

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice PM-2956

For: FSA and RMA Managers

Revised Hiring Process and Mandatory Training

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management

Chris P. Beyersheim

1 Overview

A Background

Since November 2014 agencies across the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been receiving guidance from Secretary Thomas Vilsack and Assistant Secretary for Administration (ASA), Dr. Gregory L. Parham related to transforming USDA's workforce, workplace and hiring. In addition, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) created a hiring task force to review ways to improve the hiring process.

B Purpose

This notice provides ongoing guidance on the processes to enhance cultural transformation at USDA, and to transform hiring throughout USDA, in alignment with departmental guidance and the recommendations of the FSA task force. The required changes in this notice are important to transform our workforce, workplace, and our recruitment process. To track progress in hiring, the department will continue to monitor and share the monthly cultural transformation milestones and metrics report with the agencies.

C Labor-Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

D Contacts

For questions regarding this notice contact Michael Gonzales by either of the following:

- telephone at 816-823-1455, or
- e-mail to michael.p.gonzales@kcc.usda.gov.

Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2016	All FSA and RMA managers; State Offices relay to County Offices

2 Requirements for Hiring Process

A Mandatory Training

To comply with the policy requirements identified by the department, FSA Human Resources Division (HRD) will be delivering mandatory training to all hiring managers in FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA) through January 2016. All current and new hiring managers are required to complete the new hiring manager's training by January 13, 2016. Hiring managers hired after January 13, 2016, will automatically be enrolled in a hiring manager's training course in AgLearn and have 60 calendar days to complete the training.

B Key Changes

The following key changes will be effective January 18, 2016:

- after January 18, 2016, federal and county managers who have not completed hiring manager training in either phase one (face-to-face training) or phase two (virtual training) will not be allowed to recruit and fill vacant positions,
- when appropriate, managers should leverage using the non-competitive hiring authorities to hire highly qualified veterans and persons with disabilities without posting a vacancy announcement,
- federal vacancies should be advertised for five calendar but no more than ten calendar days unless mandated by a collective bargaining agreement, and
- managers should limit the number of grade levels in vacancies advertised and be purposeful as to whether recruitment is entry level, mid-level or full performance level. This will eliminate duplication and result in significant cost savings.

As a precursor to all federal hiring actions, a consultative meeting between the hiring manager and the servicing HR specialist is required before a recruit SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, may be initiated. A new Hiring Timeline Agreement (Exhibit 1) was developed and replaces the previous Appendix A. This document will be completed during the consultation meeting. The Hiring Timeline Agreement must be signed and attached to the recruit SF-52 personnel action along with a final position description and a signed AD-332, Position Description Cover Sheet, before HRD will proceed with the recruit action. The Web-52 recruit action will be returned if a completed agreement, position description, and AD-332 are not attached.

2 Requirements for Hiring Process (Continued)

B Key Changes (Continued)

In an effort to reduce duplication of effort and increase efficiency, most federal vacancy announcements will be advertised through delegated examining or merit promotion, but not both. There will be very rare exceptions. Exceptions will require justification and approval through either a deputy administrator or associate administrator and the HRD director. The lone exception in FSA is the announcement of farm loan officer trainee (FLOT) and county operations trainee (COT) vacancies. Even with this exception in FSA, we need to make sound decisions in advertising vacancies and prevent needless wasted efforts.

Lastly, as stated in the June 24, 2015, memo from Assistant Secretary Parham, any extensions of federal certificates of eligible candidates which go beyond the 80 day time to hire goal must be approved in advance by the Secretary of Agriculture. If needed, an example extension request is attached (Exhibit 2). The extension request should be initiated at least ten calendar days before the eightieth day in the time to hire process.

By following these mandatory changes FSA supports the secretary's goal of creating an inclusive, high-performing organization while eliminating unnecessary waste across the department.

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement (Replaces Appendix A)

Position Title, Series, Grade (s): _____ Full Performance Level: _____

Duty Location(s): _____ Express Lane: ☐ Yes ☐ NoHiring Manager: _____
Print Name Signature DateHR Staffer: _____
Print Name Signature DateHR Classifier: _____
Print Name Signature Date

Item	Steps	Yes or No	Comments
Section 1			
1.	Pre-recruitment Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
1a.	Have you reviewed (annually) the agency Human Capital Plan?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
1b.	Is the PD current and completed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
1c.	Is the AD-332 completed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
1d.	Number of positions to fill?		
1e.	Travel requirement? (see page 3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
1f.	Financial disclosure?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
1g.	Telework eligible (core; adhoc; or no)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section 2			
2.	Do you want to fill the vacancy with a detail?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
2a.	Do you want to fill the vacancy with a Temporary Promotion NTE 120 days?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section 3			
3.	Is the job analysis current and completed for your vacancy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
3a.	Is the assessment tool current and completed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
3b.	Is General / Specialized experience defined?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
3c.	Selective Placement Factor(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section 4			
4.	Appointment Type (Perm, Temp, Term)		
Section 5			
5.	Work Schedule (FT, PT, Intermittent)		
Section 6			
6.	Do you want to use a noncompetitive sourcing option?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6a.	VRA or 30% or more Disabled Veterans	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6b.	Schedule A Persons with Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6c.	Other special hiring authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement (Continued)

Item	Steps	Yes or No	Comments
Section 7			
7.	Competitive sourcing options	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7a.	Advertise Merit – FSA/RMA-Local Commuting area only	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7b.	Advertise Merit – FSA-Statewide only	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7c.	Advertise Merit – FSA/RMA-Nationwide only	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7d.	Advertise Merit – DEPT-wide only	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7e.	Advertise Merit – Gov't-wide only (Federal only)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7f.	Advertise Merit – Gov't-wide and Reinstatement or Special Hiring Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7g.	Advertise Pathways	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7h.	Advertise Delegated Examining (DE)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7i.	Open Continuous Registers (OCRs) (DE or MP)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7j.	Direct Hire Authority (IT positions only)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section 8			
8.	Recruitment Incentives	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
8a.	Recruitment Bonus _____% (25% max)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
8b.	Relocation Bonus _____% (25% max)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
8c.	Relocation Expenses/Travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section 9			
9.	Open Period for announcement		
Section 10			
10.	Applicant Cap (note BU agreements)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
10a.	Merit	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
10b.	Delegated Examining	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section 11			
11.	Other Items	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
11a.	If applicable - Manager's Outreach Opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section 12			
12.	What is the recruitment strategy?		

Sign and date completed document and attach to WEB 52

Note: Electronic signatures are permitted

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement (Continued)

Required Information

Express Lane Only

Staffing # from Web-52: _____

Position #(s) from EmpowHR: _____

All Positions

Positing Description Library (PDL) #: _____

New Position: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Vice: _____

OGE 450: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Telework: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Bargaining Unit: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Occasional Travel: ☐ Up to 25% ☐ Up to 50% ☐ Up to 75% ☐ None

Reports to: _____

Is this a Supervisory Position: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Of FTE's supervised: _____

Title _____ Series _____ Grade _____ Pay Plan _____ How Many _____

Title _____ Series _____ Grade _____ Pay Plan _____ How Many _____

Title _____ Series _____ Grade _____ Pay Plan _____ How Many _____

Exceptions to Advertise Vacancies Both Merit and Delegated Examining

Exceptions to Departmental policy must be approved before starting the recruitment process.

To do so, the hiring manager must send a justification requesting the first-level approval to the applicable Deputy Administrator for FSA or the Associate Administrator for RMA.

Attach your justification to this form prior to forwarding your request to your Deputy Administrator in FSA or the Associate Administrator in RMA.

The lone exception in FSA is the advertisement of Farm Loan Officer Trainees (FLOTs) positions. The final approval is made by the FSA-HR Director.

Recommendation: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval

Deputy or Associate Administrator: _____
Print Name Signature Date

Final approval or disapproval

Recommendation: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval

FSA-HR Director: _____
Print Name Signature Date

Extension Request for Federal Certificates of Eligible Candidates



United States Department of Agriculture

[Date insertion point]

TO: Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture

THRU: Agency Administrator

FROM: Name
Title

SUBJECT: Hiring Authority Request for 15 Day Extension of Certificate(s)

In compliance with memorandum titled Continuing to Transform Hiring in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), dated June 24, 2015, by Dr. Gregory L. Parham, Assistant Secretary for Administration, requests for extensions to certificates of eligible candidates beyond the 80 day Time-To-Hire goal will no longer be granted, unless approved by the Secretary.

Hiring Managers must provide justification to substantiate approval of extension. Please submit the following information in sufficient timeframe to ensure timely review and notification if extension will be approved or denied.

Agency: _____

Location: _____

Certificate Number(s):

Justification:

Signature: Agency Official

Date

Signature: Administrator

Date

Signature: Secretary

Date

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.