

2026 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES – OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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PREFACE

This publication summarizes the fiscal year (FY) 2026 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the “Budget” is in regard to the 2026 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 2023 and 2024, Full-Year Continuing Resolution levels for 2025, and the President’s Budget request for 2026. Amounts for 2025 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 2025, as extended by the American Relief Act, 2025 (P.L. 118-158, Division D). Amounts shown in 2025 and 2026 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 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026.

In tables throughout this document, amounts equal to zero (0) are displayed as dashes (-). Amounts less than 0.5 and greater than zero are rounded and shown as a zero (0). This display treatment is used to prevent the masking of non-zero amounts that do not round up to one (1).

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 results in successful communication strategies and products that serve and engage the public in a timely and transparent manner while advancing the mission of USDA and priorities of the Administration.

OC is located in Washington, D.C. As of September 30, 2024, there were 48 permanent full-time employees funded by appropriated funds (35) and the Working Capital Fund (7). Of these employees, 38 were located in Washington D.C. and 4 were located in field offices.

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

Item	2023		2024		2025		2026	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations..	\$8,738	36	\$7,000	35	\$7,000	34	\$5,000	23
Lapsing Balances	-197	-	-92	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations	8,541	36	6,908	35	7,000	34	5,000	23
Other Funding:								
Politico Pro Subscription	82	-	128	-	-	-	-	-
WCF: Creative Media and Broadcast Center	18,132	11	11,424	13	7,470	15	7,470	15
Total Appropriation, Other Funding	18,132	11	11,552	13	7,470	15	7,470	15
Total Available, OC.....	26,952	47	18,552	48	14,470	49	12,470	38

* This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTEs**Table OC-2. Permanent Positions by Grade and FTEs**

Item	2023			2024			2025			2026		
	HQ	Field	Actual Total	HQ	Field	Actual Total	HQ	Field	Estimated Total	HQ	Field	Estimated Total
SES.....	2	-	2	2	-	2	1	-	1	1	-	1
GS-15	4	-	4	5	-	5	4	-	4	4	-	4
GS-14	7	1	8	10	1	11	9	1	10	5	1	6
GS-13	5	-	5	5	-	5	5	-	5	4	-	4
GS-12	5	1	6	8	-	8	6	1	7	4	-	4
GS-11	1	-	1	1	-	1	2	-	2	1	-	1
GS-9	4	-	4	3	-	3	4	-	4	2	-	2
GS-7	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1
Total												
Permanent	28	2	30	34	1	35	32	2	34	22	1	23
Total Perm. FT												
EOY.....	28	2	30	34	1	35	32	2	34	22	1	23
FTE*	34	-	34	34	1	35	32	2	34	22	1	23

* This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

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

Item	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Estimated	2026 Estimated
Working Capital Fund:				
Administrative Services:				
Ask USDA Contact Center	\$3	\$19	\$18	\$18
General Counsel Legal Compliance	-	-	1	10
Material Management Service	15	16	11	11
Mail and Reproduction Services	143	146	156	158
Integrated Procurement Systems	14	16	13	13
Personnel and Document Security Services	2	2	3	3
Procurement Operations Services	73	112	169	196
Human Resources Enterprise Management Systems	1	1	4	4
Subtotal	251	312	375	413
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center	2,618	165	122	269
Finance and Management:				
National Finance Center	13	15	13	13
Financial Shared Services	65	75	55	55
Internal Control Support Services	-	13	11	11
Subtotal	78	103	79	79
Information Technology:				
Client Experience Center	46	48	361	361
Department Administration IT Office	1,770	1,928	1,204	1,206
Digital Infrastructure Services Center	213	241	241	241
Enterprise Cybersecurity Services	11	11	31	31
Enterprise Data and Analytics Services	1	2	2	2
Enterprise Network Services	45	57	81	83
Subtotal	2,086	2,287	1,920	1,924
Correspondence Management Services				
Office of the Executive Secretariat	49	51	24	12
Total, Working Capital Fund	5,082	2,918	2,520	2,697
Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:				
Advisory Committee Liaison Services				
Agency Partnership Outreach	3	4	4	4
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility**	1	1	-	-
Employee Experience	1	2	1	1
Medical Services	33	16	18	18
NCR Interpreting Services	11	6	6	6
Office of Customer Experience	1	2	2	2
Physical Security	2	3	3	3
Security Detail	2	3	4	4
Security Operations Program	3	4	4	4
Talent Group	2	2	2	2
TARGET Center	1	1	1	1
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs	60	44	45	45
Agency Total	5,142	2,962	2,565	2,742

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ACCOUNT 1: OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE**

The appropriations language follows (new language underscored):

Office of the Secretary (Including Transfers of Funds)

For necessary expenses of the Office of the Secretary, \$42,696,000 of which not to exceed \$6,000,000 shall be available for the immediate Office of the Secretary; not to exceed \$1,896,000 shall be available for the Office of Homeland Security; not to exceed \$5,000,000 shall be available for the Office of Tribal Relations; not to exceed \$3,000,000 shall be available for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, of which \$1,500,000 shall be for 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(5); not to exceed \$18,300,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration, of which \$17,000,000 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 \$3,500,000 shall be available for the Office of 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 \$5,000,000 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 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 5 U.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 shall 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 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.

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

Item	Amount
Enacted, 2025	\$7,000,000
Change in Appropriation	-2,000,000
Budget Estimate, 2026	<u>5,000,000</u>

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

Item	2023 Actual	FTEs	2024 Actual	FTEs	2025 Estimated	FTEs	2026 Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.	Chg Key
Discretionary Appropriations: Office of Communications	\$8,738	36	\$7,000	35	\$7,000	34	\$5,000	23	-\$2,000	-11	(1)
Total Available	8,738	36	7,000	35	7,000	34	5,000	23	-2,000	-11	
Lapsing Balances	-197	-	-92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations ..	8,541	36	6,908	35	7,000	34	5,000	23	-2,000	-11	

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

Item	2023 Actual	FTEs	2024 Actual	FTEs	2025 Estimated	FTEs	2026 Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.
Discretionary Obligations: Office of Communications ..	\$8,541	36	\$6,908	35	\$7,000	34	\$5,000	23	-\$2,000	-11
Total Obligations	8,541	36	6,908	35	7,000	34	5,000	23	-2,000	-11
Add back: Lapsing Balances	197	-	92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriation..	8,738	36	7,000	35	7,000	34	5,000	23	-2,000	-11

JUSTIFICATION OF CHANGES**Office of Communications**

The base funds will allow the Office of Communications (OC) to carry out its statutory responsibilities and to provide guidance, leadership, counsel, and coordination for the Department's public information activities. These information activities promote the programs, policies, and activities that support America's farmers, foresters, producers, and ranchers. OC serves as the key USDA contact point for dissemination of consistent, timely information to the public. In addition to appropriated funding used for human resources operational services, current year and budget year base funds may also be used to support expedited and enhanced classification, staffing and processing efforts.

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

- (1) A decrease of \$2,000,000 and 11 FTEs in salaries and expenses (\$7,000,000 and 34 FTEs available in 2025).

In pursuit of streamlining workforce efforts, facilities, and other government efficiencies, the Office of Communications has reduced staff from 34 to 23. Funding will allow the Office of Communications to carry out its statutory responsibilities and provide guidance, leadership, counsel, and coordination for the Department's public information activities.

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs**Table OC-7. Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTEs for Office of Communications (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

State/Territory/Country	2023		2024		2025		2026	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
District of Columbia	\$8,222	34	\$6,577	33	\$6,642	32	\$4,768	22
North Carolina	205	1	211	1	224	1	232	1
Wisconsin	114	1	120	1	134	1	-	-
Obligations.....	8,541	36	6,908	35	7,000	34	5,000	23
Lapsing Balances	197	-	92	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, EOY.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available	8,738	36	7,000	35	7,000	34	5,000	23

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

Item No.	Item	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Estimated	2026 Estimated
Personnel Compensation:					
	Washington D.C.....	\$4,543	\$3,995	\$4,310	\$3,110
	Personnel Compensation, Field	214	250	260	158
11	Total personnel compensation.....	4,757	4,245	4,570	3,268
12	Personal benefits.....	1,772	1,642	1,671	1,217
13.0	Benefits for former personnel.....	5	-	-	-
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits	6,534	5,887	6,241	4,485
Other Objects:					
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons	91	82	57	75
22.0	Transportation of things	1	-	-	-
23.1	Rental payments to GSA	5	4	4	5
	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges	360	202	130	133
24.0	Printing and reproduction	13	9	7	10
25.1	Advisory and assistance services.....	224	280	23	5
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources ...	9	1	11	14
	Other goods and services from Federal sources.....	371	212	520	251
25.4	Operation and maintenance of facilities	820	206	-	-
26.0	Supplies and materials.....	34	13	7	22
31.0	Equipment	79	12	-	-
	Total, Other Objects	2,007	1,021	759	515
99.9	Total, new obligations	8,541	6,908	7,000	5,000
DHS Building Security Payments					
	(included in 25.3).....	\$11	\$9	\$10	\$11
Information Technology Investments:					
25.3	Mission Area WCF Transfers	396	923	319	224
	Total Non-Major Investment.....	396	923	319	224
	Total IT Investments	396	923	319	224
Position Data:					
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position	\$181,000	\$191,000	\$195,000	\$195,00
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position.....	\$129,000	\$131,500	\$142,000	\$142,000
	Average Grade, GS Position	13.6	13.5	13.6	13.6

* This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

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STATUS OF PROGRAMS

Current Activities

The Office of Communications (OC) ensures that information concerning USDA's programs, policies, and activities reaches the American people in an actionable, accurate, thorough, and accessible manner for all who have an interest in or rely on our services. The Office of Communications does this by disseminating information through a variety of owned digital and broadcast methods, through press announcements, via the news media, and through in-person and virtual engagements hosted by USDA or partner organizations. The successful implementation of the Department's initiatives relies on effective communication and public education initiatives, which make it possible for the public to access information on, engage with, and use the Department's programs. The Office of Communications also sets the standard for message consistency and quality of communications products from USDA's agencies and staff offices.