

**PLAN TO IMPLEMENT A LABOR MANAGEMENT FORUM AT THE
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
March 2010**

Purpose: The purpose of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) forum is to provide management and the union with exclusive recognition with a platform for collaboration, cooperation, and communication, in addressing workplace issues with an overall focus on improving productivity within the agency.

Current Status: The FTC does not currently have a labor-management forum; however, management and the union have been in consultation regarding the procedures for establishing such a forum. The FTC is a small independent agency comprised of approximately 1100 employees. The FTC has six bargaining units located in the headquarters and the regional offices. All of the bargaining units are represented by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). Approximately 29 percent of the FTC employees are included in a bargaining unit. However, only 24 percent of the FTC bargaining unit employees are represented by an active union. At this time, the FTC will focus on strengthening the current labor-management program through the forum. The FTC and the active union do not envision participating in the pilot projects.

Strategy: The FTC will establish a Labor-Management Forum at the headquarters level with representation from management and the union, as appropriate, who are located in various organizations, occupations, and levels within the FTC structure. The number of forum members will be determined based on a consensus between the applicable union

and management. However, each entity will have the opportunity to designate an equal number of members to the forum.

The headquarters' forum will be guided under the general premise that its purpose is to identify issues of mutual concern that can be addressed effectively by the forum and resolve those issues at the earliest stage possible in ways that will enhance performance of the FTC mission. The members of the forum will determine their specific charter, goals, and operating procedures.

Additional labor-management committees or councils will be established at the levels of recognition in the FTC, as necessary, and as determined by the appropriate union and management officials. The FTC currently recognizes six unions having exclusive recognition in the agency's headquarters office and regional offices.

For this process to succeed, it is imperative that everyone involved has an understanding of the Executive Order, the agency's commitment to succeed, and the roles of management and the union in the process. Therefore, training will be a prerequisite for all members of the forum, committees, and councils. At a minimum, training will be conducted in basic labor relations, interest-based problem solving, conflict resolution, and consensus decision-making. In addition, supervisors, managers, union officials, and employees will also be offered training in these areas or other areas that the forum members believe would be beneficial.

As with any group of individuals who come together collectively for a common goal, an individual's own opinions, ideas, and styles could present challenges to the forum members for staying on topic, organizing issues, and making collective decisions. Therefore, skilled facilitators will be used, as necessary, to ensure the process is

productive, the members have healthy communication, and the members stay focused on their goals and objectives. The headquarters' forum will use an official note-taker to capture the information discussed and prepare the official minutes of the meetings.

Impact on Agency Performance Goals: The FTC has three significant performance goals:

- (1) Protect consumers by preventing fraud, deception, and unfair business practices in the marketplace.
- (2) Maintain competition by preventing anticompetitive mergers and other anticompetitive business practices in the marketplace.
- (3) Advance the FTC's performance through organizational, individual, and management excellence.

The forum at the headquarters level and the councils/committees at the other levels of recognition will review the agency's 2009 – 2014 Strategic Plan and Performance and Accountability Report for 2009. A review of those documents will help the members determine what goals to establish, which should link to the agency's goals, and how they can best be accomplished to assist the agency in improving its overall performance. The forum and the committees and councils will document their decisions in writing, and they will be available for review on the agency's Intranet site. The Intranet site will be updated as progress occurs to keep employees informed. This will ensure that the goals and actions of the forum, committees, and councils are transparent to all employees in the agency. It will also instill accountability for the actions of the forum, committees, and councils.

Baseline Assessment: The agency will analyze its labor-management relations activity over the past three years (2007 – 2010) to determine the number of informal and formal issues that surfaced regarding workplace matters. The analysis will include a cost analysis, where possible. The information will be gathered from the union and the Labor Relations Officer. In addition, a survey will be developed for bargaining unit employees (current and former) and their supervisors to complete that will provide insight into the current satisfaction with labor-management relations at the FTC. This information will be provided to the forum for use in determining appropriate goals and as a baseline to assess their effectiveness over time.

Metrics: The headquarters' forum will be responsible for establishing specific metrics that will be used to monitor progress, determine improvements, and report outcomes. Once the metrics are defined, they will apply to agency labor-management relations councils or committees established at the various levels of recognition. Metrics will be established in key areas such as satisfaction with labor-management relationships and outcomes, employee satisfaction, and increased productivity in agency performance.

Resources: To ensure the success of the labor-management forum, committees, and councils, the FTC recognizes the need to devote sufficient resources to support the program. Managers and employees, serving as union representatives, must be given the necessary tools to function and the time to fully develop the goals and objectives, complete the vetting process, and evaluate their actions. The members of the forum,

committees, and councils will be granted sufficient official time to accomplish their task so that their success is not impeded by time constraints.

The FTC realizes that the use of technology will enhance the success of the forum, committees, and councils; therefore, the FTC is committed to making full use of the agency's Intranet, electronic email system, and other systems available to support this endeavor.

The forum, committees, and councils will funnel requests for resources through the Labor Relations Officer for tracking and staffing.

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