



Building Rural America
National Association of Credit Specialists
of the
USDA – Farm Service Agency
Management Personnel Committee

THE MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MET AT THE PATRIOT PLAZA III IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ON JULY 11-13, 2016, TO REVIEW RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE MEMBERSHIP.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION:

Resolution 1

CONCERN:

Applicants are applying for positions with little or no knowledge of our internal hiring policies. They apply for a job that is posted as a GS 5/7/9. By virtue of their lack of understanding of our grade designation they select incorrectly. This seemingly innocent mistake has far reaching implications. The applicant when selected is now offered a position below their education/qualification level. They are typically onboard when they learn of this issue and become displeased.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Allow the Agency to determine the grade level based upon the supported qualifications.

Make sure the instructions on USA Jobs are clear, so that applicants understand that they can apply for all grade levels. Ensure customer support is fully versed and available to answer questions from applicants.

Resolution 2

CONCERN:

Currently states are participating in National Pathways events that are intended to cover a region of several states. Nevertheless, the impact this program has been positive, the non-hosting states are being limited of qualified talent from their states due to logistic issues that potential applicants may face.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Delegate authority to states to regulate and host their own state Pathways program.

Resolution 3

CONCERN:

Currently new FLM's don't receive any administrative training other than limited alearn trainings.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Provide FLM's with a comprehensive administrative training program.

Resolution 4

CONCERN:

118-FI & other applicable travel regulations still refer to completing an AD 202 for authorizing travel while reserving funds is no longer required. A BU Notice was issued stating that offices only need complete AD 616 for local travel which is paid through Web TA. Also, the OF 108 is still required in addition to the AD 616.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Update the applicable handbook regulations to eliminate the need for the completion of the AD 202 & OF 108 in this regard.

Resolution 5

CONCERN:

Recently 55 partners were selected for the Bridges to Opportunity program to enter into a cooperative agreement with FSA and others are slated to be selected to provide outreach technical assistance to applicants or training. Multiple recipients were selected as USDA FSA partners through cooperative agreement, but what specific areas will these recipients be working in and what services will each provide to aid FSA and provide service to farmers and ranchers.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Provide a matrix of these providers and identify what outreach, technical assistance or training they will be providing along with appropriate contact information.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR NONADOPTION:

Resolution 6

CONCERN:

Under the referenced paragraph, in order to qualify as a Type 1 Office, the office must provide full service for all FP and FLP. As a clarifying "note", it states that "CEDs, FLMs, and SFLOs will be headquartered at Type 1 offices with fully trained staffs." In the case of a Shared Management CED covering two offices, one with FLP staff and the other without FLP staff, DAFO has interpreted this "note" to mean that the CED must maintain their ODS at the FLP site. In at least one case that I am aware of, this has created major problems in terms of paying for POV travel to and from the two offices. The Type 3 office has plenty of FLP activity and three full-time FLP staff, but hardly any FP activity. The CED's other office, a Type 3 office, has heavy FP workload, so that is where they live and work 4 days out of 5. With the requirement that the ODS be in the Type 1 office, we cannot reimburse the CED for travel from their primary office (Type 3) to their ODS (Type 1). They are forced to travel on their own dime to do their job. It should also be noted that the Type 1 office does have a full-time dedicated Farm Program PT, meaning that FP service is available even without the CED's presence.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

The intent of a Type 1 office is to provide full service across both FP and FLP programs. The "note" in 16-AO, para. 286 B should be amended to state that in order to qualify as a Type 1 office, "A CED or other full-time Farm Program staff, FLMs, and SFLOs will be headquartered at Type 1 offices with fully trained staffs." This change will remove the travel problems in cases like the one that I have described, and allow the agency to designate a CED's or FLM's ODS in the site that makes the most sense, without requiring that they travel on their own dime to conduct official business.

Committee Response – not an FLP issue

Resolution 7

CONCERN:

FLP personal are being made responsible for Farm Storage Facility Loan processing up to the point of recommendation to the committee. There is no written delegation of authority for these actions.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

The delegation should be in writing.

Committee Response – No delegation of authority is required to make a recommendation to the COC.

Resolution 8

CONCERN:

When a supervisor is to be out of the office they name an "Acting" FLM. This person does not receive the authority to approve any Web TA transactions.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Allow authorities to flow to the named "Acting"

Committee Response – Non supervisory non admin employees do not need access to WebTA records for coworkers.

Resolution 9

CONCERN:

Some States continue to require the FSA 958 for employees in addition to the the Web TA which is an exact duplication of the data. this is an inefficient use of time. Some also utilize alternate systems for approving leave in addition to the Web TA.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

The National Office should issue guidance that clarifies the official system and employees should not be required to duplicate work.

Committee Response – This is already policy and a State issue

Resolution 10

CONCERN:

Currently, there are GS-11 Loan Officers who are independently managing caseloads at an SFLO level. It appears the SFLO job position has been used more in cases where people do not meet the supervisory requirements [at least 3 people] for an FLM, rather than promoting and rewarding employees who are performing above their duties.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Encourage and emphasize to states they should determine the work level for a SFLO and use the SFLO job position as a promotion/management tool for current, independent FLOs who are working at the established SFLO work level.

Committee Response – it appears that concern is actually, one of the main reasons that NACS promoted the development of the position. Committee feels like each state should set their own policy regarding use of the SFLO

Resolution 11

CONCERN:

Recently HR implemented a new system that was to reduce the time it took to fill a position with a goal of 80 days. What actually happened is the system shifted a lot more of the work to the states. In addition, HR now has to ALLOW YOU to submit an SF-52. Until they allow the SF-52 to come into the office, their processing time does not start. They delay accepting SF-52s for months or lose them entirely. As a result they brag on how many actions are completed in 80 day goal.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

HR should be held to the same standard as our loan officers. FLP has to accept incomplete applications regardless of current workload. It is then our job to get them complete and all these days count against our processing goals. NACS should demand that this disparate and discriminatory treatment be stopped immediately. Or better yet, we should only be measured from completion date as those days are the only ones within our control.

Committee Response – Concern needs to be rewritten for clarification. Solution is inappropriate.

Resolution 12

CONCERN:

The ability to utilize the Senior Farm Loan Officer Position is hard determine what criteria is needed to justify the positions.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Place the criteria & justification needed to qualify or a Senior Farm Loan Office in Procedure and the steps needed to fill the position.

Committee Response – Committee feels like each state should set their own policy regarding use of the SFLO

Respectfully submitted by the 2015/2016 Management Personnel Committee.

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