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# FIRST GENERATION PROFESSIONALS (FGP) INITIATIVE

*Designed to Unlock and Unleash  
FGPs' Full Potential*

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# What is a First Generation Professional?

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For the purpose of this initiative, we have a starting point definition:

- ❖ A First Generation Professional (FGP) is the “First” in his/her immediate family to obtain a 4-year college degree and/or to obtain a higher level professional position than what was held by either parent.
- ❖ This definition will be explored and likely expanded or reshaped based on a literature review and focus group research with individuals who identify as First Generation Professionals within the Department of Commerce and some partnering agencies.



# What Got You Here May Not Get You There!

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*“You are not judged by the height you have risen but from the depth you have climbed.”*

*Frederick Douglas*



# What is Driving this Initiative?

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- ❖ Research shows that First Generation College Students experience a myriad of challenges navigating their academic career because they did not have access to or benefit from 1) parents who successfully navigated college before them or 2) the social and cultural capital (networks) acquired by their parents that could help them succeed on the college campus.
- ❖ We believe that this may be true for First Generation College Students who then become First Generation Professionals (FGP). Some FGPs, particularly those who hail from *lower socio-economic conditions*, may face individual challenges and institutional barriers that impact their career success.



# Expanding Inclusion Analysis Paradigm

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- ❖ Expanding barrier analyses efforts to examine workforce inclusion through a broader lens that includes socio-economic (SES) class and/or the intersection of SES and primary diversity characteristics (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc.).



# Do Differences in Socio-Economic Status have an Effect on Employee Success and Inclusion in the Workplace?

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*For now, here are our research drivers*

- ❖ Research reveals that traversing different socio-economic and cultural contexts may be more challenging for FGPs who lacked the benefit of professional parents and/or immediate family members, “prep” programs, or other exposure that may have helped them successfully access and navigate the workplace.

*“...Disadvantaged undergraduates’ low stocks of capital—economic and cultural—hamper their ability to integrate into, and successfully navigate, their universities.”*

Source: Jack, Anthony Abraham. “Culture Shock revisited: The Social and Cultural Contingencies of Class Marginality”



# Does Differences in Socio-Economic Status have an Effect on Employee Success and Inclusion in the Workplace?

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- ❖ Studies conducted by Payne and Krabill conclude the extent to which an employee fits in and achieves success within an organization depends largely on how their resources, connections (relationships) and hidden rules mesh with the resources, connections and hidden rules of the organization.

*“From childhood, we learn behaviors and hidden rules necessary for survival in our economic classes.”*



# Potential Individual Barriers

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- ❖ Lack of awareness and understanding of the “unwritten rules”
- ❖ Lack of awareness on how to tap into and leverage networks
- ❖ Managing Self Efficacy/Building Professional Confidence





# Potential Institutional Barriers

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- ❖ Recruitment Bias
- ❖ Cultural Fit, Competencies, and Capacity Bias
- ❖ Inclusive Networking Opportunities



# What We Hope to Discover through the Data...

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- ❖ The FGPs' experiences in the professional workplace and challenges they may face
- ❖ Any specific biases, policies, or practices that may impact FGPs' inclusion and/or career ascension
- ❖ Strategies needed to address potential barriers identified through the data collection—both on an individual and institutional/organizational level
- ❖ Which group of FGPs can benefit from the initiative?
  - New entrants to Federal Service
  - Certain grade levels/occupations



# What We Hope to Discover through the Data...

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- ❖ Needs that may differ from those addressed through other leadership development programs
- ❖ How do we destigmatize any stigma that may be associated with the group identification as we implement the initiative



# FGP Initiative Acknowledgments

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- ❖ Cohort of FGPs, EEO and D&I practitioners from several federal agencies who helped provide a framework for the initiative
- ❖ Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- ❖ Census Bureau



# Questions/Feedback

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