

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Executive Order 13985—Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

January 20, 2021

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Policy. Equal opportunity is the bedrock of American democracy, and our diversity is one of our country's greatest strengths. But 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. Our country faces converging economic, health, and climate crises that have exposed and exacerbated inequities, while a historic movement for justice has highlighted the unbearable human costs of systemic racism. Our Nation deserves an ambitious whole-of-government equity agenda that matches the scale of the opportunities and challenges that we face.

It is therefore the policy of my Administration that the Federal Government should pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of our Government. Because advancing equity requires a systematic approach to embedding fairness in decision-making processes, executive departments and agencies (agencies) must recognize and work to redress inequities in their policies and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity.

By advancing equity across the Federal Government, we can create opportunities for the improvement of communities that have been historically underserved, which benefits everyone. For example, an analysis shows that closing racial gaps in wages, housing credit, lending opportunities, and access to higher education would amount to an additional \$5 trillion in gross domestic product in the American economy over the next 5 years. The Federal Government's goal in advancing equity is to provide everyone with the opportunity to reach their full potential. Consistent with these aims, each agency must assess whether, and to what extent, its programs and policies perpetuate systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for people of color and other underserved groups. Such assessments will better equip agencies to develop policies and programs that deliver resources and benefits equitably to all.

Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order: (a) The term "equity" means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

(b) The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity."

Sec. 3. Role of the Domestic Policy Council. The role of the White House Domestic Policy Council (DPC) is to coordinate the formulation and implementation of my Administration's

domestic policy objectives. Consistent with this role, the DPC will coordinate efforts to embed equity principles, policies, and approaches across the Federal Government. This will include efforts to remove systemic barriers to and provide equal access to opportunities and benefits, identify communities the Federal Government has underserved, and develop policies designed to advance equity for those communities. The DPC-led interagency process will ensure that these efforts are made in coordination with the directors of the National Security Council and the National Economic Council.

Sec. 4. Identifying Methods to Assess Equity. (a) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) shall, in partnership with the heads of agencies, study methods for assessing whether agency policies and actions create or exacerbate barriers to full and equal participation by all eligible individuals. The study should aim to identify the best methods, consistent with applicable law, to assist agencies in assessing equity with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability.

(b) As part of this study, the Director of OMB shall consider whether to recommend that agencies employ pilot programs to test model assessment tools and assist agencies in doing so.

(c) Within 6 months of the date of this order, the Director of OMB shall deliver a report to the President describing the best practices identified by the study and, as appropriate, recommending approaches to expand use of those methods across the Federal Government.

Sec. 5. Conducting an Equity Assessment in Federal Agencies. The head of each agency, or designee, shall, in consultation with the Director of OMB, select certain of the agency's programs and policies for a review that will assess whether underserved communities and their members face systemic barriers in accessing benefits and opportunities available pursuant to those policies and programs. The head of each agency, or designee, shall conduct such review and within 200 days of the date of this order provide a report to the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy (APDP) reflecting findings on the following:

(a) Potential barriers that underserved communities and individuals may face to enrollment in and access to benefits and services in Federal programs;

(b) Potential barriers that underserved communities and individuals may face in taking advantage of agency procurement and contracting opportunities;

(c) Whether new policies, regulations, or guidance documents may be necessary to advance equity in agency actions and programs; and

(d) The operational status and level of institutional resources available to offices or divisions within the agency that are responsible for advancing civil rights or whose mandates specifically include serving underrepresented or disadvantaged communities.

Sec. 6. Allocating Federal Resources to Advance Fairness and Opportunity. The Federal Government should, consistent with applicable law, allocate resources to address the historic failure to invest sufficiently, justly, and equally in underserved communities, as well as individuals from those communities. To this end:

(a) The Director of OMB shall identify opportunities to promote equity in the budget that the President submits to the Congress.

(b) The Director of OMB shall, in coordination with the heads of agencies, study strategies, consistent with applicable law, for allocating Federal resources in a manner that increases investment in underserved communities, as well as individuals from those communities. The Director of OMB shall report the findings of this study to the President.

Sec. 7. Promoting Equitable Delivery of Government Benefits and Equitable Opportunities. Government programs are designed to serve all eligible individuals. And Government contracting and procurement opportunities should be available on an equal basis to all eligible providers of goods and services. To meet these objectives and to enhance compliance with existing civil rights laws:

(a) Within 1 year of the date of this order, the head of each agency shall consult with the APDP and the Director of OMB to produce a plan for addressing:

(i) any barriers to full and equal participation in programs identified pursuant to section 5(a) of this order; and

(ii) any barriers to full and equal participation in agency procurement and contracting opportunities identified pursuant to section 5(b) of this order.

(b) The Administrator of the U.S. Digital Service, the United States Chief Technology Officer, the Chief Information Officer of the United States, and the heads of other agencies, or their designees, shall take necessary actions, consistent with applicable law, to support agencies in developing such plans.

Sec. 8. Engagement with Members of Underserved Communities. In carrying out this order, agencies shall consult with members of communities that have been historically underrepresented in the Federal Government and underserved by, or subject to discrimination in, Federal policies and programs. The head of each agency shall evaluate opportunities, consistent with applicable law, to increase coordination, communication, and engagement with community-based organizations and civil rights organizations.

Sec. 9. Establishing an Equitable Data Working Group. Many Federal datasets are not disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, income, veteran status, or other key demographic variables. This lack of data has cascading effects and impedes efforts to measure and advance equity. A first step to promoting equity in Government action is to gather the data necessary to inform that effort.

(a) *Establishment.* There is hereby established an Interagency Working Group on Equitable Data (Data Working Group).

(b) *Membership.*

(i) The Chief Statistician of the United States and the United States Chief Technology Officer shall serve as Co-Chairs of the Data Working Group and coordinate its work. The Data Working Group shall include representatives of agencies as determined by the Co-Chairs to be necessary to complete the work of the Data Working Group, but at a minimum shall include the following officials, or their designees:

(A) the Director of OMB;

(B) the Secretary of Commerce, through the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau;

(C) the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers;

(D) the Chief Information Officer of the United States;

(E) the Secretary of the Treasury, through the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy;

(F) the Chief Data Scientist of the United States; and

(G) the Administrator of the U.S. Digital Service.

(ii) The DPC shall work closely with the Co-Chairs of the Data Working Group and assist in the Data Working Group's interagency coordination functions.

(iii) The Data Working Group shall consult with agencies to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices, consistent with applicable law.

(c) *Functions.* The Data Working Group shall:

(i) through consultation with agencies, study and provide recommendations to the APDP identifying inadequacies in existing Federal data collection programs, policies, and infrastructure across agencies, and strategies for addressing any deficiencies identified; and

(ii) support agencies in implementing actions, consistent with applicable law and privacy interests, that expand and refine the data available to the Federal Government to measure equity and capture the diversity of the American people.

(d) OMB shall provide administrative support for the Data Working Group, consistent with applicable law.

Sec. 10. Revocation. (a) Executive Order 13950 of September 22, 2020 (Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping), is hereby revoked.

(b) The heads of agencies covered by Executive Order 13950 shall review and identify proposed and existing agency actions related to or arising from Executive Order 13950. The head of each agency shall, within 60 days of the date of this order, consider suspending, revising, or rescinding any such actions, including all agency actions to terminate or restrict contracts or grants pursuant to Executive Order 13950, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law.

(c) Executive Order 13958 of November 2, 2020 (Establishing the President's Advisory 1776 Commission), is hereby revoked.

Sec. 11. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) Independent agencies are strongly encouraged to comply with the provisions of this order.

(d) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

The White House,
January 20, 2021.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:15 a.m., January 22, 2021]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on January 25.

Categories: Executive Orders : Racial equity and support for underserved communities through Federal Government, advancement efforts.

Subjects: Civil rights : Racial equality.

DCPD Number: DCPD202100054.