

Pursuant to Executive Order 14091 (February 16, 2023) on  
"Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for  
Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government"

## 2023 Equity Action Plan Summary

# U.S. Department of Justice

### Delivering equity through DOJ

Every day, the 40 components and more than 115,000 employees of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) work to fulfill its mission to uphold the rule of law, to keep our country safe, and to protect civil rights. Embedded within that mission is a core principle of advancing equal justice under law. Established during Reconstruction, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the Department's first major enforcement efforts aimed to secure the civil rights promised by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. Since then, the Department has worked to ensure that no individuals are denied the freedoms and protections guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws of the United States.

## New strategies to advance equity

DOJ has identified five areas of focus for its 2023 Equity Action Plan. DOJ will continue to engage the public on these action areas, its progress, and next steps throughout the year and beyond.

**1. Improve access to funding opportunities for organizations that are led by, and that primarily serve, historically marginalized and underserved communities that have faced societal and systemic barriers in accessing and receiving federal resources, as well as to communities disproportionately impacted by crime, violence, and victimization.** *Historically marginalized and underserved communities – and those communities disproportionately impacted by crime, violence, and victimization – face significant barriers in identifying and accessing federal funding sources and available technical assistance. These barriers include a lack of sustained outreach to inform these communities about available federal funding and technical assistance opportunities; a lack of resources and training to navigate complex federal grant application processes and recordkeeping obligations in some population-specific organizations; and a lack of trust in federal agencies or negative past experiences interfacing with government partners on the part of some population-specific organizations. These barriers not only impact the ability of these communities to secure funding but can exacerbate negative criminal justice outcomes. To address these barriers and others, DOJ will:*

- Simplify DOJ's grantmaking application process, through enhanced application assistance support, the elimination of unnecessary application requirements, and the increased use of plain language in solicitations.

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- Offer webinars to potential applicants to walk through the award programs and their specific application requirements.
- Ensure that the needs of historically marginalized and underserved communities are considered in the grantmaking process requirements.
- Employ several flexible funding models to support organizations at different stages of growth, including by offering planning grants for new organizations, capacity-building grants for expanding organizations, implementation grants for established entities, and intermediary funding models that provide subawards and capacity-building technical assistance to community-based organizations.

**2. Support corrections and reentry programs that seek to reduce recidivism and improve health and economic justice outcomes for justice-involved individuals.** *Justice-involved persons face significant barriers to successful reentry and often return to their communities without meaningful opportunities to secure housing, employment, healthcare, and other key resources. Such challenges can lead to desperation, despair, and recidivism. For instance, formerly incarcerated people face difficulty acquiring state-issued identification cards when reentering society because many of them do not have necessary proof of identity or residency documents upon release and the prison or jail records they do have are not accepted by state agencies. Lack of state-issued identification is a substantial barrier to successful reentry because it can prevent individuals from accessing critical physical and mental health wraparound resources and supports, housing, employment, and other benefits. Also, many formerly incarcerated people are burdened by debt from court-issued fines and fees as they seek to reenter society. Fines and fees levied without consideration of ability to pay can prevent individuals*

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*from succeeding upon reentry by causing them to violate the terms of their supervision, inhibit their ability to acquire a driver's license, or create such a financial burden that they are unable to afford housing and other necessities. To address these barriers and others, DOJ will:*

- Develop, in consultation with the Transportation Security Administration and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a Release Identification Card (Card) that returning citizens could use for domestic air travel and to obtain the state-issued identification that is essential to securing housing, employment, healthcare, and other benefits. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is also connecting with state governments to invite partnerships that would allow returning citizens to exchange their Card for state-issued identification.
- Develop, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security, a Release Folder that will be provided to formerly incarcerated persons upon their release. The Release Folder will contain all official documents necessary to obtain a REAL ID compliant identification from the state licensing agency where the formerly incarcerated person intends to reside.
- Provide civil legal services to incarcerated individuals, including services related to debt collection, access to benefits, and child custody matters, in select BOP women's prisons through a pilot program developed by DOJ's Access to Justice (ATJ), the National Institute of Corrections, and the BOP.
- Utilize grant funding to support state and local reentry initiatives focused on providing healthcare access, improving supervision outcomes, and addressing the ability to pay fines and fees post incarceration.

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**3. Promote an inclusive, diverse, and expert law enforcement workforce to strengthen public trust and improve public safety outcomes.**

*When members of the public believe their law enforcement agencies (LEAs) serve and listen to them, it can improve perceptions of police legitimacy and enhance public trust. Law enforcement leaders acknowledge the importance of increasing racial, ethnic, language, and gender diversity in their agencies. But hiring and promotional assessments, internal processes, recruitment strategies, and organizational policies can exacerbate the lack of diversity in the ranks by failing to adequately capture the value of and sufficiently meet the unique needs of officers from diverse backgrounds. Federal, state, and local agencies often lack the support and resources necessary to attract, hire, and retain a qualified and diverse workforce. To address these barriers and others, DOJ will:*

- Fund several research projects through the DOJ's National Institute of Justice on recruiting and retaining officers, reflecting historically marginalized communities and those underrepresented in law enforcement.
- Strengthen ties between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Black community through the FBI's Beacon Project. This program includes hosting national and regional conferences comprised of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) leadership and FBI executives to build long-term relationships and address the difficult history between the FBI and the Black community.

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**4. Improve the response of law enforcement and criminal justice personnel to crimes that disproportionately affect women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming people.**

*Women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming persons often face barriers in obtaining equitable treatment and receiving trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and victim-centered services from LEAs. Barriers to access to services leave women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming persons vulnerable to victimization and criminalization and can further isolate them from the information and resources necessary to heal. To address these barriers and others, DOJ will:*

- Increase awareness of federal laws and programs that address gender-based violence, support collaborations with community partners, and mitigate deficiencies and biases that may negatively impact the successful implementation of community-driven responses to gender-based violence.
- Adopt a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to prevent and address hate crimes through its grant programs, which support law enforcement and state-based efforts to increase victim reporting, as well as state, Tribal, and local law enforcement and prosecution agencies and their partners in conducting outreach and education and improving the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.
- Prioritize crimes against women, youth, and children, including evaluating the use of trained multidisciplinary teams for sexual assault and domestic violence cases in Indian country.

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- Provide training for institution staff who may interact with incarcerated victims of human trafficking on applying a victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approach.
- Establish a National Resource Center on Cybercrimes Against Individuals, which will provide grants for training and support to state, Tribal, and local law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial personnel to assist victims of cybercrimes.

**5. Ensure that underserved communities (including people with limited English proficiency (LEP) and people with disabilities, among others)) are aware of and able to access legal services to address environmental crime, pollution, climate change, and other environmental hazards and have help navigating the legal and regulatory landscape necessary to secure access to clean water, air, and other natural resources.** Historically marginalized and underserved communities, including communities of color, Tribal and Indigenous communities, and individuals living in low-income communities, often bear the greatest burdens of harm caused by environmental crime, pollution, climate change and climate-related disasters, and other environmental hazards. In the face of persistent and pernicious environmental and climate-related challenges, these communities often experience significant barriers to access, including with respect to communications that use technical or specialized jargon; lack of legal assistance and information regarding one's rights and supports available; lack of linguistically and culturally responsive outreach and engagement efforts; lack of translated materials (both in print and digital formats); and community engagement lacking language interpretation, sign language interpretation, or auxiliary aids. To address these barriers and others, DOJ will:

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- Promote meaningful engagement in implementing the Department's Comprehensive Environmental Justice Enforcement Strategy by partnering with historically marginalized and underserved persons, communities with LEP, and those with disabilities who are experiencing justice and climate-related concerns.
- Translate select materials and websites into the non-English languages likely to be most frequently spoken by communities with environmental justice concerns.
- Increase awareness of environmental justice enforcement and funding tools among legal service providers, who are often the first line of defense for communities with environmental justice concerns.
- Support this effort by applying the expertise of the Department's Community Relations Service in facilitating community engagement, mediation, and dialogue to help community groups meaningfully participate in decision-making processes focused on environmental justice concerns.
- Hold additional regionally focused summits by the Department's Environmental and Natural Resources Division and Office of Tribal Justice to facilitate engagement between federal and Tribal representatives.



## What DOJ accomplished

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

- ***Strengthened efforts to ensure compliance and enforcement of non-discrimination laws.***

DOJ's Civil Rights Division and Office of Justice Programs created and co-chair a Compliance Working Group to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of these statutes, issue public guidance, revise internal standards, update tools and resources, and conduct public outreach.

- ***Enhanced language access for individuals with LEP.***

In May 2022, DOJ hired its first-ever Language Access Coordinator. In August 2023, the Department also released its updated Language Access Plan, which improves translation and interpretation services, promotes quality assurance of those services, and expands the range of tools available to serve the public.

- ***Combated hate crimes and hate incidents.***

As of September 2023, DOJ launched the [United Against Hate](#) program in all 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices to help improve the reporting of hate crimes by informing communities on how to identify, report, and help prevent hate crimes, and to encourage trust building between law enforcement and communities.

What DOJ accomplished

- ***Combatted sexual misconduct and gender-based violence.***  
DOJ has also produced a report related to sexual misconduct by BOP employees, which offers actionable recommendations to improve procedures for victim reporting, ensure survivors do not experience penalties for reporting, enhance reporting options for third parties, and prioritize investigations and prosecutions of BOP employees who commit sexual misconduct.
- ***Improved access to DOJ programs and services.***  
In 2022 and 2023, the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable, a 28-federal agency collaboration, co-chaired by the Attorney General and White House Counsel's Office and led and staffed by DOJ's ATJ, engaged with legal aid and other stakeholders to inform its activities. The purpose of the engagement was to better understand the barriers and opportunities to make federal government programs and services more accessible and equitable and increase all people's ability to obtain just outcomes.