

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
LGBTQ+ Employee Organization

## Equality USDA

### Bylaws

#### I. Mission Statement

The mission of Equality USDA is to create and continue to foster a work environment free of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

#### II. Vision

Equality USDA seeks to make USDA a place where you can grow your own destiny, no matter who you are or whom you love.

#### III. Name of the Organization

The name of this Organization shall be Equality USDA. Prior to 2017, the Organization was known as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employee Organization (USDA GLOBE).<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Purpose

Equality USDA is focused on enriching the work-life of LGBTQ+ USDA employees and retirees by building a Federal workplace where employees feel safe bringing their full authentic selves to work. The acronym “*LGBTQ+*” is used by Equality USDA to represent the range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions present in our world, including but not limited to: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, pansexual, Two Spirit, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, intersex, asexual, and ally.

The purpose of Equality USDA is to:

- a. Promote understanding of issues affecting LGBTQ+ employees and retirees in USDA.
- b. Advance a USDA policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

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<sup>1</sup> USDA GLOBE was established as a USDA-recognized employee welfare and recreation organization in 1994, as witnessed by then-Assistant Secretary for Administration Wardell C. Townsend, Jr. on March 25, 1994. On June 13, 2017, based on a vote of USDA GLOBE members, the name of the organization was officially changed to Equality USDA.

- c. Provide outreach to the LGBTQ+ community in the Department.
- d. Provide educational opportunities to USDA employees on fostering an inclusive workplace and issues affecting LGBTQ+ employees and customers.
- e. Serve as a resource group on issues of concern affecting LGBTQ+ USDA employees and retirees.
- f. Work for the creation of a diverse work force that assures respect and civil rights for LGBTQ+ employees.
- g. Create a forum for the concerns of the LGBTQ+ community in the Department.

## **V. Membership**

- a. No person shall be denied membership in Equality USDA due to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, prior civil rights activity, or professional standing.
- b. Membership is voluntary. Membership and all privileges and responsibilities of membership are available to all USDA employees and retired USDA employees. USDA contractors may join for the duration of their contract.
- c. Membership covers the 12-month period of the calendar.
- d. Membership in Equality USDA is available in the following categories:
  - i. Regular Member – Any person eligible for membership shall be deemed a Regular Member upon payment of current annual dues.
  - ii. Lifetime Member – Any person eligible for membership shall be deemed a Lifetime Member upon payment of current lifetime dues.
  - iii. Associate Member – Non-dues paying members. Associate members are nonvoting members and do not have the right to hold office.
  - iv. Honorary Member – A person may receive an annual Honorary Membership upon recommendation of the Executive Board and majority vote of members. Honorary members are nonvoting members and do not have the right to hold office.
  - v. Sponsor Member – Any person(s) who donates funds to support a project or proposed activity sponsored by Equality USDA. A Sponsor Member may be considered a Regular Member if the donation exceeds the value of annual dues, as determined by the Treasurer, and the individual is a USDA employee or retiree.

## **VI. Dues**

- a. Dues will be collected by the Treasurer from all members annually, except for lifetime membership dues which shall be collected once. Electronic methods will be made available for paying dues.
- b. Dues will be determined by the Executive Board, as supported by a business plan and budget.
- c. New members may pay dues on a pro-rated basis based on remaining membership period.

- d. Only dues-paying members shall be allowed voting privileges at meetings and elections.
- e. Member privileges will be revoked if the dues are sixty (60) days past due.
- f. Special accommodations may be arranged when financial hardship is a barrier to membership at the discretion of the Executive Board, upon request.

## **VII. Government**

The laws of this organization shall consist of these bylaws and additional guidelines adopted by the membership.

## **VIII. Elections, Terms, and Service of Officers**

- a. Biennially, Equality USDA will elect six Officers from among the members. These Officers include: President, Vice President, Communications Director, Secretary, Treasurer, and Partnership Liaison. Officers will be elected by a simple majority vote of the voting members. The elected Officers will serve as an Executive Board chaired by the President. Elected Officers shall serve a term of two years. After serving their term(s), the President shall serve an additional one-year term as Past President non-voting advisor to the Executive Board.
- b. No Officer shall serve more than two consecutive terms in the same elected position. Officers wishing to serve a second term must run for re-election.
- c. All Equality USDA Regular and Lifetime members are eligible to run for office and may nominate themselves or other members willing to serve.
- d. Officer elections shall occur in the fall / winter of every odd year (2017, 2019, etc.). The term of the newly elected Board shall begin January 1<sup>st</sup> of even years (2018, 2020, etc.).
- e. In October of odd years, the President shall call for the formation of an Election Committee to oversee the nomination and election process. No individual running for office shall serve on the Election Committee.
- f. The Election Committee will:
  - i. Solicit and/or receive nominations from eligible Equality USDA members;
  - ii. Certify candidate qualifications;
  - iii. Prepare and distribute electronic elections ballots via email;
  - iv. Receive and tabulate electronic ballots. Record the official results and announce elected Officers via email.
- g. Elections shall occur using electronic ballots. The voting window shall be open a minimum of one week. Members will be notified via email to access their electronic ballot by the Elections Committee Chair. Members who are not able to vote electronically will be provided a paper ballot by the Election Committee upon request. Reasonable accommodations for voting will be accepted and processed by the Elections Committee to ensure voting is available to all members.
- h. In the event an Officer resigns or is recalled from their position on the Equality USDA Board, the remaining Officers may vote to appoint a member to fill the vacancy until the end of the departing Officer's term.

- i. When an Officer resigns their position on the Equality USDA Executive Board or separates from USDA employment, they shall notify the President as soon as possible.
  - ii. In the event the President is the vacating Officer, the Vice-President shall assume the President's responsibilities for the remainder of the term.
  - iii. An Officer who was appointed by the Board rather than elected must be nominated for election during the next regularly scheduled Fall election and may then serve for up to two full terms.
- i. An Officer may be recalled. The recall process may be initiated by any member who submits a Petition for Recall signed by at least four different members. The Petition for Recall shall describe in detail the reasons for seeking removal and be submitted to the Executive Board. The remaining Officers (i.e., those not subject to recall) shall review the Petition and if appropriate, appoint an independent Recall Committee of three members to receive, develop, examine, and present any relevant evidence to the full membership for the purpose of holding a special recall election. After presenting relevant evidence to the membership, special recall vote shall be conducted by the Recall Committee within 60 days of the receipt of the Petition. A simple majority vote of the entire general voting membership shall be required to recall an Officer.
- j. An Officer who violates these bylaws and additional guidelines adopted by the membership shall be provided written warning by the Executive Board. After three written warnings, an Officer may be the subject of a Petition to Recall.
- k. Officers will not be compensated for the performance of their duties.

## **IX. Duties.**

- a. The President, with the help of other Officers, when appropriate, will:
  - i. Develop or update a Strategic Plan that will identify specific annual goals and objectives in support of the Equality USDA mission.
  - ii. Lead, direct, and coordinate all Equality USDA activities to meet defined goals and objectives.
  - iii. Annually benchmark and assess progress made, evaluate the effectiveness of the goals and objectives themselves, take necessary actions to correct any deficiency, and report findings to Equality USDA.
  - iv. Develop the agenda and preside at all meetings of the Executive Board.
  - v. Develop the agenda and preside at all meetings of the general membership.
  - vi. Serve as the official representative and spokesperson for Equality USDA.
  - vii. Serve as the official representative for Equality USDA on USDA Civil Rights Councils and Committees, as appropriate, or delegate a representative in the President's stead.
  - viii. Coordinate and consult with USDA LGBT Special Emphasis Program Managers, or designees, in support of outreach and educational events.

- ix. Upon completing a term in office, the outgoing President will serve as the Past President non-voting advisor to the Executive Board for a period of one year. The Past President may vote in general membership votes.
  - x. Appoint Equality USDA members to positions and roles as necessary to fulfill the goals of the organization and support the initiatives and endeavors of the Executive Board. In appointing position and roles, the President shall stipulate the responsibilities and completion date.
- b. The Vice-President will:
- i. Advise and assist the President in the execution of their responsibilities.
  - ii. Execute the functions of the President in the absence, or upon the resignation or recall, of the President.
  - iii. Serve as second signature for all checks and disbursements made by Equality USDA.
  - iv. Coordinate with Equality USDA in establishing committees, assure that committee Chairpersons are nominated and assigned, and act as an oversight manager of all committees.
  - v. Function as the liaison to Equality USDA members in non-headquarters locations or designate an appropriate alternate.
- c. The Communications Director will:
- i. Establish and maintain a communications policy, including social media and web content.
  - ii. Manage the social media accounts and website for Equality USDA.
  - iii. Develop or coordinate the development of reports and correspondence as assigned by the President or Vice-President.
  - iv. Develop press releases as necessary.
  - v. Serve as an additional spokesperson for Equality USDA as requested by the President.
  - vi. Notify members of all meetings and activities.
  - vii. Review and approve attendance, messaging, and materials for all outreach events attended by Equality USDA.
- d. The Secretary will:
- i. Determine quorum and record minutes of all meetings.
  - ii. Circulate minutes, agendas, and other pertinent documents.
  - iii. Preserve all official correspondence, documents, and electronic recordings.
  - iv. Maintain an electronic library of educational materials created by Equality USDA.
  - v. Maintain a list of members by category of membership and other non-financial records.
  - vi. Make available to all members and prospective members copies of the Bylaws and other related documents.
  - vii. Coordinate with the Communications Director to assist with management of the social media accounts and website for Equality USDA.

- e. The Treasurer will:
  - i. Receive all funds payable to Equality USDA and issue receipt for such funds, including membership dues.
  - ii. Serve as primary signature for all checks and disbursements made by Equality USDA.
  - iii. Provide notification to members when dues are owed. Maintain a record of dues paid and those past-due. Notify the Executive Board when a member's dues are sixty (60) days past due and advise the Executive Board on revocation of membership privileges.
  - iv. Satisfy financial obligations as duly authorized by a majority vote of members present at a general meeting.
  - v. Keep a clear and accurate record of all Equality USDA receipts and disbursements.
  - vi. Maintain a checking account to store funds, issue payments, and ensure that the second signature on the account is that of the Vice-President.
  - vii. Present a report on the financial status of Equality USDA at all meetings.
  
- f. The Partnership Liaison will:
  - i. Represent Equality USDA at monthly Federal employee resource group meetings, such as Pride in Federal Service, Federal GLOBE, and FedQ. Report activities of Federal employee resource groups to Equality USDA and make recommendations for actions.
  - ii. Establish and maintain relationships with other affinity groups and employee organizations. Report activities of USDA affinity groups and employee organizations to Equality USDA and make recommendations for actions.
  - iii. Assist the President and Vice President in representing Equality USDA with external partners such as Out & Equal, Cultivating Change, and the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce.
  - iv. Assist in the development of Memoranda of Understanding and agreements to establish partnerships in support of the mission of Equality USDA.
  
- g. Together, the Executive Board will:
  - i. Attend board and membership meetings. Officers must notify the President and/or Vice President in advance if they are unable to attend Executive Board meetings and/or meetings with Equality USDA members.
  - ii. Work considerately and respectfully with all members.
  - iii. Actively recruit new members for Equality USDA.
  - iv. Develop a biennial business plan that outlines the Executive Board's goals and activities. Support the business plan objectives with an annual budget, and present to membership for input.

## **X. Senior Executive Champions**

- a. The Executive Board shall identify a minimum of two Senior Executive Champions who will serve as advisors to Equality USDA.
- b. Senior Executive Champions shall be USDA employees who are GS-15, Senior Executive Service members, or political appointees.
- c. The Senior Executive Champions shall:
  - i. Be provided an Honorary Membership in Equality USDA, if they are not current members.
  - ii. Act as an advocate for Equality USDA.
  - iii. Provide guidance to the Executive Board on best practices in effective leadership, strategy, conflict resolution, acquisition of resources, communications, and career development activities.
  - iv. Identify potential risks and suggest mitigation strategies.
  - v. Attend Executive Board meetings as requested by the Board and attend general membership meetings when possible.

## **XI. Voting**

- a. Voting mechanisms may include email, online polls, or teleconference, as determined by the Executive Board. Members who are not able to vote electronically may request a reasonable accommodation to vote by mail or other method by contacting an Executive Board member.
- b. To initiate or transact normal business presented at the meetings, a quorum shall constitute 10% of the voting membership.
- c. All issues regarding significant changes to Equality USDA, as determined by the Executive Board, shall be presented to the membership as voting issues.

## **XII. Committees**

- a. Any Equality USDA member may recommend that a committee be formed to develop a specific issue of interest.
- b. Any Equality USDA member may nominate another member to be the Chairperson of a committee.
- c. Committee Chairpersons will report the status of committee efforts at general Equality USDA meetings.

## **XIII. Chapters**

- a. Equality USDA members may form state and/or local Chapters of Equality USDA. Members wishing to form an Equality USDA Chapter shall draft a charter in accordance with the principles reflected in these Bylaws.
- b. All Chapter charters and subsequent amendments shall be submitted to the Equality USDA Executive Board for ratification.

#### **XIV. Meetings**

- a. The Executive Board shall conduct quarterly meetings with the general membership. General membership meetings are open to all Equality USDA members. Non-members may attend as guests of a member, or by contacting an Officer in advance.
- b. The President shall conduct monthly meetings with the Executive Board. The Executive Board may call additional meetings as necessary. Meeting minutes shall document decisions made by the Executive Board and shall be made available to members by the Secretary.
- c. Informational meetings open to all interested in Equality USDA shall be conducted as often as necessary, as determined by the Executive Board.
- d. Committee Chairpersons may conduct committee meetings as necessary.
- e. Meetings will generally be held virtually via teleconference and electronic methods. Meetings will occasionally be held in person when it is advantageous, such as in conjunction with trainings and outreach events.
- f. Training and professional development meetings will be conducted as appropriate.

#### **XV. Amendments**

Any amendments or changes to the Bylaws will be made by a two-thirds vote of eligible members present at general membership meetings. All proposed amendments must be emailed to members at least 14 days in advance of the meeting during which the vote will take place.

#### **XVI. Nondiscrimination Statement**

Equality USDA and its members are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

#### **XVII. Dissolution**

Equality USDA is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common Pleas of Washington,



D.C. for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

Amended: November 14, 2019

Approved by Member Vote: December 5, 2019



**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20250-0100

MAR 25 1994

**SUBJECT:** Establishment of USDA GLOBE


**TO:** Pat Browne  
Spokesperson, USDA GLOBE

In keeping with the Secretary's April 15, 1993, EEO and Civil Rights Policy Statement, I am pleased to officially sanction the creation of USDA GLOBE by approving the attached bylaws. With this approval, USDA GLOBE will exercise all of the rights and responsibilities of other officially sanctioned employee organizations.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Wardell C. Townsend, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Wardell C. Townsend, Jr.  
Assistant Secretary  
for Administration

Attachment



**U. S. Department of Agriculture  
Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employee Organization  
(USDA GLOBE)**

**Bylaws**

**Mission Statement.**

The mission of the U. S. Department of Agriculture Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employee Organization is to create a work environment free of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation.

**I. Name of the Organization.**

The U. S. Department of Agriculture Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employee Organization, hereafter referred to as "USDA GLOBE."

**II. Purpose.**

The purpose of USDA GLOBE is to:

- A. Promote understanding of issues affecting gay, lesbian and bisexual employees in USDA.
- B. Support the USDA policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation.
- C. Provide outreach to the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community in the Department.
- D. Serve as a resource group to the Secretary on issues of concern to gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees.
- E. Work for the creation of diverse work force that assures respect and civil rights for gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees.
- F. Create a forum for the concerns of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community in the Department.

### III. Membership.

Membership and all privileges and responsibilities of membership shall be available to all USDA employees and retired USDA employees.

### IV. Meetings.

- A. Meetings will be held monthly and will be open to all current or retired USDA employees and their invited guests.
- B. The Officers shall conduct a monthly Executive Board meeting.
- C. Committee Chairpersons may conduct committee meetings as necessary.
- D. Meetings will generally be held at the USDA headquarters in Washington. Meetings will occasionally be held at non-headquarters locations in the Washington area.

### V. Dues.

- A. Dues will be collected by the Treasurer from all members at the annual election meeting in January. Dues shall be \$12.00 per year. New members may pay dues on a pro-rated basis.
- B. Only dues-paying members shall be allowed voting privileges at meetings and elections.

### VI. Government.

The laws of this organization shall consist of these bylaws and additional guidelines adopted by the membership.

### VII. Officers and Election Process.

- A. Each year at the November general meeting, USDA GLOBE will form a Nominating Committee for the purpose of overseeing the nomination and election process. All USDA GLOBE members are eligible to run for office and may nominate themselves or other members willing to serve. The Nominating Committee will:

1. Solicit and/or receive nominations from USDA GLOBE members willing to serve as officers;
  2. Certify candidate qualifications and prepare and present elections ballots at the December general meeting;
  3. Receive additional nominations from the floor at the December general meeting;
  4. Mail a copy of the election ballot and applicable candidate information to all USDA GLOBE members not present at the December general meeting after a final slate is proposed at that meeting; and
  5. Receive absentee ballots from voting members who will not be present for the election at the January general meeting.
- B. Each year at the January general meeting, USDA GLOBE will elect five Officers from among the members. These Officers will include: President, Vice-President, Historian, Treasurer, and Liaison to Federal GLOBE. By paper ballot, the Officers will be elected by a simple majority vote of members attending the election meeting and by members who have submitted absentee ballots. The Officers will function as an Executive Board chaired by the President. Terms will be for one year and no Officer may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same elected position.

#### VIII. Duties.

- A. The President, with the help of other officers, when appropriate, will:
1. Develop or update a statement of direction that will identify specific annual goals and objectives in support of the USDA GLOBE mission.
  2. Organize, direct, and coordinate all USDA GLOBE activities to meet defined goals and objectives.
  3. Annually assess progress made, evaluate the effectiveness of the goals and objectives themselves, take necessary actions to correct any deficiency, and report findings to the USDA GLOBE.
  4. Develop the agenda and preside at all meetings of the general membership.

5. Serve as the official representative and spokesperson for USDA GLOBE.
6. Serve as the official representative for USDA GLOBE on the USDA Civil Rights Management Council.
7. Sign and execute all agreements and obligations voted by a majority of the members in attendance at meetings.

B. The Vice-President will:

1. Advise and assist the President in the execution of his or her responsibilities.
2. Execute the functions of the President in the absence, or upon the resignation, of the President.
3. Serve as second signature for all checks and disbursements made by USDA GLOBE.
4. Coordinate with USDA GLOBE in establishing committees, assure that committee Chairpersons are nominated and assigned, and act as an oversight manager of all committees.
5. Function as the liaison to USDA GLOBE groups in non-headquarters locations.

C. The Historian will:

1. Keep minutes of all general meetings.
2. Maintain all official correspondence and documents.
3. Develop or coordinate the development and reports and correspondence as may be assigned by the President or Vice-President.
4. Notify members of all meetings and activities.
5. Circulate minutes, agendas, and other pertinent documents.
6. Maintain a list of members and other non-financial records.

7. Make available to all members and prospective members copies of the Bylaws and other related documents.

D. The Treasurer will:

1. Receive all funds payable to USDA GLOBE and issue receipt for such funds, including membership dues.
2. Satisfy financial obligations as duly authorized by a majority vote of members present at a general meeting.
3. Keep a clear and accurate record of all USDA GLOBE receipts and disbursements.
4. Maintain a checking account to store funds and issue payments and ensure that the second signature on the account is that of the Vice-President.
5. Present a report on the financial status of USDA GLOBE at all general meetings.

E. The Liaison to Federal GLOBE will:

1. Represent USDA GLOBE at monthly Federal GLOBE meetings.
2. Write the USDA column for the Federal GLOBE newsletter.
3. Report current Federal GLOBE activities at USDA GLOBE meetings.
4. Federal GLOBE dues will be paid for this Officer through USDA GLOBE funds.

IX. Filling Vacant Positions.

- A. When an Officer resigns his or her position on the USDA GLOBE Executive Board or separates from USDA employment, he or she shall notify the President prior to leaving USDA GLOBE.
- B. In the event the President is the resigning Officer, the Vice-President shall assume the President's responsibilities for the remainder of the term. A new Vice-President shall be nominated and elected by members at the next general meeting.

X. **Voting.**

- A. To initiate or transact normal business presented at the meetings, a quorum shall constitute 10% of the general membership.
- B. All issues regarding significant changes to USDA GLOBE, as determined by the Executive Board, shall be presented as voting issues and must be voted on by at least two-thirds of the voting members through paper ballot.
- C. The annual election of Officers in January will also take place by paper ballot. Members may arrange to vote through absentee ballot if they are unable to attend the election meeting.

XI. **Committees.**

- A. Any USDA GLOBE member may recommend that a committee be formed to develop a specific issue of interest.
- B. Any USDA GLOBE member may nominate another member to be the Chairperson of a committee.
- C. The USDA GLOBE Executive Board will confirm the establishment of committees and appoint committee Chairpersons.
- D. Committee Chairpersons will report the status of committee efforts at general USDA GLOBE meetings.

XII. **Chapters.**

- A. USDA GLOBE members may form local Chapters of USDA GLOBE in field locations.
- B. All USDA GLOBE members working in the geographical area of a USDA GLOBE Chapter shall be eligible for Chapter membership under the same terms and conditions as members of USDA GLOBE.
- C. Each Chapter shall have the power to select its own name and develop its own charter. However, Chapter charters shall be consistent with Departmental policy and with the vision, goals, and objectives of USDA GLOBE.




- D. USDA GLOBE Charters shall elect Officers and be organized and operated in accordance with the democratic principles reflected in this Charter.
- E. All Chapter charters and subsequent amendments shall be submitted to the USDA GLOBE Executive Board for ratification.

**XIII. Amendments.**

Any amendments or changes to the Bylaws will be made by a two-thirds vote of members present at general meetings.

The undersigned Departmental Officer witnesses the establishment of USDA GLOBE:



Wardell C. Townsend, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Administration

3/25/94

Date

# Strategic Plan

of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group

**2019 - 2024**



## Background

This Strategic Plan reflects the priorities, objectives, and activities of Equality USDA for the period January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2024. The Strategic Plan is executed through Annual Business Plans and Budgets developed and approved by the Executive Board with input from members.

Equality USDA is the employee resource group (ERG) for LGBTQ+ employees and retirees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Equality USDA is focused on enriching the work-life of LGBTQ+ USDA employees and retirees by building a federal workplace where employees feel safe bringing their authentic selves to work.

## Mission Statement

The mission of Equality USDA is to create a work environment at USDA that is free of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

## Vision

Equality USDA seeks to make USDA a place where each employee can grow your own destiny, no matter who you are or whom you love.

## Language Matters

The acronym “LGBTQ+” is used by Equality USDA to represent the range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions present in our world, including but not limited to: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, pansexual, Two Spirit, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, intersex, asexual, and ally.

## Priorities

1. Establish and maintain the structure and presence of Equality USDA.
2. Contribute to outreach, recruitment and professional development of LGBTQ+ individuals.
3. Bring forward voices that represent varied orientations, identities, and experiences.
4. Ensure USDA remains an employer of choice and a welcoming workplace.
5. Build partnerships that support the welfare and health of LGBTQ+ individuals.

## **Priority #1: Establish and maintain the structure and presence of Equality USDA.**

### **Objective 1A: Complete long and short term strategic planning.**

- i. Create annual business plans and budgets with input from the membership.
- ii. Draft a 5-year strategic plan with input from the membership.
- iii. Conduct monthly board meetings and record meeting minutes.

### **Objective 1B: Complete the transition from USDA GLOBE to Equality USDA.**

- i. Amend USDA GLOBE bylaws for Equality USDA with approval by vote from the membership.
- ii. Notify the Department of Organization name change, updated bylaws, and contact info.
- iii. Create a logo with input from members.
- iv. Develop a communications plan and platform, including social media, website, and email.
- v. Create and maintain Equality USDA website.
- vi. Establish committees as necessary to execute initiatives of the Executive Board.

### **Objective 1C: Communicate with members.**

- i. Host regular informational teleconferences with members and interested parties.
- ii. Develop newsletters highlighting Equality USDA members, events, and activities.
- iii. Use social media platforms to highlight and profile Equality USDA members, events, and activities.
- iv. Provide annual accomplishments report at the end of each calendar year.
- v. Develop and maintain membership on-boarding process for new members.
- vi. Identify senior leaders (GS15/SES/Political Appointees) to serve as Executive Champions.

### **Objective 1D: Maintain fiscal solvency of the Organization.**

- i. Maintain the Organization's bank account(s), including contact names and info.
- ii. Develop and maintain standard financial operation procedures.
- iii. Complete all required tax documentation for the Organization.
- iv. Identify sponsoring members.
- v. Coordinate fundraising activities.
- vi. Create and maintain dues management system.
- vii. Report budget summary to members annually.

## **Priority #2: Contribute to outreach, recruitment and professional development of LGBTQ+ individuals.**

### **Objective 2A: Create professional development opportunities for members.**

- i. Create and maintain a professional development program.
- ii. Identify diverse out and ally senior leaders to participate in professional development opportunities.
- iii. Conduct virtual and in-person networking events.

### **Objective 2B: Conduct outreach and recruitment initiatives.**

- i. Host information tables at USDA-sponsored events.
- ii. Co-Sponsor and organize an annual interagency USDA Pride Observance with agency LGBTQ+ Special Emphasis Program Managers.
- iii. Partner with Special Emphasis Program Managers to host outreach and recruitment booths and workshops annually.
- iv. Collaborate with other federal LGBTQ+ ERGs to participate in Pride events.

### **Priority #3: Bring forward voices that represent varied orientations, identities, and experiences.**

#### **Objective 3A: Learn about the varied experiences of LGBTQ+ identities.**

- i. Host guest speakers at member meetings to highlight intersectional experiences and elevate the voices of transgender, queer, gender nonconforming, intersex, minority, and marginalized individuals and communities.
- ii. On social media platforms and in communications with members, recognize the contributions of historically silenced or marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals, including people of color and people with disabilities.
- iii. Seek out education on the impacts of intersecting frameworks of oppression related to race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and ability.
- iv. Collaborate with other federal ERG groups that represent other marginalized identities to participate in and promote events.

#### **Objective 3B: Build safe spaces.**

- i. Establish committees that reflect and support the micro-communities of identity within LGBTQ+ spaces and our membership.
- ii. Contribute time, talent, and sponsorship to grass roots organizations building safe spaces in rural areas.
- iii. Provide educational programs to USDA agencies and partners on fostering an inclusive workplace.

### **Priority #4: Ensure USDA remains an employer of choice and a welcoming workplace.**

#### **Objective 4A: Ensure USDA policies prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.**

- i. Annually, conduct a review of Department and agency civil rights and anti-harassment policies to ensure inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity protections. Document and report findings.
- ii. Call attention to policies and guidance that are discriminatory towards LGBTQ+ USDA employees and retirees.

#### **Objectives 4B: Establish and promote best practices for LGBTQ+ inclusion at USDA.**

- i. Maintain effective working relationships with LGBTQ+ Special Emphasis Program Managers in support of recruitment, retention, and outreach.
- ii. Develop guidelines on transitioning in the USDA workplace.
- iii. Create and maintain a library of educational resources.
- iv. Share best practices with USDA employees, retirees, and partners on fostering an inclusive workplace.

#### **Objectives 4C: Establish metrics on LGBTQ+ employment at USDA.**

- i. Conduct an annual review of the results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), focusing on trends in the responses of self-identified LGBTQ+ employees. Document findings and develop recommendations for improving LGBTQ+ employee satisfaction.
- ii. Contribute to the efforts of Pride in Federal Service and other federal LGBTQ+ ERGs and Special Emphasis Program Managers to collect voluntary employee demographic data on sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **Priority #5: Build partnerships to support the welfare and health of LGBTQ+ employees and retirees.**

### **Objective 5A: Collaborate with federal partners.**

- i. Collaborate with other federal LGBTQ+ ERGs and organizations such as Pride in Federal Service, FedQ, and Federal GLOBE.
- ii. Collaborate with USDA employee organizations.

### **Objective 5B: Build and maintain relationships with external partners.**

- i. Establish relationships with grass roots organizations building safe spaces in rural areas.
- ii. Encourage members to contribute educational panels and workshops at events such as the annual Summits for Out & Equal Workplace Advocates, Cultivating Change Foundation, Out in STEM (oSTEM), and Creating Change.

## **Use of Agency Facilities, Services and Resources:**

In accordance with DR-4250-251-01 Welfare and Recreation Organizations, EQUALITY USDA will utilize the following facilities, services and resources, subject to the availability of agency funds, work priorities, and other bona fide management considerations:

- Use of electronic mail system to notify member about meetings and organization activities provided such activity does not interfere with conducting official business. Use of agency-developed and controlled all-employee mailing lists to send message is not authorized.
- Use of designated bulletin boards and other area for display.
- Use of meeting space and incidental storage of organization supplies in USDA facilities.

## **Nondiscrimination Statement**

Equality USDA and its members are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

## **2018 – 2019 Executive Board**

President: Meghan Walter  
Vice-President: Kimberly Kelley  
Communications Director: Jeremy Wood  
Secretary: Dee Cummings  
Treasurer: Randi Johnson, 2019 (Diana Ramos, 2018)  
Partnership Liaison: Vacant



## About Us

Equality USDA is the employee resource group for LGBTQ+ employees and retirees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We were founded in 1994 as USDA GLOBE.



The mission of Equality USDA is to create a work environment at USDA that is free from discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Equality USDA seeks to make USDA a place where each employee can grow their own destiny, no matter who they are or whom they love.

## Contact Us

Email: [info@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:info@equalityUSDA.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EqualityUSDA/>

Instagram: @equalityUSDA

Visit us at <http://www.equalityusda.org>

[Join Equality USDA](#)

## Executive Board

President: Meghan Walter ([president@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:president@equalityUSDA.org))

Vice-President: Kimberly Kelley ([vp@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:vp@equalityUSDA.org))

Communications Director: Jeremy Wood ([communications@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:communications@equalityUSDA.org))

Treasurer: Adriana Campagna ([treasurer@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:treasurer@equalityUSDA.org))

Secretary: Dee Cummings ([secretary@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:secretary@equalityUSDA.org))

Community Outreach & Engagement Committee Co-Chairs:

Gabby Coughlin ([outreach\\_Gabby@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:outreach_Gabby@equalityUSDA.org)) and

AJ Limberger ([outreach\\_AJ@equalityUSDA.org](mailto:outreach_AJ@equalityUSDA.org))

# Pronouns in the Workplace

Have you noticed coworkers and customers including pronouns in their email signature and sharing them during meetings? If you'd like to learn more about this inclusive practice, and why folks are using pronouns in the workplace, join us on **[SCHEDULED DATE]** for a training session on Pronouns in the Workplace from Equality USDA, the LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group for USDA employees and retirees. This session will cover why folks are sharing their pronouns, best practices for doing so, and frequently asked questions about using pronouns in the workplace.

## Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- Group Agreements
- About Equality USDA
- Terms & Definitions
- Best Practices
- USDA Communication Policy
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Resources to learn more
- Audience Q&A



<b>DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION</b>		<b>Number:</b> DR-4020-251-01
<b>SUBJECT:</b> Welfare and Recreation Organizations	<b>DATE:</b> July 27, 2005	
	<b>OPI:</b> Office of Human Capital Management – Performance Management and Policy Division	

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Appendix A Declaration Statement for Welfare and Recreation Organizations

**1 PURPOSE**

This regulation establishes U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy dealing with formally established welfare and recreation organizations, other than labor organizations, as defined in Chapter 71, Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), Federal Service Labor Management Relations Statute, whose membership is comprised primarily of USDA employees. It does not address organizations or associations established outside of USDA, of which USDA employees may be members, or of formally recognized USDA associations of management officials and/or supervisors and other organizations as defined in Departmental Regulation (DR) 4020-251.

**2 SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATIONS**

With respect to all organizations formed to promote the social, welfare, and recreation interests of Department and agency employees, this regulation replaces Departmental Personnel Manual Chapter 252, Amendment 213, dated October 28, 1991 and Personnel Bulletin No. 252-1, dated March 11, 1999.



### 3 DEFINITIONS

- a **Welfare and Recreation Organization**, means a formally established organization, other than a labor organization or an organization recognized under DR 4020-251, made up primarily of USDA employees whose purpose is to promote the social, welfare, and recreation interests of Departmental employees. Membership may be open to all USDA employees or restricted to employees of a particular organizational unit(s) or geographical area. Examples of such organizations include USDA Employee Services & Recreation Association (ESRA), National Finance Center Employees Association (NFCEA), U.S. Horticultural Research Employee Association.
- b **USDA employee**, for the purposes of this regulation, means both Federal civilian employees as defined under 5 U.S.C. 2105, and USDA county committee employees, as defined under 16 U.S.C. 590h.
- c **Designated Official**, means a USDA official who is authorized in writing by the USDA Assistant Secretary for Administration, an agency Deputy Administrator for Management, or their designees, to formally recognize welfare and recreation organizations and to ensure their compliance with agreements authorizing the use of USDA real property in accordance with provisions of this regulation. Designated officials may also approve agreements authorizing use by such recognized organizations seeking to use USDA real property. For purposes of this regulation, designated officials will exercise their authority as follows:
- (1) For organizations whose majority of members are employees of a given agency, recognition and property use authorizations are granted by designated officials within that same agency. When a majority membership determination is not apparent, the designated official from the same agency as the organization's president will act on recognition and property use requests.
  - (2) For organizations whose membership is Department-wide (e.g. ESRA), the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration or designee will act on recognition and property use requests.

### 4 POLICY

In order to be afforded the use of agency facilities, services and resources as described in Section 6 of this directive, USDA welfare and recreation organizations must be formally recognized by a designated official as described in Section 3, in accordance with procedures set forth in Section 5. Recognition does not infer Departmental sponsorship, sanction, or endorsement of the organization or its activities. Moreover, because such organizations are not Federal entities, employees are not performing official duties while engaged in organization activities.

USDA managers must not bypass a labor organization with exclusive recognition rights as provided for under Chapter 71, Title 5, U.S.C. or comparable provisions of other laws, to meet with or negotiate with an association or employee organization on matters affecting conditions of employments of bargaining unit employees.

In order to be recognized, a welfare and recreation organization must:

- a Be a nonprofit organization whose membership is primarily made up of USDA employees;
- b Have a current constitution and bylaws, that includes a non-discrimination statement;
- c Adhere to relevant law and regulations pertaining to use of government property, ethics and conduct;
- d Not discriminate in terms of membership or treatment of its members because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program; and,
- e Not assist or participate in any strike, work stoppage or slowdown against the USDA, or advocate the overthrow of the constitutional form of government of the United States.

## **5 RECOGNITION PROCEDURES**

- a In order to be recognized as a welfare and recreation organization within USDA, and therefore become eligible for coverage under this regulation, the designated official must certify that the organization meets Departmental policy as contained in this directive. Procedures for certification are as follows:
  - (1) The president or duly authorized official of the welfare and recreation organization must submit a copy of the organization's constitution and bylaws along with a signed declaration statement, to the designated official. See Appendix A.
  - (2) The designated official will review the documents and initiate any necessary follow up action in order to determine whether conditions set forth in this directive are met.
  - (3) Upon determining such conditions are met, the designated official will issue a memorandum to the president of the welfare and recreation organization recognizing the organization under these regulations. Recognition will be conditional on the organization continuing to meet provisions of this directive.
  - (4) Each agency will maintain a listing of all requests made by welfare and recreation organizations as well as those associations recognized by designated officials within that agency.

- b After being recognized, the welfare and recreation organization must provide the designated official with any changes to their constitution, bylaws, the person holding the position of president, and contact information (i.e., name, address, phone number, and e-mail) for the president within 30 days after the change occurs.

## **6 USE OF AGENCY FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND RESOURCES**

- a Welfare and recreation organizations that are recognized in USDA may be authorized to use only the following facilities, services, and resources subject to the availability of agency funds, work priorities, and other bona fide management considerations:
  - (1) Use of meeting space and incidental storage of organization supplies in USDA facilities; and,
  - (2) Use of designated bulletin boards and other areas for display as consistent with building policy, USDA internal mail system, and electronic mail to notify its members about meetings and organization or group activities provided such activity does not interfere with conducting official business. Welfare and recreation organizations are not authorized to use agency-developed and controlled all-employee mailing lists to send messages.
- b Use of real property, either owned or leased by USDA, by welfare and recreation organizations for ongoing (i.e. more than 90 calendar days) organization-operated facilities may be permitted subject to applicable law, as well as USDA and General Services Administration regulations, including a requirement that they be deemed necessary for the health and efficiency of USDA employees. Agreements that set forth the terms and conditions for the use of USDA real property by facilities operated or sponsored by welfare and recreation organizations must be established in writing and address, at a minimum, the following topics:
  - (1) Specific location, size and description of planned use of the property;
  - (2) How the welfare and recreation organization will staff its facility located on USDA property, including whether it will use USDA employees and/or non-USDA volunteers or paid staff;
  - (3) Time period or duration of property use;
  - (4) Obligations on behalf of the agency and/or welfare and recreation organization for payment or provision of utilities, maintenance and cleaning of the property;
  - (5) Description of the services and benefits to be realized by USDA and its employees from the planned use; and,
  - (6) Contact persons and information within both the agency and the welfare and recreation organization responsible for administering the agreement.
- c Agreements authorizing the ongoing use of USDA real property must be reviewed from a security, legal, and property management perspective, and approved in advance by a designated official.

- d Welfare and recreation organizations that are authorized to operate ongoing facilities on USDA real property are not permitted to unilaterally contract with or permit other organizations to use USDA property for any purpose unless specifically authorized by a designated official.
- e Incidental use of USDA real property by welfare and recreation organizations for time-limited functions (i.e. less than 90 calendar days) may be authorized by a designated official provided such functions comply with law and USDA regulations, and the purpose is consistent with organization's purpose as expressed in its constitution and bylaws. Prior to authorizing use, the designated official should seek appropriate staff advice concerning issues related to agency liability, ethics and Federal property management.

## 7 ETHICS AND CONDUCT RULES

- a General. Some of the ethics and conduct rules particularly pertinent to welfare and recreation organizations are summarized in this section. At the outset, employees engaged in such activities must comply with all applicable statutes and/or regulations pertaining to ethics and conduct (including 5 C.F.R. 2635, Subpart H, Outside Activities) while participating in organization-related activities.
- b Use of Official Time and Administrative Leave. Welfare and recreation organizations are not Governmental entities. Therefore, in order to attend or participate in organization-sponsored events while on official time or administrative leave, employees must receive supervisory authorization based on a determination that the subject event or activity benefits agency programs.
- c Fundraising.
  - (1) On Federal property or on Official Time. Under 5 C.F.R. 950.102(d), agencies may establish policies and procedures applicable to solicitations conducted by employee organizations among their own members and for the benefit of welfare funds for their members. Such solicitations are not covered by the rules governing solicitation of employees on Government property for charitable donations as part of the Combined Federal Campaign. Accordingly, Federal employees who are members of welfare and recreation organizations may solicit money on behalf of their organization on Government property under the following conditions:
    - (a) Solicitations are made only to other members of the organization who are current Federal employees [solicitation of non-employee members and non-members on Federal property, under this authority, is prohibited];
    - (b) Solicitations are for organizational support (e.g., dues, see Section 8 below) or for the benefit of welfare funds for their members. See 5 C.F.R. 950.102(d);

- (c) Members do not directly solicit from an employee members whom they know to be their subordinates;
  - (d) All messages and notices communicate that the event is open only to members of the welfare and recreation organization; and,
  - (e) Any member of a welfare and recreation organization may provide to that organization a written request that the organization not solicit donations from that member, either on or off Federal Property and on official time, and that request kept in the files of that organization, and honored, until the employee provides to the organization a written rescission of the request.
- (2) Off Federal property and on personal time. The only rules that apply to the conduct of fundraising by Federal personnel under these circumstances are the fundraising rules set forth in 5 C.F.R. 2635.808(c). Accordingly, Federal employees who are members of welfare and recreation organizations may solicit money on behalf of their organization under the following conditions:
- (a) A Federal employee member, other than a special Government employee (as defined at 18 U.S.C. 202), may not solicit or accept donations from a person whom he or she knows to be a prohibited source within the meaning of 5 C.F.R. 2635.203(d) [However, a non-employee member could make such solicitation];
  - (b) A Federal employee member may not personally solicit funds or other support from another employee member who is his or her subordinate; and
  - (c) Solicitations are for organizational support (e.g., dues, see Section 8 below) or for the benefit of welfare funds for their members. See 5 C.F.R. 950.102(d).
- d Gifts-in-Kind Collections. Subject to case-by-case approval from the designated official, welfare and recreation organizations may collect gifts-in-kind such as food, clothing, and toys on government property to be used for charitable donations on behalf of the organization for the designated benefit of organizations listed in the current Combined Federal Campaign catalogue or to assist victims of specific emergencies or disasters as defined in 5 C.F.R. 950.102(a). See 5 C.F.R. 950.102(b).
- e Use of USDA Support. Welfare and recreation organizations are prohibited from using Government property, equipment, and administrative support services to engage in fundraising using a lottery or game of chance, lobbying efforts, or litigation-related activities in which the United States or USDA is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.
- f Use of Agency Name. An association or other employee organization may use the name of the Department or an agency in its name provided it is made clear that the association or organization is not an official organization of the Department or agency.

## **8 DUES AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

- a USDA assumes no responsibility for dues and other funds or in-kind gifts collected by welfare and recreation organizations.
- b It is recognized that welfare and recreation organizations may require members to pay dues as a condition of membership. Dues may be collected directly by the organization during non-duty hours, or employee members may set up individual financial allotments to a financial institution. Arrangements for such allotments must be made directly between the employee member and his/her servicing personnel office using a Direct Deposit Sign Up Form, SF 1199A.

**APPENDIX A**

**DECLARATION STATEMENT  
FOR  
WELFARE AND RECREATION ORGANIZATIONS**

Name of Welfare and  
Recreation Organization:

This Declaration Statement is submitted in accordance with Departmental Regulation 4020-251-1, in fulfillment of requirements necessary to receive recognition by the USDA.

On behalf of this Welfare and Recreation Organization, I declare the following statement to be true.

This Welfare and Recreation Organization:

1. Is a nonprofit organization whose membership is primarily made up of USDA employees,
2. Has a current constitution and bylaws (copy attached),
3. Adheres to relevant law and regulations pertaining to use of Government property, ethics and conduct,
4. Does not discriminate in terms of membership or treatment of its members because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, and
5. Will not assist or participate in any strike, work stoppage or slowdown against the USDA, or advocate the overthrow of the constitutional form of government of the United States.

\_\_\_\_\_  
President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Contact information: Name of President

Employing Agency

Mailing Address

eMail

Phone Number

Attachment: Constitution and Bylaws