UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Plain Writing Act Compliance Report

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to improving its service to our internal and external customers by writing in plain language. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires USDA to develop publications, forms, and publicly distributed documents in a manner that is "clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience." USDA pledges to provide clear, understandable, and useful information to our customers within every paper or electronic letter, publication, form, notice, or instruction produced by the Department. USDA's commitments and plain language resources can be found on USDA's Plain Writing Website.

Plain writing is an essential method of ensuring that our customers understand our programs and services, can easily obtain information, and that information is in a format to ease language translation and accessibility. USDA will continue to raise awareness about requirements of plain writing at all levels of the Department. We will ensure processes are in place so that information is clear and concise and readily available for our customers.

Adherence to plain writing principles has helped USDA communicate more clearly and effectively with the customers we serve. USDA has enjoyed consistent and positive reception for its thoroughness in conveying its programs, services, and public-facing communications in an organized, visually appealing, and understandable format.

USDA maintains this standard of excellence by:
- continuing improvements in technology;
- staying on the cutting edge of web design to keep our presence "fresh" while using a variety of digital tools and channels to ensure a pleasant and informative online experience for our customers;
- trading wordy, technical or legal jargon for simple, clear, and concise language; and most importantly
- welcoming feedback from our internal employees and external customers.

This report focuses on USDA's activities from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023, but includes our agencies' accomplishments that were not previously reported.

I.   Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing:

   a. Marcia Moore, Director of the Executive Secretariat
   b. Names of Plain Language Coordinators within the agency.

ORGANIZATION	PLAIN LANGUAGE COORDINATORS
Immediate Office of the Secretary (**OES**)	Erin Brando
Farm Production and Conservation (**FPAC**)	Wade Minami
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (**FNCS**) and Food and Nutrition Service (**FNS**)	Jairea McClamb
Office of Food Safety (**OFS**) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (**FSIS**)	Patricia Cuadros
Marketing and Regulatory Programs (**MRP**) and Agricultural Marketing Service (**AMS**)	Carl Purvis (Acting)
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (**APHIS**)	Christina Myers
Natural Resources and Environment (**NRE**) and Forest Service (**FS**)	Kathryn Sosbe
Research, Education, and Economics (**REE**) and sub-agencies except ARS	Tyler Tucker
Agricultural Research Service (**ARS**)	Ann Perry
Rural Development (**RD**)	Shani Burley-Moore
Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs (**TFAA**) and Foreign Agricultural Service (**FAS**)	Shannon Stroman
Office of Budget and Program Analysis (**OBPA**)	Norbert Snobeck
Office of the Chief Information Officer (**OCIO**)	Renae Harris-Hill
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (**OASCR**)	Jonathan Clark
Office of the General Counsel (**OGC**)	Kumar Jayasuriya

ORGANIZATION	PLAIN LANGUAGE COORDINATORS
Office of the Executive Secretariat (**OES**)	Jamie Stroter and Charles Melton
Office of Hearings and Appeals (**OHA**)	Jeff Hunt
Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (**OPPE**)	Joyce El Kouarti
Departmental Administration (**DA**)	Candace Glover
Office of Contracting and Procurement (**OCP**)	Crandall Watson
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (**NIFA**)	Kellie Burdette
Office of the Chief Scientist (**OCS**)	Rich Derksen

II. Specific Types of Agency Communications Released in FY19-23

USDA has made the following communications available in a format that is consistent with the Plain Writing Guidelines.

Type of communications of document or posting	Intended user and approximate number of potential users	What has changed by using Plain Writing?
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE		
Equity Action Planning Across USDA: (Multiple Agencies) Equity Action Plan	Details a subset of actions that USDA has chosen to highlight because of their potential high impact for underserved farmers and ranchers, farmworkers, Tribes, families and children, and rural communities.	Well-designed for reading. Organizes the information well. Highlights important concepts with simple text formatting. Uses bold for emphasis.
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan (usda.gov)	It's intended for all 100,000 USDA employees and the American public.	Well-designed and clearly written for easy understanding and comprehension.
Foreign Language Translation Services and Preparing Content for Translation Software: Executive Order 14091	The United States is a multilingual country. According to a 2019 U.S. Census Bureau survey, nearly 68 million people in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home. Each year the U.S. welcomes more than 800,000 new citizens from all over the world.	USDA pledges to provide websites and other written material in plain language to make the translation to other languages easier and cheaper for the Federal government and our customers.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (continued)		
The Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, is a law that provides any person access to agency records, except to the extent that such agency records or portions of such agency records are protected from disclosure by one or more of the nine FOIA exemptions. Electronic FOIA Request Public Access Portal	There are certain requirements for making a USDA FOIA request, and in some cases, the records you are requesting may already be posted online. Prior to submitting a request, navigate to the USDA's FOIA Website for information about the following topics: 1. Requirements and tips for making a USDA FOIA request 2. USDA FOIA component reading rooms 3. USDA FOIA points of contact 4. Prior published USDA FOIA reports 5. FOIA resources	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
DEPARTMENTAL STAFF OFFICES		
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights		
USDA Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement Departmental Regulation (DR) 4200-003, Anti-Harassment Program Departmental Regulation (DR) 4330-003, Nondiscrimination in USDA-Conducted Programs and Activities	1. USDA's mission to actively advance racial justice and equity for one another by rooting out systemic discrimination and inequities and strengthening civil rights programs while building trust within and outside the Department. 2. To establish the Anti-Harassment Program at USDA, and to fostering a model workplace free of conduct that negatively affects employee, morale, engagement and productivity. 3. To establish policy and provide guidance to agencies and employees of USDA, to ensure compliance with enforcement of the USDA's prohibitions against discrimination in its conducted programs and activities	Starts by stating the purpose. The information provided is clear, concise, and easy to understand.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
Office of Communications		
Administrative Documents

Agency Series Publications

Annual Reports Required by Law

Annual Reports Not Required by Law

Department Series Publications

Directories

Federal statistical products

Internal Reports

Non-administrative Documents

Periodicals

Presentations

Reports to the Public | Audiences range from the public in the United States and foreign countries to internal audiences of USDA employees. In 2023, the two editors in the Office of Communications reviewed more than 400 manuscripts in lengths ranging from 1 to 1,500 pages to ensure plain language and other requirements. | The Office of Communications acts as a final arbiter for reconciling many of these publications and ensures adherence to plain language requirements, USDA brand compliance, and GPO standards through the simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and ensuring online access. |

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
Office of Communications	In accordance with public laws, executive orders, policies, and Congressional directives authorizing USDA to publish information on agriculture and related subjects, USDA publications span a broad range of topics including research, statistics and economics, consumer information, food and nutrition, improved farming practices, natural resources management, agricultural marketing, conservation and environmental protection, homeland security, regulatory activities, and credit and rural development programs. 1) Department Series Publications: Many publications--ranging from popular to technical--are organized in a USDA series to ensure better recognition and to facilitate a more orderly distribution and storage.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.
Office of Communications	(2) Agency Series Publications: USDA agencies often need special publications of limited, short-term use which do not fully meet the criteria for inclusion in any USDA series.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
Office of Communications	(3) Periodicals: Periodicals exclude information materials published as administrative letters, circular letters, memorandums, press and radio releases, intermittent notices, regulations, opinions, decisions, and various management bulletins on safety, incentive awards, and similar subjects. (4) Annual Reports: Annual reports are developed to document and summarize a program, research, or the organization's activities conducted in the current or previous year.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.
Office of Communications	(a) Annual Reports Required by Law. The purpose of legally required annual reports varies widely. Several are necessary for compliance by specific agencies; several are required by specific programs about which the Secretary of Agriculture or the USDA as a whole must report. Also, the Secretary of Agriculture must make an annual written report to the President that contains purely business and executive matter necessary for the Secretary to submit to the President and Congress	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
Office of Communications	(b) Annual Reports Not Required by Law. While not required by law, an agency or Under or Assistant Secretary has determined the report necessary. These reports may be for internal use only or for reporting the results of an agency program, research, activity that may be in the public interest. (5) Internal Reports: An annual report of an agency, an Under or Assistant Secretary, or a group director that is intended primarily for internal. (6) Reports to the Public: These reports are considered reports of research progress or of special program results that are in the public interest, rather than of an agency's complete activities throughout a given year. (7) Directories: A USDA agency may publish and issue a directory of its personnel for administrative purposes. Agencies must avoid including.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
Office of Communications	8) Federal statistical products: These products published by Federal statistical agencies or units are regulated under the Information Quality Act, Public Law (P.L.) No. 106-554, § 515, the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, P.L. No. 115-435, and Federal Statistical Directives. Federal statistical products are defined as information products that describe, estimate, forecast, or analyze the characteristics of groups, customarily without identifying the persons, organizations, or individual data observations that comprise such groups. Statistical products include general-purpose tabulations, analyses, projections, forecasts, or other statistical reports. This includes products and information that support a statistical product and are released with the statistical products, such as social media text, graphics, maps, posters and charts with links to federal statistical product that it describes.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
Office of Communications	(9) Presentations (10) Administrative Documents: In addition to miscellaneous periodicals and directories, agencies may publish documents that are administrative: (a) Administrative documents are defined as: 1. Documents with an audience limited to USDA personnel and official cooperators who need the information to carry out their program responsibilities, and there is no planned distribution to an outside group. 2 Documents that fall into one of the following categories: Instruction manuals, regulations or directives governing USDA employees; preliminary reports and drafts distributed for internal review purposes. (b) Examples of official cooperators include other Federal agencies, associations, community groups, and organizations, as well as state, county, and municipal government units, foreign embassies and consulate offices within the United States.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

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Office of Communications	(11) Other Information Materials: USDA also issues information materials not considered publications. These include materials intended exclusively as: (a) Press, radio, photographic, and video releases when reproduced in finished form; (b) Background statements for use by the media; (c) Speeches and proclamations that receive limited distribution at time of presentation; (d) Forms; (e) Individual letters and memorandums used as correspondence; (f) Administrative letters, circulars, records, and memorandums intended solely for internal use; (g) Department directives; (h) Maps, posters, and charts without accompanying text matter; (i) Visual instructions and lecture notes for presentations and slides; (j) Letterheads; (k) Social media text and graphics; (l) Signs, symbols, tags, blotters and similar, items; (m) Podcasts; and (n) Video for social media, training, or film-festival distribution. (12) Non-administrative Documents: Agencies publish documents for other audiences, e.g., brochures, fact sheets, flyers, pest alerts, agricultural calendars, outlook conference programs, infographics, stickers, labels, safety guidelines for school meals, summer notices for school meals.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

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Office of Contracting and Procurement		
Improved the USDA Contracting Desk Book in order to better support plain language.	Information targeted for all those within USDA who perform contracting and procurement functions.	The changes to the desk book created a more user-friendly document that facilitates improved efficiency and increased understanding for all USDA contracting and procurement personnel.
Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement		
Shares information about USDA resources, grants and programs. Provides equitable access to USDA resources at all our agencies. Partnerships Monthly Newsletters	Information is targeted to the communities we serve, including veterans, underrepresented farmers, new farmers, students, community nonprofit organizations, and higher education institutions.	Concise and uses short paragraphs to provide complex information.

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Office of Customer Experience		
USDA Collaborate. Act. Rebuild. Empower. Strengthen. (CARES) Partner Portal: Partner Portal about CARES	It is designed specifically for, and by, those that work with farmers, ranchers and landowners that have been considered historically underserved.	Developed in response to the American Rescue Plan 1006; centered on improving equity at Federal agencies; designed to help USDA partners access the information and tools that are most relevant to their work.
Find Your Local USDA Service Center: Partner Portal (Find-USDA)	Information for USDA customers on how to find USDA Service Centers, local offices and helpful points of contact across the country.	Complies with the official guidelines for the Plain Writing Act of 2010 so users can find what they need, understand what they find, use what they find to meet their needs.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
Office of Inspector General		
You can make a FOIA Request either online through the FOIA Request Form, by e-mail, by fax, or by mail. Submit a FOIA request OIG Oversight Resources FOIA-Requests	There are certain requirements for making a FOIA request, please include the following information: 1. Today's date 2. Name (first and last name) 3. Address (street, city, state and zip) 4. Phone number 5.Fax number (if available) 6. Electronic mail address (if available) 7. Finally, describe in detail the records requested. Please provide as much information as you have available to you such as, audit report number, investigation report number, program area, etc.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.
Office of Tribal Relations		
USDA Launches Pilot Programs to Increase Affordable Homeownership Opportunities for People on Tribal Lands Homeownership Opportunities Tribal Lands	Provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural, Tribal and high-poverty areas.	USDA pledges to provide websites and other written material in plain language to provide a better experience for the customers.

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Office of Budget and Program Analysis		
Departmental directive training materials and training sessions for developers and editors include a plain language component. Provide review feedback for draft directive and form submissions, addressing plain language concerns as needed. 2018 – Introduced readability objective ranges for three audience tiers: a specialized audience; all employees; and all employees and members of the public. 2018 – Measured readability scores for each directive and form version to assess relative improvement progress. 2019 – For greater visibility, included readability scores for each directive in the Policy Status Dashboard.	Users include 50+ Departmental directive and form owners. typically including 200+ developers and editors.	Improved readability of Departmental directives and forms for members of the public and 95,000+ users across the Department.
2022 – Introduced a Readability Scorecard to provide feedback with context to directive developers and editors.	Users include 50+ Departmental directive and form owners. typically including 200+ developers and editors.	Improved readability of Departmental directives and forms for members of the public and 95,000+ users across the Department.

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DEPARTMENTAL MISSION AREAS		
FOOD, NUTRITION, AND CONSUMER SERVICES		
Farm to School Fact Sheets: Farm and Nutrition Service Fact-Sheets	More than 20 different fact sheets on a variety of topics, ranging from school gardening to local meat.	Starts by stating the purpose and the bottom line. Lays things out in a logical order. Puts the most important information at the beginning.
FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION		
Service Center Agencies eForms eForms Home	eForms allows you to search for and complete forms requesting services from Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development (RD).	USDA pledges to provide websites and other written material in plain language to provide a better experience for the customers.
Farm Production and Conservation – Business Center		
Beginning in November 2022, the Business Center began development on its new OneFPAC intranet site under the umbrella of the OneUSDA initiative to replace its legacy myFPAC system. This system is cleaner, easier to navigate, and has content written with the target audience in mind.	The site will be used by more than 20,000 USDA employees.	Content has been restructured and in many cases completely rewritten to be clearer, more concise, and easier to navigate.

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FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION (continued)		
Natural Resource Conservation Service		
NRCS has launched its new public facing website. The new site is a top-to-bottom rebuild, with content revised and reorganized to be easier to navigate and use, and to focus on the needs of the intended audience, the public.	Nearly 16.5 million unique pageviews in 2022, and more than 13 million unique page views to date in 2023.	Content was rewritten to focus on the intended audience (the public). Extraneous content was removed, and remaining content was restructured to be easier to understand, use, and navigate.
Farm Service Agency		
On October 26, 2022, FSA launched a new online tool to help producers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA. Loan Assistance Tool	The Loan Assistance Tool provides applicants needing agricultural financing, with an online, interactive, plain language, step-by-step guide to: 1. Help assess their eligibility for farm loans. 2. Direct them to the appropriate loan types for their situation and a comprehensive documentation checklist noting what should be gathered. 3. Assist them with the completion of all appropriate loan application forms while minimizing duplicate information requests.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

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MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS		
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service		
As of August, APHIS had published 42 unique publications (not including multiple language versions) using plain language best practices in FY23.

Examples include:

Outreach materials for the AgDiscovery summer student program,

Several posters for use in Puerto Rico to prevent to discourage travelers from taking or mailing prohibited items (including pork) to the U.S. mainland,

A fact sheet to help underserved populations better understand the process for applying for APHIS funding opportunities,

APHIS Protecting Animal Health Publication that explains APHIS' Farm Bill-funded animal health programs,

The APHIS strategic plan and strategic foresight documents,

An infographic (attached) summarizing APHIS' response to highly pathogenic avian influenza, and

Numerous tech notes to help people meet minimum standards of animal care, among others. | Audiences include a wide variety of stakeholders, including agricultural industries, State governments, universities, Tribes and other underserved communities, regulated entities, travelers, and others. Potential volume of users varies by publication. | APHIS has incorporated plain language principles into its publications writing and editing for many years. Over time, we have made our publications library much more accessible to both the general public and targeted stakeholders. |

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MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS (continued)		
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service		
Web Content. APHIS has worked with subject matter experts (SMEs) to rewrite 267 web pages in plain language in FY23. These pages will be published in early 2024 with the launch of the updated APHIS website.	The web content redevelopment effort focused on pages identified as priority user needs based on analytics and stakeholder interviews. APHIS' website received more than 18 million visitors in FY23.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and calls to action for site visitors.
Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) FY22 Annual Report. Streamlined a previously 40+ page, text-heavy report into more user-friendly content.	All PPQ stakeholders, including agricultural industries, State and foreign governments, and Congress.	Turned a dense document into web content broken into five easily digestible components, including "PPQ by the Numbers" and a one-pager describing the U.S. agricultural safeguarding system.
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT		
Forest Service		
Nearly 400 Projects to Expand Access to Trees and Green Spaces in Communities and Neighborhoods Nationwide. Forestry Program	Forest Service is awarding more than $1 billion in competitive grants to plant and maintain trees, combat extreme heat and climate change, and improve access to nature in cities, towns, and suburbs where more than 84% of Americans live, work, and play.	USDA pledges to provide websites and other written material in plain language to provide a better experience for the customers.

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT (continued)		
Forest Service		
For the third season, the USDA Forest Service is selling Christmas Tree permits through Recreation.gov, which makes it more convenient for visitors to find and purchase permits to cut holiday trees from their favorite national forest. Permits are currently available and may vary by national forest. News Release: Tree Permits Recreation.gov: Tree PermitsConfronting the Wildfire Crisis website Confronting the Wildfire Crisis 2022 publication Progress Summary 2022 publication Implementation Plan 2022 publication A Chronicle 2022 publication Initial Landscapes 2022 publication Second Landscapes 2023 publication	As an alternative to visiting a Forest Service office in person, visitors can go to Recreation.gov and search for their local national forest. Once on Recreation.gov, national forests provide important details, like cutting area maps, types of trees to cut, and important planning tips on their respective permit pages. "It is important to remember that visitors will need to print the permit and display it on the dash of their vehicle on the day of their visit to cut their trees," said DeLappe. Also keep in mind that many national forests may continue to sell permits in person or through local vendors.	Simplification of complex content; removal of unnecessary details; providing clear information and online access.

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT (continued)		
Forest Service		
Website: Forest Service Feature Stories Highlighted features: Article: Traveling trees: Assisted migration for climate resilience Article: Many hands tippin' torches Article: Protecting water from fire Article: And just like that, I found myself in fire school Article: Finding relief in the shade	Wide audience of external users. Analytics show that in 2023, web features had between 1,200 to nearly 160,000 views each. This does not include features published on region, forest and grassland websites.	The agency has worked for several years to expand and improve our storytelling capabilities through training that includes communication through words and visuals. The result is increasingly honed feature stories that take highly complex information and brings them to a level where the story speaks to the reader. The result of more focused writing led to the expanded capacity throughout the agency for skilled storytellers who work with equally skilled photographers or videographers.

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT (continued)		
Forest Service		
2023 Publication: Strengthening Tribal Consultation and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: A USDA Forest Service Action Plan	Internal guidance shared externally for transparency on actions the agency is taking to improve our nation-to-nation and personal relationships with Tribes. The agency took it a step further to ensure this crucial work reached the intended audiences by securing an interview with Indian Country Today.	There is a clearer understanding of leader intent for employees and a more focused understanding of their responsibilities associated with nation-to-nation relations. The same is true for external readers, especially for American Indians and Alaska Natives.
Northern Region Web Page: Confronting the Wildfire Crisis in the Northern Region	Public, partners, Congress, State legislators, interest groups. Number of users: 500+ per year.	Reformulating often bureaucratic language into plainer language has made what is a complex and often jargon-filled messages more accessible. The Wildfire Crisis Strategy is complex and can be confusing to many on how we are approaching the huge task of wildfire risk reduction. Plain language is critical to helping people understand and engage with the strategy in a meaningful way.

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT (continued)		
Forest Service		
Northern Region Newsletter: Wildfire Season 2023	Public and others. Number of users: up to 5,000 per year.	Providing clear information to the public and online access.
Northern Region Web Page: Northern Region Contact Us and FAQs	Public, partners, internal audiences. Number of users: 200 per month (web); over 1,000 receive the PDF version.	Telling our story in active voice and limiting unusual jargon and bureaucratic language helps engage the readers with our content. Liberal use of bulleted lists and visuals helps focus attention on critical elements.
Pacific Southwest Region: Spotlights articles and social media: Spotlight Articles	All website Spotlight articles are edited for plain language, to appeal to a general audience of readers interested in forest happenings.	Along with the accompanying social media posts, these Spotlights on various forest topics remove acronyms and replace technical terms. This approach invites readers from all backgrounds to join in understanding modern forestry, recreation and technologies in the region.

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT (continued)		
Forest Service		
Pacific Southwest Region: USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region: Every Kid Outdoors web page	Updated web page for kids and their parents for outdoor recreation on Region 5's 18 national forests.	"Every Kid Outdoors: Kid-Friendly Locations" web page relies largely on images and plain language to be appealing and useful for kids and parents from various backgrounds exploring recreation in the region's national forests.
Pacific Southwest Region: Storytelling Guidance for Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) and Region and includes link to: plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/words/use-simple-words-phrases/	For use by all PAOs and Region 5 employees to offer guidance in submitting storytelling articles and images to regional storytelling team.	This newly developed storytelling guidance includes references and resource link to PlainLanguage.gov use of simple words and phrases as replacement options. All editing of articles in Region 5 includes a plain language component to expand the reach and readability of articles.

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OFFICE OF FOOD SAFETY		
Improved its library of eForms at: FSIS Inspection Forms	Internal and external stakeholders, including USDA-regulated industry and the thousands of FSIS employees who use forms routinely as part of regulatory oversight and as government employees.	Not only are the FSIS forms more accessible and searchable, the library also now includes links to related resources, making it easy to find instructions and context for each of the available forms.
FSIS' Food Safety and Education Staff developed and presented a poster at the poster session for the Partnership for Food Safety Education's Consumer Food Safety Education Conference in March of 2023.	The poster session was shared with 13,000 health and food safety educators federal and state government, industry, university, extension, health department, students, and other food safety educators. The poster's goal was to communicate the successes of our 2021 Thanksgiving Communications Campaign and overall campaign considerations that others could consider fora successful food safety outreach campaign.	The poster was presented in clear and concise language that was easy to follow and understand. The poster provided a clear focus with actionable information.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
RURAL DEVELOPMENT		
How to Make Your Documents Plain Language and Section 508 Compliant Toolkit. Additionally, the Office of External Affairs Field Operations and Multimedia Branch, edited an abridged version of the full toolkit. It's meant for use by RD employees (such as our field-based public affairs officers and national and state-based program staff) who create public-facing promotional materials such as brochures, flyers, and application guides. This version uses a hybrid Associated Press Stylebook, The Chicago Manual of Style approach with Federal plain language and 508 regulations incorporated. It's available at [RD Plain Language 508 Toolkit](#)	Our internal audience is roughly 4,650 Rural Development employees in Washington, DC, St. Louis, MO and our 47 state offices. The total number of documents processed by RD's Internal Communications Branch in FY23 was 623. Also, in FY23, the Field Operations and Multimedia Branch Publications team edited more than a hundred public-facing brochures, flyers, guides, and other materials for plain language and Section 508 accessibility. Beyond that, the Multimedia branch also has transcribed more than 200 videos and webinars, ensuring Section 508 accessibility for our viewers.	The information we provide to our external and internal customers is clear, concise, and easy to understand the first time our customers read it. Our plain language activities also help our customers understand and comply with Federal laws, fill out government forms, and get Federal benefits and services. For the web, we post plain language fact sheets and content written in plain language.

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RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS		
Economic Research Service		
ERS public-facing website	External content designed to inform a wide variety of audiences (general audience, stakeholders, partners, industry, influencers, public officials) of the research programs and accomplishments of ERS	ERS collects information online from its visitors via survey, and the survey queries if the information on our website is easy to understand. Our FY23-to-date CSAT for the response to that question was 76.1.
Agricultural Research Service		
Scientific Discoveries: Scientific Discoveries 2023 ARS Office of Communications (OC): Office of Communications: USDA ARS Tellus	External content designed to inform a wide variety of audiences (general audience, stakeholders, partners, industry, influencers, public officials) of the research programs and accomplishments of ARS.	ARS OC collects information online from its visitors via survey, and the survey includes questions related to plain language, such as "clarity of the writing" and "quality of the information provided." Both of these questions typically score in the 80th percentile.

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National Institute of Food and Agriculture		
New improved articles on AskUSDA. New improved fact sheets, pamphlets, forms, website, etc. Steps taken to make USDA processes for loans and grants easier to understand. A new policy written in plain language.	Stakeholders, grant seekers, Land-grant Universities, small businesses, farmers and ranchers, veterans, NIFA employees, public, etc.	Plain, concise language helps users quickly find what they need, comprehend it and use it to meet their needs.
National Agricultural Statistics Service		
New improved articles on AskUSDA.	All NASS articles are written in plain language. We have articles written as question and answer (Q&A) talking points and frequently asked questions (FAQs) that are easy for USDA staff to reference and explain to the public. We provide new or updated articles for every new, sizeable, popular or sensitive survey, or report released.	Plain, concise language helps users quickly find what they need, comprehend it and use it to meet their needs.
New improved fact sheets, pamphlets, forms, website, etc. designed to improve the public's understanding of a program using plain language or ease in language.	NASS's Public Affairs Office uses plain language in everything public-facing, from FAQs, brochures and other informational materials produced in multiple languages to NASS web pages. PAO also publishes products called Highlights that supplement NASS's most popular data reports that are briefer and more plain language for reaching every audience. The plain language AgCounts Survey Respondent Portal makes it easier and convenient for producers to fill out NASS questionnaires.	Plain, concise language helps users quickly find what they need, comprehend it and use it to meet their needs.

Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting	Type of communications of document or posting
National Agricultural Statistics Service		
Plain Language training sponsored by your organization and the number of attendees.	NASS PAO promotes and provides regular (typically annual) plain language training to agency employees. Attendance at each training has been 100-150. The trainings are recorded with the recording and presentation accessible to all staff at all times for easy reference.	Our plain language activities and trainings help employees understand and comply with the Plain Writing Act.

III.   **Inform Agency Staff of Plain Writing Act's Requirements:**

    a. Information on the Act is posted on the USDA internet site: https://www.usda.gov/plain-writing
    b. Published an article FY23 Plain Writing Compliance Report and its requirements on OneUSDA, and internal agency news intranet site.

IV.   **Training**

    a. Agencies provided the following training:

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
FROM USDA		
OES: Best Writing Practices I (Instructor-led)	136	July 13, 2023
	46	September 14, 2023
OES: Introduction to Government Writing	51	July 13, 2023
APHIS: "Writing Up" class	130	3 times in FY23
APHIS: Excellence in Science Communication Program	50	September 2023- early 2024

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
PLAIN PROVIDED TRAINING		
FS: Virtual: Developing a Communication Strategy	200	June 20, 2019
FS: Virtual: Enterprise Program Plain Language Training	25+	February 10, 2022
FS: Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscapes Workshop, Albuquerque, N.M. - Module 9: Communications	150+	February 7-9, 2022
FS: Virtual: Plain Language and You	30+	March 29, 2022
FS: Engineering and Storytelling	15	April 18, 2023
FS: Plain Language: Writing to be clear, concise for your internal external audiences	25+	May 12, 2022
FS: Plain Language for Managers – USDA OBPA	20	June 15, 2022
FS: Wildfire Crisis and Strategic Communication	300+	March 7, 2023
FS: Forest Service Style Guide	300+	April 4, 2023
FS: Think Like a Writer: How to capture compelling stories visually	300+	May 2, 2023
FS: Wildfire and the Art of Storytelling	300+	June 6, 2023
FS: Tribal Communications	300+	September 5, 2023
FS: Plain Language Class	350+	October 4, 2023
NIFA: AgLearn Plain Language Training	343	April 5, 2023

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
EXTERNAL WEBINARS		
FS: Federal Plain Language Summit 2022	1	August 24, 2022
FS: Associated Press Style Guide	20	April 26, 2023
RD: Plain Language Trainings	39	March 22, 2023
RD: Plain Language Trainings	39	May 17, 2023
RD: Plain Language Trainings	39	July 12, 2023
RD: Plain Language Trainings	41	September 7, 2023
APHIS: Plain Language Training by Bold Type Writing Training	65	Fall 2022 August 2023
EXTERNAL ONLINE TRAINING		
English Essentials: GPO Style Manual Review	30	3 sessions in Fall 2022
Writing in Plain Language (LinkedIn Learning)	264 317	FY22 FY23

V. **Ongoing Compliance/ Sustaining Change**

 a. Marcia Moore, Director of the Executive Secretariat is the USDA contact for compliance issues.

 b. USDA has a Plain Language Forum for discussions on plain language compliance, training, and collecting accomplishments.

 c. The clearance process for each annual Plain Writing Act Compliance Report offers each organization and opportunity to review and edit their contribution to the report.

VI. **Agency's Plain Writing Website**

 a. Website address: https://www.usda.gov/plain-writing

 b. Contact us page: https://www.usda.gov/plain-writing

 c. Implementation of the Act: https://www.usda.gov/plain-writing

  i. Documents covered by the Act

  ii. Resources

 d. Links to Compliance reports: https://www.usda.gov/plain-writing

e. Links to OMB and PLAIN: https://www.usda.gov/plain-writing

VII. Customer Satisfaction Evaluation after Experiencing Plain Writing Communications

USDA will include components of plain language training in a FY24 employee survey on training and use of automated systems for document processing.

USDA Civil Rights Statement

USDA United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

July 25, 2023

USDA Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

At the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), we are recommitting ourselves to the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunity for each other and those we serve. As Secretary, I am committed to working with leaders at all levels across the Department to intentionally build and advance a culture of belonging and excellence across USDA. It is USDA's mission to actively advance racial justice and equity for one another by rooting out systemic discrimination and inequities and strengthening civil rights programs while building trust within and outside the Department. This commitment is reflected in USDA's Strategic Plan 2022-2026, USDA's Equity Action Plan, and the USDA's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year 2022-2026.

As a Department, our core values of respect and dignity, equity and inclusion, trust and integrity, service and results, and science leadership serve as guiding principles, defining appropriate behaviors and expectations for all employees, and directing decision making throughout all levels of the organization.

No employee, former employee, or applicant for employment at the Department will be denied equal opportunity because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, retaliation, or any other non-merit-based factor. This not only is the law; it is an essential component of the Department's mission and our responsibility to the public we serve.

All employees have the freedom to compete on a fair and level playing field with equal opportunity for available employment, advancement opportunities, and compensation. Equal employment opportunity covers all personnel/employment programs, management practices, and decisions, including recruitment, hiring, merit promotion, transfer, reassignments, training and career development, benefits, and separation. These civil rights principles are more than employees' rights by law—they are core values at USDA.

USDA strives to become a leader in equal employment opportunity (EEO) and a model employer. All USDA applicants and employees have the right not only to be free from harassment and discrimination but also to raise an allegation of harassment or discrimination and not fear reprisal. Any form of workplace harassment or reprisal against anyone who engages in protected activity will not be tolerated. USDA's recently issued Anti-Harassment Program Departmental Regulation 4200-003, reenforces that Agencies are required to respond to, address, and correct any harassing conduct before it becomes severe or pervasive, and USDA will continue to process complaints of harassment, discrimination, and reprisal and provide robust EEO training to all employees.

Employees and managers will be held accountable for doing their part to ensure all USDA applicants, customers, constituents, and stakeholders are provided equal access to all opportunities, programs, and services available through USDA. Accordingly, all senior leaders, managers, and supervisors must act in a manner that is deserving of the public's trust and with the utmost integrity in everything we do as public servants, leading always by example, treating everyone with dignity and respect, and promoting an ethical, equitable, and inclusive culture. All employees must comply with EEO principles as we perform the Department's mission.

Sincerely,

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

An Equal Opportunity Employer

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