Affirmative Action Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, Advancement, and Retention of Persons with Disabilities

USDA Forest Service - FY 2025

To capture agencies' affirmative action plan for persons with disabilities (PWD) and persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD), EEOC regulations (29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(e)) and MD-715 require agencies to describe how their affirmative action plan will improve the recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention of applicants and employees with disabilities.

Section I: Efforts to Reach Regulatory Goals

EEOC regulations (29 CFR §1614.203(d)(7)) require agencies to establish specific numerical goals for increasing the participation of persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities in the federal government.

1. Using the goal of 12% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWD) Answer: No

   b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWD) Answer: Yes

* For GS employees, please use two clusters: GS-1 to GS-10 and GS-11 to SES, as set forth in 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(7). For all other pay plans, please use the approximate grade clusters that are above or below GS-11 Step 1 in the Washington, DC metropolitan region.

2. Using the goal of 2% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWTD) Answer: No

   b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWTD) Answer: No

Grade Level Cluster (GS or Alternate Pay Planb)	Total	Reportable Disability Total	Reportable Disability Percentage (Numerical Goal 12 Percent)	Targeted Disability Total	Targeted Disability Percentage (Numerical Goal 2 Percent)
Grades GS-11 to SES	11907	1207	10.14	324	2.72
Grades GS-1 to GS-10	11216	1386	12.36	326	2.91

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

All managers and supervisors are required to complete training covering the Agency’s goals for hiring and recruiting Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and Persons with Targeted Disabilities (PWTD) via the EEO and Preventing Discrimination in the Federal Workplace training. Workforce metrics, including PWD representation, are regularly reviewed in management meetings, and managers communicate relevant updates or changes to their teams to ensure alignment with Agency objectives.

Section II: Model Disability Program

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(1), agencies must ensure sufficient staff, training and resources to recruit and hire persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities, administer the reasonable accommodation program and special emphasis program, and oversee any other disability hiring and advancement program the agency has in place.

A. PLAN TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT & COMPETENT STAFFING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM

1. Has the agency designated sufficient qualified personnel to implement its disability program during the reporting period? If "no", describe the agency's plan to improve the staffing for the upcoming year.

Answer: Yes

2. Identify all staff responsible for implementing the agency's disability employment program by the office, staff employment status, and responsible official.

Disability Program Task	Total Full Time	Total Part Time	Total Collateral Duty	Responsible Official (Name, Title, Office Email)
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	Erica Nieto Director erica.nieto@usda.gov
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	0	0	1	Stephan Thomas HR Specialist stephen.a.thomas@usda.gov
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	2	0	0	Amy Padilla Acting Branch Chief amy.padilla@usda.gov
Section 508 Compliance	1	0	0	Dennis Lapcewich dennis.lapcewich@usda.gov
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	Matthew Arnn Recreation, Heritage, & Volunteer Resources matthew.arnn@usda.gov
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	0	0	0	

3. Has the agency provided disability program staff with sufficient training to carry out their responsibilities during the reporting period? If "yes", describe the training that disability program staff have received. If "no", describe the training planned for the upcoming year.

Answer: Yes

Disability program staff receive annual Reasonable Accommodation training and are provided with regular updates relative to this work.

B. PLAN TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM

Has the agency provided sufficient funding and other resources to successfully implement the disability program during the reporting period? If "no", describe the agency's plan to ensure all aspects of the disability program have sufficient funding and other resources.

Answer: Yes

N/A

Section III: Program Deficiencies In The Disability Program

Program name 1	B.4.a.8
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Description of Program Deficiency	to effectively administer its special emphasis programs (such as, Federal Women's Program, Hispanic Employment Program, and People with Disabilities Program Manager)? [5 USC § 7201; 38 USC § 4214; 5 CFR § 720.204; 5 CFR § 213.3102(t) and (u); 5 CFR § 315.709]
Description of Program Deficiency	to effectively administer its special emphasis programs (such as, Federal Women's Program, Hispanic Employment Program, and People with Disabilities Program Manager)? [5 USC § 7201; 38 USC § 4214; 5 CFR § 720.204; 5 CFR § 213.3102(t) and (u); 5 CFR § 315.709]
Objective	Awaiting guidance to resume SEPM programs
Objective	Awaiting guidance to resume SEPM programs
Fiscal Year	2025
Fiscal Year	2025
Responsible Official Name	Michole Wesley
Responsible Official Name	Harsheen Eady
Responsible Official Title	Acting National Director, OCR
Responsible Official Title	Branch Chief Program Compliance/ Reports and Analytics

Section IV: Plan to Recruit and Hire Individuals with Disabilities

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(d)(1)(i) and (ii), agencies must establish a plan to increase the recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. The questions below are designed to identify outcomes of the agency's recruitment program plan for PWD and PWTD.

A. PLAN TO IDENTIFY JOB APPLICATIONS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Describe the programs and resources the agency uses to identify job applicants with disabilities, including individuals with targeted disabilities.

Resources provided at the national level throughout the fiscal year:
The Selective Placement Program Coordinator (SPPC) is charged to:
• Serve as the agency's subject matter expert on the Selective Placement Program, providing guidance to management and Human Resources on hiring, placement, and retention of individuals with disabilities, including Schedule A (5 CFR 213.3102(u)) appointing authorities.
• Coordinate with HRM, CR, and program offices to identify vacancies suitable for disability hiring, ensure inclusive recruitment strategies, and facilitate reasonable accommodation processes throughout the employment lifecycle.
• Develop and maintain partnerships with internal and external stakeholders (e.g., vocational rehabilitation agencies, disability advocacy organizations, and workforce programs) to expand outreach, applicant pools, and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
• Track, analyze, and report workforce data related to disability hiring, retention, and advancement; evaluate program effectiveness; and provide recommendations to leadership to support MD-715 compliance and barrier elimination.

The RA Branch Chief is charged to:
• Provide strategic leadership and oversight of the agency's Reasonable Accommodation program, ensuring timely, effective, and legally compliant processing of accommodation requests in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act, EEOC guidance, and agency policy.
• Direct and manage RA Branch operations, including supervision of staff, development of standard operating procedures, quality assurance reviews, and coordination with Human Resources, EEO, IT, facilities, and legal counsel.
Advise senior leadership and managers on reasonable accommodation obligations, interactive process best practices, and emerging trends or risks; recommend policy enhancements to support accessibility, inclusion, and mission effectiveness.
• Monitor, analyze, and report RA program metrics (e.g., timeliness, outcomes, costs, and trends), identify systemic barriers, and implement corrective actions to support MD-715 compliance and continuous program improvement.

The HRM Recruiter cadre are charged with:
• Planning and executing end-to-end recruitment and staffing activities, including job analysis, vacancy announcement development, applicant assessment, referral, and selection, ensuring compliance with merit system principles, veterans' preference, and applicable hiring authorities.
• Developing and implementing inclusive recruitment strategies to attract a diverse and highly qualified applicant pool, including targeted outreach, use of special hiring authorities, and collaboration with EEO, Selective Placement Program, and program offices.
• Serving as a trusted advisor to hiring managers by providing guidance on workforce planning, recruitment options, labor market trends, and effective hiring practices to meet mission and staffing needs.
• Tracking, analyzing, and reporting recruitment metrics (e.g., time-to-hire, applicant flow, source effectiveness) and recommend process improvements to enhance efficiency, equity, and compliance.

The OCR Disability Employment Program Manager is charged to:
• Lead and manage the agency's Disability Employment Program, including recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention initiatives for individuals with disabilities, in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act, Executive Order 13548, and EEOC guidance.
• Collaborate with Human Resources, EEO, Reasonable Accommodation, and program offices to implement disability hiring strategies, leverage special hiring authorities (e.g., Schedule A), and remove barriers throughout the employment lifecycle.
• Develop and maintain partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, including vocational rehabilitation agencies, educational institutions, and disability advocacy organizations, to expand outreach and applicant pipelines.
• Monitor, analyze, and report disability workforce data and program outcomes; assess effectiveness, identify systemic barriers, and recommend policy, procedural, or programmatic improvements to support MD-715 compliance and organizational accessibility

2. Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(a)(3), describe the agency's use of hiring authorities that take disability into account (e.g., Schedule A) to recruit PWD and PWTD for positions in the permanent workforce.

The Forest Service utilizes the following hiring authorities that take disability into account:
• Schedule A (5 CFR 213.3102(u)) Allows the agency to non-competitively appoint individuals with severe physical, psychiatric, or intellectual disabilities to positions in the excepted service, with potential conversion to the competitive service.
Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) Enables the hiring of eligible veterans with disabilities (and other qualifying veterans) non-competitively to positions up to GS-11.
• 30 Percent or More Disabled Veteran Authority Allows the agency to appoint veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 30 Percent or more non-competitively to temporary, term, or permanent positions.
• Disabled Veterans Enrolled in a VA Training Program Permits non-competitive appointments of veterans participating in VA-sponsored

vocational rehabilitation or training programs.
• Pathways Programs (Internship, Recent Graduates, Presidential Management Fellows) Open to individuals with disabilities who meet eligibility requirements; may be combined with Schedule A or used competitively to support early-career hiring.
• Temporary and Term Appointments The Forest Service uses temporary or term appointments, including Schedule A, to provide work experience and assess job fit for individuals with disabilities.
• Reinstatement Eligibility (for former Federal employees with disabilities) Allows eligible former Federal employees, including those with disabilities, to be reinstated non-competitively under certain conditions.
• Direct Hire Authority (when applicable) The agency uses this authority when authorized to hire qualified individuals with disabilities when positions or locations are approved for Direct Hire due to critical hiring needs or severe shortages.

Schedule A is the primary authority designed explicitly for disability hiring, while the others expand access when disability status intersects with veteran status, early-career programs, or workforce needs.
As of FY 2025, there were 1610 permanent Schedule A employees on board, 66 new hires, and 208 separations. (See Table B1)

3. When individuals apply for a position under a hiring authority that takes disability into account (e.g., Schedule A), explain how the agency (1) determines if the individual is eligible for appointment under such authority; and, (2) forwards the individual's application to the relevant hiring officials with an explanation of how and when the individual may be appointed.

USAJob Applicants: Schedule A candidates must provide documentation of disability status and proven position qualifications in USAJobs to be eligible for Schedule A hiring status. Qualified Schedule A applicants are then placed on a separate Certificate of Eligibles, which is sent to the hiring manager for consideration.

SPPC: Schedule A candidates who apply directly to the Agency Selective Placement Program Coordinator have their Schedule A disability and job qualifications reviewed and approved by a Special Program Placement Coordinator selected by an HRM Staffing specialist. Human Resources Specialists, trained in the different hiring authorities, recommend qualified applicants to hiring officials. Hiring and selection officials review the applications, and if approved, the HRM specialist oversees bringing the applicants on board.

DPM: Schedule A candidates may also submit their resumes and Schedule A letters to the DPM for consideration. The DPM then submits to the SPPC for position certification. Once the candidate's resume is certified, DPM coordinates with hiring officials for vacant positions. The Schedule A letters must state that the applicant is an individual with an intellectual disability, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability and eligible to be hired through Schedule A. A letter does not require specific disability, medical history, treatment, or need for accommodation information.

4. Has the agency provided training to all hiring managers on the use of hiring authorities that take disability into account (e.g., Schedule A)? If "yes", describe the type(s) of training and frequency. If "no", describe the agency's plan to provide this training.

Answer: Yes

The Forest Service provides annual Schedule A hiring authority and reasonable accommodation training to all regional supervisors and managers. Staff routinely engage in discussions on recruiting and retaining employees with disabilities, highlighting the benefits of hiring and supporting persons with disabilities.

B. PLAN TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Describe the agency's efforts to establish and maintain contacts with organizations that assist PWD, including PWTD, in securing and maintaining employment.

The following resources are below:
• USAJOBs
• Department of Labor’s Workforce Recruitment Program for Schedule A eligible college students and recent graduates
• Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers
• Point(s) of contact at local schools/colleges serving students with disabilities
• Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
• National Talent Acquisition Network
• Science Technology Engineering and Medicine Hiring Events
• Wildlife Apprenticeship Program

C. PROGRESSION TOWARDS GOALS (RECRUITMENT AND HIRING)

1. Using the goals of 12% for PWD and 2% for PWTD as the benchmarks, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWTD among the new hires in the permanent workforce? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) below.

a. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWD) Answer: Yes

b. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWTD) Answer: Yes

Using the federal benchmarks of 12 Percent for PWD and 2 Percent for PWTD, triggers were identified among FY 2025 permanent workforce new hires. PWD representation was 4.14 percent and PWTD representation was 0.77 Percent, both below their respective EEOC benchmarks. These gaps highlight the need for a barrier analysis to assess whether current recruitment and outreach efforts, as well as agency policies, practices, and procedures, effectively support federal disability hiring goals.

New Hires	Total (Number)	Reportable Disability Permanent Workforce (Percentage)	Reportable Disability Temporary Workforce (Percentage)	Targeted Disability Permanent Workforce (Percentage)	Targeted Disability Temporary Workforce (Percentage)
% of Total Applicants					
% of Qualified Applicants					
% of New Hires					

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

a. New Hires for MCO (PWD) Answer: N/A

b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

New Hires to Mission-Critical Occupations	Total (Number)	Reportable Disability New Hires (Percentage)	Targetable Disability New Hires (Percentage)
Numerical Goal	**--**	**12%**	**2%**

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

a. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWD) Answer: N/A

b. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

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

a. Promotions for MCO (PWD) Answer: N/A

b. Promotions for MCO (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

Section V: Plan to Ensure Advancement Opportunities for Employees with Disabilities

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. §1614.203(d)(1)(iii), agencies are required to provide sufficient advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities. Such activities might include specialized training and mentoring programs, career development opportunities, awards programs, promotions, and similar programs that address advancement. In this section, agencies should identify, and provide data on programs designed to ensure advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities.

A. ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM PLAN

Describe the agency's plan to ensure PWD, including PWTD, have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

The Forest Service is committed to advancing employment opportunities for PWDs and PWTDs through three key requirements:
• Comprehensive Decision-Making: Consider disability status as a positive factor in hiring, promotion, or assignment decisions, consistent with legal requirements.
• Targeted Recruitment: Conduct outreach and recruitment initiatives to increase PWD and PWTD representation.
• Professional Development: Provide training, internship, and mentoring programs to support PWD in achieving senior grade levels within the Agency.

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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

The Agency offers three primary leadership training programs:

The National Senior Leader Program is a competency-based training program for employees who have an interest in enhancing their leadership behaviors and who have demonstrated the ability to progress into a senior leader role. SLP supports the agency's leadership succession efforts and includes a variety of experiential activities, coaching, assessments, and engaging workshops. There is a focus on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) leadership competencies within the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ). The program is designed to meet agency needs and supports the USDA Forest Service Leadership Competency Framework.

The Middle Leader Program (MLP) is a competency-based program focused on competencies most critical for developing at the middle leader grade-level. The target grade level for MLP participants is GS-11 and GS-12. Currently each region is responsible for the implementation, planning, payment and execution phase of their respective Middle Leader Program. MLP course offerings and content may vary by region.

In support of the agency’s leadership succession planning efforts, the National New Leader Program (NNLP) is a competency-based leadership development program with emphasis on Leading Self and Leading Teams. The program is designed to develop future Forest Service leaders through providing assessment, experiential learning and individual development opportunities.
Candidates are nominated based on interest in leadership development and demonstrated self-motivation. Final appointments require management approval.

Under the “Leaders Growing Leaders” initiative, coaching is provided to inspire participants and maximize their professional and personal potential. Additionally, the Training and Development branch facilitates a mentoring program, where mentors serve as role models offering guidance and support. Applications for mentoring are accepted annually in January with supervisory approval.

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

Career Development Opportunities	Total Participants Applicants (Percentage)	Total Participants Selectees (Percentage)	PWD Applicants (Percentage)	PWD Selectees (Percentage)	PWTD Applicants (Percentage)	PWTD Selectees (Percentage)
Internship Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fellowship Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mentoring Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coaching Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Training Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Detail Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Career Development Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0

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

   a. Applicants (PWD) Answer: N/A

   b. Selections (PWD) Answer: N/A

All career development programs were paused in January 2025. Therefore, data was not collected for FY 2025.

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

   a. Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

   b. Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

N/A

C. AWARDS

1. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTD for any level of the time-off awards, bonuses, or other incentives? If "yes", please describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWD) Answer: Yes

   b. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWTD) Answer: Yes

Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, a trigger was identified for PWD in time-off awards and other incentives. PWD employees received 8.92 Percent of awards, which is 3.08 percentage points below the 12 Percent federal benchmark. Across all time-off awards ranging from 1 to 41+ hours, the average percentage received by PWD was 6.77 Percent, indicating a potential disparity in recognition and reward distribution that warrants further review.

Time-Off Awards	Total (Number)	Reportable Disability (Percentage)	Without Reportable Disability (Percentage)	Targeted Disability (Percentage)	Without Targeted Disability (Percentage)
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 hours: Awards Given	3054.00	9.66	90.34	2.00	98.00
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Total Hours	22001.00	9.33	90.67	1.90	98.10
Time-Off Awards 1 - 10 Hours: Average Hours	7.20	6.96	7.23	6.87	7.21
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 hours: Awards Given	3304.00	8.29	91.71	2.21	97.79
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Total Hours	58264.00	8.24	91.76	2.11	97.89
Time-Off Awards 11 - 20 Hours: Average Hours	17.63	17.52	17.64	16.82	17.65
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 hours: Awards Given	1212.00	9.65	90.35	2.64	97.36
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Total Hours	29416.00	9.69	90.31	2.69	97.31
Time-Off Awards 21 - 30 Hours: Average Hours	24.27	24.36	24.26	24.75	24.26
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 hours: Awards Given	112.00	6.25	93.75	0.89	99.11
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Total Hours	4340.00	6.13	93.87	0.92	99.08
Time-Off Awards 31 - 40 Hours: Average Hours	38.75	38.00	38.80	40.00	38.74
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Awards Given	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Total Hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Time-Off Awards 41 or more Hours: Average Hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Cash Awards	Total (Number)	Reportable Disability (Percentage)	Without Reportable Disability (Percentage)	Targeted Disability (Percentage)	Without Targeted Disability (Percentage)
Cash Awards $500 and Under: Awards Given	890.00	6.85	93.15	2.02	97.98
Cash Awards $500 and Under: Total Amount	291818.00	7.63	92.37	1.96	98.04
Cash Awards $500 and Under: Average Amount	327.89	365.02	325.15	317.44	328.10
Cash Awards: $501 - $999: Awards Given	816.00	8.21	91.79	1.72	98.28
Cash Awards: $501 - $999: Total Amount	590272.00	8.18	91.82	1.67	98.33
Cash Awards: $501 - $999: Average Amount	723.37	721.06	723.58	705.71	723.68
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Awards Given	1068.00	10.58	89.42	2.62	97.38
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Total Amount	1331925.00	10.63	89.37	2.80	97.20
Cash Awards: $1000 - $1999: Average Amount	1247.12	1253.24	1246.40	1329.93	1244.89
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Awards Given	433.00	9.70	90.30	2.31	97.69
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Total Amount	895184.00	9.83	90.17	2.35	97.65
Cash Awards: $2000 - $2999: Average Amount	2067.40	2095.24	2064.41	2100.00	2066.63
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Awards Given	60.00	5.00	95.00	3.33	96.67
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Total Amount	193256.00	4.79	95.21	3.24	96.76
Cash Awards: $3000 - $3999: Average Amount	3220.93	3084.00	3228.14	3126.00	3224.21
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Awards Given	71.00	7.04	92.96	4.23	95.77
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Total Amount	286425.00	6.98	93.02	4.19	95.81
Cash Awards: $4000 - $4999: Average Amount	4034.15	4000.00	4036.74	4000.00	4035.66
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Awards Given	46.00	8.70	91.30	4.35	95.65
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Total Amount	453418.00	13.07	86.93	4.64	95.36
Cash Awards: $5000 or more: Average Amount	9856.91	14810.50	9385.14	10519.50	9826.80

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTD for quality step increases or performance- based pay increases? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) below.

   a. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWTD) Answer: Yes

   b. Pay Increases (PWTD) Answer: Yes

Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, triggers were identified for PWD and PWTD in quality step increases (QSI) and performance-based pay. During FY 2025, six PWD employees received QSIs, representing 7.89 Percent of total awards, 4.11 Percent below the 12 Percent federal benchmark. One PWTD employee received a QSI, representing 1.32 Percent, of total awards, (0.68 Percent) below the 2 Percent benchmark. These results indicate potential disparities in performance-based recognition for employees with disabilities.

Other Awards	Total (Number)	Reportable Disability (Percentage)	Without Reportable Disability (Percentage)	Targeted Disability (Percentage)	Without Targeted Disability (Percentage)
Total Performance Based Pay Increases Awarded	62.00	8.06	91.94	1.61	98.39

3. If the agency has other types of employee recognition programs, are PWD and/or PWTD recognized disproportionately less than employees without disabilities? (The appropriate benchmark is the inclusion rate.) If "yes", describe the employee recognition program and relevant data in the text box.

    a. Other Types of Recognition (PWD) Answer: No

    b. Other Types of Recognition (PWTD) Answer: No

D. PROMOTIONS

1. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

    a. SES

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

    b. Grade GS-15

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

    c. Grade GS-14

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

    d. Grade GS-13

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Career development programs were paused in January 2025 and most all hiring and promotions were paused during FY 2025. Therefore, data was not collected for FY 2025.

2. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

    a. SES

        i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

        ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

b. Grade GS-15

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

c. Grade GS-14

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

d. Grade GS-13

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

3. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

a. New Hires to SES (PWD) Answer: N/A

b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD) Answer: N/A

c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD) Answer: N/A

d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

4. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

a. New Hires to SES (PWTD) Answer: N/A

b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD) Answer: N/A

c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) Answer: N/A

d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

5. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

a. Executives

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: N/A

b. Managers

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: N/A

c. Supervisors

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: N/A

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

6. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

   a. Executives

      i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

      ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

   b. Managers

      i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

      ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

   c. Supervisors

      i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: N/A

      ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

7. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

   a. New Hires for Executives (PWD) Answer: N/A

   b. New Hires for Managers (PWD) Answer: N/A

   c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

8. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box. Select "n/a" if the applicant data is not available for your agency, and describe your plan to provide the data in the text box.

   a. New Hires for Executives (PWTD) Answer: N/A

   b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD) Answer: N/A

   c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD) Answer: N/A

Data not available

Section VI: Plan to Improve Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To be model employer for persons with disabilities, agencies must have policies and programs in place to retain employees with disabilities. In this section, agencies should: (1) analyze workforce separation data to identify barriers retaining employees with disabilities; (2) describe efforts to ensure accessibility of technology and facilities; and (3) provide information on the reasonable accommodation program and workplace assistance services.

A. VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY SEPARATIONS

1. In this reporting period, did the agency convert all eligible Schedule A employees with a disability into the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service (5 C.F.R. § 213.3102(u)(6)(i))? If "no", please explain why the agency did not convert all eligible Schedule A employees.

   Answer: No

   Reason for Non-Conversion: Conversions of eligible Schedule A employees were limited and are being processed in accordance and coordination with USDA guidance.

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWD among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without disabilities? If "yes", describe the trigger below.

   a.Voluntary Separations (PWD) Answer: Yes

   b.Involuntary Separations (PWD) Answer: No

   Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, a trigger was identified among voluntary separations. PWD employees accounted for 20.19 Percent of voluntary separations, exceeding the proportion of persons without disabilities.

Separations	Total (Number)	Reportable Disabilities (Percentage)	Without Reportable Disabilities (Percentage)
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	127	0.78	0.29
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	1427	3.46	3.76
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	1023	3.23	2.63
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	355	1.13	0.91
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	2932	8.59	7.59

3. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWTD among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without targeted disabilities? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

   a.Voluntary Separations (PWTD) Answer: Yes

   b.Involuntary Separations (PWTD) Answer: Yes

   Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, a trigger was identified among voluntary separations. PWTD employees accounted for 4.72 Percent of voluntary separations, exceeding the proportion of employees without targeted disabilities.

Separations	Total (Number)	Targeted Disabilities (Percentage)	Without Targeted Disabilities (Percentage)
Permanent Workforce: Reduction in Force	0	0.00	0.00
Permanent Workforce: Removal	127	0.78	0.32
Permanent Workforce: Resignation	1427	2.34	3.76
Permanent Workforce: Retirement	1023	4.69	2.63
Permanent Workforce: Other Separations	355	1.43	0.92
Permanent Workforce: Total Separations	2932	9.24	7.64

4. If a trigger exists involving the separation rate of PWD and/or PWTD, please explain why they left the agency using exit interview results and other data sources.

No data was received regarding PWD and PWTD separations.

B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(4), federal agencies are required to inform applicants and employees of their rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794(b), concerning the accessibility of agency technology, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. § 4151-4157), concerning the accessibility of agency facilities. In addition, agencies are required to inform individuals where to file complaints if other agencies are responsible for a violation.

1. Please provide the internet address on the agency's public website for its notice explaining employees' and applicants' rights under Section 508 o the Rehabilitation Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(4), the Forest Service informs applicants and employees of their rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Architectural Barriers Act. Information on accessibility rights, including instructions for filing complaints, is publicly available on the USDA website at: USDA Accessibility Statement. This page includes the Forest Service’s nondiscrimination statement and guidance for submitting accessibility complaints.

2. Please provide the internet address on the agency's public website for its notice explaining employees' and applicants' rights under the Architectural Barriers Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

The Forest Service provides public access to information regarding employees’ and applicants’ rights under the Architectural Barriers Act, including instructions for filing complaints. This information is available on the Forest Service website: Forest Service Civil Rights – Accessibility Laws, Regulations, Policies, and Guidelines. The page includes links to rights under the ABA, Section 504, Section 508, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (Title V, Section 508c), along with the nondiscrimination statement and complaint filing instructions.

3. Describe any programs, policies, or practices that the agency has undertaken, or plans on undertaking over the next fiscal year, designed to improve accessibility of agency facilities and/or technology.

The Forest Service and USDA provide comprehensive resources to ensure accessibility for employees, including those with disabilities:
• Training & Awareness: The Corporate Knowledge and Communication Training Channel offers 508 accessibility awareness training, including webinars, brochures, checklists, templates, and guidance on validation and testing processes.
• TARGET Center: USDA’s Technology and Accessible Resources Give Employment Today (TARGET) Center leverages advanced technology to enhance accessibility and support employment experiences for persons with disabilities (PWD).
• Section 508 Program Website: Serves as a centralized portal providing tools, guidance, and support under four areas: Learn Accessible, Buy Accessible, Create Accessible, and Help Accessible. Contact information for the Section 508 Task Force and employee assistance is included.
• Architectural Barriers Act Compliance: The Agency uses the ABA Accessibility Standards Checklist to ensure administrative and recreational facilities, including parking, routes, doors, ramps, bathrooms, lifts, and stairs, meet accessibility requirements. Non-compliant areas are addressed through transition plans.
• 508 Accessibility Intranet: The CIO hosts an internal site offering resources for employees facing challenges with electronic information and communication accessibility, covering learning, procurement, creation, and support.
These initiatives collectively ensure that both physical and digital environments are accessible and compliant with federal accessibility laws.

C. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(3), agencies must adopt, post on their public website, and make available to all job applicants and employees, reasonable accommodation procedures.

1. Please provide the average time frame for processing initial requests for reasonable accommodations during the reporting period. (Please do not include previously approved requests with repetitive accommodations, such as interpreting services.)

The Reasonable Accommodation program faced unprecedented demand in FY 2025, with requests nearly tripling from 451 to 1,285, compounded by significant staff losses due to the Deferred Resignation Program and the end of contractor support. These factors created a backlog of over 350 incomplete cases. To address this, a temporary review panel was established, and quarterly assessments will continue in FY 2026 to ensure timely processing and maintain compliance with departmental regulations (DR), specifically DR 4300-008.
Below is the total number of cases received and processed in FY 25

CASES
Q1: Received - 46; Not Completed in 30 days - 10; Completed within 30 days - 45; Completed on time - 82 Percent

Q2: Received - 55; Not Completed in 30 days - 11; Completed within 30 days - 35; Completed on time - 76 Percent

Q3: Received - 53; Not Completed in 30 days - 03; Completed within 30 days - 50; Completed on time - 94 Percent

Q4: Received - 570; Not Completed in 30 days - 269; Completed within 30 days - 301; Completed on time - 53 Percent

Cases Still in Process as of Sept 30 - 581

TOTAL: Received - 724; Not Completed in 30 days - 293; Completed within 30 days - 431; Completed on time - 60 Percent

2. Describe the effectiveness of the policies, procedures, or practices to implement the agency's reasonable accommodation program. Some examples of an effective program include timely processing requests, timely providing approved accommodations, conducting training for managers and supervisors, and monitoring accommodation requests for trends.

The Forest Service RA program improved in FY 2025 through a panel review process that accelerated approvals and enhanced case tracking. Interim staff with over five months of experience strengthened processing timelines and system reporting. FY 2026 Q1 training will address new guidelines, regulatory updates, and audit readiness. Senior leadership is fully engaged, supporting timely reviews and overall program effectiveness.

D. PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES ALLOWING EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKPLACE

Pursuant to 29 CFR §1614.203(d)(5), federal agencies, as an aspect of affirmative action, are required to provide personal assistance services (PAS) to employees who need them because of a targeted disability, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the agency.

1. Describe the effectiveness of the policies, procedures, or practices to implement the PAS requirement. Some examples of an effective program include timely processing requests for PAS, timely providing approved services, conducting training for managers and supervisors, and monitoring PAS requests for trends.

The Forest Service implements its PAS program effectively by ensuring supervisors meet expected timelines for accommodations, using interactive meetings to determine the most suitable solutions, and providing clear guidance on applying for PAS via the agency website. These practices support timely processing, effective communication, and accessibility for employees with targeted disabilities.

Section VII: EEO Complaint and Findings Data

A. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING HARASSMENT

1. During the last fiscal year, did a higher percentage of PWD file a formal EEO complaint alleging harassment, as compared to the governmentwide average?

Answer: Yes

2. During the last fiscal year, did any complaints alleging harassment based on disability status result in a finding of discrimination or a settlement agreement?

Answer: Yes

3. If the agency had one or more findings of discrimination alleging harassment based on disability status during the last fiscal year, please describ the corrective measures taken by the agency.

Complaint Volume: Of 77 formal EEO complaints filed within the Forest Service, 22 (28.57 Percent) involved harassment allegations by employees with disabilities, closely aligning with the government-wide average of 28.93 Percent.

Findings and Resolutions: One complaint resulted in a formal finding of discrimination. Additionally, 6 complaints (27.27 Percent) were resolved through settlement agreements, demonstrating proactive dispute resolution.
Corrective Actions: The Agency implemented targeted corrective measures, including offers of reassignment, backpay, and training initiatives. The agency has also maintained compliance through posting notices to reinforce established policies and to prevent future incidents.

Overall Impact: These actions reflect the Forest Service’s commitment to maintaining a harassment-free work environment for employees with disabilities while ensuring adherence to federal EEO anti-discrimination standards.

B. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

1. During the last fiscal year, did a higher percentage of PWD file a formal EEO complaint alleging failure to provide a reasonable accommodatior as compared to the government-wide average?

Answer: No

2. During the last fiscal year, did any complaints alleging failure to provide reasonable accommodation result in a finding of discrimination or a settlement agreement?

Answer: Yes

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

During FY 2025, the Forest Service received 77 formal EEO complaints involving employees with disabilities. Of these, 22 complaints (28.57 Percent) alleged harassment, slightly below the government-wide average of 28.93 Percent, and sixteen complaints (20.78 Percent) alleged failure to provide reasonable accommodation, slightly above the government-wide average of 20.33 Percent. One complaint in each category resulted in a finding of discrimination. Additionally, six harassment complaints (27.27 Percent) and five RA complaints (31.25 Percent) were resolved through settlement agreements. Corrective measures implemented included offers of reassignment, backpay, training, and posting notices, demonstrating the Agency’s commitment to addressing complaints and ensuring compliance with federal EEO and RA requirements.

Section VIII: Identification and Removal of Barriers

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

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

   Answer: No

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

   Answer: N/A

3. Identify each trigger and plan to remove the barrier(s), including the identified barrier(s), objective(s), responsible official(s), planned activities, and, where applicable, accomplishments

4. Please explain the factor(s) that prevented the agency from timely completing any of the planned activities. Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.

   Barrier Identification: A barrier analysis was not conducted; therefore, no barriers (policies, procedures, or practices) affecting employment opportunities for PWD or PWTD were identified during FY 2025.
   Corrective Plan: Since no barriers were found, no corrective actions were implemented in FY 2025.

   Triggers and Planned Analysis: A barrier analysis for PWD and PWTD is scheduled for FY 2026, Q2. This upcoming analysis will assess potential triggers and determine whether any policies, procedures, or practices may impede employment opportunities.

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

   N/A

6. If the planned activities did not correct the trigger(s) and/or barrier(s), please describe how the agency intends to improve the plan for the next fiscal year.

   N/A