

Cultural Transformation Plan March 2012

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

LEADERSHIP

Measurable Goal 1: Review the 2011 OPM-ARS Employee Viewpoint Survey and determine improvement areas for ARS leaders and managers. Overall, ARS did very well on the 2011 OPM Employee Viewpoint Survey, but there are many opportunities for improvement.

- **Action Strategy:** *Effective Leadership* - Increase in average percent positive score of the Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) questions: 60, 53, 54, 64.
- **Action Strategy:** *Leadership Accountability* - Performance plans of all SES, managers and supervisors take into consideration the cultural transformation effort and ensure the same for other staff and applicable employees in that organization to include how they will be evaluated on those measures.
- **Action Strategy:** Performance plans of all SES, managers, and supervisors include a performance element and standards that hold the supervisor accountable for the performance management of subordinates.
- **Action Strategy:** Increase in the *Results-Oriented Performance Culture Index* as defined by OPM EVS Report. (Questions: 12, 14, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 30, 32, 33, 42, 44, 65)

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Measurable Goal 1: Increase percentage of employees with Individual Development Plans (IDP).

- **Action Strategy:** Promote use of Aglearn through ARS-ALL messages to employees, linking specific relevant courses, and training employees on use of Aglearn.
- **Action Strategy:** Conduct online and web-conference trainings to reach the largest group of employees and to enable employee groups with limited training funds to participate.
- **Action Strategy:** Create “Toolkit” on the ARS Cultural Transformation website to enable employees to access centrally-located training and other useful personal and professional development tools.

TALENT MANAGEMENT

Measurable Goal 1: OPM’s Talent Management System focuses on agencies having quality people with appropriate competencies in mission-critical activities. The system addresses competency gaps, particularly in mission-critical occupations, by implementing and maintaining programs to attract, acquire, develop, promote, and retain quality talent. USDA plans its own talent management system to empower promising employees to develop and deploy critical leadership performance skills.

- **Action Strategy:** Evaluate and/or update the succession and workforce planning **processes** to ensure a diversity of employees. ARS is implementing a succession plan that relies on (1) the identification of critical positions held by individuals eligible to

retire within 3 years; (2) targeting recruitment to candidates suitable for the identified positions; (3) consciously overlapping incumbents and new hires, and having them work together so that embodied knowledge transfer occurs.

- **Action Strategy:** Define activities management can undertake to cultivate an environment of *work-life balance* for employees, such as telework and flex-schedule.

Measurable Goal 2: ARS has selected a Cultural Transformation Training Officer from among senior staff and has trained the official to lead the agency in this endeavor.

- **Action Strategy:** Cultural Transformation training will continue to be disseminated to the Agency through a website created specifically for this purpose (see Measurable Goal 2 in Customer Focus and Community Outreach)
- **Action Strategy:** Staff will be given training in the CT Pillars identified by the Secretary, and training offered on the website will be varied each quarter.

CUSTOMER FOCUS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Measurable Goal 1: Increase communication and outreach to Employees via Your 2 Cents (Y2C), an employee suggestion and engagement website.

- **Action Strategy:** Increase readership of Y2C website by 20% as shown by site visit statistics and/or Ideas and Comments submitted.
- **Action Strategy:** Conduct three webcasts throughout the year to communicate such important Agency business as Budget issues, facility closure & employee relocation information.
- **Action Strategy:** Identify and take action on threenew initiatives for change and improvement in the Agency from employee feedback on Y2C.

Measurable Goal 2: Increase communication and outreach to Employees via ARS Cultural Transformation Website, known as “R3: Review, Refresh, Reform”

- **Action Strategy:** Increase readership of R3 website by 20% as shown by site visit statistics and/or blog posts and comments submitted.
- **Action Strategy:** Offer a new IDP ‘mirroring’ program, helping employees to mirror expensive training program requirements in their IDPs through Aglearn and other no-cost training methods. This has the dual benefit of saving dwindling training dollars and getting employees using their IDPs and Aglearn.
- **Action Strategy:** ARS & You Newsletter and ARS-ALL messages will be used to continue promotion of the site and the ARS Cultural Transformation effort.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Measurable Goal 1: Establish and implement a diverse workforce at USDA that looks like America.

- **Action Strategy:** Review P&P 443.0 and the requisite authorities and: 1) investigate the possibility of using of this hiring authority more broadly as a means of retaining outstanding scientists; 2) address with OPM the proposal to carry forward annual leave above 240 hours; and 3) discuss pros and cons of extending probationary period to three years.
- **Action Strategy:** Increase in percentage of managers reporting they are fully involved in the workforce planning process including determining current and future workforce requirements.
- **Action Strategy:** Increase percentage of employees hired within 80 calendar days.

Measurable Goal 2: The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the eighteen 1890 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) strengthen their partnership by implementing the National Scholars Program as a major effort to award a four-year scholarship to students that attend one of the eighteen universities or colleges and study agriculture, food, natural resources, and computer sciences.

- **Action Strategy:** ARS will continue its recruitment outreach program to minority-serving institutions. ARS researchers and professional staff participate in the Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Annual Career Fair and Training Conference, and other outreach activities throughout the country.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Measurable Goal 1: AFM / Area Office restructuring to improve delivery and reduce costs of agency business and administrative processes. Virtual implementation of “AFM Business Service Centers” has been completed.

- **Action Strategy:** Increase customer satisfaction by 15 percent measured by emailed surveys and feedback on Y2C site

Measurable Goal 2: HRD has been developing an On-boarding program with the participation from all 4 REE agencies throughout this FY. We have been piloting the On-boarding program during the 4th QTR FY-11 with the use of the USDA On-boarding portal as well as the new Supervisory and Mentor programs. HRD fully implemented the On-boarding program in all 4 agencies in January 2012.

- **Action Strategy:** Increase customer satisfaction by 15 percent, measured by emailed surveys and feedback on Y2C site

Measurable Goal 3: Six Sigma initiative to streamline/improve agency processes

- **Action Strategy:** Implement process improvement plan identified for external agreement management
- **Action Strategy:** Identify one additional Agency processes throughout the Agency that can be significantly streamlined via Six Sigma
- **Action Strategy:** Empower new Business Service Centers to continue improvement of their processes by re-engineering their own steps as they come across opportunities to do so.