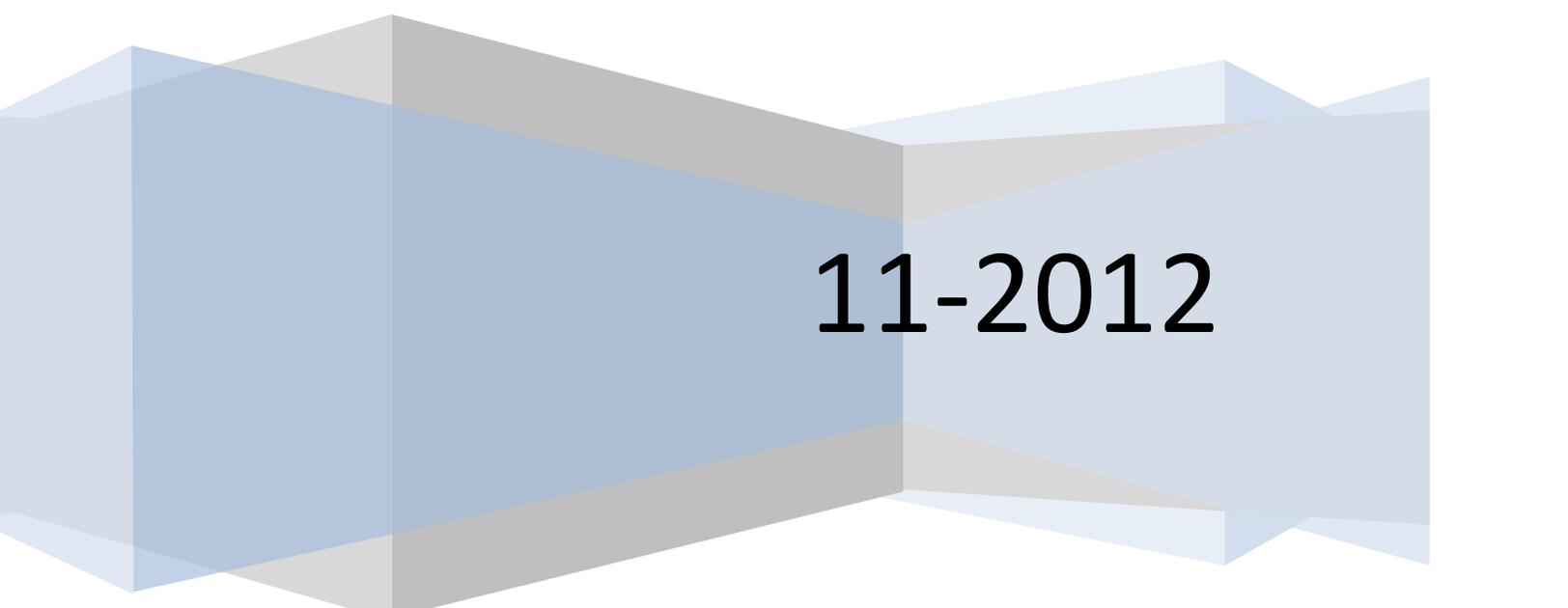




Natural Resources Conservation Service

Disabled Veteran Affirmative Action Plan FY 2012 Report

Disabled Veteran Affirmative Action Plan FY 2013 Plan

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11-2012

DISABLED VETERANS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM REPORT (DVAAP) FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2012

Methods Used to Recruit and Employ Disabled Veterans

1) Implementation of the NRCS Recruitment Strategy

The NRCS Recruitment Strategy was finalized in FY 2010. The strategy provides a roadmap for attracting, recruiting, and retaining a skilled, diverse workforce that we continue to use in FY 2011 and FY 2012. It consists of five central goals with outcomes and specific initiatives and actions that NRCS will take to reach them. These goals are:

- a. Plan strategically for recruiting a skilled, diverse workforce
- b. Develop an integrated approach to recruitment
- c. Implement standardized and user-friendly selection methods
- d. Recruit with an emphasis on retention
- e. Increase accountability through measurement and evaluation

This strategic plan aligns with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Strategic Plan (2010–2015) and the NRCS Human Capital Strategic Plan. Both underscore the paramount importance of recruiting the right people at the right time to do the right job through diverse branding and targeted recruitment initiatives.

2) Information Sharing

- a) DVAPP was shared with all Human Resources offices and all Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) for both Veterans and Disabilities.
- b) During FY 2012, Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) from all states met on a quarterly basis.

Internal Recruitment

1) Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP)

NRCS initiated a re-engineered leadership program, Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP) in FY 2011 which has continued throughout FY 2012. The program focuses on training activities that include classroom training, individual and on line learning, stretch assignments,

mentoring and coaching. The opportunity to apply for this program was posted agency wide and did contain criteria for selection, including the desire to have a diverse group of participants.

2) Update of Web Site

NRCS has launched an updated web site in FY 2012. Material has been developed which will enhance the "Careers" page of this new site.

3) Onboarding

Transitioning to a new position is not easy for anyone but can be especially daunting for veterans who are leaving a different life and transitioning to the civilian workforce. NRCS has developed an Onboarding framework that provides supervisors, human resources staff and other onboarding support people the tools, templates and policies that will provide the ability to have seamless and consistent new hire integration into the NRCS workforce. Information will be available to newly hired employees through this updated onboarding process as well as to employees who wish to have better access to internal opportunities.

Monitor, Review and Evaluate Activities

NRCS does monitor and evaluate based on information from the following:

- Civil Rights Compliance Audits
- Review and Analysis of Workforce Demographic Data
- New Hire Survey Results
- Exit Survey Results

FY 2012 Progress

Recruitment Activities

During FY 2012, NRCS was able to attend and recruit at a number of events that were directly targeting veterans, including those veterans with disabilities

- a) Wounded Warriors
- b) Hiring Heroes
- c) American Legion Convention
- d) Quantico Transition Fair
- e) Detroit Veteran's Hiring Fair
- f) Operation War Fighter

Training

- a) NRCS has provided training on direct hiring authorities to SEPM in the Veteran's and Disabilities groups.
- b) Training for recruiters has been developed which holds information regarding hiring authorities, targeting recruitment, conducting recruiting events, etc.
- c) Training for hiring managers has been completed which addresses hiring of veterans and hiring of individuals with disabilities. 100% of all hiring managers in the agency have completed 99.9% of all supervisors in the agency
- d) OPM's Veteran Hiring has been completed by 99% of all HR staff
- e) Training for Pathways has been completed by 99.9% of all supervisors which included information on veteran adjudication

Research

- a) Best Practices in Veterans programs have been researched
- b) Potential sources to utilize in targeted recruitment have been researched however this is ongoing.

Barriers

- a) Hiring freezes were in place at various times throughout FY 2012. This creates a significant barrier to facilitation of ongoing recruitment efforts. It is anticipated that this will continue into FY 2013 due to budget limits.
- b) Data is difficult to access. Without accurate data, it is difficult to make informed decisions and market to hiring managers. To overcome this barrier, Talent Management has completed an in depth data integrity study which included looking at coding for veterans. We will begin to look at implementing the changes recommended in FY 2013 as we continue to work with the Human Resources Information Systems office as well as NRCS Information Technology to develop a way to ensure we have reliable data sources.

DVAPP Plan Certification - Fiscal Year 2013

A. Name of the Agency

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington D.C. 20250

B. Name and Title of Designated DV AAP Office
(including address if different from above):

Jane Hardisty
Acting Deputy Chief of Management

C. Name and Title of Contact Person
(including address if different from above):

Marvis Montesano
Director, Talent Management
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Room 6220
Washington DC 20250
Telephone and FAX numbers:
(202)690-2250 (phone)
(202) 720-7721 (fax)

CERTIFICATION:

I certify that the above named agency: (1) has a current DISABLED VETERANS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM (DV AAP) PLAN and the program is being implemented as required by 38 U.S.C. 4214, as amended, and appropriate regulations and guidelines issued by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management: (2) that all field offices or installations having less than 500 employees are covered by a DVAAP Plan: (3) that all field offices or installations having 500 or more employees are covered by this plan or by a local plan: and (4) that such plans are available upon request from field offices or installations.

SIGNATURE AND DATE: _____
Jane Hardisty, Acting Deputy Chief for Management

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

DISABLED VETERANS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM PLAN (DVAAP) FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2013

1. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

Pursuant to section 403 of the Vietnam Era Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as amended (38 U.S.C. 2014), and section 307 of the Civil Rights Reforms Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. 3112), and section 307 of the Civil Rights Reform Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. 3112), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is required to have an up to date affirmative action plan to promote employment and advancement opportunities for qualified disabled veterans. Accordingly, the purpose of this document is to serve as the agency's Disabled Veteran Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) Plan for FY 2011.

2. PLAN COVERAGE

The DVAAP Plan covers all NRCS offices: National Headquarters (NHQ), Regional Offices, State Offices, Centers, and Field Offices. This plan also includes specific affirmative action to be taken by all offices, as appropriate, to promote the employment and advancement of disabled veterans. All employing offices are required to have a copy of the current NRCS DVAAP plan to facilitate the implementation of agency policy, to carry out their responsibilities under the national plan, and to accomplish all program objectives and goals as established by NHQ.

3. POLICY

It is the policy of NRCS to promote equal employment and advancement opportunities for disabled veterans, especially those who are 30 percent or more disabled. NRCS is committed to the employment of and advancement opportunities for disabled veterans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, marital status, political beliefs, familiar status or any other non-merit reason, as we are an equal opportunity employer.

4. PROGRAM LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibility for the success of the DVAAP is permeated throughout all levels of the agency.

- A. Overall responsibility for the development and implementation of this action plan is assigned to the Director of the Talent Management Division. The Director is designated by the NRCS as the DVAAP Manager. The day to day operations of the DVAAP are assigned to a staff member in the Talent Management Division. The DVAAP Manager's responsibilities include providing guidance

and assistance to the Human Resources staff, supervisors and managers, employees and applicants, distributing the DVAAP plan throughout the Agency, analyzing workforce data on veterans, publicizing the program and preparing the various reports related to the employment of veterans.

- B. The overall management of the Agency's Disability Employment Program is delegated to the Talent Management Division, in conjunction with the Outreach and Advocacy Division to which the National Disability Employment Program Manager (DEPM) is assigned. The National DEPM is responsible for coordinating the Disability Awareness Program to ensure that managers, supervisors, and employees have a full understanding of the program. Talent Management is responsible for coordination and development of strategic approaches to veterans programs including initiatives related to disabled veterans recruitment and retention.
- C. Regional Conservationists and State Conservationists are accountable for the success of the program in their respective areas. This includes ensuring vacancy announcements are open to disabled veterans, providing accommodations when necessary to employ disabled veterans, and publicizing the program through various media.
- D. Human Resources Managers/Specialists, in collaboration with Talent Management are responsible for implementing, evaluating and monitoring the DVAAP within their respective States. This includes publicizing the program through any available means, such as trainings, newsletters, and all-employee meetings.
- E. Disability Employment Program Managers, in collaboration with Talent Management, are responsible for coordinating the awareness of the Disabilities Program including the DVAAP, within their respective States. They serve as a link between the program operations in the State and the National DEPM. They assist in recruitment efforts and provide on-going assistance to employees and applicants, as required.
- F. All managers and supervisors are responsible for providing Equal Employment Opportunity for disabled veterans.

5. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Metrics have been established to ensure that NRCS has measurable methods of determining the success of our recruitment efforts. Attrition rates are monitored to acquire necessary information regarding separating employee's rationale for leaving the Agency.

A continuing appraisal of the program will be made throughout the year using the National Finance Center (NFC) system workforce statistical data. In addition, we continue to monitor results of our New Employee Survey and Exit Survey to retrieve information that identifies both why employees are joining and why employees are separating from NRCS.

6. RECRUITMENT/OUTREACH/ADVANCEMENT ACTIVITIES

It is NRCS' objective to participate in various recruitment initiatives, when possible and appropriate based on Agency recruitment needs, to inform disabled veterans of vacancies within the agency and to obtain qualified applicants for available or anticipated positions.

NRCS plans to continue to educate and train supervisors and managers on Veterans' Preference and noncompetitive appointments for preference eligible Veterans. We will provide information to hiring managers and human resources staff that will ensure that they are aware of the availability of accommodations through the USDA Target Center and the DOD Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP).

NRCS was able to fill the vacant Reasonable Accommodations Coordinator position. The job description was written to allow for spending 50% of time on Reasonable Accommodations and 50% on recruitment of individuals with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities.

NRCS will communicate the availability of an Agency-specific web-based recruiter training which has been developed in an effort to provide an overview of hiring authorities, methods of targeted recruitment and the importance of having a skilled and diverse workforce.

A. External Recruitment

Focus on underrepresented groups. Our recruiting efforts will focus on diverse groups and applicant pools, particularly those who are under-represented in the NRCS workforce. These efforts will go beyond ethnicity and gender, to include veterans, disabled, mid-level career, and other diverse applicants. To ensure our success, we will use diversity metrics in our planning documents and target diverse universities, educational institutions, groups, and organizations that include the under-represented populations. Our efforts to do this began with doing research and identifying barriers for each individual group and within FY 2013, we will have a finalized action plan to eliminate those barriers for:

- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics/Latinos
- African Americans
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- Disabled Individuals
- Veterans

The NRCS Recruitment Strategy addresses use of targeted recruitment processes to reach all under-represented groups, including Veterans and Disabled individuals. NRCS will utilize established contacts with veteran's organizations and will also reach out to form new contacts, such as: the Veterans' Employment Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and other similar organizations which foster the employment of disabled veterans.

Much of our recruitment is done at colleges and universities. While on campuses, NRCS will actively engage with veteran contacts whenever possible. In FY 2013, we will continue to develop a comprehensive student employment program using the new Pathways Program which will allow us to share information on campuses.

NRCS will focus on social networking and media of a variety of types in FY 2013. We believe that use of social media will expand the number of opportunities we will have to connect with veterans.

B. Internal Recruitment

All employees, including disabled veterans, are to be notified of vacancies that will be filled through placement and provided with information about procedures to follow in order to be considered for positions.

Additional informational documents will be prepared and made available which will address the ways that veterans can combine the benefits of Federal employment with their Veterans benefits.

C. Special Appointing Authorities

Talent Management Division, VEPMs, DEPMs and servicing human resources offices will continue to inform managers of the availability of special hiring authorities, such as the Veterans Readjustment Appointment Authority (VRA), Veterans Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) and the hiring authority for veterans with 30 percent or more disability. Managers will be encouraged to give consideration for using all appropriate authorities when filling positions.

During FY 2013, NRCS will continue to develop and deliver training to both Human Resources and Hiring Managers.

D. Vacancy Announcements

Servicing human resources offices are required to accept applications from persons eligible for consideration under special hiring authorities (including VRA, appointment of veterans with 30 percent or more disability etc.) at all times. Vacancy announcements will include a statement that voluntary applications from persons who want to be considered under special hiring will be accepted and considered at all times.

E. Special Events

Servicing human resources offices will participate in special events, such as career days, veterans' job fairs, employer seminars, conferences, etc. that promote awareness of the DVAAP.

The DVAAP Manager will assist offices in identifying available events that will ensure that we attract disabled Veterans and other targeted groups.

F. Unpaid Training or Work Experience

Disabled veterans may work for a Federal agency while in training in accordance with the requirements in 38 U.S.C. Chapter 31 (Veterans Administration Vocational Rehabilitation). Subsequently, a veteran may receive a non-competitive appointment to a vacancy for which he or

she is qualified when training is completed. Placement does not have to be in the agency in which training was received.

7. MONITORING, REVIEW, AND EVALUATION

The DVAAP Manager will provide oversight of the program agency-wide through periodic reviews of statistical data, inclusion of the program in any Human Resources Management evaluations or Civil Rights reviews which may be conducted throughout the year, as well as other similar oversight activities. We will continue to develop reliable data sources and will utilize all metrics available.

We plan to expand the scope of data monitoring in FY 2013 to provide a solid knowledge base on which to determine the effectiveness of our recruiting efforts.