This is a draft Resource Map for the USGS Woods Hole Pod. This was adapted from the “Sample Ph.D. Mentoring Plan” developed by Vashan Wright (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution) and Karin Block (City College of New York and CUNY Graduate Center), License: [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0]. This resource map is divided into two main sections: (1) The Map of Existing Resources, which contains a series of links and explanations about existing resources available to USGS employees. This map could be used as part of a welcoming package for new hires. (2) Resource Recommendations, which contains a list of recommended additions to the resource map, including suggestions relevant for supporting new hires as well as for retaining employees over the long term. These recommendations will be presented to USGS leadership for consideration.

(1) Map of Existing Resources

Organizational Resources (e.g., diversity officer, counseling and psychological services, ombudsperson, affinity groups, and recurring events)

The USGS has a number of existing resources that can be accessed online. While the list below is extensive and addresses a number of common requests for information and support, navigating the list can itself become a barrier to accessing desired resources. The resource map therefore begins with a list of people who can help connect employees with relevant resources.

People:

- Onboarding official: The individual helping new employees with onboarding forms/documentation is a resource for “knowing who to talk to next” as administrative/logistical questions arise for the employee. Examples include questions about paychecks, health care coverage, travel, purchasing, printing, parking, etc. The onboarding official may not have the answers directly but will know who to contact or where to find the information. In Woods Hole, this is currently Colleen Clark.
• Supervisor: The employee’s supervisor is generally expected to help new employees establish expectations (expectations about the employee’s work, as well as expectations the employee should have regarding the USGS) and facilitate the employee’s entrance into the project or group dynamic. The supervisor should be the go-to person for project direction and support, and is also trained to manage negative behaviors or conflicts the employee may experience. Note the supervisor has a duty to report cases of harassment or unwelcome behavior through the Anti-Harassment program (see below). If an employee would like to discuss something confidentially, starting with a local Peer Support Worker, the center Administrative Officer (whose duties include Human Resources; currently, Janet Paquette), USGS Ombudsman or the Employee Assistance Program would be more appropriate.

• Office Hours: During the covid pandemic, a number of distinct office hour opportunities were implemented for people to virtually “drop in” to ask questions or just to chat. Office hour sessions include monthly or bi-monthly meetings hosted by: Admin, the center director, Information Technology (IT), Peer Support Workers and the Publications/Data management team.

• Peer Support Worker (PSW) Program:
  o The Peer Support Worker Program was created to promote awareness and provide outreach and education on topics and policies related to anti-harassment, discrimination, biases, and scientific integrity, and is led by the USGS Civility and Inclusion Council. Discussions with PSWs are confidential.
  o The PSW program is growing, with PSW volunteers being added in centers across the Survey. In Woods Hole, there are currently four: Brian Buczkowski, Colleen Clark, Elizabeth Pendleton and Bill Waite. If your center does not yet have a PSW, or if you would like to discuss something with someone outside your center, there is a link to PSWs by Region.
  o PSWs cannot advocate on behalf of an individual, but they are available to listen, to discuss anything, and they are confidential unless there is a threat to human safety. PSWs can also help with questions about life outside of work, and can connect individuals with others who have similar interests. PSWs are also trained to help employees navigate the Employee Resource Matrix to find professional support for specific needs.

• USGS Ombudsman:
  o The USGS Ombudsman is confidential, but is also trained to facilitate informal discussions among individuals in conflict (to prevent situations from rising to level requiring more formal, time-consuming processes such as the Anti-Harassment Program. The Ombudsman is a neutral party rather than an advocate, but should be considered an extremely knowledgeable person to turn to, particularly if you aren’t sure where else to go. The downloadable list of things the Ombudsman can and cannot do is online, as is their contact information.

• USGS/DOI Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): These volunteer-led groups are available for all employees. Information below is a partial list of ERGs and contacts (primarily within USGS). A broader list available through DOI is also available online. Note that these groups are not exclusive. They are open to anyone who identifies as a member of the group or anyone identifying as an ally or wishing to become an ally:
ONNYX (African American Employee Resource Group): Angela Moye (amoye@usgs.gov)
Disabilities Inclusion Network: Dawn Childs (dchilds@usgs.gov)
ECSN (Early Career Science Network): Kristen Donahue (kdonahue@usgs.gov)
USGS Professional Latinos: Noelia Garcia (ngarcia@usgs.gov)
DOI- National Association of Hispanic Employees: Catherine Cilfone (catherine_cilfone@nps.gov)
LGBTQ+: Jim Mosley (jmosley@usgs.gov)
WISDom (Women in Science Dialogue): Katie Skalak (kskalak@usgs.gov)
USGS Vets: Christopher Haughie (chaughie@usgs.gov)

Online Resources:

- Employee Resource Matrix: Link to Employee Resources for Reporting and Discussing Misconduct. This downloadable matrix is a one-page summary specifying contact points, whether the interaction will be confidential, and which topics each resource supports.
- Workplace Culture Transformation: This is an expanded version of the resource matrix, listing links to a variety of support programs available to employees. A few key resources from the workplace culture page are listed here:
  - Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution (CADR) – CADR is a confidential, impartial resource for helping employees “improve and/or resolve workplace issues and concerns.” CADR offers confidential consultations and can also provide mediation/facilitation assistance if required.
  - Anti-Harassment Program: The A-H program “provides guidance to all employees to help them report any incidents of harassment without fear of retaliation and provides vital information for supervisors and management officials.” It is important to note, however, that the A-H program is neither confidential, nor centered on the reporting individual. It is a formal process in which the “the alleged victim may not be provided the outcome of any disciplinary action against the allegedly harassing employee and may not be provided a copy of the fact-finding report” (A-H policy, section 16A).
  - Dept. of the Interior (DOI) Office of the Inspector General: DOI provides an alternative approach to the USGS Anti-Harassment reporting process. The DOI reporting process can be confidential or even anonymous.

Resources outside of the USGS and DOI
As federal institutions, the USGS and DOI cannot publicly provide new employees with suggestions regarding the private-sector resources relied upon for the logistics of life (doctors, vets, grocery stores, etc.). Providing connections to professional organizations is valid, however, and such a list can be continually revised and expanded. Initially, the following suggestions have been included:

- Diverse Geologists-A Community Organization with an extensive list of resources
(2) Recommendations for establishing additional resource-map options.

URGE readings and pod discussions identify isolation as a critical barrier to overcome. In addition to hampering an employee’s initial capacity to “learn the ropes,” and “settle into the community,” isolation limits the extent to which employees are exposed to opportunities to grow and evolve in their career path. Retaining talented employees and enhancing their capacity to create, innovate and contribute to the USGS mission requires a concerted, long-term commitment to employee engagement. Recommendations in this section focus on resources for breaking through an employee’s initial isolation, then expanding their awareness and professional network. Recommendations for resources employees can use to foster a welcoming and encouraging workplace environment in which we all thrive are presented in the subsequent section.

- Direct connections: To connect newly-arrived employees with local resources, we suggest having a multi-pronged introduction to the workplace and surrounding community. As discussed in the resource map
of existing resources, this approach would involve administrative staff and the employee’s supervisor, but would also include a “buddy system.”

- The Gap: specific orientation activities covered by administration and supervisors can be outlined in an onboarding process so that supervisors and administration staff are aware of who is introducing what to new employees. With this delineation of topics, it is hoped new employees will not miss critical information (e.g., where is the copy machine, and is the employee actually getting all-hands emails and Teams messages). Gaps will inevitably occur, however, and a more flexible solution is required.
  - We propose a “Buddy with Bandwidth” to fill in the gaps left by formal introductions from the administration and supervisors. Another name for this buddy system is a “Barton Buddy” because this mechanism is designed to replace (though that is not possible) Sue Barton who was welcoming, loving and a resource to all in the Woods Hole Coastal and Marine Science Center. The Barton Buddy would fill gaps in welcoming the new employee and introducing the employee to appropriate available resources, as well as to people outside the employee’s specific project or group. The Buddy should be well versed in available resources for BIPOC and other marginalized identities available in the community.

- Onboarding dependence on employee type: non-federal types of employees (e.g., Contractors, Students, etc.) need to be included in onboarding procedures by developing specific guidance for their classification. Because non-federal employees are limited in their access to certain resources, privileges and activities, these employees are often left “in the dark” about opportunities at their center, they are more likely to be left off email lists and miss out on general office information. A Buddy that has the same (at least formerly) employment classification would be able to assist in navigating the gaps in employment specifics for non-federal employee classifications.

- We recommend establishing one (preferably more than one) Peer Support Worker at each USGS center. The contacts for initiating a PSW program at your center are available online.

- Mentoring: Though supervisors, and potentially Barton Buddies, are potentially valuable mentoring resources for an employee, establishing a diverse pool of potential mentors is critical for effectively expanding and developing an employee’s capacity to contribute over the course of their career.
  - Stove-piping: currently, employees tend to be brought in to work on a specific project or within a specific group. As a person’s interests and expertise evolve, it is likely they would be able to contribute as effectively, or perhaps even more effectively in a different group.
To capitalize on this in-house contribution potential (sometimes described as “cross-fertilization”), employees have to be aware of opportunities outside their project or group. Having mentors in other groups or centers can provide the required outside perspectives.

- Cultural exposure: groups within the USGS operate with different behavioral norms. When exposed to a single “culture,” a very real danger exists in becoming unable to recognize negative or destructive behaviors, particularly for early-career employees who may never have operated within a working group environment such as the USGS has. Access to mentors from other groups facilitates discussions around appropriate expectations and what should not be tolerated. Being able to use outside perspectives to rapidly identify and navigate barriers within a particular group’s dynamics can promote employee retention (see also Psychological Safety in the subsequent section).

Community building: a critical factor in combatting isolation is having a sense of belonging to a community. The USGS rarely hires cohorts who all identify themselves identically, so building cohort or community opportunities represents a fertile area for promoting employee engagement.

- Several official employee resource groups (ERGs) were mentioned in the existing resource map. An action step for Woods Hole (based on interest indicated during a recent center meeting poll) would be to start a local chapter of the Early Career Science Network ERG and develop an internal peer-group community for technical staff. Working with related science centers (for Woods Hole, this could be the St. Petersburg and Santa Cruz Coastal and Marine centers) Additionally, representatives from internal (ERGs) and external support organizations could be invited to give presentations about their groups (at very little expense if these presentations can be done virtually).

- Engage with local science organizations or academic partners to identify existing support groups open to engaging with USGS employees. This may be necessary in order to support a community when diversity within the center or region is very low.

- Unofficial cohort building: a cohort could be fostered among new hires. Though they may all have different backgrounds and projects, their shared experiences with finding their way in the center and community can help establish isolation-bearing connections. A “New Hire” channel has been opened on Teams for the Woods Hole Science Center, and a recommendation would be to continue supporting this channel and adding new people as they arrive.

- Forced mingling: though the COVID-19 pandemic currently limits the extent to which people can gather, the pandemic is not
anticipated to last forever. Prior to the pandemic, the Woods Hole Science Center had a ~26 year tradition of a weekly Coffee Hour. The Thursday morning event, with a rotating volunteer host, brings the entire center together to catch up with people outside their groups and projects. Informal discussions in small groups were a way to introduce new people and talk about life in and out of work. Post-pandemic renewing of the Coffee Hour tradition will be welcome, along with perhaps less-frequent informal gatherings. These additional gatherings could be inclusive, but with a cohort focus (new hires, or early-career employees for example).

(3) Recommendations for improving the workplace environment and establishing effective resources to support people throughout their USGS careers

At the USGS Director level, there is a published commitment to creating “a workplace that is civil, professional, rewarding, engaging, respectful, and inclusive; and one where all employees have an opportunity to contribute their greatest talents in support of our important mission.” This reflects the bureau’s stated recognition of the “connection between a professional, civil culture and our ability to deliver the best science possible to the American people.” It is important for the USGS to devote resources and modify accountability metrics to enable and promote activities that create the workplace environment the USGS strives for. The following recommendations are directed at renovating the workplace culture to specifically foster and reward behaviors conducive to the Survey’s ideal work environment.

- Psychological Safety: the US Department of Health and Human Services has recognized psychological safety as a fundamental element of employee productivity, noting that it is “important for team members to feel that their environment supports asking for help, trying new ways of doing things, and learning from mistakes.” They offer a two-page guide to creating psychological safety in a team environment. A recommendation is to support facilitator training so USGS employees can provide training and support materials for establishing psychological safety as a guide for behavioral norms among center staff. A number of Peer Support Workers are scheduled to take the facilitator training in the summer of 2021.

- Implicit/unconscious bias awareness training. As noted by Dr. Bruce Stewart in his 2014 Federal Manager Magazine article, the human mind can only process approximately 40 bits of information per second, though our minds bring in 11 million bits of information per second. The process of filtering the overall input stream to an operative level utilizes assumptions, many of which introduce biases at an unconscious level. The USGS recognizes implicit bias represents an ongoing challenge to the
bureau. Becoming aware of these biases allows employees to reduce incidents in which they may undervalue or not hear someone’s contributions (based on biases around gender, race, educational background, age or a host of other characteristics). Regular (annual) training to enhance and maintain awareness around the filters we use is recommended.

- Implicit bias test: This free, online test is a valuable tool in identifying the types of filters or biases a person should focus their awareness on.
- A short USGS primer on implicit bias is available as a pdf.

- Bystander intervention training. Once people are more aware of how biases (implicit or explicit) can manifest in behaviors of their coworkers as “microaggressions” or other unwelcome behavior, people can begin participating in bystander interventions. The USGS notes these intervention strategies allow employees to “hold each other accountable as they strive to treat co-workers inclusively with open-minded dialogue, dignity, and respect.” The USGS recognizes that training bystander intervention behaviors “will improve our science products over time because it will foster a more inclusive environment between peers and external research partners with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints.” A recommendation for bystander intervention training is that it’s held regularly, perhaps even twice per year. Training could alternate between office- and field-based interventions, but the frequency is intended to help cement these supportive, intervention behaviors as “muscle memory” or “instinctive responses.” In general, bystander interventions need to be implemented quickly, within seconds, raising the importance of having frequently practiced or role-played various intervention strategies.

- USGS-based training: a peer-led bystander training can be arranged through StepUp! Employee Empowerment Strategies (SEES).
- The USGS, through DOI, also offers a combined “Intergenerational sensitivity and bystander intervention” training.

- Accountability: Though this word is often connected with “punishment,” the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) notes that accountability also describes the extent to which desired behaviors are rewarded. Currently, the USGS does not have an effective process for rewarding activities supporting a healthy workplace environment, diversity, equity or inclusion (DEI). Consequently, an employee’s efforts made along these lines generally reduces their capacity to engage in “promotable activities.”

- At a center level, a recommendation is to provide clarity on whether collateral workplace environment support activities (such as engaging in coping strategies or group (ERGs) meetings) can be conducted during work hours. If so, this needs to be made clear to new and existing employees, perhaps by more widely circulating Quicktime codes for mental health or participation in support group activities.
A higher-level recommendation involves finding ways to link DEI and workplace environment activities (such as leading an ERG, being a PSW, or even engaging actively as a supervisor with the career development of a supervisee) with promotions and career advancement. For research-grade employees, the OPM-mandated promotion activity matrix is not aligned with the Director’s statements about valuable employee behaviors. This disconnect was not addressed in the 2021 assessment of the RGE promotion process. For the time being, the Executive Leadership Team could advise RGE panels about the value USGS places on researcher efforts along these lines, but career advancing DEI and workplace environment efforts will still likely need to include “products” (such as published papers, invited talks, honors or formalized leadership positions) before they can be effectively included in the RGE promotion process.