

SDASCOE QUESTIONS
SPRING BOARD MEETING 2015
February 9, 2015

STAFFING:

- Has there been any talk of adding additional Key PT's?

South Dakota is evaluating the potential need to hire additional Key PT's; however, we are still actively pursuing the filling of other critical need vacancies at this time. Requests for additional Key PT's outside of the 2 initially authorized would need to be considered and approved by DAFO.

- Are there plans to revamp the way staffing were figured and allow some flexibility for situations such as shared management and CED is only in the office part time?

National Leadership has indicated that they would reevaluate the current staffing model and additional data on an annual basis. South Dakota FSA leadership does consider varying circumstances such as shared management, shared PT's, collateral commodity and FLP responsibilities, etc. in addition to the staffing model.

- CED's do not get overtime, they get regular time if overtime is allow, Comp time and credit hours only put everyone into trouble with leave. What compensation is there for Staff and in particular CED's when we have to work on the weekends or at nights to complete tasks?

We would never ask an employee to conduct official FSA business without being properly compensate for their time. Unfortunately, we are restricted to the authorized forms of compensation which stipulates the rate at which overtime is paid, or if an employee is authorized to accrue credit time, comp time, or travel comp time.

- Please provide an updated staffing report that shows changes due to new hires/transfers and new responsibilities (i.e. Penn. Co FLP workload divided between Haakon and Fall-River/Custer) etc.

An updated staffing report will be compiled as time allows.

- Are there plans to provide training/guidebooks for Admin PTs?

There currently is not any specific training planned for administrative PT's. If there are specific training needs, please submit the topics and needs through the District Directors so that we can determine if training or resources would be appropriate.

RETIREMENT PLANNING:

- Is there going to be any retirement training like they did a few years ago for those within 5 years of retirement?

At this time there currently is not any scheduled retirement training. This is something that we could consider following the upcoming critical deadlines for FSA producers.

GOV DELIVERY - OUTREACH:

- We do not duplicate efforts where the producers are getting the same information from different sources. Deb sent out a January newsletter to all subscribers in SD. Is she going to send out a monthly newsletter?

INFO-66, requires STO's to issue a statewide monthly newsletter via the approved template. South Dakota will be complying with this national directive.

- Deb had a conference call where basically anything that is being sent out to the media needs to be cleared through Deb or Gov Delivery before being sent out. Deb went through dos and don'ts on the conference call. Several offices have weekly columns and radio spots. Asking for clearance on every single item is going to delay getting the information to the media. Would it be possible for Deb to send out an email clarifying times when we need to get clearance vs. not needing clearance?

This is a proactive and feasible suggestion. Additional guidance for COF's need to be forthcoming.

- Reporting outreach activity has become very cumbersome and needs to be streamlined. We have OTIS, now we have a "special" site to load up ARC/PLC outreach, then we have to now give monthly reports on LFP and MPP. As of late another place to now report activity in reporting outreach for Conservation Compliance. All of this trumps trying to get the signup done for our producers.

These concerns are duly noted; however, all of these specific requests have come from the Department level and FSA leadership is simply complying with the Department's directive. The concern that the redundant reporting activities interferes with effective and efficient delivery of programs to farmers and ranchers has been elevated on multiple occasions.

SHAREPOINT:

- We have handbooks, and notices for procedure, in addition we have email notes, and share point, and now it is coming out in info bulletins. There are times when it is difficult to find the info as it is in too many places. Is there a way to corral all of this impossible to find information into one place?

We fully understand that the myriad of bulletins, notices, updates, policies, and directives can be overwhelming for an FSA employee. However, it is not feasible for us to devote staff to the redundancy of creating a consolidated information data warehouse for all of this information. It is also important to note that individual offices or employees may

have a system for filing and documenting information pertinent to their respective responsibilities.

FARM LOAN:

- Will you send out the South Dakota FEVS/CEVS state-level results, and discuss your plans to improve scores?

The results of the Employee Viewpoint Survey for South Dakota were presented to the SED. An initial review of the results is very indicative of the concerns related to the delaying in advertising and filling vacancies. The survey also reiterates the commitment of South Dakota FSA employees not only to farmers and ranchers, but the Agency and USDA.

We are currently looking at engaging a task force to review the findings and discuss proactive solutions or resolutions to South Dakota FSA employee concerns.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Please provide an update on the Managed Print Services plan for SD. Will keyboards be attached to MPS units (including those ordered by NRCS that are only used for scanning by FSA) so we don't have to use our LincPass cards.

Issues and concerns with Managed Print Services are still present; however, there has been some improvement. At this point we have not made arrangements with NRCS to utilize their MPS multi-function devices. Due to the fact we have had success in utilizing keyboards with the multi-function devices in South Dakota, it is anticipated that NRCS will also utilize this option.

South Dakota FSA is currently looking to address critical printer needs by acquiring new printers through MPS. It is important that COF's recognize that this is our only option to obtain new printers for our offices. We will be looking to obtain an initial sampling of MPS printers for COF's with current critical printer needs.

- Are there funds available to provide plug-n-play webcams so calls/trainings can be done via video/Lync?

This type of purchase is considered to be an IT equipment purchase that is managed by the National Office. The South Dakota State Office cannot purchase this type of equipment

- Are there extra laptops (with cameras) that can be used for calls/trainings since PT's don't have offices and most conference rooms are not equipped with cameras or extra computers?

Loaner and training laptops are available for intermittent checkout through ITS for these instances and temporary needs. However, we cannot deploy an additional laptop to a Service Center for an extended period of time.

Through the FY2014 equipment buy, FSA did deploy many additional laptops throughout the state that may be utilized for this purpose within an office by coordinating with a user who has a laptop assigned to them rather than a desktop.

- Phased retirement has been approved by OPM. How is USDA/FSA & SD going to use this option, if at all?

FSA is currently not exercising phased retirement.