



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE


FS-1239 | January 2024

# Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):

## A USDA Forest Service Action Plan







**Cover Photo:** Inter-Tribal trainees in Lomakatsi Restoration Project's Tribal Ecological Forestry Training Program performed over 1,000 acres of fuel treatments during the year-long program. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.

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Forest Service employees work diverse mission areas on the forest, shown here at the Applewhite picnic area on the San Bernardino National Forest, Lytle Creek, CA. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.

# **+ Our Commitment To Advancing DEIA**

# Message From the Chief

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, I am pleased to share our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Action Plan, which aligns with the goals presented in the USDA DEIA Strategic Plan and follows Federal requirements for agencies to advance DEIA in their workforce policies, practices, and culture.

Our employees—and the communities we serve and live in—need a Forest Service that reflects the faces and cultures of America. Through our work, we are uniquely and deeply embedded in communities across the country. We reach people through recreation, education, and other services and benefits provided by the public lands we manage. DEIA is the embodiment of how we work with Tribes, communities, and partners to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. DEIA is built into the core of our shared purpose through:

- + Our Motto:** Caring for the land and serving people.
- + Our Values:** Service, conservation, interdependence, diversity, and safety.
- + Our Vision:** We are a multicultural and diverse organization, and all employees are respected, accepted, and appreciated for their unique and important contribution to the mission.
- + Our Code and Commitments:** Treat everyone with respect, empower one another, invest in relationships, model integrity, protect one another, and learn from mistakes.
- + Our Guiding Principles:** We strive for quality and excellence in everything we do and are sensitive to the effects of our decisions on people and resources; we strive to meet the needs of our customers in fair, friendly, and open ways; we are responsible and accountable for what we do; and we value and trust one another and share leadership.



Chief Randy Moore

Our path forward is clear. This plan highlights actions we must take to enrich our workforce, internal systems, policies, and culture. Achieving the goals set forth in this action plan will enhance the great work we do through fostering a safe work environment for all employees and strengthening our partnerships and outreach.

Evolution of our agency is a complex process and will require the same level of collaboration, commitment, and dedication we apply to achieving our mission each day. I look forward to working closely with you to continue adapting and growing as we lead the way for DEIA in the Federal Government and our agency.

RANDY MOORE

Chief, USDA Forest Service





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USDA Forest Service, Chief Executive for Work Environment and Performance Office, Mary Pletcher Rice makes remarks during a panel discussion with other USDA leaders at the NextGen 2023 Project Director's Meeting, Washington, DC. USDA photo by Tom Witham.

# Message From Organizational Leadership

The future of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service is defined by how we drive the agency's mission and culture. As its leaders,<sup>1</sup> we are committed to carrying out the goals and objectives detailed in this Forest Service DEIA Action Plan. We will hold ourselves and the entire Forest Service workforce responsible for improving the way we approach DEIA within the agency as well as the communities and customers we serve. We aim to make our agency a leader in standing up for—and progressing—DEIA across the Federal Government, through our work in:

- The Office of Civil Rights (OCR): We are committed to developing and maintaining a work environment inclusive of all employees. The OCR encourages DEIA and respect in compliance with all governing statutes, regulations, and directives. The OCR provides training and targeted outreach to the most diverse and qualified talent sources available.
- The Work Environment and Performance Office (WEPO): We are dedicated to ensuring the Forest Service creates and maintains a work environment

in which individuals are treated with respect and dignity, have equitable access to opportunities, and enjoy a sense of belonging through promotion and modeling of our cultural identity [This Is Who We Are \(TIWWA\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

- Human Resources Management (HRM): We provide innovative services that attract and sustain a high-performing workforce to meet agency needs. HRM delivers strategic and collaborative human resource solutions using cutting-edge technology and efficient business processes.

While the Forest Service DEIA Action Plan is a partnership between OCR, WEPO, and HRM, advancing DEIA in the Forest Service is the responsibility of all employees, supervisors, and leaders. We must hold ourselves and others accountable for realizing this vision and creating an inclusive workplace that welcomes and values differences, celebrates our uniqueness, learns from our diversity, and invites each other to show up as our authentic selves.



**Anzanette Randall**  
Director,  
Office of Civil Rights (OCR)



**Mary Pletcher Rice**  
Chief Executive,  
Work Environment and  
Performance Office (WEPO)



**Antoine "Tony" Dixon**  
Deputy Chief,  
Business Operations

<sup>1</sup> As of late-January 2024, Office of Civil Rights, Work Environment and Performance Office, and Business Operations organizational leadership includes: Christian Pagan (acting), Katie O'Connor (acting), and Mary Pletcher Rice, respectively. The current leadership affirms and honors the work of Pletcher Rice, Anzanette Randall, and Tony Dixon and fully supports the goals and objectives detailed in this DEIA Action Plan.

<sup>2</sup> This Is Who We Are is an agencywide effort to celebrate who we are, demonstrate how we show up, and revitalize our mission. It affirms our core values, stance, code and commitments, and habits of conservation leadership.





Botanist Lauren Quon checks native plant growth and pulls invasive weeds at a recent controlled-burn location on the Cleveland National Forest, San Diego River Gorge, CA. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.

# Introduction



For more than 100 years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service has brought people together to answer the call of conservation. As the workforce of the Forest Service, we are the living embodiment of the agency and everything it stands for. When the agency’s purpose serves as our North Star, when we focus on building strong relationships with our communities and customers, and when we base everything we do on our agency’s shared values, we bring the agency’s mission to life.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) are foundational to fulfilling the mission of the Forest Service. We must continue to cultivate an organization comprising diverse backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and ways of thinking that reflects our core values, code and commitments, and the public we serve. While this plan is rooted within the [U.S. Department of Agriculture Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan, Fiscal Year 2022–2026](#), DEIA has been a driving force for the Forest Service for many years.

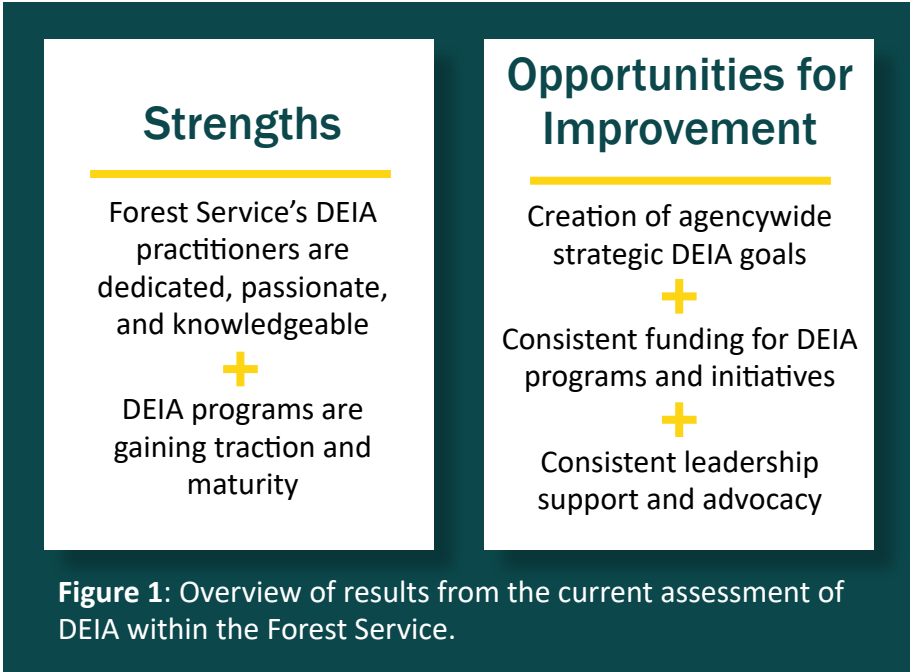
The USDA DEIA Strategic Plan is aligned with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensuring compliance with laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, and more. There is also direct alignment with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws and regulations aimed at creating a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible workplace. This plan guides intentional efforts to attract and retain individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, as part of the agency’s commitment to EEO, the Forest Service DEIA Action Plan enhances the principles of Management Directive 715 (MD-715) issued by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). MD-715 provides guidance to Federal agencies and organizations to assess their EEO

programs and address barriers to equal employment opportunities. The Forest Service DEIA Action Plan informs proactive steps to address disparities and supports the Forest Service’s special emphasis programs’ efforts around outreach and recruitment, professional development opportunities, and overall participation of underrepresented populations within the organization.

Furthermore, on June 25, 2021, President Biden signed [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 14035 on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce](#), which charges the Federal Government with increasing DEIA maturity across agencies. The Forest Service DEIA Action Plan helps to further the aims of E.O. 14035—in addition to directly aligning

and supporting the Civil Rights Act and EEO laws, regulations, principles, and related programs noted above. The actions identified in this plan have been shaped by committed and engaged employees and stakeholders from across the agency. The actions reflect the



findings and recommendations identified through a comprehensive assessment of DEIA within the Forest Service. The assessment was a critical first step to support the needs and actions the agency must take to align with DEIA best practices and Federal regulations and guidance. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR), Work Environment and Performance Office (WEPO), and Human Resources Management (HRM) assessed DEIA-related initiatives to determine areas with the greatest need and where technical support will have the most impact in achieving the agency’s overarching DEIA goals. This leadership team used comprehensive quantitative and qualitative assessment techniques to outline the key components of each initiative and program area and identify key strengths, challenges, and opportunities (figure 1) that may affect the achievement of DEIA goals and objectives.

# Purpose of This Plan

The purpose of the Forest Service DEIA Action Plan is to empower all employees and DEIA programs and initiatives to self-advocate and participate in larger strategic planning efforts to ensure DEIA is woven into the fabric of the agency. This plan reflects a true partnership among employees across the agency who are committed to advancing DEIA. The plan will create actions and strategies to positively impact the agency’s internal systems, processes, and culture for the next 5 years and beyond.

Through this plan, programs and initiatives can work to secure necessary and consistent funding and resources. This plan will also help provide formal authority that allows programs and initiatives to be less reliant on personal support from members of senior leadership. Most importantly, this plan

will form mechanisms for leadership accountability through added governance and key performance indicators (KPIs), as well as provide means for measuring the impact of DEIA programs and initiatives on organizational success.

## Defining DEIA in the Forest Service

Our leadership’s expectation is that advancing DEIA in the Forest Service is the responsibility of all employees, supervisors, and leaders. As part of the first step in demonstrating our commitment to DEIA in the Forest Service, it is critical we are operating from the same shared understanding of key concepts and terms as defined by E.O. 14035 and the USDA DEIA Strategic Plan (figure 2).

Diversity	The practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities.
Equity	The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.
Inclusion	The recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds.
Accessibility	<div>The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them. Accessibility includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provision of accommodations and modifications to ensure equal access to employment and participation in activities for people with disabilities,</li><li>• Reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities,</li><li>• Commitment to ensuring people with disabilities can independently access every outward-facing and internal activity or electronic space, and</li><li>• Pursuit of best practices, such as universal design.</li></ul></div>

Figure 2: Definitions of DEIA key concepts and terms.

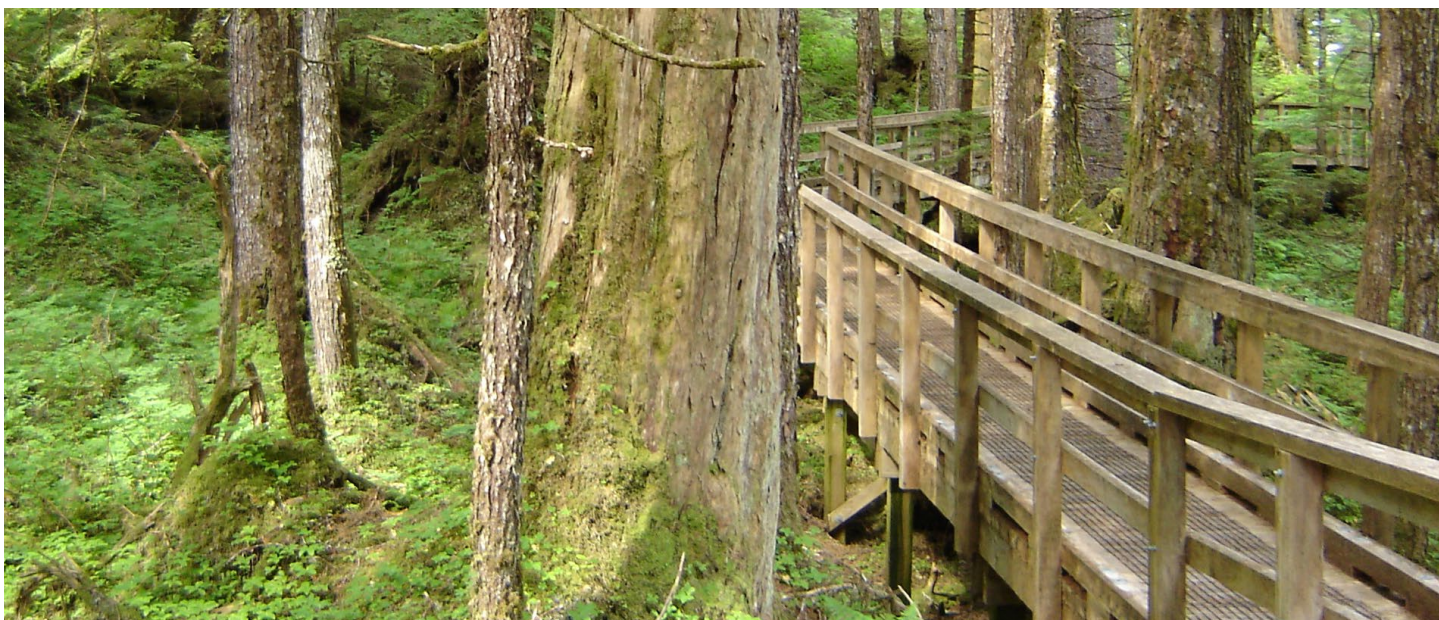




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A Forest Service field ranger briefs visitors alongside an American Sign Language interpreter at Carson National Forest, NM. USDA Forest Service photo.





Accessible viewing platforms allow visitors on the Tongass National Forest, AK, to enjoy forests and muskegs that have taken thousands of years to develop to their present state. USDA Forest Service photo.

## Alignment With Other Plans and Guidance

The Forest Service DEIA Action Plan does not stand alone, it is nested within governmentwide and USDA guidance and priorities (figure 3). The plan builds upon guidance put forth in E.O. 14035, the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) DEIA Strategic Plan](#), and subsequently the USDA DEIA Strategic Plan.

As we actively work to advance DEIA internally in the Forest Service as well as to those we serve, we are also working several plans and strategies in parallel across the agency, including this Forest Service DEIA Action Plan, [Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: A USDA Forest Service Action Plan](#) (referred to as the Tribal Action Plan in this document), and the [Forest Service Equity Action Plan, 2023–2024](#). Together, the plans provide a holistic approach to advancing DEIA within the Forest Service and establishing impactful and enduring progress—yet each serves different and distinct purposes:

- The Equity Action Plan focuses on equitably delivering the Forest Service’s mission to Tribes, partners, and the public. It represents a broad set of high-leverage actions with potential for improving community outcomes and providing

enduring systemic change. The plan outlines our commitment to assessing barriers and identifying equity outcomes for underserved communities by focusing on nine key actions organized under three themes: Community Service to All, Economic Stability, and Health and Resilience.

- The Tribal Action Plan recognizes the role Tribal governments play in decision making about Forest Service-managed lands and waters through co-stewardship, consultation, capacity-building, and by other means. The plan also emphasizes the agency’s unique, shared responsibility to ensure decisions related to Federal stewardship of lands, waters, and wildlife include considerations to safeguard the treaty rights and spiritual, subsistence, and cultural interests of any Federally-recognized Tribe.
- The Forest Service DEIA Action Plan focuses on actions and strategies that will positively impact the agency’s internal systems, processes, and culture. Leadership recognizes the role of a healthy and inclusive organizational culture and the need to build an organization that reflects the diversity of the communities and customers we serve. This plan will provide structure and cohesion to all DEIA programming and give a singular voice, vision, and mission for DEIA within the Forest Service.



## Governmentwide Guidance

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## USDA DEIA Strategic Plan

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### Forest Service Equity Action Plan

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### Forest Service Tribal Action Plan

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### Forest Service DEIA Action Plan

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#### **Governmentwide Guidance:**

- Executive Order 14035
- OPM Inaugural Report on Governmentwide DEIA and OPM Fact Sheets and Reference Documents
- Governmentwide Strategic Plan to Advance DEIA in the Federal Workforce

#### **USDA DEIA Strategic Plan:**

Priorities, goals, and commitment to integrating DEIA throughout the Department

#### **Forest Service Equity Action Plan:**

Actions to help deliver the mission in an equitable manner to benefit employees, Tribes, partners, and the public

#### **Forest Service Tribal Action Plan:**

Actions recognizing the role Tribal governments play in decision making regarding lands and waters through co-stewardship, consultation, capacity-building, and other means

#### **Forest Service DEIA Action Plan:**

Actions and strategies to positively impact the agency's internal systems, processes, and culture

**Figure 3:** Alignment of Forest Service DEIA efforts with governmentwide and USDA guidance and priorities.



Visitors Services Information Assistant Tre Chism at the front desk, Angeles National Forest, Arcadia, CA. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.



# USDA DEIA Goals and Objectives



In March 2022, USDA published its first-ever DEIA Strategic Plan to demonstrate a commitment to embracing and integrating DEIA in all efforts to deliver on its mission. The Department selected six focus areas to serve as its strategic DEIA goals and objectives for the next 5 years (fiscal years 2022–2026).

Goals	Objectives
<b>Goal 1 (Culture):</b> Build a culture that drives trust, belonging, transparency, accountability, and employee empathy.	1.1: Foster a culture that is defined by a shared understanding of what DEIA is, why it is important, how it shows up, and how each individual contributes and is held accountable to its success and advancement. 1.2: Build an equity-focused framework that provides access to purposeful and unbiased employee development and growth opportunities for USDA’s current and future workforce.
<b>Goal 2 (Workforce):</b> Achieve a workforce representative of Americans that inspires development of innovative ideas and best practices.	2.1: Promote and practice innovative and bold outreach and awareness strategies that brand USDA as an employer of choice for individuals of all backgrounds, experiences, and abilities. 2.2: Enhance relationships with current partners and develop new, sustainable partnerships to build an increasingly diverse pipeline from underserved and underrepresented communities. 2.3: Eliminate barriers and bias in the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of underrepresented candidates and use data to develop strategies designed to address the needs of specific populations.
<b>Goal 3 (Environment):</b> Foster a workplace environment that is physically, mentally, and emotionally safe.	3.1: Embed standardized antiharassment and safety policy and response system protocols and standards at every level and ensure leadership engagement in harassment prevention and response efforts. 3.2: Ensure facilities and emergency response mechanisms promote personnel safety across USDA operations. 3.3: Create a USDA-wide victim-centered and trauma-informed antiharassment program.
<b>Goal 4 (Governance):</b> Establish leadership and governance structures to support long-term and sustainable DEIA efforts.	4.1: Establish a formal shared leadership structure, systems, policies, metrics, and support functions for the CDIO with sufficient authority and resources to lead DEIA efforts. 4.2: Partner across the Department for the CDIO to use people-centric best practices to transform USDA by developing, championing, implementing, and managing USDA’s DEIA strategy and portfolio.
<b>Goal 5 (Accountability):</b> Promote empowerment, responsibility, and accountability for DEIA through developing the workforce.	5.1: Prioritize diversifying the workforce through targeted education, training, development, outreach, and advancement opportunities. 5.2: Promote consistency and accountability in learning and development at all levels. 5.3: Integrate DEIA in expectations, competencies, performance requirements, and behaviors that result in career advancement and progression.
<b>Goal 6 (Commitment):</b> Demonstrate a commitment to a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible USDA through accountability, data collection, analysis, and effective policymaking.	6.1: Create a plan for reviewing USDA policies and procedures (e.g., assessment tests, vacancy announcements, eligibility criteria, suitability requirements, etc.) to integrate civil rights and equity in the design of policies, programs, and decision making. 6.2: Support fairness and equity through the development and consistent application of equity principles and practices. 6.3: Develop a data infrastructure that is consistent and transparent which allows for standardized quantitative and qualitative data collection, management, reporting, and governance; to include the measurement, tracking, and monitoring of progress for DEIA initiatives.



Information Technology Specialist Tara Chavez works at the Albuquerque Service Center, NM. As a blind employee, her guide dog Patterson helps her navigate the service center buildings. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.



# Forest Service DEIA Action Items

The Forest Service DEIA action items outlined in this plan are aligned with and build upon the USDA DEIA goals and objectives above. The information below represents the distribution of Forest Service action items across the six USDA DEIA goals.<sup>3</sup>

## Goal 1 (Culture): 23 percent of total action items

Build a culture that drives trust, belonging, transparency, accountability, and employee empathy.

USDA DEIA Objectives	Forest Service Actions
1.1: Foster a culture that is defined by a shared understanding of what DEIA is, why it is important, how it shows up, and how each individual contributes and is held accountable to its success and advancement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an integrated, national-level Forest Service DEIA learning curriculum, supported through learning resources such as an agencywide DEIA toolkit.</li> <li>2. Develop and disseminate an integrated, consistent, and transparent internal DEIA communications plan.</li> <li>3. Hold an annual, internal Forest Service equity summit to calibrate employees to our mission, values, DEIA Action Plan, Equity Action Plan, and Tribal Action Plan.</li> <li>4. Ensure existing content, including examples and scenarios within TIWWA and the Forest Service DEIA learning curriculum, are reinforced with DEIA perspectives.</li> <li>5. Mandate DEIA activities and offer incentives for participating in internal DEIA activities.</li> </ol>
1.2: Build an equity-focused framework that provides access to purposeful and unbiased employee development and growth opportunities for USDA's current and future workforce.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrate and streamline existing accessibility activities (e.g., acquiring deaf and hard of hearing contracting services, conducting barrier analysis) to enhance accessibility agencywide.</li> <li>2. Engage with Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to proactively share information about employee development opportunities and outreach, recruitment, and retention efforts.</li> <li>3. Conduct quarterly meetings between ERG executive sponsors, ERG chairs, and administering bodies.</li> </ol>

## Goal 2 (Workforce): 23 percent of total action items

Achieve a workforce representative of Americans that inspires development of innovative ideas and best practices.

USDA DEIA Objectives	Forest Service Actions
2.1: Promote and practice innovative and bold outreach and awareness strategies that brand USDA as an employer of choice for individuals of all backgrounds, experiences, and abilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a national-level, 5-year strategic recruitment and outreach plan that is data-driven and tied to the agency's strategic and workforce plans.</li> <li>2. Create supervisor training module(s) on hiring authorities (competitive and noncompetitive) to help challenge unfounded beliefs (e.g., timelines, HRM partnership, preselection).</li> </ol>
2.2: Enhance relationships with current partners and develop new, sustainable partnerships to build an increasingly diverse pipeline from underserved and underrepresented communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrate and prioritize hiring authorities under the Resource Assistants Program (RAP), Job Corps Program, Public Lands Corps (PLC) Program, USDA 1890/1994 Scholars Program, Indian Youth Service Corps, and the Minority Serving Institution Program to significantly increase successful placement of underrepresented employees to meet short- and long-term hiring needs.</li> <li>2. Conduct an inventory assessment of Forest Service partnerships and outreach efforts to identify gaps and establish strategies to improve current and future partnerships supporting underserved communities.</li> </ol>
2.3: Eliminate barriers and bias in the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of underrepresented candidates, and use data to develop strategies designed to address the needs of specific populations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish and embed a standardized agencywide onboarding experience for new employees.</li> <li>2. Connect national-level, early career recruitment efforts with a national team of hiring managers and selecting officials who will identify, correct, and establish sustainable processes for early career hiring.</li> <li>3. Develop a working group of subject matter experts from HRM, OCR, and WEPO with hiring managers to explore the use of broader professional series or expanded technical series career ladders for hard to fill entry-level occupations to improve recruitment from more diverse candidate pools.</li> <li>4. Review and revise systems that require specific duty locations to increase the number of remote positions.</li> </ol>

<sup>3</sup> Total does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.



## Goal 3 (Environment): 23 percent of total action items

Foster a workplace environment that is physically, mentally, and emotionally safe.

USDA DEIA Objectives	Forest Service Actions
3.1: Embed standardized antiharassment and safety policy and response system protocols and standards at every level and ensure leadership engagement in harassment prevention and response efforts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an integrated case management system to include EEO complaints, discipline, and antiharassment issues where affected individuals can initiate their own cases.</li> <li>2. Implement training, communication, and marketing on antiharassment, reprisal, retaliation, and the Conflict Management and Prevention Center (CMPC).</li> <li>3. Educate employees on the antiharassment process (e.g., when to report, reporting anonymously, maintaining confidentiality, timelines, and potential outcomes) beginning with new employee orientation and continuing in various venues.</li> <li>4. Require certification by all supervisors to ensure they understand their responsibility to report harassment and provide training on their role in the antiharassment process through new- and experienced-supervisor training.</li> <li>5. Conduct an evaluation of the antiharassment program.</li> </ol>
3.2: Ensure facilities and emergency response mechanisms promote personnel safety across USDA operations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Examine and inspect Forest Service facilities to ensure they are accessible and safe for employees.</li> </ol>
3.3: Create a USDA-wide victim-centered and trauma-informed antiharassment program.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and deliver proactive antiharassment programs and training and equitably implement employee support programs that provide resources and education, including Ombuds, CMPC, and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) so employees understand and have access to available resources.</li> <li>2. Train misconduct investigators, employee relations specialists, and antiharassment case managers on victim-centered, trauma-informed approaches.</li> </ol>

## Goal 4 (Governance): 9 percent of total action items

Establish leadership and governance structures to support long-term and sustainable DEIA efforts.

USDA DEIA Objectives	Forest Service Actions
4.1: Establish a formal shared leadership structure, systems, policies, metrics, and support functions for the CDIO with sufficient authority and resources to lead DEIA efforts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a DEIA directorate within OCR, including the hiring of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer, focused on the development, implementation, and tracking of the Forest Service DEIA Action Plan.</li> </ol>
4.2: Partner across the Department for the CDIO to use people-centric best practices to transform USDA by developing, championing, implementing, and managing USDA's DEIA strategy and portfolio.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish an Equity and Environmental Justice Leadership Council to coordinate agencywide efforts to advance environmental justice and DEIA goals.</li> <li>2. Leverage the Equity and Environmental Justice Leadership Council to organize, integrate, report on, and gain measurable progress on equity, Tribal relations, and DEIA goals.</li> </ol>

## Goal 5 (Accountability): 9 percent of total action items

Promote empowerment, responsibility, and accountability for DEIA through workforce development.

USDA DEIA Objectives	Forest Service Actions
5.1: Prioritize diversifying the workforce through targeted education, training, development, outreach, and advancement opportunities.	1. Track and analyze DEIA integration within specific work units to determine the impact of increased representation, retention, and career development.
5.2: Promote consistency and accountability in learning and development at all levels.	Actions Not Applicable.
5.3: Integrate DEIA in expectations, competencies, performance requirements, and behaviors that result in career advancement and progression.	1. Review existing Forest Service critical performance elements to identify areas to incorporate DEIA competencies for element achievement. 2. Develop and circulate models demonstrating successful DEIA practices at top-, mid-, and entry-level tiers (e.g., incorporating tracking tools, incentivizing tracking, developing standards around diverse partnerships, and establishing outreach expectations).

## Goal 6 (Commitment): 14 percent of total action items

Demonstrate a commitment to a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible USDA through accountability, data collection, analysis, and effective policymaking.

USDA DEIA Objectives	Forest Service Actions
6.1: Create a plan for reviewing USDA policies and procedures (e.g., assessment tests, vacancy announcements, eligibility criteria, suitability requirements, etc.) to integrate civil rights and equity in the design of policies, programs, and decision making.	1. Develop a cross-deputy working group to review internal employment policy and procedure.
6.2: Support fairness and equity through the development and consistent application of equity principles and practices	1. Review and address discrepancies in the collection, coding, interpretation, and management of workforce demographic data across the agency. 2. Establish a community of practice and working group(s) to improve the collection, analysis, and accessibility of demographic and workforce data throughout the employee lifecycle.
6.3: Develop a data infrastructure that is consistent and transparent that allows for standardized quantitative and qualitative data collection, management, reporting, and governance; to include the measurement, tracking, and monitoring of progress for DEIA initiatives.	1. Build or enhance dashboards to provide up-to-date workforce composition data. 2. Analyze data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and agency departure surveys and provide results to leaders and employees through dashboards and/or published reports to assess and support DEIA and work environment efforts.



Public Affairs Specialist Keila Vizcarra collaborates with Tribal Relations Resource Assistant Rosa-Lee Jimenez at the Angeles National Forest, Arcadia, CA. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.

# + Implementation



At the Forest Service, we are committed to holding ourselves accountable for working toward DEIA goals and reporting on our progress. While this action plan is a multifunctional partnership between OCR, WEPO, and HRM, a critical component of its implementation is identifying roles and responsibilities. Naming action-item owners will help keep stakeholders accountable and responsible for the central role they play in implementing this plan. Defining roles and responsibilities will also create clear lanes for decision making and task management.

In addition to appointing action-item owners, OCR, WEPO, and HRM leadership will define discrete tasks and establish clear timelines and milestones necessary to accomplish the actions in this plan. Planning will be a collaborative exercise given possible action-item interdependencies and/or overlapping resources necessary to accomplish our DEIA goals.

Finally, OCR, WEPO, and HRM leadership will consistently review and evaluate our progress throughout the course of this effort by using thoughtfully defined metrics and evaluation measures. We will further define, examine, and track some of the following key factors as we implement this plan:

- Employee engagement and new employee satisfaction;
- Internal mobility;
- Employee retention, turnover, and attrition;
- Talent pool and employee accession;
- Training and development program participation;
- Hiring authority usage.

Once we review our progress, the OCR, WEPO, and HRM leadership team may refine DEIA action items to better meet current and future Forest Service needs. This team is committed to regularly reporting on progress to further enhance transparency across the agency through a comprehensive communications and marketing strategy.

## Potential Barriers to Implementation

The advancement of DEIA throughout the agency comes with potential barriers to success. Based on the current assessment of DEIA within the Forest

Service, these potential barriers include, but are not limited to:

- **Leadership Support:** Leadership engagement and support are critical to achieving consistent funding and resources and for strengthening program and initiative growth and impact. Limited leadership support could lead to duplicative efforts, frustration from practitioners, a lack of resources, and distrust and dissatisfaction with leadership from underrepresented groups.
- **Funding and Resources:** DEIA programs and initiatives are understaffed and underresourced. The Forest Service has a limited number of full-time DEIA practitioners, with most performing DEIA responsibilities as ancillary duties in addition to their full-time roles. While this action plan is ambitious, it is necessary to meet the strategic goals set forth by USDA and make progress towards our shared vision of a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible agency. Lack of resources and inconsistent or limited funding may pose challenges for programs and initiatives to make meaningful progress and add value across the agency and Department.
- **Cultural Norms and Resistance to Change:** Regardless of societal progress, differences in acceptance, understanding, or fear of change can impact an individual's openness and readiness to understand and accept the reprioritization of DEIA. The Forest Service is a cross-section of our country, reflecting the varied opinions and cultural norms of America.
- **Structure:** The agency's current DEIA programs and initiatives are spread throughout different offices, regions, and grassroots efforts. Many employees who have DEIA responsibilities perform them as collateral (or volunteer) duties. Understaffing, combined with the emotional toll of DEIA work, can lead to employee burnout, which leadership may perceive as a lack of commitment.

These identified barriers are not fully beyond our capacity to solve or overcome to ensure the successful implementation of this plan. That said, it may take creativity, determination, and collaboration across the agency, Department, and Federal Government to succeed.



Recreation Technician Katara Dale, a member of the Navajo Tribe, looks out over Albuquerque from the Sandia Ranger District on the Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands, NM. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.



# Conclusion



Guided by this action plan, at the Forest Service, we will continue to cultivate an agency that is more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible. Organizations that prioritize DEIA are more successful and effective and create an environment where everyone feels welcomed and thrives. This plan represents our commitment to making the Forest Service a guiding force for DEIA within the


Department and beyond. We recognize the path may not be easy, with obstacles to navigate and resistance to overcome, but lasting change and true progress cannot be achieved without a cultural shift. Through true collaboration and partnership across the Forest Service, we are excited about realizing our DEIA goals by bringing this action plan to life over the next 5 years.



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Forest Service field rangers greet a visitor at Wahkeena Falls, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, OR. USDA Forest Service photo.





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