

USDA EQUITY COMMISSION
Shaping Change at USDA



Public Meeting # 2

May 10-11, 2022, Day One



Cecilia Hernandez
Designated Federal Officer



Dr. Jewel Bronaugh
Co-Chair and Deputy Secretary
of Agriculture



Arturo S. Rodriguez
Co-Chair and President of the
United Farm Workers of America

- USDA Leadership Opening Remarks
- Overview of Legal Cases
- Current Status of Equity Efforts Part 1
- Public Comment Period
- Agriculture Subcommittee Report Out
- Current Status of Equity Efforts Part 2
- Adjourn



Katharine Ferguson
Chief of Staff in the Office of the Secretary

Speaker: Rick Gibson, Senior Counsel at the Office of the General Counsel, Civil Rights, Labor and Employment Law Division

Historical Discrimination Cases

- *Keepseagle v. Vilsack*- Native American Farmer and Rancher Class Action Settlement (2010)
- *Pigford v. Glickman*- African American Farmer Class Action Settlement (1999)
- *Garcia v. Vilsack*- Hispanic Farmer Class Action Settlement (2001)
- *Love v. Vilsack*- Women Farmer Class Action Settlement (2001)



Claudette Fernandez
Director of Program Equity
and Opportunity Strategy



Dr. Dwayne Goldman
Senior Advisor for Racial
Equity



Leslie Weldon
Chief Diversity and Inclusion
Officer

USDA Equity Framework



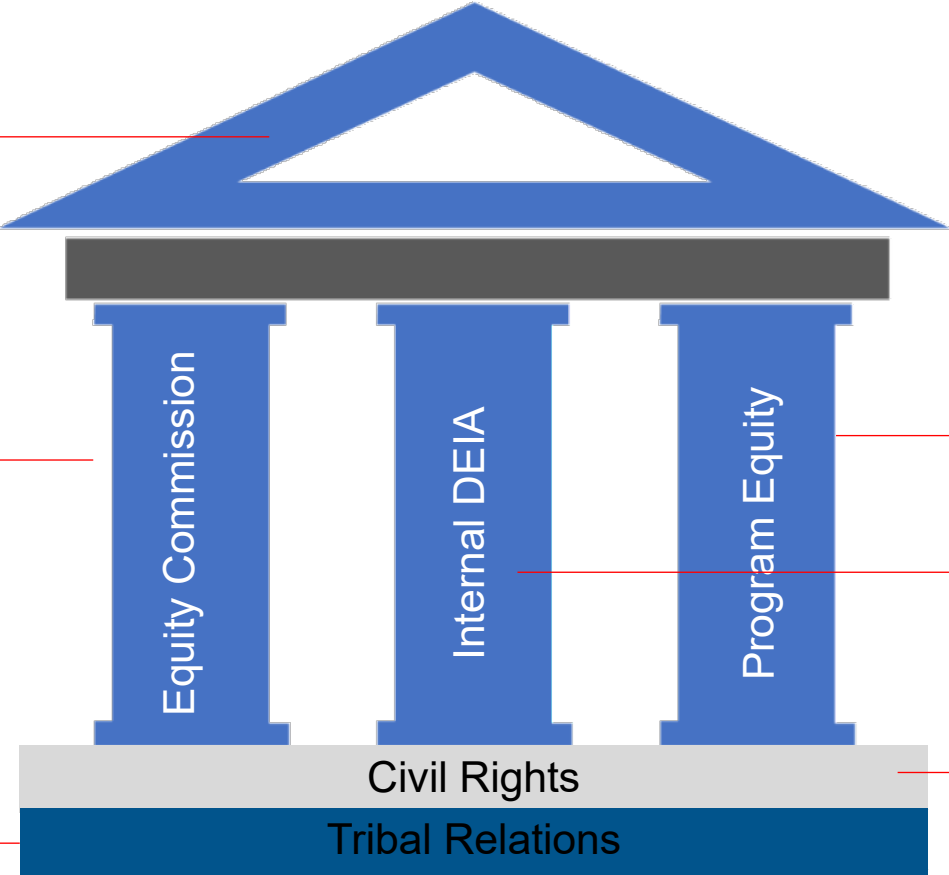
Dr. Dewayne Goldman
Sr. Advisor for Racial Justice & Equity



Cecilia Hernandez
Equity Commission,
Designated Federal Official
(DFO)



Heather Dawn Thompson
Director, Office of Tribal
Relations



Claudette Fernandez
Program Equity



Leslie Weldon
Acting Chief Diversity &
Inclusion Officer



Monica Rainge
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office
of the Assistant Secretary for Civil
Rights

..... **8** *mission areas*



———— **10** *reports* ————



30 *agencies and offices*

685

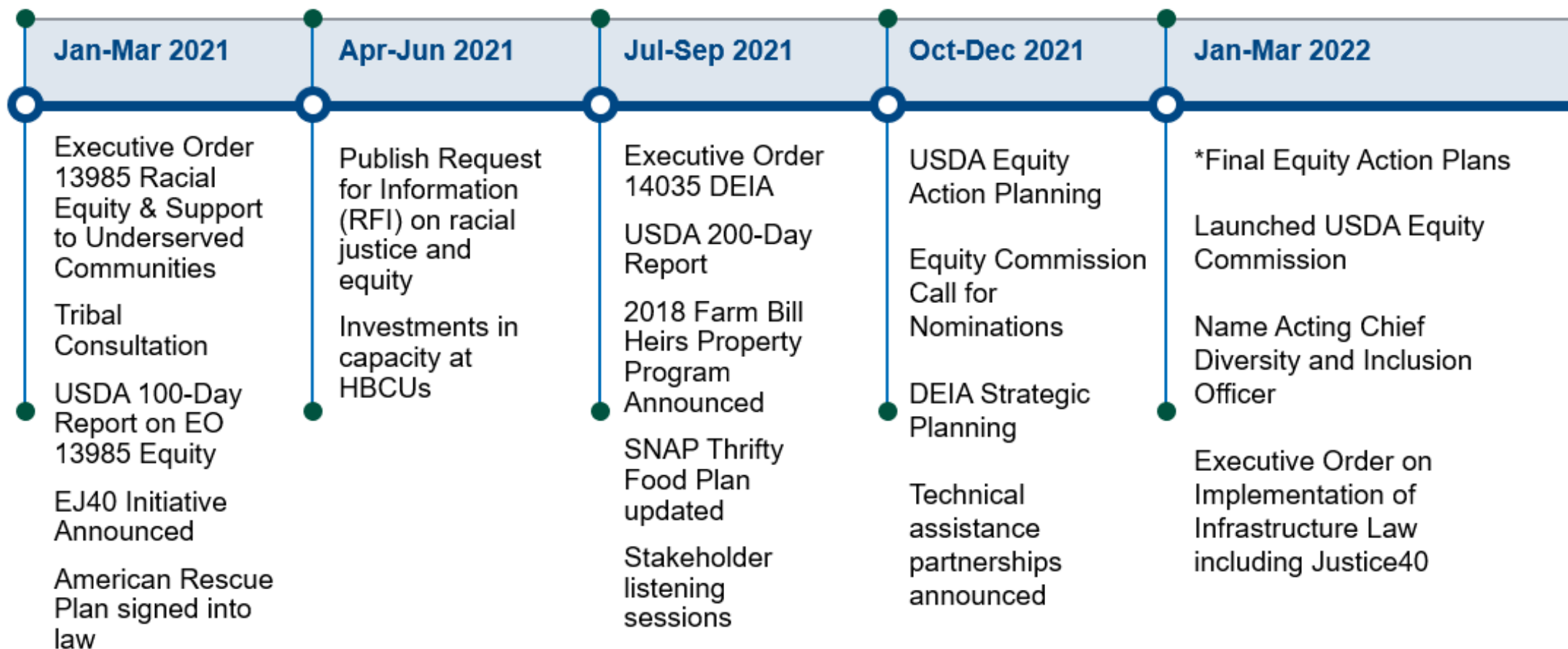
recommendations



56 *years*



Look Back- Major Equity Actions

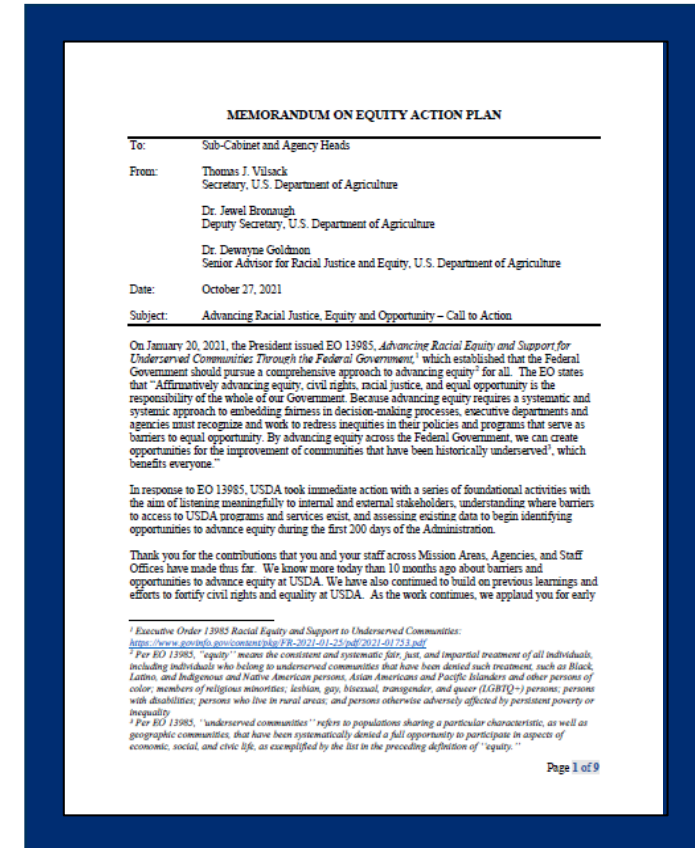


- USDA's History of Discrimination
- Lack of Internal Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA)
- Barriers to Funding Opportunities and Program Access
- Barriers to Land Access, Ownership, and Retention
- Need to Honor Trust & Treaty Responsibilities with Tribes
- Need for Targeted Education, Outreach & Technical Assistance
- Expanded Access to Nutrition Programs
- Strengthening USDA's Civil Rights
- Customer Experience including Capacity in the Field

All public comments are accessible online at <https://www.regulations.gov/document/USDA-2021-0006-0001>

- Received input from over 500 stakeholders during the summer of 2021
- 50% (most commenters) used the word “BIPOC” or “people of color” when discussing barriers and opportunities
- 20% spoke directly about the Black or African American community (farmers, organizations, businesses, youth)
- 10-15% spoke directly about tribal concerns
- 10% spoke directly about Hispanic/Latino and/or farmworker concerns
- <5% spoke directly about AAPI concerns, indicating a need for the USDA to engage more with that community

- **FY22 Priorities Secretary & Dep Sec Memo:** “Racial Justice, Equity, and Opportunity” was one of five named goals in a memo
- **FY22 Equity Action Plan Memo:** Directed staff offices and mission areas to develop equity action plans, resulting in 20 submissions and about 525 individual actions
- **USDA Equity Action Plan:** The Secretary’s office is tracking these actions and has identified a subset of them as high priority that informed the overall Department-level submission to White House in Feb 2022

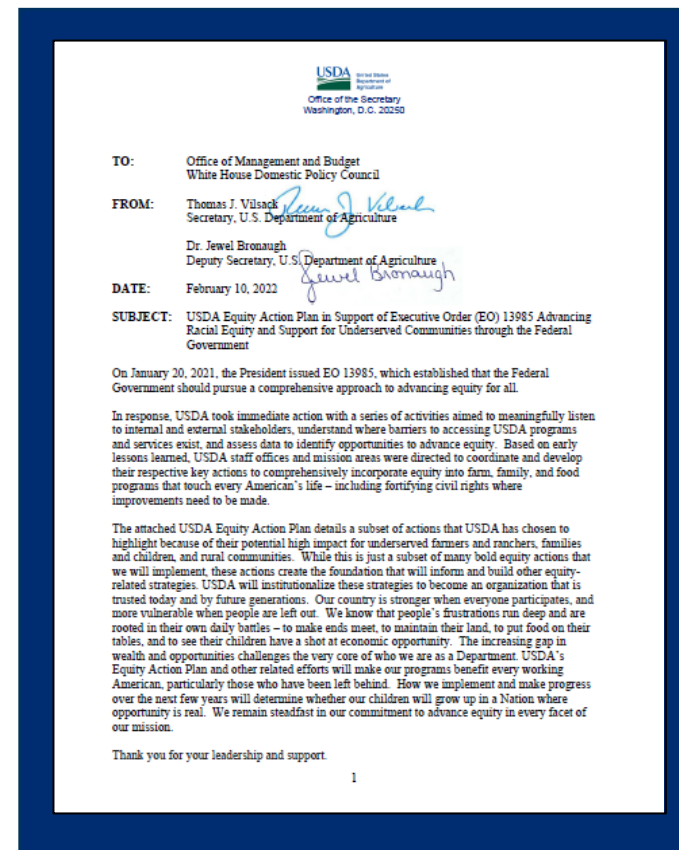


After FY22 Priorities Memo was sent, Equity Action Plan Memo followed directing staff office and mission area to identify Equity Leads and submit their respective Equity Action Plans by Nov 19, 2021.

- **Rural Development (RD):** Implemented discretionary priority points for underserved communities.
- **Food Production and Conservation (FPAC):** Strengthened implementation for Receipt for Service & reduced admin burden on farm loans.
- **Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS):** Issued policy clarification to strengthen gender equity in programs such as WIC.
- **Natural Resources & Environment (NRE):** Commitment to co-management with Indian tribes by reviewing grant requirements.
- **Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP):** Expanded outreach to diversify boards and commissions.
- **Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS):** Partnered with RD to target support to small plants and family farms on food safety regulatory compliance as they expand market.

- **Research, Education, and Economics Resources (REE):** Collaborated with OPPE and OHRM and established coordinated approach partnership with land grant & MSIs to ensure equitable student outcomes and support USDA's vacancies.
- **Trade and Foreign Affairs' (TFAA):** Partnered with Intertribal Ag Council to plan and increase tribal ag exports.
- **Office of Budget & Program Analysis (OBPA):** Integrated equity in regulatory agenda.
- **National Appeals Division (NAD):** Targeted outreach to underserved producers on their appeal rights and hiring of Spanish-speaking administrative judge.

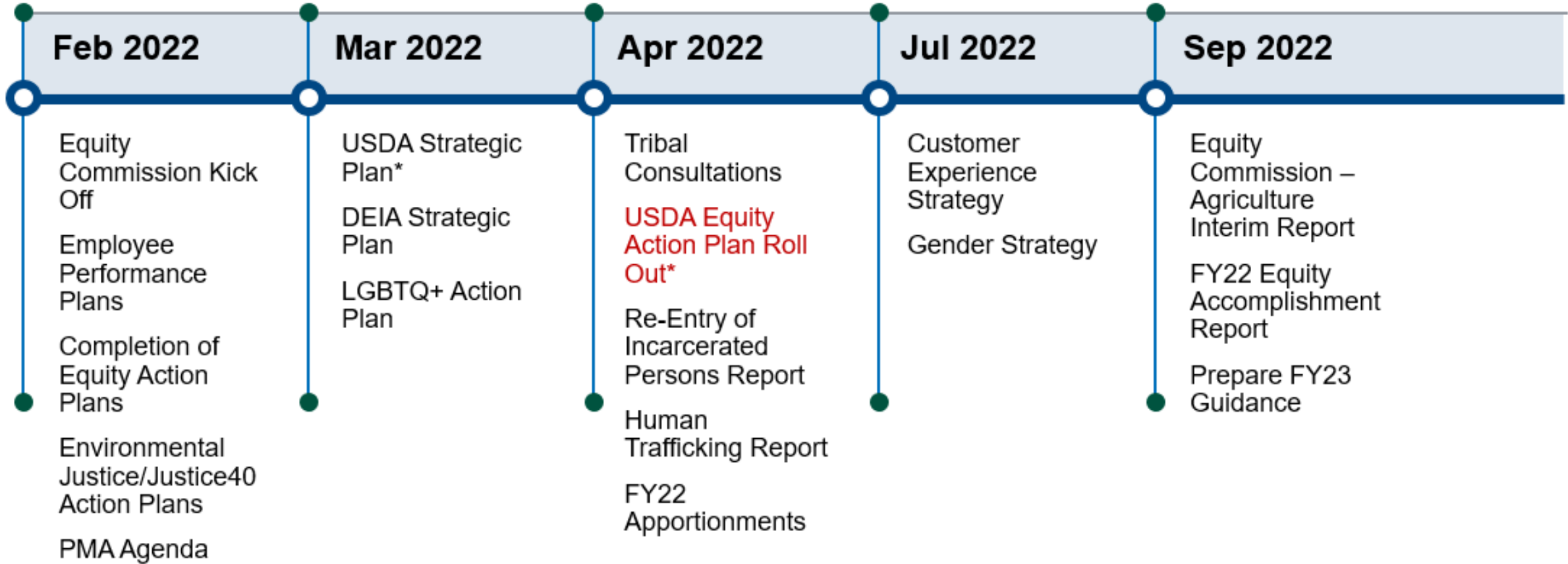
1. Partner with trusted technical assistance providers
2. Reduce barriers to USDA programs and improve support to underserved farmers, ranchers, and landowners
3. Expand equitable access to USDA nutrition assistance programs
4. Increase USDA infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities
5. Advance equity in federal procurement
6. Uphold federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian tribes
7. Unwavering commitment to civil rights



NOTE: Plans could change once final Equity Commission recommendations are received.



Six Month Outlook



USDA Equity Framework



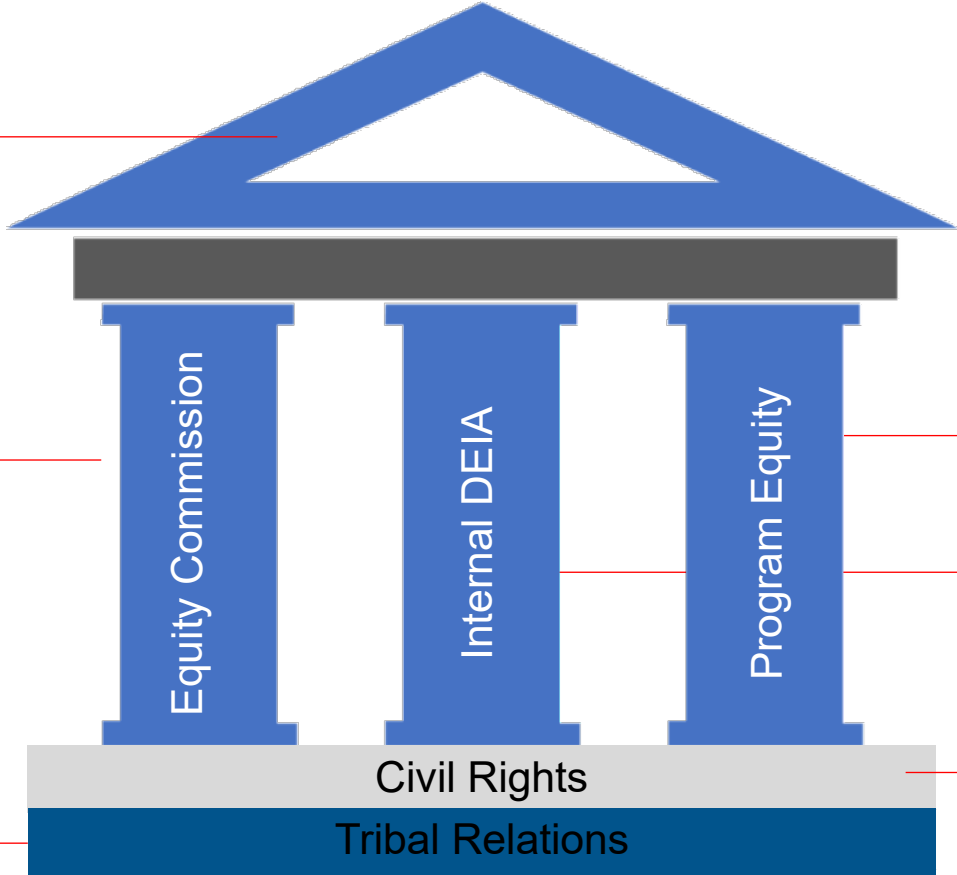
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Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office
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Goals

1. **Culture:** Build a culture that drives trust, belonging, transparency, accountability and employee empathy.
2. **Workforce:** Achieve a diverse workforce that inspires development of innovative ideas and best practices.
3. **Environment:** Foster a workplace environment that is physically, mentally, and emotionally safe.
4. **Governance:** Establish leadership and governance structures to support DEIA efforts.
5. **Accountability:** Promote empowerment, responsibility, and accountability for DEIA through developing the workforce.
6. **Commitment:** Demonstrate a commitment to a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible USDA through accountability, data collection, analysis, and effective policymaking.

Oral Comment Process

- Commenters signed up prior to meeting during registration
- Commenters were offered a pre-meeting to prepare and solve tech issues
- Commenters will now have 1:30 minute per oral comment

How to Provide Written Comments

- Submit comments to equitycommission@usda.gov
- Comment period will close on 5/26
- Compilation of written comments will be posted to the website

Access

- [Goal 2] Improving access to capital
- [Goal 3] Improving access to programs and services related to agriculture and land use
- [Goal 5] Addressing access to land, including financing programs and addressing unique issues related to heirs' property, fractionated land, and other land access/retention issues
- [Goal 6] Increasing market access to facilitate expanded access for value added opportunities (e.g., processing, trade, marketing)
- [Goal 9] Improving use of data and technology both to ensure access and to increase accountability (assumption-trackable)
- [Goal 4 – cross cutting] Implementing programs and services to mitigate effects of climate change, including improvements in risk management, conservation, and forestry programs

Performance

- [Goal 1] Improving technical assistance necessary for navigating USDA
- [Goal 7] Enhancing customer service via improved USDA staffing, training, and transformation of the organizational culture within USDA
- [Goal 8] Reviewing supporting functions such as county committees, conservation districts, and advisory boards

Service

- [Goal 10] Improving technical assistance necessary for navigating USDA
- [Goal 11] Making recommendations for ways to hold USDA accountable by requesting an implementation strategy and an action plan on recommendations

Potential Recommendations that are Emerging

- Use Artificial Intelligence to root out bias in decision systems
- Switch to the National Appeals Division to handle Civil Rights Complaints
- Include linguistically and culturally appropriate services
- Engage with indigenous and community-based organizations

Subcommittee Goals

- Improving access to capital
- Improving access to programs and services related to agriculture and land use
- Addressing access to land, including financing programs and addressing unique issues related to heirs' property, fractionated land, and other land access/retention issues
- Increasing market access to facilitate expanded access for value added opportunities (e.g., processing, trade, marketing)
- Improving use of data and technology both to ensure access and to increase accountability (assumption-trackable)
- Implementing programs and services to mitigate effects of climate change, including improvements in risk management, conservation, and forestry programs

Potential Recommendations that are Emerging

- **Culture** (hiring, training, reporting, advocacy and messaging)
- **Access** (education, applications, transparency of process, who is being assisted, who achieves the requested services)
- **Program** (eligibility requirements, responsive to stated needs, participation by desired audience, measure impact on desired audience)
- **Outcome** (actual performance)

Subcommittee Goals

- Improving USDA performance measurement and program evaluation to track and report recommendations with real outcomes
- Making recommendations for ways to hold USDA accountable by requesting an implementation strategy and an action plan on recommendations
- Implementing programs and services to mitigate effects of climate change, including improvements in risk management, conservation, and forestry programs

Potential Recommendations that are Emerging

- Enhancing the role and financial investment in organizations (non-profit, non-governmental, community-based) to provide technical assistance)
- Creating space for dialogue between USDA and local organizations such as establishing partnership meetings
- Removing discriminatory funding language in the Farm Bill
- Making County Committees more equitable
- Modernizing IT systems

Subcommittee Goals

- Improving technical assistance necessary for navigating USDA programs and services
- Enhancing customer service via improved USDA staffing, training, and transformation of the organizational culture within USDA
- Reviewing supporting functions such as county committees, conservation districts, and advisory boards
- Implementing programs and services to mitigate effects of climate change, including improvements in risk management, conservation, and forestry programs



Robert Bonnie
Under Secretary for Farm
Production and Conservation



Gloria Montano
Deputy Under Secretary for Farm
Production and Conservation



Zach Ducheneaux
Administrator for USDA's
Farm Service Agency

Farm Production and Conservation

- Building Trust and Creating Sustainable Relationships
 - Service, Performance, and Accountability
- Outreach, Engagement, and Education
 - Limited English Proficiency
 - OEE Materials and Staffing Increases
- Supporting Historically Underserved Producers
 - Access to Programs, Credit, and Land



Heather Dawn Thompson,
Director of the Office of Tribal Relations



Cecilia Hernandez
Designated Federal Officer

Thank You for Joining!

To register for Day Two of the Equity Commission Public Meeting tomorrow, go to www.usda.gov/equity-commission.

To provide public written comments, please email the Equity Commission inbox at equitycommission@usda.gov. Comment Period closes 5/26.

To learn more about equity initiatives at USDA, visit www.usda.gov/equity.



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- Member Perspectives
- Member Discussion
- Proposed Path Forward
- Adjourn



Erica Lomeli Corcoran
United Farm Workers
Foundation



Sarah Vogel
Lawyer, Author



Dr. Hazell Reed
National Black
Growers Council

- Discussion on Options for Methodology
 - Subcommittee work group structure
- Shared Vision
 - What does the future look like when we have achieved our goals?
 - What are the outcomes that we want to achieve?
 - How do we ensure outcomes are long lasting?
- Interim Report Plan
- Next Steps



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