

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

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) explores the unknown in air and space, innovates for the benefit of humanity, and inspires the world through discovery.

Delivering equity through NASA

NASA stands poised to usher in a bold new era of discovery – preparing to return astronauts, including the first woman and first person of color, to the Moon and open the way for human exploration of Mars; launching new science missions to explore the depths of the universe; and working to enrich lives and protect resources on Earth. Yet, one of our biggest challenges lies here at home. As NASA ushers in the third great era of human space exploration, NASA also will take on a renewed challenge of advancing equity by working to recognize and overcome the visible and invisible systemic barriers that hinder equitable, inclusive access – by individuals or communities – to the government programs, resources, and opportunities that make all of NASA’s work possible. To chart America’s course in space, NASA must first embrace and empower the whole of our nation here at home. NASA will anchor equity as a core component in every mission to inspire a new, more inclusive generation. NASA will seize the opportunity to make limitless the potential of all Americans, and uphold the legacies of Katherine Johnson and Mary Jackson, of Sally Ride, Ronald McNair, Mae Jemison, and Soichi Noguchi, in all NASA’s future endeavors.

New strategies to advance equity

- **Increase integration and utilization of contractors and businesses from underserved communities to expand equity in NASA's procurement processes**

When NASA sought public feedback through a Request for Information on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities in NASA Programs, Contracts, and Grants Processes, half of the requests noted the importance of increasing outreach, training, technical assistance, and communications on how to do business with the Agency. In response, NASA will review and address barriers in NASA procurement and contracting programs to identify underrepresented businesses that are eligible to compete for procurement contracts but are not submitting proposals. On the other end, the Agency will work to identify why underrepresented businesses that did apply may not have been selected for contracts. Based on these findings, NASA will increase the number of engagement opportunities with underserved communities.

- **Enhance grants and cooperative agreements to advance opportunities, access, and representation for underserved communities**

NASA awards about 3,000 grants and cooperative agreements each year, the majority across a range of science disciplines. However, underserved communities and Minority Serving Institutions (including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominately Black Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Native American Non-Tribal Institutions, Alaskan Native- or Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Asian American- and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions) are generally underrepresented in those awards. The agency is committed to identifying and addressing the barriers that inhibit participation by Minority Serving Institutions. NASA will conduct a barrier analysis of NASA grants and cooperative agreements and launch the Science Mission Directorate Bridge Program in 2022 (contingent on the availability of resources) to foster collaboration and partnerships between NASA centers and Minority Serving Institutions and research universities.

New strategies to advance equity

The program will focus on paid research and engineering internships, apprenticeships, and research experiences for faculty. The agency will also expand the Dual Anonymous Peer Review of grant proposals, in which names and identities of reviewers and proposers are kept hidden in select competitions in order to increase fairness and reduce hidden biases, and to promote more representative selection rates for its award programs.

- **Leverage earth science and socioeconomic data to help mitigate environmental challenges in underserved communities**

The world faces a host of environmental challenges – poor air and water quality, sea-level rise, extreme heat, and more. As a world leader in Earth science, NASA understands these challenges well, using an extensive network of satellites and observation systems to collect comprehensive data about the atmosphere, oceans, land, and life. The agency wants to ensure its data benefits people across the nation, particularly those in underserved and marginalized communities who face especially acute environmental threats and challenges. NASA has a longstanding commitment to making its data available to all. However, availability does not guarantee accessibility. To address this barrier, NASA will make data available on the cloud and convert many data sets to widely accepted formats for easier use, including by making its 50 most-requested environmental data sets of last year available on the internet cloud, with full transfer of NASA Earth science data to the cloud by 2025. To ensure accessibility, NASA will provide free, multi-lingual training on how to use NASA data to address priority needs in underserved communities. In 2022, NASA plans to train about 2,700 users on how to use NASA data to address key environmental issues, such as air quality, flooding, and water resources management. Introductory trainings will be offered in English and Spanish, allowing those in underserved communities to begin using NASA data.

New strategies to advance equity

● **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 communities. To meet this mandate, NASA will increase civil rights compliance audits of NASA grantee institutions receiving NASA funding; conduct a broad, proactive outreach campaign to increase awareness of NASA-funded opportunities and legal protections ensured by civil rights laws; communicate new terms and conditions for harassment reporting by grant recipients; update NASA's Language Access Plan; and expand accessibility for communities with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Building on NASA's progress

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

- **Ensuring equity in climate data accessibility and environmental justice**

NASA Earth Science and its Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center conducted their first Equity and Environmental Justice Virtual Workshop to facilitate increased communication between NASA and environmental justice communities. NASA also responded to census data identifying a lack of potable water in the homes of at least 70,000 Navajo Nation residents to create a Drought Severity Assessment Tool, helping to monitor conditions and resource allocation.

- **Laying a foundation for using Dual Anonymous Peer Review (DAPR)**

NASA began transitioning its science grant proposal review process to a DAPR system – where names of reviewers and proposers are kept hidden – to increase fairness and reduce any hidden biases present during the proposal review process.

- **Increasing equity in grants and cooperative agreements**

NASA updated its Guidebook for Proposers, highlighting a commitment to solicit projects that foster STEM education and participation by underrepresented or underserved students and education organizations. NASA's Science Mission Directorate also launched a No Due Date program as part of its 2021 research opportunities to help principal investigators achieve better work-life balance and to give smaller institutions more opportunity to submit proposals. NASA's Science Mission Directorate has been working to develop long-term relationships with new, diverse partners, better reflect the diversity of the nation, and enable greater

Building on NASA's progress

participation by underrepresented groups in agency efforts. Last year, NASA also selected 11 small business technology program proposals valued at a combined \$540,000 – six from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and five from Hispanic-serving institutions – to receive inaugural research planning grants.

● **Delivering on outreach and communications to LEP populations**

NASA released its first interactive graphic novel in English, Spanish, and visually impaired versions. Its first Spanish-language presentation of a planetary landing drew more than 3.2 million views, 39 Spanish-media interviews, and a significant social media following.