US Army Corps
of Engineers®

USACE
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion &
Accessibility (DEIA)
Strategic Plan
2023 - 2026

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Commanding General's Vision

Achieving the USACE Vision, Engineering Solutions for our Nation's toughest challenges, requires *DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT!* It is my pleasure to present the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2023 to 2026. This plan is a roadmap that will guide our organization over the next 3 years.

With an inspiring legacy that reaches back to 1775, USACE is committed to solving the nation's toughest engineering challenges. But we cannot achieve this without the support of a diverse, talented, and agile workforce.

One of my top priorities is ensuring that USACE serves as a model for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. This Strategic Plan provides procedures for implementation of the Program pursuant to Section 656 of Title 10, United States Code, Section 529 of Public Law 116-92, and Executive Order (E.O.) 14035: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce, which directed the establishment of a systematic approach to embed DEIA into enterprise talent practices, workforce engagements, and organizational structures.

This Plan builds upon the preliminary work initiated by the USACE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Council and is a product of the Office of EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) collaboration with employee resource groups, and other stakeholders.

DEIA is a call to action. Delivering on USACE's Priorities of *People, Readiness, Partnerships and Innovate* require us to fully integrate DEIA into our daily activities. Doing so will allow USACE to deliver vital engineering solutions, in collaboration with our partners, to secure our Nation, energize our economy, and reduce disaster risk. Most importantly this strategy allows USACE to retain its focus on our greatest asset – THE PEOPLE.

This will be a constantly evolving and adaptable strategy. We are on this journey together, and I am confident that we can make our goals for our USACE workplace in DEIA a reality. Embracing these initiatives will enhance our rich legacy and strengthen USACE as a world-class public engineering institution for the 21st century and beyond.

Essayons…Building Strong…Be All You Can Be!

Scott A. Spellmon
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Commanding

A Message From the Chief Diversity Officer

The DEIA Strategic Plan emphasizes USACE's commitment to improving and enhancing diversity throughout the Enterprise, enhancing inclusion and equity for everyone in the workplace, and strengthening accountability for promoting and sustaining a diverse workforce and an inclusive USACE culture.

When the initial USACE DE&I Council was established, we were focused on prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion issues across the Enterprise. We added the topic of accessibility to these efforts, thus expanding the perspective of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) to ensure more populations are recognized.

USACE DEIA Strategic Plan Overview:
- Provides mission and vision statements
- Establishes DEIA principles, derived from the principles outlined in the government wide strategic plan
- Identifies USACE-wide DEIA goals and objectives, along with implementation roadmaps for advancing DEIA across USACE
- Describes the current state of maturity for USACE DEIA efforts
- Explains the way forward for advancing DEIA across USACE

The establishment of this strategy does not conclude this process, rather it ensures that the process will continue, that concrete actions will be taken, and that there will be accountability for the achievement of its goals.

Creating equitable and inclusive environments that value diversity can be difficult because it forces us to embrace that which is different from us. It challenges our beliefs and requires not only a fundamental change in what we do, say, and think, but also to constantly self-assess and adjust our behaviors. So, I challenge each member of USACE to take the time to self-reflect and ask yourself, "Am I doing all that I can do to create an inclusive work environment?"

We can all personally commit to help make USACE more inclusive and make it the best place to work and achieve the goal of becoming a Model Workplace.

Shinu R. Shilesh

Shinu R. Shilesh
Director, Equal Employment Opportunity,
Diversity, and Inclusion

DEIA Mission and Vision Statements

Mission

USACE will embrace, integrate, and strengthen diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) across all USACE activities in service of the USACE mission.

Vision

USACE is a model employer and community partner by advancing and embedding DEIA principles, reinforcing innovative solutions, and effectively leveraging the unique strengths of our nation's people to meet current and future challenges.

DEIA Governance

On June 25, 2021, President Biden signed EO 14035 to advance DEIA in the Federal workforce. As stated in the EO, "The Federal Government should have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the American people..." USACE should also reflect the diversity of America; to accomplish this, we will focus our efforts on recruiting, hiring, developing, promoting, and retaining the best and brightest talent America has to offer.

USACE will build and sustain a diverse and talented workforce starting with leadership and cascading down to all levels across the enterprise. At USACE, we value all the dimensions of diversity that people bring to the workplace. USACE will cultivate, nurture, and sustain an inclusive culture, where our differences are leveraged to produce innovative solutions to meet the needs of our employees, partners, and the Nation.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplaces yield higher-performing organizations. Under Section 4(a) of EO 14035, the head of each agency shall complete a preliminary assessment of the current state of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in their human resources practices and workforce composition. The EO also requested each agency to develop and issue a government-wide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan. USACE developed this DEIA Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2023-2026 to define Enterprise-wide priorities that will guide its efforts moving forward.

We are focused on strengthening our human capital management efforts to enable even bolder goals in the future. For implementation, USACE Senior leadership assumes responsibility for supporting initiatives outlined within the Plan and ensures objectives are reinforced through Command specific customized DEIA initiatives. In addition, USACE Leadership will oversee Enterprise-wide DEIA internal communication throughout implementation. Regular, transparent communications are essential to the success of the Plan, and USACE leaders are committed to ongoing engagement with our workforce throughout this journey.

DEIA in the Organizational Structure

The Director of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Diversity, and Inclusion Office (EDI) serves as Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). This position is responsible for overseeing DEIA initiatives USACE-wide. The EDI Office is an independent office that reports to the Commanding General. In addition to DEIA responsibilities, EDI is also responsible for ensuring compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Civil Rights laws, regulations, executive orders, and fair employment policies that prohibit discrimination.

The CDO conducts assessments and studies leading to the establishment of the DEIA goals and objectives, including associated key performance indicators, metrics, and success measures. The CDO works with leaders, managers, supervisors, employees, and stakeholders to promote diversity, inclusion and equitable practices in policies, and business practices. The CDO leads the barrier analysis assessment of organizational culture and develops short and long-term plans to cultivate and maintain a culture and environment valuing diversity, equity and inclusion.

Executive DEIA Council

Led by the Deputy Commanding General with the CDO serving as Executive Secretary, the Executive DEIA Council (DEIAC) is representative of the departments and offices across the Enterprise so that all voices are heard. The Council will use as its governance guidepost Section 656 of Title 10, United States Code, Section 529 of Public Law 116-92, E.O. 13583 and E.O. 14035 to advance DEIA in the Federal workforce and other related laws, regulations, and policies. The Council will help steer USACE's DEIA strategy by connecting those activities to broader data-driven and results-oriented strategies. The Council workgroups will help formulate and execute the Plan. This is the primary way that USACE will ensure an integrated approach to DEIA.

DEIA Maturity Model

USACE will map its DEIA actions to this maturity model recommended in government-wide guidance as captured in the table below. USACE will collect the required data to establish our baseline and determine where the enterprise stands on the maturity spectrum and where to target our efforts towards improvement. It is also important that we determine the appropriate standards of measurement along with key performance indicators and evaluative methods to gauge our progress in advancing DEIA.

SIGNALS OF MATURITY	LEVEL 1 Foundational Capacity	LEVEL 2 Advancing Outcomes	LEVEL 3 Leading and Sustaining
DEIA approach	Focused on complying with non-discrimination legislation and regulatory requirements.	DEIA initiatives yielding improved results and outcomes driven by dedicated resources, strategic planning, goal setting and evaluation. Enterprise/Component practices promote the values of DEIA, but DEIA may not yet be integrated across Enterprise/Component mission and strategic planning.	DEIA is an integral part of overall Enterprise/Component mission, vision, values, strategy, policies, and practices. Systematic implementation of DEIA driven through goal setting, data-driven analysis, and continuous improvement. Enterprise/Component undertakes structural reforms of policies and practices to mitigate barriers, if any.

Adopted from U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Government-wide Strategic Plan to Advance DEIA

To mature to the next level of DEIA, USACE must build the DEIA infrastructure accompanied by an appropriate budget and resource allocation plan. We will apply a phased approach to development starting with data collection and analysis and progressing toward full integration of DEIA into all USACE processes and work streams.

Advancing DEIA is only possible with the right standards of measurement and infrastructure to support our efforts. We must know our positioning on the DEIA maturity spectrum to plot a pathway forward and achieve our goals. This requires that we collect the right data. Gathering the right data starts with asking the right questions about USACE's processes and work streams across the entire employee life cycle from attracting the most qualified people to work at our enterprise to retaining our employees until they transition out of the enterprise and all stages in between. We want our staff to feel seen, heard, and appreciated and know they are valued. We are attempting to answer the questions:

- What are the impacts across all these processes and work streams that affect our people and their experience within USACE?

- Does equity apply the same for all groups across the board? If not, why might that be?

- Are our programs, activities, events, and facilities accessible by all members – employees, applicants, contractors, and the public?

- Does everyone feel included and a sense of belonging?

We will apply the best methods to collect, report, and display data to tell stories about our DEIA journey. We will be transparent about where we are on the journey and how much farther we have yet to go. We will acquire the resources that will enable us to go beyond compliance with federal laws and regulations to establish an integrated approach to DEIA as reflected in the third column of the maturity matrix.

The DEIA tools and resources that will assist in USACE's maturity include:

- Management Directive (MD) 715 Annual Report.

- Equity study/analysis in accordance with E.O. 14035 to advance equity.

- Section 508 Compliance applications for the website and digital media.

- DEIA performance metrics application with a dashboard feature.

- Survey tools that enable the capture of employee feedback.

- Collaborative platform that allows us to recognize employees all year long.

- Resources for DEIA initiatives and Special Emphasis Programs (SEP).

- Increased capacity for data analytics.

USACE is in the early, foundational stage of its DEIA maturity, and the next stage is building an infrastructure and providing adequate resources to support and sustain the DEIA efforts. USACE is planning several strategic initiatives, outlined below, to foster a more inclusive workplace culture. The DOD DEIA Maturity Model, depicted below in Figure 1, has seven maturity signals represented, with four of those further broken down into discrete sub-areas. This model will be used to guide and assess the advancement of DEIA as initiatives and efforts are implemented and completed.

DoD DEIA Maturity Model

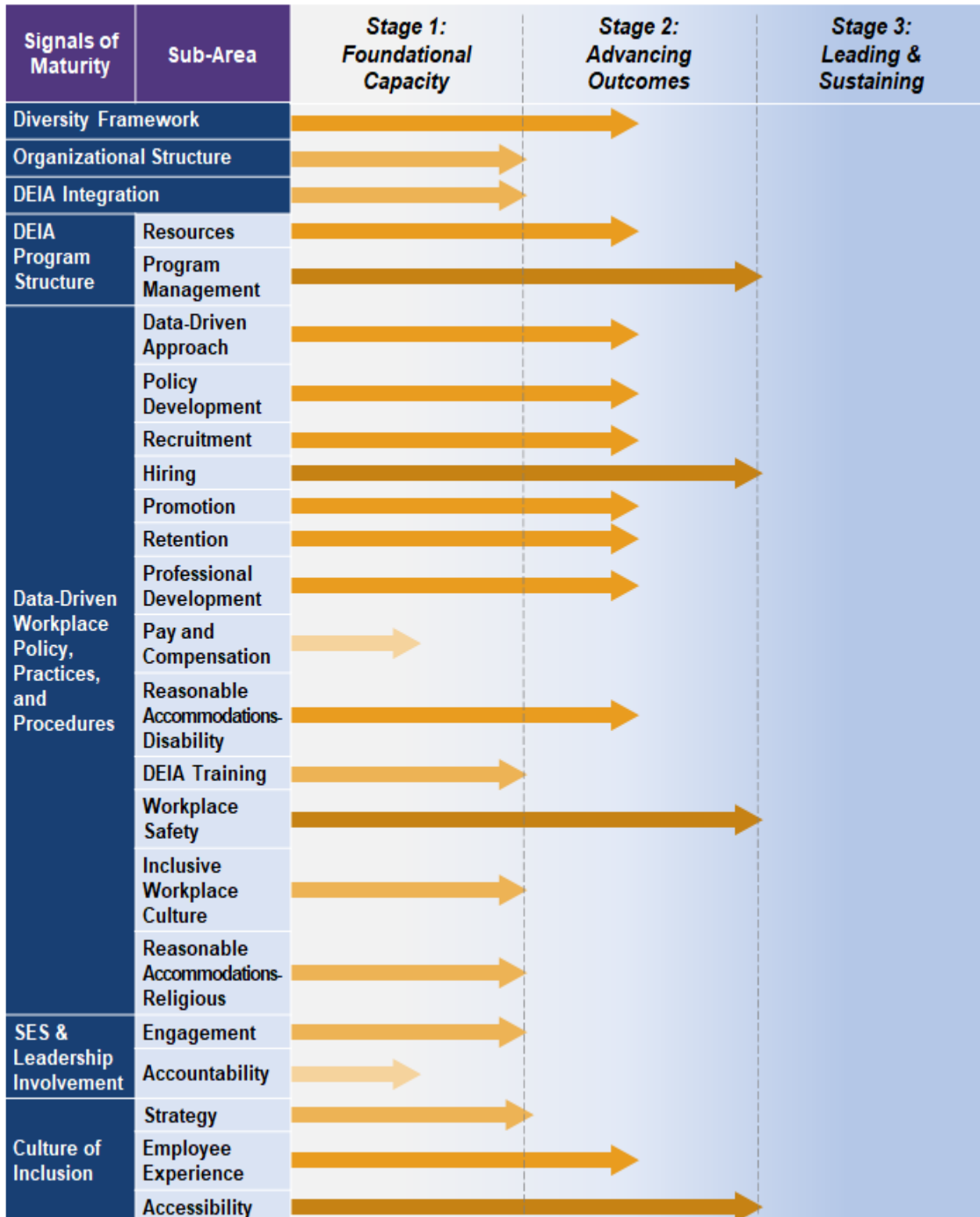| Signals of Maturity	Sub-Area	Stage 1: Foundational Capacity	Stage 2: Advancing Outcomes	Stage 3: Leading & Sustaining
Diversity Framework				
Organizational Structure				
DEIA Integration				
DEIA Program Structure	Resources			
	Program Management			
Data-Driven Workplace Policy, Practices, and Procedures	Data-Driven Approach			
	Policy Development			
	Recruitment			
	Hiring			
	Promotion			
	Retention			
	Professional Development			
	Pay and Compensation			
	Reasonable Accommodations-Disability			
	DEIA Training			
	Workplace Safety			
	Inclusive Workplace Culture			
	Reasonable Accommodations-Religious			
SES & Leadership Involvement	Engagement			
	Accountability			
Culture of Inclusion	Strategy			
	Employee Experience			
	Accessibility			

Figure 1. DoD DEIA Maturity Model

DEIA Guiding Principles

Our DEIA Guiding Principles recognizes that leadership commitment and accountability, as well as awareness and education are all crucial to success. We will drive explicit priorities and actions aligned with each of these areas. We are driving efforts with the intention that DEIA becomes implicit and naturally embedded within our organizational culture and human capital strategies and processes. This requires full integration of DEIA into all aspects of USACE's mission as a driver of performance. This plan incorporates government-wide priorities established by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

To encourage this approach, USACE has four DEIA Guiding Principles that drive and support organizational improvements and initiatives. These DEIA Guiding Principles provide a solid underpinning for a respectful and dynamic workplace, influencing behaviors and practices across the Enterprise.

USACE will shadow the four Guiding Principles to guide DEIA goals and efforts:

1. **Informed Decision-Making**
    –   DEIA efforts are founded on a standardized timeframe and evidence-based data collection, analysis, and assessment framework and incorporate internal and external feedback, resulting in sustainable, continuous, and measurable improvements in DEIA outcomes across the Enterprise.

2. **Integrated and Collaborative Approach**
    –   Advance a whole-of-enterprise DEIA approach with fully engaged and integrated Senior leadership that supports the effective and measurable execution of strategic goals across all mission operations.

3. **Improved Access**
    –   Removes barriers and provides enhanced opportunities to all individuals, to include individuals with disabilities, and provides organizational support to address all aspects of access and accessibility accommodations Enterprise wide.

4. **Increased Agility and Adaptability**
    –   Ensures the capability to integrate new aspects of DEIA and combat emerging DEIA barriers across all USACE activities in service of the USACE mission.

The four DEIA Guiding Principles take into consideration our unique mission and structure. They also integrate key aspects of the government-wide DEIA priorities, such as Advancing Equity for Employees with Disabilities and Data Collection, to ensure appropriate and adequate effort is devoted to addressing these priorities.

To achieve the realization of the Guiding Principles, USACE established five goals and thirteen supporting objectives, along with implementation roadmaps outlining current initiatives and potential future strategies in the areas of DEIA.

Summary of DEIA Goals and Objectives

1. USACE WORKFORCE

- 1.1. Identify underrepresented groups and work with Divisions, Districts, Centers, and Staff Offices to develop staffing plans to ensure diversity is addressed in their staffing plans.
- 1.2. Continue to enhance the talent management/internal employee lifecycle process by using achievable short-term milestones to affect change.
- 1.3 Measure success in increasing participation in underrepresented groups.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCY

- 2.1. Establish leadership engagement structure to support Enterprise-wide DEIA efforts, including review of the mission, vision, key strategic guidance documents, policies, and execution progress and outcomes, adjusting all as appropriate.
- 2.2. Develop a standardized, Enterprise-wide data collection and analysis process.
- 2.3. Enhance, align, and direct DEIA resource capabilities and mandate cross-enterprise accountability for the execution and achievement of DEIA initiatives.

3. EXPANSION OF EQUITY

- 3.1. Evaluate leadership and career development programs to increase access to opportunities, including for members of underserved communities.
- 3.2. Utilize procurement structures, USACE programs, and other mechanisms to impact the DEIA inclusivity of the underserved communities.

4. WORKFORCE INCLUSIVITY

- 4.1. Enhance the structure of employee resource groups (ERG)/councils to enable their support for the achievement of mission oriented DEIA objectives.
- 4.2. Enhance qualitative data gathering and analytics framework to gain workforce feedback with a mixed-methods approach to data collection.
- 4.3. Cultivate an inclusive work environment that encourages collaboration and flexibility to empower and engage every USACE team member.

5. COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

- 5.1. Assess information technology and facilities against benchmarks and industry standards to support equitable access and to remove potential barriers.
- 5.2. Develop an accessibility framework to provide comprehensive access to accessibility services to the workforce and community.
- 5.3. Improve the ability to attract, accommodate, and advance individuals with disabilities, including veterans and individuals with targeted disabilities.

Figure 2. USACE DEIA Goals and Objectives Map

Goal 1. USACE Workforce

Attract, develop, and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

Goal 1 Objectives

1.1. Identify underrepresented groups and work with Division, Districts, Centers, and Staff Offices to develop staffing plans to ensure diversity is addressed in their staffing plans.

1.2. Continue to enhance the talent management/internal employee lifecycle process by using achievable short-term milestones to affect change.

1.3. Measure success in increasing participation in underrepresented groups.

USACE knows that diverse representation matters. Diverse representation acknowledges that people of different backgrounds will bring different perspectives and knowledge to a conversation and that those differences of expertise and opinion are valuable. A higher proportion of female, racial, and ethnic minorities in leadership positions has a significant influence on the opportunities available to diverse talent, which has implications for the talent pipeline. Industries with greater shortages of diversity often lag in DEIA efforts partially because there are fewer role models and mentors to encourage younger generations of women and minority talent to pursue employment opportunities with their organizations, especially leadership positions.

As part of our data-driven approach, we will collect and maintain data on the composition of our workforce categorized by various dimensions of diversity, such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age (generation), and veteran status. Although providing information about demographic characteristics is voluntary, we know that it is useful to our human capital strategy, specifically to workforce and succession planning, as well as targeted efforts to recruit and retain diverse talent. We will communicate to our workforce the importance of this data capture and how it will be used to allay any concerns they may have about their privacy.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced broader society to examine the future of workplace. USACE will need to consider this transformation in the U.S. workforce and individuals' workplace needs (e.g., increased remote work capability, flexible hours) to keep pace with these changes and remain competitive. Thus, one of the first objectives is to utilize existing research on workplace best/promising practices and develop tailored evaluation of the policy changes and initiatives outlined in this plan. By adapting to the future of workplace, USACE can sustain a competitive edge in recruiting a diverse talent pool. This approach will ensure USACE enacts the right talent management initiatives to support the workforce. The execution and pace of these milestones and activities may differ across the Enterprise but may include efforts such as marketing paid internships or enhanced career development programs.

Goal 2. Organizational Resiliency

Enhance DEIA efforts and accountability and foster enduring resiliency through cross-cutting, collaborative, and standardized approaches and policies.

Goal 2 Objectives

2.1. Establish leadership engagement structure to support Enterprise-wide DEIA efforts, including review of the mission, vision, key strategic guidance documents, policies, and execution progress and outcomes, adjusting all as appropriate.

2.2. Develop a standardized, Enterprise-wide data collection and analysis process.

2.3. Enhance, align, and direct DEIA resource capabilities and mandate cross-enterprise accountability for the execution and achievement of DEIA initiatives.

A robust and resilient DEIA workplace requires consistent and demonstrated commitment and support from senior leadership across the Enterprise. In order to provide a deliberate and coordinated focus on DEIA enterprise-wide, USACE will establish a cross-cutting and collaborative team – consisting of leadership representation from across Enterprise. This task force will serve as a governance and advisory body supporting DEIAC focused on enhancing DEIA within their Department and integrating strategic, operational, and tactical mission support with DEIA subject matter experts. This is a groundbreaking initiative meant to shift how USACE thinks about DEIA in the context of its mission and to enforce ownership and accountability across the Enterprise. Additionally, it will provide a continuous assessment of progress yielding results and a cultural shift as necessary to enhance the needs and talents of the entire workforce.

USACE will continue to expand and standardize the data collection and analysis processes to allow for capture of both qualitative and quantitative data that helps leadership understand the root causes of systemic organizational issues. DEIA resources will be reviewed, enhanced, and aligned to better support DEIA initiatives and implementation efforts and USACE policies and compliance structures will be revised or developed to allow for effective policy delivery. USACE leadership will review the DEIA mission and vision annually, and update as appropriate, to verify DEIA efforts are hitting the mark and to guide USACE-wide efforts into the future. To achieve enduring organizational resiliency, USACE will embed a collaborative and growth-minded approach to DEIA, and ensure the Enterprise has the competencies, policies, and practices in place to continuously adapt and integrate new aspects of DEIA as it evolves.

Goal 3. Expansion of Equity

Champion, authentically promote, and maintain an equitable environment within USACE that fosters fair, just, and equal possible outcomes for all, to include underserved populations within USACE and in the surrounding communities.

Goal 3 Objectives

3.1. Evaluate leadership and career development programs to increase access to opportunities, including for members of underserved communities.

3.2. Utilize a wide array of allowable mechanisms for USACE programs to impact the DEIA by maximizing inclusion of underserved communities and by considering procurement opportunities for businesses within various socioeconomically disadvantaged program categories.

USACE is actively taking steps to mitigate barriers that prevent or inhibit participation of underserved populations in the workforce. To this end, USACE will expand the traditional grouping of underserved populations beyond race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and gender to ensure our policies and organizational procedures do not negatively impact people due to other identifiers, such as parental or caregiver status, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and all other gender identities or sexual orientations not specifically covered by the other seven listed identities and orientations (LGBTQIA+), socioeconomic status, and disability. Process barriers may exist in each area of the employment lifecycle, which includes recruitment (applicant flow), hiring, promotion, development/training, retention, and separations. Each of these stages in the employment lifecycle are managed by different offices across the Enterprise. To mitigate these process barriers, USACE will ensure tighter integration between DEIA goals and initiatives and the various offices that handle aspects of the employee lifecycle process to ensure DEIA efforts are better aligned and integrated USACE-wide.

Fostering equity extends beyond removing barriers in the workplace; USACE is committed to promoting and expanding equity in the broader community. USACE will ensure its external relationships, such as those with vendors or community partnerships, are fair and equitable for all groups. To help accomplish this, USACE will make use of a wide array of mechanisms, such as procurement structures and programs, to bolster the representation of underserved communities in the Corp's external endeavors.

Goal 4. Workforce Inclusivity

Promote organizational initiatives and expand mechanisms to better understand and meet the needs of the workforce.

Goal 4 Objectives

4.1. Enhance the structure of employee resource groups (ERG)/councils to enable their support for the achievement of mission-oriented DEIA objectives.

4.2. Enhance qualitative data gathering and analytics framework to gain workforce feedback with a mixed-methods approach to data collection.

4.3. Cultivate an inclusive work environment that encourages collaboration and flexibility to empower and engage every USACE team member.

USACE will work to foster an inclusive workplace culture that is built on psychological safety and allows everybody to be their authentic, best selves. To build that environment we must be aware of potential barriers. Barriers can block our ability to form inclusive workplaces; and therefore, must be identified and removed. Barriers limit us from achieving our full potential and can limit or prevent us from achieving equality. Barriers are often structural, but they can be attitudinal as well.

When structural barriers are combined with individual biases, the outcomes can be even more detrimental because together those impediments become reinforced and entrenched in a way that makes them difficult to spot and remove. It is important that we be intentional in listening to our staff about the things they perceive as getting in the way of their progressing and thriving at work. We will do this through employee viewpoint and other surveys, listening sessions, focus groups, and other feedback loops. We will also educate staff about the unconscious biases we all have and how to detect and mitigate them as a necessary step in eradicating barriers.

Workforce inclusivity is a readiness imperative. Inclusion indicates whether organization members feel valued and respected by their peers and leadership, and if they feel involved in decision-making and information-sharing. Inclusive organizations are linked to lower rates of discrimination while also benefitting from higher rates of retention and diverse employee recruitment.

An ERG is an employee-led group that fosters inclusivity and builds community. These employee groups also provide personal and professional support to its members. ERGs support underrepresented employees in the workplace. Employees who lead and take part in ERGs share certain things in common. For example, ERGs at USACE include the Women's Professional Network; Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders; LGBTQ Community; and Native American Employee Network.

Goal 5. Commitment to Accessibility

Foster a USACE-wide culture of accessibility and intersectionality for Individuals with Disabilities, including Veterans with Disabilities.

Goal 5 Objectives

5.1. Assess information technology and facilities against benchmarks and industry standards to support equitable access and to remove potential barriers.

5.2. Develop an accessibility framework to provide comprehensive access to accessibility services to the workforce and community.

5.3. Improve the ability to attract, accommodate, and advance individuals with disabilities, including veterans and individuals with targeted disabilities.

Accessibility is the foundation on which on which we must build diversity, equity, and inclusion for people with disabilities. Without accessibility, we cannot fully achieve the others. From an organizational support perspective, accessibility is a broad functional area that encompasses multiple aspects including the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information, and communication technology, as well as specific programmatic support and service areas. Aside from the legal requirements, accessibility is good for business. Creating products and information that everyone can use drives innovation, provides a better customer experience, and improves employee engagement. Accessibility helps us reach more stakeholders and, ultimately, achieve USACE mission.

USACE will build on progress achieved to date and will establish a Disability Program Managers working group to develop a more sustainable and mature organizational framework for accessibility. To accomplish this, USACE will take actions such as formalizing leadership under CDO, addressing relevant underlying policies, assessing requirements for additional resourcing, and coordinating and streamlining structures, mechanisms, and processes related to planning and delivery of accessibility support and services.

To remain a model employer, USACE develops processes to identify and remove employment barriers, and will provide enhanced opportunities to all individuals, including individuals with disabilities. An accessibility framework, coordinated across the Enterprise, bolsters our efforts to provide comprehensive access to employees, job applicants, and the broader community we serve. Integrating and embedding a culture of accessibility and intersectionality throughout USACE strengthens our ability to attract qualified individuals and ensure a wider pool of talent can succeed and advance once employed.

DIVERSITY ROADMAP INITIATIVES

Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives

Goal 1. USACE WORKFORCE
Attract, develop, and retain a diverse and inclusive workplace that reflects the communities we serve.

Priority Objective
1.1. Diversify the Workforce. Identify underrepresented groups and work with Divisions, Districts, Centers, and Staff Offices to develop staffing plans to ensure diversity is addressed in their staffing plans.

Initiatives

Recruitment, Accession, and Hiring:

- Examine MD715 report information for each Division, District, Center, and Staff Office specifically identifying underrepresented groups for the geographic location.

- Conduct barrier analysis and analyze applicant flow in the external hiring and recruitment process to identify triggers and barriers. Develop action items from this analysis.

- Broaden annual USACE baseline of engagement with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) / Minority Serving Institutions (MSI), professional associations and affinity groups.

- Launch outreach engagement stakeholder meetings.

- Assess whether recruitment materials are effective in attracting a broad range of talent, including individuals from underserved communities.

- Develop a method to track and report all recruitment and outreach efforts (attendance at conferences, contacts with organizations, etc.).

- Implement the use of digital marketing in outreach and recruitment activities to target demographically diverse audiences and avoid cultural bias during outreach and recruitment activities.

- Institute a plan for outreach and recruiting efforts to underrepresented locations and demographics to diversify the available pool of qualified candidates.

- Continue to build relationships with key stakeholders, Minority Serving Institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, Professional Associations, Affinity Groups, employee resource groups and Workforce Recruitment Program for Disabled Students, etc.

- Explore current internship programs at USACE Divisions, Districts, Centers, and Staff Offices to identify best practices for reaching a more inclusive internship applicant pool.

- Maximize opportunities to hire candidates at the entry level, such as Pathways Programs, Presidential Management Fellows and the use of Direct Hiring Authorities.

- Provide training in interviewing techniques, including information on avoiding unconscious biases, to personnel involved in the hiring process.

Path to Senior Leadership:

- Assess career development programs and resources to promote a diverse pool of senior personnel eligible for consideration of merit-based promotion to Senior Executive Service (SES) and equivalent positions and special leadership development positions, and, at a minimum, review the career development programs annually.

- Ensure vacancies available only to internal candidates are advertised to the widest practical extent within USACE to promote and encourage open and fair competition.

- Ensure career development, recruitment, and retention programs include strategies to distribute information regarding tools and resources that enable personnel to make informed career decisions from recruitment to retirement.

- Support transparency of developmental opportunities by posting announcements, ensuring they are accessible to all eligible employees, and systematically tracking applications and selections.

- Increase DEIA across careers from entry level through senior leadership for both the military and civilian workforces.

- Identify critical career fields associated with diverse perspectives and skillsets.

- Support participation in developmental and mentoring opportunities by enhancing mentoring programs and encouraging employee and leadership participation.

- Identify policy gaps that prohibit more comprehensive talent management and workforce changes and provide recommendations for those gaps.

Goal 2. Organizational Resiliency

Enhance DEIA efforts and accountability and foster enduring resiliency through cross-cutting, collaborative, and standardized approaches and policies.

Priority Objective

2.2. Data Utilization. Develop a standardized, Enterprise-wide data collection and analysis process.

Initiatives

- Develop a comprehensive data collection plan (referencing existing enterprise data and data to be collected), in coordination with Human Resources and the CDO, to capture DEIA data needed to establish a baseline on each focus area while ensuring that Personal Identifiable Information (PII) is protected. At a minimum, data will be collected on policies and practices related to recruitment, retention, advancement, performance and recognition, equity (including pay equity), and vendor diversity.

- Establish training in DEIA concepts for leadership and the workforce and conduct outreach and recruiting strategy for locations with underrepresented demographic groups.

- Utilize the DEIA dashboard capability where appropriate to initiate standardization of data collection and analysis approaches across the enterprise.

EQUITY ROADMAP INITIATIVES

Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives

Goal 3. Expansion of Equity
Champion, authentically promote, and maintain an equitable environment within USACE that fosters fair, just, and equal possible outcomes for all, to include underserved populations within USACE and in the surrounding communities.

Priority Objective
3.1. Equitable Representation of Underserved Populations. Evaluate leadership and career development programs to increase access to opportunities, including for members of underserved communities.

Initiatives

- Review policies and procedures (e.g., assessment tests, vacancy announcements, eligibility criteria, suitability requirements, etc.) to identify and address potential barriers to full participation in the workplace, to include barriers faced by individuals with disabilities.

- Recruit and assess populations that reflect the comparative U.S. population.

- Conduct a review of recruiters' incentive structures to identify areas to potentially increase investment to bolster recruiting of underrepresented groups.

- Increase U.S. civilian familiarity with the benefits of federal civilian employment.

- In civilian employment, increase representation of individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities above 12% and 2% federal goals.

- Utilize the National Civilian Labor Force as a benchmark to monitor and adjust strategies to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in the workforce.

- Adopt an approach that maps and assesses the employee experience (i.e., employee journey mapping), as opposed to reviewing data and feedback from a singular time period or experience.

- Develop succession management and career path opportunities to retain USACE's workforce.

- Identify learning and development opportunities to develop USACE's diverse workforce through mentorship programs, coaching programs, and career transition programs.

- Cultivate a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to contribute to their full potential and improve retention.

- Analyze the results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and other surveys to identify reasons employee's express dissatisfaction in the workplace or choose to leave USACE. Utilize data and analysis to find ways to enhance working conditions to promote retention and continuously improve the work environment for all.

- Use the Management Directive 715 (MD-715) barrier analysis and other metrics to analyze attrition to determine if disparities exist and address any issues related to retention or succession management efforts.

- Collect applicant flow data on advertised vacancy announcements and analyze the data as part of the MD-715 report.

- Integrate DEIA into performance and recognition processes to provide a reasonable assurance of fair and objective outcomes.

- Support the establishment of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for employee engagement and belonging among groups based on their affinity and that also add value as a feedback loop to leadership.

- Establish award criteria and nomination procedures to reward successful achievements in DEIA.

- Develop performance measures to gauge progress and effectiveness.

INCLUSION ROADMAP INITIATIVES

Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives
Goal 4. Workforce Inclusivity
Promote organizational initiatives and expand mechanisms to better understand and meet the needs of the workforce.
Priority Objective
4.3. Culture of Inclusivity. Cultivate an inclusive work environment that encourages collaboration and flexibility to empower and engage every USACE team member.
Initiatives

- Review communication approaches and language utilized in print and media advertisements to ensure that a broad range of the population can relate to the advertisement.

- Develop and launch DEIA Toolkit.

- Support the establishment of ERGs for employee engagement and belonging among groups based on their affinity and that also add value as a feedback loop to leadership. ERGs have proven effective in helping with employee recruitment and retention of diverse employees.

- Promote a workplace environment that is free of harassment, discrimination, bullying, and all forms of non-inclusive behaviors.

- Promote the use of inclusive language or gender-neutral language, including inclusive pronouns.

- Continue to promote and celebrate diversity through the Special Emphasis Program (SEP) cultural observances.

- Conduct and assess the results of exit and stay interviews and analyzing demographic trends in survey response data.

- Expand the availability of DEIA trainings so that employees are supported and encouraged to promote respectful, safe, and inclusive workplaces and have increased understanding of implicit and unconscious bias.

- Embed accessibility as a core design component of physical and digital spaces.

ACCESSIBILITY ROADMAP INITIATIVES

Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives

Goal 5. Commitment to Accessibility
Foster a USACE-wide culture of universal accessibility and intersectionality for Individuals with Disabilities, Individuals with Targeted Disabilities and Veterans with Disabilities.

Priority Objectives
5.2. Leadership and Organizational Frameworks. Develop an accessibility framework to provide comprehensive access to accessibility services to the workforce and community.

Initiatives

- Stand up an enterprise-wide Universal Access and Design Program, and resource appropriately:
  - Appoint an IT Accessibility/508 Program Manager (508 PM).
  - Delegate proper authority for the 508 PM to serve as the principal enterprise authority on Section 508 compliance matters.
- Evolve existing leadership framework and organizational structures to further elevate and integrate Accessibility and EEO/Disability Management services, support, and initiatives
- Update USACE Reasonable Accommodation Policy and simplify the process for accommodation requests.
- Provide training and guidance on processes to make physical and virtual environments, including common and individual environments, equitable spaces.
- Train users and operators of virtual environments on conducting accessible meetings, creating accessible documents, and addressing potential physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities.
- Inspect, assess, and evaluate IT and facilities against benchmarks and industry standards to support equitable access and to remove potential barriers.
- Ensure all technology, whether developed in-house or externally, is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act before deployment.
- Assess the average time for resolution of accommodation requests for individuals with disabilities and religious accommodations requests and implementing practices to improve efficiency.

Achieving Results – Next Steps

Advancing DEIA in the workplace is not a one-time effort; it requires sustained and demonstrated commitment from leaders, stakeholders, and the entire workforce. Creating and maintaining a culture of respect, dignity, and access is a priority and strategically necessary to ensure USACE achieves its mission.

Engagement of Divisions, Districts, Centers, and Staff Office leadership is essential to advance these objectives and implement the proposed actions. Commanders, senior leaders, managers, and supervisors will maintain accountability for each plan objective, working with their respective commands, teams, and Councils as appropriate to advance these objectives.

This Strategic Plan ensures that everyone in USACE shares the responsibility and opportunity for embracing our commitment to creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

We are aware that many factors (such as changing demographics of the labor force) may influence and challenge the execution of this plan over the next few years. However, we will continuously monitor our tactics and progress towards our objectives to update implementation efforts as appropriate.

This work is a continuous growth cycle, building towards leading and sustaining practices that create a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workforce that is an example for the entire Nation.

USACE team members can expect to receive periodic information and reports regarding progress towards the goals outlined in this plan.

Appendix A: Definitions

1. **Accessibility** – The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them. Accessibility includes the provision of accommodations and modifications to ensure equal access to employment and participation in activities for people with disabilities, the reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities, a commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can independently access every outward-facing and internal activity or electronic space, and the pursuit of best practices such as universal design.

2. **Affinity Groups** – A group of people who share interests, issues, and a common bond or background, and offer support to each other. These groups can be formed between friends, or people from the same community, workplace, or organization. Affinity groups can represent a narrow or broad dimension of diversity and are most commonly associated with race, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and family or veteran status. DoD recognized affinity groups for civilian employees are known as employee resource groups. External affinity groups are non-federal entities.

3. **Barrier Analysis** – An examination of policies, procedures, practices, or conditions that limit or tend to limit opportunities for members of certain groups.

4. **Bias** – A prejudice in favor of or against a thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way that is considered unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative effects.

   - Conscious or explicit bias is when individuals are aware of their prejudices and attitudes toward certain groups. This can take the form of overt racism or discriminatory behaviors.

   - Unconscious or implicit bias is when individuals are unaware of their hidden biases.

5. **Belonging** – Feeling valued through positive connections with others and able to bring your authentic self to work.

6. **Disability** – A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

7. **Diversity** – All the different characteristics and attributes of individuals from varying demographics that are consistent with the DoD's core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and reflective of the nation we serve.

8. **Employee Engagement** – The degree to which employees are committed to helping their organization achieve its goals. It's demonstrated by how employees think, feel, and act, as well as the emotional connection employees feel towards their employer.

9. **Employee Experience** – The sum of all experiences an employee has with their employer over the duration of their relationship. Encapsulates what people encounter and observe over the course of their tenure at an organization.

10. **Equity** – The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

11. **Generations** – Generations are one way to group age cohorts. A generation typically refers to groups of people born over a 15–20-year span.

    - *The Silent Generation*, also known as the "Lucky Few," is the cohort who came of age in the post–World War II era. They were born from 1928 to 1945.

    - *Baby Boomers* are the people born following World War II from 1946 to 1964. Increased birth rates were observed during the post–World War II baby boom, making them a relatively large demographic cohort.

    - *Generation X* (or Gen X for short) is the cohort following the baby boomers. The generation is generally defined as people born between 1965 and 1980.

    - *Millennials*, also known as Generation Y, are the generation who grew up around the turn of the 3rd millennium. According to the Pew Research Center, the generation spans those born between 1981 and 1996.

    - *Generation Z* (or Gen Z for short and colloquially as "Zoomers") are the people succeeding the Millennials. Pew Research Center describes Generation Z as spanning from 1997 to 2012.

    - *Generation Alpha* (or Gen Alpha for short) is the one succeeding Generation Z. Researchers and popular media typically use the early 2010s as starting birth years and the mid-2020s as ending birth years. Generation Alpha is the first to be born entirely in the 21st century.

12. **Inclusion** – A set of behaviors (culture) that encourages service members and civilian employees to feel valued for unique qualities and to experience a sense of belonging. Inclusive diversity is the process of valuing and integrating each individual's perspectives, ideas, and contributions into the way an organization functions and makes decisions; enabling diverse workforce members to contribute to their full potential in collaborative pursuit of organizational objectives.

13. **Psychological Safety** – An environment that encourages, recognizes and rewards individuals for their contributions and ideas by making individuals feel safe when taking interpersonal risks. A lack of psychological safety at work can inhibit team learning and lead to in-groups, groupthink and blind spots.

14. **Underrepresented** – Refers to a person or group of people who are insufficiently or inadequately represented. A situation in which the number of women or members of a minority group employed is a lower percentage of the total number of eligible employees within the employment category within the civilian labor force of the Nation.

15. **Underserved Communities** – The Executive Order defines "underserved communities" as populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. In the context of the federal workforce, this includes individuals who belong to communities of color, such as Black and African American, Hispanic, and Latino, Native American, Alaska Native and Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African persons. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (LGBTQI+) persons); persons who face discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions; parents; and caregivers. It includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on their religion or disability; first-generation professionals or first-generation college students; individuals with limited English proficiency; immigrants; individuals who belong to communities that may face employment barriers based on older age or former incarceration; persons who live in rural areas; veterans and military spouses; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality. Individuals may belong to more than one underserved community and face intersecting barriers.

Appendix B: Relevant Congressional Legislation

Congressional Legislation
United States Congress, Sections 1104, 3301, and 3302 of title 5, United States Code.
United States Congress, Section 656 of title 10, United States Code.
United States Congress, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, Section 529 of Public Law 116-92.
National Security Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Act of 2021.

Appendix C: Executive Orders on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Executive Orders	Description
E.O. 13985 - Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government	First Executive Order signed by President Joe Biden on January 20, 2021, to advance racial equity and support for underserved communities throughout the Federal Government.
E.O. 13988 Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation	Also signed on January 20th, this Executive Order strives for LGBTQIA+ equity in the Federal Government.
E.O. 14020 on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council	Strives to establish a comprehensive approach within the Federal Government to advance equal rights and opportunities, regardless of gender or gender identity.
E.O. 14031 Executive Order on Advancing Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders	The purpose of this order is to build on those policies by establishing the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.
E.O. 14035 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce	Issues guidance to increase the availability of paid internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships; reduce reliance on unpaid internships and similar programs; and improve outreach to and recruitment of individuals from underserved communities.
E.O. 14041 on White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Advances educational opportunities and reduces barriers to expand programming for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), as well as strengthen capacity to participate in Federal programs.
E.O. 14045 on White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics	Directs agencies to address discriminatory practices and challenges facing Hispanic students and reduce barriers to participation in federal employment and education.
E. O. 14049 on the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities	Advances educational and economic opportunities for Native Americans through partnerships with public, private, philanthropic, and nonprofit entities.
E.O. 14050 on White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans	Directs agencies to address discriminatory practices and challenges facing Black students and reduce barriers to participation in federal employment and education opportunities.

REFERENCES

- United States Congress, Sections 1104, 3301, and 3302 of title 5, United States Code.
- United States Congress, Section 656 of title 10, United States Code.
- United States Congress, Public Law 116-92, Section 529, "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020," December 20, 2019.
- Executive Order 14035, "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce," June 25, 2021.
- Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government," January 20, 2021.
- Executive Order13988, Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, January 20, 2021.
- Executive Order 14020, Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council, March 8, 2021.
- Executive Order 13583, Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce, August 18, 2011.
- National Security Memorandum, Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships, February 4, 2021.
- Equal Employment Commission, Management Directive 715, 1 October 2003.
- Memorandum, Secretary of Defense, Subject: Immediate Actions to Address Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity in the Military Services, 14 Jun 20.
- Management Directive 715, "Equal Employment Opportunity," October 1, 2003.
- The White House Guidance, "Government-Wide Strategic Plan to Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce," November 2021.
- The White House Statements and Releases, "FACT SHEET: President Biden Signs Executive Order Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Government," June 25, 2021.
- DoD Instruction 1020.05, "DOD Diversity and Inclusion Management Program," September 9, 2020.
- DoD Directive 1020.02E, "Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity in the DoD," June 8, 2015, as amended.
- DEIA Accessibility Guidance, "Integrating Accessibility into Agency Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Implementation Plans," December 2021.
- Klipfolio, Employee retention metrics: The 5 metrics you should be measuring, March 2022, as amended.
- U.S. Department of the Army. The Army People's Strategy: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Annex, 1 Sep 20.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USACE Campaign Plan.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USACE People Strategy.
- Human Rights Campaign, Glossary of terms: https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms.