



Office of the Chief Financial Officer

# **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

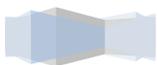
2010

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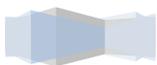
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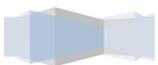
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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to provide general information about the policies and procedures governing the Office of the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO) **Headquarters** (HQ) employees. (This handbook does not apply to the employees of the National Finance Center or the Office of Budget and Program Analysis). These guidelines are intended to help you do your job effectively. The guidelines presented in this handbook are not intended to be a substitute for sound management, judgment, and discretion.

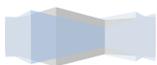
We encourage you to read the information in this handbook so that you understand OCFO's policies and procedures.

While this handbook cannot anticipate every situation that may arise in the workplace or provide information that answers every possible question, it can provide an overview of policies and procedures. If any statements in this handbook are unclear to you, please contact your **supervisor for clarification**.

To meet changing circumstances, the Chief Financial Officer reserves the right to change, revise, or rescind any of the policies or procedures described in this handbook.

In addition to the policies contained in this handbook, every OCFO employee has a duty to comply with all applicable Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Federal laws, rules and regulations.

This handbook is effective as of October 1, 2010, and supersedes any and all prior OCFO policies, procedures and employee handbooks.



# VISION, CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OCFO leads the way to fiscally sound, cost effective program delivery, supported by reliable financial management information and infrastructure.

## ***Departmental Management***

Service	Excellence in customer service
Accountability	Accountable and fair at all levels
Stewardship	Stewards of resources and public trust

## ***Office of the Chief Financial Officer***

Financial Management Accountability and Integrity - As Federal stewards, we are committed to managing all of our programs through a system of internal control. We take responsibility for our actions and work to leverage limited resources to deliver the greatest value per tax dollar.

Excellence - We establish and achieve meaningful goals, measure performance and communicate results. We value individual excellence and collective success. We serve as the focal point for USDA financial management, embracing opportunities for change and improvement while working accurately and efficiently.

Customer Focus - We value and maintain strong partnerships in achieving our goals. We reach out and listen to our customers. This ensures that we are informed about their unique requirements and they understand our capabilities as service providers. We are a customer-focused team, actively developing and providing products and services to meet customer requirements.

Workforce - We respect and value a highly skilled, enthusiastic, motivated, service-oriented and diverse workforce. We encourage innovation and risk taking. We invest in continuing professional development for all employees to ensure a technically competent and knowledgeable workforce. The OCFO is dedicated to increasing efforts in identifying employment barriers and developing plans to reduce/eliminate them.



## **MISSION**

The OCFO will shape an environment in which USDA officials have and use high quality financial and performance information to make and implement effective policy, management, stewardship, and program decisions.

## **STRATEGIC GOALS**

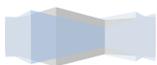
1. Promote sound financial management through leadership, policy and oversight.
2. Implement and maintain an infrastructure to provide management with on-line real time financial management information necessary for sound decision making.
3. Provide superior cross-servicing for financial and administrative services to USDA and other Federal Government agencies.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

The Secretary established the OCFO in 1995 to comply with the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990. The OCFO is responsible for overall financial management activities for the 100,000+ USDA employees and the direct management of more than 1,200 OCFO employees USDA headquarters in Washington, DC, and the National Finance Center (NFC) in New Orleans, Louisiana. The OCFO's duties include accounting and reporting responsibilities for USDA-wide program obligations. OCFO also has management oversight responsibility for nearly a third of all non-tax debt owed to the U. S. Government. In addition, the OCFO administers and manages the Department's Working Capital Fund. The appropriation for the OCFO is authorized by 7 USC 2201 and 32 USC 901ff, and the appropriation for the Departmental Working Capital Fund is authorized by 7 USC 2235.

A major government-wide cross-servicing and operations facility, the NFC processes the payroll for more than one-third of the Federal civilian workforce, excluding the Postal Service and the Department of Defense. NFC performs full data center services for automated systems that it uses to service its customers and for systems its customers use to deliver their mission. All services are provided on a fee-for-service basis. The majority of NFC's workforce and operations is located in New Orleans, with additional sites in Washington, DC, and Denver, Colorado.

The Chief Financial Officer serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary for Administration, and other Senior Officials on all matters related to budget estimates, legislative reports and regulations, financial management, financial management systems, financial control and accounting, internal control and assessment and financial training. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer frequently liaises with the White House, the Office of Management and Budget, and members of Congress.

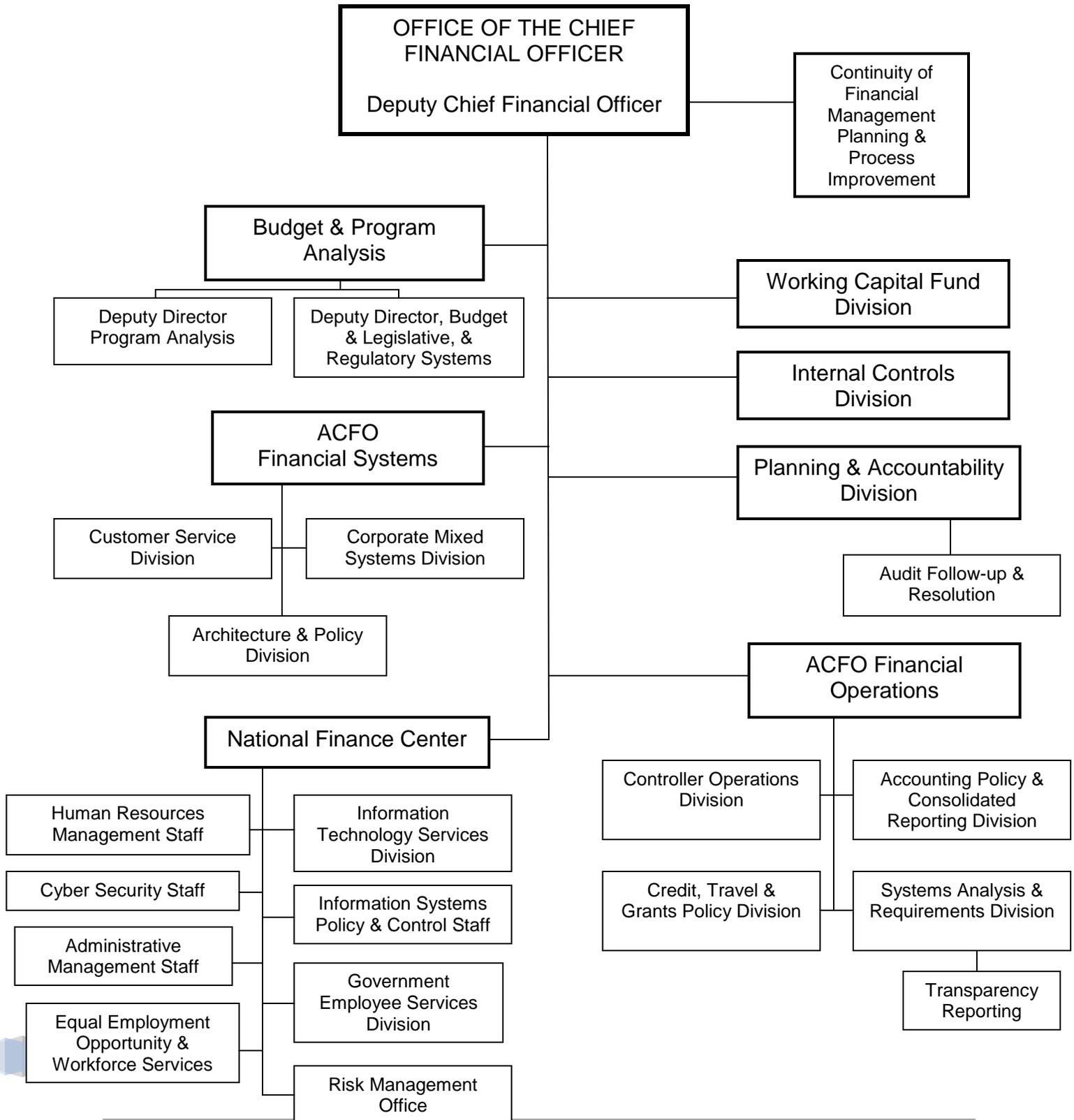


The Office of the Chief Financial Officer is comprised of the following organizational components:

BUDGET AND PROGRAM ANALYSIS  
CONTINUITY OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENT  
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS  
FINANCIAL SYSTEMS  
NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER  
INTERNAL CONTROLS  
PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
WORKING CAPITAL FUND



# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



## **BRIEF OVERVIEW OF EACH ORGANIZATION**

### ***Budget and Program Analysis***

The Office of Budget and Program Analysis' (OBPA) major activities consist of coordinating the preparation of the Department's budget estimates, legislative reports and regulations. OBPA provides direction and administration of the budget; reviews program and legislative proposals for program- and budget-related implications; and analyzes program and resource issues and alternatives. The Office also provides Departmentwide coordination of the preparation and processing of the legislative program and legislative reports; and provides Departmentwide coordination of the preparation and processing of regulations.

### ***Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement***

The Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division (CFMPPI) provides guidance and maintains the OCFO Continuity of Operations and pandemic plans. Additionally, CFMPPI provides administrative support to ensure that all organizational units are continually ready and able to provide mission support which includes employee development, facilities maintenance, contractual support, procurement of equipment, furniture and supplies, time & attendance, telework, and transit subsidy guidance and oversight.

### ***Financial Operations***

The Associate Chief Financial Officer for Financial Operations (ACFO-FO) provides a centralized control for the preparation of USDA's consolidated financial statements and other external financial reports. Additionally the ACFO-FO provides a centralized control for the maintenance of USDA's standard chart of accounts and posting models in Financial Foundation Information System. The ACFO-FO provides financial support to all of USDA and its customers, which include meeting the reporting requirements established by the Department of Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget for financial data reporting for the USDA. Additionally, the ACFO-FO provides consolidated strategic plan; streamlining and enhancing reporting and monitoring processes to ensure accountability; implementing credit reform and credit management initiatives; establishing travel, cash management, and other applicable fiscal and financial

management policies. With the passing of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act and Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the ACFO-FO became responsible for establishing management policies and reporting requirements to ensure the department meets the Act's requirements.

## ***Financial Systems***

The Associate Chief Financial Officer for Financial Systems (ACFO-FS) is responsible for implementation, operation and maintenance of the department wide financial management and administrative systems. These applications are critical to the continuous functioning of all of USDA because these are the essential systems for making vendor and producer payment for many of the USDA's vendors. Additionally, these systems provide the financial transactions for internal USDA employees for critical program support. The ACFO-FS also has responsibility for managing department wide financial system investments, ensuring that the systems comply with federal regulations and USDA standards, implementing new technology and new applications, performing and adhering to the Software Development Life Cycle.

## ***National Finance Center***

The National Finance Center's (NFC) mission is to serve USDA and other Federal organizations providing reliable, cost effective, employee-centric systems and services, allowing customer agencies to focus on their mission delivery. NFC strives to leverage its 35+ years of leadership in servicing the Federal sector and its current capabilities to provide value-added services centered on Federal employee recordkeeping. As a major government-wide cross-servicing and operational facility, the NFC processes the payroll for approximately 600,000 individuals or about 27 percent of the Federal civilian workforce who work for 140 agencies. NFC performs full data center services for other USDA and non-USDA agencies on a reimbursable basis, and is the only Federal provider of e-Authentication services for intra-government transactions.

## ***Internal Controls***

The Internal Controls Division (ICD) is responsible for providing assurance that the Department is in compliance with numerous legislative and regulatory requirements that promote and support effective financial management and financial controls. The Division focuses on providing leadership in conducting internal control reviews, risk assessments, monitoring, performance analysis and internal controls training.

## ***Planning and Accountability***

The Planning and Accountability Division (PAD) interprets, guides, and directs financial policy and planning, performance measurement, and resolution of related audits. The Division guides and oversees the preparation and annual revision of the USDA's and the agencies' five-year financial management plans, including the development of the agencies' financial management budgets and performance measures. Additionally, the Division compiles and submits the USDA Performance and Accountability Report annually.

## ***Working Capital Fund***

The Working Capital Fund Division manages a funds control program for the Working Capital Fund (WCF) activity centers. This includes activities to ensure proper accounting for the use of funds and staff years to assist these activity centers in properly accounting for their obligations and expenditures. This Division also develops and issues regulations, directives, guidelines, and other instructions for budget preparation, presentation, and execution of WCF activities.

## **FEDERAL APPOINTMENTS**

There are various types of Federal appointments. An employee will receive a copy of Standard Form (SF) 50-B, Notification of Personnel Action. The “nature of action” block on this form will indicate the type of appointment, and the particular type of appointment will determine eligibility for Federal benefits.

### ***Career-Conditional Appointment***

This is the most common type of appointment. An employee must serve a probationary period of one year. During the probationary period an employee's performance and conduct will be evaluated and the appointment can be terminated if warranted. If performance and conduct is satisfactory for three continuous years in this appointment, the employee may be converted to a career appointment.

### ***Career Appointment***

After completion of a one year probationary period and three continuous years of service, an employee is eligible for conversion to a career appointment. This is the most permanent of all appointments within the Federal Service. This appointment provides the employee with greater employment and job retention rights.

### ***Excepted Appointment***

Certain positions are excepted from the normal requirements of competitive service by law, Executive Order, or Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations. Many excepted appointments have a limit of two years on the position. Employees appointed to excepted positions do not go through the same kind of competitive process as career or career-conditional appointees; therefore, they do not receive the same benefits or employment rights.



## ***Term Appointment***

When the need for an employee's services is not permanent, OCFO may create a term appointment position for a period of more than one year, but not more than four years. Reasons for making a term appointment include, but are not limited to: project work; extraordinary workload; scheduled abolishment, reorganization, or contracting out of the function; uncertainty of future funding; or the need to maintain permanent positions for placement of employees who would otherwise be displaced from other parts of the organization. Employees in term appointments are entitled benefits such as health and life insurance and retirement credit. Term appointments do not convert to career appointments.

## ***Temporary Appointment***

Occasionally, OCFO needs employees for immediate short-term jobs. Employees in temporary appointments do not receive the same benefits as permanent employees. They do not have the same employment rights, do not participate in the retirement system, and are not eligible for health and life insurance benefits.



## PAY

Most Federal employees fall under the General Schedule or GS pay scale. The General Schedule is the pay scale for professional or “white collar” employees, and is comprised of 15 “grades.” The lowest grade is 1, and the highest is 15. Each grade has 10 “steps.” Employees advance from one grade to another as they are promoted and their responsibilities increase. Employees move to higher steps within their grade level based on the length of their tenure and acceptable job performance. Advancement to either a higher grade or step means an increase in pay.

Because within-grade, or “step,” increases are based in part on an employee's tenure, there are waiting periods before an employee can move to the next higher step. For employees with a scheduled tour of duty, the required waiting periods established by law for advancement to the next higher step are as follows:

<b>Advancement from...</b>	<b>Requires...</b>
step 1 to step 2	52 weeks of creditable service at step 1
step 2 to step 3	52 weeks of creditable service at step 2
step 3 to step 4	52 weeks of creditable service in step 3
step 4 to step 5	104 weeks of creditable service in step 4
step 5 to step 6	104 weeks of creditable service in step 5
step 6 to step 7	104 weeks of creditable service in step 6
step 7 to step 8	156 weeks of creditable service in step 7
step 8 to step 9	156 weeks of creditable service in step 8
step 9 to step 10	156 weeks of creditable service in step 9

Pay raises for the General Schedule are determined annually each year by Congress and the President. Once the pay increase is set by law, the amount is allocated by the President between base pay and locality pay.

For more information on the federal employee pay scale go to:

[www.opm.gov/oqa](http://www.opm.gov/oqa).

## ***Locality Pay***

Federal employees' pay consists of two primary parts – “base pay” and “locality pay.” While base pay is the same for each grade and step across the country, locality pay varies by geographic location. For example, a GS-9, step 5, employee in Kansas City will earn the same base pay as a GS-9, step 5, employee in Boston, but the Boston employee will earn more annually because of locality pay. There are about 30 metropolitan locality pay areas and a catch-all “rest of the United States” locality for all others within the contiguous 48 states.

## ***Pay Day/Direct Deposit***

Paydays are bi-weekly, with the official payday being the second Thursday of the pay period. Employees who are paid by direct deposit usually receive their pay on the second Monday of the pay period. Pay Period calendars can be found at:

[http://i2i.nfc.usda.gov/Forms/pay\\_period\\_calendar.html](http://i2i.nfc.usda.gov/Forms/pay_period_calendar.html)

## ***Employee Personal Page***

The Employee Personal Page (EPP) allows employees serviced by the National Finance Center (NFC) to view their payroll, leave, health and life insurance, W-2, and other personal information. EPP also allows employees to use a self-service feature to request updates to specific payroll related information.

Employees can submit changes for the following:

- Residence Address
- Federal and State Tax Withholding
- Financial Allotments
- Thrift Savings Plan Contribution Amounts
- Direct Deposit

EPP:

- can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from any personal computer with internet access
- allows employees to view and change data without having to submit change requests to their agency personnel office
- has customizable view preferences that can be set by the employee
- delivers data needed by the employee for income and W-2 verification
- contains online help accessible throughout the application to assist employees with their data change requests

Employees can access EPP at the National Finance Center's web site: [www.nfc.usda.gov](http://www.nfc.usda.gov). Follow the instructions for "Using the Employee Personal Page". Once you have registered you can sign on to check your individual information.

## EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDUCT

Departmental Regulation (DR) 4070-735-001, *Employee Responsibilities and Conduct*, dated October 4, 2007, set forth the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) policies, procedures, and standards on employee responsibilities and conduct.

It is USDA's policy that its employees:

- ✚ Maintain high standards of honesty, integrity, and impartiality;
- ✚ Adhere to the rules set forth in DR-4070-735-001, as well as all directives referenced in the directive;
- ✚ Comply with lawful supervisory direction; and
- ✚ Comply with work-related laws, regulations, and policies.

Every OCFO employee should have a copy of the DR. When the DR is revised, your supervisor must provide you with a copy within 90 days of its issuance. If you are a new employee, your supervisor must furnish a copy of the DR at the time of appointment.

The DR can be found at the following Web site:

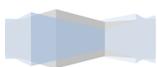
<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4070-735-001.pdf>

# ETHICS RULES, “AT A GLANCE”

## ***Gifts from Outside Sources*** ***(Subpart B - 5 CFR 2635.201-205)***

A Federal employee may not accept gifts from a “prohibited source,” or accept gifts given because an official position, except in certain limited circumstances discussed below. Additionally, a Federal employee may never solicit a gift.

- ✚ **“Prohibited source.”** A prohibited source is any person, company or organization which:
  - Does business with USDA, or
  - Is seeking to do business with USDA, or
  - Conducts activities regulated by USDA, or
  - Has interests that may be “substantially affected” by the performance or non-performance of the employee’s duties, or
  - Is an organization a majority of whose members fit any of the above categories.
  
- ✚ **Non-gifts.** Some things are not considered “gifts” and may be accepted. They include:
  - Loans and discounts available to the public or to all Federal employees for their private use;
  - Inexpensive refreshments such as soft drinks, coffee or donuts;
  - Plaques, certificates, and trophies; and
  - Rewards and prizes.
  
- **Exceptions.** A Federal Employee may accept:
  - A gift worth up to \$20 per occasion, up to a maximum value of \$50 from any source per calendar year.
  - Gifts based on close personal relationships.
  - Gifts based on outside activities or social events.
- **Limitations.** Even if otherwise permitted as an exception a Federal employee may never accept:
  - Gifts in return for being influenced in the performance of official duties;
  - Gifts solicited or coerced; and
  - Gifts that are accepted so frequently that a reasonable person might question it.
- **Disposition.** If a Federal employee receives a gift not allowable under the standards, the employee should:
  - Return it; or



- Reimburse the donor for the fair market value of the gift; or
- With supervisor's approval, donate it to charity, destroy it, or share it with the entire office (if it's perishable, such as food).

## ***Gifts Between Employees (Subpart C - 5 CFR 2635.301-304)***

- ✚ **Two Rules.** A Federal Employee may not:
  - Give a gift to an official superior (supervisor or anyone up the chain).
  - Accept a gift from any lesser-paid employee.
- **Exceptions.** It's OK to give or receive a gift under any one of the following circumstances:
  - A gift from a lesser-paid employee who IS NOT your subordinate, AND there is a personal relationship which would justify the gift.
  - The gift is for a traditional occasion such as a birthday or Christmas, and is worth \$10 or less.
  - Food or refreshments that are shared at the office.
  - A small contribution for a gift on a special occasion like a wedding, or a person leaving for a new job. (the \$10 limit does not apply here).
  - The gift is in connection with personal hospitality, like a bottle of wine on being invited to someone's home.

## ***Conflicting Financial Interests (Subpart D - 5 CFR 2635.401-403)***

- ✚ **The rule.** A Federal employee may not participate (i.e., deliberate, decide, or influence the decision of an action affecting the interests of specific persons, or a discrete identifiable class of persons) in particular matter, as part of official duties, if it would have a direct and predictable effect on the employee's financial interests. OR those of the employee's spouse, minor child, or certain others (outside employer, entities in which the employee serves as officer, director, or trustee, general partner, etc.).
- ✚ **Acquiring or holding interests.** Federal employees are not allowed to have any financial interests that might be a conflict of interest with their official duties.

## ***Impartiality in Performing Official Duties (Subpart E - 5 CFR 2635.501-503)***

- ✦ **The rule.** Federal employees should not participate in particular matters involving specific parties that are likely to affect the financial interests of a broader range of people/organizations than those listed in "Conflicting Financial Interests" above. Federal employees must consider those situations involving close relatives, prospective/former employers, outside associations in which they are active or principal, or where their spouse's/child's employer, etc. Unlike "Conflicting Financial Interests," this prohibition carries administrative, rather than criminal penalties.
  - If an employee finds themselves in such a situation, or a situation where a reasonable person might question impartiality, the employee should inform their supervisor and agency ethics official about the situation immediately. The ethics official will advise the employee on whether to proceed or not in resolving the situation.

## ***Seeking Other Employment (Subpart F - 5 CFR 2635.601-606)***

- ✦ If a Federal employee is seeking employment with a person or company, or have an arrangement concerning future employment with them, then the employee cannot participate in any matter involving that person or company as part of their official duties.

## ***Misuse of Position (Subpart G - 5 CFR 2635.701-705)***

- ✦ **Providing help.** Federal employees cannot use their position to try to intercede on behalf of friends or relatives who have any kind of business dealing with USDA.
- ✦ **Endorsements.** Federal employees cannot use their position to endorse any product, service or company, except where it is part of official duties to do so (e.g., a Foreign Agricultural Service official meeting with foreign officials to promote purchase of American products).
- ✦ **Inside Information.** Federal employees cannot use nonpublic information (information received in the course of official duties that is not available to the general public) for the financial gain of themselves or others.
- ✦ **Property.** Generally, government property may only be used for government purposes. This includes government buildings and real estate property, telephones, typewriters, computers (including software and

hardware), equipment, supplies, copiers, government vehicles and government-issued credit or charge cards.

- There are long-standing exceptions, such as brief use of the government telephone to check on children with a babysitter, or to make a long distance call utilizing a personal calling card.
- Also, employees may make limited use of government office equipment for personal needs if the use does not interfere with official business and involves minimal cost to the Agency. Such use should occur on personal time. A supervisor or manager may revoke or limit this privilege.
- There are also exceptions concerning the use of space, equipment (such as computers or copiers), and internal mail distribution systems (including email) on behalf of professional associations. (See 5 CFR §251.202).
- Though not technically "government property," Federal employees are prohibited from using the contractor-issued U.S. Government travel charge card for other than reimbursable travel expenses outside of a permanent duty location, and may not make personal use of any other government-issued purchase card (credit card).

### ***Outside Activities (Subpart H 5 CFR 2635.801-809)***

- ✚ **The rule.** Federal employees cannot engage in outside employment or any outside activity if it conflicts with their official duties.

### ***Holiday Guidance for Federal Personnel***

The holiday season is traditionally a time of parties, receptions, and exchanging of gifts. However, even during the Holiday Season, the Standards of Conduct apply. To ensure you don't unwittingly violate the standards, a brief summary of the applicable rules can be found at:

<http://usda-ethics.net/rules/holiday-guidance.htm>

**For a complete list of Ethics rules and regulations,** go to: [www.usda.gov/Ethics](http://www.usda.gov/Ethics)

Secretary Vilsack's memorandum, *Ethical Conduct*, dated March 3, 2009, can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.usda-ethics.net/rules/Secretary-Memo-on-Ethical-Conduct.pdf>

## USDA CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY STATEMENT

As Secretary of Agriculture, I fully support the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and diversity policies and programs. Improving civil rights throughout USDA is one of my top priorities, and by pursuing this goal together in a transparent and ethical manner we can lead the way in making USDA a model organization.

The success of today's "People's Department" requires the steadfast support and commitment of every USDA employee. We will have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or reprisal. There exists *no reason to discriminate* based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, marital or familial status, political beliefs, parental status, receipt of public assistance, or protected genetic information. Our policy at USDA is simply to understand that there will be zero tolerance for any form of discrimination. This standard is *applicable to every employee* at USDA and to every action taken at USDA.

To realize our vision of a modern workforce working in a modern workplace, USDA must become a model department of tolerance and inclusion. Only then will we live up to President Lincoln's description of USDA as "The People's Department." This is my commitment to you, and I expect every employee to demonstrate respect for and adherence to USDA civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and diversity policies.

To this end, accountability is key. USDA employees will be held accountable for doing their part to ensure that all USDA applicants, customers, constituents, and stakeholders as well as other USDA employees are provided equal access to the opportunities, programs, and services available through "The People's Department." Accordingly, I am counting on all senior leaders, managers, and supervisors to model appropriate behavior and to lead by example.

We must all strive to create an inclusive environment in which every employee is respected, trusted, and valued. Let us continue to cultivate and reap the benefits of a diverse USDA workforce that is rich in talent, ideas, background, and experience. The USDA mission depends on it.

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
February 25, 2009

## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMPLAINT PROCESS**

Any employee and applicant for employment within the OCFO who believe they have been subjected to employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (if 40 or over), disability, reprisal (for prior participation in an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) activity or having opposed discrimination), political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, or genetic information, have the right to file an EEO complaint.

The EEO complaint process consists of the informal process, and the formal process. Any EEO complaint must begin with the informal process.

Anyone who wishes to initiate an EEO complaint must contact an EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the alleged discriminatory act, event, or in the case of a personnel action within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the action.

Employees or applicants for employment who wish to initiate an EEO complaint within OCFO HQ should call 1-866-632-9992 or 202-260-1026.

For additional information, see Departmental Manual (DM) 4300-001, *EEO Complaint Processing Procedure*, which can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DM4300-001.pdf>

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) helps employees resolve personal and work problems through professional assistance.

EAP encourages voluntary participation. If a person thinks they would benefit from using EAP services, they may call the EAP number and set up an appointment. A professional counselor will work directly and confidentially with the employee or family member to help resolve the problem. In some cases, the counselor's role will be to assist in determining what additional community resources can provide future assistance.

Additional information can be found at the following:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4430-792-1.pdf>

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/Departmental%20Management%20Employee%20Assistance%20Program.pdf>

## DISCIPLINE

The purpose of the USDA Guide for Disciplinary Penalties (Guide) is to assist those responsible for disciplining employees in selecting appropriate penalties. While the Guide does not cover every possible offense, it does provide the more common types of offenses and the penalties usually assessed.

Opportunities for the appropriate use of alternative discipline may also be considered. Alternative discipline is available in appropriate circumstances in all cases, except when the penalty to be proposed is removal from the service or dictated by statute.

Alternative discipline may also be considered when mitigating circumstances serve to reduce a proposed penalty of removal to a lesser penalty, including a suspension or letter of reprimand.

Although each case must be evaluated on its own merits, the Guide does provide a framework to assure consistent application of disciplinary penalties throughout the Department.

Before proposing or deciding on a particular penalty, agency officials should consider all the pertinent factors, including:

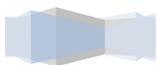
1. The nature and seriousness of the offense, and its relation to the employee's duties, position, and responsibilities, including whether the offense was intentional or technical or inadvertent, or was committed maliciously or for gain, or was frequently repeated;
2. The employee's job level and type of employment, including supervisory or fiduciary role, contacts with the public, and prominence of the position;
3. The employee's past disciplinary record;
4. The employee's past work record, including length of service, performance on the job, ability to get along with fellow workers, and dependability;
5. The effect of the offense upon the employee's ability to perform at a satisfactory level and its effect upon supervisors' confidence in the employee's ability to perform assigned duties;
6. Consistency of the penalty with those imposed upon other employees for the same or similar offenses;
7. Consistency of the penalty with the USDA Guide for Disciplinary Penalties;
8. The notoriety of the offense or its impact upon the reputation of the agency;

9. The clarity with which the employee was on notice of any rules that were violated in committing the offense, or had been warned about the conduct in question;
10. Potential for the employee's rehabilitation;
11. Mitigating circumstances surrounding the offense such as unusual job tensions, personality problems, mental impairment, harassment, or bad faith, malice or provocation on the part of others involved in the matter; and
12. The adequacy and effectiveness of alternative sanctions to deter such conduct in the future by the employee or others.

Not all of these factors will be pertinent in every case, and frequently in the individual case some of the pertinent factors will weigh in the employee's favor while others may not or may even constitute aggravating circumstances. Selection of an appropriate penalty must thus involve a responsible balancing of the relevant factors in the individual case.

The Guide can be found at the following:

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/apsd/dpm751a502working.pdf>



# TOUR OF DUTY AND HOURS OF WORK

## ***Definitions***

Core Hours - The designated hours (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) during which time all full-time employees **must** be present unless on approved leave or scheduled lunch period.

Lunch Band - The band of time between the hours of 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. that a lunch period may be scheduled.

Tour of Duty - The timeframe in which an employee must complete his or her basic work requirement. The timeframe for OCFO employees is between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. With the concurrence of the supervisor, OCFO employees may choose to work a traditional "40 hour" per week work schedule. Employees may request a starting time between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. The workday will end between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., depending on the starting time. **Employees who begin their workday before 6:30 a.m. are still required to be present during core hours and will not be on a traditional 40 hour per week schedule.** Individual work schedules and changes to the schedule must be approved by supervisors, in advance. In the 40 hour per week work schedule, the workday will be 8½ hours, which includes a required ½ hour lunch break.

Form AD-2001, Designation of Tour of Duty, Part B - Request for Change to Biweekly Schedule, can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/forms/doc/AD2001-N-05-00.pdf>

## ***Hours of Work***

At a minimum, office coverage must be provided from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. During these hours, telephone coverage and technical assistance must be available.

## ***Attendance and Reporting to Work***

If an employee expects to be absent from the job for an approved reason (e.g., scheduled leave), the request for leave should be made to the supervisor as far in advance as possible. Requests for leave may be made through WebTA. If you unexpectedly need to be absent from or late to work, you must notify **your supervisor** as far as advance as possible, and at a minimum before 9:00 a.m. by

telephone or via email. If your supervisor is not available, you should leave a message and your telephone number so that your supervisor can return your call, if needed. It is the employee's responsibility to notify the supervisor; this responsibility cannot be delegated or passed to another employee. If an employee is incapacitated, another party may call the employee's supervisor on his/her behalf.

### ***Lunch Period***

A lunch period is an approved period of time in a non-pay and non-work status that interrupts a basic workday. This period allows employees to eat or engage in non-work related activities. As stated previously, for those working a traditional 40 hour work week, the basic workday will be 8 ½ hours, which includes a ½ hour lunch break. For example, an employee who starts work at 7:30 a.m. will work until 4:00 p.m. to meet this requirement. Employees cannot "work through lunch" and leave at 3:30 p.m. Additionally, a lunch period is **REQUIRED** if an employee works a 5-hour day or more, and cannot be added on the end of the workday.

### ***Compensatory Time***

Compensatory (comp) time may only be worked if directed and approved in advance by a Division Director. Division Directors may only work comp time if directed and approved in advance by the respective ACFO or the Deputy Chief Financial Officer. Compensatory time is accrued in 1/4 hour increments, and may be used in lieu of any other forms of paid leave with prior approval of a supervisor on an hour-for-hour basis. Additionally, any hours worked prior to 6:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m. must be compensatory time and not credit hours. Compensatory time must be used by the end of the 26th pay period after the pay period during which it is earned. If an employee has comp time that has not been used and has fallen off the books, a leave audit may be conducted back to the time that the employee earned the comp time, and the employee may be paid for that time at the pay rate for when the comp time was accrued. Form AD-58, Lump Sum Leave or Compensatory Time Payment, must be completed and signed by the supervisor in order to receive pay for forfeited comp time. Comp time cannot be paid if payment of such would result in the employee receiving pay beyond that of a GS 15 step 10 (the annual pay cap).

### ***Overtime***

Overtime may only be worked if directed and approved in advance by a Division Director. Overtime is pay for hours of work officially ordered or approved in excess of the scheduled hours in a day, or in excess of 80 hours in a

pay period. If an employee is directed to work overtime, accrual of credit time is not appropriate.

## **ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES (AWS)**

OCFO supports the alternative work schedule (AWS) programs available to USDA employees and tries to accommodate participation in these programs to the maximum extent possible given our work requirements and staffing situation. Participation does place a great deal of responsibility on employees to be available for meetings and to meet other work requirements as those requirements arise. Employees must get prior approval to participate in the alternative work schedule programs.

AWS encompasses two different work schedule variations: flexible work schedules (FWS) and compressed work schedules (CWS). Each of these represents a different kind of adjustment to the traditional fixed schedule of 8 hours per day, 5 days per week, which begins and ends at the same time each day.

### ***Flexible Work Schedules (FWS)***

Flexible Work Schedules have a work requirement of 80 hours within a pay period. OCFO has approved one type of FWS – **Maxiflex**. On this schedule, an employee must be present during the core hours (9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.), but determines the remainder of work requirement - the employee may vary the number of hours worked on a given workday or the number of hours each week. Employee with the concurrence of their supervisor select a basic starting time each day (e.g., 8:00 a.m.) so that the supervisor may know generally when to expect the employee. However, the employee may change the starting times daily within the established flexible hours of 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Supervisors may require that an employee provide advance notice when they will not be arriving within ½ hour of their anticipated time of arrival, or are planning to leave more than ½ hour before their anticipated time of departure. Employees may accumulate credit hours on a Maxiflex schedule after the first 80 hours in a pay period have been completed.

Within OCFO the Maxiflex 5/4/9 may be allowed provided that work requirements and staffing situations are not impacted. In this type of schedule an employee works eight 9 hours days, one eight hour day, and has an established "AWS-day" off per pay period. Under the 5/4/9 Maxiflex, all the requirements of the FWS-Maxiflex are also applicable. An employee's AWS-day must be a scheduled day that fits the needs of the organization and approved by the supervisor. An employee may request to change their AWS day to fit the needs of the organization, or to meet personal needs. Such a request must be approved by the supervisor prior to the beginning of the pay period to ensure

adequate office coverage. A supervisor may also request an employee change their scheduled AWS day to accommodate the needs of the organization. At the discretion of the supervisor, 5/4/9 Maxiflex may be cancelled or suspended depending on the needs of the organization. Additionally, an employee may be required to work a traditional 8 hour per day work schedule when on travel or attending training. To ensure that employees are here during the 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. core hours, an employee's 8 hour day cannot begin prior to 6:30 a.m.

Employees on a 5-4/9 Maxiflex schedule receive 8 hours of holiday pay for all holidays, and are required to either make up the hour of pay or take 1 hour of leave if the holiday falls on a regularly scheduled 9 hour work day. If the holiday falls on the employee's AWS day, if the holiday is a Friday, the scheduled AWS day become the preceding Thursday, if the holiday is a Monday, the scheduled AWS day becomes the following Tuesday.

The OCFO does not allow a Maxiflex 4/10 schedule. Employees working an approved 4/10 schedule that were transferred to the OCFO with the Departmental Transformation will be "grandfathered" into a 4/10 schedule.

### ***Compressed Work Schedules (CWS) Fixed Tour***

Compressed Work Schedules fulfill the basic work requirement of 80 hours in less than 10 workdays. Arrival and departure times and non-workdays are fixed and established by management. Under a fixed CWS, there are no provisions for flextime or gliding schedules and credit hours are not permissible. OCFO has approved one type of CWS - **5-4/9**. If an employee's scheduled tour of duty is 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., and the employee reports to work at 8:30 a.m., the employee is required to take leave for the ½ hour they were delayed in arriving. There is no flexibility on a fixed tour schedule so the employee cannot "make up" the ½ hour during the pay period. On this schedule, an employee works 8 9-hour days and 1 8-hour day each pay period, and has a scheduled CWS day off.

An employee may not request for a change in the CWS day off as needed, but may request a change in the CWS tour hours up to 4 times per leave year.

Employees on a 5-4/9 fixed CWS schedule receive 8 or 9 hours of holiday pay depending on the scheduled workday that the holiday falls upon.

## ***Frequently Asked Questions regarding AWS***

### **May the supervisor change an employee's work schedule?**

Yes. Supervisors may suspend or terminate employees' participation in AWS to meet agency needs. Some examples that might compel a supervisor to take such action are: special projects requiring a "team" to work on the same schedule, travel, training, or the long-term leave of an employee within the unit. If supervisors need to take such action, the employee should be given as much advance notice as possible.

### **Is an employee guaranteed approval for a flexible work schedule?**

No. The supervisor must be able to manage workload requirements and provide for sufficient office coverage during the component's official hours before granting a flexible work schedule request.

### **Who determines an employee's non-workday?**

An employee may request any day as the non-workday subject to the supervisor's approval. The supervisor will review all requests to see whether they all can be accommodated or whether changes must be made. For example, if too many employees want the same day off to permit adequate coverage, changes will be necessary.

### **How is leave charged?**

An employee may request and use leave as usual. Leave is charged based upon the number of hours of leave used, as judged by the employee's schedule. If an employee uses a whole day of leave on a day that is regularly scheduled as a 9-hour day, then the employee is charged 9 hours of leave. If the employee uses a whole day of leave on an 8-hour day, only 8 hours of leave are charged. However, under a Maxiflex schedule, the employee may be able to make up some of the leave time during the pay period and reduce the number of hours of leave charged.

### **What is done when an employee travels or attends training?**

Most periods of travel or training are of short duration and can be accommodated without changing the compressed schedule. If the travel or training will conflict with the employee's scheduled non-workday, the employee's schedule can be altered to change the non-workday for that pay period. If the travel or training will be 5 days per week for an extended period of time, the employee may have to return to an 8-hour day schedule for the duration of the travel or training.

**What day off is an employee on a 5-4/9 entitled to when his/her regularly scheduled AWS day falls on a holiday?**

OFF DAY	HOLIDAY	IN LIEU OF HOLIDAY
MONDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
TUESDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
WEDNESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
THURSDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
FRIDAY	FRIDAY	MONDAY

**What if an employee on 5-4/9 is promoted, reassigned, or detailed?**

An employee who is working a 5-4/9 schedule and who is promoted, reassigned, or detailed out of the participating office should discuss scheduling with his/her new supervisor. In addition, if the employee remains within the same office under which he/she participated in 5-4/9 (or any other AWS), he/she should discuss the impact of participation on the work requirements of the new assignment.



## ***A Comparison of Flexible and Compressed Fixed Work Schedules***

<b>FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES - Maxiflex</b>	<b>COMPRESSED FIXED WORK SCHEDULES</b>
<p><b>Basic Work Requirement</b> The basic work requirement for a full-time employee is 80 hours in a biweekly pay period. OCFO may also establish daily or weekly work requirements. OCFO permits employees to complete their basic work requirement in less than 10 workdays, with supervisory approval.</p>	<p><b>Basic Work Requirement</b> A full-time employee must work 80 hours in biweekly pay period and must be scheduled to work on fewer than 10 workdays.</p>
<p><b>Tour of Duty</b> The tour of duty establishes when a supervisor might expect the employee to be at work (e.g., 8:00 – 5:30). The tour of duty must begin by 9:00 a.m. and not end prior to 3:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Tour of Duty</b> The tour of duty is fixed and defined by the established compressed work schedule.</p>
<p><b>Credit Hours</b> Hours may be worked in excess of the basic work requirement at the option of the employee, with supervisory approval, in order to vary the length of the workday or work week.</p>	<p><b>Credit Hours</b> There is no legal authority for credit hours under a CWS program. See 5 <a href="#">U.S.C.</a> 6121(4).</p>
<p><b>Holidays</b> A full-time employee prevented from working on a holiday (or an "in lieu of" holiday) is entitled to pay for 8 hours for that day.</p>	<p><b>Holidays</b> A full-time employee prevented from working on a holiday (or an "in lieu of" holiday) is entitled to pay for the number of hours of the compressed work schedule for the employee on that day (9 hours if scheduled for that day).</p>
<p><b>Temporary Duty</b> The agency may allow an employee covered by an <a href="#">FWS</a> program to continue the existing schedule, modify that schedule, or require him or her to follow the schedule used at the temporary work site.</p>	<p><b>Temporary Duty</b> (Same as Flexible Work Schedules)</p>
<p><b>Travel</b> Time spent in a travel status is considered to be hours of work only as provided in 5 CFR 550.112(g) or 5 <a href="#">U.S.C.</a> 5544. Time spent traveling is considered to be hours of work, or considered comp travel depending on the hours the employee is actually traveling.</p>	<p><b>Travel</b> (Same as Flexible Work Schedules)</p>

## Credit Hours

Credit hours are any hours within a Flexible Work Schedule that are in excess of an employee's basic work requirement (e.g., 80 hours a pay period) that the employee elects to work to vary the length of a work week or a workday. Employees cannot work more than 11 hours in a scheduled workday and not more than 8 hours on Saturday. This means that an employee may earn credit hours only by working within the established flexible time bands (6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.). *Employees are expected to be present on scheduled work days and are not allowed to work excessive hours and not come in on scheduled work days.* Employees may earn credit hours, on a case-by-case basis, with the prior approval of their supervisors. Supervisors are allowed to authorize "blanket" approval for credit time, for a limited time period, in order to complete special projects. In special situations, the DCFO or ACFO may authorize "blanket" approval for credit time.

Credit hours may be earned as follows:

- ✚ Credit hours are worked on a voluntary basis. However, they are worked with the concurrence of the supervisor. (If the employee is ordered to work extra hours, credit hours are earned as the hours worked would not be deemed as voluntary.)
- ✚ Credit hours may **only** be earned by employees on Maxiflex.
- ✚ Up to 24 hours may be carried over from one pay period to the next or from one leave year to the next. Any earned credit hours greater than 24 in a pay period will be forfeited if they are not used by the end of the pay period. If approved in advance by the supervisor, credit hours worked which may result in more than 24 hours of accrued credit time may be accrued as comp time.
- ✚ Credit hours may be earned in the following manner:
  - 15 minute increments
  - Monday-Friday between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
  - There is no limit on the number of credit hours that may be earned in a workday so long as the total credit hours and regular tour of duty do not exceed 11 hours (exclusive of lunch period).

The basic work requirement for full-time employees under Maxiflex is 80 hours of work in a 2-week pay period. Credit hours are hours worked in excess of the basic work requirement. Until employees have completed 80 hours in a pay status, they have not fulfilled their basic work requirement and therefore may

not earn credit hours. Hours that will count toward the basic work requirement may not be considered credit hours. It is permissible for an employee to use leave and accrue credit time in the same pay period.

Although credit hours are worked voluntarily and are not ordered overtime, they are to be worked with the concurrence of the supervisor.

### **Sample Pay Period**

#### **Week 1 - Hours Worked 43½**

<b>Glide Time (6:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.) -- Core Time (9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.) -- Glide Time (3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.)</b>	<b>Hours Worked</b>
Monday - 6:30 a.m. ----- 3:30 p.m.	8 ½
Tuesday - 6:30 a.m. ----- 4:00 p.m.	9
Wednesday - 6:00 a.m. ----- 4:30 p.m.	10
Thursday - 7:00 a.m. ----- 5:30 p.m.	10
Friday - 9:00 a.m. ----- 3:30 p.m.	6

#### **Week 2 - Hours Worked 38**

<b>Glide Time (6:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.) -- Core Time (9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.) -- Glide Time (3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.)</b>	<b>Hours Worked</b>
Monday - AWS DAY	0
Tuesday - 8:00 a.m. ----- 4:30 p.m.	8
Wednesday - 6:00 a.m. ----- 4:30 p.m.	10
Thursday - 6:00 a.m. ----- 4:30 p.m.	10
Friday - 6:00 a.m. ----- 4:30 p.m.	10

 Total Hours Worked Biweekly: 81½

Basic Work Requirement: 80

Credit Hours Earned: 1½

The employee would only request premium pay through WebTA for the 1 ½ hours of credit time accrued on the second Friday, after the completion of 80 hours in pay status. There is no need to request credit time for any hours that exceeded the daily scheduled work day since the 80 hours in pay status had not been fulfilled. Additionally, there is no need to request leave for the 3:30 p.m. departure on the first Friday since the employee was present during the core hours of 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. The employee must still notify the supervisor in advance of leaving prior to the end of the scheduled workday.

### ***Frequently Asked Questions regarding Credit Hours***

#### **May Employees Use Credit Hours before they are earned?**

No. There is no authority in law or regulation to advance credit hours. Time cannot be charged against credit hours until credit hours have been earned.

#### **Are Credit Hours Regularly Scheduled?**

No. Credit hours are worked voluntarily by employees in excess of their regularly scheduled 80-hour biweekly basic work requirement.

#### **May Credit Hours be earned for Training?**

No, credit hours cannot be earned if training or homework is required by an agency. If training is required, it does not constitute hours that an employee elects to work with supervisory approval.

Agencies may place employees on a standard work schedule (8 hours a day, 5 days a week, Monday through Friday) during a period of training or on a work schedule that corresponds to the hours of training. Employees must be notified of changes in their basic work schedule in advance of the beginning of the work week.

#### **May Employees Earn Credit Hours during Excused Absence, such as hours when they are excused from Work because of a Weather Emergency?**

No. Excused absence means that employees are excused from their basic work requirement on that day. Credit hours are hours worked voluntarily by employees in excess of their basic work requirement, with supervisory approval.

If employees work during the hours of their basic work requirement despite having been excused from work, they are not entitled to any additional compensation or to credit hours.

### **May Employees Earn or Use Credit Hours on Holidays?**

Employees may not earn any additional compensation or credit hours for working voluntarily during holiday hours. If employees under flexible work schedules are required by an agency to work during holiday hours (their basic work requirement if not for the holiday), they may be entitled to holiday premium pay for a maximum of 8 hours. Additionally, if an employee is required to travel on a holiday, they are entitled to accrue travel comp time for the actual time spent traveling.

# LEAVE

## ***Annual Leave***

An employee may use any or all accrued annual leave (including accrued credit and compensatory time) for personal needs, such as rest and relaxation, vacations, medical needs, personal business or emergencies, or to provide care for a healthy or sick family member, including providing child care when a child care center is closed due to a pandemic. Annual leave must be requested and approved in advance, and is subject to the discretion of the supervisor to approve or disapprove the time at which annual leave may be taken. Supervisors must take into consideration both coverage of the office and the need for employees to use leave so not to lose leave (or request to carry leave to the next leave year) when approving and denying leave.

## ***Accrual Rates***

<b>EMPLOYEE TYPE</b>	<b>LESS THAN 3 YEARS OF SERVICE</b>	<b>3 YEARS BUT LESS THAN 15 YEARS OF SERVICE</b>	<b>15 OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE</b>
<b>Full-Time Employees</b>	4 hours for each pay period	6 hours for each pay period, except 1¼ day (10 hours) in last pay period	8 hours for each pay period
<b>Part-Time Employees</b>	1 hour of annual leave for each 20 hours in a pay status	1 hour of annual leave for each 13 hours in a pay status	1 hour of annual leave for each 10 hours in a pay status

## ***“Use or Lose” Annual Leave***

“Use or lose” leave is annual leave over an employee's carryover limit (240 hours for most employees). An employee will lose those excess hours not use before the end of the leave year.

Some employees have a carryover limit higher than 240 hours, such as:

- Members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), who can carry over 720 hours (or more, in some cases).
- Some employees previously stationed outside the United States as civilian Federal employees.

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### **How much “use or lose” leave do I have?**

You can check the lower portion of your electronic Time and Attendance Summary in the WebTA System. Your excess hours will be labeled “Projected Use or Lose.” You can also view your pay and leave information on-line via the National Finance Center’s Employee Personal Page (EPP).

Refer to the Employee Personal Page website for more information about the EPP:

<https://www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/eplogin.aspx>

If you cannot use your excess annual leave before the end of the leave year, you might be eligible to have it restored. Check below to see if you are eligible for this option.

### **What is restored leave?**

Restored leave is “use or lose” annual leave that was forfeited at the end of the leave year and later restored to an employee. Restored annual leave is not added to the employee’s current annual leave balance. It is kept in a separate leave account. Restored annual leave must be used within two years of the end of the leave year in which it was restored.

### **Am I eligible to apply for restored leave?**

Currently, only the Assistant Secretary for Administration (unless further delegated) may consider restoring annual leave that was forfeited due to an urgent situation that would affect the mission of the agency. This restoration would occur **only** if the annual leave was scheduled in writing before the start of the **third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year** and the employee is unable to reschedule the cancelled leave before the end of the leave year.

### **I am a Supervisor. What must I do if I need to cancel leave?**

If the leave was requested and must be cancelled, immediately notify the employee, in writing. Include the dates and provide an explanation for cancelling the leave.

### **How do I apply for restored leave?**

You must apply for restoration of annual leave. It will not occur without your request. Attach copies of your leave requests that show the leave was requested before the third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year. The request must include a statement containing the reason for the

cancellation of leave. Give the written request to your supervisor, who will forward it through the management levels. Completed requests should be forwarded to the Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division.

Requests must be received by the end February.

**Note:** Leave must be forfeited before it can be restored. Forfeiture will not occur until the new leave year begins. Requests for leave restoration should not be submitted prior to the beginning of the next leave year.

### **Leave Year**

A leave year begins on the first day of the first full biweekly pay period in a calendar year. A leave year ends on the day immediately before the first day of the first full biweekly pay period in the following calendar year.

<b>Leave Year</b>	<b>Leave Year Beginning Date</b>	<b>Leave Year Ending Date</b>	<b>Date for Scheduling "Use or Lose" Annual Leave</b>	<b>Last Date for Requesting "leave restoration"</b>
<b>2010</b>	January 03, 2010	January 01, 2011	November 20, 2010	February 28, 2011
<b>2011</b>	January 02, 2011	December 31, 2011	November 19, 2011	February 29, 2012
<b>2012</b>	January 01, 2012	January 12, 2013	December 01, 2012	February 28, 2013
<b>2013</b>	January 13, 2013	January 11, 2014	November 30, 2013	February 28, 2014
<b>2014</b>	January 12, 2014	January 10, 2015	November 29, 2014	February 27, 2015
<b>2015</b>	January 11, 2015	January 09, 2016	November 28, 2015	February 29, 2016
<b>2016</b>	January 10, 2016	January 07, 2017	November 26, 2016	February 28, 2017
<b>2017</b>	January 08, 2017	January 06, 2018	November 25, 2017	February 28, 2018
<b>2018</b>	January 07, 2018	January 05, 2019	November 24, 2018	February 28, 2019
<b>2019</b>	January 06, 2019	January 04, 2020	November 23, 2019	February 28, 2020
<b>2020</b>	January 05, 2020	January 02, 2021	November 21, 2020	February 26, 2021



## **Sick Leave**

In addition to annual leave, Federal employees also accrue sick leave. Employees may use sick leave for their own personal medical needs; to care for a family member; to care for a family member with a serious health condition; or for adoption related purposes.

**Sick Leave** – An employee may use any or all accrued sick leave when he or she is unable to perform his or her duties due to physical or mental illness; is receiving medical examination or treatment; or when he or she would, as determined by the health authorities or a health care provider, jeopardize the health of others because of his or her exposure to a communicable disease.

**Sick Leave for General Family Care and Bereavement** – An employee may use a total of up to 104 hours (13 days) of sick leave each leave year to provide care for a family member who is ill or receiving medical examination or treatment. This leave also may be used to make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member. The amount of sick leave permitted for family care and bereavement purposes is pro-rated for part-time employees and employees with uncommon tours of duty in proportion to the average number of hours of work in the employee's regularly scheduled administrative work week.

**Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member with a Serious Health Condition** – An employee may use a total of up to 12 work weeks of sick leave each leave year to care for a family member with a serious health condition. If an employee has already used 13 days of sick leave for general family care and bereavement purposes (discussed above), the 13 days must be subtracted from the 12 weeks. (See Section on Family and Medical Leave)

For absences in excess of 3 days, an employee is required to submit a medical certificate or other administratively acceptable evidence to his/her supervisor.

### **Sick Leave Accrual**

- Full-time Employees - 4 hours for each biweekly pay period.
- Part-time Employees - 1 hour for each 20 hours in a pay status.

There are no limits on the amount of sick leave that can be accumulated.

## ***Advance Annual and/or Sick Leave***

If an employee has exhausted his or her accrued annual or sick leave, he or she may request advance annual and/or sick leave. A request for advanced leave must be in writing (hard copy or e-mail) and include specific information regarding why the advanced leave is being requested. While the request needs to be specific, the employee is under no obligation to share any specifics regarding medical diagnosis. The amount of annual leave that may be advanced may not exceed the amount the employee will accrue during the remainder of the leave year. A maximum of 30 days (240 hours) of sick leave may be advanced for an employee's serious disability or illness. The advancement of leave must be the exception and not considered an entitlement or normalcy of OCFO operations. Supervisors are authorized to approve advance annual or sick leave.

## ***Leave Without Pay (LWOP)***

If an employee has exhausted his or her available annual or sick leave or other forms of paid time off, he or she may request leave without pay (LWOP). LWOP is a temporary nonpay status and absence from duty that is granted at the employee's request. LWOP must be approved by the supervisor the same as any other leave status.

### **Is there a difference between LWOP and Absence Without Leave (AWOL)?**

While both types of leave are nonpay categories, there are significant differences between the two. LWOP is approved leave and requires advanced supervisory approval, except in emergency situations. Generally, even though the reason for requesting LWOP is known to be legitimate, the request may be denied if the employee's services are required or if the employee has not followed prescribed leave procedures.

AWOL is an absence from duty which is not authorized nor approved, or for which a leave request has been denied. Recording an absence as AWOL is not a disciplinary action. However, AWOL can become the basis for initiating a disciplinary action.

## ***Family and Medical Leave***

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), an employee is entitled to a total of 12 work weeks of paid and unpaid leave during any 12-month period for: (1) the birth of an employee's child and the care of the newborn; (2) the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care; (3) the care of an employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent with a serious health condition; and (4) an employee's own serious health condition that makes him or her unable to perform the duties of his or her position. An employee may substitute annual leave or sick leave, as appropriate, for unpaid leave under FMLA.

FMLA includes the following definitions related to family:

*Parent* means a biological parent or an individual who stands or stood in loco parentis to an employee when the employee was a son or daughter. This term does not include parents "in law".

*Son or daughter* means a biological, adopted, or foster child; a step child; a legal ward; or a child of a person standing in loco parentis who is--

(1) Under 18 years of age; or

(2) 18 years of age or older and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability. A son or daughter incapable of self-care requires active assistance or supervision to provide daily self-care in three or more of the "activities of daily living" or "instrumental activities of daily living". Activities of daily living include adaptive activities such as caring appropriately for one's grooming and hygiene, bathing, dressing, and eating. Instrumental activities of daily living include cooking, cleaning, shopping, taking public transportation, paying bills, maintaining a residence, using the telephones and directories, using a post office, etc. A "physical or mental disability" refers to a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual as defined in 29 CFR 1630.2 (h), (i) and (j).

*Spouse* means an individual who is a husband or wife pursuant to a marriage that is a legal union between one man and one woman, including common law marriage between one man and one woman in States where it is recognized.

Additional information can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.usda.gov/da/shmd/guide/leave.html>

## ***Leave Transfer and Leave Bank Programs***

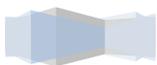
An employee who has a personal or family medical emergency and who has exhausted his or her own leave may receive donated annual leave from other Federal employees through voluntary leave transfer or leave bank programs. All agencies must have a leave transfer program. In addition, an agency may also choose to establish a leave bank for its employees.

Additional information can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.usda.gov/da/shmd/guide/leave.html>

## ***Requesting Leave***

All requests for leave must be submitted to your supervisor as far in advance as possible, of the scheduled leave. Leave requests for leave taken due to unexpected absences, e.g., illness or emergencies, must be submitted to the supervisor on the day you return to duty. Leave requests are to be submitted utilizing WebTA.



## **Holidays**

Federal law (5 U.S.C. 6103) establishes the following public holidays for Federal employees. Please note that most Federal employees work on a Monday through Friday schedule. For these employees, when a holiday falls on a non-workday -- Saturday or Sunday -- the holiday usually is observed on Monday (if the holiday falls on Sunday) or Friday (if the holiday falls on Saturday).

New Year's Day
Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Washington's Birthday*
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Columbus Day
Veterans Day
Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Day

\* This holiday is designated as "Washington's Birthday" in 5 U.S.C. 6103(a) which is the law that specifies holidays for Federal employees. Though other institutions such as state and local governments and private businesses may use other names, e.g., President's Day, the Office of Personnel Management always refers to holidays by the names designated in the law.

### ***Presidential Inauguration Day***

Federal employees in the Washington, DC, area are entitled to a holiday on the day a President is inaugurated (January 20 following a Presidential election). Employees are entitled to this holiday if they are employed in —

1. the District of Columbia;
2. Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties in Maryland;
3. Arlington and Fairfax Counties in Virginia; and
4. the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church in Virginia.

When Inauguration Day is moved to January 21<sup>st</sup> because January 20<sup>th</sup> falls on Sunday, Federal employees in the Washington, DC, area who would otherwise work on Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, are entitled to a holiday on that day.

## UNSCHEDULED LEAVE

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has devised specific procedures to be followed when a significant number of employees are prevented from reporting for work on time, or when agencies are forced to close. Such situations include adverse weather conditions (snow emergencies, severe icing conditions, floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes) and other disruptions of Government operations (air pollution, disruption of power, interruption of public transportation, etc.).

For additional information, refer to OPM's *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal or Closure Procedures*. The procedures can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>

### ***Disruptions Before the Workday Begins***

OPM will provide one of the following announcements to the media when an emergency occurs before the workday begins:

EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT	WHAT ANNOUNCEMENT MEANS
<p>"Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are OPEN for business as usual under an UNSCHEDULED LEAVE policy. Employees may take leave without prior approval."</p>	<p>Federal agencies will open on time, but employees not designated as "emergency employees" may take annual leave or leave without pay (LWOP) without the prior approval of their supervisors.</p> <p><i>Employees must notify their supervisors of their intent to take unscheduled leave.</i></p> <p>Emergency employees are expected to report for work on time.</p>
<p>"Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are OPEN for business as usual under an ADJUSTED HOME DEPARTURE policy. Employees are requested to leave home ## hours later than their normal departure time."</p>	<p>Federal agencies will open on time, but employees not designated as emergency employees should adjust their normal home departure time consistent with the announcement. Employees who arrive late for work will be excused without loss of pay or charge to leave.</p>
<p>"Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are OPEN for business as usual under an ADJUSTED HOME</p>	<p>Federal agencies will open on time, but employees not designated as "emergency employees" should adjust</p>

EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT	WHAT ANNOUNCEMENT MEANS
<p>DEPARTURE/UNSCHEDULED LEAVE policy. Employees are requested to leave home ## hours later than their normal departure time. Employees may take leave without prior approval."</p>	<p>their normal home departure time consistent with the announcement. Employees who arrive late for work will be excused without loss of pay or charge to leave. Agencies have discretionary authority to determine the amount of excused absence to grant in such cases. Employees may take annual leave or LWOP without the prior approval of their supervisors. "Emergency employees" are expected to report for work on time. Employees not designated as "emergency employees" (including telecommuting employees at an alternative work site) are excused from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. "Emergency employees" are expected to report for work on time.</p>
<p>"Federal agencies are CLOSED."</p>	<p>All offices are closed.</p> <p>Employees (including employees on pre-approved leave) are granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours they were scheduled to work. No leave slip is necessary as this can ONLY be authorized by OPM.</p> <p>Employees who had one of these days as their AWS day, the day remains their AWS day and there is no entitlement to another AWS day off in lieu of the workday on which the government was closed.</p>



## ***Disruptions After the Workday Begins***

When an emergency situation occurs during normal work hours, OPM may announce that Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are operating under an “Adjusted Work Dismissal” policy. When this announcement is made, employees should be dismissed relative to their normal departure times from work. For example, if a 3-hour “Adjusted Work Dismissal” policy is announced, workers who normally leave their offices at 5:00 p.m. would be authorized to leave at 2:00 p.m. See the chart below for more details:

WHERE ARE YOU?	LEAVE POLICY
On duty.	Agency should grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following the employees authorized time of dismissal, even if the employee is scheduled to take leave later in the day.
Left work before official announcement of “ADJUSTED WORK DISMISSAL” policy or before the time set for your dismissal.	The agency should charge leave for the remainder of the workday following the time of the employee's departure.
Scheduled to return from leave after official announcement of “ADJUSTED WORK DISMISSAL” policy, but before the time set for your dismissal.	The agency should grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following the time of the official announcement through the remainder of the workday, even if the employee is scheduled to take leave again later in the workday.
Telecommuting at an alternative worksite.	Agency should grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following what would be the employees authorized time of dismissal.
Absent on previously approved leave entire workday.	<p>The agency should continue to charge the employee (annual, sick, or leave without pay (LWOP)) for the leave for the entire workday.</p> <p>Employees on pre-approved leave for the ENTIRE workday or employees who requested unscheduled leave are charged leave for the entire day and are NOT entitled to administrative leave.</p> <p>Employees who had this day as an AWS day, the day remains their AWS day.</p>

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management is the systematic process by which OCFO involves its employees, as individuals and members of a group, in improving organizational effectiveness in the accomplishment of agency mission and goals.

Employees should be involved in the planning process to help them understand the goals of the organization, what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how well it should be done. Requirements for planning employees' performance include establishing the elements and standards of their performance appraisal plans. Through critical elements, employees are held accountable as individuals for work assignments or responsibilities.

A critical element is a work assignment or responsibility of such importance that unacceptable performance on that element would result in a determination that an employee's overall performance is unacceptable. Employees must have at least one critical element in their performance plans. A non-critical element is exclusive of a critical element, and is used in assigning a summary level. As with a critical element, a non-critical element must be expressed as an element and standard, be included in the employee's performance plan, and be used in assigning a summary level for the rating of record.

OCFO's performance appraisal period is October 1 through September 30 of each year. The supervisor or rating official is required to provide each employee with a performance plan at the beginning of each appraisal period, normally within 30 days, or when the employee is assigned to a different position with substantially different duties and responsibilities (for example, a detail or temporary promotion for more than 120 days, promotion or reassignment). At least once, at the mid-point of the appraisal period, the employee's rating official must conduct an interim progress review to ensure that performance elements and standards are appropriate and to advise an employee of current performance.

Assignments and projects are monitored continually. Mid-year progress reviews are conducted where employee performance is compared against their elements and standards.

While there is only one mandatory progress review required during the rating cycle, supervisors are encouraged to give performance feedback to their employees throughout the year.

At the end of the appraisal period, the employee's supervisor or rating official, in consideration of feedback provided by the employee, must evaluate the

employee's accomplishments and issue a rating of record for employees who have served under an established performance plan for the minimum appraisal period of 90 days or more.

Rating means evaluating employee performance against the elements and standards in an employee's performance plan and assigning a summary rating of record. The rating of record is assigned according to procedures included in the organization's appraisal program. It is based on work performed during an entire appraisal period. The rating of record has a bearing on various other personnel actions, such as granting within-grade pay increases and determining additional retention service credit in a reduction in force.

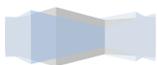
### ***Performance Management Responsibilities***

Employees will:

- Provide input into the development of their performance plans;
- Check their understanding of expectations;
- Communicate with their supervisor throughout the rating cycle;
- Provide input on accomplishments; and
- Assist in identifying training and development needs to enhance their performance.

Rating officials will:

- Explain the link between their work unit outputs, employees' duties, and agency goals;
- Ask employees to provide input into development of their performance plans;
- Provide informal feedback throughout the rating year;
- Conduct/document at least one formal progress review for every employee during the rating year;
- Complete a timely year-end performance rating for every employee; and
- Be responsible for finalizing the performance plan.



Reviewing officials will:

- Evaluate subordinate supervisor's effectiveness in performing performance management responsibilities;
- Review employees' performance standards as submitted by supervisors to ensure consistency across the work unit; and
- Review and approve employees' performance ratings.

**Note: Reviewing officials must approve year-end ratings before supervisors (rating officials) communicate the ratings to the employee.**

Additional information can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-430.pdf>

## Awards

The Federal Incentive Awards Program was established by the Government Employee's Incentive Awards Act, Title III of Public Law 793, enacted September 1, 1954.

There are various awards that are available to employees within the OCFO, including:

### ***Career Service Awards***

OCFO believes in recognition of full and part-time employees for time served in the Federal Government. Length of Service recognition includes a certificate, for five years of service, and a certificate with a pin which is presented starting with 10 years of service through 50+ years of service, at 5 year intervals.

More information may be found at:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-451.htm>

### ***Secretary's Annual Honor Awards***

The Secretary's Annual Honor Awards are the most prestigious awards given at the USDA. The purpose of Honor Awards is to provide high-level recognition to deserving USDA employees at all grade levels and private citizens who have made outstanding contributions supporting USDA's mission. The Program was created in 1947 and has continued annually since its inception. All USDA employees, as well as private citizens, are eligible for an honor award based on contributions to USDA. Individual and groups of 2 or more may be nominated. The contribution must focus on qualitative and quantitative performance measures based on the USDA Strategic Goals. Agency Heads are responsible for submitting only those individuals and groups which have made exceptional contributions and which are truly deserving of high honor.

More information may be found at:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-451-02.htm>

### ***Time Off Awards***

A Division Director may grant up to 10 hours of Time off without a higher level of review or approval. If the award exceeds 10 hours, it must be reviewed and approved by the respective ACFO or DCFO. In addition a written justification

must be attached to the AD-287-2, Recommendations & Approval of Awards, for Time off Awards exceeding 10 hours. Full-time employees may not be granted more than 40 hours for a single achievement, and may be granted up to 80 hours of Time off during a leave year. The amount of Time off granted must be proportionate to the value of the contribution being recognized. Time off Awards may be granted along with other forms of awards, as long as the total value of the awards given reflects the value of the contribution being recognized. Scheduling of Time off is subject to supervisory approval. Before utilizing the Time off Awards, managers must consider the full resource implications of the award including the salary of the employee, and the impact on the workload and customer service.

More information may be found at:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-451-03.htm>

### ***Performance Awards***

Monetary recognition is given for performance accomplishments over the course of the rating cycle, such as consistently high productivity or high quality work in relation to established performance standards. These include lump-sum performance bonuses (formerly called sustained superior performance awards) and Quality Step Increases (QSI).

A performance bonus is monetary recognition given to an employee for overall accomplishments achieved during their normal day-to-day duties in relation to established performance standards. Employees can demonstrate this in many ways, for example, regularly demonstrates high work output, consistently completes work products of high quality, or provides exceptionally prompt and courteous service to customers, clients and coworkers.

Within OCFO a standardized approach is taken in providing performance based awards for employees who have received a superior or an outstanding performance appraisal, and the monetary amount awards is consistent throughout the organization. Amounts are determined by grade level, supervisory or non-supervisory position and the numerical rating of the appraisal.

Quality Step Increases (QSI) are also allowed as a performance award. To be eligible an employee must receive an outstanding summary rating, and the recommending supervisor must write documentation of the outstanding performance and why a QSI is warranted.

## ***Spot Awards***

Spot awards allow supervisors and other individuals to grant employees (as individuals or in groups) immediate monetary recognition for extra efforts that warrant small awards. Spot awards are considered small to moderate in value and limited to broad in application

Awards may range in value from \$50 to \$750 (in any dollar amount) with no award amount exceeding \$750. Employees may receive more than one spot award within a one year period.

There is no ceiling on the total amount of any group spot award. However, the award amount for each group member may not exceed \$750.

Usually, the contributions recognized will have been completed within a period of 4 to 6 weeks or less. Recognition should be made within 3 work days, but not later than 30 days after completion of the accomplishment.

## ***Extra Effort Awards***

Extra Effort Awards - Recognition given to individuals or groups who make significant one-time contributions (e.g., special project, task force, etc.) to the Agency's or the Department's mission or goals. The award may be nonmonetary or monetary and the amount can range from \$50 to more than \$10,000, depending on the Value of Benefits and Application of the contribution to the Government.

Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards - Recognition given for a specific outstanding accomplishment such as a superior contribution on a short-term assignment or project, an act of heroism, a scientific achievement, a major discovery, or work that resulted in significant cost savings. Nonmonetary extra effort awards include time off awards, keepsakes, letters of appreciation, and honorary awards.

Monetary Extra Effort Awards - Recognition given for a particular accomplishment such as those defined above under nonmonetary recognition. Dollar amounts are determined by the contribution's Value of Benefits and extent of its Application within the Department. Nonmonetary recognition can be given in conjunction with monetary recognition, e.g., a plaque given in conjunction with a cash award. Monetary extra effort awards include extra effort (formerly called special act or service awards), spot awards, gain sharing, invention, and suggestion awards.

More information on awards may be found at:

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/recog.htm>

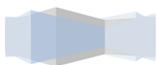


## TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

OCFO strives to provide its employees with the competencies necessary both to meet full performance at their current job, and encourage the development necessary for growth. Accomplishment of this goal comes through multiple venues and media. The use of an Individual Development Plan provides an agreed upon blueprint for linking employee development to strategic and organizational goals. This blueprint includes a variety of ways (traditional and nontraditional) to build competencies. Consider training, coaching, detail assignments, shadowing assignments (part or full-time), reading a specific book and demonstrating the skills in the workplace, on-the-job training, classroom instruction and distance learning, to name a few.

The resources available on the USDA learning management system, AgLearn, include more than 3,000 courses from vendors such as: Skill Soft, Ninth House, and DMason. It includes Books 24x7 which houses almost 20,000 titles. Additionally, AgLearn supports certifications and continuing education units for the Project Management Institute, National Association of the State Boards of Accountancy, Human Resource Institute, and American Society for Quality (Six Sigma). All of these developmental opportunities are free to USDA employees.

The Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division can provide supervisors and staff members consulting services regarding employee development.



## INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a written document, created in collaboration between a staff member and supervisor outlining goals, learning experiences, and a record of progress. The IDP serves as blueprint for personal and organizational growth and development. Items recorded on an IDP include:

- Competencies for development
- Resources and strategies for learning
- Measurable outcomes
- Costs
- Alignment with organizational goals and strategies.

The format for the IDP is flexible; a simple form can be obtained through the Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division, Human Capital Management Branch. The fundamental aspect of the IDP is to have one, and to use it to achieve career goals as well as mission objectives.

## TIME AND ATTENDANCE REPORTING

WebTA allows employees and/or timekeepers to enter their own time and leave data and provides them with the ability to submit electronic leave requests online. Managers certify the time and attendance (T&A) and approve leave requests online. The approved records are then transmitted to the NFC for salary processing. WebTA maintains a history of all records previously certified and submitted through WebTA. These records are available to the Employee, Timekeeper and/or Supervisor as long as the employee is an active employee.

### ***Responsibilities***

Employee:

- ✚ Record leave, credit hours and/or comp time using WebTA following applicable regulations, policies and procedures.
- ✚ Attest to the accuracy of recorded T&A data – provide supporting documentation, if required.
- ✚ Notify supervisor of any planned absences that will prohibit them from entering their time.
- ✚ Update personal contact information and perform other personal information such as changing passwords and making time requests.
- ✚ Submit Leave Requests to your Supervisor using WebTA.
- ✚ View current and historical T&A information.

Timekeeper:

- ✚ Enter, edit and validate T&A data on behalf of their assigned employees.
- ✚ Review previously certified T&A data.
- ✚ Manage employee's Employee Profile.
- ✚ Add new employees or make an employee inactive.
- ✚ Generate various reports (Leave Audit, Default Schedule).

Supervisor:

- ✚ Select and/or search for an employee.
- ✚ Certify all employee data prior to sending to NFC.
- ✚ If employee is out, ensures entry of hours for employee; coordinate with Master Timekeeper.
- ✚ Review and approve or deny all leave/premium pay requests.
- ✚ Delegate role to a back-up in the event of absence.

For additional information go to: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/webTA/>

WebTA training and user guides are available via AgLearn:

[www.aglearn.usda.gov](http://www.aglearn.usda.gov)

## TELECOMMUTING/TELEWORK

Telecommuting is a management option to accomplish the mission, provided it can be done without compromising the effectiveness of mission delivery and the security and sensitivity of the data under stewardship. Telecommuting is not an automatic right of employees. Management may subsequently cancel or modify a telecommuting agreement at any time, after discussion with the employee, if the original agreement fails to benefit and/or meet organizational needs or participation becomes burdensome to the supervisor. The Administrative Grievance System does not apply to actions taken in accordance with terms of a formal agreement voluntarily entered into by an employee, such as a telecommuting agreement.

**Core Telework:** Telework that occurs on a routine, regular, and recurring basis away from an employee's principal place of duty (e.g., at home, at a telework center, at an alternate location) one or more days per week.

**Situational Telework:** Telework that occurs on an occasional, non-routine basis. Employees who are approved for situational telework **MUST** obtain approval of their supervisor prior to teleworking. It is NOT acceptable that an employee call the supervisor and advise, "I'm working at home today."

Telecommuting employees may be further designated "mission critical" or "emergency" employees. An "emergency" teleworker is required to continue to work at his or her alternative worksite during all emergency situations when the agency is closed. A "mission critical" teleworker is expected to remain in contact with his or her supervisory chain at all times during any closure situation and may be called on to work at his or her alternative worksite during emergencies dealing with national security, extended emergencies or other unique situations.

Telecommuting outside of the organizational unit's commuting area will not be authorized.

Telecommuting will not be used as a mechanism to accommodate employees who accept promotions or reassignments and who do not want to relocate.

Regular telecommuting may be for a long-term recurring basis (more than 6 months, up to 1-year), or a short-term basis (6 months or less). Telework may also be authorized on an infrequent or ad hoc basis (not on a regular or recurring basis, i.e., as needed, no set schedule, when projects/assignments have short turnaround times and/or require intense concentration), or on an emergency

basis when the employee does not regularly telecommute, but is doing so in response to agency closure, emergency situation or other unique situations.

Participation in the program on a long-term or short-term basis requires an approved, written agreement signed by the employee and management. All agreements must be reviewed at the beginning of each fiscal year and a new agreement signed, even if the terms remain the same. Infrequent, ad hoc or emergency participation does not require a written agreement. However, if the supervisory chain anticipates using an "emergency" or "mission critical" employee in a telework environment during an emergency or as part of the organization's contingency planning, arrangements should be tested (e.g., connectivity, equipment access, etc.) and expectations clearly communicated. Even when a written agreement is not required by this policy, a supervisor may choose to establish one to record the general requirements and performance expectations for future telework usage.

This policy must be used in conjunction with current Departmental manuals, regulations, and guidance. Supervisors, participating employees, and supporting information technology specialists should pay close attention to the requirements of USDA's "Cyber Security Guidance Regarding Telework and Remote Access," CS-029. This policy does not re-state all teleworking information.

The employee's work, or at least the portion planned for the alternate work site, should be portable, able to be conducted independent of the regular work site and measurable in terms of quantity and quality. The work should have objective, results-oriented performance standards. The employee's supervisor must be able to evaluate results rather than actually observe the employee's performance.

Credit hours may be earned while telecommuting.

Effectively addressing the security and sensitivity of the data under stewardship is of paramount concern.

Employees who are approved to telework are to be provided with the necessary Government equipment to adequately perform their tasks at an alternative worksite, unless a waiver has been granted in accordance with DM 3525-003, *Telework & Remote Access Security*. Government-owned equipment will be serviced and maintained by the Government. Exceptions may be made only for infrequent or emergency telework.

OCFO will provide supplies, i.e., computer paper, disks, etc., equivalent to the supplies provided for non-telecommuters.

OCFO will not be responsible for operating costs, home maintenance, or other incidental costs. Telecommunication circuits (data or voice) for Government business will be acquired and installed in accordance with Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) policy. Circuits not procured in accordance with OCIO policy (e.g., already existing residential lines or employee procured) cannot be funded or reimbursed. Specific needs will be examined on a case-by-case basis through cooperation among the employee's supervisory chain, the employee and the OCFO Teleworking Program Coordinator in the Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division.

OCFO cannot guarantee personal workspace in the organizational unit location for employees who telecommute on a long-term recurring basis. They will be guaranteed shared office space for use on the days they are not telecommuting.

Sensitive but Unclassified information must not be accessible to unauthorized persons at alternative worksites unless OCFO security and IT officials certify that the system adequately protects records. They also determine whether the worksite use conforms to applicable laws or policies. Specific needs will be examined on a case-by-case basis through cooperation among the employee's supervisory chain, the employee, and appropriate subject matter experts.

Employees will safeguard and protect Government/Agency records from unauthorized disclosure or damage and will comply with the Privacy Act requirements set forth in the Privacy Act of 1974, Public Law 93-579, codified at 5 U.S.C. 552a.

Employee's duties or tasks will not be reassigned solely to permit telecommuting/telework. Either the work lends itself to telecommuting/telework or it does not.

In the event of a conflict between this policy and Departmental Regulation, the Departmental Regulation will take precedence. Bring any such conflicts to the attention of the Teleworking Program Coordinator, in the Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division, for resolution.

Additional information can be found at the following Web sites:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4080-811-002.pdf>

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DM3525-003.pdf>

## PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is any information about an individual that is maintained by an agency. This information includes, but is not limited to, financial transactions, medical history, or criminal history, and information which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. This information includes their name, social security number, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name and such biometric records as personal information which is linked or linkable to an individual.

OCFO is responsible for ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the information contained within its information systems. The agency must, at times collect, use, analyze, and store PII from its employees and customers. While OCFO remains vigilant in protecting all its information technology resources, but this is especially true of those systems containing PII.

All employees and contractors share in the responsibility for protecting the privacy of individuals whose information they are able to access. It is the policy of USDA to protect personal, financial, and employment information from unauthorized disclosure. Customers and employees have the right to expect that we will collect, maintain, use, and disseminate identifiable personal information and data only as authorized by law and as necessary to carry out our official responsibilities.

Employees and contractors are responsible for understanding the sensitivity of the information that is utilized in performance of their work, to use the information only for the reason it was collected, and then follow personally identifiable information (PII) safeguarding policies and procedures.

All PII must be secured when you are not present. Even if an employee or contractor thinks he or she is only going to be absent from the workstation for a moment, the PII must be secured. The locking of office doors complies with safeguarding policies and procedures, even if the PII behind the locked door is not in a locked cabinet or drawer. Those in open workstations are responsible for the locking of the cabinets and drawers where the PII is stored. It is also important to be mindful of documents that are thrown in the trash or the recycle receptacle. Any documents that contain PII MUST be shredded.

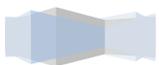
When handling personal identifiable information in an office or telework environment, it is required that the OCFO employee keep hardcopies of all such information in locked files. If such information is maintained in a cyber environment, care must be taken to lock up laptops containing PII when not in use. It is required that individuals who perform work outside of the office

operate in the accepted CITRIX environment to assure that all work is kept secure. PII must not be maintained on laptops or removable media, e.g., thumb drives, CDs, etc.

Individuals are required to make maximum use of passwords to minimize inappropriate access to PII. When in a telework environment, individuals should assure that no unauthorized persons have access to Government laptops and that all data are properly encrypted. Employees should not use Government laptops with WIFI capability in public areas such as cafes, or access Government data using an open WIFI connection. PII should not be stored on laptops or home computers. When removable media is used, it should be kept in a secure place, such as a locked file cabinet, when not in use.

For additional information about PII, please go to:

<http://www.ocionet.usda.gov/ocio/security/pii.html>



# VOICEMAIL

## Desk Telephone Standard Greetings

Every telephone equipped with voicemail should have a standard outgoing greeting that is professional, concise, and conveys relevant and useful information to the caller and updated to inform callers if you are in or out of the office. Each desk phone greeting should include the following information:

- Name of employee, organization, if the employee is in or out of the office, and a number to dial for immediate assistance

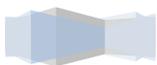
As every employee within the OCFO has Customer Service as a performance element, it is important that we all achieve superior customer service by returning calls within the specific period as specified on performance plans.

## Extended Absence Greeting

Every employee who will be out of the office for more than two business days (annual/sick leave, training, jury duty) should record an extended absence greeting. This greeting should outline the expected date of return or forward all calls to an employee in the office.

## Voicemail Boxes

All employee voice mailboxes (including government issued Blackberries and cell phones) should be set-up and ready to accept voice messages. Each voice mailbox should never be full and unable to accept new messages.



## DRESS CODE

There is no official Government-wide, USDA-wide or OCFO wide policy about how employees are to dress, or policy on how employees wear their hair, beards, etc. should be worn, or what standards of rudimentary hygiene are to be maintained.

While that is true, employees who work in the OCFO are expected to dress appropriately of each occasion and remember that they are a reflection of the OCFO, the USDA and the government. A general rule of thumb when an employee is choosing their attire for the workplace is that clothing that works well for the beach, yard work, dance clubs, exercise sessions, and sports contests may not be appropriate for a professional appearance at work.

Clothing should be clean. Torn, dirty, or frayed clothing is unacceptable. Any clothing that has words, terms, or pictures that may be offensive to other employees is unacceptable.

The OCFO has declared Friday as a dress down day. On these days, more casual clothing, although never clothing potentially offensive to others, is allowed.

All employees in the OCFO should make an accurate statement in appearance and transmit a positive, professional image at all times.

## CHILDREN IN THE WORKPLACE

In addition to agency-sponsored activities like "Bring Your Child to Work Day" or other events where families are invited and encouraged to participate, there are extremely unusual circumstances when an employee has experienced an unanticipated short-term emergency that could cause managers and supervisors to consider allowing employees to bring children into the workplace. These could include infrequent emergency situations (dependent care provider is unavailable, early release of children from school, etc.) or when an employee is needed at work and no other alternatives are available. These other alternatives could include contacting a child care referral service to arrange for backup child care services, liberal granting of accrued annual and sick leave (when applicable), or leave without pay. Prior to an employee bringing a child into the workplace prior supervisory approval **MUST** be given.

The safety and productivity of the workplace are two concerns that must be considered when addressing the issue of allowing children in the workplace. Managers and supervisors must consider both the safety of children visiting the workplace, as well as their impact on the safety of employees. Managers must also consider matters relating to worker productivity and potential liability to the government. Children injured in the workplace are not eligible for benefits under the workers' compensation program.

These issues and other local concerns (e.g., disasters, evacuation drills, travel in government vehicles, etc.) must be considered when deciding whether to allow children to enter the workplace. While at the workplace, the child **MUST** stay under the constant supervision of the parent. If a child is left unsupervised the approval will be immediately revoked.

In addition, it is imperative that all employees in the workplace be treated fairly and equitably when situations arise calling for a management/supervisory determination.

## TRAVEL

*There are four fundamentals you need to know about Federal travel:*

1. Travel must be conducted in the most cost effective and efficient manner and only when necessary to accomplish the mission of the Government.
2. Employees traveling on official business are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.
3. Except in emergencies, travel must be authorized in writing, *in advance*, by an official at least one level above the traveler.
4. Use of the Government sponsored, contractor-issued charge card is mandatory for all official travel related charges, unless there has been an exemption granted for non-use of the card.

DM 2300-001, *Agriculture Travel Regulation*, can be found at following Web site:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DM2300-001.pdf>

## TRAVEL CARD

Your government travel card, issued by US Bank, is a tool that assists you in the performance of your duties. The manner in which you use the travel card will reflect directly upon you as an employee and as an individual

You must use the card only for expenses incurred in connection with official travel. Possession of the card does not exempt you from the use of the Department's Travel Management Centers or government contract carriers when required.

Use of the card does not relieve you of the responsibility to employ prudent travel practices and to observe rules and regulations governing travel at the USDA.

### ***Zero Tolerance Policy***

The underlying objective of the Zero Tolerance Policy is to eliminate misuse and abuse in the travel card program so that it does not become necessary to impose disciplinary procedures on any USDA employee.

The Zero Tolerance strictly prohibits the following misuses of the card:

1. Unauthorized charges and charges not associated with official travel
  - a. Personal and family member use of the card is forbidden
  - b. Additional prohibited activities are listed in Section 7b of the DR 2300-001, *Government Travel Card Regulation*, dated October 20, 2003.
2. Charges while not in an official travel status
  - a. Use of the card in the vicinity of the official duty station or residence is forbidden, unless used in connection with official travel
  - b. Cash withdrawals from an automated teller machine are forbidden
3. Shared use of the card with another employee for official travel purposes
4. Allow account to become delinquent
5. Failure to use the card while on travel unless exempted
6. Failure to pay accounts with sufficient funds

7. Failure to properly use Government voucher reimbursements to repay travel expenses
8. Excessive cash advances, or cash advances not commensurate with official travel

### ***Travel Card Do's***

1. Do use your card to pay for authorized, official travel expenses.
2. Do safeguard your card and protect it from being lost or stolen.
3. Do retain your receipts while on travel so you have accurate information to file a travel claim and reconcile your monthly statement.
4. Do submit payment in full for the travel card bill before the statement due date.
5. Do contact the bank customer service number in a timely manner, if you have questions about your monthly bill.
6. Do remember your card has a charge limit for food and automatic teller machine (ATM) withdrawals.
7. Do be aware that vendors report to the Department on the use of the card for non-travel related expenses.
8. Do obtain cash advances for official travel through an ATM, only if authorized by your agency.
9. Do follow your bank's dispute process for incorrect or erroneous charges.
9. Do become familiar with the General Service Administration's Federal Travel Regulations and Agricultural Travel Regulations or visit the USDA website for more travel card information.

## ***Travel Card Don'ts***

1. Don't allow your travel card account to become delinquent. Delinquency occurs on the first day after the due date.
2. Don't put other employees' travel expenses on your card.
3. Don't use your travel card for personal expenditures not reimbursable on your travel voucher.
4. Don't use your travel card during periods when you are not in official travel status.
5. Don't wait to report a lost or stolen travel card to the bank and your travel coordinator.
6. Don't forget to file your travel claim within 5 days after you complete your trip or every 14 days if you are on continuous travel.
7. Don't wait for your voucher reimbursement to pay your bill – see “Don't” item #1!
8. Don't use your travel voucher reimbursement for personal gain. Failure to pay the bank can result in termination of charge card privileges and/or garnishment of wages.
9. Don't charge office supplies, training, conference fees, photocopies, postal services, or equipment on the travel card. Use the purchase card or other acquisition procedures to procure non-travel services and products.
10. Don't obtain cash advances that exceed the maximum daily reimbursement rate for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) for the trip. Example: \$46.00 M&IE per diem x 5 days = \$230.00 is the authorized amount.

# COMPENSATORY TIME FOR TRAVEL

## ***Description***

Compensatory time off for travel is earned by an employee for time spent in a travel status away from the employee's official duty station when such time is not otherwise compensable. So, an employee may not earn compensatory time off for travel for traveling on a workday during regular working hours because the employee is receiving his or her rate of basic pay for those hours, unless the employees has fulfilled 80 hours for the pay period prior to traveling.

## ***Coverage***

Compensatory time off for travel may be earned by an "employee" as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5541 (2) who is employed in an "Executive agency" as defined in 5 U.S.C. 105, without regard to whether the employee is exempt from or covered by the overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended. For example, this includes employees in senior-level (SL) and scientific or professional (ST) positions, but not members of the Senior Executive Service or Senior Foreign Service or Foreign Service officers.

## ***Creditable Travel***

To be creditable under this provision, travel must be officially authorized. In other words, travel must be for work purposes and must be approved by an authorized agency official or otherwise authorized under established agency policies.

For the purpose of compensatory time off for travel, time in a travel status includes—

- ✚ Time spent traveling between the official duty station and a temporary duty station;
- ✚ Time spent traveling between two temporary duty stations; and
- ✚ The "usual waiting time" preceding or interrupting such travel (e.g., waiting at an airport or train station prior to departure). The "usual waiting time" established for OCFO is 90 minutes. An "extended" waiting period—i.e., an unusually long wait during which the employee is free to rest, sleep, or

otherwise use the time for his or her own purposes—is not considered time in a travel status.

## ***Commuting Time***

- ✦ Travel outside of regular working hours between an employee's home and a temporary duty station or transportation terminal outside the limits of his or her official duty station is considered creditable travel time. However, normal home-to-work/work-to-home commuting time from the creditable travel time must be deducted.
- ✦ Travel outside of regular working hours between a worksite and a transportation terminal is creditable travel time, and no commuting time offset applies.
- ✦ Travel outside of regular working hours to or from a transportation terminal within the limits of the employee's official duty station is considered equivalent to commuting time and is not creditable travel time.

## ***Crediting and Use***

Compensatory time off for travel is credited and used in increments of one-quarter of an hour (15 minutes).

## ***Forfeiture***

Compensatory time off for travel is forfeited—

- ✦ If not used by the end of the 26th pay period after the pay period during which it was earned.
- ✦ Upon voluntary transfer to another agency;
- ✦ Upon movement to a non-covered position; or
- ✦ Upon separation from the Federal Government.

Under no circumstances may an employee receive payment for unused compensatory time off for travel.

For examples of calculating creditable travel time, go to the following:

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2005/2005-03-att2.asp>

Additional information can be at the following Web site:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4050-550-002.pdf>

## LOCAL TRAVEL

While employees are responsible for commuting expense to and from their residence and official duty station; employees may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in the performance of official duties in and around their official duty station. Generally, if the expense appears reasonable and necessary to conduct business, the employee maybe reimbursed for out of pocket expenses above and beyond the normal commuting costs. It is the responsibility of the employee seeking reimbursement to clearly illustrate and justify that the costs incurred were out of pocket and not part of their normal commuting expense. Reimbursement for local travel expenses incurred is made on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the employee's supervisor.

Local travel is any travel lasting less than twelve hours, within 35 miles of the duty station, or within 35 miles of the employee's residence.

Local travel expenses may be incurred in a variety of work-related situations including, but not limited to, required attendance at meetings, conferences or other official functions, training, or periodic work assignments at alternate duty locations in or around the official duty station.

Local travel expenses may include such items:

- ✚ The cost of subway, bus, train, taxi, or other public transportation.
- ✚ When using a privately-owned vehicle (POV), cost calculated using the number of miles driven times the applicable mileage reimbursement rates as established in the Federal Travel Regulation (gasoline is included as a component of the mileage reimbursement rate and is not separately reimbursed). When using a POV, the cost of parking and tolls are reimbursable.

Local travel expense does not include per diem. Per diem (both lodging and meals and incidental expenses) is only authorized when travel is for more than 12 hours, and the travel is to locations more than 35 miles from the official duty station or employee's residence.

There are many different commuting options for employees; for that reason, OCFO does not have a single, established formula for determining which local travel costs will or will not be paid. Employees must provide justification for expenses incurred over and above normal commuting expenses to receive reimbursement. Transit subsidy costs are included as a normal daily commuting cost of the employee when determining additional out of pocket expense.

The amount of reimbursement is determined on a case-by-case basis with consultation with the supervisor. The supervisor makes the final determination on local travel reimbursement consistent with the policy established herein.

The following are examples that are not intended to be inclusive of all situations, but will provide guidance on when to authorize local travel reimbursement:

Example A:

An employee is in a van pool and pays a flat monthly rate of \$100 to maintain a slot in the van pool. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative office one day. He cannot take the van pool to the alternative location and must drive. Because the \$100 paid for the van pool is a flat monthly rate and not prorated daily or refundable for days the employee does not use the van pool, the cost of using a POV to perform work away from the official duty stations is over and above the cost of his normal commute. The employee should be reimbursed mileage, plus any tolls and/or parking incurred.

Example B:

An employee uses a POV car to drive to work each day, and parking is provided at her office at no cost. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative site for one day. The employee must pay a parking fee of \$10.00 at the alternative location. The employee should be reimbursed the parking fee, because the parking is over and above the normal commuting costs. The employee may also be eligible for reimbursement of additional mileage if the alternate site is more than 35 miles from the official duty station or employee's residence.

Example C:

An employee takes public transportation to work each day at a cost of \$3.25 each way. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative location, accessible by public transportation, but at a cost of \$2.85 each way. The employee receives no reimbursement, because the cost of commuting to the alternative location is not an additional cost to the employee.

Example D:

An employee takes public transit to work each day, for which he receives a transit subsidy. The transit subsidy covers the \$4.50 cost of round-trip daily subway fare. In addition, the employee pays \$1.75 to park at the subway lot, and drives 10 miles round-trip to the subway lot, for an additional cost of \$5.00

(10 miles x .50 mileage reimbursement rate as of January 1, 2010). Total daily commuting cost is \$11.25. The employee is ordered to perform work at a location that is 20 miles (40 miles round-trip) from the employee's residence for a total cost of \$20.00 (40 miles x .50 mileage reimbursement rate). The employee should be reimbursed \$8.75 (\$20.00 - \$11.25); which is over the normal commuting costs. Note that the transit subsidy IS included as a normal commuting cost in this calculation.

Claims for reimbursement for local travel will be processed, using SF 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business, through the WebTA time and attendance system.

The SF 1164 must identify the date, point of origin and destination, and the amount of fare and tips or distance for each trip. When the point of destination of one trip is identical to the point of origin of the next trip, the point of origin column need not be completed. When identical trips are claimed on a voucher, only the first trip must show the points of origin, destination, and date the trip was performed. Subsequent trips may be annotated with a statement such as "Same trip made on date(s)."

The employee completes the SF 1164 and submits to supervisor for review and approval. Once SF 1164 is approved, employee provides to the timekeeper, for processing during the current pay period. If employee completes the timesheet (self- entry), reimbursement will be included in the following section:

Dollar Transactions			Remarks:
Transaction	Account Description	Dollar Amt	LOCAL TRAVEL
(No Dollar Transactions)			
Total			

Employee will provide original SF 1164 to the Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division to be maintained for audit purposes.

**Notes:**

- ✚ Employees may not be reimbursed for their normal commuting expenses, except under the Commuter Transit Subsidy Benefits Program.
- ✚ Reimbursement for local travel expenses must be supported by adequate receipts unless obtaining a receipt for local travel is impractical, such as for metered parking or mileage reimbursement.



## COMMUTER TRANSIT SUBSIDY BENEFITS PROGRAM

USDA supports programs that improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion. USDA will provide a non-taxable subsidy designed to encourage employees to use mass transportation for their daily commute to and/or from their duty station by methods other than single occupancy vehicles.

The transit subsidy benefit is for the use of the employee only and for the employees home-to-work and work-to-home commute only. The subsidy is not to be used for travel between working locations and is not to be used by anyone other than the employee who received the benefit. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the employee to keep the amount of their subsidy current and adjust as appropriate for any changes in commuting expenses. Employees will be held accountable for misuse of commuter transit subsidy benefits, and subject to appropriate disciplinary action including disqualification from future participation in the USDA Commuter Transit Subsidy Benefits Program. Disciplinary penalties could range from a letter of admonishment to removal from Federal service depending on the severity of the misuse.

The Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division manages this program for OCFO.

Additional information can be found at the following Web site:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4080-811-04.pdf>

## FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

The Federal Flexible Spending Accounts Program (FSAFeds) allows for employees to pay for certain health and dependent care expenses with pre-tax dollars. Employees may choose to make a voluntary allotment from their salary to their FSAFEDS account(s).

An FSAFeds account is where an employee may contribute money from salary BEFORE taxes are withheld and then get reimbursed for out-of-pocket health care and dependent care expenses. Most employees are already paying for eligible out-of-pocket expenses and are not utilizing the FSAFeds program to save money. Qualifying expenses include such things as medical expenses that regular insurance doesn't pay for, child care and/or adult day care expenses, vision and dental expenses, prescription and over the counter medications, and even bandages!

FSAFeds accounts must be established during Open Season. An FSAFeds ELECTION is 100% VOLUNTARY. The FSAFEDS Open Season is held each fall in conjunction with the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season from mid-November to mid-December. Eligible employees may elect up to \$5,000 for a health care and \$5,000 for a qualifying dependent care.

Learn more by visiting:

<https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/index.asp>



## CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN

OCFO maintains a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to document the procedures for ensuring the continuation of Mission Essential Functions (MEFs) in the event of an emergency situation. The primary purpose of this plan is to protect people, government facilities, equipment, and classified or sensitive information.

The COOP defines four levels of response:

1. Part of a building housing headquarters (HQ) USDA essential functions is affected.
2. A building housing HQ USDA essential functions is affected.
3. A building housing USDA essential functions and the surrounding area is affected.
4. The Washington, DC metropolitan area is affected.

Each of these levels of response requires different actions and is initiated by different organizational entities. They range from relocating to another office, to deployment (for some positions) to an alternate work location. A few employees, occupying positions deemed essential to MEFs, should be prepared for possible deployment to an alternate facility. The largest population of employees will not deploy, but should be available for contact by telephone at home.

***It is important to keep contact information current with your supervisor.***

For additional information, contact the COOP Coordinator in the Continuity of Financial Management Planning and Process Improvement Division.

### ***Emergency Evacuation Information***

In the event of emergency, during working hours, employees are to proceed to the primary evacuation site. The site is in front of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, near the kiosk, on 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Drive NW.

If the primary evacuation site is inaccessible, proceed to the Portals Building, 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Maryland Ave SW.

**Primary Evacuation Site**



**Alternate Evacuation Site**

