

For: FSA Employees

Administrative Actions Related to Combining County Offices

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Field Operations



1 Overview

A Background

FSA is implementing the Secretary’s final approved office structure for FSA as proposed in the Blueprint for Stronger Service. The approved structure includes closing a limited number of FSA County Offices. Closing offices impacts the COC organizational structure in the applicable offices, resulting in new or revised combined County Offices and reassigning county employees to new duty stations.

B Purpose

This notice provides guidance on:

- placement of CO employees
- the selection process for CED’s for combined offices
- establishing the Senior Farm Programs Officer (SFPO) position
- priority consideration
- requirements for combining COC’s.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2013	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

Notice AO-1542

2 Reassigning Subordinate CO Employees

A Placement of Employees

All subordinate permanent employees in County Offices that close will be reassigned at the same grade and step to the County Office that is receiving the work of the closing County Office.

If the work of the closed office is being split between 2 or more offices, the employees may be reassigned to any of the offices receiving the work.

Note: Deciding how work will be split between counties may:

- be the result of closing an existing combined office or shared management operation and splitting the counties between receiving offices
- occur because of a large number of producers selecting an alternative administrative office.

If closure results in discontinuing a shared management operation, PT who has received a promotion or temporary promotion to Lead PT CO-8, and has held that position in excess of 52 consecutive weeks, will be entitled to grade retention according to 27-PM, subparagraph 719 C.

B Reassignment Letters

Employees shall be given at least a 60-calendar-day notice of the reassignment because of the closing their office and moving the work to the receiving office. This notification shall include:

- specific action being taken
- effective date of the action
- re-employment rights, if reassignment is declined
- available benefits, when applicable, if reassignment is accepted.

Note: When determining the reassignment date, State Offices shall take into consideration the office closure date, VSIP application period, and any other events or factors that will affect the time period in which employees will be needed at the closing location.

Exhibit 1 contains examples of reassignment letters to be provided to subordinate employees. Templates of the examples are available for State Office download from the DAFO SED Communications SharePoint site. State Offices **must** get concurrence of the reassignment letters from HRD by contacting the designated servicing employee relations specialist. After concurrence, State Offices shall issue the letter, using regular certified mail, at least 60 calendar days before the effective date of the reassignment actions.

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3 Selecting CED's in Newly Combined County Offices

A Selecting CED's

When there is only 1 incumbent CED among all County Offices slated for combination, then that CED will be CED of the newly combined County Office. When offices are slated for combination that may result in the need for CED's to compete for selection as CED of the newly combined office, COC's shall select CED from among the incumbent CED's consistent with established policy in 27-PM, paragraph 333. State Office shall notify the affected CED's of the need to compete. See Exhibit 2 for an example notification letter.

COC's of each County Office operation involved in the consolidation have 1 vote (equal voting rights) in selecting CED. All COC's involved in the combinations will jointly interview the incumbent CED's. After the interviews, COC's will cast their vote for which CED to select. When there are:

- 2 or more stand-alone offices involved in the combination, each COC may cast 1 vote

Note: If there is a tie vote and a decision cannot be reached, the selection of CED will be referred to STC.

- shared management operations involved in the combination, all COC's of each share management operation shall caucus and determine their 1 joint vote to be cast for each shared management operation and any stand-alone COC's will cast their 1 vote.

Note: If the shared management COC's cannot reach a consensus for their vote, or if there is a tie vote and a decision cannot be reached, the selection of CED will be referred to STC.

B Reassignment Letter for Selected CED's

The selected CED's shall be given at least a 60-calendar-day notice of the reassignment to the newly combined County Office. This notification shall include:

- specific action being taken
- effective date of the action
- re-employment rights, if reassignment is declined
- available benefits, when applicable, if reassignment is accepted.

Exhibit 3 contains examples of reassignment letters to be provided to the selected CED. Templates of the examples are available for State Office's to download from the DAFO SED Communications SharePoint site. State Offices must get concurrence of the reassignment letters from HRD by contacting the designated servicing employee relations specialist. After concurrence, State Offices shall issue the letter, using regular certified mail, at least 60 calendar days before the effective date of the reassignment actions.

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4 Placing Nonselected CED's

A SFPO's

A new position, SFPO, not to exceed (NTE) 1-year, has been created for the interim placement of CED's who are not selected as CED of the newly combined County Office operation. The incumbent of this position will:

- not be duty stationed in the newly combined County Office structure
- be placed in a duty station, within the State, determined by STC
- be supervised by SED or other designated State Office supervisory employee.

The incumbent may be assigned, as needed, to:

- any County Office as acting CED
- any County Office to assist in administering programs
- a State Office program area to assist in administering programs throughout the State
- DD to assist with administering farm programs in a specific district.

The incumbent may provide basic FLP services and may perform additional FLP assignments only when farm loan authorities have been delegated. The work may also include performing office and field activities as needed to accomplish program objectives.

B Reassignment Letter for Nonselected CED's

The nonselected CED shall be given at least a 60-calendar-day notice of the directed reassignment to the SFPO position at their current grade. This notification shall include:

- specific action being taken
- effective date of the action
- location (duty station) of the position
- priority placement provisions
- re-employment rights, if reassignment is declined
- available benefits, when applicable, if reassignment is accepted.

Exhibit 3 contains examples of reassignment letters to be provided to the nonselected CED into the SFPO position. Templates of the examples are available for State Office's to download from the DAFO SED Communications SharePoint site. State Offices must get concurrence of the reassignment letters from HRD by contacting the designated servicing employee relations specialist. After concurrence, State Offices shall issue the letter, using regular certified mail, at least 60 calendar days before the effective date of the reassignment actions.

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5 General Provisions Applicable to Employee Placements

A Appeal Rights Upon Reassignment

Employees have 15 calendar days from the date of the reassignment letter to request, in writing, a final review by DAFO. The written request should include any additional information that the employee is requesting DAFO to consider. Send requests to:

USDA, FSA, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
Stop 0539
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0539.

B Relocation

Relocation costs shall be authorized for permanent employees who accept a management reassignment offer outside their current commuting area and consistent with established relocation policy in Notice FI-3075.

C Severance Pay

County Office permanent employees who have held their jobs for at least 12 months, and who decline a reassignment outside their commuting area, are entitled to severance pay consistent with established FSA policy in 27-PM, Part 8, Section 5.

Exception: Employees, who are eligible for an immediate annuity at the time of separation, including a reduced discontinued service annuity, are **not** entitled to severance pay.

D Position Descriptions

CED's in receiving offices shall prepare position descriptions for newly reassigned employees reflecting actual program assignments. Follow the requirements in 27-PM, paragraph 16. State Office shall prepare position descriptions for reassigned CED's and SFPO's reflecting actual program assignments.

E Performance Plans

If there are less than 90 calendar days in the performance rating period after the effective date of an employee's reassignment because of office closure, the pre-reassignment supervisor shall prepare a final rating of record for each employee. If there will be more than 90 calendar days in the performance rating period after the effective date of an employee's reassignment because of office closure, each supervisor affected by an office closure shall prepare an interim assessment detailing each of his/her employees' accomplishments and forward it to each employee's new supervisor of record. This interim assessment shall be considered by the new supervisor when developing the employee's annual Rating of Record. Interim assessments do not need to be on any particular form, nor entered into EmpowHR, but should be recorded in writing. The new supervisor of any employee reassigned because of an office closure shall place the employee on a performance plan within 30 calendar days of the employee's assignment to the new position.

5 General Provisions Applicable to Employee Placements (Continued)

F Re-Employment Priority Consideration for Displaced Employees

Employees who are separated for declining a reassignment outside their commuting area will have 2-year re-employment rights and will receive priority consideration for positions at their previous grade in their State. This priority consideration shall be administered in compliance with provisions in 27-PM, paragraph 328.

6 Priority Placement for SFPO's Into CED Vacancies

A SFPO's as Displaced CED's

CED's that are reassigned into SFPO positions are considered displaced for the purpose of priority consideration for CED vacancies. The SFPO position is a temporary, NTE 1-year placement that allows the employee time to find a permanent placement. SFPO's shall apply for all CED vacancies, at or above their grade level within their State, to maintain their priority consideration for CED vacancies.

Note: SFPO's who decline more than 1 offer of a permanent CED position within their State, at a grade that is not lower than their current grade, will lose priority consideration for CED vacancies.

At the end of the NTE 1-year placement, SFPO's that have declined an offer or failed to apply for a CED vacancy at their grade level and within their State will be issued a termination notice.

B Priority Consideration Offer

Displaced CED's, including SFPO's, within their State receive first consideration for all CED vacancies at their grade level. Displaced CED's outside the State receive second consideration for all vacancies for which they apply. Other qualified candidates, including COT's, may be chosen only if there are no candidates with priority consideration or placement has been declined by the candidates with priority consideration. States may only exclude displaced CED's from outside the State from consideration if the State is currently at or above their FTE ceiling **and** they have received approval from DAFO to limit the area of consideration for the CED vacancy to in-State only.

C Conducting Interviews

COC's shall conduct interviews of all priority candidates for CED vacancies first. Interviewing lower priority candidates is unnecessary unless the priority candidates have declined the position.

The priority candidates shall be provided the opportunity for a face-to-face interview. However, because of budget constraints, FSA will not pay travel costs for SFPO's to interview. If a candidate is unable to schedule a personal interview, telephone interviews may be conducted.

6 Priority Placement for SFPO's Into CED Vacancies (Continued)

D Relocation

SPFO's that accept CED's positions outside their commuting area shall be considered eligible for relocation expenses in the same manner as if the action was a management reassignment. Relocation costs shall be authorized consistent with established relocation policy in Notice FI-3075.

7 Combining COC's

A Combined Counties

Combined County Offices have only one COC consisting of 3 to 11 members. The existing COC's from the counties involved in the newly formed combination will operate as one COC during the transition period between office consolidation and the next election. Because of the timing of the office consolidations, most will not meet the time constraints for the 2012 election. Therefore, most transitional elections resulting from office consolidations will occur during the 2013 election cycle. Before the 2013 election, the existing COC's, operating as one COC, will consider any needed changes to LAA's for the combined COC jurisdiction. Ensure that appropriate outreach is conducted to include input from the local farmers and ranchers.

Note: Maintain all current SDA advisor representatives during the transition. Decisions on future SDA representation will be made after the next election results are known.

B Transitional Elections

If changes to LAA's are needed and approved by STC, then the next regular election will be a transitional election. Any LAA boundary change in the jurisdiction of COC requires transitional elections to be conducted. At the time of the next regularly scheduled election, if the number of LAA's decreases or increases, transitional elections will be held.

C Comprehensive Policy and Procedure

See 15-AO, paragraphs 59 through 63, for specific guidance on reviewing and redrawing LAA's and holding transitional elections.

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8 Contacts

A County Office Contact

If County Offices have questions about this notice, contact the State Office.

B State Office Contacts

State Offices may contact the following for questions about this notice.

IF question is about...	THEN contact...
general information	Barbara Boyd, DAFO, by either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• e-mail to barbara.boyd@wdc.usda.gov• telephone at 202-720-7890.
specific personnel-related activities or reassignment actions	either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lori Owens, HRD, by either of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• e-mail to lori.owens@tx.usda.gov• telephone at 979-680-5160• designated HRD servicing employee relation specialist.
LAA restructuring or transitional election	Deborah Johnson, DAFO, by either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• e-mail to deborah.johnson@wdc.usda.gov• telephone at 202-720-0067.

CO PT Directed Reassignment Letters

A #6 When PT Is Inside Commuting Distance

[Date]

[Employee Name]

[Employee Address]

Re: Reassignment – Change in Duty Station

Dear [Employee Name]:

This is to notify you of the decision to reassign you effective [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter], from your position as [Title, CO-Series-Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [current office] County Office in [city, State] to [Title, CO-Series-Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This is a reassignment at your same permanent grade and step. [If you have received an additional grade based on shared management responsibilities you may be eligible for grade retention if you served 52 weeks at the higher grade.] [Include this sentence when applicable.]

This reassignment is necessary to effect the closure of the [current County Office, city, State], as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Blueprint for a Stronger Service, and the transfer of all remaining functions to the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This reassignment is in the interest of economy and efficient use of employees and for the good of service.

You have an obligation to accept this reassignment to a different position within the commuting area. Should you refuse to accept this reassignment, it may be necessary to separate you from FSA County service no sooner than the effective date of the reassignment.

Please notify us in writing no later than [Date minimum of 15 calendar days from date of letter], of your decision to accept or decline this reassignment. Complete and sign the statement at the bottom of this letter and return the original to:

[SED Name]

State Executive Director

[Name of State] Farm Service Agency

[State Office Address]

Your failure to reply in writing by the deadline specified above will be accepted as your decision not to accept this reassignment. If you do not report for duty at your new work station on [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter] you will be placed in absence without leave (AWOL) status until a separation action is taken.

CO PT Directed Reassignment Letters (Continued)

A #6 When PT Is Inside Commuting Distance (Continued)

You have fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of this letter in which to request in writing a final review by the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO). Your written request should include any additional information you request DAFO to consider. The request should be sent to:

USDA, FSA, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
Stop 0539
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0539.

Since this reassignment is within the commuting distance, there is no eligibility for relocation expenses. If you are separated, there is no eligibility for discontinued service retirement, no entitlement to severance pay, and there is also no entitlement to re-employment rights.

The particulars on deferred retirement, lump sum annual leave payment, temporary continuation of health insurance, and other related benefits may be obtained from the Administrative Officer.

Please contact SED [*name, contact information*] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[*STC Chairperson Name*]
[*State*] State Committee Chair

I _____ the above reassignment.
(accept or decline)

[*Date*]

[*Employee Name*]

CO PT Directed Reassignment Letters (Continued)

B #7 When CO PT Is Outside Commuting Distance

[Date]

[Employee Name]

[Employee Address]

Re: Reassignment – Change in Duty Station

Dear [Employee Name]:

This is to notify you of the decision to reassign you effective [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter], from your position as [Title, CO-Series-Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [current office] County Office in [city, State] to [Title, CO-Series-Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This is a reassignment at your same permanent grade and step. [If you have received an additional grade based on shared management responsibilities you may be eligible for grade retention if you served 52 weeks at the higher grade.] [Include this sentence when applicable.]

This reassignment is necessary to effect the closure of the [current County Office, city, State], as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Blueprint for a Stronger Service, and the transfer of all remaining functions to the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This reassignment is in the interest of economy and efficient use of employees and for the good of service.

If you accept the reassignment, the cost of travel for you and your dependents and the shipment of household goods incurred because of this reassignment may be authorized at the Government’s expense, subject to current Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) and Notice FI-3075. If relocation expenses are authorized, you may be granted administrative leave without loss of pay for housing arrangements and related moving activities incidental to the relocation for your family and personal effects. Such excused absence is permitted, as may be necessary, up to 80 hours.

You have an obligation to accept this reassignment to a different commuting area. Should you refuse to accept this reassignment, it may be necessary to separate you from the FSA County service no sooner than the effective date of the reassignment. A declination may entitle you to discontinued service retirement if you meet the eligibility requirements of age and length of service; or a declination may entitle you to severance pay.

Please notify us in writing no later than [Date minimum of 15 calendar days from date of letter], of your decision to accept or decline this reassignment. Complete and sign the statement at the bottom of this letter and return the original to:

[SED Name]

State Executive Director

[Name of State] Farm Service Agency

[State Office Address].

CO PT Directed Reassignment Letters (Continued)

B #7 When CO PT Is Outside Commuting Distance (Continued)

Your failure to reply in writing by the deadline specified above will be accepted as your decision not to accept this reassignment. If you do not report for duty at your new work station on [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter] you will be placed in absence without leave (AWOL) status until a separation action is taken.

You have fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of this letter in which to request in writing a final review by the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO). Your written request should include any additional information you request DAFO to consider. The request should be sent to: Deputy Administrator for Field Operations:

USDA, FSA, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
Stop 0539
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0539.

Should you be eligible to retire under an option or discontinued service retirement, you will be able to do so at any time between now and the date of the effective actions. If you are not eligible to retire, and have served under a permanent appointment for the last 12 months, you are entitled to severance pay.

If you are separated and do not retire, you are entitled to re-employment rights throughout the State for two years from the date of separation. The particulars of the re-employment program, as well as unemployment rights, deferred retirement, lump sum annual leave payment, temporary continuation of health insurance, and other related benefits may be obtained from the Administrative Officer.

Please contact SED [name, contact information] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[STC Chairperson Name]
[State] State Committee Chair

I _____ the above reassignment.
(accept or decline)

[Date]

[Employee Name]

CO CED Notification Letter #1 When Competition Is Required

[Date]

[Employee Name]

[Employee Address]

Re: Office Combination

Dear [Employee Name]:

This is to notify you of the decision to close the [current office] County Office in [city, State] and transfer all remaining functions to the [new office] County Office in [city, State] creating a newly combined County Office serving [Counties]. (List all counties served by the new combined office.) This action is effective on [Date] and is necessary to effect the closure of the [current County Office, city, State], as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Blueprint for a Stronger Service.

When offices are considered for closure that may result in the need for CED's to compete for selection as the CED of the newly combined office COC shall interview and select the Combined Office CED from the incumbent CED's. Each existing COC of the combined office has equal voting rights in selecting the CED for the combined County Office operations. The STC makes the selection if the COC's are unable to reach a decision. You will be notified of the date and time for the CED interview to be conducted within the next 30 calendar days. Incumbents selected for the combined CED position will receive a reassignment letter to that position. Incumbents not selected for the CED of the combined office will receive a reassignment to a Senior Farm Programs Officer position, not to exceed one year, and will have priority placement rights to vacant CED positions during that year.

Please contact SED [name, contact information] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[STC Chairperson Name]

[State] State Committee Chair

CO CED Notification Letters

A #2 When Selected CED Is Inside Commuting Distance

[Date]

[Employee Name]

[Employee Address]

Re: Reassignment – [*Change in Duty Station* [included when applicable]]

Dear [Employee Name]:

[Use either of the following opening paragraphs, as appropriate, and delete the unused paragraph.]

[When offices are considered for closure that may result in the need for CED's to compete for selection as the CED of the newly combined office, COC shall interview and select the combined office CED from the incumbent CED's. Each existing COC of the combined office has equal voting rights in selecting the CED for the combined County Office operations. The STC makes the selection if the COC's are unable to reach a decision. You were selected as the CED for the combined office.]

[When offices are considered for closure and there is only one incumbent CED in the affected offices, that CED is selected as the CED of the new combined office. Therefore, as the only existing CED in the offices being combined you were selected as the CED for the combined office.]

As a result of this selection, this is to notify you of the decision to reassign you effective [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter], from your position as the CED CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [current office] County Office in [city, State] to CED CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This is a reassignment at your same permanent grade and step. [If you have received an additional grade based on shared management responsibilities you may be eligible for grade retention if you served 52 weeks at the higher grade.] [Include this sentence when applicable.]

This reassignment is necessary to effect the closure of the [current County Office, city, State], as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Blueprint for a Stronger Service, and the transfer of all remaining functions to the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This reassignment is in the interest of economy and efficient use of employees and for the good of service.

You have an obligation to accept this reassignment to a different position within the commuting area. Should you refuse to accept this reassignment, it may be necessary to separate you from FSA County service no sooner than the effective date of the reassignment.

Please notify the State Office in writing no later than [Date minimum of 15 calendar days from date of letter], of your decision to accept or decline this reassignment. Complete and sign the statement at the bottom of this letter and return the original to:

[SED Name]

State Executive Director

[Name of State] Farm Service Agency

[State Office Address].

CO CED Notification Letters (Continued)

A #2 When Selected CED Is Inside Commuting Distance (Continued)

Your failure to reply in writing by the deadline specified above will be accepted as your decision not to accept this reassignment. If you do not report for duty at your new work station on [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter] you will be placed in absence without leave (AWOL) status until a separation action is taken.

You have fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of this letter in which to request, in writing, a final review by the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO). Your written request should include any additional information you request DAFO to consider. The request should be sent to:

USDA, FSA, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
Stop 0539
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0539.

Since this reassignment is within the commuting distance, there is no eligibility for relocation expenses. If you are separated, there is no eligibility for discontinued service retirement, no entitlement to severance pay, and there is also no entitlement to re-employment rights.

The particulars on deferred retirement, lump sum annual leave payment, temporary continuation of health insurance, and other related benefits may be obtained from the Administrative Officer.

Please contact SED [name, contact information] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[STC Chairperson Name]
[State] State Committee Chair

I _____ the above reassignment.
(accept or decline)

[Date]

[Employee Name]

CO CED Notification Letters (Continued)

B #3 When Selected CED Is Outside Commuting Distance

[Date]

[Employee Name]

[Employee Address]

Re: Reassignment – Change in Duty Station

Dear [Employee Name]:

[Use either of the following opening paragraphs, as appropriate, and delete the unused paragraph.]

[When offices are considered for closure that may result in the need for CED's to compete for selection as the CED of the newly combined office, COC shall interview and select the combined office CED from the incumbent CED's. Each existing COC of the combined office has equal voting rights in selecting the CED for the combined County Office operations. The STC makes the selection if the COC's are unable to reach a decision. You were selected as the CED for the combined office.]

[When offices are considered for closure and there is only one incumbent CED in the affected offices, that CED is selected as the CED of the new combined office. Therefore, as the only existing CED in the offices being combined you were selected as the CED for the combined office.]
 existing CED in the offices being combined you were selected as the CED for the combined office.]

As a result of this selection this is to notify you of the decision to reassign you effective [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter], from your position as CED, CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [current office] County Office in [city, State] to CED, CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This is a reassignment at your same permanent grade and step. [If you have received an additional grade based on shared management responsibilities you may be eligible for grade retention if you served 52 weeks at the higher grade.] [Include this sentence when applicable.]

This reassignment is necessary to effect the closure of the [current County Office, city, State], as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Blueprint for a Stronger Service, and the transfer of all remaining functions to the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This reassignment is in the interest of economy and efficient use of employees and for the good of service.

If you accept the reassignment, the cost of travel for you and your dependents and the shipment of household goods incurred because of this reassignment may be authorized at the Government's expense, subject to current Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) and Notice FI-3075. If relocation expenses are authorized, you may be granted administrative leave without loss of pay for housing arrangements and related moving activities incidental to the relocation for your family and personal effects. Such excused absence is permitted, as may be necessary, up to 80 hours.

CO CED Notification Letters (Continued)

B #3 When Selected CED Is Outside Commuting Distance (Continued)

You have an obligation to accept this reassignment to a different commuting area. Should you refuse to accept this reassignment, it may be necessary to separate you from the FSA County service no sooner than the effective date of the reassignment. A declination may entitle you to discontinued service retirement if you meet the eligibility requirements of age and length of service; or a declination may entitle you to severance pay.

Please notify the State Office in writing no later than [Date minimum of 15 calendar days from date of letter], of your decision to accept or decline this reassignment. Complete and sign the statement at the bottom of this letter and return the original to:

[SED Name]
State Executive Director
[Name of State] Farm Service Agency
[State Office Address].

Your failure to reply in writing by the deadline specified above will be accepted as your decision not to accept this reassignment. If you do not report for duty at your new work station on [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter] you will be placed in absence without leave (AWOL) status until a separation action is taken.

You have fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of this letter in which to request in writing a final review by the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO). Your written request should include any additional information you request DAFO to consider. The request should be sent to:

USDA, FSA, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
Stop 0539
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0539.

Should you be eligible to retire under an optional or discontinued service retirement, you will be able to do so at any time between now and the date of the effective actions. If you are not eligible to retire, and have served under a permanent appointment for the last 12 months, you are entitled to severance pay.

If you are separated and do not retire, you are entitled to re-employment rights throughout the State for two years from the date of separation. The particulars of the re-employment program, as well as unemployment rights, deferred retirement, lump sum annual leave payment, temporary continuation of health insurance, and other related benefits may be obtained from the Administrative Officer.

Please contact SED [name, contact information] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[STC Chairperson Name]
[State] State Committee Chair

I _____ the above reassignment.
(accept or decline)

[Date]

[Employee Name]

CO CED Directed Reassignment Letter

A #4 When Nonselected CED Is Inside Commuting Distance

[Date]

[Employee Name]

[Employee Address]

Re: Reassignment – Change in Duty Station

Dear [Employee Name]:

When offices are considered for closure that may result in the need for CED’s to compete for selection as the CED of the newly combined office, COC shall interview and select the combined office CED from the incumbent CED’s. Each existing COC of the combined office has equal voting rights in selecting the CED for the combined County Office operations. The STC makes the selection if the COC’s are unable to reach a decision. You were not selected as the CED for the combined office.

As a result of this nonselection this is to notify you of the decision to reassign you effective [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter], from your position as CED, CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [current office] County Office in [city, State] to Senior Farm Programs Officer (SFPO), CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [new office] [can be a County Office or the State Office] in [city, State]. This is a reassignment at your same permanent grade and step and is not to exceed one year. [If you have received an additional grade based on shared management responsibilities you may be eligible for grade retention if you served 52 weeks at the higher grade.] [Include this sentence when applicable.]

This reassignment is necessary to effect the closure of the [current County Office, city, State], as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Blueprint for a Stronger Service, and the transfer of all remaining functions to the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This reassignment is in the interest of economy and efficient use of employees and for the good of service.

You have an obligation to accept this reassignment to a different position within the commuting area. Should you refuse to accept this reassignment, it may be necessary to separate you from FSA County service no sooner than the effective date of the reassignment.

Please notify the State Office in writing no later than [Date minimum of 15 calendar days from date of letter], of your decision to accept or decline this reassignment. Complete and sign the statement at the bottom of this letter and return the original to:

[SED Name]
 State Executive Director
 [Name of State] Farm Service Agency
 [State Office Address].

CO CED Directed Reassignment Letter (Continued)

A #4 When Nonselected CED Is Inside Commuting Distance (Continued)

Your failure to reply in writing by the deadline specified above will be accepted as your decision not to accept this reassignment. If you do not report for duty at your new work station on [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter] you will be placed in absence without leave (AWOL) status until a separation action is taken.

You have fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of this letter in which to request in writing a final review by the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO). Your written request should include any additional information you request DAFO to consider. The request should be sent to:

USDA, FSA, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
Stop 0539
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0539.

Since this reassignment is within the commuting distance, there is no eligibility for relocation expenses. If you are separated, there is no eligibility for discontinued service retirement, no entitlement to severance pay, and there is also no entitlement to re-employment rights.

The particulars on deferred retirement, lump sum annual leave payment, temporary continuation of health insurance, and other related benefits may be obtained from the Administrative Officer.

Your reassignment to a SFPO, NTE one year, position is intended as an interim solution pending permanent placement. An Agency priority placement program is available to facilitate permanent employment placement as a result of office closure. Eligibility for priority placement begins on date of this notification. There are currently vacant CED positions in the following office(s):

[List applicable County Offices and vacancy announcement information.]

You need to apply for these vacancies or any future CED vacancies within your State in order to retain your priority placement entitlement while in the SFPO position. If you fail to apply for or decline an offer of a CED position at your grade level within your State, you will be separated at the end of the one year period.

Please contact SED [name, contact information] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[STC Chairperson Name]
[State] State Committee Chair

I _____ the above reassignment.
(accept or decline)

[Date]

[Employee Name]

CO CED Directed Reassignment Letter (Continued)

B #5 When Nonselected CED Is Outside Commuting Distance

[Date]

[Employee Name]
[Employee Address]

Re: Reassignment – Change in Duty Station

Dear [Employee Name]:

When offices are considered for closure that may result in the need for CED’s to compete for selection as the CED of the newly combined office, COC shall interview and select the combined office CED from the incumbent CED’s. Each existing COC of the combined office has equal voting rights in selecting the CED for the combined County Office operations. The STC makes the selection if the COC’s are unable to reach a decision. You were not selected as the CED for the combined office.

As a result of this nonselection this is to notify you of the decision to reassign you effective [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter], from your position as CED, CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [current office] County Office in [city, State] to Senior Farm Programs Officer (SFPO), CO-1101-[Grade-Step (Annual Salary)] located in the [new office] [can be a County Office or the State Office] in [city, State]. This is a reassignment at your same permanent grade and step and is not to exceed one year. [If you have received an additional grade based on shared management responsibilities you may be eligible for grade retention if you served 52 weeks at the higher grade.] [Include this sentence when applicable.]

This reassignment is necessary to effect the closure of the [current County Office, city, State], as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Blueprint for a Stronger Service, and the transfer of all remaining functions to the [new office] County Office in [city, State]. This reassignment is in the interest of economy and efficient use of employees and for the good of service.

If you accept the reassignment, the cost of travel for you and your dependents and the shipment of household goods incurred because of this reassignment may be authorized at the Government’s expense, subject to current Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) and Notice FI-3075. If relocation expenses are authorized, you may be granted administrative leave without loss of pay for housing arrangements and related moving activities incidental to the relocation for your family and personal effects. Such excused absence is permitted, as may be necessary, up to 80 hours.

You have an obligation to accept this reassignment to a different commuting area. Should you refuse to accept this reassignment, it may be necessary to separate you from the FSA County service no sooner than the effective date of the reassignment. A declination may entitle you to discontinued service retirement if you meet the eligibility requirements of age and length of service; or a declination may entitle you to severance pay.

Please notify the State Office in writing no later than [Date minimum of 15 calendar days from date of letter], of your decision to accept or decline this reassignment. Complete and sign the statement at the bottom of this letter and return the original to:

[SED Name]
State Executive Director
[Name of State] Farm Service Agency
[State Office Address].

CO CED Directed Reassignment Letter (Continued)

B #5 When Nonselected CED Is Outside Commuting Distance (Continued)

Your failure to reply in writing by the deadline specified above will be accepted as your decision not to accept this reassignment. If you do not report for duty at your new work station on [Date at least 60 calendar days from date of letter] you will be placed in absence without leave (AWOL) status until a separation action is taken.

You have fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of this letter in which to request in writing a final review by the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO). Your written request should include any additional information you request DAFO to consider. The request should be sent to:

USDA, FSA, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations
Stop 0539
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0539.

Should you be eligible to retire under an optional or discontinued service retirement, you will be able to do so at any time between now and the date of the effective actions. If you are not eligible to retire, and have served under a permanent appointment for the last 12 months, you are entitled to severance pay.

If you are separated and do not retire, you are entitled to re-employment rights throughout the State for two years from the date of separation. The particulars of the re-employment program, as well as unemployment rights, deferred retirement, lump sum annual leave payment, temporary continuation of health insurance, and other related benefits may be obtained from the Administrative Officer.

Your reassignment to a SFPO, NTE one year, position is intended as interim solution pending permanent placement. An Agency priority placement program is available to facilitate permanent employment placement as a result of office closure. Eligibility for priority placement begins on date of this notification. There are currently vacant CED positions in the following office(s):

[List applicable County Offices and vacancy announcement information.]

You need to apply for these vacancies or any future CED vacancies within your State in order to retain your priority placement entitlement while in the SFPO position. If you fail to apply for or decline an offer of a CED position at your grade level within your State you will be separated at the end of the one year period.

Please contact SED [name, contact information] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[STC Chairperson Name]
[State] State Committee Chair

I _____ the above reassignment.
(accept or decline)

[Date]

[Employee Name]

Position Description for SFPO**Title: Senior Farm Program Officer (At Large)****Grade: CO-[11 or 12]****A. INTRODUCTION**

The incumbent of this position is employed by the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) committee(s) and assigned to the State Office and is responsible for administering program and/or administrative operations for one or more counties to carry out permanent and ad hoc commodity production, commodity/facility loan, conservation, environmental quality, indemnity, disaster, and emergency and defense programs. The incumbent may be assigned, as needed, to any County Office as acting County Executive Director to lead the administration of programs or may be assigned to any County Office to assist in administration of programs. The incumbent may be assigned to the State Office or to a District Director to assist in other duties as needed to administer the farm programs in counties throughout the State or a specific District. The incumbent may provide basic FLP services and may perform additional FLP assignments based on authorities delegated. The work also may include performing office and field activities as needed to accomplish program objectives. The position is FLSA exempt. This is the full performance level of the position.

B. MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy Interpretation: Administers and interprets policies established by the Agency and by FSA committee(s) in the office in which the position is located. Meets with the county committee(s) to discuss programs, program operations, national program requirements, local agricultural conditions, etc. Provides program information to the county committee(s), including interpretation and explanation of program legislation, regulations, and interrelationships. Takes appropriate action to assure that national, STC and COC policies and objectives are properly communicated to and carried out by clients and agency employees.

Program Management: As assigned, manages Agency commodity production, commodity and facility loan, conservation, emergency and disaster, and other related programs for the office, including those established in permanent farm legislation as well as ad hoc programs mandated by Congress. As assigned, management responsibilities may cover all aspects of program administration including, but not limited to providing program information and policy guidance to actual and potential clients, accepting program applications and determining program eligibility, preparing contracts, performing varied calculations, establishing and maintaining a full range of farm and program records, ensuring compliance with all legal and program provisions including those that are interrelated with other programs and requirements, investigating and resolving possible program violations, authorizing payments, and collecting overpayments. May represent the Agency during program appeals and at hearings at the local, State, and/or national level.

Position Description for SFPO (Continued)

Counsels clients on program requirements and interrelationships to assure eligibility for loans, purchases, payments and other program benefits. Administers new and varied ad hoc programs designed to address short-term agricultural emergencies brought about by economic conditions, adverse weather or other natural disasters. As assigned, directs office operations, and establishes work priorities, establishes operational guides for programs within the office, and assures program assignments are smoothly incorporated into existing office workflow. May issue newsletters or other informational materials and conduct meetings to inform the farming community of the availability of such programs as well as program requirements and benefits. Carries out emergency, natural disaster and defense activities as assigned.

Fiscal Management: When assigned as agent for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) within the assigned county/counties, the incumbent will be responsible for and be accountable for the receipt, custody, and disposal of all funds, negotiable instruments, and property coming into the control of CCC. As delegated by the county committee(s), may exercise authority to disburse CCC program and administrative funds. May be assigned responsibility for administering claims and handling bankruptcy cases and responsibility for fiscal programs including cash management, debt management, and debt collection.

Personnel Management: According to 7 CFR Part 7, incumbent may be assigned all day-to-day operations of the County Office and may employ subordinate non-Federal County Office and field employees. Incumbent may supervise permanent full-time office staff and exercise a full range of supervisory responsibilities including:

1. planning work to be accomplished by subordinates, setting and adjusting priorities, and preparing schedules for completion of work;
2. assigning work to subordinates based on priorities, selective consideration of the difficulty and requirements of assignments, and the capabilities of employees;
3. developing standards and evaluating work performance of subordinates;
4. giving advice, counsel, or instruction to employees on both work and administrative matters;
5. interviewing candidates and making selections for positions in the office; recommending promotions, reassignments and other personnel actions;
6. hearing and resolving complaints from employees, referring group grievances and more serious unresolved complaints to a higher level supervisor or manager;
7. effecting minor disciplinary measures, such as warnings and reprimands, recommending other action in more serious cases;
8. identifying developmental and training needs of employees, providing or arranging for needed development and training; and
9. finding ways to improve the quality of the work directed.

Consults with and provides input to the responsible Farm Loan Manager (FLM) or District Director (DD) about assignments of Program Technicians with FLP responsibilities. As assigned, provides training and/or personnel/payroll services to CED trainees and other employees.

Position Description for SFPO (Continued)

Administrative Management: As assigned, manages administrative functions in the assigned office(s), including designating employee or employees to perform these functions. Administrative activities include, but are not limited to, such areas as personnel, payroll and administrative expenses; property and space management, supplies and equipment; and mail and records management. May be assigned the responsibility and accountability for any property or item of value coming into the control of CCC. Incumbent may be assigned oversight of County Office elections and referendums, including referendums for other organizations.

Farm Loan Program Responsibilities: Performs a range of Farm Loan Program (FLP) assignments including distributing and accepting forms and applications, collecting and processing payments, responding to inquiries, and scheduling appointments with the Farm Loan Manager (FLM) or Farm Loan Officer (FLO). Works with FLM or District Director (DD) in organizing office activities to ensure that all applicants and borrowers are served in a timely manner and to ensure full understanding of and compliance with program policies and requirements. Depending on workload demands, training received and authorities delegated and maintained, the incumbent may be responsible for additional FLP assignments including maintaining and reviewing accounts, making recommendations for debt settlements, processing borrower classifications, conducting records reviews, tax searches and security checks, preparing chattel appraisals, assisting with real estate appraisals, monitoring construction projects and inventory property, completing or assisting in year-end analysis, and approving loans.

Public Relations and Outreach: as assigned, develops program information and news for use in publications, radio broadcasts, and personal appearances to maintain good public relations with farmers, farm groups, and others. Cooperates with and assists other Federal, State, and local agencies in informing rural and farming communities through appropriate media of programs that provide assistance and benefits affecting individuals' economic and social conditions.

Establishes and maintains effective working relationships with a wide range of groups and individuals in the area served. May be assigned to represent the Agency in contacts with producers and other clients, agribusiness interests, civic groups, business and government officials, media representatives and others. As assigned, may develop and conduct public relations and outreach programs in the area, including authoring newsletters, participating in meetings, and making public or media appearances. Performs other duties and responsibilities as required.

Position Description for SFPO (Continued)**C. EEO AND CIVIL RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES**

The incumbent supports equal employment, training, and promotional opportunities to all employees, applicants, and new hires; prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or marital status; and promotes a full realization of equal employment through continuous affirmative action within the work environment. Complies with and affirmatively implements the requirements of EEO laws, regulations, and policies. The incumbent ensures that information concerning county programs, policies, and committee elections is fully and fairly disseminated to farmers, employees, and the general public; provides County Office services and facilities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or marital status; and conducts all County Office operations according to applicable civil rights rules and regulations.

D. EVALUATION FACTORS**1. Knowledge Required by the Position**

Thorough knowledge of the principles and practices of agricultural production, marketing, agricultural conservation, and related fields and of FSA program provisions, policies and procedures to manage and direct the Agency's commodity and conservation programs and administrative operations for one or more counties. Knowledge of FSA FLP's and program provisions to provide program services, perform additional program assignments based on authorities delegated, and work with FLO, FLM, DD and others to assure the timely and effective delivery of FLP's and services. Knowledge of and skill in written and oral communication techniques sufficient to interpret program policies, conduct outreach activities and explain and describe program issues, requirements, benefits, problems and solutions to Agency program and administrative specialists, program participants, local officials, media representatives and others, as appropriate. Managerial knowledge and skills sufficient to provide technical guidance and oversight to assigned County Office employees in carrying out program and administrative functions.

2. Supervision Received

CED is responsible to the assigned county committee(s) or assigned State Office Management Official for the effective performance of assigned duties and responsibilities. When assigned to a county committee, the committees determine policies to follow in administration of programs but depend upon incumbent to interpret, apply, and advise on national and State procedures and instructions, as assigned. Accomplishment of goals and effectiveness of work are determined by the county committee(s) or State Office management official through exchange of information and discussion of County Office business. For county committees this will be done through regular and special committee meetings. Incumbent also receives technical guidance and oversight from DD or other members of the State Office staff, but typically carries out assigned managerial responsibilities and makes program decisions independently.

Position Description for SFPO (Continued)**3. Guidelines**

Guidelines consist of a variety of national and local program policies, procedures, and precedents which are applicable to most situations or assignments. The employee continually uses independent judgment to interpret and apply guidelines and to develop solutions for problems encountered.

4. Complexity

The work of this position involves planning and administration of program, management, and related functions for one or more County Offices. The work requires analysis of the issues involved in each assignment, evaluation of conventional problems or questions and the selection of an appropriate response or course of action.

5. Scope and Effect

The purpose of the work is to administer Agency commodity and conservation programs in the assigned county/counties, and to develop, interpret and evaluate program policies.

6. and 7. Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts

Incumbent maintains ongoing contacts with program participants, the State FSA Office, the State FSA committee, the county FSA committee, the local FAC, local officials, and employees of other agencies and outside organizations in a variety of settings. Typical of these contacts are representatives of other local and Federal agencies, producer organizations, civic organizations, producers, and their representatives, and members of the news media. The purpose of contacts is to explain available programs, interpret program requirements, encourage program participation, persuade and influence others to accept and implement recommendations concerning administrative and program operating policies and procedures, and ensure understanding of and compliance with program regulations and provisions. The employee may encounter resistance to program requirements and changes because of individual producer interests and needs and must use tact and diplomacy to achieve a working consensus among parties who have dissimilar opinions and/or goals. The incumbent must also resolve problems involving conflicting program priorities, competing objectives, or resource allocation.

8. Physical Demands

The work requires regular and recurring physical exertion involving walking through rough terrain, climbing on-farm storage facilities, etc.

9. Work Environment

The work involves exposure to operating farm machinery, heights, animals, and inclement weather conditions which requires adherence to normal safety precautions. No special protective clothing or equipment is needed.