

Appendix 2

USDA **NIFA**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

APPENDIX 2

- NIFA EEO Policy Statement

- NIFA Anti-Harassment Statement

- Reasonable Accommodation Procedures

- NIFA Organizational Chart

- NIFA Strategic Plan



United States
Department
of Agriculture

Research,
Education, and
Economics

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

SEP 22 2017

TO: All NIFA Employees

SUBJECT: NIFA's Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

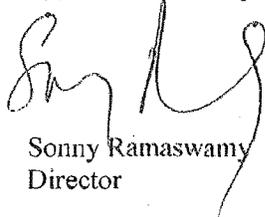
I fully support the position of the Secretary of Agriculture that equal opportunity and civil rights are of great importance and must clearly exist in USDA personnel policies and employment practices. It is of utmost importance that we renew and strengthen our efforts to ensure equal access and opportunity in all aspects of NIFA's programs and employment practices without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or sexual orientation to the full extent of nondiscrimination laws.

As employees of this Agency, we are charged by Equal Employment Opportunity laws and regulations to conduct our business in such a manner that NIFA does not directly or by implication condone the practice of discrimination. We must correct any program or employment practice that is not achieving the objectives of inclusion and anti-discrimination. I expect senior executives, managers, and supervisors authorized to make employment decisions to play a very important role in maintaining a positive equal opportunity environment, that ensures personnel practices are operating on a merit basis, and that employment decisions are not based on improper reasons - - such as race, age, sex, color, or national origin.

I support the Secretary's commitment to an emphasis on diversity in our programs and employment practices. I believe that learning to address the many dimensions of diversity surpasses ethnicity, gender, and culture, but also embraces a diversity of norms, values, and standards to which people act. We must strive to maintain an employment program that allows us to have differences of opinions in a climate of openness, mutual respect, and trust. I expect managers, supervisors, and employees to operate on the premise that we cannot be effective without being fair and responsive.

Let me reinforce, and direct all managers, supervisors, and employees to underscore that there is no conflict between a true merit selection system and equal employment opportunity laws - - because each requires non-discrimination in selection, hiring, promotion, and transfers and each requires that such decisions be based upon the person's ability and merit. I expect all managers and supervisors to promote best practices in providing equal access and opportunities in NIFA's programs and employment practices, and to provide a greater equity in the distribution of recognition for employees. I am holding senior managers responsible for achieving NIFA's affirmative employment program.

NIFA has a zero-tolerance policy regarding discrimination, and I will not tolerate discrimination in any form, and I expect each of you to assume personal responsibility in making every effort to ensure that our commitment to equitable treatment is thoroughly understood, aggressively followed, and recognized as an integral part of every educational program we deliver, every research project we undertake, and in every opportunity for employment.



Sonny Ramaswamy
Director



United States
Department
of Agriculture

Research,
Education, and
Economics

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Agriculture

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

SEP 22 2017

TO: All NIFA Employees

SUBJECT: NIFA's Anti-Harassment Policy Statement

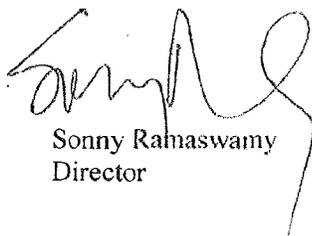
The Secretary of Agriculture is strongly committed to a workplace that is free of harassment, hostile environment, and discrimination. As Director of NIFA, I fully support the Secretary's position on harassment; I take responsibility for leading the way to see to it that harassment of employees occurring in the workplace or other settings connected with work activities are not tolerated in NIFA. Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, inappropriate or offensive actions whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status, such as sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected status.

Consider this policy a "Zero-Tolerance policy" on harassment. NIFA will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Harassment is a form of discrimination and is expressly rejected by this Agency. I expect our senior executives, managers, and supervisors to promptly stop inappropriate behavior in our workplace, to model appropriate behavior themselves, and to take every issue seriously from the moment it is raised. When incidents are severe enough or pervasive enough, they are considered harassment and is not tolerated. I expect all of our employees to do their part in ensuring that harassing behavior stay out of their workplace.

If you experience or witness any conduct that you feel may be unlawful harassment, I encourage and expect you to immediately notify your supervisor, and/or this office, or our Civil Rights Director, or the Agency human resources representative, or an EEO counselor. NIFA managers and supervisors will be held responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from harassment, and that appropriate action is taken when allegations or evidence of harassment is brought to their attention. Any NIFA employee found to have engaged in harassment in violation of civil rights laws and regulations may be subject to disciplinary action.

I am committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of unlawful discrimination or prohibited personnel practices. I will not tolerate discrimination in any form, and I expect all employees to make non-discrimination an integral part of decisions and processes affecting your workplace.

As an Agency, we must treat people as our most important asset. We must work together to develop a common set of workforce values based on mutual professional respect, and cultivate an inclusive workplace environment where cultural differences and individual differences in our workforce is appreciated and valued.



Sonny Ramaswamy
Director

United States Department of Agriculture
Research, Education, and Economics

ARS **ERS** **NASS** **NIFA**

Policies and Procedures

Title: Reasonable Accommodation Procedures
(including Personal Assistance Services)

Number: 122.2v3

Date: January 10, 2018

Originating Office: Office of Outreach, Diversity & Equal Opportunity

This Replaces: This replaces 122.2 v 2 dated October 28, 2011

Distribution: All REE Agencies

In accordance with updated regulations found in Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, this P&P outlines the procedures for providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities & the new requirement to provide personal assistance services to individuals with “targeted” disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

The Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Agencies are fully committed to a simple and streamlined process for providing effective reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities. As a model Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Employer and pursuant to Departmental Regulation, 4300-8, Reasonable Accommodation Procedures, REE managers are encouraged to be empathetic, creative, flexible and innovative when making reasonable accommodation decisions for their subordinates with disabilities. Furthermore, these reasonable accommodation procedures demonstrate REE's support of persons with disabilities and will continue to help make REE and USDA as a whole, an EEO "Employer of Choice."

This document sets forth the policies and procedures to be used for requesting reasonable accommodations and for making reasonable accommodation decisions by agency managers and supervisors. It also provides the procedures for requesting medical documentation to support an employee's claim for needing an accommodation. This is particularly important for cases when the disability and/or the need for an accommodation is not obvious; when the workplace limitations or restrictions are unknown; and to meet both efficient recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

Each reasonable accommodation request must be considered on a case-by-case basis. There is no "one-size fits all" accommodation for every disability. In most cases, requests may be resolved between the employee and the immediate supervisor, particularly when a medical condition is transitory in nature and does not rise to the level of a disability. This is referred to as an "informal" reasonable accommodation. On the other hand, medical conditions that are not transitory in nature will require a disability determination to be made by the REE Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager through the "formal" reasonable accommodation process. In either case, the immediate supervisor is generally the deciding official. For this reason, it is imperative that employees be actively engaged with their supervisors regarding their specific accommodation needs by having ongoing dialogue and communications throughout the entire process. This is often referred to as the "interactive process."

As a final note, the vast majority of reasonable accommodation requests require very little to no funding. Agencies have been directed to use discretionary funds for those accommodations that have costs associated with providing them. This includes, but is not limited to, equipment, supplies, hardware and/or software to those persons with disabilities who may need them as a reasonable accommodation. Considering most costs are nominal, management is strongly discouraged from using a lack of funding as a basis for undue hardship claims. Such claims are not easily defensible and are frowned upon by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

1. PURPOSE

This document establishes written procedures to use to implement reasonable accommodations for employees and applicants with disabilities.

2. BACKGROUND

Executive Order 13164 requires all Federal Agencies to establish procedures for handling requests for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. REE's policies and procedures fully comply with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under the law, Agencies must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals or applicants with disabilities, unless to do so would cause undue hardship. REE is fully committed to providing reasonable accommodations to its employees and applicants for employment to ensure that individuals with disabilities enjoy equal employment benefits and access to all employment opportunities as those without a disability.

3. POLICY

REE recognizes that each of its employees and applicants need the tools necessary to be productive. This includes providing effective reasonable accommodations to qualifying employees with disabilities to assist them in carrying out their job duties which ultimately help the agency accomplish its mission. An employee with a disability need only express their need for a reasonable accommodation to their immediate supervisor who, in most instances, is the deciding official for the request. In the majority of situations, providing a reasonable accommodation is simple, quick and inexpensive.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Employee

An employee with a disability who wishes to be considered for a reasonable accommodation should express their accommodation need(s) to their immediate supervisor or other deciding official within their leadership chain and/or the REE Reasonable Accommodation (RA) Program Manager. The request may be verbal and/or in writing. A request for a reasonable accommodation may also be made to the immediate supervisor or deciding official even if they have proposed to take a performance- or conduct-based action. Other basic employee responsibilities include:

- Seeking guidance from the REE RA Program Manager.
- Providing medical documentation, when necessary.
- Suggesting effective accommodations that enable the essential job functions to be performed.
- Documenting the accommodation request on Form REE-172, Request for Reasonable Accommodation (*see Exhibit 1*) and submitting to the immediate supervisor or deciding official for consideration.
- Communicating effectively to fully engage in the interactive process.
- Seeking to fully understand the reasonable accommodation laws and its requirements.
- Ensuring safe recordkeeping and/or the proper disposition of their own medical documentation.

4.2 Immediate Supervisor or Deciding Official

Generally, the immediate supervisor is the deciding official responsible for making decisions regarding a reasonable accommodation request. Some offices may choose to delegate this authority to another leadership official within the requestor's supervisory chain. For a job applicant with a disability who needs an accommodation to fully participate in the interview process, the deciding official is generally the hiring manager, although it may be the panel chair if the hiring manager has delegated a panel to oversee the interview process. In either scenario, the basic responsibilities of the deciding official include:

- Seeking guidance from the REE RA Program Manager.
- Requesting medical documentation, when necessary.
- Communicating effectively to fully engage in the interactive process.
- Collaborating with the employee to implement an effective accommodation that will enable the essential job functions to continue.
- Adhering to the established timeframes to review the request and make a decision.
- Reviewing and signing Form REE-172, Request for Reasonable Accommodation.
- Reviewing and signing Form REE-173, Denial of Reasonable Accommodation, if applicable. (*see Exhibit 2*)
- Providing both the employee and the REE RA Program Manager with copies of Forms REE-172 and/or REE-173 once a final decision is made.
- Seeking to fully understand the reasonable accommodation laws and requirements.
- Ensuring safe recordkeeping and/or the proper disposition of an employee's medical documentation.
- Consulting with the Human Resources (HR) Division, Personnel and Labor Solutions Branch when a reasonable accommodation is requested in conjunction with an anticipated or impending performance- or conduct-based action.

In the event the deciding official is unable to fulfill their responsibilities, the request shall be elevated to the next level of the requestor's leadership.

4.3 REE Reasonable Accommodation (RA) Program Manager

The REE RA Program Manager is responsible for program management and oversight. Primary responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Serves as the agency's liaison on all reasonable accommodation matters.
- Updates and maintains the contents of this P&P and reasonable accommodation forms. (i.e. REE-172, Reasonable Accommodation Request & REE-173, Denial of Reasonable Accommodation Request)
- Provides guidance, policies and procedures to employees needing a reasonable accommodation and to their immediate supervisor and/or deciding official.
- Facilitates reasonable accommodation requests and offers suggestions and resources to bring resolution.
- Reviews medical documentation to make disability determinations.
- Keeps record of medical documentation and associated documents for "formal" reasonable accommodation requests.
- Develops and provides reasonable accommodation training for the REE workforce.
- Attends trainings, workshops, seminars, and/or conferences to stay current on ADA laws and/or Rehabilitation Act updates and developments.

- Collaborates with HR professionals when reasonable accommodation policies overlap with other HR programs. (*i.e. Schedule A Hiring; telework as an accommodation; performance- & conduct-based actions; disability retirement; and/or FMLA*)
- Certifies to OPM the agency's reasonable accommodation efforts for all REE disability retirement applicants.
- Serves as REE's Handicapped Parking Coordinator for employees in the Washington Metropolitan Area who have short- and long-term disabilities and need access to permanent or temporary handicapped parking.
- Serves as the liaison to REE employees in Washington Metropolitan Area who need American Sign Language interpreters. This includes informing employees of their agency's internal process to secure an interpreter.

4.4 Departmental Reasonable Accommodation (RA) Program Manager

USDA's Departmental RA Program Manager has overall responsibility to ensure mission area compliance with obligations to provide effective reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability. In extenuating circumstances, the mission area has also designated the Departmental RA Program Manager to make reasonable accommodation determinations for employees with a disability, however Departmental level determinations are extremely rare. These high-level determinations may be necessary for extremely difficult and complex matters when/if determinations within the mission area are not possible. The Departmental RA Program Manager shall maintain, review, and interpret all documentation--medical and non-medical--to make this determination and report decisions to the appropriate officials.

5. AUTHORITIES

- Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Americans with Disabilities Amendments (ADA) Act, September 2008
- Departmental Regulation, 4300-008, Reasonable Accommodations for Employees and Applicants with Disabilities, March 2000
- Executive Order, 13164, Establishing Procedures to Facilitate the Provision of Reasonable Accommodation, October 2000
- Departmental Regulation, 4300-2, Reasonable Accommodation Procedures, July 2002

6. DEFINITIONS

Disability – As defined by the ADA, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a “record of” such an impairment, or an individual who is “regarded as” having such an impairment.

Essential Functions – the fundamental duties of a position. This includes, but is not limited to the reason this position exists; performance of a particular function; the limited number of other employees who could perform that function; and/or a function that is highly specialized and the incumbent was hired for his/her expertise of that function.

Formal Reasonable Accommodation - an accommodation that is provided by the immediate supervisor or deciding official before or after a disability determination has been made by the REE RA Program Manager. Individuals with a disability *must be accommodated* unless doing so creates an undue hardship for the agency.

Informal Reasonable Accommodation – an accommodation that is provided by the immediate supervisor or deciding official without a disability determination by the REE RA Program Manager. This *may or may not* include conditions that rise to the level of a disability. For example, a medical condition that is transitory in nature such as the flu, minor surgery, or a broken limb is not defined as a disability, however a reasonable accommodation should still be considered, unless doing so creates an undue hardship for the agency.

Interactive Process – the act of all parties communicating and fully engaging in the process of implementing an effective reasonable accommodation. This interaction may be verbal, written or both. Generally, this involves an ongoing dialogue between the employee and their immediate supervisor or deciding official to include, but is not limited to, the request of and the submission of medical documentation. Others involved in the interactive process include the REE RA Program Manager and/or other agency officials where there is a business necessity to be involved.

Medical Care Professional – an individual accredited by a professional body upon completing a course of study, and usually licensed by a government agency, to practice a health related profession such as dentistry, medicine, nursing, occupational health, physical therapy.

Mental Health Care Professional - a health care practitioner or community services provider who offers services for the purpose of improving an individual's mental health or to treat mental disorders.

Major Life Activities – functions that an individual performs on a daily basis. This includes, but is not limited to, caring for oneself, walking, running, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, thinking, sitting, standing, reaching, interacting with others, concentrating, lifting and sleeping.

Mental Impairment - any psychological or mental disorder to include, but is not limited to, mental retardation, emotional or mental illness, or a learning disability.

Physical Impairment - any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems. This includes neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, or endocrine.

Qualified Individual with a Disability - an individual with a disability who satisfies the requisite skills, experiences, education, and other job-related requirements of the position and can perform the essential functions of the position, *with or without a reasonable accommodation*.

Reasonable Accommodation - a change in the work environment or the application process that would enable a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment benefits as those individuals without a disability.

Record of an Impairment - an individual having a history of or a prior record of having a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities.

Regarded as – an individual perceived as or having an impairment which has not substantially limited a major life activity but is being treated as having such a limitation. This includes the attitudes and perceptions of others towards the impairment or having none of the impairments described, but still being treated as having one.

Substantially Limits - unable to perform a major life activity that the average person in the general population can perform or significantly restricted as to the condition, manner, or duration under which the average person in the general population could perform that same activity.

Targeted Disability – a severe disability as listed on the Office of Personnel Management Standard Form 256. It includes deafness; blindness; missing extremities; partial paralysis; complete paralysis; convulsive disorders; mental retardation; mental illness; and distortion of limb and/or spine.

Undue Hardship - an accommodation requiring significant difficulty or expense. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis and considers the nature of the accommodation, the cost of it considering the financial resources of USDA as a whole and/or the impact of the accommodation on the operations or the specific duties of the position for a particular office or facility involved.

7. REQUESTING AN ACCOMMODATION

7.1 Employees

Employees should express their need for an accommodation to their immediate supervisor or deciding official, the REE RA Program Manager and/or any other official in their leadership chain. The request may be made verbally and/or in writing. (*i.e. by email, by memorandum, and/or by using Form REE-172, Request for Reasonable Accommodation.*) The request should include the type of accommodation needed. For situations when the employee is unsure what to request, the employee's physician may make recommendations and/or the REE RA Program Manager is available to provide guidance and other resources. Employees may also request a reasonable accommodation to the deciding official proposing to take a performance- or conduct-based action.

All individuals seeking a reasonable accommodation through the formal process will be asked to complete Form REE-172 to finalize the process. This ensures proper documentation and compliance with recordkeeping requirements.

Note: Medical documentation may be required before a final reasonable accommodation determination can be made by the deciding official.

7.2 Applicants for Employment

Applicants for employment may express their need for an accommodation either verbally and/or in writing to the designee listed on the vacancy announcement and/or to the REE RA Program Manager. The request should identify the accommodation needed. Although an applicant with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation at any time during the application process, the applicant should make their request known as soon as they become aware of a barrier that hinders their full participation in the process.

Applicants contacted for an interview may be asked if an accommodation is needed for the interview. If the answer is yes, they may then be asked what type of accommodation is needed.

Note: Providing a reasonable accommodation to a job applicant with a disability during the interview process is generally the responsibility of the hiring manager, although it may be the panel chair if the hiring manager has delegated a panel to oversee the interview process.

7.3 Other Representative

The Reasonable Accommodation Program is completely voluntary to the employee, however there may be situations where a representative may request, verbally and/or in writing, an accommodation on the employee's behalf or that of a job applicant who has a disability. The representative may be a family member, a health care professional, the immediate supervisor or other representative. The request would be submitted and decided upon by the same individual to whom the employee or the job applicant would have made their request to on their own. The deciding official should always confirm with the individual with the disability that he/she actually wants to be accommodated. They must not be coerced or forced to participate in the process.

8. RECORDKEEPING OF "FORMAL" REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

In order to keep accurate records regarding the reasonable accommodation process, employees must follow-up on a verbal request by completing and signing Form REE-172, Request for Reasonable Accommodation. The immediate supervisor or deciding official is then responsible for completing and signing the supervisor's section. Copies of Form REE-172 should be distributed as follows--immediate supervisor or deciding official should maintain a copy for his/her files; the original to the employee; and a copy to the REE RA Program Manager which will be maintained for at least 5 years or when the employee separates from the agency—whichever is later. *Electronic signatures and electronic copies of the form are also acceptable.*

Although Form REE-172 is required for recordkeeping purposes for all "formal" reasonable accommodations, the written document is not necessarily required by the immediate supervisor or designated deciding official to begin the process and discussion of implementing a reasonable accommodation. The request, if made verbally, should still be considered and processed in accordance with the timelines outlined in these procedures.

Regular and reoccurring accommodations such as the need for a sign language interpreter would not require Form REE-172. Employees should contact the REE RA Program Manager (*see Section 21, Resources*) regarding the internal procedures for their respective REE agency.

In rare situations when a reasonable accommodation request is denied, Form REE-173, Denial of Reasonable Accommodation must also be completed. The immediate supervisor or deciding official should maintain a copy for his/her files; the original is provided to the employee which details his/her appeal rights; and a copy to the REE RA Program Manager which will be maintained for at least 5 years or when the employee separates from the agency—whichever is later. *Electronic signatures and electronic copies of the form are also acceptable.*

9. INTERACTIVE PROCESS

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission strongly recommends that employers fully engage in what is described as the interactive process--the act of all applicable parties fully engaging in the process towards implementing an effective reasonable accommodation. *This is an essential part of the process.*

Most reasonable accommodations can be resolved between the individual with the disability and the immediate supervisor or deciding official. In most cases, the individual with the disability will be able to provide information regarding the exact type of accommodation that is needed. However, either or both parties are permitted to include others in the interactive process if a specific limitation, restriction, or barrier is not clear; when the type of accommodation is not apparent; and/or where the parties are choosing between different reasonable accommodations that are all equally effective. Below are a few examples of individuals or entities that may need to be a part of the process. Regardless of who is involved, communication is key to success!

- A Family Member of the Individual with a Disability
- Rehabilitation Counselor
- Medical Care/Mental Health Care Professional of the Individual with a Disability
- USDA's TARGET Center
- Departmental Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager
- Departmental Disability Employment Program Manager
- REE Reasonable Accommodation Program Manager
- REE Disability Employment Program Manager
- REE HR Division, Personnel & Labor Solutions Branch
- Department of Labor's Job Accommodation Network
- Union Representative of the Individual with a Disability



INVESTING IN SCIENCE | SECURING OUR FUTURE



NIFA

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN | FY2014 - FY2018

INTEGRITY
TRANSFORMATION
ENGAGEMENT
IMPACT

**NIFA INVESTS IN AND ADVANCES AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, EDUCATION,
AND EXTENSION TO SOLVE SOCIETAL CHALLENGES.**

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture is pleased to publish our Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2018. Our plan will serve as our "roadmap" for the next five years, setting forth specific and measurable goals and strategies. This plan will enable NIFA to lead and invest in agricultural research, education and extension to solve significant societal challenges.

Our Strategic Plan will shape our decision-making and position NIFA to more effectively and efficiently accomplish our critical priorities over the next five years. Furthermore, this Strategic Plan will form the overarching framework for our financial and employee performance plans.

In developing this Strategic Plan, we heard from a wide range of stakeholders, Land Grant institutions, other partners, and our dedicated employees through listening sessions, focus groups and surveys. This plan reflects the tremendous sharing of information, ideas, and thoughts. We appreciate the input and look forward to continued dialogue to further strengthen research, education, and extension related to agriculture, communities, and society.

This plan focuses on four major goals that are in strict alignment with the 2014 Farm Bill; the USDA Strategic Plan (FY2014-2018); and the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Action Plan. These goals are:

SCIENCE

CATALYZE EXEMPLARY AND RELEVANT RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND EXTENSION PROGRAMS.

PEOPLE

TRANSFORM NIFA INTO A MODEL AGENCY WITH A HIGHLY MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

PROCESS

INSTITUTIONALIZE STREAMLINED AND EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGIES, POLICIES, AND PROCESSES.

COMMUNICATION

ADVANCE AMERICA'S GLOBAL PREEMINENCE IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES.

Each goal consists of desired results, sub-goals, and key deliverables and sound performance measures.

Since our establishment in the 2008 Farm Bill, NIFA has made important progress to enhance the stature and impact of food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences and grow support for agricultural research, education, and extension. We, however, cannot rest on our past successes. Moving forward, our sights must remain laser-focused on reaching our vision to: **"CATALYZE TRANSFORMATIVE DISCOVERIES, EDUCATION, AND ENGAGEMENT TO ADDRESS AGRICULTURAL CHALLENGES."**

With this Plan, we will continue to be committed to identifying and meeting research, education, and extension priorities and six national challenge areas:

- **FOOD SECURITY**
- **CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND CHANGE**
- **WATER**
- **SUSTAINABLE BIOENERGY**
- **CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION**
- **FOOD SAFETY**

Finally, this plan is a living, flexible document. We will regularly revisit and update the plan based on progress and as needed through an active process to meet evolving demands and new and important challenges.



SONNY RAMASWAMY
DIRECTOR

MISSION

Invest in and advance agricultural research, education, and extension¹ to solve societal challenges.

VISION

Catalyze transformative discoveries, education, and engagement to address agricultural challenges.

CORE VALUES

INTEGRITY

We value individual and organizational diversity and transparency; we honor our promises and follow through on our commitments; and we promote ethical, inclusive, and unbiased behavior internally and with partners.

TRANSFORMATION

We are forward-looking, creative visionaries and problem-solvers; we encourage risk-taking that leads to new ideas and innovative solutions; and we are committed to the next generation and dissemination of new knowledge.

ENGAGEMENT

We work with partners and other stakeholders to identify and address programmatic needs, and we work with partners to implement and improve programs.

IMPACT

We are passionate about promoting relevant, value-added programs and services; we are action-oriented and accountable for exemplary performance in all we do; and we are committed to driving outcomes that matter to the American people and to the world through service.

1. The Cooperative Extension System is a nationwide, non-credit educational network. Each U.S. state and territory has a state office at its land-grant university and a network of local or regional offices. NIFA is the federal partner in the Cooperative Extension System. It provides federal funding to the system and, through program leadership, helps the system identify and address current issues and problems.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

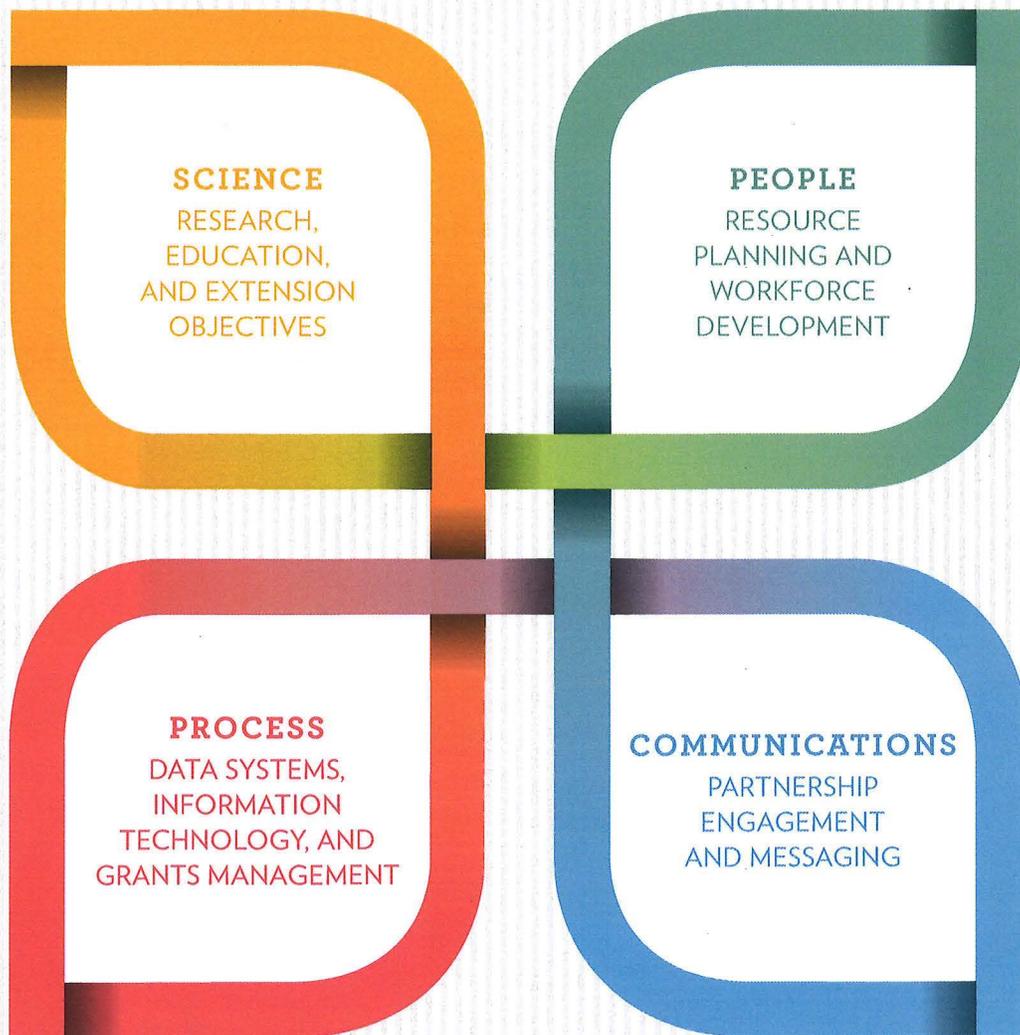
NIFA took a team approach to identify desired outcomes, goals, and performance measures to track progress over time. This plan takes a holistic approach to strategic planning. While we are a science agency, we recognize that there are several interrelated internal activities that must be included in the planning process in order to support our desired scientific outcomes. The planning group crafted four major goal areas (see diagram below).

Internal data-gathering within NIFA included listening sessions with all employees and voluntary questionnaires to solicit input on NIFA's core values, mission, vision, and strategic goals. Additionally, the strategic planning team gathered feedback from land-grant partners on the four goal areas and organizational identity.

In collaboration with the Land-Grant Universities and other partners, NIFA supports the future of agriculture and the nation's well-being through its forward-thinking investments in critical science, education, and engagement efforts.

This plan also highlights the importance of internal task forces and work groups to execute the strategic goals and management initiatives. Our plan is outcomes-based, inclusive of every unit that makes the agency operational, and has high employee engagement.

The pages that follow highlight the strategic direction for NIFA. Each activity in this strategic plan has explicit linkages with, and support for, the 2014 Farm Bill, the USDA Strategic Plan for FY 2014–2018, and the REE Action Plan.



NIFA STRATEGIC GOALS

USDA GOAL

REE GOAL

GOAL 1: SCIENCE Catalyze exemplary and relevant research, education and extension programs	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
SUB-GOAL 1.1: Advance our Nation's ability to achieve global food security and fight hunger.	1, 3	1A, 1B, 1C
SUB-GOAL 1.2: Advance the development and delivery of science for agricultural, forest, and range systems adapted to climate variability and to mitigate climate impacts.	1, 2	2A
SUB-GOAL 1.3: Optimize the production of goods and services from working lands while protecting the Nation's natural resource base and environment.	1, 2, 3	2A, 3A, 3B
SUB-GOAL 1.4: Contribute to U.S. energy independence and enhance other agricultural systems through the development of regional systems for the sustainable production of optimal biomass (forests and crops) for the production of bioenergy and value-added bio-based industrial products.	1	2B
SUB-GOAL 1.5: Combat childhood obesity by ensuring the availability of affordable, nutritious food and providing individuals and families science-based nutritional guidance.	4	4, 6
SUB-GOAL 1.6: Reduce the incidence of food-borne illness and provide a safer food supply.	3, 4	5
SUB-GOAL 1.7: Ensure the development of human capital, communities, and a diverse workforce through research, education, extension and engagement programs in food and agricultural sciences to support a sustainable agriculture system.	5	6, 7
GOAL 2: PEOPLE Transform NIFA into a model agency with a highly motivated workforce	USDA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE	—
SUB-GOAL 2.1: Enhance accountability by providing the infrastructure and oversight necessary to achieve high-performance human capital management and extend human capital responsibility and accountability to all levels of the NIFA organization.	IV	
SUB-GOAL 2.2: Establish a world class workforce through innovative talent management, targeted at attracting, selecting, engaging, developing and retaining talented individuals with the right technical and professional skills needed to meet our mission.	I, VIII	
SUB-GOAL 2.3: Build a high-performing, results-oriented performance culture.	IV	
SUB-GOAL 2.4: Cultivate effective leadership practices that permeate the organization, promote continuous learning and innovation, and develop the next generation of food and agricultural scientists.	I, IV	
GOAL 3: PROCESS Institutionalize streamlined, effective technologies, policies, and processes	5	—
GOAL 4: COMMUNICATIONS Advance America's global preeminence in food and agricultural sciences	5	7

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: SCIENCE

Catalyze exemplary and relevant research, education, and extension programs.

DESIRED RESULTS

- Meet program goals and targets outlined in NIFA portfolio plans
- Everyone, including limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and community- and faith-based organizations, has fair and equitable access to NIFA programs
- Measurable evidence showing that NIFA promotes science with a purpose—producing tangible outcomes from NIFA investments
- Research, education, and extension are viewed as three equal and essential parts of the value proposition transforming agriculture
- Integrate food and agricultural sciences with human sciences (e.g., economics, sociology and psychology)
- Strengthened relationships with our land-grant partners and stakeholders in setting our research, education, and extension program agenda
- Build upon outcomes and accomplishments of our land-grant partners and other grantees to expand knowledge and to inspire a new generation of scientists and educators

STRATEGIES AND MEANS

Our general strategies for the administration and management of science objectives include the following:

- Working closely with our partners and stakeholders to identify priorities;
- Creating a NIFA program model that maps and integrates the portfolio streams with societal challenges and aligns with Farm Bill priorities, the USDA strategic plan, and the REE action plan;
- Developing and implementing a transformative approach and annual process to identify cross-cutting strategic deliverables;
- Continually refining metrics for all of the major portfolios;
- Cataloguing and prioritizing critical infrastructure needs at land grant and non-land-grant university partners;
- Developing a compelling business case as part of the annual budget process to demonstrate NIFA's value to the nation's challenges.

KEY DELIVERABLES

- Integrated NIFA program model communicated broadly to internal and external stakeholders
- Annual science priority-setting process established to identify FY15 program strategic deliverables
- Priority program goals delivered

NIFA PORTFOLIOS

NIFA's science objectives are developed, delivered and evaluated through portfolios of science, education, and extension programs, which are managed by teams of National Program Leaders (NPLs). The process is administered under NIFA's Planning, Accountability and Reporting Office (Figure 2). Each portfolio team develops priorities and performance measures that align with NIFA, REE, and USDA strategic objectives.

Portfolios are managed through a USDA-approved science planning and evaluation cycle consisting of the following:

- **STAKEHOLDER INPUT:** Collecting and analyzing information from stakeholders regarding food and agricultural sciences. Stakeholder input informs the development of science priorities, objectives, and performance measures;
- **PORTFOLIO PLANNING:** Development of science priorities and performance measures aligned with institutional capacity;
- **IMPLEMENTATION:** Data collection and monitoring of portfolio performance in meeting objectives;
- **ASSESSMENT:** Assess achievement in meeting objectives based on performance indicators and evaluations by review panels; and

- **COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS:** Publicizing and using externally-assessed portfolio results and recommendations.

NIFA's breadth of programs is managed by national program leaders in partnership with land-grant universities and other stakeholders.

Societal challenges are the overarching elements that drive our agency's performance. The portfolios are the underpinning designed to address these challenges. The strategic plan links the activities of the portfolio teams and NIFA internal work groups to societal challenges.

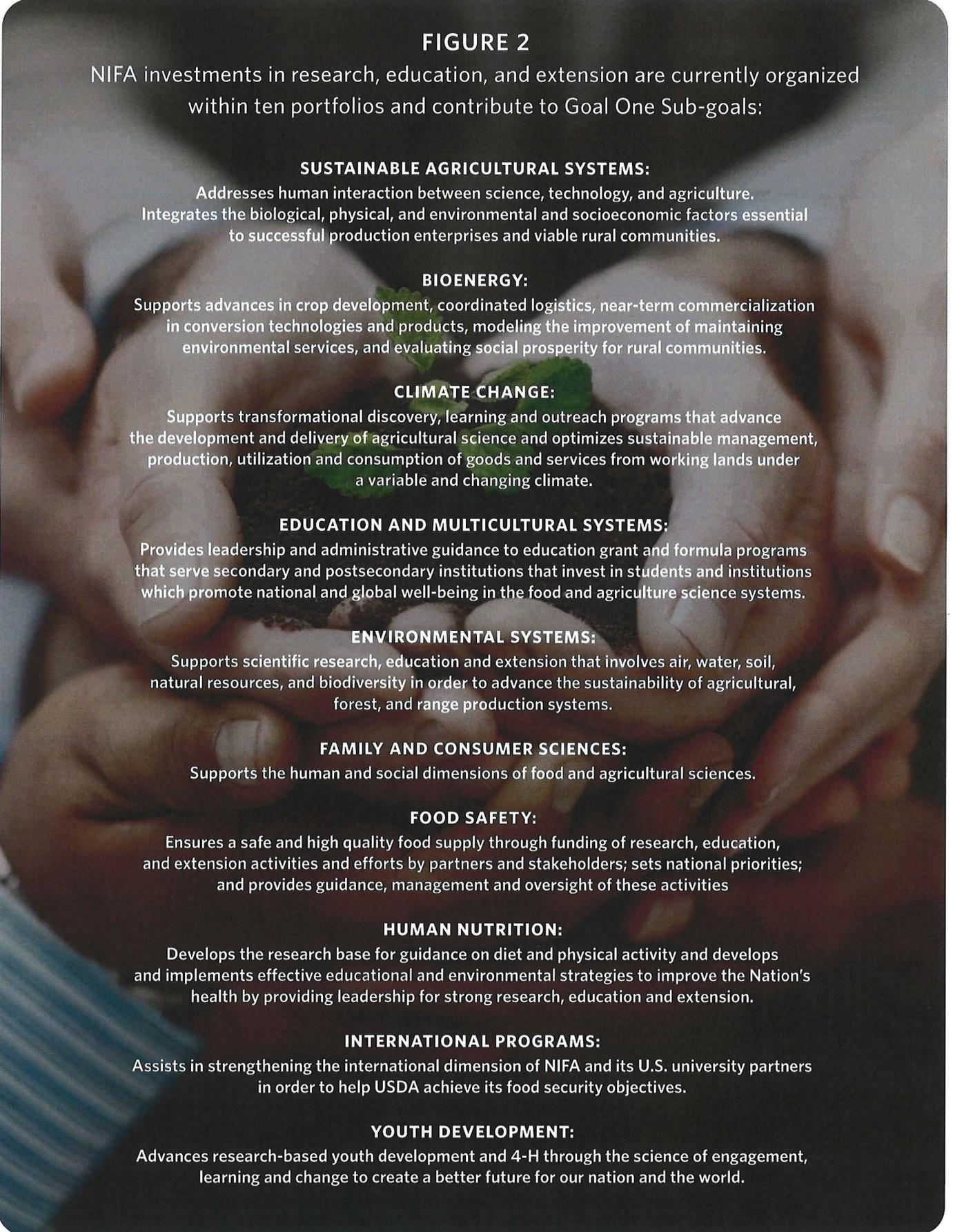


FIGURE 2

NIFA investments in research, education, and extension are currently organized within ten portfolios and contribute to Goal One Sub-goals:

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS:

Addresses human interaction between science, technology, and agriculture. Integrates the biological, physical, and environmental and socioeconomic factors essential to successful production enterprises and viable rural communities.

BIOENERGY:

Supports advances in crop development, coordinated logistics, near-term commercialization in conversion technologies and products, modeling the improvement of maintaining environmental services, and evaluating social prosperity for rural communities.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

Supports transformational discovery, learning and outreach programs that advance the development and delivery of agricultural science and optimizes sustainable management, production, utilization and consumption of goods and services from working lands under a variable and changing climate.

EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURAL SYSTEMS:

Provides leadership and administrative guidance to education grant and formula programs that serve secondary and postsecondary institutions that invest in students and institutions which promote national and global well-being in the food and agriculture science systems.

ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS:

Supports scientific research, education and extension that involves air, water, soil, natural resources, and biodiversity in order to advance the sustainability of agricultural, forest, and range production systems.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES:

Supports the human and social dimensions of food and agricultural sciences.

FOOD SAFETY:

Ensures a safe and high quality food supply through funding of research, education, and extension activities and efforts by partners and stakeholders; sets national priorities; and provides guidance, management and oversight of these activities

HUMAN NUTRITION:

Develops the research base for guidance on diet and physical activity and develops and implements effective educational and environmental strategies to improve the Nation's health by providing leadership for strong research, education and extension.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS:

Assists in strengthening the international dimension of NIFA and its U.S. university partners in order to help USDA achieve its food security objectives.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:

Advances research-based youth development and 4-H through the science of engagement, learning and change to create a better future for our nation and the world.

SUB-GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

SUB-GOAL 1.1:

Advance our nation's ability to fight hunger and ensure global food security.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 1.1.1: Number of farmers and ranchers that gained an economic, environmental or quality-of-life benefit from a change in practice learned by participating in a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) project.	15,500	16,760	12,800	13,905	14,775
MEASURE 1.1.2: Number of documented databases for data storage and analyses to enable higher throughput of various plant and animal "omics" data (e.g., genomics, epigenomics)	33	33	30	32	33
MEASURE 1.1.3: Number of NIFA-funded conferences targeting food security that enable shared learning and that identify critical areas for further exploration.	3	5	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.1.4: Number of peer-reviewed journal articles, lay publications, patents, and educational activities resulting from NIFA investments that increase our understanding of biological processes (e.g., photosynthesis and nutrient use efficiency), pathogenesis of infectious disease, development of diagnostic techniques and surveillance—all of which underlie agricultural productivity and food security.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.1.5: Number of comprehensive global feed information systems and enabling modeling technologies that facilitate high-priority research in food and animal production systems to enhance food security.	0	1	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.1.6: Number of breakthrough successes on significant or emerging pests and diseases that affect plant and animal production systems (e.g., Johne's citrus greening, colony collapse, ticks, brown marmorated stink bug).	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.1.7: Number of NIFA Requests for Applications that include a social science dimension to the research and incorporate appropriate economic and social science measures of the social benefits and costs associated with the scientific discovery.	6	8	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.1.8: Number of new farmers and ranchers participating in education projects funded by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	38,000	50,000 (ESTIMATED)	BEING ESTABLISHED
MEASURE 1.1.9: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to how consumer choice drives market economies, and how consumer policy, advertising, and other market factors influence consumer demand.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.1.10: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to factors affecting the decision making process, such as availability of resources, life events, living patterns, values, goals, interests, and attitudes of families, and external forces such as public issues, policies, and programs.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—

SUB-GOAL 1.2:

Advance the development and delivery of science for agricultural, forest, and range systems adapted to climate variability and to mitigate climate impacts.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 1.2.1: Number of NIFA-funded projects focused on greenhouse gas sequestration by U.S. agriculture as a result of NIFA investments.	300	400	200	200	300
MEASURE 1.2.2: Number of NIFA-funded projects focused on adaptation of US agriculture to climate variability as a result of NIFA investments.	300	400	200	200	300
MEASURE 1.2.3: Number of new crop varieties and animal breeds commercially available with climate adaptive traits as a result of NIFA investments.	10	12	8	8	10

SUB-GOAL 1.3:

Optimize the production of goods and services from working lands while protecting the nation's natural resource base and environment.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 1.3.1: Percentage of farmers in rural areas reached by Cooperative Extension to conserve, protect, and/or manage their water resources.	14%	15%	13%	13%	14%
MEASURE 1.3.2: Percentage of participants attending land grant led activities with knowledge on choices to access and allocate resources for the production of agriculture commodities, services and products.	14%	15%	13%	13%	14%
MEASURE 1.3.3: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to economic choices farmers and ranchers make to access and allocate resources for the production of commodities, services and products.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—

SUB-GOAL 1.4:

Contribute to U.S. energy independence and enhance other agricultural systems through the development of regional systems for the sustainable production of optimal biomass (forests and crops) for the production of bioenergy and value-added bio-based industrial products.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 1.4.1: Number of new bio-based products successfully patented from NIFA investments.	6	8	5	5	6
MEASURE 1.4.2: Number of farmer education and engagement activities through NIFA investments that facilitate farmers' adoption of dedicated bioenergy crops.	15	25	10	10	15

SUB-GOAL 1.5:

Combat childhood obesity by ensuring the availability of affordable, nutritious food and providing individuals and families science-based nutritional guidance.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 1.5.1: Dietary improvements by Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) participants (percent of EFNEP participants making dietary improvements). <i>Percent of Participants per Year:</i>	95%	BEING ESTABLISHED	94%	94%	95%
<i>Number of Adult Program Participants in EFNEP:</i>	133,300	BEING ESTABLISHED	133,446	130,485	130,485
<i>Number of Youth Program Participants in EFNEP:</i>	490,400	BEING ESTABLISHED	506,156	479,398	479,398
MEASURE 1.5.2: Number of children and youth consuming more healthy food as a result of participation in Cooperative Extension Programs (e.g., 4-H).	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.5.3: Number of underrepresented communities reached on dietary requirements and nutrition education.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.5.4: Number of youth and adult participants with knowledge or behavior change related to healthy lifestyles, including maintenance of social, emotional, and physical health.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.5.5: Number of NIFA-funded investments focusing in the development of foods or food ingredients/agricultural products or processes that assist with the availability of affordable, nutritious food.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.5.6: Number of intervention strategies or technologies for improving the availability of affordable, nutritious food resulting from NIFA investments.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—

SUB-GOAL 1.6:

Reduce the incidence of food-borne illness and provide a safer food supply.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 1.6.1: Number of technologies developed or modified to identify, detect, and/or control foodborne pathogens and other contaminants as a result of NIFA investments.	12	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.6.2: Number of intervention strategies or technologies for improving food safety resulting from NIFA investments.	21	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—

SUB-GOAL 1.7:

Ensure the development of human capital, communities, and a diverse workforce through research, education, extension, and engagement programs in food and agricultural sciences to support a sustainable agriculture system.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 1.7.1: Number of underrepresented students enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs in food and agricultural sciences.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.2: Number of underrepresented students who benefitted from new curriculum, lab facilities and other classroom improvements supported through minority serving programs.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.3: Number of underrepresented students who complete their programs of study and are interested in employment at USDA.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.4: Number of college graduates prepared for the professional and technical workforce in the food and agricultural industry.	30,700	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	29,300	29,300
MEASURE 1.7.5: Number of graduate students and post-doctorates engaged in NIFA-administered projects and programs with an integrated education component to improve educational opportunities in agriculture.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.6: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to community needs and preferences by providing local leaders and organizations the information, skills, and decision-making tools to help understand problems, identify opportunities, and plan for renewal and growth.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.7: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to understanding of the social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development of individuals and families over the human lifespan.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.8: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to understanding of the technological, demographic, and social changes occurring in society.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.9: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to social, aesthetic, and functional aspects of textiles and the interface among producers, retailers, and consumers. Work includes the social, economic, and design aspects of housing and other structures.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.10: Number of participants with knowledge or behavior change related to the development, quantity, and functioning of community institutions and social services, including emergency preparedness and response, and public safety.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 1.7.11: Number of 4-H youth participants with behavior change related to career readiness, including the development of 21st century skills such as teamwork, decision making and problem solving, persistence, goal setting, personal responsibility and conscientiousness.	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—

SUB-GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

SUB-GOAL 2.1:

Enhance accountability by providing the infrastructure and oversight necessary to achieve high-performance human capital management and extend human capital responsibility and accountability to all levels of the NIFA organization.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 2.1.1: Percentage of NIFA staff engaged in NIFA Management Initiatives.	95%	100%	—	—	75%
MEASURE 2.1.2: Percentage of supervisors who review and approve Individual Development Plans (IDPs), establish annual performance plans and conduct performance reviews within the prescribed deadlines.	95%	100%	—	—	—

SUB-GOAL 2.2:

Establish a world-class workforce through innovative talent management, targeted at attracting, selecting, engaging, developing and retaining talented individuals with the right technical and professional skills needed to meet our mission.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 2.2.1: (ATTRACTING) Number of internships hosted by different NIFA Institutes/Offices through a uniform internship program.	23 ³	40	20	23	17
MEASURE 2.2.2: (DEVELOPING) Percentage of new NIFA employees who have completed an orientation program.	50%	100%	—	—	35%
MEASURE 2.2.3: (ENGAGING) Percentage of positive responses to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) question #30: <i>Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.</i>	BASELINE 2013	TARGET 2018	2010	2011	2012
	36.8%	42.9% ⁴	50.3%	43.7%	50.4%
MEASURE 2.2.4: (DEVELOPING) Percentage of NIFA employees who have an Individual Development Plan that is based on a 180-degree competency-centric skill assessment.	20	100	—	—	—
MEASURE 2.2.5: (DEVELOPING) Percentage of positive responses to FEVS question #18: <i>My training needs are assessed.</i>	BASELINE 2013	TARGET 2018	2010	2011	2012
	34.1%	49.8% ⁵	46.8%	50.9%	49.3%
MEASURE 2.2.6: (ENGAGING) Percentage of negative responses to FEVS question #63: <i>How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work?</i>	29.5%	24% ⁶	24.9%	27.4%	20.1%
MEASURE 2.2.7: (ATTRACTING) Percentage of NIFA workforce with disabilities and targeted disabilities by utilizing Schedule A hiring authority.	0.6%	4%	—	—	—
MEASURE 2.2.8: (RETAINING) Percentage of positive responses to FEVS question #94 on NIFA workforce considering leaving the agency within the next year to take another job.	BASELINE 2013	TARGET 2018	2010	2011	2012
	38.8%	28.8% ⁷	—	—	24.4%

SUB-GOAL 2.3:

Build a high-performing, results-oriented performance culture.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 2.3.1: Percentage of Performance Plans developed for implementation in FY 2015 that conform to USDA regulations on linking employee standards and elements to USDA and/or agency goals and outcomes.	90%	100%	—	—	—
MEASURE 2.3.2: Percentage of positive responses to FEVS question #44: <i>Discussions with my supervisor/team leader about my performance are worthwhile.</i>	BASELINE 2013	TARGET 2018	2010	2011	2012
	62.6%	67.6% ⁸	59.8%	66.1%	71.9%

SUB-GOAL 2.4:

Cultivate effective leadership practices that permeate the organization, promote continuous learning and innovation, and develop the next generation of food and agricultural scientists.

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 2.4.1: Percentage of supervisors who complete 12 hours of supervisory training in a year program.	50%	100%	—	—	—
MEASURE 2.4.2: Percentage of supervisors who have a 360-degree assessment of the supervisory competencies incorporated in their Individual Development Plans.	0%	100%	—	—	—
MEASURE 2.4.3: Percentage of positive responses to FEVS question #52: <i>Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor/team leader?</i>	BASELINE 2013	TARGET 2018	2010	2011	2012
	66.2%	74.0% ⁹	69.8%	73.6%	76.8%

³ This is the total number of internships in NIFA in 2014. NIFA will develop and launch a uniform internship program beginning in 2015.

⁴ Percentage positive response for all REE agencies or Government wide, whichever was higher in FY 2013.

⁵ Percentage positive response for all REE agencies or Government wide, whichever was higher in FY 2013.

⁶ Percentage negative response for all REE agencies or Government wide, whichever was lower in FY 2013.

⁷ Percentage of NIFA employees who were considering leaving NIFA for another position in 2013 minus 5%.

⁸ Percentage positive response for all REE agencies, Government wide, or NIFA positive responses +5%; whichever was higher in FY 2013.

⁹ Percentage positive response for all REE agencies or Government wide, whichever was higher in FY 2013.

FIGURE 3: ALIGNMENT OF PORTFOLIOS TO STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Summary of how NIFA's portfolios align with the USDA Strategic Plan, the Secretary's 2014 NIFA Priorities, the REE Action Plan, and NIFA's science goals:

	NIFA PORTFOLIOS									
	SUSTAINABLE AG SYSTEMS	BIOENERGY	CLIMATE CHANGE	EDUCATION	ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS	FAMILY/CONSUMER SCIENCES	FOOD SAFETY	HUMAN NUTRITION	INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS	YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
USDA STRATEGIC GOALS										
1. Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating and economically thriving.	•	•		•	•	•			•	•
2. Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources.	•	•	•	•	•					
3. Help America promote agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security.	•	•	•	•	•				•	
4. Ensure that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.	•			•		•	•	•		•
5. Create a USDA for the 21st century that is high-performing, efficient, and adaptable.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
SECRETARY'S 2014 NIFA PRIORITIES										
1. Increase the number of reported patents/licenses/material transfer agreements in 2014 due to competitive grants by 5%.	•	•	•		•		•	•		
2. Increase the number of new plant variety releases by grantees as a result of NIFA grants by 5%.	•	•	•							
REE ACTION PLAN GOALS										
1. Local and Global Food Supply and Security	•					•	•		•	
2. Responding to Climate and Energy Needs		•	•		•	•				
3. Sustainable Use of Natural Resources		•	•		•					
4. Nutrition and Childhood Obesity						•		•		•
5. Food Safety						•	•			
6. Education and Science Literacy	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
7. Rural Prosperity/Rural-Urban Interdependence	•	•			•	•				•
NIFA SCIENCE SUB-GOALS (FROM GOAL 1)										
1. Advance our Nation's ability to achieve global food security and fight hunger.	•	•				•			•	
2. Advance the development and delivery of science for agricultural, forest, and range systems adapted to climate variability and to mitigate impacts.	•	•	•		•					
3. Optimize the production of goods and services from working lands while protecting the Nation's natural resource base and environment.	•	•	•		•					
4. Contribute to U.S. energy independence and enhance other agricultural systems through the development of regional systems for the sustainable production of optimal biomass (forests and crops) for the production of bioenergy and value-added bio-based industrial products.		•								
5. Combat childhood obesity by ensuring the availability of affordable, nutritious food and providing individuals and families science-based nutritional guidance.				•		•		•		•
6. Reduce the incidence of food-borne illness and provide a safer food supply.						•	•			
7. Ensure the development of human capital, communities, and a diverse workforce through research, education, extension and engagement programs in food and agricultural sciences to support a sustainable agriculture system.	•			•		•				•

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: PEOPLE

Transform NIFA into a model agency with a highly motivated workforce.

DESIRED RESULTS

- NIFA viewed as a model agency and a great place to work.
- Functionally staffed with talented people with the right skills in the right positions to carry out the agency's mission.
- NIFA has a vibrant culture of respect and collaboration and strong commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- NIFA employees are known for living their values of integrity, transformation, engagement, and impact as well as a strong commitment to excellence and service to the nation.

STRATEGIES AND MEANS

- Evaluate, update, and align the NIFA Human Capital Plan and the strategic plan annually.
- Seek and utilize a diverse set of options in agency leadership and program management by attracting and retaining top quality candidates and promoting diversity at all levels of the agency.
- Sustain and enhance a high-performance culture through engaging and enabling employees to be productive.
- Extend human capital and employee engagement responsibility and accountability to all levels by establishing metrics to verify goal achievement and accountability for supervisors and employees.

KEY DELIVERABLES

- A mechanism for employees to be engaged and aligned with the NIFA Human Capital Plan and in turn, with the strategic plan and communicate the status of strategic human capital deliverables on an ongoing basis.
- An effective training and development program that provides opportunities for employees to grow in mission-related areas.
- Performance tools that differentiate among levels of performance and assist with clearly communicating performance expectations for each critical occupation.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PROCESS

Institutionalize streamlined, effective technologies, policies, and processes.

DESIRED RESULTS

- NIFA is viewed as a valued partner providing cost-effective services, high-quality customer service, and a strong commitment to continuous improvement
- NIFA science programs and business practices are strategically positioned and effectively integrated—minimizing reactive responses and staff burnout
- Robust, up-to-date infrastructure and well-defined/simplified business processes are in place to support internal customers for planning, prioritizing, and executing daily operations
- Stakeholders are confident of overall integrity and quality of the review processes for all competitive and non-competitive programs across NIFA

STRATEGIES AND MEANS

- Increase stakeholder engagement and continually monitor business practices to ensure alignment with the Farm Bill, the USDA Strategic Plan and the REE Action Plan
- Ensure that NIFA's fiscal planning, implementation, and accounting practices are of the highest quality and effectively integrated within the agency
- Develop consistent review processes and procedures for all programs (competitive and non-competitive)
- Develop enhanced business practices for managing and processing grants across the agency
- Catalogue and prioritize critical infrastructure needs within NIFA
- Establish a strong Information Technology infrastructure to support high performance
- Engage with Congress to simplify and synchronize legislative authorities that drive our management systems

KEY DELIVERABLES

- Modernized grants management system
- Streamlined and standardized processes for administering competitive and non-competitive programs
- Reduced number of days for the grant award process

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET	2011	2012	2013
MEASURE 3.1: (GRANTS MODERNIZATION) Percent completion of fit-gap analysis to determine suitability of NIH grant systems for NIFA	60% COMPLETE	BY SEPTEMBER 2014 100% COMPLETION OF FIT-GAP AND A GO, NO-GO DECISION BY 2016 IMPLEMENT NEW GRANTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	—	—	—
MEASURE 3.2: (GRANTS MODERNIZATION) Number of documents digitized	—	BY END OF 2014 ALL 2014 AWARDS, 2000 GRANTS; ALL PARS FILE FOLDERS	—	—	—
MEASURE 3.3: (FLATTENING THE AWARD CURVE) Percent of all awards completed each quarter	1 ST QUARTER: 4% 2 ND QUARTER: 4% 3 RD QUARTER: 7% 4 TH QUARTER: 85%	BY 2017 1 ST QUARTER: 16% 2 ND QUARTER: 17% 3 RD QUARTER: 17% 4 TH QUARTER: 50%	—	—	—
MEASURE 3.4: (STREAMLINE PROCESSES) Consolidate HelpDesk functions within NIFA	FIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE AREAS	BY END OF 2014 CONSOLIDATE PARS AND HELPDESK BY 2015 CONSOLIDATE OGFH HELPDESK BY 2016 ONE CONSOLIDATED TIER 1 SUPPORT DESK FOR NIFA	—	—	—
MEASURE 3.5: (FLATTENING THE AWARD CURVE) Overtime required by NIFA staff to process year-end awards	BEING ESTABLISHED	BEING ESTABLISHED	—	—	—
MEASURE 3.6: (FLATTENING THE AWARD CURVE) 75% of Formula Allocations are done prior to the 3rd Quarter	BEING ESTABLISHED	BY 2016 100% COMPLETE	—	—	—

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: COMMUNICATIONS

Advance America's global preeminence in food and agricultural sciences.

DESIRED RESULTS

- Elevated standing, stature, and impact of the food and agricultural sciences within the Federal science enterprise
- Communication on the value of NIFA and its partners and stakeholders inspires and educates diverse Americans to enter the agricultural workforce
- Americans understand and value the vital role that NIFA and the food and agricultural sciences play in solving societal challenges

STRATEGIES AND MEANS

- Develop and deliver a clear and compelling message about NIFA's value in solving societal challenges
- Design and launch a strategic communication and engagement plan with targeted audiences and effective vehicles for reaching a broad set of stakeholders and the public
- Design and implement innovative information and data delivery mechanisms, including a contemporary and functional Web site
- Develop and maintain a knowledge repository that captures lessons, insights, and success stories over time
- Publicize NIFA's work and accomplishments to inform and inspire the public

- Educate and inspire the next generation of agricultural experts
- Develop and maintain a network of strong Federal/state/local strategic partners

KEY DELIVERABLES

- Process to identify and archive success stories linked to post award management
- Single NIFA portal for both internal and external users
- Partner engagement strategy
- Targeted communication plan that effectively reaches agency audiences and meets agency needs

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

MEASURE	BASELINE 2014	TARGET 2018
MEASURE 4.1: Percentage of stakeholders who express overall satisfaction with NIFA's Web site	BEING ESTABLISHED	75%
MEASURE 4.2: Increase in the number of accounts that subscribe to NIFA Twitter feed and NIFA YouTube Channel	BEING ESTABLISHED	50%
MEASURE 4.3: Increase in the number of instances where visitors engage with NIFA Twitter feed and NIFA YouTube Channel through clicks, favorites, replies, retweets, thumbs up, comment, and shares	BEING ESTABLISHED	50%
MEASURE 4.4: Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who understand the role that NIFA plays in agricultural research, education, and extension	BEING ESTABLISHED	80%

MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

NIFA has identified the following nine management initiatives to support the strategic goals outlined in this plan:

1. Establish a **shared vision** for NIFA through the development of a new Strategic Plan ensuring that the science programs and the business practices of the agency are strategically positioned and effectively integrated.
2. Establish and implement an enhanced **outcome-based performance and accountability process** for all of the major science portfolios of NIFA to enhance the quality, relevancy, and performance of all NIFA programs.
3. Ensure that NIFA develops **enhanced business practices for the management and processing of grants** and agreements across the agency, supported by a strong IT infrastructure.
4. Ensure that NIFA's **fiscal planning, implementation, and accounting practices are of the highest quality** and effectively integrated within the agency, with Administrative and Fiscal Management (AFM), and with the National Finance Center (NFC).
5. Ensure the overall **integrity and quality of the competitive peer review process for all competitive programs** across NIFA by developing consistent processes and procedures across the agency for all competitive programs.
6. Ensure the overall **integrity and quality of the review process for all non-competitive programs** by developing consistent review processes and procedures across NIFA for all non-competitive programs.
7. Elevate the **standing, stature, and impact of the food and agricultural sciences** within the Federal science enterprise through enhanced strategic partnerships with other Federal agencies.
8. Effectively **integrate research, education, and extension across NIFA**, and ensure that programs are integrated across funding authorities and funding mechanisms.
9. Ensure that **NIFA's work and accomplishments are described and communicated** in a manner that reaches, informs, and influences stakeholders and employees.

The initiatives are carried out through vigorous execution of internal task forces and work groups. NIFA's management team allows employee-centered and employee-led improvements across the agency in science, people, processes and communications. Each work group is a cross-section of NIFA employees at all levels of expertise and discipline. The groups are the backbone for executing the strategic goals, activities, and deliverables.

Appendix A demonstrates the alignment of NIFA's goals, and strategies to USDA's goals and management initiatives.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: OVERVIEW OF CIVIL RIGHTS INITIATIVES

The restructuring and reorganization of NIFA have had a major impact on the way the agency does business. It has released energy into the workforce. It has challenged employees to look at new ways of solving problems and focus on improved scientific research and customer service. The biggest impact has been the change in culture—the way people think about their job, and diversity and inclusion within the mission of the agency. Included in NIFA's mission is the goal to become a performance-based agency that will improve and strengthen efforts to ensure equal access and opportunity in all aspects of the agency's programs and employment decisions.

NIFA's organizational transformation will result in improved performance in civil rights.

NIFA expects to:

- Provide overall civil rights leadership to employees in the administrative and programmatic units of NIFA, and all land-grant university partners, and cooperators in the food and agricultural sciences. Ensure that employment decisions are planned and conducted to ensure equal opportunity for all persons. Formulate policies and provide policy direction and technical guidance for a comprehensive equal opportunity program.
- Identify conditions, actions, or patterns of behavior that might restrict equality of opportunity. Work with NIFA managers, State land-grant university partners, and cooperators to change these conditions, actions, or patterns.
- Conduct civil rights compliance reviews. As appropriate, correct the conditions of non-compliance, assist in developing conditions for continued compliance, and help managers of NIFA and land-grant university partners and cooperators obtain assistance in their equal opportunity efforts.
- Advance the full implementation of a comprehensive personnel management program that will provide equality of opportunity for all employees to seek and to achieve their highest potential and productivity.

Significant to the ultimate achievement of these initiatives are the contributions that the various program institutions within NIFA must make in asserting their leadership roles in effecting and influencing adjustments to program emphases on a National level. The posture that each program institution and its individual NPL and relevant other staff members enunciate through concerted and/or individual action is a most influential barometer of commitment. In most instances the assumption of leadership in this regard can be best described as one of average profile. Therefore, the acquisition of this average leadership potential can reduce time differentials for full compliance in all program areas.

GOAL 1: ACCOUNTABILITY:

Incorporate USDA's civil rights policy and regulations throughout agency operations to ensure that NIFA's business is done in a manner where all employees treat customers and co-workers fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect.

Consistent with the Secretary's mandate, NIFA's leadership has launched civil rights as one of its top priorities. The agency will hold employees accountable for ensuring that NIFA's programs and activities are planned and conducted to ensure equality of opportunity for all persons, including customers. NIFA will enhance equal employment opportunity for underutilized and underrepresented racial minority groups. Efforts will be made in improving and enhancing the delivery and efficiency of programs targeted at underserved groups, including minority-serving institutions eligible for services.

OBJECTIVE 1.1:

Ensure that civil rights requirements and consideration are an integral part of all of NIFA's programs and operations.

Agency managers and supervisors as principal officers are charged with and expected to ensure a work environment free of discrimination or retaliation, and are assigned a duty to uphold the civil rights of customers and employees. Employees will increase participation levels and involvement in increased opportunities for minority-serving institutions and underserved communities. Managers and supervisors will be held accountable for ensuring that employees actively support and adhere to civil rights services, and in their engagement efforts ensure that all eligible customers have equal access to NIFA's programs and services. Also managers and supervisors will be accountable for enforcing notification and electronic posting to create awareness of program opportunities and equal access to NIFA's programs.

GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT

Strengthen Delivery of Programs and Services and Support Secretary's Relevant Initiatives in this Area.

The continuing demand for all NIFA staff members and university partners and cooperators to manage programs in ways that provide equality of opportunity and equal access to all eligible customers call forth the highest level of managerial proficiency. The many factors necessary to providing a balanced program, and which meets the needs and interests of all socio-economic and racial/ethnic groups challenges staff to look anew at old processes and methods. NIFA will aggressively support the

Secretary's initiatives designed to improve delivery of programs and services to customers. The agency's strategic plan reflects a continuing need to manage programs in ways that build on past successes and enhance access and improve program services to underserved customers. Plans are designed and are being implemented to ensure that all ongoing and newly organized programs and events include non-traditional audiences, minorities, and women. Special efforts, through compliance reviews, as well as program reviews, will continue to be utilized to increase participation and service to minority clientele. Compliance reviews will also focus on correcting State partners' programs that have been conducted in ways that permit unnecessary barriers and limit the participation of minority group members. Program managers and employees will take special steps to affirmatively ensure eligible customers, institutions, and organizations are advised of, and given opportunity to, participate in available programs.

OBJECTIVE 2.1:

Facilitate access to NIFA's programs

Acknowledged in NIFA's mission is the need to benefit people, communities, and the Nation through cooperative work with its university partners and customers to advance research, extension, and higher education in the food and agricultural sciences and related environmental and human sciences. Within the context of this mission, additional opportunities will be provided for increased involvement of community-based organizations and minority-serving institutions through the use of cooperative agreements.

GOAL 3: COMPLIANCE REVIEWS:

Ensure that the program benefits and services are being delivered by the agency and its recipients on a nondiscrimination basis.

The agency's civil rights compliance review program is directed to renew and strengthen efforts to ensure equal access to all NIFA's programs. The reviews are a reliable means of identifying areas of non-compliance with civil rights regulations and weaknesses in program delivery on an equal opportunity basis, including measuring the progress of recipient institutions and cooperators. The reviews will allow NIFA to know the quantity and quality of services being delivered to minority groups and the underprivileged. The compliance reviews evaluate the effectiveness of recipient institutions methods and provides evidence upon which to make changes to improve program delivery to eligible minority communities.

OBJECTIVE 3.1:

Correct programs that bar and/or limit full participation of racial minority groups and/or women beneficiaries.

NIFA's managers and employees will use information technology and data-driven approaches to make the agency more accessible. Staff members and recipient institutions and cooperators will correct programs that permit economic barriers or social inhibitions and limit participations of racial minorities and women. The agency will craft a strategy designed to establish measures of the number of minority groups in the population eligible to participate in NIFA's programs.

METRIC FOR ALL OBJECTIVES

As a granting agency, NIFA conducts reviews of land-grant recipients to evaluate their compliance with USDA civil rights regulations. The reviews allow the agency to determine how well benefits and services are being delivered by recipients to meet the needs and interests of all customers, including minority groups in the communities being served.

Throughout the year members NIFA's civil rights staff gathers information and empirical evidence regarding programs and problems as they come in contact with NIFA program and administrative units, and the administrative and program groups within State university partners. Additional data are gathered from various sources of reviews, audits, and reports. The involvement of program units within NIFA and State partners in the identification of mutually shared problems takes place through informal conferences on a continuing basis. This process has yielded significant cooperative efforts between the program units and the civil rights staff; it has provided insight into critical problem areas. It is anticipated that this aspect of the civil rights program development process will be strengthened during the coming year.

Based on the evidence gathered from source documents the civil rights staff identify the problems, priorities, and major thrusts that serve as a basis for developing a results-oriented civil rights program delivery plan. Significant to the process of program development, problem identification and delivery of programs are the various non-discrimination rules and regulations directing USDA programs and activities.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMPLIANCE REVIEWS/EVALUATIONS

REVIEWS/EVALUATIONS	RESULTS EXPECTED	ONGOING ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES
GOAL 1: ACCOUNTABILITY		
<p>Assist employees to incorporate, as appropriate, civil rights requirements in various facets of their responsibilities and to make these requirements essential criteria in program leader's relationship with State counterparts.</p> <p>NIFA managers and supervisors assist State partners, directors, administrators, supervisors/managers in implementing creative approaches relative to employment decisions designed to increase access to opportunities for those individuals underrepresented or underutilized.</p>	<p>This effort should help to strengthen program development that will most effectively meet the needs of nontraditional audiences. The proposed action should broaden the base of programming and contribute to the achievement of balanced programs for all customers.</p> <p>The effort should expedite closer coordination on affirmative matters between program leaders having responsibilities for programs and projects with State partner representatives.</p> <p>Efforts will lead to greater minority participation in NIFA and State partners' programs and activities.</p> <p>Representation of minorities and women in certain supervisory and leading occupations will be increased, particularly, whereby these groups are available in the market place.</p>	<p>Collaborate with NIFA NPL in the identification of program activities that have civil rights implications in their area of responsibility.</p> <p>Exchange values and advice on educational trends and developments that may be useful to strengthen and enhance needs of minority group members.</p> <p>Provide NIFA managers compliance review findings and racial/gender participation data useful in strengthening program leadership functions with State counterparts.</p> <p>Assist State partners in the development and implementation of procedures designed to adjust underrepresentation of minorities and women in occupational series and functional assignments.</p>
GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN & SUPPORT		
<p>Assessment of functionality of programs. Shape and embrace culture and demographic dimensions in the community served.</p>	<p>Provide for the identification and application of evaluation processes that will help employees access accomplishments in providing equality of services to minorities and others.</p> <p>This effort will increase the use of informational materials which reflect program accomplishments. Problem areas where there are differentials in quantity and quality of services to minority group members will be reduced.</p>	<p>Meet with OCR-USDA officials for discussion of plans and assessments. Discuss any changes in program engagement and minority participation data, including information and concurrence in established plans.</p> <p>Assist State partners and cooperators in renewing and strengthening full implementation of the data collection/evaluation system. Critique reports and communicate evaluations of same.</p>
GOAL 3: COMPLIANCE		
<p>Conduct compliance reviews on a periodic basis through the development and implementation of a program for compliance reviews.</p> <p>Conduct special analysis and evaluation of progress made in meeting civil rights and equal employment opportunity program requirements. Apply evaluative procedures to programs in order that program effectiveness to minorities may be determined.</p> <p>Enhance, refine, and fully implement a racial data collection system that will provide for more meaningful measurement of clientele participation in educational programs and activities.</p>	<p>The identification and application of evaluation processes that will help NPL's and NIFA staff members assess accomplishments in providing equality of services to racial minorities and other group members.</p> <p>Indication of the compliance status, progress, and results achieved, of selected State programs in which reviews, audits, and investigations have been conducted.</p> <p>Reports will be presented that reflect adequately the efforts that were made and the results achieved from them.</p> <p>This ongoing effort should maintain maximum performance by staff members.</p> <p>Evaluative procedures will be refined and further applied to programs in order that program effectiveness to minorities may be more appropriately determined. This process should serve to lessen the burden for State partners collecting contact participation data.</p>	<p>Renew and strengthen procedures for evaluating progress in civil rights accomplishments. Collect racial data on all significant aspects of program participation including participation on committees, councils, etc. The data will continue to be used as a management tool and also as a basis for program direction, redirection, and evaluation.</p> <p>Utilize compliance review findings to exchange views and advice on educational trends and developments that may be useful to strengthen and enhance programs relative to the needs of minority group members.</p> <p>Prepare and present reports that reflect the condition of compliance in meeting non-discrimination requirements. The report will identify inequities in the delivery of benefits to minority customers.</p> <p>Examine current racial data collection and reporting system for determining the quantity and quality of benefits and services delivered to customers and as needed make changes that permit more accurate measurement of their participation. Provide a framework to obtain data only on significant aspects of program participation.</p>

APPENDIX A:

ALIGNMENT OF NIFA STRATEGIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES TO USDA STRATEGIC GOALS AND MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

NIFA STRATEGIC PLAN	USDA STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS					USDA STRATEGIC PLAN MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES		
	1 Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving.	2 Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources.	3 Help America promote agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security.	4 Ensure that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.	5 Create a USDA for the 21st century that is high-performing, efficient, and adaptable.	1 Implement a customer-centric, high-performing, modern workforce.	2 Build a modern, safe, and secure workplace that enables employees to maximize the level of service provided to customers.	3 Exhibit proper stewardship by maximizing and preserving the return on taxpayer investment entrusted to USDA.
GOAL 1: SCIENCE								
Catalyze exemplary and relevant research, education and extension programs								
1.1: Advance our Nation's ability to achieve global food security and fight hunger.	●		●					
1.2: Advance the development and delivery of science for agricultural, forest, and range systems adapted to climate variability and to mitigate climate impacts.	●	●						
1.3: Optimize the production of goods and services from working lands while protecting the Nation's natural resource base and environment.	●	●	●					
1.4: Contribute to U.S. energy independence and enhance other agricultural systems through the development of regional systems for the sustainable production of optimal biomass (forests and crops) for the production of bioenergy and value-added bio-based industrial products.		●	●					
1.5: Combat childhood obesity by ensuring the availability of affordable, nutritious food and providing individuals and families science-based nutritional guidance.				●				
1.6: Reduce the incidence of food-borne illness and provide a safer food supply.			●					
1.7: Ensure the development of human capital, communities, and a diverse workforce through research, education, extension and engagement programs in food and agricultural sciences to support a sustainable agriculture system.								

APPENDIX A: CONTINUED

NIFA STRATEGIC PLAN	USDA STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS					USDA STRATEGIC PLAN MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES		
	1 Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving.	2 Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources.	3 Help America promote agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security.	4 Ensure that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.	5 Create a USDA for the 21st century that is high-performing, efficient, and adaptable.	1 Implement a customer-centric, high-performing, modern workforce.	2 Build a modern, safe, and secure workplace that enables employees to maximize the level of service provided to customers.	3 Exhibit proper stewardship by maximizing and preserving the return on taxpayer investment entrusted to USDA.
GOAL 1: SCIENCE (CONTINUED) Catalyze exemplary and relevant research, education and extension programs								
GOAL 1 STRATEGIES								
A. Create a NIFA program model that maps and integrates the portfolio streams with societal challenges.	•	•	•	•	•			
B. Develop and implement a transformative approach and annual process to identify strategic and cross-cutting strategic deliverables	•	•	•	•	•			•
C. Continually refine metrics and implement an enhanced outcome-based performance and accountability process for all of the major science portfolios.					•			•
D. Integrate research, education, and extension across NIFA and across funding authorities and funding mechanisms.	•	•	•	•	•			
E. Catalogue and prioritize critical infrastructure needs at LGU partners.					•			•
F. Develop a compelling business case that lays out the value of NIFA and partner programs to the Nation's challenges as part of the annual budget process.					•			•
GOAL 2: PEOPLE Transform NIFA into a model agency with a highly motivated workforce								
GOAL 2 STRATEGIES								
A. Establish and implement a strong human capital program to attract, develop, and retain high performing employees.					•	•		
B. Establish clear roles and responsibilities at all levels and effective protocols to ensure timely decision-making.					•	•		
C. Implement mechanisms to reinforce individual, team, and partner accountabilities.					•	•		
D. Establish a clean, safe, and flexible work environment that supports agility, collaboration and high performance.					•		•	
E. Reinforce teamwork and collaboration across programs and organizations to reduce "stovepipe mentality."					•	•		
F. Work with Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to get human capital expertise to support initiatives in this goal area.					•	•	•	

APPENDIX A: CONTINUED

NIFA STRATEGIC PLAN	USDA STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS					USDA STRATEGIC PLAN MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES		
	1 <small>Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving.</small>	2 <small>Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources.</small>	3 <small>Help America promote agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security.</small>	4 <small>Ensure that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.</small>	5 <small>Create a USDA for the 21st century that is high-performing, efficient, and adaptable.</small>	1 <small>Implement a customer-centric, high-performing, modern workforce.</small>	2 <small>Build a modern, safe, and secure workplace that enables employees to maximize the level of service provided to customers.</small>	3 <small>Exhibit proper stewardship by maximizing and preserving the return on taxpayer investment entrusted to USDA.</small>
GOAL 3: PROCESS Institutionalize streamlined, effective technologies, policies, and processes								
GOAL 3 STRATEGIES								
A. Implement a robust customer experience program that includes a strong element of continuous improvement.					•		•	
B. Establish strong stakeholder engagement, strategic planning, and ongoing monitoring of plans and priorities aligned to the Farm Bill, the USDA Strategic Plan and the REE Action Plan.	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
C. Develop consistent review processes and procedures across NIFA for all competitive/non-competitive programs.					•		•	•
D. Catalogue and prioritize critical infrastructure needs within NIFA.					•			•
E. Establish a strong IT infrastructure to support high performance.					•	•		
F. Develop enhanced business practices for the management and processing of grants and agreements across the agency.	•	•	•	•	•			•
GOAL 4: COMMUNICATIONS Advance America's global preeminence in food and agricultural sciences								
GOAL 4 STRATEGIES								
A. Develop and deliver a compelling message about the value of agricultural research, education, and extension in solving societal challenges.					•			•
B. Design and launch a strategic communication and engagement plan with targeted audiences and effective vehicles for reaching a broad set of stakeholders and the public.					•		•	•
C. Publicize NIFA's work and accomplishments to inform, educate and inspire the public.					•			•
D. Design and implement innovative mechanisms including an updated Web site with apps that make it easy for the public to stay engaged and informed easily and quickly.					•	•	•	•
E. Educate and inspire the next generation of agricultural experts.	•	•	•	•	•			•
F. Create a partnership matrix.					•			•
G. Develop and maintain a network of strong strategic partners at Federal, state and local levels.					•			•

APPENDIX B: PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

The restructuring and reorganization of NIFA have had a major impact on the way the agency does business. It has released energy into the workforce. It has challenged employees to look at new ways of solving problems and focus on improved scientific research and customer service. The biggest impact has been the change in culture—the way people think about their job, and diversity and inclusion within the mission of the agency. Included in NIFA’s mission is the goal to become a performance-based agency that will improve and strengthen efforts to ensure equal access and opportunity in all aspects of the agency’s programs and employment decisions.

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS USED TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGIC PLAN			
EVALUATIONS/ANALYSES	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	EFFECT	DATE
ALL GOALS			
NIFA—Portfolio Assessments	A portfolio is a set of continuing, NIFA-funded activities broadly focused on a current and/or emerging issue of societal importance and serves as the foundation for agency planning and assessment.	Improvements in program planning and management, informing performance-based budgeting, staffing changes.	Self-assessments are done annually; external panel assessments are done every 5 years on a rotating basis for NIFA’s 10 portfolios.
GOAL 1			
U.S. Government Accountability Office—Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (BFRDP) (NIFA)	Report focused on coordination of USDA activities affecting Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (all USDA agencies evaluated)	Congress provided mandatory funding for the BFRDP to begin in 2009 (NIFA delegated lead); Congress also provided enhanced Beginning Farmers and Ranchers programs throughout other USDA agencies; many agencies have adopted Beginning Farmers and Ranchers in strategic goals for agency focus.	2007
National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)—NIFA	The evaluation by NAHLN partners and stakeholders assessed how well the program meets its original objectives, the future objectives and what objectives need to change.	A change in structure of the NAHLN leadership and clearer definition of responsibilities resulted in the initiation of closer examination of NAHLN progress and priorities.	2007

APPENDIX C: CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMS AND COLLABORATIONS

NIFA’s work often relies on partnerships with other USDA agencies, with other Federal agencies, and with State, local, and private partners. We seek to engage traditional interests from primary sectors of agriculture and forge new relationships with non-traditional interests (some outside agriculture), especially those who could be supportive of NIFA’s stated goals. Through these collaborations with a broad array of groups, we gather input and share information. These groups can be broadly categorized into external and internal users of NIFA’s work:

- Producers/grower groups
- Consumers, advocacy groups and communities
- Food and agricultural industries
- Science and education communities
- Government, including other USDA agencies
- Congress

APPENDIX D: STRATEGIC CONSULTATIONS

NIFA regularly consults with many of its stakeholders about program direction and policies. While many of the consultations were not conducted expressly for the development of NIFA's Strategic Plan, they did have an impact on strategic goals, objectives, strategies, and targets. Our purpose in these consultations is three-fold:

1. Hear constituents' input on issues NIFA can address and build effective coalitions to address those issues
2. Bridge perspectives
3. Continually open new avenues of communication

Appendix C (page 28) summarizes the types of groups with which we collaborate.

APPENDIX E: EXTERNAL RISK FACTORS

External factors for all NIFA goals and objectives include the positive and negative influences of national and global weather and climatic conditions on the agricultural systems of the U.S. and other countries; coordination and cooperation of USDA and other Federal agencies, state agencies, international partners, private sector, growers', and other associations; the range of potential grants and loans recipients, such as farmers, ranchers, businesses, academic research institutions and other private and public sector entities requesting funding under NIFA programs; fluctuations in commodity prices; and the adequacy of market and other information systems.



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This publication is the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's strategic plan for 2014 through 2018, and describes NIFA's national programs and lays out the agency's strategies and activities under four strategic goals that encompass specific objectives and management initiatives.

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