

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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| <b>DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION</b>                 |   | <b>Number:</b><br>4740-002 |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b><br>USDA Cross Training Program | <b>DATE:</b><br>September 26, 2013                  |                            |
|  | <b>OPI:</b><br>Office of Human Resources Management |                            |

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of USDA's Cross Training Program (CTP) is to educate USDA employees in Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD) service centers on the full range of grants, loans, services and programs administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), FSA, NRCS, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) and RD. The overall goal of CTP is to improve the level of customer service provided.

2. AUTHORITIES

- a. The Government Employees Training Act, Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 41 and related guidance issued by the Office of Personnel Management;
- b. Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 410, Training, Section 305, Establishing and Using Interagency Training.

3. REFERENCES

This directive:

- a. Shall be used in conjunction with:
  - (1) [The Business Case for the Cultural Transformation of USDA](#)
  - (2) [The Cultural Transformation of USDA: Creating an Inclusive, High-Performance Organization](#)
  - (3) [Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap](#)

- b. Addresses concerns expressed at the Employee Listening Sessions: [The Cultural Transformation of USDA, June 2010](#)

#### 4. BACKGROUND

USDA's mission is to provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management. How well our customers are served, the level of customer satisfaction, and our delivery processes are essential to accomplishing our mission. Often, customers are not certain about the specific USDA programs that are available to meet their needs.

Historically, USDA employees have been educated only on the programs in their area of specific responsibility and are often not familiar with programs offered by other USDA agencies that would help a customer further. Employees in the FSA, NRCS, and RD who interact with the public in service centers should be able to share information about other USDA programs so that a customer's needs are met.

#### 5. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

This is a new policy.

#### 6. POLICY

- a. To improve customer service, all employees in the FSA, NRCS, and RD service centers who interact with the public are required to complete all courses in the CTP curriculum.
- b. Supervisors in the FSA, NRCS, and RD are encouraged to build inter-agency program knowledge of their employees who communicate with the public by ensuring those employees complete the required cross training as part of employees' individual development plans.
- c. For existing employees, all of the training listed in Appendix I must be completed by the end of calendar year 2013. Any future cross training courses new to the employee in AgLearn, must be completed by the end of the third quarter of the fiscal year annually. New employees to whom this training requirement applies must complete all available CTP courses within their first 6 months on duty.
- d. The training is developed and maintained by a working group that is led by the USDA Virtual University with members from FSA, NRCS, RD, and the Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO).

#### 7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The USDA Virtual University:
  - (1) Works with representatives from FSA, NRCS, RD, and OAO to lend training expertise and ensure that training coursework is designed to promote adult learning.
  - (2) Issues a call for a report of employees who have completed the training.
  - (3) Ensures that the curriculum is evaluated quarterly and is up to date.
  - (4) Convenes training and subject matter experts from FSA, NRCS, RD, and OAO to update courses as needed, for example based on changes resulting from new legislation making changes to programs.
  
- b. The USDA's OAO shares the training links with the following groups to ensure that they are aware of the full range of USDA's grants, loans and services that are available to the communities they represent.
  - (1) Liaisons of the 1890 Program. The mission of the 1890 program is to attract students into careers in agriculture and related fields; share expertise and resources in areas such as agricultural research, extension and teaching programs, technology development, limited-resource farmers and minority farmer programs, and rural development programs; and to increase the involvement of the 1890 Land-Grant Institutions and Tuskegee University in the delivery of USDA programs.
  - (2) Liaisons of the 1994 Program. The mission of this program is to provide grant funds and encourage applications for the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (Tribal Colleges Extension Services) Program. This Program provides funding for the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions to conduct non-traditional education and outreach activities to help meet the needs of the Native American people, and to provide essential services to their communities.
  - (3) Liaisons to the Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). The mission of the Hispanic Serving Institutions program is to maintain strategic partnerships between USDA and HSIs that provide equitable access to employment, educational and institutional development opportunities.
  - (4) 2501 [Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR) Competitive Grants Program] Community Based Organization recipients.
  
- c. Supervisors in the FSA, NRCS, and RD ensure that appropriate employees complete the training and report it to the Virtual University as requested.

- d. The Office of the Chief Information Officer's Team AgLearn ensures that training courses are accessible to employees and members of Community Based Organizations, including Liaisons from the 1890, 1994, and HSI programs, in AgLearn.
- e. Agencies other than the AMS, FSA, NRCS, RMA and RD may be required to share or develop course content and participate in the CTP as needs arise based on new legislation related to USDA's grants, loans, and programs for customers.

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## APPENDIX A

### CROSS TRAINING PROGRAM PHASE I COURSES

Agencies are required to use the USDA Cross Training Program curriculum as outlined in paragraph 5, sections a, b, and c of this DR. The tables below outline the course titles by Agency as they are listed in AgLearn. Any updates to the curriculum can be found on the [USDA Virtual University Cross Training Program](#) webpage. All courses and activities outlined in the curriculum are freely available to all USDA personnel through AgLearn. For existing employees, all of the training listed in Appendix I, and any future cross training courses new to the employee in AgLearn, must be completed by the end of the third quarter of the fiscal year annually. New employees to whom this training requirement applies must complete all available CTP courses within their first 6 months on duty.

**NOTE:** All courses are listed in AgLearn with the “USDA Cross Training Programs” identifier prior to the course title contained in the tables below (e.g., USDA Cross Training Programs: FSA Overview).

**Table 1. Agricultural Marketing Service Courses**

| Course          | Course ID        | Source  | Method | Time (Hours) |
|-----------------|------------------|---------|--------|--------------|
| AMS Organic 101 | USDA-CTP-AMS-001 | AgLearn | Online | 0.25         |
| AMS Organic 201 | USDA-CTP-AMS-002 | AgLearn | Online | 0.5          |

**Table 2. Farm Services Agency Courses**

| Course  | Course ID        | Source  | Method | Time (Hours) |
|---|------------------|---------|--------|--------------|
| FSA Overview                                    | USDA-CTP-FSA-001 | AgLearn | Online | 0.5          |
| FSA Loan Programs                               | USDA-CTP-FSA-002 | AgLearn | Online | 0.5          |
| FSA Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program | USDA-CTP-FSA-003 | AgLearn | Online | 0.5          |

**Table 3. Natural Resource Conservation Service Courses**

| Course   | Course ID         | Source  | Method | Time (Hours) |
|--|-------------------|---------|--------|--------------|
| NRCS Overview                                    | USDA-CTP-NRCS-001 | AgLearn | Online | 0.25         |
| NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance Program   | USDA-CTP-NRCS-002 | AgLearn | Online | 0.75         |
| NRCS Partners                                    | USDA-CTP-NRCS-003 | AgLearn | Online | 0.5          |
| NRCS Conservation Programs Part I                | USDA-CTP-NRCS-004 | AgLearn | Online | 0.75         |
| NRCS Conservation Programs Part II               | USDA-CTP-NRCS-005 | AgLearn | Online | 0.75         |
| NRCS Wetland and Highly Erodible Land Compliance | USDA-CTP-NRCS-006 | AgLearn | Online | 0.25         |

**Table 4. Risk Management Agency Courses**

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| <b>Course</b>            | <b>Course ID</b> | <b>Source</b> | <b>Method</b> | <b>Time (Hours)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| RMA Crop Insurance 101   | USDA-CTP-RMA-001 | AgLearn       | Online        | 0.5                 |
| RMA Crop Insurance Cycle | USDA-CTP-RMA-002 | AgLearn       | Online        | 0.5                 |

**Table 5. Rural Development Courses**

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| <b>Course</b>                                | <b>Course ID</b> | <b>Source</b> | <b>Method</b> | <b>Time (Hours)</b> |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| RD Overview                                  | USDA-CTP-RD-001  | AgLearn       | Online        | 0.25                |
| RD Rural Business-Cooperative Programs       | USDA-CTP-RD-002  | AgLearn       | Online        | 0.75                |
| RD Housing and Community Facilities Programs | USDA-CTP-RD-003  | AgLearn       | Online        | 0.75                |
| RD Rural Utilities Service Programs          | USDA-CTP-RD-004  | AgLearn       | Online        | 0.5                 |