

Pursuant to Executive Order 14091 (February 16, 2023) on
"Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for
Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government"

2023 Equity Action Plan Summary

U.S. Department of Energy

Delivering equity through DOE

The Department of Energy (DOE) strives to ensure America's security and prosperity by addressing its energy, environmental, and nuclear challenges through transformative science and technology solutions. DOE prioritizes equity and place-based strategies in its investments to model a clean energy transition that will deliver real benefits to frontline communities, especially those historically impacted by the legacy of pollution and environmental injustice. To ensure that every community has a role in this energy transition, DOE must strive to eliminate barriers to access, transform programs and policies to open even broader pathways for underrepresented groups to access DOE resources, and create new programs to better serve communities.

New strategies to advance equity

DOE has identified five areas of focus for its 2023 Equity Action Plan through engagement with local communities, including underserved communities; small business and industry outreach events; crowdsourcing campaigns; consultations with Tribal nations; and more. The Department will continue to engage the public on these action areas, its progress, and next steps throughout the year and beyond.

1. Establish a Community Benefits Plan (CBP) framework that builds trust and improves outcomes for underserved communities, which in turn supports successful Research & Development (R&D) and Demonstration & Deployment projects that advance an equitable clean energy transition. *The nation's energy infrastructure is disproportionately sited in low-income communities and communities of color, leading to both a disproportionate exposure to the negative environmental, economic, and social impacts of this legacy energy infrastructure and a lack of access to its benefits. Tribal communities, local agencies, rural and remote communities, and smaller community-based organizations often lack the capacity to engage with project developers during the planning and design stages, which results in their concerns being excluded from consideration. To address these barriers and others, DOE will:*

- Develop a CBP framework that can be consistently applied across agency programs and expand CBPs to all relevant DOE programs that are not currently incorporating CBPs or capturing any of the CBP priorities through other mechanisms. Ensure that CBPs are scored at a minimum of 20% of the total application score, as applicable.

New strategies to advance equity

- Enhance community capacity to participate in DOE projects. Leverage resources available through federal assistance programs such as the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) [Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers](#), DOE Technical Assistance, and the awardee project developer's CBP commitments to increase communities' ability to identify potential risks and harms, identify potential risk mitigation, and possible benefits of project deployment.
- Revise community commitment policy and supporting clauses to reflect current priorities (DEAR 970.2673-1, DEAR 970.5226-3, and DOE-H-2045).

2. Update the DOE Merit Review Program to improve equitable outcomes for DOE awards. *There is a lack of consistency across DOE merit reviewer recruitment processes, which limits the agency's ability to assess overall effectiveness of merit reviews by program against a baseline. Additionally, a lack of participation by underrepresented groups affects the ability of individuals within those groups to establish relationships with DOE personnel and understand how funding applications are evaluated. To address these barriers and others, DOE will:*

- Work with Privacy Act officers and the Office of General Counsel to update systems to include demographic data with reviewer registration, which can help the agency analyze how merit review board composition may impact selection outcomes.
- Create a guidance document for resume screeners to mitigate implicit bias within merit review board selection and increase opportunities for underrepresented individuals to serve on merit review boards.

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- Create and maintain a reviewer landing page to capture departmental activities and alert potential reviewers of upcoming opportunities to serve as merit reviewers. Improve public awareness and access to DOE program managers.
- Expand departmental efforts to reach out to Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), underrepresented groups, minority organizations, and federal equity leads to increase opportunities for underrepresented individuals to serve on merit review panels and learn more about the DOE merit review process.
- Create consistency in questions asked in DOE reviewer recruitment registration processes and capture the input of reviewers on the review process and the way proposals are solicited, evaluated, and awarded.

3. Increase and improve access to procurement opportunities (acquisition and financial assistance) for new entrants and small and historically disadvantaged businesses. *By reviewing stakeholder feedback from agency Requests for Information (RFIs) and Industry Days and benchmarking state and local governments and other federal agency equity procurement best practices, DOE identified several pathways to increase and improve access to opportunities for small businesses. To address these barriers and others, DOE will:*

- Continue to increase outreach to underserved communities and socio-economically disadvantaged small businesses to bolster efforts to increase new entrants to DOE opportunities.
- Develop and leverage strategic partnerships with external entities (e.g., Minority Business Development Agency, [APEX Accelerators](#))

New strategies to advance equity

(formerly Procurement Technical Assistance Centers), and [Small Business Development Centers](#)) to support expanded socio-economic diversity among the small business supplier base through training and development and access to capital programs.

- Launch a new Department-wide Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan providing guidance to DOE offices on translation, interpretation, and outreach services for LEP persons seeking access to Department programs to help ensure that LEP communities are informed of DOE activities and funding opportunities.
- Utilize the Women-owned Small Business (WOSB) Small Business Program Manager to develop strategies for increased gender equity to be informed by increased data analytics, WOSB-centric North American Industry Classification System code assessments, and in collaboration with the Small Business Administration (SBA) WOSB Program, and major facility management contractors.

4. Integrate and track justice considerations through a metrics framework for the Department's R&D strategy by providing consistent communication of expectations and efficient coordination and implementation of reporting requirements across the Department. DOE found a need to ensure more robust and available metrics to ensure greater equity. For example, current Justice40 metrics did not capture R&D impacts outside of the geographical location where work is being performed and some did not have metrics in place to monitor and measure project progress. To address these barriers and others, DOE will:

- Develop R&D-specific metrics to quantify Justice40 impacts for all project phases including during the award post-project closeout, and secondary impacts beyond the site of performance.

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- Develop automated, easy-to-use systems to capture standard and office-specific metrics and content for all funding (funding opportunity announcements (FOAs), non-competitive grants, DOE Laboratory solicitations, etc.) that integrate with Justice40, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and office reporting requirements and are consistent with requirements established for each FOA, including expected follow-up actions, federal financial assistance guidelines, and the Paperwork Reduction Act.
- Establish policies and procedures to increase community participation in development of research questions and citizen science in research and development.
- Identify communities to review proposed R&D metrics framework.
- Distribute an organizational chart with the DOE communities working in Justice40 R&D reporting, with attention to offices engaging in R&D projects that involve or could engage external Environmental Justice communities in R&D.

5. Develop an agency-wide framework to effectively work with Tribal and disadvantaged communities to reimagine their clean energy future through real investments and technical assistance, and ensure that community voices and decision-making are integrated into DOE funding, research, and programming.

The Justice40 Stakeholder Engagement (SE) Community of Practice (CoP) and Office of Community Engagement collected the insights and feedback of stakeholder engagement staff from 24 program offices across DOE, which found the need to improve Tribal engagement—among other opportunities—to ensure equity. To address these barriers and others, DOE will:

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- Establish an internal strategy that prioritizes actions to advance meaningful community and stakeholder engagement across all DOE program offices and DOE National Laboratories. For example, develop and incorporate Tribal consultation best practices and annual training DOE-wide to improve government-to-government interactions and notifications.
- Support capacity building in Tribal and disadvantaged communities through funding, grant-writing and other technical assistance, equitable communication, and improved application processes.
- Create onboarding materials for new employees for Tribal and disadvantaged community engagement and update training to reflect Office of Personnel Management / Department of the Interior and interagency best practices for Tribal consultation and engagement.
- Improve DOE's ability for effective and responsive two-way communication, including Nation-to-Nation communication, for Tribal and disadvantaged communities.
- Modify DOE's website to create a central portal for Tribal and community organizations to easily find DOE resources available to them and highlighting this resource on the front page of energy.gov (e.g., Energy Savings Hub).

What DOE accomplished

Below is a sampling of DOE's progress delivering on equity and racial justice since its first Equity Action Plan in 2022.

- ***Hosted the inaugural DOE Minority Business and Workforce Connect Summit in February 2023 to help participants learn about how to engage in business with DOE.***

This summit offered opportunities for MBEs, DOE program offices, the National Labs, higher education institutions, financial institutions, and non-profit organizations who are working to realize a just clean energy future to build lasting and generative connections. The Summit allowed participants to learn about how to do business with DOE and engage with leaders in government and industry to learn more about how the energy industry is responding to historic federal investments in clean energy and communities. For more information, see [DOE Minority Business Enterprise Connect Summit | Department of Energy DOE's 2023 Minority Business Enterprise Connect Summit Draws Record Attendance and Announces New Partnerships | Department of Energy](#).

- ***Created the Energy Savings Hub and a video series to educate the public on topics such as energy savings and tax incentives.***

The Energy Savings Hub is a one-stop shop for homeowners, renters, and drivers to learn how they can save energy, save money, and save the planet. It features something for everyone,

What DOE accomplished

including clean energy tax incentives and tips / tricks to conserve energy. The Clean Energy 101 [video series](#) is captioned in both English and Spanish. It is comprised of short explanations of clean energy appliances and technologies that qualify for incentives in President Biden's Investing in America agenda, including the basics of clean energy technologies, such as heat pumps, rooftop solar, electric vehicles, and more.

- ***Increased procurement awards to small businesses and other disadvantaged socioeconomic categories through use of market research tools.***

Leveraged tools such as the [National Aeronautics and Space Administration Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement Provider Lookup Tool](#) and [SBA Dynamic Small Business Search](#). In FY 2023 to date, these robust market research techniques resulted in awards valued at approximately \$70.5 million for WOSBs; \$55.6 million for Veteran Owned Small Businesses; \$38.5 million for Tribal-Owned and Native American Owned Small Businesses; and \$3.8 million for HUBZone Businesses.

- ***Implemented a strategy with Management & Operating (M&O) contractors and major site and facility contractors designed to increase subcontracting opportunities from contractors who employ people who are blind or have significant disabilities (AbilityOne).***

DOE-wide [AbilityOne](#) obligations increased from \$27.5 million in FY 2022 to \$31.2 million in FY 2023, an increase of 13%.

What DOE accomplished

- ***Established a Justice40 Stakeholder Engagement Community of Practice (Justice40 SE CoP) to establish a standard of care for equitable stakeholder engagement.***
Participants in stakeholder engagement events represent a wide variety of DOE program offices. In partnership with the CoP, DOE developed a Stakeholder Engagement Smartsheet which will track energy- and justice-related stakeholder engagements by program office, technology, region, and attendees. Offices will also upload outcomes from engagements.
- ***Awarded \$30 million in financial assistance in FY 2022 to MSIs in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington to help develop highly qualified science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students and foster a well-trained, technically skilled, and inclusive workforce.***
In FY 2022 and FY 2023, Congress appropriated the Office of Environmental Management (EM) \$56 million in each year for the [Environmental Management Minority Serving Institutions Partnership Program \(EM-MSIPP\)](#), a program designed to promote the education and development of the next generation workforce in critical STEM-related disciplines in support of EM's mission. EM-MSIPP grants assist MSI efforts to build competitive academic STEM programs and to purchase the tools and equipment necessary for scientific learning.