



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

STRATEGIC PLAN
FISCAL YEARS 2025 - 2029



USDA NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, 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.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY); or the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877- 8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#) from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or

(2) Fax: (833) 256-1665; or

(3) Email:
program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN FISCAL YEARS 2025 –2029

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



Goal 1:
Equitably and Efficiently Address and Resolve Civil Rights Concerns

Objective 1.1: Address and prevent discrimination against USDA's customers and employees by efficiently and effectively resolving civil rights concerns and enforcing Federal laws

Objective 1.2: Work to ensure that USDA civil rights staff acknowledge and provide timely, clear, and justified decisions to customers' civil rights concerns

Objective 1.3: Improve program oversight and assess statutory and regulatory compliance through evidence-based compliance reviews Department-wide



Goal 2:
Innovate and Improve OASCR's Operations to Enable Evidence- Based Decisions

Objective 2.1: Optimize resource modernizing systems and infrastructure allocation

Objective 2.2: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of civil rights programs by incorporating data-based decision tools and assessments into OASCR's planning and operations

Objective 2.3: Develop new methods and improve existing methods of information exchange and transparency

Objective 2.4: Expand civil rights networks and communities of practice within USDA to bolster collaboration, information, and resource sharing across the Department



Goal 3:
Conduct Strategic Outreach and Engagement to Enhance Civil Rights and Equitable Service

Objective 3.1: Improve equitable service delivery to the American public

Objective 3.2: Improve accessible service delivery to USDA customers and employees with disabilities

Objective 3.3: Strengthen customer trust and engagement in USDA's programs and services, particularly for underserved and underrepresented communities

Objective 3.4: Promote a fair and inclusive environment that leverages feedback to recognize and meet diverse employees' needs



Goal 4:
Attract, Build, and Maintain an Empowered Workforce

Objective 4.1: Develop and implement OASCR-specific human capital strategies to guide OASCR's workforce initiatives

Objective 4.2: Acquire and retain diverse talent committed to civil rights principles

Objective 4.3: Build a workforce of civil rights experts at USDA through workforce planning and professional development activities

Objective 4.4: Establish Foster a culture of respect and equity across the USDA workforce through training and collaborative civil rights programming

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE’S NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT	2
OASCR’S STRATEGIC PLAN FISCAL YEARS 2025 –2029 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK	3
MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY THOMAS J. VILSACK	5
MESSAGE FROM DEPUTY SECRETARY XOCHITL TORRES SMALL	6
MESSAGE FROM ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY PENNY BROWN REYNOLDS, PH.D., J.D.	7
OASCR’S OVERVIEW	9
OASCR’S GUIDING PRINCIPLES	13
STRATEGIC SECTION I: STRATEGIC PLAN STRUCTURE	15
STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW	16
STRATEGIC PLAN METHODOLOGY	17
STRATEGIC PLAN USE	18
STRATEGIC SECTION II: STRATEGIC PILLARS	20
STRATEGIC SECTION III: STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS	22
GOAL 1: EQUITABLY AND EFFICIENTLY ADDRESS AND RESOLVE CIVIL RIGHTS CONCERN	24
GOAL 2: INNOVATE AND IMPROVE OASCR’S OPERATIONS TO ENABLE EVIDENCE-BASED DECISIONS	29
GOAL 3: CONDUCT STRATEGIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT TO ENHANCE CIVIL RIGHTS AND EQUITABLE SERVICE	36
GOAL 4: ATTRACT, BUILD, AND MAINTAIN AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE	42
STRATEGIC SECTION IV: STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FRAMEWORK	49
APPENDICES	51
APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS	52
APPENDIX B: DEFINITIONS	55
APPENDIX C: FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS WITHIN OASCR’S	62
APPENDIX D: OASCR ORGANIZATIONAL CHART	64
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS	61

MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY THOMAS J. VILSACK

I am honored to present the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2029, marking a significant milestone in USDA's journey toward justice and equal opportunity for all Americans. As USDA navigates this critical moment in history, I am heartened by the dedication and determination demonstrated by OASCR under the leadership of Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) Dr. Penny Brown Reynolds.

As OASCR embarks on this strategic initiative, it is crucial to recognize the pivotal role the strategic goals play in advancing USDA's broader strategic priorities across its programs and operations. Each goal outlined in the Strategic Plan was developed with the support of stakeholders across USDA. The OASCR Strategic Plan aims to ensure equal access to USDA programs and services, to prevent discrimination, and to foster a diverse and inclusive workforce. The OASCR Strategic Plan is a cornerstone for advancing USDA's vision by prioritizing accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement to foster a more equitable and just environment within USDA and beyond, for both customers and employees.

“The Strategic Plan for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights reflects the Department’s unwavering dedication to justice, equity, and opportunity for all Americans. By aligning its efforts with USDA’s broader strategic objectives, OASCR can maximize its impact and create a brighter and more just future for all.”



Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack

The three (3) pillars of OASCR's Strategic Plan: *People* (Advancing Racial Justice, Equity, and Opportunity), *Process* (Continuous Improvement and Accessibility), and *Products and Services* (Influencing Civil Rights Policy Nationwide)

underpin future success and ensure equal access to USDA funds for farmers, ranchers, and producers in rural America, and equal employment opportunities for USDA's workforce and applicants. OASCR's strategic goals and objectives are meticulously crafted to support USDA's commitment to advancing civil rights and serving the American people. They are aligned with USDA's priorities for the next five years:

- Addressing climate change and advancing racial justice, equity, and opportunity
- Creating more and better markets and ensuring equitable service
- Building an empowered workforce

MESSAGE FROM DEPUTY SECRETARY XOCHITL TORRES SMALL

OASCR's unwavering commitment to timely address civil rights concerns aligns justly with USDA's broader efforts to root out systemic racism and discrimination in all facets of USDA's operations, ensuring underserved communities have improved access to programs and opportunities. OASCR's strategic outreach initiatives will amplify marginalized voices, fostering inclusivity and removing barriers to access. OASCR strategic initiatives align with USDA's goal of providing consistent access to safe, healthy, affordable food essential for all Americans. OASCR's focus on building an empowered workforce of highly motivated, capable, and collaborative staff members complements USDA's commitment to ensuring a thriving, healthy, and inclusive workforce. OASCR will continue to foster a culture that welcomes, respects, and supports everyone, driving meaningful progress toward USDA goals.

“As OASCR embarks on this strategic initiative, it is crucial to recognize the pivotal role the strategic goals play in advancing USDA's broader strategic priorities. Each goal outlined in the Strategic Plan is a cornerstone for advancing USDA's vision and fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment within the Department and beyond.”



Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small

In summary, OASCR's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2029 emphasizes effective complaint resolution mechanisms, proactive outreach efforts, and robust enforcement of Federal civil rights laws. OASCR's Strategic Plan reflects USDA's dedication to the principles of justice, equity, and equal opportunity for all Americans, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or any other protected characteristic. By aligning its efforts with USDA's broader strategic objectives, OASCR can maximize USDA impact by upholding the highest standards of civil rights within USDA and the communities we serve. Together, let us work collaboratively to create a brighter and more just future for all.

MESSAGE FROM ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS PENNY BROWN REYNOLDS, PH.D., J.D.

As America stands on the threshold of a new era in civil rights advocacy, I am filled with immense pride and optimism to present the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2029 (Strategic Plan). As stewards of the fair and equitable treatment of all United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) customers and employees, OASCR’s mission is to uphold and advance the principles of justice, fairness, and non-discrimination for all individuals across the nation, while ensuring the delivery of quality programs and enforcement of civil rights. This Strategic Plan outlines OASCR’s commitment to fostering a society where every person is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and expression), religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.

“In the face of identified challenges and evolving opportunities, this Strategic Plan leads OASCR on a new trajectory, one based on the certainty that racial justice, equity, and equal opportunity for all are possible when the Office brings together a diversity of perspectives, beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences.”



Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,
Dr. Penny Brown Reynolds.

Over the next five years, OASCR aims to strengthen its leadership and oversight of USDA’s civil rights programs and increase its capacity to protect and promote civil rights through proactive measures, robust enforcement, and innovative initiatives. By engaging with stakeholders, leveraging technology, and advocating for policy reforms, OASCR aspires to create lasting impact and drive positive change in communities across the country.

This Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap for achieving OASCR’s goals, guiding its efforts to address emerging challenges, adapt to evolving needs, and maximize its effectiveness in safeguarding civil rights for all Americans, including USDA’s program applicants, employees, program recipients, farmers and ranchers, children and families, indigenous and underserved communities, and educational institutions.

Together, OASCR and USDA can build a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Over the past two years, I have had the privilege of leading OASCR and finding solutions to its documented problems, dysfunction, audits, and reputational challenges dating back decades.

Leadership, at its core, demands vision, focus, and a profound respect for hard work. It also hinges on the dedication of a team united in purpose. Significant outcomes have resulted, transforming USDA's Program Complaints Processing; increasing staff capacity and expertise; developing civil rights regulations, programs, and training; and initiating process improvements including information technology modernization. I am grateful for the commitment of



Deputy Secretary, Xochitl Torres Small and Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Dr. Penny Brown Reynolds at USDA 2023 Fireside Chat.

OASCR's employees, who have embraced the challenge of reshaping the Office's trajectory with unwavering resolve. OASCR's work has borne significant fruit, but there remains much work to be done.

As OASCR embarks on this new phase of strategic planning, it must remain steadfast in its commitment to inclusivity and excellence. In my three decades of service, I have encountered challenges that tested the limits of perseverance. Yet, I have also learned that no problem is insurmountable,

especially when met with determination and ingenuity. In the face of identified challenges and evolving opportunities, this Strategic Plan leads OASCR on a new trajectory, one based on the certainty that racial justice, equity, and equal opportunity for all are possible when the Office brings together diverse perspectives, beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences.

OASCR's focus must be on equipping its workforce with the resources and skills needed to transform data into meaningful insights and to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. I am deeply committed to guiding OASCR towards a future defined by fairness, empowerment, and innovation.

As OASCR moves forward, let it not lose sight of USDA's responsibility to those it serves – its stakeholders and employees, the American people, and all those who look to USDA as champions of justice, including communities of color, rural, and other underserved and underrepresented persons, and Tribal nations. Together, USDA and OASCR will uphold the values of equality and opportunity that lie at the heart of their missions, knowing that their efforts today will shape a brighter, more just tomorrow. This moment, as OASCR unveils its Strategic Plan for the years ahead, is an opportunity to rewrite the Office's narrative and shape the landscape of civil rights for generations to come.



OASCR OVERVIEW

OASCR OVERVIEW

USDA promotes sustainable agriculture, feeds Americans, and conserves the natural resources of the United States. USDA's Federal workforce of over 110,000 employees is spread over 29 Agencies and Offices. USDA's Federal workforce serves the American people at more than 4,500 locations throughout the United States and abroad.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights (OASCR) is responsible for ensuring equity by leading the USDA civil rights programs. OASCR provides oversight by coordinating the administration of civil rights laws and regulations for USDA programs, employees, and program participants. Civil rights enforcement and accountability are core components. This ensures USDA's strategic planning initiatives incorporate civil rights.

As the senior-most authority on civil rights to the Secretary of Agriculture, OASCR works to serve the American public and to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of USDA's workforce.

OASCR provides USDA-wide leadership, oversight, and guidance on civil rights compliance, mandatory training, and strategic planning for USDA's program and employment activities. OASCR's responsibilities range from overseeing USDA Civil Rights Impact Analyses (CRIAs) to determining the effects of USDA's program and employment policies on protected groups. OASCR's responsibilities extend to conducting the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and preparing USDA level annual mandatory reports, to establishing annual mandatory civil rights trainings. To fulfill these duties, OASCR works with USDA's staff offices, Mission Areas, and agencies to devise and implement USDA civil rights directives and regulations, such as the recent Anti-Harassment Procedures Manual and Anti-Harassment Regulation (DR4200-003). OASCR conducts and provides guidance on USDA-wide Special Emphasis Programs as well and administers USDA Limited English Proficiency Program (LEP).

OASCR administers the USDA Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program, both managing the EEO Formal Complaint process for all USDA's staff offices, Mission Areas, and agencies, and providing training and advice to USDA managers and supervisors on civil rights compliance and equal employment opportunity. USDA employees may file an informal EEO complaint pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, (29 C.F.R. §1614, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (19 U.S.C. §621(a)), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (19 U.S.C. §§ 791, 793, 794). (See Appendix C for complete list of key Federal laws).

An EEO complaint may also be filed due to alleged discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy), religion, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information when it involves adverse treatment related to employment practices, including hiring, promotion, and termination; harassment by managers, co-workers, or others in the workplace; denial of a reasonable workplace accommodation that is needed because of religious beliefs, disability or pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions; or retaliation for engaging in prior EEO activity or assisting with a discrimination investigation or lawsuit. USDA Mission Areas and agencies process informal EEO complaints

for their employees and applicants, except in conflicts cases. OASCR processes informal EEO complaints for USDA staff offices and all conflicts cases. If the concern cannot be resolved through informal EEO counseling or alternative dispute resolution, then complainants have the right to file a formal complaint of discrimination with OASCR. OASCR provides for the prompt, fair, and impartial processing of formal EEO Complaints of discrimination, conducts complaint investigations, and makes final determinations of discrimination. OASCR also monitors and reviews personnel policies and staffing activities for EEO implications and supports the enforcement of EEO policies USDA wide.

When an individual believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination, the individual has the right to file a complaint. Once a program complaint is filed and investigated, OASCR is responsible for making final determinations on program complaints of discrimination in approximately three hundred (300) programs. The complaints process is designed to analyze facts relevant to making a determination of discrimination, and is comprised of *three phases: intake, investigation, and adjudication.*

Intake: The intake process includes jurisdictional determinations and disposition of complaints on procedural grounds. The Program Complaints Division (PCD) accepts complaints for investigation, dismisses complaints on jurisdictional grounds, or refers complaints to the proper jurisdictional agency.

Investigation: PCD also manages the investigation process, an impartial process to determine the facts and evidence surrounding the complaint. The purpose of the investigation is to analyze and establish a fact-based, evidence-supported record of the allegations.

Adjudication: The Program Adjudication Division's (PAD) primary mission is to analyze the facts and apply the applicable laws to complaints of discrimination involving USDA conducted or assisted programs. Adjudicators assigned to PAD are charged with reviewing the evidence presented in the ROI and determining whether the evidence supports an inference of discrimination using the preponderance of the evidence standard, followed by a final agency determination.

Unlike Equal Employment Opportunity complaints, there is no statutory timeframe requirement for processing program complaints. The United States Department of Justice merely states that complaints should be processed in the prompt way.

Program Complaints Fiscal Years 2019 – 2023:

Between Fiscal Years 2019 and 2023, OASCR received and processed a total of eight hundred five (805) program complaints. It can be noted that OASCR identified and labeled with a complaint number one thousand six hundred sixteen (1,616) correspondence received, including emails, letters, programmatic referrals, or any other inquiries as a program complaint. The actual number of complaint filings between 2019 and 2023 is eight hundred five (805). This improper labeling and identification of actual program complaints is one of the major deficiencies uncovered through OASCR's administrative process improvements review and one that will be addressed in Fiscal Year 2024.

Between Fiscal Years 2019 and 2023, OASCR received and processed a total of eight hundred five (805) program complaints.

Program Complaints filed with Rural Development and HUD:

Program Complaints filed directly with Rural Development (RD) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between OASCR and the respective agencies. This MOU allows for RD and HUD to initiate the investigation and resolution of complaints alleging violations of both the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (42 U.S.C. 3601-3619)), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and/or Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI). However, RD/HUD claims are incorporated in OASCR’s inventory of claims at the time of filing and have contributed to the back log of claims based on inactivity by RD/HUD to timely process these claims.

Program Complaints filed with Food and Nutrition Service:

OASCR processes all of USDA’s program complaints filed against the respective program administrative agency or Mission Areas, with the exception of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Program complaints filed against FNS are exclusively processed by FNS.



Dr. Penny Brown Reynolds, Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, gives remarks during the Juneteenth Observance and the Flag Raising Ceremony at the USDA Headquarters, Washington D.C.

OASCR’s MISSION

OASCR's mission is to provide leadership and direction for the fair and equitable treatment of all USDA customers and employees, while ensuring the delivery of quality programs and enforcement of civil rights.

OASCR’s VISION

OASCR’s vision is to create a USDA civil rights community that embraces and values civil rights and equal access and opportunity for all employees and customers.



OASCR'S SIX GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OASCR'S SIX GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Commitment to Dynamic Organizational Change: OASCR will commit to driving organizational change both within OASCR and in the wider USDA community. This will be achieved by ensuring that ongoing planning, implementation, and assessment of initiatives are responsive and relevant to external and internal needs.

Development and Implementation of DEIA Plans: Both Office-level and broader community-focused DEIA plans will be developed and executed. These plans will encompass strategies tailored to address specific issues within OASCR and in the communities that USDA serves, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities in each area.

Metrics and Tracking for Accountability: OASCR will establish clear metrics to track the progress of its initiatives. These metrics will help the Office understand shifts and trends in diversity, equity, and inclusion within OASCR and in communities served by the USDA. Metrics will serve as a basis for evaluating OASCR's impact and guiding future actions.

Internal Evaluation and Continuous Improvement: Regular internal evaluation will be conducted to assess OASCR's progress in institutionalizing initiatives across various components such as policy, practices, structures, culture, and climate. This evaluation will also extend to external engagement, assessing the effectiveness of OASCR's outreach activities, partnerships, and community programs.

Transparent Communication: Communicating OASCR's findings, challenges, and successes to key internal and external stakeholders is essential. This transparency will foster trust, encourage collaborative efforts, and ensure accountability. It will also provide an opportunity for feedback, which is crucial for continuous improvement.

Measuring Progress in Policy, Practices, and Community Impact: OASCR will measure the progress of organizational change through indicators of policy revision, practice improvements, structural adjustments, cultural shifts, and climate change both in internal employee and external community engagements. This comprehensive approach will ensure that OASCR's efforts are not confined to internal changes but also make a tangible impact on racial justice, equity, and opportunity in the broader community.

OASCR's SIX GUIDING PRINCIPLES





STRATEGIC SECTION I

STRATEGIC PLAN STRUCTURE

OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN STRUCTURE

The OASCR Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2029, comprises four (4) sections, including appendices. OASCR's Strategic Plan Structure sets forth the process used for the allocation of resources, the setting of goals, as well as identifying risks and opportunities. OASCR's Strategic Plan has relied on data and input from many sources.

Strategic Section 1: OASCR's Strategic Plan Structure sets forth a strategic overview which will provide a map for OASCR's vision for the Organization's growth and goals. In addition, this section provides the strategic methodology used in the creation of OASCR's Strategic Plan as well as how the plan will be used in evaluation of the goals, objectives, and strategies.

Strategic Section 2: OASCR's three (3) Strategic Pillars are: *People* (Advancing Racial Justice, Equity, and Opportunity), *Process* (Continuous Improvement and Accessibility), and *Products and Services* (Influencing Civil Rights Policy Nationwide). These pillars serve as the foundation for OASCR's alignment of strategic goals and objectives.

Strategic Section 3: OASCR's Strategic Plan sets forth four (4) goals which are broad visions intended to be achieved over a five-year period. These goals will help guide OASCR's decision-making, management strategy, resource allocation, and operational execution. OASCR's Strategic Goals include: (1) Equitably and Efficiently Address and Resolve Civil Rights Concerns; (2) Innovate and Improve OASCR's Operations to Enable Evidence-Based Decisions; (3) Conduct Strategic Outreach and Engagement to Enhance Civil Rights and Equitable Service; and (4) Attract, Build, and Maintain an Empowered Workforce.

Strategic Section 4: Strategic Section 4 sets forth the OASCR's Strategic Plan Implementation Framework which will include the following steps: (1) defining strategic priorities by using OASCR's mission, vision, and values to identify OASCR's top priorities; (2) resource allocation will improve efficacy and productivity while assuring better budgetary decisions; (3) strategic communication is a continuous process that aims to integrate the strategies into OASCR's culture and ensure that OASCR's workforce is aware of the continual progress with regard to OASCR's Strategic Plan implementation; (4) monitoring and evaluation will assess the strategies' progress and inform stakeholders about the results; and (5) creation of a strategic evaluation whereby OASCR will implement processes to check the goals and data which will help determine the necessary changes to ensure the successful implementation of OASCR's Strategic Plan; (6) accountability is the process of ensuring successful implementation of OASCR's Strategic Plan; and (7) performance measurement is critical to assessing the effectiveness of the Strategic Implementation by using metrics for performance measures for calculated decision-making.

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

OASCR's Strategic Plan complements other USDA-wide plans, strategies, and initiatives, including¹ USDA's Strategic Plan, USDA's Equity Action Plan, and USDA's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan. OASCR's Strategic Plan further adheres to Federal regulations requiring USDA and OASCR to comply with laws, combat harassment in USDA's programs and services, and serves as a model employer for Civil rights and Equity.

OASCR's Fiscal Years 2025-2029 Strategic Plan reflects an innovative perspective of OASCR's current environment, including: (1) impacts and risks associated with its current strategies, processes, organizational structures, and workforce; (2) stakeholder insights gathered during facilitated sessions and stakeholder interviews; and (3) areas that provided opportunities for improvement through benchmarking and leading practice research.

OASCR's Strategic Plan aims to uphold Federal civil rights laws and USDA Regulations, in particular Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d and 2000e et seq.), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794), Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681-§1688(a), and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. §§ 6102), which prohibit discrimination against USDA program beneficiaries on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), and age. OASCR processes program complaints from recipients of USDA financial assistance, and applicants for USDA programs, services, or benefits through any USDA conducted and assisted program.

Comprehensive data collection and evaluation are pivotal to ensuring that OASCR's Strategic Plan results in positive and measurable change for OASCR and USDA. Ten themes emerged around OASCR's challenges and opportunities for improvement, which served as the foundation for development of the OASCR Strategic Plan's goals, objectives, and implementing strategies. These themes are:

- 1) Increasing organizational capacity and efficacy
- 2) Amplifying efforts within OASCR and USDA's civil rights community
- 3) Abundance of accountability and consistent enforcement of civil rights
- 4) Changes in government and leadership priorities affecting OASCR operations
- 5) Educating customers and partnering with civil rights staff USDA-wide
- 6) Building a proficient civil rights workforce across USDA to support customer needs
- 7) Leveraging technology to improve data quality, processes, and analysis
- 8) Implementing independent and self-assessments of OASCR
- 9) Establishing USDA-wide guidance around compliance review procedures, complaint processes, and reporting expectations
- 10) Championing civil rights at USDA to sustain effective operations

The OASCR Strategic Plan themes affirm sustainable organizational change, strategic growth, and the successful achievement of OASCR's mission and vision.

OASCR'S STRATEGIC METHODOLOGY

Through a thorough review of key OASCR historical and current documents, along with independent assessments by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Harvard University, and USDA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), a deep understanding of OASCR's mission priorities, along with the impacts and risks associated with current strategies, processes, organizational structures, and workforce was gained. With an emphasis on aligning the OASCR Strategic Plan with USDA goals and initiatives, the team evaluated the USDA Strategic Plan, USDA Language Access Plan, USDA Equity Action Plan, OASCR Equity Plan, and USDA DEIA Plan.

Also identified are opportunities for improvement through benchmarking and best practice research. There was an examination OASCR's strategic goals and objectives in light of the civil right's strategic plans and programs of several Federal government Agencies and organizations.

A set of six overarching focus areas to be addressed in the OASCR Strategic Plan: 1) mission, vision, and functions 2) internal strengths and barriers to meeting USDA customer and employee needs 3) external political, economic, regulatory, and technological challenges 4) OASCR relationships and communication with stakeholders 5) diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for USDA customers and employees, and 6) future strategies for success.

From February to March 2024, forty (40), sixty-minute (60) stakeholder interviews with thirty-eight (38) OASCR Senior Leaders and USDA Mission Area, Agency, and Office Civil Rights Directors to better understand OASCR stakeholder priorities, problems, and ideas for improving OASCR's policies, processes, and programs. Nineteen of the stakeholders were from OASCR, eleven (11) were from all eight (8) of USDA's Mission Areas and Agencies, and eleven (11) were from USDA Offices, including Office of the Secretary (OSEC), Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA), Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), Office of Communications (OC), and Office of Inspector General (OIG).⁴ The team also conducted numerous meetings with OASCR Senior Leaders to learn more about OASCR's history, responsibilities, and aims.

OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN USE

The OASCR Strategic Plan focuses externally and internally on both USDA customers and employees. The Strategic Plan will notably contribute to the following USDA goals and priorities:

- 1) *Foster an equitable and competitive marketplace for all agricultural producers.*⁵
- 2) *Foster a workplace environment that is physically, mentally, and emotionally safe.*⁶
- 3) *Advancing racial justice, equity, opportunity, and rural prosperity.*⁷

By building on USDA-wide plans and a solid foundation of Core Values and Guiding Principles, OASCR ensures that its programs and processes will strengthen diversity and inclusivity for USDA's customers and workforce. The OASCR Strategic Plan provides the agency with direction and focus for the next five fiscal years. The priority is to institutionalize civil rights leadership, oversight, and activities that ensure customers have equal opportunity and access to USDA conducted and financially assisted programs, and that enforce equal employment opportunity for USDA employees and applicants.

The OASCR's Strategic Plan two-fold mission and inform USDA-wide recommendations for action, guide decisions, inform learning, and monitor progress. The OASCR strategic plan will serve as a guide for annual strategic reviews, stakeholder communications, recruitment and talent development, and annual budget requests and allocations. By focusing on quarterly and yearly activities, OASCR's Strategic Plan will provide periods for reflection around challenges, progress, the incorporation of lessons learned, opportunities to accelerate organizational change.

⁵Strategic Goal 3 in *U.S. Department of Agriculture: Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2022-2026*.

⁶ Strategic Goal 3 in *U.S. Department of Agriculture: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2022 -2026*.

⁷ USDA Secretary's 2024 Priority 2



STRATEGIC SECTION II
OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN PILLARS

OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN PILLARS

OASCR has identified three Strategic Pillars that serve as the foundation for OASCR's future success. These strategic pillars align with the strategic goals and objectives in USDA's Strategic Plan, DEIA Strategic Plan, and Equity Action Plan. By implementing these Strategic Pillars, the OASCR Strategic Plan will ensure that farmers, ranchers, and producers in rural America have equal access to USDA funds, and that USDA's employees, former employees, and job applicants have equal employment opportunity.

People

Advancing Racial Justice, Equity, and Opportunity across OASCR and USDA.

OASCR is committed to advancing racial justice, equity, and opportunity for USDA's customers and employees. OASCR will identify and act on solutions to reduce barriers to access, advance opportunity for underserved and underrepresented communities, and root out generations of systemic racism and discrimination. OASCR pledges to create an environment where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, political beliefs, or other characteristics. This environment will foster a sense of belonging and inclusion, recognizing the importance of both visible and less visible aspects of identity in the context of civil rights and EEO, and making OASCR and USDA the best places to work.

Process

Continuous Process Improvement. Accessibility and Accommodation.

OASCR is committed to internally evaluating, updating, and aligning the roles and responsibilities of its divisions to accomplish the mission. By effectively leveraging Information Technology (IT), OASCR will equip its office with fully accessible tools, capacity, and processes necessary to analyze Program and EEO Complaints effectively and efficiently, in addition to compliance review data and customer engagement information to shed light on USDA's programs, policies, and procedures and their impact on underserved and underrepresented urban, rural, and Tribal communities.

Products & Services

Resolving Civil Rights Concerns; Enforcing Federal Civil Rights Statutes, Regulations; and Policies; Reducing Barriers to Program Access.

OASCR is committed to influencing civil rights policy and practice on a national scale. By pioneering innovative strategies and models at USDA, OASCR aims to set an example for other institutions, contributing to a broader understanding of civil rights and advancing equity to ensure that those who qualify can participate and obtain the benefit of USDA's programs, services, and investments in their communities.



STRATEGIC SECTION III

OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

By identifying four strategic goals to advance the civil rights of USDA's customers and workforce, the OASCR Strategic Plan builds upon the civil rights initiatives and enforcement work that OASCR is currently supporting through its four office divisions and both internal and external organizational stakeholders. (see *Appendices D and E for OASCR's Organizational Chart and list of OASCR's stakeholders*).

Strategic Goal 1

Complaints Resolution

Strategic Objectives

- 1.1 Complaint Process Standardization
- 1.2 Complaint Resolution & Proactive Compliance
- 1.3 Customer Understanding

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: EQUITABLY AND EFFICIENTLY ADDRESS AND RESOLVE CIVIL RIGHTS CONCERNS

OASCR's mission is to ensure that USDA's customers' and employees' civil rights are protected and that any civil rights concerns are addressed swiftly and justly, in accordance with Federal civil rights laws, regulations, and policies. Through collaborative efforts with its customers and USDA's staff offices, Mission Areas, and agencies, OASCR will improve its efficacy, build trust, enhance compliance with Federal requirements, and provide transparency in the delivery of civil rights services. OASCR's commitment to administering civil rights through enforcement activities and resolution of civil rights concerns stands as a beacon of hope for all who seek justice.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: INNOVATE AND IMPROVE OASCR'S OPERATIONS TO ENABLE EVIDENCE-BASED DECISIONS

At the core of OASCR's ability to affect change is the need for innovation. By embracing innovative strategies and modern technologies to enable evidence-based awareness, planning, assessments, and decisions, OASCR will streamline operations and enhance effectiveness. Through continuous process improvement and innovation, OASCR will emerge as a leader in the fight for civil rights, inspiring and leading USDA staff offices, Mission Areas, and agencies to continue in the pursuit of justice.

Strategic Goal 2

Data-Driven Operations

Strategic Objectives

- 2.1 Infrastructure Modernization
- 2.2 Data-Driven Decisions
- 2.3 Information Sharing & Transparency
- 2.4 Communities of Practice

Strategic Goal 3

Stakeholder Outreach

Strategic Objectives

- 3.1 Equitable, Accessible Services
- 3.2 Customer Trust & Community Engagement
- 3.3 Fair, Inclusive, & Diverse Environment

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: CONDUCT STRATEGIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE CIVIL RIGHTS AND EQUITABLE SERVICE

The impact of OASCR extends far beyond mere enforcement and oversight. To truly advance civil rights, OASCR must engage in strategic outreach activities that amplify marginalized voices to foster inclusivity and remove barriers for underserved and underrepresented communities. By conducting targeted stakeholder outreach, education, and engagement initiatives, OASCR will advance racial justice, equity, and opportunity for all USDA customers.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: ATTRACT, BUILD, AND MAINTAIN AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE

The strength of OASCR lies in the dedication and talent of its workforce. As OASCR embarks on this transformative journey, it commits to attracting, building, and maintaining an empowered workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities USDA serves. By focusing on individual employee development and fostering an organizational culture that enables employees to contribute their talents, skills, and expertise, OASCR will develop and unlock employees' full potential and drive meaningful progress in the accomplishment of its mission.

Strategic Goal 4

Empowered Workforce

Strategic Objectives

- 4.1 Talent Acquisition & Retention
- 4.2 Workforce Planning & Professional Development
- 4.3 Training & Collaboration

STRATEGIC GOAL I: EQUITABLY AND EFFICIENTLY ADDRESS AND RESOLVE CIVIL RIGHTS CONCERNS

OASCR helps to ensure that all USDA customers and employees receive fair and equitable treatment by enforcing the nation's civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), disability, religion, age, familial status, national origin, or receipt of income from a public assistance program.

By working to uphold the civil rights of all people in the United States, particularly some of the most vulnerable members of American society, OASCR helps to ensure that all people have equal access to safe, healthy, and affordable food. USDA's investments in climate-smart agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, and other programs, would not be effective without ensuring equal opportunity and access to these funds by USDA's customers – farmers, ranchers, and producers in rural America. Within USDA, OASCR advances equal employment opportunity for USDA's employees and prospective job applicants.

It is imperative that OASCR take strategic, preemptive actions to sustain its civil rights work in the short-term and long-term. The actions identified in this strategic goal describe how OASCR will fulfill its role in leading and overseeing USDA's civil rights programs by supporting the Civil Rights Directors and their staff in USDA's staff offices, Mission Areas, and agencies to equitably and efficiently investigate discrimination complaints, conduct proactive compliance reviews of USDA programs externally and internally, provide corrective and remedial actions, and enact and communicate policy and regulations. By revising and modernizing regulatory and procedural frameworks, with a focus on increasing responsiveness and expediting decision-making, OASCR aspires to achieve more equitable outcomes and bolster confidence in USDA's ability to serve all stakeholders effectively.

OASCR will further work to prevent discrimination and violations of Federal law by providing technical assistance and public education for the American people on their rights to equal opportunity and nondiscrimination in accessing and participating in USDA programs, services, and assisted activities. To identify the communities most in need of outreach, technical assistance, and education and to increase accessibility for persons with disabilities, OASCR will engage with and listen to program beneficiaries, help them to understand USDA's Program Complaint enforcement authorities, and work to address their concerns.

Summary of Strategic Goal I

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
Equitably and Efficiently Address and Resolve Civil Rights Concerns	Objective 1.1: Address and prevent discrimination against USDA’s customers and employees by efficiently and effectively resolving civil rights concerns and enforcing Federal laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Discrimination Complaints Resolved • Percentage of Cases Referred to ADR Office • Percentage of Cases Resolved through ADR • Average Resolution Time • Satisfaction Rate of Complainants • Preventative Training Programs Completion • Follow-Up Satisfaction Rate
	Objective 1.2: Work to ensure that USDA civil rights staff acknowledge and provide timely, clear, and justified decisions to customers’ civil rights concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response Time for Program-Related Civil Rights Concerns • Decision Justification Clarity Index • Staff Training Completion Rate • Feedback Loop Efficiency • Internal Audit Completion Rate • Improved OASCR Digital Infrastructure • Utilization of USDA Digital Infrastructure for Customer and Stakeholder Engagement
	Objective 1.3: Improve program oversight and access statutory and regulatory compliance through evidence-based compliance reviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Compliance Reviews Conducted • Barriers to Access Reduction Rate • Voluntary Compliance Rate • Technical Assistance Effectiveness Score • Repeat Non-Compliance Rate
INTENDED OUTCOME: Uphold justice for all USDA customers and employees by ensuring swift and just resolution of civil rights concerns in accordance with Federal laws, regulations, and policies to foster trust, compliance, and transparency in the delivery of civil rights services.		

Objective 1.1: Address and prevent discrimination against USDA’s customers and employees by efficiently and effectively resolving civil rights concerns and enforcing Federal laws.

Implementation Strategies

- Leverage data collection and analytics to establish evidence-based Program Complaint process improvements, timeframes, milestones, and standards for decision-making.
- Re-establish an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Office in OASCR to address civil rights concerns, and Program and EEO discrimination complaints deemed appropriate for mediation.
- Implement management controls at each stage of the Program Complaint process to review case files and validate findings.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 1.1

- **Number of Discrimination Complaints Resolved:** Track the total number of Program and EEO discrimination complaints resolved to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the resolution process.
- **Percentage of Cases Referred to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Office:** Monitor the proportion of cases referred to the ADR Office, aiming to increase this percentage to promote more efficient and collaborative resolution processes.
- **Percentage of Cases Resolved through ADR:** Monitor the proportion of ADR cases resolved during the ADR process, aiming to increase this percentage to promote more efficient and effective resolution processes.
- **Average Resolution Time:** Measure the average time taken to resolve discrimination complaints, aiming for a continuous reduction in resolution time as a sign of improved efficiency.
- **Satisfaction Rate of Complainants:** Utilize post-resolution surveys to gauge the satisfaction of complainants with the discrimination complaint resolution process and outcome. Aim for a high satisfaction rate to indicate effectiveness and fairness.
- **Preventative Training Programs Completion:** Measure the annual percentage of USDA employees completing discrimination prevention training.
- **Follow-Up Satisfaction Rate:** Evaluate the satisfaction rate of complainants six months after resolution to ensure long-term fairness and effectiveness.

Objective 1.2: Work to ensure that USDA civil rights staff acknowledge and provide timely, clear, and justified decisions to customers' civil rights concerns.

Implementation Strategies

- Incorporate document review and dialogue with customers to assist customers in articulating civil rights concerns.
- Deploy new scalable, secure, and user-friendly digital infrastructure and modernize existing customer platforms to enhance the user experience.
- Measure the percentage of civil rights staff completing required training on timely, clear, and justified decision-making processes to ensure competency and consistency.
- Track the time taken to implement changes or improvements based on feedback regarding decision clarity and justification.

- **Internal Audit Completion Rate:** Measure the percentage of internal audits completed to ensure adherence to timely, clear, and justified decision-making processes.
- **Improved OASCR Digital Infrastructure:** Develop and deploy online public complaint filing and tracking capabilities for Program Complaints, and improved public
- **Increased Marketing and Communications:** Communications and outreach materials concerning OASCR's civil rights enforcement work.
- **Utilization of USDA Digital Infrastructure for Customer and Stakeholder Engagement:** Capture frequency of utilization by different customer segments across USDA's various media platforms that promote public awareness of their civil rights and responsibilities, including [Farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) and the USDA Civil Rights app.

Objective 1.3 Improve program oversight and assess statutory and regulatory compliance through evidence-based compliance reviews USDA-wide.

Implementation Strategies

- Develop compliance reviews for USDA-conducted programs and services that identify compliance problems and inform and educate USDA staff on civil rights laws and best practices.
- Evaluate barriers inhibiting equitable access to USDA-assisted programs and create targeted compliance reviews and technical assistance strategies to help recipients achieve voluntary compliance with civil rights laws.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 1.3

- **Number of Compliance Reviews Conducted:** Monitor the total number of compliance reviews conducted to assess statutory and regulatory compliance, aiming for comprehensive coverage of USDA-assisted programs.
- **Barriers to Access Reduction Rate:** Evaluate the success in identifying and reducing barriers to equitable access through targeted compliance reviews and technical assistance, aiming to decrease reported barriers.
- **Voluntary Compliance Rate:** Track the percentage of USDA-assisted programs achieving voluntary compliance with civil rights laws following compliance reviews and technical assistance, aiming to increase this rate.
- **Technical Assistance Effectiveness Score:** Develop a score to measure the effectiveness of technical assistance provided to USDA-assisted programs in achieving compliance.

- **Repeat Non-Compliance Rate:** Track the percentage of programs with repeat non-compliance issues to identify areas needing targeted interventions.

Intended Outcome of Strategic Goal I

Uphold justice for all USDA customers and employees by ensuring swift and just resolution of civil rights concerns in accordance with Federal laws, regulations, and policies to foster trust, compliance, and transparency in the delivery of civil rights services.

Strategic Goal I: Equitably and Efficiently Address and Resolve Civil Rights Concerns

	People		Process	Products & Services
	Workforce	Customers		
Objective 1.1: Address and prevent discrimination against USDA’s customers and employees by efficiently and effectively resolving civil rights concerns and enforcing Federal laws	X	X	X	X
Objective 1.2: Work to ensure that USDA civil rights staff acknowledge and provide timely, clear, and justified decisions to customers’ civil rights concerns		X	X	X
Objective 1.3: Improve program oversight and assess statutory and regulatory compliance through evidence-based compliance reviews USDA-wide	X	X	X	X

STRATEGIC GOAL II: INNOVATE AND IMPROVE OASCR OPERATIONS TO ENABLE EVIDENCE-BASED DECISIONS

OASCR is committed to transforming its operational processes to foster an environment where decisions are informed by solid evidence and analytics. This transformation is crucial for advancing the integrity and effectiveness of the USDA's mission, ensuring that every action and strategy is underpinned by reliable data and innovative practices. To achieve this, OASCR is focusing on the modernization of its systems and infrastructure, leveraging technology to streamline workflows, and enhancing its communication to improve overall efficiency.

The objectives of this strategic goal underscore OASCR's commitment to modernizing financial planning and execution processes through the implementation of a multi-year Finance & Budget Plan and a robust Program, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) Framework. These initiatives will not only ensure financial accountability but also optimize resource allocation to pave the way for more efficient and equitable service delivery.

OASCR is committed to transforming its operational processes to foster an environment where decisions are informed by solid evidence and analytics. This transformation is crucial for advancing the integrity and effectiveness of the USDA's mission, ensuring that every action and strategy is underpinned by reliable data and innovative practices. To achieve this, OASCR is focusing on the modernization of its systems and infrastructure, leveraging technology to streamline workflows, and enhancing its communication to improve overall efficiency.

The objectives of this strategic goal underscore OASCR's commitment to modernizing financial planning and execution processes through the implementation of a multi-year Finance & Budget Plan and a robust Program, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) Framework. These initiatives will not only ensure financial accountability but also optimize resource allocation to pave the way for more efficient and equitable service delivery.

OASCR is committed to transforming its operational processes to foster an environment where decisions are informed by solid evidence and analytics. This transformation is crucial for advancing the integrity and effectiveness of the USDA's mission, ensuring that every action and strategy is underpinned by reliable data and innovative practices. To achieve this, OASCR is focusing on the modernization of its systems and infrastructure, leveraging technology to streamline workflows, and enhancing its communication to improve overall efficiency.

The objectives of this strategic goal underscore OASCR's commitment to modernizing financial planning and execution processes through the implementation of a multi-year Finance & Budget Plan and a robust Program, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) Framework. These initiatives will not only ensure financial accountability but also optimize resource allocation to pave the way for more efficient and equitable service delivery.

Data-based decision tools and reporting systems must be integrated into planning and operations to allow for a clearer and near real-time understanding of the existing operational environment and OASCR's progress and challenges. OASCR aims to strengthen operational and strategic effectiveness by deploying scalable and secure digital infrastructure, enhancing program evaluation capabilities, and embracing evidence-based decision-making in accordance with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.⁸ By implementing a comprehensive Strategic Communications Plan, OASCR can ensure that all stakeholders are informed of decisions and changes in a timely manner, thereby improving awareness and planning, and fostering a more collaborative and transparent environment.

Recognizing the importance of leveraging collective expertise and experiences to drive meaningful change and achieve shared goals, OASCR seeks to establish communities of practice that foster collaboration, information sharing, and resource pooling across USDA.

In summary, OASCR's strategic goal to innovate and improve operations is pivotal to ongoing efforts to better serve the diverse communities within USDA's purview. Through concerted efforts and a commitment to continuous process improvement, OASCR is confident it will enhance operational efficiency, improve inclusivity, and achieve its overarching mission.

⁸ See, *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018*.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC GOAL II

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
Innovate and Improve OASCR's Operations to Enable Evidence-Based Decisions	Objective 2.1: Optimize resource allocation and improve accountability by modernizing systems and infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Discrimination Complaints Resolved • Percentage of Cases Referred to ADR Office • Percentage of Cases Resolved through ADR • Average Resolution Time • Satisfaction Rate of Complainants • Preventative Training Programs Completion • Follow-Up Satisfaction Rate
	Objective 2.2: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of civil rights programs by incorporating data-based decision tools and assessments into OASCR's planning and operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response Time for Program-Related Civil Rights Concerns • Decision Justification Clarity Index • Staff Training Completion Rate • Feedback Loop Efficiency • Internal Audit Completion Rate • Improved OASCR Digital Infrastructure • Utilization of USDA Digital Infrastructure for Customer and Stakeholder Engagement
	Objective 2.3: Develop new methods and improve existing methods of information exchange and transparency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Compliance Reviews Conducted • Barriers to Access Reduction Rate • Voluntary Compliance Rate • Technical Assistance Effectiveness Score • Repeat Non-Compliance Rate
	Objective 2.4: Expand civil rights networks and communities of practice within USDA to bolster collaboration, information, and resource sharing across USDA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage Reduction in Budget Allocation Time • Increase in Financial Accountability Metrics • System Modernization Completion Rate • Reduction in Resource Allocation Timeframes through System Modernization • Improvement in Accountability and Performance Metrics in IT Infrastructure Upgrade
INTENDED OUTCOME: Inspire others to join and continue in the pursuit of justice through innovative strategies and modern technologies, streamlined operations, and enhanced effectiveness to position OASCR as a leader in the fight for civil rights.		

Objective 2.1: Optimize resource allocation and improve accountability by modernizing systems and infrastructure.

Implementation Strategies

- Implement a multi-year Finance & Budget Plan aligned with the OASCR Strategic Plan and integrate a strong PPBE Framework to enhance financial planning and execution and guide resource allocation.
- Institute an OASCR Designated Staff Initiative that aligns a group of OASCR staff responsibilities to specific Mission Area and Agency Civil Rights Offices in various regions, in particular the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Rural Development (RD), to expedite the processing and resolution of Program Complaints.
- Modernize IT (Information Technology) infrastructure to support end-to-end electronic complaint processing and data requests across OASCR and USDA's Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 2.1

- **Percentage Reduction in Budget Allocation Time:** Track the time allocated after implementing the multi-year Finance & Budget Plan and PPBE Framework.
- **Increase in Financial Accountability Metrics:** Measure financial accountability improvements through audit findings, resolution time, and budget forecast accuracy.
- **System Modernization Completion Rate:** Monitor the percentage of IT infrastructure modernization projects completed within the planned timeframe.
- **Reduction in Resource Allocation Timeframes through System Modernization:** Measure the decrease in time required for resource allocation processes following the modernization of IT systems.
- **Improvement in Accountability and Performance Metrics in IT Infrastructure Upgrade:** Track enhancements in accountability and performance metrics resulting from upgrades to the IT infrastructure.

Objective 2.2: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of civil rights programs by incorporating data-based decision tools and assessments into OASCR's planning and operations.

Implementation Strategies

- Develop robust program evaluation and data analytics capabilities, including the creation and implementation of real-time reporting systems to assess program effectiveness, track trends, identify patterns, and support evidence-based planning and decision making
- Design and implement a comprehensive evaluation plan to assess OASCR's effectiveness and to ensure accurate, consistent, and transparent data collection and reporting.
- Deploy scalable, secure, and user-appropriate digital reporting mechanisms, which utilize best practices and facilitate the sharing of civil rights data across USDA.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 2.2

- **Program Effectiveness Score:** Develop and utilize a composite index to assess the effectiveness of civil rights programs, incorporating factors such as resolution time, satisfaction rates, and equity of service delivery.
- **Reduction in Time to Identify Trends:** Measure the reduction in time to identify trends, patterns, and insights from civil rights data after deploying real-time reporting systems.
- **Data Utilization Rate:** Track the frequency of data-based decision-making in planning and operations, aiming for a year-over-year increase.
- **Data Accuracy Improvement Rate:** Measure the improvement in data accuracy and reliability year over year to ensure informed decision-making.
- **Stakeholder Data Satisfaction Index:** Gauge stakeholder satisfaction with the transparency and usability of shared civil rights data and insights.

Objective 2.3: Develop new methods and improve existing methods of information exchange and transparency.

Implementation of Objective 2.3: Develop new methods and improve existing methods of information exchange and transparency.

Implementation Strategies

- Design and implement a Strategic Communications Plan and a structured process to inform staff USDA-wide of policy and regulation changes, key milestones, and deadlines.

- Establish formal stakeholder messaging channels within USDA’s civil rights community with an emphasis on two-way feedback, decision-making transparency, and collaboration.
- Build a digital Civil Rights Resource Library with templates, tutorials, and case studies to respond to staff queries and educate USDA workforce around civil rights.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 2.3

- **Stakeholder Engagement Index:** Gauge the effectiveness of the Strategic Communications Plan and messaging channels through metrics like stakeholder feedback volume, satisfaction rates, and engagement levels.
- **Access to Civil Rights Resources:** Monitor the utilization rate of the digital Civil Rights Resource Library, aiming for increased access and usage by staff and stakeholders.
- **Transparency and Collaboration Score:** Develop a score based on survey responses from internal and external stakeholders regarding their perception of OASCR’s transparency and collaborative efforts.
- **Information Exchange Efficiency:** Evaluate the efficiency of new methods of information exchange based on speed and stakeholder satisfaction.
- **Digital Resource Innovation Rate:** Track the rate of innovation and updates to the digital Civil Rights Resource Library and other information exchange platforms.

Objective 2.4: Expand civil rights networks and communities of practice within USDA to bolster collaboration, information, and resource sharing across USDA.

Implementation Strategies

- Create topic-specific (e.g., MD-715 and No FEAR Act) communities of practice, inclusive of civil rights employees from USDA’s Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices, that meet regularly.
- Develop communities of practice and subject matter expertise in civil rights practice areas and enforcement strategies.
- Foster partnerships with external civil rights government and non-governmental organizations and communities to enhance the effectiveness of USDA civil rights.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 2.4

- **Community of Practice Engagement Levels:** Track the number of active participants in communities of practice, meeting attendance rates, and participant satisfaction.
- **Impact of Civil Rights Networks:** Measure the effectiveness of civil rights networks through metrics such as shared resources, collaborative projects initiated, and best practices developed.
- **External Partnership Success Rate:** Evaluate the success of partnerships with external civil rights organizations through joint initiatives launched, collaborative events held, and shared goals achieved.
- **Network Expansion Rate:** Measure the year-over-year growth in active civil rights networks and communities of practice within USDA.
- **Knowledge Sharing Effectiveness:** Evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge sharing within networks as measured by implemented best practices and improvements.

Intended Outcome of Strategic Goal II

Inspire others to join and continue in the pursuit of justice through innovative strategies and modern technologies, streamlined operations, and enhanced effectiveness to position OASCR as a leader in the fight for civil rights.

Strategic Goal II: Innovate and Improve OASCR’s Operations to Enable Evidence-Based Decisions

	People		Process	Products & Services
	Workforce	Customers		
Objective 2.1: Optimize resource allocation and improve accountability by modernizing systems and infrastructure	X	X	X	X
Objective 2.2: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of civil rights programs by incorporating data-based decision tools and assessments into OASCR’s planning and operations	X	X	X	X
Objective 2.3: Develop new methods and improve existing methods of information exchange and transparency	X		X	X
Objective 2.4: Expand civil rights networks and communities of practice within USDA to bolster collaboration, information, and resource sharing across USDA	X		X	

Strategic Goal III: Conduct Strategic Outreach and Engagement Activities to Enhance Civil Rights and Equitable Service

OASCR is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where every American has equitable access to USDA's services and programs. This commitment forms the cornerstone of OASCR's mission and represents a fundamental aspect of American values. This strategic goal addresses the challenges and barriers that hinder equal access to USDA resources, particularly for underserved and underrepresented populations. This goal recognizes that for USDA to truly fulfill its mandate, it must not only respond to discrimination complaints, but also engage with all segments of the American public to ensure that civil rights are protected and promoted.

Engaging effectively with customers and employees is crucial in identifying and dismantling the barriers to equitable service and ensuring that USDA programs and recipients of financial assistance comply with Federal laws prohibiting discrimination in employment and delivery of services and benefits based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, and disability. This includes improving mechanisms for processing and addressing external complaints and ensuring that OASCR's outreach efforts are inclusive and cater to the needs of the diverse communities USDA serves.

The past year's efforts in stakeholder outreach have highlighted the importance of trust and engagement in enhancing the public's perception and utilization of USDA programs and services. Through this strategic goal, OASCR reaffirms its dedication to making USDA's resources more accessible and its services more equitable, particularly focusing on enhancing the experience of underserved communities and individuals with disabilities.

By fostering a collaborative environment with USDA's Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices, and by actively seeking feedback from the communities we serve, OASCR is dedicated to refining USDA approach to civil rights and ensuring the delivery of equitable service. This goal's objectives and implementation strategies are aligned with the vision of not just reacting to issues of inequity, but also preventing them through proactive engagement, accessibility improvements, and continuous dialogue with stakeholders. OASCR's aim is to ensure that every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances, can access and benefit from the full range of programs, services, and benefits that USDA offers.

Together, with relentless pursuit and innovative enforcement strategies, OASCR and the USDA civil rights community can build a more inclusive and equitable society, demonstrating the true potential of public service to transform lives.

Summary of Strategic Goal III

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
Conduct Strategic Outreach and Engagement Activities to Enhance Civil Rights and Equitable Service	Objective 3.1: Improve equitable service delivery to the American public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in Program Accessibility • Stakeholder Engagement Index • Training and Education Reach • Equity Training Coverage • Service Delivery Innovation Index
	Objective 3.2: Improve accessible service delivery to USDA customers and employees with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility Compliance Rate • Training Completion Rate • Feedback Utilization Rate • Accessibility Improvement Projects Completion Rate • Disability Community Feedback Score
	Objective 3.3: Strengthen customer trust and engagement in USDA’s programs and services, particularly for underserved and underrepresented communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach Effectiveness Score • Community Engagement Index • Customer Feedback Implementation Rate • Outreach Program Diversity Index • Actionable Feedback Implementation Timeline
	Objective 3.4: Promote a fair and inclusive environment that leverages feedback to recognize and meet diverse employees’ needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity Policy Adoption Rate • Employee Engagement Score • Digital Platform Engagement • Inclusivity Training Impact Score • Policy Implementation Satisfaction Rate
INTENDED OUTCOME: Cultivate a more equitable society where every individual’s rights are valued and protected by conducting targeted stakeholder outreach and engagement initiatives, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering inclusivity.		

Objective 3.1 Improve equitable service delivery to the American public.

Implementation Strategies

- Design and deliver technical assistance, public education, and training initiatives to educate USDA program staff, USDA-assisted entities, and the American public about applicable Federal civil rights laws.
- Establish formal stakeholder messaging channels with USDA customers with an emphasis on two-way feedback and decision-making transparency.
- Create partnerships with community organizations, civil rights groups, and other stakeholders to extend USDA's outreach and improve service delivery.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 3.1

- **Increase in Program Accessibility:** Measure the annual rise in USDA program utilization among underserved and underrepresented populations.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Index:** Develop and track an index based on the frequency and quality of interactions with stakeholders through established messaging channels.
- **Training and Education Reach:** Track the number of USDA staff and associated entities that have completed civil rights law training programs each year.
- **Equity Training Coverage:** Track the annual percentage of USDA staff completing equity-focused training programs.
- **Service Delivery Innovation Index:** Measure the implementation of innovative practices to improve equitable service delivery.

Objective 3.2: Improve accessible service delivery to USDA customers and employees with disabilities.

Implementation Strategies

- Collaborate with USDA Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices to conduct recurring accessibility assessments of programs and services, ensuring compliance with Federal requirements (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act).
- Develop and implement training programs for USDA employees on disability awareness (including the deaf and hard of hearing), accommodation procedures, and inclusive communication practices.
- Establish partnerships with disability advocacy organizations and community groups and gather feedback on the accessibility of USDA programs and services.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 3.2

- **Accessibility Compliance Rate:** Assess and report the percentage of USDA programs and services that meet or exceed federal accessibility standards annually.
- **Training Completion Rate:** Monitor the percentage of USDA employees who complete disability awareness and accommodation procedure training annually.
- **Feedback Utilization Rate:** Measure how feedback from disability advocacy organizations and community groups is implemented to improve program accessibility.
- **Accessibility Improvement Projects Completion Rate:** Monitor the completion rate of projects aimed at improving accessibility for customers and employees with disabilities.
- **Disability Community Feedback Score:** Track satisfaction scores from the disability community regarding improvements and accommodations made.

Objective 3.3: Strengthen customer trust and engagement in USDA’s programs and services, particularly for underserved and underrepresented communities.

Implementation Strategies

- Utilize targeted outreach and communication strategies, including culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, in alignment with OASCR’s Language Access Plan.
- Reintroduce on-site visits, in collaboration with USDA’s Mission Areas and Agencies, to deepen stakeholder outreach.
- Collaborate with community-based organizations, faith-based groups, and grassroots networks to increase access to USDA programs and services in underserved areas.
- Expand customer feedback mechanisms and assessments to gather insights from underserved communities and identify areas for improvement.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 3.3

- **Outreach Effectiveness Score:** Evaluate the effectiveness of targeted outreach and communication strategies through surveys and feedback mechanisms, aiming for a year-over-year improvement.
- **Community Engagement Index:** Track the number and impact of on-site visits, collaborations with community-based organizations, and access initiatives in underserved areas.

- **Customer Feedback Implementation Rate:** Measure the percentage of customer feedback that results in actionable changes or improvements in services and programs.
- **Outreach Program Diversity Index:** Measure the diversity of outreach programs to ensure they cater to a wide range of communities and interests.
- **Actionable Feedback Implementation Timeline:** Track the average time from receiving customer feedback to implementing actionable changes.

Objective 3.4: Promote a fair and inclusive environment that leverages feedback to recognize and meet diverse employees' needs.

Implementation Strategies

- Identify and adopt the most effective equity and inclusive policies, practices, and frameworks into those of EEO and civil rights.
- Integrate Special Emphasis Programs into USDA and OASCR regulations and employment policies. Jointly plan USDA and Agency/Office-specific Special Emphasis events with staff.
- Create a digital platform to share resources and host a virtual community for employees to share their diverse stories, experiences, and perspectives.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 3.4

- **Inclusivity Policy Adoption Rate:** Quantify the percentage of equity and inclusive policies and practices adopted by the USDA and OASCR annually.
- **Employee Engagement Score:** Utilize surveys to gauge employee satisfaction and engagement with Special Emphasis Programs and inclusivity initiatives.
- **Digital Platform Engagement:** Track user engagement and activity on the digital platform for sharing resources and stories among employees.
- **Inclusivity Training Impact Score:** Assess the impact of inclusivity training on workplace culture and employee behavior.
- **Policy Implementation Satisfaction Rate:** Measure stakeholder satisfaction with implementing equity and inclusive policies and practices.

Intended Outcome of Strategic Goal III

Cultivate a more equitable society where every individual’s rights are valued and protected by conducting targeted stakeholder outreach and engagement initiatives, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering inclusivity.

Strategic Goal III: Conduct Strategic Outreach and Engagement Activities to Enhance Civil Rights and Equitable Service

	People		Process	Products & Services
	Workforce	Customers		
Objective 3.1: Improve equitable service delivery to the American public	X	X	X	X
Objective 3.2: Improve accessible service delivery to USDA customers and employees with disabilities	X	X	X	X
Objective 3.3: Strengthen customer trust and engagement in USDA’s programs and services, particularly for underserved and underrepresented communities		X	X	X
Objective 3.4: Promote a fair and inclusive environment that leverages feedback to recognize and meet diverse employees’ needs	X		X	X

Strategic Goal IV: Attract, Build, and Maintain an Empowered Workforce

As OASCR continues its mission to uphold civil rights and liberties within the USDA, it must prioritize the cultivation of a talented and empowered workforce. An empowered workforce committed to the civil rights mission and customers allows OASCR to operate more efficiently and effectively, while making a bigger impact with a relatively small workforce. This strategic goal focuses on attracting and building an OASCR workforce based on sound human capital practices, while empowering all members of USDA to respect one another and USDA’s customers.

In recent years, OASCR has received valuable feedback from employees indicating a need for a more robust and passionate workforce within the Office and USDA-wide. Through the development of a Human Capital Plan and subsequent workforce analyses, OASCR has committed to engaging in workforce-centric activities that assess staff’s current knowledge, skills, and values, and identify what USDA needs to achieve future success.

Summary of Strategic Goal IV

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
Attract, Build, and Maintain an Empowered Workforce	Objective 4.1: Develop and implement OASCR-specific human capital strategies to guide OASCR’s workforce initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the OASCR Human Capital Plan • Workforce Analysis Completion Rate • Alignment Index • Strategic Alignment Progress Score • Human Capital Innovation Index
	Objective 4.2: Acquire and retain diverse talent committed to civil rights principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity Hiring Rate • Unconscious Bias Reduction • Reduction Rate of Diverse Talent • Career Advancement Rate • Diverse Talent Satisfaction Index
	Objective 4.3: Build a workforce of civil rights experts at USDA through workforce planning and professional development activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development Completion Rate • Civil Rights Fellowship Program Participation • Workshop and Seminar Attendance • Expertise Utilization Rate • Professional Growth Index
	Objective 4.4: Establish a culture of respect and inclusion across the USDA workforce through training and collaborative civil rights programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture Assessment Improvement Score • Change Management Plan Implementation Rate • Training Participation and Feedback • Inclusion Initiative Participation Rate • Delivery of Respect and Inclusion Progress Report
INTENDED OUTCOME: Attract, build, and maintain a diverse and empowered workforce that reflects the communities USDA serves, fosters a culture of inclusion and empowerment, and unlocks employees’ full potential to drive meaningful progress in advancing civil rights.		

Using guidance and information from these analyses will allow OASCR to develop recruiting, development, and retention strategies. These strategies will allow OASCR to focus on the creation of a holistic workforce, including attracting the right talent to strengthen its core workforce, but will also focus on cultivating an environment that fosters growth, engagement, respect, and inclusivity. Establishing the right culture within OASCR will improve employees' connection to OASCR and allow them to better serve USDA customers in a timely manner, with sensitivity to diverse needs.

OASCR is committed to ensuring a safe and secure work environment for all employees engaged in civil rights work. By prioritizing employees' well-being, OASCR will create an atmosphere where individuals can thrive and make meaningful contributions to the USDA's mission. Together, OASCR and USDA can build a dynamic and inclusive workforce dedicated to advancing civil rights and serving diverse communities.

Objective 4.1 Develop and implement OASCR-specific human capital strategies to guide OASCR's workforce initiatives.

Implementation Strategies

- Develop a multi-year OASCR Human Capital Plan that aligns with the OASCR Strategic Plan's goals and objectives.
- Establish performance metrics to monitor progress and ensure alignment with established human capital goals and priorities.
- Conduct workforce analyses to identify OASCR staff's current Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs), and KSAs needed to achieve the Office's mission.
- Define and document roles and responsibilities within OASCR and the larger USDA civil rights community.
- Define and document roles and responsibilities within OASCR and the larger USDA civil rights community.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 4.1

- **Completion of the OASCR Human Capital Plan:** Measure the percentage completion and timely publication of the multi-year Human Capital Plan within the set timeframe.
- **Workforce Analysis Completion Rate:** Track the percentage of completed workforce analyses annually to identify current and needed KSAs among OASCR staff.
- **Alignment Index:** Develop and maintain an index to measure the alignment of workforce initiatives with the strategic goals and objectives, reviewed quarterly.

- **Strategic Alignment Progress Score:** Quantify progress towards strategic alignment of human capital initiatives with overall organizational goals.
- **Human Capital Innovation Index:** Measure the adoption rate of innovative human capital management practices.

Objective 4.2 Acquire and retain diverse talent committed to civil rights principles.

Implementation Strategies

- Develop and launch targeted recruitment campaigns on emerging social media platforms and in partnership with academic institutions, professional associations, and community groups that promote underrepresented groups.
- Implement techniques to reduce unconscious bias in hiring and expand and diversify the pool of potential candidates who align with OASCR's values and mission.
- Establish a mentorship program that pairs new or early career employees with senior civil rights leaders from across USDA.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 4.2

- **Diversity Hiring Rate:** Measure the percentage increase in hires from underrepresented groups annually to assess the effectiveness of targeted recruitment campaigns.
- **Unconscious Bias Reduction:** Track the reduction in unconscious bias in hiring processes through pre-and post-assessment scores of hiring panels.
- **Retention Rate of Diverse Talent:** Calculate the annual retention rate of employees from underrepresented groups to assess the effectiveness of the mentorship program and other retention strategies.
- **Career Advancement Rate:** Track how employees from underrepresented groups advance to higher positions within the organization.
- **Diverse Talent Satisfaction Index:** Measure the job satisfaction levels of diverse talent to gauge the effectiveness of the inclusive work environment.

Objective 4.3: Build a workforce of civil rights experts at USDA through workforce planning and professional development activities.

Implementation Strategies

- Implement Individual Development Plans (IDPs), along with KSA (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities) goals and approved training budgets, into performance reviews to incentivize OASCR staff development.
- Launch a Civil Rights Fellowship Program that offers immersive field experiences, research projects, and advocacy initiatives related to civil rights issues.
- Partner with Mission Area Civil Rights Directors, the Office of General Counsel (OGC), and local community organizations, advocacy groups, and academic institutions to offer live, hands-on workshops, seminars, and certifications on civil rights topics.
- Create a Civil Rights Leadership Academy to provide advanced training, coaching, and mentorship to emerging civil rights leaders within OASCR and USDA.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 4.3

- **Professional Development Completion Rate:** Measure the percentage of OASCR staff who complete their Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and achieve their KSA goals annually.
- **Civil Rights Fellowship Program Participation:** Track the number of participants in the Civil Rights Fellowship Program and their subsequent contributions to civil rights initiatives.
- **Workshop and Seminar Attendance:** Count the number of employees attending live workshops and seminars and obtaining certifications on civil rights topics annually to assess engagement and growth in expertise.
- **Expertise Utilization Rate:** Measure the rate at which the workforce's specialized knowledge and skills are utilized in civil rights initiatives.
- **Professional Growth Index:** Develop an index to measure employees' professional growth in civil rights expertise annually.

Objective 4.4: Establish a culture of respect and inclusion across the USDA workforce through training and collaborative civil rights programming.

- Conduct culture assessments to identify the current state of USDA’s culture and practices around employee engagement, respect, and inclusion.
- Leverage employees across the USDA civil rights community to develop a Change Management Plan that defines expected organizational and individual behaviors.
- Establish and implement measures that demonstrate and hold program and project owners accountable for cultural progress and growth.

Key Performance Indicators for Objective 4.4

- **Culture Assessment Improvement Score:** Measure improvements in employee engagement, respect, and inclusion scores from culture assessments conducted bi- annually.
- **Change Management Plan Implementation Rate:** Track the progress of implementing the Change Management Plan's defined organizational and individual behaviors quarterly.
- **Training Participation and Feedback:** Monitor the number of USDA staff attending training on cultural competence, unconscious bias, etc., and aggregate feedback scores to gauge effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Inclusion Initiative Participation Rate:** Monitor the participation rate in initiatives to foster a culture of respect and inclusion.
- **Delivery of Respect and Inclusion Progress Report:** Publish an annual progress report detailing achievements and areas for improvement in building a respectful and inclusive workplace culture.

Intended Outcome of Strategic Goal IV

Attract, build, and maintain a diverse and empowered workforce that reflects the communities USDA serves, fosters a culture of inclusion and empowerment, and unlocks employees' full potential to drive meaningful progress in advancing civil rights.

Strategic Goal IV: Attract, Build, and Maintain an Empowered Workforce

	People		Process	Products & Services
	Workforce	Customers		
Objective 4.1: Develop and implement OASCR-specific human capital strategies to guide OASCR's workforce initiatives	X		X	
Objective 4.2: Acquire and retain diverse talent committed to civil rights principles	X		X	
Objective 4.3: Build a workforce of civil rights experts at USDA through workforce planning and professional development activities	X		X	
Objective 4.4: Establish a culture of respect and inclusion across the USDA workforce through training and collaborative civil rights programming	X		X	X



STRATEGIC SECTION IV

**OASCR'S STRATEGIC PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

OASCR's Strategic Implementation Plan Framework

A Strategic Implementation Plan Framework is essential to actualize OASCR's Strategic Plan and will encompass both Action Plans and Performance Metrics. The Strategic Implementation is the process of turning OASCR's Strategic Plan into action.

It will outline specific actions, deadlines, and parties responsible for each Strategic Objective. OASCR's Strategic Implementation Plan Framework will encompass seven components:

- (1) Defining strategic priorities by using OASCR's mission, vision, and values to identify OASCR's top priorities;
- (2) Resource allocation will improve efficacy and productivity while assuring better budgetary decisions;
- (3) Strategic communication is a continuous process that aims to integrate the strategies into OASCR's culture and ensure that OASCR's workforce is aware of the continual progress with regard to OASCR's Strategic Plan implementation;
- (4) Monitoring and evaluation will assess the strategies' progress and inform stakeholders about the results;
- (5) Creation of a strategic evaluation whereby OASCR will implement processes to check the goals and data which will help determine the necessary changes to ensure the successful implementation of OASCR's Strategic Plan;
- (6) Accountability is the process of ensuring successful implementation of OASCR's Strategic Plan; and
- (7) Performance measurement is critical to assessing the effectiveness of the Strategic Implementation by using metrics for performance measures for calculated decision-making.

OASCR's Strategic Implementation Plan emphasizes data-driven decision-making through the development, collection, reporting, and analysis of strategic performance measures. Strategic Implementation Plan monitors key initiatives, such as IT infrastructure improvements and the ADR Office's re-establishment, to enable OASCR leadership and program managers to oversee the implementation of the OASCR Strategic Plan. Evaluating equitable access and enhancing program oversight will also be prioritized.

The Strategic Implementation Plan sets forth identified intended outcomes for each Strategic Goal that reflect initial strategic intent that may emerge as the strategy is implemented. These outcomes will serve as measures of the success of the strategy for OASCR. The intended outcomes are listed below:

INTENDED OUTCOMES OF OASCR'S STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic Goal 1

Uphold justice for all USDA customers and employees by ensuring swift and just resolution of civil rights concerns in accordance with Federal laws, regulations, and policies to foster trust, compliance, and transparency in the delivery of civil rights services.

Strategic Goal 2

Inspire others to join and continue in the pursuit of justice through innovative strategies and modern technologies, streamlined operations, and enhanced effectiveness to position OASCR as a leader in the fight for civil rights.

Strategic Goal 3

Cultivate a more equitable society where every individual's rights are valued and protected by conducting targeted stakeholder outreach and engagement initiatives, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering inclusivity.

Strategic Goal 4

Attract, build, and maintain a diverse and empowered workforce that reflects the communities USDA services, fosters a culture of inclusion and empowerment, and unlocks employees' full potential to drive meaningful progress in advancing civil rights.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS

- **ASCR:** Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
- **ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act
- **ADR:** Alternative Dispute Resolution
- **AMS:** Agricultural Marketing Service
- **APHIS:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- **ARS:** Agricultural Research Service
- **CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations
- **CR:** Civil Rights
- **EEO:** Equal Employment Opportunity
- **EEOC:** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- **EO:** Executive Order
- **ERS:** Economic Research Service
- **FPAC:** Farm Production and Conservation
- **FAS:** Foreign Agricultural Service
- **FFAS:** Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service
- **FNCS:** Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services
- **FNS:** Food and Nutrition Service
- **FPAC:** Farm Production and Conservation
- **FS:** Forest Service
- **FSA:** Farm Service Agency
- **FSIS:** Food Safety and Inspection Service
- **FY:** Fiscal Year
- **IG:** Inspector General

- **LEP:** Limited English Proficiency
- **LGBTQ:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons
- **MRP:** Marketing and Regulatory Programs
- **NIFA:** National Institute of Feed and Agriculture
- **NRCS:** National Resources Conservation Service
- **NRE:** National Resources and the Environment
- **OA:** Office of the Administrator
- **OAE:** Office of Advocacy and Enterprise
- **OALJ:** Office of Administrative Law Judges
- **OAQ:** Office of Advocacy and Outreach
- **OASA:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration
- **OASCR:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
- **OBPA:** Office of Budget and Program Analysis
- **OC:** Office of Communications
- **OCA:** Office of the Consumer Advisor
- **OCDIO:** Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
- **OCFO:** Office of the Chief Financial Officer
- **OCHRO:** Office of the Chief Human Resources Director
- **OCIO:** Office of the Chief Information Officer
- **OCR:** Office of Congressional Relations
- **OCS:** Office of the Chief Scientist
- **OES:** Office of the Executive Secretariat
- **OGC:** Office of the General Counsel
- **OGE:** Office of Government Ethics

- **OHRM:** Office of Human Resources Management
- **OHSE:** Office of Homeland Security and Emergency
- **OIE:** World Organization for Animal Health
- **OIG:** Office of Inspector General
- **OPPE:** Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
- **OSDBU:** Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
- **OSEC:** Office of the Secretary
- **OTR:** Office of Tribal Relations
- **RBCS:** Rural Business Cooperative Service
- **RD:** Rural Development
- **REE:** Research, Education and Economics
- **RHS:** Rural Housing Service
- **RMA:** Risk Management Agency
- **RUS:** Rural Utilities Service
- **SOP:** Standard Operating Procedure
- **TFAA:** Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
- **USC:** United States Code
- **USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture

APPENDIX B: DEFINITIONS

OASCR uses the following USDA terms as defined below for the purposes of this Strategic Plan:

- **Accessibility:** 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. This includes providing accommodations and modifications to ensure equal access to employment and participation in activities for people with disabilities; the reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities; a commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can independently access every outward facing and internal activity or electronic space; and the pursuit of best practices such as universal design.
- **Agency:** A major program organizational unit of delegated authorities to deliver programs, activities, benefits, and services.
- **Agency Heads:** Agency Under Secretaries, Deputy Under Secretaries, Directors, Chiefs, and Administrators within the Office of the Secretary who receive delegated authority under 7 C.F.R. Agency Heads report to and receive their delegated authorities from Under or Assistant Secretaries as prescribed in 7 C.F.R.
- **Agency and Office, or Agency/Office:** All USDA units—including Mission Areas, Agencies, and Staff Offices—that provide programs, activities, or communication with the public.
- **Alternative Dispute Resolution:** Methods and processes used to resolve disputes or conflicts outside of traditional litigation in courts, which offer parties involved in disputes alternative ways to resolve their issues such as mediation, conciliation, negotiation, conflict coaching, consultation, facilitated dialogue, group facilitation, group intervention, and training.
- **Civil Rights Community:** All Civil Rights Directors and staff located in USDA Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices including OASCR.
- **Civil Rights Concern:** Any issue or situation that involves the violation or potential violation of an individual's or group's civil rights, such as discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, religion, or other protected characteristics; harassment or retaliation for exercising one's civil rights or reporting violations; or denial of equal access to employment, education, housing, public accommodations, or government services.

- **Civil Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA):** A process used to evaluate the potential effects of policies, programs, projects, or actions on civil rights and ensure compliance with civil rights laws and regulations. CRIAs are designed to identify, prevent, and mitigate any adverse impacts on individuals of the policy, program or action considering factors such as access, participation, benefits, and outcomes for different demographic groups based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, or other protected characteristics. CRIAs may include, Identification of Stakeholders, Analysis of Potential Impacts; Identification of Mitigation Measures; Consultation and Engagement with affected stakeholders; and Documentation and Reporting.
- **Civil Rights Performance Assessment:** A process by which organizations evaluate their practices, policies, and behaviors to identify potential areas of improvement to ensure compliance with civil rights laws and regulations. This assessment helps organizations proactively address any issues or gaps and work towards fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment, which typically includes evaluation of policies and practices; data collection and analysis; stakeholder engagement; identification of areas for improvement; development of action plans; implementation and monitoring.
- **Compliance Review:** A systematic examination conducted by USDA Agencies and Offices to ensure that recipients of USDA funding or participants in USDA programs are complying with relevant laws, regulations, and program requirements, which typically includes evaluating records, documents, and reports submitted by program participants; on-site visits or inspection to verify compliance with program requirements; interviews of program staff or beneficiaries to gather information; assessment of program activities and practices for adherence to civil rights laws and regulations; and identification of noncompliance and providing guidance or corrective actions to address any deficiencies.
- **Conflicts Case:** a discrimination complaint filed against a named individual, typically a management official, who has sufficient involvement in the facts of the matter as to create a conflict of interest for the agency's Civil Rights Office to process the complaint. When an actual or perceived conflict of interest may interfere with an agency's Civil Rights Office's duty to process impartially a discrimination complaint, then OASCR assumes responsibility for the complaint processing through all stages of the case.
- **Direct In-Language Services:** Monolingual communication in a language other than English between multilingual staff and a person with LEP (e.g., Korean to Korean).
- **Diversity:** Representation of different groups of people in our society, and the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities.

- **EEO Complaint:** Also referred to as a Formal Complaint. A complaint must be filed with the agency that allegedly discriminated against the complainant within 15 days of receipt of the Notice of Final Interview. The complaint must be a signed statement from the complainant or complainant's attorney and must be sufficiently precise to identify the complainant and the agency and describe the action or practice which forms the basis of the complaint.
- **EEO Pre-Complaint:** Also referred to as an Informal Complaint. Aggrieved persons who believe they have been discriminated against must contact an agency EEO counselor prior to filing a formal complaint. The person must initiate counselor contact within 45 days of the matter alleged to be discriminatory.
- **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, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.
- **Federally Conducted Programs and Activities:** Program services, benefits, resources, or information delivered directly to the public by USDA. This means that the Agency staff directly interacts with the intended beneficiaries (program users and communities) and the Agency is responsible to implement a language access plan to serve the intended beneficiaries.
- **Federally Assisted (or Federally Supported) Programs and Activities:** Programs and activities provided by a non-federal entity that receives Federal financial assistance. This means that the recipients of federal funding (sometimes referred to as the providers of the program) directly interact with the intended beneficiaries (program users and communities) and those recipients/providers are responsible to provide meaningful access to LEP persons. The USDA Agency or Office that distributes Federal financial assistance provides oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance to those recipients to comply with LEP requirements.
- **Federal Financial Assistance:** Grants and loans of Federal funds; the grant or donation of Federal property and interests in property; the detail of Federal personnel; the sale and lease of, and the permission to use Federal property or any interest in such property or the furnishing of services without consideration, or at a consideration which is reduced for the purpose of assisting the recipient; and any Federal agreement, arrangement, or other contract which has as one of its purposes the provision of assistance.
- **FNCS:** Mission Area (Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services) focusing on the Nation's agriculture to reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition security in the United States, which is administered through the following Agency: Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

- **Food Safety:** Mission Area focusing on protecting the public’s health by ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products, and humane animal handling, which is administered through the following Agency: Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).
- **FPAC:** USDA Mission Area (Farm Production and Conservation) focusing on the Nation’s farmers and ranchers and other stewards of private agricultural land and non-industrial private forest lands, which includes the following Agencies: Farm Service Agency (FSA), FPAC Business Center, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Risk Management Agency (RMA).
- **Inclusion:** Process of engaging all people to work together with the same opportunities and equal access to success, resources, and employment, and the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds.
- **Interpretation:** The process by which the spoken word is used—generally in real-time—when transferring meaning between languages.
- **Language Assistance:** Language assistance offers meaningful access if it delivers accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the individual with LEP needing assistance. Persons (or individuals or communities) with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English are limited English proficient, or LEP. This includes individuals who may be competent in English for certain types of communication but have limited proficiency in English in other areas (reading or writing).
- **Language Assistance Services:** Oral and written language services used to provide individuals with LEP meaningful access to, and an equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services, activities, and other programs administered.
- **Management Directive 715 (MD-715):** A policy issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which provides guidance to federal agencies on the implementation of their EEO Programs and the collection and analysis of workforce data to identify and address barriers to equal employment opportunity (EEO), and requires agencies to conduct periodic self-assessments and reports annually on the following six essential elements of a model EEO program: (1) Demonstrated Commitment from Agency Leadership; (2) Integration of EEO into the Agency’s Strategic Mission; (3) Management and Program Accountability; (4) Proactive Prevention of Unlawful Discrimination; (5) Efficiency; and (6) Responsiveness and Legal Compliance.
- **Meaningful Access:** Access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English-proficient individuals.

- **Mission Areas:** USDA organizations encompassing various aspects of agriculture, rural development, food safety, nutrition, and conservation. There are eight USDA Mission Areas: Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC); Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS); Food Safety; Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP); Natural Resources and Environment (NRE); Research, Education and Economics (REE); Rural Development (RD); and Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs (TFAA).
- **MRP:** USDA Mission Area (Marketing and Regulatory Programs) facilitating domestic and international marketing of U.S. agricultural products and protecting U.S. animal and plant health, which includes the following Agencies: Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS).
- **No FEAR Act:** A federal law, “Notification and Federal Employee Anti-discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002,” imposed additional obligations on Federal agency employers to reinvigorate their obligation to provide a work environment free of discrimination and retaliation, to include providing civil rights training at least every two years to employees and managers; posting quarterly on the agency’s public website, summary statistical data pertaining to EEO complaints filed with the agency; and annual reporting to Congress and the EEOC detailing agencies’ handling of discrimination complaints and compliance with anti-discrimination laws.
- **NRE:** USDA Mission Area (National Resources and the Environment) focusing on the Nation’s forests and grasslands, which is administered through the following Agency: Forest Service (FS).
- **Primary Language:** The language in which an individual most effectively communicates when interacting. An individual’s primary language may be a language variant.
- **Program or Activity:** The term “program or activity” and the term “program” mean all the operations. For the purposes of this Plan, the definition of “program or activity” is identical to that used under the regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: “[A] federally conducted program or activity is, in simple terms, anything a Federal Agency does. Aside from employment, there are two major categories of federally conducted programs or activities covered by the regulation: those involving public contact as part of ongoing Agency operations and those directly administered for program beneficiaries and participants.
- **Program Complaint:** An allegation of discrimination, unfair treatment, denial of benefits or services provided by USDA programs, or retaliation for exercising rights protected under civil rights laws, by an individual or organization participating in USDA programs or activities.
- **Qualified Multilingual Staff:** An employee who has proficiency in English and the ability to read, write, or speak in at least one other language at the proficiency level required by the Agency/Office.

- **Qualified Translator:** An in-house or contracted translator who has been professionally trained and/or demonstrated competence to translate through national certification or comparable testing and is authorized to do so by contract with the approval of an Agency/Office. Qualified translators must also demonstrate knowledge of professional standards, and adherence to the corresponding professional code of ethics, as well as familiarity with required USDA terminology.
- **Qualified Interpreter:** An in-house or contracted interpreter who has been professionally trained and/or demonstrated competence to interpret through court certification, the State Department, or comparable testing and is authorized to do so by contract with the approval of an Agency/Office. Qualified interpreters must also demonstrate knowledge of professional standards, and adherence to the corresponding professional code of ethics, as well as familiarity with required USDA terminology.
- **Quality Assurance:** The process to ensure accuracy, consistency, quality, and reliability of language assistance services.
- **RD:** USDA Mission Area (Rural Development) fostering opportunity and economic security for people and communities in rural American through a broad range of investments such as loans, grants, and community partnerships to ensure rural families, businesses, and communities prosper, which includes the following Agencies: Rural Business Service, Rural Utilities Service, and Rural Housing Service.
- **REE:** USDA Mission Area (Research, Education and Economics) dedicated to the creation of a safe, sustainable, competitive U.S. food and fiber system, and strong communities, family and youth through integrated research, analysis and education, which includes the following Agencies: Agricultural Research Service (ARS); Economic Research Service (ERS); National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and Office of the Chief Scientist.
- **Secretary:** The Secretary of Agriculture or any Officer or employee of the Agency whom the Secretary has heretofore delegated, or whom the Secretary may hereafter delegate, the authority to act in his stead.
- **Sight Translation:** Oral or signed rendering of written text into spoken or signed language by an interpreter without change in meaning based on a visual review of the original text or document.
- **Stakeholders:** Refers to both USDA customers and employees.

- **Tagline:** A short notice in non-English languages informing the public that a document (e.g., notices of language assistance services, notices of rights, forms, correspondence, etc.) or electronic media (e.g., website, announcement via email, etc.) contains vital information and explaining how to request the document or electronic media provided in other languages.
- **TFAA:** USDA Mission Area (Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs) providing farmers and ranchers with opportunities to compete in the global marketplace through trade policy on international agricultural issues, which includes the following Agencies: Foreign Agricultural Service and U.S. Codex Office.
- **Transcreation:** A translation-related activity that combines translation, cultural adaptation and (re-)creation of text to adapt or re-create a message in a different language while making sure the new text is suitable, relevant, and useful for the intended local audience and application.
- **Translation:** The process of converting written text from a source language into an equivalent written text in a target language as fully and accurately as possible while maintaining the style, tone, and intent of the text, while considering differences of culture and dialect.
- **Underserved Communities:** Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, which includes Individuals from communities of color, such as Black and African American, Hispanic and Latino, Native American, Alaska Native and Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African persons; Individuals based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (LGBTQ+) persons); Persons based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions; parents; and caregivers; Individuals based on their religion; Individuals based on their disability; First-generation professionals or first-generation college students; Individuals with limited English proficiency; Immigrants; Individuals based on older age or formerly incarceration; Persons who live in rural areas; Veterans and military spouses; and Persons adversely affected by persistent poverty.
- **Vital Document:** Paper or electronic written material containing information critical for accessing an Agency/Office's programs or activities or required by law. Translation of vital documents is required if requested.

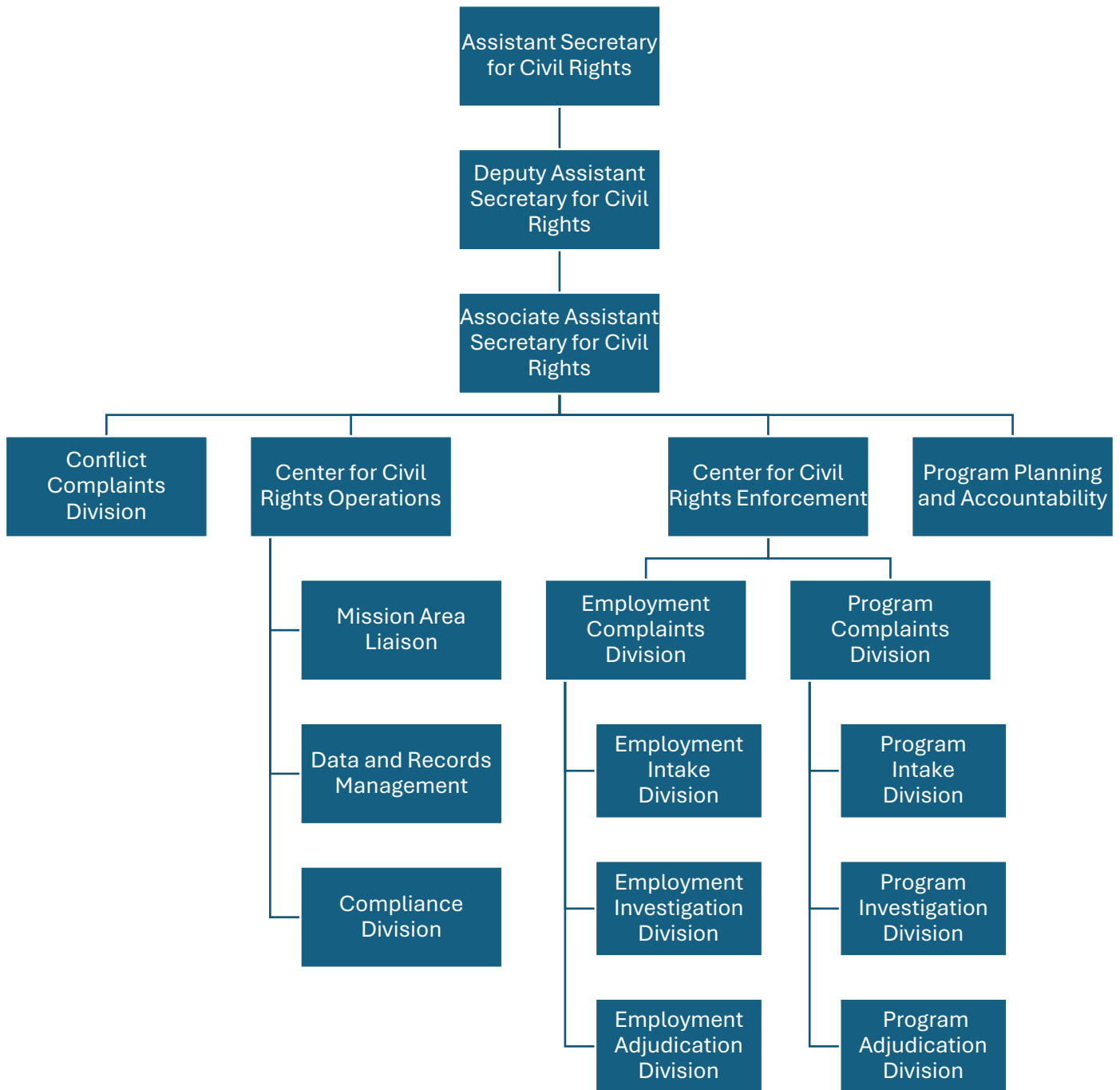
APPENDIX C: FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS WITHIN OASCR'S ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY

OASCR uses the following USDA terms as defined below for the purposes of this Strategic Plan:

- Age Discrimination Act of 1975, which prohibits discrimination based on age in USDA-funded and conducted programs and activities. 42 U.S.C. §§ 6101-6107.
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, which prohibits discrimination based on age (people who are 40 or older). 42 U.S.C. §§ 621-634.
- Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, which prohibits creditors from discriminating against applicants based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or because an applicant receives income from a public assistance program. 15 U.S.C. §§ 1691-1691f.
- Equal Pay Act of 1963, which prohibits pay discrimination based on sex. 29 U.S.C. § 206(d).
- Fair Housing Act of 1968, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, familial status (families with children under age 18), national origin, or disability in the sale, rental, advertising, or financing of housing. With respect to individuals with disabilities, discrimination includes the refusal to permit the reasonable modification of existing premises to make them accessible and the refusal to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services. Finally, the statute requires that most multifamily dwellings constructed for initial occupancy after March 1991 be accessible to persons with disabilities. 42 U.S.C. § 3601 et seq.
- Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, which prohibits sex discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth. 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e et seq.
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination based on disability in HHS-funded and conducted programs, services, activities, and facilities (Section 504), and covers access to electronic and information technology provided by USDA (Section 508). 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which prohibits discrimination based on disability in all social services programs and activities of public entities. 42 U.S.C. § 12131.
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects people of every race, color, or national origin from unlawful discrimination in USDA-funded and conducted programs and activities. 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d to 2000d-7.

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), and national origin. 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e to 2000e-7.
- Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, which prohibits discrimination based on sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity) in any education program or activity receiving USDA financial assistance. 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a).

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS





USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.