

Update: Federal Agencies Release Plans to Address Racial Equity in Research and Education

Lewis-Burke Associates LLC – April 29, 2022

Racial equity remains one of the top priorities for the Biden Administration. On his first day in office, President Biden signed [Executive Order \(EO\) 13985](#), “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government” that promotes equity and addressing systemic racism. Executive Order 13985 promotes a “whole-of-government equity agenda” to address the challenges the country faces. This executive order required every federal agency to take a comprehensive look at its policies and programs and reevaluate them to ensure equal opportunities for communities that are historically underserved, marginalized, and faced with inequity. Federal agencies have now responded to this executive order with their own equity action plans. Roughly 90 federal agencies have released detailed equity action plans outlining key strategies and commitments to address systematic issues that create inequities in our nation.

Although the federal equity action plans were just released many federal agencies have been doing the work to address racial equity since day 1 of the Biden Administration. Lewis-Burke provided a [full analysis](#) of federal efforts and opportunities to broaden participation and address racial equity in research and education in December 2021; that document provided a cross-cutting overview of strategies and commitments made prior to the release of these plans. As a result, many of the equity action plans released this month provide a deeper look into the ongoing activities that were already established to address systematic barriers.

As agencies work to implement their plans, addressing racial equity remains front and center for President Biden. The [fiscal year \(FY\) 2023 budget request](#) contained similar themes as his initial budget request, and there were several major funding increases requested to prioritize addressing racial equity in STEM. The recent request includes over \$1.5 billion in specific investments at key education and research agencies to broaden participation of under-represented communities in science and engineering and provide research infrastructure at underserved research institutions. In addition to those proposed investments, the budget request would add new funding to programs that address environmental justice and health inequities. The release of the federal equity action plans is just the beginning of the many efforts Lewis-Burke anticipates from agencies for addressing racial equity. This will continue to be a major priority for the Biden Administration.

This document provides a summary of the actions and initiatives provided in the plans that address racial equity and broaden participation of under-represented groups across the research, innovation, and education landscape. Snapshots of the federal equity action plans can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/equity/>.

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Federal Agency Commitment to Addressing Racial Equity in the Research Community

National Science Foundation (NSF)

In the agency equity action plan, NSF restates the agency’s commitment to advancing strategies “to encourage the full participation of all Americans and to remove barriers to their success” so that all can contribute to the scientific enterprise. New strategies to advance equity, that build NSF’s progress related to equity and racial justice in the first year of the Biden-Harris Administration, include:

- Enhancing NSF’s harassment prevention efforts by extending them to research activities at field sites and on research vessels.
- Collecting additional demographic data to better assess equity from the broader research community, including undergraduate students, graduate students, post-docs, and research directors.
- New engagement activities aimed at increasing the participation of disadvantaged institutions, including those from Minority Serving Institutions, in solicitations and awards.
- Enhanced engagement with Tribal Nations to increase the participation of underserved Indigenous and Native American communities in the STEM enterprise.
- Investment in resources across NSF to support civil rights.

A summary of the NSF Equity Action Plan is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/NSF-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

The full report is available at https://assets.performance.gov/cx/equity-action-plans/2022/EO%2013985_NSF_Equity%20Action%20Plan_2022.pdf.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

The Department’s equity action plan focuses on five illustrative examples from across HHS agencies, describing actions that can be taken now to advance equity through “strategies such as building data capacity, expanding stakeholder engagement, increasing understanding of root causes of inequities, and ongoing evaluation of efforts.” The examples of HHS’s commitment to equity include:

- Focusing on civil rights protections and laws to help address barriers to health care and human services, such as those individuals with limited English proficiency face in obtaining information, services and/or benefits from HHS federally conducted and federally assisted programs.
- Working to address acquisitions will focus on increasing opportunity to HHS contracting for small, disadvantaged businesses and Historically Underutilized Business Zone Small Businesses.
- Support incorporating equity considerations into grants and Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs).
- Concentrating on capacity building to incorporate equity into HHS policy and program actions, including by conducting equity assessments and disparity impact strategies.
- Prioritizing maternal mortality action to address the increased pregnancy and postpartum morbidity and mortality among Black and American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN) pregnant and childbearing people by focusing on working with states to extend health insurance coverage in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program for all enrollees who give birth and developing innovative ways to improve postpartum care.

In particular, HHS acknowledged that when examining grant processes, there is a lack of diversity in applicants as well as successful awardees, with the same entities frequently receiving awards. The

Department pointed to several suspected root causes including burdensome provisions in NOFOs, difficult to understand NOFOs, and a lack of technical assistance for the overall application process. HHS stated that it is making investments in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources in order to better incorporate equity considerations in NOFOs.

Other ongoing efforts across the agencies HHS highlighted were the NIH UNITE Initiative, highlighted below, and the creation of the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity (OCCHE). OCCHE was established in August 2021 and aims to address the impact of climate change on the health of the American people and serve as a HHS wide hub for climate change and health policy, programs, and analysis, in pursuit of environmental justice and equitable health outcomes.

HHS' Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/HHS-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

The full HHS equity action plan is available at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/hhs-equity-action-plan.pdf>.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

NIH continues to carry out its equity plan through the UNITE initiative, tasked with ending structural racism within the agency and across the biomedical research enterprise more broadly. Last year, the U Committee, responsible for receiving input from external stakeholders and self-evaluating the agency's work, released a request for information (RFI) that received over 1,100 responses that aim to inform future directions and priorities of the agency. The Committee expects to complete its in-depth analysis of the responses and will share a full RFI report in the coming months. In the future, the Committee aims to release a climate survey regarding the NIH workforce and the work of focus groups to uphold accountability standards and best practices.

The N Committee, which aims to improve the organizational culture and structure of the agency to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts throughout the agency's workforce, has obtained NIH leadership approval to establish a data tracking tool that will:

- Track performance metrics to create targets for health disparity, minority health, and health equity research funding;
- Identify scientific areas for improvement to adequately reduce health disparities;
- Establish business processes to evaluate the appropriation of NIH resources and their ability to reduce health disparities; and
- Create collaborative funding opportunities that promote and support research on health disparities, minority health, and health equity.

Future directions of the Committee include creating a new Minority Health/Health Disparity/Health Equity Research Work Group steered by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) to ensure the success of this research across the agency.

More information on the work being conducted through NIH's UNITE Initiative is available here <https://www.nih.gov/ending-structural-racism/unite-co-chairs-corner>.

Department of Education (ED)

The Department of Education's Equity Action Plan acknowledges the worsening impact the pandemic has

had on education equity. Many of its proposals are focused on “promoting student achievement” and ensuring that our “education system meets the demands of today’s global economy.” Specific initiatives identified in ED’s plan include:

- Supporting underserved populations access higher education, including by improving financial aid verification, reviewing funding models for HBCUs and MSIs, and “supporting institutions, systems, and states to raise completion rates for underserved students; and sponsoring a new vision of college excellence that makes inclusivity a marker of prestige;”
- Funding programs that support innovations in teaching and learning with a focus on underserved students. This will include an effort by ED to expand its outreach efforts to attract “the broadest possible pool” of grant peer reviewers.
- Building a publicly facing Equity in Education dashboard to “assist the Department and other stakeholders in identifying gaps in our collective capacity to understand equity in education.”

ED’s Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ED-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

ED’s “2022 Agency Equity Plan related to Executive Order 13985” is available here: <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/equity/2022-equity-plan.pdf>

Department of Labor (DOL)

DOL’s Equity Action Plan notes the “social and economic disparities revealed and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying economic crisis.” New strategies that DOL has identified to advance equity include:

- Developing strategic partnerships with community-based organizations, worker centers, unions and industries;
- Delivering “equitable access to workforce training for historically underserved workers and job seekers.” As part of this effort, DOL will “develop and continue to invest in programs and services that mitigate the challenges faced by underserved communities.”; and
- Continuing support for Registered Apprenticeships. The plan notes it will work to engage Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs) and other educational institutions use registered apprenticeship to serve diverse populations.

DOL’s Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/DOL-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>.

Department of Defense (DOD)

The Department of Defense Equity Action Plan identifies five areas to improve equity across the Department: contracting and procurement, military installations, military families, artificial intelligence (AI) research and development, and underserved community investment. Through this plan, DOD states its dedication to increasing services and opportunities for underserved communities and businesses within and engaged with the Department. Most notable for the academic research community:

- Procurement and contracting plans seek to increase participation of diverse small businesses in defense contracting and as subrecipients, as well as implement metrics for improving wage equity and labor practices within defense contracting and supply chain organizations.
- Equitable AI research and development includes continuing existing programs across the Services and defense-wide to ensure equitable and ethical data collection, implementation, and applications. While the plan does not expand research opportunities, it proposes improving the

diversity of the AI workforce by further engaging with Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and HBCUs through the AI Center of Excellence and other academic institutions.

- Investment in underserved communities includes reviewing capacity and infrastructure requirements that often impact MSIs and HBCUs from working with the Department. Following review, DOD will determine which resources are needed to meet these requirements and broaden participation. In addition to improving research opportunities for MSIs and HBCUs, the Department plans to review and further invest in K-20 STEM programs in underserved communities to support diversifying the future defense workforce.

DOD's Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/DoD-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

Department of Energy (DOE)

The Department of Energy's Equity Action Plan ensures that the agency eliminates barriers to access by transforming programs and policies and broadening pathways to DOE resources for underrepresented groups. The plan also establishes new programs to better serve communities. In the interest of the new action plan, DOE unveiled a commitment of nearly \$102 million in funding to increase STEM talent among Minority Serving Institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In addition, DOE released its framework for the Biden Administration's Justice40 Initiative which commits 40% of the overall benefits of federal investments in climate and clean energy initiatives to underserved and disadvantaged communities. Overall, DOE's Equity Action Plan focuses on procurement, financial assistance, research and development, demonstration and deployment, and stakeholder engagement in advancing equity. DOE has identified five priority action areas:

- Addressing gaps in data collection to facilitate data-informed decision-making
- Increasing opportunities for new applicants to DOE funding opportunities
- Increasing participation in research and development and financial assistance programs
- Expanding strategic tribal and stakeholder engagement across programs
- Improving access and equity in DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program

DOE's Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/DOE-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

NASA's Equity Action Plan directs the agency to identify systemic barriers, engage in internal and external outreach to hear from those affected, and assess current programs for opportunities to improve the agencies equity. NASA is committed to developing metrics and tracking systems as they implement action items and conduct early assessments of outcomes during FY 2022. Focus on four key areas, coupled with improved data analytics, will better equip NASA to track progress on closing systemic barriers to access, and advancing equity. The four foundational focus areas are:

- Increase opportunities for underserved communities in NASA's procurement processes;
- Enhance grants and cooperative agreements to advance opportunities in underserved communities;
- Leverage Earth science and socioeconomic data to help mitigate environmental challenges in underserved communities; and
- Expand access and opportunities to limited English proficient populations.

NASA's Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp->

[content/uploads/2022/04/NASA-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/NASA-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf)

US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

USDA's equity action plan lays out a programmatic roadmap to ensure equitable access to programs and services for stakeholders and communities that have been historically underserved. USDA plans to expand equitable access to nutrition assistance programs, including broadening the implementation of online ordering in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program. In doing so, it aims to strengthen gender equity and will launch a national awareness campaign. After several months of convening stakeholders and identifying the greatest barriers to opportunity, USDA outlines the following high impact actions for the agency to take to best meet the needs of underserved communities:

1. Partner with trusted technical assistance providers;
2. Reduce barriers to USDA programs and improve support to underserved farmers, ranchers, landowners, and farmworkers;
3. Expand equitable access to USDA nutrition assistance programs;
4. Increase USDA infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities;
5. Advance equity in federal procurement;
6. Uphold Federal trust and treaty Responsibilities to Indian Tribes; and
7. Institutionalize an unwavering commitment to and actions towards ensuring civil rights.”

USDA's Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/USDA-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The Environmental Protection Agency's Equity Action Plan focused largely on environmental justice initiatives to ensure equitable application of regulations as well as increased investment in communities that have been underserved and over-burdened by environmental hazards and pollutants. The Plan builds on wider Biden Administration actions including the Justice40 initiative which aims to direct 40 percent of environmental remediation and adaptation investments to underserved communities. To build capacity and provide tools for success at organizations who might seek EPA funding for environmental justice work, EPA has begun providing grants webinars to cover the basics of successful proposals and will continue to do so to strengthen the financial and human capital at these organizations. Included in these efforts are outreach to minority serving institutions (MSIs) via events and new procedures to ensure underrepresented institutions are adequately represented in applicant pools for contracting. At this point, however, the Justice40 is not applied to competitive research grants, meaning that there is no requirement or quota for a percentage of these grants to go to MSIs.

The plan also highlights the role of community science as a way to engage community leaders in addressing localized environmental justice and public health issues. The plan states that EPA will plan to administer community science grants to better collect data, increase trust in science and government agencies, and to build community engaged solutions.

EPA's Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EPA-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

In the U.S. Agency for International Development's Equity Action Plan, the organization continues to work on integrating equity into the agency's policies, strategies, and practices to create a more inclusive environment at the agency. The plan builds off five new strategies that advance equity that include:

1. “Continued development of the WorkwithUSAID platform;
2. Enhanced implementation of USAID's nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy, development and implementation of an Independent Accountability Mechanism, and advancement of Title VI protections at USAID;
3. Lowered internal and external barriers for USAID awards, to include reduction of acquisition and assistance administrative burdens that negatively affect partner capacity;
4. Designation of an Inclusive Development (ID) Advisor at each Mission and procurement of inclusive development support mechanisms managed through the Agency’s ID Hub and;
5. Implementation of a consistent approach to incorporate racial and ethnic equity and diversity into policy, planning, and learning.”

The plan also highlights USAID’s strategy for expanding and diversifying capacity-building efforts and support for increasing partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) in USAID federal programs through the MSI Partnership Initiative.

USAID’s Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/USAID-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

Department of Transportation (DOT)

The Department of Transportation’s Equity Action Plan highlights key actions that DOT will undertake to expand access and opportunity to all communities while “focusing on underserved, overburdened, and disadvantaged communities.” The actions fall under four focus areas – wealth creation, power of community, interventions, and expanding access. Actions within the plan include “providing technical assistance to small disadvantaged businesses, reinvigorating DOT’s programmatic enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, launching a national technical assistance center, and developing a national transportation cost burden measure.

In particular, the interventions focus area highlights the need for DOT to increase the number of discretionary grant applications from disadvantaged communities in urban and rural areas who have never applied for DOT funding before, and increase the number of new projects in disadvantaged communities utilizing formula funds added to infrastructure and transportation improvement programs.

DOT’s Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/DOT-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

Department of Commerce (DOC)

In addition to the agency-specific actions highlighted below, the Department of Commerce included the following five cross-cutting pillars in its equity action plan:

1. **Investments:** Support minority entrepreneurs through technical assistance and access to capital to nurture their companies at critical stages of development and growth.
2. **Capabilities and Knowledge Sharing:** Develop tools and resources for minority entrepreneurs to successfully operate their companies.
3. **Opportunities:** Create funding, training, and technical assistance programs and establish partnerships so that underrepresented groups can contribute to the emerging technologies space.
4. **People:** Ensure people and families can thrive in their communities by realizing gains from their participation in the economy.
5. **Service Delivery:** Ensure department services are data-driven and strengthened to meet the

needs of underrepresented groups.”

In conjunction with the equity action plan, DOC recently launched the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council, which will be led by Deputy Secretary Don Graves and work to champion the equity action plan.

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

Since taking office, the Biden Administration has viewed EDA as a tool to advance equitable economic growth and resilience. In the spring of 2021, EDA released updated [investment priorities](#) to guide agency investments. As a part of the investment priority update, “equity” was moved to the top of the list and the agency emphasized its commitment to working with underserved communities to achieve sustainable economic development. In the 2022 equity action plan for DOC, EDA pledges to build on this and consider equity in the development of their funding opportunities and engagement strategies. The agency has identified several challenges facing rural and other underrepresented groups in competing for EDA awards, including lack of resources, capacity, and awareness. Going forward, EDA will seek to address these challenges by providing outreach to underserved populations; recruiting diverse reviewers; and providing targeted technical assistance to these communities to ensure their success.

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

On November 15, 2021, the President signed the *Minority Business Development Act of 2021* (Division K – Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act PL. 117-58), which codifies the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), appoints an Under Secretary to lead the agency, and provides new authorities and resources. MBDA is also expecting additional funding in FY 2023 to carry out several of these new initiatives. In its equity action plan, the agency will seek to address several persistent issues including the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on minority business enterprises (MBEs); MBEs’ disproportionate access to capital; and MBEs’ disproportionate access to contracts.

The plan notes that MBDA will take steps to address barriers by expanding its services to provide one-on-one counseling and technical assistance for underserved businesses through its Business Center Program. MBDA also plans to launch a new Rural Business Center Program, which will tailor the effective business center model to the unique needs of rural MBEs, as well as several other new funding opportunities for centers. To address issues over access to capital, MBDA will support MBEs seeking to access to the Department of Treasury’s State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) and will expand support to incubators to develop networks and experience in pitching to investors. MBDA also released a solicitation for certain minority serving institutions (MSIs) that aligns with their strategic goals for MBEs. [The Minority Colleges and Universities program](#) seeks to build a diverse entrepreneurial pipeline for MBE growth by leveraging MSIs’ unique position to produce minority business leaders. This program aims to supplement the resources needed to support the undergraduate preparation capabilities of certain MSIs by expanding their entrepreneurial curriculum. MBDA will play a key role in reaching the Administration’s goal of increasing the share of contracts to small, disadvantaged businesses (SDBs) by 50 percent by 2025. MBDA will target this goal by using newfound authority under Title VI of the MBDA Act, which will allow the agency to “inform, coordinate, and evaluate policies” to increase access for MBEs to federal opportunities, grow the capacity and revenue of MBEs, and support MBE-related jobs. MBDA is charged with serving as an interagency resource to “support procurement, provide research and policy guidance to the broader community, and grow and nurture MBEs.” To do so, MBDA will provide additional business services through the Federal Procurement Center, like compiling federal contracting opportunities and direct matching. Finally, MBDA will utilize funds provided by the CARES Act and other COVID-19 related funding to support existing businesses and specialty centers that will help MBEs mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)

NIST is focused on advancing equity through its industry, academic, and manufacturing partnerships. In the DOC equity action plan, NIST aims to participate in “new industry forums, conferences, and meetings aimed at underserved communities, particularly emerging small- to medium-sized businesses.”¹ In line with this outreach to small and medium sized enterprises, NIST recently awarded multiple Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers funding for “Enhancing Diversity in Manufacturing” with the goal to increase student participation in industry/manufacturing internships across minority-serving institutions (MSI) and will likely continue to prioritize equity-based awards.

NIST also has a Steering Group for Equity in Career Advancement (SGECA), which includes staff from NIST laboratories, the Director’s Office, the Civil Rights and Diversity Office and the Office of Human Resources Management. SGECA advises the NIST Director and Associate Director for Laboratory Programs on “critical issues related to career advancement such as unintended impacts to promotion and performance award opportunities for women and minority groups; unconscious or implicit biases within the agency; and disparities that can have a cumulative impact over the course of a career.”²

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Closing the digital divide is a central tenet of the Department of Commerce’s equity plan and is listed as its number one “equity action.” The equity plan states that NTIA will lead the Administration’s plans to bring “reliable, affordable, high speed internet access to all Americans.” NTIA intends to measure their success expanding broadband access by measuring not only broadband access, but also adoption of broadband by previously unconnected Americans. NTIA has already taken several actions to support the equitable expansion of broadband access across the United States, including launching the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives and conducting outreach to and technical assistance for national tribal organizations as a part of its Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.

In response to the NTIA Internet Use Survey, which found that a disproportionate amount of rural, African Americans, and low-income households lacked access to the internet, and in support of the equity plan, NTIA plans to take the following steps:

- Invest \$50 billion in grant funds to support state and local broadband infrastructure deployment, digital inclusion, and broadband affordability efforts. NTIA intends for these programs to build infrastructure, promote community engagement, and focus on areas with the highest need. The vast majority of broadband funds will go to state and local governments, to subcontract to other stakeholders in the state, including institutions of higher education. The \$50 billion investment from NTIA will be broken down as follows:
 - **The Broadening Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program:** This \$42.45 billion program will distribute funds to support broadband infrastructure deployment and adoption. All 56 U.S. states and territories will receive funds in conjunction with their submission of a Five-Year Broadband Action Plan.
 - **The Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program:** This program will provide \$1 billion to expand middle mile infrastructure in order to reduce the cost of connecting un- and under-served areas.
 - **The Digital Equity Act:** Through this act, NTIA plans to distribute \$2.75 billion to states and territories in support of digital inclusion activities and promotion of digital skills. Out of

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/DOC-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

² <https://www.nist.gov/diversity-inclusion-and-equity/steering-group-equity-career-advancement>

the \$2.75 billion, \$1.44 billion will be distributed through a formula grant (the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program) and \$1.25 billion will be granted through a competitive grant program (The Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program).

- NTIA plans to make specific outreach and provide technical assistance to states and territories to support their broadband deployment and digital equity efforts, with a focus on communities of color, rural and Tribal communities, and vulnerable populations.
- In addition to its grant programs for state and local governments, NTIA is going to administer an additional \$1.5 billion in funds through direct grant awards, including:
 - Funding projects to connect 200,000 Tribal homes to the internet through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program;
 - Deploying high-speed internet to 130,000 homes in predominantly rural areas through the Broadband Infrastructure Program;
 - Awarding \$268 million in grant funds to Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) for the purchase of broadband services and equipment; and
 - Providing all awardees of its direct grant programs with technical assistance to ensure successful implementation of funds.

The Equity Action Plan states that NTIA intends to hold itself accountable for closing the digital divide through development of milestones for critical activities needed for successful implementation of programs, ensuring that outreach is conducted with communities of color and other underserved communities, and identification of any barriers to engagement with NTIA and broadband adoption.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

The Equity Action Plan summary for DOC only briefly touches on NOAA’s role but includes that environmental data will play a role in understanding and addressing environmental disparities in addition to ensuring equitable access and distribution of climate resilience investments and opportunities.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

The Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Equity Action Plan outlines a plan to increase underserved communities’ access to capital, disaster assistance, business counseling and training services, and procurement and contracting opportunities through improved technology. SBA will track the progress made on each recommended action by identifying specific metrics to assess progress two to four years out and five to eight years out. In addition to increasing access to SBA’s services, the Agency will work to improve its quantitative and qualitative data gathering to help inform ongoing analysis, a process that includes working with the Office of Management and Budget to identify the best ways to acquire information, without incurring unnecessary costs or creating trust issues for underserved communities.

SBA’s Equity Action Plan Summary is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SBA-EO13985-equity-summary.pdf>

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

NEA’s equity action plan outlines how the organization will create a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible programming environment throughout all the arts activities and operations. Over the course of a year, NEH established and coordinated meetings of a Racial Equity and Access Working Group to discuss and establish the organizations equity plan which produced goals to addressing barriers to equal opportunity including:

- “Address and reduce the gap between availability of arts programming and the participation of underserved groups.

- Expand engagement with underserved communities through webinars and key partner organizations. Develop concrete policies and procedures for providing access accommodations for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency.
- Determine feasibility of expanding demographic data collection related to grant beneficiaries, staff, and leadership of grant recipient organizations.
- Increase awareness of contract and procurement opportunities to HUBZone and other underrepresented groups.”

NEA also created an Agency Task Force which will help aid the coordination of the agency’s engagement efforts. More specifically, the agency will look to create more partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) with the model currently being used with NEA’s outreach with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

NEA’s Equity Action Plan is available at

https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/EquityActionPlan_041422.pdf

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

NEH’s Equity Action Plan focuses on ensuring that the agency is fulfilling its mission in expanding access to the humanities to “people of all backgrounds” and setting an equitable environment in its programs and operations. Furthermore, NEH will be launching an agency-wide Equity Task Force that will focus on mitigating barriers and creating equal participation within the agency’s programs. The goals of the task force that are outlined in the Equity Action Plan include:

- “Bolstering NEH’s Data Collection Capacity
- Enhancing NEH’s Outreach and Branding for Underserved Communities.
- Simplifying NEH’s Grant Application Process
- Expanding NEH’s Procurement Opportunities.”

NEH will also establish a Chief Diversity Officer to help the agency on DEI-related matters and create an Office of Outreach to help broaden the agency’s engagement with communities and institutions that have been historically underserved including HBCUs, MSIs, and TCUs.

NEH’s Equity Action Plan is available at <https://www.neh.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/NEH%20Agency%20Equity%20Action%20Plan%20--%20Final%20Public%20Version.pdf>