



The Department of Justice
Equity Action Plan

2023

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14091

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE EQUITY ACTION PLAN

I. Message From Agency Head

Every day, the 40 components and more than 115,000 employees of the Department of Justice (Department or DOJ) work to fulfill its mission to uphold the rule of law, to keep our country safe, and to protect civil rights. Embedded within that mission is a core principle of advancing equal justice under law. Established during Reconstruction, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the Department's first major enforcement efforts aimed to secure the civil rights promised by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. Since then, the Department has worked to ensure that no individuals are denied the freedoms and protections guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws of the United States.

The Equity Action Plan that follows reflects the Department's current efforts to continue this foundational work. The Department remains committed to aiding all people, and particularly historically marginalized and underserved communities, in accessing the Department's programs and resources, navigating complex legal and regulatory hurdles to vindicate their rights, understanding the breadth of the Department's work, and meaningfully engaging with DOJ decision-makers. Moreover, the Department's equity mission statement reflects the commitment to understand and respond to the needs, concerns, and interests of the communities we serve and to ensure that the Department's workforce reflects our increasingly diverse nation.

I am grateful to the Department's Equity Team, a group of more than twenty senior leaders from across the Department, for their work to prepare this year's Equity Action Plan and to oversee various efforts consistent with Executive Order (EO) 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.¹

II. Advancing Equity Through Agency Mission

Today, more than 150 years after the Department of Justice's watershed efforts during Reconstruction to protect the civil rights promised by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, far too many Americans still face discrimination. This harm has been particularly acute for historically marginalized and underserved communities. By committing to a whole-of-Department approach to ensure that all people are treated fairly and justly and are able to fully exercise the rights and protections established by the Constitution and laws of the United States, we honor the Department's history and advance its current mission to uphold the rule of law, to keep our country safe, and to protect civil rights. We aim to lead these efforts with legitimacy and integrity by ensuring our workforce is representative of and accountable to the country we serve.

III. Executive Summary of Equity Action Plan

DOJ has taken a Department-wide approach to advancing equity for historically marginalized and underserved communities and will continue to employ a people-centered community engagement strategy to elicit meaningful feedback from the public.

Specifically, the Department has hosted meetings, convenings, and listening sessions in order to directly engage with communities of color, Indigenous communities, individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP), rural communities, the LGBTQI+ community, persons with disabilities,

¹ Exec. Order No. 14,091, 88 Fed. Reg. 10825 (Feb. 22, 2023).

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justice-impacted individuals, and persons otherwise adversely affected by inequality. These communities include national, regional, State, and local organizations that represent the needs and concerns of and/or are rooted in historically marginalized and underserved communities, including those engaged in criminal justice reform efforts.

Historically, these communities have faced barriers in their attempts to engage with Federal agencies, either due to agency practices, policies, systems, and infrastructure, or barriers too often endemic to historically marginalized and underserved communities, such as lack of internet access, transportation, time, capacity, and financial resources. These obstacles have led to lower levels of public familiarity or knowledge of Federal programs, which are often exacerbated by historic or current lack of trust in such programs based on past negative experiences engaging with government partners. In response, the Department will continue to meaningfully engage with these communities to ensure that DOJ's programs, activities, and equity work are accessible, effective, and impactful.

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, the Department will advance the following five equity strategies:

- A. Removing barriers to access to grant funding and resources for organizations led by and that primarily serve historically marginalized and underserved communities that have faced societal and systemic barriers in accessing and receiving Federal resources, as well as to communities disproportionately impacted by crime, violence, and victimization.
- B. Supporting corrections and reentry programs that seek to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for justice-involved individuals (including those from historically marginalized and underserved communities and those disproportionately impacted by crime, violence, and victimization), including by improving healthcare coverage and continuity of care supports, reducing barriers to obtaining government-issued identification, addressing burdens associated with inability to pay fines and fees, and improving community supervision models to decrease incidence of revocation for technical violations.
- C. Promoting an inclusive, diverse, and expert law enforcement workforce to strengthen public trust and improve public safety outcomes by removing barriers to representation within Federal, State, Tribal, local, and territorial law enforcement agencies for underrepresented communities.
- D. Improving the response of law enforcement and criminal justice personnel to crimes that disproportionately affect women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming people (including gender-based violence and sex trafficking) by providing and/or supporting: (1) targeted training on how to investigate and prosecute these crimes; (2) training and resources on trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches, care, and services available to victims; and (3) resources and support for building relationships with and increasing access to services and assistance for historically marginalized and underserved communities.
- E. Ensuring that underserved communities (including people with LEP and people with disabilities, among others) are aware of and able to access legal services to address environmental crime, pollution, climate change, and other environmental hazards and have help navigating the legal and regulatory landscape necessary to secure access to clean water, air, and other natural resources.

IV. Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments

A. 2022 Equity Action Plan Update

Pursuant to EO 13985,² the Department of Justice published its first ever [Equity Action Plan](#) in April 2022. Since then, the Department has made significant progress implementing its equity priorities by improving solicitation processes, increasing opportunities for disadvantaged small businesses located in Historically Underutilized Business Zones, and strengthening mechanisms for community engagement, among others. Specific examples of the Department's ongoing progress in advancing its 2022 equity priorities include:

- **Strengthening efforts to ensure compliance and enforcement of non-discrimination laws.** Following review of implementation and administrative enforcement of the non-discrimination provisions set forth in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act³ and the Safe Streets Act⁴ in connection with Federal financial assistance, the Department is taking affirmative steps to improve this work.⁵ For example, the Civil Rights Division (CRT) and the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) created and co-chair a Compliance Working Group to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of these statutes, issue public guidance, revise internal standards, update tools and resources, and conduct public outreach.⁶
- **Enhancing language access for individuals with limited English proficiency.** In May 2022, DOJ [hired](#) its first-ever Language Access Coordinator (Coordinator). Since then, DOJ's Coordinator has reestablished the Language Access Working Group, which meets regularly, is comprised of representatives from various DOJ components, and provides a platform to support, guide, and oversee components' efforts to increase meaningful access so that communities can better access DOJ programs, communicate public safety concerns, and vindicate their rights. For example, DOJ recently published its FY 2022 – 2026 [Strategic Plan](#) in Spanish and key excerpts were published in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog. In August 2023, the Department also released its updated [Language Access Plan](#), which improves translation and interpretation services, promotes quality assurance of those services, and expands the range of tools available to serve the public.

B. Environmental Justice Scorecard

The Department has made significant progress in advancing environmental justice as measured through the agency's performance on the [Environmental Justice Scorecard](#). This progress includes: (1) analyzing how to best enforce the non-discrimination provisions under Title VI;⁷ (2) prioritizing environmental justice in DOJ's decision-making processes through the creation of the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), development and implementation of a new Comprehensive Environmental Justice Enforcement Strategy, and engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns, including Tribal nations; and (3) institutionalizing environmental justice by developing DOJ resources and training, increasing staff capacity, and strengthening

² Exec. Order No. 13,985, 86 Fed. Reg. 7009 (Jan. 25, 2021).

³ 42 U.S.C. § 2000(d).

⁴ Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, Pub. L. No. 90-351, 82 Stat. 197 (1968) (codified at 34 U.S.C. § 10101).

⁵ Memorandum from the Office of the Assoc. Att'y Gen. on the Dep't's Implementation and Admin. Enforcement of Title VI and the Safe Streets Act (June 22, 2022), https://www.ojp.gov/ocr_titlevi.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 2000(d).

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internal agency-wide working groups.⁸

C. Additional Efforts to Advance Equity

In addition to the implementation of the Department's equity priorities under EO 13985,⁹ the Department continues to advance equity in other areas, including by:

- **Combating hate crimes and hate incidents.** The Department has increased multilingual resources to combat hate crimes through Federal law enforcement action and enhanced training, support, and outreach to State and local partners. For example, DOJ has further prioritized civil rights violations and hate crimes enforcement among the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) field offices. As of September 2023, DOJ launched the [United Against Hate program](#) in all 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices (USAOs) to help improve the reporting of hate crimes by informing communities on how to identify, report, and help prevent hate crimes, and to encourage trust building between law enforcement and communities.¹⁰
- **Reforming law enforcement practices.** Pursuant to EO 14074,¹¹ DOJ is executing on more than 90 Executive Order [deliverables](#) to advance effective, fair, and constitutional policing; improve conditions of confinement and reentry; promote officer safety and wellness; and improve data collection and analysis. This work includes prohibiting the transfer or purchase of military-style weapons and equipment to State, Tribal, Local and Territorial (STLT) law enforcement agencies (LEAs), administering grants in a manner that is consistent with the adoption of EO 14074's policies, creating accreditation standards to help encourage STLT LEAs to adopt policies consistent with the EO, and working to establish the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database. DOJ also released a [Strategic Plan](#) for supporting the goals of the Federal Interagency Alternatives and Reentry Committee, which seeks to safely reduce criminal justice system interactions, support rehabilitation during incarceration, and facilitate successful reentry.¹² Lastly, DOJ has invested in state- and local-level correctional services, including by supporting correctional and educational institutions as they enhance post-secondary educational opportunities in prisons following the reinstatement of Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students in July 2023. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is also expanding access to Pell Grants within Federal correctional facilities to help incarcerated students earn college credits and/or a college degree.
- **Combating sexual misconduct and gender-based violence.** CRT has developed resources to assist Department prosecutors and investigators in understanding how to use Federal civil rights statutes to redress sexual misconduct.¹³ DOJ has also produced a [report](#) related to sexual misconduct by BOP employees, which offers actionable recommendations to improve

⁸ U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., FACT SHEET: YEAR ONE OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY AND OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (2023).

⁹ Exec. Order No. 13,985, 86 Fed. Reg. 7009 (Jan. 25, 2021).

¹⁰ U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., FACT SHEET: JUSTICE DEPARTMENT EFFORTS TO COMBAT HATE CRIMES (2023), <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/spotlight/combating-hate-crimes>.

¹¹ Exec. Order No. 14,074, 87 Fed. Reg. 32,945 (May 31, 2022).

¹² *Justice Department Fact Sheet on Implementing Executive Order on Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing, and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety*, OFF. L. POL'Y, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (May 31, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/olp/justice-department-fact-sheet-implementing-executive-order-advancing-effective-accountable>.

¹³ U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., CIVIL RIGHTS DIV., FACT SHEET: COMBATING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT (2023), <https://www.justice.gov/crt/page/file/1581661/download>.

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procedures for victim reporting, ensure victims do not experience penalties for reporting, enhance reporting options for third parties, and prioritize investigations and prosecutions of BOP employees who commit sexual misconduct.

- **Improving access to DOJ programs and services.** In 2022 and 2023, the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (LAIR), a 28-Federal agency collaboration, co-chaired by the Attorney General and White House Counsel’s Office and led and staffed by DOJ’s Office for Access to Justice (ATJ), engaged with legal aid and other stakeholders to inform its activities. The purpose of the engagement was to better understand the barriers and opportunities to make Federal government programs and services more accessible and equitable and increase all people’s ability to obtain just outcomes. In 2022, ATJ collected feedback from over 70 legal aid and advocacy organizations across the country who regularly help people access government programs and benefits for which they are eligible. Informed by this review, the [2022 Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Report](#) developed a roadmap to simplify Federal government forms, processes, and language, utilizing a people-centered approach. In 2023, ATJ, in collaboration with other agencies, held a listening session with 15 legal aid and other advocates to hear on-the-ground experiences of individuals interacting with Federal administrative proceedings to inform agency efforts, such as providing assistance through lawyers and nonlawyers, streamlining processes and language, and leveraging digital technologies while providing support to those without access to such technologies.

D. Advancing Equity Through Key Legislation

Among other notable initiatives, the Department is responsible for implementing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization of 2022,¹⁴ the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA),¹⁵ and the legislation to extend the Not Invisible Act Commission.¹⁶ The below highlights three examples of how the Department is advancing equity through legislation:

- **VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2022.**¹⁷ DOJ is implementing the [Alaska Pilot Program](#) (Pilot Program) to advance the public safety needs of Alaska Native Villages through the expansion of Tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who commit certain covered crimes in Villages designated by the Attorney General to participate in the Pilot Program. In furtherance of this work, the Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) has led formal consultations with Tribal leaders and continues to collaborate with Tribal representatives and organizations to develop the Pilot Program. In addition, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) issued a special solicitation for Alaska Tribes interested in preparing for the Pilot Program through funding under the [Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction: Targeted Support for Alaska Native Tribes Special Initiative](#). The USAO for the District of Alaska also convened approximately 800 Tribes and Tribal agencies, LEAs, and victims’ services organizations to establish the Alaska Tribal Public Safety Advisory Committee, as required by the Reauthorization. In connection with the VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2022, the Attorney General and OVW are authorized to make grants to

¹⁴ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-103, § 804, 136 Stat. 903 (2022).

¹⁵ Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, Pub. L. No. 117-159, 136 Stat. 1313 (2022), <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ159/PLAW-117publ159.pdf>.

¹⁶ Act of Jan. 5, 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-359, § 1, 136 Stat. 6290 (2023) (amending the Not Invisible Act of 2019 to extend, and provide additional support for, the activities of the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice Joint Commission on Reducing Violent Crime Against Indians, and for other purposes).

¹⁷ Consolidated Appropriations Act § 804.

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enhance services for victims of crimes in underserved populations, including LGBTQI+ populations.¹⁸

- **The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA).**¹⁹ BSCA provides DOJ with [essential tools](#) to help reduce gun violence. Notably, BSCA established new criminal offenses that address straw purchasing and firearms trafficking, changes to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and provided additional grant funding to reduce gun violence. BSCA also changed the background check process and narrowed what was known as the “boyfriend loophole” by expanding the misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence (MCDV) prohibitor to persons convicted, on or after June 25, 2022, of a qualifying offense that was committed against a person with whom they are or recently were in a dating relationship. In August 2022, NICS began denying the transfer of firearms from Federal firearms licensees to applicants based on the expanded definition of MCDV.
- **Not Invisible Act Commission.** The Joint Commission on Reducing Violent Crime Against Indians (Commission) was extended to increase intergovernmental coordination in combating violent crime within Indian lands and against Indigenous persons. Department components are supporting the work of the Commission, which is developing recommendations on establishing best practices for Federal, State, Tribal, and local LEAs to improve coordination and resources for survivors and victims’ families and combating the epidemic of missing, murdered, and trafficking of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. In 2023, the Commission held field hearings in the communities most affected by this crisis, which will result in a final report to the U.S. Congress, the Attorney General, and the Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

V. Strategies to Advance Equity in Fiscal Year 2024

A. Strategy 1. Removing Barriers to Access to Federal Grantmaking (Economic and Criminal Justice Strategy)

Barriers to Equity.

Historically marginalized and underserved communities – and those communities disproportionately impacted by crime, violence, and victimization – face significant barriers in identifying and accessing Federal funding sources and available technical assistance. The organizations that represent these communities are often best suited to design services and strategies that respond to the specific challenges faced by communities. They can also assist with enhancing trust and relationships between communities and law enforcement, which can lead to improved criminal justice outcomes.

These organizations have faced barriers to participating in Federal grant programs, including a lack of sustained outreach to inform these communities about available Federal funding and technical assistance opportunities; a lack of resources and training to navigate complex Federal grant application processes and recordkeeping obligations in some population-specific organizations;²⁰ and a lack of trust in Federal agencies or negative past experiences interfacing with government

¹⁸ Allison Randall, *OVW Celebrates LGBTQI+ Pride Month 2023*, OFF. ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (OVW), U.S. DEP’T OF JUST. (June 22, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/blog/ovw-celebrates-lgbtqi-pride-month-2023>.

¹⁹ Bipartisan Safer Communities Act § 1.

²⁰ In this Equity Action Plan, “population-specific organization” is defined as a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that primarily serves members of a specific underserved population and has demonstrated experience and expertise providing targeted services to members of that specific underserved population. *See, e.g.*, 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(26).

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partners on the part of some population-specific organizations. These barriers not only impact the ability of these communities to secure funding but can exacerbate negative criminal justice outcomes. For example, the limited availability of funding for community-centric law enforcement efforts may foreclose opportunities for community partnerships, undermine measures to reduce violence, and erode the community's trust.

Evidence Base to Support Equity Strategy.

Historically marginalized and underserved communities are often deeply affected by violence and victimization and are known to experience crime rates in excess of the national average. For example, American Indians and Alaska Natives endure the highest crime rates in the nation.²¹ There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that organizations developed for a specific cultural community to serve the needs of that community are better able to deploy culturally appropriate solutions to reduce crime and victimization and help victims transform their lives.

Research shows that through funding and technical assistance, population-specific organizations can play a significant role in effectively implementing system strategies. In fact, supporting these organizations improves outcomes by leveraging their established role as trusted community resources and relying on their proven knowledge of communities, including historically marginalized and underserved communities. For example, the [White House Alternatives, Rehabilitation, and Reentry Strategic Plan](#) stressed the need to invest in culturally responsive strategies to break the cycle of criminal justice system involvement for those disproportionately exposed to or victimized by crime. In addition, the [2023 U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#) (the Plan), reaffirmed the need to support historically marginalized and underserved communities, immigrant survivors, and victims in rural communities, among others. Specifically, the Plan identified strategies to support these communities, including by simplifying the grantmaking process and utilizing partnerships with community-trusted organizations to serve as funding intermediaries for selected Federal grants.²²

Actions to Achieve Equitable Outcomes.

This economic and criminal justice strategy seeks to improve and increase access to grant funding and technical assistance resources that benefit communities disproportionately impacted by crime, violence, and victimization at the State, Tribal, Territorial, and local level. As such, this strategy seeks to empower these communities to develop tailored initiatives and solutions to ensure more effective and transformative public safety outcomes.

To advance this strategy, DOJ's grantmaking components have and will continue to implement two key actions, among others. First, DOJ is simplifying its grantmaking application process, has enhanced application assistance support, has worked to eliminate unnecessary application requirements,²³ and has increased the use of plain language in solicitations. DOJ also offers [webinars](#) to potential applicants to walk through the award programs and their specific application requirements.²⁴

²¹ OFF. FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME, OFF. JUST. PROGRAMS, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., USING FEDERAL LAW TO PROSECUTE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRIMES IN INDIAN COUNTRY, FACILITATOR'S GUIDE TO THE TRAINING DVD, 9 (2012).

²² WHITE HOUSE GENDER POL'Y COUNCIL, U.S. NAT'L PLAN TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: STRATEGIES FOR ACTION, 37 (2023).

²³ *Resources for Applicants*, OFF. ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (OVW), U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Aug. 4, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/resources-applicants>.

²⁴ See *Training Overview*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., <https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov/training>.

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Second, the Department is working to ensure that the needs of historically marginalized and underserved communities are considered in the grantmaking process.²⁵ In so doing, DOJ administers several grant programs that aim to ensure that population-specific organizations and the communities they serve have more equitable access to funding and that such funding is tailored to their needs.²⁶ In addition, the Department employs several flexible funding models to support organizations at different stages of growth, including by offering planning grants for new organizations, capacity-building grants for expanding organizations, implementation grants for established entities, and intermediary funding models that provide subawards and capacity-building technical assistance to community-based organizations.

Public Participation and Community Engagement Efforts to Advance Equitable Outcomes.

In order to craft this equity strategy, the Department relied on the research referenced above as well as feedback from community partners, and current and potential Federal grantees. DOJ's engagements with organizations that represent, serve, or are led by historically marginalized and underserved communities, are critical to better understanding the funding needs and barriers they face in order to mitigate those barriers and meet those needs, where possible.

In terms of direct engagement with communities, DOJ has hosted listening sessions with population-specific organizations, met with law enforcement groups, and developed outreach materials targeted to various population- and linguistic-specific communities. Of note, from May 2022 to May 2023, OVW visited organizations serving historically marginalized and underserved, Tribal, and rural communities to learn about emerging issues and barriers to accessing Federal funding. OVW also conducted listening sessions with community-based organizations serving sexual assault survivors in underserved communities to solicit feedback on grant solicitations, reporting, and management.

OJP's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Office for Victims of Crime conducted both in-person and virtual listening sessions with community partners (including justice-impacted youth) to learn about the successes and challenges of service providers and practitioners and identify gaps and barriers youth and victims face in accessing services, and that organizations face in accessing resources to address these gaps and barriers. OJP also conducted listening sessions with population-specific and community-based organizations to hear from them about the public safety priorities of the communities they serve and the barriers to applying for OJP funding opportunities. These listening sessions informed changes to OJP's FY 2024 funding application

²⁵ COPS ensures that law enforcement agencies in historically marginalized and underserved communities receive equitable distribution of hiring funding through its mandate to provide 50% of funding to agencies serving populations of 150,000 or less. 34 U.S.C. § 10261(a)(11)(B). Agencies that administer OVW's STOP Formula Grant Program are required by statute to develop an implementation plan that includes demographic data on the distribution of underserved populations and a description of how the state will meet the needs of underserved populations. 34 U.S.C § 10446(i)(E).

²⁶ OJP and OVW provide funding opportunities for underserved and historically marginalized communities. See *FY 2023 Tribal Civil and Criminal Legal Assistance Program*, BUREAU OF JUST. ASSISTANCE, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (June 27, 2023), <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/o-bja-2023-171804>; *OVC FY 2023 Developing Future Victim Specialists to Serve American Indian/Alaska Native Victims of Crime*, OFF. FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Apr. 17, 2023), <https://ovc.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/o-ovc-2023-171529>; *FY 2023 Grants for Outreach and Services to Underserved Populations*, OFF. ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Jan. 9, 2023), https://www.justice.gov/d9/pages/attachments/2023/01/09/o-ovw-2023-171482-ovw_underserved_fy23-v1_si-171482.pdf; *FY 2023 Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Program*, OFF. ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Feb. 24, 2023), [OVW Fiscal Year 2023 Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Program - Solicitation \(justice.gov\)](https://www.justice.gov/ovw/fiscal-year-2023-rural-domestic-violence-dating-violence-sexual-assault-and-stalking-program-solicitation).

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template, program planning, and technical assistance tools. In order to facilitate ongoing engagement and encourage meaningful communication with community partners, OJP also established a dedicated email address to receive input about its equity efforts and the needs of communities, OJP.Equity@usdoj.gov, and has promoted this resource via social media.

In 2023, ATJ, in collaboration with CRT and the Department's grantmaking components, conducted outreach to current recipients regarding DOJ's funding tools, which included discussing funding solicitation language, award conditions, award letters, and application instructions to determine whether those resources were clear, effective, and accessible. Participants noted that the process for applying for Federal funding can be cumbersome, obtuse, and time-consuming for potential applicants, especially applicants with limited resources and expertise in DOJ's processes. In response to this feedback, the Department has, as much as practicable, employed the use of plain language in drafting its solicitation templates, and is currently developing guidance on best practices to simplify application requirements.

Proposed Metrics to Evaluate Equitable Outcomes.

In the near to mid-term, DOJ will use data to assess its efforts to improve the grantmaking application process and community engagement efforts to ensure that the Department has succeeded in reaching organizations serving and/or led by historically marginalized and underserved communities and will measure any increases in community engagements. In the near to long-term, DOJ will identify and pilot opportunities to collect the data necessary to ascertain whether these equity actions are increasing applications from population-specific organizations and reaching historically marginalized and underserved communities and those disproportionately impacted by crime, violence, and victimization. For example, starting in FY 2024, if relevant to the operations of a grantmaking component, a survey instrument will be appended to applicable funding solicitations to gather the required data to determine if equity actions are leading to an increase in applications from population-specific organizations.

B. Strategy 2. Improving Reentry Services for Justice-Involved Persons (Criminal Justice and Health Strategy)

Barriers to Equity.

Justice-involved persons face significant barriers to successful reentry and often return to their communities without meaningful opportunities to secure housing, employment, healthcare, and other key resources. Such challenges can lead to desperation, despair, and recidivism.

For instance, formerly incarcerated people face difficulty acquiring State-issued identification cards when reentering society because many of them do not have necessary proof of identity or residency documents upon release and the prison or jail records they do have are not accepted by State agencies. Lack of State-issued identification is a substantial barrier to successful reentry because it can prevent individuals from accessing critical physical and mental health wraparound resources and supports, housing, employment, and other benefits. Also, many formerly incarcerated people are burdened by debt from court-issued fines and fees as they seek to reenter society. Fines and fees levied without consideration of ability to pay can prevent individuals from succeeding upon reentry by causing them to violate the terms of their supervision, inhibit their ability to acquire a driver's license, or create

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such a financial burden that they are unable to afford housing and other necessities.²⁷

Finally, many formerly incarcerated people are released from custody under some form of supervision, which often comes with specific conditions that must be observed to avoid revocation. When the terms of their supervision serve as barriers to employment, housing, or accessing treatment for substance use disorders, many individuals find it difficult to succeed in meeting the terms of their supervision and face recidivism and reincarceration.

Evidence Base to Support Equity Strategy.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), 44% of individuals who leave State prisons were rearrested in their first year after release, and within nine years of release, five of six of those previously in State prison had been rearrested.²⁸ The high rates of recidivism for returning citizens underscores the need to support individuals upon reentry and set them up for success. Studies have also shown that suspending a person's driver's license for failure to pay fines and fees disproportionately impacts low-income communities and communities of color and can interfere with the ability of these individuals to comply with the terms of their supervision.²⁹

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is supporting research regarding the impact of criminal record expungement and sealing on reentry success.³⁰ This research has found that immediate challenges such as unstable housing options and discouraging job prospects can pose significant barriers to successful reentry. Initial findings have supported the benefit of record-clearing processes and the impact of legal representation in the expungement and clearing process.³¹

Actions to Achieve Equitable Outcomes.

This criminal justice and health strategy recognizes the burdens that returning citizens face as they attempt to rebuild their lives post incarceration. As such, this strategy seeks to improve outcomes for returning citizens by supporting initiatives and programs that reduce the barriers for reentry success and minimize the potential for recidivism.

To advance this strategy, BOP consulted with the Transportation Security Administration and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and is developing a Release Identification Card (Card) that returning citizens could use for domestic air travel and to obtain the State-issued identification that is essential to securing housing, employment, healthcare, and other benefits. BOP is also connecting with State governments to invite partnerships that would allow returning citizens to exchange their Card for State-issued identification.³² Lastly, BOP is consulting with the Department of Homeland Security to develop a Release Folder that will be provided to formerly incarcerated

²⁷ Letter from the Off. for Access to Just., Off. of Just. Programs, C. R. Div., U.S. Dep't of Just., to Colleague, 5 (Apr. 20, 2023), https://www.justice.gov/d9/press-releases/attachments/2023/04/20/doj_fines_and_fees_dear_colleague_letter_final_with_signatures_0.pdf (regarding fines and fees for youth and adults).

²⁸ See Eric Martin & Marie Garcia, *Reentry Research at NIJ: Providing Robust Evidence For High-Stakes Decision-Making*, NAT'L INST. JUST., OFF. JUST. PROGRAMS, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Apr. 11, 2022), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/300988.pdf>.

²⁹ Letter from the Off. for Access to Just., Off. of Just. Programs, C. R. Div., U.S. Dep't of Just., to Colleague, 14 (Apr. 20, 2023), https://www.justice.gov/d9/press-releases/attachments/2023/04/20/doj_fines_and_fees_dear_colleague_letter_final_with_signatures_0.pdf (regarding fines and fees for youth and adults).

³⁰ See *Expungement: Criminal Records as Reentry Barriers*, NAT'L INST. JUST. (Oct. 2022), <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/expungement-criminal-records-reentry-barriers>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., REHABILITATION, REENTRY, AND REAFFIRMING TRUST: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN PURSUANT TO SECTION 15(F) OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 14074 46-47 (2023).

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persons upon their release. The Release Folder will contain all official documents necessary to obtain a REAL ID compliant identification from the State licensing agency where the formerly incarcerated person intends to reside.

In addition, given the number of unmet civil legal needs that impact reentry success, ATJ, BOP, and the National Institute of Corrections have developed a pilot program to provide civil legal services to incarcerated individuals, including services related to debt collection, access to benefits, and child custody matters, in select BOP women's facilities.³³

OJP is utilizing grant funding to support State and local reentry initiatives focused on providing healthcare access, improving supervision outcomes, and addressing the ability to pay fines and fees post incarceration. For example, in October 2022, the Department [announced](#) awards totaling almost \$100 million to reduce recidivism and support adults and youth to successfully return to their communities after a period of confinement.³⁴

Lastly, the Department clarified its [guidance](#) so that State, Tribal, territorial, and local jurisdictions can better leverage Federal funds received under the [Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program](#) and the [National Criminal History Improvement Program](#) to support efforts to seal and expunge criminal records. This will represent a critical step forward for returning citizens as they seek to access housing and employment opportunities.

Public Participation and Community Engagement Efforts to Advance Equitable Outcomes.

Pursuant to a mandate from the First Step Act,³⁵ in April 2022, the Reentry Coordination Council (RCC) (comprising DOJ, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Agriculture) released a [Report to Congress](#) regarding reducing barriers to reentry.³⁶ The report was informed by community engagement from “interested persons, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and State, [T]ribal, and local governments” as well as “individuals who have experienced reentering the community from carceral settings....”³⁷ Such engagement included listening sessions regarding collateral consequences, employment and education, housing and food security, and healthcare and veterans. Moving forward, the Department will continue to participate in the RCC's efforts to engage with community partners and reduce barriers to successful reentry.

Proposed Metrics to Evaluate Equitable Outcomes.

In the near to mid-term, the Department will implement the rollout of the Card for formerly incarcerated individuals in all Federal facilities, with full implementation expected by the end of the first quarter of FY 2024, thereby increasing the number of returning citizens able to obtain State-issued identification. Access to identification will enable greater access to employment, housing,

³³ Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Just., Justice Department Announces Civil Legal Services Pilot Program (Apr. 21, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-civil-legal-services-pilot-program>.

³⁴ See Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Just., Justice Department Awards a Total of Nearly \$100 Million to Help Reduce Recidivism and Support Successful Reentry to Communities (Oct. 5, 2022), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-awards-total-nearly-100-million-help-reduce-recidivism-and-support>.

³⁵ First Step Act, Pub. L. No. 115-391, § 505, 132 Stat. 5194.

³⁶ REENTRY COORDINATION COUNCIL, COORDINATION TO REDUCE BARRIERS TO REENTRY: LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19 AND BEYOND (2022), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1497911/download>.

³⁷ *Id.* at 5.

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benefits, and other critical reentry needs. Through OJP, DOJ will utilize grants to States for reentry efforts focused on securing healthcare access, improving community supervision outcomes, and reducing the burden of criminal justice fines and fees. In the long-term, the Department will continue the use of OJP grants designed to help lower the rates of recidivism for individuals leaving Federal custody, and increase connections to healthcare, public benefits, housing, and employment for returning citizens at the Federal and State level.

C. **Strategy 3. Removing Barriers to the Representation of Underrepresented Groups in Law Enforcement (Criminal Justice Strategy)**

Barriers to Equity.

When members of the public believe their LEAs serve and listen to them, it can improve perceptions of police legitimacy and enhance public trust. This trust is essential to creating a system where communities view law enforcement as fair and effective and improves the likelihood that residents will report crime, provide information to the police about crime as victims and witnesses, and serve as jurors. Increased diversity within law enforcement serves as a key tool in building trust, especially with communities most impacted by law enforcement presence, investigations, and crisis response efforts.³⁸

Law enforcement leaders acknowledge the importance of increasing racial, ethnic, language, and gender diversity in their agencies. But hiring and promotional assessments, internal processes, recruitment strategies, and organizational policies can exacerbate the lack of diversity in the ranks by failing to adequately capture the value of and sufficiently meet the unique needs of officers from diverse backgrounds. For example, women officers are significantly underrepresented, making up over just 12% of sworn officers and 3% of law enforcement leaders.³⁹ Federal, State, and local agencies often lack the support and resources necessary to attract, hire, and retain a qualified and diverse workforce.

Given these barriers, it is not surprising that historically marginalized and underserved communities are underrepresented in the law enforcement profession. This underrepresentation causes many agencies to struggle in their community engagement efforts. Supporting efforts to remove these barriers is one critical step the Department can take toward building trust and legitimacy between police and the communities they serve and achieving better criminal justice outcomes for all.

Evidence Base to Support Equity Strategy.

Federal, State, Tribal, local, and territorial LEAs must improve their ability to recruit and retain officers that better reflect the communities they serve in order to improve public safety outcomes and address the recruitment and retention crisis. Increased officer diversity can also help improve the culture of police departments and build greater trust and legitimacy with historically marginalized and underserved communities, including by reducing bias through increased exposure to individuals from a diversity of backgrounds and lived experiences.⁴⁰

³⁸ See ADVANCING DIVERSITY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (2016).

³⁹ ANDREA M. GARDNER & KEVIN M. SCOTT, BUREAU JUST. STAT., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., CENSUS OF STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (2023).

⁴⁰ See COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY, RESOURCE GUIDEBOOK 2021, at 8-9 (2021).

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There is growing evidence about what works and what matters to improve the representation and experiences of underrepresented groups across law enforcement ranks.⁴¹ For example, one study found that law enforcement recruitment messages focusing on the personal benefits of applying to a particular job could be three times as effective at getting individuals to apply to a job without those details, and are particularly effective at increasing the number of applicants from groups traditionally underrepresented in the profession.⁴²

Actions to Achieve Equitable Outcomes.

This criminal justice strategy aims to advance equity by enhancing public trust in law enforcement, improving engagement with historically marginalized and underserved communities, and promoting positive relationships between Federal, State, and local LEAs and the communities they serve through improved representation of underrepresented groups in law enforcement.

In furtherance of this strategy, the Department is building the evidence base for improving the recruitment and retention of officers representing a diversity of backgrounds and facilitating technical assistance programs to help agencies reach and retain underrepresented groups. NIJ is funding several research projects on recruiting and retaining officers reflecting historically marginalized communities and those underrepresented in law enforcement, including a project with New York State Police to identify factors that influence the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of that organization.⁴³ The Department's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is advancing a [Community Policing Development Microgrants Program](#) focused on workforce diversification, which recently launched a center on innovations in recruiting and hiring.⁴⁴

Second, the FBI is strengthening ties between the FBI and the Black community through its [Beacon Project](#). This program includes hosting national and regional conferences comprised of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) leadership and FBI executives to build long-term relationships and address the difficult history between the FBI and the Black community. The FBI also hosts HBCU Campus Tours to bring FBI staff to campuses for classroom and faculty presentations, mock interviews, and resume workshops. These efforts reflect FBI's understanding of and commitment to creating trust, cultivating mutual understanding, and to building a workforce that better reflects and serves the American public.

Public Participation and Community Engagement Efforts to Advance Equitable Outcomes.

In order to advance this strategy, the Department will work with components to ensure internal consistency and alignment as well as ongoing, meaningful public participation. Such efforts may include listening sessions, focus groups, observations, and other types of engagements, as well as surveys of public perceptions of LEAs and public safety, to better understand the experiences of

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.* at 10.

⁴³ See *Fostering Diversity in a Police Agency, From Bottom to Top*, NAT'L INST. JUST., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Sept. 27, 2022), <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pnij-22-gg-03141-ress>. See also *Real-world Engagement & Turnover Analysis to Inform New Solutions (RETAINS): An Evidence-Based Policing Workforce Study*, NAT'L INST. JUST., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Sept. 27, 2022), <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pnij-22-gg-03146-ress>; *The National Police Staffing Project*, NAT'L INST. JUST., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Sept. 27, 2022), <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pnij-22-gg-03139-ress>; *From Research to Reality: Recruiting More Women into the Policing Profession*, NAT'L INST. JUST., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Sept. 16, 2019), <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2019-r2-cx-0027>.

⁴⁴ See Clifford Grammich, *Michigan State University Police Staffing Observatory Offers Guidance and Collaboration*, COMMUNITY POLICING DISPATCH, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (June 2023), https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/06-2023/michigan_police_staffing.html.

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impacted communities and people with lived experience. Specifically, the Department will continue to engage with women in law enforcement through NIJ⁴⁵ and HBCUs through the FBI.

Proposed Metrics to Evaluate Equitable Outcomes.

On a quarterly basis, Beacon Project engagements are, and will continue to be, tracked and reported. In the longer-term, BJS will continue to conduct the [Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics](#) survey. These data will include the demographic makeup of State, county, and local LEAs to measure increases in diversity. To track increases in diversity at the Federal level, DOJ will depend on BJS' [Census of Federal Law Enforcement Officers](#), which periodically collects data from all Federal LEAs with arrest and firearms authority. NIJ is also currently examining both survey and non-survey methods to assess community perceptions of police and public safety through its recently advertised [Measures of Community Perceptions Challenge](#) (Challenge), which is an open competition to develop new methods to capture community perceptions of police and public safety. The research resulting from the Challenge will help determine whether increased officer diversification has impacted public trust and positive perceptions of law enforcement.

D. Strategy 4. Addressing Victimization and Criminalization of Women, Girls, Transgender Individuals, and Gender Non-Conforming Persons (Civil Rights Strategy)

Barriers to Equity.

Women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming persons often face barriers in obtaining equitable treatment and receiving trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and victim-centered services from LEAs. Barriers to access to services leave women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming persons vulnerable to victimization and criminalization and can further isolate them from the information and resources necessary to heal. The Department recognizes that these challenges may often be the result of a lack of knowledge and understanding (as well as implicit bias) that can undermine appropriate responses to the victimization and the impact of biases on the criminalization of members of this population.

Evidence Base to Support Equity Strategy.

Women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming individuals are more likely to be victims of violent crime. More than half of women (54.3%) in the U.S. reported experiencing some form of sexual victimization involving physical contact at some point in their lifetime.⁴⁶ Between 2017 and 2020, “the rates of violent victimization were significantly higher for persons ... who self-identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual than for those who identified as straight.”⁴⁷ The rate of

⁴⁵ NAT'L INST. JUST., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., WOMEN IN POLICING: BREAKING BARRIERS AND BLAZING A PATH (2019), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/252963.pdf>.

⁴⁶ KATHLEEN C. BASILE ET AL., CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVS., PREVENTION, NATIONAL INTIMATE PARTNER AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVEY: 2016/2017 REPORT ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE (2022).

⁴⁷ BUREAU OF JUST. STAT., OFF. JUST. PROGRAMS, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY: 2017-2020 1 (2022); *see also* CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVS., PREVENTION, NISVS: AN OVERVIEW OF 2010 FINDINGS ON VICTIMIZATION BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION 1 (2010) (noting that “[s]exual minority respondents reported levels of intimate partner violence at rates equal to or higher than those of heterosexuals”).

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victimization among transgender individuals “was 2.5 times the rate among cisgender persons.”⁴⁸ Yet only “58% of violent victimizations against lesbian or gay persons were reported to the police.”⁴⁹ A common reason for the failure to report is a belief that the “police would be ineffective.”⁵⁰ Similarly, “human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls, people of color, [and] LGBTQI+ individuals.”⁵¹

The Department of Justice’s recently published policing [guidance](#) emphasizes that:

[g]ender bias...may contribute to [LEAs] failing to conduct thorough investigations of reported crimes; misclassifying cases as unfounded or wrongly clearing them...; failing to submit sexual assault kits for testing; interrogating rather than interviewing victims and witnesses; treating domestic violence as a family matter rather than a crime; failing to enforce protection orders; failing to treat same-sex domestic violence or violence against people engaged in sex trade as a crime; or treating people as criminals, rather than victims of abuse or sex trafficking.⁵²

Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge about crimes that disproportionately affect women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming people can undermine efforts to provide equitable access to justice; engage with communities in trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and victim-centered ways; and empower these persons to vindicate their rights by working with criminal justice personnel.

Recognizing and mitigating instances of bias and lack of understanding of sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of gender-based violence and the trauma resulting from victimization from these crimes is critical to LEAs’ ability to ensure women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-confirming individuals can access justice and receive the services and assistance to help them heal, as well as enhance public trust and confidence in the criminal justice system.⁵³

Actions to Achieve Equitable Outcomes.

This civil rights strategy enhances and promotes gender equity and equality through trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and victim-centered training and technical assistance for Federal, State, Tribal, local, and territorial law enforcement and prosecution agencies. In so doing, DOJ will increase awareness of Federal laws and programs that address gender-based violence, support collaborations with community partners, and mitigate deficiencies and biases that may negatively impact the successful implementation of community-driven responses to gender-based violence.

To advance this equity strategy, the Department has adopted a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to prevent and address hate crimes through its grant programs, which support law enforcement and State-based efforts to increase victim reporting, as well as State, Tribal, and local law enforcement and prosecution agencies and their partners in conducting outreach and education

⁴⁸ BUREAU OF JUST. STAT., OFF. JUST. PROGRAMS, U.S. DEP’T OF JUST., VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY: 2017-2020 1 (2022).

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 8.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ WHITE HOUSE GENDER POL’Y COUNCIL, NATIONAL STRATEGY ON GENDER EQUITY & EQUALITY 28 (2021).

⁵² U.S. DEP’T OF JUST., IMPROVING LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BY IDENTIFYING AND PREVENTING GENDER BIAS (2022).

⁵³ *See* WHITE HOUSE GENDER POL’Y COUNCIL, U.S. NATIONAL PLAN TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: STRATEGIES FOR ACTION 52-62 (2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/National-Plan-to-End-GBV.pdf> (discussing various ways in which law enforcement agencies can assist in preventing and/or mitigating the impact of gender-based violence).

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and improving the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes. This includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance's [Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Program](#), which highlights this work as it intersects with hate crimes committed on the basis of, among other identities, a victim's perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity.⁵⁴ The Department also supports community-based and civil rights organizations in creating local and national strategies focused on prevention, community education and reconciliation, and victim services and support.

Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco issued [a directive](#) in 2022 to all USAOs to revise their operating plans to better prioritize crimes against women, youth, and children, including evaluating the use of trained multidisciplinary teams for sexual assault and domestic violence cases in Indian country. USAOs must update their policies and protocols to place victims at the center of their work and to ensure prosecutors are familiar with culturally responsive, medical, and forensic services available to victims, both within and outside of Indian country.

BOP has also committed to adding training for institution staff who may interact with incarcerated victims of human trafficking on applying a victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approach, and plans to commence this training in the next several months.

In addition, in recognition of the fact that “[w]omen, girls, and LGBTQI+ individuals are disproportionately affected” by online harassment and abuse,⁵⁵ the Department is taking concerted efforts to address cybercrimes. In particular, the Department is establishing a National Resource Center on Cybercrimes Against Individuals, which will provide grants for training and support to State, Tribal, and local law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial personnel to assist victims of cybercrimes. These cybercrimes will include the use of technology to harass, threaten, stalk, extort, coerce, cause fear to, or intimidate an individual, as well as the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images. Additionally, OVW will support an initiative focused on the prosecution and investigation of online abuse, and ATJ will work with USAOs and the pro bono community to promote awareness of a new civil cause of action relating to the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images, to ensure that individuals are aware of their rights.⁵⁶

Public Participation and Community Engagement to Advance Equitable Outcomes.

The Department is actively working to increase its outreach to vulnerable communities (including women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming persons) with an intersectional lens to ensure that its work in this area is effective and responsive to the communities' needs. In a listening session DOJ hosted specifically on justice issues facing women and LGBTQI+ communities, advocates highlighted the distrust many people in these communities feel towards law enforcement and recommended increased outreach and engagement. DOJ will identify opportunities for increased and improved engagements with these communities to inform the efforts in this strategy, which may include additional listening sessions in locations across the country and inviting feedback on trainings and the information provided on DOJ websites.

⁵⁴ Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Servs., DOJ, Joined by HHS, Announces New Initiatives to Address and Prevent Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents (May 20, 2022), <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/05/20/justice-department-announces-new-initiatives-address-prevent-hate-crimes-hate-incidents.html>.

⁵⁵ Executive Summary from the White House, Initial Blueprint for the White House Task Force to Address Online Harassment and Abuse (Mar. 3, 2023) (on file with the White House).

⁵⁶ Merrick Garland, Att'y Gen., Dep't of Just., Launch of the White House Task Force to Address Online Harassment and Abuse (June 16, 2022). *See also* Executive Summary from the White House, Initial Blueprint for the White House Task Force to Address Online Harassment and Abuse (Mar. 3, 2023) (on file with the White House).

Proposed Metrics to Evaluate Equitable Outcomes.

In the near to mid-term, all Department employees who interact with victims of crimes that disproportionately affect women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming individuals will receive information and training regarding the latest supports and services afforded to victims, including the revised [Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance](#) and the rights afforded to victims under the Crime Victims' Rights Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3771,⁵⁷ and the Victims' Rights and Restitution Act, 34 U.S.C. § 20141.⁵⁸ DOJ will also regularly assess the efficacy of those trainings. Certain grants are subject to performance measures that require grantees to provide data pertaining to various metrics to assist in evaluating the reach and effectiveness of the programs funded by the grants.

The Department will train all BOP staff who may interact with incarcerated victims of human trafficking on applying victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approaches in FY 2024, with approximately 75% of these staff members receiving training in the first quarter. By the third quarter of FY 2024, 50% of victim personnel within the USAOs will complete additional training regarding culturally relevant advocacy, medical, and forensic services available to victims. In the long-term, DOJ will increase access to the criminal justice system for women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming persons impacted by crime. In so doing, the Department will increase the number of law enforcement and criminal justice staff that apply trauma-informed, victim-centered, and culturally responsive approaches.

E. Strategy 5. Strengthening Environmental Justice Collaboration (Environmental and Civil Rights Strategy)

Barriers to Equity.

Historically marginalized and underserved communities, including communities of color, Tribal and Indigenous communities, and individuals living in low-income communities, often bear the greatest burdens of harm caused by environmental crime, pollution, climate change and climate-related disasters, and other environmental hazards. Equity and equality are undermined when a person's race, national origin, language spoken, disability, income, or membership in a Tribal or Indigenous community determines their exposure to environmental and climate-related harms, especially when that exposure can cause deleterious health effects and diminished quality of life outcomes.

In the face of persistent and pernicious environmental and climate-related challenges, these communities often experience significant barriers to access, including with respect to communications that use technical or specialized jargon; lack of legal assistance and information regarding one's rights and supports available; lack of linguistically and culturally responsive outreach and engagement efforts; lack of translated materials (both in print and digital formats); and community engagement lacking language interpretation, sign language interpretation, or auxiliary aids.

These barriers can hinder the individuals and communities most at risk from understanding and participating in the Department's decision-making efforts related to environmental justice and civil rights enforcement matters (such as providing input on the remedies sought to resolve environmental enforcement actions); accessing legal services and resources following environmental disasters; and

⁵⁷ 18 U.S.C. § 3771.

⁵⁸ 34 U.S.C. § 20141.

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navigating complex legal and regulatory realities as they seek to secure access to clean water, air, and other natural resources.

Evidence Base to Support Equity Strategy.

Decades of environmental research has proven connections between the location of hazardous waste facilities and environmental hazards, and the racial and economic status of the surrounding communities. For example, in 1983, the Government Accountability Office found that three of four offsite hazardous waste facilities were located in predominantly poor and African American communities.⁵⁹ In 1992, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified that communities of color and low-income communities, “experience higher than average exposures to selected air pollutants, hazardous waste facilities, and contaminated fish and agricultural pesticides in the workplace.”⁶⁰ In 2021, the EPA also reported that “Black and African American individuals are 40% more likely than non-Black and non-African American individuals to currently live in areas with the highest projected increases in mortality rates due to climate-driven changes in extreme temperatures.”⁶¹ And EPA found that “American Indian and Alaska Native individuals are 48% more likely than non-American Indian and non-Alaska Native individuals to currently live in areas where the highest percentage of land is projected to be inundated due to sea level rise.”⁶²

The communities bearing the brunt of environmental harms have been vocal with Federal, State, Tribal, and local decision-makers about the challenges that they face in addressing and mitigating these harms. In recent years, they have stressed the importance of providing meaningful access to programs and resources for persons with LEP and have emphasized that translation services should ensure that those needing those services get the full benefit of participation, including by providing comments and feedback like those who do not use such services.

Actions to Achieve Equitable Outcomes.

This environmental and civil rights strategy seeks to advance equity by ensuring that historically marginalized and underserved communities experiencing justice and climate-related concerns are aware of and able to access the Department’s environmental justice and civil rights mandates.

In advancing this strategy, the Department will take steps to promote meaningful engagement in implementing the Department’s [Comprehensive Environmental Justice Enforcement Strategy](#) by partnering with historically marginalized and underserved persons, communities with LEP, and those with disabilities who are experiencing justice and climate-related concerns. For example, OEJ has led community listening sessions in support of DOJ’s lawsuit to improve safe drinking water access in Jackson, Mississippi, and developed community outreach best practices for case teams across the country.⁶³ OEJ will continue to organize and participate in non-case specific engagement sessions and serve as a resource for environmental enforcement case-related outreach to communities burdened by environmental hazards.

⁵⁹ U.S. GOV’T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-83-168, SITING OF HAZARDOUS WASTE LANDFILLS AND THEIR CORRELATION WITH RACIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES (1983).

⁶⁰ NAT’L SERV. CTR. FOR ENV’T PUBL’NS, U.S. ENV’T PROT. AGENCY, ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY: REDUCING RISK FOR ALL COMMUNITIES, 3 (1992).

⁶¹ OFF. OF ATMOSPHERIC PROGRAMS, U.S. ENV’T PROT. AGENCY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY IN THE UNITED STATES, 6 (2021).

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ U.S. DEP’T OF JUST., FACT SHEET: YEAR ONE OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT’S COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY AND OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (2023).

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ATJ will play a critical role in executing this engagement strategy by leveraging the expertise of the DOJ Language Access Coordinator and ATJ Language Access Team. For example, ATJ will, with help from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and OEJ, translate select materials and websites into the non-English languages likely to be most frequently spoken by communities with environmental justice concerns. ATJ will also work to increase awareness of environmental justice enforcement and funding tools among legal service providers, who are often the first line of defense for communities with environmental justice concerns.

The Department's Community Relations Service (CRS) will support this effort by applying its expertise in facilitating community engagement, mediation, and dialogue to help community groups meaningfully participate in decision-making processes focused on environmental justice concerns. CRS will publish an Environmental Justice Fact Sheet that outlines available CRS services responsive to environmental justice concerns and add an environmental justice dialogue to its roster of quarterly collaborative convenings of local civic leaders, youth, and faith leaders. These convenings are designed to reduce community tensions around issues jurisdictional to CRS under Title X of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.⁶⁴

Lastly, the Environmental and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) and OTJ will hold additional regionally focused summits to facilitate engagement between Federal and Tribal representatives.⁶⁵ For example, in July 2023, ENRD and OTJ launched a spin-off series of regional summits, speaking with Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain Tribal communities in Spokane, Washington at an event co-hosted by the USAO for the Eastern District of Washington.

Public Participation and Community Engagement to Advance Equitable Outcomes.

As previously described, DOJ will advance this environmental justice equity strategy by directly engaging with historically marginalized and underserved communities experiencing environmental justice and climate-related concerns. Specifically, ENRD, OEJ, CRT, ATJ, OTJ, and CRS will be directly involved in these public participation and community engagement efforts.

Proposed Metrics to Evaluate Equitable Outcomes.

To advance this environmental justice strategy, the Department has established several annual performance measures and long-term outcome goals that support the achievement of those goals. The long-term outcome goals include opening and/or handling 16 matters that address adverse environmental and public health effects brought under civil rights statutes each year and increasing the percentage of environmental enforcement matters in or substantially affecting overburdened and underserved communities that are favorably resolved. These goals align with the Department's priorities and express the Department's continued commitment to making progress on the important issue of ensuring environmental justice for all communities.

⁶⁴ 42 U.S.C. § 2000(g).

⁶⁵ U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., FACT SHEET: YEAR ONE OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY AND OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (2023).