

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Chief Economist
Office of Energy and Environmental Policy
Climate Change Program Office**

GS-0110-13 Economist
GS-0401-13 Agricultural Project Coordinator
GS-1301-13 Physical Scientist

Working Title: *Resource Management Specialist*

INTRODUCTION

This position serves within United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Office of the Chief Economist (OCE), Office of Energy and Environmental Policy (OEEP), Climate Change Program Office (CCPO). The USDA provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management. The OCE advises the Secretary of Agriculture on the economic implications of policies and programs affecting the U.S. food and fiber system and rural areas. OCE supports USDA policy decision making by analyzing the physical, economic, and societal impact of proposals and coordinating a response among several USDA agencies. OCE also coordinates, reviews, and approves the Department's commodity, farm sector, and weather forecasts, which are available to the public.

The CCPO coordinates USDA's responses to climate change, focusing on implications of climate change on agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. CCPO ensures that USDA is a source of objective, analytical assessments of the effects of climate change and proposed response strategies both within USDA and for our partners.

This position is supportive of the USDA's Climate Change Fellows Program (CCFP) initiative. Climate change presents real threats to U.S. agricultural production, forest resources, and rural economies. Producers and land managers across the country are experiencing climate impacts on their operations through shifting weather patterns and increasingly frequent and severe storms, floods, drought, and wildfire. At the same time, there are opportunities for farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon. The USDA's mission is to deliver lasting solutions to the climate crisis through research, conservation practices and partnerships while enhancing economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers, and private foresters.

Program Description

This program provides the authority to hire and provide technical and scientific experts as "Tier II" candidates at the GS-12 to GS-13 level with the opportunity to enhance their professional skills in the public arena and to be brought into developmental positions to gain exposure to climate change careers across the mission areas of USDA. The CCFP is a time-limited appointment in the Excepted Service under "Schedule A" hiring authority, as specified in 5 CFR 213.3102(r). Employees can apply and be hired without going through the lengthy traditional hiring process.

The length of time for the initial CCFP appointment is determined based on completion of projects, exposure to diverse program areas, the nature of a developmental assignment, and/or the duration of assignments that meet workforce planning objectives. Initial appointments for candidates may be for up to a 2-year period. Additional 1-year extensions may be made; however, the appointment cannot exceed a total of 4-years.

Projects will involve working with USDA employees on climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts across the Department. Employees will carry out climate change strategies within various USDA Agencies and offices. Employees facilitate climate change partnerships, analysis, and assessments. Employees develop tools for use in decision-making; communicate and deliver information within and outside USDA.

This is the full performance level for this interdisciplinary position under Tier II. The GS-13 is not granted until all eligibility requirements are met at the lower GS-12 grade level.

Employees using this PD can be classified under a number of occupational series including, the 0110 Economist Series, the 0401 General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Series, and the Physical Science Series, GS-1301.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Resource Management Specialist independently plans and carries out a wide variety of tasks focused on writing climate change assessments, conducting outreach, and education activities at the national level. The incumbent gathers, analyzes, synthesizes, and communicates complex scientific, technical, environmental, and economic and other information and data on climate impacts from different sources into easily interpreted information and products. Specifically, these duties require the incumbent to determine data and information sources, make inquiries, analyze content, and present material in a concise and usable format.

Prepares scientific, technical, and other data that requires a high level of scientific, technical, and economic understanding and analytical ability. Provides analysis of the gap between the needs of USDA and relevant stakeholders and the availability of current tools and information services. Synthesizes technical information into a variety of forms e.g., reports, web pages, publications, popular articles to serve different audiences. Reviews products to ensure consistency across the program and accuracy of technical content.

Assembles background data as needed and contacts officials within and outside USDA. Reviews data and provides advice to USDA leadership on quality, timeliness, follow-up on items, etc. Personally, communicates with internal and external customers. Organizes meetings and/or conferences involving ARS, FS, NRCS, other USDA and federal agencies, private industry organizations, etc.

The incumbent will be responsible for technical and scientific coordination of climate change-relevant topics. This could include convening panels of experts, managing the development of reports and analysis, commissioning and overseeing work on decision support tools, identifying

options for improving access and consistency in the use of regional climate forecasts and projections.

The incumbent may perform technical analysis to assist USDA in implementing the agriculture and climate provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act. This could include scientific or economic assessment of mitigation options in the agriculture and forestry sectors, including recommendations on implementation for USDA.

The incumbent may also perform analysis on carbon and biofuel markets as they apply to the agriculture and forest sectors. The incumbent will provide insight as the most effective opportunities for incentivizing greenhouse gas mitigation on U.S. farms, forests and rangelands. The employee may perform analysis on additional opportunities for incorporating market-based conservation principles into USDA programs and activities relative to climate change. The incumbent may also perform analysis related to the intersection of climate change and food loss and waste.

Communicates regularly with various USDA and other federal and state agencies and private sector to exchange information regarding the Department of Agriculture policies, regulations, and business process. Writes correspondence, reports, or other documents related to work assignments or developmental activities conducted with broad supervisory guidance.

Develops background information on programs, policies, and internal/external issues to maintain continuity of operations within the office. Briefs USDA leadership and CCPO on vital issues of interest to insure up-to-date information and program accomplishment. Plans and facilitates executive meetings; provides records of key agreements and decisions.

Develops operational/communication systems to ensure that informational requests from Congress, USDA, and other sources are responded to in a timely manner. Analyzes data on communications technology, telephone briefings, video-teleconferencing, etc. Ensures staff takes advantage of all capabilities of the system.

The incumbent may be responsible for the implementation of contracts, grants and agreements with third parties to perform technical work products and analysis on a variety of projects related to agriculture and greenhouse gas emissions.

The incumbent applies knowledge of and adheres to Departmental civil rights policies, goals, and objectives, with a philosophy of valuing diversity in performing everyday duties and responsibilities. The incumbent contributes to a productive and nondiscriminatory work environment through written and oral communications and interpersonal relations.

Performs other duties as assigned.

FACTOR LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

Factor 1– Knowledge Required by the Position

The Resource Management Specialist must have advanced knowledge in a field of science or economics as evidenced by, at minimum, a bachelor's degree or equivalent in a natural,

biological, or physical science, economics, or a closely related field sufficient to analyze scientific and economic information and data relevant to climate change.

Advanced skill and ability to interpret and understand the latest climate research produced by the Agriculture Research Service, US Forest Service, Economic Research Service, U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), or University partners and synthesize it into easy-to-understand documents/outputs for a variety of audiences. Has the ability to understand, interpret, and contribute to the science via peer reviewed article publication, writing white papers, and/or serving as an editor for special issues.

Knowledge of the application of a wide range of qualitative and/or quantitative methods for the analysis and assessment of management initiatives which are service-wide in nature and which can involve other agencies and organizations.

Knowledge of the major environmental and policy issues surrounding climate change, adaptation, economics, and mitigation.

Knowledge of USDA and Agency program goals and objectives, work processes and administrative operations of the organization. Comprehensive knowledge of the nature and scope of laws, precedents, regulations, and national and regional policies applicable to the administration of the USDA programs, including knowledge of USDA climate change program goals and objectives.

Ability to recommend and implement measures to ensure high quality administrative work products originating from the Department.

Skill to plan, organize and direct study teams and to effectively negotiate with management to accept and implement recommendations where proposals involve substantial agency resources, require extensive changes in established procedures and may be in conflict with existing information.

Skill in managing multiple priorities at once and in handling complex assignments in a tactful and manner, in order to resolve complex issues and problems.

Skill in oral and written communication to include a highly developed sense of tact and diplomacy for use in dealing with individuals representing opposing viewpoints to sensitive issues. Writes correspondence, reports, or other documents related to work assignments or developmental activities conducted with broad supervisory guidance.

Professional knowledge of biological practices, principles, and techniques sufficient to assist in the recommendations of planning and implementing environmental, and natural resource management activities for assigned projects.

Knowledge of related disciplines such as wildlife biology, soils and plant science, agriculture, forestry, rangeland conservation, soil conservation, etc. sufficient to assist in recommendations that impact or direct or daily activities.

Knowledge of natural resource management and related laws, policies, and regulations as it pertains

to climate change, agriculture, biodiversity, environmental protection, cultural resources, and agricultural conservation programs.

Factor 2 – Supervisory Controls

The supervisor and employee mutually develop project plans and deadlines. The employee has complete responsibility to schedule and carry out major projects and the work. The employee exercises discretion and judgment in determining the extent to which others must be informed and involved in the issues or work. The employee's work projects are reviewed for compatibility with organizational goals, guidelines, and effectiveness in achieving intended objectives.

Factor 3 – Guidelines

Guidelines consist of basic administrative policy statements concerning the issues or problems being studied, as well as practices, principles, and theories of scientific study and analysis. References may be made to pertinent legislative history, related court decisions, state and local laws, or policy initiative. The incumbent uses judgment and discretion in determining the intent and in interpreting and revising existing policy and regulatory guidance for use by others. The incumbent develops study formats or analytical approaches for use by others on a project team.

Factor 4 - Complexity

The work involves reviewing and analyzing scientific data, existing, new, or proposed programs, policies and procedures involving any number and different types of issues; interacting with varied high-level officials; and preparing a wide variety of reports addressing complex issues. The issues can be very controversial, sensitive, and/or confidential. The impact on nationwide programs and activities is considered in developing approaches, recommendations, and policies. The extensive scope of assignments and the complicated nature of the problems on which the incumbent advises necessitate extensive and frequent contacts with key agency management officials, high level officials of the agencies, congressional staffs for Members of Congress.

The work ranges from studies on internal organization proposals to preparation of reports as the result of Congressional action or intra-Departmental activities. As an advisor and consultant the employee has broad influence on numerous activities. Decisions regarding what needs to be done may include some undefined issues and elements requiring extensive analysis to determine the nature and scope of the issue. Analysis can involve widely diverse functions and work processes. The work may result in the development of new or modified policies, methods, and procedures. Judgment is required to identify critical issues and potential problem areas and impacts, and to define objectives to be achieved.

Factor 5 – Scope and Effect

The purpose of the position is to provide Climate Change expertise and coordination of program functions, to analyze and resolve problems in the effectiveness and efficiency of staff activities,

and communicate critical information to USDA staff and stakeholders. The resulting work directly affects the progress of the Staffs responsiveness to both the administrative and legislative branches, relationships with other staff and industry groups, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The incumbent analyzes and evaluates major administrative aspects of substantive, mission-oriented programs. The work has an effect on the Department (USDA) and its agencies' organizational levels and can have a marked influence on other Departments and external groups and individuals.

Factor 6. Personal Contacts

Personal contacts include agency and USDA top management officials, officials of other federal, state and private agencies and groups, Universities, NGOs, and other units of government and media representatives. The incumbent must interact with various stakeholders and customers, providing climate information and soliciting feedback on information needs on climate and agriculture.

Factor 7. Purpose of Contacts

Contacts are primarily for providing and explaining significant information, analyzing and evaluating issues and coordinating activities. The incumbent must apply significant skill and knowledge in determining where the purpose and extent of each contact is different and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact.

Factor 8. Physical Demands

The work is sedentary; however, slight physical effort may be required to carry books, computer products, files, etc. Work may require standing and walking in conjunction with travel to and attendance at meetings and conferences away from the worksite.

Factor 9. Work Environment

Work is performed in an adequately lighted, ventilated, and heated office. The work environment involves everyday risks or discomforts that require normal safety precautions.