



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

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WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2026

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Background

On August 23, 2018, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed Executive Order 187 establishing a coordinated government-wide initiative for promoting diversity and inclusion in the State workforce. Through Executive Order 187, the Office of Diversity and Management (later renamed the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Management) was established within New York State's Department of Civil Service.

On January 4, 2019, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Management published the *Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan* and the *Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Implementation Plan*. Taken together, these two plans outlined Statewide objectives for diversity and inclusion and provided State agencies with tactical guidance for establishing and maintaining standards to integrate diversity and inclusion practices into existing organizational and business activities.

• The ***Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*** identified four comprehensive Statewide objectives:

1. Develop strategic leaders
2. Recruit and retain talent
3. Foster inclusive culture
4. Deliver effective programs and services

• The ***Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Implementation Plan*** identified eight areas critical to success at the enterprise and agency levels:

1. Informed and committed leadership
2. Clearly articulated roles and responsibilities
3. Continuous policy review and development
4. Dedicated resources
5. Collective accountability
6. Education and Training
7. Program plan integration
8. Performance measures

Relying on these overarching principles and objectives, agencies were then charged with developing their own diversity and inclusion implementation plans to both identify and elaborate on the specific actions they would be taking to improve their connections with employees, residents, and the many diverse communities of the State.

Introduction

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is pleased to share the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2026. This Plan outlines our priorities and goals as we continue to cultivate and promote a diverse and inclusive culture where employees feel welcomed and motivated to do their best.

These goals and priorities reflect our commitment to support DEC diversity programs; promote continuous learning and discussion of diversity and inclusion topics; recruit qualified candidates of different backgrounds, experiences, and talents; provide internal developmental opportunities; and assess what more we can do to nurture a supportive and inclusive work environment.

The Department has adopted New York State's definition of "diversity" and "inclusion".

Diversity is defined as referring "to a group of individuals with unique characteristics whose combined contributions support agencies in meeting and exceeding their organizational goals."

Inclusion is defined as "a process that cultivates an environment that values collaboration, flexibility, and equity."

Commitment to equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion adds value to the DEC's mission by creating a culture where employees come together to innovate and resolve critical issues effecting the residents of New York State. Cultivating an employee base whose demographic make-up reflects the many unique faces, voices, and backgrounds of those we serve is a crucial element in the pursuit of environmental justice and the empowerment of individuals to participate in environmental decisions that affect their lives.

Agency Specific Objectives and Goals

DEC's overarching goal of fostering diversity and inclusion will be accomplished through a multi-pronged effort executed by the following workgroups and supported by Executive level management:

- Environmental Justice Workgroup
- Outdoor Recreation Workgroup
- Women's Initiative Workgroup
- Cultural Heritage Month Workgroup

Regional offices are working on creating their own diversity and inclusion workgroups, organized by a Regional Diversity Coordinator. The aim is to provide outreach on a local level.

One of the first steps in developing a diversity and inclusion plan is ascertaining how employees view diversity and inclusion. This was accomplished through DEC's first Diversity and Inclusion Survey. DEC worked with ODIM on the survey and it was sent out to the entire agency to gain a baseline level of employees' views. Within the next year, the results will be compiled and analyzed, after which annual updates will be sent out to gauge progress.

DEC has implemented a mandatory 'Implicit Bias' training for all employees. Working with the staff of ODIM, every division of DEC is scheduled to complete this training by December 2021.

Recruitment of a diverse workforce continues with DEC's outreach for a broader Environmental Engineer candidate field and increased involvement with the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP) at the University of, aimed at bringing students ranging from middle school through college into DEC for special projects and introducing them to the agency and the work that is done.

Within the next five years, DEC will work to fill an Equal Opportunity Specialist 1 position that was established in 2020. This position would serve as the main contact and hub of DEC's diversity and inclusion efforts, ensuring consistency among workgroups and organizing the comprehensive vision of diversity and inclusion at DEC.

Diversity and inclusion web pages have been added to DEC's internal and external websites, explicitly illustrating the agency's ongoing and evolving commitment to diversity and inclusion. Along those lines, DEC's social media team has been working to promote and engage with groups supporting diversity and inclusion. The goal is to illustrate to all internal and external stakeholders that DEC fully supports and encourages diversity and inclusion.

Taken together, these actions aim to foster diversity and inclusion on a broad scale, fortifying the original goal of the agency in conserving, improving and protecting New York's environment for the safety, welfare and social well-being of *all* of its people.

In creating this plan, we have worked to align our diversity and inclusion goals with the Statewide goals set by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Management (ODIM). To that end, the next section will outline the specific priorities, strategies, and actions that accompany each of the eight critical success factors outlined in ODIM's *Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan*.

Critical Success Factor 1: Informed & Committed Leadership

Leadership demonstrates its commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion values and serves as a model for the Department as a whole.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
1.1 Demonstrate accountability, commitment, and involvement with regards to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.	1. Executive Leadership conveys the importance of diversity and inclusion in messaging and behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add diversity and inclusion to the agenda for Regional & Division Director Meetings. • Model diversity and inclusion behaviors. • Ensure adequate training opportunities are available. • Messaging from management references news-worthy items relating to diversity and inclusion.
	2. Supervisors continuously collect input from employees on diversity and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify employee perceptions on diversity and inclusion through daily observation and discussion, then develop recommendations for future diversity and inclusion actions, which management can use to engage employees to expand efforts. • With input from ODIM, developed survey to collect staff input. DEC will use survey results to assist with making changes to diversity and inclusion efforts. • Follow-up with annual survey on diversity and inclusion to gauge progress.

Critical Success Factor 2: Clearly Articulated Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership provides clearly articulated guidance and support for diversity and inclusion initiatives. Supervisors are trained in diversity and inclusion awareness and proactively identify and resolve issues that hinder workplace diversity, respect, and inclusion. Employees serve as active participants in the development of Departmental priorities.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
1.1 Increase supervisory accountability for promoting and supporting DEC's diversity programs and objectives.	1. Include commitment to diversity and inclusion objectives in performance plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all supervisor performance programs include a diversity and inclusion element.
	2. Ensure new supervisors have timely access to diversity and inclusion learning materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate DEC's Unconscious Bias Training into Supervisory Certificate Program.
	3. Identify and resolve issues and behaviors that hinder workplace diversity, respect, and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an open dialogue with employees through surveys and/or focus groups to proactively identify workplace issues that may inhibit the retention of a diverse workforce. • Communicate and build awareness of the roles/responsibilities each employee has in support of the Department's diversity and inclusion initiatives. • Developed an exit interview survey to better understand why employees leave the Department and implement corrective actions as needed. • Examine reward/recognition opportunities.

Critical Success Factor 3: Dedicated Resources

Resources are committed and allocated to sustain organizational change in the short and long-term.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
<p>1.1 Commit to change initiatives by allocating time and resources to relevant activities.</p>	<p>1. Determine specific financial and staff requirements necessary to support diversity and inclusion initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine financial & staff resources to attend career fairs, development recruitment materials, participate in events. • Fill the Equal Opportunity Specialist 1 position to oversee and fully implement a comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion program.
	<p>2. Collaborate with other agencies/partners to increase resource capacity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Management on opportunities to share resources. • Work with other agencies, ODIM and the Division of Staffing Services on shared recruitment opportunities. • Engage in ongoing continuous improvement of diversity and inclusion initiatives through the exchange of information with partner agencies and through sharing of best practices. • Work with internal and external partners to promote the awareness of/encourage attendance at the monthly diversity celebrations coordinated by ODIM.

Critical Success Factor 4: Program Plan Implementation

Diversity and inclusion principles are incorporated into program planning and service offerings.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
<p>1.1 Assess the effectiveness and accessibility of Departmental programs and services.</p>	<p>1. Consider underrepresented groups and non-users in a comprehensive review of existing Departmental programs and services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review programs to ensure there are no real or implied biases disadvantaging underrepresented groups in any way and revise as appropriate. • Identify how diversity and inclusion can positively address challenges in Departmental programming and incorporate these ideas when making future programming plans. • Address environmental issues and concerns that affect minority communities through grant opportunities, enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, consultation, guidance, and enhanced public participation, through the Office of Environmental Justice. • Advance diversity and inclusion in outdoor recreation through the Outdoor Recreation Promotions Working Group (ORPWG), which will ensure inclusive programming, inclusive communications, and relevant training for employees interacting with the public. • Increase involvement with the STEP program at SUNY (Science & Technology Entry Program), recruiting diverse students from middle school to college into DEC.

<p>1.2 Develop relevant and meaningful messaging to reach a variety of audiences.</p>	<p>1. Develop marketing and web materials to be accessible and supportive of diversity and inclusion principles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce marketing and web material for Departmental programming that is accessible for those with hearing and/or visual impairments and those with Limited English Proficiency. • Develop recruitment video and share it with school districts statewide to capture a diverse group prior to career path choices. • Develop and utilize list of community-based outlets to expand outreach to target audiences, including those serving individuals with disabilities and minority affiliated institutions. • Increase engagement with diversity and inclusion affiliates on social media outlets; promote diversity and inclusion stories, particularly as they cross into environmental issues.
	<p>2. Develop Diversity Internships to provide a pathway to students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with colleges to develop MOUs for meaningful internship opportunities. • Hire a summer intern through the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP) in the Division of Air and expand program to other divisions.

Critical Success Factor 5: Policy Review and Development

Existing policies are reviewed for compliance with legislative and Executive directives. Newly developed policies are free of any implicit/explicit biases and promote a consistent approach to decision-making.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
1.1 Review policies and guidelines to remove unintentional barriers and support accessibility and fairness.	1. Conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies and identify those in need of revision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working with DEC’s Risk & Assessment Counsel to ensure that all policies are updated in accordance with EO 187 and GENDA.
1.2 Enhance recruitment policies and practices for selection, hiring, and retention.	1. Audit recruitment materials to ensure they are compliant with all applicable laws/regulations and foster confidence in the integrity of the hiring process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employ interviewing techniques and scoring methodologies that promote fair and consistent treatment of all applicants and that foster the selection of the best qualified candidates. ■ Revised the Job Applicant Log process; HR working with programs to ensure fair and consistent hiring practices. ● Strengthen and broaden relationships with diversity groups, professional organizations that represent diverse populations, and universities with a diverse enrollment.

Critical Success Factor 6: Collective Accountability

Short and long-term goals are identified. Performance benchmarks are set and ongoing progress is reported on.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
<p>1.1 Conduct data analyses to develop meaningful diversity and inclusion data narratives and recommendations.</p>	<p>1. Analyze demographic data and share results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish annual performance goals that further enhance diversity and inclusion throughout the Department. • Report progress annually to ODIM to ensure both transparency and accountability. • Follow up yearly with updated diversity survey and results to gauge progress.
<p>1.2 Conduct ongoing succession planning discussions that address key-person dependency issues and identify ways to broaden necessary skill sets across the Department.</p>	<p>1. Use short and long-term approaches to meet diversity and inclusion objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop short and long-term diversity and inclusion objectives across all levels of the Department. • Facilitate the creation of internal and external “pipelines” for representative applicant pools, while maintaining alignment with Department of Civil Service requirements and guidelines.

Critical Success Factor 7: Performance Measures

Diversity and inclusion data is collected and reported upon. Leadership is regularly advised of progress made against annual performance goals as well as any specific challenges that are being faced.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
<p>1.1 Collect, analyze, monitor, and report on diversity and inclusion cultural data.</p>	<p>1. Establish baseline data for diversity and inclusion activities or elements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a baseline report to analyze historical employee demographic data and monitor trends in the composition of the employee base over time. • Create a baseline diversity and inclusion survey to obtain feedback from employees on their own experiences and perspectives on the Department's strengths and areas needing improvement.
<p>1.2 Monitor progress, address challenges, and identify areas deserving of recognition.</p>	<p>1. Report to leadership on progress and assessment results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally report to Department leadership progress against annual performance goals on a quarterly basis. • Regularly advise leadership of Department-wide successes and/or challenges; address specific complaints or grievances received; identify corrective actions taken; and provide names of individual employees or programs deserving special recognition.

Critical Success Factor 8: Education and Training

Training programs communicate expectations, discourage misunderstanding, and build awareness.

Priority	Implementation Strategies	Actions
<p>1.1 Consider underrepresented groups in training development.</p>	<p>1. Offer access to information and resources on workplace policy, accessibility, reasonable accommodation, unconscious bias, and cultural competence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise existing training curriculum to ensure material reflects the Department's diversity and inclusion framework and promotes critical thinking across diverse issues, experiences, and opportunities. • Develop and maintain a diversity and inclusion training program to promote awareness, encourage continuous learning, and facilitate discussion amongst the Department's employees.
<p>1.2 Provide employees with easy access to training and development opportunities.</p>	<p>1. Promote training and educational programs and encourage employee participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential training topics and ensure that internal publications, such as the monthly e-newsletter, include articles on diversity and inclusion to further promote the importance and success of diversity to the Department's mission. • Provide time for employees to attend trainings that support the integration of diversity and inclusion principles into Department business practices. • Mandate ODIM's Implicit Bias Training for all DEC employees. Work with ODIM to schedule annual sessions each year to ensure all new employees participate in the training, including seasonal employees and police academy recruits.

Conclusion

This five-year plan lays out a course for achieving workforce diversity by recruiting from a diverse, qualified group of potential applicants; cultivating workplace inclusion through collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and ensuring sustainability of our diversity and inclusion achievements by equipping leaders with the ability to manage diversity, measure results, and refine approaches on the basis of data. The plan details specific steps to enhance diversity and inclusion in the areas of leadership engagement, analytics and reporting, training, communications, strategic planning, and program enhancement.

This multi-level approach involves a long-term commitment toward a shift in culture, increased awareness of where additional work and guidance is needed, and a concerted effort to implement, maintain and sustain an environment fully supportive of diversity and inclusion.

Based on the reality that the Department operates in a dynamic environment – one with a number of requirements and dependencies that could affect strategic priorities – the annual performance goals, measures, and targets may change over time. As priorities change, we will assess the strategic goals outlined in this plan and make alterations to them as may be required at that time.

