



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Photograph taken by Ken Scheffe

Supervisor Handbook for the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)

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STUDENT EVALUATION SAMPLES

GUIDANCE FOR SUPERVISORS

It is important that the supervisors of students understand the role they are expected to fill in training the future Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees.

Orientation of existing staff – It is essential that all members of the field office understand they are expected to assist in training new employees as a part of their job. Each member of the field office can become a mentor in their own right to the new employee and are often remembered by the new employee with fondness years later. It is a good idea to discuss the training plans, objectives and staff attitudes towards training students in a staff meeting before the students arrive.

Welcoming a new student – When a new student is assigned to you, he/she may need some advance information before arriving for work. An introductory telephone call or letter from the supervisor displays a concern for the student's well being and is usually welcomed. You might inquire if information on apartments for rent, medical facilities, churches, current office activities, etc. is needed.

Planning the training – It is essential that supervisors assess the student's progress and abilities periodically during a work period. Students should be encouraged to ask questions and to admit when they are not sure they are getting a concept (most training builds on a base of concepts and if the initial concept is not understood, future training will not take.)

Sexual Harassment – Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated. All members of the staff are to be aware of this policy. Students and other employees should be specifically informed of the NRCS policy on sexual harassment in the work place and be advised to report incidents of this nature. Reports of sexual harassment can be made to the Civil Rights Committee, the Human Resources Officer, and/or the State Administrative Officer.

Work Assignment Expectations – The expectations for productive work by a student depends upon the experience, maturity, and ability of the student. A solid foundation using progressive steps of exposure, assisting, practicing, and then doing is usually needed for technical subjects. It will be a temptation to assign routine clerical work to students because it is easy and convenient. While some clerical and other office work is necessary in each work period for orientation purposes and for understanding the "total process", a majority of their time is expected to be spent with others on the staff receiving explanations of what, why and how.

As a student gains more education and experience, progressively more difficult and productive assignments can be made. It will be rare for a student that is not in their third college work period (going into their senior year) to deal with farmers and ranchers alone.

Each student should have assignments they can work on to fill in dead time (time when others are busy, that last ½ - 1 hour of a day, etc.). Such Assignments should be meaningful and give the student a sense of accomplishment when completed. Reading manuals and directives have their place, but a steady diet of it is not a strong incentive to learning and is a poor training technique.

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

Have a clean desk for the student. Clean up the clutter in the office so it looks professional.

Send an email, letter, or telephone the new student. Extend your welcome, your understanding of when the student will show up on the first day of duty. Provide certain local information the student may be interested in – population, doctors and medical facilities, recreation facilities, etc. You may want to include approximate prices of homes or rents of apartments (the classified ad section of the local newspaper would probably be welcome).

Organize the trainee's materials and training schedule for the summer. Review the Individual Development Plan (IDP) for the student, previous work period appraisals, etc., in advance. Try to pencil in a work schedule for the trainee and discuss with all that are to provide the training.

Please go to: <http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/personnel/scep-employees.html> for additional information and to print all Supervisor forms.

ON ARRIVAL

Have field office staff be in the office for introductions on the first day the trainee is in the office. Perform introductions either early in the day or late in the day so others can get on with their work. A tour of the office is appropriate to show the student where people sit and other facilities.

Ask the student to tell you about themselves. Ask what their interests are in and out of school. Check into their previous work background. Do they have any medical condition you should know about (allergies). Find out whom to contact in case of emergencies.

Describe the office routine. Parking, leave, breaks, lunch habits, restrooms, etc. Be sure to establish their hours of duty and introduce them to their timekeeper.

Ask the student if you can answer any questions they might have (e.g., banks, grocery stores, etc.)

Review the employee's IDP with them. Explain expectations; who, what, where, and when of training scheduled. Review with the student their Performance Work Plan (PWP) that will be rated at the end of the work period, or completion of the first 90 days of work. Assign a long-term project and fully explain it so they have constructive work to perform independently when they have down time.

Provide necessary supplies and tools, or show them where they can get them.

Supervisor should have the new employee complete any necessary pre-employment forms and administer Oath of Office.

SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

New Employee Processing – 1st Day

1. Welcome new employee.
2. Administer Oath of Office.
3. Take photo of student for ID card and email to Human Resources.
4. Discuss the directive system and other relevant resources for information on policies, regulations and procedures. (see attached New Employee Checklist and print from: <http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/personnel/scep-employees.html>)
5. Discuss the Agency's occupational safety and health program, with an emphasis on the employee's rights and responsibilities, and emergency action plan if applicable.
6. Be sure and direct students to the SCEP website for any additional information and to download/print necessary forms.

<http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/personnel/scep-employees.html>

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Supervisors will be responsible for providing the student with a Performance Work Plan (PWP), based on the work that is planned and the accomplishments expected for their summer session. The minimum appraisal period for all employees is 90-calendar days. The appraisal period for most employees begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year. Students may not complete their 90 day period if this is their first work period. Returning students will complete the 90 day period during their second summer session. The second session student will need to have a final rating completed before they leave for school. During a student's work period, it is essential that a frequent and realistic appraisal of the employee's performance and potential be made. If a student has performance or conduct issues, supervisors should counsel the employee immediately and not wait until completion of the work period to advise the HRO of these issues.

Supervisors should establish a Performance Work Plan within two weeks of the students hire date.

Individual Development Plan

Supervisors must develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for students during the first 30 calendar days of their summer session. The supervisor and student should be involved in developing the IDP so that both understand and agree on the learning objectives and specific work activities that will be assigned.

Examples of training activities may include surveying, soils, conservation planning, design, grazing management, programs, and NRCS organization.

ABOUT YOUR INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)

GENERAL: This document is a plan for developing required skills and knowledge to carry out the NRCS mission and meet employee's assigned duties.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

SUPERVISORS:

Supervisors are responsible to prepare an IDP for each employee supervised. New employees must have their IDP developed in the first pay period of reporting to duty.

STUDENT/TRAINEE:

- Student should take a proactive role in seeking needed training. 'Develop your potential.'
- Insure that training received is documented in your IDP.

IDP FORM INSTRUCTIONS

RESPONSIBLE: Show Name. Supervisor is ultimately responsible in all training needs, although many subjects may be delegated. Coordination with mentors is encouraged to seek good trainers in the many disciplines.

INTRODUCTION TARGET DATE: Show Date. This applies to most new employees. Establishing target dates is intended to encourage the training process to happen!

INTRODUCTION: Indicate when the employee has been introduced to the subject.

BASIC UNDERSTANDING: More than introduced but will need more instruction or experience to reach the next level.

WORKING KNOWLEDGE: Full understanding and use of the knowledge or skill.

PROFICIENT: Can train others.

STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

Students are to keep a daily written log of their activities.

At the end of every month, the supervisor will initial and date the log. A copy of the activity log is to be forwarded to the respective Area Conservationist (or State Soil Scientist if a Soils SCEP).

Students will present a professional PowerPoint presentation about their tour to the New Mexico Leadership Team (typically in August). The presentation should be five to ten minutes in length. The following topics should be included in the reports:

1. A brief summary of student's background, both personal and academic.
2. Student's career goals upon graduation.
3. Describe at least ten activities performed during the SCEP tour. For each activity, address the following criteria:
 - a. Provided a challenge to student's technical knowledge of the subject matter.
 - b. Gave student an opportunity to apply what has been learned at school to real life situations.
 - c. Helped student understand how the activity contributes to the administration of NRCS programs to the public.
 - d. Helped student understand how the activity plays a role in conservation planning.
 - e. Whether student enjoyed the activity and why.

9 STEPS OF PLANNING

1. IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

- Problem – Un-level field, poor irrigation efficiency. Opportunity: - level field, improve efficiency
- Problem – earthen ditch, inadequate delivery, seepage. Opportunity: - CDL, pipeline.
- Field discharge, pollution potential. Opportunity: - eliminate need for discharge.

2. DETERMINE OBJECTIVES:

- Producer wants to improve speed and ease of irrigation water delivery.
- Producer wants to improve production across entire field by evening out irrigation effectiveness.

3. INVENTORY RESOURCES:

- Soil types.
- Water availability, capacity. Headgate size, high water mark, etc.
- Field discharge is a concern. Chemicals and fertilizer will easily be carried with the irrigation water directly into live water.

4. ANALYZE RESOURCE DATA:

- Capacity present to fill new DCL/pipeline or a new headgate needed.
- Soil issues – what grade is needed to best fit this soil type. Farmer input?
- Evaluate nutrient and pest program currently used by client. Is there an existing or potential pollution concern?

5. FORMULATE ALTERNATIVES:

- Look at crop plans and alternative – is there an issue?
- CDL versus pipeline. Enough head for a pipeline? Why is pipeline preferred?
- What options does the client have to eliminate the field discharge? (Discuss importance of covering alternatives.)

6. EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES:

- If water supply is an issue, drought tolerant or less cu crops should be discussed.
- Discuss pros and cons for CDL or pipeline. Some pipeline advantages could be: less expensive, less maintenance, time savings.
- Will land leveling and proper irrigation water management eliminate the need for a discharge? It should.

7. MAKE DECISIONS:

- Assist the customer but don't make the decision for them. Why is this important?

8. IMPLEMENT THE PLAN:

- Could be with program assistance or without. Designs will need to be available and/or job sheets.

9. EVALUATE THE PLAN:

- Is it working?

9 STEPS OF CONSERVATION PLANNING

PHASE 1 – COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- STEP 1 – Identify problems and opportunities: Identify resource problems, opportunities, and concerns in the planning area.
- STEP 2 – Determine objectives: Identify and document the client's objectives
- STEP 3 – Inventory Resources: Inventory the natural resources and their condition, and the economic and social consideration related to the resources. This includes on-site and related off-site conditions.
- STEP 4 – Analyze Resource Data: Analyze the resource information gathered in Planning Step 3 to clearly define the natural resource conditions, along with economic and social issues related to the resources. This includes problems and opportunities.

PHASE II – DECISION SUPPORT

- STEP 5 – Formulate alternatives: Formulate alternatives that will achieve the client's objectives, solve natural resource problems, and take advantage of opportunities to improve or protect resource conditions.
- STEP 6 – Evaluate alternatives: Evaluate the alternatives to determine their effects in addressing the client's objectives and the natural resource problems and opportunities. Evaluate the project effects on social, economic, and ecological concerns. Special attention must be given to those ecological values protected by law or Executive Order.
- STEP 7 – Make decisions: The client selects the alternative(s) and works with the planner to schedule conservation system and practice implementation. The planner prepares the necessary documentation.

PHASE III – APPLICATION AND EVALUATION

- STEP 8 – Implement the plan: The client implements the selected alternative(s). The planner provides encouragement to the client for continued implementation.
- STEP 9 – Evaluate the plan: Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan as it is implemented and make adjustments as needed