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# U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR EQUITY ACTION PLAN

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JANUARY 2, 2024

## **A Message from Deb Haaland, United States Secretary of the Interior**

At the Department of the Interior (Department), equity and inclusion are at the heart of our mission. From creating good-paying jobs for a clean energy future to stewarding the lands, air, and waters we all depend on, we advance environmental justice while ensuring that historically underserved communities can access the transformational benefits our public lands and waters have to offer.

Since our country's founding, our national parks, wildlife refuges, conservation lands, and other public lands and waters have played a defining role in the preservation of our natural beauty. Yet for generations, marginalized communities have been on the frontlines of the climate and environmental justice crises—from toxic air and water quality to inadequate access to the countless benefits of nature. This includes the pervasive harm inflicted on Indigenous communities—our country's original stewards who have cared for our shared lands and waters since time immemorial.

It is the Biden-Harris administration's mission to not just acknowledge this difficult history, but to actively empower our communities to achieve a thriving, equitable future. Our equity action plan puts this mission to work by helping mitigate the impacts of our Nation's historic wrongs while infusing our collaborative efforts with the locally driven input and guidance our work needs to shine. This collaboration is essential for protecting the irreplaceable landscapes we depend on while creating outdoor opportunities for every community, regardless of ZIP Code.

Our 2023 Equity Action Plan outlines our progress and strategies to advance President Biden's all-of-Government approach for achieving the equitable future we all deserve. I am deeply grateful to our teams across the Department who come to work every day to fulfill this mission, and I look forward to the progress we will continue to accomplish on behalf of all Americans.



Deb Haaland

**A Message from Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget of the United States Department of the Interior**

Under Secretary Haaland’s leadership and steadfast commitment, the Department of the Interior (Department) places equity at the center of its mission to serve the American people by protecting and managing the Nation’s natural resources and cultural heritage; providing scientific and other information about those resources; and honoring trust responsibilities and special commitments to American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and affiliated island communities. In furtherance of this commitment, the Department’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council (Council), which I chair, has taken on the role of the Agency Equity Action Team, developing actions to support equity-related Executive Orders (EO). The approach of the Council ensures the Department continues working collaboratively across Bureau components to deliver on equity and embed equity in our core values across all business lines, practices, and programs benefiting workforce members and the great American public we serve.

As the Department continues evolving in the work of EO 14091, entitled “Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” we recognize the nexus to many other simultaneous initiatives and action plans including gender, climate, and education, which complement the work detailed in this 2023 Equity Action Plan. In response to EO 14020, the Department’s Gender Strategy Action Plan was published in August 2022. This plan identified four focus areas which have seen both clear progress and some persistent challenges. The Council will continue its efforts to overcome challenges and achieve gender equity. With respect to EO 14008, the Department has developed its 2021 Climate Action Plan and the 2022 Climate Adaption and Resilience Plan Progress Report, which establish and update the Department’s progress on specific climate-related action items. Specific to equity, the Department embraces the second action item, to “advance climate equity” in a collaborative manner across departmental functions. Finally, with regard to EO 13988, the Department’s dedicated working group’s activities resulted in many successes including the Department’s first Transgender Day of Visibility. Additional activities include the continual evaluation of written materials, including policies, forms, and web content to ensure the usage of gender-neutral language.

I am honored to work with Secretary Haaland to help fulfill her personal commitment to making progress in ensuring equity for all.



Joan Mooney

**AGENCY EQUITY TEAM LEAD:** Jennifer Koduru and Hope Balamani

### **Advancing Equity Through Agency Mission**

The Department of the Interior's (Department or DOI) workforce fulfills its mission to protect and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated island communities. The Department plays a pivotal role in how the United States stewards its public lands and waters, increases environmental protections, pursues environmental justice, and respects our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribes. The Department is advancing this mission by embracing opportunities to promote equity in all actions through prioritizing the strengthening of interactions with the public in civil, equitable, and engaging ways that authentically demonstrate our pledge to equity. Likewise, DOI has taken a holistic approach ensuring equity is embedded throughout policy and program development and delivery across the agency.

### **Executive Summary of Equity Action Plan**

Executive Order (EO) 14091, entitled "Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through The Federal Government," cascades and builds upon EO 13985, entitled "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government." The Department externally focuses its lens to refine and redefine how we engage with underserved communities throughout the Nation to build on progress and ensure DOI's success through building meaningful sustainability for generations to come. Further, advancing equity is a principle that is reflected in how the Department serves the American people and fulfills its mission. In drafting this Equity Action Plan, DOI was guided by an evidence-based approach that utilizes qualitative and quantitative methods to identify root causes in order to identify and fundamentally address systemic barriers to equity. As the Department continues to grow in this space, we are taking immediate steps to further explore improvements to equity analytical capabilities. By shifting beyond data analytics and encompassing technical and process analysis, DOI is better informed to fortify all its lines of business and tangible outcomes. The Department is proud to put forward this Equity Action Plan, which provides the foundation to achieve outcomes that remove barriers to equal opportunity and deliver resources and benefits equitably to all.

The Department protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust and treaty responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated island communities. The Department plays a pivotal role in how the United States stewards its public lands and waters, increases environmental protections, pursues environmental justice, and respects our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribes.

The Department is leaning into its ethical and legal responsibilities to Tribes by honoring sovereignty and reckoning with DOI's role in historical injustice and marginalization of Indigenous people. Leaders are learning from the past through (1) nation-to-nation consultation; (2) listening for understanding; (3) ethically co-producing, sharing, and using evidence and data for decision-making; and (4) employing analytic tools to advance and promote equity and justice in all that we do for Tribes, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and the American public. The Department also recognizes that much of the United States' history is tied to our public lands. Whether it be our national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges, or other historic or culturally

significant areas, each of these have played a significant role in shaping America's identity. Public lands enable physical activity, promote mental health and wellness, and foster a sense of community through the preservation of ecosystems and interpretation of a shared heritage. With more than 480 million acres of public land managed by the Department, and more than 400 million people visiting DOI-managed lands annually, opportunities exist to develop and implement new strategies and plans for the advancement of equitable access to public lands for all people to connect and recreate.

In executing the Department's diverse mission goals, DOI spends more than \$3 billion annually in procurement contracts. These contracts are performed throughout the country across a wide variety of industries, from construction to information technology and beyond. The Department is committed to ensuring a diverse supplier base for these contracts because businesses of all types should realize economic and developmental benefits from DOI's contract dollars—and DOI's programs benefit from diverse experience, background, and expertise.

Developing a quantitative and qualitative approach with emphasis on evidence-based findings, public participation, and community engagement informed this plan's scope of refinement. To this end, DOI has established five focus areas that support its mission and have strong potential for equity impact. These five foundational focus areas also distinctively linked to equity objectives, including civil rights, criminal justice, economic justice, and environmental justice. The five focus areas are:

- Strengthen external civil rights enforcement and proactive engagement activities to increase equitable access to federally conducted and assisted programs and activities for members of the public;
- Increase public trust in DOI Law Enforcement by evaluating its workforce, increasing transparency and accountability, and providing mental health and wellness support to law enforcement;
- Advance equity in contracting practices to include businesses with characteristics that align with the definition of underserved communities, taking incremental steps to ensure the Department's obligated dollars are equitably distributed to underserved communities;
- Increase opportunities for members of the public to access public lands, prioritizing access to recreation areas and services in underserved communities; and
- Institutionalize environmental justice and increase the proportion of benefits of the Justice40 initiative covered programs reaching disadvantaged communities to work toward the goal of 40 percent and progress environmental justice further.

Focusing on these critical areas, coupled with improved data analytics and continuous feedback will posture DOI to track the progress on addressing systemic racism and advancing equity for all, including communities that have long been underserved.

## **Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments**

The following highlights the many accomplishments made to date by the Department on its actions, performance measures, and milestones to advance equity.

### **A. 2022 Equity Action Plan Update (pursuant to EO 13985)**

- Developed new policies and procedures to strengthen and fulfill the Federal Government's responsibility to ensure regular and meaningful consultation with American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, as well as a second policy consultation with Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Corporations.
- Enhanced data collection to support park programming that is more inclusive of under-represented communities through the investments made in the National Park Service's (NPS) socio-economic program as well as the park unit visitor surveys.
- Released the Campground Modernization Guide to support an improved and more inclusive visitor experience.
- Enhanced the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- Tracked the short- and long-term success outcomes of (LWCF) and Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership investments in under-represented communities.
- Distributed inclusive storytelling grants through NPS, which included \$2.1 million in grant funding provided 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.
- Provided transportation investments, including 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.
- Developed and published a simple to use, public facing, DOI-specific acquisition data visualization that provides access to detailed information about DOI's purchasing history. This tool provides new entrants a simple way to distill extensive DOI contracting data, use the tailored results to target marketing of their products and services, and identify potential networking opportunities, which reduces administrative burdens of vendors interested in participating in DOI procurements.

### **B. Environmental Justice Scorecard (pursuant to section 223 of EO 14008)**

- Established the DOI Environmental Justice Steering Committee.
- Developed the DOI Climate Task Force.
- Implemented the first-ever DOI Environmental Justice Scorecard.
- The Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program made Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 grants available to the six Appalachian states and three Tribal communities with Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Programs. Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia each received \$26.6 million; Alabama, Ohio, and Virginia were each allocated \$10.6 million; and the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Crow Tribe were each allocated \$3.5 million to return legacy coal mining sites to productive use and foster economic and community development.

- The DOI provided \$46 million in funding to Tribal communities to address the unique impacts of climate change in Indigenous communities. This initial funding from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and FY 2022 appropriations funded projects and initiatives address and strengthen climate resilience and adaptation; ocean and coastal management; community-driven relocation and protect-in-place activities; and internships and youth engagement.
- The DOI 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 Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) modified the evaluation criteria for WaterSMART grants to encourage projects that directly benefit disadvantaged communities and support climate change resiliency.
- The NPS announced \$192 million in funding for the LWCF – Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP), which enables urban, disadvantaged communities to (1) create new outdoor recreation spaces, (2) reinvigorate existing parks, and (3) form connections between people and the outdoors in such communities. As part of the notice of funding opportunity, 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. The NPS also created two deadlines for the grant—January 23, 2023, and May 31, 2023—to encourage States to submit more grants.
- In standing up the BIL Orphaned Oil and Gas Wells Federal Program, DOI established evaluation criteria to prioritize disadvantaged communities, and ensure projects identify and address any disproportionate burden of adverse human health or environmental effects of orphaned wells on communities of color, low-income communities, and Tribal and Indigenous communities.

### **C. Additional Efforts to Advance Equity**

- The DOI launched a Women’s Mentoring Program in 2022 to provide a platform for Department employees who would benefit from accessing a women-centered space. With a mission of fostering meaningful relationships through mentorships in which women build knowledge, confidence, leadership, and skills, this program is run by volunteers. It also addresses Federal workforce gender inequalities and supports the administration’s National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality.
- The Department’s procurement staff and Office of the Solicitor collaborated to develop a vendor communications guidance document. This guidance addresses issues identified during public engagement. Specifically, the guidance seeks to improve how information is conveyed to unsuccessful offerors after award. Such meaningful communication supports new entrants and other small and disadvantaged businesses in learning about Government contracting, grow as a business, and being better poised to submit competitive proposals for future acquisitions.

- Secretary Haaland 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 DOI and Department of Housing and Urban Development collaboratively announced support for more Affordable Housing in Nevada.
- In support of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda investing in climate resilience and ecosystem restoration, DOI highlights Typhoon Recovery, Habitat Investments in Visit to Guam.

#### **D. Advancing Equity Through Key Legislation**

- The Department set annual goals for all Bureaus and Offices for contracting with the Indian Small Business Economic Enterprises (ISBEE). These goals set the expectation that the entire Department, not just the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Indian Education, consider the use of the Department’s Buy Indian Act authority to set aside contracts for Indian-owned businesses in equal measure to the other statutorily required small business categories. The Department also developed and provided training to all Contracting Officers on the use of the Buy Indian Act.
- The DOI collaborated with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to hold the first-ever joint industry day event focused on outreach to Indian-owned businesses. This 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.

### **DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR 2023 EQUITY ACTION PLAN STRATEGIES**

#### **Strategy #1**

- Increase equitable access to federally conducted and assisted programs and activities for members of the public by strengthening external civil rights enforcement and proactive engagement activities.

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

- **Civil Rights:** All Government entities are charged with protecting the civil and constitutional rights of all persons, including (1) the right to vote; (2) language access; and (3) prohibitions on discrimination on an array of protected bases. In addition, the entities should promote equity in science to root out bias in the design and use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

#### **Barriers to Equity**

- This strategy seeks to identify and remove barriers to equity by enforcing public civil rights protections prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance. It also ensures that the Department—along with its programs, activities and services—does not discriminate based on race, color, sex,



gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disabilities in any actions related to national parks, wildlife conservation, land management, and cultural heritage preservation.

- Public lands accessibility focuses on ensuring that everyone benefits from the experiences offered by America's public land, such as national parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas. This means removing existing and potential barriers by reasonably modifying the Department's programs and activities to permit equitable access for people who have disabilities as well as provide meaningful access for members of the public who may be limited English proficient.

### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy**

- The DOI will use public civil rights compliance review and complaint data for the past 5 years as the evidence base to support its strategies.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity**

To address these barriers, DOI will:

- Increase compliance reviews with respect to granting Federal financial assistance as well as the Department's and Bureau's actions which affect their interaction with the public.
- Partner with stakeholders to ensure public civil rights statutes, regulations, and EOs are considered early in all actions and processes to ensure that all are aware of their public civil rights obligations and requirements to comply so that discrimination does not occur.
- Build and expand on the Department's and Bureau's efforts to allow access for all members of the public to their programs and activities which include the lands managed by the Department so that all may participate.
- Increase the staffing in the DOI Public Civil Rights Office and in the Bureaus to meet the increasing demands for outreach, enforcement, and technical assistance.

### **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)**

#### *Near to Mid-Term Indicators (1-5 Years)*

- Implement a comprehensive Language Access Plan for the Department and all Bureaus in order that persons who may be limited English proficient have access to the Department's and Bureaus' programs and activities.
- Improve the Department's and Bureaus' capacity to provide technical assistance and enforcement by ensuring that all Bureaus can conduct compliance reviews and process complaints of discrimination.
- Develop and implement a system of surveys for accessibility for persons with disabilities to determine where the Department and Bureaus are not providing access to managed lands and facilities as well as their respective programs and activities.

### ***Long-Term Indicators (5+ Years)***

- Continue to improve on the Department’s comprehensive Language Access Plan in order that persons who may be limited English proficient have access to the Department’s and Bureaus’ programs and activities.
- After building capacity, conduct compliance reviews of the Department’s and Bureaus’ programs and activities to determine which programs and activities are out of compliance and then ensure access to all, while also processing all complaints involving these programs and activities.
- After determining which programs and activities involving the Department’s and Bureaus’ managed lands and facilities need improvement, ensure that they are accessible to persons with disabilities.

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

The Department will continue engagement with the public and community throughout this and upcoming years as standard practice. To develop the strategies above, DOI identified possible barriers related to accessing the Department’s programs and activities for individuals who may have disabilities as well as provide meaningful access for persons who may be limited English proficient. The Department collected feedback regarding DOI accessibility initiatives and projects that are both planned and in progress. Analyses of user survey data related to federally managed lands were also assessed.

### **Strategy #2**

- Increase public trust in DOI Law Enforcement by evaluating its workforce, increasing transparency and accountability, and providing mental health and wellness support to law enforcement.

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

- **Criminal Justice:** All Government entities are charged with improving our Nation’s criminal justice system to end unjust disparities in sentencing, strengthening public safety, and ensuring equal justice under the law.

**Collaborating Agencies:** Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security

### **Barriers to Equity**

- **Public Trust in DOI Law Enforcement:** One year ago, on May 25, 2022, President Biden signed the historic EO 14074, entitled “Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety.” As emphasized in the May 2015 report, entitled “Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing,” building trust and nurturing legitimacy on both sides of the police/citizen divide serves as the foundational principle underlying the nature of relations between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Police cannot fulfill their role to keep communities safe without public trust and confidence in law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Yet, there are places in America today where the bonds of trust are frayed or broken. To heal as a Nation, we must acknowledge

that fatal encounters with law enforcement have disproportionately involved people of color.

- **Officer Mental Health, Wellness, and Safety:** Police officer mental health, wellness, and safety are important to achieving equity. When officers face high levels of stress, trauma, or mental health challenges, it can impact their interactions with the community and undermine their ability to serve and protect their communities safely and effectively. This barrier becomes evident through a recent survey of Department law enforcement personnel. The findings revealed that:
  - Only 62 percent rate their mental health as "good" or "great" during core job functions.
  - Over the last 6 months, 43 percent have experienced mental health concerns.
  - Only 52 percent believe there are sufficient resources for their mental health support.
- **Law Enforcement Program Effectiveness:** In October 2022, the Department announced a series of updated policies that will help advance safe, transparent, accountable, and effective policing practices; build public trust; and strengthen public safety. The policies provide clear guidelines on use of force standards, require DOI officers to wear body-worn cameras, and restrict the use of no-knock warrants. These policy updates were part of the Department's continuing implementation of President Biden's May 2022 EO 14074, entitled "Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety."

### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy**

- Goals were established during the scoping phase of DOI's Law Enforcement Task Force (LETF) to guide the research and outreach process. Stakeholder engagement occurred through various mediums—public listening sessions, public and internal surveys, a Federal Register Notice, and websites. Quantitative survey data was compiled from public, partner, and employee input. Qualitative information was coded to identify significant themes emerging from both internal and external feedback. Trends in issues and suggested actions were aggregated and summarized. Recommendation categories were developed, within which the aspirational future was articulated. Leaders and subject matter experts across the spectrum of related disciplines were repeatedly consulted and engaged in crafting a regenerative path forward.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, DOI will:

- Recruit, hire, retain, and supervise a trusted and adequately staffed workforce that reflects the people and communities they serve.
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency in communicating with the public during and after critical incidents.
- Develop a wellness program to increase the health, wellness, and effectiveness of the law enforcement workforce.

## **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)**

### ***Near to Mid-Term Indicators (1-5 Years)***

- Create a comprehensive baseline of data on law enforcement workforce to support assessments.
- Perform a standardized staffing analysis across all Bureaus to ensure consistency in approach and facilitate comprehensive insights into workforce requirements.
- Update the current System of Records Notice for DOI's law enforcement records management systems to ensure the appropriate and lawful public disclosure of law enforcement records and video footage for the purpose of transparency and communicating during a crisis, as authorized routine practice.
- Prioritize and assist Bureaus in hiring full-time mental health and wellness coordinators.

### ***Long-Term Indicators (5+ Years)***

- Long-term retention and advancement of a law enforcement workforce that reflects the people and communities served.
- Conduct staffing analyses every 5 years to ensure alignment between staffing numbers and changes in trends, communities, visitation, and other relevant factors.
- Review critical incidents that require public communication and an evaluation of the appropriateness and timeliness of the response, with a focus on enhancing transparency and accountability.
- Evaluate the status of law enforcement mental health and wellness efforts, and identify and expand on successes ensuring Bureaus are appropriately staffed with trained personnel.

## **Public Participation and Community Engagement**

- To develop these strategies, DOI engaged with the public including members of underserved communities, during the public outreach phase of DOI's LETF. This engagement phase provided baseline data that was analyzed and informed the final recommendations for improvement. The Department plans to conduct future public engagement and participation activities to continue identifying additional barriers and potential solutions and assess progress, which may include:
  - Collecting feedback about DOI law enforcement programs after the recommendations are implemented.
  - Analyzing the resultant feedback related to DOI law enforcement programs and reorienting as necessary.

### **Strategy #3**

- Advance equity in the Department’s contracting practices to include businesses with characteristics that align with the definition of underserved communities.

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

- **Economic Justice:** The Department can use the power of procurement to contract with and support small and disadvantaged businesses, which may help narrow the racial and gender wealth gaps. The Department will improve access to procurement opportunities for businesses owned by underserved communities by identifying and addressing barriers in the Department’s procurement process.

**Collaborating Agencies:** The Small Business Administration (SBA), HHS, and General Services Administration.

### **Barriers to Equity**

- **Difficulty Finding Opportunities.** Through ongoing engagement with small vendors—small, small disadvantaged, women-owned small, service-disabled veteran owned small businesses, businesses located in historically underutilized business zones, and ISBEEs—DOI has repeatedly helped vendors who convey that learning about contracting opportunities can be challenging, especially for new or inexperienced businesses. New entrants to the Federal procurement process lack experience and understanding of how to access opportunities and the various methods that DOI uses to procure goods and services.
- **Communication.** During DOI’s listening sessions, participants indicated frustration with the communication between the Department and vendors, including identifying the appropriate individuals within Bureaus to help them, response rates, and obtaining information about specific opportunities before and after award. In addition, outreach—especially in-person outreach—can be limited by geography and established networks, which may also present barriers for some businesses.
- **Process Complexity.** During DOI’s listening sessions, participants provided input regarding the complexity of the procurement process, with each step governed by statute and regulations that may differ from commercial contracting. It can be particularly challenging for new or inexperienced businesses to understand requirements, terms and conditions in solicitations, and other elements of the process. Limited opportunities to gain experience and/or training on the process may present barriers to some businesses.
- **Departmental Procedures.** Ensuring Departmental processes and policies contribute to an equitable distribution of awards to underserved communities is a critical component to achieving equity in Federal procurement. Based on the barriers identified above—awareness of procurement opportunities and communication with vendors—preliminary review of DOI policy, feedback from listening sessions, and survey results, the Department identified the following process and policy as a focus area for additional targeted review and analysis:
  - Publicizing procurement actions.
  - Communication with vendors throughout the acquisition process, such as communication with vendors who were unsuccessful at securing an award during debriefing.

## **Evidence Base to Support Strategy**

- The Department conducted both quantitative and qualitative analysis to identify impactful actions. Listening sessions were conducted, along with focus groups and surveys. These methods provided feedback that led directly to the Department's implementation plan. Extensive analysis of the Department's historic procurement data was also conducted.
- Results of ongoing the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved customer experience information collection surveys, including product testing, vendor feedback, and vendor research (Improving Customer Experience Information Collection, OMB Control Number 1090-0012), are being used to inform strategies and actions to advance equity in the Department's contracting practices and counseling of businesses.

## **Actions to Achieve Equity**

To address these barriers, DOI will:

- Increase opportunities for Indian-owned economic enterprises. The Department will continue to monitor performance against annually established ISBEE goals to ensure that benefits previously described are being realized. Additionally, the Department will seek opportunities to collaborate with other Federal partners such as SBA and HHS to increase opportunities for Indian-owned businesses in Federal procurement.
- Implement policy on communicating with vendors throughout the procurement process, especially with unsuccessful offerors after award.
- Continue implementation of the vendor communications guidance.
- Review Departmental procedures and practices related to the length of time that acquisition actions are publicized. The DOI will enhance its current policies to ensure that adequate time is provided for all business types to be competitive.
- Review Departmental procedures and practices related to contracting vehicles. The Department will develop and implement updated guidance on DOI operational practices, to simplify the process and close the gap of understanding by small and disadvantaged businesses.
- Collaboration with Federal partners. The DOI will seek out and continue to participate in collaborative opportunities with OMB, SBA, and other Federal departments that focus on Government-wide small business initiatives, including other equity-focused EOs—Executive Order on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council—and OMB-led focus groups.
- Modernize DOI's small business counseling services.
- Utilize data visualization to publish acquisition data providing greater access to detailed information about DOI's purchasing history and include the most recent acquisition data educating vendors on the use of tools during vendor engagement sessions.
- Expand digital services utilizing vendor survey information collected to curate digitally available information, resources, and tools for the small business vendors that consider their varying maturity, life situations (such as accessibility for those with disabilities and mobile access through quick-response coding), and experiences in Federal contracting.

- Develop a small business toolkit. The Department will continue to develop, adapt, and post new tools and resources that promote the inclusion of underserved communities in DOI procurement engagements.

### **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)**

#### *Near to Mid-Term Indicators (1-5 Years)*

- Percentage of total contract dollars awarded to ISBEEs for the Department.
- Annual DOI-wide small business procurement scorecard, as issued by SBA, which is an assessment tool that (1) measures how well Federal agencies reach their small business and socio-economic prime contracting and subcontracting goals, (2) provide accurate and transparent contracting data and (3) report agency-specific progress.
- Distribution of awardees by their maturity (new entrants, recent entrants, and established vendors), as tracked by Government-wide dashboards.
- Demographic and qualitative results of ongoing OMB approved customer experience information collection surveys, including product testing, vendor feedback, and vendor research, per OMB Control Number 1090-0012, entitled “Improving Customer Experience.”

#### *Longer-Term (+ 5 years)*

- Long-term, the Department will monitor these metrics to evaluate and continually maximize opportunities to small and disadvantaged businesses.
- Expand digital services materials to include languages other than English, with resources available in at least one additional language by 2029.

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

- To develop this strategy, the Department hosted listening sessions that attracted diverse participation from across the country, with sessions ranging from 30 to 400+ registrants. Likewise, the Department invited public comments through the Federal Register and participated in the Office of Federal Procurement Policy and Department of Energy’s Government-wide equity crowdsourcing campaign. The Department also surveyed employees and conducted a policy review. The DOI will continue to engage with the public and specifically with members of underserved communities in similar ways throughout the next year.

### **Strategy #4**

- Increase opportunities for underserved communities to access public lands, prioritizing access to recreation areas and services in urban communities.

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

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

national origin, religion, age, or disability. Promote equity in science to root out bias in the design and use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

- **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).

**Collaborating Agencies:** Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation agencies and DOI Bureaus, including NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), BIA, BOR, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway Administration

### **Barriers to Equity**

- Individuals may face challenges accessing DOI-managed sites due to the remote nature of many public lands.
- Accessing public lands often requires a personal vehicle—4-wheel drive or high clearance vehicles are often required—and there are limited alternative transportation options (e.g., public transit, alternative access, pedestrian and cycling trails) for visitors.
- Costs may serve as a barrier to access as not all people have the means to travel to, or participate in, recreational activities on DOI-managed lands. Accessing many sites requires visitors to spend money as well as time. Even sites that do not charge a fee generally have a cost implication.
- Safety concerns may limit local access to public lands without safe and well-designed facilities.

### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy**

- The Department used multiple data points to identify the best strategies which yield the highest and most meaningful outcomes. Such datasets include recreation activities data, Every Kid Outdoors voucher data (<https://everykidoutdoors.gov/index.htm>), outdoor participation report, 200-day report, internal focus groups, and external public listening sessions.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity**

To address these barriers, DOI will:

- Strengthen partnerships that will support broader equity-based representation and engagement with diverse and underserved communities and audiences.
- Support close-to-home recreation opportunities.
- Create a 21st century transportation system through investments in transit, trails, and technology. Expand partnerships to better connect neighboring communities, eliminate fatalities, and minimize injuries on the NPS transportation system, and address visitor needs as well as prepare for the future of transportation.
- Increase equity considerations in LWCF implementation.



- Increase investments in programs and services with proven track records of effectiveness.
- Coordinate and report on implementation of the work of the Reconciliation in Place Names Subcommittee, which remove derogatory names from Federal lands.
- Implement the reduction of barriers to improve accessibility. Particularly, focus on factors that reduce or eliminate physical or perceived barriers such as fees, transportation, and infrastructure to improve accessibility for underserved communities such as individuals with disabilities.
- Implement actions that provide improved visitor access of information to plan, recreate, and remain connected with NPS sites.
- Expand inclusive programming and leveraging of partnership options in storytelling, ranger programs, education, and community engagement enhanced inclusive experiences.
- Strengthen data collection tools to support evidence-based evaluation of information that will better inform decision making to create an equitable visitor experience.

### **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)**

#### *Near to Mid-Term Indicators (1-5 Years)*

- Number of partnerships formed and project collaborations with community-based organizations, state and local governments, and new partnerships.
- Number of first-time visitors and number of people making repeat visits to public lands and waters.
- Improve data collection processes to capture visitation numbers as well as visitor demographics, which will facilitate a better understanding of who is visiting public lands and waters and who is not more accurately.

#### *Longer-Term (+ 5 years)*

- Overall trends in responses to visitor surveys, visitor demographics, and other metrics to track increases in use based on improvements to web-based information and reduction of barriers.
- Changes in transit usage numbers for new transportation infrastructure to determine any equity outcomes.

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

- To develop these strategies, DOI engaged with the public and members of underserved communities through public participation and community engagement. Such engagements included strategic outreach—surveys and workshops—to communities with initial reporting to reflect on whether their needs are being met and determine if their feedback is being included in park programming, visitor satisfaction, and accessibility.

### **Strategy #5**

- Incorporate environmental justice considerations into Department policies and program designs and expand outreach to communities with environmental justice concerns to increase the proportion of the benefits of the Department's Justice40 Initiative covered programs that reach disadvantaged communities.

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

- **Environmental Justice:** Secure environmental justice and spur economic opportunity by implementing the Justice40 Initiative to ensure that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments, flow to disadvantaged communities across rural, urban, and Tribal areas.

**Collaborating Agencies:** N/A

## **Barriers to Equity**

- Lack of expertise and/or capacity of disadvantaged communities to engage in the Federal grant-making process, or the process of seeking Federal financial assistance as identified through listening sessions and public comments solicited through a Federal Register Notice.
- The structure of the Department is such that environmental justice activities are distributed across various Bureaus, and the Department's diverse set of missions—protecting natural resources and cultural heritage, providing scientific and other information about these resources, and honoring our nation's trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated Island Communities—can make it particularly difficult for community groups or nonprofit organizations from disadvantaged communities to engage with those programs or figure out how to access those funding streams, based on feedback received from community members at broader engagements about federal environmental justice programs.
- The complexity of the grant process—application forms, timing, process, and requirements—hinders disadvantaged communities from applying for financial assistance, based on feedback received from community members during listening sessions and public comments solicited through a Federal Register Notice.
- Lack of awareness of the Justice40 Initiative, the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, and the Department's Justice40 Initiative covered programs by some of the underserved and disadvantaged communities we interact with, based on feedback received from community members during engagements with them.

## **Evidence Base to Support Strategy**

- Analysis and outreach, including public listening sessions, performed in response to EO 13985 produced evidence that Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians were often unaware of the range of grant opportunities available to them and/or lack the technical capacity or time required to apply for grant opportunities which are a central element of the Department's environmental justice efforts.
- In FY 2022, the Department conducted foundational fact finding, including research and data collection, to develop the Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI) Dashboard and enable essential funding analysis and data modeling needed to assess barriers to achieve the Department's equity outcomes. The DOI utilized the Department of Education's MSI datasets to initiate the analysis of its financial assistance and procurement funding to MSIs. The Department continues efforts to assess how its policies and programs may perpetuate barriers for underserved communities.

- As outlined in the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda, to address the Priority Learning Question “How can DOI remove barriers to participation and ensure equitable access to the Department’s grant and contracting opportunities for historically underrepresented populations?,” planned activities include data and analysis related to awards, applications and determining whether a specific step in the process of grant award and management demonstrates a statistically significant disparity of underrepresented groups. This evaluation will also explore whether a specific step in the process demonstrates a statistically significant disparity increase. The DOI will conduct extensive stakeholder outreach, surveys, and other data gathering, which will inform how we act to modify the implementation of existing programs so that those changes reduce barriers to participation.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity**

To address these barriers, DOI will

- Modify the way existing programs are implemented to emphasize the importance of delivering benefits to underserved communities and design new programs equitably, which will ensure that a greater portion of funds flow to those communities. Examples include:
  - For the ORLP, NPS specified the following criteria for emphasis to be considered in the evaluation of proposals for awards in FY 2023: (1) environmental justice, (2) urban heat map areas, and (3) military outdoor recreation.
  - The LWCF State Assistance Program provides grants to States to support the acquisition of land and the development of facilities for public outdoor recreation. The NPS-revised LWCF State Manual, which lays out the requirements for State participation in the program, asks States to be more intentional in selecting LWCF projects that are in alignment with Justice40 Initiative goals and direct States to use the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool in project selection.
  - In order for States to participate in the LWCF program, they must prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan that outlines how they will implement the program. The NPS will also ask States, through their quinquennial updates, to include underserved communities as they identify recreation issues of Statewide importance and the actions States will take to address them.
  - In implementing the BIL AML Program, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement is encouraging States and Tribes to prioritize projects that invest in communities marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution, consistent with the President’s Justice40 Initiative. This work will be informed by a planned investigation, per the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda, into identified sites on Tribal lands that require remediation from prior coal mining activity to determine that which is hindering completing reclamation work and identify potential solutions.
  - In implementing the BIL Orphaned Well program, the Department is requesting States and Federal partners receiving funds through the orphaned well program to prioritize plugging and remediation of wells within 0.5 miles of underserved communities as much as possible under legal authorities to maximize the environmental justice impact.

- Revise Departmental and Bureau policies to make environmental justice considerations an essential part of the decision-making process, which will help shape program development and implementation to have a greater focus on environmental justice. Examples include:
  - Update the Department’s environmental justice policy as stated in the Departmental Manual to reflect EO 14008, entitled “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad” and EO 14096, entitled “Revitalizing Our Nations Commitment to Environmental Justice for All.”
  - Create guidance documents for the use of science and data in environmental decision-making to incorporate data related to environmental justice and Indigenous Knowledge, along with an environmental justice science and data integrated decision model. This work, which helps address the Department’s priority learning question: “How well does DOI collect and document traditional knowledge that informs decisions?”, which is based on feedback received at numerous listening sessions and through public comments that will result in more equitable outcomes by ensuring that the voices of Indigenous communities and communities with environmental justice concerns are part of the decision-making process.
  - The BLM issued an “Instruction Memorandum about Environmental Justice Implementation” and “Addressing Environmental Justice in NEPA FAQs” in September 2022. These documents update and formalize best practices while recommending methods for scoping, outreach, and analysis in environmental reviews. These policies will help guide BLM staff in implementing environmental justice and Justice40 Initiative and will serve as examples for other Bureaus to develop policies.
- Expand outreach and assistance efforts to better meet the needs of underserved communities. Priority learning question 4.4 in the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda asked, “How can the Department increase stakeholder engagement to improve environmental justice outcomes for infrastructure investments?” Examples include:
  - Develop a stakeholder relationship management platform to reduce stakeholder fatigue and help staff across the Department learn about the needs communities identify during engagements and consultations. This will lead to more equitable outcomes by increasing the effectiveness and usefulness of engagements.
  - Provide technical assistance for grant writing and grant writers, which we have learned from listening sessions and public comment is an important tool for reducing the barriers to participating in funding opportunities.
  - Work with on-the-ground partners that can help guide and direct our outreach to communities who need it most. For example, the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations has been working with certain Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs) that have facilitated outreach to other NHOs and portions of the community that have not historically applied for or received funding from the Department due to capacity issues or other barriers to participation. This outreach helps inform program design to reach those communities.
- Use funding provided in the Inflation Reduction Act for outreach regarding permitting environmental reviews and authorizations to perform stakeholder and community engagement, with emphasis on enabling underserved communities to be part of the decision-making process. This will help address a priority learning question in the FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda that inquires how the Department can increase capacity to augment the

percentage of National Environmental Policy Act decision documents that incorporate merits, drawbacks, analysis of impacts, and mitigation measures of Department actions to people, such as through socioeconomic and environmental justice analyses, by expanding our engagement on these matters.

- Develop and provide training for Departmental staff to improve their ability to work with underserved communities, which was identified through internal discussions with staff as an area of need. Examples include:
  - Develop and host Departmentwide environmental justice training, including on Indigenous Knowledge.
  - Develop a stakeholder toolkit, including an internal needs assessment and gap analysis that enables employees to assess their own skills regarding engagement with communities.
  - Develop a community of practice, mentorship network, and list of DOI employees who work on stakeholder engagement.
  - Develop an environmental justice toolkit site including environmental justice screening and mapping tools compendium for use internally by Department staff.
- Conduct a geography-focused impact analysis project to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how various Department activities can combine to impact a region.
- Conduct a Justice40 Initiative covered program pilot evaluation to get a more comprehensive understanding of what is working about a program, what could be modified to remove any identified barriers, and how stakeholders perceive it.

### **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)**

#### *Near to Mid-Term Indicators (1-5 Years)*

- Increased percentage of Justice40 Initiative covered program benefiting investments going to disadvantaged communities.
- Increased percentage of benefits going to underserved communities.
- Increased number of technical assistance engagements that target information sharing and assistance to underserved communities, including increased partnerships and joint events with other Federal agencies.

#### *Longer-Term (+ 5 years)*

- Increased number of collaborations between Bureaus and Offices across the Department that leverage the impact of individual activities on disadvantaged communities throughout a region.
- Number of program modifications made to reduce barriers and improved stakeholder perceptions of those programs.

## **Public Participation and Community Engagement**

To develop these strategies and continued engagement, DOI plans to facilitate early, meaningful, and ongoing involvement with communities that have environmental justice concerns. The Department will develop a stakeholder relationship management platform to reduce community engagement fatigue and ensure the feedback received is used across the Department. To prepare and enable DOI employees to build relationships with communities, DOI will (1) create a self-assessment tool for DOI employees; (2) establish a community of practice, mentorship network, and list of DOI employees that work on stakeholder engagement; and (3) develop a stakeholder toolkit, including internal needs assessment and gap analysis. The Department will host engagements focused on Justice40 Initiative covered programs with impacted communities; some of these engagements will be part of the White House Campaign for Environmental Justice.