

OSTP Equity Action Plan in Response to EO 13985

(1) Executive summary

The mission of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) is to maximize the benefits of science and technology to advance health, prosperity, security, environmental quality, and justice for all Americans.¹ This includes those from underserved communities such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

OSTP is committed to advancing both *equity in* science and technology, and science and technology *for equity*. Because of its ability to directly influence national science and technology policy decision-making, and to convene federal agencies across the government and entities outside it, OSTP is uniquely positioned to pursue these goals. We strive to advance *equity in* science and technology as it relates to shifting the culture, practices, and policies that govern scientific institutions, training, and funding, to produce outcomes that benefit all Americans.

While advancing equity in the scientific enterprise will require a professional scientific community that reflects the full diversity of America, representation alone is insufficient to achieve equitable outcomes. We also strive to advance science and technology *for equity*, including leveraging the power and potential of scientific tools, data, and advancements for the public good. This work includes helping to ensure scientific and technological developments do not perpetuate or exacerbate harms to particular communities, are applied to address societal inequities, and are available for all people to use.

OSTP is not a grant-administering or regulatory agency. Accordingly, our plan focuses on how we can strengthen our capability to ensure that the science and technology policies that we develop and contribute to are equitable for all Americans. To work towards including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality, we will continue to:

1. Increase OSTP's capacity to develop equitable science and technology policy; and
2. Employ and have our work informed by inclusive stakeholder engagement.

¹ OSTP Mission Statement on White House Office of Science and Technology Policy website. See, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/>

(2) Summary of early accomplishments

In the early days of the Administration, OSTP leadership crafted an expanded mission and values statement where principles of equity are tightly integrated throughout. (See appendix).

Grounded by those mission and values statements, OSTP continues to create opportunities to further equity-driven work and pilot inclusive engagement approaches. As a foundational step, from the beginning of this Administration, OSTP has identified and onboarded a number of scholars with expertise in equity, including individuals who can bring an equity lens to policy-making in areas such as climate, health, technology, and STEM. Some of these experts include [Gretchen Goldman](#), Assistant Director for Environment Science, Engineering, Policy, & Justice, [Jedidah Isler](#), Assistant Director for STEM Opportunity & Engagement, [Christina Ciocca Eller](#), Assistant Director for Evidence and Policy, [Erica Kimmerling](#), Senior Policy Advisor for Public Engagement in Science, and [Temeika Fairley](#), Assistant Director for Health Equity & Health Communications.

In addition to on-boarding staff with equity expertise, OSTP has had success embedding equity in policy areas including but not limited to STEM education, artificial intelligence, the environment, criminal justice, voting access, health, and immigration and workforce. Specific emphasis has been placed on inclusive engagement on these topics. One highlight is the “Time is Now: Advancing Equity in Science and Technology” engagement series including [five roundtables](#) and a [public ideation challenge](#). Explicitly to address discriminatory impacts of artificial intelligence, OSTP is in the process of developing [a Bill of Rights for an Automated Society](#) and has [committed to elevating Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge](#) (ITEK) in Federal scientific and policy processes. We also conducted extensive engagement around equity in health care access and impacts via [ARPA-H listening](#) sessions and a multi-pronged approach to solicit input on [Scientific Integrity](#) and will continue to do so because public engagement is a vital component of any future policy planning processes.

A working group was established to further the development and implementation of OSTP’s equity action plan. The purpose of the working group has been to develop a practice and culture at OSTP that embeds equity considerations from conceptualization to implementation of policy, and which routinely considers equity as a key evaluative component of effective policy. This cross-divisional team has begun developing the OSTP Equity Guidebook (see actions below) that will serve as a framework and practical tool for increasing OSTP’s capabilities for advancing equity in our policy work.

(3) Equity action plan

Action 1: Increasing OSTP's capacity to develop equitable science and technology policy

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

The benefits of science and technology remain unevenly distributed² across racial, gender, economic, and geographic lines as evidenced, for example, by persistent health inequities³ and the discriminatory harms perpetuated by some uses of artificial intelligence.⁴ For science and technology to benefit all people, there needs to be deliberate approaches to embed equity considerations throughout the development of science and technology policy. These policies can include, but are not limited to, the governance and regulation of emerging technology, priority setting for the use of Federal funds, and implementation of guidance.

Despite positive intentions and the established need for equitable science and technology policy, there is limited institutional knowledge at OSTP of effective practices and approaches and individual capability for embedding equity considerations throughout the policy development process. Developing and documenting equitable practices that can be shared widely throughout OSTP and retained during staff turnover are necessary.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

To support capacity-building for equitable science and technology policy, OSTP has begun stress-testing new models and approaches. In addition to the insights gained from hiring staff with specific expertise in equity assessment and equitable design, OSTP recognizes the need to increase the long-term capacity of the office to develop and implement equitable science and technology policy.

OSTP actions have and will include:

- Forming a working group to develop an OSTP Equity Guidebook.
 - The purpose of the OSTP Equity Guidebook will be to provide practical approaches for OSTP staff to incorporate equity considerations into their day-to-day policy work. Example OSTP policy activities that could be discussed in the guidebook include: forming and managing diverse interagency teams, mapping and framing a policy issue, and requesting and accepting external meetings and speaking engagements.
 - Guidance for specific policy activities may include a checklist of actions with equity considerations, reflection questions, potential metrics, and resources. While checklists are not enough to ensure equitable outcomes

² <https://www.wired.com/story/alondra-nelson-make-science-tech-more-just/>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/overview/healthequity.htm>

⁴ <https://www.aclu.org/news/privacy-technology/how-artificial-intelligence-can-deepen-racial-and-economic-inequities/>

on their own, our goal is to provide an initial set of best practices that push our processes toward more equitable outcomes.

- The guidebook will serve as a resource to all OSTP staff throughout their tenure.
- Early drafts of the OSTP Equity Guidebook will be workshopped with the broader OSTP staff as a means of refining the content and catalyzing internal dialogue on equity considerations in policymaking.
- A final version will be incorporated as part of OSTP on-boarding procedures, regular operational practices, and utilized and discussed during staff professional development opportunities such as lunch and learns.

These actions have been prioritized because developing and socializing a guidebook can be used to encourage staff dialogue and build an equity culture at OSTP that will drive better policy outcomes. In addition to the benefits from the process of developing the guidebook, it will become a usable and useful product that can be incorporated as part of on-boarding and regular operational practices to create continuity despite regular staff turnover. These developments will ultimately improve the policy development process at OSTP, thereby helping to cultivate a science and technology ecosystem that benefits all Americans.

C. Tracking Progress

Over the long term, OSTP will use these strategies for equitable policy development, to shape policy so science and technology benefit all Americans. Over the short term, OSTP will have successfully built capacity for embedding equity considerations throughout our policy work. An indicator of efficacy of the approach will be whether future OSTPs develop an updated version of the OSTP Equity Guidebook.

D. Accountability

OSTP will survey staff after the dissemination of the complete guidebook to solicit feedback and assess the utility of the guidebook.

OSTP will commit to reporting to OMB the timeline and completion of the guidebook.

Over the first year of implementation, OSTP will commit to regularly assessing our policies to determine the extent the guidebook is followed. Based on this assessment, OSTP will commit to developing strategies to institutional its use.

Action 2: Employing inclusive engagement to impact policy development

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

Inclusive engagement is critical to delivering equitable outcomes on the range of science policy issues in OSTP's portfolio such as pandemic preparedness and artificial intelligence. OSTP is committed to engaging all Americans⁵, including those from underserved communities. For example, community engagement was recommended by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine to be part of a framework for equitable allocation of COVID-19 vaccine doses due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on certain populations and the need for trust and accountability on this sensitive issue.⁶ OSTP has and will continue to actively engage with the public and recognizes it is especially important to diversify who has an opportunity to participate in the policy-making process.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

To help ensure inclusive engagement, OSTP has hired policy staff with specific expertise in public engagement. OSTP has also begun piloting engagements with inclusive practices including ideation challenges, closed and open-door roundtable discussions, and listening sessions. Inclusive engagement requires intentional consideration and reflection at each stage including: 1) Framing the goals of engagement with an eye toward equitable outcomes, 2) Choosing an appropriate format and structure, 3) Outreach and relationship building with potential participants from underserved communities, 4) Designing accessible materials and providing accessibility services, 5) Clear communication, and 6) Follow-through.

As OSTP continues to design inclusive engagement opportunities, we will develop guidance on inclusive engagement best practices for different types of engagement to be included in the OSTP Equity Guidebook. This resource will capture lessons learned from across teams at OSTP and be used to establish standard practices for engagement. The OSTP Equity Guidebook will become part of the on-boarding process for OSTP staff to reinforce the importance of engagement for delivering equitable policy outcomes and to aid new staff members in their efforts to design and execute effective public engagement.

C. Tracking Progress

Increased internal dialogue about and embrace of inclusive engagement will be early indicators of success. Over the short term, OSTP will have successfully made progress on

⁵ OSTP Mission Statement on White House Office of Science and Technology Policy website. See, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/>

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, <https://doi.org/10.17226/25917>.

this outcome if inclusive engagement strategies are incorporated into major policy initiatives.

Over the long term, OSTP will seek to use these engagements, as well as strategies for equitable policy development, to shape policy so science and technology benefits all people. An indicator of efficacy of this approach will be if policy development and implementation include new equity considerations as well as whether future OSTPs develop an updated version of the guidebook or adopt the approaches for engagement.

D. Accountability

As OSTP continues its efforts to engage widely with the American public, we will commit to widely disseminating readouts of engagements that are of interest to the broader public as a means of increasing visibility on OSTP activity.

OSTP will also survey staff after the dissemination of the complete guidebook to solicit feedback and assess the utility of the resource.

Appendix

Mission Statement

The mission of OSTP is to maximize the benefits of science and technology to advance health, prosperity, security, environmental quality, and justice for all Americans.

To accomplish this mission, OSTP:

- provides advice to the President and White House officials on all matters related to science and technology;
- stewards the creation of bold visions, unified strategies, clear plans, wise policies, and effective, equitable programs for science and technology, working with departments and agencies across the Federal government and with Congress;
- engages with external partners, including industry, academia, philanthropic organizations, and civil society; state, local, Tribal and territorial governments; and other nations; and
- works to ensure inclusion and integrity in all aspects of science and technology.

Values Statement

Our Work

- We work as one team collaborating toward a common goal: ensuring that science and technology best serve the country.
- We develop policy that is science-driven, and based on evidence, exploration, open-mindedness, rigor, honesty, and scientific integrity.
- We work to ensure that all Americans can participate in and benefit from science and technology.

Our Culture

- We commit to an OSTP that looks like America and values our diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and experiences.
- We strive to create an environment where everyone feels welcome to contribute and ask questions.
- We support personal and professional development, because everyone should be continuing to grow in their skills and experiences.
- We strive to work hard, because our mission is important, and to support a healthy work-life balance, because wellbeing and happiness are also important.
- We care about our colleagues as individuals, not just for their work.
- We commit to treat everyone with respect and kindness, and to assume best intentions from each other.