

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20250

March 24, 1998

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM 4360-1

ACTIONS TO FOSTER IMPROVED OUTREACH TO CUSTOMERS

1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

On August 22, 1997, I issued Secretary's Memorandum 1020-48 establishing the Office of Outreach within the Department of Agriculture (USDA), which is located in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration. This action implemented recommendation 37 in the Civil Rights Action Team's (CRAT) report. The mission of the Office of Outreach is to ensure that all potential customers have full access to all USDA programs and services. To fulfill its mission, the Office of Outreach's responsibilities are to provide leadership and coordination for program delivery outreach efforts throughout USDA.

To ensure effective outreach efforts at USDA, I have determined the need for additional outreach actions to fulfill the implementation of recommendations 38, 39, and 40 in the CRAT report. The actions ordered below provide for: a) the establishment of a National Outreach Council at USDA headquarters, b) the establishment of a State Outreach Council in each State and Territory, c) the designation of an Outreach Coordinator in each agency, and d) the development of Departmental, agency, and State outreach plans.

2 ACTIONS ORDERED

- a In cooperation with the Office of Outreach, the chairperson of the National Food and Agriculture Council (NFAC) will direct the establishment of a National Outreach Council (NOC) at USDA headquarters, to gather information from non-Federal partner agencies and other persons, organizations, and groups in the public, private, nonprofit, and religious arenas about the program and outreach needs of different customer groups (especially under-served groups including women, minorities, and limited-resource clients) and ways to address these needs. In addition, the NOC will work with the Office of Outreach to develop a USDA strategic outreach plan and provide guidance and support to State Outreach Councils (SOC).

- (1) Membership shall include one representative from each USDA agency that is active at the State level and should include representatives of Cabinet-level agencies with which USDA collaborates in the delivery of programs.
- (2) The incoming NFAC chairperson shall serve as the chairperson of the NOC.
- (3) The NOC chairperson shall convene meetings as needed, but not less than once quarterly.
- (4) All meetings shall be open and announced via mail and public notices, and agendas shall be circulated to members in advance of meetings, and be available to the public.
- (5) Official minutes of all meetings shall be prepared and approved by the NOC chairperson and copies forwarded to the NFAC executive officer, the State Outreach Council chairs, and the director of the Office of Outreach.

b In cooperation with the Office of Outreach and NFAC, the chairperson of the Food and Agriculture Council in each state, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (SFAC) will direct the establishment of a State Outreach Council (SOC) to gather information from non-Federal partner agencies and other persons, organizations, and groups in the public, private, nonprofit, and religious arenas about the program and outreach needs of different customer groups (especially under-served groups including women, minorities, and limited-resource clients); ways to address these needs; barriers to participation of under-served customers in USDA programs; and the effective dissemination of information to such groups. In addition, the SOC will develop, coordinate, and monitor a State outreach plan in concert with the SFAC, NOC, and the Office of Outreach.

- (1) Membership shall include one representative from each USDA agency operating in the State; relevant State agencies such as the State Departments of Agriculture, Education, Human Resources, and Natural Resources; and State universities and land-grant institutions.
- (2) The incoming SFAC chairperson shall serve as the chairperson of the SOC.

- (3) The SOC chairperson shall convene meetings as needed, but not less than once quarterly.
- (4) All meetings shall be open and announced via mail and public notices, and agenda shall be circulated to members in advance of meetings, and be available to the public.
- (5) Official minutes of all meetings shall be prepared and approved by the SOC chairperson and copies forwarded to the SFAC chairperson, the NOC chairperson, and the director of the Office of Outreach.

- c Each agency head with significant program delivery efforts shall designate an agency outreach coordinator to plan, lead, and coordinate outreach efforts within the agency; coordinate and communicate agency outreach activities with the Office of Outreach and other agencies; and serve as the agency representative to an Outreach Working Group, to be established by the Office of Outreach.
- d Each agency head with significant program delivery efforts shall oversee the development of an agency strategic outreach plan, which reflects the goals and objectives stated in the Departmental Strategic Outreach Plan, and shall oversee the incorporation of the key elements of the agency outreach plan into the outreach component of the agency's Government Performance and Results Act strategic plan.

3 EFFECTIVE DATE

The provisions of this memorandum are effective immediately.

4. TERMINATION

This memorandum shall remain in effect for one year or until such earlier time as published delegations of authority have been revised to incorporate its provisions and all actions ordered herein have been accomplished. Within one year of the date of this memorandum, its provisions shall be incorporated through the Departmental standard operating procedures.



DAN GLICKMAN
Secretary