

Leaders' Alert

A newsletter for Executives, Managers, and Management Officials
of the Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

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Enhancing Leadership Competencies

Brian Marincic, Human Resources Specialist
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The leadership competency being highlighted for the month of January is conflict management. Conflict Management is the ability to foresee, manage, and ultimately prevent conflict, and is defined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as:

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“Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.”

In order to better manage conflict, supervisors and managers should note that conflict can arise from any combination of factors, usually an incompatibility, or interference of ideas or tasks: in a diverse federal workforce, conflict is not unlikely. If gone undetected and unmediated, conflict may cause continuous tension for employees, which in turn, can impact morale, productivity, and job performance.

Every FFAS supervisor and manager has access to the [Manager's Excellence Resource Center \(MERC\)](#), online portal containing a variety of resources designed to improve or enhance a supervisor or manager's understanding and knowledge of how to manage conflict effectively. Some of the content available through MERC focusing on managing conflict is:

- [The Profiles of Coaching Programs and Tactics](#)
- [Agilent Staged Competency Model](#)
- [Boosting the Effectiveness of Frontline Management](#)

Past issues of this and other internal communications publications are available from
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=hrdhome&subject=landing&topic=landing>

YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US!

Send any comments, questions, and/or suggestions about this issue to whilemenia.duncan@kcc.usda.gov
or fax to **816-926-1825**, Attention: Editor, Leaders' Alert



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Enhancing Leadership Competencies (continued)

A number of other training options pertaining to conflict management are also available free of charge to FFAS employees:

- Conflict Management - **through AgLearn**
- Conflict Management in the Workplace: How to Manage Disagreements and Develop Trust and Understanding, 3rd Edition - **through Books 24 x 7**
- Anger Management: How to Recognize Your Hot Buttons - **through AgLearn**

Take a moment to explore MERC and capitalize on the available resources that support leader development.

To access the MERC System:

- Go to: <https://www.merc.executiveboard.com/>
Note: the MERC is also accessible via the HRD Intranet site at:
<http://fsaintranet.sc.egov.usda.gov/ffas/hrd/default.htm>
- Under **Getting Started**, click on "[Get a Username and Password](#)"
This link will prompt you to fill out a short form to establish membership.
Please make sure to use your business email address. This will be your user name.
Note: All FFAS Employees should select "Farm Service Agency"
- Check "Remember me" to directly log into the site for future visits
- Once you have completed this form, please click submit

Direct questions about MERC to brian.marincic@wdc.usda.gov, or telephone 202-401- 0353, Human Resources Specialist, Leadership and Employee Development Branch

Pathways Programs

Janice Barnes, Human Resources Specialist
Policy Accountability Branch

President Obama released an Executive Order on December 27, 2010 which changes sections 3301 and 3302 of title 5, United States Code. The Pathways Programs has been established to include the Internship Program and the Recent Graduates Program, along with the Presidential Management Fellows Program. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will issue regulations implementing the Pathways Programs consistent with this order.

These new programs will offer clear paths to Federal internships for students from high school through post-graduate school and for recent graduates. The internships will provide meaningful training, mentoring, and career-development opportunities.

Effective February 28, the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) is superseded and revoked, and any individuals serving in FCIP appointments shall be converted to the competitive service on March 1, 2011.



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Pathways Programs (continued)

On the effective date of final regulations, OPM will implement the Internship Program and the Student Career Experience Program will be superseded and revoked.

On the effective date of final regulations promulgated by OPM to implement changes to the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program required by this order, Executive Order 13318 (PMF Program), as amended, is superseded and revoked.

[Click here](#) for the entire Executive Order and [Click here](#) for an OPM memorandum with additional clarification regarding Executive Order 13562.

Labor-Management Forums Improve Delivery of Government Services

Noreen Joice, Chief

Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch

On December 9, 2009, the President signed Executive Order 13522, Creating Labor-Management Forums to Improve Delivery of Government Services. The Executive Order's purpose is "to establish a cooperative and productive form of labor-management relations throughout the executive branch that will promote satisfactory labor relations and improve the productivity and effectiveness of the Federal Government." The Order instructs Federal Departments to establish labor-management forums as the mechanism for achieving these goals. The forums are to provide the venue for labor and management "to collaborate in order to deliver the highest quality services to the American people." Since that time, the Farm Service Agency has been in discussions with its unions and forums have been or are being established at the union level of recognition.

In addition, the Executive Order requires management to "allow employees and their union representatives to have pre-decisional involvement in all workplace matters to the fullest extent practicable, without regard to whether those matters are negotiable subjects of bargaining under 5 U.S.C. 7106..." The purpose of Pre-Decisional Involvement (PDI) is to encourage the joint development of solutions on workplace issues in advance of management making decisions on those matters. "Before (pre) management concludes what course of action will be taken (decision), the ideas of employees will be sought and considered (involvement)."

In a memorandum dated December 3, 2010, the Assistant Secretary for Administration instructed Subcabinet Officials and Agency Heads that they must advise their supervisors and managers who directly or indirectly supervise bargaining unit employees to immediately engage their unions in PDI. The labor-management forums will normally be the mechanism by which unions are engaged in pre-decisional involvement with respect to working conditions of bargaining unit employees. However, there may be limited circumstances where it would be appropriate for the individual supervisor of a bargaining unit employee to also engage the union in PDI. For example, if a supervisor is changing the work schedule of a bargaining unit employee, prior to implementing that change, he or she should engage the union in PDI. The servicing Employee/Labor Relations Specialist should be contacted prior to the Supervisor initiating contact with the union.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact your servicing Employee/Labor Relations Specialist.



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