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# The LGBT Special Emphasis Program of the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service

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1. Title of Session:

The LGBT Special Emphasis Program of the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service

2. Write a brief description of your program for brochure:

The USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) employs approximately 12,000 people, and serves farmers and forest landowners in every state. As an equal opportunity employer and provider, the NRCS is striving to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for LGBT employees and clients.

3. Program Outline / Abstract:

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is a branch of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The NRCS assists farmers and forest landowners to protect the soil, water, and other natural resources on their land. Located in almost every county within the United States, the NRCS employs almost 12,000 people.

The NRCS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. Within the NRCS and other agencies of the USDA, Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs) have become established as a component of the Equal Employment Opportunity Program. SEPs were set up to address the unique concerns of members of certain groups in achieving diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity. An LGBT SEP has been established to address the concerns of LGBT employees within the NRCS, as well as the concerns of LGBT individuals applying for NRCS programs.

The specific purpose of the LGBT program is to provide LGBT awareness and education to NRCS employees and partners while focusing on such issues as employment, retention, promotion, training, career development, and advancement opportunities affecting NRCS employees and program applicants. Some goals of the program are to ensure LGBT individuals receive equal treatment in all aspects of employment, to encourage the participation of LGBT populations in all NRCS programs, and to educate all NRCS employees by raising the level of awareness of LGBT workplace issues and concerns.

4. Presenter Information:

Gary is a URI graduate – received his undergraduate degree and Master's degree studying Environmental Science. After college, he worked various jobs in the environmental field, primarily dealing with soil, wetlands, and septic system issues. He began working with the NRCS in 2009, which is a branch of the USDA. In 2010, he finally felt the need to get involved in civil rights, and joined the civil rights committee. Currently, he serves as the LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager for the NRCS in the states of Rhode Island and Massachusetts.