

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION MISSION AREA
 BUSINESS CENTER
 WASHINGTON, DC 20250**

FPAC NOTICE	NUMBER: FPACN 4740-001
SUBJECT: Improving USDA’s Internships – Approvals Required for Work Experience Agreements	DATE: October 14, 2018
APPROVING OFFICIAL: Thomas Christensen, Deputy Chief Operating Officer	EXPIRATION DATE: October 13, 2019

1. PURPOSE

This directive provides guidance to FPAC agencies on entering into any new internship agreements or extending or modifying existing internship agreements consistent with the Deputy Secretary’s direction to Under Secretaries and agency heads on August 16, 2018.

2. MESSAGE

- a. On August 16, 2018, USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky issued a memorandum to all Under Secretaries and agency heads entitled “Improving USDA’s Internships – Approvals Required for Work Experience Agreements.” The memo contains instructions and a listing of 12 data elements required to be gathered and submitted as part of the request for departmental approval.
- b. Effective immediately, FPAC agencies are now required to obtain approval before entering into any new internship agreements or extending or modifying existing internship agreements. This review and approval process will ensure an assessment of all prospective USDA internship agreements for legal sufficiency and that USDA is complying with all appropriate statutory and regulatory authorities. By providing this review process, we will be able to better align opportunities with our workforce needs, develop targeted metrics for success, and provide our USDA interns with a superior career enhancement opportunity.
- c. This new review and approval requirement includes agreements with individual educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, associations, and other groups. At this time, the only exclusion from this new agreement review process is USDA’s Forest Service Resource Assistant Program operated under the authority of the Public Lands Corps Act. Also, this does not apply to Pathways Program Interns, Pathways Recent Graduates, or Presidential Management Fellows, as they are programs that are coordinated through USDA’s Office of Human Resources.
- d. Please note that this is not a directive to terminate existing internship agreements. It is meant to secure approval for renewals, extensions, and new internship agreements.
- e. To fulfill this new requirement the oversight, collection, and submission of all requests to USDA will be managed through the Workforce Planning and Recruitment Section of the FPAC Business Center’s Human Resources Division’s Workforce Programs Branch.

This will permit the opportunity to develop an inventory of the agreements, ensure a consistent approach across FPAC and incorporate the use of interns in our ongoing efforts to build a “best in class” workforce. The USDA Office of Human Resource Management has indicated that all requests need to be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the prior agreement’s end date or, for new agreements, at least 45 days before the preferred date of signature.

- f. In facilitating the submission and approval process, the Workforce Planning and Recruitment Section will work with FPAC organizations to collect and consolidate the following information, which is required to be included in requests:
- (1) The agreement document (prior year or draft of the newly proposed agreement)
 - (2) Start and end date of agreement
 - (3) Deadline that a decision is required for renewing or enacting the agreement
 - (4) Annual costs encumbered for fiscal year (FY) 2017, awarded in FY 2018, and requested for FY 2019
 - (5) Types of expenses covered—specify whether the participants receive wages, stipends, tuition, travel, room (housing), board (meals), or other considerations
 - (6) Roles the interns play in carrying out your agency’s or office’s work, including alignment with USDA’s Strategic Plan FY 2018 to 2022
 - (7) Work experiences offered (e.g., what activities the interns do and who they report to)
 - (8) Term of work experience (less-than-semester, summer semester, fall semester, spring semester, full-year, or multi-year)
 - (9) Number of participants by term of work experience (as delineated above)
 - (10) Geographic location of interns prior to their service with USDA, such as hometown, town of prior address, college or university recruited from, etc. (as much information as is available)
 - (11) Process for modifying agreement
 - (12) End of year report or latest status report for FY 2017 and FY 2018 (if available)

3. CONTACT

If you have questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Roger Slater by email at roger.slater@ut.usda.gov or by phone at 202-579-1016.

Attachment A – Notification from U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Stephen L. Censky, “Improving USDA’s Internships – Approvals Required for Work Experience Agreements”



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

To: Undersecretaries and Agency Heads of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

From: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Deputy Secretary Stephen L. Censky

Date: August 16, 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen L. Censky", written over a horizontal line.

Subject: Improving USDA's Internships – Approvals Required for Work Experience Agreements

Fully enacting USDA's Strategic Goal #1 both today and in the future requires a capable, skilled, and motivated team of employees. Ensuring that programs are delivered efficiently, effectively, and with integrity—and a focus on customer service—means that we must be strategic and deliberate about investing in our workforce and recruiting from a geographically diverse set of talent throughout the Nation.

Internship programs play a critical role in this important endeavor to develop the best talent pipeline in the Federal Government. This summer, USDA employed more than 1,400 Pathways interns, and more than 1,200 other interns and volunteers, managed through a wide variety of third-party agreements.

In order to begin creating the strategic, true OneUSDA approach we need for all of our internship options, **agencies are now required to attain approval before entering into any new internship agreements, or for extending or modifying existing internship agreements.** This review and approval process will ensure an assessment of all prospective USDA internship agreements for legal sufficiency and that USDA is complying with all appropriate statutory and regulatory authorities. By providing this concerted review process, we will be able to better align opportunities with our workforce needs, develop targeted metrics for success, and provide our USDA interns with a superior career enhancement opportunity.

This new review and approval requirement includes agreements with individual education institutions, non-profit organizations, associations, and other groups. At this time, the only exclusion from this new agreements-review process is USDA's Forest Service Resource Assistant Program operated under the authority of the Public Lands Corps Act, since all hands are needed in that Agency at this time, for ongoing operations. Also, this does not apply to Pathways Program Interns, Pathways Recent Grads, or Pathways Fellows, as they are programs that are coordinated through USDA's Office of Human Resources.

Note that this is not a directive to terminate existing internship agreements, just to seek approval for renewals, extensions, and new internship agreements.

Requests for new agreements, extensions, and modifications should be sent to the Office of Human Resource Management at ohrmdatagroup@dm.usda.gov. Please be sure to send requests at least 30 days in advance of the prior agreement's end date or, for new agreements, at least 45 days before the preferred date of signature.

Agreement approvals will be considered by the Office of the Secretary and Departmental Administration based on the following information, which is required to be included in requests:

- The agreement document (prior year or draft of the newly-proposed agreement)
- Start and end date of agreement
- Deadline that a decision is required for renewing or enacting the agreement
- Annual costs encumbered for fiscal year (FY) 2017, awarded in FY 2018, and request for FY 2019
- Types of expenses covered—specify whether the participants receive wages, stipends, tuition, travel, room and/or board/housing, or other considerations
- Roles the interns play in carrying out your Agency's or office's work, including alignment with USDA's Strategic Plan FY 2018 to 2022
- Work experiences offered (e.g., what activities the interns do and who they report to)
- Term of work experience (less-than semester, Summer semester, Fall semester, Spring semester, full-year, or multi-year)
- Number of participants by term of work experience (as delineated above)
- Geographic location of interns, prior to their service with USDA via the organization, such as hometown, town of prior address, college/university recruited from, etc. (as much information as is available)
- Process for modifying agreement
- End of year report or latest status report for FY 2017 and FY 2018 (if available)

Also, in the approval request, please include the name, position title, phone numbers, and email addresses of the point of contact within your Agency or office that can be reached in case of questions, and as well as whom should receive a notice of approval.

Lastly, if your Mission Areas requires interns in the Fall 2018 semester during the agreement review period, please also notify the Office of Human Resource Management at the same email address (ohrmdatagroup@dm.usda.gov). We may be able to offer short-term solutions for internships during the interim review period.

Thank you for all you do for USDA, as we "Do Right and Feed Everyone"!