UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

For: FSA and RMA Managers

<u>**Revised Hiring Process and Mandatory Training**</u>

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator for Management

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, and

    Note: The required changes in this notice are important to transform our workforce, workplace, and 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.

- obsoletes Notice PM-2956.

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.

Disposal Date	Distribution
February 1, 2017	All FSA and RMA managers; State Offices relay to County Offices

1   Overview (Continued)

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**.

2   Requirements for Hiring Process

A   Mandatory Training

To comply with the policy requirements identified by the department, FSA Human Resources Division (HRD) delivered mandatory training to all federal hiring managers in FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA) through January 2016. All current and new federal hiring managers were required to complete the new hiring manager's training by January 13, 2016.

- **Federal** hiring managers hired after January 13, 2016, will automatically be enrolled in the Federal Hiring Manager's Training Course for phase three in AgLearn (projected to be available no later than the end of February 2016) and have 60 calendar days to complete the training.

- All current and newly hired **non-federal (CO) county** hiring managers will automatically be enrolled in the County Hiring Manager's Training Course in AgLearn in March 2016 and have 60 calendar days to complete the county training module.

- The AgLearn ID's for the new online training for both federal and non-federal (CO) county managers have not been established. That information will be provided directly to the federal and non-federal (CO) county hiring managers when the courses are available and loaded on their work lists in AgLearn no later than the end of February.

- For state committee (STC) and county committee (COC) members, a paper-based version of the county hiring training was provided to the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO) in February 2016 for distribution on the DAFO training website at **http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsatraining/**. The training should be delivered to the STC and COC during the next scheduled meeting held after the training is made available for download.

2   Requirements for Hiring Process (Continued)

B   Key Changes

The following key changes will be effective immediately or as indicated:

- after April 2016 **federal** managers who have not completed hiring manager training in either phase one (face-to-face training), phase two (virtual training), or phase three in AgLearn will not be allowed to recruit and fill vacant positions,

- after April 2016 **non-federal (CO) county** hiring managers who have not completed the county hiring manager training in AgLearn 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 business days 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 will be completed during the consultation meeting. The hiring timeline agreement must be signed and attached to the recruit SF-52 personnel action 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 work 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.

Lastly, as stated in the June 24, 2015, memo (Exhibit 3) 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 (for Federal positions only)

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement (Replaces Appendix A)

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

Duty Location(s): _____ Express Lane: ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Hiring Manager:_____
         Print Name   *Signature*   *Date*

HR Staffer:_____
         Print Name   *Signature*   *Date*

HR Classifier:_____
         Print Name   *Signature*   *Date*

Item	Steps	Yes or No	Comments
Section 1			
1.	**Pre-recruitment Consultation**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
1a.	Have you reviewed (annually) the agency Human Capital Plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
1b.	Is the PD current and completed?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
1c.	Is the AD-332 completed?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
1d.	Number of positions to fill?		
1e.	Travel requirement? (see page 3)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
1f.	Financial disclosure?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
1g.	Telework eligible (core; adhoc; or no)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
1h.	Salary/Locality Pay Area		
Section 2			
2.	**Do you want to fill the vacancy with a detail?**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
2a.	**Do you want to fill the vacancy with a Temporary Promotion NTE 120 days?**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Section 3			
3.	**Is the job analysis current and completed for your vacancy?**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
3a.	Is the assessment tool current and completed?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
3b.	Is General/Specialized experience defined?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
3c.	Selective Placement Factor(s)	☐ Yes ☐ 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?**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
6a.	VRA or 30% or more Disabled Veterans	☐ Yes ☐ No	
6b.	Schedule A Persons with Disability	☐ Yes ☐ No	
6c.	Other special hiring authority	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Last updated 1/11/2016

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement (for Federal positions only) (Continued)

Item	Steps	Yes or No	Comments
Section 7			
7.	**Competitive sourcing options**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7a.	Advertise Merit – FSA/RMA-Local Commuting area only	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7b.	Advertise Merit – FSA-Statewide only	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7c.	Advertise Merit – FSA/RMA-Nationwide only	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7d.	Advertise Merit – DEPT-wide only	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7e.	Advertise Merit – Gov't-wide only (Federal only)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7f.	Advertise Merit – Gov't-wide and Reinstatement or Special Hiring Authority	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7g.	Advertise Pathways	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7h.	Advertise Delegated Examining (DE)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7i.	Open Continuous Registers (OCRs) (DE or MP)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7j.	Direct Hire Authority (IT positions only)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Section 8			
8.	**Recruitment Incentives**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
8a.	Recruitment Bonus_____% (25% max)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
8b.	Relocation Bonus_____% (25% max)	☐ Yes ☐ No	
8c.	Relocation Expenses/Travel	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Section 9			
9.	**Open Period for announcement**		
Section 10			
10.	**Applicant Cap (note BU agreements)**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
10a.	Merit	☐ Yes ☐ No	
10b.	Delegated Examining	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Section 11			
11.	**Other Items**	☐ Yes ☐ No	
11a.	If applicable - Manager's Outreach Opportunities	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Section 12			
12.	**What is the recruitment strategy?**		
Section 13			
13.	**Certificate Referred To**		
13a.		☐ Yes ☐ No	
13b.		☐ Yes ☐ No	
13c.		☐ Yes ☐ No	
Section 14			
14.	**Closeout/Audited date**		

Sign and date completed document and attach to WEB 52

Note: Electronic signatures are permitted

2

Last updated 1/11/2016

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement (for Federal positions only) (Continued)

Required Information

Express Lane Only
Staffing # from Web-52:_____
Position #(s) from EmpowHR:_____
_____

All Positions
Position 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 _____

===

Express Lane Only
Staffing # from Web-52:_____
Position #(s) from EmpowHR:_____
_____

All Positions
Position 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 _____
===

3   *Last updated 1/11/2016*

FFAS Hiring Timeline Agreement (for Federal positions only) (Continued)

<u>Exceptions to Advertise Vacancies Both Merit and Delegated Examining</u>

Exceptions to Departmental policy <u>must</u> 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 <u>prior</u> 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*

<u>Final approval or disapproval</u>
Recommendation: ☐ Approval   ☐ Disapproval

FSA-HR Director:_____ _____ _____
                                   Print Name   *Signature*   *Date*

5   *Last updated 1/11/2016*

Extension Request for Federal Certificates of Eligible Candidates

---

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

_____

[Date insertion point]

FROM: Name of Hiring Manager
                  Title

TO: Thomas Mulhern
                  Director, Human Resources Division

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:_____ Certificate Number(s): _____
Location:_____

Justification:

_____
_____
_____

_____   _____
Signature: Hiring Manager Requesting Extension   Date

Review and Approval Process

First Review - Recommend Approval or Disapproval: Yes or No

_____   _____
Signature: FSA-Human Resources Director   Date

Second Review - Recommend Approval or Disapproval: Yes or No

_____   _____
Signature: Director of Office Human Resources Management (OHRM)   Date

Final Review - Recommend Approval or Disapproval: Yes or No

_____   _____
Signature: Secretary   Date

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Memorandum for Assistant Secretary Parham

USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

Departmental
Management

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC
20250-9600

TO: Deputy Administrators for Management
Mission Area Human Resources Directors
Staff Office Human Resources Directors

FROM: Dr. Gregory L. Parham
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

Gregory L. Parham JUN 24 2015

SUBJECT: Continuing to Transform Hiring in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The purpose of this memorandum is to follow up on my February 24, 2015, memorandum, *Transforming Hiring in USDA*, in which I directed the immediate implementation of nine requirements to transform the hiring process throughout USDA.

I greatly appreciate your sustained leadership to implement the nine requirements and look forward to seeing positive results from a transformed hiring process throughout USDA. To further support our efforts, please implement the following two additional requirements:

1. Requests for extensions to certificates of eligibles beyond the 80 day Time-To-Hire goal will no longer be granted, unless approved by the Secretary; and

2. Hiring Managers are required to certify completion of the Office of Personnel Management's Hiring Survey for the position being filled before Human Resources will make a tentative offer to a selectee.

Please ensure these two additional hiring requirements are implemented immediately in your Mission Area, Agency, or Staff Office. Should you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact William P. Milton, Jr., Chief Human Capital Officer, Office of Human Resources Management, at 202-690-2994 or at William.Milton@dm.usda.gov.

Thank you.

cc:
Subcabinet Members
Agency Heads

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER