

Chapter 2

ODEO: Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (Formerly Civil Rights Staff)

The Northern Plains Area (NPA) is an equal opportunity employer and is vigilant about promoting a safe environment that is also free from discrimination and harassment for all current and potential employees, customers, and visitors, and where people are treated with dignity and respect. The NPA adheres to all EEO and civil rights rules and regulations, including prohibitions against discrimination, harassment and retaliation. Discrimination and/or harassment based on an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status is prohibited.

The NPA Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Program Manager serves as the NPA designated contact for questions concerning civil rights, EEO, and diversity-related outreach. Employees with questions or concerns about civil rights may also contact the ARS ODEO office and ask to speak to a civil rights counselor. Details about the civil rights complaint process can be accessed at the AFM website. The NPA ODEO Program Manager also manages several functions: NPA Diversity Task Force, summer internship programs, quarterly civil rights reports, the annual EEO MD-715 report, various outreach activities, and with the Assistant Area Director coordinates the mentoring component of the Newly Appointed Scientist Professional Development Program. The NPA ODEO Program Manager is also available to provide on-site training on EEO, civil rights, and diversity topics.

Acronyms: See [Chapter 22](#) for a comprehensive list of commonly used acronyms

References: [DR 4120-1](#) – Mandatory Annual Training
[DR 4300-6](#) – Civil Rights Policy
[DR 4300-7](#) – Processing EEO Complaints
[P&P 122.1](#) – Preventing Workplace Violence
[P&P 122.2](#) – Reasonable Accommodation Procedures
[P&P 402.5](#) – REE Telework Program
[P&P 412.2](#) – Appointment and Orientation of New Employees (ARS)
[P&P 413.8](#) – Student and Volunteer Programs
[P&P 461.5](#) – Misconduct, Discipline, and Adverse Action
[P&P 463.2](#) – Administrative Grievance System
[NPA PM-03-002](#) – Equal Employment/Civil Rights Performance Element
[NPA PM-04-002](#) – Recruitment Procedures for Cat 1, Cat 4 Scientists, Research Leaders and Center Directors

Cross Reference: [Chapter 10](#) – Human Resources
[Chapter 24](#) – Awards

Web Sites: EEO/Civil Rights/Diversity
ARS EEO/CR – Office of ODEO
www.ars.usda.gov/aboutus/docs.htm?docid=1323
NPA – Outreach/EEO/CR/Diversity

- <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=16578>
- AFM Cooperative Resolution Program
www.afm.ars.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/COOPRES
- EEO/CR Complaint Process
www.ars.usda.gov/aboutus/docs.htm?docid=1318
- Listing of Special Emphasis Observances
<http://www.census.gov/eo/spemph.html>
- USDA Target Center (Adaptive Technologies and Equipment)
www.usda.gov/oo/target
- AFM Programs & Services
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/programs/coopres/>
- ODEO Complain Process
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/complaint.htm>
- Outreach and Recruitment
 - ARS Careers
www.ars.usda.gov/careers
 - Listing of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)
www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/edlite-list.html
 - ARS Timeline/History of 1890 Land Grant Institutions
www.ars.usda.gov/is/timeline/landgrant.htm
 - Listing of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)
www.hacu.net/hacu/Default_EN.asp
 - Listing of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU)
www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhc/edlite-tclist.html
- Policies and Regulations
 - NPA Policy Memorandums
www.ars.usda.gov/npa/policies
 - AFM Policies and Procedures
www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/pplist.htm
 - REE Work-Life Programs
www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife/
 - NPA Quarterly Report Formats: SharePoint Site
<https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/NPA/eeocr/gr/default.aspx>

- Attachment(s) :
- 1 - Quarterly Reports: Sample Format – [White House Initiatives](#)
 - 2 - Quarterly Reports: Sample Format – [Civil Rights Self Assessment](#)

Points of Contact:

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<p>Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity 1400 Independence Ave. S.W., Room 3913-S Mail Stop 0304 Washington, DC 20250-0304 Telephone: (202) 720-6161 (Main Office) Fax: (202) 690-0109</p>	<p>Jan Lewis ADR Program Specialist 5601 Sunnyside Avenue , Room 2-L212 Beltsville, Maryland 20705-5144 Telephone: (301) 504-1450 Fax: (301) 504-3261 E-Mail: jan.lewis@ars.usda.gov</p>

Student Employment

There are two distinct employment programs designed exclusively for students: STEP (Student Temporary Employment Program) and SCEP (Student Career Experience Program). Additionally, locations have the opportunity to hire students during the summer (on STEP appointments) through the NPA Summer Internship or Apprenticeship programs, and through the American Indian Summer Internship Program. Details on these programs can be found at: http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/staffing_recruit/student/index.htm. These programs are briefly described below:

Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP): This program employs students (at least 16 years of age) in any occupation on a temporary basis (full-time or part-time) during the school year and/or during the summer (there are no restrictions on the number of reappointments). STEP employees are assigned to any position in any series for which the student qualifies, although most STEP appointments start at the lower end of the GS schedule. STEP employees earn sick leave, and those with appointments lasting 90 days or more earn annual leave. The student's field of study need not be related to the job duties. STEP students cannot be non-competitively converted to permanent positions, although STEP students can be converted to SCEP appointments without competition.

Student Career Employment Program (SCEP): SCEP appointments are an extension of the typical STEP appointment, and are an especially valuable tool for recruiting students who demonstrate abilities and interest in pursuing careers in ARS, and is particularly useful for recruiting women and minorities. Units that first hire students under STEP as a precursor to the

SCEP typically experience greater satisfaction because they will have had the opportunity to assess the student's performance and interest in ARS. Units are strongly encouraged to thoughtfully construct SCEP appointments according to their needs, and provide structured mentoring, sufficient funding to pay competitive wages and perhaps offer additional inducements such as assistance with tuition and books. A target position **MUST** be identified at the time of appointment and be appropriate to the student's educational pursuits. SCEP students may be eligible for non-competitive conversion to permanent employment within 120 days following graduation, provided the student has worked for at least 640 hours in a career-related position for ARS, the unit has funding for a position, and the student meets the minimum requirements. SCEP employees earn sick and annual leave and are eligible to enroll in health and life insurance (pay the full premium), participate in the Federal Employees Retirement System and Thrift Savings Plan.

NPA Summer Intern Program: This program offers paid 8-week summer internships for post-secondary students seeking an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree or certificate. Interns are hired at the GS-3 level, and the Area Director and research units equally share in funding the salary for each intern. A call for proposals is released in January of each year, and selected proposals are announced in February. Successful proposals are those that include a structured research project, mentoring by a scientist, and have a well-articulated plan to actively recruit women and minorities.

American Indian Summer Intern Program: These internships provide salary, housing, and transportation to selected students recruited from participating colleges and universities. As with the NPA Summer Intern and Apprentice programs, selection of projects is conducted through a competitive call for proposals at a limited number of locations. Successful proposals are those that include a structured research project and mentoring, along with a keen desire to work with the American Indian population. A call for proposals is sent to selected locations in November of each year.

Training

New Employees: All new employees must complete the following training modules: Sexual Harassment Prevention; Workplace Violence; Understanding Conflict; and Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This training is offered in conjunction with New Employee Orientation. Contact Kathi White for further information.

Continuing Employees: USDA Regulation 4120-1 requires all employees to complete annual mandatory EEO/Civil Rights training.

Diversity Celebrations: Locations are encouraged to either sponsor workshops or other events associated with all of the designated Special Emphasis Observances, and/or sponsor an annual diversity day celebration. The website, <http://www.census.gov/eo/spemph.html>, provides a listing of the designated Special Emphasis Observances.

On-site Training: Barbara King is available to present workshops on a variety of topics as well as design presentations on topics tailored to a location's specific interests. Contact Barbara for details.

Recruitment

Locations are encouraged to aggressively advertise and recruit for all positions. The ODEO Recruitment Office provides a wealth of information and resources on recruitment strategies, as does Barbara King.

The NPA Policy on Recruitment Procedures for Cat 1 and Cat 4 Positions (NPA PM-04-002) states the procedures to be followed when recruiting those positions. The policy can be found on the NPA Web site at: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=8584>.

Quality of Work/Life; Employee Assistance Program; and Workplace Violence

Several employment practices have been adopted by the federal government to assist managers and employees in meeting work and personal life demands and desires. Some of those programs are flexi-time, maxi-flex, voluntary leave, telecommuting/alternative work sites, life long learning opportunities, telecommuting, job-sharing, part-time work, and the leave transfer program. Federal legislation addressing work/life balancing includes the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Sick Leave/Family Friendly Leave Act. The USDA encourages managers to work with employees to develop solutions to balancing work/personal life conflicts. Specific information on each of these programs can be found at:

- P&P 402.5 (<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/PDF/402-5.pdf>)
- REE Work-Life Programs (www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife/)

The *Employee Assistance Program* is a free service for employees who would like to seek professional counseling for work and/or personal issues. For confidential assistance, call 1-866-443-3277 (toll free number). The EAP contact will provide the caller with the names of professional counselors in the caller's geographic area.

Workplace violence, although relatively rare, is nonetheless something that all employees need to be aware of. Workplace violence can occur as a result of escalating tensions among and between co-workers and/or supervisors, while other workplace violence is related to domestic or other personal strife that impact the job site. Workplace violence can start with simple disagreements, which over time expand to psychological bullying or aggressive physical or verbal abuse. Physical altercations such as shoving, punching, pushing, and blocking, as well as verbal assaults such as profanity, yelling, and insults, are never acceptable in the workplace. Anytime an employee feels threatened, he or she should immediately seek assistance from a co-worker, supervisor, or call security. If an employee feels they are in a dangerous situation, they should call 911. The USDA policy on workplace violence prevention is given to every new employee during new employee orientation and can be downloaded from the USDA Web site (<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/violence/wpv.htm>).

Resolving EEO/CR Issues

The Northern Plains Area is an equal opportunity employer and is vigilant about promoting a safe environment free from discrimination and harassment for all current and potential employees, customers, and visitors. Consequently, the NPA adheres to all EEO and civil rights

rules and regulations. Discrimination and/or harassment based on an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, age, political belief, sexual orientation, and marital or family status, is prohibited.

When issues do arise, the first course of action if at all feasible is to try to resolve the issue, with or without supervisory involvement. While some situations may be blatantly illegal and require immediate attention, many times issues are not so obvious. Other times, issues that appear to be illegal discrimination or harassment involve performance problems, or are actually interpersonal conflicts that are not based on any of the protected categories. It is important that anytime issues do arise, that action is taken to resolve the issue. Sometimes, all it takes is for the person who is the recipient of questionable behavior to tell the offending actor (verbally, or in writing) that his/her behavior is unwelcome and to please stop. If that approach does not work, or the recipient is uncomfortable about addressing the offending person, the recipient should contact their supervisor or another supervisor, or call the area civil rights manager (Barbara King), or contact the ARS civil rights office. An additional resource is the Cooperative Resolution Program. That office provides mediation (costs borne by the unit) for non-civil rights issues, as well as training and consultation.

EEO/CR and Diversity Awards

The ARS Administrator and the NPA Area Director both sponsor one award each year specifically directed at the EEO/CR and Diversity realms. The ARS award is titled The ARS Administrator's Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights, and the NPA Director's recognition is designated as the Equal Employment Opportunity-Diversity award.

The Administrator's award is designed to recognize individuals or groups for exemplary achievements in promoting EEO/CR and promoting an awareness and commitment to workforce diversity. The call for nominations is generally issued in mid-March.

The Director's award is to recognize employees for special achievements in promoting equal employment opportunity and workforce diversity through actions that clearly exceed the responsibilities of their positions or assignments. The call for nominations is generally issued in mid-August.

Disabilities and the Target Center

Disabled applicants and employees may be eligible for reasonable accommodations under either the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Additionally, Section 501 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires federal agencies to exercise affirmative action in hiring the disabled. Employees who believe they need accommodations for their current position should contact their supervisor to begin discussions as to eligibility qualifications, possible accommodations, or other options.

Several resources exist to assist employees and supervisors with questions relating to disabled applicants and employees. An excellent resource is the USDA Target Center, which provides a wealth of services, including worksite assessments to determine possible accommodations, free temporary use of assistive technologies, and referrals to vendors and products for purchasing

assistive equipment. There are two Target Centers – one in Washington, DC and the second in St. Louis, MO. To learn more about Target Centers, go to: www.usda.gov/oo/target.

Questions about disabilities in general can be directed to Barbara King, Kathi White, or the ARS ODEO Staff.

Discussion of References:

Mandatory Annual Training: Departmental Regulation 4120-001 requires annual training on a selected topic dealing with EEO, CR, and/or Diversity. The Department is responsible for identifying the topic and delivery of this training and also determines any timelines. The ARS Office of ODEO coordinates the training with each Area ODEO Program Manager.

Civil Rights Policy: The Department, Agency, and Area all have stand-alone policies on Civil Rights that are issued annually. These policies (and all related policies) can be found on the NPA home page: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=16578#PolicyStmts>,

Civil Rights Complaint Process: The Headquarters office of ODEO handles the complaint process. Employees who have questions or concerns about EEO, Civil Rights, and Diversity can contact either the Area ODEO Program Manager directly at 970-492-7053 (or email: Barbara.King@ars.usda.gov) or contact the ODEO EEO counselors at Headquarters at 202-760-6161 (or 800-340-4289) and ask to speak with one of the EEO Counselors.

AFM Policies and Procedures: All Policies and Procedures (P&P) are posted on the AFM website: www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/pplist.htm. The P&Ps listed in this chapter are those dealing with EEO and workplace related topics.

REE Work-Life Programs: A listing of all REE programs that are designed to assist employees balance work and personal life responsibilities. Examples include EAP (Employee Assistance Program), Telework, Child-care subsidies. See: www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife/,

NPA Policy Memos: All NPA Policy Memos are posted on the NPA home page: www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=16552

Civil Rights Performance Element: All non-supervisory employees must have the EO/CR element language combined with another critical element in their performance standards. All supervisory employees must have a stand-alone EEO/CR performance element.

Recruitment Policy for Cat 1 and Cat 4 Vacancies: This policy explains the Area process for recruiting for these positions.

Discussion of Web Sites:

The listed web sites represent the most commonly sought sites relating to Agency EEO, Civil Rights, Diversity, and other related topics.

Quarterly Report Formats: <https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/NPA/eeocr/qr/default.aspx>

Every quarter, locations are to complete two reports documenting outreach activities: The Civil Rights Self Assessment (CRSA) and White House Initiatives (WHI). Formats for these reports are saved on the NPA EEO Sharepoint site, making it possible for locations to easily update their activities throughout the quarter. These reports provide locations the opportunity to list outreach activities and collaborations, especially those with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI). The location questionnaires are then compiled into an Area-wide report for review by the Area Director, and then submitted to the ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity for further review and distribution to the Agency Administrator. At most locations the Administrative Officer is responsible for completing the report for their location.