

Affirmative Action Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, Advancement, and Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To capture agencies' affirmative action plan for persons with disabilities (PWD) and persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD), EEOC regulations (29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(e)) and MD-715 require agencies to describe how their affirmative action plan will improve the recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention of applicants and employees with disabilities.

Section I: Efforts to Reach Regulatory Goals

EEOC regulations (29 CFR §1614.203(d)(7)) require agencies to establish specific numerical goals for increasing the participation of persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities in the federal government

1. Using the goal of 12% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----|
| a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWD) | Answer | Yes |
| b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWD) | Answer | Yes |

a 4.19% b. 3.43%

*For GS employees, please use two clusters: GS-1 to GS-10 and GS-11 to SES, as set forth in 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(7). For all other pay plans, please use the approximate grade clusters that are above or below GS-11 Step 1 in the Washington, DC metropolitan region.

2. Using the goal of 2% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----|
| a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |
| b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |

a. 1.30% b. 1.18%

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

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

ARS holds managers and supervisors accountable for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce through the REE Recruitment Agreement, in particular, Appendix A, which requires that the ARS hiring managers utilize the MD-715 in recruiting. EEO Program Managers review MD-715 identified barriers with hiring managers during the vacancy announcement process to enhance opportunities for recruitment and hire. ARS EEO Program Managers (PM) or designees serve as EEO Observers with the evaluation panel throughout the evaluation and selection process of permanent new hires. A key goal/objective of senior level officials (Area Directors) is to work directly with the ODEO Program Managers to create more effective diversity plans to ensure sufficient opportunities for groups such as PWD and PWTD.

Section II: Model Disability Program

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(1), agencies must ensure sufficient staff, training and resources to recruit and hire persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities, administer the reasonable accommodation program and special emphasis program, and oversee any other disability hiring and advancement program the agency has in place.

A. PLAN TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT & COMPETENT STAFFING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM

- Has the agency designated sufficient qualified personnel to implement its disability program during the reporting period? If “no”, describe the agency’s plan to improve the staffing for the upcoming year.

Answer Yes

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

Disability Program Task	# of FTE Staff By Employment Status			Responsible Official (Name, Title, Office Email)
	Full Time	Part Time	Collateral Duty	
Section 508 Compliance	0	0	0	Angela Pompey Chief, Information Security Officer angela.pompey@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	Alan Robinson Deputy Director alan.robinson@usda.gov
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	40	0	0	Jennifer Riddle Supervisory HR Specialist jennifer.riddle@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	0	0	0	
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	40	0	0	Jennifer Riddle Supervisory HR Specialist jennifer.riddle@usda.gov
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	0	0	0	Tracey Troutman Director tracey.troutman@usda.gov

- Has the agency provided disability program staff with sufficient training to carry out their responsibilities during the reporting period? If “yes”, describe the training that disability program staff have received. If “no”, describe the training planned for the upcoming year.

Answer Yes

The Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager attends classroom-style training on an “annual” basis provided by the National Employment Law Institute. She also fully complies with all Agency-wide civil rights and diversity training mandates. Additionally, she stays abreast of any new or updated program regulations, program developments and best practices by doing independent research and/or by participating in Departmental meetings, webinars, conference calls, etc. The disability program staff has received Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) Training, Barrier Analysis Training, MD-715 Training.

B. PLAN TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM

Has the agency provided sufficient funding and other resources to successfully implement the disability program during the reporting period? If “no”, describe the agency’s plan to ensure all aspects of the disability program have sufficient funding and other resources.

Answer Yes

Section III: Program Deficiencies In The Disability Program

Section IV: Plan to Recruit and Hire Individuals with Disabilities

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(d)(1)(i) and (ii), agencies must establish a plan to increase the recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. The questions below are designed to identify outcomes of the agency’s recruitment program plan for PWD and PWTD

A. PLAN TO IDENTIFY JOB APPLICATIONS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Describe the programs and resources the agency uses to identify job applicants with disabilities, including individuals with targeted disabilities.

The agency utilizes the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) and the Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP).

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

The agency has experienced success utilizing the Schedule A 213.2102(u) authority to recruit individuals with disabilities using various programs.

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

Individuals apply for REE vacancies via USAJobs. Qualified individuals are referred to selecting officials on a non-competitive eligibles certificate.

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

Answer Yes

Training is available in AgLearn. The Disability Program Manager also provided a comprehensive presentation of programs for hiring people with disabilities and developed and distributed AFM communication on the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP). Diversity and Inclusion inform and engage webinar held on March 11, 2019. The event was an opportunity to learn how to connect with over 2,100 multidisciplinary students and recent graduates from more than 360 accredited institutions to consider for all positions – including mission-critical occupations – for summer or permanent employment. Four agency Program Managers completed the WRP Recruiter training. In FY 19, ARS had 43 employers registered under the Workforce Recruitment Program and 6 WRP hires reported (1 for an internship for over a year, 3 for internships less than a year, and 2 for permanent positions). 5 Recruiters from ARS have volunteered and are conducting interviews with WRP students this fall. The Disability Program Manager Developed and distributed a procedural statement regarding the process for managing unsolicited resumes received from veterans and people with disabilities. As a result, numerous requests for resumes were received from HR Specialists and hiring managers. New hires have been made utilizing this non-competitive, easy to use and timely resource. Currently, there are approximately 200 resumes available in the portal. The Disability Program Manager also developed documents regarding hiring both veterans and people with disabilities. The documents: Helpful Links for Hiring Managers, Q&A’s for Hiring Managers and Tips for Hiring

Managers are valuable information available for hiring managers to reference when considering hiring veterans and people with disabilities. Agency conducted seminar titled More Than Awareness: Neurodiversity in the Workplace on September 6, 2019. The purpose of the seminar was to share tools to support the management of neurodiverse employees and discuss special hiring programs and flexibilities when considering neurodiverse job candidates.

B. PLAN TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Describe the agency's efforts to establish and maintain contacts with organizations that assist PWD, including PWTD, in securing and maintaining employment.

The agency utilizes Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP), and Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP). The agency has experienced success utilizing the Schedule A 213.2102(u) authority to recruit individuals with disabilities using various programs. As an employment initiative for the past three years, the USDA-ARS, SEA Program Analysts are in continued weekly contact with Disability Scoop; which is the nation's largest news organization devoted to covering developmental disabilities. With daily coverage of autism, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and more, no other news source offers a more timely and comprehensive take on the issues that matter to the developmental disability community and potential U.S. workforce. With consistent vacancies being distributed amongst the readers which include teachers, special educators, school administrators, therapists and other disability professionals in addition to parents and caregivers will continue and give USDA-ARS, SEA a consistent advertisement recruitment venue resource for the readers and the opportunities to view disability issues or available individuals with disabilities for employment opportunities in the SEA region and other ARS locations. The SEA Program Analysts along with the SEA Administration are developing new working relationships with the Disabled American Veterans and an ongoing work with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. Strides have been made with recruitment guidance, veteran spouse support, veteran preference hiring practices thru the Gulf Coast Veterans Advocacy Council (GCVAC), and continue to make recommendations to improve the quality of life for the veterans and their families thru employment practices. All non-scientific vacancies were circulated to an established list-serve of contacts known as the Northeast Area Best Hiring Practice. The list-serve Points of Contact (POC), include 1862 Institutions, 1890's Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Workforce Recruitment Coordinators for Veterans and the Military (State of Maryland), recognized CO-OP Farmer/Rancher Organizations and others. This initiative ensures that a broad candidate pool is reached and minorities are made aware of career opportunities, including student programs within Agricultural Research Service and the USDA. Agency staff participate in outreach to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Offices in Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins, Greeley Golden, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Alamosa and the Eastern Plains Offices and conducted meetings with each location Business Outreach Representative to update information and to explore potential future partnerships. ARS -SEA Scientist/Research Leader in Arkansas works directly with Military Veteran Small Farms Program and is assisted by the SEA ODEO Program Manager by customizing internships for prospective farmers to provide a unique learning opportunity to work closely with mentors and a network of successful farmers. This internship program is based on being flexible to both the farmer and the intern. Many veteran farmers along with ARS personnel serve as mentors and are the ones to develop the position to fit what the intern is looking for and match what the farmers have to offer. Managers/supervisors, human resources personnel and hiring managers and selection officials are provided training on Veteran Employment for Hiring Managers and Veteran Employment for Federal Human Resources Personnel. Recruitment resources provided by the SEA ODEO Program Manager include Veterans - Top Ten Reasons to Hire Veterans and Wounded Warriors (attached) http://vetsuccess.gov/va_vre_and_vetsuccess, Employer Assistance and Resource (EARN) - <http://www.askearn.org/>. The SEA ODEO Program Managers coordinate with the H2H Employment Coordinators by providing weekly vacancies announcements via email geared towards quality career readiness assistance to Reserve Component Service members preparing for the next civilian career. Four agency Program Managers completed the WRP Recruiter training. ARS-wide WRP inform and engage webinar held March 11, 2019 to give an overview of the WRP and the WRP database. The event was part of the agency Diversity and Inclusion Initiative. Managers and supervisors were provided information to enhance their ability to recruit and hire qualified undergraduate and graduate students and recent graduates for summer internships and/or permanent positions timely to register/participate in the 2019 program. The HRD Program Manager conducted webinar for SEA employees on hiring veterans and people with disabilities. The HRD Program Manager also developed a procedural statement and established a database/portal with unsolicited resumes received from veterans and people with disabilities who are eligible for non-competitive hiring. Currently over 100 resumes are in the portal.

C. PROGRESSION TOWARDS GOALS (RECRUITMENT AND HIRING)

1. Using the goals of 12% for PWD and 2% for PWTD as the benchmarks, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWTD among the new hires in the permanent workforce? If "yes", please describe the triggers below.

- a. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWD) Answer No
- b. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWTD) Answer No

New Hires	Total (#)	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
		Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)	Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)
% of Total Applicants	0				
% of Qualified Applicants	0				
% of New Hires	0				

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

- a. New Hires for MCO (PWD) Answer Yes
- b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD) Answer Yes

a. PWD qualified applicants not selected (0201, 0401, 0440,1101,1320,2210). b. PWTD qualified applicants not selected (0201, 1320, 2210)

New Hires to Mission-Critical Occupations	Total (#)	Reportable Disability		Targetable Disability	
		Qualified Applicants (%)	New Hires (%)	Qualified Applicants (%)	New Hires (%)
Numerical Goal	--	12%		2%	

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

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

a. PWD qualified applicants not selected (1102, 2210).

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

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

Triggers exist for PWD (1102, 2210).

Section V: Plan to Ensure Advancement Opportunities for Employees with Disabilities

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(d)(1)(iii), agencies are required to provide sufficient advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities. Such activities might include specialized training and mentoring programs, career development opportunities, awards programs, promotions, and similar programs that address advancement. In this section, agencies should identify, and provide data on programs designed to ensure advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities.

A. ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM PLAN

Describe the agency’s plan to ensure PWD, including PWTD, have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

To demonstrate the Agency’s commitment to diversity and EEO, the Administrator established a group that was comprised of staff from Administrative and Financial Management (including Human Resources Division) and the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity to develop a Diversity Recruitment Plan to increase diversity in underrepresented populations throughout the Agency. The plan contains several goals with several corresponding objectives which are accompanied by action/improvement strategies. In 2017, the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) reassigned its ODEO Program Managers directly to Area Directors who oversee a majority of the workforce at ARS. A key goal/objective of these senior level officials (Area Directors) is to work directly with the reassigned ODEO Program Managers to create more effective diversity plans to ensure sufficient opportunities for groups such as PWD and PWTD. Strategies are being developed to attract and promote PWD and PWTD within each geographical area in the country. As the Agency is divided into five (5) geographical regions, each Area faces different challenges based upon the unique populations which inhabit those regions. By directly assigning ODEO Program Managers to the Area Directors, ARS is better equipping those senior officials with subject matter experts to identify local sources of PWD and PWTD perspective employees. In addition, the ODEO Program Managers will enhance local outreach activities and develop diversity plans specifically designed to attract the potential PWD and PWTD talent sought to serve in a research organization such as ARS. Disability program manager developed documents regarding hiring both veterans and people with disabilities. The documents: Helpful Links for Hiring Managers, Q&A’s for Hiring Managers and Tips for Hiring Managers provide valuable information for hiring managers to reference when considering hiring veterans and people with disabilities.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

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

Agency career development opportunities are: OPM/Management Development, OPM FEI Leadership, Congressional Briefing Conference, NRLTP Leadership Workshop, New Leader Program, Executive Leadership Potential, American Management Associate Leadership & Team Development for Managerial Success, ARS Supervisory Training, Location and Headquarters Service Employees Team (SET) Details. As long as employees meet the requirements (grade, within their discipline, supervisors’ approval, funding, etc.) interested employees may apply for career development opportunities. Employees interested in serving on a detail coordinate with their supervisors and submit resumes to the SET Program Coordinator who works with the requestor to fill their needs. Once a year within 30 days of annual performance evaluations, employees and supervisors must meet to discuss goals and accomplishments and develop an IDP. This meeting gives both the opportunity to set objectives and plan learning experiences that will support them. The agency is looking into sponsorship versus mentoring and is currently piloting the Sponsorship Program to AFM employees for 2020—based upon feedback received, the agency will then think about piloting to other entities of ARS. The program is due to kick-off in 2019.

2. In the table below, please provide the data for career development opportunities that require competition and/or supervisory recommendation/ approval to participate.

Career Development Opportunities	Total Participants		PWD		PWTD	
	Applicants (#)	Selectees (#)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)
Fellowship Programs						
Coaching Programs						
Detail Programs	20	20	10	10	0	0
Mentoring Programs						

Career Development Opportunities	Total Participants		PWD		PWTD	
	Applicants (#)	Selectees (#)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)
Other Career Development Programs						
Internship Programs						
Training Programs	154	154	11.18	11.18	4.65	4.65

3. Do triggers exist for PWD among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for the applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. Applicants (PWD) Answer No
- b. Selections (PWD) Answer No

4. Do triggers exist for PWTD among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for the applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

- a. Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
- b. Selections (PWTD) Answer No

C. AWARDS

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

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

PWD less than PWTD time-off awards 1-9 hrs less, time-off 9+, cash 100-500

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

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTD for quality step increases or performance-based pay increases? If “yes”, please describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- a. Pay Increases (PWD) Answer No
- b. Pay Increases (PWTD) Answer Yes

PWTD less than PWD.

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

3. If the agency has other types of employee recognition programs, are PWD and/or PWTD recognized disproportionately less than employees without disabilities? (The appropriate benchmark is the inclusion rate.) If “yes”, describe the employee recognition program and relevant data in the text box.

- a. Other Types of Recognition (PWD) Answer N/A
- b. Other Types of Recognition (PWTD) Answer N/A

D. PROMOTIONS

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

- a. SES
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A
- b. Grade GS-15
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A
- c. Grade GS-14
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A
- d. Grade GS-13
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer N/A

USAStaffing and NFC do not provide qualified internal applicant information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain information. a. No PWD SES selections b. GS-15: 5.66% selected c. GS-14: 6.82% selected d. GS-13: no selections

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

- a. SES
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A

- b. Grade GS-15
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A
- c. Grade GS-14
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A
- d. Grade GS-13
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A

USA Staffing and NFC do not provide requested information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain information. a. SES: no selection b. GS-15: no selection c. GS-14: 2.27% selected d. GS-13: no selections

3. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.
- a. New Hires to SES (PWD) Answer N/A
 - b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD) Answer N/A
 - c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD) Answer N/A
 - d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD) Answer N/A

USA Staffing and NFC do not provide qualified applicant information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain information. a. No SES PWD b. No GS-15 PWD c. GS-14: 10% d. GS-13: 6.67%

4. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.
- a. New Hires to SES (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) Answer N/A

USA Staffing and NFC do not provide qualified applicant information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain information. No hires with PWTD.

5. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

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

USAStaffing and NFC do not provide number of qualified internal applicant information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain information. a.9.09% selections b.8% selections c.no selections

6. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTB among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

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

USAStaffing and NFC do not provide number of qualified internal applicant information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain information. a. No selections b. 8% selections c. No selections

7. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

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

USA Staffing and NFC do not provide qualified applicant information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain

information. a. No selections b. No selections c. No selections

8. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

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

USA Staffing and NFC do not provide information. Agency will work with HR on mechanism to obtain information.

Section VI: Plan to Improve Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To be model employer for persons with disabilities, agencies must have policies and programs in place to retain employees with disabilities. In this section, agencies should: (1) analyze workforce separation data to identify barriers retaining employees with disabilities; (2) describe efforts to ensure accessibility of technology and facilities; and (3) provide information on the reasonable accommodation program and workplace assistance services.

A. VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY SEPARATIONS

1. In this reporting period, did the agency convert all eligible Schedule A employees with a disability into the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service (5 C.F.R. § 213.3102(u)(6)(i))? If “no”, please explain why the agency did not convert all eligible Schedule A employees.

Answer Yes

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWD among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without disabilities? If “yes”, describe the trigger below.

- a. Voluntary Separations (PWD) Answer Yes
- b. Involuntary Separations (PWD) Answer No

Rate of voluntary separations for PWD is 9.68% compared to 8.51% for PWOD.

Separations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
-------------	---------	---------------------------	-----------------------------------

3. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWTD among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without targeted disabilities? If “yes”, describe the trigger below.

- a. Voluntary Separations (PWTD) Answer Yes
- b. Involuntary Separations (PWTD) Answer Yes

Rate of voluntary separations for PWTD is 8% compared to 7.26% for PWOTD. Rate of involuntary separations for PWTD 0.68% compared to 0.14% for PWOTD.

Separations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
-------------	---------	-------------------------	---------------------------------

4. If a trigger exists involving the separation rate of PWD and/or PWTD, please explain why they left the agency using exit interview results and other data sources.

The agency is unable to determine at this time. The CR Office plans to work with HR on determining exit survey results.

B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(4), federal agencies are required to inform applicants and employees of their rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794(b), concerning the accessibility of agency technology, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. § 4151-4157), concerning the accessibility of agency facilities. In addition, agencies are required to inform individuals where to file complaints if other agencies are responsible for a violation.

1. Please provide the internet address on the agency's public website for its notice explaining employees' and applicants' rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

ARS currently defers to the Departmental Section 508 Regulation. At this time there is no formal Section 508 complaint process within ARS. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) is designated to handle Section 508 complaints but is currently reviewing and mediating complaints based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/section-508>

2. Please provide the internet address on the agency's public website for its notice explaining employees' and applicants' rights under the Architectural Barriers Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

ARS currently defers to the Departmental Section 508 Regulation. At this time, there is no formal Section 508 complaint process within ARS. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) is designated to handle Section 508 complaints but is currently reviewing and mediating complaints based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/section-508>

3. Describe any programs, policies, or practices that the agency has undertaken, or plans on undertaking over the next fiscal year, designed to improve accessibility of agency facilities and/or technology.

ARS addresses handicap accessibility in a few ways. While buildings are old and are grandfathered to meet the standard at the time they are built, ARS does have locations on an ad hoc, occasional basis that will execute projects to provide or improve accessibility at their facilities year in and year out. ARS addresses ADA accessibility issues when performing major renovation or renewal of any existing buildings. The current design guide, P&P 242.1, requires that ARS meet current handicap accessibilities standards. ARS is in the process of undergoing a 5 year complete facility assessment of all active ARS owned facilities. During the assessment visit, accessibility requirements are noted with other system deficiencies. The location can prioritize all deficient items/systems throughout their facility within their three years Capital Projects and Repair Plan (CPRP). They will then execute prioritized projects throughout the year. While all accessibility items identified are not accomplished immediately, the ones associated with a safety issue will get prioritized first and funded within the same fiscal year by the location/area. ARS Capital Investment Strategy, projects that are funded by Congress under the Building and Facility Program are required to meet all current ADA Accessibility standards as well as all Federal, State and Local building/code compliant standards.

C. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(3), agencies must adopt, post on their public website, and make available to all job applicants and employees, reasonable accommodation procedures.

1. Please provide the average time frame for processing initial requests for reasonable accommodations during the reporting period. (Please do not include previously approved requests with repetitive accommodations, such as interpreting services.)

As cited in the Agency's Reasonable Accommodation (RA) Policy & Procedures, deciding officials have 5 days to acknowledge receipt of a RA request and 30 days to provide an accommodation. On average, reasonable accommodation requests are processed

immediately. For equipment purchases, full implementation of an accommodation may vary depending upon the vendor and the type of equipment needed. Additionally, most deciding officials provide interim accommodations or offer an alternative accommodation when the preferred accommodation is an undue hardship. As a result, the Agency has few or no denials.

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

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

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

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

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

The REE RA Program Manager revised the Agency’s RA Program Policy & Procedures which included a separate chapter to explain the policy and procedures for requesting Personal Assistance Services (PAS). The policy was issued to the REE workforce on January 4, 2018. To date, there have been no requests submitted for PAS, therefore a trend analysis is not relevant at this time. Information about PAS is shared with the workforce during training sessions/webinars that are provided by the REE RA Program Manager.

Section VII: EEO Complaint and Findings Data

A. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING HARASSMENT

1. During the last fiscal year, did a higher percentage of PWD file a formal EEO complaint alleging harassment, as compared to the governmentwide average?

Answer No
2. During the last fiscal year, did any complaints alleging harassment based on disability status result in a finding of discrimination or a settlement agreement?

Answer No
3. If the agency had one or more findings of discrimination alleging harassment based on disability status during the last fiscal year, please describe the corrective measures taken by the agency.

N/A

B. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

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

Answer No

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

Answer No

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

Section VIII: Identification and Removal of Barriers

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

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

Answer Yes

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

Answer Yes

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

<p>STATEMENT OF CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>The low participation rate of PWD (8.54%) in the agency's total permanent workforce as compared to the goal of 12%.</p>							
<p>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</p>	<p><i>Barrier Group</i></p> <p>People with Disabilities</p>							
<p>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>								
<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>The following grades do not meet the 12% goal for persons with disabilities in permanent GS-3 (10%), GS-8 (4.67%), GS-9 (7.60%), GS-10 (0%), GS-11 (5.87%), GS-13 (7.57%), GS-14 (5.30%), GS-15 (4.69%).</p>							
<p>Objective</p>	<p>Complete exit survey and resurvey workforce</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="483 928 1507 1066"> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 928 646 982">Date Objective Initiated</td> <td data-bbox="646 928 1507 982">Sep 1, 2018</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 991 646 1066">Target Date For Completion Of Objective</td> <td data-bbox="646 991 1507 1066">Dec 31, 2018</td> </tr> </table>				Date Objective Initiated	Sep 1, 2018	Target Date For Completion Of Objective	Dec 31, 2018
Date Objective Initiated	Sep 1, 2018							
Target Date For Completion Of Objective	Dec 31, 2018							
<p>Responsible Officials</p>	<p>Willis Collie Director, HR</p> <p>Alan Robinson Acting Director</p>							
<p>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</p>	<p>Planned Activities</p>	<p>Sufficient Staffing & Funding (Yes or No)</p>	<p>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</p>	<p>Completion Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</p>				

Fiscal Year	Accomplishments
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee Exit Process policy and procedures distributed on March 22, 2019. Eighty-seven (87) former employees responded to agency exit survey. - ARS-wide WRP inform and engage webinar held March 11, 2019 to give an overview of the WRP and the WRP database. The event was part of the agency Diversity and Inclusion Initiative. Managers and supervisors were provided information to enhance their ability to recruit and hire qualified undergraduate and graduate students and recent graduates for summer internships and/or permanent positions timely to register/participate in the 2019 program. - ARS had 43 employers registered under the Workforce Recruitment Program and 6 WRP hires reported (1 for an internship for over a year, 3 for internships less than a year, and 2 for permanent positions). 5 Recruiters from ARS have volunteered and are conducting interviews with WRP students this fall. - Eighty-seven (87) former employees responded to agency exit survey. - Agency conducted seminar titled More Than Awareness: Neurodiversity in the Workplace. - The Disability Program Manager Developed and distributed a procedural statement regarding the process for managing unsolicited resumes received from veterans and people with disabilities. As a result, numerous requests for resumes were received from HR Specialists and hiring managers. New hires have been made utilizing this non-competitive, easy to use and timely resource. Currently, there are approximately 200 resumes available in the portal. - The Disability Program Manager developed documents regarding hiring both veterans and people with disabilities. The documents: Helpful Links for Hiring Managers, Q&A's for Hiring Managers and Tips for Hiring Managers are valuable information available for hiring managers to reference when considering hiring veterans and people with disabilities. - Persons with TD represent 2.86% of the permanent workforce. - Persons with TD are above 2% in grades GS-9, GS-12, GS-13 & GS-15. - PWD are above 12% in SES. - Persons with TD are above 2% in the major occupations for series 0201 (4.05%), 0403 (2.08%), 0404 (2.33%), 0440 (4.88%), 1102 (4.76%), 1320 (3.83%). - PWD are above 12% in major occupation for series 0201(13.51%) - PWD permanent new hires are 15.33% and PWTD permanent new hires are 3.28%. - Time off awards, cash awards, and QSI's increased for PWTD. - Time off awards (1-9) and (9+), cash awards (100-500), and QSI's increased for PWD. - 174 employees participated/are participating in career development/leadership training and/or details. Career development/ leadership training and details are designed to provide promotion opportunities to underrepresented employees in the workforce including PWD and PWTD.

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

N/A

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

See accomplishments

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

The agency will need to determine if data obtained from workforce survey and exit survey is sufficient to correct triggers/barriers.