# POSITION DESCRIPTION

**Deputy Secretary, Department of agriculture**

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  |
| Agency Mission | To provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues based on public policy, the best available science and effective management. To provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds and healthy private working lands.  |
| Position Overview | As per the Government Performance and Results Act of 2010, the deputy secretary is also the chief operating officer. The deputy secretary historically serves as a partner to the secretary, managing day-to-day operations and addressing issues that need not require the secretary’s attention. Depending upon the deputy secretary’s strengths, she or he may frequently interact with Congress and/or stakeholder groups (industry groups, food safety advocates, hunger advocates, etc.) and may travel domestically and internationally to advance departmental goals and invite public/stakeholder feedback. |
| Compensation | Level II $183,100[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Agriculture |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | Under current law, USDA’s total outlays for 2020 are estimated at $119 billion. The Agency has over 100,000 employees, and approximately 33 separate agencies and offices. The deputy secretary shares support staff with the secretary and may have one confidential assistant. Office of Pesticides, NAD and Office of Small Business Procurement are direct reports to the deputy secretary. However, as COO, the deputy secretary will manage people from all over the organization, not just those in his or her direct office.  |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Executes the president’s and secretary’s strategic plan for the agency by dealing with the overall operations, managing the individual departments and integrating mission-support functions with program and policy objectives.
* Works with peers in other agencies, OMB, stakeholders including local or state governments and Congress.
* Resolves interagency conflict.
* Serves as a key advisor to the secretary on all matters pertaining to the agency.
* Ensures that the agency’s components are delivering their programs and services in an effective and efficient manner with integrity.
* Develops and manages complementary internal management processes that coordinate across programs.
* Represents the secretary in public and private meetings including dealings with the White House, Congress, state governments, trade groups, etc.
* Oversees internal GPRA processes.
* Works closely with the secretary, chief of staff and CXOs.
* Monitors budget status in conjunction with the chief financial officer (CFO) and develops budget requests in conjunction with the Office of Budget and Policy Analysis (OBPA).
* May serve as liaison to USDA inspector general.
* Interacts with stakeholder groups representing commodities, nutrition advocates, food safety advocates and environmental protection advocates.
* Serves on the PMC, which involves direct interaction with OMB and other deputies.
* Chairs the E Board and SES management activities and works closely with CFO and National Finance Center.
* Directly coordinates with the assistant secretary for administration on operations and procurement and the OBPA for budget.
* Involved in Civil Rights and diversity work of the organization.
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration.] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Proven ability and experience leading and managing a large and complex enterprise.
* Previous experience with federal government enterprise operations.
* Understanding of core services, programs and initiatives delivered by the agency’s key departments.
* Experience dealing with high-profile stakeholders.
* Experience leading through unexpected crisis situations preferred.
* Familiarity with the federal budget process preferred.
* Experience conducting Congressional briefings and testifying before Congress.
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| Competencies | * Demonstrated ability to resolve conflicts within a large organization.
* Comfort leading and managing in ambiguity, as deputy secretaries often have very vague or undefined statutory responsibilities and authorities.
* Ability to establish positive relationships with coworkers and external stakeholders.
* Ability to forge strong Congressional relationships preferred.
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Stephen Censky (2017 to 2020) – CEO of the American Soybean Association; Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service; legislative assistant for Senator Jim Abdnor (R-SD) |
| Michael Scuses (2016 to 2017) – Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services and President of the USDA Commodity Credit Corporation; Chief of Staff to Governor Ruth Ann Minner; Delaware Secretary of Agriculture; President of the Northeast Association of State Departments of Agriculture; Vice President of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture; Chairman of the Kent County Regional Planning Commission in Delaware; Chairman of USDA's Delaware FSA Committee |
| Krysta Harden (2013 to 2016) – Chief of staff to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack; assistant secretary of Agriculture for Congressional Relations; CEO of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD); worked with the American Soybean Association as senior vice president of Gordley Associates; staff director for the House subcommittee on Peanuts and Tobacco; chief of staff and press secretary for former Congressman Charles Hatcher |

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260, December 27 ,2020), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials through January 1, 2022. The compensation information is based on guidance from the Office of Personnel Management and can be accessed [here](https://www.chcoc.gov/content/continued-pay-freeze-certain-senior-political-officials-4#:~:text=Section%20748%20of%20division%20E,on%20December%2031%2C%202020%2C%20by). If you are selected for this position, please consult the agency’s HR representative for further guidance on compensation.  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)