

## 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	
	#	#	%	#	%
Numarical Goal	--	12%		2%	
Grades GS-1 to GS-10	1546	206	13.32	56	3.62
Grades GS-11 to SES	3040	424	13.95	82	2.70

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

The agency remains firm on its commitment for being a model employer of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and persons with targeted disabilities (PWTDs) by exceeding the established numerical workforce goals of 12% for PWDs and 2% for PWTDs in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(7). The agency currently stands at 19% for PWDs and 3% for PWTDs. The goals are shared during state of the agency meetings and/or managerial meetings with senior executives, hiring managers and HR staff; goals are shared during individual consultations with hiring managers, and through the distribution of disability-related employment tools, resources and information communicated to all employees. The numerical goals are displayed on the HR Workforce Management Dashboards, also.

### 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 2021 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	
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	Sharese C. Paylor, Ed.D. Civil Rights Director
Section 508 Compliance	1	0	0	Anthony Brannum Assistant Chief Information Officer
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	Deborah Oliver Reasonable Accommodations Manager Deborah.Oliver@usda.gov
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 applications from PWD and PWTD	2	0	0	Michael.Ontiveros@usda.g
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.

**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.

### 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 employs recruitment strategies that incorporated a variety of approaches for identifying PWD/PWTD job applicants. Throughout FY21, RD promoted the use of strategic hiring initiatives to include emphasis on external recruitment, use of the Schedule A, Peace Corps, and 30% or more disabled Veteran hiring authorities and maintained a database comprised of resumes for Schedule A and other PWDs (ex: disable Veterans) applicants. The agency established internal goals for filling 75 percent of RD vacancies with individuals from outside the agency or individuals new to RD. USAjobs postings, coupled with the use of non-competitive hiring flexibilities for recruitment and hiring, are supplemented by posting vacancy announcements on the LinkedIn Recruitment Platform and targeting PWDs and PWTDs – this effort alone resulted in approximately two-hundred fifty resume/ applications received from individuals who applied for positions based on disability. Furthermore, the Veterans Employment Program Manager conducts targeted outreach through external partners (i. e, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, Hiring Our Heroes, Military Transitioning Centers, etc.) to assist hiring managers in filling vacancies, the Disability Employment Program Manager communicates directly with PWD/PWTDs for submitting resumes to the agency through use of the special hiring authorities and collaboration with external partners (i.e., Workforce Recruitment Program); and other specific outreach and recruitment efforts are conducted by staff including participation at virtual career fairs (i.e., Federal Asian Pacific American Council) and participation as members of Departmental Special Emphasis workgroups (i.e., the USDA Native American Working Group and Disability Employment Awareness Program).

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. Hiring managers are provided training and consultation at the beginning of the recruitment process that includes 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 inquiries from applicants, hiring managers, 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. Applicants are added to the internal database for consideration in filling vacancies. 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, Schedule A letter, 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

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 the applicable hiring authorities. Hiring managers are provide training and consultation at the beginning of the recruitment process that includes direct discussion about the various non-competitive hiring authorities available for use in filling their positions. The Human Resources Office makes update to the Pre-Recruitment Consultation Guide to include a section on disability employment FAQs and a brochure on non-competitive hiring authorities for veterans. This guide is distributed to hiring managers.

**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.

The agency maintains contact with organizations such as the Workforce Recruitment Program, Veteran Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Job Accommodation Network, USAjobs Talent Portal, and national and local disability advocacy groups. The agency continues to effectively communicate with the various organizations to ensure 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

New Hires	Total (#)	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
		Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)	Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)
% of Total Applicants	8401	5.09	0.00	2.93	0.00
% of Qualified Applicants	4496	4.45	0.00	2.62	0.00
% of New Hires	231	4.76	0.00	3.90	0.00

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 1 out of 5 MCOs – Accounting (occupational code 510). There were no PWDs or PWTDs hired for series 510

although PWDs accounted for 7.8% of qualified applicants and PWTDS accounted for 6% of qualified applicants.

New Hires to Mission-Critical Occupations	Total (#)	Reportable Disability	Targetable Disability
		New Hires (%)	New Hires (%)
Numerical Goal	--	12%	2%
0301 MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATION AND PROGRAM	1	0.00	0.00
0343 MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ANALYSIS	18	5.56	5.56
0510 ACCOUNTING	13	0.00	0.00
1101 GENERAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	98	9.18	7.14
1165 LOAN SPECIALIST	101	0.99	0.99

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 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. 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 2 of 5 MCOs – Misc. Administration & Programs and Accounting (occupational codes 301 and 510). There were no PWDs or PWTDs promoted for series 301 although PWDs accounted for 10% of qualified applicants and PWTDs accounted for 5.1% of qualified applicants; and no PWDs or PWTDs were promoted for series 510 although PWDs accounted for 6% of qualified applicants and PWTDs accounted for 1.9% of qualified applicants.

## 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 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 2021, RD implemented a new Training Needs Assessment (TNA) and a new Career Development Rotational (CDR) Program (pilot) for supporting the workforce. Included in the TNA was a survey of the workforce on how the agency can better accommodate the needs of PWD among the employees. Of the 1113 respondents, nineteen stated that they “have a disability that requires accommodations for training delivery.” This data is being used to improve programs and program delivery going forward. The agency implemented the Career Development Rotation (CDR) Program (pilot) on August 2, 2021. The CDR program is a new initiative that focuses on broadening the skills, competencies, and experiences of personnel by providing voluntary, lateral rotation within the agency. The CDR Program is designed to expose personnel to different functional experiences that will increase/the participant’s breadth of experience and/knowledge and it is used as a management tool to develop personnel within and across RD programs. There currently four host offices and six program participants. Initial survey results showed that host supervisors are overall pleased with the contributions and development of their participants in the program. Participants have provided feedback stating that their “developmental goals are being met by taking part in the program and RD’s CDR Program” and that the program “has been beneficial in helping me gain uninterrupted “Specialized Training” in other areas of the agency not typically gained in a routine environment. I am very appreciative of this opportunity.” In addition to mandatory training and development offerings, the agency provides an array of career development tools to assist employees with skill development such as the IDP and EDP, Mentoring and Coaching Programs, Supervisor Training Program, Pathways Program Curriculum, Online Courses, Webinars, and procured resources such as the LinkedIn Learning Video Library, Manager Advantage Portal Toolkit, Skillsoft’s Percepio, OPM’s Presidential Management Council (PMC) Interagency Rotation Program (IRP) (which had its first all virtual instance), FEI Leadership Program, Rosetta Stone Language Series, etc. All employees, including PWDs/PWTDs, have 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. Many of the training and development offerings are conducted using Microsoft Teams, which provides a reasonable accommodation option for participants to include captioning for improved accessibility.

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						
Detail Programs						
Internship Programs						
Fellowship Programs						
Mentoring Programs	51	50	6	12.00	1	00.02
Coaching Programs						
Other Career Development Programs	14	6	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 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	592	15.69	12.83	15.11	15.85
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Total Hours	4687	127.58	100.99	126.62	127.85
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Average Hours	7.92	1.29	0.21	6.03	-0.05
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 hours: Awards Given	360	6.66	8.02	5.76	6.91
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Total Hours	6172	116.96	137.11	106.47	119.92
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Average Hours	17.14	2.78	0.46	13.31	-0.19
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 hours: Awards Given	126	2.69	2.87	2.16	2.85
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Total Hours	3211	70.36	72.79	56.12	74.39
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Average Hours	25.48	4.14	0.68	18.71	0.02
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 hours: Awards Given	104	2.69	2.28	2.16	2.85
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Total Hours	4056	103.96	89.08	86.33	108.94
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Average Hours	39	6.12	1.05	28.78	-0.29

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Awards Given	0	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	1651	36.93	36.20	26.62	39.84
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Total Amount	1239249	27922.82	27136.20	21464.03	29747.56
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Average Amount	750.61	119.84	20.12	580.11	-10.20
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Awards Given	2031	43.58	45.40	37.41	45.33
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Total Amount	2657093	56648.34	59333.67	50697.84	58329.47
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Average Amount	1308.27	205.99	35.07	974.96	-11.25
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Awards Given	196	3.01	4.56	2.16	3.25
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Total Amount	443147	7006.97	10321.79	5132.37	7536.59
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Average Amount	2260.95	368.79	60.72	1710.79	-10.36
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Awards Given	7	0.32	0.13	0.00	0.41
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Total Amount	22320	1030.11	424.47	0.00	1321.14
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Average Amount	3188.57	515.06	84.89	0.00	660.57
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Awards Given	22320	1030.11	424.47	0.00	1321.14
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

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 Yes

b. Pay Increases (PWTD) Answer Yes

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



Other Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Total Performance Based Pay Increases Awarded	66	1.11	1.53	1.44	1.02

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 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 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	Yes
b. Grade GS-15		
i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)	Answer	No
ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)	Answer	Yes
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

Triggers exist in PWTD 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 PWTD 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%.

Separations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	11	0.16	0.25
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	99	1.10	2.30
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	205	7.06	4.01
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	100	2.20	2.15
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	418	10.52	8.79

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	11	0.00	0.25
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	99	2.13	2.14
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	205	11.35	4.21
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	100	0.71	2.21
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	418	14.18	8.87

- 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.

- 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>

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.
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## 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

<b>Source of the Trigger:</b>	Other					
<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?	Inability to identify triggers for career development opportunities.					
<b>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</b>	<i>Barrier Group</i> People with Disabilities					
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed?:</b>	Y					
<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>		<b>Description of Policy, Procedure, or Practice</b>			
	Demographic Data		Demographic data was not being captured for PWDs/PWTDs within career development.			
<b>Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan</b>						
<b>Date Initiated</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Sufficient Funding / Staffing?</b>	<b>Date Modified</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>Objective Description</b>	
09/30/2020	05/01/2021	Yes		04/01/2021	Establish process and procedures for tracking and monitoring PWD/PWTD participation rates in career development programs.	
09/30/2020	05/01/2021	Yes		04/01/2021	Implement a process and procedure for requesting/capturing career development program demographic data.	
<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>						
<b>Title</b>		<b>Name</b>		<b>Standards Address The Plan?</b>		
Director RD HR		Sheila Williamson		Yes		
<b>Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective</b>						
<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>			<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding?</b>	<b>Modified Date</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
05/01/2021	Work with Human Resources Information Systems for tracking and monitoring demographic data for career development programs.			Yes		04/01/2021



<b>Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective</b>				
<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>	<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding?</b>	<b>Modified Date</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
05/01/2021	Implement a process and procedure for requesting/capturing career development program demographic data.	Yes		04/01/2021
<b>Report of Accomplishments</b>				
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>			
2021	Information Systems Branch have established a process and procedure for systematically tracking, monitoring, and reporting demographic data, on a quarterly basis, for applicants and selectees in career development programs.			

<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?	PWDs total separation rate is higher than those without disabilities.					
<b>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</b>	<i>Barrier Group</i> People with Disabilities					
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed?:</b>	Y					
<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>		<b>Description of Policy, Procedure, or Practice</b>			
	Exit Interviews		Exit Interview Surveys is not capturing specific feedback from departing/separating employees to include PWDs/PWTDs.			
<b>Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan</b>						
<b>Date Initiated</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Sufficient Funding / Staffing?</b>	<b>Date Modified</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>Objective Description</b>	
10/01/2021	11/30/2021	Yes			Increase usage by updating current exit interview survey questions to obtain relevant feedback as it relates to PWDs/PWTDs on the exit interview surveys.	
<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>						
<b>Title</b>		<b>Name</b>		<b>Standards Address The Plan?</b>		
Director RD HR		Sheila Williamson		Yes		
<b>Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective</b>						
<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>			<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding?</b>	<b>Modified Date</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
11/30/2021	Develop process for increasing departing employee completion of the exit survey and better utilization of the feedback obtained. This includes providing updates to Separation SOP document, updating the survey questionnaire, and designating an Exit Coordinator for monitoring and tracking employee separations for administering the Exit Survey.			Yes	09/20/2021	

<b>Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective</b>				
<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>	<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding?</b>	<b>Modified Date</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
02/01/2022	Implement the new survey	Yes		
<b>Report of Accomplishments</b>				
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>			
2021	Developed a new process and procedure for increasing usage of the exit survey and obtaining feedback. This includes updating the survey questionnaire and designating a new Exit Coordinator.			

<b>Source of the Trigger:</b>	Other				
<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?	PWD and PWTD new hires/internal competitive promotions are at lower rates than the established goals.				
<b>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</b>	<i>Barrier Group</i> People with Disabilities				
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed?:</b>	Y				
<b>Barrier(s) Identified?:</b>	N				
<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>		
	Hiring Managers		Hiring Managers not consistent and fully utilizing the Human Resources hiring package provided to hiring officials which includes language about EEOC and MD-715 requirements and workforce demographics. In addition, readily available workforce demographics (posted on dashboard) should be included in the hiring package as a standard practice.		
<b>Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan</b>					
<b>Date Initiated</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Sufficient Funding / Staffing?</b>	<b>Date Modified</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>Objective Description</b>
09/30/2020	06/30/2022	Yes			Improve the rate of PWD/PWTD new hires and competitive internal promotions.  Provide recruitment training to new incoming senior leaders that includes the use of hiring authorities such as Schedule A, 30% or more disable Vet appointing authority.
09/30/2020	09/30/2021	Yes		09/30/2021	Improve the rate of PWD/PWTD new hires and competitive internal promotions.  Reinvigorating and build new partnerships with organizations that provide employment assistance to PWDs.
<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>					
<b>Title</b>		<b>Name</b>		<b>Standards Address The Plan?</b>	

Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective				
Target Date	Planned Activities	Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
Report of Accomplishments				
Fiscal Year	Accomplishment			

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

For Trigger #2: The process has been developed and awaits leadership review and approval. For Trigger #3: Planned activities are to be completed upon arrival of new senior leadership (forty-seven State Directors). As of this report submission, only a few State Directors have onboarded. HR is in the process of revising the Recruitment Guide and upon completion refresher training will be provided to recruitment staff.

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

For Trigger # 1: The activity provides the process and procedure for monitoring and tracking PWD/PWTD participation in career development programs. The agency can now track participation in the new Career Development Rotation Program (Pilot) implemented in FY21

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.