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

Notice AO-1202

For: FSA Employees

Program Delivery in FSA Offices in USDA Service Centers

Approved by: Administrator

1 Overview

A Background

FSA is still challenged to maximize fiscal and personnel resources for the most effective delivery of farm programs (FP) and FLP. STC's and SED's continue to find it necessary to consolidate resources, strategically place personnel, share-manage field offices, use part-time field offices, and close additional service centers to more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of local customers.

The limited number of personnel resources require planning in determining how commodity, conservation, and FLP will be delivered in FSA Offices in USDA Service Centers.

B Purpose

This notice outlines:

- titles for employees
- types of FSA Offices in USDA Service Centers
- role of employees delivering FP and FLP
- supervisory roles and responsibilities
- how administrative functions will be carried out in FSA Service Center Offices
- cross training priorities.

Note: The complete merging of dual delivery and personnel systems is a process that will necessitate statutory, regulatory, and policy changes. FSA is working toward a goal of commonality in its dual personnel system. As statutory, regulatory, and policy changes are made, FSA will be moving forward with appropriate personnel policy changes that will promote hiring the best qualified employees.

Continued on the next page

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2000	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to FSA Service Center Offices

1 Overview (Continued)

C
Labor Relations Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, this notice does not apply until bargaining takes place. Where contract language addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

D
State Office Action

State Offices shall immediately distribute this notice to FSA Service Centers.

2 Employee Titles

A
Types of Employees

All FSA employees working in a Service Center will be referred to as FSA Service Center employees.

If there is a need to distinguish between COC employees and Civil Service employees, identify them as CO employees or GS employees.

B
Position Titles for Service Center Level Employees

FSA believes positions with similar responsibilities should have similar working titles. All FSA program technicians for FP and FLP will have the working title of Program Technician (PT).

The following working titles are authorized for Service Center positions:

- Farm Loan Officer (FLO), formerly Agriculture Credit Officer
- Farm Loan Manager (FLM), formerly Ag Credit Manager or District Credit Manager
- Chief Program Technician (CPT), formerly Chief Program Assistant
- Program Clerk, formerly Ag Credit Clerk.

Continued on the next page

2 Employee Titles (Continued)

C
Position Titles for State Level Employees

To ensure consistency in working titles, the supervisor of the FLP Branch in the State Office has a working title of Farm Loan Chief (FLC), similar to the working titles of the supervisors in the commodity branches in the State Office.

The working title for State Office employees with FLP responsibilities is Farm Loan Specialist. The working title for State Office support personnel for FP and FLP is State Office PT.

3 Role of Employees Delivering FSA Programs in Service Center Offices

A
Basic Services Delivered in All FSA Service Center Offices

All FSA Service Center Offices will provide for the timely and effective delivery of basic FP. All FSA Service Center Offices shall provide customers with required applications, forms, instructions, and information on current and new FP.

All FSA Service Center Offices shall provide the following basic FLP services:

- collecting and processing payments
- distributing applications, forms, and informational literature
- accepting loan making and servicing applications
- responding to automated account information inquiries
- scheduling appointments with FLO or FLM
- conducting outreach activities, including appropriate publicity through the media.

SED's, STC's, and DD's must train employees to ensure that all basic services of **all** FSA programs are delivered in an effective and timely manner.

Continued on the next page

3 Role of Employees Delivering FSA Programs in Service Center Offices (Continued)

B
Role of PT's

PT's in all Service Center Offices shall be trained to ensure delivery of the basic FP and FLP services in subparagraph A.

At least 1 PT or the CED will be assigned program responsibility for each of the basic FP's, as well as new FP's, and at least 1 PT in every FSA Service Center Office shall be assigned FLP as a program responsibility.

In Service Centers where FLO's or FLM's are headquartered and where warranted by workload, there shall be at least 1 PT assigned FLP as a program responsibility with **very minimal** or **no additional** primary program responsibility.

All PT's assigned FLP responsibility shall be responsible for:

- basic FLP services listed in subparagraph A
- maintaining current borrower and operational files
- assisting CED's, FLO's, FLM's, and DD's with technical and program duties associated with FLP.

Supervisors shall provide necessary training for PT's in their assigned programs.

C
Role of CPT's

CPT's may be established in larger Service Center Offices to assist CED in managing:

- administrative functions
- FP activity
- FLP responsibilities assigned to CED.

CPT's shall:

- provide training and guidance to other employees
- coordinate employee work activities
- ensure that resources are available or properly allocated to accomplish the work of the Service Center Office
- when designated by COC or CED, be responsible for all office and field activities when CED is absent.

CPT's may also be assigned specific commodity or conservation program responsibility.

Continued on the next page

3 Role of Employees Delivering FSA Programs in Service Center Offices (Continued)

D
Role of FLO

FLO's shall:

- evaluate financial situations and credit risks and/or approve or disapprove individual loans
- provide advice to applicants and borrowers on selecting, expanding, and using farms, land development, improvements, organizing farm and rural enterprises, and other related matters
- provide continuing assistance to individual and group borrowers on maintaining compliance with loan requirements
- receive technical supervision from FLM, or in their absence, DD.

FLO's role includes the responsibilities listed, but is not limited to these responsibilities.

E
Role of FLM

FLM's:

- shall evaluate financial situations and credit risks and approve or disapprove individual loans
- shall provide advice to applicants and borrowers on selecting, expanding, and using farms, land development, improvements, organizing farm and rural enterprises, and other related matters
- shall provide continuing assistance to individual and group borrowers on maintaining compliance with loan requirements
- under the supervision of DD, shall serve as the Service Center level technical authority on FLP
- shall provide advice, technical assistance, and financial management assistance to applicants and borrowers
- shall provide information about FLP to representatives of businesses and community groups

Continued on the next page

3 Role of Employees Delivering FSA Programs in Service Center Offices (Continued)

E
Role of FLM (Continued)

- will supervise and direct the work of farm loan staff responsible for making, servicing, and liquidating loans under farm loan authorities as indicated in the table in subparagraph 5 B

- may supervise FLP activity for a specific geographic region.

FLM's role includes the responsibilities listed, but is not limited to these responsibilities.

F
Role of CED

CED's will be responsible for the following:

- the effective and timely delivery of FP
- all administrative functions for the Service Center Office
- serving as Agency representative to the local FAC.

SED and FLC will identify FSA Service Center Offices where CED, after sufficient training, shall be responsible for ensuring that the following FLP responsibilities are performed:

- delivering basic FLP services in subparagraph A

- reviewing accounts, collecting data as needed, searching lien records, and making recommendations for debt settlements

- responding to FOIA requests

- processing borrower classifications

- conducting:

  - quarterly records reviews
  - lien searches
  - tax searches and checks
  - outreach efforts
  - security checks such as chattel, crop, and real estate

Continued on the next page

F
Role of CED (Continued)

- preparing chattel appraisals
- assisting with real estate appraisals by gathering comparable sales information
- monitoring construction projects such as barns, conservation, poultry, etc.
- monitoring inventory property
- collecting data for year-end analysis.

Depending on training received and workload demands, CED's may be responsible for additional FLP responsibilities or assignments. CED's role includes the responsibilities listed, but is not limited to these responsibilities.

SED's and DD's are responsible for providing CED's with the necessary training for FP and FLP responsibilities. All CED's are required to complete this training.

CED’s consult and provide input to FLO, FLM, and/or DD about daily assignments for PT’s with FLP and **other** program assignments.

G
Role of DD

DD’s shall:

- have overall managerial responsibility for operations in FSA Service Center Offices in the assigned district to ensure conformance to policy and procedural requirements in all programs
- provide oversight, program advice, training, and guidance to COC's and FSA Service Center staff on FP and FLP
- conduct ongoing evaluations of program and administrative operations in FSA Service Center Offices within the district to ensure that FSA programs are delivered effectively and accurately
- exercise assigned supervisory responsibilities

Continued on the next page

G
Role of DD (Continued)

- make FLP decisions or recommendations in those areas beyond the delegated authority of FLM
- ensure that offices are providing adequate counseling services and processing loan applications and servicing promptly
- ensure adequate and necessary cross training for employees in the district
- review and concur that all personnel-related decisions and actions of COC's, CED's, and FLM's are in accordance with policy and procedure.

All DD's must have loan approval authority. Any new DD must complete any required FP training, FLP training and testing and receive loan approval authority within 12 months after their effective service date as a DD.

DD's role includes the responsibilities listed, but is not limited to these responsibilities.

H
Role of FLC

FLC's shall:

- ensure the propriety, integrity, and consistency of FLP administration throughout the State
- develop and disseminate State policies, systems, and operating procedures
- provide guidance on controversial and/or highly unusual situations
- provide advice, technical assistance, and financial management assistance to applicants and borrowers
- direct reviews of FLP to ensure:
  - Statewide conformance to policy and procedural requirements
  - that offices are providing adequate counseling service and processing loan applications and servicing promptly
- develop, plan, and direct FLP training to ensure that all FSA employees are able to carry out their FLP responsibilities and assignments.

FLC's role includes the responsibilities listed, but is not limited to these responsibilities.

---

4 Types of Service Centers

A Background

Declining ceilings and funding have forced FSA to evaluate all possible options to meet customer needs. These options include offering varying levels of service at FSA Service Center Offices, shared management, part-time offices, office closures, and satellite offices. SED's and STC's shall consider the following factors when planning their future field delivery needs:

- efficiency - the cost of delivering services in relation to benefits received by producers
- outreach - impact on small, limited resource, and minority producers
- program participation - evaluation of current and potential program participation.

SED's and STC's shall plan and train personnel, as appropriate, to attain a reasonable combination of the following types of FSA Service Center Offices to ensure effective and timely program delivery for all FSA programs.

Continued on the next page

4 Types of Service Centers (Continued)

B
Full Commodity/ Full FLP Service Office - (Type 1 Office)

Type 1 Offices shall provide full service on all programs administered by FSA. CED's and FLM's will be headquartered at these offices with fully trained staffs. An office where an FLO or a CED with grandfathered loan approval authority is headquartered and serves only that office's service area will also be considered a Type 1 Office. Type 1 Offices shall provide full FP and FLP services, and may provide FLP services to other type offices.

Complete FLP loan files shall be maintained at Type 1 Offices for borrowers within the office's service area. Type 1 Offices may maintain FLP files for any Type 2, Type 3, part-time, or satellite locations that receive FLP services from the office. In Type 1 Offices, where warranted by FLP workload, there will be at least 1 PT assigned FLP as a program responsibility with very minimal or no additional primary program responsibility. Additional PT's shall be assigned FLP program responsibility commensurate to existing workload.

Note: State Offices shall consider centralizing the making and servicing of guaranteed loans to State Offices, districts, or FLM's. Centralizing these functions would provide better consistency and efficiency in delivery of the guaranteed loan program to customers.

C
Full Commodity/ Intermediate FLP Service Office - (Type 2 Office)

Type 2 Offices shall provide full service on all FSA FP's. FLP workload does not justify a full time FLO or FLM, but the office is visited on a regular basis by FLO or FLM. This office will be staffed with adequate support staff to cover FP and FLP.

Basic FLP activities in subparagraph 3 A, authorizing releases, writing checks from supervised bank accounts, and distributing loan funds, as authorized by FLO's or FLM's, will be provided in Type 2 Offices.

Complete FLP loan files may be maintained in this office for borrowers within the office's service area. A Type 2 Office may also maintain FLP files for any Type 3 Office or satellite location that receives FLP services from the office. SED's shall ensure that properly trained employees are available to maintain files located in these offices. FLP files will not be distributed to a Service Center where there are less than 35 borrowers' files to be maintained or serviced.

Continued on the next page

4 Types of Service Centers (Continued)

D
Full Commodity/ Basic FLP Service Office - (Type 3 Office)

Type 3 Offices shall provide full service on all FSA FP's. FLP workload does not justify regular visits by FLO or FLM, but the office is visited, as needed. Basic FLP activities in subparagraph 3 A will be provided in these offices. Full time employees will have basic knowledge of all programs and shall provide forms and assistance in completing FLP applications.

No FLP files would be maintained in a Type 3 Office, however, copies of appropriate items could be maintained so that basic service activities could be completed.

E
Part-Time Service Center Office

Some FSA Service Offices are serving a very limited number of customers and it is not feasible with limited resources to continue to have personnel present in those offices every business day. SED's and STC's shall review their offices to identify offices that may be open part-time, rather than full-time. When implementing part-time offices, SED's and STC's shall follow procedure in 27-PM, subparagraph 52 C. SED's and STC's shall work with COC's in this process. Similar to shared-management, STC's shall have the authority to implement part-time offices to allocate resources in their State to ensure effective program delivery.

CED's in the headquarter Service Center Office for the part-time office shall work with COC to ensure that services in the part-time office will be adequately available during program signups and emergency situations.

F
Satellite Locations

Satellite locations are used for outreach or to service producers monthly basis or more often, as needed. No full time staff or System 36 would be stationed at this location. This option may be used in counties where offices have already been closed and staff needs to be present during special outreach efforts or program signups.

5 Supervision

A Background

Section 226 of the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 stipulates that:

- CO and GS employees may be used interchangeably in local FSA offices
- personnel actions for GS employees shall be taken by another GS employee.

Note: Personnel actions include appointments, promotions, disciplinary actions, details, reassignments, performance evaluation, pay, and awards.

B Assigning Work

CED's are responsible for supervising all:

- administrative functions such as, time and attendance, travel, etc., in each FSA Service Center Office and selecting a PT to be assigned all administrative duties and responsibilities

- commodity and conservation program activity.

Notes: Oversight of FLP loan making and servicing will be under the direction of the responsible FLM or DD. See following table.

Although the CED position description has been clarified to show that CED's do not have full responsibility for FLP loan making and servicing, CED's are responsible, at a minimum, for FLP functions as outlined in subparagraph 5 E.

Continued on the next page

5 Supervision (Continued)

B
Assigning Work (Continued)

The following table clarifies supervisory responsibilities in different situations.

Employee	Primary Responsibility	Type of Office	Supervisor	Daily Assignments
PT (CO)	FP	All offices	CED	CED
PT (GS)	FP	All offices	DD	CED+DD
PT (CO)	FLP	Type 1 office	FLM 1/	FLM or FLO+CED
		Type 2 office	FLM	FLM, FLO or DD+CED
PT (GS)	FLP	Type 1 office	FLM	FLM or FLO
		Type 2 office	FLM or DD	FLM, FLO or DD+CED
FLO	FLP	All offices	FLM or DD	FLM or DD + CED

Employee	Supervisor	Daily Assignments
FLM	DD	DD
CED	COC	COC + DD
DD	SED	SED

1/ Supervisor may be a CED with loan approval authority.

Notes: Employees listed first under “Daily Assignments” column will be the primary person making the day-to-day assignments with consultation and input from the last person listed. It is required that day-to-day assignments be a coordinated effort.

DD's will resolve any issues that may arise about day-to-day assignments.

In Type 3 Offices PT's will normally have collateral program duties of FP and FLP. Therefore, CED's should be supervisors of CO PT's and FLM's or DD's should be the supervisors of GS PT's.

Continued on the next page

5 Supervision (Continued)

C
Performance Evaluation

Career ladder promotions shall not be effected unless:

- the employee's current performance rating has a summary rating of "Results Achieved"
- there is work available at the higher level
- the employee demonstrates the potential for satisfactory performance at the next higher level.

Supervisors will consult with other managers who are involved in day-to-day assignments when completing an employee's performance evaluation.

COC will review and evaluate CED performance with DD concurrence.

D
Administrative Functions

One PT in each FSA Service Center Office shall be assigned **all** administrative duties, including serving as official timekeeper, for both CO and GS FSA Service Center employees. CED is the supervisor of all administrative functions in each FSA Service Center Office and will select PT to be assigned these administrative duties. If assigning administrative duties to a GS PT with FLP duties and responsibilities in a Type 2 or 3 Office, CED will consult with FLO or FLM and DD before making the assignment. PT will be responsible for reviewing and processing all time and attendance records for all FSA employees headquartered in that office.

Continued on the next page

5 Supervision (Continued)

E
Designating Acting CED

When determining who shall serve as acting CED, COC's should consider management experience, availability, and feasibility. STC's may provide guidance and criteria to be considered by COC. STC's shall work with COC's, as needed, to resolve any problems concerning the acting CED designation.

Where there is a CED vacancy, employees in an acting capacity shall be temporarily promoted, if eligible, when the arrangement is expected to exceed 30 calendar days. The temporary promotion should not exceed 120 calendar days. If a Service Center Office is in a temporary shared management operation or has a CED vacancy for longer than 120 calendar days, STC or SED shall meet with COC to work out a permanent option. Exceptions to the 120 calendar days shall be approved by EDSO.

F
Designating Acting FLM

DD's should determine an acting FLM in FLM's absence, if one is needed for program delivery or FLP supervision.

G
Delegations of Authority

Guaranteed loan regulations have been published to provide for delegation of authority to FLM's and FLO's for guaranteed loans. Notice FLP-37 provides instructions to COC's to delegate authority to determine eligibility for Direct Loans.

When COC delegates any program authority to any FSA employee, including FLO's, FLM's, and CED's, **all** delegated actions shall be reported back to COC at the next COC meeting so that delegated actions may be included in the COC minutes. COC minutes are an official record of all Service Center level determinations.

H
Cross Training

Cross training of FSA employees is critical for the delivery of **all** FSA programs. SED's are responsible for providing necessary cross training for the effective delivery of **all** FSA programs.

SED's shall ensure that updated FLP training modules are available in every FSA office. However, these modules do not stand alone as an FLP training tool.

I
Obsolete Notice

Notice AO-1164 is obsolete.