

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 |

The agency developed an analysis and does not know if there is a trigger involving PWD in all grade levels. The agency did not fall below the 12% threshold of having 8.80% of PWD for grade levels GS-1 to GS-10 and 5.88% for grade levels GS- 11 to SES and surpasses EEOC's benchmark. A trigger exists where 10% of employees are not reporting their disability status.

*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 |

The agency did not develop a barrier analysis and does not know if there is a trigger involving PWTD in all grade levels. The agency numbers exceed 2% in all grade levels for PWTD.

Grade Level Cluster(GS or Alternate Pay Planb)	Total	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
	#	#	%	#	%
Numarical Goal	--	12%		2%	
Grades GS-1 to GS-10	34	3	8.82	2	5.88
Grades GS-11 to SES	213	16	7.51	6	2.82

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

The Director of Civil Rights presents the numerical goals during the annual State of the Agency presentation to the Executive Council. Supervisors are provided a demographic comparison of staffs to ensure they are aware of underrepresentation. The Equal Opportunity Staff collaborates with Human Resources to establish recruitment plans annually to assist in meeting targets.

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

NIFA EEO Director collaborates with the Administrative Officer and HR to implement the disability program. The Agency does need to increase the use of the program to fill vacant positions so an additional awareness will be provided to hiring officials in FY 22. HR announced the new RA Program Manager on November 8, 2020.

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

Disability Program Task	# of FTE Staff By Employment Status			Responsible Official (Name, Title, Office Email)
	Full Time	Part Time	Collateral Duty	
Section 508 Compliance	1	0	0	christopher.lowe@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	0	0	1	Drenda Williams Director EO/CR
Processing applications from PWD and PWTB	40	0	0	Human Resources Staff Kirstin Showalter, Supervisory HR Specialist,
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTB	1	0	1	Drenda Williams Director EO/CR
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	40	0	0	Human Resources Staff Kirstin Showalter, Supervisory HR Specialist
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	Human Resource Staff Deanna Lewis, Supervisory HR Specialist

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

The Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager attends classroom-style training on an annual basis provided by the National Employment Law Institute, complies with all Agency-wide civil rights and diversity training mandates. The RA Program Manager stays abreast of any new or updated program regulations, program developments and best practices by participating in Departmental meetings, webinars, conference calls, etc. The RA Program Manager conducted training on May 31, 2021, and a follow up training was conducted on June 2, 2021, by the Civil Rights, Labor and Employment Law Division, Office of the General Counsel conduct. In partnership with USDA, Departmental Management, the Human Resources Division conducted training on March 8, 2021.

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

Most accommodations provided are cost neutral, however, funding is available to any deciding officials who incurs costs in providing employees with disabilities with special equipment or services. Furthermore, the Agency’s written policy and verbal guidance from the Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager provides deciding officials with procedures to obtain funding, when necessary.

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.

The agency utilizes the Operation War Fighter Program for disabled veterans transitioning out of the military and the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP). In FY 2021, the Director of Civil Rights collaborated with DisabilityKC as an additional resource to outreach to job applicants with disabilities.

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

The agency utilizes Schedule A 213.2102(u) and the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) hiring authorities to recruit individuals with targeted disabilities.

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

Applicants who are interested in applying for a job under Schedule A or VRA may provide a resume, Schedule A Letter and/or DD214 documentation. Interviews are conducted and if the selecting official is interested in hiring the applicant, information is submitted to REE – ARS for a qualification’s determination.

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

Answer Yes

Training is available through AgLearn and the disability program manager for the REE mission area, housed in USDA- ARS-

ODEO, provided a comprehensive presentation of programs for hiring people with disabilities in FY 21. The disability program manager also developed and distributed AFM communication on the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP). The Disability Program Manager developed and distributed a procedural statement regarding the process for managing unsolicited resumes received from veterans and persons with disabilities. These documents: Helpful Links for Hiring Managers, Q&A's for Hiring Managers and Tips for Hiring Managers are valuable information available for hiring managers to reference when considering hiring veterans and people with disabilities. The EEO Specialist in partnership with HR's Disability Coordinator developed a Special Hiring Authority fact sheet to assist hiring officials to understand the process to hire a Schedule A applicant. The EEO Specialist in partnership with HR developed a Disability Fact Sheet to assist recruiters and applicants in understanding how to apply under the Schedule A hiring authority. The DEIA Recruitment Team in collaboration with HR and the EEO Specialist organized an Applying for Federal Jobs webinar for Hispanic Serving Institutions and agency employees to provide NIFA mission and positions, Special Hiring Authorities, Applying for Federal Jobs information. The EEO Specialist provided an overview/training of the Special Hiring Authority process and Workforce Recruitment Program to the Disability Program Manager to assist in understanding the hiring process. The EO Director, EEO Specialist and Disability Program Manager attended the Center for Disability Inclusion Summit to receive training and resources.

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 has established a relationship with Center for Diversity and Gallaudet University in FY 21 and continue accessing the Workforce Recruitment Program to provide qualified applicants.

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 Yes

The agency did review workforce data, and a barrier analysis was developed. Based on the number of disability statuses not completed, this served as the trigger for PWD and PWTD data. The agency PWD (7.69%) and PWTD (3.24%) percentages were below the benchmarks. These percentages could have possibly increased if 100% of employees complete their status. Awareness was provided in the employee newsletter on the use of this data and how to update it.

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

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 N/A
- b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD) Answer N/A

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

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

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

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

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

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

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.

NIFA’s work force analysis did not reveal any triggers regarding the opportunities for advancement for individuals with disabilities. The office which houses the REE mission area’s disability program manager, ARS-ODEO, established a group that was comprised of staff from Administrative and Financial Management (including Human Resources Division) and the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity to develop a Diversity Recruitment Plan to increase diversity in underrepresented populations throughout the Agency. The plan contains several goals with several corresponding objectives which are accompanied by action/ improvement strategies. NIFA needs to actively collaborate with ARS-ODEO on this matter to ensure that it takes an active role in ensuring that PWD and PWTD have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

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

Agency career development opportunities are: New Leader Program, Congressional Briefing Conference, OPM/Management Development, OPM FEI Leadership, Executive Leadership Potential, NRLTP Leadership Workshop, American Management Association Leadership & Team Development for Managerial Success, Location and Headquarters Service Employees Team (SET) Details. Employees may voluntarily apply for career development opportunities. Detail opportunities are also available for employees in coordination with their supervisors and submission of resumes to the SET Program Coordinator. Once a year within 30 days of annual performance evaluations, employees and supervisors must meet to discuss goals and accomplishments and develop an IDP.

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 (%)
Coaching Programs	28	22	7.14	9.09	3.57	4.54
Internship Programs		12		N/A		N/A
Fellowship Programs		3		N/A		N/A
Mentoring Programs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Training Programs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Detail Programs	Pendng	Pendng				
Other Career Development Programs						

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 N/A
- b. Selections (PWD) Answer N/A

There were no employees eligible for the career development program under the Schedule A authority in FY 21.

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 N/A
- b. Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A

There were no employees eligible for conversion under the Schedule A authority in FY 21.

C. AWARDS

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

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

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 hours: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Total Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Average Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 hours: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Total Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Average Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 hours: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Total Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Average Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 hours: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Total Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Average Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
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	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Cash Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
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 No
- b. Pay Increases (PWTD) Answer No

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

Other Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Total Performance Based Pay Increases Awarded	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

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 No
- b. Other Types of Recognition (PWTD) Answer No

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

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 N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A
- b. Grade GS-15

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)	Answer	N/A
ii. Internal Selections (PWD)	Answer	N/A
c. Grade GS-14		
i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)	Answer	N/A
ii. Internal Selections (PWD)	Answer	N/A
d. Grade GS-13		
i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)	Answer	N/A
ii. Internal Selections (PWD)	Answer	N/A

The Applicant workflow data information for persons with disabilities was not collected or maintained for these selections.

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

a. SES

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB)	Answer	N/A
ii. Internal Selections (PWTB)	Answer	N/A

b. Grade GS-15

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB)	Answer	N/A
ii. Internal Selections (PWTB)	Answer	N/A

c. Grade GS-14

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB)	Answer	N/A
ii. Internal Selections (PWTB)	Answer	N/A

d. Grade GS-13

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB)	Answer	N/A
ii. Internal Selections (PWTB)	Answer	N/A

Applicant workflow data information for persons with disabilities was not collected or maintained for these 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	N/A
b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD)	Answer	N/A

- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD) Answer N/A
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD) Answer N/A

The agency did not collect or maintain workflow data information for FY21, and it is unknown whether any triggers exist for the above categories;

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 N/A
- b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD) Answer N/A
- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) Answer N/A
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) Answer N/A

The agency did not collect or maintain workflow data information for FY21, and it is unknown whether any triggers exist for the above categories.

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 N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A
- b. Managers
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A
- c. Supervisors
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A

Please see response to Question #1. No additional distinct workflow data on supervisory position selection was collected.

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 N/A

- ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A
- b. Managers
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A
- c. Supervisors
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A

Please see response to Question #2. No additional distinct workflow data on supervisory positions was collected.

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 N/A
 - b. New Hires for Managers (PWD) Answer N/A
 - c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD) Answer N/A

Please see response to Question #3. No additional distinct workflow data on supervisory positions selection was collected.

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 N/A
 - b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD) Answer N/A

Please see response to Question #4. No additional distinct workflow data on supervisory positions selection was collected.

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 No

There were no employees eligible for conversion under the Schedule A authority in FY 21.

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

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

Seperations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	0	0.00	0.00

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

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

Seperations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	0	0.00	0.00

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.

The agency did not track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 21.

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.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/section-508>

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.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/section-508>

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.

NIFA relocated from the Beacon address to 805 Pennsylvania in Kansas City, MO in FY 21, and the facility had a designated ADA coordinator to ensure it is fully accessible at the new location.

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.)

As cited in the Agency's Reasonable Accommodation (RA) Policy & Procedures, deciding officials have 5 days to acknowledge receipt of a RA request and 30 days to provide an accommodation. On average, reasonable accommodation requests are processed immediately. For equipment purchases, full implementation of an accommodation may vary depending upon the vendor and the type of equipment needed. Additionally, interim accommodations or alternative accommodations are made when the preferred accommodation is an undue hardship.

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

The following efforts are ongoing by the REE Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager to ensure program efficiency and effectiveness: Participates in Agency-wide meetings, trainings, and webinars as the subject-matter expert to promote RA program awareness. The program developed visual aids to simplify the RA administrative process for persons with disabilities and their deciding officials which includes step-by-step procedures for timely processing of requests. 1. Modified policies, hard copy materials, and web site information to ensure persons with disabilities understand their rights and responsibilities. 2. Strategizes with supervisors to develop alternative accommodation options that are equally effective when preferred accommodation imposes an undue hardship. This mitigates denials which reduce or eliminate EEO complaints. 3. Provides classroom-style training or webinars to educate the workforce— particularly supervisors who serve as RA deciding officials. 4. Issues a quarterly email blast (newsletter) with snippets of RA information. 5. Informs both persons with disabilities and their supervisors of proper record keeping of medical documentation to reduce or eliminate HIPPA and Privacy Act violations. 6. Partners with HR professionals when program overlaps occur to ensure a collaborative and consistent approach exists when conveying information to employees and their supervisors.

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

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

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

USDA has implemented RA policies, procedures and processes in accordance with Departmental Regulation 4300-008, Reasonable Accommodation (RA) and Personal Assistance Services (PAS) for Employees and Applicants with Disabilities. To date, all requests submitted for PAS, have been processed according to procedures. PAS is shared with the workforce during training sessions/webinars that are provided by the REE RA Program Manager. Training was provided on May 2020, with a follow up training conducted June 2020, conducted by the Civil Rights, Labor and Employment Law Division, Office of the General Counsel. In partnership with USDA, Departmental Management, the Human Resources Division training will provide training 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.

N/A

B. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

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

Answer No

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

Answer No

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

N/A

Section VIII: Identification and Removal of Barriers

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

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

Answer No

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

Answer N/A

3. Identify each trigger and plan to remove the barrier(s), including the identified barrier(s), objective(s), responsible official(s), planned activities, and, where applicable, accomplishments
4. Please explain the factor(s) that prevented the agency from timely completing any of the planned activities.

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A