

USDA LABOR-MANAGEMENT FORUM

MEETING MINUTES

JUNE 7, 2010

Approved July 29, 2010

USDA Labor-Management Forum Charter.

Forum members reviewed the draft Charter developed and recommended by its Charter Work Group. The draft was reviewed line-by-line with edits integrated into the draft document directly at the meeting, followed by formal sign-off and adoption of the Charter. This meeting agenda topic consumed the major focus of the June 7, 2010 Forum meeting.

A discussion of Section IX-Funding, culminated in adoption of Charter language committing to USDA funding for conducting assessments of the Department's labor-management environment. While not included in the language of the formal Charter, consensus agreement was reached on several other funding related matters. Forum members agreed that: USDA Agencies and Offices will fund travel and per diem costs for their respective employee Forum members to attend face-to-face meetings; management will not fund travel and per diem for guests of USDA Forum union representatives; and USDA will fund the cost of facilitation, consultation, and advisory services it contracts to provide to the USDA Forum.

The Forum agreed to and the Charter establishes the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration (ASA) or her/his designee and a representative designated by labor organization Forum members to serve as co-chairs for the Forum. Presiding duties will be rotated between the two co-chairs on a six-month basis with labor taking the first turn presiding. The labor organizations designated Debra Arnold, President, AFSCME Local 3870, to serve as the Forum's labor co-chair. William P. Milton, Jr., Deputy Director, Office of Human Resources Management will serve as the Deputy ASA's designated co-chair for management on the Forum.

Labor Relations Climate Assessment.

The Forum considered the recommendations of its Climate Assessment Work Group. Forum members agreed that both electronic (email) surveys and targeted focused interviews will be used to collect labor relations climate assessment information. Forum members agreed that only labor union and management representatives directly involved and engaged in the labor-management relationship will be surveyed. The Electronic surveys will go to management-labor union counterparts, of each of USDA's bargaining units and to the Labor Relations Officers servicing those bargaining units. 43 focused interviews were recommended, targeted to get maximum survey population coverage through a minimum number of interviews. There was some discussion regarding the number and recommended targets of the focused interviews, with the interview list to be refined as the roster of individuals to be interviewed is further developed and finalized. The Work Group set July 16, 2010 as its target for completion of the

Climate Assessment. Contract support will be used to conduct, analyze, and report the findings of the labor relations climate assessment.

Next Steps for Establishing Working Forums in the Mission Area/Agencies.

The Forum came to agreement that its next step for establishing labor-management forums at the Mission Area and Agency levels would take the form of an overarching communication to those levels of the Department. There was some discussion as to the target and goal for such a communication, with AFGE's representative reminding Forum members that the Executive Order specifically calls for labor-management forums to be established at the bargaining unit level. The Forum named a Communications Work Group to develop a draft communication with the goal of moving USDA Mission Areas and Agencies to proceed with establishing their labor-management forums.

Training.

Forum members were advised that the Department was able to arrange for USDA-only two-day training on the Executive Order presented jointly by the FLRA and FMCS. Dates were being finalized, with an expectation that the training would take place in August.