

Agricultural Research Service Administrative and Financial Management Services Follow-Up Assessment

ABOUT THE ACADEMY

The National Academy of Public Administration is a non-profit, independent organization of top public management and organizational leaders who tackle the nation's most critical and complex public management challenges. With a network of more than 900 distinguished Fellows and an experienced professional staff, the Academy is uniquely qualified and trusted across government to provide objective advice and practical solutions based on systematic research and expert analysis. Established in 1967 and chartered by Congress in 1984, the Academy continues to make a positive impact by helping federal, state and local governments respond effectively to current circumstances and changing conditions. Learn more about the Academy and its work at www.NAPAwash.org

BACKGROUND

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the other Research, Education and Economic (REE) agencies (the Economic Research Service, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are research-focused agencies with offices located throughout the United States. ARS has adopted a shared services concept for administrative and financial service delivery and created the Administrative and Financial Management (AFM) service organization to manage the delivery of these essential mission support functions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

ARS is seeking a follow-up assessment of its AFM services organization to evaluate progress since the February 2017 report of the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy). That report provided ARS with findings and recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of these services. The Academy will assess the Agency's progress on implementing the nearly four dozen recommendations provided along with all the strategies and processes that were made by ARS. The assessment is led by an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) of Academy Fellows and based upon:

- Discussions with Agency leaders at headquarters and regional offices;
- Quantitative and qualitative performance metrics;
- Industrial or Federal benchmarks;
- A survey of all Agency personnel; and
- Focus groups organized to explore issues by job classification, region, grade level, and other relevant crosscuts, to elicit a broad set of candid views.

The Academy shall provide findings on service delivery and customer satisfaction, any significant barriers to service delivery and customer satisfaction, areas where recommendations, strategies, processes, or procedures should be revised, and potential new areas identified through the assessment processes noted above. The Academy shall also provide recommendations on prioritized next steps for the Agency's focus to address these findings.

This is an eight-month project. The Academy has formed a two-member EAG to advise the study team. Information on the EAG and study team is provided on the next page.

ACADEMY STUDY PANEL

Basil Gooden*: Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Commonwealth of Virginia. Former State Director, Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Chief Deputy Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Commonwealth of Virginia; Coordinator of Outreach and Community Relations, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University; Extension Specialist, Virginia Cooperative Extension.

John Palguta*: Vice President, Policy and Research, Partnership for Public Service; Adjunct Professor, McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University. Former positions with U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board: Director, Policy and Evaluation; Deputy Director, Policy and Evaluation; Supervisory Research Analyst. Former positions with U.S. Office of Personnel Management: Branch Chief, Personnel Office; Personnel Management Advisor, Bureau of Personnel Management Evaluation.

PROJECT STAFF

Brenna Isman, *Director of Academy Studies*

Roger Kodat, *Senior Project Director*

Ginger Groeber, *Senior Advisor*

Kate Connor, *Research Analyst*

Elise Johnson, *Senior Research Associate*

***Academy Fellow**