

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

<b>DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION</b>		Number: 4720-001
<b>SUBJECT</b> USDA Onboarding Requirements	<b>DATE:</b> June 3, 2011	
	<b>OPI:</b> Office of Human Resources Management	

Section	Page
1 Purpose	1
2 Background	1
3 Definitions	1
4 Policy	2
5 Responsibilities	2
Appendix A - Template Tentative Job Offer Letter	A-1
Appendix B - Template Final Job Offer Letter	B-1

1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) policy and framework for welcoming and orienting new employees throughout USDA to enable these employees to quickly become productive and successful.

2. BACKGROUND

The USDA Cultural Transformation Initiative emphasizes the need for the development of an efficient and effective modern workforce. This directive creates a new uniform framework for onboarding new employees which will result in a more engaged and successful workforce.

3. DEFINITIONS

Agency - An organizational unit of the Department, other than a Staff Office as defined below, whose head reports to an Under Secretary.

Onboarding - is a business management process in which supervisors and others assist new employees to assimilate into their work environment and become productive employees.

Staff Office - A Departmental administrative office whose head reports to the Secretary or to

the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

USDA's Onboarding Portal - is a central Web page, for use by all agencies, containing important information for supervisors, sponsors, and new employees regarding the onboarding process. Access to the Onboarding Portal homepage is at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP>.

Onboarding checklist - is a tool to enable supervisors to ensure that important information is imparted to the new employee on a timely basis.

EOD - "Entry On Duty" refers to the first day that new employee reports for duty at the employee's agency.

Orientation - is the process, beginning on the employee's entry on duty day or during the employee's first weeks, in which new employees are administered the Oath of Office, provided information related to their salary and other employment benefits, complete required new entrant forms and receive information about USDA's mission, programs and policies.

Sponsor - is a co-worker of the new employee (not the new employee's supervisor) who acts as a guide during the onboarding process.

#### 4. POLICY

USDA policy requires responsible stewardship of resources and accountability for the strategic management of human resources, including the successful acclimation of new employees into the workplace. To achieve this goal, USDA is establishing a uniform framework for orienting new employees to the workplace. Through this policy, USDA will develop and maintain a high performing and cohesive workforce that achieves its mission within budget and with the most efficient onboarding processes possible.

#### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Agency Heads are responsible for ensuring that:

- (1) Processes are in place for new employees to receive a welcome letter from their direct supervisors, preferably prior to their EOD date. Supervisors are required to provide their new employees with a welcome letter. Supervisors may use, as a model, the welcome letter template on the USDA Onboarding Portal at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPSSponsor.htm>. This letter is in addition to any offer letter or communication sent to the employee from the Human Resources Office. When new employees are notified of a reporting date that is less than a week in advance, the welcome letter is still required, but may be given to the new employee at the EOD orientation.

- (2) Agency Human Resources staff and supervisory staffs conduct an effective orientation program for new employees which offer participants the opportunity to further their knowledge about USDA, the agency they work for, and its stakeholders, while providing information to help new employees be more successful at USDA.
- (3) Agencies use the template employment confirmation letter at Appendices A and B.
- (4) Agencies allocate resources to ensure that their onboarding process complies with this Regulation.
- (5) Agency staff use the USDA Onboarding Portal at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP>. The Onboarding Portal must be used by all agencies and staff offices as the primary source for onboarding new employees.
  - (a) As the primary source of information, the USDA Onboarding Portal provides information (forms, program information, etc.). To avoid duplication, agencies may not include the same information on their agency's new employee Web site. Agencies may, however, supplement on their own Web sites, agency-specific information for new employees.
  - (b) Agency Web sites must be accessible through the USDA Onboarding Portal's "My Agency Page". Agency links from the My Agency Page must include links to the agency's vision, mission and values, organizational chart, acronym list, and New Employee Information page. The New Employee Information page is the single portal to the agencies' specific information for new employees.
  - (c) Agency Web sites must be accessible to the general public.
  - (d) Agencies are responsible for notifying the USDA Onboarding Portal owner of changes to links from the USDA Web site to their agency Web site.
  - (e) Agency Human Resources personnel are required to include appropriate information about the Web site, including the Web site address, etc., in job offer letters (tentative and final).
  - (f) Agency Human Resources personnel must encourage new employees to complete the required forms required for entry on duty day prior to the entry on duty date. Alternatively, in the event that the employee is unable to obtain or complete the forms prior to entry on duty day, the agency should provide the employee with the opportunity to complete and submit the forms on entry on duty day. Agency-specific forms must be available on the agency's New Employee Information Web site.
- (6) Agencies report progress in implementing this directive. This is a process improvement initiative and agencies are expected to report progress as indicated

below in subparagraph (a).

(a) Agencies must submit quarterly reports regarding their onboarding program. Reports must be signed by the agency's Director of Human Resources.

1 These reports are due to the Provost of the USDA Virtual University on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following the end of the quarter (reports would thus be due no later than January 15<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup>, July 15<sup>th</sup> and October 15<sup>th</sup>). Reports must address how the agency has progressed in implementing each of the requirements of this regulation to include success, barriers, and what action was taken, or is recommended, to overcome the barrier.

2 This reporting requirement expires when the Provost of the Virtual University notifies the agency that reporting is no longer required. It is anticipated that some agencies will complete their implementation of this regulation sooner than others and when that occurs, will be exempt from this reporting requirement.

b. Servicing Human Resource Offices are responsible for:

(1) Working with employees to complete the following items, prior to the employee reporting for duty:

(a) Background check which can be completed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the Office of Personnel Management. The FBI offers a 24-hour turn-around basic background check. Consideration should be given to the agency's needs regarding cost and timing for these options.

(b) New employee training, available on the USDA Onboarding Portal.

(c) Applicable forms available via the Onboarding Portal. When an does not have a personal computer, the HR specialist should explore options before deciding to mail forms to the individual. Some options to be considered include directing the applicant to the nearest USDA agency office where he or she can access, download to hard copy, and complete the information, using a computer at the local library, or using a computer at the nearest copy/computer store. Where there are costs associated with the use of a computer, agencies are authorized to reimburse the applicant for those costs. Alternatively, in the event that the employee is unable to complete the forms on a personal computer, the agency should mail the forms to the employee to complete.

(2) Conducting, at a minimum, the following actions on the employee's EOD day (if an office does not have its own Human Resources Staff, these actions should be completed by an appropriate employee/supervisor):

- (a) Provide a warm welcome.
  - (b) Verify that all mandatory first day forms are complete (e.g., I-9, emergency contact information).
  - (c) Swear-in employee.
  - (d) Provide a briefing on employee benefits. While an overview is acceptable, the goal of this requirement is to ensure the employee has enough information to begin to consider benefit options and ask appropriate questions prior to filing deadlines.
  - (e) Provide a map and/or tour of the facility.
  - (f) Begin, if not complete, the process of issuing an identification badge.
  - (g) Review what the employee can expect during his or her first 60 days at USDA and the agency and provide written notification of any mandatory meetings.
- c. Supervisors are responsible for:
- (1) Being engaged in the hiring process for their new employee and being the primary owners of the onboarding component for their new employees. Specifically, this means that:
    - (a) Supervisors are expected to welcome their new employees to USDA and to introduce them to the culture and values of their agency.
    - (b) Supervisors must contact the employee prior to their entrance on duty to welcome them, preferably by telephone.
    - (c) Supervisors are responsible for assigning a sponsor for all new employees. A sponsor is a co-worker of the new employee and may not be an individual in the employee's supervisory chain of command, except when no other option exists. Sponsors may be "virtual" (i.e., available by telephone and/or e-mail) if they are located in a different geographic location than the new employee. When the sponsor is virtual, some duties required of the sponsor, as explained in the USDA Onboarding Portal at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPSSponsor.htm>, are waived by the supervisor when the supervisor appoints the sponsor. No waivers are permitted when the sponsor and the employee are in the same geographic locale.
    - (d) Supervisors must use the standard USDA onboarding checklist on the USDA Onboarding Portal at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPSSponsor.htm> to track the employee's onboarding progress. When complete, the checklist will be

maintained by the supervisor.

- (e) Supervisors are expected to use the tools on the USDA Onboarding Portal at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPIndex.htm> to meet these requirements.

END

# Appendix A

## TEMPLATE TENTATIVE JOB OFFER LETTER

NOTE: CUSTOMIZE UNDERLINED AREAS

[DATE]

Ms. Jane M. Doe.  
1234 St. Elsewhere Place  
Anywhere, 29605

Dear Ms. Doe:

Congratulations, you have been tentatively selected for the Title, Series, Grade and salary (when available) position located with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agency, Department/Division, in City, State. **This offer is tentative pending a favorable outcome of the following:**

- Completion of the OF 306 Declaration for Federal Employment. To obtain the form, go to [www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPForms.htm](http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPForms.htm). Please download, complete, and fax to me at Fax Number. Please accomplish this as soon as possible but no later than two (2) days from receipt of this letter. You will need to bring the original with you when you report for duty.
- All Background Investigations include a minimum of a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Criminal History Check (fingerprint check). Final approval of your appointment, which will result in a permanent offer of employment, is contingent upon the favorable results of the fingerprint check. Retention in this position is contingent on a favorable background investigation. This position requires a (**select type of investigation**) investigation.

Low Risk/Non-Sensitive -- National Agency Check with Written Inquiries (NACI) OR  
Moderate Risk / Public Trust -- Minimum Background Investigation - (MBI) OR  
High Risk / Public Trust - Background Investigation - (BI) OR  
Noncritical-Sensitive National Security (with access to classified information at the Confidential or Secret levels) -- Access National Agencies Check with Inquiries Investigation (ANACI) OR  
Critical-Sensitive National Security (with access to classified information at the Secret or Top Secret level) requiring a Single Scope Background Investigation - (SSBI) OR  
Special Sensitive National Security Investigation with SCI or other Special Access to classified information requiring a Single Scope Background Investigation or Presidential appointee - (SSBI)

**(For Appointment Above the Minimum Only)**

- Receipt of two (2) copies of your latest Leave and Earning Statement for salary verification, which can be faxed to me at Fax Number. This will be utilized to determine whether your salary may be set above the minimum rate of the grade.

**(For positions requiring a Financial Disclosure Form)**

- In accordance with the Office of Government Ethics regulations at 5 CFR 2634.904(a)(1), this position will require you to file a report of your financial interests at the time you report for duty and annually thereafter. To obtain the form go to [www.usda.gov/ethics](http://www.usda.gov/ethics) and **click on the “Forms” tab and scroll down to OGE Form 450**, Confidential Financial Disclosure Report. If you have questions regarding completion of the form, please contact the following employee in the USDA Office of Ethics: give Ethics Specialist and contact number/email
- **(WDC or applicable office)** Please contact either Specialist Name (area code) telephone number or Specialist Name at (area code) telephone number to schedule an appointment for the processing of your fingerprints. You should report to U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW (the entrance of the South Building at 14<sup>th</sup> and Independence Avenue), Washington, DC on the appointment date for completion of your fingerprinting process. Upon arrival, please have security contact HR Specialist or other appropriate contact.

**Note:** If you will be traveling by Metro, get off at the Smithsonian Metro Station and exit via Independence Avenue, turn right and proceed to the 14<sup>th</sup> Street entrance.

- **(Remote Activity)** In order to begin the fingerprinting process, contact your local police station or other authorized fingerprint authority and arrange a time to have two (2) **original** sets of fingerprints completed on the SF-87s sent to you via FedEx. Please confirm your mailing address as shown above by return email. Upon completion of the fingerprints, please protect them and return via FedEx to the address below:

Enter appropriate Personnel Security Office Address

If you have any questions or concerns you may contact me at HR Specialist/Assistant Phone Number. In addition, please visit the USDA Onboarding Portal, at [www.dm.usda.gov/OBP](http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP) for useful information about the USDA. I look forward to meeting you and hope you enjoy your new position.

Sincerely,

HR Specialist/Assistant Signature block

cc: Emergency Preparedness Division (of your Agency) and new employee’s supervisor



## Appendix B

### TEMPLATE FINAL JOB OFFER LETTER

NOTE: THE UNDERLINED AREAS REQUIRE AGENCY SPECIFIC ENTRIES

[DATE]

John M. Doe  
1234 Somewhere Ave.  
Anywhere, KS 66216

Dear Mr. Doe:

Welcome to the Agency [Insert employee's name]!

It is my pleasure to officially inform you that your fingerprint check was completed with favorable results and to confirm your acceptance of our offer of permanent employment as a Title, Grade, Series and Step, in the Agency, Department, Division, in City, State.

Your salary will be \$Total Salary per annum (this includes locality pay). (Service Credit for Annual Leave Accrual has been approved in the amount of **Number of Years** and **Number of Months.**)

The type of appointment will be a (Career-Conditional/Career/Excepted Appointment/Appointment Not to Exceed **Date**) appointment. This position is full time.

The effective date of your appointment is Date. On Monday, Date, please report directly to Supervisor's Name at 8:00 a.m. (unless otherwise discussed with him/her). His/her office is located at Address, Floor, Suite or Room Number, City, State. After meeting with your supervisor, please report to the Human Resources Division, enter address if separate location, wherein you will complete the orientation process.

- Please go to [www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPForms.htm](http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPForms.htm) to obtain access to the required forms. The Web site will indicate which forms you are required to complete. Please bring these forms with you when you report for duty.
- **HR Specialist/Assistant selects appropriate background investigation form.**  
In order to complete the background investigation you will need to complete enter appropriate form name at [www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPForms.htm](http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP/OBPForms.htm) . Provide any specific instructions. Additional instructions will be provided after you enter on duty.

- **If the clearance is a Secret/Top Secret/Confidential include the following paragraph:**  
This appointment requires that you obtain and maintain a "type of clearance" security clearance entailing an in-depth background investigation taking a number of months. If you do not pass this clearance, your continued employment is not guaranteed.

This appointment is subject to confirmation that you are eligible to work in the United States under the provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. To confirm this, when you report for duty, please be prepared to provide your state driver's license or state-issued identification card containing your photograph AND your original social security card or birth certificate. If you do not have these documents, please review the alternatives provided on the Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, which you will be required to complete during your onboarding process.

- **(For positions requiring a Financial Disclosure Form)**

In accordance with the Office of Government Ethics regulations at 5 CFR 2634.904(a)(1), you are entering a position which requires you to file a report of your financial interests at the time you report for duty and annually thereafter. To obtain the form go to [www.usda.gov/ethics](http://www.usda.gov/ethics) and **click on the "Forms" tab and then scroll down to OGE Form 450**, Confidential Financial Disclosure Report. If you have questions regarding completion of the form, please contact the following employee in the USDA Office of Ethics: give Ethics Specialist and contact number/email).

Please visit the USDA Onboarding Portal at [www.dm.usda.gov/OBP](http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP) for useful information on USDA, Agency, required forms, benefits, etc. If you have any questions, please call me at HR Specialist/Assistant number.

Sincerely,

HR Specialist/Assistant Signature block

cc: new employee's supervisor