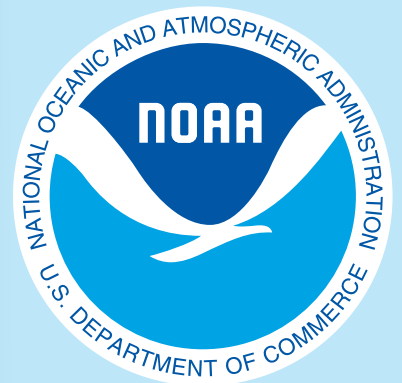


# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY **STRATEGIC PLAN**

OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH (OAR)



OCTOBER 2021

**Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)  
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility\* Strategic Plan**

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\* Executive order 14035 “Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce” was signed on June 25, 2021. This OAR plan was completed and awaiting final review by leadership at the time EO14035 was signed. OAR acknowledges the importance of addressing issues of access for people with disabilities, and recognizes that many of the goals and objectives outlined in this plan will also provide the opportunity to improve accessibility.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), or “NOAA Research”, provides NOAA with the scientific research foundation necessary to help NOAA achieve its mission to (1) understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans and coasts, (2) share that knowledge and information with others, and (3) conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. OAR enables better forecasts and earlier warnings for natural disasters, a greater understanding of the Earth, and better predictions of environmental processes that affect the health of our natural environment. Our role is to provide unbiased science to better manage the environment nationally and globally. Working in partnership with other organizational units of NOAA, OAR contributes to NOAA’s world leadership in environmental science assuring NOAA is well positioned and organized to provide the sound scientific research policy-makers need.

### OAR’s Mission:

1. Conduct research to understand and predict the Earth system
2. Develop technology to improve NOAA science, service, and stewardship
3. Transition the results so they are useful to society

### OAR’s Vision:

1. Deliver NOAA's future

OAR’s unique role in NOAA’s mission of science, service and stewardship demands a diverse workforce to reflect, understand, and respond to the varied communities and stakeholders we serve. Equally important is an equitable and inclusive work environment that enhances organizational performance. OAR’s sustained commitment to strengthen diversity and equity, and nurture a culture of inclusion, is critical to the success of the preeminent research required to support weather and climate forecasting, understand and predict Earth systems, promote sustainable economic uses of America’s oceans, Great Lakes and coasts, and support communities and ecosystems so they are resilient to inevitable change.

Fostering a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable workforce that reflects society as a whole is a top priority for the Federal Government, and a mission imperative for NOAA. OAR adopts by reference the NOAA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan<sup>1,4</sup> and aims to align this plan with the NOAA goals and objectives. OAR recognizes DEI challenges and opportunities that come with a workforce comprising federal, cooperative institute and contract employees working together at Laboratory, Program and Staff Office worksites across the nation.

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/NOAA%202020-2024%20Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Strategic%20Plan\\_0.pdf](https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/NOAA%202020-2024%20Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Strategic%20Plan_0.pdf)

The OAR Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan is presented in two parts:

1. **OAR DEIA Strategic Plan**
2. **OAR DEIA Implementation Plan**

The OAR DEIA Strategic Plan formalizes OAR’s ongoing commitment to DEI principles, policies, and best practices, while the OAR DEIA Implementation Plan lists specific goals and actions to be achieved during FY22-25. It is expected that the Implementation Plan will be updated periodically to recognize accomplishments, set new objectives, and define additional actions to address areas in need of improvement.

**LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT:**

OAR leadership commits to providing our workforce and job applicants with full and fair opportunities for employment, career advancement, and access to resources and programs. We recognize that diversity is about more than race and gender, and we are committed to and strive to foster an equitable and inclusive culture for everyone. We value the unique differences and shared values of each member of the OAR team.

The principles of diversity, equity and inclusion are core values for OAR. Empowering a workforce that includes diversity of thought, diversity in its people, and diversity in its business practices demonstrates that we are capable of understanding and responding effectively to the needs of our workforce and to our mission. We are committed to creating, promoting, and sustaining a workplace where the talents of all individuals are nurtured, recognized and appreciated.

OAR Leadership is grateful for the efforts of the EEO/Diversity Program Office, Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee (EEOAC), and OAR Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (ODIAC) for their contributions to the development of this OAR DEIA Strategic Plan and OAR DEIA Implementation Plan. The EEO/Diversity Program office and EEOAC have been well-established champions for DEI within OAR. The ODIAC, composed also of volunteer representatives from all Laboratories, Program and Staff Offices was established more recently in 2017.

<b>Craig McLean</b> Assistant Administrator for OAR	<b>David Holst</b> Deputy Assistant Administrator for Programs and Administration (acting)
<b>Gary Matlock</b> Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science	<b>Ko Barrett</b> OAR Senior Advisor for Climate
<b>John Cortinas</b> Director, Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory	<b>Venkatachalam Ramaswamy</b> Director, General Fluid Dynamics Laboratory
<b>Michelle M. McClure</b> Director, Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory	<b>David Fahey</b> Director, Chemical Sciences Laboratory
<b>Jack Kain</b> Director, National Severe Storms Laboratory	<b>James Butler</b> Director, Global Monitoring Laboratory
<b>(vacant)</b> Air Resources Laboratory	<b>Jennifer Mahoney</b> Director, Global Systems Laboratory
<b>Deborah H. Lee</b> Director, Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory	<b>Robert Webb</b> Director, Physical Sciences Laboratory
<b>Jonathan Pennock</b> Director, National Sea Grant College Program	<b>Genevieve Fisher (acting)</b> Director, Ocean Exploration and Research
<b>R. Wayne Higgins</b> Director, Climate Program Office	<b>Dorothy Koch</b> Director, Weather Program Office
<b>David Legler</b> Director, Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing Program	<b>Libby Jewett</b> Director, Ocean Acidification Program

## **OAR Assistant Administrator’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Statement (10/21/21)**

The [OAR Strategy, 2020-2026](#), which you helped us to build, begins with our Mission, Vision, and Values. The first value identified is to Commit to Diversity. Therein, we recognize that “OAR is enriched by diverse perspectives, celebrating each other’s unique experience and expertise.” Supporting and increasing the diversity of our workforce is a top priority for me, OAR Leadership, and NOAA Leadership. Strengthening the culture and broadening the perspectives of our organization are very important commitments. This work is challenging and takes all of us.

The OAR Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan and subsequent Implementation Plan are documents that have been created as guides to bring us all in alignment to work together towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace with specific goals and actions that we will use to monitor our progress. We indeed can work together and embrace, commit to, and act upon the values and identified areas for improvement to move us forward toward a more perfect organization and community. Doing so will help to ensure that our workplace is inclusive and that opportunities for everyone are fair and equitable.

The OAR senior leadership team has approved the OAR DEI Strategic Plan to affirm our support and agreement to work together for the advancement of DEI in OAR. Our commitment is not just to increase the diversity in our ranks, but also to foster a culture that is open, equitable and inclusive for everyone.

A starting point for your individual contributions to DEI in OAR is found in the following guiding principles, offered by our OAR EEO Advisory Committee. These principles are a starting point for your individual contributions towards extending a spirit of inclusion in our work environment, in which everyone can play a meaningful role, and building a work culture and environment in which we can all be proud.

- We will treat each other with respect, always, regardless of rank or grade.
- Every employee deserves a work environment free from discrimination, disrespect, and fear.
- All employees are valued and included for the unique contributions they bring to the organization.
- Leaders and supervisors have a special responsibility to build and preserve this climate and culture of inclusion and mutual respect for all.
- We promote open expression of our individuality and diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity, and respect, and will promote an environment of professionalism in our facilities.
- We seek to resolve workplace conflicts in a prompt, impartial, confidential, nondiscriminatory, and constructive manner, without fear of reprisal, and at the lowest level through open communication.
- People First, Mission Always.
- We will routinely seek to attract diverse talent in our workforce.

The OAR DEI Strategic Plan and the OAR Implementation Plan are working documents that will evolve as we make progress. Please read and familiarize yourself with the actions and goals contained herein. We are on this journey together, and I am confident that we can make our goals for our OAR workplace in diversity, equity, and inclusion a reality. Thank you for all that you do to advance the mission of OAR and to provide for our DE&I success now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Craig N. McLean

Assistant Administrator for Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce is a top priority for the Federal Government and a mission imperative for NOAA and OAR. Empirical studies demonstrate that diversity management is a first step in improving workplace performance, and assuring every individual's sense of inclusion within their organization is necessary to leverage the diversity and maximize productivity. Sabharwal (2014)<sup>2</sup>, for example, found that “productive workplaces exist when employees are encouraged to express their opinions, and their input is sought before making important organizational decisions.”

OAR recognizes the importance and responsibility to “pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of our Government. The Federal Government's goal in advancing equity is to provide everyone with the opportunity to reach their full potential.”<sup>3</sup>

This plan provides a roadmap for building a more equitable and inclusive work environment that expands and leverages diversity to achieve mission goals and business objectives. Inherent to OAR's approach is the reality that diverse workforces require equitable, inclusive environments to thrive. Inclusion requires a culture that connects each team member to the organization and encourages communication, flexibility, and fairness. OAR celebrates diversity throughout the organization and aims to provide a culture in which all individuals are welcomed and encouraged to contribute to their full potential.

For this plan to be successful, adequate financial resources will be required to support implementation of several of the recommended actions, and to measure and document their effectiveness and outcomes.

Strengthening leadership accountability at all levels is critical for sustaining progress toward the diversity, equity, and inclusion goals articulated in this plan. However, successful implementation of the goals and objectives in this plan also requires commitment and contribution from every individual within our organization.

This plan links OAR to the goals and objectives of the NOAA D&I Strategic Plan and incorporates government-wide priorities established by the Office of Personnel Management<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Sabharwal, M. (2014). Is Diversity Management Sufficient? Organizational Inclusion to Further Performance. *Public Personnel Management*, 1, 21.

<sup>3</sup> [Executive Order 13985](#) “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government”

<sup>4</sup> The terms “D&I” and “diversity and inclusion” are used in this document only in reference to content from the NOAA plan or OPM, for consistency with the language used by those sources.

## DEFINING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity is the unique mixture of attributes shaping an individual’s identity that they bring into the workplace. Diversity refers to demographic diversity (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation), experiential diversity (e.g., affinities, hobbies, and abilities), and cognitive diversity (e.g., sensory processing and problem solving).

Inclusion is a culture that values the unique attributes of all team members. It is an environment which is respectful, collaborative, supportive, and one that allows for equitable access. Inclusion requires active and intentional engagement on the part of everyone and provides a feeling of belonging.

The term “equity” means the consistent and systemic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as African Americans, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality (EO 13985<sup>3</sup>). OAR seeks to address systemic barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing opportunities equally to reach their full potential.

## ENVISIONING SUSTAINABLE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

OAR’s vision for diversity, equity and inclusion: A sustainable, equitable, inclusive work environment in which diversity is leveraged to achieve mission goals and business objectives, and to maximize the potential of individuals and the organization.

### SUMMARY OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

GOALS	OBJECTIVES
1. <b>WORKFORCE DIVERSITY:</b> Recruit, train, and develop a diverse, highly-capable workforce at all levels of the agency.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify underrepresented groups and work with Laboratories, Program and Staff Offices to develop staffing plans to ensure diversity is addressed in their staffing plans.</li><li>2. Seek opportunities to engage and attract underrepresented and disabled populations. Enhance relationships with current partners, develop sustained partnerships with minority serving institutions, and promote education and outreach of OAR activities outside of NOAA.</li><li>3. Reduce barriers and biases in the hiring of diverse, highly-qualified candidates.</li></ol>
2. <b>WORKPLACE INCLUSION:</b> Build a work environment that promotes inclusion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Cultivate an inclusive work environment that encourages collaboration and flexibility to empower and engage every OAR team member.</li><li>2. Ensure equitable opportunities for all staff in order to retain a diverse and qualified workforce, and to reinforce a sense of belonging.</li></ol>



	3. Address feelings of exclusion due to variable interpretation and application of the CI, contractor, and foreign national rules and regulations across OAR.
3. <b>SUSTAINABILITY:</b> Build a sustained and adaptive leadership committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive OAR through accountability, data and education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish the OAR Chief of Staff (COS) Office, in collaboration with the EEO/Diversity Program Office, as the OAR stewards for implementing and continually supporting the OAR DEI Strategic and Implementation Plans.</li> <li>2. Expand leadership accountability for managing diversity, equity, and inclusion across OAR.</li> <li>3. Increase the visibility of leaders in diversity-related activities.</li> <li>4. Eradicate racial inequalities and all forms of discrimination and harassment, especially sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH).</li> </ol>

**ASSESSING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

Measuring the impact of various initiatives to improve DEI is often a difficult proposition. To assist agencies with this issue, the Office of Personnel Management has included questions in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey<sup>5</sup> that are used to gauge employee perceptions of D&I within their respective agencies. These measures provide quantitative benchmarks for agencies to use to measure their progress with D&I initiatives. NOAA Federal employee responses to this survey are combined into D&I categories by the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® NOAA Agency Report<sup>6</sup>.

Additionally, OAR recently conducted an enterprise-wide Organizational Health and Culture Assessment<sup>7</sup> that identified strengths and weaknesses with respect to DEI issues. This assessment included responses from non-federal members of the OAR team.

**VALUING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

NOAA is an agency that enriches life through science, and it depends on the cutting-edge science provided by OAR research programs. Our reach goes from the surface of the sun to the depths of the ocean floor as we work to keep the public informed of the changing environment around them. The multiple mission areas that OAR contributes to are rapidly evolving and increasingly complex, and demand higher levels of collective readiness and capabilities across OAR’s workforce. At the same time, the communities NOAA serves are becoming increasingly diverse. OPM describes three tangible benefits to focusing on diversity and inclusion: serving our communities and being socially responsible, increasing innovation, and getting a return on investment. OAR requires these benefits to

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bestplacestowork.org/rankings/detail/CM54>

<sup>7</sup> <https://hub.oar.noaa.gov/Hot-Items/Health-Culture-Assessment.aspx> (internal access only)

sustain our long-term organizational excellence in science, stewardship, and service, and recognizes that the principles of equity are equally important for achieving them.

To provide high-quality, responsive customer service to the public, we need a workforce that reflects American society. A diverse workforce provides exactly this through varied backgrounds, perspectives, knowledge and skills. By diversifying our workforce, we can maximize our performance by leveraging the wealth of lived experiences, different ways of knowing and interpretation, and cultural awareness to maximize OAR's service to NOAA and the Nation. This will provide OAR with stronger capabilities to 1) advance our ability to understand and anticipate changes in the Earth's environment, 2) improve society's ability to make scientifically informed decisions, 3) truly understand and therefore properly serve the American public, and 4) conserve and manage ocean and coastal ecosystems and resources.

## **COMMITTING TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

OAR is fully committed to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels to maximize the potential of individuals within our workforce and the organization as a whole, and to achieve our mission goals and business objectives. In making this commitment, OAR recognizes that all team members (whether federal or non-federal), supervisors, and leaders at all levels play a critical role in realizing this vision. All team members contribute to and support a diverse workforce and inclusive environment by demonstrating respect and integrity with and for each other in every aspect of daily work.

OAR is committed to creating a workforce that is diverse and a culture that is equitable and inclusive. To this end, OAR will focus simultaneously on examining institutional policies, procedures and practices to assure consistency with DEI goals, along with emphasizing the importance of individual participation and accountability. Effectiveness of these efforts and strategies will be enhanced with monitoring and accountability measures to provide data that can drive assessment and future planning. Support for cross-agency education, scholarship, and services can also advance OAR-specific DEI goals.

## **ACHIEVING RESULTS:**

The companion document to the OAR Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan is the OAR Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Implementation Plan. Carrying out the actions listed in the Implementation Plan will be critical to OAR's success in achieving the DEIA Strategic Plan goals. The OAR Chief of Staff will lead the overall implementation of the plans with support and coordination from the OAR EEO/Diversity Program Manager, and with the full support of OAR leadership. Engagement of Laboratory, Program and Staff Office leadership, along with their colleagues and teams, is essential to advance these objectives and implement the proposed actions. Together, the entire OAR workforce in all Laboratories, Program and Staff Offices will need to commit to these DEI goals in order to achieve results. OAR is also fortunate to have two additional committees, the OAR EEOAC and ODIAC, to support implementation efforts, contribute to monitoring, and evaluate data resulting from these actions. These committees are advisory but can make recommendations to OAR leadership for future actions or policy adjustments to consider as progress is made and weaknesses are identified. OAR team members can expect to receive periodic information and reports regarding progress toward the goals outlined in this plan.

**APPENDIX A: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

<b>ROLES</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
Senior OAR Leadership (including Laboratory Directors, Program Directors, and Staff Office leaders)	Champion diversity, equity and inclusion across OAR. Support the effort of the OAR Chief of Staff to implement DEI actions and ensure that organizational systems, policies, and practices necessary for supporting OAR’s diversity, equity, and inclusion vision are integrated into operations.
OAR Chief of Staff	The OAR Chief of Staff is responsible for overseeing the Implementation Plan, and delegating responsibility for action items with coordination and support from the EEO Office/Diversity Program Manager.
EEO Office/Diversity Program Manager	Develop OAR’s DEIA Strategic Plan, and oversee DEI annual report and performance measurements. Coordinate with and support the OAR Chief of Staff in accomplishing Implementation Plan action items. Advise OAR leadership and provide Laboratory, Program, and Staff Offices direction to achieve these OAR DEIA Strategic Plan goals. Establish policies and procedures that directly support plan objectives and ensure compliance with EEO laws and Federal reporting requirements.
Office of Human Capital Services	Provide direction and support in achieving OAR DEIA Strategic Plan goals, to include: leading workforce planning and analysis; hiring; talent management (e.g., training and onboarding); recognition and awards; communication planning; metrics programs; processes; and policies.
All Selection Officials, Hiring Managers, HR Staff, and Recruiters	Comply with diversity hiring and selection principles, and select the best qualified applicant for the job regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, color, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or any other non-merit factor, unless it is targeted recruitment.
OAR EEOAC and ODIAC committees	Support and enhance DEI efforts within OAR. These committees provide advice and recommendations to OAR leadership related to OAR DEI issues, collect data from and report on OAR DEI actions, and provide suggestions for future actions.

Every OAR Team Member	Individually help advance OAR's diversity, equity and inclusion goals by cultivating a culture of belonging, celebrating the value of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and recognizing and mitigating implicit biases.
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## **APPENDIX B: DEFINITION OF ACRONYMS**

AGO -	Acquisition and Grants Office
AISES -	American Indian Science and Engineering Society
CFO/CAO -	Chief Financial Officer/Chief Administrative Officer
CI -	Cooperative Institute
COS -	Chief of Staff
CSC -	Cooperative Science Center
D&I -	Diversity and Inclusion
DEI -	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DEIA -	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
DOC -	Department of Commerce
EEO -	Equal Employment Opportunity
EEOAC -	EEO Advisory Committee
ELT -	Executive Leadership Team
EPP -	Educational Partnership Program
ERG -	Employee Resource Groups
ESD -	Employee Services Division
FEVS -	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey
FY -	Fiscal Year
HQ -	Headquarters
HR -	Human Resources
HRBA -	Human Resources Business Advisor
MD715 -	Management Directive – 715
MODD -	Management and Organizational Development Division
MSI -	Minority Serving Institution
NEC -	NOAA Executive Council
NewIQ -	New Inclusion Quotient
NOAA -	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NTA -	National Technical Association
OAR -	Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

ODIAC - OAR Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee  
OHCA - Organizational Health and Culture Assessment  
OICR - Office of Inclusions and Civil Rights  
OPM - Office of Personnel Management  
OSS/CI - Office of Science Support/Cooperative Institutes  
SACNAS - Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics, and Native Americans in Science  
SASH - Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment  
SEP - Special Emphasis Program  
SRC - Senior Research Council  
SMM – Senior Management Meeting