United States
Department of
Agriculture

USDA Forest Service
Aviation Strategic Plan
Fiscal Years 2022–2026

Fire and Aviation Management   **May 2022**

From USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2015-2020

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Cover Photo: USDA Forest Service de Havilland DHC-2 Beaver on the Pagami Creek Fire in 2011. Photo by Ken Hupila, Snotty Moose Studios.

USDA Forest Service
Aviation Strategic Plan
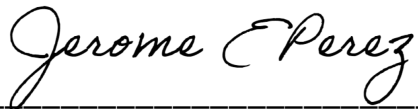## Fiscal Years 2022–2026

Prepared by:

- Aviation Strategic Planning Branch

Reviewed by:

- Assistant Director, Aviation

- Deputy Director, Aviation and Operations

Approved by:

Jerome E Perez   July 12, 2022
_____   _____
Jerome E. Perez   Date
Director, Fire and Aviation Management

Contents

Executive Summary – What's Ahead

The next five years (2022-2026) will present both challenges and opportunities for Forest Service Aviation. Global climate change continues to create challenges. The year 2020 was one of the worst ever for wildland fires, continuing a national trend. Ten of the last sixteen years (since 2006) have been some of the worst on record as far as acres burned. Now, instead of a fire "season," we have a fire "year."

The 2021 Infrastructure and Jobs Act provides an opportunity. As Forest Service Chief Randy Moore stated in his November 15, 2021, message:

> "In short, this historic legislation gives us more of the funding we need to ensure that the people and communities we serve get all the benefits they want and need from the nation's forests and grasslands. Congress will be watching and holding us accountable, so it will be up to us to deliver."

This Strategic Plan—in conjunction with other documents such as Fire and Aviation Management's Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy—provides a framework to focus how we face these challenges and take advantage of opportunities.

Four overarching goals guide us as we strive to achieve the Forest Service Mission of "sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." These four goals address safety, our people, our organizational capabilities, and technological advances. As a High Reliability Organization, our priority is to bring everyone home to their families at the end of every mission. We want a diverse, highly qualified, trained, and motivated workforce. And we want a well-defined mission framework for these employees that also capitalizes on technological advances.

Our strategic goals are tied to specific objectives. Key performance indicators are used to define how well the agency has advanced toward accomplishing each objective. Intentionally designed to be specific, measurable, and attainable, these indicators will help us move forward strategically. Progress will be reported in an annual Forest Service Aviation Program Report to assist us in monitoring performance.

This Aviation Strategic Plan is the "umbrella" document that provides a strategic context for all aviation activities. It is not a stand-alone document, but complements, enhances, and guides other plans and strategies. It is intricately tied to higher level documents such as the Forest Service Strategic Plan, and is the long-term framework for guiding future Forest Service Aviation activities.

Aviation leadership will review our strategy twice annually; one of these reviews will be used to identify any needed adjustments. Each aviation program will develop a three- to five-year program management plan that includes a desired future state and defines the processes and requirements to reach it. Each year, a specific program of work will also be developed for each aviation support mission as part of a disciplined effort to act strategically.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

FOREST SERVICE
—MISSION

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

FOREST SERVICE
—MOTTO

Caring for the Land and Serving People

FOREST SERVICE AVIATION
—VISION

Forest Service Aviation leads the world in aviation, supporting natural resources and wildland firefighting.

FOREST SERVICE AVIATION
—MISSION

To provide safe, efficient, effective, timely, and coordinated aviation support for agency operations, in support of cooperator and partnership agreements, and to meet current and future needs through innovation and technology in order to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands.

FIRE & AVIATION MANAGEMENT
—CORE VALUES

Safety, integrity, treating people with mutual respect, and land stewardship.

The success of Forest Service Aviation depends on...

FOREST SERVICE AVIATION
—CORE VALUES

- *Accountability*

  Everyone is responsible for their actions.

- *Boldness*

  Take action, be proactive.

- *Collaboration*

  Work with interagency cooperators.

- *Continuous Improvement*

  Be self-aware and strive to be better.

- *Customer Commitment*

  Consider community and customer needs.

- *Diversity*

  Seek diverse perspectives.

- *Inclusion*

  Provide equal access to opportunities and resources.

- *Innovation*

  Stay abreast of latest trends.

- *Integrity*

  Always do the right thing.

- *Transparency*

  Be open and honest.

Strategic Plan Connections

The Aviation Strategic Plan is not a stand-alone document. It cascades from the following relevant goals in the current Department and Agency Strategic Plans:

USDA Strategic Plan (Fiscal Years 2022-2026)

- Combat climate change to support America's working lands, natural resources, and communities.

- Ensure America's agricultural system is equitable, resilient, and prosperous.

- Attract, inspire, and retain an engaged and motivated workforce that's proud to represent USDA.

USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan (Fiscal Years 2015-2020)

- Sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands.

- Apply knowledge globally.

- Excel as a high-performing agency.

The Aviation Strategic Plan provides the long-term framework for guiding future Forest Service Aviation activities. It complements, enhances, and guides other plans and strategies—such as Fire and Aviation Management's Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy. It serves as the foundation for individual aviation program management plans (covering a span of 3 to 5 years) and annual programs of work for aviation support missions (such as aerial supervision, exclusive-use Type 1 helicopters, etc.). The Aviation Strategic Plan should be used by regions and units in their planning processes to ensure alignment throughout the agency.
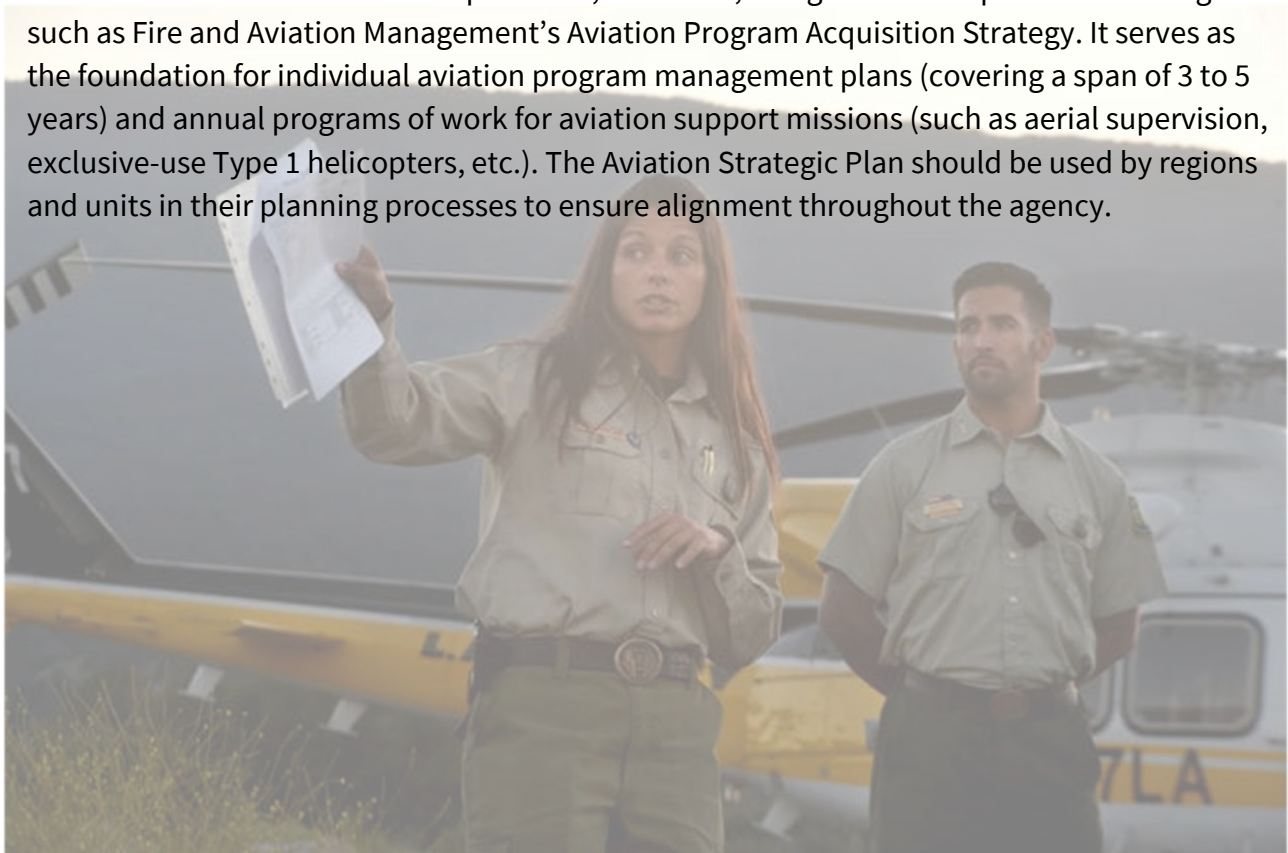
USDA Strategic Plan

Forest Service Strategic Plan

Forest Service Aviation Strategic Plan

Fire and Aviation Management's Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy

Aviation Program Management Plans

Aviation Support Mission Programs of Work

Four Strategic Goals of Forest Service Aviation

The following are the Forest Service Aviation goals for 2022-2026:

GOAL 1
Prevent Accidents Through Proactive Risk Management

GOAL 2
Take Care of Our People

GOAL 3
Organize for Success

GOAL 4
Explore, Evaluate, and Adopt Emerging Technology to Achieve the Aviation Mission More Effectively

Forest Service Aviation	Forest Service	USDA
Goal 1: Prevent Accidents Through Proactive Risk Management.	Excel as a High-Performing Agency	Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous
Goal 2: Take Care of Our People	Sustain our Nation's Forests and Grasslands	Attract, Inspire, and Retain an Engaged and Motivated Workforce that's Proud to Represent USDA
Goal 3: Organize for Success	Excel as a High Performing Agency	Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous
Goal 4: Explore, Evaluate, and Adopt Emerging Technology to Achieve the Aviation Mission More Effectively	Apply Knowledge Globally	Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources and Communities

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

The 2022-2026 Aviation Strategic Plan establishes four over-arching goals for all aspects of Forest Service Aviation. These goals address safety, people, organizational framework, and technology. Objectives are identified for each goal, with specific key performance indicators and strategies to help ensure that goals and objectives are being met. The key performance indicators are detailed, measurable conditions that can be periodically reviewed and reported.

Goals ➡ Objectives ➡ Key Performance Indicators

STRATEGIC GOAL

Prevent Accidents Through Proactive Risk Management

Objective 1.1: Enhance and improve the agency's Aviation Safety Management System.

Objective 1.2: Develop an acceptable level of safety performance with targets and indicators.

Objective 1.3: Continue to improve the risk management process.

Objective 1.4: Ensure aviation systems function as designed and comply with requirements and standards.

Objective 1.5: Develop a proactive culture with a learning environment and open communication.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Take Care of Our People

Objective 2.1: Fill positions with high-quality applicants with a diversity of culture, perspectives, and ideas.

Objective 2.2: Create an aviation career development plan including requirements, training, and mentoring.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Organize for Success

Objective 3.1: Engage in a continuous review of existing policy, adjusting as needed to meet emerging needs.

Objective 3.2: Develop a deliberate and transparent budget process that clearly identifies priorities.

Objective 3.3: Monitor and improve efficiency of contracted aircraft.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Explore, Evaluate, and Adopt Emerging Technology to Achieve the Mission More Effectively

Objective 4.1: Restore, sustain, and modernize the Forest Service Aviation fleet.

Fiscal Years 2022-2026
Key Performance Indicators

Prevent Accidents Through Proactive Risk Management

1.1.1. Keep Leadership Informed

1.1.2. Gap Analysis Working Group

1.1.3. Gold Standard Certification

1.1.4. Review and Update Guides

1.2.1. Safety Performance Targets/Indicators

1.3.1. Programmatic Risk Assessments

1.3.2. Risk Assessment Close-Outs

1.3.3. Risk Management Process

1.4.1. Regional Reviews

1.4.2. Programmatic Reviews

1.4.3. Mishap Investigation Process

1.4.4. Flight Operations Quality Assurance

1.5.1. Safety Recognition and Awards

1.5.2. Aviation Safety Communique System

Take Care of Our People

2.1.1. Diversity Outreach

2.1.2. Reduce Acting Appointments

2.2.1. Aviation Career Paths and Mentoring

Organize for Success

3.1.1. Policy Review Cycle

3.2.1. Support Mission Programs of Work

3.2.2. Aviation Budget Transparency

3.2.3. Staffing Standards

3.2.4. Program Management Plans

3.3.1. Contract Efficiency Monitoring

3.3.2. Contract Efficacy Monitoring

3.3.3. Contract Risk Monitoring

Explore, Evaluate, and Adopt Emerging Technology to Achieve the Mission More Effectively

4.1.1. Working Capital Fund Fleet Evaluation

4.1.2. Human-Aiding Technology

4.1.3. Standardized IT Capability

Goal 1: Prevent Accidents Through Proactive Risk Management

Aviation safety is the practice of managing risks in aviation. Safety is a commitment that requires proactive management within the functional areas of an Aviation Safety Management System (policy, risk management, promotion, and assurance) to reduce the likelihood of aircraft mishaps.

Prevent Accidents Through Proactive Risk Management

☑ Outcome

Proactive safety management focuses on leading safety indicators that fall outside traditional or historical metrics (such as counting the number of accidents). The Forest Service incorporated an Aviation Safety Management System into policy in 2010 to shift this focus on undesirable outcomes to an understanding of how collaborative efforts in aviation management help prevent aviation mishaps. Focusing on the number of accidents as a goal is a flawed construct that does not move the agency forward in terms of safety culture; it can create the impression that our safety efforts are not working. Safety must be approached as a positive concept instead of believing that an absence of accidents indicates the presence of safety. Implementing an Aviation Safety Management System as a formal, top-down, organization-wide approach requires support at the top levels of leadership where an accountable executive is designated to support the safety effort.

Objective 1.1: Enhance and improve the agency's Aviation Safety Management System.

Key Performance Indicator 1.1.1.

KEEP LEADERSHIP INFORMED

Keep leadership informed on Aviation Safety Management Systems efforts and aviation safety statistics. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will coordinate with the Assistant Director, Aviation to ensure an Accountable Executive is designated in policy by the next policy revision cycle. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will provide an annual (fiscal year) aviation statistical report to the Accountable Executive; Director, Fire and Aviation Management; and Assistant Director, Aviation by January 31 each year.

Key Performance Indicator 1.1.2.

GAP ANALYSIS WORKING GROUP

By September 30, 2023, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will organize a working group to conduct gap analysis between desired and actual safety performance. This will include a plan to position the agency for a "Stage 1" external International Standards-Business Aviation Operations audit by January 31, 2025.

Key Performance Indicator 1.1.3.

GOLD STANDARD CERTIFICATION

By September 30, 2023, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will coordinate a Program of Work to ensure meeting the Interagency Committee for Aviation Policy Federal Aviation Gold Standard Certification every two years. This will document adherence to Federal Management Regulation Part 102.33.

Key Performance Indicator 1.1.4.

REVIEW AND UPDATE GUIDES

By September 2023, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will implement a Program of Work that includes development of and adherence to a process for review, update, and approval of the Aviation Safety Management Systems Guide and Aviation Mishap Investigation Guide for the next revision cycle.

Objective 1.2: Identify the minimum level of safety performance as defined in the agency's safety vision and policy by developing an acceptable level of safety performance expressed in terms of targets and indicators.

Key Performance Indicator 1.2.1.

SAFETY PERFORMANCE TARGETS AND INDICATORS

The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will organize a working group with the National Aviation Safety Council to develop relevant safety targets and indicators. The working group will be in place by September 30, 2022. Once safety targets and indicators are established, they will be evaluated annually on their validity as a safety metric related to the overall goal of "proactively managing safety to reduce risk." Targets and indicators will be included in the Annual Aviation Safety Report.

Objective 1.3: Continue to improve the risk management process. Ensure a consistent process to evaluate and manage risk in aviation operations to "as low as reasonably practicable."

Key Performance Indicator 1.3.1.

PROGRAMMATIC RISK ASSESSMENTS

The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will coordinate a schedule for strategic and programmatic risk assessments and provide the Assistant Director, Aviation the status of these by January 31 each year.

Key Performance Indicator 1.3.2.

RISK ASSESSMENT CLOSE-OUTS

The Strategic Risk Assessment Close-Out Steering Committee will ensure at least two strategic/programmatic risk assessments go through the close-out process each year. The steering committee chair will provide a list of assessments accomplished in the previous fiscal year to the Assistant Director, Aviation by January 31 each year.

Key Performance Indicator 1.3.3.

RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

By September 30, 2023, ensure the risk management process outlined in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Interagency Standards for Aviation Risk Management replaces former versions in all manuals, handbooks, and guides. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System will ensure representation on the Risk Management Subcommittee under the National Interagency Aviation Committee and participate in course review and updates to A-205 Risk Management 1 and A-305 Risk Management II to reflect the approved process.

Objective 1.4: Quality/Safety Assurance. Ensure aviation systems function as designed and comply with requirements and agency standards.

Key Performance Indicator 1.4.1.

REGIONAL REVIEWS

By September 30, 2023, the Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will develop a schedule for regional reviews to provide quality and performance feedback through an internal program audit/evaluation in two regions (including Research Stations) per year to ensure evaluation occurs every five years, including one external evaluation (different directorate/line officer) per cycle. Review results and best practices will be provided to the Assistant Director, Aviation in the Aviation Program Annual Report.
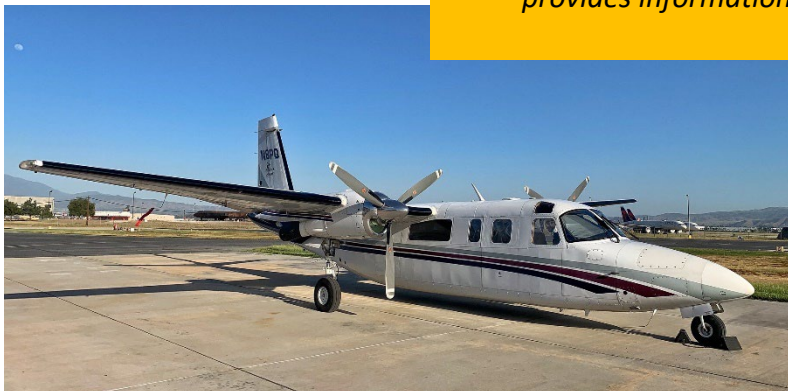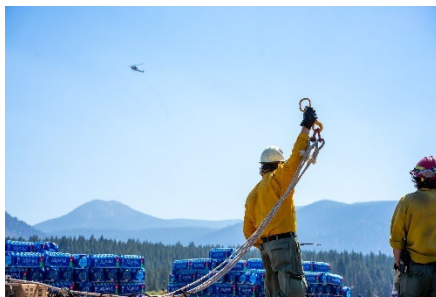

Key Performance Indicator 1.4.2.

PROGRAMMATIC REVIEWS

Quality and performance feedback is accomplished through an internal programmatic review of all aviation programs to ensure evaluation every five years, including one external evaluation (different directorate/line officer) per cycle. The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will develop a schedule for programmatic reviews that includes other Forest Service Deputy Chiefs, Directors, and staff areas with aviation activities. He/she will report the review results (including best practices) to the Assistant Director, Aviation. The schedule and completed reviews will be included in the Aviation Program Annual Report. An International Standards-Business Aviation Operations audit coordinated with the Interagency Committee for Aviation Policy may be substituted for the requirement of an external programmatic review.

Key Performance Indicator 1.4.3.

MISHAP INVESTIGATION PROCESS

A critical part of quality assurance is understanding why an accident occurred. The main objective of an aviation accident investigation is to understand the complex issues that allowed an accident to occur. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will conduct an annual review to ensure the following agency expectations and components of FMR 102-33.185 are provided for:

- *Ensure a process for proper reporting of all aircraft mishaps, including those involving unmanned aircraft systems.*
- *Seek National Transportation Safety Board "Party Status" for accidents under the operational control of the Forest Service, and ensure the agency investigation process is compliant with, and adheres to, National Transportation Safety Board regulations (49 Code of Federal Regulations 830 and 831).*
- *Ensure designated Aviation Safety Inspectors and Qualified Technical Investigators who may be asked to participate with the National Transportation Safety Board are trained by providing Qualified Technical Investigator training for new Regional Aviation Safety Managers (as needed) and Qualified Technical Investigator workshops at intervals designated in policy.*
- *Aviation Mishap Investigation Guide is updated and provides information on proper procedure.*

Key Performance Indicator 1.4.4.

FLIGHT OPERATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

By January 1, 2024, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will develop a program to collect and analyze flight data on Working Capital Fund aircraft to improve safety. This will include:

- *Coordination with Labor Relations and the National Federation of Federal Employees (Union) for flight data monitoring equipment that will be installed on Working Capital Fund aircraft.*
- *Developing a Flight Operational Quality Assurance Plan.*

Objective 1.5: Develop a proactive culture with a learning environment and open communication through promotion. This objective provides a sense of purpose and direction to the Aviation Safety Management Systems by ensuring an open communications environment and that employees receive adequate recognition.

Key Performance Indicator 1.5.1.

SAFETY RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

Each region and the Washington Office will promote and maintain a safety recognition and award program that raises awareness of a safe working environment and that values individual health and wellness by recognizing superior safety performers. By January 31 each year, Washington Office Branch Chiefs, Regional Aviation Safety Managers, and Regional Aviation Officers will coordinate safety awards and provide information to the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems for inclusion in the Annual Safety Report.

Key Performance Indicator 1.5.2.

AVIATION SAFETY COMMUNIQUE (SAFECOM) SYSTEM

Oversee administration of the Aviation Safety Communique (SAFECOM) system as the primary interagency method to report and manage safety concerns and hazards. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will:

- *Ensure SAFECOM managers are properly designated and trained on how to manage SAFECOM reports in respective regions/stations/units.*
- *Provide quality assurance by continuing efforts already in place to review all Forest Service SAFECOMs, providing feedback, and ensuring reports are properly prepared prior to public viewing.*
- *Continue to incorporate SAFECOM statistics and trends into the Annual Aviation Safety Report (already completed every year since 2004).*

Goal 2: Take Care of Our People

Recruit and retain a sufficient and highly qualified, trained, and motivated workforce.

Take Care of Our People

☑ Outcome

Our organization will incorporate standardization in training and qualifications with a forward-looking philosophy to meet future missions for the Forest Service and other agencies, while creating a sense of belonging and setting the benchmark for professional qualifications. The organization will be streamlined for safety while recognizing the value in Forest Service decentralization and diversity. This goal aims for a diverse, highly qualified, trained, and motivated workforce.

Objective 2.1: Fill positions with high-quality applicants who can bring diversity of people and culture, perspectives, and ideas to successfully promote the agency's mission and vision.

Key Performance Indicator 2.1.1.

DIVERSITY OUTREACH

Set the example for all levels of the organization by ensuring Washington Office recruitment actions include outreach for a diverse applicant pool. Aviation branch chiefs will ensure the recruitment process includes outreach to organizations that will provide a diversity of experience and perspectives, such as civil rights, veteran affairs, and Forest Service special emphasis programs. The Assistant Director, Aviation will verify actions before giving approval to finalizing outreach, recruitment, and hiring actions.

Key Performance Indicator 2.1.2.

REDUCE ACTING APPOINTMENTS

Stabilize continuity of organization by reducing the number of acting appointments to Washington Office aviation leadership positions. The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning, will record quarterly the Washington Office leadership positions being held on an acting basis. A year-end report will be provided to the Assistant Director, Aviation.

Objective 2.2: Create an aviation career development plan that provides career path requirements, training, and mentoring while improving the qualifications of individuals and vacancy fill rates. To maintain proficiency and professionalism in the Aviation Program, the organization must have qualified individuals in aviation positions.

Key Performance Indicator 2.2.1.

AVIATION CAREER PATHS AND MENTORING

Within six months of approval of this strategic plan, the National Aviation Officer Council will appoint a working group to provide suggested aviation career paths and an aviation mentoring program. This working group will also develop a program to include an orientation program and training for aviation-related duties, such as aviation operational positions, airworthiness, safety, project management, budgeting, planning, and International Standards-Business Aircraft Operations auditor certification. It will also include promotion options and a suggested succession-planning process. The results will be briefed to the Assistant Director, Aviation within a year of appointment.
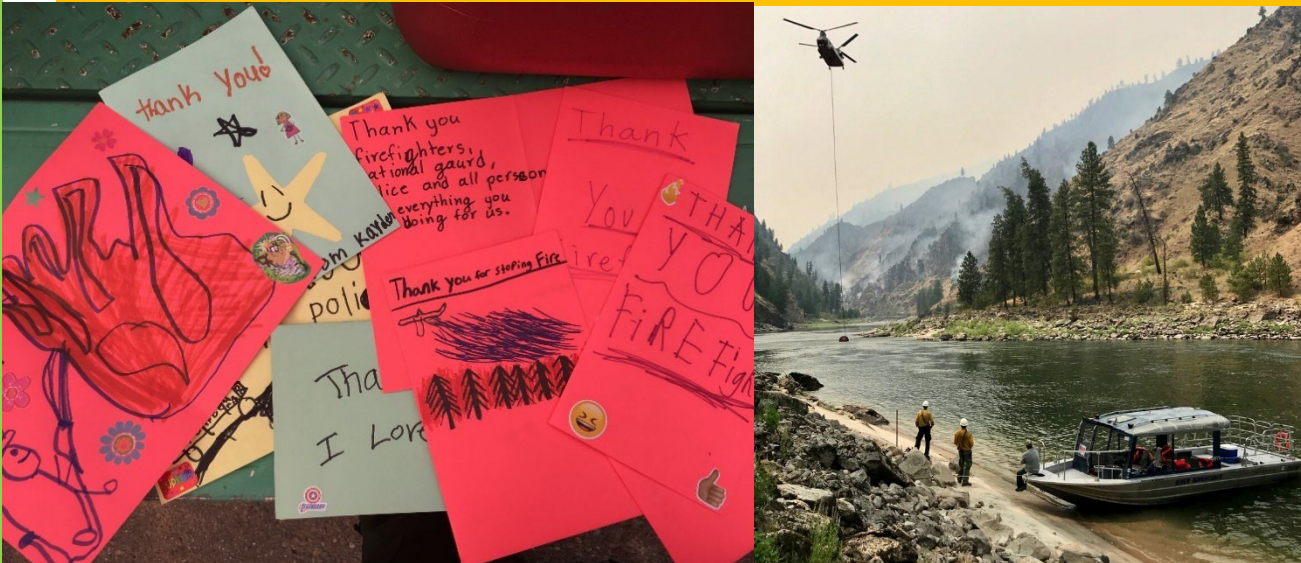
Goal 3: Organize for Success

Align the Forest Service Aviation Program to meet the needs of current and future operations.

Organize for Success

☑ **Outcome**

Policy is a critical component of the Forest Service Aviation Program. The agency is committed to providing high-quality aviation policy that is effective and meets the needs of the user. A comprehensive, long-term, aviation policy framework is necessary for the continuing development of the program. An effective budget process is necessary to ensure the best use of government funds. Efficiency in contract aircraft is key to fighting the rising threat of wildfires. The outcome of this goal is to have a clear framework to work within.

Objective 3.1: Aviation program leaders at all levels will engage in a continuous review of existing policy—revising, deleting, and/or adding new policy to meet emerging needs. Policy will be developed as a result of leaders' intent after completion of critical planning and with consideration of impacts from risk and change.

Key Performance Indicator 3.1.1.

POLICY REVIEW CYCLE

The Aviation Policy Team will coordinate a two-year cycle to review policy, document field requests for changes and edits, coordinate with Fire and Aviation Management and other staff areas with aviation activities for review, and coordinate with the Office of Regulatory and Management Services.

Objective 3.2: Develop a budget process that identifies priorities and is deliberate and transparent about what the agency is allocating to each program and resource. Match organizational standards and budget.

Key Performance Indicator 3.2.1.

SUPPORT MISSION PROGRAMS OF WORK

By September 30, 2023, the Aviation Branch Chiefs will develop yearly Programs of Work with priorities and a tracking and reporting process for each support mission. This will be updated annually by the respective Washington Office aviation branch chief.
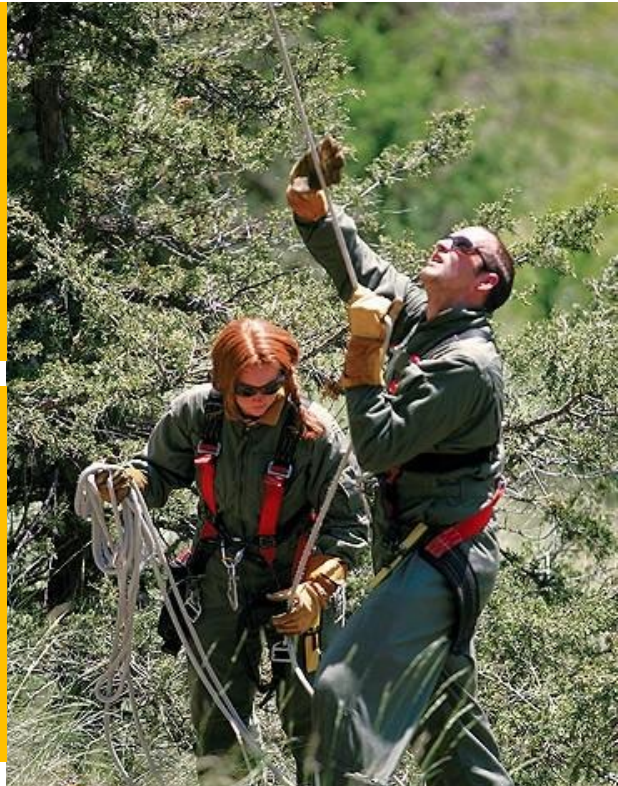
Key Performance Indicator 3.2.2.

AVIATION BUDGET TRANSPARENCY

The Aviation Branch Chiefs will develop and review the aviation budget for transparency and accuracy so that it can be allocated yearly for each support mission.

Key Performance Indicator 3.2.3.

STAFFING STANDARDS

By January 31, 2023, the Aviation Branch Chiefs will set staffing standards for each support mission and aviation program (crew/region/Washington Office).

Key Performance Indicator 3.2.4.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PLANS

By May 2023, each Washington Office Aviation program manager will develop a three- to five-year program management plan for their program. The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will then review the program management plans by September 2023 to ensure alignment with planning documents.

Objective 3.3: Monitor and improve efficiency of contracted aircraft.

Key Performance Indicator 3.3.1.

CONTRACT EFFICIENCY MONITORING

Aviation Integrating Program/Project Teams and Overarching Integrating Program/Project Teams will monitor contract efficiency by tracking contract cycle time; customer, vendor, or regional/national trends; contract value assessments; and missed milestones. They will use results to inform future acquisitions in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy. The Aviation Senior Program Manager will gather this information and provide it to the Integrating and Overarching Integrating Program/Project Teams.

Key Performance Indicator 3.3.2.

CONTRACT EFFICACY MONITORING

The Aviation Senior Program Manager will monitor contract efficacy by tracking the number of contracts per program, the remaining value of terminated contracts, and historical legacy contract trends. Use results to inform future acquisitions in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy.

Key Performance Indicator 3.3.3.

CONTRACT RISK MONITORING

The Aviation Senior Program Manager will monitor contract risk by tracking standard clause variance (from the Master Specification), amount of aircraft contracts/agreements expiring without being re-procured, and disputes or protests resolved. These will be used in future acquisition in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy.

Goal 4: Explore, Evaluate, and Adopt Emerging Technology to Achieve the Mission More Effectively

Whenever feasible, evaluate, select, and deploy technologically advanced and cost-effective aircraft, equipment, and infrastructure to meet the agency's current and future mission.

Explore, Evaluate, and Adopt Emerging Technology to Achieve the Aviation Mission More Effectively

☑ Outcome

Forest Service operations are not possible without a diverse fleet of well-maintained Forest Service-owned and contracted aircraft, which are equipped to perform in an efficient manner. The agency seeks an appropriate balance of aircraft and leverage of new technology to meet current and future needs. The outcome from this goal is to use modern technology to accomplish our mission safely and effectively.

Objective 4.1: Restore, sustain, and modernize the Forest Service Aviation fleet.

Key Performance Indicator 4.1.1.

WORKING CAPITAL FUND FLEET EVALUATION

The Branch Chief, Airworthiness will coordinate with Washington Office Branch Chiefs, Regional Aviation Officers, and Regional Aviation Safety Managers to evaluate the Working Capital Fund fleet, develop priorities, and create a plan for how the agency will move forward, meeting the timeline issued by the Office of Management and Budget, Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11, Part 7, Aviation Business Case for Agency Missions. The plan will be submitted to the Assistant Director, Aviation by December 2022. Use results to inform future acquisitions in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy.

Key Performance Indicator 4.1.2.

HUMAN-AIDING TECHNOLOGY

The Branch Chief, Aviation Operations will coordinate with other entities as necessary to implement human-aiding technology to improve the effectiveness and safety of all Forest Service aircraft through the Aerial Supervision Steering Committee. Development will include testing and evaluating systems such as electronic flight bags, daylight displays, airborne electro-optical/infrared cameras, and wireless data links on both agency-owned and agency-contracted aircraft.

Key Performance Indicator 4.1.3.

STANDARDIZED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CAPABILITY

The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will coordinate with other Forest Service staff, directorates, and deputy chief areas to research the requirements to develop standardized information technology (IT) capability through all Forest Service Aviation areas within a year of approval of this strategic plan.

Strategic Planning Processes and Overview

Managing the USDA Forest Service Aviation Program requires complex integration within the agency, as well as with Congress, industry, and other federal and state agencies. For a successful implementation, the Aviation Strategic Plan must be accompanied by three other plans—Business/Program, Unit, and Annual Work Plans. The following are the four planning phases in the Aviation Strategic Plan:

1. **Strategic planning** takes place at the highest level and identifies strategic priorities for the agency that are implemented over a period of time through annual agency budgets. Strategic priorities are based on national assessments of natural resources and are responsive to social and political trends.

   The Aviation Strategic Plan takes guidance from the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan and the USDA Strategic Plan. As stated in the 2020 Fire and Aviation Management Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy: "As goals and objectives are cascaded down through the Aviation Program, objectives must become more operational and tactical, as do the performance and effectiveness measures including key performance indicators."

   Accountability follows the objectives and measures, and ownership is defined at each level. A key performance indicator is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively a program is achieving key program objectives.

2. **Business/Program planning** by national programs, regions, and research stations translates broad strategic direction into the specific work that contributes to the agency's aviation goals and objectives.

   The Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy divides aircraft into five programs:
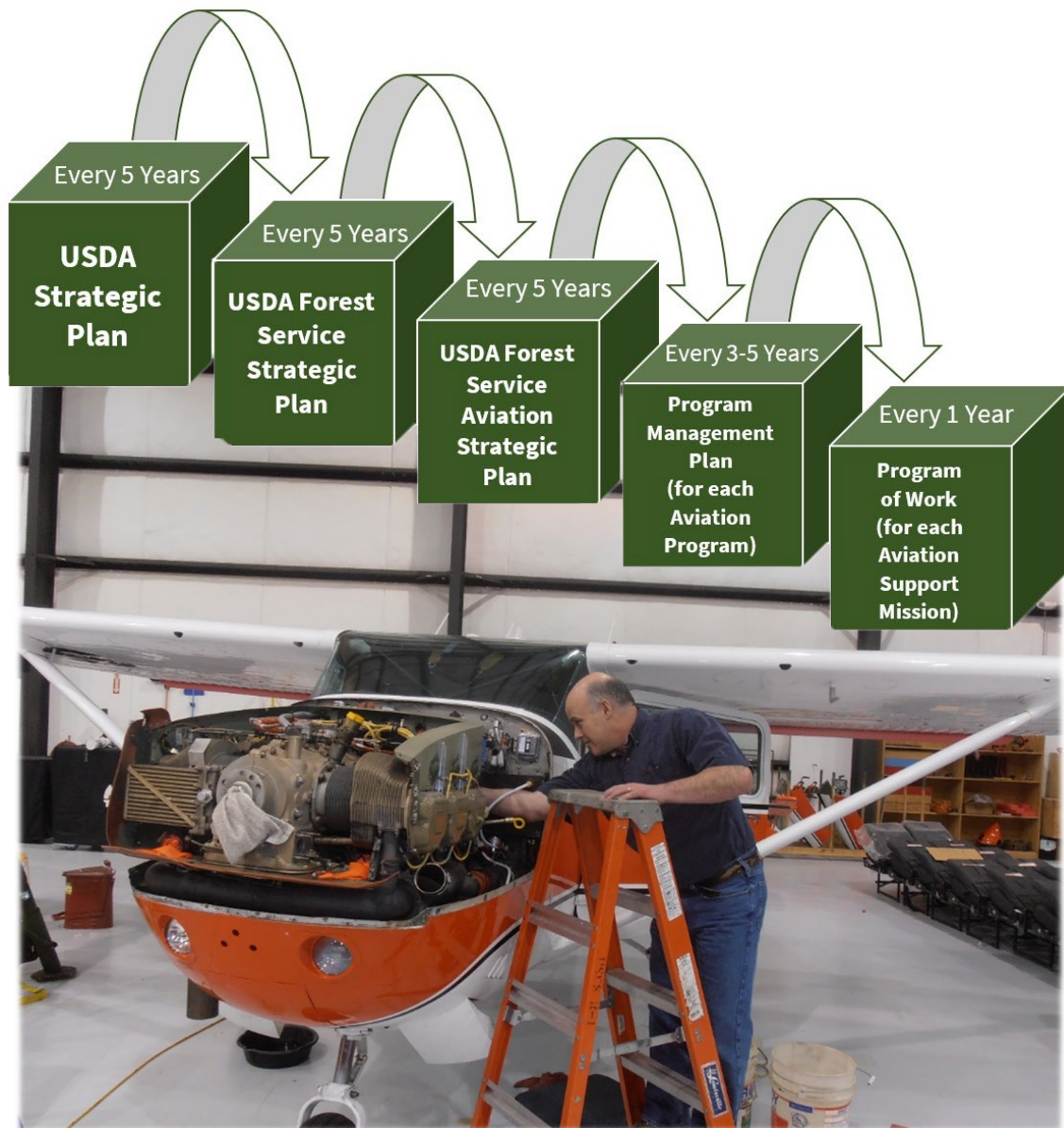
   - Helicopters
   - Large/Very Large Airtankers
   - Multi-Engine Water Scoopers
   - Diverse Mission Fixed-Wing Aircraft
   - Unmanned Aircraft Systems

   Aviation program management plans define the programs in terms of planning, funding, contracts, sustainment, aircraft type and quantity, organization, logistics, and other program-specific information. Regions and program areas that use aviation will supplement national program plans.

3. **Unit planning** (for example, land and resource management plans for national forests and grasslands) provides a current inventory and condition assessment of resources on a particular management unit. This inventory, coupled with the desired future condition for the resources, is the basis for annual work planning and budgeting. The National Aviation Safety and Management Plan provides a basis to cascade through different levels to unit-level aviation planning.

4. **Annual work planning** identifies the projects that units propose for funding in a given fiscal year. Programs of work for support missions provide priorities, funding information, and ties to aviation strategic goals and objectives. This level of planning involves the final application of strategic direction into a unit's annual budget to move its resources toward a desired future condition. Project Aviation Safety Plans with fourteen elements are used for aviation work projects.

Aviation Strategic Planning Overview

- USDA Strategic Plan (Every 5 Years)

- USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan (Every 5 Years)

- USDA Forest Service Aviation Strategic Plan (Every 5 Years)

- Program Management Plan (Every 3 to 5 Years for Each Aviation Program)

- Programs of Work (Every 1 Year for Each Aviation Support Mission)

Key Performance Indicators

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
1.1.1.	**Keep Leadership Informed**—Keep leadership informed on safety efforts and statistics. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will coordinate with the Assistant Director, Aviation to ensure an Accountable Executive is designated in policy by the next policy revision cycle. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will provide an annual (fiscal year) aviation statistical report to the Accountable Executive; Director, Fire and Aviation Management; and Assistant Director, Aviation by January 31 each year.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems	Accountable Executive: Sept. 30, 2023. Annual report: Each year by Jan. 31 starting in 2023.
1.1.2.	**Gap Analysis Working Group**—By September 30, 2022, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will organize a working group to conduct gap analysis between desired and actual safety performance. This will include a plan to position the agency for a "Stage 1" external International Standards-Business Aviation Operations audit by January 31, 2025.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems	Sept. 30, 2023
1.1.3.	**Gold Standard Certification**—By September 30, 2022, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will coordinate a Program of Work to ensure meeting the Interagency Committee for Aviation Policy Federal Aviation Gold Standard Certification every two years. This will document adherence to Federal Management Regulation Part 102.33.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems	Sept. 30, 2023
1.1.4.	**Review and Update Guides**—By September 30, 2023, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will implement a Program of Work that includes development of and adherence to a process for review, update, and approval of the Aviation Safety Management Systems Guide and Aviation Mishap Investigation Guide for the next revision cycle.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems	Sept. 30, 2023

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
1.2.1.	**Safety Performance Targets and Indicators**—The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will organize a working group with the National Aviation Safety Council to develop relevant safety performance targets and indicators. The working group will be in place by September 30, 2023. Once safety targets and indictors are established, they will be evaluated annually on their validity as a safety metric related to the overall goal of "proactively managing safety to reduce risk." Targets and indicators will be included in the Annual Aviation Safety Report.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems	Sept. 30, 2023
1.3.1.	**Programmatic Risk Assessments**—The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will coordinate a schedule for strategic and programmatic risk assessments and provide the Assistant Director, Aviation the status of these by January 31 each year.	Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning	Each year by Jan. 31 starting in 2023
1.3.2.	**Risk Assessment Close-Outs**—The Strategic Risk Assessment Close-Out Steering Committee will ensure at least two strategic/programmatic risk assessments go through the close-out process each year. The steering committee chair will provide a list of assessments accomplished in the previous fiscal year to the Assistant Director, Aviation by January 31 each year.	Strategic Risk Assessment Close-Out Steering Committee Chair	Each year by Jan. 31 starting in 2023
1.3.3.	**Risk Management Process**—Ensure the risk management process outlined in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Interagency Standards for Aviation Risk Management replaces former versions in all manuals, handbooks, and guides. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems will ensure representation on the Risk Management Subcommittee under the National Interagency Aviation Committee and participate in course review and updates to A-205 Risk Management 1 and A-305 Risk Management II to reflect the approved process.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System	Sept. 30, 2023
1.4.1.	**Regional Reviews**—The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will develop a schedule for regional reviews to provide quality and performance feedback through an internal program audit/evaluation in two regions (including Research Stations) per year to ensure evaluation occurs every five years, including one external evaluation (different directorate/line officer) per cycle. Review results and best practices will be provided to the Assistant Director, Aviation in the Aviation Program Annual Report.	Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning	Sept. 30, 2023

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
1.4.2.	**Programmatic Reviews**—Quality and performance feedback is accomplished through an internal programmatic review of all aviation programs to ensure evaluation every five years, including one external evaluation (different directorate/line officer) per cycle. The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will develop a schedule for programmatic reviews that includes other Forest Service Deputy Chiefs, Directors, and staff areas with aviation activities. He/she will report the review results (including best practices) to the Assistant Director, Aviation. The schedule and completed reviews will be included in the Aviation Program Annual Report. An International Standards-Business Aviation Operations audit coordinated with the Interagency Committee for Aviation Policy may be substituted for the requirement of an external programmatic review.	Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning	Sept. 30, 2023
1.4.3.	**Mishap Investigation Process**—The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System will conduct an annual review to ensure the following agency expectations and components of Federal Management Regulation 102-33.185 are provided for: • Ensure a process for proper reporting of all aircraft mishaps, including those involving unmanned aircraft systems. • Seek National Transportation Safety Board Party Status for accidents under the operational control of the Forest Service, and ensure the agency investigation process is compliant with, and adheres to, National Transportation Safety Board regulations (49 Code of Federal Regulations 830 and 831). • Ensure designated Aviation Safety Inspectors and Qualified Technical Investigators who may be asked to participate with the National Transportation Safety Board are properly trained by providing Qualified Technical Investigator training for new Regional Aviation Managers (as needed) and Qualified Technical Investigator workshops at intervals designated in policy. • Aviation Mishap Investigation Guide is updated and provides information on proper procedure.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System	Sept. 30, 2023

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
1.4.4.	**Flight Operations Quality Assurance**—By January 1, 2024, the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System will develop a program to collect and analyze flight data on Working Capital Fund aircraft to improve safety. This will include: • Coordination with Labor Relations and the National Federation of Federal Employees (Union) for flight data monitoring equipment that will be installed on Working Capital Fund aircraft. • Developing a Flight Operational Quality Assurance Plan.	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System	Jan. 1, 2024
1.5.1.	**Safety Recognition and Awards**—Each region and the Washington Office will promote and maintain a safety recognition and award program that raises awareness of a safe working environment and that values individual health and wellness by recognizing superior safety performers. By January 31 each year, Washington Office Branch Chiefs, Regional Aviation Safety Managers, and Regional Aviation Officers will coordinate safety awards and provide information to the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System for inclusion in the Annual Safety Report.	Washington Office Branch Chiefs, Regional Aviation Safety Managers, Regional Aviation Officers	Each year by Jan. 31 starting in 2023
1.5.2.	**Aviation Safety Communiqué System**—Oversee administration of the Aviation Safety Communiqué (SAFECOM) system as the primary interagency method to report and manage safety concerns and hazards. The Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System will: • Ensure SAFECOM managers are properly designated and trained on how to manage SAFECOM reports in respective regions/stations/units. • Provide quality assurance by continuing efforts already in place to review all Forest Service SAFECOMs, providing feedback, and ensuring reports are properly prepared prior to public viewing. • Continue to incorporate SAFECOM statistics and trends into the Annual Aviation Safety Report (already completed every year since 2004).	Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System	Ongoing

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
2.1.1.	**Diversity Outreach**—Set the example for all levels of the organization by ensuring Washington Office recruitment actions include outreach for a diverse applicant pool. Aviation branch chiefs will ensure the recruitment process includes outreach to organizations that will provide a diversity of experience and perspectives, such as civil rights, veteran affairs, and Forest Service special emphasis programs. The Assistant Director, Aviation will verify actions before giving approval to finalizing outreach, recruitment, and hiring actions.	Aviation Branch Chiefs	Ongoing
2.1.2.	**Reduce Acting Appointments**—Stabilize continuity of organization by reducing the number of acting appointments to Washington Office aviation leadership positions. The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will record quarterly the Washington Office leadership positions being held on an acting basis. A year-end report will be provided to the Assistant Director, Aviation.	Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning	Quarterly record starting in Jan 2023; year-end report each year by Jan. 31, starting in 2024.
2.2.1.	**Aviation Career Paths and Mentoring**—Within six months of approval of this Strategic Plan, the National Aviation Officer Council will appoint a working group to provide suggested aviation career paths and an aviation mentoring program. This working group will also develop a program to include an orientation program and training for aviation-related duties, such as aviation operational positions, airworthiness, safety, project management, budgeting, planning, and International Standards-Business Aircraft Operations auditor certification. It will also include promotion options and suggested succession planning processes. The results will be briefed to the Assistant Director, Aviation within a year of appointment.	Assistant Director, Aviation	Jan. 31, 2023
3.1.1.	**Policy Review Cycle**—The Aviation Policy Team will coordinate a two-year cycle to review policy, document field requests for changes and edits, coordinate with Fire and Aviation Management and other staff areas with aviation activities for review, and coordinate with the Office of Regulatory and Management Services.	Branch Chief, Aviation Business Operations	Each year by Jan. 31, starting in 2023.

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
3.2.1.	**Support Mission Programs of Work**—By September 30, 2023, the Aviation Branch Chiefs will develop yearly Programs of Work with priorities and a tracking and reporting process for each support mission. This will be updated annually by the respective branch chief.	Branch Chiefs, Aviation Strategic Planning, Aviation Business Operations, and Aviation Operations	Sept. 30, 2023.
3.2.2.	**Aviation Budget Transparency**—The Aviation Branch Chiefs will develop and review the aviation budget for transparency and accuracy so that it can be allocated yearly for each support mission.	Branch Chiefs, Aviation Strategic Planning, Aviation Business Operations, and Aviation Operations	Each year by Jan. 31, starting in 2023.
3.2.3.	**Staffing Standards**—By July 2023, the Aviation Branch Chiefs will set staffing standards for each support mission and aviation program (crew/region/Washington Office).	Branch Chiefs, Aviation Strategic Planning, Aviation Business Operations, and Aviation Operations	July 31, 2023
3.2.4.	**Program Management Plans**—By May 2023, each Washington Office aviation program manager will develop a three- to five-year program management plan for their aviation program. The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning will then review the program management plans by September 2023 to ensure alignment with planning documents.	Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning	May 31, 2023

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
3.3.1.	**Contract Efficiency Monitoring**—Aviation Integrating Program/Project Teams and Overarching Integrating Program/Project Teams will monitor contract efficiency by tracking contract cycle time; customer, vendor, or regional/national trends; contract value assessments; and missed milestones. They will use results to inform future acquisitions in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy. The Aviation Senior Program Manager will gather this information and provide it to the Integrating and Overarching Integrating Program/Project Teams.	Aviation Senior Program Manager	Jan. 31, 2023
3.3.2.	**Contract Efficacy Monitoring**—The Aviation Senior Program Manager will monitor contract efficacy by tracking the number of contracts per program, the remaining value of terminated contracts, and historical legacy contract trends. Use results to inform future acquisitions in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy.	Aviation Senior Program Manager	Jan. 31, 2023
3.3.3.	**Contract Risk Monitoring**—The Aviation Senior Program Manager will monitor contract risk by tracking: standard clause variance (from the Master Spec), amount of aircraft contracts/agreements expiring without being re-procured, and disputes or protests resolved. These will be used in future acquisition in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy.	Aviation Senior Program Manager	Jan. 31, 2023
4.1.1.	**Working Capital Fund Fleet Evaluation**—The Branch Chief, Airworthiness will coordinate with Washington Office Branch Chiefs, Regional Aviation Officers, and Regional Aviation Safety Managers to evaluate the Working Capital Fund fleet, develop priorities and a plan for how the agency will move forward, meeting the timeline issued by the Office of Management and Budget, Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11, Part 7, Aviation Business Case for Agency Missions. The plan will be submitted to the Assistant Director, Aviation by December 2022. Use results to inform future acquisitions in alignment with the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy.	Branch Chief, Airworthiness	Jan. 31, 2023

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Responsible	Target Date
4.1.2.	**Human-Aiding Technology**—The Branch Chief, Aviation Operations will coordinate with other entities as necessary to implement human-aiding technology to improve the effectiveness and safety of all Forest Service aircraft through the Aerial Supervision Steering Committee. Development will include testing and evaluating systems such as electronic flight bags, daylight displays, airborne electro-optical/infrared cameras, and wireless data links on both agency-owned and agency-contracted aircraft.	Branch Chief, Aviation Operations	Jan. 31, 2023
4.1.3.	**Standardized Information Technology Capability**—The Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning, will coordinate with other Forest Service staff, directorates, and deputy chief areas to research the requirements to develop standardized information technology (IT) capability through all Forest Service Aviation areas within a year of approval of this strategic plan.	Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning	Jan. 31, 2023

"As a High Reliability Organization, our priority is to bring everyone home to their families at the end of every mission."