

Farm Credit Administration
Plain Writing Act Compliance Report
April 13, 2012

I. Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing:

[provide names and contact information for your Senior Agency Official and agency coordinators]

- a. **Name of Senior Agency Official.** Mike Stokke, Director of the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, is the FCA Senior Agency Plain Writing Official. Mr. Stokke also serves as the Executive Assistant to FCA Chairman and CEO Leland A. Strom. His e-mail address is stokkem@fca.gov.
- b. **Names of Plain Language coordinators within the agency.** Emily Yaghmour, writer/editor in the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, coordinates the Agency's plain writing activities. Her e-mail address is yaghmoure@fca.gov.

II. Explain what specific types of agency communications have you released by making them available in a format that is consistent with the Plain Writing guidelines.

<p>Type of communications of document or posting. List how this is made available to the public</p>	<p>Who is the intended user and approximate number of potential users</p>	<p>What has changed by using Plain Writing</p>
<p><i>The Director's Role</i>, a 66-page booklet to provide guidance to directors of the institutions FCA regulates. This document is published on our website and distributed in hard copy to Farm Credit System institutions.</p>	<p>Directors on the boards of Farm Credit System institutions. Managers at System institutions may also find the document helpful. The number of users ranges from 1,500 to 2,000 Farm Credit System representatives.</p>	<p>We substantially revised the booklet, employing several plain language techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We used pronouns throughout the document (“we” referred to our Agency; “you” referred to institution directors). • We reorganized the content to better serve the reader. • We shortened sentences and paragraphs. • We incorporated more bulleted lists, which added to the white space throughout the report. <p>According to StyleWriter, the revised document’s “bog index” improved by 9 points over the bog index of the original document. The bog index measures readability of a document.</p>
<p>News releases, issued electronically and posted on the agency’s website</p>	<p>The primary audiences include agricultural and finance reporters and representatives of the Farm Credit System.</p>	<p>Since long before the Plain Writing Act was enacted, we have worked hard to make our releases plain and transparent.</p>
<p>Agency’s website</p>	<p>The audiences for our website include representatives of the Farm Credit System, members of the media, members of Congress, and the general public.</p>	<p>In 2007, we substantially revised the content of our website to incorporate the principles of plain writing and to be more succinct. We applied many of the same principles that are described in the Federal Plain Language Guidelines.</p>

III. Inform agency staff of Plain Writing Act's requirements:

[list the ways you've provided information on the Act to your staff]

- a. **Information on the Act is posted on the agency Intranet.** We created a Plain Writing SharePoint site as part of the FCA intranet. The page describes the documents that we produce that must comply with the Plain Writing Act. It also provides employees with information about training, and it provides links to many plain writing resources. The site also refers employees to StyleWriter, a tool on the agency's network that employees can use to help them evaluate the clarity of their documents.
- b. **Published an article on the Act and its requirements in the internal agency news bulletin.** Since May 2011, we have published 21 articles in FCA Today, the agency's online employee newsletter, on plain writing and plain writing training. These articles include 11 articles that are part of the agency's "Uncle Sam Says" series. This series consists of excerpts from the *Federal Plain Language Guidelines*. We decided to run an excerpt from the *Guidelines* periodically to complement our plain writing training efforts.

IV. Training

[describe training efforts]

a. Agency provided the following trainings:

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
Bill Porter, an instructor from PLAIN, delivered a half-day presentation on the principles of plain writing	36	August 26, 2011
Kathryn Catania, an instructor from PLAIN, delivered a half-day presentation on the principles of plain writing. Almost half of the class participated via video conference from FCA field offices.	77	March 14, 2012
Online training, which consisted of two courses, Writing I and Writing II.* These courses, which were developed by a contractor several years ago for use by FCA employees, covered many of the principles in the <i>Federal Plain Language Guidelines</i> .	12	June 2011 to the Present
Online training for new employees. To provide plain writing training to employees who join the agency from now on, we are adapting Kathryn Catania’s plain writing PowerPoint presentation for our purposes. Leland A. Strom, the agency’s Chairman and CEO, is narrating the slides. Every new employee will be required to view the presentation online.	N/A	On or before April 13, 2013, this online training tool will be available.
<p>* For many years, these courses have been mandatory for all examiners commissioned by FCA. Within a year or two of being hired, each examiner-in-training must take both courses. As a result, approximately 120 of FCA’s 280 employees have taken these courses as part of their examiner training. This number does not include the 12 employees who took the courses from June 2011 to the present.</p> <p>Note: In 2011, each of the agency’s senior managers identified all employees in his or her office who either write or edit documents that would be considered covered by the Plain Writing Act. In all, 57 employees were identified. FCA made plain writing training mandatory for all of these employees. As of today, all but four of these employees have received training.</p>		

V. Ongoing compliance/ sustaining change

[list the ways you intend to stay in compliance with the Act]

- a. **Name of agency contact for compliance issues.** Mike Stokke, FCA’s Senior Plain Writing Official, and Emily Yaghmour, FCA’s Plain Writing Coordinator, are our contacts for compliance issues.
- b. **Documenting and reporting use of plain writing in agency communications.** We are developing a plain writing awards program in which offices are invited to submit examples of documents that incorporate plain writing principles. The agency will present an annual award to the authors and editors of the “plainest” document.
- c. **Clearance process.** Each major office in the agency has identified a person to serve as its plain writing reviewer. These individuals review all covered documents produced by the office to ensure that they are plainly written. FCA’s plain writing coordinator will meet with these reviewers later this spring to provide guidance and resources for performing a plain writing review. Each reviewer will be supplied with the [plain writing checklist](#) from www.plainlanguage.gov and with the following resources:
 - *Federal Plain Language Guidelines*
 - *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White
 - *The Copyeditor’s Handbook* by Amy Einsohn
 - *Legal Writing in Plain English* by Bryan A. Garner
 - *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition

VI. Agency's plain writing website

[provide information on your website and include links to it]

- a. **Website address.** [Plain Writing at FCA](http://www.fca.gov/home/plainwriting.html), the agency's official plain writing Web page is located at www.fca.gov/home/plainwriting.html.
- b. **Contact us page.** To give the public an opportunity to report FCA documents that are difficult to understand, the agency's plain writing Web page provides contact information for Emily Yaghmour, the agency's plain writing coordinator.
- c. **Implementation of the Act**
 - i. **Documents covered by the Act.** FCA has identified the following agency documents as covered by the Plain Writing Act:
 - Reports of Examination
 - Informational Memoranda
 - Bookletters
 - Policy Statements
 - Legal Opinions
 - Major agency reports, such as the Annual Report on the Farm Credit System, the Performance and Accountability Report, and the FCA Budget Justification to Congress
 - Text for the website
 - Regulatory preambles

ii. **Timeline.**

Action	Target Deadline	Results
The agency will train all employees who write or edit documents covered by the Plain Writing Act.	April 13, 2012	Ninety-three percent of the 57 employees for whom training was mandatory have received training. In addition, 54 employees for whom the training was not mandatory have received training.
FCA will complete an online training presentation that will serve as mandatory plain writing training for all new FCA employees.	April 13, 2013	N/A
The agency will implement an awards program to recognize examples of plain writing.	April 13, 2013	N/A
FCA will provide resources and guidance to plain writing reviewers throughout the agency.	April 13, 2013	N/A

d. **Links to compliance reports.** The page contains a link to the [FCA Plain Writing Act Implementation Plan](#), which was published on July 8, 2011.

VII. Customer Satisfaction Evaluation after Experiencing Plain Writing Communications

As of yet, we have received no feedback from the public, either positive or negative, through our Plain Writing Web page.