

Causey Awards Entry

Nominee Information

Name: Francis X. McDonough
Title: Chief Human Capital Officer
Company: U.S. Department of Agriculture-Food and Nutrition Service

What does this person do?

Francis \"Frank\" McDonough is the Chief Human Capital Officer for the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, responsible for all Human Resource Services which include but are not limited to: HR policy, procedures, instructions and notices; position management; employee training and development; performance management; labor relations between management and two Union partners (National Treasury Employees Union represents six Regional Offices and the National Headquarters; and, American Federation of Government Employees represents one Regional Office); recruitment; student employment program; employee assistance program; telework; and transit subsidy. FNS has 1,451 employees geographically dispersed in 7 Regional Offices located throughout the continental United States. The National Headquarters is in Alexandria, VA. Frank outlines and executes the people strategies to ensure FNS attracts and retains the right talent mix to oversee its efforts to end hunger and obesity through the administration of the Nation's \$112 billion investment across 15 Federal nutrition assistance programs. In partnership with State and Tribal governments, our programs serve one in four Americans during the course of a year. FNS is committed to ensuring access to healthy and safe food for those participating in our programs including expecting mothers; infants and children in child care, school breakfast and lunch; and low-income families going to food banks; local farmers markets; and local supermarkets. These are investments that support education, health care, and a competitive workforce. No American should have to go hungry. Frank's leadership during 2012 was instrumental ensuring continued success in a period of fiscal uncertainty. He fashioned and implemented some comprehensive strategies to position FNS to navigate the turbulent waters ahead.

How did this person go above and beyond in 2012?

The Division Mr. Frank McDonough oversees is comprised of three Branches and during a significant portion of 2012, the Employee and Labor Relations Branch Chief position was vacant. To ensure there was no loss of support, he oversaw and directed the day-to-day operation of the labor relations and

employee relations functions, which resulted in excellent analysis and clear articulation of thorny issues. He was masterful at listening to customer concerns, whether employees, managers or union officials and crafting responses that reflected a high level of collaboration. His clear explanations and expert advice around optimal courses of action were critical in discussions with line management and senior leadership. Frank served as both co-facilitator of the Agency-wide Labor Management Forum and primary support for the Forum with NTEU and AFGE counsel. He personally prepared meeting agendas and minutes, and brainstormed with management members regarding pre-decisional information briefings. He successfully promoted increased use of the Forum as adjunct support for major Agency initiatives. His premier achievement was framing and arranging highly sensitive and critical conversations between Union counsel and senior leaders regarding a major organizational restructure designed to address program integrity concerns while reducing the FNS real estate footprint. Frank's innovative, atypical approach for sharing information laid the foundation that directly attributed to the successful restructure and is seen as a major catalyst in the significantly improved Labor/Management working relationship. The fiscal realities and new operational approaches envisioned in the organizational structure noted above called for great use of workplace flexibilities such as teleworking. Frank developed a comprehensive proposal to specifically modify Article 20 of the National Treasury Employee Union (NTEU) Collective Bargaining Agreement to support the Agency's interest in providing affected employees in closing field offices with full-time telework opportunities. His proposal positioned FNS to comply with the law, regulation and guidance and better execute Office of Personnel Management Guidance on dismissals and government shut-downs—FNS operational capability expanded to 24/7/365. His efforts catapulted the agency toward full-time telework opportunities by creating a standard framework for future telework requests or potential office closures. Together with Program, Regional and Office of Information Technology representatives, Frank successfully negotiated the extensive program into Article 20; obtained Agency-head approval, created and delivered a joint explanatory webinar with NTEU; led numerous questions and answers conference calls for supervisors and managers; and, prepared and presented a 3 hour webinar on how to make telework successful. This effort achieved multiple results: • Closed 31 field offices located throughout the United States (56% reduction) • Saved over \$800K annually in lease expenses • Secured leadership buy-in for including expanded use of

telework into our operational strategy o FNS operational capacity expanded to 24/7/365 • Permitted 60 Field Office employees to migrate into full-time telework or remote work environment • Increased participation by 250 employees (+23%) from 850 to 1100 out of 1,273 eligible by the end of 2012. The remaining 173 employees eligible for telework declined participation. Thus, the agency overall telework participation for 2012 was 86.41% in 2012 (highest in the Department of Agriculture and far exceeding the goal of 51%). Concurrently, Frank oversaw and managed the agency's groundbreaking position management work. This work entails a universal application of a systematic and integrated position management approach to determine the number of positions needed, the skills and knowledge required, and the grouping and assignment of duties and responsibilities to achieve maximum efficiency and economy across the workforce. Narrow position management execution in past years led to disparate application based on localized personalities and budget. Although the work commenced in 2010, Frank accelerated the effort in 2012. He led actions that resulted in the following: • Refinement and publication of an agency Position Management Guide--the foundation for the operational approach the agency used moving forward. • Development of detailed Regional Office restructuring plans, strategies, tactics and timelines; responded to questions and concerns from across the Agency; and developed transition plans, cost analyses, and briefings to senior leadership and the Labor Management Forum. • Fine-tuned (newly developed) position descriptions. • Co-defended decisions to convert and implement nearly 50 supervisory positions to team leads which provided a balanced supervisor/employee ratio. In addition to the Position Management efforts, Frank framed a comprehensive approach to succession planning within FNS. During 2012, the first assessment around FNS activities, reports, and processes in support of a succession planning model was completed. The assessment identified that Succession Planning activities and responsibilities were fragmented across the agency with Regions implementing independent programs. Also, there was not a specific HQ process manager or team responsible for the implementation and evaluation of a succession planning process. As a result, succession planning for the agency was defined, and a project plan is in place. Frank was directly involved with and/or directly influenced accomplishment of significant milestones in 2012 toward full implementation of Succession Planning including: • Developed the Succession Planning Executive Team (SPET) Charter— The purpose of the SPET is to assist, support, and guide the Succession Planning Process Owner throughout the year to ensure that the process is meeting the stated succession

planning objectives. • Developed the draft competency model along with recommended proficiency levels for Branch Chiefs and Division Directors. • Met with union representatives, providing an overview of the Succession Planning Process and obtained their buy-in. • Developed the course specifications and partnered with Northern Virginia Community College to establish the Aspiring Leaders Program. In FY12, Frank coalesced existing training development opportunities into an agency-defined Leadership Continuum - a development path for all employees ranging from WG/GS-5 to GS-15-- • Aspiring Leaders Program (NEW for 2012) for WG/GS-5 to 11. The Aspiring Leader program was the final piece of the Leadership Continuum that provided development opportunity for employees. The inaugural Aspiring Leader course kicked off in December 2012 and will graduate July 22, 2013. • Leadership Institute for GS-12 to 13. Leadership Institute participants are vigorously assessed to identify their training and developmental needs. The results of these assessments are used to develop and complete an individual Personal Learning Contract, receive leadership development training, plan and complete a team project, and enjoy a 30 day internal or external developmental rotation; • Managerial Excellence Program offering all FNCS managers in grades 14-15 leadership development training options through: o FEI's Leadership for a Democratic Society o The Center for Creative Learning o Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government o Brookings Institution

Give us an example of the impact of this person's work. How did it make a difference?

For more context, prior to Frank's arrival in the latter part of 2010, the agency did not fully embrace telework, did not apply solid position management principles and succession planning was given little to no consideration. 2012 was the year of action in which Frank, minus a branch chief, effectively and significantly moved the agency forward in these three areas while leading and managing all other functions under Human Resources. These accomplishments would not have been possible without his expertise, ability to collaborate, communicate, manage expectations and overcome objections from employees, managers, supervisors, Union partners and Senior Leaders. He was the foundation and catalyst toward moving the agency in a new direction and to examine and perfect its organizational structure. He led the charge to evaluate perceived organizational disparities and inequities including positions and grades and created a plan to address the issues. He identified and championed opportunities to redesign the organization for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. Frank's 2012 work to advance our position management approach coupled with

Succession Planning and the Leadership Continuum aided the agency leadership in building a foundation for understanding its competency gaps, bench strength and effectively communicating a path for employees at all levels to pursue leadership development opportunities. Historically, FNS had not devoted the resources needed to design, produce and deliver competency-building opportunities to its employees in grades WG/GS5-11 positions, which comprises 33% of the agency workforce. Frank's partnership with the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) was key to making the most of our limited budget. His passion for the initiative was instrumental in NOVA securing an \$11,633 grant from the State of Virginia to offset cost of the Aspiring Leader Program. Accordingly, 100 FNCS employees nationwide enrolled in the program with is set to graduate July 22, 2013. The inaugural Aspiring Leader Course permitted these employees to concentrate on ten competencies: Interpersonal Skills, Conflict Management, Team Building, Integrity, Written Communications, Oral Communications, Problem- Solving, Accountability, Customer Service, and Continual Learning. In 2012, Secretary Vilsack, challenged USDA agencies to look across their operations to identify opportunities to achieve efficiencies and cost saving initiatives. Frank led the way with our union partners for FNCS to reduce its leased building footprint by closing 31 field offices, a 56% reduction, and cost savings of \$800,000 annually. Additionally, he broadened our use of workforce flexibilities by working with union partners and leaders to permit 60 employees to work in a full time telework or remote environment. It did not stop there. In 2012, Frank's increased the agency's participation in telework to 86.41% (well above the USDA target of 51%) directly resulting in the Department of Agriculture winning The 2012 Telework Exchange Tele-Vision Awards Program for Excellence in Telework Leadership. The Department of Agriculture's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration (now Deputy Chief of Staff) sent the following message: "Dear Team FNS – It is with extreme pleasure that we reach out to you for an opportunity to accept a prestigious award on behalf of the USDA Telework Program. FNS has the highest participation rate of any USDA agency. Thanks in large part for your support of Telework and the progress that FNS has made in far exceeding our FY2012 participation goals, we would like to extend the offer of accepting the Excellence in Telework Leadership award at the Telework Exchange's upcoming Telework Town Hall on May 2nd. " – Oscar Gonzales, Departmental Management Recapitulation of his successes for 2012: • Closed 31 field offices located throughout the United States (56% reduction) • Saved over \$800K annually

in lease expenses • Secured leadership buy-in for including expanded use of telework into our operational strategy o FNS operational capacity expanded to 24/7/365 • Negotiated and permitted 60 Field Office employees to migrate into full-time telework or remote work environment • Increased telework participation by 250 employees (+23%) from 850 to 1100 out of 1,273 eligible by the end of 2012. The remaining 173 employees eligible for telework declined participation. Thus, the agency overall telework participation for 2012 was 86.41% in 2012 (highest in the Department of Agriculture and far exceeding the goal of 51%). • Refinement and publication of an agency Position Management Guide--the foundation for the operational approach the agency used moving forward. • Development of detailed Regional Office restructuring plans, strategies, tactics and timelines; responded to questions and concerns from across the Agency; and developed transition plans, cost analyses, and briefings to senior leadership and the Labor Management Forum. • Fine-tuned (newly developed) position descriptions. • Co-defended decisions to convert and implement nearly 50 supervisory positions to team leads which provided a balanced supervisor/employee ratio. • Developed the Succession Planning Executive Team (SPET) Charter— The purpose of the SPET is to assist, support, and guide the Succession Planning Process Owner throughout the year to ensure that the process is meeting the stated succession planning objectives. • Developed the draft competency model along with recommended proficiency levels for Branch Chiefs and Division Directors. • Met with union representatives, providing an overview of the Succession Planning Process and obtained their buy-in. • Developed the course specifications and partnered with Northern Virginia Community College to establish the Aspiring Leaders Program. • Coalesced existing training development opportunities into an agency-defined Leadership Continuum. • Partnered with the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) to create the Aspiring Leaders Program for WG/GS-5 to 11. The Aspiring Leader program was the final piece of the Leadership Continuum that provided development opportunity for employees. The inaugural Aspiring Leader course kicked off in December 2012 with 100 agency employees nationwide enrolled and will graduate July 22, 2013.

Other Points:

Bottom-line, Frank is the real deal and his impressive accomplishments speak volumes considering he had some significant gaps in key positions. He is seen by management, employees and his peers as a subject matter expert, voice of reason and visionary for what Human Resources could and

should be. He works tirelessly to make FNCS the best work environment for employees in the Federal Government.