I hope this issue of the HR Broadcast finds all of you and your loved ones happy, safe, and healthy.

We need to celebrate our work and the ability to rise to every situation. As we began to slow down our response to COVID, more emergencies came that needed attention. It is more critical now than ever that we work to expand and strengthen our workforce so we are prepared to respond to tomorrow’s challenges and meet the evolving needs of our programs.

As we move into Quarter 3, I wanted to share an exciting update from our HR Operations team. You may have heard mention of a ‘Talent Center’ floating around. This new initiative is a long-term talent acquisition strategy to make program hiring more efficient and more productive. The Talent Center will be managed by a dedicated team focused on identifying, recruiting, and hiring diverse candidate pools for all positions - especially those that are mission-critical and/or require specific experience and skillsets.

This will be a significant shift from our current process of recruiting and filling positions only once an immediate hiring need is recognized. By taking a more proactive approach to recruitment and hiring, we hope to better prepare APHIS programs for future workforce needs and help refocus efforts from ongoing hiring challenges to performing the actual work of our mission. As the Talent Center continues to develop, our team will keep you informed on recruitment initiatives and ways we can partner to improve the hiring process and diversify our workforce. To start, we ask that you help recruit! You know the work, you are the most knowledgeable, you have common interest with the candidates, and you are the best to find the talent. Please help spread the news of our organization!

Spring brings new growth, blooming flowers, and a sense of hope and optimism for warmer days to come. But as the proverb goes, “Gardens are not made by sitting in the shade.” Hard work, persistence, and attentive care are what bring forth the most beautiful gardens. Let’s continue to support one another as we work together to overcome challenges, achieve goals, and cultivate a brilliant, dedicated, and exceptional workforce.

Take care and enjoy the sunshine!

Terri Meighan
Terri Meighan, HR Director
APHIS Employees: Help Us Recruit!
You—our passionate, hardworking employees—are APHIS’ greatest resource for recruiting new talent and expanding our workforce. Here’s how you can help.

Refer People You Know
Know anyone on the hunt for a new job? Encourage them to check out open positions on USAJOBS, upload their resume, and make it searchable so our recruiters can find them.

Promote Our Fast Tracks
We can hire veterans, military spouses, recent grads, people with disabilities, and former Peace Corps or AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers under special authorities. These unique hiring paths give eligible candidates a fast track to Federal jobs.

Follow Us on Social Media
APHIS updates its Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages daily with the latest news, upcoming events, job announcements, and more. Liking and sharing these posts will help us reach more people and promote all the great work we do.

Keeping U.S. Agriculture Healthy for America and the World

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www.aphis.usda.gov/careers
If FY 2022 had an official theme in HRD, it would be “Get strategic.” We’re looking at every aspect of the work we do and how we get it accomplished, and, of course, a big part of being strategic is knowing where we need to go next. So, we embarked on the development of a 5-year Strategic Human Capital Plan (SHCP) with the support of AvantGarde (AG), an independent consulting firm.

Traditionally, most SHCPs focus on data such as mission critical occupations, diversity, retirement eligibility, and retention rates which are all important pieces of information. But for the APHIS SHCP, we’re also looking at critical priorities such as:

- Our existing leadership pipelines and where we need to focus our leadership development programs,
- Employee engagement, and what it’s like to work for the respective Program areas, and
- Where our very different Programs may be facing new and unique challenges in the coming years.

To better understand how these dynamics impact mission delivery within and across APHIS, AG conducted a series of focus groups with a wide variety of employees, subject matter experts, and supervisors. They are now analyzing the findings from the focus groups, and from those themes developing:

- Indices of employee work experiences and viewpoints,
- APHISwide and Program-specific workforce challenges and gaps, and ultimately
- APHISwide and Program-specific Human Capital Goals and Strategies.

Once the draft SHCP is vetted with leadership and then finalized, HRD and AG will be partnering to develop an annual operating plan to put all of it into action.

With the help of the hundreds of employees, subject matter experts, and supervisors who participated in the focus groups, the practical end result will be a SHCP that enables APHIS to have the right employees with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time, fully engaged, and accomplishing our mission.

Continue reading on next page...
APHIS Strategic Human Capital Plan
Overview of Plan Development

APHIS has partnered with AvantGarde (AG) to develop a 5-year Strategic Human Capital Plan (SHCP) for fiscal years 2023 - 2027. The SHCP will build off the FY 22 APHIS Recruitment Plan and Strategy. Once complete, the SHCP will help APHIS optimize resources and achieve mission success by enacting codified, long-term, data-driven workforce management strategies.

Key SHCP development activities are outlined below.

1. Initial Data Review
   Review of current and historical APHIS and USDA data to ensure development of the SHCP considers and integrates existing APHISwide and Program-specific workforce documents, initiatives, and projects.

2. Interviews and Focus Groups
   Facilitation of interviews and focus groups with employees and leadership to better understand the current and future APHISwide and Program-specific strengths and challenges.

3. Challenges and Goals
   Facilitation of review sessions to validate and prioritize challenges identified in the interviews and focus groups and to establish high-level APHIS human capital goals.

4. APHIS Strategic Human Capital Plan
   Development of the APHIS 5-year Strategic Human Capital Plan (SHCP) to include human capital goals and APHISwide and Program-specific strategies.

5. APHIS Human Capital Operating Plan
   Development of the Human Capital Operating Plan (HCOP) to include actions for SHCP strategies and metrics for progress tracking which will serve as a framework for SHCP implementation and help ensure success.

For more information about the APHIS Strategic Human Capital Plan efforts, contact Joanna Barlow (joanna.barlow@usda.gov)
Mark Your Calendars for June 30th!
Performance and Awards Reminders
By Lynn Doetschman (Lynn.H.Doetschman@usda.gov)

As we are now in the 3rd Quarter of FY 2022, there are a few reminders to share for performance management and awards.

3rd Quarter Performance Conversations
(“Quarterly Conversations”)

Supervisors and employees must meet at least once every quarter to discuss progress of assignments, to provide feedback of observed performance and performance expectations, and to identify assignments and/or projects in the upcoming quarter and remainder of the performance year. Third Quarter conversations can be completed at any time during the quarter, but must be completed no later than June 30, 2022. There is no minimum time for the employee to perform under standards, or for the Rating Official to be in that role, before a Quarterly Conversation can occur. Once completed, the conversation is documented in the Enterprise Performance Management Application (ePMA). After the conversation has been documented in the system, ePMA will alert employees to acknowledge completion of the Quarterly Conversation in ePMA. The employee’s acknowledgement will complete the process for that quarter.

Looking Ahead to Year-End Appraisals

Employee performance plans should be established and in place by June 30, 2022 (90 days prior to the end of the performance cycle) for employee performance to be evaluated and rated at the end of the performance cycle (September 30, 2022). Steps should be taken to ensure all employees (including new hires, those who have been reassigned or promoted, and employees who are on temporary promotions or details of more than 90 days) are covered by appropriate performance plans documented in ePMA and approved by the Reviewing Official. ePMA has job aids and videos available demonstrating how to prepare and revise performance plans, as well as many other performance activities.

Employee Recognition Reminder

Continue reading on next page...
“Performance and Awards Reminders” continued from page 5…

Employee Recognition Reminder

Just a reminder that USDA’s Departmental Regulation (DR) on Employee Performance and Awards (DR 4040-430), issued June 2020, shifted focus from rating-based awards at the end of the year to achievement-based awards that can be distributed throughout the year. One reason for the change was to make awards more meaningful by shortening the time between employee contributions and recognition. Achievement Awards can be given at any time and more than once in a year; can be given as cash and/or time off; and are to be given consistent with the scales in Appendix E of the DR to determine the amounts and Appendix D to determine the approving officials (including the 1st or 2nd line supervisor on all awards).

USDA’s commitment to the employee recognition program is reinforced in the recent Office of Human Resources Management memorandum “Employee Recognition Reminder for FY 2022.” As we have entered the second half of the FY 2022 performance year, the memo reminds and encourages supervisors to take advantage of the opportunities provided in DR 4040-430 to acknowledge employees’ contributions to the mission throughout the year.

Need Help?

More information on Achievement Awards and Quality Step Increases (QSIs) is available in previous HR Broadcast articles:

- "A Reminder About USDA’s New Awards Policy" (Achievement Award information) (FY21 Quarter 3)
- "Award Authorization Levels" (FY21 Quarter 2)
- "Guidance on QSIs and QSI Panels" (FY22 Quarter 1)

For performance and awards policy questions, please contact Lynn Doetschman at Lynn.H.Doetschman@usda.gov.

Questions on attaching and submitting awards via eTracker, or their status, may be directed to be directed to MRPBS.HRD.Awards@usda.gov.

For information on ePMA access or use, please see the User Guides within ePMA or contact the Systems and Reporting Branch at HR.System.Access@usda.gov.
This year, we have eleven holidays and some of those holidays fall on the first Monday of the pay period. When that happens it’s important that we understand “in lieu of holidays.” The “in lieu of holiday” applies when a holiday falls on a full-time employee’s non-workday. Part-time employees are not eligible for an in-lieu of holiday when a holiday falls on a non-workday. Intermittent employees may not receive pay when no work is done on a holiday.

The regulations require that we observe the holiday or the “in lieu of holiday” on the day that it occurs.

This means that:

- When the holiday falls on your regular workday, that day is your holiday.
- When the holiday falls on your non-workday, your in-lieu of holiday is the workday immediately before the holiday. There are three exceptions to this rule:

1. If the holiday falls on Sunday, and Sunday is a non-workday for you (or, for an employee whose basic workweek includes Sunday, a non-workday designated as the employee’s in-lieu of Sunday non-workday), the next workday will be your designated in-lieu of holiday. (See 5 U.S.C. 6103 and Executive Order 11582, February 11, 1971.)

2. If Inauguration Day falls on a non-workday (this only applies to employees in the Washington, DC area), you may not receive an in-lieu of holiday.

3. The head of the agency may determine a different in-lieu of holiday if necessary to prevent an adverse agency impact. He/she may designate a different in-lieu of holiday for full-time employees under a compressed work schedule (CWS). The authority may be re-delegated to the first Senior Executive Service (SES) member in the employee’s supervisory chain. An adverse agency impact means the following: reduction of productivity of the agency; a diminished level of service furnished to the public by the agency; or an increase in the cost of agency operations. (See 5 U.S.C. 6103[d] and 6131[b])

Continue reading on next page...
Unfortunately, we are not permitted to designate or permit employees to choose a different in-lieu of holiday. To help you navigate “in lieu of holidays,” we’ve shared some FAQs below on the topic. Additional information on this topic is available in the Human Resources Desk Guide, Subchapter 4610, Tours of Duty, Section F, Scheduling Days Off for Federal Holidays.

**Question: How many hours of paid holiday time off can I claim?**

**Response:** The amount of paid holiday time you may claim depends on your work schedule. Employees on:

- Flexible (e.g., maxiflex) and Standard Work Schedules receive 8 hours.
- Compressed Work Schedules receive the number of hours scheduled to work on that day (either 8, 9, or 10 hours).
- First-40 and First-8 Work Schedules receive 8 hours.

**Note:** Intermittent employees cannot be paid when no work is performed on a holiday because they do not have a regularly scheduled administrative workweek.

**Question: I am under maxiflex and I work 10 hours a day. Do I receive 10 hours of paid holiday time off?**

**Response:** No. Maxiflex employees may only receive 8 hours of paid holiday time off. (See 5 U.S.C. 6124)

For example, you are on a maxiflex schedule working 10-hour days as approved by your supervisor on your MRP 346, Designation of Tour of Duty. Monday is normally a 10-hour workday for you, but Monday is a holiday. You can only claim 8 hours of paid holiday time off (TC 66) and will need to make up the other 2 hours throughout the week by working more hours or by taking leave.

**Question: Can I switch my in-lieu of day holiday so I can have a long weekend?**

**Response:** No. You may not choose which day you want to take as your in-lieu of holiday. Holidays and in-lieu of holidays are mandated by statute and Executive Order and it is based on your scheduled tour of duty. However, under maxiflex you may request to switch your day off.
Transit Subsidy Guidance for Transit Participants
Returning to Agency Offices
By Tara Abramowitz (Tara.L.Abramowitz@usda.gov)

As employees begin their return to agency offices and riding mass transit for their home to work commutes, the Human Resources Division’s Policy Staff wants to remind transit participants of their responsibility for the transit benefits they receive.

For all Transit Participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 you were a participant of the Transit Program prior to March 2020, and haven’t withdrawn via the TRANServe Web Based Application System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then:</td>
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<tr>
<td>you are still an active participant and your benefits are still available.</td>
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<td>2 you will be teleworking more or less frequently than you did prior to the agency’s mandatory/maximum telework status</td>
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<tr>
<td>then:</td>
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<tr>
<td>you must log in to the TRANServe Web Based Application System and modify your transit application to accurately reflect your new work schedule, i.e., number of days you are commuting into the office.</td>
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<td>3 you were a participant prior to March 2020 and you are now a remote employee no longer requiring benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>then:</td>
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<tr>
<td>you should now withdraw your participation through the TRANServe Web Based Application System.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 you were a TRANServe credit card holder prior to March 2020 and you don’t have your credit card available to you, or if you haven’t received a card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you will need to call US Bank to request a new card, TRANServe Credit Card Information. You will need specific information prior to calling US Bank. Please reach out to your local Transit Benefit Coordinator (TBC) so he/she can contact the Dept. of Transportation to request the needed info.</td>
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For Headquarters Participants only:

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<tr>
<td>5 you have a SmarTrip card with a serial number that starts with a number other than “0167&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you will need to purchase a replacement card. Register your SmarTrip® card in your WMATA account and submit a SmarTrip card change in the TRANServe Web Based Application System.</td>
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<td>6 you receive smart benefits and have not swiped your card at a Metro turnstile in several months and up to the entirety of the agency’s mandatory/maximum telework status and your benefits will not autoload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you should call WMATA SmarTrip card customer service at (888) 762-7874 to receive a SmarTrip card refresh. This should allow your benefits to load on the next card swipe.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Questions regarding transit applications should be directed to your local Transit Benefits Coordinator or the Headquarters Transit Benefit Coordinator, William Miller at William.Miller3@usda.gov. Transit Subsidy Incentive policy questions should be directed to Tara Abramowitz at Tara.L.Abramowitz@usda.gov.
Q. If I had a home official duty station prior to my position officially being designated as remote (with or without a geographic restriction) do I need to complete a Remote Work Agreement?

A. Yes. By completing and submitting a Remote Work Agreement, HRD will be able to accurately account for the work location of each of its employees. This is especially important when HRD must respond to USDA, OPM, and other requested data calls and reports. [Telework and Remote Work Agreement - MRP Customer Portal](usda.gov)

Q. What if we have submitted our telework or remote work agreement and the supervisor hasn’t approved it yet? Does the system notify the supervisor they have actions to approve?

A. Yes. When the Telework and Remote Work Agreement is submitted, the system sends a notification to the supervisor from aphis@servicenowservices.com with the subject “A Request for Telework and Remote Work Agreement requires your approval.” Check with your supervisor if you have not received a system notification that your agreement has been approved or rejected.

Q. What if my supervisor cannot find the original email notification from the system?

A. HRD recommends resubmitting a new agreement which will prompt a new email notification to the supervisor and override the pending telework or remote work agreement. [Telework and Remote Work Agreement - MRP Customer Portal](usda.gov)

Q. Who should supervisors contact to verify who among the staff members have confirmed and completed agreements?

A. Supervisors may send a request to mrp.telework.remotework.servicenow@usda.gov within HRD’s Policy Staff for confirmation of completed agreements.

Q. Who should employees contact if they have any questions pertaining to the Telework and Remote Work policy or agreement form?

A. Employees may contact the MRP Telework and Remote Work Coordinator, Tara Abramowitz, at Tara.L.Abramowitz@usda.gov or send an email to mrp.telework.remotework.servicenow@usda.gov.
This has started out as quite a year! The pandemic is still circling, some of you may have or are deploying in response to African Swine Fever or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, and others are continuing to ensure success for the daily mission objectives. With all of that swirling, HR wants to encourage you to plan some time off. Please ensure that you schedule time away from work to rest, relax, rejuvenate with your family, and use your use or lose annual leave.

Here are some important points to keep in mind:

- The 2022 leave year ends on December 31, 2022 (pay period 26).
- Employees who in 2020 received a Mission Essential Occupation (MCO) memo for COVID-19 annual leave restoration will not have 2020 lost annual leave restored until the COVID-19 emergency is deemed ended. These employees continue to be prohibited/restricted on leave usage due to their MCO designation.
- Use or lose annual leave must be scheduled by November 19, 2022, the end of pay period 23, 2022. Leave must either be scheduled electronically or in writing (e.g., email or WebTA.) If the leave is not properly scheduled and is lost at the end of the leave year, it cannot be considered for restoration because it did not meet the scheduling requirement.
- Follow the recommended leave usage order. Choosing to do otherwise means lost leave will not be restored.
- While the leave must be scheduled by the end of pay period 23, you have until the end of pay period 26 to use it.
- Lost leave may not be considered for restoration until pay period 1, 2023.

Remember that the National Finance Center (NFC) maintains your official leave balances. Routinely review your leave balances on your NFC Statement of Earnings and Leave against WebTA. If you find that there are discrepancies, address them with your timekeeper. Pay particular attention to your leave balances and work closely with your supervisor to schedule and use any use/lose annual leave.

If you have any questions, contact your servicing Leave and Compensation Team Specialist or me.
The MRP Directive and Human Resources Desk Guide Subchapter 4630, Absence and Leave, Section B – Annual Leave, has guidance on the order of leave usage. For 2022, employees need to use leave in the following order:

1. Use or lose annual leave,
2. Restored leave, if any
3. Compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay,
4. Compensatory time off for travel,
5. Time-off award, and
6. Any other accrued time, e.g., credit hours, annual leave.

Always use sick leave as appropriate. Using use or lose annual leave first prevents leave loss at the end of the leave year. If you began the 2022 leave year with a 240-hour balance, then that means you are already in a use/lose situation. Please use your leave in the order shown above. If you choose to use earned time off in a different order and annual leave is lost at the end of the 2022 leave year, then leave restoration will not be an option and the leave will be permanently lost.

Your RMS/AO staffs have been advised of the policy and are available to answer questions as well as HRO, Minneapolis. As you are planning your summer vacation, please remember the leave usage order policy.
While I hope no one ever needs to request paid bereavement leave (PBL), it is a new leave benefit for MRP employees. Upon the death of a child, PBL provides eligible employees a one-time entitlement to 2 workweeks (up to 80 hours) of PBL that must be used within 12 months of the child’s death. Use of PBL does not impact the earning of paid leave nor prevent an employee from using earned time off.

To be eligible to use this leave, the child must be under the age of 18, or 18 and older and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability, and meet the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) definition of child.

An employee is eligible for this leave, if at the time of the child’s death, the employee is:

- In a leave earning position;
- Serving under a permanent or term appointment (i.e., employees serving under a temporary appointment of 1 year or less are not eligible);
- Have an established part-time or full-time work schedule (i.e., intermittent employees are not eligible), and;
- Have completed at least 12 months of service as an employee (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2105).

Supervisors may require a written self-certification or death certificate to verify that the requested PBL is being used for bereavement purposes. In any case where the need for leave is foreseeable (e.g., if taking the leave intermittently), employees must provide advance notice, as practicable.

PBL may be used retroactively by submitting corrected time sheets in connection with the death of an eligible child on or after December 27, 2021. The National Finance Center (NFC) is currently developing a new transaction code for PBL and it is expected to be available for employee use by December 2022. Employees will code WebTA as TC 66-Admin/Excused Absence until NFC has the new PBL coding available for employee use.

The HRD Policy Branch is in the process of updating the Human Resources Desk Guide Subchapter 4630, Absence and Leave, to include guidance on PBL. Please refer questions to your servicing Leave and Compensation Specialist, HR Operations.
The National Finance Center (NFC) has been distributing corrected W-2s for 2020 for the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) repayments. Human Resources has received some reports from employees stating that the corrected W-2s (sometimes referred to as a W-2c) were being mailed to an old mailing address.

The NFC recently shared some information about this issue. Unfortunately, the 2020 W-2cs were sent to the same addresses that were on the original 2020 W-2s.

If an employee moved since receiving the original 2020 W-2, it is likely the corrected W-2 for 2020 will be sent to the old mailing address. If the employee no longer has access to the mail at the old address, there are two options.

1. Employees have the ability to access the corrected W-2 through the Employee Personal Page (MyEPP).
   a. After logging into EPP, please click on the original W-2 for 2020.
   b. The corrected information should begin with page 3 or 4 of the document.
   c. There will not be a separate document for the corrected portion.

2. If you don’t have access to MyEPP, please contact your servicing Leave and Compensation service provider for assistance.

Employees should remember that if the debt was not paid in full by December 31, 2021, a 2020 W-2c will be issued showing the amount paid up to that point. Repayments for the debt after December 31, 2021, should be reflected on the current tax year’s W-2 (e.g., 2022 when it becomes available.)

Questions regarding the corrected W-2? Please refer to the Employee FAQ document created and distributed in May of 2021. Below is one question from that document.

**Q: Will I be required to file a 2020 amended tax return after receiving the Form W-2c?**
Per IRS guidance, if you had only one employer during 2020 and your Form W-2c for 2020 only shows a correction to box 4 to account for employee Social Security tax that was deferred in 2020 and withheld in 2021 pursuant to IRS Notice 2020-65, no further steps are required.

If you are an employee who had more than one employer during 2020, you may want to consult with a tax professional regarding what steps to take.

Any questions, please contact your servicing Leave and Compensation service provider: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/business-services/HRD/Contact_Us
Back in October, the APHIS Benefits Team announced a new tool - the Retirement Calculator - that is now available to assist you with your retirement planning and has a wealth of knowledge to help answer your benefits-related questions.

Similar to the annual Personal Benefits Statement posted on your Employee Personal Page, the Retirement Calculator can give you a general idea of what you can expect to receive from your FERS or CSRS annuity. However, rather than a static report, the Retirement Calculator is an interactive tool that will let you plug in different retirement dates that you may be considering. It also allows you to make different assumptions, such as what survivor benefit you want to leave your spouse or what level of life insurance you want to continue into retirement, so you can run different scenarios.

There are limitations to this tool since its projections are based on limited data drawn from our personnel and payroll database, but you may find it helpful as you plan for retirement. Here are some links to get you started:

- **How to access the Retirement Calculator** – a step-by-step guide to get you to the tool.
- **How to run a retirement estimate** – a step-by-step guide for using the tool.
- **How to interpret the retirement estimate report** – a detailed explanation of the report.
- **FAQs** – your first stop in getting immediate answers to common questions.

All of these resources are posted on our [Benefits - Retirement web page](#) so you can access them at any time.

The Retirement Calculator is located on a landing page that also offers general information about Federal benefits such as information on health insurance, TSP, life insurance, etc. You can also view what your current elections are and review a wide variety of handouts and recorded webinars. We highly encourage employees to review these resources if you have any benefits questions.

If you have any questions about the Retirement Calculator, please feel free to contact the APHIS Benefits Team by emailing us at [APHIS.Retirement.Calculator.helpbox@usda.gov](mailto:APHIS.Retirement.Calculator.helpbox@usda.gov).
As part of the transition to a new Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) service provider, TSP is introducing exciting new features to make the TSP experience even better for participants and beneficiaries. These changes include more flexibility in how participants access My Account, more options to contact TSP representatives for help, and even more transactions that can be completed smoothly and securely online.

**What’s Changing?**

- A mobile app that puts account management at your fingertips.
  - Access to your account from anywhere at anytime.
  - Year-to-date fund performance, balance history, and current investment mix.
  - Online transactions to move money between funds, and more.
- More investment options through the TSP mutual fund window, personalized support for rollovers to your TSP account, and a new way to move money within your TSP account.
- Additional layers of security to enhance account protections.
- A new My Account interface designed with you in mind.
- Secure logins with the option to use device biometrics, such as fingerprint or facial recognition when using the mobile app.
- Expanded support options including an online chat function to connect with a ThriftLine Representative, a 24/7 virtual assistant on our website, and phone access to speak with a ThriftLine Representative.
- Electronic signatures and online payment options that reduce paperwork and save time.

**What’s Staying the Same?**

- Investment elections will remain the same for both future contributions and current allocations unless you make a change. TSP funds are also staying the same.
- The way employees establish or change their contributions will remain the same. Establishing or changing contributions will still be made via the Employee Personal Page (EPP) your agency/service online payroll system, and/or by completing the TSP-1 or TSP-U-1 forms and returning them to your agency’s/service’s HR department.

More information about these and other features can be found at [www.tsp.gov/new-tsp-features](http://www.tsp.gov/new-tsp-features).
Throughout the pandemic, courses on time management continue to be among the most frequently requested. There’s a scientific reason for it. Under stress, our brains function differently. Our ‘fight or flight’ response is activated, and that can impact our ability to think, innovate, and focus. The bottom line is -- stress is unavoidable, and it can make it harder to get things done.

One way to gain awareness around your own stress response is to work with a coach. A coach can provide you with tools and strategies to help you notice your stress levels and train your mind to shift more quickly to a neutral response. This enables greater focus, productivity, and well-being.

APHIS Internal Coaches are available to support you with time management and other challenges that are getting in the way. To learn more about the APHIS Coaching Program and how to request a coach, visit our webpage MRPBS-APHIS Center for Training & Organization Development - APHIS Coaching Program (sharepoint.com).

Not quite sure how working with a coach can help you? Join an upcoming Question and Answer session for additional information. Call details will be announced via APHIS-Broadcast Messaging email in the coming weeks.