



Building Rural America
National Association of Credit Specialists
of the
USDA – Farm Service Agency
Management/Personnel Committee

2012 NACS Management/Personnel Resolutions

THE MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MET AT THE DETROIT MARRIOTT AT THE RENAISSANCE CENTER HOTEL IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN ON JUNE 18, 2012 TO REVIEW RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE MEMBERSHIP.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION:

Resolution 1

CONCERN: Empower is designed to be a full service site for employees and supervisors to access information on their positions and the on those that they supervise. Employees who log into Empower are unable to see position descriptions. Page 1 is completed with required information. Item 25 Description of Major Duties and Responsibilities is blank. The Position Description is not included.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Accurate Position Descriptions for all employees should be included on Empowhr.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE: The proposed solution is currently being addressed in one of the One USDA initiatives scheduled for implementation in the last quarter of FY13. When the required integration of EmpowHR is successful with the new staffing tool, “eRecruit,” the position description will need to be entered into EmpowHR in order for it to flow to the new staffing tool before recruitment may begin. This integration will be done prior to implementation. In time, through promotions, competitive reassignments, new employees, etc., all employees’ position descriptions will be in EmpowHR.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Pull forward and follow up in 2014 if it isn’t implemented or needs changes.

Resolution 2

CONCERN: 5PM Par 22 C Identifying Performance Elements states that when identifying performance elements, the elements should be reflected in the employee's official position description and encompass the position's major duties and responsibilities. As an FLM, my performance element on supervision includes standards on hiring that are required by the department. My position description contains nothing about hiring responsibilities and with the state being considered over staffed it does not appear that hiring will be done during the rating period. Regulations tell us and we are trained that the performance plan should match the position yet the department does not act accordingly.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

- 1.** The position description should be updated to accurately reflect what the employee does.
- 2.** The Performance Plan and Position Description should match.
- 3.** The performance plan should not include activities that the employee does not participate in. (How do you achieve something you do not do?)

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE: The proposed solutions are in alignment with the guidance already set forth in 5PM. Managers have the discretion to modify Position Descriptions as they determine appropriate and should consult with the Classification and Position Management Section of the Talent Acquisition Branch.

While performance plans should correlate with the major duties of the position description it should be noted there is no requirement that each and every duty be tied to a standard within a performance plan.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: **No follow up at this time. FLM's should be able to address this issue by working with your supervisor and adjusting your performance plan accordingly.**

Resolution 3

CONCERN: For 6 months my FLO spent more than 50% of his time detailed to another office. ARS has no provisions to capture detailed work so the work done during details results in inaccurate information recorded for the employee's home duty station.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: ARS provide a category for work done during details or other work done in your home office that is assigned from another office. We request a notice/clarification on how to properly allocate work hours to the proper office.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE: During the solicitation of improvement to the Activity Reporting System, the Managerial Cost Accounting (MCA) Governance Board received several requests that address the same concern you have expressed. The MCA's proposed solution would include a modification to the current WebTA software to add an additional field to record an alternate work site. Because of budget and accounting issues, we are asking that employees

currently not use more than one organizational accounting code in their T&A's to capture work being completed in different locations. A cost for the change in software will be requested for the CFO's consideration and a decision made in the next few months.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Pull forward and follow-up in 2014 if it isn't completed.

Resolution 4

CONCERN: There are times when telework could be allowed as FLP work is not always face to face. RD allows the loan approval offices to be approved for core telework schedules. FLP approval offices have similar customer facing duties.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Allow FLP field employees to qualify for core telework if approved by their supervisor and review official.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE: While we understand the concerns of NACS, DAFO is adhering to the policy set forth in Notice PM-2851. Service center employees are ineligible for core telework as are SEDs. These employees may be eligible for ad hoc telework under circumstances stated in the above notice.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: No follow up at this time. It would take a change to Notice PM-2851.

Resolution 5

CONCERN: Currently, we are required to use USA Jobs for filling vacancies (i.e. hiring FLOTs). Managers get stacks of applications to wade through that have neither production agriculture experience nor any formal training in an agriculture field. The present screening questionnaire gives a higher value to someone with work experience, any work experience, over a person with an agriculture degree. For example, a person working in a nursing home or a welfare office will make a register and displace an individual with a 4 year degree in Agriculture Economics.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: The evaluation system/questionnaires should be changed so that persons with education, training and/or experience in agriculture make the list of referred candidates for consideration.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE: The criticality of the need to develop effective methods of assessing applicants for vacancies within the Agency is agreed and there have been steps taken to improve the assessment tools used in this process. A different assessment questionnaire for vacancy announcements (status and non-status candidates) for GS-1165 FLOT positions went into effect in October 2012. All vacancy announcements, regardless of the area of consideration, GS-1165-5/7 FLOT positions are advertised using the assessment tool that was developed from the independent consulting firm, SME's, and HR Psychologist. Since that time, the agency has

not filled many FLOT positions due to budget, and the hiring freeze for outside of agency hiring. Management is confident the assessment will improve the quality of outside applicants, however it has been difficult to determine with the limited hiring.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Need input from someone who has used the new format. If there is still an issue we will follow up at Annual Meeting.

Resolution 6

CONCERN: We routinely receive mail from the St. Louis Finance Office which has been mailed in a large white envelope at the cost of \$1.00 or more. The contents will be only a regular white envelope with 1 or 2 documents in it which could have been mailed for \$0.45.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

1. Scan and email document to county office
2. Do not use the large envelope.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE: This issue has been discussed many times over. Currently Rural Development handles FSA St. Louis mailroom services. In 2010 and 2011 FSA St. Louis had several PII incidents with mailing reports and letters to the field offices and to borrowers. One incident involved the single envelope getting ripped apart in the post office machinery and PII data got exposed. The solution to that PII violation was to double envelope all mailings sent to the field offices and borrowers that contain PII data. While I agree the doubling of envelopes are costly, FSA and RD does not want to put the agencies and borrowers at risk with future PII violations. The double enveloping has adequately mitigated PII violations.

Scanning and emailing the documents sent to the field offices would be time consuming and labor intensive. FSA St. Louis is not staffed to handle such a labor intensive process. FSA St. Louis is working diligently to get a lot of reports and letters sent electronically. FSA St. Louis will continue to work toward a more electronically based reporting system but at this time we are still regulated to the physical mailing of some reports and forms.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: No follow up at this time.

Resolution 7

CONCERN: 1-EQ indicates that the Environmental Coordinator will certify that FLOT's have completed Environmental Training; however there is no Environmental module. We realize that there are differences between the states regarding environmental requirements however; the core material is universal. It is essential that FLOTs have a good grounding of agency environmental requirements as they begin their career.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Add training module to address core environmental requirements to the training program.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE: After review of 1-EQ, we could not find the reference of any specific requirement for the certification of FLOT environmental training and still believe it is most beneficial to continue to let State Offices pair their State law environmental requirements with those in 1-EQ for their environmental training for Field staff.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: No follow up at this time.