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 achieved 15.79% (6 employees) for grades GS-1 to GS-10 for PWD which surpasses the EEOC benchmark of 12%, and achieved 8.68% (29 employees) for grade levels GS-11 to SES for PWD.

*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 have a trigger involving PWTD in all grade levels. The agency was above the 2% threshold, having 7.89% (3 employees) of PWTD for grade levels GS-1 to GS-10 and 2.39% (8 employees) for grade levels GS-11 to SES. The PWTD numbers surpasses EEOC's benchmark of 2%.

Grade Level Cluster(GS or Alternate Pay Planb)	Total	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
	#	#	%	#	%
Numarical Goal	--	12%		2%	
Grades GS-1 to GS-10					
Grades GS-11 to SES					

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 will collaborate with the Administrative Officer and HR to implement the disability program. The Agency will increase the use of the program to assist in filling vacant position in FY 23.

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
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	40	0	0	Human Resources Staff Michael Cooper, Supervisory HR Specialist,
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	40	0	0	Human Resources Staff Michael.Cooper, Supervisory HR Specialist
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	Joseph McCleary Reasonable Accommodations Program Manager
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	0	0	1	Jesssica Creighton Director EO/CR
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	1	Jessica Creighton Director EO/CR

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

EO Staff, the Disability and Veteran Emphasis Program Managers have received Workforce Recruitment Program and Disability Program Manager training in August of 2022. 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. Employees completed the RA training in AgLearn by September of 2022. Employees completed the Section 508 Training was completed in AgLearn by September of 2022.

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 provides 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 22, the Acting Director of Civil Rights, Senior DEIA Officer, EEO Specialist and Disability Program Manager collaborated with the Center for Disability Inclusion as an additional resource to outreach for 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. 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. Five employees were hired under the Schedule A Hiring Authority.

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.

The agency performs a basic qualification on each applicant who applied for a vacant position under the Schedule A Hiring Authority and Human Resources forwards the qualified applicant's application to the hiring official with instructions of the process for hiring the applicant. Five employees were hired under the Schedule A Hiring Authority.

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

Answer   Yes

The Schedule A Coordinator provided Schedule A Hiring Authority training to managers and hiring officials in two organized webinars in FY 22. Types of Training 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 22. The Disability Program Manager also developed and distributed communication on the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP). The Disability Program Manager continued to distribute the 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 for hiring managers to reference when considering hiring veterans and people with disabilities. The EEO Specialist in partnership with HR's Disability Coordinator continued to share the Special Hiring Authority fact sheet to assist hiring officials to understand the process to hire a Schedule A applicant. The DEIA Recruitment Team, HR and the EO Staff delivered two webinars on the following subjects, Applying for Federal Jobs, Special Hiring Authorities, NIFA's mission and positions, to Hispanic Serving Institutions and agency employees. The EEO Specialist provided an overview/training of the Special Hiring Authority process and Workforce Recruitment Program to the Disability and Veteran Emphasis Program Managers to assist in understanding the hiring process. They also completed the WRP registration and training and provided Schedule A resumes. The Disability and Veteran Emphasis Program Managers attended the Center for Disability Inclusion Summit to network and receive training/resources. They also attended CDI's monthly networking meetings and assisted in organizing a disability webinar. The EEO Specialist, Disability Emphasis Program Manager and Schedule A Coordinator developed onboarding materials for Schedule A applicants and resources for supervisors.

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 continues the partnership with Center for Diversity (CDI) and Gallaudet University in FY 22 and continue accessing the Workforce Recruitment Program to provide qualified applicants. For Disability Employment Awareness Month CDI and Gallaudet representative were the keynote speakers for both webinars.

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 not have workforce data for PWD and PWTD to determine if triggers exist.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

Developmental opportunities are New Leader Program, Congressional Briefing Conference, OPM/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
Fellowship Programs	N/A	3	N/A	33	N/A	0
Detail Programs	Pendng	Pendng	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other Career Development Programs	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Internship Programs		12		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

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 NIFA's career development program under the Schedule A Hiring Authority.

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 Hiring Authority in FY 22.

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 22. NIFA will begin the analyses in FY 23.

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %

Cash Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %

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 have access to the workforce data to track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 22.

Other Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %

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 have access to the workforce data to track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category for FY 22.

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

NIFA was unable to obtain the information regarding triggers for PWD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels for FY 22, to perform an analysis. NIFA plans to request the workflow data from the mission area for FY 23 reporting.

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   N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   N/A

    b. Grade GS-15

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   N/A

    c. Grade GS-14

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   N/A

    d. Grade GS-13

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   N/A

NIFA was unable to obtain the information regarding triggers for PWTD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels for FY 22, to perform an analysis. NIFA plans to request the workflow data from the mission area for FY 23 reporting.

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

NIFA was unable to obtain the information regarding triggers for PWTD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels for FY 22, to perform an analysis. NIFA plans to request the workflow data from the mission area for FY 23 reporting.

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

NIFA was unable to obtain the information regarding triggers for PWTD among the new hires to the senior grade levels for FY 22, to perform an analysis. NIFA plans to request the workflow data from the mission area for FY 23 reporting.

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 22.

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

NIFA was unable to obtain the information regarding triggers for PWD that existed for separations. NIFA plans to request the workflow data from the mission area for FY 23 reporting.

Seperations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %

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 have access to the data, to track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed in this category.

Seperations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %

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 have access to the workforce data, to track the data to determine if there were triggers that existed for PWD and/or PWTD involving separations.

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 designated a Communication Specialist to provide technical services to meet 508 compliance products and service request. NIFA created a new 508 Coordinators position to lead training for employees that occurred in AgLearn on 06/03/2022 and 07/01/2022, and to provide assistance for the program.

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.

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 USDA-REE RA Program Manager. The RA procedures were issued 2/22/2022, 3/12/2022, and the RA Training was completed September of 2022.

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 USDA-REE RA Program Manager. The RA procedures were issued 2/22/2022, 3/12/2022, and the RA Training was completed September of 2022.

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   No

3. Identify each trigger and plan to remove the barrier(s), including the identified barrier(s), objective(s), responsible official(s), planned activities, and, where applicable, accomplishments

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

The agency does not have access to applicant flow data regarding hiring, employment, awards, promotion opportunities for PWD and/or PWTD. Applicant flow data is not consistent or accurate for each grade level to determine if there is a trigger or barrier which affects employment opportunities for PWD and/or PWTD. NIFA will request the applicant flow data to perform an analysis of the data to determine if there are any triggers for FY 23. NIFA will request the applicant flow data to perform an analysis of the data to determine if there are any triggers for FY 23.

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