

Department of Agriculture

At the [Partnership for Public Service](#), we believe that our future and our democracy depend on the ability to solve big problems—and that we need an effective federal government to do so. As part of the executive branch, federal agencies play a role in enforcing laws and policies to achieve these ends. This series presents a sampling of initiatives at specific agencies to demonstrate the many ways our government affects our lives and communities.

THE PEOPLE OF THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

Each of the roughly 81,000 career federal employees at the Department of Agriculture is committed to the mission of the organization: To provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our nation’s natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds and healthy private working lands. Veterans make up 15% of the department.¹

EMPLOYEES WITH VETERAN STATUS



TYPE OF WORK

Department of Agriculture staff conduct their responsibilities within a variety of subcomponents, that is, entities within the department. These include:



Farm production and conservation components such as the Farm Service Agency, which provides safety net programs to mitigate the significant risks of farming



Consumer-focused components such as the Food and Nutrition Service, which administers federal domestic nutrition assistance programs and connects scientific research to the nutrition needs of shoppers

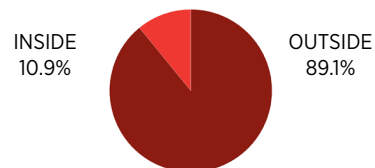


Natural resource management components such as the U.S. Forest Service, which sustains the health and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

WHERE THEY WORK

Agriculture employees work throughout the United States and around the globe. Nearly 90% of the career staff work outside the Washington, D.C., area.²

USDA CAREER STAFF WORKING INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE WASHINGTON, D.C., AREA



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“It is great when I hear from somebody that they have used my software and the data to assess a 50,000-acre [forest management] project or something larger. [Converting complex data into information which supports firefighters and protects habitats] gives me job satisfaction in a big way.”

Robert McGaughey, research forester for the U.S. Forest Service and [2024 Service to America medals* finalist](#) for career achievement.

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S COMMITMENT TO SERVE THE PUBLIC

THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT IN YOUR BACKYARD

The [Rural Utilities Service](#) funds quality, high-speed, affordable and reliable broadband infrastructure in rural America. Through its ReConnect Program, launched in 2018, the agency has invested more than \$1 billion to expand high-speed broadband infrastructure in rural areas and tribal lands.



SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

2023 Science, Technology and Environment Award

J. VINCENT EDWARDS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[J. Vincent Edwards](#) was chosen as a finalist for the 2023 Service to America Medals® Science, Technology and Environment award for his outstanding work. Edwards developed innovative and highly effective new cotton-based medical gauze and dressings for trauma and chronic wound patients that are now in use by hospitals and first responders.

¹ Data included in this section represents full-time, nonseasonal, permanent civilian employees of the executive branch as of February 2024. Unless otherwise noted, this includes the career members of the Senior Executive Service. For more up-to-date information, see <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/agency-performance-dashboard/profile/USDA/>

² The Washington, D.C., area includes the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. It excludes all other U.S. states and U.S. territories as well as federal employees living in foreign countries.

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