Building Rural America
National Association of Credit Specialists
of the
USDA – Farm Service Agency
Information Technology Committee

ADOPTED 2015-2016 RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 1

CONCERN:
Events can only be entered in OTIS prior to the acutal event for approval.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Add a check box to mark event as unplanned which will allow user to input results for one approval.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
DAFO appreciates the suggestion to enter unplanned events into the system without approval. That has been a discussion point for the past 3 years. However no further investments or enhancements will be made to the OTIS system. Development is underway to include outreach activity tracking into the Bridge.

The Bridge will be implemented nationwide in early CY 17. Detailed information to the field along with training will be issued in the next 2 months.

For any questions regarding OTIS, employees may contact us at fsaoutreach@wdc.usda.gov.

For general questions regarding Bridges to Opportunity, employees may contact us at Bridges2Opportunity@fsa.usda.gov.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: We accept this response, and look forward to seeing these updates to the Bridge.

Resolution 2

CONCERN:
Dashboard items are not always able to be completed by designated timesframes due to lack of resources, however the only options are to delete them or mark them complete.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Add an option for multiple selection of items that have a lower priority (such as farm assessment, chattel inspections, analysis, classifications, etc.) to mark them "not compete".

Also for completed items, create a summary page where you can view all items that have workflow that needs to be completed and can all be updated from that main page. Similar to how we have our loan checklist in DLM. However, don't remove where we can go into them individually.

Add an option for multiple "customer" selection of specific categories (such as farm assessment, chattel inspection, analysis, classifications) to mark as "not complete".

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
We disagree with this resolution.

Subparagraph 96, D, to FSA Handbook 4-FLP states:
"D Documenting Reviews Not Completed As Scheduled
When the authorized agency official determines that a scheduled chattel inspection will not be completed as scheduled, the Farm Visit workflow in DLS shall be terminated. The terminated workflow must be documented as to why the workflow was not completed. A new Farm Visit workflow must be created and scheduled immediately as applicable."

These steps were put in place as part of a mitigation plan to address OIG audit findings.

With regard to priority, it is important to remember that while these actions can and should be properly managed to match the available resources, they must be completed in accordance with the Handbook and any current Notices.

The existing DLS Borrower context dashboard provides a summary view of all reviews pending as well as other account information like flags or transaction discrepancy indicators.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: For time management purposes we would still like to see something that would allow us to create and/or terminate workflows for multiple borrowers in one action. See response to Resolution 14 for further clarification.

Resolution 3

CONCERN:
After checks are processed in NRRS, there is too much time lapsing before checks are completely processed (sometimes as long as 60 days), and we are releasing security in accordance with procedure before we are realizing that checks have been dishonored.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
When checks are marked as final payment in NRRS, FLMs should receive notification within seven business days when a check has been honored or dishonored to prevent security from being released in accordance with proceedure (30 days).

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
Per discussions held with NACS and NFAOC/FaSB team, the State/Field Offices are not being notified timely when a check is dishonored. There was an attempt to automate this process but there apparently are still issues and time delays. NFAOC/FaSB requested clarification on their responsibilities when the State/Field office is not notified of a dishonored check timely and the security is released. Through the dishonored check process, a 2C uncollectible hits ADPS for FaSB to work. Further instruction needs to be provided and, as such, NFAOC/FaSB is requesting the FSA IT staff and the Kansas City NRRS group to assist in researching and responding to this issue and provide further guidance.

NFAOC RESPONSE:
Through the dishonored check process, a 2C uncollectible hits ADPS for NFAOC/FaSB to work. These 2C uncollectables have to research before they can be processed. NFAOC will request the FSA IT staff and the Kansas City NRRS group to assist in researching and responding to this issue and provide further guidance as this is an OBF/KC (Office of Budget and Finance/Kansas City) issue that they will need to address. (FaSB)

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Thank you for including NACS and the NACS IT committee in your efforts to resolve this issue.

Resolution 4

CONCERN:
DLS shows the incorrect number of years remaining for the term limits. This causes the field staff to manually calculate and update the field which adds time to loan processing.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Fix DLS to show the correct number of years remaining for term limits as reflected in PLAS.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
The National Office supports this resolution and is actively working to get the changes to DLS completed as proposed.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Thank you. We look forward to these improvements.

Resolution 5

CONCERN:
Inputting emails into the notes section of FBP is very time consuming.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Allow us to attach/upload files to the FBP notes section.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
Our license with Moody's does not include the attachment feature. We have explored the possiblity of obtaining this feature in the past, but determined that attaching additional documents could cause performance issues within the FBP. Inputting emails into the notes section is currenlty the only current option; however, as new versions of FBP are released we will continue to explore the possibility of using other options for inputting the emails into FBP.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Thank you for keeping our concerns in mind with future versions and improvements to FBP.

Resolution 6

CONCERN:
FSFL are able to obtain real-time payoffs in DLM, but FLP aren't.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Allow FLP to have the same functionality.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
The DLS application currently provides this functionality.

DLS Customer Management, TPOF function, can be used to calculate the Total Payoff amount of all a customer's direct loans, as of a specified accrual date. The information is then displayed showing a summary and detailed per loan view of the balances owed and then provides the total sum of all the selected loans as of the selected accrual date. Accrual Date may be back dated but not beyond the last cash payment or last non-cash payment date.

DLS will calculate a payoff for any outstanding direct loan with the exception of a loan that is not fully disbursed or where an equity record or receivable exist. Also, due to the accounting procedures and systems in place, when using the TPOF function in DLS, consideration of the time delay on payments being applied to PLAS from NRRS must be taken into consideration by reviewing the date of last payment and selecting an accrual date accordingly.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: The committes agrees with this response.

Resolution 7

CONCERN:
USDA provides online services to enable its customers access USDA Web applications using eAuthentication. When a customer registers and is upgraded to Level 2 they should have access to FSAfarms+, Financial Inquiries for FSA Producers, etc.

The FSA provides access to these online programs to individuals but doesn't provides these services to entities or their representatives. Individual members of an entity can register and be upgraded to level 2 but this doesn't provide access to the entities customer records.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
USDA and FSA should update online access to customer records and link individual entity members, with level 2 clearance, to the entity's customer records similar to the access provided to individual producers.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
We understand the need to securely extend data access in USDA/FSA public facing applications to all authorized members associated with an entity and designees/representatives of USDA customers. The level of effort required to develop this solution will be enterprise-wide and crosscutting as it will affect many applications. The National Office will evaluate this request and prioritize based on funding available.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Thank you for making our concern a priority. We appreciate your consideration and support.

Resolution 8

CONCERN:
Laptops we are provided are excessively heavy (especially considering the files we also must take with us) as well as slow and with poor screen quality.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Since we always use them when connected to the internet, Surface Pro would be much cheaper and more mobile.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
The National Office acknowledges the need for lighter weight devices for our increasingly mobile workplace. There is funding in the FY17 budget to begin a cyclical refresh of computers. Moving forward, the goal is to replace approximately 1/3 of agency computers each FY. We are currently evaluating all computer hardware options, including the Microsoft Surface Tablet, available through USDA-OCIO-CTS Blanket Purchase Agreements. We hope to provide a variety of computer configurations that address the mobility needs of employees while maximizing the use of funding available in the FY17 budget.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Thank you! We look forward to these new upgrades, and would like to propose that each employee be given the option to select which of the available devices they would prefer to use.

Resolution 9

CONCERN:
We are unable to pull a report with all loan officers by bank in GLS.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Create a report that lists the bank and Loan Officer with contact info (email, address & phone number) within a servicing offices territory.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
GLS does not capture the Servicing Office's territory and with all the other priorities for funding we have no plans to capture this information at this time. However, the existing Lender Representative List in MRE has been recently modified so that State Office and National Office employees can search by State, Lender ID and/or Branch number. Once the report is pulled it can be sorted by Lender ID and Branch number. MRE reports can only be used by National and State Office users.

NFAOC RESPONSE:
GLS does not currently capture the Servicing Office's territory. However, the existing Lender Representative List in MRE has been recently modified so that SO and NO employees can search by State, Lender ID and/or Branch number. Once the report is pulled it can be sorted by Lender ID and Branch number. (MRE reports can only be used by National and State Office users.) (FCSB)

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: We accept this response and recognize the amount of time it would require to maintain this type of list.

Resolution 10

CONCERN:
Currently there is no place on the DLS Dashboard to record a chattel appraisal done by FSA or 3rd party other than the Loan Making Checklist Environmental area. Our appraiser each year asks us for a list of chattel appraisals completed.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Under the DLS Farm Visit tab add a checkbox for chattel appraisal completed. Also provide an interface between FMMI & PLAS into DLS to show 3rd party appraisals have been completed.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
The National Appraisal Tracking System (NATS), when implemented, will have the capability of tracking (1) chattel and real estate appraisals conducted by FSA or contracted; (2) chattel appraisal reviews; (3) technical reviews of real estate appraisals; and (4) 3rd party appraisals. Therefore, modifying DLS to track chattel appraisals before NATS is implemented may not be a prudent use of scarce resources.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: We accept this response. We were unaware of that the NATS system would be available, and look forward to see what it has to offer.

Resolution 11

CONCERN:
Payment remainder letter does not address acured interest. See attached letter.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Add wording to address acured interest for the design of the letter to look more like a payment statement.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
We disagree with this resolution.

We believe there would be limited value to the borrower in providing accrued interest information as part of the payment reminder letter. Borrowers receive detailed account information when appropriate and any information about accrued interest would be incorrect the day after the payment letter is sent. Additionally, borrowers are provided with an automated service line that can used to obtain updated account information.

NFAOC RESPONSE:
NFAOC agrees with National Office response.
To change the purpose and intent of this letter, will require DAFLP (Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs) approval.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: The Committee accepts and agrees with the national office response, and appreciates the opportunity to work further with NFAOC on developing a resolution that further more specifically addresses the concern

Resolution 12

CONCERN:
Currently there is no way to keep track of PAD for customers.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Designate on customer profile if customer has PAD; Impliment report to track who has PAD payments; Designate PAD Payments in DLS or ADP history screens.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
When the PAD information was sent to the State Offices there was a Tracking Spreadsheet that was included. We have been in contact with the CMCB Branch to discuss individual state reports. It is possible that we can be provided with individual state reports from them. FSA does

not have access to the PAD system. At this time, we would suggest that the states request their county offices use the tracking spreadsheet that was provided.

NFAOC RESPONSE:
There is a report from the PAD system that is available by state that indicates by loan number the PAD status of a customer. This report can be provided to whomever you designate. The NFAOC supports the request to designate the customer PAD status in PLAS, but defers to IT. (CMCB)

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: We would like to keep this on our wish list going forward. Something like a checkbox on the process application screen that would flow over to the customer profile screen that designates which loans have PADs in place.

Resolution 13

CONCERN:
GLS prefills the guarantee fee on the conditional commitment when using the data filled forms option for loans being made in conjunction with a direct down payment loan with a non-beginning SDA applicant. A guarantee fee is not required

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Program GLS to have either a code or block to show that this is a non-beginning farmer SDA applicant for a loan being made in conjunction with a direct FLP down payment loan.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
This issue was previously discussed and the solution at the time was to allow the Guarantee Fee field on the Conditional Commitment form to be an enterable field. The Fee Amount is still prefilled based on the information available in GLS, but if no fee is owed (because of the direct down payment program or other reasons not available in GLS) then the field may be updated to show $0.00. (NOTE: The Loan Closing Transaction works the same way. The Guarantee Fee Amount is prefilled but if it should be zero, the Fee Purpose field can be changed from 3 (meaning that a fee is owed) to a 7 (indicating that no fee is due) and the Fee Amount field can be changed to $0.)

NFAOC RESPONSE:
This issue was previously discussed back around 2011 and the solution at that time was to allow the Guarantee Fee field on the Conditional Commitment form to be an enterable field. The Fee Amount is still prefilled based on the information available in GLS, but if no fee is owed (because of the direct down payment program or other reasons not available in GLS) then the field may be updated to show $0.00.   {NOTE: The Loan Closing Transaction works the same way. The Guarantee Fee Amount is prefilled but if it should be zero the Fee Purpose field can be changed from 3 (meaning that a fee is owed) to a 7 (indicating that no fee is due) and the Fee Amount field can be changed to $0.} If this solution on the Conditional Commitment form is no longer satisfactory, please let us know and we can discuss other options. (FCSB)

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: The committee accepts this response.

Resolution 14

CONCERN:
It takes a lot of time to go through the DLS dashboard and select each item, update, save, then select the next item.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Create a summary page for individual borrowers where you can view all items that have workflow that needs to be completed and can all be updated from that main page. Similar to how we have our loan checklist in DLM. However don't remove where we can go into them individually.

NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:
We disagree with this resolution.

Existing DLS functionality provides a summary view of pending servicing workflows, on a per customer basis. Access to each review item is accomplished from this summary view.

Based on the tracking needs of the various workflows, we will not be able to provide a "Checklist" type of interface as that would defeat the purpose of being able to schedule individual reviews ahead of time then be able to track progress and record accomplishment of related actions, e.g., like sending requests for additional information for graduation, etc., on a per workflow basis. This tracking and monitoring capability was a requirements request from all levels of management and end users and allows for better oversight and portfolio management.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE: In order to efficiently comply with procedure, specifically 4-FLP Subparagraph 96, C & D, we would like the option to select multiple borrowers to enter the statement regarding lack of completion due to lack of time, personnel and other resources. It is the committees belief that workflows are not being created for each borrower, because field staff realizes that not all are going to get completed. So rather than entering in a workflow for a farm visit, classification, graduation review, etc. for each borrower, field staff only enters the workflow when the task has been completed, and therefore, the uncompleted tasks are not being properly entered and documented due to the amount of time it takes to enter these tasks for each individual borrower. If there were a way to enter these types of regular servicing tasks for multiple borrowers at one time, it would save a significant amount of time. Then the when the tasks do get completed, they can be entered in for each individual borrower as completed. But also, at the end of the year it would be significantly simpler to select multiple borrowers to terminate the transactions and document why they were not completed, and then turn around and set up the same workflow task for the next year for that same group of borrowers. At this time the committee does not know of any other method of tracking work that is not getting completed, and is concerned that there may be offices across the country that are not properly entering the workflows due to the amount of time it takes. The committee will continue to work on clarification of our concern.