Affirmative Action Plan
for the Recruitment, Hiring, Advancement, and Retention of Persons with Disabilities

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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 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(7)) require agencies to establish specific numerical goals for increasing the participation of persons with reportable and targeted disabilities in the federal government.

1. Using the goal of 12% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWD</u> 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 <u>PWTD</u> 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

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

Rural Development (RD) established a Veterans Employment Advisory Council (VEAC) in Fiscal Year 2017 of which are in their charter, the goals of the organizations are, "To communicate to hiring managers their goal to obtain or sustain a 25% Veterans workforce and reduce the Veterans attrition rate." This is also communicated to hiring managers in the pre-recruitment hiring consultation for a non-competitive hire.

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 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.

<div align="center">Answer: Yes</div>

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	66	0	0	Prentice Tart, Chief, Policy & Programs Branch, Office of Human Resources, prentice.tart@wdc.usda.gov
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	70	0	0	Prentice Tart, Chief, Policy & Programs Branch, Office of Human Resources, prentice.tart@wdc.usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	2	0	0	Valerie Portwood, Chief, Labor & Employee Relations Branch, Office of Human Resources Valerie.portwood@stl.usda.go
Section 508 Compliance	3	0	0	Mia Jordan, Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Information Office Mia.Jordan@wdc.usda.gov Section508@ocio.usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	3	0	0	Sharese Paylor, Acting Civil Rights Director, Office of Civil Rights sharese.paylor@wdc.usda.go v
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	Sharese Paylor, Acting Civil Rights Director, Office of Civil Rights sharese.paylor@wdc.usda.go v

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(s) that disability program staff have received. If "no", describe the training(s) planned for the upcoming year.

Answer: Yes

USDA AgLearn Distant Learning Training Database

2017 Special Emphasis Program Manager Training-Special Emphasis Program Manager Training (SEPM) across USDA. The training will include presentations on the following:

- USDA Special Emphasis Program vision, goals, roles, and responsibilities
- Guidance from senior USDA leaders, as well as key representatives from the Office of Personnel
- Management and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Strategies to increase cross-collaboration within USDA
- Data and barrier analysis training
- Recruitment – Use of hiring flexibilities
- Professional development opportunities

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: No

The Human Resources Policy and Programs Branch has a Recruitment team that addresses and recommends to hiring officials non-competitive hiring authorities to use to fill vacant positions such as Schedule A, 30% disabled Veterans and other individuals with disabilities.

Section III: Program Deficiencies in the Disability Program

In Part G of its FY 2017 MD-715 report, the agency identified the following program deficiencies involving its disability program:

Program Deficiencies	Agency Comments
Have the procedures for reasonable accomodation for individuals with disabilities been made readily available/accessible to all employees by disseminating such procedures during orientation of new employees and by making such procedures available on the World Wide Web or Internet?	See Part H-2

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 APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

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

Rural Development (RD) Veterans Employment Program - The RD Veterans Employment Team attended a total of 31 Veteran hiring events and made contact with approximately 12,000 Veterans during FY 2017. The Team provided a host of services to job seeking candidates such as: Introduction to Agency careers, skills, & career matching; training and development counseling; collaboration with Operation War Fighter (OWF) & Vocational Rehabilitation services, resume review & assistance; Federal application processes (USAJOBS & Special Hiring Authorities); and placement assistance referrals.

RD used the Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) authority to fill positions, allowing managers to recruit from all sources, creating a larger applicant pool to reach disabled veterans, individuals with disabilities, along with other best qualified candidates. The Policy and Programs Branch attended hiring events (e.g. the Wounded Warrior Project) that are sponsored for and aimed at employing Veterans with disabilities.

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.

Under the Agency's Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program, RD utilizes the Veteran Recruitment Act (VRA), Veteran Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA), Schedule A, and other non-competitive hiring authorities to recuit and retain Veterans and other individuals with disabilities.

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.

Candidates must identify themselves as having a disability. RD requires medical documentation of the disability as required by OPM and the hiring authority. Applicants eligible for non-competitive authorities that take disability into account are referred to the selecting official on non-competitive certificates under such authorities, when qualified.

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

The Office of Human Resources Policy and Programs Branch provided several briefings to hiring managers on the subject. The Branch also sends out periodic memos on the subject throughout the year.

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.

To continue our efforts throughout the year in supporting our disabled Veterans, RD does the following:

1. Continues to establish relationships with organizations and special programs for Veterans such as Hiring Our Heroes, Operation Warfighter, and Wounded Warrior Programs to increase the number of Veterans attracted and hired within Rural Development. Activities in FY 2017 included outreach to Veteran organizations and participation in on-site job fairs.

2. Provide information regarding the Agency's employment opportunities by directing Veterans to the USAJobs website or providing the Veteran with active Job Opportunity Announcements (JOA) on-site, conducting resume reviews, and providing information on Federal special hiring authorities.

3. Continue partnerships with the Department of Defense Operation War Fighter (OWF) Outreach Coordinators to focus on placement of Volunteer Veterans and other preference eligible candidates nationwide by attending hiring events sponsored by the partner.

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

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.

    a. New Hires for MCO (PWD)   Answer: No

    b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD)   Answer: No

This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

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.

    a. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWD)   Answer: No

    b. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWTD)   Answer: No

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.

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

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 PWTD, have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

RD advertised career opportunities at the entry level with career ladders where employees would receive training and be developed on the job.
We also utilized the VRA Authority, which supported training agreement programs to allow for advancement to higher levels upon completion of provided training. Individual Development Plans were used to identify training needs and to determine the resources to meet those needs.
The following training through USDA's web-based AgLearn was encouraged within the agency:
 - Veterans Employment Training
 - Veterans Hiring for Hiring Managers
 - Veterans Hiring for Human Resources Specialists
RD established a Veterans Employment Advisory Council (VEAC) in FY 2017. The VEAC's mission is, "To provide the best services possible to all veterans employed or seeking employment in Rural Development so they may have a very successful and rewarding career with the agency." The goals of the organization is to obtain or sustain the 25% Veterans workforce hiring goal and reduce the Veterans attrition rate."

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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

All employees are required to complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which identifies specific training and other developmental opportunities for the employee based on where they are in their career and skills needed to successfully perform the duties of their position. Employees are also afforded the opportunity to participate in the Emerging Leaders Program or the USDA Leadership Essential Certificate Program.

2. Do triggers exist for <u>PWD</u> among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a. Applicants (PWD)   Answer: No

   b. Selections (PWD)   Answer: No

This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

3. Do triggers exist for <u>PWTD</u> among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs identified? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a. Applicants (PWTD)   Answer: No

   b. Selections (PWTD)   Answer: No

This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

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: No

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.

   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: No

      ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer: No

   d. Grade GS-13

      i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer: No

      ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer: No

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2. Does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWTD</u> 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.

    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: No

    d. Grade GS-13

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer: No

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer: No

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3. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWD</u> 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.

    a. New Hires to SES (PWD)   Answer: No

    b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD)   Answer: No

    c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD)   Answer: No

    d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD)   Answer: No

This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

4.   Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWTD</u> 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.

    a. New Hires to SES (PWTD)   Answer: No

    b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD)   Answer: No

    c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD)   Answer: No

    d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD)   Answer: No

This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

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5.   Does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWD</u> 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.

    a. Executives

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer: No

        ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer: No

    b. Managers

        i.Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer: No

        ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer: No

    c. Supervisors

        i.Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer: No

        ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer: No

This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

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6.   Does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWTD</u> 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.

   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: No

   c. Supervisors

      i.Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer: No

      ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer: No

> This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

7.   Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWD</u> among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a. New Hires for Executives (PWD)   Answer: No

   b. New Hires for Managers (PWD)   Answer: No

   c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD)   Answer: No

> This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

8.   Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving <u>PWTD</u> among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a. New Hires for Executives (PWTD)   Answer: No

   b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD)   Answer: No

   c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD)   Answer: No

> This information was not collected within the Agency's FY 2017 Workforce Data Tables.

Section VI: Plan to Improve Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To be a 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 personal 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: No

There were no Schedule A employees converted in FY 2017. The employees who reported disabilities were hired under disabled Veteran authorities.

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: No

    b. Involuntary Separations (PWD)   Answer: No

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: No

    b. Involuntary Separations (PWTD)   Answer: No

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.

Not applicable

B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(4), federal agencies are required to inform job 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.

www.rd.usda.gov/files/UTPScheduleH-2-CertificationRegardingArchitecturalBarriers(doc).doc

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.)

Average processing time for new (initial) requests for reasonable accommodations for FY 2017 was 20 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.

Effectiveness:

• Expeditiously processed reasonable accommodation requests; the FY 2017 actual average processing time of 20 days is considered exceptional based on the 30 day guideline contained in USDA Department Manual 4300-002, Reasonable Accommodation Procedures.

- The Office of Human Resources Employee and Labor Relations Branch, provided reasonable accommodation training to: (1) all Human Resources practitioners and St. Louis/DC managers on March 15, March 22, March 23, March 27, March 29, and March 30, 2017; and (2) to the RD Kentucky managers on August 15, 2017.

- RD Michigan management secured training through Long Range Plans for their managers; the training occurred on October 27, 2016 and March 29, 2017. On an unknown date, the Office of Civil Rights provided training to RD South Carolina managers.

- Monitoring of accommodation requests for trends occurred and revealed an increase in the number of accommodation requests seeking (1) telework beyond the parameters contained in agency policy and (2) equipment to include space heaters.

- The Employee and Labor Relations Branch is in the process of incorporating EEOC recommendations into RD's draft Reasonable Accommodation Standard Operating Procedure that will include mandates from MD-715 (i.e., personal assistance services).

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

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 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, timely providing approved services, conducting training for managers and supervisors, and monitoring PAS requests for trends.

The USDA TARGET Center provides Assistive Technology (AT) Assessments to USDA employees with disabilities either in-person, over the phone, or through TARGET Web Connect. Employees or supervisors who feel there may be a need for assistive technology may contact the TARGET Center to schedule an assessment. USDA employees and agencies may requests assistive technology at no cost through the USDA/CAP Partnership. This process is facilitated via the USDA TARGET Center.

Individual Assistive Technology Reasonable Accommodations

Available to USDA employees with a qualified disability.

Public Access Assistive Technology

Available to USDA agencies and offices to ensure that members of the public and customers with disabilities have access to direct onsite services from USDA.

The USDA TARGET Center partners with the USDA Disability Employment Program

to ensure customers requesting assistive technology have access to the latest list of Reasonable Accommodations Contacts.

National Loan Program

The USDA TARGET Center loans a variety of assistive technology and ergonomic equipment for evaluation purposes. USDA employees nationwide may borrow an item for a two-week period. The Target Center will also provide vendor information to interested customers.

Temporary Scooter Loans
USDA Employees with temporary mobility issues may borrow a scooter for up to four weeks. Scooters are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and will only be given to employees with a signed Scooter Policy

Assessable Communications Program

The TARGET Center has also announced the addition of a new service program to the portfolio of services provided to USDA employees with disabilities and service providers. The Accessible Communications Program integrates a variety of assistive technology tools, training programs related to accessible communications, and technical assistance to enable all USDA program managers, employees and service providers to effectively engage with approximately 8,000 USDA employees with disabilities nationwide.

USDA Roadmap to Acquire Interpreting Services

The USDA Roadmap to Acquire Interpreting Services outlines the process to obtain sign language interpreters in a variety of modes, as well as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and Type Well transcribers. These services are essential to USDA employees and visitors who attend Department or agency events, staff meetings, one-on-one meetings with co-workers, training, office social events or any other situation which requires communication among employees. Agencies can use this roadmap to efficiently deliver quality sign language interpreting services for employees nationwide.

Ergonomics Program

The USDA Ergonomics Program is unique in providing an overall preventive measurement in allowing employees the opportunity to have an ergonomic assessment, and then employees have the opportunity to sample ergonomic equipment after an assessment. This approach has provided immediate comfort for employees with obtaining chair fittings, sampling mice, keyboards and other ergonomic accessories.

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 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.

Not applicable

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.

Not applicable

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: N/A

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.

Trigger	
Barrier(s)	
Objective(s)	

Responsible Official(s)	Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)

Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)	Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)

Sources of Data	Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)	Identify Information Collected
Workforce Data Tables		
Complaint Data (Trends)		
Grievance Data (Trends)		
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)		
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)		
Exit Interview Data		
Focus Groups		
Interviews		
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)		
Other (Please Describe)		

Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Planned Activities	Sufficient Staffing & Funding (Yes or No)	Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Completion Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Fiscal Year	Accomplishments

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

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

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.

Not applicable