

**2025 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES – OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

*Contents*

Preface..... 1

Agency-Wide ..... 1

    Purpose Statement ..... 1

    OIG and GAO Reports ..... 1

    Available Funds and FTEs ..... 2

    Permanent Positions by Grade and FTEs ..... 2

    Shared Funding Projects..... 3

Account 1: Salaries and Expenses..... 5

    Appropriations Language ..... 5

    Lead-Off Tabular Statement..... 6

    Project Statements ..... 6

    Justification of Changes ..... 7

    Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTEs ..... 8

    Classification by Objects..... 8

    Status of Programs..... 9

This page was intentionally left blank.

***PREFACE***

This publication summarizes the fiscal year (FY) 2025 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the “Budget” is in regard to the 2025 Budget, unless otherwise noted. All references to years refer to fiscal year, except where specifically noted. The budgetary tables throughout this document show actual amounts for 2022 and 2023, annualized Continuing Resolution levels for 2024, and the President’s Budget request for 2025. Amounts for 2024 estimated levels include: non-enacted amounts such as Full-Time Equivalent levels, fleet levels, information technology investment levels, recovery levels, transfers in and out, balances available end of year, and obligation levels.

Throughout this publication, the “2018 Farm Bill” is used to refer to the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Most programs funded by the 2018 Farm Bill are funded through 2023. Amounts shown in 2024 and 2025 for most Farm Bill programs reflect those confirmed in the baseline.

Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, sequestration is included in the numbers for mandatory programs in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

In tables throughout this document, amounts equal to zero (0) are displayed as dashes (-). Amounts less than 0.5 and greater than zero are rounded and shown as a zero (0). This display treatment is used to prevent the masking of non-zero amounts that do not round up to one (1).

***AGENCY-WIDE***

**PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The Office of Communications (OC) was established on June 7, 1913, when the Secretary of Agriculture established the Office of Information as a news service to communicate findings and recommendations of USDA’s scientists and specialists to the widest possible audience. Section 7 CFR Subtitle A, delegates authority for public affairs activities from the Secretary to the Director of OC.

As USDA programs expanded to serve new constituencies beyond its original audiences in remote, rural parts of the country, OC has leveraged digital communications tools and channels to better inform and serve the broader public. OC’s mission is to provide leadership, expertise, management, counsel and coordination that results in successful communication strategies and products that serve and engage the public in a timely, fair, equal, transparent, and easily accessible manner while advancing the mission of USDA and priorities of the Administration.

OC is located in Washington, D.C. As of September 30, 2023, there were 38 permanent full-time employees funded by appropriated funds (34) and the Working Capital Fund (4). Of these employees 36 were located in Washington D.C. and 2 were located in field offices.

**OIG AND GAO REPORTS**

OC did not have any Office of Inspector General or Government Accountability Office evaluation reports during the past year.

**AVAILABLE FUNDS AND FTEs**

**Table OC-1. Available Funds and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations.....	\$7,309	34	\$8,738	36	\$8,738	36	\$11,577	42
Lapsing Balances .....	-105	-	-197	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations .....	7,204	34	8,541	36	8,738	36	11,577	42
Other USDA:								
Politico Pro Subscription .....	117	-	82	-	124	-	125	-
WCF: Creative Media and Broadcast Center.....	6,498	10	18,132	11	7,864	15	7,470	15
Total, Other USDA .....	6,615	10	18,214	11	7,988	15	7,595	15
Total Available, OC .....	13,924	44	14,869	47	7,864	51	7,470	57

**PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTEs**

**Table OC-2. Permanent Positions by Grade and FTEs**

Item	2022			2023			2024			2025		
	D.C.	Field	Actual Total	D.C.	Field	Actual Total	D.C.	Field	Estimated Total	D.C.	Field	Estimated Total
SES.....	2	-	2	3	-	3	2	-	2	2	-	2
GS-15.....	4	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	4
GS-14.....	7	1	8	11	-	11	11	1	12	13	1	14
GS-13.....	5	-	5	5	1	6	8	-	8	9	-	9
GS-12.....	5	1	6	6	1	7	4	1	5	5	1	6
GS-11.....	1	-	1	4	-	4	2	-	2	3	-	3
GS-9.....	-	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	3	4	-	4
Total Permanent.....	28	2	30	36	2	38	34	2	36	40	2	42
Total Perm. FT EOY...	28	2	30	36	2	38	34	2	36	40	2	42
FTE .....	34	-	34	34	2	36	34	2	36	40	2	42

**SHARED FUNDING PROJECTS**

**Table OC-3. Shared Funding Projects (thousands of dollars)**

Item	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated
<b>Working Capital Fund:</b>				
Administrative Services:				
Material Management Service .....	\$16	\$15	\$16	\$15
Mail and Reproduction Services .....	149	143	146	144
Integrated Procurement Systems.....	18	14	16	-
Procurement Operations Services .....	53	73	104	145
Human Resources Enterprise Management Systems.....	1	1	1	1
AskUSDA Contact Center .....	-	3	17	17
Subtotal .....	237	249	300	322
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center .....	1,226	2,618	278	119
Finance and Management:				
National Finance Center .....	12	13	14	13
Financial Shared Services .....	51	65	75	72
Internal Control Support Services.....	-	-	13	11
Personnel and Document Security .....	-	2	2	2
Subtotal .....	63	80	104	98
Information Technology:				
Client Experience Center .....	121	46	333	307
Department Administration Information Technology Office .....	1,442	1,770	1,176	1,168
Digital Infrastructure Services Center .....	179	213	116	109
Enterprise Cybersecurity Services .....	-	11	28	31
Enterprise Data and Analytics Services.....	-	1	2	1
Enterprise Network Services.....	69	45	78	77
Subtotal .....	1,811	2,086	1,733	1,693
Correspondence Management Services:				
Office of the Executive Secretariat .....	5	49	51	37
Total, Working Capital Fund .....	3,342	5,082	2,466	2,269
<b>Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:</b>				
Personnel and Document Security .....	2	-	-	-
Agency Partnership Outreach .....	3	3	4	4
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility .....	-	1	1	1
Medical Services.....	10	33	16	16
National Capital Region Interpreting Services .....	2	11	6	6
Office of Customer Experience .....	4	1	2	2
Physical Security.....	2	2	3	3
Security Detail .....	2	2	3	3
Security Operations Program.....	3	3	4	4
Talent Group .....	-	2	2	2
TARGET Center .....	1	1	1	1
USDA Enterprise Data Analytics Services.....	2	-	-	-
Employee Experience .....	-	1	2	2
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs.....	31	60	44	44
Agency Total.....	3,373	5,142	2,510	2,313

This page was intentionally left blank.

**ACCOUNT 1: SALARIES AND EXPENSES****APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE**

The appropriations language follows (new language underscored; deleted matter enclosed in brackets):

Office of the secretary (Including Transfers of Funds)

For necessary expenses of the Office of the Secretary, [~~\$112,634,000~~]\$103,025,000, of which not to exceed [~~\$34,713,000~~]\$20,669,000 shall be available for the Immediate Office of the Secretary; not to exceed [~~\$2,396,000~~]\$3,174,000 shall be available for the Office of Homeland Security; not to exceed [~~\$6,533,000~~]\$6,613,000 shall be available for the Office of Tribal Relations, of which \$1,000,000 shall be [to establish ]available for a Tribal Public Health Resource Center at a land grant university with existing indigenous public health expertise to expand current partnerships and collaborative efforts with indigenous groups, including but not limited to, tribal organizations and institutions such as tribal colleges, tribal technical colleges, tribal community colleges and tribal universities, to improve the delivery of culturally appropriate public health services and functions in American Indian communities focusing on indigenous food sovereignty; not to exceed [~~\$10,357,000~~]\$9,339,000 shall be available for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), of which \$1,500,000 shall be for 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(5); not to exceed [~~\$37,369,000~~]\$46,944,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration, of which [~~\$35,627,000~~]\$45,207,000 shall be available for Departmental Administration to provide for necessary expenses for management support services to offices of the Department and for general administration, security, repairs and alterations, and other miscellaneous supplies and expenses not otherwise provided for and necessary for the practical and efficient work of the Department, of which \$12,000,000 shall be available for the hire and purchase of zero emission passenger vehicles and supporting charging or fueling infrastructure; *Provided*, That funds made available by this Act to an agency in the Administration mission area for salaries and expenses are available to fund up to one administrative support staff for the Office; not to exceed [~~\$4,727,000~~]\$4,709,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs to carry out the programs funded by this Act, including programs involving intergovernmental affairs and liaison within the executive branch; and not to exceed [~~\$16,539,000~~]\$11,577,000 shall be available for the Office of Communications: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to transfer funds appropriated for any office of the Office of the Secretary to any other office of the Office of the Secretary[: *Provided further*; That, of the funds provided under this heading, up to \$4,000,000 may be transferred to OPPE and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to carry out section 12301 of Public Law 115–334]: *Provided further*, That, of the funds provided under this heading, up to [~~\$20,000,000~~]\$10,000,000 may be transferred to the Farm Service Agency to carry out section [729]727 of title VII of this Act: *Provided further*, That no appropriation for any office shall be increased or decreased by more than 5 percent: *Provided further*; That not to exceed \$22,000 of the amount made available under this paragraph for the Immediate Office of the Secretary shall be available for official reception and representation expenses, not otherwise provided for, as determined by the Secretary: *Provided further*, That the amount made available under this heading for Departmental Administration shall be reimbursed from applicable appropriations in this Act for travel expenses incident to the holding of hearings as required by 5U.S.C. 551-558: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs may be transferred to agencies of the Department of Agriculture funded by this Act to maintain personnel at the agency level: *Provided further*, That no funds made available under this heading for the Office of Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations may be obligated after 30 days from the date of enactment of this Act, unless the Secretary has notified the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress on the allocation of these funds by USDA agency: *Provided further*, That during any 30 day notification period referenced in section 716 of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall take no action to begin implementation of the action that is subject to section 716 of this Act or make any public announcement of such action in any form.

**Change Description**

*The first change* (line 5 of paragraph 1) modifies language for the Tribal Public Health Resource Center that is within the Office of Tribal Relations. The Tribal Public Health Resource Center was previously established, and the language is updated to reflect that the funds are now available.

*The second change* (line 16 of paragraph 1) adds language to include the zero-emission passenger vehicle fleet funding for Departmental Administration.

The third change (line 25 of paragraph 1) removes language that transfers funding from the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture for the Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program.

The fourth change (line 28 of paragraph 1) reflects the updated General Provision section number for the Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Initiative.

**LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT**

**Table OC-4. Lead-Off Tabular Statement (In dollars)**

Item	Amount
Estimate, 2024	\$8,738,000
Change in Appropriation	+2,839,000
Budget Estimate, 2025	<u>11,577,000</u>

**PROJECT STATEMENTS**

**Table OC-5. Project Statement on Basis of Appropriations (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025		FTE	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	Inc. or Dec. Chg Key
Discretionary Appropriations:										
Office of Communication ..	\$7,309	34	\$8,738	36	\$8,738	36	\$11,577	42	+\$2,839	+6 (1)
Transfers In and Out,										
Rescissions .....	175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriation.....	7,484	34	8,738	36	8,738	36	11,577	42	+2,839	+6
Transfers Out:										
Working Capital Funds .....	-175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transfers Out .....	-175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available.....	7,309	34	8,738	36	8,738	36	11,577	42	+2,839	+6
Lapsing Balances .....	-105	-	-197	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations.....	7,204	34	8,541	36	8,738	36	11,577	42	+2,839	+6

**Table OC-6. Project Statement on Basis of Obligations (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025		FTE Inc.	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	or Dec.
Discretionary Obligations:										
Office of Communication ..	\$7,204	34	\$8,541	36	\$8,738	36	\$11,577	42	+\$2,839	+6
Total Obligations.....	7,204	34	8,541	36	8,738	36	11,577	42	+2,839	+6
Add back:										
Lapsing Balances .....	105	-	197	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available.....	7,309	34	8,738	36	8,738	36	11,577	42	+2,839	+6
Less:										
Total Transfers Out .....	175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriation.....	7,484	34	8,738	36	8,738	36	11,577	42	+2,839	+6



**JUSTIFICATION OF CHANGES****Office of Communications**

The base funds will allow the Office of Communications (OC) to carry out its statutory responsibilities and to continue to provide guidance, leadership, counsel, and coordination for the Department's public information activities for programs, policies, and activities to support America's farmers, foresters, producers, and ranchers. OC serves as the key USDA contact point for dissemination of consistent, timely information to the public. In addition to appropriated funding used for human resources operational services, current year and budget year base funds may also be used to support expedited and enhanced classification, staffing and processing efforts.

The numbers and letters of the following listing relates to values in the Change (Chg) Key column of the Project Statement:

1. An increase of \$2,839,000 and 6 FTEs in salaries and expenses for the Office of Communications programs (\$8,738,00 and 36 FTEs available in 2024).
  - a) An increase of \$239,000 for pay and employee costs in the Office of Communications programs. This increase will support an annualization of the 2024 5.2 percent Cost of Living pay increase and the 2025 2.0 percent Cost of Living pay increase. These funds are necessary to ensure the continuation without interruption of the services for citizens performed by the Office of Communications. The office provides the communications infrastructure that supports all USDA agencies and staff offices. The many services provided include informing rural Americans via USDA Radio stories and features and engaging audiences via the USDA.gov and Farmers.gov websites. Other important work includes the prompt Government Printing Office (GPO) Stylebook review of USDA reports from the Agricultural Research Service, the Economic Research Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service, and the Food and Nutrition Service. Also important is the ability of the Department to engage with our workforce spread across the Nation utilizing the OneUSDA intranet site and its agency subsites. The office also oversees and coordinates with GPO for all USDA print needs, ensuring agencies receive maximum value while minimizing costs.
  - b) An increase of \$2,000,000 and 2 FTEs to increase public access to information about Federal resources, programs, and services in multiple languages. To comply with Executive Orders directing Federal agencies to ensure everyone has meaningful access to USDA's Federally conducted and federally assisted services, these funds will integrate additional language resources to the USDA.gov website. The Department will identify those documents deemed vital, targeting them for automated routine translation and human translators respectively. The vital documents screening is necessary to ensure all taxpayers have meaningful access to important written communication. Such public communication is essential to serve all Americans by providing effective, innovative, science-based policy leadership in agriculture, food and nutrition, natural resource protection and management, rural development, and related issues with a commitment to delivering equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive.
  - c) An increase of \$600,000 and 4 FTEs for critical mission support. This increase would facilitate the creation of the Analysis and Evaluation Division, fundamentally increasing the effectiveness of USDA's communications to farmers, foresters, producers, and ranchers and providing the data necessary to make real-time informed decisions in a changing communications landscape. While several large agencies have the capacity to perform real-time media tracking, analysis and report results, the Office of Communications does not have an equal capability. Utilizing commercial-off-the-shelf software to monitor USDA communications efforts directed at consumers, farmers, ranchers, rural Americans, and other constituents will lead to better decision-making based on data and wiser resource decisions. Such data-based decisions include the USDA.gov website, USDA radio and video products, and social media channels. The group would be responsible for working with USDA agencies and staff offices to develop strategic recommendations on improving their public facing outreach based on actual data. USDA is committed to developing evidence-based policy and evaluation plans, as required by the Evidence-Based Policy-making Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-435).

**GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs**

*Table OC-7. Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)*

State/Territory/Country	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
District of Columbia .....	\$6,887	32	\$8,222	34	\$8,409	34	\$11,234	40
North Carolina .....	207	1	205	1	210	1	218	1
Wisconsin.....	110	1	114	1	119	1	125	1
Obligations.....	7,204	34	8,541	36	8,738	36	11,577	42
Lapsing Balances .....	105	-	197	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available.....	7,309	34	8,738	36	8,738	36	11,577	42

**CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS**

*Table OC-8 Classification by Objects (thousands of dollars)*

Item No.	Item	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated
	Personnel Compensation:				
	Washington D.C.....	\$3,772	\$4,543	\$4,976	\$5,941
	Personnel Compensation, Field .....	212	214	329	343
11	Total personnel compensation .....	3,984	4,757	5,305	6,284
12	Personal benefits .....	1,564	1,772	1,869	2,214
13.0	Benefits for former personnel .....	1	5	5	5
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits .....	5,549	6,534	7,179	8,503
	Other Objects:				
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons .....	66	91	90	120
22.0	Transportation of things.....	-	1	1	2
23.1	Rental payments to GSA.....	4	5	5	6
23.3	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges.....	303	360	360	400
24.0	Printing and reproduction .....	16	13	15	20
25	Other contractual services.....	-	371	488	1,866
25.1	Advisory and assistance services.....	904	224	240	250
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources .....	34	9	40	50
25.4	Operation and maintenance of facilities .....	61	820	65	75
25.5	Research and development contracts.....	21	-	25	35
26.0	Supplies and materials .....	159	34	140	150
31.0	Equipment.....	87	79	90	100
	Total, Other Objects.....	1,655	2,007	1,559	3,074
99.9	Total, new obligations.....	7,204	8,541	8,738	11,577
	DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3)	\$8	\$11	\$9	\$10
	<b>Mission Area Non-Major Investment Totals</b>	-	-	-	-
	Mission Area Standard Investment Totals.....	291	396	1,196	200
25.3	Mission Area WCF Transfers .....	2,186	-	-	-
	Total Non-Major Investment .....	2,477	396	1,196	200
	<b>Total IT Investments .....</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>1,196</b>	<b>200</b>
	Position Data:				
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position .....	\$181,000	\$181,000	\$190,000	\$194,000
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position.....	\$121,577	\$129,000	\$135,000	\$138,000
	Average Grade, GS Position.....	13.5	13.6	13.7	13.7

**STATUS OF PROGRAMS**

The Office of Communication delivers information concerning USDA's programs, policies, and activities to the American people by disseminating information through media outlets and directly to farmers, consumers, environmentalists, the business community, and other interest groups. The success of the Department's initiatives relies on effective communication and public education campaigns, making it easier for the public to access information on the Department's programs. OC has also taken on an increasingly important role in coordinating USDA's communications during emergencies or other incidents – that potentially affect large segments of the public or industry.

**Current Activities****Creative Media and Broadcast Center (CMBC)**

CMBC is a central USDA resource for high-quality and cost-effective communications products and services. CMBC provides strategic communication planning solutions and tactical development, creation, production, and distribution. CMBC creates a wide range of communication products, including video and audio, print, exhibits, and photographs. CMBC provides services to agencies for information campaigns, training, radio and video public service announcements, webcasts, visitor centers, and remote media interviews.

CMBC essential services create and disseminate communications for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Sub-Cabinet and mission areas. CMBC promotes the integrated use of traditional media and social media outreach. CMBC creative production services are provided to headquarters, regional, and local USDA offices, and, upon request, to other government agencies on a reimbursable basis.

CMBC includes the USDA Photography group that provides services including photojournalism, portraiture, multimedia productions, scientific, and photographic research. Photography also produces content to support social media channels including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram. Photography works with OC's Editorial Review to verify photographic quality and subject content, copyright and clearances for all images used in publications, and ensure images are supported by key words and metadata. Photography also provides imagery for internal and external audiences through USDA's Flickr photo stream web site: [www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/). The group maintains standards for all USDA photography acquisition and provides photographic training for agency Public Affairs Specialists and supports the Office of the Secretary with press and event photography.

CMBC also includes the USDA Radio service. Two producers create six to twenty broadcast-ready radio reports and actualities on weekdays covering USDA news and programs. In addition, they also produce eleven feature stories weekly, covering the consumer and agriculture. USDA Radio content is available for web download by the public and listeners can subscribe for email delivery.

**Digital Communications Division (DCD)**

The DCD manages and maintains the USDA.gov web portal, ensuring content is available, accessible, and relevant to the Department's diverse stakeholders. DCD coordinates its digital communication efforts with the press office, providing expertise in web communications, online community engagement, and social media tactics. The group also supports agency and program area communications, evaluating web and social media analytics for USDA.gov and agency websites to better understand our users and their access of the Department's information and services.

Analytic trends are incorporated in ongoing communication planning efforts and web content strategies. The DCD team manages the USDA.gov search tool and seeks to optimize web content for search engines. The DCD team manages the Department's official social media assets such as the USDA X, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, and the USDA Blog. DCD works collaboratively with agency web and communication teams and chairs the Social Media Council and Web Council within the Department, communicating best practices, Federal and USDA web initiatives, USDA web design and functionality guidance, and information about emerging tools or technologies. Additionally, DCD collaborates with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, public affairs directors, and program employees to ensure that web communication and social media programs effectively support the Department's mission. The DCD develops and maintains current policy on the official use of social media, new media, and digital communications, and provides the standards and guidance to all USDA digital efforts.

**Events, Print and Editorial Review (EPER) Division**

The Printing Services group within EPER remains the Department’s central printing authority and liaison with the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) and the Congressional Joint Committee on Printing. The group consults with, advises, instructs, and assists the agency printing specialists, administrative officers, editors, publications writers, and information specialists on the most economical and effective printing methods and procedures.

The Constituent Affairs group within EPER manages briefings at USDA headquarters with major stakeholders, including national and international delegations. The Constituent Affairs team collaborates with USDA Intergovernmental Affairs to support in-person visitation.

EPER’s Editorial Review group provides Departmental oversight for USDA’s publishing activities. Providing the final Departmental clearance of traditional and online publications before going out to the public, the group ensures compliance with Federal regulations and USDA Departmental Regulations and guidelines, including photography copyright reviews.

EPER shares responsibility with Digital Communications for providing strategic planning and oversight for the use of the USDA brand across all media. Implementation of the “One USDA” brand has increased visibility for USDA’s wide-ranging products and services. Brand management also ensures that the logo is used only where authorized, providing assurances to the public that the Department stands behind products and services that carry the USDA logo.

EPER assumed responsibility for Department internal communications, including the USDA intranet, in 2020 and oversees the development of an enterprise internet solution for the Department and all sub-agencies. A full transition to this solution is expected by 2026. The group works closely with OC’s Digital Communications to manage content for the USDA intranet. This group also manages all-employee emails and collaboratively drafts and clears all internal communications to employees from the Office of the Secretary.

**Administration, Budget, and Customer Service (ABCS) Division**

The ABCS group is a central point of contact for external customer service and is responsible for budget formulation, preparation, justification, forecasting, and execution, as well as for coordinating all human resources tasks and providing administrative support to OC. Included in these support services are facilities and property management, oversight of telecommunications services, and the processing of all training, travel, and procurement requests.

**Press Operations (PO)**

PO provides outreach to media outlets and responds to reporter’s questions about the overall mission of the Department as well as the Secretary’s priorities. Communication Coordinators work with USDA Agencies and Staff Office communications staff to provide the leadership, expertise, counsel and coordination needed to develop communications plans and implement strategies vital to the overall formulation and awareness of USDA programs and policies. In addition, PO coordinates public and media communications for the Office of the Secretary and assists USDA mission areas and staff offices in developing plans for effective crafting and dissemination of information about their programs.

**Speechwriting**

The Speechwriting section of OC compiles briefings and drafts speeches, Op-Eds, and other remarks for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, as well as provides message guidance to USDA staff.

**Selected Examples of Recent Progress****Administration, Budget, and Customer Service (ABCS) Division**

The ABCS group represents the USDA Staff offices to the USDA Customer Experience Office, answering 1,888 telephone and written correspondence inquiries, responded to 91 e-mails, and created, reviewed, updated, and uploaded 167 knowledge articles in the Department-wide Ask USDA Information Hotline for 2023.

**Events, Print and Editorial Review (EPER) Division**

The USDA Brand gives consistent identity to the Department, increases public recognition of the value and wide range of USDA's products and services, and brings economy of scale to the production of visual information materials. Additionally, Events, Print and Editorial Review updated the style and branding guides for the agency and added plain language and inclusive language guidance to the USDA Style Guide.

EPER's Editorial Review team reviewed and cleared more than 400 final products in a timely manner to meet deadlines of agencies and offices.

EPER's departmental-level Printing Services group completed printing requests for USDA agencies. USDA completed more than 1,000 print projects utilizing all printing programs including GPO Express program to ensure the best customer service with the most cost-efficient printing process. The Print Operating Data System built on an Enterprise-wide platform is in active use by the Natural Agricultural Statistics Service, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center, the U.S. Forest Service Office of Communications, and OC. Development is underway to implement the system to manage and track printing procurement throughout the Department.

In 2023, USDA continued work to re-envision the stove piped system of internal communications centered around USDA's 29 separate staff offices and program areas and apply enterprise thinking to build a single system to ensure all employees received timely, actionable information. OneUSDA has been expanded to include space for agency subsites in developing communication tools to transform the USDA workforce culture and support the development of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessible programs and policies that are central to delivering more equitable and fair outcomes for our customers. A steering committee made up of representatives from all mission areas and many staff offices was established and is actively guiding future development.

OneUSDA Intranet accomplishments for 2023 include 60 Secretary and Deputy Secretary messages informing staff of important policy changes ranging from the rollout of equity programs and directives including new policies for: return to work, telework and remote work; COVID 19 response; mitigating and reporting workplace harassment; new required trainings in unconscious bias; and many others promoting nationally recognized months and holidays related to the promotion of civil rights. Messages also supported annual CFC and Feds Feed Families giving campaigns, the People's Garden, the USDA Farmers Market, Facilities announcements, as well as Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey promotion and reporting.

Other accomplishments in 2023 include the creation of 120 events pages to advertise a range of civil rights and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility trainings and celebrations to build a common culture that embraces a diverse workforce representative of all our customers and stakeholders. Twenty-seven topic pages were designed highlighting employee resources and staff office content to promote accessibility to employee services and programs. These pages included working closely with the OCIO, Civil Rights and OHRM to build and create an online inclusive hiring guide, and a hiring guide for supervisors and managers. Additionally, 35 employee highlight pages were created with emphasis on lifting up unsung USDA heroes, spotlighting the breadth of the workforce, and showcasing the value of USDA staff.

**Creative Media and Broadcast Center (CMBC)**

CMBC supported USDA leadership and mission areas, delivering timely messages to the public and employees.

Center team provided support and coverage for news conferences with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Chief Economist, and other leadership. The Creative team documented NRCS, FSA and FS program efforts to create outreach and training videos. Project support continued for prevention of African Swine Fever and Avian Influenza outreach efforts with APHIS. CMBC worked with NASS on marketing the successful AG Census participation effort.

Photography Services images and video clips posted had over 11 million total views on USDA's Flickr photostream, [www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/). Photography team reviewed 72 editorial clearances for USDA Agencies.

USDA Radio – Two radio producers created 2,316 news items in 2023. USDA Radio also produced 572 features – 52 Agriculture USA documentaries, 260 Consumer Time features and 260 Ag Update features. News and feature reports are available for download at [www.usda.gov/media/radio](http://www.usda.gov/media/radio).

**Digital Communications Division (DCD)**

USDA Web Modernization – OC’s DCD effectively managed USDA’s Web Modernization Initiative by leading OC, in partnership with the Office of the Secretary, the Office of Customer Experience and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), to create the strategies, planning, development of project plans, and design and technical migration of website look and feel and hosting environments to USDA’s common Enterprise Web Application Platform System. DCD successfully transferred all Staff Office websites from separate hosting environments to hosting under the USDA.gov domain. With the consolidation of all USDA web assets onto a single platform operated by USDA’s OCIO’s Departmental Administration Information Technology Office, all Department web applications share a common platform which means agencies benefit from sharing the costs for development, security, hosting, and system administration. For example, the hosting environment OCIO operates allows for a variable number of servers to provide the pre-production and production infrastructure, allowing USDA to provision and de-provision servers as need along with pooled costs for hosting, maintenance, and security. Customers benefit from a consistent overall look and feel, no matter what agency within USDA.gov they are searching.

Digital Magazine – USDA primarily utilizes web and social media to provide information and resources to our large and broad audience. These audiences range from farmers to researchers, students to educators, and many more. With so many priorities and programs, USDA looks to go beyond what our websites offer by creating an online digital magazine called "USDA Stories". Unlike our website which houses mostly administrative content, USDA Stories shares the work USDA does across all program areas in a visually appealing way that is easy to read and share, using a modern storytelling platform. Stories are visually driven with high quality videos, photographs, artwork and graphic design elements such as infographics and charts. Unlike press releases and blogs, submitted stories should be significant and impactful. Selected stories may be used for USDA's new online feature, but they may also be integrated into the Department's messaging and highlighted through social media, press releases and news articles.

USDA.gov Redesign – In 2022, the Office of Communications embarked on a large-scale redesign project for USDA.gov to meet the growing needs of our customers and employees. With the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Idea Act requiring US Web Design System (USWDS) adoption, the USDA.gov redesign is a blueprint for all USDA agencies with web presences to follow in order to meet the requirements. The redesign process is scheduled to launch in 2024.

**Press Operations (PO)**

The Press Operations group arranged interviews with international, national and local media for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, averaging 4-6 interviews per week, to increase awareness and build support for USDA programs and priorities. Additionally, PO worked with agencies to respond to press inquiries, craft communications plans, and drafted and edited press materials, while also staffing and gathering press for teleconference press calls on major Department announcements.

**Speechwriting**

OC’s Speechwriting group prepared speeches, briefings and remarks for use by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and subcabinet and researched and interviewed event planners to ensure that remarks matched up with audience expectations and were appropriate for each audience makeup, in terms of topics of interest and including information specific to each audience.