

For: State and County Offices

Announcing the Key Program Technician (KPT) Permanent Position

Approved by: Administrator



1 Overview

A Background

Notice PM-2783 established the CO-8 KPT pilot program. The pilot expired July 31, 2013. KPT's:

- serve as program experts for 2 or more commodity program and related areas, for their assigned County Offices, within their assigned districts
- provide a central resource for expert guidance, coordination, and assistance at the County Office level with district-wide collaboration for assigned programs

Note: Key PT's may assist State Office employees with training assignments.

State Offices that participated in the pilot program provided DAFO with an evaluation of the KPT position. Feedback has shown that KPT positions are very effective and beneficial. Therefore, the decision has been made to establish KPT as a permanent position.

B Purpose

This notice provides:

- notification of the determination to make KPT a permanent position
- policies and procedures for converting or establishing KPT positions
- guidance for filling and using KPT positions.

C Contact

If there are questions about this notice:

- County Offices shall contact the State Office administrative officer
- State Offices shall contact Lori Owens, HRD, by e-mail to lori.owens@tx.usda.gov or telephone at 979-680-5160.

Disposal Date	Distribution
March 1, 2014 8-12-13	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

2 Action

A Converting Existing KPT Positions

Each existing KPT position was filled as a temporary promotion, not-to-exceed 1 year. Management shall evaluate the current needs within the State Office and the current qualifications and expertise of the existing KPT's. If the current needs are being met, the existing KPT may, at management's discretion, be converted to a permanent appointment without further competition. If the needs in the State Office have changed, management may allow the existing temporary promotion to expire, and advertise the permanent KPT position with the updated requirements of the position.

B Terminating Existing KPT Temporary Promotions

If the existing KPT positions are **not** converted to permanent positions, the temporary promotion shall be terminated. KPT's will be returned to their original PT position of record when the temporary promotion expires. The temporary KPT promotion does **not** entitle the employee to grade or pay retention. If the temporary promotion was extended beyond 1 year, highest previous rate applies when setting the salary for the employee being returned to the former PT position; otherwise, the employee will return to the grade and step held before the temporary promotion. If a within-grade step increase was due during the period the employee was on the temporary promotion, then WGI would be applied when the employee returns to the grade held before the temporary promotion.

C Recruitment Process for New KPT's

New KPT positions shall be:

- filled using merit selection principles and EEO guidelines
- filled within current ceiling and budget for the State
- headquartered at the employee's current County Office.

3 Filling KPT Vacancies

A Establishing KPT Positions

State Offices are **not** required to establish KPT positions. KPT position is available at management's discretion. KPT positions are established at the CO-08 KPT grade level **only**. State Offices are authorized one KPT position; State Offices with 6 or more districts are authorized two KPT positions.

Note: All KPT positions **must** be filled within established ceilings and budgets for the State.

3 Filling KPT Vacancies (Continued)

B Advertising KPT Vacancies

State Offices shall request a vacancy for new KPT positions to be posted on USAJOBS by adding the request to the County Office Vacancy Request Tracker located on DAFO's SharePoint site at

<https://fsa.sc.egov.usda.gov/mgr/DAFO/Lists/County%20Office%20Vacancy%20Request%20Tracker/AllItems.aspx>

The area of consideration is restricted to current, full-time, permanent County Office employees. State Offices **must** notify each County Office of the vacancy, including the USAJOBS vacancy number, by e-mail when the vacancy has posted.

Note: The e-mail shall include the link to the USAJOBS vacancy announcement.

C Application Review Process

An interview panel shall be established to review applicants. The membership shall include CED's who do not supervise any of the applicants, DD, and any others deemed appropriate as panel members. The panel shall provide their recommendations to SED. SED's will make the selections.

4 Actions After Selection

A Performance Element

A specific performance element about the duties of the KPT position will be added to the performance plan for all selected KPT's (Exhibit 1).

B Position Description (PD)

An example PD (Exhibit 2) is provided for KPT duties and responsibilities. Additional duties from existing PD's related to KPT-specific work in the local County Office may be added.

C Communications

Ensure that expectations and methods of communication between applicable State Office employees and KPT's are established and communicated to have effective collaboration.

Performance Element

The following specific performance element shall be added to the performance plan for all selected KPT's.

Non-Critical Element	Individual Program Contributions to the State
	<p>ELEMENT: This employee serves as an initial contact point for Program Technicians within the State for resolving operational and policy program questions and problems in their assigned program areas. Develops and contributes creative ideas and solutions to program operations and/or issues resulting in added value to the State's products and services. Works with County and State Office coworkers to appropriately implement decisions. Collaborates with Program Technicians throughout assigned County Offices to ensure consistency with programs' execution. Willingly accepts and acts on constructive criticism.</p>
	<p>STANDARDS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly cooperates with coworkers and others in meeting commitments and accomplishing assigned work on time; such as, sharing information freely with no more than one to two exceptions. 2. Responds constructively to feedback within 24 hours, seeking ways to improve with no more than one to two exceptions. 3. Updates records that affect other programs in the office within timeframes established by management with no more than one to three exceptions. 4. Monthly initiates contact with County Executive Directors of assigned County Offices to proactively assess programs' status with no more than one to two exceptions. 5. Fosters productive and cooperative working relationships by showing understanding, courtesy, tact, and politeness to others with no more than one to two valid complaints. <p>Note: Zero exceptions alone for these standards does not mean that you "exceed fully successful" for this element. In order to obtain "exceeds fully successful" for this element, there must be additional supporting evidence that shows you excelled beyond the fully successful requirements.</p> <p>RESULTS: The achievement of these standards will result in increased cooperation and cross training between employees fostering a harmonious and productive work environment. This aligns with "Crosscutting Management Objectives Supporting FSA Strategic Goals".</p>

Example PD

The following example PD is provided for KPT activities; additional duties from existing PD that are related to KPT's specific work in the local County Office may be added.

Title: Key Program Technician

Grade: CO-8

A. INTRODUCTION

Five to thirty percent of the time, the incumbent provides assistance to multiple County Offices by serving as the initial contact point for Program Technicians within the State resolving operational and policy program questions and problems. In addition, the incumbent serves as a program expert for two or more programs. This is the full performance level of the position. The position is FLSA nonexempt.

B. MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Receives, researches, and responds to assigned programs policy and operational problems, questions and issues originating in assigned County Office in the State. Such matters may include, but are not limited to, those involving program policies and legal, regulatory or policy requirements; contracts and other program documents and forms; program calculations and payments; GIS issues; and automated procedures ranging from those related to major software releases to individual error messages.

Identifies specific nature of problem or question and determines appropriate action to effect problem/question resolution. Provides clarification of handbook materials and detailed instructions for completing specific tasks. Issues verbal or written instruction and guidance and follows up to assure problems were correctly resolved. Keeps appropriate officials informed of problems and questions received as well as solutions provided. Refers questions for which an answer cannot be found to the County Executive Director, District Director, or appropriate State Office specialist.

Promotes consistent and uniform program interpretation and operations within the State. Issues e mails to Program Technicians within the State to provide guidance on commonly recurring questions, citing handbook references when available. Conducts conference calls with Program Technicians within the State to share questions, comments and concerns. As needed, travels to other County Offices to provide assistance with complex problems and hands-on training.

Interprets and applies draft procedures. Determines actions needed for implementation when final procedures are issued. Participates with State Office specialists in developing and testing operating instructions, State notices, checklist and similar issuances. Recommends changes to clarify instructions, identifies better ways to accomplish program tasks and assures consistency of operations. Notifies appropriate officials of repetitive or recurring problems. Consults with State Office specialists to resolve conflicts between program notices and handbooks based upon personal experience and problems and questions referred by others.

Example PD (Continued)

Serves as the training specialist for assigned programs within the assigned County Offices in the State. Leads training sessions and/or travels to specific County Offices to provide onsite training. Recommends training for new procedures and for refresher courses. Maintains awareness of knowledge and experience levels of Program Technicians in the State so as to provide guidance and assistance and to assess training needs.

Performs other duties as assigned.

C. EEO AND CIVIL RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES

The employee is responsible for knowing and supporting equal opportunity and civil rights policies; performing assigned duties in full compliance with the letter and spirit of equal opportunity and civil rights laws and regulations; ensuring bias-free written and oral communications; and respecting and valuing differences of other employees and clients.

D. SUPERVISION RECEIVED

Assignments outside the incumbent's headquarters County Office are coordinated with the County Executive Director, who keeps the District Director informed on issues of district-wide concern. Because one of the major objectives of the position is to provide assistance to multiple County Offices by responding to technical program issues, the employee works with a high degree of independence, setting assignment priorities, exercising judgment and initiative to research and respond to problems and questions, and referring to a higher level only those matters which are unusually complex.

E. KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

The work requires thorough knowledge of assigned programs policies and regulations, operating procedures and precedents and skill in applying this knowledge to a wide variety of complex problems and issues referred by Program Technicians within the State. Such knowledge may have been gained through additional training and/or extensive practical experience in the assigned program areas. The incumbent must have the knowledge and skills to accurately identify the nature of problems presented, conduct necessary research to determine the appropriate means for resolving the problems and communicate the necessary procedures for problem resolutions to Program Technicians with varying levels of expertise.

The incumbent must also have excellent communication skills to work with State Office Specialists and to provide training to Program Technicians within the State.