

2025 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES - OFFICE OF PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Table of Contents

Preface	1
Agency-Wide.....	1
Purpose Statement	1
OIG And GAO Reports	1
Available Funds And FTEs	2
Permanent Positions By Grade And FTEs	2
Shared Funding Projects.....	2
Account 1: Salaries and Expenses	5
Appropriations Language.....	5
Lead-Off Tabular Statement.....	6
Project Statements	6
Justification of Changes	7
Classification by Objects.....	7
Status of Programs	9

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PREFACE

This publication summarizes the fiscal year (FY) 2025 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the “Budget” is in regard to the 2025 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 2022 and 2023, annualized Continuing Resolution levels for 2024, and the President’s Budget request for 2025. Amounts for 2024 estimated levels include: non-enacted amounts such as Full-Time Equivalent levels, fleet levels, information technology investment levels, recovery levels, transfers in and out, balances available end of year, and obligation levels.

Throughout this publication, the “2018 Farm Bill” is used to refer to the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Most programs funded by the 2018 Farm Bill are funded through 2023. Amounts shown in 2024 and 2025 for most Farm Bill programs reflect those confirmed in the baseline.

Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, sequestration is included in the numbers for mandatory programs in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

AGENCY-WIDE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Per 7 U.S.C. 6934, the Secretary of Agriculture shall establish within the executive operations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) an office to be known as the “Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement” to improve access to programs of the Department; to improve the viability and profitability of small farms and ranches, beginning farmers or ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, limited resource producers, and veteran farmers and ranchers; and to promote youth outreach.

The duties of the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE) shall be to ensure small farms and ranches, beginning farmers or ranchers, veteran farmers and ranchers, and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers have access to, and equitable participation in, programs and services of the Department by: establishing and monitoring the goals and objectives of the Department to increase participation in programs of the Department by small, beginning, socially disadvantaged, or veteran farmers or ranchers; assessing the effectiveness of Department outreach programs; developing and implementing a plan to coordinate outreach activities and services provided by the Department; providing input to the agencies and offices on programmatic and policy decisions; measuring outcomes of the programs and activities of the Department on small farms and ranches, beginning farmers or ranchers, veteran farmers or ranchers, and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers programs; recommending new initiatives and programs to the Secretary of Agriculture; and performing any other related duties the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

OPPE is located at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. As of September 30, 2023, OPPE’s staff was comprised of 46 full-time permanent employees, including 14 employees located in Washington, D.C. and 32 employees located across the United States.

OIG AND GAO REPORTS

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

AVAILABLE FUNDS AND FTEs

Table OPPE-1. Available Funds and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations.....	\$9,044	8	\$7,780	10	\$9,280	10	\$9,339	10
Mandatory Appropriations.....	18,860	-	23,575	3	23,575	3	23,575	3
Total Adjusted Appropriation.....	27,904	8	31,355	13	32,855	13	32,914	13
Lapsing Balances.....	-62	-	-192	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations	27,842	8	31,163	13	32,855	13	32,914	13
Other Funding:								
Agency Partnership Outreach	6,744	33	-	26	-	35	-	35
Thurgood Marshall College Fund	675	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Approps Other Funding..	7,419	33	-	26	-	35	-	35
Total Obligations, Other	7,419	33	-	26	-	35	-	35
Total Obligations, OPPE	35,261	41	31,163	39	32,855	48	32,914	48
Total Available, OPPE	35,323	41	31,355	39	32,855	48	32,914	48

PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTEs

Table OPPE-2. Permanent Positions by Grade and FTEs

Item	2022			2023			2024			2025		
	D.C.	Field	Actual Total	D.C.	Field	Actual Total	D.C.	Field	Estimated Total	D.C.	Field	Estimated Total
SES	2	-	2	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	1
GS-15.....	4	-	4	3	-	3	6	-	6	6	-	6
GS-14.....	1	1	2	3	4	6	2	-	2	2	-	2
GS-13.....	5	17	22	6	25	27	8	28	36	8	28	36
GS-12.....	4	1	5	2	2	2	-	-	2	2	-	2
GS-11.....	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GS-9.....	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1
GS-7.....	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GS-5.....	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Perm. FT EOY	22	19	41	14	32	46	19	29	48	19	29	48
FTE.....	22	19	41	14	25	39	19	29	48	19	29	48

*Total FTEs are all inclusive of workforce categories including temporary positions.

SHARED FUNDING PROJECTS

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

Item	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated
	Working Capital Fund:			
Administrative Services:				
AskUSDA Contact Center	-	\$4	\$7	\$7
Human Resource Enterprise System Management	\$1	1	-	-
Integrated Procurement Systems.....	2	3	4	-
Mail and Reproduction Services	11	12	17	17
Material Management Service Center.....	7	7	7	7
Procurement Operations Services	4	5	7	-
Subtotal	25	32	42	42
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center	5	12	62	8
Finance and Management:				
Financial Shared Services.....	136	139	150	149
Internal Control Support Services.....	-	-	13	11
National Finance Center	13	12	11	10
Personnel and Document Security	-	-	1	1
Financial Management Support Services.....	415	377	412	437
Subtotal	564	528	587	608

Item	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated
Information Technology:				
Client Experience Center	256	223	185	180
Department Administration Information Technology Office.....	126	1,043	320	404
Digital Infrastructure Services Center.....	34	27	33	31
Enterprise Cybersecurity Services	-	14	21	23
Enterprise Data and Analytics Services	-	2	2	2
Enterprise Network Services.....	26	27	27	27
Subtotal.....	442	1,336	588	667
Correspondence Management Services:				
Office of the Executive Secretariat	3	26	28	18
Total, Working Capital Fund	1,039	1,934	1,307	1,343
Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:				
Advisory Committee Liaison Services.....	4	3	6	6
Agency Partnership Outreach	1	1	1	1
Intertribal Technical Assistance Network	-	-	1	1
Medical Services.....	2	2	5	5
National Capital Region Interpreting Services.....	-	1	2	2
Office of Customer Experience.....	1	-	-	-
Physical Security	1	-	1	1
Security Detail	1	-	1	1
Security Operations.....	1	1	1	1
Talent Group.....	-	-	1	1
USDA Enterprise Data Analytics Services	1	-	-	-
Employee Experience	-	-	1	1
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs	12	8	20	20
E-Gov:				
E-Rulemaking	11	2	-	-
Grants.gov.....	-	5	5	6
Total, E-Gov	11	7	5	6
Agency Total	1,062	1,949	1,332	1,369

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ACCOUNT 1: SALARIES AND EXPENSES**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, [~~\$112,634,000~~]\$103,025,000, of which not to exceed [~~\$34,713,000~~]\$20,669,000 shall be available for the Immediate Office of the Secretary; not to exceed [~~\$2,396,000~~]\$3,174,000 shall be available for the Office of Homeland Security; not to exceed [~~\$6,533,000~~]\$6,613,000 shall be available for the Office of Tribal Relations, of which \$1,000,000 shall be [to establish]available for a Tribal Public Health Resource Center at a land grant university with existing indigenous public health expertise to expand current partnerships and collaborative efforts with indigenous groups, including but not limited to, tribal organizations and institutions such as tribal colleges, tribal technical colleges, tribal community colleges and tribal universities, to improve the delivery of culturally appropriate public health services and functions in American Indian communities focusing on indigenous food sovereignty; not to exceed [~~\$10,357,000~~]\$9,339,000 shall be available for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), of which \$1,500,000 shall be for 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(5); not to exceed [~~\$37,369,000~~]\$46,944,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration, of which [~~\$35,627,000~~]\$45,207,000 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, of which \$12,000,000 shall be available for the hire and purchase of zero emission passenger vehicles and supporting charging or fueling infrastructure: *Provided*, That funds made available by this Act to an agency in the Administration mission area for salaries and expenses are available to fund up to one administrative support staff for the Office; not to exceed [~~\$4,727,000~~]\$4,709,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs to carry out the programs funded by this Act, including programs involving intergovernmental affairs and liaison within the executive branch; and not to exceed [~~\$16,539,000~~]\$11,577,000 shall be available for the Office of Communications: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to transfer funds appropriated for any office of the Office of the Secretary to any other office of the Office of the Secretary[: *Provided further*; That, of the funds provided under this heading, up to \$4,000,000 may be transferred to OPPE and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to carry out section 12301 of Public Law 115–334]: *Provided further*, That, of the funds provided under this heading, up to [~~\$20,000,000~~]\$10,000,000 may be transferred to the Farm Service Agency to carry out section [729]727 of title VII of this Act: *Provided further*, That no appropriation for any office shall be increased or decreased by more than 5 percent: *Provided further*; That not to exceed \$22,000 of the amount made available under this paragraph for the Immediate Office of the Secretary shall be available for official reception and representation expenses, not otherwise provided for, as determined by the Secretary: *Provided further*, That the amount made available under this heading for Departmental Administration shall be reimbursed from applicable appropriations in this Act for travel expenses incident to the holding of hearings as required by 5U.S.C. 551-558: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs may be transferred to agencies of the Department of Agriculture funded by this Act to maintain personnel at the agency level: *Provided further*, That no funds made available under this heading for the Office of Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations may be obligated after 30 days from the date of enactment of this Act, unless the Secretary has notified the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress on the allocation of these funds by USDA agency: *Provided further*, That during any 30 day notification period referenced in section 716 of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall take no action to begin implementation of the action that is subject to section 716 of this Act or make any public announcement of such action in any form.

Change Description

The first change (line 5 of paragraph 1) modifies language for the Tribal Public Health Resource Center that is within the Office of Tribal Relations. The Tribal Public Health Resource Center was previously established, and the language is updated to reflect that the funds are now available.

The second change (line 16 of paragraph 1) adds language to include the zero-emission passenger vehicle fleet funding for Departmental Administration.

The third change (line 25 of paragraph 1) removes language that transfers funding from the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture for the Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program.

The fourth change (line 28 of paragraph 1) reflects the updated General Provision section number for the Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Initiative.

LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT

Table OPPE-4. Lead-Off Tabular Statement (In dollars)

Item	Amount
Estimate, 2024	\$9,280,000
Change in Appropriation	+59,000
Budget Estimate, 2025	9,339,000

PROJECT STATEMENTS

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

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025		Inc. or	FTE Inc.	Chg
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Dec.	or Dec.	Key
Discretionary Appropriations:											
OPPE	\$7,044	8	\$5,773	10	\$7,273	10	\$7,332	10	+\$59	-	(1)
GP- FOTO	2,000	-	2,007	-	2,007	-	2,007	-	-	-	-
Subtotal.....	9,044	8	7,780	10	9,280	10	9,339	10	+59	-	-
Mandatory Appropriations:											
Outreach for SDFR.....	18,860	-	23,575	3	23,575	3	23,575	3	-	-	-
Total Adjusted Approp	27,904	8	31,355	13	32,855	13	32,914	13	+59	-	-
Add back:											
Transfers In and Out, Rescissions.....	678	-	1,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sequestration	1,140	-	1,425	-	1,425	-	1,425	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriation	29,722	8	34,280	13	34,280	13	34,339	13	+59	-	-
Transfers Out:											
Working Capital Funds.....	-678	-	-1,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sequestration	-1,140	-	-1,425	-	-1,425	-	-1,425	-	-	-	-
Total Available	27,904	8	31,355	13	32,855	13	32,914	13	59	-	-
Lapsing Balances											
	-62	-	-192	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations	27,842	8	31,163	13	32,855	13	32,914	13	+59	-	-

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

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025		Inc. or	FTE Inc.
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Dec.	or Dec.
Discretionary Obligations:										
OPPE	\$6,982	8	\$5,581	10	\$7,273	10	\$7,332	10	+\$59	-
GP – FOTO.....	2,000	-	2,007	-	2,007	-	2,007	-	-	-
Subtotal Disc Obligations	8,982	8	7,588	10	9,280	10	9,339	10	+59	-
Mandatory Obligations:										
Outreach for SDFR	18,860	-	23,575	3	23,575	3	23,575	3	-	-
Total Obligations	27,842	8	31,163	13	32,855	13	32,914	13	+59	-
Add back:										
Lapsing Balances	62	-	192	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available	27,904	8	31,355	13	32,855	13	32,914	13	+59	-
Less:										
Total Transfers Out.....	678	-	1,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sequestration	1,140	-	1,425	-	1,425	-	1,425	-	-	-
Total Appropriation	29,722	8	34,280	13	34,280	13	34,339	13	+59	-

JUSTIFICATION OF CHANGES

Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement

Base funds will allow OPPE to continue to ensure small farms and ranches, beginning farmers or ranchers, veteran farmers and ranchers, and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers have access to, and equitable participation in, programs and services of the Department.

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

- (1) An increase of \$59,000 in salaries and expenses for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement programs (\$9,280,000 and 13 FTEs available in 2024).

This increase will support an annualization of the 2024 5.2 percent Cost of Living pay increase and the 2025 2.0 percent Cost of Living pay increase. If this funding is not provided, OPPE will have a limited ability to develop and maintain partnerships focused on solutions to challenges facing rural and underserved communities in the United States as directed by 7 U.S.C. 6934. The OPPE would be unable to sustain cooperative agreements that maintain USDA Liaisons on campuses and in the communities around minority-serving institutions. It would also directly impact the OPPE’s ability to provide equitable access to USDA’s scholarship and fellowship programs through online application forms and through cooperative agreements with partner organizations.

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs

Table OPPE-7. Geographic Breakdown of Discretionary Obligations and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

State/Territory/Country	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
District of Columbia	\$8,982	8	\$7,588	10	\$9,280	10	\$9,339	10
Obligations	8,982	8	7,588	10	9,280	10	9,339	10
Lapsing Balances	62	-	192	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available	9,044	8	7,780	10	9,280	10	9,339	10

Table OPPE-8. Geographic Breakdown of Mandatory Obligations and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

State/Territory/Country	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
District of Columbia	\$18,860	0	\$23,575	3	\$23,575	3	\$23,575	3
Obligations	18,860	0	23,575	3	23,575	3	23,575	3

CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS

Table OPPE-9 Classification by Objects (thousands of dollars)

Item No.	Item	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated
Personnel Compensation:					
	Washington D.C.	\$593	\$1,731	\$1,774	\$1,836
	Personnel Compensation, Field	449	991	1,221	1,479
11	Total personnel compensation	1,042	2,722	2,995	3,315
12	Personal benefits	391	646	932	959
	Total, personnel comp., and benefits	1,433	3,368	3,927	4,274
Other Objects:					
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons.....	85	245	150	155
23.1	Rental payments to GSA	36	1	40	45
23.2	Rental payments to others.....	8	71	10	11
24.0	Printing and reproduction	-	3	1	2
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources	261	195	1,000	1,100
25.3	Other goods and services from Federal sources.....	7,088	2,105	2,059	2,103
26.0	Supplies and materials	1	46	20	25
31.0	Equipment.....	70	45	150	155
41.0	Grants, subsidies, and contributions	18,860	25,084	25,498	25,044

	Total, Other Objects.....	26,409	27,795	28,928	28640
99.9	Total, new obligations.....	27,842	31,163	32,855	32,914
	DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3)	\$11	\$3	\$4	\$4
	Position Data:				
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position	\$170,657	\$174,923	\$178,133	\$181,235
235	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position	\$124,200	\$127,305	\$130,471	\$132,691
	Average Grade, GS Position.....	13.8	13.9	13.8	13.6

STATUS OF PROGRAMS

Section 12406 of the 2018 Farm Bill changed the name from the Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO) to the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), and the duties previously delegated to OAO, including oversight of the minority-serving higher education institutions, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and veteran farmers and ranchers, are now delegated to OPPE. Additionally, section 12305 of the 2018 Farm Bill established the position of the Agricultural Youth Coordinator to promote the role of youth-serving organizations and school-based agricultural education. The coordinator position has been delegated to OPPE.

In addition to the requirements of the 2018 Farm Bill, OPPE has oversight of the following USDA programs and initiatives:

- The Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison, established under section 12304 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, requiring the Department of Agriculture to help connect returning veterans with beginning farmer training and agricultural vocational and rehabilitation programs at USDA and to advocate interactions on behalf of veterans within USDA.
- The Farmworker Coordinator Initiative.
- The White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI).
- The White House Initiative on Historically Black College and Universities.
- The Women in Agriculture Initiative.
- Any other such programs the Secretary of Agriculture deems essential to serve the interest of USDA.

Current Activities

OPPE develops and maintains partnerships focused on solutions to challenges facing rural and underserved communities, and connects those communities to the education, tools, and resources available to them through USDA's programs and initiatives.

OPPE reviews USDA's outreach processes to effectively coordinate USDA's interactions with the public and USDA's supports of partner events at the national, regional, and local levels.

OPPE reviews USDA's recruitment processes to effectively coordinate USDA's interactions with the civilian labor force and management of USDA's fellowships, scholarships, and internships.

OPPE works with the U.S. Department of Education and other partners on additional opportunities to collaborate and strengthen outreach to rural and underserved communities.

Selected Examples of Recent Progress

1890 Land-Grant Institutions National Program:

Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE) assumes a crucial role in overseeing the USDA 1890 National Scholars Program, a collaborative initiative between the USDA and the 19 historically Black Land Grant Universities established under the second Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890. This impactful program involves a strategic partnership where USDA joins forces with these 1890 universities to bestow scholarship recipients with comprehensive support, covering full tuition, fees, books, and room and board for up to four years. These scholars, enrolled at one of the nineteen 1890 universities, pursue degrees in disciplines such as agriculture, food science, and natural resource sciences. Notably, the program incorporates valuable work experience at USDA through summer internships, enriching scholarship recipients' academic journey. Upon successfully completing the program, scholars undergo a non-competitive conversion into career positions within USDA, fostering a seamless transition from scholarship to meaningful employment. In the 2023 cohort, the USDA 1890 National Scholars Program proudly awarded 100 scholarships, with a groundbreaking shift in the application process—introducing a new electronic application available through an online platform, resulting in the highest number of applications received to date. Since its inception, this initiative has empowered over 1,000 students with scholarships dedicated to pursuing bachelor's degrees in fields aligned with agriculture, food science, natural resource science, or related disciplines at one of the nineteen 1890 Land-grant Universities. Renewal of the scholarship is contingent upon maintaining satisfactory academic

performance and progressing normally toward the bachelor's degree. As of November 8, 2023, the program boasts an enrollment milestone, with over 280 students—a record high—reflecting the profound impact and success of the USDA 1890 National Scholars Program. OPPE hired four USDA 1890 Liaisons to fill positions that had been vacant for an extended period to ensure a one-to-one relationship with each of the 19 universities of the 1890 land-grant system. In addition to their host 1890 university, the liaisons share information and provide support to their local communities, non-profits, partner organizations, and farmers and ranchers. OPPE helped coordinate and lead multiple 1890 Land-Grant Institutions with their annual AgDiscovery Program camp sessions at 12 of the 19 universities. Campers included students aged 12 to 16 years old interested in careers and opportunities in agriculture. OPPE supports the USDA 1890 Task Force through periodic meetings. The Task Force was established in the mid-to-late 1970s when the 1890 Land-Grant Universities strategically collaborated with the USDA to address issues like funding disparities and equal access to programs and opportunities. This dialogue resulted in the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing the partnership and giving rise to the USDA 1890 Program. The primary goal of the USDA 1890 Program is to strengthen the alliance between USDA and the 1890 Land-Grant Universities, focusing on three key program areas: the USDA 1890 Task Force, USDA Agricultural Liaison Officers Program, and the USDA 1890 National Scholars Program. Established in 1988, the USDA 1890 Task Force, an official entity of the Office of the Secretary, aims to enhance collaboration between USDA agencies and the 1890 Land-Grant Universities. Its purpose is to implement USDA programs on 1890 campuses and attract minorities to agriculture and related disciplines. Comprising senior USDA officials and 1890 Land-Grant University presidents, the Task Force provides leadership to the USDA 1890 Program. Chaired by a USDA senior official and co-chaired by an 1890 Land-Grant University president, the Task Force advises initiatives like the USDA 1890 National Scholars Program and the USDA 1890 Liaison component. Supporting the Task Force is the USDA 1890 Executive Team, consisting of USDA representatives and University administrators. The Executive Team aids the Task Force's mission by providing technical and administrative assistance, communicating effectively on its behalf, generating meeting agendas, proposing recommendations, building relationships, and sharing pertinent information. Periodic feedback on Task Force activities is provided to USDA and the 1890 system. In essence, the USDA 1890 Program operates as a collaborative platform, facilitated by the Task Force, and supported by the Executive Team, to advance mutual interests, foster diversity in agriculture, and strengthen the partnership between USDA and the 1890 Land-Grant Universities. Meetings held in 2023 resulted in the development of recommendations that have been drafted for review by the Co-Chairs for consideration.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) National Program:

OPPE maintains oversight of the USDA E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship Program, which offers HSI faculty and staff the opportunity to work collaboratively with USDA to gain insight and understanding of the Federal government. Fellows receive access to long-term collaboration opportunities with USDA agencies, and then share what they have learned with students and colleagues at their home institutions and in their communities. Science Fellowships are for science faculty at HSIs. Education Fellowships are for all other faculty and staff at HSIs. High School Fellowships are for secondary education superintendents, principals, agricultural and/or district level educators/administrators working in Hispanic-Serving School Districts. The USDA E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship Program awarded 30 fellowships in the 2023 cohort, an increase of 5 more fellows than 2022. For the first time ever, USDA/OPPE entered into a cooperative agreement with the National HEP/CAMP Association to pilot a paid 10-week summer internship program in Washington, D.C. This third-party internship program offered USDA an opportunity to provide work experiences to eight aspiring young leaders from farmworker backgrounds, to increase diversity, and to promote awareness of the various career opportunities within USDA. The Association is an organization whose membership is comprised of universities, colleges, and non-profit organizations committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of the national HEP and CAMP program, all HEP and CAMP projects, and to disseminating information about HEP and CAMP. OPPE hired two additional USDA HSI liaisons and have strategically stationed liaisons at various HSIs across the country in states like California, Texas, Illinois, Florida, and New York. These liaisons serve as champions and personal resources for HSIs and Hispanic farmers and ranchers at the regional level. They also provide vital support to HSIs across the United States to connect their students with USDA programs and services. Services are also offered in Spanish in both oral and written formats.

OPPE held the Third Annual Hispanic-Serving Institutions Federal Resource Symposium on September 21. Senior leaders from across USDA's staff offices, mission areas, and agencies were in attendance and provided agency-specific presentations and updates during this virtual event with 215 attendees. For 33 years, USDA has

partnered with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) that works to advance the educational excellence of the more than 2.2 million Hispanic students across the country. OPPE provides administrative support to the USDA HACU Leadership Group that works to maintain and improve this relationship. In 2023, OPPE coordinated a One USDA sponsorship for HACU's 37th Annual Conference in Chicago, IL. OPPE has also helped to coordinate opportunities through the USDA HACU National Internship Program for more than 3,000 students to intern at USDA.

Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program ("2501 Program"):

OPPE continued the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill provisions for the 2501 Program, including the new requirement for a peer-review grant panel, an increase in maximum grant amounts, longer periods of performance, and priority for nonprofit organizations/applicants. OPPE also embarked on a grants management system enhancement by starting the process to transition away from the USDA EZ Fed Grants system to the government-wide solution in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Grant Solutions system along with the development of performance measures for future assessments of efficiency and effectiveness. OPPE provided 41 grants for new 2501 Program projects to support historically underserved and veteran farmers and ranchers. Project funding totaled \$27.6 million for projects in 27 states and territories. OPPE provided \$1.5 million in funding to the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center grant to continue research on policies affecting historically underserved farmers and ranchers at Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi. OPPE held the first in-person 2501 Symposium post the COVID-19 pandemic in Austin, Texas to ensure USDA stakeholders had access to the most updated programmatic and funding opportunity information and to collect stakeholder feedback that will be considered for future programmatic enhancements to improve delivery of the 2501 Program. Senior leaders from across USDA's staff offices, mission areas, and agencies were in attendance and presented during the event to over 300 attendees, which included previous awardees and stakeholders from underserved communities.

Advisory Committees:

The Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers and Ranchers (ACMF) held two public meetings in its final year of a special term extension. Federal Register notices for both meetings were properly prepared and timely published, yielding an uptick in public (virtual) participation. OPPE hosted the first (in-person) public meeting for the ACMF in Tucson, Arizona March 28-30, 2023, and a second in-person public meeting in Savannah, Georgia June 27-29, 2023. OPPE successfully facilitated the committee deliberations under significant time constraints of impending expiration of membership appointments which led to progress of ACMF recommendations and have been submitted to the USDA Secretary. OPPE also planned and executed a call for ACMF nominations yielding 66 applicants for consideration to serve as members on the committee for the next two years. OPPE planned and stood up a review panel for a close look at all applicants and 15 candidates have been recommended for appointment in a nomination package pending selection by the Secretary of Agriculture. OPPE successfully planned and prepared for rechartering the Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (ACBFR) which had been inactive since October 2019. That charter was approved in August 2023. In quick succession, OPPE prepared and published a Federal Register notice calling for nominations to the ACBFR on September 8, 2023. The applicants are currently being vetted and reviewed by a panel of USDA officials to be recommended to the Secretary to serve a two-year appointment.

Agricultural Youth Coordinator:

In July 2023, OPPE hired a Youth Coordinator that is dedicated to meeting with youth across the United States to promote agricultural education and to raise awareness of opportunities in agriculture. The Youth Coordinator is highly engaged in meeting partners, attending various youth conferences, forming additional partnerships, and mapping out opportunities with school-based agricultural education and youth-serving organizations to help motivate and prepare young people to pursue careers in the agriculture, food, and natural resources systems. Youth coordination work has helped and will continue to build youth awareness of the reach and importance of agriculture, across diverse fields and disciplines and advocate on behalf of youth involved in food and agriculture organizations in interactions with employees of the Department. OPPE partnered with the Office of the Chief Economist to host 30 students as part of the USDA Future Leaders in Agriculture Program during the Ag Outlook Forum in February. This was the first in-person cohort since 2020. OPPE also coordinated a new cooperative agreement with Thurgood Marshall College Fund to host 65 interns across the department for the

summer of 2023 and an additional 3 extended for the fall semester. OPPE launched a new internship program for students from migrant and farmworker backgrounds this summer. These National HEP/CAMP Association internships allowed eight aspiring young high school and college students to learn about career opportunities within the Department while working in paid 10-week internships.

Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison (MVAL):

OPPE, in collaboration with U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Small Business Association, supports over 16.2 million veterans by hosting events such as the first ever “Boots to Business” agricultural training held May 9-10, 2023. OPPE worked with the USDA National Beginning Farming and Ranching Program to create a two-day course for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers with over 250 veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses in attendance. MVAL also responded and engaged over 340 returning military veterans interested in beginning ranching and farming. OPPE responded to and engaged over 286 transitioning service members and veterans seeking employment opportunities at USDA contributing to the USDA hiring 3,307 permanent veterans. These actions occurred at events such as the Fort Hood MEGA Career Fair, the American Legion National Convention, and the Farmer Veterans Coalition Stakeholders Conference. OPPE successfully managed a formal partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense Military Spouse Employment Program (MSEP) by closely managing and meeting all the reporting requirements of the USDA and MSEP partnership. As a result, USDA received the highest rating as Highly Engaged in the MSEP portal. In addition, USDA increased employment of military spouses from 16 in 2022 to 35 in 2023.

Farmworker Coordinator:

OPPE supported USDA efforts to create and implement programs to better serve roughly 2.4 million farmworkers through events when OPPE hosted, in partnership with U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Education, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Alianza de Campesinas representing 26 organizations covering 20 states to build understanding of challenges faced by farmworker women such as: gender-based violence, pesticides, sustainable agriculture and environmental justice, nutrition, immigration reform, and workplace exploitation including health and safety.

White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI):

OPPE led the coordination of support for the WHIAANHPI to address issues impacting the estimated 24 million Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. This included efforts to improve language access, nutrition, disaster preparedness, and access to become beginning farmers and ranchers.

Women in Agriculture:

OPPE met with representatives of National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), Women in Agribusiness, Women in Agriculture, and the Farmers Union Women’s Conference to create collaborative ways to enhance outreach and support of the 1.2 million women in agriculture residing in the U.S.

White House Initiative on Historically Black College and Universities (WHIHBCU):

OPPE coordinated the 2023 USDA Historically Black Colleges and Universities Engagement Plan and coordinated USDA participation and support for HBCU Week to include recruiting efforts at the HBCU Career Fair. The WHIHBCU Liaison (housed in OPPE) serves as the Agency representative in monthly meetings with the HBCU Interagency Working Group and is responsible for sharing information on opportunities available to the HBCU community to increase their awareness of and participation in USDA’s programs and services.