

# National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) Diversity & Inclusion Plan

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(Derived from OAR EEO/Diversity Program material)

## Definition of Diversity

Workforce Diversity is defined as a collection of individual attributes that together help agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively. These include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. The concept also encompasses differences among people concerning where they are from and where they have lived and their differences of thought and life experiences (OPM 2011)

## Definition of Inclusion

We define inclusion as a culture that connects each employee to the organization; encourages collaborations, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity through the organization so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.

## Mission

With concerted efforts and the collaboration of OAR Leadership, EEO/Diversity Staff, EEO/Diversity Advisory Committee and hiring officials, increase the diversity of NSSL's workforce. This will be carried out through three goals: **Workforce Diversity, Workforce Inclusion and Sustainability**. These goals are in alignment with the goals as set out in the OPM Government-Wide Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan and the proposed NOAA Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan. The goals will be discussed in detail later in this NSSL Diversity & Inclusion Plan.

## Why Diversity and Inclusion are Important

Decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists and demographers show organizations with a diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation are more innovative than homogeneous groups (Phillips 2014). For example, an international study of public companies (McKinsey & Company 2015) showed those with ethnic and gender diversity were 35% and 15%, respectively, more likely to outperform the national industry median. David Dye, Director of Human Capital at Deloitte, said, "The U.S. population's demographics is shifting and it is important that federal agencies have their workforce align with the customer base. We also know diversity and inclusion inspire great innovative thought that comes from different perspectives. For those reasons, diversity and inclusion is a terribly important topic for the federal government."

## To Whom the Plan Applies

This is a plan for the Federal employees of NSSL. Because of the close working relationship between employees of NSSL and the Cooperative Institute for Mesoscale Meteorological Studies (CIMMS), however, the actions and activities described herein will be made available to

CIMMS staff where no/minimal costs are involved. CIMMS and contract employees affiliated with NSSL will be encouraged to participate in appropriate D&I events.

### **The Three Key Goals**

- **Workforce Diversity**
- **Workforce Inclusion**
- **Sustainability**

### **NSSL Leadership Team**

For the purposes of this document, the NSSL Leadership Team (NLT) shall include:

- Director
- Deputy Director
- FRDD Chief
- RRDD Chief
- WRDD Chief
- Senior Scientist(s)
- Program Manager(s)

## **GOAL 1 - WORKFORCE DIVERSITY**

**NSSL will recruit from a diverse, qualified group of potential applicants to secure a high-performing workforce drawn from all segments of American society (OPM 2011).**

*Priority 1.1 – Engage NLT and Divisional Team Leads in representing NSSL at conferences/training/meetings targeting underrepresented groups or having a diversity component.*

### **Actions**

1. The NSSL Director's Office (DO) will set aside sufficient funds for **one member of each NSSL division** (DO, FRDD, RRDD, WRDD) to attend at least one conference/training/meeting **every year** which targets underrepresented groups or has a diversity component. Emphasis for participation should be placed on NLT and Divisional Team Leads. The Division Chiefs and Deputy Director will be responsible for selecting one participant to attend the following (or similar) meetings ([see calendar](#)):
  - a. Women of Color STEM Conference;
  - b. American Indian Science & Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference;
  - c. Society of Asian Scientists & Engineers (SASE) National Conference and Career Fair;
  - d. Diversity Program Meetings at professional association meetings related to the hydrologic and meteorological AGU National Meeting and AMS Annual Meeting.
2. As appropriate for the event, each participant will present NSSL research and internship opportunities to the audience for the purpose of possible recruitment.

3. After each participant attends a meeting, they will be responsible for sharing their experience at the next opportune NSSL Managers' Team Meeting.
4. Reflecting the D&I responsibilities in the Director's performance plan, the Director will ensure Action #1 is included in each NLT member's performance plan under the Diversity or Professional Development elements.

*Priority 1.2 – Develop Strategic Alliances across the laboratories, line offices and other offices in NOAA that focuses on Diversity & Inclusion*

Actions

1. NSSL Leadership will interact with the NOAA's Office of Education and the Educational Partnership Program (EPP) to:
  - a. Keep the Diversity & Inclusion conversation going and a priority, and;
  - b. Foster relationships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) for the purpose of recruiting talent. The most relevant of these EPP/MSI programs are:
    - i. Center for Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology (Howard University, lead institution);
    - ii. Center for Earth System Sciences and Remote Sensing Technologies (City College of New York, lead institution).
2. NSSL Leadership will seek opportunities to collaborate with sister OAR laboratories and programs in D&I activities.
3. The NLT will include references to D&I alliances and partnerships in strategic plans, program plans, project goals, etc.

*Priority 1.3 – Develop and support an internship program focused on diversity.*

Actions

1. NSSL will develop and support a robust internship program, wherein:
  - a. At least one student from an underrepresented/minority group will be hosted or sponsored remotely each year on a rotating basis through the divisions, funding permitting (see the following table).
  - b. Each Division supporting an intern will have a mentor assigned to that intern and trained via the EPP mentor training.
2. A mentor from each Division will participate in the Office of Education's Partnership Program and Cooperative Science Center Programs every fourth year as shown in the table below.

INTERN & MENTOR ROTATION	DO	FRDD	RRDD	WRDD
<b>Year A (2018)</b>	X			
<b>Year B</b>		X		
<b>Year C</b>			X	
<b>Year D</b>				X

3. NSSL will utilize any of the following programs to support participation in #1 above:
  - a. Undergraduate
    - i. NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU)
    - ii. NOAA Hollings Students
    - iii. NOAA Educational Partnership Program (EPP)
  - b. Graduates
    - i. NOAA Cooperative Science Centers (CSC)
    - ii. NSF Graduate Research Internship Program (GRIP)
    - iii. Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) [National Internship Program \(HNIP\)](#).
  - c. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Tribal Nations Water Project.
  - d. NOAA Pathways Program
  - e. Others are [listed here](#).

{See Appendix 1 for more details about these programs }

*Priority 1.4 – Establish a clear emphasis on diversity in recruitment and selections for Federal positions.*

Actions

1. NLT will support training for Federally-permissible recruitment and selection practices of underrepresented groups.
2. NLT will ensure diversity training is completed by all members of selection recommendation panels prior to the onset of selection processes.
3. NLT will develop an internal process by which diversity is clearly a considered factor in selections. This will include:
  - a. Diversity among the members of a recommending panel.
  - b. Diversity-related evaluation tools to be used in the selection process.

## GOAL 2 – WORKFORCE INCLUSION

**NSSL will cultivate a culture encouraging collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to contribute to their full potential and further retention (OPM 2011).**

*Priority 2.1 – Applying concepts from the “Crucial Conversations” training.*

### Actions

1. NLT will develop a baseline understanding of the perceptions of staff regarding the degree to which they feel included in Laboratory opportunities for program development, personal career growth, and in other areas. One possibility is to conduct a survey of staff with the assistance of professional workplace surveys.
2. NLT will provide “Crucial Conversations and Communications” training for all Laboratory employees at least once every two years, with the expectation that the more employees converse about diversity of perspectives, the easier it is to have these types of crucial conversations.
3. Each NLT member, especially those with supervisory responsibilities, will encourage their Federal staff and associate partners (CIMMS and contractors) to speak openly about issues related to D&I. The NLT member will listen carefully, without judgment or criticism.
4. NLT members will hold each other accountable for creating an environment where diversity is as normal and common as the subject of their research. This will be accomplished by exemplifying in their actions that all employees bring and add value to the incredible work that is being conducted at NSSL.

*Priority 2.2 – NSSL will ensure its facilities are an inclusive environment.*

### Actions

1. NSSL will be in full compliance with the standards of Section 501, 504, and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. Managers and employees should be aware of their responsibilities to maintain an accessible and adaptable workplace that's inclusive of employees with disabilities.

### GOAL 3 – SUSTAINABILITY

**Develops structures and strategies to equip leaders with the ability to manage diversity, be accountable, measure results, refine approaches on the basis of such data, and institutionalize a culture of inclusion (OPM 2011).**

*Priority 3.1 – Establish a support infrastructure for sustainment of NSSL D&I.*

#### Actions

1. The NLT will support a NSSL Diversity and Inclusion Sustainability Team (NDIST) to foster D&I activities in NSSL, monitor results, and collaborate with the NLT. Members will be comprised of (see Appendix 2 for the names of those serving in these positions):
  - a. NSSL Deputy Director (also Chair of NDIST)
  - b. NSSL Representative to OAR D&I Advisory Committee
  - c. NSSL Representative to OAR’s EEO/Diversity Committee
  - d. One representative from each NSSL’s four divisions (DO, FRDD, RRDD, and WRDD), serving rotating two-year terms.
2. Quarterly D&I meetings will be held between NLT and the NDIST to discuss what’s working and what’s not regarding D&I in the Laboratory.
3. Contribute to the fulfillment of Priority 3.2 by keeping D&I activities alive in the Laboratory at all levels. General tasks of the team include:
  - a. Conducting brainstorming sessions to develop, align, and implement a diversity strategy inclusive of all employees.
  - b. Recommending recruitment practices for hiring a diverse workforce.
  - c. Improving outreach and access to employment opportunities for underrepresented groups.
  - d. Recommending screening and interviewing processes to facility the equal participation of diverse applicants.
  - e. Recommending strategies for achieving effective career development and retention of underrepresented groups in NSSL.
  - f. Maintain a “Diversity Dialogue” wherein all employees will be open to new ideas and innovative strategies for making all employees feel included.
  - g. Review and present suggestions to the NLT. Examples may include establishing an “Inclusion Improvement Box” in various common areas of the laboratory and/or via the NSSL Intranet, so employees can make suggestions on how inclusion can be improved at the laboratory. The suggestions will be reviewed by the NLT and shared for discussion and action, as appropriate.

*Priority 3.2 – Establish a continuous learning environment focused on D&I for all NSSL employees.*

#### Actions

1. The NDIST will schedule regular Lab-wide brown bag lunch and learn sessions to have continuing conversations about D&I. The frequency of meetings will be determined by NDIST.
2. The NDIST will schedule a speaker once each quarter for NSSL Managers' Meetings to enhance the understanding and knowledge of D&I.
3. The NDIST will organize and coordinate opportunities to provide special D&I presentations at Lab-wide seminars or forums.
4. The NDIST will emphasize D&I training for Principal Investigators on a regular basis.
5. The NDIST will recommend annual mandatory training for lab PIs who prepare proposals about the importance of D&I in their selection of associate scientists, post-docs, and students.

This NSSL D&I Program Plan is approved by:

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Dr. Steven Koch, NSSL Director

October 4, 2017  
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Date

#### **REFERENCES**

- McKinsey & Company, 2015: Why diversity matters. <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>
- Office of Personnel Management, 2011: *Government-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*, <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/governmentwidedistrategicplan.pdf>
- Phillips, K.W., 2014: How Diversity Makes Us Smarter: Being around people who are different from us makes us more creative, more diligent and harder-working. *Scientific American*, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>

**APPENDIX 1**

**D&I PROGRAMS OF OPPORTUNITY**

Program	Support Org.	Level	Duration	Cost to NSSL?	Student Sources
Hollings*	NOAA OEd	Undergrad	9 weeks	None	Anywhere
EPP*	NOAA OEd	Undergrad	9 weeks	None	Anywhere
NCAS-M*	NOAA OEd	Grad	3-12 months	None	Anywhere
HNIP	HACU	Grad	15 weeks (10 weeks in summer)	Yes	Anywhere
GRIP*	NSF	Grad	2.5 to 12 months	Partial (\$5K/mo from NSD)	Anywhere
Pathways	NOAA	Either	Summer	Yes	Anywhere
REU	NSF	Undergrad	Summer	No	Anywhere

\*Access through the [Student Scholarship Internship Opportunities \(SSIO\)](#) interface.



## APPENDIX 2

### NSSL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SUSTAINABILITY TEAM (NDIST) MEMBERS

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>
NSSL Deputy Director	Lans Rothfusz	Permanent
NSSL Representative to OAR D&I Advisory Committee	Sean Waugh	Committee appointment
NSSL Representative to OAR's EEO/Diversity Committee	Bob Rabin	Committee appointment
DO Rep	PaTrina Gregory	2017-2018
FRDD Representative	Pam Heinselman	2018-2019
RRDD Representative	Bim Wood	2017-2018
WRDD Representative	Jian Zhang	2018-2019