

Recent Executive Actions on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

January 29, 2025

Background

President Donald Trump issued executive order (E.O.) 14151 titled [“Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing”](#) on January 20, 2025. This E.O. seeks to end diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs—which are sometimes referred to as diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) programs—throughout the federal government. On January 21, 2025, President Trump issued an additional E.O. titled [“Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,”](#) which, among other things, revokes numerous DEI-related executive orders issued by previous Administrations.

These developments represent a change in course from the [Biden Administration’s DEI-related actions](#). For instance, President Joe Biden issued E.O. 13985, [“Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,”](#) on January 20, 2021 which directed federal agencies to pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity. Later, on June 25, 2021, President Biden issued E.O. 14035 titled [“Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce,”](#) which mandated that the federal government “remove barriers to equal opportunity” to enhance its ability to recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain talented individuals and to act as a model employer for DEIA. This E.O. required the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to create a “Government-Wide DEIA Plan,” directed executive branch agencies to create their own DEIA strategic plans, encouraged agencies to establish chief diversity officers or equivalent, and tasked executive branch agencies with additional DEIA-related responsibilities such as data collection and reporting requirements.

Contents of the Executive Orders

[E.O. 14151](#) states that the Biden Administration “forced illegal and immoral discrimination programs, going by the name ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion’ (DEI), into virtually all aspects of the Federal Government in areas ranging from airline safety to the military.” Further, it states that executive agencies’ issuance of “Equity Action Plans” pursuant to E.O. 13985 and other Biden Administration initiatives demonstrated “immense public waste and shameful discrimination.”

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E.O. 14151 requires the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Attorney General, and the director of OPM to coordinate to terminate all DEI- and DEIA-related mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities across the federal government “under whatever name they appear.” It requires the OPM director and the Attorney General to review federal employment practices, union contracts, and training policies to comply with the E.O., and to ensure that federal employment practices do not “consider DEI or DEIA factors, goals, policies, mandates, or requirements.” In collaboration with the aforementioned officials, agency heads are required to complete a list of actions within 60 days of the issuance of the E.O., including:

1. terminating all DEI, DEIA, and “environmental justice” offices and positions; all “equity action plans,” equity actions, initiatives, or programs, equity-related grants or contracts; and all DEI or DEIA performance requirements for employees, contractors, or grantees;
2. providing the OMB director with a list of DEI, DEIA, or “environmental justice” positions, committees, programs, services, activities, budgets, and expenditures; federal contractors who have provided DEI training or materials; and recipients of federal grants related to DEI, DEIA, or “environmental justice” programs, services, or activities; and
3. assessing the impact and cost of prior DEI, DEIA, or “environmental justice” programs, services, or activities and recommending actions to align with the E.O.’s purpose as described in Section 1.

The E.O. also requires the assistant to the President for domestic policy to meet with the OMB director, the OPM director, and agency heads to report on the prevalence and cost of DEI, DEIA, and “environmental justice” activities; discuss barriers to implementing this E.O.; and track progress on its implementation.

President Trump’s E.O. “[Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#)” builds on E.O. 14151 by reaffirming the Administration’s commitment to ending DEI and DEIA practices government-wide. It requires agencies to “to terminate all discriminatory and illegal preferences, mandates, policies, programs, activities, guidance, regulations, enforcement actions, consent orders, and requirements,” among other things. Notably, it revokes a number of executive orders, presidential memoranda, and other executive actions taken by previous Administrations including the Biden, Obama, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Lyndon Johnson Administrations. It also encourages the private sector to take steps to align with the Trump Administration’s views.

Implementation

On January 21, 2025, OPM Acting Director Charles Ezell issued a memorandum titled “[Initial Guidance Regarding DEIA Executive Orders](#),” which provides additional instructions to agencies on closing DEIA offices and placing employees of DEIA offices on paid [administrative leave](#). It requires agencies to remove outward-facing media of DEIA offices, withdraw any materials relevant to E.O. 14035, cancel DEIA-related trainings, and terminate DEIA-related contractors. Agencies were also instructed to report to OPM lists of DEIA offices, employees, and contractors and to work with OPM to establish a written plan “for executing a [reduction-in-force](#) action regarding the employees who work in a DEIA office.”

Several agencies have issued press releases that provide details on the implementation of these executive orders (e.g., [Department of Education](#), [Department of Veterans Affairs](#)).

In addition, OMB issued [memorandum M-25-13](#) on January 27, 2025, stating that executive agencies must temporarily pause “all activities related to obligation or disbursement of all federal financial assistance, and other relevant agency activities that may be implicated by the executive orders, including, but not limited to, financial assistance for foreign aid, nongovernmental organizations, DEI, woke gender ideology, and the green new deal.” A [subsequent fact sheet](#) issued by OMB clarified that the funding

pause did not apply “across-the-board.” Instead, it was limited to “programs, projects, and activities implicated by the President’s Executive Orders, such as ending DEI, the green new deal, and funding nongovernmental organizations that undermine the national interest.” M-25-13 was [subsequently rescinded](#) on January 29, 2025. The provisions terminating or otherwise restricting federal DEI activities in the cross-referenced executive orders remain in effect.

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