Hiring Policies for the USGS

In this deliverable, the USGS Woods Hole URGE Pod presents a summary of our Bureau's publicly available information on hiring pathways and policies. Certain aspects of the hiring process are set above the Bureau level (e.g., by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management), so our pod discussions worked to identify recommendations that could be implemented in the discretionary spaces available at the Center and Bureau levels. These suggested recommendations will be presented to the USGS leadership for consideration.

A recently published USGS Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement says "To ensure that we carry our mission forward and achieve our potential for transformational earth and biological science, it is critical that we **attract, retain, and develop a skilled and high performing workforce**, establish and strengthen sustainable relationships with our diverse communities, educational institutions, and professional organizations, and foster an attractive workplace that **reflects the best and the brightest of every segment of our society**." It is clear from demographics highlighted in the Session 3 URGE deliverable that the USGS workforce does not reflect "every segment of our society." At the USGS, scientific research, development of societally relevant scientific products, and communication and engagement of the entire public relies on a diversity of ideas and representation of people from all sectors of society. Diverse groups generate the broader ranges of ideas and solutions needed to address our Nation's critical science needs. Readings and discussions in this session centered around hiring practices at the USGS that may serve as barriers to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse workforce.

Institutionalizing the recommendations and best practices developed during URGE is one critical step to fostering a USGS that reflects the country it serves. This has been one of the hardest pieces for the USGS URGE pod to identify because it comes down to how and where we establish and maintain accountability across multiple levels in the bureau. For example, many of the recommendations can be implemented at the Center level, with support from leadership at that level. Others require individual action (such as active engagement with anti-bias and bystander training). Ultimately, leadership at all levels of USGS needs to commit to valuing certain behaviors and programs, codify those

[1] R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples, (2017).
[2] https://careers.whoi.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/
[3] K. Cobb, #GRExit Resources, https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13215461.v1, (2020).
[4] J. Posselt, Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjghw8s, (2016).
[5] https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html
[6] K. Griffin, J. Bennett, T. York, Leveraging Promising Practices, Washington DC: Aspire Alliance, (2020).

changes within the various official mechanisms that we have (from a line item in a federal budget down to individual EPAPs) and then hold ourselves and our institution accountable.

<u>Overview</u>

Though the intent in the federal employment process is not to discriminate (see <u>EEO statement</u>), the formal and informal hiring processes at USGS may function as barriers to increasing the representation of diverse communities within the workforce. The process of hiring, nurturing and retaining employees represents a long-term investment of time and resources that begins well before a job announcement is developed. The USGS can more effectively move toward its vision of equity by intentionally developing support and reward structures for existing employees to engage in a suite of employment-based activities including:

- Developing a candidate pool,
- Building relationships within that pool,
- Advertising job opportunities to personal and professional networks,
- Helping applicants navigate the job application,
- Evaluating candidates,
- Providing opportunities for a supportive transition to the workforce, and
- Encouraging professional development and healthy workplace culture.

At each of these steps, current practices can "gatekeep" or control access to the USGS, resulting in exclusion of BIPOC in the USGS workforce at all levels. Here we assess the multitude of places where the hiring process can introduce biases and we present recommendations for addressing those barriers to equitable employment.

<u>Recruiting</u>

USGS has a wide variety of employment types, as well as <u>pathways to employment</u> (e.g., Contractors (Student Services, Independent), <u>Cooperative Agreements</u> with universities and other entities; <u>Mendenhall</u> (postdoctoral fellows); <u>Internship programs</u> (NAGT, <u>MSI Partnerships</u>); Regular employees (term, permanent, seasonal); <u>Pathways</u>), and different recruitment strategies are used for each.

Additions to the USGS workforce represent a significant investment by the Center, Region, the Mission Areas and Programs that fund them, and the bureau. The investment begins well before the hire is made. Many staff at USGS report they had an advocate who invested significant effort in their hire regardless of which program they "came up" through (e.g., USGS internships, Pathways, Mendenhall). Such recruitment practices offer both challenges and opportunities to recruiting BIPOC applicants. *Challenges* include a narrowly focused recruitment effort:

recruitment is typically done within established networks, which may not be diverse; risk aversion may be a critical driving factor in hiring given the time commitment each hire represents; reduced opportunity to recruit candidates outside established pipelines and programs; and established pipelines and programs may be vulnerable to cancellation if funding streams and staffing are not prioritized within USGS. The main *opportunity* is that the culture and practice of cultivating applicants and advancing them through the hiring process can be used to increase representation within the USGS workforce.

There are several avenues to pursue to develop a diverse candidate pool and build relationships that can lead to advocacy at the time of hiring. Conferences present opportunities to meet students and scientists outside of established networks. At both large (e.g., AGU, AGU Ocean Sciences Meeting, GSA) and smaller, targeted conferences (e.g., SACNAS), USGS staff could be encouraged to attend and participate in sessions that discuss diversity efforts within the geosciences, to meet and develop relationships with BIPOC students and scientists, and to offer information on USGS hiring practices to minimize barriers associated with lack of knowledge of the process, as discussed below. To facilitate conference attendance by senior leadership, it is recommended to reinstate a previously utilized agreement granting 4-8 hours of diversity training credit to attendees who participate in the full conference/workshop. In addition, removing barriers to USGS employee conference attendance for these meetings could result in wider participation.

USAJOBS.gov is the "Federal Government's official employment site," but posting to USAJobs does not constitute advertising the job because the listing is not automatically guided into various pools of potential applicants, unless an applicant is pre-registered on the site and has created automated alerts. A recommendation for advertising is to develop a list of network contacts to which a link to the job announcement can be sent. The intent is to have these network contacts then advertise the job by passing the link directly to potential applicants. An important element of such an advertisement is the opportunity to pass along information about whom to contact for further details about the job and about the application requirements. Misunderstanding the application's expectations is seen as a significant barrier to attracting a diverse applicant pool.

Within the USGS, BIPOC candidate network contacts exist, although there does not appear to be an official listing of whom to contact. Networking largely remains within the domain of the individual scientists. We provide here an initial list of potential contacts who could assist with advertising job applications within specific demographic pools:

Contacts within the USGS:

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USGS Equal Employment Office: Regina Neal-Mujahid (gs_deo_recruitment@usgs.gov; rneal-mujahid@usgs.gov)

ONYX (African American Employee Resource Group (ERG): Angela Moye (amoye@usgs.gov)

Disabilities Inclusion Network (ERG): Dawn Childs (dchilds@usgs.gov)

USGS Professional Latinos (ERG): Noelia Garcia (ngarcia@usgs.gov)

DOI- National Association of Hispanic Employees (ERG): Catherine Cilfone (catherine_cilfone@nps.gov)

LGBTQ+A (ERG): Jim Mosley (jmosley@usgs.gov)

WISDom (Women in Science Dialogue ERG): Katie Skalak (kskalak@usgs.gov)

USGS Vets (ERG): Christopher Haughie (chaughie@usgs.gov)

Contacts through USGS partnership cooperatives with minority-serving institutions:

City College of New York: Walter Barnhardt (wbarnhardt@usgs.gov)

Tennessee State University: Thomas Byl (tdbyl@usgs.gov)

University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez: Though this partnership is shown on the USGS web site, there is no known current lead. The partnership champion retired, and while there currently exist a number of promising leads for potentially restarting this partnership, nothing will likely move forward again until another champion decides to take on this effort on. This partnership was the first college pipeline program in the USGS, and stands as a cautionary tale for relying on champions to not only advance, but maintain efforts the USGS claims to have an interest in (regarding College Pipeline Programs, "the USGS is interested in forming partnerships with minority serving institutions to provide opportunities for students through lecture series and internships"). If these activities are to continue thriving beyond the tenure of the activity's original champion, USGS leadership will need to devote resources to structuring programs and ideas that serve the USGS vision.

Contacts outside the USGS:

Direct advertisements with professional societies (e.g. SACNAS) are possible. Note that while paid advertising is permissible (Survey Manual 205.11), free options are available and can be done quickly. Social media posts can also be useful. Targets for social media posting of the USAJobs link have included:

@AccessibleGEO	@ESWNtweets	@NABGSocial
@AWG_org	@GeoLatinas	@nonschistyjobs
@CoastalCarbon	@geospatialwomen	@SACNAS
@earth_jobs	@IBParticipation	

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Paid advertisements can be released after they are vetted by the HR specialist working on the hiring. Options for pre-vetted templates that would allow paid advertisements to move quickly to publication can improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The USAJobs application process can be daunting and varies considerably from private sector job applications. As an example, USAJobs resumes contain much more information than standard 2-page resumes. To be competitive, the applicant must somehow discover they need to include detailed information that addresses specific points from the job advertisement, ideally using the same language as the job advertisement itself. Finding guidance on applying for federal jobs may be a barrier to acquire this knowledge, for example those who do not know anyone in federal service may not realize the advantage of the "mimic the job announcement language" strategy. Providing equal access to information and guidance about the application process could remove a barrier to entry. We recommend that hiring managers consider offering an informational session or proactively opening communication lines with potential candidates through inclusive, welcoming language in job opportunity advertisements that offers support. An example of this approach is provided by the USGS Water Mission Area, which produced a web page describing their jobs and hiring process, and followed this up with a twitter feed offering additional pathways for connecting to the potential applicant pools.

Finally, we would like to note that since 2010, demographic data has been collected voluntarily with applications by USAJobs, and as of 2017, 70% of applicants submitted this information. Thus, there is the potential to evaluate applicant pool demographics, potentially providing information similar to that available for the USGS workforce. Applicant demographics is one component of evaluating the effectiveness of various recruitment strategies, as well as determining where the main barriers to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse work force exist. Currently, however, the collected data do not appear to be publicly available, so we were unable to analyze the data for guidance on optimizing recruitment activities.

Hiring

There are numerous steps to hiring at USGS, and during URGE discussions, decision points were identified where unintended bias could be introduced into the hiring process. These so-called "discretionary spaces" represent decision points where equity checks have been shown to be particularly effective at promoting equitable hiring outcomes.

1) Position Description (step 3, Hiring Manager): USGS positions descriptions (PD) and official qualifications can be reviewed carefully to ensure that PD requirements match the needed skill set. Given the narrow educational requirements for some positions, the fact that some majors are not included in a USAJobs list of federal occupations by college majors (i.e.

Geology is listed, but not Environmental Science or Environmental Studies despite similar numbers of graduates) could be a potential barrier to recruiting a diverse workforce. Further, the PD and associated advertisement language itself could deter particular candidates from applying. Common suggestions for attracting the most diverse candidate pool possible are to remove words that connote race, gender, age, or ability; to highlight the USGS's commitment to diversifying its workforce in the advertisement; and to reduce the number of minimum requirements to qualify, in recognition that there are multiple pathways to achieving the same level of knowledge, skill, or experience.

KSA (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) questions can introduce bias because they might inquire about a candidate's specific experience with lab, field, or other research activity, conference participation, or software skills (e.g., MATLAB, ArcGIS, and those which require an expensive license) that a candidate may not have had an opportunity to pursue due to financial barriers. These opportunities typically exist preferentially at well-funded institutions and may not reflect on a candidate's ability to perform a job or to learn a skill. One potential solution if these types of questions are necessary is to ask a preliminary question that inquires about a candidate's access to opportunities or experience. Another solution would be to focus the question on a capability rather than a specific pathway to that capability (e.g., ask about GIS experience rather than experience with the specific program ArcGIS). A third solution would be to give these such specifically-targeted questions very low weights in the ranking process. KSA questions also are more likely to evaluate a candidate's confidence rather than their skills, as the answers are self evaluations. Marginalized groups typically may rate themselves lower (Exley & Kessler, 2020), so KSA questions may unintentionally screen for confidence rather than real skill differences.

2) Evaluation of Applications (step 8, Human Resources Specialist): HR specialists evaluate, rate, and rank candidates in this step. HR's review is based upon the General Schedule classification and qualification guidelines. This step is one critical way in which federal science agencies may differ in hiring practices from private and academic institutions, where review of applications is typically done by those knowledgeable about the exact position being filled. The addition of a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in the review process may allow for assessing applicants by someone familiar with the knowledge and duties required for the position. SMEs can work with HR during minimum qualifications review or evaluate specialized experience; they can rate and rank candidates; and can participate in developing assessment material. The HR Hiring Manager provides oversight to SME involvement throughout the hiring process and should be involved during all hiring steps (i.e., before announcement is released). SMEs have participated in several USGS hiring actions and this has led to positive hiring outcomes.

3) Review of Applications (Step 10a, Hiring Manager/Panel): After top candidates are established by HR specialists, those candidates' application documents are released to the Hiring Manager. At this point, the trajectory of the review and selection process is at the discretion of the Hiring Manager. Review can either be done by the Hiring Manager alone or by a panel. Review by a panel offers additional opportunities to ensure equitable hiring outcomes. In order to create a diverse review panel, individuals who hold various positions within USGS, are at different career stages, and represent a variety of demographics should be included. It could be helpful to include someone outside of the group or center to provide a different perspective or to balance potentially harmful group dynamics. Diverse review panels offer broader applicant assessments and tend to result in more diverse hires (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). We recommend that all members of review panels be asked to complete anti-bias training. Before reviewing application materials, the hiring manager or panel could create a rubric to evaluate candidates' skills. Pre-defining the desired applicant qualities and using a rubric focuses attention on the most relevant candidate information and can minimize biased evaluations while also reducing panel members' required efforts and deliberation times.

4) Schedule and Conduct Interviews (Step 10b, Hiring Manager/Panel): USGS offers several resources for conducting interviews (see Interviewing in the Supervisor's Toolkit and OPM's Reference Checking Guide). Curated questions and rubrics that are established before interviews can focus a review panel on relevant material and reduce evaluating extraneous information that can endear a candidate to review panel members for the wrong reasons, as can also occur when reviewing other application materials. It can be tempting to evaluate how well a candidate might fit into the workplace or group dynamic. While this is certainly important, cognitive biases can enter and review panels may select candidates who are most similar to themselves. This reinforces the need for diverse review panels.

5) Check References (Step 10c, Hiring Manager): Reference checks are completed via verbal interviews rather than written references. Several studies have demonstrated that references may be biased, with women and BIPOC applicants receiving less favorable reviews. Several guides exist that help identify potential bias in reviews: Best Practices for Reading and Writing Letters of Recommendation; Unconscious Bias in Recommendations Letters; Avoiding Racial Bias in Reference Writing)

6) Make Selection (Step 10d, Hiring Manager): Candidate selection offers an opportunity for a final *equity check*, in the form of reflection, during the hiring process. Key questions for this check include: 1) What different prior opportunities has each candidate had? 2) Have we evaluated skills or growth potential? *Resumes build privilege and do not necessarily reflect potential.* 3) Are there perceived differences between ourselves and the applicant that are not

relevant to the position, but are influencing our decision? *Unconscious bias can result in hiring individuals who share many similarities with ourselves* (Note references in 4 and 5 above regarding the unconscious biases in italics above)*.

Transition

The period between hiring and start date is an opportunity to introduce new hires to the USGS and build the new hire's sense of inclusion. Prior to starting work, the USGS can provide opportunities for the new hire to make connections with existing employees who can help navigate personal logistical questions such as how to locate living arrangements, doctors, dependent care facilities, places of worship, etc. Having champions/advocates who actively engage with new hires prior to their arrival can foster connections to people within the USGS. These connections in turn can help new hires learn the center's culture and expectations while providing the beginnings of the social and career networks required for employees to thrive.

Specifically, the cultural transition can be fostered by intentionally setting meetings with the new hire. For example, the center director could welcome the new hire and discuss the center's culture, resources the new hire could tap into, and position expectations. The new hire's supervisor could organize an introductory meeting in which the new hire and existing personnel can introduce themselves. These interpersonal contacts can be the foundation of the communications that provide new hires with the sense of inclusivity vital to their effectiveness and their likelihood of remaining with the center. Early definition of expectations, goals, and how a new employee will be evaluated are key to providing a smooth transition and rapid growth. Ideally, such discussions would occur with multiple individuals and roles (Supervisor, Project Lead, Safety Officer, PSW, etc) whom the new hires may engage with, including with the center director. In addition, such conversations would be beneficial at subsequent career transitions as employee job assignments evolve over the course of a career, since expectations at each new job level are not necessarily known prior to working in that new sphere of activity.

A second aspect of the transition period is its duration. The USGS hiring process can be quite slow, which can be a barrier to new employees unable to afford an extended period of time between paychecks, or new graduates concerned with how to begin repaying their student loans. Relocation expenses can also be a barrier, though there are targeted USGS programs that can be used to address some of these concerns:

Relocation: Though directly supporting relocation costs is an option only for relocating existing federal employees, the USGS does have the capacity to provide a Recruitment Incentive the new hire could then use for moving expenses (up to 25% of their annual salary). Personnel Bulletin No. 06-01 Section 3c states that an incentive recommendation must be made "one level higher than the supervisor of the employee receiving the incentive payment," and that approval

can be granted by bureau heads ([this authority is also held by the Deputy Director](#)). The high level of approval required for this activity can be a barrier for utilizing this USGS offering. Pushback from Human Resources has been noted when incentive offering is proposed, so we recommend streamlining this tool at least with regard to hiring from disadvantaged groups in our efforts to carry out the [USGS Equal Employment Opportunity Policy](#).

Student Loan Repayment: An additional tool to reduce a new hire's financial risk in accepting a USGS position is to utilize the [Student Loan Repayment Program](#). Approval for this support mechanism is at the Regional Director level, and can be used to cover $10k per year of certain student loan debt (up to a total of $60k). For this program, the employee is expected to remain in federal service for 3 years, so this could be an effective approach for both permanent and term hires. While these incentives and programs are formally in place, they may not be frequently employed due to lack of funding or support at the appropriate level. Increasing application of such incentives could improve the attractiveness of employment at USGS by enhancing real and perceived benefits.

Retention

As with hiring and transition activities, our URGE pod members consistently report that successful retention involves a dedicated champion willing to invest time and resources in the employee. Though the specific actions vary from case to case, certain trends emerge: champions mentor their employees with regard to USGS expectations (what counts toward promotion, for example); champions facilitate the employee's access to the resources required to thrive in their position (fostering collaboration between the employee and the larger group, providing leadership opportunities and a sense of agency to the employee, for example); champions also advocate for the employee as the employee transitions between job levels (contract, intern, student, term, permanent) or between promotion levels.

Though we have personal evidence of these types of supportive champion behaviors and their effectiveness in retaining and nurturing employees, it is clear from the Session 3 URGE deliverable concerning USGS employment demographics that we do not advocate equally across all employees beginning with recruitment; the Survey's unbalanced employment demographics are the result of gatekeeping integrated over all employment-based activities. While such advocacy is the ideal, our recommendations center on focusing advocacy efforts on minoritized communities within the USGS and institutionalizing the support for such advocacy activities. Equitable access to guidance and mentoring is likely to be one way USGS supports retention of BIPOC employees. Ultimately, cultural shifts that come about by implementing recommendations and best practices, such as outlined in USGS URGE session documents, are necessary to avoid inviting BIPOC students and scientists into workspaces with cultures or practices that might feel unsafe, unwelcoming, or unsupportive.

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Existing Advocacy Groups: The USGS currently has a number of advocacy groups targeting particular elements of the employment demographic spectrum. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are volunteer-led communities within DOI and within USGS specifically which can provide spaces for people to draw from the wisdom and support of their peers. ERGs provide a sense of community, which is an important component of improving retention rates because people resist leaving spaces in which they feel they belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). The existence of these ERGs should be highlighted more overtly during the hiring and transition phases.

The USGS has a Peer Support Worker (PSW) program comprised of non-supervisory volunteers who work to "promote awareness and provide outreach and education on topics and policies related to anti-harassment, discrimination, biases, and scientific integrity." In additional to engaging with workplace environment issues, PSWs engage with employees, who can confidentially reach out to PSWs for guidance on a variety of USGS resources, or if the employee simply wants to feel heard.

Institutionalizing advocacy within the USGS:
While the USGS does have certain advocacy resources that can be utilized in support of hiring, transition and retention, it is critical to note these resources are predominantly handled by volunteers or as collateral duty activities. Though a limited number of individuals have elements of DEI listed in their performance plans (EPAPs), this is not the norm. Moreover, even if these activities were systematically codified within employee EPAPs, the Office of Personnel Management guidelines for promotion in research positions does not reward activities related to improving the workplace environment, enhancing equity, or in any way supporting the stated goals of the USGS regarding diversity and inclusion:

- "The USGS is committed to seeking out and retaining a highly skilled and diverse workforce...."
- "We must strive to create and foster a supportive and understanding environment in which each employee can realize maximum potential, regardless of differences."
- "Simply put, leveraging diversity and inclusion is the right thing to do. As the demographics of our Nation change, so will our workforce and so must our approach to diversity."

Fully addressing how we reward employee behaviors that the USGS has publicly committed to fostering likely requires discussions above the Bureau level with regard to modifying OPM standards. Here we focus on actions that can be taken within the Bureau.

Targeted Training Opportunities: As noted above in "Recruitment," the USGS can grant 4-8 hours of diversity training credit to employees who attend conferences geared for marginalized and minoritized communities. This diversity credit approach has been used previously within the USGS, and did result in several effective opportunities for leadership to engage in the recruiting process.

Performance Plans (EPAP): Rather than relying on an ad hoc assembly of champions willing to invest their time in recruiting, mentoring and supporting employees from diverse backgrounds, DEI-related activities can be formally introduced into leadership-level performance plans ~~(center directors and supervisors, for instance)~~. To begin addressing the issue of rewarding DEI activities at the OPM-defined promotion level, EPAPs can include quantitative specifics that match OPM-approved promotable activities, such as leading workshops or training experiences around DEI topics (e.g., [Bystander Intervention training led by USGS employees](#)), or [coauthoring papers](#) and [presentations](#) discussing DEI efforts and opportunities within the USGS (e.g., [Ethridge et al., 2019 AGU Fall Conference](#)).

Position Descriptions (PD): To begin advancing beyond the current norm of engaging with DEI-related activities in a volunteer or "extracurricular" fashion, elements of the hiring, transitioning and retaining of employees can be captured within an employee's position description. By explicitly listing such activities as a part of the employee's primary duties, the USGS guards against these activities being dropped during periods when volunteers must fully commit to their position-description activities and abandon collateral duties. As noted in the Overview, the recruitment, hiring, transitioning and retention process represents a significant long-term investment on the part of existing employees. As the bureau continues to review and standardize position descriptions, the opportunity exists to ensure that PDs reflect a commitment of every position to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Without personnel who are official responsible for these activities, there will always be a danger of losing an effective program or resource whenever a volunteer champion retires or otherwise transitions away from their existing position (e.g., the current lapse in the USGS cooperative program with the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez).

Position Categories: As noted in the Recruiting section, there are a number of position types into which a person can be hired. Just as it is critical to establish a metric in the position description that promotes activities the USGS has stated are important, it is critical to properly match the type of position to the applicant and situation. Perhaps the most obvious example is the distinction between advertising a contract versus a term position. As a contract hire, the applicant is not a federal employee and is thereby placed in a more vulnerable position than a term or other federal employee. This vulnerability becomes apparent in situations such as a

government shutdown, or a blanket restriction on certain allowable on-site activities (as was put in place during the pandemic). In these situations, a contract hire is vulnerable to a loss of pay due to restrictions imposed by the USGS itself on the contract hire's ability to work. For contracted positions, the USGS can specify that the vendor must meet certain diversity standards within their company and potentially in the contractors they provide to USGS. For the USGS to grow into an identity of being an employer that prioritizes the well-being of its workforce, care will need to be taken in offering contract positions to minimize a new hire's exposure to risks that are beyond individual control. Though personal evidence indicates that BIPOC are over-represented in contractor positions, official demographic data are not available for USGS contracted employees.

<u>Recommendations</u>
Here, we summarize recommendations made in previous sections. These recommendations highlight a fundamental truth: attracting, hiring and retaining a diverse workforce requires a long-term commitment on the part of the USGS *to each personnel position individually*. This commitment takes the form of a relationship that begins well before any applicants are identified (e.g., establishing networks that reach the applicant pools reflecting our Nation's demographics), runs through the hiring process (e.g., ensuring no steps in the hiring process create inequitable barriers that limit candidate diversity available for final selection), continues through the onboarding or transition process (e.g., ensuring new/transitioning employees understand expectations and feel included in their project/team), and into retention (e.g., rewarding behaviors the USGS sees as enhancing workplace effectiveness and execution of the USGS mission).

- Devote resources to "institutionalize" activities that recruit a diverse workforce. Advocacy is important in every step of the USGS hiring process: success stories all have a champion willing to share their time, energy, and resources. Succession plans for such activities are needed so they continue to serve the USGS mission and workforce beyond the champion's tenure.
- Evaluate applicant demographics to determine whether and how our existing recruitment and hiring process excludes certain segments of our society.
- Broaden professional networks as avenues for recruitment to increase workforce diversity. Conference attendance at smaller, targeted conferences and attending sessions on diversity and inclusion at larger conferences can broaden networks.
- Advertise open positions widely, utilizing job boards, social media, and professional networks.
- Critically evaluate position description language, education or experience requirements, and KSA questions.

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- Increase accessibility of the application process by providing training on using USAJOBS for applicants and holding informational sessions that break down barriers between candidates and the hiring manager.
- Convene a panel for each new hiring action, with members representing diverse positions, career stages, and potentially includes members from outside the group or center, during the entire application review. Designate an SME for each hiring action.
- Promote anti-bias training for any employee serving on a hiring panel or as an SME.
- Evaluate applications against a pre-determined set of metrics (e.g., a pre-established, agreed-upon rubric), which can help avoid a number of unconscious biases.
- Support pipeline programs and other activities that improve diversity of the USGS workforce by building reward systems that recognizes employees at the OPM-defined promotion level.
- Clarify how existing USGS recruitment and hiring incentives can be used, and identify sustainable mechanisms to ensure their longevity and fund them.
- Offer transition support to new hires—introduce them to USGS culture, practices, and resources such as the PSW and Employee Resource Groups.
- Invest in Center activities to improve cultural competence that improves understanding and awareness of issues faced by underrepresented groups when joining majority white scientific and local communities.
- Broaden activities that can count toward the yearly diversity training requirements to include attendance at minority serving professional society meetings to mentor students as part of the USGS exhibit teams.