

Pursuant to Executive Order 13985 (January 20, 2021) on "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government"

Equity Action Plan Summary

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) serves as the chief human resources agency and personnel policy manager for the Federal Government. OPM provides human resources leadership and support to federal agencies and helps the federal workforce achieve their aspirations as they serve the American people. The Agency directs human resources and employee management services, administers retirement benefits, manages health insurance and other insurance benefit programs, and oversees merit-based and inclusive hiring into the civil service.

Delivering equity through OPM

OPM's policies and practices influence the composition, compensation, and work experiences of the federal workforce. In turn, the federal workforce designs and delivers policies and programs that affect all people in the U.S. and beyond. Advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are fundamental to delivering on OPM's mission to build and support a federal workforce that represents and delivers for America. Accordingly, the Agency has a significant role in implementing the President's Executive Order 14035 on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce. OPM also has a critical role to play in advancing health equity, retirement security, and equal employment opportunities for our nation's public servants.

New strategies to advance equity

- **Invest in data to identify and address barriers in federal hiring**

The federal hiring process has many steps; data trends indicate a drop-off in representation for some underserved communities as the federal hiring process progresses. Applicant demographic data is voluntarily collected but historically has not been easily available to, and usable by, human resource offices to identify root causes for drop-off patterns and interventions to address them. In response to this barrier, OPM will expand federal agency access to post-audit (retroactive) candidate demographic data, providing agencies with an easily accessible, comprehensive dataset that will enable a more detailed analysis of barriers in the hiring process. OPM will also help agencies build the knowledge and skills to analyze and use this data to address barriers to underserved communities more effectively.

- **Empower federal workforce to make better health benefit choices and advance health equity**

OPM administers the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) insurance program. The ease of choosing a health plan is dependent on the quality of the available tools for presenting complex information to enrollees with varying levels of understanding and varying needs. Underserved communities have conveyed that current tools do not clearly present key aspects of health plan choices, such as the cost and quality of benefits offered. This contributes to a lack of understanding of health choices, furthering inequitable outcomes. To address this barrier, OPM will support efforts by eligible Federal government employees; annuitants; employees of entitled and enrolled Tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations; and their eligible family members in selecting the health benefits that best fit their needs by introducing selection tools that are informative and sensitive to their diverse needs.

- **Advance retirement security**

OPM is responsible for working with agency benefits officers across government to develop and implement a retirement financial education strategy. Resources for early and midcareer financial planning are often

New strategies to advance equity

limited or nonexistent. These gaps in financial education programs create barriers to equity because wealth accumulation is a career-long effort, and key decisions made early in a federal career compound over a lifetime. Financial education and wealth accumulation are especially important areas of focus among underserved communities. To address this barrier, OPM will examine how key decisions in early and midcareer can improve the trajectory of wealth building and will work with benefits officers across government to examine existing agency financial education plans and specific government financial education programs. OPM will also provide tools to train benefits officers in financial education best practices. Finally, OPM will identify effective financial education programs currently in use at some agencies and make them more widely available across the federal government.

Building on OPM's progress

This equity action plan builds on OPM's progress delivering on equity and racial justice in the first year of the Biden-Harris Administration.

- **Establishing OPM's Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility**

In October 2021, the Director established the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (ODEIA) within OPM and aligned it to report directly to the Office of the Director. ODEIA is charged with leading strategic DEIA government-wide priorities, working collaboratively with stakeholders, and providing tools to help federal agencies advance DEIA – including advising the Director on the President's Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce.

- **Conducting focus groups with underserved communities**

OPM convened and conducted focus group discussions with employee groups in July 2021 to hear directly from members of underserved communities and better understand if, and to what extent, they faced barriers in accessing federal employee benefits. The focus groups were hosted by video conference and lasted two hours, with one hour focused on FEHB plan selection and one hour focused on retirement readiness. The four focus group discussions included 61 federal employees and were comprised of benefits officers, employees who identify as LGBTQ+, employees who identify as a person of color, and employees who identify as persons with disabilities.

- **Expanding pathways to federal employment**

OPM finalized a series of policies that deepen OPM's commitment to making federal service a pathway to the middle class, expanding the access to good jobs to Americans from all walks of life. In September 2021, OPM expanded opportunities for military spouses to serve in federal jobs by finalizing an expansion of the Military Spouse Non-Competitive Appointment Authority. OPM also finalized two policies that expand

Building on OPM's progress

access to good-paying opportunities in federal service, including paid internships, for post-secondary students and recent graduates in August and November 2021.

- **Expanding benefits to additional Tribal employees**

In September 2021, OPM issued a policy to expand access to high quality health coverage by extending the opportunity to enroll in the FEHB Program to additional Tribal employees.

- **Implementing new federal minimum wage**

In January 2022, OPM issued new pay schedules and additional guidance that fulfill the Administration's commitment to pay every federal employee at least \$15 per hour. These actions collectively raised the pay for 67,000 federal employees who previously worked below this threshold. Raising pay rates across the Federal Government to a minimum of \$15 per hour reflects our appreciation for the federal workforce and our values as a nation.