

Develop a Customer-centric, Inclusive, and High-performing Workforce by Investing in and Engaging Employees to Improve Service Delivery

ACHIEVEMENTS: USDA employees work on the frontlines every day to serve the country and its taxpayers, whether it is through battling wildfires or ensuring the safety of our Nation's food supply. Since the employees are responsible for providing these services, it is imperative that the workforce be equipped with the skills and abilities to effectively and efficiently carry out the Department's responsibilities. Part of ensuring a high-performing workforce is an engaged workforce. USDA made some progress with regard to employee engagement seeing an increase in its *Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey* results in 2015. USDA ranked high in areas related to "Effective Leadership: Supervisors" and "Employee Skills-Mission Match," and ranked third highest among large agencies in its "Support for Diversity." The results reflect the work being done at the Department in support of the *Cultural Transformation* initiative. The goal of this initiative is to get all USDA employees to work together to ensure that USDA is a place where there's equity of opportunity for all employees and everyone who works here is empowered to reach their full potential.

CHALLENGES: The Government Accountability Office released a report in January 2014 which states that 30.6 percent of all career permanent Federal employees who were on board in September 2012 will be eligible to retire by September 2017. At USDA these employees potentially include food safety inspectors, veterinarians, scientists, information technology specialists, firefighters, and service center employees out in the field assisting farmers and ranchers. These high projected retirement rates and competition with the private sector for top employees underscores the need for USDA to effectively implement succession planning to address potential critical skill gaps, take steps to create a modern work environment for a more mobile, tech driven workforce, and to actively engage a new generation of leaders.