

Charter: Diversity Task Force
NORTHERN PLAINS AREA (NPA)
USDA, ARS
Approved by Task Force on April 29, 2004

ARTICLE I: Committee Name:

Northern Plains Area Diversity Task Force

ARTICLE II: Purpose

We in the NPA are aware of the need for and benefits of a workforce that is representative of the nation's increasingly diverse population. The NPA has made substantial progress in diversifying its workforce, and views every job vacancy as an opportunity to further diversify its workforce.

The Northern Plains Area Diversity Task Force (the Task Force) will serve in an advisory capacity to the Area Director, Dr. Wilbert H. Blackburn. The Task Force will assist the Area Director in fulfilling objectives of the EEO and Affirmative Employment Program by helping to formulate and recommend activities and processes to the Area Director, which will: 1) expand diversity recruitment efforts in the NPA; 2) enhance quality of life issues within the NPA; 3) increase employee awareness of diversity, EEO/CR, and conflict resolution; and 4) will strive to retain a diversified workforce. Additionally, Task Force members will serve as their Location's advocate and contact for diversity-related issues and Task Force initiatives.

ARTICLE III: Vision Statement

The vision of the Northern Plains Area Diversity Task Force is to create an environment which sustains a diverse workforce united in research excellence and quality service in support of the ARS mission.

ARTICLE IV: Mission Statement

The mission of the Task Force is to develop and sustain a workforce reflective of the nation's diverse population. The Task Force will recommend and support activities within NPA to: develop and implement recruitment, outreach, and communication approaches in order to

ensure a diverse workforce; ensure an organizational climate which promotes work life quality and employee retention; and assist in developing activities that will increase employee awareness of diversity, equal employment opportunity, and civil rights.

ARTICLE V: Task Force Objectives

The Task Force has three primary objectives:

1. Focus on positively impacting the recruitment process in order to help achieve a more diverse workforce.
2. Identify and recommend actions and programs which will ensure retention of valued employees by enhancing quality of life issues.
3. Assist in developing activities that will increase employee awareness of diversity, EEO/CR, and conflict resolution.

ARTICLE VI: Organizational Structure, Meeting Schedule, Membership, and Scope

Organizational Structure: The organizational structure of the Task Force shall consist of an Advisory Council and an Action Team. The Area Civil Rights Manager/EEO Specialist will serve as Coordinator of the Task Force. The Advisory Council will be appointed by the Area Director, and will serve as a resource to the Action Team, without voting rights. The Action Team members will have full voting rights. In the case of a tie vote, the Coordinator shall cast the deciding vote. The Action Team will elect a Chair and Chair-Elect; the Chair shall serve one year and the Chair-Elect shall serve one year as Chair-Elect and the following year as Chair. The Coordinator and Chair will work closely to plan the activities of the Task Force.

Meeting Schedule: Meetings of the Task Force shall be held tri-annually in October, January, and April, or as schedules allow. One meeting will be by attendance; the other two meetings will be via teleconference. The Area Director will cover travel expenses of members for one meeting each fiscal year. Members shall alert the Chair in advance if they will be unable to attend a meeting. A majority of the Task Force Action Team shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting business.

Membership: The members of the Action Team shall consist of representatives from each of the Locations and shall be representative of the NPA workforce and include employees from the major job categories, regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, disability, religion,

political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. Members of the Action Team will be appointed by the Area Director, from nominations received from each Location Center Director (or Research Leader). Terms will be for one to three years. Members who have more than two unexcused absences may face removal from the Task Force. Reappointments, and filling vacancies, will be at the discretion of the Area Director.

Members will be granted official time to attend Task Force meetings. Members will also be given reasonable time to conduct Task Force activities, with “reasonable time” determined in conjunction with the member and his/her Center Director (or Research Leader).

Scope and Boundaries: Task Force recommendations and activities shall not be constrained by the boundaries of existing processes. The Task Force shall define the best processes that: 1) satisfy the objective, 2) are plausible in the NPA, and 3) conform to existing law and USDA-EEO policy. The Task Force shall recommend and help implement innovations in process that will accelerate progress toward the Task Force vision, mission, and EEOC requirements.

ARTICLE VII: Sunset Clause

The Task Force is chartered for five years, starting 29 April 2004 and terminating on 31 January 2009, unless it is extended or re-chartered by the Area Director. The Task Force can be dismantled at any time if the Area Director decides that its efforts are no longer adding value to the stated purpose and objectives of the Northern Plains Area Diversity Task Force.

Dr. Wilbert H. Blackburn, Area Director

Date