

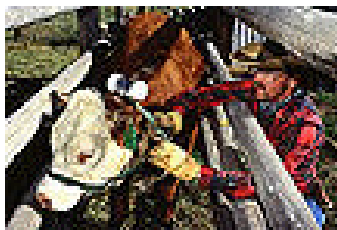


# Research, Education, & Economics

United States Department of Agriculture

## HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN

FY 2003 – FY 2007



# REE HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	4
HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN STRUCTURE.....	6
HUMAN CAPITAL KEY ELEMENTS, IMPROVEMENT GOALS, AND STRATEGIES .....	8
KEY ELEMENT 1: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND HUMAN CAPITAL PLANNING .....	8
KEY ELEMENT 2: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEPLOYMENT .....	10
KEY ELEMENT 3: ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM .....	12
KEY ELEMENT 4: TALENT MANAGEMENT .....	14
KEY ELEMENT 5: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING .....	16
KEY ELEMENT 6: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE .....	18
KEY ELEMENT 7: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT .....	20
KEY ELEMENT 8: DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT, EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS .....	22
KEY ELEMENT 9: LABOR AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT .....	24
PRESIDENT’S MANAGEMENT AGENDA COORDINATION .....	26
APPENDIX A: ACTION PLAN SUMMARY.....	28
APPENDIX B: CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY STATEMENT.....	34
APPENDIX C: IMPACTS ON WORKFORCE PLANNING .....	35
APPENDIX D: STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK .....	39
REE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES .....	40

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Research, Education and Economics (REE) agencies have prepared new strategic plans that will guide their efforts over the next five years. The foundation for the strategic plans is the Administration's Policy Report: "Taking Stock For The New Century" and the USDA Strategic Plan which lay out the long term view of the Nation's agricultural and food system. Effective implementation of the strategic plans will enable REE to meet the challenges articulated in the Administration's policy report. Our success depends in large part on a REE workforce that is highly motivated, skilled, flexible and technologically adept. Human capital planning is critical to ensuring that the REE workforce is capable of providing effective leadership on food, agriculture, research, resources and related issues.

The Human Capital (HC) Plan establishes a framework of policies and practices that will guide efforts in meeting these workforce needs. It contains interdependent improvement goals and actionable strategies that will transform how REE managers assess, plan for and respond pro-actively to human capital challenges and needs. The plan commits REE to the following Key Elements and Improvement Goals:

**Strategic Alignment/Human Capital Planning:** Institute a practice of systematic human capital management that is aligned with the USDA HC Plan, the REE and agency strategic plans and the budget.

**Workforce Planning and Deployment:** Conduct workforce planning to identify current and future skills gaps in order to efficiently and effectively deploy the REE workforce.

**Accountability System:** Ensure human resources programs are strategically aligned, effective and efficient, and in compliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and the President's Management Agenda (PMA).

**Talent Management:** Align recruitment and retention strategies with workforce planning efforts to enhance the effectiveness of these efforts and close position and competency gaps.

**Leadership Development and Succession Planning:** Ensure leadership continuity through comprehensive succession planning and leadership development programs, and opportunities.

**Knowledge Management and Employee Development:** Capture and share knowledge, and develop employee competencies to better perform the REE mission.

**Performance Management:** Improve individual and organizational performance.

**Diversity Management, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Civil Rights:** Ensure a diverse workforce with the necessary skills to accomplish mission and strategic goals.

**Labor and Employee Relations, and Conflict Management:** Develop and maintain effective working relationships with labor organizations.

The REE HC Plan is a single source for performance expectations, time lines and measures for meeting the human capital goals within USDA and REE; a mechanism to respond to the Department regarding progress towards meeting human capital goals; and a vehicle to examine and ensure greater business efficiencies and cross-agency collaboration. The Plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness as guidance on maintaining a workforce capable of meeting the challenges to the farm and food, production, and environmental systems.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this REE Human Capital (HC) Plan is to help managers make smart investments in the current and future REE workforce.

REE faces human capital challenges now and in the future. Like other Federal agencies, REE's workforce is aging and many employees are reaching retirement eligibility. Over the next five years, a large number of REE executives and managers, as well as scientific, technical, and administrative employees, will be eligible for retirement. In addition, REE's work is becoming more complex, requiring the workforce to be skilled and trained in new ways of doing business, including finding new responses to continuing threats to the nation's homeland security. REE customers expect first class service that requires employees to be collaborative and to share information better and faster. Retaining a competitive advantage in the U. S. food and agricultural sector depends on attracting, developing and retaining top talent in leadership positions and crucial scientific fields.

The HC Plan was developed in response to the following human capital imperatives:

To ensure stated strategic goals are met, REE will lay the foundation for effective human capital management through on-going human capital and workforce planning efforts.

To minimize the impact of leadership attrition and respond to new leadership competency requirements, REE will focus on leadership development and succession planning.

To meet the mission, REE will develop strategies to attract scientists, economists, statisticians, and other mission area experts to maintain REE as a leader in world-class research, education, and information. REE will also develop strategies for recruitment and retention of technical and administrative staff to support the mission area experts.

To ensure REE improves its citizen-centered structure and meets the goals of a market-based, results-oriented government entity, workforce planning activities will be coordinated with the Competitive Sourcing, eGovernment, Financial Management, and Budget and Performance Integration initiatives from the President's Management Agenda.

To ensure a flexible, effective workforce, REE must undertake training and cultural change efforts. Areas of focus include: improving technology skills; improving customer service; and improving managerial business skills.

To ensure the REE workforce is inclusive, and REE benefits from cultural diversity, REE agencies will maintain a strong civil rights program that communicates and reinforces the importance of cultural diversity and invites inclusiveness.

The REE HC Plan contains Key Elements and Improvement Goals. These Elements and Goals are supported by Actionable Strategies and Performance Measures. Appendix A is the action

plan summary. The REE Civil Rights Statement is found in Appendix B. This HC Plan has its foundation in the REE and agency strategic plans, and is driven by External, Internal, and Cross-cutting Mission Drivers. These issues and events which impact REE workforce planning are discussed in Appendix C. A summary of the REE Strategic Framework is found in Appendix D.

REE Mission Area management has built a solid supporting infrastructure of planning, communication, collaboration and accountability to successfully implement the HC Plan. By carrying out their defined roles and responsibilities, REE executive leadership, human resources staff, agency managers, and employees can successfully implement the Plan. The human capital strategies that have been identified will help REE agencies excel in their work and serve their customers well.

The four agencies which make up the REE Mission Area are:

- Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES)
- Economic Research Service (ERS)
- National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

## HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN STRUCTURE

Strategic management of human capital is necessary to ensure REE's human resources are effectively utilized in accomplishing the REE mission. The HC Plan is intended to be flexible enough to accommodate circumstances not only as they are today, but also as they unfold in the future.

The REE HC Plan development team was established in February 2003. Team members included human resources professionals and one representative from each of the REE agencies. The team first defined human capital imperatives based on analysis of the REE and agency strategic plans, cross-cutting mission drivers, and internal and external drivers. Actionable strategies, priorities, milestones, and key measures were developed to guide REE in achieving its human capital goals.

The REE HC Plan will be updated on a regular basis in relation to changes in the Strategic Plan, new initiatives, etc. The REE HC Plan is a single source for performance expectations and measures for meeting human capital goals, a mechanism to respond to the Department, OPM and OMB regarding progress toward meeting human capital goals, and a vehicle to ensure business efficiency and a reduction in redundant systems.

**Accountability:** REE will adopt the USDA Accountability System to measure progress toward achieving effective human capital goals.

**Components:** The REE HC Plan is based on the framework of the USDA HC Plan. This framework has three key objectives: 1) Conducting strategic planning and alignment; 2) Implementing integrated human resources systems; and 3) Creating a high-performance work culture.

The REE HC Plan includes the nine Key Elements outlined in USDA's Human Capital framework. They are:

- Strategic Alignment and Human Capital Planning
- Workforce Planning and Deployment
- Accountability System
- Talent Management
- Leadership Development and Succession Planning
- Knowledge Management and Employee Development
- Performance Management
- Diversity Management, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and Civil Rights
- Labor and Employee Relations, and Conflict Management

Each Key Element is presented in terms of improvement goals, actionable strategies, and current initiatives. Timelines and measures to assess progress are found in the Action Plan Summary, Appendix A.

**Roles and Responsibilities:** To successfully implement the REE HC Plan, everyone, from top management to front-line employees, must be committed to the plan and its goals. Following is a brief outline of roles and responsibilities:

Secretary/Subcabinet	Maintain and communicate commitment to the Department HC initiative Provide leadership and resources for human capital efforts
USDA/OHRM	Provide leadership in development of human capital planning Provide oversight and training for agency HC Plan efforts Provide a mechanism for sharing best practices Manage accountability for the Department's HC Plan progress Provide regular reports to the Secretary, OPM, and OMB
Agency Management	Integrate human capital planning with business processes Participate in the development, implementation, and oversight of human capital plans and initiatives Demonstrate commitment, support and leadership in human capital planning Communicate commitment to human capital investment and the achievement of human capital goals to all employees Work with the Human Resources Division and Civil Rights Staff to identify and resolve impediments to HC Plan goals and achievements
Human Resources Division	Develop HC Plan with REE specific initiatives Facilitate the implementation of human capital actions/strategies Work with agency management to identify and resolve impediments to HC Plan goals and achievements Report to USDA on progress toward goals achievement
Employees	Share information and knowledge on human capital issues with other employees and management personnel Provide feedback and suggestions to management Develop their technical skills Self-assess leadership capabilities and work toward obtaining leadership skills



## HUMAN CAPITAL KEY ELEMENTS, IMPROVEMENT GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

The following sets forth the Key Elements, Improvement Goals, and Actionable Strategies of the REE HC Plan.

### **KEY ELEMENT 1: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND HUMAN CAPITAL PLANNING**

Human capital goals are embedded in the REE strategic and workforce plans. Human Resources Division (HRD) provides human resources services to all four agencies. The HR Director serves on the USDA Human Resources Leadership Council, and with the other USDA HR Directors discusses, reviews and enacts human capital initiatives at the Department level. A number of other employees serve on USDA committees and task forces working on human capital and related initiatives. Recognizing that agency managers and supervisors are responsible for investment in human capital, HRD will assist agency management in implementing human capital initiatives.

***Improvement Goal 1: Institute a Practice of Systematic Human Capital Management that is Aligned with the USDA HC Plan, the REE and agency Strategic Plans, and the Budget***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*\*) Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Develop a Human Capital Plan for the REE Mission Area.

Support USDA human capital initiatives. Participate in collaborative efforts by providing representatives for working groups and sharing best practices.\*\*\*

Use the HC Plan in alignment with the strategic plan and in conjunction with the budget to set priorities for resource allocations and funding requests.\*\*\*

Implement a HC Plan communications strategy, including use of the web, to ensure stakeholder participation in and understanding of their responsibilities related to the HC Plan.\*\*\*

Participate in USDA forums on human capital to share best practices, exchange ideas, and hold skill building workshops in order to further the human capital endeavor. Develop similar workshops within REE.\*\*\*

### ***Current Initiatives:***

The REE agencies have undertaken a number of activities in the human capital arena that form a basis for continued success in the human capital effort. All REE agencies have undergone reorganizations or restructuring and have developed integrated business plans to better carry out their mission while continuing to better serve their customers. ARS Administrative and Financial Management has established customer service training requirements and customer service standards that serve as a model for doing business. NASS has integrated its human capital program into normal business processes and has made changes to its awards program,

career path plans, and employee development plans. ERS, in response to the revolution in information technology and the advent of the worldwide web as the primary communications tool, restructured its administrative staff to capture the types of duties that are needed now and in the future. A number of statistical assistant positions, whose duties were obsolete, were abolished and replaced by positions focused on web/data management, and quality control. This forward-looking initiative served not only to modernize the workforce, but to benefit the employees as well, since the newly created positions were classifiable at higher GS grade levels.

CSREES underwent major reorganization in March 2002. The objectives were to (1) improve customer service, (2) clarify staff roles and responsibilities, (3) consolidate management and clarify points of agency entry, and (4) align agency structure and goals. Paramount among the goals was to continuously improve the working relationships among university partners and others, as CSREES delivered an ever-increasing portfolio of funded programs. This reorganization has led to a more efficient organization. For example, a key management objective was to establish the Information Systems and Technology Management (ISTM) unit. CSREES manages a number of databases and the new structure provided for integration of these different databases into one structure that standardized procedures, eliminated duplication and consolidated resources. The ISTM also is responsible for the implementation of an electronic proposal submission and grants award system that is critical to improving customer service and meeting federal reporting requirements.

All REE agencies continue to review each vacant supervisory position to determine whether the position can be redeployed to front-line program work. During 2003, ARS, through the realignment of management units to better accomplish program objectives, redeployed two research leader positions to full time bench research positions. ARS also recently established the Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO) by consolidating three separate information technology units at Headquarters. This consolidation will provide for better coordination of information management and technology services both now and continuing into the future.

## **KEY ELEMENT 2: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEPLOYMENT**

In September 2002, USDA conducted a preliminary Skills Gap Analysis of 21 of their most critical occupational series (a Skills Gap Analysis shows projected deficiencies in competencies and resources to adequately perform the work of a unit). The analysis was based on series population, mission criticality, recruiting difficulty and homeland security responsibility, and included an inventory of required staff, forecasted gaps based on historical accession and separation rates, and projected gaps over a five-year period. This Skills Gap Analysis reflected the relatively high percentage of USDA employees 50 years and older and a projected retirement rate 55% above “normal” for the next five years. A number of the REE mission-critical occupational series were included in the analysis.

### ***Improvement Goal 2: Conduct Workforce Planning to Identify Current and Future Skills Gaps in Order to Efficiently and Effectively Deploy the REE Workforce***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*\*)Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Institute workforce planning in the REE agencies based on the USDA model.\*\*\*

Conduct a Skills Gap Analysis in each REE agency.

Develop and implement workforce restructuring plans, as needed, that incorporate competitive sourcing solutions and resource savings related to eGovernment efficiencies.\*\*\*

### ***Current Initiatives:***

The CSREES Executive Council, with Human Resources representatives, periodically meets to discuss priorities for short-term, intermediate, and long-term staffing needs. This allows the agency to (1) operate as one integrated organization with staffing aligned with program responsibilities, (2) integrate planning and recruitment across organizational units, (3) review key support positions to ensure consistency across units, and (4) discuss recruitment and retention strategies. The criteria for staffing priority program areas include (1) centrality of program to mission of CSREES and USDA, (2) complexity of program development and delivery, including stakeholder activity and multi-agency involvement, (3) the level of current and likely program funding and the type of funding mechanism, and (4) array of staff in same and related areas currently in CSREES.

The ARS is currently conducting five competitive sourcing studies, covering three management units in the Beltsville Area and two units in the Midwest Area. ARS also has conducted a skills gap analysis of a mission-critical occupation, Veterinary Medicine. The results of the analysis showed a critical shortage of qualified candidates for ARS Research Veterinary Medical Officer positions. As a result, ARS developed the ARS Veterinary Medicine Doctoral Program in

conjunction with five universities (the program is a competitive training opportunity).

The first announcement was published August 18, 2003, with the expectation that the first student will begin classes in January 2004. Program plans call for the training of two students per year for the next 5 years.

For many years NASS has utilized long-term training programs in specialty areas (mathematical statistician, computer science, etc.) in conjunction with universities to train employees in these fields to enhance their careers and eliminate projected employee shortages in these areas.

ERS recently conducted a workforce/skills gap analysis of mission-critical positions and is currently developing strategies for closing those gaps and preparing the workforce to be able to carry out the ERS mission in the future.

When workforce planning capability is further developed, REE will focus on sharing and promoting best practices among its agencies. Although the mission and size of each of the REE agencies vary, human capital practices that work efficiently in one agency will be reviewed for applicability to the other agencies.

### **KEY ELEMENT 3: ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

The development of the HC Plan, along with goals, strategies, time lines and measures directly linked to strategy, is the first step in developing a comprehensive standardized accountability program. It is important to fully address effectiveness, efficiency and compliance with applicable rules and regulations. REE will follow the Department's Accountability Program since all USDA agencies are responsible and required to report to it. Each year the Department will designate program areas to be reviewed and evaluated for compliance as well as program effectiveness.

REE will supplement the USDA Accountability Plan with other measures to formulate a comprehensive system that establishes standards and provides useful assessment tools for the agencies. REE already has identified key human resources services and established qualitative and quantitative customer service standards.

***Improvement Goal 3: Ensure REE Human Resources Programs are Strategically Aligned, Effective and Efficient, and in Compliance with Applicable Laws, Rules, Regulations, and the President's Management Agenda***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*\*)Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Systematically evaluate agency programs using the processes, tools and standards found in the USDA Accountability Plan.\*\*\*

Provide timely accountability reports to USDA on progress in meeting the Accountability Plan goals and actions.\*\*\*

Continue to utilize Human Resources Management Evaluation (HRME), Human Capital Management Assessment (HCMA), Consolidated Administrative Review and Evaluation (CARE) and other programs that provide human resources improvements and data needed for planning.

***Current Initiatives:***

The REE agencies have a history of reviewing human capital management for effectiveness and compliance. NASS has conducted Human Resources Management Evaluations (HRME) of their office entities for many years with excellent human resources results. ARS has performed Consolidated Administrative Review and Evaluations (CARE) reviews of their field offices and individual HQ units for approximately the last 10 years. The CARE program's purpose is to review all administrative processes and procedures, including human resources. Recently ARS developed a Human Capital Management Assessment (HCMA) program that gathers information and analyzes data on a number of human resources-related and employee-related items. It is designed to provide management with the requisite information to improve human capital management. CSREES and ERS have performed special studies (usually tied to reorganization, realignment or functional work changes) that have targeted the human resources needs of their agencies and employees.

## **KEY ELEMENT 4: TALENT MANAGEMENT**

Because of projected retirements, competition from private industry, and increasingly complex work, and the need for new technology skills, the REE agencies must employ aggressive recruitment and retention strategies. Recruitment strategies include use of recruitment incentives, repayment of student loans, and availability of flexible work schedules and work/life programs. Important among retention strategies are employee empowerment and self-actualization, trust, and new and aggressive use of work/life programs.

### ***Improvement Goal 4: Align Recruitment and Retention Strategies with Workforce Planning Efforts to Enhance the Effectiveness of these Efforts and Close Position and Competency Gaps***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*\*)Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Develop and align recruitment and retention plans with workforce planning and deployment plans to focus on mission-critical positions as well as existing and potential competency gaps.\*\*\*

Fully utilize the Senior Scientific Research Service (SSRS) program.

Continue to use, promote and explore the use of human resources flexibilities to recruit and retain employees.\*\*\*

Support legislative changes to eliminate impediments in the government human resources processes.

Continue to use senior program managers and supervisors in recruiting activities, especially those focused on meeting diversity goals and filling mission-critical positions.\*\*\*

### ***Current Initiatives:***

The REE agencies have been very active in striving to hire and retain quality employees. Each of the agencies has a professional recruitment plan which best serves its needs, whether it involves hiring primarily at the entry level, hiring at the journeyman level and/or hiring at the managerial level. REE uses all available HR flexibilities to recruit a diverse, highly qualified work force: USDA DEMO authority, Delegated Examining authority, and the use of standing registers, as well as merit/alternative merit promotion. Categorical ratings, as provided in the Department of Homeland Security legislation, will be looked at for implementation in CSREES, ERS, and NASS, as another tool supervisors can use to fill vacancies.

The agencies have targeted colleges, professional associations and other professional contacts with information regarding their mission, positions, benefits, etc. and maintain these contacts even in times of low hiring activity. REE will take into account the results of Skills Gap Analysis to assist in identifying future recruitment needs and critical position skills for mission-critical positions as well as technical, administrative, and clerical positions.

Existing hiring flexibilities such as superior qualification appointments, recruitment incentives, relocation bonuses, student loan repayments, career intern programs and other initiatives have been used to help recruit and retain talent. In FY 2002, ARS reported the Department's only use of repayment of student loans as a recruitment incentive (2 incidents). REE agencies will continue utilizing these HR flexibilities and communicate their existence and benefit to the organization to all REE managers. In addition, REE utilizes and promotes the use of teleworking, flexible work schedules, transportation subsidies, pre-tax parking benefits, and childcare tuition assistance (planned for 2004) in all of their recruitment and retention efforts. REE also plans to continue to push for changes in government hiring regulations that can foster more streamlined hiring and job classification processes.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 established within USDA a special category for distinguished world-class scientists, the Senior Scientific Research Service (SSRS). The program benefits ARS and ERS, allowing the USDA Secretary to recruit, appoint and pay world-class research scientists without regard to the pay limitations of Title 5 U. S. Code. The SSRS will boost REE's competitive ability to attract and retain high-caliber research scientists. ARS recently received approval from the Secretary to recruit and fill two positions using this authority.

## **KEY ELEMENT 5: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING**

Commitment to developing leaders and having a plan for replenishing the pipeline of supervisory and managerial talent is key to REE's success. Like most other Federal agencies, a substantial percentage of our SES, managerial and supervisory workforce is eligible to retire within the next 5 years. REE will take aggressive steps to ensure there is an adequate pool of trained employees eligible to assume leadership positions as they become available.

### ***Improvement Goal 5: Ensure Leadership Continuity through Comprehensive Succession Planning and Leadership Development Programs and Opportunities.***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*\*)Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Communicate best practices within REE and from other agencies/private industry to all managers and other employees.

Develop comprehensive succession plans for leadership positions in each agency.\*\*\*

Utilize OPM-developed core competencies in leadership development programs. Include the leadership function in the workforce planning and analysis process to identify agency specific position and competency requirements.\*\*\*

Develop and/or use OPM and other leadership development programs, to prepare employees for leadership so that REE has a competitive internal pool of candidates to fill future leadership vacancies.

Encourage the use of mentoring programs, coaches, and assessment tools such as career mapping and 360 degree feedback assessment.

### ***Current Initiatives:***

The REE agencies have been and will continue to support the USDA SES Candidate Development Program and other Department coordinated leadership ventures including the Congressional Fellows program, the Brookings Institute, the Federal Executive Institute (FEI), the National War College, etc., supplementing the programs with other leadership development offerings that provide participants with unique and valuable learning experiences. REE will also continue to support and utilize Intergovernmental Personnel Act exchanges or assignments and will support the Department as it develops a tri-agency (with EPA and DOI) rotational intern program. In addition, REE will continue to develop and support agency leadership development programs while continually looking for opportunities to upgrade and expand our course offerings.

REE will continue to formalize succession planning within the agencies.



NASS has built a comprehensive succession plan of training and work assignments that prepares employees for top management positions and/or technical positions in the agency.

ARS has developed Leadership Evaluation and Development (LEAD), Professional Excellence and Knowledge (PEAK) and Path to Leadership Program (PLP) to facilitate succession and leadership planning for both administrative and scientific leadership positions. PEAK is for executive development, PLP is targeted to help employees decide if they would like to pursue a leadership position, and LEAD is targeted to develop leaders among administrative management employees.

CSREES employees participate in the annual ESCOP/ACOP Leadership Development program to better understand CSREES administered university-based programs. In its thirteenth year, the program is sponsored by the land grant university system and is designed to enhance and shape the future of the system by developing future leaders for the food and agriculture system.

Along with the Department, the REE will identify best practices within its agencies and make them available to other agencies within and outside the REE. REE managers will be kept informed of best practices of other USDA and Government agencies as a method to ensure that all REE managers have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. Where feasible REE program ideas and training courses will be shared with other agencies to save costs and streamline processes.

## **KEY ELEMENT 6: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT**

REE leadership is committed to providing opportunities for employee development, including formal classroom training and eLearning. A key ingredient for the future is aligning training strategies to mission accomplishment. Of equal importance, based on the projected high retirement rates for employees in all occupations, is the ability to retain and share knowledge.

There will be increased emphasis on coaching and mentoring in order to close critical competency gaps. The advent of eLearning with its ability to train many employees in a cost effective manner provides REE the opportunity to further expand and build upon its knowledge base.

### ***Improvement Goal 6: Capture and Share Knowledge and Develop Employee Competencies to Better Perform the REE Mission***

**Actionable Strategies:** (\*\*\*)Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Actively participate in the USDA eGovernment and eLearning content and knowledge management effort, implementing the Department strategy when complete.\*\*\*

Participate in and support implementation of USDA eGovernment enterprise efforts in establishing a learning management strategy, implementing when available.\*\*\*

Assess the impact of current training strategies on closing competency gaps and meeting business goals.\*\*\*

Develop or procure employee development programs and/or tools that lend themselves to the development of core competencies needed in mission-critical positions.

Develop methods to capture the knowledge of employees who retire, so that new employees will have access to that knowledge base and the retirees' years of corporate history.

### ***Current Initiatives:***

Each agency has excellent employee development programs focused on upward mobility and advancement, technical training, supervisory training, and executive development. Development ventures in customer service, program management and financial management also contribute to REE's efforts in employee development and closing the skills gap. ARS recently announced a competitive training program, the ARS Veterinary Medicine Doctoral Program, which is designed to ensure the availability of a workforce equipped to conduct research in veterinary medicine. This program is described in more detail under Key Element 2.

REE will closely monitor the proposed USDA Learning Management System (LMS) and other eLearning and 21 eGovernment ventures. REE will also monitor progress of the USDA content management team which is focused on developing an enterprise system leading to improvements

in organizing, accessing, and using information, documents, and corporate knowledge. This effort is critical to capturing the knowledge of employees retiring from mission-critical positions.

## **KEY ELEMENT 7: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

REE's performance management program success will be measured by the extent to which it:

Aligns employee and team performance expectations with organizational strategic plans including performance goals and objectives;

Provides for employee performance evaluation that focuses on results and objective measures of performance based on established performance goals and plans;

Uses the performance management process as a tool to improve continuous two-way communication of organizational, team, and employee performance objectives and accomplishments.

Linking performance to organizational goals and missions remains a challenge. The Department recently began building on this process by linking the Honor Awards categories to USDA strategic goals and completed its first appraisal period for the SES employees linking the performance management system to mission outcomes and business results. The key for REE is to establish the same linkage to all managers' and supervisors' performance standards and eventually to all employees' standards.

### ***Improvement Goal 7: Improve Individual and Organizational Performance***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*\*)Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Review existing performance appraisal plans to ensure linkage to organization mission accomplishment for all employees, starting from the SES (link subordinate standards to SES standards) and cascading down the organization.\*\*\*

Assess the effectiveness of the performance management system (performance appraisal, awards and recognition programs, etc.) to ensure the systems recognize performance distinctions.\*\*\*

### ***Current Initiatives:***

USDA SES performance standards include the requirement that executives seek employee feedback and make improvements based on that feedback. The standards were implemented for the appraisal period beginning October 2002. NASS conducts a climate survey of all employees every other year with the most recent survey conducted in 2001. After the survey is completed implementation teams are formed to review survey recommendations and develop improvement strategies if needed. ARS and CSREES have recently completed all-employee surveys. These surveys meet the requirements of the USDA SES performance criteria.

## **KEY ELEMENT 8: DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT, EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

A diverse high-performing workforce and a discrimination-free workplace are REE priorities. To achieve these priorities REE is firmly committed to increasing the diversity of its workforce, providing equal opportunity and ensuring civil rights. REE management works in collaboration with its Human Resources Division, its Civil Rights Staffs and diversity committees, and the Department to build and maintain a diverse, high-performing workforce and create a discrimination-free workplace.

### ***Improvement Goal 8: Ensure a Diverse Workforce With the Necessary Skills to Accomplish Mission and Strategic Goals***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Ensure that Diversity, Civil Rights and EEO are properly aligned with and incorporated, as appropriate, into all strategic planning and human capital initiatives and annual performance plans.\*\*

Provide the Department with the requisite information to facilitate their compilation and disclosure of data required to assess compliance with civil rights, EEO, diversity and related reporting requirements.\*\*

Incorporate diversity goals in workforce planning while continuing to focus on attracting, hiring, developing and advancing applicants and employees who are members of under represented and socially disadvantaged groups.\*\*

### ***Current Initiatives:***

REE implements policies, programs, and activities created and promoted at Department level. In addition, REE is executing and pursuing a broad range of supporting activities to further the tenets of these programs. These include hosting diversity conferences, conducting civil rights assessments, conducting civil rights training, publishing newsletters and related material, and numerous other forums to achieve diversity, civil rights, and EEO objectives.

Each year ARS provides science internships for both high school and college students, and recently entered into a partnership with Hispanic-serving Miami-Dade County Community College, its first association at the junior college level.

All four REE agencies participated in the 2003 Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS) program, and annually support interns through the 1890 Scholars, HACU Summer Internships, and other student programs.

CSREES established a Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) in August 2000 to aid employees in fostering awareness and acceptance of differences and to explore how the differences might be

used as assets to enhance work relationships. The annual Administrator's Diversity Award was established in 2001 to recognize CSREES staff accomplishments in achieving positive organizational outcomes in support of diversity, pluralism, and related innovation in program design and implementation. For the past year the CSREES intranet has a site entitled "Holibrations" that highlights the holidays and celebrations in the U. S. and around the world to encourage a broader understanding and acceptance of diversity in the agency. CSREES periodically offers a two-day multi-cultural awareness and appreciation course with a goal of 100% agency participation.

In an effort to promote equal opportunity and workforce diversity, NASS has provided financial support to the Southern University's Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunity Unit (BAYOU) Program to encourage black and other minority students to pursue an agriculture-related curriculum. In addition, NASS annually conducts a very aggressive recruitment effort at a variety of colleges and universities under the USDA Summer Employment Program to identify and hire minorities, women and individuals with disabilities to work nationwide for the agency as student assistants. NASS also supports undergraduate students selected under the USDA National Scholars Program being implemented at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and at Hispanic-Serving Institutions. These students are offered summer and intermittent employment opportunities and permanent employment with NASS upon successful completion of four-year degree graduation requirements. Finally, NASS is implementing, on a continuing basis, a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Puerto Rico (Mayaguez Campus) as part of an initiative to increase the existing level of diversity in the agency.

## **KEY ELEMENT 9: LABOR AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

About 15% of ARS employees are covered by bargaining units. Consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements, ARS will utilize the conflict resolution process to resolve labor/employee relations conflicts.

### ***Improvement Goal 9: Develop and Maintain Effective Working Relationships with Labor Organizations***

***Actionable Strategies:*** (\*\*\*)Denotes USDA HC Plan Strategies)

Develop a Labor-Management Relations (LMR) Strategic Plan.

Incorporate basic labor management relations and labor contract administration training into new supervisory or related training programs.\*\*\*

Continue to educate managers and supervisors on union contracts, dealings, etc.

Participate in the development of and promote a standardized electronic dispute record system for the Department.\*\*\*

### ***Current Initiatives:***

Labor and employee relations training is included in supervisory training provided to the REE agencies. Included is information intended to foster the appropriate use of conflict resolution techniques that maintain union employees' legal rights under the established dispute resolution system.

## **PRESIDENT'S MANAGEMENT AGENDA COORDINATION**

It is imperative that the REE HC Plan is coordinated with the other four President's Management Agenda (PMA) initiatives: competitive sourcing, financial management, expanding electronic government, and budget and performance integration. The following summarizes the alignment areas.

### **COMPETITIVE SOURCING**

The Department developed a Competitive Sourcing Plan in May 2002 and established a working group in October 2002 to ensure consistent application of competitive sourcing throughout the USDA. The REE is represented on this working group and has its own competitive sourcing working group. Five studies have been initiated. In addition, REE will consider competitive sourcing during workforce planning efforts or major restructuring efforts.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Improved financial management will be accomplished by educating managers on sound financial management practices and holding managers accountable in their program area. The HC Plan outlines an action strategy for developing programs and tools that address crosscutting competency development needs such as financial management. Additionally, the goal of aligning the performance appraisal system with organization mission accomplishment will support accountability related to financial management.

### **EXPANDING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT**

The Department published its eGovernment Strategic Plan in June 2002 and has developed integrated eGovernment strategic plans. Each of the REE agencies has developed plans that focus on improvements in electronic service delivery for employees, external organizations, and citizens. Two distinct eGovernment areas relate directly to human capital: knowledge management and employee development. A Department human capital action strategy requires content and knowledge management systems to address human capital issues such as capturing retiree knowledge. In addition, human resources representatives are working on the development of an enterprise-wide learning management system under this eLearning initiative. REE will be able to track courses, direct and indirect training costs, attendance, types of training, facilities, etc. There are a number of other eGovernment activities that can be considered to increase the efficiency of program and administrative staff.

### **BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE INTEGRATION**

Strong human capital management such as skills building, workload analysis, and improved accountability will aid Budget and Performance Integration. The employee development goal specifying career planning based on mission requirements will support developmental efforts in this area. A Department initiative to develop a workforce planning model that includes workforce analysis and is directly aligned with agency mission, goals and objectives, will benefit this area and will be adopted or modified for use in REE.



The HC Plan aligning the performance appraisal system with mission accomplishments will support accountability related to budget and performance integration. The new SES appraisal system already links performance to mission accomplishment and strategic goals.

**APPENDIX A**  
ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

REE HC Plan implementation is based on the time frames developed by the Department. Time frames for actionable strategies defined specifically by REE are based on REE resource, budget, and other constraints. Progress on the key performance measures discussed in the Department HC Plan are reported to the Department on a quarterly basis and are an integral part of the REE action strategies.

The process for monitoring, analyzing and evaluating performance measures is described in the USDA Human Capital Accountability Plan. REE provides quarterly reports to USDA and ongoing tracking, monitoring, and evaluation of the REE HC Plan implementation.

**Key Element 1 - Strategic Alignment and Human Capital Planning**

Goal 1: Institute a practice of systematic human capital management that is aligned with the USDA HC Plan, the REE and agency strategic plans, and the budget.

Measure 1: The REE Mission Area has developed human capital strategies that are aligned with the REE and agencies' Strategic Plans or the Annual Performance Plans by FY 04.

Actionable Strategies:

Develop a Human Capital Plan for the REE Mission Area

Timeline: Start – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 03      Complete – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04

Support the USDA Human Capital initiatives. Participate in their collaborative efforts by providing representatives for working groups and the sharing of best practices.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 03      Ongoing activity

Use the HC Plan in alignment with the strategic plan and in conjunction with the budget to set priorities for resource allocations and funding requests.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04      Ongoing activity

Implement a human capital communications strategy, including use of the web, to ensure stakeholder participation in and understanding of their responsibilities related to the HC Plan.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 04      Ongoing activity

Participate in USDA forums on human capital to share best practices, exchange ideas, and hold skill building workshops in order to further the human capital endeavor. Develop similar workshops within REE. \*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 03      Ongoing activity

## **Key Element 2 - Workforce Planning and Deployment**

Goal 2: Conduct workforce planning to identify current and future skills gaps in order to efficiently and effectively deploy the REE workforce.

Measure 2: All REE agencies have developed a workforce plan, including a review of structure, by the end of FY 04.

Actionable Strategies:

Institute workforce planning in the REE agencies based on the USDA model.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY 03      Complete – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04

Conduct a Skills Gap analysis in REE.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 04      Ongoing Activity

Develop and implement workforce restructuring plans, as needed, that incorporate competitive sourcing solutions and resource savings related to eGovernment efficiencies.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04      Complete - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 07

## **Key Element 3 - Accountability System**

Goal 3: Ensure REE Human Resources programs are strategically aligned, effective, and efficient, and in compliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and the President's Management Agenda.

Measure 3: Percent of REE agencies showing progress on the Human Capital Standards for Success.

Actionable strategies:

Systematically evaluate agency programs using the processes, tools and standards found in the USDA Accountability Plan.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 03      Ongoing activity

Provide timely accountability reports to USDA on progress in meeting the Accountability Plan goals and actions.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 03      Ongoing activity

Continue to utilize HRME, HCMA, CARE, and other programs that provide human resources improvements and data needed for planning.

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 03      Ongoing activity

## **Key Element 4 - Talent Management**

Goal 4: Align recruitment and retention strategies with workforce planning efforts to enhance the effectiveness of these efforts and close position and competency gaps.

Measure 4: No REE mission-critical occupations with significant skills gaps (less than 15%) by FY 07.

Actionable strategies:

Develop and align recruitment and retention plans with workforce planning and deployment plans to focus on mission-critical positions as well as existing and potential competency gaps.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04      Complete - Ongoing activity with review each FY 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr

Fully utilize the SSRS program.

Timeline: Start – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr FY 03      Ongoing Activity

Continue to use, promote, and explore the use of human resources flexibilities to recruit and retain employees.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - FY 02      Ongoing Activity

Support legislative changes to eliminate impediments in the government human resources processes.

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04      Ongoing activity

Continue to use senior program managers and supervisors in recruiting activities, especially those focused on meeting diversity goals and filling mission-critical positions.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – FY 02      Ongoing activity

## **Key Element 5 - Leadership Development and Succession Planning**

Goal 5: Ensure leadership continuity through comprehensive succession planning and leadership development programs and opportunities.

Measure 5A: Retention rate of employees in career GS-15 and SES positions.

Measure 5B: Ratio of employees (GS-15 and above) enrolled in or having completed a managerial development program or SESCDP program versus SES career positions.

Actionable strategies:

Communicate best practices within REE and from other agencies/private industry to all managers and other employees.

Timeline: Start - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 04      Ongoing activity

Develop comprehensive succession plans for leadership positions in each agency.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04      Complete – 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY 04

Utilize OPM-developed core competencies in leadership development programs.

Timeline: Start - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 04      Complete - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 05

Include the leadership function in the workforce planning and analysis process to identify agency specific position and competency requirements.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Ongoing activity with review each FY 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr

Develop and/or use OPM and other leadership development programs to prepare employees for leadership so that REE has a competitive internal pool of candidates to fill future leadership vacancies.

Timeline: Start – 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY03                      Ongoing activity

Encourage the use of mentoring programs, coaches, and assessment tools such as career mapping and 360 degree feedback.

Timeline: Start – 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY03                      Ongoing activity

### **Key Element 6 - Knowledge Management and Employee Development**

Goal 6: Capture and share knowledge and develop employee competencies to better perform the REE mission.

Measure 6A: Responses to the Government-wide Survey (GWS) Leadership and Knowledge Management questions are above the 3.00 indicator level.

Measure 6B: All of the REE agencies' knowledge management strategies are in place by FY 07.

#### Actionable Strategies:

Actively participate in the USDA eGovernment and eLearning content and knowledge management effort, implementing the Department strategy when complete.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - FY 03                      Ongoing activity

Participate in and support implementation of USDA eGovernment enterprise efforts in establishing a learning management strategy, implementing when available.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – FY 03                      Ongoing activity

Assess the impact of current training strategies on closing competency gaps and meeting business goals. \*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Ongoing activity

Develop or procure employee development programs and/or tools that lend themselves to the development of core competencies, needed in mission-critical positions.

Timeline: Start - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Complete - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 07

Develop methods to capture the knowledge of employees who retire, so that new employees will have access to that knowledge base and the retirees' years of corporate history.

Timeline: Start – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Complete - 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY 04

## **Key Element 7 - Performance Management**

Goal 7: Improve individual and organizational performance.

Measure 7: Responses to OPM's Government-wide Survey questions on performance culture are at or above the 3.00 indicator level.

Actionable Strategies:

Review existing performance appraisal plans to ensure linkage to organization mission accomplishment for all employees, starting from the SES (link subordinate standards to SES standards) and cascading down the organization.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Ongoing activity

Assess the effectiveness of the performance management system (performance appraisal, awards and recognition programs, etc.) to ensure the systems address performance distinctions.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Complete - 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY 04

## **Key Element 8 - Diversity Management, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Civil Rights**

Goal 8: Ensure a diverse workforce with the necessary skills to accomplish mission and strategic goals.

Measure 8A: Eighty (80) per cent of diversity goals met by FY 04.

Measure 8B: Development of diversity outreach strategy completed by FY 04.

Actionable Strategies:

Ensure that diversity, civil rights, and EEO are properly aligned with and incorporated, as appropriate, into all strategic planning, human capital initiatives and annual performance plans.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Ongoing activity

Provide the Department with the requisite information to facilitate their compilation and disclosure of data required to assess compliance with civil rights, EEO, diversity and related reporting requirements.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr FY 03                      Ongoing activity

Incorporate diversity goals in workforce planning while continuing to focus on attracting, hiring, developing, and advancing applicants and employees who are members of under represented and socially disadvantaged groups.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04                      Ongoing activity

## Key Element 9 - Labor and Employee Relations and Conflict Management

Goal 9: Develop and maintain effective working relationships with labor organizations.

Measure 9A: Response to applicable Government-wide Survey (GWS) question is at or above the 3.00 indicator level.

Measure 9B: Usage rate of, and percentage of disputes resolved through, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program.

Actionable strategies:

Develop an LMR Strategic Plan

Timeline: Start – 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY 03

Complete – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 04

Incorporate basic labor management relations and labor contract administration training into new supervisory or related training programs.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - FY 03

Complete – 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr FY 05

Continue to educate managers and supervisors on union contracts, dealings, etc.

Timeline: Start - FY 03

Ongoing activity

Participate in the development of and promote a standardized electronic dispute record system for the Department.\*\*\*

Timeline: Start - 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr FY 03

Complete 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr FY 04

**APPENDIX B**  
CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY STATEMENT

The REE embraces the Department's civil rights policy of building and maintaining a dynamic and effective workforce inextricably linked to creating and sustaining:

High-quality, high-performing, diverse workforce, and

A workplace environment free from discrimination, harassment, intolerance, and reprisal.

Underlying the accomplishment of our goals of service to customers and efficient management are principles providing, ensuring, and promoting a workplace where employees and applicants for employment are:

Treated equitably, fairly, and justly,

Assured equal opportunity for development and advancement,

Encouraged and supported to reach their full potential in the performance of their job, and

Recognized and rewarded for their achievement and the value of their contributions to ensuring customers experience excellent customer service and equal access to all programs.

Our civil rights policy prohibits reprisal, harassment, or discrimination based on age, color, disability, national origin and race, and where applicable family, parental or marital status, political affiliation, religion, sex (gender), sexual orientation, and public assistance status.

REE is dedicated to strategic, administrative, advocacy, change management, and employee developmental actions in line with the HC Plan, that do not adversely affect or disproportionately impact any group of employees or applicants.



## APPENDIX C IMPACTS ON WORKFORCE PLANNING

The four agencies (ARS, CSREES, ERS and NASS) that comprise REE are responsible to the American people for a variety of programs and services as outlined in their mission statements.

The many REE employees (permanent, temporary, seasonal, intermittent and volunteer) and the numerous state and university cooperative employees and other non-Federal associates make it possible for REE to carry out its missions and programs. The breadth of our agencies' missions and programs requires a diversity of skills. An extensive field structure enables REE to provide services directly to our customers.

REE employs approximately 11,000 permanent employees in addition to a large number of temporary, intermittent, and student employees. Demographics of the REE workforce pose a significant challenge: the average age of our employees is nearly 45 years; less than 10% of the workforce is under 30 years of age. Over 40% of our workforce is expected to retire in the next 10 years, and there are fewer skilled workers entering the replacement pipeline. The average REE grade is GS-9 and as in most other government agencies, our most populous grades are GS-9 through GS-12. However, expected retirements in this grade range over the next decade, coupled with the anticipated smaller number of applicants who qualify in disciplines needed by REE agencies suggests a potential replacement shortfall. The HC Plan will aid in the development of specific steps to ensure that highly skilled personnel will be available in critical REE positions in the future.

REE in the past has followed the USDA direction in significant streamlining and de-layering efforts in its workforce. These initiatives have streamlined our program delivery and administrative structures. However, limited budgets, effective technology use, and competitive sourcing still impact our workforce and staffing levels. The HC Plan will address these issues. The most distinguishing feature of our workforce is its occupational diversity. REE employs individuals in over 150 different occupations. Our workforce is most concentrated in the occupations which drive our mission: agricultural research, economics, statistics and education.

**Technical Expertise In Scientific Disciplines** REE is the primary scientific based mission area within USDA. REE includes the ARS which is the principal in-house science research agency dedicated to solving high-priority agricultural problems through research and information access and dissemination. CSREES provides leadership to identify, develop and manage Federal programs to support university-based and other institutional research, education and extension projects and programs. Through fair, efficient and effective administration of Federal financial assistance, CSREES implements awards and agreements of approximately \$1 billion annually. These funds help train the next generation of food and agricultural scientists and educators. The need for a workforce that is highly trained in the most advanced and current agricultural and scientific knowledge is paramount to fulfillment of our mission.

**Knowledge Of Economics and Statistics** In REE, ERS economists provide economic analysis to develop and evaluate legislative, regulatory and policy options and measure the success or failure of agriculture as it relates to farmers, consumers and the general public. The knowledge

of agricultural commodities, credit principles, financial analysis, production, marketing and trade issues is now and will remain vital to the success of the mission.

NASS provides the basic agricultural and rural data needs for USDA and for the citizens of the United States, both those working in agriculture and those living in rural communities. By objectively providing timely, accurate and usable statistical information and services, public officials and private interests are able to make informed decisions. NASS' statistics not only keep those involved with America's biggest industry well-informed, but they also provide the basic information necessary to keep agriculture markets stable and efficient, and help maintain a level playing field for all users of agricultural statistics.

**Information Technology (IT) Skills** Investment and improvement in IT systems are critical to accomplishing the missions of the REE agencies as our employees and our customers increasingly rely upon computer technology as a tool to efficiently and effectively perform their work. Adopting new technologies and advancements using eGovernment and eCommerce business processes change the way we perform our work and conduct our business with the public.

## **EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL DRIVERS**

The REE HC Plan supports our most important resource: PEOPLE (our employees). Our current strategic planning efforts indicate a variety of external and internal drivers that impact human capital planning. These are:

### **External Drivers**

Department-wide focus on the Administration's Policy Report, *Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for the New Century*

Federal laws and congressionally mandated actions including the Government Performance and Results Act

Heightened national focus on Homeland Security

USDA Human Capital and Strategic Plans

Citizen and congressional interest focused on civil rights issues

Changing citizen expectations of the role of Government including more collaboration and citizen involvement

Human Resources regulations and statutes including classification systems, the competitive recruitment process, recruitment and retention incentives, and other policies and regulations

## **Internal Drivers**

A potential significant loss of leadership due to projected high rate of Senior Executive Service (SES) and management employees eligible for retirement and projected dearth of replacements

Implementation of major policy initiatives, such as the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 involving close coordination and tight deadlines

Funding constraints and competing requirements within the human resources area and REE as a whole, notably other facets of the President's Management Agenda (PMA), such as Competitive Sourcing

REE Strategic Plan and related policy initiatives

The potential for downsizing coupled with the need for new knowledge, skills and abilities

Shift to an enterprise IT system and other automation to better support the REE mission

These internal and external drivers help to reinforce the types of human capital initiatives that must be in place to ensure that we have the right number and skill mix of employees in our workforce. They will also help to determine the impact of technology on the types of skills we need and how our work can be performed more efficiently while continuing to be more responsive to the customer.

## **CROSSCUTTING MISSION DRIVERS**

It is clear that several crosscutting issues will drive the Department's and REE's mission activities and delivery, and significantly impact human capital management. These drivers are:

### **Scientific Research**

The competitive future of the U. S. food and agriculture sector depends on a continuing flow of scientific research and analysis. Discovery and applied research in biotechnology and genomics lay the foundation for meeting the challenges of global food security. Genetics and molecular biology hold promise to reduce recurring problems of plant and animal disease, invasive species, post-harvest losses and food-related problems with human health. Developing commercially feasible renewable resources, food-based health products and manufacturing products, creates new demand for agricultural products and helps reduce dependence on foreign sources. To meet these challenges, REE must be prepared to educate, recruit and retain top talent in these critical scientific disciplines.

### **Global Markets**

Globalization of markets and culture has enormous implications for the food and agricultural system and those who work in it. We can no longer think of U. S. agriculture as being confined to what occurs within our nation's borders. It is critical that REE employees see this bigger

picture and understand how to structure and implement REE programs to recognize the challenges and opportunities presented by the global markets.

### **Homeland Security**

The increased vulnerability of U. S. agriculture to accidental and intentionally introduced animal and plant pests and pathogens has required the establishment of a nationwide network of diagnostic facilities to reinforce and supplement the Federal facilities of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). To meet this requirement, the USDA through the joint efforts of CSREES and APHIS has established a unified Federal-State network of public agricultural institutions to identify and respond to high-risk biological pathogens in the food and agriculture system. Funding provided by CSREES to universities will help train some of the workforce needed to address this issue. The unique and critical USDA role in helping protect against threats to farms, ranches and the American food supply will affect how REE recruits, trains and deploys its workforce.

### **Natural Resources**

The management of our public and private natural resources must result in long-term strategies that yield maximum sustainable benefits that satisfy the breadth and variety of social concerns. A major goal of REE is to provide scientific information to community-based forest and range resources decision makers with policy alternatives for sustainable resource management. In addition, the REE must expand the scientific knowledge and technology base to enhance the productivity of our natural resources. Specifically, the REE agencies perform the research, education, extension, forecasting and economic analysis activities needed to provide producers and their advisors with the management practices and tools that will allow sustainable food, feed and fiber production while protecting our soil, air and water resources.

### **Farm Security and Rural Investment Act Implementation**

REE must have a capable and well-trained staff that can quickly perform research, develop policy and programs, and implement and direct the programs authorized in the Act. In addition the REE will need to continue to improve service delivery requiring more collaboration and information sharing among our agencies, and other USDA and Federal agencies.

## **APPENDIX D STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

The HC Plan was developed to institute policies and practices that will ensure the REE Mission Area and its agencies will have a workforce capable of carrying out its mission. Following are the mission, vision, values, and strategic goals for REE.

**MISSION:** REE provides and supports the creation of the science-based knowledge required by USDA and its customers. This includes providing the sound scientific basis for informed decision making for all who contribute to the U. S. food and agricultural system. The REE promotes the well being of American agriculture, related industries, consumers, and rural residents by:

- A. Creating basic research knowledge at the frontiers of biological, physical and social sciences,
- B. Applying knowledge in innovative ways to address problems and issues,
- C. Promoting commercial development and timely transfer of new knowledge and technologies to users,
- D. Educating and informing public and private decision makers, and
- E. Strengthening higher education to develop the skills of the evolving workforce.

**VISION:** REE is recognized as the premier organization that provides the best available science and information to its customers to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving food and agriculture system.

**VALUES:** USDA and REE values are based on the values articulated by President Bush to Federal employees on November 19, 2001. They are:

We must always maintain the highest ethical standards. In addition to asking, "What is legal?" we must also ask, "What is right?"

We must confront the tough problems, not avoid them. We are here to serve the public's long-term interests, not just to apply quick, short-term fixes.

We must remember that political and career employees are part of the same team. People do not separate them, and neither do I. We all have high expectations from our Government. To meet these expectations, we need to work together.

We should always remember that every dollar we spend is the taxpayers money. People worked hard to earn it, we should spend it wisely and reluctantly.

## **REE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Goal 1: Enhance Economic Opportunities For Agricultural Producers**

- 1.1. Provide information, knowledge and education to help expand markets and reduce trade barriers.
- 1.2. Support international economic development and trade capacity building through research and technical assistance.
- 1.3. Provide the science-based knowledge and technologies to generate new or improved high quality products and processes to expand markets for the agricultural sector.
- 1.4. Provide science-based information, knowledge and education to facilitate risk management by farmers and ranchers.
- 1.5. Contribute science-based information, analysis and education to promote the efficiency of agricultural production systems.

### **Goal 2: Support Increased Economic Opportunities And Improved Quality Of Life In Rural America**

- 2.1. Expand economic opportunities in rural America by bringing scientific insights into economic and business decision making.
- 2.2. Provide science-based technology, products and information to facilitate informed decisions affecting the quality of life in rural areas.

### **Goal 3: Enhance Protection And Safety Of The Nation's Agriculture And Food Supply**

- 3.1. Reduce the incidence of food borne illnesses through science-based knowledge and education.
- 3.2. Develop and deliver science-based information and technologies to reduce the number and severity of agricultural pest and disease outbreaks.

### **Goal 4: Improve The Nation's Nutrition And Health**

- 4.1. Improve human health by better understanding the nutrient requirements of individuals and the nutritional value of foods.
- 4.2. Promote healthier food choices and lifestyles.
- 4.3. Enhance understanding of economic and social issues and outcomes leading to improved food program management and customer service.

### **Goal 5: Protect And Enhance The Nation's Natural Resource Base And Environment**

- 5.1. Provide science-based knowledge and education to improve the management of forests and rangelands.
- 5.2. Provide science-based knowledge and education to improve the management of soil, air and water resources to support production and enhance the environment.