

**2024 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES – OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

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**PREFACE**

This publication summarizes the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the “Budget” is in regard to the 2024 Budget, unless otherwise noted. All references to years refer to fiscal year, except where specifically noted. The budgetary tables throughout this document show actual amounts for 2021 and 2022, enacted levels for 2023, and the President’s Budget request for 2024. Amounts for 2023 estimated levels include: non-enacted amounts such as Full-Time Equivalent levels, fleet levels, information technology investment levels, recovery levels, transfers in and out, balances available end of year, and obligation levels.

Throughout this publication, the “2018 Farm Bill” is used to refer to the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Most programs funded by the 2018 Farm Bill are funded through 2023. Amounts shown in 2024 for most Farm Bill programs reflect those confirmed in the baseline.

Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, sequestration is included in the numbers for mandatory programs in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

**AGENCY-WIDE****PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The Office of Communications (OC) was established on June 7, 1913, when the Secretary of Agriculture established the Office of Information as a news service to communicate findings and recommendations of USDA’s scientists and specialists to the widest possible audience. Section 7 CFR Subtitle A, delegates authority for public affairs activities from the Secretary to the Director of OC.

As USDA programs expanded to serve new constituencies beyond its original audiences in remote, rural parts of the country, OC has leveraged digital communications tools and channels to better inform and serve the broader public. OC’s mission is to provide leadership, expertise, management, counsel, and coordination that result in successful communication strategies and products that serve and engage the public in a timely, fair, equal, transparent, and easily accessible manner while advancing the mission of USDA and priorities of the Administration.

OC is located in Washington, D.C. As of September 30, 2022, there were 40 permanent full-time employees funded by appropriated funds (30) and the Working Capital Fund (10). Of these employees 38 were located in Washington D.C. and 2 were located in field offices.

**OIG AND GAO REPORTS**

OC did not have any Office of Inspector General or Government Accountability Office evaluation reports during the past year.

**AVAILABLE FUNDS AND FTEs****Table OC-1. Available Funds and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

Item	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Actual	FTE	Actual	FTE	Estimated	FTE	Estimated	FTE
Salaries and Expenses:								
Office of Communications.....	\$7,342	36	\$7,309	34	\$8,738	44	\$16,539	48
Total Available .....	7,342	36	7,309	34	8,738	44	16,539	48
Lapsing Balances .....	-276	-	-105	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations .....	7,066	36	7,204	34	8,738	44	16,539	48
Other USDA:								
Politico Pro Subscription .....	-	-	117	-	147	-	147	-
USDA.Gov Project .....	-	-	1,000	-	-	-	-	-
UC Volunteer Detailees .....	-	-	48	-	2	-	-	-
Staff Detail.....	-	-	95	-	85	-	-	-
Working Capital Fund .....	3,707	9	6,498	10	6,469	13	7,864	15
Total, Other USDA.....	3,707	9	7,758	10	6,703	13	8,011	15
Total Available, OC.....	10,773	45	15,067	44	15,441	57	24,550	63

Note: The details associated with Supplemental appropriations provided to the Office of the Secretary, but implemented in this Agency, is found in the USDA Budget Summary and is not reflected above.

**PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTES**

*Table OC-2. Permanent Positions by Grade and FTES*

Item	2021			2022			2023			2024		
	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total
SES.....	2	-	2	2	-	2	3	-	3	3	-	3
GS-15.....	3	-	3	4	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	4
GS-14.....	8	-	8	7	1	8	8	1	9	8	1	9
GS-13.....	9	-	9	5	-	5	10	-	10	10	-	10
GS-12.....	13	-	13	5	1	6	12	1	13	16	1	17
GS-11.....	5	-	5	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1
GS-9.....	2	-	2	4	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	4
Total Permanent.....	42	-	42	28	2	30	42	2	44	46	2	48
Total Perm. FT EOY	42	-	42	28	2	30	42	2	44	46	2	48
FTE.....	45	-	45	34	-	34	42	2	44	46	2	48

**SHARED FUNDING PROJECTS**

*Table OC-3. Shared Funding Projects (thousands of dollars)*

Item	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
<b>Working Capital Fund:</b>								
Administrative Services:								
Material Management Service.....	\$21	\$16	\$15	\$15	\$15	\$15	\$15	\$15
Mail and Reproduction Services.....	159	152	142	142	142	142	146	146
Integrated Procurement Systems.....	20	18	14	14	14	14	15	15
Procurement Operations Services.....	61	57	73	73	73	73	75	75
Human Resources Enterprise Management Systems.....	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Personnel Document Security.....	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2
AskUSDA Contact Center.....	-	-	3	3	3	3	43	43
Subtotal.....	262	244	250	250	250	250	297	297
Communications:								
Creative Media & Broadcast Center.....	291	217	338	338	338	338	278	278
Finance and Management:								
ASC WCF Controller.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
National Finance Center.....	15	12	14	14	14	14	14	14
Financial Management Systems.....	48	61	65	65	65	65	70	70
Internal Control Support Services.....	-	-	7	7	7	7	8	8
Subtotal.....	63	73	86	86	86	86	92	92
Information Technology:								
Client Experience Center.....	73	406	365	365	365	365	382	382
Department Administration Information Technology Office.....	1,803	1,220	1,045	1,045	1,045	1,045	1,029	1,029
Digital Infrastructure Services Center.....	143	176	137	137	137	137	149	149
Enterprise Network Services.....	43	42	52	52	52	52	62	62
Enterprise Cybersecurity Services.....	-	-	11	11	11	11	11	11
Enterprise Data and Analytics Services.....	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	2
Subtotal.....	2,062	1,844	1,611	1,611	1,611	1,611	1,635	1,635
Correspondence Management Services.....	3	5	49	49	49	49	51	51
Total, Working Capital Fund.....	2,681	2,383	2,334	2,334	2,334	2,334	2,353	2,353
<b>Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:</b>								
Agency Partnership Outreach.....	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.....	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
Human Resources Priority Goals Program.....	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2
Medical Services.....	13	10	33	33	33	33	33	33
National Capital Region Interpreting Services.....	7	2	19	19	19	19	19	19
Office of Customer Experience.....	5	4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Personnel and Document Security Program.....	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Physical Security.....	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Security Detail.....	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Security Operations Program.....	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Talent Group.....	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2

Item			2023	2024
	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	Estimated	Estimated
TARGET Center.....	1	1	1	1
USDA Enterprise Data Analytics Services.....	3	2	-	-
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs.....	44	31	70	70
Agency Total..... 051906	2,725	2,414	2,404	2,423

**ACCOUNT 1: SALARIES AND EXPENSES****APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE**

The appropriations language follows (new language underscored; deleted matter enclosed in brackets):

*Salaries and Expenses***Office of the Secretary**

For necessary expenses of the Office of the Secretary, [~~\$65,067,000~~]\$112,634,000, of which not to exceed [~~\$7,423,000~~]\$34,713,000 shall be available for the Immediate Office of the Secretary; not to exceed [~~\$1,396,000~~]\$2,396,000 shall be available for the Office of Homeland Security; not to exceed [~~\$5,190,000~~]\$6,533,000 shall be available for the Office of Tribal Relations, of which \$1,000,000 shall be to establish a Tribal Public Health Resource Center at a land grant university with existing indigenous public health expertise to expand current partnerships and collaborative efforts with indigenous groups, including but not limited to, tribal organizations and institutions such as tribal colleges, tribal technical colleges, tribal community colleges and tribal universities, to improve the delivery of culturally appropriate public health services and functions in American Indian communities focusing on indigenous food sovereignty; not to exceed [~~\$9,280,000~~]\$10,357,000 shall be available for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), of which \$1,500,000 shall be for 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(5); not to exceed; [~~\$28,422,000~~]\$37,369,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration, of which [~~\$26,716,000~~]\$35,627,000 shall be available for Departmental Administration to provide for necessary expenses for management support services to offices of the Department and for general administration, security, repairs and alterations, and other miscellaneous supplies and expenses not otherwise provided for and necessary for the practical and efficient work of the Department: *Provided*, That funds made available by this Act to an agency in the Administration mission area for salaries and expenses are available to fund up to one administrative support staff for the Office; not to exceed [~~\$4,609,000~~]\$4,727,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs to carry out the programs funded by this Act, including programs involving intergovernmental affairs and liaison within the executive branch; and not to exceed [~~\$8,738,000~~]\$16,539,000 shall be available for the Office of Communications: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to transfer funds appropriated for any office of the Office of the Secretary to any other office of the Office of the Secretary: *Provided further*, That, of the funds provided under this heading, up to \$4,000,000 may be transferred to OPPE and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to carry out section 12301 of Public Law 115–334: *Provided further*, That, of the funds provided under this heading, up to \$20,000,000 may be transferred to the Farm Service Agency to carry out section 729 of title VII of this Act: *Provided further*, That no appropriation for any office shall be increased or decreased by more than 5 percent: *Provided further*, That not to exceed \$22,000 of the amount made available under this paragraph for the Immediate Office of the Secretary shall be available for official reception and representation expenses, not otherwise provided for, as determined by the Secretary: *Provided further*, That the amount made available under this heading for Departmental Administration shall be reimbursed from applicable appropriations in this Act for travel expenses incident to the holding of hearings as required by 5U.S.C. 551-558: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs may be transferred to agencies of the Department of Agriculture funded by this Act to maintain personnel at the agency level: *Provided further*, That no funds made available under this heading for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations may be obligated after 30 days from the date of enactment of this act, unless the Secretary has notified the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress on the allocation of these funds by USDA agency: *Provided further*; That during any 30 day notification period referenced in section 716 of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall take no action to begin implementation of the action that is subject to section 716 of this Act or make any public announcement of such action in any form.

**Change Description**

*This change* adds language for the transfer of funds for Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach and authorizes the Secretary to transfer funds to Farm Service Agency to carry out section 729 of title VII of this Act.

**LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT****Table OC-4. Lead-Off Tabular Statement (In dollars)**

Item	Amount
Estimate, 2023	\$8,738,000
Change in Appropriation	+7,801,000
Budget Estimate, 2024	<u>16,539,000</u>

**PROJECT STATEMENTS****Table OC-5. Project Statement on Basis of Appropriations (thousands of dollars, FTE)**

Item	2021		2022		2023		2024		FTE		
	Actual	FTE	Actual	FTE	Estimated	FTE	Estimated	FTE	Inc. or Dec.	Inc. or Dec.	Chg Key
Discretionary Appropriations:											
Office of Communications.....	\$7,342	36	\$7,309	34	\$8,738	44	\$16,539	48	+\$7,801	+4	(1)
Total Adjusted Approp .....	7,342	36	7,309	34	8,738	44	16,539	48	+7,801	+4	
Add back:											
Rescission, Transfers In and Out .....	-	-	175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriations.....	7,342	36	7,484	34	8,738	44	16,539	48	+7,801	+4	
Transfers Out:											
Working Capital Fund .....	-	-	-175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transfers Out.....	-	-	-175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available .....	7,342	36	7,309	34	8,738	44	16,539	48	+7,801	+4	
Lapsing Balances.....	-276	-	-105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations .....	<u>7,066</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>7,204</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>8,738</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>16,539</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>+7,801</u>	<u>+4</u>	

Note: The details associated with Supplemental appropriations provided to the Office of the Secretary, but implemented in this account, is found in the USDA Budget Summary and is not reflected above.

**Table OC-6. Project Statement on Basis of Obligations (thousands of dollars, FTE)**

Item	2021		2022		2023		2024		FTE		
	Actual	FTE	Actual	FTE	Estimated	FTE	Estimated	FTE	Inc. or Dec.	Inc. or Dec.	or Dec.
Discretionary Obligations:											
Office of Communications.....	\$7,066	36	\$7,204	34	\$8,738	44	\$16,539	48	+\$7,801	+4	
Total Obligations .....	7,066	36	7,204	34	8,738	44	16,539	48	+7,801	+4	
Add back:											
Lapsing Balances.....	276	-	105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available .....	7,342	36	7,309	34	8,738	44	16,539	48	+7,801	+4	
Less:											
Total Transfers Out.....	-	-	175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriations.....	<u>7,342</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>7,484</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>8,738</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>16,539</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>+7,801</u>	<u>+4</u>	

Note: The details associated with Supplemental appropriations provided to the Office of the Secretary, but implemented in this account, is found in the USDA Budget Summary and is not reflected above.

**Office of Communications**

The numbers and letters of the following listing relates to values in the Change (Chg) Key column of the Project Statement:

- (1) An increase of \$7,801,000 and 4 FTEs (\$8,738,000 and 44 FTEs available in 2023).

The funding change is requested for the following items:

- A) An increase of \$303,000 for 2024 Pay.

This increase will support the annualization of the 2023 4.6 percent Cost of Living pay increase and the 2024 5.2 percent Cost of Living pay increase. The pay will allow the OC to continue to perform its mission of providing leadership, expertise, management, counsel, and coordination that result in successful communication strategies and products that serve and engage the public in a timely, fair, equal, transparent, and easily accessible.

B) An increase of \$1,371,000 for USDA Web Modernization.

The funding is needed to foster better communications between USDA and America’s farmers, foresters, producers, and ranchers. The Office of Communications will improve our digital communications, utilizing the USDA.gov website, social media tools (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), and leverage digital communications to replace traditional printing requirements. These resources will help support new initiatives to better engage and inform those seeking USDA services, such as the Digital Magazine format launched in June 2022; they will also help leverage the resources already committed to rebuilding and refreshing the USDA.gov website, providing tools for USDA agencies and offices. The primary way taxpayers first reach out for information is via the website. By leveraging the technology improvements made in the seven years since the last rebuild, we will provide our potential customers with an improved experience which should also support the agencies and field offices.

These resources will also contribute towards increasing USDA employee engagement across the country. With staff located in almost every county in the United States, OC launched a one-USDA intranet site in 2020 to reach all our employees through one consistent communications channel. As USDA addresses a declining Federal Employees’ Viewpoint Survey score, engaging in a two-way conversation with employees helps USDA attract, inspire, and retain an engaged and motivated workforce while ensuring the large field staff in USDA have a consistent channel to share their feedback, ideas and recommendations for improving our service to those who need our services.

C) An increase of \$1,127,000 and 4 FTEs for Digital Modernization.

This funding is needed to publicize USDA’s programs for taxpayers under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, the Inflation Reduction Act, and new Farm Bill programs by leveraging the power of video for USDA agencies. The Office of Communications will make centralized strategic hires to ensure USDA agencies and staff offices have access to reliable video production. Leveraging a self-funded investment to refresh the 27-year-old TV studio set in 2021, the office will add 4 positions to support video teleconferencing in the studio as well as capture digital production outside of Washington DC. Since the 2020 global pandemic, travel has increasingly been replaced by video teleconferencing and these additional resources will have a multiplier effect across the department as USDA seeks to inform and engage our stakeholders in convenient ways.

D) An increase of \$5,000,000 for Language Access.

This funding is needed to update USDA language access plans and resources to better disseminate information about federal resources, programs, and services, in line with the November 2022 memo issued by the Attorney General of the United States, “Strengthening the Federal Government’s Commitment to Language Access,” which requested updates to Department language access plans and resources to disseminate information more effectively about federal resources, programs, and services. These funds will contribute to the implementation of the Department’s revised plan.

**GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs**

***Table OC-7. Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)***

State/Territory/Country	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Actual	FTE	Actual	FTE	Estimated	FTE	Estimated	FTE
District of Columbia .....	\$7,066	36	\$6,887	32	\$8,387	42	\$16,173	46
North Carolina .....	-	-	207	1	228	1	238	1
Wisconsin .....	-	-	110	1	123	1	128	1
Obligations .....	7,066	36	7,204	34	8,738	44	16,539	48
Lapsing Balances .....	276	-	105	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available .....	7,342	36	7,309	34	8,738	44	16,539	48

**CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS****Table OC-8 Classification by Objects (thousands of dollars)**

Item No.	Item	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Estimated	2024 Estimated
	Personnel Compensation:				
	Washington D.C.....	\$4,059	\$3,772	\$4,932	\$6,703
	Personnel Compensation, Field.....	-	212	267	282
11	Total personnel compensation.....	4,059	3,984	5,199	6,985
12	Personal benefits .....	1,464	1,564	1,843	2,762
13.0	Benefits for former personnel .....	1	1	1	1
	Total, personnel comp., and benefits.....	5,524	5,549	7,043	9,748
	Other Objects:				
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons.....	33	66	90	100
23.1	Rental payments to GSA.....	-	4	5	5
23.3	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges .....	195	303	310	315
24.0	Printing and reproduction.....	7	16	15	15
25.1	Advisory and assistance services .....	504	904	915	5,946
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources .....	3	34	40	45
25.3	Other goods and services from Federal sources .....	217	-	-	-
25.4	Operation and maintenance of facilities.....	-	61	65	70
25.5	Research and development contracts .....	35	21	25	25
26.0	Supplies and materials .....	135	159	140	170
31.0	Equipment.....	413	87	90	100
	Total, Other Objects.....	1,542	1,655	1,695	6,791
99.9	Total, new obligations.....	7,066	7,204	8,738	16,539
	DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3).....	\$14	\$8	\$11	\$11
	<b>Mission Area Non-Major Investment Totals</b>	-	-	-	-
	Mission Area Standard Investment Totals .....	-	291	62	584
25.3	Mission Area WCF Transfers .....	-	2,186	2,230	2,275
	Total Non-Major Investment .....	-	2,477	2,292	2,859
	<b>Total IT Investments.....</b>	-	<b>2,477</b>	<b>2,292</b>	<b>2,859</b>
	Position Data:				
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position .....	\$177,000	\$181,000	\$185,525	\$191,091
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position .....	\$119,000	\$121,577	\$124,616	\$128,355
	Average Grade, GS Position .....	13.6	13.5	13.5	13.5

## **STATUS OF PROGRAMS**

The mission of the Office of Communications (OC) is to provide leadership, expertise, management, and coordination to develop successful communication strategies and products that advance the mission of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and priorities of the government while serving and engaging the public in a fair, equal, transparent, and easily accessible manner. OC delivers information concerning USDA's programs, policies, and activities to the American people by disseminating information through media outlets and directly to farmers, consumers, environmentalists, the business community, and other interest groups. The success of the Department's initiatives relies on effective communication and public education campaigns, making it easier for the public to access information on the Department's programs. OC has also taken on an increasingly important role in coordinating USDA's communications during emergencies or other incidents that potentially affect large segments of the public or industry.

### **Current Activities**

#### ***Creative Media and Broadcast Center (CMBC)***

CMBC is a central USDA resource for high-quality and cost-effective communications products and services. CMBC provides strategic communication planning solutions and tactical development, creation, production, and distribution. CMBC creates a wide range of communication products, including video and audio, print, exhibits, and web. CMBC provides services to agencies for information campaigns, training, radio and video public service announcements, webcasts, visitor centers, and remote media interviews.

CMBC essential services creating and disseminating communications for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Sub-Cabinet and mission areas. CMBC promotes the integrated use of traditional media and social media outreach. CMBC production services are provided to headquarters, regional, and local USDA offices, and to other government agencies, upon request.

CMBC's Creative Services business line added capabilities to efficiently meet our customer's needs, including updated studio and field production cameras. Majority of CMBC work during the pandemic was creating field video and photography content for both public outreach and training.

CMBC also houses the USDA Radio team, who produce between 6-20 broadcast ready stories and actualities about Agriculture/Research/Crop/Rural America Monday through Friday. The Radio team also uploads a dozen feature stories on topics about agriculture and for consumers weekly.

CMBC also includes the USDA Photography group that provides photography services including photojournalism, portraiture, multimedia productions, scientific, and photographic research for internal and external clients. Photography provides digital and multimedia content for the Digital Communications Division to support social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Photography works with OC's Editorial Review to verify photographic quality and subject content, copyright and clearances for all images used in publications, and ensure images are supported by key words and metadata. Photography also provides imagery for internal and external audiences through USDA's Flickr photo stream web site: [www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/). The group provides photographic training for agency Public Affairs Specialists and supports the Office of the Secretary with press and event photography.

#### ***Digital Communications Division (DCD)***

The DCD manages and maintains the USDA.gov web portal, ensuring content is available, accessible, and relevant to the Department's diverse stakeholders. DCD coordinates its digital communication efforts with the press office, providing expertise in web communications, online community engagement, and social media tactics. The group also supports agency and program area communications, evaluating web and social media analytics for USDA.gov and agency websites to better understand our users and their access of the Department's information and services.

Analytic trends are incorporated in ongoing communication planning efforts and web content strategies. The DCD team manages the USDA.gov search tool and seeks to optimize web content for search engines. The DCD team manages the Department's official social media assets such as the USDA Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, and the USDA Blog. DCD works collaboratively with agency web and communication teams and chairs the Social Media Council and Web Council within the Department, communicating best practices, Federal and USDA web initiatives, USDA web design and functionality guidance, and the use of emerging tools or technologies. Additionally, DCD collaborates with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, public affairs directors, and program employees, to ensure that web communication and social media programs effectively support the Department's mission. The DCD develops and maintains current policy on the official use of social media, new media, and digital communications, and provides the standards and guidance to all USDA digital efforts.

***Events, Print and Editorial Review (EPER) Division***

The Printing Services group within EPER remains the Department’s central printing authority and liaison with the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) and the Congressional Joint Committee on Printing. The group consults with, advises, instructs, and assists the agency printing specialists, administrative officers, editors, publications writers, and information specialists on the most economical and effective printing methods and procedures.

The Constituent Affairs group within EPER manages briefings at USDA headquarters with major stakeholders, including national and international delegations. The Constituent Affairs team collaborates with USDA Congressional Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs to support in-person visitation. Over the course of 2023, EPER will re-evaluate Constituent Affairs and develop a strategy going forward.

EPER’s Editorial Review group provides Departmental oversight for USDA’s publishing activities. Providing the final Departmental authorization and clearance of traditional and online publications before going out to the public, the group ensures compliance with Federal regulations and USDA Departmental Regulations and guidelines, including photography copyright reviews.

EPER shares responsibility with Digital Communications for providing strategic planning and oversight for the use of the USDA brand across all media. Implementation of the “One USDA” brand has increased visibility for USDA’s wide-ranging products and services. Brand management also ensures that the logo is used only where authorized, providing assurances to the public that the Department stands behind products and services that carry the USDA logo.

Starting in 2020, EPER also assumed responsibility for Department internal communications, including the USDA intranet. The group oversees the development of an enterprise internet solution for the Department and all sub-agencies. A full transition to this solution is expected by 2026. The group works closely with OC’s Digital Communications to manage content for the USDA intranet. This group also manages all-employee emails from the Office of the Secretary and the OneUSDA mailboxes and is responsible for collaboratively drafting and clearing all internal communications from the Office of the Secretary.

***Administration, Budget, and Customer Service (ABCS) Division***

The ABCS group is a central point of contact for external customer service and is responsible for budget formulation, preparation, justification, forecasting, and execution, as well as for coordinating all human resources tasks and providing administrative support to OC. Included in these support services are facilities and property management, oversight of telecommunications services, and the processing of all training, travel, and procurement requests.

***Press Operations (PO)***

PO provides outreach to media outlets and responds to reporter’s questions about the overall mission of the Department as well as the Secretary’s priorities. Communication Coordinators work with USDA Agencies and Staff Office communications staff to provide the leadership, expertise, counsel and coordination needed to develop communications plans and implement strategies vital to the overall formulation and awareness of USDA programs and policies. In addition, PO coordinates public and media communications for the Office of the Secretary and assists USDA mission areas and staff offices in developing plans for effective crafting and dissemination of information.

***Speechwriting***

The Speechwriting section of OC compiles briefings and drafts speeches, Op-Eds, and other remarks for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, as well as provides message guidance to USDA staff.

**Selected Examples of Recent Progress*****Administration, Budget, and Customer Service (ABCS) Division***

The ABCS group represents the USDA Staff offices to the USDA Customer Experience Office, answering 3,084 telephone and written correspondence inquiries, responded to 101 e-mails, and created, reviewed, updated, and uploaded 931 knowledge articles in the Department-wide Ask USDA Information Hotline for 2022.

***Events, Print and Editorial Review (EPER) Division***

The USDA Brand gives consistent identity to the Department, increases public recognition of the value and wide range of USDA’s products and services, and brings economy of scale to the production of visual information materials. In 2022, OC worked with the Office of General Counsel to defend the USDA Brand by promptly identifying the inappropriate use of the USDA Brand by a developer, nonprofits, and loan institutions and sending cease-and-desist letters in a timely fashion. Additionally, Events, Print and Editorial Review updated the style and

branding guides for the agency and adopted a unified common signature lockup for both print and web publications. EPER's Editorial Review team reviewed and cleared more than 160 manuscripts and 125 final products in a timely manner to meet deadlines of agencies and offices.

EPER's departmental-level Printing Services group completed printing requests for USDA agencies. USDA completed more than 1,000 print projects utilizing all printing programs including GPO Express program to ensure the best customer service with the most cost-efficient printing process. The Print Operating Data System built on the Enterprise-wide Service Now platform is in active use by the Natural Agricultural Statistics Service, the Food Safety and Inspection Service and OC. Development is underway to implement the system to manage and track printing procurement throughout the Department.

OneUSDA has been expanded to include space for agency subsites in support of developing communication tools to transform the USDA workforce culture and support the development of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessible programs and policies that are central to delivering more equitable and fair outcomes for our customers. A steering committee made up of representatives from all mission areas and many staff offices is established and actively guiding future development.

### ***Creative Media and Broadcast Center (CMBC)***

CMBC supported USDA leadership and mission areas, delivering timely messages to the public and employees.

Center team provided support and coverage for news conferences with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Chief Economist, and other leadership. The Creative team documented agencies field program efforts to create outreach and training videos. Project support for African Swine Fever and Avian Influenza outreach efforts with APHIS; Development of market messaging for MyPlate outreach for FNS.

Photography Services images and video clips posted had over 15 million total views on USDA's Flickr photostream, [www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/). Photography team reviewed 102 editorial clearances for USDA Agencies.

USDA TV Studio upgrade work continued with installation of energy efficient LED lighting.

USDA Radio – Two radio producers created 2,533 news items in 2022. USDA Radio also produced 572 features – 52 Agriculture USA documentaries, 260 Consumer Time features and 260 Ag Update features. News and feature reports are available for download at [www.usda.gov/media/radio](http://www.usda.gov/media/radio).

### ***Digital Communications Division (DCD)***

USDA Web Modernization – OC's DCD effectively managed USDA's Web Modernization Initiative by leading OC, in partnership with the Office of the Secretary, the Office of Customer Experience and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), to create the strategies, planning, development of project plans, and design and technical migration of website look and feel and hosting environments to USDA's common Enterprise Web Application Platform System. DCD successfully transferred almost all Staff Office websites from separate hosting environments to being hosted under the USDA.gov domain. With the consolidation of all USDA web assets onto a single platform operated by USDA's OCIO's Departmental Administration Information Technology Office, all Department web applications share a common platform which means agencies benefit from sharing the costs for development, security, hosting, and system administration. For example, the hosting environment OCIO operates allows for an elastic (variable number) of servers to provide the pre-production and production infrastructure, allowing USDA to provision and deprovision servers as need, providing further cost avoidance along with pooled costs for hosting, maintenance, and security. And customers benefit from a consistent overall look and feel, no matter what agency within USDA.gov they are searching.

Digital Magazine – USDA primarily utilizes web and social media to provide information and resources to our large and broad audience. These audiences range from farmers to researchers, students to educators, and many more. With so many priorities and programs, USDA looks to go beyond what our websites offer by creating an online digital magazine called "USDA Stories". Unlike our website which houses mostly administrative content, USDA Stories will market the wonderful work we do across all program areas, in a visually appealing way that is easy to read and share, using a modern storytelling platform. The Office of Communications is collecting stories that will feature individual and organizational successes, highlighting the breadth of our work here at USDA, how they tie into USDA's Priorities, and also shine a light on the lesser known services our Department provides. Stories are visually-driven with high quality videos, photographs, artwork and graphic design elements such as infographics and charts. Unlike press releases and blogs, submitted stories should be significant and impactful. Selected stories may be used for USDA's new online feature, but they may also be integrated into the Department's messaging and highlighted through social media, press releases and news articles.

USDA Priorities – With Secretary Vilsack’s leadership and the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is empowering people and improving lives. USDA has set four cross-cutting strategic priorities as part of its work behalf of producers, families, and rural communities: Addressing Climate Change via Climate Smart Agriculture, Forestry, and Clean Energy; Advancing Racial Justice, Equity, Opportunity and Rural Prosperity; Creating More and Better Market Opportunities; and Tackling Food and Nutrition Insecurity. To deliver on the promises of these priorities, OC created a special website on [USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov) to promote the work we're doing on these priorities and delivering the messages critical to the success of the initiatives.

***Press Operations (PO)***

The Press Operations group arranged interviews with international, national, and local media for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, averaging 4-6 interviews per week, to increase awareness and build support for USDA programs and priorities. This division also organized press for travel for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, while physically traveling with the Principals to support on the ground press activities. Notably, the team supported an average of one domestic trip per week and quarterly international travel, with some weeks and months including more than the average. Additionally, PO worked with agencies to respond to press inquiries, craft communications plans, and drafted and edited press materials, while also staffing and gathering press for teleconference press calls on major Department announcements.

***Speechwriting***

OC’s Speechwriting group prepared speeches, briefings, and remarks for use by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and subcabinet and researched and interviewed event planners to ensure that remarks matched up with audience expectations and were appropriate for each audience makeup in terms of topics of interest and including information specific to each audience.