Ctr.htm*.

This reference document and updated information is located on the Post Office Express Web page at *http://blue.usps.gov/delret/L4RetAccChs_POExprs.htm*.

4 Submitting Your Request

41   POE Request Package, Headquarters

Submit the POE request package to the manager, Retail Access Channels. The request package must be complete. Incomplete request packages will be returned and delay the establishment of the POE.

The manager, Retail Access Channels, will send an e-mail message acknowledging receipt of the request package to the manager, Post Office Operations or Postmaster, the District Manager, Marketing, and the Retail Specialist/POE coordinator. Upon approval, all parties will be notified.

42   Requisition Approval

District managers have the authority to approve funding (requisitions) for POEs. No one below the district manager level may approve funding. The FSO project manager will manage procurement of all necessary work, permits, construction supplies, counters, and all other required equipment and signage.

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5 Selecting a Site

51 General

When selecting a site, remember that a private retail location must present a "branded image" associated with the Postal Service, recognizable by consumers.

You must conduct a community relations investigation following the community relations regulations (CRR) for contacting the community. The *U.S. Postal Service Facility Projects Guide to Community Relations* was published in *Postal Bulletin* 22155, dated May 26, 2005. The FSO real estate specialist manages this process with help of the district retail specialist/POE coordinator and installation head/designee.

Note: You can locate the guide by going to *Blue.* Click on *Postal Bulletin* and select the year "2005," then type in "community relations" in the search box.

52 Determine Minimum Site Requirements

When determining minimum site requirements, consider the following:

a. Square footage.

b. Number of daily business and weekend hours.

c. Parking.

d. Accessibility and egress/ingress (traffic-light access).

e. Number of other affiliated locations (other stores with the same name).

f. How close the retail space is to the store entrance.

g. Any other factor affecting customer service and visibility.

53 Team Meeting

The local team should hold a preliminary meeting to review the CRR and individual roles and responsibilities. These include:

a. Preparing the community contact letter.

b. Notifying the appropriate members of Congress.

c. Preparing a news release.

d. Scheduling with local officials a town hall meeting or hearing.

54 Time Periods

The following minimum time periods must be observed under the CRR:

a.   Seven days for initial meeting or hearing after meeting with local officials and advertising the time, date, and location of the meeting.

b.   Fifteen days after the public hearing (or last public meeting if more than one is scheduled) to consider the views expressed by the community members and officials before deciding whether to expand or to advertise for existing buildings and sites. Notify local officials in writing of decision and post a copy of the letter at the local Post Office.

c.   Thirty days before advertising for existing buildings and sites, preferably in the downtown area.

d.   Sixty days after sending the IGN letter and advising local officials of sites before deciding on a specific site.

e.   Thirty days after advising local officials of selected site.

Note: Facility Project Flowchart is in Exhibit 54.

Exhibit 54
Facility Project Flowchart

Facility Project Flowchart

```
District prepares community contact          Copy of community contact letter           GR notifies
letter and forwards to Facilities Service    to area Public Affairs and                 appropriate members
Office (FSO) with request for       ──▶      Communications (PA&C) office and   ──▶     of congress
real estate action                           Government Relations (GR)

                                             Area PA&C center drafts
FSO makes appointment to meet                news release
local officials, dates letter, and
advises PA&C & GR of meeting date.  ──▶      District asks PA&C to issue dated
                                             news release. PA&C sends copy to
                                             real estate specialist (RES),
FSO and District representative meet         district, postmaster, and GR.
local officials and leave dated
community contact letter.           ──▶      Advise lessor of meeting                               7 days
Schedule project for public meeting.

Attend public meeting(s)
```

```
FSO
evaluates                                                                                            15 days
comments and
decides how project will   ──▶      Expansion              ──▶     PA&C consults with district on
proceed (expansion                                                issuance of news release.
or alternate
quarters/new                                                                                         30 days
site)

Advertisement for alternate   ──▶   Copy to PA&C and GR    ──▶     PA&C consults with district on
quarters/new site                                                 issuance of news release.

Site
review committee
meeting
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```
Sign intergovernmental (IGN) letter of ranked
sites and advise local officials of all sites

                                                                                                     60 days
Site
selected   ──▶   Copy to PA&C and GR    ──▶     GR notifies appropriate members
                                                of Congress

                                                                                                     30 days
RES notifies local officials   ──▶   Postmaster issues all subsequent news
                                     releases with PA&C guidance

Project proceeds
```

Source: Community Relations Guide (2005) Postal Bulletin 22155

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6 Designing and Constructing the POE

61 Design and Construction Requirements

You may begin the process of designing and constructing the POE once headquarters approves it. This chapter provides an overview of the process. The facility service office (FSO), design and construction (D&C) project manager will ensure that the POE follows all design and construction requirements, per Handbook AS-503, *Standard Design Criteria.*

62 Review of the Design and Construction Requirements

Before initiating design, the D&C project manager coordinates and schedules an on-site meeting with the following team members:

a. District retail specialist/POE coordinator.

b. Installation head/designee.

c. POE supplier.

d. Independent architect/engineer (A/E), if needed.

63 Characteristics of the Design and Construction Requirements

The Design and Construction requirements:

a. Assure the finished POE build-out is functional and presents a uniform Postal Service "branded" image to the public.

b. Assure the POE complies with Postal Service design standards.

c. Define what equipment and supplies are needed for build-out.

d. Establish responsibilities.

e. Ensure that all team members know what's going on.

64   Finalizing the Design

After completing the site visit, the D&C project manager will prepare the final design and review it with the installation head/designee and district retail specialist/POE coordinator. Once the design is complete, the FSO group will solicit proposals for construction. When the FSO has received and evaluated the proposals, they will award a construction contract.

65   Constructing the POE

The D&C project manager will communicate consistently and follow the progress of the construction with the postmaster or installation head/designee and district retail specialist/POE coordinator. The D&C project manager, postmaster or installation head/designee, and retail specialist/POE coordinator will do the final inspection. When the FSO contracting officer formally accepts the space, the activation process can begin.

7 Activating the POE

71 General

You will continue to work with your POE team to ensure that the POE is constructed and supplied according to plan.

72 POE Activation

Steps to activate the POE include the following:

a.   Construction build-out complete.

b.   Opening day.

c.   Grand opening.

d.   Follow-up.

73 Advertising

Advertising notifies the community where the POE is located and what hours it operates. Before opening a POE, you should use grand-opening advertising processes. After the grand opening, and throughout the life of the contract, you should use Message Maker to create advertising materials, and order point-of-purchase signage where necessary.

731 Grand-Opening Advertising

Grand-opening advertising consists of the following:

a.   Grand-opening news release.

b.   Name and location of the POE.

c.   Products and services provided.

d.   Hours of operation.

e.   Phone number.

f.   Contact for additional information.

g.   Postcard.

h.   Door decal.

i.   Advertising shared by retailer and Postal Service. This can be a way to advertise using someone else's funds.

j.   Advertising used at opening but stays in use.

732   Message Maker

Using Message Maker, you can:

a.   Create awareness postcard.

b.   Create awareness door sign.

733   Point-of-Purchase Signage

Point-of-purchase (POP) signage communicates product and service information and promotional messages to customers. POP is designed to give the right information at the right place and the right time so customers can make an informed decision about the products and services they need. There are two types of POP: continuity menu boards and promotional POP:

a.   Continuity menu boards are continuously displayed, promote core products and services, and provide price information.

b.   Promotional POP is seasonal and provides specific, solution-oriented product information.

You must display all mandatory posters and other retail signage related to retail products according to current *Postal Operations Manual* and retail standardization guidelines. The retail specialist must order all initial in-store signage. Consult the Facilities Database to determine how to distribute POP in the future.

74   Local Signage

Check with the community transportation department to see if they will erect signs directing the public to the POE location.

75   Staffing/Training/Site Access

You must hire staff to run the POE. You must ensure that:

a.   The retail associate position(s) is posted promptly.

b.   Retail associate(s) have had their POS logins activated for the new POS location.

c.   Employees have received APC training (as necessary).

d.   All standard retail associate training is conducted accordingly. Supplement training, as necessary, will be provided as appropriate.

76   Equipment/Property/Supplies

The POE must be supplied according to the following:

a.   The POS coordinator or retail specialist will request equipment, property, and supplies in time to meet the needs of the POE. He or she

will also coordinate obtaining the telephone, broadband, and other communication lines needed to connect POS and APC equipment to the server.

b.   The retail specialist will arrange for the delivery and activation of credit/debit acceptance equipment. He or she will also arrange for the delivery and installation of approved APC equipment.

77   Operational Requirements

The installation head/designee must ensure that the responsible party meets his or her obligations. These include the following:

a.   Comply with all approved financial procedures, including: obtaining the finance number (6 digits), retail unit ID (4 digits), pay location, and time and attendance collection system (TACS) transaction codes for the POE.

b.   Implement mail collection schedule.

c.   Submit necessary information for "new" facility to AMS for the Facilities Database.

d.   Update "My Post Office" with required information.

e.   Order postal supplies.

f.   Order ReadyPost Merchandise/OLRP (official licensed retail products) as appropriate for the design, space, and demographic.

g.   Set up system for receiving and depositing funds.

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8 Managing the POE

81 General

The POE must be managed the same as any other retail operation. This means ensuring that customers are receiving prompt, efficient, accurate, and courteous service.

82 Reviews and Examinations

821 Performance Reviews

The retail specialist must conduct the POE performance review each quarter for the first year to encourage quality performance. During these reviews, evaluate and discuss:

a. Operational efficiency.

b. Aviation security.

c. HAZMAT acceptance.

d. Bank Secrecy Act.

e. Sales skills and product knowledge.

f. Retail products and services.

g. Retail standardization.

h. Revenue performance.

To prepare for the performance review:

a. Take the POE file, including previous review sheets, for reference.

b. Confirm that previously noted problems have been resolved.

c. Analyze the situation to determine if there are problems that need to be solved or if performance needs improving.

d. If performance has not met previously identified goals, contact the functional area to determine what needs to be done.

822 POE Financial Examinations/Counts

Financial examinations or counts must be in compliance with policies and procedures outlined in Handbook F-1 and the Postmaster field guide, the same as other postal retail operations.

823 **Review of Service Hours**

    a.   Determine if the hours of service are meeting the needs of the community.

    b.   Review Retail Data Mart: POS/Windows Operations Survey reports.

83   Review and Recommendation

Determine if the need for this POE still exists by:

    a.   Identifying any other lower-cost service alternatives available to the community.

    b.   Determining if "relocating" the site is in the best interest of the USPS.

    c.   Validating that service, revenue, and performance are being realized.

The district retail specialist and installation head/designee will prepare a recommendation for review by the manager of marketing, installation head, and district manager.

84   Decision to Close

If revenue seems to be decreasing, there are problems with customer service, and costs are increasing, thoroughly evaluate the POE to determine if keeping it open makes good business sense. The district retail specialist and installation head/designee will prepare a recommendation for review by the manager of marketing, installation head, and district manager.