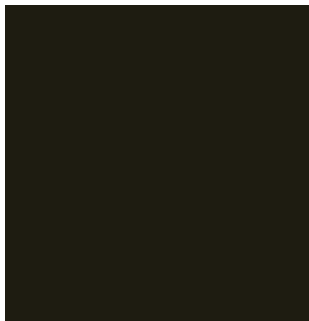
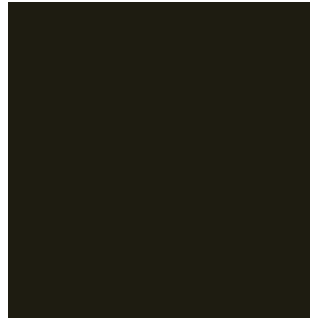
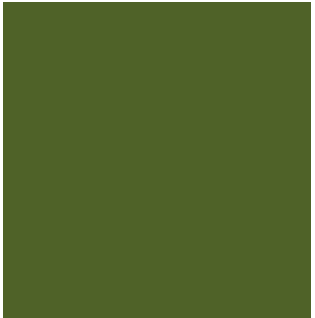
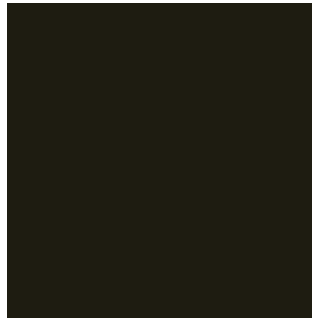


AMS Civil Rights Program

Strategic Plan
FY 2016-2018





Additional copies of this Strategic Plan can be downloaded from AMS' Web site at www.ams.usda.gov

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Greetings! I am excited to unveil our new Civil Rights Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year 2016-2018. My staff and I worked diligently to prepare this document to insure that our Agency is in compliance with the Federal statutes and Departmental regulations that prohibit discrimination in hiring, employment, and program delivery. We also reached out to our Programs to obtain feedback in the preparation of this plan. I would like to thank them for their assistance, because all of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) leaders, managers, supervisors, and employees are responsible for creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive work environment.



My office oversees compliance with Federal statutes, rules, policies, and guidelines, and we are committed to building and leveraging partnerships both within and with persons external to AMS. This supports the Agency's commitment to obtaining and maintaining a diverse and motivated workforce, and it assists us in providing valuable customer service to our stakeholders and to the public.

To that end, in October 2015, the Civil Rights Program (CRP) staff and I met to revise the Program's strategic plan and to chart a course for the next three years. We examined both the internal and external environments impacting civil rights and diversity at AMS, and determined how the CRP could achieve its mission and support the overall goals and objectives of AMS, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This plan serves as a roadmap, which charts a course for our success for the coming years. It also aligns with and supports the AMS and USDA strategic plans.

My staff and I will continue to collaborate with Agency leadership to deliver services that create a positive and inclusive work environment, while ensuring compliance and accountability. Additionally, my staff will strive to expand organizational awareness and knowledge of civil rights and diversity. I believe this effort will have a direct impact on the Agency's commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse and motivated workforce.

I believe that by working as a team and partnering with both our employees and AMS leadership, we will optimize equality, fairness, inclusiveness, and opportunities in our workplace!

Sincerely,

Clifton Gilchrist
Director
Civil Rights Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The CRP is a program within USDA, AMS and is responsible for ensuring Agency compliance with Federal statutes that prohibit discrimination in hiring, employment and program delivery. The AMS Civil Rights Staff serves as principle advisors to the Administrator and Agency senior staff on all civil rights issues.

The CRP's staff provides a variety of civil rights support services to the Agency, both in the Washington, DC, headquarters and field offices across the nation. The CRP is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of affirmative employment, special emphasis programs, compliance reviews, student/internship opportunities, the EEO complaints process, alternative dispute resolution, and related training.

More specifically, the CRP is responsible for ensuring the Agency's compliance with the following Federal statutes that prohibit discrimination in hiring, employment, and program delivery:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, prohibits discrimination in programs receiving federal assistance;
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin;
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967, as amended, prohibits employment discrimination against individuals 40 years of age and older;
- Equal Pay Act (EPA) of 1963, prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in compensation for substantially equal work performed under similar conditions;
- Title I and Title V of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of disability in the private sector and state and local governments;
- Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, prohibits employment discrimination against federal employees with disabilities; and,
- Civil Rights Act of 1991, provides monetary damages in cases of intentional discrimination and clarifying provisions regarding disparate impact actions.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The CRP strategic plan covers three (3) years starting October 1, 2015 (FY2016) and ending September 30, 2018 (FY2018). The plan aligns with and supports both the FY2014-2018 USDA and AMS strategic plans.

The plan includes the following components:

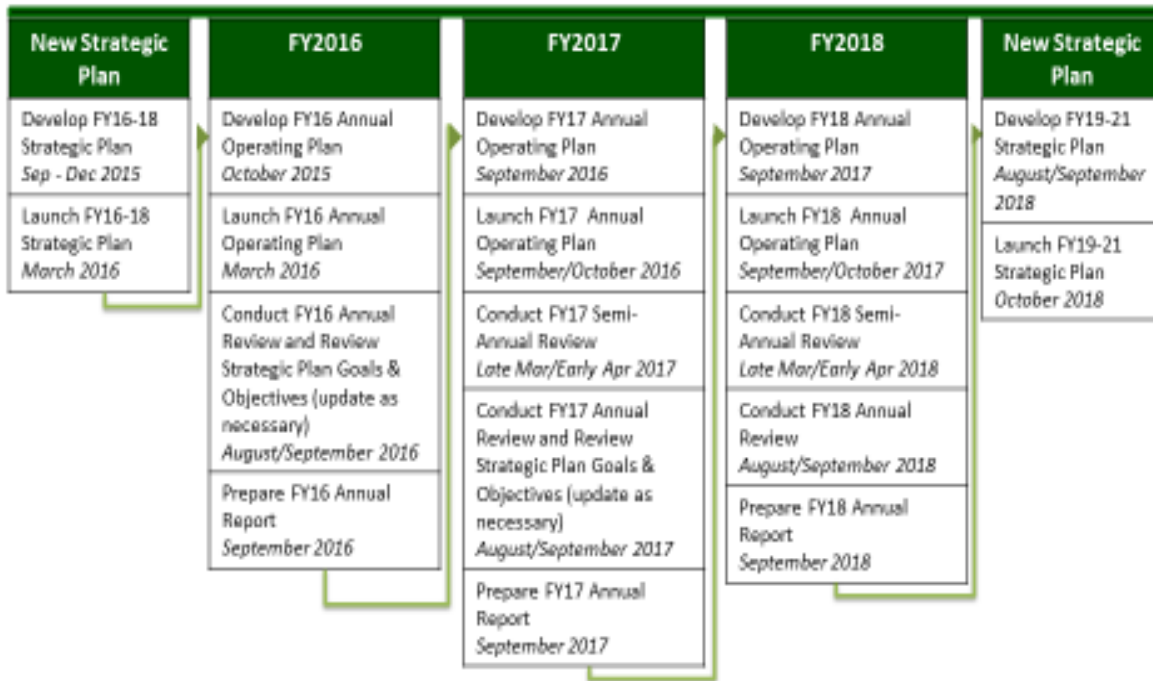
Mission Statement	The CRP's purpose or reason for being.
Vision Statement	The CRP's envisioned future; where the program is headed; the impact it aspires to make over the next 10 to 20 years.
Core Values	The CRP's foundational values and beliefs that guide how the team conducts itself.
Strategic Goals	The CRP's priorities and outcomes over the next 3-5 years.
Supporting Objectives	Specific actions the CRP will initiate to achieve desired outcomes and success.
Performance Indicators	Measures that the CRP will track to indicate performance of the goals and objectives.

The CRP will use this 3-year strategic plan to guide program-wide performance from FY2016 through FY2018. An Annual Operating Plan will be developed for each year of the strategic plan, indicating the specific activities/actions, targeted outcomes, staff leads, timing, resources, and collaboration required for achievement of the annual activities. Performance will be tracked on a quarterly basis and the strategic plan will be reviewed at the end of each year.

HOW THE PLAN WILL BE USED

The CRP strategic plan covers a 3-year period that begins in FY2016 and ends at the conclusion of FY2018. To ensure that the strategic plan is effectively operationalized within the Program, the CRP developed a strategic planning life cycle. The cycle, pictured below, includes the development of an Annual Operating Plan for each fiscal year, semi-annual reporting, an Annual Report, and revision of the plan at the end of the 3-year time frame.

CRP Strategic Planning Life Cycle



The Annual Plan, developed at the beginning of each fiscal year, describes the specific activities/initiatives the CRP will pursue in support of the strategic goals and objectives. More specifically, the Annual Plan defines the activities, timing, deliverables/outcomes, and staff assignments for achieving the plan. The Annual Plan serves as a companion document to the strategic plan.

MISSION, VISION AND CORE VALUES

MISSION

Promote diversity, inclusion, equal access, and fair treatment for all AMS employees, applicants, stakeholders, and customers.

VISION

Become an Agency that maximizes partnerships between leadership, employees and stakeholders to optimize equality, fairness, inclusiveness, and opportunities in the workplace.

The CRP envisions a future where AMS is unequivocally viewed as an agency that embraces, builds, and realizes a work environment that is known for its diversity and inclusiveness. In this envisioned future, the AMS work environment is one in which leaders, managers, and employees work together in a collaborative way to ensure equality, fairness, and opportunity for all. Partnerships are developed to increase awareness, educate, build bridges, and remove barriers to success. Furthermore, our vision of the future is that AMS achieves a diverse and inclusive work environment that treats all with dignity and respect not because it is a requirement, but because AMS genuinely values diversity.

CORE VALUES

- **Customer Service** – we are committed to making ourselves accessible and collaborating with our customers to deliver responsive, high quality services that meet their needs.
- **Integrity** – we conduct ourselves in a way that engenders trust and demonstrates a commitment to impartiality, fairness, and confidentiality.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** – we value, honor, and promote fairness, equal opportunity, and mutual respect, and we celebrate diversity and differences.
- **Creativity and Innovation** – we approach challenges and opportunities in a way that demonstrates resilience, flexibility, out of the box thinking, and a willingness to try new things.
- **Accountability** – we hold ourselves and others accountable and ensure that our actions and performance comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

ALIGNMENT WITH AMS STRATEGIC GOALS

The CRP's strategic goals align with and support the AMS FY 2014-2018 strategic goals. While the CRP strategic goals could realistically track to all six of the AMS strategic goals, they directly align to Goals 1 and 6. The table below provides an overview of the direct alignment of the three CRP plan goals.

CRP Alignment with AMS FY2014-2018 Strategic Goals



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: COMPLIANCE

Actively engage all organizational levels and deliver services to create a positive work environment that ensures compliance and accountability for internal and external customers

The CRP leads the Agency's efforts to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies for our employees and customers. This includes conducting compliance reviews, managing the complaint process, and maximizing the use of alternative dispute resolution to address conflicts. While the CRP is responsible for overseeing and managing these programs, their successful implementation, administration, and outcomes depend on a number of individuals and organizational partners. The CRP is committed to implementing a variety of initiatives (within their control) to expand and improve compliance reviews, enhance the efficiency of the complaint process, and expand use and participation of ADR.

Objective 1.1: Compliance Reviews

Improve the frequency and quality of compliance reviews and reports

Compliance Reviews are systematically planned, reoccurring assessments to determine AMS programs' and services' compliance with equal opportunity policies, procedures, and practices; and Federal civil rights statutes, regulations, standards, and policies. The CRP performs compliance reviews for AMS programs operating under Title VI (service delivery) and Title VII (employment). The CRP may initiate program compliance reviews based on several factors, including, but not limited to: regulatory requirements, authorization, evidence of existing violations, level and type of complaints over time, issues arising from complaints that indicate the need for a more systematic review, previous consent decrees and settlement agreements, and relation to implementation of Departmental policies and procedures. The CRP is committed to conducting more frequent site visits, compliance reviews, and reports.

Objective 1.2: Complaint Management

Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the complaint process

One of the CRP's primary responsibilities is to address equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints alleging that AMS' actions, policies, or practices are discriminatory. The complaint process encompasses all stages of each EEO complaint, including: counseling, acceptance, dismissal, investigation, alternative dispute resolution, hearing, decision, appeal, and civil action. The CRP is committed to developing an exceptional, highly efficient complaint process and resolution structure that includes development of tools, resources, and templates.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Objective 1.3: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Optimize and strengthen ADR processes and participation

It is the policy of AMS to prevent conflicts whenever possible and, when conflicts do occur, to make every effort to reach early resolutions via ADR. AMS uses ADR as a standard tool for resolving workplace disputes and conflicts between AMS employees and customers whenever practical and possible. The CRP is responsible for administering ADR services associated with EEO matters. ADR is offered to all employees who contact the CRP, but employees have not historically taken full advantage of ADR as a method of addressing and resolving conflict in the workplace. Opportunities exist to expand the use of ADR as a conflict resolution tool and reduce the number of complaints moving directly to the formal complaint process. The CRP is committed to the processes and emphasizing participation in the ADR program.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1.1: Completed Compliance Reviews

The CRP conducts compliance reviews to assess and evaluate civil rights and equal opportunity policies, procedures, and practices. This determines compliance with statutes, regulations, standards, and policies. The CRP will track the number of completed AMS Program compliance reviews (Title VI and Title VII) to indicate increased performance in improving the frequency of reviews.

Indicators – what is being measured?	Baseline (FY15)	FY16 Target	FY17 Target	FY18 Target
# of Program Compliance Reviews completed (Title VI-service delivery)	0	1	2	3
# of Employment Compliance Reviews completed (Title VII-employment)	1	1	2	2

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1.2: Complaint Management

The CRP will implement an effective EEO counseling, Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, and complaints management program. This will be done by tracking the number of complaints processed in a timely manner, and reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, the existing EEO counseling and complaints management process.

Indicators – what is being measured?	Baseline (FY15)	FY16 Target	FY17 Target	FY18 Target
% of Informal Complaints processed in a timely manner	95-100%	95- 100%	95-100%	95-100%

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1.3: EEO Counseling and Alternative Dispute Resolution

Past history has shown that complainants have not frequently utilized the ADR process. While the decision to utilize ADR is voluntary for the complainant, the CRP will increase awareness of ADR and the benefits of participating in the ADR process. This should result in the reduction of complaints proceeding to the formal stage and an increase of resolutions for informal complaints. The CRP will track the percentage of informal complaints that utilize ADR.

Indicators – what is being measured?	Baseline (FY15)	FY16 Target	FY17 Target	FY18 Target
% of informal complaints utilizing ADR	31%	33%	34%	35%

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 2: AWARENESS AND TRAINING

Expand civil rights and diversity awareness knowledge through communication, training and education

Raising awareness and providing training are critical components in engaging the entire AMS workforce to support civil rights and diversity initiatives. The CRP designs and implements Agency-wide training focusing on EEO, civil rights, harassment, conflict management, disability awareness, and workforce diversity. Training is designed for managers, supervisors, and employees. This strategic goal emphasizes CRP's commitment to enhancing the overall performance of the organization through civil rights, EEO, and diversity training.

Objective 2.1: Awareness

Expand awareness of conflict resolution, ADR, and ADA

To effectively shift the organizational culture and create an agency that embraces and demonstrates a shared valued of civil rights and diversity, it is first necessary to raise the basic level of awareness and understanding of key issues. The CRP is committed to informing and raising the awareness of leadership, employees, and stakeholders on a broad range of civil rights and diversity topics. Over the next three years, the CRP will use innovative methods to increase awareness of conflict resolution, ADR, and Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADA).

Objective 2.2: Comprehensive Training Strategy

Develop and implement a comprehensive training strategy

Training is a critical component in engaging and educating the entire AMS workforce to support civil rights and diversity initiatives. The CRP designs and implements agency-wide training focused on EEO, civil rights, harassment, conflict management, disability awareness, and workforce diversity. Training is designed for managers, supervisors, and employees. The CRP is committed to enhancing the overall performance of the organization through the development and implementation of a comprehensive training strategy. Training will be developed and delivered on a variety of topics, including mandatory annual civil rights training, ADR, EEO, regulations, policies, and procedures, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and current CRP programs and services.

Objective 2.3: Technology

Strengthen the use of technology solutions to deliver and monitor training

The CRP provides services to AMS supervisors and employees located across the United States. It is not always possible or feasible to bring staff in for face-to-face consultations and training sessions. The CRP is committed to removing the geographic barriers to quality training programs and will pursue technology solutions to effectively deliver training and monitor participation in such programs.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 2.1: Training Programs Conducted

The CRP conducts a wide range of civil rights, ADR, EEO, policy, and related training programs. To measure the Program's ability to enhance and expand awareness through a variety of training opportunities, the CRP will track the number of training programs it conducts for AMS managers and employees.

Indicators – what is being measured?	Baseline (FY15)	FY16 Target	FY17 Target	FY18 Target
# of training programs conducted	13	14	15	16

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 2.2: Training Participation

To measure the Program's ability to enhance and expand awareness through training, the CRP will track the number of participants (managers and employees) in CRP-sponsored training programs.

Indicators – what is being measured?	Baseline (FY15)	FY16 Target	FY17 Target	FY18 Target
# of managers/employees participating in CRP-sponsored training	11%	11.5%	12%	12.5%

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 3: WORKFORCE DIVERSIFICATION

Leverage partnerships to create and maintain a diverse and motivated workforce

The CRP is committed to supporting the AMS strategic objective to increase workforce diversity in recruitment, retention, and advancement. Achieving workforce diversification can only be realized through the collective efforts of all AMS leaders, managers, and employees. Human Resources and Civil Rights staffs play a critical role in supporting this objective. AMS CRP is committed to supporting workforce diversification and will focus on identifying, promoting, and enhancing partnerships; developing affirmative employment programs; and to increasing representation, recruitment, and retention of the workforce through monitoring and reporting.

Objective 3.1: Partnerships

Enhance and expand strategic partnerships

The CRP is in a unique position to partner with a broad range of organizations to advance a diverse AMS workforce. Since the CRP does not directly impact the day-to-day hiring and management of AMS staff, the CRP seeks to influence hiring practices by building and maintaining a strong relationship and valued partnership with Agency leaders. The CRP will explore ways to recognize AMS Programs that excel in workforce diversification initiatives. The CRP will also collaborate with Human Resources to research and evaluate data, statistics, and trends to enhance workforce diversification. Furthermore, the CRP will partner with colleges and universities to promote and raise awareness of AMS career opportunities and help build the pipeline for new talent in the organization. The CRP is committed to strengthening partnerships with leadership, human resources, colleges, universities, and other key partners to help advance the diversification of the AMS workforce.

Objective 3.2: Affirmative Employment Programs

Enhance and develop affirmative employment programs

AMS strives to maintain a workforce that represents society's broad segments. As such, the Agency developed a Special Emphasis Program (SEP) to develop a diverse and talented workforce. The SEP's employee development and recruitment plan, the SEP Assessment Plan shown at the end of this document, provides this direction and guidance for the Agency. The program focuses on providing support for the following SEPs: African-American, Hispanic, Women, Asian American & Pacific Islander, American Indian & Alaskan Native, Veteran, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), Caribbean, and Persons with Disabilities. This Agency-wide program is supported by the CRP, Agency leaders, and AMS employees who volunteer as designated Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs). The CRP is committed to leading this effort by providing oversight to the SEPMs to continue to grow and develop the SEP, as well as other agency affirmative employment programs.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Objective 3.3: Diversity

Increase representation, recruitment, and retention of AMS workforce through monitoring and reporting

AMS strives to increase recruitment and representation of targeted groups with low participation rates, and to retain employees to maintain a high-performing, diverse workforce. The CRP will monitor, analyze, and provide statistics on the diversity of the workforce on a monthly basis. The Civil Rights Director will also meet with the Administrator and Deputy Administrators on a quarterly basis to review workforce profiles and discuss representation, recruitment, and retention strategies.

The CRP is responsible for ongoing tracking, analysis and reporting of diversity statistics and corresponding goals and actions. To engage all levels of AMS in understanding and supporting initiatives to set and achieve realistic workforce diversification goals, managers and supervisors need to receive and understand current and ongoing data on AMS' diversity statistics. The CRP is committed to monitoring and delivering high quality, informative reports related to achieving workforce diversification goals and providing these reports to Agency-wide decision-makers.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 3.1: Partnerships

The CRP's success in contributing to workforce diversification relies heavily on the establishment and effective use of strategic partnerships. The Program will measure its success in enhancing and expanding strategic partnerships with formalized agreements and tracking the number of strategic partnerships maintained.

Indicators – what is being measured?	Baseline (FY15)	FY16 Target	FY17 Target	FY18 Target
# of formalized strategic partnerships	1	3	5	7

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 3.2: Focus Groups

The CRP will implement the use of focus groups to collect pertinent information that will inform Agency decision-makers on matters related to workforce diversification. To measure success, the CRP will track the number of focus groups held.

Indicators – what is being measured?	Baseline (FY15)	FY16 Target	FY17 Target	FY18 Target
# of focus groups conducted	0	2	4	4

SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM'S ASSESSMENT PLAN

Agricultural Marketing Service		
<p>AMS 2016 Special Emphasis Assessment Plan (SEAP)</p> <p>Purpose: Special Emphasis Programs are established to assist in the recruitment, development training and advancement of women, minorities, persons with disabilities and veterans.</p> <p>AMS has appointed Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) for the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -African American -American Indian/Alaskan Native -Asian American/Pacific Islander -Caribbean American -Disability Employment -Federal Women -Hispanic Employment -Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender -Veterans Employment <p>The SEAP reflects the results of a detailed workforce assessment and barrier analysis that outlines the Agency's recruitment, hiring and outreach strategic goals, objectives, and action items targeted at eliminating barriers and increasing diversity, inclusion, and sustainability.</p>	<p>Recruitment & Hiring</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain and encourage participation of a talented, diverse workforce within AMS 2. Increase diversity and participation rates in major/mission critical occupations
	<p>Employee Development</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase agency diversity in GS-09 through SES positions 2. Identify and increase employee participation in career development plans 3. Increase participation of minorities in the AMS mentoring program
	<p>Supervisory & Managerial Commitment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze program needs and increase new hires for groups with low participation rates 2. Establish, track, and convey information and formal supervisory training, including diversity and inclusion 3. Create and implement strategies to retain a diverse workforce and increase inclusion through employee engagement initiatives
	<p>Program Evaluations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure AMS SEPMs receive required training and understand the agency's and business needs in order to effectively manage their activity 2. Improve the agency-wide process to track and record employee training information

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