



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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# FOREST SERVICE

BRANDING STANDARDS





USDA Forest Service staff on the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina. USDA Forest Service photo by Cecilio Ricardo.

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Sunset at Baptiste Lookout on the Flathead National Forest in Montana. USDA Forest Service photo by Mark Hufstetter.

# ABOUT THESE STANDARDS

These branding standards provide instruction for the look and feel of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service communication materials.

We are the Forest Service. We want everyone who interacts with us to understand who we are as an agency. How we show up is not only about having readily identifiable signage or the day-to-day interactions with uniformed employees. How we communicate across the board, from news releases to websites to technical reports, plays an important role in how the public perceives the agency.

This is our brand, and all of us must constantly work to support and protect it. Our branding standards are part of building trust. When our materials consistently display our insignia, as well as the USDA symbol and other official elements, people can recognize and verify them as legitimate. Our communication products help us build relationships, highlight our purpose, share our values, and bring our mission to life.

## OBJECTIVES

- Establish a consistent and recognizable identity for all Forest Service communication products.
- Follow and communicate USDA standards.
- Bring economy of scale to the production of communication materials.
- Represent the agency's rich heritage of conservation and commitment to service.
- Provide clear guidance for all employees, contractors, vendors, and partners who produce materials for the Forest Service.

## SCOPE

These branding standards provide guidance on the use of the Forest Service insignia and the USDA symbol on a variety of communication products, as well as outlining standards for writing, social media, publications, and videos. Apply these branding standards to all communications materials, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Publications
- Social media products
- Flyers and posters
- Newsletters
- News releases
- Presentation materials
- Promotional materials
- Story maps
- Exhibits
- Videos
- Web pages

These standards do not apply to interpretive panels, waysides, and exhibits. Please see the [Interpretive Services Hub](#), [Interpretive & Educational Materials Visual Standards](#), and the [Engineering Poster and Sign Handbook \(EM-7100-15\)](#) for guidance on these products. If you need direction on a specific product, contact the national Office of Communication.

## GOAL

Provide clear and consistent agencywide direction that will build the public's trust in the Forest Service's mission, as well as increase public recognition of the value and range of agency products and services.



Angus cattle graze on the Gravelly Mountain Range in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. USDA photo by Preston Keres.

# USDA BRANDING

As a USDA agency, Forest Service communication products must follow standards established by the Department. USDA updated their style guide in October 2020, revised from January 2013. Their guidance provides detailed direction on the use of the USDA symbol and agency identification. Applicable regulations are detailed below. See the [full USDA guide](#) for more information.

## USDA SYMBOL CLEAR SPACE

As the primary logo of our Department, the USDA symbol should stand out from other graphic elements. Always surround the symbol with a minimum area of clear space equal to the width of the A in the USDA symbol.

## USDA SYMBOL PROPORTIONS

Maintain the proportion of 1:0.685. Do not distort the USDA symbol.



Clear space



Proportions

## USDA LOCKUP

The USDA lockup consists of the USDA symbol, Department title, and (when appropriate) the agency title (subidentity). The Department title is below the agency title and directly to the right of the USDA symbol. This is referred to as the “signature text.”



## SIGNATURE TEXT

Use the font Source Sans Pro for signature text. The agency name uses title case and the Department name is in all caps. Abbreviate “U.S.” and left align the text.

Because the size of products may vary, USDA does not provide specific guidance on text size of the signature text. Based on their examples, we recommend the Department text (signature cap) to equal the height of the lowest point of the hill in the USDA logo, similar to 2013 guidance, using the closest standard point value for font size. The agency text should be 1.5 times the font size of the Department text. Center the text vertically with the logos.

## USDA FOREST SERVICE LOCKUP

The Forest Service is the only USDA agency allowed to present their symbol, our insignia, in the USDA lockup. Insignia use requirements, and how to incorporate the insignia into the lockup, are detailed in the following pages.





Logging operations on the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia. USDA photo by Lance Cheung.

# INSIGNIA REGULATIONS

The insignia is the most important element of our agency's identity and branding. It immediately identifies the Forest Service to the world, making it one of our most valuable assets. The insignia has iconic value to both Forest Service employees and the American public.

## INSIGNIA AND USDA SYMBOL

As an agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, our communication products should reflect this association and include the USDA symbol, accompanied by the Forest Service insignia.

When used together, do not make the Forest Service insignia larger or more prominent than the USDA symbol. If placed side by side, place the USDA symbol at the left of Forest Service insignia; if stacked, place the USDA symbol above the Forest Service insignia. If using a color version of the insignia, use a color version of the USDA symbol.

## OTHER AGENCY SYMBOLS AND LOGOS

The Forest Service insignia is the only approved logo identity for the agency. **Logos identifying units or programs of the Forest Service are not allowed.** See [Departmental Regulation 1430-002](#), Use of Logos/Marks at the United States Department of Agriculture. Logos for regions, stations, forests, districts, staffs, and programs dilute the iconic symbolism of the insignia as an instant agency identifier. Do not spend funding developing new logos.

Existing program logos and theme art approved prior to 2013 should have been phased out. Use of previous identification art is no longer approved for use on pens, pencils, lapel pins, T-shirts, mugs, magnets, plaques, bags, and other specialty items. See [Government Purchase Card Program Guide](#).

Theme art may be developed for special events, such as anniversaries or other commemorative events. Please check with the national Office of Communication Assistant Director for Visual Information and Publishing for approval of art. Do not use the art to replace the USDA or Forest Service symbols.



Near the Dark Canyon Wilderness on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Charity Parks.

# FOREST SERVICE BRANDING

The Forest Service insignia is a key element of “Who We Are.” It has been a symbol of the agency’s identity since the creation of the Forest Service in 1905.

Only use the insignia art provided by the Forest Service Office of Communication, found on the [OC Hub SharePoint site](#).

## SIZE

The minimum height for the insignia is 0.5 inches with a proportion of 1:0.9. The insignia must not be taller than the USDA symbol.



Clear Space

## AREA OF ISOLATION

As the primary symbol of our agency, the insignia should stand out from other graphic elements. Ensure the insignia is always surrounded with a minimum area of clear space equal to the width of the insignia’s tree at the widest part.

## COLORS

The official colors for the Forest Service insignia are dark green and gold. The only other approved two-color option is brown and cream. When reproducing it in one color, make the insignia black, white, or the dominant color used in the information product with a transparent interior (no white or alternate colors).



COLOR



WHITE



BLACK



CREAM

### GREEN

CMYK: 90, 38, 87, 37  
 RGB: 0, 88, 56  
 Hex: 005838

### GOLD

CMYK: 1, 14, 96, 0  
 RGB: 255, 213, 29  
 Hex: ffd51d

### BROWN

CMYK: 40, 55, 58, 42  
 RGB: 106, 81, 71  
 Hex: 6a5147

### CREAM

CMYK: 0, 7, 24, 4  
 RGB: 244, 225, 190  
 Hex: f4e1be



Kayaking the Deschutes River through the Deschutes National Forest in Oregon. USDA Forest Service photo.

# APPROPRIATE INSIGNIA USE

The Forest Service insignia should not be re-created or altered in any way. [Find official insignias](#) and other resources on the OC Hub SharePoint site.

## DISTORTION

Use approved images and DO NOT:

- Distort, stretch, or skew the insignia.
- Alter the colors of the insignia.
- Apply special effects (bevel, emboss, glow, shadow, etc.).
- Introduce text or graphics into the insignia.
- Use any part of the insignia as a graphic element.
- Isolate the insignia in a box frame or box shape.



## VISIBILITY

Do not place the Forest Service insignia on low-contrast or busy backgrounds. Background colors must have a color contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for the insignia to remain highly visible. Contrast tools are widely available; USDA recommends a contrast checker hosted by WebAIM.





Wildland firefighters perform a prescribed burn on the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. USDA Forest Service photo by Cecilio Ricardo.

# LOCKUP

The USDA Forest Service lockup guidelines are directed by USDA. The “signature lockup” includes the USDA symbol, Forest Service insignia, and text naming the agency and Department. The signature lockup is the main element of the isolation bar, or “ISO-Bar” (see next page). It requires that the Department title be below the agency title and directly to the right of the USDA symbol and Forest Service insignia. A lockup can also be made without the text, which is used for social media branding.

## REQUIREMENTS

Set the USDA symbol and Forest Service insignia at equal height with a minimum height of 0.5 inches on printed products.

Display the agency name in Source Sans Pro—title case and 1.5 times larger than the Department font size.

Center align the symbol, insignia, and lockup text.



When using a lockup, either use the approved two-color variants of the symbol and insignia, or use a single color variant for both. Do not mix a single color USDA symbol with a two-color insignia (or vice versa).

Ensure the distance between the USDA logo and the Forest Service insignia is equal to the width of the “A.” The distance between the Forest Service insignia and the agency/Department text is equal to the width of the tree.

Display the Department name in Source San Pro, all caps.





The Milky Way arcs over Mt. Hood National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Glenn Daman.

# ISO-BAR

Use the ISO-Bar at the top of all visual communications products to provide a clean, consistent background area and position for the lockup. All acceptable versions of the lockup can be used within the ISO-Bar.

The ISO-Bar is placed at the top of communication products. **Do NOT place images, gradations, text, or other elements within the ISO-Bar.** With full color logos, use black text. With single color logos, text color should match the logos. Maintain proper color contrast between lockup and ISO-Bar background.



## INCLUDING SECONDARY INFORMATION

As a required element for an array of products, the ISO-Bar specifications can be adapted based on the type of media being created. Add additional information, such as unit name, publication number, and date, under the signature lockup. Use Source Sans Pro for this information to complement the required ISO-Bar font and left align the text. Separate the information with vertical dividers.

On products with a narrow horizontal and a long vertical canvas, such as folded brochures, reduce the font size to no smaller than 8 points or omit the signature text to accommodate for limited space. If publication information is needed on a narrow product, it can be stacked or placed elsewhere on the product (footer, back cover, etc.).

Use proper spacing, sizing, and alignment for lockup. Align it flush left with the horizontal divider line.

Do not place any other images, graphics, gradations, or text within the ISO-Bar, with the exception of partner products (see page 10). The background must be a solid color and should extend to the edges of the product

Make the ISO-Bar height 8 percent or more of the media height (min. 0.75 inches).



Place the horizontal divider line with clear space equal to height of Department text.

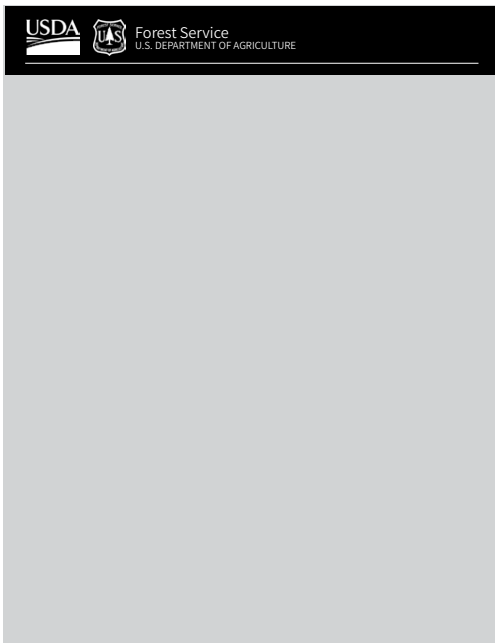
Include secondary information on information products when needed. Align left. Separate information with vertical dividers.

Center the horizontal divider line on the document with a weight of 0.5 or 1 pt. Leave a margin of 0.5" on the left and right sides of the line.

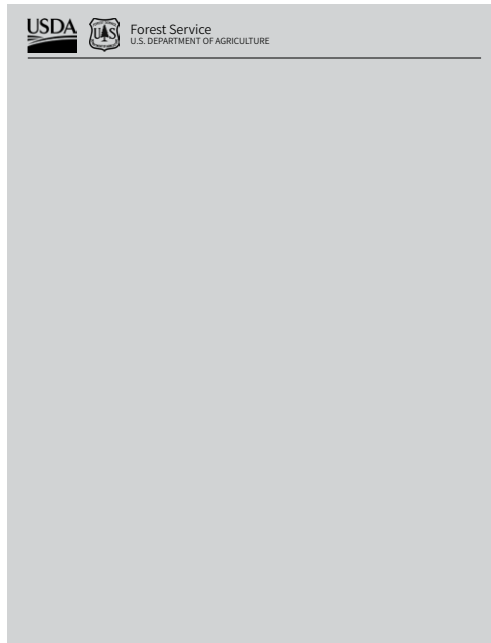


Santa Fe Ski Valley. USDA Forest Service photo by Javonne Goodman.

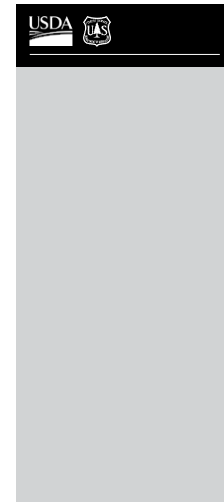
# BRANDING EXAMPLES



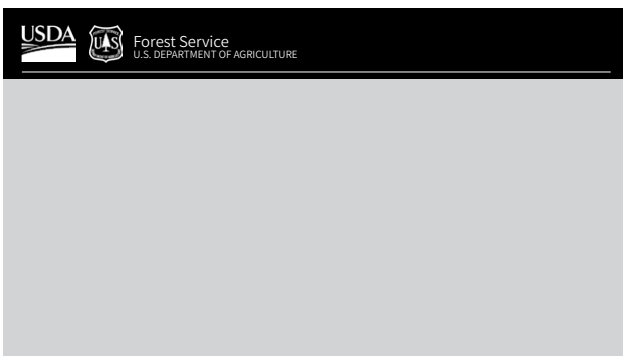
An ISO-Bar using a different background color than the body of the document.



An ISO-Bar using the same background color as the body of the document.



The ISO-Bar may be scaled to fit wide and narrow canvases, like a banner or folded brochure.



When using the ISO-Bar on PowerPoint presentations, only use the full ISO-Bar on the first slide. Subsequent slides may use the USDA Forest Service lockup without signature text in the bottom left or right corners.



A view of Cedar Breaks National Monument and the Dixie National Forest in Utah. USDA Forest Service photo.

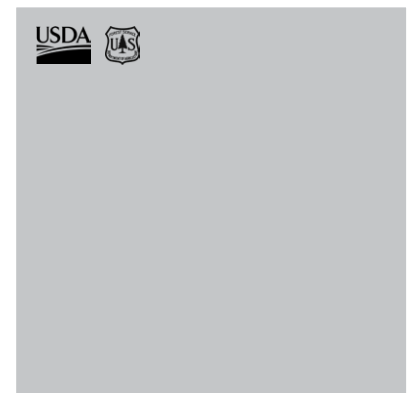
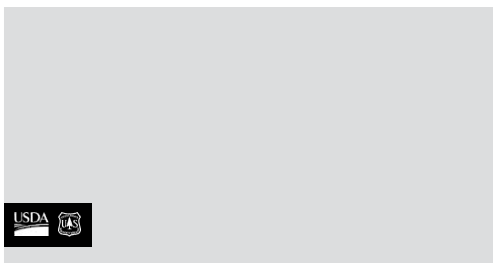
# SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDING

Use the USDA Forest Service lockup **without signature text** when creating social media graphics. Maintain the minimum clear space between the logos, canvas edges, and other elements. Although the top left corner is the preferred placement of the logos, placement in any of the four corners is acceptable. If using a busy or low-contrast background image, a solid color bar may be placed behind the symbols.

USDA Forest Service branding is not required if:

- Using an unaltered photo.
- Using a graphic not created by the Forest Service.

## BRANDING PLACEMENT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS



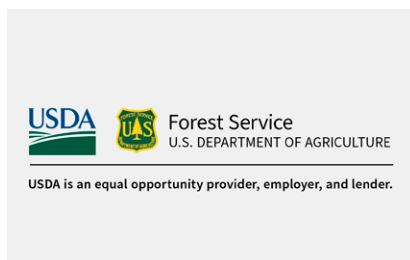


A female common merganser with chicks at Ward Creek near Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Ranger District, Tongass National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Ben Limle.

# VIDEO BRANDING

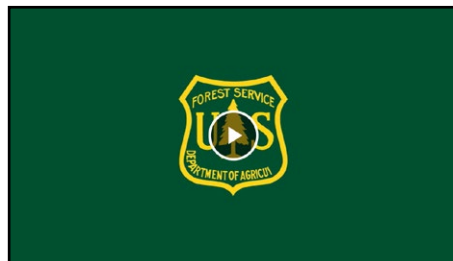
Video productions must include the USDA symbol, Forest Service insignia, and nondiscrimination statement. For Forest Service productions, use approved end slate templates. Place the end slate at the end of the video. Video branding resources are available on the [QC Hub SharePoint site](#).

## END SLATE



An end slate is a required element, containing agency branding and the USDA nondiscrimination statement. Use it in the final 5–20 seconds of a video.

## ANIMATED OPENER



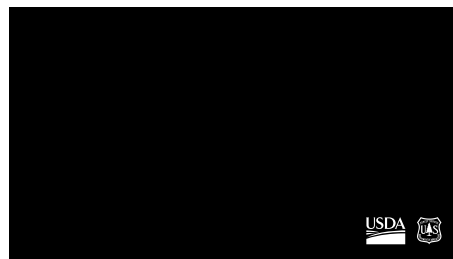
This is a 4-second animation of the insignia appearing at the opening of a video.

## LOWER THIRDS



Use lower thirds when a Forest Service staff member appears in a video. Display their name in the top portion of the lower third and their title in the bottom portion.

## CORNER BUG



The corner bug includes the USDA symbol and the Forest Service insignia. Display the bug in the corner of the viewable area of the video for the entirety of the video, except when it conflicts with video content, i.e., when you are displaying the opening logo, a lower third, or the closing end slate. The best location is the lower right of the video.



Operations Assistant Miriam Salgado samples water quality in the Rio Mameyes in the Luquillo Experimental Forest within the El Yunque National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.

# SPECIALTY ITEMS AND OTHER PRODUCTS

These branding standards apply to communication materials, including promotional items, billboards, and other related products. The recreation and engineering programs have also adopted the standards for [interpretive panels/waysides](#), nonstandard posters, and [maps](#) and [story maps](#).

For giveaway and promotional items, display both the USDA symbol and Forest Service insignia whenever symbols may be shown at an appropriate size. Items such as stickers, patches, and pencils generally vary in size and shape and MAY be too small to include USDA and Forest Service branding. If these giveaway items are too small to include both logos, use just the Forest Service insignia.

See [Government Purchase Card Program Guide, 10.1, Items 16 and 25](#).

For T-shirts and other clothing items, use just the insignia with the name of the unit or program placed above, to the right, or directly below the art, leaving an appropriate clear space.

For large exhibits, use the ISO-Bar branding. For table-top or smaller specialty exhibits, billboards, tablecloths, and other unique specialty items, the USDA Forest Service lockup without text (i.e., the “social media branding”) may be substituted.



National Office of Communication



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Mount Ritter on the Inyo National Forest, Ansel Adams Wilderness. USDA Forest Service photo by Paul Wade.

# INCLUDING PARTNERS

To accomplish the agency mission, the Forest Service partners with other Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments; nonprofit and for-profit organizations; universities, communities, and other organizations. When developing products together, use the following guidance to determine how to best represent the agency and help the audience visually see the connection.

## BRANDING FOREST SERVICE PRODUCTS WITH PARTNERS

If the Forest Service has contributed more than 50 percent of the funding toward the project or development of the product, follow Forest Service branding standards with the ISO-Bar.

In the ISO-Bar, include the logos of other public and/or private-sector partners. Acquire the logos from the respective partners and approval to use them. An email approval message is sufficient.

If all of the logos represent Federal organizations, place the logos in alphabetical order after the USDA symbol and Forest Service insignia. Federal agencies may be displayed without their Department name or logo if the Department is not an individual partner.

If the organizations are a mix of Federal and non-Federal, place the USDA Forest Service lockup first, then a vertical rule. Order the remaining logos as dictated by the situation. Use best judgment in deciding how many partner logos are necessary and if the ISO-Bar is the best place to display these elements.

If the partners are other USDA agencies, use just the USDA symbol and agency names. Refrain from using the insignia since other agencies do not have symbols.

Use a vertical rule line between the USDA Forest Service lockup and partner logos.

List Federal and non-Federal partners in alphabetical order.



Include signature text if the space allows. Signature text may be omitted on smaller products to allow space for partner logos.



Rio Grande National Forest in fall. USDA Forest Service photo.

# PARTNER PRODUCTS

## USE OF INSIGNIA BY PARTNERS

In order for a cooperator or partner to use the Forest Service insignia on its web, social media, large publications, or videos, a formal relationship must exist. Relationships may be established through an agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding, cooperative agreement, or an interagency agreement (Forest Service Manual [FSM] [1632.2](#), FSM [1641.1](#), and FSM [1660](#) [see chapter 1666 for guidance specific to websites]).

The insignia should only be used for identification and not to suggest the agency endorses one product or organization over another. Use caution when identifying the agency when working with for-profit organizations. If the Forest Service is not the primary organization, the insignia may be used alone but should not be placed before the lead or other organization's logos. The insignia should be the same size or smaller than the lead partner's and other logos. The product should not appear to be a Forest Service product. It should be very clear that the product was produced by the partner.

Do not use cooperative agreements as a method to avoid proper clearance through agency channels.

For direction on use of the insignia by partners and cooperators, see [36 CFR 264.2\(a\)](#) and [Forest Service Handbook \(FSH\) 1509.11, sections 72.11\(14\), 72.31\(14\), and 72.41\(17\)](#), and section [91.2, exhibit 01](#).

## APPROVAL OF INSIGNIA USE

Submit the request through the appropriate region and station public affairs office. See [regional](#) and [station](#) contacts. Provide a copy of the agreement and a sample of how the insignia will be used. Provide art to the partner to develop the sample with a caveat that use will need to be approved and cleared. Please submit at the start of the project and allow time for feedback. Allow at least 1 week for approval of use.

The appropriate regional or station contact will submit the request to the appropriate staff for approval.

## ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

See [FSH 1609.11, sections 17.43 and 17.5](#).

### Use of Forest Service

Instruct the partner to refer to the agency as the "U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service" in the first use and as the Forest Service, thereafter.

### Financial Assistance

If the partner is a recipient of Federal financial assistance, ensure they include a public notification of nondiscrimination and a statement acknowledging financial aid and other significant contributions.

Nondiscrimination statements used by these recipients are not required to use the full text of the Department statement, but the statements are required to include the words "equal opportunity" and to convey the message of equal opportunity by depiction of a diversity of participants in photographs and graphics. Where appropriate, the recipient may state: "This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

Use the following statement or similar, as appropriate:

*"Publication made possible by a grant from (insert name of cooperator) under (an interagency agreement) (memorandum of understanding) with the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender."*

### Partnerships Without Financial Assistance

With proper approval, Forest Service partners may use the insignia to demonstrate work together with them. Use the insignia by itself, or, where appropriate, add the following text when the involvement needs clarified to reduce the risk of appearing to endorse a product or organization:

*"In partnership with the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture." Or: "Partners include the following."*

The insignia should not be placed first in the list of logos and should not be larger than any other partner's or organization's logo.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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