

## 2027 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES - OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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## **PREFACE**

This publication summarizes the fiscal year (FY) 2027 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the "Budget" is in regard to the 2027 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 2024 and 2025, Working Families Tax Cut Act, Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agency Appropriations Act, 2026, and the President's Budget request for 2027. Amounts for 2026 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 "Working Families Tax Cut Act" is used to refer to the Public Law 119-21.

Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, sequestration is included in the numbers for mandatory programs in 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027.

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 small non-zero amounts that do not round up to one (1). Due to rounding, some tables may not sum exactly.

## **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 their 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 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, 2025, there were 37 permanent full-time employees funded by appropriated funds (28) and the Working Capital Fund (9). Of these employees, 33 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	2024		2025		2026		2027	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations....	\$7,000	35	\$7,000	28	\$5,000	23	\$4,997	22
Total Obligations .....	7,000	35	7,000	28	5,000	23	4,997	22
Lapsing Balances .....	-92	-	-148	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations, OC .....	6,908	35	6,852	28	5,000	23	4,997	22
Other Federal Funds:								
WCF: Creative Media and Broadcast Center.....	11,424	13	8,599	18	5,470	6	5,470	6
Total, Other Federal .....	11,424	13	8,599	18	5,470	6	5,470	6
Total Available, OC.....	18,332	48	15,451	46	10,470	29	10,467	28

**PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTEs**

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

Item	2024			2025			2026			2027		
	HQ	Field	Total	HQ	Field	Total	HQ	Field	Total	HQ	Field	Total
SES.....	2	-	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
GS-15.....	5	-	5	4	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	4
GS-14.....	10	1	11	5	1	6	5	1	6	5	1	6
GS-13.....	5	-	5	4	-	4	4	-	4	3	-	4
GS-12.....	8	-	8	5	1	6	3	-	3	3	-	3
GS-11.....	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1
GS-9 .....	3	-	3	6	-	6	5	-	5	5	-	5
Total Permanent	34	1	35	26	2	28	22	1	23	21	1	22
Total Perm. FT EOY.....	34	1	35	26	2	28	22	1	23	21	1	22
FTE .....	34	1	35	26	2	28	22	1	23	21	1	22

**SHARED FUNDING PROJECTS**

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

Item	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Estimated	2027 Estimated
<b>Working Capital Fund:</b>				
Administrative Services:				
AskUSDA Contact Center .....	\$19	\$18	-	-
General Counsel Legal Compliance .....	-	-	\$10	\$10
Human Resources Enterprise System Management .....	2	2	4	4
Integrated Procurement Systems.....	16	13	23	23
Mail and Reproduction Management Division.....	146	157	119	120
Material Management Service Center .....	17	11	10	10
Personnel and Document Security.....	2	3	3	-
Procurement Operations Division .....	-	-	157	157
Subtotal .....	202	204	326	324
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center.....	155	41	14	79
Finance and Management:				
Internal Control Support Services.....	13	11	1	1
Financial Shared Services .....	75	55	45	44
National Finance Center .....	14	11	14	14
Subtotal .....	102	77	60	59
Client Experience Center .....	49	88	599	595
Department Administration Information Technology Office.....	2,224	1,207	962	-
Digital Infrastructure Services Center.....	242	250	-	963
Enterprise Cybersecurity Services.....	11	12	33	33
Enterprise Data and Analytics Services .....	1	1	-	-
Enterprise Network Services .....	55	45	35	35
Subtotal .....	2,582	1,603	1,629	1,626
Correspondence Management Services:				
Office of the Executive Secretariat .....	51	12	10	10
Total, Working Capital Fund.....	3,092	1,937	2,039	2,098
<b>Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:</b>				
Agency Partnership Outreach.....	4	4	2	2
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility .....	1	-	-	-
Employee Experience.....	2	1	-	-
Medical Services.....	16	-	-	-
NCR Interpreting Services .....	6	6	6	6
OCFO Shared Services Branch .....	-	-	-	1
Office of Customer Experience .....	2	1	-	-
Physical Security .....	3	3	1	1
Security Detail.....	3	4	8	8
Security Operations .....	4	3	4	4
Talent Group.....	2	2	-	-
TARGET Center .....	1	1	1	1
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs.....	44	25	22	23
Agency Total.....	3,136	1,962	2,061	2,121

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**ACCOUNT 1: OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

**APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE**

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

*Office of the Secretary (Including Transfers of Funds)*

For necessary expenses of the Office of the Secretary, [~~\$46,361,000~~]\$64,987,000 of which not to exceed [~~\$7,000,000~~]\$5,964,000 shall be available for the immediate Office of the Secretary[, of which \$500,000 shall be for the establishment of a Seafood Industry Liaison]; not to exceed [~~\$1,700,000~~]\$15,259,000 shall be available for the Office of Homeland Security; not to exceed [~~\$5,190,000~~]\$5,000,000 shall be available for the Office of Tribal Relations, of which \$1,000,000 shall be to continue 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 to improve the delivery of public health services and functions in American Indian communities focusing on indigenous food sovereignty; not to exceed [~~\$5,250,000~~]\$1,998,000 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 [~~\$18,721,000~~]\$28,269,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration, of which [~~\$17,015,000~~]\$26,969,000 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~~]\$4,997,000 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[: *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].

**LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT**

**Table OC-4. Lead-Off Tabular Statement (in dollars)**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Enacted, 2026 .....	\$5,000,000
Change in Appropriation .....	-3,000
Budget Estimate, 2027 .....	<u>4,997,000</u>

**PROJECT STATEMENTS**

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

Item	2024 Actual	FTEs	2025 Actual	FTEs	2026 Estimated	FTEs	2027 Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.	Chg Key
Discretionary Approp: Office of Communications .....	\$7,000	35	\$7,000	28	\$5,000	23	\$4,997	22	-\$3	-1	(1)
Total Available.....	7,000	35	7,000	28	5,000	23	4,997	22	-3	-1	
Lapsing Balances.....	-92	-	-148	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations.....	6,908	35	6,852	28	5,000	23	4,997	22	-3	-1	

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

Item	2024 Actual	FTEs	2025 Actual	FTEs	2026 Estimated	FTEs	2027 Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.
Discretionary Obligations: Office of Communications .....	\$6,908	35	\$6,852	28	\$5,000	23	\$4,997	22	-\$3	-1
Total Obligations.....	6,908	35	6,852	28	5,000	23	4,997	22	-3	-1
Add back: Lapsing Balances.....	92	-	148	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriation .....	7,000	35	7,000	28	5,000	23	4,997	22	-3	-1

**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. In accordance with administration policy announced in the Budget, OC will follow new government-wide grants guidance prohibiting the use of Federal funds to pay for subscriptions to academic journals, as well as for the publication of research results that are not specifically required by Federal statute or approved in advance by a Federal agency. This policy preserves funds to support actual research by ensuring that the American taxpayer does not pay for the research, publication, and access to that research, essentially triple-charging the public for the same product.

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

- (1) A decrease of \$3,000 to the Office of Communications for National Security Related Expenses being transferred to the Office of Homeland Security (\$5,000,000 and 23 FTEs available in 2026).

This decrease of \$3,000 for National Security Related Expenses, being realigned to the Office of Homeland Security (OHS), will enhance efficiency and effectiveness within USDA. This strategic realignment will centralize resources under OHS, which provides leadership in national security through policy development, emergency preparedness and response initiatives, and threat mitigation coordination. Consolidating the budget under OHS eliminates redundancies, ensures more coordinated resource allocation, and improves the execution of departmental security policies, ultimately bolstering the USDA’s resilience and readiness without compromising overall security.

**GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs**

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

State/Territory/Country	2024		2025		2026		2027	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
District of Columbia .....	\$6,577	33	\$6,506	26	\$4,776	22	\$4,771	21
North Carolina.....	211	1	218	1	224	1	226	1
Wisconsin.....	120	1	128	1	-	-	-	-
Obligations .....	6,908	35	6,852	28	5,000	23	4,997	22
Lapsing Balances.....	92	-	148	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available.....	7,000	35	7,000	28	5,000	23	4,997	22

**OBJECT CLASSIFICATION**

**Table OC-8. Classification by Objects – Discretionary Funding (thousands of dollars)**

Item No.	Item	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Estimated	2027 Estimated
<b>Personnel Compensation:</b>					
	Washington D.C. ....	\$3,995	\$3,899	\$2,886	\$2,877
	Personnel Compensation, Field.....	250	251	163	165
11	Total personnel compensation.....	4,245	4,150	3,049	3,042
12	Personal benefits.....	1,642	1,551	1,282	1,159
13.0	Benefits for former personnel.....	-	3	2	2
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits ....	5,887	5,704	4,333	4,203
<b>Other Objects:</b>					
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons.....	82	59	80	80
23.1	Rental payments to GSA .....	4	4	4	4
23.3	Communications, utilities, & misc. charge	202	131	136	130
24.0	Printing and reproduction .....	9	14	7	7
25.1	Advisory and assistance services.....	280	123	60	61
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources.	1	8	1	1
25.3	Other goods and serv from Fed sources ..	212	769	348	480
25.4	Operation and maintenance of facilities ...	206	1	1	1
26.0	Supplies and materials.....	13	20	20	20
31.0	Equipment.....	12	19	10	10
	Total, Other Objects.....	1,021	1,148	667	794
99.9	Total, new obligations .....	6,908	6,852	5,000	4,997
	<b>DHS Bldg. Sec. Payments</b> (included in 25.3) .....	\$11	\$7	\$7	\$7
<b>Position Data:</b>					
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position .....	\$191,000	\$198,000	\$0	\$-
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position .....	\$131,500	\$135,000	\$134,000	\$134,000
	Average Grade, GS Position.....	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5

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**STATUS OF PROGRAMS**

The Office of Communication (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. Given the increasing frequency of natural disasters and the need for cross-cutting support from multiple USDA mission areas, OC has also taken on a more significant role in coordinating USDA's communications during natural disasters or other emergencies that potentially affect large segments of the agriculture sector or the public.

**Current Activities****Creative Media and Broadcast Center (CMBC)**

CMBC provides strategic planning, development, production, and distribution of various communication products, including video, audio, print, exhibits, and photography, to support a wide range of initiatives such as information campaigns, training programs, public service announcements, webcasts, visitor centers, and remote media interviews.

CMBC Creative Production services assist USDA offices at all levels, including headquarters to regional, and local branches. These services are also available to other government agencies on a reimbursable basis, expanding CMBC's reach and impact. Our photography specialists document USDA's work through engaging photojournalism, portraits, multimedia, and scientific visuals. They provide coverage for press and programs while maintaining brand photography standards. The team collaborates with the Office of Communications (OC) Editorial Review to ensure photographic quality, subject accuracy, copyright compliance, and proper image clearances.

CMBC also includes USDA Radio, which delivers news and program updates. Content is available for web download, and listeners can subscribe to email delivery, ensuring timely access to USDA information.

**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 strategy and content development. The group also guides agency and program area digital communications, evaluating web and social media analytics for USDA.gov and agency websites to better understand our users and their access to the Department's information and services.

Analytic trends are incorporated into 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 X, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, as well as provides support for the Secretary's social media presence. 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 Administration, and USDA web initiatives, USDA web design and functionality guidance, and information about emerging tools or technologies. Additionally, DCD collaborates with the Office of the Secretary, Office of the Chief Information Officer, agency 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, digital media, and digital communications and provides 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. Additionally, the group monitors the procurement and payment of the Congressional Federal Register postings and publications.

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 Intergovernmental Affairs to support in-person visitation.

EPER has one staff member whose duties includes Departmental oversight into USDA's publishing activities. Providing the final Departmental clearance of traditional and online publications before going out to the public, the group ensures compliance with Federal and USDA Departmental Regulations and guidelines, including photography and copywriting reviews. This individual also manages brand and internal communications as outlined in the following paragraphs.

EPER shares responsibility with Digital Communications for providing strategic planning and oversight for using the USDA brand across all media. The implementation of the "One USDA" brand has increased the visibility of USDA's wide-ranging products and services. Brand management also ensures that the logo is used only where authorized, assuring the public that the Department stands behind products and services that carry the USDA logo.

Internal communications, including the USDA intranet team (1 member), oversees the development and management of an enterprise internet solution for the Department and all sub-agencies. The individual works closely with OC's Digital Communications to manage content for the USDA intranet. This individual also manages all employee emails and collaboratively drafts and clears all internal communications to employees from the Office of the Secretary.

### **Press Operations (PO)**

The Press Operations team is responsible for establishing core messaging for USDA and its senior officials; works directly with agencies and policy leads to determine the appropriate strategy and timing of USDA's communications campaigns; provides review, editing, and quality control for most communications collateral from USDA; and directly supports the Office of the Secretary's and Office of the Deputy Secretary's press and other public engagements. Press Operations also conducts proactive outreach to media outlets and responds to incoming press inquiries about the Department and the Secretary's priorities. In addition, several communication coordinators in OC work with USDA agencies and office communications staff to provide the leadership, expertise, counsel, and coordination needed to develop communications plans and implement strategies vital to formulating awareness of USDA programs and policies. The Press Operations team coordinates public and media engagements for the Office of the Secretary. It assists USDA mission areas and staff offices in developing plans for effectively crafting and disseminating information about their programs.

### **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.

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

The ABCS division serves as a central point of contact for external customer service. Its primary responsibilities include budget formulation, preparation, justification, forecasting, and execution. Additionally, it coordinates internal controls and risk management over operations and financial

reporting activities, human resources tasks, and other administrative tasks. These support services include facilities and property management, oversight of telecommunications services, and processing of all training, travel, and procurement requests.

### **Selected Examples of Recent Progress**

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

CMBC supports USDA's leadership and mission, ensuring timely communication with the public and employees.

CMBC's USDA Radio service in 2025 created 2,019 news items, 52 Agriculture USA documentaries, 226 Consumer Time features, and 226 Ag Update features. This content is available on USDA.gov

CMBC supported ongoing disease prevention efforts, working as with APHIS on African Swine Fever education and direct-to-consumer marketing efforts. CMBC project managed ongoing contract work in support of year two of the expanded summer feeding program for the Food and Nutrition Service.

CMBC's video production team supported a wide range of USDA initiatives. Examples included: Collaborating with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), CMBC produced a video series designed to educate producers and landowners. The "Conservation at Work" series for NRCS and the "How We Work" series for FSA provide valuable insights into effective conservation and management practices.

Photography Services images and video clips now total 113,933 images on USDA's Flickr photostream, at [www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/). Images averaging over 1 million hits per month in search results. The photography team provided editorial photo clearance for USDA Agencies.

#### **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 economies of scale to the production of visual information materials. Additionally, Events, Print, and Editorial Review updates the style and branding guides for the agency and updated plain language and inclusive language guidance in the USDA Style Guide.

Between October 2024 and April 23, 2025, EPER's Editorial Review team reviewed and cleared more than 40 final products and over 2,000 pages of text promptly to meet deadlines of agencies and offices. The Editorial Review team retired in April 2025 as part of the Department of Government Efficiency's Deferred Resignation Program. The positions were not backfilled and the Office of Communications reviews of agency non-news communications for branding, style, and content are limited to brand and policy compliance. The review functions are now the responsibility of the communications coordinators on the Office of Communications press team.

EPER's departmental-level Printing Services group completed printing requests for USDA agencies. USDA completed more than 1,000 projects utilizing all printing programs, including the GPO Express program, to ensure the best customer service with the most cost-efficient printing process. The Print Operating Data System, built on an Enterprise-wide platform, is in active use by all agencies producing work through the Office of Communications. Before system implementation, deposit accounts were not tracked. Since POTS implementation, the Office of Communications has identified over \$12 million in unspent account obligations dating as far back as 2013 and has worked closely with the agencies to reconcile the funds and return unspent funding to the Department of the Treasury. The automations are generating 30% cost savings in labor hours since the time prior to its implementation. In total, the system has helped us identify over 50 expired GPO deposit accounts to close out and reduce the number of staff required across the department for this type of specialized procurement.

In 2025, USDA continued work to re-envision the stove-piped system of internal communications centered around USDA's 29 separate staff offices and program areas and apply enterprise thinking to

build a single system to ensure all employees received timely, actionable information. Two additional USDA agencies migrated off outdated intranet platforms in 2025 to the OneUSDA intranet, reducing the duplicative costs of having multiple intranets across the Department. As part of the migration, improvements were made both to the customer experience and the content manager experience based upon feedback and data received from employee surveys. With the change in Administrations, the OneUSDA intranet content audit removed outdated content and updated content in compliance with Executive Orders and the Integrated Digital Experience Act. The intranet was integral in informing staff about government efficiency initiatives and other high-priority Administration messaging. Over the course of the year, decreased staffing has reduced the ability to manage large volumes of content, resulting in more concise and high-priority informational messaging.

OC partnered with the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP) to design and create an electronic book layout for the USDA procurement manuals, and the rest of USDA will be able to replicate this format to replace non-compliant PDF formats. OC likewise partnered with APHIS to create new intranet design elements specific to APHIS' needs but will also be available for all agencies to use, including user polls, a kudos board, an improved business card orders submission process, a format for an employee photo gallery, and a feedback form for submission of anonymous employee feedback to managers.

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

USDA Web Modernization – OC's DCD effectively manages USDA's Web Modernization Initiative by leading OC, in partnership with the Office of the Secretary 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 all Staff Office websites from separate hosting environments to hosting 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 a variable number of servers to provide the pre-production and production infrastructure, allowing USDA to provision and de-provision servers as needed, along with pooled costs for hosting, maintenance, and security. Customers benefit from a consistent overall look and feel, no matter what agency within USDA.gov they are searching. Web modernization is ongoing and will start a new chapter with the launch of USDA.gov's redesigned website.

USDA.gov Redesign – USDA has consistently led the Federal Government in adopting advanced technologies and best practices, in alignment with the standards established by the General Services Administration (GSA). Our Web Modernization Initiative, launched in 2020, represents a collaborative effort among the Office of Communications (OC), and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). In partnership with GSA's Centers of Excellence, DCD developed a digital strategy that adheres to Federal web standards while catering specifically to the unique needs of the department.

Since late 2022, OC has been diligently working on the redesign of USDA.gov to enhance USDA's primary website. The objective is to meet the evolving needs of USDA customers through improved design, user experience, accessibility, and optimized content delivery across all device platforms.

The approach is firmly rooted in data and research, guiding the design and organization of the new site. DCD has engaged with various agencies within the Department to ensure that progress is informed from diverse perspectives. The primary goal is to adhere to Federal web and accessibility standards while creating a website that reflects USDA's mission. DCD aims to streamline the user experience, making it easy for customers to locate the information they seek with minimal effort.

The redesign of USDA.gov has been a collaborative endeavor involving input from both USDA agencies and users. DCD has utilized a variety of data sources, conducted user research, facilitated workshops, and implemented extensive testing. Recognizing that, while data informs the organization,

user input is vital to understanding business needs, and DCD prioritized stakeholder engagement throughout the process. USDA.gov's redesign launched in December 2024.

Secretarial Support for Digital Content – DCD engages with the Secretary and her team to create outstanding digital services and products that have become a highlight of the Federal Government. DCD manages the filming and editing of new content and supports digital outreach through various mechanisms such as live streams, press conferences, and TV interviews. With a nimble and skilled creative team, DCD supports the Secretary with creative content on the digital side and via print products. In 2025, OC's Digital Team produced more digital and print content than the previous 5 years combined.

### **Press Operations (PO)**

The Press Operations group supported the distribution of 250 Departmental press releases, in addition to providing guidance on press releases distributed at the agency level. The press team also managed the response to approximately 1,450 incoming press inquiries to USDA, and arranged and staffed approximately 4-6 interviews with international, national and local media for the Secretary or Deputy Secretary to increase awareness and build support for USDA programs and priorities. This is in addition to providing the messaging, thematic and strategic direction for at least 3-4 events weekly featuring the Secretary or Deputy Secretary, and others involving the Sub Cabinet, senior advisors, or agency administrators. Additionally, the Press Operations team worked with agencies to support written correspondence; develop Congressional testimony; craft communications plans; and coordinate with the White House and other intergovernmental partners on shared priorities, among other activities.

### **Speechwriting**

OC's Speechwriting group prepared speeches, briefings, and remarks for use by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and subcabinet and researched and met with event planners to ensure that remarks aligned with audience expectations, in terms of topics of interest and including information specific to each audience. Speechwriting supported at least 125 in-person events in addition to recorded remarks for virtual engagements. The Speechwriter also works directly with EPER's internal communications team to plan and edit all-staff correspondence, including Federal holiday and national observance messages, as well as monthly emails from the Secretary to all employees.