

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

<b>SECTION I: EFFORTS TO REACH REGULATORY GOALS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SECTION II: MODEL DISABILITY PROGRAM .....</b>	<b>2</b>
A. PLAN TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT & COMPETENT STAFFING FOR DISABILITY PROGRAM .....	3
B. PLAN TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM .....	4
<b>SECTION III: PROGRAM DEFICIENCIES IN THE DISABILITY PROGRAM .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SECTION IV: PLAN TO RECRUIT AND HIRE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
A. PLAN TO IDENTIFY JOB APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES .....	5
B. PLAN TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ORGANIZATIONS .....	8
C. PROGRESSION TOWARDS GOALS (RECRUITMENT AND HIRING) .....	9
<b>SECTION V: PLAN TO ENSURE ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
A. ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM PLAN .....	10
B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES .....	10
C. AWARDS .....	10
D. PROMOTIONS .....	11
<b>SECTION VI: PLAN TO IMPROVE RETENTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
A. VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY SEPARATIONS .....	15
B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES .....	16
C. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM .....	17
D. PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES ALLOWING EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKPLACE .....	17
<b>SECTION VII: EEO COMPLAINT AND FINDINGS DATA .....</b>	<b>18</b>
A. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING HARASSMENT .....	18
B. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION .....	18
<b>SECTION VIII: IDENTIFICATION AND REMOVAL OF BARRIERS .....</b>	

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

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 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(7)) require agencies to establish specific numerical goals for increasing the participation of persons with reportable and 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: Yes
b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWD)	Answer: Yes

The grade level cluster for GS-01 to GS-10 is at 7.96 percent which is below the benchmark.  
The grade level cluster for GS-11 to SES is at 6.94 percent which is below the benchmark.

\* 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

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

The numerical goals are displayed on the Workforce Management Dashboards and the Cultural Transformation Accountability Report. They are also discussed during the Workforce Planning Sessions on the USDA Cultural Transformation Metrics.

### 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 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

During FY 2017, the Agency’s CR Office completed decentralization to establish Civil Rights Service Centers (CRSC) within Field Units. Staffing up is expected to be completed by early 2nd Quarter FY 2018. By the second quarter of FY 2018, the CRSC, in consultation with the CR Headquarters (Capacity Building & Outreach Division) subject matter experts will resolve how Special Emphasis Program (SEP) functions will be shared at the CRSC to implement their disability programs.

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	# of FTE Staff by Employment Status			Responsible Official (Name, Title, Office, Email)
	Full Time	Part Time	Collateral Duty	
Processing applications from PWD and PWTD	132	0	0	Erica Nieto Acting Asst. Director, HR Field Operations enieto@fs.fed.us
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	132	0	0	Erica Nieto Acting Asst. Director, HR Field Operations enieto@fs.fed.us
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	6	0	0	Robin Kilgore, Asst. Director CR, Field Operations, robinckilgore@fs.fed.us
Section 508 Compliance	1	0	0	Janet Zeller National Accessibility Program Manager jzeller@fs.fed.us
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	1	0	0	Mitch Ringer Information Architect, Chief Information Office, Strategic Planning mringer@fs.fed.us
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWTD	1	0	0	Gerald McGaughran Disability Employment Program Manager jmccaughran@fs.fed.us

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(s) that disability program staff have received. If “no”, describe the training(s) planned for the upcoming year.

Answer: Yes

First quarter of FY 2018 – Agency DEPM, EEOC Reporting Staff participate in EEOC and Federal Exchange on Employment and Disability (FEED) Webinar/Information and Training Sessions on changes to Section 501 Rehabilitative Act including development of PAS Plan.

During FY 2017, the Agency’s Civil Rights Office completed decentralization to establish Civil Rights Service Centers within Field Units. Staffing up is expected to be completed by the second quarter of FY 2018.

By the first quarter of FY 2018, New Supervisor Training will be finalized covering topics including roles/expectations of Supervisors in supporting Agency’s Affirmative Action Plan and in implementing RA/PAS policy/procedures.

By the second quarter of FY 2018, CRSC, in consultation with CR Headquarters (Capacity Building & Outreach Division) will resolve how SEP functions will be shared at the CRSC to implement their disability programs, supported by training modules already developed and available via AgLearn, or to be developed and implemented on a quarterly basis.

By the third quarter of FY 2018, the CR Outreach & Diversity Branch’s newly developed SharePoint site is expected to be completed which will provide Field Units resource materials.

**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

Because of USDA hiring restrictions, there are some positions not yet filled at CRSC that, though budgeted, have yet to be approved by the Department as “special exceptions.”

**Section III: Program Deficiencies in the Disability Program**

In Part G of its FY 2017 MD-715 report, the agency identified the following program deficiencies involving its disability program:

Program Deficiencies	Agency Comments

Program Deficiencies	Agency Comments
Have the procedures for reasonable accomodation 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 World Wide Web or Internet?	Procedures are provided to employees via orientation and they are on the Office of Civil Rights intranet webpage, the Forest Service is in the process of adding the RA procedures to the WWW.
Are 90% of accommodation requests processed within the frame set forth in the agency procedures for reasonable accommodation?	Reviewing data and updating tracking system

## 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 APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

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

Key Programs, Resources, Strategies include:

Agency leadership continues to monitor progress through the Cultural Transformation Accountability Report (CTAR), published each pay period. New reports have been added to assist Regions to Forest level, along with Onboard and Separation reports. The CTAR provided additional information and focus on the Agency’s hiring actions. Applicant flow reports have been added to the eRecruit system.

Disability Employment Program Manager (DEPM) seeking to reduce applicants’ and employees’ underreporting of PWD/PWTD/30 percent disabled Veteran statuses through providing training, developing resources to better educate audiences (students, potential applicants/job prospects, employees, supervisors, referral sources) about:

- Benefit and flexibility of obtaining Schedule A Certification, if eligible, for opening more doors to Federal employment and promotions;
  - Benefit of reporting disability statuses and changes in them throughout Federal career as contributing factor in Agencies’ ability to attract, hire, promote, and retain Veterans, Disabled veterans, Schedule A eligible persons, and persons with Targeted and Other disabilities and/or serious health conditions;
    - How common are disabilities/serious health conditions among employees in the workforce, even though about 80 percent are non-obvious/visible (US Census data).

Engaging with Strategic Partnerships/Organizations to improve inclusion of PWD/PWTD/Wounded Warriors in programs and work experiences that feed applicant pipeline such as:

- Greening Youth Foundation-Natural Resource Internships - Diverse Students;
- National Institute of Food & Agriculture Partnership with Hispanic Institutions from New Mexico & Puerto Rico;

- Forest Service-California Consortium - Targeted Minorities;
- 21st Century Conservation Service (21CSC) Nationwide Projects - Diverse Pool.

Agency's Employment Outreach Database allows users to search, create, edit, and respond to outreach notices, to include indicating their non-competitive eligibilities. The system also includes a calendar showing Forest Service participation in Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) events. DEPM serves as Agency's National WRP point of contact (POC); alerts Forest Service outreach and selecting officials of this valuable source for outreach/recruitment of Schedule A eligible College Students and Recent Graduates with Disabilities. DEPM yearly converts database into condensed spreadsheet enabling key- word search; develops distribution list of all 2,500-3,000 participants; resume mines to alert them of Forest Service National Recruitment events.

DEPM recruiting PWD/PWTD prospects into internship programs that gain additional noncompetitive eligibility as well as Forest Service-related experience and network such as completion of Public Land Corps (PLC) projects and Resource Assistants Program (RAP); joining colleagues in providing webinars to walk participants through USAJOBS' Profile and application process while also educating them about obtaining Schedule A Certification, if eligible, and reporting disability statuses, with its added benefits.

DEPM working with Job Corps Units/Leadership to identify and encourage more to also explore their Schedule A eligibility as another opportunity to open more Forest Service/Federal employment doors, since many come to Job Corps with non-visible/non-obvious disabilities potentially qualifying under Schedule A.

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.

In recent renegotiations of one of our Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA), Forest Service/NFFE Master Agreement, a few hiring flexibilities, including Schedule A and Veteran's Recruitment Authority (VRA) were added as exceptions to the requirement in our CBA to also advertise positions via Merit Promotion. This change helped make use of those authorities more efficient.

During workforce planning session, and in all new Supervisor Training, use of special hiring authorities are explained to hiring managers including Schedule A, 30 percent disabled veterans, disabled veterans enrolled in a Veteran Affairs (VA) training program and Operation Warfighter. Supervisor Training will also include roles/expectations of supervisors in supporting Agency's Affirmative Action Plan and implementing R/PAS policy/procedures.

HRM/CR National Workforce Recruitment Initiative to provide the structure, process and capacity for the agency to hire 1,000 new employees through the National Collective Recruiting and Hiring initiative, with a goal of increasing the number of diverse candidates available for selection within the event.

Ensure candidate pools are at least 20 percent diverse for each targeted event.

Provided year round expertise and assist Forest Service Units/Staff seeking to support Federal, Departmental, or Agency internship programs, such as those outreaching to Wounded Warriors, Disabled Veterans, and Persons with Disabilities.

DEPM played a major role in designing CR Compliance review, administered anonymously to all employees, on the unit; imbedded "Supplemental Diversity Survey (SDS)" questions into tool offering employees (veterans & non-veterans)- especially those with non-visible targeted & other disabilities typically underreported by 50-75 percent, a way to report their disability statuses anonymously. Results of data from just 5 of 16 reporting units so far surveyed are PWTD reported rates of 10 percent

(rather than 2 percent on record); PWD reported rates of 20 percent (rather than 7 percent on record); Total reporting PWD status anonymously already exceeded total that Agency's entire workforce reported on record. SDS also demonstrates the way Federal Agencies can more accurately measure and be credited for its inclusion of Schedule A eligible persons and Disabled Veterans. Rather than just counting total Schedule A hires, SDS also obtains "Total with Schedule A eligibility hired other ways." It obtains total veterans with current or pending disability ratings of 30 percent or more, and "Disabled". Many veterans get revised VA Disability ratings after civilian hire that go unreported (as preference doesn't apply to Merit Promotion) - either from less than to exceeding 30 percent; or from no rating to Disabled Veteran (<30 percent) rating.

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.

Merit Promotion: Upon closure of a Merit Promotion announcement, HRM sends the selecting officials 2 certification lists - qualified competitive candidates and qualified noncompetitive candidates eligible under special authority eligible for noncompetitive selection as indicated on the certification list.

Selecting officials can opt to fill their vacancy noncompetitively or competitively.

DEMO Appointment: Upon closure of a Competitive announcement open to the public, HRM applies Veterans preference and creates a Certificate of Eligible Candidates.

The Certificate may only include Veterans with preference, depending on how many applied and qualified. Otherwise, the certificate is typically of the "highly qualified" group, including qualifying candidates with noncompetitive eligibility. In cases where the Selecting Official opts to hire noncompetitively from qualifying Schedule A eligible candidates, Veteran preference is only applied to qualifying Schedule A eligible candidates. HRM then sends the list of qualifying candidates to the Selecting Official. To be considered/selected noncompetitively, qualifying Schedule A eligible candidates may also submit credentials without applying to Merit Promotion or DEMO announcements, such as in response to outreach notices; as a result of networking and learning of an upcoming vacancy; or otherwise connecting with officials/outreach staff and other opportunities materialize for which prospect might be considered.

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

As part of the FY 2017 strategic workforce planning process, HRM conducted 14 two-day workforce planning workshops across the Forest Service. The purpose of the workshops were to improve the hiring experience of managers, HR personnel, and current and future employees by simplifying the process of collecting workforce planning data, providing field units and staff with data to assess their workforce needs, providing training and improving skills of workforce planning teams, facilitating alignment of workforce planning to the budget planning cycle, identifying targeted outreach and recruitment opportunities, addressing developmental needs and beginning to identify strategies to support succession planning and closing critical skill

gaps.

New Supervisor Training covers topics including roles/expectations of supervisors in supporting Agency's Affirmative Action Plan, implementing RA/PAS policy/procedures; and use of Special Hiring Authorities that take disability into account (e.g., Schedule A) to recruit PWD and PWTD for positions in the permanent workforce.

By early 2nd Quarter FY 2018, CRSC, in consultation with CR Headquarters (Capacity Building & Outreach Division) will resolve how SEP functions will be shared at the CRSC to implement their disability programs, supported by training modules already developed and available via AgLearn, or to be developed and implemented on a quarterly basis.

## **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.

In recent renegotiations of one of our Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA), Forest Service/NFFE Master Agreement, a few hiring flexibilities, including Schedule A and Veteran's Recruitment Authority (VRA) were added as exceptions to the requirement in our CBA to also advertise positions via Merit Promotion. This change helped make use of those authorities more efficient.

During workforce planning session, and in all new Supervisor Training, use of special hiring authorities are explained to hiring managers including Schedule A, 30 percent disabled veterans, disabled veterans enrolled in a Veteran Affairs (VA) training program and Operation Warfighter. Supervisor Training will also include roles/expectations of supervisors in supporting Agency's Affirmative Action Plan and implementing RA/PAS policy/procedures.

HRM/CR National Workforce Recruitment Initiative to provide the structure, process and capacity for the agency to hire 1,000 new employees through the National Collective Recruiting and Hiring initiative, with a goal of increasing the number of diverse candidates available for selection within the event.

Ensure candidate pools are at least 20 percent diverse for each targeted event.

Provided year round expertise and assist Forest Service Units/Staff seeking to support Federal, Departmental, or Agency internship programs, such as those outreaching to Wounded Warriors, Disabled Veterans, and Persons with Disabilities.

DEPM played a major role in designing CR Compliance review, administered anonymously to all employees, on the unit; imbedded "Supplemental Diversity Survey (SDS)" questions into tool offering employees (veterans & non-veterans)- especially those with non-visible targeted & other disabilities typically underreported by 50-75 percent, a way to report their disability statuses anonymously. Results of data from just 5 of 16 reporting units so far surveyed are PWTD reported rates of 10 percent (rather than 2 percent on record); PWD reported rates of 20 percent (rather than 7 percent on record); Total reporting PWTD status anonymously already exceeded total that Agency's entire workforce reported on record. SDS also demonstrates the way Federal Agencies can more accurately measure and be credited for its inclusion of Schedule A eligible persons and Disabled Veterans. Rather than just counting total Schedule A hires, SDS also obtains "Total with Schedule A eligibility hired other ways." It obtains total veterans with current or pending disability ratings of 30 percent or more, and "Disabled". Many veterans get revised VA Disability ratings after civilian hire that go unreported (as preference doesn't apply to Merit Promotion) - either from less than to exceeding 30 percent; or from no rating to Disabled Veteran (<30 percent)

rating.

**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”, please describe the triggers below.
  - a. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWD)      Answer: Yes
  - b. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWTD)      Answer: No

Total for hires of PWD in Permanent Workforce for FY 2017 was 2.0 percent which is 10 percent under benchmark.

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.
  - a. New Hires for MCO (PWD)      Answer: Yes
  - b. New Hires for MCO (PWTD)      Answer: Yes

New Hire for MCO (PWD) selections fall below the benchmark in Occupational Series 0408 and 0454.  
 New Hire for MCO (PWTD) selections fall below the benchmark in Occupational Series 0301, 0340, 0462 and 1101.

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.
  - a. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWD)      Answer: Yes
  - b. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWTD)      Answer: No

Qualified applicants for MCO (PWD) fall below benchmark in Occupational series 0301, 0340, 0462 and 1101.

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.
  - a. Promotions for MCO (PWD)      Answer: No
  - b. Promotions for MCO (PWTD)      Answer: No

MD-715 Tables do not track this information. Working to develop reports to track and monitor.

**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.

Using Table B12 to monitor. The Agency has two Leadership Training Programs:

- The Senior Leader Program follows a competitive internal selection process, with final vetting by the agency’s Executive Leadership Team.
- The National New Leader Program. Employees in a permanent position at the GS 7-11 grade level, with one full year of agency service at the time of application submission can apply for this program. Individuals are nominated based on their desire and interest to develop their leadership potential and their high self-motivation to complete all requirements and participate fully in all components of the program. The unit will collect applications and establish its review process for prioritizing nominations. Once the applicant has completed their portion of the application package, the applicant will forward the package to their supervisor. The supervisor will then complete the supervisor assessment and endorsement, which are included with the employee’s application package.

**B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

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

See Part I.1

2. 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 applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- |                     |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| a. Applicants (PWD) | Answer: No |
| b. Selections (PWD) | Answer: No |

3. Do triggers exist for PWTD among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs identified? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- |                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| a. Applicants (PWTD) | Answer: No |
| b. Selections (PWTD) | Answer: No |

**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: No

b. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWTD) Answer: No

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", please describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

a. Pay Increases (PWD) Answer: No

b. Pay Increases (PWTD) Answer: No

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: N/A

b. Other Types of Recognition (PWTD) Answer: N/A

#### 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.

a. SES

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: No

b. Grade GS-15

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: No

c. Grade GS-14

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: No

d. Grade GS-13

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: No

MD-715 Tables do not track this information. Working to develop reports to track and monitor.

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.

a. SES

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

b. Grade GS-15

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

c. Grade GS-14

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

d. Grade GS-13

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

MD-715 Tables do not track this information. Working to develop reports to track and monitor.

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.

a. New Hires to SES (PWD) Answer: No

b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD) Answer: No

c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD) Answer: No

d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD) Answer: No

USDA hires SES employees, not the Forest Service.

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.

- a. New Hires to SES (PWTD) Answer: Yes
- b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD) Answer: Yes
- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) Answer: Yes
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) Answer: Yes

USDA hires SES employees, not the Forest Service  
 GS-15 falls 2.18 percent below benchmark  
 GS-14 falls 1.16 percent below benchmark  
 GS-13 falls 1.54 percent below benchmark

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.

- a. Executives
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: No
- b. Managers
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: No
- c. Supervisors
  - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD) Answer: No
  - ii. Internal Selections (PWD) Answer: No

MD-715 Tables do not track this information. Working to develop reports to track and monitor.

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.

a. Executives

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

b. Managers

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

c. Supervisors

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

MD-715 Tables do not track this information. Working to develop reports to track and monitor.

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.

a. New Hires for Executives (PWD) Answer: No

b. New Hires for Managers (PWD) Answer: No

c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD) Answer: No

MD-715 Tables do not track this information. Working to develop reports to track and monitor.

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.

a. New Hires for Executives (PWTD) Answer: No

b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD) Answer: No

c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD) Answer: No

MD-715 Tables do not track this information. Working to develop reports to track and monitor.

## Section VI: Plan to Improve Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To be a 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 personal 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

Although, it is urged to convert Schedule A employees, it is management’s choice. The below reference is from the updated standard operating procedures (SOP).  
 Schedule A - Disability Conversion to C/CCA Updated: October 12, 2016  
 References: 5 CFR Part 213.3102(u); Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, Chapter 9; OPM Website- Disability Employment, Schedule A Hiring Authority.  
 Summary  
 An agency may noncompetitively convert to the competitive service an employee who has completed 2 or more years of satisfactory service on a non-temporary Schedule A appointment. The conversion must be at the same grade level and a separate action processed for a career ladder promotion (if applicable).  
 Note: There is no requirement to convert the employee and they may remain under a Schedule A appointment for their entire career; Forest Service urges managers/supervisors to convert Schedule A employees.

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: Yes |

Voluntary separations exceeded the benchmark by 3.89 percent  
 Voluntary separations exceeded the benchmark by 16.22 percent

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 below.

- |                                   |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| a. Voluntary Separations (PWTD)   | Answer: No  |
| b. Involuntary Separations (PWTD) | Answer: Yes |

Involuntary separations exceeded the benchmark by 6.37 percent.

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.

Current exit survey does not collect PWD or PWTD information.

## B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(4), federal agencies are required to inform job 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 of the Rehabilitation Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

Forest Service public website at <https://www.fs.fed.us> contains a link to the USDA Accessibility Statement addressing rights under Section 508. The Forest Service public website above has a link to the USDA Nondiscrimination Statement which contains the instructions for filing a complaint.

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.

Forest Service public website at <https://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/accessibility/> contains a section titled Accessibility Laws, Regulations, Policies and Guidelines. This section contains additional links to rights under ABA, ABAAS, Section 504, 508, and ADA Title V Section 508c. The section above has a link to the nondiscrimination statement/instructions on how to

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.

Last year, the Forest Service recorded two short presentations, "Accessible and Effective Communications" and "Color-Blindness," to bring an awareness to all employees that our websites, electronic documents, power-points, etc. must be 508 Compliant.

Forest Service is currently collaborating with the USDA Target Center to research the feasibility of offering video remote interpretation services at all Regional, Supervisory, and District offices/Visitor Centers to provide individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing "on-demand sign language" via a laptop or iPad.

As of October 2017, the Forest Service achieved accessibility in 49.5 percent of recreation buildings and 29.7 percent of recreation sites such as campgrounds and picnic areas. Forest Service provides a larger number of a wide range of accessible recreation sites and facilities than any other entity.

For employees and the Public who may have visual impairments, OCR recorded and posted two presentations, "Accessible and Effective Communications" and "Color-blindness," for all employees to view on intranet. These presentations were to provide awareness surrounding the requirements that our electronic documents are 508 compliant for individuals with visual impairments.

CR created and posted a resource titled, "Effective and Accessible Communications," on the CR intranet. This resource contains a short summary of Accessible Communications under Section 508, 504, and LEP. It also contains the website for each program area and a POC for assistance.

National Facilities Program Management is working to improve the strategic approach to facilities management in general. That work will result in the identification of deficiencies as a first step in making improvements to priority facilities that are deficient. Additionally, we're requiring this issue be more thoroughly addressed in the process of facility master planning at the unit level. (POC Michael Balen, mbalen@fs.fed.us)

## 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.)

84.5 percent of cases are processed timely.

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.

185 of a total of 237 RA requests for FY 2017 have been processed and closed. RA trends, along with EEO trends, were discussed with top regional leaders on a monthly basis as part of an overall discussion of the status of the CR Service Center. Ongoing training by CR Service Centers' RA Specialists are provided at Regional Leadership Team meetings and to RSA employees overall.

- Over 1,000 employees were trained this year in the reasonable accommodation process.
- RA Specialists use the Labor Employee Relations Information System (LERIS) RA database to track and process RA requests. The most recent data shows RA requests processing within the targeted 30 days is approaching 90 percent. LERIS will also allow DPMs to produce customized reports that are tailored to a particular region's issues. The Forest Service continues to focus on improving timeliness of processing as we are working with a USDA inter-agency workgroup to revise the Agency's reasonable accommodation policy and procedures.
- Though all requests were not monitored for trends, trends were noted. One trend occurring was an increase in requests for use of an "Assistance" or "Companion Animal." Unlike service animals, companion animals are not individually trained to perform specific kinds of tasks. Instead, the principle service is simply companionship. While service animals are trained to behave flawlessly in public, companion animals may or may not be as well-behaved.

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

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 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.

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

The Agency developed an interim policy until further direction from the Department is received. Requests for RA and PAS will be covered under one policy/procedures. Provision of PAS as RA during travel have been provided as needed since inception of the RA policy/procedures.

## 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 government-wide average?

Answer: No

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: No

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

N/A

### 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 accommodation, as compared to the government-wide average?

Answer: Yes

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: No

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.

N/A

## 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: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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.

<b>Trigger 1</b>	The grade level cluster for GS-01 to GS-10 is at 7.96 percent which is below the benchmark. The grade level cluster for GS-11 to SES is at 6.94 percent which is below the benchmark.	
<b>Barrier(s)</b>		
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Increase workforce participation rates for PWD	
<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>		<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>
Forest Service Leadership, CR and HRM Directors		No
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)</b>		<b>Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)</b>
Yes		Yes
<b>Sources of Data</b>	<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>
Workforce Data Tables	Yes	MD 715 A and B Tables, promotions, awards, separations
Complaint Data (Trends)	Yes	462 and No Fear Reports
Grievance Data (Trends)	No	
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)	No	
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)	Yes	FEVS and Unit Surveys
Exit Interview Data	Yes	
Focus Groups	No	
Interviews	No	
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)	No	

<b>Sources of Data</b>		<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>		
Other (Please Describe)		No			
<b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>	<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Completion Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	

<p>09/30/2018</p>	<p>Increase the use of alternative hiring authority                  HRM will work and collaborate with CR managers regarding recruitment and hiring initiatives, workforce and succession planning and serving on the Forest Service Human Capital Planning Workforce Group.                  CR and HRM will collaborate to make better use of applicant flow data in developing actionable strategies for improving diversity, outreach and recruitment.                  CR will collaborate with HRM to identify areas for improving diversity and develop tools for hiring managers to utilize a targeted outreach plan.                  Further educate and motivate candidates with potential Schedule an eligibility to pursue Certification by DEPM developing training tool by which CR Outreach Staff, National Recruitment Team, and Partnership Organizations managing Forest Service-collaborative internship can communicate this information to potential candidates.                  DEPM develop training tool further clarifying to applicants and employees how voluntarily reporting of all your disability statuses can positively impact the public's and management's awareness of disability representation/ prevalence, and open doors to additional hiring and promotion.                  Continued use of Supplemental Diversity Survey as a simple, quick tool by which the Agency units can anonymously obtain more candid, complete snapshots of overall workforce diversity data, including otherwise non-visible or obvious disability statuses (veteran disability ratings, and civilian PWTD/PWD disabilities/severe health conditions), other RNO/ERI, LGBTQ, and gender data. Information used for educational, awareness, and sensitivity purposes, and potential alternative or supplemental EEOC reporting purposes.</p>	<p>Yes</p>		
<p><b>Fiscal Year</b></p>	<p><b>Accomplishments</b></p>			
<p>2018</p>	<p>DEPM will develop a training tool as a resource for the CR outreach staff, National</p>			

<p><b>Trigger 2</b></p>	<p>PWD are separating at rates that hinder gains in the workforce</p>
<p><b>Barrier(s)</b></p>	<p>The Agency lacks the ability to analyze exit survey data for PWD; Exit interviews are conducted by supervisors and data is not reported/collected in any national way to identify trends.</p>

<b>Objective(s)</b>	Retention of diverse highly-qualified employees through increasing cultural competencies			
<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>		<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>		
Forest Service Leadership, CR and HRM Directors		No		
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)</b>		<b>Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)</b>		
No		Yes		
<b>Sources of Data</b>	<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>		
Workforce Data Tables	Yes	MD 715 A and B Tables, promotions, awards, separations		
Complaint Data (Trends)	Yes	462 and No Fear Reports		
Grievance Data (Trends)	No			
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)	No			
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)	Yes	FEVS and Unit Surveys		
Exit Interview Data	Yes	Exit Interview Survey results, reasons for separation from agency		
Focus Groups	No			
Interviews	No			
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)	No			
Other (Please Describe)	No			
<b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>	<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Completion Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>

<p>09/28/2018</p>	<p>HRM and CR collaborate to update Exit Survey to capture PWD and PWTD                  Provide quarterly reports of national data and trend analysis for PWD and PWTD to include reasonable accommodation to Agency leadership and Civil Rights directors in the field.                  Raise awareness, and attitudes toward inclusion, by continued use of Supplemental Diversity Survey as a simple, quick tool by which Agency Units can anonymously obtain more candid complete snapshots and awareness of their overall workforce diversity representation, including otherwise non-visible or obvious disability statuses (veteran disability ratings, and civilian PWTD/PWD disabilities/severe health conditions).                  To bring more visibility and embracing of disability diversity in workforce, DEPM will develop a training tool for presenting and clarifying how to obtain Schedule A Certification, if eligible, and the versatility this noncompetitive eligibility offers as a strategy for alerting recruiters/selecting officials of the disability diversity prospects offer the federal workforce, and opening doors to more federal employment, promotion, and retention opportunities.                  To encourage more candid, complete voluntary reporting of disability statuses and thus raising awareness, cultural competency, DEPM will develop a training tool for clarifying how the varied disability data agencies ask veterans and non-veterans to voluntarily provide “for statistical reporting purposes” while interns, applicants, new hires, and continuing employees (if veteran/civilian disability status changes) can impact their opportunities for Federal hiring, promotion, and retention.</p>	<p>Yes</p>		
<p><b>Fiscal Year</b></p>	<p><b>Accomplishments</b></p>			
<p>2018</p>	<p>DEPM develop training tool as resource for CR outreach staff, National Recruitment</p>			

4. Please explain the factor(s) that prevented the agency from timely completing any of the planned activities.

N/A

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

DEPM developed training tools in the first quarter of FY 2018 to promote Schedule A Certification. A separate training educates interns, applicants, new hires, and continuing employees (veterans and non- veterans) about the value of their voluntary reported disability data, including as ongoing employees should notify the agency as their disability status changes occur. Both tools will be tested during remaining quarters of FY.

Supplemental Diversity Survey (SDS) questions remain imbedded in Civil Rights EEO Compliance Reviews that will be conducted in FY 2018. During the first quarter of FY 2018, additional questions will be added to gauge how much of disability data reported by respondent is new/not also reported on record. In past three fiscal years, the SDS questionnaire was presented to all employees of 5 out of 16 reporting units. With 37 percent of employees responding, representation rates for PWTD statuses were around 10 percent; total reporting anonymously from 5 units exceeded total reported on record from all 16 units Agency-wide. The total PWD averaged close to 20 percent reporting rate, rather than 7 percent reported on record. Percent of Veterans reporting "30 percent or more disabled rating" anonymously exceeded Agency rate reported on record. Survey also was able to capture "total Schedule A eligibles employed (via any Authority), rather than just total hired under Schedule A- i.e. and more accurate measure for crediting degree to which Agency supports employment of Schedule A eligibles."

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