

Foreword

Welcome to USDA! is a convenient collection of valuable information to help you get started as a Federal employee at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This booklet provides you with personnel and administrative topics related to services in the Federal government.

As much as practical, USDA references are included to convey specific requirements and policies of the Department. However, you will notice other sources of information, such as the Office of Personnel Management. The content format provides a concise summary of the topic and references to expanded information, including web sites for your convenience. Employees should note that their agencies also may have specific information related to some of these topics.

Information provided in this document is a result of combined effort of a broad array of expertise throughout Departmental Administration (DA). The Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) wishes to acknowledge the considerable effort of managers and staff members within OHCM and across DA as they reviewed, revised and added new information for the benefit of all USDA employees. Our thanks to them, for without their due diligence, this booklet would not have materialized. We hope you will find it informative and helpful in your personal adjustment to assuming public service responsibilities in your new position at USDA.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD	1
WELCOME TO USDA!	5
DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION AND DEPARTMENTAL STAFF OFFICES	6
<i>Getting Started As A New Employee</i>	9
BUILDING AND SERVICES INFORMATION	11
<i>Building Information</i>	11
<i>Headquarters Building Locations</i>	12
<i>USDA Headquarters Offices, Virginia</i>	12
<i>USDA Headquarters Offices, Maryland</i>	12
<i>Shuttles</i>	12
SAFETY AND SECURITY	13
USDA BE PREPARED WEBSITE	13
<i>Building Security</i>	13
<i>Fire Evacuation Procedures</i>	14
<i>Workplace Violence Prevention</i>	14
<i>Smoking Policy</i>	14
FEDERAL PAY, WORK SCHEDULES, TYPES OF APPOINTMENTS	15
<i>Federal Pay</i>	15
<i>Deductions and Allotments</i>	15
<i>Work Schedules</i>	15
<i>Credit Hours</i>	16
<i>Types of Appointments</i>	17
ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE	19
<i>Attendance, Leave and Holidays</i>	19
<i>Annual Leave</i>	19
<i>Sick Leave</i>	20
<i>Administrative Leave</i>	20
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	21
<i>Dental and Vision Insurance</i>	21
<i>Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)</i>	21
<i>Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)</i>	21
<i>Long Term Care Insurance</i>	21
<i>Retirement</i>	22
<i>Thrift Savings Plan –</i>	22
<i>Unemployment Compensation</i>	23
HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES	24
<i>Official Personnel Folder</i>	24
<i>Personnel Actions</i>	24
<i>Designation of Beneficiary Forms</i>	24
<i>National Finance Center's Employee Personal Page</i>	24
<i>TALX–Employment Verification</i>	25
PERFORMANCE PLANS AND PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS	26
<i>Performance Plan</i>	26

<i>Progress Review</i>	26
<i>Performance Appraisals</i>	26
EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION	27
<i>Purpose</i>	27
<i>Monetary Awards</i>	27
<i>Non-Monetary Awards</i>	27
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	29
IDP	29
<i>AgLearn</i>	29
<i>Standard Form 182</i>	29
TRAVEL AND MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION	30
<i>Travel</i>	30
<i>Local Travel</i>	30
<i>Government Travel Cards</i>	31
<i>Business Cards</i>	31
<i>Professional Liability Insurance</i>	31
<i>Information Security</i>	31
WORK LIFE	32
<i>Adoption</i>	32
<i>Child Care Services</i>	32
<i>Child Care Tuition Assistance</i>	32
<i>Elder Care Locator</i>	32
<i>Guaranteed Ride Home</i>	32
<i>Nursing Mothers Rooms</i>	32
<i>Part Time Employment and Job Sharing</i>	33
<i>Pre-Tax Parking</i>	33
<i>Telework</i>	33
<i>Transit Subsidy</i>	33
<i>USDA TARGET Center</i>	33
<i>Volunteering</i>	34
<i>Wellness</i>	34
USDA PROCUREMENT AND PROPERTY OVERVIEW	35
<i>The Federal Procurement Process</i>	35
ACQUIRING GOODS AND SERVICES	35
<i>General Purpose Office Supplies</i>	35
<i>Office Furniture</i>	35
<i>Acquiring Goods or Services Costing \$2,500 or Less</i>	35
<i>Acquiring Goods and Services Costing More than \$2,500</i>	36
<i>Printing Services and Volume Photocopying Services</i>	36
<i>Courier Services</i>	36
SAFETY AND HEALTH	37
<i>Office of Workers Compensation</i>	37
<i>Employee Assistance Program</i>	37
<i>Drug Free Workplace Plan (DFWP)</i>	37
<i>Medical Services</i>	38
<i>Immunizations</i>	39
VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES	40
<i>Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)</i>	40
<i>U.S. Savings Bonds</i>	40
<i>Blood Donor Program</i>	40

<i>USDA Federal Credit Union</i>	40
<i>Employee Services and Recreation Association (ESRA)</i>	41
<i>Farmer's Market</i>	41
<i>Health and Fitness Center</i>	41
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY/CIVIL RIGHTS	42
<i>USDA's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Statement</i>	42
<i>Equal Employment Opportunity</i>	42
<i>Workplace Diversity and Inclusion</i>	42
USDA AGENCY ACRONYMS	44
GOVERNMENT ACRONYMS	45
ITEMS YOU NEED TO KNOW DURING YOUR FIRST WEEK	46
NEW EMPLOYEE CHECKLIST	47

Welcome to USDA!

Welcome New Employee!

It is my pleasure to welcome you to one of the many Departmental offices serving the needs of the Department of Agriculture. I believe you will find your work to be enjoyable and rewarding. I hope you will share in the pride we in Departmental Administration, Departmental Staff Offices and the Office of the Secretary have in our achievements, which contribute so much to the efficient administrative operations of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

USDA, founded by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, when more than half of the Nation's population lived and worked on farms, has evolved with the economy. Today, USDA improves the Nation's economy and quality of life by:

- Enhancing economic opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers;
- Ensuring a safe, affordable, nutritious and accessible food supply;
- Caring for public lands and helping people care for private lands;
- Supporting the sound, sustainable development of rural communities;
- Expanding global markets for agricultural and forest products and services; and
- Working to reduce hunger and improve America's health through good nutrition.

The Office of the Secretary provides executive level leadership in enhancing economic opportunities for agricultural producers, protecting the Nation's food supply, improving nutrition and health and protecting the Nation's natural resources and environment.

Departmental Staff Offices are those administrative offices whose head reports to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Departmental Administration is USDA's central administrative management organization. Departmental Administration provides support to policy officials of the Department, and overall direction and coordination for the administrative programs and services of USDA. In addition, Departmental Administration manages the Headquarters Complex and provides direct customer service to Washington, D.C. employees.

Your supervisor will explain your responsibilities, rights and privileges. Permanent employees, assisted by their supervisors, will develop a training plan based on job description, personal needs, and performance standards. As you progress in your training, the plan will be revised to continue your professional development.

As a federal employee, you represent the United States Government and are held to a high standard of conduct and ethics. Mutual understanding, cooperation, consideration, and courtesy between you and your associates, your supervisor, and the people we serve should be the guiding principles during your employment. You should not hesitate to fully discuss your interests and concerns with your supervisor.

Again, we welcome you to USDA and wish you every success and happiness in your work.

Sincerely,

LESLIE R. VIOLETTE
Director
Departmental Human Resources Division
Office of Human Capital Management

Departmental Administration and Departmental Staff Offices

Departmental Administration (DA)	DA Office	Responsibility and Mission
		<p>USDA's central administrative management organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provides support to policy officials of the Department Provides overall direction and coordination for the administrative programs and services -Manages Headquarters Complex -Provides direct customer service to D.C. employees
	Office of the Administrative Law Judges (OALJ)	-Consists of three Judges who conduct rulemaking and adjudicatory hearings throughout the United States in proceedings subject to the Administrative Procedure Act.
	Office of Ethics (OE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fosters an environment in which USDA decision making is, and is publicly perceived to be, untainted by any conflicting personal interest of its staff. -Provides responsive counseling and advice to all employees; administers personal financial disclosure requirements on covered staff; and provides training to USDA staff on various rules governing employee conduct, conflicts of interest, and political activity.
	Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provides leadership and policy direction to USDA mission areas in implementing human resources management programs and initiatives. -Provides analysis and information to the Secretary and other Departmental policy officials to support informed decision making regarding the Department's human resources programs.
	Office of the Judicial Officer (OJO)	-Acts as final deciding officer in USDA adjudicatory proceedings.
	Office of Management Services (OMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assists Assistant Secretary for Administration and other Department officials in the development and execution of administrative policies that cut across mission and functional lines. - Provides strategic planning, performance reporting, analysis, budget coordination and special initiative support to Departmental Administration.
	Office of Operations (OO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides cost-efficient, centralized services including health units; sign language interpreting, mail, copier, and duplicating services; departmental mailing lists; supply, personal property, and space management; and forms and publication distribution. - Manages Headquarters office space. - Provides overall direction, leadership, coordination, and guidance in activities relating to facilities management, engineering and architecture, internal energy conservation, recycling, and mail and copier management programs.
	Office of Procurement & Property Management (OPPM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides policy, advice and coordination in acquisitions, procurement and management of real and personal property. - Provides oversight and policy in transportation, supply, motor vehicles, aircraft, recycling, and energy conservation - Coordinates USDA's disaster management and emergency planning response activities.
	Office of Security Services (OSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides Departmental executive leadership in physical security, emergency programs, personnel and document security, continuity of operations (COOP), and continuity of government (COG). - Provides security management of USDA's Headquarters facilities. - Runs 24/7 operations center support nationwide. - Coordinates facility disaster management/ emergency planning response activities within the National Capital Region - Safeguards national security information. - Manages security clearances. - Determines "Suitability for Employment" for USDA employees in public trust positions.

Departmental Administration (DA)	DA Office	Responsibility and Mission
	Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develops policies, standards, and programs consistent with federal guidelines for developing, managing, analyzing, evaluating, and improving USDA Affirmative Procurement Programs. - Provides guidance to USDA organizations in the on outreach efforts to ensure all targeted groups are involved, and that the participation of small, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses in the Department's contracting and program activities is increased.
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR)		
	Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides policy guidance to USDA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program Managers and monitors agencies' compliance with USDA's policy on the use of ADR. Every USDA Agency and Office has an ADR Program.
	Office of Adjudication and Compliance (OAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitates the fair and equitable treatment of USDA customers and employees, while ensuring the delivery and enforcement of civil rights programs and activities. - Ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies for USDA customers and employees regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, political beliefs, parental status, protected genetic information, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.
	Office of Outreach and Diversity (OOD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitates USDA's outreach and diversity efforts to assist managers in hiring a diverse workforce and to ensure all populations have access to USDA programs and services
Departmental Staff Offices		
	Homeland Security Office (HSO)	Responsible for overseeing and coordinating Departmental activities to address applicable Homeland Security Presidential Directives.
	National Appeals Division (NAD)	Conducts impartial administrative appeal hearings of adverse program decisions made by USDA and reviews of determinations issued by NAD hearing officers when requested by a party to the appeal.
	Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides centralized coordination and direction for the Department's budget, legislative and regulatory functions. - Provides analysis and evaluation to support the implementation of critical policies. - Administers the Department's budgetary functions and develops and presents budget-related matters to Congress, the news media, and the public.
	Office of Chief Economist (OCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advises the Secretary on the economic situation in agricultural markets and the economic implications of policies and programs affecting American agriculture and rural communities. - Serves as the focal point for economic intelligence and analysis related to agricultural markets and for risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis related to Departmental regulations affecting food and agriculture.
	Office of Congressional Relations (OCR)	Serves as the USDA's liaison with Congress. OCR works closely with members and staffs of various House and Senate Committees to communicate the USDA's legislative agenda and budget proposals
	Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible for the supervision and coordination of the design, acquisition, maintenance, use, and disposal of information technology by USDA agencies. - Strategically acquires and uses information technology resources to improve the quality, timeliness and cost-effectiveness of USDA services.
	Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)	Shapes an environment for USDA officials eliciting the high-quality financial performance needed to make and implement effective policy, management, stewardship, and program decisions.

Departmental Staff Offices	Responsibility and Mission	
	Office of Communications (OC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USDA's central source of public information. The office provides centralized information services using the latest, most effective and efficient technology and standards for communication. - Provides the leadership, coordination, expertise, and counsel needed to develop the strategies, products, and services that are used to describe USDA initiatives, programs, and functions to the public.
	Office of the General Counsel (OGC)	An independent legal staff office that provides legal advice and services to the Secretary of Agriculture and to all other officials and agencies of the Department with respect to all USDA programs and activities.
	Office of Inspector General (OIG)	-Investigates allegations of crime against the Department's program, and promotes the economy and efficiency of its operations.

Getting Started As A New Employee

- **Building Services** - Services offered by the Operations and Maintenance Branch include: alterations to existing workspaces; maintenance and repair of building equipment inventories; office cleaning services; environmental controls for heating, cooling and lighting; interior and exterior landscaping; snow removal; pest control; recycling; and concessions management for eateries. USDA employees needing adjustments to environmental controls in their individual workspaces, or wishing to obtain any of the other services offered by the branch may visit the Operations and Maintenance Branch in Room S-228, South Building, or contact the Washington Area Service Center (WASC) "Hotline" helpdesk at 202-720-6858.
- **DA Help Desk** – For assistance with computer problems, the Help Desk phone number is 202-720-9898.
- **Email Listings** – In MS Outlook, clicking on the To:, CC: or BCC: buttons will automatically display the Global email listing for all of USDA.
- **Forms Location** – Forms may be located at the following Web Link: <http://dab.nfc.usda.gov/forms/na-formsmain.html>.
- **Inclement Weather** – USDA follows the guidance per the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Most often, this is announced via local news media.
 - For information on Operating Status by telephone, call (202) 606-1900.
 - This information may also be checked via the internet. Please refer to Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/beprepared>.
 - Hearing impaired users may utilize the Federal Relay Service* by simply dialing 1-800-877-8339.
 - Also, you may refer to Web Link: <http://www.opm.gov/status/>.
 - For information on early dismissal or closure procedures, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>
- **Telephone Listings:** Individuals may be located by referring to Web Link: http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/ s.7 0 A/7 0 10B?navid=DIRECTORIES&parentnav=USDAEMP_SERVICES&navtype=RT
- **Telephone Usage** – To obtain an outside line, dial a "9" before entering the telephone number.
 - If the number is within the USDA buildings, the number may be dialed directly (7 digits) without first entering the "9".
 - Many numbers have a 202 prefix do not require the "202" prefix be entered; i.e., one could dial the telephone number 202-555-1111 in this order – 9 (for outside line) – 555-1111.
- **Use of Computers. Copiers. Fax Machines**
 - Property. Generally, you may use government property only for government purposes. This includes government buildings and real property, telephones, typewriters, computers (including software and hardware), equipment, supplies, faxes and copiers.
 - There is a relatively new "reasonable-use" standard that essentially states that one may use conventional office equipment and telecommunications for unofficial use













if: a) it is used on one's own time and does not impede your work; b) the use incurs zero or minimal incremental cost to the government; and c) the purpose to which the equipment is used is not inappropriate. This *de minimis* safe harbor standard was a common sense response to the availability of Internet connections within today's office setting and the recognition that the cost of service remains essentially the same regardless of how much or how little the Internet is used.

Building and Services Information





Building Information

- **Metro** – USDA Headquarters is accessed via the Smithsonian Metro Stop from either the Orange or Blue Metro Lines. From the Mall exit, cross Jefferson Drive and enter through the Whitten Building. From the Independence Avenue exit, the door to the South Building is located at the top of this Metro exit.
- **Headquarters Buildings**
 - **Whitten Building**, 1400 Independence Avenue, Washington, DC 20250
 - **South Building**, 1400 Independence Avenue, Washington, DC 20250
- **Room Number Derivations** within the two Headquarters Buildings:
 - Whitten Building – Room numbers are identified with an “A” for the middle part of the building, an “E” for rooms on the east side, and a “W” for rooms on the West side of the building. For example, room number 121E would indicate the room is on the first floor, room 21 on the east side of the building.
 - South Building – The hallway that parallels and is adjacent to Independence Avenue is the “0” hallway. Rooms on this hallway will begin with a “0”
Corridors 1-6 run perpendicular to Independence Avenue. The farthest hallway, parallel to the “0” hallway, has room numbers beginning with an “8” or “9”.
- **Traveling Between Whitten and South Buildings** – There are 3 means to move between these 2 buildings without going outside – which is especially nice during hot, cold or rainy weather.
 - There is a tunnel located on the basement levels of the 2 buildings that connects the two buildings under Independence Avenue.
 - There are above-ground archways on the 2nd and 6th wings of the South building, which connect across Independence Avenue to the 3rd floor of the Whitten Building.
- **Cafeterias and Snack Bars** – There is a small cafeteria in the Basement of the Whitten Building, a larger cafeteria on the first floor of the South Building (open to tourists), and a small snack bar on the 6th wing of the South Building, basement level. Additional information on operating hours and menus can be found at Web Link:
<http://www.usda.gov/oo/cafemenu.htm>.
- **Ag Promenade** – This is located in the sub-basement of the South Building. This can be accessed from the 3rd wing of the South Building. On the Ag Promenade may be found the Agriculture Federal Credit Union (AFCU), a gift store, ATM machine, US Postal Service Office, Federal Express drop-off box, Employee Services and Recreation Association (ESRA) Store, deli and coffee shop, smoothie shop, barber shop, and fitness center.
- **ATM Machines** – There is one machine by the Whitten cafeteria, one by the Cafeteria in the South Building on the second wing, one by the elevator on the Ag Promenade, and one on the basement level of the South Building.






Headquarters Building Locations

-  USDA Headquarters Complex, Washington, D.C.
 - Jamie L. Whitten Building, 14th and Jefferson Drive
 - South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
-  Cotton Annex, 300 12th Street, SW
-  Yates Building, 201 14th Street SW
-  Franklin Court, 1099 14th Street, NW
-  1800 M Street, NW
-  Waterfront Center, 800 9th Street, SW
-  Portals Building, 1250 Maryland Avenue
-  SW Aerospace Building, 901 D Street, SW
-  Reporters Building, 300 14th Street, SW
-  West End Court, 1255 22nd Street, NW
-  2101 L Street, NW
-  501 School Street, SW

USDA Headquarters Offices, Virginia

-  Fairfax Circle, 3251 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA
-  Park Center, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, V A
-  Rosslyn Plaza Building East, 1621 North Kent Street, Arlington, VA
-  1815 North Ft. Meyer Drive, Arlington, VA

USDA Headquarters Offices, Maryland

-  USDA Center at Riverside, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD
-  George Washington Carver Center, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Beltsville, MD
-  Landover Service Center, 3222 Hubbard Road, Landover, MD
-  National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD
-  Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, MD

Shuttles

- The USDA Shuttle Bus travels between the South Building and Beltsville (George Washington Carver Center). For information on this service, please call 301-504-2411. Departures from the South Building are at 7:45 am, 9:15 am, 10:45 am, 1:15 pm, and 2:45 pm. (This shuttle departs Beltsville at 7:00 am, 8:30 am, 10:00 am, 12:30 pm, 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm).
- Shuttle Service is also available in the Beltsville Area and the George Carver Washington Center. Please refer to Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/oo/shuttlesched.htm> for additional information.

Safety and Security



HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX

Medical Emergency/Fire	911 Voice/TDD
USDA Security Control	(202)690-0869 (24/7)
Center	(202)720-8476 (TTY)
Federal Protective Service	(202)708-1111 (24/7)
USDA Operations Center	(202)720-5711 or 1-877-677-2369 (24/7)
Security Operations	(202)720-6270
Safety Operations	(202)720-6808
USDA Health Unit	(202)720-9522
Facilities	(202)720-6858
	(202)260-0386 (TTY)
Employee Information Line	(800)932-1902 or (202)690-3636
	Call 711 to access voice relay (TTY) services.
Bomb Threat Procedure	After call is over, hang up then perform the following: (DO NOT DIAL 9 FIRST) Touch Tone: *57 or Rotary: 1157

USDA Be Prepared Website
<http://www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared/>

Building Security

- Most USDA facilities have secure entrances, particularly in metropolitan settings. In the Washington, D.C. Area, visitors must pass through metal detectors and are subject to screening of packages.
- Employees are issued a picture identification badge for building access. During times of heightened security, such as large crowds of demonstrators in the area, procedures may be tightened.
- **Badges are to be worn and visible at all times** while within the USDA buildings.
- Visitors: All visitors must report to a guard desk at one of the visitor entrances. Once individual identification is verified, an appropriate badge will be issued.
 - **Visitors with Government Identification** – these visitors must sign in at the guard's desk, and then they can move about on their own within the building.

- **Visitors without Government ID** – these visitors must sign in at the guard’s desk and then be escorted for the duration of their visit to USDA.
- **Lost badges** – If a badge is determined to be lost, notify the Identification Badge office at 202-720-2744 as soon as possible. To obtain a new badge, obtain a form from the HR office, and return to the Badge Issuing Center on the Ag Promenade, located in the sub-basement of the South Building.
- Guards may issue a **temporary one-day badge** if a badge is lost or left at home.
- By October 2008, all USDA employees and contractors will be issued a “**Linc Pass**,” a new badge with a computer chip. Within the next few years, these badges will be used to access computer equipment and the USDA buildings.

Fire Evacuation Procedures

- Locate the nearest posted diagram that identifies the means of egress in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring evacuation. Become familiar with the nearest fire exit, and the next best alternative means of egress. Please refer to the "Emergency Procedures" brochure for steps to take in the event of a fire or other emergency. This may be found at Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/beprepared/EmployeeGuide.pdf>.
- Fire drills will occur at least once a year and are necessary part of ensuing employee safety in case of a real emergency.

Workplace Violence Prevention

- Violence in the workplace can take many forms. Examples include: intimidating behavior, threats of suicide, injury or the threat of injury to property and/or programs, fistfights, shootings, stabbings, sexual assaults, or unauthorized use of deadly weapons and explosives.
- The Department is committed to taking action necessary to prevent workplace violence. The Department's Workplace Violence Prevention regulations and Handbook on Workplace Violence Prevention and Response are located at the following Web Link: www.usda.gov/da/workviolence.htm
- All acts of violence should be reported promptly to supervisors or managers, and in case of emergency, directly to building security or Federal Protective Service officials at the numbers listed previously.

Smoking Policy

- **Inside USDA Facilities.** All interior space in USDA facilities are smoke-free.
- **Outside Smoking Areas.** Outdoor smoking areas will be designated when possible, which are reasonably accessible to workers and provide a measure of protection from the weather elements. These smoking areas must be a minimum of 15 feet away from common points of ingress and egress of facilities. Areas within parking garages may only be designated as smoking areas 15 feet from entrance, and if proper ventilation exists.
- Appropriate ash and filter receptacles will be provided and maintained at all established smoking areas. Additional receptacles may be placed at entrances not designated as smoking areas. However, they should display a sign containing the no smoking symbol.
- For additional information, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4400-006.pdf>

Federal Pay, Work Schedules, Types of Appointments

Federal Pay

- **About the GS Grade System.** The GS system is divided into 15 grades, each of which has 10 steps. Entry-level hiring into a grade normally is done at Step 1, although various personnel flexibilities allow hiring at different steps. The grade level of an initial hire depends largely on the occupation, as does the career progression up through the grades.
- **Payment for Services** -Pay is set when you are appointed. You will be paid biweekly and should arrange for direct deposit of your paycheck. Exceptions may be made in hardship situations only.
- The official pay day is the **second Thursday of the pay period.**
- **Locality Based Pay.** Pay is locality based. For GS employees, there are 30 or so metropolitan locality pay areas and a catch-all “rest of the United States” locality for everywhere else within the contiguous 48 states. Raises are set by local labor market conditions, subject to the availability of funds appropriated by Congress.
- **Pay Day and Pay Scales / Direct Deposit** -Paydays are bi-weekly, with the official payday being the second Thursday of the pay period. Employees who are paid by direct deposit usually receive their pay (deposited to their account) on the second Monday of the pay period (three days earlier than the official pay day).
- For information on **Federal Pay scales** you may refer to Web Links: GS pay scales - www.opm.gov/oca or SES pay - www.opm.gov/oca
- **Employee Personal Page** – Pay information is available electronically via the Employee Personal Page at the National Finance Center’s web site: www.nfc.usda.gov. Follow the instructions on NFC’s home page by clicking on “Using the Employee Personal Page”. Once you have registered on the Employee Personal Page, you can sign on at any time to check individual information.

Deductions and Allotments

- The following will be deducted from your pay automatically:
 - Federal taxes
 - State taxes
 - Hospitalization insurance tax (HITS-Medicare)
 - Retirement contributions
- The following, if elected, will be deducted from your pay:
 - Health insurance premiums
 - Life insurance premiums
 - Thrift Savings Plan deductions
 - U. S. Savings Bonds
 - Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), if the payroll deduction option is chosen

Work Schedules

- All employees, with the exception of intermittent employees, have a regularly scheduled “tour of duty.” Tour of duty means the clock hours of the day, and the days of the week that comprise an employee’s regularly scheduled administrative workweek.

- Full time employees are entitled to a basic workweek of 40 hours. When possible, the work-week will consist of 5 workdays – Monday through Friday.
- Some offices have established core hours – these are “set” hours during which times all employees need to be “at work” – this would include individuals on telework arrangements. Check with your supervisor to determine if your office has established core hours.
- Some offices are approved for alternative work schedules (AWS), which represent a work scheduling flexibility that may be used at management’s discretion. Once an office has gained approval for a particular AWS, supervisors may accept employee requests to adopt an AWS.
- Among some of the schedules currently in use:
 - **5-4/9 compressed work schedule:** This schedule has an 80-hour biweekly work requirement that is satisfied in 9 workdays. Each pay period, the employee works 8 nine-hour days and 1 eight-hour day.
 - **4/10 compressed work schedule:** This schedule has a basic work requirement of 40 hours per work week. This work requirement is satisfied in 4 workdays, each of which is 10 hours in length.
 - **Gliding schedule:** This schedule is a flexible schedule that has an 8 hour daily work requirement. There are flexible time bands and core time bands during each workday. Employees may, within the flexible time bands, select a different arrival and departure time each day.
 - **Maxiflex schedule:** Maxiflex is the most flexible form of alternative work schedule. Characteristics of Maxiflex include: a bi-weekly work requirement of 80 hours for full-time employees; potential to complete the basic work requirement in fewer than 10 workdays; the possibility of variable numbers of hours of work daily; flexible starting and end times; and voluntary credit hours up to 24 which can be carried over into the next pay period. Within regulatory guidelines, organizations approved for Maxiflex schedules may tailor Maxiflex to meet their particular work schedules.
- For full time employees, the workday will include a 30-minute unpaid daily meal period when 5 or more hours are worked.

Credit Hours

- Credit hours are **all hours in excess of an employee's basic work requirement which the employee elects to work and the supervisor approves** so as to vary the length of the workweek or a workday. However, when an employee is directed by management to work beyond their basic work requirement, overtime or compensatory time must be granted. Depending on the supervisor's preferences, credit hour approval may be given before (pre-approval) or after (post-approval) the credit hours are worked.
- **Up to 24 credit hours may be carried over from one pay period to the next** or from one leave year to the next. Any credit hours in excess of 24 at the end of a pay period will be forfeited. Part-time employees may carry over an amount equal to 1/4 of their biweekly work schedule, (e.g., a part-time worker with a biweekly tour of duty of 40 hours would be able to carry over 10 hours of credit time from one pay period to the next.) Any unused credit leave must be paid at the current hourly pay rate when an

employee leaves their organization and is unable to transfer the credit hours, or separates from Federal service.

- Credit hours may be earned and used in as little as 15 minute increments.
- Credit hours may not be used before they are earned. They may not be earned or used by Senior Executive Service or Intermittent employees.
- Employees may work credit hours on days where paid leave is also taken.
- Credit hours may not be earned on a holiday unless the credit hours worked are outside the employee's regular tour of duty.
- Credit hours may not be earned while an employee is traveling (in transit). Travel time is not considered to be voluntary, and therefore does not meet the credit time definition of "electing to work."

Types of Appointments

- There are many types of appointments and appointing authorities each with different conditions.
- Most employees entered the Federal service through a competitive process. This hiring process is the most often used and leads to a competitive appointment.
 - **Career Conditional.** This is the most common type of competitive appointment. Persons receiving this type of appointment serve a one-year probationary period. This is a permanent appointment; however, there are some conditions to be met. The most important condition is acceptable performance. Others include suitability for employment and medical qualifications. Should you leave Federal service after your probationary period and prior to being converted to career status, you may have to compete again through the competitive examination process to be rehired.
 - When first appointed as a career conditional employee, a one-year probationary period must be served.
 - During the probationary period, conduct and work performance in the actual duties of the job are observed. If work performance or conduct does not demonstrate the fitness of qualifications for continued Federal employment, an individual may be separated based on deficiency in work performance, lack of aptitude or cooperativeness, or undesirable conduct evidenced by activities either during or outside official working hours.
 - If an employee serving on a probationary period is terminated for the reasons outlined above, the employee does not have appeal rights.
 - **Career.** After serving your probationary period and completing three years of continuous service, you can expect to be converted to a career appointment. This is the most permanent of appointments and provides you with greater job retention rights. Should you leave government service and then wish to return, you need not compete again through the competitive examination process.
 - **Excepted.** Certain positions are excepted from the normal requirements for competition. These exceptions may be made by the Congress of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). As a rule, these positions are excepted because they are difficult to examine for, require special qualifications, or have special

relationships with key executive officials. Among the examples of exceptions positions are attorneys and some scientific positions.

- **Temporary Positions:** Personnel appointed to temporary positions do not go through the same kind of competitive process described for career or career-conditional employees. Moreover, they do not receive the same benefits that career or career-conditional appointees receive.
 - Occasionally employees are needed for immediate short-term jobs, normally lasting a year or less. In those cases, employees are hired for short periods and given temporary appointments. Any subsequent appointment of a permanent nature would require a further competitive process.
 - Employees holding temporary appointments do not receive most of the benefits other employees enjoy. For example, they cannot be promoted, do not have retention protection, do not participate in the retirement system, and are not eligible to enroll in FEGLI or the TSP.
 - Employees serving on temporary appointments do not acquire competitive status and are not eligible to be non-competitively converted to a career-conditional appointment.
- **Probationary periods for newly appointed managers or supervisors.** Supervisors and managers must serve a 12-month probationary period when they are first placed in a supervisory or managerial position. New supervisors or managers should receive a minimum of 40 hours of formal training within one year.

Attendance and Leave

Attendance, Leave and Holidays

- **Attendance:** In accordance with Departmental regulations, work schedules must be established. Where the agency/office operates under a flexible work schedule, "tour of duty" schedules must be established, and leave normally must be approved in advance.
- An official Time and Attendance (T&A) record for each employee is maintained by your local timekeeper.
- **What to do in inclement weather?** Call (202) 606-1900 to obtain Operating Status in the Washington, DC, area when you do not have access to internet. Also, this will be posted to the OPM website at Web Link: http://www.opm.gov/Operating_Status_Schedules/
- USDA Departmental Regulation 4070-735-00, Employee Responsibilities and Conduct, Section 12, Attendance and Leave, states:
 - "(a) Every employee must observe designated duty hours and be punctual in reporting for work and returning from lunch periods. Tardiness can result in employees being placed in a non-pay status for unauthorized absence; i.e., absence without leave (AWOL).
 - (b) Every employee must normally obtain advance authorization for any absence from duty. Approval of leave is a discretionary matter reserved to the supervisor. The use of leave is not a right afforded to an employee, but is conditioned on the needs of USDA service. Where absence from duty results from illness or an emergency, an employee is required to notify his or her supervisor or other appropriate person as soon as possible. When an employee fails to properly notify his or her supervisor, the absence may be charged as AWOL. For more information, please refer to: Web Link: www.opm.gov and select "Quick Index" and then "Pay and Leave"
- **Requesting Leave:** The procedures for requesting leave are established by your supervisor. OPM Form 71 is used within USDA to request most forms of leave.
- **Leave Without Pay and Absence without Leave:**
 - Leave Without Pay (LWOP) is an approved absence in a non-pay status.
 - Absence Without Leave (AWOL) is an absence in a non-pay status without approval.
- For more information on leave, including Family Medical Leave Act, Family Friendly Leave Act, etc., you may refer to Web Link: www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/factindx.asp

Annual Leave

- If you have no prior service, you will earn annual leave for vacation and other purposes at the rate of 13 days a year (four hours a pay period).
- After three years of Federal service, you will earn 20 days of annual leave a year (six hours a pay period).
- After 15 years of Federal service, you will earn 26 days of annual leave (eight hours a pay period).
- Employees who serve on a part-time basis will have their leave accrual prorated based on the number of hours worked each pay period.

- You may carry annual leave over into the following year not to exceed 240 hours. Any annual leave over 240 is forfeited at the beginning of the first full pay period of the calendar year, unless a waiver is obtained meeting certain requirements as specified by law.
- Generally, SES members have a 720-hour annual leave limit, and any accumulated leave over 720 hours is forfeited at the beginning of the first full pay period of the calendar year. However, some SES may have a personal leave ceiling that exceeds 720 hours. In these cases, SES members' personal leave ceiling must be reduced by the number of hours used in excess of the number of hours earned during the previous year. When the personal leave ceiling falls below 720 hours, the ceiling is eliminated and the SES member becomes subject to the 720 hour limit.

Sick Leave

- You will earn 13 days (four hours a pay period) of sick leave regardless of the number of years of Federal service.
- Sick leave may be used for medical, dental or optical examination or treatment; if incapacitated by physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth. Sick leave may be used if; because of exposure to communicable disease, you might jeopardize the health of others by your presence on the job. Also, sick leave may be used for adoption-related activities. In addition, you may use a limited amount of sick leave to provide care for a family member as the result of physical or mental illness or injury, pregnancy, childbirth, or medical, dental or optical examination or treatment; or make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or to attend the funeral of a family member.
- For additional information, please talk to your Supervisor or a Human Resources Specialist.
- Employees who serve on a part-time basis will have their leave accrual prorated based on the number of hours worked each pay period.
- There is no limitation on accrual/carryover.

Administrative Leave

- In some circumstances you may be granted administrative leave without charge to your leave account. Examples would include (after meeting specific criteria): leave for voting, leave for inclement weather, and leave for recuperation after blood donation, etc.
- Holidays - Federal employees have the following 10 paid holidays off:
 - New Year's Day
 - Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, Birthday
 - Washington's Birthday
 - Memorial Day
 - Independence Day
 - Labor Day
 - Columbus Day
 - Veterans Day
 - Thanksgiving Day
 - Christmas Day

Employee Benefits

Dental and Vision Insurance

- Dental and Vision Insurance offers you choices to supplement your health plan's dental and vision coverage. Go to the <http://www.opm.gov/insure/DentalVision/index.asp> web site for complete information on the Federal Dental and Vision Plans (FEDVIP), including the details of each plan, the cost, and how to enroll. If you choose to enroll, you have 60 days from the date of employment to complete your enrollment using the FEDVIP enrollment process at Web Link: <https://www.benefeds.com/>.
- Additionally, there are open enrollment periods during Nov- Dec of each year.

Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)

- At the time of your appointment you will be provided with information on your eligibility/non-eligibility to enroll in the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program. New eligible employees are covered by basic life insurance on their first day in pay and duty status, and have the option of electing additional insurance or electing not to enroll.
- The FEGLI program provides group term life insurance. In most cases, employees are automatically covered by basic life insurance.
- For more information on this subject, you may refer to Web Link: www.opm.gov/insure/life/index.htm

Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)

- At the time of your appointment you will be provided with information on your eligibility/non-eligibility to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. New eligible employees have a 60-day opportunity period to elect health benefits coverage. Coverage becomes effective the pay period after receipt of a properly completed registration form. Your personnel office will provide you with appropriate plan information and enrollment forms.
- The government pays for a portion of the cost of the FEHB program.
- There are two types of enrollment in each FEHB plan: self only, which provides benefits only to you; and self and family, providing benefits to you and all eligible family members. A self and family enrollment covers you, your spouse, and your unmarried dependent children under age 22.
- For more information on this subject, you may refer to Web Link: www.opm.gov/insure/health/index.htm

Long Term Care Insurance

- Employees eligible to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program can also enroll in the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program. Long term care insurance helps pay for long term care services, such as home care or care in a nursing home or assisted living facility. Premiums are based on the level of coverage and age at the time that you (or your eligible family members) buy the insurance. There is no government contribution towards the premium.

Retirement

- At the time of your appointment your human resources office will provide you with information on your Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) retirement coverage. Your type of appointment and any prior Federal civilian service will determine your retirement coverage.
- If this is your first civilian appointment into the Federal Government you will be covered under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Coverage for employees who have prior Federal civilian service will be determined after a review of prior Federal service.
- Coverage will be in one of the following: FERS, Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), or CSRS Offset. Employees whose appointment does not confer retirement benefits will be covered under Social Security only. For more information on this subject, you may refer to Web Links www.opm.gov/retire/index.htm www.tsp.gov

Thrift Savings Plan –

- The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings plan and is one of the three components of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). An employee new to the Federal Government may begin to contribute to TSP immediately regardless of what retirement system they are under, there is no waiting period.
- Eligible employees may contribute up to the maximum IRS elective deferral limit.
- An employee covered under FERS will receive matching contributions from their agency as soon as they become eligible (for additional information, contact the HR Benefits specialist). If you are covered under FERS and you are contributing to TSP your agency will match your contributions up to the first five percent of your contributions. The first 3 percent of your contributions will be matched dollar-for-dollar; the next 2 percent will be matched 50 cents on the dollar. There is no matching above the five percent.
- If you are a FERS employee your agency will contribute an automatic one percent to your TSP account regardless of whether you contribute to TSP or not. However new FERS employees and rehired FERS employees must serve a waiting period before becoming eligible to receive the agency automatic one percent contribution.
- The agency automatic 1 percent contribution is subject to a vesting (entitled to keep the 1 percent contribution) period. An employee is considered vested after 3 years for most employees, and 2 years for FERS employees in congressional and certain non-career positions.
- Employees covered under CSRS or CSRS Offset may also contribute to the TSP. CSRS & CSRS Offset covered employees may contribute up to the maximum IRS elective deferral limit, but receive no matching funds or agency automatic 1 percent contributions.
- All contributions to the TSP are tax deferred.
- If you are interested in contributing to TSP, ask your agency employing office for a copy of the Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSPBK-08) and the Election Form (TSP-1) to start contributing. To get an idea of how your personal account can grow, see "How can I estimate my TSP account balance?" in the *Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees*. These funds compound, with contributions and earnings growing tax

deferred. This enables your account to grow more rapidly. See the TSP website provided below.

- For more information on this subject, you may refer to Web Link: www.tsp.gov

Unemployment Compensation

- States, through agreements with the Department of Labor, administer unemployment compensation based on the same terms and conditions as administered under State unemployment compensation laws. Please refer to State unemployment compensation laws for additional information. For more information on this subject, you may refer to: Web Link: <http://www.dol.gov> and select "Unemployment Compensation"

Human Resources Services

Official Personnel Folder

- The employing agency, usually your personnel office, maintains an Official Personnel Folder (OPF) for each civilian Federal employee. USDA is currently working to maximize electronic documents. Consequently, OPF documents may now be scanned and available electronically, and there may not be hard copies for individual review.
- The purpose of the OPF is to track an employee's employment history. After an employee leaves the federal government, the OPF is sent to the Federal Records Center in St. Louis.
- You do have the right to review your OPF, but you must generally do so in the presence of an appropriate official.
- For information on record keeping, you may refer to Web Link:
www.opm.gov/feddata/persdoc.asp

Personnel Actions

- When you are hired, receive a pay raise, etc., a personnel action is processed by your Human Resources Office.
- You will receive notification of the personnel action via a Standard Form (SF) 50, Notification of Personnel Action. In addition to having your personal information reflected on this document (such as name, date of birth, SSN), the form also provides information on the nature of the action taken, salary information, organization location, employment data, and provides special remarks when needed.
- These SF-50s serve as your record of Federal employment. SF50s are also filed in your personal OPF.
- You are responsible for initiating notices of any personal information change, such as officially changing your name.

Designation of Beneficiary Forms

- When you are appointed, you will be given designation of beneficiary forms for completion, or you may choose the default order of precedence.
- You will receive beneficiary forms for the following:
 - Unpaid compensation (covers items such as any salary due, annual leave lump sum, travel, refunds, etc.)
 - Life insurance
 - Retirement
 - Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- You may change or cancel beneficiary forms at any time. The TSP beneficiary form must be mailed directly to the TSP Service Office as directed on the form.

National Finance Center's Employee Personal Page

- The USDA, National Finance Center (NFC) serves as your payroll office. One of the newer services offered by NFC is the Employee Personal Page.
- The Employee Personnel Page has a self service option that allows employees to change their Residence Address, Federal and State Tax withholding, Financial Allotments and

Direct Deposit. You can access this Page by going to NFC's home page at Web Link: https://www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/ep_warning.asp

- This page serves as a convenient and easy way for employees to find current up-to-date information on such matters as their payroll, leave, travel, life insurance, health insurance, savings bond, and other personal information.
- You must have a PIN to access your personal data. You may request a PIN from this website.

TALX–Employment Verification

- NFC provides the TALX Corporation with selected employee salary and employment information each pay period. You may use TALX as a means for employment verification. TALX is a provider of HR/Payroll services and focuses on replacing slow, paper-based, expensive manual methods so our clients can provide better, faster employee service while reducing costs. TALX services enable organizations to meet today's demands for reduced costs and higher service levels.
- Employees seeking employment verification should call “The Work Number for Everyone” 1-800-367-2884, enter the USDA Code (obtain from your personnel office), SSN and PIN (obtain from your personnel office) for an authorization number.
- Lenders then may obtain employment and salary verification by voice or fax by calling 1-900-555-9675 and providing the authorization number provided by the applicant.
- For additional information, you may contact the TALX Corporation Customer Service Line at 1-800-996-7566.

Performance Plans and Performance Appraisals

Performance Plan

- The purpose of the performance plan is to provide a documented record of management expectations. A performance plan is the aggregate of all your written (or otherwise recorded) critical and non-critical elements and standards.
- Generally, the performance elements describe what work is to be done (or what goals are to be accomplished), while the performance standards describe levels of quality, quantity, timeliness and/or manner of performance.
- Your supervisor will help you prepare your performance plan. You must have a performance plan within 30 days of your appointment.
- If you are a supervisor, you are encouraged to involve your subordinates in the development of their performance plans.

Progress Review

- A supervisor must conduct at least one progress review with each employee during the appraisal period to ensure that specific information is provided about an employee's performance against established performance standards; however, continuous two-way communication of organizational, team, and employee performance objectives and accomplishments is encouraged.
- The progress review may also be used as an opportunity to modify performance elements or standards to reflect changes that may have taken place since the performance plan was initially developed.

Performance Appraisals

- The appraisal period is normally 12 months, from October 1 through September 30.
- At the end of the appraisal period, accomplishments are documented, performance on each element is appraised, and a summary rating is proposed, approved by a reviewing official and discussed with the employee.
- A rating of record may not be given unless performance elements and standards were established and communicated to the employee and the employee served under the standards for the minimum appraisal period specified in the agency's program.

Employee Recognition

Purpose:

- The purpose of the Incentive Awards Recognition Program is to provide various means of demonstrating, through monetary and non-monetary recognition, the significance USDA sets on employee contributions and achievements that enhance organizational effectiveness and improve organizational quality.
- The Incentive Awards Recognition Program Departmental Regulation is designed to fairly and equitably recognize and reward individuals and groups for excellence in service to the overall mission and goals of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Monetary Awards.

- Monetary recognition is granted to an individual or group for a one-time superior accomplishment or a significant contribution to the USDA's or the Agency's mission or goals. Award amounts should be proportionate to the level of the contribution made to the organization's mission or goals. Monetary award recognition includes Extra Effort, Spot Awards, Performance, and Suggestions/Invention.
 - Extra Effort – A one-time lump-sum cash award granted to recognize specific accomplishments by individuals or groups of employees that have exceeded normal job requirements.
 - Spot Awards- A monetary award designed to grant "immediate" recognition to an employee or group of employees for a short-term accomplishment that represents contributions toward achievements or organizational goals or mission. Spot awards range in value from \$50 to \$750 (increments of \$5 or \$10) with no award amount exceeding \$750.
 - Performance Award- A one-time lump sum cash award granted annually solely based on an employee's current rating of record. Performance ratings are assigned at the end of the appraisal period for performance over the entire period.
 - Suggestions/Invention- A monetary award granted to an employee or group of employees for an adopted idea or invention that improves operations and services to the public and contributes directly to the economy or efficiency of Government operations. These awards may also take forms of honorary, informal recognition, or time off awards.

Non-Monetary Awards.

- Non-monetary recognition given for a specific outstanding accomplishment such as a superior contribution on a short-term assignment or project, an act of heroism, a scientific achievement, a major discovery, or work that "results" in significant cost savings.
- Non-monetary awards can be relatively inexpensive and range from small merchandise items to letters of appreciation, informal recognition, keepsakes, honorary awards and time off awards (An excused absence granted to a Federal employee without charge to leave or loss of pay).

- Non-monetary awards can be given in conjunction with a monetary award; e.g., a plaque given in conjunction with a monetary award. No more than \$250 can be spent on any one item.

Training and Development

IDP

- An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a written schedule or action plan of training and development activities or experiences designed to meet an employee's particular job and career goals.
- Each individual should develop an IDP annually. This written plan is developed to establish order, maintain focus, and track progress of the activities outlined for the intent of aiding an employee in accomplishing their goals. This form is now available within AgLearn.

AgLearn

- AgLearn is USDA's enterprise-wide learning management system (LMS). The system manages all aspects of training within each agency as well as across the department. AgLearn's User Interface is where all USDA employees and non-employees will go to search on available training, plan for learning development, and record all completed training activity.
- The user may access AgLearn 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at Web Link: www.AgLearn.usda.gov.
- What the user has access to, in terms of course offerings, will be determined by the part of USDA to which he/she belongs.

Standard Form 182

- This is the form used to request vendor training. This form is now able to be completed and approved electronically within AgLearn.

Travel and Miscellaneous Administrative Information

Travel

- Federal employee travel for **official business must be pre-approved** by an authorized agency official. All travel must be coordinated with the supervisor to avoid overtime work periods (when possible) and high travel costs.
- **Government Travel cards.** Check with your supervisor to determine if you need to obtain a government credit card. The policy for the use of government credit cards may be found at Web Link: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR2300-001.htm>
- An employee on official travel is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a person would when traveling on personal business.
- **Lodging and per diem rates are established worldwide** for such official travel. Each individual agency has a contact responsible for ensuring that travel regulations, as issued by the General Services Administration, are followed, in addition to providing guidance and assistance to employees.
- In accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR's), effective January 1, 2001, it is mandatory to **contact USDA's Travel Management Center – Fed Traveler** to make all common carrier, hotel/motel, and car rental reservations. For additional information, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.fedtraveler.com/>
- Fed traveler can be reached 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM (Eastern Standard Time) at the following: Toll-Free: 1- (866) 876-8020 (voice), (800) 281-1787 (fax) or at Web Link: CallCenter@fedtravelersupport.com. Requests received after-hours will be addressed during work hours the following day.
- For more information about travel, you may refer to: Web Links: www.gsa.gov and www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/factindx.htm
- Government travel reimbursements for expenses may include: transportation, per diem, lodging (up to GSA established rates) and meal and incidental expenses (M&IE).
- Travel forms – Form AD 616 (USDA) is used to document expenses incurred on government travel.

Local Travel.

- Employees may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in performing official duties in and around their duty station. This is commonly referred to as reimbursement for "Local Travel".
- Local travel expenses may include such things as the cost of subway, bus, train or taxi or, if employees use their privately-owned vehicle, mileage, tolls, and parking.
- Local travel expenses could be incurred in a variety of work related situations including, but not limited to, required attendance at meetings, conferences or other official functions, training, periodic work assignments at alternate duty locations in or around the duty station, etc.
- The authority to reimburse employees for local travel expenses is delegated to each agency.
- Approval of individual local travel claims is generally the responsibility of the employee's fund-holder, supervisor, or other designated travel approving official.

Government Travel Cards

- Check with your supervisor to determine if you need to obtain a government credit card. The policy for the use of government credit cards may be found at Web Link: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR2300-001.htm>
- Employees must use their government travel cards to pay for reimbursable travel expenses.
- Employees who use the charge card for inappropriate or non-official purposes or who fail to pay their account balances in a timely manner will be subject to disciplinary action. This may range from a letter of reprimand to removal from duty.

Business Cards

- Government personnel are authorized to have business cards prepared for official responsibilities. Check with your agency administrative office for procedures available for having business cards printed.

Professional Liability Insurance

- You may be eligible for partial reimbursement for Professional Liability Insurance. Further information is contained in Departmental Regulation DR 4060-1, Professional Liability Insurance Partial Premium Reimbursement Program.
- For additional information, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4060-001.htm>

Information Security

- Departmental Regulation 3140-001, USDA Information Systems Security Policy, establishes policies to ensure comprehensive protections are in place to safeguard all information technology resources. USDA managers must ensure that protections are in place to protect against accidental or deliberate, unauthorized alteration, destruction, delay, theft, access, use or damage to systems, data, applications, equipment, and telecommunications. This regulation also defines USDA's information and telecommunications security missions, goals, scope, and responsibilities.
- For the complete text of this Directive, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR3140-001.pdf>

Work Life

(Main Website at Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/ffwg.htm>)

Adoption

- Adoption can be a challenging and rewarding experience and the Federal Government provides a number of family-friendly programs and benefits that can ease the adoption process for Federal employees. Work and family programs are spreading across Government and making it easier for Federal employees to balance all aspects of their lives, including helping employees with the adoption process.
- The U.S. Office of Personnel Management's "Adoption Benefits Guide for Federal Employees" is located at Web Link: <http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/html/adoption.htm>.
- This guide provides information on leave programs, health benefits, tax benefits, and state adoption subsidy programs.

Child Care Services

- On-Site Child Care - On-site or near-site childcare provided by licensed professionals may be available at your work location.
- Refer to Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/ffwg.htm> for more information and locations of child care sites.

Child Care Tuition Assistance

- You may be eligible to receive monthly agency-paid childcare tuition assistance paid directly to your childcare provider. Contact your work/life program manager (<http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/ffwg.htm>) for details on eligibility and availability. Not all USDA agencies offer this assistance.

Elder Care Locator

- If you are responsible for or concerned about an elderly relative and/or older person and don't know where to turn for information call the Elder Care Locator service at 1-800-677-1116 (M-F, 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. EST).

Guaranteed Ride Home

- This program provides commuters in the Washington Metropolitan Area who regularly carpool, vanpool, bike, walk or take transit to work with a reliable ride home when one of life's unexpected personal emergencies or unscheduled overtime arises.
- This free service is available up to four times per year.
- Information and registration for the program can be found at Web Link: <http://www.mwcog.org/commuter/Bdy-Grh.html> or call 1-800-745-RIDE

Nursing Mothers Rooms

- If you are a new mother and plan to return to work shortly, you may require use of a Nursing Mothers Room. The location of these rooms may be found at Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/ffwg.htm>

Part Time Employment and Job Sharing

- If other flexible work options do not meet your needs, you may want to explore part-time employment or job sharing with another employee. More information can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/ffwg.htm> or by contacting your servicing personnel office.

Pre-Tax Parking

- If you park at eligible parking locations and commute to and from work via mass transportation, qualified vanpool, or in a carpool of two or more persons, you may be eligible to exclude certain monthly parking expenses from your taxable income up to the maximum authorized by the Internal Revenue Service or the actual cost of parking, whichever is less. Check with your commuter transit benefits coordinator.
- This benefit pertains to eligible employees nationwide. For additional information, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/agency/da/shmd/parking.html>

Telework

- Eligible employees may be authorized to work at an alternative worksite, e.g. GSA or USDA Telework Center, at home, or a satellite office on a regular and recurring schedule for one or more days a week. Also, temporary teleworking arrangements may be appropriate when you are recuperating from an injury or illness that makes commuting difficult.
- Your supervisor and agency management must approve any telework arrangement. See USDA Directive 4080-811-2 dated January 2, 2002, and your individual agency's policy.
- Frequently Asked Questions and Answers on Telework are found at Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/telework.htm>

Transit Subsidy

- If you commute to and from work utilizing mass transportation or a qualified vanpool, you may be eligible to receive a monthly agency-paid transit subsidy of up to the maximum authorized by the Internal Revenue Service or the actual cost of commuting, whichever is less.
- Check with your commuter transit benefits coordinator. Your agency coordinator can be found at Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/ffwg.htm>.
- This benefit pertains to eligible employees nationwide.

USDA TARGET Center

- TARGET: Technology Accessible Resources Gives Employment Today
- The TARGET Center was established in 1992 to support USDA employees with assistive technology and ergonomic solutions. Services enable equal opportunity to access electronic and information technology essential in today's workforce. The TARGET Center's mission is to:
 - Support federal policies which enforce the accessibility of electronic and information technologies to people with disabilities.

- Provide assessments and demonstrations to assure appropriate implementation of assistive technology for the Department's workforce.
- TARGET consultations are available to managers and procurement officials on accommodations that are cost effective and will aid employees in the work place. Other services available through the TARGET Center are:
 - Needs assessments;
 - Presentations;
 - Demonstrations;
 - Resource information;
 - Resource loans; and alternative formats.
- The TARGET Center is located at 1006-South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
 - (202) 720-2600 (Voice TTY)
 - (202) 720-2681 (fax)
 - E-Mail: target-center@usda.gov
 - Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/oo/target/>

Volunteering

- USDA encourages employees to consider volunteering for agency-sponsored activities; e.g., Tutoring at Van Ness Elementary School (adopted by USDA and Junior Achievement), your children's school, community organizations, etc.
- Employees may consider using the many options available (flexible work schedules, teleworking, annual leave, etc.) in order to participate in volunteering activities.
- For more information on volunteering go to Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/Volunteering.html>

Wellness

- It is USDA's policy to promote wellness programs that improve employee health, morale, and productivity. More information can be obtained at Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/da/shmd/wellness.html> . You will find the resource links on this site to be extremely helpful in developing your personal wellness program.

USDA Procurement and Property Overview

The Federal Procurement Process

- The Federal procurement process is governed by numerous laws and regulations designed to maintain the public's confidence in the integrity, fairness and openness with which the government conducts business.
- With few exceptions, only warranted employees, known as "Contracting Officers", may enter into contracts on behalf of the Government.
- In addition to obtaining goods and services, the federal procurement process is also used to achieve certain socio-economic and other policy objectives. As a result, required sources of supply, small business, and other considerations often come into play.
- You are encouraged to seek expert advice from your organization's contracting officials should you have contracting concerns or questions.

Acquiring Goods and Services

General Purpose Office Supplies

- Organizations will have local and other sources for office supplies. Please have your staff contact your servicing contracting activity for further information.

Office Furniture

- For officials in the Office of the Secretary, Executive Services serves as your liaison for obtaining furniture and all other procurement services. They can be contacted at (202) 720-8482.
- For locations in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, the USDA Office of Operations operates a furniture management center known as the Centralized Excess Property Operation (CEPO). It is a quality source of refurbished furniture. A designated staff person may contact CEPO (202) 720-8482 for more information or review their website at Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/oo/property.htm>.
- Note that on-hand stock/inventory is the first source to be considered for fulfilling office supplies and furniture, as well as other needed items. Please note that there is a restriction on the total amount that can be spent on furnishing and decorating offices. Details are provided below. Only once it is determined that existing stock cannot meet a given need is procurement action undertaken.

Acquiring Goods or Services Costing \$2,500 or Less

- These relatively inexpensive goods or services are obtained through use of the Government Purchase Card (GPC), essentially a VISA credit for official government expenses only.
- The card cannot be used for personal expenses of any kind, nor can it be used for Government travel or to fuel or maintain a Government vehicle, unless the vendor refuses to accept the USDA fleet credit card.

- USDA has over 22,000 GPCs issued, so odds are there is someone in your office or organization with a card that can quickly acquire inexpensive items you may need. The cardholders have been trained in basic procurement rules, and will know if there is a required source of supply that must be used to fulfill your need.
- Should you need assistance in identifying a card holder to assist you, please contact your servicing procurement activity.

Acquiring Goods and Services Costing More than \$2,500

- These supplies and services are acquired by Contracting Officers in your servicing contracting activity. The procurement is initiated by a requisition, known as the "AD-700" form, sent to the contracting activity. For further information on requisitioning requirements, please contact your servicing contracting activity.

Printing Services and Volume Photocopying: Services

- For local large volume printing and photocopying needs in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, the Office of Operations' Mail and Reproduction Management Division (MRMD) provides these services. For additional information, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/oo/usersguideprintout.pdf>
- The MRMD printing and photocopying plant is located in the South Building. For routine "light" copying, MRMD has located copying machines throughout the USDA Washington, DC, complex. These copiers are likely not far from your office. For office locations outside Washington, DC, consult with your administrative staff on the location of copying and printing services.

Courier Services

- The Courier Unit provides daily scheduled and unscheduled pick-up and delivery service throughout the Washington DC metropolitan area, including suburban Maryland and Virginia.
- To schedule a pick-up, please contact Dwight Redd at 202-720-5869 Room 0423-S
- For additional information, please refer to Web Link: <http://www.usda.gov/oo/usersguideprintout.pdf>

Safety and Health

Office of Workers Compensation

- Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) Benefits: The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) (5 U.S.C. 8101 et. seq.) is administered by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) of the U.S. Department of Labor.
- Civilian employees are entitled to medical and compensation benefits as a result of a work-related injury or illness sustained while in the performance of duty.
- The employing agency and OWCP provide return-to-work assistance when disability results from a work-related injury or illness. The FECA Act provides compensation to dependents if the injury or disease causes the employee's death.
- If a work-related injury or illness occurs, the employee must notify their supervisor immediately and contact their personnel office for assistance.
- Additional information on this subject is available at Web Link: <http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/owcp/fecacont.htm>

Employee Assistance Program

- Each Federal agency is responsible for having an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees in maintaining a balance between their work and personal life. The EAP will provide confidential assistance with substance abuse problems, family issues, etc.
- The EAP helps employees resolve personal and work problems through professional assistance.
- The EAP will provide confidential assistance for the following types of problems: marital, financial, substance abuse, family, vocational, work-related stress, legal referral, weight/weight loss, physical/medical issues, dependent cares, emotional/psychological problems, etc.
- Please contact your personnel office or agency EAP coordinator for specific information on your agency's EAP.
- For information on your agency EAP coordinator, please refer to Web Link: www.usda.gov/da/employ/eapcoor.htm

Drug Free Workplace Plan (DFWP)

- The Department's DFWP is in response to Executive Order 12564 (Drug Free Federal Workplace) and Department of Transportation Regulations.
- The plan includes policies and procedures for:
 - 1) Offering counseling and assistance for employees suffering from drug abuse;
 - 2) Providing training for supervisors to recognize and combat illegal drug use in the workplace;
 - 3) Offering education to all employees about drug abuse; and
 - 4) Identifying illegal drug use through a testing program. USDA randomly tests for five illicit drugs from employees occupying sensitive positions or having safety or security responsibilities. Sensitive positions include Presidential appointments, positions requiring Top Secret security clearances, and others. DOT regulations

require alcohol and drug testing of employees required to have a commercial driver's license.

- For additional information on this subject, please refer to Web Link:
www.usda.gov/da/shmd/dfwp.htm

Medical Services

- The USDA South Building Health Unit is located in Room 1411 - South Building; Phone: (202) 720-3281, Hours of Operation: 7: 15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For additional information on this subject, please refer to Web Link:
<http://www.usda.gov/oo/health.htm>
- Services Provided by the medical staff at the Health Unit includes:
 - Acute Ambulatory Care
 - Emergency Office Call
 - Health Education
 - Health Promotion and Maintenance Programs
 - Immunizations
 - Field Health Units
 - USDA Medical Services Staff
- Emergency Office Calls
 - The medical staff will visit employees for medical care when employees are severely ill or distressed and refer them to the appropriate medical facility when indicated.
 - Health Education
 - The medical staff provides information on diseases and treatment as well as for optimal health maintenance, such as nutrition and weight control.
 - Health Promotion and Maintenance Programs
 - Health Fair
 - Mammography
 - Blood Pressure Monitoring
 - Administration of Prescription Medications
 - Allergy Immunotherapy (Allergy Shots)
 - Lectures
 - Tuberculosis Skin Testing (P.P.D.) The Health Units provide tuberculosis skin testing to volunteers for the Adopt a School Program.
 - Annual Health Fairs are scheduled
 - The South Building Health Unit schedules health screening programs throughout the year.
 - Mammography. The Medical Services Health Unit schedules the Mammography Mobile Vans when the dates are available.
 - Blood Pressure Monitoring. Check with the center for blood pressure monitoring hours. Note: A doctor's order is required for monitoring your blood pressure more than once a week.
 - Administration of Prescription Medications. The Health Unit medical staff will administer prescription medications, such as vitamin shots, and assist the employee in complying with medication regimens.

- Allergy Immunotherapy (Allergy Shots). This service is provided. Check with the center for appropriate hours.

Immunizations

- Official Travel Immunizations. The medical staff provides information and recommendations of immunization requirements. The staff also administers immunizations such as Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Typhoid.
- Influenza Immunizations (Flu Shots). This service is provided by the Health Units each year in the fall. The Health Unit also handles immunizations related to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogen Policy.
- Blood Drives. The Health Unit assist in the coordination and implementation of the American Red Cross blood drives. Blood drives are held six times a year.

Voluntary Activities

The following is a list of voluntary organizations, programs, and activities in which USDA employees most frequently participate. Please note that this list is not complete. For additional information, please check with your supervisor.

Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)

- The CFC is an annual Government-wide campaign to raise money to help those in need across our community and throughout the world. CFC is the only authorized solicitation of employees in the Federal workplace on behalf of charitable organizations. USDA employees are encouraged to donate in the form of payroll deduction that will help all year long. At the beginning of the campaign, a designated coworker contacts every employee with details about the CFC.

U.S. Savings Bonds

- You may purchase U.S. Savings Bonds under the payroll deduction plan by completing form SBD 1928, Authorization for Purchase and Request for Change United States Series EE Savings Bonds, and sending it to your servicing Human Resources office. Savings Bonds may be purchased in denominations of up to \$10,000 at a cost of 50 percent of their face value. Your Savings Bonds will be mailed to you during the week following the payday in which the full purchase price has been deducted. For more information visit the web site at Web Link: www.savingsbonds.gov.

Blood Donor Program

- USDA encourages your participation in the regional blood program of the American Red Cross. From time to time, you will be notified that the Red Cross blood collection unit will be in your area. Employees are encouraged to donate blood and will be given appropriate administrative leave for this purpose.

USDA Federal Credit Union

- Located on the Ag Promenade, sub-basement of the South Building, the following services are available to Federal employees:
 - Direct Payroll Deposit
 - Credit Cards
 - Checking Accounts
 - Traveler's Checks
 - Payroll Deduction Share Certificates Loans
 - IRA's
- The USDA Federal Credit Union also has offices in the Virginia and Maryland suburbs.
- For additional information, please refer to Web Link: <https://www.agriculturefcu.org/>

Employee Services and Recreation Association (ESRA)

- ESRA is a nonprofit organization for USDA employees in the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan area. Its members work together for their individual and collective welfare and for the improvement of their working environment.
- After joining, members may benefit from various services such as discount prices on travel tour packages, discount group buying plans, photo finishing, and discount tickets to sporting events, etc.
- ESRA is located on the Ag Promenade in the South Building. For information on activities and membership call (202) 720-3772 or visit the web site at Web Link: www.usdaesra.org.

Farmer's Market

- On Fridays during the period of June through October, a Farmer's Market is conducted from 10 AM to 2 PM on the USDA Parking Lot, at the corner of 12th Street and Independence Avenue. Many varieties of fresh produce are available. (This is on the East Side of the Whitten Building).

Health and Fitness Center

- Located on the Ag Promenade of the South Building, the Fitness Center is open 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. The facility consists of a life cycle room, a weight room, an aerobics room, locker rooms, and showers. The center also has a number of Cybex exercise machines.
- Membership is available to USDA and contract employees within the Department. A nominal fee is charged for membership.
- For more information, call (202) 720-8995 or visit the web site at Web Link: www.usdaesra.org.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights

USDA's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Statement

- Departmental Regulation 4300-6, Civil Rights Policy for the Department of Agriculture, contains the USDA civil rights policy, listing the prohibited bases of discrimination, and states: "It is the policy of the Department of Agriculture that no person shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, protected genetic information, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, status as a parent, or retaliation for involvement in the EEO process."
- This policy applies to all customers and employees regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status or family status. USDA employees, in Washington and all field offices, must commit to uphold this policy.
- Also, reprisal of any kind against employees or customers will not be tolerated. The Subcabinet, agency heads, managers, supervisors and other employees across the Department will be held accountable for civil rights at USDA. All employees must demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunity for all.

Equal Employment Opportunity:

- The Department of Agriculture is committed to affording every employee and customer fair and equitable treatment without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. To assist in translating this commitment into meaningful action, each agency head will strive to achieve the following civil rights strategic goals:
 - 1) Hold managers, supervisors, and other employees accountable for ensuring that USDA customers and employees are treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect.
 - 2) Ensure equal access and provide equal treatment in the delivery of USDA programs and services to all customers.
 - 3) Eliminate under-representation in the workforce by recruiting and employing a highly skilled, competent, and diverse workforce, free of discrimination, reprisal, and sexual harassment.
 - 4) Provide sufficient human, fiscal, and organizational resources, and train all employees, to institute an effective civil rights program.
 - 5) Ensure equal opportunity to minority, women-owned, and small and disadvantaged businesses in USDA procurement and contracting activities.

Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

- Workplace Diversity and Inclusion are core values of USDA.
- Diversity is not just limited to the traditional categories of race, age, gender, physical ability, religion, or sexual orientation. Diversity encompasses all the ways that human

beings are both similar and different, to include work experience, educational background, personal habits, marital status, and work location. These factors create areas of commonality and points of differences – all from which we can learn.

- We realize that people are our most important asset. When people believe they are being treated fairly and with respect, when people feel good about their jobs, and when people enjoy coming to work, they are more productive.
- Therefore, USDA strives to create a workplace that values diversity and inclusion, where all employees demonstrate, on a daily basis, their respect for each individual's unique attributes so that the workplace is free from harassment, discrimination, and intolerance.

USDA Agency Acronyms

The following list of abbreviations and acronyms may help you become acquainted with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agencies.

AGENCY

- Agricultural Marketing Service (*AMS*)
- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (*APHIS*)
- Agricultural Research Service (*ARS*)
- Cooperative State Research Education, & Extension Service (*CSREES*)
- Departmental Administration (*DA*)
- Office of Administrative Law Judges (*OALJ*)
- Office of Ethics (*OE*)
- Office of Human Capital Management (*OHCM*)
- Office of the Judicial Officer (*OJO*)
- Office of Management Services (*OMS*)
- Office of Operations (*OO*)
- Office of Procurement & Property Management (*OPPM*)
- Office of Security Services (*OSS*)
- Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (*OSDBU*)
- Economic Research Service (*ERS*)
- Foreign Agricultural Service (*FAS*)
- Food and Nutrition Service (*FNS*)
- Forest Service (*FS*)
- Farm Service Agency (*FSA*)
- Food Safety and Inspection Service (*FSIS*)
- Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (*GIPSA*)
- National Appeals Division (*NAD*)
- National Agricultural Statistics Service (*NASS*)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (*NRCS*)
- Office of Adjudication and Compliance (*OAC*)
- Office of Budget and Program Analysis (*OBPA*)
- Office of Communications (*OC*)
- Office of the Chief Economist (*OCE*)
- Office of the Chief Financial Officer (*OCFO*)
- National Finance Center (*NFC*)
- Office of the Chief Information Officer (*OCIO*)
- Office of Congressional Relations (*OCR*)
- Office of the Executive Secretariat (*OES*)
- Office of the General Counsel (*OGC*)
- Office of the Inspector General (*OIG*)
- Risk Management Agency (*RMA*)
- Rural Business-Cooperative Service (*RBS*)
- Rural Housing Service (*RHS*)
- Rural Utilities Service (*RUS*)

Government Acronyms

The following list will help you become acquainted with other commonly used acronyms. If you cannot find or understand an acronym, please ask your supervisor.

- APDA**---Association for Persons With Disabilities in Agriculture
- COLA**---Cost-of-living allowance
- CSRS**---Civil Service Retirement System
- EEO**---Equal Employment Opportunity
- EOD**---Enter on Duty
- FECA**---Federal Employees Compensation Act
- FEGLI**---Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
- FEHB**---Federal Employees Health Benefits
- FERS**---Federal Employees Retirement System
- GS**---General Schedule
- HMO**---Health Maintenance Organization
- HR**---Human Resources
- LWOP**---Leave Without Pay
- MSPB**---Merit Systems Protection Board
- NFC**---National Finance Center
- OA**---Office of the Administrator
- OD**---Office of the Director
- OPM**---Office of Personnel Management
- PD**---Position Description
- SCD**---Service Computation Date
- SES**---Senior Executive Service
- TARGET Center**---Technology Accessible Resources Gives Employment Today
- T&A**--- Time and Attendance
- TDY** --- Temporary Duty
- TSP**--- Thrift Savings Plan

Items You Need to Know During Your First Week

Your Job

- Days and Hours Of Work, Including Lunch and Breaks, Etc.
- Who Your Supervisor Is
- What Your Work Unit Does, And How It Relates To Other Parts Of USDA
- Your Duties (Read Your Position Description And Discuss This With Your Supervisor)
- Work Facilities – Such As Parking Spaces And Cafeteria
- Dress Requirements

Pay and Leave

- Time And Attendance Reporting Procedures
- When You Will Receive Your First Paycheck
- Employee Personal Page From NFC's Webpage
- When, How, And Whom To Notify If You An Unable To Report To Work
- How And From Whom To Request Leave

Health and Safety Benefits at Work

- On-the-Job Safety and Health
- Safety and Health Equipment
- Hazard Communication
- Emergency Action Plan
- Reporting and Correcting Workplace Hazards
- Medical Services and First Aid

Benefits

- Health Benefit Plans – what plans are available and how to enroll
- Long Term Care Insurance – what it is and how to enroll
- Flexible Spending Accounts – types available and how to enroll
- Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Vision Insurance
- Retirement Coverage – FERS or CSRS
- Thrift Savings Plan
- Designation of Beneficiaries
- Employee Assistance Program

Employee Conduct, Rights, and Privileges

- Employee Responsibilities And Conduct
- Use Of Government Property
- Grievance Procedures
- Joining a Union - Your rights to join or refrain from joining a union, and whether you are covered by a collective bargaining

New Employee Checklist

The checklist below is designed to help ensure that your questions or concerns are addressed in reference to benefits and services, policies and procedures, job functions, and your role and responsibilities within the organization.

If any items could be answered "No" and are applicable to you or your position, or "Need more information," please bring these items to the attention of your supervisor.

- **Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Position (SF-85)** has been submitted
- **Fingerprint Chart (SF-87)** has been submitted
- **Life Insurance Form (SF-2817)** has been submitted
- **Health Insurance Form (SF-2809)** has been submitted
- **Thrift Savings Election Form** has been submitted
- **Designation of Beneficiary Form(s)** have been submitted
- **Direct Deposit Sign-Up or Waiver Form** has been submitted
- **Savings Bonds Form** (if desired) has been submitted
- **Financial and Discretionary Allotments Form** has been submitted
- **Dental or Vision Insurance Programs** (if desired) enrollment completed at <HTTPS://www.BENEFEDS.com>
- **Flexible Spending Account** enrollment completed (if desired)
- **Long Term Care Insurance** enrollment completed (if desired)

- I know what benefits/services are available for me and how/when to enroll
- I have received a Federal employee photo identification/badge
- I have met my supervisor/managers
- I have met my co-workers and others with whom I will interact frequently
- I have toured my work area
- I have located facilities that I may need (cafeteria, restroom, parking, etc.)
- I have received a key or access to my work area
- I understand the communication system within my department
- An email account has been assigned to me
- I can explain my job responsibilities
- Performance standards have been explained and are clear to me
- Policies and procedures have been explained
- I can explain the terms and conditions of my employment
- I have been given documentation relevant to my job
- I understand how my job fits with other jobs in my department
- I can describe the products/services we provide
- I can explain who our customers are
- I know where to get supplies and equipment
- I know who to ask for help
- I know what to do in an emergency
- I am aware of training opportunities