

Affirmative Action 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 No
 - b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWD) Answer No

*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 No

Grade Level Cluster(GS or Alternate Pay Planb)	Total	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
	#	#	%	#	%
Numerical Goal	--	12%		2%	
Grades GS-11 to SES	3324	473	14.23	89	2.68
Grades GS-1 to GS-10	1227	186	15.16	50	4.07

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

For FY 2023 the agency exceeded the EEOC established numerical workforce goals of 12% for persons with disabilities (PWDs) and 2% for persons with targeted disabilities (PWTDs) in both the GS-1 to GS-10 grade level cluster and GS-11 to SES grade level cluster. RD attained an all-encompassing participation rate of 14.45% for PWDs and 3.07% for PWTDs. The established numerical goals and agency achievements are shared during senior executive meetings and briefings, pre-recruitment consultation meetings with agency hiring officials, all-employee Newsbox announcements, and on the OneRD Employee Portal. Moreover, the goals are updated quarterly and displayed on the HR Workforce Management Dashboards.

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

The agency maintained sufficient personnel in FY 2022 for implementing its disability program.

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	
Section 508 Compliance	1	0	0	Tim McCrossen Assistant Chief Information Officer
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	2	0	0	Michael.Ontiveros@usda.g
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	1	0	0	Allison Savage Disability Program Manager Allison.Savage@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	Deborah Oliver Reasonable Accommodations Manager Deborah.Oliver@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	Sharese C. Paylor, Ed.D. Civil Rights Director
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	Darryll Woodson Disability Program Manager

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

Disability program staff participate in monthly MD-715 training sessions lead by the Department and training sessions offered by the Federal Exchange on Employment and Disability (FEED). Reasonable Accommodation and Personal Assistance Services Mandatory Training and the Workforce Recruitment Program Recruiter Training. Additional training completed include RD Sign Language Interpreting Services – Policy, Office of Personnel Management (OPM); ODEIA Summit. Continued collaboration with USDA Disability Program Manager to elevate the program towards a model Disability Program. Civil Rights, in collaboration with Human Resources, will plan a Disability Employment Awareness training session and public announcements to include hiring strategies, the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the hiring process of persons with disabilities (PWD) and persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD), and the reasonable accommodation process.

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: Program Deficiencies In The Disability Program

Section IV: 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.

RD utilizes multiple resources for identifying job applicants with disabilities to include the USAjobs Agency Talent Portal (ATP), the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) and the LinkedIn Recruitment Platform (LRP). Agency vacancy announcements are posted on USAjobs and some on the LRP for access by all applicants to included PWDs/PWTDs. The Veterans Employment Program Manager coordinates with the USDA Military Veteran Agricultural Liaison (MVAL) and a variety of Veteran programs and groups (Operation Warfighter Program, military installations, Wounded Warriors Staffing Consultants, etc.) for identifying potential job applicants with disabilities. The Disability Employment Program Manager communicates directly with PWTDs for submitting resumes, Schedule A Letters, and responding to questions about disability employment. Other outreach and recruitment efforts are conducted by hiring officials, Human Resources and Civil Rights Staff including participation in virtual and in-person career fairs, informational sessions, and special emphasis workgroups. Furthermore, in FY 2022 RD began development of a new recruitment planning guide for release in FY 2023. The guide is being developed in accordance with EO 14035 DEIA and will serve as a resource and tool for enhancing the outreach, recruitment and hiring knowledge of hiring officials to include emphasis on strategic recruitment planning, underrepresented groups (i.e., PWDs/PWTDs) and the availability of special hiring authorities (i.e., Schedule A).

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

RD applies a direct approach for use of hiring authorities that take disability into account. Vacancy announcements provide information about the Schedule A Hiring Authority that includes eligibility requirements, regulations, and tips for applicants using the Schedule A Authority. New hiring officials are required to complete training curricula that includes information on non-competitive hiring authorities. At the beginning of the recruitment process hiring officials are provided recruitment consultation that incorporates guidance on the use of special hiring authorities such as Schedule A, 30 percent or More Disabled Veteran, and Peace Corps. Disability program staff routinely respond to disability employment inquiries from applicants, hiring officials, HR professionals, and employees with disabilities. The agency accepts applications for appoint under the hiring authorities that take disability into account in accordance with OPM regulations. Applicant resumes and schedule A letters are added to the RD Internal Database for consideration in filling vacancies, also. The resumes are referred to hiring officials and/or HR personnel requesting qualified candidates for filling vacant positions.

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.

Determination about eligibility that takes disability into account is made by examining the application/documentation as submitted by the applicant. If the individual is eligible, the application package is forward to the relevant HR personnel for conducting a qualification analysis. If the individual qualifies, their resume, and application are forwarded to the hiring official for consideration with an explanation of how and when the individual may be appointed.

- 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

Hiring managers are provide training and consultation at the beginning of the recruitment process that includes direct discussion about the availability of various non-competitive hiring authorities for use in filling their positions. All hiring managers and supervisors are required to complete core supervisory training within one year of initial appointment to a supervisory position and refresher training every three years thereafter. This training includes modules covering the roles and responsibilities of hiring managers when taking disability into account and applicable hiring authorities. Additionally, a new recruitment guide for hiring officials is being finalized for release in FY 2023. The guide is being developed in accordance with EO 14035 DEIA and will serve as a resource and tool for enhancing the outreach, recruitment and hiring knowledge of hiring officials to include emphasis on strategic recruitment planning, underrepresented groups (i.e., PWDs/PWTDs) and the availability of special hiring authorities (i.e., 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.

RD maintains connection with disability employment organizations and programs such as the Veteran Readiness and Employment Services, the Workforce Recruitment Program, and USAjobs Agency Talent Portal among others. The agency continues to partner with the various organizations for ensuring that RD recruitment and hiring strategies are accomplished.

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 No
- b. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWTD) Answer No

PWD 13.62% and PWTD 2.34%

New Hires	Total (#)	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
		Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)	Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)
% of Total Applicants	0				
% of Qualified Applicants	0				
% of New Hires	0				

- 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

Triggers exist for 4 out of 5 MCOs – PWDs for Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for 4.28% qualified and 0% hired, Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 3.85% qualified and 0% hired, General Business and Industry (occupational code 1101) accounted for 5.29% qualified and 10.10% hired, and Loan Specialist (occupational code 1165) accounted for 5.05% qualified and 6.02% hired. Triggers exist for 3 out of 5 MCOs – PWTDs for Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for 1.57% qualified and 0% hired, Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 343) accounted for 2.00% qualified and 0% hired, and Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 3.85% qualified and 0% hired.

New Hires to Mission-Critical Occupations	Total (#)	Reportable Disability	Targetable Disability
		New Hires (%)	New Hires (%)
Numerical Goal	--	12%	2%
0301 MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATION AND PROGRAM	0	0.00	0.00
0343 MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ANALYSIS	0	0.00	0.00
0510 ACCOUNTING	0	0.00	0.00
1101 GENERAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	0	0.00	0.00
1165 LOAN SPECIALIST	0	0.00	0.00

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

Triggers exist for 5 out of 5 MCOs – PWDs for Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for 8.15% applicants & 7.66% qualified, Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 343) accounted for 7.97% applicants & 7.54% qualified, Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 7.07 applicants & 2.64% qualified, General Business and Industry (occupational code 1101) accounted for 7.14% applicants & 6.42% qualified, and Loan Specialist (occupational code 1165) accounted for 6.02% applicants & 9.10% qualified. Triggers exist for 1 out of 5 MCOs – PWTDs for Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 1.81% applicants & 0% qualified.

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 Yes
- b. Promotions for MCO (PWTD) Answer Yes

Triggers exist for 5 out of 5 MCOs – PWDs for Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for

7.66% qualified and 0% promoted, Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 343) accounted for 7.54% qualified and 6.45% promoted, Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 2.64% qualified and 0% promoted, General Business and Industry (occupational code 1101) accounted for 6.42% qualified and 3.90% promoted, and Loan Specialist (occupational code 1165) accounted for 9.10% qualified and 3.47% promoted. Triggers exist for 4 out of 5 MCOs – PWTDS for Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for 5.36% qualified and 0% promoted, Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 343) accounted for 4.07% qualified and 0% promoted, Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 0% qualified and 0% promoted, and Loan Specialist (occupational code 1165) accounted for 6.36% qualified and 0.69% promoted.

Section V: 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 PWTDS, have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

RD applies Merit System Principles for ensuring equal opportunity for all employees including individuals with disabilities. The agency seeks to eliminate any barriers to advancement for PWDs/PWTDS and uses HR data to track which Schedule A employees are eligible to be converted to career/career conditional status; and ensures that those individuals are converted promptly after they have successfully served the two-year probationary period. The agency seeks to assist all employees in career development and advancement by providing an array of training and development educational tools and resources.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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

In FY 2022 training and development programs were created to include the full participation of the workforce. Program notifications were sent with 508 Compliance to assure all workforce participants would be notified with no barriers. RD facilitated workshop and training sessions that identified technical proficiencies and expertise levels for mission critical occupations. All employees, including PWDs/PWTDS had access to these learning and career development offerings. The Agency actively markets and promotes these opportunities among employees and takes great care to ensure that all materials are 508 Compliant to ensure that all employees can access and apply. The Career Development Rotation (CDR) Program presented an opportunity for all employees to apply to participate in a voluntary, lateral rotation within the agency. The focus on the augmentation of skills, competencies, and experiences of employees by providing CDR is intended to depict employees to diverse purposeful experiences that will increase the participants' extensiveness of experience and knowledge used as a management tool to develop personnel within and across RD programs. The Mentoring Program has two cohort sessions that run during the summer and winter. Mentoring pod platforms were created in FY 2022 to increase mentoring partnerships and availability among the cohort participants. The Mentoring Networking session features career development topics for discussing among the participants. Supervisor Training was distributed to all supervisors without regard to demographics. Furthermore, mandatory training and development offerings support the agency and provides an array of career development tools external and internal to AgLearn, the agency's Learning Management System. The tools are available to all employees in a 508 Compliant manner to assist employees with skill development such as the Individual Development and Executive Development Plans. AgLearn supports the Agency's Supervisor Training Program, Pathways Program Curriculum, Online Courses, Webinars, and procured resources such as the LinkedIn Learning Video Library, and Skillsoft's Percepio. External programs include Mentoring and Coaching Programs, Office of Personnel Management's Presidential Management Council Interagency Rotation Program, and the White House Leadership Development Program. External tools used include Manager Advantage Portal and the Rosetta Stone tool to support language learning outside of user's native language licenses were assigned to active RD language learners. Many of the training and development offerings are conducted using collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom providing a reasonable accommodation option for employees to include captioning for improved accessibility, also.

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 (%)
Training Programs						
Internship Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fellowship Programs	17	3	0	0	0	0
Detail Programs						
Coaching Programs						
Other Career Development Programs	14	6	0	0	0	0
Mentoring Programs	84	79	14.20	13.90	3.	00.02

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 Yes

No applicants or selections made for the CDR Program.

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 Yes

No applicants or selections made for the CDR Program.

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 Yes
- b. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWTD) Answer Yes

Time-off Awards: The benchmark for 1-10 hrs is 13% (PWDs are 16% and PWTDs are 15%), benchmark for 11-20 hrs is 8.02% (PWDs are 6.7% and PWTDs are 6%), benchmark for 21-30 hrs is 3% (PWDs are 3% and PWTDs are 2.16%), benchmark for 31-40 hrs is 2.3% (PWDs are 3% and PWTDs are 2.16%), there are no time-off awards for 41 hrs or more. Cash Awards: The benchmark for \$500 and below is 43.2% (PWDs are 41% and PWTDs are 52%), benchmark for \$501-\$999 is 36.2% (PWDs are 37% and PWTDs are 27%), benchmark for \$1000-\$1999 is 45.4% (PWDs are 44% and PWTDs are 37.41%), benchmark for \$2000-\$2999 is 4.6% (PWDs are 3.01% and PWTDs are 2.16%), benchmark for \$3000-\$3999 is 0.13% (PWDs are 0.32% and PWTDs are 0%), there are no cash awards for \$4000-\$4999 and \$5000 or more.

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 hours: Awards Given	945	18.64	20.78	15.00	19.62
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Total Hours	7018	132.73	155.60	115.71	137.31
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Average Hours	7.43	1.08	0.21	5.51	-0.11
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 hours: Awards Given	906	17.73	20.17	17.86	17.69
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Total Hours	15241	293.48	341.21	294.29	293.27
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Average Hours	16.82	2.51	0.47	11.77	0.02
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 hours: Awards Given	199	3.48	4.36	2.86	3.65
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Total Hours	4912	86.97	107.86	72.86	90.77
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Average Hours	24.68	3.78	0.69	18.21	-0.10
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 hours: Awards Given	169	5.00	3.36	2.86	5.58
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Total Hours	6496	190.30	130.26	108.57	212.31
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Average Hours	38.44	5.77	1.08	27.14	0.01
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Awards Given	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Total Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Average Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Cash Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Awards Given	1140	25.15	25.01	27.14	24.62
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Total Amount	863051	18923.79	18960.13	20307.14	18551.35
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Average Amount	757.06	114.00	21.07	534.40	0.81
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Awards Given	1241	25.91	27.81	18.57	27.88
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Total Amount	1564693	32565.00	35106.47	22838.57	35183.65
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Average Amount	1260.83	190.44	35.07	878.41	5.22
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Awards Given	266	6.06	5.89	6.43	5.96
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Total Amount	577304	12566.36	12893.28	13214.29	12391.92
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Average Amount	2170.32	314.16	60.82	1468.26	3.44
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Awards Given	57	1.36	1.28	2.86	0.96
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Total Amount	179000	4333.33	4012.23	9285.71	3000.00
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Average Amount	3140.35	481.48	87.22	2321.43	-13.89

Cash Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Awards Given	5	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Total Amount	20000	0.00	555.71	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Average Amount	4000	0.00	111.14	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Awards Given	6	0.30	0.08	0.00	0.38
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Total Amount	64985	1818.18	1333.29	0.00	2307.69
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Average Amount	10830.83	909.09	444.43	0.00	1153.85

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTB 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 Yes
- b. Pay Increases (PWTB) Answer Yes

QSI: Benchmark is 0.40% (PWDs are 0.16% and PWTBs are 0%) Performance-based Pay Increase benchmark is 1.53% (PWDs are 1.11% and PWTBs are 1.44%).

Other Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Total Performance Based Pay Increases Awarded	26	0.30	0.67	0.00	0.38

3. If the agency has other types of employee recognition programs, are PWD and/or PWTB 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 (PWTB) 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 Yes
- b. Grade GS-15
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer No
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer Yes

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

Triggers exist in PWD for Promotions Internal Applicants for Internal Selections in SES (6.08%), GS-15 (6.08%), GS-14 (5.73%), & GS-13 (7.87%). The goal is 12% for senior grade levels.

2. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTB 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 (PWTB) Answer No
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer Yes
- b. Grade GS-15
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB) Answer No
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer Yes
- c. Grade GS-14
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB) Answer No
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer No
- d. Grade GS-13
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB) Answer No
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer No

Triggers exist in PWTB for Promotions Internal Applicants for Internal Promotions in SES (0.00%), GS-15 (0.00%). The goal is 2% for senior grade levels.

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 Yes
- b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD) Answer Yes
- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD) Answer Yes
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD) Answer Yes

Triggers exist in PWD for New Hires among selectees in SES (0.85%), GS-15 (0.85%), GS-14 (1.01%), & GS-13 (2.55%). The goal is 12% for senior grade levels.

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 | Yes |
| b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |
| c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |
| d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |

Triggers exist in PWD for New Hires among selectees in SES (0.00%), GS-15 (0.00%), GS-14 (0.00%), & GS-13 (0.00%). The goal is 2% for senior grade levels.

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 | No |

Triggers exist in PWD for Internal Applicants for Internal Selections among Executives (6.08%) & Managers (7.34%). The goal is 12% for senior grade levels.

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 | Yes |
| b. Managers | | |

- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer No
- c. Supervisors
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer No

A trigger exist in PWTD for Internal Applicants for Internal Selections among Executives (0.00%). The goal is 2% for senior grade levels.

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 Yes
 - c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD) Answer Yes

Triggers exist in PWD for New Hires to Supervisory among Executives (0.85%), Managers (1.79%) & Supervisor (3.80%). The goal is 12% for senior grade levels.

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 No

Triggers exist in PWTD for New Hires to Supervisory among Executives (0.00%) & Managers (0.00%). The goal is 2% for senior grade levels.

Section VI: 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 C.F.R. § 213.3102(u)(6)(i))? If “no”, please explain why the agency did not convert all eligible Schedule A employees.

Answer Yes

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 No

The benchmark for voluntary separations is 6.39%. PWD voluntary separations are 8.24%.

Seperations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	21	0.30	0.48
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	99	2.84	2.02
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	182	6.13	3.56
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	111	2.54	2.37
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	413	11.81	8.43

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

The benchmark for voluntary separations is 6.39%. PWTD voluntary separations are 13.66%.

Seperations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	21	0.70	0.45
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	99	4.93	2.05
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	182	4.93	3.90
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	111	0.70	2.45
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	413	11.27	8.84

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.

Table B1 indicates that 86.5% of PWD voluntary separations are due to retirement and 84.2% of PWTD voluntary separations are due to retirement.

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.rd.usda.gov/related-links/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.

<https://rd.usda.gov/> ABA is located in the footer of RD’s public website. Click the Sitemap button.

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.

Public Access Assistive Technology is available to USDA agencies and offices to ensure that members of the public, customers, and USDA employees with disabilities have access to direct onsite services from USDA.

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.)

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 (10/1/20 – 9/30/21), the average processing time of reasonable accommodation requests was 14 business days.

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 agency’s reasonable accommodation program is effective based on timely processing of requests and training provided to managers/supervisors and employees by Employee Relations (ER) staff throughout FY 2021. Training was presented by ER staff on 9/16/21. A mandatory AgLearn reasonable accommodation training course was required to be completed by all managers/supervisors and employees by 5/31/21.

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.

There were no Personal Assistance Services (PAS) requests submitted in FY 2021.

Section VII: 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 governmentwide 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.

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.

Section VIII: 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 PWTD?

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

Source of the Trigger:	Workforce Data (if so identify the table)					
Specific Workforce Data Table:	Workforce Data Table - B1					
STATEMENT OF CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER: Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue. How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?	Qualified PWDs/PWTDs New Hires and Internal Competitive Promotions are not being selected within mission critical occupations (MCOs).					
STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:	<i>Barrier Group</i> People with Disabilities					
Barrier Analysis Process Completed?:	N					
Barrier(s) Identified?:	Y					
STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER: Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.	Barrier Name		Description of Policy, Procedure, or Practice			
	Outreach		The barrier is the lack of targeted outreach to PWD/PWTD to include the failure to attract qualified PWD/PWTD as New Hires and Internal Competitive Promotions within the MCOs.			
Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan						
Date Initiated	Target Date	Sufficient Funding / Staffing?	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description	
09/30/2022	09/30/2023	Yes			The objective is to focus on the hiring processes to determine why PWDs/PWTDs are qualified but are not being selected within the MCOs.	
Responsible Official(s)						
Title		Name		Standards Address The Plan?		
Civil Rights Director		Sharese C. Paylor		Yes		
Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective						
Target Date	Planned Activities			Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
09/30/2025	In collaboration with Diversity Program Manager and Human Resources, there will be focus on outreach of PWDs/PWTDs with external partnerships i.e., universities, organizations, corporations, etc.			Yes	10/01/2023	

Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective				
Target Date	Planned Activities	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
09/30/2025	The workforce needs targeted training on Schedule A hiring authority and reasonable accommodations to include increasing targeted training to the workforce Educate potential applicants on hiring PWD/PWTD and benefits of using schedule A.	Yes	10/01/2023	
09/30/2025	Educate hiring officials on the benefits of using Schedule A applicants and commit to do at least one targeted outreach in collaboration with Human Resources.	Yes	10/01/2023	
Report of Accomplishments				
Fiscal Year	Accomplishment			
2023	Completed initial analysis of PWD/PWTD workforce data.			

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

Time will be needed to create targeted training and provide to employees. Outreach will be a multi-year effort.

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

N/A

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.

N/A