

## Equity Action Plan Digest: US Interagency Council on Homelessness

Summarized by Madeline Baxter

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 Interagency Council on Homelessness's equity action plan is available at [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/Equity\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Equity_Action_Plan.pdf) (PDF).

### Overview

<b>What problem is the council trying to solve?</b>	To work toward equitable access to safe and affordable housing, thereby eliminating homelessness through racial equity, decriminalization, and inclusion efforts (pp. 3–8)
<b>Priority groups</b>	Agency employees (p. 6), people of color experiencing homelessness (p. 3), tribal sovereign nations (p. 1)
<b>Historic harm mentioned?</b>	Yes
<b>Partners in implementation</b>	Community engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal nations (pp. 3–8)
<b>Equity defined as</b>	Not defined beyond executive order

### Pillars and Principles of Equity

<b>Acknowledgement of past harm and present barriers</b>	Racial inequities in rates of homelessness (p. 3); limited ability to engage in tribal consultations (p. 4); racial disparities in senior-level positions (p. 6)
<b>Impact goals</b>	Develop a federal strategic plan (pp. 3–4); complete tribal consultations, convening, and outreach (p. 5)
<b>Actions and activities</b>	Engaged in nearly 100 listening sessions (p. 2) with stakeholders to provide insight into homelessness policies (p. 6); internal workplace survey to gain awareness of employees' opinions on the state of racial equity within the organization (p. 6)
<b>Accountability measures and approaches</b>	Oversight by the Office of the Executive Director (p. 4); public reports on federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness (p. 4); oversight of interagency working group (p. 5); agency-wide internal action plan (p. 6); progress reporting to chief of staff (p. 6); annual progress reports (p. 8)

**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](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Pathways%20to%20Equity%20at%20Scale%20Appendix_0.pdf).

## Types of Equity and Related Activities

<b>Procedural</b> (example: expanding language and translation services; simplifying the vendor application process)	Strengthening internal operations to identify areas where the council can model operational behaviors in advancing racial equity for partner agencies and communities (p. 1); developing an advisory group with tribal sovereign nations (p. 6); existing internal Racial Equity Action Team will continue to lead working group, craft departmental guidance, and strategize inclusive agency partnerships (p. 7)
<b>Distributional</b> (example: creating new procurement program)	Reestablishing the Interagency Working Group on American Indians and Alaskan Natives (p. 5); building a strategy to coordinate tribal homelessness policy and programs in the federal government (p. 5); developing a national convening on homelessness among Native Americans (p. 6)
<b>Structural</b> (example: policy change via proposing legislation related to an equity goal; changing organizational functions)	Discontinued the practice of relying on prior salary histories to set pay for prospective applicants (p. 2); required racial equity training as part of new employees' onboarding orientation process (p. 2); creation of new federal strategic plan (pp. 3–4); collecting data on homelessness by race, ethnicity, and geography (p. 4); learning circle on race, housing, and homelessness (p. 7); developing budget lines that include racial equity as standard practice (p. 7)

## Key Metrics to Measure Progress on Equity

- key findings analysis on Point-in-Time data, develop equity-centered goals in federal strategic plan (p. 4)
- types and number of staff community engagements (p. 5)
- technical assistance feedback from clients (p. 7)
- number of employees that participate in professional development opportunities on racial equity and cultural competency (p. 7)

## Looking Ahead: Key Reflections for Plan Implementation

Where is the council set up for success?	People impacted by homelessness are directly included in decisionmaking; equity action plan is aligned with agency-wide internal action plan; agency is creating federal strategic plan to ensure alignment toward equity goals
Areas for future investment and growth	Quantify progress metrics to ensure accountability, especially metrics related to outcomes for American Indian / Alaskan Native people; potential to expand the equity action plan beyond three focus areas when resources are available; connect with infrastructure grants and cross-agency initiatives that relate to economic development, to ensure that plans do not worsen homelessness