

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

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

Section I: Efforts to Reach Regulatory Goals

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

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|----|
| a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWD) | Answer | No |
| b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWD) | Answer | No |

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

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

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|----|
| a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWTD) | Answer | No |
| b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWTD) | Answer | No |

| 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.

NIFA 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 NIFA hiring managers utilize the MD-715 in recruiting.

Section II: Model Disability Program

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

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

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

Answer No

NIFA plans to hire an additional six (6) equal opportunity/civil rights staff in FY 2020.

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

| Disability Program Task | # of FTE Staff By Employment Status | | | Responsible Official (Name, Title, Office Email) |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|--|
| | Full Time | Part Time | Collateral Duty | |
| Section 508 Compliance | 1 | 0 | 0 | christopher.lowe@usda.gov |
| Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees | 1 | 0 | 0 | Tonya Morris Program Analyst |
| Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account | 1 | 0 | 0 | Drenda Williams Director EO/CR |
| Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTB | 1 | 0 | 0 | Drenda Williams Director EO/CR |
| Processing applications from PWD and PWTB | 4 | 0 | 0 | Human Resources Staff |
| Architectural Barriers Act Compliance | 0 | 0 | 1 | Drenda Williams Director EO/CR Program Analyst |

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

Answer Yes

Training was provided to the Disability Employment Program Manager and the Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager through various training programs including EEOC Disability training seminars and webinars.

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

| | | | |
|--|---|------------------------|---|
| Brief Description of Program Deficiency | A.2.c.3. Reasonable accommodation program? [see 29 CFR § 1614.203(d)(7)(ii)(C)] If “yes”, please provide how often. | | |
| Objective | Annually distribute information to all employees as a reminder of all the EEO guidance and ensure the resources are readily available on the Equal Opportunity Staff website. | | |
| Target Date | Sep 15, 2020 | | |
| Completion Date | | | |
| Planned Activities | <u>Target Date</u> | <u>Completion Date</u> | <u>Planned Activity</u> |
| | Jun 1, 2020 | | Utilize the agency employees newsletter “The Beet” to communication guidance annually by creating a Civil Rights Corner. The Civil Rights Corner will be another method for employees to receive communication about civil rights policies and processes. |
| | Jul 15, 2020 | | Assess the guidance to determine the last distribution dates. |
| | Aug 1, 2020 | | Revise EOS Website to allow employees to find guidance in a more efficient manner. |
| | Sep 30, 2020 | | Hire 6 positions on the EOS to complete the NIFA staffing plan ensuring adequate staffing resources are available to ensure EEO processes and policies are distributed annually to all employees. |
| Accomplishments | <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Accomplishment</u> | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Brief Description of Program Deficiency | B.4.a.4. to provide all supervisors and employees with training on the EEO program, including but not limited to retaliation, harassment, religious accommodations, disability accommodations, the EEO complaint process, and ADR? [see MD-715, II(B) and III(C)] If not, please identify the type(s) of training with insufficient funding in the comments column. | | |
| Objective | Increase NIFA’s EOS staff by 6 additional staff members to meet 100% staffing levels in order to carry out the components required for a model EEO program. | | |
| Target Date | Sep 30, 2020 | | |
| Completion Date | | | |
| Planned Activities | <u>Target Date</u> | <u>Completion Date</u> | <u>Planned Activity</u> |
| | May 10, 2020 | May 10, 2020 | Civil Rights Director hired effective 5/10/2020 |
| | Jun 30, 2020 | June 19, 2020 | Civil Rights Director review position descriptions and modify as needed for classification. |
| | Jun 30, 2020 | May 18, 2020 | Civil Rights Director assess staff needs and develop staffing proposal for Leadership and Administrative Officer approval. |
| | Jul 15, 2020 | June 26, 2020 | Administrative Officer Staff and Civil Rights Director submission of position descriptions to classification. |
| | Jul 30, 2020 | | Utilize Schedule A hiring authority to fill 2 EOS positions. (Secretary and entry level Equal Opportunity Specialist) |
| | Aug 1, 2020 | | Complete recruitment of 2 mid level EOS positions with an effective date no later than 9/30/2020. |
| Accomplishments | <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Accomplishment</u> | |
| | 2020 | Civil Rights Director developed and submitted EOS staffing plan to ensure employment resources are obtained to carry out a model EEO programs which was approved. | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Brief Description of Program Deficiency | B.4.a.6. to publish and distribute EEO materials (e.g. harassment policies, EEO posters, reasonable accommodations procedures)? [see MD-715, II(B)] | | |
| Objective | Increase NIFA's EOS staff by 6 additional staff members to meet 100% staffing levels in order to carry out the components required for a model EEO program. | | |
| Target Date | Sep 30, 2020 | | |
| Completion Date | | | |
| Planned Activities | <u>Target Date</u> | <u>Completion Date</u> | <u>Planned Activity</u> |
| | May 10, 2020 | May 10, 2020 | Civil Rights Director hired effective 5/10/2020 |
| | Jun 30, 2020 | May 31, 2020 | Civil Rights Director assess staff needs and develop staffing proposal for Leadership and Administrative Officer approval. |
| | Jun 30, 2020 | June 19, 2020 | Civil Rights Director review position descriptions and modify as needed for classification. |
| | Jul 15, 2020 | June 26, 2020 | Administrative Officer Staff and Civil Rights Director submission of position descriptions to classification. |
| | Jul 30, 2020 | | Utilize Schedule A hiring authority to fill 2 EOS positions. (Secretary and entry level Equal Opportunity Specialist) |
| Aug 1, 2020 | | Complete recruitment of 2 mid level EOS positions with an effective date no later than 9/30/2020. | |
| Accomplishments | <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Accomplishment</u> | |
| | 2020 | Civil Rights Director developed and submitted EOS staffing plan to ensure employment resources are obtained to carry out a model EEO programs which was approved. | |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Brief Description of Program Deficiency | B.4.a.8. to effectively administer its special emphasis programs (such as, Federal Women's Program, Hispanic Employment Program, and People with Disabilities Program Manager)? [5 USC § 7201; 38 USC § 4214; 5 CFR § 720.204; 5 CFR § 213.3102(t) and (u); 5 CFR § 315.709] | | |
| Objective | Increase NIFA's EOS staff by 6 additional staff members to meet 100% staffing levels in order to carry out the components required for a model EEO program. | | |
| Target Date | Sep 30, 2020 | | |
| Completion Date | | | |
| Planned Activities | <u>Target Date</u> | <u>Completion Date</u> | <u>Planned Activity</u> |
| | May 10, 2020 | May 10, 2020 | Civil Rights Director hired effective 5/10/2020 |
| | Jun 30, 2020 | May 31, 2020 | Civil Rights Director assess staff needs and develop staffing proposal for Leadership and Administrative Officer approval. |
| | Jun 30, 2020 | June 19, 2020 | Civil Rights Director review position descriptions and modify as needed for classification. |
| | Jul 15, 2020 | June 26, 2020 | Administrative Officer Staff and Civil Rights Director submission of position descriptions to classification. |
| | Jul 30, 2020 | | Utilize Schedule A hiring authority to fill 2 EOS positions. (Secretary and entry level Equal Opportunity Specialist) |
| Aug 1, 2020 | | Complete recruitment of 2 mid level EOS positions with an effective date no later than 9/30/2020. | |
| Accomplishments | <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Accomplishment</u> | |
| | 2020 | Civil Rights Director developed and submitted EOS staffing plan to ensure employment resources are obtained to carry out a model EEO programs which was approved. | |

| | | | |
|--|---|------------------------|--|
| Brief Description of Program Deficiency | C.4.e.1. Implement the Affirmative Action Plan for Individuals with Disabilities? [see 29 CFR §1614.203(d); MD-715, II(C)] | | |
| Objective | Collaborate with Administrative Officer/Staff on identification and removal of barriers with the development of an Affirmative Action Plan for individuals with disabilities. | | |
| Target Date | Sep 1, 2020 | | |
| Completion Date | | | |
| Planned Activities | <u>Target Date</u> | <u>Completion Date</u> | <u>Planned Activity</u> |
| | Oct 1, 2020 | | Develop Affirmative Action Plan items as part of the Equal Opportunity Staff Strategic Plan. |
| | Nov 15, 2020 | | Establish standing meeting with Administrative Officer/Staff, as a collaboration to discuss and implement the Affirmative Action plan for individuals with disabilities. |
| Accomplishments | <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Accomplishment</u> | |

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 PWTDD

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.

There is the Schedule A Hiring Authority Designation in all USDA application Acquisition Portal, known as "Tapability" is automatically uploaded from USAJOBS; Pathways Student Intern Program, and the WRP Program.

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 PWTDD for positions in the permanent workforce

Human Resources advertises each vacant position under the Schedule A Hiring Authority, which take disability into account. A Schedule A Letter is required to accompany each application which serves as certification that the applicant is an individual with a disability. Disabled Veterans are encouraged to apply for federal positions, with the submission of an SF 15 Form for Declaration of Federal Preferences, used by Federal Agencies and OPM for veterans claiming various veteran point preference.

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.

This function is centralized in the Human Resources Office at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Human Resources makes the determination of eligibility based on the employment application, the Schedule A Letter and/or the Form SF15 submitted at the time of application. The application packet is forwarded to the hiring manager for selection of applicants.

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 on the use of hiring authorities is always provided to NIFA Managers systematically throughout the year, particularly during the hiring process. This training will continue to be provided to NIFA leadership, and reviewed by NIFA Executive Officials for FY2020 and FY2021.

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.

NIFA works with various disability organizations such as the USDA Veterans and Persons with Disabilities Portal (USDA Vet/PwD Portal). USDA also maintains an agreement with the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP). Under this agreement, USDA job opportunities posted to the USAJOBS website are uploaded to the TAP Web Portal where Schedule A eligible applicants with disabilities can view the opportunities posted and apply.

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 N/A
- b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD) Answer N/A

It is unknown whether triggers exist in this category for FY19 because the agency did not track this information

| 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 No
- b. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWTD) Answer No

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

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

The Department does not provide Applicant Pool Data for the MCO for employee promotions.

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.

The Agency provides opportunities for advancement for all employees, including PWD and PWTD. NIFA Institute Directors and Managers regularly work with employees on an individual basis in developing employee plans for career advancement. Examples of programs the agency utilizes to assist employees in career development and advancement include: The Agency's Competency-Centric Learning and Development Framework, Detail Opportunities, Courses, along with various online courses and webinars designed to assist employees in their career advancement. Tuition discounts are also available for employees taking courses at Champlain College, to assist employees in career advancement.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

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

NIFA provides career development opportunities to all employees including PWD and PWTD. Training and Career Development programs offered to NIFA employees include a Mentoring Program, and Executive Coaching Program, Detail Programs offered to agency staff, SES, Office Directors, and Division Directors, Lead 21 Leadership Development Program, and the AgLearn Training System. Student interns are offered career development through the Pathways Program.

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 (%) |
| Internship Programs | | | | | | |
| Training Programs | | | | | | |
| Fellowship Programs | | | | | | |
| Detail Programs | | | | | | |
| Mentoring Programs | | | | | | |
| Other Career Development Programs | | | | | | |
| Coaching Programs | | | | | | |

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

- a. Applicants (PWD) Answer N/A
- b. Selections (PWD) Answer N/A

There is nothing to report at this time. The Department does not provide applicant pool data for career development programs. NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop a data repository for this information.

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

- a. Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
- b. Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A

There is nothing to report at this time. The Department does not provide applicant flow data for career development programs. NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop a data repository for this information.

C. AWARDS

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

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

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

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

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

| 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

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

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

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

- 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

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

- 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

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

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

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

6. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If “yes”, describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select “n/a” if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.
- a. Executives
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - b. Managers
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer N/A
 - c. Supervisors
 - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)

Answer N/A

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

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

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

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

No analysis could be make as the Department does not provide enough information on these applicants. Hiring levels are low to non-existent due the agency's plans to relocate outside of the Washington Capitol Area (WCA). NIFA will be working with the Department and Human Resources to develop detailed information on these applicants in its newly acquired applicant pool data system.

Section VI: Plan to Improve Retention of Persons with Disabilities

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

A. VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY SEPARATIONS

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

Answer No

This information is not yet available for this reporting period. Human Resources does not have a mechanism for tracking Schedule A employees eligible for conversion to competitive positions. NIFA will be working closely with Human Resources to develop a repository system to track Schedule A employees eligible for conversion into competitive positions after two years of satisfactory

service.

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

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

| Seperations | Total # | Reportable Disabilities % | Without Reportable Disabilities % |
|-------------|---------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|-------------|---------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|

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

- a. Voluntary Separations (PWTD) Answer No
- b. Involuntary Separations (PWTD) Answer No

| Seperations | Total # | Targeted Disabilities % | Without Targeted Disabilities % |
|-------------|---------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
|-------------|---------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|

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

B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

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

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

<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/> and www.usda.gov

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.

www.usda.gov

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.

The Agency is located in a leased facility. The facility is accessible to disabled employees and customers.

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 and Procedures, deciding officials have 5 days to acknowledge receipt of an RA request and 30 days to provide an accommodation. 100 percent of accommodation requests were processed within the time frame set forth in the agency procedures for reasonable accommodation.

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 REE 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. • 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. • The REE Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager ensures compliance with the Agency's procedures, including analyzing trends and problems. This includes, but is not limited to providing training to managers and supervisors and developing written materials and disseminating Agency-wide reasonable accommodation policies and procedures.

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.

Currently the agency's Disability Employment Program Manager refers request requiring Personal Assistance Services (PAS) to the REE Reasonable Accommodation in making employee reasonable accommodation requests requiring personal assistance services. The PAS policy is contained in the REE Reasonable Accommodation Policies and Procedures.

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 N/A

- 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 N/A

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.

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 N/A

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 N/A

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.

No Reasonable Accommodation complaints were filed in the past year.

Section VIII: Identification and Removal of Barriers

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

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

Answer No

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

Answer N/A

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

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

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

n/a

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

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n/a