



PLAIN WRITING ACT COMPLIANCE REPORT

2017



OVERVIEW

This report describes the Federal Housing Finance Agency's compliance 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 the kinds of documents that are subject to the Act's requirements as follows:

(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.

5 USC 301 Note.

Effective writing is an 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 and regularly communicates the importance of clear and effective writing in all FHFA documents, both those for internal use and those issued or available to the public. Agency policies highlight FHFA's commitment to producing documents that reflect strong analysis, collaboration, and clear writing. In 2017, staff worked toward updating an Agency policy that emphasizes the importance of writing in a clear and concise manner.

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- **Offering Writing Training for Staff:** To improve the ability of staff to write clearly and effectively, FHFA offers two internal writing course options:
 - **Business Writing Principles Class:** This training option targets employees who produce written work products in the Agency and want to increase the quality of first drafts and minimize revisions. The course is taught in a traditional classroom setting and the student to instructor ratio is no more than 20 to 1.
 - **Subject Matter Expert Class:** This training option targets employees who are subject matter experts, managers, and supervisors at the Agency who possess some business writing skills and would benefit from additional 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. The course is taught in a traditional classroom setting, and the student to instructor ratio is no more than 25 to 1. This course has also been incorporated as one of the 11 required courses under FHFA's Housing Finance Examiner Commissioning Program.

During 2017, based on feedback from students and senior management, FHFA modified the materials for this course. These modifications included example documents that are more FHFA-specific, new writing exercises, and training that emphasizes effective analytical writing.

From December 2013 through year end 2017, approximately 250 FHFA employees have attended one or both of the writing courses.

- **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 website integrates visual information and video communications along with clear written descriptions of FHFA initiatives and materials.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PLAIN WRITING AT FHFA

Carrie Johnson, Principal 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](#).