



**FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE**

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Food Assistance Division  
Office of Capacity Building and Development

Fiscal Year 2018 Recipients' Guide to Cooperative Agreement Annual Work Plan  
Food for Progress

## Overview of a Work Plan under Food for Progress

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) places a high level of importance on strategically managing and implementing grants to maximize the use of US federal tax dollars in achieving optimal programmatic results. Per the Food Assistance Division (FAD) policy, all cooperative agreements must include a work plan that details which activities will be conducted over the life of the agreement. As such, the following is guidance on the Food for Progress (FFPr) requirements for completing a work plan which includes a standard methodology for completing and submitting project work. The guidance is intended to be used as an adaptive management tool by project staff to control for scope, schedule, and efficient use of resources. A successful work plan should contain the following:

**Work Breakdown Structure (WBS):** The WBS is a hierarchical decomposition of all project deliverables required to accomplish the project's objectives. The WBS is the starting point for scope management on the project. This document defines the scope of work to be completed in the current approved cooperative agreement and is specifically used to estimate costs, allocate resources, manage risk and create schedules of a project.

**WBS Dictionary:** The WBS dictionary provides detailed information about each component of the WBS and includes information on the deliverables, responsible party, resources required, schedule and milestones of each work package.

**Gantt Chart:** The Gantt Chart tracks project tasks over time. The Gantt chart outlines work that needs to be completed on a day-by-day basis and is the main tool used for managing project schedules. It lists tasks on the vertical axis and time intervals on the horizontal axis.

**Staffing Dictionary:** The Staffing Dictionary is a list of all staff available for work on the project and that will charge time to the project. This broadly includes sub-recipients.

**Project Narrative:** The project narrative outlines the project's overall theory of change and justifies each activity in terms of its contribution to the theory of change. A project narrative should include: a change management system that discusses monetization shortfalls and/or windfalls, ineffective or ill-advised activities, and general guidelines for USDA engagement.

## Work Plan Components:

Food for Progress work plans will be divided into two sections: a project narrative and a WBS. The project narrative will be submitted in Microsoft Word format, while the WBS will be completed using the Microsoft Excel template provided by USDA. The sections below provide specific guidance on how implementing partners (PVOs) should complete each of these sections.

### **Project Narrative:**

The Project Narrative should provide a rationale for both the projects as a whole as well as for each activity. In recent years, Food for Progress has moved much of the context and rationale for activities from the agreements to the work plans. The narrative should be revisited and updated as implementation progresses and USDA and PVOs learn what works and what doesn't. A regularly updated work plan will not only require USDA and partners to revisit original assumptions, but also serve as the living record of

the project's rationale. This is valuable for five-year projects that will be managed by more than one USDA analyst, PVO Project Manager, and even Chief of Party.

Project Narratives should include:

- A brief statement (no more than 2-3 sentences) of the problem the project is trying to solve.
- A **Theory of Change (TOC)** that outlines how the project intervention's approach will solve that problem.
- **Critical assumptions** which, if not realized, undermine the project's TOC. FFPr proposals require critical assumptions, but they are not usually revisited during the implementation period. Critical assumptions often focus on macroeconomic or climatic shocks which might undermine the project. While these are valid critical assumptions, work plans should instead focus on critical assumptions that support the project's implementation approach.
- **Activity section:**
  - A brief description of the scope of each activity.
  - Who is responsible for the activity (prime recipients vs. Sub-recipients)?
  - A rationale for each activity- how does it contribute to the project's overall TOC? No more than 4 sentences.
  - Critical assumptions that are specific to that activity. The assumptions that are described above are intended to be general; activity critical assumptions are more specific. Why might a project's training model prove ineffective? Why might the project's approach to market access not work?
- **Change Management:** how will the project respond to events that significantly affect implementation? Below are two common examples of something that might compel a project to change its approach:
  - Monetization shortfall/windfall
  - Ineffective/ill-timed activities
- **Project Map:** A map showing the locations where each activity will be implemented should include:
  - A clear representation of the total area covered by all project activities, at the second-level administrative division. For example, the country-level would be zero-level administrative division (i.e. the United States), the state would be the first-level administrative division (i.e. Virginia), and the county would be the second-level administrative division (i.e. Alexandria, a county within the state of Virginia). For any given country, the most broadly and internationally-recognized administrative divisions should be used;
  - The location of relevant in-country offices, sub-offices, and warehouses that will be used by the project;
  - The location of other relevant locations relevant for the value chain (I.e. slaughterhouses for a livestock
- **Organizational Chart:** An Organizational Chart will identify the names, positions, and responsibilities of all of the Award Recipients' and sub recipients' key personnel.
  - For the purpose of the work plan, the Award Recipients' key personnel will be managers with general responsibilities for implementation of the agreement, such as the country director, finance director, and chief of party, as well as critical technical staff for specific activities under the agreement. The Organizational Chart should show the links and reporting structure between key personnel and critical technical staff. The Organizational

Chart should include a table that lists each key position, the organization that key personnel works for (i.e. prime versus sub-recipient), name, level of effort (i.e. percent of time/effort calculated to project), location (i.e. field, regional, headquarters), and key responsibilities.

- **Annual Travel Plan:** The annual travel plan should be submitted with the Work Plan. It must list all foreign travel to be taken during the year.
- **Communication Plan:** This section will set standards on project communications, including:
  - How does the PVO plan to publicize the project, to audiences both in the target country and the United States?
  - How does the PVO intend to communicate with project stakeholders, including USDA (in Washington D.C. and at Post), sub-recipients, private sector partners, local governments, etc.?

### **Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), Dictionary, and Gantt Chart:**

The intention of the new Work Plan guidance is to better incorporate Project Management (PM) concepts into FFPr project design. A foundational component of project management is the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), which organizes work into a hierarchy. The top level of the hierarchy divides the project into broad activities. The WBS, however, goes further and breaks down activities into various levels of sub-activities and, eventually, a work package. The work package is a specific task requiring no less than 8 hours and no more than 80 hours to complete. There should be a deliverable associated with each work package. The WBS should cover the entire length of the project.

Accompanying this guidance document is an Excel workbook which will serve as a template for creating a WBS and associated documents.

#### ***Work Breakdown Structure:***

- Activities should be decomposed according to the following hierarchy:
  - Activity Level 1 (this is the activity found in the Cooperative Agreement):
    - Year
      - Activity Level 2
        - Activity Level 3 (if necessary)
          - Work Package
- Each level of the hierarchy will be assigned an ID, with decimal points corresponding to each level. Activities will be assigned a single digit (5, for example), Year will take the first decimal place (5.1), sub-activities the next (5.1.1), and so on.
- The first items on the WBS will be Administration, Monetization, and Monitoring & Evaluation, which will be assigned the IDs 1, 2, and 3, respectively.
- **Duration:**
  - Create a duration for each work package. This can be done in Excel by subtracting the Start Date from the End Date.
  - Determine if any deliverables or work packages have dependencies on other work. This is critical to being able to set the start and end dates of work packages.
  - Enter in Start and End dates according to the following format: mm/dd/yyyy

- PVOs should first determine the duration of the work package. As stated previously, work packages can vary in duration between 8 and 80 hours. Work packages that are longer than 80 hours can likely be divided into two or more work packages. The next Level is Activity Level 3, which contains work packages. The duration of Activity Level 3 will not necessarily be the sum of the work packages that it contains, as work packages can be done simultaneously. Nevertheless, Activity Level 3's duration cannot be less than the work package below it with the longest duration.
- No duration needs to be indicated for the 'Year' level.
- A dropdown menu in Column J is used to indicate if the work package is completed, in progress, or not yet started.
- Work packages can be assigned to an organization using a drop-down menu. This menu is populated on the Staffing Dictionary worksheet.
- Work packages can also be assigned to individuals within those organizations (though usually this will only be done for work packages assigned to the prime recipient). The project's staff directory will be filled out on the Staffing Dictionary worksheet, which will in turn populate the drop-down menu in column L.
- A completed WBS will be a large spreadsheet. To make it more navigable, collapse the work packages using the Group function under the Data tab.
- As the WBS is filled in, drag the formulas down in Columns I:L so that those cells populate properly.

### *WBS Dictionary*

The WBS Dictionary contains detailed information about each work package. It contains much of the information contained in the WBS, but also a description of what that work entails, deliverables associated with that work package, and what resources (staff, equipment, etc.) are needed to complete the work package.

### *Gantt Chart*

The Gantt Chart is a visual representation of work packages. It contains the same information as the WBS, but only includes the work packages themselves, excluding activities, sub-activities, etc. The Gantt Chart auto-populates based on the Start and End Dates, and it will change color according to whether the work package has been completed, is in progress, or has not yet been started. The 'Completed?' column (Column G) in the Gantt Chart worksheet is linked to the 'Completed?' column (Column J) in the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) worksheet; simply select the completion status in the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and the 'Completed?' Column will fill out on the Gantt Chart. As the Gantt Chart is filled in, drag the formulas down in Columns E-G.

The Gantt Chart is divided by week for the forthcoming year, and then by month for each successive year.

### *Staffing Dictionary*

Work packages should be assigned to both organizations and individuals within those organizations. The Staffing Dictionary sheet includes the prime recipient, the sub-recipients, and the names of project staff for the prime recipient (sub-recipient staff are excluded for simplicity's sake). Filling in this sheet populates the drop-down menus in the WBS.