

## 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

During FY 2019 NRCS has a permanent workforce of 9,075 permanent employees. 9.31 percent (845) employees in the permanent workforce voluntarily identified as having a disability which is below the EEOC benchmark of 12.00 percent. Grade clusters for FY2019 contained the following: GS 1 – 10: 10.12 percent (403) GS 11 – SES-level: 8.68 percent (442) Both grade clusters indicate a trigger as both are below the 12% benchmark goals of the EEOC and both have a slight decrease from last year's participation rates for PWD.

\*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

During FY 2019, 2.91 percent (264) permanent NRCS employees identified as having a Targeted Disability (TD) which is above the EEOC goal of 2.00 percent. NRCS targeted disabilities population in grade clusters revealed: GS 1 –10: 3.04 percent (121) GS 11 – SES level: 2.81 percent (143) Both clusters are above the participation benchmark for targeted disabilities of 2.00 percent.

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.

The agency communicates its goals to hiring officials through: • Regular updates to Leadership during monthly/quarterly meetings •

Quarterly status reviews of NFC workforce data • Newly established FPAC Data Analytics Team provides timely and on-demand workforce and business analytics using the Tableau System

## 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	
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	1	0	0	Michelle Jordan National Disability Emphasis Program Manager michelle.jordan@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	George Wood Real Property Leasing Officer george.wood@usda.gov
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	Michelle Jordan National Disability Emphasis Program Manager michelle.jordan@usda.gov
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	demitrice.boozar@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	2	0	0	Colette Ross and Marvin Jones Reasonable Accommodations Program Managers colette.ross@usda.gov and marvin.jones@usda.gov
Section 508 Compliance	1	0	0	Darren Ash Chief Information Officer darren.ash@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

• Special Emphasis Program training • Disability Program 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 generally uses the following resources to identify PWD/PWTD students and applicants: • Special Hiring Authorities • Vocational Rehabilitation Services • Veterans Administration – VR&E Employment Coordinators • Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Non-paid Work Experience Program • Recruitment and Outreach Events • Job and Career Fairs • Third Party Cooperative Agreement

- 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

Recruitment vehicles used by the agency include: • Schedule A Hiring Authorities • Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) • 30% or More Disabled Veterans

- 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.

The Affinity Program Managers have established relationships with specialists at vocational rehabilitation centers to develop a pool of qualified applicants for positions within the Agency. In many cases, qualified eligible candidates are referred from vocational rehabilitation offices or other organizations and groups representing persons with disabilities. Hiring officials are provided resumes and transcripts, if applicable, of qualified individuals for hiring consideration. The Affinity Program Managers forward the application and disability qualifying documents to the staffing specialists to review to ensure that applicants meet the qualifications of the positions and the eligibility requirements of the special hiring authorities.

- 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

The Agency provided: "Hiring Flexibility for Hiring Managers Overview" (Supervisory or Hiring Personnel) as a Webinar during the 2nd and 3rd quarter of FY 2019. The course was recorded and uploaded to the learning management system (AgLearn) and is available on-demand for hiring manager personnel.

**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 Disability Emphasis Program Managers and Veterans Emphasis Program Managers establish and strengthen relationships with organizations and groups representing persons with disabilities.

**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 Yes

b. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWTD) Answer Yes

It's clear from the 2019 workforce statistics (chart below) that Separations (Table B14) were much higher than Hires (Table B8) in both categories. This indicates a "Low Entry High Exit" trigger for this category. (Note: Red font indicates below the benchmark.) EEOC Federal Goal 12.00% --NRCS PWD: Hires- 9.33% --NRCS PWD: Separations - 16.34% EEOC Federal Goal 2.00% --NRCS TD Hires 1.04% --NRCS TD Separations 6.34%

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

Tables B7 and B9: Applicants and Hires Data for FY2019 wasn't released until after the report was certified by the NRCS Chief.

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 N/A
- b. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWTD) Answer N/A

Tables B7 and B9: Applicants and Hires Data for FY2019 wasn't released until after the report was certified by the NRCS Chief.

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

Tables B7 and B9: Applicants and Hires Data for FY2019 wasn't released until after the report was certified by the NRCS Chief.

## 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.

It is agency policy to recruit qualified, diverse individuals to: 1) Ensure bringing the best qualified candidates to the attention of management; 2) Give employees an opportunity to receive fair, equitable, and appropriate consideration for higher level jobs; 3) Provide an incentive for employees to improve their performance and develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities; and 4) Provide career advancement opportunities for all employees, including PWD and PWTD.

### B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

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

The showcase career development opportunity that the Agency provides to its employees is the Strategic Leadership Development Program (SLDP). The SLDP is a 12-month program for aspiring strategic leaders. The program focuses on deepening knowledge and practicing skills. It includes: 1) classroom training (virtual or in-person); 2) participating on learning teams; 3) coaching and mentoring; 4) a targeted stretch assignment; and 5) a group project focused on an Agency priority, challenge, or opportunity. The program is designed to develop a pool of effective leaders who can move into positions with increasing strategic responsibilities within the Agency over the next five-years. Those interested in becoming state, regional, or national leaders may find this program of particular value.

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

Currently, there is no system to collect and aggregate demographic data for career development program applications.

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

Currently, there is no system to collect and aggregate demographic data for career development program applications.

**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 Yes

The FY 2019 suitable benchmark range to measure the inclusion for Total Time-off Awards (number of awards given) is between 7.69 - 7.89 percent. The current PWD participation rate is 11.19 percent which is well above the benchmark and does not indicate a trigger. The inclusion rate for PWTD lies at 5.59 percent and therefore indicates a trigger for this category.

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

The current inclusion rate benchmark for Quality Step Increase Awards is 9.70 percent for PWD and 3.35 percent for PWTD. PWD lies at 9.39 percent and PWTD lies at 3.25 percent for FY2019. There is no trigger for either category for QSI awards.

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

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level.

2. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTB 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 (PWTB) Answer N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer N/A

b. Grade GS-15

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB) Answer N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer N/A

c. Grade GS-14

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB) Answer N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer N/A

d. Grade GS-13

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB) Answer N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTB) Answer N/A

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level.

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

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level

4. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTB 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 (PWTB) Answer N/A

b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTB) Answer N/A

c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTB) Answer N/A

d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTB) Answer N/A

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level

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

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level

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

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level

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

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level

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

NFC workforce data tables do not contain details for internal applicants by GS/SES Level

## 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 N/A

Schedule A data was not available at the time of submission.

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

Both participation rates are within the inclusion range of 7.62% - 12.50%; thus, there is no indication of a trigger: Voluntary = 11.24% and Involuntary = 11.78%.

Separations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
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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

Both participation rates are below the inclusion range of 7.62% - 12.50%; thus, there is no indication of a trigger: Voluntary = 4.41% and Involuntary = 7.41%.

Separations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
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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.

Currently the exit interviews forms do not capture demographic data distribution by disability.

**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.ascr.usda.gov/> <https://www.usda.gov/accessibility-statement> <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/careers/join/>

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.

The employees’ and applicants’ rights under the Architectural Barriers Act can be found in the websites and through a general look-up under the USDA website for the subject Act and filing. The ASCR Civil Rights portal is most direct. <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/> <https://www.usda.gov/usda-civil-rights-agencies-and-offices>

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.

Currently, there are no plans to design any new programs, policies, or practices to improve accessibility of Agency facilities and/or technology.

**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.)

The average time frame for processing initial requests for reasonable accommodations is approximately four weeks upon the receipt of the supporting medical documentation. The customer is allowed two weeks to obtain all the sufficient medical documentation to support their claim, and an additional two weeks regarding the interactive process with both the Requester and the Decision Makers to draft and finalize an Accommodation Plan.

- 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.

Fiscal Year 2019 # of Actual Requests - 62, Approved - 34, Denied - 7, Pending - 20, Withdrawn - 1. Requested Reconsideration - 0  
 The effectiveness of the policies and procedures of the existing reasonable accommodation program are evident regarding the timeliness in processing and the percentage of approvals FY 2019: 62 accommodation requests received, at an average time-frame of four weeks per request, with an 54% approval rate. The Reasonable Accommodation Program presented four Webinars throughout the mission area involving Reasonable Accommodations and the actual process.

**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 PAS requirement was initiated in January 2018, and currently there hasn’t been a case involving this requirement.

**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.

The government-wide average for this measure 19.69%. The NRCS average for FY 2019 lies at 11.45%

**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.

The government-wide average of this measure is 13.53%. The NRCS average for FY 2019 lies at 11.50%. All complaints were resolved by settlement agreement.

## 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><b>STATEMENT OF CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</b></p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>“Blocked Pipeline” or “Glass Wall” conditions may exist in selecting PWD and PWTD for Executive/Senior level positions.</p>							
<p><b>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</b></p>	<p><i>Barrier Group</i></p> <p>People with Disabilities</p> <p>People with Targeted Disabilities</p>							
<p><b>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</b></p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>								
<p><b>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</b></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>Some Major Critical Occupation series have low or no participation of employees with disabilities and employees with targeted disabilities.</p>							
<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>Increase the participation rate of PWD and PWTD.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="440 961 1495 1108"> <tr> <td data-bbox="440 961 646 1024"><b>Date Objective Initiated</b></td> <td data-bbox="646 961 1495 1024">Oct 1, 2019</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="440 1024 646 1108"><b>Target Date For Completion Of Objective</b></td> <td data-bbox="646 1024 1495 1108">Dec 31, 2021</td> </tr> </table>				<b>Date Objective Initiated</b>	Oct 1, 2019	<b>Target Date For Completion Of Objective</b>	Dec 31, 2021
<b>Date Objective Initiated</b>	Oct 1, 2019							
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<p><b>Responsible Officials</b></p>		<p>Melissa Drummond Chief Human Resources Officer</p>						
<p><b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b></p>	<p><b>Planned Activities</b></p>	<p><b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b></p>	<p><b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b></p>	<p><b>Completion Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b></p>				
<p>12/31/2021</p>	<p>§ Explore sponsoring a career-counseling event for employees with disabilities, modeled on a new program instituted at FEMA for all employees.</p> <p>§ Identify and disseminate strategies and resources to increase participation of employees with disabilities in existing mentoring programs.</p> <p>§ Ensure equal access to all training and career development opportunities.</p> <p>§ Require all training and program announcements include statements that reasonable accommodations are available upon request.</p>	<p>Yes</p>						
<p><b>Fiscal Year</b></p>	<p><b>Accomplishments</b></p>							
<p>2019</p>	<p>Reporters and Analysts attended “Barrier Analysis” Training provided by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in order to standardize format used to analyze workforce data.</p>							

<p><b>STATEMENT OF CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</b></p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>Workforce data tables B - 8 and 14: Low Entry High Exit (LEHE) conditions may exist for hiring and separation of employees with targeted disabilities.</p>							
<p><b>STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:</b></p>	<p><i>Barrier Group</i></p> <p>People with Targeted Disabilities</p>							
<p><b>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</b></p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>								
<p><b>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</b></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>Upon reviewing the 5-year trend data reveals "LEHE" conditions from FY 2014 through FY 2019 with regard to the hiring and separation rates for NRCS employees with disabilities and targeted disabilities. -- Review the strategic plan for recruitment, hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities..</p>							
<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>Increase the participation rate of PWD and PWTD.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="483 940 776 1081"> <tr> <td><b>Date Objective Initiated</b></td> <td>Jan 1, 2020</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Target Date For Completion Of Objective</b></td> <td>Dec 31, 2021</td> </tr> </table>				<b>Date Objective Initiated</b>	Jan 1, 2020	<b>Target Date For Completion Of Objective</b>	Dec 31, 2021
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<p>12/31/2021</p>	<p>Provide training to Hiring Managers regarding PWTD and PWD</p>	<p>Yes</p>						
<p>12/31/2021</p>	<p>Develop a strategic plan for the recruitment, hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities.</p>	<p>Yes</p>						
<p>12/31/2021</p>	<p>Resurvey the workforce disability status through the employee self-identification process</p>	<p>Yes</p>						
<p><b>Fiscal Year</b></p>	<p><b>Accomplishments</b></p>							
<p>2019</p>	<p>Reporters and Analysts attended "Barrier Analysis" Training provided by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in order to standardize format used to analyze workforce data.</p>							

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

Fully engaging Agency senior officials, hiring officials and DEPMs to explore strategies that can promote hiring of PWTD.

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

N/A -Target planned activity completions are over a 2-year time frame.

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.

A diverse, highly skilled workforce is vital to the agency's mission, because it is the rich diversity of the FPAC / NRCS workforce that is the fabric of the agency's past, present, and future success. Most important, a diverse workforce directly impacts the successful delivery of the technical assistance and services that we provide. The FPAC mission area (FBC, FSA, NRCS and RMA) remains committed in developing a comprehensive barrier analysis to identify and evaluate barriers and means to eliminate them, real or perceived, in order to close the gap between the FPAC Mission-area's workforce representation and the National Civilian Labor Force