

ANALYZING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE U.S.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S FOREIGN SERVICE

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Foreign Service is a part of the U.S. Department of State and represents the United States abroad at 270 embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic missions worldwide. Its members are called Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). The modern Foreign Service was created by the Foreign Service Act of 1924, also known as the Rogers Act. A significant concern about the Foreign Service is that it is not diverse enough because it lacks representation from people of color and fails to reflect the demographics of the U.S. population. The Foreign Service has often been perceived as ‘male, pale, and Yale.’ Members of the U.S. Congress are urging the State Department to invest more resources in making the Foreign Service more inclusive and representative of the U.S. population. President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have committed to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the federal workforce. A diverse Foreign Service is essential for the United States to address challenging global issues.

The literature review uses reports from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the State Department’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) to explore the diversity of the Department of State’s workforce overtime, promotion rates, barriers to diversity, weaknesses in the State Department’s DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service, and what the State Department is doing well regarding its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service.

This policy report analyzes the State Department’s DEIA initiatives and efforts using Kotter’s 8-step change model. The findings show that the State Department has increased its DEIA efforts. They created a DEIA Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026 and the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (S/ODI). They have also increased recruiting efforts, created academic fellowship programs, expanded eligibility for certain things to improve retention, and created

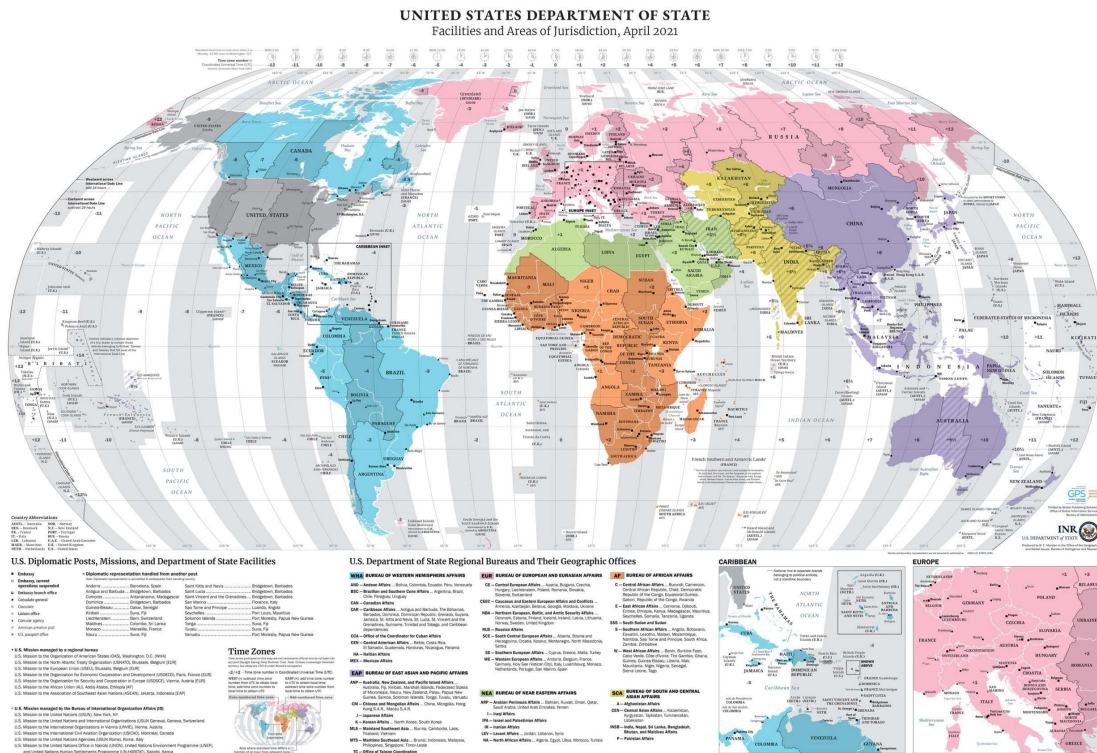
new units dedicated to finding and retaining talent. While the Foreign Service has grown more diverse over time, it still faces longstanding diversity issues. The State Department needs to improve how it collects information on marginalized groups, measures its progress toward its DEIA goals, and identifies barriers to DEIA. The department needs to strengthen its commitment to DEIA and do a better job of holding employees accountable. These challenges undermine the State Department's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service.

This policy report recommends following Kotter's 8-step change model to make the Foreign Service more diverse and inclusive. Kotter's 8-step change model is a step-by-step process that organizations can follow to improve their chances of implementing change. The State Department must create urgency for DEIA in the Foreign Service, build a coalition that will promote DEIA initiatives, create a vision for how DEIA should look in the Foreign Service, communicate the vision, empower others to participate in making change, create quick wins to increase momentum for DEIA, build on the change, and embed the change. This change model will strengthen the State Department's ability to recruit and retain a diverse Foreign Service. The State Department must strengthen and sustain its DEIA efforts so that the Foreign Service can become more diverse and inclusive.

Introduction

The U.S. Foreign Service is a part of the U.S. Department of State and represents the United States abroad. The members of the U.S. Foreign Service are called Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) and are non-partisan. As seen in Figure 1 below, FSOs can be asked to work at one of 270 embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic missions in The Americas, Africa, Europe and Eurasia, East Asia and Pacific, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and throughout the United States (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-b; U.S. Department of State, 2021). A significant criticism the Foreign Service faces is that it does not reflect the demographics of the U.S. population and lacks representation from people of color. Having a diverse Foreign Service with different backgrounds and broad perspectives is vital because FSOs are asked to work in countries worldwide that are facing complex challenges. This year, 2024, the Foreign Service turned a hundred years old.

Figure 1 United States Department of State: Facilities and Areas of Jurisdiction, April 2021



The Foreign Service Act of 1924, also known as the Rogers Act, created the United States Foreign Service by merging the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Service and Consular Service (Lamont & Cohen, 2014). The creation of the U.S. Foreign Service also established a meritocracy-driven personnel system and necessary allowances and benefits. The need for such reform had been clear years before Representative John Jacob Rogers introduced his first Foreign Service reform bill in 1919 by President Theodore Roosevelt. Both the Consular Service and Diplomatic Service were in dire need of modernization and were considered inefficient.

The Act of April 5, 1906, written almost entirely by then Consular Bureau Chief Wilbur John Carr, reorganized the Consular Service to make it more merit-based (Lamont & Cohen, 2014). It also classified officers by salary, increased the overall pay scale, and created a corps of consular inspectors that reported on each consular post at least once every two years. However, these reforms did not address the State Department's larger structural problems. In the post-World War I world, the Diplomatic Service was not adequately equipped to handle growing responsibilities, and there was no inspection system to supervise diplomatic posts. Additionally, the State Department did not have the authority to support disabled officers, fund sick or home leave, provide a retirement system with benefits, or allow officers to serve in positions outside their specialty. Neither service had the legal authority for "officer training; post, representational or cost-of-living allowances; or the dismissal or retirement of ineffective officers" (Lamont & Cohen, 2014). It was clear that effective reform required comprehensive legislation. This leads to the passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1924.

An FSO can be a generalist or a specialist. Generalists can pick one of five career tracks to work in. The career tracks are consular, economics, management, political, and public diplomacy (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-b). Specialists have specialized skills, and there are

currently seventeen specialist jobs in these six categories: administration, building construction, operations and maintenance, information technology, international information and English language programs, law enforcement and security, and medical and health (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-d; U.S. Department of State, n.d.-e). Those who want to become FSOs must take the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT) and the Foreign Service Officer Assessment (FSOA) (U.S. Department of State, 2024). They must also meet the minimum medical requirements, receive a Top-Secret security clearance, and receive a positive review from a suitability review panel. After meeting all three eligibility requirements, they will be placed on the Register, a rank-ordered list of successful candidates sorted by career track. The higher a candidate is ranked on the Register, the more quickly they will be invited to join the U.S. Foreign Service.

FSOs represent the United States abroad. Their mission is to “promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American citizens while advancing the interests of the U.S. abroad” (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-c). FSOs can be asked to work at one of 270 embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic missions in The Americas, Africa, Europe and Eurasia, East Asia and Pacific, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and throughout the United States (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-b). FSOs learn foreign languages and about different cultures, so they are ready to serve abroad. They are trained at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) before working at their assigned post. One assignment for an FSO usually lasts three years but can vary depending on the post. FSOs are also expected to practice diplomacy to advance America’s interests, solve global challenges, build alliances, counter adversaries, promote peace, and find new opportunities for America (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-b). Specific posts abroad are called hardship posts because they are more difficult and dangerous, and FSOs face more challenges at

those posts. FSOs must be able to think quickly and creatively to solve global issues to help people worldwide.

A diverse Foreign Service is essential for the United States to address challenging global issues. President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have committed to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the federal workforce. On President Biden's first day in office, he signed Executive Order 13985, which advances racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government and establishes that affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the government's responsibility (The White House, 2021). Executive Order 13985 also establishes that cultivating a workforce that draws from the full diversity of the United States is a policy of the Biden Administration. President Biden also believes that the Federal Government must be a model for DEIA and that all employees must be treated with dignity and respect because it is the United States' largest employer. Secretary Blinken is committed to modernizing American diplomacy and building and retaining a diverse, dynamic, and entrepreneurial workforce (Blinken, 2021). While Secretary Blinken (2021) was giving a speech on modernizing American diplomacy at FSI, he said, "Our diversity as a nation in backgrounds and experiences, in race, religion, ethnicity, in countries of origin, is among our greatest competitive advantages in the world. Failing to draw on that diversity shortchanges our foreign policy and our ability to advance our interests in the world." Whether DEIA is prioritized is up to whoever is in office at the time, so while the current Biden Administration considers it a priority, previous or future administrations might not consider it a priority, which can affect how diverse the Foreign Service is.

Members of the U.S. Congress believe that the Foreign Service is not diverse enough because it lacks representation from people of color and fails to reflect the demographics of the U.S. population (Lee, 2024). They want the U.S. Department of State to invest more resources in making the Foreign Service more inclusive and representative of the U.S. population. The Foreign Service has often been perceived as ‘male, pale, and Yale,’ highlighting the need for inclusive representation (Lee, 2024). The members of the Foreign Service represent the U.S. to governments and international organizations worldwide, another reason for inclusive representation. Additionally, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 says the composition of the Foreign Service should represent the American people (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a). A report requested by Congress in 2020 and done by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found shortcomings in the State Department’s hiring and promotions process. The GAO is an independent, non-partisan agency that works for Congress and provides Congress with objective, non-partisan, fact-based information so the government can save money and be more efficient (U.S. Government Accountability Office, n.d.). The GAO’s report found disparities in promotion rates, underrepresentation of minorities in leadership positions, and institutional barriers not being addressed. The lack of diversity has broader implications and can lead to issues like systemic racism, poverty, inequality, and climate justice being disregarded (Lee, 2024). By having a more diverse Foreign Service, we can draw from a more comprehensive array of perspectives and experiences to solve problems and develop new, innovative solutions to global issues and challenges (Lee, 2024).

This policy report will analyze the U.S. Department of State’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives focused on the Foreign Service throughout the years and how well they maintain a diverse and inclusive Foreign Service. In the literature review section, I will

provide an overview of my topic in the literature and the workforce statistics of the Foreign Service over the years. The literature review will also discuss promotion rates, barriers to diversity, weaknesses in the State Department's DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service, and what the State Department is doing well regarding its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. In the analytical framework section, I will explain Kotter's 8-step change model, how it can be applied to this paper, and why it is appropriate for this topic. I will then discuss and analyze my findings and provide recommendations based on Kotter's 8-step change model. Finally, I will conclude my paper with a summary.

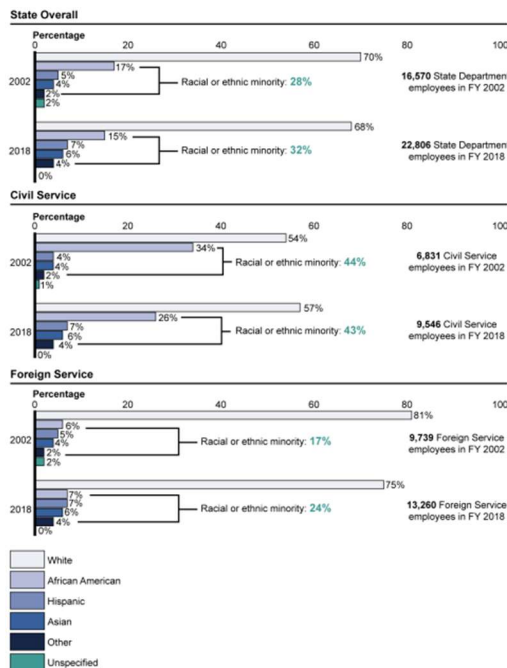
How the State Department's DEIA Efforts Are Assessed

The literature regarding the U.S. Department of State's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service primarily consists of reports from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). The State Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) also recently wrote a report on the State Department's DEIA strategic plan and its accountability goal. The GAO reports on the U.S. Department of State's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service are from 1989, 2020, and 2022. The literature explores the diversity of the Department of State's workforce overtime, promotion rates, barriers to diversity, weaknesses in the State Department's DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service, and what the State Department is doing well regarding its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service.

Multiple GAO reports have stated that the U.S. Department of State's workforce has grown more diverse over time but still faces longstanding diversity issues. As seen in Figure 2 below, the proportion of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups among the State Department's full-time, permanent, career employees grew from 28 percent in 2002 to 32 percent in 2018 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a; U.S. Government Accountability

Office, 2020b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). Figure 2 also shows that the proportion of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups in the State Department's Foreign Service grew from 17 percent in 2002 to 24 percent in 2018. During the 1980s, the U.S. Foreign Service grew by over 900 employees, of which 475 were minorities and 225 were white women (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a). The representation of minorities and women in the Foreign Service increased from 30 percent in 1981 to 35 percent in 1987. The representation of minorities in the State Department increased from 7 percent to 11 percent between 1981 and 1987 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989b). While the general Foreign Service has grown more diverse, the diversity of the senior ranks of the Foreign Service still needs work (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b).

Figure 2 Diversity in State Department Workforce in Fiscal Years 2002 and 2018



The GAO found that historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups and women were underrepresented in the senior ranks of the Foreign Service (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The GAO's analysis of the State Department's data from 2002 through 2018 found that the promotion rates for historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups were generally lower than for Whites. The proportions of racial or ethnic minorities in 2018 were progressively lower in each rank above Class 5 in the Foreign Service. The promotion rates for women in the Foreign Service were higher than men's. Also, women in the Foreign Service were more likely than men to be promoted early to mid-career. The State Department is hiring diverse classes at the lower ranks of the Foreign Service to improve the representation at the higher ranks over time. It takes approximately 20 years to rise from Class 4 in the Foreign Service, a lower rank in the Foreign Service, to the Senior Foreign Service, a higher rank, so the diversity of the senior ranks should improve over time. The State Department has identified some barriers to equal opportunity and diversity and has started taking steps to investigate and eliminate those barriers. The GAO's reports found that the State Department needs to improve its barrier analysis process and methodology for identifying potential barriers because its analyses vary in depth and have methodological weaknesses (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). For example, the State Department's analysis only allows it to identify extreme disparities as indicators of potential barriers in Foreign Service promotions, so its statistical methodology for analyzing Foreign Service promotion outcomes may have prevented it from identifying disparities.

The GAO and OIG reports identify weaknesses in the State Department’s DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service. The State Department does not have performance measures that track the outcomes of or progress toward its DEIA goals and objectives, so it does not have the information needed to assess progress toward its DEIA goals (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The State Department also faces challenges collecting information on marginalized groups because of intersectionality, data disaggregation, and differing definitions, and sometimes data cannot be disaggregated due to privacy laws, cultural sensitivities, or difficulties with self-reporting (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The State Department also struggles with measuring progress and enhancing accountability, which can hinder its ability to create a diverse and inclusive workplace (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b; U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). In the past, it also lacked established goals or timetables for the internal movement or promotion of personnel to reduce the underrepresentation of minorities and women at mid and senior levels of the Foreign Service (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989b). The State Department also did not adequately overview its personnel processes for possible barriers to equal employment opportunity, the hiring of minorities, and the advancement of minorities and white women (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989b). There are several areas where the State Department needs to improve, but there are also areas where it is doing well regarding its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service.

The GAO and OIG reports identify what the State Department is doing well regarding its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. The State Department is doing well in addressing

employee involvement, diversity training, leadership commitment, recruitment, and succession planning (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The OIG (2023) determined that the State Department was progressing toward its accountability goal and the corresponding strategies and milestones, but it still needs to complete other milestones. The State Department offers specialized diversity and inclusion training, supports employee organizations representing staff's DEIA interests, and maintains recruiting partnerships with diverse academic institutions and professional organizations. They have also established DEIA-related policies like workplace flexibility and accessibility and identified additional policy gaps that still need to be addressed. Workplace flexibility and accessibility policies like leave without pay, remote work arrangements, and alternative work schedules can benefit all employees, including those with familial responsibilities, medical conditions, or disabilities. They also provide assistance technology equipment to employees with disabilities. The State Department also provides mentoring and career development to enhance leadership skills, retain employees, and develop an agile workforce. As of October 2018, more than 70 percent of the selected Senior Executive Service career development program participants were women, and 50 percent identified as a minority (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a). There are also bureau-level initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion, like the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs' Driving Diversity, Growth, and Excellence initiative and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Diversity Working Group initiative (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a).

The literature shows that the U.S. Department of State's workforce has grown more diverse over time but still faces longstanding diversity issues. In the senior ranks of the Foreign Service, historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups and women were underrepresented

(U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). Additionally, historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups had lower promotion rates. The State Department has identified barriers and weaknesses to equal opportunity and diversity and is working on addressing them.

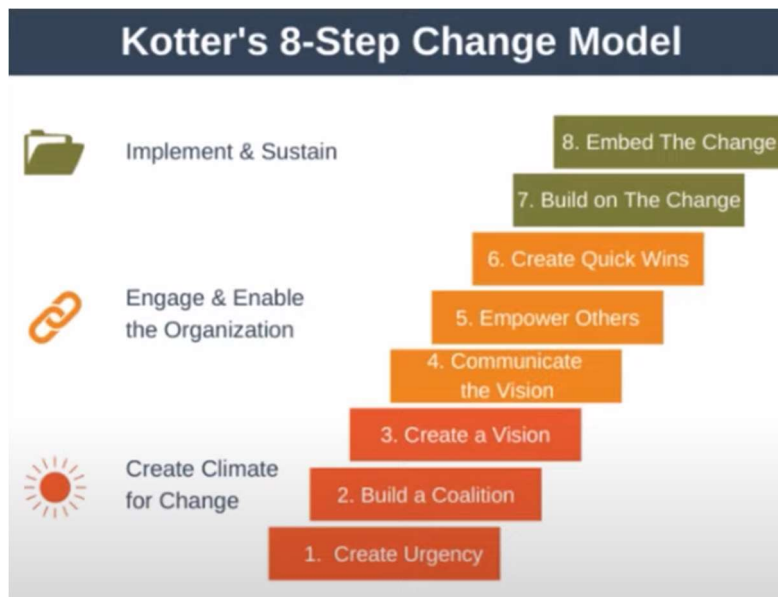
Analytical Framework: Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

Kotter's 8-step change model is the analytical framework that will be used to analyze the U.S. Department of State's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service (EPM, 2021). This paper will explain each step of Kotter's 8-step change model and the three phases. I will explain how Kotter's 8-step change model can be applied to this paper and why it is an appropriate analytical framework for this topic.

Kotter's 8-step change model is a step-by-step process that organizations can follow to improve their chances of implementing change. As seen in Figure 3 below, the eight steps for Kotter's change model are to create urgency, build a coalition, create a vision, communicate the vision, empower others, create quick wins, build on the change, and embed the change (EPM, 2021). Step one is to create urgency, so organizations must build a compelling case for change and convince others to act immediately. Step two is to build a coalition because organizations need influential and respected people from different parts of the organization to help them make change happen. It is tough to push change entirely on your own. Step three is to create a clear vision of how the organization sees the organization in the future and why that change is necessary. It must also be easy for others to understand the organization's vision so they know how they will be affected by the change and can decide whether to support the organization. Step four is communicating the vision to win over others and pull everyone in the same direction.

Step five removes barriers and empowers others to act on the vision and make the change happen. Step six is to create quick wins early on. Step seven is to build on the change by repeating steps four through six. It is essential to build on change because real change takes a long time, and people can revert to how they used to do things. Step eight is to embed the change in your organizational systems and process and ensure it sticks. Kotter's 8-step change model also consists of three phases: creating a climate for change, engaging and enabling the organization, and implementing and sustaining. Steps one through three are part of the first phase, creating a climate for change. Steps four through six are part of the second phase, engaging and enabling the organization. Steps seven and eight are part of the third phase, implementing and sustaining.

Figure 3 Kotter's 8-Step Change Model



Kotter's 8-step change model is the appropriate analytical framework for assessing the U.S. Department of State's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. It emphasizes creating the climate needed to make change happen. DEIA is considered a controversial topic in America, and not everyone supports it, so the State Department must create the climate needed to make

this change happen. DEIA efforts and initiatives require cultural shifts and structural changes within an organization, and Kotter's 8-step change model provides a straightforward step-by-step process to manage such changes. An 8-step change model is more manageable and draws attention to steps like creating urgency and building a coalition. It could be easy to overlook steps like creating urgency and building a coalition because the State Department can assume they already have support from key stakeholders. However, they need to explain why DEIA is essential and work on getting support from key stakeholders. This change model also focuses on empowering individuals and generating buy-ins across all levels of the organization to ensure a more inclusive and collaborative approach to change. It is difficult to make change happen if most of the organization is against it, and to make meaningful change that will help people, you need to talk to people from different parts of the organization. It also focuses on measurable progress and sustaining change to build momentum and ensures changes are embedded into organizational norms and practices. The State Department is a large organization, so quick wins in a large organization can help build momentum. Kotter's emphasis on embedding change can help reduce the risk of backsliding. Kotter's model can also be tailored to address different aspects of DEIA, like improving recruitment, fostering inclusion, or dismantling barriers. Kotter's 8-step change model is a comprehensive framework with essential steps for DEIA efforts.

Kotter's 8-step change model can be applied to the U.S. Department of State's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. Each of the eight steps can be used to analyze the State Department's current DEIA policies and efforts and suggest improvements. For step one, organizations can look for information that shows that the State Department or other stakeholders are creating urgency regarding its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. The information can be

executive orders from the President, orders from the Secretary of State, feedback from the Foreign Service workforce, and concerns from Congress. For step two, organizations can examine whether the State Department has identified stakeholders essential for implementing DEIA initiatives and if they have a formal coalition. For step three, organizations can look at the State Department's vision for its DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service and determine if it is straightforward and clear. For step four, organizations can look at how the State Department communicates its vision for its DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service and see if they are winning over people. For step five, organizations can examine whether the State Department is removing barriers that can stifle its DEIA efforts and empowering people to make change happen. For step six, organizations can examine whether the State Department has had early wins in its DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service. For step seven, organizations can look at the State Department's process over time and see if real change is happening or if people are just reverting to their old ways. For step eight, organizations can look at whether the State Department's DEIA efforts and initiatives are becoming a part of the State Department's organizational systems and process. These are examples of how Kotter's 8-step change model can be applied to the State Department's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service.

Findings

The U.S. Department of State is progressing in its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. I will summarize the findings of the GAO and OIG reports used in the literature review. I will discuss the State Department's Foreign Service workforce diversity statistics and look at the composition of the Foreign Service over the years. I will discuss the State Department's DEIA Strategic Plan and the things it is doing to diversify the Foreign Service. I will also analyze existing qualitative

and quantitative data regarding the U.S. Department of State's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service using Kotter's 8-step change model.

The GAO and OIG reports cover the U.S. Department of State's workforce overtime, promotion rates, barriers to diversity, weaknesses in the State Department's DEIA efforts regarding the Foreign Service, and what the State Department is doing well regarding its DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. The U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service workforce has grown more diverse over time but still faces longstanding diversity issues (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The GAO found that the promotion rates for historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups from 2002 to 2018 were generally lower than for Whites. Additionally, the GAO found that historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups and women were underrepresented in the senior ranks of the Foreign Service. The State Department needs to improve its barrier analysis process and methodology for identifying potential barriers because its analyses vary in depth and have methodological weaknesses (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The State Department does not have performance measures that track the outcomes or progress toward its DEIA goals. It also faces challenges in collecting information on marginalized groups, measuring progress, and enhancing accountability (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b; U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). Figure 4 below shows the types, frequency, and number of diversity issues identified by the Department of State for the fiscal years 2009-2018. Figure 5 below shows the GAO's assessment of the Department of State's

actions (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The department is good at addressing employee involvement and diversity training. They are generally addressing leadership commitment, recruitment, and succession planning. They are partially addressing measurement and accountability.

Figure 4 Types, Frequency, and Number of Diversity Issues Identified by the Department of State, Fiscal Years 2009-2018

Type of diversity issue	Fiscal year										Total times identified
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the senior ranks	—	—	—	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Underrepresentation of Women in the senior ranks	✓ ^a	—	—	—	—	—	✓	—	—	—	2
Underrepresentation of African Americans in the senior ranks	—	✓	—	—	—	✓	—	—	—	—	2
Underrepresentation of Native American/Pacific Islander/Alaskan Natives	—	—	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Underrepresentation of women in Foreign Service	—	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Underrepresentation of African Americans in the Foreign Service	✓	—	—	✓	—	✓	—	—	—	—	3
Underrepresentation of minorities in the senior ranks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	4
Underrepresentation of Hispanics	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	✓	✓	—	6
Underrepresentation of individuals with disabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	8
Higher attrition of women in a particular bureau	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	✓	1
Higher attrition of minorities in a particular bureau	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	✓	1
Total issues identified	5	5	5	6	2	3	2	2	1	2	33

Legend: ✓ = identified in Management Directive 715 (MD-715) report for the fiscal year, — = not identified in MD-715 report for the fiscal year.
 Source: GAO analysis of Department of State MD-715 reports for fiscal years 2009 through 2019. | GAO-20-515T
^aIn 2009, State's MD-715 report cited underrepresentation of African American and Hispanic females in the senior ranks.

Figure 5 GAO's Assessment of Department of State's Actions Compared to Leading Practices for Diversity and Inclusion Management

Leading practice	Definition	GAO overall rating
Employee involvement	The contribution of employees in driving diversity throughout an organization	●
Diversity training	Organizational efforts to inform and educate management and staff about diversity	●
Leadership commitment	A vision of diversity demonstrated and communicated throughout an organization by top-level management	◐
Recruitment	The process of attracting a supply of qualified, diverse applicants	◐
Succession planning	An ongoing, strategic process for identifying and developing a diverse pool of future leaders	◐
Accountability	The means to ensure that leaders are responsible for diversity by linking their performance assessment to the progress of diversity initiatives	◑
Measurement	A set of quantitative and qualitative measures that assess the effect of various aspects of an overall diversity program	◑

Legend: ●—Address: all steps addressed. ◐—Generally address: half or more of the steps addressed. ◑—Partially address: fewer than half of the steps addressed. ○—Do not address: all steps not addressed.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State and GAO leading practices for diversity and inclusion management. | GAO-22-106150

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), a professional association representing the U.S. Foreign Service, has published diversity statistics for the State Department's permanent workforce from 2018 to the present (*Foreign Service Statistics*, n.d.). The State Department's Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) provided the AFSA with the diversity statistics. The statistics focus on the following races and ethnicities: African American, American Indian, Asian, multi-race, Native Hawaiian, White, unspecified for race, Hispanic, non-Hispanic, and unspecified for ethnicity. The proportion of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups in the State Department's Foreign Service grew from 17 percent in 2002 to 24 percent in 2018 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). In September 2018, as seen in Figure 12 below, 5.5% of Foreign Service (FS) Generalists and 8.7% of FS Specialists were African American, 0.3% of FS Generalists and 0.4% of FS Specialists were American Indian, 6.8% of FS Generalists and 5.7% of FS Specialists were Asian, 4.0% of FS Generalists and 5.7% of FS Specialists were multi-race, 0.0% of FS Generalists and 0.1% of FS Specialists were Native Hawaiian, 81.2% of FS Generalists and 75.2% of FS Specialists were White, 1.9% of FS Generalists and 3.8% of FS Specialists were unspecified for race, 6.2% of FS Generalists and 9.7% of FS Specialists were Hispanic, 93.6% of FS Generalists and 89.8% of FS Specialists were non-Hispanic, and 0.0% of FS Generalists and 0.4% of FS Specialists were unspecified for ethnicity. In September 2024, as seen in Figure 6 below, 6.7% of FS Generalists and 10.1% of FS Specialists were African American, 0.6% of FS Generalists and 1.0% of FS Specialists were American Indian, 7.8% of FS Generalists and 7.9% of FS Specialists were Asian, 4.5% of FS Generalists and 4.6% of FS Specialists were multi-race, 0.1% of FS Generalists and 0.4% of FS

Specialists were Native Hawaiian, 78.4% of FS Generalists and 72.3% of FS Specialists were White, 1.9% of FS Generalists and 3.8% of FS Specialists were unspecified for race, 7.9% of FS Generalists and 11.9% of FS Specialists were Hispanic, 92.0% of FS Generalists and 87.9% of FS Specialists were non-Hispanic, and 0.1% of FS Generalists and 0.2% of FS Specialists were unspecified for ethnicity. As seen below in Figures 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, the U.S. Foreign Service is slowly becoming more diverse. The State Department still has much work to do to make the Foreign Service more diverse and representative of the U.S. population.

Figure 6 U.S. Department of State Fulltime Permanent Workforce Diversity 09-30-2024

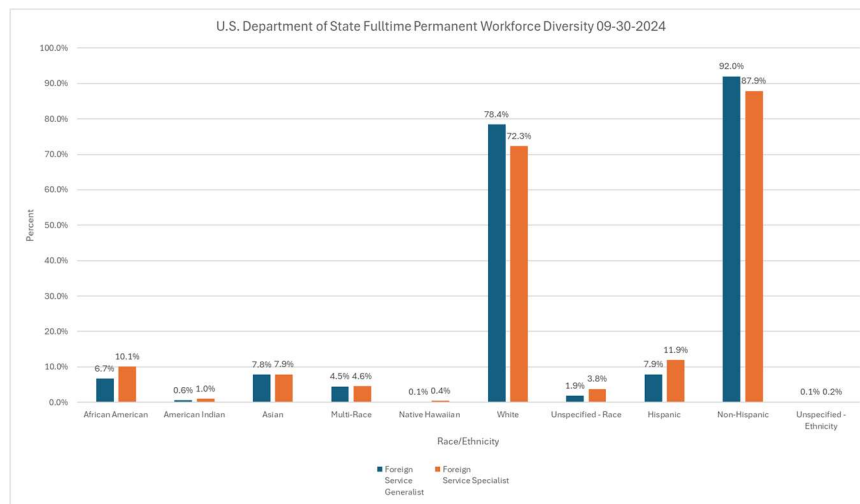


Figure 7 U.S. Department of State Fulltime Permanent Workforce Diversity 09-30-2023

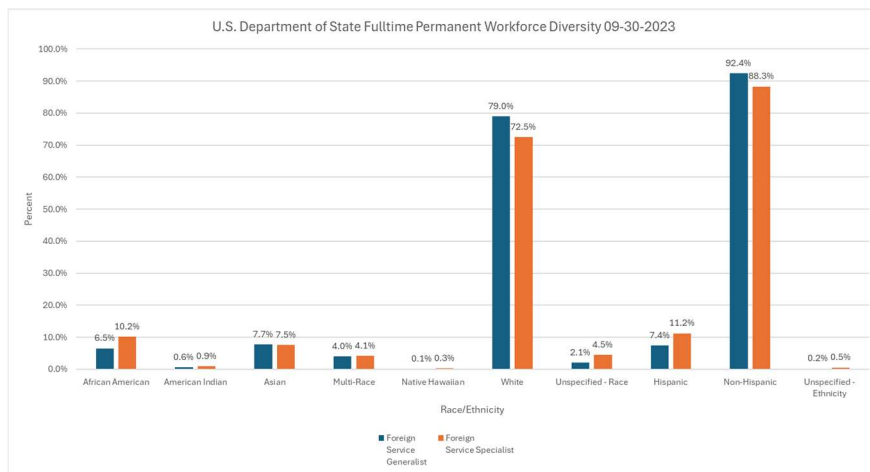


Figure 8 U.S. Department of State Fulltime Permanent Workforce Diversity 09-30-2022

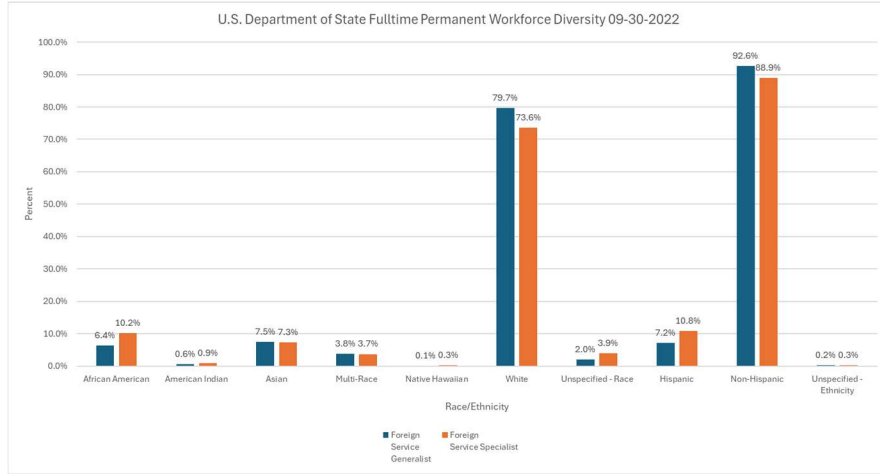


Figure 9 U.S. Department of State Fulltime Permanent Workforce Diversity 09-30-2021

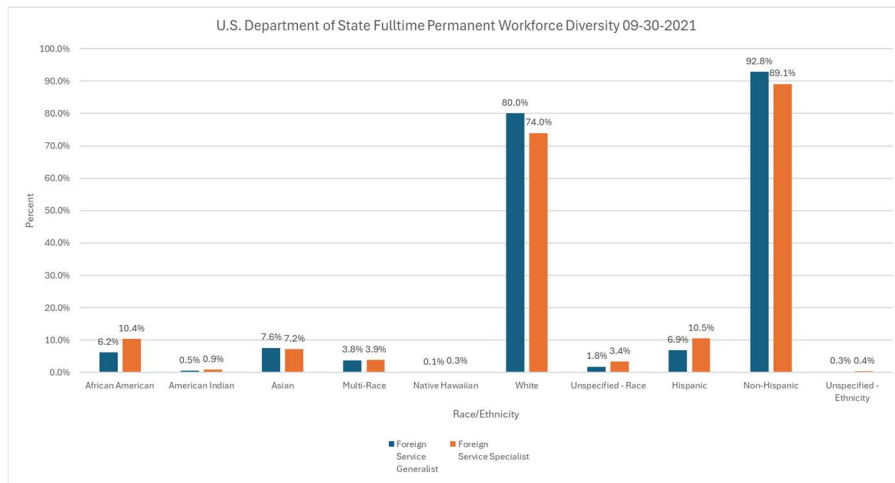


Figure 10 U.S. Department of State Fulltime Permanent Workforce Diversity 09-30-2020

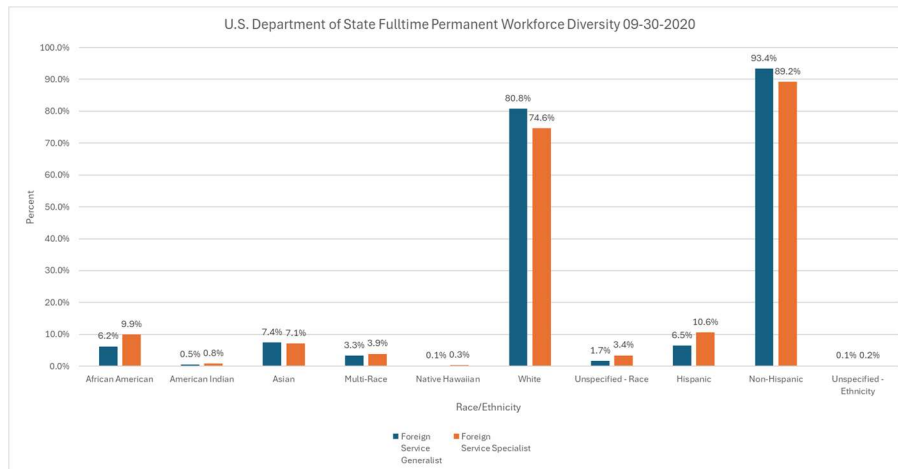


Figure 11 U.S. Department of State Fulltime Permanent Workforce Diversity 09-30-2019

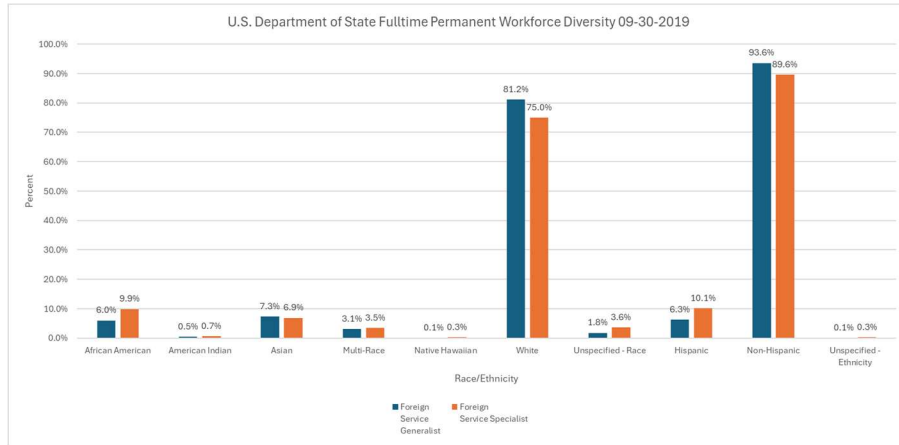
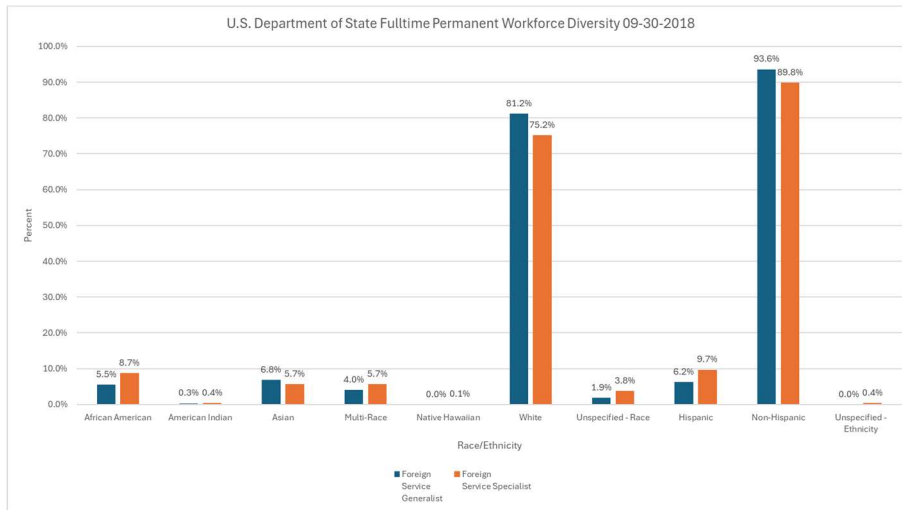


Figure 12 U.S. Department of State Fulltime Permanent Workforce Diversity 09-30-2018



During the Biden Administration, the State Department created a DEIA Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026 in response to Executive Order 14035 on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce (Office of the Spokesperson, 2022). Secretary Blinken appointed Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley as the State Department’s first stand-alone Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) and created the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (S/ODI). The CDIO will work with department leaders to achieve the specific priorities, goals, and objectives outlined in the DEIA Strategic Plan and ensure transparency and accountability. S/ODI will work on making the State Department more diverse, equitable,

inclusive, and accessible. The plan was made using 700 comments from civil and foreign service employees, locally employed staff, contractors, and eligible family member employees (U.S. Department of State Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, n.d.).

The goals for diversity in the DEIA Strategic Plan are to use an evidence-based approach to identify barriers to equitable career outcomes and to formalize DEIA expectations for all employees (U.S. Department of State Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, n.d.). The goals for equity are to recruit a workforce that reflects America's diversity, improve transparency and equity in advancement processes, and retain and advance a diverse and high-performing workforce. The goals for inclusion are to improve inclusivity by informing and training the workforce, advance transparency and equity in professional development opportunities, and make overseas service more inclusive. The goals for accessibility are to strengthen accountability policies and processes to prevent and eliminate discrimination, harassment, bullying, and toxic management, create a more accessible and disability-inclusive workplace, and create more respect and a culture of accessibility for religious diversity and religious minorities. This plan is a good start, and the State Department is working on increasing its diversity overall.

The State Department launched a playbook that prioritizes disability rights and accessibility within its workforce and across its diplomatic mission in November 2024 (Heckman, 2024c). It was developed by Sara Minkara, the department's Special Advisor on International Disability Rights, along with employees at the U.S. Embassy in Lima, Peru. According to Minkara, people with disabilities are too often excluded from critical conversations within the State Department's diplomatic mission because of accessibility issues related to communication, technology, and narrative (Heckman, 2024c). The lack of accessibility makes it harder for those with disabilities to participate in important conversations. Approximately 8% of

the State Department's full-time permanent FSOs and 12% of FSO specialists have a disability (Heckman, 2024c). About 72% of Foreign Service facilities and 56% of Foreign Service office buildings were substantially or fully accessible to individuals with disabilities as of January 2023 (Heckman, 2024c). The playbook shows employees how to incorporate disability issues into their work and outlines how accessibility intersects with U.S. foreign policy. The suggestions in the playbook are straightforward, scalable, standardized, and based on experiences and lessons learned from the field. The playbook is expected to be released to the public in December 2024. This playbook will also help preserve some of the Biden administration's work on DEIA as the State Department prepares for a change in administration.

The State Department increased its recruiting activities, expanded eligibility for certain things to improve retention, and created new units dedicated to finding and retaining talent during the Biden Administration (McKeon, 2022). The State Department's Recruitment Division conducted over 3,000 recruiting activities with over 900 events targeting DEIA prospects. The Recruitment Division engaged with over 15,000 individual prospects at these DEIA-focused recruiting events. A 500-person Volunteer Recruiter Corps with representation from all affinity groups was established and participated in more than 150 recruiting events. The State Department also works with Congress to authorize, and fund paid internships. They have also expanded remote work and telework eligibility and student loan repayment eligibility criteria. They also established the first Veterans Services Coordinator position to support the veterans working at the State Department. They created a Retention Team to review data, talk to the workforce to understand why they are staying or leaving, and develop the first Department-wide retention strategy. They also established a Talent Sourcing Unit so the State Department can effectively identify, reach, and target individuals for recruitment, especially in fields requiring

specialized skills. They also held their first department-only career fair focused on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and engaging diverse candidates. The State Department is working on making its workforce more diverse but must also work on its commitment to DEIA.

Commitment to DEIA varies within the State Department. A U.S. Government Accountability Office (2022a) report found that most State Department employee organizations have favorable views of senior leadership commitment to DEIA. However, their views declined substantially for bureau leadership, managers, and supervisors. Ambassador Mari Carmen Aponte and Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley both agree that the State Department's internal evaluation system is designed to put little value on equal employment opportunity (EEO), and that causes women and people of color to be underrepresented within the State Department (Bettinger-Lopez & Turkington, 2020). State Department leadership must pressure the rest of the department to take EEO seriously, or it will not be taken seriously. Lack of diversity undermines the State Department's efficacy and affects FSO retention. Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley, who is African American, and Ambassador Aponte, who is Puerto Rican, emphasized the importance of professional and personal networks in advancing opportunity and boosting morale, especially when the foreign affairs community is not that diverse and lacks representation (Bettinger-Lopez & Turkington, 2020). Through her involvement in diverse organizations, Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley expressed that she felt a sense of inclusion and affirmation that she was not the only person in the State Department and the foreign affairs community who looked the way she did and when she had doubts about staying with the State Department, her network inspired her to stay (Bettinger-Lopez & Turkington, 2020). Today, more networks in foreign policy are available for women and people

of color, such as Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation and the Diversity in National Security Network (Bettinger-Lopez & Turkington, 2020). The State Department also has thirty-five employee organizations that encourage individualism and support employees from various backgrounds (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-a).

The State Department has been working on increasing the proportion of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups in the Foreign Service. The State Department funded the following academic fellowship programs: the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Graduate Fellowship Program (established in 1992), the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program (established in 2002), the Foreign Affairs Information Technology (FAIT) Fellowship, and the William D. Clarke, Sr. Diplomatic Security (Clarke DS) Fellowship (Kopp, 2021; Heckman, 2022). They provide financial support, mentoring, professional development, and assistance to students interested in pursuing a Foreign Service career. These fellowships help attract top talent and increase the diversity of the department workforce. One in nine active FSOs was a Rangel or Pickering fellow, the number of FSO generalists from underrepresented backgrounds has increased by 33%, and about 65% of all FAIT fellows come from underrepresented backgrounds (Heckman, 2022). The State Department also sends recruiters known as diplomats in residence to historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs). Foreign Service entry procedures were also modified to increase the chances of minority candidates getting to the oral assessment.

The State Department is working on making itself more accessible. The Foreign Service application process is now entirely online, so candidates do not need to travel to Washington, D.C. for an interview (Blinken, 2024). They are making the bidding process for senior positions, including deputy assistant secretaries, more equitable and transparent (Blinken, 2024). They are

also working on creating a pipeline for leaders with disabilities (Blinken, 2024). The State Department opened its Access Center in 2020 to provide assistive technology to employees with disabilities (Heckman, 2024c). The Access Center's assistive technology includes ergonomic computer mice and keyboards, screen magnifiers, assistive listening devices, and deaf-to-hearing communication systems (Heckman, 2024c). Supervisors and managers can use the center to better understand their employees' workplace needs (Heckman, 2024c).

The State Department changed its minimum medical qualification standard in March 2023 for career Foreign Service applicants to advance its commitment to hire a workforce more representative of society (Office of the Spokesperson, 2023). The department also paid over \$37 million to settle claims of disability discrimination as part of its settlement of a lawsuit that spanned nearly two decades after the department rejected or delayed hiring more than 230 individuals who were not able to get a “Class 1” or “Worldwide Available” medical clearance (Heckman, 2024c). The revised minimum medical qualification standard will only determine whether an applicant is medically qualified for hire (Office of the Spokesperson, 2023). It will not define or limit the posts the applicant can serve (Office of the Spokesperson, 2023). This change will give people with disabilities more opportunities to pursue a Foreign Service career.

There have been times when the State Department was more successful at hiring people from historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups and times when it was less successful. Hiring for the Foreign Service increased from 2001 to 2004 and again from 2009 to 2012, but minority hiring did not increase (Kopp, 2021). There was a smaller percentage of Black FSOs in the Foreign Service in 2015 than in 1987. Hispanic, Asian American, and female FSOs all did better. The department also had a hiring freeze from January 23, 2017, to May 15, 2018, contributing to the staff deficit. Due to pressure from Congress, the State Department brought on

60 Pickering and Rangel fellows during the hiring freeze to increase the number of minorities at the entry-level. During the Biden Administration, the State Department increased hiring. It is hiring about 1,000 new employees for the Foreign Service (Heckman, 2024b). Congress cut the State Department's overall budget by about 7% in its fiscal 2024 spending deal, so they will have to slow down hiring efforts, but they still plan on hiring above their attrition rate (Heckman, 2024a; Heckman, 2024b). The people the department hired during the last four years come from more than 500 different colleges and universities and come from all 50 states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The U.S. Department of State's Office of Inspector General (2023) has identified issues with the State Department's accountability policies and processes. The OIG found that sexual harassment was likely underreported in the State Department. The department did take steps to address sexual harassment, but they lacked coordination and guidance on the investigative and disciplinary process for sexual harassment reports. The OIG also found that the department lacked data on the consistency of the investigative and disciplinary process. The State Department conducted an inaugural agency-wide climate survey on DEIA in April and May 2022 that received over 8,600 employee responses (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). The survey found that most respondents believed that discrimination, harassment, and bullying are underreported in the State Department and that there is little accountability when reported (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). Furthermore, employees are less likely to report discrimination, harassment, and bullying if they think the person responsible will not be held accountable (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023).

The State Department is working on increasing transparency in department accountability mechanisms (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). The department is issuing an annual report on its actions to fix systems and practices that enable discrimination and harassment, as well as telling the workforce how the State Department's discipline program holds employees who engage in bullying, harassment, and discrimination accountable. The department also informs harassment victims whether their complaints were substantiated, referred for consideration of discipline, or both. The department is working on publishing yearly statistics on the number of EEO complaints that end in settlement and the types of remedies and substantiated acts of discrimination and harassment organized by the bureau. They are also assembling a working group to review all harassment policies and Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) guidance.

The State Department is also working on expanding and strengthening mechanisms for employees so they can report problematic behavior and avoid retaliation (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). All embassies have medical services units that have sexual assault training and kits. The department is working on identifying barriers to expanding the department's Family Advocacy Program to provide on-site victim advocacy support to domestic violence survivors. The department is developing an anti-bullying program in which employees can report toxic management practices that do not have an EEO basis. It also aims to figure out how to mitigate the risk of retaliation against employees involved in an EEO complaint. It is piloting a channel employees can use to report management issues to their bureau front offices without fear of retaliation. The department is also looking into increasing the number of department-employed investigators for its EEO and anti-harassment programs to

shorten timelines for department investigations related to discrimination, harassment, and other misconduct.

Applications of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

The State Department is working on the first step of Kotter's 8-step change model: creating urgency. President Biden, Secretary Blinken, members of Congress, and FSOs have expressed the importance of DEIA in the Foreign Service. The proportion of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups in the State Department's Foreign Service grew from 17 percent in 2002 to 24 percent in 2018 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). According to the Foreign Service Statistics (n.d.), the proportion of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups in the State Department's Foreign Service is slowly growing more diverse. However, not all previous presidential administrations considered DEIA a priority, and that could have caused the State Department not to prioritize DEIA in the past. This possibly caused the current Foreign Service to struggle with DEIA and not be that diverse. While it is great that the current administration considers it a priority, it will take time to see the changes they want to see. Future presidential administrations, Secretaries of State, members of Congress, and FSOs will need to continue prioritizing DEIA so the Foreign Service becomes more diverse quickly in the future. While the current Biden Administration was able to create urgency for DEIA in the Foreign Service, it is possible that the incoming Trump Administration will not prioritize DEIA in the Foreign Service. For the Foreign Service to become more diverse, there needs to be more consistent support for DEIA, and that can be hard to achieve because presidential administrations can change every four or eight years, and the next administration can decide not to prioritize DEIA.

The State Department is working on building a coalition. As for building a coalition, the State Department currently has the support of critical stakeholders essential for implementing DEIA initiatives, such as President Biden, Secretary Blinken, the current CDIO Zakiya Carr Johnson, and the current Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Global Talent Marcia Bernicat (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). The State Department's Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR) also advocates for changes to overcome barriers restricting EEO (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). GTM and S/ODI work together to advance DEIA and DEIA-related policies within the State Department. Also, some bureaus have launched bureau-level initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion, like the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs' Driving Diversity, Growth, and Excellence initiative and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Diversity Working Group initiative (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a). Due to a lack of information on how GTM and S/ODI work together with other bureaus, it is difficult to determine how successful the State Department is at building a coalition. It is also up to individual bureaus to promote DEIA and diversify their bureaus.

The State Department has a clear vision and is working on communicating it and empowering others. The State Department's vision is the DEIA Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026. The strategic plan is clear about its goals and its strategies and actions to achieve them. There was a DEIA Strategic Plan for 2016 to 2020, but no document is available online (Under Secretary for Management, 2019). I have not been able to find DEIA strategic plans for the State Department in past years. The department also launched a playbook that prioritizes disability rights and accessibility within its workforce in November 2024 (Heckman, 2024c). The State Department communicates its vision through speeches, press releases, social media, and State

Magazine. The State Department also communicates its vision and empowers others by offering specialized diversity and inclusion training on anti-harassment, antidiscrimination, unconscious bias, and equal employment opportunity and diversity awareness (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). Based on Ambassador Aponte and Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley's experiences, the State Department struggled with empowering others in the past because they both felt like the internal evaluation system put little value on EEO, and they relied on outside support when they felt like they did not belong at the State Department. The department now supports thirty-five employee organizations representing the staff's DEIA interests (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-a). The department also now has an Office of Diversity and Inclusion that is working on making the department more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

The State Department is working on creating quick wins, building on the change, and embedding the change. Some quick wins are the DEIA Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026, creating the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, establishing the CDIO position, and being good at addressing employee involvement and diversity training. These quick wins help build momentum and motivate people to work harder on DEIA initiatives. They have built on the change by increasing recruiting activities, expanding eligibility for certain things to improve retention, and creating new units dedicated to finding and retaining talent during the Biden Administration (McKeon, 2022). They have also built on change by moving the FSO application process entirely online, making the bidding process for senior positions more equitable and transparent, opening the Access Center in 2020 to provide assistive technology to employees with disabilities, and making its minimum medical qualification standard more inclusive (Blinken, 2024; Heckman, 2024c). The department is working on increasing transparency in

department accountability mechanisms, expanding and strengthening mechanisms for employees to report problematic behavior and avoid retaliation, and shortening timelines for department investigations related to discrimination, harassment, and other misconduct (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). The State Department has recently started focusing more on DEIA because of President Biden's Executive Order 14035. These DEIA initiatives are new and ongoing, so it will take time to see results. The current State Department leadership is working on embedding changes. They created a Retention Team and a Talent Sourcing Unit to see how they can recruit new talent and retain their current workforce. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is also there to help embed DEIA in the organization's culture.

Brief Implications

To have a more diverse Foreign Service, the State Department must have the support of key stakeholders, make an effort to reach out to a more diverse range of candidates, ensure people from historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups feel supported at the State Department, and make the Foreign Service more accessible. The department must also hold employees who engage in bullying, harassment, and discrimination accountable. Otherwise, people from historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups will not feel like they belong in the State Department's Foreign Service and will consider leaving (Bettinger-Lopez & Turkington, 2020).

Recommendations for the State Department

The State Department's Foreign Service can become more diverse and inclusive by addressing barriers to diversity, creating a climate for change, empowering others, and embedding DEIA in its organization. There are improvements the State Department can make to its DEIA efforts.

There are a variety of recommendations structured around Kotter's 8-step change model. The recommendations are for the State Department, GAO, OIG, GTM, S/ODI, and S/OCR.

President Biden, Secretary Blinken, members of Congress, and FSOs have expressed the importance of DEIA in the Foreign Service. Their support helps create urgency and makes the State Department prioritize DEIA. Consistent support for DEIA is needed so that the State Department's DEIA efforts will continue, and the Foreign Service will become more diverse quickly in the future. A recommendation is that the State Department, GAO, and/or OIG should have data-driven evidence showing how the underrepresentation of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups and lack of DEIA efforts negatively impact the State Department, the Foreign Service, and organizational effectiveness. This can be statistics on disparities in recruitment, retention, and promotion. They should also have data-driven evidence that shows how DEIA positively impacts the State Department, the Foreign Service, and organizational effectiveness. The department can do an annual agency-wide climate survey on DEIA to see how their DEIA efforts are progressing and ask State Department employees about their workplace experiences (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). The State Department, GAO, and/or OIG can also highlight the benefits of a diverse Foreign Service, such as increased cultural competency, strengthened decision-making, innovation, and diverse perspectives (Bettinger-Lopez & Turkington, 2020). The State Department should work on normalizing conversations about DEIA and create forums for open dialogue on the experiences and challenges FSOs face and potential solutions. The State Department can also hold department-wide town halls or send surveys to discuss the urgency of addressing DEIA issues in the Foreign Service.

While the State Department currently has the support of critical stakeholders essential for implementing DEIA initiatives, it needs to work on building a coalition (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). It is the S/ODI's responsibility to make the State Department more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible. A recommendation is that S/ODI works with other bureaus to create a cross-functional DEIA task force that includes State Department leadership committed to change, FSOs from underrepresented groups, and DEIA advisors. This task force can work together to create, monitor, and implement DEIA initiatives that can help diversify the Foreign Service. Another recommendation is that S/ODI works to create coalitions within bureaus or at a specific location. The State Department has 270 embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic missions worldwide, so it could be easier to work and build coalitions with people you are physically close to (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-b).

The State Department's DEIA Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026 clearly envisions change. The plan outlines its goals and strategies and actions to achieve them. One recommendation is to continue using feedback from civil and foreign service employees, locally employed staff, contractors, and eligible family member employees for future DEIA Strategic Plans. Another recommendation is to emphasize how DEIA strengthens U.S. diplomatic efforts and helps the State Department's mission. If possible, the State Department should highlight successful examples of DEIA initiatives. GTM, S/ODI, and S/OCR can also work together to release guidance for DEIA initiatives so bureaus can better understand what they should and should not be doing.

The State Department communicates its vision through speeches, press releases, social media, and State Magazine. It also offers specialized diversity and inclusion training. The department can expand its communication of its vision by providing regular updates through

internal newsletters, internal messages, video messages, and employee forums. Currently, the general State Department workforce does not think senior leadership supports DEIA efforts (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). In contrast, the State Department senior leadership believes they strongly support DEIA efforts (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). The department should train State Department leadership, managers, and supervisors to reinforce and emphasize its DEIA vision in their communications and actions.

The State Department struggled with empowering others in the past but is improving. It empowers others by offering specialized diversity and inclusion training and supporting thirty-five employee organizations representing the staff's DEIA interests (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b; U.S. Department of State, n.d.-a). The State Department should provide resources to underrepresented groups, like mentorship programs, professional development, training, support groups, and more. They should expand the kind of training they offer and include cultural competency and inclusive leadership training. They should also create a safe environment for employees to voice concerns or report issues. The State Department needs to do a better job at holding people accountable by developing and implementing additional actions to enhance accountability for workplace DEIA goals, including for managers and supervisors, such as analyzing the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The lack of accountability discourages employees from voicing concerns or reporting issues (U.S. Department of State Office of Inspector General, 2023). The department is addressing this by deploying new DEIA-specific competency requirements in July 2024 for supervisors, which are advancing and integrating the department's DEIA goals, cultural sensitivities, and respect for individual differences, as well as building diverse collaborative

networks (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a). The GAO is monitoring the department's process on this. They should also encourage more FSOs to create and participate in DEIA initiatives so that no one feels isolated and that more FSOs support DEIA initiatives.

The State Department has some quick wins and should work on getting more. Quick wins help build momentum and motivate people to work harder on DEIA initiatives. The department should set achievable short-term goals that can show immediate progress. They can partner with more HBCUs, HSIs, and minority-serving institutions so they can recruit for the Foreign Service at their career fairs. They can also partner with more public and state universities to recruit. The department can also acknowledge and award inclusive behaviors and contributions to DEIA to motivate more people to be more inclusive.

The State Department is currently building on change by increasing recruiting activities, expanding eligibility for certain things to improve retention, and creating new units dedicated to finding and retaining talent during the Biden Administration (McKeon, 2022). A recommendation is that S/ODI should establish quantitative and qualitative performance measures for the State Department's DEIA-related goals and objectives in the workplace and develop a process to evaluate progress (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a). They can evaluate the effectiveness of their recruitment activities and expand them to more schools, job fairs, and other events. They should do an annual survey to get feedback from civil and foreign service employees, locally employed staff, contractors, and eligible family member employees on DEIA initiatives to see how much process is being made, what they are doing right, and what they are doing wrong. The State Department also needs to improve its barrier analysis process to ensure all the steps of the process are followed (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a). As of July 2024, the department is working on addressing this by

providing guidance and Standard Operating Procedures to guide the department's barrier analyses. The department should also improve its statistical methodology to ensure it is appropriate for identifying potential barriers to DEIA (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a).

The State Department is working on embedding change. One recommendation is that they can incorporate DEIA training into onboarding, professional development programs, and leadership development programs. They can also make DEIA a key metric in organizational reports. They can also be more consistent with creating and releasing a DEIA Strategic Plan in the future. The State Department can also conduct audits on their DEIA efforts and use third-party evaluators to assess their DEIA initiatives' effectiveness. The evaluators can also make recommendations if improvements are needed. The department can also work on normalizing conversations about DEIA and create forums for open dialogue on challenges FSOs face and potential solutions. This will also encourage FSOs to speak up about their experiences and ideas. Another recommendation is that the State Department hold department leaders accountable for meeting DEIA goals by tying them to performance reviews. GTM, S/ODI, and S/OCR should also work on officially embedding the goals, actions, and strategies in the DEIA Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026 into the State Department's organizational culture so they can withstand future presidential administrations that may not prioritize DEIA.

Conclusion

This policy report sheds light on the State Department's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service. Although the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service has grown more diverse over the years, it still faces longstanding diversity issues, such as the underrepresentation of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups in the senior ranks, struggling to identify barriers to

diversity, and struggling with measuring progress and enhancing accountability (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1989a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2020b; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022b). The findings show that the State Department has been working on diversifying its Foreign Service. There have been times when it has been more successful and times when it has been less successful. The current Biden Administration has emphasized the importance of DEIA and influenced the State Department to prioritize DEIA. The State Department and future presidential administrations must continue prioritizing DEIA so the Foreign Service can become more diverse.

For this policy report, I solely relied on secondary data and existing information. While that kind of information was helpful and insightful, it might not fully represent the experiences and challenges FSOs from historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups face. The GAO reports were from 1989, 2020, and 2022. The OIG report was from 2023. The data and information were limited to specific years. It would be helpful if GAO and OIG did reports more consistently over the years so organizations and policy practitioners can see if there are similarities or differences between the reports. The GAO and OIG reports also lacked information regarding recruitment, academic fellowship programs, and internships. Recruitment, academic fellowship programs, and internships have helped diversify the State Department and the Foreign Service, so having more data and information on them would be helpful. Interviews and surveys must also be conducted with FSOs from historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups so organizations and policy practitioners can learn about their experiences at the State Department and how they can improve DEIA.

Diversifying the Foreign Service is not easy and will take time to achieve. There needs to be continuous support for DEIA so the Foreign Service can continue to become more diverse. A diverse Foreign Service is needed to face global challenges. This report supports the State Department's DEIA efforts for the Foreign Service by offering a structured analysis and actionable recommendations.

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