

Pursuant to Executive Order 13985 (January 20, 2021) on "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government"

Equity Action Plan Summary

U.S. General Services Administration

The mission of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is to deliver the best customer experience and value in real estate, acquisition, and technology services to the government and the American people. GSA leverages the buying power of the Federal Government to provide federal purchasers with cost-effective, high-quality products and services from commercial vendors.

Delivering equity through GSA

GSA delivers mission-critical services and core products to federal agency customers and clients, which makes the agency uniquely positioned to have a multiplier effect across government in advancing equity and removing barriers for underserved communities. GSA will leverage its mission to contribute to closing the racial wealth gap by advancing equity through supplier diversity and increasing opportunities for overall contract dollars to be awarded to underserved and disadvantaged businesses. GSA's governmentwide technology services and solutions each serve millions of end-users annually. GSA is dedicated to actions that prioritize equitable user experience as a core design principle, mitigate algorithmic bias, improve digital accessibility, and thereby modernize the delivery of government services to the American people.

New strategies to advance equity

- **Use human-centered design principles to expand opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses to use the Multiple Award Schedule procurement award and enhance elements of the vendor education process**

Small and disadvantaged businesses can experience difficulty navigating the Multiple Award Schedule award process, lacking understanding of the requirements of federal procurement, which can lead to missed opportunities. GSA will address this barrier by simplifying the process for firms to obtain contracts and by improving vendor education. This will enable more firms, including small and disadvantaged businesses, to enter the federal marketplace. As companies grow more proficient and experienced in using the Multiple Award Schedule, they can prepare to compete for contract vehicles with more complex buying regulations.

- **Develop a robust community assessment process to determine the economic and environmental justice effects of the footprint of public buildings**

The GSA manages federal property, including operating and maintaining buildings. However, it does not have the comprehensive data necessary to fully assess the community impact of its real estate portfolio, leading to potential inequities with respect to how public buildings are designed, sited, or operated. GSA will address this gap by developing a model for community assessment. GSA will hire a full-time data scientist, develop data-sharing agreements with relevant Federal agencies with community data that could be used by GSA, and elevate and expand its Good Neighbor program. The program will deliver tangible benefits to communities through outreach, by increasing urban planning technical assistance and landscape architecture programming, and by strengthening engagement with State, Local and Tribal stakeholders.

New strategies to advance equity

- **Prioritize equitable design and user experience when delivering Federal digital services and improve accessibility and performance for older devices and for mobile, rural, and low-bandwidth users**

Many government applications and websites have minimal language accessibility, confusing navigation, and poor design practices resulting in user mistrust and frustration. Instances where user experiences have been disappointing or subpar have been attributed to high user stress resulting in reduced reading comprehension, navigation problems, and incomplete tasks. These challenges are exacerbated for those with low-bandwidth or older devices. To address these barriers, GSA will work closely with community partners to ensure greater representativeness when measuring customer experience and usability. GSA teams will perform accessibility assessments following industry-approved standards, run usability tests and user interviews to measure and improve task completion rates and page load times for low- and limited-bandwidth connections to prioritize work to improve the usability of government websites. GSA will also address discrimination in emerging technologies and data sovereignty, including ensuring equitable remote identity-verification experiences for diverse populations. GSA commits that it will not deploy facial recognition, liveness detection, or any other emerging technology into production environments until a rigorous review has given the agency confidence that they can be implemented equitably and without causing disproportionate harm to vulnerable populations.

- **Invest in resources to help advance civil rights**

Advancing equity rests on the presumption of equal opportunities and protection under the law. As noted in the Executive Order, Government programs are designed to serve all eligible individuals. To meet this objective and to enhance compliance with existing civil rights laws, agencies were obligated to address the operational status and level of institutional resources available to offices or divisions within the agency that are responsible for advancing civil rights or whose mandates specifically include serving underrepresented or disadvantaged

New strategies to advance equity

communities. To meet this mandate, GSA will conduct 14 civil rights compliance reviews of State Agencies for Surplus Property per fiscal year (2022-2026) and conduct civil rights compliance reviews of the largest recipients of federal surplus personal property to verify their programs and activities are similarly accessible to the public they serve. GSA will also reassess and update GSA's Language Access Plan to afford meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency to GSA's programs and activities – in alignment with recent executive orders focusing on equity, voting access information, environmental justice and climate – and develop and launch employee training that addresses equity and environmental justice.

Building on GSA's progress

This equity action plan builds on GSA's progress delivering on equity and racial justice in the first year of the Biden-Harris Administration.

- **Expanding access to underserved businesses**

The Governmentwide Category Management Project Management Office hosted a Fall Industry Day targeted at the small business (SB) and the small disadvantaged business (SDB) community. The session helped SBs and SDBs navigate the federal marketplace. Almost 1,200 businesses attended the live event or viewed it on demand. GSA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization hosted a virtual, full-day training and matchmaking event focused on helping small businesses achieve success in the federal marketplace. More than 800 federal leaders and industry experts participated. GSA also hosted 11 virtual events connecting 80 Small Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses with an estimated 40 GSA prime contractors to meet, network, and discuss potential subcontracting opportunities.

- **Expanding access and consultation to underserved communities**

The Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings, an office within the Office of Government-wide Policy, established the Green Building Advisory Committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Committee's Environmental Justice and Equity Task Group garnered feedback from community groups and advocacy organizations and presented recommendations to the Committee as it evaluates the public building portfolio's impacts. GSA's Public Building Service (PBS) is partnering with the National Endowment for the Arts to increase the diversity and outreach of its Art in Architecture program. PBS facilitated an "IDEA" (DEIA) Roundtable with associations and industry partners. The Industry Roundtable focused on diversity and inclusion topics and highlighted such topics as the Architectural Barriers Act in the federal built environment. PBS continues to maintain the Good Neighbor Program,

Building on GSA's progress

which provides technical planning expertise to GSA project teams to improve collaboration with rural and urban communities nationwide regarding GSA projects and properties.

● **Ensuring equitable technology transformation**

Login.gov partnered with Source America and Knowability to recruit low-vision and blind users for insight on accessibility issues on the platform. Login.gov commissioned a field test to assess the efficacy of liveness detection systems in identity-proofing processes. Revisions to Login.gov have been made to improve access and mitigate disparities. Technology Transformation Services adopted formal acceptance criteria and implemented automated testing to promote accessibility. Its continuous-integration test suite automatically detects known accessibility defects so that they can be addressed before product launches. This equity intervention improves accessibility to government digital services for individuals with visual impairments.