

**U.S. Agency for Global Media
Agency Equity Action Plan – 1/20/22**

Summary

The mission of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) is to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. USAGM networks advance U.S. national interests by providing audiences with accurate news and information that expand perspectives via locally relevant traditional and digital media platforms. USAGM programming opens a window onto democracy in action, in all its richness and complexity, and demonstrates to the world values that reflect our society: freedom, openness, inclusion, democracy, and hope.

USAGM provides news and information in 62 languages to an audience estimated at 394 million people weekly in both open and closed societies across the globe through its five broadcasting entities -- the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, and Middle East Broadcasting Networks – and through the Open Technology Fund, dedicated to advancing internet freedom in the world’s most repressive environments.

USAGM will initially focus its efforts to advance equity and remove barriers for underserved communities in its contracting and procurement activities, and its broadcast programming -- to provide a voice to traditionally underserved communities and to ensure minorities and underserved communities are represented in its programming. We will work to expand reach to, and engagement with, underserved audiences abroad. We will work to ensure inclusivity as we fulfill a mandate to represent a balanced projection of significant American thought and institutions.

Summary of Early Accomplishments

USAGM has: taken initial steps to define underserved communities in the target regions across the globe; begun to identify data required to establish baselines and guide strategies; and recognized the need to establish new qualitative and quantitative measures to gauge progress.

Equity Action Plan

1. Increase Procurement and Contracting Opportunities for Underserved Communities

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

USAGM measures and tracks its progress towards meeting SBA’s government-wide goals annually, including its progress towards meeting SBA’s government-wide socioeconomic contracting goals for businesses owned by Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDB), Women-Owned Small Businesses (WOSB), service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB), small businesses located in Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZones), and Small Business Concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

In FY 2020, USAGM exceeded SBA's government-wide small business contracting goal by 8.71%. In addition, USAGM met and exceeded SBA's government-wide socioeconomic contracting goals for total contracting dollars awarded to WOSBs and to small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Although USAGM made significant progress towards meeting government-wide goals, it did not meet SBA's socioeconomic goal for contract dollars awarded to SDVOSBs and to small businesses located in HUBZones. By not meeting these specific goals, USAGM has created a barrier for SDVOSBs and for small businesses located in HUBZones to have equitable opportunities to compete for federal contracting dollars.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

In response to the Agency's review of barriers and equity in our procurement and contracting opportunities, USAGM will set aside more procurement opportunities for socially disadvantaged small businesses and will work to increase the frequency with which it engages with small disadvantaged businesses. By setting aside more contract opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses and by engaging more with industry, USAGM will reduce the barriers experienced by small disadvantaged businesses when attempting to identify and compete for federal contracting dollars. USAGM will monitor procurement guidance to ensure any new government-wide targets are realized.

C. Tracking Progress

To determine whether efforts are increasing engagement with, and opportunities for, traditionally underserved communities, the Agency will track progress towards these goals by using procurement data obtained from FPDS-NG and use this information to develop monthly, quarterly, and annual reports.

D. Accountability

USAGM will maintain accountability by tracking and reporting progress towards meeting socioeconomic goals on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. Monthly reports are provided to the contracting staff, quarterly reports are provided to the Agency's Senior Procurement Executive for data-based decision-making, and biannual reports will be provided to the CEO. Report outcomes will dictate the need for additional measures or strategic focus.

2. Expand Reach to -- and Engagement with -- Underserved Audiences Abroad

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

A primary goal included in USAGM's draft 2022-2026 strategic plan is to "reach and engage underserved audiences, including women, youth, and marginalized populations." The agency strives to serve the information needs of marginalized populations, including but not limited to women, refugees, religious and ethnic minorities, diaspora communities, people with

disabilities, and sexual minorities. One tool to achieve this objective is to ensure underserved communities are well-represented in USAGM broadcasts – to ensure USAGM programming includes coverage and representation of and about underserved communities in the target region. In FY 2022, USAGM will work with network leadership and research staff to finalize definitions of key underserved communities on a market-by-market basis, and establish metrics for a baseline assessment for engaging underserved demographics.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

While enumerating the key underserved communities relevant to each service across USAGMS's two federal and three non-profit grantee broadcast organizations, USAGM will reflect any related inputs from the EOP working group in the coming months. Quantitative and qualitative metrics will be developed to measure success in reaching defined target communities and providing programming that addresses their information needs.

USAGM will:

- Increase research to understand societal and systemic issues that influence media use by underserved audiences in order to adjust content and delivery decisions.
- Sharpen audience segmentation and targeting to drive content strategies and better address gender and age demographics, as well as psychographic segments.
- Reach out to groups that traditionally have been underserved by news media, including women and youth, as well as refugee communities, with compelling programming that will inform and empower them.
- Increase the visibility in programming of members of underserved groups, especially encouraging participation in programming as authoritative experts.

C. Tracking Progress

During annual language service reviews, USAGM will begin including an assessment of the proportion of programming designed to represent or reach out to underserved audiences as defined in each of its target regions. We will begin to measure audience segments from traditionally underserved communities defined for each service. USAGM will develop related performance goals and measures to gauge reach to, and impact on, those local, traditionally underserved community targets. For example, potential targets could include:

- Increase representation of women in programming, measured by tracking percentage of discretionary guests who are women
- Develop specific programming to increase reach to persons with disabilities, measured by studied qualitative indicators of effectiveness.

D. Accountability

Related post-review action plans will be required by each USAGM broadcast lead and entity head to address findings of research and program reviews. Summary assessment and analysis will be provided by the Office of Policy and Research to the USAGM CEO.

3. Ensure Inclusion of U.S. Underserved Communities when “Telling America’s Story”

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

Both Voice of America (VOA) and Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc. (MBN) are responsible for putting America, Americans, and American policy onto context for its audiences abroad. The VOA charter includes VOA’s responsibility to “represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.”

While there are no perceived barriers to ensuring equitable coverage of U.S. underserved communities as defined by E.O. 13985 in VOA and MBN broadcasts, there may be insufficient data collected to ensure inclusion goals are met. Staffing, assignments, and awareness of underserved communities and concerns could potentially be, but are not yet demonstrated as, barriers.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

To take the first steps to assess inclusion of underserved communities in USAGM-funded programming, current representation proportional goals for audio, video and digital content will be examined or set. Program review measures will be developed to gauge success in meeting the mandate of balanced representation. Inclusive coverage and programming will be – or continue to be – a targeted element of content development. To ensure content creators have a solid understanding of the broad array of underserved communities, including racial and ethnic minorities, that should be considered when telling America’s story, communications and/or training will be developed and delivered.

C. Tracking Progress

During annual language service reviews, USAGM will assess the proportion of programming designed to represent or involve underserved communities. We will track representation of women – and other underserved communities – included as experts or guests on its newscasts and in other recurring informational programs.

D. Accountability

Post-program review action plans will be required by each USAGM network and entity head. Summary assessment and analysis will be provided by the Office of Policy and Research to the USAGM CEO.