

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

FPAC has a permanent workforce of 15,430 employees, 9.55% (or 1,474) of employees voluntarily identified as having a disability which is below the EEOC benchmark of 12.00%. This indicates a trigger for this category. Grade clusters for FY22 contained the following: • GS/GM 1 – 10: 544 (8.77%) individuals • GS/GM 11 – SES: 930 (10.08%) individuals

*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 No

FPAC has a permanent workforce of 15,430 employees, 2.22% (342) employees in the disability workforce voluntarily identified as having a targeted disability above the EEOC benchmark of 2.00 percent. This does not indicate a trigger for this category. Grade clusters for FY22 contained the following: • GS/GM 1 – 10: 120 (1.93%) individuals -- Cluster GS/GM 1 – 10 indicates a trigger as it does not meet the 2.00% benchmark. • GS/GM 11 – SES: 222 (2.41%) individuals

Grade Level Cluster(GS or Alternate Pay Planb)	Total	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
	#	#	%	#	%
Numarical Goal	--	12%		2%	
Grades GS-1 to GS-10	6204	544	8.77	120	1.93
Grades GS-11 to SES	9225	930	10.08	222	2.41

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

1. Quarterly reports are submitted to the USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR). 2. Hiring goals are communicated to Hiring Managers during their mandatory management training. In this in-depth supervisor training, Hiring

Managers are trained on the availability of special hiring authorities, such as Schedule A, Direct Hire Authority, VERA, and Veteran’s Preference. In addition, each FPAC Division has an HR Specialist assigned to assist them with any HR-related needs, and they are encouraged to meet bi-weekly. 3. Per our Executive Summary, FPAC’s Workforce Planning and Recruitment Section manages a robust Diversity Recruitment and Outreach Program to participate in Career Fairs with minority-serving institutions, colleges, and universities nationwide. 4. In September of 2022, HRD and CRD led a training event to educate the workforce on disability awareness in the workforce.

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 Yes

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	
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	84	0	0	William.Bridges@usda.gov
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	6	0	0	William.Bridges@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	Darren Ash Director Information Solutions Darren.Ash@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	5	0	0	Monique.Salahuddin@usda
Section 508 Compliance	4	0	0	Darren Ash Director Information Solutions Darren.Ash@usda.gov
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	50	Michelle Hart Chief, Equal Employment Complaints Processing & Resolutions Branch Michelle.Hart@usda.gov

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

The Agency offers HR Staffing Employees, RA/PAS Program Managers, and Special Emphasis Program Managers sufficient resources, including training to carry out their position responsibilities. In response to employee feedback, HRD provided training for HR Staff, FPAC Supervisors, and all interested employees available in the AgLearn system and the agency's internal webpage. HRD provided Hiring Manager courses discussing the use of special hiring authorities for 30% veterans, VRA, and Schedule A applications. Additionally, FPAC RA Program Managers and Outreach Staff stay abreast of relevant disability employment law, updates to agency policy and other topics via webinars and online education and learning systems like Linked-in Learning or Skillssoft.

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

In response to employee feedback, HRD provided training for HR Staff, FPAC Supervisors, and all interested employees available in the AgLearn system and the agency's internal webpage. The Agency offers HR Staffing Employees, RA/PAS Program Managers, and Affirmative Employment Special Emphasis Program Managers sufficient resources, including training to carry out their position responsibilities. HRD provided Hiring Manager courses discussing the use of special hiring authorities for 30% veterans, VRA, and Schedule A applications. Additionally, FPAC RA Program Managers and Outreach Staff stay abreast of relevant disability employment law, updates to agency policy and other topics via webinars and online education and learning systems like Linked-in Learning or Skillssoft.

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.

FPAC uses the following resources to identify PWD/PWTD applicants: • Vocational Rehabilitation Services • Veterans Administration – VR&E Employment Coordinators • Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) • Nonpaid Work Experience Program • Recruitment and Outreach Events • Job and Career Fairs (for students)

- 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

FPAC employs non-competitive hiring authorities established by law or Executive Order (EO) that allows for the quick appointment of qualified candidates while also adhering to Merit System principles. FPAC generally employs the following hiring authorities: • 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.

Program Managers establish relationships with specialists at vocational rehabilitation centers to develop a pool of qualified applicants for FPAC open positions. Next, qualified, eligible candidates are referred from vocational rehabilitation offices or other organizations and groups representing persons with disabilities to the agency program manager. Hiring officials are provided resumes and transcripts, if applicable, of qualified individuals for hiring consideration. The managers and staff 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

FPAC’s Employee Development Section (EDS) provided specialized training for hiring managers during the 1st quarter of FY22. Additionally, HRD offers hiring managers training online through streaming webinars, presentations, and guidance that is available on the HRD internal website and AgLearn.

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.

HRD leads FPAC’s Workforce Planning, Outreach, and Recruitment Section, which manages the mission area’s Diversity Recruitment and Outreach initiatives. Per our executive summary, we have a yearly schedule of targeted institutions, colleges/ universities that include organizations focused on the advancement of individuals with disabilities. For instance, FPAC partners with “CAREERS & the disABLED” to enhance recruitment opportunities. In addition, in FY22, we established and developed partnerships with organizations such as America Job Centers, Centers for Independent Living, and Employment Network Service providers. FPAC CREEOD’s Affirmative Employment Team and affinity group Program Managers promote outreach activities by working closely with State-level DEPMs, VEPMs, and Selective Placement Coordinators.

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

During FY22, the number of New Hires saw an overall decrease at 6.64% for FY22 to 6.94% for FY21. This falls short of the 12.00% regulatory goal set by the EEOC/OPM. Respectively, this indicates a trigger for this group. FPAC HRD encourages all employees to voluntarily update their ERI and Disability status in the employee personnel system to increase the accuracy of the demographic data.

New Hires	Total (#)	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
		Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)	Permanent Workforce (%)	Temporary Workforce (%)
% of Total Applicants	14323	5.47	0.00	2.65	0.00
% of Qualified Applicants	10866	5.48	0.00	2.51	0.00

% of New Hires	407	2.95	0.00	1.72	0.00
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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

FY22 applicant flow reveals no selections (0.00 percent) for the following newly hired major critical occupations: • GS0401 Natural Resources Management Series • GS1100 General Business and Industry Series 1145 and 1165 • GS1801 General Inspection, Investigation, Enforcement, And Compliance Series This indicates a trigger for these MCO.

New Hires to Mission-Critical Occupations	Total (#)	Reportable Disability	Targetable Disability
		New Hires (%)	New Hires (%)
Numerical Goal	--	12%	2%
0301 MISC ADMINISTRATION AND PROGRAM	10	0.00	0.00
0343 MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAM ANALYSIS	5	0.00	0.00
0401 GENERAL BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE	32	3.13	3.13
0457 SOIL CONSERVATION	127	1.57	0.00
0458 SOIL CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN	24	8.33	8.33
0470 SOIL SCIENCE	3	0.00	0.00
0501 FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION & PROGRAM	0	0.00	0.00
0510 ACCOUNTING	1	0.00	0.00
0560 BUDGET ANALYSIS	1	0.00	0.00
0802 ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN	17	5.88	5.88
0810 CIVIL ENGINEERING	28	0.00	0.00
1101 GENERAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	91	3.30	1.10
1145 AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM SPECIALIST	0	0.00	0.00
1165 LOAN SPECIALIST	56	1.79	1.79
1801 GENERAL INSPECTION, INVESTIGATION AND COMPLIANCE	1	0.00	0.00
2210 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT	11	18.18	9.09

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 Yes

FY22 applicant flow reveals non-selection (0.00 percent) for the following internal applicant major critical occupations indicating a trigger: • GS0401 Natural Resources Management Series • GS1100 General Business and Industry Series 1101 and 1145 • GS1801 General Inspection, Investigation, Enforcement, And Compliance Series • GS2210 Information Tech Management

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 Yes

FY22 internal promotions for PWTD employees are below the OCLF and RAP in all MCO series.

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 FPAC 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 TD.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

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

Individual Development Plans, or IDPs, are used to identify short-term and long-term goals for employee development. Each Mission Area agency identifies yearly funding for staff development opportunities. FPAC utilizes mandatory, quarterly performance meetings between employee and supervisor to discuss performance goals, measures, employee development and identify stretch assignments. HRD/EDS has developed updated career paths for most major occupations for all FPAC mission areas. The plans are available to all FPAC EDS intra-net site employees. Free training is offered through AgLearn on diverse topics using various web-based and on-demand technologies. Linked-in Learning modules and Skillsoft course catalogues were expanded to include leadership, administrative, diversity and inclusion, and various learning and educational topics. Enhanced opportunities and resources are offered through Detail assignments which are announced through email distribution and the FBC intra-net site.

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	1383	249	18.00%	0.07%	1.80%	0.00%
Other Career Development Programs	19	8	42.10%	42.10%	0.00%	0.00%

Career Development Opportunities	Total Participants		PWD		PWTD	
	Applicants (#)	Selectees (#)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)
Fellowship Programs						
Training Programs						
Mentoring Programs						
Coaching Programs						
Detail 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 No
- b. Selections (PWD) Answer Yes

FY22, the relevant applicant pool for interns who identify as TD is 0.44%. With this in mind and no selections or 0.00% for intern positions indicate a trigger.

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 Yes
- b. Selections (PWTD) Answer Yes

A trigger exists for PWTD as it is below the relevant applicant pool of .44% at 0.07% for Interns and no selections or 0.0% for the leadership development program.

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 Yes

Using a suitable inclusion rate of 11.09% PWD Time-off Awards are below 9.98%. Cash Awards for PWD was 10.05% during FY22. This is closer to the inclusion ratio of 11.17% but slightly below. PWTD are below the inclusion ratio at Time-off and Cash awards, indicating a trigger.

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 hours: Awards Given	997	7.80	6.08	7.89	7.77
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Total Hours	6833	49.86	42.18	49.42	50.00
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Average Hours	6.85	0.43	0.05	1.83	0.01

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 hours: Awards Given	413	2.10	2.82	1.75	2.21
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Total Hours	7632	39.01	52.10	30.41	41.61
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Average Hours	18.48	1.26	0.14	5.07	0.11
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 hours: Awards Given	130	0.54	0.85	0.00	0.71
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Total Hours	3236	13.03	21.15	0.00	16.96
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Average Hours	24.89	1.63	0.19	0.00	2.12
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 hours: Awards Given	173	1.15	1.16	1.75	0.97
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Total Hours	6698	45.59	45.03	70.18	38.16
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Average Hours	38.72	2.68	0.30	11.70	-0.04
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Total Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Average Hours	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Cash Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Awards Given	5114	38.26	32.73	38.89	38.07
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Total Amount	3715088	27590.57	23800.25	28237.43	27395.14
Cash Awards: \$501 - \$999: Average Amount	726.45	48.92	5.61	212.31	-0.45
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Awards Given	6810	48.03	44.55	44.44	49.12
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Total Amount	8164847	57490.30	53492.73	52485.67	59002.30
Cash Awards: \$1000 - \$1999: Average Amount	1198.95	81.20	9.25	345.30	1.41
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Awards Given	1600	9.77	10.65	10.53	9.54
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Total Amount	3521535	22001.63	23379.17	23180.41	21645.49
Cash Awards: \$2000 - \$2999: Average Amount	2200.96	152.79	16.92	643.90	4.41
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Awards Given	525	3.12	3.50	3.22	3.09
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Total Amount	1727869	10086.43	11522.79	10457.02	9974.47
Cash Awards: \$3000 - \$3999: Average Amount	3291.18	219.27	25.38	950.64	-1.69
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Awards Given	135	0.75	0.93	0.58	0.80
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Total Amount	558385	3077.54	3855.67	2631.58	3212.28

Cash Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Cash Awards: \$4000 - \$4999: Average Amount	4136.19	279.78	31.87	1315.79	-33.22
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Awards Given	90	0.68	0.59	0.88	0.62
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Total Amount	521762	3663.50	3482.06	4824.56	3312.72
Cash Awards: \$5000 or more: Average Amount	5797.36	366.35	45.22	1608.19	-8.83

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 Yes

b. Pay Increases (PWTD) Answer Yes

The Performance-based inclusion index was 8.03%, and PWD and PWTD were below the rate at 7.43% and 2.03%, respectively. This indicates a trigger.

Other Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Total Performance Based Pay Increases Awarded	37	0.07	0.26	0.00	0.09

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

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 Yes

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer Yes

c. Grade GS-14

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer Yes

ii. Internal Selections (PWD)	Answer	Yes
d. Grade GS-13		
i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)	Answer	Yes
ii. Internal Selections (PWD)	Answer	Yes

In all cases, senior grade level applicants or selections for GS 13 – 15 Individuals with a Disability (PWD) did not meet the Relevant Applicant Pool benchmarks. SES-level is managed through the Department and was unavailable for this reporting period. Non-GS pay plan data was not obtainable in the NFC Reporting Center.

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	No
ii. Internal Selections (PWTB)	Answer	No
c. Grade GS-14		
i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB)	Answer	Yes
ii. Internal Selections (PWTB)	Answer	Yes
d. Grade GS-13		
i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTB)	Answer	No
ii. Internal Selections (PWTB)	Answer	Yes

GS-14 applicants in the Targeted Disability (TD) group met Relevant Applicant Pool benchmarks, however there were no selections made at this level. GS-13 applicants exceeded the Relevant Applicant Pool benchmarks; however, TD were below the goal for internal selections. SES-level is managed through the Department and was not available for this reporting period. Non-GS pay plan data was not obtainable in the NFC Reporting Center. Non-GS pay plan data was not obtainable in the NFC Reporting Center.

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	Yes
c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD)	Answer	Yes
d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD)	Answer	No

Although there were applicants at the GS-15 and -14 senior levels, both were below the 12.00% regulatory goals and both had no selections for new hires. SES-level information is managed through the Department and was not available for this reporting period. Non-GS pay plan data was not obtainable in the NFC Reporting Center.

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 | Yes |
| c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |
| d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) | Answer | Yes |

Although there were applicants at the GS 15 - 13 level, there were no selections for PWTD new hires at the senior levels. SES-level information is managed through the Department and was not available for this reporting period. Non-GS pay plan data was not obtainable in the NFC Reporting Center

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 | No |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWD) | Answer | No |
| b. Managers | | |
| i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) | Answer | No |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWD) | Answer | No |
| c. Supervisors | | |
| i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) | Answer | No |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWD) | Answer | No |

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 | No |
| ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) | Answer | No |

b. Managers

- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer Yes

c. Supervisors

- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer No

Internal selections for PWTD Managers were slightly below the benchmark (relevant applicant pool at 0.50%; selections 0.46%).

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 Yes
- b. New Hires for Managers (PWD) Answer Yes
- c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD) Answer Yes

There were no selections during the reporting period indicating a trigger.

8. 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 (PWTD) Answer Yes
- b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD) Answer Yes
- c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD) Answer Yes

There were no selections during the reporting period indicating a trigger.

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 No
- b. Involuntary Separations (PWD) Answer Yes

Involuntary separations for PWD at 13.5% exceeded the inclusion rate of 11.96% indicating a trigger.

Separations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	42	0.33	0.26
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	771	3.52	5.04
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	615	4.32	3.86
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	175	1.20	1.10
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	1603	9.36	10.26

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

During FY22Q1 the top exit interview reason for separating was retirement at 67%, following at 18% inadequate equipment for reasonable accommodation.

Separations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	42	0.57	0.26
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	771	2.84	4.94
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	615	4.83	3.88
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	175	1.14	1.11
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	1603	9.38	10.19

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.

During FY22 Q1, employees who participated in exit interviews stated the top reasons for separating were due to: retirement, 91 employees or 67%; inadequate equipment for reasonable accommodation, 25 employees or 18%; and voluntary separation due to job stress with the following examples being: mandated COVID vaccine, testing, and masking requirements, 25 employees or 15%.

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.

• USDA: <https://www.usda.gov/accessibility-statement> • FSA: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/help/accessibility-statement/index> • NRCS: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/accessibility> • RMA: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Web-Site-Policies-and-Important-Links/>

Accessibility-Statement • FPAC BC: <https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/about/civil-rights-and-equal-employment-opportunity/accessibility/index.html>

- 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 Access Board is the federal agency responsible for enforcing the ABA. The Access Board’s accessibility standards are available on their website at <https://www.access-board.gov/aba/>. For information about filing a complaint, go to <https://www.access-board.gov/enforcement/>

- 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.

At the time of reporting there were no new programs, policies, or practices to review.

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.)

Upon receiving the supporting medical documentation, the average time within FY2022 to process initial requests for reasonable accommodations was 22 business days out of the 30 business days required. The customer is allowed 15 business days to obtain all the sufficient medical documentation to support their claim and 30 business days regarding the interactive process with both the Requestor 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.

RA Program Effectiveness: • The number of requests received in FY2022 was 1,393 requests • The average processing timeframe for each request was 22 days • The FY22 approval ratio was 99% FY2022 RA Training Conducted: • The number of trainings conducted within the RA Program Area during the FY was 5 RA Webinars (1 hr. each). These included outside presenters from the Office of General Council. Topics included: Essential Duties, Fit for Duty, PAS, Service/Emotional Support Animals Performance and Conduct relative to an existing RA and Environmental Sensitivities.

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. The

Reasonable Accommodation Program presented five (5) Webinars throughout the mission area involving Reasonable Accommodations to include the PAS requirement. FY2022 RA Training Conducted: • The number of trainings conducted within the RA Program Area during the FY was 5 RA Webinars (1 hr. each). These included outside presenters from the Office of General Council. • Topics included: Essential Duties, Fit for Duty, PAS, Service/Emotional Support Animals Performance and Conduct relative to an existing RA and Environmental Sensitivities.

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.

Complaints Alleging Harassment • FY22 Government Average: 22% • FY22 FPAC Average: 22.0% The Agency incurred one (1) finding of discrimination during FY22. The finding did not cite a harassment based on a disability.

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 Agency incurred one (1) finding of discrimination during FY22. The finding did not cite a harassment based on a disability.

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

Source of the Trigger:	Workforce Data (if so identify the table)	
Specific Workforce Data Table:	Workforce Data Table - B1	
STATEMENT OF CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER: Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue. How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?	FPAC is not meeting the 501 regulatory goals of 12% Persons with a Disability (PWD). PWD are not meeting established Occupational Civilian Labor Force (OCLF) and Relevant Applicant Pool benchmarks for Major Critical Occupations (MCO) within FPAC.	
STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:	<i>Barrier Group</i> People with Disabilities People with Targeted Disabilities	
Barrier Analysis Process Completed?:	Y	
Barrier(s) Identified?:	Y	
STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER: Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.	Barrier Name	Description of Policy, Procedure, or Practice
	Institutional Barriers:	Workforce undercount of FPAC employees and applicant demographics exists due to the self-identification policy for race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, and disability. Identifying demographic data is voluntary for employees and applicants alike, making it difficult and near impossible to get accurate and reliable demographic data. Because of this ongoing policy and systemic issue, reportable demographic data are often skewed. The USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) and the NFC Reporting Center are aware of the systemic data issues and working on providing specific responses to resolve them. Policies and procedures are in place for the hiring and advancement of all FPAC personnel at all levels. However, FPAC currently does not have a Selective Placement Coordinator or Team. Despite this, Schedule A, VEOA, and other special hiring authorities are now in use and highly encouraged for external hires. Although policy communications are fully disseminated, i
	Physical Barriers:	USDA FPAC service center's physical facilities experienced non-compliance with Federal standards and regulations for building accessibility, specifically the lack of [formerly named handicap] placard parking at urban areas buildings. The onsite review of physical and structural facilities is a standard part of the civil rights compliance review (CRCR) process for NRCS but not for all other mission agencies within FPAC. In addition, curtailing mission travel continues due to the pandemic which affects onsite compliance reviews using form AD 2056 Building Accessibility.

		Barrier Name	Description of Policy, Procedure, or Practice			
		Attitudinal Barriers:	Assessment of complaint activity does not confirm more than usual complaints, citing Disability, Reasonable Accommodations, or Harassment. HRD provided Special Hiring Authority and Reasonable Accommodations training to managers during FY2022. In addition, to improve awareness, diversity, and inclusion among FPAC's workforce, CREEOD provided training on Unconscious Bias, Ableism, and Disability Inclusion in the Workplace during the reporting period. Despite these actions, FPAC new hires for PWD and TD were below 501 regulatory goals of 12% for PWD and 2% for TD.			
Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan						
Date Initiated	Target Date	Sufficient Funding / Staffing?	Date Modified	Date Completed	Objective Description	
01/02/2022	12/31/2024	Yes			Increase the participation rate of PWD and PWTD in the workforce	
Responsible Official(s)						
Title		Name		Standards Address The Plan?		
Chief Human Resources Officer		Melissa Drummond		Yes		
Chief Operating Officer		Robert Ibarra		Yes		
Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective						
Target Date	Planned Activities			Sufficient Staffing & Funding?	Modified Date	Completion Date
12/31/2023	Continue to monitor quarterly progress on hiring goals for major occupations.			Yes		
12/31/2023	Continue to offer equal access to all events, training, and career development opportunities.			Yes		
12/31/2023	Develop a Human Capital Operating Plan for the recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with disabilities.			Yes		
12/31/2023	Conduct a deeper dive Barrier Analysis			Yes		
Report of Accomplishments						
Fiscal Year	Accomplishment					
2021	FPAC HRD completed the transition of the Special Emphasis Program to CREEOD and stood up the Affirmative Employment Program housed under the Equal Employment Complaints Processing and Resolutions Branch of the Division.					
2022	<p>CREEOD provided Annual and quarterly Special Emphasis Program Manager Training. CREEOD conducted a total of 44 CR training events in FY22. This is an increase of 15 (52%) over the 29 produced in FY21; 26 included DEIA concepts. The Division hosted 19 Cultural Observances/Events a 63% increase over FY2021. We also produced 12 articles, a 42% increase over FY21.</p> <p>In collaboration with HRD, FPAC Mission Area attended 73 Outreach and Recruitment events. 103 EEO observations were conducted to assist agencies in hiring interviews for a variety of sensitive and supervisory positions.</p>					
2022	<p>the number and percentage of PWD employees in the current workforce increased from the prior fiscal year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY21 #1,478 9.33% • FY22 #1,506 9.56% 					

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

Planned activity deadlines have longer term due dates (2 - 3 years).

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

Although still under the 501 regulatory goals, the number and percentage of PWD employees in the current workforce increased from the prior fiscal year. • FY21 #1,478 9.33% • FY22 #1,506 9.56%

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.

HRD is working toward completing FPACs comprehensive Human Capital Operating and Recruitment Plan incorporating strategic information regarding special hiring authorities. CREEOD intends to work with HRD to monitor the progress of FPACs Strategic Plan, when it becomes available.