

USDA Agricultural Research Service

For period covering October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

<b>PART A</b> Department or Agency Identifying Information	<b>1. Agency</b>	<b>1.</b> USDA Agricultural Research Service
	<b>1.a</b> 2nd level reporting component	
	<b>2. Address</b>	<b>2.</b> Rm. 3913 S.B., 1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
	<b>3. City, State, Zip Code</b>	<b>3.</b> Washington, DC 20250
	<b>4. Agency Code</b>   <b>5. FIPS code(s)</b>	<b>4.</b> AG03   <b>5.</b> 50000

<b>PART B</b> Total Employment	<b>1.</b> Enter total number of permanent full-time and part-time employees	<b>1.</b> 5523
	<b>2.</b> Enter total number of temporary employees	<b>2.</b> 1597
	<b>3. TOTAL EMPLOYMENT [add lines B 1 through 2]</b>	<b>4.</b> 7120

<b>PART C</b> Agency Official(s) Responsible For Oversight of EEO Program(s)	Title Type	Name	Title
		Head of Agency	Tom Vilsack
	Head of Agency Designee	Simon Liu	Administrator
	Head of Agency Designee	Simon Liu	Administrator
	Principal EEO Director/Official	Tracey Troutman	Director, ODEO
	Complaint Processing Program Manager	Sheila Cheeks	EEO Manager
	Hispanic Program Manager (SEPM)	Debra Owens-Coleman	Program Analyst
	Women's Program Manager (SEPM)	Debra Owens-Coleman	Program Analyst
	Disability Program Manager (SEPM)	Mary Weber	HR Specialist
	Special Placement Program Coordinator (Individuals with Disabilities)	Mary Weber	HR Specialist
	Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager	Joseph McCleary	Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager
	ADR Program Manager	Sheila Cheeks	EEO Manager
	Principal MD-715 Preparer	Debra Owens-Coleman	Program Analyst

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<b>PART D</b> List of Subordinate Components Covered in This Report	<b>Subordinate Component and Location (City/State)</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Agency Code</b>
	USDA Agricultural Research Service Beltsville, MD	United States	AG00
	USDA Agricultural Research Service Washington, DC	United States	AG00
	USDA Agricultural Research Service Stoneville, MS	United States	AG00
	USDA Agricultural Research Service Peoria, IL	United States	AG00
	USDA Agricultural Research Service Beltsville, MD	United States	AG00
	USDA Agricultural Research Service Fort Collins, CO	United States	AG00
	USDA Agricultural Research Service Albany, CA	United States	AG00

<b>EEOC FORMS and Documents</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Uploaded</b>	
Agency Strategic Plan	Y	Y	
EEO Policy Statement	Y	Y	
Organization Chart	Y	Y	
Alternative Dispute Resolution Procedures	Y	Y	
Reasonable Accommodation Procedure	Y	Y	
Personal Assistance Services Procedures	Y	Y	
Anti-Harassment Policy and Procedures	Y	Y	
EEO Strategic Plan	N	N	
Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) Report	N	N	
Diversity Policy Statement	N	N	
Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) Report	N	N	
Human Capital Strategic Plan	N	N	
Results from most recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey or Annual Employee Survey	N	N	

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: MISSION**

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's](#) chief scientific in-house research agency.

ARS is divided into 5 geographic Areas across the country: [Midwest Area](#) || [Northeast Area](#) || [Pacific West Area](#) || [Plains Area](#) || [Southeast Area](#)

ARS also includes: || [National Agricultural Library \(NAL\)](#)

ARS conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority and provide information access and dissemination to ensure high-quality, safe food, and other agricultural products; assess the nutritional needs of Americans; sustain a competitive agricultural economy; enhance the natural resource base and the environment; and provide economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ESSENTIAL ELEMENT A-F

**Essential Element 1: Demonstrated Commitment from Agency Leadership**

**USDA 2023 Civil Rights and USDA 2021 Anti-harassment policy statements distributed to all employees and placed on ARS site <https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/odeo-policy-statements/>**

ARS submitted the FY 2022 MD-715 within the requested timeframe to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) and the Equal Employment Commission. The report was submitted electronically into EEOC's Federal Sector EEO Portal by the requested due date. The quarterly reports were submitted by the requested OASCR due date. The annual MD-715 Executive Summary and FY 22 Annual Affirmative Action Plan are posted on the ARS ODEO web page [MD-715 Part Data - 2022.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#) and <https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/odeo/MD-715/MD-715%20Affirmative%20Action%20Plan%20-%202022.pdf> respectively.

MD-715 briefings and overviews are conducted on an as needed basis and are also part of the agency compliance reviews.

ARS provides EEO/civil rights information, counseling, and advice to 100 percent of employees requesting the information through a variety of sources to reduce EEO complaints. All employees requesting EEO/civil rights information and guidance regarding the complaint process are referred to the Agency's website at <https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/the-eeo-compliance-branch/>

The Director of the ARS, Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) reports directly to the Administrator. The Director serves as an advisor to the Administrator and retains a seat on the Administrator's Council (senior management team), thereby preserving visibility and influence at the Agency level. The ODEO director and team provide information to employees and customers regarding recruitment strategies to increase the number of underrepresented and traditional underserved populations, succession planning, and other workforce changes.

Agency wide, 2375 EEO observations were conducted in FY 23 by ODEO and/or non-ODEO designated employees.

**Essential Element 2: Integration of EEO into the Agency's Strategic Mission**

The agency is supporting the implementation of Executive Orders 14035 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce and 13985 Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government with the development of new USDA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Goals, Strategic Objectives, and Implementation Strategies to ensure equity and diversity and address barriers to diversity.

ARS holds managers and supervisors accountable for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce through the REE Recruitment Agreement, in particular, Appendix A, which requires the ARS hiring managers utilize the MD-715 in the recruiting process in efforts to increase diversity. In addition to the checklist required by the policy, ARS managers review the OPM Shared List of People with Disabilities before they can move forward with the competitive hiring process.

ARS submitted the FY 2021 MD-715 within the requested timeframe to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) and the Equal Employment Commission. The report was submitted electronically into EEOC's Federal Sector EEO Portal by the requested due date. The quarterly reports were submitted by the requested OASCR due date. The annual MD-715 Executive Summary and FY 20 Annual Affirmative Action Plan are posted on the ODEO website at <https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/odeo/MD-715/FY%202020%20MD715%20Parts%20Report.pdf> and <https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/odeo/MD-715/ARS%20Affirmative%20Action%20Plan%202020.pdf>

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Agency wide, 1543 EEO observations were conducted in FY 22 by ODEO and non-ODEO employees.

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ARS continues to conduct activities in K-12 schools, universities/colleges, minority serving institutions and organizations that cater to persons with disabilities to address identified areas of underrepresentation in the Agency. ARS utilizes several handouts, and branding/engagement tools to increase the Agency's brand appeal and decrease the negative stigma of agriculture. In addition, the Agency's social media accounts (i.e., Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Tellus) are branding/engagement tools used to expand efforts to connect/engage with the public – includes underserved communities and minority institutions.

ARS' Human Resources Division's Talent Outreach Branch continued developing and disseminating the Weekly Vacancy Listings via approximately 80,000 subscriber List Serve consisting of potential applicants from underrepresented groups and persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Agency continued utilizing its LinkedIn Careers Page to post scientific job opportunities as well as running recruitment campaign ads to expand the applicant pool to recruit and retain the best talent to the Agency.

ARS continued to have a robust student employment program focused on recruitment and training the next generation of agricultural leaders. The following programs are highlighted:

- Supported the USDA/1890 Partnership through the 1890 National Scholars Program. The USDA/1890 National Scholars Program is a partnership between USDA and the Nation's nineteen 1890 Land-grant institutions (HBCUs) to address recruitment issues through education and workforce development. During **FY 2023, ARS supported 43 USDA 1890 National Scholars** at various 1890 institutions across the country.
- ARS and the World Food Prize Foundation continued the Wallace-Carver Fellowship program as part of a long standing partnership. The Wallace-Carver Fellowship offers exceptional college students the opportunity to collaborate with across the United States. **Nine (9) Wallace-Carver Fellows were hired FY 23.**
- Supported the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership's (CAPAL's) mission to empower Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) youth by increasing access to public service opportunities and building a strong AANHPI public service pipeline. During **FY 23, ARS and CAPAL entered an agreement to place two students** to work in ARS' research laboratories or administrative and financial management offices and cover conference cost **in support of the CAPAL Summer Fellowship Program.**
- ARS is a proud supporter of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). As part of this partnership, **ARS placed 322 HACU interns in FY23** to work in Agency research laboratories or administrative and financial management offices. ARS is the largest supporter of HACU at USDA.

The Agency funded participation in the following outreach events scheduled in FY 2024:

- The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual First Americans Land-Grant Consortium (FALCON) Conference scheduled October 13-15, 2023 (FY 2024) in Denver, Colorado. The conference will include sessions on teaching, extension, and research programs that benefit Native American students, communities, governments, and lands.
- An information booth at the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) Conference scheduled October 20-23, 2023 in Spokane, Washington. The conference attendees will consist of High School students through undergraduate and graduate students.

The Agency continued conducting and/or supporting USDA-wide Special Emphasis Programs (SEP) observance webinars consisting of panelists from affinity/employee resource groups, scientists, tribal colleges and universities administrators,

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faculty and students, non-profit organizations, and other subject matter experts to advance and embed diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility throughout the workforce. Discussion topics (a) addressed barriers to eliminate under representation in the workforce; (b) addressed recruitment and outreach programs, partnerships, and initiatives to eliminate barriers; (c) educated the workforce on cultural diversity, equal employment opportunity, and civil rights issues; and (d) encouraged employees to seek out and participate in career development and mentoring opportunities. In FY 23, ARS co-hosted, planned and conducted a well-attended REE Mission Area special emphasis observance Zoom webinar for Hispanic Heritage Month that addressed the significance of Hispanics as drivers of America's prosperity, power, and progress and showcased the contributions of Latinos and the barriers the community still face.

The Agency is committed to upholding civil rights; advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA); and creating a culture that respects, welcomes, and supports all employees, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer+ (LGBTQ+) individuals and people with disabilities. As a result of the Administrator's strong commitment, the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) developed EEO action plans for the Agency's Equity, DEIA, and Justice40 Implementation Plans as well as coordinated, monitored, and tracked status of the three plans to ensure objectives that enhance relationships and develop new sustainable partnerships to build an increasingly diverse pipeline from underserved and underrepresented communities; build a culture that drives trust, belonging, transparency, accountability and employee empathy; and facilitate the Agency to become the premier employer in agricultural sciences are met as aligned with the USDA and ARS Strategic Plans.

Additionally, ODEO developed a strategic, unified Agency wide recruitment effort to address racial underrepresentation in the permanent scientific workforce and improve other areas of EEO commitment.

It is ARS' policy to create a work environment which promotes and encourages the recruitment, hiring, retention, career development, and advancement of all disabled Veterans. ARS ensures employees with disabilities have accommodations needed to assist in carrying out the duties assigned for their positions. Employees with disabilities are consulted on any barriers that may impair their ability to compete in the workplace because of disability. ARS provides employment counseling and skill training to transitioning service members and has a mechanism to provide timely employment information and resources to veterans. ARS is the only agency in the REE mission area that has the authority to recruit outside hires through the Demonstration Project (DEMO authority). The use of DEMO authority gives veterans greater opportunities than the preference given to them by standard OPM hiring procedures.

In FY 23, the agency **hired 96 veterans** and currently **employs 602 veterans**.

**Element 3: Management and Program Accountability**

ARS holds managers and supervisors accountable for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce through the REE Recruitment Agreement, in particular, Appendix A, which requires the ARS hiring managers utilize the MD-715 in the recruiting process in efforts to increase diversity.

ARS recognizes its employees for exemplary achievements in promoting a diverse workplace free from discrimination, harassment, retaliation and demonstrated commitment to workforce diversity through an ODEO award by the Administrator. The FY 23 Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity award winners were recognized at the annual Employee Recognition Program on April 18, 2023. The **supervisory/managerial award** was "For creating outstanding ways to interact with the students and staff of the Chicago High School Agricultural Sciences, as part of the Three Sisters Project." The **non-supervisory/non-managerial award** was "For promoting diversity, leading outreach activities, and encouraging others to engage in activities towards improving the working environment."

The ARS Engagement Council provides coordination, guidance, and leadership for employee engagement activities across ARS. Among the engagement actions include webinars where employees have an opportunity to discuss concerns with senior management. The Council is constantly updating the Administrative Council (Senior Leadership). The Engagement Council members have worked with employees to establish engagement councils at local levels to facilitate increased engagement

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throughout ARS. Employees have access to Engagement Council information and updates on the Agency's intranet, Axon.

The Engagement Council and agency wide emails encouraged employees to complete the FY 23 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). On February 22, 2023, HR hosted the FEVS Inform and Engage webinar to discuss the FY 2022 FEVS results and answer employee questions about FEVS. **The FY 23 FEVS response rate was 69.9%, a 10.4% higher response rate than FY 2022.** Managers and employees are encouraged to work together to analyze and use the FEVS results to identify and discuss actions that will improve the workplace.

Nine (9) employees participated/are participating in career development training programs and 26 employees participated/are participating in Detail Programs. Career development/leadership training and details are designed to provide promotion opportunities to underrepresented employees in the workforce.

**Essential Element 4: Proactive Prevention**

FY 23 Compliance reviews were conducted for AFM's Human Resources Division-Headquarters (HQ)-George Washington Carver Center (GWCC), Beltsville, MD on August 29, 2023; AFM's Acquisition and Property Division-HQ GWCC, Beltsville, MD on August 31, 2023; SEA-Florence, SC Location on September 20, 2023; and MWA-Columbia, MO Location on September 18, 2023.

Over 4000 employees completed training in reference to: Reasonable Accommodation, No Fear, EEO for Supervisors and Managers, EEO and Preventing Discrimination in the Federal Workplace, Bridging the Diversity Gap, Your Role in Workplace Diversity, Leading Diversity, Anti-Harassment Training: Identifying and Preventing Workplace Harassment, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

Delivery Methods: Face-to Face; Webcasts; Webinars (Other designed topics and dates may be updated).

Agency employees completed mandatory training – Understanding and Interrupting Unconscious Bias.

Targeted Audience: All Employees

Time Period: January 2023

Delivery Method: AgLearn

Agency supervisors completed Annual ARS Supervisor Training – Covering three topics: Innovation, Coaching, and Communication as follows:

- Leading Innovation
- Enhancing Team Innovation
- Coaching for Results
- Building a Coaching Culture: Improving Performance Through Timely Feedback
- How to Manage Difficult Conversations

Employees requesting EEO/civil rights information and guidance regarding the complaint process are referred to the Agency's website at <https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/the-eeo-compliance-branch/>

In compliance with Departmental Regulation 4710-001, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), ARS continues to demonstrate good efforts to resolve EEO complaints utilizing ADR (voluntary) and non-EEO related workplace disputes utilizing the voluntary Cooperative Resolution Program (CRP) at the earliest stage possible.

Through the utilization of the ARS non-EEO early resolution ADR services, ARS makes every effort throughout the complaint process to educate employees about the benefits of utilizing ADR. ARS adjusted its Compliance Review process to include questions to determine field employee's awareness and likelihood to utilize ADR in the EEO process and CR as an early resolution option. By making these adjustments, ARS seeks more information about staff and their views on ADR utilization.

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All informal complainants were offered ADR within the timeframes set by EEOC regulations. Results: Informal – 22 offered, 5 accepted; Formal – 2 offered, 1 accepted.

“EEO Alternative Dispute Resolution Mediation Fact Sheet” is distributed to complainants in the informal and formal EEO complaint process stage. The complainant is encouraged to sign and return the fact sheet agreeing/disagreeing to participate in the mediation process. The complainant has the option to elect between counseling and mediation. Complainants are offered several opportunities to accept ADR throughout the complaint process (ARS, Office of General Counsel, EEOC, etc.). ARS continues to educate and emphasize to managers, supervisors, and employees that the ADR process is timely, cost effective, and efficient following the Department of Agriculture’s policy on the use of ADR. Managers, supervisors, and employees are encouraged to participate in the ADR process.

In FY 2023, CRP conducted 64 consultations and 6 facilitated dialogues; no conflict coaching, or early resolution sessions were conducted.

**Essential Element 5: Efficiency**

ARS obtains applicant flow data for Internal Competitive Promotions and New Hires for Senior Grade Levels (Table A&B7) and Management Positions (Table A&B8) from USAStaffing and the NFC Reporting Center.

**Essential Element 6: Responsiveness and Legal Compliance**

ARS follows USDA EEOC reporting requirements and complies with EEO orders or directives. The NFC is responsible for payroll processing. ARS coordinates with budget to prepare paperwork for payment processing. ARS has no control over the complaint payment process once documentation is provided to NFC.

ARS timely processed 100 percent of the 13 completed pre-complaint counseling ending for the reporting period.

Eleven (11) investigations were completed by Employment Investigation Division in FY 23, and all were completed in 180 days or less. Fourteen (14) complaints were closed in FY 23.



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES**

Fifty-four percent (2,958) of the ARS permanent workforce (5,523) is age 50 or over. Fifty-five percent (3,044) of the total permanent workforce are eligible for retirement between 2023 and 2033. Of the 55 percent eligible for retirement, 41 percent (1,237) are grades 13 – SES in the identified major occupations.

**Workforce Composition: Table A1 (Permanent workforce: 3,079 males and 2,444 females = 5,523)**

**PERCENTAGES BELOW THE CLF ARE ANNOTATED IN RED (groups with a deficit of 1% or greater difference)**

- Total Females represented 44.25% (2,444 employees), **3.95** percentage points below the NCLF of 48.20%
- Hispanic/Latino males represented **3.01%** (166 employees), **3.79** percentage points below the NCLF of 6.80%
- Hispanic/Latino females represented **2.35%** (130 employees), **3.85** percentage points below the NCLF 6.20%
- White males represented 42.01% (2,320 employees), 6.41% percentage points above the NCLF of 35.60%
- White females represented 31.67% (1,749 employees), 0.13 percentage points below the NCLF of 31.80%
- Black/African American males represented **3.82%** (211 employees), **1.88** percentage points below the NCLF of 5.70%
- Black/African American females represented **5.52%** (305 employees) **1.08** percentage points below the NCLF of 6.60%
- Asian males represented 6.30% (348 employees) 4.10 percentage points above the NCLF of 2.20%
- Asian females represented 4.09% (226 employees) 1.89 percentage points above the NCLF of 2.20%
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males represented 0.20% (11 employees), 0.10 percentage points above the NCLF of 0.10%
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females represented 0.07% (4 employees), 0.03 percentage points below the NCLF of 0.10%
- American Indian/Alaska Native males represented 0.34% (19 employees), 0.04 percentage points above the NCLF of 0.30%
- American Indian/Alaska Native females represented 0.33% (18 employees), 0.03 percentage points above the NCLF of 0.30%
- Two or More Races males represented 0.07% (4 employees) 0.93 percentage points below the NCLF of 1.00%
- Two or More Races females represented 0.22% (12 employees), 0.78 percentage points below the NCLF of 1.00%
- the NCLF of 1.00%

**Employee Gains** (Permanent – 401)

**Permanent Hires for FY 23:**

- Hispanic/Latino males – 16 and females – 19
- White males – 115 and females – 143
- Black or African American males – 20 and females – 37
- Asian males – 24 and females – 17
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander males – 1 and females – 1
- American Indian or Alaska Native males – 2 and females – 3
- Two or More Races males – 2 and females – 1
- Persons with Disability – 61 and Persons with Targeted Disability – 11

The following were **hired less than their representation in the CLF:**

Total Males (44.89%), Hispanic or Latino males (3.99%) and females (4.74%), White males (28.68%), Black or African American males (4.99%), and Two or More Races males (0.50%) and females (0.25%).

The **permanent selection rate** for the following groups was **higher than their participation rate in the workforce:**

Group	Selection Rate	Participation Rate

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Total Female	55.11%	44.25%
Hispanic or Latino male	3.99%	3.01%
Hispanic or Latino female	4.74%	2.35%
White female	35.66%	31.67%
Black or African American male	4.99%	3.82%
Black or African American female	9.23%	5.52%
Asian female	4.24%	4.09%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male	0.25%	0.20%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander female	0.25%	0.07%
American Indian or Alaska Native male	0.50%	0.34%
American Indian or Alaska Native female	0.75%	0.33%
Two or More Races male	0.50%	0.07%
Two or More Races female	0.25%	0.22%

**Separations**

There was a total of 418 separations including 14 involuntary separations.

One hundred sixty six (166) separations were retirements of permanent employees.

The following **groups separated at a rate more than their ARS representation**: Total female (45.45%), Hispanic or Latino female (3.11%), White female (32.06%), Black or African American male (5.50%) and female (7.66%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander female (0.24%), and American Indian or Alaska Native male (0.48%).

**Persons with Targeted Disability (PWTD)**: Of the 5,478 permanent employees, 132 (2.41%) are PWTD. Thirteen (13) people with TD voluntarily separated including retirement.

**Grade Distribution – GS-13 – SES**

There are 1,805 or 33% of the ARS permanent employees at the senior-grade level (Grades 13 – SES including other senior pay). White males and females continue to hold the majority of these grade levels.

White males (894) and females (388) = 1,282

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES

Hispanic/Latino males (50) and females (30) = 80  
Black/African American males (55) and females (55) = 110  
Asian males (235) and females (78) = 313  
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males = 6  
American Indian/Alaska Native males (7) and females (3) = 10  
Two or More Races males (1) and females (3) = 4  
Persons with Disability = 110  
Persons with Targeted Disability = 34

**Mission Critical Occupations (MCO)**

The trend shifted from White males and females to Asian males and females dominating the nine mission critical occupations. Asian males had a high participation rate in five MCOs and Asian females participated at a high rate in eight MCOs when compared to each respective RCLF .

1. Human Resources Management, 0201 = 68
2. General Natural Resources Management and Biological Science, 0401 = 374
3. Microbiology, 0403 = 214
4. Biological Science Technician, 0404 = 1,298
5. Genetics, 0440 = 258
6. General Business and Industry, 1101 = 28
7. Contracting, 1102 = 65
8. Chemistry, 1320 = 176
9. Information Technology Management, 2210 = 121

Groups noted below indicate **participation rate less than the Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF)**:

- **MCO 0201: Hispanic/Latino males** represent 1.47% versus 4.70% RCLF, **Hispanic/Latino females** represent 4.41% versus 6.70% RCLF, **White males** represent 8.82% versus 28.10% RCLF, **White females** represent 35.25% versus 43.50% RCLF, **Black/African American males** represent 1.47% versus 3.30%, and no (0%) representation of **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females** versus 0.10% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native males and females** no (0%) representation versus 0.20% RCLF and 0.30% RCLF, respectively and **Two or More Races males and females** no (0%) representation versus 0.70% RCLF and 1.20%, respectively.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES

- **MCO 0401:** **Hispanic/Latino males** represent 1.60% versus 2.60% RCLF, **Hispanic/Latino females** represent 2.67% versus 3.10% RCLF, **White females** represent 26.47% versus 36.60% RCLF, **Black/African American females** represent 1.07% versus 1.80% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native males** no (0%) representation versus 0.20% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native females** represent 0.27% versus 0.30% RCLF, and **Two or More Races males and females** no (0%) representation versus 1.30% each.
- **MCO 0403:** **Hispanic/Latino males** represent 0.93% versus 2.60% RCLF, **White males** represent 40.65% versus 42.20% RCLF, **White females** represent 35.51% versus 36.60% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native females** no (0%) representation versus 0.30% RCLF, **Two or More Races males** no (0%) representation versus 1.30% RCLF, and **Two or More Races females** represent 0.93% versus 1.30% RCLF.
- **MCO 0404:** **Hispanic/Latino males** represent 2.85% versus 6.40% RCLF, **Hispanic/Latino females** represent 2.16% versus 4.80% RCLF, **White males** represent 37.60% versus 40.90% RCLF, **Black/African American males** represent 2.77% versus 4.40% RCLF, **Black/African American females** represent 4.16% versus 4.40% RCLF, **Asian males** represent 2.54% versus 3.40% RCLF, **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males and females** represent 0.08% versus 0.10% RCLF each, **American Indian/Alaska Native males** represent 0.46% versus 0.50% RCLF, **Two or More Races males** represent 0.08% versus 1.40% RCLF, and **Two or More Races females** represent 0.39% versus 1.10% RCLF.
- **MCO 0440:** **Hispanic/Latino males** represent 1.94% versus 2.60% RCLF, **Hispanic/Latino females** represent 0.78% versus 3.10% RCLF, **White females** represent 19.38% versus 36.60% RCLF, **Black/African American females** no (0%) representation versus 1.80% RCLF, **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males** no (0%) representation versus 0.10% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native females** no (0%) representation versus 0.30% RCLF, and **Two or More Races males and females** no (0%) representation versus 1.30% RCLF each.
- **MCO 1101:** **Hispanic/Latino males** no (0%) representation versus 4.40% RCLF, **Hispanic/Latino females** no representation versus 5.50% RCLF, **White males** represent 17.86% versus 32.50% RCLF, **Black/African American males** represent 3.57% versus 4.00% RCLF, **Asian males** no (0%) representation versus 3.50% RCLF, **Native American/Other Pacific Islander males and females** no (0%) representation versus 0.10% RCLF each, **American Indian/Alaska Native males and females** no (0%) representation versus 0.20% RCLF and 0.30% RCLF, respectively, and **Two or More Races males** no (0%) representation versus 0.90% RCLF.
- **MCO 1102:** **Hispanic/Latino males** represent 1.54% versus 4.30% RCLF, **White females** represent 27.69% versus 39.20% RCLF, **Black/African American males** represent 3.08% versus 3.30% RCLF, **Asian females** no (0%) representation versus 2.40% RCLF, **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females** no (0%) representation versus 0.10% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native males** no (0%) representation versus 0.20% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native females** no (0%) representation versus 0.30% RCLF, and **Two or More Races males and females** no (0%) representation versus 0.60% RCLF and 1.00% RCLF, respectively.
- **MCO 1320:** **Hispanic/Latino males** represent 2.84% versus 3.70% RCLF, **Hispanic/Latino females** represent 0.57% versus 2.40% RCLF, **White males** represent 42.05% versus 46.20% RCLF, **White females** represent 18.75% versus 24.60% RCLF, **Black/African American males** represent 2.84% versus 3.70% RCLF, **Black/African American females** represent 2.27% versus 3.50% RCLF, **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females** no (0%) representation versus 0.10% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native females** no (0%) representation versus 0.20% RCLF, and **Two or More Races males and females** no representation versus 0.90% RCLF and 0.70% RCLF, respectively.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES**

- **MCO 2210: Hispanic/Latino males** represent 2.48% versus 4.50% RCLF, **Hispanic/Latino females** no (0%) representation versus 1.60% RCLF, **White males** represent 45.45% versus 54.30% RCLF, **White females** represent 20.66% versus 21.60% RCLF, **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males** no (0%) representation versus 0.10% RCLF, **American Indian/Alaska Native females** no (0%) representation versus 0.10% RCLF, and **Two or More males and females** no (0%) representation versus 1.30% RCLF and 0.70% RCLF, respectively.

**MCO New Hires & Internal Competitive Promotions:**

USAA staffing applicant data shows there were **11,932 applications for agency new hire vacancies for permanent MCOs:** 0201 (1,090 applications), 0401 (2,074 applications), 0403 (1,181 applications), 0404 (5,339 applications), 0440 (481 applications), 1101 (269 applications), 1102 (362 applications), 1320 (820 applications), and 2210 (316 applications).

**Selections were made in the following MCOs:**

- **0401 – 28 [18 males, 9 females, and 1 sex omitted; 4 Persons With Disability (PWD)]**
- **0403 – 23 (7 males, 14 females, and 2 sex omitted; 4 PWD)**
- **0404 – 131 (47 males, 70 females, and 14 sex omitted; 6 PWD)**
- **0440 - 13 (11 males and 2 females)**
- **1101 - 1 (sex omitted)**
- **1320 – 8 (5 males and 3 females)**
- **2210 - 2 (2 males; 1 PWD)**

USAA staffing applicant data shows there were **4,463 applications for internal competitive promotions for permanent MCOs:** 0201 (1,893 applications), 0401 (36 applications), 0403 (35 applications), 0404 (171 applications), 1101 (374 applications), 1102 (1,513 applications), 1320 (78 applications), and 2210 (363 applications).

**Selections were made in the following MCOs:**

- **0201 – 15 (3 males and 12 females; 4 PWD and 3 PWD)**
- **0401 – 3 (1 male and 2 females)**
- **0403 - 3 (1 male and 2 females)**
- **0404 – 7 (3 males and 4 females)**
- **1101 - 2 (1 female and 1 sex omitted; 1 PWD, 1 PWD)**
- **1102 – 17 (7 males, 5 females, and 5 sex omitted; 3 PWD, 2 PWD)**
- **1320 – 1 (1 sex omitted)**
- **2210 – 4 (3 females and 1 sex omitted)**

**Salaries:**

**Majority of employee salaries are in the following range:**

\$60,001-\$70,000 (243 males, 363 females)

\$70,001-\$80,000 (316 males, 338 females)

\$80,001-\$90,000 (273 males, 232 females)

**Awards:**

The following groups were **distributed** in the awards category at **less than their ARS representation:**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES

**Time-off: 1-10 hours (141)**

Hispanic/Latino females, White males, Black/African American females, and Asian males and females.

**Note:** No awards for Hispanic/Latino males, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males and females, and Two or More Races males and females.

**Time-off: 11-20 hours (106)**

Hispanic/Latino males, White males, Black/African American males and females, and Asian females.

**Note:** No awards for Asian males, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males and females, American Indian/Alaska Native females, and Two or More Races males.

**Time-off: 21-30 hours (31)**

White males, Black/African American males, and Asian males and females.

**Note:** No awards for Hispanic/Latino males, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males and females, American Indian/Alaska Native males and females, and Two or More Races males and females.

**Time-off: 31-40 hours (16)**

White males.

**Note:** No awards for Hispanic/Latino females, Asian males and females, Native Hawaiian males and females, American Indian/Alaska Native males and females, and Two or More Races males and females.

**Time-off: 41 or more hours (0)**– No groups awarded.

**Cash Awards: \$500 and Under (1,885)**

Hispanic/Latino males and females, White males, Asian males and females, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males and females, American Indian/Alaska Native females, and Two or More Races females.

**Note:** No awards for Two or More Races males.

**Cash Awards: \$501 – 999 (1,195)**

Hispanic/Latino males, White males, Black/African American males, Asian males and females, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males, and American Indian/Alaska Native males and females.

**Note:** No awards for Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females.

**Cash Awards: \$1000 – 1999 (2,289)**

Hispanic/Latino males and females, White males, Asian males and females, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males and females, and American Indian/Alaska Native males.

**Note:** No awards for Two or More Races males.

**Cash Awards: \$2000 – 2999 (914)**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES

Hispanic/Latino males, White females, Black/African American males and females, Asian females, and American Indian/Alaska Native males and females.

**Note:** No awards for Two or More Races males and females.

**Cash Awards: \$3000 – 3999 (244)**

Hispanic/Latino males and females, White females, Black/African American males and females, and Asian females

**Note:** No awards for Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females and Two or More Races males and females.

**Cash Awards: \$4000 – 4999 (45)**

Hispanic/Latino males and females, White females, Black/African American males, and Asian males.

**Note:** No awards Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males and females, American Indian/Alaska Native males and females, and Two or More Races males.

**Cash Awards: \$5000 or More (49)**

Hispanic/Latino females and White females.

**Note:** Black/African American females, Native Hawaiian/Alaska Native males and females, American Indian/Alaska Native males and females, and Two or More Races males and females.

**Quality Step Increases (106)**

Hispanic/Latino males, White males, and Black/African American males and females.

**Note:** No awards for Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander males, American Indian/Alaska Native males and females, and Two or More Races males and females.

**Performance Based Pay Increase (52)**

White females and Asian females.

**Note:** No awards for Hispanic/Latino females, Black/African American females, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females, American Indian/Alaska Native males and females, and Two or More Races males and females.

**Senior Grade Levels New Hires and Internal Competitive Promotions**

**Senior Grade Levels New Hires:**

USA Staffing applicant data shows there were **5,672 applications for new hires for permanent senior grade level positions:**

GS-13 (3,017 applications), 37 selections [22 males and 15 females; 4 Persons With Disability (PWD)]

White females (18.92%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (31.67%).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES**

Asian males (24.32%) and females (16.22%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (6.30% and 4.09%, respectively).

GS-14 (1,131 applications), 14 selections (11 males, 2 females, and 1 omitted RNO/sex)

White males (53.85%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (42.01%).

White females (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (31.67%). White females qualified and were referred.

Asian males (30.77%) and females (15.38%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (6.30% and 4.09%, respectively).

GS-15 (1,524 applications), 11 selections (8 males, 1 female and 2 omitted RNO/sex)

White females (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (31.67%). White females qualified and were referred.

White males (66.67%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (42.01%).

Asian males (22.22%) and females (11.11%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (6.30% and 4.09%, respectively).

**Senior Grade Levels Internal Competitive Promotions:**

**USA Staffing applicant data shows that there were 2,387 applications for promotions for permanent senior grade level positions:**

GS-13 (1,810 applications), 16 selections [5 males, 7 females, and 4 omitted RNO/sex; 2 PWD; 1 Person With Targeted Disability (PWTD)]

White males (33.33%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (42.01%)

GS-14 (570 applications), 3 selections (1 male and 2 omitted RNO/sex)

No Hispanic/Latino males and females, White females, Black/African American males and females, American Indian/Alaska Native males and Two or More Races males and females qualified and were referred at a rate higher than their ARS participation rate but was not selected.

GS-15 (7 applications), 1 selection (1 omitted RNO/sex).

Hispanic/Latino males and females applied 16.67% each – a rate higher than ARS participation rate 3.01% and 2.35%, respectively but were not referred.

**Management Positions New Hires and Internal Competitive Promotions**

**Management Positions New Hires:**

**USA Staffing applicant data shows there were 6,856 applications for new hires for management positions:**

**Executives**(1,343 applications), 9 selections (8 males, 1 female)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES

White males (66.67%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (42.01%)

Asian males (22.22%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (6.30%)

Asian females (11.11%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (4.09%)

**Managers** (3,736 applications), 50 selections (33 males, 17 females)

Asian males (26.00%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (6.30%)

Asian females (16.00%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (4.09%)

Black/African American females (4.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (5.52%)

Two or More Races males (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (0.07%)

Two or More Races females (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (0.22%)

**Supervisors**(1,777 applications), 21 selections (13 males and 8 females)

Hispanic/Latino males (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (3.01%)

Hispanic/Latino females (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (2.35%)

Black/African American females (4.76%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (5.52%)

Asian males (28.57%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (6.30%)

Asian females (14.29%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (4.09%)

Two or More Races males (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (0.07%)

**Management Positions Internal Competitive Promotions:**

USASTaffing applicant data shows there were **2,650 applications for internal competitive promotions for management positions:**

**Executives**(6 applications), 1selection (RNO/sex omitted)

No protected groups – voluntarily identified applicants – qualified.

Internal application rate for Hispanic/Latino males and females (16.67% each) and Black/African American males (16.67%) – more than ARS participation rate 3.01%, 2.35%, and 3.82%, respectively.

**Managers**(1,998 applications), 13 selections (6 males, 7 females; 3 PWD, 1 PWTD)

Hispanic/Latino males (7.69%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (3.01%)

Hispanic/Latino females (7.69% ) selected – more than ARS participation rate (2.35%)

White females (38.46%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (31.67%)

Black/African American males (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (3.82%)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WORKFORCE ANALYSES**

Black/African American females (7.69%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (5.52%)

**Supervisors**(646 applications), 4selections (2 male, 2 females)

Hispanic/Latino males (25.00%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (3.01%)

Hispanic/Latino females (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (2.35%)

White females (25.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (31.67%)

Black/African American females (0.00%) selected – less than ARS participation rate (3.82%)

Black/African American females (25.00%) selected – more than ARS participation rate (5.52%)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In FY 2021, Agency was approved to hire an Anti-Harassment Coordinator (AHC) FTE. In FY 2023, a new position description was written and classified. Human Resources' Personnel Labor Solutions (PALS) implemented the anti-harassment program. An Acting AHC provides services for function. In addition, to the Acting AHC's individual ARS email address, a designated ARS email address ([AHP-REE@usda.gov](mailto:AHP-REE@usda.gov)) was established for the function. PALS is making plans to recruit and hire a permanent AHC by 12/31/2024.

The FY 23 Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity award winners were recognized at the annual Employee Recognition Program on April 18, 2023. The **supervisory/managerial award** was "For creating outstanding ways to interact with the students and staff of the Chicago High School Agricultural Sciences, as part of the Three Sisters Project." The **non-supervisory/non-managerial award** was "For promoting diversity, leading outreach activities, and encouraging others to engage in activities towards improving the working environment."

In FY 2023, CRP conducted 64 consultations and 6 facilitated dialogues; no conflict coaching, or early resolution sessions were conducted.

Agency wide, 2,375 EEO observations were conducted in FY 23 by ODEO and non-ODEO employees.

In FY 2023, the Agency hired converted 23 Schedule A employees.

FY 2023, the Agency hired 61 PWD and 11 PWTD.

In FY 2023, the agency **hired 96 veterans** and currently **employs 602 veterans**.

Nine (9) employees participated/are participating in career development training programs and 26 employees participated/are participating in Detail Programs. Career development/leadership training and details are designed to provide promotion opportunities to underrepresented employees in the workforce.

In February 2021, ARS launched the "Three Sisters Project" with a pilot partnership between ARS and the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences (CHSAS). The ARS "Three Sisters Project" joins together students from urban high school agricultural programs, scientists from ARS laboratories, and national program leaders. The purpose of the project is to support and further students' interest in agriculture science and science overall, with the hopes of bringing diversity and fresh ideas to the pipeline of talent recruited to ARS and other agricultural science organizations. Due to the success of the Three Sisters pilot, the program model expanded. In FY 23, the project continues to be a success and includes at least one other sponsored high school, W. B. Saul High School in Philadelphia, PA.

The Tribal Relations Tool was created to provide an understanding for ARS employees and the broader USDA community about the function of Tribal colleges and universities as land grant institutions. Tribal colleges and universities are mapped within the tool, along with ARS research unit offices. The purpose of this map is to encourage ARS researchers and Tribal college and university faculty to build collaborations and partnerships that benefit the United States' food security and Tribes' economic and food self-sufficiency.

In March 2022, agency launched the Mirror Dialogues, a new approach in ARS to provide visibility around, encourage discussion about, and ultimately make positive progress for the critical issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in science with the aim of improving the employee and stakeholder experience in and with ARS. In FY 2023, the Agency initiated plans to launch the next topic in the Mirror Dialogues series in 2024 about "Age and Tenure in the Workplace."

USDA Agricultural Research Service

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Agency continued efforts with Project Sync, a federated effort to strategically coordinate, plan, and implement initiatives over the last several years, to provide global leadership in agricultural discoveries through scientific excellence by becoming the premier employer in agricultural science. Project Sync actions are aligned with the USDA Strategic Goal to attract, inspire and retain an engaged and motivated workforce proud to represent USDA.

Agency employees completed mandatory training – Understanding and Interrupting Unconscious Bias.

Targeted Audience: All Employees

Time Period: January 2023

Delivery Method: AgLearn

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: PLANNED ACTIVITIES

**CR office working with HR to implement anti-harassment program.**

**CR and HR developed a new position description for a permanent Anti-Harassment (HR) Coordinator. Agency Anti-Harassment (HR) program implemented. Agency has Acting AH Coordinator and designated AH email box ([AHP-REE@usda.gov](mailto:AHP-REE@usda.gov)). Plans are underway to recruit and fill the permanent AH Coordinator by 12/31/2024.**

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**CERTIFICATION of ESTABLISHMENT of CONTINUING  
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS**

[Redacted] am the  
(Insert Name Above) (Insert official title/series/grade above)

Principal EEO Director/Official for

[Redacted]  
(Insert Agency/Component Name above)

The agency has conducted an annual self-assessment of Section 717 and Section 501 programs against the essential elements as prescribed by EEO MD-715. If an essential element was not fully compliant with the standards of EEO MD-715, a further evaluation was conducted and, as appropriate, EEO Plans for Attaining the Essential Elements of a Model EEO Program, are included with this Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report.

The agency has also analyzed its work force profiles and conducted barrier analyses aimed at detecting whether any management or personnel policy, procedure or practice is operating to disadvantage any group based on race, national origin, gender or disability. EEO Plans to Eliminate Identified Barriers, as appropriate, are included with this Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report.

I certify that proper documentation of this assessment is in place and is being maintained for EEOC review upon request.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal EEO Director/Official  
Certifies that this Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report is in compliance with EEO MD-715.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Agency Head or Agency Head Designee



\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Agency Self-Assessment Checklist



Essential Element: A Demonstrated Commitment From agency Leadership

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	A.1. The agency issues an effective, up-to-date EEO policy statement.				
	A.1.a. Does the agency annually issue a signed and dated EEO policy statement on agency letterhead that clearly communicates the agency's commitment to EEO for all employees and applicants? If "Yes", please provide the annual issuance date in the comments column. [see MD-715, II(A)]	X			Issued 07/25/2023 6/8/2022
	A.1.b. Does the EEO policy statement address all protected bases (age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation and gender identity), genetic information, national origin, race, religion, and reprisal) contained in the laws EEOC enforces? [see 29 CFR § 1614.101(a)] If the EEO policy statement covers any additional bases (e.g., marital status, veteran status and political affiliation), please list them in the comments column.	X			

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For period covering October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

Agency Self-Assessment Checklist

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			
 Measures		Yes	No	N/A	For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
	A.2. The agency has communicated EEO policies and procedures to all employees.				

A.2.a. Does the agency disseminate the following policies and procedures to all employees:

A.2.a.1. Anti-harassment policy? [see MD 715, II(A)]	X			
A.2.a.2. Reasonable accommodation procedures? [see 29 CFR § 1614.203(d)(3)]	X			

A.2.b. Does the agency prominently post the following information throughout the workplace and on its public website:

A.2.b.1. The business contact information for its EEO Counselors, EEO Officers, Special Emphasis Program Managers, and EEO Director? [see 29 C.F.R § 1614.102(b)(7)]	X			<a href="https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/">https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/</a>
A.2.b.2. Written materials concerning the EEO program, laws, policy statements, and the operation of the EEO complaint process? [see 29 CFR § 1614.102(b)(5)]	X			<a href="https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/the-eo-compliance-branch/">https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/the-eo-compliance-branch/</a> <a href="https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/odeo-policy-statements/">https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/odeo-policy-statements/</a>
A.2.b.3. Reasonable accommodation procedures? [see 29 CFR § 1614.203(d)(3)(i)] If so, please provide the internet address in the comments column.	X			<a href="https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/reasonable-accommodation/">https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/reasonable-accommodation/</a>

A.2.c. Does the agency inform its employees about the following topics:

A.2.c.1. EEO complaint process? [see 29 CFR §§ 1614.102(a)(12) and 1614.102(b)(5)] If “yes”, please provide how often and the means by which such training is delivered.	X			During employee orientation, requested or mandatory training - onsite or webinar
A.2.c.2. ADR process? [see MD-110, Ch. 3(II)(C)] If “yes”, please provide how often.	X			During employee orientation and requested briefings by CRP.



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Agency Self-Assessment Checklist

<p>A.2.c.3. Reasonable accommodation program? [see 29 CFR § 1614.203(d)(7)(ii)(C)] If “yes”, please provide how often.</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>During employee orientation, as part of the agency’s supervisory training program, by issuing a quarterly bulletin about the program, and by posting the policy and procedures on the agency’s intranet and website.</p>
<p>A.2.c.4. Anti-harassment program? [see EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (1999), § V.C.1] If “yes”, please provide how often.</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>Annually disseminated Agency policy statements, one-time New Employee Orientation, and training.</p>
<p>A.2.c.5. Behaviors that are inappropriate in the workplace and could result in disciplinary action? [5 CFR §2635.101(b)] If “yes”, please provide how often.</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>Annually disseminated Agency policy statements and one-time New Employee Orientation</p>

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Agency Self-Assessment Checklist



 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	A.3. The agency assesses and ensures EEO principles are part of its culture.				
A.3.a. Does the agency provide recognition to employees, supervisors, managers and units demonstrating superior accomplishment in equal employment opportunity? [see 29 CFR § 1614.102(a)(9)] If "yes", provide one or two examples in the comments section. .		X			Administrator's EEO FY23 Supervisory/ Managerial award was "For creating outstanding ways to interact w/ students & staff of the Chicago High School Agricultural Sciences, as part of the Three Sisters Project" and the Non-Supervisory/Non-Managerial award was "For promoting diversity, leading outreach activities & encouraging others to engage in activities towards improving the working environment."
A.3.b. Does the agency utilize the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey or other climate assessment tools to monitor the perception of EEO principles within the workforce? [see 5 CFR Part 250]		X			

USDA Agricultural Research Service

For period covering October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

Agency Self-Assessment Checklist



Essential Element: B Integration of EEO into the agency's Strategic Mission

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	B.1. The reporting structure for the EEO program provides the principal EEO official with appropriate authority and resources to effectively carry out a successful EEO program.				
	B.1.a. Is the agency head the immediate supervisor of the person ("EEO Director") who has day-to-day control over the EEO office? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(4)]	X			
	B.1.a.1. If the EEO Director does not report to the agency head, does the EEO Director report to the same agency head designee as the mission-related programmatic offices? If "yes," please provide the title of the agency head designee in the comments.	X			Associate Administrator
	B.1.a.2. Does the agency's organizational chart clearly define the reporting structure for the EEO office? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(4)]	X			
	B.1.b. Does the EEO Director have a regular and effective means of advising the agency head and other senior management officials of the effectiveness, efficiency and legal compliance of the agency's EEO program? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(1); MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			
	B.1.c. During this reporting period, did the EEO Director present to the head of the agency, and other senior management officials, the "State of the agency" briefing covering the six essential elements of the model EEO program and the status of the barrier analysis process? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I] If "yes", please provide the date of the briefing in the comments column.	X			June 27, 2023
	B.1.d. Does the EEO Director regularly participate in senior-level staff meetings concerning personnel, budget, technology, and other workforce issues? [see MD-715, II(B)]	X			

USDA Agricultural Research Service

For period covering October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023



Agency Self-Assessment Checklist

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	B.2. The EEO Director controls all aspects of the EEO program.				
	B.2.a. Is the EEO Director responsible for the implementation of a continuing affirmative employment program to promote EEO and to identify and eliminate discriminatory policies, procedures, and practices? [see MD-110, Ch. 1(III)(A); 29 CFR §1614.102(c)] If not, identify the office with this authority in the comments column.	X			
	B.2.b. Is the EEO Director responsible for overseeing the completion of EEO counseling? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(4)]	X			
	B.2.c. Is the EEO Director responsible for overseeing the fair and thorough investigation of EEO complaints? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(5)] [This question may not be applicable for certain subordinate level components.]			X	ARS investigations are handled by the Department's Employment Investigation Division (EID)
	B.2.d. Is the EEO Director responsible for overseeing the timely issuance of final agency decisions? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(5)] [This question may not be applicable for certain subordinate level components.]			X	ARS final agency decisions are handled by the Department's Employment Adjudication Division (EAD)
	B.2.e. Is the EEO Director responsible for ensuring compliance with EEOC orders? [see 29 CFR §§ 1614.102(e); 1614.502]	X			ARS EEO Office works in coordination with HR and relevant management officials.
	B.2.f. Is the EEO Director responsible for periodically evaluating the entire EEO program and providing recommendations for improvement to the agency head? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(2)]	X			
	B.2.g. If the agency has subordinate level components, does the EEO Director provide effective guidance and coordination for the components? [see 29 CFR §§ 1614.102(c)(2); (c)(3)]	X			

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	B.3. The EEO Director and other EEO professional staff are involved in, and consulted on, management/personnel actions.				
	B.3.a. Do EEO program officials participate in agency meetings regarding workforce changes that might impact EEO issues, including strategic planning, recruitment strategies, vacancy projections, succession planning, and selections for training/career development opportunities? [see MD-715, II(B)]	X			
	B.3.b. Does the agency's current strategic plan reference EEO / diversity and inclusion principles? [see MD-715, II(B)] If "yes", please identify the EEO principles in the strategic plan in the comments column.	X			ARS is committed to upholding CR; advancing DEIA & creating a culture that respects, welcomes & supports all employees, including LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities. As result of the Administrator's strong commitment, the Office of ODEO developed EEO action plans for ARS' Equity, DEIA, and Justice40 Plans & coordinated, monitored & tracked status three plans to ensure objectives.

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			
 Measures		Yes	No	N/A	For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report

B.4.a. Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(1), has the agency allocated sufficient funding and qualified staffing to successfully implement the EEO program, for the following areas:

B.4.a.1. to conduct a self-assessment of the agency for possible program deficiencies? [see MD-715, II(D)]	X			
B.4.a.10. to effectively manage its reasonable accommodation program? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(4)(ii)]	X			
B.4.a.11. to ensure timely and complete compliance with EEOC orders? [see MD-715, II(E)]	X			
B.4.a.2. to enable the agency to conduct a thorough barrier analysis of its workforce? [see MD-715, II(B)]	X			
B.4.a.3. to timely, thoroughly, and fairly process EEO complaints, including EEO counseling, investigations, final agency decisions, and legal sufficiency reviews? [see 29 CFR §§ 1614.102(c)(5); 1614.105(b) – (f); MD-110, Ch. 1(IV)(D) & 5(IV); MD-715, II(E)]	X			Note: investigations and FADs are handled by the Department
B.4.a.4. to provide all supervisors and employees with training on the EEO program, including but not limited to retaliation, harassment, religious accommodations, disability accommodations, the EEO complaint process, and ADR? [see MD-715, II(B) and III(C)] If not, please identify the type(s) of training with insufficient funding in the comments column.	X			
B.4.a.5. to conduct thorough, accurate, and effective field audits of the EEO programs in components and the field offices, if applicable? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(2)]	X			
B.4.a.6. to publish and distribute EEO materials (e.g. harassment policies, EEO posters, reasonable accommodations procedures)? [see MD-715, II(B)]	X			
B.4.a.7. to maintain accurate data collection and tracking systems for the following types of data: complaint tracking, workforce demographics, and applicant flow data? [see MD-715, II(E)] If not, please identify the systems with insufficient funding in the comments section.	X			
B.4.a.8. to effectively administer its special emphasis programs (such as, Federal Women’s Program, Hispanic Employment Program, and People with Disabilities Program Manager)? [5 USC § 7201; 38 USC § 4214; 5 CFR § 720.204; 5 CFR § 213.3102(i) and (u); 5 CFR § 315.709]	X			

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<p>B.4.a.9. to effectively manage its anti-harassment program? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I; EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (1999), § V.C.1]</p>		<p>X</p>	<p>CR office worked with HR-PALS to implement Anti-Harassment program. Developed a new position description for a permanent AH Coordinator. ODEO developed written internal agency guidelines to share with HRD-PALS. ARS has Acting AH Coordinator and designated AH email box (AHP-REE@usda.gov) HRD's PALS making plans to recruit and fill the permanent AH Coordinator position by 12/31/2024.</p>
<p>B.4.b. Does the EEO office have a budget that is separate from other offices within the agency? [see 29 CFR § 1614.102(a)(1)]</p>	<p>X</p>		
<p>B.4.c. Are the duties and responsibilities of EEO officials clearly defined? [see MD-110, Ch. 1(III)(A), 2(III), &amp; 6(III)]</p>	<p>X</p>		
<p>B.4.d. Does the agency ensure that all new counselors and investigators, including contractors and collateral duty employees, receive the required 32 hours of training, pursuant to Ch. 2(II) (A) of MD-110?</p>	<p>X</p>		
<p>B.4.e. Does the agency ensure that all experienced counselors and investigators, including contractors and collateral duty employees, receive the required 8 hours of annual refresher training, pursuant to Ch. 2(II)(C) of MD-110?</p>	<p>X</p>		

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	B.5. The agency recruits, hires, develops, and retains supervisors and managers who have effective managerial, communications, and interpersonal skills				

B.5.a. Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(5), have all managers and supervisors received orientation, training, and advice on their responsibilities under the following areas under the agency EEO program:

B.5.a.1. EEO complaint process? [see MD-715(II)(B)]	X			
B.5.a.2. Reasonable Accommodation Procedures? [see 29 CFR § 1614.102(d)(3)]	X			
B.5.a.3. Anti-harassment policy? [see MD-715(II)(B)]	X			
B.5.a.4. Supervisory, managerial, communication and interpersonal skills in order to supervise most effectively in a workplace with diverse employees and avoid disputes arising from ineffective communications? [see MD-715, II(B)]	X			
B.5.a.5. ADR, with emphasis on the federal government's interest in encouraging mutual resolution of disputes and the benefits associated with utilizing ADR? [see MD-715(II)(E)]	X			

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	B.6. The agency involves managers in the implementation of its EEO program.				

B.6.a. Are senior managers involved in the implementation of Special Emphasis Programs? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			
B.6.b. Do senior managers participate in the barrier analysis process? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			Work with their designated Area outreach Program Manager/HR
B.6.c. When barriers are identified, do senior managers assist in developing agency EEO action plans (Part I, Part J, or the Executive Summary)? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			Work directly with designated Area Program Manager to create more effective diversity plans to ensure sufficient opportunities for underrepresented groups and communities .
B.6.d. Do senior managers successfully implement EEO Action Plans and incorporate the EEO Action Plan Objectives into agency strategic plans? [29 CFR §1614.102(a)(5)]	X			




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Essential Element: C Management and Program Accountability

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	C.1. The agency conducts regular internal audits of its component and field offices.				
C.1.a. Does the agency regularly assess its component and field offices for possible EEO program deficiencies? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(2)] If "yes", please provide the schedule for conducting audits in the comments section.		X			Annual Civil Rights Compliance Reviews conducted for Human Resources Division-HQ GWCC, Beltsville, MD on August 29, 2023; Acquisition and Property Division-HQ GWCC, Beltsville, MD on August 31, 2023; SEA-Florence, SC on September 20, 2023; and MWA-Columbia, MO on September 18, 2023.
C.1.b. Does the agency regularly assess its component and field offices on their efforts to remove barriers from the workplace? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(2)] If "yes", please provide the schedule for conducting audits in the comments section.		X			Annual Civil Rights Compliance Reviews conducted for Human Resources Division-HQ GWCC, Beltsville, MD on August 29, 2023; Acquisition and Property Division-HQ GWCC, Beltsville, MD on August 31, 2023; SEA-Florence, SC on September 20, 2023; and MWA-Columbia, MO on September 18, 2023.
C.1.c. Do the component and field offices make reasonable efforts to comply with the recommendations of the field audit? [see MD-715, II(C)]		X			Corrective action plans are completed

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 Compliance Indicator	 Measures	Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
	C.2. The agency has established procedures to prevent all forms of EEO discrimination.				
	C.2.a. Has the agency established comprehensive anti-harassment policy and procedures that comply with EEOC's enforcement guidance? [see MD-715, II(C); Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (Enforcement Guidance), EEOC No. 915.002, § V.C.1 (June 18, 1999)]	X			
	C.2.a.1. Does the anti-harassment policy require corrective action to prevent or eliminate conduct before it rises to the level of unlawful harassment? [see EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (1999), § V.C.1]	X			
	C.2.a.2. Has the agency established a firewall between the Anti-Harassment Coordinator and the EEO Director? [see EEOC Report, Model EEO Program Must Have an Effective Anti-Harassment Program (2006)]	X			The Anti-Harassment (AH) Coordinator function is organizationally aligned with HR-Personnel and Labor Solutions (PALS) Branch.
	C.2.a.3. Does the agency have a separate procedure (outside the EEO complaint process) to address harassment allegations? [see Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (Enforcement Guidance), EEOC No. 915.002, § V.C.1 (June 18, 1999)]	X			Harassment allegations are addressed through HRD-PALS.
	C.2.a.4. Does the agency ensure that the EEO office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment? [See Enforcement Guidance, V.C.]	X			The EEO office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment.
	C.2.a.5. Does the agency conduct a prompt inquiry (beginning within 10 days of notification) of all harassment allegations, including those initially raised in the EEO complaint process? [see Complainant v. Dep't of Veterans Affairs, EEOC Appeal No. 0120123232 (May 21, 2015); Complainant v. Dep't of Defense (Defense Commissary Agency), EEOC Appeal No. 0120130331 (May 29, 2015)] If "no", please provide the percentage of timely-processed inquiries in the comments column.	X			Anti-Harassment (AH) program implemented.
	C.2.a.6. Do the agency's training materials on its anti-harassment policy include examples of disability-based harassment? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(2)]	X			
	C.2.b. Has the agency established disability reasonable accommodation procedures that comply with EEOC's regulations and guidance? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(3)]	X			
	C.2.b.1. Is there a designated agency official or other mechanism in place to coordinate or assist with processing requests for disability accommodations throughout the agency? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(3)(D)]	X			
	C.2.b.2. Has the agency established a firewall between the Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager and the EEO Director? [see MD-110, Ch. 1(IV)(A)]	X			
	C.2.b.3. Does the agency ensure that job applicants can request and receive reasonable accommodations during the application and placement processes? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(1)(ii)(B)]	X			
	C.2.b.4. Do the reasonable accommodation procedures clearly state that the agency should process the request within a maximum amount of time (e.g., 20 business days), as established by the agency in its affirmative action plan? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(3)(i)(M)]	X			

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C.2.b.5. Does the agency process all initial accommodation requests, excluding ongoing interpretative services, within the time frame set forth in its reasonable accommodation procedures? [see MD-715, II(C)] If “no”, please provide the percentage of timely-processed requests, excluding ongoing interpretative services, in the comments column.	X			
C.2.c. Has the agency established procedures for processing requests for personal assistance services that comply with EEOC’s regulations, enforcement guidance, and other applicable executive orders, guidance, and standards? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(6)]	X			
C.2.c.1. Does the agency post its procedures for processing requests for Personal Assistance Services on its public website? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(5)(v)] If “yes”, please provide the internet address in the comments column.	X			<a href="https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/reasonable-accommodation/">https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/reasonable-accommodation/</a>

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	C.3. The agency evaluates managers and supervisors on their efforts to ensure equal employment opportunity.				
	C.3.a. Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(5), do all managers and supervisors have an element in their performance appraisal that evaluates their commitment to agency EEO policies and principles and their participation in the EEO program?	X			
	C.3.b. Does the agency require rating officials to evaluate the performance of managers and supervisors based on the following activities:				
	C.3.b.1. Resolve EEO problems/disagreements/conflicts, including the participation in ADR proceedings? [see MD-110, Ch. 3.I]	X			
	C.3.b.2. Ensure full cooperation of employees under his/her supervision with EEO officials, such as counselors and investigators? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(6)]	X			
	C.3.b.3. Ensure a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment and retaliation? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.3.b.4. Ensure that subordinate supervisors have effective managerial, communication, and interpersonal skills to supervise in a workplace with diverse employees? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			
	C.3.b.5. Provide religious accommodations when such accommodations do not cause an undue hardship? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(7)]	X			
	C.3.b.6. Provide disability accommodations when such accommodations do not cause an undue hardship? [ see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(8)]	X			
	C.3.b.7. Support the EEO program in identifying and removing barriers to equal opportunity?. [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.3.b.8. Support the anti-harassment program in investigating and correcting harassing conduct?. [see Enforcement Guidance, V.C.2]	X			The EEO Office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment.
	C.3.b.9. Comply with settlement agreements and orders issued by the agency, EEOC, and EEO-related cases from the Merit Systems Protection Board, labor arbitrators, and the Federal Labor Relations Authority? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.3.c. Does the EEO Director recommend to the agency head improvements or corrections, including remedial or disciplinary actions, for managers and supervisors who have failed in their EEO responsibilities? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(2)]	X			
	C.3.d. When the EEO Director recommends remedial or disciplinary actions, are the recommendations regularly implemented by the agency? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(c)(2)]	X			

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	C.4. The agency ensures effective coordination between its EEO program and Human Resources (HR) program.				
	C.4.a. Do the HR Director and the EEO Director meet regularly to assess whether personnel programs, policies, and procedures conform to EEOC laws, instructions, and management directives? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(2)]	X			
	C.4.b. Has the agency established timetables/schedules to review at regular intervals its merit promotion program, employee recognition awards program, employee development/training programs, and management/personnel policies, procedures, and practices for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in the program by all EEO groups? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			
	C.4.c. Does the EEO office have timely access to accurate and complete data (e.g., demographic data for the workforce, applicants, training programs, etc.) required to prepare the MD-715 workforce data tables? [see 29 CFR §1614.601(a)]	X			
	C.4.d. Does the HR office timely provide the EEO office with access to other data (e.g., exit interview data, climate assessment surveys, and grievance data), upon request? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.4.e. Pursuant to Section II(C) of MD-715, does the EEO office collaborate with the HR office to:				
	C.4.e.1. Implement the Affirmative Action Plan for Individuals with Disabilities? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d); MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.4.e.2. Develop and/or conduct outreach and recruiting initiatives? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.4.e.3. Develop and/or provide training for managers and employees? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.4.e.4. Identify and remove barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
	C.4.e.5. Assist in preparing the MD-715 report? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			
 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	N/A	
	C.5.a. Does the agency have a disciplinary policy and/or table of penalties that covers discriminatory conduct? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(6); see also Douglas v. Veterans Administration, 5 MSPR 280 (1981)]	X			
	C.5.b. When appropriate, does the agency discipline or sanction managers and employees for discriminatory conduct? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(6)] If "yes", please state the number of disciplined/sanctioned individuals during this reporting period in the comments.	X			ARS had no disciplined/sanctioned individuals during this reporting period.
	C.5.c. If the agency has a finding of discrimination (or settles cases in which a finding was likely), does the agency inform managers and supervisors about the discriminatory conduct (e.g., post mortem to discuss lessons learned)? [see MD-715, II(C)]	X			

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	C.6. The EEO office advises managers/supervisors on EEO matters.			N/A	
	C.6.a. Does the EEO office provide management/supervisory officials with regular EEO updates on at least an annual basis, including EEO complaints, workforce demographics and data summaries, legal updates, barrier analysis plans, and special emphasis updates? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I] If "yes", please identify the frequency of the EEO updates in the comments column.	X			Management officials are provided monthly reports on EEO complaints from EEO Office and regular updates on workforce demographics, etc. from designated Area Program Managers.
	C.6.b. Are EEO officials readily available to answer managers' and supervisors' questions or concerns? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			

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Essential Element: D Proactive Prevention

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	D.1. The agency conducts a reasonable assessment to monitor progress towards achieving equal employment opportunity throughout the year.	Yes	No	N/A	
	D.1.a. Does the agency have a process for identifying triggers in the workplace? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			
	D.1.b. Does the agency regularly use the following sources of information for trigger identification: workforce data; complaint/grievance data; exit surveys; employee climate surveys; focus groups; affinity groups; union; program evaluations; special emphasis programs; and/or external special interest groups? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			
	D.1.c. Does the agency conduct exit interviews or surveys that include questions on how the agency could improve the recruitment, hiring, inclusion, retention and advancement of individuals with disabilities? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(1)(iii)(C)]	X			P&P 426.2
 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures	D.2. The agency identifies areas where barriers may exclude EEO groups (reasonable basis to act.)	Yes	No	N/A	
	D.2.a. Does the agency have a process for analyzing the identified triggers to find possible barriers? [see MD-715, (II)(B)]	X			
	D.2.b. Does the agency regularly examine the impact of management/personnel policies, procedures, and practices by race, national origin, sex, and disability? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(3)]	X			
	D.2.c. Does the agency consider whether any group of employees or applicants might be negatively impacted prior to making human resource decisions, such as re-organizations and realignments? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(3)]	X			
	D.2.d. Does the agency regularly review the following sources of information to find barriers: complaint/grievance data, exit surveys, employee climate surveys, focus groups, affinity groups, union, program evaluations, anti-harassment program, special emphasis programs, and/or external special interest groups? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I] If "yes", please identify the data sources in the comments column.	X			Complaint data, exit surveys, compliance reviews, and NFC workforce data

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	D.3. The agency establishes appropriate action plans to remove identified barriers.	Yes	No	N/A	
	D.3.a. Does the agency effectively tailor action plans to address the identified barriers, in particular policies, procedures, or practices? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(a)(3)]	X			
	D.3.b. If the agency identified one or more barriers during the reporting period, did the agency implement a plan in Part I, including meeting the target dates for the planned activities? [see MD-715, II(D)]	X			
	D.3.c. Does the agency periodically review the effectiveness of the plans? [see MD-715, II(D)]	X			
 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures	D.4. The agency has an affirmative action plan for people with disabilities, including those with targeted disabilities.	Yes	No	N/A	
	D.4.a. Does the agency post its affirmative action plan on its public website? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(4)] If yes, please provide the internet address in the comments.	X			<a href="https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARUserFiles/odeo/MD-715/MD-715%20Affirm%202022.pdf">https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARUserFiles/odeo/MD-715/MD-715%20Affirm%202022.pdf</a>
	D.4.b. Does the agency take specific steps to ensure qualified people with disabilities are aware of and encouraged to apply for job vacancies? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(1)(i)]	X			
	D.4.c. Does the agency ensure that disability-related questions from members of the public are answered promptly and correctly? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(1)(ii)(A)]	X			
	D.4.d. Has the agency taken specific steps that are reasonably designed to increase the number of persons with disabilities or targeted disabilities employed at the agency until it meets the goals? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(7)(ii)]	X			



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Agency Self-Assessment Checklist

Essential Element: E Efficiency

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	E.1. The agency maintains an efficient, fair, and impartial complaint resolution process.				
E.1.a. Does the agency timely provide EEO counseling, pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.105?		X			
E.1.b. Does the agency provide written notification of rights and responsibilities in the EEO process during the initial counseling session, pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.105(b)(1)?		X			
E.1.c. Does the agency issue acknowledgment letters immediately upon receipt of a formal complaint, pursuant to MD-110, Ch. 5(I)?				X	Acknowledgment letters are issued by the Department's Employment Complaint Division (ECD)
E.1.d. Does the agency issue acceptance letters/dismissal decisions within a reasonable time (e.g., 60 days) after receipt of the written EEO Counselor report, pursuant to MD-110, Ch. 5(I)? If so, please provide the average processing time in the comments.				X	Acceptance letters and dismissal decisions are issued by the Department's Employment Complaint Division (ECD)
E.1.e. Does the agency ensure that all employees fully cooperate with EEO counselors and EEO personnel in the EEO process, including granting routine access to personnel records related to an investigation, pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(6)?		X			
E.1.f. Does the agency timely complete investigations, pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.108?				X	ARS investigations are conducted by the Department's Employment Investigation Division (EID).
E.1.g. If the agency does not timely complete investigations, does the agency notify complainants of the date by which the investigation will be completed and of their right to request a hearing or file a lawsuit, pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.108(g)?				X	ARS investigations are conducted by the Department's Employment Investigation Division (EID). ARS works with EID to ensure that investigations are completed timely.
E.1.h. When the complainant did not request a hearing, does the agency timely issue the final agency decision, pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.110(b)?				X	The Department's Employment Adjudication Division (EAD) issues final agency decisions.

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Agency Self-Assessment Checklist

E.1.i. Does the agency timely issue final actions following receipt of the hearing file and the administrative judge's decision, pursuant to 29 CFR § 1614.110(a)?			X	The Department's Employment Adjudication Division (EAD) issues final agency decisions.	
E.1.j. If the agency uses contractors to implement any stage of the EEO complaint process, does the agency hold them accountable for poor work product and/or delays? [See MD-110, Ch. 5(V)(A)] If "yes", please describe how in the comments column.	X			Contractors used for EEO Counseling. Agency will make it a point to bring issues/concerns or address delays to counselors/ vendors attention.	
E.1.k. If the agency uses employees to implement any stage of the EEO complaint process, does the agency hold them accountable for poor work product and/or delays during performance review? [See MD-110, Ch. 5(V)(A)]	X				
E.1.l. Does the agency submit complaint files and other documents in the proper format to EEOC through the Federal Sector EEO Portal (FedSEP)? [See 29 CFR § 1614.403(g)]	X				
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	E.2. The agency has a neutral EEO process.		<b>Measure Has Been Met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>			Yes	No	
E.2.a. Has the agency established a clear separation between its EEO complaint program and its defensive function? [see MD-110, Ch. 1(IV)(D)] If "yes", please explain.	X			Firewall. OGC handles EEO matters at hearing stage.	
E.2.b. When seeking legal sufficiency reviews, does the EEO office have access to sufficient legal resources separate from the agency representative? [see MD-110, Ch. 1(IV)(D)] If "yes", please identify the source/ location of the attorney who conducts the legal sufficiency review in the comments column.	X			OGC	
E.2.c. If the EEO office relies on the agency's defensive function to conduct the legal sufficiency review, is there a firewall between the reviewing attorney and the agency representative? [see MD-110, Ch. 1(IV)(D)]	X				
E.2.d. Does the agency ensure that its agency representative does not intrude upon EEO counseling, investigations, and final agency decisions? [see MD-110, Ch. 1(IV)(D)]	X				
E.2.e. If applicable, are processing time frames incorporated for the legal counsel's sufficiency review for timely processing of complaints? [see EEOC Report, Attaining a Model Agency Program: Efficiency (Dec. 1, 2004)]			X	N/A	

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	E.3. The agency has established and encouraged the widespread use of a fair alternative dispute resolution (ADR) program.				
	E.3.a. Has the agency established an ADR program for use during both the pre-complaint and formal complaint stages of the EEO process? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(2)]	X			
	E.3.b. Does the agency require managers and supervisors to participate in ADR once it has been offered? [see MD-715, II(A)(1)]	X			
	E.3.c. Does the Agency encourage all employees to use ADR, where ADR is appropriate? [See MD-110, Ch. 3(IV)(C)]	X			
	E.3.d. Does the agency ensure a management official with settlement authority is accessible during the dispute resolution process? [see MD-110, Ch. 3(III)(A)(9)]	X			
	E.3.e. Does the agency prohibit the responsible management official named in the dispute from having settlement authority? [see MD-110, Ch. 3(I)]	X			
	E.3.f. Does the agency annually evaluate the effectiveness of its ADR program? [see MD-110, Ch. 3(II)(D)]	X			

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Agency Self-Assessment Checklist

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	N/A	



E.4.a. Does the agency have systems in place to accurately collect, monitor, and analyze the following data:

E.4.a.1. Complaint activity, including the issues and bases of the complaints, the aggrieved individuals/complainants, and the involved management official? [see MD-715, II(E)]	X			iComplaints database system
E.4.a.2. The race, national origin, sex, and disability status of agency employees? [see 29 CFR §1614.601(a)]	X			NFC System
E.4.a.3. Recruitment activities? [see MD-715, II(E)]	X			Student Outreach Database
E.4.a.4. External and internal applicant flow data concerning the applicants' race, national origin, sex, and disability status? [see MD-715, II(E)]	X			USA Staffing and NFC
E.4.a.5. The processing of requests for reasonable accommodation? [29 CFR §1614.203(d)(4)]	X			The RA Program Manager collaborates with deciding officials to monitor and track the processing of all formal reasonable accommodation requests.
E.4.a.6. The processing of complaints for the anti-harassment program? [see EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (1999), § V.C.2]	X			HR-PALS implemented the anti-harassment program. An Acting AH Coordinator provides services for anti-harassment function.
E.4.b. Does the agency have a system in place to re-survey the workforce on a regular basis? [MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I]	X			NFC's My Employee Personal Page (MyEPP)

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			
 Measures		Yes	No	N/A	For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
E.5.a. Does the agency monitor trends in its EEO program to determine whether the agency is meeting its obligations under the statutes EEOC enforces? [see MD-715, II(E)] If "yes", provide an example in the comments.		X			ARS monitors trends using No Fear, MD-715, and 462 data.
E.5.b. Does the agency review other agencies' best practices and adopt them, where appropriate, to improve the effectiveness of its EEO program? [see MD-715, II(E)] If "yes", provide an example in the comments.		X			Met with USDA colleagues to obtain information about ADR best practices.
E.5.c. Does the agency compare its performance in the EEO process to other federal agencies of similar size? [see MD-715, II(E)]		X			

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Agency Self-Assessment Checklist





Essential Element: F Responsiveness and Legal Compliance

 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	F.1. The agency has processes in place to ensure timely and full compliance with EEOC orders and settlement agreements.				
	F.1.a. Does the agency have a system of management controls to ensure that its officials timely comply with EEOC orders/directives and final agency actions? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(e); MD-715, II(F)]	X			EEO office works with management and HR to ensure compliance with EEOC orders.
	F.1.b. Does the agency have a system of management controls to ensure the timely, accurate, and complete compliance with resolutions/settlement agreements? [see MD-715, II(F)]	X			EEO office works with management and HR to ensure compliance with settlement agreements.
	F.1.c. Are there procedures in place to ensure the timely and predictable processing of ordered monetary relief? [see MD-715, II(F)]	X			EEO office works with budget office to ensure timely processing of monetary relief.
	F.1.d. Are procedures in place to process other forms of ordered relief promptly? [see MD-715, II(F)]	X			
	F.1.e. When EEOC issues an order requiring compliance by the agency, does the agency hold its compliance officer(s) accountable for poor work product and/or delays during performance review? [see MD-110, Ch. 9(IX)(H)]	X			

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 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		Yes	No	N/A	
 Measures	F.2. The agency complies with the law, including EEOC regulations, management directives, orders, and other written instructions.				
	F.2.a. Does the agency timely respond and fully comply with EEOC orders? [see 29 CFR §1614.502; MD-715, II(E)]	X			
	F.2.a.1. When a complainant requests a hearing, does the agency timely forward the investigative file to the appropriate EEOC hearing office? [see 29 CFR §1614.108(g)]	X			
	F.2.a.2. When there is a finding of discrimination that is not the subject of an appeal by the agency, does the agency ensure timely compliance with the orders of relief? [see 29 CFR §1614.501]	X			
	F.2.a.3. When a complainant files an appeal, does the agency timely forward the investigative file to EEOC's Office of Federal Operations? [see 29 CFR §1614.403(e)]			X	The Department's Employment Adjudication Division is responsible for timely forwarding complaint files in reference to appeals.
	F.2.a.4. Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.502, does the agency promptly provide EEOC with the required documentation for completing compliance?	X			
 Compliance Indicator		Measure Has Been Met			For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	N/A	
	F.3. The agency reports to EEOC its program efforts and accomplishments.				
	F.3.a. Does the agency timely submit to EEOC an accurate and complete No FEAR Act report? [Public Law 107-174 (May 15, 2002), §203(a)]	X			
	F.3.b. Does the agency timely post on its public webpage its quarterly No FEAR Act data? [see 29 CFR §1614.703(d)]	X			<a href="https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/the-eo-compliance-branch/">https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-outreach-diversity-and-equal-opportunity/the-eo-compliance-branch/</a>

Essential Element: O Other



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Plan to Attain Essential Elements

PART H.1

Brief Description of Program Deficiency:	B.4.a.7. to maintain accurate data collection and tracking systems for the following types of data: complaint tracking, workforce demographics, and applicant flow data? [see MD-715, II(E)] If not, please identify the systems with insufficient funding in the comments section.
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Incomplete Applicant Flow Data

Objectives for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
12/20/2021	12/31/2023	12/31/2024		Address incomplete applicant flow data

Responsible Officials

Title	Name	Standards Address the Plan?
HR Director	Willis Collie	Yes

Planned Activities

Target Date	Planned Activity	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
12/30/2023	Work with HR to develop a mechanism to address data deficiencies (missing interview data for Tables A/B6, 7, and 8).	Yes		

Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishment
2021	The Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) has reviewed the stated incompletions and has notified HR of the requirements. ODEO is working with analytics team to develop a dashboard to improve analytic and reporting capabilities.

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Plan to Attain Essential Elements

PART H.2

Brief Description of Program Deficiency: B.4.a.9. to effectively manage its anti-harassment program? [see MD-715 Instructions, Sec. I; EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (1999), § V.C.1]

Effectively Management Anti-Harassment Program

Objectives for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
12/11/2019	12/31/2021	12/31/2023	09/05/2023	Allocate sufficient funding and qualified staffing to successfully implement anti-harassment program . Agency has approved to hire FTE. Plans are underway to recruit and fill by the end of 2022.

Responsible Officials

Title	Name	Standards Address the Plan?
ODEO Director	Tracey Troutman	Yes

Planned Activities

Target Date	Planned Activity	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
12/31/2021	In FY 2021, Agency was approved to hire an Anti-Harassment Coordinator (AHC) FTE.  ARS appointed 2 temporary AHCs who applied the USDA Anti-Harassment Departmental Regulation and assisted in the creation of AH Departmental Manual for a fully functioning program by 09/05/2023.	Yes	12/31/2023	09/05/2023

Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishment
2023	ARS appointed 2 temporary AHCs who applied the USDA Anti-Harassment Departmental Regulation and assisted in the creation of AH Departmental Manual for a fully functioning program by 09/05/2023.  In FY 2023, a new position description was written and classified. Human Resources' Personnel and Labor Solutions (PALS) implemented the anti-harassment program. An Acting AHC provides services for function. In addition, to the Acting AHC's personal email address, a designated email address (AHP-REE@usda.gov ) was established for the function.

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Plan to Attain Essential Elements

PART H.3

Brief Description of Program Deficiency: C.3.b.8. Support the anti-harassment program in investigating and correcting harassing conduct?. [see Enforcement Guidance, V.C.2]  
Support the anti-harassment program in investigating and correcting harassing conduct. [see Enforcement Guidance, V.C.2]

Objectives for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
09/30/2021	09/30/2022	12/31/2023	09/05/2023	ARS does not have a separate anti-harassment program. Working on mechanism to implement anti-harassment program.

Responsible Officials

Title	Name	Standards Address the Plan?
ODEO Director	Tracey Troutman	No

Planned Activities

Target Date	Planned Activity	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
09/30/2021	Agency approved to hire FTE.	Yes	12/31/2023	09/05/2023

Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishment
2021	Agency approved the hiring of FTE. Plans are underway to recruit and fill position.
2023	ARS has appointed 2 temporary AHCs who applied the USDA Anti-Harassment Departmental Regulation and assisting in the creation of AH Departmental Manual for a fully functioning program by 09/05/2023.  In FY 2023, a new position description was written and classified. HRD's Personnel Labor Solutions (PALS) implemented the anti-harassment program. An Acting AHC provides services for function. In addition, to the Acting AHC's personal email address, a designated email address (AHP-REE@usda.gov ) was established for the function. The EEO Office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment.

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Plan to Attain Essential Elements

PART H.4

Brief Description of Program Deficiency:	C.2.a.4. Does the agency ensure that the EEO office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment? [See Enforcement Guidance, V.C.]
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The agency does not have established procedures in place to ensure the EEO Office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment.

Objectives for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
09/30/2021	09/30/2022	12/31/2023	09/05/2023	ARS does not have a separate anti-harassment program. Working on mechanism to implement anti-harassment program.

Responsible Officials

Title	Name	Standards Address the Plan?
Civil Rights Director, ARS	Tracey Troutman	Yes

Planned Activities

Target Date	Planned Activity	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
09/30/2021	Agency approved to hire FTE. Plans are underway to recruit and fill by the end of FY22.	Yes	12/31/2023	09/05/2023

Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishment
2021	Agency approved the hiring of FTE. Plans are underway to recruit and fill position.
2023	ARS has appointed 2 temporary AHCs who applied the USDA Anti-Harassment Departmental Regulation and assisting in the creation of AH Departmental Manual for a fully functioning program by 09/05/2023.  In FY 2023, a new position description was written and classified. HRD's Personnel Labor Solutions (PALS) implemented the anti-harassment program. An Acting AHC provides services for function. In addition, to the Acting AHC's personal email address, a designated email address (AHP-REE@usda.gov ) was established for the function. The EEO Office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment.

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Plan to Attain Essential Elements

PART H.5

Brief Description of Program Deficiency: E.1.h. When the complainant did not request a hearing, does the agency timely issue the final agency decision, pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.110(b)?

Untimely Final Agency Decisions on Merits

Objectives for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
07/06/2021	12/31/2021		12/31/2021	Communicate with OASCR, EAD to improve the timeliness of ARS FAD's since they handle this process.

Responsible Officials

Title	Name	Standards Address the Plan?
Director, Office of Adjudication	Kirk Perry	Yes

Planned Activities

Target Date	Planned Activity	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
12/30/2021	The agency will continue to communicate with OASCR, EAD regarding timely issuance of FAD's. ARS makes OASCR/EAD aware of FAD elections or complaints referred for FAD by EEOC which is noted in the Department's case management database. The agency liaison follows up with EAD on the status of FAD's.	Yes		12/30/2021
12/30/2021	ARS set up first quarterly meeting with Office of the Assistant Secretary (OASCR) to continue communication and work to improve the timeliness of Final Agency Decisions (FADs). Meetings to continue on a quarterly basis.	Yes		12/30/2021

Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishment
2021	In FY21 the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (USDA, OASCR), Center for Civil Rights Enforcement (CCRE), Employment Investigation Division (EID) completed 10 ARS EEO complaint investigations 90% were conducted timely, with an average processing time of 147 days in investigation.

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Plan to Attain Essential Elements

PART H.6

Brief Description of Program Deficiency: E.3.c. Does the Agency encourage all employees to use ADR, where ADR is appropriate? [See MD-110, Ch. 3(IV)(C)]

Low ADR participation rate during the pre-complaint stage

Objectives for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
07/06/2021	12/31/2021	12/31/2023	12/31/2024	Encourage employee participation in ADR

Responsible Officials

Title	Name	Standards Address the Plan?
Director, ODEO	Tracey Troutman	Yes
Deputy Director, ODEO	To be determined	Yes

Planned Activities

Target Date	Planned Activity	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
07/06/2021	Meet with USDA colleagues to obtain information about ADR best practices.	Yes		07/06/2021
09/30/2022	ODEO leadership will explore the feasibility of employing an in-house full time employee (FTE) for EEO ADR.	Yes	12/31/2024	
09/30/2022	Revise ADR Policy to be consistent with EEOC guidance.	Yes	12/31/2024	

Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishment
2021	ARS met with USDA colleagues to obtain information about ADR best practices. ODEO is working with the ARS Office of Communications to prepare videos and brochures and reviewing how we market the CRP to employees. During ODEO's October 2021 meeting with CCRE, discussions were also held regarding low participation rates in ADR by ARS employees engaged in the EEO process. ODEO shared how its staff met with staff from a sister USDA agency to exchange ideas on improving ADR participation, ranging from training staff to communications to Agency employees. CRP staff are developing a revised communication/rebranding strategy to better inform staff on the virtues of ADR, as well as automate contact for services through informational links. Lastly, the agency has worked to expand training for CRP staff. CRP staff completed certification to conduct Conflict Dynamics Profile assessments, as well as to train supervisors and managers in how to mediate disputes in the workplace. The goal is to increase awareness regarding ADR (EEO and non-EEO) utility throughout ARS.

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Plan to Attain Essential Elements

PART H.7

Brief Description of Program Deficiency: E.4.a.6. The processing of complaints for the anti-harassment program? [see EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Vicarious Employer Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors (1999), § V.C.2]

Establish Anti-Harassment Program

Objectives for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
12/11/2019	12/31/2021	12/31/2023		Establish Anti-Harassment Program

Responsible Officials

Title	Name	Standards Address the Plan?
HR Director	Willis Collie	Yes
ODEO Director	Tracey Troutman	Yes

Planned Activities

Target Date	Planned Activity	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
12/31/2022	Work with HR to implement anti-harassment program.	Yes	12/31/2023	09/05/2023
12/31/2023	Plans are underway to recruit and fill anti-harassment coordinator position by the end of 2024.	Yes	12/31/2023	09/05/2023
12/31/2023	Anti-harassment coordinator review of training to establish plan for training revision to include examples of disability-based harassment for leadership approval.	Yes	12/31/2023	09/05/2023

Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishment
2021	Agency approved to hire FTE. ARS held a webinar that provided information and answered questions addressing disability-based harassment. ARS continues to explore innovative practices, compliant training, and efficient processes for the implementation of the anti-harassment program.
2023	ARS appointed 2 temporary AHCs who applied the USDA Anti-Harassment Departmental Regulation and assisted in the creation of AH Departmental Manual for a fully functioning program by 09/05/2023.  In FY 2023, a new position description was written and classified. Human Resources Division's (HRD) Personnel Labor Solutions (PALS) implemented the anti-harassment program. An Acting AHC provides services for function. In addition to the Acting AHC's personal email address, a designated email address (AHP-REE@usda.gov) was established for the function.  ARS completed its planned activities to establish and implement a separate, effective, and fully functioning EEOC compliant anti-harassment program aligned with its Human Resources-Personnel and Labor Solutions (PALS) office; ensured its anti-harassment program included procedures to assure the EEO Office informs the anti-harassment program of all EEO counseling activity alleging harassment; required rating officials to evaluate the performance of its managers and supervisors on their efforts to support the anti-harassment program in investigating and correcting harassing conduct; and has systems in place for the agency to accurately collect, monitor, and analyze data regarding processing complaints for its anti-harassment function.

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Plan to Eliminate Identified Barriers

PART I.1

<b>Source of the Trigger:</b>	Workforce Data (if so identify the table)	
<b>Specific Workforce Data Table:</b>	Workforce Data Table - A6	
<b>STATEMENT OF CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</b>  Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.  How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?	When comparing the participation rates of Hispanics or Latinos (HL) in each major occupation with upward mobility to their availability in the occupational CLF, HL employees appear to be predominately in the Biological Science Technician – 0404 series and not the other major occupations of the agency. HL females are above the OCLF in series 0401, 0403, 1320, and 2210. HL males are above the OCLF in series 0401, 0403, 1102, 1320, and 2210. The glass ceiling for HL males appears to be grade GS-09 & 15. The glass ceiling for HL females appears to be grade GS-07 & 09.	
<b>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</b>	<i>Barrier Group</i> Hispanic or Latino Males Hispanic or Latino Females	
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed?:</b>	N	
<b>Barrier(s) Identified?:</b>	Y	
<b>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</b>  Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.	<b>Barrier Name</b> Hispanic employees reach the glass ceiling for certain grades. The agency will further evaluate.	<b>Description of Policy, Procedure, or Practice</b> To be determined.

Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan

Date Initiated	Target Date	Sufficient Funding / Staffing?	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
09/30/2018	09/30/2020	Yes	09/30/2024		Identify root cause of glass ceiling for Hispanic/Latino employees. Conduct further analysis.

Responsible Official(s)

Title	Name	Standards Address The Plan?
Director, HRD	Willis Collie	Yes
Director, ODEO	Tracey Troutman	Yes

Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective

Target Date	Planned Activities	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
09/30/2022	Work to train staff on conducting barrier analysis.	Yes	09/30/2024	



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Plan to Eliminate Identified Barriers

Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective

Target Date	Planned Activities	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
09/30/2020	Work with HR to obtain data to determine if majority of Hispanic/Latino employees are in positions other than designated MCOs.	Yes		12/30/2020
09/30/2023	Conduct further analysis to identify root cause of glass ceiling for Hispanic employees.	Yes	09/30/2024	

Report of Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishments
2022	<p>The Agency is still working to accomplish ARS MD-715 Action Plan – Scientific Workforce goals focused on increasing Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, or both in permanent SY workforce resulting in onboarding one perm employee. In addition to strategic plan the agency notes the following:</p> <p>Agency renewed its Hispanic Latino Professionals Association (HPLA) Employer Membership – includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unlimited nationwide job postings and monthly job importing service w/unlimited users. In addition to automatic job importing, unlimited manual job postings can be posted anytime by unlimited account users.</li> <li>2. A profile on HPLA website featuring your organization's name, logo, description, and links to Agency's opportunities. <a href="https://www.hpla.com/employers/employerlist.html">https://www.hpla.com/employers/employerlist.html</a></li> <li>3. Inclusion on the America's Best Places For Latinos lists where the Agency is listed alphabetically by industry and location. Agency's profile is indexed into HPLA's search engine and is easily accessible for HPLA users and members.</li> <li>4. Two targeted Email Recruitment Advertising Campaigns. Agency receives complete reports of the total available people who keyword matched the skills of the Agency's job profiles and requirements, and who were actively or passively looking for a new opportunity. Reports include an accounting of who reads the ad, and who clicks as interested in the opportunity. The report of interested prospects includes names, emails, phone numbers, and resumes. Regional Campaigns of up to 500 targeted people within a 150-mile radius are included.</li> <li>5. Access to one recruiting events/networking events anywhere in the United States. Agency is scheduled to participate in the 2021 HPLA DC Mero Area Virtual Job Fair, March 9, 2021.</li> <li>6. Annual Reports consisting of the number of Agency jobs posted, views to posted jobs, and apply clicks.</li> </ol> <p>Agency's Inform and Engage webinar held on October 28th titled "Best Practices for Virtual Recruitment. Human Resources team discussed tips for successful recruitment in the virtual environment. The team shared pointers on determining the best source of candidates, the importance of the hiring timeline, and virtual interviewing.</p>

USDA Agricultural Research Service

For period covering October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

Plan to Eliminate Identified Barriers

Report of Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishments
2023	<p>ARS launched the Three Sisters Project with a pilot partnership between ARS and the Chicago, IL High School for Agricultural Sciences (CHSAS). The ARS "Three Sisters Project" joins together students from urban high school agricultural programs, scientists from ARS laboratories, and national program leaders. The purpose of the project is to support and further students' interest in agriculture science and science overall with the hopes of bringing diversity and fresh ideas to the pipeline of talent recruited to ARS and other agricultural science organizations. Due to the success of the Three Sisters pilot, the program model expanded. In FY 23, the project continues to be a success and includes at least one other sponsored high school, W. B. Saul High School in Philadelphia, PA.</p> <p>Agency hired 322 HACU interns in FY 23.</p> <p>Nine (9) employees participated/are participating in career development training programs and 26 employees participated/are participating in Detail Programs. Career development/leadership training and details are designed to provide promotion opportunities to underrepresented employees in the workforce.</p> <p>Agency staff participated in 2,375 EEO observations. In each EEO observation, trained EEO specialists guide the selecting panels through the process in a manner that is not only fair and equitable, but also provide guidance on the importance of diversity, including working to make sure that hiring panels themselves consist of diverse panelist.</p>

**MD-715 – Part J**  
**Special Program Plan**  
**for the Recruitment, Hiring, Advancement, and**  
**Retention of Persons with Disabilities**

To capture agencies' affirmative action plan for persons with disabilities (PWD) and persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD), EEOC regulations (29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(e)) and MD-715 require agencies to describe how their affirmative action plan will improve the recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention of applicants and employees with disabilities.

**Section I: Efforts to Reach Regulatory Goals**

EEOC regulations (29 CFR § 1614.203(d)(7)) require agencies to establish specific numerical goals for increasing the participation of persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities in the federal government

1. Using the goal of 12% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- |                               |        |     |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----|
| a.Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWD) | Answer | Yes |
| b.Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWD)  | Answer | Yes |

a. 9.55% b. 6.65%

\*For GS employees, please use two clusters: GS-1 to GS-10 and GS-11 to SES, as set forth in 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d) (7). For all other pay plans, please use the approximate grade clusters that are above or below GS-11 Step 1 in the Washington, DC metropolitan region.

2. Using the goal of 2% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- |                                |        |     |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----|
| a.Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWTD) | Answer | No  |
| b.Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWTD)  | Answer | Yes |

b. 1.93%

3. Describe how the agency has communicated the numerical goals to the hiring managers and/or recruiters.

ARS holds managers and supervisors accountable for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce through the REE Recruitment Agreement, in particular, Appendix A, which requires that the ARS hiring managers utilize the MD-715 in recruiting. EEO Program Managers review MD-715 identified barriers with hiring managers during the vacancy announcement process to enhance opportunities for recruitment and hire. ARS EEO Program Managers (PM) or designees serve as EEO Observers with the evaluation panel throughout the evaluation and selection process of permanent new hires. A key goal/objective of senior level officials (Area Directors) is to work directly with the ODEO Program Managers to create more effective diversity plans to ensure sufficient opportunities for groups such as PWD and PWTD. By the end of FY22, the ODEO Director and HR Director will review the agency’s current recruitment plan/efforts to determine if and to what extent the agency currently considers disability status as a positive factor in hiring, promotion, or assignment decisions to the extent permitted by law, and provide recommendations for improvements. The ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) hosted a webinar for staff with disabilities and supervisors on September 15, 2022. The webinar covered: 1) hiring authorities and flexibilities for veterans and people with disabilities, 2) career development opportunities via the Graduate School's Leadership Programs, the Office of Personnel Management's Center for Leadership Development, and AgLearn, and 3) how individual development plans (IDPs) can help with career progression.

**Section II: Model Disability Program**

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(1), agencies must ensure sufficient staff, training and resources to recruit and hire persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities, administer the reasonable accommodation program and special emphasis program, and oversee any other disability hiring and advancement program the agency has in place.

**A. PLAN TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT & COMPETENT STAFFING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM**

1. Has the agency designated sufficient qualified personnel to implement its disability program during the reporting period? If “no”, describe the agency’s plan to improve the staffing for the upcoming year.

Answer Yes

2. Identify all staff responsible for implementing the agency's disability employment program by the office, staff employment status, and responsible official.

Disability Program Task	# of FTE Staff By Employment Status			Responsible Official (Name, Title, Office Email)
	Full Time	Part Time	Collateral Duty	
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	0	0	5	Keli Martin Supervisory HR Specialist keli.martin@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	Hillary Clark Supervisory HR Specialist hillary.clark@usda.gov
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	0	0	40	Keli Martin Supervisory HR Specialist keli.martin@usda.gov
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	Tracey Troutman Director tracey.troutman@usda.gov
Section 508 Compliance	0	0	1	Christopher Lowe Chief Cyber Security Operations Officer christopher.lowe@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	0	0	1	Antonino Fleri Division Director, Facilities Division

3. Has the agency provided disability program staff with sufficient training to carry out their responsibilities during the reporting period? If “yes”, describe the training that disability program staff have received. If “no”, describe the training planned for the upcoming year.

Answer Yes

Training courses directly related to disability employment were taken from during the reporting period including: Section 508: What it is and Why it is Important? Training planned for upcoming year include: Americans with Disabilities Act: An Overview for Managers; Workplace Accommodation; and Reasonable Accommodation and Personal Assistance Services Training for Employees.

**B. PLAN TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM**

Has the agency provided sufficient funding and other resources to successfully implement the disability program during the reporting period? If “no”, describe the agency’s plan to ensure all aspects of the disability program have sufficient funding and other resources

Answer Yes

**Section III: Plan to Recruit and Hire Individuals with Disabilities**

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(d)(1)(i) and (ii), agencies must establish a plan to increase the recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. The questions below are designed to identify outcomes of the agency’s recruitment program plan for PWD and PWTD

**A. PLAN TO IDENTIFY JOB APPLICATIONS WITH DISABILITIES**

1. Describe the programs and resources the agency uses to identify job applicants with disabilities, including individuals with targeted disabilities.

The agency utilizes the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP). The Disability Employment Program Manager (DEPM) receives many unsolicited resumes and Schedule A letters from individuals with disabilities. This documentation is maintained in a database for agency hiring managers who may request to review resumes to fill their vacant positions. Additionally, the USA Jobs Agency Talent Portal is used to identify resumes of individuals with disabilities to be considered via the Schedule A hiring authority.

2. Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(a)(3), describe the agency's use of hiring authorities that take disability into account (e.g., Schedule A) to recruit PWD and PWTD for positions in the permanent workforce

The agency has experienced success utilizing the Schedule A 213.2102(u) authority to recruit individuals with disabilities using various programs.

3. When individuals apply for a position under a hiring authority that takes disability into account (e.g., Schedule A), explain how the agency (1) determines if the individual is eligible for appointment under such authority; and, (2) forwards the individual's application to the relevant hiring officials with an explanation of how and when the individual may be appointed.

If the individual applies via a job opportunity announcement and they are determined to be qualified for the position, their resume is referred by the human resources specialist to the hiring manager on a non-competitive eligible certificate.

4. Has the agency provided training to all hiring managers on the use of hiring authorities that take disability into account (e.g., Schedule A)? If "yes", describe the type(s) of training and frequency. If "no", describe the agency's plan to provide this training.

Answer Yes

Training is available in AgLearn. The Disability Program Manager provided information about WRP in the March 2022 Harvest newsletter. The Disability Program Manager developed and distributed a procedural statement regarding the process for managing unsolicited resumes received from veterans and people with disabilities. As a result, numerous requests for resumes were received from HR Specialists and hiring managers. New hires have been made utilizing this non-competitive, easy to use and timely resource. Currently, there are approximately 200 resumes available in the portal. The Disability Program Manager also developed documents regarding hiring both veterans and people with disabilities. The documents: Helpful Links for Hiring Managers, Q&A's for Hiring Managers and Tips for Hiring Managers are valuable information available for hiring managers to reference when considering hiring veterans and people with disabilities. HRD Program Manager hosted a brown bag training session for HR Specialists on the benefits of hiring veterans and people with disabilities. HRD Program Manager hosted "All Things Non-Competitive" training session for ARS and client agencies which addressed non-competitive hiring authorities and non-competitive hiring eligibilities – this included Schedule A.

## B. PLAN TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Describe the agency's efforts to establish and maintain contacts with organizations that assist PWD, including PWTD, in securing and maintaining employment.

In FY 2021, the DEPM prepared numerous forms of communication (AFM "Greenies") relaying information to hiring managers on the WRP and informing them of upcoming WRP informational webinars. The DEPM completed the formal training required to become a WRP Recruiter. The DEPM received numerous requests from hiring managers for referral of WRP candidates. The DEPM assisted the hiring managers by searching the WRP database various times to assist them in hiring the best qualified individuals to fill their positions.

## C. PROGRESSION TOWARDS GOALS (RECRUITMENT AND HIRING)

1. Using the goals of 12% for PWD and 2% for PWTD as the benchmarks, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWTD among the new hires in the permanent workforce? If "yes", please describe the triggers below.

- |   |        |     |
|---|--------|-----|
| a. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWD)  | Answer | Yes |
| b. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWTD) | Answer | No  |

a. 8.09%

2. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWTD among the new hires for any of the mission-critical occupations (MCO)? If "yes", please describe the triggers below. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. New Hires for MCO (PWD) Answer Yes
- b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD) Answer Yes

a. PWD qualified applicants not selected (0440, 1320, and 2210) b. PWTD qualified applicants not selected (0401, 0403, 0440, 1101, 1102, 1320, and 2210)

3. Using the relevant applicant pool as the benchmark, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWTD among the qualified internal applicants for any of the mission-critical occupations (MCO)? If "yes", please describe the triggers below. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWD) Answer Yes
- b. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWTD) Answer Yes

a. PWD qualified applicants not selected (1101 and 1102) b. PWTD qualified applicants not selected (0201, 0401, 1101, 1102, and 2210)

4. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWTD among employees promoted to any of the mission-critical occupations (MCO)? If "yes", please describe the triggers below. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. Promotions for MCO (PWD) Answer No
- b. Promotions for MCO (PWTD) Answer Yes

Triggers exist for PWTD. PWTD in MCO 0201, 0401, and 2210 promoted at lower rate than PWD.

### Section IV: Plan to Ensure Advancement Opportunities for Employees with Disabilities

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(d)(1)(iii), agencies are required to provide sufficient advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities. Such activities might include specialized training and mentoring programs, career development opportunities, awards programs, promotions, and similar programs that address advancement. In this section, agencies should identify, and provide data on programs designed to ensure advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities.

#### A. ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM PLAN

Describe the agency's plan to ensure PWD, including PWTD, have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

To demonstrate the Agency's commitment to diversity and EEO, the Administrator established a group that was comprised of staff from Administrative and Financial Management (including Human Resources Division) and the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity to develop a Diversity Recruitment Plan to increase diversity in underrepresented populations throughout the Agency. The plan contains several goals with several corresponding objectives which are accompanied by action/improvement strategies. In 2017, the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) reassigned its ODEO Program Managers directly to Area Directors who oversee a majority of the workforce at ARS. A key goal/objective of these senior level officials (Area Directors) is to work directly with the reassigned ODEO Program Managers to create more effective diversity plans to ensure sufficient opportunities for groups such as PWD and PWTD. Strategies are being developed to attract and promote PWD and PWTD within each geographical area in the country. As the Agency is divided into five (5) geographical regions, each Area faces different challenges based upon the unique populations which inhabit those regions. By directly assigning ODEO Program Managers to the Area Directors, ARS is better equipping those senior officials with subject matter experts to identify local sources of PWD and PWTD perspective employees. In addition, the ODEO Program Managers will enhance local outreach activities and develop diversity plans specifically designed to attract the potential PWD and PWTD talent sought to serve in a research organization such as ARS. Disability program manager developed documents regarding hiring both veterans and people with disabilities. The documents: Helpful Links for Hiring Managers, Q&A's for Hiring Managers and Tips for Hiring Managers provide valuable information for hiring managers to reference when considering hiring veterans and people with disabilities.

**B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES**

1. Please describe the career development opportunities that the agency provides to its employees.

Agency career development opportunities are: OPM Center for Leadership Development, OPM FEI Leadership for a Democratic Society, Congressional Briefing Conference (ARS Employees), Graduate School Leadership Development Programs, American Management Associate Leadership & Team Development for Managerial Success, ARS Supervisory Training, Location and Headquarters Service Employees Team (SET) Details, and Aglearn. As long as employees meet the requirements (grade, within their discipline, supervisors' approval, funding, etc.) interested employees may apply for career development opportunities. Employees interested in serving on a detail coordinate with their supervisors and submit resumes to the SET Program Coordinator who works with the requestor to fill their needs. Once a year within 30 days of annual performance evaluations, employees and supervisors must meet to discuss goals and accomplishments and develop an IDP. This meeting gives both the opportunity to set objectives and plan learning experiences that will support them. The Agency currently has a Mentoring Program for new Supervisors.

2. In the table below, please provide the data for career development opportunities that require competition and/or supervisory recommendation/approval to participate.

Career Development Opportunities	Total Participants		PWD		PWTD	
	Applicants (#)	Selectees (#)	Applicants (#)	Selectees (#)	Applicants (#)	Selectees (#)
Detail Programs						
Fellowship Programs						
Coaching Programs						
Mentoring Programs						
Internship Programs						
Other Career Development Programs						
Training Programs	17	17	0	0	0	0

3. Do triggers exist for PWD among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for the applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- |                     |        |     |
|---------------------|--------|-----|
| a. Applicants (PWD) | Answer | Yes |
| b. Selections (PWD) | Answer | No  |

a. No applicants for career development programs

4. Do triggers exist for PWTD among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for the applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- |                      |        |     |
|----------------------|--------|-----|
| a. Applicants (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |
| b. Selections (PWTD) | Answer | No  |

a. No applicants for career development programs

### C. AWARDS

1. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTD for any level of the time-off awards, bonuses, or other incentives? If “yes”, please describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- |   |        |     |
|---|--------|-----|
| a. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWD)  | Answer | No  |
| b. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |

b. PWTD less than PWD (time off and cash awards)

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTD for quality step increases or performance-based pay increases? If “yes”, please describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- |                         |        |    |
|-------------------------|--------|----|
| a. Pay Increases (PWD)  | Answer | No |
| b. Pay Increases (PWTD) | Answer | No |

3. If the agency has other types of employee recognition programs, are PWD and/or PWTD recognized disproportionately less than employees without disabilities? (The appropriate benchmark is the inclusion rate.) If “yes”, describe the employee recognition program and relevant data in the text box.

- |                                      |        |     |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----|
| a. Other Types of Recognition (PWD)  | Answer | N/A |
| b. Other Types of Recognition (PWTD) | Answer | N/A |

### D. PROMOTIONS

1. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- |  |        |     |
|--|--------|-----|
| a. SES                                 |        |     |
| i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) | Answer | No  |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWD)          | Answer | No  |
| b. Grade GS-15                         |        |     |
| i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) | Answer | No  |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWD)          | Answer | No  |
| c. Grade GS-14                         |        |     |
| i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) | Answer | Yes |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWD)          | Answer | No  |
| d. Grade GS-13                         |        |     |
| i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) | Answer | Yes |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWD)          | Answer | No  |



a. Department OHRM maintains SES data. Agency working with POC to obtain data. d. GS-13: qualified applicants selected at lesser rate

2. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. SES
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer No
- b. Grade GS-15
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer No
- c. Grade GS-14
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer Yes
- d. Grade GS-13
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer Yes

a. Department OHRM maintains SES data. Agency working with POC to obtain data. c. GS-14: qualified applicants, no selections d. GS-13: qualified, no selections

3. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. New Hires to SES (PWD) Answer No
- b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD) Answer Yes
- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD) Answer No
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD) Answer No

a. Department OHRM maintains SES data. Agency working with POC to obtain data. b. No qualified GS-15 hires

4. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. New Hires to SES (PWTD) Answer No
- b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD) Answer Yes
- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) Answer No
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) Answer No

a. Department OHRM maintains SES data. Agency working with POC to obtain data. b. No GS-15 qualified applicants hired

5. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. Executives
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer Yes
- b. Managers
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer Yes
- c. Supervisors

- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer Yes

a. qualified applicants, no selections b. qualified applicants, no selections c. qualified applicants, no selections

6. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. Executives
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer No
- b. Managers
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer Yes
- c. Supervisors
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer Yes

b. qualified applicants, no selections c. qualified applicants, no selections

7. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. New Hires for Executives (PWD) Answer Yes
- b. New Hires for Managers (PWD) Answer No
- c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD) Answer Yes

a. qualified applicants, no selections c. qualified applicants, no selections

8. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. New Hires for Executives (PWTD) Answer Yes
- b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD) Answer No
- c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD) Answer Yes

b. qualified applicant, no selections c. qualified applicant, no selection

## Section V: Plan to Improve Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To be model employer for persons with disabilities, agencies must have policies and programs in place to retain employees with disabilities. In this section, agencies should: (1) analyze workforce separation data to identify barriers retaining employees with disabilities; (2) describe efforts to ensure accessibility of technology and facilities; and (3) provide information on the reasonable accommodation program and workplace assistance services.

### A. VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY SEPARATIONS

1. In this reporting period, did the agency convert all eligible Schedule A employees with a disability into the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service (5 CFR § 213.3102(u)(6)(i))? If “no”, please explain why the agency did not convert all eligible Schedule A employees.

Answer N/A

None of Schedule A employees were eligible for conversion at this time.

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWD among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without disabilities? If “yes”, describe the trigger below.

- a. Voluntary Separations (PWD) Answer Yes
- b. Involuntary Separations (PWD) Answer Yes

a. Rate of voluntary separations for PWD 10.16% compared to 8.90% for PWOD b. Rate of involuntary separations for PWD 0.34% compared to 0.90% for PWOD

3. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWTD among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without targeted disabilities? If “yes”, describe the trigger below.

a. Voluntary Separations (PWTD)	Answer	Yes
b. Involuntary Separations (PWTD)	Answer	No

a. Rate of voluntary separations for PWTD 11.36% compared to 8.94% for PWOTD b. Rate of involuntary separations for PWTD 0.76% compared to 0.34% for PWOTD

4. If a trigger exists involving the separation rate of PWD and/or PWTD, please explain why they left the agency using exit interview results and other data sources.

In FY 2021, the REE/ARS Exit Survey was amended to include related questions. As indicated below, the exit survey results were limited due to a lack of respondent input. 1) Provide feedback about your experiences regarding the processes or practices within your REE agency for providing Reasonable Accommodation or Personal Assistance Services. Out of 23 responses 14 responded N/A, 1 did not seek accommodation and 7 gave positive feedback. 2) Provide feedback about your experiences regarding accessibility related to one or more of the following: Electronic documents, Software applications, Technology hardware, and Physical structure. Out of 37 respondents most selected Very Accessible and 1 selected Not Accessible 3) While you were employed at the REE agency, did you ever have an experience where you did not feel included in the agency’s activity or program because of your disability? 61.76% answered Never and 38.24% Do Not Know 4) Describe what your REE agency is doing well regarding the recruitment, hiring, inclusion, career development, and/or retention of people with disabilities. Out of 116 exit interviews 94 skipped answering this question other responses included 11 N/A, 3 I don’t know, and 8 positive responses. 5) Provide any suggestions you have to improve the recruitment, hiring, inclusion, career development, and/or retention of people with disabilities at your REE agency. Of 19 respondents, the majority gave no suggestions. Additionally, the Agency has implemented an Agencywide strategy to increase the utilization of exit surveys as part of its new MD-715 Action Plan. ARS set a goal of having exit surveys completed and returned by 100 percent of employees leaving the Agency, beginning the 3rd quarter of FY 2021. ARS will submit accomplishments at the end of FY 2022.

## B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(4), federal agencies are required to inform applicants and employees of their rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794(b), concerning the accessibility of agency technology, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. § 4151-4157), concerning the accessibility of agency facilities. In addition, agencies are required to inform individuals where to file complaints if other agencies are responsible for a violation.

1. Please provide the internet address on the agency’s public website for its notice explaining employees’ and applicants’ rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

<https://www.usda.gov/accessibility-statement>

2. Please provide the internet address on the agency’s public website for its notice explaining employees’ and applicants’ rights under the Architectural Barriers Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

The USDA Accessibility public webpage must be revised to include information on the Architectural Barriers Act.

3. Describe any programs, policies, or practices that the agency has undertaken, or plans on undertaking over the next fiscal year, designed to improve accessibility of agency facilities and/or technology.

ARS addresses handicap accessibility in a few ways. While buildings are old and are grandfathered to meet the standard at the time they are built, ARS does have locations on an ad hoc, occasional basis that will execute projects to provide or improve accessibility at their facilities year in and year out. ARS addresses ADA accessibility issues when performing major renovation or renewal of any existing buildings. The current design guide, P&P 242.1, requires that ARS meet current handicap accessibilities standards. ARS is in the process of undergoing a 5 year complete facility assessment of all active ARS owned facilities. During the assessment visit, accessibility requirements are noted with other system deficiencies. The location can prioritize all deficient items/systems throughout their facility within their three years Capital Projects and Repair Plan (CPRP). They will then execute prioritized projects throughout the year. While all accessibility items identified are not accomplished immediately, the ones associated with a safety issue will get prioritized first and funded within the same fiscal year by the location/area. ARS Capital Investment Strategy, projects that are funded by Congress under the Building and Facility Program are required to meet all current ADA Accessibility standards as well as all Federal, State and Local building/code compliant standards. Preliminary conversations around ABA compliance identified the following practices from the Facilities Division: During a building or modernization project, the agency follows the most current state and local guidelines to include ABA requirements on all ARS projects. Until such time as a facility undergoes a modernization project, all grandfathered rules at the time of construction still apply. Currently, building and modernization projects are under the oversight of the Facilities Director. ODEO will continue to work with Facilities Division to better understand the current practices. ARS currently does not have a 508 Compliance Officer. During FY 2021, the ODEO Director worked with the Assistant Chief Information Officer (ACIO) and Office of Communications Director to submit a justification for a 508 Compliance Officer for the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Mission Area. ARS is one of four REE agencies, and OCIO/IT functions for ARS are centralized at the REE mission area. This FTE would have the skills to review and remediate 508 issues. The ACIO is working to move forward with establishing an agreement to hire a compliance officer.

### **C. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM**

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(3), agencies must adopt, post on their public website, and make available to all job applicants and employees, reasonable accommodation procedures.

1. Please provide the average time frame for processing initial requests for reasonable accommodations during the reporting period. (Please do not include previously approved requests with repetitive accommodations, such as interpreting services.)

Background: The DR states, "The supervisor must approve or deny requests for RA and PAS within 30 business days of the initial request, absent extenuating circumstances, such as a delay in returning requested medical information or an unscheduled office closure." The entire FY 2021 the Agency was experiencing extenuating circumstances. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency was also tasked with implementing executive order 14043 Requiring Coronavirus Vaccination for all Federal employees. This created many requests asking for exemption to the requirement. Given this background, most non-vaccine related requests were decided in far less than the 30 business days required by the DR. In FY21 ARS had 294 RA requests. 186 were vaccine related requests and 108 were non vaccine related requests.

2. Describe the effectiveness of the policies, procedures, or practices to implement the agency's reasonable accommodation program. Some examples of an effective program include timely processing requests, timely providing approved accommodations, conducting training for managers and supervisors, and monitoring accommodation requests for trends.

The following efforts are ongoing by the REE Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager to ensure program efficiency and effectiveness. • Participates in Agency-wide meetings, trainings, and webinars as the subject-matter expert to promote RA program awareness. • Modified policies, hard copy materials, and web site information to ensure persons with disabilities understand their rights and responsibilities. • Strategizes with supervisors to develop alternative accommodation options that are equally effective when preferred accommodation imposes an undue hardship. This mitigates denials which reduce or eliminate EEO complaints. • Provided webinars to educate the workforce • Informs both persons with disabilities and their supervisors of proper record keeping of medical documentation to reduce or eliminate HIPPA and Privacy Act violations. • Partners with HR professionals when program overlaps occur to ensure a collaborative and consistent approach exists when conveying information to employees and their supervisors.

## D. PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES ALLOWING EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKPLACE

Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(5), federal agencies, as an aspect of affirmative action, are required to provide personal assistance services (PAS) to employees who need them because of a targeted disability, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the agency.

Describe the effectiveness of the policies, procedures, or practices to implement the PAS requirement. Some examples of an effective program include timely processing requests for PAS, timely providing approved services, conducting training for managers and supervisors, and monitoring PAS requests for trends.

• The RA Program Manager provided training to managers and employees to make them aware of the existence of PAS services. • The Agency established a contract to provide PAS services • We have one employee using PAS services. PAS services were not provided in a timely manner as outlined in the DR because we didn't have a contract vehicle in place to provide the services. Now that we have a contract in place, services are provided.

## Section VI: EEO Complaint and Findings Data

### A. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING HARASSMENT

1. During the last fiscal year, did a higher percentage of PWD file a formal EEO complaint alleging harassment, as compared to the government-wide average?

Answer No

2. During the last fiscal year, did any complaints alleging harassment based on disability status result in a finding of discrimination or a settlement agreement?

Answer No

3. If the agency had one or more findings of discrimination alleging harassment based on disability status during the last fiscal year, please describe the corrective measures taken by the agency.

N/A

### B. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

1. During the last fiscal year, did a higher percentage of PWD file a formal EEO complaint alleging failure to provide a reasonable accommodation, as compared to the government-wide average?

Answer No

2. During the last fiscal year, did any complaints alleging failure to provide reasonable accommodation result in a finding of discrimination or a settlement agreement?

Answer No

3. If the agency had one or more findings of discrimination involving the failure to provide a reasonable accommodation during the last fiscal year, please describe the corrective measures taken by the agency.

N/A

## Section VII: Identification and Removal of Barriers

Element D of MD-715 requires agencies to conduct a barrier analysis when a trigger suggests that a policy, procedure, or practice may be impeding the employment opportunities of a protected EEO group.

1. Has the agency identified any barriers (policies, procedures, and/or practices) that affect employment opportunities for PWD and/or PWTD?

Answer No

2. Has the agency established a plan to correct the barrier(s) involving PWD and/or PWTB?

Answer No

3. Identify each trigger and plan to remove the barrier(s), including the identified barrier(s), objective(s), responsible official(s), planned activities, and, where applicable, accomplishments

<b>Source of the Trigger:</b>	Workforce Data (if so identify the table)
<b>Specific Workforce Data Table:</b>	Workforce Data Table - B1
<b>STATEMENT OF CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</b>  Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.  How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?	The low participation rate of PWD (8.71%) in the agency's total permanent workforce as compared to the EEOC goal of 12%.

<b>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</b>	<i>Barrier Group</i> People with Disabilities
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<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed?:</b>	N
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<b>Barrier(s) Identified?:</b>	Y
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<b>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</b>  Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.	<b>Barrier Name</b>	<b>Description of Policy, Procedure, or Practice</b>
	The low participation rate of PWD	There may be a "glass wall" and/or "blocked pipeline" for persons with disabilities in the workforce.

**Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan**

Date Initiated	Target Date	Sufficient Funding / Staffing?	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description
09/01/2018	12/31/2018	Yes	12/31/2022		Conduct further analysis of the MCO and applicant flow data to determine if either exist.

**Responsible Official(s)**

Title	Name	Standards Address The Plan?
HR Director	Willis Collie	Yes
ODEO Director	Tracey Troutman	Yes

**Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective**

Target Date	Planned Activities	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
12/31/2022	HR and ODEO in further conversation to address deficiencies and analyze workforce data to see if there are any barriers for PWD employees progressing and being promoted at the same rate as other employees or use what we have in the past.	Yes		

## Report of Accomplishments

Fiscal Year	Accomplishments
2022	<p>The ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) hosted a webinar for staff with disabilities and supervisors on September 15, 2022. The webinar covered: 1) hiring authorities and flexibilities for veterans and people with disabilities, 2) career development opportunities via the Graduate School's Leadership Programs, the Office of Personnel Management's Center for Leadership Development, and AgLearn, and 3) how individual development plans (IDPs) can help with career progression. Agency employees completed mandatory Unconscious Bias training.</p> <p>Persons with TD represent 2.41% of the permanent workforce.</p> <p>Persons with TD represent 2.82% of the permanent workforce new hires.</p> <p>Agency hired 26 Schedule A employees.</p> <p>Persons with TD are above 2% in grades GS-14.</p> <p>Persons with TD are above 2% in the major occupations for series 0201 (2.50%), 0404 (2.03%), 0440 (3.44%), 1101(3.45%), 1320 (2.86%).</p> <p>PWD are above 12% in major occupation series 0201(18.75%)</p> <p>17 employees with disabilities and targeted disabilities participated/are participating in career development/ leadership training and/or details.</p>

4. Please explain the factor(s) that prevented the agency from timely completing any of the planned activities.

N/A

5. For the planned activities that were completed, please describe the actual impact of those activities toward eliminating the barrier(s).

See accomplishments

6. If the planned activities did not correct the trigger(s) and/or barrier(s), please describe how the agency intends to improve the plan for the next fiscal year.

The agency will need to further analyze workforce data to see if there are any barriers for PWD employees.