

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, DC. 20250

<b>DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION</b>	Number: 4040-412-001
SUBJECT: Leadership Competency Framework and Assessments	Date: July 25, 2014
	OPI: Office of Human Resources Management

1. PURPOSE

This regulation establishes the USDA Leadership Competency Framework to support leadership development of USDA employees.

A clearly defined leadership model will help USDA employees and supervisors develop their leadership skills. All USDA employees should have a common set of leadership competencies that are used throughout the Department for individual leadership development needs and as part of any leadership development program delivered by USDA agencies.

By using a common leadership competency framework USDA personnel will be better able to assess their leadership capabilities for developmental purposes and to support the Department's workforce and succession planning efforts.

This Departmental Regulation will:

- a. Ensure consistent use of leadership competencies and assessments throughout the USDA.
- b. Minimize duplication of effort among USDA agencies in developing and managing leadership competency assessments.
- c. Establish a standard framework for employee development based on the Office of Personnel Management leadership competencies (see Appendix I).

2. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

This Departmental Regulation supersedes DR 4040-412-001, Leadership Competency Framework. (December 12, 2006).

### 3. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

- a. [The Government Employees Training Act, Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 41](#) and related guidance issued by the Office of Personnel Management;
- b. [Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\), Part 410, Training](#);
- c. [Title 5, CFR, Part 412, Executive, Management, and Supervisory Development](#);
- d. [Departmental Regulation 3630-001, USDA eLearning Services, Courseware and Content](#); and
- e. [Departmental Regulation 4040-410, Individual Development Plans](#).

### 4. POLICY

The USDA will use a standard competency model for leadership development called the Leadership Competency Framework (Appendix A).

- a. The Leadership Competency Framework will be based on the Office of Personal Management (OPM) Executive Core Qualifications and leadership competencies to serve as a guide in developing approaches and tools for expanding the workforce's capacity and capabilities.
- b. The Leadership Competency Framework has been approved by the USDA Training Officers Consortium pursuant to Section 10.c.(1) in this Departmental Regulation.
- c. All USDA mission areas, agencies, and staff offices will use the USDA Leadership Competency Framework as the basis for leadership development activities.

### 5. REQUIREMENT TO TAKE A 360-DEGREE ASSESSMENT

All supervisors, managers, and executives who are full-time, career or career-conditional employees are required to take a 360-degree assessment at least every three years to guide their leadership development.

- a. After October 1, 2015, all supervisors must complete a 360-degree assessment at least once every three years.
- b. The assessment may be completed as a stand-alone activity or as part of a leadership development program.

- c. A Mission Area Human Resource Director (MAHRD), Director of a staff office, or designee may grant an extension to supervisors to complete the requirement under the following conditions:
  - (1) Required service of more than 12 months as part of a military deployment;
  - (2) As required or permissible under a superseding authority.
  - (3) The MAHRD must notify the Virtual University and document the conditions of the extension granted including the required date for completing the requirement.
- d. To receive credit for meeting the requirements of this regulation, the supervisor must participate in a feedback session designed to support the individual's developmental planning.
  - (1) Feedback sessions must be delivered through a process approved by the Virtual University or delivered using the process appropriate for an assessment that has been approved by a MARHD under Section 6.b. of this Regulation.
  - (2) Computer-generated reports or training recommendations are not considered feedback sessions.

## 6. QUALIFYING ASSESSMENTS.

- a. Supervisors must use the 360-degree assessments available through AgLearn and approved by the Department for the purposes of meeting the requirements in Section 5 of this regulation.
- b. MAHRDs, OHRDs, or their designee may authorize and approve the use of other assessments for the purposes of this regulation provided that the assessment:
  - (1) Is a 360-degree instrument.
  - (2) Is offered with feedback by a qualified facilitator to support professional development.
  - (3) Assesses leadership competencies.

## 7. USE OF ASSESSMENT DATA FOR PLANNING

Aggregated data from multi-rater assessments may be used for planning purposes by the Department, agencies, and programs to calculate norms, establish baseline competency levels, develop workforce and/or succession plans, and meet Federal regulatory requirements on reporting organizational competency levels.

## 8. CONFIDENTIALITY

- a. Assessments delivered to meet requirements in this regulation are for an employee's developmental needs. The assessments may not be used as input for any personnel actions including, but not limited to, performance assessments, evaluations, compensation, or incentives.
- b. Only people responsible for administering and delivering 360-degree assessments will have access to the results, and the results of individual 360-degree assessments will not be shared except under the following circumstances:
  - (1) Appearance of imminent risk of serious harm to the individual or others;
  - (2) Threats of workplace violence;
  - (3) Evidence of fraud; or,
  - (4) As required by Federal statute.
- c. Information disclosed in feedback sessions is to be held confidential by the person facilitating and delivering feedback sessions.
- d. Access to systems and data folders is limited to personnel assigned to administer the assessment system.
- e. Rater responses must be anonymous except that responses from a subject's immediate supervisor may be seen by the subject.
- f. Supervisors may not take any adverse action or retaliate against an employee as a result of feedback provided by the employee as part of a 360 assessment.

## 9. DEFINITIONS

- a. 360-Degree Assessment. A comprehensive assessment and evaluation tool and process used to capture valuable input from multiple internal and external sources about an employee's competency levels. These sources may include the employee, supervisor, peers, direct reports, and/or customers.
- b. Competency. An observable, measureable set of related knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to successfully produce required outcomes directly related to job performance; specifically, the leadership competencies defined by OPM.

- c. Employee Development Guide. A document that defines the OPM core leadership competencies important for all USDA employees at their specific positional level in the organization that lists recommendations for training.
- d. Executives. Employees in Senior Executive Service (including Senior Leaders) who lead the Agency and set organizational goals.
- e. Feedback Session. A process to help the assessment subject understand the assessment results to support developmental planning. Feedback sessions may be delivered individually or as part of a group, in person or electronically. Feedback sessions must be interactive.
- f. Leadership Competency Framework. A list of the competencies needed for successful performance at each of five leadership levels: 1) All Employee, 2) Team Leader, 3) Supervisor, 4) Manager, and 5) Executive. The Leadership Competency Framework is progressive through the five levels of leadership with competencies at each level serving as the foundation for the next level of leadership.
- g. Managers. Employees who accomplish work by directing the duties of an organizational unit with accountability for the success of specific line or staff functions. Managers also monitor and evaluate the progress of the organizational unit toward meeting goals and making adjustments in objectives, work plans, schedules, and commitment of resources. Generally, managers supervise supervisors.
- h. Multi-rater/Multi-level Assessment. An alternative name for 360-degree assessment.
- i. Subject. The individual being rated as part of an assessment.
- j. Subordinate Supervisors. Any supervisory employees (including managers and executives) who are the direct reports of a manager or executive.
- k. Supervisors: Supervisors are permanent, full-time Federal employees who are responsible for delivering at least one employee's performance review. For the purposes of this regulation, only employees who are coded as "2" in the USDA Enterprise Human Resources data system are subject to this policy's assessment requirement.

## 10. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Agency Heads shall ensure that there is adequate support for implementing policies and programs for all supervisors to meet the requirements outlined in this Regulation.
- b. MAHRDs and OHRDs shall:

- (1) Ensure that persons selected into supervisor, manager, and executive positions are made aware of this requirement at their appointment, that the requirement is documented, and that steps are taken to address any supervisor's failure to complete the program.
  - (2) Report annually to the Virtual University on compliance with 360-degree leadership competency assessment requirements.
- c. USDA Training Officers Consortium (TOC) shall review and approve the design for approaches, programs, and assessments developed to support this Regulation.
- d. USDA Virtual University shall:
- (1) Develop and maintain the Department-wide 360-degree leadership competency assessment program, to include approaches for orientating participants and raters, feedback sessions for participants, and guidance on acceptable assessments.
  - (2) Ensure that 360-degree leadership competency assessment approach meets the standards established by the Office of Personnel Management, this regulation, and the TOC, as well as standards for sound test design.
  - (3) Provide to MAHRDs a reporting template on compliance with 360-degree leadership competency assessment requirements.
  - (4) Coordinate with Team AgLearn to develop and implement approaches to market and educate users on implementing this regulation, as well as monitoring compliance with this regulation.
  - (5) Collect and maintain Departmental records on 360-degree leadership competency assessment for the purpose of compliance with the Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework and other organizational needs.
- e. Executives and Managers shall:
- (1) Ensure that all supervisors have satisfactorily completed an approved 360-degree leadership competency assessment within the required time period.
  - (2) Evaluate the developmental needs of subordinate supervisors and ensure that their Individual Development Plans reflect development needs identified in the assessments.
- f. Director of AgLearn shall:
- (1) Include Leadership Competency Framework in Departmental e-learning strategies.

(2) Provide guidance to the USDA Office of Human Resources Management on supporting the requirements of this Regulation.

g. AgLearn Administrators shall:

(1) Support employees in recording their training, development, and assessment activities in AgLearn

(2) Create reports that document completion of the requirements in this Regulation.

-END-

## Appendix A

### Leadership Competency Framework

**Leading & Managing Organizations** – Executive Level – Core competencies include Entrepreneurship, External Awareness, and Vision

**Leading & Managing Programs** – Manager Level – Core competencies include Creativity and Innovation, Financial Management, Partnering, Political Savvy, Strategic Thinking, Technology Management

**Leading and Managing People** – Supervisor Level – Core competencies include Accountability, Conflict Management, Developing Others, Human Capital Management, Leveraging Diversity

**Managing Projects** – Team Leader Level – Core competencies include Decisiveness, Influencing/Negotiating, Team Building, Technical Credibility

**Managing Yourself** – All employees – Core competencies include Continual Learning, Customer Service, Flexibility, Integrity/Honesty, Interpersonal Skills, Oral Communication, Problem Solving, Public Service Motivation, Resilience, Written Communication

#### Leadership Competency Definitions

Accountability: Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.

Conflict Management: Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.

Continual Learning: Assesses and recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development.

Creativity and Innovation: Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting edge programs/processes.

Customer Service: Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.

Decisiveness: Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.

Developing Others: Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.

Entrepreneurship: Positions the organization for future success by identifying new opportunities; builds the organization by developing or improving products or services. Takes calculated risks to accomplish organizational objectives.

External Awareness: Understands and keeps up-to-date on local, national, and international policies and trends that affect the organization and shape stakeholders' views; is aware of the organization's impact on the external environment.

Financial Management: Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.

Flexibility: Is open to change and new information; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

Human Capital Management: Builds and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.

Influencing/Negotiating: Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.

Integrity/Honesty: Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner. Shows consistency in words and actions. Models high standards of ethics.

Interpersonal Skills: Treats others with courtesy, sensitivity, and respect. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs and feelings of different people in different situations.

Leveraging Diversity: Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

Oral Communication: Makes clear and convincing oral presentations. Listens effectively; clarifies information as needed.

Partnering: Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.

Political Savvy: Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.

Problem Solving: Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevance and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.

Public Service Motivation: Shows a commitment to serve the public. Ensures that actions meet public needs; aligns organizational objectives and practices with public interests.

Resilience: Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.

Strategic Thinking: Formulates objectives and priorities, and implements plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization in a global environment. Capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.

Team Building: Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

Technical Credibility: Understands and appropriately applies principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise.

Technology Management: Keeps up-to-date on technological developments. Makes effective use of technology to achieve results. Ensures access to and security of technology systems.

Vision: Takes a long-term view and builds a shared vision with others; acts as a catalyst for organizational change. Influences others to translate vision into action.

Written Communication: Writes in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.