



FFAS HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION NEWSLETTER



Farm and Foreign
Agricultural Services
Human Resources Division

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Preparing for End of Year Performance Ratings

David Simmons, Employee and Labor Relations Specialist
Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch

As we reach the end of the October 1 to September 30 performance year it is important that employees prepare now for the end of the year performance ratings. The performance rating period ends September 30; allowing employees time to prepare to meet with their Supervisors to participate in their performance rating by October 31. Performance ratings are based upon the work expectations provided in the employee's Performance Work Plan (PWP) which was given to the employee at the beginning of the rating period.



At this point in the year employees should have a pretty good idea of how they are performing and can begin preparing for the performance rating. This means employees should be gathering documentation to support the milestones and accomplishments they have achieved. This way the employee can have a clear recollection and understanding of what was accomplished for the year, the steps and methods taken to achieve this milestone, and the results and benefits of this milestone to the Agency and to the customer.

Every employee will receive a performance rating as long as the employee has been on a PWP for at least 90 days. If an employee has had more than one supervisor during the rating period, prior supervisors are to prepare an interim assessment detailing the employee's accomplishments. With this knowledge, the employee can also contact any previous supervisors during this period to assure or ask them to provide them and their current supervisor with a copy of their interim assessment. The rating supervisor will then consider this interim assessment as part of the employee's annual rating of record.

The end of one rating period is also the beginning of another rating period. This means that employees will receive a new PWP. The PWP sets forth the supervisory expectations for that position. Employees will meet with their supervisor to review the current PWP to determine, among other things, whether the employee is performing duties not set forth in the current PWP.

If that is the case, the PWP will be revised to reflect the actual duties the employee is performing. The supervisors and the employee are involved in establishing or revising their PWP, so be prepared to answer questions supervisors may have concerning establishing or revising the PWP. PWPs are given to employees within 30 days of the beginning of the rating period. However, the best practice is that the employee receives the PWP at the beginning of the rating period, i.e., October 1.

AgLearn and the No FEAR Act Refresher Training

Extracted from a submission by the Office of Civil Rights

The USDA Employees United States Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Training Division has issued the notification shown below:



The Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 is a United States federal law that seeks to discourage federal managers and supervisors from engaging in unlawful discrimination and retaliation. It is popularly called the No FEAR Act, and is also known as Public Law (PL) 107-174; requiring federal agencies to provide training to their employees regarding their rights and protection under the No FEAR Act.

On August 1, 2011, the Office of Compliance, Policy and Training in collaboration with AgLearn, launched the mandatory No FEAR Act Refresher Training. Employees can locate the refresher training in their AgLearn learning plans for employees who must complete the training by December 30, 2011. It is intended to refresh our knowledge of the No FEAR Act of 2002, and to promote a work environment free of discrimination and retaliation. Employees without a computer and the proper technological equipment must see their Civil Rights Director for a paper version of this training. The on-line or paper version will take less than ten minutes to complete. Help us help ourselves contribute to the growth of a healthy work environment at USDA.

You may contact marie.hubbard@wdc.usda.gov or telephone 202 401-0373 in the FFAS Human Resources Division Leadership and Development Branch for any questions related to accessing the training.

Learn Heart Health

Juliet McBride, National Health and Wellness Coordinator
Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch
Benefits and Performance Management Section

According to the Center of Disease Control, heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women. Promoting a healthy heart is beneficial to everyone. Click on the website below to learn how a healthy lifestyle can help prevent heart disease.

In addition, learn the signs of a heart attack.

http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/what_you_can_do.htm

http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/signs_symptoms.htm



For additional information, contact the FFAS Worklife and Wellness Program Manager at 202-401-068, TTY dial 711.

Employees can acquire furniture and equipment for Home Telework Offices

C. Mondina McClain, Human Resources Specialist
Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch
Benefits and Performance Management Section

Great News! Below is information on free and low cost ways for FFAS employees to acquire office furniture and equipment for Home Telework Offices

Are you aware that USDA employees can acquire **FREE** excess office furniture (while supplies last) to outfit your home offices that are approved for you to work from via your official Telework Agreement? What better way to set up your Telework office than to ensure you have all the same comforts of your traditional office- for free!



If interested, follow this link <https://www.bsc.usda.gov/newbsc2006/EFW.pdf> to review some examples of available furniture and coordinate with Eugene Magruder at the USDA Centralized Excess Property Organization at (301)394-0400.

Emerging Issues

Information excerpted from websites shown at each article

OPM would like to share some very important news with regarding the payment of Federal retirement benefits. The U.S. Department of Treasury has made changes affecting the way retirees will receive payment. Everyone will be required to change to direct deposit or receive a debit card (if you do not have a bank account). If you already have direct deposit, congratulations and thank you! If you don't, please sign up with us now. The U.S. Treasury will be sending, or has sent, an official notice very soon.



Wouldn't it be nice to know that you don't have to worry about your paper check being delayed in the mail, lost or stolen? Well, more than 95% of all Federal retirees receive their payments by direct deposit and they feel secure that their payments will arrive on time and are immediately available to them. Our direct deposit occurs on the first business day of each month!

To help you sign up for Direct Deposit, OPM provides many options. You can make your change on your online retirement account at <https://www.servicesonline.opm.gov>.

1. You can fax an SF 1199A form to **724-794-6633**. This form can be obtained from your **financial institution**.
2. You can mail an SF 1199A form to OPM, Retirement Operations, PO Box 440, Boyers PA 16017-0440.
3. You can call us at **1-888-767-6738**. Please be sure to have your bank routing number and account number handy.
4. You can visit www.GoDirect.org or call GoDirect at **1-800-333-1795**. NFC *also* issued a notification entitled "Direct Deposit Salary Payments" which was posted to the NFC Web site. To view the notification, [click here](#).

Emerging Issues (continued)

The Office of Personnel Management released guidance for the preparation and submission for the 2011 Fiscal Year Human Capital Management Report. Read the guidance at this link:

http://www.chcoc.gov/files/HCMR_ReportTemplate.pdf

Promoting diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce helps agencies recruit and retain talented individuals from all communities, to reflect the people we serve and to create an environment in which the best people do their best work. Follow this link to review the [news release](#) resulting from President Obama's signed Executive Order to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce. It will promote the federal workplace as a model of equal employment opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. Follow this [link](#) to view the newly launched OPM Diversity and Inclusion website!

Pre-Retirement Information and Services presented by OPM at

<http://www.opm.gov/retire/pre/index.asp>.

Ask the Editor

The easiest way to find out exactly "what" someone wants to know is simply by asking...so tell me...what topics are you most interested in hearing about in this newsletter?

Provide topics to the Editor at whilemenia.duncan@kcc.usda.gov or telephone 816-823-4669.



Follow this link <http://www.theworknumber.com/Employees/> when you need proof of employment and income in order to grant credit, monitor your portfolio or a potential employer needing work history?

Career Opportunities in FFAS

All jobs (headquarters and field) open throughout each Agency may be obtained by accessing:

FSA Federal (GS) positions & FSA County Office (CO) positions:

<http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/a9agfsa.asp>

FAS Positions:

<http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/a9agfas.asp>

RMA Positions:

<http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/a9agrma.asp>

Provide feedback and articles for publication to the Editor at whilemenia.duncan@kcc.usda.gov