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Boost Your Search with Google!

AgLearn is proud to announce the latest addition – **Google Search Training** courses! Three new courses are available now: [Google Skills Development](#), [Google Skills Application](#), and [Google Skills Review](#). Each one provides lessons that are skills-based for the user who wants to learn the key search techniques as quickly as possible.

In the [Google Skills Development](#) course, you will watch a recording of how to implement the skills and practice with immediate feedback. The lessons range in length from 3 to 6 minutes with the entire course being approximately one hour in length.

Next, learn how combining multiple search skills can solve your search challenge in the [Google Skills Application](#) course. This engaging course is 15 minutes in length. Lastly, master your skills using the [Google Skills Review](#). In this 15 minute course, you will view a real-world application of the Search filter. Remember that these resources are available at no cost to you since your agency has prepaid for your license.

Retirement Planning Designed for Federal Employees

Now more than ever, financial and retirement planning is critical. Whether you're at the beginning of your career or a few short years from retirement, now is the time to get started. The first step is to take advantage of the Dmason courses available in AgLearn because these courses go beyond teaching – they help you develop your own personal financial plan.

Courses are available for everyone whether you are early-, mid-, or late-career. Start by choosing a course that correlates to the stage in your career. These self-paced courses allow you to focus on topics of interest and provide a step-by-step guide that will enable you to:

- Describe your financial goals
- Estimate how much money you need now and later
- Estimate your Federal retirement and other income
- Calculate your potential savings growth
- Calculate needed additional savings
- Evaluate risks and returns for investments
- Include your Federal retirement and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Learn how to choose investments for short-, intermediate, and long-term goals
- For late career, evaluate TSP withdrawals for training officers. These courses meet OPM Directives to teach Financial Literacy! [Click here](#) to select the right course for you, or click on the DMason Retirement Planning subject area in the AgLearn catalog.

It's never too late to start planning!

Let's Learn about Safety

Workplace safety is an important issue, especially for our field employees. USDA has a long history of providing training and resources to promote workplace safety and AgLearn is a great resource for your safety needs.

There are over 100 courses on environmental, safety and health topics that have been integrated into AgLearn. It is one of the newest ways that employees can access training on workplace safety issues. Some of the most popular courses are [Defensive Driving](#), [Hazardous Material Management](#) and [Back Safety](#).

Many of the courses serve as a good first step for meeting OSHA training requirements and provide valuable safety information. Try [Hazard Communication](#), which talks about the precautions that both you and your employer must take in order to safely use, handle, and dispose of hazardous chemicals in the workplace. Or try [Hearing Conservation](#), to help you prevent noise-induced hearing loss. Or maybe try [Lockout/Tagout](#), which provides information about control of hazardous energy and work under the protection of a Lockout/Tagout permit.

You can also take advantage of some personal safety classes such as [Heat Stress](#), which discusses the effects of heat on your body, outlines the risk factors for heat-related illnesses, and describes the associated treatments for each.

To take a complete look at all of the courses in Environmental, Safety, and Health Library, expand the subject in the course catalog. These resources are available to all learners at no additional cost since your agency has prepaid for your licenses.

Ready To Explore

Today's learners expect e-learning to be as engaging and visually rich as many of the web-based environments they encounter on a daily basis. The Business Exploration Series was designed with those expectations in mind – and it's available through AgLearn today! Comprised of the Business Impact Series and the Challenge Series, these bring to life, problems and solutions for a wide range of workplace and professional topics.

The Business Impact Series analyze frequently encountered workplace problems and deliver practical solutions. Taking just five 5 to 10 minutes to complete, each one focuses on a key scenario, uses innovative video and animation techniques to dramatize its core elements, and recommends a specific course of action. You can find these resources in the AgLearn catalog under nine separate topics as shown below.

Each Challenge Series is a practical solution that briefly immerses learners in a workplace situation, and gets them back to the job with tools to apply the concepts in their place of work. These resources are also located in the catalog as illustrated below.

As a reminder, these resources are available to all learners at no additional cost since each Agency has prepaid for licenses. So, start exploring today!

New SkillSoft Resources – Available Now

As March 2010 came to an end, many new resources had been added to AgLearn since the beginning of the year. New courses, simulations, videos, books, and even updated KnowledgeCenters are just some of the latest additions. Below is just a sampling of the newest resources.

Business Grammar

[Working with Words](#) and [Sentence Construction](#).

Resources to help you optimize your work/life balance including:

[Taking Control of Your Stress](#), [Analyzing Your Life Balance](#), and [Maintaining Your Life Balance](#).

Other new courses include: [Leveraging the Performance Appraisal](#), [Workplace Conflict: Strategies for Resolving Conflicts](#), and [Interacting with Others](#).

More courses can be found by clicking on the [SkillSoft – Latest Additions](#), which is located on the AgLearn splash page, under: **Learning Resources: New Courses — Just Released!**

Also, don't forget to check out the folders in Books24x7. These folders are updated monthly!

Assignments and Completions—2QFY10 Results

The second quarter of FY2010 has passed and the numbers are in. Did your agency's usage increase? RMA's numbers did—congratulations! The table below lists the agencies ranked by the combined number of assignments and completions. As a reminder, assignments are defined as items that have

been accessed by a learner but not completed whereas completions are items that have been marked complete in their learning history. These numbers are combined to show the big picture for discretionary training.

USDA Agency % of Assignments & Completions 2QFY10

RMA	9068%
APHIS	3980%
GIPSA	3117%
FSIS	2886%
NIFA	2633%
RD	2587%
ERS	2347%
NASS	2333%
Departmental Offices*	2017%
AMS	1919%
FSA	1843%
FS	1762%
ARS	1483%
NRCS	1269%
FNS	1191%
FAS	1185%

*Note: Departmental Offices includes: NAD, OBPA, OC, OCE, OCIO, OCFO, OES, OGC, CR, DA, OIG, and SEC.

These results clearly indicate significant increases in the utilization of discretionary training in AgLearn, which translates into cost-savings for each agency.

The percentages in the table were calculated by adding the total number of assignments and completions; then dividing by the total number of active users per agency. As the usage of AgLearn and its resources increase, the cost of discretionary training goes down; saving your agency training dollars.

If you would like to increase your agency's percentages, Team AgLearn can help. Send an email to Michele Borg at michele.borg@ocio.usda.gov to learn various ways to increase your agency's usage.

FY2010 Information Security Awareness Training

Congratulations to everyone that completed the FY2010 Information Security Awareness and Rules of Behavior Training before the overall department deadline on March 31, 2010. Keep in mind that incompatible computer configuration settings that created completion issues are not unique to this course. It is always important that your agency computers keep up with the AgLearn FDCC standards for updating trusted sites, Java, and Flash. Without these updates, your agency's workforce will not be able to maximize the full capabilities that AgLearn has to offer.

Whenever AgLearn identifies a trend that appears to affect multiple users from completing a course, Team AgLearn will develop a job aid or course instruction to help the user complete the training without having to revert to the AgLearn Help Desk. In the case of FY10 ISA and ROB training, the following Internet Settings and Completion job aids were created:

- [Internet Options Settings](#)
- [Completing Your FY2010 USDA Information Security Awareness and Rules of Behavior Training](#)

Please contact your Agency Information Systems Security Program Manager (ISSPM) for any questions regarding the FY2010 or the upcoming FY2011 training and compliance policy. A list of ISSPM for each agency can be accessed by clicking on the following link:

http://www.ocio.usda.gov/ocio/security/docs/ISSPM_List.xlsx.

PLEASE NOTE: You must be on the USDA network in order to access this information.

IDP Training for AgLearn Administrators

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a form designed to help employees plan and monitor their career development. Filling out an IDP helps employees and their supervisors identify the employee's career goals and the development opportunities available to meet them. Several agencies are currently taking steps to implement the AgLearn online IDP form to provide a more efficient means of collecting the data and integrating the training needs of employees with the available resources in AgLearn. The AgLearn online IDP, however, has a number of characteristics that are quite different from any paper form that you or the users you support may have worked with in the past. If your agency is implementing the AgLearn IDP, you may want to take advantage of the training resources offered by Team AgLearn.

On March 3rd, Team AgLearn offered a webinar on IDPs and Competencies to AgLearn agency leads and senior administrators. The webinar presented the concept of online IDPs as trusted source documents, which explains the underlying reasons for creating and submitting IDPs in a specific recommended fashion. The webinar stepped through the process of creating and submitting IDPs as well as adding activities to IDP goals to help achieve those goals. The webinar also explained how assigned competencies can be integrated with the IDP and how competency gaps can be addressed and tracked with this online form. Finally, best practices and troubleshooting tips were presented to help administrators better identify potential problems and support their users as they create, edit and submit their online IDPs.

If you are interested in learning more about supporting the implementation of IDPs in your agency and would like to attend one of these webinars, contact your AgLearn Agency Lead for more information.

IDP Training Resources for Users

Many users are not aware that there are a number of training resources that can help them create, edit, submit, and even troubleshoot their personal IDPs. One of the most common errors with the online IDP occurs when the user submits a plan but has not yet identified his/her supervisor in AgLearn. It is critical that anyone planning to create and submit an online IDP must first make sure their supervisor is identified in their AgLearn profile. A link to a user job aid providing the steps for updating an AgLearn profile can be found here: <https://aglearn.usda.gov/scorm-content/JobAids/UpdatingYourAgLearnProfile.pdf>.

AgLearn also provides online IDP training courses. To access the courses from www.aglearn.usda.gov, click **Help**.

Scroll down to the section titled **Individual Development Plan (IDP)** and click any of the links to launch training.

Finally, an FAQ document is available to help users identify their plan status and troubleshoot some common issues at: https://aglearn.usda.gov/customcontent/JobAids/IDP_FAQs.pdf

Ask Team AgLearn**Q: Who should I call for questions about AgLearn? Ghostbusters?**

A: That depends on the nature of the question. But whatever the reason, even paranormal activity, please refer to the [Contact Us](#) page, which is located in the top left corner of the AgLearn splash page. This valuable reference tool lists the AgLearn Point of Contact for every agency as well as the AgLearn Help Desk and the eAuthentication Help Desk.

Q: I was unable to attend the last Resource Awareness Day because the event was at full capacity. Will AgLearn have another one on the same topic?

A: Yes, AgLearn will conduct another Resource Awareness Day featuring Debbie Mason, a certified financial planner, on Monday, May 10th. Fortunately, we were able to secure all three rooms in the back of the USDA South Building cafeteria allowing for more people to attend this popular event. Here is the agenda:

11:00 AM EST to 12:00 PM EST - Early and Mid Career presentation and Q&A

12:00 PM EST to 1:00 PM EST - Late Career presentation and Q&A

Q: Why can't I change the supervisor or email address of some of the employees, particularly new

ones, within my agency, even though I have the proper Admin roles?

A: First, check the employee's Organization field (located on the Summary tab) to see if the Organizational Unit ID (a.k.a. Org code) has been assigned to a designated domain.

If it has, the Organization field will contain the first few characters of the Organization Unit ID (located under the Custom Fields tab) followed by the name of the domain it is mapped to in parentheses.

If an employee's Organizational Unit ID has not been mapped to a domain in AgLearn, the Organization field will contain "no org mapped".

In this case, report this issue to your Agency's POC or Lead AgLearn Administrator. **Neither an admin nor the employee can change information on the employee's user summary tab (email address, supervisor, etc.) until this issue is resolved.**

The AgLearn program is managed by USDA's Distance Learning Program Director under OCIO.
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