

# EEOC FORM 715-01

## EEO Program Status Report

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EEOC FORM 715-01  
Executive Summary

*U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*

**FEDERAL AGENCY ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT**

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Department of Agriculture

For Period Covering October 1, 2005, to September 30, 2006.

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) submitted its first report under the EEO Management Directive 715 (MD-715) on January 31, 2005, covering Fiscal Year (FY) 2004. In that report, the Department conducted a critical analysis of its efforts in the areas of employment discrimination, complaint processing, and affirmative employment. For FY 2005, and in this year's report, USDA's MD-715 responds to feedback received from EEOC on the previous year's report, refines the analyses of areas in which improvement could be made, and reports accomplishments in implementing the plans' objectives. USDA remains committed to achieving model employer status, as defined by MD-715, and submits this report on its achievements to date, workforce analysis, objectives, and planned activities.

### Department's Mission and Mission-Related Functions

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

The USDA strives to:

- Expand international trade for agricultural products and support international economic development;
- Expand domestic marketing opportunities for agricultural products and strengthen risk management, the use of financial tools, and the provision of sound information to help farmers and ranchers in their decision-making process;
- Further develop alternative markets for agricultural products and activities;
- Provide financing needed to help expand job opportunities and improve housing, utilities, and infrastructure in rural America;
- Enhance food safety by taking steps to reduce the prevalence of foodborne hazards from farm to table, and safeguard agriculture from natural and intentional threats;
- Improve nutrition by providing food assistance and nutrition education and promotion; and
- Manage and protect America's public and private lands working cooperatively with other levels of government and the private sector.

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

Part G of MD-715 defines the 6 essential elements of a model EEO program through a list of 122 measurement items. In last year's MD-715 report, USDA cited 20 items from Part G for discussion and action planning under Part H. Of the 20 items, 2 new ones had been added and 4 were listed as having been accomplished. The four accomplished items are not included in this year's report. The remaining 16 objectives are discussed in Part H. The following summarizes USDA's efforts to meet the essential elements of a model EEO program.

### **A. Demonstrated commitment from agency leadership**

The Department's leadership continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to equal opportunity for all employees and applicants. Secretary Johanns has issued a Civil Rights Policy Statement that declares his commitment to ensuring the civil rights of all USDA employees and calls for all employees to be treated with respect, dignity, and equality. Planned activities for FY 2006 include the continued evaluation of Agency heads and Staff Office Directors on their performance in promoting civil rights and equal opportunity, and the completion of Department-level compliance reviews of the hiring and promotion practices in selected USDA agencies.

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

In response to USDA's FY 2005 report, the EEOC recognized the Department's resolve to address critical workforce issues. The annual Agency Head assessment criteria were again reviewed and revised in FY 2006 to more accurately evaluate and assess the civil rights accomplishments of USDA's top-level executives. The Department continues to refine and strengthen its civil rights training programs, making use of information technology tools to ensure that the training is accessible by all employees.

### **C. Management and Program Accountability**

In FY 2006, USDA issued a new Departmental Regulation, "Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures." The regulation sets forth the policy and procedures for carrying out the Department's commitment to ensure that appropriate disciplinary or corrective actions are taken when discrimination or civil rights related misconduct occurs. The regulation also strengthens existing civil rights policies within the Department. USDA continues to update and improve its enterprise system for preparing the workforce data tables required to complete the MD-715 report. This information management system allows the Department and second-level reporting components to prepare more accurate, complete and consistent workforce data tables.

#### **D. Proactive Prevention of Unlawful Discrimination**

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights took steps in FY 2006 to place greater emphasis on the coordination and monitoring of subcomponent ADR programs to ensure that all programs are effective and in compliance with external requirements. The Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights is responsible for this effort. USDA issued a new ADR Departmental Regulation in FY 2006. This regulation creates uniform standards for certain aspects of ADR programs and reaffirms the obligation to provide ADR as an option during the EEO pre-complaint process. ADR training for supervisors and managers continues to be emphasized in our planned activities.

#### **E. Efficiency**

USDA continues to make progress in improving the efficiency of its complaint processing. The percentage of timely EEO investigations increased to 49 percent in FY 2006, as compared with 47.6 percent in FY 2005. Other improvements are evident in the pending inventory: for instance, the number of complaints pending written notification decreased from 198 in FY 2005 to 127 in FY 2006. The average age of the complaints pending written notification decreased from 118.64 days in FY 2005 to 104.17 days in FY 2006. Similar progress is noted in the complaints pending investigation: the number pending decreased from 239 in FY 2005 to 226 in FY 2006, and the average age decreased from 295.85 days in FY 2005 to 231.28 days in FY 2006. The improvements in the pending inventory were assisted by a sharp decline in the number of complaints filed, from 628 in FY 2005 to 535 in FY 2006.

The data regarding final agency decisions does not demonstrate similar improvement. Staff losses, combined with implementation of greater quality control procedures, negatively impacted the productivity of the adjudication division. Greater attention was focused on issuing consistent, high quality final agency decisions on EEO complaints, and significant effort was made to address aged complaints and multi-issue complaints. In addition, USDA implemented procedures to ensure that final orders on decisions by EEOC Administrative Judges are issued within the regulatory period of 40 days. When final orders on AJ decisions are combined with merit decisions, the average days to issuance decreased significantly, from 402 days in FY 2005 to 257 days in FY 2006. Timely processing of final agency decisions is a current priority, and efforts are being made to fill vacancies, obtain external contractor support, and further streamline the process.

The new Civil Rights Enterprise System for tracking and monitoring employment discrimination complaints was fully implemented by December 31, 2005, and has resulted in greater transparency, better coordination, more accurate data, and improved reporting. A new process was instituted in FY 2006 to better coordinate and improve the Department's presence at national conferences supported by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

## **F. Responsiveness and Legal Compliance**

Our self-assessment has not identified any deficiencies in this area in either the present report or in prior reports. EEOC recommended that some priority be given to compliance processes, which was consistent with the FY 2006 initiatives of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. USDA plans to focus greater attention in the areas of ADR and compliance as it continues to reduce its complaint processing workload.

## Analysis of Workforce Profiles

At the close of FY 2006, USDA's total employment was 101,792, including 88,072 permanent and 13,720 temporary employees (see Table 1). The permanent workforce of 88,072 consisted of 49,640 (56.3 percent) men and 38,432 (43.6 percent) women.

**Table 1: Permanent, Temporary, and Total Employment  
FY 2006 and FY 2005 Number (Percent)**

	Permanent FY 2006	Permanent FY 2005	Temporary FY 2006	Temporary FY 2006	Total FY 2006	Total FY 2005
Total All	88,072 (100.0%)	90,255 (100.0%)	13,720 (100.0%)	13,299 (100.0%)	101,792 (100.%)	103,554 (100.0%)
Total Men	49,640 (56.3%)	50,961 (56.5%)	7,448 (54.3%)	7,232 (54.4%)	57,088 (56.1%)	58,193 (56.2%)
Total Women	38,432 (43.6%)	39,294 (43.5%)	6,272 (45.7%)	6,067 (45.6%)	44,704 (43.9%)	45,361 (43.8%)
Hispanic Men	3,236 (3.7%)	3,298 (3.6%)	677 (4.9%)	708 (5.3%)	3,913 (3.8%)	4,006 (3.9%)
Hispanic Women	2,038 (2.3%)	2,023 (2.2%)	629 (4.6%)	628 (4.7%)	2,667 (2.6%)	2,651 (2.6%)
White Men	40,633 (46.1%)	41,775 (46.3%)	5,784 (42.2%)	5,560 (41.8%)	46,417 (45.6%)	47,335 (45.7%)
White Women	28,504 (32.4%)	29,188 (32.3%)	3,946 (28.8%)	3,855 (29.0%)	32,450 (31.9%)	33,043 (31.9%)
Black Men	3,398 (3.9%)	3,472 (3.8%)	609 (4.4%)	588 (4.4%)	4,007 (3.9%)	4,060 (3.9%)
Black Women	6,138 (7.0%)	6,321 (7.0%)	1,393 (10.1%)	1,311 (9.9%)	7,531 (7.4%)	7,632 (7.4%)
AI/AN Men	1,212 (1.4%)	1,259 (1.4%)	153 (1.1%)	140 (1.0%)	1,365 (1.3%)	1,399 (1.4%)
AI/AN Women	839 (1.0%)	868 (1.0%)	144 (1.0%)	102 (0.8%)	983 (1.0%)	970 (1.0%)
AA/PI Men	1,161 (1.3%)	1,157 (1.3%)	225 (1.6%)	236 (1.8%)	1,386 (1.4%)	1,393 (1.4%)
AA/PI Women	913 (1.0%)	894 (1.0%)	160 (1.2%)	171 (1.3%)	1,073 (1.1%)	1,065 (1.0%)

Women and minorities made up 53.9 percent of the FY 2006 permanent workforce—38,432 (43.6 percent) women, 5,274 Hispanic employees (6.0 percent), 9,536 Black employees (10.9 percent), 2,051 American Indian/Alaska Native employees (AI/AN) (2.3 percent), and 2,074 Asian American/Pacific Islander employees (AA/PI) (2.3 percent).

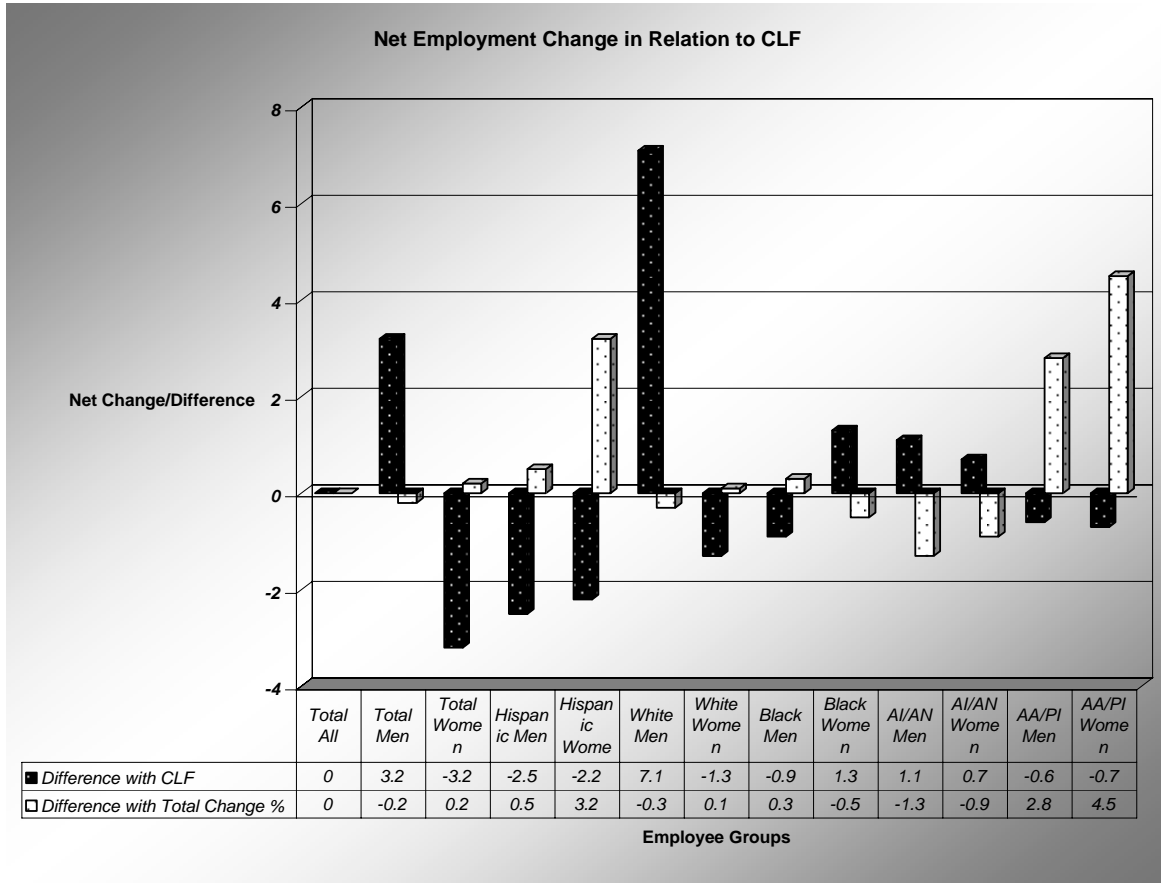
Between FY 2005 and FY 2006 the size of the permanent workforce decreased by 2,183 (-2.4 percent) employees. In FY 2006, participation rates for several protected

employee groups were below their comparable Civilian Labor Force (CLF) rates (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Net Change (FY 2005-FY 2006) and Comparison to CLF (Permanent Employees)**

	Net Change Number	Net Change Percent	Percentage of Total FY 2006	CLF	Difference with CLF (+ over or - under)
Total All	-2,183	-2.4	100.0	100.0	0.0
Total Men	-1,321	-2.6	56.4	53.2	+3.2
Total Women	-862	-2.2	43.6	46.8	-3.2
Hispanic Men	-62	-1.9	3.7	6.2	-2.5
Hispanic Women	15	0.7	2.3	4.5	-2.2
White Men	-1,142	-2.7	46.1	39.0	+7.1
White Women	-684	-2.3	32.4	33.7	-1.3
Black Men	-74	-2.1	3.9	4.8	-0.9
Black Women	-183	-2.9	7.0	5.7	+1.3
AI/AN Men	-47	-3.7	1.4	0.3	+1.1
AI/AN Women	-29	-3.3	1.0	0.3	+0.7
AA/PI Men	4	0.3	1.3	1.9	-0.6
AA/PI Women	19	2.1	1.0	1.7	-0.7

The following graph illustrates each group's progress in reaching parity with the CLF. The dark shaded bar compares each group's proportion in the USDA workforce to representation in the CLF. A bar extending above the axis line indicates representation over CLF levels, and a bar below indicates that the CLF level has not been met. The light shaded bar indicates the relative gain or loss a group made in FY 2006 in relation to achieving parity with the CLF. For example, the difference in the representation of Hispanic women in the CLF (4.5 percent) and in the total USDA workforce (2.3 percent) is -2.2. However, the difference in the percent net change for Hispanic women (+0.7 percent) and for the total USDA workforce (-2.4 percent) is +3.2 (with rounding). Therefore, while Hispanic women remained below the CLF rate at the end of FY 2006, they gained ground in closing the gap during the year.



### *USDA Agencies and Staff Offices*

There are significant differences in the size of USDA agencies and staff offices, ranging from the larger agencies such as the Forest Service (30,378) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (12,110) to some of the smaller components such as the Economic Research Service (356) and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (357). There also is a wide variance across agencies in the participation rates for women and minorities. For example, White males make up 58.1 percent of permanent employees at the Natural Resources Conservation Service and 51.4 percent at the Forest Service. On the other hand, White males make up 23.0 percent of the 1,243 employees at the Food and Nutrition Service and 18.7 percent of the 1,459 employees at the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Consequently, while the largest number of women and minorities are employed at USDA's larger agencies, the participation rates in those agencies lag behind the Department-wide and CLF rates.

### *Professionals, and Officials and Managers Occupational Groups*

Of the nine occupational groups, most USDA employees (30,162), or one of every three, are in the professional category. White males hold 52.7 percent of professional positions at USDA (compared with a national workforce CLF rate of 37.1 percent) (see Table 3). The employee sectors with the highest representation in professional jobs



are AA/PI men (52.9 percent) and women (44.9 percent) and White men (39.1 percent). The employee sectors with the lowest representation in professional jobs are Black women (22.1 percent), AI/AN women (25.4 percent) and Hispanic women (26.1 percent).

The representation of women and minorities in the Officials and Managers occupational group frequently exceeds the national workforce CLF rate. Hispanic women (2.6 percent), Black men (4.3 percent), Black women (9.1 percent), AI/AN men (1.1 percent), AI/AN women (1.1 percent), and women as a whole (48.4 percent) fare well in the Officials and Managers category, exceeding the CLF rates for their groups (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Specific Occupational Groups FY 2006 Comparison to CLF**

	Officials and Managers CLF	Officials and Managers USDA	Professionals CLF	Professionals USDA
Total All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Men	61.4	51.6	46.3	62.7
Total Women	38.6	48.4	53.7	37.3
Hispanic Men	3.3	3.4	2.3	3.2
Hispanic Women	2.4	2.6	2.8	1.8
White Men	52.1	41.6	37.1	52.7
White Women	30.6	34.8	42.3	29.0
Black Men	2.8	4.3	2.7	3.6
Black Women	3.5	9.1	4.9	4.5
AI/AN Men	0.2	1.1	0.2	1.1
AI/AN Women	0.2	1.1	0.3	0.7
AA/PI Men	2.1	1.1	3.2	2.0
AA/PI Women	1.3	0.8	2.6	1.3

*Grade Levels*

Women (particularly White, Black, Hispanic, AI/AN women) tend to be overrepresented in grades GS 1-8 positions, which often have limited promotion potential. While women make up 43.6 percent of the permanent workforce, they hold 55.7 percent of the GS 1-8 jobs. To look at it from a different perspective, of all General Schedule permanent jobs held by men, 28.7 percent are in the GS 1-8 range, but of all General Schedule permanent jobs held by women, 45.3 percent are in the GS 1-8 range (see Table 4). Roughly half of all Black and AI/AN women hold jobs in the GS 1-8 range.

Women and minorities tend to be underrepresented in the higher-grade WG 11-15 jobs. Of the 73 permanent WG 11-15 positions, 83.6 percent (61) of them are held by White men. Women hold only 8.9 percent of all permanent WG jobs (148 of 1,661) and do not hold any of the WG 11-15 positions. Of the 10 WG 12-15 positions, only one is held by a minority.

**Table 4: Employment Grades GS 1-8 and WG 11-15 (Permanent)**

	Total GS	GS 1-8	Percent	Total WG	WG 11-15	Percent
Total All	85,788	30,024	35.0	1,661	73	4.4
Total Men	47,660	13,429	28.2	959	73	7.6
Total Women	38,128	16,595	43.5	148	0	0.0
Hispanic Men	3,086	1,303	42.2	102	6	5.9
Hispanic Women	2,013	1,012	50.3	15	0	0.0
White Men	39,103	10,413	26.6	674	61	9.1
White Women	28,275	11,932	42.2	106	0	0.0
Black Men	3,185	1,043	32.7	140	4	2.9
Black Women	6,101	2,936	48.1	22	0	0.0
AI/AN Men	1,158	476	41.1	31	2	6.5
AI/AN Women	832	420	50.5	5	0	0.0
AA/PI Men	1,128	194	17.2	12	0	0.0
AA/PI Women	907	295	32.5	0	0	0.0

*Major Occupations*

Of the seven major occupations identified in this report, only the Soil Conservation (457) position consistently *exceeds* the CLF rates for all women and minority groups. The Soil Conservation position accounts for 5.1 percent of the total permanent workforce. However, of the remaining six major occupations, in all but one instance, AA/PI men and women and Hispanic women are represented below CLF rates (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Participation and CLF Rates for USDA Major Occupations (percentages)**

Occupation	AA/PI Men USDA	AA/PI Men CLF	AA/PI Women USDA	AA/PI Women CLF	Hispanic Women USDA	Hispanic Women CLF
Forestry Tech. 462	0.8	4.1	0.2	4.3	1.1	3.4
Loan Specialist 1165	0.4	1.2	0.6	1.9	2.7	4.3
Gen. Bus. & Ind. 1101	0.2	2.6	0.9	2.3	4.9	5.3
Info. Tech. Spec. 2210	2.4	7.4	2.1	2.9	1.6	1.6
Food Inspection 1863	0.9	2.2	0.7	0.8	2.6	5.7
Gen. Biol. Sci. 401	1.7	4.1	1.0	4.3	1.8	2.1

The most widespread discrepancy occurs in the Forestry Technician (462) occupation, which is the largest occupational category at USDA with 8,067 employees (9.2 percent of the permanent workforce). 81.5 percent of all Forestry Technician jobs are held by males. White, Hispanic, Black, and AA/PI women and Black and AA/PI men are all employed below CLF rates in this major occupation. Participation rates for White, Hispanic, Black, and AA/PI women and AA/PI men are below CLF rates in the Loan Specialist (1165) and General Biological Science (401) occupations.

### *Employees With Disabilities*

In FY 2006 there were 6,155 (6.97 percent) permanent employees with a reported disability. The number of employees with targeted disabilities totaled 923 (1.04 percent), as compared to the Federal high benchmark rate of 2.17 percent. Four agencies or offices exceeded or came close to matching the Federal high rate—Office of the Executive Secretariat (4.17 percent), Departmental Administration (3.35 percent), Office of the Chief Financial Officer (2.01 percent), and Food and Nutrition Service (1.93 percent).

The hiring rate over the prior three fiscal years resulted in an overall employment decline in employees with targeted disabilities. Between FY 2004 and FY 2005, the number of permanent employees with targeted disabilities dropped by 61, from 955 to 894. This trend was reversed in FY 2006. The number of employees with targeted disabilities increased during FY 2006 by 29 (a 3.24 percent increase). This increase occurred in spite of an overall USDA workforce decrease of 2.4 percent. However, the Department is still below the Federal high benchmark and the data suggest that agencies are underutilizing special authorities available to assist them in meeting hiring goals for employees with targeted disabilities.

People with targeted disabilities are clustered in the lower grade levels GS-5-8, and in the Office & Clerical occupational group (26.54 percent compared with 8.30 percent for employees reporting no disability).

*Employee Recognition and Awards*

Women consistently do better than men in the proportion of employee recognitions and awards they receive. Women and minority employees received recognitions and awards roughly in line with their proportion of the workforce (see Table 6). Some exceptions include time-off awards (1-9 hours) to Hispanic men (1.0 percent vs. 3.7 percent of the workforce), time-off awards (9+ hours) to Black and AI/AN men (2.8 percent vs. 3.9 percent of the workforce, and 0.9 percent vs. 1.4 percent of the workforce, respectively), and quality step increases to Black males (2.8 percent vs. 3.9 percent of the workforce).

**Table 6: Employee Recognition and Awards (Percent Distribution Across Groups)**

	Total Permanent Employees	Time-Off Awards 1-9 Hours	Time-Off Awards 9+ Hours	Cash Awards \$100-\$500	Cash Awards Over \$500	Quality Step Increases
Total All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Men	56.3	44.0	40.7	52.0	52.7	51.7
Total Women	43.6	56.0	59.3	48.0	47.3	48.3
Hispanic Men	3.7	1.0	1.9	3.0	3.2	3.5
Hispanic Women	2.3	2.0	2.1	3.0	2.3	2.7
White Men	46.1	36.0	32.6	42.0	43.4	42.0
White Women	32.4	41.0	40.6	35.0	34.3	35.7
Black Men	3.9	5.0	4.1	4.0	3.7	2.9
Black Women	7.0	10.0	14.3	9.0	8.6	7.5
AI/AN Men	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5
AI/AN Women	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.5
AA/PI Men	1.3	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.4	1.9
AA/PI Women	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.3	1.8

*Hires and Separations*

Women as a whole, Hispanic women, and AA/PI men and women improved their relative proportion of the permanent workforce at USDA in FY 2006. Their percentage of new hires was above, and their percentage of separation was below, their percentage of the total workforce (see Table 7). In absolute terms, however, the number of women decreased slightly (as did the overall workforce), but the absolute numbers were positive for Hispanic women and AA/PI men and women. Both the number and proportion of White men declined the greatest during FY 2006.

**Table 7: Hires and Separations (Permanent Employees)  
Number and Percent Distribution Across Groups**

	Total Number Permanent Employees	Total Percent Permanent Employees	Total Number Hires	Total Percent Hires	Total Number Separations	Total Percent Separations	Net Number of Hires vs. Separations
Total All	88,072	100.0	6,484	100.0	8,197	100.0	-1,713
Total Men	49,640	56.3	3,623	55.9	4,653	56.8	-1,030
Total Women	38,432	43.6	2,861	44.1	3,544	43.2	-683
Hispanic Men	3,236	3.7	327	5.0	334	4.1	-7
Hispanic Women	2,038	2.3	202	3.1	173	2.1	+29
White Men	40,633	46.1	2,835	43.7	3,802	46.4	-967
White Women	28,504	32.4	1,986	30.6	2,577	31.4	-591
Black Men	3,398	3.9	289	4.5	307	3.8	-18
Black Women	6,138	7.0	508	7.8	633	7.7	-125
AI/AN Men	1,212	1.4	62	1.0	107	1.3	-45
AI/AN Women	839	1.0	55	0.9	83	1.0	-28
AA/PI Men	1,161	1.3	110	1.7	103	1.3	+7
AA/PI Women	913	1.0	110	1.7	78	1.0	+32

## Summary of EEO Plan Objectives to Eliminate Barriers (Part I)

Part I of MD-715 provides a summary of challenges USDA faces in attaining the status of a model EEO agency. Significant activities during the year that aided the elimination of barriers include: the issuance of new Departmental Regulations on Civil Rights Accountability and Alternative Dispute Resolution; Department-wide training on civil rights impact analysis; comprehensive Departmental compliance reviews conducted at three sub-agencies; and the utilization of a variety of tools for promoting special emphasis and affirmative employment opportunities. USDA has identified three challenges in Part I of the report and has proposed a plan to address each challenge.

The challenge related to establishing and meeting hiring and retention goals for employees with targeted disabilities has been moved from Part I to Part J, the Department's Special Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, and Advancement of Individuals with Targeted Disabilities. Significant progress was made in FY 2006, and the analysis, action plan and report of accomplishments have been consolidated in Part J.

By carrying out the action items designed to address the identified barriers, USDA intends to meet the following objectives:

### *1. Increase Representation of Minorities and Women in the Workforce*

Work with agency personnel directors to develop targeted recruiting efforts to increase the representation of minorities and women in the workforce. Encourage managers to take affirmative steps to recruit, hire, train and promote employees from diverse backgrounds. Undertake comprehensive equal employment opportunity compliance review activities to monitor employment policies and practices.

### *2. Increase Advancement Opportunities for Minorities and Women*

Ensure that promotions are made in an even-handed and non-discriminatory manner, and that opportunities and training are provided to allow employees to develop.

### *3. Promote a Workplace Free of Reprisal or Harassment*

Provide civil rights training to managers, supervisors, and other employees, and encourage the use of ADR techniques to resolve workplace disputes. Implement the new accountability procedures. Promote a climate of tolerance, mutual respect and cultural sensitivity.

## **Special Program Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, and Advancement of Individuals With Targeted Disabilities (Part J)**

### *Total Employment*

The participation rate of persons with targeted disabilities in USDA's total workforce (permanent and temporary) increased from 975 (0.94 percent) in FY 2005 to 1006 (0.98 percent) in FY 2006.

### *Permanent Employment*

USDA employed 6,155 (6.97 percent) persons with reportable disabilities, of which 923 (1.04 percent) are permanent employees with targeted disabilities, compared to 894 in FY 2005. Overall, employees with targeted disabilities increased by 29 employees reflecting a net increase of 3.24 percent compared to a net loss of 2.42 percent in total USDA permanent employment.

USDA workforce representation of 1.04 percent exceeds the Federal-wide average of 0.98 percent for employees with targeted disabilities. However, USDA is still below the Federal-high rate of 2.16 percent, achieved by the EEOC.

Only one employee with a targeted disability holds a Senior Executive Service level position.

Employees with targeted disabilities (TD) continue to have a low participation rate in the Executive/Senior Level Officials and Managers occupational groups (0.65 percent compared to 1.68 percent non-disabled), Mid-Level Officials/Managers (2.6 percent compared to 4.78 percent non-disabled) and First-Level Officials and Managers (3.14 percent compared to 7.22 percent non-disabled.)

Employees with targeted disabilities are clustered in the GS-5-8 grades, particularly in the Office and Clerical, Craft Workers, Laborers and Service Workers occupational groups.

Employees with targeted disabilities on permanent appointments have a low participation rate in grades GS-8 through GS-15.

In addition, only 25.57 percent of employees with targeted disabilities are employed in the Professional occupational group, compared with 34.83 percent of non-disabled employees. Employees with targeted disabilities are clustered in the Office and Clerical occupational group, 26.54 percent compared to 8.3 percent non-disabled.

### *Implications Suggested by Data Analysis*

Standard recruiting practices are not yielding qualified candidates with targeted disabilities to meet mission-critical occupations and qualify for higher pay grades.

Agencies are not achieving the Department's hiring goal of 2 percent for employees with targeted disabilities.

*Recommended Plan Elements to Further Improve Representation*

- Analyze factors contributing to low hiring of persons with targeted disabilities.
- Establish recruitment practices that will yield qualified candidates for mission critical occupations and at higher grade levels.
- Promote use of mentoring and formal career development programs to help employees with targeted disabilities acquire required knowledge, skills, and abilities for advancement.