



The AgLearn Vine

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AgLearn Business Intelligent Pilot Project

AgLearn is implementing a Business Intelligence (BI) capability to assist the training community in improving program performance and address reporting requirements, using the wealth of data now in AgLearn, such as course completion data or requests for external training (SF-182's). Business Intelligence is a process of collecting, integrating, analyzing, and presenting information in a way that facilitates the discovery of actionable knowledge about a program.

While reports present information as a snapshot in time, dashboards and analytical tools present information over a time continuum – enabling users to understand trends, differences, or changes, and acquire new knowledge about their organization.

BI includes dashboards and analytics that enable users to see trends and make predictions about future conditions.

Furthermore, users will be able to “slice and dice” completions by organization, position, and/or demographics to gain new insights and perform comparative analyses.

The new BI capability facilitates answering questions such as the following:

- How many hours did employees expend on external training during a specified time frame by agency, organizational unit, location, or state?
- What was the total dollar amount expended during a specified time frame on external training by job series?
- Are offices that are located in close geographical proximity to one another hiring vendors to teach identical courses?

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Civil Rights Completions by Year

Subject Area	Completion Year	Total
CIVIL_RIGHTS	2004	8
	2005	6,811
	2006	9,023
	2007	1,595

USDA AgLearn Business Intelligent Pilot Project

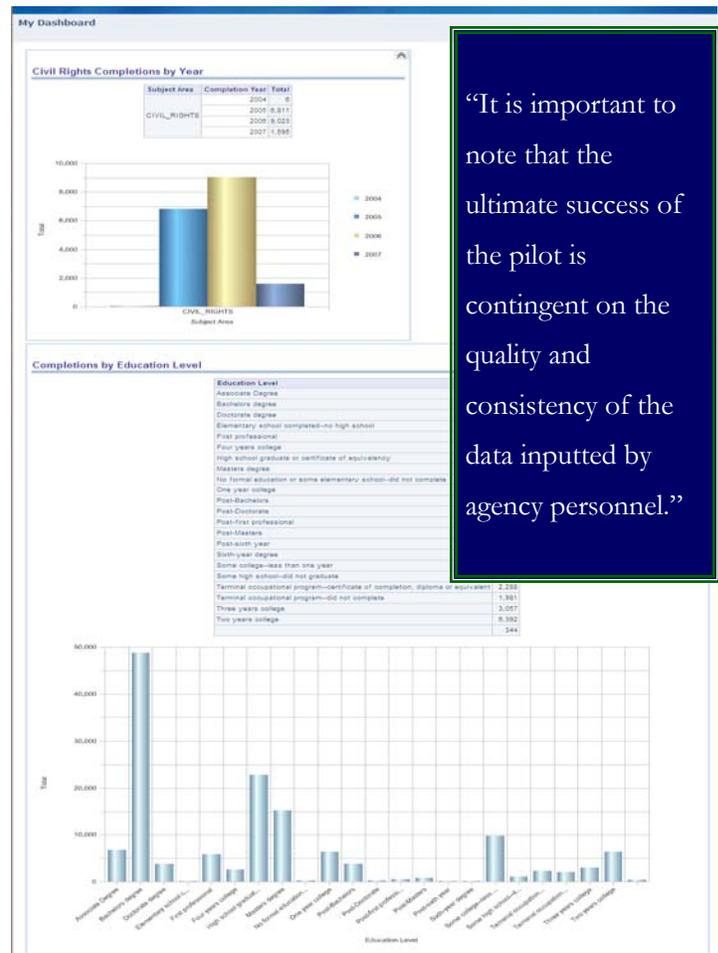
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- What percentage of training requests submitted by employees are denied?
- What are the top five reasons why requests are denied?
- Of the GS 11-13 employees who received leadership training, what percentage are still employed by the Department?
- How many of them are now at a higher pay grade?

An “Early Adopter Team” was selected from training members from various USDA Agencies. They have studied the product and have met several times to take on the following re-

sponsibilities:

- 1) Identify and prioritize requirements
- 2) Identity potential data quality issues, definitions and associated business rules (e.g., definition of a completion, rules for determining a completion)
- 3) Provide feedback on the BI solution design
- 4) Test pre-production versions of the BI solution
- 5) Provide insight on how to encourage use of the BI solution within their respective communities



“It is important to note that the ultimate success of the pilot is contingent on the quality and consistency of the data inputted by agency personnel.”

SF-182 Improvements: Vendor Table Update Process

Previously, using the vendor drop-down list when completing an online SF-182 in AgLearn was more of a hindrance than an aid because the vendor list was not sequenced alphabetically and there were many duplicate or seldom used vendors on the list. As a result, many people used the “Other” vendor option, which required them to manually input a vendor name along with all of the vendor’s contact information. Not only was this time consuming, but it also increased the chance of incorrect vendor data and prevented agencies and the Department from accurately summarizing data from common vendors. With this in mind, AgLearn has created a new

streamlined vendor list that is sequenced to facilitate rapid identification of a specific vendor. To save time, employees should now use the current vendor drop-down list instead of adding additional information via the “Other” option.

Additional tips: If training is to be conducted at different locations for the same vendor, simply input the alternate training location in the “Training Site” field on the SF-182 form thus avoiding having to reenter the vendor name and contact information.

To ensure that the vendor list remains a helpful, user-friendly tool, employees should contact their Lead AgLearn Administrator when a new frequently used vendor should be added to the list.

ACE Credits – Coming Soon to AgLearn!

What is ACE?

The American Council on Education (ACE) represents all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting institutions such as: community colleges and four-year institutions; private and public universities; and nonprofit and for-profit colleges.

What does this do for me?

Agreements are currently in place between ACE and SkillSoft for granting higher education credits to individuals completing courseware curriculum made up from groupings of SkillSoft online training courses. Many of these same courses are available in AgLearn to USDA Federal Employees. As a result, the AgLearn program requested and received ACE approval for course completions in AgLearn.

What curriculum does this cover?

Many IT and business curricula covering accounting, finance, Six Sigma, writing, human resources, ITIL, knowledge management, personnel management, project management (PMP and CAPM), programming, information and network security, networking, and desktop support will be provided through AgLearn.

How will this work?

Team AgLearn is currently working to group various online SkillSoft courses into special ACE Curricula in AgLearn. Each curriculum is designed so that a user can take courses in any order, but must complete all courses in a curriculum before being granted access to final exams. If any particular course exists within more than one curriculum, its completion will count for all curricula using that course. Once ready, the courses will be accessible directly within an ACE subject area in your AgLearn catalog. Full curricula can also be found through a catalog search, which will enable a user to assign themselves all courses in their desired curriculum at one time.

What else will I need to know?

Past completions of the associated SkillSoft courses will not count towards ACE credits. The courses must be repeated under its ACE curriculum grouping. We are currently working to define a process by which examinations can be proctored and certified for full credit completion. However, some curricula will require testing at certified testing facilities to receive final credit (e.g. Six Sigma, PMP, A+ Certification, etc.). Users are also responsible for coordinating with their own scholastic institutions to ensure that ACE credits are accepted.

New Releases for 2nd Quarter 2009

Have you seen the latest releases?

We are continually adding new courses, videos, books and other resources to AgLearn. One way to inform learners of the new releases is to announce them under Learning Resources on our Welcome Page. This list is updated on a quarterly basis.

Some of the new releases will include the Fourth Edition-aligned Project Scope Management Guide (PMBOK® Guide) courses.

Below are just a few that are available now!

[Defining and Sequencing Project Activities](#)

[Estimating Activity Resources and Durations](#)

[Developing and Controlling the Project Schedule](#)

[Quality Assurance and Quality Control](#)

[Planning Project Human Resources](#)

[Click here](#) to check out all of the latest releases on our welcome page!

Learning Resources

New Courses - Just Released! *Updated June 2009*
[SkillSoft - Latest Additions!](#)
 Check out all of the newest courses now available in AgLearn!

The Numbers Speak for Themselves

AgLearn uses many communication methods to increase awareness of the vast resources available to USDA employees. One method is email notification. Over the years, many emails have been distributed to targeted audiences as well as general communications to all learners. In order to determine the effectiveness of these emails, metrics are collected the week prior to the distributed email and compared to the week after. Check out these numbers!

Topic	Assignments Prior*	Assignments During	% Increase	Completions Prior**	Completions During	% Increase
Ninth House Overview	120	302	251%	89	101	113%
Handling Conflict	43	2049	4765%	18	301	1672%
Top 2008	269	2862	1064%	42	144	343%
NH Management	12	1234	10283%	4	641	16025%
Time Management	189	438	232%	24	218	908%
Listening Skills	4	807	20175%	11	290	2636%

* Indicates an item was added to a learning plan ** Indicates an item was completed and added to learning history

Planning Live Events—Easy as 1 2 3

Planning on delivering a “live” cross agency training event? Need to send out notifications, register attendees and record completions? Sound like a lot of work? Not at all, if you plan to schedule and announce your event by taking advantage of the tools and wizards available in AgLearn!

On April 22nd, Team AgLearn delivered a webinar on “Creating Live Cross Agency Training Events”. During this webinar, participants learned how to:

- Develop “direct-link” notifications, allowing users to register for training directly from the email that announces the event.
- Notify all registrants of a particular event automatically if training schedules need to change.
- Create multiple classes for an event in nearly the time it takes to create just one.
- Automatically place users on a waitlist who register for a class after the maximum registration has been reached.
- “Auto-fill” registrations from the wait list when cancellations or withdrawals occur.
- Record completions for all attendees in one quick step, using AgLearn’s “AutoFill from Class Roster” tool.

To view the recording of this webinar, [click here](#) or copy and paste the link below:

https://admin.na4.acrobat.com/_a824684986/p95504111/



Upgrading to Microsoft 2007?

Welcome to SkillSoft's
Microsoft Office 2007
KnowledgeCenter™

It's Easier than You Think!

AgLearn can be your one-stop shop for all your Microsoft 2007 needs. In addition to the many online courses, AgLearn provides access to the Microsoft Office 2007 KnowledgeCenter! Connecting to the experts, roadmaps, and practice labs are just a few of the hands on resources that you'll find in the KnowledgeCenter. Most importantly, these resources are available at *no cost to you* since your Agency has prepaid for your license! [Click here](#) to check it out today!

Connect with the Experts



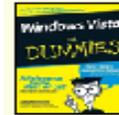
Need some help or advice?
E-mail or chat directly to the professionals in our expert center

Learning Roadmaps



Use targeted skills-improvement roadmaps to help you achieve your training goals

Selected Books



Windows Vista For Dummies
John Wiley & Sons

Related Resources

Microsoft Office XP Solution Center

OCIO IT Analyst Certification Testing

As an IT Analyst for OCIO-USDA, Mr. Jimmy Handal is required to have a certain level of technical expertise to perform his current job duties and to qualify for career advancement opportunities.

Maintaining technical expertise often involves receiving and updating IT certifications. Most IT certification exams have associated fees and must be taken at a test center. The MS Windows XP OS certification exam cost \$130 for an individual each time that it is taken. Mr. Handal was delighted to learn about SkillSoft's Microsoft test preparation courses available in AgLearn at no charge to all USDA employees. He felt that the courses did a great job at simulating a real, timed exam. He also liked the option to use the study-mode feature, which instantly provides the correct answer when a wrong answer is selected. Mr. Handal also stated that these test prep courses, compared to others, offered better test simulations which were closest to a real certification exam.

After discovering this resource in AgLearn, Mr. Handal plans to use the test prep and other courses to help prepare for future IT certification exams and recommends these courses to others.

Generally taken near the end of a program of certification-orientated study, SkillSoft TestPreps enable the learner to test their knowledge in a simulated certification testing environment. Learners can take TestPreps in two different modes: Study and Certification. Study mode is designed to maximize learning by providing feedback, while Certification mode is designed to mimic a certification exam.

Here are two prep courses that Mr. Handal found very useful:

TestPrep 70-271 Supporting Users and Troubleshooting a Microsoft Windows XP Operating System

TestPrep 70-272 Supporting Users and Troubleshooting Desktop Applications on a Microsoft Windows XP Operating System

Ask Team AgLearn

Q: I turned off the pop-up blockers in IE and still cannot launch a course, could a toolbar add-on to my browser be the problem?

A: Yes, search toolbars like those powered by Yahoo or Google often have their own pop-up blockers that may interfere with the launching of courses in AgLearn.

Q: Why does AgLearn keep sending me emails about courses that I'm not interested in?

A: Based on our current feedback, emails are distributed that highlight specific online training opportunities that are popular among employees. Our metrics indicate the emails are extremely effective in generating interest that may not occur without this communication. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause but unfortunately the system does not allow for specific users to be removed from mailing lists.

Q: Are there limitations to the type of data that can be entered into the SF-182 data fields?

A: Yes, the number of characters is limited by the specific data field. Also, the Title field will generate an error if an apostrophe is used and Cost fields will generate errors if commas are used. Therefore, the best practice is to avoid using *any* special characters in *any* of the SF-182 fields.

Q: I'm an AgLearn administrator and some new employees are still waiting for their AgLearn account. How are accounts created for USDA employees?

A: New AgLearn accounts are system generated when AgLearn receives data nightly from a source called the Common Employee Database (CED). The CED in turn receives information from a variety of sources, some of which are updated more frequently than others. If your agency is using the Empower system, it is likely that an AgLearn account will be generated within a day or two of the creation of the employee's eAuthentication account. If you are not an Empower agency, the AgLearn account may take as long as a few weeks to appear, depending on the update processes of the systems feeding the data into the CED.

For more information regarding the Empower system and its relationship to the USDA eAuthentication Service's new Fast-Track Employee Registration process, contact your Agency Registration Lead (ARL). A list of ARL's is located at: <https://app.eauth.egov.usda.gov/AccountServices/ARL/AgencyRegistrationLeads.aspx>

The AgLearn program is managed by USDA's E-Training Director under OCIO.

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AgLearn
Learning just got easier!