



LOCUS Guide to Equity Action Plans: *Department of Energy*

In April 2022, the Biden Administration released the federal government’s first ever Equity Actions Plans for over 90 federal agencies. These strategies delineate department-specific long range goals and operational priorities that aim to improve the delivery of equitable outcomes for all Americans through systemic reforms and investments in historically underserved communities. The actions proposed in these plans will have broad impacts on land use, infrastructure investment, housing and regional planning, which are summarized succinctly in these LOCUS guides.

Equity Priorities:

The Department of Energy seeks to advance equity and justice in the energy, environmental, and nuclear sectors, and is a critical leader to deliver on the Justice40 Initiative, which will ensure that 40 percent of the benefits of climate and clean energy programs flow to underserved communities. The Equity Action Plan aims to provide low-income households and energy insecure areas an opportunity for financial security, colleges and universities funding for the advancement of research, and businesses the advancement of economic opportunity.



Image by Unsplash user Andrey Metelev



Key Equity Actions:

- Expand demographic data collection in financial assistance applications and create a data collection system for underserved communities and individuals for all contract and financial assistance opportunities. This action will expand and diversify participation in business opportunities, outreach events, and programs.
- Create a central portal for Department of Energy acquisition opportunities to reduce barriers to accessing procurement and financial assistance opportunities for underrepresented applicants.
- Incorporate evidence-based best practices to make R&D grants and programs more accessible to underrepresented communities and stakeholders that have otherwise been underserved by the Department of Energy. This will be accomplished through actions like introducing a diversity, equity, and inclusion training program for merit reviewers and the establishment of a technical assistance program that helps women, Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDBs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), persons with disabilities, communities of color, and LGBTQI+ communities in applying for financial assistance.
- Build trust and expand community engagement activities with diverse stakeholders and Tribal Nations to increase public awareness of Department of Energy opportunities.

Land Use or Real Estate Highlights:

- Create a new Weatherization Readiness fund and a competitive grant program that makes funding available to all grantees and low income households. This action would increase energy efficiency of dwellings, reduce residential energy expenditures, and improve health and safety, especially for older adults, people with disabilities, and children.
- Alleviate financial impacts to Native American and Alaska Native communities struggling with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by funding projects that will reduce energy costs and increase energy security and resiliency.
- Help environmental justice communities and communities with historical ties to fossil fuel industries access the economic and environmental benefits of clean energy and clean energy manufacturing through the Communities LEAP (Local Energy Action Program) Pilot program.

Measuring Impact:

Each of the priorities includes proposed strategies to track progress and impact, related to the specific actions proposed. Some notable metrics include:

- Analyze newly-collected demographic data to determine whether applicants from underrepresented institutions and underserved communities have equitable access to Department of Energy programs and services.
- Ensure 15 percent of prime and sub-award dollars are obligated to SDBs, and streamline and relax subcontracting requirements where possible.

Read the Department of Energy's Equity Action Plan [here](#).