



# enewsletter

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PAGE **1** FALL 2012

## Welcome to the Fall 2012 AgLearn Newsletter

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- + New! Organic Literacy Courses on AgLearn
- + Digital Signatures Course
- + Top Ten Courses
- + Your IDP Questions Answered

Just as the summer closed, AgLearn opened its doors to reveal a new, improved experience for you. After many months of planning, preparation, and production, we finally reached the launch of AgLearn 6.4.

In this issue, you will get some information about innovative new courses and answers to your questions about your IDP. Use this newsletter—or reach out to Team AgLearn—whenever you need information or assistance.

## New! Organic Literacy Courses on AgLearn

### *Do you know the role USDA plays in organic agriculture?*

Take part in this series—designed to help USDA staff members gain a better understanding of the needs of organic and alternative agricultural producers. With this insight, you can make the USDA's programs and services accessible to customers

who need them most. The Organic Literacy Initiative, a cross-USDA team of 14 agency representatives, has developed two dynamic and informative training modules:

- + **Organic 101:** Introduction to Organic
- + **Organic 201:** Intermediate Organic

To provide the best service to our organic customers, you have to know which resources are appropriate for their needs. Become *literate* so you can make the right connections to the right services.

## Digital Signatures

*Did you know that it costs the USDA approximately \$0.03 for every page that is printed?*

It costs even more to print in color or to transmit and store paper files. By moving as much information as possible to electronic media, the digital signature initiative is an important effort to minimize the amount of paper used at the USDA.

International Technology Services (ITS) collaborated with AgLearn staff to design and create a new online course titled, *Digital Signatures*. The course is not mandatory but is an important avenue to learning what you need to know about the digital signature initiative. Less than one hour in length, the course consists of two modules:

### Module One

- + Differences between digital signatures and electronic signatures
- + Equipment that is needed to use digital signatures at USDA
- + Benefits of using digital signatures USDA policies governing the use of digital signatures

### Module Two

- + Digitally sign electronic documents and messages
- + Verify a digital signature
- + Remove a digital signature from a document

You can easily find this course by searching the AgLearn catalog for *Digital Signature*.

A second digital signature course is in the works to provide information on:

- + Return on investment (ROI) - repeatable model
- + How it works with Windows 7 and Office 2010
- + Current projects and efforts in USDA agencies

Watch for more information and reminders in upcoming communications throughout USDA.

## AgLearn's Top Ten Course List

- 1 **Google Skills Development**
- 2 **Getting Started with Windows 7**
- 3 **Word 2010, Excel 2010, and the New Office 2010 Interface**
- 4 **Getting Started with Outlook 2010**
- 5 **Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely**
- 6 **Developing Character for Decisiveness**
- 7 **Personal Productivity: Self-organization and Overcoming Procrastination**
- 8 **Personal Productivity Improvement: Managing Your Workspace**
- 9 **Google Skills Review**
- 10 **Overcoming the Barriers to Decisiveness**

Did you know that in the upgraded AgLearn, you can now rate the courses you take? You can give your opinion or *get the scoop* from your peers. The new user ratings function allows you to rate the items you have completed on a scale from one to five. You can use these ratings to choose courses and make recommendations to your peers. The course ratings will appear next to the courses when you search the catalog, making it easier for you to use.

## Your IDP Questions Answered

### *Questions About Your IDP in AgLearn?*

Most USDA employees now create their annual individual development plan (IDP) in AgLearn. With the recent AgLearn upgrade, a few questions have surfaced from those of you preparing to create your new fiscal year plan.

### *What happened to my expired plans?*

Once your IDP passes its expiration date, AgLearn automatically moves the plan to your **Completed Work**. In **Completed Work**, select the **Type** drop down list and choose **Plan**. All of your previously expired plans will appear. You won't be able to edit or modify those goals, but you will be able to view them for reference.

### *I created an FY13 plan before my FY12 plan expired. I noticed my uncompleted goals appeared on my new plan, but were flagged as invalid. Why did this happen?*

While your uncompleted goals were automatically transferred to the new plan, the target dates for completion were not changed. Also, a few fields on the FY13 plan are now mandatory. Be sure to edit those *invalid* goals and change the target date to a date within the current fiscal year. Also, be sure to fill in all fields that are labeled with a red asterisk\*.

### *I created a calendar year plan for 2012. Do I need to create a fiscal year plan from now on?*

Yes, USDA policy will now require that all employees create a fiscal year plan. This will allow for more efficient reporting methods across the Department. If you currently have a calendar year plan, be sure to create your new FY13 plan before your current plan expires at the end of the calendar year. That way, all of your uncompleted goals will automatically appear on your new plan. Make sure your current plan is in **Approved** status.

### *My FY12 plan has expired. Is there any way to move goals from this plan to my new plan?*

Yes. In your FY13 plan, select the option to add a new goal. At the top of the **Add Goal** window, select the **Goal Wizard** option. From the **Goal Wizard** window, choose the option to **Add Goals** from **Other Plans**. Your previous years' plans will be displayed in this window. Select the plan that holds the goal you wish to copy to your new plan and then select **Next**. All of your uncompleted goals will appear. Select the goal you wish to copy and then select **Next**. Fill in the new **Target Dates** and select **Finish**. Your old goal is now in your new IDP. The **Adding Goals from Expired Plans to Your IDP** job aid is available for you to complete this process.

### *I created a FY13 plan before my FY12 plan expired, but my uncompleted goals didn't move over to my new plan. Why didn't they move over?*

Most likely your FY12 was not in **Approved** status when you created the new plan.

### *What resources are available to me to learn more about how AgLearn handles IDPs?*

The best resources for learning about IDPs in AgLearn are the AgLearn+ IDP course and the Creating an IDP in AgLearn job aid. Take the course to learn about all aspects of the IDP; then keep the job aid close by for step-by-step guidance while you create your plan.