

United States Department of Agriculture
Strategic Plan to Increase
Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

FY 2012 – FY 2015



Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a global employer of over 100,000 individuals who deliver programs and services that touch almost every American, every day. USDA's mission is to provide global leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management.

Cultural Change and Accountability

USDA is undergoing a cultural transformation under the leadership of Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack, to develop a dynamic, diverse workforce that well represents the diversity of the people for whom we work: the American people, including those with disabilities. As part of the cultural transformation initiative, USDA is committed to becoming the model employer of individuals with disabilities in Federal service. USDA agency leaders provide monthly reports to the Assistant Secretary of Administration to the Secretary on the numbers of permanent employees with disabilities hired. During the summer internship season (April through August), bi-weekly reports are submitted on the numbers of student interns with disabilities hired.

The USDA Strategic Plan to Increase Federal Employment of People with Disabilities (USDA Plan) inaugurates clear goals and establishes a framework of strategies to create an inclusive and accessible environment that welcomes individuals with disabilities throughout each stage of the employment life cycle. USDA's Mission Areas and Staff Offices are not seeking to simply meet hiring goals. USDA is recruiting qualified individuals with disabilities who are interested in establishing their careers, rich with growth and opportunity within the Department.

We will improve our hiring of qualified individuals with disabilities while ensuring that our current employees with disabilities are receiving effective reasonable accommodations and are encouraged to participate in professional development programs that will lead to advancement opportunities. By maintaining the interests and needs of our current work force, we will create higher employee satisfaction rates that should yield positive retention results.

Senior Accountable Official	Implementation Partners
William P Milton, Jr. Chief Human Capital Officer Office of Human Resources Management U.S. Department of Agriculture William.Milton@dm.usda.gov	USDA Subcabinet Leaders
	Deputy Administrators for Management (DAMs)
	Supervisors/Managers
	USDA Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM)
	Mission Area HR Directors (MAHRDs)
	USDA HR Specialists and Recruiters
	USDA Office of Civil Rights
	USDA Office of Worker's Compensation
	Diversity & Inclusion Specialists
	Diversity & Inclusion Officers
	USDA Selective Placement Coordinators, Disability Program Managers, and Reasonable Accommodation Designees

Background

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., USDA is structured with eight Mission Areas that include more than 20 sub agencies and multiple Staff Offices with a presence throughout the 50 states and eight territories, as well as in 57 foreign countries.

According to FY 2009 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Annual Report on the Federal Workforce, USDA is listed at the sixth of the 15 cabinet level agencies in the number of employees with targeted disabilities. Since fiscal year 2006, when .96% of USDA's workforce was persons with targeted disabilities, the number decreased to .83%.

USDA Goals and Metrics

The USDA Plan is designed to achieve the following five core goals as required by Executive Order 13548. Each goal includes individuals with disabilities, and those with targeted disabilities.

1. Increase the use of the Schedule A Hiring Authority and the number of new hires who have disabilities.
 - a. Metric – Departmental Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) will prepare and monitor monthly reports on Schedule A usage and the numbers of permanent employees hired. Results will be shared with the Assistant Secretary for Administration and reported to the Secretary.
2. Increase the number of student interns with disabilities.
 - a. Metric – Departmental Office of Human Resources Management will prepare and monitor weekly reports on hiring student interns with targeted disabilities during April to August, annually. Results will be shared with the Assistant Secretary for Administration and reported to the Secretary.
3. Improve and expand accessible professional development programs and increase advancement of employees with disabilities.
 - a. Metric – Departmental Office of Human Resources Management will prepare and monitor monthly reports on promotions of employees with disabilities. Results will be shared with the Assistant Secretary for Administration and reported to the Secretary.
4. Increase retention rates of employees with disabilities.
 - a. Metric – Departmental Office of Human Resources Management will prepare and monitor monthly attrition reports on separations from Federal service of USDA employees with disabilities.
5. Expedite the return to work of seriously injured and ill employees.
 - a. Metric – Departmental Office of Human Resources Management, in conjunction with the USDA Worker's Compensation Program Manager, will monitor the Department's metrics required for the Protecting our Workers and Ensuring

Reemployment (POWER) Initiative to the Department of Labor's Office of Worker's Compensation Program.

Hiring Goals	FY 2011 2% Goal Results	FY 2012 Goal	FY 2013 Goal	FY 2014 Goal	FY 2015 Goal
Employees with Targeted Disabilities	.77% (797)	3%	3%	4%	4%
Student Interns with Targeted Disabilities	.43%*	3% (Need to Hire 183)	3%	4%	4%

***11.31% of student interns did not identify as having or not having a disability.**

USDA agencies are committed to hiring 7,100 student interns during summer, 2012. 1,000 of these opportunities are designated for hiring disabled veterans. Secretary Vilsack has an established goal that 3% (183) of the remaining 6,100 positions must be filled with qualified students with targeted disabilities.

Goal 1: Increase the use of the Schedule A Hiring Authority and the number of new hires who have disabilities.

Metric 1: Departmental Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) will prepare and monitor monthly reports on Schedule A usage and the numbers of permanent employees hired. Results will be shared with the Assistant Secretary for Administration and reported to the Secretary.

Strategy 1: Create an effective infrastructure to support the recruitment, hiring, advancement and retention of people with disabilities.

Background: USDA is decentralized with pockets of best practices of employing individuals with disabilities throughout the U.S. Centralizing information and resources, defining roles and responsibilities, and standardizing policies, while streamlining processes will enhance the Department's initiatives to increase employment of individuals with disabilities.

Strategies		Start Date	End Date	Responsible Party
1.1	Establish USDA Disability Employment Center of Excellence	March 2012	September 2012	Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM)
1.2	Create One Stop USDA Disability Employment Web Site	February 2012	May 2012	OHRM
1.3	Establish the USDA Selective Placement Program with a Representatives within each Mission Area	March 2012	Ongoing	OHRM, MAHRDs, DAMs, and Diversity & Inclusion Officers
1.4	Define roles and responsibilities of Disability Employment Program Managers, Disability Special Emphasis Program Managers, and Selective Placement Coordinators	February 2012	Ongoing	OHRM in collaboration with MAHRDS, Diversity & Inclusion Officers
1.5	Update Departmental Reasonable Accommodation Policy and Procedures	March 2012	December 2012	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, and MAHRDs
1.6	Create Departmental Reassignment Procedures	March 2012	July 2012	OHRM
1.7	Train DEPMs, Recruiters, Student Coordinators, Managers, and HR Staff	Student Internship Training February 2012	Ongoing with Annual Refreshers	OHRM, Disability Inclusion Officers, and Disability Program Managers

1.8	Establish Centralized Reasonable Accommodation Fund	July 2012	October 2013	OHRM, Office of the Secretary
1.9	Require weekly reports from agency heads on the numbers of permanent and students with disabilities hired. –Reports are monitored by the USDA Secretary	April 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Office of the Secretary, and Diversity & Inclusion Officers
1.10	Establish, Market, and Use Pipeline of Individuals with Disabilities –Ready to Work	January 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Disability Inclusion Officers, Disability Program Managers
1.11	Sign Memorandum of Understanding with Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)	December 2011	Completed/Ongoing Partnership	OHRM
1.11.a	Train and market use of Partnership with CSAVR to USDA key stakeholders in HR and hiring managers	March 2012	Ongoing	OHRM, Selective Placement Coordinators, Disability Program Managers
1.12	Develop and disseminate definitive toolkits of information for HR, hiring managers, USDA employees with disabilities, and applicants with disabilities	January 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Selective Placement Coordinators, Disability Program Managers
1.13	Train and market use of Bender List	January 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, MAHRDs, and DAMs
1.14	Develop PowerPoint Training on Disability Awareness, Schedule A, Recruitment Resources, and Reasonable Accommodations	January 2011	February 2011	OHRM
1.14.a	Record PowerPoint(s) as a	April 2012	Ongoing	OHRM

	webinar series			
1.14.b	Integrate webinars into USDA on line educational system (AgLearn)	July 2012	Ongoing	OHRM
1.15	Develop web based, Departmental, standardized training on Section 508.	May 2012	September 2012	OCIO/OHRM, Section 508 Officers
1.16	Develop web based, standardized training on hosting accessible meetings and events.	March 2012	September 2012	OHRM, Reasonable Accommodation Designees
1.17	Cross Train Disability Employment Program Managers, Special Emphasis Program Managers, Selective Placement Coordinators, Worker's Compensation Officers and Section 508 Officers on reasonable accommodations, Schedule A procedures, Section 508, and disability awareness	March 2012	Ongoing	OHRM in collaboration with Worker's Compensation Programs
1.18	Train Diversity & Inclusion Specialists and Officers on disability awareness and use of Schedule A.	April 2012	October 2012	OHRM, Disability Program Managers and Selective Placement Coordinators
3.2	Re-survey the USDA workforce and update status for race, national origin, disability and veterans status (SF-256)	February 2012	March 2012	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, MAHRDs, and DAMs

Indicators of Progress

- *USDA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (Dec. 2011) that provides access to a national Vocational Rehabilitation network of over 25,000 counselors providing direct services to more than 1,000,000 individuals with disabilities who are seeking work. In addition, USDA will access additional free national databases and networks that include pre-screened applicants with disabilities who are eligible for hire into student internship and permanent employment opportunities.
- Measure and monitor the number of hires from the OPM Shared Register ("Bender List").

- Positive feedback collected via a prompt at the USDA web site, and via anonymous surveys to key stakeholders via USDA Connect, the internal networking site for all USDA employees.

Goal 2: Increase the number of student interns with disabilities.				
Metric 2: Departmental Office of Human Resources Management will prepare and monitor weekly reports on hiring student interns with targeted disabilities during April to August, annually. Results will be shared with the Assistant Secretary for Administration and reported to the Secretary.				
Strategies	Start Date	End Date	Responsible Party	Strategies
2.1	Train and market use of Workforce Recruitment Program database to managers, recruiters, and HR staff.	April 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, MAHRDs, DAMs, and Selective Placement Coordinators
2.1.a	Host Workforce Recruitment Program Event for 2012 Season	February 2012	February 2012	OHRM with support from Office of Chief Information Officer
2.1.b	Train all USDA Recruiters, HR Specialist, and Internship Coordinators on the use of WRP and disability awareness	March 2012	June 2012	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, MAHRDs, and DAMs
2.2	Leverage the MOU with Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation to direct market internship positions to students with targeted disabilities.	March 2012	Ongoing	OHRM, MARHDS, HR Specialists, Diversity & Inclusion Officers

Indicators of Progress:

- Increased recruitment and hiring of student interns with disabilities who are registered in the WRP database.

Goal 3: Improve and expand accessible professional development programs and increase advancement of employees with disabilities.

Metric: Departmental Office of Human Resources Management will prepare and monitor monthly reports on promotions of employees with disabilities. Results will be shared with the Assistant Secretary for Administration and reported to the Secretary.

Background: Employees with disabilities are sometimes isolated from mainstream networking opportunities and are frequently unaware of professional development programs. USDA will implement stronger marketing and recruiting to the full workforce and directly to employees with disabilities as USDA affinity groups are established.

Strategies		Start Date	End Date	Responsible Party
3.1	Support the development of USDA affinity groups for employees with disabilities	August 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, MAHRDs, and DAMs
3.3	Market the USDA detail registry to employees with disabilities	September 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, MAHRDs, and DAMs
3.4	Establish registry of managers and senior leaders for USDA mentoring of employees with disabilities	October 2012	Ongoing	OHRM, Diversity & Inclusion Officers, MAHRDs, and DAMs
3.5	Leverage SharePoint and social media as a means of connecting USDA employees with disabilities to mentors.	1/2013	6/2013	OHRM, Selective Placement Coordinators

Indicators of Progress

- Increased use of detail assignments of employees with disabilities.
- Increased advancement of employees with disabilities into higher grade levels.
- Monitor and measure the number of employees with disabilities engaged with mentors.
- Increased number of employees with disabilities/targeted disabilities in higher grade positions.

Goal 4: Increase retention of employees with disabilities.

Metric 4: Departmental Office of Human Resources Management will prepare and monitor monthly attrition reports on separations from Federal service of USDA employees with disabilities.

Strategies		Start Date	End Date	Responsible Party
4.1	Create Departmental Reassignment Policy and Procedures	March 2012	June 2012	OHRM and Worker's Compensation Office
4.2	Design and implement formal and informal means of employees with disabilities providing feedback on their employment experience.	May 2012	Ongoing	OHRM, Disability Program Managers, Selective Placement Coordinators, Diversity & Inclusion Officers
4.3	Develop and implement a Departmental Process for Employees to appeal reasonable accommodation decisions at the Mission Area level.			
4.4	Departmental Disability Employment Program Managers reviews and signs applications for Disability Retirement to ensure reasonable accommodation options have been exhausted.	January 2012	Ongoing	OHRM/Diversity Division
4.5	Design and implement measures to monitor separations of employees with disabilities in conjunction with employee exit surveys.	January 2013	Ongoing	OHRM, MAHRDs, HR Staff

Indicators of Progress

- Decreased rate of separations for employees with disabilities.
- Increased rate of successful reassignments as a reasonable accommodation.

Goal 5: Increase return to work outcomes and retention of injured employees and employees with disabilities.

Metric 5: Departmental Office of Human Resources Management, in conjunction with the USDA Worker's Compensation Program Manager, will monitor the Department's metrics required for the Protecting our Workers and Ensuring Reemployment (POWER) Initiative to the Department of Labor's Office of Worker's Compensation Program.

Background: The USDA Worker's Compensation Program is integrated with the Department of Labor's POWER initiative. USDA will enhance and expedite return to work outcomes by cross training and through regular collaboration between the Workers Compensation Program and the Disability Employment Program.

Strategies		Start Date	End Date	Responsible Party
5.1	Include Worker's Compensation Program Manager in Disability Employment Program meetings and communications.	January 2011	Ongoing	OHRM and Worker's Compensation Office
5.2	Cross train Worker's Compensation Officers with Disability Employment Program Managers	April 2012	Ongoing	OHRM and Worker's Compensation Office
5.3	Link Worker's Compensation Officers with Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation to assist in needs assessments, reasonable accommodations, and return to work support.	January 2012	Ongoing	OHRM and Worker's Compensation Office
5.4	Add Worker's Compensation Information and Resources to the Departmental Disability Employment Program web site.	April 2012	May 2012	OHRM and Worker's Compensation Office
5.5	Include Worker's Compensation Program Manager in Disability Employment Program meetings and communications.	January 2011	Ongoing	OHRM and Worker's Compensation Office

5.6	Monitor return to work progress and successes under the President's POWER Initiative on a quarterly bases.	January 2011	Ongoing	Worker's Compensation Office & OHRM
5.7	Identify injured employees, as defined by FECA, and coordinate reasonable accommodations through the Disability Employment Program	January 2011	Ongoing	OHRM, Disability Program Managers, Reasonable Accommodation Designees and Worker's Compensation Program Specialists

Indicators of Progress

- Workers Compensation Program Managers post their progress regularly on the Department of Labor's web site to monitor progress in returning injured employees to work. Monitoring and tracking of these reports are conducted by the USDA Worker's Compensation Officer, with access provided to the Disability Employment Program Managers.
- Workers Compensation Program Officers, Disability Employment Program Managers and Selective Placement Coordinators will monitor and report monthly on their collaborations to ensure that communication and sharing of resources is ongoing.
- Increased use and successful placement of injured workers through the USDA Reassignment Process will be an indicator of increased collaboration between Worker's Compensation Officers and Reasonable Accommodation Designees, and Disability Program Managers.