

**Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP)  
Annual Accomplishment Report  
FY 2019**

**I. Executive Summary**

In accordance with Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart C, this report represents the FY 2019 accomplishments for veterans programs for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The report provides an assessment of the current status of disabled veterans in the APHIS workforce through partnerships that share information, collaborate, and develop strategies to increase diversity and inclusion throughout APHIS, as well as align APHIS' hiring initiatives and employment opportunities for veterans, disabled veterans, and persons with disabilities.

APHIS is committed to the recruitment, employment, advancement, and retention of people with disabilities, particularly those with targeted disabilities, and disabled veterans with special emphasis on outreach activities for disabled veterans with a 30 percent or more compensable service connected disability. To accomplish this, the Agency:

- ensures nondiscrimination against people with disabilities and fosters full participation in and access to all USDA programs, activities and services;
- provides technical support and assistance in providing reasonable accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities;
- develops and implements a continuing comprehensive approach to the Department's Affirmative Action Program for Individuals with Disabilities and Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP);
- provides technical employment information on the non-competitive, excepted service appointing authorities and assistance to applicants and employees with disabilities and potential employees;
- ensures that qualified applicants and employees with disabilities receive the necessary work-related accommodations in order to receive USDA services and/or carry out their duties;
- conducts disability awareness training to educate managers, supervisors, and coworkers on how to interact, respect, and work with people with disabilities; and
- works to dispel myths, fears, and misconceptions about what people with disabilities can or cannot accomplish.

In FY 2019, based on the FY 2019 DVAAP Action Plan, APHIS continued to devote substantial efforts on promoting diversity and recruiting a dynamic and first-class workforce. In doing so, the Agency continued to focus on increasing the employment of Veterans/Disabled Veterans. APHIS has an extensive recruitment and action plan that addressed and implemented outreach and recruitment activities for these mission areas.

## II. Organizational Structure

- Agency Mission Overview: APHIS is a multi-faceted agency with a broad mission area that includes protecting and promoting U.S. agricultural health, regulating genetically engineered organisms, administering the Animal Welfare Act, and carrying out wildlife damage management activities. These efforts support the overall mission of the USDA, which is to protect and promote food, agriculture, natural resources, and related issues.

Within APHIS, the Human Resources Division (HRD) and the Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion (OCRDI) work in partnership to support the Agency's Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program objectives. Both organizations provide guidance and assistance to field and headquarters managers and supervisors in an effort to help the Agency meet its goal to acquire and develop a diversified workforce.

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## III. FY 2019 Accomplishment Report

- **Recruit and Employ**

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service continues to reach out and partner with organizations and individuals at the Federal, State, County, and non-governmental levels via its Human Resources (HR) Veterans' Employment Emphasis Coordinator (VEEC). The VEEC fosters these partnerships to ensure increased awareness and access to employment with APHIS. The APHIS VEEC is a veteran himself with 25 years of active service, who brings firsthand veteran experience that can be beneficial to the veteran entering the application process. In FY 2019, Program Managers, HRD Staff, and USDA Departmental Staff, regularly referred positions to the National Veterans Employment Program Manager and VEEC when available with the intent to promote the hiring of veterans and Schedule A (disability) eligible candidates for noncompetitive job placement options.

The VEEC participates in monthly meetings with the APHIS HRD and the Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion (OCRDI) to share best practices, resources, and effective outreach strategies. In addition to positions being directly recruited for, the VEEC continues to conduct outreach efforts to notify veteran organizations nationwide of positions currently being advertised on USAJobs at the direct request of hiring managers. Management and Regulatory Program Business Services (MRPBS) HRO continued its efforts to increase retention rates of veterans hired by utilizing the Veterans Assisting Leaders Understanding Employing Veterans (VALUE Vet) group previously established in FY 2012. VALUE Vet was founded by veterans already employed in MRP to ensure the newly hired veteran has a group of veterans that have made the transition for military to federal service successfully

are available to answer any questions the newly hired veteran may have, or work with leadership to ensure a smooth transition is implemented to increase the success rate of first time hires into federal service.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Economic Opportunity, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, and USDA to improve employment and career development opportunities for veterans and veterans with disabilities in the Federal Government. This is accomplished by advertising directly to Department of Veterans Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Officers, and Employment Coordinators, County Veteran Service Officers, and other partners to notify, consult with, and ultimately refer eligible and qualified candidates for possible consideration by hiring managers.

During FY 2019, APHIS broadened its outreach efforts to veterans by continuing its partnership with MilitaryConnection.com as part of APHIS' use of social media to promote hiring opportunities to veterans. MilitaryConnection.com is a comprehensive online directory of resources, whose focus is employment for the veteran. MilitaryConnection.com is recognized by Weddles and the International Association of Employment Web Sites as a Top 100 Employment Web Site that has over 298,000 followers on Twitter. APHIS also initiated a partnership with the various branches of the military service (Marine Corps, Army, Navy, and Air Force) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Coordinators to ensure veterans preparing to leave the service are familiar with APHIS and the hiring opportunities that exist. The Agency provided each TAP Coordinator with an informational flyer that is included in the veterans' TAP binder for their review and questions. APHIS expects over 50,000 veterans from diverse backgrounds to have participated in the TAP classes during FY 2019.

The Agency has partnered with Departmental Management on a reoccurring basis to network and advertise available positions, seek outreach assistance, and generate awareness on behalf of veteran hiring initiatives. Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) and the Department, under a MOU with the Department of Veterans Affairs, continued the VR&E's Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE) program by providing stakeholder education of the NPWE directly to APHIS and AMS leaders and managers during the monthly Administrative Officer calls. In conjunction with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the MRP VEEC, APHIS drafted and distributed a comprehensive information document designed to assist with the understanding and implementation of the NPWE program and has been widely disseminated to all MRP Administrative Officers. The Agency also assisted veterans in the job application process as well as coordinated with veteran service organizations and colleges with higher veteran populations to attract and recruit veteran talent for noncompetitive placement in MRP positions.

Additionally, in FY 2019, The Department, in partnership with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), has implemented an online toolkit for managers on disability employment called the Just-in-Time Toolkit, developed by Cornell University. The Toolkit consists of ten tools: that can each be used in five minutes or less. Tools are based on real-life work situations that real managers have encountered on disability issues, but include specific information unique to your organization. If a manager chooses, each tool contains other

links to test your knowledge, print out a one-page sheet of reminders, or pursue further resources.

Additionally, the following targeted recruitment events were attended during FY 2019:

- **Veterans Hiring Fair - June 12, 2019- Washington, DC**
- **Fort Hood Mega Job Fair - June 18, 2019- Fort Hood, TX**
- **Wounded Warriors Hiring Expo - September 10-12, 2019- Woodbridge, VA**
- **Fort Meade Community Job Fair - September 18, 2019- Fort Meade, MD**
- **Fort Campbell Career Fair - September 18-19, 2019- Fort Campbell, KY.**

In addition to the targeted recruitment events attended, the following was available as a valuable tool for veterans to reach out and find information on a variety of subjects and issues that could be applicable to them during the course of their pre-employment or employment:

- **Veterans Website.** For veterans already employed with USDA, the APHIS Veterans' Employment Program Manager can access and utilize a web page which is accessible on USDA's community website at <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/veterans>. The site allows USDA veterans to share information and learn from each other about employment and working at USDA. It offers information on a variety of topics, ranging from helping veterans with credit options to women veterans' health issues.

- **Promote and Develop**

In FY 2019, APHIS veterans had access to a wide variety of development tools, such as the APHIS Leadership Roadmap and the APHIS Leadership Development Toolkit. The Kit provides a methodical process to develop Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and offers guidance on employee growth and continued advancement.

APHIS also offers a mentoring program that is available to all employees, including veterans. The *Open Mentoring Network* is an on-line learning tool which allows users to share knowledge, select mentoring partners, create learning plans, share learning resources, and more. It allows for learning across geographical boundaries, job function, position, and/or demographics. As employees make new connections using the Open Mentoring system, they strengthen their interpersonal networks, share information and expertise, and broaden their knowledge base across APHIS. Veterans can also avail themselves of an internal coaching program designed to help APHIS meet its succession needs by passing on institutional knowledge and developing its leaders. This program provides APHIS leadership

with continued support to effectively deal with the challenges of a changing work environment.

The Agency's *Reasonable Accommodation Program* promotes a workplace that provides reasonable accommodations to remove workplace barriers that would prevent individuals with disabilities, including disabled veterans, from participating in the job application process for Federal employment; prevent them from performing essential job functions; and prevent them from enjoying the same benefits and privileges of employment as non-disabled employees. In FY 2019, the Workplace Resolutions and Wellness Branch staff delivered seventeen (17) trainings on reasonable accommodation-related topics, including an overview of the reasonable accommodation (RA) process, accommodating employees, the supervisors role in the RA process, general telework versus telework as a reasonable accommodation, and medical confidentiality in the RA process.

Reference guides and pamphlets are also available, which provide answers to critical questions about employees with disabilities on a range of topics such as: incentives and return on investment; interviewing and hiring; achieving workplace success; and retaining valued employees.

FY 2019 promotion and workforce profiles are reflected in the following chart. Total veteran promotions are about 5.3% lower than in FY 2018. Thirty percent (30%) or more disabled veteran promotions also decreased by about 3.7%. While the size of the overall Agency workforce increased in 2019, the veteran workforce remained proportionately stable, with less than 1.0% variation in any category.

FY 2019 Veteran Promotions (1-year comparison)						
		Total Promotions	Total Veteran Promotions	Non-Disabled Veteran Promotions*	Disabled Veteran Promotions**	30% or more Disabled Veteran Promotions***
FY 2019 Promotions	#	801	102	39	15	48
	%		12.7%	4.9%	1.9%	6.0%
FY 2018 Promotions	#	751	135	43	19	73
	%		18.0%	5.7%	2.5%	9.7%
FY 2019 WF Profile	#	8,122	1,127	541	152	434
	%		13.9%	6.7%	1.9%	5.3%
FY 2018 WF Profile	#	7,947	1,079	566	155	358
	%		13.6%	7.1%	2.0%	4.5%

\*5-point (TP) and 10-point 'other' (XP)

\*\*10 point disability (XP) and 10-point compensable (CP)

\*\*\*10 point 30% or more compensable (CPS)

- **Agency Oversight**

The Human Resources Division and OCRDI continued to review existing and projected attrition/retention and related issues of the advancement of disabled veterans, and identified any barriers that needed to be removed and/or improved in the employment of disabled veterans. They also evaluated planned efforts to promote employment and advancement opportunities for qualified veterans through review and analysis of hiring, retention, and promotion rates based on statistical analysis. The Human Resources Division provides a bi-weekly report to the Deputy Administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS), which is shared with the Administrator and the Under Secretary's office on hiring and profile trends in placement and representation of disabled veterans.

On a quarterly basis, the HR Broadcast Newsletter is published and provides valuable information to managers, supervisors, and employees on a variety of topics, including veterans hiring. Additionally, management actively seeks out and listens to employee opinions and concerns, through town hall meetings, forums, and on-line portals that allow for open communication. Through these venues, employees have a clear picture of the mission and direction of the organization, and how their work contributes to Agency goals. These communication venues enhance efficiency, avoid duplication and confusion, and are designed to ensure that policies and messages are consistent.

A training course has been made mandatory for managers to provide them with a solid understanding of veterans hiring authorities and flexibilities. The course continues to familiarize participants with veterans' employment options and described the benefits to all parties involved: the Agency, managers, and veterans seeking Federal employment. This course also explains how certain special appointing authorities can be used to increase the number of veterans in the workplace and to expedite the hiring process.

- **Program Execution**

In FY 2019, HRD and OCRDI assisted APHIS programs with diversity and inclusion efforts through the review of existing and projected attrition and retention and related issues and, in concert with key management officials, strategized corrective measures. The Human Resources Division and OCRDI continued to pursue partnerships within the mission area, with other organizations, and in the local community to support disabled veterans programs and the hiring of veterans in the Federal government. As part of the DVAAP Plan, APHIS continues its efforts to retain, recruit, and hire disabled veterans. It adheres to the vision and strategic goals set forth in the Office of Personnel Management's Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan.

#### **IV. Agency Challenges**

In FY 2019, APHIS had a total of 983 separations, and of those separations 161 (16.4%) were veterans. The total percentage of veterans separating from the Agency was higher in FY 2019 than in FY 2018. However, more veterans were hired than separated, and this is in keep with the rest of the Agency's separation and hiring trends. The Agency had a total of 1,111 new hires, and of those new hires 186 (16.7%) were veterans. At the end of FY 2019, APHIS had a total of 1,127 veterans in the workforce, 571 (50.7%) of which were disabled veterans.

<b>FY 2019</b> <b>APHIS Veteran Employees by Preference Type</b> <b>(1-year comparison)</b>						
		Total Hires	Total Vets	Non-Disabled Vets*	Disabled Vets**	30% or more Disabled Vets ***
FY 2019 Hires	#	1,111	186	59	17	110
	%		16.7%	5.3%	1.5%	9.9%
FY 2018 Hires	#	753	82	44	7	31
	%		10.9%	5.8%	1.0%	4.1%
FY 2019 Separations	#	983	161	84	20	57
	%		16.4%	8.5%	2.0%	5.8%
FY 2018 Separations	#	901	129	60	18	51
	%		14.3%	6.7%	2.0%	5.7%
FY 2019 WF Profile	#	8,122	1,127	541	132	439
	%		13.9%	6.7%	1.9%	5.4%
FY 2018 WF Profile	#	7,947	1,079	566	155	358
	%		13.6%	7.1%	2.0%	4.5%

\*5-point (TP) and 10-point 'other' (XP)

\*\*10 point disability (XP) and 10-point compensable (CP)

\*\*\*10 point 30% or more compensable (CPS)

<b>FY 2019</b> <b>APHIS Veterans Preference – Minority Gender Profile</b>		
Female	Male	Total
223 (19.8%)	904 (80.2%)	1,127 (100.0%)



**V. Plan Certification**

This certification indicates that the DVAAP program is being implemented as required by 5 CFR 720 and appropriate guidance issued by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Additionally, APHIS has a current plan as required by the regulation.

**A. Designated DVAAP Certifying Official:**

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**B. Designated DVAAP POC:**

- 1) Name: Patrick W. Johnson
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**C. Plan Last Amended:**

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Date

**D. Date Effective:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**CERTIFYING OFFICIAL SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_