

# Equity Action Plan 2024–2028

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



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# Message from the Chief Executive Officer

USAGM brings voices from America to people all over the world. What makes us effective in telling our stories is our ability to bring together diverse people with unique perspectives and empowering them to communicate and work together. Our mission to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy, acknowledges that the wisdom of a workforce that reflects the population we serve is better able to understand and meet the needs of our audience.

The agency provides news and information in 63 languages to an audience of 420 million people weekly in both open and closed societies across the globe. Accordingly, it has an opportunity to remove barriers for people in underrepresented communities and make the agency's policies, procedures, and practices more equitable for these groups. The stories we bring to underrepresented groups, gives them a voice and ensures they are represented in our programming.

At home, in our efforts to end unjust disparities, promote equity, and root out bias, USAGM is focused on advancing equity for underserved communities by increasing procurement opportunities and contracting opportunities, providing them with access to technology for use in broadcasting and journalism, and serving as an entry point for mid-career and senior journalists from diverse backgrounds to tell the stories of their communities. Students will be equipped with tools they otherwise would not have access to, leveling the playing field so they may competitively compete in today's workforce, and the agency will be an entry point for aspiring journalists from underrepresented groups. The agency will also work to increase the number of underserved communities serving in leadership roles in the newsroom to build a supportive and inclusive work environment, as well as ensure that programming accurately represents the voices of those from underserved communities being covered.

Our work allows us to expand our reach to and engagement with underrepresented audiences abroad, so that we may ensure inclusivity in representing a balanced projection of significant American thought and institutions. In addition, our commitment to advancing equity demonstrates our efforts to strengthen equitable outcomes for America's youth and communities that are severely underrepresented in journalism.



Amanda Bennett  
Chief Executive Officer  
U.S. Agency for Global Media

# Advancing Equity Through the Agency's Mission

The agency's mission is to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. With its first-rate global communications capacity, USAGM is uniquely capable of defending press freedom and access to information in some of the most challenging markets for journalists.

Consistent with American values of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which allows individuals to express themselves without government interference or regulation, our goal is to provide audiences in closed societies that are traditionally underrepresented, or where free media is not yet fully established, with consistently accurate reporting and other content that opens minds and stimulates debate. These groups are often ignored because they are in countries that are outside the U.S. and are less developed. However, many from these countries are now U.S. citizens, in addition to, first and second generation born U.S. citizens whose families are from these underserved countries. The United States is a melting pot of many different ethnicities. As a result, providing trusted, compelling, and impactful content, which includes the stories of all the ethnicities that make up the U.S., demonstrates a commitment to developing and providing programming that is significant and adds value.

# Executive Summary of Equity Action Plan

## Strategies:

### **1. Increase Procurement and Contracting Opportunities for Underserved Communities**

- The barriers to underserved communities include challenges with skilled labor, procurement times and requests, outreach, and the procurement process.
- The agency will meaningfully engage members of the public by being proactive, when necessary, getting assistance with acquisition and procurement strategies and the contracting process, setting aside opportunities, and addressing challenges that may come up and discussing how to overcome them.

### **2. Provide Students in Underrepresented Communities With Access to Technology For Use in Broadcasting and Journalism**

- The barriers to the underserved communities include, not exposing underrepresented groups to technological opportunities, which are readily available to those outside these communities.
- The agency will meaningfully engage members of the public, primarily focusing on students from underserved communities by establishing a partnership with a local high school.
- Therefore, students will work toward establishing a formal career, they will learn about different careers, functional roles, and how jobs are performed. In addition, students will participate in a mentorship program.

### **3. Provide Access to Underrepresented Communities that are Severely Underrepresented in Journalism to Tell the Stories of Their Own Communities**

- The barriers to the underserved communities include, a severe shortage of groups who have traditionally been ignored and sharing the experiences and stories their communities frequently face.

- The agency will meaningfully engage members of the public by attending journalism conferences to scout for a variety of professional journalists, increase awareness of the agency’s mission, and build relationships with diverse journalists for future jobs and opportunities.
- This will result in identifying journalists from underserved communities that have primarily been forgotten, to tell stories of their communities from their perspective.

# Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments

## Strategy #1 – Increased Procurement and Contracting Opportunities for Underserved Communities

The intended actions resulted in USAGM setting goals to:

- Increase the procurement opportunities for socially disadvantaged small businesses;
- Increase contracting opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses; and
- Monitor procurement guidance to ensure any new government-wide targets are realized.

USAGM was able to track the progress of this strategy by accessing reporting data from the System for Award Management (SAM) to compare awards to each socio economic category.

The accomplishments the agency made in this area consisted of:

- Hiring contractors from underserved communities through businesses owned by groups who have been underrepresented;
- Selecting diverse vendors to conduct training in diverse countries; and
- Exceeding contracting requirements with vendors from underserved communities during the previous fiscal year.

## Strategy #2 – Expand Reach to – and Engagement with – Underserved Audiences Abroad

The intended actions resulted in USAGM setting goals to:

- Understanding societal and systemic issues that influence underserved audiences to address gender, age, and psychographic audience segmentation;
- Reaching out to underrepresented groups with compelling programming that will inform and empower them; and
- Increasing visibility in programming of members of underrepresented groups and encouraging participation in programming as authoritative experts.

The agency was able to track the progress of this strategy by assessing the proportion of programming designed to represent or reach underserved audiences as defined in each of its target regions.

The accomplishments the agency made in this area consisted of:

- Strengthening the agency’s understanding of international media environments where the agency’s media operates;
- Enhancing impact measurements to provide unbiased reporting;
- Preparing reports on challenges and restrictions that affect the rights of the underserved community;
- Providing vital news reports, programs, and documentaries to underserved groups;
- Reporting on investigations that expose unfair treatment of underserved groups;
- Creating an avenue for underserved groups to connect and anonymously share their stories; and
- Reporting on women from underserved communities serving in the military and being subjected to sexual assaults and harassment.

### **Strategy #3 – Ensure Inclusion of U.S. Underserved Communities When “Telling America’s Story”**

The intended actions resulted in USAGM setting goals to:

- Develop measures to gauge success in meeting balanced representation and inclusive coverage of content development.
- Ensure a solid understanding of the underserved communities that tell America’s story.

The agency was able to track the progress of this strategy by assessing the representation of experts and guests from the underserved communities that are represented in the agency’s newscasts and in other recurring informational programs.

The accomplishments the agency made in this area consisted of:

- Understanding societal systemic issues that influence media use by underserved audiences to better address gender, age, and psychographic issues.
- Providing content containing the voices and expert knowledge of America’s underserved communities to share through video series and documentaries, information on: first-generation Americans of African heritage who were U.S. elected officials; the first group of African slaves; African American historians and sociologists; and the unseen presence of African tech start-ups and entrepreneurial innovation and creativity designed and that tell America’s story.



# Strategies to Advance Equity in FY 2024

## Strategy #1 – Increase Procurement and Contracting Opportunities for Underserved Communities

### WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT EQUITY OBJECTIVE

Economic Justice

### COLLABORATING AGENCIES (IF APPLICABLE)

Small Business Administration, Procurement Center Representative (PCR)

### BARRIERS

The challenges that may affect the award process with small businesses involve: 1) lack of skilled labor; 2) procurement lead times; 3) large procurement requests; and 4) agency outreach to small businesses.

### EVIDENCE BASE TO SUPPORT STRATEGY

Agencies are measured on how well they reach their small business and socioeconomic prime contracting goals for small businesses, such as, Women Owned, Service Disabled Veteran Owned, Veteran Owned, Minority Owned, Small Disadvantaged, and Historically Underutilized Business Zones. As a result, a Small Business Set-Aside Program (SBSA) was developed to help assure small businesses are awarded a fair proportion of government contracts by reserving certain government purchases exclusively for participation by small businesses.

### ACTIONS TO ADVANCE AND ENSURE EQUITY

On an annual basis, USAGM provides accurate and transparent contracting data and reports agency specific progress to the Agency Head. Between \$10,000 and \$250,000 is automatically set aside for small businesses as required by federal regulations. To advance equity, the agency will be proactive in reaching out to the Small Business Association (SBA) and the SBA's Procurement Center Representative (PCR) to: have their acquisition and procurement strategies reviewed, to receive guidance on the contracting process, setting aside procurement opportunities for small businesses; and receive assistance with challenges that may come up and how to overcome them. This engagement encouraged the agency to keep the small business database current and accurate, and encouraged small businesses to register their businesses in the

System for Award Management (SAM), which is the database used by the agency when posting procurement opportunities.

### **PROPOSED METRICS**

To determine if the agency is meeting its required goals, all procurements will be reviewed and tracked quarterly as well as annually. Tracking will include accessing reporting data from the SAM database, then all awards can be compared to each socio-economic category. This will assist in determining whether the acquisition and acquisition strategy is equitable and inclusive of the underserved community.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The agency will meaningfully engage the public, including the underserved community to implement this strategy at the beginning of FY 2024.

## **Strategy#2 – Provide Students in Underrepresented Communities with Access to Technology and Training for Use in Broadcasting and Journalism**

### **WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT EQUITY OBJECTIVE**

Civil Rights, Economic Justice, Educational Equity, and Housing Justice and Community Investment

### **COLLABORATING AGENCIES (IF APPLICABLE)**

Flowers High School in Springdale, Maryland

### **BARRIERS**

There are inequities faced by communities of color concerning technology. As a result, a significant barrier to technology is the gap in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) opportunities in underserved communities. To have long-term success in creating a diverse tech sector, not only private companies, but the Federal Government must invest in STEM education for the next generation of workers. This will address the skill shortage and the lack of diversity we already face in the technology field today. Another barrier is connecting agencies with talent from underserved communities. Education is only one part of the solution. Mentoring talent can also help tackle the challenge.

### **EVIDENCE BASE TO SUPPORT STRATEGY**

STEM is a key success factor in education. Technology is what enables Broadcasters to reach their audiences. The Information Technology, satellite technology, network design, and engineering that support journalism are key to the agency's mission. Establishing a formal

mentoring program would provide a much needed boost to a local school that would benefit students who are traditionally underrepresented in the technical workforce.

### **ACTIONS TO ADVANCE AND ENSURE EQUITY**

Forming a partnership will provide a conduit for mentorship of young adults and allow them insight into careers in Computer Science, Engineering, and other IT positions. USAGM can host sessions with a school to discuss careers, functional roles, and how the jobs are performed. Topics such as satellite and distribution technology, coding, software development, network design, technical certifications, etc. can all be explored. USAGM will establish a recurring interaction with a High School by establishing a partnership with the school to interactively engage with the students. The agency will teach students IT, Broadcast Operations (VOA), Technical Writing, Project Management, and other career related topics. Additionally, the agency will mentor students and provide them with hands-on experience.

### **PROPOSED METRICS**

To determine if the agency is successful in exposing an increased number of students from the underserved community to the technology field, the number of students participating in STEM opportunities will be analyzed at the beginning and end of the school year to identify the composition of minorities, women, and economically disadvantaged students that are participating. This information will be reported to the Head of the Agency.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The agency is considering meaningfully engaging the public, including the underserved community to implement this strategy at the beginning of the 2024–2025 public school year.

## **Strategy#3 – Provide Access to Underrepresented Communities that are Severely Underrepresented in Journalism to Tell the Stories of Their Own Communities**

### **WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT EQUITY OBJECTIVE**

Civil Rights

### **COLLABORATING AGENCIES (IF APPLICABLE)**

National Association of Black Journalists

Asian American Journalists Association

National Association of Hispanic Journalists

## **BARRIERS**

A significant barrier that exist is a severe shortage of journalists from underserved communities that historically have been ignored and are underrepresented in the journalism field. Another barrier just as significant is reporting on stories about the experiences, challenges, and accomplishments of individuals from underrepresented communities from the perspective of and by journalists from those communities. The lack of journalists from these communities inhibits the ability of newsrooms in general to reach members of these communities and the ability to tell their stories with accuracy and awareness.

## **EVIDENCE BASE TO SUPPORT STRATEGY**

Providing journalists with information about the agency’s journalism program, including senior positions, entry-level positions, internships, contracting opportunities, and how to qualify for them.

## **ACTIONS TO ADVANCE AND ENSURE EQUITY**

The agency will send 2-3 senior journalists to the annual conferences of three, high-profile affinity associations in the journalism field — the National Association of Black Journalists, the Asian American Journalists Association, and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. At these conferences, USAGM journalists will network and recruit seasoned journalists at the mid-career and executive levels to ensure leaders in the newsroom are representative of the underserved communities whose stories they are telling around the world. The agency aims to become an employer of choice for journalists from all underserved communities. Inform about how the agency will benefit from employing skilled journalists and training student journalists from underrepresented communities. Create specific content that explains the agency’s mission and get out and tell the stories of their communities.

## **PROPOSED METRICS**

Set goals for contact with journalists. Establish annual goals for in-person or online visits with professional journalists. Also, if questions were addressed to agency members during in-person and online visits, the agency members follow up with responses.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The agency will meaningfully engage the public, including the underserved community to implement this strategy during the second and third quarters of 2024.



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