

Nominee Information

Name: Mika Cross
Title: Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager
Company: Office for Human Resources Management, USDA
Nominator: Cali Yost

What does this person do?

Mika leads the Department of Agriculture's Work/Life and Wellness program portfolio across 29 different Agencies, Mission Areas and Special Offices and strategically leverages the policies and programs under her purview to realize a number of key human capital objectives and Department-wide efficiencies. Working with top leaders, she effectively builds coalitions needed to position USDA as an innovative organization, recognized across Government as a best-practice for leveraging Telework and other workplace flexibility programs as a strategic management tool to accomplish a number of business efficiencies, to include continuity of operations during times when a USDA facility would otherwise be unavailable to work from; increased work/life flexibility which leads to improved employee morale, engagement and retention; as well as a means to realize cost savings when looking at real property costs; transit subsidy funding and attrition. Most importantly, Telework at USDA is an integral component of the Secretary of Agriculture's Cultural Transformation initiative: to ensure that USDA offers a flexible, supportive and inclusive work environment to attract and retain top talent that is reflective of the American Public whom we serve. This is especially important in the current work environment across Government.

How did this person go above and beyond in 2012?

In 2013, Mika has successfully become an ambassador across the Federal government, to elevate workplace issues not only for USDA benefit, but for the benefit of the rest of government. She routinely partners with the Office of Personnel Management to highlight USDA's best practices in innovative policy, program measurement and management and internal communications and marketing campaigns. She also partners with USDA's Labor Management Forum, employee-based organizations, Diversity Councils, Transformation initiatives and has volunteers to serve as Vice President for the Veteran Employee Organization (VEO) to help elevate workplace issues that affect Veterans at USDA to top leadership. Her ability to build coalitions across USDA and government has earned her recognition as a thought leader in her field. In 2013, Mika volunteered as a mentor for a group of Federal Fellows from the Partnership for Public Service's, Excellence in Government (EIG) program. Her leadership helped fellows from the NIH, EPA, DOE and the USAF Operations Agency build a virtual training course to address cultural and management challenges with adoption of Federal Telework across government. The training was held by webinar, and was free for all Federal employees to participate, and featured top leaders from their Agencies who leveraged Best Practices in overcoming challenges to Telework implementation. The web

raining was recorded and archived for future use and benefit, at no cost to Federal Agencies.

Give us an example of the impact of this person's work. How did it make a difference?

USDA's Telework and Work/Life Programs are constantly leveraged by the OPM Community of Practice to help other Federal Agencies learn how to effectively implement programs and policies across government. The USDA 2013 Telework Week campaign offered images, posters and flyers for others to use and Mika helped OPM develop a series of competency-based web training for Federal Telework Program Coordinators to learn the skills of how to effectively set and measure program objectives and goals. On behalf of the USDA, Mika's work has been cited in the latest OPM Telework ROI Whitepaper and was referenced several times throughout the 2012 OPM Telework Data Call Report to Congress. Her willingness to share resources, ideas and information positions USDA as a Best Practice for the rest of government and demonstrated her effective ability to build coalitions, partnerships and get things done more effectively.

Other Points:

Mika is an example of situational leadership in the Federal space. She is a tireless advocate for workplace programs, policies and initiatives to positively affect the Federal workplace and create a modern, flexible and agile work environment for future Feds across government.

Nominee Information

Name: Mika J. Cross
Title: Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager
Company: Office for Human Resources Management, Department of Agriculture
Nominator: Art Chantker

What does this person do?

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How did this person go above and beyond in 2012?

In 2013, Mika has successfully become an ambassador across the Federal government, to elevate workplace issues not only for USDA benefit, but for the benefit of the rest of government. She routinely partners with the Office of Personnel Management to highlight USDA's best practices in innovative policy, program measurement and management and internal communications and marketing campaigns. She also partners with USDA's Labor Management Forum, employee-based organizations, Diversity Councils, Transformation initiatives and has volunteers to serve as Vice President for the Veteran Employee Organization (VEO) to help elevate workplace issues that affect Veterans at USDA to top leadership. Her ability to build coalitions across USDA and government has earned her recognition as a thought leader in her field. In 2013, Mika volunteered as a mentor for a group of Federal Fellows from the Partnership for Public Service's, Excellence in Government (EIG) program. Her leadership helped fellows from the NIH, EPA, DOE and the USAF Operations Agency build a virtual training course to address cultural and management challenges with adoption of Federal Telework across government. The training was held by webinar, and was free for all Federal employees to participate, and

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Mika is an example of situational leadership in the Federal space. She is a tireless advocate for workplace programs, policies and initiatives to positively affect the Federal workplace and create a modern, flexible and agile work environment for future Feds across government. She has volunteered on a number of employee workplace organizations, serves as a mentor for many (including the HR University's Flash Mentoring events across government) and gives back her time to help others learn to adopt new ideas and initiatives. Some examples of her work have been cited in SHRM, BBC, FCW, Washington Post, Huffington Post and Federal News Radio:

Other Points:

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/536/3209721/USDA-work-life-office-promotes-telework-other-flexible-programs>
<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/Tool-Measures-Telework-ROI.aspx?hrnews>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2013/12/11/telework-once-a-mom-perk-keeps-government-humming-during-snow-storms/>
<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20130801-pyjamas-on-the-payroll>
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mika-cross/blurred-lines_1_b_4085242.html <http://fcw.com/articles/2013/05/30/usda-telework.aspx>

Name: Mika Cross
Title: Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager
Company: USDA
Nominator: Kate Lister

What does this person do?

Mika is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager which encompasses 29 different agencies, mission areas and special offices. In general, she is responsible for promoting and managing policies and programs that support the agency’s human capital objectives and improve agency effectiveness and efficiency. To this end Mika has:

- Worked with internal and external leaders to position USDA as an innovator
- Built telework and workplace flexibility programs that have been widely recognized as innovative, engaging, and models for success
- Dramatically increased employee participation in work-life and flexibility programs which has led to better morale, increased engagement, greater retention, reduced costs, and better continuity of operations
- Effectively integrated telework as part of the Secretary of Agriculture’s Cultural Transformation initiative; a program aimed at attracting talent by offering a flexible, supportive and inclusive work environment.

How did this person go above and beyond in 2012?

I’ve seen Mika go above and beyond what is required of her in a whole host of ways. Most impressive to me was how she overcome the problem of not being able to afford teleconference resources for her nationwide telework training. Mika’s “Let’s Talk Telework” webinars had become so popular in 2012 and that she had to turn people away because she did not have the budget for the number of telephone connections. To solve the problem, Mika took it upon herself to negotiate with an outside training partner (TMGov) to host her programs at no cost to the government. In addition, she has engaged the services of top telework authorities in both the public and private sector to enrich the training offered. This unique relationship has allowed over 5,000 employees from all across government—not just within USDA—to benefit from training they would not have received otherwise. TMGov was so impressed by the training and the audience Mika was able to bring, that they agreed to host a 6-part series with Mika as the lead. Those programs have been recorded and are available to other federal employees at no cost. In addition to the above, Mika has gone above and beyond by:

- Sharing

USDA's best practices, policies, marketing materials, and methods for measuring results with the Office of Personnel Management and other openly throughout government • Partnering with with USDA's Labor Management Forum, employee-based organizations, Diversity Councils, Transformation initiatives • Leading a process that resulted in USDA winning the 2013 Work-Life Seal of Distinction Award which led to positive publicity for the agency • Volunteering her own time to serve as Vice President for the Veteran Employee Organization (VEO) to help elevate workplace issues that affect Veterans at USDA to top leadership • Volunteering her own time to be a mentor for a group of Federal Fellows from the Partnership for Public Service's, Excellence in Government (EIG) program • As the winner of WorldatWork's Alliance for WorkLife Progress prestigious Work/Life Rising Star award, as well as the Innovate Excellence Work/Life Program Award. Mika has traveled at her own expense and on her own time to work with the organization to advocate for work-life issues throughout the public and private sector. • Serving as a mentor for HR University's Flash Mentoring events across government which help develop and inspire other public servants.

Mika's above and beyond efforts to promote telework and work/life programs have brought significant positive attention to not just USDA, but to the work/life and telework issues throughout government. For example her work have been cited in SHRM, BBC, FCW, Washington Post, Huffington Post and Federal News Radio:

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/536/3209721/USDA-work-life-office-promotes-telework-other-flexible-programs>

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/Tool-Measures-Telework-ROI.aspx?hrnews>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2013/12/11/telework-once-a-mom-perk-keeps-government-humming-during-snow-storms/>

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20130801-pyjamas-on-the-payroll>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mika-cross/blurred-lines_1_b_4085242.html

On behalf of the USDA, Mika's work has been cited in the latest OPM Telework ROI Whitepaper and was referenced several times throughout the Fiscal Year 2012 OPM Telework Data Call Report to Congress which was recently published in December 2013.

Give us an example of the impact of this person's work. How did it make a difference?

Other Points:

Mika is a tireless advocate and mentor for workplace programs,

policies and initiatives that are leading to making government more modern, more flexible, and more agile.