

DIFFERENT BELIEFS



Weather Program Office (WPO)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility Strategic and Implementation Plan







DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES











FY24-FY26



DIVERSITY WE VALUE DIVERSITY AS A STRENGTH, RESPECT ALL TEAMMATES, AND EMBRACE OUR DIFFERENCES

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS



As a program office under OAR, this strategic plan and its subsequent implementation are in line with the OAR Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Implementation Plan (FY22-FY25).

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LEADERSHIP STATEMENT



NOAA's Weather Program Office (WPO) takes great pride in its diverse team, which comprises individuals from a variety of races, genders, sexual orientations, ages, as well as disciplinary training and backgrounds. This diversity is an important first step in an exciting road ahead to strengthen the integration and expression of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in our programs, culture, and mission.

DEIA is implicit in WPO's mission to "cultivate, fund and transition collaborative weather research that results in accurate and actionable weather information *for all*". Our aim is to support research that promotes collaboration with operational partners, engages in co-

production with end-users, and delivers effective, impactful outcomes for society. Weather forecasts are ineffective if they are not received, understood and acted upon. However, the impactfulness of forecasts increases if those developing and delivering the forecasts are representative and inclusive of the communities who receive them. In addition, to save the lives and property of all citizens, extra attention is required to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The challenges ahead are significant, but WPO is well-suited to tackle them.

We must begin internally by strengthening the expression of DEIA within our own team. Our staff is highly diverse, with almost half representing racial minorities, at least half identifying as female, and several identifying as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Each individual within WPO is critical to our collective success. Therefore, every individual must be given an equal opportunity to share their unique perspective and ensure their opinions are heard and integrated into all relevant WPO activities. Moreover, WPO's leadership— Director, Deputy Director, and Division Chiefs— is committed to providing, to the extent possible, the opportunity for each WPO staff member to develop and advance skills that align with current roles as well as next career steps in accordance with WPO's mission and goals. We must foster an increasingly inclusive practice within WPO, providing "the recognition, appreciation, empowerment and use of the talents, skills and voices of employees of all backgrounds."

We remain committed to upholding DEIA principles in our hiring practices. In addition to embracing the opportunity to hire diverse talent, we also leverage internship, fellowship, and mentorship programs to create valuable opportunities for students and early-career professionals to immerse themselves in our office activities and culture as well as explore our staff's unique disciplinary backgrounds. As we strengthen support for DEIA within our office, we also aim to foster DEIA principles in our research communities. We will continue to use funding opportunities to expand access and lower barriers for diverse institutions

and individuals to obtain funding and engage in weather research. We will employ targeted funding opportunities, review criteria, and research topics that are designed to include new and diverse communities and to improve our forecast products and services needed by the most vulnerable communities. We will partner with communities and programs designed to foster diversity in weather research, such as the NOAA Cooperative Science Center for Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology (NCAS-M). We will continue to provide webinars, website information, and other outreach mechanisms designed to clarify and lower barriers to developing meritorious and successful proposals.

Environmental justice is also a critical priority for WPO. Our weather research must carefully consider the protection of *all* lives and property, regardless of social or economic status, and indeed we aim to make extra effort to accommodate the particular needs of those who are most vulnerable. Environmental justice is realized when all individuals, regardless of their race, culture, or income, experience an equitable level of protection from environmental and health hazards. Moreover, it entails ensuring that everyone has equal access to participate in the decision-making process, guaranteeing a healthy environment for all to thrive in their daily lives. With this goal in mind, WPO leadership will increasingly prioritize research activities aimed at enhancing justice for all communities.

This includes identifying regions and populations that are most vulnerable, assessing the types of information that would be most valuable for their decision-making needs, and advocating to NOAA and Congress on their behalf.

WPO leadership is incredibly excited to support WPO's diverse team as we continue to develop an inclusive office culture, further integrate DEIA principles into our funding and program activities, while funding more research that aims to deliver more accurate and actionable weather information *for all.*



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Dr. Dorothy Koch Director, Weather Program Office

John Jen Hoeve

Dr. John Ten Hoeve Deputy Director, Weather Program Office

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Numerous recent policy initiatives demonstrate a whole of government commitment to understanding and responding effectively to the needs of its workforce as well as promote a workplace where the talents of all individuals are recognized and appreciated. The Federal Government affirmatively established that advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of our Government in the Executive Order entitled "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce" dated June 25, 2021. In keeping with the "U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality "dated October 22, 2021, the Department of Commerce has also committed to ensuring that women, girls, and those identifying as nonbinary are valued and empowered in all fields and walks of life, from the boardroom to the science lab to the factory floor. Additionally, in NOAA's "Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2020–2024", NOAA leadership commits to empowering its workforce through diversity of thought, diversity in its people, and diversity in its business practices. Finally, the OAR "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan" asserts its commitment to providing its current and prospective workforce with full and fair opportunities for employment, career advancement, and access to resources and programs.

As a Program Office located within OAR, WPO embraces diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and we proudly incorporate justice into our WPO Strategic Plan as well. Through the issuance of competitive-funded research grants via our annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), we are uniquely positioned to support underserved communities. The NOFO contains information about which WPO research programs are actively soliciting proposals and the ground rules and key deadlines for each funding competition. Our programs include **Air Quality & Fire Weather, Disaster Supplementals, Earth Prediction Innovation Center (EPIC), Joint Technology Transfer Initiative (JTTI), Observations, Subseasonal to Seasonal Research (S2S), Social Science, Testbeds, and the Verification of the Origins of Rotation in Tornadoes Experiment (VORTEX-USA).**

We are a growing program office with approximately 40 professionals with Federal, Contractor, Fellow and Intern status, where every voice delivers value to the overall organizational culture. WPO propels on its diversity to foster a positive work environment where all employees can maximize their contribution and strive to reach their full potential. Our aim is to leverage diversity in the same manner as the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) frames it: an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization, where all employees feel valued because of their differences, not despite their differences.

> The most difficult thing is the decision to act; the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do.

– Amelia Earhart

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Commerce (DOC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Program Office (WPO) cultivates, funds and transitions collaborative weather research that results in accurate and actionable weather information for all.

In pursuit of its vision and mission, WPO works closely with the National Weather Service (NWS) to help develop and transition to operations both physical and social science weather research methodologies and outputs, including those related to hurricanes, severe thunderstorms, heavy precipitation, and air pollution. Further, WPO leverages social science research to understand how people manage uncertainty during extreme weather, which can then inform NWS on potential operational improvements.

Moreover, WPO selects and funds research that supports and fosters collaboration across the entirety of the Weather, Water, and Climate Enterprise (i.e., NOAA Laboratories and Line Offices, other Federal agencies, state and local governments, academia, and the private sector). We are also committed to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility (DEIJA) within our internal staff and operations as well as our recipients of our Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) and other internal and external stakeholders and partnerships.

WPO's MISSION AND VISION



Mission

Driving collaborative weather research to develop and transition products and services that ensure accurate and actionable weather forecasts for all.



Vision

Innovative science powering a Weather-Ready Nation.

WPO's CORE VALUES

Integrity: We adhere to the highest scientific, personal, and professional standards.

Inclusive Innovation: We welcome a wide diversity of experiences, knowledge, and ideas to drive open-science solutions.

Results Driven: We achieve high-quality research outcomes to measurably advance NOAA's mission.

Societal Relevance: We ensure that everything we do is geared towards having a positive impact on society, including through our own work and our partnerships.

Teamwork: We value collaborative approaches and transparent communications across WPO and with our partners.

DEFINITIONS

- 1. Accessibility: The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all 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. Definition Reference: Executive Order 14305.
- 2. Diversity: The practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities in accordance with Executive Order 14035.
- **3.** Environmental Justice: An important component of social equity that seeks to address inequitable land use plans, policies, and actions, such as locating hazardous waste and resource extraction, which disproportionately affect low income and minority communities. It is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.
- **4.** Equity: 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 as stated in Executive Order 13985.
- **5. Justice:** The right to be treated and the responsibility to treat others with fairness and equity, the duty to challenge prejudice, and to uphold the laws, policies and procedures that promote justice in all respects. It addresses inequalities that arise from a differential distribution of power, resources, opportunities and privilege. Involves acknowledging and addressing past injustice as well.
- **6. Inclusion:** The recognition, appreciation, empowerment and use of the talents, skills and voices of employees of all backgrounds.

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- **7. Social Justice:** The view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities and being able to participate in and contribute to all aspects of a society that genuinely includes people living with mental illness; that supports, intervenes and prevents crises; and that does not discriminate or stigmatize.
- 8. Underserved Communities: As defined in Executive Order 14035, this term refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. In context of the Federal workforce, this term includes individuals who belong to communities of color, such as Black and African American, Hispanic and Latino, Native American, Alaska Native and Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African persons. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (LGBTQ+) persons); persons who face discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions; parents; and caregivers. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on their religion or disability; first-generation professionals or first-generation college students; individuals with limited English proficiency; immigrants; individuals who belong to communities that may face employment barriers based on older age or former incarceration; persons who live in rural areas; veterans and military spouses; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality. Individuals may belong to more than one underserved community and face intersecting barriers.
- **9.** WPO Leadership: For the purposes of this plan, "WPO Leadership" consists of the WPO Director, WPO Deputy Director, and WPO Division Chiefs.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS

1. PARTNERSHIPS

Foster a diverse network with academic, governmental, and industry

partners to continuously improve weather information, products, and services.



Reference the WPO 2022 - 2026 Strategic Plan, Section 1.7, page 8

2. WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Foster a psychologically safe environment and effectively engage, coach, and empower a diverse, highlyskilled workforce.

OBJECTIVES

- Create more equitable research outcomes by improving the diversity of the institutions and recipients of our funding opportunities.
- 2. Strengthen and expand relationships with the private sector, industry, academic institutions, Cooperative Science Centers, Minority Serving Institutions, and explore multiuniversity research consortia to apply diverse research capabilities to critical NOAA science priorities.
- Broaden the skillsets and perspectives of WPO employees through targeted hiring, training, and development opportunities, and bring new ideas into WPO through detail assignments, staff exchanges, and student programs.
- **2.** Integrate DEIJA into the overall culture of the organization, to include federal employees, contractors, and students.

3. SUSTAINMENT

Build and sustain flexible leadership (modification of style or approach to leadership in response to uncertain or unpredictable circumstances) committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive WPO through justice, accessibility and education.

- Increase the visibility of WPO leadership in diversity-related activities e.g. NOAA Office of Inclusion and Civil Rights sponsored programs, DOC level programs, office programs such as listening sessions; where employees will respect and value the transparency of its leadership participation.
- 2. Eradicate racial inequalities and all forms of discrimination and harassment to include sexual assault and sexual harassment.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL #1: PARTNERSHIPS

Foster a diverse weather-knowledge ecosystem with academic, governmental, industry partners to continuously improve weather information, products, and services.



Objective 1: Create more equitable research outcomes by improving the diversity of the institutions and recipients of our funding opportunities by creating a formidable presence at conferences and workshops which serve and focus on underrepresented communities.

Action	Metric(s)	Responsible Party
FY24 : A. Increase engagement with MSIs/HSIs/CSCs.	Develop and execute a strategy to increase engagement with MSIs/HSIs/CSCs and to improve accessibility of our funding opportunities to diversify awardees.	Policy & Partnerships Lead
FY24 : B. Establish a listserv that encompasses institutions (e.g. MSI's, HBCU's, Tribal Communities, etc.) and recipients who have been previously unsuccessful with receiving WPO funding as well as tutorial information for SAM registration, FAQs and open office hours to facilitate process questions	Meet the goal of the number of utilizations of the listserv, number of updates to the listing to continue to grow the list and amount of times the list is used compared to the number of funding opportunities in a funding year.	Grants Manager
	Coming together is beginning, staying and working together is – Henry Ford	

Objective 2: Strengthen and expand relationships with academic institutions and cooperative institutes and explore multi-university research consortia to apply diverse research capabilities to critical NOAA science priorities.

Action	Metric(s)	Responsible Party
FY25: A. Diversify grant reviewer pools to include more representatives from Cooperative Science Centers or other MSIs, HBCUs, and Tribal Colleges to include a greater range of perspectives in the grant review process.	Develop and execute a strategy to increase engagement with MSIs/HBCUs/CSCs and to increase the number of representatives from these institutions in WPO grant reviewer pools.	All of WPO
FY25: B. When funding opportunities arise, actively consider awards to Cooperative Science Centers or other MSI/HSIs or historically unrepresented communities in areas where diverse perspectives and barriers to entry exist to advance WPO's research priorities (e.g. mini grants for things like cloud computing)	Steady long-term growth in the number of institutions funded by WPO, including particularly those that are historically underrepresented.	All of WPO
FY26: C. Leverage the NOAA Ambassadors Program to expand our engagement with K-12 institutions.	Track at least one engagement each fiscal year to introduce the mission of WPO to K-12 institutions.	All of WPO
goal but on a shared	s aren't dependent on a more co I path of equality, desire, and no amount of passion. – Sarah MacLean	

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Objective 3: Expand diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and justice for WPO employees, partners and funding recipients.

Action	Metric(s)	Responsible Party
FY24: A. Create and execute an annual or bi-annual 100% in person retreat for all WPO employees including attention to staff experiences of inclusivity.	Over 90% of the WPO leadership, Federal and contractor employees are present and engaged throughout the 2-3-day retreat.	All of WPO
	Assessments of psychological safety and inclusivity are taken before and after the retreat to weigh its benefit.	
FY25: B. Create and market 2 training opportunities of the NOFO process to underrepresented and disadvantaged communities to include previous unsuccessful recipients.	Number of participants and their respective feedback.	Division Chiefs (Observations and Research Support Division; Earth System Research and Modeling Division and Science, Technology and Society Division)



GOAL #2: WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Engage, coach, and succeed a diverse, highlycompetent workforce in a psychologically safe environment.



Objective 1: Broaden the skillsets and perspectives of WPO employees through targeted hiring, training, and development opportunities, and bring new ideas into WPO through detail assignments, staff exchanges, and student programs.

Action	Metric(s)	Responsible Party
FY24: A. Consider, in partnerships with the respective OHCS Business Advisor, the special hiring authorities (e.g. Military Spouse, Schedule A, Veterans Recruitment Appointment, Pathways, Fellowship Programs) for all recruitments.	Starting in FY24, maintain metrics of the number of vacancies versus the number of vacancies that utilize the special hiring authorities as a first cut for qualified applicants and at the end of each fiscal year, report those metrics to the OAR/WPO as well as the OAR EEOAC.	Administrative Officer (AO)
FY24: B. Continue quarterly listening sessions, bi-weekly DEIJA moments and monthly WPO DEI Meetings	Number of participations versus the overall organizational size and the quality and quantity of feedback through Google Forms from the staff of the respective impact.	DEIJA Lead
FY24: C. Continue to support a strong summer Student Program within WPO that brings in new perspectives from a diverse array of student programs (e.g. Lapenta Program, EPP/MSI program, Hollings Scholars, etc.)	Host at least 3 students per summer within WPO	Annual Volunteer(s) from the WPO workforce

FY25: D. Offer leadership training opportunities to WPO leadership to include the Director, Deputy Director and all Division Chiefs to promulgate practices and leadership styles that embrace Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility. Starting in FY25, provide biannual 360 feedback instruments of all of the WPO leadership to measure the leadership competencies of their organizational subordinates.

Deputy Director



Objective 2: Integrate DEIJA into the overall culture of the organization to include all of our employees.

Action	Metric(s)	Responsible Party
FY24: A. Active participation within the OAR ODIAC	WPO supports the ODIAC with two volunteers bi-annually and provides the platform in staff meetings to report out on at a minimum; semi-annual basis.	WPO ODIAC Volunteers Deputy Director
FY24: B. Active participation within the OAR EEOAC	WPO supports the OAR/EEOAC with two volunteers bi-annually and provides the platform in staff meetings to report out on at a minimum; semi-annual basis.	WPO EEOAC Volunteers Deputy Director



GOAL #3: SUSTAINMENT

Build and sustain flexible leadership committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive WPO through justice, accessibility and education.

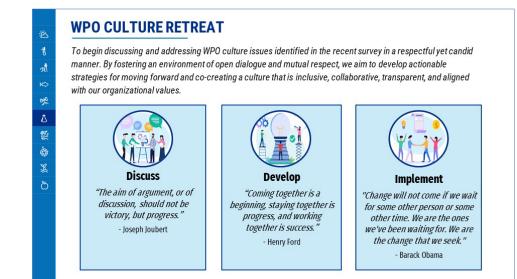


Objective 1: Increase the visibility of WPO leadership in diversity-related activities.

Action	Metric(s)	Responsible Party
FY24: A. WPO Leadership active participation in seminar(s), training(s) and/or organized discussions focused on accessing the NOAA STEM and other support professional talent pool, advancement, retention, ally ship, belonging and equity.	100% of the WPO Leadership attend at least two (2) of the suggested opportunities a year.	WPO Leadership Team
FY24: B. Build a WPO culture that supports diversity, inclusion and belonging in WPO where individual strengths and commitment to DEIJA is recognized by WPO leadership, and through team building and other EARTH events (connection to WPO Culture Action Plan).	Dedicate a staff meeting a quarter to have an open discussion and/or activity on equity, inclusion, accessibility, psychological safety and belonging. Ensure this activity is connected with the WPO Culture work conducted in FY23 and FY24.	WPO Leadership DEIJA Lead
	bility is very high on television, ev V! With a successful role, its even – James Spader	

Objective 2: Eradicate racial inequalities and all forms of discrimination and harassment to include sexual assault and sexual harassment from the hiring, interviewing, selection, onboarding and retention of a highly talented and motivated workforce.

Action	Metric(s)	Responsible Party
FY25 : A. Create a Hiring, Interviewing, Selection, Onboarding and Retention Plan for WPO, which provides just-in- time training (unconscious bias, equity, inclusion, at a minimum), and evaluating position descriptions to consider the job qualifications as it relates to experience and/or a degree, etc.	100% of the Federal hiring vacancy announcements follow the established policy which discloses diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility for all applicants. Ensure that all hiring panelists take unconscious bias training or attest that they've already taken it.	All Hiring Officials
FY25: B. Diversity training for the office - how to work within a diverse and geographically dispersed team (e.g. Assessments - DISC, Strength Finders, Four Sights, invited speaker)	Strongly encourage participation a minimum of once per year with accessibility to all WPO employees	Deputy Director and/or DEIJA Lead

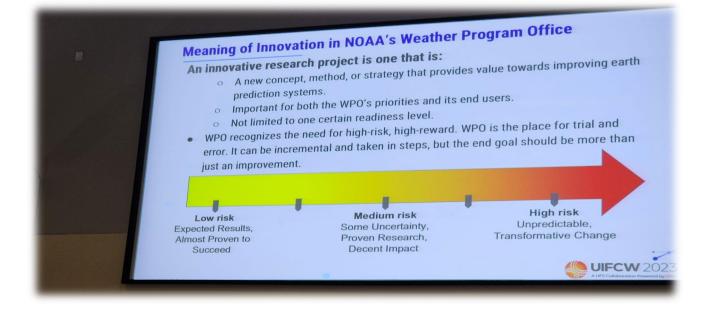


ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE(S)	RESPONSIBILITY(IES)
WPO Director and WPO Deputy Director	Champion and lead with justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility across WPO and with our internal and external stakeholders and serves as the owner of this plan.
WPO Deputy Director	Supports his employees in the manifestation of DEIJA in hiring, promoting and availing opportunities.
WPO Division Chiefs	Implementing the aforementioned actions within their respective teams and communicating organizational successes at least annually to the staff from the goals, objectives, vision and metrics of this plan.
WPO EEOAC and ODIAC Representative(s)	Support and enhance DEIJA efforts within OAR and WPO. Collect data from and report on OAR/WPO DEIJA actions, and provide suggestions for future actions.
DEIJA Lead	Coordinate with the respective stakeholders and build a report card of WPO's status semi-annually in each area, tell our success stories, communicate areas of opportunities, and celebrate our successes. Keep the publication of DEIJA integral into the fiber of the organization.
Every WPO Team Member	Courageously advance WPO's diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility goals by actively cultivating a culture of belonging, embracing the value of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and recognizing and mitigating all (implicit and explicit) biases.

DEFINITION OF ACRONYMS

DEIJA	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility
DOC	Department of Commerce
EEOAC	Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee
FEVS	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey
FY	Fiscal Year
MSI	Minority Serving Institution
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
OAR	Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
ODIAC	OAR Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee
OHCS	Office of Human Capital Services
ОРМ	Office of Personnel Management
WPO	Weather Program Office



APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

- Interagency Policy Group on Increasing Diversity in STEM Workforce by Reducing the Impact of Bias, Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and Office of Personnel Management (OPM), November 2016 file:///C:/Users/claudia.womble/Downloads/ostp-opm bias mitigation report 20161129.pdf
- 2. NOAA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2020 2024 https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2020/Dec/NOAA%202020-2024%20Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf
- 3. NOAA Policy on Gender Identity Protections <u>https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/noaa-administrative-orders-chapter-215-equal-opportunity/nao-215-4-noaa-policy-on-gender-identity-protections</u>
- 4. OAR Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan, dated October 2021 https://www.nssl.noaa.gov/about/events/review2021/documents/FinalDraft-OAR-DEI-StrategicPlan-07Sep2021.docx.pdf
- 5. Weather Program Office Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2022 2026 <u>https://wpo.noaa.gov/strategic-plan/</u>

