

Equity Action Plan Digest: Federal Trade Commission

Summarized by Travis Reginal

This is one in a series of Urban Institute digests summarizing federal agencies', subagencies', and commissions' 2022 equity action plans, which were released in response to the Biden administration's January 2021 executive order, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. The Federal Trade Commission's equity action plan is available at https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/FTCEquityActionPlanForRelease41422.pdf (PDF).

Overview

What <i>problem</i> is the commission trying to solve?	Fraud and nonfraud consumer issues facing underserved communities
Priority groups	Asian American, Black, Latino, and Native American people; children with special needs; people with low incomes; rural communities; senior citizens; service-disabled veterans; small-business contractors; small disadvantaged businesses; women-owned small businesses
Historic harm mentioned?	No
Partners in implementation	Internal agency equity team; Department of Justice
Equity defined as	Not defined beyond executive order

Pillars and Principles of Equity

Acknowledgement of past harm and present barriers	Deceptive or unfair practices (p. 4); algorithmic bias (p. 4); restrictive real estate covenants and acquisitions by large supermarkets (p. 6)
Impact goals	Equity in consumer protection enforcement (p. 4); equity in antitrust enforcement; equity in procurement and contracting (p. 10)
Actions and activities	Injunctive relief (p. 5); compensating consumers that have been harmed (p. 5); developing assessment toolkit (p. 5); staff training in equity principles (p. 8); expanding data collection to track the participation of subgroups (p. 10)
Accountability measures and approaches	Existing planning and monitoring processes (p. 5)

Note: For the rubric we used to evaluate these components of the equity action plans, see the appendix to the Urban Institute's 2023 brief "Pathways to Equity at Scale: An Analysis of the 2022 Federal Equity Action Plans and Recommendations for 2023 Plans," available at https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Pathways%20to%20Equity%20at%20Scale%20Appendix_0.pdf.

Types of Equity and Related Activities

Procedural (example: expanding language and translation services; simplifying the vendor application process)	Updating the Bureau of Competition’s selection processes by including the impact of proposed mergers and anticompetition conduct on underserved communities (p. 6); targeted outreach to small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, and small-business contractors in Historically Underutilized Business Zones for contracting opportunities (p. 7); monthly, virtual open FTC meetings where the public can share feedback; posting transcripts of FTC meetings online; gathering input from labor unions (p. 7)
Distributional (example: creating new procurement program)	Plan for programmatic equity analysis (p. 2)
Structural (example: policy change via proposing legislation related to an equity goal; changing organizational functions)	Collection and analysis of procurement and contracting data (p. 1); use of toolkit is embedded in staff’s work (p. 5); creation of new policies/initiatives, community outreach, and law enforcement actions that address relative harms to different market participants (p. 5); trainings for internal staff (p. 10)

Key Metrics to Measure Progress on Equity

- collection and analysis of procurement and contracting data (p. 1)
- use of toolkit is embedded in staff’s work (p. 5)
- creation of new policies/initiatives, community outreach, and law enforcement actions that address relative harms to different market participants (p. 5)
- trainings for internal staff (p. 10)

Looking Ahead: Key Reflections for Plan Implementation

Where is the commission set up for success?	Clear impact goals and planned activities; matching activities to relative harms
Areas for future investment and growth	Create metrics related to equity in planned enforcement and procurement activities; track public feedback and concerns shared in open meetings; release milestones for programmatic equity analysis