

For: FSA Employees

FSA Mentoring Program

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

FSA will launch a formal mentoring program pilot in FY 2012 to provide professional relationships in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentee’s professional and personal growth. Through the Cultural Transformation Listening Sessions conducted in 2010, FSA employees requested that a mentoring program be established. In addition, Federal regulations require certain employees to participate in a formal mentoring program.

B Purpose

This notice announces the FSA Mentoring Program, which:

- assists in developing a diverse, high-performing workforce capable of adapting to the rapidly changing workplace
- helps to promote and foster a continuous learning environment, cultivate professional identity, enhance career growth, and drive cultural change.

C Benefits

There are numerous benefits of a formal mentoring program. Some of the benefits include the following:

- participation may be creditable towards the Cultural Transformation performance elements

Disposal Date	Distribution
June 1, 2013	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

Notice PM-2854

1 Overview (Continued)

C Benefits (Continued)

- supports the Secretary's Cultural Transformation initiative by continually examining program delivery and surveying the workforce and/or stakeholders/customers

Note: It creates an environment for inclusion, exceptional performance, effective leadership, and works to eliminate any barriers to operation and service excellence.

- enhances succession planning by developing employees
- fosters knowledge transfer from 1 generation of employee to another
- helps employees develop as professionals by improving skills in translating values and strategies into productive actions by:
 - obtaining assistance for new and innovative ideas
 - demonstrating their strengths and exploring potential
 - increasing career networks while receiving greater exposure within FSA or USDA
- improves retention of existing employees
- enhances recruitment of new employees.

D Mentoring Program Offerings

FSA will announce a mentoring program opportunity in FY 2012 open to all Federal, State, and County Office employees to apply. The initial offering will serve as a pilot with 25 mentors and 25 mentees selected to participate. Additional mentoring offerings will be determined at a later date.

The mentoring session will commence from June 2012 through February 2013. The application due date to participate in the FSA Mentoring Program is from **May 7 through May 18, 2012**. Employees selected to participate as mentors or mentees will be notified the week of June 4, 2012.

Additional information about the timeline and specific training will be communicated to the selected mentors and mentees by separate e-mail correspondence. All individuals required to participate in a formal mentoring program will be notified of the requirement and encouraged to apply for the initial offering. The first-line supervisors of employees under the required category will also be notified to ensure compliance.

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1 Overview (Continued)

E Existing Mentoring Programs

In cases where mentoring programs already exist, such as DD or other formal Field Office mentoring programs, **the intent is not to replace those programs**, but rather to make available the resources and training for mentors that will be associated with the formal FSA program.

2 Nominating New Mentors

A Submitting FSA-612

Employees who wish to serve as a mentor **must** submit an application using FSA-612 (Exhibit 1), with supervisor approval and endorsement. All State and County Office applicants are required to have the approval of their respective SED. The program requires a 9-month commitment with a minimum of 30 minutes per week to dedicate to the mentoring relationship. Mentors should review the desired criteria, characteristics, roles, and responsibilities before applying to be a mentor.

B Desired Mentor Criteria

The following are desired mentor criteria:

- currently hold a supervisor/senior management position, or possess senior level technical expertise to broaden the prospective mentee's experience
- no adverse activity action
- no performance evaluations below fully successful
- possesses the knowledge and influence needed to be a mentor
- willingness to share knowledge
- serve as a resource and positive role model
- embraces the Agency's mission, vision, goals, and values.

Note: Additional information will be provided during the mandatory virtual orientation. This program does **not** require travel.

2 Nominating New Mentors (Continued)

C Desired Mentor Characteristics

The following are desired mentor characteristics:

- people oriented
- internally motivated
- effective teacher
- secure in present position
- achiever
- values FSA
- respects and values others
- supports diversity, inclusion, and high performance.

D Responsibilities

New mentors:

- are able to guide and coach the mentee
- are willing to participate in all scheduled activities
- maintain strict confidentiality
- participate in feedback sessions with program manager
- complete quarterly progress reports
- can provide objective and positive suggestions on how the mentee may improve proficiency and productivity on the job.

3 Nominating Mentees

A Submitting FSA-613

Employees who wish to be mentored **must** submit an application using FSA-613 (Exhibit 2), with first-line supervisor approval for all applicants. All State and County Office applicants are required to have the approval of their respective SED. All employees are eligible to be mentored, however, as mandated by DR 4740-001, a mentor is required for the following categories of employees:

- new supervisors (individuals who have never been a supervisor before)
- Presidential Management Fellows

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3 Nominating Mentees (Continued)

A Submitting FSA-613 (Continued)

- SES Candidate Development Program participants
- Students Career Experience Program Graduates recently converted to permanent status within 90 days of conversion.

4 Submission Requirements

A Submitting Applications

All interested mentor and mentees can find the required forms on the FFAS Employee Forms/Publications Online Website located at <http://fsaintranet.sc.egov.usda.gov/dam/ffasforms/forms.html>. Submit the application package by e-mail to fsamentoringprogram@wdc.usda.gov. In the “Subject” line, state “Mentor Application” or “Mentee Application”.

Supervisor endorsements are a requirement for a complete package. The supervisor should **not** return the endorsement to the applicant. Endorsements should be submitted directly to the e-mail address in this subparagraph to be included with the mentor or mentee application package.

B Mentor or Mentee Selection and Pairing Process

Employees nominated to be mentors will be vetted through a formal evaluation process by a committee. Considerations for the appointments of mentors or mentees include the following:

- fair assignments of the candidate pools and self-nomination criteria (commonality of expression of interest between applicants)
- consistency with any applicable labor-management agreement.

Note: A primary consideration will be that the mentor is outside of the mentee’s chain of command and at least 1 pay grade higher than the mentee. Under unusual circumstances where no other option exists, mentors may be of the same grade as the mentee.

C Contact

For questions about the FSA Mentoring Program, contact the following HRD employees:

- Shirene Warner at 202-772-9165 for program area mentors
- Cindy Witmer at 816-926-2500 for program area mentees.

FSA-612, Mentor Application

The following is an example of FSA-612.

This form is available electronically.	
FSA-612 (04-11-12)	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Farm Service Agency
MENTOR APPLICATION	
Please respond to all questions below. You may attach up to one additional page. All materials submitted are confidential. Your information should be submitted to the Mentoring Program Coordinator. The information provided on this form will be used in matching you with a prospective Mentor.	
Supervisor endorsements are a requirement for a complete package. The supervisor should not return the endorsement to the applicant. Endorsements should be submitted directly to FSAMENTORINGPROGRAM@USDA.GOV .	
PART A - GENERAL INFORMATION	
1A. Applicant's Name (<i>Last, First, Middle Initial</i>)	1B. Office Location: <input type="checkbox"/> Headquarters <input type="checkbox"/> State/County Office (Complete Part H)
2A. Job Title	2B. Series
	2C. Grade
3A. Division	3B. Branch
	3C. Section
4. Email Address	5. Telephone Number (<i>Including Area Code</i>)
PART B -LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES: Select the skills or areas of expertise that you could contribute most to a mentoring relationship. (See Page 3 for Leadership Competencies Definitions)	
6. Leading Organizations (<i>Select all that apply</i>):	
<input type="checkbox"/> A. Entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/> B. External Awareness
<input type="checkbox"/> C. Strategic Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> D. Vision
7. Managing Programs (<i>Select all that apply</i>):	
<input type="checkbox"/> A. Creativity/Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> B. Financial Management
<input type="checkbox"/> C. Partnering	<input type="checkbox"/> D. Political Savvy
<input type="checkbox"/> E. Technology Management	
8. Managing People (<i>Select all that apply</i>):	
<input type="checkbox"/> A. Conflict Management	<input type="checkbox"/> B. Developing Others
<input type="checkbox"/> C. Human Capital Management	<input type="checkbox"/> D. Leveraging Diversity
<input type="checkbox"/> E. Public Service Motivation	
PART C - JOB HISTORY	
9. Provide a brief overview of your job and major accomplishments.	
PART D - EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	
10. List degrees, certifications, and areas of technical expertise.	

FSA-612, Mentor Application (Continued)

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PART E - CAREER GOALS		
11. List short-term and long-term goals.		
PART F - MENTOR EXPERIENCE		
12. Briefly describe any prior experiences as a mentor or mentee in a formal relationship.		
13. State at least 3 characteristics or qualities you feel you need to have in common with a mentee for a successful partnership.		
14. What are your expectations of the relationship as a mentor?		
15A. Are you willing to Mentor an ADDITIONAL employee (2 people max): <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO, not at this time		
15B. Mentor's Name (Printed)	15C. Mentor's Signature	15D. Date (MM-DD-YYYY)
PART G – SUPERVISOR APPROVAL (PLEASE NOTE: There is an ADDITIONAL supervisor endorsement required to be submitted directly to fsamentoringprogram@WDC.usda.gov)		
16. Select appropriate choice for application submission:		
<input type="checkbox"/> A. Concur <input type="checkbox"/> B. Concur with Reservation <input type="checkbox"/> C. Do not Concur		
17A. Supervisor's Name (Printed)	17B. Supervisor's Signature	17C. Date (MM-DD-YYYY)
PART H – STATE AND COUNTY EMPLOYEES ONLY		
18A. State Executive Director (SED) Name	18B. State Executive Director (SED) Signature	18C. Date (MM-DD-YYYY)

FSA-612, Mentor Application (Continued)

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DEFINITIONS**Leading Organizations**

Entrepreneurship - Identifies opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization. Is willing to take risks; initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.

External Awareness - Identifies and keeps up to date on key national and international policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how best to be positioned to achieve a competitive business advantage in a global economy.

Strategic Thinking - Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities; anticipates potential threats or opportunities.

Vision - Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change; builds a shared vision with others. The ability to influence others to translate vision into action.

Managing Programs

Creativity/Innovation - Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.

Financial Management - Demonstrates broad understanding of principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels. Prepares, justifies, and/or administers the budget for the program area; uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; monitors expenditures in support of programs and policies. Identifies cost-effective approaches. Manages procurement and contracting.

Partnering - Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities; collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.

Political Savvy - Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality; recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.

Technology Management - Uses efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness. Develops strategies using new technology to enhance decision-making. Understands the impact of technological changes on the organization.

Managing People

Conflict Management - Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.

Developing Others - Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.

Human Capital Management - Builds and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.

Leveraging Diversity - Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

Public Service Motivation - Shows a commitment to serve the public. Ensures that actions meet public needs; aligns organizational objectives and practices with public interests.

FSA-612, Mentor Application (Continued)

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Supervisor Endorsement

FSA Mentoring Program FY 2012/13

As a requirement of the FSA Mentoring application process, the employee's supervisor must provide an endorsement for his/her employee's nomination as a participant in the FSA Mentoring Program FY 2012. Please indicate within your endorsement why you feel that your employee is a candidate and should be selected as a participant for the Mentoring Program. Please use the area below for your comments. Please check the appropriate box for the participation of your employee: Mentor Mentee

Comments:

Employee Name: _____ Title: _____

Printed Supervisor Name: _____ Title: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Once the endorsement is completed, **DO NOT RETURN TO EMPLOYEE.**

Please email endorsement directly to the Mentoring program organizational box at: FSAMENTORINGPROGRAM@USDA.GOV.

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MENTEE APPLICATION	
Please respond to all questions below. You may attach up to one additional page. All materials submitted are confidential. Your information should be submitted to the Mentoring Program Coordinator. The information provided on this form will be used in matching you with a prospective Mentor.	
Supervisor endorsements are a requirement for a complete package. The supervisor should not return the endorsement to the applicant. Endorsements should be submitted directly to FSAMENTORINGPROGRAM@USDA.GOV .	
PART A - GENERAL INFORMATION	
1A. Applicant's Name (<i>Last, First, Middle Initial</i>)	1B. Office Location: <input type="checkbox"/> Headquarters <input type="checkbox"/> State/County Office (Complete Part H)
2A. Job Title	2B. Series
	2C. Grade
3A. Division	3B. Branch
	3C. Section
4. Email Address	5. Telephone Number (<i>Including Area Code</i>)
PART B - LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES: Select the skills or areas of expertise that you are most interested in developing/enhancing. (See Page 3 for Leadership Competencies Definitions)	
6. Leading Organizations (<i>Must select 2</i>):	
<input type="checkbox"/> A. Entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/> B. External Awareness
<input type="checkbox"/> C. Strategic Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> D. Vision
7. Managing Programs (<i>Must select 3</i>):	
<input type="checkbox"/> A. Creativity/Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> B. Financial Management
<input type="checkbox"/> C. Partnering	<input type="checkbox"/> D. Political Savvy
<input type="checkbox"/> E. Technology Management	
8. Managing People (<i>Must select 3</i>):	
<input type="checkbox"/> A. Conflict Management	<input type="checkbox"/> B. Developing Others
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FSA-613, Mentee Application (Continued)

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11. List short-term and long-term goals.			
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12. State at least 3 characteristics or qualities you feel you need to have in common with a mentor for a successful partnership.			
13. What are some SPECIFIC areas of career development or professional growth that you would like to work on during this mentoring relationship?			
14. What are your expectations of the relationship as a mentee?			
15A. Mentee's Name (<i>Printed</i>)	15B. Mentee's Signature	15C. Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	
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17A. State Executive Director (SED) Name	17B. State Executive Director (SED) Signature	17C. Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	
PART I - MENTOR PREFERENCE			
If there is a particular person you would like to be assigned as your formal MENTOR, please list your 1 st and 2 nd choices in order of priority. (This is not an automatic assignment. Your request will be considered when making your mentoring match).			
18A. 1st Choice	18B. Grade	18C. Section	18D. Email Address
19A. 2nd Choice	19B. Grade	19C. Section	19D. Email Address

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