



Improving Customer Experience with Federal Services

High Impact Service Provider Annual CX Action Plan

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

June 2019



HISP Annual Maturity Self-Assessment Summary

In 200 words or less total, tell us about your efforts around each core CX function by responding to the following prompts that apply.

Measurement: 4 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

FSA is working with our FPAC Customer Experience (CX) partners to deploy a nation-wide representative producer survey as required by A-11; and an Internal Customer Survey, which will also have information from our field staff related to CX. In addition, FPAC is implementing qualitative means and channels to inform measurement such as an enterprise-wide CX Steering Committee, a Voice of the Customer (VOC) tool, and as funds allow, limited qualitative field research.

What are you most proud of?

FSA is working with our FPAC CX partners to identify data sources and data streams that are used in the programmatic and operational measurement space. In future years, the Optimally Performing Office (OPO) metrics can be used to provide operational CX metrics.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

The Voice of the Customer and OPO systems are capable of analyzing and categorizing qualitative feedback from customers, in addition, we see an increase in the ability to take in internal and external feedback through the new mechanisms we are putting in place referenced above.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Competing priorities which include implementing the Farm Bill in a timely manner, while at the same time making sure we update or design our programs to have better means to measure the customer experience.

What else would you like to share?

Governance: 3 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

All FPAC agencies are coming together with a governance structure that includes biweekly committees, regular touchpoint discussions and approval processes while also retaining agency independence of prioritization and implementation. In addition, as we improve efficiencies of administrative staff functions we are ensuring that these roles and responsibilities are being defined and filled.

What are you most proud of?

There is significant engagement and support from senior leadership as we continue to develop the Farmers.gov platform within an agile framework.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

FPAC will soon launch a limited number of small pilots to test improvements. We expect these to significantly inform the nature and level of benefits that we assume will increase our abilities to obtain internal and external feedback through the new mechanisms.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Competing priorities while we are implementing the Farm Bill while at the same time how we update or design our programs have better means to measure the customer experience.

What else would you like to share?





Organization & Culture: 3 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

The USDA level efforts are working to engage the Customer Experience Representatives and Leadership to implement cultural change across the USDA. The FPAC CXD engages our Farm Service Agency Champions to support their work.

What are you most proud of?

We have assigned our FSA Points of Contact, Champions and are working to gather subject matter experts to move forward to continue previous activities and implement new activities across the agency.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Building on previous efforts to Journey Map the Farm Loan Experience and we will identify impactful touchpoints to focus research and development of continued improvements.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Competing priorities which include implementing the Farm Bill in a timely manner, while at the same time making sure we update or design our programs to have better means to measure the customer experience.

What else would you like to share?

Customer Research: 1 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

FSA is working with our FPAC Customer Experience (CX) partners to deploy a nation-wide representative producer survey as required by A-11; and an Internal Customer Survey, which will also have information from our field staff related to CX. In addition, FPAC is implementing qualitative means and channels to inform measurement such as an enterprise-wide CX Steering Committee, a Voice of the Customer (VOC) tool, and as funds allow, limited qualitative field research.

What are you most proud of?

FSA employees, particularly at the field level, are passionate about customer service and are dedicated to serving farmers and ranchers. They understand the relationship based nature of program delivery and recognize it is a critical component in Customer satisfaction.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

FPAC will soon launch a limited number of small pilots to test improvements. We expect these to significantly inform the nature and level of benefits that we assume will increase our abilities to obtain internal and external feedback through the new mechanisms.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Competing priorities which include implementing the Farm Bill in a timely manner, while at the same time making sure we update or design our programs to have better means to measure the customer experience.

What else would you like to share?





Service Design: 3 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

We have implemented human-centered design for our redesigned customer portal, Farmers.gov including new design elements from the U.S. Web Design Standards to help make the site more intuitive. The primary goals for the redesign include highlighting more social and engaging information, enhancing the site to help customers get to information faster and provide a better viewing experience..

What are you most proud of?

The Farmers.gov redesign will self-service applications, educational materials, engagement opportunities and business tools to increase efficiency and productivity while preserving and fostering long-held traditional relationships between local USDA offices and producers.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

We are working to implement our Farm Loan Wizard on Farmers.gov and hope to provide more updates for self-service resources. .

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Competing priorities which include implementing the Farm Bill in a timely manner, while at the same time making sure we update or design our programs to have better means to measure the customer experience.

What else would you like to share?

Areas of Focus

Reflecting upon our 2019 CX Maturity Self-Assessment, our HISP has decided to focus on raising our maturity in the following areas in FY19/FY20:

- Measurement
- Governance
- Organization & Culture
- Customer Research
- Service Design





FY 2019 / 2020 CX Improvement Actions

Describe a use case where a typical customer of your program faced challenge(s) during a service experience. This case should relate to one of your organization's Focus Areas for the remainder of FY19 and through FY20.

Example HISP Customer Profile

Farm loans use case: A typical farmer may be raising cows or row crops, which their family has done for generations, and they are committed to their agricultural way of life. They might get turned down for financing from a local bank or traditional lender or require a loan guarantee. The FSA Farm Loans program delivered by a Loan Officer at the local USDA Service Center provides information and support on how to get a loan to expand their operation. They discuss practices that can help with sustainability and increase profits over time. The loan officer connects them with a Program Technician to learn more about other programs they may be eligible for to assist with risk management and cash flow. This producer also participates in FSA programs and visits the office annually to complete acreage reporting.

Customer Needs + Frustrations

Overwhelming paperwork and processing time. Gathering and supplying documentation needed to prove eligibility requirements may be difficult to procure or require multiple office visits. Eligibility and program requirements are often determined by legislation; staff have limited flexibility around many of the requirements. If a loan was denied, reasons for denial may need further explanation with the producer so they understand why they were deemed ineligible, how to reapply, and/or how to seek other assistance.

HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

Competing priorities which include implementing the Farm Bill in a timely manner, while at the same time making sure we update or design our programs to have better means to measure the customer experience.

Stats

The average number of days to process direct loans was 31 in 2017. The average number of days to process guaranteed loans was 11 that same year. The percentage of direct and guaranteed loan borrowers who are beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged was 52.24 and 18.96 respectively. This measure is from submission to decision, but the filling out the paperwork takes place before submission and is not included in these measures.

Action 1

Focus Area: Customer Research

Goal to be accomplished by September 30th, 2021:

Put in place the governing structure to provide coordination and consistency across FPAC to implement the Paperwork Reduction Act while collecting feedback and customer insights to streamline application processes, implement process improvements and increase awareness around eligibility requirements.

Critical Activities and Milestones:

- Develop governing structure with counterparts across the USDA.
- Deploy and Report Producer Survey
- Deploy and Report Internal Employee Survey
- Implement the Voice of the Customer Experience Feedback Manager.
- Implement Customer Experience Metrics and Performance Indicators to track progress toward meeting agency goals to improve customer experiences.

Other Notes:

N/A





FY 2019 / 2020 CX Improvement Actions

Describe a use case where a typical customer of your program faced challenge(s) during a service experience. This case should relate to one of your organization's Focus Areas for the remainder of FY19 and through FY20.

Example HISP Customer Profile

The Beginning Producer has been farming for less than 10 years and can be found among a variety of agricultural production systems at different scales. Some new farmers are young people growing their responsibilities within family businesses, but many come from non-farming backgrounds. Two of the biggest challenges facing new farmers and ranchers are access to land and access to capital. This farmer wants to expand farm operations, start a new enterprise on the family farm, buy equipment or learn more about succeeding as a new organic farmer. They are interested in their first loan, risk management and crop insurance programs. The Farm Service Agency can provide working capital to secure farmland, start or expand a business as well as some risk management tools. The typical new farmer may be interacting with USDA for the first time at their local FSA office and is seeking additional resources and direction in growing and managing their business.

Customer Needs + Frustrations

Our initial research shows that producers value working with our field staff. Our field staff are the face of the USDA in their local communities. Improving their effectiveness through sharing best practices, developed locally, across the nation, piloting and scaling improvements, improving interoperability across systems and data sets, standardizing definitions across agencies and providing real-time information with secure, mobile technologies will help them deliver better experiences.

HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

Legacy systems and limited IT resources will provide a challenging environment to prioritize solutions. Testing new ideas with specific centers using existing initiatives and assets may help.

Stats

Nationally, 73 percent of farms have computer access. Of those farmers, 72 percent, up 1 percent from 2015, own or lease a computer. Computer usage for farm business, at 47 percent nationally, is up 4 percentage points from 2015. (NASS, Farm Computer Usage and Ownership – United States: 2009-2017)

Action 2

Focus Area: **Measurement**

Goal to be accomplished by September 30th, 2021:

Capture the beginning of our customer's first FSA experience from the time they sign up at their county office which begins the process of evaluating their eligibility for most of our FPAC programs.

Critical Activities and Milestones:

Journey map the Farm Number acquisition and Farm Record experience with local service centers to show how producers begin the process of getting started with their local office and establishing a record that is used across both FSA and NRCS applications.

Map the Farm Number and Farm Record through our legacy and modern systems, including how the information is transferred across agencies and used in each process.

Determine points on the journey using customer feedback where system or process improvements would improve the customer journey by streamlining to reduce redundant processes.

Other Notes:

N/A

