

Federal Housing Finance Agency
Plain Writing Act Compliance Report
April 2013

This report describes the Federal Housing Finance Agency's compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (Act).

The Act is intended to make it easy for the public to understand government documents by requiring executive agencies to use plain writing in new or substantially revised "covered documents." The Act defines a covered document as one that is needed for obtaining any federal government benefit or service or filing taxes; provides information about any federal government benefit or service; or explains to the public how to comply with a requirement that the federal government administers or enforces.

Although relatively few of FHFA's documents are covered by the Act (FHFA does not directly provide benefits to the public), the agency is committed to writing documents that are clear, concise, and well organized. FHFA is also redesigning its entire Web site with plain language in mind.

FHFA continued to provide plain writing courses to employees, keeping class sizes small to ensure opportunity for individual feedback on each participant's written work. We also provided one-on-one writing coaching. We tailor all writing courses to the attendees' type of work products.

One of the writing courses started with a group session that focused on making FHFA writing easy to read. Participants worked on exercises (many of them taken from FHFA writing samples) to help make their writing well organized, clear, and concise. Several participants then took part in one-on-one coaching that was intended to help each improve his or her writing. The participants worked with the coach on three or four of their own writing samples over several months. There was definite improvement in their writing.

Many FHFA documents provide recommendations to agency leadership, and often involve contributions from multiple subject matter experts. Accordingly, we provided writing

training that, among other things, focused on producing documents that are standardized regardless of the number of contributors.

We will continue to provide training to staff who write or edit documents, and to those for whom writing or editing is not a significant responsibility, but who would like to improve their writing.

FHFA established a plain writing website at <http://www.fhfa.gov/PlainLanguage> . The senior agency official for plain writing is Sandy Comenetz, Executive Advisor to the Director, plainlanguage@fhfa.gov