

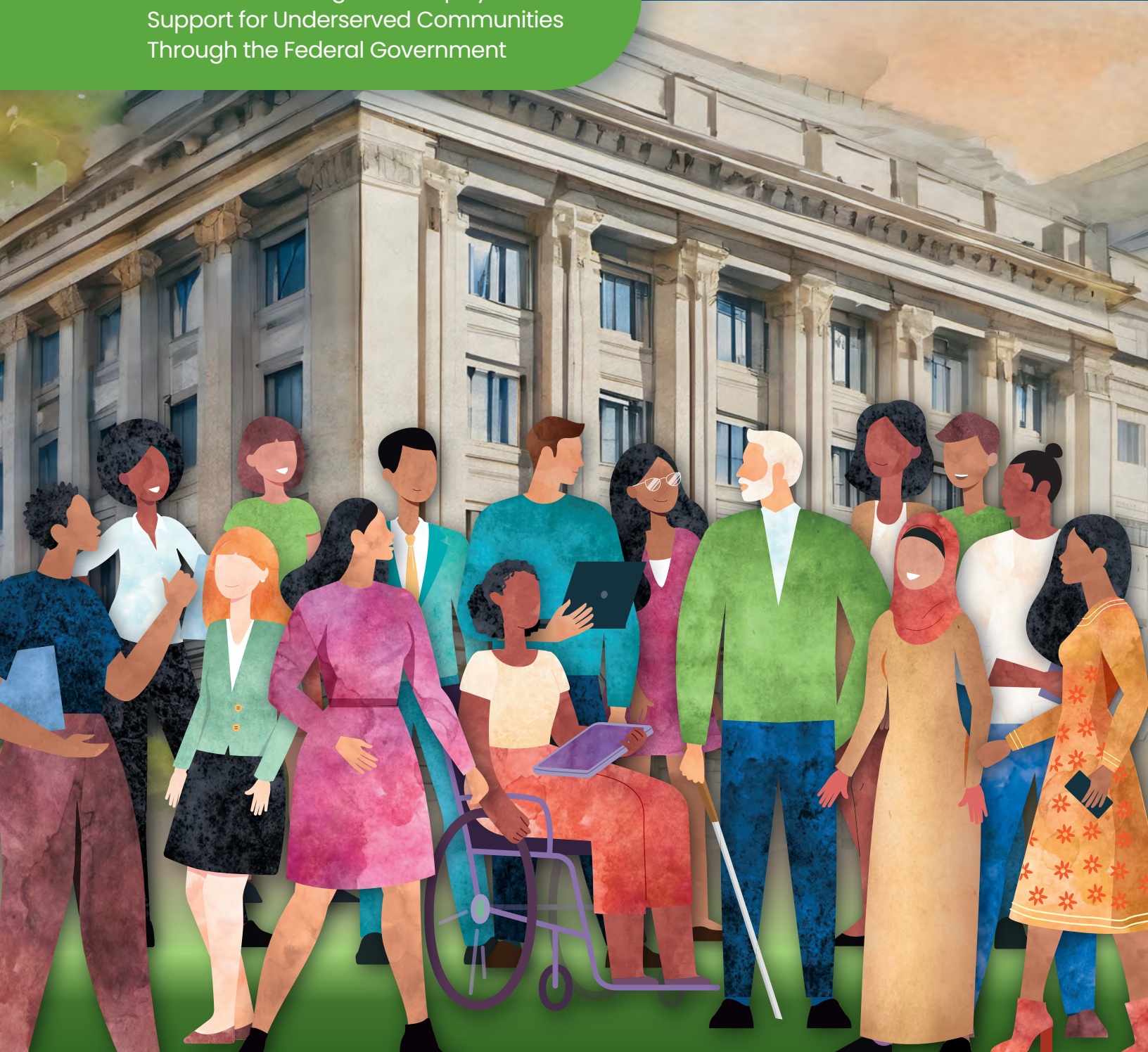
U.S. Department of Commerce Equity Action Plan



Executive Order 14091

Further Advancing Racial Equity and
Support for Underserved Communities
Through the Federal Government

January 2024







By advancing equity, the Federal Government can support and empower all Americans, including the many communities in America that have been underserved, discriminated against, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. We can also deliver resources and benefits equitably to the people of the United States and rebuild trust in Government.

*— President Joe Biden
Executive Order on Further Advancing
Racial Equity and Support for
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Table of Contents

Message from the Secretary	2
Advancing Equity Through Agency Mission	3
Executive Summary of Equity Action Plan	4
Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments	7
2022 Equity Action Plan Update (pursuant to EO 13985)	7
Environmental Justice Scorecard (pursuant to section 223 of EO 14008)	8
Additional Efforts to Advance Equity	9
Advancing Equity Through Key Legislation	10
Strategies to Advance Equity in FY 2024	11
 Strategic Goal 1: Drive U.S. Innovation and Global Competitiveness <i>Equity Strategy 1: Mobilize our nation’s diversity to fuel innovation and sustain our global competitiveness across geographic regions so that all communities have equal access to opportunities</i>	12
 Strategic Goal 2: Foster Inclusive Capitalism for All <i>Equity Strategy 2: Expand growth opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs, including in underserved communities</i>	15
 Strategic Goal 3: Foster Equitable Economic Growth for All <i>Equity Strategy 3: Promote equitable economic development and career pathways to good jobs</i>	19
 Strategic Goal 4: Address the Climate Crisis Through Mitigation, Adaptation, and Resilience Efforts <i>Equity Strategy 4: Use targeted investments and program design to address the climate crisis through mitigation, adaptation, and resilience efforts to ensure environmental and economic resilience</i>	24
 Strategic Goal 5: Expand Opportunity and Discovery Through Data <i>Equity Strategy 5: Expand opportunity and discovery through data capture to inform and evaluate actions that improve community outcomes</i>	27

Message from the Secretary



The Department of Commerce’s mission is to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity for all communities. To increase our nation’s competitiveness, opportunity must equitably be within reach of every American.

We are proud to be part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to ensure our workplaces, our programs, and our stakeholder engagements reflect the rich diversity of our nation and that the outcomes of our work are felt in every sector of American life.

I take tremendous pride in the work being led by our first-ever Counselor for Equity to quantify, amplify, and increase equitable outcomes across the Department. The Counselor for Equity is joined by dedicated professionals who understand that equity is critical to achieving our goals. This includes our first Under Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary of the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), our CHIPS Program Office Senior Advisor for Opportunity and Inclusion, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Director of the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives, and the Senior Advisor for Women in Construction, among other inspiring leaders. These leaders will work closely with the Department’s Equity Council to continue to drive external-facing efforts to empower underserved communities in our economy.

Pursuing equity is not just the right thing to do – it is a fundamental tenet of good commerce. Each of the Department’s strategic goals, coupled with the equity strategies outlined in this report, help us to advance our mission. We are driven by the belief that equity is good for business and good for the people we serve. Throughout this report are examples of how America’s economy and people are best served by filtering our work through a prism of equity. America’s diversity is its competitive advantage – but only if everyone has an opportunity to fulfill their potential and fully participate. While the communities and ideas that shape America are changing faster than ever, the Department of Commerce’s commitment to growing an economy that delivers for all communities is a constant the American people can count on.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gina Raimondo". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce

Advancing Equity Through Agency Mission



Mission

The Department of Commerce’s mission is to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity for all communities.

The Department has long declared its mission is “to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity.” In 2022, Secretary Raimondo and Deputy Secretary Graves created the Department’s new mission statement: “to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity for all communities.” To include “for all” is a small change with a significant meaning. The addition acknowledges that global competitiveness and sustained economic growth require that all communities have an opportunity to participate in the 21st-century economy. This new mission embodies the Department’s commitment to institutionalizing equity across policy design, grant development, external outreach, and program implementation strategies. In short, inclusive growth is good economics. We will fail to meet our full potential as a nation unless we harness the talents and strengths of communities in all parts of the country.



“Our economy cannot afford to wait any longer. It’s not just about fixing workplace policies on paper. It’s about all of us working hand in hand to create an equitable workplace, environment, and economy for all American workers – in attitude and in action.”

— U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves,
Equity Council Co-Chair

Executive Summary of Equity Action Plan

The Department's FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan identifies key strategic goals to advance the Department's mission and support the overarching objective to improve America's economic competitiveness. These strategic goals serve as the organizing principles for the Equity Action Plan. The equity strategies associated with each strategic goal will assist in designing programs that will address barriers to equity and meet the needs of all Americans, including underserved communities. These strategic goals and aligned equity strategies are:



Strategic Goal 1: Drive U.S. Innovation and Global Competitiveness

The Barrier: For too long, economic growth and higher-paying jobs have clustered in a few cities. This has led to growing geographic income inequality in which wealth isn't spreading to the smallest metro areas and rural towns.

Equity Strategy 1: Mobilize our nation's diversity to fuel innovation and sustain our global competitiveness across geographic regions so that all communities have equal access to opportunities.



Strategic Goal 2: Foster Inclusive Capitalism for All

The Barrier: Minority-owned and rural-based businesses face disparities in access to capital, federal contracts, export opportunities, technical support or advice, and networking.

Equity Strategy 2: Expand growth opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs, including in underserved communities.



Strategic Goal 3: Foster Equitable Economic Growth for All

The Barrier: Lack of wraparound services, such as affordable, high-quality internet service, childcare, and education, prevent many people from accessing job training programs, thereby missing out on opportunities for employment in high-growth industries. Specifically, the lack of access to internet service is a significant barrier for underserved communities, hampering full participation in modern life, such as starting a business, offering services or goods via e-commerce, taking online courses and training, finding a doctor, and much more.

Equity Strategy 3: Promote equitable economic development and career pathways to good jobs.



Strategic Goal 4: Address the Climate Crisis with Mitigation, Adaptation, and Resilience Efforts

The Barrier: Underserved communities face **significant** barriers in building resilience or rebuilding their communities post-disaster due to barriers of limited resources, capacity, technical capabilities, or access to technical assistance. Investing in climate resiliency also means helping workers find high-quality jobs related to climate resilience.

Equity Strategy 4: Use targeted investments and program design to address the climate crisis through mitigation, adaptation, and resilience efforts to ensure environmental and economic resilience.



Strategic Goal 5: Expand Opportunity and Discovery Through Data

The Barrier: The lack of data access, timeliness, and transparency **contributes** to limited public trust – including for underserved communities. Advances in artificial intelligence widen the trust gap by potentially worsening existing biases and inequities and increasing concerns over the misuse of data, confidentiality, and privacy.

Equity Strategy 5: Expand opportunity and discovery through data capture to inform and evaluate actions that improve community outcomes.

The Department understands that developing equitable programs will be meaningless without inclusive outreach and engagement with the communities we serve and want to build trust with. For instance, following tribal consultations in 2022, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) **updated** its Tribal Consultation Policy, Consultation Handbook, and Indigenous Knowledge Guidance. These updated policies and guidance will strive to provide meaningful and timely input from federally recognized Indian tribes into NOAA's decision-making process on policy matters that have tribal implications.

Our Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (OBFNP) is central to our ongoing community outreach and external engagement efforts. OBFNP aims to foster stakeholder engagement and develop partnerships between businesses, communities, and faith-based organizations focused on job creation and economic growth. Since May 2022, OBFNP has cultivated a growing database of roughly 2,000 stakeholders, leading to several state-based and stakeholder roundtables and summits with 250 national faith, business, and community-based organization leaders, with the White House and federal agency partners. The Department is also proud to announce that, in Fall 2023, OBFNP hosted the first-ever government-wide Youth Summit to motivate and empower the next generation. Workshops focused on entrepreneurship, data, innovation, leadership, and invention. Attendees could meet and engage with senior leaders across the Department of Commerce and the Federal Government.

These are just a few examples of how engagement activities helped shape the Department’s Equity Action Plan to outline policy priorities and outreach efforts that needed to be done to ensure inclusive and high-quality programs were designed and launched. As the Department continues its outreach and engagement efforts, it will pool the resources and expertise of all 13 Department bureaus to foster a collaborative environment and involve underserved communities in developing the equitable outcomes we seek to achieve.



Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments

2022 Equity Action Plan Update (pursuant to EO 13985)

Since the first Equity Action Plan launched in February 2022, the Department has made significant progress toward building innovation ecosystems; growing businesses and expanding the workforce; and making Commerce services, data, and science more accessible for and in historically underserved communities.

Building innovation: In June 2023, NTIA announced funding allocations for the \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. [BEAD](#) funding will be used to deploy or upgrade broadband networks to ensure everyone in America has access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet service. Once deployment goals are met, any remaining funding can be used to pursue eligible access, adoption, and equity-related uses. Announced in June and September 2023, NTIA's Middle Mile (MM) program provided nearly a billion dollars in grants across 36 organizations across 40 states and territories to support the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle-mile infrastructure, reduce the cost of bringing high-speed internet to unserved and underserved communities, and increase the resilience of internet infrastructure. Lastly, the purpose of the Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP) is to build partnerships between states and internet service providers to expand internet access to areas without service, especially rural areas. With \$288 million, NTIA awarded 14 recipients, and projects began breaking ground this year.

In Fall 2022, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) [announced](#) that all \$3 billion in American Rescue Plan dollars had been released across 780 awards through six innovative grant programs. Additionally, EDA committed \$300 million to American coal communities through its Coal Communities Commitment. Ultimately, EDA exceeded the commitment and awarded \$551 million to coal communities.

Growing businesses and expanding the workforce: The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) has increased investments in its national network of programs to include an [expansion](#) of 35 Business Centers to 41 and [provided](#) \$2.62 million in Federal Procurement Supplemental awards to 26 existing Business Centers to support the President "Investing in America" agenda to expand contracting opportunities to minority business enterprises. MBDA also launched the [Capital Readiness Program](#) (CRP) on December 17, 2022. With \$125 million, CRP will fund business incubators or accelerators designed to prepare underserved entrepreneurs and business owners to secure capital from the \$10 billion State Small Business Credit Initiative and other capital sources. In late summer of 2023, MBDA announced the 43 competition winners.

The International Trade Administration (ITA) formulated an Agency Priority Goal (APG) to accelerate its digital transformation and enhance its U.S. Commercial Service arm through the Global Diversity Export Initiative (GDEI) to double the annual number of clients assisted, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and businesses in the nation's underserved communities. ITA successfully served approximately 6,500 clients in underserved communities in FY 2022 and remains on track to meet its two-year target of 11,500 for FY 2023.

Making services, data, and science accessible: On March 9, 2023, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) launched the [First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program](#) as an initiative under the Council for Inclusive Innovation (CI²). The new initiative benefits first-time patent filers who are individuals or small businesses qualifying as a “micro entity.” By providing an early response for a qualifying application (referred to as “first office action”), the program increases accessibility to new members of the innovation ecosystem, particularly those from underrepresented and/or under-resourced groups.

The Census Bureau (Census) launched the [Community Resilience Estimates](#) (CRE) program to help measure the abilities of communities to absorb the external stresses of a disaster or shock. The CRE partnerships include various Commerce and inter-agency partners like EDA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). More broadly, the CRE program provides users with a dashboard and data to understand the social vulnerability of their communities.

NOAA has co-produced seven regional pilot projects with communities across the country to address local environmental challenges, including flooding, heat, coastal inundation, and other climate change issues. Each regional pilot responds directly to feedback received from partners during Climate and Equity roundtable discussions. Pilots will take a unique, place-based approach to helping vulnerable communities better understand, prepare for, and respond to climate change. All pilot programs will wrap up by the end of 2025.

Environmental Justice Scorecard (pursuant to section 223 of EO 14008)

The Department of Commerce is committed to working towards President Biden’s [Justice40 Initiative](#) to target 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to reach disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment. [The Department’s FY 2022 Phase One Scorecard](#) highlights include nearly \$535 million in funding for technical assistance and capacity building through NOAA’s Urban Heat Island Mapping, Community Climate Studies Program, and the Climate Adaptation Partnerships Program. In centering environmental justice in the Department’s decision-making, NOAA conducted two technical assistance outreach events, five tribal Consultations, and addressed 50 related requests for information and listening sessions.

Additional Efforts to Advance Equity

To better capture and include underserved communities in data collection, the Census [received](#) a FY 2023 appropriation of \$10 million to research, adding questions on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) in the American Community Survey. Similarly, Census is piloting a project with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to develop formally private (confidentiality safeguarded) measures of race and ethnicity at the person level, allowing Census to share protected data with the IRS. Sharing such protected microdata allows other federal agencies to study variations by race and ethnicity in enrollment, access, and usage patterns of benefits and services of federal programs without necessitating access to confidential data.

To better support rural and tribal communities, MBDA provided \$5.7 million in 31 supplemental awards to the Business Center Network for technical assistance to minority business enterprises more than 50 miles from a Business Center in a rural area. NTIA is implementing the [Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program](#) (TBCP), a \$3 billion program to support governments in bringing high-speed internet service to Tribal lands, including telehealth, distance learning, affordability, and digital inclusion initiatives. Under the first funding phase, \$1.78 billion was awarded to 191 tribal entities since the program began in 2021. The second funding phase, for approximately \$980 million, was issued on July 27, 2023. As part of EDA's American Rescue Plan funding, the [Indigenous Communities program](#) invested \$100 million to support the needs of tribal governments and Indigenous communities. This program made 51 awards in 25 states and the Northern Mariana Islands. Grantees estimate that these projects will create or save 2,435 jobs and attract \$28.7 million in private investment. In April 2023, NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation (OHC) recommended \$56.4 million, funded by BIL and IRA, in awards for 25 tribal projects to support tribal-led restoration, resilience, and fish passage projects and an additional 22 subawards totaling nearly \$13 million in funding was awarded to projects that align with tribal priorities, work with tribal members, or restore habitat on tribal-owned lands. For all unsuccessful tribal applicants, OHC staff also offered the opportunity to meet to help those applicants improve their proposals for future competitions.

To better support minority-serving anchor institutions, NTIA is implementing the [Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program](#) (CMC), which provides \$268 million in grant funding to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to purchase broadband internet service and eligible equipment or to hire and train information technology personnel, to upgrade classroom technology, and to increase digital literacy skills. In February 2023, NTIA announced that all funding from this grant program had been awarded to 93 universities, including 43 HBCUs, 31 HSIs, 21 MSIs, and five TCUs.

To increase entrepreneurship and access to quality jobs for women, ITA's Women Accessing Global E-Commerce Initiative (WAGE) is dedicated to building the capacity of women-owned businesses and entrepreneurs to engage in cross-border e-commerce to scale and create more jobs. To date, ITA has established seven strategic partnerships with organizations that provide training programs and counseling. EDA's Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) encouraged applicants to reach underserved communities, including women, through their awards, and nearly 90 percent of GJC Challenge grantees have investments that focus on uplifting women's access to good-paying jobs in America's workforce. Additionally, wraparound services are a key provision for all GJC awardees. Such support is essential for ensuring participants can access training and job opportunities. While childcare is not exclusively accessed by women, all 32 grantees have included childcare as a key area for supportive services in their projects.

Advancing Equity Through Key Legislation

Congress has passed significant legislation providing funding to and directing the Department to maximize impact to all communities.

The American Rescue Plan funded EDA's \$1 billion Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) and \$500 million Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) program. For both programs, EDA has made geographic diversity a top priority, and for the first time in history, the Department has its own grant program that invests in industry-led workforce training and registered apprenticeships – focusing on underserved communities, including women and people of color.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law codified MBDA, provided approximately \$3 billion to NOAA in habitat restoration, coastal resilience, and weather forecasting, and provided nearly \$50 billion to NTIA to deploy universal, high-speed, affordable internet service so everyone in America can participate in the digital economy.

The Department's \$50 billion CHIPS for America program – made possible by the CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS) – will strengthen and revitalize the U.S. position in semiconductor research, development, and manufacturing and create hundreds of thousands of good jobs that can change lives, offer family-sustaining benefits, and lead to long-term careers. Since [announcing](#) the first funding opportunity in February, the Department has received over 500 statements of interest and over 100 pre- and full applications from companies seeking to build semiconductor projects across 42 states.

CHIPS also authorized funds later appropriated in the FY 2023 omnibus to NIST and EDA to launch programs. With \$1.5 billion, NTIA's Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund will help drive wireless innovation, strengthen supply chain resilience, and help unlock opportunities for innovation and competition in a market historically dominated by a few suppliers. With \$500 million, the Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs) program will drive regional technology-centric growth by leveraging existing innovation capacity to catalyze the creation of good jobs in the industries of the future for American workers at all skill levels equitably and inclusively. With \$200 million, the Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program (Recompete) will provide grants to eligible communities to alleviate persistent economic distress, supporting long-term comprehensive economic development and job creation.

The [Inflation Reduction Act](#) provided NOAA with \$3.3 billion to build on its commitment to help Americans – including tribes and other underserved communities – prepare, adapt, and build resilience to weather and climate events; improve supercomputing capacity and research; strengthen NOAA's hurricane hunter aircraft and fleet; and upgrade NOAA facilities.

Strategies to Advance Equity in FY 2024



STRATEGIC GOAL 1
Drive U.S. Innovation and
Global Competitiveness

EQUITY STRATEGY 1: Mobilize our nation's diversity to fuel innovation and sustain our global competitiveness across geographic regions so that all communities have equal access to opportunities.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2
Foster Inclusive
Capitalism for All

EQUITY STRATEGY 2: Expand growth opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs, including in underserved communities.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3
Foster Equitable
Economic Growth for All

EQUITY STRATEGY 3: Promote equitable economic development and career pathways to good jobs.



STRATEGIC GOAL 4
Address the Climate
Crisis Through Mitigation,
Adaptation, and
Resilience Efforts

EQUITY STRATEGY 4: Use targeted investments and program design to address the climate crisis through mitigation, adaptation, and resilience efforts to ensure environmental and economic resilience.



STRATEGIC GOAL 5
Expand Opportunity and
Discovery Through Data

EQUITY STRATEGY 5: Expand opportunity and discovery through data capture to inform and evaluate actions that improve community outcomes.



STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Drive U.S. Innovation and Global Competitiveness

Equity Strategy 1: Mobilize our nation's diversity to fuel innovation and sustain our global competitiveness across geographic regions so that all communities can have equal access to opportunities.

Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s): Economic Justice and Educational Equity

Collaborating Agencies: National Science Foundation (NSF), USPTO, EDA's National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (NACIE), and USPTO's Council for Inclusive Innovation (CI²).

Barriers to Equity: For too long, economic growth and higher-paying jobs have **clustered** in a few cities. This has led to growing geographic income inequality in which wealth isn't spreading to the smallest metro areas and rural towns.

Evidence Base to Support Strategy:

- Geographic income inequality has **risen** more than 40 percent between 1980 and 2021. The richest places are pulling away, and many others – especially smaller towns and rural areas – have fallen further behind. Rising geographic inequality suggests that economic opportunities are becoming less evenly distributed across the country and such geographic inequality risks reducing households' ability to move to desired locations. This could concentrate economic and social challenges in certain places, or contribute to political polarization.
- Places with higher incomes in 1980 tended to have **faster income growth** between 1980 and 2021, contributing to widening geographic inequality and little change in the income ranking of places. In recent decades, faster-growing, higher-paying sectors have clustered in the same places over time, leading to increased geographic inequality. Additionally, the faster-growing, higher-paying sectors, such as tech, finance, and professional services, have become a growing share of the economy and pay high wages.

Actions to Achieve Equity

1.1 Build inclusive innovation-based regional ecosystems. Through three major programs, CHIPS, BBBRC and Tech Hubs, the Department is dedicating once-in-a-generation resources toward creating innovation-based clusters in geographically diverse regions as well as workforce pipelines to ensure all Americans, including people from underserved communities, have access to STEM jobs and high-quality jobs in high-demand fields and can participate in the innovation economy.

- **NIST's CHIPS. The CHIPS Program (CPO)** is committed to building strong communities that share in the prosperity of the semiconductor industry. This commitment includes promoting a sustainable, competitive domestic semiconductor industry; facilitating the creation and expansion of innovation clusters through economies of scale and investments across the supply chain; and generating benefits for a broad range of stakeholders and communities, including workers; small businesses; minority-owned, veteran-owned, and women-owned businesses; and universities and colleges. For instance, applicants were asked to outline proactive efforts to include such businesses in a project's construction and production supply chain, to make a commitment to tracking and disclosing disaggregated data on supplier diversity and contractor/subcontractor diversity, to build robust outreach plans for engaging with small businesses; minority-owned, veteran-owned, and women-owned businesses, and to identify sectoral partnerships to support

high-quality, equitable workforce development strategies. CHIPS Incentives applicants are expected to describe how they will collect and report demographically disaggregated data on workforce efforts. Additionally, applicants will have to describe how they will track and disclose data on supplier diversity that is demographically disaggregated (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, veteran status), including statistics on what share of suppliers are majority-owned by different groups.

- **EDA’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge.** The \$1 billion program provides transformational investments to develop and strengthen regional industry clusters across the country, all while embracing equitable economic growth, creating good-paying jobs, and enhancing U.S. global competitiveness. Coalitions were challenged to design strategies that would ensure that the economic benefits of the project would be shared by all communities in the region, including any underserved communities. BBBRC funds numerous projects that include improving access to innovation for underserved communities as part of the program design, such as wraparound services for workforce development, fellowship programs, and governance projects that include community engagement and representation in coalition management.
- **EDA’s Tech Hubs.** EDA designated Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs) in geographically diverse regions, including underserved communities, with a concentration of assets, resources, capacity, and the potential to become globally competitive, innovative ecosystems for technologies critical to our economic and national security. In its application review, EDA evaluated applicants’ plans to actively engage underserved and geographically diverse communities, ensuring the benefits of innovation-based economic growth are shared broadly. EDA also encouraged the participation of labor organizations or other entities representing workers as direct members of the consortium applications. EDA accepted Tech Hubs Phase 1 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) applications through its August 15, 2023 deadline; Phase 1 Tech Hubs Designees and Strategy Development Grant recipients and the Phase 2 NOFO were announced in October 2023. Designated Tech Hubs are invited to apply for Phase 2 implementation awards, through which they will address how their proposed strategies, approaches, key metrics, and projects would increase equitable economic growth and ensure that underserved communities are represented in and benefit from the Hub.

Proposed Metrics

Near- to Medium-Term Metrics May Include:

- **NIST’s CHIPS.** CPO metrics are under development but are expected to include disaggregated data on the demographics of the workforce, recipient spend on community investments, and recipient spend with small and/or diverse businesses. CPO may also work with each recipient to define bespoke metrics.
- **EDA’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge.** Output metrics currently under development for testing and validation include: the number of workers, including workers from underserved communities, completing workforce training programs and share of the overall total; the number of minority- and women-owned business enterprises engaged in extension services and share of the overall total; and the number of entrepreneurs, including entrepreneurs from underserved communities, accepted into accelerator/incubator cohorts and share of the overall total.
- **EDA’s Tech Hubs.** These metrics are under development and expected to be released in Summer 2024.

Longer-Term Metrics May Include:

- **NIST’s CHIPS.** CPO metrics are under development, but award recipients will be expected to provide routine reporting on a broad range of data. CPO is currently working to document the specific metrics that will be reported.
- **EDA’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge.** Outcome metrics may include: the number of workers, including workers from underserved communities, placed in new jobs; the number of minority- and women-owned business enterprises reporting adoption of new technologies or access to new markets and share of the overall total; the amount of private investment secured by minority- and women-owned business enterprises and share of the overall total; and the number of new businesses created by entrepreneurs from underserved communities and share of the overall total. At the component grant level, grantees have also articulated more tailored metrics that include goals for equitable outcomes directly tied to their programmatic activities.
- **EDA’s Tech Hubs.** These metrics are under development and expected to be released in Summer 2024.

Public Participation and Community Engagement

- **NIST’s CHIPS.** In the incentives program for large suppliers and semiconductor manufacturers, the CPO will evaluate applicants’ plans to provide equitable workforce pathways for economically disadvantaged individuals. Applicants will also be evaluated on their engagement with minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned businesses and their investment strategy to support their communities.
- **EDA’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge.** Each coalition articulated a community engagement strategy that EDA will support. In many cases, regional governance structures are being set up that explicitly include investments in things such as community representation, DEIA councils, and funding for public education and engagement around the coalition’s industry cluster.
- **EDA’s Tech Hubs.** EDA solicited public input on its design and implementation of the Tech Hubs Program via a Request for Information in mid-February 2023. EDA analyzed and synthesized responses to incorporate feedback into the Phase 1 NOFO and will continue to do so throughout the program’s duration.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Foster Inclusive Capitalism for All

Equity Strategy 2: Expand growth opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs, including in underserved communities.

Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s): Economic Justice and Community Investments

Collaborating Agencies: Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, Small Business Administration (8(a) Graduates, Department of State, Department of Treasury, Department of Defense, Department of Commerce Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, and Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Barriers to Equity: [Minority-owned](#) and [rural-based](#) businesses face disparities in access to capital, federal contracts, export opportunities, technical support or advice, and networking.

Evidence Base to Support Strategy:

- The most [persistent](#) barrier to the establishment, expansion, and growth of minority business enterprises (MBEs) continues to be access to capital. The U.S. Federal Reserve found that more than half of Black-owned businesses were turned down for private bank loans, a rate twice as high as white business owners.
- A Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies study [found](#) that 6 in 10 Black business owners faced challenges obtaining capital. Over a third of Latino business owners faced the same. Business owners of color were more likely to struggle to access startup funding, growth funding, and capital with affordable interest rates.
- In [2022](#), in the U.S., only 1.9 percent of venture capital dollars went to all-women teams; less than .5 percent went to Black and Brown women; only 12 percent of venture capital decision-makers are women.
- Innovation fueled economic growth in America for the past century, but since the 1970s, innovation (as measured by fundamental productivity growth) appears to have [slowed](#) from an annual increase of 1.9 percent to 0.7 percent. Research shows that innovation in the U.S. could [quadruple](#) if women, minorities, and children from low-income families became inventors at the same rate as men from high-income families. According to the USPTO, that [increase](#) in inventorship would grow our economy and GDP by an estimated \$1 trillion.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, [fewer](#) than 1 percent of minority-owned businesses export goods or services. For these enterprises, insufficient financial resources often hinder their ability to invest in overseas market exploration, navigate regulatory complexities, and establish international networks.

Actions to Achieve Equity

2.1 Provide capital access support to businesses and entrepreneurs, including for underserved communities, to start or scale in high-growth industries.

- **Implement MBDA's Capital Readiness Program (CRP).** With 43 awardees, MBDA recently launched a new network of incubators, accelerators, and organizations with expertise to assist and train underserved entrepreneurs to improve access to diverse forms of capital, resources, and technical assistance to start or scale their businesses in high-growth industries such as healthcare, climate resilient technology, asset management, infrastructure, and more.

- **Leverage MBDA Business Centers.** MBDA will continue to leverage its [41 Business Centers](#) and nine Specialty Centers focused on procurement, exporting, and manufacturing. With nationwide coverage and grants totaling \$16.4 million, these centers provide high-quality business advisory services, counseling, and mentoring to MBEs to access capital, contracts, and grants.
- **Implement EDA's [Build to Scale \(B2S\)](#).** EDA awards and manages a portfolio of grants designed to increase regional capacity to strengthen ecosystems that equitably and inclusively support diverse technology innovators, entrepreneurs, and startups. EDA will run two types of B2S programs. First, the Venture Challenge will fund organizations to start and speed up regional growth through technology-based economic development and by strengthening regional innovation ecosystems that promote the commercialization of new technologies, grow industry clusters, and lead to better-paying jobs. Second, the Capital Challenge awards provide programmatic and operation support for the formation, launch, and or scale of investment capital for technology companies to start and scale.

2.2 Provide targeted business support to small and medium-sized enterprises.

- **ITA's [Global Diversity Export Initiative \(GDEI\)](#).** The purpose of GDEI is to create and execute export promotion solutions and raise awareness of the benefits and resources of exporting to reach businesses in underserved communities in the United States. This initiative involves creating strategic partnerships with national, regional, and local minority chambers of commerce, industry, and business organizations to amplify ITA export resources and ensure our trade shows, missions, and counseling services from our U.S. Export Assistance Centers (USEAC) reach businesses in underserved communities.
- **ITA's [Rural Export Center \(REC\)](#).** To enhance rural outreach efforts and provide customized market research for rural businesses, the REC and USEACs throughout the United States provide rural businesses with export business development assistance and, when appropriate, certain fee-based services, like the Rural America's Intelligence Service for Exporters (RAISE). In FY 2022, ITA's commitment to the work of the REC was underscored by the establishment of a full-time, dedicated REC Director position to oversee, manage, and grow the REC's work.
- **USPTO's [Council for Inclusive Innovation \(CI²\)](#).** CI² is charged with identifying new ways to expand American innovation by tapping into the strength of our nation's diversity and increasing opportunities for all Americans to participate in innovation. One of the initiatives is expanding pro bono legal services for new inventors and entrepreneurs at no cost through programs such as the [Law School Clinic Certificate Program](#), [Patent Pro Bono Program](#), and [Trademark Trial and Appeal Board's \(TTAB\) Pro Bono Program](#).

Proposed Metrics

Near- to Medium-Term Metrics May Include:

- **MBDA's [Capital Readiness Program](#).** Number of Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individual (SEDI) entrepreneurs served, number of SEDI entrepreneurs that graduated from the project, number of networking or match-making events hosted, number of SEDI entrepreneurs or SEDI-owned business pitches to capital providers, number of SEDI-owned businesses formed or scaled, and total amount of capital raised (equity investments/debt/grants).

- **MBDA Business Centers.** Number of MBEs served and reached; gross revenues generated (including contracts); percent of clients increased profits; the value of financing/bonding/capital, number of jobs created and retained; and the number of formed strategic partners.
- **EDA's Build to Scale.** The number of entrepreneurs and startups that participate in the program; the value of investment fund capital raised; number of 1-on-1 meetings with potential investors; number of clients secured funding; number of patents; number of new technologies were commercialized, licensed, or brought to market; number of training or skills assistance sessions were hosted; number of seed stage, angel investment, or early-stage venture capital deals made; number of outreach and networking events were hosted; number of mentoring and coaching sessions hosted; number of products launched; and number of jobs created or retained.
- **USPTO's Council for Inclusive Innovation.** The number of students participating in law school clinics and the number of law schools participating in the clinic certification program.
- **ITA's Global Diversity Export Initiative.** Number of export and investment clients assisted, including clients from underserved communities. For FY 2023, the GDEI target is to assist 458 clients. As of August 2, ITA had assisted 695 clients, reaching 152 percent of the established goal.
- **ITA's Rural Export Center.** The number of businesses in rural communities that have been assisted or benefited. ITA has already achieved its REC assistance goals for FY 2023 by assisting 410 clients, 170 more than the original goal.

Longer-Term Metrics May Include:

- **MBDA's Capital Readiness Program.** The total amount of capital raised and the number of SEDI-owned businesses that have formed or scaled.
- **MBDA Business Centers.** Increase percentage of MBEs and increase the percentage of public/federal contracts awarded to MBEs.
- **EDA's Build to Scale.** Build public and private capacity for entrepreneurs and innovators to invent, improve, and bring to market new products and services in critical, emerging, and transformative sectors and industries; accelerate the growth of regional economies that are focused on industries of the future; and equitably and inclusively increase access to capital for technology-enabled entrepreneurs.
- **USPTO's Council for Inclusive Innovation.** Assess the number of patents and trademarks filed and granted through the USPTO Law School Clinic Certification Program.
- **ITA's Global Diversity Export Initiative.** Increase exports coming from businesses in underserved communities.
- **ITA's Rural Export Center.** Increase exports coming from businesses in rural communities.

Public Participation and Community Engagement

- **MBDA’s Capital Readiness Program.** On June 9, 2023, MBDA held its inaugural Capital Formation Forum to review the status of problems and programs relating to capital formation by MBEs. Participants represented various federal agencies involved in capital formation issues and addressing solutions to access to capital issues for MBEs. The discussion focused on the status of issues and programs relating to capital formation from the government’s perspective and solutions for addressing these issues.
- **MBDA Business Centers.** The MBDA has [entered](#) into memoranda of agreement with Bilateral Infrastructure Law funded agencies, including the Department of Transportation and Department of Energy, designed to maximize the inclusion and growth of MBEs in federal investments, contracts, resources, and administration priorities around high-growth industries. The three top initiatives will include a National Equity Tour, Technical Assistance/Business Advisory Services, and MBE Contract Matching. These collaborations aim to close the gap in federal contracting disparity and ensure that MBEs have an equitable opportunity to participate in and benefit from federal contract opportunities.
- **EDA’s Build to Scale.** EDA works with [SSTI](#), a national nonprofit organization focused on STEM initiatives offers information and services that are needed to succeed in today’s innovation economy. SSTI will host a Community of Practice (CoP) focused on technology-based economic development, through which EDA supports members of the CoP, including B2S recipients, and receives feedback on the B2S program. Outside of SSTI, EDA engages with diverse audiences at numerous conferences, webinars, and annual convenings. Lastly, EDA solicits public input on the design and implementation of the B2S program through its [Customer Experience Survey](#). EDA incorporates this program delivery feedback in future grant competitions.
- **USPTO’s Council for Inclusive Innovation.** The USPTO has been conducting in-person and virtual outreach to inventors, attorneys, and law schools to increase awareness and participation in pro bono programs and legal services programs through, for example, its “Pathways” events for current and aspiring entrepreneurs. These networking events connect attendees with IP protection and commercialization information and resources. In addition, the Under Secretary has sent letters to law schools throughout the country inviting them to join the USPTO Law School Clinic Certification Program. The USPTO also visited 47 law school clinics during the 2022-23 school year, including law school visits by Deputy Under Secretary Derrick Brent and General Counsel Dave Berdan.
- **ITA’s Global Diversity Export Initiative and Rural Export Center.** ITA’s U.S. Commercial Service (CS) industry experts design trade missions for U.S. businesses to leverage new trade leads, partnering opportunities, and international sales. CS launched a national outreach event series called “Building Bridges to Global Markets.” This program brings no-cost, in-person exporting expertise to local companies through an event that features resources to grow international sales, connect with key trade resources, and access trade finance and capital, including an export finance resource panel that typically features our trade finance partners from SBA and EXIM Bank. These events introduce the full array of export assistance from local trade experts focused on connecting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from underserved communities to export opportunities. This year, ITA is planning to organize several GDEI Strategic Partner Events. This includes trade missions such as TradeWinds, Women in Tech, and the GDEI Trade Mission to South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria led by ITA Under Secretary Marisa Lago. In May 2024, the Department of Commerce is leading TradeWinds, its most significant annual trade mission, to Europe/Eurasia which will be hosted in Istanbul, Turkey, with mission stops available in Poland, Denmark, Italy, Kazakhstan, and Romania.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Foster Equitable Economic Growth for All

Equity Strategy 3: Promote equitable economic development and career pathways to good jobs.

Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s): Economic Justice and Community Investments

Collaborating Agencies: Federal Communications Commission, Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Treasury, Department of Interior, Department of Labor, Department of Education.

Barriers to Equity: [Lack of wraparound services](#), such as affordable, high-quality internet service, childcare, and education, prevent many people from accessing job training programs, thereby missing out on opportunities for employment in high-growth industries. Specifically, the lack of access to internet service is a significant barrier for underserved communities, hampering full participation in modern life, such as starting a business, offering services or goods via e-commerce, taking online courses and training, finding a doctor, and much more.

Evidence Base to Support Strategy:

- The NTIA Internet Use Survey [shows](#) that 24 million households did not use the internet at home in 2021.
- A recent review of [research](#) on childcare costs and women's labor supply finds that a 10 percent decrease in the cost of childcare to families leads to a 0.5 to 2.5 percent increase in mothers participating in the workforce. [Research shows](#) that productivity gains may be the greatest when low-wage workers are provided with adequate care options. Further, disruptions to childcare are [more common among lower-income and lower-socially supported mothers](#).
- Education and labor market outcomes remain inequitable. Research [shows](#) that students do not receive sufficient information about what careers are available and which courses best lead to those options, so they waste time in courses that do not lead to good jobs. For example, not all students graduate from high school, and even when they do, most are ineligible for their postsecondary training program of choice.

Actions to Achieve Equity

3.1 Ensure that everyone in America has access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet.

- **NTIA's Internet for All.** The Department is deploying nearly \$50 billion to invest in broadband infrastructure deployment, affordability, and digital equity and inclusion efforts. Closing the digital divide will be a major step toward dismantling structural barriers to inclusive economic growth. These investments will fuel economic development as the programs are expected to create more than 150,000 jobs. BEAD, MM, BIP, TBCP, and CMC were discussed in the 2022 Equity Action Plan Progress and Accomplishment section. All of these programs are on-going and in the implementation phases. Here are the next steps for BEAD and updates on the State Digital Equity Act (DE) programs that make up NTIA's Internet for All Initiatives:
 - **Awaiting approval of initial proposals for BEAD.** States, D.C., and territories (Eligible Entities) submitted their proposals for NTIA approval at the end of 2023, after fulfilling the public disclosure and comment requirements to facilitate community engagement and input. Once approved, Eligible Entities will have access to at least

20 percent of their BEAD grant funds and can begin implementation of eligible activities. An Eligible Entity may initiate its competitive subgrantee selection process upon approval of its initial proposal and will have up to one year to conduct additional local coordination, complete the selection process, and submit a final proposal to NTIA. The BEAD program required stakeholder outreach with a focus on ensuring robust local engagement and outreach to underserved communities. Eligible Entities must identify these communities and determine specific outreach and engagement strategies tailored to their needs, including providing outreach in the languages used in the communities these eligible activities serve.

- **Implementing DE Programs.** The \$2.75 billion program includes three grant programs that promote digital inclusion and equity to ensure that all individuals and communities have access to the skills and tools needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy. Since late 2022, NTIA has awarded State DE Planning Grant funds to 56 states and territories and expects digital equity plans to be submitted starting in late 2023.

3.2 Create and strengthen workforce development training and access to jobs in high-growth industries.

- **EDA's Good Jobs Challenge (GJC).** This program is expected to train and place 50,000 people in good jobs. GJC meets participants where they are – which includes flexible course scheduling, hands-on training, and curriculum directly aligned to jobs available in their field of training. All 32 awardees received funding to support wraparound services and have plans for how to use services to improve outcomes for participants who would have otherwise struggled to access training and job opportunities. Grantees have allocated millions of dollars to ensure participants can access to childcare, transportation, English language learning, etc. GJC also has awardees that support the workforce needs of underserved populations and areas, communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers such as persons with disabilities, disconnected youth, individuals in recovery, individuals with past criminal records including justice-impacted and reentry participants, trainees participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and veterans.
- **EDA's Recompete Pilot Program.** With over 4,000 communities eligible for the pilot, the program will invest \$200 million in organizations committed to creating and connecting workers in persistently distressed communities to good jobs while ensuring the economic benefits are equitably allocated. Unique amongst EDA's national competitions, Recompete is designed to be exclusively targeted towards those communities grappling with persistent economic distress, with equity at its core. The Phase 1 NOFO application deadline closed on October 2023, and EDA received 565 applications – the highest number of submissions of out any national competition to-date. Phase 1 applicants seeking Recompete Plan approval will be assessed against six competitive factors, one of which is "equity, inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity." In addition, applicants are asked to articulate their approach to community engagement, acquire quality letters of support from entities representing underserved communities, and devise a plan to ensure benefits are equitably shared. In the winter of 2023, EDA will announce Strategy Development Grant recipients and at least 20 Finalists that will be invited to apply to Phase 2. In FY 2024, the EDA will announce 4-8 Phase 2 implementation awards averaging \$20-\$50 million each.

- **EDA's STEM Talent Challenge.** The program aims to build STEM talent training systems to strengthen regional innovation economies. On September 19, 2023, EDA announced a total of \$4.5 million in grants to 11 organizations that are creating and implementing STEM talent development strategies that complement their region's innovation economy.
- **Million Women in Construction Initiative.** The Department of Labor's (Labor) Employment and Earnings by Occupation data showed that the number of women working in the construction industry at only 10 percent or 1.2 million women as of 2020. Secretary Raimondo announced a public goal to double the number of women working in the construction industry over the next ten years. To achieve this goal, the Department is promoting the goal through large implementation programs, working with other agencies to do the same, and highlighting commitments from Labor and the private sector to launch complementary efforts. In July 2023, the Secretary hired a Senior Advisor for Women in Construction to oversee this initiative.
 - Through the Internet for All program, Commerce will promote increased outreach to recruit women in broadband construction. NTIA's BEAD program requires states and territories to develop workforce plans that include strategies to ensure the job opportunities created will be available to a diverse pool of workers, including women and people of color.
 - Through the CHIPS NOFO for commercial facilities, applicants are asked to describe how they will recruit, hire, and retain a diverse and skilled construction workforce, including efforts to include women and other economically disadvantaged individuals in the construction industry.
 - Additionally, the CHIPS NOFO for commercial fabrication facilities requires applicants requesting over \$150 million in direct funding to provide a plan for access to child care for facility and construction workers. This will expand access to training opportunities and enable workers to fully participate in these high-quality, good-paying jobs.

Proposed Metrics

Near- to Medium-Term Metrics May Include:

- **NTIA's Internet for All.** The number of outreach and technical assistance sessions to support broadband planning, deployment, adoption and use; the number of unserved Tribal households gaining access to broadband; the number of state or territory digital equity plans, the number of persons served by digital inclusion programs; the number of state or territory BEAD five year action plans and initial proposals; the number of unserved households gaining access to broadband; the number of unserved businesses gaining access to broadband; the number of broadband serviceable locations with potential for improved service; the number of jobs created, the number of jobs retained, the number of community anchor institutions with potential connections; and the number of connected wholesalers or last mile providers.

- **EDA's Good Jobs Challenge.** Wage growth and number of enrollments, completions, and placements for participants in sector-specific, place-based business training programs; networks of training and necessary wrap-around support services partners to ensure worker success; braided and aligned federal, state, local, private, and philanthropic resources to sustain long-term programs; enhanced engagement and leadership from unions and underrepresented populations to increase job quality; and equity analysis from partners like University of Michigan and New Growth Innovation Network to extract best equity practices in serving targeted populations.
- **EDA's Recompete Pilot Program.** While Recompete metrics are currently being developed, applicants are encouraged to articulate their own vision for how they will ensure historically underserved populations and areas benefit from their proposed interventions that can achieve measurable outputs and outcomes.
- **EDA's STEM Talent Challenge.** The number of job placements of program participants, number of training or skills assistance sessions hosted, and demographic data of participants.
- **Million Women in Construction Initiative.** For recipients of the CHIPS incentive program funding, the demographically disaggregated data will be on the makeup of the construction workforce. For recipients of BEAD program funding, demographics of those served and entered into the workforce.

Longer-Term Metrics May Include:

- **NTIA's Internet for All.** Percentage increase in broadband availability and adoption, and socioeconomic outcomes such as jobs created and increased labor productivity, business activity, and positive local and regional economic impacts.
- **EDA's Good Jobs Challenge.** Increased hiring of local workers into in-demand jobs including from underrepresented communities; wage growth; closure of employment gaps for employers in critical competitive sectors like clean tech, manufacturing, and supporting care economy jobs (e.g. childcare, education); increased capacity of workforce development, higher education, non-profits, and unions to increase domestic job quality in targeted sectors; strong, agile community networks able to respond to quickly changing skills and talent needs necessary for US global competitiveness.
- **EDA's Recompete Pilot Program.** To be determined, though EDA anticipates it will track the change in the Prime-Age Employment Gap, per capita wages, and long-term comprehensive economic development for regions awarded implementation grants.
- **EDA's STEM Talent Challenge.** The number of jobs created, wage or earnings growth, the number of participants trained; the amount of private investment matched; and demographic data of participants.
- **Million Women in Construction Initiative.** The number of women employed in the construction industry by requiring funding recipients of both the Internet for All program and the CHIPS program to report the demographics of their workforce. Given the nature of the timeline of those programs, the Department does not expect to begin receiving demographic data from funding recipients until 2024.

Public Participation and Community Engagement

- **NTIA's Internet for All.** NTIA supports increased capacity in local communities by hosting local coordination events and convening the Digital Equity Leaders Network (DELN), Tribal Broadband Leaders Network (TBLN), and State Broadband Leaders Network (SBLN). NTIA **received more than 240 stakeholder submissions** to support the development of NOFOs for the Digital Equity Capacity Grant and Competitive Grant Programs, which will be launched in 2024. In addition, BEAD Eligible Entities will begin their challenge processes this winter whereby a local government, nonprofit organization, or broadband service provider may challenge whether a particular location or community anchor institution is eligible for BEAD funds, including whether it's unserved or underserved. This process will help ensure that underrepresented communities are not left behind in Eligible Entities' plans.
- **EDA's Good Jobs Challenge.** GJC awardees call on members of the public that they are serving to sign up for a job training program in their community, hire participants from these programs, and work with their own workplaces to reconceptualize who gets hired and promoted.
- **EDA's Recompete Pilot Program.** The Phase I NOFO was informed by the RFI issued February 23, 2023, and Tribal Consultation held on March 9, 2023, both of which shaped key design features of the competition. In the lead up to the Phase 1 deadline, EDA held a number of webinars and engaged with various community stakeholders.
- **EDA's STEM Talent Challenge.** EDA launched its first and only consumer experience survey to better understand and support its stakeholders. The survey was open to current, past, and prospective STEM Talent Challenge grantees and is a precursor to longer, targeted customer experience interviews to build out the quantitative and qualitative information collected in the survey. Responses were due September 2023.



STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Address the Climate Crisis Through Mitigation, Adaptation, and Resilience Efforts

Equity Strategy 4: Use targeted investments and program design to address the climate crisis through mitigation, adaptation, and resilience efforts to ensure environmental and economic resilience.

Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s): Economic Justice and Environmental Justice

Collaborating Agencies: FEMA, Census, Department of Interior, Department of Transportation, EPA, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Council on Environmental Quality, National Science Foundation, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, United States Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Barriers to Equity: Underserved communities face [significant](#) barriers in building resilience or rebuilding their communities post-disaster due to barriers of limited resources, capacity, technical capabilities, or access to technical assistance. Investing in climate resiliency also means helping workers find high-quality jobs related to climate resilience.

Evidence Base to Support Strategy:

- More than 40 percent of the U.S. population [lives](#) in coastal counties where residents are experiencing climate change in a variety of ways including more rapidly intensifying hurricanes, more severe storms, excessive heat, deepening droughts, and more frequent flooding.
- In the 1980s, the [average](#) time between billion-dollar climate disasters in the U.S. was 82 days; today, it is only 18 days.
- A peer-reviewed EPA [report](#) shows severe harms from climate change fall disproportionately upon underserved communities who are least able to prepare for and recover from heat waves, poor air quality, flooding, and other impacts. For example, Black and African American individuals are 40 percent more likely than non-Black and non-African American individuals to currently live in areas with the highest projected increases in mortality rates due to climate-driven changes in extreme temperatures.

Actions to Achieve Equity

4.1 Benchmark and execute our Justice40 commitments. Through NOAA, EDA, and NIST, the Department has laid the foundation for programming and policies to be a part of the [Justice40 Initiative](#), which will reach a larger and more diverse audience. Alongside this Initiative, the Department strives to address the key barriers to economic success and provide greater visibility and transparency in our effort to support communities that are underserved and overburdened by pollution and other impacts of climate change. For example, NOAA's \$45 million Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities funding [opportunity](#) provides funding exclusively to Indian Tribes and underserved community organizations, including \$20 million that is set aside for Tribes. The purpose of this program is to support opportunities for tribes, tribal entities, and underserved communities to meaningfully engage in coastal habitat restoration activities.

4.2 Invest Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds towards climate-related economic development in vulnerable communities. In June 2023 and through IRA, NOAA announced the \$2.6 billion framework to protect coastal communities and restore marine resources to help vulnerable communities prepare, adapt, and build resilience to weather and climate events. NOAA continues to address the needs of underserved communities through its grantmaking; in addition to the funding previously awarded through BIL, NOAA is **leveraging** IRA funding to invest up to \$45 million to advance coastal habitat restoration in underserved and tribal communities as well capacity building support for coastal resilience strategy development. Equity is a priority across NOAA's BIL and IRA implementation. Two key NOAA IRA programs to highlight are:

- **NOAA's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge (CRRC).** The CRRC is a new, two-part track, competitive grant program that will support collaborative approaches to resilience in coastal regions, emphasizing risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity and inclusion, and building enduring capacity to withstand future natural disasters.
- **NOAA's Climate-Ready Workforce (CRW).** This CRW is designed to meet the emerging and existing needs of employers while helping workers obtain the necessary skills to enter good jobs so that workers and employers can work together to enhance climate resilience. CRW will allow qualified organizations to form regional partnerships to develop training programs that build in-demand skills, offer wraparound services that allow workers to successfully enroll in and complete training, and enter or advance into good jobs that enhance climate resilience. NOAA encourages applicants to conduct recruitment outreach to workers with barriers to the labor market, including historically underserved and under-resourced communities and individuals. The CRW competition is currently underway; metrics will be finalized after full applications are received in February 2024 and before awards are announced in Summer 2024.

Proposed Metrics

Near- to Medium-Term Metrics May Include:

- **NOAA's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.** There will be an array of metrics expected to be collected and reported out by track one awardees, including, the number of underserved communities engaged through funded regional coalitions and the number of individuals who represent underserved communities engaged (e.g., through capacity building, workforce development, or other opportunities) and any compensation (financial or other form) provided to support engagement. Similarly, track two CRRC awardees will be expected to collect and report data on the number of risk reduction actions implemented to address known vulnerabilities and report specific data on actions implemented in underserved communities. Because awards will not be made until late FY 2024, it is unlikely that we will be able to report engagement until FY 2025.
- **NOAA's Climate-Ready Workforce.** The awardees will be expected to collect and report data demonstrating the successful placement of individuals in good jobs that enhance climate resilience. Awards will not be made until late FY 2024, meaning, NOAA will be able to report engagement until FY 2025.

Longer-Term Metrics May Include:

- **NOAA’s Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.** To be announced in Spring 2024.
- **NOAA’s Climate-Ready Workforce.** To be announced in Spring 2024.

Public Participation and Community Engagement

- NOAA hosted four virtual tribal sessions and two written comment periods and produced two Tribal Input Executive Summary and Response reports to inform the implementation of its BIL and IRA funding programs. NOAA has also worked to ensure that tribes are aware of different funding opportunities. For example, on June 21, 2023, NOAA held a live Q&A session on NOAA’s BIL funding opportunity for Tribal Engagement in Regional Ocean Partnerships; and, on July 25, 2023, NOAA hosted a tribal webinar to inform tribes and provide an overview of major IRA funding opportunities through NOAA’s Climate Ready Coasts and Communities initiative.



STRATEGIC GOAL 5: Expand Opportunity and Discovery Through Data

Equity Strategy 5: Expand opportunity and discovery through data to inform and evaluate actions that improve community outcomes.

Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s): Economic Justice and Community Investment

Collaborating Agencies: Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, National Women’s Business Council, Small Business Administration, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, the Department of Labor, United States Postal Service, General Service Administration, Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Housing and Urban Development, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Oak Ridge National Lab, United States Department of Agriculture, United States Army Corps of Engineers, United States Geologic Service, National Science Foundation, Department of State, Department of Justice, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Barriers to Equity: The lack of data access, timeliness, and transparency **contributes** to limited public trust – including for underserved communities. Advances in artificial intelligence widen the trust gap by potentially worsening existing biases and inequities and increasing concerns over the misuse of data, confidentiality, and privacy.

Evidence Base to Support Strategy:

- Past and recent research like the 2030 Census Request For Information (RFI) has documented the need for and importance of Census Bureau efforts to improve coverage rates for Historically Undercounted Populations (HUPs). For instance, in 2022, the Census Bureau released **results** from the Post Enumeration Survey and Demographic Analysis, which produced estimates showing that the 2020 Census undercounted some populations (e.g., the Black or African American population, the American Indian or Alaska Native population living on a reservation, young children 0 to 4 years old, etc.), which underscores the value of advancing research to help the Census Bureau accurately count and describe HUPs.
- AI systems can reflect and amplify systemic and human biases present in the organizations and communities that develop, deploy, and use them. AI systems can also manifest statistical and computational biases. This can cause them to **underperform** for some groups relative to others, as in **facial recognition**, or to **treat groups differently**. Studies have shown that these phenomena have led to disparate outcomes in **employment, housing, credit scoring, health care, and finance**. Some private sector actors as well as public regulators have **indicated** the **need** to adjust their work in response to AI-related bias and discrimination.

Actions to Achieve Equity

5.1 Continue Census 2030 preparations with special attention to historically undercounted populations. The 2030 Census research and testing program prioritizes innovations focused on enumerating HUPs, including research and testing focused on hard-to-count populations. Research areas include, but are not limited to, improving census response rates that improve data quality and reduce respondent burden.

5.2 Improve data capture of underserved communities.

- **Business Owner Demographic Characteristics.** To help improve the quality and usefulness of measuring business owners' demographic characteristics, the Census Bureau is producing hybrid data products that utilize survey response data and administrative records to develop total business ownership by demographics – including but not limited to data on employment, revenue, and exporting data for women, minority, veteran, LGBTQIA+, and disabled-owned businesses. For instance and mentioned in the Additional Efforts to Advance Equity section, Census received a FY 2023 appropriation of \$10 million to research, adding questions on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) in the American Community Survey.
- **Geographic Inequality.** The Office of the Undersecretary of Economic Affairs (OUSEA) launched a new data initiative, [Regional Economic Regional Initiative \(Regional Initiative\)](#), to improve our nation's understanding of local regional economies and their ability to compete. It will equip public and private sector decision-makers at every level – local, state, Tribal, and federal – with research and data tools to address entrenched and growing geographic inequality and better meet the economic needs of those they serve. The Regional Initiative will also help identify the strengths and weaknesses of regional economies, uncover new opportunities for growth, provide insights into local economic needs, and maximize the impact of regional investments.
- **Women in the Labor Force.** OUSEA launched a new dashboard that provides monthly updates of data on women in the labor force alongside the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly release on the employment situation. Over the next year, the OUSEA will update the monthly reporting on women in particular industries – especially those undergoing rapid changes due to legislative or environmental factors.

5.3 Further equitable access to data for Puerto Rico. The Census Bureau seeks to empower decision-makers, businesses, researchers, and the public with timely, accurate, reliable, and meaningful data for Puerto Rico. The Census Bureau is furthering equitable access to data in several ways:

- **Establish a Federal Statistical Research Data Center (FSRDC) in Puerto Rico.** The FSRDC will provide the opportunity to understand better the economic, health, and social conditions affecting the Commonwealth, which would enhance the ability of federal and local officials to make decisions. Additionally, providing the Puerto Rican research community equitable access to the wealth of federal restricted-use data available through the FSRDC network will help develop statistical capacity and collaboration building on the island;
- **Leverage data for disaster recovery.** The [Community Resilience Estimates \(CRE\) for Puerto Rico](#) will show the social vulnerability in Puerto Rico in the event of a disaster. Using restricted microdata from the 2019 Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS) and small area modeling, the CRE creates population estimates based on ten individual/household level risk factors, including: poverty status, number of caregivers in the households, unit-level crowding, educational attainment, employment, disability status, health insurance coverage, age (65+), vehicle access, and broadband internet access;
- **Establish an annual Puerto Rico Economic Survey.** Contingent on funding, supporting through the Puerto Rico Economic Program the establishment of an annual Puerto Rico Economic Survey and a monthly/quarterly economic indicator collection for Puerto Rico; and

- **Establish and serve as co-chair of the Puerto Rico Geospatial Data Group.** A forum for sharing information about all geospatial data activities and resources related to Puerto Rico between stakeholders from geospatial agencies within the federal government, the Government of Puerto Rico, and non-government organizations and industry.

5.4 Promote accountability and accessibility through data transparency and partnerships.

- **Track and evaluate the equitable distribution of above-baseline program federal funding.** Through the Census Bureau’s Center of Excellence (COE), the Department will leverage data sources to supplement administrative data collected by program administering agencies. This will provide standard services to the Department’s agencies to support departmental evaluation of the implementation, outcomes, and impacts of above-base programs and their distribution to underserved communities through the ARP, BIL, IRA, and CHIPS.

5.5 Address the potential discriminatory effects of certain AI technology.

- **Creation of NIST’s generative AI profile for the Risk Management Framework.** NIST established the National AI Advisory Committee (NAIAC), a group of experts tasked with advising the President and the National AI Initiative Office on topics related to AI. This includes matters related to the use of AI in law enforcement and legal standards, such as those ensuring that AI use is consistent with privacy rights, civil rights and civil liberties, and disability rights. NIST intends to develop a generative AI profile for the Risk Management Framework to help entities apply the framework to the creation of new, advanced generative AI models.
- **Address harmful biases throughout the AI system lifecycle.** In May, NIST and NSF launched the Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law and Society (TRAILS), a partnership between the University of Maryland, George Washington, and Morgan State University. NIST and NSF will invest \$20 million over five years for TRAILS to focus on how ethics and human rights can drive AI development and governance. Importantly, a key pillar of TRAILS will be input and feedback from marginalized communities.

Proposed Metrics

Near- to Medium-Term Metrics May Include:

- **Continue Census 2030 preparations with special attention to historically undercounted populations.** The viability of new decennial procedures that support the 2030 Census Operational Plan will be researched and tested, including assessments during the 2026 and 2028 Census Tests. Metrics providing evidence of the utility and accuracy of decennial programs include household and person-level administrative record coverage, resilient data collection and case management IT infrastructure, and dynamic contact strategies that reach each community.
- **Improve data capture of underserved communities.** The creation of the official Census data product measurements will include business ownership, employment, and revenue by demographic characteristics of the business owner for all employer and nonemployer businesses.

- **Further equitable access to data for Puerto Rico.** The output will be the creation of a Federal Statistical Research Data Center (FSRDC) in a Census Bureau facility that will transition to the University of Puerto Rico; other outputs metrics include a number of research projects conducted in the FRSDC. For the CRE for Puerto Rico, it is a measure of social vulnerability to disasters at the state/commonwealth, municipalities and census tract geographic levels, as well as producing more precise and timely measures of the communities most and least vulnerable to disasters. The Puerto Rico Geospatial Group will establish a Charter within FY 2023 and meet and share information on at least six geospatial topics or programs each fiscal year.
- **Address the potential discriminatory effects of certain AI technology.** Applying the NIST AI Risk Management Framework to generative AI to identify the risks and impacts, including but limited to tracking the increased participation of the public, especially underserved communities, in AI design, development, and deployment, outputs from TRAILS can be examined, including number of students participating in TRAILS programs (e.g., hackathons, internships), number of and attendance at webinars and information sessions, and volume of research outputs (e.g., papers, talks).

Longer-Term Metrics May Include:

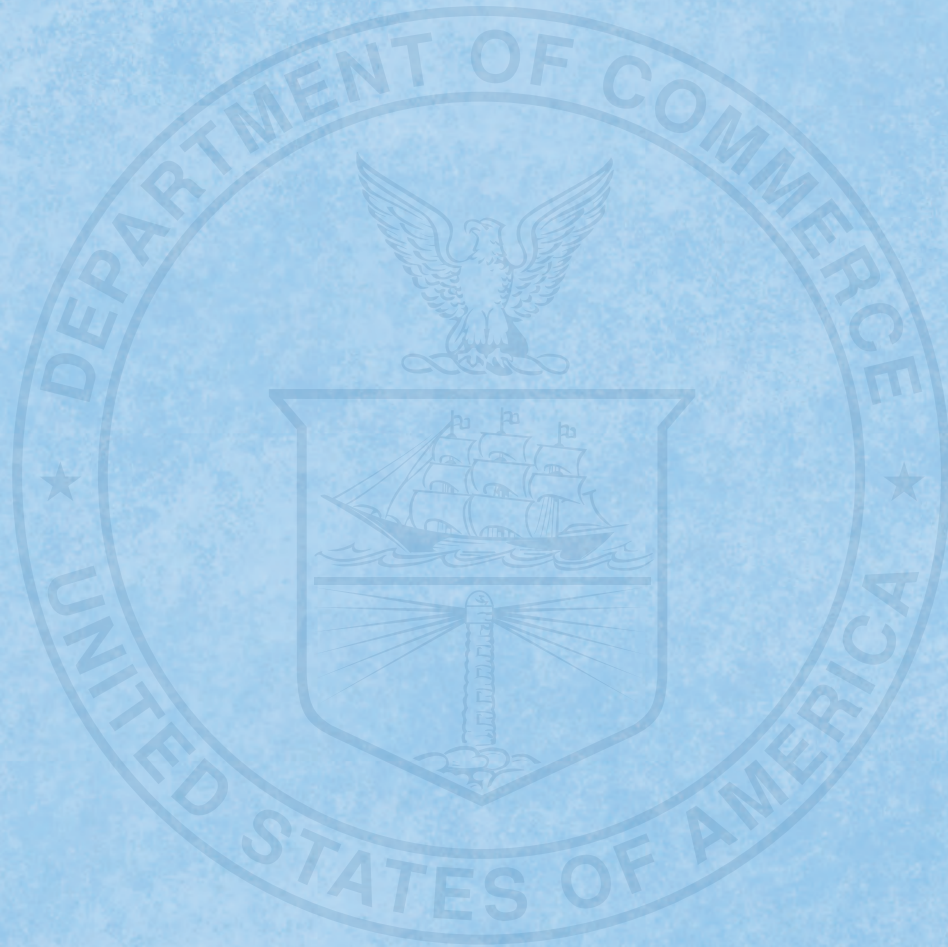
- **Continue Census 2030 preparations with special attention to historically undercounted populations.** Improvements to household and person-level decennial data’s utility, objectivity, and integrity.
- **Improve data capture of underserved communities.**
 - **Business Owner Demographic Characteristics.** Better measures of business ownership and performance by business owner demographics, and enhanced ability to track business demographic trends and performance disparities across demographic groups.
 - **Geographic Inequality.** The Regional Initiative is developing a dataset of all Commerce place-based investments, like CHIPS, BBBRC, and Tech Hubs, which it will use to help bureaus measure the long-term impacts of place-based programs, particularly in underserved places. Increased number of programs and bureaus that understand how their funding is impacting underserved communities and their awareness of how to incorporate various indicators of distress into their funding decision-making.
 - **Women in the Labor Force.** Increased percentage of women in the workforce overall and within industries like construction, where women have historically been underrepresented.
- **Further equitable access to data for Puerto Rico.** A FSRDC in a Census Bureau facility that will transition to the University of Puerto Rico will provide the opportunity to researchers located on the island to access relevant data without the need to travel to the U.S. An example of an expected output is the number of research projects conducted. For Community Resilience Estimates for Puerto Rico, the intent is to move from the experimental estimate stage to an official product that can be adopted and used in determining social vulnerability in the event of a disaster.

- **Promote accountability and accessibility through data transparency and partnerships.**
 - **Track and evaluate the equitable distribution of above-baseline program federal funding.** Increased number of programs and bureaus that understand how their funding is impacting underserved communities and their awareness of how to incorporate various indicators of distress into their funding decision-making.
- **Address the potential discriminatory effects of certain AI technology.** Adoption by organizations of the NIST AI Risk Management Framework; increased participation of policymakers, sociotechnical experts, and members of marginalized communities in research, design, development, and governance of AI systems; understanding how to build AI systems that are trusted by the people who use and are affected by them.

Public Participation and Community Engagement

- **The Census Bureau.** For the upcoming decennial, the Census began with the 2030 Census Research Federal Register Notice and associated outreach activities. The notice sought public input to develop and implement strategies to improve participation in the 2030 Census. In particular, the notice asked for feedback on reaching and motivating everyone, technology, new data sources, how the Census contacts respondents, and respondent support services. For overall public engagement efforts across all programming, the Census Bureau will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the decade, including those in underserved communities, to nurture relationships of trust and to gain a better understanding of the data collection operations; the impact of an accurate count on communities; and the Census Bureau commitment to scientific integrity, transparency, objectivity, reliability, and confidentiality of the data collected. For instance, the Census will conduct outreach and discovery with key stakeholders to investigate existing data sources and collaborate on data products most critical for measuring Puerto Rico’s economy.
- **Geographic Inequality.** The Office of the Under Secretary of Economic Affairs conducts regular public awareness of the Regional Initiative by promoting the initiatives through public email updates, speeches, and event participation, publishing a regular blog on Regional Initiative topics, and engaging monthly with different stakeholder groups.
- **AI.** Through TRAILS, NIST and NSF will engage with academia and other partners in research, student engagement and training, and outreach. For the National AI Advisory Council, the meetings are posted on the federal register for anyone to attend, and public experts from advocacy groups are invited to speak.

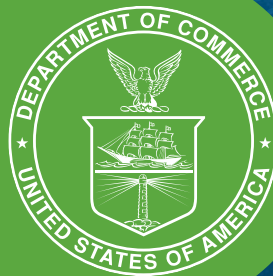
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