

For: All FSA Offices

**Business Process Council to Assist Information Technology (IT)
Modernization Efforts for Farm Program Delivery**

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

A Background

To enter the eBusiness/eGovernment age and provide more efficient services to its customers in the 21st century, DAFP must develop capabilities for modern day, real time, integrated infrastructure that can be used by farmers, FSA County Offices, sister and other government agencies, and third parties. DAFP realizes its existing automated delivery systems, which are basically unchanged since their inception in the mid-1980's, are both outdated and not fully supported by real time eligibility, payment limitation, compliance, statistical reporting, and accounting functions.

B Purpose

This notice provides State and County Offices with information about DAFP's formation of a Business Process Council for automation purposes.

Disposal Date November 1, 2004	Distribution All FSA Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices
--	---

2 General Information About FSA's IT Modernization Efforts

A One-Stop Service

On April 11, 1996, USDA announced its vision for implementing "one-stop" service to its customers through a network of Service Centers staffed by sister agencies. Central to the vision of "one-stop" service is the need for reengineering telecommunications, installing modern day IT infrastructure, and employing real time common administrative systems, software tools, and global positioning and information system (GPS/GIS) technologies.

Much of the work on assembling "one-stop" service infrastructure has begun and has already been completed. The **task remaining** is to apply the capabilities provided by modern IT infrastructure to the development of a more efficient farm program delivery system.

B Steering Committee

To begin the process of farm program delivery modernization, DAFP formed a **Farm Programs Steering Committee** in May 2001 to provide DAFP personnel and State and County Office users of its delivery systems with a forum for:

- keeping DAFP updated on departmental IT developments
- coordinating actions between **farm programs** and **farm loan program** developments
- planning and formulating short and long term IT needs for program delivery systems
- ensuring that DAFP requests for IT needs are conveyed to ITSD and OCIO.

Note: In May 2001 a Farm Loan Programs Steering Committee already existed.

C Business Process Council

On July 15, 2003, DAFP established a **Business Process Council** to function as a subcommittee of the **Farm Programs Steering Committee**. Although the Business Process Council is part of the Steering Committee, DAFP intends for the council to work independently and meet on a more frequently. The Business Process Council's **initial** responsibility is to draft a concise, high level view or **blueprint** for the desired new DAFP program delivery system. Eventually, the Business Process Council will function as an oversight body to guide project implementation.

3 General Information About DAFP's Business Process Council

A Reasons for Formation

DAFP's primary reason for forming the **Business Process Council** was to provide a vehicle for ensuring that software for a **new** farm programs delivery system meets the needs of, and is positively influenced in its creation by the collaborative work efforts of the stakeholders who have built, presently maintain and use its **existing** delivery systems.

While contractor support is available for this type of work, DAFP felt that contractors would lack the in depth understanding of the unique complexities of, and relationships between, DAFP's various farm program areas to be best suited for this task. For that reason, DAFP decided to staff the Business Process Council with Agency employees.

The high level **blueprint** that will result from Business Process Council work will subsequently be used by IT contractors hired to provide project technical support, and by DAFP Program Managers and Agricultural Program Specialists who will work with those contractors, to reengineer business processes and to write the detailed technical user requirements needed for the new program delivery system's design and actual construction.

B Governance and Assistance

The Business Process Council will be governed by an **Executive Committee** headed by DAFP, and over time it will receive high level technical guidance from an **Enterprise Architecture Board** that will ensure consistency with USDA goals and standards.

C Staffing and Operations

DAFP staffed the Business Process Council with management and business level Agency representatives from across the entire farm program business process spectrum, to include County Offices, see paragraph 4. While its membership size is large, 18 permanent members, the Business Process Council remains manageable and its members' expertise easily supports creating workgroups of experts with flexible skills to perform multiple tasks.

D Member Duties

Business Process Council members are expected to represent, seek input from, and report back to their respective work areas. Members are also expected to have the authority to **commit** on behalf of their program areas during Business Process Council sessions.

4 Business Process Council Members

A 19 Permanent Members

At the outset the Business Process Council has 19 permanent members. Membership can be increased or changed as needed by DAFP. Following are current permanent members, classified by function and work area:

- **General Management (1):**

John Johnson, DAFP, Business Process Council and Executive Committee Chairperson

- **Representatives of (4) Business Process Owners:**

Sandy Bryant, DAFP, PECD

Martin Lowenfish, DAFP, CEPD

Misty Jones, DAFP, TD

George Stickels, DAFP, PSD

- **Representatives of (8) Support Functions:**

Shirley Hall, DAFP, PECD

Ron Nicholls, DAFP, APFO

Steve Sanders, DAM, ITSD

Jorge Rivera, DAM, FMD

Armando Sanchez, DAM, BUD

Sandra Garland, DAM, MSD

Ragh Singh, DAFO

Linda Cronin, DAFO

- **Representatives of (3) Business Process Implementers:**

Richard Hill, CED, Ripley County, MO

Sandra Little, CED, Champaign County, IL

Salomon Ramirez, DAFP

- **Representatives of (3) Agency Stakeholders:**

Steve Rubin, DAFLP

Candy Thompson, DACO

Steve Mikkelsen, FSA Office of Business and Program Integration.

5 Business Process Council's Tasks

A Initial and Long Range

The Business Process Council's initial, **specific task** is to:

- formulate a macro view (high level, big picture) of the business processes required for a new DAFP program delivery system (System)
- incorporate the processes, procedures, practices, and technologies required for the System to be functional in a modern day, real time, data sharing environment
- draft a high level **blueprint** for the System that is consistent with USDA's enterprise architecture plan and with USDA's long-term eGovernment strategies
- specifically, provide in the System's high level design for:
 - ongoing legislative mandates
 - common portal user interface to facilitate, by 3-clicks maximum, access to programs
 - County Office, customer, and third-party use
 - interface with all FSA program areas, sister and other government agencies;

and for:

- real time eligibility, compliance, payment limitation, and accounting functions
- eliminating system redundancies
- using modern day GPS/GIS technologies
- ongoing movement towards reducing paper volume in the processing of transactions;

and for:

- maximum flexibility for optimum use of technology advancements over time
- mechanisms for using user friendly data warehousing and statistical reporting systems
- mechanisms for ongoing monitoring of performance and budgetary goals
- proactive marketing of the full range of USDA program opportunities.

Over the long term, the Business Process Council will be expected to monitor and provide oversight for all stages of the new System's technical design, construction, and implementation, through to its completion.

6 Future Use of Field Staff Expertise

A Field Experience

FSA field employees' experience and knowledge gained through years of implementing farm programs at the State and County Office levels will be very useful as DAFP's IT modernization efforts progress. As IT contractors, DAFP Program Managers, and Agricultural Program Specialists work to develop the new system's design, DAFP intends to:

- keep field staff informed of developments
- call upon and employ field expertise when ever and where ever it is needed.