EEO and Diversity
Transcript

Welcome and thank you for standing by. All participants are on listen only until the question and answer session of today's conference. To ask a question, press star one. Unmute your phone and I will introduce you. This call is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may discontinue -- disconnect at this time. If you are unable to log into the net, you may view the slides through your e-mail. Please continue to try to log onto the net if you so choose. Space is currently being freed up. I would now like to introduce Mr. Tony John.

Think you, Jennifer. Thank you for all of you who have been so patient. We have had some technical problems. That sometimes is the nature of the beast with these virtual trainings. I appreciate your patience.

Housekeeping items before we get into the training that I go over each time. One, if you are participating in this training in a room full of other people and only one of you assigned into the meeting, if you could send Allison Savage -- send her an e-mail giving her the e-mail addresses of all the people who participated in your one login so she can give credit to everyone who participated in the training.

These trainings are going to be uploaded to AgLearn by the end of January. Also, you will get a survey, a training participant survey that is going to come to you within four business days. That is how also when you will get credit for the training. You don't get credit for the training right away when it is done. It takes a few days to process all of the people who signed in. Just be patient for that.

Today we are going to be talking about EEO and Diversity. It's going to be a wild ride. We have an agenda. We are going to take a refresher break. We are going to start off talking about Federal EEO Laws. Then we will go from there. What does potential discrimination look like in the Federal government?

And then I really want to talk about what are the things that supervisors need to do because of the Federal EEO laws. Not just what do the laws mean, but what do you need to do because of the laws. If there is an EEO complaint, we will talk about what that process looks like. We will finally talk about affirmative action and diversity in the Federal workforce.

Just to let you know, with all these trainings, I do a pole set -- I have a whole set of my trusted managers when I have a story to tell, or I turn to these managers who are my friends, especially if I want a pooled good experience. I asked them when it comes to EEO and diversity, what are the things in their opinion that are a must share.

In some ways, at least for me as a consultant, I don't necessarily consult with these types of things. I had a few managers echo this point to me that as a manager, they needed to know what the laws were and what they were supposed to do because of the laws. That was what protected them from making any

sort of errors that would lead to problems. I have avoided for other trainings going over all of the laws and legislation. I think sometimes that can be boring.

To a virtual training audience I really hate to be -- hesitate to be boring. So many of my trusted friends says it is the law that people need to know that we are going to go over that. Also, I tried to take the laws and even the other human capital things we talked about and try to come up with a checklist of practical things that managers need to always be aware of that you can feel comfortable knowing when it comes to EEO and diversity, I'm doing what I should be doing.

The first law when it comes to equal employment opportunity -- it happened in 1963, equal pay act said that people doing the same work have to get paid the same, whether they are male or female. It is something that needed a law in 1963. You can't pay people differently if they are male or female. Even though we have had this law on the books since 1963, as a country there are still some things we should be aware of this. There definitely is a debate on whether or not men and women are paid equally for the same work. As a manager, we have to be aware that.

The next big law is the biggest one, the civil rights act of 1964. It created six protected classes. These are you cannot be treated differently than others based on your membership in one of these groups, your race, your color -- that is the wording from the act which means your skin color -- your national origin, your sex or gender, the religion you belong to, and you cannot be treated differently if you have either spoken up and raised a question based on your membership in these groups or even if you have spoken on behalf of others. You should not fear reprisal because you brought these issues up of race and national origin or religion.

These are the initial six protected groups. Then things were added to it. In 1967 they passed the age discrimination in employment act. We cannot discriminate against people because of their age. Initially the act said it is for people over 40, but younger than 65. Once you were older than 65, we were still able to discriminate against you. That's my lame joke for the day. The retirement age, that was the reason. You can't discriminate on people because of their age. That cap is gone.

In 1973 - 1990, the rehabilitation act -- you probably heard of that, the Americans with disabilities act. You're not allowed to discriminate in the workplace against people because they have a disability. By law, we have to make reasonable accommodations unless it presents undue hardship to our agency or sub agency.

I need to define those things. What is a reasonable accommodation? There are two main reasons. Reasonable accommodations are just changing the job or the structure surrounding the job so that people can still do the work even though they belong to one of these protected classes that potentially creates a complication. You can have a reasonable accommodation where you modify work schedule, you provide help or interpreters.

People usually think about reasonable accommodations when it comes to disabilities, but also general managers are supposed to consider reasonable accommodation when people are part of a certain religion. There are religions where there are certain points in the day where they have devotional

periods, where they pray or meditate. The timing of it is very important. As long as it doesn't keep people from being able to do the critical parts of their job, we are supposed to be making reasonable accommodations. Also optional holidays, even permission to wear religious clothing.

I will give you an example of my team. We have a member of the team who is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They are sometimes called Mormon. He feels very strongly he does not work on Sunday. He avoids doing any work on what he considers to be the Sabbath. Occasionally on my team we have to travel on Sunday to do work projects.

My supervisor has tried to make accommodations either to send him out a date early or to try and avoid those projects, or to make sure our customers know that he has that -- that there is a type of accommodation we made for him. He is a fantastic worker. Making that accommodation has only strengthened our team, enabling us to keep him on the team.

The key is, is it reasonable? Did it cause us undue hardship making that accommodation for him? Undue hardship would be an action that requires significant difficulty or expense when considering relation to factors such as the size of your agency or sub agency, what resources you have to put towards the sort of things. When you think about my coworker, the accommodations made for his religion there is potential problems when you only have seven consultants on our team.

My manager decided that we have the resources to accommodate that. If we did not have the resources, the people, his reasonable accommodation might border on undue hardship and it might be reason that we would not be able to do it and so we would have to explore potentially other options.

Your resources as a team and agency dictate what is reasonable. If you are in the mix of a choice of whether or not to make an accommodation, it is very wise to bring in centralized HR folks and executive managers to help you make an informed decision about what is reasonable. That way you can make a better decision on that. Having him on our team is a bonus because he brings a diverse opinion and diverse background to our team that we would not get otherwise.

When it comes to discrimination, we are not allowed in the federal government to discriminate -- really, no one is allowed to discriminate, but when it comes to discrimination, the federal government -- we're talking about is intentional, unintentional denying people their equal opportunity for employment or advancement due to their belonging to a protected group.

People can be discriminated -- discrimination -- the dictionary definition -- this is what this discrimination look like to the federal government, what do managers when people typically are accusing managers of discrimination, this is what they are talking about.

Based on employees belonging to six protected groups -- now we have eight. Have to add age and disability. Based on the employee's belonging to one of these eight groups, we are not allowed to discriminate or treat them differently as they go through their employment or investment. Now, what might that look like?

These are the areas where the manager -- you need to have your antenna up, thinking about and being sensitive to the potential that people may be feeling like they are getting discriminated against. I'm using the word feeling. It's not necessarily the people are being discriminated against. As a manager you want to be able to preemptively nip those feelings in the bud so it does not blossom into a real problem. Here are the areas again. Have your antenna up. The first area is applicant testing. It is important that we designed those in a way that they do not systematically disadvantage those of a protected class. Also, when you are doing your interviews -- very related to the applicant testing -- it is important that people never feel like you prefer females to males or you dislike people from certain racial backgrounds.

We want to make sure we are sensitive to that. When you are looking at their tests, your interview questions, put that in your criteria of successful questions. It only takes a look over. In my experience, it's useful to have a second person go over these questions and check them for quality and ask is there a potential for EEO concerns.

When it comes to these blue areas, these are all the pre-hiring areas. When going through the selection process you want to make sure there is nothing in your process that is a disadvantage to others, to people in a certain protected class.

These red items are potential things that could come up. The blue items are things you need to be sensitive about people applying for jobs. Red items are for your employees on your team already. When it comes to classification, consistently and equal pay, it's important that no one feels you are systematically going to one group and giving them promotions or classifying their positions and leaving out those of other groups.

Is important that all of this is based on the work that is getting done. When it comes to staffing, we want to be careful about only giving promotions or temporary details or assigning to folks -- are we giving it to people who quote, look like us. That's a quick path to go down the discrimination path. We want to make sure there isn't any pattern in our reassignment. Being able to do the job should be our number one priority.

Finally, are people being selected for training to move up the ladder? We need to be careful about who gets to go to those trainees and has development. And how we evaluate performance. At the end you want to make sure that when we are doing our performance evaluations that people are being rated according to the work getting done and not according to other criteria.

Finally, are we fair about conduct? Our people from protected classes, whatever class they belong to, that they are treated fairly and equally when it comes to conduct issues?

Lastly, -- lastly, the green areas are ones where people are leaving their team. When people are resigning, you want to make sure you are treating everyone equally. Even things like retirement -- we have retirement parties. We want to make sure we treat people equally and we are not just rewarding people who are like us. When it comes to reduction in force, reductions in force are increasingly done through automated systems.

Lastly, the retirements. We want to look at the pattern of retirements and make sure we don't have a disproportionate amount of people from protected classes leaving because of anything we are doing.

These are the areas where you've got to have your antenna up when it comes to being a good federal manager.

When it comes to discrimination, there are two different types. There is disparate treatment and disparate impact -- disparate treatment is where individuals feel they are treated differently because they are belonging to a certain group and disparate impact is when full groups of people are impacted systematically.

In general, but I would say is that managers are usually more concerned with disparate treatment when it comes to the individual treatment of their folks, but disaparate impact -- for example, your recruitment strategy -- I will give you an example.

My former manager's manager, his recruitment strategy, he is a federal career internship program which now doesn't exist. He would go to the same well over and over again. He felt like they came out with the right skill set, they came out with the right expectations about pay, they were sticking with OPM.

Long-term, that's an issue. When you are always going to the same recruitment pools that can lead to situations where your workforce is not representative of the public that you serve. Also, the program really -- in some ways, OPM disbanded the program because it was leading to disproportionate not hiring of veterans, which presents a big problem. Anyway, that is an example of a program -- there is a disparate impact. It desperately -- disparately impacted a group of people who were not given hiring opportunities for this team because they were not even considered in the recruiting process -- policies and strategies.

Of course, an unintentional aspect of discrimination. In my experience, most managers who are dealing with discrimination issues, it typically is unintentional. It is rare that there are intentional issues. That is why you need to have your antenna up about the sinks. -- these things.

What are the practical things a manager can do in order to keep themselves on the straight and narrow, and keep from getting hurt or getting accused or having a complaint against them?

Four major areas managers should be thinking of. You cannot discriminate. All decisions should be job-related. You should protect your employees and foster a positive work environment. It's important that you handle complaints actively and quickly so they do not feel -- employees when they make a complaint -- that you don't feel like they are avoiding it -- you are avoiding it or causing problems.

In some ways when we don't act swiftly, there is an assumption made by employees that are silence or inaction -- there's a lot of stuff on our plate. Think strategically about workforce diversity. The principle to keep in mind, is your workforce representative of the public that you serve? Also, the area in which your team is based out of.

For example, if you are the manager of a virtual team and it just so happens every the year -- over the year everyone from your team is from a protected class, but you have a virtual team, which means you can pull from anywhere in the country, that is a sign you should think strategically about the pool of people where you are pulling applicants for, and maybe being strategic and deliberate about your team's diversity. We will talk at the end of this training about the diversity in a lot of ways.

People think about diversity, they think about the office and they think about other things. I think a lot of organizations pay a lot of lip service, but they don't actually do it. There are laws and regulations about EEO and affirmative action, and diversity is the end goal of those regulations. There are reasons for diversity. There are business reasons. Not trampling on Americans' rights, but [INDISCERNIBLE] We will talk about that later.

We are going to talk briefly about the EEO complaint process. I hope this doesn't happen to anyone, but it does happen. Sometimes unfairly or fairly, it does happen. There is an informal complaint process that happens within the federal government. When it comes to these processes, you should definitely solicit the help of centralized HR. While the burden is on you to do these things, there are people there to hold your hand.

The first step in the informal complaint process is that the employee contacts the EEO office and says there is a problem. There is a rule that this contact has to happen within 45 days of the event they are concerned about.

Then the counselor explains EEO counseling and alternative dispute resolutions to the employee. This is a general complaint process. USDA Rural Development may have other parts they have added into their process. Then the counselor attempts to resolve the problem. Again, the counselor -- they hold a final interview with the employee, no more than 30 days after the counselor was first brought in.

If that is taking on -- the employee can ask for an extension of 60 days after that. It can go as long as 90 days. Then you can ask for informal resolution.

At that point, the employee has 15 days from whenever the formal resolution comes to fruition, they have 15 days to create and -- create a formal complaint. One of the things that I see increasingly utilized in the federal government is alternative dispute resolution.

What ADR looks like, it is a less formal attempt to resolve issues. You bring in an arbitrator who comes in and makes a decision that is binding for the agency and employee. The individual can appeal. The agency cannot. It is binding for the agency.

If the individual does not like what they ADR decides, they can appeal the decision and go through the formal complaint procedure. Again, a third-party comes in, someone unassociated with the agency. These people are trained to intervene, trained on the sorts of situations. They take the disagreement and try to come up with mutual ground. The beauty of ADR is that there aren't as many rules that restrict what they can use as a resolution. It is much less resource intensive than a formal complaint.

This is one of the tools in your tool chest. Definitely explore what ADR resources are available to you. Work with your HR staff to access that.

The formal complaint process is more intense and longer. There are more steps. The employee files a formal complaint within 15 days of the informal complaint being resolved. The EEO decides -- EEO office decides whether to accept the complaint. If they EEO office except the complaint, the investigation begins. The EEO office investigates the complaint.

At the end of that investigation -- the investigation needs to be completed within 180 days -- the agency submits to the employee the file that pertains to their investigation.

Within 30 days of that, the individual can request either a hearing before an EEO administrative judge, or they can request a final agency decision.

The process can stop right there and there can be a final decision by the agency, or typically they go to the EEO judge. The judge then issues an order within 40 days of receipt. You can see how these processes do not just come and go. -- just come and go. There's a lot of time that goes into these.

The formal complaint process, if you can nip it in the bud, it will use a lot of -- lot less time and resources if you can take care of the problem either preemptively, going through a checklist of your employees, or just going through the alternative dispute resolution.

Once the judge -- the final judge makes her decision. The employee can appeal that decision. If they don't like the decision the EEOC makes, the employee can make a filing with the U.S. District Court.

All of these have timelines of usually three months, six months. This whole process really can take -- I have heard of it taking years to go through. It is something we should be thinking about how to not go through this process.

I gave you things to consider, have your antenna up. As one of the handouts for this training, I haven't EEO -- have an EEO checklist read -- checklist. If you are wondering, I'm pretty unsure about what I need to be doing to make sure I'm doing what I can on the front end to protect my team and do what I need to do to make sure my folks feel safe when it comes to EEO rules, here is a checklist. You will notice a lot of in things we already talked about in other training. You can download this from the handouts section of the training. Are the knowledge, skills, and ability in your job application, are they based on the job? Are you focused on job-related requirements?

Once you go through yes or no, what do you do to foster a positive work environment? I have the materials that have been used. I really like this checklist. It says here under foster a positive work environment, employees are told clearly and frequently the discrimination will not be tolerated. I say frequently is something to consider. In my experience, you don't need to bring this up on a weekly or monthly basis. At least on a yearly basis or even twice a year, it is important to reiterate or do something that communicates to your folks that poor behavior when it comes to discrimination will not be tolerated. In my experience, a yearly basis is oftentimes frequent enough. It depends on your team and the type of work environment you have there.

These are some things to think about. Are you assigning your work fairly and equitably and in a way that reflects the skills people have, and not their belonging to certain protected classes? Are you sensitive to cues that are an indication that there's already a problem? Maybe there's a problem in your team that you haven't caused big you need to deal with because the buck stops with you. A lot of these indications are indications of some kind of trauma, maybe personal issues. These are things that you are seeing them, and as a manager, it is one of your responsibilities to see if there is something you can do to help. It is not so you can know about the personal problems of other people. It is so you can accomplish your agency's strategic mission and you can help people and retain people instead of losing them, if there is a problem. When you are approached with EEO complaints, what is your response? This is a checklist. I thought it was useful. Police my experience as a manager and working with other managers, the question comes up, am I doing everything I need to do and I'm not exactly sure what I should be doing. If you are doing anything, you can sleep better at night.

You can take your EEO concern off the table in little bit and feel more comfortable that you're not going to have as many problems. Is it going to protect you from any problem ever happening? No. That is not the key. Does it hedge your bets if you go through that checklist and you feel you are doing pretty well? Your hedging your bets that you have a healthy work environment and people are less likely to file EEO complaints. We are going to get back together. At 2:08 -- 2:09 Central time, we will get back together and start the training up. I want to give you a bathroom and BlackBerry break, and get to some of the questions that have been asked in our Q&A function. We will take a break until 2:09 p.m. central time. Have a good break.

Alright. Back to the grind.

At the end of the training, they will be more questions and we will have time for questions and answers, but I want to talk a little bit about affirmative action and diversity. I just have a question, actually, and it is, kind of, a loaded question, but it is very much anonymous. Nobody knows how anyone else answers, but how would you categorize your feelings about affirmative action in the federal government? I know, it is not a great question.

There are a lot of ways you can interpret this, but I am just curious to know. I will let everyone else -- I will hold off on letting everyone else. I want to get more answers. We have had about 20 brave souls answer the question out of 90-plus. 30 brave souls. Again, I promise you, there is no way for me to know who has answered what.

Interestingly enough, only a few of you responded negatively, and, you know, I think, a lot of times people have had a bad experience, where they say they have a negative view of affirmative action. I think one of the keys is also -- affirmative action is one of those things that definitely get ties up in -- gets tied up in political battles, and when it comes to federal managers, I think it is important for people to realize that in the federal government, somebody has to be qualified to do the work in order to ever be hired. So, no one should ever be hired who is not able to do the work, and the burden is on us as managers and centralized HR folks to make sure that our selection process is good enough to do that.

We should always have the role of hiring people who are good at the work. Affirmative action, then mean in that context -- that means in that context, because no one is hired who is not able to do the job, in that case we are thinking deliberately about having a diverse workforce that is representative of the public that we serve. Often times, at least in my experience, oftentimes affirmative action is not something that necessarily comes up in our selection process, as much as it does in our recruitment process. I have seen it much more effective recruitment strategies that agencies have.

If you are a manager, however much sway you have in the recruitment strategy, that you are part of, that your son -agency -- sub-agency has, you are team has, that is when it affects you. I would say, in general, when managers do not feel they are being forced to bring up someone that is not able to do the job, then they do not have any problem with affirmative action at all. Again, this goes back to a we talked about last week -- having good position discussions and good, valid, questionnaires that help you screen out the good, the better, and the best, and help managers feel confident that they are bringing on good employees, no matter what their protected classes are.

Also, if you have a diverse strategy of going to different school, where you are student interns, or pathway programs, or recent graduate programs, that is a great way to bring in diverse employees, as opposed to always bringing in the same types of employees, like a manager's manager. Affirmative action dictates that all agencies are required to execute recruitment strategies that stop discriminatory practices. They correct the affects of past discrimination, and that we hire and retain a workforce that is representative of the public. So, there is actually a form that your centralized HR folks -- I know they have to work with it. It is called management form 7 -- I am terrible.

I should have this on the side. They have to have this -- fill that information out, and sometimes you probably get data calls about people on your team, and potentially it is something that is only handled through your human resources information system. Maybe you do not even know, but as an agency, you have to do all of this. You have to create a recruitment strategy. I think managers can, oftentimes, help this by giving ideas of good places to go to start their recruitment, and I think managers can have a really big impact on that. We had a manager on our team who -- I would not call her a whistleblower, but she brought up concerns about the recruitment strategies of our team, and we changed for the better, and I'm excited to share with you stories about how diversity has positively affect our team.

There -- affected our team. There is a yearly self-audit. It gives the status of the EEO program that you have. It identifies any of the problems found during the self-assessment, and also, what are the barriers -- there is a specific part of the audit called the barrier analysis that is outside of the product, and then, when you throw it out, it outlines what other activities the agency is going to do to fix problems. If you are unaware of this vacuum, you never heard of it, but you are interested, I would suggest asking your EEO office. Ask how you can participate in making things better, to be part of the solution, as opposed to the problem.

Potentially, you have had centralized discussions where you know what you're supposed to do when it comes to affirmative action. In my experience, affirmative action can have a positive impact on teams, and here is why. It leads to diversity. Like I said before, EEO and affirmative action -- there are laws and

regulations that dictate how we're supposed to act, or what, we as a team, we're supposed to have to make sure there is no discrimination in place and that we are representing the public. The diversity is the end result will these rules, and diversity is useful. It is not a pie-in-the-sky type of thing. It is useful. Now, it is not all fairy and gumdrops, and hugs and kisses all the time. It does bring increased profits to teams.

What I would say is there is an increase in the share number of -- sheer number of conflicts that happen. What is the opposite of having a diverse team -- if you have a complete homogenous, people that think the same, Have as much conflict, so they will agree on almost everything, so, yeah, diversity means increased conflict. However, this is scientifically validated research. It is not pie-in-the-sky, hopeful thinking. Diversity leads to better decisions. Many of you are probably familiar with group think. If you took psychology 101, groupthink is a phenomena are often times groups of human beings make poor decisions because nobody wants to create conflict in the group or somehow present information that could split with the leader -- what the leader of the group thinks is a good idea, and there are, kind of, classic examples of groupthink. You think of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

That is often brought up as a potential groupthink situation, and really, President Kennedy, from that point on, he actually made it a point to bring in people of diverse opinions into his decision-making process, so that he could make better decisions, because people from diverse backgrounds, with divers opinions, are more -- diverse opinions, are more likely to think of the same problem differently, and that enables groups to make better decisions. Homogenous groups, when everyone thinks the same, they are more likely to think the same and go full speed ahead without considering other options. Also, a problem with homogenous groups, they make risky decisions.

What has been shown is that groups that are almost all the same, are more likely to -- they are more likely to have what is called a risky shift. They are more likely to go in polarized ways -- either move toward dangerously not making any decision at all, or move towards making an extreme decision. Again, when everyone agrees and has the same backgrounds, and make risky choices that diverse groups do not. Also, diversity has been shown to lead to innovation. You are more likely to come up with innovative ideas when different point of view are reflected on your team.

I will give you an example. So, my team is a virtual team. We now have a consultant -- eight consultants on our team, and I would have said a few years it will we had a pretty homogenous team, and just recently, we hired a new member of our team, and we will call her Sarah. Sarah -- she is from a different, I would say if you did and affirmative action analysis, -- Sarah is from a different protected class and the other members of our team. Sarah has already integrated in a couple of ways. She has brought innovations to work process that has made them better. One of the things we do because we are a virtual team -- if anyone has questions about this type of thing -- this is an example of teambuilding that we do. I am based in Kansas City.

I have team workers in St. Louis, Tulsa, Washington, D.C., and in writing, -- and in Raleigh, North Carolina, and we had team meetings. As part of those meetings, we spent time -- we have an

assignment we have to do, and often times the question is who is your favorite Disney character, your favorite baseball player -- innocuous questions like that.

Sarah, this week, she asked each of us to do a survey for others, and as a team it was clear that she thought of this opportunity is something totally different than the rest of us. To be honest, it brought a really positive feeling to our team meeting. Anyway, as Sarah's coworker, I am so glad that my executive and management teams thought strategically, and whether or not we would have hired -- maybe we would have hired Sarah anyway without thinking about diversity and affirmative action, but maybe not. She brings -- there has already been a positive affect that she has had on the team meetings. We also are developing a new -- computer programs. Sarah participates in those.

It is clear, not only issue bringing different beliefs because of her belongings were different protected class, but she also has different experiences than the rest of us, and she just brings a lot to our team. It has really made it concrete and real for me what diversity can bring to a team. So, one of the questions I have for you is what has been your experience with diversity for your team? And, again, I have absolutely no idea how people are answering these questions.

Has it been positive, or is it -- "it does not really affect us?" Interesting. It is almost uniformly positive. There are a few negative, and some neutral. I think, really, when it comes down to it, I think -- interesting enough, there is a little bit of a disconnect between how you answered the affirmative action policies, and how you diversity. I cannot do because of recency effect, but as you go forward, think about how you think about diversity as a positive thing when you are feeling more neutral or negative about affirmative action policies, or having to comply with EEO rules.

When we can think about the end product is something positive, it makes it worth going through the rigmarole of the regulations that help us get there, if that makes sense. I know for a fact that diversity, again, it is not all skipping through the fields. There is conflict. That happens. People are more likely to have disagreements, and I would say this -- sometimes in the short-term, that means that some of our short-term deliverable meetings, they go longer, they take longer, but everyone is on the same page. Because decisions are better than they would normally be, it ends up saving us re-work we would eventually do.

The short-term deliverables yes, sometimes are delayed, because it takes long to get there, but the long-term, positive effects and up saving my team time and help us to do --end saving my team time and help us to do good things. So, USDA has a diversity plan, and if you look at the handout associated with this training, USDA has the diversity inclusion plan -- and inclusion plan. That, I think, is the fourth handout. I also have OPM government-line -- government-wide strategic and inclusion plan that your document is based on, and a document that I like -- how diversity makes a smarter. If you are feeling neutral or even negatively about diversity, there really is research that vindicates, or reinforces the idea that it is useful. It is not just a pie in the sky, optimistic thing.

It is something that managers really cannot -- leverage to make their teams work better in the long term. Opium plans calls for extreme -- OPM plans calls for inclusion and the USDA plan is more specific. They have specific goals when it comes to leadership accountability. That correlates the sustainability

option, and then you have two things that correlate to the OPM go for diversity. We have plans for the outreach of partnership and recruitment plans, and then when it comes to workforce inclusion, people that are already looking for USDA, USDA has a plan for 2011-2015, regarding how we retain and remote folks. You have -- promote folks. You have awareness, and recognition. I want to bring up in general what the goal was. If you are interested in any of these, you can go to the document.

USDA has a goal for leadership and accountability. What does that mean? It means there is specific action that executives are supposed to be taking when it comes to retaining and hiring a diverse workforce. So, there are metrics in place. If you do not know what those are, I would reach out to your EEO office. I am sure they know, and maybe your centralized HR folks. There are outreach goals and strategic goals. USDA is protecting itself from my manager -- the problem my manager's manager found himself in where they needed to diversify recruitment strategies , so they were not just bringing in the same people whenever there was a vacancy.

Again, when it comes to recruitment and hiring, there are strategic metrics already in place for these. Some of them might be affecting you. Some of them might not, and if you are interested, look at the plan that I have attached. Also, when it comes to retention and promotion, there is a goal -- they provide training when it comes to worklife balance.

Again, retaining your folks -- the same strategy of retaining your workforce are the same for your retaining your diverse workforce. Those are useful tools to have. If you have interest in participating in that training, I think it is useful to carve out that time. When it comes to diversity training, USDA has a specific goal for articulating requirements. That was a goal for 2011. I am sure they have articulated that goal, and I am sure some of you are even required to participate in diversity training. One of the important parts of this is that diversity training is, in some way -- you cannot train people to be more diverse. That does not work. Really, it is a training about the behaviors and the sensitivities managers need to have so they can manage their folks.

Finally, the specific goal in the diversity plan of employee development and recognition. So that we can retain good folks, it is important to keep them engaged, and have them not want to turn over, and that is where recognition -- what recognition is all about. Also, as an agency thinks about their organizational design, and their workforce planning, it is important that they look at EEO and affirmative action things, and they realize that they are promotion strategies, and not just leading to certain types of people, certain groups being promoted, and others being left behind. Anyways, these are the rules -- I cannot speak specifically to how that has affected you. Here is my take.

I apologize, this has been more law and regulation focus. EEO is the law. Diversity, though, is the ultimate goal of the law, and there are dismissed reasons for diversity -- business reasons for diversity. You are not alone in ever going to a complaint process, or trying to figure out how you can better navigate EEO issues. There are centralized fact that can help you. You can preemptively in the bud -- preemptively nip in the blood bu --d EEO issues. There is one way to show you are partnering with your employees -- you do not have this top-down, autocratic management style -- you are working with your

team to accomplish your goals. Again, diversity -- size has shown diversity -- science has shown diversity leads to better decisions for your team. I do not just believe that. I know that is true.

I know there are people cutting out early. I hope you found this to be practical. If you have questions, stay on the line. I'm happy to answer them as best I can. Here is my contact info.

Jennifer, can you take depends off of the -- can you participants off of mute ? What dress. Please press star to. --

Yes. Please press star one ask a question. One moment for incoming questions.

That was a long, pregnant pause. I am not hearing any questions.

Currently I am showing any questions on the line. If you would like to ask a question, press star one on your phone.

It was that girl. I appreciate the positive feedback from -- zero. I appreciate the positive feedback. This is a subject where it is what it is. You'll just have to know the rules and be refreshed on them.

I apologize if it was -- I also apologize for the technical problems. I appreciate you sticking with it.

Jennifer, if there are no questions, after the pregnant pause, I will let everyone go. No reason to hold everyone on the phone mind and a web meeting. Thank you for your participation. Future trainings will be less regulation-heavy and based on best practices. I hope you find it useful and to our critic.

This concludes -- and thank you for today.

This concludes today's conference. You may disconnect at this time.