

USDA Labor Management Forum

April 23, 2014 Minutes

Draft

I. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

The USDA Labor-Management Forum Meeting was called to order at 1:07 p.m.

Member Roll Call:

Labor and Designated Alternates:	Management and Designated Alternates:
Shantelle Gordon, AFSCME Labor Co-chair (Alt.)	Dan Kline, DM, Management Co-Chair (Alt.)
Chris Berry, NFFE	Dr. Gregory L. Parham, ASA
Johanna Eckley, NTEU	Robin Heard, DM
Sharon Shore, NTEU	Jacqueline Myers, FSIS
David Mergen, AFSA	Marilyn Holland, APHIS
Sarah Rehberg, NAAE	Steve Placek, NAD
Dave Cann-AFGE	Sharon Randolph, RD (for E. Primrose)
	Francis Austin, FNCS (for F. McDonough)
	N. Hewitt, OGC (for T. Trost)
	S. Moore, NRCS (for G. Norman)
	Kathy Hall, ARS (for J. Park)
	Adrian Lindsey, OHRM
	Randolph Wilkinson, OHRM

Other Attendees: Dr. Gregory Parham, ASA-OSEC, Chris Nelson-OSEC, Jamie Edmunds-OSEC, Karlease Kelly-OHRM, MaryJo Thompson-OHRM, , Deborah Rodriguez-OHRM, Frank King, APHIS

Note Taker(s): Dan Kline/Myron Greenhow

II. DISCUSSION

Introduction: The Chief Human Capital Officer **William P. Milton, Jr.** and the USDA Management Co-chair **Bryan Knowles** were not in attendance for the meeting. **Dan Kline** chaired the meeting for Management and **Shantelle Gordon** chaired the meeting for Labor. The quarterly meeting was called to order at approximately 1:05 p.m. All members introduced themselves for the benefit of the participants on the teleconference line.

Before addressing any agenda item, **Dan** asked the labor representatives directly to identify the Labor Co-chair. **Shantelle Gordon** responded that **Chris Ketner** is the Labor Co-chair despite his absence today. She indicated, as previously noted above, that she would be acting as his designated alternate today. Satisfied with the response, **Dan** made a motion to accept the

minutes of the previous meeting absent any objections. **Shantelle** seconded the motion. The minutes were adopted without objection.

President's Management Agenda: **Dan** introduced the Assistant Administrator for Management **Dr. Gregory L. Parham**. **Dr. Parham** gave a presentation addressing the President's Management Agenda (PMA). The PMA Board is led by the Office of Management and Budget and consists of 24 Chief Financial Officers from various departments. Five principle areas of concern have been benchmarked. The areas are: Acquisition Management, review/refine the ways in which we presently procure; Financial Management, to include total spending over which the Chief Financial Officer has primary responsibility; Human Capital Management, the most invaluable of resources, fostering talent management, dynamic workforce, and culture of excellence while promoting employee satisfaction; IT Management, how much is spent on hardware, software and services; and Real Property, review of USDA space. USDA already has initiatives devoted to realizing cost benefits from space utilization. In 2015, we'll be decentralizing the central account for GSA redistributing applicable shares to the agencies. **Dr. Parham** pointed out that \$3, 000, 000, 000 is on the table. USDA's interests are represented by Deputy Secretary **Krysta Hardin**; she presently sits on the PMA Board.

Leasing Improvement Strategy: Office of the Secretary's (OSEC) Program Analyst **Chris Nelson** and Special Assistant **Jamie Edmunds** gave a presentation on the Department's Leasing Improvement Strategy. **Chris** stated that week ago a one-pager was circulated to the Forum. He pointed out that USDA is one of the largest landowners in the federal government. USDA possesses over forty thousand buildings and structures which currently cost over \$470 million dollars annually. This estimate does not include maintenance and support costs. This in turn requires the maintenance of a substantial number of leases; -- over 3000 leases. We have over 1,000 month-to-month leases. This poses a risk of noncommittal by landlords fearful of USDA's opting out at any time, thus precipitating a lack of repairs and regular maintenance in many cases. The result is employees working in buildings that are in need of substantive care. USDA's goal is to streamline leasing across the board. We must take an aggressive approach to managing space more effectively.

The Request from Congress is what does USDA intend to reduce its footprint given its workforce has declined. There has been a 12% reduction in the workforce in the last ten years. This overlooks the fact the USDA's work continues to increase year after year. **Jamie Edmunds** shared that another center of excellence has been proposed; a governance board to look at workload analysis. It will serve as an advisory board to GSA. **Dr. Parham** has asked me to lead a liaison team now being developed. We are requesting Labor's engagement. **Chris** noted this is focused on the service agencies. **Jamie** informed the Forum that more information would be shared on USDA Connect. **Myron** asked how representatives external to USDA would have access to the site. **Chris** suggested that such individuals may be granted access to USDA Connect.

FY2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: The Virtual University Provost **Karlease Kelly** informed the Forum that the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) would be launched the week of May 5, 2014. The population would consist of a random sample government-wide. Approximately, 30 thousand permanent full-time and part-time employees will be offered an opportunity to participate in the EVS. **Karlease** shared that the Department will publicize making duty time available to complete the survey; that it's voluntary and confidential. **Dan Kline** asked when the results will be released by OPM. **Karlease** noted that reports be available as early as August, with reports available beginning in September 2014. **Dr. Parham** noted the turn-around time seems to take a long time, and he suggested that the process should be truncated. **Dan** asked if the EVS questions were available for review. **Karlease** said she would share them with **Myron** after the meeting. **Dr. Parham** asked if **Karlease** and **MaryJo Thompson** could share a little of the process with the Forum. EVS Program Manager **MaryJo** pointed out that OPM provided a preview of what employees will receive. **Karlease** noted that OPM is proactive about notifying agencies of a lack of results, or abnormal results.

Robin Heard expressed to the Forum that given **David Cann's** presence, she wanted to note their joint participation in Employee Engagement Work Group Workgroup. It is a joint work group consisting of members of the [Chief Human Capital Officers Council](#) and National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations. The workgroup is looking at opportunities to increase employee engagement in the federal government. The workgroup has created three teams to tackle (1) best/promising practices to increase employee engagement, (2) barriers and enablers of employee engagement, and (3) measures of and incentives for increasing employee engagement.

Revisions to Departmental Regulation 1010.001, Organization: Senior Policy Specialist **Deborah Rodriguez** gave a brief presentation to the Forum. She informed the Forum that her office was in the planning stages of streamlining the Organization DR. **Dan** intimated that we would like to out this out for pre-decisional involvement. **Dave Mergen** asked if this has anything to do with the Farm Bill Reauthorization. **Robin** shared that the 1010 package would not come until the end of any reorganization plan. **Dan** shared that this has nothing to do with the Farm Bill Reauthorization. **Deborah** noted that typically there are 30 to 60 reorganizations (reorgs) conducted annually within the Department. **Chris Berry** asked whether or not he heard correctly in that there are only 30 to 65 reorgs annually. **Deborah** reiterated 30 to 60. **Chris** noted that he had concerns that the Forest Service is not following the present DR; he further notes that there have been as few 100 and as many as 300 reorgs in the Forest Service wherein the DR was not followed. **Dr. Parham** noted that the Department receives many incomplete packages. **Chris** chimed that he's looking forward to PDI over this initiative.

Report on PDI Activity for 2nd Quarter of 2014: **Dan Kline** noted, that since we now know who the Labor Co-chair is, let's move on with the recent PDI Activity. He pointed out that last year he worked directly with **Steve Hollis** in effecting a formal approach to monitoring and reporting on PDI activity; hence the new PDI policy. It was pointed out that all agency forums

are required to report on their PDI activity on a quarterly basis. All forums were required at the outset to identify more than three PDI initiatives for the calendar year. The quarterly reports denote snapshots of PDI progress by agencies for the year. As an example, **Dan** pointed out that FFAS has reached a third, approximately 33% of its goal for the year. This was determined by reviewing all of the identified PDI suggested by each agency LMF and determining how much of what was suggested versus what was actually accomplished for the quarter. Thus, FFAS is on track to complete its goal by the end of the year. Though an agency may not have met its goal presently, its progress will be noted by what it has been accomplished at the respective quarter toward achieving its annual goal. Where a mission area has not received credit for any PDI activity is most likely due to an agency's failure to submit anything within the allotted time constraint or the activity was so negligible that it could not be measured.

Dave Mergen questioned the intent of the PDI Mailbox that was distributed to the Forum. **Dan** responded that AFSA's response was received and forwarded to the appropriate agency contact for a response. The PDI Mailbox was set up to resolve PDI issues.

Neha Hewitt wanted to know when the next opportunity to submit PDI reports would occur. **Myron** stated the next reports are due July 7, 2014; and no later than July 10, 2014. **Dan** noted that typically a written signature is required, but our office will accept an email notification from the union indicating the submission is a joint submission when a signature is not possible given the time constraint. **Shantelle** wanted to know what happens if the parties miss their goal. **Dan** indicated they will most likely be color-coded as red, "failing." This information would be reflected in the CT Metrics & Milestone Progress Report to the Secretary.

Dave shared that it sounds like his initial request may not have been made using the proper protocol. He wanted to know how his request should have been handled where it crosses over organizational lines. **Dan** noted that each agency is responsible for having its own guidelines, but if you have not asked, then start with your agency's LRO. One of the initiatives of the PDI policy is to allow Labor to identify all PDI opportunities that should have been offered, but were not.

Dave Cann wanted to know if PDI was increasing with the new policy's implementation or was it too early to tell. **Robin Heard** asked if there was a benchmark for last year, the response was no. Forums were merely required to indicate that PDI was regularly occurring between the parties to the maximum extent possible to receive credit for PDI.

Report on National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations PDI Interviews:

Myron Greenhow shared briefly with the Forum a recent assignment he'd been offer. The National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations (Council) had established two subcommittees to address forum concerns and populate more tools for LMF engagement. The Problem Resolution Subcommittee was charged with conducting PDI Interviews of ten LMFs from among different agencies. **Myron** was tasked with serving as a management representative along with a union representative to conduct a few interviews of selected LMFs. We are tasked with interviewing two LMFs in DOD units and an EEOC LMF. Once all of the

interviews have been completed they will be rolled up into a report that will be generated by the Council.

Wrap Up and Confirmation of Meeting Dates: **Neha Hewitt** asked if any member of the Forum has knowledge of addressing negotiating over mobile devices. **Dan** shared that if anyone has such knowledge if they could communicate with **Neha** directly at Neha.Hewitt@ogc.usda.gov or they could contact her at 503.808-5959. **Dave Cann** offered to see if there was anything in any of their available CBAs he might be capable of sharing.

The Forum confirmed the next quarterly meeting for July 23, 2014.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.