*Building Rural America*

**National Association of Credit Specialists**

of the

**USDA – Farm Service Agency**

**MANAGEMENT / PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**



**THE MANAGEMENT / PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MET AT THE HILTON OMAHA IN OMAHA, NE, ON JUNE 26-28, 2023, TO REVIEW RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE MEMBERSHIP.**

**THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION:**

**Resolution 1**

**CONCERN:**

In offices with no Farm Loan Program Technicians the Farm Loan Officers, Farm Loan Managers, and Farm Loan Officer Trainees are doing their work plus the normal work an FLP PT. Many of the new FLO's and FLOT's don't know the PT basics as they have never been PT's or have never been provided PT training. There are many administrative and clerical areas that PT's cover that FLO's are never taught.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Ensure that all FLOTS have a training in completing tasks generally preformed by PT. Ensure existing FLO's, and FLM's are provided the training to ensure they understand how to preform all the normal duties of a PT.

**Resolution 2**

**CONCERN:**

With the rising number of retirements and resignations among Managers, the employees taking their place are not well-equipped for the positions they are taking. Between application processing and personnel management, there is no time to complete AgLearn "on your own," and although there is outside support from your DD's and other FLM's, not having a set curriculum or standard set of daily, monthly or quarterly management expectations is detrimental to the new Managers and their employees.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Training program for new Farm Loan Managers that includes materials for first time Managers; training new employees (FLOT's, FLO's, PT's, FLA's); time and priority management, etc.; and roles and responsibilities outside of what is listed in USAJobs.

**Resolution 3**

**CONCERN:**

Our agency strives to be diverse; however, when a customer calls or comes to the counter and English is not their native language or it is extremely limited, it is almost impossible to help them without having a few key sentences that we as federal employees can establish to help. I do understand that we have an interpretation service, but it is frustrating trying to point to a poster or have a limited conversation over the phone without a few key sentences. Demographically our office deals with a number of Asian and Hispanic applicants and most often my coworkers cannot connect the bridge to start the interpretation process.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Give Farm Service Agency access to Rosetta Stone.

**Resolution 4**

**CONCERN:**

Farm Service Agency is unable to recruit and retain qualified employees due to inadequate pay to compete with the private sector. New college graduates are offered a higher salary at banks or farm credits and are uninterested in working for the government. Local service jobs offer a higher salary for entry level non-technical jobs than FSA does for technical/skilled jobs.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Re-evaluate the pay scale for all Farm Service Agency employees (GS & CO) to bring the pay in line with private sector jobs and allow for recruitment and retention of qualified individuals.

**THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR NON-ADOPTION:**

**Resolution 5**

**CONCERN:**

In the wake of so many current and soon to be retired FLP employees, FLP is/will be in the need for Mentorship/Trainers. As of now, information on rehired employee's is very minimal and or not widely available.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Offer part-time employment to recently retired FLP staff. Retired FLM's could offer mentorship to newly selected FLM's and/or off training to newly selected FLOT's. FLP PT's/LA's could offer training to newly selected PT's/LA's.

**EXPLANATION FOR NON-ADOPTON BY THE COMMITTEE:**

A mechanism already exists in the Federal Government to address this concern. The re-employed annuitant avenue was expanded to allow Federal agencies more flexibility in requesting to utilize this option. More information regarding the availability of this process can be found at OPM.gov (dual compensation waiver)

In addition, there is the possibility that the position could be Double Encumbered to allow a training transition period between the retiring employee and the new employee.

**Resolution 6**

**CONCERN:**

Our DD rarely meets with FLP; however, FP is continuously having TEAMS meeting discussing any new updates and/or questions that arise. FLP, however; will pose a question to the DD and we are usually told to READ and/or they will follow up. Unfortunately, our questions fall of deaf ears 90% of the time. We are then further frustrated when told we need to submit any S/O correspondence thru our DD. Again, our question goes nowhere.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Hire a District Director that can cover multiple districts but addresses FLP questions and concerns. This will allow for consistency throughout our states. The solution will also allow for much needed discussions when updates/amendments are made that may need clarity.

**EXPLANATION FOR NON-ADOPTON BY THE COMMITTEE:**

This concern could be better addressed by the states reviewing how they have structured the support provided to the field and how best to utilize position management and improve lines of communication in these regards.

**Resolution 7**

**CONCERN:**

The education requirements for a PT GS-6 and GS-7 are higher than those of a Loan Assistant/Loan Specialist (FLOT). It is not required to have a one year of graduate education or masters or higher-level graduate degree for the FLOT position for a GS-7.

Why are the education requirements for a PT GS-6 and GS-7 higher than those of a Loan Assistant/Loan Specialist (FLOT) GS 7?

To qualify for a GS-6 or GS-7 for a PT the applicants needs to have one year of graduate education or masters or higher level graduate degree from an accredited college or university with a major in finance, business administration, economics, accounting, engineering, mathematics, banking and credit, law, statistics, or other fields related to the position, such as agriculture, agricultural economics, farm, livestock or ranch management, or rural sociology.

To qualify for a GS-7 for a FLOT position the applicant needs to have Superior Academic Achievement: A bachelor's degree in finance, business administration, economics, accounting, engineering, mathematics, banking and credit, law, statistics, or another field related to the position, such as agriculture, agricultural economics, farm, livestock or ranch management, or rural sociology from an accredited college or university with either: 1) a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 based on a 4.0 scale; 2) a 3.5 GPA based on a 4.0 scale for required courses completed in a major field of study during the last two years of undergraduate study; 3) class standing of upper third of the graduating class in the college, university, or major subdivision of the college; 4) membership in a National Scholastic Honour Society certified by the Association of College Honour Societies, excluding freshman honour societies.

It is not required to have a one year of graduate education or masters or higher-level graduate degree for the FLOT position at a GS-7.

The PT position is asking for a higher level of education for same to lesser pay of the FLOT position.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

Have national office review the education requirements for PT positions.

Lower the education requirements for GS-6 and GS-7 PT positions.

**EXPLANATION FOR NON-ADOPTON BY THE COMMITTEE:**

The position classification for a FLP-Program Technician falls into the 1101 General Business and Industry series and is grouped into the Clerical and Administrative Support Position. The FLOT position falls into the 1165 Loan Specialist series. OPM regulations in these regards provide the standards by which the entry grade for this position is determined. The FLOT position has a higher-grade potential and therefore different standards for the entry level and each progression as compared to the PT.

Respectfully submitted by the 2022-2023 Management / Personnel Committee:

John Oosterman, CA, Zone A Heather Cox, TX, Zone B

Dustin Mattingly, KY, Zone C Theresa Windham, GA, Zone D - Chair