U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE EQUITY ACTION PLAN

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

U.S. Department of Commerce

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Cabinet-Level Equity Action Plan

Submitted to the
Domestic Policy Council and Office of Management and Budget

Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government was introduced on January 20, 2021. As a first action item in support of this executive order, Department of Commerce submitted the "Department of Commerce 200-Day Assessment Report" on August 9, 2021 – which was met with department-specific and general feedback from the Office of Management and Budget on September 22, 2021.

This document, per Executive Order 13985, contains the Department of Commerce Equity Action Plan to meaningfully address the barriers and opportunities identified through the cabinet-level agency's equity assessment, which includes action items at the subcomponent level. This document will be used to help set public expectations and promote accountability as the agency develops its longer-term equity implementation strategy.

Department of Commerce Subcomponent Bureaus

Bureau of Economic Analysis	*National Institute of Standards and Technology*
Bureau of Industry and Security	*National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*
U.S. Census Bureau	*National Technical Information Service*
Economic Development Administration	*National Telecommunications and Information Administration*
Office of the Undersecretary for Economic Affairs	*U.S. Patent and Trademark Office*
International Trade Administration	*Office of the Secretary*
Minority Business Development Agency	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC or Department) plays a critical role in driving U.S. competitiveness. The Department has long declared that its mission is "to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity." In the FY 22-FY26 *Department of Commerce Strategic Plan,* DOC Secretary Gina Raimondo commits the Department to a new mission statement: "to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity *for all communities*." The addition acknowledges that global competitiveness and sustained economic growth require that all communities have an opportunity to participate in the 21st Century economy. In short, inclusive growth is good economics. We fail to meet our full potential as a nation unless we harness the talents and strengths of all parts of the country, including women, people of color, and others who are too often left behind.

In pursuit of the new mission, the Department will drive both external-facing efforts to empower underserved communities in the economy and internal efforts to build a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible organization.

The following plan focuses on the Department's commitments to *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government*, as directed by Executive Order (EO) 13985. The EO called for federal agencies to assess whether underserved communities face systemic barriers in equitably accessing services and develop a plan for addressing any barriers that were identified through an equity assessment.

The Department of Commerce has laid the foundation for programing and policies that will reach a larger and more diverse audience, and address key barriers to economic success for historically underserved communities. Department leadership is committed to incorporating equity into every stream of work. In this report, we highlight three broad goals. Using the range of Commerce tools, from economic development dollars, to export promotion and business counseling, to data and technology knowledge, the Department will:

- **Build innovation ecosystems in historically underserved communities**.
  - *Equity Action #1: Close the digital divide:* Through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the Department will lead the Administration's efforts to bring reliable, affordable, high speed internet access to all Americans. NTIA will measure success both in terms of access and adoption, ensuring the broadband investments effectively connect millions of underserved Americans to the innovation economy.
  - *Equity Action #2: Ensure community development dollars advance racial equity and support underserved communities*: Through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), the Economic Development Administration (EDA) received funding commensurate with its ambitious goals – to transform communities across America – spurring job creation, entrepreneurship, and innovation. In this new chapter, EDA has explicitly prioritized equity, ensuring investment dollars reach communities of color and rural communities that have been historically underserved.
- **Grow businesses in underserved communities:**
  - *Equity Action # 3: Grow Minority Business Enterprises (MBE):* Through the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), authorized for the first time under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Department of Commerce will support MBEs through technical assistance, access to capital, and access to contracts. MBDA will measure success by growth in revenue and employment of the MBEs served.

- o *Equity Action #4: Strengthen small businesses in underserved communities by helping them be successful exporters:* Through the International Trade Administration (ITA), the Department will double the number of businesses that receive export support services, prioritizing those from historically underserved communities. Through this initiative, ITA will increase business resilience, growth, and employment.
- **Make Department of Commerce services, science, and data more accessible**
  - o *Equity Action #5: Increase access to the patent and trademark systems for inventors and entrepreneurs from historically underserved communities:* The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) will increase engagement, expand training and increase pro bono services in order to expand access to the U.S. patent system. Expanding opportunity for all entrepreneurs will increase support for new business growth and enhance domestic competitiveness.
  - o *Equity Action #6: Make Department of Commerce science and data more findable, accessible, and usable:* Underserved communities face significant barriers in accessing the Department's data and science programs. To ensure all communities benefit from these resources, the Department is engaged in both bureau-specific and cross-department efforts to engage new stakeholders and develop new tools.

BACKGROUND:

On January 20, 2021, the President issued EO 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, calling for federal agencies to assess whether underserved communities face systemic barriers in equitably accessing services and develop a plan for addressing any barriers that were identified through an equity assessment. As a first action item in support of this executive order, DOC submitted the "Department of Commerce 200-Day Assessment Report" on August 9, 2021.

This assessment includes the following five pillars that are designed to guide the Department's commitment to creating a more equitable and inclusive economy:

1. **Investments:** Support minority entrepreneurs through technical assistance and access to capital to nurture their companies at critical stages of development and growth.
2. **Capabilities and Knowledge Sharing**: Develop tools and resources for minority entrepreneurs to successfully operate their companies.
3. **Opportunities**: Create funding, training, and technical assistance programs and establish partnerships so that underrepresented groups can contribute to the emerging technologies space.
4. **People**: Ensure people and families can thrive in their communities by realizing gains from their participation in the economy.
5. **Service Delivery**: Ensure department services are data-driven and strengthened to meet the needs of underrepresented groups.

As an immediate response to the assessment, the Department launched the DOC Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council (Council), also known as the DOC Equity Council, which is chaired by the Deputy Secretary and includes cross-bureau representation on the following committees:

- Accessibility
- Environmental Justice
- Gender
- LGBTQIA+

- Measurement
- Race and Ethnicity
- Underserved Communities and Businesses
- Workplace Culture.

The Council demonstrates senior leadership's commitment to cultivating a culture of fairness that is cross-cutting against both internal and external service delivery areas. The various committees will also help to ensure strategic alignment with other key EOs, such as EO 14035 on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce.

SUMMARY OF EARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since the release of EO 13985 on January 20, 2021, the Department has worked to address barriers to services through implementation of legislation and program design, and broad efforts to expand access and outreach to our core Department services.

Build innovation ecosystems in historically underserved communities.

- *NTIA:* Launched the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives (OMBI), to expand NTIA's reach to engage Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and their surrounding anchor communities. OMBI sits within NTIA's Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth (OICG) and was authorized by Section 902 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.
- *NTIA:* As part of its Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP), NTIA provided technical assistance webinars, tribal consultations, and direct outreach to individual, regional, and national tribal organizations. NTIA reached more than 300 tribes, prioritizing those with limited or inadequate access to broadband. This outreach resulted in over 300 applications representing more than 450 Federally recognized tribes and requesting nearly $6 billion in funds—more than 6 times the $980 million available. Separately, NTIA helped over 1,000 participants prepare as potential applicants for the Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) Pilot Program, which received more than 200 applications with requests totaling approximately $833 million in funding (with $268 million available).
- *USPTO:* Chaired by the Secretary of Commerce, the newly launched Council for Inclusive Innovation (CI^2) is designed to help develop a comprehensive national strategy to build a more inclusive innovation ecosystem.

Grow businesses in underserved communities.

- *MBDA*: On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Minority Business Development Act of 2021 (Division K – Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act PL. 117-58). The Act codifies the Minority Business Development Agency within the Department of Commerce and appoints an Under Secretary to lead MBDA. The Act establishes MBDA's mission to support and grow MBEs. It also calls upon MBDA to establish new regional offices, reach rural communities, establish an advisory council, and serve as federal coordination hub of all MBE-related federal programs, and conduct research and information pertaining to MBEs.
- *MBDA:* In FY20, MBDA invested approximately $10M under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act through thirty (30) awards to business and specialty centers and minority chambers of commerce. These awards provide education, training, and advising to small, minority-owned enterprises (SMEs) in their recovery efforts. In FY 21, MBDA received

$25M in Coronavirus Response & Relief funding under the Consolidated Appropriations Act. MBDA is deploying these funds to its existing business and specialty centers to assist MBEs with preventing, preparing for, and responding to coronavirus in their recovery from the effects of COVID-19 crisis.

- *ITA*: Through the new Global Diversity Export Initiative (GDEI), ITA provides export assistance to U.S. businesses from underserved communities across America. ITA is uniquely positioned to leverage its network of trade professionals across the United States and around the world, as well as partner with national, regional, and local minority chambers of commerce, to help more businesses in underserved communities to identify export opportunities, access financing, and connect with potential international buyers and partners. Since its launch, ITA has selected a GDEI team lead to coordinate ITA's underserved community export efforts, signed strategic partnerships with key community stakeholders, and conducted a series of educational webinars and programs for outreach across the country.

- *National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST):* Through the "Enhancing Diversity in Manufacturing" competitive award, four Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) centers will increase student participation in industry internships across Minority-Serving Institutions–placing up to eight (8) interns in the first year and up to sixteen (16) interns in the second year.

Make Department of Commerce services, science, and data more accessible.

- *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA):* NOAA amended Sea Grant Program communications to use more inclusive language. The National Sea Grant Advisory Board established a sub-committee on social justice and resiliency.

- *Census Bureau:* Census launched a new 'Data for Equity' website on Census.gov) and added an Equity page on the COVID-19 Data Hub Census COVID-19 Data Hub to provide easy access to equity-focused tools. The tools allow users quick access to census county and tract data on social vulnerability and equity gaps from the Census Bureau's Community Resilience Estimates, the American Community Survey (ACS), the Census Planning Database, Census Business Builder, and Opportunity Atlas. Various federal agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Agriculture (USDA) have utilized these data equity tools and training materials.

ACTION PLANS:

The Department of Commerce is committed to building on the above progress to advance its new mission: "to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity for all communities."

Equity Action #1: Closing the digital divide

Barrier to equitable outcomes: Broadband is an engine for opportunity in the modern economy and a necessary foundation for inclusive growth. It can close geographic and economic gaps between rural and urban areas, transform distressed areas, drive global competitiveness, and increase national economic resiliency. Further, broadband is an essential component of modern life and has become a requirement to participate equally in education, employment, health care, and public safety services. Indeed, for many, broadband literally kept families connected to their jobs and schools through the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet many Americans—and disproportionately those living in rural areas, on Tribal lands, and in communities of color—do not have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband, nor the tools to use such services, and to this day, in 2022, a digital divide persists. Maximizing broadband coverage and its meaningful use is imperative for national and individual success. The

Department seeks to address these digital inequalities to promote not only the availability of reliable, affordable high speed broadband access but also the adoption and meaningful use of broadband for all Americans.

- Disproportionate broadband access: The Federal Communications Commission has been tasked with developing broadband maps which will identify on a location-by-location basis the number of households unserved by highspeed internet infrastructure. Using the current maps, we estimate that more than 30 million Americans live in areas where there is no broadband infrastructure that provides minimally acceptable speeds – a particular problem in rural communities and on Tribal lands.
- Disproportionate broadband adoption: According to the NTIA Internet Use Survey, 26% of Americans did not use the internet from home in 2019; however, for certain populations, the number was much higher: 32% of rural households did not use the internet at home, 33% of African American households did not use the internet at home, and 43% of low-income households (less than $25K/year) did not use the internet at home. According to the American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2019, only 69% of households on federal Trust lands had a broadband subscription at home.

Action and intended impact: To chart a path toward universal broadband access, affordability, and adoption, the Department will administer nearly $50B in grant funds through NTIA to invest in broadband infrastructure deployment, affordability, and digital inclusion efforts. The Department will focus its investments, outreach, and related technical assistance on those communities and other areas of the Nation that have largely been left behind in the digital revolution to ensure that all American's have an opportunity to participate equitably in the modern digital economy. NTIA will:

- Expand universal access through state and territory broadband grants**:** Through State and territory programs, NTIA will facilitate broadband infrastructure investments and grant programs focused on developing actionable plans for the respective communities to close the digital divide. In addition to building physical infrastructure in communities currently lacking reliable, affordable, high speed broadband, these grant programs will promote community engagement, requiring awardees to focus on those communities with the greatest needs, including Tribal nations, to provide input and insight on community broadband needs and initiatives to deploy broadband infrastructure in areas without broadband, but also to support the adoption of and meaningful use of broadband.
  - Broadband equity, access, and deployment (BEAD) program: NTIA will distribute $42.45B among states, territories, D.C., and Puerto Rico for projects that support broadband infrastructure deployment and adoption. Eligible entities will receive initial funds to support broadband planning and related capacity efforts, from mapping, staffing state/territory broadband offices, to outreach and coordination with local communities. In the near term, NTIA will administer funds to support 56 states and territories with the development of Five-Year Broadband Action Plans to outline the respective State/Territory's efforts to close the digital divide. These plans must address local and community needs, including those of Tribal nations; identify those areas that need to be prioritized for Federal broadband investment; and propose solutions for the deployment of reliable, affordable, high speed broadband within that state/territory. After this planning phase and once the FCC releases location-based mapping of broadband availability, the remaining funding will be allocated based on a formula that considers the number of unserved and high-cost locations in the state. States and territories will then propose projects that meet the statutory priorities,

the first priority being funding to provide broadband to unserved areas (those below 25/3 Mbps), followed by underserved areas (those below 100/20 Mbps), and then serving community anchor institutions (1/1 Gbps).

- o <u>Enabling middle mile broadband infrastructure program:</u> NTIA will distribute $1B to expand and extend middle mile infrastructure to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas to the internet backbone.
- o <u>Digital equity act:</u> NTIA will distribute $2.75B to states and territories to promote digital inclusion and ensure all individuals and communities have the opportunity to acquire the same skills, technology, and capacity needed to engage in the nation's digital economy. In the near term, NTIA will administer the $60M State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program to support the development of Digital Equity Plans for all 50 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. These plans will require awardees to develop digital equity and inclusion plans and mechanisms to support broadband adoption and use across specific covered populations, including but not limited to communities of color, rural communities, and Tribal communities, inclusive of aging individuals, incarcerated people, veterans, people with disabilities, speakers of diverse languages, and low literacy populations. Once the planning phase concludes, NTIA will administer the $1.44B State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, a formula grant program for states and territories to implement their Digital Equity Plans. Finally, NTIA will administer the $1.25B Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program for specific political subdivisions to implement digital equity projects.
- o In the upcoming planning periods for both the BEAD Program and the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program, NTIA will provide proactive one-to-many and one-on-one technical assistance to states and territories to support their planning efforts. This includes specific technical assistance to support outreach and engagement with communities of color, rural communities, Tribal communities, and vulnerable populations to ensure planning efforts are inclusive and equitable.

- **Expand affordable and reliable access to high speed broadband service through direct grants:** Through its Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP), Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) Pilot Program, and Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP), NTIA will administer more than $1.5B in grant awards for projects in areas without broadband service to provide at least 330,000 households with reliable and affordable access to high speed internet service and provide grants to HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs to promote broadband adoption and use in their respective communities. In addition, through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, NTIA received an additional $2B to support the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.
  - o Through the TBCP, NTIA will fund projects that will provide more than 200,000 Tribal households with either reliable, affordable high-speed broadband access or subsidized or free broadband access.
  - o Through the BIP, NTIA is funding reliable, affordable high speed broadband infrastructure deployment to more than 130,000 homes in predominantly rural areas.
  - o Through the CMC Pilot Program, NTIA will award $268M in grant funding to HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs for the purchase of broadband internet access service and eligible equipment or to hire and train information technology personnel. NTIA will provide metrics to track intended outcomes by May 2022, once all grant awards have been made.
  - o NTIA will provide on-going technical assistance support to all awardees to successfully implement their projects and to realize the intended outcomes.

Tracking progress: NTIA will track its progress towards eliminating the digital divide by collecting performance and results data for grant-funded projects, such as TBCP, BIP, CMC. These data points will include but are not limited to the numbers of homes or locations passed by broadband, number of individuals or households receiving subsidized or free broadband services, and number of training hours provided to communities. NTIA will track the completion and submission of the State and Territory Digital Equity Plans and the Five-Year Broadband Action Plans. NTIA also will track its efforts to provide technical assistance to support all grant-funded efforts, from infrastructure deployment to planning and engagement with communities with the greatest broadband need. For planning grants, NTIA will be able to track results and success of planning efforts through the state and territory selection of subgrants for broadband infrastructure deployment in the BEAD Program and digital inclusion and equity projects in the state capacity grants for digital equity – representing a combined total of $42B in funding. Further, in 5-7 years from grant award, NTIA will be able to conduct an economic impact analysis for areas in which the Department invested funds for broadband efforts to assess its impact, from access and adoption, through improved economic, health, and educational outcomes.

Accountability: The Department, acting through NTIA, intends to hold itself accountable by developing comprehensive plans, to include milestones for critical activities needed to support the successful implementation of its grant programs and technical assistance. NTIA will also conduct proactive outreach and engagement with communities of color, rural communities, and Tribal communities, as well as groups representing vulnerable populations to ensure understanding of their unique community needs, identify any associated barriers to promote their engagement with NTIA's programs, and obtain feedback on how NTIA could further support their communities.

Equity Action #2: Ensure economic development dollars advance racial equity and support underserved communities:

Barriers to equitable outcomes: Currently, underserved communities, particularly communities of color and rural communities, face several barriers when it comes to economic development and job creation. First, underserved communities face a legacy of discrimination in private lending, lower levels of wealth, and other systemic inequities that cannot be ignored by any policy maker. Second, many underserved communities are not aware of funding opportunities, such as grant programs to support economic development or technical assistance to aid in developing or implementing an economic plan. Third, many underserved communities lack capacity to effectively develop and/or implement an economic development plan. Even with sufficient funding, underserved communities often face inadequate access to resources, technical assistance, or networks needed to effectively carry out their plans. Lastly, economic opportunities or programs may unintentionally disadvantage these communities, which may stem from how these opportunities, programs, and/or services are designed, delivered, marketed, or evaluated. These are all barriers EDA aims to help overcome through more intentional program design, outreach, evaluation of programs and technical assistance.

Actions and intended impact: To effectively advance equity, EDA is aiming to ensure the benefits achieved through its programs are equitably realized by all communities, including underserved communities, such as communities of color and rural communities. Specifically, EDA will track measures including but not limited to the following:
- Estimated jobs created and retained for underserved populations and geographies.
- Private investment funds leveraged for underserved populations and geographies.
- Total sum of funding secured by entrepreneurs in underserved population and geographies.

EDA sets Investment Priorities to provide an overarching framework to ensure its grant investment portfolio supports regional economies to prosper and become more resilient. In 2021, EDA revised its Investment Priorities to align with the Biden-Harris Administration Management Agenda. At the top of the list of these priorities is Equity, which EDA defines as follows: "Economic development planning or implementation projects that advance equity across America through investments that directly benefit 1) one or more traditionally underserved populations, including but not limited to women, Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders, or 2) underserved communities within geographies that have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity such as Tribal Lands, Persistent Poverty Counties, and rural areas with demonstrated, historical underservice." This definition closely aligns with EO 13985 on "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government".

To achieve the stated impact of raising wages, creating jobs and expanding business ownership in underserved communities, EDA has adopted specific measures across the historic $3B in funding for American Rescue Plan (ARP) programs. This investment will support bottom-up economic development focused on advancing equity, creating good-paying jobs, helping workers to develop in-demand skills, building economic resilience, and accelerating the economic recovery for the industries and communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, EDA is prioritizing equity through:

- Design programs with a focus on equity: EDA will ensure intentionality in the design of programs and Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) to appropriately signal and stress the importance of equity and diversity in the programs it will ultimately fund.
- Conduct outreach and engagement across underserved communities: EDA will leverage the success of its 50+ webinars that have been conducted on ARP Programs that have reached over 22,000 Americans as it continues to develop strategies with a deliberate focus on reaching underserved communities by partnering with different government and external parties to help reach these communities.
- Evaluate NOFOs with a focus on equity: EDA will make equity a prominent evaluation criterion in NOFOs, recruit and select a diverse group of experienced, qualified reviewers, and take a portfolio approach, particularly with the Build Back Better Regional Challenge and Good Jobs Challenge, to ensure diversity across various dimensions, such as but not limited to geography, industry, underserved community, vulnerable population, and entity type.
- Deliver technical assistance with a focus on equity: EDA will award grants to entities to provide technical assistance to grantees, particularly from underserved communities, to help ensure their success and execute against equity priorities.

Tracking progress: EDA has set equity goals for each ARP program and will track progress toward those outcomes moving forward.

- Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC): The BBBRC provides transformative investments – up to $100M per grantee – to develop and strengthen regional industry clusters across the country, all while embracing economic equity, creating good-paying jobs, and enhancing U.S. competitiveness globally. EDA has funded a specific technical assistance partner for the BBBRC that is solely focused on equity and will be training all 60 finalists on how to advance equity more effectively in their coalitions. EDA will track its progress against the BBBRC by measuring estimated jobs created and retained for underserved communities and geographies, private investment funds leveraged by underserved communities and geographies, and total sum of funding secured by entrepreneurs in these communities. The bureau also intends to award a

grant to a research provider to measure short and long-term impacts of its programs, specifically for underserved communities.

- Good Jobs Challenge: The Good Jobs Challenge aims to get Americans, particularly those from underserved communities, back to work by building and strengthening systems and partnerships that bring together employers who have hiring needs with other key entities to train workers with in-demand skills that lead to good-paying jobs. Equity is a key evaluation criterion, as evidenced through the following language: "The extent to which the application articulates a plan for ensuring that the project's benefits are shared across all affected communities and fairly between employers and workers. This includes the extent to which the application demonstrates the ability to serve trainees that benefit from federal and state programs like SNAP, TANF, and WIC." EDA will track its progress against the Good Jobs Challenge by measuring workforce development outcomes, such as metrics associated with recruits, jobs, wages, which will be assessed by key demographics. The bureau is in the process of finalizing these metrics and also intends to award a grant to a research provider to measure short and long-term impacts of its programs, specifically for underserved communities.

- Coal Communities Commitment: EDA has committed $300M of its $3B in ARP funding to coal communities, including $100M from the BBBRC and $200M from its Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity due to transitioning energy markets and inadequate resources for workers and communities affected by these changes. Additionally, EDA hired a Coal Communities Coordinator at the end of 2021 to focus on outreach, building capacity and technical assistance for coal communities. EDA will track its progress against the Coal Communities Commitment by measuring estimated jobs created and retained for coal communities, private investment funds leveraged by coal communities, and total sum of funding secured by entrepreneurs in coal communities. The bureau also intends to award a grant to a research provider to measure short and long-term impacts of its programs, specifically for coal communities.

- Indigenous Communities Challenge: EDA has allocated $100M of its $3B in ARP funding to the Indigenous Communities Challenge designed to fund a wide range of economic development activities for Tribal communities, which have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity. Additionally, EDA hired an Indigenous Communities Coordinator in Fall 2021 to focus on outreach, building capacity, and technical assistance for indigenous communities. EDA will track its progress against the Indigenous Communities Challenge by measuring estimated jobs created and retained for Tribal communities, private investment funds leveraged by Tribal communities, and total sum of funding secured by entrepreneurs in Tribal communities. The bureau also intends to award a grant to a research provider to measure short and long-term impacts of its programs, specifically for Tribal communities.

Accountability: EDA will make public the deliverables and outcomes of the research it funds through its Research, Networks & Technical Assistance grants, as well as relevant metrics and measurements compiled from grantees during the period of performance.

Equity Action #3: Grow minority business enterprises

Barriers to equitable outcomes: Growing minority businesses enterprises (MBEs) can help reduce the racial wealth gap, increase employment and opportunity in majority-minority communities, and increase U.S. economic competitiveness. However, MBEs face systematic barriers to growth in the U.S. economy, which ultimately stymie the growth of the U.S. economy and its competitiveness. By 2044, minorities

will be the majority of the U.S. population, and minority workers and MBEs will represent a significant and growing share of the economy. But, according to a recent MBDA study, GDP contributions of employer MBEs will not catch up to the contributions of non-minority businesses until 2059, potentially leading to a persistent loss of $5.3T to the U.S. economy per year, or about 11% of the total economy. It is an economic imperative to grow MBEs and dismantle barriers to access economic opportunities.

- <u>Disproportionate impact from COVID-19</u>: From February to April 2020, the number of active African American-owned businesses dropped 41%, Latino business ownership fell by 32%, and Asian American business ownership dropped by 26%, compared to a 17% decline for white business owners. In 2022, the Federal Reserve Bank released a report finding a that 81% of Asian firms,76% of Black firms and 74% of Hispanic firms were in poor financial compared with 55% of non-Hispanic White firms. to non-Hispanic White at 55%.
- <u>Disproportionate access to capital</u>: The most persistent barrier to the establishment, expansion, and growth of MBEs continues to be accessing capital. The U.S. Federal Reserve found that more than half of Black-owned businesses were turned down for loans, a rate twice as high as white business owners. MBEs are more likely than similarly situated white-owned businesses to have been denied credit, less likely to receive the full amount requested, and more likely to be discouraged from applying for credit for their business needs.
- <u>Disproportionate access to contracts:</u> Contracting barriers continue to exist for MBEs at the prime and the subcontractor levels. Examples of barriers include blocked or withheld network access, lack of timely bid notifications, held bids, pre-qualification requirements, bid shopping, and bonding and/or insurance. Small minority-owned firms are statistically less likely to win a federal contract than if they were participating in small business contracting assistance initiatives, such as SBA's 8(a) and HUBZone programs.

Action and intended impact: As a newly authorized bureau, MBDA will seize the moment and serve as an interagency resource to support procurement, provide research and policy guidance to the broader community, and, above all, grow and nurture MBEs. In FY23, MBDA expects a budget increase, allowing the bureau to expand services and reach. A more effective and robust MBDA will build on historic successes.

- <u>Deliver technical assistance:</u> With additional appropriations, MBDA will expand the reach of its Business Center Program to provide more MBEs with one-on-one counseling and technical assistance to grow revenue and increase employment. The centers help MBEs to access capital and assist with procurement, contracting, increasing revenue, and other business needs. Specialty Centers target assistance to specific industries or services such as exporting, advanced manufacturing, and procurement. The Export Centers were created to generate increased financing, contract opportunities, and greater access to new and global markets. For the Advanced Manufacturing Centers, MBDA assesses regulatory changes in manufacturing in domestic and global markets, its economic impact, and needs for minority manufacturers. With needed appropriations, MBDA will launch a Rural Business Center Program, which will tailor the effective business center model to the unique needs of rural MBEs.
- <u>Increase MBE's access to capital</u>: To help MBEs access capital, MBDA will provide technical assistance to MBEs accessing Treasury's the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) program. With the goal of increasing equity funding for MBEs, MBDA will support incubators and programs to help firms develop the necessary networks and experience to pitch investors.

MBDA is finalizing program measures of success, but at a minimum they will include the number of firms served and the number of firms successfully applying for SSBCI and other programs.

- Access to contracts: MBDA will play a critical role in delivering on the Administration's goal of increasing the share of contracts going to small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs) by 50% by 2025 – an unprecedented target projected to translate to an additional $100B to SDBs over five years. To meet this target, the MBDA will utilize its new authority under Title VI, section 100601 of the MBDA Act, to inform, coordinate, and evaluate policies to increase MBE access to and awards of federal procurement opportunities. In this role, MBDA will advocate for equitable procurement practices within the Department of Commerce and across the Federal Government. Because of the bureau's unique perspective and expertise in working with MBEs, the Department was added as a voting member of the Category Management Leadership Council. Through its Federal Procurement Center (FCP), MBDA will provide business services including, but not limited to, developing a pool of federal contracting opportunities; direct matching of opportunities with qualified/vetted MBEs; relationship management and deal sourcing initiatives.

Tracking progress: MBDA seeks to grow MBEs' capacity and revenue, and to support MBE-related jobs. Each program establishes specific metrics of success that track MBE outcomes and impact. MBDA and its network of program operators measure success through metrics such asdollars awarded related to capital and contracts, firms reporting an increase in profit and the number jobs created and retained.

Accountability: With new resources and authority, MBDA's programs will require new accountability mechanisms. MBDA will be run by a newly authorized Senate-confirmed Under-Secretary who will be accountable to the Secretary, President, and U.S. Congress.

Equity Action #4: Strengthen small businesses in underserved communities by helping them be successful exporters

Barrier to Equitable Outcomes: Companies that export are less likely to go bankrupt and more likely to hire more workers and pay higher wages than non-exporters. Historically, small U.S. businesses in underserved communities have had limited awareness of the opportunities and benefits of exporting and have faced greater challenges to growing and adding new jobs. Some of those challenges include the requisite knowledge of export mechanics, financing, foreign legal and regulatory requirements, access to industry-specific market research, and avenues for meeting potential foreign partners and clients.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 Annual Business Survey, there were slightly more than 1M minority-owned employer businesses, yet only 28,500 of those businesses exported goods and services. Rural areas are particularly underserved, and rural communities can be found in all 56 states and territories. Hundreds of small rural cities and towns depend on just a handful of small businesses to provide non-farm employment. However, between 2008 and 2017, the rural labor-force participation rate fell by 4.1 percent. From its post-recession low, rural wage and salary employment has grown at an average annual rate of only 0.5 percent. Because these small rural businesses are located far from information, contacts, gateways, and services that facilitate export success, the Department of Commerce is critical in helping them to pursue export sales.

The Department of Commerce export resources and support could have a significant and long-lasting economic impact on small businesses in underserved communities across the nation. Through the Department's U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service (US&FCS) network of 106 domestic offices, dedicated

trade professionals cover hundreds of cities and rural areas across the nation, providing market intelligence, counseling, programs, and services that broaden the export horizons of small American businesses. The offices and staff have the capacity to connect exporters to US&FCS professionals strategically located at American Embassies and Consulates in 76 countries and to deliver programs, services, and customer-tailored assistance connecting small U.S. businesses to foreign partners and buyers.

Action and intended impact: In March 2021, Secretary Raimondo challenged ITA to double the number of clients assisted in the next two fiscal years. Accordingly, ITA formulated an Agency Priority Goal (APG) to "accelerate its digital transformation to double annual number of clients assisted from 38,000 in FY 2020 to 76,000 in FY 2023, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the nation's underserved communities."

ITA will focus on enhancing its accessibility and assistance to businesses in underserved communities and is targeting to grow the number of unique export clients assisted in underserved communities from approximately 5,700 in FY20 to 11,500 by the end of FY23. ITA's strategy to make its assistance more readily available to businesses in the underserved community includes making improvements to information technology (IT) systems, enhancing its digital content, using omnichannel marketing, and creating dedicated events and services offerings. For example, in FY22 and FY23, ITA committed to:

- Enhance Digital Experience: ITA will implement a digital experience platform to provide clients with personalized access across ITA's digital touchpoints and to enable ITA to capture clients assisted online. ITA will modernize delivery of events and services through best-in-class technology solutions that expand access to ITA's assistance and improve participant tracking. ITA will also improve the quality of digital content and expand the breadth and depth of information available to clients on ITA's website (trade.gov). In addition, ITA will enhance marketing campaigns through IT automation and private-public sector best practices while also expanding outreach to businesses in underserved communities through the Global Diversity Export Initiative (GDEI), Women's Global Trade Empowerment program, and Rural Export Center (REC).
- Enhance GDEI: ITA selected a GDEI team lead to coordinate ITA's underserved community export efforts, established its GDEI website (https://www.trade.gov/global-diversity-export-initiative), and launched GDEI efforts with two educational webinars that drew over 1,000 GDEI U.S. SMEs from across the country.

Tracking progress: ITA is already working on these strategic initiatives and tracking and reporting on its results on a quarterly basis. In FY22 Q1 (the first quarter ITA set targets for assistance to underserved businesses), ITA assisted over 2,000 small businesses in underserved communities and boosted its outreach and assistance to businesses in underserved communities through several key initiatives. ITA will continue to track data and milestones and report its results on a quarterly basis through the OMB's Performance.gov website.

Accountability: ITA's culture upholds transparency and accountability as fundamental principles for exemplary public services. As such, the bureau reports on progress towards its goals for assisting small businesses in underserved communities will be made public on a quarterly basis through OMB's dedicated website.

Equity Action #5: Increase access to the patent and trademark systems for inventors and entrepreneurs from historically underserved communities.

Barriers to equitable outcomes: Patenting is an essential step in the innovation pipeline, allowing entrepreneurs to develop new products and driving the long-term competitiveness of an economy. Entrepreneurs from historically underserved communities often face barriers to obtaining patents. Recent research has demonstrated that the likelihood an individual will patent an innovation is determined by socioeconomic factors like parental wealth, race, gender, and geography. According to a recent study led by researchers at Harvard University, children born into families in the top 1% of income are nearly ten times as the rest of the populations likely to patent an innovation, White individuals are almost three times as likely to hold a patent as individuals who identify as African American and men are more than five times as likely as women to hold a patent. This research suggests that if these "lost Einsteins" patented at similar rates to White men born into families in the top 20% in terms of income, the U.S. would see more than four times as many inventors.

Key barriers to obtaining intellectual property for historically underserved communities include:

- Limited exposure and knowledge of the value of intellectual property (IP) protection and limited experience with the IP system and the programs available to provide support.
- Limitations in local educational curricula or the absence of role models or networks of innovators to provide guidance or aspiration to join the IP ecosystem.
- High cost of obtaining legal assistance from IP practitioners.

Actions and intended impacts: USPTO is undertaking several initiatives to address the barriers to the innovation ecosystem across historically underserved communities. USPTO will:
- Implement or enhance several initiatives to address the lack of exposure to IP information:
    - USPTO will continue to leverage its new Tribal Nations Partnership with the U.S. Department of Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board and not-for-profit Indian Dispute Resolution Service and the Acorn Project to provide online courses to Native American and Alaska Native artists on IP basics and on establishing or expanding their businesses via e-commerce. The class first launched in February 2022.
    - USPTO will launch a pilot program AccessUSPTO, an outreach-based initiative to connect with national organizations with a focus on inclusion, such as the National Organization of Women Business Owners, National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, and National Urban League.
- Expand outreach to students and teachers to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in IP:
    - USPTO will initiate educational programs for HBCUs, TCUs, MSIs, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), women's colleges, and community colleges to provide students and faculty with train-the-trainer IP professional development workshops and students with hands on real world transdisciplinary IP educational opportunities. The modules, which have been successfully used with Howard University, University of Puerto Rico, and University of Houston, will include training on IP basics, best practices for patent and trademark filers, and highlight local resources for independent inventors and small business owners.
    - USPTO will expand its paid internship program for high schoolers to include the addition of a program for college students. These programs will enhance the interns' knowledge of the roles that USPTO and IP play in the innovation ecosystem, as well provide them with firsthand exposure to federal careers in IP.
- Increase stakeholders' knowledge of and access to the IP system:
    - USPTO will implement the Stakeholder Application Readiness Training (StART), a program that provides training on the patent application process to inventors who represent themselves to increase the likelihood that an application will reach an examiner's docket

and receive a decision on patentability. The agency will look for increasing numbers of patent applicants who represent themselves, especially innovators from underserved communities, who complete the application process.

- o USPTO will launch a Customer Ambassador Pilot, in which dedicated bureau personnel will assist a selected group of individual inventors or joint inventors in navigating through the patent application process, especially first-time filers from underserved communities, during the application process.
- o USPTO plans to offer the First-time Filer Expedited Examination Petition, which will allow for a streamlined patent filing experience for first-time inventors to help them understand and navigate the examination process. For some first-time micro entity filers, wait times for the patent application process may act as a barrier, especially for those in underserved geographic and economic areas and more specifically, individuals that are underrepresented in the innovation space, particularly women, people of color, and veterans.

- Spearhead initiatives to support the Council for Inclusive Innovation (CI^2):
  - o USPTO will launch a community outreach program, in which volunteer USPTO employees will serve as IP educational ambassadors who increase IP awareness in their communities, especially historically underserved communities that have not been included in the innovation ecosystem.
  - o USPTO will update its website thru the Expanding Innovation Portal Program to include multi-lingual use and allow users to select information, tools and services based on their level of IP familiarity.
  - o USPTO will provide laptops with pre-loaded IP information to innovators in underserved communities through the Expanding Innovation Laptop Program.

- Alleviate financial barriers to obtaining IP legal assistance:
  - o The Trademark Trial and Appeal Board's (TTAB) Pro Bono Clearinghouse Program established a third-party clearinghouse to connect volunteer attorneys with independent trademark registrants/applicants or small business owners, especially MBEs, who need assistance on IP matters before the Board. The Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB) will also launch a Pro Bono Clearinghouse Program for independent inventors and small business owners.
  - o USPTO will encourage additional law schools, including HBCUs, MSIs and HSIs, to participate in the USPTO Law School Clinic Certification Program as part of the Pro Bono and Patent Practitioner Expansion Programs.

Tracking progress: To track progress on its initiatives, the USPTO has established working groups, specifically the Council for Inclusive Innovation (CI^2), and the Economic Relief Working Group, that continuously monitor the agency's programs and offerings. They also conduct formal quarterly checks of metrics and compare them to program goals, and they evaluate stakeholder feedback.

- IP Exposure and Experience: USPTO will monitor the number of attendees for IP-related courses that are delivered to Native American and Alaska Native artists. The bureau will also measure success by tracking the number of organizations that agree to collaborate with outreach and external engagement efforts, as well as the level of participation in events by their members.
- DEIA in IP: USPTO will rely on participant survey results for educational programs to monitor success among HBCUs, MSIs, and HSIs. The bureau will also measure success with its paid internship programs through feedback from surveys, and with data on the number of students, especially from historically underserved communities, who express a new-found interest in pursuing a career in IP or in becoming inventors or entrepreneurs.

- Stakeholder Engagement with IP System: USPTO will track its progress through increases in the numbers of patent applicants who represent themselves and complete the application process, especially innovators or entrepreneurs from underserved communities. It will also monitor the number of participants with its ambassador program who complete the application process. USPTO will use the number of first-time filer petitions submitted to indicate the initiative's success
- Outreach and External Engagement through CI[2]: USPTO will track the number of educational programs initiated across historically underserved communities and increases in the number of attendees. The bureau will track user feedback and engagement rates for its enhanced website. In addition, it will success with its pre-loaded laptops initiative through the number of laptops distributed and feedback from users regarding their increased understanding of IP and ability to access IP resources and assistance.
- IP Legal Assistance: USPTO will track increases in practitioner participation, as well as the numbers of self-reported pro bono services provided before the TTAB and PTAB. The bureau will also monitor increased representation by participating law schools on IP matters before the TTAB.

Accountability: In addition to measuring progress through the success metrics described above, USPTO will ensure that its programs align with the Biden-Harris Administration's goal to advance equity and evaluate ways to publicly share progress. In addition, quarterly progress reports will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce and USPTO Director.

Equity Action #6: Make Department of Commerce science and data more findable, accessible, and usable.

Barrier to equitable outcomes: The Department is tasked with promoting job creation and economic growth by providing the data necessary to support commerce and constitutional democracy, fostering innovation by setting standards, conducting foundational research and development, and providing invaluable tools for domestic companies and entrepreneurs. The Department's bureaus and programs are well known to traditional stakeholder groups, most of which have been working with the Department for decades, but the Department recognizes that underserved communities may lack awareness of and/or access to some of its bureaus' programs and services.

Several bureaus have relatively low visibility to the general population and do not have a formal program for outreach and external engagement among underserved communities. Research by the General Services Administration's (GSA) Office of Evaluation of Sciences reports that accessing programming is challenging for individuals, businesses, and communities that have not previously worked with the Federal Government. Burdensome administrative processes further compound issues of accessibility, which may discourage or preclude utilization of programs and services by underserved communities.

Further, the Department identified several gaps that create barriers to the full and fair accessibility to department and bureau-level technological tools across underserved communities. While some bureaus' websites include interactive maps to capture geographic and demographic data, the data isn't granular and is not current enough to capture the impact of the Department's programs and services on the socioeconomic ecosystems in underserved communities. Moreover, some data systems are antiquated and do not enable reporting on progress with targets across these communities.

For example, historically underserved communities – whether rural communities or disinvested urban areas– are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. NOAA, the Federal Government's

provider of critical climate data, has the science resources and the programmatic supports to help historically underserved communities build resilience and prepare for climate shocks already underway, but has identified additional actions needed to ensure data effectively serves relevant communities.

Similarly, NIST serves the nation by providing reference materials and data standards that ensure quality, benchmark performance, and aid domestic manufacturers in remaining competitive in the global economy across a wide range of technology fields. These measurement services typically require users to have in depth technical knowledge in their field to successfully implement the bureau's standards and maximize their value. Therefore, the barrier to equitable outcomes across underserved communities is often knowledge of how to gain access to and optimally utilize the standards – especially for SMEs.

BEA and BIS recognize that the majority of their respective assets have been made primarily available in English. This is a significant barrier to driving both internal and external-facing DEIA-related goals as it presents challenges with effectively engaging underserved communities with multi-lingual populations.

Action and intended impact: The Department will ensure an integrated approach to raising awareness and enhancing accessibility to programs and services through both department and bureau-level objectives. The Department commits to leveraging cross-bureau and strategic partnerships with external groups to drive a robust approach to outreach and engagement among underserved communities. As part of this outreach strategy, the Department will reinstitute its Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Additionally, the Department will deploy social media campaigns to enhance visibility by increasing its digital footprint across targeted audiences – to include promoting the DOC Speakers' Bureau which is designed to disseminate information on available programs and services.

- Prepare a Climate Ready Nation: NOAA will work across multiple programs to enhance community engagement to ensure historically underserved and socially vulnerable communities (HUSVC) can access the data and programs needed to build climate resilience.
  - NOAA's National Weather Service will establish a cohesive Community Engagement Program (CEP) by restructuring existing programs. For example, StormReady will be recast as the Weather-Ready Communities Program to address a broader host of weather hazards that inordinately impact HUSVCs, such as floods, heat, cold, and air quality. The bureau will also establish equity as a requirement for credentialling Weather Ready Nation Ambassadors (WRNA) and will prioritize building the ambassadors' ability to engage targeted communities.
  - NOAA will use recommendations from Climate and Equity Roundtables held in eight regions to complete regional climate and equity pilots to enhance resilience to flooding, heat, coastal inundation, and other climate hazards. The bureau will work more closely with community partners on implementing these pilots to increase participation from HUSVCs in planning and training sessions, as well as to customize the bureau's products and services where appropriate to address place and community-based needs. NOAA will develop a sustainable engagement plan to ensure these pilots can lead to long-term collaboration with vulnerable communities most at risk of climate impacts.
  - NOAA's Climate-Smart Communities Initiative (CSCI), which is currently expected to launch in 2022, will prepare climate adaptation practitioners to work with communities in every state to develop and implement climate resilience plans. These training opportunities help to put equity at the center of these plans by ensuring that HUSVCs receive technical assistance with weather, water, and climate services and have access to useful federal data to supplement locally relevant data. NOAA will continue to work

to increase access to climate-related learning by providing products in both English and Spanish. In addition, NOAA has offered virtual instructor-led trainings for Spanish-speaking audiences using simultaneous translation services.

- o NOAA's Office of Education will continue to run grant and scholarship programs that connect people to climate science and products. These programs have provided opportunities for people to get hands-on experience and training in NOAA-related sciences and use it to pursue careers in related fields and increase community resilience to environmental hazards.

- Measure economic and social vulnerability: Census, which currently collects data across several demographic variables, will continue to use its recently launched CRE for Equity, which is a tool that measures an individual, household or community's capacity to absorb, endure, and recover from the socioeconomic impacts of a disaster. The tool operates as an easy-to-use dashboard that consolidates data to measure social vulnerability. The bureau continues to enhance the tool's application, which includes its use to identify investment priorities to address equity gaps in funding opportunities. Micro-level data from the SBPS, which leveraged ownership data from the Annual Business Survey (ABS), was used to create estimates of the effect of the pandemic on small businesses by owner race, sex, ethnicity, and veteran status.

- Expand access to technology and standards: NIST will continue to provide educational resources to assist new users on reference materials and data standards. The technology areas covered by these services are growing at an unprecedented rate, particularly in fields such as biotechnology, quantum science, artificial intelligence, and climate mitigation. To reduce the barrier for use of NIST standards, the bureau will widen its educational outreach to provide greater penetration across these fields, including participation in new industry forums, conferences, and meetings aimed at underserved communities – particularly emerging SMEs.

- Expand data scientist contracting opportunities: NTIS will continue to leverage its Joint Venture Partnership (JVP) Program to provide innovative data services across the federal landscape by partnering with private, non-profit, and/or academic entities that help to advance federal data priorities. The current partners consist of industry leaders in data discovery, accessibility, usability, interoperability, security, and privacy. NTIS redrafted its request for partners JVP, which included an increased focus on participation among underserved communities. To that end, the bureau also engaged MBDA to encourage participation through direct outreach and engagement at events. In addition to the 10,000 emails that were previously sent, NTIS issued additional notices to communities of interest.

- Use inclusive language to the reach multi-lingual populations: BEA and BIS will continue to produce more documents and data services in other languages as needed to reduce linguistic barriers to utilization – beginning with a focus on Spanish-speaking underserved communities.

Tracking progress: The Department will track its progress based on its ability to create its next generation of technological tools that are not only easily findable, accessible, and usable by underserved communities, but can also help to expand the collection of demographic variables in datasets to better identify these communities.

- NOAA: NOAA will track its progress with outreach and external engagement among underserved communities through a set of metrics, such as the percentage of participants from historically underserved communities with the Citizen Science Program, the number of Weather Ready Nation Ambassadors focused on service equity, and the number of injuries and/or fatalities in HUSVCs following hazardous weather events.

- NIST: NIST has an existing system for tracking requests for its measurement services. However, this system is currently being updated to provide a greater opportunity to measure the reach and impact of NIST programs and/or services to underserved communities, as well as the full fields of science.
- NTIS: NTIS will measure its progress based on the number of new partnerships as part of JVP that help to drive participation among underserved communities.
- BEA: BEA will seek advance input from underserved communities when designing outreach and external engagement strategies.
- BIS: BIS' Export Administration Office will track trends in the utilization of the bureau's programs and/or services across underserved communities in which Spanish is the dominate language. These trends will be measured by the number of export control inquiries that are received after the production of bilingual supporting documents.

Accountability: The Department has embedded the service equity goal in the *FY22-FY26 Department of Commerce Strategic Plan* – which will promote alignment with bureau-level strategies. To help ensure alignment, the DOC Equity Council launched a Race and Ethnicity Committee, which consists of cross-bureau representation, and is charged with driving the development of enterprise-wide equity action plans to ensure accountability at all organizational levels. In addition, the Department will continue its involvement with the Equitable Data Working Group (EDWG), which is a multi-disciplinary body that is charged with advancing a whole-of-government approach through the systematic measurement of inequities across underserved communities to help improve equitable data practices across the Federal Government.