



# Strengthening Social & Economic Development: A Spotlight Report

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*Academy Staff 2021*

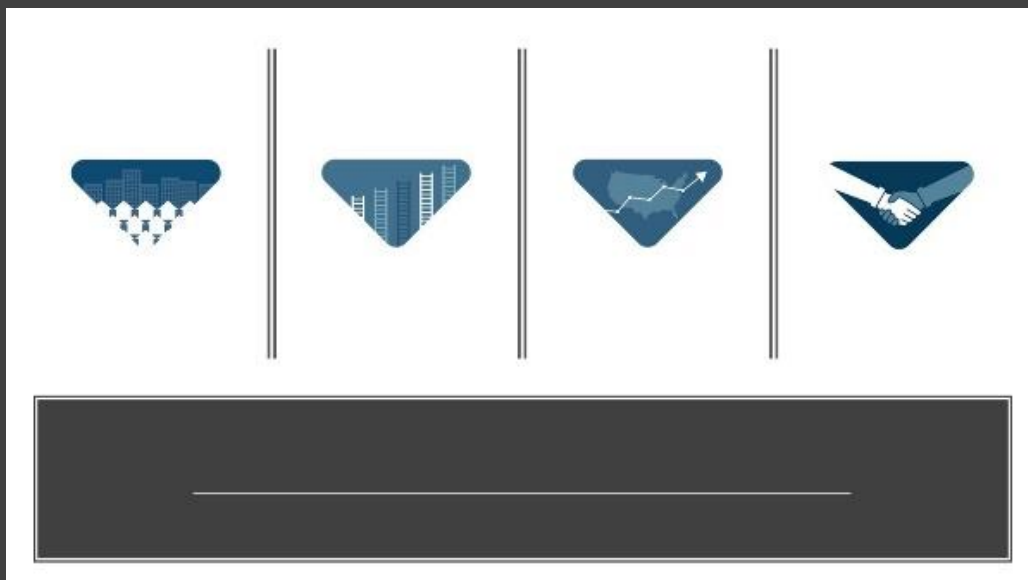
*Working Paper:*

**Foster Social Equity**

**Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work**

**Build Resilient Communities**

**Advance the Nation's Long-Term Fiscal Health**



## Spotlight Report on Strengthening Social & Economic Development:

### Introduction

In November 2019, the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) announced 12 Grand Challenges in Public Administration after a year of intense research under the guidance of a Steering Committee from across the field.

**Table 1. Grand Challenges in Public Administration**

Focus Area	Grand Challenge
<i>Managing Technological Changes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure Data Security and Privacy Rights of Individuals</li><li>• Make Government AI Ready</li></ul>
<i>Protecting &amp; Advancing Democracy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect Electoral Integrity and Enhance Voter Participation</li><li>• Modernize and Reinvigorate the Public Service</li><li>• Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement</li><li>• Advance National Interests in a Changing Global Context</li></ul>
<i>Strengthening Social &amp; Economic Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster Social Equity</li><li>• Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work</li><li>• Build Resilient Communities</li><li>• Advance the Nation's Long-Term Fiscal Health</li></ul>
<i>Ensuring Environmental Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Steward Natural Resources and Address Climate Change</li><li>• Create Modern Water Systems for Safe and Sustainable Use</li></ul>

This spotlight report focuses on the 4 Grand Challenges relevant to Strengthening Social & Economic Development:

- Foster Social Equity
- Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work
- Advance the Nation's Long-Term Fiscal Health
- Build Resilient Communities

In 2020, a group of Academy Fellows developed action plans to advise the Administration in 2021 on key near-term administrative actions to address the Grand Challenges. Within the topic

of strengthening social and economic development, the Fellows produced action plans on fostering social equity, connecting individuals to meaningful work, building resilient communities, and advancing the nation's long-term fiscal health. This working paper follows up on those reports by documenting important actions being taken at various government levels to address these challenges. This spotlight report is a work-in-progress that will be expanded upon in 2022, especially through a greater focus on non-federal actions.

## The Current State

The United States is facing unprecedented stresses as a nation—ones that ultimately demand collective action, trust, and community-building across the public and private sectors. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country was forced to grapple with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Many members of the community have been living through immense loss, rising unemployment, and housing and food insecurity. As the United States wrestles with these complex issues, it must:

- Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into policies and make a more equitable nation;
- Reduce food insecurity;
- Provide meaningful work for all Americans;
- Rebuild intergovernmental relations and resiliency in communities; and
- Build a stronger fiscal foundation.

## FOSTER SOCIAL EQUITY

In the United States, people have continually advocated for their right to be treated as equal to their peers. Even with policy changes and paradigm shifts, however, many of these inequities are still retained in laws, institutions, and culture. The nation continues to face significant racial, gender, and economic disparities in such areas as criminal justice, healthcare, education, environmental impacts, housing, social services, and transportation.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed many of the inequities that continue to exist in our society. For example, people from certain racial backgrounds who were also low income and/or were disabled have been at higher risk of dying of COVID-19 during the pandemic. Although the COVID-19 vaccines and tests were free to the public, the virus hit certain communities harder than others. This speaks to the unequal treatment and access to healthcare people have in the country. As of November 2021, health officials, governments, and communities have made significant progress in combatting the virus, but the Delta variant is a continued threat, and new strains of the virus could emerge to cause a new deadly wave. With unvaccinated individuals most at-risk for this new wave of variants, vaccination is vital.<sup>1</sup> Though there is new evidence that shows the racial gaps in the distribution of the vaccine are shrinking, Black and Hispanic Americans remain more likely to be unvaccinated when compared to white Americans, which means they are at higher risk of contracting the virus.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic also limited

many people's ability to work, reducing their standard of living and increasing food insecurity in many families.

While people spent months in quarantine, the country witnessed the murder of George Floyd through cell phone footage and read about the deaths of individuals such as Breonna Taylor at the hands of the police. With more attention focused on this issue, many began to question the role that police play in our communities and the rise of military-grade weapons in police departments. In response, communities have debated whether to change their funding model for the police; in some cases, they have shifted funding from the police department to other departments. These deaths also spoke to the fact that people of color are more likely to experience police threats or force. A study of over 100 million people found that there are even disparities in routine traffic stops, with Black drivers 20 percent more likely than white drivers to be pulled over by police.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, the pandemic highlighted the disparities between front-line service jobs and most white-collar jobs. Though white-collar workers were able to transition to a telework system in most cases, emergency response and service employees were often unable to do so, putting them at increased risk of contracting COVID-19.<sup>4</sup> This distinction hurt some groups more than others. About three-fourths of US workers cannot work from home.<sup>5</sup> Workers earning higher wages were six times more likely to be able to work from home than those earning lower wages.<sup>6</sup> Less than one in five Black workers and about one in six Hispanic workers can work remotely from home.<sup>7</sup>

## **CONNECT INDIVIDUALS TO MEANINGFUL WORK**

The global coronavirus pandemic has upended the U.S. economy and its traditional modes and models of work. While many in this country have retained work that provides sufficient income, dignity and enjoyment, millions of others have not. The immediate and urgent challenge is to create meaningful work for all Americans. What individuals do—their labor, earnings, purchases, and the taxes they pay—is a primary determinant of economic performance and political stability. If the nation hopes to develop a stronger economy as it recovers from the global impacts of the pandemic, it must understand what is happening to work and intentionally connect individuals to meaningful, reliable, and productive work.

After the creation of more than 1 million jobs in July, employment growth and hiring numbers decreased in August and September. Employment growth for the entire year so far has averaged 582,000 jobs a month.<sup>8</sup> The unemployment rate saw a decline to 4.8 percent in September and then fell to 4.6 percent in October.<sup>9</sup> This rate represents the lowest level of unemployment since the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020.<sup>10</sup> However, labor force participation rate has remained unchanged at 61.6 percent from October 2021 to November 2021.<sup>11</sup>

A gap between job openings and new hires has persisted due to low salaries, undervaluation, and a mismatch between skills required and skills possessed by applicants.<sup>12</sup> Approximately 2.3 million people qualify as long-term unemployed, as they have been out of work for longer than

twenty-seven weeks.<sup>13</sup> This group makes up approximately 31.6 percent of all unemployed individuals and is 1.2 million higher than it was in February 2020.<sup>14</sup> The number of people permanently out of work has declined from 2.7 million in September to 2.1 million in October, within the unemployment cohort.<sup>15</sup>

Some employers have suggested that COVID-19 stimulus checks encouraged people to stay home rather than return to work, but there has not been a significant surge in employment so far after the end of expanded federal benefits.<sup>16</sup> Although employment is moving in a positive direction, with 75 percent of jobs lost in the pandemic now restored, the labor market is still not functioning efficiently.

In 2021, at least one in four people quit their job.<sup>17</sup> Many workers have become burnt out and fed up with their workplace conditions. The pandemic exacerbated workers' concerns by putting many essential workers at risk and overextending already understaffed teams. As a result, many workers are demanding higher pay, more benefits, and improved working conditions. Some relevant trends include:

- There were workplace strikes against 178 employers this year.<sup>18</sup> Bus drivers, maintenance staff, and film and television workers have all conducted strikes.<sup>19</sup>
- Concerns from workers regarding:<sup>20</sup>
  - A decrease in real wage growth;
  - Essential workers' health being put at risk during the pandemic;
  - A mismatch between companies' profit increases and the growth in wages and benefits;
  - Understaffing; and
- Workers' increased labor market leverage.<sup>21</sup>

## **FISCAL HEALTH**

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States was forced to deal with its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Many people in the country are living through dramatic economic loss, rising unemployment, and housing and food insecurity.

Although the economy has recovered from the March 2020 shock more quickly than from the 2008 recession, many of the financial measures that spurred recovery have placed additional burdens on the country's long term fiscal health. As of November 3, 2021, the U.S. has spent \$4.7 trillion toward its COVID-19 response. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the budget deficit in 2021 to be \$2.3 trillion, which is about 10 percent of the GDP. The CBO's new ten-year forecast averages \$1.3 trillion per year, with an estimated total of \$12.3 trillion in additional debt based on current policies.

With interest rates currently holding at near zero percent, an easier economic recovery is more likely. If rates push higher in the future, which can be the Federal Reserve's reaction to inflationary pressures, the U.S. will have a more difficult path to reducing its debt. The Fed has noted the possibility of a bond-buying taper in the near future, and they have targeted a 2 percent average inflation rate year over year. In 2021, inflation has varied month-to-month and averages around 3 percent for the year. The Fed stated that some of this inflation is transitory and due to both supply chain issues and the economic recovery from 2020.

States have also faced financial challenges due to the fact that they do not have an opportunity for deficit spending and therefore must balance their annual budget.<sup>22</sup> Some estimates predict that states and localities could be hit by a multi-year revenue shortfall of nearly \$500 billion between 2020 and 2022.<sup>23</sup> In addition, total amounts allotted in state rainy day funds diminished for the first time since the Great Recession in FY 2020.<sup>24</sup> According to the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO), fifteen states withdrew a total of \$12.4 billion from their rainy-day funds following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>25</sup> Illinois, Nevada, and New Jersey have nearly depleted their rainy-day funds. Fortunately, federal COVID-19 relief funds are enabling several states, including California, Michigan, and Oklahoma, to reimburse their rainy-day funds in FY 2022.<sup>26</sup>

## **BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES**

The United States is facing many unprecedented stresses as a nation— a global pandemic, economic difficulties, and social injustices. The consequences of global warming and climate change compound these stresses— destroying an aging infrastructure and forcing individuals from their homes. Years of inaction at the federal level have resulted in failing grades on America's infrastructure.<sup>27</sup> Maintenance and repair for national transportation is much overdue, with a maintenance backlog for highways alone at \$441 billion.<sup>28</sup>

Climate change is leading to more frequent and more dangerous natural disasters. In 2020, the United States experienced 22 natural disasters that cost at least \$95 billion in damages and repairs.<sup>29</sup> These disasters will continue to wreak havoc on the nation's communities, especially since people are now living in areas that are more prone to experience disasters.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, most Americans are not prepared for the economic loss that will accompany many of these disasters; a national survey found that about 20 percent of people have no emergency funds saved for rebuilding after a disaster.<sup>31</sup> In addition, one-fifth of Americans surveyed said they could not afford to purchase the level of insurance needed to fully protect their property.<sup>32</sup> Only 25 percent of people reported taking active steps to reduce damage to their property in preparation for an oncoming storm.<sup>33</sup>

The United States needs an urgent, unified commitment on behalf of its governments to build communities that can weather these threats— a commitment to building trust, increasing communication and efficiency, and attending to the different needs of each community. Through these efforts, the United States can build and sustain the necessary resilience frameworks, policies, and practices to carry itself into a more equitable tomorrow.

## Actions Underway

All levels of government—and the private and nonprofit sectors—are undertaking actions intended to address these Grand Challenges. This section highlights a few illustrative actions, but it is in no way an exhaustive list. It is intended to show some of the types of actions being undertaken.

### FOSTER SOCIAL EQUITY

#### Federal

##### Promoting Equity in the Federal Workforce

The federal government has undertaken several important actions to address social equity in its workforce and across programs. Most prominent is the Executive Order 13985, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government”, which was issued on January 20, 2021.<sup>34</sup> This EO states that the Director of OMB will work with the heads of the different agencies to assess agencies’ capabilities and review systemic barriers that may exist in those agencies that hurt inclusivity and equity.<sup>35</sup> It also instructs the head of each agency to choose certain programs to be assessed for fair opportunity. A report of the preliminary findings has already been sent to the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy.<sup>36</sup>

This EO addresses three out of the four recommendations of the [Promoting Social Equity in an Evidence-Based Policy Environment Action Plan](#). The first recommendation of this action plan stated that there should be a social equity evidence review, which is a standard met by the issuance of the EO. The second recommendation called for a statistical inventory of public data with information about equity, and the EO calls for the establishment of an Equitable Data Working Group to do just that. The group is interagency and will look for inadequacies in current federal data.<sup>37</sup> Lastly, the EO states that the OMB will create methods that agencies can use to assess if they are being inclusive, which addresses the recommendation that federal programs should be assessed by a social equity measure along with effectiveness and efficiency metrics. However, it is not clear yet what the social equity measure will be. The only recommendation that isn’t covered by this EO is the recommendation to create a social equity Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goal and a CAP working group to assess progress on social equity outcomes. However, that may be addressed with the release of the President’s Management Agenda later this year.

Other relevant executive orders include:

- Executive Order 14035: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce

- Agency heads are required to make advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility a priority component of the agency’s management agenda and strategic plan.<sup>38</sup>
- The head of each agency must implement the government-wide DEIA Plan.<sup>39</sup>
- Executive Order 13988: Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation<sup>40</sup>
  - All heads of organizations should review all existing regulations and policies that prohibit sex discrimination and identify those that are inconsistent with the President’s policies
    - “All persons should receive equal treatment under the law, no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation.”
  - Revise existing agency actions to implement statutes preventing sex discrimination
  - Develop a plan to carry out actions identified in the requirements above
- Executive Order 14031: Advancing Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders<sup>41</sup>
  - Establishes the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AA&NHPI)
  - Tasks the Commission to monitor the government’s efforts on enhancing opportunities for AA&NHPI and to outline measures against anti-Asian incidents and for Asian-Americans social integration
  - Creates a White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, which evaluates institutional barriers, discrimination against AA&NHPI, and paths towards inclusion

### Addressing Food Insecurity

The federal government has also taken actions to address the issue of food insecurity, which was the subject of one of the Academy Fellow Election 2020 Working Groups, and many of the recommendations from the [Improving Child Well-Being & Reducing Food Insecurity Action Plan](#) have been implemented. For example, in June 2020, in accordance with the Action Plan, the Trump administration increased funding for the Farm to School programs – awarding a \$12 million grant to 159 grantees – the most projects funded to date.<sup>42</sup> However, neither the administration nor the USDA created an accountability tracking system to monitor the effectiveness of the programs, though they do conduct evaluations on specific programs.<sup>43</sup>

As part of pandemic relief programs like the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, billions of dollars were dedicated to fighting food insecurity. For example, in ARPA, \$3.6 billion was dedicated to supporting the food production and distribution supply chain.<sup>44</sup> ARPA also extended a 15 percent increase to monthly benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and provided \$1.15 billion to states for administering SNAP benefits beyond the \$1 billion to U.S.



Territories for nutrition assistance programs.<sup>45</sup> In addition, ARPA gave \$490 million to the USDA to increase the cash-value voucher amount provided under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children for up to \$35 during the pandemic.<sup>46</sup> Lastly, it directs the USDA to reimburse emergency shelters that fall under the National School Lunch Program for meals given to anyone under the age of 25.<sup>47</sup>

### COVID-19 Relief Programs

Home to advanced medical technologies, innovations, and world-class medical schools, the United States is a global leader in the medical field but struggles with equal access to affordable healthcare. This has become a particular concern during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Because the most marginalized in this nation's communities are disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, the Administration authorized Executive Order 13995, "Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery"<sup>48</sup> which creates the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force to promote an equitable recovery. Employment and workforce protections are also issues of equity, as it is primarily minority populations who are on the front-line service positions with the highest risk of exposure to the virus. Executive Orders 13991, "Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing"<sup>49</sup> and 13999, "Protecting Worker Health and Safety"<sup>50</sup> implement safety protocols for these workers, urging workplaces to follow CDC guidelines. Some other relevant pieces of legislation include:

- Executive Order 14001: A Sustainable Public Health Supply Chain<sup>51</sup>
  - The federal government is urged to take immediate action to secure supplies needed to address the pandemic and have them remain available;
  - The federal government is urged to take any appropriate legal action to fill any supply shortfalls; and
  - Heads of agencies will provide a report to the President detailing assessment of need for and inventory of supplies, analysis of each agency's capacity to provide pandemic response supplies, an assessment of gaps between needs and supplies, and recommendation on how to fill them.
- CARES Act<sup>52</sup>
  - \$140 billion to support health care; and
  - COVID testing covered at no cost to patients.

## **State, Local, and Tribal**

### Promoting Equity in the Public Service Workforce

There has been more of a push for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training in state and local government and in the private sector than at the federal level. Some states such as Vermont have used CARES Act funding to pay for equity and inclusion training.<sup>53</sup> The city of Long Beach, California adopted a Framework for Reconciliation that is targeted at ending systemic racism using four key steps: acknowledging the existence and impacts of systemic racism, listening to community members' experiences of racial injustice, convening stakeholders to use what they learned in the listening sessions and from racial disparity data to recommend

initiatives that shape policy reform, and writing short-term and long-term recommendations for the City Council to consider.<sup>54</sup> Staff from various city departments formed a Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative Team to begin taking actions revealed in the Framework process.<sup>55</sup>

### Addressing Food Insecurity

From a food security standpoint, many states used their CARES Act funding for food assistance programs. These states include but are not limited to: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, and North Carolina.<sup>56</sup>

Tying into one of the recommendations from the [Improving Child Well-Being & Reducing Food Insecurity Action Plan](#), the Food and Nutrition Service awarded grants of approximately \$100,000 to the First Nations Development Institute, which aligns with the recommendation that more funding should go to tribal communities.<sup>57</sup>

### COVID-19 Relief Programs

Native Americans have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Tribes across the country have faced more cases, hospitalizations, and deaths than most racial and ethnic groups in the United States.<sup>58</sup> At the beginning of the pandemic, Native Americans were dying from COVID-19 at a rate 2.4 times higher than white, non-Hispanic people.<sup>59</sup> However, in the face of hardship imposed on their community by the pandemic, Native American tribes have carried out some of the most successful vaccine distribution in the country.<sup>60</sup> Instead of being supplied vaccines by their state governments, tribes opted to work with the Indian Health Service (IHS).<sup>61</sup> Even though the organization is historically underfunded, the vaccine distribution was a success. In fact, many tribes across the country have been vaccinating their residents at faster rates than United States averages.<sup>62</sup> In addition to vaccinations, the tribes have also been educating their residents and building trust in the vaccine amongst their community. The Navajo Department of Health (NDOH) has also improved its public health tools and increased contact tracing.<sup>63</sup> Their COVID-19 dashboard provides resources and data for health care professionals and communities struggling to combat the virus.<sup>64</sup>

### Changes in Police Budgets

Several states have decided to redistribute some funds from police budgets to other initiatives. Former Boston Mayor Marty Walsh pledged to reallocate 20 percent of the Boston Police Department's budget toward community programs dedicated to reducing inequality in the city.<sup>65</sup> Part of the reallocated funds will support trauma and counseling services at the city's health commission. Salt Lake City's city council voted to reduce the police department's budget by \$5.3 million.<sup>66</sup> The funds will be reallocated to a social work program and toward purchasing more body cameras and less-lethal weapons for officers. Their newly created committee on racial equity and policing will receive some funds as well.

Other states have taken steps to allocate more funds to police departments. Governor Kemp of Georgia signed a bill that will restrict police budget reductions of more than 5 percent.<sup>67</sup> Wisconsin and Iowa have also followed Georgia's lead in limiting police budget reductions.

Idaho officials decided to move forward with their 2021 budget which included increasing the police department budget by \$1.2 million.<sup>68</sup> Minneapolis voters recently rejected a proposal to replace the city's police department with a new public safety department.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, the Minneapolis Chief of Police is calling for \$27 million more in funding for the department in 2022.<sup>70</sup>

## **Private and Nonprofit**

### Promoting Equity in the Public Service Workplace

There are several initiatives working towards increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in government workplaces. For example, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is creating a new Equity and Inclusion Toolkit for Local Government that will teach local government leaders equity and inclusion strategies and will provide tools to assist these leaders with integrating DEI in their workplaces.<sup>71</sup> The National Association of Cities (NaCo) has been building a network of experts that can assist county executives with introducing best practices in DEI initiatives into their county offices.<sup>72</sup> Lastly, Civic Pulse, in partnership with Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL), is developing a Local Government Diversity Dashboard which will compile data on the gender, race, ethnicity, and age of local government officials.<sup>73</sup> It expects to complete the prototype by the end of 2021.

### COVID-19 Relief Programs

Although the vaccine has proven to be the best defense against the virus and its new strains, there are still large gaps between the most vaccinated counties and the least vaccinated counties across the United States. At the beginning of the pandemic, several minority groups had COVID-19 infection rates that were higher than their white counterparts. In fact, some death rates for majority-black counties were three times those of comparable white counties.<sup>74</sup>

The Conversation is a campaign that educates members of the Black and Latino communities about the importance of the COVID-19 vaccine in the hopes of increasing vaccination rates in these communities. This national campaign comprises Black and Latino healthcare workers, researchers, and state government officials.<sup>75</sup> They are committed to dispelling misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine, connecting people to useful resources, and providing facts to their audience.<sup>76</sup>

## **CONNECT INDIVIDUALS TO MEANINGFUL WORK**

### **Federal**

- CARES Act<sup>77</sup>
  - One-time direct payments of \$1,200 for individuals, \$2,400 for married couples, and an additional \$500 per child.
  - \$250 billion for extended unemployment insurance and expands eligibility.

- Executive Order 14002: Economic Relief Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic<sup>78</sup>
  - Urge federal agencies to do what they can to provide relief (includes better leveraging pandemic-related data).
- Executive Order 14025: Worker Organizing and Empowerment<sup>79</sup>
  - Boost union participation.
- Executive Order 13658: Establishing a Minimum Wage for Contractors<sup>80</sup>
  - New agency contract solicitations need to include a \$15 minimum wage by January 30, 2022, implemented in new contracts by March 30, 2022.
  - Ensure a \$15 minimum wage for all federal contract workers, including those with disabilities.
  - Restore minimum wage protections to outfitters and guides operating on federal lands.
- Executive Order 14003: Protecting the Federal Workforce<sup>81</sup>
  - Encourages employees to practice collective bargaining and other forms of union participation.
- The American Families Plan (pending legislation)
  - If this law is passed as drafted, comprehensive paid medical and family leave, childcare support, and access to free and lower-cost college and pre-K would become available to millions of Americans.<sup>82</sup>
  - Through this expansion of the social safety net, workers could experience more sustainable employment conditions— and thus more sustainable living conditions.<sup>83</sup>
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)<sup>84</sup>
  - Delivers financial relief to families in the form of stimulus checks, extended unemployment benefits, increases in child tax credits, use of the Homeowner's Assistance Fund, and increases in SNAP.
  - Supports communities with the Small Business Opportunity Fund and the distribution of \$360 billion in emergency funding.

This aligns with the recommendation of the Academy's Action Plan, "[Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans](#)" to "Develop a longer-term strategy to enhance social equity and meaningful work and coordinate social safety net programs with the implementation of long-term workforce development actions."

- The American Jobs Plan<sup>85</sup> (pending legislation)
  - Create caregiving jobs and raise wages and benefits for essential home care workers.

- Strengthen American manufacturing jobs and invest in innovation.
- Create good-paying union jobs and provide job training for future industries.
- Administration to invest \$621 billion into transportation over 8 years, which can increase access to jobs.<sup>86</sup>

This aligns with the recommendation of the Academy’s Action Plan, “[Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans](#)” to “Use collaborative governance models to ensure that workforce development programs can satisfy demand that is centered on individuals and families.” The American Jobs Plan pushes for collaborative governance that supports individuals, their communities, and “Black and brown Americans, immigrants, and women”<sup>87</sup> in particular.

- National Apprenticeship Act (pending legislation)
  - Although it has only passed the House thus far, the National Apprenticeship Act further supports the second recommendation. As it intends to “expand registered apprenticeships, youth apprenticeships, and pre-apprenticeship programs,”<sup>88</sup> the legislation centers the individual and focuses on supporting the growth of a diverse workforce. The Act also advocates for the development of partnerships between community colleges and apprenticeship programs that would align with the third recommendation by streamlining the education-to-employment pipeline. Augmenting this effort, the Administration increased the number of individuals who can tap into a “continuous ladder” to employment by cancelling \$3 billion in student loan debt.
- Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad
  - Calls for the creation of the Civilian Climate Corps, a service organization dedicated to conservation and resilience work.<sup>89</sup>

The Administration also focused on the fifth recommendation of the Academy’s Action Plan, “[Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans](#)” through its response to the pressures of the pandemic. ARPA’s relief package— including an extension of unemployment benefits and an increase in child tax credits— is an important example of this recommendation in action. The economic fallout of this public health crisis has also exacerbated the burden of student loan debt. In providing \$3 billion in debt cancellation<sup>90</sup>, the Administration has also promoted social equity— and thus the fifth recommendation— as it supports a vulnerable population while they connect to meaningful work. The Administration extended its social justice efforts to the workplace itself, issuing the Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce to ensure that spaces are accessible and equitable.<sup>91</sup>

## State

- Colorado has announced a Jumpstart Incentive program to award financial incentives to unemployed residents if they return to full-time employment.<sup>92</sup>

- Connecticut has announced that the state will provide funds up to \$1,000 to individuals that return to full time employment and remain employed for 8 weeks.<sup>93</sup>
- Idaho Governor Brad Little set aside \$100 million from COVID-19 relief funds to award bonuses up to \$1,500 for those with full-time employment and \$750 for part-time employees.<sup>94</sup>
- Oklahoma will use its ARPA funds to award a \$1,200 incentive to the first 20,000 residents currently receiving unemployment funds who return to work.<sup>95</sup>

## **State and Local**

### Diversifying the Economy

Even before COVID, U.S. cities and municipalities struggled with rising costs due to population growth and increasing expectations for service delivery.<sup>96</sup> In response, some states found ways to diversify their economic base to increase stability and boost resilience in their communities. For instance, Virginia passed a bill in 2021 ending tax credits for the coal industry; in doing so, it aims to diversify energy technology and sources, boosting the region's economy and its tax revenues.<sup>97</sup> In July, Virginia's government announced it will direct \$700 million from ARPA to expand broadband access and help close the digital divide for some of the poorest regions of the state; this is an important step towards business recruitment and creating higher-paying jobs.<sup>98</sup> North Carolina has taken similar steps by investing \$750 million from relief funds into broadband infrastructure.<sup>99</sup>

When the COVID-19 pandemic decimated the tourism industry on which the Las Vegas/Southern Nevada area relies, regional leaders recognized the need to diversify their revenue base.<sup>100</sup> The area is using its proximity to major western markets to bolster more rail and truck connectivity across the state and expand air passenger and cargo capabilities.<sup>101</sup> Because power costs remain higher than average in this area, the state plans to increase the deployment of renewable energy sources.<sup>102</sup>

### Providing Economic Aid

Some states have used the CARES Act to take concrete steps to prevent evictions and secure economic assistance for their residents. The state of Texas, for example, has allocated funds for legal aid providers and pro bono lawyers for eviction prevention.<sup>103</sup> Washington allocated \$2.3 million to the Office of Civil Legal Aid to address the comprehensive civil legal needs of families and individuals.<sup>104</sup> The state also provided money from the CARES Act to childcare providers and Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers for rent, utilities, personnel, food, and supplies.<sup>105</sup>

## **BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES**

### **Federal**

#### Natural Disaster Relief and Prevention

A key component of Resilient Communities is natural disaster preparedness and response, along with a strong infrastructure for social and economic welfare. Actions regarding this Grand Challenge include:

- Amtrak has invested \$7.3 billion into a new fleet of modern trains that will service the Northeast corridor, its most utilized route.
  - This investment is expected to draw 1.5 million more riders to its services annually and will help reduce the number of cars on the road.<sup>106</sup>
- Biden-Harris Administration proposed doubling FEMA program, Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, to \$1 billion to prepare for hurricane and wildfire season<sup>107</sup>
  - However, “this new money is less than what some disaster experts had said is needed” as the U.S. experienced 22 disasters last year that exceeded \$1 billion in damages each.<sup>108</sup>
- Biden-Harris Administration releases wildfire strategy<sup>109</sup>
  - Agriculture Department calls on the U.S. Forest Service to double or even quadruple its thinning of forests to prevent wildfires
    - “It called for treating an additional 20 million acres on National Forest System land by 2040, as well as 30 million acres on other federal, state, tribal and private land.”
- CARES Act<sup>110</sup>
  - State, local, and tribal governments receive \$150 billion
    - \$30 billion for states and educational institutions; \$45 billion for disaster relief; \$25 billion for transit programs.
- The American Jobs Plan<sup>111</sup> (pending legislation)

- Fix highways; rebuild bridges; and upgrade ports, airports, and transit centers.
- Rebuild clean drinking water infrastructure, a renewed electric grid, and high-speed broadband to all Americans.
- Modernize homes, commercial buildings, schools, and federal buildings.

### Addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic

Supporting public health initiatives and providing relief from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Administration enacted several executive orders and pieces of legislation that form the foundation of a resilience strategy. Through Executive Orders 13997, “Improving and Expanding Access to Care and Treatments for COVID-19”<sup>112</sup> and 14009, “Strengthening Americans’ Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care”<sup>113</sup> the federal government committed to dismantling barriers to healthcare, advising care facilities, supporting research into new technologies, and increasing access to care. Here, access is the accelerator of resilience, which is augmented by Executive Order 13994, “Ensuring a Data-Driven Response to COVID-19 and Future High-Consequence Public Health Threats”.<sup>114</sup> In response to this order, federal agencies will name leaders to direct data collection and management related to public health so that the U.S. can address the current crisis with transparency and prepare for the future. As part of its larger resilience strategy, the Administration also put forth Executive Order 13987, “Organizing and Mobilizing the United States Government to Provide a Unified and Effective Response to Combat COVID-19 and To Provide United States Leadership on Global Health and Security,”<sup>115</sup> which creates new positions that are dedicated to reducing disparities, coordinating responses, and streamlining communication within all levels of government. This EO does not involve the creation of a national resilience director position or office, as the [Developing & Empowering a National Resilience Agenda Action Plan](#) suggests; however, it does address a critical part of the Action Plan’s recommendations, as it includes the creation of a COVID-19 Coordinator who is intended to facilitate decision-making and communication— two keys to resilience. Lastly, Executive Order 13996, “Establishing the COVID-19 Pandemic Testing Board and Ensuring a Sustainable Public Health Workforce for COVID-19 and Other Biological Threats”, created a testing board of representatives from executive departments and agencies to establish a national COVID-19 testing and public health workforce strategy.<sup>116</sup> With these new offices, councils, and positions, the federal government can advance resilience efforts through efficient cooperation and centralized guidance.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this staff working paper is to follow up on the Election 2020 Working Group reports for the federal Administration by highlighting key actions intended to address these Grand Challenges. The Academy staff welcomes Fellow input and advice, especially on steps being undertaken by states, localities, and Tribes. Over the next year, this paper will update the



description of federal actions based on the latest information and place a greater emphasis on non-federal actions.

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