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 FY22, persons with disabilities (Form SF-256 Disability Codes 01-04; 06-99) in the permanent GS 1-10 levels totaled 31.1% of the respective workforce. Persons with disabilities in the GS-11 to senior leader cluster totaled 16.9% of the respective workforce. Employees with targeted disabilities accounted for 4.9% of the GS-1 to GS-10 levels, whereas 2.3% of those in the GS-11 and above positions reported targeted disabilities.

*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

For FY22, employees with targeted disabilities (Form SF-256 Disability Codes 01-04; 06-99) accounted for 4.9% of the GS-1 to GS-10 levels, whereas 2.3% of those in the GS-11 and above positions reported targeted disabilities.

Grade Level Cluster(GS or Alternate Pay Planb)	Total	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability	
	#	#	%	#	%
Numarical Goal	--	12%		2%	
Grades GS-1 to GS-10	135	41	30.37	6	4.44
Grades GS-11 to SES	643	112	17.42	16	2.49

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

During FY 2022, NASS focused on the goals for recruitment, hiring, and retention of employees with disabilities to increase the numbers within its workforce, along with encouraging employees to update their disability status. These efforts were successful, as despite a decline in its workforce, the agency exceeded both the PWD and PWTD Federal targets for its permanent workforce. The

NASS Civil Rights Office prepares a quarterly MD-715 Executive Summary for the SES team that highlights the Agency performance in meeting the Federal PWD and PWTD goals.

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	
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	5	0	0	Agricultural Resource Service (ARS) Human Resource Managers
Section 508 Compliance	3	0	0	Kristen Lenhardt, Director NASS Public Affairs Office
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	June Turner, Director NASS Civil Rights Office
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	USDA Departmental Management
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	7	0	0	Agricultural Resource Service (ARS) Director Human Resource Manager Willis.Collie@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	1	0	0	REEaccomodations@usda.g

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

Program staff regularly attend seminars sponsored by FEED, EARN, and JAN. OPM has also sponsored training sessions on disability hiring and retention, which NASS staff have attended. CRO participates with the interagency working group, FEED. CRO also circulated agency-wide the U.S. Department of Labor memo looking for federal employees to act as volunteer recruiters for the

Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP). NASS continues to have challenges analyzing some of the data until the Department resolves the issues of producing accurate and useful applicant flow tables. In FY 2019, the Department piloted a new applicant flow data query system (USA Staffing) to get better analyses tables for applicant flow, but there are still inconsistencies between the USA Staffing output and workforce data tables produced by NFC. It is challenging to reconcile data between the two systems, especially since the NFC system does not produce any values except for those selected for promotions or as new hires. Additionally, there have been many glitches and outages with USA Staffing that OPM is working through. While there is more detailed data in the applicant flow (when available), there is still no information about candidates who were interviewed, limiting the possible barrier analysis.

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 current hiring tool, USAJobs, has added process constraints, and this is the main tool used by the ARS HR staff who handling hiring actions for the NASS. NASS does use the Schedule A Hiring Authority and the Veteran hiring authorities to appoint eligible persons and Veterans with disabilities into positions when possible. NASS has 19.6% of staff who identify as persons with disability, including 2.9% as persons with targeted disability, which is similar to FY 2021's levels.

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

Managers with hiring authority in Headquarters, the National Operations Division, and in the 12 Regional Field Offices attend numerous job and career fairs at colleges and universities in-person and virtually, throughout the year to recruit potential candidates for employment. Many of these institutions have Veterans and students with disabilities.

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.

NASS predominately uses OPM's USA Jobs to recruit potential candidates and works closely with ARS's HR Staff (as they process NASS's hiring) to determine Schedule A eligibility if people and veterans with disabilities apply. These lists of qualified Schedule A applicants are referred to management when positions become available.

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.

<div align="right">Answer   Yes</div>

> Hiring managers and Senior leadership receive annual reasonable accommodation and personal assistance services training which includes Special Hiring Authorities overview and review of the application process.

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.

> NASS will continue to collaborate with various colleges and universities to recruit qualified persons with disabilities. NASS has also begun to plan to work more closely with both EARN and JAN. Information and resources shared at FEED meetings has also beneficial and these are shared agency-wide.

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

> NASS had 19 permanent new hires in FY 2022. The permanent new hires self-reported as 5.26% (1 person) PWD, but there were no PWTD new hires. Considering the low amount of hiring and the downward trend for the overall workforce in FY 2022, there was not much of a change in representation in the agency, so no conclusions can be drawn at this time.

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   No

         b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD)   Answer   No

> There were no qualified applicants who were PWD or PWTD, despite receiving applications from both groups. Considering the low amount of hiring and the downward trend for the overall workforce in FY 2022, there was not much of a change in representation in the agency, so no conclusions can be drawn at this time.

New Hires to Mission-Critical Occupations	Total	Reportable Disability	Targetable Disability
		New Hires	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

> Unlikely that there are triggers for PWD/PWTD among the internal applicants. While there are still issues with missing Applicant Flow Data due to USA Staffing issues, currently in the NASS Mission Critical Occupation series (GS 1529, 1530, and 2210), the Agency has a rate of 16.5% PWD and 2.5% PWTD. However, out of the 90 internal selections made during FY 2022, 27.8% were of PWD and 6.7% were of PWTD.

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

       a. Promotions for MCO (PWD)   Answer   Yes

       b. Promotions for MCO (PWTD)   Answer   No

> While there were 3 PWD who were qualified internal applicants, none were selected for the 24 selections that were made for MCOs in FY 2022. There were no qualified internal applicants who were PWTD, though there were 11 applicants in that category.

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.

> Through the use of the MD-715 B Table analyses, NASS monitors the recruitment, retention, and advancement of those employees self-identifying as PWD and PWTD. The NASS CRO prepares both quarterly and annual MD-715 reports. Using these, quarterly highlights of the MD-715 are shared with the SES team, which includes a summary of findings, analyses of trends, and triggers identified that could cause barriers to employment or advancement. Both A Tables and B Table findings are summarized in the briefing, and the agency's plans for addressing barriers are included. Most of the NASS development programs (new employees, survey and estimation Basic training, professional development, etc.) are based on occupational series/time with the Agency. Staff attend these in their first three years in NASS, as relevant to their roles. Additionally, during FY 2022, the newly formed Workforce Performance and Staff Development Section delivered training on creating IDPs. The Agency's Workforce Transformation Team drafted a Succession Planning Guide for the agency to ensure opportunities for development and advancement.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

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

NASS continues to promote career development opportunities for employees throughout the agency and in multiple disciplines. The organization continues to promote its Career Path Guides that provides the guidance for the employees to map out their training requirements to advance with their occupational series. NASS provides leadership training, new supervisor training, mentoring, coaching and training in the Executive Core Qualifications, such as preparing for applying to the Senior Executive Service, as well as those applying to the SES Candidate Development Program (CDP) candidates. In addition, within each division and program office, employees have access to funding for annual training conferences or college/university courses related to their positions. NASS is a statistical agency and is always encouraging employees to take advance courses in math and statistics. NASS also encourages upward mobility and during this year had several secretaries and statistical assistants finish degrees to become professional statisticians within the agency. NASS also promotes intra-and inter-Agency details for employees as a tool for career enhancement when considering the training and developmental aspects of the assignment. NASS has an active Mentoring Program to enhance employees' careers by providing a program that fosters working relationships so that they may benefit from other's experiences and wisdom. The NASS Mentoring Program helps employees establish informal networks and gain access to other NASS employees willing to help them better understand NASS, do their jobs better, and prepare for advancement within the Agency. The program is open to ALL employees throughout NASS. Mentors can support, counsel, and coach employees and help them plan and realize their career goals. While employees are always free to seek out mentors on their own, the NASS Mentoring Program provides the Agency support for establishing mentor-mentee relationships. USDA offers many training courses on its AgLearn platform, LinkedIn Learning, and external training opportunities (e.g., GovLoop and Management Concepts) are shared as available for various skills and competencies. Each employee in NASS is required to have an approved IDP on record. Each employee and their supervisor annually update the IDP to reflect the mutual needs of the employee and the Agency. Training and development needs and objectives, and career goals and aspirations of the employee are coordinated with Agency career opportunities and staffing needs. Training plans vary widely and range from university courses and other formal training programs to "none" for employees who are at full performance in their current position and are satisfied there. Employees are encouraged to take training beyond what is sponsored within the Agency, including computer software, statistics, survey methodology, project management, technical and administrative, and professional development courses. NASS management authorizes funding (budget permitting) of some reasonable requests that are included on an approved IDP. The goal of this policy is to enable all employees to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities in areas related to the Agency's mission, or employee interests for professional development (e.g., leadership). These courses can be taken in a traditional classroom or virtually. Courses are sometimes taken on the employee's own time (non-duty hours) but may be taken during duty hours if approved by management. NASS offers three graduate educational training programs designed to provide employees with at least 1 year of graduate level academic education. These programs include Mathematical Statistics or data analytics -designed to provide education for agricultural and mathematical statisticians in advanced statistics and statistical theory to become highly trained mathematical statisticians and Survey Methodology, a program designed for agricultural/survey statisticians and mathematical statisticians to receive advanced training in survey methodology. Participants generally attend the Joint Program for Survey Methodology (JPSM) at the University of Maryland or the University of Michigan. The third graduate educational training program is in the field of Information Technology: This program is designed primarily for information technology specialists to receive at least 1 year of full-time graduate training in software engineering, telecommunications, or management information systems. The program is also open to agricultural/survey statisticians and mathematical statisticians who have a strong interest and background in computer systems and information technology.

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

Career Development Opportunities	Total Participants		PWD		PWTD	
	Applicants (#)	Selectees (#)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)	Applicants (%)	Selectees (%)
Fellowship Programs		3		0%		0%
Internship Programs		4		0%		0%
Mentoring Programs		15		0%		6%
Coaching Programs		11		0%		0%
Training Programs		31		0%		10%
Detail Programs		9		0%		0%
Other Career Development Programs		25		0%		8%

3.

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

    a. Applicants (PWD)   Answer   No

    b. Selections (PWD)   Answer   No

Unknown. NASS doesn't have a quantifiable process for these career development applications to selections.

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

    a. Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   No

    b. Selections (PWTD)   Answer   No

Unknown. NASS doesn't have a quantifiable process for these career development applications to selections.

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 %
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 hours: Awards Given	39	3.92	5.23	4.55	3.82
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Total Hours	260	23.53	35.54	36.36	21.37
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Average Hours	6.67	3.92	1.18	36.36	-1.53
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 hours: Awards Given	9	1.31	1.05	0.00	1.53
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Total Hours	148	18.30	17.42	0.00	21.37
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Average Hours	16.44	9.15	2.90	0.00	10.69
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 hours: Awards Given	8	0.65	1.22	4.55	0.00
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Total Hours	196	18.30	29.27	127.27	0.00
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Average Hours	24.5	18.30	4.18	127.27	0.00
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 hours: Awards Given	4	0.65	0.52	0.00	0.76
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Total Hours	148	20.92	20.21	0.00	24.43

Time-Off Awards	Total (#)	Reportable Disability %	Without Reportable Disability %	Targeted Disability %	Without Targeted Disability %
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Average Hours	37	20.92	6.74	0.00	24.43
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	260	42.48	31.88	31.82	44.27
Cash Awards: $501 - $999: Total Amount	191250	31519.61	23471.25	22613.64	33015.27
Cash Awards: $501 - $999: Average Amount	735.58	484.92	128.26	3230.50	23.82
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Awards Given	431	54.90	56.79	50.00	55.73
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Total Amount	509375	64379.08	67007.84	61363.64	64885.50
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Average Amount	1181.84	766.42	205.55	5578.50	-41.72
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Awards Given	45	5.88	5.92	9.09	5.34
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Total Amount	135000	17647.06	17770.03	27272.73	16030.53
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Average Amount	3000	1960.78	522.65	13636.36	0.00
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Awards Given	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Total Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Average Amount	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Awards Given	1	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Total Amount	18284	0.00	3185.37	0.00	0.00
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Average Amount	18284	0.00	3185.37	0.00	0.00

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 %
Total Performance Based Pay Increases Awarded	8	0.65	1.22	4.55	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   No

        b. Other Types of Recognition (PWTD)   Answer   No

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   No

           ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   No

        b. Grade GS-15

           i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   No

           ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   No

        c. Grade GS-14

           i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   No

           ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   No

        d. Grade GS-13

           i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)   Answer   No

           ii. Internal Selections (PWD)   Answer   No

Unknown. There was too few qualified internal applicants and selections to make inferences.

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   No

           ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   No

b. Grade GS-15

    i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   No

    ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   No

c. Grade GS-14

    i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   No

    ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   No

d. Grade GS-13

    i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD)   Answer   No

    ii. Internal Selections (PWTD)   Answer   No

Unknown. There were too few applicants with targeted disabilities, and no qualified internal applicants and selections to make inferences.

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   No

    b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD)   Answer   No

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

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

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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   No

    b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD)   Answer   No

    c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD)   Answer   No

    d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD)   Answer   No

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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

Unknown. There was too few qualified internal applicants and selections to make inferences.

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	No

        c. Supervisors

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

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	No
b. New Hires for Managers (PWD)	Answer	No
c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD)	Answer	No

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	No

b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD)	Answer	No
c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD)	Answer	No

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

N/A. There were none to convert.

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

Total separations for the agency were 46, PWD was 10 - all voluntary. 3 out of the 10 were PWTD.

Seperations	Total #	Reportable Disabilities %	Without Reportable Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	2	0.00	0.31
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	11	1.28	1.40
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	25	3.21	3.12
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	8	1.92	0.78
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	46	6.41	5.61

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

N/A

Seperations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	2	0.00	0.26
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	11	0.00	1.42

Seperations	Total #	Targeted Disabilities %	Without Targeted Disabilities %
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	25	13.04	2.84
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	8	0.00	1.03
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	46	13.04	5.55

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.

N/A

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.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/section-508 https://www.usda.gov/accessibility-statement https://www.usda.gov/ra/toolkit/document-library https://www.usda.gov/oascr/filing-discrimination-complaint-usda-employee NASS currently defers to the Departmental Section 508 Regulation. While there is no formal Section 508 complaint process within USDA, these complaints would be referred thought the regular EEO complaint process.

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.

https://www.usda.gov/ra/toolkit/document-library https://www.access-board.gov/law/aba.html This file can be accessed on the NASS website homepage through the About NASS/Civil Rights/ Accessibility/Document Library link.

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.

NASS has not needed to improve accessibility to any facilities. Any facilities that NASS occupies either fall under USDA or rented GSA facilities which are compliant. Many staff are fully remote, which improves accessibility needs and creates opportunities for greater inclusion. NASS uses mostly Microsoft Office products, which are consistently improving for accessibility needs. Upon noticing that some employees were unaware of the captioning option in Microsoft Teams for meetings, CRO staff requested instructions be sent to all employees about this feature and how to utilize it, which was sent at the end of FY 2022. Further, NASS is using new contracts to sunset older technology in favor of new, more accessible products/software with better support for current and future needs. There is mandatory 508 Compliance Training annually for all employees, with additional sessions of overviews and practical tips by Public Affairs staff for units who work create materials for public use, such as Statistics Division.

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.)

NASS follows the USDA policy, which stipulates confirmation of receipt within five days. The Agency is also guided by the REE Mission Area policy, which encourages that upon receipt, all supervisors review reasonable accommodation requests immediately or as soon as possible. Once approved, these requests are forwarded to USDA ARS AFM's Reasonable Accommodations Manager. ARS is the agency that handles HR functions for the REE Mission Area (which includes NASS).

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.

All reasonable accommodations requests are processed and implemented in a timely manner, per USDA and REE Mission Area Policies. The policy is posted: https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/odeo/PolicyStatements/1222v3%20(reasonable%20accommodation%20policy).pdf

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.

NASS adheres to the Department and Mission Area policy statements. The NASS Civil Rights Office circulated the link for USDA's Departmental Regulation. Training sessions were also conducted for both supervisory and non-supervisory employees highlighting the new policy. Many supervisors and managers in NASS automatically approve requests for PAS, even without additional documentation and formal requests. https://www.nass.usda.gov/About_NASS/Civil_Rights/reasonable-accommodations2020.pdf https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/odeo/PolicyStatements/1222v3%20(reasonable%20accommodation%20policy).pdf

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.

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?

<div style="text-align: right">Answer   No</div>

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?

<div style="text-align: right">Answer   No</div>

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

Section VIII: Identification and Removal of Barriers

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

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

<div style="text-align: right">Answer   Yes</div>

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

<div style="text-align: right">Answer   N/A</div>

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 - B4
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?	No triggers found. NASS is at or above targets for PWD and PWTD overall.

STATEMENT OF BARRIER GROUPS:	*Barrier Group*
	People with 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**
	Low participation in the target disabilities (GS-11 – SES)	NASS has low turnover at senior levels.

Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan					
Date Initiated	**Target Date**	**Sufficient Funding / Staffing?**	**Date Modified**	**Date Completed**	**Objective Description**
02/01/2022	12/31/2024	Yes			Train, mentor and coach the mission critical employees that are in the GS 1 – 10 (4% of employees in this category have PWTD) for succession and candidate pool building to rise into the GS-11-SES slots.
01/01/2020	12/31/2023	Yes			NASS will continue to participate in the Workforce Recruitment Program, and participate fully with the interagency working group, Federal Exchange on Employment and Disability (FEED).
01/01/2020	12/31/2023	Yes			Ensure that the newly formed NASS Strategic Planning Office has a focus on NASS career development opportunities addressing all positions at NASS, employee development opportunities, as well as technical GS-14 and GS-15 positions.
01/01/2020	12/31/2025	Yes	10/01/2020		Continue to encourage development and use of mid- and senior level IDPs for NASS's major occupations in order to keep a pipeline of future managers, supervisors and SES leadership.

Objective(s) and Dates for EEO Plan					
Date Initiated	**Target Date**	**Sufficient Funding / Staffing?**	**Date Modified**	**Date Completed**	**Objective Description**
01/01/2020	12/31/2025	Yes		09/30/2020	Encourage supervisors and managers to utilize special hiring authorities where applicable.

Responsible Official(s)		
Title	**Name**	**Standards Address The Plan?**
NASS Civil Rights Office	June Turner	Yes

Planned Activities Toward Completion of Objective				
Target Date	**Planned Activities**	**Sufficient Staffing & Funding?**	**Modified Date**	**Completion Date**
12/31/2022	A training needs assessment revealed that there is still a need for more training initiatives and leadership development programs. With many top-level managers eligible to retire, there will be many opportunities to fill supervisory and executive level positions within the agency in the near future. NASS Training Office, Civil Rights Office, and the Office of the Administrator will continue to offer training sessions for managers and supervisors.	Yes		
12/31/2022	Promote the NASS Mentoring Program to all staff. - The mission of the NASS Mentoring Program is to enhance employees' careers by providing a program that fosters working relationships so that they may benefit from other's experiences and wisdom. The NASS Mentoring Program helps employees establish informal networks and gain access to other NASS employees willing to help them better understand NASS, do their jobs better, and prepare for advancement within the Agency. The program is open to ALL employees throughout NASS. Mentors can support, counsel, and coach employees and help them plan and realize their career goals. While employees are always free to seek out mentors on their own, the NASS Mentoring Program provides the Agency support for establishing mentor-mentee relationships.	Yes		
12/31/2022	Employees are encouraged to take training beyond what is sponsored within the Agency, including computer software, statistics, survey methodology, project management, technical and administrative, and personal development courses. NASS management authorizes funding (budget permitting) of all reasonable requests that are included on an approved IDP. The goal of this policy is to enable all employees to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities in areas related to the Agency's mission. These courses can be taken in a traditional classroom or on-line. Courses are often taken on the employee's own time (non-duty hours), but may be taken during duty hours if approved by management.	Yes		

Report of Accomplishments	
Fiscal Year	**Accomplishment**
2022	Employees are encouraged to take training beyond what is sponsored within the Agency, including computer software, statistics, survey methodology, project management, technical and administrative, and personal development courses. NASS management authorizes funding (budget permitting) of all reasonable requests that are included on an approved IDP. The goal of this policy is to enable all employees to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities in areas related to the Agency's mission. These courses can be taken in a traditional classroom or on-line. Courses are often taken on the employee's own time (non-duty hours), but may be taken during duty hours if approved by management.
2022	The NASS Career Paths Team, which consists of Agency Human Resource specialists and employees from several agency units representing various job series and grade levels. The team developed very comprehensive career path guides designed to help employees understand what knowledge, skills, personal characteristics, and experiences are required to progress in their career. The career path guides identify the competencies needed to be successful in a job series; serve as a resource to develop skills for advancement; and provide the tools for communication with managers to set career goals and set realistic expectations when making career decisions. The guides act also as a tool for manager to help clarify expectations and proficiency standards for each career level; and provides a resource to help managers and employees discuss career goals and set reasonable expectations. The guide provides a clear picture of the various job opportunities within in each job series and across the agency.
2022	Each employee in NASS is required to have an approved IDP on record. Each employee and their supervisor annually update the IDP to reflect the mutual needs of the employee and the Agency. Training and development needs and objectives, and career goals and aspirations of the employee are coordinated with Agency career opportunities and staffing needs. Training plans vary widely and range from college courses and other formal training programs to "none" for employees who are fully competent in their current position.
2022	The NASS Disability Employment Special Emphasis Program Manager position is a 10% collateral duty assignment, with a focus on inclusion. Two programs were sponsored by NASS during FY 2022 for Disabilities Awareness Month and one for the National Disability Awareness Month. NASS staff attended the USDA, Office of Human Resources Management, National Disability Employment Awareness Month observance. Staff were also invited to attend other organization and agency training webinars throughout National Disability Employment Awareness Month. NASS worked with is mission area to host a week-long mental health awareness trainings.
2022	In FY 2022, NASS held several leadership development-training opportunities for all staff and some directly for supervisors looking for upward mobility. NASS revamped its mentoring program, responsibility for which was moved under the Agency's training division, located in the National Operations Center in St. Louis, MO. In addition, NASS senior staff are encouraging more women, minorities and individuals with disabilities to consider these leadership positions as they become available. In FY 2022, NASS had several upward mobility conversions to the professional series.
2022	All NASS staff were invited to attend OPM's training session, The Executive Core Qualifications - Preparing for Application to the Senior Executive Service, which targeted Agency employees aspiring and preparing to apply to the SES, as well as those applying to the SES Candidate Development Program (CDP) candidates preparing their ECQs for review.
2022	NASS revamped the Mentoring Program. The mission of the NASS Mentoring Program is to enhance employees' careers by providing a program that fosters working relationships so that they may benefit from other's experiences and wisdom. The NASS Mentoring Program helps employees establish informal networks and gain access to other NASS employees willing to help them better understand NASS, do their jobs better, and prepare for advancement within the Agency. The program is open to ALL employees throughout NASS. Mentors can support, counsel, and coach employees and help them plan and realize their career goals. While employees are always free to seek out mentors on their own, the NASS Mentoring Program provides the Agency support for establishing mentor-mentee relationships.
2022	NASS sent instructions to all employees to review and update their Disability Status on their Employee Personnel Page, as necessary. The Diversity and Outreach Program Manager also provided additional guidance to those who requested further instructions in coding their disabilities.

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

There are many ongoing initiatives.

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

Better understanding on the use of special hiring authorities and good grasp of the sensitivity issues associated with the handling of a reasonable accommodation.

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.

Planned activities helped correct the trigger yet the Agency will move ahead with all plans to bring on staff who self-identify as PWD and PWTD once a more fiscally and physically stable environment allows more hiring. The Agency was able to hire 50 individuals in FY 2021, but only 10.0% self-reported as PWD. NASS is committed to putting forth a positive effort of creating an inclusive and supportive environment.