

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 the Interior

Delivering equity through DOI

The U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI's) workforce fulfills its mission to protect and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, affiliated Island Communities, and all citizens. The Department plays a pivotal role in how the United States stewards its public lands and waters, increases environmental protections, pursues environmental justice, and respects our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribes. DOI is advancing this mission by embracing opportunities to promote equity in all actions through prioritizing the strengthening of interactions with the public in civil, equitable, and engaging ways that authentically demonstrate our pledge to equity. Likewise, DOI has taken a holistic approach ensuring equity is embedded throughout policy and program development and delivery across the agency.

New strategies to advance equity

DOI has identified five areas of focus for its 2023 Equity Action Plan using a quantitative and qualitative approach with emphasis on evidence-based findings, public participation, and community engagement to inform this plan. DOI will continue to engage the public on these action areas, its progress, and next steps throughout the year and beyond.

1. Increase equitable access to federally conducted and assisted programs and activities for members of the public by strengthening external civil rights enforcement and proactive engagement activities. *Public lands accessibility focuses on ensuring that everyone benefits from the experiences offered by America's public land, such as national parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas. This means removing existing and potential barriers by reasonably modifying the Department's programs and activities to permit equitable access for people who have disabilities as well as provide meaningful access for members of the public who may be limited English proficient. To address these barriers and others, DOI will:*

- Increase compliance reviews with respect to granting federal financial assistance as well as the Department's and bureau's actions which affect their interaction with the public.
- Partner with stakeholders to ensure public civil rights statutes, regulations, and executive orders are considered early in all actions and processes so that all are aware of their public civil rights obligations and requirements to comply so discrimination does not occur.
- Build and expand on the Department's and bureau's efforts to allow access for all members of the public to their programs and

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activities, which include the lands managed by the Department, so that all may participate.

- Increase the staffing in the Department's Public Civil Rights Office and in the bureaus to meet the increasing demands for outreach, enforcement, and technical assistance.

2. Increase public trust in the Department's law enforcement by evaluating its workforce, increasing transparency and accountability, and providing mental health and wellness support to law enforcement. DOI engaged with the public, including members of underserved communities, in support of historic Executive Order (EO) 14074, *Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety*. During the public outreach phase of Secretary Haaland's Law Enforcement Task Force, participants shared the need to ensure public trust in policing, protect the public, and provide health and wellness support for officers in order to support a whole-of-government approach to equity. To address these barriers and others, DOI will:

- Develop more culturally and linguistically inclusive practices and recruit, hire, retain, and supervise a trusted and adequately staffed workforce that reflects the people and communities they serve.
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency in communicating with the public during and after critical incidents.
- Develop a wellness program to increase the health, wellness, and effectiveness of the law enforcement workforce.

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3. Advance equity in the Department’s contracting practices to include businesses with characteristics that align with the definition of underserved communities. *During DOI’s listening sessions, focus groups and administered surveys to improve small business utilization. Participants shared that it can be particularly challenging for new or inexperienced businesses to understand requirements, terms and conditions in solicitations, and other elements of the process. To address these barriers and others, DOI will:*

- Continue to monitor performance against annually established Indian Small Business Economic Enterprise goals to ensure that benefits previously described are being realized.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with other federal partners such as the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to increase opportunities for Indian-owned businesses in federal procurement.
- Review departmental procedures and practices related to the length of time that acquisition actions are publicized. DOI will enhance its current policies to ensure that adequate time is provided for all business types to be competitive.
- Collaborate with federal partners. DOI will seek out and continue to participate in collaborative opportunities with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), SBA, and other federal departments that focus on government-wide small business initiatives, including other equity-focused EOs (e.g., [Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council](#)) and OMB-led focus groups.

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- Expand digital services utilizing vendor survey information collected to curate digitally available information, resources, and tools for the small business vendors that consider their varying maturity, life situations (such as accessibility for those with disabilities and mobile access through QR coding), and experiences in federal contracting.
- Develop a Small Business Toolkit. The Department will continue to develop, adapt, and post new tools and resources that promote the inclusion of underserved communities in DOI procurement engagements.

4. Increase opportunities for underserved communities to access public lands, prioritizing access to recreation areas and services in urban communities. *Individuals may face challenges accessing DOI-managed sites due to the remote nature of many public lands. Additionally, accessing public lands often requires a personal vehicle (4-wheel drive or high clearance vehicles are often required), and there are limited alternative transportation options (public transit, alternative access, pedestrian and cycling trails, etc.) for visitors. To address these barriers and others, DOI will:*

- Create a 21st century transportation system through investments in transit, trails, and technology. Expand partnerships to better connect neighboring communities, eliminate fatalities, and minimize injuries on the National Park Service (NPS) transportation system, and address visitor needs as well as prepare for the future of transportation.
- Coordinate and report on implementation of the work of the Reconciliation in Place Names Subcommittee, which removes derogatory names from federal lands.

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- Implement the reduction of barriers to improve accessibility. Particularly, focus on factors that reduce or eliminate physical or perceived barriers such as fees, transportation, and infrastructure to improve accessibility for underserved communities such as individuals with disabilities.
- Expand inclusive programming and leveraging of partnership options in storytelling, ranger programs, education, and community engagement enhanced inclusive experiences.
- Strengthen data collection tools to support evidence-based evaluation of information that will better inform decision making to create an equitable visitor experience. Track the number of first-time visitors and number of people making repeat visits to public lands and waters.

5. Incorporate environmental justice considerations into Department policies and program designs and expand outreach to communities with environmental justice concerns to increase the proportion of the benefits of the Department's Justice40 Initiative covered programs that reach disadvantaged communities. *Based on feedback received from community members during listening sessions, there is a need to expand education and access about federal environmental justice programs to provide more information on available grants and application periods. To address these barriers and others, DOI will:*

- Modify the way existing programs are implemented to emphasize the importance of delivering benefits to underserved communities and design new programs equitably, which will ensure that a

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greater portion of funds flow to those communities. For example, NPS will revise its Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Handbook, which lays out the requirements for state participation in the [program](#), to ask states to be more intentional in selecting projects that are in alignment with Justice40 Initiative goals and direct states to use the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) in project selection.

- Ensure NPS works with states, through their quinquennial updates to include underserved communities as they identify recreation issues of statewide importance, and the actions states will take to address them.
- Ask states and federal partners receiving funds through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Orphaned Well program to prioritize plugging and remediation of wells within 0.5 miles of underserved communities as much as possible under legal authorities to maximize the environmental justice impact.
- Create guidance documents that incorporate data related to environmental justice and Indigenous knowledge to ensure more equitable outcomes that include the voices of Indigenous communities and communities with environmental justice concerns are part of the decision-making process.
- Expand outreach and assistance efforts to better meet the needs of underserved communities. For example, the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations has been working with certain Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs) that have facilitated outreach to other NHOs and portions of the community that have not historically applied for or received funding from the Department due to capacity issues or other barriers to participation. This outreach helps inform program design to reach those communities.

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- Use funding provided in the Inflation Reduction Act for outreach regarding permitting Environmental Reviews and Authorizations to perform stakeholder and community engagement, with emphasis on enabling underserved communities to be part of the decision-making process.
- Conduct a geography-focused impact analysis project to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how various Department activities can combine to impact a region.

What DOI accomplished

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

- ***Distributed inclusive Storytelling Grants through the NPS.***
\$2.1 million dollars in grant funding was provided to 30 NPS units to help share more inclusive and comprehensive narratives, reduce park Storytelling backlogs, and invest in staff capacity to sustain transformative interpretation.
- ***Announced \$192 million in funding for the [LWCF Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership \(ORLP\) program](#).***
As part of the notice of funding opportunity, NPS modified the evaluation criteria in ORLP grants to encourage states to submit projects focused on environmental justice, addressing heat islands, and support for recreation outside of military facilities. NPS also created two deadlines for the grant (January 23, 2023, and May 31, 2023) to encourage states to submit more grants.
- ***Made FY 2022 grants available through the [Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization \(AMLER\) Program to the six Appalachian states and three Tribal communities with Abandoned Mine Land \(AML\) programs](#).***
Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia each received \$26.63 million; Alabama, Ohio, and Virginia were each allocated \$10.652 million; while the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Crow Tribe were each allocated \$3.551 million to return legacy coal mining sites to productive use and foster economic and community development.

What DOI accomplished

- ***Provided \$46 million in funding to Tribal communities to address the unique impacts of climate change in Indigenous communities.***

This initial funding from the BIL and FY 2022 appropriations funded projects and initiatives that address and strengthen climate resilience and adaptation; ocean and coastal management; community-driven relocation and protect-in-place activities; and internships and youth engagement.

- ***Collaborated with HHS to hold the first-ever joint industry day event focused on outreach to Indian-owned businesses.***

The event provided a learning opportunity for Indian-owned businesses to grow their understanding of the government contracting process and to hear from top executives from both agencies about upcoming business opportunities.