2012 Explanatory Notes Office of Civil Rights

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OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Purpose Statement

The Office of Civil Rights' (CR) mission is to facilitate the fair and equitable treatment of USDA customers and employees while ensuring the delivery and enforcement of the Departmental civil rights programs and activities. CR seeks innovative methods to make progress towards meeting the regulatory standards for processing the Department's EEO and program complaints, as well as to become a more efficient and effective operation. CR utilizes assigned staff and contract attorneys to assist with the final agency decision (FAD) workload. In addition, CR utilizes contract services and detailed staff to assist with the elimination of the program and EEO complaint inventory.

CR reviews agency standard operating procedures and employee performance standards to ensure that systems and workload analyses are in place to prevent future backlogs and to maintain the complaint inventory at a manageable level while working to meet all processing regulatory timeframes. CR focuses Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) efforts solely on EEO and program conflicts that could evolve into discrimination complaints. This new focus allows more conflicts and/or disputes to be resolved prior to becoming discrimination complaints. Non-EEO and program discrimination conflicts will be addressed outside of CR. CR has incorporated a conciliation function that will provide follow up to ensure that all parties are managing their conflicts in a healthy and productive manner. CR provides periodic ADR orientations, updates, and targeted conflict management training to USDA Subcabinet officials, recognized employee organizations, agency civil rights directors, and headquarters and agency employees.

As of September 30, 2010, there were 131 full-time permanent employees, all located in Washington, D.C.

Government Accountability Office Reports

GAO-09-02

10/08

U.S. Accountability Final Report Recommendations and Options to Address Management Deficiencies in the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Available Funds and Staff Years 2010 Actual and Estimated 2011 and 2012

Item	Actual 2010		Estimated 2	2011	Estimated 2012	
		Staff		Staff		Staff
	Amount	Years	Amount	Years	Amount	Years
Office of Civil	\$23,813,653	132	\$23,922,000	126	\$24,922,000	126
Rights	108,347					
Lapsed Balances						
Assistant Secretary for			895,000	5	895,000	5
Civil Rights						
Total, Salaries and Expenses	23,922,000	132	24,817,000	131	25,817,000	131
Obligations under other						
USDA appropriations:						
EEO Investigations	220,300		100,000		100,000	
Misc. Reimbursements	1,362,611		915,000	3	919,000	3
Total, Reimbursements	1,582,911		1,015,000	3	1,019,000	3
Total, Civil Rights	25,504,911	132	25,832,000	134	26,836,000	134

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Permanent Positions by Grade and Staff Year Summary 2010 Actual and Estimated 2011 and 2012

		2010			2011		2012		
Grade	Wash DC	Field	Total	Wash DC	Field	Total	Wash DC	Field	Total
Senior Executive									
Service	2		2	4		4	4		4
GS-15	21		21	23		23	23		23
GS-14	24		24	27		27	27		27
GS-13	49		49	48		48	48		48
GS-12	14		14	15		15	15		15
GS-11	6		6	6		6	6		6
GS-10	2		2	2		2	2		2
GS-9	5		5	4		4	4		4
GS-8	10		10	4		4	4		4
GS-7	12		12	4	'	4	4		4
GS-6	2		2	2		2	2		2
Total Permanent									
Positions	147		147	139		139	. 139		139
Unfilled Positions									
end-of-year	-16		-16	- 5		- 5	- 5		- 5
Total, Permanent									
Full-time									
Employment, end-									
of-year	131		131	134		134	134		134
Staff Year									
Estimate	132		132	134		134	134		134

Note: This chart includes CR Direct and CR Reimbursement positions.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Appropriation Language

For necessary expenses of the Office of Civil Rights, \$24,922,000.

For necessary expenses of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, \$895,000.

Lead-off Tabular Statement

Annualized Continuing Resolution, 2011	\$24,817,000
Budget Estimate, 2012	25,817,000
Change in Appropriation	<u>+1,000,000</u>

Summary of Increases and Decreases (On basis of appropriation)

	2011	Program	2012
Item of Change	Estimated	Changes	Estimated
Civil Rights	\$24,817,000	+\$1,000,000	\$25,817,000

<u>Project Statement</u> (On basis of appropriation)

	2010 Actual		2011 Estin	nated		2012 Estim	ated
	Amount	Staff Years	Amount	Staff Years	Increase or Decrease	Amount	Staff Years
Civil Rights	\$23,813,653	132	\$23,922,000	129	+\$1,000,000	\$24,922,000	129
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights	·		895,000	5	·	895,000	5
Unobligated Balance	+108,347				<u>-</u> -		
Total Available or Estimate	23,922,000	132	24,817,000	134	+1,000,000	25,817,000	134

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Justifications for Increases and Decreases

(1) An increase of \$1,000,000 for the Office of Civil Rights (\$23,922,000 available in 2011) consisting of:

a) An increase of \$500,000 for the Civil Rights Enterprise System.

This funding will be used to upgrade the Civil Rights Enterprise System with the purchase of software that allows for (a) an Interactive Voice Response system; (b) scanning of employment complaints; (c) an automated correspondence system; and (d) an enterprise reporting system. This will improve the reliability and ensure the accuracy of data and reports in the Civil Rights Enterprise System; increase accessibility and thereby reduce processing time by up to 20 percent; and create a critical backup system for civil rights complaint records enabling swift disaster recovery. Movement of records to digitized portable document format (PDF) will prevent loss, damage or inadvertent destruction of critical documents. Further, it will prevent USDA from being sanctioned for failure to produce documents necessary in litigation. USDA will potentially save \$2,000,000 in fines assessed for failure to produce documents because all complaints files will be digitized. To date, \$250,000 has been expended for digitizing all program complaint files.

b) An increase of \$350,000 for the Civil Rights Training.

This funding will be used for civil rights training of leadership and their staffs in FSA, RD, and NRCS, and will be conducted in nine States during fiscal year 2012. The training focuses on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Reasonable Accommodations/Americans with Disabilities Act, customer service, and cultural transformation. These agencies were chosen because; (1) they have the highest number of EEO or Program complaints files, and (2) they are generally co-located in the same city, county, or office building. Combining the training ensures all State Executive Directors, State Conservationists and State Directors receive the same training. Several agencies (outside of those with the largest numbers of complaints) have already requested the training. Travel costs, inclusive of flights, hotels, and rental cars are estimated at \$35,000 to \$40,000 per training event. Video conferencing will be used to minimize travel costs. Training sites will be determined based on a needs assessment, agency requests, and urgency of civil rights related incidents.

c) An increase of \$150,000 for Compliance Reviews.

This funding will be used for compliance reviews to ensure that the issues and concerns raised in the complaint activity of selected agencies are being addressed aggressively and proactively. Michigan, South Carolina, Louisiana, Arkansas, Minnesota, Oregon, New Mexico, and Oklahoma will be targeted for compliance reviews of their programs and EEO activities. Compliance reviews are designed to assess an agency's adherence to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and other applicable civil rights laws and regulations in the administration and delivery of Federally assisted and conducted programs, services, and activities related to equal employment opportunity. In addition, agencies are to be reviewed periodically for their processes, programs, and activities to ensure that they are in compliance with various laws, regulations, and directives governing equal opportunity. The Compliance Division recommends corrective action for implementation to address findings identified at the completion of the compliance review.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and Staff Years 2010 Actual and Estimated 2011 and 2012

	2010		2011		2012	
		Staff		Staff		Staff
	Amount	Years	Amount	Years	Amount	Years
Washington, D.C	\$23,813,653	132	\$24,817,000	134	\$25,817,000	134
Unobligated balance	+108,347					
Total, Available or Estimate	23,922,000	132	24,817,000	134	25,817,000	134

<u>Classification by Objects</u> 2010 Actual and Estimated 2011 and 2012

		<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	2012
Personne	l Compensation:			
Wasi	hington, D.C	\$11,853,393	\$13,194,000	\$13,241,000
11	Total personnel compensation	11,853,393	13,194,000	13,241,000
. 12	Personnel benefits	2,975,307	3,716,000	3,729,000
13	Benefits for former personnel	100,000		
	Total pers. comp. and benefits	14,928,700	16,910,000	16,970,000
Othe	r Objects:			
21	Travel and transportation of persons	773,437	556,000	906,000
22	Transportation of things	17,807	18,000	18,000
23.3	Communications, utilities, and			
	misc. charges	215,802	144,000	144,000
24	Printing and reproduction	8,000	18,000	18,000
25.2	Other services	2,616,812	3,707,000	3,797,000
25.3	Purchases of goods and services			
	from Government Accounts	5,168,312	3,170,000	3,170,000
26	Supplies and materials	56,512	209,000	709,000
31	Equipment	17,447	85,000	85,000
42	Insurance Claims and Indemnities	18,580		
43	Interest	236		
	Total other objects	8,884,953	7,907,000	8,847,000
	Total other objects	0,00 1,900		
Tota	l direct obligations=	23,813,653	24,817,000	25,817,000
Position		\$144,446	\$160,723	\$163,772
	rage Salary, ES positions	\$93,850	\$96,599	\$96,863
	rage Salary, GS positions	\$93,830 13.3	13.3	13.3
Ave	rage Grade, GS positions	13.3	15.5	13.3

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

STATUS OF PROGRAM

The Departmental Civil Rights' activities include: 1) timely and cost-effective complaint processing of equal employment opportunity (EEO) and program complaints; and 2) the implementation of initiatives to prevent EEO and program complaints through the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and civil rights related activities.

Current Activities:

<u>Timely and Cost Effective Complaint Processing.</u> This office continues to seek innovative methods to make progress towards meeting the regulatory standards for processing the Department's EEO and program complaints, as well as to become a more efficient and effective operation. The office utilizes assigned staff and contract attorneys to assist with the final agency decision (FAD) workload.

EEO and Program Complaint Inventory Reduction. This office utilizes contract services and detailed staff to assist with the elimination of the EEO and program complaint inventory. They review standard operating procedures and employee performance standards to ensure that systems and workload analyses are in place to prevent future backlogs and to maintain the complaint inventory at a manageable level while working to meet all processing regulatory timeframes.

This office is focusing efforts on EEO and program conflicts that could evolve into discrimination complaints. This new focus allows more conflicts and/or disputes to be resolved prior to becoming discrimination complaints. Non-EEO and program discrimination conflicts will be addressed outside of the Office of Civil Rights. A conciliation function has been developed to ensure that all parties are managing their conflicts in a healthy and productive manner.

This office provides periodic ADR orientations, updates, and targeted conflict management training to USDA Subcabinet officials, recognized employee organizations, agency civil rights directors, headquarters and agency employees. In addition, working in collaboration with the alternative dispute resolution Leadership Group, this office will revise the current ADR Regulations and conduct monthly ADR training sessions.

Selected Examples of Recent Progress:

Timely Processing of Program Complaints. This office is working with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and agency Civil Rights staff to utilize LEAN Six Sigma (LSS) methodology to improve the program discrimination complaint process as part of the USDA Process Improvement Transformation Initiative. As part of the LSS project, the team developed a standard USDA program discrimination complaint form to be used throughout USDA agencies to ensure that USDA collects consistent information in a timely manner, therefore reducing delays and errors in determining USDA jurisdiction. The form is presently undergoing departmental review and being prepared for the Office of Management and Budget approval in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Timely Processing of EEO Complaints. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reported in its Federal Work Force for Fiscal Year 2009 report that out of a total of 6,905 Federal employment complaints closed on the merits, about 3 percent resulted in findings of discrimination. During fiscal years 2004 thru 2008 at USDA, out of 1,677 EEO complaints closed on the merits, only 20 complaints (1.19 percent) resulted in findings of discrimination. Under the leadership of Secretary Vilsack, this office is in line with the Federal Government-wide average in finding merit in complaints of unlawful employment discriminatory practices. In fiscal year 2009, this office reported that out of 466 EEO complaints closed on the merits, 11 (3.13 percent) resulted in findings of discrimination. In fiscal year 2010, 22 complaints (3.6 percent) were found to have merit. In addition, the total number of EEO complaints filed by USDA employees has dropped from a high of 970 in fiscal year 1999 to a low of 461 in fiscal year 2010. The fiscal year 2010 filing rate is 13 percent less than that of fiscal year 2009 (529), and 15

percent less than the past four years (529 in fiscal year 2006; 562 in fiscal year 2007; 555 in fiscal year 2008; and 529 in fiscal year 2009.

<u>EEO Complaint Prevention Activities.</u> ADR efforts have been increased in the area of EEO disputes to aid in the prevention of future EEO complaints. One such initiative that has aided in complaint prevention is the EEO Complaint Early Resolution Task Force.

This office conducts monthly ADR training workshops and other activities for USDA employees and officially sanctioned employee organizations focusing on communication, conflict management, and generational influences on workplace conflicts. The workshops are presented to live audiences, via webinar, and teleconferences to include employees located outside the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. As an example, the training on "How to have Crucial Conversations to Resolve Conflict - Making It Safe," was very successful with over 100 employees in attendance and 500 telephone lines dedicated for access to the seminar.

USDA also has a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender diversity program. This office conducts training workshops that address sexual orientation and gender identity to employees throughout the country.

This office provided civil rights training to USDA employees in 15 States throughout the country, including Title VII-Employment, Reasonable Accommodations/American with Disabilities Act, and training for investigators and Federally-assisted programs. The office is currently leading an intra-agency team to revise and draft all civil rights Departmental regulations and directives which will result in the consistent application of standards for civil rights activities throughout USDA.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Summary of Budget and Performance Statement of Department Goals and Objectives

The Office of Civil Rights' (CR) mission is to provide overall leadership, coordination, and direction for USDA's civil rights programs, including matters related to program delivery, compliance and equal employment opportunity. CR provides 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. CR ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies for USDA customers and employees.

CR has one agency strategic goal, and one agency objective that contribute to all the strategic goals of the Department.

USDA Strategic Goal	DM Strategic Goal	DM Objectives	Programs that Contribute	Key Outcome
CR supports all USDA Strategic Goals.	DM Goal 2: Ensure that all USDA programs and activities are accessible and accountable.	Objective 1: Enable and ensure equitable access to all USDA programs.	Civil Rights	Key Outcome 1: Program and EEO complaint reduction and prevention.

Key Outcome 1: Program and EEO complaint reduction and prevention.

<u>Long-term Performance Measure:</u> Decrease in the number of individual Program and EEO complaints filed.

Select Past Accomplishments Toward Achievement of the Key Outcome: The reduction in reports of investigation (ROIs) processed for fiscal year 2009 is 31. While this is a slight reduction, it is an improvement from the previous fiscal year. Forty-four percent of the ROIs were processed within 180 days, 48 percent were processed within 180 to 360 days, and 8 percent were processed later than 360 days. Overall Employment Complaints' case inventory has been reduced to 1,113 cases (as of September 16, 2010) which is a 17 percent reduction from the 1,342 in fiscal year 2005. EEO complaints pending final agency decision are down to 152 cases (as of September 16, 2010), which is a reduction of 51 percent from the day Secretary Vilsack was sworn in (there were 313 cases on January 21, 2009); this represents a decrease of 73 percent from 565 cases pending final agency decision in fiscal year 2005.

Civil Rights Enterprise System (CRES) - in furtherance of the Administration's transparency and modernization goals, significant steps were taken to improve the functions, reliability, and accuracy of the data and information in the Civil Rights Enterprise System. Specifically, the following actions were taken on the CRES modules: (1) Program Complaints Management System (PCMS) - new Business Rules were established to ensure data fields are populated with accurate data and information; additional data fields were added to allow documentation of critical data pertaining to civil rights complaints administration and adjudication; a suite of standardized reports was developed, tested and added to the production environment to allow better measurement of progress and monitoring of processing times. (2) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) System - a complete review of system requirements and functionality was conducted, with recommendations for significant improvements. The proposed enhancements—establish an interface/communication between the iComplaints and ADR modules, enhance the ability of the system to capture and report on the cost of doing business, and enhance the quarterly and annual reports to comport with regulatory requirements—were approved and implemented. (3) iComplaints Employment Tracking System - a standard suite of management reports was developed and placed in production further enabling the measurement of progress in reducing inventories, the identification of major issues and bases giving rise to complaints of discrimination and monitoring processing times. Additional events were added to the Civil Action Module to enable complete documentation of the process. (4) E-Document Management System - approximately 15,000 Program complaint records (85 percent) were organized, indexed, tabbed and scanned into digitized portable document files.

State program agency leadership and staffs received training on employment and civil rights related statutes, policies and regulations. CR training staff received civil rights and program training from Rural Development (RD) and Farm Service Agency (FSA), and participated in audio training on EEO. CR training staff collaborated with Forest Service on training in Regions III & V and with the FSA for training of managers and supervisors in the Washington, DC office. Civil Rights trainings were conducted for the FSA, NRCS and RD leadership (FSA State Executive Directors, NRCS State Conservationists, RD State Directors, respectively) and staff in: Syracuse, NY (NRCS/FSA/RD); Alexandria, LA (NRCS/RD); Gainesville, FL (NRCS/FSA/RD); College Station, TX (FSA); Temple, TX (NRCS/RD); Alexandria, LA (FSA); Portland, Oregon (NRCS/FSA/RD); Upper Marlboro, MD (FSA); Sacramento, CA (Forest Service); St. Louis, MO (FSA); and Montana (NRCS).

Civil Rights staff has conducted three of eight planned Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Awareness training sessions. In addition, all open OIG audit recommendations have been closed with the exception of one. This is the highest number of closed recommendations in the past seven years.

Selected Accomplishments Expected at the FY 2012 Proposed Resource Level: We anticipate resolving 3,800 program discrimination complaints filed under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA). The Secretary's Task Force determined these complaints were not processed, investigated, or resolved in a timely fashion. For the majority of these complaints, the ECOA statute of limitations has expired. The statute of limitations is important because USDA cannot provide monetary relief on complaints older than two years unless the statute of limitations is legislatively extended. Of the 3,800 program complaints, an estimated 600 complaints will be settled. To address this issue, the Budget includes a request within the Farm Service Agency salaries and expenses account total for \$40 million to settle written claims filed under the ECOA from July 1, 1997 through October 31, 2009. This funding is contingent upon enactment of authorizing legislation regarding the ECOA statute of limitations. More specifically, we anticipate settlement/resolution of major program civil rights class action complaints stemming from disparate treatment of women, Hispanic and American Indian farmers, ranchers, and producers. The Farm Service Agency salaries and expenses account includes \$20 million for adminstrative expenses related to settling existing claims of discrimination in the delivery of agency programs.

We also anticipate greater efficiency and effectiveness will allow shifting of resources from complaint processing to complaint prevention and other proactive programs designed to meet the mandate of USDA becoming a model equal opportunity employer. Specifically, we anticipate: 1) further reductions in the inventory of complaints; 2) significant enhancement of the Civil Rights Enterprise System, including enhanced security and digitized backup of EEO and Program civil rights complaint records to enable disaster recovery; greater efficiency in analyzing and reporting accurate data on complaints; and increased public access to civil rights information through use of Interactive Voice Response technology; 3) increased review, analysis and reporting of agency compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and Presidential Executive Orders on civil rights; and 4) increased education and training of state and county agency decision-makers on their civil rights responsibilities, and prevention and early resolution of workplace issues that give rise to civil rights complaints.

Strategic Goal Funding Matrix (On basis of appropriation)

	2010 Actual		2011 Estimated			2012 Estimated	
		 Staff		Staff			Staff
	<u>Amount</u>	Years	Amount	<u>Years</u>	<u>Decrease</u>	<u>Amount</u>	Years
Civil Rights	\$23,813,653	132	\$23,922,000	129	+\$1,000,000	\$24,922,000	129
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights			895,000	5		895,000	5
Unobligated Balance	+108,347						
Total Available or Estimate	23,922,000	132	24,817,000	134	+1,000,000	25,817,000	134

DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Summary of Budget and Performance Key Performance Outcomes and Measures

DM Department Goal 2: Ensure all USDA programs and activities are accessible and accountable.

Key Outcome 1: Program and EEO complaint reduction and prevention.

Key Performance Targets:

Performance Measure Performance Measure 1.1	2007 Actual	2008 Actual	2009 Actual	2010 Actual	2011 Target	2012 Target
Percent reduction in the USDA backlog of program civil rights complaint reports of investigation and agency position statements.						
a. Units	N/A	N/A	10%	15%	15%	15%
b. Dollars	N/A	N/A	\$2,135,100	\$3,572,048	\$3,722,550	\$3,872,550
Performance Measure 1.2 Percent reduction in the USDA backlog of program civil rights complaint final agency decisions.						
a. Units	N/A	N/A	10%	15%	15%	15%
b. Dollars	N/A	N/A	\$2,135,100	\$3,572,048	\$3,722,550	\$3,872,550
Performance Measure 1.3 Percent reduction in the USDA backlog of EEO reports of investigation.	-					
a. Units	N/A	N/A	20%	25%	25%	25%
b. Dollars	N/A	N/A	\$4,270,200	\$5,953,413	\$6,204,250	\$6,454,250
Performance Measure 1.4 Percent reduction in the USDA backlog of EEO final agency decisions.						
a. Units	N/A	N/A	20%	25%	25%	25%
b. Dollars	N/A	N/A	\$4,270,200	\$5,953,413	\$6,204,250	\$6,454,250

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Summary of Budget and Performance Full Cost by Department Strategic Goal

Strategic Goal: Ensure USDA provides fair and equitable services and benefits to all customers and upholds the civil rights of its employees.

		De	ollars in Thousand	S
		<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Office of Civi				
	Salary and Benefits	\$14,829	\$16,910	\$16,970
	Departmental Central Charges	5,168	3,170	3,170
	Staff Development	112	244	244
	Travel	773	556	906
	Contracts	2,505	3,463	3,553
	Administrative Costs	427	474	974
	Total Costs	23,814	24,817	25,817
	FTEs	132	134	134
				•
	Performance Measure 1.1: Percent reduction in			
	the inherited backlog of program civil rights			
	complaint reports of investigation and agency			
	position statements.			
	BY Performance	15 percent	15 percent	15 percent
	Unit Cost	\$3,572,100	\$3,722,550	\$3,872,550
	Performance Measure 1.2: Percent reduction in			
	the inherited backlog of program civil rights			
	complaint final agency decisions.			
	BY Performance	15 percent	15 percent	15 percent
•	Unit Cost	\$3,572,100	\$3,722,550	\$3,872,550
•	Performance Measure 1.3: Percent reduction in			
	the inherited backlog of EEO reports of			
	investigation.			
	BY Performance	25 percent	25 percent	25 percent
	Unit Cost	\$5,953,500	\$6,204,250	\$6,454,250
	Performance Measure 1.4: Percent reduction in			
	the inherited backlog of EEO final agency			
	decisions.			0.5
	BY Performance	25 percent	25 percent	25 percent
	Unit Cost	\$5,953,500	\$6,204,250	\$6,454,250