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-11 to SES					
Grades GS-1 to GS-10					

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

In FY 2024, Rural Development (RD) surpassed the EEOC established numerical workforce goals of 12% for persons with disabilities (PWDs) and 2% for persons with targeted disabilities (PWTDs) across two grade-level clusters (GS-1 to GS-10 and GS11 to SES). The agency achieved an overall permanent workforce participation rate of 18.00% for PWDs (includes not identified PWDs at 7.0%) and 3.0% for PWTDs exceeding the benchmark set forth by EEOC. There are various methods of communication for workforce goals and agency performance, which includes senior executive meetings and briefings, and pre-recruitment consultations with hiring officials. Additional communication methods include all-employee Newsbox announcements, HR Workforce Management Dashboards, and the HR Disability Employment Resources SharePoint site page. The agency's commitment to fostering a workforce for all is evident in its successful attainment of the established workforce participation goals and its dedication to creating opportunities across all grade levels.

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.

<div align="right">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	1	0	0	Tanya Robles Branch II Tanya.Robles@usda.gov
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	1	0	0	Allison Savage Disability Employment Allison.Savage@usda.gov
Section 508 Compliance	1	0	0	Anthony Brannum Assistant Chief Information Anthony.Brannum@usda.gov
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	0	0	0	Darryll Woodson, DHS Disability Program Manager Darryll.Woodson@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	Deborah Oliver Reasonable Deborah.Oliver@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	Sharese C Paylor, Ed.D Civil Rights Director Sharese.Paylor@usda.gov

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.

<div align="right">Answer   Yes</div>

RD Disability Program staff training includes: • Federal Exchange on Employment and Disability (FEED) monthly meetings • RD Civil Rights and Human Resources monthly MD-715 informational meetings • Department of Labor (DOL) 2023 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Advancing Access training and educational events (CY October 2023) • USDA TARGET Center 2023 NDEAM training events (CY October 2023) • Multi-Departmental Non-Competitive Military Career Fairs • USDA Community of Practice Disability Meetings • Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Level Up to Public Service training event • Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) Recruiter Training and Disability Database Training • USDA Deaf, Hard of Hearing Workgroup Meetings • RD Program Events • Reasonable Accommodation and Personal Assistance Services during RD

Civil Rights EEO Branch Compliance Reviews • Building Talent Pools, Hiring Practices, and Onboarding and Employee Success 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.

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 hiring officials, human resources personnel, and civil rights employs a comprehensive approach to identifying job applicants with disabilities through various outreach and recruitment activities. In FY 2024, this included participation in seventeen virtual and in-person career fairs and events, including but not limited to, multiple RD Regional Job Fairs, the MANRRS Conference, National 4-H Conference, Military Spouse Hiring Event, Peace Corps Hiring Event, CareerEco Virtual Event Series (i.e., National Career & Graduate Stem Fair, National Graduate Business Fair, and Government/Non-profit Virtual Career Fair), Federal Interagency Military Spouse Career Expo, A Hiring Manager's Workshop on Military Spouse Employment, and Heroes Work Here. The agency leverages the USAJobs Talent Portal and WRP Database Portal for conducting resume mining RD posts vacancy announcements to USAJobs and include information that encourages qualified Schedule A candidates and 30% or more Veterans with disabilities to apply. The agency's public facing career site and internal employee SharePoint site were both updated in FY 2024 with additional employment tools and resources that include an over of the RD workplace benefits, mission critical occupational series, and job openings; the RD Workforce and Recruitment Toolkit (includes links to the USDA Hiring Toolkit), hiring incentives chart, job fair planning, new employee onboarding, and more. The Veterans Employment Program Manager collaborates with the USDA Military Veteran Agricultural Liaison (MVAL) and various veteran-focused programs and organizations, including the Operation Warfighter Program, military installations, DOD SkillBridge, Program, and Wounded Warriors Staffing Consultants, to identify potential job applicants with disabilities. The Disability Employment Program Manager provides direct support to external/internal customers including PWDs/PWTDs by assisting with resume submissions, Schedule A Letters, and addressing inquires related to disability employment.

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 takes a proactive approach to leverage hiring authorities that take disability into account. Vacancy announcements include information about the Schedule A Hiring Authority that includes eligibility requirements, regulations, and tips for applicants. New hiring officials must complete training that -covers non-competitive hiring authorities, including Schedule A, 30% or More Veterans, and Peace Corps alumni. At the beginning of the recruitment process, all hiring officials receive recruitment consultations that use these authorities to attract PWD/PWTD applicants with disabilities (PWD/PWTD) who have mission-critical skills needed for the job. Uniformed recruitment resources tailored for mission critical occupations, provide hiring officials, additional resources to support targeted recruitment efforts. Disability program staff routinely respond to disability employment inquiries from external customers and potential applicants, hiring officials, HR professionals, and employees with disabilities, providing guidance and

support as needed. Acceptance of applications through hiring authorities that consider disability must be in line with OPM regulations. The agency also maintains an internal repository that holds unsolicited applicant resumes, and Schedule A letters. The hiring officials or HR personnel seeking qualified candidates for vacant positions will receive a referral to the documents. During FY 2024, RD onboarded 493 new hires of which 32 were under the Schedule A hiring authority, representing 6% of all new hires.

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.

Eligibility decisions that consider disability are based on the application and any supporting documentation the applicant provides. This process includes evaluating the applicant's qualification for the specific position to ensure they meet the basic requirements, possess the necessary skills, and satisfy the qualifications for the role. RD officials check supporting documentation, like a Schedule A Letter, to confirm eligibility under the special hiring authority. The hiring official receives the application, resume, SF-50 (reflecting i.e., Schedule A designation) when an applicant qualifies for the open position. The submission process includes how and when a candidate may be in the position.

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 receive training and consultation at the start of the recruitment process, which includes discussion on the availability and use of non-competitive hiring authorities to fill positions.HR Office Hours conducts monthly webinars covering various hiring topics, including the application of alternative hiring authorities. Additionally, all hiring managers and supervisors must complete core supervisory training within one year of their initial appointment to a supervisory position and refresher training every three years. This training includes modules covering the roles and responsibilities of hiring managers when taking disability into account and applicable hiring authorities. To further support hiring efforts, the Supervisory SharePoint site page includes a comprehensive range of tools and resources. These resources include guidance on appointment authorities, sample Schedule A Letters, a recruitment toolkit, a hiring incentives chart, and other materials designed to assist hiring officials in their recruitment and hiring process.

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.

Over the years, RD has maintained connection and partnership with disability employment organizations and programs, including the Veteran Readiness and Employment Services, the Workforce Recruitment Program, and the USAJobs Agency Talent Portal. These organizations and programs are integral to RD's efforts to achieve its outreach, recruitment, and hiring objectives. For FY 2025 the agency will seek to partner with other organizations such as the America Job Centers, State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, Centers for Independent Living, and Employment Network Service Providers.

C. PROGRESSION TOWARDS GOALS (RECRUITMENT AND HIRING)

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

a. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWD)   Answer   Yes

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

A trigger exists among PWD New Hires at 9.04% in the permanent workforce.

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 5 out of 5 MCOs – PWDs for Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for 11.01% qualified and 0% hired, Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 0343) accounted for 11.00% qualified and 7.14% hired, Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 17.39% qualified and 0% hired, General Business and Industry (occupational code 1101) accounted for 6.26% qualified and 4.17% hired, and Loan Specialist (occupational code 1165) accounted for 7.00% qualified and 4.00% hired. Triggers exist for 3 out of 5 MCOs – PWTDs for Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for 6.00% qualified and 0% hired, Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 13.04% qualified and 0% hired, and Loan Specialist (occupational code 1165) accounted for 3.31% qualified and 1.29% hired.

New Hires to Mission-Critical Occupations	Total	Reportable Disability	Targetable Disability
		New Hires	New Hires
	(#)	(%)	(%)
Numerical Goal	--	12%	2%

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   No

Triggers exist for 3 out of 5 MCOs –Miscellaneous Administration and Program (occupational code 301) accounted for 9.13% applicants & 6.00% qualified. Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 0343) accounted for 10.04% applicants & 9.02% qualified. Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 6.73% applicants & 4.17% qualified. General Business and Industry (occupational code 1101) accounted for 7.90% applicants & 7.43% 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 5.50% qualified and 7.14% promoted, Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 343) accounted for 9.02% qualified and 4.00% promoted, Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 6.50% qualified and 0% promoted, General Business and Industry (occupational code 1101) accounted for 7.43% qualified and 6.40% promoted, and Loan Specialist (occupational code 1165) accounted for 12.20% qualified and 7.70% promoted. Triggers exist for 2 out of 5 MCOs – PWTDs for Management and Program Analysis (occupational code 343) accounted for 6.00% qualified and 0% promoted and Accounting (occupational code 510) accounted for 3.23% qualified and 0% 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 PWTD, have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

The agency is committed to supporting the career development and advancement of all employees by offering a wide range of training and educational resources, including mentoring and coaching opportunities. RD adheres to Merit System Principles to ensure equal employment opportunity for all employees including PWDs/PWTDs. The agency seeks to eliminate any obstacles to advancement for PWDs/PWTDs and uses HR data to track Schedule A employees who are eligible for conversion to career or career-conditional status and ensures prompt conversion upon successful completion of the two-year probationary period.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

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

In FY 2024, RD's training and development programs encourage full workforce participation. The workshops and training sessions enhance technical proficiencies and expertise in mission-critical occupations (MCOs) as well soft skills and leadership training. They are accessible to all employees. RD actively promotes these offerings across the organization and ensures all content is 508 compliant providing access for all employees. RD career development opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following: Community Based Fellows Program (CBFP)- The goal of this initiative is to create a mission-critical occupation entry-level, skills-based development program targeted for those in rural communities. The program provides the participants with formal developmental courses and on-the-job training in a variety of tasks, offering practical experience and technical competence in the methods, procedures, principles, theories, and techniques used in various administrative or program functions. This program is slated for implementation in FY 2025. Mentoring Program- The program consists of two cohort sessions that run during each fiscal year. In FY 2024, To offer additional opportunities for the participants to connect with their mentors and mentoring pods, the program began an 8-month rotation instead of the 6-month rotation. The Mentoring Networking sessions feature career development topics for discussion among the participants. Treasury Executive Institute (TEI)- The Treasury Executive Institute offers leadership development opportunities to all GS 14-15s, SES Members, Political Appointees. TEI provides a learning environment to achieving executive level professional development while solving individual leadership challenges. TEI offers one on one coaching, live trainings/webinars, and self-paced training modules geared toward learning effective leadership skills. DISC Training- In FY 2024, DISC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Compliance) Personality Assessment Training continued to be one of the most highly sought out programs for RD employees. Training included Taking Flight with DISC and DISC Chameleon Leadership. Additionally, staff members earned certifications as DISC and Team Dynamic facilitators for delivery of this program. Supervisor Training Program- This Supervisory Training Program is mandatory to all supervisors. This offering supports the agency and provides an array of learning and development courses, specific to supervisor personnel, such as Prohibited Personnel Practices and Merit System Principles, Hiring Matters, Accommodating Disabilities, The EEO Process, Annual Ethics training, and more. A new version of the program will go from conception to implementation in FY 2025. AgLearn (the USDA Learning Management System (LMS)) supports the Agency's Individual Development Plans, Supervisor Training Program, Pathways Program Curriculum, Online Courses, Webinars, and procured resources such as the LinkedIn Learning Video Library, Rosetta Stone, Dmason Financial Planning Tools, Skillsoft's Percepio Immersive Learning Content, and more. External programs include the

Manager Advantage Portal, Mentoring and Coaching Programs, and the OPM Presidential Management Council Interagency Rotation Program. Many of the training and development offerings use collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom providing a reasonable accommodation option such as captioning for improved accessibility. All employees have access to the vast array of learning and development opportunities provided by the agency.

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 (%)
Internship Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fellowship Programs	7	5	14	20	0	0
Mentoring Programs	112	104	14	15	0	0
Coaching Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Training Programs	123	123	10	10	0	0
Detail Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Career Development Programs	454	400	18	21	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   No

       b. Selections (PWD)   Answer   No

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

There were zero applicants or selectees with PWTD.

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

PWD triggers exist in Time-Off Awards: 21-30 hours at 9.06%, Cash Awards: $4000-$4999 at 10.20%, and Cash Awards: $5000 or more at 6.67% which fell below the inclusion rate benchmark of 13.34%. PWTD triggers exist in Time-Off Awards: 21-30 hours at

0.79%, Cash Awards: $2000-$2999 at 1.22%, and Cash Awards: $5000 or more at 0% which fell below the inclusion rate benchmark of 2.52%

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 hours: Awards Given	883	23.83	17.94	22.90	24.07
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Total Hours	7009	189.72	142.63	164.89	196.09
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Average Hours	7.94	1.24	0.21	5.50	0.15
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 hours: Awards Given	761	15.58	16.15	15.27	15.66
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Total Hours	13053	269.16	277.12	265.65	270.06
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Average Hours	17.15	2.69	0.46	13.28	-0.02
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 hours: Awards Given	254	3.58	5.50	1.53	4.11
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Total Hours	6230	87.85	134.92	36.64	100.98
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Average Hours	24.53	3.82	0.65	18.32	0.10
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 hours: Awards Given	229	4.98	4.89	5.34	4.89
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Total Hours	8920	189.41	191.35	210.69	183.95
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Average Hours	38.95	5.92	1.05	30.10	-0.28
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	931	18.69	20.26	21.37	18.00
Cash Awards: $501 - $999: Total Amount	700450	14064.17	15211.32	15384.73	13725.64
Cash Awards: $501 - $999: Average Amount	752.36	117.20	20.04	549.46	6.39
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Awards Given	2019	39.10	43.89	35.88	39.92
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Total Amount	2556733	48933.18	55623.55	44448.85	50082.78
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Average Amount	1266.34	194.95	33.83	945.72	2.49
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Awards Given	655	12.15	14.34	6.11	13.70
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Total Amount	1451216	27276.17	31667.67	13473.28	30814.68
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Average Amount	2215.6	349.69	58.97	1684.16	7.59

Cash Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Awards Given	188	4.36	4.16	3.05	4.70
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Total Amount	590142	13604.36	13075.33	9160.31	14743.64
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Average Amount	3139.05	485.87	83.82	2290.08	23.34
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Awards Given	49	0.78	1.12	1.53	0.59
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Total Amount	196750	3115.26	4504.81	6106.87	2348.34
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Average Amount	4015.31	623.05	107.26	3053.44	0.00
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Awards Given	15	0.16	0.37	0.00	0.20
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Total Amount	117755	778.82	3010.01	0.00	978.47
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Average Amount	7850.33	778.82	215.00	0.00	978.47

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

PWD trigger exists in performance-based pay increases at 5.88% which fell below the inclusion rate benchmark of 13.34%. PWTD triggers exist in quality step increases at 1.15% and performance-based pay increases at 0% which fell below the inclusion rate benchmark of 2.52%.

Other Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Total Performance Based Pay Increases Awarded	17	0.16	0.43	0.00	0.20

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

There are no other types of employee recognition programs.

D. PROMOTIONS

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

      a. SES

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   No

    ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   No

b. Grade GS-15

    i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   Yes

    ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   Yes

c. Grade GS-14

    i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   Yes

    ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   Yes

d. Grade GS-13

    i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   Yes

    ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   Yes

GS-15: MCO series 301 (12.12%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 13.50%. MCO series 510 (14.30%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 25%. MCO 301 fell below the benchmark with no promotions under Internal Selections. GS-14: MCO Series 301 (4.17%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 7.27%. MCO Series 1101 (3.03%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 9.00%. MCOs Series 301 and 1101 fell below the benchmark with no promotions under Internal Selections. GS-13: MCO Series 343 (7.10%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 11.44%. MCO Series 1101 (5.50%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 8.00%. MCO 1165 fell below the benchmark and MCOs Series 510 and 1101 fell below the benchmark with no promotions under Internal Selections.

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

    a. SES

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   No

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   No

    b. Grade GS-15

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

    c. Grade GS-14

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   No

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

    d. Grade GS-13

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

GS-15: MCOs 343, 510, and 1165 had no Qualified Internal Applicants. MCOs Series 301 (6.06%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 8.00% with no promotions under Internal Selections. GS-14: MCOs 343, 510, and 1101 had no Qualified Internal Applicants. MCO 301 had no promotions under Internal Selections. GS-13: MCOs 301 and 510 had no Qualified Internal Applicants. MCOs Series 343 (4.00%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 6.11%. MCO Series 1101 (2.00%) for Qualified Internal Applicants fell below the benchmark of 5.00%. MCOs 343 & 1101 fell below the benchmark with no promotions under Internal Selections.

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

    a. New Hires to SES (PWD)   Answer   No

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

    c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD)   Answer   Yes

    d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD)   Answer   Yes

GS-14: MCO Series 301 Qualified 7.02% & Selected 0%. GS-13: MCO Series 343 Qualified 4.44% & Selected 0%; MCO Series 1101 Qualified 6.40% & Selected 0%. MCO Series 1165 Qualified 10.53% & Selected 0%.

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

    a. New Hires to SES (PWTD)   Answer   No

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

    c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

    d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

GS-14: MCO Series 301 Qualified 2.00% & Selected 0%. GS-13: MCO Series 343 Qualified 1.11% & Selected 0%; MCO Series 1101 Qualified 3.00% & Selected 0% & MCO Series 1165 Qualified 5.30% & Selected 0%.

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   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   Yes

    b. Managers

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   Yes

    c. Supervisors

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   Yes

> Executives: MCO Series 301 - 3.00% of PWD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWD were selected. Managers: MCO Series 301 – 4.20% of PWD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWD were selected. MCO Series 510 - 0% of PWD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWD were selected. MCO Series 1101 - 2.13% of PWD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWD were selected. Supervisors: MCO Series 1101 – 0% of PWD were selected.

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   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

    b. Managers

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

    c. Supervisors

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   Yes

> Executives: MCO Series 301 – 0.43% of PWTD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWTD were selected. Managers: MCO Series 301 – 4.20% of PWTD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWTD were selected. MCO Series 343, 510, and 1101 - 0% of PWTD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWTD were selected. Supervisors: MCO Series 1101 - 0% of PWTD comprised the qualified applicant pool and 0% of PWTD selected.

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

> In comparison to the qualified applicant pool, triggers exist for PWD among selectees for new hires for executives (0%), managers (0%), and supervisors (0%).

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   Yes

    c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD)   Answer   No

In comparison to the qualified applicant pool, triggers exist for PWTD among selectees for new hires to executive (0%) positions and for new hires to managers (0%).

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

The agency did convert all eligible Schedule A employees with a disability into the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service.

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

Seperations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	13	0.00	0.31
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	58	0.91	1.25
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	159	5.74	2.90
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	88	2.87	1.65
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	318	9.52	6.11

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

Seperations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	13	0.00	0.28

Seperations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	58	0.00	1.24
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	159	10.87	3.07
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	88	1.45	1.83
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	318	12.32	6.41

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.

N/A

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://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/offices/civil-rights Under Resources- How to file a ABA Complaint

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. The agency continues to work with division overseeing new or renewed leased office space to ensure that facility is accessible. The agency also conducts accessibility reviews on office space.

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.)

63 Reasonable Accommodation (RA) requests were received in FY24; 52 RA decisions were rendered from 10/1/23 to 9/30/24. Average processing time was 18.34 business days, as compared to USDA's requirement to process cases within 30 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.

In FY 2024, employee reasonable accommodation (RA) requests were timely processed. The requests were monitored by following up with managers and supervisors and sending a notice to the Civil Rights Office should accommodation decisions exceed 30 business days. Performance standards are also incorporated into the supervisor and manager performance plans for gauging timely processing of employee requests for accommodation. The agency conducted training for managers and supervisors on reasonable accommodations during the events and the monthly HR Office Hours informational sessions.

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 employee requests for PAS in FY 2024.

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?

<div align="right">Answer   No</div>

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?

<div align="right">Answer   Yes</div>

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.

There was one (1) settlement agreement and one (1) Final Agency Decision (FAD) finding. During the FY, the RMO, to include RD managers, supervisors, and employees, attended remedial anti-discrimination training, reasonable accommodations training, and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) training. Also, RD posted copies of the "NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES" both online and in hard copy at the workplace of those involved.

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?

<div align="right">Answer   No</div>

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?

<div align="right">Answer   Yes</div>

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.

There was one (1) settlement agreement. During this fiscal year, supervisors, managers, and employees take additional reasonable accommodation training.

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   Yes

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

   Answer   Yes

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 - B6
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:	*Barrier Group*
	People with Disabilities
	People with Targeted 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 obstacle is the lack of 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**
10/01/2023	09/30/2025	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?**
RD CR Director	Dr. Sharese C. Paylor, Ed.D	Yes
RD HR Director	Marlon Taubenheim	Yes

Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective				
Target Date	**Planned Activities**	**Sufficient Staffing & Funding?**	**Modified Date**	**Completion Date**
09/30/2025	In collaboration with Human Resources, there will be focus on outreach 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 training on Schedule A hiring authority and reasonable accommodations to include increasing training to the workforce and 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 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.
2024	- Additional training was provided to the Disability Program Manager for "Building Talent Pools" and "Adopting Hiring Practices" to include Persons with Disabilities. - The HR Disability Program Manager/Selective Placement Coordinator updated the HR Disability Program website and collaborated with the CR Disability Program Manager who developed QR codes with agency specific information for recruitment and outreach at conventions and conferences. - The CR Disability Program Manager developed a PowerPoint presentation on the disability program, to include hiring authorities for persons with disabilities and reasonable accommodations, for all EEO Branch Compliance Reviews site visits. - RD CR and HR promoted hiring authorities for persons with disabilities on multiple online platforms, to include Office of Disability Employment Policy and the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), to train RD employees in being a volunteer to conduct informational interviews with future WRP candidates. - RD CR and HR Disability Program Managers highlighted the RD Disability Program, specifically internal promotions outreach, at USDA-wide National Disability Employment Awareness Month two (2) day event. - RD HR developed additional outreach and recruitment opportunities to include persons with disabilities.

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

Time will be needed to create training and provide to employees. Outreach will be a multi-year effort. During monthly MD-715 meetings to include workforce analysis, RD Civil Rights and Human Resources are in discussions on how to collect interview data from the hiring process for workforce analysis. HR is researching processes to adequately collect interview data needed to address possible barrier. Initially, consider time to develop this new process.

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

Percentages have been improving.

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.

Although obstacles still exist, the percentages are slowly moving in a positive direction with some improvement. The agency will continue to work towards compliance with training.