



**2023**

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
EQUITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

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## Message from the Secretary

The Department of Labor is deeply committed to improving the well-being of underserved, marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded communities. Through our 2022 Equity Action Plan, we have embarked on a mission to improve the well-being of underserved, marginalized, and excluded communities, advancing (1) enforcement of wage and hour laws; (2) administering and improving the federal-state Unemployment Insurance (UI) system; (3) broadening access to DOL programs, services, and information for workers with limited English proficiency; (4) expanding sector-based training and employment strategies; and (5) diversifying the federal workforce by building new pathways into government apprenticeships. I am proud to say that our ambitious plan is well underway; we've strengthened our partnerships to prevent and address workplace retaliation, provided millions of dollars to States in grants to improve the UI system, created a Centralized Office for Language Access so that our services can reach all workers regardless of language barriers, launched a national online dialogue to strengthen employment and training services, and expanded apprenticeship opportunities across the Department.

The Administration's historic [Executive Orders](#) to advance racial equity through mobilization of Federal resources provides the Department of Labor with an opportunity to deepen our commitments from the previous year while pursuing new avenues to reach underserved and disenfranchised communities. We have created an Agency Equity Team, led by our Chief Diversity and Equity Officer and leaders from across the agency, to embed equity into our agency's strategic documents and policies, including advancing gender equity, support for LGBTQ+ rights, and pursuing environmental justice.

To deepen the equity work we've accomplished, we have researched the barriers the communities we serve face and developed five areas of focus for the 2023 Equity Action Plan: (1) supporting workers in the Southeast United States; (2) ensuring underserved communities have access to good jobs; (3) embedding gender equity into our partnerships and services; (4) improving services for Limited English Proficient individuals; and (5) evaluating procurement practices to advance equity. These focus areas will allow us to improve on the work we've already accomplished by further committing our programmatic, policy, and budget levers to target our most underserved communities.

As Acting Secretary, I've established a goal for Department of Labor agencies to empower all workers in America through modern industrial renaissance policy and enforcement, such as modern industrial strategy, robust enforcement of worker protection laws, and supporting workers' right to organize and collectively bargain. Our continued success will be achieved when equity has become a fundamental part of all agency functions, including hiring, outreach, training, mission, execution, measurement and assessment, and policymaking. Embedding equity means valuing and embracing diversity; ensuring that diverse voices, perspectives, and talents are included and represented in decision-making processes, workplaces, and with recognition of the multiple and overlapping identities held by workers in communities that DOL serves. Advancing equity aligns with the principles of human rights and equality; it is crucial for

building a more just, inclusive, and prosperous workforce where everyone has the chance to reach their full potential.

Data has shown that advancing equity leads to economic growth for everyone. When underserved individuals and communities are given the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, it boosts productivity, innovation, and overall economic well-being, which in turn reduces income inequality and poverty rates. Through its levers, DOL is committed to using its efforts to promote the economic and social wellbeing of all workers.

Moving Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Su". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Julie Su  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Labor

## **Advancing Equity Through the Department of Labor’s Mission**

*The U.S. Department of Labor’s mission is to “foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.” Equal opportunity is the bedrock of American democracy, and our diversity is one of our country’s greatest strengths. However, for too many, the American Dream remains out of reach. Entrenched disparities in our laws and public policies, and in our public and private institutions, have often denied that equal opportunity to individuals and communities, leaving some workers more vulnerable to injury, discrimination, exploitation, or abuse. To continue to improve working conditions for all workers, DOL must embed equity in a sustainable manner that recognizes the multiple and overlapping identities held by workers and with input from the communities DOL serves.*

### **Executive Summary**

The U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL, the Department) mission to foster and improve the welfare and conditions of all workers translates into four core functions: (1) worker protection; (2) benefits administration; (3) workforce development; and (4) development of labor market information. In response to Executive Order 14091 on *Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, the Department has employed its programmatic, policy, and budgetary levers to advance equity in five key areas:

- (1) Supporting workers, including those in the Southeast United States
  - Workers in the Southeast United States are more likely to be afforded fewer worker protections, lower wages, and lack of strong worker coalitions, increasing the potential for employer work violations, wage disparities, and decreased awareness of workers’ rights. To combat this, DOL agencies are embedding a focus on Southeast workers in agency initiatives to increase enforcement and workers’ rights awareness, job training opportunities, and outreach in the Southeast United States region.
- (2) Ensuring underserved communities have access to good jobs
  - Underserved communities face significant challenges with access to good jobs, including lack of equal employment opportunities, and lack of support services. DOL is partnering with other federal agencies to ensure federal infrastructure dollars are implementing the [Good Jobs Principles](#) for underserved communities, and partnering with State and local actors to encourage good hiring and retention practices in the private sector.
- (3) Embedding gender equity into our partnerships and services
  - Women are a critical part of our workforce, yet face disproportionately lower wages, workforce discrimination, and occupational segregation. DOL is working across agencies to ensure good paying jobs, improve wages in female dominated sectors, and reduce caregiving penalties and workplace discrimination.

- (4) Improving services for Limited English Proficient individuals
  - Federal agency services often lack the capability to effectively interact with Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals, leading to decreased service delivery and unmet community needs. To meet the needs of LEP individuals, DOL is continuing to standardize language access tools and integrate language access into agency activities.
- (5) Evaluating our procurement practices to advance equity, including to support - small, disadvantaged businesses such as Black and women-owned businesses.
  - Small, disadvantaged businesses such as Black and women-owned businesses are underrepresented in Federal procurement contracting which can have a substantial impact on the success of the business. To understand the full scope of why and which businesses are underrepresented, DOL is conducting an evaluation exercise, and will produce an evidence-based strategic plan for engagement based on exercise results.

Within the past year, DOL agencies have engaged meaningfully with stakeholders and community partners; this has intrinsically informed our approach to the Equity Action Plan. We conducted strategic meetings with workers, community leaders, and businesses within the Southeast, and found that workers were significantly more likely to face wage violations and fewer worker protections, as well as decreased coalition building. In April 2023, we held an extensive workshop with stakeholders to brainstorm and discuss solutions for employment rates among formerly incarcerated individuals, which will inform our work to increase access to pilot job readiness trainings for this underserved demographic. We've conducted stakeholder meetings and established Memoranda of Understanding to strengthen the Federal government's commitment to good jobs and gender equity and conducted internal dialogues to fine tune our language access services. These are just a few examples; we are consistently engaging our stakeholders to identify barriers that communities face, and retooling our outreach, and our service delivery to alleviate and remove barriers to good jobs and improved working conditions.

To ensure long term success, the 2023 Equity Action Plan strategies are being embedded in the Department's strategic plans and have informed our measures and milestones for success. We hope that through these strategies we continue to embed equity and develop partnerships in such a way that addresses historical disadvantages and systemic discrimination, invests in, and values the nation's economy, builds a modern, inclusive workforce, and supports a lifetime of worker empowerment.

## Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments

### 2022 Equity Action Plan Update

The Department’s 2022 Equity Action Plan focused on removing barriers that underserved workers face within and outside the workplace through five strategic focus areas. DOL has completed or is on the road to complete all milestones outlined; below are highlights of our accomplishments.

#### Enforcement of Wage and Hours Laws

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Equity Action</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>
Wage and Hour Division (WHD)	Maximize Strategic Partnerships with State and Local Governments Informed by a Sector and Place-Based Enforcement Analysis	In FY 2022, WHD developed a prototype equity index, a tool to identify underserved communities by geography, and in FY 2023 WHD piloted an application of the index as part of identifying where to strategically use its limited enforcement resources for maximum impact for the protection of the low-wage vulnerable workers that need it most. In addition, WHD continues to develop and implement Memorandum of Understanding with federal, state, and local governments with a focus on ensuring that it maximizes the worker protections available by geography, provide for data sharing, cross-training, referrals, coordinated enforcement, joint outreach, and compliance assistance around worker protection.
WHD, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Office of the Solicitor (SOL)	Reaffirm WHD’s Commitment to Preventing and Addressing Retaliation	In FY 2022, WHD issued extensive internal guidance to its enforcement staff on processes and protocols when conducting retaliation investigations; in partnership with the DOL Solicitor, OSHA, EEOC and NLRB, developed a list of best practices for employers to prevent and address retaliation relating to the laws that WHD enforces, and against workers who exercise their rights under the law. Since January 2021, WHD has concluded over 95 investigations focused on protecting workers from retaliation and working with the Solicitor’s office to prosecute employers that retaliate in violation of the laws that WHD enforces. These 95 cases resulted in \$415,991 in back wages for 128 workers and remedies other than back wages, such as job reinstatement and the removal of negative points from personnel record, for 83 additional workers.

#### Administering and Providing for the Federal-state Unemployment Insurance system

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Equity Action</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>
Office of Unemployment Insurance (OUI)	Provide Equity Grants to States for UI systems	The Department has announced awards of more than \$216.2 million in funds to 44 states and the District of Columbia to fund projects such as technology enhancements, claimant communications and outreach, translation services, data analysis to understand equity disparities, plain language initiatives, staff and backlog reductions and workflow/customer journey analysis.

<p>OUI, Employment and Training Administration (ETA)</p>	<p>Tiger Teams Initiative to Identify Technological, Operational, and Administrative Short-term Solutions in Areas of Equitable Access, Timeliness, and Fraud Reduction</p>	<p>The Department provided Tiger Team consultative assessments to 30 states through FY 2023. Through assessment findings, ETA has delivered more than 100 equity-based recommendations to enhance access and improve economic security across state UI programs, and has developed a UI Equitable Access Toolkit, which is available to state UI agencies and publicly to all UI stakeholders. The Department released its first ever, online training for Equitable Access in UI. This fundamental training was developed based on the Department’s learnings from its UI Tiger Team engagements with state UI agencies and community-based organizations across the country.</p> <p>In FY 2024, following a UI Tiger Team consultative assessment, ETA will deliver recommendations to an additional six states on means to improve equity and accessibility within UI programs. Also, in FY 2024, the Department will develop and publish interactive eLearning lessons focused on identifying methods to remove barriers to UI benefits and improving equitable access to all UI programs.</p>
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Broadening access to DOL programs, services, and information for workers with limited English proficiency

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Equity Action</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>
<p>Civil Rights Center (CRC), Office of Public Affairs (OPA)</p>	<p>Ensure Greater Department-wide Language Access Planning</p>	<p>In FY 2023, CRC established the Centralized Office of Language Assistance (COLA) to provide technical assistance and guidance to agencies on language access. The Department also launched an enterprise-wide survey to assess each DOL agency’s current language access practices, to strengthen outreach, engagement, and foster stronger relationships with organizations who serve Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals. The Department’s Plan to Improve Access for Persons with LEP will be issued shortly.</p>
<p>OSHA</p>	<p>Expand Agency-Specific Language Access Initiatives</p>	<p>In FY 2022, OSHA’s Susan Harwood Training Grant program funded 90 different non-profit organizations to develop and/or offer safety and health training and/or materials for hard-to-reach, often LEP workers and small business employers located in 30 states and the District of Columbia. Over 87% of applicants proposed to develop or offer training in languages other than English.</p>



Expanding sector-based training and employment strategies

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Equity Action</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>
Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS)	Foster Equity in Discretionary Grantmaking	In the 2022 HVRP Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), VETS required applicants to propose strategies to achieve economic opportunity and address historical inequities. A full 10% of applicants' scores were based on ability to serve historically underserved communities and how they will serve communities not currently being served by an HVRP grant. VETS also conducted an HVRP FOA Service Delivery Area Analysis and developed a strategy to conduct a pre-FOA release outreach and education campaign for stakeholders; conducted personal outreach to specific areas identified in the Service Delivery Area analysis as underserved or underrepresented; and provided a technical assistance seminar for applicants. VETS has conducted a similar review in FY 2023 and will continue this process in FY 2024.
ETA	Engage with Stakeholders to Identify Barriers to Equity in ETA Administered Services, Programs, and Benefits	In FY 2022, ETA conducted a number of engagement activities to inform its equity-related strategies and activities, including: engaging with stakeholders in underserved communities to identify equity barriers in employment and training; providing technical assistance to employers and industries to expand Registered Apprenticeship programs, and working with DOL leadership to increase equity within the Registered Apprenticeship program.

**Equity in Environmental Justice: Justice40**

In service of the [Justice40 Initiative](#), federal agencies are working towards delivering forty percent of overall benefits of climate, clean energy, training, workforce development, and other federal investments to disadvantaged communities that have been marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment.<sup>[1]</sup> The Department of Labor’s [Phase One Scorecard](#) identifies DOL’s proposed and accomplished initiatives towards this effort, including \$1.8 billion in funding made available from Justice40 covered programs, and 383 technical assistance outreach events in FY 2022 to provide critical information to workers, employers, and federal, state, and local governments to improve job quality and access to good jobs. Of the proposed initiatives, the Department is currently working towards or has completed the following actions to embed environmental justice into all aspects of its work:

- DOL’s Job Corps launched a pre-apprenticeship initiative to expand career opportunities and pathways for graduates to participate in registered apprenticeship programs in infrastructure, including clean energy and renewable energy manufacturing. There are currently 143 Corps instructors nationwide providing training towards renewable resources and energy.
- DOL has revamped its Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) under four Justice40 covered programs to support the development and implementation of sustainable construction and building practices and clean energy technologies, including reference to

EPA's Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool; as of April 2023, DOL has awarded over \$140 million in 30+ States through these funding vehicles.

- DOL has developed two tools or resources to advance environmental justice:
  - DOL's Good Jobs Initiative created a set of tools to ensure good jobs in climate and environmental justice investments. The [Good Jobs in Federal Investments: A Toolkit for Employers, Workers, and Government](#), is a toolkit intended to assist federal agencies, state, tribal and local governments, employers, and labor and worker advocacy organizations unleash their power to improve job quality and equity and data collection in federal investments.
  - DOL has hired two staff that work on environmental justice, either in a full-time or part time capacity.
- DOL has two new or strengthened internal working group(s), steering committee(s), council(s) on environmental justice.
  - The internal Climate Working Group, organized by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy (OASP), consists of representatives from across DOL sub-agencies, and coordinates the various climate priorities of the Administration and DOL leadership.
  - The Climate Action Plan meetings, organized by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management (OASAM) is a cross-DOL subagency meeting focused on the implementation of the Climate Action Plan, published yearly, which is an ongoing program to ensure robust federal mission resilience, protect worker safety (before, during, and after climate-related events), mitigate environmental threats to our facilities, and improve our procurement and acquisition stewardship.
- DOL is currently updating its Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, to be released Fall 2023.

[1] [White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council | Environmental Justice | The White House](#)

### **Additional Efforts to Advance Equity**

- In response to EO 14020 and pursuant to the implementation of the government-wide *National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality*, DOL has developed an agency-specific plan outlining over 50 action items to reduce occupational segregation for women workers, increase equity in pay and hiring, increase access to benefits and knowledge of worker rights, and increase older women's employment and economic security. To date, DOL has accomplished or is well underway to accomplishing all action items identified.
- The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has implemented the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), connecting federal and private sector employees with students and recent graduates with disabilities from over 400 colleges and universities for internships and permanent positions. ODEP will continue to support student and recent graduate participation in WRP, including outreach to underserved communities, minority-serving institutions, veterans services offices, and leveraging federal and alliance partnerships. When working with federal agencies, ODEP will also continue to

provide hiring authority technical assistance, educate about the provision of effective reasonable accommodations, and encourage expanding WRP and Schedule A hiring as part of agency strategic planning.

- In FY 2024, ODEP expects available funding of approximately \$13M to support approximately four Equitable Transition Model (ETM) demonstration grants focused on underrepresented youth with disabilities, including youth experiencing homelessness, leaving foster care, and/or involved in the justice system, to improve employment outcomes, as well as increase states' capacity to develop innovative employment strategies for underserved youth and their families.
- To further align with the Department's mission, goal, and objective of creating an economy for all workers, DOL has expanded its outreach and engagement with HBCUs, HSIs, tribal communities, and other minority serving institutions. We have advanced our engagement through mentorship programs, training, and grant opportunities, listening sessions, roundtables, formal invitations to extended procurement and contracting webinars, and more. The impact of engaging with more diverse populations through colleges and universities informs our efforts and allows for participation with communities that mirror the workforce in America. In addition, we have and will continue to embed this extended outreach and initiative into our agency strategic plans.

### **Embedding Equity in Key Legislation**

In support of federal Investing in America (IIA) funds, stemming from funds through the American Rescue Plan, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act, the Good Jobs Initiative (GJI) provides critical information to workers, employers, and government agencies as they work to improve job quality and create access to good jobs, free from discrimination and harassment for all working people (with emphasis on underserved communities, including BIPOC individuals, LGBTQ+ individuals, women, immigrants, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals in rural communities, individuals without a college degree, individuals with or recovering from a substance use disorder, justice-involved individuals, and opportunity youth). In alignment with the [Good Jobs Principles](#), equity provisions have been embedded in all aspects of the GJI:

- DOL has entered into Memoranda of Understanding with the Departments of Transportation, Energy, Commerce, the Interior, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the General Services Administration to engage in “cooperative efforts to build sustainable career pathways to meet industry’s need for talent and workers’ need for quality jobs,” and “to address barriers to opportunity and build an economy that empowers all people, including individuals from underserved communities;”
- Through these inter-agency partnerships, over \$181 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds include provisions that require, preference, or encourage job quality, worker empowerment, and equity in the use of these federal funds; and
- Those incentives have been included in 91 Funding Opportunity Announcements.

As part of the Department's strategy to advance equity, GJI will continue to provide technical assistance on federal funding opportunities across the Investing in America Agenda to embed job quality, equity, and worker empowerment.

## 2023 Equity Action Plan Strategies

### **Strategy 1: Supporting Workers, Including Those in the Southeast United States**

*Improve conditions for Southeast Workers through increases in outreach, enforcement, and the creation of programs such as training, apprenticeship, and pre-apprenticeship opportunities.*

**Whole-of-Government Equity Objective: Economic Justice:** Building a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy.

**Collaborating Agencies:** DOL is partnering with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to tailor enforcement service delivery and provide information on apprenticeship and job opportunities for workers in the Southeast United States.

### **Barriers to Equity:**

Workers in the Southeast United States, as defined by the Department's regional mapping, are more likely to face the following barriers, increasing the potential for employer work violations, pay disparities, and decreased awareness of worker resources and safety requirements:

- Fewer worker protections;
- Lower wages;
- Pre-emptive legislation that prevents strong worker protections;
- Lack of strong worker coalitions; and
- Reliance on Federal enforcement due to insufficient State enforcement policies/agencies.

### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

- Analyses of Workers Rights by State ([link](#)), Labor Force Statistics ([link](#)), and Best and Worst States to Work in America ([link](#)) indicate that the states in the Southeastern United States are routinely ranked in the bottom third of States for worker protections, wage, and salary.
- Based on data, states in the Southeast experience [lower union affiliation](#) of employed wage and salary workers in comparison to other states.
- States in the Southeast are collectively more likely to contain economically [distressed communities](#), defined as communities with lower educational attainment, higher poverty and unemployment rates and lower median incomes.
- In FY 2022, DOL conducted a series of meetings across the United States with workers and found that Southeast workers faced significant worker protection and wage disparities amongst Black, Latino, women, migrant, and other underserved communities.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, DOL will develop agency specific measures to accomplish the following:

- Work through existing levers and community partnerships to increase pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and job training opportunities for workers in the Southeast, increasing career and wage improvement opportunities;

- Identify gaps in our enforcement service delivery, to provide targeted information and outreach to vulnerable worker populations and increase awareness around worker protection and wage laws;
- Increase outreach to Southeast business owners, to increase awareness of federal contracting opportunities and to stimulate participation by the Southeast business owners in the competitive federal procurement process;
- Conduct a series of listening sessions and outreach sessions across the Southeastern United States, connecting workers with other workers, community leaders, and State officials and encouraging coalition building;
- Embed an equity focus on the Southeast region agencywide through upcoming agency strategic plans; and
- Development of a strategy for the Power of Community- amplifying the voices of marginalized communities to provide feedback on DOL engagement/services.

### **Proposed Metrics:**

#### **Near- to Medium-Term**

- Number of pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and job training opportunities developed in the Southeast region;
- Number of listening sessions and outreach sessions conducted in the Southeast; and
- Number of equity initiatives on the Southeastern United States incorporated into DOL subagency management plans by September 2024.

#### **Longer-Term**

- Increased worker protections, higher wages and job opportunities, and increased worker coalitions for workers in the Southeastern United States.

### **Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

Department agencies will be working closely with community partners to provide targeted services and receive meaningful feedback from Southeast workers:

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) holds regular Interagency Vulnerable Worker Roundtables to disseminate information on workers' rights and create strong strategic collaborations between vulnerable workers and community stakeholders. OSHA will focus convenings on the Southeast, in addition to other regions, and be intentional in outreach by including focusing on underserved workers, such as Black workers and the Formerly Incarcerated, as well as other groups.
- DOL plans to hold convenings with workers, State officials, and key staff in the Southeast, to achieve the following:
  - Disseminate information on workers' rights, avenues for reporting poor working conditions, and apprenticeship opportunities.
  - Connect workers and community leaders to create an environment for stronger worker coalitions.
  - Create a pipeline by which workers feel comfortable reporting unfavorable working conditions, and provide feedback on current DOL processes to improve service delivery; and
  - The Women's Bureau (WB) will work with justice impacted people in the Southeast to develop a training on effective outreach strategies to justice impacted

people. WB will also, in concert with the Office of Human Resources, explore policy options to increase recruitment at DOL of justice impacted people, and provide pilot job readiness trainings inside local jails within the Southeast region.

**Strategy 2: Ensuring Underserved Communities Have Access to Good Jobs**

*Improve access to good jobs for underserved and disenfranchised communities through Federal, state, and local partnerships, advocacy for equitable pathways to sustainable wages, and development of tools and frameworks for good job implementation.*

**Whole-of-Government Equity Objective: Civil Rights:** Protect the civil and constitutional rights of all persons, including the right to vote, language access, and prohibitions on discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability, etc.

**Collaborating Agencies with Good-Jobs-Initiative MOUs:** [Department of Commerce](#), [Department of Transportation](#), [Department of Energy](#), [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), [Department of the Interior](#), and the [General Services Administration](#). With each of these agencies, GJI draws upon Department of Labor expertise to embed job quality, worker empowerment, and equity provisions in federal funding opportunities from these agencies. GJI shares its subject matter expertise on job quality, equity, and worker empowerment with federal agencies as well as shared stakeholders including funding applicants, state and local governments, the private sector, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, labor unions, and others, through joint engagement opportunities.

**Barriers to Equity:**

- Current recruiting, hiring, retention, and promotion practices limit fairness in hiring opportunities in infrastructure industries such as construction, advanced manufacturing, and clean energy;
- Lack of equitable and effective pathways to access infrastructure jobs through workforce development; and
- Lack of supportive/wraparound services such as housing, affordable childcare and language access, which can enable the success of underserved workers in job training and employment.

**Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

- [Studies show](#) that a range of support services are needed to enable underserved individuals to participate in job training. Among women, who often bear the brunt of care giving responsibilities, evidence shows the positive impact supportive services have on completion of training programs and job outcomes. [Studies](#) also show that women who received occupational skills training had wages that were 80 percent higher than those who did not receive such training and those who received supportive services earned an average of \$400 more per quarter in comparison to those not receiving those services. Apprentices who do not complete their apprenticeship are [more likely to report](#) experiencing financial difficulties, especially with being able to afford tools and clothing, housing, child care, housing, and transportation.

- A [recent report](#) found that "Union-supported pre-apprenticeship programs have established a significant track record of actively promoting diversity in the trades. Pre-apprenticeship enrollments using the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) reflect considerable diversity and arguably constitute the largest pre-apprenticeship program in any industry in the US."
- In order to strengthen the pathway to good jobs for underrepresented groups, [research](#) has shown the importance of holistic approaches to job attainment, such as quality apprenticeships, supportive services, and safe and inclusive workplaces.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, DOL will support:

- Expanding agency partnerships in OFCCP's Megaproject Program
  - The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), in concert with other federal agencies will designate additional [Megaprojects](#) in FY 2024. Under this designation, OFCCP will engage with a wide range of stakeholders to remove hiring barriers and promote equal employment opportunity in federally funded large construction projects pre-construction including through outreach to underserved populations and the use of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Embedding equity provisions in federal Investing in America (IIA) investments, such as the [Good Jobs in Federal Investments: A Toolkit for Employers, Workers, and Government](#), the [MOU between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) and DOL, and the [MOU between the U.S. General Services Administration and DOL](#), requiring, preferencing, or encouraging funding applicants to provide supportive services on their projects.
- Securing equity commitments from localities implementing IIA investments, through place-based strategies.
- Encouraging DOL grant applicants to develop projects that specifically address each of the Good Jobs Principles, which envision equitable pathways to family-sustaining wages, to promote development of new workforce development models that can be applied to other federal investments.
- Directing DOL grant applicants to provide more robust and detailed supportive services strategies to develop frameworks that can be applied to other federal investments.
- Investing in strategies to improve good jobs for care workers:
  - The Women's Bureau (WB), Office of Assistant Secretary for Policy (OASP), and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), are working to identify and maximize utility of data on the Direct Care Workforce. In FY 2024, DOL will continue to expand analyses on care workers who serve people with disabilities and older adults through the DOL-HHS workgroup on direct care workforce.
  - WB, ASP, and the Chief Evaluation Office are collaborating on a research report to explore wages in the Care Workforce, to be published in FY 2024 as well as guidance to help States and localities conduct their own analyses of comparable pay rates for care workers in their respective jurisdictions.

## **Proposed Metrics:**

### **Near- to Medium-Term**

- Number of Memoranda of Understanding established with Federal agencies to increase the number of agencies aligning their efforts and leveraging their individual and combined resources to educate and encourage industries to attract, train, retain, and empower a diverse, qualified, well compensated workforce; and
- Number of equity and job quality incentives built into federal infrastructure dollars and Federal grants, where data is publicly available.

### **Longer-Term**

- Increased equitable employment opportunities, increased equitable workforce development pathways into infrastructure jobs and supportive services, and increased job security and career advancement for underserved and vulnerable communities, in federal funding where data is publicly available.

### **Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

- To host additional Good Jobs events similarly to those carried out in recent years, such as the [FY 2022 DOL Good Jobs Summit](#), which joined over 350 cross-sector stakeholders to discuss effective strategies for building partnerships to empower working people; and the series of FY 2023 Good Jobs events that DOL hosted specifically aimed at uplifting examples of Good Jobs creation and workers from underserved communities including women, people of color, and others, employed in critical sectors like construction. See, e.g., [Making Equity Real: Black Workers and Good Jobs](#), [Empowering AA and NHPI Workers and Promoting Good Jobs for All Workers](#), and [Latinx Workers & Invest in America: Building the High Road While Combating the Low Road](#).
- Through the Megaproject Program, OFCCP will establish Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Committees to discuss hiring barriers and strategies to promote equal employment opportunity for all applicants, including women, people of color, veterans, and people with disabilities.

### **Strategy 3: Embedding Gender Equity into our Partnerships and Services**

*Embed Gender Equity through the disruption of occupational segregation to improve wages and working conditions in key, female-dominated sectors, reduce caregiving penalties for women and low paid workers, and eliminate gender-based discrimination in the workplace to include transwomen.*

**Whole-of-Government Equity Objective: Economic Justice:** Building a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy.

**Collaborating Agencies:** DOL is partnering with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to collaborate on new data products, such as the National Database of Childcare Prices, as well as draft guidance and technical assistance to federal agencies on maximizing flexibility in funding for support services. DOL also partners with several agencies through its Good Jobs Initiative, to ensure gender equity in Investing in America-funded jobs.



### **Barriers to Equity:**

Women are a critical part of the U.S. labor force and contribute significantly both to their families' economic security and the U.S. economy. Yet women, especially women of color, have experienced longstanding disparities in the labor force. Women have persistently lower wages and fewer workplace benefits than men, disparities that are even more significant for Black, Hispanic, and some subsets of Asian women. Women-dominated jobs, including care work, have been devalued. Decades of underinvestment in social safety net policies like childcare and paid leave and declining unionization rates left women with few supports to manage work and their unpaid family caregiving responsibilities.

Women have been acutely affected in the workplace in the following areas:

- Occupational segregation – wherein women are overrepresented in certain jobs and industries and underrepresented in others – leads to lower pay for women and contributes to the wage gap for several interrelated reasons.
- In addition, women, who have always performed the majority of unpaid family caregiving, often face additional barriers throughout their working lives, such as periods out of the labor force to meet caregiving demands, whether for children or for aging or disabled loved ones, or discrimination on the basis of sex or caregiver status.

The gender and racial wage gap results in women being paid only 84% of what men are paid, on average, and women of color even less. This means that they must work more years to earn the same amount as men, while at the same time they must prepare for a longer retirement, in large part due to their longer life expectancy.

### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

- In 2020, the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau (WB) collaborated with the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct the most comprehensive [analysis of the gender wage gap](#) to date. The analysis shows that the majority of the gap between men and women's wages cannot be explained through measurable differences between workers, such as age, education, work history, industry, occupation, or work hours, but is more likely the result of occupational and industrial segregation.
- Additional studies show that [providing caregiving activities](#) to children and adults with care needs, of which women are disproportionately responsible, impose substantial lifetime economic costs; and during economic strife, like the [COVID-pandemic](#), subsets of women have experienced slower recovery in comparison to their male counterparts.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, DOL will support:

- [Disrupting occupational segregation](#), getting more women in pathways to good-paying jobs
  - The Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) Office of Apprenticeship (OA), WB, ODEP, and Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) will collaborate to increase female participation in pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships, including leveraging the [recently launched RA Academy](#) to add training resources for program sponsors and State Apprenticeship Agencies on EEO and DEIA in apprenticeship; design a Federal Apprenticeship Accelerator with DEIA Focus; and award new contracts and grants like WB's [Tradeswomen](#)

[Building Infrastructure](#) and [WANTO](#) grants and through initiatives like ODEP's [Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship](#), as well as support ongoing evaluations of RA grants.

- Improving wages and working conditions in key, female-dominated sectors
  - In support of EO 14095, *Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers*, the Wage and Hour Division (WHD) and WB are collaborating through an MOU to promote the rights of the care workforce by creating sample employment agreements for domestic workers that provide child and long-term care to negotiate the terms of employment, facilitating compliance and awareness of labor law and best practices, and incorporate language to embed the requirements of relevant worker protection laws.
  - WB will work with elected officials to support investments in care infrastructure, strengthen the majority female workforce that performs essential work, and provide technical assistance through the [Good Jobs Great Cities Academy](#).
  - OSHA Rulemaking in progress: OSHA is currently developing *Prevention of Workplace Violence in Health Care and Social Assistance*, a standard on workplace violence prevention in the healthcare and social assistance industries, occupations which tend to employ significantly more women than men
  - WB will continue working with HHS to elevate ways to build equity in wages and job quality in female dominated sectors through the DOL-HHS workgroup, and technical assistance to agencies for support services.
- Reducing caregiving penalties for women and low-paid workers
  - In FY 2024, the WB will continue to expand and tailor the National Database of Childcare Prices (NDCP), in collaboration with ICF International and HHS, to develop key analytical tools to evaluate how childcare prices are linked with gender and racial inequality in the labor force.
  - WB is partnering with the Urban Institute to conduct the project, *Understanding Equity in Paid Leave through Microsimulation Analysis*. This project will provide research and technical assistance to states or local jurisdictions considering paid leave programs, and answer new questions about policy impacts, costs, and benefits of paid leave policies.

- Eliminating gender-based discrimination in the workplace

DOL will contribute key deliverables toward the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality and the National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence,

including:

- In FY 2024, WB will administer its Fostering Access, Rights, and Equity ([FARE](#)) grant, focusing the program to support women who have been impacted by gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.
- As the federal government makes historic investments in infrastructure, OFCCP intends to develop a best practices document outlining how federal contractors and subcontractors can create safe environments free from gender-based violence and harassment.
- In anticipation of the FAR Council's rulemaking prohibiting salary history inquiries by federal contractors, OFCCP plans to publish sub-regulatory guidance clarifying how reliance on salary history for hiring and compensation decisions may result in discrimination under Executive Order 11246.

- WHD and WB are collaborating with the EEOC and have launched a [year-long series of free webinars and outreach events](#) to ensure workers, their advocates, health care providers, and employers understand the workplace rights of new and expectant workers.
- WHD will continue to promote new requirements that allow nursing employees the time and private space to express breast milk at work as outlined in the PUMP Act through education and outreach efforts to improve worker protections and employer compliance.

### **Proposed Metrics:**

#### **Near- to Medium-Term**

- Number of grants provided to increase women’s participation in apprenticeship programs;
- Set standards for addressing gender-based violence and harassment in the workforce; and
- Number of state partnerships formed to support investments in female-dominated work sectors.

#### **Longer-Term**

- Overall increases in wages in [female dominated sectors](#), increases in the number of women in higher paying fields, and reduction of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.

### **Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

DOL has participated in a number of partnership development sessions to build connections, understand barriers, and understand how to best serve women workers. DOL will continue to develop partnerships through community engagement, including the following actions:

- Through an MOU with the International Labour Organization Office for the United States and Canada, DOL will host national and regional events with employers, unions, workers, public officials, and community organizations uplifting survivor-, worker-, union- and employer-informed strategies and best practices to eliminate gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work, based on principles codified in ILO Convention 190.
- The WB will collect new data and continue to expand the [National Database of Childcare Prices](#) (NDCP) to include new products on childcare price trends, disparities in access to affordable childcare by race, ethnicity, and family income, and detailed assessments of the impacts of childcare prices on maternal employment. The WB will engage with researchers, advocates, and local, state, and federal agencies and policy makers to expand use of the NDCP data and research products in support of equity in access to care infrastructure.

#### **Strategy 4: Improving Services for Limited English Proficient Individuals**

*Improve DOL's service delivery for all workers through the continued expansion of DOL's language access outreach, and the establishment of a centralized Language Access technical center to support agencies' access to translation, interpretation, and related technical assistance needs.*

**Whole-of-Government Equity Objective: Civil Rights:** Protect the civil and constitutional rights of all persons, and enforce prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of race, national origin (including individuals who are Limited English Proficient), sex, disability, etc.

**Collaborating Agencies:** The Department of Justice (DOJ) provides technical oversight to federal agencies in the implementation of Executive Order 13166.

#### **Barriers to Equity:**

- Lack of awareness of the requirements that DOL agencies and grant recipients must take due to language barriers, which prevents or hinders workers from accessing key government benefits and services, such as unemployment insurance.
- Lack of reasonable steps to provide meaningful, timely, and free language assistance to include qualified written translation or oral interpretation,
- DOL's interpretation, translation, and other language access activities were generally decentralized across each of the Department's agencies, resulting in inconsistent standards and practices across the Department.

#### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

- In FY 2023, the Department of Labor's Civil Rights Center (CRC) launched a comprehensive survey to assess each DOL agency's current language access practices and pinpoint areas to improve access for workers and other external departmental stakeholders.
- Coupled with analysis of language trends derived from the Census Bureau's 2020 Census and the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS), and the U.S. Department of State's Refugee Processing Center Admissions and Arrivals Report, the survey determined that Language Access services were inconsistent across DOL, and there were gaps in ensuring meaningful access for workers.
- Each DOL agency had different results – depending on their mission, eligible service population(s), delivery area(s), effectiveness of existing program(s), etc. However, most agencies identified additional languages or supplemental efforts for which more consideration was needed to ensure meaningful access.
- The survey revealed the need to draft agency-specific sections of the Department's Language Access Plan and to highlight current language services and areas to improve the provision of language services to vulnerable LEP workers. This extensive Plan has been reviewed by the Department of Justice and is being finalized for publication, including translation, so that it may be made public.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, DOL will:

- Review the need to translate vital information/documents, depending on the size of the language groups; the use of Babel notices or taglines to facilitate access to language assistance services; bilingual staffing resources and/or how to engage with outside interpreter services; and developing SOPs and related training to ensure consistent outreach and engagement.
- Take steps to increase DOL language capacity, including through expanding the pool of staff that have language skills.
  - DOL agencies will review and update existing position descriptions to determine the need to expand language requirements for outreach to and engagement with underserved communities and will submit a plan for recruitment of bilingual positions.
- Develop centralized resources for Departmental agencies to use to meet needs for individual programs and populations served.
  - In FY 2023, the CRC established the Centralized Office of Language Assistance (COLA) to improve access to DOL conducted programs and activities for Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals. In FY 2024, COLA will provide agencies within DOL with a framework for engagement with LEP individuals, technical assistance training, and develop performance metrics to gauge performance as it relates to language access, among other activities.
  - DOL agencies will implement agency-specific language access milestones, to include translation of vital documents into significant language groups, and development/implementation of an outreach and engagement strategy.

### **Proposed Metrics:**

#### **Near- to Medium-Term**

- Number of bilingual and multilingual staff onboarded to support language services;
- Number of vital documents translated by the end of FY 2024;
- Number of outreach and engagement opportunities conducted with LEP demographics; and
- Number of technical assistance trainings provided to DOL agencies.

#### **Longer-Term**

- Increased number of LEP individuals able to engage in DOL programs and access DOL information, and increased number of language groups served.

### **Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

In support of this strategy, each agency must create and implement strategies for improved outreach and engagement with LEP workers and other stakeholders. As an example, the Wage and Hour Division (WHD) conducts outreach through its Community Outreach and Resource Planning Specialists, who establish and maintain stakeholder relationships with community-based organizations and advocacy groups that provide language services. WHD also informs LEP communities of language assistance services through publicly placed posters; WHD's website; social media accounts; direct emails to listservs and individuals; and, through existing

relationships with community-based organizations serving LEP communities. WHD also receives feedback on effectiveness through surveys and stakeholder engagement.

### **Strategy 5: Evaluating Our Procurement Practices to Advance Equity**

*Increase outreach to small, disadvantaged businesses, such as Black- and women-owned businesses, in contracting processes, through the development of an evidence-based evaluation to identify opportunities in the procurement processes and implementation of a strategic engagement plan.*

**Whole-of-Government Equity Objective: Economic Justice:** Building a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy.

#### **Barriers to Equity:**

- Current data collection fails to capture data disaggregation and analysis into baseline outreach to and procurement contracting with small disadvantaged and women owned Businesses; and
- Lack of agency-wide strategies to increase outreach to small disadvantaged and women owned business competition in contracting.

#### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

- Historically small, disadvantaged businesses such as women, Black and Hispanic owned are [underrepresented in Federal procurement contracting](#). For example, the share of procurement dollars going to Black-owned businesses is the lowest (about 1.9%) compared to other race/ethnicity groups.
- In [DOL's evaluation](#) of equity in Federal contracting, for FY 2021, the Department awarded to minority-owned businesses contracts commensurate and above the representation in federal contracting; however, DOL's procurement contracting such as with women-owned, Hispanic-owned, and Black-owned businesses are below the proportion of eligible businesses available for federal contracting.
- DOL's procurement practices have received an [A+ in contract awarding](#) to small, disadvantaged businesses (SDB) and women owned small businesses (WOSBs). However, DOL has not disaggregated data to determine whether there are potential opportunities to further increase outreach and contracting opportunities, including current engagement levels with these businesses.
- To increase the number of underrepresented groups in contracting, [studies](#) have shown it is necessary to identify gaps in the procurement process, evaluate internal processes, and increase stakeholder engagement and partnership development.

#### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, DOL will:

- Explore options to collect expanded demographic categories for contractors, as permitted by and in accordance with Federal procurement regulations and other laws.
- Review relevant and available data and develop a strategic outreach plan to improve engagement with underrepresented groups, remove internal barriers to engagement as applicable, and encourage expanded participation in contracting opportunities.

- Implement the strategic outreach plan to improve engagement with underrepresented groups and encourage expanded participation in contracting opportunities.

**Proposed Metrics:**

**Near- to Medium-Term**

- Development of an evidence-based analysis within agencywide procurement efforts.
- Based on analysis, number of agencies that develop strategic plans to remove internal barriers and expanded engagement with small disenfranchised and women owned businesses.

**Longer-Term**

- Expand engagement with small, disadvantaged businesses to build on current contracting representation in the DOL procurement process.

**Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

As part of the evidence building analysis, the Department will engage with small business and strategic community partners for feedback on the procurement process and potential opportunities to encourage participation by small disadvantaged and women owned businesses.