

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. Department of State

The U.S. Department of State (State Department) leads America's foreign policy through diplomacy, programs, and assistance by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety, and economic prosperity.

Delivering equity through State

Addressing systemic racism and strengthening democracy worldwide is a core tenet of President Biden's foreign policy. The State Department is the lead foreign affairs agency within the Executive Branch for conducting diplomacy and has outlined five key priorities for integrating equity into the State Department's foreign affairs work, including through foreign assistance, foreign policy development and implementation, public diplomacy, consular services, and procurement, contracts, and grants. The State Department will integrate equity into every aspect of its foreign affairs mission.

New strategies to advance equity

- **Engage high-level diplomatic partners and individuals worldwide from underserved racial and ethnic groups and other underserved communities to better assess and embed equity into U.S. foreign policies**

Systematic exclusion of underserved communities from full participation in economic, social, and civic life impedes equality and equity globally. Barriers also exist in the State Department's engagement with underserved communities. These include eroded trust of the U.S. in countries where diplomacy has historically engaged primarily with the dominant population; lack of tools, data, and training to measure and access equity; and limited resources to conduct equity analyses within the State Department. To address these barriers, the State Department will engage in specific actions under this mission to include increasing engagement with individuals from marginalized racial and ethnic groups and other underserved communities during overseas missions; collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data about race, ethnicity, and other intersections of marginalization; and raising the visibility of racial and other inequities globally and generate better-informed foreign policies to decrease barriers to equity and equality worldwide.

- **Embed racial equity and support for underserved communities in foreign assistance by collecting data related to key equity issues and developing a social inclusion analysis tool**

Without common terminology and metrics, the State Department cannot report on its efforts to advance racial equity and support for underserved communities using measures that can be aggregated across bureaus, countries, regions, or globally. To address this barrier, the State Department created a standard reporting framework and will use reporting data to identify existing equity gaps, challenges, and opportunities. The State Department will also develop, test, and implement a social inclusion analysis tool to ensure equity considerations are incorporated into the design of its programs. These strategies support the State Department's work with agency stakeholders to inform data-driven operations and

New strategies to advance equity

programming that integrates racial equity and support for underserved communities into U.S. foreign assistance.

- **Measurably increase the scope and scale of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs engagement, programming, and partnerships among individuals of racial and ethnic groups and underserved communities**

The State Department must continue to provide guidance on aligning EO 13985 with the Public Diplomacy Framework, increase participation by diverse or marginalized communities in Public Diplomacy (PD) programs, and address the provision of funding for accommodations which increase accessibility. Accommodations may include the use of personal assistants or sign language interpreters, as well as physical or electronic devices or services that enable access and communication for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. Nonetheless, among the greatest barriers are the knowledge and skills of our PD practitioners with regards to EO 13985, which would benefit from training and developmental activities. To address these barriers, the State Department will identify key actions for reaching these goals, such as establishing relevant guidance for PD operational planning; incorporating equity-related goals into Bureau strategy documents guiding work with foreign and domestic constituencies; tracking PD program participation; and considering broadening the criteria for Public Diplomacy program participation to increase the inclusion of underrepresented and underserved communities. These efforts will increase awareness of, and access to, resources opportunities; better align PD and broader equity-driven foreign policy; and increase participation in PD programs among marginalized communities domestically and around the world.

New strategies to advance equity

- **Offer U.S. citizenship products with inclusive gender markers as well as reform and reorganize resources to provide more equitable, accessible consular services to U.S. citizens**

Transgender and non-binary Americans often face administrative burdens and barriers to obtaining accurate IDs, including passports. To address these barriers, the Department will expand access to U.S. passports with non-binary gender markers; undertake a review of travel.state.gov to make the website more inclusive and useful for all audiences; and dedicate personnel to plan and implement a road map for reviewing and regularly updating travel.state.gov and ensuring its use of inclusive language into the future.

- **Embed racial equity and support for underserved communities in its procurement, contracts, and grants**

A substantial challenge for the State Department remains in reducing underserved groups' impediments to contracting opportunities. The most common barriers to entry for small businesses and underserved communities are the State Department's geographic dispersion and worldwide performance requirements; access to capital (to include financing and bonding); facility security clearances; and opportunities to compete.

To address these barriers, one area of focus of the State Department's strategy will be the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT), a contracting process created to incentivize small businesses to enter the market. Rewards under the SAT are reserved for small businesses. However, the State Department does not currently have a rigorous process to verify that SAT awards are being set aside for small businesses. The State Department will require better review approvals for acquisitions under the SAT, placing greater scrutiny and accountability on procurement actions and reporting. Through this governance, State Department will ensure U.S. small and underserved businesses, the intended recipients eligible for SAT awards, have the maximum practical opportunity to receive them.

Building on State's progress

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

- **Committing to key U.S. High-level Diplomatic Engagements**

The Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership, released February 23, 2021, lays out an active bilateral agenda that includes support for underserved communities and advancing diversity and inclusion. During an October 2021 High-Level Dialogue, the United States and Colombia agreed to resume their dialogue on the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan for Racial and Ethnic Equality (CAPREE), in conjunction with our civil societies. The United States and Colombia also committed to scheduling a steering committee meeting for 2022 to examine efforts by both governments towards the inclusion of Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and other underserved communities.

- **Dedicating funding for Human Rights and Racial Equity**

The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) has dedicated funding to establish programming specifically for individuals from marginalized racial and ethnic groups. For the first time, DRL integrated racial equity and justice in a “notice of funding opportunity” template and proposal submission instructions for all foreign assistance solicitations in FY 2021 – 2022. Since FY 2021, DRL has requested racial equity disaggregation, analysis, and consideration in programming.

- **Addressing vulnerability to human trafficking**

The State Department has expanded data collection on racial equity and underserved communities for the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report. The State Department also funded a Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network project to examine how institutional racism relates to trafficking and is working with other cabinet agencies to integrate an equity-based approach into U.S. anti-trafficking work.

Building on State's progress

- **Supporting a new United Nations body**

On August 2, 2021, the United Nations General Assembly, with the full support of the United States, approved a historic resolution establishing the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (PFPAD). The PFPAD provides expertise in addressing the challenges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance facing people of African descent. The State Department nominated Howard University School of Law Professor Justin Hansford as an independent expert to the body; he was elected on December 16, 2021. His nomination and election further demonstrate U.S. commitment to addressing issues of racial justice on a global scale.

- **Updating the interpretation of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) and U.S. citizenship**

On May 18, 2021, the State Department updated its interpretation of Section 301 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952, the law which governs acquisition of U.S. citizenship. Children born abroad to married parents, including those conceived using ART, who have a genetic or gestational tie to at least one of the married parents, and meet the INA's other requirements, can make a claim to U.S. citizenship at birth through the U.S. citizen parent.

- **Improving communication on Consular Affairs website**

The State Department continues to review and update its flagship website: travel.state.gov. Revising the website, including the Spanish language pages, with more precise and inclusive language will increase equity and access to information.

- **Representing American diversity on U.S. travel documents**

The State Department continues its efforts to incorporate themes and artwork to reflect the diversity of the United States with new designs for the U.S. passport book, the U.S. passport card, the Consular Report of Birth Abroad, and other consular products.

Building on State's progress

- **Increasing intersectionality and equity in foreign affairs through special envoys**

The State Department has welcomed a U.S. Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons and a Special Advisor on International Disability Rights. Both actively encourage intersectionality across their global workstreams by engaging in lines of effort to promote racial equity, accessibility, value, and inclusion of individuals from underserved communities.

- **Developing strategic messaging on racial equity and support for underserved communities**

The State Department provided overseas U.S. missions with messaging guidance, original video content, and official statements from the State Department's leadership on the one-year commemoration of George Floyd's murder, the Tulsa Race Massacre, and Juneteenth. The State Department also coordinated a global campaign for the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act to celebrate how the world is powered by diversity, accessibility, equity, and inclusion by highlighting the contributions of persons with disabilities across the globe.

- **Diversifying academic exchange programs**

The Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) Programs provide grants, training, and resources to help U.S. higher education institutions increase and diversify student participation and the destination where they study. For example, Dillard University is using an IDEAS Grant to establish its first-ever study abroad office, and Alaska Pacific University is using an IDEAS Grant to develop a study abroad program designed to connect Alaska Native students with indigenous peoples in Sweden and Finland.

Building on State's progress



- **Advancing civil rights through professional exchange programs**

In September 2021, the Office of International Visitors initiated a virtual International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) project entitled “The Problem We All Live With: Dismantling Racial and Social Injustice,” to encourage participants to work together to dismantle systemic racism and advance civil rights in their own countries. The Office of the U.S. Speaker Program recruited 82 U.S. experts on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility to engage professional foreign audiences on business and economic development; communication and dialogue; education and awareness; and identity, activism, and leadership. The Office of Citizen Exchanges (CE) prioritizes diversity and inclusion, including racial and ethnic diversity, in recruiting a diverse pool of participants in its cultural, sports, youth and professional fellows exchange programs.

- **Engaging Foreign Press Centers**

The Foreign Press Centers’ Advancing Racial Equity Series connects foreign journalists with experts on the history, contemporary struggles, and opportunities present in U.S. race relations to advance President Biden’s comprehensive equity agenda. The Foreign Press Centers held eight briefings to-date, highlighting issues such as the history and meaning of Juneteenth, climate equity, social justice movements, the role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in higher education, and resiliency in Black business communities.