



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

THE MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MET AT THE SHERATON DOWNTOWN HOTEL IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH ON JUNE 22, 2011, TO REVIEW RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE MEMBERSHIP.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION:

Resolution 1

CONCERN: The Agency has enacted the USDA departmental policy on telework. Use of telework will benefit customer service during IT and weather-related incidences and allow savings in travel. Positions that should be encouraged to use telework are: appraisers, district directors, FLM's/SLO's, FLO's, and others where customer service would not be negatively affected.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: National Office needs to revise 34-PM to conform with the recently issued Departmental regulation.

Resolution 2

CONCERN: The Activity Reporting System (ARS) contains 27 programs plus leave and 31 activities. An employee has a total of over 800 choices to choose from when they report activity. It does not appear to be realistic or productive to track over 800 activities to determine what we do.

SOLUTION: Reduce the number of activities per program.

Resolution 3

CONCERN: The Agency has not implemented a restructuring of the network of delivery sites. The budget cutbacks and funding priority issues have necessitated employee reductions and service cutbacks to customers to balance the budget. Multiple number of zero staffed or minimally staffed offices are maintained at the expense of service to the public.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: NACS-FSA supports the restructure of the FSA delivery network of offices to provide for a more efficient use of resources while maintaining service to the public.

FSA management working with appropriate employee groups should develop and implement a leaner delivery network to maintain optimal delivery of service within the budgetary funds anticipated.

Resolution 4

CONCERN: National Notices are not issued in a timely manner. An example would be FI Notice-3019, which was issued 01/04/11 and referenced December, 2010 timeframes.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Expedite the Notice approval and issuance procedure in order for the field offices to receive the notices in a timely manner.

Resolution 5

CONCERN: With the impending administrative budget cuts along with possible VSIP there is the likelihood that FSA field offices and staff will be greatly affected as will our customers. When deciding which VSIP offers will be accepted it should be noted that the greatest consequences will be felt in the County Office.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: When the Agency makes a determination what criteria or sequencing will be used in the selection process of which VSIPs to accept, that the employee associations be provided an opportunity to comment prior to implementation.

Resolution 6

CONCERN: 1-EQ indicates that the Environmental Coordinator will certify that FLOT's have completed Environmental Training; however there is no Environmental module to assist the trainers ensure FLOTs obtain adequate Environmental training.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Add an environmental module to the training program.

Resolution 7

CONCERN: The activity list in ARS is cumbersome to go through when you are adding a new program to your T&A and many activities do not correspond to some programs.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Adjust the activities shown depending on possible activities based on the program that has been selected.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR NON-ADOPTION:

Resolution 8

CONCERN: We are encouraging borrowers to get a Power of Attorney in order to keep us from sending correspondence overseas, yet OGC has not approved a form that is acceptable as a POA. So borrower has to go to a lawyer and get a POA and then we have to send to OGC for approval.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: OGC needs to get an approved POA form and provide it to county offices for use by borrowers entering active duty.

Resolution 9

CONCERN: I am a member of the State FSA Farm Loan Program FLOT training staff and am an FLM in one of the state's 2 designated FLOT Training Offices.

The success of the FSA FLOT training program in its mission to produce professionally qualified loan officers, capable of assuming the full responsibilities of the FLO position, is continually becoming more essential to address the accelerating attrition in Farm Loan Programs.

While the agency delivers services nationally, with the exception of orientation, CFAT, the training manual, FLOTRAC and exam process, the majority of FLOT training is received at a single local FSA office.

At a recent state meeting, 3 FLOTs were asked to comment on the strengths and/or weaknesses of the training. 2 FLOTs located in one office responded positively. The 3rd FLOT, who was in another office responded less positively. Specifically, he noted that the office staff were so busy that they did not have time to provide him with hands-on training experience he needed to develop satisfactory job performance competencies.

No one at the meeting denied that this trainee was not receiving sufficient, guided loan making and serving experience.

It is highly desirable for new agency employees to have an opportunity to develop the loan making skills and office management techniques from field office loan making and servicing personnel located in highly functioning FLP offices. The staff in these offices, however, tasked with providing farm financial services in a high demand environment are not always able to carry out a one to two year training program.

Locating a trainee in this type of office for a one to two year period can often result in the type of training experience described above, which does not achieve the desired results of the FLOT training program.

Some specific course of action should be identified and implemented to assure that all trainees get an adequate amount of hands on field experience.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: It is incumbent upon NACS to alert WDC management to step forward and participate with state management to address this situation. One suggestion may be to consider details as necessary to enable FLOT trainees to get to accompany loan officers from other offices on loan making activities. With a basic guiding directive from the FSA National Office, these details do not need to and should not be confined to being only within state office jurisdictional boundaries. Trainees can gain valuable training experience on details to officers

the where workload activities permit the take the trainee to the field to receive needed loan making experience. There should be no reason that trainees could not work on details in offices in an adjacent state

EXPLANATION FOR NON-ADOPTION BY THE COMMITTEE:

This appears to be an internal state issue.

Resolution 10

CONCERN: The role of the County Committee (COC) has come to a point where it provides limited value to the Agency, and all of the functions it performs could be carried out by FSA County Office Employees (Federal and County), District Directors, State Office Employees, and State Committee. The COC was identified in the recent Jackson/Lewis Study as a Key Barrier to Equitable Delivery of Programs. The Agencies limited budget cannot afford the cost related with COC Pay, COC Elections, and other expenses. The need to have a COC meeting does not provide the best quality of customer service to our producers, as the meetings are typically held once a month and in the instance of an FSFL approval we are capable of making a decision without COC input.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Eliminate the County Committee from all program approvals, employee hiring, employee ratings, and other statutory requirements.

EXPLANATION FOR NON-ADOPTION BY THE COMMITTEE: This action would require legislative action.

Resolution 11

CONCERN: The Farm Loan Chief has no supervision and or direct authority with the FLP offices/staff in the county offices which hinders the ability to address situations & dilutes the authority/ability of FLP.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Have all FLM report directly to the FLC as the 1st lien supervisor

EXPLANATION FOR NON-ADOPTION BY THE COMMITTEE: This action would shift the FLC duties from primarily Program Management to Personnel Management.

Respectfully submitted by the 2010 / 2011 Management/Personnel Committee,

Joyce NevinsGinsberg, Chairperson, Zone A

Allen Hall, Zone B

Greg Koerner, Zone C

Alec Love, Zone D