

2023 Annual WH Black Initiative Agency Plan: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission



2023 Annual WH Black Initiative Agency Plan

**White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity
for Black Americans**

Submission Instructions: By **March 1, 2024**, prepare and submit an electronic copy of your agency's 2023 Annual WH Black Initiative Agency Plan to the following office:

U. S. Department of Education
**White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity
for Black Americans**
WHBlackInitiative@ed.gov

The Initiative will submit your report to the Secretary of Education, the Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans (Initiative), and the Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing on Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans (as established in section 3 of [Executive Order 14050](#)).

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Federal Agency Name: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

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Office:	Submission Date:
Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR)	
Instructions: Please provide the following information as it pertains to your agency's implementation of Executive Order 14050. Be sure to include the appropriate data to support your submissions as applicable.	

(1) Describe the agency's efforts to ensure that Federal programs and initiatives administered by the Department and other agencies are meeting the educational needs of Black Americans, including efforts to incorporate best practices into appropriate discretionary programs where the agency sees fit and as permitted by law.

Black Americans, Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are encouraged to participate in all the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) regulatory planning and decision-making processes open to the public, and to participate in the education investment programs and activities described in the following paragraphs. The NRC actively partners and builds constructive relationships with Federal agencies, educational institutions, public-private entities, community-based organizations, small businesses, professional associations, and other groups to ensure that a wide variety of communities participate in the agency's programs, activities, and career and funding opportunities. The following paragraphs describe how the NRC supported Black Americans during fiscal year (FY) 2023 and FY 2024.

RECRUITMENT, OUTREACH, AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Recruitment Strategies and Outreach Initiatives/Efforts

The NRC aims to improve diversity in the workforce pipeline, and in the current workforce through strategic recruitment, effective collaboration, and outreach to a broad population. The following are examples of the agency's efforts in 2023:

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- The Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) and the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR) developed the NRC's annual recruitment calendar jointly with other Federal employers, schools and universities, and other groups, in order to maximize community-level outreach and engagement.
- OCHCO and SBCR work continuously to increase diversity in the recruitment pipeline by leveraging NRC's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Committees, the Diversity Management Inclusion Council, the Diversity Management Advisory Committee, affinity groups (e.g., the NRC's chapter of Blacks in Government), and other committees and groups (e.g., #HIRENRC) to raise awareness, tap into networks, and reinforce the NRC's focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Collaboration with these groups also serves to broaden the NRC's outreach to minority serving institutions (MSIs) (e.g., PBIs, and Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs), HBCU's, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other underrepresented populations).
- OCHCO partnered with HBCU Connect, a social network for HBCU students and alumni that provides a platform for networking, professional opportunities, educational opportunities, and connections with hiring organizations. OCHCO posted job opportunities to HBCU Connect, advertising on its website, and sent an email blast to students about opportunities at the NRC.
- In FY 2023–2024, the NRC's Minority-Serving Institutions Program (MSIP), administered by SBCR, conducted outreach and sent notices to MSIs of NRC job openings posted on USAJOBS. These included positions for Law Clerk; Nuclear Systems Engineer/Scientist; Project Engineer (RIDP) (Regions I, II, and III); Administrative Judge; Administrative Judge (Technical) (Part Time-Intermittent); Public Notice for Direct Hire (Engineering/Physical Science); Public Notice for Direct Hire (Acquisitions); Public Notice for Direct Hire—Information Technology (IT) Specialist (INFOSEC); Reliability and Risk Analyst—Direct Hire Authority; Public Notice for Direct Hire (Reactor Systems Engineer); and Administrative Assistant. The NRC also accepted resumes from individuals with disabilities (Schedule A) and veterans.
- The MSIP made direct personal contact with, or sent notifications to, a broad range of organizations, universities, and colleges focused on meeting the needs of Black communities. These included, but were not limited to, the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans; the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities; the Quality Education for Minorities Network; the National Environmental Justice Conference Initiative; Lincoln University; Lane College; Jarvis Christian College; Morehouse College; Alabama A&M University; Howard University; the University of the District of Columbia; Harris-Stowe State University; Florida A&M University; Fayetteville State University; Bethune-Cookman University; Grambling State University; Virginia State University; Alcorn State University; Albany State University; Tuskegee University; North Carolina A&T State University; Fort Valley State University; Tennessee State University; Morgan State University; and Texas Southern University.

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University Champions Program

The NRC developed the University Champions Program to strengthen its relationship with universities, as part of the agency's overall human capital strategy. University Champions are NRC staff members who establish a high-level presence on university campuses and maintain contact with university officials and career centers. The University Champions Program increases the opportunities available to students and new graduates, while also giving the NRC access to substantial talent pools. Examples of University Champion activities include the following:

- participate in meetings with engineering and science department heads, professors, and career counselors to discuss student and entry-level employment opportunities in disciplines of interest to the NRC
- providing information on NRC grants, promoting the NRC as an employer of choice, participating in career fairs, conducting classroom technical presentations, conducting NRC information sessions for student organizations, and reviewing resumes for vacancies at the agency, including the NRC's Temporary Summer Student Program
- serving on panels or technical advisory committees on campus, serving as a guest lecturer or speaker, and developing webinars and hosting resume clinics

In FY 2023, OCHCO recruited new employees to become University Champions and expand outreach to MSIs and other underrepresented groups. Training was held for all University Champions to ensure alignment on the program's purpose and expectations.

As a result, OCHCO has added 10 new MSIs to its outreach and recruitment event list. The NRC now has volunteer University Champions at the following HBCUs: Alabama A&M University, Hampton University, Florida A&M University, Fort Valley State University, Grambling State University, Morgan State University, North Carolina A&T State University, South Carolina State University, Southern University and A&M College, Tuskegee University, and Wilberforce University.

NextGen

The agency's NextGen cohort is a group of NRC staff members who have volunteered to help attract, recruit, and retain the next generation of nuclear regulatory leaders, to better position the NRC to support future nuclear energy demands. The NextGen cohort helps coordinate events between staff members and summer interns, fosters workplace engagement, and participates in internal/external networking opportunities to increase the NRC's presence in local communities and at recruitment events. The NextGen cohort leads efforts

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to identify gaps and solutions for optimizing recruitment of the next generation of regulators. The cohort also helps the agency identify and address its needs as the NRC and its workload evolve.

Total Annual Recruitment and Outreach Events

In FY 2023, the NRC participated in 55 recruitment events that were identified in the formal annual recruitment schedule. Of the 40 campus-based events among these, 11 took place at the following HBCUs: Alabama A&M University, Howard University, Tennessee State University, Florida Memorial University, Fort Valley State University, Jackson State University, Lincoln University, Morgan State University, North Carolina A&T State University, South Carolina State University, and Southern University and A&M College. Notably, the NRC has had a long-lasting partnership with Fort Valley State University (FVSU), with staff members attending the annual FVSU Career Day and participating in the Cooperative Developmental Energy Program. FVSU has served as a pipeline for NRC health physicists since the early 2000s.

In-Person Career Expo

On May 11, 2023, the NRC conducted an in-person career expo at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center. This event provided hiring opportunities for several NRC offices, including on-the-spot interviews and letters of intent to hire (where applicable). Positions the NRC was seeking to fill included, but were not limited to, Administrative Assistants; Correspondence Analysts; Information Specialists; Health Physicists; Human Resources Specialists; Intelligence Analysts; International Relations Specialists; IT Specialists; Cybersecurity Specialists; Technical Assistants; Financial Management Specialists; Engineers (General, Electronics, Fire Protection, Fuel Cycle, Materials, Metallurgist, Mechanical, Nuclear, Operations, Reactor); Reactor Inspectors; Physical Scientists; Security Specialists; Cost, Budget, and Financial Analysts; Instructors; Risk and Reliability Analysts; Emergency Preparedness Coordinators and Specialists; Program and Project Managers; Legal Interns; Licensing Assistants; Management Analysts, and more. The MSIP sent notification of the NRC's career expo to the universities, colleges, and other organizations mentioned above.

Other Partnerships and Engagement with Federal Agencies, Education Institutions, and Groups

NRC staff members at all levels support the NRC's efforts to produce a diverse skilled workforce. Some examples are described below:

- NRC staff members partnered with the U.S. Department of Energy and the American Nuclear Society to facilitate knowledge and skill transfer to HBCU students. A resident inspector engaged with dual-degree engineering students at Morehouse College and invited them to the American Nuclear Society's student conference in April 2023, providing them with exposure to and involvement in the nuclear industry.

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- NRC staff members participated in the National Society of Black Engineers Annual Convention, which had over 10,000 engineering and physical science students in attendance.
- NRC staff members participated in the National Society of Black Physicists.
- NRC division managers provided active leadership and mentorship to several organizations, such as the NRC chapter of Blacks in Government. Staff members also participated in the Blacks in Government National Training Institute.
- On April 11, 2023, NRC regional staff members participated in Science Careers in Search of Women, an event for high school students, at Argonne National Laboratory. During the event, staff members interfaced with over 100 high school students.
- An NRC licensing officer served as the Montgomery County Science Fair Coordinator. Thirteen other NRC staff members also volunteered, reviewing over 24 middle school and 127 high school projects. They ultimately selected 19 students to be recognized at NRC Headquarters on April 26, 2023.
- NRC staff members participated in a North Carolina community college career day event, presenting opportunities within the NRC, sharing their experiences, and offering advice on career growth and development.

EMPLOYMENT

2023 New Hires

In 2023, the NRC hired 261 new employees, of whom 11 graduated from HBCUs: 1 from Bowie State University, a human resources specialist; 1 from Central State University, a health physicist; 3 from Hampton University, 2 health physicists and 1 project manager; 1 from Morgan State University, a personnel security specialist; 2 from North Carolina A&T State University, a reactor inspector and a project engineer; 1 from Southern University and A&M College, a project manager; and 2 from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, an audit manager and a human resources specialist. There was also one employee who graduated from a Federal dually designated institution (a PBI/Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI)).

TRAINING AND PLACEMENT PROGRAMS

Temporary Summer Student Program

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A key strategy for improving diversity in the NRC's workforce pipeline is the agency's Temporary Summer Student Program (TSSP), which offers internships to students in various fields (including but not limited to engineering, science, IT, accounting, and business) who maintain a minimum GPA of 2.85. In summer 2023, 74 student interns onboarded, of whom four attended HBCUs (Morgan State University, Spelman College, Howard University, and Southern University and A&M College). A goal for FY 2024 is to increase HBCU student participation in the program.

The TSSP takes place between May and August.

The vacancy announcement is posted on USAJOBS each year from early September through mid-October.

The starting salary is \$33,113.60 (GG 04-09). More information is available at <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/employment/students-summer-faq.html>.

Student Cooperative Education Program

Through the Student Cooperative Education (Co-op) Program, the NRC hires student trainees who will fill positions at the agency upon graduation. Student co-op appointments are initially established as 13-month terms rather than as permanent appointments, with flexibility to extend in appropriate increments (typically 1 year or less), for up to 120 days after the student's expected graduation. This ensures that students remain eligible for Federal benefits, and it lets the NRC convert successful co-op program participants to term or permanent positions. When implementing co-op appointments, the NRC is committed to these future conversions. In 2023, all four TSSP students from HBCUs were converted to the Co-op Program at the end of their internships. The NRC's high conversion rate has helped make its student employment programs a valuable pipeline to meet long-term agency needs.

Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network (NRAN) Program

The NRC's Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network (NRAN) is a paid, full-time 18-month training program for outstanding engineers and scientists who are graduating with a B.S., M.S., or Ph.D degree. The program is designed to develop well-rounded regulators by focusing on skill development in multiple areas, through the support of mentors and NRC leaders across the agency. Participants complete three to four apprenticeships with technical experts to build a fundamental skill set to support future career growth. The NRAN program's goal is to recruit, hire, develop, and retain recent college graduates with science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degrees to fill critical skill gaps and projected vacancies in regulatory positions. The first NRAN cohort started in 2020, with future cohorts launching every 2 years. The first cohort consisted of 23 individuals, including 4 students from HBCUs (Alabama A&M University and South Carolina State

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University). The second cohort was recruited between September 2, 2021, and December 21, 2021, and began training in July 2022. To increase participation from underrepresented groups, the NRC conducted a virtual information session on the NRAN for students at MSIs, including HBCUs.

In 2023, OCHCO led 25 NRAN employees through their last round of apprenticeships. Several NRAN employees participated in recruitment trips for the agency to provide diverse representation at universities. For the 2022/2023 NRAN cohort, the NRC used diverse tiger teams for the interview and selection processes. OCHCO hired 25 entry-level staff members for the NRAN in 2024, of whom 44 percent are nonwhite, 44 percent are female, and 16 percent are individuals with disabilities. Five members (20 percent) of the 2024 cohort are students graduating from MSIs. More information about the NRAN program can be found at <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/employment/nran-faq.html>.

Honor Law Graduate Program

Each year, the NRC selects a small number of graduating law students or judicial law clerks to serve in the agency's Honor Law Graduate Program (HLGP). The HLGP is the primary mechanism for hiring entry-level attorneys at the NRC. During the open period for the HLGP vacancy, the staff of the NRC's Office of the General Counsel (OGC) communicated directly about the program with the National Black Law Students Association, which includes Howard University School of Law. OCHCO also posted an announcement for the HLGP on HBCU Connect, a social network for HBCU students and alumni.

In December 2023, the MSIP reached out to a number of organizations and educational institutions requesting that they circulate an announcement to law schools and others about the Summer Intern Law Clerk vacancy at OGC. This internship opportunity for first- and second-year law students was posted on USAJOBS, with opening and closing dates of December 13, 2023, and January 16, 2024; however, the NRC announced that once 75 applications were received, the vacancy would close effective midnight on the day the limit was reached. The MSIP sent notifications of the announcement to stakeholders, including PBIs and HBCUs.

On January 29, 2024, OGC and MSIP staff members participated in a virtual meeting with a second-year law student from Howard University's School of Law. They discussed the MSIP's goals and objectives, OGC's HLGP and summer law clerk positions, legal program opportunities in other NRC offices and the possibility of establishing a partnership between the NRC and the Howard Energy and Environmental Law Society (HEELS). The purpose of HEELS is to (1) encourage an understanding of environmental concerns on the Howard campus and in the broader community, (2) prepare law students for careers in environmental law, energy law, and related areas of law, and (3) identify the intersections of environmental law and other legal areas including energy, natural resources, animal welfare, food, climate change, public health, sustainable development, and human rights. OGC attended and shared information about legal job

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opportunities with a larger audience during the job fair sponsored by Howard University on February 26th in the Holy Cross Foyer at the Howard Law School campus. The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel also shared information about its clerkship program.

A review of NRC's workforce data revealed that there were no PBI or HBCU students among the four employees hired through the HLGP in 2023. However, the NRC anticipates that in FY 2024, thanks to continued outreach and establishment of recent partnerships, a larger number of PBI and HBCU students will participate in the HLGP application process.

GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Grants Administered by the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

In FY 2023, the NRC awarded \$17.8 million through the University Nuclear Leadership Program (UNLP). The UNLP program provides grants to academic institutions to support education in nuclear science, nuclear engineering, and related fields. The program provides funding for university research and development (R&D) projects, fellowships, scholarships, and distinguished faculty advancement awards. The NRC's Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (RES) issues two Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcements each year, one for R&D and one for educational grant awards. The NRC invites R&D projects that complement its current research portfolio and that help the NRC prepare for upcoming challenges. The NRC seeks projects that provide a variety of direct and indirect, near- and longer-term benefits. Research areas of particular interest are identified in the R&D NOFO.

RES also issues an educational NOFO for scholarships, fellowships, trade school and community college scholarships and distinguished faculty advancement. Scholarship grants are awarded for a 3-year period, in amounts up to \$200,000. Fellowship grants are awarded for a 4-year period, in amounts up to \$400,000. Distinguished Faculty Advancement grants are awarded for a 4-year period, in amounts up to \$600,000. Trade School and Community College grants are awarded for a 2-year period, in amounts up to \$150,000. There were no grants awarded to PBIs or HBCUs in FY 2023 under either of the UNLP NOFOs. Both the R&D and UNLP grants are fully funded upon award.

In FY 2024, the NRC anticipates awarding \$11.7 million in R&D grants and \$8.2 million in education grants, of which RES has recommended an award to Florence-Darlington Technical College (PBI) for a Trade School Scholarship in the amount of \$149,200 to conduct a project entitled, "*The Florence-Darlington Technical College's (FDTC) Power-Up Nuclear Scholarship Program (Power-Up).*"

Minority-Serving Institutions Grants Program

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The NRC also provides educational funding through the Minority-Serving Institutions Grants Program (MSIGP), which is administered by SBCR. In 2022, the NRC reinstated the MSIGP to address challenges faced by MSIs (including PBIs) and HBCUs in applying for NRC funding. In FY 2023, the MSIGP issued four grants to MSIs; however, these did not include any PBIs or HBCUs, because no PBIs or HBCUs had submitted applications for the available funding.

In 2024, the NRC anticipates awarding \$1,799,371 through the MSIGP. SBCR has recommended five proposals for grant awards: two to HBCUs and three to HSIs. North Carolina A&T State University (an HBCU) has been recommended for a \$600,000 fellowship award to support a project entitled “Participation in Nuclear Engineering (PINE): Research and Education Concentration of Mechanical Engineering Emphasizing Cooling, Safety, Radiation Shielding, Protection and Reliability.” South Carolina State University (an HBCU) was recommended for a \$199,938 scholarship award to support a project entitled “South Carolina State University—Nuclear Engineering Program Scholarship Support 2024.”

CONTRACTS

The NRC contracts for services related to IT and cybersecurity, corporate support, research, and engineering. The agency provides an annual forecast of contract opportunities, including opportunities open to institutions of higher education such as HBCUs. Examples of areas in which the NRC contracts with universities (and may do so in the future) include systematic human performance data collection, motor-operated valve training, alternative dispute resolution neutral services, guidance for evacuation time estimate studies, research on degrading under dry storage and transportation conditions, and technical assistance for the reactor and environmental programs. In FY 2023, the NRC awarded 17 contracts to institutions of higher education, totaling \$13,268,548.58, through open competition, the Simplified Acquisition Process, and sole source methods. However, none of these contracts were awarded to HBCUs specifically.

The NRC’s current Global Infrastructure and Development Acquisition (GLINDA) Blanket Procurement Acquisition (BPA) has six awardees, two of which are small businesses. The BPA has a 6-year period of performance and an estimated value of \$679 million. It provides the NRC with a wide range of IT infrastructure and application maintenance and operation services. For example, Symposit LLC (a GLINDA subcontractor) is a Small Business Administration (SBA)-certified small, disadvantaged business and SBA-certified 8(a) firm that provides modern IT solutions. Symposit participates in the National Institutes of Health Path to Excellence and Innovation Program, which offers opportunities for partnerships between Government contractors and HBCUs. In addition, Symposit actively recruits HBCUs from the Washington, DC, metropolitan area for consideration as Federal Government contractor support.

Similarly, Immersive Concepts is an SBA-certified 8(a) firm and HUBZone Certified Business that provides professional services to the Federal Government and the public and private sectors and is a prime contractor on three multimillion-dollar NRC contracts. Immersive

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Concepts has a memorandum of understanding with an HBCU to hire its undergraduates and to pay students' tuition for graduate degrees or certifications; the firm is actively discussing a similar partnership with another HBCU. The contract through which Immersive Concepts provides multimedia services to the NRC includes support from an HBCU graduate who recently received a master's degree in IT from Bowie State University. Moreover, to support its public- and private-sector contracts, Immersive Concepts employs graduates and current students from several HBCUs, including Morgan State University, Howard University, Florida A&M University, Bowie State University, Spelman College, North Carolina A&T State University, Tennessee State University, and Virginia State University. The NRC's MSIP is partnering with Immersive Concepts to increase opportunities for future participation by HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs (including PBIs).

BEST PRACTICES THAT IMPACT BLACK AMERICANS AND BLACK COMMUNITIES

The following are examples of the best practices the NRC followed in FY 2023:

- In support of the NRC's hiring initiatives, OCHCO conducted four hiring manager workshops to enhance knowledge of the agency's hiring process and noncompetitive hiring options.
- The NRC's Office of Public Affairs launched social media campaigns to highlight career opportunities at the NRC.
- In fall 2023, the NRC issued a newsletter entitled "ReActions: Career Opportunities at NRC," which highlighted the many educational and employment programs offered by the agency for both students and mid-career individuals. The newsletter is being widely circulated.
- OCHCO and SBCR continue to use data collected through various systems (e.g., electronic surveys) to inform the NRC's recruitment and hiring efforts. Data are routinely analyzed to identify progress as well as opportunities to enhance diversity, inclusion, and engagement.
- NRC staff members participated in courses at the National Judicial College and the Administrative Conference of the United States, including a series on agency best practices for increasing accessibility to agency adjudications for underprivileged communities.

(2) Describe how the applicable agency has and will decrease barriers to participation of Black Americans in Federal employment and student engagement opportunities.

SBCR administers the NRC's civil rights programs (see the response to question 4 for details). SBCR oversees the barrier analysis that the NRC conducts to comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC's) Management Directive 715 (MD-715), which requires the agency to conduct a thorough barrier analysis of the workforce, involve senior managers in the barrier analysis process

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(including development and implementation of action plans), conduct root-cause investigations, and report to the EEOC on the agency's progress.

The NRC partners at the community level with employers, schools and universities, and public and private groups to improve education and employment opportunities and the community conditions that affect employability. This involves outreach and recruitment activities related to the NRC's training, development, and career placement programs (e.g., the TSSP, the NRAN, the HLGP, the Co-op Program, and noncompetitive and competitive hires).

The NRC has processes in place to identify and eliminate barriers for PBIs and HBCUs. For example, SBCR concurs on the agency's annual recruitment schedule, participates in pre- and post-recruitment activities, and coordinates efforts with the University Champions to ensure inclusion of PBIs, HBCUs and other groups in campus outreach efforts. SBCR reviews recruitment and applicant flow data to assess the effectiveness of the NRC's recruitment and outreach efforts and applicant selections and provides input on future efforts. SBCR also monitors tracked sources (e.g., recruitment schedules, outreach efforts, the Inclusive Diversity Strategic Plan activities reports, agency workforce assessments, and statistical data tables) to identify possible barriers related to EEO. Additionally, SBCR monitors and coordinates efforts involving the NRC's education investment pre- and post-award grants administration processes to ensure fairness, equality, and compliance with applicable regulations.

OCHCO seeks feedback from SBCR, University Champions, and other involved agency staff on how to enhance the agency's recruitment and outreach programs and assess potential barriers to building a diverse talent pipeline. A survey tool has been developed and is currently provided to all NRC employees who participate in a recruitment or outreach event to gather their feedback on the success of the event and to identify challenges or areas for improvement.

(3) Describe how the applicable agency can address challenges facing Black students and higher education institutions that serve Black students, such as PBIs and HBCUs, brought on by or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This section also may include how the applicable agency engages and supports Black students at PWIs, MSIs, and community colleges.

The NRC partners at the community level with employers, schools and universities, and public and private groups to improve education and employment opportunities and the community conditions that affect employability. This involves refining strategies and processes, monitoring and evaluating performance outcomes and continuing to partner with PBIs, HBCUs, and other organizations to develop a diverse skilled workforce pipeline.

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The NRC will continue to explore ways to alleviate challenges PBIs and HBCUs face in applying and competing for grants, continue outreach efforts to solicit volunteers from PBIs and HBCUs to serve as grant proposal reviewers, and promote PBI and HBCU participation in NRC programs and funding opportunities (e.g., grants, contracts, cooperative agreements).

(4) Describe how the agency's Office of Civil Rights, if applicable, can address discriminatory policies and practices that limit educational and economic opportunity for Black Americans.

In accordance with Title 29 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (29 CFR) 1614.102(a), the NRC, like other Federal agencies, is required to "maintain a continuing affirmative program to promote equal opportunity and to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices and policies." Under subsection (a)(3), the agency is required to "[conduct] a continuing campaign to eradicate every form of prejudice or discrimination from [its] personnel policies, practices and working conditions." Agencies are also mandated to follow guidance issued by the EEOC, including the instructions in MD-715. MD-715, Section II, Element B, Subsection B1, states, "The EEO Director is responsible for the implementation of the affirmative employment program, including national and regional EEO plans, reports, and other matters to improve EEO program efficiency and/or eliminate identified barriers to the realization of equality of opportunity."

Additionally, 29 CFR 1614.102(a)(13) requires Federal agencies to "[participate] at the community level with other employers, with schools and universities and with other public and private groups in cooperative action to improve employment opportunities and community conditions that affect employability."

The NRC has delegated authority to SBCR to administer the agency's civil rights programs, including the Affirmative Employment and Diversity Management (AEDM) Program and MSIP.

Throughout FY 2023, SBCR/AEDM conducted focused outreach efforts, using MD-715 reports and plans, to promote interest in and increase office-level use of information and data analysis as a basis for operational decision-making. Such efforts help foster diversity, participation, and inclusion of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities, both in the NRC workforce and workplace and in all aspects of NRC operations.

(5) Please provide any other information or data the applicable agency determines is relevant to promoting educational opportunities for Black Americans.

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SBCR administers the MSIP, through which the NRC staff builds and maintains partnerships with MSIs and assists with efforts to provide support to these institutions. The MSIP currently supports partnerships with HBCUs, HSIs, and TCUs, as well as other MSIs such as PBIs, AANAPISIs, and Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs). The MSIP was approved in 2006 under legislative authority of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPA), section 651(c)(4), "Partnership Programs with Institutions of Higher Education"; EPA section 622, "Nuclear Regulatory Commission Scholarship and Fellowship Program"; and a host of presidential executive orders directed towards HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs (e.g., PBIs, HSIs, AANAPISIs, and NASNTIs). The MSIP was established to develop partnership programs to promote a diverse skilled workforce pipeline; improve education and employment opportunities and conditions that affect employability; and broaden participation by underrepresented groups in NRC occupations, programs, and activities. The MSIP's measurable objectives are to assist MSIs in their efforts to (1) achieve academic excellence, (2) develop their human capital (e.g., faculty and students), (3) build capability, capacity, and infrastructure, (4) participate in Federal, State, local, and public-private programs and activities, (5) gain knowledge and skills needed to compete for and win contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and other resources, and (6) develop a diverse skilled workforce to support the nation, the NRC, and the industry. The MSIP serves as the NRC's liaison between internal and external partners.

In 2017, as part of Project Aim, an agency effort that recommended reductions in corporate support resources, the NRC discontinued the MSIGP. In 2022, the NRC reinstated the MSIGP to address challenges faced by MSIs, HBCUs, and TCUs in applying for NRC funding. While the MSIGP issued four grants in FY 2023, none were awarded to PBIs or HBCUs, because no PBIs or HBCUs had submitted applications for the available funds. Therefore, SBCR's MSIGP staff is conducting outreach to create awareness and encourage participation in the MSIGP. For example, during the 2023 National HBCU Week Conference, an MSIGP staff member served as a workshop panelist, with the goals of (1) promoting HBCU participation in MSIGP's FY 2024 funding opportunities, and (2) soliciting HBCU and PBI faculty to serve as volunteer grant panel reviewers, so that HBCUs and PBIs can gain familiarity with the NRC's grant processes. An OCHCO staff member also participated in a webinar hosted by the U.S. National Science Foundation's Resources and Evaluation Center, where they served as a panelist and shared information about the NRC's jobs, programs, and grant funding opportunities.

The NRC has also broadened the eligibility criteria in its NOFO for scholarships to include community colleges legislatively authorized to award 4-year bachelor's degrees. This was done as a strategy to meet workforce demands, increase access to educational and career advancement opportunities, address affordability, and raise attainment rates. The NRC is starting to recognize a return on its newly implemented change strategies.

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(6) Please provide any other information or data the applicable agency determines is relevant to promoting economic opportunities for Black Americans.

See the response to question 5.

(7) Describe any progress your agency has made toward advancing or achieving the mission of the Executive Order and the Initiative in the past year.

The NRC recognizes that its implementation of change strategies has resulted in significant progress towards achieving the mission of Executive Order 14050. These strategies include recruiting University Champions to support additional outreach activities and interactions with PBIs and HBCUs; increasing representation of PBI and HBCU faculty on grant review panels; promoting interest and participation by PBIs and HBCUs in programs and funding opportunities; encouraging partnerships between educational institutions by incorporating rating incentives into the grant application process; and pursuing partnerships to promote opportunities at the NRC (e.g., educational, employment, and funding opportunities) and build capability, capacity, and infrastructure at PBIs and HBCUs. All of the NRC programs, activities, and initiatives described in the response to question 1 of this document are showing measurable performance results that align with the intent of the executive order.

(8) Describe how the agency will utilize outreach and partnerships to improve access to educational equity and economic opportunities for Black Americans.

The NRC partners at the community level with employers, schools and universities, and public and private groups to improve education and employment opportunities and the community conditions that affect employability. These partnerships are crucial to the success of the NRC's recruitment and outreach efforts; onboarding, training, development, and placement programs; and funding opportunities (including summer hires and the TSSP, the NRAN, the HLGP, the Co-op Program, noncompetitive and competitive hires, grants, and contracts).

The NRC relies heavily on the change strategies, communication methods, employee engagement methods, and internal and external partnerships described in the response to question 1 to measure and improve access to educational and economic opportunities for Black Americans, including students and faculty at PBIs and HBCUs.

The NRC is continuing to explore ways to alleviate challenges PBIs and HBCUs face in applying for agency grants. The agency pursues a wide range of outreach efforts, solicits volunteers from PBIs and HBCUs to serve as grant proposal reviewers, and actively promotes PBI and HBCU participation in NRC employment and funding opportunities (e.g., grants and contracts). For example, in FY 2023, the NRC

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held two virtual exchange events covering topics that affect small business capital and Federal/NRC contracting and compliance. While the NRC is unable to verify PBI or HBCU attendance, both events were open to the public. The NRC will continue to (1) schedule counseling sessions to explain the resources available under the Small Business Toolbox and how to use them effectively, (2) provide information on Federal procurement opportunities, mentor/protégé and support programs, important things to know and do, how to get on the U.S. General Services Administration contractor vendor list, and best practices for doing business with the Federal Government, (3) explore contractors' recruitment practices and participation in HBCU contracting programs during market research for upcoming agency contract opportunities, and (4) showcase the services offered by the Small Business Program to help HBCUs identify and respond to contract opportunities. Additionally, the SBCR staff has implemented a support helpline, available during normal business hours, which provides assistance with using the resources in the Small Business Toolbox.

(9) Address any changes to agency policies and practices that the agency deems necessary or appropriate to ensure that barriers to federal resources and opportunities are addressed and removed.

The NRC conducts ongoing assessments as part of its MD-715 compliance requirements. SBCR's AEDM staff monitors all aspects of NRC operations (e.g., recruitment, outreach, hiring, promotion, advancement, training and development, incentives, retention, and separations). The AEDM staff also monitors the agency's pre- and post-award grant administration processes to ensure equal opportunity and equity in all operating phases. Additionally, AEDM staff coordinates efforts with the Small Business Program to enhance contracting opportunities.

In 2021–2022, the NRC recognized that a significant challenge existed in relation to its RES-administered educational and R&D grants: The R&D and UNLP solicitations both focus on nuclear science, engineering, and technology, as well as related disciplines capable of supporting the design, construction, operation, and regulation of nuclear facilities and the safe handling of nuclear materials. However, many MSIs (including PBIs), HBCUs, and TCUs offer only broad STEM programs that do not cover these specialized disciplines, which means they cannot compete for these NRC funds. To address this problem, the NRC has enacted the following measures:

- In 2021, the NRC expanded the program scope of both RES NOFOs to provide a more level playing field for MSIs (including PBIs), HBCUs, and TCUs.
- To increase participation from MSIs, HBCUs, and TCUs, the NRC added an evaluation criterion to incentivize minority partnerships. During the competitive proposal review process, the NRC awards up to 10 discretionary points to grant applications whose research proposal includes a partnership arrangement with one or more MSIs/HBCUs/TCUs.

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- The NRC encourages faculty members from MSIs, HBCUs, and TCUs to volunteer as proposal reviewers to gain familiarity with the agency and the competitive grant process.
- SBCR, RES, the Acquisition Management Division, and OGC collaborated to broaden the eligibility criteria for scholarships under the agency's FY 2023 UNLP NOFO, to include community colleges. The NRC adopted this change after finding that approximately 24 States have legislatively authorized their community colleges to award bachelor's degrees as a way to meet workforce demands, increase access to educational and career advancement opportunities, address affordability, and raise attainment rates. Additionally, emerging research suggests that community college bachelor's degrees may better serve a diverse student population.

Also, in late 2021, the NRC recognized that its discontinuation of the MSIGP in 2017, as part of the corporate support reductions recommended by Project Aim, had left a significant gap. Over the years (since 2006), the MSIGP had helped numerous MSIs and HBCUs provide STEM education, conduct projects and activities, and develop infrastructure, capacity-building, and experiential learning opportunities that would inspire and inform the next generation of the NRC's workforce, including scientists, engineers, and innovators. In spring 2022, the Commission directed the NRC staff to reconstitute the MSIGP.

(10) Please include any other information that you think would be pertinent for the Initiative to know about the work your agency is doing to make an impact and/or support the educational and economic advancement of Black Americans.

The NRC is proud to have been recognized for many years, including 2023, as a "Best of the Best" supporter of Black Americans by the *Black Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE) Journal*: <https://diversitycomm.net/black-eeo-journal/top-government-law-enforcement-agencies/>.

The NRC is continuing to increase its hiring and expects to hire 400 people during FY 2024. The NRC builds its talent pipeline using three recruitment programs focused on current college students and recent graduates: the TSSP (for summer interns), the NRAN, and the Co-op Program. The NRC is also committed to increasing the number of entry-level hires, both through formal training programs such as the NRAN and through non-NRAN positions. Although progress has been made, additional efforts are needed to increase diversity within the NRC's recruitment programs.

In FY 2023–2024, the NRC plans to extend outreach efforts to MSI/HBCU/PBI law schools (e.g., the University of the District of Columbia's David A. Clarke School of Law, Howard University School of Law, the Florida A&M University College of Law, and Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law), to promote interest in career development and employment opportunities for attorneys at the NRC (e.g., the HLGP, legal intern programs, and law clerk positions), as well as the aforementioned funding opportunities.

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The NRC appreciates past support from the White House Black Initiative. We look forward to continued support in our efforts to reach the desired populations and achieve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the NRC's workforce, training and development programs, and acquisition of grants and contracts.