



enewsletter

A publication of **aglearn+**

Fall 2015

 Follow us [@AgLearnToday](https://twitter.com/AgLearnToday)

Just Like the Fall Colors, AgLearn is Changing This Season

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- + Make Your IDP the Best It Can Be
- + Coming Soon: AgLearn Upgrade
- + 2015 Aggie Award Winners
- + 2015 Strategic Workshop Wrap-Up

The New AgLearn is Coming Soon

In this issue, get more details about the upcoming upgrade. See the highlights from the 2015 Strategic Workshop. You will also find helpful tips about your Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Make Your IDP the Best It Can Be

To develop an effective Individual Development Plan (IDP), you should first consider your current and future career goals (see IDP Questions to Consider). Once you have a good understanding of what must be accomplished and what goals you'd like to achieve, you can begin the process of developing the IDP with your supervisor.

Follow these simple best practices to make sure you develop an effective IDP:

- Make sure to give serious thought to your present and future goals so that your objectives are well defined.
- Remember that IDPs should be a joint effort between the employee and the supervisor.
- IDP planning is not a one-time event—the employee and the supervisor should have conversations throughout each performance cycle.

Ultimately, it is the employee's responsibility to take charge of his/her career. Use these best practices to make your individual development more successful.

IDP Questions to Consider

- What is the future direction of my agency? What will the organization need from its employees in the future?
- What are my goals over the next three to five years? (This question is crucial to providing a motivational focus for everything you do. Goals can be professional and/or personal.)
- What are my greatest strengths? How can I more effectively build on them?
- Do I have any gaps or weaknesses that prevent me from performing my current job to my best ability? Are there areas that prevent me from reaching my career goals?



FALL 2015

Coming Soon: The Latest AgLearn Upgrade

This Fall, AgLearn will be upgraded from version 6.4.5 to 1411. As always, AgLearn seeks to make things better for you so you can work better and faster. Here are just some of the great changes to come:

- **Mobile keeps getting better!**
 - AgLearn will be easier to use on your tablet on iOS and Android
 - Mobile enhancements will give you a similar experience, whether on your desktop or tablet
 - You will be able to take exams on a tablet
 - You can withdraw from courses on a tablet
- **Look and Feel!**
 - The new look is cleaner but still familiar with updated branding for a nicer experience
 - AgLearn will work better but there's no major change to the way you do things
- **Catalog searches**
 - Better than ever with keyword searches, search terms, and searches by relevancy
- **Items**
 - New item thumbnails that give you a better look at items
 - Optional surveys will automatically be removed when they are overdue
 - You can make recommendations about courses

AgLearn will keep you up to date as we get closer to the upgrade so you know what to expect and when. Get ready for the new AgLearn... coming soon!!

2015 Aggie Award Winners

Each year, AgLearn is pleased to recognize the agencies that excel at maximizing AgLearn and its resources. Here is a list of this years' proud winners. Congratulations again to all!

+ The Helping Hand Award

Marie Hubbard, Farm Service Agency (FSA)

+ Outstanding Achievement: Discretionary Completions

1st Place – Risk Management Agency (RMA)

2nd Place – National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

3rd Place – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

+ Outstanding Achievement: Mission Completions

1st Place – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

2nd Place – Risk Management Agency (RMA)

3rd Place – Farm Service Agency (FSA)

+ Outstanding Achievement: Return On Investment

1st Place – Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

2nd Place – National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

3rd Place – Risk Management Agency (RMA)

FALL 2015

Wrap-Up of the 2015 Strategic Workshop: See What Happened in the Room!

By all accounts, this year's workshop was another success. Held in mid-July in Washington, DC, the two-day event focused on the products and services from AgLearn partners and customers on the first day; the second day was devoted to internal AgLearn matters. For the second year, there were many ways to participate: attend the event in person, follow the event on Twitter, or join in via the web. Here's how the days unfolded:

DAY 1

Day one began with a welcome and an overview of the agenda from Deputy Director, John Rehberger. He reported some interesting facts:

- More than 8 million online courses have been completed since AgLearn began.
- There are fewer classroom classes and a larger increase in discretionary completions. Mandatory completions are down.
- Mobile usage is up.
- There has been an increase in IDPs and a big spike in Books24X7.

Most importantly, AgLearn is working now to make the website experience richer and more interactive for users. AgLearn is keeping pace with technology to meet your needs and make AgLearn easier to use. The vision for the future includes upgrading the user interface and continuing to support USDA's mission for its workforce.

Rosetta Stone

Derrick McGown and Justin Lautenschlager stated that AgLearn is one of the best and easiest groups they support. They talked about some unique features with V/4 Foundations, new gaming opportunities, and new tools to help place you in the right courses and improve access on your mobile device.

The Target Center

Paul Lloyd from the Target Center demonstrated some of the many mobile devices in use. From ergonomic seating, mobile devices, and cutting edge technology, the Target Center can accommodate people with low or no vision or hearing challenges as well as mobility challenges. The latest news is the National Loan Program which allows end users/testers to try assistive devices. Lloyd said to get educated so that you always keep accessibility in mind.

CourseAvenue

President Joe Gorup gave a quick history and his perspective on their offerings including more mobile solutions to meet customer need. He pointed out the challenges of elearning and how CourseAvenue can help to smooth the road bumps. He said CourseAvenue has embraced gaming technologies to offer new ways to work.

Virtual University

Jake Faibisch shared the Virtual University (VU) challenge: that every employee, everywhere, has the resources and support they need to work. The VU focuses on three primary areas: policy, curricula, and programs. Mentoring is one of the most impactful employee development efforts that people can do, according to Faibisch. Important to note: all new supervisors are required to take the new supervisor training before the end of their probation period. Experienced supervisor training is also required. Be sure to remain compliant.

FALL 2015

Wrap-Up of the 2015 Strategic Workshop (continued...)

SkillSoft

Anita Heller said there is a lot of traction on IT technologies. She pointed out that 90% of all Skillsoft course content is Java free. She announced the new video-based courseware and a new innovation coming with Books24X7. There is a new Skillsoft learning app that will give you engaging access to content anytime as well as some more innovations over the next few months. Check out the new Client Community website where you can find competency maps and more information.

Apple Computer – Devices, Mobility, Accessibility

Brian James was the last session of the day. He pointed out that USDA uses 20,000 iPhones, 6000 iPads, and 1000 Macs. He talked about the built-in accessibility of iPads to aid in AgLearn's goal to ensure access for all users. He also discussed iTunesU, a course manager that works like a lightweight learning management system (LMS) for training.



DAY 2

The Aggie Award winners were announced. This is an annual presentation to the agencies who have made achievements in various areas. The 2015 recipients can be seen on the cover page.

IT Fellows Program

Karen Simpson and Jari Santos said the program has been successful and has garnered great enthusiasm from the participants. Site visits gave fellows the opportunity to hear from federal experts and see real-world service. The 25 fellows come from all of the USDA agencies, breaking down silos. CIOs are heavily involved in shaping the program and alumni are invited to mentor future fellows.

Best Practices in Course Development V2

Dana DeRouche and Brad Stine discussed best practices for 508 and accessibility. All AgLearn courses must go through this compliance. The goal is that a person using assistive technology should be able to take the same course as an individual who doesn't need assistive technology. They provided tips to make the text and audio 508 compliant. Remember that all linked documents must be 508 compliant. A workaround can be used if all other efforts have been exhausted.

AgLearn Upgrade

Dana King discussed the upgrade from version 6.4.5 to 1411. He pointed out that not all changes will be obvious. Some changes include enhanced catalog searches, general admin changes, changes to the Assignment profiles, new mobile capabilities, and a lot of back-end changes that will make AgLearn better for you.

Making ATAN More Efficient: A Primer

Dana King informed the group that Team AgLearn gets more than 2000 tickets a year. He unveiled his David Letterman-style list of the "Top Ten Ways You Can Help Make ATAN More Efficient". Some of the tips include proofreading your tickets, making specific requests so that the problem can be solved, and many more. The key point to remember is to take troubleshooting steps to the simplest location first; then troubleshoot up to the more difficult.



National Training Education Resource (NTER)

Sudha Sriparameswaran gave an LMS overview. NTER works with other agencies to ensure an ongoing effort. NTER provides transfer and delivery of virtual classroom training. It's easy to access and it's web-based. Sriparameswaran shared the dashboard and the functionality within the platform.

FALL 2015

Wrap-Up of the 2015 Strategic Workshop (continued...)

Tabletop Discussions

The attendees broke into working groups to brainstorm about challenges faced in their respective agencies. Rounding out the day was "If I Were Supreme Ruler" led by a roundtable discussion on the challenges that AgLearn users face. Participants joined the chat remotely as well. After sharing ideas and experiences, the workshop wrapped up with great expectations for 2016.

Copies of all presentations are available on USDA Connect. You can still review the tweets on AgLearnToday #AGLW2015. See the photo gallery below!

