



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

**2015-2016 ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS:**

**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.

**NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:**

When applicants apply for any position(s) in USA Jobs, it clearly states that **the applicant** must identify **each grade level** that he or she is applying for in the vacancy announcement. This is the applicant's sole responsibility.

Secondly, the vacancy announcement always identifies a point of contact to call on the last page of the vacancy announcement if an applicant has a question.

Based on current USDA and OPM requirements and staffing software applications the proposed solution cannot be implemented, applicants must continue to indicate the grade level(s) at which they wish to be considered.

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE:**

Accepted response without comment

**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.

**NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:**

All states offices are allowed to make requests to host a Pathways On-site event at local colleges and universities with prior HRD approval. The current approval process is based on the number of positions advertised and the type of school requested – the focus is on Land-Grant Universities and Minority Serving Institutions. There are two types of onsite events available:

1. Application Acceptance – HR officials accept resumes for designated advertised positions onsite on behalf of the Agency. This event requires a minimum of five positions be advertised
2. Direct Hire – HR representatives accept applications and provide tentative offers; and hiring managers conduct onsite interviews. This event requires a minimum of ten positions be advertised

Due to these requirements and to ensure the Agency receives a return on investment, there has been a need to solicit participation nationwide or with neighboring states to host these events. Without the minimum required positions, HRD is unable to approve and support the event.

The proposed solution does not meet OPM’s requirement that Human Resources Division personnel must be in attendance to host these events and that HR personnel are the only employees who may official collect resumes on behalf of the Agency at these events.

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE:**

Committee commented that the pathways option has gained targeted candidates and we would like to see it continue or expand.

**Resolution 3**

**CONCERN:**

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

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Provide FLM's administrative training (13a's, personnel . . . etc.)

**NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:**

USDA supervisory training requirements are established in Departmental regulation (DR) 4040-412-002, Training and Development for Supervisors (<https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departamental-regulation-4040-412-002>). Additional FSA guidance for new supervisory training requirements was addressed in PM-2941, and as provided in subparagraph 2 E, required courses are added to the employee's AgLearn "to do list" by HRD's Leadership and Employee Development Branch (LEDB). While use of AgLearn does allow FSA to provide cost-effective training, we do recognize the limitations associated with computer-based training. Therefore, new FLM's are also scheduled to participate in FSA's National Leadership Training titled "Influencing Excellence: Effective Leadership at FSA".

FSA's National Leadership Training is a four-day session, attended in person, held at multiple locations across the nation throughout the year. Since its inception, 313 FLM's have attended the National Leadership Training, with an addition 13 FLM's scheduled to attend sessions planned for March and April of 2017. The training covers a variety of topics and provides both new and experienced FLM's the opportunity to network with FLM's from other states, as well as with CED's and DD's.

DAFLP, along with DAFO and LEDB, continues to explore the development of additional training opportunities for FSA supervisors and managers.

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE:**

Training for new, supervisors continues to be an issue that requires attention, AgLearn training is understood to be cost effective. However it is the "least best" option. The personal interaction of in person training is far more beneficial.

**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.

**NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:**

We will accept the proposed solution, update handbook 118-FI, accordingly, and release an amendment to the field within the next 60-90 days

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE:**

This has not been implemented yet (5/19/2017)

## **Resolution 5**

### **CONCERN:**

Recently 55 partners were selected to enter into a cooperative agreement with FSA and others are slated to be selected. 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 that shows what they will be providing and where with appropriate contact information.

### **NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSE:**

POINT OF CONTACT: OBPI COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT PROGRAM – Robert Stephenson/Michael Kresin

Spreadsheet attached, along with state points of contact for additional information.

### **COMMITTEE RESPONSE:**

We were provided matrix as requested as shown below

FSA Number	Non-Federal Entity	Purpose	FSA Technical Rep (Contact)
FA-DAFO-7-001	Renewing The Countryside II	Regional Coordinators will help women farmers access FSA programs.	Shayla Watson
FA-NC-7-002	North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center	Collaborate with FSA to provide train the trainer to educate Community Colleges about FSA Loan programs.	Nimasheena Burns
FA-GA-7-003	Athens Land Trust, Inc.	Financial Management and strategies for creating viable and stable Ag Enterprises.	Neal Leonard
FA-OH-7-004	A&L Afterschool Literacyplus Institute	Loan program training, lectures and workshops in Franklin County, OH.	Christina Reed
FA-DAFO-7-005	Hmong National Development, Inc.	Capacity Building for Hmong Farmers emphasizing FSA resources.	Shayla Watson
FA-AL-7-006	Farmscape Solutions	Develop e- curriculum and workshops on recordkeeping.	Cassandra Searight
FA-FL-7-007	North South Institute, Inc.	Focus on underserved producers through three clusters.	Janet Wright
FA-IL-7-008	Food Works	Technical assistance and financial education through Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings mentorship program.	Jean French
FA-OH-7-009	Central State University	Encourage and assist farmers to own and operate farms through outreach and technical assistance.	Christina Reed
FA-LA-7-010	Recirculating Farms Coalition Inc.	Outreach and training activities to existing and potential producers in New Orleans.	Ervin Norwood
FA-CA-7-011	Kitchen Food Ventures, Inc.	Deliver business/financial development services, technical assistance and computer training.	Brooke Raffaele
FA-DAFO-7-012	Wealth Watchers, Inc.	Increase awareness and participation in FSA programs through workshops and training.	Shayla Watson
FA-HI-7-013	The Kohala Center	Expand current rural and cooperative business development service and provide financial education.	Steve Peterson, Steve Bazzell
FA-ME-7-014	Northern Maine Development Commission, Inc.	Provide knowledge on the regional ag value and supply chain through meetings and workshops.	Sherry Hamel, MaryAnne Coffin
FA-MO-7-015	University of Missouri System	Develop financial and technical skills of Latino farmers.	Alan Ball
FA-MT-7-016	Montana State University, Inc.	Increase education on FSFL, record keeping and best production practices.	Jennifer Cole
FA-ME-7-017	Cultivating Community	Growing Pathways project to ease learning curve of accessing FSA programs.	Sherry Hamel, MaryAnne Coffin
FA-NC-7-018	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, Inc.	Provide financial and business management training and technical support.	Nimasheena Burns
FA-DAFO-7-019	Farmer's Legal Action Group, Inc.	Training on the FSFL program	Shayla Watson
FA-MN-7-020	Asian Economic Development Association	Outreach to local Asian farmers in the Twin Cities.	Lindsay Mutegi
FA-CA-7-021	Cal Poly Corporation (University)	FEED - Farmer Experiential Education and Development Program - training to educate new farmers.	Brooke Raffaele
FA-MS-7-022	Winston County Self Help Cooperative	Improve technical assistance and financial education to underserved producers.	Aaron Robinson
FA-NM-7-023	New Mexico State University	Increase number of eligible farmers to participate in FSA programs.	New Mexico State Office
FA-DAFO-7-024	Holistic Management International	Showcasing the diversity of HMI's education programs in three states.	Shayla Watson
FA-KS-7-025	Kansas State University	Identify farmers struggling and provide financial and borrower technical assistance.	Kitra Cooper
CCC-DAFP-7-026	Pheasants Forever, Inc.	Outreach to educate female landowners.	Kathie Moh
FA-CA-7-027	Building Youth Tomorrow Today	Educational Outreach apprenticeship project for at risk kids.	Brooke Raffaele
FA-NM-7-028	Center for Southwest Culture, Inc.	Outreach to Hispanic and Indigenous farmers and ranchers.	New Mexico State Office
FA-AR-7-029	East Arkansas Enterprise Community	Outreach and education to groups who grow fruits and vegetables in an effort to raise awareness and participation in FSA programs.	Rhonda Oguinn
FA-DAFLP-7-030	University of Vermont & State Agricultural College	Develop online record keeping tool.	Pixie Greer
FA-AZ-7-031	Cochise County Community College District	Education and outreach support to farmers and ranchers in Arizona.	Santa Murillo/Carol Case
FA-MI-7-032	Michigan Integrated Food & Farming Systems	Educators to work one on one with SDAs to create outreach mechanisms and reporting templates designed to increase reporting of cropping history, yields, direct market pricing info to FSA.	Savannah Halleaux
FA-VA-7-033	Virginia State University	Provide tools and skills to help increase participation in FSA programs and services. Will outreach on all programs but this proposal focus is for training and technical assistance on OIs and FOs.	Virginia State Office
FA-ME-7-034	University of Maine System	Hired project manager to work directly with farmers one on one and through trainings to improve their abilities to keep electronics, explain the records required for FSA programs, and provide different approaches for efficient record keeping for both financial and production related data.	MaryAnne Coffin/Sherry Hamel
FA-AL-7-035	Cottage House Inc.	Promotional and technical assistance campaign to recruit more under-served farmers to access FSA programs.	Cassandra Searight
FA-AL-7-036	Vivian B. Adams School Board	The Skills, Education and Entrepreneurship Development (SEED) Project will be designed to offer all participants a distinct opportunity to (a) improve and increase marketable fruit. Using our high tunnel facility, market managers and vendors, local chefs and restaurant managers, the general public and the 144 individuals with intellectual disabilities served by the school in best practices, common challenges and solutions, stewardship of natural resources, and local networking opportunities in the selection, growth, production, marketing and sales, preparation, and nutritional value of fruits, vegetables and specialty crops	Cassandra Searight
FA-AL-7-037	Dubois Institute for Entrepreneurship, Inc.	The project will use the facilities of Alabama State University & Dothan Library to train 80 ethnic minority farmers, veterans, who grow greens, tomatoes, watermelons, grapes. Alabama has military installations, and have high concentrations of veterans. 1. FSA-Programs - Farm Ownership & Farm Operating Loans, Livestock Indemnity Programs, Livestock Forage Programs, 2. Livestock Contracts, 4. Agri-Economics using Excel Software, 5. Excel Training, 6. Quick Books Training, 7. Credit Technical Assistance, 8. Business Plan Writing, 9. Veteran's Programs, 10. FSA Programs - NAP Insurance, Crop Insurance, 11. Marketing Products, 12. GAP/GHP Cert	Cassandra Searight
FA-TN-7-038	University of Tennessee	Provide producer/agri-industry personnel education on NAP, WFRP & Other USDA programs. 4 producer meeting/written & web resources for producers. Educate on maintaining proper records and improve participation.	
FA-WI-7-039	University of Wisconsin System	Direct marketing education for livestock producers.	Kim Iczkowski
FA-ME-7-040	Sunrise County Economic Council	Washington County ME. Workshops and individual counseling to educate diversified fruit/vegetable producers about FSA programs and financial training for loans.	MaryAnne Coffin/Sherry Hamel
FA-CA-7-041	Organic Farming Research Foundation	Develop guidebook for organic farmers. Conduct meetings, mailings, news releases on off.org site. Focus on conservation buffer zones, disaster losses, interim financing after harvest, FSFL.	Brooke Raffaele
FA-MS-7-042	Mississippi State University	Focuses on increasing access to African Americans, women and BFRs in conservation programs. Will integrate face to face education, smart phone applications and online decision making tools/targeted marketing to key stakeholder groups.	Aaron Robinson
FA-OK-7-043	Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, Inc.	Partnering with tribal members to participate in Farm bill programs. Provide info to member of the Muskogee Creek Nation. Educate on FSA common provisions.	Janlyn Hannah
FA-GA-7-044	Fort Valley State University	Train 60 minority farmers and vegetable producers growing greens, tomatoes, watermelons & grapes. 4 days of training in 3 cities: Ft. Valley, Columbus, Albany. High concentration of vets due to military installation.	Neal Leonard
FA-WA-7-045	Washington State University	Increase financial literacy, strengthen business operations and present FSA programs in the West Puget Sound region of WA. In class and on-farm workshops. (Kitsap County)	Chris Bieker
FA-CA-7-046	Siskiyou Joint Community College District	Educate farmers/ranchers in county on basic accounting skills. (Balance sheets/income statements)	Brooke Raffaele