

History of the National Civil Rights Leadership Committee (NCRLC)

The committee was founded by Dr. Alfonso Torres in August 1999. The NCRLC was charged with developing active and consistent approaches to Civil Rights (CR) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) for Veterinary Services (VS) and interfacing with the EEO Advisory Committees. The USDA VS has a mission of fair and equitable treatment of employees and to foster true equality of opportunity for VS employees, program beneficiaries, and all other stake holders. Committee membership is competitive and limited to 10 or less VS employees. Membership is made up of all grades. Any full-time employee is eligible who is not currently a member of an EEO Advisory Committee.

The committee is expected to assist in monitoring and evaluating VSs progress in implementing the Department's civil rights goals and objectives and the VS Civil Rights Strategic Plan. The newly formed group was also responsible to assist the Deputy Administrator in developing civil rights and EEO initiatives that will be beneficial throughout the organization. In organizing this committee there were expected outcomes: a better work place for all VS employees; reduction in the number of formal complaints; and increased services and opportunities to underrepresented groups and communities.

In the year 2000, the 1st F-to-F meeting of the NCRLC was held in Riverdale. In this meeting the founding members decided that this mission could be best accomplished:

- by developing a diverse work force
- by evaluating and monitoring VS progress in implementing the VS Civil Rights Strategic Plan
- by interfacing with our already established local and regional EEO committees
- and by developing National EEO/CR initiatives which would benefit everyone

In keeping with our original objectives of providing leadership and guidance to VS and to developing a national approach to CR program implementation within VS; some NCRLC accomplishments have been:

- Establishing a National Recruiter position
- Ensuring the EEO/CR committees be given a budget
- Ensuring that the collateral duty EEO representatives receive training to assist them in implementing their assigned responsibilities.
- Meeting routinely with the local EEO/CR representatives to provide assistance as needed
- Implemented having a EEO representative on BEI interviews
- Implemented a policy to ensure that Emergency Detail assignments be fairly and equitably assigned
- Presenting concerns brought forward to liaisons for VSMT awareness
- Accountability: Holding all employees accountable for treating each other, applicants, our customers and stakeholders fairly and equitably by utilizing surveys, direct contact from employees and customers and reviewing of reports and statistical information
- Established a VS CR Strategic Plan with goals, defined objectives and "Outcome Measures" for monitoring VS EEO/CR progress
- Members represent the agency by giving opening and closing speeches at the VS supported Ag-Discoveries
- Liaisons met with the local LMT on strategies to get employment diversity locally
- Host a symposium every two years to educate and train EEO/CR committee members

Special funding for projects that are consistent with the VS Civil Rights Strategic Plan and the VS Strategic and Performance Plan that have the potential to be applied nationally in scope and concept were created. The NCRLC members evaluated the proposals and selected those that fit the criteria. Past and present projects selected by the Committee:

VS Area Office/Alcorn State University

Vs Area Office/Kentucky State University

VS NVSL/CVB/Iowa State University

VS New York Area Office

VS MANRRS cluster meetings

VS Recruitment Fairs and promotional giveaways

Centers of Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) bridging the gap between Ag-Discovery participants who are now in college and the student summer employment program

North Carolina (NC) Area Office and North Carolina State University (NCSU)

Mississippi State Area Office

NVSL/CVB Scientist in a Suitcase

Partnership with MANRRS

Alcorn State University

Ag-DISCOVERY is an outreach program to help students learn about careers in plant science and veterinary medicine. The program allows students to live on a college campus and learn about science from university professors and practicing veterinarians and animal health technicians working for the US Government. This 2-week summer boarding program targets students 12-16 years of age who are interested in learning more about animal science and/or veterinary medicine. Students gain experience through hands-on labs, workshops, and field trips. Evenings are filled with character- and team building activities and diversity workshops.

This is the 8th year for the Ag-DISCOVERY program at Alcorn State University and was the 1st of its kind anywhere in the US. This groundbreaking project has been the cornerstone for all other Ag-DISCOVERY programs that followed. **VS/NCRLC is proud to be a part of the continued success by sponsoring this project each year!**

Kentucky State University

A new Ag-DISCOVERY was introduced as a project proposal by the Kentucky Area Office and the Land-Grant Program at Kentucky State University (KSU) in 2006. The University would be the center-point for hosting a number of 12 to 16 year olds for a 2 week summer boarding program located in Frankfort, KY. The program targets students that have an interest in learning more about public service, veterinary medicine and animal science. The students were exposed to various animal science projects including fetal pig dissection, diagnosis of animal diseases, and research projects with presentations provided by the students. They visited the behind the scenes look at an Equine Research Center, the Louisville Zoo and the Cincinnati Aquarium. They visited various private farming businesses and other universities in the nearby States. Along with the student studies, they also had lessons in teamwork, diversity and cultural understanding. The feedback from the students and parents – on a scale from 1 to 10 - they rated it a resounding 11! This project is a huge success with glowing parental reports and a big “thank you” to the VS and the NCRLC. **See Appendix 1** (letter from parent of participating student).

Iowa State University (ISU)

The VS NVSL/CVB and ISU (a land-grant institution) teamed up and centered the program on investing in the future of wildlife and domestic animal health. The University would be the center-point for hosting a number of 14 to 17 year olds for a 2 week summer boarding program located in Ames, Iowa. The program targets students that have an interest in learning more about the interconnection between wildlife biology and conservation, laboratory technology and diagnostics, animal science and veterinary medicine. The students were exposed to various animal science projects including parasite comparison, sheep dissection, diagnosis of animal diseases, and various research projects with a presentation provided by the students the last day. They visited the Great Ape Trust, and saw a behind the scenes look at the Animal Rescue League. They participated in the 1 Heart Equestrian therapy, visited various private farming

businesses, and did laboratory animal testing and several Department of Natural Resources (DNR) activities.

VS New York Area Office

This program was designed as a Youth Disease Traceability Awareness Exercise. Land grant colleges across the country host youth programs which focus on future career opportunities. Collaborating with these colleges enables USDA Veterinary Services to inform potential future employees of the important role USDA plays in safeguarding animal agriculture. In collaboration with Cornell University Youth Programs Office, New York Veterinary Services staff planned to participate in three youth events in 2010. During FY 2010, Veterinary Services proposed to collaborate with colleges offering animal science and related courses.

Although Veterinary Services in New York were only able to participate in one youth event, it provided useful insight for directing veterinary services future recruitment efforts. Based on the event feedback, collaboration with colleges and universities merits exploration as a new approach to recruitment efforts for veterinary services. Participants clearly demonstrated a lack of prior knowledge of veterinary services and the role it plays in safeguarding animal agriculture. Two participants approached VS staff at the end of the presentation and indicated they were vegetarians but they were very impressed by the presentation and the measures taken to make food safe. All participants demonstrated an initial lack of understanding of Veterinary Services including one student who raised a few beef cows.

VS MANRRS cluster meetings

The funding will allow VS to participate in the National meeting planning process. There will be four meetings. This funding will add to VSs involvement in the National Conference. It also shows our continued commitment and support, plus gives VS additional exposure on-site for each cluster meeting. The outcome measure will be maximizing our exposure during these events.

VS Recruitment Fairs and promotional giveaways

The committee helped sponsor and/or set up VS Exhibits at conference career booths. The committee also sponsored give-away trinkets with the VS logo.

The Centers of Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH)

This CEAH proposal would help bridge the gap between the Ag-DISCOVERY programs participants and its Summer Internships program. In this project proposal, CEAH would contact previous Ag-DISCOVERY participants who are now in college and offer them 10 weeks of summer employment. CEAH contacted several eligible former Ag-DISCOVERY participants and offered them employment which would give them exposure to what CEAH does and how working for the federal government works. CEAH also offered the summer internship to non-Ag-DISCOVERY applicants.

North Carolina (NC) Area Office and North Carolina State University (NCSU)

Dr. Roberta Morales, VMO, and Dr. Eric Coleman, Area VMO, introduced a project proposal which would provide a ten-week summer employment to 3-6 qualified underrepresented minority students from predominantly minority-serving institutions in North Carolina. Three institutions were chosen for their participation: North Carolina Agricultural and Technological College, North Carolina Central College and University of North Carolina Pembroke. NCSU-College of Veterinary Medicine and VS (Dr. Morales) would review applicant submissions and select qualified participants based on academic achievement and their interests in USDA and other herd health or public health areas of veterinary medicine.

This summer intern program was with NCSU-CVM and VS/NCRLC with the NC Area Office monitoring and actively working with our partners. The Internship Program actually had 4 active students participating in this project the first year with NCSU paying the salary for one of the students. The

internship emphasized focused opportunities that provided a depth of training that strengthened the student's profile as a future job applicant and provided a depth of experience to solidify the student's career goals in public service. The cooperative agreement allowed these student interns the opportunity to visit and work at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) and the Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB) in Ames, IA with the assistance and coordination of Dr. Art Davis for the NVSL and Dr. Carol Belzer for the CVB, which opened up another area of potential employment. The outcome of this project was overwhelming appreciation from the interns and the Drs. at NCSU for the life changing experiences in veterinary medicine. To date all the students enrolled in this internship were accepted by the veterinary schools to which they applied!

Mississippi State Area Office

The request for special funding from the NCRLC was for the purpose of purchasing school supplies for teachers and students of the Jackson Public Schools' (JPS) "Partnership in Education" program. This project allowed VS, through NCRLC, to contribute funds to the JPS District to help purchase needed supplies for their classrooms. This unique outreach program was met with exuberant appreciation from the teachers and the staff of JPS District. The JPS District held an appreciation breakfast to thank each sponsor for their thoughtful and kind financial gifts. NCRLC salutes the employees of the Mississippi Area Office for their project proposal suggesting NCRLC help fund part of the JPS District "Partners in Education" program. This outreach program helped introduced VS/NCRLC to the teachers, students and the community.

NVSL/CVB Scientist in a Suitcase

This project was completed as a video presentation to show-case the VS Ames laboratories in their role in the protection of animal health and agriculture. The video was designed to be shown to Intermediate and High School students in the surrounding communities.

Partnership with Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and other Related Sciences (MANRRS)

This was a direct effort to introduce minority students to the VS agency and the many internships and positions available within the organization.

Special Projects Completed:

- Members have served on the selecting committee for the 1890 National Scholars Program
- VS Civil Rights strategic plan for FY 2009-2015
- Some members served as judges for various MANRRS competitions
- Several members served as recruiters at the career booth sponsored by VS at the National MANRRS Conference
- Spoke to Youth County Agents at Southern University about Ag-Discovery Programs
- Several NCRLC members have partnered with their local university as liaisons between MANRRS and VS
- Some NCRLC members have started Junior MANRRS in their local High Schools
- One member established a MANRRS chapter at a local university
- Developed and presented the civil rights/EEO portion of the APHIS Retention Survey
- Facilitated diversity workshops at the area OH/WV VS office
- NCRLC-sponsored VS-wide teleconference and VS-Regions, CEAH, and NVSL videoconference regarding disability issues
- NCRLC-sponsored Disability 101 videoconference from APHIS HQ to VS field locations
- NCRLC Coordinated USDA Target Center overview webinar for VS employees

- Advised and participated in the APHIS Native American Working Group Planning Committee for their bi-annual meeting
- Mentored student members of the YMCA Black Achievers Program
- NCRLC-sponsored Symposium every two years to disseminate information and educate VS EEO/CR committees on diverse topics

Recruitment Fairs attended by members:

Hispanic Association College and Universities (HACU) – provided booth fee and representatives
 League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
 Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS)
 Tuskegee Recruitment Fair
 Iowa State University Career Days
 Society of American Indian Government Employees
 Pennsylvania State University Recruitment Fair
 University of Pittsburg Recruitment Days
 Native American Fish and Wildlife Conference
 Hispanic Job Fair (Hispanic Community Job Fair) Pennsylvania
 Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund 40th Annual Meeting
 Native American Fish and Wildlife Conference
 AISES Conference
 Career Fair at Delaware State University
 Career Fair at Delhi University in Upstate New York
 Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine Career Day in March of 2010
 The Delaware State University Career Fair
 National Urban League Centennial Conference
 Southern University Career Fair
 Southern University Summer Ag Expo Fair

Other responsibilities and/or events attended by members:

- Liaisons attended EEO committee meetings as required by the NCRLC Charter
- Attended monthly telephone conference calls
- Supported local SEPM EEOCR sponsored events
- Participated in BEI Panels as the EEO/CR Observer as requested
- Provided information about the VS student internships, (this outreach program helped introduced VS/NCRLC to the teachers, students and the community)
- Helped in NC Student Career Pathways program as requested
- Participated in the Civil Rights Information Academy Training
- Brought forward issues of National scope as requested
- Some members met with local Community Action Groups and performed workshops and distributed CD's and brochures on how to apply for Federal Employment and how to write effective KSA's
- Reviewed and analyzed data received from National Finance Center and FEORP report to determine where shortages occur within VS to enhance recruitment efforts
- Many members participate in community outreach programs that help introduce VS/NCRLC to the schools and community
- Distribution of Ag-Discovery brochures to various organizations to reach diverse students throughout the country

- Served as judges for State Science & Engineering Fair, the State Science and Technology Fair, and the FFA Science Fair
- Participated in APHIS Native American Working Group Strategic Plan Meeting in Washington, DC
- Mentored students members of the YMCA Black Achievers Program
- Participation in outreach to the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian American Affairs and Hispanic American Affairs
- Participation in agriculture related fairs, programs and events throughout the states of Pennsylvania, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, Florida, Iowa and Arizona
- Overview of the AgDiscovery Program was given to a group of Latino students in Harrisburg, PA
- Many provide guidance and support to minorities in their liaison areas regarding job application, vacancies and other employment related information
- Participation in the Governor's Advisory Commission on African American Affairs monthly business exchange
- Many volunteer and represent VS at the state level in areas of outreach and diversity