



U.S. Department of Defense

# Equity Action Plan 2023 Update

January 2024

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# Message from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

In January 2021, the Department of Defense (DoD) took steps to immediately implement President Biden's Executive Order (E.O.) 13985, [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), by conducting an equity assessment to identify potential barriers that underserved communities and individuals face when accessing the DoD. Actions to address these barriers were outlined in the DoD's 2022 Equity Action Plan (EAP), which focused on five Action Areas:

1. Procurement and Contracting;
2. Military Installations and Bases;
3. Military Family Equity Advancement;
4. Equity Artificial Intelligence (AI) Research and Development; and
5. Underserved Community Investment.

Per E.O. 14091, [Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), this EAP addresses the reporting requirements found in:

- E.O. 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*;
- E.O. 13988, [Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation](#);
- E.O. 14008, [Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#); and
- E.O. 14020, [Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council](#).

The DoD brought together a team that includes leaders responsible for implementing these Executive Orders. Additionally, because the DoD's EAP 2023 Update addresses the requirements of several different Executive Orders, the DoD worked closely with the Domestic Policy Council and the Office of Management and Budget and selected the following Strategies for the 2023 EAP Update:

1. Advance equity for military families with a focus on healthcare, education, and economic challenges and opportunities;
2. Advance economic equity and rectify past harms for communities around military installations and bases;
3. Integrate environmental/economic justice tools into DoD planning tools for decision-making, where applicable;
4. Advance gender diversity, equity, and inclusion by removing barriers to the recruitment, development, retention, and advancement of women in DoD; and
5. Advance women's participation in democracy, representation, and decision-making in peace and security processes.

Each of these Strategies was informed by community engagement. A few examples of such engagement include connecting with tribal members through the Department's Native American

Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP), holding listening sessions with Service members and military spouses regarding food security, and hosting the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) to gain information about issues impacting female Service members. The Department will continue to connect with members of the community to advance equitable outcomes.

These Strategies demonstrate a Department-wide commitment to equity and a holistic approach for continuing to cultivate enduring and equitable change. Significant accomplishments across these Strategies include:

- Launched the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) Small Business program, which brought in over 60 new small business employer partners;
- Initiated a robust environmental cleanup communication and outreach effort to improve transparency and engage communities affected by DoD's cleanup activities;
- Opened walk-in contraception services at 130 military medical treatment facilities to provide same-day access to the full scope of non-surgical contraceptive methods; and
- Established the Women in Service Working Group, which serves as the primary advisory group to align the medical and personnel policy communities to develop, discuss, and provide recommendations on issues related to Women in Service.

These accomplishments reflect a commitment to not only building a strong, capable, and equitable Total Force but also to ensure equitable impacts and services to the public that we serve. The Strategies and their actions described in this plan demonstrate the Department's efforts to improve outcomes for all Americans, as exemplified in remarks given by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2022:

*"We still have a lot of work to do to achieve that community ... to banish racism, to fight poverty, to break down barriers, to defend our democracy, and to come together in the common cause of bringing our republic closer to its founding promise.*

*That task belongs to all of us, of course, in or out of uniform. As Dr. King preached, we are all 'caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,' and 'whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.'*

*We understand that mindset very well here in the Department of Defense, as it is the very essence of teamwork. We strive every day to serve this country with honor and integrity, and with a true sense of the contributions that all of us give to the task, no matter where we come from or how we worship."*

# Advancing Equity Through Agency Mission

As the world's preeminent military and the largest U.S. Federal workforce, it is the Department's responsibility to lead in advancing equity. While the DoD has historically focused on increasing equity within the DoD community, the Department has expanded its approach to include creating opportunities for all Americans. Through its current equity efforts, the Department seeks to advance equity for military families and members of underserved communities and to rectify past harms for communities around military installations and bases. Advancing equity not only makes the Joint Force a stronger and more resilient fighting force, but it is also an essential component of deterring conflict for the American people and building a safer, more prosperous world.

## Executive Summary of Equity Action Plan

The Department has identified five key Strategies to advance and embed equity. The five Strategies are:

1. Advance equity for military families with a focus on healthcare, education, and economic challenges and opportunities;
2. Advance economic equity and rectify past harms for communities around military installations and bases;
3. Integrate environmental/economic justice tools into DoD planning tools for decision-making, where applicable;
4. Advance gender diversity, equity, and inclusion by removing barriers to the recruitment, development, retention, and advancement of women in DoD; and
5. Advance women's participation in democracy, representation, and decision-making in peace and security processes.

Key barriers to achieving equity include the high demands of military life, historical actions that have resulted in adverse community outcomes, and disproportionate environmental impacts on underserved communities, among others. The Department continues to acknowledge these barriers and, as provided in the Strategies described below, takes steps to eliminate them.

Plans to address these barriers include:

- Explore changes to Military Health System (MHS) GENESIS to address gaps in food insecurity screening;
- Invest over \$1.4 billion (B) in the Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP) and \$20 million (M) in the NALEMP that address legacy impacts from past DoD actions;
- Develop an implementation strategy by September 2024 for E.O. 14096, [Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All](#)
- Standardize reproductive health care policies through the development of a new Department of Defense Instruction; and
- Work with partner nations to (i) promote women in those partner nations meaningfully participating and serving at all ranks and in all occupations in defense and security sectors, and (ii) conduct related security cooperation programs and activities.

# Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments

This section presents the Department's equity updates for the Action Areas from the 2022 EAP, the results of its first environmental scorecard, a description of additional efforts to advance equity, and key initiatives to implement recent laws that also advance equity.

## 2022 Equity Action Plan Action Areas Updates

### Action 1 – Procurement and Contracting

**Objective: Close gaps in participation by small businesses and other underserved communities and improve workforce equity through an ambitious equitable procurement and contracting agenda that includes advancing equity throughout the supply chain (e.g., advancing opportunities for prime and subcontractors who are members of underserved communities).**

- 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.
- Achieved a 10.14 percent Small Disadvantaged Business goal in FY 2022, exceeding the year-end goal by 0.64 percent. This achievement advanced the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government approach to expanding contracting opportunities for Small Disadvantaged Businesses.
- Exceeded its yearly milestone (0.60 percent by January 2023), achieving 0.61 percent of [AbilityOne Program](#) contract spending. In FY 2022, DoD procured more than \$2.5B of products and services from the AbilityOne Program, an increase of \$125M in FY 2021. DoD contracts with the AbilityOne program to secure the services of approximately 35,000 individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities. The Military Departments and other participating DoD Components submitted their 2023 updates to the AbilityOne Strategic Plans, which will be implemented through the end of the calendar year. DoD continues to participate in the Federal level AbilityOne Representatives Program monthly meetings hosted by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission.
- Issued a memorandum titled, "Actions to Support the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment," that provides a list of actions to promote the awareness of workers' organizing rights, contractors' responsibilities, and government authorities when government contract workers are trying to organize the contracting workforce.
- Baselined Simplified Acquisition Threshold performance within Military Departments and other DoD Components and established goals for FY 2023 and beyond. DoD is on track to issue regular guidance to the acquisition workforce on maximizing small business participation and update and deploy the Office of Small Business Program's Market Research Center of Excellence (MRCOE) in Quarter (Q) 1 of FY 2024.
  - Educating small business professionals on how to use MRCOE to enhance DoD small business utilization through targeted and consistent performance and goal management and institutionalizing the involvement of small business professionals in the earliest stages of acquisition planning through regulation, policy, or guidance are on track for Q3 of FY 2024. Finally, DoD will add

functionality and capabilities based on updated business rules and supply chain requirements by Q4 of FY 2024.

## Action 2 – Military Installations and Bases

**Objective: Advance equity for communities around military installations and bases, including through NALEMP and Defense Environmental Restoration Program cleanup programs, and through prioritizing clean-up of Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).**

- Closed 13 FY 2021 Cooperative Agreements (CAs) in Q4 2023. At the beginning of Q2 2023, DoD finalized and approved the FY 2023 Short List of 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. These FY 2023 CAs are expected to be executed by Q4 2023. Additionally, NALEMP is currently considering 16 Tribes for FY 2024 CAs.
- Completed over half of the Preliminary Assessments/Site Inspections (PA/SI) at 707 installations where DoD may have used and potentially released PFAS materials. DoD obligated \$2.0 billion (B) through FY 2022 to conduct PFAS-related drinking water mitigation, investigations, and cleanup on its installations, as well as in nearby communities.
- Awarded three non-construction planning and organization assistance grants to Guam in FY 2022 totaling \$2.3 million (M) to address cumulative DoD socioeconomic and environmental impacts in Guam.
- Provided approximately \$218M in appropriated funding for outside-the-fence investments in Guam, including a cultural repository (\$12M), public health lab (\$32M), upgrades to the Northern District Wastewater Treatment Plant (\$139.3M), Interceptor Sewer Refurbishment (\$30.6M), Northern Guam Lens Aquifer Monitoring System (\$3.7M), and surface transportation network improvements (\$246M).
  - Three of the five Guam outside-the-fence investments are complete, one is under construction, and one is completing final design. All projects are estimated to be completed by 2025.
- Initiated a robust environmental cleanup communication and outreach effort to improve transparency and engage communities affected by DoD's cleanup activities.

## Action 3 – Military Family Equity Advancement

**Objective: 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.**

- Hosted Teacher Leadership Academies with more than 150 participants across the DoDEA Europe, Americas, and Pacific regions.
- Launched the MSEP Small Business program, which brought in over 30 new small business employer partners.
- Added questions to the Status of Forces Surveys to better understand usage of dining facilities and federal subsistence programs.
- Expanded the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN)-PLUS initiative to cover seven additional states, bringing the total number of states covered to 13 plus Miami-Dade County in Florida.
- Implemented the Basic Needs Allowance to provide an additional allowance to eligible families whose income was less than 150 percent 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.

#### Action 4 – Equitable AI Research and Development

**Objective: Become a leader on equitable AI research and development through programs such as Artificial Social Intelligence for Successful Teams, Grounded AI Language Acquisition Research, and Guaranteeing AI Robustness Against Deception.**

- Released an updated [Responsible AI Guidelines](#) by the Defense Innovation Unit in June 2023. It is a practical framework for including the DoD's 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.

#### Action 5 – Underserved Community Investment

**Objective: Invest in underserved communities and expand access to DoD programs and opportunities by increasing investments in Minority-serving Institutions (MIs) and investments in kindergarten (K)-12 and K-20 programs.**

- Established the first Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)-led University Affiliated Research Center at Howard University in Tactical Autonomy.
- Awarded 82 grants to HBCU/MI researchers totaling \$61.7M, which represents a record amount of research grants given to HBCU/MI research projects.
- Placed 114 interns at 13 defense laboratories and OSD organizations through the DoD HBCU/MI Summer Research Internship program in Summer 2023.
- 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 HBCU/MI involvement in defense research activities.



- 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.
- Hosted three successful Taking the Pentagon to the People educational outreach events during FY 2023 at: University of California at Riverside, a joint event at Tuskegee and Alabama State Universities, and Arizona State University.
- [Announced the establishment of four new research centers of excellence](#) at MIs of higher education, as part of its Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-serving Institutions Research and Education Program. The awards total \$40M and will enhance research programs and capabilities in critical scientific and engineering disciplines, while expanding HBCUs' and MIs' capacity to participate in DoD research programs and activities. These awards will also increase the number of graduates in STEM fields, including those from under-represented minorities, which is critically important to the Department's mission.

## Environmental Justice Scorecard Results

Historically underserved communities often suffer disproportionate environmental impacts. This population includes DoD military and civilian personnel and their families living on and off military installations. To address this condition, Strategy 3 of this EAP contains Integrated Environmental/Economic Justice Tools, which also include actions that will help the DoD achieve environmental justice.

One of the tools to assess environmental justice is the DoD Environmental Justice Scorecard, which can be found [here](#). The DoD's environmental justice scorecard assesses DoD's progress in delivering environmental and health benefits to underserved communities.

DoD's renewed focus on environmental justice has advanced environmental justice results in numerous locations. For example, Fort Carson Air Program Managers work closely with local communities, non-governmental organizations, and government advisory councils on topics related to air quality in these communities. Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall participates in multi-agency working groups to provide these communities with infrastructure investments. West Point's long and collaborative history of resource management with Tribal Nations and fair approach to development has resulted in a low risk of disproportionate impacts to traditionally underserved communities. Fort Stewart promoted free COVID vaccine clinics to ensure such communities had access to vaccines.

Additionally, the Army National Guard created the Southeast Regional Native American Consultations with six Tribal Nations participating in seven states; the Arkansas and Texas Army National Guard State Consultation, with five Tribal Nations participating; and the Oregon Army National Guard Consultations, with one Tribal Nation participating.

## Additional Efforts to Advance Equity

The Department took additional actions to advance equity beyond what was described in the 2022 EAP. Some of these actions are:

- Implemented a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) education framework to deliver equitable access and opportunity to all military-connected students.

- Offered its annual technical assistance workshop through the DoD HBCU/MI Program. DoD provided information about defense research priorities as well as fellowship, internship, and scholarship opportunities that span the defense research enterprise.
- Published its [Responsible Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Implementation Pathway](#), which guides the Department’s journey to its goal of a trusted AI ecosystem.

## Advancing Equity Through Key Legislation

The DoD is taking steps to implement statutory requirements that will advance equity. The statutory requirements listed below are supported by the Strategies identified in Section 5 and by the Action Areas from the 2022 EAP.

Legislative Source	Description	Related EAP Strategy/ Action	DoD Actions
<b>FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Section (Sec.) 611</b>	Increases the maximum household income to qualify for Basic Needs Allowance from 130 percent of FPG to 150 percent and allows the Secretary of Defense to change that figure to 200 percent in specific areas.	Strategy 1	In January 2023, the Department implemented the Basic Needs Allowance to provide an additional allowance to eligible families whose income was less than 130 percent of the FPG. In July 2023, the Department expanded this threshold to 150 percent of FPG.
<b>FY 2022 NDAA, Sec. 564</b>	Establishes paid fellowships for military spouses to work with employers across a variety of industries.	Strategy 1 & Action 3	DoD partnered with employers to host more than 400 military spouses in industry fellowships from January 2023 to November 2023.
<b>FY 2020 NDAA, Sec. 214</b>	Allows the Secretary of Defense to implement incentives to encourage research and educational collaboration with HBCUs and MIs.	Action 5	DoD established the first HBCU-led University Affiliated Research Center at Howard University in Tactical Autonomy and awarded 82 grants to HBCUs/MI researchers totaling \$61.7M.

# Strategies to Advance Equity in FY 2024

## Strategy #1

**Advance equity for military families with a focus on healthcare, education, and economic challenges and opportunities.**

### Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s)

- **Economic Justice:** Build a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy.
- **Educational Equity:** Pursue educational equity so that our Nation's schools put every student on a path to success.
- **Health Equity:** Advance equity in health, including mental and behavioral health and well-being.

### Collaborating Agencies

Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Education

### Barriers to Equity

- DoDEA students transition between DoDEA and non-DoDEA schools and school systems multiple times throughout their pre-k through 12th grade school careers, which leads to challenges in consistent and equitable access to educational opportunities such as, but not limited to, curricular resources, earning credit for graduation, and course options.
- Spousal unemployment and underemployment can be barriers to both economic and food security for military families, which, in turn, can impact readiness, resilience, and retention.
- Demands of military life, such as frequent moves, long periods of separation, and executing the military mission, can pose unique stressors and health equity barriers for Service members and their families. Ensuring access to resources that support well-being is critical to their readiness and resilience.

### Evidence Base to Support Strategy

- Department of Defense Status of Forces Surveys and Active Duty/Reserve Component Spouse Surveys (ADSS/RCSS) provide data on spouse employment, wellness, food security, and other key quality of life areas. Federally funded Research and Development Center surveys and reports also provide key quality of life data and information.
- DoD also obtains data and input from internal and external stakeholders, to include the Military Services, military service organizations/veteran service organizations (MSO/VSO), the public, Congress, White House Joining Forces, and others.
- The FY 2021 ADSS showed that 21 percent of military spouses indicated they were actively looking for work but were unable to obtain employment. Both the 2020 Status of Forces Survey of the Active Component (SOFSA) and the 2021 ADSS showed levels of

food insecurity at ~24-25 percent. Survey results are available on <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>.

- The Joining Forces Sub-Interagency Policy Committee created health equity as a national patient safety goal, as of July 1, 2023, requiring incorporation of social determinants of health (e.g., food insecurity) as a priority for health care.

### Actions to Achieve Equity

To address these barriers, DoD will:

- Ensure consistent and equitable access for DoDEA students through increasing opportunities to advanced placement course options, advanced academic programs and services, DoDEA Virtual School course enrollment, and ongoing professional learning for all DoDEA educators to understand the dynamic needs of military-connected students during times of transition.
- Expand employer partnerships through the MSEP program to provide more job opportunities for military spouses on the MSEP portal.
- Continue to complete actions from the DoD Food Security Strategy and Roadmap and implement other actions to address food security challenges.
- Provide military spouses with paid fellowship opportunities through the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot (MSCAP) to enhance their experience and marketable skills.
- Explore approaches to educate health care providers on using an evidence-based screening tool (“the Hunger Vital Sign”) to evaluate household risk of food insecurity, offer providers key resources for those patients/households who screen as being at risk, and communicate the importance of food insecurity as a social determinant of health.
- Explore changes to MHS GENESIS to address gaps in food insecurity screening, specifically to ensure screening of all children ages 0-17 years and to integrate early pregnancy screening.
- Consider mechanisms/processes for how health care providers can connect military beneficiaries' households/patients experiencing food insecurity to needed resources.
- Add additional resources relevant to food insecurity on the TRICARE website (e.g., federal food assistance programs); ensure information and resources are easily available for providers and beneficiaries.
- Once finalized and approved, include food insecurity resources into the Virtual Education Center, which is currently being tested to augment provider-patient communication in the electronic record.

### Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)

#### Near- to Medium-Term (*Likely to be mostly outputs*)

- **MSEP:** Output – Increase MSEP employer partners by 10 percent from FY 2023 to FY 2024; Outcome – MSEP employer partners will report hiring on at least a quarterly basis to help better identify hiring outcomes and continuity of employment.

- **MSCAP:** Output – Place 100 military spouses in fellowships in FY 2024; Outcome – spouses introduced to employer hosts through paid fellowships with potential for full-time employment.
- **Food Security Strategy & Roadmap:** Output – Complete at least five of the remaining outstanding actions (FY 2024 Goal: initiate and complete qualitative RAND food security study of junior Service members/families at select installations).
- Assess the pre-enrollment criteria of all students, including historically underserved populations participating in challenging coursework, which includes, but not limited to, advanced placement courses, advanced academics programs and services, accelerated courses.
- Assess the enrollment process for all students to access challenging coursework via digital learning opportunities, which includes, but not limited to, advanced placement courses, advanced academics programs and services, accelerated courses.
- Assess student participation and performance across all student groups in challenging coursework, which includes, but not limited to, advanced placement courses, advanced academics programs and services, and accelerated courses.

### **Longer-Term (Outcomes)**

- Better understanding of the root causes and challenges of food insecurity within the military community to better refine solutions through policies and programs.
- Increase student participation and performance in challenging coursework across all student groups.
- The MHS is collecting food insecurity screening data from the electronic health record in response to the new Joint Commission standards and Safety Goal related to reducing healthcare disparities; this will support military medical treatment facility efforts to address social determinants of health, such as food insecurity, which affect patient health and well-being.
- The Defense Health Agency is exploring how best to leverage medical records data to collect, analyze and report health equity data, including data on social determinants of health.

### **Public Participation and Community Engagement**

- To better understand the challenges of food security among Service members and families and the impact of DoD policies and programs, DoD will continue to work with MSO/VSO partners, the Services, and other entities.
- DoD will continue to engage multiple employment sectors (for-profit, non-profit, academia, health care, etc.) to promote the talents of military spouses and encourage employers to support and join DoD military spouse programs.

## **Strategy #2**

### **Advance economic equity and rectify past harms for communities around military installations and bases.**

## Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s)

- **Economic Justice:** Ensure strong and fair economic conditions for communities impacted by Defense Installations.
- **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.

## Collaborating Agencies

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Park Service (NPS), Federally recognized Tribes, and Tribal and State Historic Preservation Offices

## Barriers to Equity

- DoD operational and training activities during the World War II and Cold War eras resulted in adverse environmental, health, and economic impacts to communities, including American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Historically, DoD built temporary bases and bombing ranges on and near Indian lands, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act-conveyed properties, ancestral lands, and reserved treaty rights areas. Legacy impacts from operations at these former bases and ranges may include hazardous materials, debris, underground fuel storage tanks, lead-based paint, asbestos, munitions/explosives residue, and abandoned or unsafe sites. These impacts create a barrier to Indigenous populations by potentially hindering land development for housing, economic opportunities (e.g., harvesting timber), or protecting the land for subsistence food gathering or cultural practices. Current training and operational activities, although now conducted in a manner to reduce adverse impacts, still can be barriers to equity.
- More recently, DoD's efforts to expand its footprint on Guam may result in additional stress on the infrastructure of the island and the local population. Much of this stress will impact underserved communities. Finally, the construction of a new installation in Guam coupled with the surge in military construction projects at legacy installations has increased the quantity of unearthed artifacts. The only certified repository on Guam is very small and is operated by the NPS to curate the NPS's War in the Pacific collection.

## Evidence Base to Support Strategy

- The total number of sites eligible for remediation under the DoD NALEMP is 158 sites. Remediation is complete at over 100 sites.

## Actions to Achieve Equity

To address these barriers, DoD will:

- Explore new partnership opportunities with EPA and other Federal agencies to advance environmental justice in accordance with E.O. 14096. DoD is committed to early and meaningful engagement with communities. For example, in its cleanup programs, DoD will identify opportunities for engagement and provide updates on its cleanup progress.

- While choosing among waste disposal options, pay particular attention to the additional oversight and controls provided at disposal and destruction facilities with environmental permits to ensure the least exposure to communities.
- Evaluate which communities may be experiencing negative environmental, health, or economic effects due to proximity to DoD testing sites, bases, or munitions sites, and invest in mitigating those effects and advancing equitable outcomes for those communities.
  - In FY 2024, DoD anticipates investing over \$1.4B in the DERP and \$20M in NALEMP that address legacy impacts from past DoD actions.
- Subject to existing legal authority, consider planning and adjustment assistance for communities where DoD has formally announced action that potentially impacts a local community. The DoD will evaluate opportunities to assist communities with defense diversification assistance where communities close to installations meet specific thresholds regarding their defense dependence.
- Seek opportunities for significant new investments in underserved communities around military bases and installations.

## Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)

### Near- to Medium-Term (*Likely to be mostly outputs*)

- Track NALEMP funding execution.
- Track DERP funding execution.
- Track grant funding of awards and execution on Guam.

### Longer-Term (*Outcomes*)

- Build public trust.
- Prevent future negative effects on communities.

## Public Participation and Community Engagement

- Actively seek public engagement in the cleanup process and enhance public outreach and engagement (e.g., Restoration Advisory Boards) to ensure that the voices and lived experiences of communities with environmental justice concerns inform DoD's work. The Restoration Advisory Boards provide an opportunity for the local community adjacent to the installation to discuss issues related to the cleanup with installation representatives. The installation representatives communicate how the Department's contracted cleanup is proceeding based on the Record of Decision and enables direct feedback from the public regarding potential new issues or previously unidentified impacts.
- Track NALEMP ad hoc tribal engagements.
- Conduct Association of Defense Communities meetings and other public engagement.
- Provide grant financial assistance to the Government of Guam's Community Defense Liaison Office to ensure Guam can speak with one voice as it engages DoD across a

range of issues. This significantly improves the community engagement between Guam and the Department.

### Strategy #3

**Integrate environmental/economic justice tools into DoD planning tools for decision-making, where applicable.**

#### Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s)

- **Economic Justice:** Ensure strong and fair economic conditions for communities impacted by Defense Installations.
- **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.

#### Collaborating Agencies

White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) EPA, Defense communities, and local and state governments that are included in the integrated installation resilience plans.

#### Barriers to Equity

- E.O.s [12898](#), 14008, and 14096 have identified that communities that have been historically disadvantaged often suffer disproportionate environmental impacts, such as infrastructure decline, deteriorating housing, exposure to lead, and industrial pollution. This includes many DoD military and civilian personnel and their families living on and off base.
- Many communities located near military bases have historically been underrepresented in public engagement on agency decision-making. Many of these communities still lack the resources to track proposed actions and engage in the Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation processes.

#### Evidence Base to Support Strategy

- The Department continues to identify and clean up past military sites that supported cold war security efforts (called Formerly Used Defense Sites) that affected remote communities.
- DoD used the Climate and Economic Screening Tool to determine that nearly 40 percent of major military installations are adjacent to communities that meet selected criteria for Environmental Justice considerations.

#### Actions to Achieve Equity

To address these barriers, DoD will:

- **Develop an implementation strategy by September 2024** for E.O. 14096, *Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All*, signed in April 2023. This E.O. formally defined Environmental Justice and expanded the scope of the E.O. 12898, assessing for disproportional impacts to low-income and minority populations.



- **Incorporate Environmental Justice Screening and the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tools into the Defense Climate Assessment tool by May 2024.**
- **Train DoD Climate Assessment Tool users**, a community of DoD installation planners and decision-makers, on environmental justice principles and how to include these principles and corresponding data into DoD planning processes by August 2024.

### Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)

#### Near- to Medium-Term (*Likely to be mostly outputs*)

- [DoD January 2023 Environmental Scorecard](#).
- Fully incorporate Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool data into the DoD Climate Assessment Tool.

#### Longer-Term (*Outcomes*)

- Train and equip DoD planners and decision-makers on how to access, view, and analyze environmental justice data in Department tools.
- Continue to ensure that DoD identifies potential impacts on and mitigation for communities that have been historically disadvantaged through the National Environmental Policy Act analysis and via Restoration Advisory Boards.

### Public Participation and Community Engagement

1. DoD continues to participate in the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, which is a public Federal Advisory Committee established by the White House in 2021.
  - DoD provided a dedicated panel discussion on challenges in cleanup of legacy pollution in 2022 and anticipates supporting the committee with continued engagement.
  - DoD provides response to public comments on Environmental Justice issues raised at the advisory committee.
2. DoD is looking for opportunities to support CEQ public engagement requests with Assistant Secretary of Defense-level engagements.

## Strategy #4

**Advance gender diversity, equity, and inclusion by removing barriers to the recruitment, development, retention, and advancement of women in DoD.**

### Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s)

- **Global Equity:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.
- **Health Equity:** Advance equity in health, including mental and behavioral health and well-being.
- **Economic Justice:** Build a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy.

## Collaborating Agencies

Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Health and Human Services

## Barriers to Equity

- Efforts to ensure the sex-specific needs of female Service members have frequently been isolated, with limited accountability for lasting change, causing a barrier to gender equity.
- The lack of strategic infrastructure to advance sound scientific evidence on women's health is a barrier to advancing gender equity.
- Timely access to lawfully available reproductive health care is a readiness, retention, and recruitment issue, particularly for female Service members.

## Evidence Base to Support Strategy

- In 2019, the Defense Health Board was charged with exploring DoD policies, practices, structure, and capabilities that promote or inhibit women's health and access to services focused on musculoskeletal injury prevention, reproductive health, and psychological and mental health. Their final report, "[Active Duty Women's Health Care Services](#)," found that active duty Women continue to experience health care and operational challenges that reviews and reports over the past 25 years have identified, evaluated, and made recommendations for improvement.
- The [DoD Women's Reproductive Health Survey \(WRHS\)](#) surveyed active-duty female Service members about their needs, preferences, and experiences accessing reproductive health through the MHS. The findings provided recommendations for improvement to support and ensure female Service members have access to the reproductive health care they need throughout their military careers.
- The 2019 DACOWITS focus groups collected qualitative and quantitative data during visits in April and May 2019 to eight military installations representing all four DoD Service branches (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force). During these focus groups, the Committee addressed three topics: 1. Conscious and unconscious gender bias; 2. Pregnancy and parenthood; and 3. Physical fitness assessments. (Gaddes, R., Jacobson, Z., Montgomery S., Moore, C., Stangle, J., & Williams, A. (2019). [Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services \(DACOWITS\) 2019 focus group report.](#))

## Actions to Achieve Equity

To address these barriers, DoD will:

- Execute a childcare fee assistance pilot program, increasing access to child care for eligible Service members by implementing changes or requirements from the NDAA FY 2024 and determining the feasibility of recommendations from the DoD Child Care Summit (continuation from FY 2022 plan).
- Broaden the pool of eligible providers to receive fee assistance through strategic partnerships with states and counties (continuation from FY 2022 plan).
- Provide recommendations from the Women in Service Working Group, a subgroup of the Medical and Personnel Executive Steering Committee, for policy and programmatic

changes that will advance the needs of female Service members in response to the 2020 Defense Health Board report.

- Pilot a reproductive behavioral health consultation program that will offer military health care providers access to reproductive behavioral health subject matter experts to address issues and care for reproductive health-related behavioral health impacts (done in collaboration with the Department of Veteran Affairs).

## Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)

### Near- to Medium-Term (*Likely to be mostly outputs*)

- Increase states participating in [MCCYN-PLUS](#) by five no later than the end of calendar year 2023. This will increase the total number of state/county participants to 15; increasing the number of providers eligible to receive fee assistance on behalf of military families.
- Contingent upon participant feedback from the DoD Child Care Summit on September 15, 2023; increase usage of the Child Care in Your Home Pilot.
- Complete focus groups on reproductive health-related concerns to Service members.

### Longer-Term (*Outcomes*)

- DoD will feature a diverse portfolio/system of resources to meet the myriad child care needs of our military families.
- Standardization of health care policies will ensure that all female Service members have access to the same, quality care for the range of their reproductive health needs.
- Increase informed decision-making on family planning goals through available resources, such as walk-in contraception services and updates to the health.mil website that provide clear information about available contraception.
- Implementation of policies and processes that permit female Service members to advance in their military careers without impediments caused by inflexible career paths and options, thereby increasing the recruitment and retention of women who serve.

## Public Participation and Community Engagement

- DoD coordinates with other Federal agencies to advance maternal health outcomes through the Maternal Health Interagency Policy Council and Maternal Mental Health Taskforce.
- The MHS engages with other Federal Agencies in the Health and Human Services working group on maternal mental health.
- DACOWITS, composed of civilian members, engages Service members and the public to provide advice and recommendations on issues impacting recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of female Service members.
- DoD participates in the Women's Health Research Interagency Policy Council with other Federal Agencies to advance women's health across the country.

## Strategy #5

**Advance women’s participation in democracy, representation, and decision-making in peace and security processes.**

### Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s)

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

### Collaborating Agencies

Other relevant Federal departments and agencies identified in the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Act of 2017, which includes the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Homeland Security.

### Barriers to Equity

- Global insecurity affects the national security of the United States, as regions of conflict often provide havens for terrorists and other illicit actors; become proxies for strategic competition; and lead to population displacement, migration, and further regional instability.
- Women, girls, and other underserved communities are [disproportionally impacted](#) by conflict and instability, which often exacerbate [gender-based violence](#). [Evidence suggests](#) that when women meaningfully participated in security sector roles, security forces often have better information about the needs of the local community, including women and girls’ unique needs, and citizens view security forces as more credible and trustworthy.
- Despite the critical role women can play in their defense institutions, women’s recruitment, career progressions, and involvement in security sector decision making [still lags behind](#) globally due to [gender-based barriers](#) [https://us-east-1-02900067-inspect.menlosecurity.com/safeview-fileserv/tc\\_download/7267d6ebc83f7eef415b6f13509bd4b3f2e259555850b7d4eb9de128d57f193f/?&cid=N5F6B3DF25713\\_&rid=8d39caf583e2db1a68d4d5de0ac72148&file\\_url=https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/imce/Women's%2520Guide%2520Curriculum/InclusiveSecurity\\_Curriculum\\_Series\\_SSR\\_MOD8.pdf&type=original](https://us-east-1-02900067-inspect.menlosecurity.com/safeview-fileserv/tc_download/7267d6ebc83f7eef415b6f13509bd4b3f2e259555850b7d4eb9de128d57f193f/?&cid=N5F6B3DF25713_&rid=8d39caf583e2db1a68d4d5de0ac72148&file_url=https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/imce/Women's%2520Guide%2520Curriculum/InclusiveSecurity_Curriculum_Series_SSR_MOD8.pdf&type=original) instances of unsupportive leadership, discouraging culture and norms, and lack of adequate infrastructure and equipment.
- Defense institutions [struggle integrating](#) a gender perspective into military operations to better plan for and accommodate the disproportionate impact of conflict on women, girls, and other underserved communities.

### Evidence Base to Support Strategy

- [The Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017](#) establishes as U.S. policy the promotion of the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of overseas conflict prevention, management, and resolution, including by encouraging partner governments to adopt plans to improve the meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes and decision-making institutions. Studies on WPS have found that women’s involvement in military and police forces [improves efficacy](#) and force readiness, while

their meaningful participation in peace negotiations makes it more likely that warring parties will reach [sustainable agreements](#) and enhance the effectiveness of [peacekeeping efforts](#).

- [E.O. 13595](#) emphasizes the importance of promoting women’s participation in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as in post-conflict relief and recovery; in advancing peace, national security, economic and social development; and in international cooperation.
- The Department’s implementation of the WPS Act is a key component of how the Department works with partner nation security forces on addressing both the barriers for women’s participation in the security sector and the long- and short-term security needs of women and girls when impacted by [conflict or crisis](#). These efforts strengthen partner nations’ ability to apply a critical gender analysis to operations and activities of their own national security forces.

## Actions to Achieve Equity

To address these barriers, DoD will in FY 2024:

- 1. Elevate and standardize the Gender Advisor workforce to further the consideration and application of gender analysis to the Department’s plans, operations, activities, and investments.**
  - a. Codify roles and responsibilities for the gender advisor workforce in DoD policy guidance (e.g., DoDI).
  - b. Establish and maintain skill expertise identifiers for Service members and DoD civilians.
  - c. Ensure DoD organizations maintain a gender advisory workforce, including Gender Advisors, Gender Focal Points, and WPS Program Managers, implement DoD WPS policy guidance.
- 2. Expand the understanding, consideration, and application of gender and socio-cultural considerations and their impacts across the Department’s plans, operations, activities, and investments in support of national security decision making.**
  - a. Incorporate definitions and define gender analysis in DoD policy guidance.
  - b. Train the gender advisory workforce and DoD personnel on steps for conducting gender analyses, as appropriate.
  - c. Conduct gender analysis to inform security cooperation, Theater Campaign Plans, training for U.S personnel, military exercises, and DoD support to the development of Integrated Country Strategies.
- 3. Work with partner nations to advance gender equity and equality within national security decision-making, engagement, and cooperation with allies and partners globally.**
  - a. Update DoD security cooperation guidance and design templates to reflect gender analysis information and to encourage the design and implementation of security cooperation programs relevant to WPS.

- b. Conduct a pilot program within one country in each geographic Combatant Command's area of responsibility to assess the barriers and opportunities with respect to strengthening recruitment, employment, development, retention, and promotion of women in the military forces of partner nations.
- c. Seek to provide opportunities for women in national security forces of foreign partners to participate in security cooperation and assistance programs, resources, training, and education opportunities, including US professional military education institutions.
- d. Work with partner nations to advance gender equity and equality within national security decision-making, engagement, and cooperation with allies and partners globally.

## Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)

### Near- to Medium-Term (*Likely to be mostly outputs*)

- Metrics for Action #1
  - Number of DoD strategies, policies, and programs that are informed by a gender analysis.
  - Number of gender advisors, gender focal points, and WPS Programs Managers performing their duties across DoD Components.
  - Number of Operationalizing WPS 100 and 200 level courses conducted within a fiscal year.
- Metrics for Action #2
  - Number of trainings for DoD personnel that integrate WPS principles including how to incorporate gender and socio-cultural considerations into military operations, activities, and investments.
  - Integration of gender and socio-cultural considerations into DoD strategic and policy-level documents.
  - Integration of gender analysis into DoD security cooperation planning and programming.
- Metrics for Action #3
  - Number of engagements by U.S. leaders that lead to activities conducted with partner nations on WPS.
  - Annual increase in enrollment and participation of women in U.S. professional military education institutions and courses.

### Longer-Term (*Outcomes*)

DoD is organized, trained, and equipped to:

- Seek to ensure U.S. military operations do not have a disproportionately negative impact on the condition of civilians based on those civilians' gender roles, identities, and responsibilities.

- Seek to protect and mitigate harm to civilians by accounting for gender and socio-cultural considerations in response to human rights violations, sexual exploitation and abuse, crisis and conflict related sexual violence, trafficking in persons, the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and the damaging of cultural property.
- Work with allies and partners to seek to expand opportunities and remove recruitment, employment, retention, development, and promotion barriers that contribute to the under-representation of women in foreign security forces.
- Work with allies and partners on the reduction and prevention of sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic abuse, and other forms of violence that disproportionately impact women's participation in foreign security forces.
- Work with allies and partners on integrating gender analysis into their policy, planning, operations, exercises, and training.

### Public Participation and Community Engagement

- The DoD, together with the Department of State, USAID, and Department of Homeland Security, participates in annual engagements with civil society organizations, specifically with members of the [U.S. Civil Society Working Group](#) on WPS.

## List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Description
CA	Cooperative Agreements
CEQ	White House Council on Environmental Quality
DACOWITS	Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
DERP	Defense Environmental Restoration Program
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDEA	Department of Defense Education Activity
EAP	Equity Action Plan
E.O.	Executive Order
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FPG	Federal Poverty Guidelines
HBCU	Historically Black College or University
MCCYN	Military Childcare in Your Neighborhood
MHS	Military Health System
MRCOE	Market Research Center of Excellence
MSCAP	Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot
MSEP	Military Spouse Employment Partnership
MSO/VSO	Military Service Organizations/Veteran Service Organizations
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Support
NALEMP	Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program
NPS	National Park Service
PA/SI	Preliminary Assessments/Site Inspections
PFAS	Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
SOFS-A	Status of Forces Survey of the Active Component
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security