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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) at NOAA: Promising Developments and Critical Needs

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Context

- A racial reckoning has swept the country
- Scientific organizations are reflecting DEIA issues and commit to do better
- NOAA lacks diversity, but is willing to change
- The problem has long been known
- Isolated efforts to address DEIA exist
- Effective and concerted efforts to address DEIA systemically are still lacking
- NOAA is being held accountable in multiple ways
- The SAB responded to a DEIA session in 2020 by forming the subcommittee



Objectives and Process

Objectives

- *Understand the state of affairs around DEIAJB+ at NOAA*
- *Provide the SAB & NOAA leadership with guidance and advice*

Process

- *Listening Sessions with*
 - 10 NOAA Employee Resource Groups
 - 9 individuals from NOAA Leadership
- *Biweekly subcommittee meetings to plan, review and digest*
 - 4-5 SAB members & Cynthia Decker
 - Staff support (currently Kathy Longmire): many thanks!



Problem Statement

Diversity in NOAA does not reflect that of the United States with implications for its ability to fulfill its mission.

Major Takeaways

- The pace of change at NOAA remains slow related to fostering a DEIA mindset for improving diversity of NOAA staff
- Current developments for addressing DEIA at NOAA are promising
- However, those may not be sufficient to accelerate cultural and institutional change

Findings and Insights

- **Historic Trauma persists**
 - Current NOAA employees may have experienced damage to their careers
 - Trust in change might be compromised by lack of acknowledgement
- **Culture change is complex - continue working on all fronts**
 - Signal priority
 - Change incentive structures
 - Address values and norms
 - Fight for minds and hearts
 - Acknowledge bottom up, top down and the complexity of the middle



Findings and Insights

- **Own the entire career pathway**
 - Changing who gets hired by making full use of all options
 - Consider barriers for promotion and preparing for leadership
 - Change expectations for what a “successful NOAA person” is
- **Talent management is changing**
 - New ideas for supporting a more diverse workforce at NOAA exist
 - Implementation is still lagging behind
 - Culture of NOAA / Fed Gov’t not yet supportive of more aggressive HR strategies



Findings and Insights

- **Monitoring system and transparency**
 - Comprehensive tracking systems are now being created
 - Use and impact not established yet
 - Fully invest and make as widely available as possible
 - Couple with better data (e.g., exit interviews)
- **DEIA Plan exists but needs follow-up**
 - We are more than halfway through the DEIA strategic plan's timeline
 - Financial support from Congress is missing
 - Plan has severe limitations: doesn't identify baseline or define numeric outcomes / desired state of affair -> Process oriented, not outcome oriented



Findings and Insights

- **Continue with promising practices, for instance:**
 - *Inclusion/belonging:*
 - ERGs are already playing an important role in supporting non-dominant communities at NOAA and in connecting with non-dominant outside groups
 - With additional support ERGs could expand their benefits to NOAA
 - *Access/diversity:*
 - Hiring practices that can increase diversity: cluster and direct hire, diverse search committees, bias training etc.(search advocates)
 - Outreach, internships, fellowships and collaboration with MSIs and HBCUs
 - *Cultural and organizational change:*
 - Continue strong signaling from leadership
 - Update Strategic Plan; add goals and metrics; combine with implementation and monitoring plan



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- NOAA leadership for its desire to listen and reflect
- NOAA for being a steadfast steward of the public interest through science and public engagement

