
EEOC FORM
715-01 PART E
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Service

For Period Covering October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**USDA – Agricultural Research Service
EEOC Management Directive 715 Employment Opportunity Program Plan
FY 2013**

The purpose of this report is to identify trends and barriers impacting the Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) efforts to be a model Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) employer. This report analyzes workforce data by race, gender, and employees with targeted disabilities (TD). One trend that we are not required to monitor, but provides a backdrop to our analysis, is age. **Fifty-three percent** (3,166) of the ARS workforce is **age 50 or over** (decrease of three percent from 2012). **Fifty-five percent** (3,260) of the total permanent workforce (5,942) are **eligible for retirement between 2013 and 2022** (2 percent increase since 2012 report). Of the 55 percent, **26 percent** (1,508) are **grades 13-SES** (3 percent increase) in the identified major occupations.

MISSION AREA: Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

The ARS conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority and provide information access and dissemination to ensure high-quality, safe food, and other agricultural products; assess the nutritional needs of Americans; sustain a competitive agricultural economy; enhance the natural resource base and the environment, and provide economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole.

This report is more than just numbers. With each targeted group, we compared our numbers to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF). As this report explains in detail, **ARS is underrepresented in Hispanic males and females, White females, African American males and females, American Indian males and females, Two or More Races males and females, and Persons with targeted disabilities (Persons with TD)**. One may ask, “Why does ARS care about representation and being inclusive?” The answer is that we care about this because it is one way, however, not the only way, to ensure diversity exists in our workforce and that our representation strives to reflect the population that we serve. **ARS cares about representation and inclusion** because it allows a broader range of intellectual decision making to solve and conduct research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems, establishes parity for all groups that will strengthen and enrich our workforce, employees will see others like themselves, and feel comfortable about entering and staying in our workforce and every employee will feel respected and acknowledged.

1. DESCRIPTION of PERMANENT WORKFORCE

2. CHANGES IN PERMANENT WORKFORCE POPULATIONS

All ARS employees are included in this report. The data is based on information as of September 30, 2013. It represents the workforce demographics of ARS’s permanent workforce by race, gender, and disability in the format required by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive 715 (MD-715).

Part E (continued)

Based on the EEOC classifications, ARS's reportable employee population is displayed in the following table from largest to smallest (*see Tables A&B1 for details*):

RNO/Gender	FY 2012 Population	FY 2013 Population	Agency representation %/ Net change*	CLF
White male	2,839	2,778	46.75 -2.15	38.33
White female	1,902	1,861	31.32 -2.16	34.03
African American female	339	331	5.57 -2.36	6.53
Asian male	299	298	5.02 -0.33	1.97
African American male	214	209	3.52 -2.34	5.49
Asian female	174	175	2.95 +0.57	1.93
Hispanic male	150	141	2.37 -6.00	5.17
Hispanic female	90	87	1.46 -3.33	4.79
Persons with TD	68	69	1.14 +1.45	2
American Indian female	23	22	0.37 -4.35	0.53
American Indian male	21	23	0.39 +9.52	0.55
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander female	6	6	0 0	0.07
Two or More Races female	4	6	0.10 +50.00	0.28
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male	4	4	0.07 0	0.07
Two or More Races male	0	1	0.02 +100.00	0.8
TOTAL**	6,065	5,942	100 -30.17	

*Net change is the representation difference between FY 2012 and 2013.

**Person with TD are included in the other groups.

Part E (continued)

Groups below CLF	Variance (number in parentheses was reported in 2012 based on 2000 CLF)
Hispanic male	167 (228)
Hispanic female	198 (186)
White female	162 (140)
African American male	118 (78)
African American female	58 (7)
American Indian male	10 (1)
American Indian female	10 (was not under CLF in 2012)
Two or More Races male	15 (49)
Two or More Races female	11 (45)
Persons with TD	51 (52)

Grade Distribution – GS-13 – SES (highest to lowest representation based on the grade representation – see *Tables A&B4-1 for details*). White males and females continue to dominate the GS-13 to SES positions. **Note:** The single asterisk indicates that the groups were distributed in the subject grade level at less than their total workforce representation.

Grade	RNO/Gender	Number and Percent within Grade
13 (587 - decrease of 28 since 2012)	White male*	274 (46.68)
	White female	158 (26.92)
	Asian male	58 (9.88)
	Asian female	30 (5.11)
	African American female*	27 (4.6)
	African American male	21 (3.58)
	Hispanic male*	11 (1.87)
	Hispanic female*	7 (1.19)
	Persons with TD*	6 (1.02)
	American Indian male*	1 (0.17)
	<i>Two or more races male and female and Native Hawaiian male and female and American Indian female not represented</i>	
Changes since 2012: <i>Distributed in Grade 13 at less than total workforce representation: White males</i> <i>Distributed higher than total workforce: White females</i>		

Part E – Grade Distribution (continued)

14 (653 – decrease of 18)	White male	368 (56.36)
	White female*	122 (18.68)
	Asian male*	87 (13.32)
	Asian female	22 (3.37)
	Hispanic male*	12 (1.84)
	African American male*	15 (2.30)
	African American female*	13 (1.99)
	Hispanic female*	7 (1.07)
	American Indian male	4 (0.61)
	Persons with TD*	3 (0.46)
	Native Hawaiian male	2 (0.31)
	Two or More Races female	1 (0.15)
	<i>American Indian females, Native Hawaiian females, and Two or More Races males not represented.</i>	
15 (706 – increase of 37)	White male	495 (70.11)
	White female*	89 (12.61)
	Asian male	75 (10.62)
	Hispanic male *	19 (2.69)
	African American male*	12 (1.7)
	Asian female*	6 (0.85)
	Persons with TD*	5 (0.71)
	Hispanic female*	4 (0.57)
	African American female*	3 (0.42)
	American Indian female*	2 (0.28)
	American Indian male*	1 (0.14)
	<i>Native Hawaiian males and females, and Two or More Races males and females not represented.</i>	

Part E – Grade Distribution (continued)

SES (32 – decrease of 4)	White male	18 (56.25)
	White female*	7 (21.88)
	Asian male	2 (6.25)
	African American female	2 (6.25)
	American Indian female	1 (3.13)
	Hispanic female	1 (3.13)
	Native Hawaiian male	1 (3.13)
	<i>Hispanic males, African American males, Asian females, Native Hawaiian female, American Indian males, and Persons with TD not represented</i>	

Mission Critical Occupations

White males and females continue to dominate the mission critical occupations. The following are the groups that fall below the relative labor force (RLF) - *see tables A&B 6 for details (percentage in parentheses is the difference from 2012 unless no changes):*

0404, Biological Technician [1,360 or 22.8 percent (+0.2) of the ARS total current permanent workforce]

White female.

No representation for Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander male and female and Two or More Races male and female.

Note: Since 2012, the following groups are above the RLF: Hispanic male and female, African American male and female, Asian male and female, and American Indian male.

0401, General Biological Science (344 or 5.8 percent)

Hispanic male and female, White female, and American Indian male.

No representation Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander female, American Indian male, and Two or More Races male and female.

1320, Chemistry [264 or 4.44 percent (-0.13)]

White female, African American male and Asian female. No representation for Hispanic female, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, American Indian female, Two or More Races male and female and Asian male.

Note: Since 2012, the following groups are above the RLF: White male.

Part E – Mission Critical Occupations (continued)

0440, Genetics (261 or 4.4 percent)

Hispanic male and female, White female, African American male, Asian female, and American Indian male. No representation for African American female, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, American Indian female, and Two or More Races male and female.

0403, Microbiology (230 or 3.87 percent)

Hispanic female and White female. No representation for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female and American Indian male.

Note: Since 2012, the following groups are above the RLF: African American female and Asian female.

Since the 2012 reporting period, the Human Resources Division (HRD) has determined that the following occupational series have been identified as mission critical:

2210, Information Technology Management (199 or 3.34 percent)

White male and Asian male and female. No representation for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female.

0201, Human Resources Management (88 or 1.48 percent)

Hispanic female, White male and female, and Asian female.

No representation for Hispanic male, Asian male, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, American Indian male and Two or More Races male.

1102, Contracting (45 or 0.75 percent)

White female. No representation for Hispanic male and female, Asian female, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander female, American Indian or Alaska Native male and female, and Two or More Race male and female.

1101, General Business and Industry (31 or 0.52 percent)

Hispanic female, White male, African American male, and Asian male. No representation for Asian female, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, American Indian or Alaska Native male and female, and Two or More Races.

ARS will also be reporting the previously identified major occupations as they represent the majority of the workforce in addition to the ones identified by HR.

Part E (continued)

3. NEW HIRES (permanent)

The following are being **hired less than their availability in the CLF** (*see tables A&B 8 for details*): African American males, Hispanic females, White males, and Persons with TD are being hired less than their availability in the CLF. *No hires for Hispanic males, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander females, and American Indian or Alaska Native male.*

Total for FY 2013	Race/Gender
54	White males
44	White females
10	African American females
7	Asian males
4	Asian females
4	African American males
2	Hispanic females
2	Two or More Races females
1	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male
1	American Indian or Alaska Native female
1	Persons with TD

4. PROMOTIONS

Total employees eligible for Career Ladder Promotions (totals are inclusive of FY 2013 – *see Tables A&B 10 for details*)

643 (312 males and 331 females):

The following groups were distributed in separations at more than their ARS promotion representation (groups underrepresented are bolded):

Hispanic male and female, White male, African American male, Asian male, American Indian female, Two or More Races female.

Note 1: Since 2012, Persons with TD’s promotion percentage was higher than the separation percentage.

Note 2: The following groups had no promotion representation: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, and Two or More Races male.

Part E – Promotions (continued)

Time in grade in excess of minimum 1-12 months

70 (35 males and 35 females):

The following groups were distributed in separations at more than their ARS promotion representation:

White male and female, African American male, and Asian male.

Note 1: Since 2012, the following were promoted at a higher percentage than separation percentage: Hispanic male and Asian female.

Note 2: The following groups had no promotion representation: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, American Indian male and female, and Two or More Races male, and Persons with TD.

Time in grade in excess of minimum 13-24 months

70 (38 males and 32 females):

The following groups were distributed in separations at more than their ARS promotion representation: Hispanic male.

Note 1: Since 2012, the following were promoted at a higher percentage than separation percentage: White female, African American male, and Persons with TD.

Note 2: The following groups had no promotion representation: Hispanic female, Asian male and female, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, American Indian female, and Two or More Races male and female.

Time in grade in excess of minimum 25+ months

354 (177 males and 177 females):

The following groups were distributed in separations at more than their ARS representation:

Hispanic, White male, African American male, Asian male, and Persons with TD.

Note 1: Since 2012, the following were promoted at a higher percentage than separation percentage: Hispanic male, African American female, and American Indian female.

Note 2: The following groups had no promotion representation: Native American or Other Pacific Islander male and female, and Two or More Races male and female.

Note: ARS will conduct further research to ensure that promotions are made in an even-handed and non-discriminatory fashion, and that developmental assignments and training are provided to assist with career mobility.

Part E (continued)

5. SEPARATIONS (*see Tables A&B14 for details*):

Voluntary [300 compared to FY 2012 total 529 (decrease of 43 percent)] - The following groups continue to separate at more than their representation (all are underrepresented groups): Hispanic male and female, White female, African American male, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male, American Indian female, and Two or More Races female.

Note: Since 2012, African American females are separating at less than their workforce representation.

Involuntary [17 compared to FY 2012 total 89 (decrease of 81 percent)] – The following involuntary separated during this reporting period: Hispanic male and female, White male and female, African American male and female, Asian male, and Persons with TD.

Note: ARS and HRD plan to meet by the end of FY 2014 or to discuss the implementation of an exit interview survey.

Sixty-eight (68) Veterans separated (23 percent of the total 300 voluntary separations – **increase of 9 percent since 2012**):

SES

4 White Male

Grade 15

10 White Male

Grade 12

2 White Male

Grade 11 (6)

4 White Male; 1 African American Male; and 1 African American Female

Grade 10 (4)

3 White Male and 1 Asian Male

Grade 9 (8)

5 White Male; 1 White Female; 2 African American Male

Grade 8

4 White Male

Grade 7 (5)

1 African American Female; 2 White Male; 1 Two or More Races Male; and 1 Hispanic Male

Part E – Veteran Separations (continued)

Grade 6 (8)

5 White Male; 1 Hispanic Male; 1 Hispanic Female; and
1 African American Female

Grade 5 (8)

5 White Male; 2 African American Female; and 1 Hispanic Male

Grade 4 (2)

1 White female and 1 African American Female

Grade 3 (3)

2 White Female and 1 White Male

Grade 2 (3)

1 African American Female, 1 Hispanic Male, and 1 Asian Male

Grade 1

1 White Male

6. AWARDS (*see Tables A&B13 for details*):

The following groups were distributed in the awards category at less than their ARS representation:

Time-off – 1-9 hours (218 employees for FY 2013)

Hispanic male (0.46 percent vs. 2.37 percent in workforce);

African American male (0.46 vs. 3.52);

Asian male (4.13 vs. 5.02);

Asian female (1.83 vs. 2.95)

Note: No representation for Hispanic female (1.46 workforce), Native Hawaiian male (0.07), Native Hawaiian female (0.10), American Indian male (0.39), Two or More Races male (0.02), and Two or More Races female (0.10).

Time-off – 9+ hours (951 employees)

Hispanic male (1.37 percent vs. 2.37 percent in workforce);

Hispanic female (1.16 vs. 1.46);

White male (44.58 vs. 46.75);

African American male (2.52 vs. 3.52);

Asian male (2.73 vs. 5.02);

Asian female (1.79 vs. 2.95);

American Indian male (0.32 vs. 0.39);

American Indian female (0.21 vs. 0.37);

Two or More Races male (0 vs. 0.02)

Part E – Awards (continued)

Note: No representation for Native Hawaiian male (0.07) and female (0.10), Two or More Races male (0.02) and female (0.10).

Cash Awards - \$100-\$500 (760 employees)

White male 38.55 vs. 46.75);

Asian male (3.16 vs. 5.02);

Asian female (2.11 vs. 2.95)

Note: No representation for Native Hawaiian male (0.07) and female (0.10), and Two or More Races male (0.02).

Cash Awards - \$501+ (3,457 employees)

Hispanic female (1.27 vs. 1.46);

White female (29.1 vs. 31.32);

African American male (2.46 vs. 3.52);

African American female (2.14 vs. 5.57);

Native Hawaiian male (0.06 vs. 0.07);

American Indian male (0.2 vs. 0.39);

Two or More Races female (0.06 vs. 0.1);

Persons with TD (0.78 vs. 1.14)

Note: No representation for Two or More Races male.

Quality Step Increases (594 employees)

Hispanic male (2.36 vs. 2.37);

White male (35.69 vs. 46.75);

American Indian male (0.34 vs. 0.39)

Note: No representation for Native Hawaiian female, Two or More Races male and female.

SES Cash Awards (30 employees)

White female (30 vs. 31.32);

African American female (3.33 vs. 5.57);

Asian male (3.33 vs. 5.02)

Note: No representation for Hispanic male (2.37), Hispanic female (1.46), African American male (3.52), Asian female (2.95), American Indian male (0.39), American Indian female (0.37), and Persons with TD (1.14).

Part E – Awards (continued)

During third quarter, the Administrator organized a special task force in partnership with the HR Performance and Awards Staff to streamline the process and make the recognition of employees for their outstanding contributions to the organization more meaningful. Specifically, the revamped program will allow for:

- Fewer awards for a more meaningful ceremony and recognition;
- Equal opportunity/diversifying of recognition among all employees;
- Expansion in awards categories meant to capture all employees in scientific and non-scientific type positions;
- Tiered awards, with Areas holding parallel business processes; and
- An informal, moderated, peer-to-peer recognition program to compliment the formal program.

The task force has developed special work group/teams to establish and develop the criteria for the various award programs/categories to include: (Location Support Award, Scientific Support Award, Research Leadership and Center Directorship Award, and the Administrative and Program Management Award). These award programs were created to recognize outstanding contributions in areas such as: Research, business administration, customer service and technical expertise, leadership and management, innovation, cost savings, adaptation, and communications to name a few. The workgroups are and have been diversified by: gender, race, ethnicity, grade, occupation, and location geographical areas to ensure equal opportunity for all employees.

7. **Recruitment and Retention of Veterans**

1. **Establishing a structure dedicated to employing Veterans**

The Administrator issues the Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement annually aligning with the Secretary's Civil Rights Policy Statement. The policy statement holds employees accountable to be proactive in creating and maintaining a competitive and qualified diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of today's society and states that disciplinary action will be taken for conduct or behavior that indicates discrimination, sexual or non-sexual harassment, and retaliation. The statement reflects the Agency's affirmative commitment to employment of eligible disabled veterans. It is ARS's policy to create a work environment which promotes and encourages the recruitment, hiring, retention, career development and advancement of all disabled Veterans.

ARS ensures that disabled employees have accommodations needed to assist in carrying out the duties assigned for their positions. Employees with disabilities are regularly consulted on any barriers that may impair their ability to compete in the workplace because of disability.

Part E – Veterans (continued)

VETERAN HIRES (permanent)

During FY 2013, ARS hired 62 permanent veterans (increase of 106 percent or 32 since 2012).

Grade 14 (2)

2 White male

Grade 13 (2)

1 White female

1 White male

Grade 12 (1)

1 White male

Grade 11 (6)

2 White female

2 White male

1 African American female

1 Two or More Races female

Grade 9 (4)

3 White male

1 African American female

Grade 8 (2)

2 White male

Grade 7 (6)

4 White male

1 White female

1 African American male

Grade 6 (7)

3 White Male

2 White female

1 African American female

1 Hispanic male

Part E – Veterans (continued)

Grade 5 (20)

- 7 African American male
- 1 African American female
- 4 White male
- 5 White female
- 1 Two or More Races male
- 2 Hispanic female

Grade 4

- 4 White male

Grade 3

- 2 White female

Grade 2

- 2 White male

Grade 1

- 1 White male

SES

- 3 White male

Twelve (12) reported non-targeted and one reported targeted disabilities.

ARS employs approximately 586 veterans (-4 from 2012).

2. Providing employment counseling and skill training to transitioning service members

ARS includes a name and number of a human resources specialist on all of our vacancy announcements so applicants have someone to contact if they have questions or concerns or want to obtain reasonable accommodation for any part of the application process. Announcements include OPM's Vet Guide web site address and directions on how to access veterans' information.

ARS allocates sufficient resources for training opportunities and education programs designed to provide maximum opportunities for disabled employees to advance. Supervisors and managers are very mindful of the ARS disability program obligation and continue to demonstrate a firm commitment to help disabled employees reach their potential. Career counseling is available.

Part E – Veterans (continued)

ARS conducts periodic assessment to monitor progress, identifies areas where barriers may exist to exclude disabled employees, and develops plans to eliminate those barriers.

3. Implementing a marketing campaign to inform Veterans about ARS employment opportunities

ARS continued to use a variety of recruitment sources such as conferences, hiring, fairs, briefings, vocational rehabilitation, Facebook and Twitter as outreach and recruitment sources to employ veterans and disabled veterans. Recruitment sources and activities are listed in Part J (TAB 8).

ARS is the only agency in the REE mission area that has the authority to recruit outside hires through the Demonstration Project (DEMO authority). The use of DEMO authority gives veterans greater preference than the preference given to them by standard OPM hiring procedures.

4. Building a mechanism to provide timely employment information and resources to Veterans

ARS includes a name and number of a human resources specialist on all of our vacancy announcements so applicants have someone to contact if they have questions or concerns or want to obtain reasonable accommodation for any part of the application process. Announcements include OPM's Vet Guide web site address and directions on how to access veterans' information.

ARS promoted the referral for noncompetitive consideration of all qualified disabled Veterans and supported Federal and Departmental initiatives, which included exploring all employment opportunities that integrated veterans into the workforce. ARS will continue to:

- Ensure that recruitment efforts are consistently coordinated in order to obtain maximum effectiveness and efficiency where appropriate.
- Ensure that recruitment announcements and literature reflect the Agency's desire to reach all segments of potential workforce, including eligible disabled candidates.
- Proactively look for opportunities to use the Veterans Readjustment Authority to fill vacancies.
- Strengthen and expand resources for obtaining resumes of disabled veterans.
- Publish vacancy announcement that include information indicating expanded eligibility for preference eligible in accordance with the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act.

Part E (continued)

8. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (permanent) – percentages based on total workforce of 5,942 (percentages are about the same as reported in 2012 quarter unless indicated)

DESCRIPTION	NONE	NOT IDENTIFIED	REPORTABLE <i>(excludes Targeted)</i>	TARGETED
Total Workforce (5,942)	5,400 or 90.88% (-0.06%)	113 or 1.90% (-.00%)	361 or 6.08% (-1.16%)	68 or 1.14% (-.02%)
New Hires (130)	116 or 89.23% (-1.47%)	1 or .77% (-.25%)	14 or 10.77%	1 or .77% (-.25%)
Promotions (643)	593 or 91.43% (+.79%)	13 or 2.02% (+0.15%)	33 or 5.13% (-1.12%)	4 or 0.62% (-.16%)
Separations (300)	264 or 88.00% (+0.68%)	13 or 4.33% (+0.1%)	20 or 6.7% (-.81%)	3 or 1.00% (+.06%)
AWARDS				
Time off 1-9 hours (218)	199 or 91.28% (-0.70%)	1 or 0.46% (-0.1%)	13 or 5.96% (-2.3%)	5 or 2.29% (-0.54%)
Time off 9+ hours (951)	858 or 90.33% (-0.26%)	10 or 1.05% (-0.14%)	71 or 7.47% (-1.15%)	12 or 1.26% (+0.18%)
Cash awards - \$100 - \$500 (760)	683 or 89.87% (+0.01%)	16 or 2.11%	49 or 6.45% (-1.58%)	12 or 1.58%
Cash awards \$500+ (3,457)	3,185 or 92.13% (-0.12%)	79 or 2.29% (+0.03%)	166 or 4.80% (-0.67%)	27 or 0.78%
Quality Step Increases (594)	544 or 91.58%	10 or 1.68%	33 or 5.56% (-1.17%)	7 or 0.7 or 1.18%

UPDATE OF ARS SELF-ASSESSMENT [Parts G (see **TAB 4**) and H]

The following summarizes ARS’s effort to meet the EEOC’s six essential elements:

Essential Element A: Demonstrated Commitment from Agency Leadership

ARS continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to equal opportunity for all employees, applicants, and service recipients. The 2013 Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policy Statements were sent to all ARS employees. The statements were placed on the ARS home page and also in each employee’s AgLearn learning history. Once the employees have read the policy statements, the AgLearn accounts will be updated stating that they have read and understand the policies. If the employees do not certify reading the policy statements, just as in the current AgLearn training process, the employees are notified, followed by notifying their immediate supervisor – monitored by the Area Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Employment (ODEO) Program Managers. See **TAB 5** for policies.

Managers and supervisors are evaluated through their performance plans regarding their commitment to ARS EEO policies and principles.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element A (continued)

The Department conducted two No Fear Refresher and No Fear Comprehensive Training Wrap-up sessions for ARS (September and October 2012). As a result of scheduling the sessions, our completion rate for the mandatory training reached 100 percent. ARS also sponsored an ARS/EEOC Reasonable Accommodation Webinar on October 23, 2012 (185 participants).

All ARS employees completed the mandatory Workplace Harassment Training for Employees and Supervisors by September 30, 2013.

ARS conducted a review and evaluation of the performance management system for the Senior Science and Technology Service (SSTS) and identified a gap in accountability and recognition of this service. As a result, the Administrator championed and requested Executive Resources Management Division to partner with ARS to pursue establishing a new performance management system as well as modify the minimum rate of pay, and leave accrual for the SSTS. This project entails reclassification of position descriptions, new written policy, as well as gaining legislative approval to amend the law in order to modify the qualification standards and the minimum rate of pay for positions in this service. Currently, a proposal and changes on P.L 107-171 to Congress is underway to make the SSTS equivalent to the SES and SL/ST. Recent accomplishments from this partnership includes discussions with the Office of Congressional Affairs (OCR), Office of the General Council (OGC), and the Office of Budget Program Appropriations (OBPA) on the preparation package and necessary action steps for a legislation change. ARS, ERMD, OGC, and OBPA will be submitting the preparation package for the 2015 budget/legislative reports proposal. ARS will be the driving agency for this initiative and will draft the cost benefits analysis. These efforts are continuous and will potentially have an impact on the SSTS and the use of this service within the entire Federal Government.

The ARS Administrator organized a special task force in partnership with HRD Performance and Awards Staff to streamline the process and make the recognition of employees for their outstanding contributions to the organization more meaningful. Specifically, the revamp ARS awards recognition program will allow for:

- Fewer awards for a more meaningful ceremony and recognition;
- Equal opportunity/diversifying of recognition among all employees;
- Expansion in awards categories meant to capture all employees in scientific and non-scientific type positions;
- Tiered awards, with Areas holding parallel business processes; and
- An informal, moderated, peer-to-peer recognition program to compliment the formal program.

The task force has developed special work group/teams to establish and develop the criteria for the various award programs/categories to include: (Location Support Award, Scientific Support Award, Research Leadership and Center Directorship Award, and the Administrative and Program Management Award). These award programs were created to recognize outstanding contributions in areas such as:

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element A (continued)

Research, business administration, customer service and technical expertise, leadership and management, innovation, cost savings, adaptation, and communications to name a few. The workgroups are and have been diversified by: gender, race, ethnicity, grade, occupation, and location geographical areas to ensure equal opportunity for all employees.

The Task Force continues to make huge progress in achieving our mission of overhauling, improving, and ensuring meaningful recognition of our agency employee recognition programs. Most recently, the Agency launched its first phase to implementing the new award programs by offering informational access on our new intranet site. This site will become the center stage for advertising and submitting nominations for the specialty programs. Additionally, a platform is being developed to support the connected informal peer-to-peer recognition program that will allow for all agency employees to contribute and recognize colleagues. ARS will be carrying out the formal announcement in January/February 2014 in the form of an agency bulletin.

The ARS Administrator champions and supports the health and well-being of the agency's workforce. Approximately 60 percent (59.54 percent) of ARS employees have Ad Hoc telework agreements, *exceeding* the Department's goal of 35 percent. The number of employees not having agreements decreased by 10.08 percent. The number of core agreement increased by 10.77 percent.

Essential Element B: Integration of EEO into the Agency's Strategic Mission

ARS achieved 87 percent of the goals in the ARS Strategic Plan (increase of 6 percent since 2012).

Reporting to the Agency Head

The Director of the ARS, Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) reports directly to the Administrator. The Director serves as an advisor to the Administrator and Associates and retains a seat on the Administrator's Council (senior management team), thereby preserving visibility and influence at the Agency level. The ODEO Director and staff (including Area ODEO Program Managers) continue to provide information to employees and customers regarding recruitment strategies, vacancy projections, succession planning, selections for training/career development opportunities, and other workforce changes.

After the submission of the MD-715, the ODEO Director presents the state of the EEO program to the Administrator.

Essential Element C: Management and Program Accountability

- ARS holds managers and supervisors accountable for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce through the REE Recruitment Agreement, in particular, Appendix A, which requires the ARS hiring managers utilize the MD-715 in the recruiting process in efforts to increase diversity.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

- **Employee Recognition Awards Program**

Annually, the Human Resources Division (HRD) Performance and Awards Staff (PAS) reviews and evaluates recognition programs to ensure fairness and equal opportunity for all employees. Additionally, PAS continues the BETA testing phase of an automated system in FY 2013. We anticipate launching the new system in FY 2014. The purpose of the automated system is to capture demographic data of participants to determine and identify trends that may not closely reflect the agency's population. PAS continues to work towards creating an organization culture that recognizes employees for their contributions and accomplishment toward meeting the agency's mission.

The ARS Administrator organized a special task force in partnership with HRD to streamline the process and make the recognition of employees for their outstanding contributions to the organization more meaningful.

Specifically, the revamp ARS awards recognition program will allow for:

- Fewer awards for a more meaningful ceremony and recognition;
- Equal opportunity / diversifying of recognition among all employees;
- Expansion in awards categories meant to capture all employees in scientific and non-scientific type positions;
- Tiered awards, with Areas holding parallel business processes; and
- An informal, moderated, peer-to-peer recognition program to compliment the formal program.

The task force has developed special work group/teams to establish and develop the criteria for the various award programs/categories to include: (Location Support Award, Scientific Support Award, Research Leadership and Center Directorship Award, and the Administrative and Program Management Award). These award programs were created to recognize outstanding contributions in areas such as: Research, business administration, customer service and technical expertise, leadership and management, innovation, cost savings, adaptation, and communications to name a few. The workgroups are and have been diversified by: gender, race, ethnicity, grade, occupation, and location geographical areas to ensure equal opportunity for all employees.

ARS Holding Managers and Supervisors Accountable for Achieving a Diverse Work Force

It is ARS’s goal to ensure leadership accountability for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce. To achieve this goal, ARS has implemented the USDA Diversity Road Map by accomplishing the following:

1. Leadership Accountability and Commitment

Diversity Officer

The Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Director is the ARS Diversity Officer.

Establish and Maintain Special Emphasis Working Group

ARS has National Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) serving on advisory councils for Asian American and Pacific Islanders; African Americans; Persons with Disabilities; Hispanics; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered; Native Americans; Women; and Veterans. The ODEO Area Program Managers serve as the Area SEPMs (the Pacific West Area has SEPMs in each location).

SES Incorporate Diversity Goals in Performance Plans

All GS-15 and below supervisors within ARS had goals related to the Secretary’s Cultural Transformation and USDA Diversity Roadmap added to their performance requirements in the Supervision and Human Capital Management Performance Element. Also, the draft REE Performance Management Policy was established to better align with the Department’s policy and to promote consistency among the REE agencies. Currently, the Department has revised the existing Performance Management Policy and it is being vetted for approval. Once this occurs, the REE Performance Management Policy will be revisited for any necessary modifications prior to its full implementation which is projected no later than FY 2015. These various actions will help supervisors and managers promote and foster inclusion and diversity throughout the agency.

At a more strategic level, REE’s updated human capital and workforce plans which also include Succession Planning will reflect actions to deepen the results-oriented performance culture. This will help to institutionalize changes begun in response to employee feedback through the FEVS.

ARS continued to deliver key segments of its supervisory training curriculum, namely Crucial Conversations (book clubs and classroom training) and Myers Briggs Type Indicator training. These courses are the building blocks for frontline supervisors, with a view toward their continuation in the managerial career track. This contributes to our overarching goal of succession planning assuring leadership continuity from first line supervisor to Senior Executive in ARS. Crucial conversations has been widely adopted within ARS and is used in OPM’s

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

Management Development Centers. Approximately 650 employees have completed Crucial Conversations, Myers Briggs Type Indicator, as well as Individual Development Plan, and “Question Behind the Question” trainings.

The HRD Recruitment Staff developed a (*Enclosure 1 under Tab 2*) and poster for job seekers with disabilities to be used at recruitment fairs and events targeting persons with disabilities and promoting ARS as the employer of choice. **ARS has hired or converted 13 individuals** (increase of 8 since 2012) **under the Schedule A hiring authority.**

The ARS Administrator champions and supports the health and well-being of the agency’s workforce. The following displays the number of ARS official agreements/opt outs of 6,236 (number in parentheses is 2012 figure):

Opt/Outs (Employees eligible to telework, but decline to do so):	2,939
[increase of 228 agreements or 8 percent (2,711)]	
Core/Regular 24 hours or more:	164
[increase of 71 agreements or 76 percent (93)]	
Core/Regular 1-23 hours:	361
Core/1-2 days:	
[increase of 57 agreements or 19 percent (304)]	
Ad Hoc/Situational Telework/Other	2,009
[increase of 376 agreements or 23 percent (1,633)]	

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) conducted a review and evaluation of the performance management system for the Senior Science and Technology Service (SSTS) and identified a gap in accountability and recognition of this service. As a result, the Administrator championed and requested Executive Resources Management Division to partner with ARS to pursue establishing a new performance management system as well as modify the minimum rate of pay, and leave accrual for the SSTS. This project entails reclassification of position descriptions, new written policy, as well as gaining legislative approval to amend the law in order to modify the qualification standards and the minimum rate of pay for positions in this service. Currently, a proposal and changes on P.L 107-171 to Congress is underway to make the SSTS equivalent to the SES and SL/ST. Recent accomplishments from this partnership includes discussions with the Office of Congressional Affairs (OCR), Office of the General Council (OGC), and the Office of Budget Program Appropriations (OBPA) on the preparation package and necessary action steps for a legislation change.

ARS, ERMD, OGC, and OBPA will be submitting the preparation package for the 2015 budget/legislative reports proposal. ARS will be the driving agency for this initiative and will draft the cost benefits analysis. These efforts are continuous and

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

will potentially have an impact on the SSTS and the use of this service within the entire Federal Government.

Provide Monthly Reports to OHRM

N/A per Monshi Ramdass on April 17, 2012 and reconfirmed July 30, 2013.

ARS submits quarterly reports to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights on overall demographics (total workforce including veterans and persons with disabilities), hires, promotions (competitive and non-competitive by grade only), separations, awards (templates from the National Finance Center's Reporting Center), executive summary identifying the gaps in underrepresentation and action items that are being pursued according to the Part I of the MD-715. The quarterly reports are shared with the Administrative Council (ARS' senior management team). ARS HRD submits weekly reports regarding students and career interns.

Evaluate Staffing/Hiring Process

ARS Human Resources Division developed and implemented an on-boarding program with participation from all four REE agencies. This program uses the USDA on-boarding portal as well as the new supervisory and mentor programs. HRD continues to monitor and improve our on-boarding efforts as challenges present themselves. We have successfully solved issues with student and temporary hire on-boarding activities.

ARS continues to utilize the MD-715 in the recruiting process in efforts to increase diversity. The Agency continues to utilize the quarterly reporting regiment that tracks performance against these targets in a format that is visible and easy to use.

Conduct Workforce Analysis

Through the MD-715, Affirmative Employment Program Report process, ARS conducts a workforce analysis to identify areas of underrepresentation at all grade levels and occupations, with emphasis on GS-13 to SES positions and mission critical occupations.

Result: Based on data from the National Finance Center Reporting Center, statistical analysis shows that the following remain under the Civilian Labor Force (CLF): Hispanic males and females, African American males and females, and White females. The percentage of ARS employees with targeted disabilities increased by .02 percent, however, is .84 percent below the required 2 percent. ARS continues to conduct outreach activities to educate possible applicants on ARS career opportunities focusing on broadening the diversity in the applicant pool.

White males and females continue to dominate the GS-13 to SES positions. The following groups met or were above their total workforce representation:

- GS-13: Asian male and female and Persons with TD.
- GS-14: White male, Asian male, and Hispanic male.
- GS-15: White male and Asian male.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

Using End-of-Year Funds to Develop Initiatives to Enhance Professional Development

End Year funds are utilized to develop initiatives to increase representation in groups that do not meet the CLF as necessary to enhance professional development. The Administrator and the Deputy Administrator for Administrative and Financial Management (AFM) continue to stress to the Administrator's Council (ARS senior management) the importance of utilizing the career development and mentoring programs. Six sessions were conducted this year with 13 participants. Unable to determine the participation of groups under the CLF [to determine demographics, the HRD Employee and Leadership Development Staff (ELDS) has to look up that information separately; OASCR advised on April 29 that information was not needed in this report].

ELDS has implemented a Level 1 Course Evaluation process which collects student feedback on course material, instructor performance and training environment via AgLearn-based student surveys. All students are prompted via automated email to complete the surveys upon receiving credit for course completion. The ELDS staff then routinely collects and reviews the data to identify potential areas of course improvement or additional trainer development. This allows employees to receive optimal information to close skill gaps which over time will enhance the workforce to be more results-focused.

2. Outreach and Partnership

Establish Partnerships with Minority-Serving Groups and Employee Associations

Although ARS does not have formal established partnerships with the Federally Employee Women, the Federal Asian Pacific American Council, American Association of People with Disabilities, Blacks in Government, Asian American Government Executive Network, League of United Latin American Citizens, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered, National Image Inc., Society of American Indian Government Employees, and Student Veterans of America, ARS has continuously supported their annual training events to include shared exhibit space with USDA-wide conference coordination and provided information about the Agency as well as encouraged the general memberships to apply for vacancies.

ARS is also committed to building strong research collaborations that are necessary to address growing and complex challenges related to food production, human nutrition, agricultural sustainability, and natural resource protection. In this regard, the following is an update of the goal mentioned in FY 2012 report: Status on Agreements Management Six Sigma Initiative (launched in FY 2011):

The teams have designed and implemented Phases 1 and 2/3 of the identified opportunities for improvement. These improvements include a massive overhaul of the data fields required in the process and system, the implementation of all agreement types being captured, and implementation of an automated disapproval process. Phase 3 consists of some of the most

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

drastic changes to the process with the implementation of a new approval process and email notification for most actions. This is currently in the testing phase and will be implemented within the last quarter. Additional opportunities will be completed by the end of the calendar year. Overall the improvements have resulted in a more streamlined approach to agreements management.

Provide Outreach and Funding to Minority-Serving Institutions (data is for FY 2012 – current data not available until end of FY 2013)

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) – ARS supported 7 HACU Interns:

- 4 Southern Plains Area (College Station, Texas)
- 2 Midwest Area (Peoria, Illinois)
- 1 Pacific West Area (Albany, California)

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) - \$731,000

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) - \$2,450,000

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) – \$20, 000

Thurgood Marshall – For the past several years, ARS has sponsored and participated in the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) Leadership Institute and Career Fair. ARS’s sponsorship for FY 13 was sustained at \$5,000. The TMCF Leadership Institute is the only organization in the United States that represents all of the Nation’s public HBCUs. In addition to the career fair, ARS conducted a professional development workshop during the event.

USDA/1994 National Scholars Program

ARS uses the USDA/1994 National Scholars Program to enhance its partnership between of the ARS and the Nation’s tribal colleges and universities. The program awards scholarships to students attending (or have attended) 1994 institutions, pursuing a bachelor's and/or an associate’s degree in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or related academic disciplines, and are employed to work full-time with the USDA upon graduation. Despite the changes in the USDA/1994 Program, ARS continued to sponsor a 1994 student at Washington State University. A junior, transfer student from Salish Kootenai, the student majored in Chemistry and is employed assigned to the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center Animal Parasitic Diseases Laboratory. Partnership with the 1994 Institutions and Community assists ARS in meeting the requirements of MD-715 and the Government wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

USDA/1890 National Scholars Program

ARS uses the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program to enhance its partnership between of the ARS and the eighteen 1890 Historically Black Land-Grant Universities. The program awards scholarships to students attending 1890 institutions, pursuing a bachelor's degree in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or related academic disciplines, and willing to work full-time with the USDA upon graduation. ARS has a long history of supporting this program to including converting students to full time positions upon graduation. In FY 2012, ARS provided scholarship and financial support for six scholars. During FY 2012, one graduate scholar is currently enrolled at Georgia Institute of Technology working on a Master's of Construction Engineering; two scholars are enrolled at Southern University—one sophomore, nutrition major, and one junior, ag economics major; one sophomore, dietetics/nutrition major at Alabama A&M; and two freshmen at Tuskegee University majoring in animal science.

USDA scholars program not only strengthens the long-term partnerships between ARS and minority serving institutions but assists ARS in meeting the requirements of MD-715 and the Government wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. The Agency also provided financial support for numerous minority students through student recruitments, Student Tuition Assistance, Scholarships, and Other Aid.

The Agency also continues to lead the Department in student program initiatives including but not limited to the Secretary's Wallace-Carver Fellows Program and the REE Mission Area through training programs and workshops such as the REE Intern Workshop to increase recruitment and retention of student interns. The summer 2013 class of Wallace Carver Fellows had 19 interns; 15 of which are working in various ARS laboratories across the country (79 percent). The Wallace Carver program started with an annual Leadership Symposium in Washington, DC to include their attendance and recognition at the State Department for the Annual announcement of the World Food Prize. Following the orientation, the fellows started their assignments to include but not limited to analyzing agricultural and economic policy; assisting in the management of food, nutrition and rural development programs; many took part in groundbreaking field and laboratory-based research.

3. Recruitment and Hiring

Develop Strategic Marketing Recruitment Tools and Advertisement of Employment Opportunities

ARS continues to conduct outreach activities in K-12 schools, 1862 Universities and Colleges, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), 1890 Land Grant Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and minority serving organizations [i.e., Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Latinos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS); Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC), and League of United Latin Americans Citizens (LULAC)], and the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), etc. ARS also provides internships and mentorship for high achieving high school students through our continued partnerships with high schools.

The ODEO Outreach and Recruitment Branch (ORB) continues to encourage supervisors and managers and HR specialists to utilize all available resources to market vacancies including both paid and non-paid advertisements, contacts with colleagues and peers, stakeholders who can help push the vacancy announcements out to broader audiences. The Branch also continues to provide assistance with the REE Recruitment Agreement with hiring officials as part of the new hiring process. ARS maintains a list serve that promotes the most recent positions that are updated weekly in USAJobs. The listserv is distributed on a weekly basis.

ARS continues to encourage managers and supervisors to take affirmative steps to recruit, hire, advance and retain employees with low participating rates, including employees with targeted disabilities. As part of the One USDA Initiative, ARS will implement the Entrance on Duty online system in February 2014 to replace the current on-boarding process. This system will allow for a more effective delivery of services by decreasing paperwork requirements thereby allowing agencies to bring employees onboard in a timelier manner.

Establish Strategies and Implement Programs to Target Recruitment Efforts Based on MD-715

Based on the MD-715 plans to increase diversity, ARS will continue to conduct outreach activities in K-12 schools, 1862 Universities and Colleges, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), 1890 Land Grant Institutions, Hispanic- Serving Institutions (HSIs), and minority serving organizations [i.e., Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Latinos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS); Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)] and the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), etc.

The ODEO ORB continues to encourage supervisors and managers and HR specialists to utilize all available resources to market vacancies including both

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

paid and non-paid advertisements, contacts with colleagues and peers, stakeholders who can help push the vacancy announcements out to broader audiences. The Branch also provided assistance with the REE Recruitment Agreement with hiring officials as part of the new hiring process. ARS maintains a list serve that promotes the most recent positions that are updated weekly in USAJobs. The listserv is distributed on a weekly basis.

ARS continues to encourage managers and supervisors to take affirmative steps to recruit, hire, advance and retain employees with low participating rates, including employees with targeted disabilities. To this end, ARS implemented a number of initiatives including reminding hiring managers of the need to consider diversity in hiring summer students and promotion of the OPM Shared List of People with Disabilities.

ARS utilized the Department's request for summer student hiring statistics (including RNO data) to remind managers of the requirement to remain cognizant of diversity in their summer student hiring efforts. ARS' minority total student employment is 25.44 percent (decrease of 6.56 percent since FY 2012): African American/Blacks (10.3 or 40); Asians (4.9 or 19); Hispanics (5.6 percent or 22); Two or More Races (3.35 percent or 13) and American Indians (1.29 percent or 5). White males represent 42 percent or 163 and White females represent 32 percent or 126.

Throughout the fiscal year HRD has reminded hiring managers of the hiring flexibilities and resources available to them for hiring persons with TD. The HRD Recruitment Staff developed a brochure (*Enclosure 1 under Tab 2*) and poster for job seekers with disabilities to be used at recruitment fairs and events targeting persons with disabilities and promoting ARS as the employer of choice.

ARS has hired or converted 13 individuals (increase of 8 since 2012) **under the Schedule A hiring authority.**

Increasing veteran hires by 75 percent: Accomplished.

During 2013, ARS hired 62 permanent veterans (increase of 106 percent or 32 since 2012). ARS employs 586 veterans (decrease of 4 since 2012).

ARS will continue to analyze the diversity rates of student hires to develop additional outreach programs and hiring manager guidance. One of the ways we hope to increase hiring of persons with targeted disabilities is the increased utilization of the OPM Shared List of People with Disabilities.

Result: These actions may present the opportunity to increase the potential pool of minority applicants and persons with targeted disabilities available for employment.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

ARS continues to utilize the Department Regulation (DR), Position Management and Vacancy Control, DR-4020-250-002. ARS expects all hiring managers to complete the associated checklist, which requires hiring managers to consider special hiring authorities; consult with ODEO Program Managers on hiring/recruitment efforts and outreach; to review current workforce profile data and stated agency diversity goals and the statement of efforts to address underrepresentation. In addition to the checklist required by the DR, ARS managers are being required to review the OPM Shared List of People with Disabilities before they can move forward with the competitive hiring process.

Publish Workforce Information

The MD-715 Executive Summary is published on the ARS Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity website <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/files/ExecSummary2011.pdf>. The summary shows the total workforce by race and national origin, gender and disability and all grades in particularly focusing on Grades 13 through SES.

Agencies Survey Demographics Data on Quarterly Basis

ARS submits quarterly reports to the Department's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. The report is shared with the Area Directors to distribute to their management.

Establish and Implement Strategies to Increase Hiring People with Disabilities and Veterans Develop and Implement Strategies Resulting in Use of Hiring Authorities/flexibilities

Based on the highly technical nature of our research scientist and scientific support positions, the agency receives relatively few qualified applications from individuals with targeted disabilities. In order to address this barrier, we have focused our outreach efforts on positions for which there is a larger pool of potential candidates with disabilities such as office support, technician, and wage system positions. Additionally, special initiatives will include continued participation on the "Workforce Recruitment Program" which targets college students and recent college graduates with disabilities and the use of open continuous vacancy announcements which specifically solicit candidates with non-disqualifying disabilities. While these appointments were temporary in nature and are not reflected in a permanent disability employment profile, we are hopeful a few of these candidates will be available for permanent employment in our professional, administrative, and technical categories after completing their school commitments. Throughout the fiscal year HRD has reminded hiring managers of the hiring flexibilities and resources, such as the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Shared List of People with Disabilities, available to them for hiring Persons with TD. The HRD Recruitment Staff developed a brochure (**TAB 7**) and poster for job seekers with disabilities to be used at recruitment fairs and events targeting persons with disabilities and promoting ARS as the employer of choice. **ARS has hired or converted 13 individuals** (increase of 8 since 2012) **under the Schedule A hiring authority.**

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

Develop and Implement Strategies Resulting in Maximum Use of Hiring Authorities/Flexibilities

As a part of ARS' hiring strategy, it is now mandatory for ARS hiring managers to review the database of pre-qualified candidates from the OPM's Shared List of People with Disabilities (also referred to as the Bender List) prior to advertising a competitive vacancy announcement.

Conduct Quarterly Meetings to Review Data and Impact of Recruitment and Hiring Strategies with Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), Veterans' Programs and Special Emphasis Program

Data is reviewed quarterly and ARS continues to conduct outreach to seek increasing persons with disabilities.

Result: ARS has:

- hired 1 person with targeted disabilities (total 69 in ARS workforce)
- hired or converted 13 individuals under the Schedule A hiring authority
- hired 62 veterans (total 586 in ARS workforce).

Develop and Implement a Hiring Plan for 2013 Summer Intern Program

ARS utilized the Department's request for summer student hiring statistics (including RNO data) to remind managers of the requirement to remain cognizant of diversity in their summer student hiring efforts. As of FY 2013, third, ARS' minority total student employment is 28 percent (decrease of 4 percent since FY 2012): African American/Blacks (12.1 percent or 65); Asians (5.61 percent or 30); Hispanics (5.61 percent or 30); Two or More Races (2.62 percent or 14) and American Indians (1.87 percent or 10). White males represent 40 percent (3 percent increase) and White females represent 32 percent (1 percent increase).

4. Retention and Promotion

Establish Baseline and Track Data and Monitor Results Regarding Hiring, Retention and Promotion of Employees in Underrepresented Groups

ARS continues to monitor and track data regarding the hiring, retention, and promotion of employees in groups under the CLF (Hispanics, African Americans, White females, and Persons with TD) utilizing FY 2011 as a baseline.

Result:

Hires: The following are being **hired less than their availability in the CLF** (see tables A&B 8 for details): African American males, Hispanic females, White males, and Persons with TD are being hired less than their availability in the CLF. *No hires for Hispanic males, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander females, and American Indian or Alaska Native male.* See page 8 for details.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

Separations: Voluntary [300 compared to FY 2012 total 529 (decrease of 43 percent)] - The following groups continue to separate at more than their representation (all are underrepresented groups): Hispanic male and female, White female, African American male, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male, American Indian female, and Two or More Races female.

Note: Since 2012, African American females are separating at less than their workforce representation.

Involuntary [17 compared to FY 2012 total 89 (decrease of 81 percent)] – The following involuntary separated during this reporting period: Hispanic male and female, White male and female, African American male and female, Asian male, and Persons with TD.

Note: ARS and HRD plan to meet by the end of FY 2014 or to discuss the implementation of an exit interview survey.

Promotions (see page 8 for details): The following groups were distributed in separations at more than their ARS promotion representation (groups underrepresented are bolded):

Hispanic male and female, White male, **African American male**, Asian male, **American Indian female**, **Two or More Races female**.

Note 1: Since 2012, Persons with TD's promotion percentage was higher than the separation percentage.

Note 2: The following groups had no promotion representation: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander male and female, and Two or More Races male.

Conduct Exit Survey Interviews

In August 2011, the DR-4020-250-002, Position Management and Vacancy Control, ARS required all managers have at least an informal discussion with exiting employees to identify any significant issues (for consideration in the hiring process and to identify barriers to hiring/retention). ARS and HRD plan to meet by the end of FY 2014 or 2015 to discuss the implementation of an exit interview survey.

OHRM Will Implement On-Boarding in First Quarter 2011

ARS Human Resources Division developed and implemented an on-boarding program with participation from all four REE agencies. This program uses the USDA on-boarding portal as well as the new supervisory and mentor programs. HRD continues to monitor and improve our on-boarding efforts as challenges present themselves. We have successfully solved issues with student and temporary hire on-boarding activities.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

5. Diversity Training and Awareness

OHRM Will Provide to Enable Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs)

Most of the SEPMs are new this reporting period and have not been trained by OHRM. They will be encouraged to attend the Graduate School USA. Each SEPM has attended various training about their specific program.

Conduct Diversity Training

ARS training includes, but is not limited to educational videos and Agency-sponsored courses through AgLearn. The following are examples:

- Two NoFEAR Refresher and Comprehensive Training
- ARS Disability Program Manager sponsored an ARS/EEOC Reasonable Accommodation webinar for approximately 185 participants.
- The ODEO Cooperative Resolution Program Staff continued to conduct training (see *Enclosure 2 under Tab 2* for details).

Plan and Execute a Multicultural Day OHRM Will Provide Training to Enable Special Emphasis Program Managers

ARS has not planned a multicultural day nor to our knowledge has OHRM provided training. ARS employees attend the Special Emphasis Program observances in person or via video (after the observance). Additionally, the eight Areas/Locations sponsor events to educate employees of cultural differences and to value, respect, and be allowed to perform at their fullest potential.

Establish New Category for Honor Awards that Recognizes Accomplishments in Diversity and Recruitment

Since 2001, with the exception of 2013 (see page , ARS continues to recognize its employees for exemplary achievements in promoting a diverse workplace free from discrimination, harassment, retaliation and demonstrated commitment to workforce diversity. There are two categories – supervisory and non-supervisory. Annual nominations are solicited and designed to provide an opportunity for all employees in different occupational series to fairly compete for the award. The award panels are diverse and include minority representation. Requests are made to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and Civil Rights Directors for panelists.

Establish a Multi-faceted Communications Plan Utilizing Social Media to Ensure Leaders, Supervisors, and Employees Understand USDA's Commitment to Diversity and Accountability

Tools used to communicate with external customers:

- ARS' *Your Two Cents* (Y2C) and Cultural Transformation (CT) website incorporates a variety of social media tools to connect and inform employees about relevant information. The CT site specifically uses several tools (blogs, tool kit, discussion board, video—the ARS CT

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

video was placed in all ARS employees learning plans in AgLearn—and other interactive features that are characteristic of social media tools (<http://ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents/CTBlog/index.html>). These tools are designed to inform ARS employees about CT issues that impact or are relevant to them. In addition, the *ARS & You* newsletter features a monthly blurb with updates on both of these initiatives, as well as a quarterly letter from Dr. Knipling that covers items of importance to ARS employees.

- ARS and REE newsletters. ARS also contributes articles to the USDA CT newsletter.
- AFM uses USDA Connect (minimal use – has been determined that employees are not utilizing) and SharePoint to communicate with ARS employees regarding restructuring and other issues.

6. Employee Development and Recognition

Track Participation Rate of Underrepresented Groups Who Have Individual Development Plans (IDPs) Through AgLearn and Virtual University

The use of AgLearn and the Virtual University is not mandated for developing and/or tracking the use of IDPs. ARS promotes the message that effective leadership is what drives the organization towards success. Every individual in the agency is a leader and is accountable for his/her own career development. The use of IDPs translates this message as it is a tool that is visible, tangible evidence that leadership development is taking place. We encourage supervisors and managers to use this tool as a way to drive accountability for development, and most importantly, to help foster a two-way commitment between the employee and themselves on what must be done to grow.

ARS is tracking the establishment of IDPs on a bi-annual basis. This is accomplished through the solicitation of supervisors and managers and their certifying that IDPs are established for their employees. ARS' IDP establishment is currently at a successful 95 percent. For those employees that don't have an IDP in place, appropriate supervisory and managerial officials are contacted. An explanation must be provided for non-establishment of IDP and/or an IDP is readily established. ARS is actively working with the appropriate chain of commands to address the deficiencies on an individual employee basis in order to obtain a 100 percent completion rate of Individual Development Plans (IDPs). This effort helps to improve organizational performance and accountability. ARS is created and launched an IDP PowerPoint Training Pilot in AgLearn at the end of FY 2011 that will be available 24/7 to all REE employees. Thus far, 175 ARS personnel have taken either the webinar or classroom version, with another two offerings scheduled. Implementation will be based on the results from the latest FEVS to see if the classes have had a positive effect.

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element C (continued)

IDP training is part of the new ARS’ Supervisory Training Program, and we will garner some measure of effectiveness based on feedback from survey monkey and noted Federal Human Capital/Employee Viewpoint Surveys. IDPs are also part of the new hire’s checklist.

Track Participation Rate of Underrepresented Groups Who Have Mentors Through AgLearn and Virtual University

Although ARS does not have an agency-wide mentoring program, several Area Offices (Pacific West, Northern Plains, Southern Plains and Beltsville Area) have successfully implemented their own mentoring programs. ARS is working with the Virtual University as part of its mentoring program to implement USDA mentoring best practices and leverage USDA mentoring resources at ARS. As a part of the USDA On-Boarding Program, all ARS supervisors are being required to assign “sponsors” to all new employees.

Track Participation Rate of Underrepresented Groups Who Have Coaches through AgLearn and Virtual University

With regard to the use of a new-hire survey, ARS began conducting new hire surveys for all new hires for May 2011. New employees are surveyed after approximately 120 days on the job. ARS is working with the Virtual University as a participant in its Coaching Workgroup to implement USDA coaching best practices and leverage USDA coaching resources at ARS.

Track Participation Rate of Underrepresented Groups Who Participate in Developmental Details through NFC

According to the OPM Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, details cannot be processed in NFC. Therefore, comprehensive data is not currently available on the participation rate of underrepresented groups who participate in developmental details.

Essential Element D: Proactive Prevention

- Since the last reporting period, ARS commissioned Insightlink Communications to conduct an organization-wide climate to gauge employees’ satisfaction on a number of issues, with a particular emphasis on determining the overall climate of the organization, assessing which factors are contributing to employee satisfaction and which are detracting from their satisfaction. Thirty-three (33) percent or 2,790 of 8,448 employees participated. The report was structured on the basis of 4Cs: Culture, Commitment, Communications, and Compensation.

With overall job satisfaction at 49 percent, ARS is below the national and industry norms and well below the recommended target level (65 percent) for an engaged workforce. The survey results indicate that this score is due to a mixture of positive responses in some areas that are being counterbalanced by lower scores in others. Additionally, in both areas of its strengths and

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element D (continued)

weaknesses, there is some variation in scores among employee groups along the lines of gender, ethnicity and disability status. This suggests that ARS not only needs to build on its strengths and address its weaknesses, it needs to make sure that any improvements are experienced by all employees.

The work itself is a major positive element for ARS, as most employees feel their work is respected (62 percent), interesting (89 percent), and challenging (86 percent). Views of the organization's immediate supervisors tend to be positive (63 percent), although scores are less strong for higher management levels. These favorable ratings are supported by employees' own comments, many of which feature positive statements about the value and enjoyment of ARS' work.

The issues that are impacting overall satisfaction levels at ARS are, for a number of measures, somewhat worse among women, employees of color and those with disabilities. In addition, while ARS' diversity efforts achieve positive scores overall, employees in these groups are generally less certain that the diversity efforts are effective or that policies and promotional opportunities are administered fairly.

A correlation analysis of the factors that drive job satisfaction at ARS, combined with the comments made by employees, do not suggest that discrimination is the primary source of the organization's lower-than-desirable employee scores. Rather, it appears that the organization's systemic issues of lack of training, poor advancement opportunities, weak communication and limited rewards and recognition may be more keenly felt by these groups, while still being felt by most employees. Even though ARS should address any instances of the organization's more fundamental problems, in turn, help alleviate these issues among underrepresented groups as well.

The Administrative Council (senior leadership) has been briefed. The Administrator will send a results memorandum to the employees requesting their vote on suggested actions to accomplish five recommendations based on the results of the survey.

- The following displays the number of offers and acceptances regarding the ADR process for informal and formal EEO complaints:

Informal:	27 offered (2 accepted or 7.4 percent, 1 settlement) – decrease of 7.6 percent (15 percent reported in 2012).
Formal:	15 offered (4 accepted or 27 percent, 2 settlements) – decrease of 35 percent (62 percent reported in 2012).

Part E – Self-Assessment – Element D (continued)

The ARS ODEO staff continues to educate all employees and customers about improving communication through the utilization of our non-EEO early resolution ADR services.

Mediations

8 offers (100 percent resolved – 33 percent increase from 2012)

Facilitated Dialogues (100 percent resolution of those conducted – 25 percent increase)

19 offers (no withdraws)

Coaching (26)

Essential Element E: Efficiency

Deficiency: The agency does not track the information required by the MD-715: A&B7, Applications and Hires (to our knowledge, no USDA agencies collect this information). Previously, ARS was using USA Staffing, but that information was incomplete as it did not include wage grade or scientist positions nor does USA Staffing collect disability information from applicants (see Note 1). OPM and EEOC are working to create the categories and create a form to collect disability information, and then it would work similarly to the other RNO data in USAJOBS where the reports would be pulled through USA Staffing. Until this feature is built into USAJOBS, agencies are unable to collect and report applicant’s disability information.

Note 1: EEOC published in the Federal Register a revised applicant data form allowing agencies to comment, which ARS did (collaboration of ODEO and HRD). The revision would add disability status of applicants to the collection, thereby allowing the agencies and EEOC to track progress toward meeting the recruitment and hiring strategies developed pursuant to E.O. 13548, Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities.

Note 2: Per the USA Staffing Program Officer, the current memorandum of understanding between USDA and USA Staffing is that aggregate data can only be sent to the USDA’s two points of contact (Monshi Ramdass and staff). The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) has brought this problem to the attention of the USDA main point of contact for applicant data to include the data in future reports.

Essential Element F: Responsiveness and Legal Compliance

ARS follows USDA EEOC reporting requirements and complies with EEO orders or directives. The NFC is responsible for payroll processing. Therefore, ARS has no control over the complaint payment process.

Part E (continued)

Status for FY 2013 Complaints

Informal complaints filed:	4
Formal complaints filed:	4
Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR):	1 (informal - settled)
Monetary Payouts:	\$0
Investigative costs:	\$12,226

CRP continues to take a more informal approach to addressing one-on-one issues by conducting more facilitated dialogues rather than mediation.

Counseling Process

In 2012, ARS continued to make progress in improving the efficiency of its complaint processing.

I. **Counseling**

- a. ARS timely processed 100 percent of the **3 pre-complaint counselings**.
- b. ARS will continue to monitor the agencies' counselor training requirements.
- c. The following displays the number of offers and acceptances regarding the ADR process for informal and formal EEO complaints:

Informal: 4 offered and 1 accepted
Formal: 2 offered and 0 accepted

II. **Bases of Complaints Filed**

- a. The bases of alleged discrimination most raised were (listed from most raised to least): reprisal, age and sex.
- b. Of the 7 formal complaints filed, 1 contained allegations of race (1 Asian), 1 contained allegations of religion, 3 contained allegations of reprisal, 4 contained allegations of sex (3 female and 1 male), 1 contained allegations of national origin, 2 contained allegations of disability and 2 contained allegations of marital status.

III. **Complaint Processing Times**

Note: Timelines of investigations being completed in 180-day-timeframe depends on the timely issuance of the acceptance letter by the Department and also the scope of the investigation based on the issues involved.

- a. ARS completed 6 investigations in the 180-day timeframe.
- b. ARS's average processing time for all complaint closures increased from 388 days in FY 2012 to 4,388 days in FY 2013.
Note: Closures include FAD, settlements, and withdrawals.

Part E – Counseling process (continued)

IV. **Cost**

ARS expended a total of \$29,574.00 for 7 complaint investigations for an average expenditure of \$4,225.

ARS Use of ADR for EEO Dispute Resolution in FY 2012	Complaints
Completed/Ended Counseling/Complaint Closures	4
Total Number Offered ADR	4
ADR Offer rate	100%
ADR Participation Rate	
Total ADR Settlements	1 (informal)
Total ADR Settlements Amount	\$0.00

	Total #	#Timely	%
All Pre-complaint Counseling	4	4	100
All Investigations	3	3	
All Complaint Closures	4		
Merit Decisions (no AJ)	2	0	0
Dismissal Decisions (no AJ)	0	0	0

*APD = Average Processing Days

Outcome of Complaints in FY 2013						
	Complaint Closures		FAD* (no AJ Decision)		Final Order (AJ Decision Fully Implemented)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Complaints Filed	4		2		2	
Total Closures	4					
Settlements	0					
Withdrawals	0					
Total FADS	4					
Dismissals	0					
Merit Decisions	2					
Finding Discrimination	0					
Finding No Discrimination	4					

*FAD = Final Agency Decision

Part E – Counseling process (continued)

**The increase appears to be based on race, reprisal and age related complaints. ARS will continue to conduct trainings on these topics.

- A. FAD processing – FADs are administered by the Department’s Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.
- B. EEO Investigations – Over five years ago the Department turned over the administration of the EEO investigations to the Agencies. The Department determines the allegations to be accepted for investigation. Timelines of investigations being completed in 180 day timeframe depends on the timely issuance of the acceptance letter by the Department and also the scope of the investigation based on the issues involved.
- C. Settlement Agreements – ARS does not receive feedback from the Department. If a settlement is reached at the informal stage, the Agency obtains guidance from OGC. At the formal stage, an OGC representative works with management to finalize the terms of the agreement.
Note: ARS Civil Rights Office manages the EEO process completely separate from OGC.
- D. ARS submitted timely submissions of all reports associated with the requirement of the No FEAR Act. ARS’ No FEAR data can be accessed via ODEO’s website <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO> with a link to the USDA’s website <http://www.usda.gov/nofear/ars/indexars.html>.
Note: Complaint processing data is based on the 462 report.

Summary of EEO Plan Objectives to Eliminate Identified Barriers (Part I)

Objective 1

Following the guidance of the USDA Diversity Roadmap, ARS will continue to encourage managers and supervisors to take affirmative steps to recruit, hire, advance and retain employees with low participating rates, including employees with targeted disabilities.

Accomplishments: Although Hispanic males and females, White females, and African American/Black males and females, American Indian males and females (since 2012 with the 2010 CLF – 2000 was used in 2012), and Two or More Races males and females continue to fall under the CLF, all groups have increased in hiring since 2011 (baseline), except for the Hispanic males, African American males and females, and American Indian males.

ARS hiring managers utilize the MD-715 in the recruiting process in efforts to increase diversity.

Objective 2

Increase advancement opportunities for women, employees with targeted disabilities, and groups with low participation rates.

Accomplishments: ARS managers and supervisors continue to promote leadership trainings. Six sessions were conducted this year with 13 participants (race and gender data is not captured).

Part E – Summary of EEO Plan Objectives to Eliminate Identified Barriers (continued)

Summary of EEO Plan Objectives to Eliminate Identified Barriers (Part J)

ARS's goal is to increase the number of hires for Persons with TD by 1 percent based on 74 (2011 baseline) - 1.

Accomplished: 1 hire