

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 Labor

Delivering equity through DOL

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL's) mission is to "foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights." Equal opportunity is the bedrock of American democracy, and our diversity is one of our country's greatest strengths. However, for too many, the American Dream remains out of reach. Entrenched disparities in our laws and public policies, and in our public and private institutions, have often denied that equal opportunity to individuals and communities, leaving some workers more vulnerable to injury, discrimination, exploitation, or abuse. To continue to improve working conditions for all workers, DOL must embed equity in a sustainable manner that recognizes the multiple and overlapping identities held by workers and with input from the communities DOL serves.

New strategies to advance equity

DOL has identified five areas of focus for its 2023 Equity Action Plan through roundtables, convenings, external events, summits, partnership development sessions, and surveys. DOL will continue to engage the public on these action areas, its progress, and next steps throughout the year and beyond.

1. Supporting workers in the Southeast United States. *Workers in the Southeast United States are more likely to have fewer worker protections, pay disparities, pre-emptive legislation that prevents strong worker protections, lack of strong worker coalitions, and reliance on federal enforcement due to insufficient state enforcement policies / agencies. Based on data, states in the Southeast experience lower union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers in comparison to other states. States in the Southeast are collectively also more likely to contain economically distressed communities, defined as communities with lower educational attainment, higher poverty and unemployment rates, and lower median incomes. In FY 2022, DOL conducted a series of meetings across the United States with workers and found that Southeast workers faced significant worker protection and wage disparities amongst Black, Latino, women, migrant, and other underserved communities. To address these barriers and others, DOL will:*

- Embed a focus on Southeast workers in agency initiatives to increase workers' rights awareness, job training opportunities, and outreach in the Southeast United States region who are more likely to be afforded fewer worker protections, lower wages, and lack of strong worker coalitions, increasing the potential for employer work violations, wage disparities, and decreased awareness of workers' rights.

New strategies to advance equity

- Work through existing levers and community partnerships to increase pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and job training opportunities for workers in the Southeast, increasing career and wage improvement opportunities.
- Conduct a series of listening sessions and outreach sessions across the Southeastern United States, connecting workers with other workers, community leaders, and state officials and encouraging coalition building.
- Embed an equity focus on the Southeast region agencywide through upcoming agency strategic plans.
- Develop a strategy for the Power of Community – amplifying the voices of marginalized communities to provide feedback on DOL engagement / services.

New strategies to advance equity

2. Ensuring underserved communities have access to good jobs.

In order to strengthen the pathway to good jobs for underrepresented groups, [research](#) has shown the importance of holistic approaches to job attainment, such as quality apprenticeships, supportive services, and safe and inclusive workplaces. Among women, who often bear the brunt of care giving responsibilities, evidence shows the positive impact supportive services have on completion of training programs and job outcomes. Apprentices who do not complete their apprenticeship are more likely to report experiencing financial difficulties, especially with being able to afford tools and clothing, housing, child care, housing, and transportation. To address these barriers and others, DOL will:

- Expand agency partnerships in DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs' (OFCCP) [Megaproject](#).
- Embed equity provisions in federal Investing in America (IIA) investments.
- Encourage DOL grant applicants to develop projects that specifically address each of the [Good Jobs Principles](#), which envision equitable pathways to family-sustaining wages, to promote development of new workforce development models that can be applied to other federal investments.
- Direct DOL grant applicants to provide more robust and detailed supportive services strategies to develop frameworks that can be applied to other federal investments.
- Invest in strategies to improve good jobs for care workers. In FY 2024, DOL will continue to expand analyses on care workers who serve people with disabilities and older adults through the DOL-U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) workgroup on direct care workforce.

New strategies to advance equity

3. Embedding gender equity into our partnerships and services.

Women are a critical part of the U.S. labor force and contribute significantly both to their families' economic security and the U.S. economy. Yet women, especially women of color, have experienced longstanding disparities in the labor force. Women have persistently lower wages and fewer workplace benefits than men, disparities that are even more significant for Black, Hispanic, and some subsets of Asian women. Decades of underinvestment in social safety net policies like childcare and paid leave and declining unionization rates left women with few supports to manage work and their unpaid family caregiving responsibilities. Women have also been acutely affected by occupational segregation – wherein women are overrepresented in certain jobs and industries and underrepresented in others – leading to lower pay for women and contributing to the wage gap for several interrelated reasons. To address these barriers and others, DOL will:

- Create pathways for more women to get into good-paying jobs through the Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) [Office of Apprenticeship \(OA\)](#) apprenticeship programs.
- Improve wages and working conditions in key, female-dominated sectors through DOL's [Women's Bureau \(WB\)](#) work with elected officials to support investments in care infrastructure, strengthening the majority female workforce that performs essential work, and providing technical assistance through the Good Jobs, Great Cities Academy.
- Reduce caregiving penalties for women and low-paid workers through the WB expanding and tailoring the [National Database of Childcare Prices \(NDCP\)](#), in collaboration with the Inner City Fund (ICF) International and HHS, to develop key analytical tools to

New strategies to advance equity

evaluate how childcare prices are linked with gender and racial inequality in the labor force.

- Administer in FY 2024, DOL's [Fostering Access, Rights, and Equity \(FARE\) grant](#), focusing the program to support women who have been impacted by gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.
- Continue to promote new requirements that allow nursing employees the time and private space to express breast milk at work as outlined in the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP Act) through education and outreach efforts to improve worker protections and employer compliance.

4. Improving services for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). *In FY 2023, DOL's Civil Rights Center (CRC) launched a comprehensive survey to assess each DOL agency's current language access practices and pinpoint areas to improve access for workers and other external departmental stakeholders. Coupled with analysis of language trends derived from the Census Bureau's 2020 Census and the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS), and the U.S. Department of State's Refugee Processing Center Admissions and Arrivals Report, the survey determined that language access services were inconsistent across DOL, and there were gaps in ensuring meaningful access for workers. To address these barriers and others, DOL will:*

- Review the need to translate vital information / documents, depending on the size of the language groups; the use of Babel notices or taglines to facilitate access to language assistance services; bilingual staffing resources and / or how to engage with outside interpreter services; and developing standard operating

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procedures and related training to ensure consistent outreach and engagement.

- Take steps to increase DOL language capacity, including through expanding the pool of staff that have language skills.
- Develop centralized resources for Departmental agencies to use to meet needs for individual programs and populations served.
- Release the Department's Language Access Plan to highlight current language services and areas to improve the provision of language services to vulnerable LEP workers.

5. Evaluating procurement practices to advance equity.

In DOL's [evaluation](#) of equity in federal contracting for FY 2021, the Department awarded to minority-owned businesses contracts commensurate and above their representation in federal contracting; however, DOL's procurement contracting, such as with women-owned, Hispanic-owned, and Black-owned businesses, are below the proportion of eligible businesses available for federal contracting. To address these barriers and others, DOL will:

- Explore options to collect expanded demographic categories for contractors, as permitted by and in accordance with federal procurement regulations and other laws.
- Review relevant and available data, and develop and implement a strategic outreach plan to improve engagement with underrepresented groups, remove internal barriers to engagement as applicable, and encourage expanded participation in contracting opportunities.

What DOL accomplished

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

- ***Announced awards to 44 states and the District of Columbia of more than \$216.2 million dollars in funds.***
The Department has announced awards of more than \$216.2 million in funds to 44 states and the District of Columbia to fund projects such as technology enhancements, claimant communications and outreach, translation services, data analysis to understand equity disparities, plain language initiatives, staff and backlog reductions, and workflow / customer journey analysis.
- ***Delivered 100 equity-based recommendations to enhance access and improve economic security across state Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs.***
The Department provided Tiger Team consultative assessments to 30 states through FY 2023; through assessment findings, ETA has delivered more than 100 equity-based recommendations to enhance access and improve economic security across state UI programs, and has developed a [UI Equitable Access Toolkit](#), which is available to state UI agencies and publicly to all UI stakeholders. The Department released its first ever, online training for equitable access in UI.
- ***Advanced the [Good Jobs Initiative](#).***
In support of federal IIA funds, stemming from funds through the American Rescue Plan, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act, the Initiative

What DOL accomplished

provides critical information to workers, employers, and government agencies as they work to improve job quality and create access to good jobs, free from discrimination and harassment for all working people (with emphasis on underserved communities, including BIPOC individuals, LGBTQ+ individuals, women, immigrants, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals in rural communities, individuals without a college degree, individuals with or recovering from a substance use disorder, justice-involved individuals, and opportunity youth).

- ***Expanded the Registered Apprenticeship programs through engagement with stakeholders in underserved communities.***

In FY 2022, ETA conducted a number of engagement activities to inform its equity-related strategies and activities, including: engaging with stakeholders in underserved communities to identify equity barriers in employment and training, providing technical assistance to employers and industries to expand [Registered Apprenticeship programs](#), and working with DOL leadership to increase equity within the Registered Apprenticeship program.

- ***Required Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) applicants to propose strategies to achieve economic opportunity and address historical inequities.***

In the 2022 [HVRP](#) FOA, DOL's [Veterans' Employment and Training Service \(VETS\)](#) agency required applicants to propose strategies to achieve economic opportunity and address historical

What DOL accomplished

inequities. A full 10% of applicants' scores were based on ability to serve historically underserved communities and how they will serve communities not currently being served by an HVRP grant. VETS also conducted an HVRP FOA Service Delivery Area Analysis and developed a strategy to conduct a pre-FOA release outreach and education campaign for stakeholders; conducted personal outreach to specific areas identified in the Service Delivery Area analysis as underserved or underrepresented; and provided a technical assistance seminar for applicants.