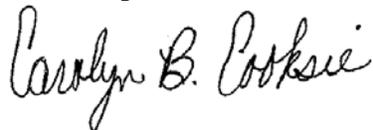


For: FSA Employees

Updates to Activity Reporting System

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

OBF continues to look for efficiencies and improvements to the Activity Reporting System to provide FSA with more accurate and useful data and offer a more user-friendly software environment. 21-AO was recently amended to include clarifications and updates.

B Purpose

This notice provides information on improvements and changes that have been made to the Activity Reporting System in the WebTA software, and updates that were made by 21-AO, amendment 4, that include the following:

- new activities added to the Activity Dictionary
- clarification on “Other FSA Programs”
- clarification of FAS – DAM and RMA – DAM program categories
- addition of Program Information
- correction of program/activity combinations validation
- information about new generic programs and activities.

C Contact Information

If there are any questions about this notice, contact either of the following:

- Mitzi Lankford, BUD, by either e-mail to mitzi.lankford@wdc.usda.gov or telephone at 202-720-0510
- Vicki Larson, BUD, by either e-mail to vicki.larson@wdc.usda.gov or telephone at 202-720-2501.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Disposal Date | Distribution |
| February 1, 2012 | All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices |

2 Additions and Improvements

A Software Improvement for the Activity Reporting System in WebTA

Suggestions from WebTA and Activity Reporting System users have been collected since implementing the software in FY 2010. Some suggestions have already been included in the software; however, other suggestions had to be delayed because they were not compliant with the version of WebTA available. In the current WebTA version 3.8.20 released in Pay Period 24, the software provides the ability for the “Program” and “Activity” drop-down menus to be alphabetized for easier selection by users. OBF will continue to make improvements to software as future versions of WebTA allow.

B Activity Reporting System Activity Dictionary Additions and Clarifications

The Activity Reporting System Activity Dictionary found in 21-AO, Exhibit 4, has been amended to add/update activities and help define activities performed, including the following:

- “Leasing” has been added as an activity with the description, “lease procurement and simplified lease acquisition procedures”
- “MIDAS”, has been added as an activity.

Note: The activity for MIDAS will be captured separately than other activities in the Activity Reporting System. Any work that would normally be reported according to the Activity Dictionary under a specific activity; such as IT Development and Modernization, **if related to MIDAS**, will be reported as MIDAS.

Exceptions: “NP” (nonprogram)/”HR” (human resources), required training, and any activity that **is not** related to MIDAS shall be reported according to the applicable activities found within the Activity Dictionary.

2 **Additions and Improvements (Continued)**

C Other FSA Programs Clarification

Certain programs require a minimal amount of time or are only worked on by a minimal number of employees during any FY; as a result, it is not practical to track the time for these programs separately. To resolve this issue, time dedicated to these programs will be captured in the category, “Other FSA Programs” and shall only be used for the following programs:

- 2008 Aquaculture Grants
- Asparagus Revenue Market Loss Assistance Payment Program
- Biofuel Initiative
- CAP/Poultry Grant Program
- Dairy Indemnity Payment Program
- Feedstock Flexibility
- Grassroots Source Water Protection Program
- Inactive FSA programs
- Reforestation Pilot Program
- State Mediation Grants
- Sugar Program
- Voluntary Public Access Grant and Habitat Incentive Program.

Note: Use of the “Other FSA Programs” category will be monitored by the National Office for appropriate use.

D Clarification of Reimbursable Agreement Categories

Major reimbursable agreements with high dollar value or work volume, are captured in the Activity Reporting System in a program-like category. The time reported for these reimbursable agreements provides support for the funding FSA requests for services provided. The salary and benefit dollars associated with the Activity Reporting System data also provides documentation to use for settling direct and reimbursable funds in FMML.

RMA and FAS have, or are pursuing, several different reimbursable agreements with FSA. This has caused some confusion for employees in reporting as well as OBF in pulling the correct data for the purposes mentioned herein. For that reason, 2 reimbursable program categories have been renamed to clarify that they should **only** be used by DAM employees. The program categories are:

- “FAS” – HR renamed “FAS – DAM”
- “RMA” renamed “RMA – DAM”.

Note: See 21-AO, Exhibit 6 for more information on other Agency reimbursable agreements.

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2 Additions and Improvements (Continued)

E Program Information by Area

Employees should always relate their work to a program when possible. 21-AO, Exhibit 6 has been added to define programs and clarify the organization or office groups whose employee's would perform work related to the program. Each area contains component programs or categories, a brief description of the overall purpose of each program or category, and the organization or office groups whose employee's would perform work for the program. This table provides an example.

| Program Area or Category | Short Description | Long Description | Purpose | To Be Used By |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Income Support and Disaster Assistance | ACRE | Average Crop Revenue Election Program | Provides producers an option to earn payments to protect against declines in market revenue. | State and County Office and applicable headquarter <u>1/</u> employees. |

1/ For the purpose of this exhibit **only**, National Office means Washington, DC; Kansas City; St. Louis; and APFO, **except** DACO and KCCO. DACO and/KCCO are considered separate because of the nature of specific programs.

F Additional Program and Activity Combinations

Because the decisions needed to be made at the time the Activity Reporting System software was developed as to what program and activity combinations would possibly be used by all levels of FSA, several combinations were **not** included in the original software. Those combinations have previously shown in employees T&A's as invalid combinations. The requested combinations were added in this request for software updates. The new program activity combinations added are as follow:

- "Common - Emergency Prep"
- "Common - Environmental Compliance"
- "Common - Outreach"
- "Crop Insurance - Measvs"
- "Crop Insurance - Prog-Pol-Plng"
- "Crop Insurance - Training"
- "NP - Outreach".

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3 New Generic Programs and Activities

A National Office Authorization for Generic Program Codes

When the Activity Reporting System was initially implemented in July 2010, costs and requests for changes to the software were covered under the original contract. The changes were completed with a very short turn-around-time and no additional cost was incurred. There is now one USDA contract for WebTA that has moved to a standardized software release schedule that makes any change in the Activity Reporting System a multi-month process. This requires decisions on changes to the system to be made months in advance. To still provide for flexibility and timeliness within WebTA for Activity Reporting System, new generic programs and activities have been added that can be used as needed and **directed by OBF**.

Five generic program codes, that have been created and added to the Activity Reporting System “Program” drop-down menu:

- were added with the specific intent to be used in relation to new or ad-hoc programs for FSA to begin capturing the programs without the delay or added expense of initiating a software change
- are to be used **only** when defined by National Office personnel and authorized through an AO notice.

The 5 generic programs codes are:

- “NOAUTH-P1”
- “NOAUTH-P2”
- “NOAUTH-P3”
- “NOAUTH-P4”
- “NOAUTH-P5”.

B National Office Authorization for Generic Activity Codes

Five generic activity codes, that have been created and added to the Activity Reporting System “Activity” drop-down menu:

- were added with the specific intent to be used in relation to new or ad-hoc activities for FSA to begin capturing the activity without the delay or added expense of initiating a software change
- are to be used **only** when defined by National Office personnel and authorized through an AO notice.

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3 New Generic Programs and Activities (Continued)

B National Office Authorization for Generic Activity Codes (Continued)

The 5 generic activity codes are:

- “NOAUTH-A1”
- “NOAUTH-A2”
- “NOAUTH-A3”
- “NOAUTH-A4”
- “NOAUTH-A5”.

The generic program and activities are **not** to be used **except** as directed and will be monitored through National Office reports.