

Climate Program Office FY 21-FY 25  
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility  
Strategic Plan

**Mission:**

The Climate Program Office (CPO) seeks to advance scientific understanding, monitoring, and prediction of climate and its impacts to enable effective decisions.

**Vision:**

CPO reflects and leverages the talent and diversity of its employees to ensure people, businesses and the environment continue thriving in the face of climate impacts.

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## **Note From the Director's Office**

Recent events have demonstrated that this Nation may be ready to make major changes, which hopefully will begin to address centuries of racial injustice. CPO will seize this moment to make progress in those areas over which we can actually control. CPO's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan, in a manner consistent with OAR's and NOAA's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plans, outlines how CPO will ensure that its workforce reflects the diversity that is one of the Nation's greatest strengths, broaden participation in CPO's grant programs, and that America's communities, especially the most vulnerable, are resilient in the face of environmental change.

CPO recognizes the importance of building a diverse and highly trained workforce. CPO used the results of the OAR Health and Culture Assessment completed in 2020 to gather and integrate ideas from across the office on how to advance DEIA initiatives at every level of the organization. A DEIA working group was established, comprising members from across CPO, and tasked the group with making recommendations to CPO leadership. It was this group that developed this strategic plan.

We recognize the ambition of the goals laid out in this plan and acknowledge the effort required to accomplish them, but we believe that the time for bold action is now. This effort is not about checking a box or developing a plan which will sit on a shelf. Rather, we will integrate the concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into the culture and operations of CPO to improve the morale and well being of its employees and of the various stakeholders and communities we serve. CPO's vision of "People, businesses and the environment thriving in the face of climate impacts" cannot be achieved without being inclusive in our work and mindful of the most vulnerable to a changing climate.

CPO commits to:

- Reviewing its hiring and targeted recruiting practices, and modify where possible to ensure that candidates are diverse and highly qualified
- Maximize use of direct hire authorities to employ alumni of NOAA-funded programs such as the Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI), Hollings scholarship, William Lapenta Internship, Knauss Fellowship, and other NOAA programs
- Regularly educate our leaders and staff to reduce unconscious and implicit bias
- Ensure that our federal funding announcements are distributed to wide and diverse audiences, and that proposals specifically address diversity, inclusion and environmental justice issues in the research teams and in the research itself

## CPO Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan

- Create an environment where cultural differences are celebrated and welcomed
- Promote work-life balance
- Invest in building relationships with underserved communities to build equity in education, internship opportunities, and job access

Wayne Higgins  
Director, Climate Program Office

Ben DeAngelo  
Deputy Director, Climate Program Office

## **Leadership Commitment**

The leaders of the Climate Program Office (CPO) at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) commit to providing an inclusive office environment that embraces, encourages and leverages the diversity of its employees, funding, applicants, and partners to further its mission and vision. We acknowledge that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility principles must become integrated into the culture of the office to truly be successful as an organization, and therefore commit our time and resources to making DEIA products/recommendations part of the long-term CPO strategy. We also recognize that CPO's funded research and programs can only be unbiased and fully inclusive when diversity is a consideration at every level, from research teams to review panels. We will therefore incorporate DEIA into our research grants and opportunities, education and outreach efforts, and the actions we take to empower and build resilience of minority, underrepresented, and economically-disadvantaged communities. Lastly, we commit to continue learning about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility reporting on and evaluating our progress, and applying new knowledge to CPO culture.

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## **Equity Statement**

CPO strives to fulfill the values of justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the pursuit of its science, the management of its workforce, the design and execution of its financial awards, and the character of its partnerships. CPO acknowledges that its mission is fundamentally about public service and helping communities understand and adapt to a changing climate at all timescales. Furthermore, CPO recognizes this work is practiced in a society of people with differential power, histories of discrimination, and influenced by institutions long dominated by particular perspectives. The significant costs of racism, sexism, ableism, and other systemic oppressions disrupt and inhibit our collective ability to provide the best available information possible in order for our Nation and world to adapt to and thrive in a changing climate. Therefore, CPO reaffirms its commitment to understanding and responding to these challenges to the fullest extent of its authority and responsibility.

## **Introduction**

The Climate Program Office at NOAA seeks to further its diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts by creating an inclusive, equitable environment that leverages the diversity in its current and future workforce to meet critical mission and business objectives/goals. Leaders and staff have recognized the need to incorporate these ideals into the culture of the CPO workplace and together have developed a plan to integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility over the long term.

Diversity refers to those unique differentiating aspects of staff and applicants (seen and unseen) that enhance the variety of life in the office. These aspects include but are not limited to: sex, race, gender, disability, ethnicity, etc. Inclusion is the creation of a symbiotic work environment where the ideas, thoughts, and values of staff are considered, valued and respected. The inclusive environment is respectful, collaborative, supportive, and equitable in access. Maintaining diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as central parts of the workplace requires constant assessment, effort, and intentional/active engagement from all leaders and staff.

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Working Group will be the driver of change and sustained focus on DEIA efforts in the CPO office. The working group will assess, monitor, and adjust efforts as needed to meet the needs of the office. The working group will also be open to input, thoughts, and concerns from CPO staff and leaders on how to further improve DEIA efforts. It is the vision of leadership and staff in the working group to use the following goals and objectives described below to meet the needs of CPO to the best of our abilities.

### **Definitions:**

Defining DEIA as outlined in Executive Order 13985 - Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

1. The term “diversity” means the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities.
2. The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.
3. The term “inclusion” means the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds.
4. The term “accessibility” means the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all

people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them. Accessibility includes the provision of accommodations and modifications to ensure equal access to employment and participation in activities for people with disabilities, the reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities, a commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can independently access every outward-facing and internal activity or electronic space, and the pursuit of best practices such as universal design.



## **Executive Summary**

The Climate Program Office (CPO) encompasses a diverse portfolio of science and outreach activities. A core function of CPO is managing competitive research programs in which we fund high-priority climate science, assessments, decision support research, outreach, education, and capacity-building activities designed to advance our understanding of Earth's climate system, and to foster the application of this knowledge in risk management and adaptation efforts. CPO-supported research is conducted in regions across the United States, at national and international scales, and globally.

This FY21-25 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan outlines three goals meant to enable CPO's capability in fostering and leveraging the talent and diversity of its employees and program spaces.

Goal 1: Workforce Diversity: seek to recruit, attract, and retain a diverse, highly-capable workforce at all levels of employment within CPO.

- Recruit qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds to advance CPO's mission
- Reduce barriers and biases in hiring practices
- Increase diversity in senior-level positions
- Create a culture that promotes employment of individuals with disabilities

Goal 2: Workplace Inclusion and Communication: enable CPO's channels of communication around and engagement in DEIA programs, activities, and initiatives.

- Cultivate an inclusive work environment in CPO
- Improve communication within CPO across all levels
- Provide information on DEIA activities
- Promote Work-Life Balance Guidelines

Goal 3: Sustainability: sustain commitment to prioritize program activities that will carry DEIA principles to our partners, stakeholders, and communities.

- Strengthen Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) language to incorporate DEIA
- Encourage DEIA opportunities in competitive research
- Develop robust partnerships to improve student and early-career engagement
- Increase K-12 student opportunities for underserved communities

## Summary of Goals and Objectives

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Objectives</u>
Goal 1: Workforce Diversity	1. Effectively recruit qualified individuals across all job series and levels who have diverse backgrounds, cultures, experience, education, and skills that can be leveraged to advance CPO’s mission
	2. Reduce barriers and biases in CPO’s hiring of diverse, highly-qualified candidates
	3. Increase diversity in senior-level positions by refining hiring and promotion practices, developing succession and recruitment plans, and offering employee career development opportunities
	4. Create a culture that promotes the employment of individuals with disabilities
Goal 2: Workplace Inclusion and Communication	1. Cultivate an inclusive work environment that empowers and actively engages every CPO team member
	2. Improve communication across CPO including follow up communications among staff, communication between staff and division chiefs, and communication between staff and senior management
	3. Provide information on DEIA topics/activities to federal employees and contractors
	4. Promote Work-Life Balance Guidelines to help CPO manage work and life obligations
	5. Hold leadership accountable for advancing the efforts of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Working Group as well as individual staff efforts to include and expand DEIA in their work and performance plans
Goal 3: Sustainability	1. Strengthen language in Notice of Federal Funding Opportunities to integrate DEIA in review, implementation, and reporting of grants and cooperative agreements
	2. CPO will encourage inclusion of racial equity and climate justice foci in its competitive research announcements and decisions as well as

	other initiatives in which this office and its staff are involved
	3. Develop robust partnerships to engage networks of educators, academic advisors, professionals, scholastic institutions, and scientific organizations to increase engagement with underrepresented groups in climate science, by promoting awareness of internships and hiring opportunities
	4. Increase engagement with K-12 students from underserved communities to promote awareness of climate science and career opportunities in NOAA mission fields

## **Goal 1: Workforce Diversity**

Recruit and attract a diverse, highly-capable workforce at all levels of employment (entry level, administrative, scientific, management, etc.) within CPO

<u>Objective 1</u>		
Effectively recruit qualified individuals across all job series and levels who have diverse backgrounds, cultures, experience, education, and skills that can be leveraged to advance CPO's mission		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Expand awareness and use of special hiring authorities and direct hiring capabilities to increase diversity of staff	Track how often available hiring authorities are used when recruiting and onboarding	FY21 Q4
Develop and execute succession plans and recruitment practices that includes the use of special/direct hiring authorities and expands the advertisement of open positions	Monitor the EEO statistics yearly to determine how effective the effort has been in recruiting and hiring diverse staff.	FY22 Q2
Develop and execute targeted recruitment plans for advertising positions to underrepresented groups	Report and keep statistics on the platforms/groups job advertisements are shared to as well as the number of applications received from underrepresented groups	FY22 Q1
Create a focus on increasing the diversity within CPO, with specific focus on science roles	Aim to increase diversity to be representative of the public we serve	FY22 Q4

<u>Objective 2</u>
Reduce barriers and biases in CPO's hiring of diverse, highly-qualified candidates

<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Require annual implicit bias, and DEIA training for all staff, to include senior management and leadership	Set a target compliance rate to be reached by the end of Q1 each fiscal year	FY22 Q1
Create diverse hiring panels	Improvement in workforce diversity as reported by the EEO office each year	FY22 Q2
Make finding available CPO positions/job announcements more accessible	Track the number of applications being submitted for positions. Overall numbers should increase if job announcements are more accessible	FY22 Q1

<u>Objective 3</u>		
Increase diversity in senior-level positions by refining hiring and promotion practices, developing succession and recruitment plans, and offering employee career development opportunities		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Offer employees the option and training to create Individual Development Plans (IDP) used to develop their professional career and improve/increase their skill set	Create a target compliance and monitor percentage of staff who create and complete an IDP	FY22 Q2
Create a 5-year succession plan for the office that includes various candidates for internal promotion as well as external hiring options from diverse recruitment sources	Number of senior positions with completed succession plan	FY22 Q3
Expand federal employee training options to include professional development, leadership development, and topics related to DEIA; and create a list of training options offered to affiliates by their	Develop a target and monitor the percentage of individuals who are taking training courses	FY22 Q2

contracting companies; extend these practices to contractual relationships		
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<u>Objective 4</u>		
Create a culture that promotes the employment of individuals with disabilities		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Use Schedule A hiring authority and others allowable to recruit individuals with disabilities	Keep statistics on the percentage of employees hired using schedule A; the demographic of those with disabilities should be near that of the general population	FY22 Q2
Leverage partnerships and resources to recruit and hire qualified individuals with disabilities (IWD) and targeted disabilities (IWTD)	Keep statistics on the percentage of employees hired using partnerships; the demographic of those with disabilities should be near that of the general population	FY22 Q2
Target advertisements to colleges, universities, institutions, and communities for IWDs	Keep statistics on how many positions are advertised to communities with disabilities	FY22 Q2

## **Goal 2: Workplace Inclusion and Communication**

Enable open channels of communication and engagement in programs, activities, and initiatives taking place in the office

<u>Objective 1</u>		
Cultivate an inclusive work environment that empowers and actively engages every CPO team member		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Promote participation in DEIA activities with an emphasis on regular training/information sessions	Set a target for the amount of training/information sessions provided each quarter and track participation in each event	FY21 Q4
Develop a CPO DEIA onboarding program	Monitor the percentage of incoming staff who participate in the program	FY22 Q1
Increase awareness of NOAA's process for requesting accommodations and provide them as needed	Monitor the number of places accommodation information is currently available and make it more accessible by increasing avenues to obtain the information	FY22 Q4

<u>Objective 2</u>		
Improve communication across CPO including follow up communications among staff, communication between staff and division chiefs, and communication between staff and senior management		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Establish safe spaces for open discussion	Use reports such as the OHCA or CPO surveys to determine if staff feelings on office dynamics have improved from year to year	FY21 Q2

Leadership should actively seek input from employees when developing new plans/programs	Monitor the percentage of plans/programs launched with formal input sessions provided to employees	FY21 Q2
Offer regular check in meetings, open office hours, etc. to actively engage with staff and create room for open communication	Measure frequency of and participation in check-in meetings and open office hours	FY21 Q2

<u>Objective 3</u>		
Provide information on DEIA topics/activities to federal employees and contractors		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Host informational sessions/webinars that provide in-depth knowledge on the importance of DEIA as well as various topics related to DEIA best practices, allyship, safe spaces, etc	Track the number/frequency of informational sessions as well as level of participation in each session	FY21 Q3
Establish a DEIA landing page on the CPO website	Views/frequency of updates	FY21 Q4

<u>Objective 4</u>		
Promote Work-Life Balance Guidelines to help CPO manage work and life obligations		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Increase awareness of work-life balance by developing guidelines that promote work-life balance, and sharing the NOAA resources for work-life balance.	Measure frequency of and participation in information sessions/briefings and use of resources.	FY21 Q2



Advocate for the adaptation of the <a href="#">CPO Work-Life Balance Guidelines.pdf</a> to reduce feelings of exhaustion/burnout	Regularly survey senior management for the use of guidelines within their divisions	FY21 Q2
Advocate for frequent use of the <a href="#">Work-Life Balance Resource Folder</a> to help employees and staff find ways to balance	Use all hands meetings to do regular wellness checks and survey the office on use of available resources. Have senior managers refer staff to resources as an option when in need of balance	FY21 Q2

<p><u>Objective 5</u></p> <p>Hold leadership accountable for advancing the efforts of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Working Group as well as individual staff efforts to include and expand DEIA in their work and performance plans</p>		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Senior management should participate in DEIA activities and events held by or recommended by the working group	Designate a senior manager rep to lead senior accountability efforts	FY22 Q4
Senior management should promote and reinforce the ideas, actions, and programs coming from the DEIA working group	N/A	FY21 Q3

### **Goal 3: Sustainability**

Prioritize activities that build equity and justice among scientists and stakeholder communities. Develop a sustainable commitment from leadership and the office to a diverse and inclusive workforce and interactions with the community

<u>Objective 1</u>		
Strengthen language in Notice of Federal Funding Opportunities to integrate DEIA in review, implementation, and reporting of grants and cooperative agreements		
<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
All CPO NOFOs should clearly articulate DEIA objectives and include clear directions and definitions for grantees.	N/A	FY21Q4
Implement new harassment reporting requirement (AOP)	N/A	FY21 Q3
Proposals are assessed for DEIA as applicable in proposal reviews	Percentage of review panels where DEIA statements are explicitly discussed	FY21Q4
Diversify review panels for federal funding opportunities	All panels should aim to have diverse representation	FY22 Q2
Add specific language to annual progress reports asking PIs to report on DEIA success relevant to their funded research	This creates a new metric and allows us to track the impact of DEIA activities as proposed vs. as reported	FY21Q4

<u>Objective 2</u>
CPO will encourage inclusion of racial equity and climate justice foci in its competitive research announcements and decisions as well as other initiatives in which this office and its staff are involved

<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
CPO's community-facing programs will fund research and engagement benefitting disadvantaged communities per EO 14008	CPO will set a target to dedicate at least 40% of community-facing funding resources to disadvantaged communities	FY23 Q1
CPO Climate initiatives/proposals going forward will include ways to address issues in climate justice, equity, and resilience of minority, impoverished, and underserved communities	% of programs that can demonstrate gains in research team diversity, inclusive research or engagement approaches, efforts to dismantle systemic barriers to equity, or increased resilience of disadvantaged communities	FY22 Q3

Objective 3

Develop robust partnerships to engage networks of educators, academic advisors, professionals, scholastic institutions, and scientific organizations to increase engagement with underrepresented groups in climate science, by promoting awareness of internships and hiring opportunities

<u>Actions/Tactics</u>	<u>Metrics for Progress</u>	<u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u>
Establish relationships with underserved school districts and educators nationwide at the K-12 and post secondary levels to encourage participation in the education network	Create a contact list for school/program representatives we currently have connections with and continually build upon it. Regularly report on active participation in events, webinars, etc	FY 21 Q4
Build connections between educators and career scientists in the network to increase information flow and access to knowledge, resources, tools, job/internship announcements that some underfunded schools are not able to obtain	Create a forum for open exchange of information. Monitor the amount of participation in public forums, aim for daily usage.	FY24 Q1

<p><u>Objective 4</u></p> <p>Increase engagement with K-12 students from underserved communities to promote awareness of climate science and career opportunities in NOAA mission fields</p>		
<p><u>Actions/Tactics</u></p>	<p><u>Metrics for Progress</u></p>	<p><u>Target Completion Date (FY/Q)</u></p>
<p>Create a Kindergarten - Post Secondary mentoring program for students to nurture interest in and lower barriers to science education and career development</p>	<p>Monitor the number of schools/school systems participating</p>	<p>FY24 Q3</p>
<p>Create training opportunities (e.g. internships) in CPO for high school students</p>	<p>Monitor the number of interns across CPO and levels of diversity</p>	<p>FY23 Q1</p>