



Office of the Chief Information Officer  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# FY 2024 ANNUAL TECHNOLOGY REPORT



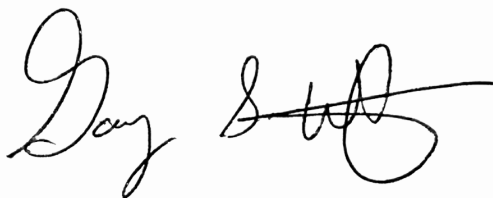
# Welcome

Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) was a remarkable year at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) not only in terms of accomplishments but also in terms of customer service and employee satisfaction.

It was a USDA team effort with Mission Areas (MAs) and Staff Offices as we implemented several large projects across the Department savings millions of dollars and many manhours for our employees.

This is important as we look forward to FY25 and FY26 budget numbers and how we maintain the progress we have made by still moving ahead to upgrade systems, hire personnel, and continue to look for ways to save dollars for the American people.

The work we do every day to support our customers across the world is only possible because of the professionals who work diligently to keep the lines of communication open and the data flowing. This yearly report is a testament to them!



Gary Washington  
Chief Information Officer  
U.S. Department of Agriculture



## CIO Gary Washington

“ We develop, deliver, and defend the business information technologies that empower every aspect of the USDA mission. ”

# About OCIO



## Our Mission

Enable the USDA mission through innovative, secure, and cost effective IT solutions and services

## Our Vision

Implement a customer first model leveraging technologies that provide for simple, seamless, and secure digital services and offers a world class experience for the American public

## Our Strategic Goals

Accelerate  
Digital  
Transformation

Drive Innovation  
in Support of  
USDA Mission

Improve IT  
Organizational  
Ability With a  
Skilled Workforce

Build Resilience  
Into Everything  
We Do

Enable  
Data-Driven  
Decision Making

# Delivering modernized IT tools and innovative IT operations to serve USDA



## Grants Modernization

Through the Grants Modernization Initiative, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will implement a new grants management system using a Quality Service Management Office (QSMO) as a service provider to deliver enterprise-wide innovation. This federally managed marketplace will create a seamless experience for staff and customers, improve NIFA's ability to track and report outcomes, and help achieve the agency mission more efficiently and effectively. [Learn more>](#)

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

USDA has successfully piloted several generative AI use cases to enable the USDA workforce to work more efficiently and effectively with the goal of improving organizational health and service delivery. A new USDA AI Lab is in development where USDA Mission Areas and Staff Offices can work together in a shared environment to share code, lessons learned, and use common cloud infrastructure. USDA will release its inaugural AI Strategy in FY 2025, focusing on workforce development, AI governance, equitable and responsible AI, technology enablement, and data readiness. [Learn more>](#)

## Application Rationalization

In FY 2024, the 2-year Application Rationalization project completed the standardization of software products across USDA, delivering multiple benefits for our customers and workforce:

- Reducing 7 percent of the 80,000 software products installed across USDA, and removing nearly 260,000 outdated, unsupported, and unapproved software installations
- Improving USDA's cybersecurity posture by removing outdated and unsupported software from the environment
- Standardizing USDA's software library has resulted in fewer software related help desk tickets, freeing up time for technicians and customers
- Estimated cost avoidance of \$1.125 million annually and customer productivity gains of 400,000 hours of down time avoidance



# Developing customer-centric solutions and an agile IT workforce for USDA

## SNAP Education

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) public-facing website upgraded to a newer content management system and integrated the SNAP-Ed Toolkit in FY 2024. This project created a cohesive customer experience by eliminating redundant information, implementing a consistent design, and streamlining navigation.

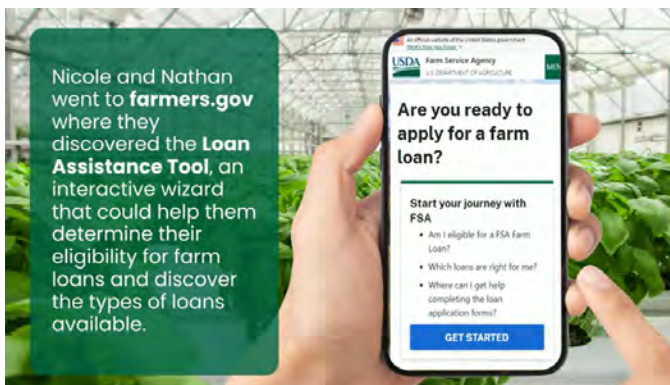
[Learn more>](#)



## Delegated Hiring Authority for IT Specialists

Beginning in FY 2024, USDA can use Delegated Hiring Authority (DHA) to hire individuals into IT Specialist positions under term and temporary appointments nationwide. To provide excellent customer service, including service offerings reflecting the technology of today, it is imperative that USDA's IT workforce possess the skills and knowledge associated to these emerging technologies in order to meet the customer needs of today and tomorrow. DHA is an important tool to recruit and hire the tech talent needed for USDA's digital transformation in these key positions:

- Customer Support
- Operating Systems
- Systems Analysis
- Systems Admin
- Internet
- Network Services
- Enterprise Architecture
- Application Software
- Policy and Planning
- Data Management



## Farm Loan Program

A holistic Farm Loan Program (FLP) transformation will better position producers for business growth. Automating and digitizing end-to-end business processes will enhance FLP customer experiences and loan lifecycle processing efficiencies.

[Learn more>](#)

# Defending USDA information, operations, and stakeholders with resilient systems



## Geospatial Information Services

Starting in FY 2024, all USDA drones are considered sensitive IT assets. USDA collects high resolution imagery with uncrewed aerial systems or drones while leveraging vast amounts of satellite information. This ensures the cybersecurity of USDA's fleet of over 1,000 drones and advances improved data governance, which is important as drones are known to be targeted by foreign adversaries including some foreign hardware and software providers.

## Cloud Solutions - STRATUS

STRATUS is a suite of government-wide Basic Ordering Agreements (BOAs) that reflects the next generation of USDA cloud service solutions. STRATUS provides rapid access to cloud capabilities and will reduce costs, better allocate resources, and continuously improve USDA's IT enterprise to keep pace with technology and business model advancements. All Mission Area legacy contracts with the Federal Cloud Hosting Solutions program have transitioned to lower STRATUS rates and will deliver \$7 million in savings in FY 2025.

## Cybersecurity

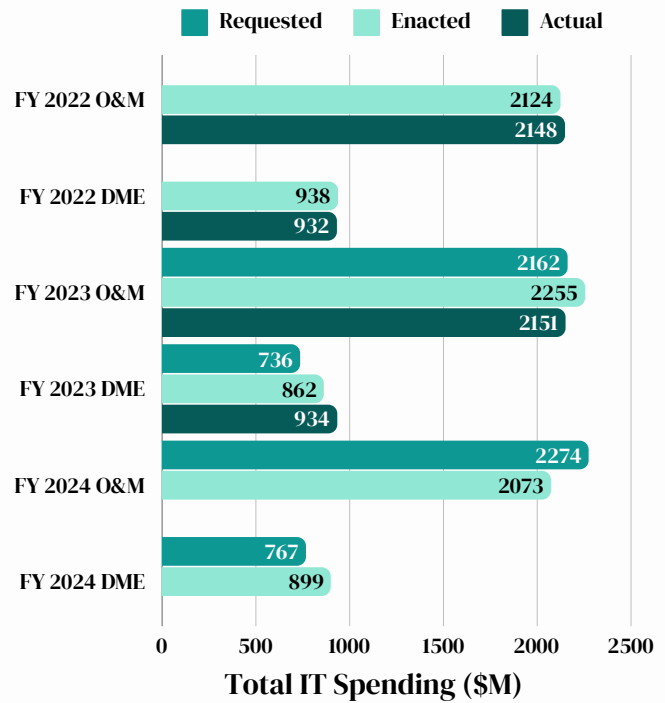
USDA accomplished several major cybersecurity priorities associated with implementing Executive Order (EO) 14028, Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity, and subsequent Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum 22-09, Moving the U.S. Government Toward Zero Trust Cybersecurity Principles:

- Fully implementing multifactor authentication (MFA) to USDA's workforce of 130,000+ Federal employees and contractors
- Deploying endpoint detection and response (EDR) to 90 percent of USDA computers and servers to continuously monitor and analyze USDA's mission critical systems and data for advanced threats
- Cybersecurity event logging for approximately 180,000 devices and assets, and encrypting 90 percent of data in transit and data at-rest
- Coordinating across USDA to ensure a 90 percent fill rate for skilled cybersecurity positions

# USDA IT Budget

The USDA Information Technology (IT) Budget is composed of Operations & Maintenance (O&M) and Development, Modernization, and Enhancement (DME):

- Requested amount: The IT dollar amount the agency requested from Congress in the President's budget request for that fiscal year.
- Enacted amount: The IT dollar amount Congress actually funded through that fiscal year's appropriation.
- Actual amount: The IT dollar amount the agency actually spent that fiscal year based on what was appropriated by Congress.



[View the IT Portfolio Dashboard>](#)



**82.14%**

Low Risk CIO Rating



**95.38%**

Projects on Schedule



**97.78%**

Projects on Budget



**96%**

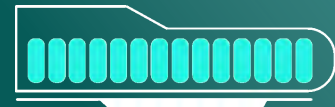
Performance Metrics Met

## Technology Modernization Fund (TMF) Investments

- \$60M to modernize USDA's networks and improve data access with USDANet
- \$8M to help Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) deliver customer-centric experience
- \$4.4M to enhance USDA's Cybersecurity with Zero Trust Architecture

Over \$80.6 million in TMF investments have been making an impact at USDA since 2018, helping to completely transform the way our Department does business, protects data, and executes our mission. TMF's partnership will help USDA continue to streamline service delivery, improve customer experience, and enhance protection of sensitive data from cyberattacks. These essential investments in modern information technology and tools are empowering USDA to manage costs and mission performance more effectively now and for the future. [Learn more>](#)

# Delivering Results



## FY 2024 Cost Savings and Avoidance

Achieved \$883.7 million in cost savings and avoidance through enterprise solutions, contract negotiations, services consolidation, and decommissioning systems and equipment.



## 2024 USDA Secretary Honor's Award

50,000+ USDA mobile devices were migrated to a secure, cost-effective, and capable mobile device management and mobile threat defense platform by October 2023.



## 2024 EPEAT (Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool) Purchase Award Winner

In 2023, USDA saved \$319,263 and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 1,778,351 kg of carbon dioxide equivalents by purchasing 46,000+ EPEAT certified electronic products.



## FY 2024 Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA)

Scoring an overall B, USDA is successfully managing IT to improve our Department's ability to deliver its mission and conduct its business.



## FY 2024 Small Business Procurement

57.32 percent of Office of Chief Information Officer FY 2024 contracts were awarded to small businesses, valued at over \$296.2 million.






## Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

130,000+ USDA staff were empowered with RPA technology, saving an estimated 9,600 hours with 1,300 automations.



# USDA CIO Council

The USDA Chief Information Officer Council (CIOC) serves as the principal advisory forum to the USDA CIO for improving the operational efficiency and strategic use of information technology (IT) across the USDA Enterprise.

-  Executive Board Members
-  Voting Members
-  Advisors



**Gary Washington**  
USDA Chief Information Officer



**Kimberly Jackson**  
USDA Deputy Chief Information Officer



**Carl Mayes**  
Assistant CIO Food Safety



**Renee Gore**  
Assistant CIO Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services



**Cedric Bragg**  
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**Kelli Petrie**  
Assistant CIO Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs



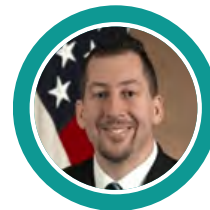
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**Laura Hill**  
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**Ron Sequeira**  
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**Denessa Moses**  
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**Arianne Gallagher-Welcher**  
Executive Director USDA Digital Service



**Don Bitner**  
USDA Chief Technology Officer



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**Photo credits:**

Cover: A scenic view of the west fork of the Madison River as it runs through the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest is the largest of the national forests in Montana, covering 3.35 million acres and throughout eight Southwest Montana counties. USDA Photo by Preston Keres.

Fall apples at Bloomingdale Farmers Market, a park side street location in Washington, DC. They accept the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits using the Electronic Balance Transfer (EBT) card. They also accept Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) benefits coupons. USDA Photo by Lance Cheung.

Cows graze in a pasture at Twinbrook Creamery, in Lynden, WA, and in the distance is Mt. Baker. USDA Photo by Lance Cheung.

Page 4: Courtesy of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Grants Management Initiative.

Page 5: Courtesy of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Page 6: Courtesy of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Page 10: Scenic landscape of cornfield near Lyons, Georgia. USDA photo by Preston Keres.