

Special Hiring Reform Edition

Leaders' Alert

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

FFAS MISSION AREA: FSA, FAS, RMA

Visit the FFAS Hiring Reform Website [here](#)



Introducing

Hiring Reform

Danny Sadler
Human Resources Division Operations Chief

President Obama's memorandum dated May 11, 2010, improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process, is Phase I of the Administration's comprehensive e-initiative to address major long-standing impediments to recruiting and hiring the best and the brightest into the Federal civilian workforce. The memorandum is based on issues that you and your managers have brought to the attention of OPM, and it is designed to help you and your Agencies build the workforce you need to achieve your goals.

The President's initiative provides for a vigorous Government wide recruiting effort, makes it easier for Americans to apply for Federal jobs, raises the bar on candidate quality and provides a commonsense approach to the overall hiring process. These steps are taken with rigorous adherence to and respect for the merit system principles upon which the civil service is grounded. Following on the President's Veterans Employment Initiative of November 2009, this reform package honors the sacrifice and commitment of our veterans by safeguarding their rights under law.

Successful implementation of these reforms will help each achieve its objectives for the American people, but these reforms will not succeed in each agency without strong leadership from the top. Institutional inertia has stifled previous reform efforts.

This Leaders' Alert is dedicated to introducing the President's Hiring Reform 2010.

This initiative is designed to help managers build the workforce needed to achieve mission goals.

Past issues of this communications publications are available from

[http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=newsroom
&subject=landing&topic=la](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=newsroom&subject=landing&topic=la)

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



The New HRD
*Where Our Customers
Experience Our Value Everyday*

Introducing Hiring Reform (continued)

The President's initiative sets a new course with clear objectives and detailed guidance, followed by continuous two-way communication between your agency and OPM and expert support at each step along the way.

Major changes have occurred in USDA FFAS with the implementation of the President's Hiring Reform Initiative, which is comprised of three integral parts. They are Hiring Reform Overview, which is training on the Hiring Reform Initiative and the expectations placed on hiring managers, the Hiring Reform website, which is full of useful information on improving the hiring process that is specifically targeted at FFAS hiring managers. The third piece comes in additional training and information-sharing events that are scheduled for the remaining of FY11 and beyond.

So please enjoy the articles in the Special Hiring Reform Edition of the Leader's Alert and be on the lookout for the required Hiring Reform training, as well as future issuances of relevant information on improving the hiring process.

Hiring Reform Web Site

Stephanie Sybil Brown, Chief
Human Resources Information Systems Branch

FFAS HRD, in a concerted effort with ITSD, has been busy building a web site specifically to support the increased managerial involvement and accountability in the hiring process. The purpose of the site is to provide FFAS hiring managers with the full range of support they need to meet the President's ambitious hiring reform objectives. It will also help to facilitate the collaborative relationship between the hiring manager and HRD, which is essential to maximizing the effectiveness of the hiring process. Successful implementation of the reforms will help the Department-wide effort to develop an inclusive, high-performing organization.

We want to say a special thank you to Jonathan Leaman, ITSD/HR Liaison, for his essential assistance in creating this website.

You can access the Hiring Reform Website by clicking [here](#).

Hiring Reform Expectations for Hiring Managers

From: William P. Milton, Jr.
Chief Human Capital Officer
United States Department of Agriculture

On May 11, 2010, President Obama issued a memorandum, "Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process," as part of the Administration's comprehensive initiative to address the complexity and inefficiency of today's Federal hiring process that deters many highly qualified individuals from seeking and obtaining jobs in the Federal Government. The President's memorandum directed Departments and Agencies to overhaul the way they recruit and hire to enable Americans to apply for Federal jobs through a common sense hiring process. Further, the memorandum directed agency managers and supervisors to assume a leadership role in recruiting and selecting employees from all segments of our society.



Hiring Reform Expectations (continued)

Successful implementation of the President's Hiring Reform is critical to achieving USDA and Mission Area goals and will require sustained leadership support on behalf of all hiring managers. Implementation began in USDA on November 1, 2010. This document outlines new expectations highlighted by Hiring Reform to assist supervisors and managers in the transition to their new roles. Those new expectations are:

Expectation 1. Be aware of and use available hiring flexibilities, outlined at:

- http://www.opm.gov/Strategic_Management_of_Human_Capital/fhfr/default.asp and
- <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/SummaryofHiringAuthoritiesandFlexibilities.pdf>

Collaborate with your Human Resources (HR) Consultant to best leverage these flexibilities.

Expectation 2. Develop a *strategic view* of USDA Priorities and have a USDA-wide viewpoint. Review USDA's vision and mission statements. Understand how your agency's plans support the Department's priorities articulated in the USDA Strategic Plan. In addition, be cognizant of the Cultural Transformation Initiatives in order to contribute to the development of a culture where all employees are fully committed, motivated, and engaged in achieving USDA's mission.

Expectation 3. Develop your *cultural competence*, which is the ability to effectively and sensitively work with others who are culturally and ethnically different. Also, be aware of the diversity and demographics of your workforce and how it compares to the overall workforce demographics of America. Be mindful of under-representation in your workforce. Every recruit action is an opportunity to address gaps between your workforce and that of America.

Expectation 4. Engage in and take responsibility for the recruitment and hiring process at four major points:

1. *Prior to Releasing the Job Announcement:*

- a. Per Departmental Regulation (DR) 4020-250-002, Position Management and Vacancy Control, an organizational assessment must be completed using Appendix A, Position Management and Workforce/Succession Planning Checklist.

2. *After the selection:*

- a. Ensure the functions/tasks outlined in the position description are necessary, accurately described, and support the organization's goals.
- b. Collaborate with your HR Consultant to:
 - i. Complete the job analysis which is used to identify competencies requisite for successful job performance and to develop valid quality category definitions
 - ii. Develop the selection assessment tool (for example, an occupational questionnaire) that will be used to assess candidates, and
 - iii. Plan your recruitment strategy, identifying alternatives to target your outreach to attract a diverse and high quality applicant pool.



Hiring Reform Expectations (continued)2. *After the selection continued:*

- c. Be forward thinking and inclusive – recognize the workforce is changing and take steps to manage that change.

3. *While the Job Announcement is Open:*

- a. Encourage applicants to apply.
- b. Ensure subject matter experts are available to assist HR with applicant assessment.
- c. Plan for interviews by developing questions and identifying panel members.

4. *When the Certificate of Eligibles is Issued:*

Conduct timely interviews, make reference checks for job finalist(s), and complete the selection. Notify HR of the selection within the timeframe specified by your HR Office.

5. *After the selection:*

- a. Complete OPM's manager satisfaction survey.
- b. Prepare for on-boarding the new employee and support the new employee's transition into the Federal service. Encourage the new employee to complete OPM's applicant satisfaction survey.
- c. Enable an inclusive environment wherein differences are valued and integrated into your organization.
- d. Begin immediately to manage the employee's performance consistent with your organization's performance management regulation.

Expectation 5. Know and understand interview planning and interview techniques. In conclusion, the goal of Hiring Reform is to improve the hiring process so that USDA and Mission Areas can recruit and hire highly qualified employees to deliver the quality services and results the American people expect and deserve and to establish a diverse workforce that looks like America and is recognized for excellence in touching the life of every American, "Every Day, Every Way." The ability of USDA agencies and offices to perform their missions effectively and efficiently depends on a talented, engaged, and high performing workforce.



FFAS 2010 Hiring Reform
Human Resources Division (HRD)
Ranay Brady, Customer Service Advocate
Talent Acquisition Branch

Background:

President Obama personally initiated Phase I of the Administration's comprehensive initiative to address major long-standing impediments to recruiting and hiring the best and the brightest into the Federal civilian workforce. This initiative is based on issues that hiring managers have brought to the attention of OPM, and it is designed to help you and your Agencies build the workforce you need to achieve your goals.

Objectives:

Building on these efforts, the President's initiative challenges agencies and OPM to focus on key objectives to further reform the hiring process. These include:

- Eliminate any requirement that applicants respond to essay-style questions when submitting their initial application materials for any Federal job;
- Allow individuals to apply for Federal employment by submitting resumes and cover letters or completing simple, plain language applications, and assess applicants using valid, reliable tools;
- Provide for selection from among a larger number of qualified applicants by using the "category rating" approach, rather than the "rule of 3" approach, under which managers may only select from among the three highest scoring applicants;
- Require that managers and supervisors with responsibility for hiring are more fully involved in the recruitment and hiring process and held accountable for recruiting and hiring highly qualified employees and supporting their successful transition into Federal service, beginning with the first performance review cycle starting after November 1, 2010;
- Improve the quality and speed of agency hiring by substantially reducing the time it takes to hire mission-critical and commonly filled positions, and analyze the cause of hiring problems and actions that can be taken to improve the hiring process; and
- Notify individuals applying for Federal employment through USAJOBS, an OPM-approved Federal web-based employment search portal, about the status of their application at key stages of the application process.



FFAS 2010 Hiring Reform (continued)

Although much work has been accomplished through the President's Hiring Reform Initiative described above, HRD continues to build upon, review and evaluate processes to develop further improvements which facilitate recruiting top talent and streamlining the hiring process. During the next phase, progress will be attained through implementation of the following initiatives:

- Development of a Recruitment Script which encompasses the entire hiring process. This will serve as a valuable resource tool for HR practitioners in facilitating their consultant role as well as serving as an educational tool for hiring officials.
- Utilization of Departmental and FFAS Category Rating policy. Additional policy issues are being addressed which are impacted by the Hiring Reform initiative.
- Development of a workforce snapshot tool. This tool will assist in capturing workforce and succession planning data to identify and plan a more strategic approach in meeting recruitment, retention and mission area goals. This will also serve as a valuable tool to assist hiring managers in responding to the Position Management and Vacancy Control policy recently issued by Department.
- Development of training for hiring officials. Structured training will be conducted which define the Hiring Reform requirements. The training will be accompanied by tools to assist the hiring officials in fulfilling their role and remaining fully engaged in the hiring process.

Work will continue to link the past activities to the current, track progress and document the success and accomplishments attained in the implementation of the President's Hiring Reform Initiative.

Manager Satisfaction Survey Participation

Jeana Nolan, Human Resources Specialist
Talent Acquisition Branch

One of the many changes due to the President's 2010 Hiring Reform Initiative is to ensure full participation of hiring managers throughout the hiring process life-cycle. This includes that managers take an active role in the job analysis process, including the completion of the Manager Satisfaction Survey (MSS).

The MSS is used to make improvements in the Federal Hiring Process and your participation will assure FFAS's voice is heard. FFAS's goal is to continually improve our hiring process as our ability to achieve our mission depends on our ability to attract a diverse, talented, and high performing workforce.



Manager Satisfaction Survey (continued)

At the last meeting of the Chief Human Capital Officer Counsel (CHCO), the Department of Agriculture was notified regarding our low participation rate in the MSS. The participation rates in FY 2010 were:

- Farm Service Agency – 8%
- Foreign Agricultural Service – 0%
- Risk Management Agency – 0%

Why is the MSS important?

- Agencies improved response rate will provide meaningful data to make process improvements
- Initial response rate directly impacts the 6-month Manager Survey
- Results will gauge the agency's progress in implementing hiring reform initiatives
- Data that you provide is instrumental in determining hiring reform success for your agency and government wide
- Gives you the opportunity to provide feedback directly to FFAS decision makers anonymously
- Response rate will be part of the HR Dashboard
- Deputy CHCO Workgroup held brainstorming session to assess ways to improve response rates

To this end, FFAS HRD is requesting your support in taking this short survey. If FFAS participation does not improve, one of the suggestions that came out of the CHCO Workgroup brainstorming session was to make this survey mandatory and have the manager provide proof of taking the survey prior to the tentative offer being extended.

Completing the MSS

1. The first communiqué requesting the manager to complete the MSS will be when the Human Resources Specialist sends the email indicating the certificate is available in USA Staffing.
2. Upon selection, return the certificate electronically in USA Staffing via "Selection Manager." At this time a second communiqué will be issued via USA Staffing to complete the MSS. It is not necessary to fax or email a copy of the certificate back to HRD.

When you complete the MSS, you are fulfilling part of the new performance standards in regards to participating in the hiring process. This cannot be achieved without the full participation of the hiring managers. Your feedback through the MSS is important and will be used to further improve the federal hiring process.



Hiring Reform Training

Whilemenia Duncan, Communications Officer
Operations

In accordance with mandates set forth in OPM's Hiring Reform Initiative; the Department has issued specific requirements to be added to the [FY11 Performance Plans](#) of all supervisors with the authority to hire. The purpose of these requirements is to assure hiring managers and supervisors are fully engaged in the hiring process and to hold them accountable for the results. To that end, training has been developed on the hiring initiatives to ensure managers understand the impact and their role in the entire hiring process.

The training, titled "Introduction to Hiring Reform" will provide an overview of the Hiring Reform Initiative and information you may use to partner with the HRD. The information may be used to make decisions concerning planning workforce requirements, identifying required skills for the work, and becoming actively engaged in the recruitment and interviewing process. It also focuses on the need to being fully involved in recruiting and hiring highly qualified employees, and in fully supporting their transition to the federal service.

The training will be administered through AgLearn, and will soon be placed on the Learning Plan of each manager and supervisor. A notice will be issued that provides instructions on the requirements for taking and completing the training.

Additional training and informational resources will be made available throughout the year on HRD's Hiring Reform Web Page.

Workforce and Succession Planning

Joice Trout, Human Resources Specialist
Human Resources Information Systems Branch

Workforce and succession planning are critical elements in an organizations day to day business. Effective planning prepares agencies for the workforce crisis that is being created by profound demographic shifts. Leadership must know and understand their current workforce needs in order to make valuable and educated decisions for future workforce requirements. Furthermore, as the nation's population and workforce increasingly diversify, agencies will need to adapt their cultures, management and human resources approaches to this diversity. Workforce planning is the business process for ensuring that an organization has suitable access to talent to ensure future business success. Human Resources is in the process of creating a tool to assist managers with capturing their current workforce data information efficiently and effectively.



Workforce and Succession Planning (continued)

In addition, workforce planning is not a onetime event, but a continuous effort to ensure that the competencies are being developed over time. Human Resources have recognized the need for leadership to know your workforce needs and is partnering with you to assist in this effort by creating a website to assist you in your efforts to familiarize yourself with your workforce and succession planning needs. The OPM 2010 Hiring Reform and the USDA Position Management Policy are drivers for development of this website. In addition, the USDA Diversity Roadmap has monthly reporting requirements for each agency in which this website will have the ability to address.

The new Workforce and Succession planning website will capture *Quarterly Workforce Snapshots (overall current workforce, grade, age, gender, length of service, veterans and length of service)* at the Deputy Administrator level. In addition information will be available for a variety of existing web tools leadership can use to obtain their workforce information. These web tools include the *Executive Information System (EIS), EmpowHR Data Warehouse* and the *NFC Reporting Center*.

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Position Description Library

Talent Acquisition Branch
Classification and Position Management Section

The FFAS Position Description Library is a web-based automated position classification records system that provides active position descriptions (PDs) to HRD Professionals, Management and employees within FFAS. This system will replace all hardcopy classification records, which include the following: position descriptions, PD coversheets (AD-332) and evaluation statements. The FFAS Position Description Library is not only a valuable resource to HRD Professionals, but it also serves as a tool to elevate HRD's customer service to a new level of efficiency and effectiveness.

Before the FFAS Position Description Library was established, all FFAS PDs were maintained within PD books. Locating, utilizing and editing hardcopy PDs was time-consuming, and thus, inefficient for both the HRD community and our customers.

However, the new web-based application increases the efficiency of HRD operations by replacing hardcopy PD books with an electronic database – serving as the primary source to retrieve active PDs. This automated application provides users with electronic access to position descriptions and to OPM classification standards and qualification standards for General Schedule (GS) and Federal Wage System (FWS) positions. It also provides users the capability to access and search on any data element or combination of data elements of PDs – such as title, series, grade, pay plan, division and organizational location. Furthermore, the application maintains automated records of competitive levels, position sensitivity codes, supervisory codes, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) status, Bargaining Unit codes and OGE 450.



Position Description Library (continued)

Benefits of the FFAS Position Description Library include the following:

- establishment of one database with active PDs and evaluation statements available
- online access to all PDs within FFAS
- automated PD numbering system
- search capability for PDs
- cut and paste capability to establish a new PD
- elimination of time spent in maintaining master files of PDs
- elimination of requirement to fax or mail PDs to obtain signatures on the PD coversheet
- elimination of the PD cover sheet (AD-332)
- and faster processing time through the elimination of paper and the use of established PDs.

In order to familiarize HRD professionals with the new web-based application, employees in HRD have been trained and advised in the use of the FFAS Position Description Library.

Next steps include training management, throughout April and May, in the use of the FFAS Position Description Library. The official HRD management release date will be determined after all training has been completed for the audience.

Hiring *Reform*



The New HRD
Where Our Customers
Experience Our Value Everyday