



**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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**Fiscal Year 2014**

**Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report**



**Equal Opportunity for All**

**Office of the Chief  
Civil Rights Division**

5601 Sunnyside Avenue  
Beltsville, MD 20705  
December 1, 2014

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Annual EEO Program Status Report  
EEOC FORM 715-01

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## **Message From the Director, Civil Rights Division**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is proud to present its Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program Status Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, as required by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Management Directive 715 (MD-715). NRCS promotes the highest level of organizational performance in order to achieve its mission of "*Helping People Help the Land.*"

The Chief of NRCS is fully committed to maintain a work environment free of discrimination and ensure a compliant civil rights program that practices the principles of equal employment opportunities for all employees and applicants. NRCS succeeds in part by ensuring that our workplace decisions are equitable and based upon merit and by employing a workforce that reflects one of our nation's greatest strengths—the diversity of America's citizens. This diversity extends not only to the variety of races and ethnicities but also to the multitude of backgrounds, talents, skills, education, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives of our employees.

NRCS also recognizes the need to create and maintain a highly skilled workforce in which individual differences are respected and valued. Our employees are empowered to do their work so that they can reach their potential while making contributions toward the NRCS's mission. The Civil Rights Division serves as a senior advisor on all matters as related to equal employment opportunity and civil rights including developing and setting policy procedures and guidance specifically for achieving a model EEO program. Our senior leaders including the Assistant Chief, Deputy Chiefs, Regional Conservationists, and personnel managers are held accountable for the effective implementation and management of the MD 715 guidance.

As the agency's principal EEO steward, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage supervisors and employees to renew your commitment to support the principles of equal employment opportunity. A diverse, highly skilled workforce is simply vital to our mission. We must take whatever actions are needed to ensure that the principles of equal opportunity and diversity are clearly communicated and practiced in our daily routines as it is more than just a one-time reporting requirement. Together we can make a difference.

*Selina Lee*

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART A - D		U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission FEDERAL AGENCY ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT			
For period covering October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014.					
<b>PART A</b> Department or Agency Identifying Information	<b>1. Agency</b>		<b>1. U.S. Department of Agriculture</b>		
	1.a. 2 <sup>nd</sup> level reporting component		<b>Natural Resources Conservation Service</b>		
	1.b. 3 <sup>rd</sup> level reporting component				
	1.c. 4 <sup>th</sup> level reporting component				
	<b>2. Address</b>		<b>2. 1400 Independence Avenue, SW</b>		
	<b>3. City, State, Zip Code</b>		<b>3. Washington, DC 20020</b>		
	4. CPDF Code	<b>4. DA</b>	<b>5. Agency Code</b>	<b>5. AG16</b>	
<b>PART B</b> Total Employment	1. Enter total number of permanent full-time and part-time employees				<b>1. 10,368</b>
	2. Enter total number of temporary employees				<b>2. 337</b>
	3. Enter total number employees paid from non-appropriated funds				<b>3. 0</b>
	<b>4. TOTAL EMPLOYMENT [add lines B 1 through 3]</b>				<b>4. 10,705</b>
<b>PART C</b> Agency Official(s) Responsible For Oversight of EEO Program(s)	1. Head of Agency Official Title		Jason Weller Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service		
	2. Agency Head Designee		Leonard Jordan Assistant Chief for Conservation		
	3. Principal EEO Director/Official Title/series/grade		Selina S. Lee Director, Civil Rights Division (CRD)		
	4. Title VII Affirmative EEO Program Official		Sandra McWhirter Chief, Employment Compliance Branch, CRD		
	5. Section 501 Affirmative Action Program Official		Brienne Burger, Talent Management		
	6. Complaint Processing Program Manager		Sandra McWhirter Chief, Employment Compliance Branch, CRD		
	7. Other Responsible EEO Staff		Sharyn Alvarez, National Federal Women's Program Manager		
		Jacqueline Horne, Acting Director, Talent Management			
		Anita Holland-Spears, MD 715 Program Analyst, CRD Barbara Taylor, MD 715 Senior Program Manager, CRD			

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART A - D	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission FEDERAL AGENCY ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT		
PART D List of Subordinate Components Covered in This Report	Subordinate Component and Location (City/State)		CPDF and FIPS codes
Policy Statements			X
Executive Summary [FORM 715-01 PART E], that includes:	X	*Optional Annual Self-Assessment Checklist Against Essential Elements [FORM 715-01PART G]	X
Brief paragraph describing the agency's mission and mission-related functions	X	*EEO Plan To Attain the Essential Elements of a Model EEO Program [FORM 715-01 PART H] for each programmatic essential element requiring improvement	X
Summary of results of agency's annual self-assessment against MD-715 "Essential Elements"	X	*EEO Plan To Eliminate Identified Barrier [FORM 715-01 PART I] for each identified barrier	X
Summary of Analysis of Work Force Profiles including net change analysis and comparison to RCLF	X	*Special Program Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, and Advancement of Individuals With Targeted Disabilities for agencies with 1,000 or more employees [FORM 715-01 PART J]	X
Summary of EEO Plan objectives planned to eliminate identified barriers or correct program deficiencies	X	*Copy of Workforce Data Tables as necessary to support Executive Summary and/or EEO Plans	X
Summary of EEO Plan action items implemented or accomplished	X	*Copy of data from 462 Report as necessary to support action items related to Complaint Processing Program deficiencies, ADR effectiveness, or other compliance issues	X
*Statement of Establishment of Continuing Equal Employment Opportunity Programs [FORM 715-01 PART F]	X	*Copy of Facility Accessibility Survey results as necessary to support EEO Action Plan for building renovation projects	
*Copies of relevant EEO Policy Statement(s) and/or excerpts from revisions made to EEO Policy Statements	X	*Organizational Chart	X

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA), NATURAL RESOURCES  
CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)  
ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT  
EEOC FORM 715-01, PART E  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**INTRODUCTION**

The mission of the NRCS is to improve the health of our Nation's natural resources while sustaining and enhancing the productivity of American agriculture. NRCS provides voluntary assistance through strong partnerships with private landowners, managers, and communities to protect, restore, and enhance the lands and waters upon which people and the environment depend.

NRCS strives to ensure that its workforce is free of barriers to equal employment opportunity (EEO) to attract, develop, and retain a highly quality workforce as is specified in its Strategic Plan for FY 2011-2015 objective #3.4.

NRCS employs a total of 10,705 employees throughout its headquarters in Washington D.C. and four regional offices that include 50 States, the Virgin Islands and the Pacific Basin. NRCS employees primarily provide conservation related program administration and field services across the nation (See Appendix F). The workforce is committed to providing our partners and participants the assistance to succeed in a highly competitive global agricultural economy.

Pursuant to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC's), Management Directive (MD) 715 guidance, all Federal managers, supervisors, human resource specialists, and EEO officials are held accountable for the effective implementation of a model EEO program. The lead responsibility for day-to-day implementation of the EEO program within the agency rests with the Director of the Civil Rights Division (CRD) who reports to the Chief of NRCS. The office of the CRD is located in Beltsville, Maryland, and is responsible for the overall evaluation and development of the agency-wide affirmative employment effort with direct authority to administer the EEO process including functions such as alternative dispute resolution (ADR), Title VI program compliance, and workforce training. The Director, CRD routinely works with the Deputy Chief for Management, Director of Talent Management, and Director of Human Resources to monitor the progress in implementing MD-715 strategic goals and actions.

The goal of this report is to assess the progress of the NRCS EEO program pursuant to EEOC requirements and to provide feedback to assist USDA in its ongoing efforts to become a model EEO employer.

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Executive Summary**

**Key Accomplishments in FY 2014**

1. Issued a new NRCS Anti-Discrimination Policy Statement, in support of the Secretary's policy of ensuring a work environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation.
2. Joined the USDA leadership in hosting and celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1963 with numerous observance events and awareness activities throughout the headquarters and the State offices.
3. Emphasized the importance of policy and program compliance by holding NRCS managers and supervisors accountable for civil rights (CR) program implementation and compliance in their performance standards. All managers and employees are required to have a stand-alone CR/EEO performance element.
4. Evaluated all SES-level supervisors and managers to ensure compliance of and commitment support for CR/EEO. NRCS incorporated the requirements of DR 4300-010, "Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures", which requires that annual performance appraisals for managers and supervisors include an evaluation of their contributions to the USDA's commitment to CR and equal opportunity (EO) and to adherence to its CR policy.
5. Implemented a comprehensive training plan to supervisors, managers and employees. Topics included mandatory NO FEAR Act training, CR Compliance and Program Delivery Update, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Special Emphasis Programs, Redirecting Highly Charged Conversations, and Management Directive (MD) 715 training. State offices also provided various CR/EEO training during employee meetings to inform them about their rights and responsibilities in the EEO process. Approximately 95% of NRCS' employees completed the USDA mandatory NO FEAR Act online training.
6. Promoted affirmative program goals and objectives by appointing eight National Special Emphasis Program Managers (NSEPMs): i.e., American Indian/Alaska Native Program, Asian American/Pacific Islander Program; Black Employment Program; Disability Employment Program; Federal Women's Program (FWP); Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Program; Hispanic Employment Program (HEP); and Veterans Employment Program. The national FWP and HEP managers are full-time and the other five national program managers are collateral duty appointments. Additionally, NRCS has over 300 collateral duty Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) nationally in each State and Center for each of the eight SEPs listed above.
7. Successfully conducted ongoing barrier analysis to address potential barriers against women, minorities and persons with disabilities. The barrier analyses were conducted by NSEPMs who reported to the director of Talent Management Division. Each NSEPM also engaged the State's SEPM to implement the plan of action in eliminating potential barriers that may affect each SEP group.
8. Accomplished a moderate increase for minorities, women and persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD): minorities increased by 0.29% from 18.96% in FY 2013 to 19.25% in FY 2014; women increased by 0.41%

from 34.95% in FY 2013 to 35.36% in FY 2014; PWTD increased by 0.04% from 0.92% in FY 2013 to 0.96% in FY 2014.

9. Demonstrated excellent results in maintaining high participation rate of persons with disabilities, which made up of 10.09% of the permanent workforce; it was significantly higher than the community benchmark of 7.00%.
10. Routinely engaged interested employee groups to help implement agency-wide diversity and CR initiatives such as participating in college job fairs, conducting cultural awareness training, planning annual ethnic observance programs, promoting targeted recruitment, addressing career development, and engaging workforce in the SEP barrier analyses.
11. Continued the collaborative relationships with the USDA, Office of Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights (OASCR) to provide ADR training to the workforce and ensured that ADR information and training such as facilitation, teambuilding, conflict resolution, coaching and mentoring are made available to managers and employees.
12. Conducted comprehensive and detailed Civil Rights Impact Analyses (CRIA). The CRIA is a management process designed to ensure that the civil rights impact of any of policy and organizational changes is considered, and to offer recommendations of how these might be mitigated.
13. Widely distributed CR program activities and EEO information to all employees, applicants, and customers via the NRCS, CRD website.
14. Conducted ten CR compliance reviews at the selected State Offices (Massachusetts, South Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, Montana, Utah, Iowa, North Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Indiana), wherein compliance was recognized for prominently displaying civil rights policies and posters.
15. Launched the agency-wide Limited English Proficiency (LEP) program to provide equal opportunity in all programs, services, and activities to LEP individuals.
16. NRCS achieved the following excellent results in complaints processing:
  - NRCS ensured all EEO counselors received annual required training.
  - The FY 2014 pre-complaint rate of 0.5% based on the NRCS workforce indicates a moderate decrease over the last three years, and remains lower than the government-wide average of 1.1%.
  - The offer rate of ADR at the pre-complaint stage of the EEO complaint process was 94.6% which was higher than the government average of 85.7%.
  - The ADR election rate at the pre-complaint stage increased from 28.2% in FY 2010 to 71.7% in FY 2014, which was higher than the government average of 51.1%.
  - Approximately 60% of the NRCS EEO investigations were completed timely by the OASCR, which was a positive improvement from 40% in FY 2013. The average time for completing an investigation was 220 days.
  - In support of the OASCR partnership initiatives, NRCS reimbursed the OASCR approximately \$327,500 (including indirect cost) for servicing 44 EEO investigations.
  - There were no instances of untimely responses to EEOC orders or settlements. All EEOC and OASCR requests for information or documents were timely responded. No remands or notices for failure to comply with EEOC's orders were issued.

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Executive Summary**

**Summary Results of Self-Assessment against MD 715 Essential Elements**

**Essential Element A: Demonstrated Commitment from Agency Leadership**

Assessment of this element includes a review of whether the agency head communicates commitment to EEO through the ranks at the beginning of the agency head's tenure and annually thereafter by issuing and disseminating written policy statements that express the agency head's commitment to EEO and a workplace free of discriminatory harassment.

In an effort to move forward and transform NRCS into a model Title VII/EEO program, NRCS continues to hold directors, high-level employees, EEO staff officials and personnel officers accountable for the effective management of NRCS' affirmative employment programs. NRCS reaffirms EEO for all employees and applicants for employment regardless of any protected bases and strives to ensure all employees are able to compete on a fair and level playing field for job opportunities and advancement.

NRCS has successfully accomplished the following goals as is necessary to achieve a model EEO program based on the evaluation from the USDA, OASCR in its FY 2014 Civil Rights Performance Plan and Accomplishment report.

- 1) *Commitment of Agency Leadership/Strategic Plan Integration;*
- 2) *Program Delivery: Proactive management and legal compliance;*
- 3) *EEO program: Proactive management and legal compliance; and*
- 4) *Utilization of Alternative Dispute Resolution*
- 5) *Procurement.*
- 6) *Secretary's Commitment*
- 7) *Implementation of the Secretary's Commitment to Diversity*
- 8) *Establishment and Implementation of a Special Emphasis Program to Expand Diversity.*

In FY 2014, NRCS accomplished the following key practices:

1. Ensuring policies were prominently posted in all personnel offices, EEO offices and on the agency's website. All policies and procedures related to anti-discrimination laws, civil rights, EEO complaints process, reasonable accommodations, special emphasis programs, and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) were posted or disseminated via NRCS' public website. See Appendix E.
2. Providing training to managers, supervisors and employees. The training covered topics such as CR Compliance and Program Delivery Update, ADR, SEPs, Redirecting Highly Charged Conversations, and MD 715. State offices also provided instructor-led civil rights training during all-employees meetings to inform their employees about their rights and responsibilities. Approximately 95% of NRCS' employees completed the USDA mandatory NO FEAR Act online training.

3. Evaluating program effectiveness by initiating CR compliance reviews. 100% of CR compliance reviews were conducted as scheduled, wherein compliance was noted regarding the areas needing improvement and compliance.
4. Evaluating managers and supervisors for their contributions to USDA's commitment to CR and EEO. Annual performance appraisals for all SES-level supervisors and managers provide feedback on how managers and supervisors carried out their support and commitment to CR and EEO.
5. Holding all NRCS employees accountable for CR responsibilities. By making CR/EEO a critical element on the employee's performance plan, the agency ensures that the employee understands the agency's EEO policies and that the plan provides the accountability necessary to ensure that customers and colleagues are fairly and equitably treated.
6. Appointing SEPMs and members of Civil Rights Advisory Committees (CRACs) on a collateral duty basis. NRCS ensured that an addendum of job duties was provided to the employees to ensure their understanding of the required duties. All collateral SEPMs and the CRAC Chairpersons in each unit report directly to their respective Deputy Equal Employment Officer.
7. Issuing a new Anti-Discrimination Policy Statement from the head of NRCS to reinforce the commitment to provide a work environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and to emphasize our supervisor's obligations to prevent discrimination and promptly cease any form of harassment or retaliation in the workplace.
8. Allocating sufficient resources to support the operations of the NRCS's CR program.

There were no deficiencies found in this essential element.

## **Essential Element B: Integration of EEO into the Agency's Strategic Mission**

This element recognizes that equality of opportunity is essential in attracting, developing, and retaining the most qualified workforce to support the agency's achievement of its strategic mission. It emphasizes that the role of the EEO office is to serve as a resource to agency supervisors and managers by providing direction, guidance, and monitoring of key activities to achieve a diverse workplace free of barriers to equal employment opportunity. Assessment of this essential element included a review of the reporting structure of the EEO Director, techniques the agency uses to integrate the EEO program into the agency's mission, whether the EEO Director has regular and effective means of informing the agency head and other senior management officials of the status of the EEO program, and whether EEO officials are involved in and consulted on human capital management and personnel actions.

Annually, the Chief, NRCS allocates sufficient resources to administer Title VII and Rehabilitation Act programs. Amidst Agency reorganization, the Agency produced an accompanying Strategic Plan Progress Report and Update Plan. The release of the updated FY 2011-2015 Strategic Plan was postponed due to delayed funding and congressional modification of the NRCS program budget. Despite the delay, the Strategic Plan Progress Report and Update incorporated the agency's assurance of fair and equitable service delivery to all program customers and the goals of increasing diversity in employment. It also included assurance of CR/EEO goals and objectives relative to the Secretary's new Civil Rights Era and Cultural Transformation initiatives.

As a companion document to the NRCS' Strategic Plan, the Human Capital Plan emphasizes outreach, workforce diversity, upward mobility, and staff development and outlines a variety of strategies designed to ensure that the Agency can continue to serve the public, build and maintain partnerships, and provide healthy and productive natural resources through a highly skilled and diverse workforce. NRCS' Human Capital Vision of "Conservation First, People Always," is driven by a business and human capital driver paradigm which focuses on five key human capital strategic goals:

- Leadership;
- Recruitment and Retention;
- Performance Culture;
- Talent Development; and
- Human Capital Effectiveness.

The NRCS' Human Capital Plan seeks to develop a leadership cadre that represents the diverse communities and customers we serve. The assessments of current and future needs are being accomplished through a series of leadership competency models which are accessible to all employees.

The NRCS website successfully distributes information concerning EEO laws, regulations, plans, and reports. The CRD website contains the program strategic plan, MD 715 reports, EEO, and ADR notices and policy statements. CRD publishes program updates, reviews which best workplace practices, and keeps the workforce informed of the latest EEO/Civil Rights updates and activities.

There were no deficiencies found in this essential element.

### **Essential Element C: Management and Program Accountability**

This element recognizes that a model Title VII and Rehabilitation Act program will hold managers, supervisors, EEO officials, and personnel officers accountable for the effective implementation and management of the agency's program.

A model EEO program will hold managers, supervisors, EEO officials, and personnel officers accountable for the effective implementation and management of the agency's program. As part of management and program accountability, MD715 provides that agencies should ensure that: (1) regular internal audits are conducted of the EEO program; (2) EEO procedures are established; (3) managers and supervisors are evaluated on EEO; (4) personnel policies are clear and consistently implemented; (5) a comprehensive anti-harassment policy has been issued; (6) an effective reasonable accommodation policy has been issued; and (7) findings of discrimination are reviewed.

NRCS ensured all EEO policies and procedures are updated and distributed annually to the workforce. By preparing the MD 715 report annually, NRCS conducted a self-assessment to evaluate the agency's effort in achieving MD 715 program goals and objectives. In addition, NRCS incorporated the requirements of DR 4300-010, "Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures", which require that annual performance appraisals for managers and supervisors to include an evaluation of their contributions to USDA's commitment to civil rights and equal opportunity (EO) and to adhere to its CR policy.

All NRCS managers, supervisors and employees have a stand-alone CR/EEO critical performance element. The element incorporates the agency's CR policies and provides the accountability necessary to ensure that customers and employees are fairly and equitably treated. Performance standards for new employees are put in place within 30 days of them entering duty.

There were no deficiencies found in this essential element.

**Essential Element D: Proactive Prevention of Unlawful Discrimination**

This element requires that the agency conduct self-assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the Title VII and Rehabilitation Act programs and determine whether the agency has made a good faith effort to identify and remove barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace.

In compliance with the No FEAR Act and Part 1614.703 of Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the Department timely submitted its No FEAR Report to Congress and posted quarterly reports on its public website summarizing the statistical data relating to EEO complaints filed. Part 1614 of EEOC’s regulation requires that each agency shall “establish a system for periodically evaluating the effectiveness of the agency’s overall equal employment opportunity effort.” See 29 C.F.R. Part 1614.102(a) (11). In particular, “each agency shall maintain a continuing affirmative program to promote equal opportunity and to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices and policies.” See 29 C.F.R. Part 1614.102(a).

NRCS strives to address the low participation rates of women, minorities and the hiring of persons with targeted disabilities. NRCS promotes diversity and inclusion by fully utilizing employees’ talents at all levels of the organization. NRCS also promoted targeted recruitment initiatives to assess workforce demographics changes, succession planning, retention and separation rates, and hiring trends. Listed below is the CRD’s summary review and analysis of the agency’s FY 2014 workforce profiles based on the MD 715 data tables provided at Appendix H.

**Summary of Analysis of Permanent Workforce**

In FY 2014, NRCS employed 10,705 employees: 10,368 permanent and 337 temporary employees. The number of permanent employees decreased by 323 from 10,691 in FY 2013 to 10,368 in FY 2014. Participation rates of White women, Black men, Black women, Hispanic men, Hispanic women, Asian men, and Asian women remain lower than the National Civilian Labor Force (NCLF).

Table 1. Summary of Permanent Workforce By Participation Rates

Permanent Workforce	Benchmark (National 2010 CLF)	FY 2013 NRCS %	FY 2014 NRCS %	Changes
White Male	38.33%	53.67%	53.16%	-0.51%
<b>White Female</b>	34.03%	27.37%	<b>27.59%</b>	+0.23%
<b>Black Male</b>	5.49%	4.39%	<b>4.53%</b>	+0.15%
<b>Black Female</b>	6.53%	3.63%	<b>3.70%</b>	+0.07%
<b>Hispanic Male</b>	5.17%	3.39%	<b>3.33%</b>	-0.06%
<b>Hispanic Female</b>	4.79%	1.67%	<b>1.76%</b>	+0.09%
<b>Asian Male</b>	1.97%	0.81%	<b>0.82%</b>	+0.01%
<b>Asian Female</b>	1.93%	0.56%	<b>0.59%</b>	+0.03%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Male	0.07%	0.20%	0.20%	0.00%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Female	0.07%	0.18%	0.19%	+0.01%
American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) Male	0.55%	2.34%	2.31%	-0.03%
American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) Female	0.53%	1.19%	1.16%	-0.03%
Two or More Races Male	0.26%	0.26%	0.28%	+0.02%
Two or More Races Female	0.28%	0.35%	0.37%	+0.02%

Of the permanent workforce, minorities increased by 0.29% from 18.96% in FY 2013 to 19.25% in FY 2014; which remained below the benchmark population of the NCLF average of 27.23%. Participation rate of women increased by 0.41% from 34.95% in FY 2013 to 35.36% in FY 2014, which remained below the NCLF of 48.14%. Persons with disabilities represented 10.09% of the permanent workforce, which was well above the community benchmark of 7%. Persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD) increased by 0.04% from 0.92% in FY 2013 to 0.96% in FY 2014, which remained below the community benchmark of 2.00%. Overall, the changes in participation rates between FY 2013 and FY 2014 were moderate. A summary of changes from FY 2013 to FY 2014 is provided in Table below.

Table 2. Summary of Permanent Workforce By Major EEO Groupings

NRCS Permanent Workforce	Benchmark	FY 2013 NRCS %	FY 2014 NRCS%	Changes
<b>Women</b>	48.14%	34.95%	<b>35.36%</b>	+0.41%
<b>Minorities</b>	27.64%	18.96%	<b>19.25%</b>	+ 0.29%
People with Disabilities	7.0%	10.16%	10.09%	-0.05%
<b>People with Targeted Disabilities</b>	2.0%	0.92%	<b>0.96%</b>	<b>+0.04%</b>

## Summary Analysis of Identified Triggers

### Low Participation Rate of Hispanic Employment in the Workforce

With respect to the Hispanic permanent workforce, the number of Hispanic employees decreased slightly from 541 in FY 2013 to 527 in FY 2014. Despite the decrease in number, the participation rate for Hispanic employees shows a slight increase from 5.06% in FY 2013 to 5.09% in FY 2014; however, it remained significantly below the NCLF of 9.66%.

Table 3. FY 2014 NRCS Hispanic Employment Profiles

	Men #(% )	Women # (%)	Total
NCLF (2010)	5.17%	4.79%	9.96%
<b>Permanent</b>	345 (3.33%)	182 (1.76%)	<b>527 (5.09%)</b>
Executive/Senior Level Managers	12 (9.68%)	1 (0.81%)	13 (10.49%)
Mid-Level Managers	15 (3.71%)	10 (2.48%)	(25) (6.19%)
Officials and Managers Total	16 (2.66%)	24 (3.99%)	40 (6.65%)
SES	2 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	2 (9.09%)
Hiring Rate	11 (3.12%)	8 (2.27%)	19 (5.39%)
Separation Rate	27 (3.78%)	8 (1.12%)	35 (4.9%)

With respect to gains and losses, there was a positive trend in the hiring rate for Hispanic men and women from 2.5% in FY 2013 (3 men and 3 women) to 5.39% (11 men and 8 women) in FY 2014. The separation rate for Hispanics increased slightly from 4.27% (20 men and 11 women) in FY 2013 to 4.90% (27 men and 8 women) in FY 2014.

With respect to the senior executive service (SES) grade level, Hispanics made up of 9.09% which was higher than their corresponding participation rates of 5.09%. There were two Hispanic male SESs and no Hispanic female SESs in the permanent workforce. The participation rate of Hispanics at the Executive/Senior leadership positions was well-represented at 10.48%, which was significantly higher their corresponding participation rates of 5.09%.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for Hispanic Men and Women (See Appendix H, Table A6 of this report). Specifically, the participation rate of Hispanic males are below their relevant occupational CLF in the following major or mission critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (2.32% v. CLF of 4.20%), Engineer Technician-0802 (3.18% v. CLF of 8.10%), Human Resource Management-0201 (0.87% v. CLF 5.00%), Contracting-1102 (1.18% v. CLF of 2.20%), Cartography-1370 (3.45% v. CLF of 6.20%), Environmental Engineering-0819 (0% v. 3.5%), and IT Management-2210 (3.51% v. CLF 6.10%).

Participation rates of Hispanic women are below their respective occupational CLF in the following mission critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician -0458 (1.08% v. CLF of 7.90%), General Biological Science-0401 (1.49% v. CLF 2.60%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0.24% v. CLF of 2.10%), Management Analyst-0343 (0.74% v. CLF of 8.10%), Secretary-0318 (2.48% v. CLF of 9.30%), Geology-1350 (0% v. CLF 1.70%), Contracting-1102 (3.53% v. CLF of 5.10%), IT Management – 2210 (1.75% v. CLF of 2.30%), and Environmental Engineering-0819 (0% v. CLF of 1.10%).

A summary of the potential barriers and HEP efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided at Appendix D.

### **Low Participation Rate of Black Employment in The Work Force**

With respect to the Black permanent workforce, the number of Black employees decreased slightly from 857 in FY 2013 to 854 in FY 2014. Despite the increase in number, the participation rate for Black employees shows a slight increase from 8.02% in FY 2013 to 8.23% in FY 2014, which was below the NCLF of 12.02%.

Table 4 . FY 2014 NRCS Black Employment Profiles

	<b>Men #(% )</b>	<b>Women # (% )</b>	<b>Total</b>
NCLF (2010)	5.49%	6.53%	12.02%
<b>Permanent</b>	470 (4.53%)	384 (3.70%)	<b>854 (8.23%)</b>
Executive/Senior Level Managers (GS15+)	18 (14.52%)	8 (6.45%)	26 (20.97%)
Mid-Level Managers (GS 13-14)	40 (9.90%)	26 (6.44%)	66 (16.34%)
Officials and Managers Total	52 (8.64%)	113 (18.77%)	165 (27.41%)
SES	5 (22.73%)	1 (4.55%)	6 (27.28%)
Hiring Rate	27 (7.65%)	17 (4.82%)	44 (12.47%)
Separation Rate	26 (3.64%)	23 (3.22%)	49 (6.86%)

With respect to gains and losses, there was a positive trend in the hiring rate for Black men and women from 11.67% in FY 2013 (16 men and 12 women) to 12.47% (27 men and 17 women) in FY 2014. However, the separation rate for Blacks decreased slightly from 9.50% (43 men and 26 women) in FY 2013 to 6.86% (26 men and 23 women) in FY 2014.

With respect to the senior executive service (SES) grade level, there were six Black SESs (5 men and one woman) in the permanent workforce. The participation rate of Blacks at the SES level was 27.28%, which was significantly higher than their corresponding participation rates of 8.23%.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant occupation CLF for Black men and Black women (See Appendix H, Table A6 of this report). Specifically, the participation rates of Black men are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (2.82% v. CLF of 3.80%), Engineer Technician-0802 (3.67% v. CLF

7.20%), Rangeland Management-0454 (0.00% v. CFL of 1.80%), Agricultural Engineer-0890 (1.76% v. CLF of 3.90%), Budget Analyst-0560 (1.06% v. CLF of 4.00%), Cartography-1370 (0.00% v. CLF of 4.00%), IT Management – 2210 (1.75% v. CLF 7.00%), Geology-1350 (0.00% v. CLF 2.00%), and Environmental Engineer-0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 5.10%).

Participation rates of Black women are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician -0458 (0.58% v. CLF of 2.80%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.30%), Geology-1350 (0.00% v. CLF of 1.70%) and Environmental Engineering-0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 1.9%).

A summary of the national BEP efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided at Appendix D.

### **Low Participation Rate of Asian American (AA)**

There were a total of 146 AA employees in the permanent workforce (85 men and 61 women) in FY 2014. The number of AA employees decreased from 147 in FY 2013 to 146 in FY 2014. Thus, the participation rate for AA employees shows a slight increase of 0.04% from 1.37% in FY 2013 to 1.41% in FY 2014.

Table 5 . FY 2014 NRCS Asian American Employment Profiles

	<b>Men #(% )</b>	<b>Women # (% )</b>	<b>Total # (%)</b>
NCLF (2010)	1.97%	1.93%	3.90%
<b>Permanent</b>	85 (0.82%)	61 (0.59%)	<b>146 (1.41%)</b>
<b>Executive/Senior Level Managers (GS15+)</b>	1 (0.81%)	1 (0.81%)	<b>2 (1.62%)</b>
Mid-Level Managers (GS 13-14)	5 (1.24%)	3 (0.74%)	8 (1.98%)
Officials and Managers Total	9 (1.50%)	13 (2.16%)	22 (3.66%)
<b>SES</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0.00%)	<b>0 (0.00%)</b>
Hiring Rate	3 (0.85%)	3 (0.85%)	6 (1.70%)
Separation Rate	9 (1.26%)	4 (0.56%)	13 (1.82%)

With respect to gains and losses, there was a slight decrease in the hiring rate for AA from 2.92% in FY 2013 (4 men and 3 women) to 1.70% (3 men and 3 women) in FY 2014, which was below their respective NCLFs of 3.9%. The separation rate for AA decreased from 2.89% (9 men and 12 women) in FY 2013 to 1.82% (9 men and 4 women) in FY 2014.

With respect to the SES level, there was no AA. The participation rates of AA men and women at the SES level are absent, which remain below their corresponding rates of 1.41%.

With respect to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NH/PI), their participation rate was 0.39% in the permanent workforce, which was well above the NCLF of 0.14%. There were a total of 41 employees identified as NHPI in the permanent workforce.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for AA men and AA women (See Appendix H, Table A6 of this report). Specifically, Participate rates of AA men are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major/mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation-0457 (0.58% v. CLF 0.90%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.17% v. CLF of 6.80%), Soil Science-0470 (0.96% v. CLF 4.80%), General Biological Science-0401 (0.37% v. CLF of 5.20%), Civil Engineering-0810 (2.66% v. CLF 8.90%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0.49% v. CLF of 5.7%), Miscellaneous Clerk-0303 (0.00% v. CLF of 0.90%), Rangeland Management-0454 (0.34% v. CFL of 0.90%), Agricultural

Engineering-0890 (2.20% v. CLF 10.20%), Agronomy-0471 (1.96% v. CLF of 4.80%), Human Resource Management-0201 (0.87% v. CLF of 2.2%), Budget Analyst-0560 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.80%), Cartography-1370 (1.72% v. CLF of 2.80%), and Geology-1350 (0.00% v. 2.80%).

Participation rates of AA women are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation-0457 (0.38% v. CLF 0.70%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.17% v. CLF of 7.90%), Soil Science-0470 (0.00% v. CLF 2.40%), General Biological Science-0401 (0.74% v. CLF of 6.00%), Civil Engineering-0810 (0.41% v. CLF of 1.80%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.30%), Miscellaneous Clerk-0303 (0.00% v. CLF 0.70%), Agricultural Engineer-0890 (0.88% v. CLF of 3.60%), Management Analyst-0343 (1.48% v. CLF of 2.60%), Secretary-0318 (0.83% v. CLF of 2.30%), Human Resource Management-0201 (1.74% v. CLF of 2.7%), Contracting-1102 (0.00% v. CLF of 4.20%), Agronomy-0471 (0.98% v. CLF 2.40%), Geology-1350 (0.00% v. CLF 1.00%), and Environmental Engineering-0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.6%).

A summary of the Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided at Appendix D.

### **Low Participation Rates of Women in the Workforce**

In FY 2014, NRCS women represented 35.36% of the NRCS’s permanent workforce, which has remained below the NCLF of 48.14%. The largest female groups were White women (27.59%) and Black women (3.70%).

With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for Hispanic women, AA women, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women, American Indian/American Native women in the SES level and Two+ Races women remain absent i.e., their participation rates were below their corresponding participation rates in the permanent workforce.

Table 6. FY 2014 Participation Rates of Women by Senior Grade Levels

Permanent Workforce	White Women	Black Women	Hispanic Women	Asian Women	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Women	American Indian/Alaska Native Women	Two+ Races Women
GS-13	21.12%	6.81%	1.75%	0.70%	0.35%	1.05%	0.35%
GS-14	22.26%	11.64%	1.37%	1.37%	0.00%	1.37%	0.34%
GS-15	20.90%	5.97%	1.49%	0.75%	0.00%	0.75%	0.00%
SES	27.27%	4.55%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Relevant Benchmark (NRCS Permanent Workforce)	27.59%	3.70%	1.76%	0.59%	0.19%	1.16%	0.37%

Participation rates of NRCS women are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (24.21% v. CLF of 55.00%), Soil Science-0470 (19.01% v. CLF of 26.40%), General Biological Science-0401 (30.86% v. CLF of 47.70%), Engineer Technician-0802 (9.29% v. CLF of 20.50%), Management Analyst-0343 (57.04% v. CLF of 75.00%), and Geology-1350 (20.69% v. CLF 31.0%).

A summary of the Federal Women’s Program efforts to eliminate the potential barriers for women is provided at Appendix D.

**Low Participation Rate of Persons with Targeted Disabilities (PWTD) in the Permanent Workforce**

NRCS has a permanent workforce of 10,368 employees in FY 2014: 10.09% of employees in the permanent workforce identified themselves as having a disability and 0.96% identified as having a targeted disability (PWTD). The participation rate of PWTD in the permanent workforce increased by 0.04% from 0.92% to 0.96%, which remained below the community benchmark of 2.0%. Within the PWTD categories, NRCS employees identified with psychiatric disability, partial paralysis, and hearing represented the highest representation among all groups with targeted disabilities respectively at 0.32%, 0.18%, and 0.16%.

Table 7 . FY 2014 NRCS PWTD Employment Profiles

<b>NRCS permanent Work Force</b>	<b>Persons WO Targeted Disabilities (PWOTD) #/(%)</b>	<b>NRCS PWTD #/(%)</b>
Permanent	10268 (99.03%)	100 (0.96%)
Executive/Senior Level Managers (GS15+)	122 (1.18%)	2 (0.02%)
Mid-Level Managers (GS 13-14)	403 (3.92%)	1 (0.01%)
Officials and Managers Total	587 (5.71%)	15 (15.00%)
SES	22 (2.14%)	0 (0.00%)
Hiring Rate	351 (3.83%)	2 (0.02%)
Separation Rate	709 (7.74%)	6 (0.06%)
Soil Conservation (0457)	4138 (40.29%)	29 (29.00%)
Soil Conservation Technician (0458)	1198 (11.66%)	8 (0.08%)
Soil Science (0470)	621 (6.05%)	5 (0.05%)
General Biological Science	536 (5.22%)	2 (0.02%)

With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for PWTD were below the relevant benchmarks. Noticeably, the participation rate for PWTD at the SES level remains absent.

Participation rates of PWTD are below the PWOTD’s participation rates in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation – 0457 (29% v. PWOTD of 40.29%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.08% v. PWOTD of 11.66%), Soil Science-0470 (0.05% v. PWOTD of 6.05%) and General Biological Science-0401 (0.02% v. PWOTD of 5.22%).

A summary of the Disability Employment Program accomplishments and efforts to eliminate the potential barriers for PWTD is provided Part J and Appendix D of this report.

**Current Issues of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)**

Recent events, including the filing of two EEOC lawsuits on behalf of transgender employees and an amicus brief in the 7th Circuit related to coverage of sexual orientation, have triggered increased interest about protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals under federal employment-discrimination laws. In 2012, the EEOC held that discrimination against an individual because that person is transgender (also known as gender identity discrimination) is discrimination because of sex and therefore is prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Commission has also found that discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals based on

sex-stereotypes, such as the belief that men should only date women or that women should only marry men, is discrimination on the basis of sex under Title VII. Consistent with these Commission rulings (and case law from the Supreme Court and other courts), the Commission has instructed agency investigators and attorneys that discrimination against an individual because that person is transgender is a violation of Title VII's prohibition of sex discrimination in employment. In addition, investigators and attorneys were instructed that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals also may bring valid Title VII sex discrimination claims, and that the EEOC should accept charges alleging sexual-orientation-related discrimination. These allegations might include, for example, claims of sexual harassment or other kinds of sex discrimination, such as adverse actions taken because of the person's failure to conform to sex-stereotypes. In collaboration with OASCR, NRCS has been implementing the SEP priority with regard to the emphasis of LGBT issues in the workforce.

A summary report of the LGBT program activities can be found in Appendix D.

### **Distribution of Cash & QSI Awards**

#### **Cash Awards:**

There were 1,153 employees received cash awards between \$100 and \$500 and 3,586 employees received cash awards of \$500 and more. For awards under \$500, the average was \$338. For awards over \$500, the average was \$1,049.

The largest group to receive cash awards between \$100 and \$500 was White male employees at 50% followed by White female employees at 32.00%. Black male employees received 3.47% followed by Black females at 2.85% of the awards between \$100 and \$500.

The largest group to receive cash awards of \$500 and more was White male employees at 51.98% with an average amount of \$1,084; followed by White female employees at 28.58% with an average of \$996; and followed by Black female employees at 4.55% with an average of \$1,000.

Hispanics males and females both received 3.76% and 2.06% respectively, in an average of \$1,051 and \$940 respectively in the category for cash awards over \$500.

AI/AN males and females received 1.95% and 1.34% respectively, in an average amount of \$1,081 and \$964 for cash awards over \$500. Asians males and females received 0.75% and 0.67%, respectively, of an average amount of \$1,077 and \$1,066 for cash awards over \$500.

Employees with disabilities received 8.56% in an average amount of \$1,060 for cash award over \$500. Employees with targeted disabilities received 0.75% in an average amount of \$1,072 for cash award over \$500.

#### **Quality Step Increase (QSI):**

Two hundred ninety four (294) employees received QSIs with an average benefit amount of \$1,928. The largest group to receive this award was White males with 38.44%. The next largest groups were White females with 35.03% followed by Black males and Hispanic males at 5.44%. The third largest groups were Hispanic females and Black females at 3.4%.

Asian males and females respectively received 2.04% and 1.70%. Employees with disabilities received this award at a rate of 8.50% and employees with targeted disabilities at 0.68%.

For detailed information, see Appendix H Table A13/B13.

### **Summary of FY 2014 Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) Results**

The 2014 EVS results show the positive responses in addressing the following EEO and diversity related questions:

Table 8. NRCS's 2014 Employee Viewpoint Survey Results

2014 EVS Questions	NRCS Positive Responses	USDA Total	Government-wide Average
11. My talents are used well in the workplace.	59.0%	57.2%	56.5%
15. My performance appraisal is a fair reflection of my performance.	69.4%	66.4%	68.2%
17. I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal.	61.6%	57.8%	60.3%
19. In my most recent performance appraisal, I understood what I had to do to be rated at different performance levels.	65.4%	65.0%	67.5%
22. Promotions in my work unit are based on merit	36.6%	32.5%	32.0%
24. In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.	33.1%	29.3%	31.5%
25. Awards in my work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs.	42.0%	37.9%	38.0%
34. Policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace.	72.0%	64.1%	55.5%
37. Arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated.	63.0%	53.8%	50.3%
38. Prohibited personnel practices are not tolerated.	77.8%	68.9%	65.2%
45. My supervisor/team leader is committed to a workforce representative of all segments of society.	79.3%	71.7%	66.2%
47. Supervisors in my work unit support employee development.	76.8%	68.0%	63.1%
55. Managers/supervisors/team leaders work well with employees with different backgrounds.	69.7%	63.5%	63.1%

In most cases, NRCS's EVS results exceeded both the USDA-wide average and the government-wide average in the following EVS questions:

- The favorable responses to the questions regarding promotion, recognition for performance and awards seem to have the lowest percentages:
  - ✓ 33.1% of NRCS employees responded favorably in the question whether performance is recognized in a meaningful way, which was slightly higher than the government-wide average of 31.5%.
  - ✓ 36.6% of NRCS employees indicated that “promotions in my work unit are based on merit,” a result that was higher than the government-wide average of 32.0%.
  - ✓ 42.0% of NRCS employees agreed that awards in their work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs, which was higher than the government-wide average of 38.0%.

- With respect to talent management and employee development, 59.0% of NRCS employees noted that their talents were used well in the workplace, which was higher than the government-wide average of 56.5%; 76.8% of NRCS employees agreed that supervisors in their work unit support employee development, which was higher than the government-wide average of 63.1%; and 69.4% of NRCS employees agreed that their performance appraisal was a fair reflection of their performance, which was higher than the government-wide average of 68.2%.
- With respect to whether an employee feared reprisal for reporting a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation, 61.6% of Department employees answered in the affirmative, which was lower than the government-wide average of 60.3%. Similarly, 77.8% of NRCS employees agreed that prohibited personnel practices were not tolerated, which was higher than the government-wide average of 65.2%.
- With respect to whether policies and programs promoted diversity in the workforce, 72.0% of NRCS employees agreed with the statement, which was significantly higher than the government-wide average of 55.5%. Similarly, 79.3% agreed that their supervisors/teal leaders are committed to a workforce representative of all segments of society, which was much higher than the government-wide average of 66.2%

NRCS 2014 results were below the government-wide average in the following EVS questions:

- 57% of Department employees expressed that they understood what they had to do to be rated at different performance levels, which was lower than the government-wide average of 68%;

### **Essential Element E: Efficiency**

This element requires agencies to have an efficient and fair dispute resolution process and effective systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of their EEO programs. CRD, working collaboratively with OASCR, ensures that individual complaints are fairly and thoroughly investigated and that final action is taken in a timely manner. 29 C.F.R. Part 1614.102(c) (5). Section II (E) of MD-715 establishes that a model EEO program must have an efficient and fair dispute resolution process and effective systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of its EEO programs. In this regard, Section II (E) recommends that agencies “benchmark against EEOC regulations at 29 C.F.R. Part 1614 and other federal agencies of similar size which are highly ranked in the EEOC’s Annual Report on the federal sector complaints process.”

#### (1) Pre-complaint Stage:

A review of the FY 2014 EEOC 462 report (Appendix G), the number of EEO pre-complaints filing indicates a decrease from a high of 74 in FY 2013 to 56 in FY 2014. The pre-complaint rate of 0.5% based on the workforce in FY 2014 indicates a moderate decrease over the last three years, and remains lower than the available government-wide average of 1.1%<sup>1</sup>.

#### (2) The Use of ADR:

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<sup>1</sup>The government-wide average is provided by EEOC’s website for the FY 2012 EEOC’s Annual Report on the federal sector complaints process.

In FY 2014, the offer rate of ADR at the pre-complaint stage of the EEO complaint process was 94.6%, which is higher than the Federal government average of 85.7%. This was due in large part to the enhanced collaboration, marketing and outreach of the ADR Center and EEOS staffs. These efforts included agency-wide promotion of the use of ADR to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage. The Director, CRD stressed the importance of utilizing the ADR process to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage. The ADR team continued collaborating with the State Conservationists and senior leaders to conduct training and provide employees information related to ADR services such as facilitation, teambuilding, conflict resolution, coaching and mentoring services.

The ADR election rate at the pre-complaint stage increased from 28.2% in FY 2010 to 71.7% in FY 2014, and remained comparable to the government-wide average of 51.1%. However, the ADR resolution rate decreased from 57.1% FY 2010 to 36.8% in FY 2014, which was below the government-wide average of 63.0%.

Table 9. Complaint Rate and ADR Usage in the Pre-complaint Stage, 5 Year Trends

Fiscal Years	NRCS Work Force	# of Pre-complaints	Complaint Rate	ADR Offer Rate	ADR Election Rate	ADR Resolution Rate
2010	12589	43	0.3%	90.7%	28.2%	54.5%
2011	12296	45	0.4%	68.9%	64.5%	65.0%
2012	11821	74	0.6%	86.5%	70.3%	35.6%
2013	11162	74	0.7%	86.5%	75.0%	47.9%
2014	10740	56	0.5%	94.6%	71.7%	36.8%

(3) Formal Complaints Stage:

a. Investigations:

Investigations into claims of discrimination are a key component of the formal EEO complaint process. Delays may impede the primary goal of gathering sufficient evidence to permit a determination as to whether discrimination occurred. EEOC regulation 29 C.F.R. §1614.106(e)(2) requires agencies to conduct an investigation and issue a report to the complainant within 180 days of the filing of a complaint unless: 1) the parties agreed to an extension of no more than 90 days (may not exceed 270 days); or 2) the complaint was amended or consolidated, which can add another 180 days to the period but may not exceed a total of 360 days.

The percentage of timely investigations for formal complaints increased from 14.3% in FY 2010 to 59.1% in FY 2014, which was lower than the government-wide average of 74.9%. The average cost of NRCS EEO contracting out investigations was \$3,055, which was higher than the government-wide average cost of \$2,811 (for contracting out complaints investigation).

Table 10. Average Processing Time for NRCS EEO Investigations 5 Year Trends (Part IX, 462 reports)

Fiscal Years	# of Formal Filed	# of Investigations Completed	# of timely investigations	% of Timely Investigations	Average Processing Days for all investigations (including amended cases)	Average Cost per Investigation (Director Cost) Reported
2010	26	21	3	14.3%	279	\$3,078
2011	29	27	10	37.0%	308	\$2,530
2012	39	22	17	77.3%	189	\$2,552
2013	43	30	12	40.0%	213	\$2,975
2014	42	44	26	59.1%	220	\$3,055

b. Final Agency Decision (FAD):

EEOC regulations require agencies to issue merit final agency decisions (FADs) within 60 days of receiving notification that a complainant has requested an immediate decision from the agency, or within 60 days of the end of the 30-day period for the complainant to request a hearing or an immediate final decision, where the complainant has not requested either a hearing or a FAD.

Routinely, the OASCR provided management service to NRCS in processing the formal complaints filed against NRCS at the headquarters level, including the drafting and the issuance of agency-wide final agency decisions. In FY 2014, OASCR issued 16 merit FADs with an average processing time of 102 days. This is a significant improvement compared to the processing time of 221 days in FY 2010. Of 16 merit FADs issued, 4 (25%) were timely issued within 60 days, which was below the government-wide average of 48.6%. With respect to this requirement, the OASCR strives to achieve process improvement for cost efficiency and timeliness in the issuance of merit FADs.

Table 11. Department's Average Processing Time to issue Merit FADs (Part VI, D, 462 report)

Fiscal Years	# of Merit FAD Issued	Average Days	# of Merit FADs Timely Issued	% of Merit FADs Timely Issued
2010	17	221	0	0.0%
2011	17	226	4	23.5%
2012	8	296	4	50.0%
2013	9	64	5	55.6%
2014	16	102	4	25.0%

Routinely, NRCS prepared the State Conservationist's CR Performance (Appraisals) Report which is a management tool used to evaluate all fifty States and US Territories on their performance on CR. NRCS continued improvements in the area of complaints management to streamline workflow, enhance process efficiencies, improve customer service, and incorporate accountability.

NRCS continued working with OASCR to achieve performance metrics and process improvement by revising standard operating procedures and providing internal training on work process. Jointly NRCS utilizes the Department's enterprise system, iComplaints, for complaint tracking and monitoring which identifies and tracks the status of the EEO complaint process stages. The system allows CRD staff to identify/analyze the location, status, and length of time elapsed at each stage of the NRCS's complaints resolution process; the issues and the bases of the complaints; the aggrieved individuals/complainants that involved management officials; and other information necessary to analyze complaint activity aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the agency's EEO program.

**Essential Element F: Responsiveness and Legal Compliance**

This element assesses whether the agency complies with the law, including EEOC regulations, directives, orders, and other written instructions and whether agency reports are promptly submitted to EEOC.

In FY 2014, one case was found discrimination by the EEOC; which is currently being appealed.

There were no instances of untimely responses to EEOC orders or settlements. In FY 2014, NRCS submitted both the Annual Federal EEO Statistical Report of Discrimination Complaints Form 462 and

MD 715 reports to EEOC by their due dates. CRD was also very responsive to all EEOC's requests for information. No remands or notices for failure to comply with EEOC's orders were issued.

In accordance with EEO MD-110, NRCS ensured that experienced counselors and contract investigators received the required 32 hours of training and the annual 8-hour refresher training.

CRD staff responded to all customer inquiries within 2 days of the date of contact and provided information for data requests by established due dates. In particular, CRD routinely sent the complaint file to the EEOC's field office within five calendar days upon receipt of the hearing notice. During the appellate stage of the EEO complaint process, all complaint files were forwarded to EEOC electronically via the EEOC File Exchange (EFX) well within the required time frame.

Processing of monetary agreements is processed by the responsible NHQ and/or State Official. Documentation for completing compliance is promptly provided and reviewed by CRD. All settlement agreements were fully implemented. In addition, NRCS implemented all EEOC orders in a timely manner. There were no discrepancies found in this element.

## **Summary of EEO Plan Action Implemented/Accomplished**

### Targeted Recruitment Efforts

NRCS does recognize the need to have a dedicated workforce planning tool which is now available to leadership agency-wide to ensure that decisions regarding the workforce are made strategically with clear, consistent and complete information.

Since FY 2009, NRCS has established a design team to review the current state of workforce planning, establish a vision for what the perfect system would be and then to identify gaps between the current state and the vision.

- Workforce Planning Policy - In FY 2010, The Workforce Planning Policy was developed and finalized. General Manual 360, Subpart A, Part 402.
- ABC Enhancement Initiative – Activity Based Costing (ABC) is a system which measures productivity based on past performance time and needs. Analysis of the data will feed into the WFP Software Tool to address the FTE “demand” needs of the agency.
- Workforce Planning Software Tool: To implement a WFP process and system(tool) that will determine workload demand, supply and gaps, competency demand, supply and gaps, as well as workforce profile supply, demand and gaps. Work has begun on this process.

NRCS has updated a national recruitment framework which was approved in FY 2014 by NRCS leadership. This strategic document has been the foundation of the recruitment events at NRCS for FY 14 and will continue through FY 17. This strategic plan aligns with the USDA Strategic Plan, the NRCS Strategic Plan and the NRCS Human Capital Strategic Plan.

During FY 2014, the following initiatives identified in the Recruitment Strategy have been implemented:

- Increasing identification of partnerships that will support diverse candidate pools. NRCS has added one additional partnership as well as worked to enhance our previous efforts and currently have partnerships with the following:
  - Thurgood Marshall College Fund

- Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources Related Sciences (MANRRS)
- American Indians Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Hmong National Development
- FFA Career Development Experience
- California State Polytechnic University – Pomona
- Increase number of Presentations to Diversity Groups
  - MANRRS National Conference
  - Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute
  - Five AISES regional conferences
  - FFA National and Regional conferences (5)
  - NRCS-NAFEO\* Scholars Days (\*National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education)
- Recruited diverse candidates at the following Career Events:
  - MANRRS National Conference
  - MANRRS Regional Conferences (3)
  - Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute
  - AISES Conferences
  - FFA National Conferences

A National Recruitment Cadre is in the early stages of planning for helping to implement the National Recruitment Framework and will continue working with these individuals through FY 14 and into FY 15.

NRCS Hispanic, Black, AA, and AI/AN recruitment cadres have been established and continue to gain success through utilization of strong ties to campus involvement. Relationships have been established which allow NRCS to have a presence in classrooms while on campuses for recruitment fairs. Recruitment teams also hosted events for Agricultural-related student groups so that students would have additional access to staff members. From our contacts at career fairs, a database was created with information that was shared with other areas of NRCS. The database has proven to be a good source to recruit women and minority interns and new permanent employees.

Diversity recruitment efforts existed throughout the Agency. The agency recruited students and entry-level hires at the following recruitment events:

- American Indian Agriculture Symposium, Las Vegas, NV
- American Indian Science and Engineering Fair (NAISEF), Albuquerque, NM
- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Black Engineer of the Year Conference
- California State Polytechnic University Career Fair, Pomona, CA
- Conference on Asian Pacific American Leaders (CAPAL)
- Federal Asian Pacific American Council Conference (FAPAC)
- Florida A & M (1894)
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
- HACU Career Fair
- Hiring Heroes Career Fair, Little Rock, AK
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) national conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- LULACs National Veterans Summit, Los Angeles, CA

- Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS)
- New Mexico State University Career Fair, Las Cruces, NM
- Society for Range Management
- Texas A&M University Career Fair, Kingsville, TX
- Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute Conference
- Tuskegee University
- University of Puerto Rico Career Fair, Mayaguez, PR
- University of Texas Career Fair, El Paso, TX
- Wounded Warriors Career Fair, LA,
- Four MANRRS regional conferences
- MANRRS National conference
- Five AISES regional conferences
- Two National AISES conferences
- Latino Education Conference (Faculty members of HSIs)
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) national conference
- HSI Student Leadership Program for Ag Students
- FFA Regional Conference
- Presentations at HSIs in Illinois, Florida, California
- Hispanic Leaders in Agriculture Environment (HLAE) at Texas A&M
- National Hispanic Environmental Council for Students Summer Institute
- Federally Employed Women (FEW) Conference, New Orleans, LA

For FY 14, NRCS has hired 189 student interns nationwide. The breakdown is as follows:

Table Student Interns Hired by Race/National Origin

	White	Black	Asian	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	American Indian/Alaska Native	Other
#	114	40	5	2	19	6	3
%	60.32%	21.16%	2.65%	1.06%	10.05%	3.18%	1.59%

### The Project GROW initiatives

The Project GROW initiatives in both Minnesota and Florida have wrapped up for the year with a new group of students.

#### Accomplishments for the MN Project GROW-

- Eight (8) students were able to continually participate in the entire program
- Mentor/Protégé relationships were established for these eight (8) students
- NRCS speakers came in once a month to work with the students on exposure to different careers in NRCS and work with them on the principles of NRCS Conservation Practices
- Of the eight (8) students, all identified that they would be interested in coming to work for NRCS in the future and one (1) of the students applied for the Pathways Internship opportunities in MN

#### Accomplishments for the FL Project GROW-

- Eight (8) students were able to continually participate in the entire program with participation ranging from 11-34 students on a weekly basis
- NRCS speakers came in once a month to work with the students on exposure to different careers in NRCS and work with them on the principles of NRCS Conservation Practices
- All of the students expressed particular interest in applying for Pathways Internships in the future

NRCS Hmong Initiative: A Partnership between NRCS and the Hmong American Partnership/Hmong National Development, Inc. Since FY 2011, NRCS began working with the Hmong National Development (HND) and its subsidiary Hmong American Partnership (HAP). This partnership resulted in the formation of an agreement which is structured as follows:

- HAP office in St. Paul, MN selected 15 secondary students who have an interest in science-based curriculum. Most are juniors and seniors in High School with a small number in first year of college.
- The students will meet on a weekly basis for a period of seven months for a two hour learning session. NRCS has supplied curriculum based on natural resources and environmental issues which will be used during those sessions.
- Each student has a local mentor assigned from NRCS. It is anticipated that the mentors or other local staff will be speaking with the students to share real life NRCS experiences that correspond to the curriculum they are being taught
- Training related to the Hmong culture was presented this week by the HAP staff to the 15 Minnesota staff members who volunteered to be mentors. Mentoring training was also conducted with all of the NRCS mentors.
- Special events are being planned to include the NRCS mentors and the students such as field trips to NRCS and social gatherings with the student's families.
- A capstone project will be completed by the students and presented to NRCS at the end of the seven-month timeframe. This capstone project will be collaboration between NRCS mentors and staff and the students to improve NRCS efforts in recruitment; this will include identifying cultural barriers and ways to overcome them, cultural information to share with NRCS employees, and what experiences students would like to have when learning about NRCS and what we do.

#### Special Emphasis Program Implementation

NRCS also promotes employee engagement and outreach activities within the EEO community via the establishment of Special Emphasis Programs. NRCS has a cadre of eight National Special Emphasis Program Managers (NSEPMs) (i.e., American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program; Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program; Black Emphasis Program; Disability Emphasis Program; Federal Women's Program (FWP); Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Emphasis Program; Hispanic Emphasis Program (HEP); and Veterans Emphasis Program). The National FWP and HEP are full-time managers and the other five NSEPMs are collateral duty assignments. Additionally, NRCS has over 300 collateral duty SEPMs nationally in each State and Center for each of the eight SEPs listed above

In FY 2014, National SEPMs developed an online quarterly report survey that was completed by 313 State SEPMs; an 80% response rate. The SEPMs responded to 28 questions to identify triggers, barriers and recommendations to eliminate barriers related to recruitment, hiring, retention, and career development. The individual reports were consolidated into one report with a summary of barriers

and recommendations and distributed to agency Deputy Chief for Management.

The National SEPMs strengthened partnerships with SEPMs in the States to conduct barrier analyses and assist in diversity management within NRCS. NSEPMs report to the director of Talent Management Division and work closely with the States SEPMs to strengthen partnerships agency-wide to implement the diversity and EEO related initiatives such as providing training activities via diverse speakers, planning ethnic observance programs, promoting program awareness and engaging the workforce via barrier analysis.

Appendix D summarizes the ongoing efforts by each SEP group in their efforts to identify and eliminate barriers.

## **Summary of EEO Plan Objectives Planned to Eliminate Identified Barriers**

In the upcoming year, NRCS CRD will work closely with NSEPMs and HR officials to address the identified barriers in Part I of this report and take the following actions to remove any potential program deficiencies and barriers:

### 1. Increase Participation Rates of Minorities and Women in the Workforce

- Establish a MD 715 affirmative employment work group to discuss the ongoing recruitment and hiring initiatives and efforts in removing potential barriers that may affect the employment opportunities for women, minorities and persons with targeted disabilities.
- Encourage managers to take affirmative steps to recruit, hire, train, and promote employees from diverse backgrounds.

### 2. Improve Retention of Minorities

- Engage SEPMs and representatives from employee resource groups to discuss the Employee Viewpoint Survey results and develop a plan of action to address the areas that need improvement.
- Identify factors contributing to the net losses of minorities and women and develop a strategy for addressing these factors within the agency's control.

### 3. Increase Advancement Opportunities for Minorities and Women

- Ensure that performance expectations are clearly communicated, promotion opportunities are announced in a non-discriminatory fashion, and developmental assignments and training openly are provided.

### 4. Increase Representation of Persons with Targeted Disabilities (PWTD)

- Develop a NRCS Action/Hiring Plan for PWTD.
- Collaborate with NDEPMs to ensure that training and workshops are provided to managers and supervisors on the use of special hiring authorities for qualified individuals with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, ADR, and prevention of harassment.
- Disseminate job announcements for targeted job series to the EEO community and other diverse constituent groups.
- Promote outreach activities by working closely with State SEPMs, HR Veterans Employment Program (VEP), and selective placement coordinators.
- Strengthen partnerships with State SEPMs to address the effectiveness of recruitment, career development, and retention initiatives for the PWTD.

### 5. Improve Data Accuracy for Barrier Analyses

- Collaborate with HR staff in correcting the program deficiencies as related to applicant pool data.
- Establish an award recognition system to recognize collateral duty SEPMs and CR/EEO members who demonstrate outstanding contributions to MD 715 program goals.
- Provide MD 715 training to collateral duty members of NSEPMs and CR Advisory Council.

### 6. Correct Program Deficiencies

- Continue to host collaborative meetings with OASCR to seek process improvement in addressing efficiency in processing and managing the EEO complaints process.

- Develop innovative, premier training for EEO practitioners about the use of iComplaint system and the application of strategic evaluation to improve the timeliness and the quality of EEO services.

7. Promote Early Resolution of EEO Complaints

- Host a series of workshops, seminars, and group sessions to keep supervisors and employees aware of the preventive effort in eliminating discrimination/harassment in the workplace.
- Provide facilitation services to help better manage and address conflict by determining team values and conflict resolution styles. Provide supervisors and managers specific conflict management training and educate management officials about the EEO process when dealing with allegations of discrimination.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Annual EEO Program Status Report  
EEOC FORM 715-01 Part F**

<b>EEOC FORM 715-01 PART F</b>	<i>For period covering October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014</i>
<b>CERTIFICATION OF ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTINUING EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM</b>	
<p align="center"><u><i>I, Selina S. Lee, Director, Equal Employment Opportunity Services, am the Principal EEO Director/Official for the Department.</i></u></p> <p><i>The agency has conducted an annual EEO self-assessment of Section 717 and Section 501 programs, against the essential elements prescribed by EEO MD-715. If an essential element was not fully compliant with the standards of EEO MD-715, a subsequent evaluation was conducted. The Department's EEO Plans for attaining the Essential Elements of a Model EEO Program are included with this Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report.</i></p> <p><i>The agency has also analyzed its workforce profiles and conducted barrier analyses aimed at detecting whether any management or personnel policy, procedure, or practice is operating in such a way as to disadvantage any group based on race, national origin, gender, or disability. EEOS' Plans to eliminate identified barriers, as appropriate, are included with this Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report.</i></p> <p><i>I certify that proper documentation of this assessment is in place and is being maintained for EEOC review upon request.</i></p>	
Selina Lee	
<b>Signature of Principal EEO Director/Official</b>	<b>Date</b>
Jason Weller 	11/24/14
<b>Signature of Agency Head or Agency Head Designee</b>	<b>Date</b>

**U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Annual EEO Program Status Report  
EEOC FORM 715-01, Part G**

**Agency Self-Assessment Checklist Measuring Essential Elements**

Essential Element A: DEMONSTRATED COMMITMENT FROM AGENCY LEADERSHIP Requires the agency head to issue written policy statements ensuring a workplace free of discriminatory harassment and a commitment to equal employment opportunity.				
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>EEO policy statements are up-to-date.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
 <b>Measures</b>				
	Was the EEO policy Statement issued within 6 - 9 months of the installation of the Agency Head? If no, provide an explanation.	X		
	During the current Agency Head's tenure, has the EEO policy Statement been re-issued annually? If no, provide an explanation.	X		
	Are new employees provided with a copy of the EEO policy statement during orientation?	X		
	When an employee is promoted into the supervisory ranks, is s/he provided with a copy of the EEO policy statement?	X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>EEO policy statements have been communicated to all employees.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
 <b>Measures</b>				
	Have the heads of subordinate reporting components communicated support of all agency EEO policies through the ranks?	X		
	Has the agency made written materials available to all employees and applicants, informing them of the variety of EEO programs and administrative and judicial remedial procedures available to them?	X		
	Has the agency prominently posted such written materials in all personnel offices, EEO offices, and on the agency's internal website? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(5)]	X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>Agency EEO policy is vigorously enforced by agency management.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
 <b>Measures</b>				

Are managers and supervisors evaluated on their commitment to agency EEO policies and principles, including their efforts to:	X		
resolve problems/disagreements and other conflicts in their respective work environments as they arise?	X		
Address employees' concerns, whether perceived or real, and following-up with appropriate action to correct or eliminate tension in the workplace?	X		
Support the agency's EEO program through allocation of mission personnel to participate in community outreach and recruitment programs with private employers, public schools and universities?	X		
Ensure full cooperation of employees under his/her supervision with EEO office officials such as EEO Counselors, EEO Investigators, etc.?	X		
Ensure a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment and retaliation?	X		
Ensure that subordinate supervisors have effective managerial, communication and interpersonal skills in order to supervise most effectively in a workplace with diverse employees and avoid disputes arising from ineffective communications ?	X		
Ensure the provision of requested religious accommodations when such accommodations do not cause an undue hardship?	X		
Ensure the provision of requested disability accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities when such accommodations do not cause an undue hardship?	X		
Have all employees been informed about what behaviors are inappropriate in the workplace and that this behavior may result in disciplinary actions?	X		
Describe what means were utilized by the agency to inform its workforce about the penalties for unacceptable behavior.			
Have the procedures for requesting reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities been made readily available/accessible to all employees by disseminating such procedures during orientation of new employees and by making such procedures available on the Internet?	X		
Have managers and supervisors been trained on their responsibilities under the procedures for reasonable accommodation?	X		

**Essential Element B: INTEGRATION OF EEO INTO THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIC MISSION**

**Requires that the agency's EEO programs be organized and structured to maintain a workplace that is free from discrimination in any of the agency's policies, procedures or practices and supports the agency's strategic mission.**

 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The reporting structure for the EEO Program provides the Principal EEO Official with appropriate authority and resources to effectively carry out a successful EEO Program.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Is the EEO Director under the direct supervision of the agency head? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(4)]  For subordinate level reporting components, is the EEO Director/Officer under the immediate supervision of the lower level component's head official? (For example, does the Regional EEO Officer report to the Regional Administrator?)		X		
Are the duties and responsibilities of EEO officials clearly defined?		X		
Do the EEO officials have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out the duties and responsibilities of their positions?		X		
If the agency has 2 <sup>nd</sup> level reporting components, are there organizational charts that clearly define the reporting structure for EEO programs?		N/A		
If the agency has 2 <sup>nd</sup> level reporting components, does the agency-wide EEO Director have authority for the EEO programs within the subordinate reporting components?		N/A		
If not, please describe how EEO program authority is delegated to subordinate reporting components.				
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The EEO Director and other EEO professional staff responsible for EEO programs have regular and effective means of informing the agency head and senior management officials of the status of EEO programs and are involved in, and consulted on, management/personnel actions.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Does the EEO Director/Officer have a regular and effective means of informing the agency head and other top management officials of the effectiveness, efficiency and legal compliance of the agency's EEO program?		X		
Following the submission of the immediately preceding FORM 715-01, did the EEO Director/Officer present to the head of the agency and other senior officials the "State of the Agency" briefing covering all components of the EEO report, including an assessment of the performance of the agency in each of the six elements of the Model EEO Program and a report on the progress of the agency in completing its barrier analysis including any barriers it identified, eliminated and/or reduced the impact of?		X		

Are EEO program officials present during agency deliberations prior to decisions regarding recruitment strategies, vacancy projections, succession planning, selections for training/career development opportunities, and other workforce changes?		X		
Does the agency consider whether any group of employees or applicants might be negatively impacted prior to making human resource decisions such as re-organizations and re-alignments?		X		
Are management/personnel policies, procedures and practices examined at regular intervals to assess whether there are hidden impediments to the realization of equality of opportunity for any group(s) of employees or applicants? [see 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(b)(3)]		X		
Is the EEO Director included in the agency's strategic planning, especially the agency's human capital plan, regarding succession planning, training, etc., to ensure that EEO concerns are integrated into the agency's strategic mission?		X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency has committed sufficient human resources and budget allocations to its EEO programs to ensure successful operation.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
 <b>Measures</b>				
Does the EEO Director have the authority and funding to ensure implementation of agency EEO action plans to improve EEO program efficiency and/or eliminate identified barriers to the realization of equality of opportunity?		X		
Are sufficient personnel resources allocated to the EEO Program to ensure that the agency self-assessments and self-analyses prescribed by EEO MD-715 are conducted annually and maintained in order to achieve an effective complaint processing system?		X		
Are statutory/regulatory EEO-related Special Emphasis Programs sufficiently staffed?		X		
Federal Women's Program - 5 U.S.C. 7201; 38 U.S.C. 4214; Title 5 CFR, Subpart B, 720.204		X		
Hispanic Employment Program - Title 5 CFR, Subpart B, 720.204		X		
People With Disabilities Program Manager; Selective Placement Program for Individuals With Disabilities - Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act; Title 5 U.S.C. Subpart B, Chapter 31, Subchapter I-3102; 5 CFR 213.3102(t) and (u); 5 CFR 315.709		X		
Are other agency special emphasis programs monitored by the EEO Office for coordination and compliance with EEO guidelines and principles, such as FEORP - 5 CFR 720; Veterans Employment Programs; and Black/African American; American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American/Pacific Islander programs?		X		

 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency has committed a sufficient percentage of its budget to support the success of its EEO Programs.</b>	Measure has been met		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
		Yes	No	
 <b>Measures</b>				
Are there sufficient resources to enable the agency to conduct a thorough barrier analysis of its workforce, including the provision of adequate data collection and tracking systems?		X		
Is there a sufficient budget allocation for all employees to utilize all EEO programs, when desired, including the complaint processing program, ADR, subordinate level reporting components, and making a request for reasonable accommodation?		X		
Has funding been secured for publication and distribution of EEO materials (e.g. harassment policies, EEO posters, reasonable accommodations procedures, etc.)?		X		
Is there a central fund or other mechanism for funding the supplies, equipment and services necessary to provide disability accommodations?		X		
Does the agency fund major renovation projects to ensure timely compliance with Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards?		X		
Is the EEO Program allocated with sufficient resources to train all employees on EEO Programs, including administrative and judicial remedial procedures available to employees?		X		
Is there sufficient funding to ensure the prominent posting of written materials in all personnel and EEO offices? [see 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(b)(5)]		X		
Is there sufficient funding to ensure that all employees have access to this training and information?		X		
Is there sufficient funding to provide all managers and supervisors with training and periodic updates on their EEO responsibilities:		X		
for ensuring a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment and retaliation?		X		
for providing religious accommodations?		X		
for providing disability accommodations in accordance with the agency's written procedures?		X		
in the EEO discrimination complaint process?		X		
to participate in ADR?		X		

**Essential Element C: MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY**

**This element requires the Agency Head to hold all managers, supervisors, and EEO Officials responsible for the effective implementation of the agency's EEO Program and Plan.**

 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>EEO program officials advise and provide appropriate assistance to managers/supervisors about the status of EEO programs within each manager's or supervisor's area or responsibility.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
	Are regular (monthly/quarterly/semi-annually) EEO updates provided to management/supervisory officials by EEO program officials?	X		
	Do EEO program officials coordinate the development and implementation of EEO Plans with all appropriate agency managers to include Agency Counsel, Human Resource Officials, Finance, and the Chief information Officer?	X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The Human Resources Director and the EEO Director meet regularly to assess whether personnel programs, policies, and procedures are in conformity with instructions contained in EEOC management directives. [see 29 CFR § 1614.102(b)(3)]</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
	Have timetables or schedules been established for the agency to review its Merit Promotion Program Policy and Procedures for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in promotion opportunities by all groups?	X		
	Have timetables or schedules been established for the agency to review its Employee Recognition Awards Program and Procedures for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in the program by all groups?	X		
	Have timetables or schedules been established for the agency to review its Employee Development/Training Programs for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in training opportunities by all groups?	X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>When findings of discrimination are made, the agency explores whether or not disciplinary actions should be taken.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
	Does the agency have a disciplinary policy and/or a table of penalties that covers employees found to have committed discrimination?	X		
	Have all employees, supervisors, and managers been informed as to the penalties for perpetrating discriminatory behavior or for taking personnel actions based upon a prohibited basis?	X		
	Has the agency, when appropriate, disciplined or sanctioned managers/supervisors or employees found to have discriminated over the past two years?	X		
If so, cite the number found to have discriminated and list penalty /disciplinary action for each type of violation.				

Does the agency promptly (within the established time frame) comply with EEOC, Merit Systems Protection Board, Federal Labor Relations Authority, labor arbitrators, and District Court orders?		X		
Does the agency review disability accommodation decisions/actions to ensure compliance with its written procedures and analyze the information tracked for trends, problems, etc.?		X		
<b>Essential Element D: PROACTIVE PREVENTION</b>				
<b>Requires that the agency head makes early efforts to prevent discriminatory actions and eliminate barriers to equal employment opportunity in the workplace.</b>				
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>Analyses to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to employment are conducted throughout the year.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Do senior managers meet with and assist the EEO Director and/or other EEO Program Officials in the identification of barriers that may be impeding the realization of equal employment opportunity?		X		
When barriers are identified, do senior managers develop and implement, with the assistance of the agency EEO office, agency EEO Action Plans to eliminate said barriers?		X		
Do senior managers successfully implement EEO Action Plans and incorporate the EEO Action Plan Objectives into agency strategic plans?		X		
Are trend analyses of workforce profiles conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trend analyses of the workforce's major occupations conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trends analyses of the workforce's grade level distribution conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trend analyses of the workforce's compensation and reward system conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trend analyses of the effects of management/personnel policies, procedures and practices conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is encouraged by senior management.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Are all employees encouraged to use ADR?		X		
Is the participation of supervisors and managers in the ADR process required?		X		

<b>Essential Element E: EFFICIENCY</b>				
<b>Requires that the agency head ensure that there are effective systems in place for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the agency's EEO Programs as well as an efficient and fair dispute resolution process.</b>				
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency has sufficient staffing, funding, and authority to achieve the elimination of identified barriers.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
	Does the EEO Office employ personnel with adequate training and experience to conduct the analyses required by MD-715 and these instructions?	X		
	Has the agency implemented adequate data collection and analysis systems to permit tracking of the information as required by MD-715 and these instructions?	X		
	Have sufficient resources been provided to conduct effective audits of field facilities' efforts to achieve a model EEO program and eliminate discrimination under Title VII and the Rehabilitation Act?	X		
	Is there a designated agency official or other mechanism in place to coordinate or assist with processing requests for disability accommodations in all major components of the agency?	X		
	Are 90% of accommodation requests processed within the time frame set forth in the agency procedures for reasonable accommodation?	X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency has an effective complaint tracking and monitoring system in place to increase the effectiveness of the agency's EEO Programs.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
	Does the agency use a complaint tracking and monitoring system that delineates the location and status of complaints and the length of time elapsed at each stage of the agency's complaint resolution process?	X		
	Does the agency's tracking system identify the issues and bases for the complaints, the aggrieved individuals/complainants, the involved management officials and other information to analyze complaint activity and trends?	X		
	Does the agency hold contractors accountable for delays in counseling and investigation processing times?	X		
If yes, briefly describe how: Via interagency agreement and NRCS performance plan for supervisors and managers				
	Does the agency monitor and ensure that new investigators and counselors, including contract and collateral duty investigators, receive the 32 hours of training required in accordance with EEO Management Directive MD-110?	X		

Does the agency monitor and ensure that experienced counselors and investigators, including contract and collateral duty investigators, receive the 8 hours of refresher training required on an annual basis in accordance with EEO Management Directive MD-110?		X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency has sufficient staffing, funding and authority to comply with the time frames in accordance with the EEOC (29 C.F.R. Part 1614) regulations for processing EEO complaints of employment discrimination.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Are benchmarks in place that compare the agency's discrimination complaint processes with 29 C.F.R. Part 1614?		X		
Does the agency provide timely EEO counseling within 30 days of the initial request or within an agreed upon extension in writing, up to 60 days?		X		
Does the agency provide an aggrieved person with written notification of his/her rights and responsibilities in the EEO process in a timely fashion?		X		
Does the agency complete the investigations within the applicable prescribed time frame?			X	About 60% timely. The USDA, OASCR provides reimbursable service in processing all NRCS EEO investigations.
When a complainant requests a final agency decision, does the agency issue the decision within 60 days of the request?			X	About 25% timely. The USDA, OASCR is responsible for the issuance of agency-wide FADs.
When a complainant requests a hearing, does the agency immediately, upon receipt of the request from the EEOC AJ, forward the investigative file to the EEOC Hearing Office?		X		
When a settlement agreement is entered into, does the agency timely complete all obligations provided for in such agreements?		X		
Does the agency ensure timely compliance with EEOC AJ decisions that are not the subject of an appeal by the agency?		X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>There is an efficient and fair dispute resolution process and effective systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the agency's EEO complaint processing program.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
In accordance with 29 C.F.R. §1614.102(b), has the agency established an ADR Program for the pre-complaint and formal complaint stages of the EEO process?		X		
Does the agency require all managers and supervisors to receive ADR training in accordance with EEOC (29 C.F.R. Part 1614) regulations, which emphasize the federal government's interest in encouraging mutual resolution of disputes and the benefits associated with utilizing ADR?		X		
After the agency has offered ADR and the complainant has elected to participate in ADR, are the managers required to participate?		X		

Does the responsible management official directly involved in the dispute have settlement authority?			X	Per MD 110, Chapter 3, Section VI(a)9, the settlement authority is reserved for the Resolving Official and not the responsible management official. USDA assigns the RMO's immediate supervisor as the RO.
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency has effective systems in place for maintaining and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of its EEO programs.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Does the agency have a system of management controls in place to ensure the timely, accurate, complete and consistent reporting of EEO complaint data to the EEOC?		X		
Does the agency provide reasonable resources for the EEO complaint process to ensure efficient and successful operation in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(a)(1)?		X		
Does the agency's EEO office have management controls in place to monitor and ensure that the data received from Human Resources is accurate, timely received, and contains all the required data elements for submitting annual reports to the EEOC?		X		
Do the agency's EEO programs address all of the laws enforced by the EEOC?		X		
Does the agency identify and monitor significant trends in complaint processing to determine whether the agency is meeting its obligations under both Title VII and the Rehabilitation Act?		X		
Does the agency track recruitment efforts and analyze efforts to identify potential barriers in accordance with MD-715 standards?			X	NCRS did not provide an adequate data collection for applicant pools needed to permit tracking of the information required by MD-715 as shown on Tables A7 and A9.
Does the agency consult with other agencies of similar size on the effectiveness of their EEO programs to identify best practices and share ideas?		X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency ensures that the investigation and adjudication functions of its complaint resolution process are separate from its legal defense arm of agency and other offices with conflicting or competing interests.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		<b>For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report</b>
 <b>Measures</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Are legal sufficiency reviews of EEO matters handled by a functional unit that is separate and apart from the unit that handles agency representation in EEO complaints?		X		
Does the agency discrimination complaint process ensure a neutral adjudication function?		X		

If applicable, are processing time frames incorporated into the legal counsel's sufficiency review for timely processing of complaints?		X		
<b>Essential Element F: RESPONSIVENESS AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE</b> This element requires that federal agencies be in full compliance with EEO statutes and EEOC regulations, policy guidance, and other written instructions.				
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>Agency personnel are accountable for timely compliance with orders issued by EEOC Administrative Judges.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 <b>Measures</b>		Yes	No	
	Does the agency have a system of management control to ensure that agency officials timely comply with any orders or directives issued by an EEOC Administrative Judges?	X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>The agency's system of management controls ensures that the agency timely completes all ordered corrective action and submits its compliance reports to EEOC within 30 days of such completion.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 <b>Measures</b>		Yes	No	
Does the agency have control over the payroll processing function of the agency? If Yes, answer the two questions below.		X		
Are there steps in place to guarantee responsive, timely, and predictable processing of ordered monetary relief?		X		
Are procedures in place to promptly process other forms of ordered relief?		X		
 <b>Compliance Indicator</b>	<b>Agency personnel are accountable for the timely completion of actions required to comply with orders of EEOC.</b>	<b>Measure has been met</b>		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 <b>Measures</b>		Yes	No	
Is compliance with EEOC orders encompassed in the performance standards of any agency employees?		X		
If so, please identify the employees by title in the comments section, and state how performance is measured.				
Is the unit charged with the responsibility of complying with EEOC orders located in the EEO office?		X		
If not, please identify the unit in which it is located, the number of employees in the unit, and their grade levels in the comments section.				

Have the involved employees received any formal training in EEO compliance?	X		
Does the agency promptly provide to the EEOC the following documentation for completing compliance:	X		
Attorney Fees: Copy of check issued for attorney fees and/or a narrative statement by an appropriate agency official and/or an agency payment order delineating the dollar amount of attorney fees paid;	X		
Awards: A narrative statement by an appropriate agency official stating the dollar amount and the criteria used to calculate the award;	X		
Back Pay and Interest: Computer printouts or payroll documents outlining gross back pay and interest, copies of any checks issued, and narrative statements by an appropriate agency official total monies paid;	X		
Compensatory Damages: The final agency decision and evidence of payment, if made;	X		
Training: Attendance roster at training session(s) or a narrative statement by an appropriate agency official confirming that specific persons or groups of persons attended training on a certain date;	X		
Personnel Actions (e.g., Reinstatement, Promotion, Hiring, Reassignment): Copies of SF-50s;	X		
Posting of Notice of Violation: Original signed and dated notice reflecting the dates that the notice was posted. A copy of the notice will suffice if the original is not available;	X		
Supplemental Investigation: 1. Copy of letter to complainant acknowledging receipt from EEOC of remanded case. 2. Copy of letter to complainant for when the Report of Investigation was transmitted (not the ROI itself unless specified). 3. Copy of request for a hearing (complainant's request letter or agency's transmittal letter);	X		
Final Agency Decision (FAD): FAD or copy of the complainant's request for a hearing;	X		
Restoration of Leave: Printout or statement identifying the amount of leave restored, if applicable. If not, an explanation or statement;	X		
Civil Actions: A complete copy of the civil action complaint demonstrating the same issues raised as in the compliance matter;	X		
Settlement Agreements: Signed and dated agreement with specific dollar amounts, if applicable. Also, if appropriate, documentation of relief should be provided?	X		

Footnotes:

1. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102.

2. When an agency makes modifications to its procedures, the procedures must be resubmitted to the Commission. See *EEOC Policy Guidance on Executive Order 13164: Establishing Procedures to Facilitate the Provision of Reasonable Accommodation* (10/20/00) Requests.

<b>EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H</b>	<b><i>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service EEO Plan For Attaining the Essential Elements of A Model EEO Program</i></b>	
NRCS	FY 2014	
<b>Essential Element E: Efficiency</b>		
Compliance Measures	Does the agency provide timely EEO investigation and timely issuance of final agency decision within the required timeframe set forth by the EEO Commission?	
STATEMENT of MODEL PROGRAM ESSENTIAL ELEMENT DEFICIENCY:	In FY 2014, about 60% of EEO investigations and 25% of FADs were completed in a timely manner.	
OBJECTIVE:	Complete at least 90% of investigations and FADs issued in a timely manner.	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	USDA, OASCR Staff NRCS, CRD Staff	
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	October 01, 2014	
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2015	
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:		TARGET DATE (Must be specific)
Monitor requests for information to ensure that all requests are responded within the required timeframes and ensured that the date of the completed action is updated in the database tracking system within 2-3 days.		On a quarterly basis to September 30, 2015
Develop a tracking system to evaluate the progress of EEO investigations.		March 31, 2015
Meet with OASCR Liaisons to obtain updates and work to ensure that agency witnesses cooperate with investigators in timely submitting/maintaining relevant documentation and statements for the record.		April 30, 2015
Provide training to responsible management officials and other witnesses regarding the investigation process at the counseling stage to ensure their understanding of their obligation to cooperate during the EEO complaint process.		September 30, 2015

<b>EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H</b>	<b>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service EEO Plan For Attaining the Essential Elements of A Model EEO Program</b>	
NRCS		FY 2014
<b>Essential Element E: Efficiency</b>		
Compliance Measures	Has the agency implemented an adequate data collection and analysis system for applicant pools, which permits tracking of the information required by MD-715 and these instructions?	
STATEMENT of MODEL PROGRAM ESSENTIAL ELEMENT DEFICIENCY:	In FY 2014, NRCS did not have the capability to collect applicant pool data to allow the NSEPMs and CRD staff to conduct an application pool/barrier analysis.	
OBJECTIVE:	Modify the applicant tracking system for applicant pools to produce sufficient data tables for barrier analysis purpose as required by MD-715 guidance. .	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	MD 715 Program Managers, CRD Director of Human Resources Director, Talent Management National Finance Center (NFC) IT Team, USDA National SEP Managers	
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	January 3, 2015	
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2015	
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:		TARGET DATE (Must be specific)
The CRD will work with OASCR/HR/NFC to seek technical assistance in updating the race and national origin (RNO) and disability codes in the recruitment and hiring database system. This will include the capability to track applicants, including internal candidates for competitive promotions and senior grade level positions by race, sex, national origin, date of birth, and disability status.		September 30, 2015
Examine initial report output and determine whether further modifications are needed. Design a series of standard reports that will facilitate applicant pool data analysis.		September 30, 2015

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*U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service*  
**EEO PLAN TO ELIMINATE IDENTIFIED BARRIER**

**Barrier #1: Participation rate of Hispanics in NRCS remains below the National CLF.**

**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?

The participation rate for Hispanic employees shows a slight increase from 5.06% in FY 2013 to 5.09% in FY 2014; however, it remained significantly below the NCLF of 9.66%.

**BARRIER ANALYSIS:**

Provide a description of the steps taken and data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.

With respect to gains and losses, there was a positive trend in the hiring rate for Hispanic men and women from 2.5% in FY 2013 (3 men and 3 women) to 5.39% (11 men and 8 women) in FY 2014. However, the separation rate for Hispanics increased slightly from 4.27% (20 men and 11 women) in FY 2013 to 4.9% (27 men and 8 women) in FY 2014.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for Hispanic Men and Women. Specifically, participation rates of Hispanic males are below their CLF in the following major occupations Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (2.32% v. CLF of 4.20%), Engineer Technician-0802 (3.18% v. CLF of 8.10%), Human Resource Management – 0201 (0.87% v. CLF 5.00%), Contracting-1102 (1.18% v. CLF of 2.20%), Cartography-1370 (3.45% v. CLF of 6.20%) Environmental Engineering-0819 (0% v. 3.5%), and IT Management – 2210 (3.51% v. CLF 6.10%).

Participation rates of Hispanic women are below their CLF in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician -0458 (1.08% v. CLF of 7.90%), General Biological Science-0401 (1.49% v. CLF 2.60%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0.24% v. CLF of 2.10%), Management Analyst-0343 (0.74% v. CLF of 8.10%), Secretary-0318 (2.48% v. CLF of 9.30%), Contracting-1102 (3.53% v. CLF of 5.10%), IT Management – 2210 (1.75% v. CLF of 2.30%), Geology-1350 (0% v. CLF 1.70%), and Environmental Engineering-0819 (0% v. CLF of 1.10%).

**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.

National HEP Manager conducted a barrier analysis and provided a summary of barrier and program updates. See Appendix D for details.

<p><b>OBJECTIVE:</b></p> <p>State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified Hispanic applicants by expanding the applicant pool for Hispanics in major occupations with NRCS.</p>	
<p><b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:</b></p>	<p>National Hispanic Employment Program Manager          Director, Talent Management          Deputy Chief for Management          HR Director          MD 715 Program Managers, CRD</p>	
<p><b>DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:</b></p>	<p>October 1, 2014</p>	
<p><b>TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</b></p>	<p>September 30, 2015</p>	
<p><b>PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET DATE</b></p>	
<p>Convene a HEPM meeting to engage senior leaders, the HR recruitment team, and State Conservationists to work on the national recruitment plan and to develop strategies dedicated to the Hispanic hiring initiatives.</p>	<p>March 2015</p>	
<p>Establish a support system that encourages Hispanics to become interested in public service and that teaches them how to apply for jobs in government agencies.</p>	<p>July 2015</p>	
<p>Continue collaborative partnership activities with the Hispanic colleges and institutions to market the job application process with the focus to increase the Hispanic outreach efforts, and to make Hispanic applicants aware of job availability in the Department.</p>	<p>August 2015</p>	
<p>Develop and implement a series of career development initiatives targeted at current Department Hispanic employees, including mentorship and rotational assignments.</p>	<p>September 2015</p>	
<p><b>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</b></p> <p>The National Hispanic Employment Program Manager (NHEPM) is the lead responsible person for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management’s commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The HEPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, the NHEPM has established productive relationships acquiring active support and engagement with community leaders such as the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics as well as building professional contacts with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU).</p> <p>The goal is to attract Hispanic interns to career paths in Federal service through various student programs, including the Federal Pathways and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Programs. The HEPM initiated a series of best practice led by the Office of Personnel Management as a holistic approach to Hispanic recruitment by partnering with USDA and the Hispanic community to discuss and plan university job and internship fairs.</p> <p>See Appendix D for HEP accomplishments, initiatives and updates.</p>		

**Barrier #2: Participation rate of Blacks in NRCS remains below the National CLF.**

<p><b>STATEMENT of CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</b></p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>With respect to the Black permanent workforce, the number of Black employees decreased slightly from 857 in FY 2013 to 854 in FY 2014. Despite the increase in number, the participation rate for Black employees shows a slight increase from 8.02% in FY 2013 to 8.23% in FY 2014, which was below the NCLF of 12.02%.</p> <p>With respect to gains and losses, there was a positive trend in the hiring rate for Black men and women from 11.67% in FY 2013 (16 men and 12 women) to 12.47% (27 men and 17 women) in FY 2014. However, the separation rate for Blacks decreased slightly from 9.5% (43 men and 26 women) in FY 2013 to 6.86% (26 men and 23 women) in FY 2014.</p>
<p><b>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</b></p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and the data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>	<p>Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for Black Men and Black Women (See Appendix H, Table A6). Specifically, Participation rates of Black males are below their relevant occupational CLFs in the following major occupations: Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (2.82% v. CLF of 3.80%), Engineer Technician-0802 (3.67% v. CLF 7.20%), Rangeland Management-0454 (0% v. CFL of 1.80%), Agricultural Engineer-0890 (1.76% v. CLF of 3.90%), Budget Analyst-0560 (1.06% v. CLF of 4.00%), Cartography-1370 (0% v. CLF of 4.00%), IT Management – 2210 (1.75% v. CLF 7.00%), Geology-1350 (0% v. CLF 2.00%), and Environmental Engineer-0819 (0% v. CLF of 5.1%).</p> <p>Participation rates of Black women are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician -0458 (0.58% v. CLF of 2.80%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0% v. CLF of 2.3%), Geology-1350 (0% v. CLF of 1.70%) and Environmental Engineering-0819 (0% v. CLF of 1.9%).</p>
<p><b>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</b></p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>See Appendix D for BEP Manager’s updates on actions taken to address the barrier analysis.</p>
<p><b>OBJECTIVE:</b></p> <p>State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified Black within NRCS by expanding the applicant pool for major occupations within NRCS.</p>

to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	BEP Manager Talent Management Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	October 1, 2014
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2015
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	TARGET DATE (Must Be Specific)
Engage BEP members, senior leaders, human resource staff, and hiring officials to discuss process improvement and determine whether the recruitment and selection process should be refined internally.	March 2015
Host mentoring and “brown bag” sessions with Black employees to discuss their advancement experience.	September 2015
Evaluate policies and practices and observe how qualified applicants are selected into senior grade level positions and assess whether the agency’s selection process has any deficiencies or potential barriers.	December 2015
<p><b>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</b></p> <p>Workforce profiles are provided to senior leaders quarterly to advise them of the NRCS’s MD 715 program goals.</p> <p>The National BEPM (NBEPM) is the lead responsible person for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management’s commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The BEPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, the NBEPM has established productive relationships acquiring active support and engagement with community leaders such as the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Blacks as well as building professional contacts with the Historic Blacks Colleges and Universities. The goal is to attract Black interns to career paths in Federal service through various student programs, including the Federal Pathways and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Programs.</p> <p>See Appendix D for details on the BEP accomplishments, initiatives and updates.</p>	

**Barrier #3: Participation rate of Asian Americans (AA) in NRCS remains below the National CLF.**

**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?

There were a total of 146 AA employees in the permanent workforce (85 men and 61 women) in FY 2014. The number of AA employees decreased from 147 in FY 2013 to 146 in FY 2014. Thus, the participation rate for AA employees shows a slight increase of 0.04% from 1.37% in FY 2013 to 1.41% in FY 2014.

With respect to gains and losses, there was a slight decrease in the hiring rate for AA men and women from 2.92% in FY 2013 (4 men and 3 women) to 1.70% (3 men and 3 women) in FY 2014, which was below their respective NCLFs of 3.9%. The separation rate for AA men increased from 1.24% in FY 2013 to 1.26% in FY 2014; whereas the separation rate for AA women decreased from 1.65% in FY 2013 to 0.56% in FY 2014.

With respect to the SES level, there were no AA employees. The participation rates of AA men and women at the SES level are absent, which remain below their corresponding rates of 1.41%.

**BARRIER ANALYSIS:**

Provide a description of the steps taken and the data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for AA Men and AA Women. Specifically, Participation rates of AA men are below their relevant occupational CLFs in the following major/mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation-0457 (.58% v. CLF 0.90%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.17% v. CLF of 6.80%), Soil Science-0470 (0.96% v. CLF 4.80%), Civil Engineering-0810 (2.66% v. CLF 8.90%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0.49% v. CLF of 5.7%), Rangeland Management-0454 (0.34% v. CFL of 0.90%), Agricultural Engineering-0890 (2.20% v. CLF 10.20%), Agronomy-0471 (1.96% v. CLF of 4.80%), Human Resource Management-0201 (0.87% v. CLF of 2.2%), Budget Analyst-0560 (0% v. CLF of 2.80%), Cartography-1370 (1.72% v. CLF of 2.80%), and Geology-1350 (0% v. 2.80%).

Participation Rates of AA women are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation-0457 (.38% v. CLF 0.70%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.17% v. CLF of 7.90%), Soil Science-0470 (0% v. CLF 2.40%), Civil Engineering-0810 (0.41% v. CLF of 1.8%), Engineer Technician-0802 (0% v. CLF of 2.3%), Agricultural Engineer-0890 (0.88% v. CLF of 3.60%), Management Analyst-0343 (1.48% v. CLF of 2.60%), Human Resource Management-0201 (1.74% v. CLF of 2.7%), Agronomy-0471 (0.98% v. CLF 2.4%), Geology-1350 (0% v. CLF 1.0%), and Environmental Engineering-0819 (0% v. CLF of 2.6%).

**STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:**

Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice

The overall Asian participation rates remain below the NCLF as well as the relevant occupational CLFs.

that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.	
<b>OBJECTIVE:</b> State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.	To increase the hiring of qualified Asians within NRCS by expanding the applicant pool for major occupations within NRCS.
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:</b>	National AAPI Manager Talent Management Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD
<b>DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:</b>	October 1, 2014
<b>TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</b>	September 30, 2015
<b>PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</b>	<b>TARGET DATE (Must Be Specific)</b>
Engage AA SEP members, senior leaders, human resource staff, and hiring officials to address the low participation rate of AA groups and develop a strategy to expand the applicant pool of AA for job vacancies in major occupations.	March 2015
Establish a support system that encourages Asian candidates to become interested in public service and that teaches them how to apply for jobs in government agencies.	December 2015
<p><b>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</b></p> <p>The National Asian American/Pacific Islander (AA/PI) Employment Program Manager is the lead responsible person for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management's commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The AA SEPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, the National AA/PI Manager has established productive relationships acquiring active support and engagement with Department leaders from the White House Initiative on AA/PI as well as building professional contacts with the local employee organizations. The goal is to attract AAPI interns to career paths in Federal service through various student programs, including the Federal Pathways and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Programs.</p> <p>See Appendix D for details on the AA/PI program accomplishments, initiatives and updates.</p>	

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**Barrier #4: Participation rate of Women in NRCS remains below the National CLF.**

<p>STATEMENT of CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>In FY 2014, NRCS women represented 35.36% of the NRCS's permanent workforce, which has remained below the NCLF of 48.14%. The largest female groups were White women (27.59%) and Black women (3.70%).</p> <p>With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for Hispanic women, AA women, and American Indian/American Native women in the SES level remain absent i.e., their participation rates were below their corresponding participation rates in the permanent workforce.</p>
<p>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and the data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>	<p>Participation rates of NRCS women are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (24.21% v. CLF of 55.000%), Soil Science-0470 (19.01% v. CLF of 26.40%), General Biological Science-0401 (30.86% v. CLF of 47.7%), Engineer Technician-0802 (9.29% v. CLF of 20.50%), Management Analyst-0343 (57.04% v. CLF of 75.00%), and Geology-1350 (20.69% v. CLF 31.0%).</p>
<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>The overall women participation rate remains below the NCLF.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified women within NRCS by expanding the women applicant pool for major occupations within NRCS.</p>
<p>RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:</p>	<p>National FWP Manager Director, Talent Management Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD</p>

DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	October 1, 2014
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2015
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	TARGET DATE (Must Be Specific)
Engage FWP members, senior leaders, human resource staff, and hiring officials to examine ways to improve retention, and discuss process improvement to determine whether the recruitment and selection process should be refined internally.	March 2015
Host mentoring and “brown bag” sessions with FWP employees to discuss their advancement experience.	September 2015
Evaluate policies and practices and observe how qualified applicants are selected into senior grade level positions and assess whether the agency’s selection process has any deficiencies or potential barriers.	December 2015
<p><b>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</b></p> <p>The National Federal Women’s Program Manager (NFWPM) is the lead responsible person for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management’s commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The NFWPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, the NFWPM has established productive relationships acquiring active support and engagement with community leaders from the women community as well as building professional contacts with the local employee organizations. The goal is to attract female interns to career paths in Federal service through various student programs, including the Federal Pathways and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Programs.</p> <p>See Appendix D for details on the FWP accomplishments, initiatives and updates.</p>	

<b>EEOC FORM 715-01 PART I</b>	<i>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service</i> <b>EEO PLAN TO ELIMINATE IDENTIFIED BARRIER</b>
<b>Barrier Analysis #5: The low participate rate of PWTD when compared to the federal benchmark of 2.0%.</b>	
<p>STATEMENT of CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>The low participation rate of PWTD is 0.96%, which is below the community's benchmark of 2.0%.</p>
<p>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>	<p>With respect to the senior grade level, the participation rate for PWTD in the SES level is absent. The participation rate of PWTD at the senior grade GS 15 level was 1.61%, which was above the PWTD's participation rate of 0.96%.</p> <p>The hiring rate of PWTD in the permanent workforce shows an increase of 0.57% in FY 2014, which remains below the community's goal of 2.0%. The separation rate of PWTD in the permanent workforce shows a positive decrease from 0.92% in FY 2013 to 0.84% in FY 2014.</p> <p>With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for PWTD were below the relevant benchmarks. Noticeably, the participation rate for PWTD at the SES level remains absent.</p> <p>Participation rates of PWTD are below the PWOTD's participation rates in the following mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation – 0457 (29% v. PWOTD of 40.29%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.08% v. PWOTD of 11.66%), Soil Science-0470 (0.05% v. PWOTD of 6.05%) and General Biological Science-0401 (0.02% v. PWOTD of 5.22%).</p>
<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>The overall PWTD participation rate remains below the community's goal of 2%. A summary of the Disability Employment Program Manager's plans to eliminate the potential barriers for PWTD is provided at Appendix D.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified PWTD within NRCS by expanding the applicant pool in filling major occupation positions within NRCS.</p>

practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	National DEP Manager Director, Talent Management Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	October 1, 2014
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2015
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	TARGET DATE
Provide updates to managers and supervisors regarding the disability hiring plan.	June 2015
Recognize managers and supervisors who have made outstanding contributions to ensure an inclusive work environment and supported hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities.	September 2015
Ensure supervisors and managers' performance plans continue to include the accountability standards that hold them responsible for their practical roles and responsibilities in EEO, Diversity and Inclusion.	September 2015
Implement action items planned as shown on Part J of this report.	December 2015
<p><b>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</b></p> <p>The National DEP Manager (NDEPM) works with hiring officials by meeting with human resource specialists and obtaining packets, including but not limited to, templates of sample vacancy announcements, resumes of veterans and individuals with disabilities, and job analyses. This model will decrease the time to hire applicants with disabilities and ensure a diverse applicant pool.</p> <p>The mission of the DEP is to responsible for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management's commitment to promoting hiring of persons with targeted disabilities in the work place. The NDEPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>See Appendix D for details on the DEP accomplishments, initiatives and updates.</p>	

PART J Department or Agency Identifying Information	<b>Part J</b> <b>U.S Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service</b> <b>Special Program Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, and Advancement of Individuals with Disabilities</b> <b>For period covering October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014</b>						
	Part II  Employment Trend and Special Recruitment for Individuals with Targeted Disabilities	... beginning of FY 2014		... end of FY 2014		Net Change	
Enter Actual Number at the ...							
Number		%	Number	%	Number	Rate of Change	
Total Workforce		11,158	100%	10,705	100%	-453	-4.05%
Reportable Disability		1,133	10.15%	1070	10.00%	+63	-0.15%
Targeted Disability		102	0.91%	100	0.97%	+2	+0.06%
The Federal Goal by 2015			2.0%		%		
<p>If the rate of change for persons with targeted disabilities is not equal to or greater than the rate of change for the total workforce, a barrier analysis should be conducted (see below).</p>							
1. Total number of applications received from persons with targeted disabilities during the reporting period (that voluntarily self-identified).						N/A	
2. Total number of selections of individuals with targeted disabilities during this reporting period.							

<b>PART III</b> <b>Participation Rates In Agency Employment Programs – Permanent Workforce</b>									
Other Employment/Personnel Programs	TOTAL	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability		Not Identified		No Disability	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
3. Competitive Promotions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. Non-Competitive Promotions	729	85	11.66%	8	1.1%	18	2.47%	626	85.87%
5. Employment Development Training	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6. Employee Recognition and Awards									
• Time-Off Awards/Total hours awarded	203 (3391 hrs.)	20 (320 hrs)	9.85%	4 (68 hrs)	1.97%	1 (29 hrs)	0.5%	182 (3,042 hrs)	89.7%
• Cash Awards Under \$500	1153 (\$390,286)	127	11.01%	8	0.69%	19	1.65%	1007	87.34%
• Cash Awards Over \$500	3,586 (\$3,762,967)	307	8.56%	27	.75%	40	1.12%	3239	90.32%
• Quality Step Increases (QSIs) (Total Swarded)	294 \$566,720	25	8.5%	2	0.68%	3	1.02%	266	90.48%

**Part IV. Identification and Elimination of Barriers**

NRCS aggressively targeted diverse groups of qualified candidates, including persons with targeted disabilities, in its FY 2014 recruiting campaign.

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities database is provided to all Disability Emphasis Program Managers (DEPMs) and the link is identified on the NRCS CRD Web site. In March, the 2010 Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) data was available on the website ([www.wrp.gov](http://www.wrp.gov)). It provides information on over 1,800 college students with disabilities who are seeking summer or permanent employment in federal agencies nationwide. In order to access the database you must request your ID/PW through the above-noted Web site. Because of the confidential information within the database access is restricted to DEPMs/VEPMs, HRM and hiring officials. NRCS Disabilities Emphasis Program Managers (DEPM) work continuously to break down barriers in hiring and retaining persons with disabilities. These efforts include:

NRCS continues to recognize that employees hired 20-30 years ago could have become employees with disabilities. Employees are encouraged to review SF-256 and update on line. This enabled the agency to recertify employees and obtain a more accurate count of employees with disabilities.

For many years, NRCS has had a proactive reasonable accommodation program which has been fully developed to track the progress of requests for reasonable accommodations. See Appendix C. The DEPM facilitated the provision of services to employees via the development of very effective working relationships with internal and external resources. The Department has a highly capable assistive technology unit that provides technology assessments, assistive technology hardware and software, alternate format products, and adaptive technology.

Listed below are highlights of NDEPM plan of actions to eliminate the identified barriers:

- Across the U.S. NRCS NDEPMs forward and carry job vacancies to local hiring authorities, job fairs, vocational organizations and agencies that support the employment of persons with disabilities to ensure those job opportunities are seen by as wide a population as possible.
- Organizing and participating in “Diversity Days” where triggers, barriers, and success stories regarding persons with disabilities are discussed and presented to supervisors and workers.
- Coordinating with leadership to reserve some student positions for students with disabilities, and then finding those students and hiring them.
- A comprehensive sharing within NRCS employees nationwide the Presidential Proclamation promoting hiring persons with disabilities, and wide participation in the White House Disability teleconferences.
- Spreading awareness through the NRCS National Disabilities poster contest, highlighting the benefits and profitability of hiring persons with disabilities.
- Participating in all state DEPMs in Civil Rights Action Committees to ensure persons with disabilities remain high up in consideration in Civil Rights programs.
- Quarterly DEPM teleconferences are organized to share USDA guidance,

	<p>provide training, and to assess the state DEPM's concerns and questions regarding issues affecting the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination has been made with other federal agencies including the Federal Disabilities Workforce Consortium, to share information and coordinate efforts of DEPMs.</li> <li>• Hosting quarterly teleconferences with other National SEPMS to provide centralized information, guidance, training, and direction to the State and Center SEPMS. Through these teleconferences SEPMS share ideas, concerns, and best practices.</li> </ul> <p>For more information on the DEP accomplishments, analysis and updates, see Appendix D of this report.</p>
<p>Part V Goals for PWTD</p>	<p>In FY 2015, NRCS will continue to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fully engage agency senior officials, the HR Group, Hiring Officials, and DEP members to explore strategies that can promote hiring of PWTD;</li> <li>2. Review Exit survey results to determine the causes for PWTD separation rates;</li> <li>3. Work to participate in Individuals with Disabilities and Veterans Career Fair;</li> <li>4. Improve the coordination between the DEPM and the Selective Placement Coordinators;</li> <li>5. Develop a NRCS Action/Hiring Plan for PWTD.</li> <li>6. Ensure that training and workshops are provided to managers and supervisors on the use of special hiring authorities for qualified individuals with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, ADR, and prevention of harassment.</li> <li>7. Disseminate job announcements for targeted job series to the EEO community and other diverse constituent groups.</li> <li>8. Promote outreach activities by working closely with State DEPMs, HR Veterans Employment Program (VEP), and selective placement coordinators.</li> <li>9. Strengthen partnerships with State DEPMs to address the effectiveness of recruitment, career development, and retention initiatives for the PWTD.</li> </ol>