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MUSLIM AMERICANS IN PUBLIC SERVICE RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 14035 ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA) IN THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

A Blueprint for Action

Washington, D.C., July 30th, 2021 —Muslim Americans in Public Service ([MAPS](https://mapsnational.org)), a national nonprofit network of Muslim American public servants committed to building more just and equitable government institutions, welcomes President Biden's [Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce](#), signed on June 25th, 2021. In response to the Executive Order, MAPS offers a roadmap to advance diversity and inclusion efforts, with a focus on Muslim Americans in the federal workforce.

The Executive Order affirms that:

As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government must be a model for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. Accordingly, the Federal Government must strengthen its ability to recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain our Nation's talent and remove barriers to equal opportunity.

And extends the scope to substantively include religious minorities:

It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on their religion or disability; first-generation professionals or first-generation college students; individuals with limited English proficiency; immigrants...

MAPS recognizes that the Biden Administration has made strides in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion over recent months, including the January 20th signing of Executive Order 13985 on "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities" and the Presidential Proclamation on "Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to The United States," which ended the Muslim Ban that had separated so many Muslim American families.

We have seen several welcome and historic Presidential nominations and appointments, including the confirmation of the first Muslim Article III Federal Judge. In addition to many Muslim Americans appointed to various Executive branch roles, the Biden Administration has also nominated ten Muslim Americans for Senate-confirmed positions to date. All of these appointments and nominations help to ensure that our federal government personnel reflect the true diversity of our country.

Despite gains made, structural barriers to the advancement of Muslim Americans in the Federal workforce continue to this day. As [research](#) by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) confirms, as a religious minority, an [ethnically diverse group \(half of whom are immigrants\), and a third of whom are Black](#), American Muslims are at a unique demographic intersection that makes them vulnerable to hate crimes. Federal employees have shared their experiences of bullying and anti-Muslim discrimination in the workplace, as well as observing training programs that perpetuate anti-Muslim bias. We've also seen [anti-Muslim legislation across jurisdictions](#), as well as discriminatory policing, [bias in media representation and in the legal system](#), and the use of anti-Muslim rhetoric and statements by political candidates and elected or appointed officials.

To operationalize the Executive Order, we offer the following recommendations to advance DEIA in the Federal workforce:

- 1) **Integrate Countering Islamophobia into DEIA Policy.** Name Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry as priority areas to assure inclusive policies and work environments, and include the same within existing or future diversity, equity, inclusion, and special emphasis efforts, statements, policies and written materials.
- 2) **Collect Disaggregated Data on Religious Minorities.** Collect and analyze data on employees who self-identify as Muslim to ensure they are treated equitably and free from harassment and discrimination.
- 3) **Eliminate Anti-Muslim Bias in Federal Workforce Trainings.** In some [government-sponsored trainings](#) and programs, Islam and Muslims are portrayed as violent and incompatible with broader society, [provoking fear and suspicion of Muslims in national institutions](#). We request a vetting process for such training, in partnership with Muslim American civil society and civil rights organizations, to ensure the successful removal of Islamophobic materials and anti-Muslim bias in training programs.
- 4) **Standardize Law Enforcement and National Security Programs and Engagement.** Set consistent and non-discriminatory guidelines for government vetting of individuals and organization by:
 - a) Creating equal and consistent rules of when vetting is or is not required, in order to standardize, streamline and combat overt discrimination from government programs and engagements. Muslims and Muslim organizations are subject to vetting more frequently and broadly than non-Muslim groups, which are only vetted for principal level considerations.
 - b) Revisiting FBI rules of engagement with certain organizations, as the FBI's determination is often followed by other government agencies. Some Muslim organizations are placed in a "pending phase" for years with no clear evidence against them or recourse.

- 5) **Ensure Fairness and Equity in the Security Clearance Process.** Ensure that documented anti-Muslim advocacy/ Islamophobia is considered in the security clearances process, and that those who express such views are held accountable.
- 6) **Strengthen the EEO Grievance Processes Across the Interagency.** Provide transparent and accessible guidance on redress and grievance processes for employees who experience Islamophobia or anti-Muslim bigotry in the workplace.
- 7) **Ensure Unbiased and Accountable Leadership in Government.** Ensure that documented anti-Muslim activity, advocacy or animus is considered in non-career Executive appointments and career appointments to the Senior Executive Service (SES) across the Federal interagency.
- 8) **Resource Availability.** Include language on Islamophobia and resources on combating anti-Muslim bigotry, in partnership with Muslim American civil society and civil rights organizations, by the Director of OPM and Chair of the EEOC, in order to identify and help prevent “bias against underserved communities,” pursuant to Section 9 of the Executive Order (Training and Learning), which states:

The Director of OPM and the Chair of the EEOC shall issue guidance and serve as a resource and repository for best practices for agencies to develop or enhance existing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training programs.

- 9) **Institutional Partnership.** Include the broader Muslim American community, its institutions, and schools in government-wide Partnership Initiatives to ensure inclusion and access, pursuant to Section 7 of the Executive Order (Partnerships and Recruitment), which states:

The Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the Director of OPM, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB, in consultation with the Chair of the EEOC, shall coordinate a Government-wide initiative to strengthen partnerships (Partnerships Initiative) to facilitate recruitment for Federal employment opportunities of individuals who are members of underserved communities.

The head of each agency shall work with the Director of OSTP, the Director of OPM, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB to make employment, internship, fellowship, and apprenticeship opportunities available through the Partnerships Initiative, and shall take steps to enhance recruitment efforts through the Partnerships Initiative, as part of the agency's overall recruitment efforts.

- 10) **Awareness of Muslim Employee Faith Practices.** Ensure Federal government institutions are aware of Muslim practices, including the observance of the high holidays of *Eid Al Fitr* and *Eid Al Adha* (as well as Shi'a holidays of *Ashura* and *Arba'een*), the practice of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and the practice of offering Friday *Jumu'ah* congregational prayer services, and midday and afternoon prayers, either individually or in congregation.

- 11) **Faith-Based Partnerships in Government Agencies.** Following the re-establishment of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and similar offices in many Federal Agencies, government executives should also consider establishing or re-establishing faith-based initiatives where appropriate in order to support successful collaboration and outreach in public programs and further enhance trust in government.

- 12) **White House Muslim American Liaison.** We also recommend that the vacant position of Muslim-American Liaison in the White House Office of Public Engagement be filled in order to re-establish a conduit for future community outreach, engagement, and follow up on these or other concerns.

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