

EEOC Form 715-01 FY 2004 Report

Executive Summary

Department's Mission and Mission-Related Functions

The mission of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is to provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management.

The Department's major programmatic policies and objectives are to:

- Expand markets for agricultural products and support international economic development;
- Further develop alternative markets for agricultural products and activities;
- Provide financing needed to help expand job opportunities and improve housing, utilities, and infrastructure in Rural America;
- Enhance food safety by taking steps to reduce the prevalence of foodborne hazards from farm to table;
- Improve nutrition and health by providing food assistance and nutrition education and promotion; and
- Manage and protect America's public and private lands working cooperatively with other levels of government and the private sector.

Summary of Department's Self-Assessment (Parts G and H)

In Part G of MD-715, the essential elements of a model EEO agency are defined in the form of a checklist of 122 measurement items subdivided into 6 categories. USDA has determined that improvement in its operations could be achieved in 18 of the measures, in 5 of the 6 categories. The proposed planned activities to achieve progress on these 18 items, as presented in Part H of this report, are stated below.

A. Demonstrated commitment from agency leadership

Send a memorandum to each Mission Area Personnel Office reminding the offices to provide a copy of USDA's EEO policy statement:

- To new employees, and
- To employees promoted into the supervisory ranks.

Send a memorandum to all agency heads, staff directors, Civil Rights directors, and Human Resources directors reminding them of the requirement under Departmental Regulation (DR) 4300-6 that a separate critical civil rights performance element be included in the management performance plans of all supervisors and asking them to specifically address in the civil rights performance element the individual's efforts to:

Resolve problems/disagreements and other conflicts in their respective work environment as they arise;

- address concerns, whether perceived or real, raised by employees and follow-up with appropriate action to correct or eliminate tension in the workplace;
- 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;
- ensure full cooperation of employees under their supervision with EEO office officials such as EEO Counselors, EEO Investigators, etc.;
- 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; and,
- ensure the provision of requested religious accommodation when such accommodation does not cause an undue hardship.

B. Integration of EEO into the agency's strategic mission

In FY 2005, training for supervisors and managers on their responsibilities in the EEO discrimination complaint process will be mandatory.

Training on their responsibility to provide religious accommodation will be the object of future training for all USDA managers and supervisors

C. Management and program accountability

Assign task force and conduct review of USDA's:

- Merit Promotion Program Policy and Procedures for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in training opportunities by all groups;
- Employee Recognition Awards Program and Procedures for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in the program by all groups; and,
- Employee Development/Training Programs for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in training opportunities by all groups.

Office of Civil Rights, Equal Opportunity and Compliance Division, shall perform compliance reviews of agency activities in accordance with Title VII and Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act.

D. Proactive prevention of unlawful discrimination

Provide training and guidance for supervisors and managers in the ADR process(es) and requirements once new regulations that are currently in the clearance process take effect.

E. Efficiency

Implement the Eversity software system, a Department-wide web application that provides workforce analysis, barrier identification, tracking, management, and reporting required under MD-715.

Individual agencies are responsible for the training of investigators and counselors. The Department will continue to monitor the agencies on this type of training.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) training for managers and supervisors is the responsibility of individual agencies and sub-components. The Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center will work with them through their ADR managers and agency Civil Rights directors to develop the appropriate training programs.

Analysis of Workforce Profiles

At the close of FY 2004, USDA's total employment was 112,336, including 91,210 permanent and 16,547 temporary employees. The permanent workforce of 91,210 consisted of 52,033 (57.0 percent) men and 39,177 (43.0 percent) women.

Women and minorities made up 53.3 percent of the FY 2004 permanent workforce – 39,177 (43.0 percent) women, 5,245 Hispanics (5.7 percent), 2,198 American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) (2.4 percent), and 2,295 Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (AA/PI) (2.5 percent).

Women (particularly White, Black, Hispanic, AI/AN women) tend to be overrepresented in grades GS 1-8 positions, which often have limited promotion potential. Women make up 43.0 percent of the permanent workforce, in all GS grades, but hold 53.9 percent of the GS 1-8 jobs.

In FY 2004 there were 6,351 (6.96 percent) permanent employees with a reported disability. The number of employees with targeted disabilities totaled 946 (1.04 percent), are compared to the Federal high benchmark rate 2.27 percent.