

Toolkit on Implementing the Presidential Memorandum on Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks, National Forests, and Other Public Lands and Waters

On January 12th, 2017 President Obama issued [a pivotal memorandum](http://bit.ly/2isoG4z) (available at <http://bit.ly/2isoG4z>) directing federal land and water management agencies to engage in diversity and inclusion efforts to ensure “all Americans have the opportunity to experience and enjoy our public lands and waters.” What follows is our interpretation of this memo, which we’ve organized along six themes, and some suggestions beyond what is already in the memo.

A few thoughts before we dive in:

- **This memo is for all of us:** Though the memo is specifically directed at four federal agencies, many if not all of its suggestions are applicable to any organization or agency that facilitates experiences on public lands or in public waters. Moreover, the document directly calls on federal agencies to collaborate with the public, nonprofit, and educational sector. The federal government alone cannot accomplish cultivating truly welcoming and inclusive environments on public lands and waters; that vision can only come to fruition with *all of our collective efforts*. So, if you are a state or municipal agency, a conservation nonprofit, an experiential or environmental education organization, an environmental advocacy organization, an outdoor outreach organization, or even a private company that guides or leads trips on public lands and waters, please read on.
- **Don’t forget equity and justice:** We’re particularly excited to see a federal diversity and inclusion initiative that doesn’t solely focus on diversity metrics, but rather prioritizes an inclusive workforce and programs. That said, inequality and injustice lie at the root of homogeneity and exclusion on public lands, in public waters and within agencies. Consequently, we urge you to integrate equity and justice into your implementation efforts.
- **Definitions are important:** Though the memo’s introduction section defines “diversity” broadly, it becomes clear in the directive section that President Obama is focusing on four specific marginalized groups: (1) “minorities” (which we refer to as communities of color); (2) low-income, (3) disabled populations; and (4) tribal communities (Section 2a(vi), Section 2b(i, iv)). We suggest that agencies and organizations not only think about race, income, ability and indigeneity, but [all facets of diversity](http://bit.ly/2jIDlXn) (as it is defined on our vocab sheet at <http://bit.ly/2jIDlXn>) including but not limited to, ethnicity, gender identity, gender presentation, immigration status, religious affiliation, class, socio-economic status, and age.

- **Word choice is important:** The memo often refers to “diverse communities.” but we utilize the language “marginalized communities” or “people with marginalized identities.” No single person can be diverse, and often, “diverse community” is used as a euphemism for communities of color. We use “marginalized” because it forces us to discuss the very power dynamics that have created exclusion in our public lands and waters.

We’ve organized President Obama’s memo by the following themes:

1. Recruitment and Advancement of Staff with Marginalized Identities
2. Accountability
3. Training
4. Collaboration
5. Access to and Enjoyment of Public Lands and Waters
6. Public Engagement in Public Land and Water Decisions

I. Recruitment and Advancement of Staff with Marginalized Identities	
<p>Create professional development programs such as fellowships, private-public exchanges, and detail assignments to recruit and prepare a more diverse workforce.</p> <p>Section 1a(iv); 2b(ii)</p>	<p>The memo directs agencies to partner with private or international organizations, State, local and tribal governments, or other branches of the Federal Government to make this happen.</p> <p>We also suggest partnering with educational institutions, conservation nonprofits, outdoor and environmental education organizations, university natural resources management and conservation programs, identity-specific outdoor organizations, and outdoor brands and retailers to create a career continuum for people from marginalized communities.</p> <p>The hallmarks of an inclusive and equitable fellowship or internship program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fair compensation; ○ Logistical support for lodging and transportation (even if it is just information); ○ A detailed orientation to your agency; ○ Clear expectations; ○ Clear learning objectives with tasks that support those objectives; ○ Meaningful work beyond administrative tasks; ○ Opportunities to network with people with like identities and experiences; ○ Refraining from assuming they’ll want to work on outreach or diversity and inclusion initiatives based on their marginalized identity(ies); ○ Exit interviews and implementation of feedback from these interviews in a timely fashion;



I. Recruitment and Advancement of Staff with Marginalized Identities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Opportunities to work across your agency and with multiple staff members; and ○ Coaching and mentorship.
<p>Prepare mid-level staff from marginalized communities for leadership positions through a formal senior level training program.</p> <p>Section 1a(v); 1a(vi); 1b(i)</p>	<p>Don't reinvent the wheel. Leadership development programs for aspiring agency leaders from marginalized communities exist! The memo mentions a Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program, but there are several other organizations specifically for leaders in the green sector that apply an equity lens to their training, including: the Green Leadership Trust, Training and Resources for the Environmental Community, Center for Diversity & The Environment, and the Environmental Leadership Program.</p>
<p>Create mentorship and sponsorship programs to advance staff from marginalized communities.</p> <p>Section 1a(v); 1a(vi); 1b(i)</p>	<p>The words “mentor” and “sponsor” appear in the memo, and we want to make it clear that these two words mean very different things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mentor is someone (preferably with similar identities) from any level of the agency or even outside the agency, who provides insight and support about skills building, career path, and any other specific career oriented goals, taking a cue from the mentee's vision and aspirations. • A sponsor, on the other hand, is someone in a leadership position within your agency who can articulate the sponsee's unique skills and advocates for the sponsee's advancement within the leadership group.
<p>Build systems to keep track of who stays, who leaves, why they stay, and why they leave.</p> <p>Section 1a(i-iii)</p>	<p>Track the following data by demographics (race, gender, age, socio-economic status, dis/ability, tribal affiliation, and other demographics):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representation at each level within your agency • advancement • retention at each level <p>Conduct exit interviews of all staff to ascertain reasons for departure (specifically, ask them if it was a “push” or “pull” decision; that is, are they leaving because they felt pushed out by agency culture and behaviors, or are they leaving because they had a better opportunity elsewhere, or both?)</p>



2. Accountability	
<p>Hold senior leaders accountable by evaluating them on their diversity and inclusion efforts in performance reviews and in their advancement process.</p> <p>Section 1b(i)</p>	<p>Create institutional structure to hold leaders accountable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your advancement rubric, include “cultural competency” and “demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion,” which gets to both competence and buy-in. • In your standard performance evaluations, evaluate senior leaders for cultural competency and have them report out their progress on diversity and inclusion-related measures. <p>*A quick note on cultural competency: our definition is “the ability to flex with difference or work well with those who are different from you.”</p>
<p>Each agency is held accountable with a requirement to self-assess on diversity and inclusion, and to make these self-assessments available to the public.</p> <p>Section 1c(i)</p>	<p>The memo provides some guidance here by providing two examples of assessments required by law to which agencies can add a diversity and inclusion lens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Order 13583 self-assessments; and • Self-assessments and barrier analyses required by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Management Directive 715. <p>So as not to make these assessments burdensome, we advise a single assessment that meets the criteria of both of the above.</p> <p>Self-assessments can be biased if they’re guided by the perceptions of individuals with dominant identities. We advise leadership take steps to mitigate that bias by seeking external support to create an accurate self-assessment tool that can be used for several years.</p>
<p>The Office of Personnel Management will review each agency on diversity and inclusion efforts and make recommendations.</p> <p>Section 1c(ii), 1c(iii)</p>	<p>These recommendations will ideally be part of a holistic strategic diversity and inclusion plan that not only outlines broad goals, but also offers strategies, tactics, metrics, and accountability. A framework for thinking about diversity and inclusion strategy can be found on our website at http://bit.ly/2j75JCG, and a free webinar on building diversity and inclusion strategy can be found on our website at http://bit.ly/2iMTcq6.</p>
<p>Agencies will hold their funding recipients accountable for promoting diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Section 2a(iii)</p>	<p>In our work, we’ve seen our foundation partners hold their grantees accountable for diversity and inclusion in a few ways, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requiring that grantees report on demographics and other relevant metrics in grant reports; • making training on unconscious bias, diversity, and inclusion available to grantees; • requiring that all grantees include a goal aimed to increase



2. Accountability	
	<p>diversity and inclusion in public lands and waters in their proposal;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a rubric to score all grantees so as to mitigate grantor bias; • including “demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion” as a qualification in the rubric; • incorporating questions that address the grantee’s views on and commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity; • when appropriate, allocating part of the funding to the placement and training of interns/fellows with marginalized identities; and • actively approaching organizations working in/with marginalized communities.
<p>Score/rate bureaus, directorates, and divisions within your agency on inclusion improvement.</p> <p>Section 1b(ii)</p>	<p>The memo mentions the new IQ index as one scoring method.</p> <p>There are also additional ways to score/rate bureaus, directorates, and divisions within your agency on inclusivity, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • via staff survey questions related to inclusion and division culture • by tracking the number of inclusion-related incidents that occur within your division seasonally or annually. (In fact, many universities already have bias incident reporting tools that help with tracking incidents, incident management, and identifying trends.)



3. Training

<p>Expand unconscious bias training for staff, and make it mandatory for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • senior staff; • managers; • outreach personnel; • recruitment and hiring personnel; • staff responsible for professional and career development; • staff involved in promotion; • law enforcement staff; • bureaus, directorates, and divisions within agencies that score low on inclusion improvement (every two years) <p>Section 1b(ii)</p>	<p>Though the memo is specific on who should receive training and how frequently some people should receive it, it doesn't specify (a) who should run training; (b) how frequently they should be run (with the exception of divisions that score low on inclusion improvement); and (c) what approach the training should utilize.</p> <p>Ideally, agencies should have the capacity to internally run these trainings at least once a year (or during every hiring cycle) so they don't consistently have to rely on external trainers like us.</p> <p>That said, if you are relying on external trainings (which you may need to do for a few years), make sure they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a goal of handing the curriculum off to you within a few years (e.g. through a train-the-trainer). • use an unconscious bias model that meets people where they are at and doesn't engender guilt and shame. • employ an intersectional lens that doesn't only examine unconscious race bias, but also bias with regard to class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, and more. • effectively facilitate discussions around power, privilege, and oppression. • strive to understand and build on previous knowledge and systems within your agency rather than reinvent the wheel. • recognize and celebrate what you're already doing well and laying out small wins along the way to avoid fatigue. • provide you with tools that you can implement in your daily work rather than a theoretical discussion of bias.
<p>Expand diversity and inclusion training, and specifically, provide it every two years to bureaus, directorates, and divisions within your agency that score low on inclusion improvement.</p> <p>Section 1b(ii)</p>	<p>President Obama's memo seems to prioritize unconscious bias training over diversity and inclusion training, but doesn't make a distinction between the two types of trainings.</p> <p>Our interpretation of the memo is that diversity and inclusion training constitutes a deeper dive beyond unconscious bias into topics such as privilege, power, oppression, and allyship, as well as identity-specific learning about race and racism, class and classism, dis/ability and ableism, gender identity, gender presentation and sexual orientation, cissexism, heterosexism, and more.</p> <p>Our recommendation would be for you to build in a continuum of trainings that starts with unconscious bias, and then progresses to various diversity and inclusion topics.</p>



3. Training

<p>Expand flexible work schedule training and specifically, provide it every two years to bureaus, directorates, and divisions, within your agency that score low on inclusion improvement.</p> <p>Section 1b(ii)</p>	<p>Between the three training topics specified in the memo, this topic is the most discrete. There are clear guidelines and researched better practices on flexible work arrangements. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telecommuting; • flexible holiday calendars; • part time; • flex time; • compressed work week; and • job sharing. <p>We agree that this training is important because research shows workers who have control over their own schedules have lower stress levels, psychological distress, burnout, and higher job satisfaction (see http://bit.ly/2jWWWmoV) The training should also emphasize that staff should not be penalized for flexible work schedules. An Ernst & Young survey concluded 1/10 U.S. workers “have suffered a negative consequence as a result of having a flexible work schedule” due to the perception that face time is tantamount to dependability and responsibility. (see https://go.ey.com/2iFvZmk) Because of the stigma, participation rates for these flexible schemes are low—around 12 percent, according to a study issued late in 2015.</p>
<p>Stay on the learning/research edge of these topics.</p> <p>Section 1b(ii)</p>	<p>Unless you have a staff member dedicated to diversity and inclusion, it may feel overwhelming to stay on the learning and research edge of topics such as diversity and inclusion, unconscious bias, and flexible work arrangements.</p> <p>Fear not; there are many resources out there. We have a free curated resources page on our website (https://theavarnagroup.com/resources/) and are also happy to talk to leaders about ways they can continue to keep their trainings fresh.</p> <p>As a leader, you can support your staff in continued learning opportunities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including diversity and inclusion discussions in staff meetings; • Encouraging staff to dedicate one hour per week to learning; • Sharing articles, podcasts, books, and videos with staff; and • Encouraging staff to attend events and conferences that enhance their learning related to diversity and inclusion.



4. Collaboration	
<p>HR personnel from all of the agencies will meet twice a year to gauge progress, identify gaps, and support each other.</p> <p>Section 1c(ii)</p>	<p>It makes sense for HR personnel from all the covered agencies to collaborate on common policies and forms. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job application systems; • hiring rubrics; • job description language; • benefits programs; • internships and fellowships; • mentoring and sponsorship programs; • inclusion incident reporting systems; and • helpful trainings. <p>Additionally, software, forms, and policies can be universalized and updated so HR personnel can focus on work that is unique to their agency.</p>
<p>Partner with other organizations and agencies for fellowships, private-public exchanges, and detail assignments.</p> <p>Section 1a(iv)</p>	<p>The memo directs agencies to partner with State, local and tribal governments, or other branches of the Federal Government. We urge you to consider a broader range of partners (including nonprofits and educational institutions).</p> <p>In approaching prospective partners, ensure that the benefits of the partnership are mutual and that you are not asking them to partner with you simply to make your workforce more diverse. A mutualistic or reciprocal partnership is imperative. Some hallmarks of a mutually beneficial partnership are when each partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feels equally bought into the goal or process; the goal or process benefits everyone; • understands their roles and responsibilities in accomplishing the goal; and • feels comfortable raising concerns about the trajectory of the process.
<p>Partner with State, local, tribal, private, and non-profit partners to expand access to public lands and waters.</p> <p>Section 2b(iii)</p>	<p>This strategy will be addressed below in sections 5 and 6.</p>



5. Access to and Enjoyment of Public Lands & Waters

<p>Within a year, agencies must build an action plan addressing access to and enjoyment of public lands/waters.</p> <p>Section 2a(vi), 2b</p>	<p>The memo provides a list of possible action strategies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outreach; • mentoring; • partnerships; • program evaluation; • multilingual and culturally appropriate materials, and • liaisons. <p>Remember that this is not the universe of strategies that support access to and enjoyment of public lands and waters, and that other strategies must be considered, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical transportation/access; • a welcoming and inclusive built environment for people from all backgrounds (e.g., bathrooms, group sites, signage, and more); • culturally relevant, responsible, and responsive programs, interpretation and communications (not just “culturally appropriate” as specified in the memo). Here, “relevant” connotes how you connect programming, interpretation, and communications to users’ lives (this can include multilingual signage). “Responsible” connotes how you tackle bias to present multiple and balanced perspectives (such as including historical and current indigenous presence in all interpretation). “Responsive” connotes how you employ participant-centered instructional methods to reach all participants (such as place based experiential learning). <p>Be sure that your action plan is holistic and sustainable and to articulate goals, strategies, tactics, metrics, and accountability. See our recommended approach to crafting a holistic plan at http://bit.ly/2j75JCG.</p>
<p>Periodically, agencies must identify site-specific barriers to marginalized communities accessing and recreating on their lands and waters.</p> <p>Section 2a(i)</p>	<p>The memo doesn’t specify the frequency of this report, but given that agencies are engaging in self-assessment, it makes sense for this report to accompany the self-assessment.</p> <p>In this self-assessment, it is important that the barriers be identified by the community experiencing them, and not inferred by agency personnel.</p> <p>Each public land site and community is unique; there is no “one size fits all” type of community engagement. We recommend</p>



5. Access to and Enjoyment of Public Lands & Waters

creating a plan for accessibility for each public lands site and includes all stakeholders in this planning.

Furthermore, it's important not to think of identity-specific communities as a monolithic entity. Each person, regardless of identity, has different and unique relationships with public lands and waters, and different and unique barriers to access and enjoyment of them.



6. Public Engagement in Public Land & Water Decisions

<p>Agencies must engage with marginalized communities in all protection and management decisions regarding the lands/water. In fact, in three months, agencies must identify public liaisons from a diverse array of communities from which they'll seek input.</p> <p>Section 2c; 2a(iv)</p>	<p>For this particular task, we will direct you to a Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit that we are developing in partnership with The Wilderness Society. The toolkit will be published imminently and contains details on how to approach and engage with communities in your project area in a meaningful way.</p> <p>Some guidelines we're including in the toolkit are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your homework: meet with community members and review relevant academic, scientific, and news reports and civic plans to get a sense of: demographics; major active organizations; where people live, work, and play; key community events; influential persons; languages spoken; typical household size; cultural norms and values; social history; and barriers to opportunities and rights (e.g., healthcare and education). • Build rapport with individuals, civic/religious/academic/community leaders, and organizations in the community. • Signal that you care about issues that are priority for the community. • Avoid paternalistic paradigms (e.g., "service"). • Be clear how the community will benefit from engagement and how their input will be considered in making a final decision. • Implement accessible and relevant stakeholder input processes, including: using physically accessible locations that are familiar to community members; offering transportation reimbursements, meals, and dependent care during meetings; providing translation services; and facilitating meetings in a way that validates all perspectives and honors diverse communications styles and values. • Provide communities with follow up information about the project.
<p>Within a year, agencies must build an action plan addressing barriers to marginalized communities' participation in protecting and managing important cultural, historic, and nature areas.</p> <p>Section 2a(vi); 2c</p>	<p>In the memo, President Obama lists some items that can go in this portion of the action plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommendations from marginalized populations regarding at-risk historic, cultural, and nature areas; • improved information dissemination; • identifying staff responsible for outreach; • building partnership plans; and • focusing on communities who experience significant financial barriers to participation.



	<p>We're not sure why the President refers to "important cultural, historic, and natural areas" in Section 2c(i) instead of all public lands and waters (as he did in Section 2a). We know that people from marginalized communities enjoy and appreciate a variety of public lands, and assume that "important cultural, historic, and nature areas" encompass <u>all</u> public lands.</p>
<p>Update policy manuals and handbooks to ensure that these materials reflect the importance of engaging with marginalized populations in management decisions.</p> <p>Section 2a(ii); 2c(ii)</p>	<p>Policy manuals will serve as a guiding document for employees, but don't serve as a guarantee that the policy will be implemented. Be sure that your policy articulates why the organization or agency is engaged in diversity and inclusion efforts. Some reasons why agencies may value these efforts are articulated in the introduction of the memo.</p> <p>We've seen agencies and conservation organizations articulate the importance of diversity and inclusion efforts in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "public lands and waters belong to everyone and it is our job to actively identify and eliminate barriers to full participation in public lands and waters (advocacy, access, stewardship, recreation, and management) by those in historically marginalized populations in our country and communities." • "everyone connects and engages with public lands and waters in a way that reflects their culture, experiences, and personal preferences, and we need to honor the myriad ways people connect to these lands and waters by including their perspectives in management." • "everyone has the right to access public lands and waters and have inclusive experiences within them." • "the future of our public lands and waters is tethered to connecting the diverse youth of today to the outdoors; they are the next generation of conservation advocates, public land and water users, and innovators." • "all communities have the right to the benefits of public lands and waters, including important physical and mental health benefits." • "a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive agency staff yields more creative, collaborative, synergistic, innovative, and effective outcomes." • "talented staff are more likely to stay if there is an inclusive workplace culture." • "equity, inclusion, and diversity are essential in achieving



	<p>our agency’s mission”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “by engaging in equity, inclusion, and diversity work, our public land and water management agencies will maintain relevance in the face of shifting national demographics.” • “users of public lands and waters will more likely have more positive experiences if they interact with staff who have similar identities.” <p>Go to http://bit.ly/2jX3ku9 for a free webinar on articulating your “whys” for diversity and inclusion.</p>
<p>Within 120 days, each covered agency shall identify opportunities to promote participation by marginalized populations in advisory councils and stakeholder committees that are involved in management decisions.</p> <p>Section 2a(v)</p>	<p>As you identify possible partnerships and collaborative opportunities, be sure to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the community benefit from participation? • How will their input be utilized to make a decision? • If you end up not incorporating their input, why? <p>Failure to consider these questions can leave people feeling tokenized; like agencies are paying them mere lip service instead of taking their input seriously. We will flesh this out more in our Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit we’re building in collaboration with The Wilderness Society.</p>