



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
2024 Plain Writing Act Compliance Report

SUBMITTED BY THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

2024 Plain Writing Act Compliance Report

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to writing in plain language, to improve service to both internal and external customers. The *Plain Writing Act of 2010* (Public Law 111-274) enhances citizen access to government information and services by establishing that the U.S. Government issues clearly written documents to the public. All Federal agencies are accountable to the public to promote clear communication that the public can understand and use. 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 Writing¹ website.

“The term *plain writing* means writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.” (*id.* Sec. 3 (3)). It is an essential method of ensuring that our customers understand our programs and services and can easily obtain information in an accessible format. USDA will continue to raise awareness and promote the standardization of plain writing at all levels of the Department. Our goal is continuous effectiveness and accountability to our customers.

Adherence to *plain writing* principles helps USDA communicate clearly and effectively with the customers we serve. USDA upholds this standard of excellence by ensuring its thoroughness in conveying programs, services, and public-facing communications in an organized, visually appealing, and understandable format.

USDA maintains this standard of excellence through:

- technology improvements;
- cutting-edge web design utilizing digital tools and channels that promote a positive online customer experience;
- use of clear and concise language; and most importantly,
- welcoming feedback from our internal employees and external customers.

¹ United States Department of Agriculture. Plain Language Writing in USDA. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/plain-writing>.

This report focuses on USDA’s activities from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024, and includes agency accomplishments not previously reported.

**Marcia Moore, Director of the Executive Secretariat
Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing**

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Plain Writing Coordinators

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Office of Customer Experience (OCX)	Tiffany Jones
Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES)	Charles Melton
Office of the General Counsel (OGC)	Kumar Jayasuriya
Research, Education, and Economics (REE) and sub-agencies except ARS	Tyler Tucker
Rural Development (RD)	Shani Burley-Moore
Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs and (FAS)	Shannon Stroman

USDA Agency Plain Language Highlights for FY 2024

In his final message to Congress, President Abraham Lincoln called USDA the “People’s Department” because the work of USDA agencies and programs impacted the lives of generations of Americans. The following snapshots highlight what USDA’s agencies have done to support the American people over the past year.

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

Food and Nutrition Service

In FY 2024, USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) employed innovative plain writing strategies to improve agency communication. The efforts resulted in increased engagement from diverse audiences using (1) issue-focused marketing collateral, (2) bilingual communication, (3) infographic forward webpages, (4) strategic education fact sheets, (5) and targeted social media. Agency exemplars of excellence are highlighted below:

- Following an uptick in the theft of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Congress enacted legislation to reimburse lost benefits to recipients. The SNAP Fraud Prevention webpage² was improved to educate the public on the different types of SNAP fraud, and to direct website users to available resources and contact information. Plain language created an easier-to-understand resource to explain the different forms of SNAP fraud.
- Creating a public-facing webpage intended for the general public and state agency employees can be a challenge. The Addressing Stolen SNAP Benefits website³ provides useful information for each group on the impact of a new law that reimburses SNAP recipients for stolen benefits. Here, program participants can easily see how this legislation affects them and the steps they need to take to exercise their rights under the law.
- Upon the one-year anniversary of the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, FNS released the Fact Sheet on the One-Year Anniversary of the White House

² USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Snap Fraud Prevention. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/fraud>.

³ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Addressing Stolen SNAP Benefits. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/stolen-benefits>.

Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.⁴ The fact sheet uses bullet points to graphically organize each of the five pillars of the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.⁵

- The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, (Public Law 117-328) terminated the temporary allocation of SNAP COVID-19 emergency allotments (supplements). To help SNAP participants understand the changes in their benefits, FNS provided 13 specific questions and answers on the Questions and Answers about Changes to SNAP Benefit Amounts webpage.⁶ FNS provided the questions and answers in a clear, organized format and enhanced an English/Spanish blog post⁷ with an effective infographic.⁸
- Farm to School Fact Sheets⁹ are a collection of more than 20 different fact sheets on a variety of topics about the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program, including school gardening and local food resources. Designed for a public audience, existing and potential grantees, and grantee partners, each fact sheet is written in a logical order, with the most important information at the beginning, and stating a purpose, and bottom line.
- The Summer Nutrition webpage¹⁰ conveys information about two new options to feed more American children. The webpage content was refreshed and expanded to address child hunger in question-and-answer and bulleted formats, with infographics.

⁴ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Fact Sheet: One Year of FNS Advancing Goals of the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fact-sheet/fns-role>.

⁵ The White House, Executive Summary: Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Fact Sheet: One Year of FNS Advancing Goals of the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/09/27/executive-summary-biden-harris-administration-national-strategy-on-hunger-nutrition-and-health/>.

⁶ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Changes to Snap Benefits Amounts - 2023. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/changes-2023-benefit-amounts>.

⁷ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Long, C. SNAP Emergency Allotments are Ending. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/blog/snap-emergency-allotments-are-ending>.

⁸ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Recent Changes to SNAP Benefits Amounts. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/2023-benefit-changes>.

⁹ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Farm to School Fact Sheets. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/factsheets>.

¹⁰ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. SUN Programs: USDA's Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer>.



- FNS launched the MyPlate Instagram Account¹¹ to communicate to the public in plain language the benefits of eating healthy. Written in everyday language with graphics and pictures, the Instagram posts provide healthy eating tips, recipes, and more. MyPlate Instagram complements the MyPlate.gov website,¹² and offers the public resources, and visual reminders for healthy eating.
- FNS created the Proposed Updates to the School Nutrition Standards¹³ webpage to explain proposed changes to school meal standards. Designed and written for stakeholders, state agencies, and the general public, the website translates the proposed nutrition standards provisions into four categories. Answers to frequently asked questions surrounding the updates are communicated in a clear and concise manner. Additional resources on the webpage include a comparison chart,¹⁴ infographics, and a media toolkit¹⁵ for external communication.

¹¹ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. My Plate Instagram. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.instagram.com/myplate_gov/.

¹² USDA Food and Nutrition Service. My Plate. Retrieved October 16, 2024, from <https://www.myplate.gov>.

¹³ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Updates to the School Nutrition Standards. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates>.

¹⁴ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. School Meal Standards Comparison Chart. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-meal-standards-comparison-chart>.

¹⁵ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. School Nutrition Media Toolkit. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates/media-toolkit>.

- FNS created the [SNAP Quality Control webpage](#)¹⁶ to contextualize the release of the FY 2022 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payment error rates. The webpage helps media, stakeholders, and the general public understand the SNAP quality control system, and makes complex, technical content accessible using plain language principles, graphic design, and a question-and-answer section.
- FNS designed the [SNAP Healthy Incentives Infographic](#)¹⁷ to help a range of audiences, including stakeholders, retailers, and SNAP participants understand and value SNAP healthy incentives. The infographic uses bullet points for concise explanations with hyperlinks to additional webpages.



Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC)

The Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Service Business Center’s Civil Rights Division produced more than 425 translated documents for FPAC agencies. The total number of online limited English proficiency (LEP) requests for language support increased by 68 percent. These translations offer consumer benefits for 112,379 Hispanic agricultural producers, members with limited English proficiency, and Spanish-language media outlets. Additionally:

- The Civil Rights Division conducted a data call to FPAC agencies to conduct a vital document inventory, identifying available vital documents in non-English languages and agency plans for document translations in the coming fiscal year.
- In FY 2023, the Civil Rights Division expanded the number of service providers from one to five, resulting in greater access in more languages, including indigenous languages; third-party validation of translated documents; and cultural sensitivity reviews. The division updated the Statement of Work for contract support to improve quality standards and to require vendors to provide pre-document translation consultation

¹⁶ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. [SNAP Quality Control](#). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/qc>.

¹⁷ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. [SNAP Healthy Incentives Infographic](#). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/healthy-incentives-infographic>.

to agencies upon request. Members also have an option in the LEP online system to request a quality review of the third party translated products.

- The FPAC Business Center’s External Affairs and Civil Rights Divisions updated its LEP resource guide posted on the USDA website. Members of the public with limited English proficiency and customer-facing employees are the primary beneficiaries of this effort. The External Affairs Division also created a library of translated material available on [Farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov)¹⁸ for members of the public with limited English proficiency.
- As part of its continuing efforts to better serve the 112,379 Hispanic agricultural producers who are the potential end consumers for its products the FPAC Business Center External Affairs Division translated more than 40 press releases from English to Spanish, benefitting members of the public with limited English proficiency and Spanish-language media outlets.
- The FPAC Business Center Information Solutions Division tested 262 documents, websites, training, kiosks, and mobile devices across three customer-facing FPAC agencies (FSA, NRCS, RMA) for Section 508 compliance during the first three quarters of the year. It also tested and remediated 56 training courses in USDA AgLearn, (PDF, Recordings, and PowerPoint) for Section 508 compliance. Of these training courses, 1,005 modules are compliant in the USDA AgLearn training environment.

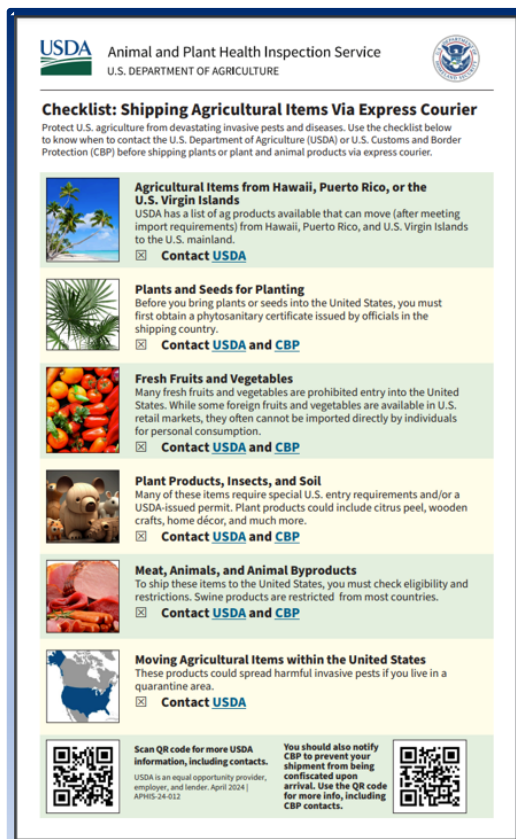
Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP)

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Office of Legislative and Public Affairs launched a new, modernized [APHIS](https://www.aphis.usda.gov)¹⁹ website, with nearly 4,000 redesigned web pages. In fiscal year 2024, APHIS modernized its website to better serve stakeholder needs and comply with the [Plain Language Act of 2010](#), [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#), and the [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act](#). The redesigned web pages incorporate many user-oriented improvements. These include applying plain language best practices to site navigation

¹⁸ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. [Farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.farmers.gov/>.

¹⁹ USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. [Aphis.usda.gov](https://www.aphis.usda.gov). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/>.



and most visited pages, and make APHIS information easier to find, read, understand, and use. The improved site has received more than 2.7 million visits since its launch in April 2024.

APHIS also revamped its [HPAI Detections in Livestock](#) page,²⁰ which had almost 6800 visitors in August. These visitors included dairy herd producers, veterinarians, state cooperators, Federal partners, and other interested stakeholders. Previously, the page had become a dumping ground for documents and other dense content, making the website difficult to navigate. After a thorough content audit, APHIS developed a content strategy based on plain language best practices. The strategy organized information into clear content buckets with an intuitive navigation scheme, parsed information across several pages

making it easier to navigate, and added overview and informational statements to help orient the reader to the content on each page. APHIS also increased the use of visual and interactive features to encourage readers to engage with available information and applied other formatting techniques to create a clear information hierarchy.

In fiscal year 2024, APHIS produced more than 65 educational materials and outreach products for use with external audiences that used plain language best practices. These products make it easier for audiences to understand and access vital agency programs, services, and funding; comply with agency regulations; or pursue a career, temporary position, or internship/student opportunity with APHIS.

The APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine Program identified agricultural items shipped via express courier as a high-risk pathway for introducing invasive pests and diseases into the United

²⁰ USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. [Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) in Livestock](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock.

States and spreading them within the country. Because of this, APHIS created the Shipping Agriculture Products via Express Courier webpage²¹ and checklist infographic.²² The information assists everyone from buyers on e-commerce sites like Amazon, eBay, and Facebook Marketplace to gardeners shipping homegrown produce to family and friends across the Nation. Invasive plant and animal pests and diseases can harm our crops, livestock, poultry, and ecosystems. Many people who buy agricultural items online, receive them from family or friends, or ship these items themselves are not aware of the agricultural risk associated with these products and their legal obligations under APHIS regulations. The new APHIS products are written and designed for people in plain language, and contain a clear call to action, and quick contact links. Readers can review the checklist and quickly learn when and how to contact USDA and/or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection before shipping or receiving agricultural items via express courier.

APHIS' Emergency and Regulatory Compliance Services Emergency Management Branch developed resources to help APHIS employees and supervisors during the agency's transition to a new system for managing employees' deployment to agricultural emergencies. These include step-by-step written instructions on how to use the new system and answers to users' frequently asked questions. APHIS designed the written materials using clear and concise language with a well-organized structure. Staff writers wanted to eliminate jargon and technical terms to appeal to as broad an audience as possible since APHIS handles a wide range of emergencies. As a result of the outreach, and the use of webinars and written communication, the Emergency Management Branch minimized follow-up questions from users and increased employees' ability to complete their profiles in the new system.

²¹ USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Shipping Plants, Food, and Other Agricultural Products via Express Courier. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-imports/shipping-plants-food-other-agricultural-products-express-courier>.

²² USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Shipping Agricultural Items via Express Courier. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/checklist-shipping-agricultural-items.pdf>.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)



The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Public Affairs office used plain language principles in the creation of two new infographics this year. In addition to being available on the AMS website for agricultural stakeholders and the general public, the infographics for the Local Meat Capacity Grant program²³ and the Organic Market Development Grant program are also distributed to up to 375,500 subscribers through the agency’s use of the digital distribution service, GovDelivery.

The Public Affairs Office continues to use infographics to distill complex information into simple, visually appealing graphics with easy-to-understand statistics and bite-sized facts to help stakeholders understand the purpose and impact of the agency’s programs.

The Specialty Crops Standard,²⁴ which has a distribution of 136,757 subscribers, demonstrates how the Public Affairs Office works with each of its programs to refine their external newsletters for stakeholders to be simple and easy to read with the unique audience of each newsletter in mind. Using simpler language and shorter more focused and engaging articles, the program expects the new format will gain more subscribers, and will lead to a more informed specialty crop industry. It is one of four newsletters AMS sends to external stakeholders with a total subscriber base of more than 175,600 subscribers.

AMS continues using its intranet, AMS Insight, to reach its almost 4,000 employees with critical information, links to resources, communication from AMS leadership and stories about the agency’s activities. Designed for and with input from employees, AMS Insight became the

²³ USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. Local Meat Capacity Grant Program. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/LocalMCAP_Infographic.pdf

²⁴ USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. The Specialty Crops Standard. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAMS/bulletins/3a8f859m>.

agency’s hometown “newspaper.” AMS Insight was discontinued and transitioned to the OneUSDA Intranet using the same reader-friendly style²⁵ as much as possible.

Natural Resources and Environment

Forest Service

The Forest Service feature webpage²⁶ highlights agency stories using visual prompts to draw interest to recently published stories. The redesign includes sending a monthly email to subscribers that offers a preview of posted features and allows readers to quickly and consistently connect to the features that interest them. In 2024, more than 74 million people viewed online stories, publications, videos and other online information across the agency’s 156 sites.

The agency reorganized the feature page from a simple chronological list to one that is by date but focuses on visual labeling and broader use of strong visuals, including photos and videos. The agency also continues to improve writing using Associated Press Style that is more familiar to the average reader, calls for ease of presentation and encourages plain language tactics, such as reducing if not eliminating the use of acronyms. The agency also updated the home page to include links for easy access to agency priority work, information about national forests and grasslands, news releases and photos and videos.

²⁵ USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://intranet.usda.gov/agricultural-marketing-service-ams/employee-stories>.

²⁶USDA Forest Service. Feature Stories. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/features>.

Wildfire Crisis Strategy: A Historic Year²⁷ provides the public with an update of how the agency performed during the first year of implementing the 10-year wildfire crisis strategy. Using graphics to illustrate categories, the Forest Service presents accomplishments so that individuals can identify agency work meaningful to them. Users of the information include residents and elected representatives of communities within designated landscapes, agency partners, and members of Tribal organizations. The Forest Service describes its implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy with simple summaries of the work completed and how, why, and with whom, as well as what is next.



The Forest Service developed Forest Service Careers: Real Jobs, Real Impact²⁸ tri-fold brochures (general,²⁹ Pathways Program,³⁰ seasonal,³¹ and Presidential Management Fellows Program) are used in national recruitment efforts. The attractive layout and design enhance a quick, digestible format about jobs with the Forest Service, providing information recruiters want to share and job seekers need to know. The brochures' familiar theme and brand make recruitment efforts look cohesive, professional, and intriguing.

The Human Resources Management office also used plain language principles in its public external webpages (Public Lands Corps hiring,³² Returned Peace Corps career path opportunities,³³ AmeriCorps Vista Alumni Careers,³⁴ Veterans and Military-Related Hiring,³⁵

²⁷ USDA Forest Service. Wildfire Crisis Strategy: A Historic Year. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/WCS-Historic-Year.pdf.

²⁸ USDA Forest Service. Forest Service Careers: Real Jobs, Real Impact. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/careers.pdf.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ USDA Forest Service. Forest Service Careers: Real Jobs, Real Impact – Pathways Program. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/pathways.pdf.

³¹ USDA Forest Service. Forest Service Careers: Real Jobs, Real Impact – Permanent Seasonal Employment. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/seasonal-jobs.pdf.

³² USDA Forest Service. Public Land Corps. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers/public-lands-corps>.

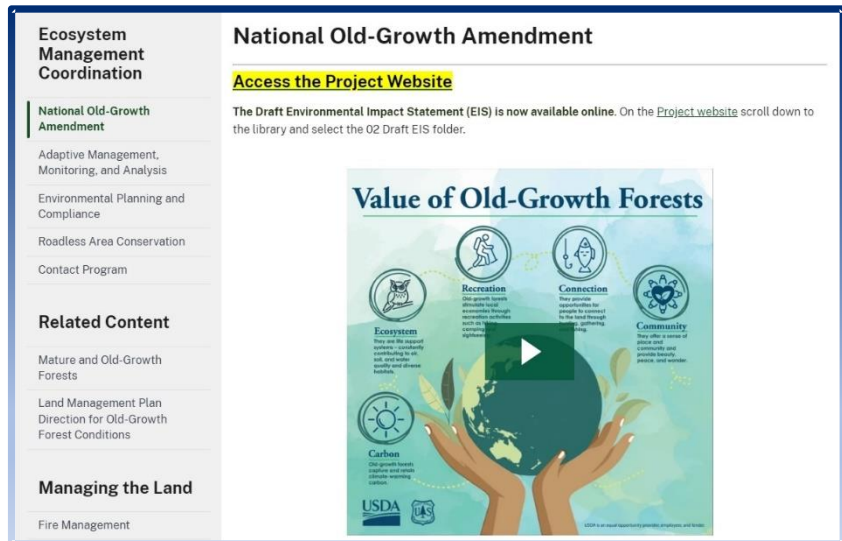
³³ USDA Forest Service. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Staff. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers/returned-peace-corps>.

³⁴ USDA Forest Service. AmeriCorps Vista Alumni. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers/ameri-corps-vista-alumni>.

³⁵ USDA Forest Service. Veterans and Military-Related Hiring. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers/veterans-and-military>.

Persons with Disabilities Hiring,³⁶ and Indian Youth Service Corps³⁷). The job-seeking information provided also outlines the types of jobs available for a land management agency, potentially offering a career path users may not have considered. These pages are easily found on the national page under Working with Us or in a web search. Information is based on Federal hiring law and policy basics but presented using active voice and personal pronouns in a format more common to younger people and job seekers. Plain language and web content techniques, including clear headings, bulleted lists, photos, graphics, and videos add to a visually appealing layout.

The National Forest System’s webpage on the National Old-Growth Amendment³⁸ the Old-Growth Amendment Factsheet³⁹ outline the agency’s response to executive order requirements and National Environmental Policy Act processes in an informative way that allows the public to understand their role in making decisions regarding stewardship. While navigating the Federal processes for environmental impact statements can be challenging, the webpage uses plain language tactics, including a graphic and two videos about the benefits of old-growth forests and how the agency plans to provide consistent direction to conserve and steward old-growth conditions in response to rapidly changing climate conditions. This information is helping readers understand the process and how they can contribute to land management plans. The agency received more than 6,000 comments about the proposed amendment.



³⁶ USDA Forest Service. Persons with Disabilities Hiring. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers/schedule-a>.

³⁷ USDA Forest Service. Indian Youth Service Corps. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers/Indian-Youth-Service-Corps>.

³⁸ USDA Forest Service. National Old-Growth Amendment. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/old-growth-forests/amendment>.

³⁹ USDA Forest Service. National Old-Growth Amendment Fact Sheet. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/old-growth-amendment.pdf.

*The National Sustainable Operations Strategy*⁴⁰ is an online publication about how the agency prioritizes reducing our environmental impact in all aspects of operations. The document focuses on internal audiences who are required to know and understand and often carry out the work required but was provided to external audiences as a measure of accountability. Rooted in simplicity and visual design features, the publication uses simple headings such as “The Big Why,” “The Big Who,” and “The Big How” to guide the reader through the document. This simple design tactic allows the reader to more easily scan the document, stopping to read sections they are more interested in.

The Forest Service’s Geospatial Technology and Applications Center provides Forest Service maps for visitor uses, including the new online [ArcGIS tool](#)⁴¹ that allows users to find and download free maps. First responders, Forest Service staff, researchers, recreation industry

Forest Service Digital Maps

Home National Series Regional Series Forest Series 126,720 Series 100K Series Ranger District Series FSTopo FSTopo Legacy

STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST

Forest Service Digital Maps are a collection of maps covering all lands administered by the USDA Forest Service.

Forest Service Digital Maps are produced at national, regional and forest level scales. Detailed maps are produced at 1:126,720 (half-inch to a mile), 1:100K, and 1:63,360 (one-inch to a mile) our Ranger District Series and the traditional 1:24K topographic map known as FSTopo (1:24K for the continental United States, and Puerto Rico, and 1:25K for Alaska).

Each year a collection of maps is produced and available for free. To download the Forest Service Digital Maps, click on the map series in the menu. You will be directed to a web map and chart with each map footprint displaced with a downloadable link. Click on the footprint or select a map from the chart and select your preferred file type.

Feedback
If you have feedback about any of our maps please fill out the survey.

Product Details
Additional Details about the product.

⁴⁰ USDA Forest Service. [National Sustainable Operations Strategy](https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/sustainable-operations-strategy.pdf). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/sustainable-operations-strategy.pdf.

⁴¹ USDA Forest Service. [Forest Service Digital Maps](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9ab8d03e2bec4d7fbfc27ba836e70aed). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9ab8d03e2bec4d7fbfc27ba836e70aed>.

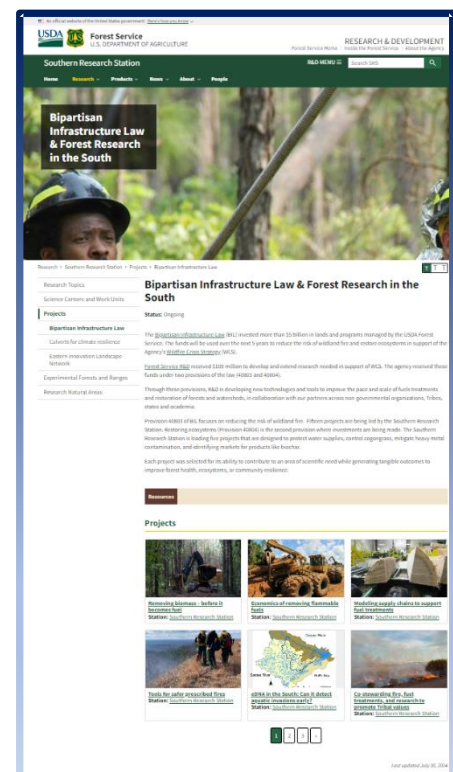
professionals, partners and recreationists that account for more than 160 million-plus visits to national forests and grasslands use these maps for various purposes.

Topographic road maps created at all levels of the organization are now easily accessible for download on a descriptive, intuitive, interactive page. Previously, the user had to know the map coding number on a download list. Now, thousands of maps are available through a Google-maps-style interface and a searchable descriptive list. The maps page is written in an easy-to-understand style for users looking to purchase professionally printed maps with tear-and water-resistant paper, foldable forest or grassland maps or use the interactive online Forest Visitor map, which is also available as an app on your Android or Apple phone.

Using the same look and feel across five research station and other such sites, the Forest Service Office of the Deputy Chief, Research & Development created a collection of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law⁴² project webpages that succinctly uses common terms to provide an understanding of the projects, goals and intended benefits. The intended audiences include agency employees, university and other partners, state forestry agencies and other interested external audiences. Page views vary by station but collectively record more than 30,000 views annually.

Forest Service Research & Development content creators continue to evolve their writing to be more inclusive of a broader audience beyond scientists and land managers. The pages are organized using plain language tactics with a similar look and feel as well as short, easily digestible

information with links to more in-depth content as appropriate. For example, the Southern Research Station's project on modeling supply chains to support fuels treatment⁴³ includes a brief overview, information about the principal investigators, and a list of collaborators. The

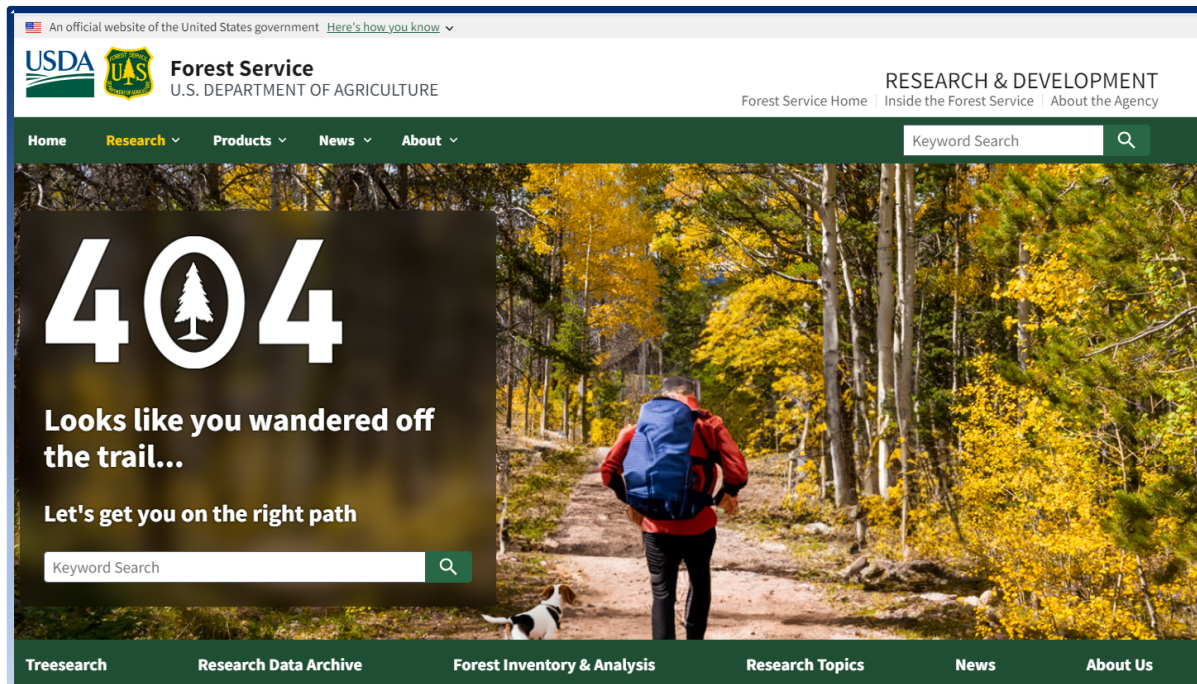


⁴² USDA Forest Service Research and Development. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Forest Research in the South. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://research.fs.usda.gov/srs/projects/bilsrs>.

⁴³ *Id.*

Research & Development site uses the same look in other areas, giving users a level of familiarity as they move from section to section.

Instead of a generic “404 error,” which indicates a bad or wrong URL, a redesigned page that includes the ability to search for the topic users were hoping to find now appears thanks to the efforts of Forest Service Research & Development. In 2023, the Research & Development site recorded 1.2 million users. In 2024, the agency is expected to surpass that number of users.



In an effort to bring in more users, the Forest Service Research & Development updated and redesigned Experimental Forests and Ranges⁴⁴ webpages, which encompass the Forest Service-managed experimental forests and ranges. Among these is the largest and longest-lived ecological research network in the U.S. This long-term science can inform land managers and decision makers with a host of scientifically based information. The landing page provides basic information about the size and need for experimental forests and ranges and offers a growing list of science-based features for users to learn more.

⁴⁴ USDA Forest Service Research and Development. Experimental Forests and Ranges. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://research.fs.usda.gov/forestsandranges>.

The Forest Service Office of the Deputy Chief, Research & Development, Forest Inventory and Analysis program updated and redesigned Forest Inventory and Analysis⁴⁵ webpages. The Forest Inventory and Analysis program collects, analyzes and delivers current, consistent and credible information about the status of forests and forest resources in the U.S. to Federal, State, Tribal, local and private woodland owners. Anyone with interest in the topic can download information from the database. Combined, the new Forest Inventory pages were viewed more than 80,000 times.

The new webpages break up content in digestible, easy-to-understand sections, significantly reducing the use of acronyms and offering explanations helpful to users who rarely or have never used the data. One page, which also uses a graphic, describes the two basic descriptions of land use and land cover and other definitions or descriptions change depending on the report or organization, including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

The Forest Service Office of the Deputy Chief, State, Private and Tribal Forestry-Fire and Aviation program redesigned the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program⁴⁶ webpage. It is geared towards the general public with an emphasis on residents and elected officials of communities that have received a grant, local officials interested in applying for a grant and media looking for information to aid in storytelling on reducing wildfire risk. More than one-third of the population lives in counties at high risk of wildfires, so the number of potential users is in the millions.

The page includes an easy summary of program goals that clearly explains the intent of the program, characteristics that make a community a priority for funding, and descriptions of how the funding can be used. All that information uses plain language tactics, including short paragraphs, bulleted lists and information headers. Two short videos describe the program so viewers can get a quick overview without reading the webpage and visually shows the program's success. A press kit for the new media and feature stories augments the information.

⁴⁵ USDA Forest Service Research and Development. Forest Inventory and Analysis. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://research.fs.usda.gov/programs/fia>.

⁴⁶ USDA Forest Service. Community Wildfire Grant Program. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/grants/cwdg>.



The agency's Forest Legacy Grant Program 2024 Grants⁴⁷ and Forest Landowner Support⁴⁸ program webpages target partner organizations, the public and those interested in grants. Incorporating plain language has allowed media outlets to ascertain the information they need quickly and efficiently to help them share stories detailing how the programs help communities. Plain language tactics create greater engagement among grant applicants in underserved and disadvantaged communities of the customer-focused webpage. The information provided lowers the barrier of entry to communities that otherwise may have struggled through the grant application process.

Producing opportunity: new sawmill opens in the Sierra Nevada,⁴⁹ a web-based feature story that uses plain language tactics and engaging visuals, uses visually descriptive language and accompanying photos to show the reader the efforts behind a new sawmill. The mill supports the local economies, makes valuable products, and supports forest management in a region prone to catastrophic wildfires. The feature illustrates how Forest Service grants can provide needed economic support. The language used in this feature and in others like it has increased engagement from communities, especially by local media outlets, which often republish feature stories on their sites.

⁴⁷ USDA Forest Service. Forest Legacy 2024 Funded Projects. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/forest-legacy/program/fy24-funded-projects>.

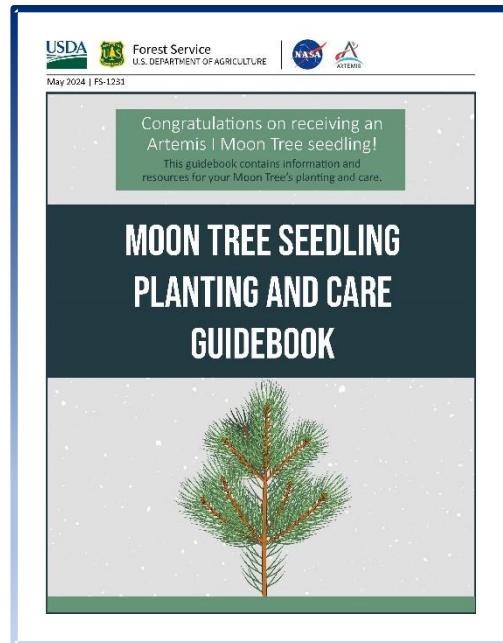
⁴⁸ USDA Forest Service. Forest Landowner Support. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/state-private-tribal-forestry/coop-forestry/ira-forest-landowner-support>.

⁴⁹ USDA Forest Service. Avitt, A. Producing Opportunity. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/features/producing-opportunity>.

The Moon Tree Seedling Planting and Care Guidebook⁵⁰ is now accessible online for recipients of Moon Tree seedlings grown in Forest Service nurseries and facilities. The name Moon Tree derives from the Artemis I mission that included the seeds from five tree species as part of the cargo. The mission aboard the Orion spacecraft spanned 25 days, 10 hours and 53 minutes and covered more than 1.4 million miles. The returned seeds were distributed to organizations.

Easy-to-understand instructions for planting preparation, basic planting techniques, watering, weeding, mulching, protection of young seedlings, pruning, and general maintenance and health checks

can help seedling recipients successfully grow and maintain their Moon Trees. The information included graphics, lists, headings and subheadings and other plain language tactics, including steps to keep the tree safe from wildlife, humans, weeds and other hazards.



The Forest Service Shawnee National Forest video production, Eclipse 2024⁵¹ targets the general public, new and returning visitors to the Shawnee National Forest. Interview questions developed for the production were simple in nature, ensuring interviewer/interviewee exchanges felt like a conversation. The resulting on-camera discourse was genuine, aligned with identified priorities, and easily understandable for diverse audiences.

The Forest Service external webpage, Eastern Region Tribal Relations Program⁵² provides information for Tribes in and near the Eastern Region, general public and employees. The Eastern Region's Tribal Relations webpage promotes the agency's commitment to co-stewardship with its Tribal partners, which aligns with national priorities for government-to-

⁵⁰ USDA Forest Service. Moon Tree Seedling Planting and Care Guidebook. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/Moon-Tree-Planting-Guide.pdf.

⁵¹ USDA Forest Service. Experience 2024's Solar Eclipse from the Shawnee National Forest. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTRrAbZfEnI>.

⁵² USDA Forest Service. Tribal Relations. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r9/workingtogether/tribalrelations>.

government relationships. The webpage highlights program goals and provides easily navigable information for Tribes and other audiences to access.

Office of Food Safety

Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS)

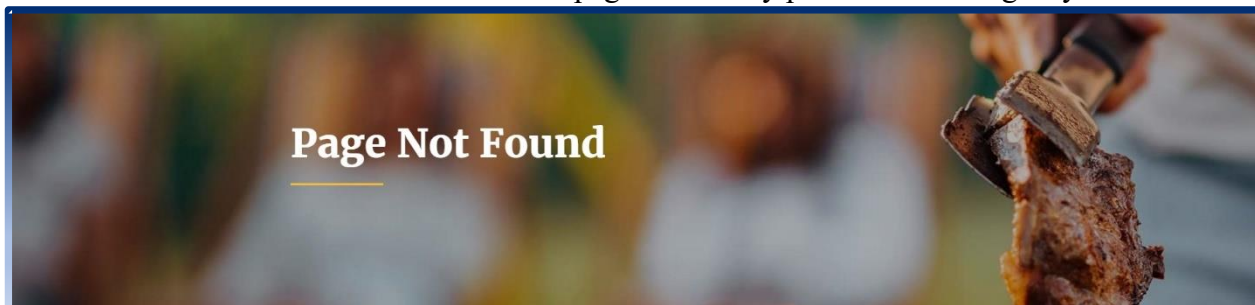
The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) correspondence control officer developed a folder of instructional handouts and videos prior to and during the USDA AgWrite system launch. Based on the USDA AgWrite user manual and trainings provided by OES, the materials serve as a quick step-by-step resource to facilitate a smoother transition to USDA AgWrite by FSIS for anyone needing to coordinate or approve documents through USDA AgWrite.

By releasing our handouts and videos with plain writing in mind, FSIS facilitated the transition to USDA AgWrite for leadership and staff. They are able to refer to the steps listed in the simple and easy-to-follow materials as they continue to acclimate to the new system and clear and sign documents.

FSIS developed a new style guide to outline best practices for developing documents and other communication materials for anyone in FSIS who drafts, edits and approves documents, presentations, and other written materials.

The 20-page FSIS Style Guide was drafted with an approachable tone and plain writing in mind and contains a section with reminders about plain writing. Once approved and released on the FSIS website, it will be a useful tool to writers, editors, and approvers.

Instead of using a generic 404-error page, the image of a steak being grilled now appears thanks to the efforts of the FSIS Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education Digital and Executive Communications staff. The new page is not only pertinent to the agency's focus on



meat, poultry and egg products, but is more eye-catching and reflects our audience’s interest in safe food prep practices. In fiscal year 2023, the FSIS website had 20.6 million page views, which highlights the importance of this effort.

FSIS developed the page in a welcoming and helpful tone with a bullet list of commonly used links. With plain writing, the general public users see easy-to-understand reasons as to why their link did not work. The two-tiered approach reduces ambiguity, alleviates any stress and helps users access important public health information.

The FSIS Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education Digital and Executive Communications staff writer-editors reviewed website content and updated the text according to Associated Press Style, focusing primarily on the food safety section. By using plain writing, FSIS writer-editors streamlined and updated the content on the website. They removed redundant information and cleaned up paragraphs, reducing the word count and providing only the essentials. The Beef from Farm to Table⁵³ webpage showcases this effort.

Since July 2024, FSIS expanded the agency’s published content. Staff prepared food safety blogs in English, Spanish and other languages. Blog topics include safety tips about grilling, potlucks, back-to-school lunches, farmers markets, the Super Bowl and Thanksgiving gatherings. Infographics are available in English and Spanish as well. (See examples about tailgating in English⁵⁴ and Spanish⁵⁵ on the FSIS website and the Thanksgiving infographics in the plain language report folder.)

Additionally, the FSIS Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education’s pitching staff conduct outreach with media outlets, schools, and health districts to distribute food safety information. The Thanksgiving food campaign yielded the highest monthly page views at 2.2 million in November 2023 alone.

⁵³ USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Beef From Farm to Table. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/meat-fish/beef-farm-table>.

⁵⁴ USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Lopez, B. Kickoff Your Tailgate Party with Food Safety. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/news-events/news-press-releases/kickoff-your-tailgate-party-food-safety>.

⁵⁵ USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Inicie Su Fiesta de “Tailgate” con Seguridad Alimentaria. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/news-events/news-press-releases/inicie-su-fiesta-de-tailgate-con-seguridad-alimentaria>.

Inicie Su Fiesta de “Tailgate” con Seguridad Alimentaria

BEVERLY LOPEZ, COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM SPECIALIST, FSIS-USDA



¡La temporada de fútbol americano ya está aquí! Eso significa celebrar fiestas con amigos y familiares mientras apoya a su equipo favorito. Al cocinar en los estacionamientos de los estadios, es importante seguir las pautas de seguridad alimentaria para evitar quedar fuera por enfermedades transmitidas por alimentos. Reunámonos y elaboremos un plan de seguridad alimentaria para una temporada ganadora de fiestas de tailgate.

FSIS offers a diverse array of content for the public. As with the content in English, FSIS follows standards of organizing the words in short sections, using bulleted lists and short sentences for content in other languages. Infographics are also economical on word count and use short sentences with essential information. The agency continues expanding its outreach to different segments of the public with food safety blogs which are available in different languages. Increasingly, schools and health districts have requested content from FSIS in English and Spanish that they can share with their audiences.

FSIS Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education, Congressional and Public Affairs, and Food Safety Education staffs created food safety reels for social media in 2024. The reels were posted on USDA’s Instagram account, which has about 144,000 followers. Examples include reels on keeping food cool in the summer and washing a food preparation area thoroughly.

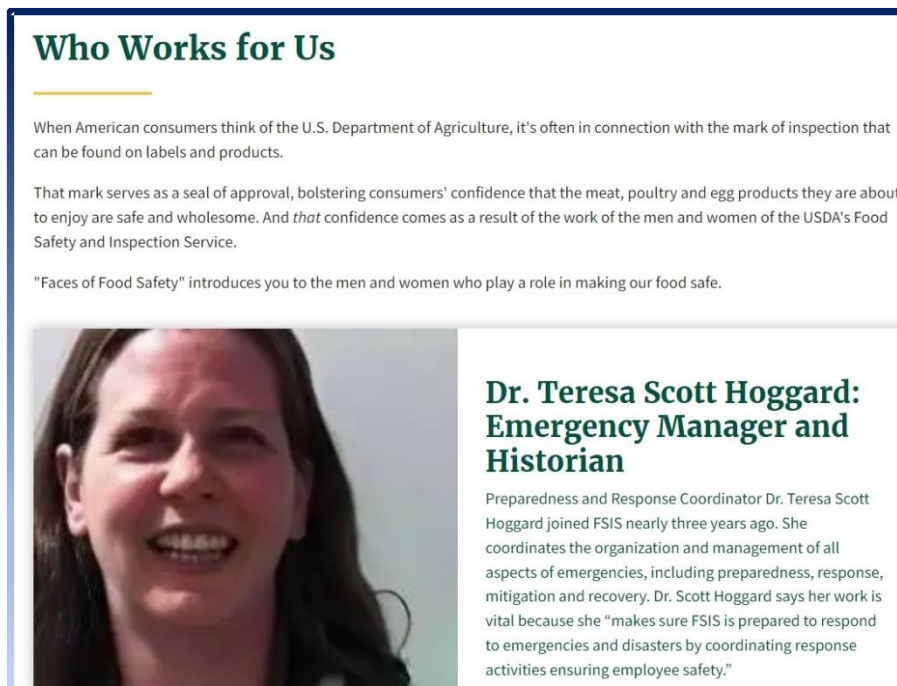
FSIS continues leveraging social media opportunities to share food safety news. Reels remain a popular way for users to access news and content, particularly among younger people. Food safety tips are demonstrated in the video footage, which is accompanied by onscreen text that is simple and succinct in a step-by-step format. The information in the reel is reinforced by the caption below the video with easy-to-follow bullet points on how to prevent foodborne illnesses.

The FSIS Office of Public Health Science and the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education Digital and Executive Communications staff updated the website about the food safety fellows,⁵⁶ who are recruited each year through the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education program. In 2023, the agency added a section of interviews with former food safety fellows.

The FSIS Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education Digital and Executive Communications Staff created the “Who Works for Us” features, which are published in the internal newsletter, Food for Thought, and in the careers section of the FSIS website. The new interviews allow FSIS fellows to tell their stories to a larger audience: the public, FSIS stakeholders, and potential fellowship applicants. The fellows explained their research projects and experiences in easy-to-understand language and minimal technical jargon. By putting plain writing into play, the fellows’ stories are a helpful addition to the website because potential applicants can better imagine what an FSIS fellowship could be like. The features are also a resource for the public, whether someone just wants to know about food safety or is considering a career with USDA. They are often republished in other outlets such as Food Safety News.

⁵⁶ USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. FSIS/ORISE Food Safety Fellowship Program. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/science-data/research-priorities/fsisorise-food-safety-fellowship-program>.

The “Who Works for Us” section shows FSIS employees an aspect of food safety that they might not know of already and introduces them to fellow staff. FSIS writer-editors spend an hour on the phone with the featured employee, paring the technical and personal information into an article of 800-1,000 words. Writer-editors use plain writing with simple sentences and shorter paragraphs when possible as they paint a picture of what it’s like to work at FSIS. For an example of Who Works for Us, see the feature on Dr. Teresa Scott Hoggard: Emergency Manager and Civil War Historian.⁵⁷.




Who Works for Us

When American consumers think of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, it's often in connection with the mark of inspection that can be found on labels and products.

That mark serves as a seal of approval, bolstering consumers' confidence that the meat, poultry and egg products they are about to enjoy are safe and wholesome. And *that* confidence comes as a result of the work of the men and women of the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

"Faces of Food Safety" introduces you to the men and women who play a role in making our food safe.



**Dr. Teresa Scott Hoggard:
Emergency Manager and
Historian**

Preparedness and Response Coordinator Dr. Teresa Scott Hoggard joined FSIS nearly three years ago. She coordinates the organization and management of all aspects of emergencies, including preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery. Dr. Scott Hoggard says her work is vital because she "makes sure FSIS is prepared to respond to emergencies and disasters by coordinating response activities ensuring employee safety."

The FSIS Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education Congressional and Public Affairs Staff developed recruitment fliers for visitors to FSIS’ booth at events and career fairs throughout the year.

FSIS Congressional and Public Affairs Staff developed recruitment fliers to distribute to the public at events including the annual Agricultural Outlook Forum, the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference, career fairs and university visits. One example is the benefits flier which outlines Federal employee benefits at a glance in a two-page handout. Information is arranged in a table with short sentences blocks for easier understanding and less ambiguity. By presenting the essentials, FSIS better captures the interest of potential job

⁵⁷ USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. [FSIS/ORISE Food Safety Fellowship Program](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/careers/who-works-us/dr--teresa-scott-hoggard-emergency-manager-and-civil-war-historian). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/careers/who-works-us/dr--teresa-scott-hoggard-emergency-manager-and-civil-war-historian>.

applicants and cuts down on explaining benefits information repeatedly. FSIS reviews all recruitment efforts annually.

Rural Development (RD)

The Rural Development Office of External Affairs Internal Communications Branch maintains and updates its Plain Language⁵⁸ and Section 508⁵⁹ SharePoint sites with the most current training materials, tools, resources, and best practices information. All USDA Rural Development (RD) staff have access to these SharePoint⁶⁰ pages. Upon request, the Internal Communications Branch provides RD staff, administrative branches, and program areas with plain language and section 508 training.

The Internal Communication Branch reviews and edits for plain language more than 500 communications items each fiscal year, including items such as email correspondence, memos and presentations. These internal communications cover all areas of the mission area, including the RD Business Center, Innovation Center and Office of Civil Rights.

Whether supporting USDA RD employees or public-facing audiences, every publication and video the Field Operations and Multimedia (FOMM) touches is edited to ensure plain language compliance and Section 508 accessibility. During fiscal year 2024, the FOMM processed captions for more than 1,000 media files, completed more than 150 training videos, messages from the Under Secretary and other principals, and completed or updated 40 fact sheets among its plain language accomplishments this year.

FOMM also conducts weekly office hours training for field-based public affairs specialists, OEA team members, and interested program personnel. In fiscal year 2024, FOMM created or updated these plain language and Section 508 accessibility guides:

- Rural Success Story Resource Guide and Checklist⁶¹

⁵⁸ USDA Rural Development. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/rd_oea/IC/_layouts/15/.

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ USDA Rural Development. Rural Success Story Guide. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/240617-usda-rd-successstoryguide.pdf>. Published March 2024.

- Congressional Announcement Management System (CAMS) Style Manual⁶²
- Our “How to Make Your Documents Plain Language Compliant and 508 Accessible”⁶³ Guide continues to be used throughout the mission area and beyond.



Finally, FOMM participated in the enterprise-wide effort spearheaded by Mike Illenberg and the Office of Communications to identify and implement accessible universal fonts for use in all publications, letters, and official correspondence.

Research, Education and Economics (REE)

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

Plain Language has impacted Agricultural Research Service (ARS) internal policies and procedures documentation. The impacts include transitioning language from passive to active, more frequent use of bullet lists, and internal links between sections instead of parenthetical references.

ARS audiences vary, from subject matter experts, to mission-wide groups, to the public. ARS continues incorporating plain language into its internal and external PowerPoint presentations, national program annual reports, accomplishments, and internal briefings for ARS and Research,

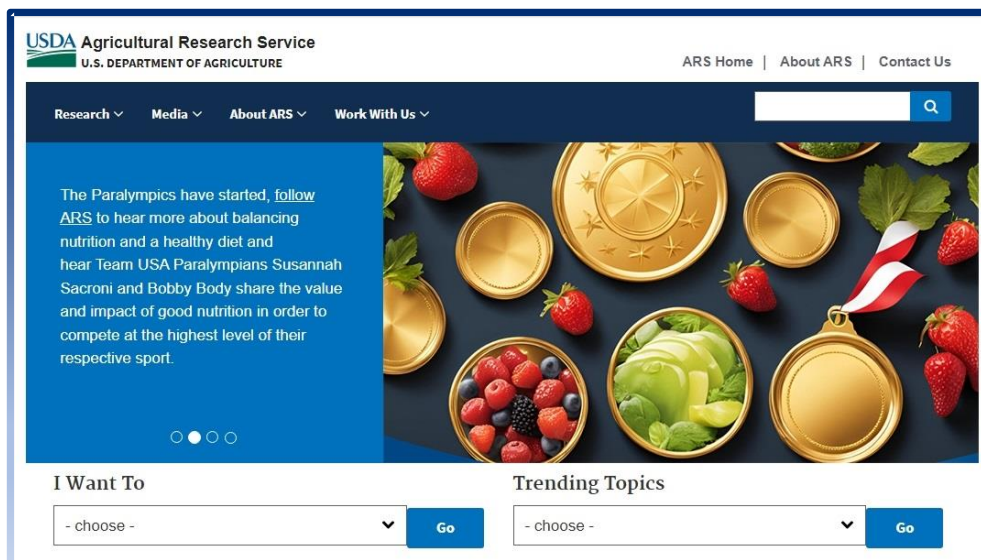
⁶² USDA Rural Development. Congressional Announcement Management System Style Manual. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd-oea-cams-styleguide-240522.pdf>. Updated May 2024.

⁶³ USDA Rural Development. How to Make Your Documents Plain Language Compliant and 508 Accessible. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/508_RD_PlainLanguageToolkit_508.pdf.

Education and Economics leadership. Editors emphasize active voice and the use of bullet lists to enhance the clarity and readability of these products for a wide range of intended audiences.

The Internal Plain Language training course presented by Office of National Programs and Office of Communications increases the skills of ARS scientists and staff in presenting ARS scientific studies in non-technical language for general audiences. Twelve to fifteen students attend each session when the class is offered.

ARS continually works to improve the readability and ease of access for its website.⁶⁴ In the last 12 months, the website hosted more than 1.75 million visitors. More than 1,000 visitors to the ARS website completed a survey about the information provided on the website and scored the Clarity of Writing at 85%, and Quality of Information at 84%.



ARS internal newsletters (Weekly Highlights and Quarterly Harvest) are in plain language. Plain language is required in the Axon+ Governance, which is an internal website for all ARS and REE employees. All content managers learn this requirement when they receive permissions to add to the site. Editors continuously work with Axon+ Content Managers to encourage use of plain language and accessibility throughout Axon+ and provide training on plain language best practices.

⁶⁴ USDA Agricultural Research Service. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.ars.usda.gov/>.

Economic Research Service (ERS)

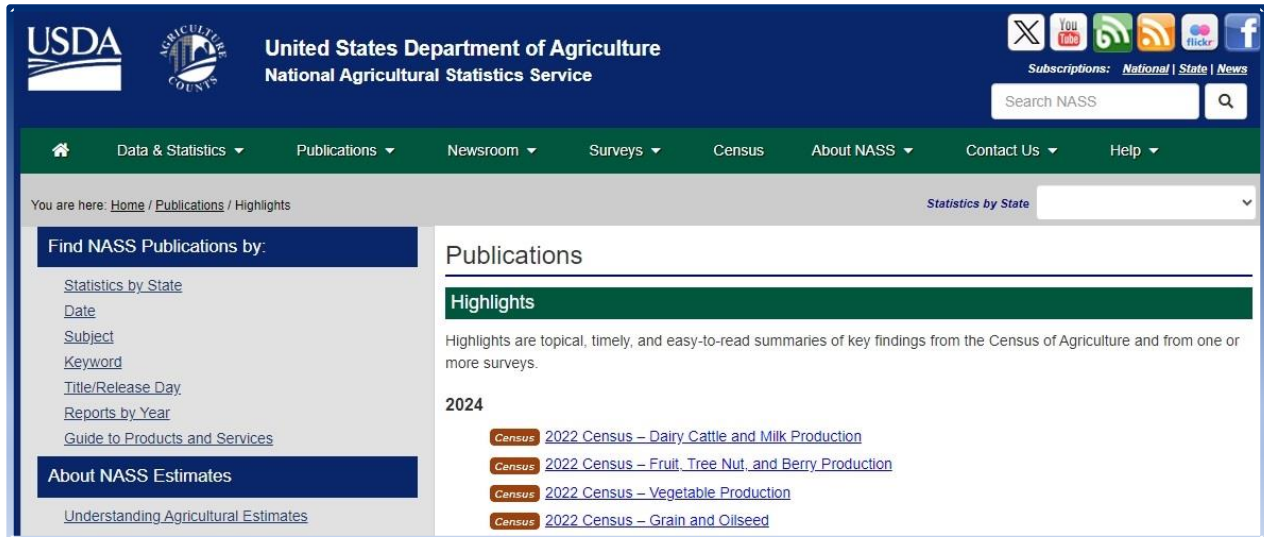
The Economic Research Service (ERS) Web Services Branch publishes objective, external content, including reports, articles, charts, data products, and data visualizations. Content is designed to inform and enhance public and private decision making. Each product is crafted using the principles of plain language to reach a general audience, stakeholders, Federal and non-Federal partners, agricultural industry, and public officials. In FY 2024, 9.8 million people visited the ERS website. ERS collected information online from its visitors via survey. The survey queries if the website information is easy to understand. Its fiscal year 2024-to-date customer satisfaction score for the response to that question was 80.8, an increase of nearly 5 percent from 76.1 in fiscal year 2023.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

All of NASS's internal communications and publicity materials are in plain writing and are intended for a lay audience. Materials developed and/or updated during fiscal year 2024 include Data Highlights,⁶⁵ media alerts and news releases, Agricultural Statistics Board (ASB) notices, sample newsletter content for partners and a news release template. More than 2,000 people were reached by news releases, media advisories, and ASB notices; that includes a list of media and press release subscribers.

NASS maintains an active social media presence, with an X channel that has roughly 68,000 followers. USDA Facebook and USDA Instagram, which NASS uses to post content, have 533,000 and 143,000 followers, respectively. NASS uses USDA Instagram more frequently than in past years.

⁶⁵ USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. Publications. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/index.php>.



NASS began using gender neutral language in the salutation on census survey cover letters (e.g., “Dear Producer” replaced “Dear Sir/Madam.”). Gendered language is necessary on some materials that specifically focus on the gender of a producer. For example, the Census of Agriculture includes a question about gender that is used for this data collection, reports, and publicity materials.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture is the extramural science funding agency for USDA. The audiences for most of our external communications are scientists and faculty in higher education.

Over the past year we have continued to refine our Requests for Applications (RFA) for NIFA grants to meet plain language standards and promote ease of use equitably for all potential applicants. To support this goal, the agency instituted required plain language training for all staff in 2023. This year, the agency’s 53 new employees also successfully completed the required training. In August 2024, the agency began hosting bi-weekly Learn and Grow sessions for staff that focus on key areas of writing for plain language such as reducing acronym use, using active voice, simplifying sentence structure and effective use of bulleted lists. The sessions are beneficial in improving plain language writing skills to ensure clarity, consistency, and effectiveness across all NIFA platforms. Attendance at these sessions averages 19% of agency staff. Staff report finding these sessions very helpful and the lessons easy to apply.

The NIFA internal newsletter, The Beet, uses plain language to communicate relevant updates and plain language best practices with all NIFA staff. The newsletters are archived on SharePoint for staff reference.

In FY 2024, there were about 2.1 million visitors to NIFA’s website. NIFA Communications puts a strong emphasis on ensuring content is in plain language with a particular focus on the blog entries and impact stories. In an online survey about web effectiveness, NIFA scored 3.38/5.00 on the prompt “The information on this website was easy to understand.”

At the end of FY 2023 and throughout FY 2024, the agency’s web team completed a content audit of the NIFA website, identifying information that requires updates, improving plain language use and implementing multi-lingual processes and tools where appropriate. The web team also hosts monthly workshops and ad hoc trainings for the 80+ web content creators at NIFA. These workshops cover issues and provide resources related to web content creation, including plain language training.

To further support these efforts, each RFA has an accompanying technical assistance webinar where potential applicants can get more information and ask questions. Webinars are recorded and posted online for future reference and application support.

NIFA’s public facing newsletter, NIFA Update, is distributed weekly to more than 85,000 subscribers. The newsletter is carefully crafted to use language appropriate to the audience for clear understanding and high-quality usability. In addition to choosing appropriate language, NIFA Update uses a variety of techniques to improve readability including bulleted lists and different heading sizes.

Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS)

The Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) supports the Chief Scientist in their role as chief communicator of USDA science. OCS continues incorporating plain language into its internal and external PowerPoint presentations, accomplishments, and internal briefings for OCS and Research, Education and Economics leadership. OCS annually publishes the [Pollinator Priorities Report](#). The contents of this report reflect feedback from a wide variety of contributors, including members of the USDA Pollinator Workgroup, associated sub-workgroups, and

participants in the annual “State of the Science Workshop: Research and Outreach to Support the Health of Agricultural Pollinators. The Pollinator Priorities Report is crafted using the principles of plain language to reach a general audience, stakeholders, Federal and non-Federal partners, agricultural industry, and public officials.

Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs

Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS)

The Communications Division in USDA’s Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) updated the FAS Style Guide to adhere to State Department updates on country names as part of its plain language efforts during the past fiscal year.

The FAS Office of Civil Rights updated its compliance reports by eliminating all jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity to make sure all language is clear, concise, well-organized, and consistent with other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience. It also took steps to ensure the office reviews all documents that leave its office, including presentations and PDFs, for Section 508 compliance.

On April 29, 2024, the FAS Office of Civil Rights hosted a virtual Civil Rights Café titled “Nourishing Knowledge, Feeding Equity, and Equality.” During the café, employees gained insights into fostering inclusivity and discovered practical strategies for promoting equality in the workplace. Lessons include creating positive change and a safe space to stand up, continuing to be visible, and declaring that diversity and inclusion mean including everyone. Staff also discussed employees’ compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 508.

Staff Offices

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR)

- USDA’s Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights completed a departmental manual and two policy statements using plain language principles: the Departmental Manual (DM 4200-003) Anti-Harassment Procedure Manual, the 2024 USDA Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement, and the 2024 USDA Anti-Harassment Statement. All three documents are for all USDA Mission Areas, agencies, and staff

offices as well as all employees, contractors, volunteers, and those under formal partnership agreements performing work for or on behalf of USDA. Plain Language principles made them clear, concise and easy to understand.

Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (OCDIO)

The USDA's Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (OCDIO) made significant strides in promoting clear and accessible communication in FY 2024 through the use of plain language principles. One of the most notable achievements was the launch of OCDIO's first forward-facing website. This website was designed to establish external representation of the OCDIO while providing a pathway to communicate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives to USDA's external audiences and stakeholders. By employing plain language, the site is clear, easy to navigate, and effectively communicates the mission, vision and core values of the department.

In addition to the website, the OCDIO authored and published a series of four blogs, targeting both internal and external audiences. These blogs were written with plain language principles in mind, ensuring that USDA's DEIA policies, strategies, and success stories are conveyed in a manner that is easily understood by a diverse range of readers. This commitment to plain language supports the USDA's mission of promoting transparency and inclusive communication.

OCDIO also refined its internal SharePoint site, restructuring content to make it more user-friendly and accessible for USDA staff. By applying plain language standards, the revised SharePoint site enhances clarity and ease of use, providing employees with better access to critical DEIA tools and resources within the department.

Moreover, the OCDIO updated the USDA Inclusive Hiring Toolkit to ensure compliance with plain language guidelines. By simplifying complex information and making the content more concise, the toolkit now provides clearer guidance on DEIA-compliant hiring practices. This update ensures that all USDA agencies and offices have access to user-friendly, actionable resources to support inclusive hiring.

In all these initiatives, the OCDIO's application of plain language principles has contributed to USDA's broader goals of transparency, accessibility, and effective communication with both internal and external stakeholders.

Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA)

The Office of Budget and Program Analysis Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Staff, Departmental Policy Office developed directive training materials and conducted training sessions for developers and editors that included a plain writing component. The training materials and training sessions also included the requirement that all materials be Section 508 compliant prior to posting to the Departmental Directives web page.

The training was for all USDA Mission Areas, agencies, and staff offices that own or sponsor Departmental Directives (Directives are policies used by two or more agencies in the Department); approximately 200 policy developers and editors. All USDA Mission Areas, agencies, and staff offices that own or sponsor Departmental Forms (Departmental Forms are forms used by two or more agencies in the Department); approximately 40 forms developers and editors.

Plain writing created better documents with fewer feedback or correction loops in all seven phases of the policy formal review process. It also facilitated better data collection logic on Departmental Forms submissions; improved, easily understood instructions on forms with more complicated inputs/requirements. Continued acceptance of plain writing methodologies by directives developers, editors, and forms developers is making a difference. Individual Mission Areas, agencies, and staff offices are continuing to socialize the need for plain writing in their internally and externally facing materials (e.g., fliers, bulletins, directives, forms, posters).

Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)

The USDA Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) crafted its Financial Policy and Planning (FPP) Standard Operating Procedure: Correspondence Guide, which is currently pending approval. The manual is for FPP directors and branch chiefs first and eventually will be given to all OCFO employees. The Administrative Management Division and Front Office staff of FPP are placing “bottom line up front” attention to written documents by removing

unnecessary detail and focusing on clear and concise writing. OCFO is also improving packets requiring signatures from the Associate Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Chief Financial Officer.

Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP)

The USDA Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP) updated the user experience of its “Contracting with USDA”⁶⁶ website to help vendors find what they need and understand what they find. OCP added collapsible buttons and inserted links as appropriate. Leveraging the “F-format” allows readers to skim and scan to quickly find what they need.

OCP updated its “Definitions and Acronyms”⁶⁷ website for the benefit of various stakeholders including vendors new to contracting, USDA program offices unfamiliar with contracting-related terminology, and contracting professionals new to USDA. This may impact thousands of potential stakeholders. Stakeholders now have real-time access to simple, clear, and direct information on unfamiliar contracting-related terms at USDA.

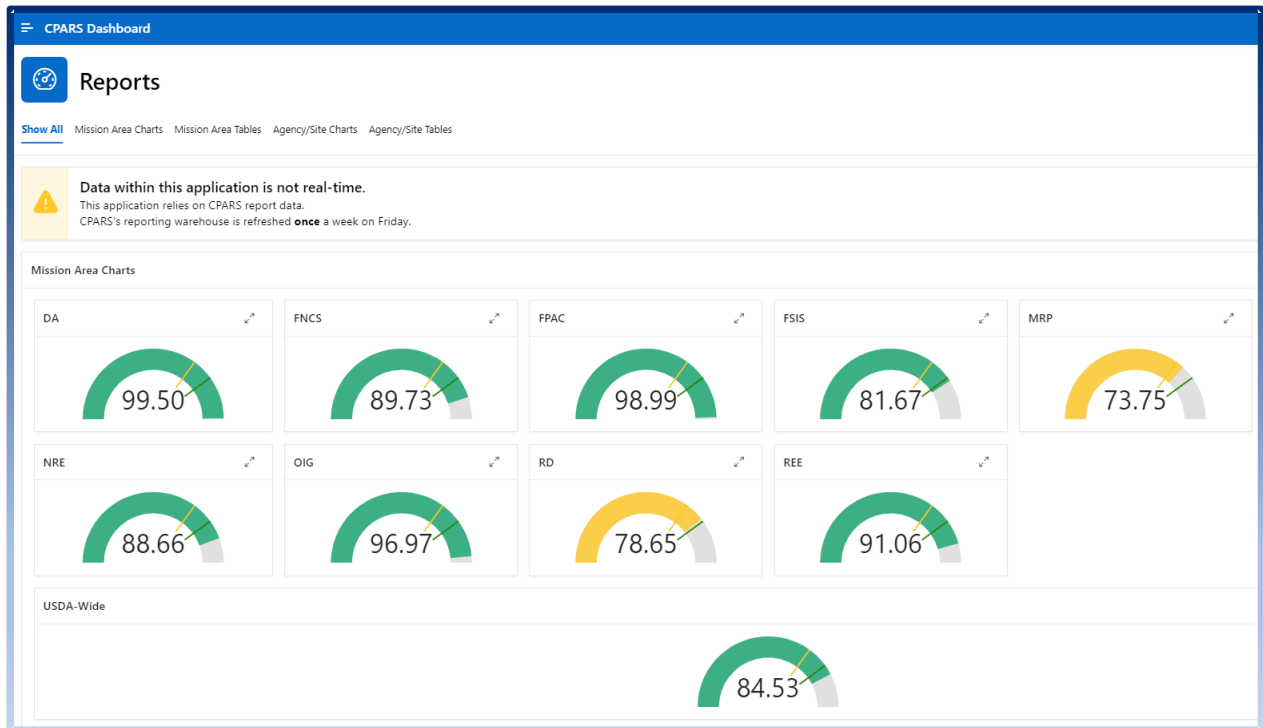
OCP’s Forecast of Business Opportunities⁶⁸ tool provides a list of anticipated USDA solicitations that small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, HUBZone small businesses, and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses may be able to perform under direct contracts with USDA. This may impact thousands of potential vendors. Potential vendors now have access to improved information on contracting opportunities in a manner that they can filter to target their areas of interest.

OCP’s Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) Dashboard allows USDA’s contracting community, which includes about 11,000 employees, to monitor compliance with requirements to document performance of vendors contracting with USDA. The CPARS Dashboard presents the necessary information in a clear and concise manner which has helped raise reporting compliance from 42 percent to more than 84 percent in fiscal year 2024.

⁶⁶ USDA Office of Contracting and Procurement. Contracting with USDA. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/da/ocp/contracting>.

⁶⁷ USDA Office of Contracting and Procurement. Definitions and Acronyms. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/da/ocp/ppd/etools>.

⁶⁸ USDA Office of Contracting and Procurement. Forecast of Business Opportunities. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/da/osdbu/forecast>.



In addition, the CPARS Job Aid provides helpful tips in an easy-to-follow manner that features useful headings, addresses different roles separately, and leverages a flowchart to illustrate processes. Its target audience includes Contracting Officers and Contracting Officer's Representatives.

OCP's Menu to Reduce Contract Spend assisted about 200 potential users, including Under Secretaries, staff office directors and other key stakeholders. It provides a bulletized list of prioritized, concrete actions for consideration to reduce contract spending in an environment of anticipated reductions to funding levels.

The USDA Contracting Desk Book provides contracting related policy in the active voice, leveraging links and lists where practicable, and reflects a more simple and direct writing style. Its users include contracting professionals, Contracting Officer's Representatives, and Program and Project Managers.

The USDA Acquisition Workforce SharePoint site splits content into logical sections (training, policy, and systems) and prioritizes subsections based on relevance. User-centric navigation, illustrative icons, and other features provide an intuitive user experience.

The OCP Government Purchase Card website has been moved to a [SharePoint site](#),⁶⁹ and the updated program guide leverages plain language principles and 508 guidelines. The documents that were updated include the Government Purchase Card Program Guide,⁷⁰ Government Purchase Card forms and User Guides. The updated guide used the active voice, leveraged updated links and lists where practicable, and made the documents more comprehensive for the end user.

Office of Ethics (OE)

USDA has recently had an influx of detailees appointed under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act. The Intergovernmental Personnel Act details present special ethics concerns because they are considered to be employed both by the Federal government and the institution (e.g. State government, nonprofit institutions) from which they are detailed. To ensure that ethics guidance for the Intergovernmental Personnel Act detailees is immediately available to them, the USDA Office of Ethics created a section on the front page of its [website](#)⁷¹ that contains the resources for Intergovernmental Personnel Act detailees.

By placing these resources on a publicly available website, the multimedia resources, written as simply and clearly as possible, are available for all. Public availability enhances transparency and USDA's reputation as a leader in ethics.

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

The USDA's Office of the General Counsel created an internship database, which provides a short biography, picture, resume, and related information of all onboarding, present, and former interns since 2020 for all OGC staff and interested USDA staff. Plain Language principles guided its development as its design and organization put the user first with easily understood filter options and short and clear subheadings for each record.

⁶⁹ USDA. [USDA Government Purchase Card \(GPC\) Program](#). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/DA-OCP-GPCProgram>.

⁷⁰ USDA. [USDA Government Purchase Card \(GPC\) Program Guide](#). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://intranet.usda.gov/user-guides/usda-government-purchase-card-gpc-program-guide>.

⁷¹ USDA Office of Ethics. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/oe>.

Using the Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Lists OGC created a collection of orientation training sessions for all new staff and interns. The list was created after usability testing to confirm it is designed with the user in mind.

Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA)

The USDA Office of Hearings and Appeals successfully launched the Spanish version of e-file. This new online resource makes it easier for farmer and ranchers in under-represented Spanish-speaking populations to work with OHA.


Office Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE)

In fiscal year 2024, OPPE-Communications posted 48 [national blogs](#)⁷² with an average view count of 1,200. Writing with a plain language focus has met many of the intentions of the plain language program itself by making the content more accessible, relatable, and easier to understand for the people who need it the most, including high school students, college students, and English Second Language (ESL) speakers. Many of our customers and users are considered

Blog Categories

- American Rescue Plan (2)
- Animals (33)
- Broadband (1)
- Climate (17)
- Conservation (32)
- Coronavirus (4)
- Data (1)
- Energy (2)
- Equity (200)
- Farming (62)
- Food and Nutrition (150)
- Forestry (16)
- Health and Safety (78)
- Inflation Reduction Act (3)
- Initiatives (133)
- Nutrition Security (70)

office of partnerships and public engagement




[1890 National Scholar's Roots Run Deep in Agriculture](#)

When Kiera Sherrod was young, her grandfather often came to her house in Albany, Georgia to plant crops in her parents' backyard for her family to maintain and harvest. This ritual also sparked the beginning of his granddaughter's interest in agriculture.

MD Sharman, Public Affairs Specialist, USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement Posted in [Equity, Initiatives](#)
Sep 03, 2024

[Respond to this story](#)



[CAPAL Intern Driven to Change Food Insecurity](#)

Nichole Espineli is studying for her master's degree at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Her determination, borne from her personal experience with food insecurity, led her to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership \(CAPAL\)](#)⁷³ internship this past summer with the [USDA Agricultural Research Service](#).

youth, and traditional government language may have alienated them previously. Using plain language in these web-based articles is a clear way to show underserved youth and ESL organizations that we intend to communicate with them and the communities they serve in the most efficient and practical way possible.

OPPE-Communications refreshed the Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison (MVAL) [webpage](#),⁷³ which averages 3,000 page views annually. By utilizing infographics and restructuring the page to move key information closer to the top, users can easily and quickly find the information they are looking for.

OPPE-Communications also refreshed the USDA Liaisons [webpage](#),⁷⁴ which averages 3,000 page views annually. The Liaisons webpage was added to serve our customers, such as students and staff at minority-serving institutions, as well as the liaisons themselves. Information about USDA Liaisons was previously hard to find. OPPE has now made the most sought-after information easily accessible, which reduced complaints and questions about identifying the USDA Liaisons serving a given location.

OPPE-Communications staff has also developed an online directory of OPPE's summer interns featuring their name, institution, photo, short biography and assigned USDA unit.

Using GovDelivery customized templates helps create a consistent look and feel for OPPE email communications. Recipients can clearly recognize that these messages are from USDA OPPE. Plain language, primarily the use of pronouns, avoidance of jargon, and strict prohibition of double negatives has been instituted on many of our disseminated materials. OPPE has distributed multiple communications in Spanish to engage Spanish-speaking audiences.

The [OPPE Newsletter](#)⁷⁵ reaches more than 33,000 people a month and prioritizes the use of pronouns and informal language. Additionally, the structure of the newsletter itself is succinct with the most requested information up front, such as events and happenings. Subheadings, lists,

⁷³ USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement. [Veterans](#). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/veterans>.

⁷⁴ USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement. [USDA Liaisons](#). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/liaisons>.

⁷⁵ USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement. [USDA Government Purchase Card \(GPC\) Program](#). Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/monthly-newsletters>.

and intuitive breaks also help structure the information and enhance readability. Even the subscription prompt⁷⁶ contains plain language, speaking directly to the prospective user.

OPPE-Communications staff also conducted two plain language workshops for all staff and interns focusing on how to caption photos and write engaging, straightforward posts for social media.

Office of Customer Experience (OCX)



The AskUSDA Contact Center (ACC) is the beginning point for the American public to communicate with USDA. The design of the USDA customer experience centers plain language principles. Customers can quickly and efficiently access information and receive assistance using any of the ACC communication channels; one website, one phone number, or one email address.

In FY 2024, customers accessed USDA in real time through live agents by phone or through electronic chat, and asynchronously through email. The ACC managed each communication channel successfully with a 100% target goal success rate. The ACC:

- Answered and responded to 72,729 customer phone inquiries with an average handle time of 4:43 minutes;
- Engaged 20,095 electronic chats with an average response time of 11 seconds; and
- Responded to 33, 864 email with an average response time of 17 hours and 50 minutes.

The ACC authors, curates and maintains an electronic library comprised of thousands of English and Spanish plain language knowledge articles. The knowledge articles contain accessible, relevant information on important USDA topics for the public. The articles are accessed through a web-based self-service channel. Users independently conduct searches for answers to

⁷⁶ USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAOCIO/signup/37170>.

frequently asked questions. In FY 2024, OCX created 1,033 new plain language knowledge articles. Of those articles, 975 were translated into Spanish.

OCX agents shared more than 159,727 articles with the public, reviewed 3,153 articles, and archived 640 articles. Anecdotally, OCX agents and customers report that the information from USDA knowledge articles have helped in avoiding foreclosure on Rural Development loans, aided in the re-establishment of SNAP benefits for elderly customers in Food and Nutrition Service, resolved long standing confusion on tree removal, connected customers to the appropriate civil rights offices for inquiries, and assisted a customer experiencing a mental health crisis.

USDA Plain Language Forum

In FY 2024, the USDA Plain Language Forum promoted a professional exchange of information on topics related to Federal writing. The Plain Language Forum supports the USDA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Action Plan in promoting document accessibility compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act,⁷⁷ foreign language translation, and gender-inclusive writing. USDA employees dedicated themselves to the ethos that *USDA audiences deserve clear communication*. An estimated 3,000 USDA employees attended a forum throughout the fiscal year. The following vignettes and data points, spotlight instructional leaders and the forum's activities.

- **Mike Illenberg**, Director of Brand, Events, Print, Editorial Review, and Internal Communications within the Office of Communications, addressed USDA symbols and branding. People recognize logos immediately from American multinational brands like Nike to the logos of their local food markets and gas stations. USDA's logo is no different. Their presentation covered USDA's policies on seal and logo usage, and the approval process.
- Plain language instructor **Karen Robin** conducted two training sessions on Principles of Plain Language, for managers and Federal employees. The training offered tools to help attendees craft effective messages. The sessions punctuated USDA's dedication to clear communication to all audiences, from elected officials to the average American.
- **Angela M. Brees**, the Economic Research Service, Publishing Services Branch Chief, spoke on publishing for a targeted audience. Their editorial and design expertise for research reports, *Agricultural Outlook* reports, *Amber Waves*, *Charts of Note*, and infographics showcased techniques, tools, and best practices to reach diverse audiences.
- With guidance on Section 508 compliance' continuous evolution **Terri Walker**, Acting Departmental Forms Manager and Departmental Directives Manager, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Departmental Policy Office discussed policy-writing, forms management, section 508 compliance, and tips to succeed in developing updated forms and policy documents.

⁷⁷ Regulations.gov. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from <https://www.regulations.gov/accessibility>.

- **OCIO’s Section 508 Team** held several Q&A sessions and promoted their Section 508 Awareness and Document Remediation Training Program. Attendees learned to create Section 508-compliant documents.
- **Patrick Orr**, works with APHIS on information mapping, and conducted a webinar entitled, *Unlocking the Power of Plain Language with Information Mapping*. Participants learned to analyze an audience, organize information, avoid long paragraphs, and to understand the difference between writing a procedure and writing a process.
- Words have power. The words people use can make the difference between forging positive connections or creating distance in their personal and professional lives. **Jeremy Wood**, a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategy and Policy Advisor, spoke on inclusive language, teaching participants that gender inclusive language is both gender neutral and gender equitable.
- **Dr. Víctor Valdivia Ruiz** from The George Washington University spoke to the Plain Language Forum about the application of foreign language orthography in culturally inclusive business writing and presentation. Attendees overwhelmingly evaluated the session as excellent.
- **OES** led regular seminars entitled, *Best Writing Practices I*, designed to support employees who manage correspondence, memoranda, reports, and other documents on behalf of the Secretary.

FY 2024 Compliance Training

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
Food and Nutrition Service		
<u>FNS Executive Correspondence Training 101</u> The FNS correspondence team created a course in USDA AgLearn that includes a plain language section	165 employees	March 27, 2024
Farm Production and Conservation		
Plain Language training connecting agency goals to advancing equity, the legal requirements of the Plain Writing Act, the benefits of using plain language, and key elements of clear communication	96 NRCS leaders and staff
Introductory overview of plain language and the Plain Writing Act	~48 FPAC Business Center public affairs specialists
Several briefings on the proper submission of requests for translated documents, and ways employees can assist the accuracy of translation work products	FPAC agency state offices and employee groups
Section 508 training, testing methods and remediation procedures, and plain language practices, document and application creation	>1,200 employees
Animal Plant Health Inspection Service		
Plant Protection and Quarantine Permit Staff Four-hour in-person training APHIS PLAIN-trained staff	35	April 16, 2024

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
<u>APHIS Excellence in Science Communication</u> A six-month program for two cohorts of APHIS scientists and technical experts to improve their ability to communicate complex information to stakeholders and leaders; resulting in 46 employee graduates; and including in-person training from an outside expert on plain language, related topics, and other opportunities to strengthen plain language skills (including formal presentations and shadows)	46	September 2023-February 2024
Internal Communications Branch		
Section 508 training webinar Rural Development-Enterprise Office	50	July 18, 2023
Plain language training webinar Rural Development – Rural Partners Network	25	March 19, 2024
Section 508 training webinar Rural Development – Rural Partners Network	25	April 4, 2024
Field Operations and Multimedia Branch – Weekly Office Hours		
State Executive Summary Best Practices	30	November 20, 2023
Using Microsoft Word Styles	25	December 27, 2023
Using Plain Language	30	January 25, 2024
Amplifying Success Stories	20	February 9, 2024
Writing Op-Eds	30	April 11, 2024

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
Economic Research Service		
<u>Publishing at ERS</u> Recorded, live on-site training posted to SharePoint; topics include report writing/publishing, article writing/publishing, visual communications	>80	September 25-29, 2023, and October, 2023
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights		
<u>Section 508: What It Is and Why It's Important?</u> Presented by: USDA AgLearn	13	December 23, 2023 June 6, 2024
Civil Rights Management System Public Facing Portal Section 508 Review Training	12	April 1, 2023
Civil Rights Management System Internal Database	12	May 23, 2024
ICT Accessible Section 508 Conformance Training	12	June 4, 2024
DCMA Section 508 Fielding Awareness Conference Day-2 Training	12	July 25, 2024
Section 508 Compliance recurring monthly meetings to review CRMS website and OASCR website OASCR's Data Records and Management Division	>12	Ongoing during the fiscal year
<u>Writing in Plain Language</u> Presented by USDA AgLearn LINKED Learning	CCO / 32 OASCR employees	November 24, 2023 / September 9, 2024 – September 30, 2024
<u>Principles of Plain Language (part 1)</u> Presented by Karen Robin	All USDA CCOs	February 6, 2024

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
<u>Principles of Plain Language (part 2)</u> Presented by Karen Robin	All USDA CCOs	February 6, 2024
Office of Budget Programs and Analysis		
Employee shadowing opportunity OCDIO	1	August 26-27, 2024
Section 508 ad hoc training OES	2	February-April 2024
Departmental directives Plain Writing/Section 508 ad hoc training OCIO	>25	November-August 2024
Forms and ad hoc Section 508 related training/guidance FNS, OCP, OASCR, OCIO, OCFO, FSA, OO	>50	October 2023-August 2024
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 2024, the two editors in the Office of Communications reviewed more than 225 manuscripts in lengths ranging from 1 to 600 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 Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS)		
AU KEY Executive Leadership Training: Executive Clarity	4	May – December, 2023
Office of the Chief Financial Officer		
Plain Language Act training USDA AgLearn	1	August 26, 2024
<u>Principles of Plain Language – Part 1</u> Presented by Karen Robin	3	February 6, 2024
<u>Principles of Plain Language – Part 1</u> Presented by Karen Robin	3	February 13, 2024
<u>Section 508: What It Is and Why It’s Important?</u>	3	Dates vary in 2023
Document remediation training with general overview of Section 508 OCIO	2	March 20, 2024
<u>Best Writing Practices 1</u> Office of the Executive Secretariat	3	October 24, 2023 November 28, 2023 January 25, 2024 February 29, 2024
Office of Chief Information Officer Section 508 Program Office		
Monthly Plain Language Forums, presenting and responding to Q&A sessions on Section 508	>165	October 23, 2023

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
Section 508 awareness and document remediation training in the Plain Language Forum (employees were given instructions to create and maintain various forms of documentation, and taught methods to secure Section 508 document compliance)	>165	March 19, 2024
Office of Contracting and Procurement		
Shared opportunity to review various training sessions located on SharePoint	Available to >100 OCP employees	February 2024
Office of Ethics		
....
Office of the Executive Secretariat		
<u>Section 508 Document Remediation</u> Plain Language Forum Guest Speaker: Sarah Reed, OCIO	73	October 26, 2023
<u>Inclusive Language in Agency Communications</u> Plain Language Forum Guest Speaker: Jeremy Wood	66	November 30, 2023
Plain Language Forum	79	January 25, 2024
<u>Principles of Plain Language</u> Instructor: Karen Robin	239 155	February 6, 2024 (Pt. 1) February 13, 2024 (Pt. 2)
<u>Plain Language: What, why, how</u> (for Managers) Instructor: Karen Robin	69	February 23, 2024

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
<u>Departmental Directives and Forms</u> Plain Language Forum Guest Speaker: Terri Walker	84	February 29, 2024
<u>Publishing for a Targeted Audience</u> Plain Language Forum Guest Speaker: Angela Brees	76	March 28, 2024
<u>Unlocking the Power of Plain Language with Information Mapping</u> Plain Language Forum Guest Speaker: Patrick Orr	79	May 30, 2024
Plain Language Forum Guest Speaker: Terri Walker	83	June 27, 2024
Plain Language Forum	75	July 25, 2024
Plain Language Forum (General Q&A Session)	57	August 29, 2024
Office of General Counsel		
Orientation (CRLELD) Civil Rights Labor and Employment Law Division Online training for new employees and interns Topics include: -respectful use of pronouns to reflect gender-based harassment -training to prevent harassing communication	-Live audience: 107 in attendance -Recording audience: 300 potential users
<u>Preventing Harassing Communication</u>	300 potential online users	

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
Office of Hearings and Appeals		
....
Office of the Inspector General		
....
Office of Public Partnerships and Engagement		
Clear Photo Caption Training	50	June 26, 2024
Plain Language Training	50	June 26, 2024
Office of Tribal Relations		
....
Forest Service		
<u>Write to be Read; Write to be Understood: Using Plain Language Best Practices</u>	~ 350 employees	October 3, 2023
<u>Writing Releases, Features and Opinions/Editorials</u>	~ 235 employees	November 7, 2023
<u>Using Plain Language in Policy Development</u>	~ 40 employees	May 2, 2024
<u>Plain Language for Forest Service Southern Region 8</u>	~ 95 employees	July 30, 2024
Food Safety Inspection Service		
<u>Bold Type's Plain Language Workshop</u> for the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education	15-16	September 2024
Office of Budget Programs and Analysis		
<u>Plain Language & Dept. Directives Plain Language Forum (OES membership)</u>	February 29, 2024

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained	Date
Office of the Chief Economist		
Section 508 compliance training in USDA AgLearn	64	September 30, 2024
Regular hands-on plain writing training	Various	As needed, for controlled correspondence responses
Office of Chief Information Officer Section 508 Program Office		
Disseminated information regarding accessible fonts for websites and documents to the Office of Communications to utilize in their style guide	90
OMB Memo M-24-08: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed all 30-day, 90-day and 120-day actions for the OMB Memo M-24-08 - Strengthening Digital Accessibility and the Management of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act • Ensured the activity was reported in the Staff Equity Office Plan 	90
Office of Customer Experience		
<u>Section 508: What It is and Why It's Important</u>	4	October, 2024