

The Federal Manager

COVER

Improve the Diversity of Your Team Using Strategies from the USDA Diversity Roadmap 3

FEATURE

Mediocrity and Disengagement – What to Do? 8

DEPARTMENTS

President's Page 2
The Influence of FMA-PAC

Policy & Legislation 12
FMA Legislative Priorities Moving Forward Despite Partisan Politics on Capitol Hill

Federal Sector FYI 15

Meet Your Legislators 16
U.S. Representatives Elijah Cummings and Dennis Ross

Making a Difference 18
FMA's 73rd National Convention and Management Training Seminar
The Power of Your Voice – A First-Hand Account of *Day on the Hill*
FMA Welcomes Transportation Security Management Chapter!

Community Partners 26
FEEA: 25 Years of Feds Helping Feds

Legal Brief 28
Are You Timid? Is That What's Wrong with the Civil Service?

Between the Lines 31
America Celebrates Public Service

FMA Corporate Partners



PRESIDENT'S PAGE



*FMA National President
Patricia Niehaus*

The Influence of FMA-PAC

Hello, Team FMA! The conclusion of FMA's 73rd annual National Convention marked the departure of two of FMA's distinguished Executive Board members. Please join me in thanking our outgoing National Vice President Jim Mahlmann and National Treasurer Sherie Lewis for their many years of service to our Association. We are thrilled they intend to continue to be active within FMA. Many, many thanks to both of you!

I would also like to welcome the three new members of our Board: National Vice President George Smith; National Treasurer, Katie Smith (no relation); and, Region 2 Director Dora Quinlan.

Welcome, and thank you for dedicating your time to Team FMA.

The attacks on federal employees show no signs of slowing down. FMA's legislative staff is working hard on countering these attacks, but they cannot do this alone. *FMA needs YOUR help!* Once again, I ask each and every one of you to actively participate in this battle – and all signs are pointed towards a heated fight. Please continue to pay attention to information coming from the National Office and contact your Members of Congress accordingly. Grassroots is crucial to the success of our efforts. If you have not been receiving this information, please take a moment to send your non-work e-mail address to info@fedmanagers.org.

Another way you can help is by contributing to our political action committee (FMA-PAC). The access that FMA-PAC contributions provide has assisted FMA in building stronger relationships with Members of Congress and their staff on issues of importance to FMA. FMA-PAC funds are helping FMA create a more visible and credible image on Capitol Hill and building clout with the Administration. *By contributing to FMA-PAC, you are helping FMA improve its contribution levels and continue to build on the legislative successes we have enjoyed in the past.*

Remember: FMA *cannot* use your dues to fund our political activity. Although I agree in principle with the sentiment, that we should not have to pay to present our opinions to our Members of Congress; however, the reality is that money talks. Big corporations and unions gain their influence two ways – members and money. I challenge you to increase both for FMA this year.

In the spring issue of the magazine, we thanked our FMA-PAC donors. The Executive Circle requires less than \$20 per pay period, or \$500 a year, to join. It takes less than \$10 per pay period (\$250/year) to join the Congressional Circle, and less than \$4 per pay period (\$100/year) will make you a Century Circle member! *Please think carefully about this.* A small contribution of \$5 or \$10 a pay period can go a long way in stretching FMA's political capital. If only 1,000 of our members donated \$5 per pay period, FMA-PAC would gain \$130,000 to help support our friends in Congress. Imagine what we could do with those funds!

FMA-PAC allows you as members to gain access to your lawmakers via fundraisers held in your area, and FMA-PAC prioritizes local fundraisers with FMA members over Washington, D.C. events. If you have been to a fundraiser in the past, please take a moment to share the experience with your chapter members and fellow feds.

I realize that by making a push for PAC contributions, I am asking you to provide FMA additional money for political gain. I understand that given the stress on all our pocketbooks lately, this may seem like a grand proposal. I realize this will not be appealing to everyone. However, I hope you will take a moment to think about how you can further invest in making FMA work for you. Whether it is time, money or both, we are here for you, but we need your support. Thank you.

Questions about FMA-PAC should be directed to FMA-PAC Chairman Leonard Lew (lflaw@sbcbglobal.net) or FMA's Government Affairs Director Jessica Klement (jklement@fedmanagers.org). ■

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All materials submitted to *The Federal Manager* should pertain to public service managers. Copy should be double-spaced, no longer than 10 pages.

High resolution color photographs, charts, or other illustrations should be included if possible. Text should be submitted by email or on compact disc. Include a biography of the author.

Submit unsolicited articles to:

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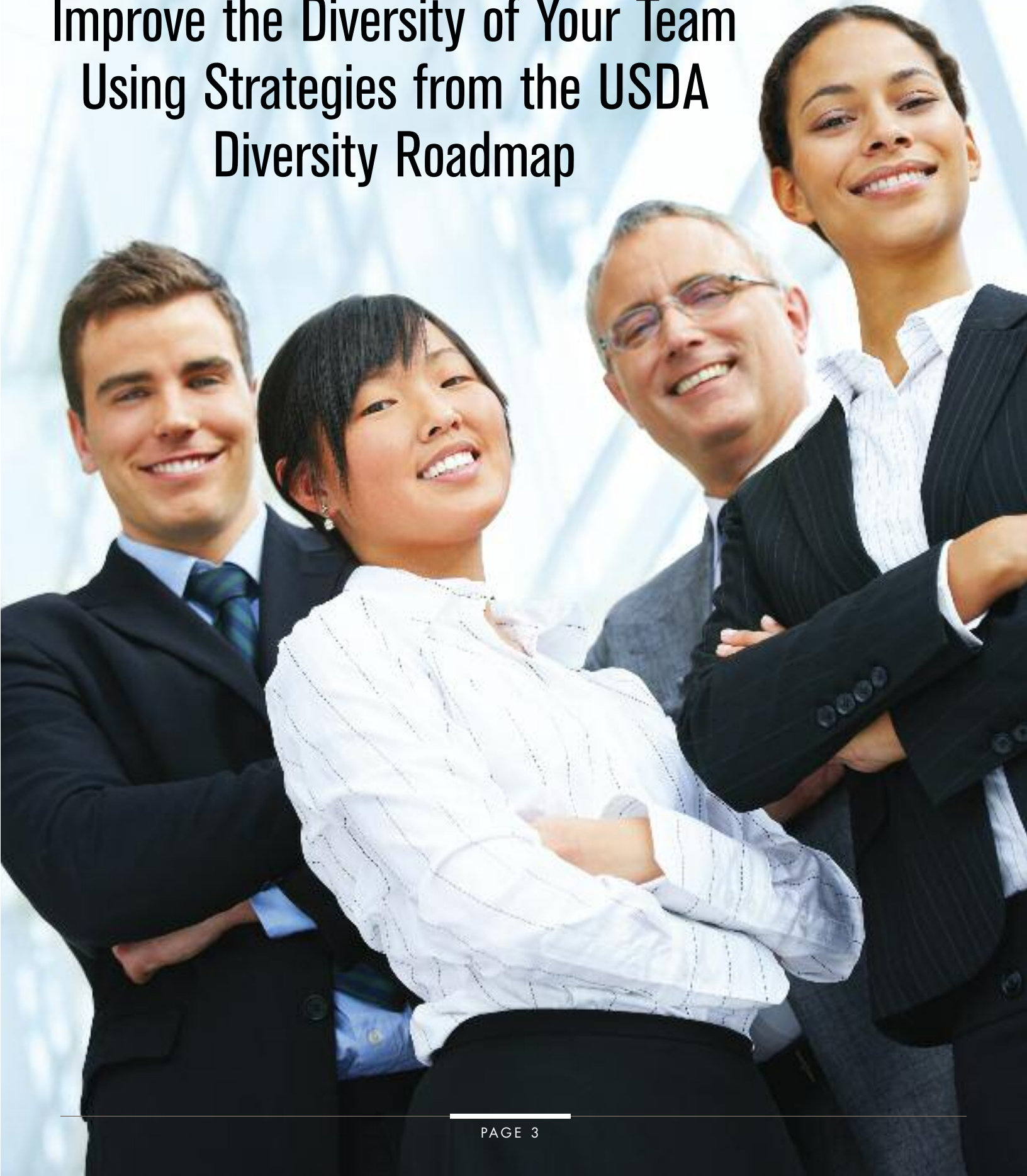
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Improve the Diversity of Your Team Using Strategies from the USDA Diversity Roadmap



Improve the Diversity of Your Team

Improve the Diversity of Your Team continued from page 3

By The Office of Human Resources Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Diversity is a topic that is on the mind of every top federal manager. A diverse workforce is critical for any organization that seeks to improve and maintain a competitive advantage. Focusing on diversity and looking for ways to achieve an inclusive environment is not just a “nice to have” objective, it makes good business sense and it is critical in today’s environment. A diverse team offers greater productivity and a competitive edge. Diversity improves the quality of organizations and offers a higher return on the investment in human capital. Additionally, federal managers know that future mission accomplishment generated by their team depends on the quality of employees they recruit today. New employees often consider an organization’s diversity efforts when deciding whether to accept or reject an employment offer. Potential candidates are usually more attracted to employers that are committed to sustaining a diverse workforce. Moreover, diverse perspectives increase creativity as they offer different views, ideas, and solutions. More importantly, successful development of a diversity-oriented organization is significantly different from increasing the percentage of minority representation. It requires commitment to the recruitment, retention, development, and support of under represented candidates. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is promoting this comprehensive approach with its federal managers through its Diversity Roadmap.

USDA’s Diversity Roadmap outlines six key strategies that federal managers in all organizations should apply to improve employee motivation and productivity. Each strategy has timelines, reports, and accountable parties to ensure results are achieved. These strategies are:

- Leadership Accountability
- Outreach and Partnership
- Recruitment and Hiring
- Retention and Promotion
- Diversity Training and Awareness
- Employee Development and Recognition

The Leadership Accountability Strategy focuses on the responsibilities of the federal manager. The key elements of this strategy include establishing an advisory council to provide input on diversity issues, incorporating diversity goals in performance standards for all employees, and establishing processes to regularly conduct workforce analyses to identify areas of under representation in your organization. This strategy forms a foundation that is needed for all of the other strategies to be effective.

The Outreach and Partnership Strategy includes developing links with a variety of organizations that can partner with federal managers on diversity issues. At USDA, Memorandums of Agreement have been signed with the Federal Managers Association (FMA), Federally Employed Women (FEW), the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC), National Image Inc., League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Blacks In Government (BIG), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT), Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE), and Asian American Government Executive Network (AAGEN) to support and assist our diversity efforts in hiring, retention, training and the advancement of USDA’s work. USDA also provides outreach and funding to minority-serving institutions, including the Hispanic Associations of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), the Washington Internships for Native American Students (WINS), the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander (AANAPISI), 1890, 1862, 1994 institutions, Thurgood Marshall

Scholarship Fund, and similar organizations and programs, intern programs, and additional new and existing programs.

The USDA Diversity Roadmap recommends a number of activities to achieve the Recruitment Strategy. These focus on a review of the Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee Management Directive (MD) 715 Report for groups that are under represented, and exploring new avenues of recruitment and the utilization of special hiring authorities. To ensure recruitment activities deliver the results that are needed to achieve a diverse team, USDA recommends the following.

- Implement the Referral Bonus Award Program to include, in addition to hard-to-fill jobs, recruitment of individuals from under represented groups, veterans, and the disabled.
- Use strategic marketing recruitment tools and advertisement of employment opportunities to attract under represented populations.
- Establish strategies and implement programs to target recruiting efforts based on Civilian Labor Force deficits per MD 715.
- Establish and implement strategies and programs as well as quarterly reporting requirements to increase hiring of people with disabilities and veterans to meet the intent of the Executive Order on hiring peoples with disabilities.
- Develop and implement strategies that result in the maximum use of hiring authorities / flexibilities.
- Conduct quarterly meetings to review data and impact of recruitment and hiring strategies with the Workforce Recruitment Program, Veterans Programs and Special Emphasis Program Managers.

- Develop and implement a hiring plan for interns that will reflect diversity needs.

Recruitment alone will not sustain the results that federal managers need to achieve. USDA also recommends strategies for retention and promotion so that federal managers can retain employees. The quality of supervision employees receive is critical to employee retention rates. People leave managers and supervisors more often than they leave companies or jobs. It is not enough that the manager is well liked or a nice person. Sure, nice, likeable managers earn some points with their employees. Draconian or controlling managers will encounter difficulties retaining high-performing employees. Below market benefits and compensation can also factor into retention rates. But, a manager or supervisor who is skilled at employee retention knows that the quality of the supervision can be the determining factor in employee retention. The USDA Diversity Roadmap recommends that federal managers receive training on retention strategies, wellness and work life balance. They should also provide career opportunities and resources to employees for career development through mentoring, coaching and Individual Development Plans. Additionally, the following activities are recommended to help federal managers ensure that they retain a diverse group of employees.

- Establish baseline information regarding retention of employees in under represented groups.
- Track data regarding the hiring and retention of employees in under represented groups.
- Establish baseline information regarding promotion of employees in under represented groups and populations.

- Track data regarding the promotion of employees in under represented groups.
- Monitor results and action items associated with the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey for your team to identify possible areas that address the retention of a diverse workforce.
- Conduct an exit survey or interview with every individual who leaves a position to assess barriers to retention.
- Provide effective onboarding for newly hired employees, and survey new hires about the effectiveness of their onboarding experience after 30 days, 90 days, and upon their first year of hiring anniversary date.

Another strategy federal managers are using from the Diversity Roadmap is diversity training and awareness. When an organization fails to give value to diversity and incorporate it into the culture of the organization, the organization will struggle in today's working environment. Diversity training and awareness allows an organization to take advantage of many ideas and opinions to maintain its competitiveness. Diversity training and awareness focuses on a comprehensive range of qualities other than race and gender. A diversified working environment contributes to developing effective working relationships with individuals from varied backgrounds. We are a multicultural society, and failing to give credibility and respect to the many diverse individuals of an organization limits the productivity of that organization. Diversity in an organization respects and values the unique differences and similarities of individuals. It recognizes that every individual has qualities that they bring to the table. These values, background and experiences create a truly diversified environment. Therefore, training and awareness along with recognition is an imperative to

celebrating diversity and bringing the skills of every team member to the forefront. The Roadmap recommends the following activities.

- Conduct diversity training for supervisors, managers, recruiters and Human Resources Specialists.
- Plan and execute a multicultural day to celebrate diversity and inclusion.
- Establish a multi-faceted communications plan utilizing social media to ensure leaders, supervisors, and employees understand the organization's commitment to diversity and accountability.

Finally, the USDA Diversity Roadmap recommends that federal managers consider employee development and recognition to promote diversity within the organization. Employee development is crucial for the growth and prosperity of any organization as employees are one of the determining factors for the success of the organization. The more capable and qualified the employees, the more effective and efficient the organization becomes. Employee development programs are essential to improve morale as well as to motivate employees to perform well. Employees enjoy learning new skills and meeting challenges and they are more motivated when they feel there is great potential for personal growth. When the organization shows interest in employee development, the employee naturally has a greater interest in the organization's development. The following activities are proposed by the Roadmap.

- Track the participation rate of under represented groups who have Individual Development Plans.
- Track the participation rate of under represented groups who have mentors.

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Improve the Diversity of Your Team

Improve the Diversity of Your Team continued from page 5

- Track the participation rate of under represented groups who have coaches.
- Track the participation rate of under represented groups that participate in developmental details through the new website.
- Establish a category of awards that recognizes accomplishments in diversity and recruitment.

Following are some practical examples of how federal managers within USDA are implementing the Roadmap to improve diversity.

Improving Disability Hiring

USDA hosted a training session led by a panel of top-level experts on employment of persons with disabilities reaching more than 500 key federal service employees. The event, open to federal employees from other organizations, provided information on the Executive Order to Increase Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities (E.O. 13548), including reasonable accommodation policy, procedures, and resources. Recruitment resources along with an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) shared register of pre-screened entry level job applicants with disabilities were provided, with information and guidance on returning injured employees to work. Chaired by Christine Griffin, OPM Deputy Director, the panel of presenters included leaders from the White House,

Department of Defense, Department of Labor, and Department of Education.

Increasing the Hiring of Veterans

More veterans, including those who are disabled, are joining the USDA workforce than ever before. This increase is due to USDA's commitment to the Veterans Employment Initiative resulting from Executive Order 13518, Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government. The Executive Order requires that USDA and 23 other federal agencies create a Veterans Employment Office with the full-time responsibility of promoting the recruitment and employment of veterans. In September 2010, the Interagency Council co-chaired by the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs announced specific performance goals for each agency in support of the Veterans Employment Initiative in fiscal year 2011. The Interagency Council determined that USDA's hiring goal for veterans will be ten percent of all new hires, and four percent for veterans with disabilities. USDA has surpassed these goals, with 13.9 percent of all new hires being veterans, and 5.2 percent being veterans with disabilities. USDA's Veterans Employment Program manager established a Veterans Advisory Council with members from each of USDA's Mission Areas. The Council will identify issues related to employment, retention, development, and advancement of veterans. The Council will also help identify barriers to fair employment of veterans, and assist in raising awareness among employees and management officials of the value of veterans. USDA is promoting partnerships with veterans' service organizations, and sponsoring activities that will promote the value of hiring veterans.

Creating a Safe Work Environment for Gays, Lesbians, and Transgender Employees

USDA issued a Departmental Regulation establishing a Special Emphasis Program (SEP) for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees. As a result, training opportunities are being developed so that the new LGBT SEP managers have the tools and resources they need to provide advice to federal managers about LGBT workplace issues and concerns. Education and awareness are vital parts of the program to ensure LGBT employees are able to work in a safe and inclusive environment. Talking about LGBT issues is not always easy because people have different perceptions and feelings based on their respective experiences or beliefs. However, it is imperative to hold these critical conversations about LGBT issues because LGBT inclusion is now part of official USDA policy. Discrimination or harassment of employees will not be tolerated for any reason, and any employee who experiences discrimination is urged to report it to their supervisor and/or a SEP manager or member of their Civil Rights Office. Because of the early success of USDA's LGBT Special Emphasis Program, representatives from OPM have met with USDA to gather lessons learned.

Working Across Generations

On most work teams today, there are as many as four different generations reflected among employees. Persons from different generations may be motivated by diverse factors and have different preferences for work styles. USDA is providing training to its federal managers on recognizing generational differences, and on the different strategies they can

employ to connect with a variety of generations that exist in the workforce. This includes varying methods of communication, recognizing performance, and assigning work.

Established Diversity Officers

A major component of the Diversity Roadmap is the goal of Leadership Accountability and Commitment. This led to the appointment of Diversity Officers. Diversity Officers are Senior Executive Service /GS-15 leaders who are charged with the responsibility of providing oversight and leadership to fully implement the Diversity Roadmap throughout USDA. The Diversity Officers will ensure the goals and objectives are accomplished as outlined within the Roadmap. Another requirement being pursued by the Diversity Officers is monthly reporting of diversity demographic data as it relates to new hires, promotions, separations, professional development, and the overall diversity landscape. In addition to reporting, the Diversity Officers will share strategies and best practices to improve diversity across USDA.

Oversight for the Diversity Roadmap at USDA is provided by Mr. Monshi Ramdass. Mr. Ramdass serves as the Director of Recruitment, Diversity, Wellness and Worklife, Veterans, Disability, and Mediation Division of the USDA Office of Human Resources Management. He has unified the USDA Mission Area of Special

Emphasis Program Managers and transformed the Special Observance Programs to create the “One USDA” vision with the agency’s partnerships. His philosophy is, “Strategies for change can only be achieved when led and supported from the top.” Prior to serving in his current position, Mr. Ramdass had a distinguished military and civilian career with over 25 years of experience in various capacities and leadership positions including Military Human Resources Director and Equal Opportunity Program Manager. Mr. Ramdass holds a Master’s degree in Human Resources Development and a Bachelor’s degree in Health Service Administration. For answers to questions about improving diversity for your team or organization, contact Mr. Ramdass at monshi.ramdass@dm.usda.gov.

In summary, embracing and championing diversity is critical for success in today’s environment. A federal manager who promotes and supports diversity will have a more productive work team that achieves better mission delivery. By implementing strategies outlined in USDA’s Diversity Roadmap, federal managers will be able to see both short-term and long-term results. ■

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