



PLAIN WRITING ACT COMPLIANCE REPORT

2015



Office of the Director

Overview

This report describes efforts by the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) to comply with the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (Act). The purpose of the Act is to improve the effectiveness and accountability of federal agencies to the public by promoting clear government communication that the public can understand and use. The Act also defines which kinds of documents are subject to the Act's requirements:

(2) The term 'covered document'—

(A) means any document that—

(i) is necessary for obtaining any Federal Government benefit or service or filing taxes;

(ii) provides information about any Federal Government benefit or service; or

(iii) explains to the public how to comply with a requirement the Federal Government administers or enforces;

(B) includes (whether in paper or electronic form) a letter, publication, form, notice, or instruction; and

(C) does not include a regulation.¹

Effective writing is a FHFA priority, and the Agency is committed to publishing documents that are clear, concise, and well organized.

Plain Writing Compliance

FHFA has taken a number of steps to enhance the quality and clarity of writing that the Agency produces:

- **Prioritizing Clear and Effective Writing in FHFA Documents:** Senior FHFA leadership prioritizes the importance of clear and effective writing in all FHFA documents. The Director and other senior leadership communicate this priority to staff on a regular basis, including at all staff meetings. Additionally, recent Agency policies

¹ 5 USC 301 note (Section 3)



highlight FHFA's commitment to producing documents that reflect strong analysis and clear writing. To further these policies, FHFA offered training to all staff, which was mandatory for some employees, on the process for developing and approving Agency written materials.

- **Offering Writing Training for Staff:** To improve the ability of staff to write clearly and effectively, FHFA offers two writing course options, which are described below. Since December 2013, approximately 145 FHFA employees have attended one or both of the writing courses. FHFA will continue offering writing training to staff, and the Agency will enhance these training offerings as appropriate in the upcoming year.
 - **Business Writing Principles Class:** The first training option targets employees who produce written work products in the Agency and want to increase the quality of first drafts and minimize revisions. This course takes place in a traditional classroom setting with a student-to-instructor ratio of 20 to 1.
 - **Subject Matter Expert Class:** The second training option is targeted for subject matter experts, managers, and supervisors at the Agency who possess business writing skills and would benefit from training to write more clearly and effectively. This course includes a four hour workshop and up to four hours of one-on-one writing coaching. The workshop and coaching are designed to improve clarity and accuracy of documents produced for both public disclosure and Agency internal use. This course takes place in a traditional classroom setting with a student-to-instructor ratio of 25 to 1 and is supplemented by one-on-one sessions.
- **Providing information on www.fhfa.gov:** FHFA works to communicate information to the public in a clear and effective manner on the Agency's website, www.fhfa.gov. The Agency launched a new website in 2014, which has made it possible to better integrate visual information and video communications along with clearly written descriptions of FHFA initiatives. For example, the Agency recently debuted a new blog, *FHFA Insights*, to communicate information to the public and a wide range of stakeholders.

Contact Information for Plain Writing at FHFA

Carrie Johnson, Senior Advisor in the Office of the Director, is the Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing and can be reached at plainwriting@fhfa.gov. FHFA has posted information about Plain Writing on the Agency's [website](#).

