



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

TO: Under Secretaries, Agency Heads, and Staff Office Heads

FROM: Thomas J. Vilsack  NOV 19 2014
Secretary

SUBJECT: Transforming USDA's Workforce and Workplace

The purpose of this memorandum is to call for your continued commitment to achieving a cultural transformation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Among my goals, upon accepting the privilege of serving our President as the Secretary of Agriculture, was to transform the culture of USDA in order to create an inclusive, high-performing organization. In leveraging the Cultural Transformation Milestones and Metrics and associated monthly reporting, we have made much progress. It is true that what gets measured gets done. I applaud you on your leadership in effecting transformation in many of the areas upon which we have focused.

However, there remain several challenges to which I call your attention and that require your engagement to achieve. These are issues that currently are holding us back from completing what we set forth to achieve, specifically:

- *Time-to-Hire*—Federal-wide goal is 80 days. USDA has fallen backward to 101 days.
- *Delegated Examining/Demonstration Authority Certificate Use Rate*—USDA's goal is 80 percent, and we finished fiscal year (FY) 2014 at 38 percent, which represents nearly \$10 million in wasted effort.
- *Diversity Training*—USDA's completion rate is low, and there is a notable absence of attendance at Department-wide observances by leadership from many agencies and staff offices.
- *Hiring Veterans*—The President's interagency Council for Veterans Employment goal for FY 2015 is that 25 percent of all hires will be veterans. The USDA hiring rate for veterans for FY 2014 was 14 percent.
- *Effective Implementation of the USDA-wide Enterprise Human Resources IT System.*
- *Telework Participation*—USDA's goal is to reach a 60 percent participation rate, which is attainable if we work together to remove barriers. The current telework participation rate is 21 percent.

To change outcomes, we must change processes and procedures. To this end, I have requested that Dr. Gregory Parham, Assistant Secretary for Administration, issue guidance to your Deputy Administrators for Management and your Mission Area Human Resources Directors. Please work with your staff to ensure this guidance is fully implemented.

To track progress, we will continue to share the monthly Cultural Transformation Milestones and Metrics Report with each of you, your Transformation Officers, and your Mission Area Human Resources Directors. Your engagement to ensure accurate reports are submitted in a timely manner is of paramount importance.

Regarding our Diversity/Transformation Officer cadre, I believe what we are doing is of sufficient importance to necessitate involvement of our Senior Executives. Please ensure a Senior Executive in your organization serves as your Diversity/Transformation Officer in order to provide consistent, timely, and accurate information.