

USDA Labor Management Forum

January 25, 2013 Minutes

Draft

I. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

The USDA Labor-Management Forum Meeting was called to order at 1:10 p.m.

Roll Call:

Labor Members and Designated Alternates:	Management Members and Designated Alternates:
Melissa Baumann, NFFE	Leslie Violette, NRCS
Chris Berry, NFFE	Arthur Bryant, Forest Service
Clay Combs, AFGE (for Steve Hollis, Labor Co-Chair)	William P. Milton, Jr., CHCO OHRM
Steve Hollis, AFGE	Bryan Knowles, DM-OHRM, Management Co-Chair
Luke Chesek, NTEU	Frank King, APHIS
Sarah Rehberg, NAAE	Steve Placek, NAD
David Mergen, AFSA	Dan Kline, DM-OHRM
Stan Painter, AFGE	Walter Vick, FNS
Marcus Washington, AFSCME	Marilyn Holland, APHIS
	Cynthia C. Ross, APHIS
	Tami Trost, OGC

Other Attendees: Adrian Lindsey, Myron Greenhow

Note Taker(s): Myron Greenhow/Adrian Lindsey

II. DISCUSSION

Introduction: The Management Co-Chair, **Bryan M. Knowles**, called the quarterly meeting to order and introduced **Clay Combes** as the stand-in for **Steve Hollis**, the newly elected Labor Co-Chair who could not be in attendance.

National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations (NCFLMR): **Bryan Knowles** reported to the Forum the results of the latest NCFLMR meeting. The NCFLMR meeting centered on what its purpose and relevance would be and included trying to find ways to strengthen E.O. 13522, addressing supervisory ratios, encouraging career development, and understanding the financial challenges facing agencies. The NCFLMR was especially interested in creating a workgroup to help Agencies and Departments develop a better understanding of PDI. In particular, the workgroup would address the lack of understanding surrounding what PDI is, its meaning and relevance, its enforcement and best practices. **Bryan** shared that OPM's

John Berry wants to know what agencies are still holding back on engaging in Pre-Decisional Involvement (PDI). **William (Billy) P. Milton, Jr.** dovetailed **Bryan's** remarks by letting it be known that agencies are being placed on notice of their obligation to engage Labor in PDI.

Pre-decisional Involvement and Revising Metrics:

- ***The Labor-Management Climate Assessment Survey.*** **Myron Greenhow** introduced the survey, and noted the lack of participation in 2012's report in comparison to the 2011 report. **Melissa Baumann** expressed that labor had no input on the distribution of the survey and was not aware that one was being distributed, and that this probably contributed to the poor response rate. **Billy** responded to Melissa's assertions by stating that she should have been aware that the survey was being distributed due to the fact the last quarterly meeting discussed the distribution of the survey and how far the report could be drilled down. **Chris Berry** expressed concern as to whether or not PDI was happening based on the results of the survey. **Billy** responded by stating that Agencies not engaging in PDI are now on notice that they should be. **Billy** also stressed that the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Plan has made PDI an initiative for 2013. **Billy** emphasized that PDI should be occurring 100% of the time, but that the goal for the Department is 90% for 2013.

The rest of the conversation addressed what kinds of mechanisms can be used to ensure that all the employees who should receive the survey do, including advising Agency LROs to communicate with Labor to verify the accuracy of the contact information being on file.

- ***USDA Labor Metrics Report 2012.*** **Dan Kline** expressed concern that the 2012 Labor Metrics Reporting was markedly lower than last year's, and he noticed a lack of PDI occurring in agencies. **Dan** further emphasized that some agencies were submitting a report in order to meet a deadline, but no joint collaboration was actually occurring. In light of this, **Dan** suggested that a joint labor-management workgroup be created to establish better ways to ensure that Forums establish agreed upon PDI goals and ensure that the metric reports submitted joint submissions.

Upon hearing **Dan's** statements, **Stan Painter** added that the Metrics Report FSIS submitted for 2012 was fabricated. **Stan** also noted that FSIS's Forum does not have a charter or metrics; and, the last meeting between the parties occurred last summer. **Stan** mentioned that he had "high hopes" for **Jacqueline Myers**, but that hope has since faded. **Dan** responded that where a labor organization has declined to participate in labor-management forum activities, they should still engage in PDI as much as practicable. As a followup, **Stan** stated that he met with agencies today, and was made aware that the agency was engaging BUEs; he continued that he only finds out these things after it "hits the field."

Billy interjected by stating that one of the things he intends to do is inform the **Secretary** of what has been taking place in FSIS. **Billy** added that FSIS had been coded yellow in the past, but that it would be coded red should the agency continue to fail in meeting its obligation to engage Labor under the Executive Order. **Stan** thanked **Billy** for the suggested course of action.

- ***Cultural Transformation Report Card for Labor-Management Forums.*** **Bryan** and **Dan** introduced the idea of standing up a workgroup to create a new PDI metric that would highlight the continuous PDI progress/accomplishments being made in forums throughout the USDA. One recommendation was that the workgroup consider requiring Management and Labor to agree to engage in PDI on some number of workplace issues annually in order to continue receiving credit for engaging in PDI. **Chris** noted that the draft guidance suggested three items which may not even represent one percent of the matters that could be ripe for PDI. **Billy** repeated the Department's goal is 90% of the workplace issues affecting BUEs be addressed through PDI for 2013. It was also suggested that each forum decide on a process for PDI engagement. **Billy** stressed that he understands that not all workplace issues will have the opportunity to be addressed through PDI because of time constraints and the fact that directives from GSA, OPM, OMB, and Treasury oftentimes do not lend themselves to the PDI process. **Melissa** voiced her desire to know more about the magnitude of what kinds of things that could and should require PDI. **Chris** asked **Billy** what communication is being shared with the LROs, because the Forest Service is developing a database (assumed for PDI inventory). **Billy** states that no communication has come from the Department requiring such action.
- ***PDI Inventory***
 - **FY 2012 Listing.** **Bryan** introduced the Department's 2012 PDI Inventory Spreadsheet for the purposes of ensuring that the Department's spreadsheet reflected what was actually being cleared through the Forum.
 - **January 2013 PDI Notice.** **Bryan** also stated that he will distribute January's PDI Update during the last week of January 2013.
- ***Updated/Joint USDA Forum Guidance for PDI.*** **Bryan** introduced the idea of a PDI guidance document being developed by the forum for distribution to the USDA's respective Agencies and bargaining units. The purpose of this document would be to provide these groups with guidance that may improve their PDI relationships. **Bryan** concluded by requesting that 2 Labor members assist in the development of this guidance. **Chris** asked if metrics were done at the USDA Forum level. **Billy** remarked the Forum should. **Bryan** proffered we would have to establish the collective community noting that it may only be us here at the table.

Employee Viewpoint Survey Results:

Bryan asked **Billy** to address the forum regarding the results of the employee viewpoint survey. **Billy** expressed that the drill down requested by the forum took enormous effort, the data

retrieved was voluminous. This was the first time such an effort had been made to survey the government-wide population. **Dave Mergen** asked whether or not the survey pointed to anything the Department can do to improve the labor-management environment. **Billy** responded that some, but not all, of the items of concern were within the Department's ability to improve. **Billy** expressed that agencies should be using the pulse surveys which is a part of the Secretary's 2013 Action Plan.

Department-wide Leave Transfer/Donation Program:

Neither **Frank McDoough** nor **Jacqueline Myers** was available for the call, but **Bryan** was able to share that the cost of administering this program is becoming a rising concern. It was noted this initiative has been taken up by the Administrative Business Initiative Council (ABIC).

Transit Subsidy/Milage Rate POV:

Because Departments government-wide did not receive notification of this update until after the provisions went into effect, the forum agreed that nothing additional could be done through PDI. **Billy** and **Bryan** shared that they were considering the possibility of drafting a letter to John Berry and GSA stressing the importance of PDI for BUEs impacted by their decisions and requesting that future decisions take into consideration the PDI process.

Forum Charter Revision Workgroup Request:

Another attempt was made to solicit Labor participation for the working group before management representatives, **Frank McDonough** and **Adrian Lindsey**, begin revising the USDA LM Forum Charter.

Emergency Preparedness Procedures:

Dan expressed that the Office of Operations (OO) is willing to address the Forum again regarding the safety procedures in place at the buildings they are responsible for, provided that the Forum provides OO with the questions it wants answered prior to meeting with the forum. **Chris** questioned whether this matter was appropriate for the Department's Forum given the initiative only covers the National Capitol region.

FLRA Update:

Bryan informed the Forum that due to Carol Waller Pope's term as chairman and member of the FLRA (the Authority) have expired, the Authority is now operating with only one member. Because of this development the FLRA has posted guidance entitled "Case Processing While the Authority Component has One Member" to the FLRA website. The guidance is available at the following link: http://www.flra.gov/webfm_send/674.

Confirmation of Meeting Dates:

The forum confirmed the future Quarterly Meeting dates of April 24, July 24, and October 23, 2013. The Quarterly meeting times will be the same (1pm – 4pm), and the physical location (104-A) and teleconference numbers will be the same until further notice.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

DRAFT