



Food Safety and Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Equity Action Plan

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Message from the Under Secretary



Dr. Emilio Esteban
Under Secretary for Food Safety

In the United States and around the world, food is a great unifier. Everyone needs access to safe and nutritious food. As the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Under Secretary for Food Safety, I am proud to oversee the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), whose mission is to protect public health by preventing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products. With the Biden-Harris Administration's focus on equity, we have been reevaluating how we ensure that all of our stakeholders have equal access to FSIS resources, and that underserved communities are being heard, and their needs met.

USDA has institutionalized this approach and is working to carry out essential executive orders and ensure that our policies, programs, and services better reflect the values of equity and inclusion. Here at FSIS, we have a special connection to the American people. We are responsible for inspecting meat, poultry, and egg product establishments across the United States. With this wide geographic reach, FSIS is in a unique position to interact with rural businesses and diverse communities across the country. FSIS is a critical link in gathering stakeholder feedback,

sharing vital information on funding opportunities, and making sure small and very small establishments understand how they can benefit from USDA programs and grow the U.S. food supply. The ability to produce safe food is essential to our economy, and I want to ensure that our policies, programs, and services are reaching historically underrepresented groups.

I have witnessed firsthand the evolution of food safety over the last few decades. This evolution has required us to reexamine the needs of our constituents. We need to innovate in our approach to stakeholder engagement and ensure that our resources and decision-making processes are transparent and accessible. Transparency will guide our engagement with stakeholders and consumers to create an open environment of communication around policy decision-making. This effort to equitably serve our constituents is a top priority. We know that to do it correctly, we need to examine our internal processes and listen to outside voices. Leadership in FSIS and the Office of Food Safety is fully committed to the advancement of equity and will ensure that this remains a top priority. As President Biden said, "Advancing equity is not a 1-year project. It's a generational commitment." This plan lays out our path forward.

– Dr. Emilio Esteban
Under Secretary for Food Safety

Message from the Administrator



*Food Safety and Inspection Service
Administrator Paul Kiecker*

The mandate given in Executive Orders 13985 and 14091 to advance equity for all—including communities that have long been underserved—and to address systemic racism in our Nation’s policies and programs, is the driving force behind the work of the USDA Equity Commission and has informed FSIS’ responsibility to engage with our small establishments and underserved constituents. More than 90% of Federally inspected establishments are small or very small in size. These businesses play an important role in feeding Americans and ensuring food system resiliency. USDA’s renewed push to better communicate, connect, and listen to all of our constituents has led to our adoption of innovative ways to reach new groups and develop culturally competent engagement methods.

To this end, I have made it a priority to travel to underserved communities and hear firsthand how we can better partner with them to facilitate safe food production. FSIS is committed to ensuring that all of our constituents have the tools, guidance, and technical resources they need to comply with the regulations and forums in which to provide feedback to inform decision-

making. Furthermore, we want to ensure that we are providing those resources equitably. A key engagement avenue to identify and better communicate with underserved constituents is small plant and tribal roundtables. These forums bring together FSIS leadership, USDA grant management and loan specialists, District Office representatives, and relevant State officials, with small groups of plant managers or potential grant of inspection applicants. They foster open communication and help us to listen to our audience and gain insight into the unique perspectives and challenges faced by these underserved communities. In short, we are committed to reducing barriers, advancing equity, and improving access for small establishment owners and operators; consumers with limited English proficiency; tribal nations seeking to build self-sufficiency; small, disadvantaged business owners; and women-owned small businesses.

As our Equity Plan illustrates, these efforts are ongoing, and we are committed to continuing to hear from our stakeholders and actualizing on improvements to equity and community support. Our efforts to ensure equity are critical to Agency success. My job as FSIS Administrator is to ensure that we fulfill the Agency’s mission. To accomplish this, we need to be reaching all groups, sharing our guidance, and ensuring our policies, programs and actions are informed by stakeholder feedback. These actions will ensure that we grow to accommodate a modern food system and a modern America.

– Paul Kiecker
FSIS Administrator

Executive Summary

FSIS has taken decisive action to eliminate and reduce barriers, advance equity, and improve access for FSIS-regulated small and very small establishment owners and operators; tribal nations seeking to build self-sufficiency and grow their meat and poultry processing businesses; establishment owners/operators and consumers with limited English proficiency; small, disadvantaged business owners (SDBs); and women-owned small businesses (WOSBs) in search of Federal procurement opportunities. In accordance with Executive Order 13985 on “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” Executive Order 14091 on “Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” and applicable civil rights laws, and in alignment with USDA priorities and recommendations issued by the USDA Equity Commission, FSIS has reexamined what equity means from the vantage points of its various stakeholders, identified ways to meet stakeholders at their point of need, and implemented a multi-layered strategy for advancing equity for all through its policies, programs, and activities.

Since the issuance of EO 13985 on January 20, 2021, FSIS has initiated a variety of actions to advance equity for those in marginalized and underrepresented communities. The Agency has identified the following 4 priority actions upon which to focus its efforts in 2023–2024.

Priority Action 1: Provide robust technical assistance to, and reduce barriers to access for, small and very small establishment owners and operators

Priority Action 2: Expand language access for consumers with limited English proficiency

Priority Action 3: Assist tribal nations in their efforts to build self-sufficiency and grow their meat and poultry processing businesses

Priority Action 4: Increase equity through Federal procurement

For each priority action, the plan that follows:

- Identifies access barriers.
- Articulates actions underway, or actions that the Agency has committed to undertake, to advance equity for stakeholders in these underrepresented communities.
- Discusses how the Agency plans to meaningfully engage with leaders and representatives from these communities.

Over the past 2 years, FSIS has made great strides in institutionalizing equity into the fabric of the Agency. By steadily executing on our planned 2023–2024 actions, we will help achieve the aspirational goal set forth in EO 14091—namely, to “bridge the gap between the world we see and the future we seek.”¹

In accordance with the USDA Equity Commission’s Recommendation # 9 on Institutionalizing Equity, the Under Secretary for Food Safety and FSIS Administrator have provided consistent leadership focus on equity by championing this important work externally and internally, ensuring the availability of funding, and institutionalizing organizational culture change.

¹Executive Order 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, Federal Register, Vol. 88, No. 35, February 22, 2023, Presidential Documents, p. 10831, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/02/16/executive-order-on-further-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>.



Priority Actions

Priority Action 1: Provide robust technical assistance to, and reduce barriers to access for, small and very small establishment owners and operators

BARRIERS

More than 90% of the slaughter and processing establishments regulated by FSIS are considered small—meaning they have fewer than 500 employees—or very small, meaning they have fewer than 10 employees or do less than \$2.5 million a year in sales. FSIS offers support tailored to meet the needs of these establishments, including slaughter and production businesses owned and operated by people in underrepresented communities.

FSIS focuses its guidance and assistance on small and very small establishments, particularly those from underrepresented populations. Although all meat and poultry establishments can apply the recommendations set forth in the Agency’s guidance, it is important to FSIS that small and very small establishments have access to a full range of scientific and technical support and the assistance needed to establish safe and effective Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems. Focusing food safety and labeling guidelines on the needs of small and very small establishments provides them with assistance that may be otherwise unavailable to them. This enables them to focus on growing their businesses, expanding processing capacity, and creating jobs.

STRATEGY

Mindful of these challenges, FSIS works with small and very small establishments to develop a timeline to comply with new requirements and provides them with sufficient lead time to implement operational changes.

In alignment with the USDA Equity Commission's Recommendation #4 on Technical Assistance and Outreach and its identification of the need to "provide stakeholders and customers a more seamless experience across USDA's technical assistance portfolio of support,"² FSIS connects these establishments with Mission Areas and Agencies within USDA and across the Federal government that offer grants and other forms of financial assistance to help them implement new requirements or acquire a Federal Grant of Inspection. FSIS also provides a resource page on its public website that houses guidelines, including HACCP model plans tailored to small and very small establishments.

Consistent with EO 14091 and the USDA Equity Commission's Recommendation # 13 on Customer Experience, FSIS has strengthened engagement with various stakeholders in underrepresented communities to better understand their aspirations and the challenges they face, adopted techniques to improve the quality, frequency, and accessibility of the engagements, and created feedback loops to strengthen trust and identify ways we can better support them.

ACCOMPLISHMENT HIGHLIGHTS (OCTOBER 2021 – JUNE 2023):

- Implemented a provision of the American Rescue Plan Act to reduce overtime and holiday inspection fees for small establishments by 30% and very small establishments by 75%. Since its enactment in July 2021, FSIS has issued credits and refunds to more than 2,900 small and very small establishments, providing more than \$43.5 million in savings as of June 9, 2023.
- Continued the ongoing partnership with Agricultural Marketing Service on the implementation of the Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) Program. Initial outreach we conducted for MPIRG awardees indicated interest on the part of small and very small establishments in seeking Federal grants of inspection in their MPIRG project narratives. As such, the Agency provided MPIRG awardees with helpful information on how the process works, points of contact, and applicable regulatory requirements.
- Developed food safety regulation guidance documents, including an updated HACCP guide, six Generic HACCP models, and cooking and cooling guidelines. The Agency also developed a new Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures model. This information is intended to assist establishments, including small and very small establishments, in complying with regulatory requirements to produce safe and wholesome products.
- Translated 11 of its guidelines and outreach materials, including its cooking and cooling guidelines, into four languages (Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese) and posted the translations on its website.
- Received 197 inquiries through its help desk, especially created to assist small and very small establishments. The Agency received approximately 10% of the inquiries, 5,579 out of 55,831, on the *askFSIS* platform from customers who identify themselves as small and very small establishments. Leveraging use of this platform, the Agency provided technical assistance to small and very small establishments.
- Held eight small plant roundtables and listening sessions in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Mississippi, South Dakota, Texas, and Virginia, reaching approximately 510 participants with both virtual and in-person attendance. FSIS conducted these events in areas with large numbers of small and very small establishments. Starting in March 2023, we began to make interpretation services available upon request. The Agency also looked for opportunities to partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1890 institutions, and tribal colleges in hosting future roundtables.³

²*Interim Report 2023: Recommendations made to USDA to advance equity for all*, USDA Equity Commission, p. 21, February 27, 2023, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-ec-interim-report-2023.pdf>.

³USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service, FSIS Highlights 2022 Accomplishments in Protecting Public Health | Food Safety and Inspection Service (usda.gov), February 6, 2023, <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/news-events/news-press-releases/fsis-highlights-2022-accomplishments-protecting-public-health>.

- Convened monthly Establishment Town Halls, which provided small and very small plants opportunities to share ideas, raise concerns, and for Agency leadership to address their questions.
- Posted recordings of the monthly Establishment Town Halls on its public website, based on feedback from owners and operators. This ensures equal access to the updates, resources, and information for those who could not attend the live calls.
- Expanded outreach to attract and appoint diverse candidates from different geographical areas to the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection (NACMPI) in FY2022. The primary role of the Committee is to advise the Secretary of Agriculture concerning State and Federal programs with respect to meat and poultry inspection; food safety; and other matters that fall within the scope of the Federal Meat Inspection Act and Poultry Products Inspection Act. Efforts were made to ensure that the membership of this Committee is balanced in terms of both expertise in meat and poultry safety, public health, and other FSIS policies, as well as geographic diversity to provide more substantial contributions to USDA's regulatory policy development. Committee vacancies were announced to minority businesses and organizations, consumer groups, businesses, media, local and state governments, and academia. On April 4, 2023, FSIS announced the appointment of 15 new members and five returning Committee members.⁴

2023–2024 PLANNED ACTIONS:

- Continue holding monthly calls with FSIS-regulated establishments regarding USDA programs, services, and resources from which they could benefit. These calls are tailored to small and very-small establishments, giving them regular access to FSIS leadership and subject matter experts who can answer their questions directly or connect them with someone who can help.
- Solicit feedback from small and very small establishment owners through the implementation of a multi-language survey to ascertain how FSIS can better service their needs and improve outreach to them.
- Solicit industry feedback through NACMPI, which will hold a public virtual meeting on June 21–22, 2023, on ways to expand engagement with, and technical assistance to, new and existing small and very small establishments, including those in underserved communities.
- Expand outreach to small and very small establishments by increasing invitations to small plant roundtables that include under-represented communities. Roundtables are set for June 2023 in Albany, New York; July 2023 (this will be a National Roundtable held in conjunction with the American Association of Meat Processors' annual meeting) in Charleston, South Carolina; and August 2023 in Portland, Oregon.
- Provide real-time interpreter services at small and very small plant roundtables upon request.

ENGAGEMENT

- FSIS hosts a series of small plant roundtables held in areas of the U.S. where these businesses are located to maintain open communication and answer questions.
- FSIS hosts monthly virtual Establishment Town Halls for stakeholders and for regulated establishments to discuss ongoing activities in the Agency, including important food safety, inspection, and policy information.

⁴USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA Appoints New Members to Food Safety Advisory Committee. April 4, 2023, <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/04/04/usda-appoints-new-members-food-safety-advisory-committee>.

- The Agency publishes a weekly newsletter, the *Constituent Update*, to keep establishments informed of emerging developments. The newsletter is emailed every Friday and covers updates on policies, directives, and other important announcements.
- FSIS field personnel provide one-on-one outreach to small and very small establishments.
- FSIS operates a help desk, especially for small and very small establishments.
- The above resources supplement the information posted on our website, www.fsis.usda.gov, which contains our most up-to-date Agency communications, FSIS directives, guidance, and resources for regulated businesses, contact information for FSIS District Offices, and links to other USDA resources.

Priority Action 2: Expand language access for consumers with limited English proficiency

BARRIERS

The USDA Equity Commission has identified “language as a barrier for linguistically and culturally diverse communities trying to access USDA programs and services.”⁵ Language barriers can make it difficult for non-English speaking consumers or those who speak English as a second language to understand the messages that FSIS communicates regarding the importance of safe food handling and how to reduce risks associated with foodborne illness.

Cultural or tradition-based barriers can also reinforce unsafe practices. For example, in some cultures, washing raw poultry before cooking is a practice passed down from generation to generation. In addition, some holiday traditions involve stuffing a raw chicken or turkey. These practices can be steeped in family and community, but they are inconsistent with the best science-based recommendations.

STRATEGY

In alignment with the USDA Equity Commission’s Recommendation # 12 on Language Access, the Agency has made many publications, brochures, and fact sheets on safe food handling and preparation available in Spanish. The Agency includes translated messages and food safety information in its food safety campaigns, including key events and holidays, such as Thanksgiving, the Super Bowl, Summer grilling and back to school. With these campaigns, FSIS engages with traditional and digital media channels, offering interviews in both English and Spanish to make sure key U.S. audiences have access to food safety information.

In recognizing the significance of cultural and traditional influences, FSIS provides science-based information on why consumers should not wash poultry or stuff raw poultry, as well as information on how to do each safely.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS HIGHLIGHTS (OCTOBER 2021 – JUNE 2023):

- Continued to provide Spanish-speaking customer service on Meat and Poultry Hotline. This toll-free telephone service helps prevent foodborne illness by answering consumers’ questions about the safe storage, handling, and preparation of meat, poultry, and egg products.
- Reordered 30,000 *Is It Done Yet?* magnets in Spanish to meet demand from the Spanish-speaking public and extension offices conducting outreach in the Hispanic community.

⁵Interim Report 2023: Recommendations made to USDA to advance equity for all, USDA Equity Commission, p. 29, February 27, 2023, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-ec-interim-report-2023.pdf>.

- Delivered a food safety talk and bilingual materials at a state convention for the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Hispanic civil rights group, in Washington, D.C. in April 2023.
- Continued to supply extension offices and USDA personnel out in the field with Spanish publications to promote food safety. In April 2023, FSIS provided 1,000 Spanish food safety brochures for distribution at a Puerto Rico career expo.
- Collaborated with the [Latin American Youth Center](#), which supports Latino, African American, and refugee households in the DC metro area, to provide food safety materials. FSIS shipped 500 food thermometers, 500 *Food Safety Family Activities* books, and 500 *Let's Talk Turkey – A Consumer's Guide to Roasting Turkey* brochures to the Center in preparation for a Thanksgiving holiday event. For its holiday food box distribution to low-income families, FSIS provided 400 copies of its English and Spanish food safety internal temperature magnets, along with food safety activities books for youth in English and Spanish.
- Conducted dozens of Spanish language interviews across radio and TV for several different campaigns: 16 for the 2023 Super Bowl Campaign; 21 for the 2022 Thanksgiving Campaign, and 11 for the 2022 Back-to-School Campaign. In addition, FSIS received notable Spanish TV coverage for the 2022 Summer Grilling Campaign in San Diego, CA (KUANLD Telemundo), Las Vegas, NV (KBLR Telemundo), and Corpus Christi, TX (KORO Univision).
- Included FSIS' Back-to-School food safety blog in a monthly email sent by LULAC to its 37,000 email subscribers in October 2022.

2023–2024 PLANNED ACTIONS:

- Initiate an ad campaign to raise awareness of the availability of Spanish content on the Meat and Poultry Hotline and expand food safety messaging to more Americans through media outlets, social media,



and/or public service announcement placements. The target population for this effort is the “sandwich generation,” (i.e., those who are simultaneously caring for young children and elderly family members) with a focus on English and Spanish speakers. This initiative supports the Agency’s commitment to developing culturally competent, multicultural, educationally appropriate, and accessible food safety messaging in Spanish and English.

- Explore new consumer label designs tied to safe handling instructions for raw meat and poultry that will earn consumers’ attention and adoption of safe food handling practices. While these instructions currently exist on retail labels, FSIS is looking at how to improve their impact with a wider range of consumers. There will be four Spanish-speaking focus groups to help ensure that the revised labels are understandable and accessible, increase consumer knowledge, and motivate changes in food safety risk perceptions and behavior.
- Continue to recognize the importance of technology in enhancing citizen safety and providing best customer service. To this end, FSIS is exploring the use of technology to provide recall information in multiple languages with a read-aloud feature on its website. This can improve accessibility, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness while ensuring non-English speakers receive crucial information timely. By doing so, FSIS can improve consumer safety and satisfaction while providing a more efficient and cost-effective approach to providing recall information to the consumers.
- Present a World Food Safety Day talk and Spanish-language food safety materials at a LULAC youth group meeting in June 2023.

ENGAGEMENT

- FSIS recently published a standalone blog spotlighting the Ramadan Holiday—“Food Safety Do’s and Don’ts for Ramadan”—with emphasis being placed on ensuring the content was culturally-competent.
- As noted above, FSIS is committed to providing food safety information to Spanish-speaking consumers. Bilingual food safety specialists answer consumer inquiries on the [USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline](#) daily from 10 am – 6 pm ET. Public affairs specialists conduct partnership outreach, promote safe food handling via social media, and host and participate in outreach events targeting the Hispanic community. Spanish speakers are a key component of the Agency’s seasonal food safety outreach campaigns—Super Bowl, Summer Grilling, Back to School, and Thanksgiving, which includes a media tour that focuses on providing food safety information through English and Spanish Radio and TV outlets.
- The Meat and Poultry Hotline welcomes feedback from consumers who engage with food safety specialists through the online live chat function. Customer satisfaction information is gathered from customers through a post-inquiry survey with a numerical rating and customer comments are also gathered from the post-inquiry survey.

Priority Action 3: Assist tribal nations in their efforts to build self-sufficiency and grow their meat and poultry processing businesses

BARRIERS

In the past, tribal communities cultivated and ate a wide variety of food.⁶ Historical events have led to limitations and loss of traditional food ways and indigenous food sovereignty. In addition, generational knowledge of traditional food ways and surrounding traditions and cultures has been lost. Much of Indian Country imports its food from outside operations because of a lack of access to local sources of quality, affordable food. Diet-related issues can be connected to unhealthy outside food sources.⁶

Tribal communities, specifically younger generations, face limited job opportunities. The jobless rate for American Indians and Alaska Natives peaked at 28.6% in April 2020, early in the COVID-19 pandemic, and is still double that of the overall U.S. population.⁷ The unemployment rate is higher for tribal members who live in Indian Country than those who live elsewhere.⁸ Food entrepreneurial opportunities can increase labor force participation and decrease unemployment in tribal communities.

STRATEGY

Through conversations and listening, in the areas of technical assistance, communication, and community engagement, FSIS is committed to supporting tribal sovereignty, self-determination, traditions, and culture. Food sovereignty re-introduces traditional processes of food production and distribution. FSIS is committed to food sovereignty and respecting tribal sovereignty, self-determination, culture, and traditions. The Agency is providing technical assistance to tribes, which includes assistance in obtaining Federal Grants of Inspection, food safety compliance education, and connection to USDA Mission Areas and Agencies that offer grants and loans.

FSIS led and participated in listening sessions with tribal leadership, communities, and businesses in April 2022, June 2022, December 2022, and March 2023, respectively, to provide direct communication, strengthen trust, and ensure that FSIS policies and programs support tribal self-determination, traditions, and culture.

FSIS supports outreach and community engagement to increase program development and promote food safety. Engagement includes small and very small establishment roundtables and youth conferences to allow tribal members to identify opportunities related to food production and processing.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS HIGHLIGHTS (OCTOBER 2021 – JUNE 2023):

- The FSIS Administrator visited three tribal nations in June 2022 and witnessed diverse approaches to raising and harvesting bison. The Osage Nation of Oklahoma, the Quapaw Tribe, Makoce Agriculture Development on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and the InterTribal Buffalo Council hosted these engagements as opportunities for USDA to learn from and better understand tribal interests.

⁶U.S. Department of the Interior Indian Affairs, “Why Food Sovereignty Matters, American Indian and Alaska Native communities often lack easy access to fresh, affordable food,” accessed June 7, 2023, <https://www.bia.gov/service/indigenous-tourism/why-food-sovereignty-matters>.

⁷Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily, Unemployment rate for American Indians and Alaska Natives at 7.9 percent in December 2021, January 26, 2022, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/unemployment-rate-for-american-indians-and-alaska-natives-at-7-9-percent-in-december-2021.htm>.

⁸Mary Dorinda Allard and Vernon Brundage Jr., “American Indians and Alaska Natives in the U.S. labor force,” Monthly Labor Review, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 2019, <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2019.24>.

- Assisted two tribal nation establishments, Est. 47879 Looped Square Meats (Muscogee Creek Nation) and M1007 Cherokee Nation Meat Processing LLC., to come under Federal inspection to slaughter and process cattle, sheep, goats, and swine. Both establishments also slaughter and process bison under a state inspection system. Because bison is not an amenable species under the Federal Meat Inspection Act, FSIS charges for providing voluntary bison inspection. Therefore, FSIS coordinated with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry to issue M1007 a state grant of inspection, which includes no-cost bison inspection. As FSIS does with all tribal establishments, FSIS provided the two establishments with contact information for USDA's Office of Tribal Relations (OTR).
- Engaged with, and solicited input from, tribal leaders at tribal agricultural forums on ways to expand outreach and provide technical assistance to tribes applying for grants of inspection.
- Attended the 2023 Tribal Meat Processing Tours and Training Fly-in hosted by Intertribal Agricultural Council. The FSIS Administrator delivered remarks, explaining how FSIS can support tribes and assist in their efforts to build self-sufficiency and revenue through meat and poultry processing.

PLANNED 2023–2024 ACTIONS:

- Adding tribal lands to the publicly posted Meat and Poultry Inspection Directory and interactive map, overlaying points for 6,800+ establishments with quick facts about each plant along with the boundaries of tribal land for the first time in the Agency's history. The new view helps improve (1) outreach planning, supports local economies (whether identifying slaughter and processing establishments on/near tribal land or identifying job opportunities as local establishments) and (2) recruitment activities in these underserved areas.



- Hosting tribal webinars in partnership with the USDA's OTR to increase understanding of the Federal Grant of Inspection process and encourage tribal plants to consider coming under FSIS inspection.

ENGAGEMENT

- Leverage collaboration with OTR to continue building relationships with tribal nations.
- Participated in USDA Tribal Equity Consultations, April 24 – April 26, 2023.
- Participate in Native Youth Summit at University of Arkansas, July 21 – July 22, 2023.

Priority Action 4: Increase equity through Federal procurement

BARRIERS

Underserved small businesses often face even greater hurdles obtaining contracts relative to their populations.⁹ According to an Issue Brief issued by the White House on December 1, 2021, titled *The Benefits of Increased Equity in Federal Contracting*, “people of color, women, and those from rural areas are underrepresented in their share of total Federal procurement dollars, even relative to their low rates of ownership in the general economy.”¹⁰ Furthermore, it was noted that the Federal government, as a whole, fell short of achieving its goal of awarding 5% of its contracting dollars to women-owned small businesses and 3% of its contracting dollars to HUBZone-designated small businesses, which include those in rural areas characterized by low median incomes, high unemployment rates, and those that fall within Indian reservations.¹¹

As of December 2021, less than 10% of Federal agencies' total eligible procurement dollars went to socially disadvantaged businesses.¹² While women own roughly 20% of all small businesses economy-wide, less than 5% of Federal contracting dollars went to women-owned small businesses.¹³

STRATEGY

FSIS has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to advancing equity in Federal procurement, expanding opportunities for small business owners in underrepresented communities and women-owned small businesses to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, and narrowing persistent wealth disparities experienced by minority and women small business owners through its contract awards.

Each year, the Agency has awarded over \$30 million in contracts to small businesses and directs a significant share of FSIS' approximately \$60 million in total procurement spending to SDBs and WOSBs. Included are contracts for information technology equipment and services, lab equipment, protective equipment for frontline

⁹US Department of Commerce, Minority Business Development Agency, Contracting Barriers and Factors Affecting Minority Business Enterprises, Minority Business Development Agency, December 2016, https://archive.mbda.gov/sites/mbda.gov/files/migrated/files-attachments/ContractingBarriers_AReviewofExistingDisparityStudies.pdf.

¹⁰The Council of Economic Advisers, The White House. The Benefits of Increased Equity in Federal Contracting December 1, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/written-materials/2021/12/01/the-benefits-of-increased-equity-in-federal-contracting>.

¹¹US Senate, 21st Century Barriers to Women's Entrepreneurship, Majority Report of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, July 23, 2014, https://www.sbc.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/3/f/3f954386-f16b-48d2-86ad-698a75e33cc4/F74C2CA266014842F8A3D86C3AB619BA.21st-century-barriers-to-women-s-entrepreneurship-revised-ed.-v.1.pdf.

¹²The White House, FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Announces Reforms to Increase Equity and Level the Playing Field for Underserved Small Business Owners, December 2, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/12/02/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-reforms-to-increase-equity-and-level-the-playing-field-for-underserved-small-business-owners/>.

¹³Ibid.

inspectors, and supplies. FSIS has contributed to USDA’s past successes by exceeding its 5% SDB goal for 7 consecutive years. In addition, FSIS exceeded the 5% WOSB goal by more than three-fold over the last 4 years.

In response to Executive Orders 13985 and 14091 and consistent with the USDA Equity Commission’s Recommendation #18 on Procurement, FSIS has undertaken a multipronged approach to strengthening supplier diversity, which includes: expanding outreach to SDBs and WOSBs to increase the number of new entrants competing for FSIS procurement opportunities; training of its procurement staff and Contracting Officer’s Representatives to consider SDBs and WOSBs in their market research; raising SDBs’ and WOSBs’ awareness of White House initiatives to ensure equal access to services for those with limited English proficiency; and developing forecasts to align upcoming FSIS contracting opportunities with the capabilities of SDBs and WOSBs.

Additionally, FSIS increased its SDB goal from the statutory goal of 5% to 21.5% to align with the ambitious FY2022 goal that SBA established for USDA as a whole. As the table below shows, FSIS more than met this goal, which represented more than an eight-fold increase to FSIS’ target over the previous 7 years—over \$29 million awarded to SDBs in FY2022. FSIS awarded over \$14.5 million to WOSBs in FY2022 and over \$59 million to small businesses collectively in FY2022.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS HIGHLIGHTS (OCTOBER 2021 – JUNE 2023):

- Far exceeded FY2022 small business goals across all socioeconomic categories, as summarized below:

	USDA Goal	% of FSIS Contracting	Percentage Points Over USDA Goal
Small Business	44%	76%	32
Small Disadvantaged Business	21.5%	60%	38.5
Women-Owned Small Business	5%	27%	22
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business	3%	23%	20
HubZone	3%	27%	24

Source: [Integrated Acquisition System \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/procurement-integrated-acquisition-system)

- Delivered annual training to the acquisition community on in-depth market research, including policies and procedures associated with FSIS’ Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP Plan).
- Held Procurement Planning Conferences in Q1 and Q3 FY2022 to identify new and existing requirements.
- Developed and approved acquisition plans in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

2023–2024 PLANNED ACTIONS

- Ensure equitable and fair source selection occurs for every procurement by making sure that evaluation criteria are tailored and relevant to each action and are not a barrier to entry or eliminate potential vendors by being too restrictive.
- Ensure Acquisition Training and Procurement Conferences include USDA’s LEP requirements.
- Reduce sole-sourcing contracts when possible to increase competition in the industry as well as help ensure FSIS receives quality products at a fair and equitable cost. Ensure equitable and fair source selection occurs for every procurement and include robust evaluation criteria in all procurements.
- Place greater emphasis on early market research to see where potential set-aside efforts can be procured for WOSB and SDBs.



- Engage with small businesses and seek out new ways to enhance FSIS' vendor pool by attending industry days and vendor meet and greets.

ENGAGEMENT

- Focus outreach on exceeding small business goals across all socioeconomic categories and increase the number of new entrants competing for FSIS procurement dollars.
- Invite small businesses to FSIS-hosted Industry Days, attend vendor fairs, and participate in additional small business outreach opportunities. Issue more direct awards to small businesses across socioeconomic categories, including awards to WOSBs and Blind and Visually Impaired small businesses.

In sum, FSIS will further equity in procurement by providing diverse suppliers with opportunities needed to fuel the start and growth of their businesses, create jobs, and win in the marketplace, thereby strengthening local communities and economies.

For more information on equity at FSIS, and all of USDA, see usda.gov/equity.

Selected Equity Resources and Information

USDA Equity-Related Summary Reports and Guidance

PROGRAMMATIC EQUITY AT USDA

- [Equity Website](#)
- [Equity Accomplishments](#)
- Equity Action Plan: [Full Plan | Summary](#) (February 2022)
- [USDA Environmental Justice Scorecard](#)
- [USDA Advisory Committees](#)

EQUITY COMMISSION

- [Equity Commission Website](#)
- [2023 Interim Report | USDA Response](#) (February 2023)
- [Informe Interino 2023 | Respuesta al Informe Interino de la Comisión de Equidad del USDA](#) (febrero 2023)

FSIS Resources

- [Apply for Grant of Inspection](#)
- [Food Safety Brochures & Publications](#)
- [FSIS Limited-English-Proficiency-Plan.pdf](#) (usda.gov)
- [Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection Directory](#)
- [National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection \(NACMPI\)](#)
- [USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline](#)

Selected Equity-Related Executive Orders and White House Resources

- [White House Equity Page](#)
- [Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)
- [Executive Order 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)
- [Executive Order 14096, Revitalizing our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All](#)
- [Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments](#)
- [Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships](#)
- [The Path to Achieving Justice40](#)

USDA Mission Statement

“To serve all Americans by providing effective, innovative, science-based public policy leadership in agriculture, food and nutrition, natural resource protection and management, rural development, and related issues with a commitment to delivering equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive.”

Department Equity Action Plan Goals

1. Reducing Barriers to USDA Programs

USDA is reducing barriers to programs and improving support to underserved farmers, ranchers, landowners, businesses, and communities, including by providing ways for stakeholders to share their experiences, insights, and needs and by incorporating that input into policy development and implementation improvement.

2. Partnering with Trusted Technical Assistance Providers

USDA is partnering with trusted technical assistance providers to ensure that underserved producers and communities have the support they need to access USDA programs.

3. Directing USDA Programs to Those Who Need Them the Most

USDA programs are targeting those who need them the most, including by increasing infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities.

4. Expanding Equitable Access to USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs

USDA is expanding equitable access to USDA nutrition assistance programs to ensure that those who qualify are able to participate, those who participate get benefits that are meaningful, and those who receive those benefits can use them conveniently and in ways that promote improvements in their health and well-being.

5. Advancing Equity in Federal Procurement

USDA is advancing equity in Federal procurement, by providing underserved and disadvantaged businesses, tools, and resources to increase access to funding opportunities and expand their network to develop critical local, State, regional, and National relationships.

6. Upholding Federal Trust and Treaty Responsibilities to Indian Tribes

USDA is upholding general Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian Tribes, removing barriers to access USDA programs, embracing tribal self-determination principles, and incorporating indigenous values and perspectives in program design and delivery.

7. Committing Unwaveringly to Civil Rights

USDA has committed unwaveringly to civil rights, working to equip its civil rights offices with the tools, skills, capacity, and processes essential to enforce and uphold civil rights effectively and efficiently.

8. Operating with Transparency and Accountability

USDA is operating transparently and accountably, providing information on Department programs that Congress, stakeholders, and the general public need to hold us to account on our equity agenda, and working systematically to collect and take account of public feedback.

USDA



WWW.FSIS.USDA.GOV/EQUITYACTIONPLAN2023

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.