

FS - ACES

Program

Enrollee Handbook



Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Program

In-Partnership with U.S. Department of Agriculture - U.S. Forest Service

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Dear Enrollee,

Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI) has developed this Forest Service (FS) - Agriculture Conservation Experience Service (ACES) Handbook as an informational tool for the purpose of acquainting you with the policies, procedures, benefits and restrictions that affect your participation in the FS-ACES Program. This Handbook is also a source of information for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) FS Coordinators and Monitors. It is important to keep your handbook nearby for frequent reference.

Provisions outlined in the FS-ACES Handbook are not intended to bestow any rights or privileges on Enrollees or guarantee enrollment for any definite period of time. Enrollment in the FS-ACES Program is a temporary position and may be renewed upon renewal of subsequent task agreements. The enrollment relationship between SSAI and the Enrollee is an at will relationship. This means that an Enrollee is free to terminate his or her enrollment at any time during the enrollment period, and SSAI and USDA FS have the right not to renew an Enrollee's enrollment agreement.

SSAI will review the FS-ACES Program's policies, procedures and benefits contained herein on a regular basis. In making revisions, the FS-ACES Program will consider the need for/and desirability of changes. SSAI may enhance, modify or delete any policy, procedure or benefit described in this manual at any time.

As a guide, this handbook is not intended as a document to cover all circumstances or situations. SSAI may find it necessary to handle a situation in a manner not specifically outlined in the FS-ACES Enrollee Handbook. For this reason, an Enrollee with special circumstances may require individualized treatment to resolve a particular problem. In those situations, it may be appropriate for the FS-ACES Program to treat an Enrollee in a manner different from the general rules specified in this handbook.

If you have additional questions regarding personnel policies, practices and procedures, please contact the SSAI/FS-ACES Program Office at 301-578-8910.

Sincerely,

John Smith
Director, ACES Program

SENIOR SERVICE AMERICA, Inc.

ABOUT SENIOR SERVICE AMERICA, INC.

Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides employment and training opportunities to individuals age 55 and over. Located in Silver Spring, MD, SSAI works with a wide range of community and faith-based organizations, government agencies and institutions of higher learning to provide employment opportunities for older workers. SSAI operates the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), funded by the DOL, the Senior Environmental Employment (SEE) Program funded by the USEPA, and both the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agriculture Conservation Experience Service (ACES) Program, and the Forest Service (FS)-Agriculture Conservation Experience Service (ACES) Program, funded by the USDA and authorized by the Farm Bill of 2007, as amended in the Farm Bill of 2014.

THE FS-ACES PROGRAM

The Farm Bill implemented the Agriculture Conservation Experienced Service (ACES) Program as a means to provide a cost effective recruitment opportunity to obtain the temporary technical services of non-federal, experienced workers age 55 and older to assist in conservation-related programs. Authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill (H.R. 2642): Public Law 113-79, Section 8302, the Forest Service received authority to utilize the Program to provide technical services for conservation-related programs and authorities carried out on National Forest System (NFS) land. ACES will provide the Forest Service the opportunity to bring in FS-ACES Enrollees with the desired experience and skills to help mentor, train and provide special project work in these areas.

To implement the FS-ACES Program, USDA-Forest Service entered into cooperative agreements with two national aging organizations. They include:

- National Older Worker Career Center, Inc. (NOWCC)
- Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI)

FS-ACES PROGRAM GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Applicant	A person who applies for a position with the FS-ACES Program.
Candidate	A person selected from the pool of applicants for further consideration (interview, testing, etc.) for a specific task agreement.
FS-ACES Enrollee	A person, at least 55 years of age, enrolled in the FS-ACES Program. Enrollees are not employees of the USDA Forest Service and are not to be used to displace agency federal personnel. Enrollees are also not employees of the grantee organization; they are Enrollees in the FS-ACES Program.
FS-ACES Coordinators	Appointed by the Regional Foresters to manage FS-ACES position development and task agreements at the State level. The coordinator serves as the primary point of contact with the nonprofit organization for their task agreements. The coordinator ensures task agreements, statements of work, budgets, and positions descriptions, are consistent with national policy guidelines.
FS-ACES Monitors	USDA FS employees who oversee and review the daily tasks or assignments of FS-ACES Enrollees, and reviews and approves timecards.
FS-ACES Alternate Monitor	USDA FS employees who is authorized to exercise the responsibilities of the FS-ACES Monitor in their absence.
National FS-ACES Program Manager	The USDA FS official responsible for the overall administration of the FS-ACES program.
Nonprofit Organization/Grantee	Partner organization that is a private, nonprofit organization, eligible to receive grants under the Community Service Senior Opportunities Act (42 U.S.C.3056 et seq.), that has entered into an Agreement with USDA FS-ACES to utilize the talents of older Americans in providing technical assistance to achieve USDA FS conservation objectives.
Task agreement	The USDA FS organizational unit agreement with a partnering nonprofit organization to secure FS-ACES workers. Funds to support the positions are provided by the organizational unit.
Director, FS-ACES Program	The person responsible for the overall administration of the FS-ACES Program, including policy, program and personnel decisions.
SSAI Field Operations Officer	An SSAI staff representative assigned to oversee the FS-ACES day-to-day FS-ACES Program operations of a particular region, site, laboratory or location.
State USDA-FS Coordinator	At the state level, the USDA-FS official responsible for the overall administration of the FS-ACES program, the Task Agreements with the nonprofit organizations, and is responsible for assisting all state officials, and Coordinators and Monitors who develop task agreements for and direct the FS-ACES positions and work.

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100 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT

It is the Forest Service Agriculture Conservation Experience Service (FS-ACES) Program’s policy to promote equal opportunity and nondiscriminatory practices in all facets of its operations. SSAI FS-ACES Program practices shall ensure that all persons have equal opportunity to work and advance within the FS-ACES Program on the basis of merit, fitness and ability, regardless of color, race, sex, age, religion, political affiliation, sexual orientation, ethnic background, nationality, past military status or any other classification protected by law. Participants in this program must be 55 years of age or older as required by Public Law (P.L. 98-313), 2008 Farm Bill. USDA Forest Service non-discrimination policy is: AD-3027, found online at

http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Services (USDA FS) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) “

101 ENROLLING PERSONS WITH AIDS

With respect to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), medical experts studying the disease have done a great deal of research to determine the disease is not spread through any form of casual contact with a person who has AIDS. Working with people who have AIDS, or people who have been exposed to the AIDS virus, will not cause co-workers to develop the disease.

In assuring a safe environment for all Enrollees, our policy is to enroll individuals with AIDS as long as a doctor pronounces them capable to work. Enrollees who are concerned about AIDS and would like to learn more about it are encouraged to direct inquiries to a health care provider.

102 PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

The SSAI FS-ACES Program requires all Enrollee applicants to complete Immigration Form I-9 and provide documents to establish both identity and enrollment eligibility.

As a result of the Immigration Reform and Control Act signed on November 6, 1986, SSAI is subject to penalties if they knowingly hire illegal aliens, or discriminate against current or prospective employees/Enrollees because of their “citizenship status.”

Any person legally eligible to work in the United States, who meets the age requirement for the FS-ACES Program, may be considered an applicant for enrollment.

103 DISABILITY

It is SSAI’s policy to be responsive to any disabled Enrollees who can perform the essential functions of the assignment with reasonable accommodation(s). SSAI complies with all requirements of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

104 SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment of Enrollees in any form will not be tolerated. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to unwelcome sexual flirtations, propositions, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, requests for sexual activities, unwanted touching of an individual, graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body, sexually degrading words, a display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, sexually explicit or offensive jokes, or physical assault.

No SSAI employee, FS-USDA employee or Enrollee shall threaten or insinuate, explicitly or implicitly, that another Enrollee's refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect that person's enrollment in the FS-ACES Program, performance evaluation, wages, assigned duties, shifts or any other condition of program enrollment. No SSAI employee or USDA Forest Service employee shall promise, imply or grant any preferential treatment in connection with an Enrollee engaging in sexual conduct. Any Enrollee who feels they are being victimized as a result of sexual harassment by an SSAI employee, USDA Forest Service employee or any person in connection with his or her enrollment status should bring the matter to the immediate attention of his or her Monitor, USDA FS State Coordinator, SSAI Field Operations Officer and/or the SSAI FS-ACES Program Director.

SSAI will promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment in a confidential manner and take appropriate corrective actions if warranted. Any questions about this sexual harassment policy should be brought to the attention of the SSAI FS-ACES Program Director.

105 NONDISCRIMINATION

Any incident or situation where an Enrollee believes he or she has encountered discrimination or harassment should be brought to the immediate attention of the Field Operations Officer and the USDA Forest Service State Coordinator. All complaints will be promptly investigated in a confidential manner. SSAI will take appropriate corrective action, when justified, to remedy all violations of these policies.

Each Enrollee has the option to follow the USDA process below:

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call toll free voice (866) 632-9992, TDD (800)877-8339, or voice relay (866) 377-8642. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

200 GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Enrollees are participants in the FS-ACES Program, not Federal employees. Upon enrollment in the SSAI-ACES Program, Enrollees are assigned to an USDA Forest Service Monitor. The Monitor will make sure the Enrollee understands his or her assignment and will provide any instructions necessary.

Monitors can provide information on assignment responsibilities, work schedules, hours of work, and other similar topics.

201 ENROLLEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Due to the nature of the assignment, which is based upon an approved Position Description, Enrollees may be requested to:

- Hold a valid driver's license
- Travel
- Be away from home for one or more nights
- Participate in air or land travel

Enrollees are required to:

- Perform only those tasks that are consistent with the Position Description assigned by the USDA FS Monitor and in accordance with any work restriction imposed by a physician.
- Learn and conform to the standard procedures specified for carrying out assigned tasks.
- Inform SSAI of any changes in the scope of work, unsafe working environments or work requirements.
- Inform SSAI when job duties are substantially changed.
- Inform SSAI when their monitor or alternate monitor change
- Wear appropriate attire for the assignment.
- Take responsibility for prompt and accurate submission of timecards and any required written activity reports.

202 USDA FS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Regional or State FS-ACES Coordinators

Responsibilities Include:

- Serving as the point of contact for implementing FS-ACES goals within their state or location.
- Interacting with the partnering organization to facilitate FS-ACES position requests and task agreements.
- Working with staff grants/agreements/contract specialists to ensure the task agreement is complete and includes a statement of work, budget or cost worksheet, and position description for each position.
- Coordinating with state, NHQ/Center leadership as appropriate to identify program funding for positions.
- Arranging for interviews of applicants with Monitors and making selection recommendations to the partnering nonprofit organization with the necessary support documentation.
- Serving as liaison with partnering nonprofit organization.
- Secure signatures for the task agreement and certification of no displacement.

- Develop position descriptions, statement of works, and cost analysis worksheet or budget for task agreements.
- Working with the FS-ACES Monitor to address Enrollee problems/issues through the nonprofit organization.

FS-ACES Monitors

Responsibilities include:

- Interviewing prospective candidates and making selection recommendations back to the nonprofit organization through the FS-ACES Coordinator.
- Providing day-to-day work assignments for Enrollees and documenting accomplishments.
- Arranging for transportation of Enrollees consistent with the position description.
- Providing time and attendance verification; ensuring no overtime or compensatory time charges.
- Coordinating with the ACES Coordinator regarding Enrollee performance and conduct issues as well as other position management matters.

Note: There will be one primary person designated as the Enrollee's NRCS Monitor. An alternate Monitor will also be assigned to fill in when the primary Monitor is not available.

203 SSAI FS-ACES PROGRAM STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

The National SSAI-ACES Program office is responsible for the general administration of the program including fiscal management, personnel policy development and implementation, and coordination with USDA FS offices.

The SSAI/FS-ACES Program Director and staff responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Providing a full range of human resource services, Enrollee relations and fiscal management
- Submitting required and ad-hoc reports to USDA FS headquarters, handling all payroll and travel transactions, and overseeing the administration of Enrollee benefits.
- Developing and maintaining FS-ACES Program policies and procedures for staff and Enrollees
- Coordinating with USDA FS headquarters and other national sponsors in the operation of the overall program

Your assigned SSAI/FS-ACES Program Director and Staff will:

- Serve as the first point of contact for SSAI Enrollees and USDA FS Monitors
- Initiate and guide recruitment efforts by assisting USDA FS Monitors by drafting and placing vacancy announcement(s), completing applicant enrollment in the program and processing all enrollment documents
- Pre-screen all applicants, participate in interviews as needed, verify selected candidates' references and work closely with USDA FS staff
- Respond to Enrollee issues; assist with performance improvement and process terminations in a fair and equitable manner
- Perform periodic on-site visits and monitor programmatic activities to ensure working conditions, treatment and the work of the Enrollee is consistent with the provisions of the Participating Agreement, Supplemental Project Agreement and the Position Description
- Ensure the Enrollee's safety, making certain he or she has not been assigned to buildings or surroundings that are unsanitary, hazardous or a danger to the Enrollee's health or safety

300 ENROLLMENT AND POSITION ASSIGNMENTS

There are many diverse assignments within the FS-ACES Program. FS-ACES positions are used to provide technical services throughout the USDA Forest Service where conservation related program are executed on National Forest System Land, including positions at the Washington Office, Regions, Stations and Areas. While assisting USDA FS in its mission, FS-ACES Program Enrollees may not be used to displace individuals currently employed by USDA FS as part of its federal workforce.

Positions in the FS-ACES Program are ***not*** permanent positions. They are temporary positions that will vary in duration depending on continued funding by USDA FS, changing needs or Enrollee performance.

301 ELIGIBILITY

Participation in the FS-ACES Program is open to individuals age 55 and over as outlined in the public legislation governing the program. There are no income limits for eligibility in the program.

Proof of age must be presented during screening.

The skill levels required vary with the positions to be filled. For example, a local USDA FS office will assess its needs and, in conjunction with SSAI, design positions to be filled by Enrollees. Persons with the appropriate skill levels will be recruited to fill these designated positions.

SSAI FS-ACES Program is required to check the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to enrollment to assure Enrollee's name does not appear as an ineligible person.

302 POSITION DESCRIPTION / SCOPE of WORK

Upon entry into the FS-ACES Program, Enrollees are assigned to a specific position and given a Position Description or Scope of Work stating the duties and responsibilities of the assignment. The Position Description may not list all duties an Enrollee will be called upon to do, but rather indicates the range of typical assignments. Enrollees are not to accept responsibilities outside the scope of work described in their Position Description without prior SSAI approval.

The Position Description is not meant to limit an Enrollee's initiative or the number of specific tasks that may be required. An Enrollee's duties may be modified to help better support the division to which the Enrollee is assigned. If new responsibilities are to be added, the Position Description must be changed by the Monitor to reflect the new duties and be approved by SSAI. The Monitor should discuss any changes in duties with the Enrollee and provide him or her with a copy of the revised Position Description.

303 ASSIGNMENT CATEGORIES AND WAGE LEVELS

Assignment levels and pay ranges have been established by USDA FS. Assignments in the FS-ACES Program are divided into four levels, each with its own pay scale.

Level

- I. Specialized area of study, programmatic and technical duties. 5 years of related on-the-job experience.
- II. Specific degree, specific technical skills and certification. 10 years of related on-the-job experience.

- III. Specific degree, Professional with comprehensive experience and institutional knowledge. 15 years minimum of related on-the-job experience.
- IV. Professional/ expert in the field of discipline. Significant institutional knowledge regarding policy or practice within the profession and on a national level. 20 years minimum of related on-the-job experience.

304 RECRUITMENT, INTERVIEWING AND SELECTION

SSAI makes every effort to successfully match applicants to position vacancies. To achieve this standard, an enrollment and recruitment process has been established. The SSAI FS-ACES Program Director or designee is responsible for contacting the USDA FS selected applicant(s) and is the sole party authorized to make an assignment offer.

305 RIGHT TO PRIVACY

FS-ACES Enrollees have a basic right to privacy when interviewing for new positions within the FS-ACES program. This is the same privacy afforded applicants who do not wish to have their present employer contacted during the interview process.

306 ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

The enrollment period is temporary; length of service is dependent on funding for the projects described in the Scope of Work and/or Position Description. Agreements may be terminated when the work is completed, allocated funds are depleted, or non-resolvable issues arise concerning performance.

Once a selection has been made, the new Enrollee will receive an orientation from their SSAI Field Operations Officer and an assignment related orientation by their USDA FS Monitor. A copy of the approved Position Description and an FS-ACES Enrollee Handbook will also be provided.

The following documents (original or .pdf file) must be submitted to SSAI prior to the first day on the assignment:

- Enrollee Information Form
- Enrollment Agreement
- Local, State and Federal Withholding Certificates as applicable
- I-9 Employment Verification Form with supporting documents
- Enrollment Activity Form (EAF)
- Enrollee Certification Form
- Direct Deposit form and copy of voided check for checking account or bank form showing account number for saving account
- Driver's License or Picture ID
- Proof of age documents (passport or birth certificate)
- Valid Social Security Card

An Enrollee may not begin work until all enrollment forms are completed and submitted to the SSAI Office. If an Enrollee does not have a Social Security Card, the Enrollee must submit official documentation from the Social Security Administration that they have applied for a new social security card. Once the new card is received, a copy must be submitted to SSAI.

The enrollment agreement outlines the terms and conditions of FS-ACES assignments. Enrollment in an FS-ACES position is considered temporary and may be discontinued at any time.

307 PROBATIONARY PERIOD

All new Enrollees are subject to an informal 90-day probationary period. The probationary period may be extended at the discretion of the USDA FS Monitor in consultation with the SSAI Field Operations Officer.

During the probationary period, the Monitor will observe an Enrollee's conduct and work performance and will decide whether the Enrollee has satisfied the requirements of the position. If the Monitor ascertains that the requirements of the position have not been met, the assignment may be terminated or the probationary period may be extended.

Termination may occur at any time during the probationary period. Should a termination be warranted, a termination letter will be provided to the Enrollee. Efforts will be made to assist Enrollees in meeting the requirements of the position before termination.

The USDA FS Monitor and Enrollee are encouraged to contact their Field Operations Officer for guidance and assistance during this process.

308 JOB-RELATED TRAINING/CONFERENCES

FS-ACES Enrollees are considered to be fully qualified for positions when enrolled. However, technological changes, new equipment or revised program requirements may require additional training. If such training will incur costs, the USDA FS Monitor and Coordinator must submit a completed Enrollment Activity Form (EAF), Travel Authorization Form (if necessary) and paperwork registering the Enrollee for the USDA FS training. These documents should be submitted to the SSAI FS-ACES Program three weeks prior to the training date. Employment Activity Forms may be faxed, mailed or e-mailed. Only job-related training will be approved.

Costs for job-related training will be processed by SSAI.

All training/conference must be approved in advance by the Monitor and State Coordinator. Enrollee must complete and submit a Project Enrollee Activity Form (PEAF) with pertinent dates, costs, and purpose for training.

400 ENROLLEE BENEFITS AND LEAVE POLICIES

All Enrollees in the SSAI FS-ACES Program are entitled to the benefits listed in this section.

401 WORKERS' COMPENSATION, REPORTING WORK-RELATED INJURIES AND ILLNESSES

SSAI provides Workers' Compensation benefits in the event of a work-related injury or occupational illness or death of an Enrollee that occurs while on assignment in an USDA FS facility or conducting other authorized assignments on behalf of USDA FS. All injuries must be reported within 24 hours to SSAI. In case of an emergency, the Enrollee is responsible for immediately notifying his or her Monitor and SSAI Field Operations Officer as well as seeking medical care.

It is essential that all information surrounding an injury or occupational illness be obtained. This enables the SSAI Field Operations Officer to report the incident accurately.

The Enrollee is responsible for the following:

- Submitting all necessary documents pertaining to Workers' Compensation claims for the State in which the Enrollee resides
- Ensuring that documents are properly filled out and submitted as soon as possible

SSAI will provide the Enrollee with a "First Report of Injury" form to be completed and submitted directly to the Field Operations Officer. A copy of the form can be found on the website. Enrollees who have filed a "First Report of Injury" form, and are unable to perform their duties because of the work-related injury, may become eligible to receive income benefits under the Workers' Compensation benefit.

There is a statutory waiting period before income benefits are payable under Workers' Compensation. During the "waiting period," Enrollees may use sick leave. After the waiting period expires, the Enrollee may become eligible to receive income benefits under Workers' Compensation if they are still unable to perform their duties.

402 UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

SSAI pays into unemployment insurance programs in every state where FS-ACES Program Enrollees currently work. An Enrollee who terminates and wishes to file for Unemployment insurance must file with the Unemployment Office within the state they live. Each state sets different eligibility standards for collecting unemployment insurance. For questions relating to eligibility criteria, the Enrollee should contact the Unemployment Office in the state where he or she resides.

403 LEAVE TIME (VACATION AND SICK)

Vacation Leave

Except where expressly provided in individual State Laws, SSAI in Partnership with the Forest Service have agreed, that in consideration of higher wages provided to Enrollees, there is no vacation leave provided to Enrollees.

Sick Leave

FS-ACES Enrollees are eligible for sick leave at the rate of .0334 hours of sick leave for each paid hour worked in the FS-ACES Program. Enrollees become entitled to sick leave credits when they are earned.

Sick leave credits may also be used for prearranged visits to a doctor's office or hospital for consultation or a checkup. Enrollees can use up to five (5) days of sick leave to care for a family member who may be ill.

Enrollees who leave the program for any reason will not be paid for unused sick leave.

404 HOLIDAYS

Except where expressly provided in individual State Laws, SSAI in Partnership with the Forest Service have agreed, that in consideration of higher wages provided to Enrollees, there are no paid holidays provided to Enrollees.

405 JURY DUTY

Except where expressly provided in individual State Laws, SSAI in Partnership with the Forest Service have agreed, that in consideration of higher wages provided to Enrollees, there is no paid jury duty time provided to Enrollees. In the event an Enrollee is summoned for jury duty, he or she should inform a Monitor upon being called for jury service.

406 LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP)

An Enrollee may be on leave without pay for up to 30 calendar days in a given calendar year.

A formal written notice and a completed Enrollee Activity Form (EAF) must be submitted for approval prior to leave without pay status. If the Enrollee is unable to return to work after the 30 days, his or her status changes to a voluntary termination from the FS-ACES Program.

407 SEVERE WEATHER/EARLY DISMISSALS PROCEDURES

USDA FS Monitors will provide direction to Enrollees regarding office closings, early dismissals, or late openings due to inclement weather or other unusual circumstances.

408 FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) provides up to 12 weeks of leave in any 12-month period of time to care for a family member or for an individual's medical purposes. SSAI's FMLA policy follows the Federal FMLA policy. If an Enrollee is working in a state that has a more liberal Family and Medical Leave Act, then SSAI will follow that state's rules.

To be eligible for FMLA, an Enrollee must have been enrolled in the SSAI/FS-ACES Program for a minimum of one year and worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the request for FMLA leave. All eligible Enrollees may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave within any 12 month period.

An Enrollee wishing to use FMLA should submit an EAF and a written request with all necessary supporting documentation, including reason(s) for taking the planned leave and information or documentation from a medical professional, to their Field Operations Officer, with a copy to the SSAI FS-ACES Program Director and their Monitor.

For more information on eligibility requirements, usage policies or amount of leave available to the Enrollee, contact your SSAI Field Operations Officer.

500 TIME AND ATTENDANCE

501 PAY PERIODS

Our pay period starts on Saturday and ends on the second Friday. SSAI FS-ACES Enrollees are paid every two weeks on alternate Tuesdays. Pay schedules will be provided annually. To obtain a current pay schedule, log into the SSAI Website: <http://www.seniorserviceamerica.org/our-programs/the-agriculture-conservation-experienced-services-program/> .

502 TIMECARDS

SSAI FS-ACES Program Enrollees use the ADP electronic Timecard System (ADP Workforce Now) to record their hours. Enrollees are invited to register to the ADP portal to be able to use the online timecard system.

Enrollees and Monitors/Designee should sign/approve the timecard on the last day of attendance for the pay period or the due date. Timecards are due to Payroll by end of business day, Friday the day the pay period ends or on the Enrollee's last day of attendance. Timecards not approved online after the Friday deadline should be sent to the Payroll Office via email or fax with the Monitor's signature.

SSAI/FS-ACES Enrollees will use the Timecard Form in Excel format initially to be paid if they are not yet registered with the ADP portal. The timecard is also used when the Enrollee forgets to enter their hours online after the timecard deadline has passed in order to be paid. The Timecard Form and instructions are available on our website.

503 DIRECT DEPOSIT/PAYCHECK AVAILABILITY

An Enrollee may elect direct deposit for his or her paycheck to more than one account, providing the appropriate information for each account is given to the SSAI Payroll Office. Direct deposit requests to checking accounts require a voided check, showing your name and address. Direct deposit requests to savings accounts require documentation from your bank showing the correct ABA/Routing and account numbers.

Pay statements will be mailed initially to the Enrollee's home address until the direct deposit pre-note process is complete. Pay statements may be accessed online thereafter.

Any changes in bank information, account numbers or ABA/Routing numbers require a completed Direct Deposit Form and necessary attachments. It normally takes up to two pay periods to process initial set-up of your direct deposit account. Direct Deposit Authorization Forms are located on the website.

It also takes two pay cycles to set up any changes to direct deposit. Enrollees will receive a "live check" until the direct deposit pre-note process is completed.

600 WORK HOURS, PAY AND ABSENTEEISM

The standard hours for all FS-ACES positions, which are the number of hours the Enrollee is scheduled to work in a two-week pay period, are limited to 29 hours per week or 58 hours per pay period. An Enrollee's schedule shall be established by the USDA FS Monitor and then sent to the State FS-ACES Program Coordinator and then to SSAI FS-ACES Program Director for final approval.

601 STANDARD WORK HOURS PER WEEK

Enrollees are required to work their approved standard hours per week. An Enrollee may not exceed their standard work hour limit for the week without pre-approval from his or her Monitor to work additional hours within that week. Any time worked over an Enrollee's standard hours must be approved by their Monitor, submitted to the State FS-ACES Coordinator and then SSAI/FS-ACES Program Director for final approval. In this event, the monitor must indicate their approval of the additional hours on the notepad at the end of each on the timecard screen.

602 OVERTIME /COMPENSATORY TIME

FS-ACES Enrollees are not authorized to work overtime and not eligible to earn compensatory time.

603 ABSENCE FROM WORK

Absence from work due to illness, emergency and/or other reasons must be reported to the FS-ACES Monitor no later than two hours following the Enrollee's scheduled starting time. An Enrollee shall call in each day during his or her absence unless other arrangements have been made with the FS-ACES Monitor.

Failure to provide notification of absence may be reason for dismissal. If an Enrollee arbitrarily leaves the assignment for three working days without explanation or contacting the FS-ACES Monitor, this assignment abandonment would be cause for termination.

Absence from the assignment for three unscheduled workdays due to medical reasons will require a doctor's statement to permit an Enrollee to resume their assignment after illness and/or injury. The doctor's statement must be furnished to the FS-ACES Monitor and FS-ACES Program Field Operations Officer before the Enrollee may resume work.

700 TRAVEL

Enrollees may be authorized to travel for activities essential to their FS-ACES Position duties. When business travel occurs within a payroll cycle, the following rules will apply for completing timecards:

- Travel time during regular work hours (weekday) is counted as paid time.
- Travel time before or after regular work hours (weekday) is not counted as paid time.
- All hours spent working (weekday) are counted as paid time.

701 TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS AND TRAVEL ADVANCES

- All travel authorizations for an Enrollee's business travel must be approved in advance by the Monitor and State Coordinator and submitted to the SSAI FS-ACES Program Office for final approval.
- Travel authorizations must contain a breakdown of costs for all travel expenses.
- After the travel authorizations have been forwarded to the SSAI FS-ACES Program office, a completed authorization will be sent to the Enrollee.
- A completed form will have approval signatures from the Monitor, State Coordinator, and SSAI FS-ACES Program Director.
- A copy of the authorization form should be attached with the travel expense report that is submitted at the conclusion of travel.
- Airline or land travel reservations may not be granted until a travel authorization is completed.
- Travel advances are based on estimated costs.
- Enrollees may request a travel advance up to 85% of the value of the anticipated expense, to a maximum of \$1,000, whichever is less.
- Other travel costs are borne by the Enrollee until a travel expense report and original receipts are submitted to SSAI.
- No more than two advances will be permitted at any one time.
- Travel advances will require seven business days to process.

702 TRAVEL EXPENSE REPORTS

Original travel expense reports should be submitted to SSAI within two weeks after the completion of travel. Faxed or e-mailed Travel Expense Reports will not be accepted. Expense Reports should be completed in ink or typed, signed by the Enrollee and approved by the Monitor. A copy of the approved Travel Authorization Form and receipts showing date, amount, and nature of expenditure should be attached to the Travel Expense Report for all reimbursable expenses. Expense Reports that do not follow SSAI guidelines will be returned to Enrollees for corrections.

703 REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

A. Hotel Expense

The cost of approved hotel accommodations within the Federal GSA per diem (lodging) rates and taxes incurred during business travel will be reimbursed. Hotel reservations made through the SSAI travel agency are guaranteed and subject to cancellation fees. It is the Enrollee's responsibility to cancel unneeded reservations to avoid cancellation charges. Enrollees should note the date and time of cancellation, the cancellation number, and with whom the cancellation was made. Failure to secure this information may result in a cancellation fee being charged to the Enrollee. Hotel "no-show" charges are not reimbursable.

B. Meals & Incidental Expenses

Enrollees are entitled to reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) at the per diem allowance published in the Federal Travel Regulations. Per diem will be reimbursed at 75% of the applicable rate on the dates of departure and return. M&IE allowances are applicable for travel in which an Enrollee is away from their official office site on business for 12 hours or more. Enrollee on business travel for 12 hours or more is entitled to the 75% rate of the per diem allowance applicable to the location of the temporary duty station.

C. Airline / Train Travel (if prior approval is given)

Travelers are expected to use the most economical travel option available at the time reservations are made. If coach class is not available, travel should be rescheduled. Connecting flights, rather than non-stop or direct flights, should be used if there are substantial savings. Excess personal baggage charges are not reimbursable.

D. Vehicle Use

At no time should an FS-ACES Enrollee use a hand held devices while operating a vehicle on official business.

- (1) USDA FS will allow Enrollees to operate (after valid state driver's license has been verified and the Enrollees must have completed a defensive driving course within the last 3 years and must provide proof of personal comprehensive liability insurance) USDA FS owned or leased vehicles only if used for official purposes of the USDA FS. Enrollees may drive the government vehicle or ride as a passenger. The use of personally owned vehicles will be permitted only when a government vehicle is not available. The Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) places liability on the government for claims arising from automotive accidents involving government owned or leased vehicles being used on official government business.
- (2) Privately Owned Vehicles use should be requested only when a government vehicle is not available. Prior approval for Privately Owned Vehicle use must be obtained by the Monitor and State Coordinator.

- (3) The use of a rental car must be approved by an Enrollee's Monitor. Such approval must be brought to the State Coordinator immediately. Every effort should be made to secure a cost-effective rental car. For example, a rental car should not be larger than a full-size automobile, luxury cars should be avoided and every attempt should be made to obtain a car with unlimited mileage. In addition, high-cost downtown or hotel parking should be avoided. It is the Enrollee's responsibility to refuel the rental car prior to returning it to the rental agency in order to avoid excessive refueling charges.

The Enrollee should sign "SSAI" on the "FS-ACES Enrollee's Name" line on the car rental agreement. The Enrollee is the only person authorized to drive the rental car. Monitors or other FS-ACES staff are prohibited from riding in the rental car. Cars rented in SSAI's name for business travel may not be used for personal use and should be returned to the rental agency at the end of the scheduled authorized travel.

E. Local Transportation

Local transportation includes travel to and from terminals as well as other local transportation necessary for conducting business. Airport shuttles, taxis and public transportation, rather than a rental car, should be used whenever possible.

F. Mileage Reimbursement

Enrollees using their own vehicle for official business or driving to and from FS-ACES approved training facilities are entitled to the mileage rate allowed by the Federal government. Mileage reimbursement is in lieu of all operating expenses such as gas, oil, and repairs. Enrollees must support the mileage claim with odometer readings.

Enrollees are responsible for maintaining their vehicles in safe operating condition and are also responsible for providing insurance. Privately Owned Vehicles, when used for business, are at the risk of the owner. The FS-ACES Enrollee must provide proof of valid and current up to date Insurance.

800 ENROLLEE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Monitors are responsible for assuring their work sites do not present safety hazards to Enrollees. Monitors will acquaint Enrollees with proper safety procedures and any special safety equipment required to perform their assignments. Enrollees are expected to use proper safety precautions in the performance of assigned duties and to wear the appropriate safety equipment as instructed by the Monitor.

Based on the duties and responsibilities outlined in the Position Description, certain assignments may require the oversight of a Safety Officer. Generally, only those assignments involving possible exposure to hazardous materials or those assignments involving substantial time away from FS ACES would require this kind of review by the Safety Officer.

900 RULES OF CONDUCT

Although Enrollees are not USDA FS employees, they are associated with the agency. An Enrollee's actions and oral representations could reflect upon USDA FS. Enrollees are to avoid any actions that may result in or create the appearance of using the association with USDA FS for private gain. Undermining public confidence in the integrity of USDA-FS programs is also discouraged.

901 ENROLLEE RESTRICTIONS

It should be clearly understood that Enrollees are not employees of the federal government or the USDA FS and cannot act as authorized representatives of these entities.

FS-ACES Program Enrollees are not permitted to do the following:

- Represent themselves as federal employees. Enrollees should clearly identify their status as participants in the ACES Program when working with Forest Service personnel or interacting with third parties on behalf of the Agency. Such identification may be done orally or by badge and does not require the physical separation of Enrollees from Forest Service staff.
- ACES Enrollees cannot serve as Forest Service Volunteers while they are participating in the ACES Program, unless they are participating in a separate volunteer program unrelated to the work they are providing through ACES
- Receive Forest Service awards, including cash awards, medals, plaques, certificates, or superior performance citations

902 Access to Personally Identifiable Information

ACES Enrollees may come in contact with Forest Service customers' personally identifiable information (PII) as a part of routine business operations. Enrollees are expected to abide by laws and regulations governing of USDA employees and contractors with regards to the privacy of personal information relating to natural resources conservation programs. FS-ACES Monitors can offer guidance in this area.

Subtitle E of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3841 et. seq.) was amended by the 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act adding Section 1244. This section addresses the privacy of personal information and lists exceptions to section 552(b)(3) of title 5 U.S.C. (Freedom of Information Act). Section 1244 states that information provided to USDA or a contractor of USDA by an owner, operator, or producer for the purpose of receiving financial or technical assistance in any natural resource program administered by Forest Service, NRCS, or FSA is not considered public information nor is information that is proprietary to the agricultural operation. This law has been further amended by Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 by Section 1619 to include geospatial information.

903 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION (CBI)

Enrollees must adhere to the following regarding Confidential Business information:

- a) Use of the information only for the purpose of carrying out the work of the Forest Service.
- b) Do not disclose the information to anyone other than the Forest Service without prior written approval of the Forest Service.
- c) Return to the Forest Service all copies of such information (any abstracts or extracts there from) upon request by the Forest Service.
- d) Sign an agreement to honor the terms in this clause, before access to confidential business information is granted.

904 SYSTEM FOR AWARDS MANAGEMENT (SAM)

SSAI/FS-ACES Program is required to check the System for Awards Management (SAM) prior to enrollment to assure Enrollee's name does not appear as an ineligible person.

The SAM is an electronic, web-based system that identifies those parties excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain types of Federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits. The SAM keeps its user community aware of administrative and statutory exclusions across the entire government, suspected terrorists, and individuals barred from entering the United States.

905 LOBBYING & POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

SSAI FS-ACES Program Enrollees are paid from federal funds and may participate freely in the political process with the following exceptions:

- Enrollees may not engage in political activities (partisan or non-partisan) while on duty or during their assignment hours unless they are on approved unpaid leave.
- Enrollees may not present themselves as spokespersons for SSAI or the FS-ACES Program while engaged in partisan or non-partisan political activity.

Questions may be directed to your SSAI Field Operations Officer.

906 DRUGS AND ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

SSAI absolutely prohibits the use, consumption, sale, purchase, transfer or possession of any illegal or non-prescription drug by Enrollees during working hours or while on the premises of the local USDA FS work sites. "Illegal Drugs" are defined for the purposes of this policy as any drug that is either not legally obtainable or is legally obtainable but has not been legally obtained. The term further includes prescribed drugs not legally obtained, prescribed drugs not being used for prescribed purposes, and prescribed drugs being used by a person other than the prescription holder. Legally prescribed medications are not covered under this policy and are permitted to the extent that their use does not adversely affect the employee's work ability, job performance, or the safety of others in the workplace. Enrollees are also strictly prohibited from being under the influence of alcohol during working hours or while on the premises of the local USDA-FS work sites.

SSAI will, to the best of its ability, work with Enrollees suffering from drug and alcohol addiction to provide the assistance necessary to overcome their dependence.

- Any Enrollee seeking such assistance is encouraged to discuss the matter with his or her Monitor and/or FS-ACES Program Coordinator before problems begin to surface in the workplace
- Any disclosures made by an Enrollee will be treated as strictly confidential
- The Enrollee's decision to seek assistance will not be used as the basis for disciplinary action or used against the Enrollee in a disciplinary proceeding

Violation of this policy can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination from the FS-ACES Program.

1000 ENROLLEE PERFORMANCE AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Enrollees in the FS-ACES Program are expected to demonstrate behavior on the job that reflects favorably on SSAI and the USDA FS. In the event performance on the job falls short of expectations, the following disciplinary measures may be used in an effort to bring about a change in behavior.

A. Oral or Written Warning

An oral or written statement by the Monitor expressing dissatisfaction with the Enrollee's work performance and outlining specific actions needed to improve the situation. Documentation providing the date and a summary of the warning will be submitted to the FS-ACES Regional Coordinator and the SSAI FS-ACES Program Director or the Field Operations Officer where it will become a part of the Enrollee's program record. The Enrollee will also be given a copy of any written warning.

B. Letter of Reprimand

The letter of reprimand written to the Enrollee by the SSAI FS-ACES Program Director or his designee is the final warning. Unless the Enrollee's behavior changes by a specified deadline, the Enrollee will be terminated on a specified date. The letter should summarize the dissatisfaction with the Enrollee's behavior, the failure to improve following counseling, and an initial warning. A copy of the letter will be sent to the FS-ACES Program Coordinator and a copy will be placed in the Enrollee's program file.

1001 TERMINATION

Only the SSAI FS-ACES Program Director or his designee may terminate an Enrollee. Most often, termination is at the request of an FS-ACES Monitor or Coordinator. A FS-ACES Monitor may recommend termination for good reason at any time during enrollment based on appropriate documentation. In all cases, the FS-Monitor and the Field Operations Officer should work in concert to provide the Enrollee guidance and assistance. If the disciplinary measures do not bring about the desired change within a specified period of time, the Enrollee will be discharged.

Reasons for termination may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Physical violence, disorderly conduct or disruptive behavior
- Refusal to follow directions of the Monitor during work hours
- Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Sleeping while on the job
- Repeated tardiness and/or absenteeism
- Repeated violation of safety rules
- Theft, fraud, or falsifying records

Enrollees may be laid off if USDA FS makes a decision to abolish a position due to budgetary considerations, reorganization or changing needs. Enrollees who have been terminated may be called back to work upon reinstatement of funding for any position they are qualified to perform. If other positions are available within the same USDA FS geographical location, persons who have been terminated due to a reduction in force may interview for a position they are qualified to perform. A guarantee of enrollment cannot be made. Enrollees being terminated due to a reduction in force will be notified in writing by the Field Operations Officer no less than two weeks prior to the date of termination. It should be understood that FS-ACES Program positions are not permanent positions and may be discontinued at any time.

1002 VOLUNTARY TERMINATION

FS-ACES Program Enrollees are asked to provide a two-week advance written notice of resignation to their FS-ACES Monitor. The SSAI FS-ACES Program recognizes there may be situations where it is not possible to give a full two-week notice

1003 GRIEVANCE/APPEAL PROCEDURES

Enrollees have the right to a grievance and appeal process. If a problem is not resolved satisfactorily between the Field Operations Officer, Monitor or Region USDA FS Coordinator, the Enrollee may submit his or her grievance in writing to:

SSAI-ACES Program Director
Senior Service America, Inc.
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 200
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314

The SSAI FS-ACES Program Director will review the complaint and render a final decision within 15 days. If an Enrollee believes that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, marital status, age or handicap, and has exhausted the steps in the grievance procedure, he or she may file a formal discrimination complaint.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call toll free voice (866) 632-9992, TDD (800)877-8339, or voice relay (866) 377-8642. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.