

THE WHITE HOUSE EQUITY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

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Executive Summary

Since President Biden's first day in office, the Biden-Harris Administration has championed racial equity and the full and fair participation of underserved communities in American life—including through historic investments in clean energy, manufacturing, and infrastructure as part of the President's Investing in America agenda and executive action begun with [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 13985](#) and furthered by [E.O. 14091](#).

Advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities—including rural communities, communities of color, Tribal communities, LGBTQI+ individuals, people with disabilities, women and girls, and communities impacted by persistent poverty—is not a one-time project. It is a generational commitment that will require sustained leadership and responsibility from the entire Federal Government. Over the last three years, federal agencies—in collaboration with communities, civil society, the private sector, and state and local government—have worked vigorously to engage in the historic work of transforming the way the Federal Government serves the American people by removing barriers to government programs and services and embedding a focus on equity into the fabric of federal policymaking and service delivery.

Since the release of their Equity Action Plans in April 2022, federal agencies continue to take ambitious actions to expand federal investment in and support for underserved communities. This White House Equity Action Plan Progress Report includes just some of the recent actions among the more than 650 accomplishments in the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to advance equity. Agencies have taken steps such as:

- **The Department of Commerce** allocated over \$42 billion to deploy or upgrade broadband networks to ensure everyone in America, including rural and Tribal communities, has access to reliable, affordable, high-speed Internet service.
- **The Department of Health and Human Services** approved 43 states, DC, and the Virgin Islands to provide 12 months of continuous postpartum coverage through Medicaid and CHIP, helping to improve maternal health, particularly in underserved communities.
- **The Department of Housing and Urban Development** lowered costs for borrowers by reducing annual mortgage insurance premium rates to support making homeownership more accessible and affordable for all working families, particularly households of color.
- **The Department of the Interior** made grants available through the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program to six Appalachian states and three Tribal communities; and provided \$46 million in funding to Tribal communities to address the unique impacts of climate change in Indigenous communities.
- **The Department of Transportation** announced \$800 million in grants to help communities improve roadway safety, especially for the most vulnerable roadway users, benefitting underserved communities disproportionately impacted by fatalities.
- **The Department of Energy** launched the Low-Income Communities Bonus Credit Program to expand access to cost-saving clean energy projects in underserved communities through a groundbreaking tax incentive.

Agencies will continue to build on these accomplishments and take new actions to advance and embed equity through their 2023 Equity Action Plan Updates, Agency Strategic Plans, budget formulation, and other organization-wide efforts.



Advancing Equity Through Historic Legislation and Investments in America

Landmark legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden such as the American Rescue Plan (ARP), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS), and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is transforming our Nation for the better by reaching communities in every corner of the United States (U.S.)—including those that have for too often and too long been left behind. President Biden’s [Investing in America](#) Agenda is mobilizing historic levels of private sector investments in the U.S., bolstering the industrial base through manufacturing and innovation, and creating new, good-paying local jobs that expand pathways to the middle class. The equitable use and implementation of these historic investments are reflected across the Equity Action Plans.

Continuing to Address Systemic Barriers to Equity and Equal Opportunity

Yet, even with this historic progress there are significant barriers to equity that remain due to longstanding racial discrimination, bias, and inequality, which impede equal opportunity for countless Americans. Agencies have identified several barriers to equity as reported in their Equity Action Plans. For example:

- The **Department of Education** identified that despite gains over the last 15 years, postsecondary attainment rates are still not high enough to meet the need for skilled workers to power our economy. Considerable gaps remain by race and income—with fewer than one-third of Black and only about one-fourth of Hispanic and Native American adults holding postsecondary credentials, compared to over 50% of white adults. Only 15% of students from the lowest-income families earn bachelor’s degrees by age 24.
- The **Department of Transportation** indicated that people experiencing lower incomes spend a far greater percent of their income on transportation than households with middle or higher incomes. Reliable, safe, high-quality accessible multimodal transportation systems can help address these disparities and increase residents’ upward economic mobility. Additionally, there are significant disparities in transportation and pedestrian safety impacting Black, Tribal, rural communities, and persons with disabilities.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** recognized that certain populations continue to face barriers to quality, affordable health services, including those with low-incomes, rural communities, households with a primary language other than English, immigrants, Tribes/Native Americans, racial and/or ethnic minority communities, LGBTQI+ populations, and persons with disabilities. Certain populations also experience biased treatment and limited access to care.
- The **Department of Treasury** identified that historical exclusion from and lack of access to capital has led to poor outcomes for individuals and communities of color, women, rural areas, and counties with persistent poverty, resulting in economic disparities. Beyond un- and under-banked rates, there are disparities among different groups in access to and use of financial products and services including tax-advantaged retirement accounts, stock market investments, insurance, and small business loans.
- The **Department of Agriculture** seeks to address the complex web of factors that causes food insecurity and contributes to diet-related diseases and health disparities. A key



barrier to healthy eating is lack of access to nutritious food. Poverty, or limited income or financial resources; education and job opportunities; access to health care, safe housing, and transportation; and neighborhood design—including legacy segregation—all affect the ability to obtain food, make healthy choices, and remain physically active.

To address these barriers and others, agencies have taken historic steps to advance racial equity and support for underserved communities under the umbrella of the following eight whole-of-government equity objectives:

Economic Justice: Build a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy. Ensure equitable procurement practices, including through small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs) contracting and the Buy Indian Act (25 U.S.C. 47). Build prosperity in rural communities.

Educational Equity: Pursue educational equity so that our Nation’s schools put every student on a path to success without barriers by providing access to the tools and resources students need.

Environmental Justice: Secure environmental justice and spur economic opportunity by addressing disproportionate and adverse health and environmental impacts, including from climate change and cumulative impacts, on marginalized and overburdened communities. Implement the Justice40 Initiative to ensure that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments, e.g., in clean energy, climate, pollution reduction, and critical infrastructure, flow to disadvantaged communities across rural, urban, and Tribal areas.

Civil Rights: Protect the civil and constitutional rights of all persons, including the right to vote, language access, and prohibitions on discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, and other bases. Provide safeguards and root out bias in the design and use of evolving technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

Health Equity: Advance equity in health, including mental and behavioral health and well-being, nutrition, and ensuring an equitable recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Criminal Justice and Public Safety: Improve our Nation’s criminal justice system to end unjust disparities in sentencing; strengthen public safety; counter domestic violent extremism, racism, and hate-fueled violence; and ensure equal justice under law.

Housing Justice and Community Investment: Invest in communities where federal policies have historically impeded equal opportunity—both rural and urban—in ways that mitigate economic displacement, expand access to capital, preserve housing and neighborhood affordability, root out discrimination in the housing market, and build community wealth.

Global Equality: Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.



Further Advancing Equity Through the Everyday Business of Government

Pursuant to [E.O. 14091](#), federal agencies are implementing innovative new strategies to embed equity in day-to-day governing, including:

- Expanding access to critical government benefits and services by reducing the time and paperwork burdens faced by the public in order to access these resources;
- Advancing equity in federal grantmaking, including by increasing access to underserved communities through equitably delivering federal financial assistance while also reducing administrative burdens on applicants and recipients;
- Advancing equity in federal contracting and procurement, including by diversifying the federal supplier base;
- Engaging with stakeholders and communities that have been historically excluded from policy-making processes;
- Furthering equitable data initiatives to better understand and improve the impact of federal policies on equity outcomes;
- Centering equity in strategic and performance planning as well as evidence-building;
- Providing excellent, equitable, and secure customer experience; and
- Improving service delivery through a human-centered approach to government that puts people first.

For more details on the Biden-Harris Administration’s progress to advance equity and justice for underserved communities, visit www.whitehouse.gov/equity. Read full agency Equity Action Plans at www.performance.gov/equity.



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ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Advancing Equity in Federal Procurement

- The **Department of Commerce** Minority Business Development Agency has increased investments in its national network of programs to include an expansion from 35 Business Centers to 41 and provided 28 Federal Procurement Supplemental Awards to support the President’s Investing in America Agenda to expand contracting opportunities to minority business enterprises. MBDA also launched the Capital Readiness Program (CRP) on December 17, 2022. With \$125 million, CRP will fund business incubators or accelerators designed to prepare underserved entrepreneurs and business owners to secure capital from the \$10 billion State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) and other capital sources. MBDA announced the 43 competition winners in the late summer of 2023.
- The **Department of Commerce’s** Minority Business Development Agency provided \$5.7 million in 31 supplemental awards to the Business Center Network for technical assistance to minority business enterprises more than 50 miles from a Business Center in a rural area.
- To close gaps in participation by small businesses and other underserved communities and improve workforce equity through an ambitious equitable procurement and contracting agenda, the **Department of Defense** developed and executed the [DoD Small Business Strategy and Implementation Plan](#), highlighting the Department’s commitment to fostering a robust and equitable defense industrial base and discussing Department policies on working with small businesses. The agency achieved a 10.25% SDB goal in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, exceeding the year-end goal by 0.75%.
- In FY 2022, the **Department of Defense** procured more than \$2.5 billion of products and services from the AbilityOne Program, an increase of \$125 million from FY 2021. DoD contracts with the AbilityOne Program to employ approximately 35,000 individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities.
- The **Department of Energy** implemented a strategy with contractors and major site and facility contractors designed to increase subcontracting opportunities from contractors who employ people who are blind or have significant disabilities through the AbilityOne Program. DOE-wide AbilityOne Program obligations increased from \$27.5 million in FY 2022 to \$31.2 million in FY 2023, an increase of 13%.
- The **Department of Energy** used market research tools such as the [National Aeronautics and Space Administration \(NASA\) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement Provider Lookup Tool](#), [Small Business Administration \(SBA\) Dynamic Small Business Search](#), and [General Services Administration \(GSA\) Market Research as a Service Request for Information \(RFI\) Tool](#) to increase procurement awards to small business and other disadvantaged socioeconomic categories. In FY 2023 to date, these robust market research techniques resulted in awards valued at approximately \$70.5 million for Women-Owned Small Businesses; \$55.6 million for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses;



\$38.5 million for Tribal-Owned and Native American-Owned Small Businesses; and \$3.8 million for Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Businesses.

- The **Department of Homeland Security** strengthened efforts to engage small businesses, including those owned by members of underserved communities such as women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities, through various outreach activities. In FY 2022, DHS exceeded all small business prime and socioeconomic goals as negotiated with the SBA, equating to \$9 billion awarded to small businesses, including \$4 billion to SDBs. DHS is the largest spending agency to have this level of goal achievement.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development** awarded \$456 million (39% of all HUD contract awards) in prime contracts to small businesses. HUD received an “A+” in FY 2022 on its [Small Business Procurement Scorecard](#), ensuring that small businesses had a maximum practicable opportunity to participate in government contracting, and prioritized small business outreach to host events for underrepresented groups.
- The **Department of the Interior** and **Health and Human Services** held the first HHS/DOI Buy Indian Industry Day, attended by more than 152 non-federal attendees and facilitated more than 663 meetings between vendors and Federal buyers; engaged with more than 700+ contracting staff across the agency increasing awareness of the Buy Indian Act and contracting authority; created a Buy Indian Act Course, which has been completed by over 2,000 Interior employees in 2023; increased the amount of money obligated to Indian owned small businesses from \$210.5 million in 2020 to \$636.2 million in 2023.
- In October, 2023, the **Department of the Interior’s** Indian Affairs was awarded the 2023 Chief Acquisition Officer’s Council Small Business and Procurement Equity Excellence Award by OMB’s Office of Federal Procurement Policy. The recognition was for Indian Affairs’ advancement of the breadth and depth of diversity in the supplier base while advancing sound contracting stewardship principles that support increased participation in competitions and awards to socioeconomic disadvantaged small businesses and engagement with other underserved groups.
- In January 2022, the **Department of Transportation** launched a [DOT-wide procurement dashboard](#) to raise awareness of contracting opportunities and drive accountability for advancing SDB goals.
- To address the hurdles small and minority-owned businesses can face in obtaining federal contracts, the **Department of Transportation** launched the Master Capacity Building Series. The initial session hosted more than 500 participants, and the program has reached over 6,400 SDB owners as of June 2023. Technical assistance has contributed to an increase in SDB utilization, from 18.2% of DOT direct contract dollars in FY 2021 to 21.25% in FY 2022.
- The **Department of Treasury** awarded \$1.2 billion in FY 2023 to SDBs, representing almost 12% of eligible small business dollars available for Treasury contracts. In addition, Treasury awarded Women-owned businesses \$989 million and minority-owned businesses \$1.1 billion (regardless of business size).



- In FY 2022, \$2.8 billion of the **General Services Administration** contracting obligations went to small businesses, including 21.4% to SDBs. In FY 2023, GSA increased its small business contracting obligations to \$3.3 billion, representing over 50% of the agency’s eligible spending.
- The **General Services Administration** awarded 1,111 SDB 8(a) STARS III contracts and 290 “rising stars” their first awards, exceeding \$925 million in obligations. These awards stemmed from GSA’s establishment of new contracting pools in the growing federal marketplace of Information Technology services and solutions to bolster participation of Women-Owned Small Businesses, Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses, and small businesses located in HUBZones.
- The **General Services Administration** launched a new [Supplier Base Dashboard](#) to provide more transparency and public reporting on federal efforts to increase the number of new entrants to the federal marketplace and reverse the general decline in the small business supplier base.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** obligated \$1.9 billion in contracts from FY 2021 through FY 2022 under the product service line set-asides for small business categories and AbilityOne programs.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** Office of Small Business Programs increased outreach events in FY 2022 by 80% from FY 2021, surpassing its goal of 50% by 2029, and saw an increase in participation from businesses in underserved communities by 10%.
- The **Small Business Administration** negotiated [contracting goals](#) with all 24 Chief Financial Officers Act agencies to drive more federal dollars to [SDB owners](#). [Dollars earned by SDBs](#) increased from \$62.4 billion in FY 2021 to a record \$69.9 billion in FY 2022, while the number of federal government procurement and contracting opportunities [went](#) from from \$89.5 billion in FY 2021 to \$99.5 billion in FY 2022.

Supporting Small Business Owners and New Entrepreneurs

- The **Department of Commerce** International Trade Administration (ITA) formulated an Agency Priority Goal (APG) to accelerate its digital transformation and enhance its U.S. Commercial Service arm through the Global Diversity Export Initiative (GDEI) to double the annual number of clients assisted, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises and businesses in the Nation’s underserved communities. ITA successfully served approximately 6,500 clients in underserved communities in FY 2022 and remains on track to meet its two-year target of 11,500 for FY 2023.
- To make services, data, and science accessible, the **Department of Commerce** U.S. Patent and Trademark Office launched the [First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program](#) focused on first-time patent filers who are individuals or small businesses qualifying as a “micro entity,” including those from underrepresented and/or under-resourced groups. Commerce also launched the [Community Resilience Estimates](#) program that helps measure the abilities of communities to absorb the external stresses of



a disaster or shock and provides users with a dashboard and data to understand the social vulnerability of their communities.

- To increase entrepreneurship and access to quality jobs for women, the **Department of Commerce** ITA's Women Accessing Global E-Commerce Initiative (WAGE) is dedicated to building the capacity of Women-Owned Businesses and entrepreneurs to engage in cross-border e-commerce to scale and create more jobs. To date, ITA has established seven strategic partnerships with organizations that provide training programs and counseling. Commerce Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) encouraged applicants to reach underserved communities, including women, through their awards, and nearly 90% of GJC grantees have investments that focus on uplifting women's access to good-paying jobs in America's workforce. Additionally, wraparound services are a key provision for all GJC awardees. Such support is essential for ensuring participants can access training and job opportunities. While childcare is not exclusively accessed by women, all 32 grantees have included childcare as a key area for supportive services in their projects.
- The **Department of Defense** launched the Military Spouse Employment Program Small Business training program, which brought in over 30 new small business employer partners.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** successfully launched the Small Business Customer Experience (SBCX) [procurement forecasting tool](#) and increased small business procurement opportunities. HHS established the SBCX system as the department-wide procurement forecasting tool for small businesses. It is designed to reduce barriers to entry for small businesses and increase competition. Use of this tool has generated over 5,000 procurement opportunities for FY 2023, which is double from the previous year.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** [Homeland Security Startup Studio \(HSSS\)](#) pairs the next generation of entrepreneurs with federally-funded, cutting-edge homeland security technologies to help move them from the lab to the market. In the 2023 cycle, HSSS received applications from 185 entrepreneurs, with 66% coming from those identifying as Black, Indigenous, or persons of color, and 29% coming from those identifying as women. Of the 30 entrepreneurs selected for the 2023 HSSS cohort, 30% identified as female and 57% identified as Black, Indigenous, or persons of color.
- The **Department of the Interior** collaborated with the **Department of Health and Human Services** to hold the first-ever joint industry day event focused on outreach to Indian-owned businesses. The event provided a learning opportunity for Indian-owned businesses to grow their understanding of the government contracting process and to hear from top executives from both agencies about upcoming business opportunities.
- In July 2022, the **Department of Transportation** issued a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) to modernize the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Airport Concession DBE (ACDBE) program regulations to help further level the playing field for SDBs.
- In November 2023, the **Department of Transportation** Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) held the sixth meeting of the [Women of Trucking Advisory](#)



[Board](#), whose work supports women pursuing careers in trucking, expands scholarship opportunities for women in the trucking industry, and enhance trucking training, mentorship, education, and outreach programs for women.

- In April 2023, the **Department of Transportation** in partnership with the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation convened the first ever [Green Shipping Corridor Network Collaborative Forum](#) with a variety of stakeholders to promote green shipping and environmental justice for the Great Lakes region.
- The **General Services Administration** debuted a new feature to foster more Native American business participation in the federal marketplace. GSA issued a [Guide to Using GSA Solutions](#) and debuted a new search feature that enables buyers to search for Native American business categories in the GSA Advantage!®, GSA eBuy, and GSA eLibrary e-tools to find commercial products and services. This will foster greater Native American business participation in the federal marketplace, help customers more easily meet Buy Indian Act needs, and strengthen the ability for Tribes to pursue intertribal commerce efforts.
- The **General Services Administration** published the first-ever [Supplier Diversity and Equity Action Plan](#) to support federal marketplace participation of SDBs.
- The **Small Business Administration** used its regulatory authority to create a new type of Small Business Lending Company (SBLC) called a Community Advantage Small Business Lending Company (CA SBLC), which provided for the conversion of Community Advantage (CA) Pilot lenders to fully licensed CA SBLCs with permanent 7(a) lending authority. Borrower data became integrated automatically and a high-quality customer service support system was made available. From FY 2022 to FY 2023, CA lending to underserved borrowers increased by 11% by total loan count and 23% by total loan dollars.
- The **Small Business Administration** partnered with the **General Services Administration** to create greater opportunities for [8\(a\)](#) program participants. The launch of the 8(a) [Multiple Award Schedule](#) (MAS) Pool increases 8(a) program participants' opportunities within the GSA's MAS Program.
- In 2023, the **Small Business Administration** and the **Office of Management and Budget** Office of Federal Policy Procurement (OFPP) rolled out new electronic tools to identify qualified businesses and measure the health of the industrial base, including the [Small Business Data HUB](#) and [GSA's Resources and Tools to Advance Equity in Procurement](#).

Increasing Access to Capital

- The **Department of Treasury** and the [Community Development Financial Institutions Fund](#) (CDFI Fund) have deployed historic amounts of capital to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs)—institutions that have a demonstrated track record of reaching financially underserved borrowers. In addition, through the Emergency Capital Investment Program



(ECIP), Treasury has made more than \$8.5 billion in investments in 175 community financial institutions, in addition to over \$1.73 billion in grants through the CDFI Equitable Recovery Program and a historic \$226 million investment in 68 Puerto Rican cooperativas, or cooperative community financial institutions. New ECIP reporting data made available in October 2023, reflecting lending in the final six months of 2022, showed that ECIP lenders originated a total of approximately \$26 billion in loans, of which approximately 75% went to low- and moderate-income borrowers, borrowers in rural communities, and other categories of qualified lending. Approximately one third of their total originations, \$8.6 billion, were “deep impact” loans made to the hardest-to-serve borrowers, including those that are low-income, residents on Tribal lands and in U.S. Territories, and owners of very small businesses.

- As of December 2023, the **Department of Treasury** has announced the approval of more than \$159 million in funding allocated to 63 Tribal governments under the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI).
- In October 2023, the **Department of Treasury** announced the availability of an additional \$75 million in competitive grant funding through the Investing in America Small Business Opportunity Program, available to SSBCI jurisdictions with a more specific focus on reaching very small and underserved businesses aligned with federal legislation such as infrastructure, manufacturing, and clean energy. Of the nearly \$10 billion program, \$2.5 billion in Capital Program funds is reserved to support underserved businesses and incentivize jurisdictions to reach underserved businesses. SSBCI investments are a key part of the Administration’s efforts to fuel the small business boom by providing small businesses and entrepreneurs the resources they need to succeed.
- The **Small Business Administration** advanced significant reforms to lending programs to improve equity in capital access. SBA opened a window from June 1 through July 31, 2023, for new applications for SBLC licenses for SBLCs, which have historically lent to businesses that have less access to capital, including Black, Latino, Native American, and rural entrepreneurs, at higher rates, and published simplified program rules to increase access and participation.
- The **Small Business Administration** improved access to business counseling, training, and services, strengthening the lines of communication with and support to underserved communities. SBA created the [Tribal College Small Business Achievement grant](#) to support Native American economic development; expanded [Veteran Business Outreach Centers](#) (VBOCs) Program from 22 to 28 locations, fully servicing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. The agency also promoted SBA programs and services to Black entrepreneurs and with [Operation HOPE](#) to provide financial literacy and resources for their efforts to create one million Black businesses; hosted outreach events with various federal agencies, including the new [Path to Prosperity](#) workshop series which served over 3,300 attendees from mostly rural areas; and signed Strategic Alliance Memorandums with: the [American Jewish Committee](#) to combat antisemitism; the [National Pan-Hellenic Council](#) to promote SBA programs and services to Black entrepreneurs; and [Operation HOPE](#) to provide financial literacy and resources for their efforts to create one million Black businesses.



- The **Small Business Administration** increased the number of community financial institutions enrolled in Lender Match to 236 in FY 2022. The agency exceeded its APG of enrolling 240 lenders by the end of FY 2023 by enrolling 254 vendors.
- On August 17, 2023, the **Small Business Administration** [finalized a rule](#) to encourage expanded participation by a more diverse range of fund managers across the nation by establishing a new fund-of-funds license, aligning terms to fit with patient and growth strategies, enabling smaller-sized funds to receive support; and by simplifying and streamlining licensing rules. Greater diversity in funds is proven to increase the diversity of underlying investments. In FY 2022, SBA's efforts led to a 29% increase in SBIC financing to Women-Owned, Minority-Owned, and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses from FY 2021.

Improving Worker Rights and Fair Pay

- To enforce wage and hour laws, in FY 2022, the **Department of Labor** Wage and Hour Division (WHD) developed a prototype equity index, a tool to identify underserved communities by geography. In FY 2023, the agency piloted application of the index as part of identifying where to strategically use its limited enforcement resources for maximum impact for the protection of low-wage vulnerable workers. In addition, the Department continues to develop and implement Memoranda of Understanding with federal, state, and local governments with a focus on maximizing the worker protections available by geography, data sharing, cross-training, referrals, coordinated enforcement, joint outreach, and compliance assistance.
- To prevent and address worker retaliation, in FY 2022, the **Department of Labor** WHD issued extensive internal guidance to its enforcement staff on processes and protocols when conducting retaliation investigations. In partnership with the DOL Solicitor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and National Labor Relations Board, the Department developed a list of best practices for employers to prevent and address retaliation relating to the laws that WHD enforces, and against workers who exercise their rights under the law. Since January 2021, WHD has concluded over 95 investigations focused on protecting workers from retaliation and working with the Solicitor's office to prosecute employers that retaliate in violation of the laws that WHD enforces. These 95 cases resulted in \$415,991 in back wages for 128 workers and remedies other than back wages, such as job reinstatement and the removal of negative points from personnel records, for 83 additional workers.
- To ensure equity in federal-state unemployment insurance (UI) systems, the **Department of Labor** announced awards of more than \$216.2 million in funds to 44 states and the District of Columbia to fund projects such as technology enhancements, claimant communications and outreach, translation services, data analysis to understand equity disparities, plain language initiatives, staff and backlog reductions, and workflow/customer journey analysis.



- The **Department of Labor** worked to increase technical assistance to improve its UI programs by providing Tiger Team consultative assessments to 30 states through FY 2023; through assessment of findings, ETA has delivered more than 100 equity-based recommendations to enhance access and improve economic security across state UI programs, and has developed a [Unemployment Insurance Equitable Access Toolkit](#), which is available to state UI agencies and publicly to all UI stakeholders.
- The **Department of Labor** Job Corps launched a pre-apprenticeship initiative to expand career opportunities and pathways for graduates to participate in registered apprenticeship programs in infrastructure, including clean energy and renewable energy manufacturing. There are currently 143 Corps instructors nationwide providing training towards renewable resources and energy.
- Pursuant to the implementation of the government-wide [National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality](#), the **Department of Labor** has developed an agency-specific plan outlining over 50 action items to reduce occupational segregation for women workers, increase equity in pay and hiring, increase access to benefits and knowledge of worker rights, and increase older women’s employment and economic security. To date, DOL has accomplished or is well underway to accomplishing all action items identified.
- The **Department of Labor** Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has implemented the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), connecting federal and private sector employees with students and recent graduates with disabilities from over 400 colleges and universities for internships and permanent positions. ODEP will continue to support student and recent graduate participation in WRP, including outreach to underserved communities, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Veterans Services offices, and leveraging federal and alliance partnerships.
- The **General Services Administration** established federal partnerships to advance equal opportunity in the construction trade workforce in partnerships with the **Department of Labor** on the [Mega Construction Project Program](#) and [Good Jobs Initiative \(GJI\)](#) to advance equal opportunity in the construction trade workforce and expand the use of Project Labor Agreements on federal projects by over \$35 million.
- In alignment with the [Good Jobs Principles](#), equity provisions have been embedded in all aspects of the **Department of Labor** GJI.
- The **Department of Labor** has entered into Memoranda of Understanding with the **Departments of Transportation, Energy, Commerce, and the Interior**; the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**; and the **General Services Administration** to engage in “cooperative efforts to build sustainable career pathways to meet industry’s need for talent and workers’ need for quality jobs,” and “to address barriers to opportunity and build an economy that empowers all people, including individuals from underserved communities.” Through these inter-agency partnerships, over \$181 billion in BIL funds include provisions that require, preference, or encourage job quality, worker empowerment, and equity in the use of these federal funds; and those incentives have been included in 91 Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs). As part of the Department’s strategy to advance equity, GJI will continue to provide technical



assistance on federal funding opportunities across the Investing in America Agenda to embed job quality, equity, and worker empowerment.

- Through the **General Services Administration**, [Login.gov](https://www.login.gov) partnered with federal agencies and state governments to provide secure, accessible identity verification services for benefits and emergency assistance programs. As an example, the **Department of Labor** pilot in Arkansas helped more than 19,000 citizens of the state verify their identities while applying for unemployment benefits.
- The **Office of Personnel Management** launched a new reporting capability (Power BI) to understand barriers in the hiring process, which includes reporting capabilities and dashboards, to expand federal agency access to and use of Post-Audit Applicant Flow Data (AFD). The use of Power BI expands beyond improved access to AFD and includes broad access to talent acquisition data for agencies and the public, as well as other OPM data products. OPM has established connectivity between most agencies and OPM's Power BI environment.
- The **Office of Personnel Management** is supporting Benefits Officers across government to advance financial security initiatives that seek to improve retirement readiness and financial literacy for members of underserved communities within the federal government. This effort is targeted at examining disparities in financial security outcomes across the federal government. OPM has collected data on existing financial literacy programs from relevant agencies across government and has conducted a rigorous literature review that focuses on summarizing evaluations of employer-based retirement and readiness for financial security. OPM is using this information to develop a financial literacy curriculum.
- The **Office of Personnel Management** issued employee wellness guidance in May 2023, that is designed to foster the mental, emotional, and physical prosperity of federal employees through workplace wellness tools and resources which can optimize both employee and organizational success, and launched a new Mindful FED governmentwide program. By reframing Employee Assistance Programs as wellness programs, OPM is striving to de-stigmatize the use of mental health services. OPM also has continued efforts to achieve mental health parity through access to mental health services offered by Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB), by working with Carriers to ensure mental health services are reimbursed similarly to physical health services.
- On April 19, 2023, the **Office of Personnel Management** hosted a virtual Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) National Engagement for federal and non-federal employees. The focus of the national virtual event was to share publicly available documents as exemplars to both the private and public sectors that promote promising practices and DEIA in the workforce, as well as highlight the 2023 Gender Identity Guidance, the DEIA Annual Report, and the Government-wide Strategic Plan for DEIA in the federal workforce.
- In December 2022, the **Office of Personnel Management** convened a three-day national event, "DEIA Summit 2022: A Whole-of-Government Approach to Disability Employment," to discuss promising practices and strategies to improve employment for people with disabilities in the federal workforce.



- Since July 2021, the **Office of Personnel Management** has led a DEIA Learning Community to support all federal agencies with implementing promising practices, and worked with agencies as they self-assessed the strengths and challenges related to DEIA practices within their own organizations. Learning community offerings are open to all federal employees and include webinars, newsletters, office hours, and 24-hour access to online resources, videos, and templates.
- In September 2022, the **Office of Personnel Management** established the Chief Diversity Officers Executive Council as a coordinated effort to embed DEIA principles across the federal government.
- In February 2023, the **Office of Personnel Management** released Government-wide DEIA: Our Progress and Path Forward to Building a Better Workforce for the American People, the inaugural annual report providing a government-wide perspective of DEIA progress.
- The **Office of Personnel Management** published Gender Identity Guidance to all agencies on Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31, 2023.
- In January 2023, the **Office of Personnel Management** issued guidance on internships and similar programs, including guidance to increase the availability of paid internships and reduce the practice of hiring interns, fellows, and apprentices who are unpaid.
- In January 2024, the **Office of Personnel Management** released a final regulation that prohibits the use of previous non-federal salary history when setting pay for federal jobs—an important step to help address gender and racial pay gaps, as well as attract and retain a qualified, effective workforce. And the **Federal Acquisition Regulatory (FAR) Council** issued a proposal to prohibit federal contractors and subcontractors from seeking and considering information about job applicants’ compensation history when hiring or setting pay for personnel working on or in connection with a government contract. In addition, the proposal would require federal contractors and subcontractors to disclose expected salary ranges in job postings, a policy that has been shown to reduce pay secrecy, help workers negotiate, and reduce pay gaps.
- On August 31, 2023, the **Office of Personnel Management** published final regulations implementing the Fair Chance to Compete For Jobs Act, pertaining to when, during the hiring process, a hiring agency can request information typically collected during a background investigation from an applicant for federal employment. The regulations expand the positions covered by the “ban the box” policy, which delays inquiries into an applicant’s criminal history until a conditional offer has been made.
- The ARP funded the **Department of Commerce** Economic Development Administration’s (EDA’s) \$1 billion Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) and \$500 million GJC program. For both programs, EDA has made geographic diversity a top priority, and for the first time in history, the Department has its own grant program that invests in industry-led workforce training and registered apprenticeships—focusing on underserved communities, including women and people of color.



Supporting Military Families and Veterans

- The **Department of Defense** worked to advance equity for military families who are members of underserved communities, including through increased investments and expanded programming in Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools, improving economic security and opportunities for military spouses, advancing health equity, and combating economic challenges experienced by military families related to housing and food insecurity.
- The **Department of Defense** also:
 - Hosted Teacher Leadership Academies with more than 150 participants across the DoDEA Europe, Americas, and Pacific regions.
 - Expanded the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN)-PLUS initiative to cover seven additional states, bringing the total number of states covered to 10.
 - Implemented the Basic Needs Allowance to provide an additional allowance to eligible families whose income was less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG).
 - Published DoD’s [Food Security Strategy and Roadmap](#) and completed 21 of its 30 actions.
 - Launched a self-guided financial well-being assessment tool to help Service members and their families assess their financial well-being and be referred to appropriate resources.
- The **Department of Agriculture’s** six-item measure for food security was added in its Status of Forces Surveys and Spouse Surveys for both the Active and Reserve Components to be able to measure and track food security challenges among all Service members and families.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** has expanded care for women veterans: Over the past two years, VA has [expanded breast cancer screenings and mammograms for Veterans with potential toxic exposures](#); [supported access to reproductive health services, including contraception, abortion counseling and—in certain cases—abortion care for Veterans and VA beneficiaries](#); [dramatically expanded one-on-one maternity care coordination](#) for women Veterans—the fastest growing cohort of Veterans at VA. Women [Veterans are also enrolling in VA health care](#) at higher rates under the PACT Act, and VA recently hosted its [first Women Veterans Experience Action Center](#), helping more than 340 women Veterans apply for the care and benefits they deserve.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** has reached a [new, historic agreement](#) with the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to improve quality of life for Black Veterans. Under this partnership, VA and the NAACP are working to increase the number of Black Veterans enrolled in VA health care, increase awareness of VA benefits and services among Black Veterans, and increase recruitment of culturally-competent providers at VA. VA and the NAACP also meet regularly, share expertise and knowledge, and coordinate on outreach to minority Veteran communities.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** has removed barriers to benefits for LGBTQ+



veterans. VA [closed a gap in benefits for survivors of LGBTQ Veterans](#), righting a wrong that was a legacy of the discriminatory federal ban on same-sex marriages. Previously, VA also [increased access to benefits](#) for Veterans who were given “Other Than Honorable” discharges due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and [more](#).

- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** increased access to care and benefits for Native American and Alaska Native Veterans. In April 2023, VA [announced](#) that eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans are no longer required to make copayments for health care and urgent care received through VA—making VA health care more accessible and affordable. VA also [lowered the interest rate](#) for [VA Native American Direct Loans](#) from 6% to 2.5%, making access to housing loans more affordable for Native American Veterans.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** updated its mission statement to include all Veterans. In March 2023, [VA updated its 1959 mission statement](#) to be inclusive of all those who have served in our nation’s military—including women veterans—and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors. The new mission statement is: “To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** increased service delivery to Veterans with Other Than Honorable discharges. Over the past 10 years, VA’s eligibility determination rate for Veterans with Other Than Honorable discharges has been 74%—meaning that 74% of those Veterans were granted benefits and/or healthcare. VA has also conducted extensive outreach to Veterans who received Other Than Honorable discharges, increasing the number of Veterans with Other Than Honorable discharges who applied for VA care or benefits from approximately 1,700 in 2012 to more than 10,000 in 2023.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** released new data showing that the PACT Act is helping eliminate disparities at VA. In September 2023, VA released its first [quarterly demographic supplement](#) to the [PACT Act dashboard](#), with data showing that the PACT Act is helping VA reach and serve all Veterans, including those in historically underserved communities. For example, American Indian/Alaska Native and Black Veterans are submitting PACT Act related claims at higher rates. Additionally, Asian, Black, Hispanic Veterans, Women Veterans, and the youngest Veterans are all enrolling in VA care at higher proportions than a comparable baseline.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** created a VBA Equity Assurance Office and Equity Assurance Plan to eliminate disparities in Veteran Benefits. In June 2023, VA announced that it has created a new Equity Assurance Office within VBA to eliminate any disparities in the delivery of earned benefits to Veterans—including disability benefits, housing benefits, GI Bill benefits, and much more. This office released an Equity Assurance Plan, which includes actions like requiring all VBA employees to take unconscious bias and implicit bias training and increasing recruiting from minority-serving institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** published an RFI on June 20, 2023, for the public to provide data and information on minority and historically underserved Veterans. VA’s Center for Minority Veterans will use this input to improve outreach, education,



engagement, enrollment, advocacy, and access programs for minority and historically underserved veterans.

- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** provided \$718,000 to 20 medical centers to implement and/or advance equity, quality improvement, and performance monitoring projects and initiatives. These efforts focus on a range of health equity-related topics including diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and hypertension management, as well as social determinants of health and Veteran perceptions of care and preventive services.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** implemented the PACT Act, the largest health care and benefit expansion in VA history. This law helps provide generations of Veterans with benefits and health care for exposure to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. To help ensure that implementation of the law leads to equitable outcomes for all Veterans, among other actions, VA has: translated the PACT Act fact sheets into 13 languages, with additional languages in process; launched VA.gov/PACT, a comprehensive public-facing resource for Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors; trained employees on the new law to better reach more Veterans; and used PACT Act authorities to hire and retain more staff, resulting in nearly a 12,000 net increase of employees who helped provide services to nearly 122,000 new enrollees and process over 900,000 claims.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** conducted Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC) events in Michigan, Texas, Montana, Colorado, California, Kentucky, Hawaii, American Samoa, and Guam that address and solve issues concerning access to VA care and benefits enrollment for Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. VEAC events provide peer-to-peer connections, resources and immediate help for Veterans at-risk for homelessness. In FY 2023, served 4,583 Veterans, their family members, caregivers, and survivors, including 837 women and 582 Veterans at-risk of homelessness. Of the 2,145 VEAC exit survey responses in FY 2023, 873 respondents identified as either American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and/or Hispanic or Latino—an increase of 41% over FY 2022. VA launched its first Pacific Region VEAC with a special emphasis on women Veterans, resulting in almost 30% increase in women Veteran engagement when compared to previous participation rates.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** enhanced the quarterly VA-Wide Trust Survey in October 2021, to capture voluntary, self-reported expanded demographic options for race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation to identify trust scores for underserved populations. These metrics are reported each quarter as part of VA's I*DEA APG for the FY 2022-2023 cycle; from the first quarter of FY 2022 through the third quarter of FY 2023, statistically significant increases in trust occurred across 10 of the 26 enhanced demographic domains. When comparing the third quarter of FY 2022 trust scores with the third quarter of FY 2023 trust scores, VA saw statistically significant increases across 19 of the 26 domains.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** hosted the Here for H.E.R. (Hope. Education. Resources.) symposium in partnership with HUD, HHS, and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. The symposium shared information about Women's Health Transition Training, an overview of women's health, Vet Center services for women



Veterans, fraud prevention, how to apply for benefits, an update on the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT Act), and information on benefits and support unique to the Women Veteran Special Emphasis Program.

- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** [VA I*DEA Council](#) was chartered on June 22, 2023, by the VA Operations Board, which is chaired by the Deputy Secretary. The I*DEA Council serves as the Agency Equity Team, to enable enterprise action and accountability through planning, advising, and monitoring, and will review and lead implementation activities to guarantee alignment with the VA FY 2022-2028 Strategic Plan, the VA Secretary's strategic priorities, and other equity-related objectives.

Addressing Barriers to Equity for Underserved Farmers

- The **Department of Agriculture** launched the USDA's Rural Partners Network (RPN) in April 2022, and expanded it in November 2022, to include 36 community networks across 10 states and Puerto Rico. The RPN is an all-of-government place-based program that brings together 20 federal agencies and regional commissions to help rural communities access resources and funding to create jobs, build infrastructure, and support long-term economic stability on their own terms. In May 2023, \$394 million in awards were [announced to provide loans and grants to support 52 projects](#) to support long-term visions for strong local economies.
- The **Department of Agriculture** has helped more than 30,000 farmers and ranchers who were in financial distress stay on their farms and farming, thanks to resources provided through IRA Section 22006. The IRA allocated \$3.1 billion for USDA to provide relief for distressed borrowers with certain direct and guaranteed loans, and to expedite assistance for those whose agricultural operations are at financial risk due to factors outside their control, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the law was signed in August 2022, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) has provided over \$1.9 billion and counting in immediate assistance (as of December 31, 2023).
- The **Department of Agriculture** expanded its Equity Commission by adding a Rural Community Economic Development Subcommittee, and moved towards implementing the Commission's recommendations. USDA's Equity Commission is an independent body, now with 41 Commission and Subcommittee members charged with evaluating USDA programs and services and developing recommendations on how the Department can reduce barriers. The Department's implementation will ensure everyone has a fair shot at resources, begin closing the racial wealth gap, and address longstanding inequities in agriculture. In February 2023, the Commission issued 32 interim recommendations, and in October 2023, finalized its work by voting on a total of 66 recommendations that will be included in the final report to be published in 2024.
- The **Department of Agriculture** increased land, capital, and market access for underserved producers. In June 2023, the Department announced the investment of approximately \$300 million to fund 50 innovative projects with non-profit, academic, and other partners to help improve access to land, capital, and markets for underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. The Increasing Land, Capital, and Market



Access (Increasing Land Access) Program, funded by the IRA, works to increase access to farm ownership opportunities; improve results for those with heirs' property or fractionated land; increase access to markets and capital that affect the ability to access land; and improve land ownership, land succession, and agricultural business planning.

- The **Department of Agriculture** simplified the direct farm loan application process. Approximately 26,000 producers submit direct loan applications to FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. In response, FSA implemented a [simplified direct farm loan application process](#) in February 2023, drastically reducing the burden and time spent on its forms, which shrank from 10 different forms with 29 pages of paperwork to a single 13-page document (including a cover page and checklist for the applicant's information). The new form is estimated to save nearly half the time needed for completion. FSA has also [rolled out](#) a [loan assistance tool](#) that helps farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process.
- In FY 2022, the **Department of Agriculture** Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) invested \$50 million in Racial Justice and Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements. 118 partners were selected for two-year projects that support underserved farmers and ranchers with climate-smart agriculture and forestry by expanding the delivery of conservation assistance. In February 2023, NRCS opened up a second round of cooperative agreement funding, of up to \$70 million, seeking applications for two-year projects that encourage participation in NRCS programs, especially in underserved communities and among urban and small-scale producers.

Expanding Access to Grants

- To promote equity in the [Nonprofit Security Grant Program \(NSGP\)](#), which provides funding for physical security enhancements to nonprofit organizations, including houses of worship, that are at high risk of terrorist attack, in FY 2023, the **Department of Homeland Security's** Federal Emergency Management Agency advanced considerations of equity in awarding NSGP funding by adding up to 15 additional points to the scores of organizations that demonstrate how they serve an underserved community or population or that are located within an underserved community. Additionally, applicants who had never received NSGP funding had 15 points added to their project score (a scoring metric continued from FY 2022).
- In the 2022 Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) FOA, the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) under the **Department of Labor** required applicants to propose strategies to achieve economic opportunity and address historical inequities. A full 10% of applicants' scores were based on ability to serve historically underserved communities and how they will serve communities not currently being served by an HVRP grant. VETS also conducted an HVRP FOA Service Delivery Area Analysis and developed a strategy to conduct a pre-FOA release outreach and education campaign for stakeholders; conducted personal outreach to specific areas identified in the Service Delivery Area analysis as underserved or underrepresented; and provided a



technical assistance seminar for applicants. VETS has conducted a similar review in FY 2023 and will continue this process in FY 2024.

- In October 2022, the **Department of Transportation** released a guide on [Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making](#) to help funding recipients meaningfully involve the public in various stages of transportation decision-making and build their organizational capacities to do so.
- In FY 2022, applicants representing disadvantaged communities accounted for about a quarter of new applicants to the **Department of Transportation** programs. This sets the baseline for increasing the number of new applicants from disadvantaged communities by 5% by FY 2025.
- In March 2022, the **Department of Transportation** piloted a [new approach](#) of releasing combined Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) to streamline the process for applicants applying for multiple discretionary grant programs.
- In April 2022, the **Department of Transportation** launched [federal partnerships](#) with key agencies making place-based technical assistance investments.
- In June 2022, the **Department of Transportation** released the [DOT Navigator](#), a new one-stop shop for communities to access DOT technical assistance and capacity building resources, and to get more information to help them apply for DOT funding.
- In October 2022, the **Department of Transportation** launched the [Thriving Communities Program](#) and awarded \$21 million to four Thriving Communities capacity builders in April 2023, which will support 64 communities in 42 states, including six Tribal Nations and Puerto Rico. These awards will provide hands-on technical assistance to underserved and overburdened communities and support place-based initiatives that are co-designed with communities most impacted by poor access and climate change.
- In May 2023, the **Department of Transportation** launched an online DOT [Discretionary Grants Dashboard](#) to make it easier for communities to search the full set of federal transportation grant programs and find those that may align with local needs.
- In July 2023, the **Department of Transportation** announced a first-of-its-kind [philanthropic collaboration](#) with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to leverage and expand technical assistance opportunities for DOT grantees and potential applicants to deepen community engagement, resource community-based organizations, and build local capacity.
- To build the capacity of communities with environmental justice concerns, the **Environmental Protection Agency** established an [Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers program \(EJ TCTACs\)](#) that will provide - free of charge and without the need for any application - tens of thousands of communities and other environmental justice stakeholders with technical assistance such as for grant proposal writing, grant management, effective implementation of projects and grant resources, reporting, etc.
- The Environmental Protection Agency established and operationalized the [National Network of EJ Thriving Community Grantmakers](#) (EJ TCGM). The EJ TCGM program



will build a nation-wide network of Grantmakers that will provide subgrants to communities in their regional coverage areas in amounts between \$100, 000 to \$350,000. These subgrants will essentially replace EPA's traditional grant programs such as the EJ Small Grants, which would provide such small levels of support directly to communities through a traditional government grant competition and award process. EPA plans to make at least eleven Grantmaker awards across the United States with \$50 million each, of which at least \$40 million must be directly sub-awarded to capacity-constrained communities. EPA anticipates that over the next three years the Grantmakers will make approximately 2,000 subawards in the amounts cited. EPA has announced the eleven (11) recipients of the EJ TCGM awards totaling \$600 million.

- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** reduced administrative burden on grant applicants and ensured consistency and compliance with federal regulations by standardizing NASA's NOFO template.
- The **National Science Foundation** and the Asian American Foundation collaborated to support the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders by introducing the "Demystifying Federal Grants" webinar series. This series was created to provide valuable knowledge and practical advice to assist community-based organizations in successfully applying for federal grants and accessing resources.
- Under the \$50 billion CHIPS Act, the **Department of Commerce** will strengthen and revitalize the U.S. position in semiconductor research, development, and manufacturing and create hundreds of thousands of good jobs that can change lives, offer family-sustaining benefits, and lead to long-term careers. For example, with \$500 million, the Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs) program will drive regional technology-centric growth by leveraging existing innovation capacity to catalyze the creation of good jobs in the industries of the future for American workers at all skill levels, equitably and inclusively. With \$200 million, the Recompete Pilot program will provide grants to eligible communities to alleviate persistent economic distress, supporting long-term comprehensive economic development and job creation.



EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Improving and Expanding Education Access for K-12 Students

- The **Department of Education** implemented Maintenance of Equity ARP Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSER) requirements to ensure historically underserved students have the state and local resources necessary for continued recovery.
- The **Department of Education** continues to work with states to provide technical assistance using the \$19 billion in Title I funding to sustain key activities funded by ARP, such as increasing academic achievement, supporting students' mental health, expanding access to preschool, and strengthening teacher recruitment and retention.
- The **Department of Education** invested in resources to help advance civil rights to identify inequities in educational opportunities:
 - The Department's Office for Civil Rights ([OCR](#)) has remained committed to advancing equity for underrepresented and disadvantaged student groups and ensuring compliance with civil rights laws within its authority. OCR released fact sheets addressing [migratory children](#), [unaccompanied children](#), students who are [English learners](#), diversity and inclusion activities [under Title VI](#) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), and [Title VI](#) protection from discrimination based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.
 - OCR also released a [Press Release](#) reminding schools of their legal obligations to address discrimination, a [Resource Document](#) on confronting racial discrimination in student discipline, and [Guiding Principles](#) for creating safe, inclusive, supportive, and fair school climates. Additionally, the Department released a [Toolkit](#) for creating inclusive and nondiscriminatory school environments for LGBTQI+ students.
- The **Department of Education** funded 264 grants with \$1 billion in Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) funds to more than 40 states to increase the supply of school-based mental health professionals under the [School-Based Mental Health Services Grant](#) and the [Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program \(MHSPD\)](#). At least 40 states used "high poverty" in their definition of high-needs school. The Department estimates these five-year grants will result in an increase of 14,000 mental health professionals. In FY 2023, nearly 50% of the MHSPD grants include a partnership with MSIs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), or Tribal Colleges. In a [letter](#) to state education agencies (SEAs) the department encouraged states prioritize funding for districts with high rates of poverty and one of the following: a high student-to-mental health professional ratio; high rates of chronic absenteeism, exclusionary discipline, and/or referrals to the juvenile justice system, bullying/harassment, community and school violence, or substance abuse; or students who recently experienced a natural disaster or traumatic event.
- The **Department of Education** designated the \$1 billion from the BSCA as the [Stronger Connections Grant Program](#). This enables SEAs to competitively award subgrants to



high-need local education agencies (LEAs) for activities to support safe and healthy students under Elementary and Secondary Education Act Section 4108.

Expanding Procurement, Grant Opportunities, and Pathway Programs at HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs

- The **Department of Agriculture** announced a \$262.5 million investment to support 33 projects across U.S. institutions of higher education designed to train the next generation of diverse agricultural professionals. Through the USDA [NextGen program](#), the projects are led by 1890 land-grant institutions (historically Black land-grant universities), 1994 land-grant institutions (Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)), Alaska Native-Serving Institutions and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and institutions of higher education located in the Insular Areas. This historic investment will provide training and support to more than 20,000 future food and agricultural leaders through 33 projects executed by more than 60 institutions across 24 U.S. states and Insular Areas.
- To address harmful biases throughout the Artificial Intelligence (AI) system lifecycle, in May 2023, the **Department of Commerce** through the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the **National Science Foundation** launched the [Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law and Society \(TRAILS\)](#), a partnership between the University of Maryland, George Washington University, and Morgan State University. NIST and NSF will invest \$20 million over five years for TRAILS to focus on how ethics and human rights can drive AI development and governance. Importantly, a key pillar of TRAILS will be input and feedback from marginalized communities.
- The **Department of Defense** established the first HBCU-led University Affiliated Research Center at Howard University in Tactical Autonomy in January 2023.
- The **Department of Defense** awarded 82 grants to HBCUs/MSIs researchers totaling \$61.7 million, which represents a record amount of research grants given to HBCUs and MSIs.
- The **Department of Defense** placed 114 interns at 13 defense laboratories and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) organizations through the DoD HBCU/MSI Summer Research Internship program in Summer 2023.
- The **Department of Defense** sponsored six town halls in collaboration with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to facilitate discussions on equitable research and the educational partnerships necessary to advance HBCUs/MSIs involvement in defense research activities.
- The **Department of Defense** conducted an Opportunities Workshop and Intern Seminar for over 400 participants to expand awareness of DoD opportunities, provide a platform for collaboration, and encourage greater participation in the Department's initiatives to support national security functions and the defense mission.
- The **Department of Defense** hosted three successful Taking the Pentagon to the People educational outreach events during FY 2023 at the University of California at Riverside, a joint event at Tuskegee and Alabama State Universities, and Arizona State University.



- The **Department of Defense** [announced the establishment of four new research centers of excellence](#) at MSIs of higher education, as part of its Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-serving Institutions Research and Education Program. The awards total \$40 million and will enhance research programs and capabilities in critical scientific and engineering disciplines, while expanding the capacity of HBCUs and MSIs to participate in DoD research programs and activities. These awards will also increase the number of graduates in Science, Technology, Education, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, including those from under-represented minorities, which is critically important to the Department's mission.
- The **Department of Education** worked to secure a significant increase in appropriations for programs to strengthen HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs in the FY 2023 budget. The Department issued Notices Inviting Applications for and awarded a number of Title III/V grant programs to strengthen HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs, including Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) and HSIs over the last year, and published the Notices Inviting Applications for the new \$50 million HBCU, TCU, and MSI Research Funding grant this summer, which aims to provide funds to implement transformational investments in research infrastructure, including research productivity, faculty expertise, graduate programs, physical infrastructure, human capital development, and partnerships leading to increases in external funding.
- To increase participation in the **Department of Energy** research and development and financial assistance programs, in FY 2022, the agency awarded \$30 million in financial assistance to MSIs in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington. These grants help to develop highly qualified STEM students and foster a well-trained, technically skilled, and inclusive workforce.
- In FY 2022, the **Department of Energy** Office of Science (SC) launched the [Reaching a New Energy Sciences Workforce \(RENEW\)](#) initiative to establish a more targeted and intentional approach to building foundations to support undergraduate and graduate student training opportunities and support institutions historically underrepresented in the SC research portfolio. In FY 2022, SC announced 41 RENEW awards totaling \$32 million to 37 institutions, including 24 MSIs. In FY 2023, SC issued seven RENEW solicitations and awarded \$70 million in funding to 65 institutions, including 40 MSIs.
- In FY 2023, the **Department of Energy** SC launched the [Funding for Accelerated, Inclusive Research \(FAIR\) initiative](#) to build research capacity, infrastructure, and expertise at non-R1 institutions and support mutually beneficial relationships between MSIs and emerging research institutions and partner institutions. SC has announced \$37 million in funding for 52 projects to 44 institutions to perform basic research in applied mathematics, biology, chemistry, computer science, engineering, geoscience, isotope research, materials science, and physics.
- As a result of the increased outreach and engagement with MSI communities and support for funding mechanisms aimed at increasing MSI participation, the **Department of Energy** SC significantly increased the participation of MSIs as lead institutions in the Department's funding opportunities in FY 2022 over FY 2021 levels. For example, SC more than doubled the number of research grants to HBCUs as the lead institution in FY 2022 (from 15 awards in FY 2021 to 35 awards in FY 2022). SC nearly doubled the level



of funding support for research awards to HSIs from FY 2021 levels (from \$58 million in FY 2021 to \$109 million in FY 2022). SC nearly doubled the number of new awards to HSIs in FY 2022 (from 171 awards in in FY 2021 to 136 awards in FY 2022).

- In FY 2023, the **Department of Energy** SC established a requirement that all research proposals submitted to SC include a plan for Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Research (PIER). PIER Plans describe the strategies and activities the applicants will incorporate into their research projects to promote opportunity, inclusion, and access to STEM research and training for individuals from all backgrounds. PIER Plans are evaluated as part of the merit review process.
- To support university training and research programs, in June 2023, the **Department of Energy** announced up to \$17.7 million in available funding for five different areas of interest, including establishing multi-institution collaborations for student exchanges from MSIs, new academic curricula related to geosciences, and supporting interdisciplinary training in humanities-driven STEM fields.
- In April 2023, the **Department of Energy** announced its awards for the University Nuclear Leadership Program (UNLP) scholarship and fellowship opportunities, which provided 17 undergraduate scholarships to eight MSIs, totaling \$170,000, and awarded three graduate fellowships to two MSIs, totaling \$507,000.
- The **Department of Energy** initiated a STEM pilot program (Faculty Applied Clean Energy Science) to offer a unique opportunity to foster the growth of STEM faculty from MSIs through exposure to the National Lab systems. By providing valuable on-site experiences, fostering collaboration, and developing scalable educational modules, the program aims to expand DOE funding opportunities for MSI faculty.
- The **Department of Energy** National Nuclear Security Administration MSI Internship program successfully supported 96 student interns to build sustainable STEM pipelines that prepare a diverse workforce of world class talent through strategic partnerships between MSIs, including TCUs, and the nuclear security enterprise.
- The **Department of Energy** [Apprenticeships for Complete and Committed Employment for Specialized Skills](#) (ACCESS) program, which focuses on skills development to meet ongoing and emerging technician and skilled craft trades needs at National Laboratories and covered facilities, awarded two five-year grants totaling \$2.17 million to Hardinge Inc. and the Association of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Local 412. Hardinge, located in Elmira, NY, will receive \$978,053 for the project Level Up @ Hardinge, which will recruit and train apprentices in advanced manufacturing for workforces at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, as well as the Kansas City National Security Campus and the Y-12 National Security Complex. The Albuquerque, NM–based Journeyman and Apprentices Association will receive \$1,194,460 for the project New Mexico National Labs Apprenticeship Partnership. The partnership will train HVAC/R (heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration) technicians for Sandia National Laboratories and pipefitters for LANL.
- The **Department of Energy** in partnership with the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** launched a Weatherization Workforce Development Pilot in February



2023 to enhance impact in four communities: Lowell, MA; Roanoke, VA; Chicago, IL; and Warner Robins, GA. The program connects HUD residents to weatherization jobs within Community Action Agencies, and sets up residents for careers in green construction.

- The **Department of Energy** National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory manage the [NNSA Graduate Fellowship Program](#) (NGFP) and partner with MSIs to recruit highly qualified and diverse students for this program. In 2021, 28% of applicants hired through this program were from underrepresented minority groups. In 2023, that number increased to 45%, an increase of 17%. The diversity of the applicant pool increased, and, as a result, the number of diverse fellows has meaningfully increased over the past two years. NGFP developed a diverse team of University Relationship Managers to assist with outreach at MSIs. This approach resulted in 20% of all applications being submitted from an MSI.
- In May 2023, the **Department of Energy** [released its HBCU Clean Energy Education Prize](#). This competition, with \$7.75 million in cash prizes, will help HBCU institutions develop programming to strengthen the participation of K-12 and community college students in STEM and other associated fields that can lead to potential careers in clean energy industries. It will also give HBCUs the opportunity to create enhanced curricula and programs that will provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students and establish partnerships that lead to career opportunities in clean energy.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** established HBCU-Connect, a new initiative with HBCUs. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, an Institute within HHS National Institutes of Health (NIH), developed the initiative to inspire the development of environmental health science leaders from diverse backgrounds. HBCU-Connect is a multifaceted effort to strengthen ties between the institute and faculty and students at academic institutions that are often underrepresented in the sciences.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** Science and Technology Directorate's (S&T's) MSI Program serves to foster and cultivate diverse, university-based research capacity building and workforce development opportunities. These opportunities prepare motivated students and faculty at MSIs to grow and develop through research contributions to the homeland security enterprise. In 2023, S&T awarded approximately \$9.7 million dollars to 20 MSIs to support these goals.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** S&T's Coastal Resilience Center (CRC), a DHS Center of Excellence led by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, leads projects to advance equity in resilience, emergency planning, and response and recovery. CRC has created and institutionalized successful and expanding educational programs at several MSIs, including Jackson State University, Tougaloo College, Johnson C. Smith University, and the University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez. These educational programs serve to train the next generation of coastal resilience professionals in coastal infrastructure resilience, disaster studies, and coastal studies.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** launched the [Bridge Program](#) to increase diversity in NASA's STEM workforce and build capacity at HBCUs and MSIs.



- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** increased the grant award amount to HBCUs between FY 2021 and FY 2022 by 39.9%, or \$1.36 million.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** awarded eight proposals totaling \$11 million over three years to HBCUs to build data science networks with Earth science data, as part of NASA's [Minority University Research and Education Project](#) (MUREP).

Supporting College Access and Completion

- In the wake of the Supreme Court ruling this summer limiting the ability of colleges to consider an applicant's race in and of itself as a factor in deciding whether to admit an applicant, the **Department of Education** provided colleges and universities with [resources](#) on what admissions practices and programs remain lawful to promote diversity, convened a National Summit on Educational Opportunity, and released a [report](#) on strategies for increasing diversity and educational opportunity. The Department also awarded over \$40 million in GEAR UP and TRIO Upward Bound grants in FY 2023 for programs focused on helping low-income students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities gain access to college.
- The **Department of Education** worked to secure a [\\$500 increase in the maximum Pell Grant](#) award, the largest increase in 10 years, in the FY 2023 Omnibus Appropriations bill and awarded \$22 million in grants to colleges to address students' basic needs, including food, housing, transportation, and childcare earlier this fiscal year.
- The **Department of Education** has implemented a number of efforts over the last year to ease repayment and reduce debt burden for student loan borrowers, which disproportionately impacts low-income students and students of color, including recently approving an additional \$9 billion in debt relief through fixes to [income-driven repayment \(IDR\) plan](#) and Public Student Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) programs and granting automatic relief for borrowers with total and permanent disabilities, bringing the total approved debt cancellation to \$132 billion for over 3.6 million Americans. The Department also rolled out initial implementation of the [SAVE plan](#) this fall, which is the most affordable repayment plan ever created, and has already enrolled more than 4 million borrowers.
- The **Department of Education** re-launched [the Raise the Bar: Attaining College Excellence & Equity](#) initiative with a summit this spring focused on data-driven improvement efforts to equitably increase completion rates for students of color and low-income students, published the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) for the [Postsecondary Student Success Grants](#) this summer, which the Department worked to increase from its initial appropriation of \$5 million to \$45 million this year, and renewed [Project Success](#), which provides funding to HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs through Federal Student Aid in partnership with Guaranty Agencies to increase completion rates and decrease default rates.
- The **Department of Education** reinstated the Financial Student Aid Office of Enforcement, which was closed under the previous Administration, to better protect



student loan borrowers by ensuring that schools are adhering to the federal student aid program rules and delivering quality education to students.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Protecting Overburdened Communities from Pollution and Environmental Harms

- In September 2023, the **Department of Agriculture** Forest Service announced up to \$1 billion in direct federal support, under the IRA, to local communities for urban tree-planting and maintenance through the [Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry \(UCF\) program](#). 100% of the awards will go to disadvantaged communities across the country. This historic funding will support projects throughout the U.S. to improve public health, increase access to nature, build climate resilience, and deliver tangible economic and ecological benefits. This funding supplements \$250 million previously awarded to state and territory forestry agencies in April 2023.
- The [IRA](#) provided the **Department of Commerce** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with \$3.3 billion to build on its commitment to help Americans—including Tribes and other underserved communities—prepare, adapt, and build resilience to weather and climate events; improve supercomputing capacity and research; strengthen NOAA's hurricane hunter aircraft and fleet; and upgrade NOAA facilities.
- To advance equity for communities around military installations and bases, the **Department of Defense** closed 13 FY 2021 Cooperative Agreements in the fourth quarter of 2023. At the beginning of the second quarter of 2023, the OSD finalized and approved the FY 2023 Short List of [Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program](#) (NALEMP) projects and budgets for 14 Federally Recognized Tribes. The Short List is a list of Tribes with eligible sites that have been approved for NALEMP funding to address past DoD environmental impacts on Indian lands and other locations where DoD, an Indian tribe, and the current landowner agree that such mitigation is appropriate.
- The **Department of Defense** completed over half of the Preliminary Assessments/Site Inspections (PAs/SIs) at 707 installations where DoD may have used or potentially released per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs). DoD obligated \$2 billion through FY 2022 to conduct PFAS-related drinking water mitigation, investigations, and cleanup on its installations, as well as in nearby communities.
- The **Department of Defense** awarded three non-construction planning and organization assistance grants to Guam in FY 2022 totaling \$2.3 million to address cumulative DoD socioeconomic and environmental impacts in Guam.
- The **Department of Defense** provided approximately \$218 million in appropriated funding for outside-the-fence investments in Guam, including a cultural repository (\$12 million), a public health lab (\$32 million), upgrades to the Northern District Wastewater Treatment Plant (\$139.3 million), Interceptor Sewer Refurbishment (\$30.6 million), the Northern Guam Lens Aquifer Monitoring System (\$3.7 million), and surface transportation network improvements (\$212 million). All projects are estimated to be completed by 2025.



- The **Department of Energy** announced on July 6, 2023, nine states and three Tribal communities as the third cohort to receive a combined total of \$207.6 million in [Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grants](#) including the Metlakatla Indian Community (Annette Island Reserve), the Native Village of Eagle, and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota.
- Since FY 2021, the **Environmental Protection Agency** issued over 133 orders to address drinking water violations in communities, particularly in communities with environmental justice concerns, such as Cahokia Heights, Illinois; Clarksburg, West Virginia; and Jackson, Mississippi; and in Tribal areas.
- In March 2022, the **Environmental Protection Agency** reached a settlement with Chevron Phillips Chemical Company to install and operate air pollution controls at three petrochemical manufacturing facilities in Texas located in areas of environmental justice concern. Monitoring results will be publicly posted, and corrective actions are required if emissions exceed certain thresholds.
- In August 2022, the **Environmental Protection Agency**, following negotiations that considered concerns voiced by the local community, secured a preliminary injunction for the Toa Alta Municipal Solid Waste Landfill to take immediate action to address urgent human health and environmental concerns.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** issued two Clean Air Act emergency orders to shut down the Limetree Refinery in the U.S. Virgin Islands (June 2021) where residents were sickened by excess sulfur and hydrogen sulfide emissions, and to cut hydrogen sulfide emissions from the New Indy plant in South Carolina (May 2021).
- The **Environmental Protection Agency**, in developing the final nitrogen oxides (NOx) emission standards for trucks, conducted analyses of the number and demographics of the populations living within close proximity to truck freight routes. The [final rule](#) will likely result in widespread air quality improvements across the U.S., especially in areas already overburdened by air pollution and diesel emissions, beginning with model year 2027.
- In July 2023, the **Environmental Protection Agency** issued proposed rules to strengthen lead paint standards to protect against childhood lead exposure.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** awarded \$900 million in funding for [Clean School Buses](#) to support replacing existing school buses with zero-emission or low-emission buses that reduce exhaust, which is linked to asthma.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** announced the allotment of \$2.865 billion in FY 2023 funds from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for identification and replacement of lead service lines (LSLs). As part of the Lead Service Line Replacement Accelerators, EPA and four state partners are working with 40 communities to address existing barriers and accelerate progress towards LSL identification and replacement.
- In December 2021, the **Environmental Protection Agency** deployed more than \$1 billion from the BIL for cleanup activities at more than 100 Superfund National Priorities List sites across the country. EPA started 81 new cleanup projects in 2022, including projects at 44 sites previously on the backlog. By starting four times as many construction projects as the year before, EPA is aggressively bringing more sites across



the country closer to finishing cleanup. In February 2023, EPA announced the second wave of approximately \$1 billion in funding from the BIL to start new cleanup projects at 22 Superfund sites and expedite other ongoing cleanups across the country.

- The **Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Direct Technical Assistance** (BRIC DTA) initiative, integrates climate change adaptation and disaster loss reduction into broader community and economic development initiatives in selected underserved communities through partnerships. In FY 2022, FEMA awarded \$23 million federal cost share with the Village of DePue, Illinois Wastewater Treatment Plant Rebuild to build a new plant on village property outside of the floodway and floodplain. In FY 2022, FEMA awarded \$2.51 million federal cost share with Danville School District Safe Room, located in an economically disadvantaged rural community in Arkansas because it had no protection for its students during severe wind and tornado events. Through BRIC DTA, Danville will build an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant, multi-purpose safe room next to the elementary school, with space for 1,126 students and staff, including six wheelchair spaces, during dangerous storms. The project should also help improve stormwater management and reduce future risk of flash flooding by including nature-based solutions, such as permeable pavement.

Promoting the Latest Science, Data, and Research to Better Address Environmental Justice Concerns

- The **Department of Transportation** through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began tracking the number of residential and non-residential displacements to ensure displacements, especially in communities with environmental justice concerns, are reduced across all projects and that mitigation measures are in place to minimize impacts of relocation.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** developed and operationalized a Cumulative Impacts Framework in EPA's programs and activities. The agency issued [Cumulative Impacts Research: Recommendations for EPA's Office of Research and Development](#), which provides recommendations for EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) cumulative impacts research to improve scientific methods and tools, and EPA [Legal Tools to Advance Environmental Justice: Cumulative Impacts Addendum](#), an assessment of EPA's legal authorities to consider and address cumulative impacts.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** [awarded \\$21.4 million in research grant funding](#) to 16 institutions for community-based research on how climate change may compound adverse environmental conditions and health stressors in communities with environmental justice concerns.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** [issued STAR grant awards](#) to establish Centers for Early Lifestage Vulnerabilities to Environmental Stressors—Cumulative Health Impacts to investigate cumulative health impacts for children in rural agricultural communities with environmental justice concerns.



- The **Environmental Protection Agency** has integrated participatory (community) science in its released [Using Participatory Science at EPA: Vision and Principles](#), a strategic approach to using participatory science (also known as citizen science, community science, volunteer monitoring, and public participation in scientific research) to strengthen environmental protection, and produced [resource materials](#) (Quality Assurance Toolkit) to support the use of participatory science, such as through [\\$53 million in funding for 132 air monitoring projects in 37 states](#) and [seven approximately \\$75,000 Environmental Justice Small Grant awards](#) to help communities to engage in collaborative efforts to reduce diesel pollution at ports and railyards.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** awarded [39 environmental justice proposals totaling \\$6.9 million](#) for up to three years. These proposals included topics of air quality, climate hazards, and extreme heat.

Strengthening Engagement with Communities and Supporting Capacity Building

- The **Department of Commerce** made available nearly \$535 million in [Justice40 Initiative](#) funding for technical assistance and capacity building to support communities. Through the [Urban Heat Island Mapping](#), [Community Climate Studies Program](#), and the Climate Adaptation Partnerships Program, funds will help center environmental justice in the Department's decision-making. NOAA conducted two technical assistance outreach events, five Tribal Consultations, and addressed 50 related RFIs and listening sessions.
- The **Department of the Interior's** [Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization \(AMLER\) Program](#) made FY 2022 grants available to the six Appalachian states and three Tribal communities with Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Programs to return legacy coal mining sites to productive use and foster economic and community development. Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia each received \$26.63 million; Alabama, Ohio, and Virginia were each allocated \$10.652 million; while the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Crow Tribe were each allocated \$3.551 million.
- The **Department of Treasury** is implementing a variety of tax incentives and provisions in the IRA to build a clean energy economy. The IRA increases the amount of the Investment Tax Credit available for solar and wind facilities built in low-income communities, on Indian Land, or directly serving low-income households, as well as additional place-based incentives such as the energy community bonus for eligible investments in legacy coal and energy communities.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** [announced \\$128 million](#) for environmental justice projects across the country through the Thriving Communities EJ Collaborative Problem Solving and Government to Government grant programs launched in FY 2023; the programs support communities and their governmental partners in establishing strong collaborative efforts to identify solutions to priority equity and justice challenges facing the community.



- The **Department of Commerce** NOAA has co-produced seven regional pilot projects with communities across the country to address local environmental challenges, including flooding, heat, coastal inundation, and other climate change issues. Each regional pilot responds directly to feedback received from partners during climate and equity roundtable discussions. Pilots will take a unique, place-based approach to helping vulnerable communities better understand, prepare for, and respond to climate change. All pilot programs will wrap up by the end of 2025.



CIVIL RIGHTS

Advancing Civil Rights

- The **Department of Agriculture** transformed the Department’s civil rights complaint process by building capacity and improving timeliness. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights has drastically improved the timeliness of its processing of civil rights complaints by customers, including investigations, decision making, and appeals, and has built the capacity to further reduce processing time for new USDA customer discrimination complaints from three years to 225 days, going forward.
- The **Department of Justice** is strengthening efforts to ensure compliance and enforcement of non-discrimination laws. Following review of implementation and administrative enforcement of the non-discrimination provisions set forth in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Safe Streets Act in connection with federal financial assistance, the Department is taking affirmative steps to improve this work. For example, the Civil Rights Division (and the Office of Justice Programs (OJP)) created and co-chair a Compliance Working Group to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of these statutes, issue public guidance, revise internal standards, update tools and resources, and conduct public outreach.
- To reform law enforcement practices, pursuant to E.O. 14074, the **Department of Justice** is executing on more than 90 E.O. [deliverables](#) to advance effective, fair, and constitutional policing; improve conditions of confinement and reentry; promote officer safety and wellness; and improve data collection and analysis. This work includes prohibiting the transfer or purchase of military-style weapons and equipment to State, Tribal, Local and Territorial (STLT) law enforcement agencies (LEAs), administering grants in a manner that is consistent with the adoption of E.O. 14074’s policies, creating accreditation standards to help encourage STLT LEAs to adopt policies consistent with the E.O., and working to establish the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database. DOJ also released a [Strategic Plan](#) for supporting the goals of the Federal Interagency Alternatives and Reentry Committee, which seeks to safely reduce criminal justice system interactions, support rehabilitation during incarceration, and facilitate successful reentry. Lastly, DOJ has invested in state- and local-level correctional services, including by supporting correctional and educational institutions as they enhance post-secondary educational opportunities in prisons following the reinstatement of Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students in July 2023. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is also expanding access to Pell Grants within federal correctional facilities to help incarcerated students earn college credits and/or a college degree.
- To improve access to **Department of Justice** programs and services, in 2022 and 2023, the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (LAIR), a collaboration of 28 federal agencies, co-chaired by the Attorney General and White House Counsel’s Office and led and staffed by DOJ’s Office for Access to Justice (ATJ), engaged with legal aid and other stakeholders to inform its activities. The purpose of the engagement was to better understand the barriers and opportunities to make Federal Government programs and services more accessible and



equitable and increase all people's ability to obtain just outcomes. In 2022, ATJ collected feedback from over 70 legal aid and advocacy organizations across the country who regularly help people access government programs and benefits for which they are eligible. Informed by this review, the [2022 Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Report](#) developed a roadmap to simplify Federal Government forms, processes, and language, utilizing a people-centered approach. In 2023, ATJ, in collaboration with other agencies, held a listening session with 15 legal aid and other advocates to hear on-the-ground experiences of individuals interacting with federal administrative proceedings to inform agency efforts, such as providing assistance through lawyers and nonlawyers, streamlining processes and language, and leveraging digital technologies while providing support to those without access to such technologies.

- The **Department of Health and Human Services** and the **Department of Justice** issued a joint [guidance document](#) on the protections in federal nondiscrimination laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Section 1557 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, regarding access to telehealth for people with disabilities and limited English proficient (LEP) persons. This document reminded healthcare providers that while telehealth expands healthcare opportunities for individuals who would otherwise be unable to receive healthcare in person, it must be provided in a manner that is accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- In September 2023, the **Department of Health and Human Services** issued a proposed rule to strengthen prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of a disability in health care and human services programs by making updates to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to advance equity and bolster protections for people with disabilities.
- In accordance with Section 9I of E.O. 14074, Advancing Effective Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety, the **Department of Homeland Security** LEAs will continue to ensure that effective procedures are in place for receiving, investigating, and responding meaningfully to complaints alleging improper profiling or bias by law enforcement officers and agents. DHS agencies will be reviewing and adopting new, or updating as necessary, procedures that, at a minimum, address the intake, investigation, and response to complaints.
- To improve airport screening and reduce the possibility of bias against travelers and increase safety, the **Department of Homeland Security** Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) has enhanced and standardized training for its screening officers and has improved its screening technology capabilities. TSA deployed new Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) software for screening systems at airports across the country. This update eliminates the need for Transportation Security Officers to determine a passenger's gender prior to AIT screening and is projected to reduce the instances of enhanced screening for transgender persons and members of other underserved communities.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** has taken steps to advance equity in its Trusted Traveler Programs. TSA updated the PreCheck® application process by allowing individuals to select their gender marker based on self-attestation, regardless of sex assigned at birth. The application was updated to include additional gender marker options to better serve non-binary and gender non-conforming travelers.



- The **Department of Homeland Security** S&T developed two complementary technological approaches to facilitate safe, no touch TSA screening of passengers with disabilities who use assistive devices. The goal is to improve convenience and efficiency at TSA checkpoints for passengers with limited mobility, while maintaining their dignity during security and threat detection procedures. Working prototypes of a handheld screening tool and AI-enabled algorithms for AIT systems are expected to be evaluated by the Transportation Security Laboratory in FY 2023-2024.
- The **Department of Transportation** issued a [fact sheet](#) on Title VI and discrimination on the basis of shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, which protects individuals who are or are perceived to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or of another religious group.
- The **Department of Transportation** reestablished the [Advisory Committee on Transportation Equity](#) (ACTE) in May 2022, to provide independent advice on DOT equity programs. Appointees to the ACTE [were announced in August 2023](#), and are drawn from various sectors of the transportation industry. The group held its first meeting in September 2023.
- In response to E.O. 13985, in December 2022, the **Department of Transportation** issued [DOT Order 1000.17](#) and formed the DOT Equity Council (Council) to guide and oversee the process for institutionalizing equity across the Department’s policies and programs, and compliance with related E.O.s and authorities. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg chairs the Equity Council, which meets quarterly.
- The **Department of Treasury** has made significant efforts to increase civil rights compliance and equal opportunity throughout the Department with the implementation of a new external civil rights language access plan and complaint tracking system. Treasury’s Office of Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity also worked with the CDFI Fund to implement pre-award civil rights compliance reviews in their financial assistance award process. Specifically, the CDFI Fund began using a pre-award data collection form in August 2023.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** launched the new [Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights](#), which significantly increased staffing with a majority of full-time employees deployed in EPA’s 10 regions; strengthened and increased support for language assistance services and community engagement; began development of indicators to identify disparities in environmental and public health conditions; and trained and built capacity across EPA on integrating equity and justice into agency work to advance environmental justice and integrate equity in the implementation of agency programs.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** strengthened external civil rights enforcement and initiated EPA’s first civil rights compliance review to evaluate impacts of potentially discriminatory activities by EPA financial assistance recipients on communities with environmental justice concerns, and increased transparency by affirmatively providing information to the public, including an interactive [Online Docket](#) of all external [civil rights complaints](#) filed with EPA since 2014, and corresponding documents.
- In August 2022, the **Environmental Protection Agency** issued [Interim Environmental Justice and Civil Rights in Permitting FAQs](#), which gathered existing guidance, technical



assistance, and other resources to assist permit writers and reviewers with integrating environmental justice and civil rights into decision-making.

- The **General Services Administration** worked to expand access to voter registration information in communities that face voter participation difficulties due to language barriers. Vote.gov added several Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander languages including: Bengali, Khmer, Korean, Hindi, Tagalog, and Vietnamese, with Chinese (both simplified and traditional) and its first Alaska Native language, Yup'ik-Akuzipik.
- The **General Services Administration** launched an [Equity Study on Remote Identity Proofing](#), recruiting 4,000 Americans, to understand potential barriers and demographic disparities in identity verification technologies that are commonly used by the public when accessing federal services and benefits.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** increased accessibility in NASA facilities. Among NASA's efforts to increase accessibility are initiatives at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center and Space Center Houston for [Sensory Friendly Hours](#) at visitor centers and numerous [STEM materials and programs for students with disabilities](#). In July 2023, the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex was named a [Certified Autism Center](#).
- In September 2023, the **Social Security Administration** (SSA) updated policy to offer people the choice to self-select their gender on their Social Security number (SSN) record. People who update their gender marker will still need to show a current document to prove their identity, but they will no longer need to provide medical or legal documentation of their gender.

Improving Language Access

- The **Department of Agriculture** is working across the Department to increase language access for customers and potential customers with LEP. The Department has announced a new Language Access Plan to guide Department-wide and agency plans and implementation and made significant progress in increasing the availability of non-English resources. For example, in FY 2022, USDA's Farm Production and Conservation mission area translated more than 730 products spanning 30 languages and created 200 new Spanish-language webpages on farmers.gov.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** created a comprehensive structure for implementing HHS's action plan and practices for language access. HHS relaunched its Language Access Steering Committee (LASC), which is comprised of representatives from every HHS agency. The LASC will facilitate the sharing of effective practices and procedures for enhancing language access.
- To ensure state compliance with language access and effective communication obligations during and after public health emergencies, on April 5, 2023, the **Department of Health and Human Services** OCR dispatched a letter to state health officials reminding states of their language access and effective communication obligations under federal civil rights laws to ensure that individuals and families continue to have access to Medicaid.



- In July 2022, **Department of Homeland Security** U.S. Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued [new language access guidance](#) to ensure that LEP individuals seeking asylum who cannot be interviewed in the credible fear screening process are placed into removal proceedings where an immigration judge can apply appropriate language access safeguards as that individual seeks relief.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** USCIS Language Services Branch has prioritized reaching the most vulnerable populations, including victims of trafficking, in their languages and in a culturally appropriate manner. This work, which spanned two fiscal years and involved multiple language specialists, resulted in approximately 1,000 pages of translation.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** continues to enhance communication with the public regarding the ability to file complaints concerning DHS programs and seek redress without retaliation, how these processes work, and what individuals can expect from these processes. In March 2023, the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) launched a new [online complaint portal](#), with prompts available in 10 languages. The portal accepts complaints in any language and also notes the availability of interpreters and translators for any language.
- On May 25, 2023, **Department of Homeland Security** Secretary Mayorkas issued [Policy Statement 500-02](#), Reaffirming the Commitment to Nondiscrimination in Department of Homeland Security Activities, adopting the [May 2023 Department of Justice Guidance](#) for Federal Law Enforcement Agencies Regarding the Use of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, National Origin, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Disability as it applies to federal law enforcement personnel and federal non-law enforcement personnel in the DHS covered law enforcement activities. Expanded application of the anti-profiling standards to security screening activities by federal law enforcement agencies, such as those performed by Protective Security Officers employed by the Federal Protective Service, is among several notable policy changes resulting from DHS adoption of the updated DOJ guidance.
- In May 2023, the **Department of Homeland Security** CRCL transmitted an update of the Department's Language Access Plan to DOJ, pursuant to the [November 2022 Memorandum from the Attorney General](#), Strengthening the Federal Government's Commitment to Language Access. The [DHS Language Access Plan](#), finalized and issued in November 2023, incorporates recommendations from DHS agencies and offices, highlights language access accomplishments, and affirms the Department's commitment to ensuring meaningful access to persons and communities with LEP, which DHS serves. CRCL administers the DHS Civil Rights Evaluation Tool, a data collection and technical assistance tool, which assists the approximately 3,000 DHS grant recipients in meeting and understanding their civil rights responsibilities, including [language access obligations](#) under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights requirements.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman offers case assistance (free of charge), and conducts stakeholder outreach to marginalized and vulnerable communities, farmworkers, refugees, asylees, individuals requesting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, and others, is implementing a multilingual strategy to expand the office's reach to individuals with



LEP. The strategy incorporates infographics which are available in 11 languages: English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic, Somali, and Ukrainian.

- The **Department of Homeland Security** U.S. Coast Guard is procuring portable handheld tools that provide real-time translation at sea to augment in-person translators. The portable translators are expected to provide instant off-line translations at sea for at least 16 different languages, including Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, German, French, Haitian-Creole, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian-Iranian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. In addition, the tools will have the capability to translate documents (text-to-voice).
- In May 2022, the **Department of Justice** [hired](#) its first-ever Language Access Coordinator and has reestablished the Language Access Working Group, which is comprised of representatives from various DOJ components, and meets regularly to provide a platform to support, guide, and oversee components' efforts to increase meaningful access so that communities can better access DOJ programs, communicate public safety concerns, and vindicate their rights. For example, DOJ recently published its FY 2022-2026 [Strategic Plan](#) in Spanish. DOJ also published key excerpts in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog. In August 2023, the Department also released its updated [Language Access Plan](#), which improves translation and interpretation services, promotes quality assurance of those services, and expands the range of tools available to serve the public.
- In FY 2023, the **Department of Labor** Civil Rights Center established the Centralized Office of Language Assistance to provide technical assistance and guidance to agencies on language access. The Department also launched an enterprise-wide survey to assess each DOL agency's current language access practices, to strengthen outreach, engagement, and foster stronger relationships with organizations who serve LEP individuals. The Department's Plan to Improve Access for Persons with LEP will be issued shortly.
- In FY 2022, **Department of Labor** OSHA's [Susan Harwood Training Grant program](#) funded 90 different non-profit organizations to develop and/or offer safety and health training and/or materials for hard-to-reach, often LEP workers and small business employers located in 30 states and the District of Columbia. Over 87% of applicants proposed to develop or offer training in languages other than English.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** developed and updated Language Access Plans at all 10 of its Centers to establish a more equitable communication strategy for reaching LEP populations. Additionally, NASA completed one Title VI compliance review focused on LEP. It also completed two Title IX reviews and initiated two additional Title IX reviews. Together, these actions strengthened NASA's work on civil rights compliance and accessibility to LEP populations.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** greatly expanded Spanish-language communications, including releasing the second episode of [Universo Curioso de la NASA](#), ranked number one in science podcasts in 15 countries. NASA's Spanish



language [Instagram](#) and [X\(Twitter\)](#) accounts ranked number one in the federal government.

- In August 2023, the **Social Security Administration** made form SS-5 (Application for a Social Security Card) instructions available in 15 languages other than English and Spanish in local Social Security offices and Card Centers. The non-English instructions will help applicants with LEP complete the English-language form SS-5.

Leveraging Equitable Data

- To better capture and include underserved communities in data collection, the **Department of Commerce** Census Bureau received a FY 2023 appropriation of \$10 million to research adding questions on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the American Community Survey. Similarly, Census is piloting a project with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to develop formally private (confidentiality safeguarded) measures of race and ethnicity at the person level, allowing Census to share protected data with the IRS. Sharing such protected microdata allows other federal agencies to study variations by race and ethnicity in enrollment in, access to, and usage patterns of benefits and services of federal programs without necessitating access to confidential data.
- To become a leader on equitable AI research and development, the **Department of Defense** released an updated [Responsible AI Guidelines in Practice](#) by the Defense Innovation Unit in June 2023. The document is a practical framework for including the DoD's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Ethics Principles, including equity, in AI product planning, development, testing, and evaluation. It is a living document, to be updated based on evolving best practices and practical experience.
- In June 2022, the **Department of Defense** published its [Responsible Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Implementation Pathway](#), which guides the Department's journey to its goal of a trusted AI ecosystem.
- To address gaps in data collection, the **Department of Energy** implemented an agency wide BIL FOA template for BIL and IRA actions to further the Administration's goals to advance equity, provide support for disadvantaged communities, and leverage federal resources to achieve these objectives. The FOA template includes a Community Benefits Plan requirement, along with requirements to collect equity and justice-focused data.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development** updated data collection requirements in its Homeless Management Information System. The updates improved race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity data collection from homelessness service providers and developed new resources for additional guidance: Client-Centered Approach to Recognizing Race and Ethnicity Identities in Data Collection and Client-Centered Approach to Recognizing Gender Identities in Data Collection.
- The **Department of the Interior** enhanced its data collection to support park programming that is more inclusive of underrepresented communities through the investments made in the National Park Service's (NPS's) socio-economic program, as well as the park unit visitor surveys.



- In December 2022, the **Department of Transportation** [FHWA surveyed](#) State Departments of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations on their inclusion of quantitative equity screenings and meaningful and representative public participation in their Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs in order to help develop a baseline and work toward achieving the related Key Performance Indicator.
- As of December 2022, the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** migrated 75 environmental data sets to the cloud, surpassing the goal of 50 for 2022, to make the data more accessible to the public.
- Since January 2022, the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration's** [Applied Remote Sensing Training](#) program has trained almost 28,000 people from all 50 states, three territories, and 159 countries on how to use NASA data to address key environmental issues, surpassing its annual goal of 3,000 people by more than nine-fold.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** awarded 16 proposals totaling \$6.5 million over three years for education and training in open science to enable transparent research and data for everyone.
- In August 2022, the **Social Security Administration** added race and ethnicity questions to the online SSN application process used to obtain a Social Security card. This has resulted in an increase of voluntary reporting of race and ethnicity information. In September 2023, SSA also added race and ethnicity questions to the online SSN replacement application process used to obtain a replacement card.



HEALTH EQUITY

Expanding Equitable Access to Food and Nutrition for Children and Families

- The **Department of Agriculture** is investing in outreach, innovation, and modernization to ensure that the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) serves more eligible families and better meets their needs. WIC modernization is focused on enrolling and keeping enrolled all eligible families; making shopping simple and convenient; continuing to leverage technology to make applying for the program, scheduling appointments, receiving nutrition services, and interacting with WIC between appointments easy; and making WIC equitable and accessible for all. While evaluations of the modernization effort are planned to start this year, preliminary data shows that WIC participation is rising in most states, with 6.7 million moms, babies, and young kids benefitting from the program as of July 2023.
- In September 2023, the **Department of Agriculture** finalized a regulation expanding the availability of the school lunch program Community Eligibility Provision, which gives about 3,000 more school districts in high-need areas the option to serve breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost. USDA is also supporting expanded access to healthy school meals by offering extensive financial support for schools: \$30 million in Healthy Meals Incentives grants to 264 small and rural school districts nationwide; \$30 million in FY 2023 Equipment Grants for states and school districts operating school lunch programs; and nearly \$11 million in FY 2023 Farm to School Grants, serving 1.2 million children.
- The **Department of Agriculture** awarded nearly \$100 million in Reach & Resiliency grants to 42 state agencies to expand The Emergency Food Assistance Program operations in underserved areas, including remote, rural, and Tribal communities. USDA also announced a second round of nearly \$1 billion in funding through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation for states to order commodities from USDA vendors for emergency food providers, including food banks and community kitchens, as they face high demand and supply chain disruptions. The investment is part of USDA's continued efforts to make nutritious food grown by American producers more accessible for families and students nationwide.
- In summer 2023, the **Department of Agriculture** Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) allowed certain rural areas to distribute meals to kids outside of the typically required group (congregate) settings through the Summer Food Service Program and National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option. This action will help close the summer hunger gap and ensure equitable access to nutritious food for children in all parts of the country during the summer months. FNS is also partnering with states and stakeholders to stand up a permanent Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program starting in summer 2024, which will provide benefits to purchase groceries over the summer to families with children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.



Improving Maternal and Reproductive Healthcare

- As of December 2023, the **Department of Health and Human Services** approved 42 states, DC, and the Virgin Islands to provide 12 months of continuous postpartum coverage through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). An estimated 540,000 Americans annually are eligible for essential care for a full year after pregnancy. HHS secured this option for states permanently in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, and CMS will continue to work with states on continuous coverage.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** awarded [Equity in Postpartum Care Challenge](#) grants to identify successful and promising approaches to improving postpartum care and equity in maternal health outcomes.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** CMS established a "Birthing Friendly" hospital designation—a publicly-reported, public-facing hospital designation on the quality and safety of maternity care (launched in 2023). CMS will award this designation to hospitals that report they participated in a national or statewide quality collaborative and implemented all recommended interventions.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** established a National Maternal Mental Health Hotline on Mother's Day 2022, which provides 24/7, free, confidential emotional support, resources, and referrals before, during, and after pregnancy in English and Spanish and offers interpreter services in more than 60 languages. During the first year, hotline counselors responded to nearly 12,000 calls and texts.
- In December 2023, the **Department of Health and Human Services** launched the Transforming Maternal Health model through the CMS Innovation Center, the first to focus exclusively on improving maternal health care for people enrolled in Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program. The model will support participating state Medicaid agencies in the development of a whole-person approach to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care that addresses the physical, mental health, and social needs experienced during pregnancy. The goal of the model is to reduce disparities in access and treatment. The model aims to improve outcomes and experiences for mothers and their newborns, while also reducing overall program expenditures.
- In July 2022, the **Departments of Health and Human Services, the Treasury, and Labor** issued guidance on coverage of certain contraceptive services and products, including emergency contraceptives, under the Affordable Care Act. In August 2022, the **Office of Personnel Management** issued a Carrier Letter on Contraception reminding Carriers of their responsibilities to offer contraceptive services with no enrollee cost-sharing. At the end of January 2024, OPM issued guidance strongly encouraging all FEHB Carriers to broaden coverage for contraceptive products, drugs and services at no cost sharing; and, undertake comprehensive enrollee education on the availability of contraceptive services. This guidance aligns the FEHB program with those regulated or funded by the departments of Labor, HHS, and Treasury.
- On March 1, 2023, the **Office of Personnel Management** issued its annual Call Letter for the 2024 plan year for FEHBP plans requiring health plans to offer expanded fertility benefits, including coverage of artificial insemination and, at a minimum, 3 cycles of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) related drugs annually. Twenty-five health plan choices,



including four national plan choices, offer broader coverage of in-vitro fertilization (IVF) related services and benefits than the minimum level required.

- The **Office of Personnel Management** asked FEHB Carriers to maintain and expand coverage shown to improve maternal health outcomes that many initiated in 2022. The majority of FEHB Carriers have continued to: implement the CDC-developed Her™ campaign to raise awareness among providers of potentially life-threatening warning signs during and after pregnancy exhibited by women of color; increase reimbursement and coverage for childbirth education classes, group prenatal care, home visiting programs, care management for high-risk pregnancies, self-measured blood pressure monitoring, certified nurse midwives, birth centers, and perinatal support services, like doulas; and include in their networks hospitals whose standards align with the “Birthing-Friendly” designation aimed at improving perinatal health outcomes and maternal health equity.

Addressing Community Health Needs

- On August 4, 2022, the **Department of Health and Human Services** published draft rules on language access in all health programs and activities funded by HHS, HHS’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), proposing comprehensive updates to HHS’s regulations implementing Section 1557, the nondiscrimination provision of the Affordable Care Act. The proposed rule would restore and strengthen civil rights protections for patients and consumers in certain federally funded health programs.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** OCR and the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources published an NPRM clarifying nondiscrimination on the basis of sex in certain HHS grants. The NPRM states that, in statutes administered by HHS that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, HHS interprets those provisions to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. This NPRM further builds on HHS’s efforts to ensure access to health and human services in furtherance of President Biden’s E.O.s on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation and Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals.
- The **Office of Personnel Management** conducted 10 focus groups of federal employees and completed a report on its findings to support the development of a new FEHB tool. The findings helped OPM identify key features and functionality that federal employees desire in a Decision Support Tool when selecting health benefits and informed the user-research for the Decision Support Tool for Postal employees. In addition, OPM finalized a customer experience web survey and published the Paperwork Reduction Act notice to implement the web surveys. OPM also included questions in the 2023 Federal Employee Benefits Survey to assess employee views on the current plan comparison tool.
- In FY 2023, the **Social Security Administration** launched a new Supplemental Security Income (SSI) “Basic Needs” campaign to restore applications closer to pre-pandemic levels, in support of its FY 2022-2023 APG. The APG was to increase SSI applications from underserved communities by 25% and nationwide by 15%, relative to the 2021



baseline. The agency exceeded its APG target for SSI applications from underserved communities, achieving about 105% of its goal. Nationwide, the agency achieved about 99% of its goal for SSI applications.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Countering Domestic Violent Extremism, Racism, and Hate-Fueled Violence

- To counter domestic violent extremism and targeted violence, the **Department of Homeland Security** Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) conducted targeted outreach to additional local and underserved communities, providing technical assistance and support to those stakeholders. The Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program provides funding for state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, nonprofits, and institutions of higher education to establish or enhance capabilities to prevent targeted violence and terrorism. In FY 2022, CP3 reached 49 new organizations and over 900 people, resulting in 31 applications from and 11 awards to organizations representing underserved communities.
- In response to a wave of bomb threats targeting HBCUs in 2022, the **Department of Homeland Security** Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's Office for Bombing Prevention conducted 27 courses for HBCU students and faculty in prevention and building resilience, trained more than 1,200 participants, delivered over 1,500 products, and saw a 54% increase in completion of the more than 24,000 training videos. Additional courses are ongoing.
- In 2022, the **Department of Homeland Security** Office of State and Local Law Enforcement and CRCL Office, and the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through HBCUs, sponsored full-day courses at five HBCUs to help equip campus leaders and other community stakeholders with the problem-solving skills to prevent, protect, and mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from active shooter situations.
- Since July 2022, the **Department of Homeland Security** has led multiple engagements focused on addressing community concerns related to domestic violent extremism, Department strategy, and incidents of hate targeting specific communities. In April 2023, DHS Office of Partnership and Engagement (OPE) hosted a virtual Ramadan engagement with American Muslim community leaders to solicit their feedback, concerns, and insights on DHS policies and programs.
- In March 2023, the **Department of Homeland Security** launched the [Prevention Resource Finder](#), providing stakeholders with information on the resources needed to help prepare for and prevent targeted violence and terrorism across our country.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** regularly engages with underserved communities and stakeholder groups, including those representing diverse racial, ethnic, and religious communities; the LGBTQI+ community; persons who are LEP; individuals with disabilities; and others. For example, in September 2022, Secretary Mayorkas [announced the appointment of 25 members to the reinvigorated Faith-Based Security Advisory Council](#). The Council's membership, with representatives from the Christian,



Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh faith communities, as well as law enforcement, has met three times and has issued recommendations on enhancing information sharing with faith-based organizations, improving the accessibility of DHS grants and resources, and building trust and partnerships with faith-based communities.

- The **Department of Justice** has increased multilingual resources to combat hate crimes and incidents through federal law enforcement action and enhanced training, support, and outreach to state and local partners. For example, DOJ has further prioritized civil rights violations and hate crimes enforcement among the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s field offices. As of September 2023, DOJ launched the [United Against Hate program](#) in all 94 U.S. Attorneys’ Offices to help improve the reporting of hate crimes by informing communities on how to identify, report, and help prevent hate crimes, and to encourage trust building between law enforcement and communities.
- The BSCA provides the **Department of Justice** with [essential tools](#) to help prevent and reduce gun violence. Notably, BSCA established new federal criminal offenses that address straw purchasing and firearms trafficking, prompted changes to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), and provided additional grant funding to prevent and reduce gun violence. BSCA also changed the background check process and narrowed what was known as the “boyfriend loophole” by expanding the misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence (MCDV) prohibitor to persons convicted, on or after June 25, 2022, of a qualifying offense that was committed against a person with whom they are or recently were in a dating relationship. In August 2022, NICS began denying the transfer of firearms from federal firearms licensees to applicants based on the expanded definition of MCDV.
- The Joint Commission on Reducing Violent Crime Against Indians (Commission) was extended to increase intergovernmental coordination in combating violent crime within Indian lands and against Indigenous persons. The **Department of Justice** components are supporting the work of the Commission, which is developing recommendations on establishing best practices for federal, state, Tribal, and local LEAs to improve coordination and resources for survivors and victims’ families and combating the epidemic of missing, murdered, and trafficking of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. In 2023, the Commission held field hearings in the communities most affected by this crisis, which will result in a final report to the U.S. Congress, the Attorney General, and the Secretary of the **Department of the Interior**.

Supporting Victims and Survivors of Gender-Based Violence

- In July 2023, the **Department of Defense** continues to implement military justice reform through the [Executive Order signed by President Biden](#) that transferred key decision-making authorities from commanders to specialized, independent military prosecutors for domestic violence, sexual assault, murder, and other serious offenses.
- In March 2022, the **Department of Homeland Security** Blue Campaign developed an online [Gender-Based Violence \(GBV\) Awareness Course](#) to help airport and private aviation industry personnel define GBV; identify its various forms, including human trafficking; and describe ways to support victims and survivors.



- In March 2023, the **Department of Homeland Security** USCIS announced the opening of the [Humanitarian, Adjustment, Removing Conditions, and Travel Documents \(HART\) Service Center](#). This new Service Center focuses on adjudication of humanitarian-based immigration relief, including Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitions and petitions for U nonimmigrant status for eligible survivors of qualifying crimes. The establishment of this new Service Center will significantly increase the number of adjudicators to positively impact the timeliness and scale of USCIS' humanitarian processing abilities, particularly for women and girls pursuing these avenues of humanitarian protection. In support of this announcement, USCIS held a national stakeholder engagement in April 2023, and provided briefings on the new service center to several stakeholder groups.
- To combat sexual misconduct and gender-based violence, the **Department of Justice** has developed resources to assist Department prosecutors and investigators in understanding how to use federal civil rights statutes to redress sexual misconduct. DOJ has also produced a [report](#) related to sexual misconduct by BOP employees, which offers actionable recommendations to improve procedures for victim reporting, ensure survivors do not experience penalties for reporting, enhance reporting options for third parties, and prioritize investigations and prosecutions of BOP employees who commit sexual misconduct.
- The **Department of Justice** is implementing the [Alaska Pilot Program](#) (Pilot Program) to advance the public safety needs of Alaska Native Villages through the expansion of Tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who commit certain covered crimes in Villages designated by the Attorney General to participate in the Pilot Program. In furtherance of this work, the Office of Tribal Justice has led formal consultations with Tribal leaders and continues to collaborate with Tribal representatives and organizations to develop the Pilot Program. In addition, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) issued a special solicitation for Alaska Tribes interested in preparing for the Pilot Program through funding under the [Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction: Targeted Support for Alaska Native Tribes Special Initiative](#). The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Alaska also convened approximately 800 Tribes and Tribal agencies, LEAs, and victims' services organizations to establish the Alaska Tribal Public Safety Advisory Committee, as required by VAWA Reauthorization. In connection with the VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2022, the Attorney General and OVW are authorized to make grants to enhance services for victims of crimes in underserved populations, including LGBTQI+ populations.
- The **Department of Transportation** Maritime Administration and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy released the Every Mariner Builds A Respectful Culture (EMBARC) Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) Prevention Mandatory Standards for all U.S.-flag vessels to adopt and follow. These standards foster a community of mutual respect, support, and accountability and provide resources to support appropriate reporting of sexual misconduct, impacting not only individual midshipmen but the industry culture as a whole. Fourteen companies have fully enrolled and adopted a SASH policy as of July 2023.



- The **National Science Foundation’s** Office of Equity and Civil Rights has appointed a dedicated Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response Program Manager along with a Senior Advisor within the Office of the Director to expand the efforts and guide program initiatives. The Office also issued a Dear Colleague letter in August 2023 that encourages applicants to submit research proposals to NSF-funding opportunities that address harassment in STEM education and research settings and workplaces.

Improving Transit Safety and Accessibility in Urban and Rural Communities

- In October 2022, the **Department of Transportation** announced the [TIFIA 49 Program](#) that offers low-cost and flexible financing for transit and Transit-oriented Development (TOD) projects at up to 49% of eligible project costs through DOT’s Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, a higher level of financing that will help more projects get off the ground.
- In December 2022, the **Department of Transportation** Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced 15 projects in nine states that will receive approximately \$686 million under the new [All Stations Accessibility Program](#) to make transit rail stations built before passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act fully accessible to people with disabilities.
- In January 2023, the **Department of Transportation** encouraged discretionary grant project sponsors to identify how their project will reverse or mitigate how the community is experiencing disadvantage.
- In January 2023, the **Department of Transportation** FHWA released the [Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide](#) for state and local governments aimed at reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries resulting from speeding related crashes as part of a broader speed management program—especially in school areas and construction zones.
- In February 2023, the **Department of Transportation** FTA awarded its [Mobility, Access & Transportation Insecurity: Creating Links to Opportunity Research and Demonstration program](#) to explore strategies to improve people’s mobility and access to daily needs and evaluate outcomes and impacts upon individuals and communities.
- In February 2023, the **Department of Transportation** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published a final rule, as required by the BIL, updating the Uniform State Highway Safety Grant Program to require NHTSA grant recipients to conduct meaningful public engagement among affected communities, particularly those most significantly impacted by traffic crashes resulting in injuries and fatalities.
- In February 2023, the **Department of Transportation** announced \$800 million in grant awards for the [Safe Streets and Roads for All program](#) to help communities improve roadway safety, especially for the most vulnerable roadway users, benefitting disadvantaged communities who are disproportionately impacted by roadway fatalities.
- In May 2023, the **Department of Transportation** launched the [Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#) tool, an interactive mapping tool to understand where



transportation insecurity, defined as limited transportation access and safety combined with high cost burden, is most acute across the country. The Department also began piloting a transportation cost burden measure, using existing data sources in the ETC Explorer, to prioritize transportation investments.

- In June 2023, the **Department of Transportation** Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) awarded \$570 million in project funds under the [Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program](#) which provides funding for highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods. With the proximity of rail infrastructure to minority and low-income areas, there often is a correlation between grade crossing delays and negative impacts to those communities.
- The **Department of Transportation** Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is researching ways to help automatically secure wheelchairs in aircraft while maintaining occupant safety. NHTSA also continues to identify the needs of people with disabilities and diverse needs to use the automated vehicles of the future safely and comfortably.



HOUSING JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Advancing Housing Justice

- The **Department of the Interior** and **Department of Housing and Urban Development** collaboratively announced support for more [Affordable Housing in Nevada](#).
- The **Department of Treasury** leveraged the Emergency Rental Assistance program to create the first-ever nationwide infrastructure to prevent eviction. More than 12.3 million household payments were made to families at risk of eviction as of June 30, 2023. The program has been [particularly effective](#) at reaching low-income and/or traditionally underserved renters, including Black and women-headed households.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development** [lowered costs for borrowers](#) by reducing the Annual Mortgage Insurance Premium Rates. In addition to lowering costs for borrowers, which could mean an estimated savings of \$678 million for American families, HUD established a [40-Year Loan modification](#) to better assist struggling homeowners from losing their assets to foreclosure, particularly households of color.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development** partnered with the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) to Address Appraisal Bias and Discrimination. The HUD-NAREB partnership is tackling appraisal bias and discrimination and promoting fairness in the housing market through online training for counselors, roundtable discussions on bias and discrimination, educational material distribution, and appraisal-related training.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development** educated housing providers, tenants, applicants, and others about fair housing protections. HUD issued [Implementation of the Office of General Counsel’s Guidance on Application of Fair Housing Act Standards to the Use of Criminal Records by Providers of Housing and Real Estate-Related Transactions](#) to [protect tenant rights](#) related to the use of criminal records, including to set out best practices related to the use of criminal background screening information on applicants or tenants, and developed an [LGBTQIA+ Fair Housing Toolkit](#) to advance housing equity for the LGBTQIA+ community.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development** has taken additional steps through the Office of Single Family Housing (SFH) to support wealth-generation activities for prospective and current homeowners. Specifically, SFH expanded access to credit by incorporating a borrower’s positive rental payment history into the mortgage underwriting process. Using rental payment history promotes a more inclusive credit evaluation, which in turn can expand homeownership opportunities to first-time homebuyers. This guidance is expected to continue to expand homeownership opportunities for borrowers where a positive rental payment history can make a difference when combined with other assessment factors for determining eligibility for



Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured mortgage financing. HUD estimates this policy change will enable an additional 5,000 borrowers per year to qualify for an FHA-insured loan.

- In 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration’s Interagency Task Force on [Property Appraisal and Valuation Equity \(PAVE\)](#), led by the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** and the White House, released the [PAVE Action Plan](#), the most wide-ranging set of actions ever announced to advance equity in the home appraisal process.
- In March 2023, the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** awarded \$54 million to 182 fair housing organizations across the country under its Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP), an increase of \$7 million from the prior year’s funding cycle. The grants will provide \$28,200,000 to support the efforts of national, state, and local fair housing entities working to address violations of the Fair Housing Act and helping to end discrimination in housing. In addition, HUD provided \$26,350,000 in funding to its second- and third-year Private Enforcement Initiative grantees to continue fair housing enforcement efforts nationwide. Eligible activities for the funding awarded include testing for appraisal bias and educating local communities on the issue. The grant funding will allow the grantees to provide fair housing enforcement by conducting investigations, testing to identify discrimination in the rental and sales markets, and filing fair housing complaints with HUD or substantially equivalent state and local agencies.
- In October 2023, the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** [published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) that would eliminate the agency’s restrictions on the use of fair housing testers with prior felony convictions or certain other convictions by FHIP grantees and Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) agencies. Fair housing testers provide invaluable support to HUD and HUD’s fair housing partners by taking part in housing transactions to screen for discrimination.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development** [Office of Public and Indian Housing is ensuring that Public Housing Authorities meet legal requirements](#) around disclosing denials of admission to applicants and to share best practices around the use of tenant screening reports and the disclosure of the contents of those reports to tenants.

Achieving Equitable Outcomes for Disaster Survivors

- The **Department of Commerce** Census Bureau launched the Community Resilience Estimates (CRE) program to help measure the abilities of communities to absorb the external stresses of a disaster or shock. The CRE partnerships include various Commerce and inter-agency partners like the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), NOAA, DHS FEMA, and EPA. More broadly, the CRE program provides users with a dashboard and data to understand the social vulnerability of their communities.
- The **Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency** has advanced equity as a foundation for public assistance. In August 2022, FEMA’s Office for Public Assistance released the Operational Draft of the [Public Assistance Program Delivery Guide](#), which included considerations for FEMA recipients and applicants to conduct response and recovery efforts in an equitable manner. The guide



includes a performance metric for the prioritization of communities rated as highly socially vulnerable, including underserved rural areas.

- The **Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency** is redeveloping the way it collects, documents, and processes information from applicants to be less burdensome, more effective, and more equitable in the distribution of public assistance. FEMA will work to clarify the recipient’s legal responsibility and to structure a more comprehensive reporting process so that recipients and subrecipients clearly understand their obligations to develop and report on their strategies for equitable response and recovery.
- The **Small Business Administration** improved access to disaster assistance through a new process to assist businesses with application completion, reconsiderations, credit repair, and managerial and technical services. To optimize recovery resource delivery, SBA increased the maximum allowable disaster loan amount; implemented statutory changes to increase the accessibility of disaster assistance for rural communities and piloted a new lending platform to reduce burden and speed up the application and approval process; and began conducting customer service campaigns earlier in the disaster response cycle with partners. These partners include local, state, and federal entities such as SBA Resource Partners like [Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDCs), [Women’s Business Centers](#) (WBCs), the business mentoring organization [SCORE](#), and [Veterans Business Outreach Centers](#) (VBOCs), as well as [Community Navigators](#), economic development agencies, and emergency managers, and with mayors, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), MSIs, HBCUs, and Tribal Nations.
- The **Small Business Administration** completed the Disaster Loan Program Modifications Rule to increase the maximum allowable disaster loan amount to ensure the amount of disaster assistance is sufficient to help disaster victims complete a full recovery.
- The **Small Business Administration** implemented statutory changes increasing the accessibility of [disaster assistance for rural communities](#).
- In collaboration with local organizations, the **Small Business Administration** new Portable Loan Outreach Center (PLOC) initiative focused on providing support to underserved disaster survivors that might not otherwise have access to SBA assistance. In FY 2023, several rural areas have been served by PLOCs. For example, in Mississippi, [352 business](#) contacts had 72 successful loan applications; in Florida, 248 contacts led to 132 accepted applications.
- As of the third quarter of FY 2023, the **Small Business Administration** conducted 3,957 targeted outreach activities and events for disaster survivors in underserved communities, emphasizing engagement with key community stakeholders.



Tackling the Digital Divide

- The **Department of Agriculture** Rural Development's (RD's) [ReConnect Program](#) provides loans, grants, and loan-grant combinations to bring high-speed Internet to rural areas that lack sufficient access to broadband. In FY 2022, in the program's third round of funding, RD authorized 100% grants (without matching requirements) for Alaska Native Corporations, Tribal governments, colonias, persistent poverty areas, and socially vulnerable communities. For the fourth round, an additional no-match funding category was added in August 2022, for projects where 90% of households lack sufficient access to broadband.
- The **Department of Agriculture** made funding available to rural communities, technical assistance providers, and cooperatives through a new [Broadband Technical Assistance \(BTA\) program](#). The BTA program promotes broadband expansion in rural areas with support for project planning and community engagement, financial sustainability, environmental compliance, construction planning and engineering, accessing federal resources, and data collection and reporting. \$20 million is available to help rural communities access broadband technical assistance resources and to support the development / expansion of broadband cooperatives.
- The **Department of Commerce** allocated more than \$42 billion for broadband construction, improvements, and access through the [Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment](#) (BEAD) program to deploy or upgrade broadband networks to ensure everyone in America has access to reliable, affordable, high-speed Internet service; nearly a billion dollars in [Middle Mile](#) (MM) program grants allocated across 36 organizations across 40 states and territories to support the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle-mile infrastructure, and \$288 million in [Broadband Infrastructure Program](#) (BIP) funds awarded to 14 recipients to begin breaking ground this year through partnerships between states and Internet service providers to expand Internet access to areas without service, especially rural areas.
- To better support minority-serving anchor institutions, the **Department of Commerce** is implementing the [Connecting Minority Communities \(CMC\) Pilot Program](#), which provided \$268 million in grant funding to 43 HBCUs, 31 HSIs, and 21 MSIs, and five TCUs to purchase broadband Internet service and eligible equipment, or to hire and train Information Technology personnel, to upgrade classroom technology, and to increase digital literacy skills.
- The **Department of Commerce** [Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program](#) provided \$980 million to Tribal governments to be used for broadband deployment on Tribal lands, as well as for telehealth, distance learning, broadband affordability, and digital inclusion initiatives. The Department invested \$100 million through the [Indigenous Communities program funding](#), which was awarded to 51 recipients in 25 states and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to support the needs of Tribal governments and Indigenous communities.



Improving Equity in Infrastructure

- The **Department of the Interior** announced support for President Biden’s establishment of the [Baaj Nwaavjo I’tah Kukveni](#)—Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument in northern Arizona. The new national monument consists of three distinct areas to the north and south of Grand Canyon National Park, totaling approximately 917,618 acres of federal lands in northern Arizona.
- The **Department of the Interior** announced \$8.5 million in grant awards by the Office of Insular Affairs’ Energizing Insular Communities program to support energy initiatives in the U.S. territories. This award included \$1 million to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority for the procurement of hybrid and electric utility fleet vehicles and equipment and \$1 million to the American Samoa Medical Center Authority for microgrid, cooling tower, and LED lighting retrofit projects.
- The **Department of the Interior** NPS announced \$192 million in funding for the [Land Water Conservation Fund \(LWCF\)—Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership \(ORLP\) Program](#), which enables urban, disadvantaged communities to create new outdoor recreation spaces, reinvigorate existing parks, and form connections between people and the outdoors in such communities. As part of its NOFO, NPS modified the evaluation criteria in ORLP grants to encourage states to submit projects focused on environmental justice, addressing heat islands, and support for recreation outside of military facilities. NPS also created two deadlines for the grant (January 23, 2023, and May 31, 2023) to encourage states to submit more grants.
- The **Department of the Interior** enhanced LWCF and ORLP investments that are tracking the short- and long-term success outcomes of the program investments in under-represented communities.
- In February 2023, the **Department of Transportation** awarded \$185 million to disadvantaged communities as part of the [Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program](#) to provide planning and construction grants to communities who have been cut off from opportunities by infrastructure projects.
- In July 2023, the **Department of Transportation** published the joint FY 2023 NOFO for the [Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods](#) Program, making up to \$3.16 billion available for planning activities and capital construction projects that advance community-centered connection.
- The **Department of Transportation** launched the [Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success \(ROUTES\) initiative](#) to address concerns and identify transportation challenges facing rural communities. Department officials hosted a series of webinars and informational sessions to solicit input and increase awareness of DOT programs for rural communities and convened a council dedicated to addressing rural and Tribal initiatives. ROUTES offers comprehensive technical assistance to rural communities across a variety of transportation-related topics, including grant funding, electric vehicles, safety, and infrastructure development and maintenance.



Strengthening Community Engagement and Public Participation

- The **Department of Energy** created the Office of State and Community Energy Programs to administer state and community-facing programs, including the [Weatherization Assistance Program](#). On February 3, 2023, DOE published allocations of \$30 million for Weatherization Readiness from the FY 2023 Weather Assistance Program appropriation, an increase of \$15 million from FY 2022.
- The **Department of Energy** created the [Energy Savings Hub](#) and a video series to educate the public on topics such as energy savings and tax incentives. The Energy Savings Hub is a one-stop shop for homeowners, renters, and drivers to learn how they can save energy, save money, and save the planet. It features something for everyone, including clean energy tax incentives and tips/tricks to conserve energy. The Clean Energy 101 [video series](#) is captioned in both English and Spanish. It is comprised of short explanations of clean energy appliances and technologies that qualify for incentives in President Biden's Investing in America Agenda, including the basics of clean energy technologies, such as heat pumps, solar rooftops, electric vehicles, and more.
- The **Department of the Interior** released the [Campground Modernization guide](#) to support an improved and more inclusive visitor experience.
- The **Department of the Interior** distributed \$2.1 million dollars in grant funding to 30 NPS units to help share more inclusive and comprehensive narratives, reduce park Storytelling backlogs, and invest in staff capacity to sustain transformative interpretation.
- The **Department of the Interior** developed a partnership with Uber/Lyft in three pilot cities where access is limited for urban communities. This partnership includes subsidized rides to NPS units and partner-based data-collection to track success of the program.
- The **General Services Administration** partnered with the National Endowment for the Arts and updated the [Art in Architecture](#) program rules to expand public access and artist representation in the millions of dollars of commissioned artworks permanently installed in federal facilities.
- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** increased public participation in NASA outreach events to underserved communities between September 2022 and March 2023 by 70%.
- The **Department of Treasury** collaborated with 12 national Latino organizations to host the first Treasury summit on investing in the economic future of the Latino community in June 2023. The Latino Economic Summit brought together nearly 100 leaders from the private, nonprofit, and government sectors to elevate challenges and identify opportunities to unleash the potential of the Latino community and the entire economy.
- The **Department of Treasury** Office of Tribal and Native Affairs works across Treasury and the IRS offices to advise on economic and recovery programs, \$30 billion in direct Tribal set-asides to the benefit of over 2.5 million Tribal citizens, tax policies, and other policy matters that impact Tribal and Native communities. The Office also conducts consultations with Tribes and coordinates outreach. As of February 2024, the Office has hosted over 50 formal consultations and 900 tribal engagement sessions.



- The **Department of Treasury** Advisory Committee on Racial Equity ([TACRE](#)) established cross-cutting principles and priorities and in 2023 submitted several recommendations to Treasury to address data transparency, taxpayer access to Direct File, direct engagement with taxpayers who could benefit from tax credits, and working with CDFIs to promote diversification through the certification and re-certification processes.
- The **Department of Treasury** launched a [blog series](#) detailing the origins of racial economic disparities and the implications for the national economy.



GLOBAL EQUALITY

Removing Barriers to Naturalization and Humanitarian Processing

- The **Department of Homeland Security** USCIS began a comprehensive review of policies, regulations, forms, and operations to identify barriers that may impede access to naturalization by underserved communities, and is undertaking efforts to reduce or eliminate those barriers. In October 2022, USCIS updated Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions, and related Policy Manual [guidance](#). Applicants for naturalization with a physical or developmental disability or mental impairment may request an exception to the English and civics testing requirements for naturalization. This form and Policy Manual update streamline the process for applicants to claim and substantiate a disability by eliminating unnecessary and duplicative questions.
- In March 2023, the **Department of Homeland Security** USCIS updated Policy Manual [guidance](#) to allow individuals requesting immigration benefits to self-select their gender marker without the need to provide proof of their gender identity or to match the gender listed on their supporting documentation. This update reflects an important step toward reducing administrative burdens on applicants and increasing accessibility to immigration benefits and services.
- In May 2022, the **Department of Homeland Security** U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) implemented an online training course titled, “Disability Access Training for Law Enforcement Professionals,” to educate uniformed officers and agents about their roles and responsibilities for ensuring nondiscrimination in CBP-conducted services, programs, and activities for members of the public with disabilities. CBP’s uniformed officers and agents will be required to complete the training on a biennial basis.
- In FY 2023, the **Department of Homeland Security** began increasing the use of video technology to conduct I-589 asylum interviews domestically, and I-590 refugee interviews internationally, so that applicants living in remote locations will not have to wait so long or travel so far.
- The **Department of State** produced numerous public reports that have strengthened their specific focus on equity, such as [Human Rights Report](#), [Trafficking in Persons Report](#), [International Religious Freedom Report](#), and several equity-related Congressional reports. The Department also established its first [Equity APG](#), in the FY 2022-2023 cycle, to advance equity in U.S. foreign policies, programs, and processes. As an example of how the APG drove significant organizational change by identifying outcomes and measuring results, the U.S. negotiated more than 50 United Nations outcome and/or consensus documents that expanded inclusive language of historically marginalized and underserved groups. This included United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the rights of Indigenous peoples, people of African descent, and eliminating gender-based violence.
- In FY 2022, the **Department of State** began globally tracking foreign assistance programs to embed equity and inclusion into programming. This effort complements existing tracking efforts, enabling programs to address the specific needs of marginalized,



racial and ethnic, and other underserved communities, and continued efforts to develop a Social Inclusion Analysis Tool to help Department officials integrate and operationalize equity and inclusion into externally-facing foreign affairs areas, foreign policy implementation, foreign assistance program design, and diplomatic statecraft. Investments totaled \$56.8 million, spread across all geographic regions.

Supporting Global Equality and Engagement

- To increase the capacity of the **Department of State’s** Public Diplomacy programs to embed equity into programs, the agency developed guidance that incorporates intersectional equity principles, leveraged data and technology to track equity in the Public Diplomacy program participation, and expanded outreach and engagement with underserved communities to include providing live captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing and launching the inaugural [Sign@State Symposium](#) and [Minority Serving Institutions Conference](#).
- The **Department of State** began [issuing passport books](#) with gender x markers to the general public in April 2022, and is updating other passport and citizenship forms to allow the selection of the X gender marker for passport cards, expedited passports, and [Consular Reports of Birth Abroad](#); and revamped artwork and imagery on U.S. passports to ensure better representation of diversity in the nation.
- The **Agency for International Development (USAID)** approved more than 4,700 partner profiles in the [WorkwithUSAID.gov Partner Directory](#). More than 1,600 partners have completed the pre-engagement assessment, increasing the visibility of their work, connecting them with others in the development community, and assessing whether or not they are ready to respond to a USAID solicitation.
- The **Agency for International Development** published the updated Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) Strategy and Implementation Plan. The Plan includes a simplified and reduced pre-award risk survey for local organizations seeking USAID funding and a Renewal Award Guide and Template to train A&A staff to use a mechanism that leverages practices from collaborating, learning, and adapting, and responds to adjustments in dynamic operating environments. For example, USAID issued reminders to prime contractors about the requirement of reporting data against their small business subcontracting plan and to improve the accuracy of data they submit.
- The **Agency for International Development** launched the [Racial and Ethnic Equity Initiative](#). This initiative is a knowledge base of operational and best practices that have successfully advanced social inclusion and racial equity in foreign assistance programming.
- The **Agency for International Development** established an External Civil Rights Division in the USAID Office of Civil Rights. The new Division will receive and address complaints and ensure the agency complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- The **Agency for International Development** developed a new method to track the extent to which USAID’s foreign assistance programming is locally led. USAID identified 14 high priority “good practices” that create space for local actors to exercise leadership over foreign assistance programming, including priority setting, activity design, implementation, or defining and measuring results.