



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



Update February 2007

# National Agricultural Statistics Service

## Workforce Strategies For FY 2007-2012

Additional copies of this Workforce Plan can be downloaded at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/nassinfo/plancovr.htm>

To request paper copies, send an email with delivery information to [nass@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass@nass.usda.gov).

If you have comments or questions, please submit via email to [nass@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass@nass.usda.gov).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Contents

<b>STRATEGY 1: ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF WORKLIFE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Performance Measures</i> .....	1
<i>Actionable Strategies</i> .....	1
<b>STRATEGY 2: TRAIN NASS EMPLOYEES TO MEET THE AGENCY CHALLENGES.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Performance Measures</i> .....	2
<i>Actionable Strategies</i> .....	2
<b>STRATEGY 3: UTILIZE OUTSOURCING SERVICES EFFICIENTLY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Performance Measures</i> .....	3
<i>Actionable Strategies</i> .....	3
<b>STRATEGY 4: STENGTHEN NASS SUCCESSION PLANS TO STENGTHEN NASS LEADERSHIP.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Performance Measures</i> .....	4
<i>Actionable Strategies</i> .....	4
<b>STRATEGY 5: CREATE A NASS WORKFORCE THAT IS MORE ACCOUNTABLE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Performance Measures</i> .....	5
<i>Actionable Strategies</i> .....	5
<b>STRATEGY 6: RECRUIT AND RETAIN A HIGH PERFORMING WORKFORCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Performance Measures</i> .....	6
<i>Actionable Strategies</i> .....	6
<b>STRATEGY 7: ASSESS THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO DEMONSTRATE IT’S PRODUCING THE RESULTS INTENDED .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Performance Measures</i> .....	7
<i>Actionable Strategies</i> .....	7
<b>NASS LEADERSHIP MODEL.....</b>	<b>8</b>

---



## STRATEGY 1: ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF WORKLIFE

NASS is very conscientious about identifying and addressing issues that are important to its employees. Every three years, the Agency gives its employees the chance to voice their concerns and make suggestions that will improve their work atmosphere. Every Organizational Climate Survey will focus on enhancing and furthering the recommendations made by the previous Organizational Climate Survey Evaluation Team (OCSET). It will provide a measure for comparison with the results of the previous survey and an opportunity to re-evaluate any new or carryover concerns to be addressed by the Agency in the future. As part of a continuous re-evaluation process, NASS managers will continue to evaluate work life options and other employee friendly benefits as they become available.

### Performance Measures

- The OCSET develops and makes recommendations for organizational improvement in NASS.
- NASS Organizational Climate Survey responses show steady improvement in employee satisfaction when compared to the previous survey.
- Human Resource Management Evaluation recommendations are evaluated and implemented.

### Actionable Strategies

- Employees should continue to keep their managers well informed of work related issues including concerns about workloads, adequate resources, and their work environment.
- Continue to improve Agency communications through documentation and information posted on NASS's Intranet (NASSNet).
- NASS staff will constantly re-evaluate programs to create opportunities to make the Agency a great place to work.
- Continue adopting and providing consistent government-wide and department-wide work life programs that benefit employees and NASS, making the NASS work environment a desirable place to work.
- Conduct the NASS Organizational Climate Survey at least every three years.
- Continue to charter teams to evaluate the results from the Organizational Climate Surveys.
- Management and employees respond to OPM's Federal Human Capital Survey and compare the results with NASS's Organizational Climate Survey results.
- Human Resource Management Evaluations (HRME) will be conducted in the field offices and headquarters.

## STRATEGY 2: TRAIN NASS EMPLOYEES TO MEET THE AGENCY CHALLENGES

One of the most important management challenges facing NASS is the need to transform its culture to help change the way it does business in the 21st century. NASS must continue to build its fundamental management capabilities in order to effectively address the agriculture sector's most pressing priorities and take advantage of emerging opportunities. To accomplish this, NASS will need to invest resources, including time and money, to ensure that employees have the information, knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to work effectively in a rapidly changing and complex environment. Investments in training and developing employees are part of the Agency's overall effort to achieve accurate, timely, and cost-effective results.

Training can be defined as making available to employees planned and coordinated educational programs of instruction in professional, technical, or other fields that are, or will be, related to the employee's job responsibilities. Developmental programs can include experiences such as coaching, mentoring, or rotational assignments. The essential aim of training and development programs is to assist the Agency in achieving its mission and goals by improving individual, and ultimately, organizational performance.

### Performance Measures

- A minimum of 3 percent of the Agency's annual budget is directed towards training.
- Technical, leadership, inter-personal skills, career development, and other training are appropriate to address the training needs as identified by the needs assessment.
- Training workshop history shows that an appropriate number of training events are conducted to address training and skill needs to close competency gaps.
- Census training needs are completed prior to the implementation phase of the next Census.
- The number of employees completing the full-time training program each year meets or exceeds the 10-year average.

### Actionable Strategies

- Conduct an annual Training Needs Assessment Survey to identify skills gaps and obtain an assessment of employees' proficiency in all critical areas of performance.
- Conduct a survey of senior executives and managers to gain insight into what proficiencies would be key to meeting their vision of the future for the Agency.
- Develop a 5-year Strategic Training Plan for the Agency.
- State Directors work with local universities to expand the number of universities which "qualify" for the NASS full-time training programs.
- Identify key opportunities or needs within the Agency which would be most appropriate placement for full-time training, graduates to make immediate use of their training.
- NASS's career development is continually updated using a structured training program.

## STRATEGY 3: UTILIZE OUTSOURCING SERVICES EFFICIENTLY

NASS currently has a strong outsourcing program. Over 20 percent of its annual appropriated budget and more than 20 percent of its FAIR Act Inventory of commercial functions were outsourced for data collection and data capture activities. For the 2007 Census of Agriculture, NASS plans to outsource mailing the census questionnaires and handling of the returned questionnaires instead of hiring additional federal employees into its workforce.

The Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area FY 2003 FAIR Act Inventory, serves as the baseline for NASS's long-range competitive sourcing plan and NASS will continue to use it as a management tool to ensure suitable commercial activities are carried out in the most effective and efficient manner possible. In reviewing the NASS FAIR Act Inventory and applying the REE FAIR Act guidance, NASS applied standards and measures to data collection and data capture activities associated with annual surveys and the 2007 Census of Agriculture to determine those functions appropriate for competitive sourcing. These plans will be refined as NASS gains additional experience in competitive sourcing studies currently being done in the REE mission area and gains further insight into the Agency workforce as classified in the FAIR Act Inventory.

### Performance Measures

- Feasibility reviews for competitively outsourcing agency functions are conducted, as needed.
- Specialized services are contracted out on a project by project basis or during heavy or peak workloads.
- All survey data collection is contracted out.
- Census preparations such as printing of forms, mailing, etc. are contracted out.

### Actionable Strategies

- Complete the annual FAIR Act Inventory each year on-time.
- Study and analyze NASS commercial activities and functions to determine their feasibility to be publicly announced for A-76 competition.
- Projects requiring specific skill sets or resources that not available in NASS should be procured from outside public or private sources.
- Maintain the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) cooperative agreement to provide all survey data collection support activities.
- Establish agreements with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide assistance with the 2007 Census of Agriculture list building and data collection activities.

## STRATEGY 4: STRENGTHEN NASS SUCCESSION PLANS TO STRENGTHEN NASS LEADERSHIP

Like many organizations, NASS is facing a critical challenge in leadership succession planning. NASS needs to continue to emphasize the importance of succession planning as a strategic planning tool to ensure the Agency has a diverse, well prepared pool of individuals who are able to fill leadership roles at every management level of the organization.

NASS's senior leaders need to be intentional and purposeful in creating a leadership culture and relay this message to their employees through words and actions. All NASS employees need to practice succession planning and constantly remind their teams of its importance. This is a continual process that needs to work both down and up from all levels. If this process is practiced, the rewards will be well-trained leaders at all levels, prepared to fill positions of increased responsibilities.

### Performance Measures

- Number of staff qualified for leadership positions are identified to assess bench strength.
- Competency gaps closed for management and leadership.
- Percent of GS-12 employees who received supervisory and management training.
- Extent to which employees hold their leaders in high regard.
- Highly qualified applicants are enrolled in USDA's SESCO Program.

### Actionable Strategies

- Monitor leadership bench strength and competencies.
- Support leadership and management training and the Department's SESCO program.
- NASS senior leaders improve taking ownership by: encouraging relationships between current and aspiring leaders; participating in team projects; identifying and assessing developing leaders; and rewarding leaders for developing others.
- Continue to instill institutional knowledge and the NASS culture in leadership, which is critical to the Agency's success.
- Strengthen development opportunities by utilizing USDA's Career Enhancement Program (CEP), specifically designed so that employees in the single-interval series positions can advance to positions of greater responsibility. The positions are competitively announced and selectees are placed under a training agreement and plan.
- Contribute and support the Department's and the REE Mission Area succession planning efforts.
- Communicate the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and plans for sustaining the Agency functions.
- Develop pandemic plans for headquarters and field office essential functions.



## STRATEGY 5: CREATE A NASS WORKFORCE THAT IS MORE ACCOUNTABLE

This is an area of importance to NASS and is aligned to one of the Presidential Management Initiatives. It is now a requirement to link individual performance with the Agency's strategic goals and annual performance plans and projects. NASS has moved from a two-level employee performance evaluation program to the multi-level evaluation process. This program effectively differentiates between the various levels of (high and low) performance and provides consequences based on performance with linkage to individual/team/unit performance to organizational goals, desired results, and outcomes.

The NASS Awards Program has changed over the years to keep in step with changes made to the employee appraisal programs. Changes have been made to the NASS Awards Program to realign awards with improved efficiency or innovation. NASS will continue using the Administrator's Awards for Excellence Program. Information documenting an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) will be used as the primary evaluation element for promotion.

### Performance Measures

- NASS maintains a “green” human capital rating issued by the Department each quarter.
- SES performance ratings reflect accomplishments of strategic and annual goals.
- Employees are recognized monetarily and non-monetarily for their accomplishments and performance.
- All supervisors and managers fairly and equitably evaluate employees' performance using established performance standards and measures and documented accomplishments and agency performance results.
- Employees are evaluated and promoted based on information in their KSA documentation.
- Extent to which employees believe their organizational culture promotes improvement processes, products and services, and organizational outcomes.

### Actionable Strategies

- Maintain alignment between employee performance plans and the NASS strategic goals.
- Provide training to all NASS supervisors and managers on how to conduct an effective performance appraisal and recognize employees using the new programs.
- Senior managers are responsible for reviewing annual performance ratings for consistency across the agency and reflect the performance results and accomplishments attained by the agency.
- NASS Awards Program is aligned with the multi-level performance evaluation program.
- The NASS Awards Program will be funded by the Administrator.
- Employees make use of the Core Development Training Program to develop their KSAs.
- HRME's and Technical Reviews are conducted.
- Evaluate OMB's 2005 PAAT assessment of NASS.
- Participate in OPM's performance management beta site upon request.

## STRATEGY 6: RECRUIT AND RETAIN A HIGH PERFORMING WORKFORCE

Recruiting the best qualified applicants and retaining a highly skilled and professional staff is critically important to NASS. This is the best means for successfully carrying out the Agency’s mission to efficiently and effectively serve and meet the data needs of its customers. NASS management must continue to be progressive in: its recruitment tactics; annual and long-term training strategies; employee career advancement and placement in the organization; recognizing high performing employees; and thoroughly evaluating employee feedback with a follow-up action plan. NASS must continue to focus on the people who do the work, the places it’s performed, and the processes that produce the data products to meet the needs of the customers it serves. NASS managers and supervisors must communicate, collaborate, coach, and be a catalyst for making NASS not only a high performing organization, but a valued and friendly place to work for every employee.

### Performance Measures

- Hire the best qualified candidates and job applicants in a timely fashion.
- Meet mission critical occupation gaps.
- Annually, at least 55 percent of new hires are women and minorities.
- Pilot new quality work life programs to assess value of program before implementation.
- Recognize high performing employees for their accomplishments and achievements.
- Extent to which employees are satisfied with their jobs and various aspects thereof.

### Actionable Strategies

- Continue to use the Career Intern Program to recruit and hire professional staff.
- Develop and provide high quality recruitment resources and materials for our recruiters.
- Identify where the hot beds of recruitment are located by State or target recruitment activity by State.
- Recruit new employees from colleges and universities with an emphasis on recruiting from 1890’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Institutions, and members of the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU).
- Consider expanding the Minority Recruitment Program to include a program such as the Outstanding Scholar and Bilingual/Bicultural Programs.
- Employ interns through the Workforce Recruitment Program for students with disabilities.
- Assist employees to “qualify” for different job series in their quest for career advancement and other job related opportunities.
- Expand the use of temporary duty (TDY) for all grade levels in the field and headquarters.
- NASS supervisors use the NASS Awards Program to recognize high performing individuals.
- NASS supervisors rate employees’ performance fairly and accurately and provide feedback to the employee throughout the year.
- Continue use of recruitment, relocation and retention incentives as needed. Provide added incentives or additional career opportunities or use of HR flexibilities for employees/potential candidates in areas/States that are harder to place employees.
- Track timelines for hiring GS employees and senior executives.
- Monitor mission critical occupation gaps.

## STRATEGY 7: ASSESS THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO DEMONSTRATE IT'S PRODUCING THE RESULTS INTENDED

The Agency has implemented most of the recommendations of the FOORT to consolidate field office activities in the areas of data collection, estimation and analysis, services, information technology, and administrative functions. The consolidation has resulted in more heterogeneous field offices. NASS will still maintain a strong, viable presence in every location in which NASS currently has an office. NASS has taken advantage of the decentralized structure and built on these advantages by using the latest hardware, software, and communications technology. These tools will provide new opportunities in training, customer service, recruiting, employee development, research, and marketing.

### Performance Measures

- Creation of consolidated estimation and survey centers in field offices will result in higher quality estimates.
- Better customer service in the areas of: print/mail; information technology; and administration due to the creation of regional centers with staffing and equipment to more adequately meet customer demands.
- Fewer dollars spent on data entry contracting, more accurate data collected, and less NASDA expense as a result of the wider implementation of electronic data reporting (EDR) and the use of personal digital assistants (PDAs) by enumerators.
- More consistency and efficiency in telephone data collection will result due to consolidation of most field office calls into regional calling centers.

### Actionable Strategies

- Restructure print/mail centers into four locations and equip them with higher performing and more technically advanced equipment.
- Create additional and better-equipped regional telephone data collection centers.
- Expand the use of EDR.
- Consolidate administrative functions as retirements and resignations occur.
- Form regional survey, estimates, and analysis centers.
- Move appropriate HQ national level functions and/or estimate programs to field offices.
- Develop and use Enterprise Architecture (EA) models in developing and implementing eGov solutions, applications, and tools.
- Automate LAN administration using Enterprise Architecture (EA) models.

# NASS LEADERSHIP MODEL

