Agricultural Marketing Service

Human Capital Plan

FY 2015-2018

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Message from Leadership

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has a long, rich tradition of providing excellent programs and services to agricultural producers and industry. At AMS, our mission is to facilitate a nationwide system that quickly and efficiently moves wholesome, affordable agricultural products from the farm to the consumer. Doing that takes a team with strong collaboration skills, and the ability to adapt and innovate in the face of rapidly changing conditions.

We operate at a high level of efficiency and are known around the world for quality. To maintain these standards we need to attract and train new employees while benefiting from the professional experience of our long-term staff. We also benefit from strong partnerships forged with other USDA agencies and with departments across the government. Our private and State partners are also indispensable. Collaborating with our stakeholders, and telling their stories, helps document our past success and set the stage for new opportunities both here in America and internationally.

Over the remaining four-year life of this Plan, AMS will continue to set ambitious workforce goals to enable us to meet the requirements of our mission through empowering our employees and planning for what comes next. We are working to recruit a diverse workforce that reflects the changing demographics of the American population, and reaching out across the country to show potential recruits the amazing career opportunities AMS offers.

The complete list of our revised human capital goals is in Appendix F on page 50. There you will see how this year's plan has been amended to meet AMS and department strategic goals.

It is an honor to lead this great Agency, which includes a highly talented, exceptionally educated, dedicated group of professionals. As employees of this organization I encourage you to focus on our mission, which is to serve the people of the United States and consumers of quality and nutritious food worldwide.

Elanor Starmer
AMS Administrator

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I. Introduction

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) facilitates marketing by providing the agriculture industry with valuable services that help ensure the quality and availability of wholesome food for consumers throughout the U.S. The Agency has an annual budget of approximately $1.5 billion. Nearly 2/3 of the Agency's operational budget for workforce is derived through voluntary user-fee services. Much of the Agency's overall funding is directed toward commodity purchases in support of Federal food assistance programs.

AMS programs and activities provide the basic infrastructure to improve market competitiveness to benefit consumers and producers of American agriculture. American agriculture is incredibly diverse and includes operations of every size. It supports 1 in 12 U.S. jobs, and provides safe, affordable food to consumers across the globe. The economic vitality and quality of life in America, and the U.S. economy at large, is dependent on a competitive, efficient and productive agricultural system. A system that encompasses farmers, growers, ranchers and distributors along with business owners of every size who support each other in a challenging global, technologically advanced and competitive business environment. In an era of market consolidation and intense competition, this industry relies upon fair and open access to markets and the vital data, analysis and oversight that AMS provides.

AMS recognizes that meeting these challenges requires a dedicated and skilled workforce. This Human Capital Plan provides direction for addressing the workforce management challenges and opportunities that face us every day.

Overview of Human Capital Planning

The AMS Human Capital Plan (HCP) has a single focus: ensuring our Agency has the human resources needed to accomplish our short- and long-term goals. It provides a sweeping operational view of the agricultural and administrative environments that should enhance our workforce's ability to deliver our programs. Through the HCP, AMS can take a truly strategic approach to staffing because the plan encompasses and coordinates the major planning documents the Agency creates, including:

- Budgets
- Various Agency and program strategic plans
- Agency and program operational plans
- The AMS Hiring and Employee Development (AHED) Plan
- The Field Employee Engagement Task Force Action Plan
- The AMS Special Emphasis Plan
- The AMS Recruitment Plan

Integral to this report, the Office of Personnel Management will for the first time review Department-wide Agency plans to ensure they are connecting future workload and staffing needs to program results. USDA has created a HCP online portal to integrate all of its agencies' plans, and AMS' HCP is completely integrated into this system. This Department-wide application captures three critical planning elements for each USDA agency:

- Who we are (our current workforce)
- What we do (our critical career positions, the competencies needed for them, skill gaps, and programmatic changes impacting the workforce)
- Where we're going (internal and external changes we can expect and our response to them)

The AMS Mission: Facilitate the strategic marketing of agricultural products in domestic and international markets, while ensuring fair trading practices and promoting a competitive and efficient marketplace to the benefit of producers, traders, and consumers of U.S. food and fiber products.

The AMS Vision: A marketing system that quickly and efficiently moves wholesome, affordable agricultural products from producers and traders to markets.

Strategic Goals and Initiatives: AMS has six strategic goals (see next section) that describe major areas of emphasis and will enable the AMS to accomplish its mission, achieve its vision and uphold its values of independence, objectivity, customer service, accountability, honesty, integrity and diversity. While AMS supports all of the USDA FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan goals, three are directly tied to the plan:

<u>USDA</u>

- **Goal 1:** Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so they are Self-sustaining, Repopulating and Economically Thriving (specifically Objective 1.2 – Increase Agricultural Opportunities by Ensuring a Robust Safety Net, Creating New Markets and Supporting a Competitive Agricultural System),
- **Goal 4:** Ensure that all of America's Children have Access to Safe, Nutritious and Balanced Meals, and
- **Goal 5:** Create a USDA for the 21st Century that is High-performing, Efficient and Adaptable.

<u>AMS</u>

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Enhance Outreach between Stakeholders and AMS Programs

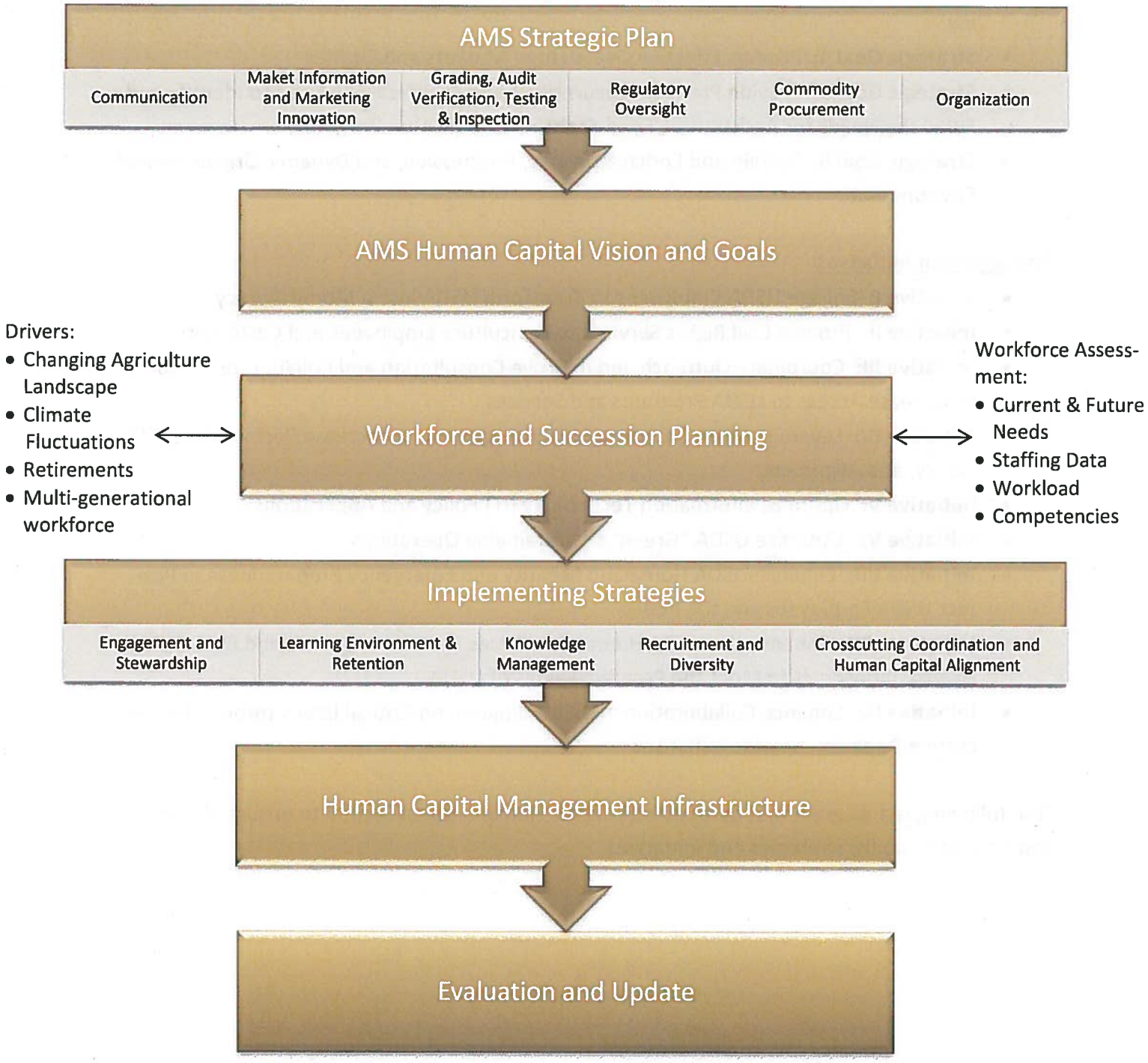
- **Strategic Goal 2:** Provide Market Information and Intelligence and Support the Development of New Markets
- **Strategic Goal 3:** Provide Quality Claims and Analyses to Facilitate Agricultural Marketing
- **Strategic Goal 4:** Provide Effective Oversight of Markets and Entities
- **Strategic Goal 5:** Provide Premier Procurement and Technical Solutions to Identify and Fulfill the Needs for Agricultural, Food Assistance, and Other Programs
- **Strategic Goal 6:** Sustain and Enrich a Diverse, Progressive, and Dynamic Organizational Environment

Management Initiatives

- **Initiative I:** Engage USDA Employees to Transform USDA into a Model Agency
- **Initiative II:** Provide Civil Rights Services to Agriculture Employees and Customers
- **Initiative III:** Coordinate Outreach and Improve Consultation and Collaboration Efforts to Increase Access to USDA Programs and Services
- **Initiative IV:** Leverage USDA Departmental Management to Increase Performance, Efficiency, and Alignment
- **Initiative V:** Optimize Information Technology (IT) Policy and Applications
- **Initiative VI:** Optimize USDA "Green" or Sustainable Operations
- **Initiative VII:** Enhance USDA Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness to Protect USDA Employees and the Public
- **Initiative VIII:** Enhance the USDA Human Resources Process to Recruit and Hire Skilled, Diverse Individuals to Meet the Program Needs of USDA
- **Initiative IX:** Enhance Collaboration and Coordination on Critical Issues through Cross-cutting Department wide initiatives

The following is a diagram that demonstrates AMS' Human Capital System to ensure alignment with changing goals, strategies and initiatives.

AMS Human Capital Management System



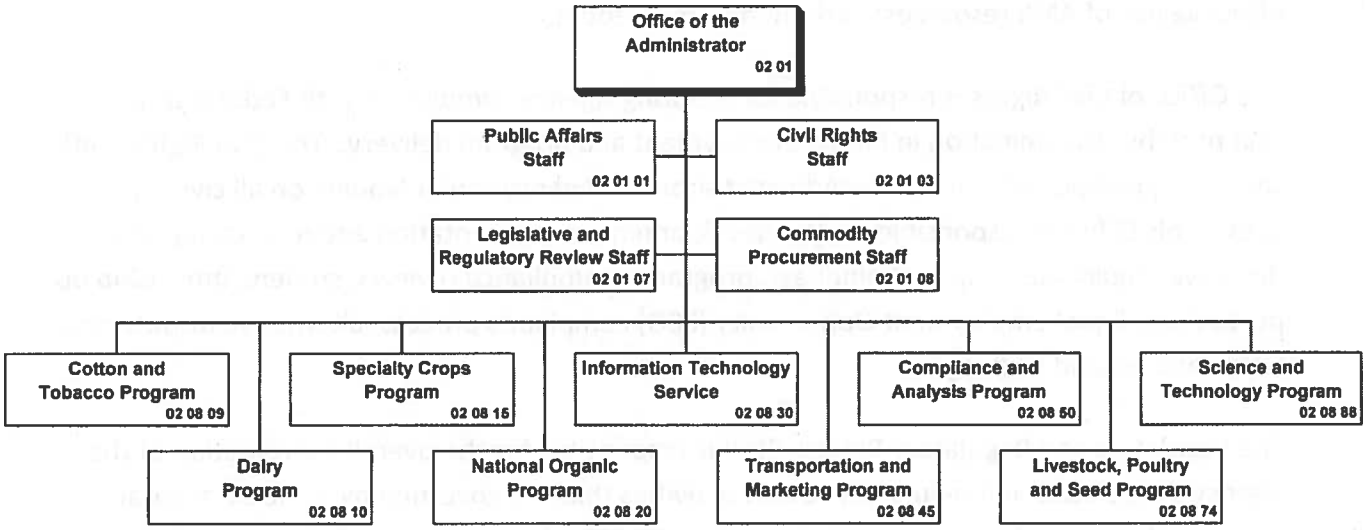
Agricultural Marketing Service Organizational Structure

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

Supercedes AMS chart dated September 13, 2012

APPROVED: _____
Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs

DATE: _____



The mission of the Agricultural Marketing Service is to facilitate the competitive and efficient marketing of agricultural products.

AMS facilitates marketing by providing the agriculture industry with valuable services that help ensure the quality and availability of food and fiber for consumers throughout the U.S. The Agency supports agriculture through a variety of programs and organizations, which include the Office of the Administrator and Staff Offices; Compliance and Analysis Program; Cotton and Tobacco Program; Dairy Program; Information Technology Service; Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program; National Organic Program; Science and Technology Program; Specialty Crops Program; and Transportation and Marketing Program.

These programs carry out the following activities:

The Office of the Administrator and Staff Offices

The Office of the Administrator and Staff Offices, including Civil Rights, Legislative and Regulatory Review, Commodity Procurement and Public Affairs are responsible for formulation and oversight of AMS mission, policies and program operations that facilitate the efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops and are used to carry out the broad agricultural regulatory, marketing and inspection programs conducted by AMS.

To support the USDA and AMS missions, values and goals, the Office of the Administrator and Staff Offices administer a variety of management activities for all AMS programs to ensure the effective use of AMS resources; both money and people.

The Office of Civil Rights is responsible for ensuring Agency compliance with Federal statutes that prohibit discrimination in hiring, employment and program delivery. The Civil Rights staff serves as principle advisors to the Administrator and Agency senior leaders on all civil rights issues. This Office is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of affirmative employment, special emphasis programs, compliance reviews, student/internship opportunities, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints process, alternative dispute resolution and related training.

The Legislative and Regulatory Review Staff is responsible for the overall coordination of the Agency's legislative and regulatory review activities that are governed by some 50 separate statutes, the Agency's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) activities and the Agency's Information Collection activities.

The Outreach Office, which is housed in the Transportation and Marketing Program, supports and serves all of our stakeholders; from Farm Bill supported grants to organic certification; grading services to plant variety protection, AMS has a lot to offer. In conjunction with the Department's Office of Advocacy and Outreach, our Outreach staff is focused on:

- Improving the viability and profitability of small and beginning farmers and ranchers
- Improving knowledge of and access to USDA programs for historically underserved communities
- Closing the professional achievement gap by providing opportunities to talented and diverse young people to support the agricultural industry in the 21st century
- Improving diversity on USDA advisory boards and committees

The Public Affairs office works responsibly with news media of all types so that AMS messaging is clearly understood by the Agency's numerous internal and external stakeholders as well as consumers nationwide.

They plan, coordinate, execute and evaluate AMS internal and external communications, enhancing the Agency's brand and protecting its reputation as the trusted authority consumers, stakeholders and USDA employees can rely on to ensure the quality and wholesomeness of agricultural commodities moving into the commercial marketplace.

AMS' Commodity Procurement Staff (CP) purchase a variety of domestically produced and processed commodity food products, through a competitive process among approved vendors. These purchases support American agriculture by encouraging the consumption of domestic foods. CP manages the Web-Based Supply Chain Management System, the fully integrated, web-based ordering and procurement system used for the purchase of USDA Foods. Some of the purchases help producers provide an outlet for surplus products. The wholesome, high quality products, collectively called USDA Foods, are delivered to schools, food banks and households in communities across the country and are a vital component of our nation's food safety net.

Compliance & Analysis Program

The Compliance and Analysis (C&A) Program is an internal Agency program that provides a wide range of professional services to AMS to help carry out its mission. C&A services include: analysis and information that supports decision-making; administrative management; employee safety and stewardship of facilities and resources; homeland security; compliance and investigations; budget and performance monitoring; financial management procedures and monitoring; strategic planning; management tools and reform initiatives that support mission achievement; and process improvement activities.

Cotton & Tobacco Program

The Cotton and Tobacco Program, based in Memphis, Tennessee, supports the orderly and efficient marketing of U.S. cotton, domestically and internationally, by providing unbiased classification, standardization, market news and oversight of the research and promotion program. The Cotton and Tobacco Program:

1. Provides third-party user-fee cotton classification services, and cotton classification data to cotton industry, government and academic stakeholders.
2. Collects cotton classification data, creates reports and disseminates timely and current price and supply information to aid buyers and sellers in assessing market conditions and in making purchase and sale decisions.
3. Creates and distributes physical cotton grade standards and calibration standards for use by private and government entities throughout the world.
4. Oversees the research and promotion activities of the Cotton Board, under the Cotton Research and Promotion Act.
5. Provides official grade standards and conducts pesticide testing services to tobacco industry, academic, and Federal government stakeholders.

Dairy Program

The Dairy Program helps the U.S. dairy industry efficiently market high-quality milk and dairy products. It also ensures that U.S. consumers have access to a sufficient supply of these products at all times. They help the industry market U.S. dairy products worldwide by providing international programs and services, including export certification services.

The Dairy Grading Program provides buyers and sellers with an impartial evaluation of product quality so businesses and consumers can buy with confidence. Dairy Standardization develops the dairy grade standards used in the grading appraisal process. Through its dairy market news and mandatory dairy commodity price reporting, the Dairy Program provides timely and accurate market information on milk and dairy products. This information assists the dairy industry in making buying and selling decisions and in planning for the future. They also administer Federal Milk Marketing Orders, which are Federal rules requested by the industry to make the buying and selling of fluid milk an orderly, dependable process for U.S. dairy farmers, milk dealers and consumers.

The Dairy Program also oversees two research and promotion programs, whose goals are to expand domestic and foreign markets and uses for U.S. fluid milk and dairy products. The Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Program focuses on fluid milk, while the Dairy Research and Promotion Program focuses on dairy products.

Information Technology Service

The Information Technology Service (ITS) provides technology support services to all of the Agency's business units and is responsible for guiding the effective and efficient use of information technology across AMS.

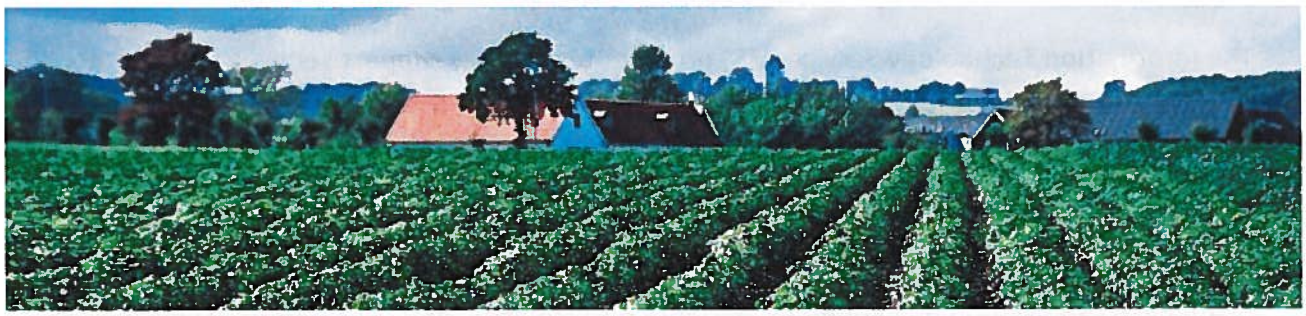
ITS supports the Agency's strategic goals and USDA's strategic IT priorities by keeping AMS' technology investments business-driven, solution-oriented and sustainable. From investment planning, to application development, network performance, and user support, their service helps Agency programs use information technology to successfully deliver their mission in the 21st Century.

Livestock, Poultry & Seed Program

The Livestock, Poultry and Seed (LPS) Program is a team of 850 Federal and an additional 850 State employees who operate under Federal oversight through cooperative agreements the Program has with all 50 States. This work is carried out by seven different LPS Divisions. LPS administers a wide range of the Agency's programs related to the livestock, meat, poultry, egg, fish, grain and seed industries as well as regulatory and support functions that extend to other commodities as well.

The programs include retail country of origin and method of production labeling programs, quality grading services, seed testing services, domestic and export auditing, process verification and accreditation services, mandatory and voluntary market news reporting services, economic and statistical analysis services, oversight of six research and promotion programs, and food product specification development and acceptance services for Federal food and nutrition programs including the National School Lunch Program.

National Organic Program



The National Organic Program (NOP) is a regulatory program that is responsible for developing national standards for organically-produced agricultural products. These standards assure consumers that products with the USDA organic seal meet consistent, uniform standards.

The NOP key activities include:

- Maintain the list of certified organic operations and help new farmers and businesses learn how to get certified
- Develop regulations and guidance on organic standards
- Manage the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances
- Accredit certifying agents to certify organic producers and handlers
- Establish international organic import and export policies
- Investigate and take action on regulatory violation complaints
- Facilitate the work of the National Organic Standards Board , a Federal Advisory Committee
- Provide training to certifying agents, USDA staff and other stakeholders
- Engage and serve the organic community

Science and Technology Program

The Science & Technology (S&T) Program provides scientific, certification and analytical support services to the agricultural community to improve the quality, wholesomeness and marketing of agricultural products domestically and internationally. S&T supports AMS and other USDA Agencies, Federal and State agencies and private sector food and agricultural industries. S&T is organized into three areas: Laboratory Approval & Testing Division (LATD); Monitoring Programs Division (MPD); and the Plant Variety Protection Office (PVPO).

The LATD provides lab testing and approval services to facilitate domestic and international marketing of food and agricultural commodities. The National Science Laboratories (NSL) is a fee-for-service lab network utilized by both industry and government. Through laboratories located in Gastonia, NC; Blakely and Dawson, GA; and Winter Haven, FL, NSL provides chemical, microbiological and bio-molecular analyses on food and agricultural commodities. They also approve, or accredit, labs to perform testing services in support of domestic and international trade.

The MPD administers the Pesticide Data Program (PDP). PDP is a national pesticide residue data program. Through cooperation with State agriculture departments and other Federal agencies, PDP manages the collection, analysis and reporting of pesticide residues on agricultural commodities in the U.S. food supply, with an emphasis on those commodities highly consumed by infants and children. PDP data are used primarily by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to conduct ongoing evaluations of consumers' dietary exposure to pesticides.

PVPO provides intellectual property protection to breeders of new varieties of seeds and tubers. We examine new applications and grant certificates that protect varieties for 20 years (25 years for vines and trees). The certificates are recognized worldwide and allow faster filing of foreign PVP applications. Certificate owners have exclusive rights to market and sell their varieties, manage the use of their varieties by other breeders and enjoy legal protection of their work.

Specialty Crops Program

The Specialty Crops Program (SCP) helps buyers and sellers of all sizes in the U.S. produce industry to market their perishable products in the most efficient manner. We partner with State agencies and other industry organizations for the benefit of nationwide growers, shippers, brokers, receivers, processors, retailers and restaurants, direct to consumer sales, and the foodservice industry.

To carry out its mission, SCP is organized into the following divisions: Market News, Marketing Order and Agreements, Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, Promotion and Economics, and Specialty Crop Inspection. The program offers a wide array of services that span from helping market the quality of products to ensuring that there is fair trade in the produce industry. The program also helps specialty crop growers and handlers to combine their resources to help their respective industries overcome marketing barriers.

Transportation & Marketing Program

The Transportation and Marketing (T&M) Program supports local and regional food systems and increasing consumer access to fresh, healthy foods in our community. T&M's programs, grants and services help small- and mid-sized producers with marketing opportunities through the combination of applied research, technical services and grant support.

The program also serves as the expert source for economic analysis on agricultural transportation from farm to markets through transportation market reports, regulatory representation and technical assistance.

T&M administers farmers market and local food grant programs to help farmers and ranchers market the food they produce, including programs that further farmers markets, local food systems and specialty crops, such as fruit and vegetables.

The USDA Farmers Market and People's Garden located at the Headquarters building serves as a "living laboratory" for farmers markets and community gardens. T&M manages USDA's Local Food Directories, a set of online resources that are designed to provide customers with convenient access to information about farmers market, Community Supported Agriculture, on-farm markets and food hubs locations, directions, hours, product offerings and accepted forms of payment.

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II. AMS Workforce Profile

Workforce Profile Overview: The Workforce Profile provides the demographic data of the AMS workforce. The information shows current and projected workforce trends to help AMS leaders make decisions related to the future workforce. The profile data is intended to provide a snapshot of the AMS workforce. Understanding the composition of the workforce and the changing demographics is crucial in determining how to best focus efforts.

Category	Description
Employee Strength	As of September 10, 2015, AMS had a total workforce of 3,602 employees - 2,008 permanent and 1,594 nonpermanent.
Mission Critical Occupations	There are 2,755 employees in mission critical occupations. This represents 76.5% of the total workforce.
Occupation Distribution of Employees	Across all occupational series, 76.5% of the total workforce are in one of the following top 6 occupational series: GS-0301- Miscellaneous Administration and Program – 1.3%, GS-1102 - Contracting – 0.7%, GS-1146 - AG Marketing Specialist – 8.0%, GS-1147 - AG Market Reporter – 3.9%, GS-1980 - AG Commodity Grader – 36.6%, and GS-1981 - AG Commodity Grader Aid – 26.0%.
Average Age	The average age of the AMS workforce is 46 and median age is 49.
Length of Service	The average length of service is over 15 years for a permanent employee and under one year for non-permanent employee.
Supervisor	Supervisors represent approximately 9.4% of the total workforce.
Gender	Females represent 56.3% and males 43.7% of the total workforce.
Retirement Eligibility	Currently, 22% of the total workforce (926 employees) are eligible for retirement. Over the next five years, approximately 36% of the workforce will be eligible.
MCO Retirement Eligibility	There are 607 employees within the mission critical occupations eligible to retire in 2015.
Separation Rate	The overall separation rate for AMS for FY 2015 is 12.5%, but only 5.8% for permanent employees.
Supervisor to Employee Ratio	The average supervisor to employee ratio is 1 to 11 employees.
Veterans	8.1 % (292) of the AMS workforce are veterans.

To understand the data behind AMS' workforce, it's important to note that nearly half of the total workforce are seasonal employees. Over the past few years AMS has had fewer than 100 seasonal employees on its payroll around April or May which then grows to a peak of around 1,600 employees by November. As of September 2015, AMS had a total workforce of 3,602 employees - 2,008 permanent and 1,594 nonpermanent (seasonal). In addition, AMS oversees over 3,600 Federally-supervised State employees working under cooperative agreements and 464 staff working for the Federal Milk Marketing Orders program. All of these different employment arrangements have unique issues and requirements as well as hiring and separation strategies. It is a challenge to hire, monitor and separate the large number of seasonal employees.

There are 2,755 employees in Mission Critical Occupations (MCO) throughout the Agency. This represents 76.5% of the total workforce. 1,484 or 74% of the permanent employees work in MCOs and 1,271 or 80% of the Agency's seasonal employees are also working in MCOs. These are positions that directly affect AMS' ability to accomplish its core activities on behalf of the agriculture industry and the public. All employees are important for maintaining our agency's long-term stability and high-quality customer service. However, MCOs are critical positions that must be maintained during extraordinary circumstances, such as governmental shutdowns or to ensure continuity of operations. MCO includes the following top 6 occupational series:

- GS-0301- Miscellaneous Administration and Program – 1.3%,
- GS-1102 - Contracting – 0.7%,
- GS-1146 - AG Marketing Specialist – 8.0%,
- GS-1147 - AG Market Reporter – 3.9%,
- GS-1980 - AG Commodity Grader – 36.6%, and
- GS-1981 - AG Commodity Grader Aid – 26.0%.

The average age of AMS' total workforce is 46, however, the average age of an AMS permanent employee slightly higher at 48.6. The average length of service is over 15.4 for permanent employees. This is not dramatically different from the general Federal civilian workforce demographics. According to recent OPM data[1] the average for non-seasonal full-time permanent employees 47.3 and the average length of service for full-time permanent employees is 13.9. In AMS, females represent 56.3% and males 43.7% of the total workforce. This compares to 56.5% men and 43.5% women for the total Federal civilian workforce. 12.6% Federal civilian workforce are supervisor or managers. At AMS 9.4% are supervisors and another 1.3% are classified

[1] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/data-analysis-documentation/federal-employment-reports/reports-publications/profile-of-federal-civilian-non-postal-employees/

as managers. The average supervisor-to-employee ratio within AMS is 1:11, which exceeds the Department's goal of 1:9.

In March 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor announced that the annual national percentage of veterans in the civilian labor force was 7%[2]. AMS exceeds that number by employing 8.1 % of individuals with veteran's preference.

According to a recent report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) around 31% of all Federal non-postal civilian employees will be eligible to retire by September 2017[3]. Currently, 22% of the Agency's total workforce (926 employees) is eligible for retirement. By 2017 that number could rise to 29% and over the next five years, approximately 36% of the workforce will be eligible. Currently, 607 employees within the mission critical occupations (22% of MCOs) are eligible to retire.

According to the "Fed Figures 2014 Federal Departures" report by the Partnership for Public Service, the government-wide average attrition rate for 2014 was 6.2%. The overall separation rate, a similar calculation, for AMS during FY 2015 was 12.5%, but only 5.8% of these were permanent employees.

[2] http://www.dol-esa.gov/errd/VEVRAA.jsp
[3] http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-215

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III. Impacts

A number of significant internal and external issues affect AMS' current and future workforce. Issues such as, financial security, work culture, funding, technology, customer demands, changes in the agricultural landscape, as well as employee diversity and attrition, need to be considered when developing a human capital plan. These factors impact the skills sets and resources needed to accomplish shifting mission priorities and requirements.

A. Operational (Strategic) Impacts

These are impacts that are influenced from external sources. Examples of this type of impact include government-wide issues such as budget cuts or changing priorities from USDA, OPM and OMB etc. For AMS, impacts include the following:

- **Financial Security** – Changes in the economy directly impact the ability to attract and retain a workforce. Good job markets have led people to seek higher-paying opportunities outside the Federal sector, while an underperforming economy has led job seekers to look at positions in the Federal government, which offer stability. Furthermore, economic downturns historically lead some people to delay retirement.
- **Work/Life Balance** – Flexible employment, including full-time, part-time, alternative work schedules, job-sharing and alternative work locations, (e.g., telework) are all part of the new workforce landscape. This presents new opportunities for managers to creatively staff the workforce while supporting employees' worklife balance needs. The supervisors and Agency are responsible for accomplishing the mission, and human capital practitioners must develop the policies and the tools to support evolving work arrangements. AMS has worked to keep current and continues to expand the flexibility it offers in work schedules as well as employee benefits.
- **Funding** – The availability of resources to carry out the mission is highly dependent upon an increasingly complex and time-consuming budget process. Department funding levels in a constrained budget environment as well as delays in annual appropriations have the potential to adversely affect implementation of human capital strategies and programs.

  Operating under a challenging budget environment where greater coordination among Programs is essential. It requires AMS and its Programs to review operations constantly to identify areas where expenses can be reduced without affecting the services provided to customers. Uncertainty regarding the timing and amount of appropriations creates a reluctance to make any long-term spending and hiring decisions. Effects of the challenging budget environment differ based primarily on whether a Program or Division receives a majority of its funding through appropriations or user-fees. In addition, Con-

tinuing Resolutions include provisions that prohibit AMS from beginning new activities and projects and direct it to take only the most limited funding actions.

During periods of continued budget constraints, AMS has experienced a reduction or change in the level of services provided and increased costs. After operating under Continuing Resolutions for a prolonged time, AMS has faced additional challenges executing its final budget and was challenged to spend funds in a compressed timeframe.

AMS has successfully managed to make adjustments to its workforce to accommodate these budget constraints including consolidating all USDA domestic commodity procurement activities. In 2015, twenty-one Commodity Procurement staff members from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) were transitioned over to AMS. This consolidation, which will improve efficiency and reduce operational costs, is an example of the positive and proactive response AMS is taking to adjust to a challenging budget environment.

AMS programs have identified common issues and work together in developing joint solutions. Instead of each program developing its own strategies, AMS is working as an agency to solve common issues regarding the hiring, recruitment and retention of employees. Such initiatives include the Recruitment and Hiring Functional Committee (RHFC) and the Agency's AHED initiatives.

B. Workforce Impacts

These are impacts that are influenced from the Agency's workforce (internal). Examples of this type of impact include workforce attrition, diversity and skills needed, etc. For AMS, impacts include the following:

- **Technology and Process Improvements –** Individuals entering the workforce today and in the years to come expect their workplace to have the same tools and technology they are accustomed to in their homes and schools. They will want access to current, reliable data about themselves, their organization and the industries they serve. This allows them to work smarter and faster. AMS recruits and employees have online access to apply for jobs, make payroll deductions and change their health plans. However, they also want improved or additional technology that will offer them the freedom and flexibility to conduct business anywhere and at any time. The improved processes and streamlining of operations requires reengineering of business processes, including technology and an understanding of how those changes affect the workforce. As new technologies and new processes evolve, AMS employees will need additional training and development to keep pace.
- **Workforce Demographics and Diversity –** While significant numbers of employees retire each year, the anticipated "retirement tsunami" has not occurred. AMS is developing

ways to help the most experienced employees transfer knowledge and skills to more junior employees, developing new tools (e.g., phased retirement, coaching, mentoring, etc.) to assist with this effort. Along with the multi–generations in the workforce, AMS is actively working to develop a diverse workforce to better reflect the current civilian labor force. This shift in the population is an opportunity to rethink recruitment strategies by using specific internal and external workforce data to build a team that is representative of the citizens served. The success of any organization will increasingly depend on integrating diversity principles into daily operations, improving the level of inclusiveness and respect for a diverse workforce and developing partnerships and alliances with external groups and organizations to expand the talent pool and include a more diverse population.



- **Employee Engagement –** AMS understands the changes required to attract, develop and retain a 21st Century workforce. Currently, the average length of service is over 15 years for a permanent employee; however, in order to retain new hires, AMS needs to be aware of a wide range of factors influencing overall retention. In addition to competitive pay and benefits for Federal employees, other variables are playing an increasing role in employee satisfaction and retention. Flexible work environments that offer work place options, such as Telework and Alternative Work Schedules, and recognition for a job well done through monetary, non–monetary, and/or career enhancing incentives are important to reducing turnover and retaining a dynamic workforce. AMS also strives to include diversity principles, improve the respect and understanding for a diverse population and develop alliances with external organizations. In order to expand the talent pool and include a more diverse population, AMS is committed to the Secretary's Commitments as outlined in the USDA Diversity and Inclusion Plan as well as developing its own Special Emphasis Assessment Plan, Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Plan, Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program and AMS Outreach Plan. AMS works to cultivate and compete for leaders who possess the ability to drive results by engaging their workforce. The Agency also embraces and encourages open and honest communication among workforce members, which leads to high levels of motivation and commitment in the workplace. Recent examples of this include the formation of the Field

Employee Engagement Advisory Committee as well as the participation of senior leaders in many town halls and field site visits.

- **Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining Employees –** Recruiting, hiring and retaining a skilled and diverse workforce in a rapidly changing work environment require particular attention to the essential work that needs to be performed. Employees in mission critical series will require particular attention and participating in mentoring will help mitigate the retirement wave. All Programs will work to ensure an adequate workforce with the right skills to efficiently complete the workload. To address many of these issues, AMS has established a Recruitment and Hiring Functional Committee comprised of staff throughout the agency with the goal of increasing recruitment activities where needed in order to develop a workforce skilled in evolving technologies and program challenges which will ensure greater value-added, customer service, and process efficiencies.

C. Work Impacts

These are impacts affecting the workforce from work process changes, mission changes, and/or technology changes. AMS' work is heavily influenced by domestic marketing challenges and changing consumer tastes and demand. It is critical to meet regularly with industry stakeholders to identify needs and collaborate on operational changes. AMS also needs to be sensitive to industries' needs to add or modify quality or classing standards and labeling. For AMS, the impacts include the following:

- **Flexible Staffing –** AMS' funding is also highly influenced by customer demands, which in turn directly influences staffing levels. Since a large portion of the operating budget comes from voluntary user fees, AMS must be able to quickly respond to the ever-changing needs of its customers. Whether it is the addition of a particular marketing order, the reduction of work because of reduced customer demand or the development of entirely new quality assessment standards, AMS needs to maintain a well-trained and flexible workforce. For decades, AMS has maintained a large seasonal workforce in order to meet specific demands related to crop growing seasons. Now that flexibility has begun to expand to our permanent workforce. Rapidly changing agricultural markets, consumer preferences and volatile exter-

nal factors (e.g., low pathogenic avian influenza A outbreaks) are putting pressure on AMS to figure out how to maintain a flexible, highly-trained and permanent workforce. Finally AMS oversees over 3,600 Federal-State employees working under cooperative agreements in addition to 464 staff working for the Federal Milk Marketing Orders program.

- **Nutritional Requirements for Food Procurements –** To address the changes in nutritional requirements for food procurements, Programs will work on addressing the changes. AMS is working with both internal partners and the agriculture industry to facilitate the marketing of product, assist rural communities, procure food for the Department's various nutrition programs and ensure that we have the resources necessary to meet the needs of our customers. This commitment may mean that AMS will need to shift some work assignments, seek employees with specialized backgrounds in nutrition and expand its workforce. As parents and even children call for more nutritional food, we anticipate the need to expand the commodities purchased for the National School Lunch Program and other nutrition assistance programs.
- **Environmental Conditions –** Changes in environmental conditions make it more difficult to maintain crop yields or adequate animal health. Crop yields and production could be impacted by the reduction of acreage planted, lack of water allocations, higher abandonment after planting, higher input costs and increased financial and risk management costs. Reduced crop production negatively impacts the level of grading and classification services needed, subsequently reducing overall revenue and staffing need. Research and promotion assessment dollars available for projects would also diminish.
- **Marketing Claims –** The expanded use of marketing claims on agricultural products could lead to increased demand for voluntary grading, certification and verification services designed to ensure the consistent quality of specific agricultural products. The new services and markets will lead to new AMS Market News reports, requiring more investigation into value differentiation of claims in the marketplace. It will also increase pressure to find ways to validate and certify marketing claims, potentially leading to fragmentation of niches market that could be too small for AMS fee-for-service to be economically feasible. AMS' Research & Promotion and Marketing Agreements & Orders will need to increase staff to handle the addition of new orders and agreements.

- **Niche Marketing –** Niche marketing impacts all four of the major commodity programs within AMS (C&T, DY, LPS, and SCP) in similar ways. Each program will need to explore additional opportunities to collect and disseminate market data and provide more local and regional price information. Creating and expanding new markets means AMS Market News will need to increase and/or prioritize the number of reports it produces and adjust staff accordingly. It also means that AMS will require more research into niche and local marketing patterns and economic impacts. It could potentially increase requests for verification services to support new marketing claims.
- **Genetically Modified/Engineered –** AMS plans on maintaining its third party independence and supports "coexistence" when it comes to the labeling of non-Genetically Modified Organisms (non-GMO) or Genetically Engineered (GE) crops. However, in order to meet industry and consumer needs, AMS may be required to develop new services or markets. In order to accommodate these changes AMS will need to better align its regulatory and fee-for-service functions with current technologies since non-GMO/GE products could potentially increase requests for verification services. AMS stands ready to work with both industry and consumers to meet their demands for increased or revised labeling standards.
- **Traceability and Transparency –** Consumer demand for additional nutritional information and supply chain traceability have already impacted AMS. AMS will continue to provide more education, possibly through increased consumer outreach, publications and websites. Staff will continue to be trained on the use of plain language and respond to stakeholders requests. The Agency will need to invest in better technology tools to support increased traceability and transparency. As with most of the issues, labeling and traceability will potentially lead to additional testing for food quality or safety.

  Technological options will also increase transparency and traceability across the food chain, allowing for easier detection of fraud and greater consumer access to information about their food and its sources. Agriculture infrastructure impacts the movement of agriculture products, which will in turn, impact supply, demand and market prices.

- **Biosecurity –** The introduction of pests, diseases or herbicide resistant weeds could have an impact on the agriculture industry through reduction in crop size, potentially lower quality, and increased cost of research and control. This issue has al-

ready led to the need for increased innovation and research to support shifting risks to traditional and organic crops and animals. To address this change, AMS would need to increase the workload of its employees, hire more people, or seek new staff with a different set of competencies. Regardless, AMS will definitely need to train/retain its employees on the changes to and expansion of biosecurity issues. These issues cut across all of the commodity areas and it will require a coordinated Agency-wide strategy to ensure that all Programs are positioned for success.

- **Scale of Farming Operations –** Challenges between the priorities of big agriculture and small and beginning farmers do exist. AMS will rise to the challenge by continuing to provide third party, unbiased services and disseminating accurate, timely and unbiased market information as well as remembering the importance of co-existence between many forms of farming. AMS will strive to make services and regulatory oversight equally accessible and transparent to all segments of the marketplace. By maximizing public comment and participation from a range of different interests, AMS will bring many different stakeholders together to find the best solutions. AMS will continue to make information available on our website for all of our programs for the next generation of farmers and ranchers in order to serve a more and more diverse audience and provide even more connections for new farmers. A healthy agricultural economy involves all sizes of operations and AMS will continue to offer "scale-neutral" services. Depending on the scope of services provided, this could necessitate the hiring of additional staff.
- **International Trade –** The international trade environment has led to an increase in services and work load for AMS, and one of the Department's primary goals long-term goals is to bolster agricultural trade through market and product expansion. AMS is at the forefront of this expansion by negotiating and establishing international quality standards, promoting U.S. agriculture overseas, covering international markets through its Market News services, administering Marketing Orders and import regulations, establishing trade agreements with the five largest organic markets, achieving acceptance of U.S. issued export certificates in four foreign countries and monitoring the international transportation of agricultural goods. The expansion and increased monitoring of international trade means an increase and/or change in the highly-skilled workforce needs for AMS.

The *Appendix to The Budget of the U.S. Government for Fiscal Year 2013*, USDA, p. 93, helps illustrate the impact by noting that such services, "continue to become more complex as the volume of agricultural commodities increases, as greater numbers of new processed commodities are developed and as the agricultural market structure undergoes extensive changes."

AMS Human Capital Plan Alignment		
Impacts	**Strategies**	**Actions**
Operational		
Financial Security	Knowledge Management and Transfer	Knowledge Management Crosscutting Coordination & Alignment
Work/Life Balance	Recruitment and Retention	Engagement & Stewardship
Funding	Work and Organizational Change	Knowledge Management Crosscutting Coordination & Alignment
Workforce		
Technology & Process Improvement	Employee Development and Training Work and Organizational Change	IT Improvements & Efficiencies
Demographics & Diversity	Recruitment and Retention Work and Organizational Change	Engagement & Stewardship Recruitment & Diversity
Cultural Transformation	Recruitment and Retention	
Recruiting, Hiring & Retaining Employees	Recruitment and Retention	
International Trade	Employee Development and Training Work and Organizational Change	Knowledge Management Crosscutting Coordination & Alignment
Work		
Flexible Staffing	Work and Organizational Change	Recruitment & Diversity
Nutritional Requirements for Food Procurements	Employee Development and Training Work and Organizational Change	Engagement & Stewardship Learning Environment & Retention Crosscutting Coordination & Alignment
Environmental Conditions	Work and Organizational Change	
Marketing Claims	Employee Development and Training Work and Organizational Change	
Genetically Modified/ Engineered	Work and Organizational Change	
Tractability & Transparency	Work and Organizational Change	
Biosecurity	Work and Organizational Change	
Scale of Farming Operations	Work and Organizational Change	
International Trade	Employee Development and Training Work and Organizational Change	

IV. Human Capital Goals and Strategies

Overview: As a result of anticipated strategic, workforce and work impacts affecting the workforce over the next four years, USDA will set workforce goals to counter the impacts. These goals will ensure the USDA workforce is postured to achieve mission requirements and strategic goals and/or management initiatives. The goals are divided into two types; workforce human capital and succession planning.

Human Capital Goals: Agency Human Capital Goals are listed below and addressed the two categories, which are:

- **Workforce** – These types of human capital goals are related to the workforce "at large". This looks across occupations, supervisory status and grade levels.
- **Succession** – Succession type human capital goals specifically target supervisory workforce to ensure the agency is addressing leadership needs over the next 4 years.

Strategies to Achieve Human Capital Goals: Strategies to achieve human capital goals are broken down into the following four categories:

- Recruitment and Retention
- Employee Development and Training
- Work and Organizational Change
- Knowledge Management and Transfer

Recruitment and Retention: The following strategies (with the point of contact for each action) address the recruitment and retention gaps. The objective of achieving these performance goals is to attract and retain highly qualified and skilled employees to ensure the USDA mission is accomplished.

Human Capital Goal	Strategy to Achieve Human Capital Goal	Agency POC
Human Capital Goal #1 Strategic Alignment	Institute a practice of systematic human capital management aligned with AMS and USDA strategic plans and budgets	Erin Morris

Employee Development and Training: The following strategies (with the point of contact for each action) address employee development and training. The objective of achieving these performance goals is to develop and train the workforce to ensure each employee has the skills, knowledge and abilities to perform critical work functions and to lead people in performing the Agency's mission.

Human Capital Goal	Strategy to Achieve Human Capital Goal	Agency POC
Human Capital Goal #2 Leadership	Work with AMS supervisors and managers to assist employees in developing comprehensive IDP's so that they are equipped with both the technical and soft skills needed to not only perform their current job but with an eye to the future.	Erin Morris

Work and Organizational Change: The following strategies (including the point of contact for each action) address the work and organizational change gaps. The objective of achieving these performance goals is to create efficient and effective work flows and processes and organizational efficiencies to manage people and resources effectively.

Human Capital Goal	Strategy to Achieve Human Capital Goal	Agency POC
Human Capital Goal #3 Results Oriented Performance Culture	Organizational Change - Implement USDA-wide priorities (CT, FEVS, etc.).	Erin Morris
	Align the performance appraisal system with the agency's mission accomplishments and link it to employee development and recognition programs to improve performance.	Erin Morris
	Develop and implement recruitment plans and strategies that focus on recruiting and hiring employees in a streamlined, efficient, transparent and results-oriented process.	Karen Comfort

Knowledge Management and Transfer: The following strategies address knowledge management gaps. The objective of achieving these performance goals is to create system(s) and processes that capture critical information from current and departing employees.

Human Capital Goal	Strategy to Achieve Human Capital Goal	Agency POC
Human Capital Goal #4 Talent and Knowledge Management	Develop employee competencies to better perform the AMS mission through development opportunities.	Erin Morris
	Institute human capital planning that efficiently and effectively deploys the Agency's human capital plan and addresses skills gaps.	Erin Morris

Human Capital Goal	Strategy to Achieve Human Capital Goal	Agency POC
	Work with APHIS Human Resources Division to develop position descriptions, vacancy announcements and selection criteria to ensure that AMS is able to recruit the best possible candidates for vacancies and new hires; ensure workforce diversity and necessary skills; and, align recruitment and retention strategies with human capital planning efforts to close critical position and competency gaps.	Erin Morris and APHIS HRD
	Ensure leadership continuity and development through human capital planning, training, tools and resources.	Erin Morris
	Develop a repository of Agency information that can be used across AMS for historical reference and report development.	Sonia Jimenez
Human Capital Goal #5 Accountability	Prevent and successfully resolve employee disputes.	Cliff Gilchrist Sonia Jimenez
	Ensure that human capital programs are strategically aligned, effective, efficient and comply with applicable laws and regulations.	Erin Morris and APHIS HRD

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Appendix A: Implementation Action Plan

The Implementation Action Plan is used for managing, coordinating and monitoring progress towards achieving human capital goals. Items are selected from the previous lists of strategies to achieve goals and moved to this action plan when: At the direction of AMS leadership; an Action item is completed; and/or the owner of the strategy has modified the action item.

Although the human capital plan covers a four year period, in conjunction with the agency strategic plan, it is recommended initially, to address one year at a time. Each year, as the human capital plan is reviewed, the action items can be revised for the next year.

Action Item Description	Performance Measure	Due Date	Owner
1. **Engagement & Stewardship** Effectively Manage and Utilize Workforce	a. Establish a Field Employee Engagement Advisory Committee consisting of field employees at various grade levels & series to advise on best practices and needs (FEVS)	10/2015 Complete	Erin Morris
	b. Develop process for gathering employee process improvement and cultural transformation ideas (WAGI Initiative)	12/2015	Karen Comfort
	c. Conduct All Employee Town Hall meeting	Summer 2016 Complete	Elanor Starmer
2. **Learning Environment & Retention** Develop and Retain Workforce	a. Develop a benchmark for Agency separation trends (MD-715)	12/2015 Complete	Sonia Jimenez
	b. Develop workforce analysis and strategy for Major Critical Occupations (HCP) including a review of skill gaps	09/2016	Sonia Jimenez
	c. All Agency supervisors to complete annual leadership/supervisory training (DR 4040-412-002)	09/2016	Erin Morris
3. **Knowledge Management** Seamless Staffing Transitions	a. Establish a resource sharing library, available to all employees, where standard operating procedures, best practices and customized training (e.g. Organic 101 and 201, and F&V webinars) are maintained (CT)	05/2016 Complete	Sonia Jimenez

Action Item Description	Performance Measure	Due Date	Owner
	b. Percent of mentor/ mentee pairs that complete annual program (CT)	09/2016	Sonia Jimenez
	c. Update AMS training needs with APHIS COTS training group (new)	03/2016 Complete	Erin Morris
	d. Develop Onboarding strategy and New Employee Handbook for new AMS employees (new)	09/2016	Erin Morris
4. **Recruitment & Diversity** Broaden and Diversify Talent Pool	a. Expand monthly Recruitment & Hiring Functional Committee meetings (SEAP) to include APHIS HR and AMS Associate Deputies	Ongoing	Karen Comfort
	b. Reinstitute a cadre of trained recruiters with membership from all Programs who are knowledgeable and capable of representing the Agency at customer recruitment events.	Ongoing	Karen Comfort
	c. Conduct two recruitment events for the Pathways Program that target a talented and diverse hiring pool (AHED)	09/2016	Karen Comfort
5. **Crosscutting Coordination & Alignment** Continual workforce analysis and needs assessment	a. Conduct meetings/Brown Bag to connect and update information concerning human capital planning, cultural transformation and agency head assessment activities and goals (HCP)	Ongoing	Melissa Tharp
	b. Develop annual timeline that includes all deliverables and Department direction for HC activities including HCP, CT, AHA, R&R, Outreach, SEAP, etc.	Summer 2016	Melissa Tharp
	c. Develop a FY 2016 Annual Operating Plan of Agency priorities and goals to ensure focused use of resources (new)	12/2015 Complete	Sonia Jimenez
	d. Conduct quarterly status of funds with AMS Deputy Administrators to ensure proper alignment and use of funds	Ongoing	Charles Stephens

Action Item Description	Performance Measure	Due Date	Owner
6. <u>Information Technology Improvements & Efficiencies</u>	a. Develop single Grading and Inspection Program & Financial System (AIT)	09/2016	Craig Morris
	b. Move the market new information to a new IT platform (MARS)	03/2016	Chuck Parrott
	c. Implement an automated grants management system (GRANTOR)	09/2016	Arthur Neal

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Appendix B: Communications Plan:

This appendix provides a blueprint for communicating expected opportunities for human capital planning activities.

Communication Goals and Objectives: Evaluate the effectiveness of the AMS workforce plan and its development process to ensure the intended results are achieved. By doing so, AMS will be able to monitor, evaluate and revise the plan as needed. Encourage AMS leaders to communicate information to employees related to the workforce plan under the following circumstances:

- Upon approval of the AMS human capital plan, include how the plan will impact agency employees individually and as an organization.
- When the AMS human capital plan is updated and/or revised.
- When the actions in the plan are evaluated.
- On an annual basis to ensure Individual Development Plan goals are aligned with AMS workforce goals.

Communication Goals:

1. Successfully develop and implement the AMS human capital plan by engaging leadership, managers, supervisors, employees in the process.
2. Leverage all applicable authorities to better align the workforce with the mission.
3. Leverage the all applicable authorities to prepare for retirements by managing loss of knowledge and building a pipeline of future leaders.

Communication Objectives:

1. Inform all employees on the goals/objectives, timelines and progress of the AMS human capital plan.
2. Use a variety of formal and informal communication media including newsletters, Web, e-mail and personal contact.

AMS leadership may add additional communication strategies as necessary to keep employees informed. Following are the strategies for communication, in accordance with the AMS Human Capital Planning Guide:

Agricultural Marketing Service's Human Capital Plan

Type	Description	Target Date(s)	POC
Presentation	Develop format and include human capital update in 2016 town hall meetings with AMS employees.	Complete	Elanor Starmer, Erin Morris and Melissa Tharp
Email	AMS News notification to all employees of the updated Human Capital Plan with a link for easy viewing.	07/2016	Elanor Starmer and Public Affairs
Other	Include write-up in the Agency's newsletter (The AMS Voice) after each meeting concerning the AMS HC Plan and Agency direction.	07/2016	Melissa Tharp
Presentation	Discuss Plan and Agency direction with senior leadership team.	08/2016	Erin Morris and Sonia Jimenez
Presentation	Conduct Brown Bag to discuss Human Capital Planning and Employee Engagement Efforts within AMS.	09/2016	Melissa Tharp and Karen Comfort

Appendix C: Evaluation Plan

The Evaluation Plan is used for managing, monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving human capital goals. Evaluation items are selected from the action items in the Appendix A: Implementation Action Plan. The Human Capital Planning Workgroup, in collaboration with the action item owner, will evaluate the action item as indicted. Additionally, an annual evaluation report of the plan will be submitted to agency leadership for further action, as required.

In accordance with HRStat, agency leadership must have ongoing discussion and oversight of workforce planning activities throughout the year.

The agency leadership may add additional evaluation requirements as necessary to monitor the effectiveness of achieving human capital goals. The following action items will be conducted by the agency for evaluation in accordance with the Human Capital Planning Guide.

Date	Type	Action Item	Observation	Recommendation(s)/Findings
June 2016	☐ Monitor ☐ Evaluate ☐ Revise ☐ Other	Develop a 2016 timeline that captures all HC, CT, FEVS and CR reports and activities so that the programs can plan accordingly. Review timeline and Feedback from the Department and ensure all programs have a plan to accomplish the new supervisory training requirements. Pull list from APHIS HR on the AMS supervisors that have completed the 360 degree assessment within the last three years and compare to supervisor list on POL. Using this same set of employees, identify the training needs completion timeframes.	☐ Progress ☐ Issues ☐ Adjustment ☐ Other	

Date	Type	Action Item	Observation	Recommenda-tion(s)/Findings
July 2016	☐ Monitor ☐ Evaluate ☐ Revise ☐ Other	**Meeting** Prior to this meeting, develop master goal file for distribution and update this month. Also review program assessment questionnaire, update as needed and send out to the programs for completion by the end of April. Obtain list from each Program of the documents that they would like to see in the AMS Resource Library.	☐ Progress ☐ Issues ☐ Adjustment ☐ Other	
July 2016	☐ Monitor ☐ Evaluate ☐ Revise ☐ Other	Conduct Workforce Analysis and discuss program impacts and drivers. Have each program ensure that IDP development opportunities are tied to OPM competencies. Roll out new workforce dashboard to the Programs and obtain the master data file so that we can update information monthly.	☐ Progress ☐ Issues ☐ Adjustment ☐ Other	
August 2016	☐ Monitor ☐ Evaluate ☐ Revise ☐ Other	**Meeting** Distribute program assessment results and identify major themes. Develop a WORD/EXCEL HCP template to be completed by the Programs which we will load into the HCP Tool.	☐ Progress ☐ Issues ☐ Adjustment ☐ Other	
September 2016	☐ Monitor ☐ Evaluate ☐ Revise ☐ Other	**Meeting** Invite Tiffany Chavez, or other Department HC expert, back to AMS to talk at Agency Brown Bag and review Agency progress.	☐ Progress ☐ Issues ☐ Adjustment ☐ Other	

Date	Type	Action Item	Observation	Recommenda-tion(s)/Findings
September 2016	☐ Monitor ☐ Evaluate ☐ Revise ☐ Other	Upload information into the Human Capital Tool and conduct self-audit.	☐ Progress ☐ Issues ☐ Adjustment ☐ Other	
September /October 2016	☐ Monitor ☐ Evaluate ☐ Revise ☐ Other	Department audit of AMS Data.	☐ Progress ☐ Issues ☐ Adjustment ☐ Other	

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Appendix D: Human Capital Plan Points of Contact

Numerous individuals, work units and policies contribute to the success of agency human capital efforts. If you have questions, require information or support leverage the listing below:

Type	Description	Point of Contact
Human Capital Program	As the AMS Chief Operating Officer, Erin ensures that the Agency's Human Capital Program is in alignment with Department and Agency mission and goals.	Erin Morris
Human Capital Program	As the AMS Deputy Administrator responsible for performance measures, Sonia ensures that the Agency's Human Capital Program is in alignment with Department and Agency mission and goals.	Sonia Jimenez
Human Capital Practice	As the AMS lead for Human Capital Planning, Melissa ensures that performance measures support human capital planning efforts and facilitates cross Agency coordination with Cultural Transformation, Outreach and Civil Rights initiatives.	Melissa Tharp
Human Capital Practice	As the AMS lead for Employee Engagement, Karen is responsible for the Agency's Employee Engagement Advisory Committee, and serves as the Agency's representative on the Department's CT Taskforce.	Karen Comfort
Human Capital Practice	As the AMS lead for Civil Rights, Clifton is responsible for managing the development and implementation of the Agency-wide Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action programs, the equal employment opportunity counseling programs, and special programs designed to familiarize minority and female students with career options within the Agency.	Clifton Gilchrist
Human Capital Practice	As the AMS lead for Outreach, Responsible for developing, leading and directing the Agency's Outreach Program to improve knowledge and use of AMS programs and services to under-served populations.	Billy Cox

External Agricultural Marketing Service support for achieving goals: The following resources are available to support AMS in achieving our human capital goals.

Type	Description	Point of Contact
Human Capital Program	The USDA Virtual University programs are delivered using a hybrid or "blended" learning concept, enabling maximum flexibility for the learner and the best use of USDA resources.	Karlease Kelly
Human Capital Practice	The Executive Resource Management Division (ERMD) supports the Office of Human Resources Management in the administration of human resources policies for the Department's executive level employees: Senior Executive Service (SES) members, Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST) employees, Senior Scientific Research Service (SSRS), and political appointees. ERMD also provides HR support to Office of the Secretary employees, works closely with the Secretary's Office on various policy initiatives affecting executive employees, and serves as the liaison between the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and other Federal Departments.	Patty Moore
Human Capital Program	The Strategic Human Resources Planning and Accountability Division (SHRPA) directs implementation of the Human Capital Accountability Framework (HCAAF) title 5, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), Part 250, which provides a systematic means by which USDA monitors and analyzes performance on all aspects of human capital management policies, programs, and activities as they support the USDA Strategic Plan, USDA Strategic Human Capital Plan, and mission accomplishment and to ensure effectiveness and efficiency, and compliance with law and regulation and adherence to merit systems principles.	Allen Hatcher

Appendix E: Utilization of the Human Capital Plan

Implementing this plan consists of translating the recommended strategies to achieve goals into workable actions that are well-defined with actions, objectives, and measurable performance metric and timetables in which to achieve goals. It involves dedicating time, energy, and resources to address the critical staffing and/or competency gaps and surpluses that exist within the organization as they relate to the strategic issues.

To be successful, human capital planning requires the commitment of leadership throughout the organization. Senior-level managers should lead and support the planning process, ensure the plan is aligned with the AMS' strategic direction and hold subordinate managers accountable for carrying out the goals. The most noticeable effects of the human capital plan includes:

- Budget allocation and alignment to address human capital performance goals.
- Recruitment planning and activities linked to impending shortages addressed in the HCP.
- Training focused on workforce performance needs as addressed in the plan.
- Individual development plans (IDP) aligned with needs addressed in the plan.
- Communication with employees regarding workforce issues.

Supervisors and managers should take responsibility for supporting the human capital planning process within their areas of responsibility. They will benefit from human capital planning because the competencies of staff members will be aligned with strategic goals and objectives. Leaders should refer to the human capital plan in the following, but not limited to, situations:

- Developing employee IDPs.
- Develop staffing and hiring plans.
- Preparing operational plans and unit budgets.
- Planning employee development to meet operational requirements.
- Developing employees to meet projected turnover due to retirements.
- Recruiting new employees.

Employees should take responsibility for technical and professional development and include supervisors in developing IDPs. IDPs should show direct links between the human capital plan and employee development goals, ensuring that the limited resources available are allocated for developmental activities to address organizational needs and help in achieving human capital goals. Employees should refer to this plan in the following situations:

- Assessing strengths and areas of developmental needed against workforce performance goals.
- Developing IDPs that are realistic and aligned with workforce performance goals.
- Identifying career enhancement opportunities.

- Refer to the APHIS MRPBS Desk Guide for specific instructions related to developing an IDP.

Appendix F: Agency Addendum to the Annual Performance Plan/Report

The purpose of this addendum is to integrate human capital goals and performance into the AMS' performance plan.

Each year, this addendum is submitted to AMS' strategic planning and/or performance management staff for inclusion into the performance plan and report for the fiscal year. The information included should come from the implementation action plan, Appendix A.

FY 2015 AMS Human Capital Goals Addendum to the Annual Performance Plan

Human capital goals are designed to ensure the workforce is postured to support the strategic goals of the Department. Over the next two years these goals should become integrated into the strategic planning, budget and performance planning/reporting cycles. The strategy to achieve this integration is to prepare AMS planners, whether workforce, strategic, budget or performance, on the "how to" procedures, set key milestones then set expectation for full integration in an orderly fashion. For example, year one the department will set workforce goals as an appendix to the annual performance plan/report, then year two set the expectation agencies incorporate workforce goals alongside there agency performance goals.

AMS Action Item	Key Performance Measure
Lead the organization to eliminate barriers to operational and service excellence in work-life and wellness, labor relations, process improvement, employee development, talent management, customer focus and community outreach and hiring reform.	• Develop and implement an AMS-wide Human Capital Plan using the Department's Human Capital Planning tool. • Improve access for employees by deploying computers and email addresses to graders. • Implement the AMS Hiring and Employee Development (AHED) Plan to improve our ability to recruit, hire and develop a highly talented and diverse workforce by increasing the operational effectiveness of human resources and deepening engagement between employees and their leaders at all levels.
Demonstrate support through allocation of resources and commitment of program area managers to support employee initiatives.	• Include a Cultural Transformation standard in all managers and supervisors performance plan. • Complete, sign and review 100% of the

AMS Action Item	Key Performance Measure
	Individual Development Plans for all eligible employees. • Develop the framework for a workforce trend/barrier analysis of the agency hiring practices. • Establish Recruitment Functional Committee.
Pursue workforce diversity through recruitment, outreach and employee development programs designed to enhance the hiring and retention of highly qualified employees from diverse backgrounds.	• Develop and implement the Agency's Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Plan and the Special Emphasis Assessment Plan. • Exercise all of USDA's special hiring authorities.
Develop and implement an annual plan to enhance employee engagement and effectively address opportunities identified in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results.	• Include a FEVS standard in all managers and supervisors performance plan. • Collect and respond to feedback from all-employee events and activities (i.e., survey, town hall meetings, focus groups, etc.). • Develop and support a Field Employee Engagement Task Force comprised of broad range of field employees. • Conduct five Town Hall meetings.
Develop legacy program within the Agency to ensure knowledge transfer to new employees.	• Develop New Employee Portal and Handbook. • Develop Standard Operating Procedures • Continue AMS Mentoring Program which couples employees across the Agency.

Appendix G: Agency FEVS Action Plan

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies. Survey results provide valuable insight into the challenges agency leaders face in ensuring the Federal Government has an effective civilian workforce and how well they are responding.

As a result of the FY 2014 results, Agency leadership took the following actions to improve employees' perceptions:

FEVS Action Item	Performance Measure	Due Date	Owner
Establish a Field Employee Engagement Taskforce consisting of field employees at various levels and in various series.	Provide set of recommendations to the Administrator from the taskforce for engaging field employees.	Complete	Erin Morris
Create more face-to-face opportunities for senior leaders to engage with employees	Conduct five town hall meetings across the country for AMS staff.	Complete	Erin Morris
Develop on-line on-boarding training about the Agency mission, programs and services for all employees.	Incorporate Agency video into on-boarding training program.	Complete	Erin Morris
Share best practices across and within Programs.	Create on-line library to retain best practices information.	Ongoing	All Programs
Develop and publicize Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for various processes and functions.	Catalog current Agency SOPs.	08/2016	All Programs
Improve AMS' ability to reach, recruit and hire the best qualified candidate for most commonly filled positions.	Review and update KSA Question Library for most commonly filled positions.	Complete	Erin Morris and Agency RMOs
Develop Agency-wide strategy to improve diversity and recruitment efforts.	Complete AMS Diversity and Recruitment Plan for 2015.	Complete	Cliff Gilchrist
Develop and grow AMS employees at all levels.	Conduct feasibility study for reinstituting the AMS PST Training for GS-12	12/2015 Complete	Erin Morris

	through GS-14 level.	
Ensure training needs are being met.	Review Service Level Agreement with APHIS for training and development.	12/2015 Complete
Increase employee awareness of Agency programs, functions and special emphasis groups.	Conduct monthly Brown Bag Lunch development series.	Ongoing
Ensure leadership development opportunities are available and being completed by supervisory staff.	Complete required leadership training and 360 degree assessments.	Ongoing
Continue AMS Mentoring Program to emphasize commitment to employee development.	90% of AMS SES staff are mentors in the AMS Program.	10/2016

Human Capital Planning Committee Members:

Charles Stephens, Director Budget Division
Cliff Gilchrist, Director Civil Rights
Melissa Tharp, Associate Deputy Administrator Compliance & Analysis Program
Angela Hooper, Associate Deputy Administrator Cotton & Tobacco Program
Whitney Rick, Director, Promotion, Research and Planning Division Dairy Program
Judith Dudley, Associate Deputy Administrator Information Technology Services
Larry Meadows, Associate Deputy Administrator Livestock, Poultry & Seed Program
Jennifer Tucker, Associate Deputy Administrator National Organic Program
Diana Haynes, Division Director, Monitoring Programs Science & Technology Program
Chris Purdy, Associate Deputy Administrator Specialty Crops Program
Karla Whalen, Associate Deputy Administrator Transportation & Marketing Program
Monica Alexander, Supervisory Management Analyst Cotton & Tobacco Program
Serita Daniel, Resource Management Officer Compliance & Analysis, Dairy, Information Technology, National Organic, Science & Technology and Transportation & Marketing Programs
Dana Laster, Resource Management Officer Specialty Crops Program
Sang Lineback, Resource Management Officer Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program
Yirui Mu, Management Analyst Compliance and Analysis Program
Darcy Long, Human Capital SME APHIS, HRD
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Executive Leadership Approval:

Sonia Jimenez, Deputy Administrator Compliance and Analysis Program	7/18/16 Date
Erin Morris, Associate Administrator Agricultural Marketing Service	7/20/16 Date
Elanor Starmer, Administrator Agricultural Marketing Service	7/22/16 Date