

USDA/ARS/PACIFIC WEST AREA

PWA Employee Handbook


PWA Workforce Diversity Committee
(PWA-WFDC)

2017

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 - WHENEVER YOU SEE THIS SYMBOL, IT REPRESENTS A LINK TO A WEBPAGE

PWA EMPLOYEE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The PWA Mentorship Program will be established for all new and current employees having no other mentorship (e.g., National Advisory Council for Office Professionals [NACOP] and Scientists [SYs]) opportunities available to them. It is intended to help those employees understand and further communicate the values, vision and mission of the Agency.

- **Benefits to ARS**

- Makes a smoother transition (new employees) into the workforce.
- Furthers professional development (new/current employees)
- Develops new and different perspectives, stimulating creative thinking and problem solving
- Increases career networks and receives greater agency exposure
- Aids in succession planning by ensuring institutional knowledge transfer

- **Benefits to Mentee:**

- New employees learn the ropes and navigate the terrain by having a guide who can explain the unwritten rules
- Provides valuable support/sounding board as employees adjust to new or changing responsibilities/expectations
- Assists employees to self-assess, set improvement goals, and develop skills and knowledge needed to achieve maximum performance

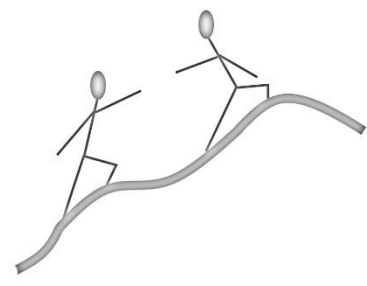
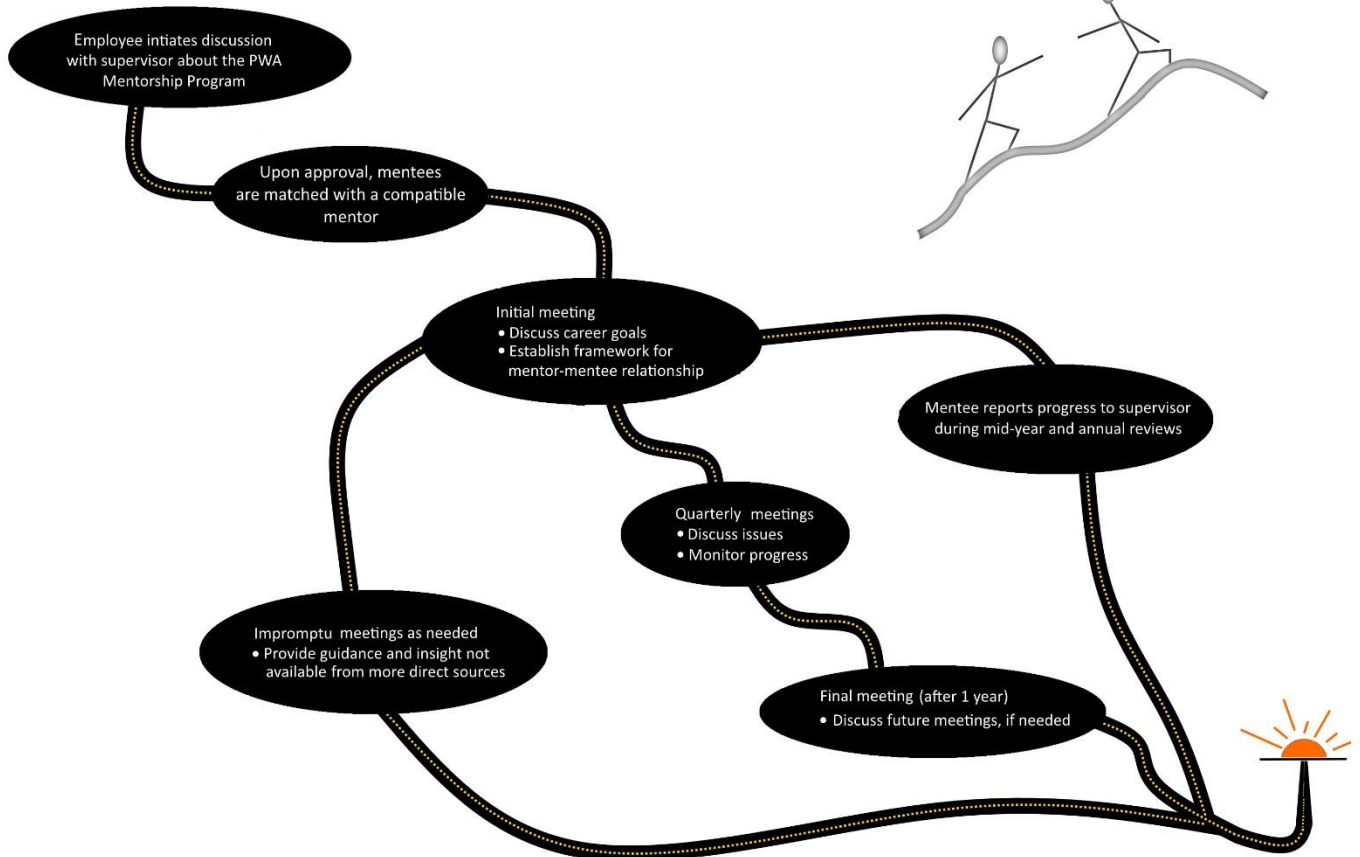
- **Benefits to Mentor:**

- Provides personal fulfillment through nurturing professional growth in co-workers who demonstrate potential
- Deepens understanding of different perspectives when mentor begins to look at things from the mentee's position
- Offers an opportunity to be recognized, valued and appreciated for the knowledge, experience, and guidance they contribute to others

Mentoring Guidelines

- [Proposed PWA Mentoring Program Guidelines - w \(TBD – Under Construction\)](#)
- Program administered and monitored by the PWA-WFDC
 - Mentor-Mentee must each have supervisory approval to participate
 - Informal, 1-year cycle (may be renewed if parties agree, and receive supervisory approval to continue)
 - Quarterly meetings between Mentor-Mentee
 - Impromptu Meetings, as needed
 - Meetings can be held: one-on-one, virtually, telephonically

PWA Mentorship Program



EMPLOYEE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

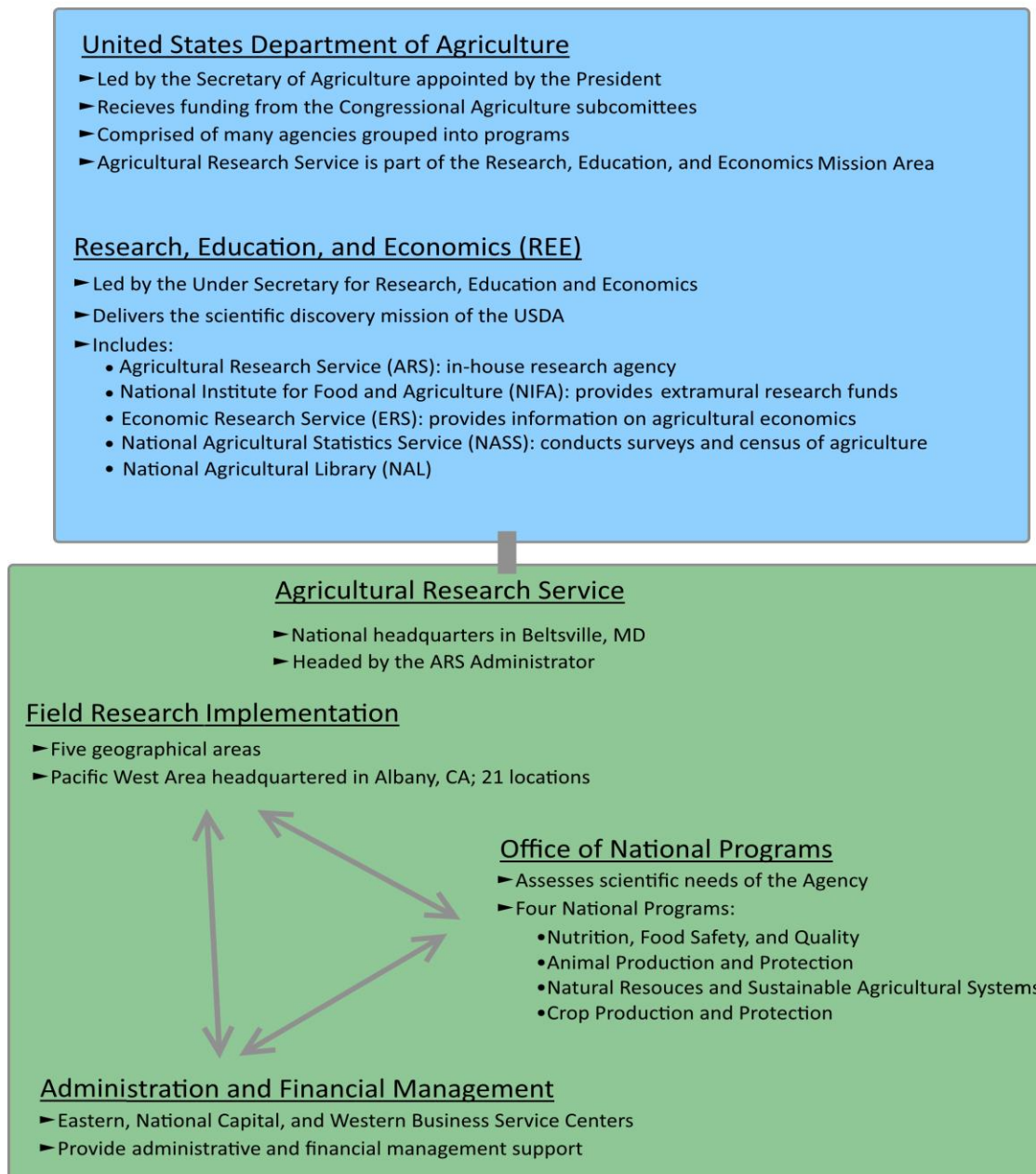
ARS employees are expected to adhere to Standards of Conduct, and to contribute to a work environment that is conducive to agency goals. In addition, federal employees are prohibited by the Hatch Act Law from participating in certain political activities. The following links provide an overview of standards of conduct, and list prohibited political activities. Contact an ethics officer if you have questions about prohibited activities.

- [USDA Employee Responsibilities and Conduct](#)
- [REE Policies and Procedures](#)
- [The Hatch Act: Permitted and Prohibited Political Activities](#)
- [USDA Office of Ethics](#)
 - [New Employees](#)
- [Scientific Ethics](#)

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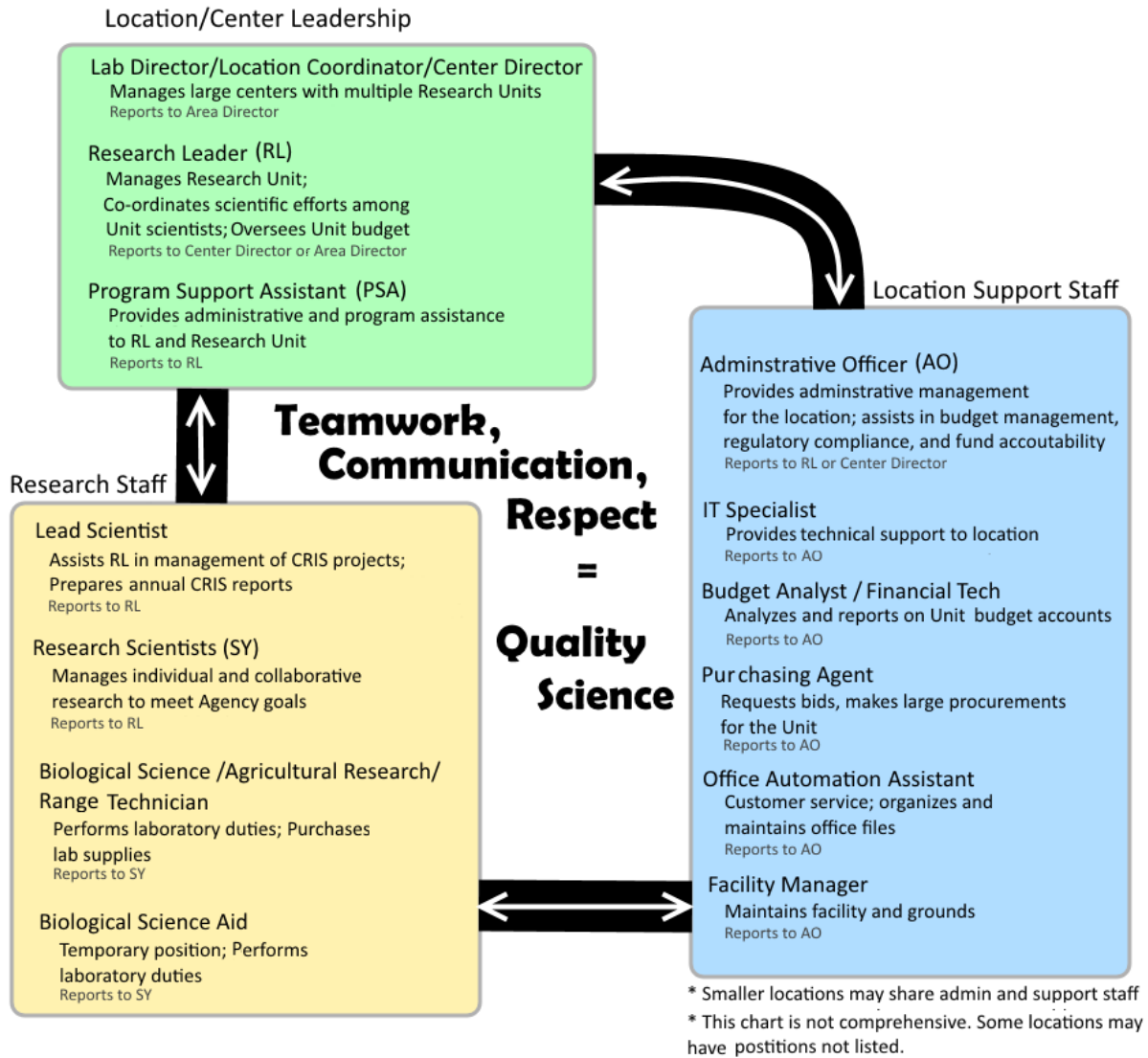
ORGANIZATIONAL HIERARCHY

The ARS is an agency of the USDA within the Research Education and Economics mission area. The USDA-ARS is the largest agricultural research organization in the world. There are nearly 3000 employees working on about 1100 projects at more than 100 locations administered from 5 regional Area Offices. The structure of the agency and the interactions among various offices of the Agency and USDA can be confusing, but are important to understand.



- [ARS Organizational Chart](#)
- [Administrative and Financial Management Council \(AFMC\)](#)
- [ARS Research Locations Map](#)
- [PWA Locations](#)

LOCATION/CENTER/SUPPORT STAFF ORGANIZATION



This organizational chart depicts a general construction of the Location Support Staff (LSS) at an ARS field location. It also depicts the general construction of all location personnel. The LSS may vary depending upon a number of variables: e.g., the number of employees; the number/types of scientists/scientific disciplines; geographical location, etc. To best understand how various positions operate at your location, contact and engage with the person serving in that capacity to gain a better understanding of their particular role and responsibilities.

ARS ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

AFM works in partnership with the REE agencies, their customers and partners, and the public by meeting their administrative and financial management needs and interests through delivery of responsive and effective business services. Incorporated in AFM are the Eastern, National Capital and Western Business Service Centers, Acquisition and Property, Extramural Agreements, Facilities, Financial Management, and Human Resources Divisions as well as the Homeland Security program.

Links provided below provide details of employee salaries and benefits, and links to other online resources for federal employees.

- [2017 General Schedule \(GS\) Locality Pay Tables](#)
- Benefits
 - [Human Resources](#)
 - [Employee Benefits](#)
 - [Healthcare](#)
 - [Life Insurance](#)
 - [Retirement](#)
 - Retirement and Benefits Staff: (301)504-4376
 - [Thrifts Savings Plan \(TSP\)](#)
 - [Long Term Care](#)
- [Employee Assistance Program](#)
 - [Employee Assistance Program Overview](#)
 - PHONE NUMBER: 1-800-222-0364
- Employee Resources
 - [AFM](#)- Links to:
 - AgLearn-online training - [w](#)
 - eOPF - electronic Official Personnel Folder - [w](#)
 - EPP - Employee Personal Page - [w](#)
 - WebTA - Time and Attendance - [w](#)
 - AXON - ARS Intranet - [w](#)
 - [Your2Cents](#)- Share Ideas. - [w](#) (HTTP 404 Not Found)
 - [REE Policies and Procedures 402.1 – Flexible Work Schedules](#)
 - [REE Policies and Procedures 402.6 – Leave Administration](#)
 - [REE Telework Program](#)

ARS AUTOMATED SYSTEMS

Most employees will be required to work with one or more ARS automated systems. The links below provide information for the most common ARS software.

- **General Information**
 - [ARIS](#) Agricultural Research Information System - ^w
 - [CATS](#) CRIS Allocation Tracking System - ^w
 - [CRIS](#) – Current Research Information System
 - [CONCUR](#) - ^w
 - [PCMS](#) Purchasing Card Management System - ^w
 - [REE](#) eForms - ^w

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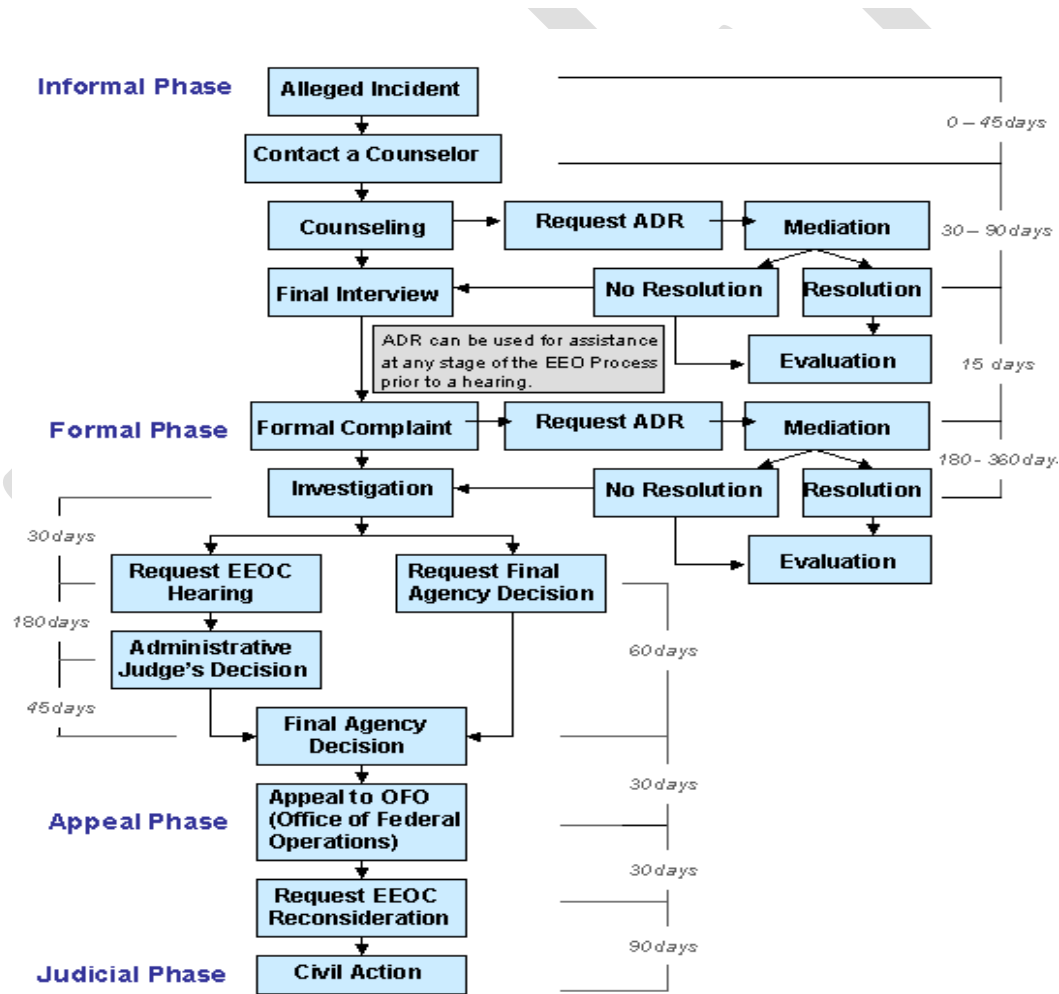
EEO PROCESS

"One of the Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) top priorities is to improve civil rights throughout the Agency by eradicating discrimination, sexual/nonsexual harassment, and retaliation; improving and successfully managing a work environment as diverse as our customers; creating and maintaining an environment where all ARS employees are valued, respected, and free to develop and perform to their fullest potential; and diversifying a work environment representative of our customers."

-Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, ARS Administrator

The EEO Complaint Process

ARS is committed to treating employees and customers fairly. The EEO complaint process consists of the informal process and the formal process. If an employee feels they have been discriminated against and wishes to file an EEO complaint, they must begin with the informal process. For further information on the EEO Complaint Process, contact the ARS [Office of Outreach Diversity and Equal Opportunity](#) (ODEO) to speak with a member of the Civil Rights Staff at (202) 720-6161.



This link provides important information by answering [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) regarding the EEO Process.

ADMINISTRATIVE GRIEVANCE PROCESS

- **REE Policies and Procedures – Administrative Grievance System – 463.2**

This Policy and Procedure establishes procedures and time limits for filing and resolving grievances under the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Administrative Grievance System. The Employee Relations Branch (ERB), Human Resources Division (HRD), AFM, is available to provide more detailed guidance to employees and supervisors concerning grievances.

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APPROPRIATIONS

All government agencies are annually funded by congressional appropriations bills. Employees will likely receive periodic emails indicating the status of the appropriation bill to fund the next fiscal year (beginning on October 1st). Occasionally, disagreements on appropriation bills can lead to a government shutdown.

Information on Pending Bills

President's Request

- ▶ President makes funding request for next fiscal year
- ▶ No binding authority
- ▶ First Monday in February



Congressional Budgeting

- ▶ House and Senate Budget committees establish total discretionary for next fiscal year
- ▶ Full 10 years considered, but only next fiscal year is binding
- ▶ Voted in full chamber; President does not sign.
- ▶ Ideally completed by April 15th



Congressional Appropriations

- ▶ 12 Appropriations subcommittees mark-up program-by-program funding
- ▶ Full appropriations committee approves sub-committee reports.
- ▶ Full chamber debates and passes appropriation bills.
- ▶ House and Senate must negotiate a bill that can pass both chambers of Congress.
- ▶ Occasionally, the 12 appropriation bills are packed into an Omnibus spending bill if the twelve separate bills cannot be passed before October 1.
- ▶ Minibus spending bills combine several appropriation bills together that don't require further debate, allowing debate to continue on other appropriation bills.

President Signs into Law

- ▶ President signs appropriation bill into law before October 1.
- ▶ Or, president vetos appropriation bill and sends it back to Congress.



What happens when an Appropriations Bill is not passed by October 1st

- ▶ Congress can pass a Continuing Resolution to provide short-term funding for government operations and personnel. These Continuing Resolutions continue appropriations at existing levels to provide Congress more time to debate disagreements over regular appropriations.
- ▶ A Government Shutdown occurs if Congress and the President do not pass an Appropriations Bill or Continuing Resolution. During a shutdown, all "non-critical" personnel are furloughed until funding is restored. A shutdown event last occurred between September 30th and October 17th 2013.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

The use of acronyms by the US government is wide-spread and often confusing. In fact, many of the links provided in this handbook contain acronyms that will be unfamiliar to new employees. The following glossaries to help translate unfamiliar acronyms.

- [Acronyms Common to USDA, REE, and ARS](#)

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