

2023 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES – OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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AGENCY-WIDE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Office of Communications (OC) was established on June 7, 1913, when the Secretary of Agriculture established the Office of Information as a news service to communicate findings and recommendations of USDA’s scientists and specialists to the widest possible audience. Section 7 CFR Subtitle A, delegates authority for public affairs activities from the Secretary to the Director of OC.

As USDA programs expanded to serve new constituencies beyond its original audiences in remote, rural parts of the country, OC has leveraged digital communications tools and channels to better inform and serve the broader public. OC’s mission is to provide leadership, expertise, management, counsel and coordination that result in successful communication strategies and products that serve and engage the public in a timely, fair, equal, transparent, and easily accessible manner while advancing the mission of USDA and priorities of the Administration.

OC is located in Washington, D.C. As of September 30, 2021, there were 42 full-time permanent employees, all stationed in Washington, D.C.

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

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

Item	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Actual	FTE	Actual	FTE	Estimated	FTE	Estimated	FTE
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations	\$7,261	34	\$7,342	36	\$7,342	36	\$11,388	42
Transfers Out	-100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Adjusted Appropriation	7,161	34	7,342	36	7,342	36	11,388	42
Lapsing Balances	-186	-	-276	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations	6,975	34	7,066	36	7,342	36	11,388	42
Other Funding								
Agency Photo Services	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations, Office of Communications	7,015	34	7,066	36	7,342	36	11,388	42
Working Capital Fund a/								
Creative Media and Broadcast Center (USDA)	3,619	9	3,707	9	3,707	9	6,099	13
Total Available, OC	10,634	43	10,773	45	11,049	45	17,487	55

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

Item	2020 Actual			2021 Actual			2022 Estimated			2023 Estimated		
	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total
SES	1	-	1	2	-	2	2	-	2	2	-	2
GS-15	3	-	3	3	-	3	4	-	4	5	-	5
GS-14	8	-	8	8	-	8	7	-	7	9	-	9
GS-13	9	-	9	9	-	9	13	-	13	13	-	13
GS-12	13	-	13	13	-	13	10	1	11	14	1	15
GS-11	2	-	2	5	-	5	3	-	3	4	-	4
GS-9	3	-	3	2	-	2	4	-	4	5	-	5
Total Perm. FT EOY	39	-	39	42	-	42	43	1	44	52	1	53
FTE	43	0	43	45		45	43	1	44	52	1	53

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

Item	<u>2020 Actual</u>	<u>2021 Actual</u>	<u>2022 Estimated</u>	<u>2023 Estimated</u>
Working Capital Fund:				
Administrative Services:				
Material Management Service.....	\$14	\$21	\$15	\$15
Mail and Reproduction Services.....	159	159	152	152
Integrated Procurement Systems.....	17	20	18	17
Procurement Operations Services.....	51	61	57	52
Human Resources Enterprise Management Systems.....	1	1	1	1
Subtotal.....	242	262	243	237
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center.....	123	291	217	328
Finance and Management:				
National Finance Center.....	17	15	12	12
Financial Management Systems.....	49	48	61	64
Subtotal.....	66	63	73	76
Information Technology:				
Client Experience Center.....	735	73	406	427
Department Administration Information Technology Office.....	665	1,803	1,220	1,247
Digital Infrastructure Services Center.....	534	143	176	178
Enterprise Network Services.....	66	43	43	38
Subtotal.....	2,000	2,062	1,845	1,890
Correspondence Management Services.....	-	3	5	5
Total, Working Capital Fund.....	2,431	2,681	2,383	2,536
Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:				
Agency Partnership Outreach.....	6	4	3	3
Medical Services.....	4	13	10	10
Office of Customer Experience.....	2	5	4	4
Personnel and Document Security Program.....	2	2	2	2
Physical Security.....	-	2	2	2
Security Detail.....	3	3	2	2
Security Operations Program.....	7	4	3	3
TARGET Center.....	1	1	1	1
TARGET Center NCR Interpreting Services.....	-	7	4	5
USDA Enterprise Data Analytics Services.....	-	3	2	2
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs.....	25	44	33	34
E-Gov:				
Human Resources Line of Business.....	1	-	-	-
Total, E-Gov.....	1	-	-	-
Agency Total.....	2,457	2,725	2,416	2,570

*ACCOUNT I: SALARIES AND EXPENSES***LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT.*****Table OC-4. Lead Off Tabular Statement***

Item	Amount
Estimate, 2022	\$7,342,000
Change in Appropriation	<u>4,046,000</u>
Budget Estimate, 2023	<u><u>11,388,000</u></u>

APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE

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

Office of the Secretary

For necessary expenses of the Office of the Secretary, [~~\$86,773,000~~]\$81,010,000 of which not to exceed [~~\$14,801,000~~]\$10,623,000 shall be available for the Immediate Office of the Secretary[, of which \$9,098,000 shall be available for climate change, including coordinating climate change activities across the Department]; not to exceed [~~\$13,429,000~~]\$2,306,000 shall be available for the Office of Homeland Security; not to exceed [~~\$13,294,000~~]\$10,525,000 shall be available for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement; not to exceed [~~\$2,860,000~~]\$6,450,000 shall be available for the Office of Tribal Relations; not to exceed [~~\$27,400,000~~]\$35,047,000 shall be available for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration, of which [~~\$26,001,000~~]\$33,300,000 shall be available for Departmental Administration to provide for necessary expenses for management support services to offices of the Department and for general administration, security, repairs and alterations, and other miscellaneous supplies and expenses not otherwise provided for and necessary for the practical and efficient work of the Department; *Provided*, That funds made available by this Act to an agency in the Administration mission area for salaries and expenses are available to fund up to one administrative support staff for the Office; not to exceed [~~\$4,480,000~~]\$4,671,000 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 [~~\$10,509,000~~]\$11,388,000 shall be available for the Office of Communications: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to transfer funds appropriated for any office of the Office of the Secretary to any other office of the Office of the Secretary: *Provided further*, That no appropriation for any office shall be increased or decreased by more than 5 percent: *Provided further*, That not to exceed \$22,000 of the amount made available under this paragraph for the Immediate Office of the Secretary shall be available for official reception and representation expenses, not otherwise provided for, as determined by the Secretary: *Provided further*, That the amount made available under this heading for Departmental Administration shall be reimbursed from applicable appropriations in this Act for travel expenses incident to the holding of hearings as required by U.S.C. 551-558: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs may be transferred to agencies of the Department of Agriculture funded by this Act to maintain personnel at the agency level.

The first change eliminates language that specified funding for climate change related activities.

PROJECT STATEMENT**Table OC-5. Project Statement (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

Item	2020 Actual	FTE	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Estimated	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.	Chg Key
Discretionary Appropriations:											
Office of Communications.....	\$7,261	34	\$7,342	36	\$7,342	42	\$11,388	48	+\$4,046	+6	(1)
Transfers Out:											
5% OSEC Transfer.....	-100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Available.....	7,161	34	7,342	36	7,342	42	11,388	48	4,046	6	
Lapsing Balances.....	-186	-	-276	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Obligations.....	6,975	34	7,066	36	7,342	42	11,388	48	4,046	6	

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

Item	2020 Actual	FTE	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Estimated	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.
Discretionary Obligations:										
Office of Communications.	\$6,975	34	\$7,066	36	\$7,342	42	\$11,388	48	+\$4,046	+6
Add back:.....										
Lapsing Balances.....	186	-	276	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available.....	7,161	34	7,342	36	7,342	42	11,388	48	4,046	6
Less:										
Total Transfers Out.....	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriation.....	7,261	34	7,342	36	7,342	42	11,388	48	4,046	6

Office of Communications

- 1) A net increase of \$4,046,000 and 6 FTEs (\$7,342,000 and 36 FTEs available in 2022).

The funding change is requested for the following items:

- (A) An increase of \$142,000, which includes \$97,000 for pay inflation and \$45,000 for FERS.

This increase supports the pay increase which went into effect January 1, 2022, of a 2.7 percent Cost of Living pay increases for civilian employees, and a 1.1 percent increase to cover the expenses for the mandated increase of USDA's contribution to FERS.

- (B) An increase of \$254,000 for 2023 Pay.

This increase will support the annualization of the 2022 2.7 percent Cost of Living pay increase and the 2023 4.6 percent Cost of Living pay increase.

The pay will allow the OC to continue to perform its mission of providing leadership, expertise, management, counsel, and coordination that result in successful communication strategies and products that serve and engage the public in a timely, fair, equal, transparent, and easily accessible.

- (C) An increase of \$153,000 for Shared Cost Programs and Working Capital Fund Inflationary Increases.

An increase of \$153,000 for Shared Cost Programs and Working Capital inflationary costs will support an inflationary percentage increase of 6 percent for the Office of Communications to continue to fund the required fixed Departmental programs.

- (D) An increase of \$1,871,000 to maintain current staffing levels.

This increase is needed to support and maintain current staffing levels to meet the program demands and statutory requirements imposed on OC, including coordination and oversight of all USDA and agency communications efforts; USDA-wide internal communications support for the Secretary, Sub-cabinet, and agencies; content management and administration of intranet.usda.gov; content management of usda.gov;

administering Department-wide social media channels and coordinating agency social media efforts, including reviewing and approving new channel requests; editorial review of all public USDA and agency reports (except scientific publications under the USDA Scientific Integrity Policy); coordinating USDA-wide printing with GPO and the Joint Congressional Committee on Printing; USDA Radio stories and features highlighting agricultural news and market reports; photography support, including archival responsibilities for USDA and agencies; and serving as public-facing Customer Service role and supporting other “O-offices” through the AskUSDA service. Elimination of the pay cost increase means the OC would not be able to fund approximately 1 FTE and/or would need to significantly cut travel, training, and mission support. Approximately 77 percent of OC’s budget supports personnel compensation and benefits. Failure to receive this increase would prevent us from fully performing our mission, which is necessary to ensure OC can continue support for all areas of the Department as well as meeting the needs of the Executive Office of the President and members of Congress.

(E) An increase of \$1,626,000 in the Office of Communications to Launch a Digital Magazine and support 6 FTEs.

The Office of Communications serves as the central distribution point for USDA’s customers to receive consistent, timely information from USDA agencies about programs and policies. USDA’s current social media channels (primarily Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube) all continue to grow in reach and engagement. However, the Department lacks a distribution channel for long-form analysis, news stories, and in-depth examples for farmers, foresters, producers, and ranchers to learn about and utilize USDA programs to benefit their operations. The proposed 13-percent budget increase of \$1,626,000 would allow OC to launch a digital magazine to effectively reach beyond traditional audiences while continuing to connect with farmers, foresters, ranchers, and rural Americans about USDA programs and policies. New activities made possible by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, the USDA’s Equity Commission, and new Farm Bill that reduce barriers for accessing USDA programs would benefit from reaching new audiences. Such a project would be USDA’s most significant new communications channel since the expansion of USDA.gov and related social media channels more than a decade ago, when such tools first demonstrated they were viable communications channels. A digital magazine would allow USDA to present longer-form news and information targeted to those using USDA programs while leveraging existing USDA audio, photography, and video products in a way that is superior to existing channels. Finally, a digital magazine format provides USDA with the flexibility to reach audiences in a timely way so taxpayers can quickly leverage new programs, especially around major changes such as the enactment of a new Farm Bill. While preliminary work on the concept began in fiscal year 2021, previous attempts with similar one-time projects demonstrated that existing resources are inadequate to launch and sustain this project. The proposed \$1,626,000 increase would allow OC to hire six GS-13 staff members as: 1) Managing Editors to work with USDA Agencies and Mission Areas in preparing content and curating the material collected from across USDA in a coherent manner; and 2) Designers and Web Developers to prepare and format the magazine, provide front end design and layout for optimal customer experience to best serve USDA’s customers and clients. In addition to the six new staff positions, the remaining funds are budgeted to reimburse USDA’s Office of the Chief Information Officer for increased web hosting costs, with a small amount set aside to purchase editing, graphics, and publishing software to support the new digital magazine. The base funds will continue to support the mission of the Office of Communications (OC), allowing OC to provide leadership, expertise, counsel, and coordination for the development of communication strategies vital to the overall formation, awareness, and acceptance of USDA programs and policies.

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

State/Territory/Country	2020 Actual	FTE	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Estimated	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE
District of Columbia	\$6,975	34	\$7,066	36	\$7,342	41	\$11,388	48
Wisconsin	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Obligations	6,975	34	7,066	36	7,342	42	11,388	48
Lapsing Balances	186	-	276	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available	7,161	34	7,342	36	7,342	42	11,388	48

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

Item No.	Item	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Estimated	2023 Estimated
Personnel Compensation:					
	Washington D.C.	\$4,053	\$4,059	\$4,108	\$6,215
	Personnel Compensation, Field	-	-	-	-
11	Total personnel compensation	4,053	4,059	4,108	6,215
12	Personal benefits	1,361	1,464	1,370	1,994
13.0	Benefits for former personnel	1	1	1	1
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits	5,415	5,524	5,479	8,210
Other Objects:					
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons	52	33	25	70
22.0	Transportation of things	2	-	2	2
23.1	Rental payments to GSA	3	-	3	3
23.3	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges	174	195	176	190
24.0	Printing and reproduction	268	7	120	269
25	Other contractual services	532	354	541	590
25.1	Advisory and assistance services	176	150	180	185
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources	5	3	5	5
25.3	Other goods and services from Federal sources	201	217	664	1,494
25.5	Research and development contracts	21	35	22	30
26.0	Supplies and materials	21	135	25	90
31.0	Equipment	105	413	100	250
	Total, Other Objects	1,560	1,542	1,863	3,178
99.9	Total, new obligations	6,975	7,066	7,342	11,388
	DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3)	\$25	\$14	\$14	\$14
Position Data:					
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position	\$152,000	\$177,000	\$177,000	\$177,000
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position	\$115,000	\$119,000	\$119,000	\$122,000
	Average Grade, GS Position	13.6	13,6	13.6	13.8

Advertising Expenditures

There are no contracts for advertising expenses to report.

STATUS OF PROGRAMS

The mission of the Office of Communications (OC) is to provide leadership, expertise, management, and coordination to develop successful communication strategies and products that advance the mission of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and priorities of the government while serving and engaging the public in a fair, equal, transparent, and easily accessible manner. OC delivers information concerning USDA's programs, policies, and activities to the American people by disseminating information through media outlets and directly to farmers, consumers, environmentalists, the business community, and other interest groups. The success of the Department's initiatives relies on effective communication and public education campaigns, making it easier for the public to access information on the Department's programs. OC has also taken on an increasingly important role in coordinating USDA's communications during emergencies or other incidents that potentially affect large segments of the public or industry.

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

CMBC is a central USDA resource for high-quality and cost-effective communications products and services. CMBC provides strategic communication planning solutions and tactical development, creation, production and distribution. CMBC creates and oversees a wide range of communication products, including video and audio, print, exhibits, and web. CMBC provides services to agencies for visitor centers, information campaigns, training, radio and TV public service announcements, webcasts, remote media interviews, and audio and video webinars.

CMBC supports a customer experience approach to the development of communication and training products and provides an essential service creating and disseminating communications for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Sub-Cabinet. CMBC promotes the integrated use of traditional media and social media outreach. CMBC has a role in the USDA's continuity of operations and emergency response communications plans. CMBC production services are provided to headquarters, regional, and local USDA offices, and to other government agencies, upon request.

CMBC's Creative Services business line has added capabilities to efficiently meet our customer's needs, including: 3 new television studio sets plus a green screen and remote-controlled cameras that decrease the cost to clients by reducing crew size for in-studio events, field equipment including portable teleprompters to support recordings outside of the USDA studio, and video drones flown by a certified operator.

CMBC also houses the USDA Radio group who produce between 6-12 Agriculture/Crop/Rural America daily stories Monday through Friday, and a dozen feature stories weekly, distributed to commercial farm radio outlets.

CMBC also includes the USDA Photography group that provides photography services including photojournalism, portraiture, multimedia productions, scientific, and photographic research for internal and external clients. Photography provides digital and multimedia content for the Digital Communications Division to support social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Photography works with OC's Editorial Review to verify photographic quality and subject content, copyright and clearances for all images used in publications, and ensure images are supported by key words and metadata. Photography also provides imagery for internal and external audiences through USDA's Flickr photo stream web site: www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/. The group provides photographic training for agency Public Affairs Specialists and supports the Office of the Secretary with press and event photography.

Digital Communications Division (DCD)

The DCD manages and maintains the USDA.gov web portal, ensuring content is available, accessible, and relevant to the Department's diverse stakeholders. DCD coordinates its digital communication efforts with the press office, providing expertise in web communications, online community engagement, and social media tactics. The group also supports agency and program area communications, evaluating web and social media analytics for USDA.gov and agency websites to better understand our users and their access of the Department's information and services.

Analytic trends are incorporated in ongoing communication planning efforts and web content strategies. The DCD team manages the USDA.gov search tool and seeks to optimize web content for search engines. The DCD team manages the Department's official social media assets such as the USDA Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, and the USDA Blog. DCD works collaboratively with agency web and communication teams and chairs the Social Media Council and Web Council within the Department, communicating best practices, Federal and USDA web initiatives, USDA web design and functionality guidance, and the use of emerging tools or

technologies. Additionally, DCD collaborates with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, public affairs directors, and program employees, to ensure that web communication and social media programs effectively support the Department’s mission. The DCD develops and maintains current policy on the official use of social media, new media, and digital communications, and provides the standards and guidance to all USDA digital efforts.

Events, Print and Editorial Review (EPER) Division

The Printing Services group within EPER remains the Department’s central printing authority and liaison with the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) and the Congressional Joint Committee on Printing. The group consults with, advises, instructs, and assists the agency printing specialists, administrative officers, editors, publications writers, and information specialists on the most economical and effective printing methods and procedures.

The Constituent Affairs group within EPER manages briefings at USDA headquarters with major stakeholders, including national and international delegations. In 2021, due to COVID-19 restrictions, this group’s work shifted to primarily virtual events/meetings and towards supporting other OC functions. The team was trained in virtual conference hosting and actively facilitated multiple meetings. As USDA staff offices are expected to reopen in calendar year 2022, the Constituent Affairs team will collaborate with USDA Congressional Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs to support in-person visitation.

EPER’s Editorial Review group provides Departmental oversight for USDA’s publishing activities. Providing the final Departmental authorization and clearance of traditional and online publications before going out to the public, the group ensures compliance with Federal regulations and USDA Departmental Regulations and guidelines, including photography copywrite reviews.

EPER shares responsibility with Digital Communications for providing strategic planning and oversight for the use of the USDA brand across all media. Implementation of the “One USDA” brand has increased visibility for USDA’s wide-ranging products and services. Brand management also ensures that the logo is used only where authorized, providing assurances to the public that the Department stands behind products and services that carry the USDA logo.

In 2020, EPER also assumed responsibility for Department internal communications, including the USDA intranet. The group oversees the development of an enterprise internet solution for the Department and all sub-agencies. A full transition to this solution is expected by 2026. The group works closely with OC’s Digital Communications to manage content for the USDA intranet. This group also manages all-employee emails from the Office of the Secretary and the OneUSDA mailboxes and is responsible for collaboratively drafting and clearing all internal communications from the Office of the Secretary.

Administration, Budget, and Customer Service (ABCS) Division

The ABCS group is a central point of contact for external customer service and is responsible for budget formulation, preparation, justification, forecasting, and execution, as well as for coordinating all human resources tasks and providing administrative support to OC. Included in these support services are facilities and property management, oversight of telecommunications services, and the processing of all training, travel, and procurement requests.

Press Operations (PO)

PO provides outreach to media outlets and responds to reporter’s questions about the overall mission of the Department as well as the Secretary’s priorities. Communication Coordinators work with USDA Agencies and Staff Office communications staff to provide the leadership, expertise, counsel and coordination needed to develop communications plans and implement strategies vital to the overall formulation and awareness of USDA programs and policies. In addition, PO coordinates public and media communications for the Office of the Secretary and assists USDA mission areas and staff offices in developing plans for effective crafting and dissemination of information.

Speechwriting

The Speechwriting section of OC compiles briefings and drafts speeches, Op-Eds, and other remarks for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, as well as provides message guidance to USDA staff.

Selected Examples of Recent Progress

Administration, Budget, and Customer Service (ABCS) Division

The ABCS group represents the USDA Staff offices to the USDA Customer Experience Office, answering 6,764 telephone and written correspondence inquiries, responded to 565 e-mails, and created, reviewed, updated, and uploaded 1,142 knowledge articles in the Department-wide Ask USDA Information Hotline for FY 2021.

Events, Print and Editorial Review (EPER) Division

The USDA Brand gives consistent identity to the Department, increases public recognition of the value and wide range of USDA's products and services, and brings economy of scale to the production of visual information materials. In FY 2021, OC worked with the Office of General Counsel to defend the USDA Brand by promptly identifying the inappropriate use of the USDA Brand by a developer, nonprofits, and loan institutions and sending cease-and-desist letters in a timely fashion. Additionally, EPER updated the style and branding guides for the agency and adopted a unified common signature lockup for both print and web publications.

EPER's Editorial Review team reviewed and cleared 160 manuscripts and 125 final products in a timely manner to meet deadlines of agencies and offices.

EPER's departmental-level Printing Services group completed printing requests for USDA agencies. USDA completed 1,082 print projects utilizing all printing programs including GPO Express program to ensure the best customer service with the most cost-efficient printing process.

In 2021, the nearly 15-year-old database used to manage, track, and facilitate departmental print orders ceased to work due to outdated software. EPER's Printing Services group is collaborating with agency staff to fund and develop a departmental enterprise software solution that will add additional functionality and opportunities for labor and printing cost savings across the department. The new system is expected to be completed and adopted in FY 2022.

Creative Media and Broadcast Center (CMBC)

CMBC supported USDA leadership during the pandemic, delivering timely messages to staff and the public. Production team worked on location and virtually, creating content for agency programs. CMBC also provide technical support and coverage for news conferences with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and other leadership. Photography reports 12.7 million total views in Flickr, available at www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/, and 128 editorial clearances for USDA Agencies in FY 2021. USDA TV Studio upgrade work was also started in in FY 2021, with a goal to expand flexibility of studio programming and reduce needed staffing.

USDA Radio - Despite the pandemic, daily output of content exceeded the prior year. In FY 2021, USDA Radio aired 3,013 news items, 490 more than FY 2020. USDA Radio aired 572 features, 52 Agriculture USA documentaries, 260 Consumer Time features and 260 Ag Update features, all available for download at www.usda.gov/media/radio

Digital Communications Division (DCD)

USDA Web Modernization – OC's DCD effectively managed USDA's Web Modernization Initiative by leading OC, in partnership with OSEC, OCX, and OCIO, to create the strategies, planning, development of project plans, and design and technical migration of website look and feel and hosting environments to USDA's common EWAPS platform. DCD successfully transferred most Staff Office websites from separate hosting environments to being hosted under the USDA.gov domain. With the consolidation of all USDA web assets onto a single platform operated by USDA's OCIO, all department web applications share a common platform which means agencies benefit from sharing the costs for development, security, hosting, and system administration. For example, the hosting environment OCIO operates allows for an elastic (variable number) of servers to provide the pre-production and production infrastructure, allowing USDA to provision and deprovision servers as need, providing further cost avoidance along with pooled costs for hosting, maintenance, and security. And customers benefit from a consistent overall look and feel, no matter what agency within USDA.gov they are searching.

Digital Strategy Playbook – The USDA Digital Strategy Playbook, available at www.usda.gov/digital-strategy, serves a road map for USDA digital content and provides guidelines, tools and best practice advice for USDA agencies and staff offices to meet the on-line needs of their customers. The goal is to provide the best experiences to our customers: the American agricultural producers and consumers who rely on these sites for information and help with consistency across the Department. USDA's Digital Strategy was created to: 1) clearly outline the multiple mandates federal websites must follow, and 2) help USDA agencies and staff offices find resources and expert advice to meet those mandates. Implementing new design standard for all USDA websites ensures that USDA clients and customers will find a common layout for each USDA agency, helping speed the search for answers and

providing a uniform experience. The DCD supported agency and staff offices by assisting during the implementation of new style guides, especially by providing uniform common design files and code bases for these websites. A common design standard and DCD-provided support results in deferred spending by the agencies who normally contract for similar design and usability tools. In addition, DCD developed and launched a new USDA Style Guide/Brand Guide and assisted agencies with implementation of standards for websites, social media, outreach materials, official usage, and design files.

Coronavirus Response – OC’s DCD also provided the immediate USDA response to the coronavirus pandemic. DCD developed and redesigned a new website for COVID-related materials, constantly improving the delivery of information and user experience. DCD also reviewed and cleared all website posts and social media across all of USDA’s digital channels and developed social media strategies and prioritized response for coronavirus related activities. Using a centralized approach to coronavirus response, DCD developed efficiencies and time/cost savings across the board feeding into one response from the Department as opposed to responses from all 29 agencies and offices.

Press Operations (PO)

The Press Operations group arranged interviews with international, national and local media and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, to increase awareness and build support for USDA programs and priorities. This division also organized press for travel for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, and worked with agencies to respond to press inquiries, craft communications plans, and drafted and edited press materials.

Speechwriting

OC’s Speechwriting group prepared speeches, briefings and remarks for use by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and subcabinet and researched and interviewed event planners to ensure that remarks matched up with audience expectations and were appropriate for each audience makeup in terms of topics of interest and including information specific to each audience.