

For: FSA Employees

Discontinuing Bridges to Opportunity

Approved by: Administrator



1 Overview

A Background

The Bridges to Opportunity (Bridges) service was developed to add value to FSA’s traditional programs and services by connecting customers to the services they need. Specifically, Bridges provided a wide range of agricultural resources to customers, along with customer referrals to both internal and external partners. The resources were locally focused and participating partners collaborated with FSA to enhance service to our local agricultural communities.

Bridges began as a pilot in 2014 in 12 offices and 5 States. In 2016, it was expanded to 200 offices in 20 States, serving over 300 counties. Finally, the service was implemented nationwide in early 2017. With each phase, refinements were made to the service, including the development of a customer relationship management (CRM) application that allowed the service to be managed and delivered electronically to customers.

The Bridges CRM application introduced the capability of tracking all customer service activities, in addition to managing and providing resources and referrals. By compiling customer service data, the agency positioned itself to provide more proactive service to better meet customers’ needs and improve the customer experience. Receipt for Service functionality was also incorporated into the application to maximize its usefulness.

With the release of the Farmers.gov website and portal, the effort to add value to customer service is expanding. New and enhanced features and functionality will be released incrementally through Farmers.gov.

B Purpose

This notice provides information on:

- the transition from the Bridges application to the Farmers.gov portal
- the discontinuation of components of the Bridges service
- components and functionality that will continue with the Farmers.gov portal.

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2019	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

Notice AO-1706

1 Overview (Continued)

C Contact

Direct questions to Glenn Schafer by either of the following:

- e-mail to glenn.schafer@wdc.usda.gov
- telephone at 202-236-4983.

2 Transition to Farmers.gov Portal

A Effective Date

On July 16, 2018, the Bridges application will be replaced by the Farmers.gov portal.

B Access to the Portal

FSA employees with access to the Bridges application will have access to the Farmers.gov portal upon its release. All other FSA employees will be granted access soon after the release of the portal.

A link to the portal will be on the FSA Applications page listed as Farmers.gov employee portals.

3 Bridges Components Discontinued

A Resources

The primary component of the Bridges service involved providing agricultural resources to customers from a wide range of sources. The following resources will not initially be available in the Farmers.gov portal:

- Individuals
- Organizations
- Events
- Bundles
- Websites.

The delivery of resources to customers may be reintroduced as an integral part of Farmers.gov content management with a future release of the Farmers.gov portal.

B Referrals

Another component of the service included customer referrals to FSA employees, USDA agency partners, and external partners. Referrals to USDA agency partners and external partners ended in early 2018. Referrals to FSA employees, or any FPAC employee with access to the Farmers.gov portal, will continue.

Notice AO-1706

3 Bridges Components Discontinued (Continued)

C Application Features

Additional features of the application to be discontinued include:

- Chatter
- Libraries
- Coveo Search.

These features may be reintroduced with a future release of the Farmers.gov portal.

D Bridges E-Mail and Support

The Bridges e-mail address (**Bridges2Opportunity@fsa.usda.gov**) will no longer be used.

Direct requests for support for technical issues with the Farmers.gov portal application to the FSA Help Desk or through Remedy.

Support for policy and procedure related to the specific applications within the Farmers.gov portal, including how to use applications, features, and functionality, shall be directed to the appropriate program specialists in the State and National Offices. County level employees shall follow their State's established protocol for policy and procedural questions.

4 Continued Functionality

A Customer Interactions

FSA employees will continue to document customer service activities as "customer interactions" through the Farmers.gov portal. Customer interaction functionality will operate basically the same in the portal as it has been in the Bridges application, although the look and feel of the application has been updated.

The Farmers.gov features curricula is available in AgLearn to familiarize employees with using the portal. Additional training and user guidance is being planned.

B Receipt for Service

Complying with the Receipt for Service requirement will be accomplished using the Farmers.gov portal, as it has been using the Bridges application. All FSA employees shall use the portal to issue receipts to customers. The webRFS application shall not be used by FSA employees.

Receipt for Service policy, found in 22-AO, has not changed; however, 22-AO is being updated to reference the Farmers.gov portal as the application to use for issuing receipts.

4 Continued Functionality (Continued)

C Knowledge Articles

Knowledge is a feature of the portal that allows authorized users to develop and publish articles that can be shared with customers through the receipt. Articles with employee-specific information can also be developed for use by employees.

Additional development is required before articles will be available to share with customers or for use by employees. The Knowledge feature will be present in the portal but will not immediately be populated with articles. More information and guidance will be provided when Knowledge Articles become available.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

A Bridges Roles

In an effort to ensure a smooth transition to using the portal, the individual roles designated as State Bridges Coordinator and State Resource Manager will no longer be applicable. However, these individuals may continue to receive information and guidance on the portal as it relates to the legacy Bridges functionality that will continue in the portal.