

Instilling Values of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

INTO THE NATIONAL OCEAN PROTECTION COALITION





REPORT COMMISSIONED
BY THE NATIONAL OCEAN
PROTECTION COALITION

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Executive Summary

Organizations that uphold exemplary standards of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are not built in a day. The structures and processes that make them outstanding require commitment, effort, representation, follow-through and repeated evaluation and accountability. The National Ocean Protection Coalition (NOPC) brought on López-Wagner Strategies and ALRAS Digital as it began its own DEI journey to analyze, research, and recommend the path the coalition can take to build a more inclusive collaborative for new and existing members, as well as to design campaigns for the defense and establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) that consider the voices of the people and communities who are the most deeply affected without MPAs and how these protected areas will be of benefit to them.

This report is the final product in a four-month effort that took into consideration the coalition's history, its Leadership Team, the perspectives and priorities of coalition members, and lessons learned from outside the coalition. The result is a comprehensive report that exhibits a highly engaged coalition with individual experiences and preferences in incorporating DEI into their own organizations, but with little history in doing so for this coalition, nor the knowledge that a commitment existed to undertake and launch such an effort in 2020. As NOPC is in the initial stages of its DEI journey, some members noted a lack of centralized information, shareable resources, and organizational transparency hindering collaboration in incorporating DEI into the coalition's work and, by extension, in other coalition efforts.

This is not to say that the coalition has been unsuccessful - quite the opposite. NOPC has been extremely successful in building a community of engaged ocean advocates in Washington, D.C. and across the country to educate and mobilize around the establishment and defense of MPAs. Nevertheless, the incorporation of three key

frameworks will strengthen the coalition's collective power and ability to generate change in ocean conservation while moving to center a holistic approach on humanity.

López-Wagner Strategies has proposed a series of frameworks built on one another to grow collective power. These include:

- ▶ DEI Framework
- ▶ Organizational Effectiveness Framework
- ▶ Programmatic Framework

Each framework includes a series of specific, achievable, and distinct recommendations that include defining key terms and ideas relevant to the DEI journey, establishment and diversification of bodies within the coalition, education and power-sharing for new and existing members as well as leadership teams, partnership building and collaboration with justice-focused and BIPOC-led organizations, and the shifting toward a more public-facing stance for the coalition that differentiates it from other ocean conservation organizations as well as the National Ocean Policy Coalition.

Our team echoes what was noted in the organization-wide survey and has been repeated endlessly by the NOPC Leadership Team: NOPC is at the beginning of its DEI journey. This report is not an exhaustive list of to-dos that will cure all of the organization's ails. Instead, this report and the efforts that went into it are the starting point of a long, winding journey that we are proud to support NOPC on and believe that, if properly implemented, can yield dramatic effects on the coalition's ability to affect change.

Introduction

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, or DEI for short, is often called “forever work.” It is work that individuals and organizations take on in perpetuity, in a continually evolving world to address historical inequities and imbalances in power created via systems of oppression and bias alongside present-day problems. The deep desire and need to forge more equitable opportunities and outcomes to dismantle toxic attitudes and foster environments conducive for greater belonging guide this work.


In July 2020, the National Ocean Protection Coalition (NOPC) brought on López-Wagner Strategies and ALRAS Digital as strategic consultants to analyze existing organizational procedures and structures at the coalition, understand leadership and member dynamics that contribute to short- and long-term efforts to establish Marine Protected Areas, and offer an informed set of recommendations to elevate efforts and achievements of the coalition with a focus on inclusion.

The following report is the conclusion of a four-month effort which has included comprehensive research of external partners and similar organizations who have undertaken their own DEI journeys, numerous meetings with NOPC leadership and members, two extensive coalition surveys, and an NOPC Leadership Team workshop, tied together by a combined two decades of experience in environmental and social justice work.


Strengthening the collective impact of NOPC to foster DEI will require a commitment to growth. It will be a commitment to the deliberate and intentional fusion of DEI learning and competence by the NOPC staff and its leadership, along with participating NOPC members and the coalition leads from respective organizations. We encourage NOPC to establish the necessary internal structures to develop a DEI Framework for its growth and programming.

An overarching strategy begins with small steps for incremental and deep-rooted change. We recommend the NOPC Leadership Team and coalition members develop a shared vocabulary for engagement and focus on creating a culture of belonging via inclusive practices, intentional and equitable partnerships, and increased use of inclusive communications and language throughout organization language.


The López-Wagner Strategies and ALRAS Digital team stand by the recommendations made in this report and offer our extended availability to inform its implementation. We have also made known to the NOPC Leadership Team the network of experienced professionals as well as coalition members who are willing and able to support the next steps in this long journey forward.



“[Diversity is] The differences among us based on which we experience systemic advantages or encounter systemic barriers in access to opportunities and resources.”



“Diversity references all aspects of human difference”



Capacity and Infrastructure


Investing in internal capacity and infrastructure is critical to sustainable growth. NOPC does not presently have a standardized set of processes or internal procedures written or its mission statement or values available to the public or prospective members.

As NOPC grows its DEI work, transparency of the coalition's processes and procedures must be prioritized, pertaining to decision-making, campaign strategies, priority setting, and its membership, leadership and various working group structures, including those NOPC envisions for 2021. This transparency will support holding NOPC Leadership and individuals accountable to the work and expansion of the same, which demonstrates a commitment to an equitable and inclusive field.

These processes and internal procedures can be informed by a strategic plan for the coalition, discussed in this report, which centers its DEI work on a proposed DEI Framework, also in this report. Alongside NOPC's strategic plan, these would be helpful to include for members of the NOPC coalition, staff and external stakeholders. Without this infrastructure, members are left to apply their own organization's mission, values and goals to their work with NOPC, consciously or unconsciously.

To that end, the following recommendations aim to highlight the overarching areas of work for NOPC to consider and implement for 2021 and beyond. These key areas are categorized into three underlying frameworks—DEI Framework, Organizational Effectiveness Framework, and Programmatic Framework. These areas have been organized by scope of work.

The DEI framework currently has its own standalone recommendations since NOPC is starting its DEI journey, in the future NOPC should ensure DEI is deeply rooted in all aspects of its work. NOPC must begin with a strong DEI foundation that will inform the following recommendations. Equally important, a section on Executive Director Leadership Development has been created with its own set of recommendations to support the coalition's director in leading and driving the coalition's DEI work. Lastly, given that NOPC is committed to a long-life DEI journey, the following recommendations are by no means exhaustive. However, these recommendations will provide a holistic overview of the critical foundational work needed to make substantial advancement in its DEI vision.



“Diversity is a noun. It can be measured by counting individuals, and extends to gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, nationality, and other things. I don't think diversity has been an important aspect of the coalition's work. I think our measurement has been square kilometers, not people.”

Summary of Findings

In efforts to piece together a more holistic view of NOPC, López-Wagner Strategies conducted two distinct surveys shared with the coalition. These questionnaires were made available online via SurveyMonkey to capture feedback and gather insights from an inclusive number of NOPC members, allies and affiliates. This allowed our team to leverage the views of the broader membership to inform the final recommendations for this early phase in NOPC's DEI journey.

In the late Summer of 2020, the first survey was sent to a small selection of NOPC members and senior staff, resulting in nine unique respondents representing seven coalition members. A second larger survey invited the more than 50 members of the coalition to participate, resulting in 33 unique respondents representing 26 organizations and three consultants.

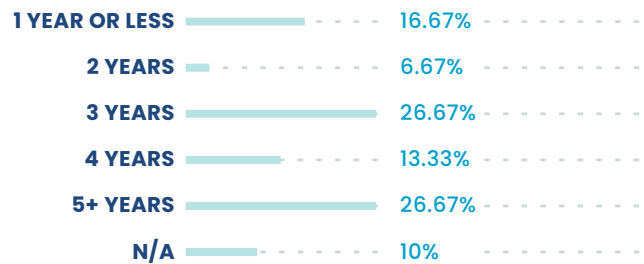
Overall, both surveys resulted in 40 unique individual responses from 32 organizations. All respondents believe equity plays a role in ocean conservation and stressed the importance of resolving DEI issues before engaging in efforts to incorporate justice into the organization's ocean conservation efforts. All respondents also noted an evolution in their personal views on DEI, observing that they have become more intentional and aware of the concept itself and how it relates to the organizations where they work and the policies they embrace.

Almost all respondents felt included in the coalition and saw themselves as allies and advocates committed to working with and alongside NOPC to fulfill its obligations around DEI. Most respondents also noted that their respective organizations are actively engaged in these efforts, whether at the beginning of their individual DEI journeys or in the thick of it – all are willing to work with, teach, and learn from NOPC to distribute and amplify the impact of widespread implementation of DEI principles in ocean conservation.

The below survey results are representative of the second survey unless otherwise noted. The survey responses and relevant insights were extracted via qualitative response analysis and quantitative data aggregation. The qualitative response analysis was facilitated by sentiment analysis and natural language processing capabilities available in SurveyMonkey.

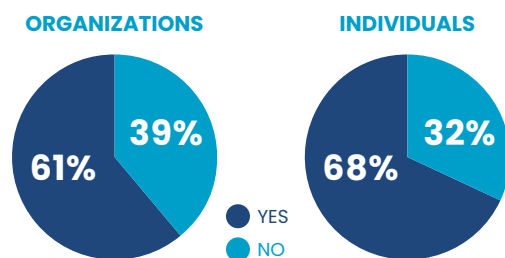
AUDIENCE SUMMARY

A plurality of responses, about 24%, were generated by individuals with "Director" in their title. Another 15% of responses were generated by individuals with a significant leadership role, either Executive Directors, Presidents, or CEOs. Other prominent answers came from Managers and Vice Presidents. Only about 18% of responses came from Associate and Analyst level staff. Most respondents, about 67%, have been involved with the organization for over three years.



Of all respondents surveyed, 61% noted that their organizations had been through or were in the process of going through an organizational DEI training. A slightly larger share of respondents, 68%, had undergone at least one DEI training with a current or past employer.

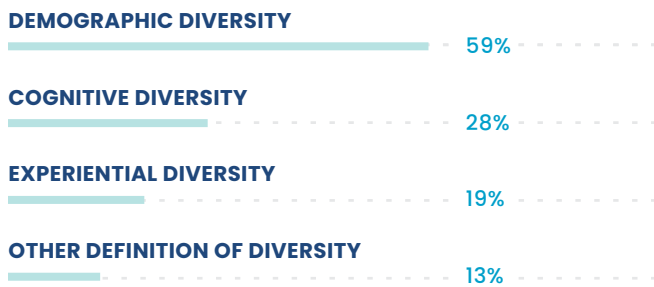
COUNT OF THOSE UNDERGOING OR HAVING UNDERGONE DEI TRAININGS



Most respondents, about 73%, agreed to disclose their organization and identity to NOPC leadership if needed. It is important to note that this is a considerable decline from the first survey, which exhibited a response rate of 89% that agreed to disclose identity and organization.

While all respondents agreed that diversity is an essential aspect of the coalition’s work, respondents did not have a universal definition of diversity. Though most included elements of demography in their definition of diversity, several discussed diversity in the context of cognitive diversity, or the inclusion of people who have different ways of thinking, different viewpoints and different skill sets in a team or group and experiential diversity, or the different life experiences that shape our emotional universe, as well as various other nontraditional forms of diversity.

RESPONDENTS’ DEFINITION OF DIVERSITY



“Diversity is what we are, and inclusion is what we do.”

“True inclusion would potentially require us to be comfortable altering some of NOPC’s tactics or values to ensure that inclusion is more than adding membership.”

Unlike the discussion of diversity, most respondents agreed that inclusion in all its forms means providing a welcoming platform to all voices and, at times, giving more space and recognition in that platform to people who have not received it before. In this sense, inclusion is qualitative vs. quantitative, and therefore harder to measure.

Most respondents agree that inclusion is something that they would like to see reflected in the work of NOPC and/or the broader ocean conservation community, therefore implying, though not explicitly noting, that it is lacking in the organization. Most respondents also agreed that justice and equity belong in the U.S. ocean conservation movement, but that work is needed around diversity and inclusion before this work can begin.

“DEI has not traditionally been a focus in oceans. In fact the U.S. ocean conservation community has little diversity. I think there are ample opportunities to work together with faith-based organizations, native American tribes and other POC organizations.”

“Justice involves dismantling systems of oppression and privilege that create systemic disadvantages and barriers to people’s ability to access resources and opportunities.”

“Equity is an approach based on fairness to ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources. In practice, it ensures everyone is given equal opportunity to thrive.”

Learning from Partners in Prioritizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

A majority of respondents, 75%, explicitly noted they felt included within the coalition. A quarter of those respondents indicated that there was room for improvement, specifically in increasing transparency around the organization’s long-term strategies and overall governance structures and being more welcoming of non-DC organizations. Several groups called out a Beltway mentality that permeates the organization and in turn, its partnerships.

22% of respondents did not directly answer the question, either skipping it or responding “N/A.” These responses came primarily from individuals who had been with the coalition for less than a year. Only 3% of respondents responded that they did not feel included in the coalition.

“Not being DC based has had its challenges. There is a beltway mentality that permeates a lot of this work.”

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS FROM COALITION MEMBERS

- ▶ Welcoming non-DC groups and tackling beltway mentality
- ▶ Sharing of long-term plans and strategic roadmaps
- ▶ Improving clarity on governance structures
- ▶ Increasing transparency

“As this is ongoing work, it is difficult to say right now what NOPC’s commitment could mean, but this consultation with members and recognition of the work to do indicates NOPC can be a partner in this process and is appreciated.”

“I don’t clearly see a justice component to the work that we are doing with NOPC.”

All survey respondents noted their thinking about DEI has changed over time and that the events of 2020 have catalyzed personal and organizational changes in how they perceive and think about DEI issues. Despite evolution of thinking at the personal level, a slight majority of survey respondents (52%) are unaware of or find it difficult to pinpoint in what stage NOPC is in its commitment to DEI. Given the length of time most respondents have spent with the coalition, this statistic demonstrates that most members are unaware or not included in DEI efforts and therefore can’t speak to or may find it hard to believe that a DEI commitment is underway.

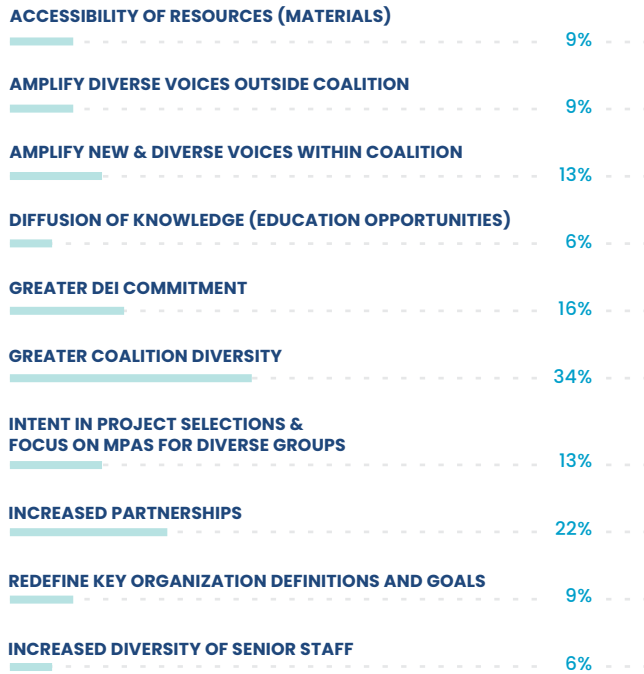
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO STATED WHERE NOPC IS IN DEI COMMITMENT

Unaware/Difficult to Say	52%
Beginning	41%
Middle	7%

“Seek input from diverse organizations and environmental justice groups on NOPC priorities. Organize workshops and panels with diverse and environmental justice-led voices. Steer funding to more diverse organizations.”

As an immediate follow-up, survey respondents were asked what it would look like for NOPC to work with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion lens and framework. The most frequently cited actions to take included greater coalition diversity and increased partnerships with other organizations.

RESPONSES TO “WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE FOR NOPC TO WORK WITH A DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION LENS AND FRAMEWORK”



The López-Wagner Strategies team predicted that partnerships would be a featured response in what belongs in a DEI Framework and therefore asked how NOPC might expand and build new equitable partnerships in the future. Responses to this question tended to include themes of transparency in partnerships asks, direct and intentional outreach informed by research and relationships, and providing partners with materials, access to information (resources) and research to which they may not have access.

“I think that the ocean conservation community needs to invest in initiatives aimed at inspiring young people of color to join the ocean conservation movement and provide long-term mentoring and support.”

“Be clear about what we want from partnerships, so they are intentional and effective.”

“A simple set of guiding principles that the entire community can commit and adhere to would be immensely helpful.”

“NOPC can be a great platform to facilitate collaboration across a spectrum of organizations and communities that have an interest in ocean conservation.”

“We’re committed. To act on the commitment and follow through to fully integrate DEI, or as much as possible, will take intentional outreach and recruitment from diverse places and that type of investment could easily be a full-time job. I’d love more foundation or other funding support.”

As a final question, survey respondents were asked what resources they would need as a member of NOPC to commit to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Interestingly, funding was not the most frequently cited response; resources in the form of training(s), webinars, easy to access toolkits, readings, and research were the most needed resources cited by respondents. Other popular responses included offering forums and mechanisms of participation for NOPC members and educational and networking opportunities to learn from and grow with other members or similar organizations.

WHAT RESOURCES WOULD YOU NEED AS A MEMBER OF NOPC TO COMMIT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION?



Frameworks & Recommendations

The following three key frameworks were built based on the responses and insights offered by membership, allies and affiliates. Research and insights from non-member organizations outside of the coalition and broader ocean conservation movement were also used to help build the framework and are noted further below in this report.

Programmatic

- Communities
- Partnerships
- Programs Communications
- Development

Organizational

- Culture
- Capacity
- Members
- Leadership
- Learning

DEI

- Mission
- Vision
- Values
- Strategic Plan
- Data

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

Area of Focus

Recommendations

Mission, Vision, and Values

- ▶ Re-evaluate mission and values to align with NOPC's overall DEI vision
- ▶ Update and develop language and clear definitions of NOPC's DEI values and goals
- ▶ Weave language and DEI throughout internal documents and public organizational descriptions

Strategic Plan

- ▶ Develop a strategic plan for NOPC through an equitable and inclusive process that:
 - ▶ Is inclusive of its membership
 - ▶ Integrates and centers DEI values and goals
 - ▶ Communicates with partners, stakeholders, and on NOPC's future website

Data

- ▶ Create an annual or biennial DEI report to measure and account for NOPC's DEI work (external)
- ▶ Develop and define metrics and measures of success
- ▶ Define measurable goals with a clear process and system to engage in feedback discussions and ongoing evaluation
- ▶ Develop data and measures of accountability

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework | Supporting Research

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

As NOPC strategically builds on its DEI work and initiatives, it can evaluate and revise its vision, mission, and principles to ensure they align with its core values. Such values will need to be defined by NOPC to enable a shift in institutional behavior. Equally important, NOPC will determine how it will measure itself against those principles to live up to them, and ultimately see DEI at its core, embedded in NOPC's mission rather than it viewed as a distinct or additional goal. (External resource: [McKnight Foundation](#))

A robust DEI framework begins with developing a DEI statement and defining what DEI specifically means for NOPC. This statement will allow for shared language among leadership, staff and board, and members, informing the development of overarching goals, followed by objectives, strategy and tactics. Once goals and priorities have been developed, it is critically important to implement tools and processes to assess the progress towards these diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. (External resource: [NOAA](#))

"Diversity is where everyone is invited to the party. Equity means that everyone gets to contribute to the playlist. Inclusion means that everyone has the opportunity to dance." – Robert Sellers, Chief Diversity Officer at the University of Michigan.

Environmental justice activities in the U.S. have led to environmental and socio-economic improvements for resource-dependent, disenfranchised communities, natural resources and economic redress. NOPC should consider what it would look like to foster greater knowledge of and training to understand environmental justice, to become stronger allies and partners as a coalition. Environmental justice is the concept that all people have a right to access clean water, lands, ocean and coasts, and air, as they are integral to human life. Ensuring access means that all people can exercise meaningful participation in decision-making processes about how natural resources are utilized. In addition to access, environmental justice refers to equity, meaning all people should have equitable protection from harms associated with polluted water, lands, and air. (External resource: [National Sea Grant Network](#))

STRATEGIC PLAN

Once the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework and shared language have been developed and tested, NOPC can better inform and develop a strategic plan with goals and objectives where DEI becomes institutionalized in the coalition through training sessions, formalized policies, and practices. Furthermore, NOPC should have a detailed, achievable and sustainable plan to address, proactively prevent, and rectify inequities within the coalition. (External resource: [Greenlining](#))

Once the DEI framework has been defined, guidelines can then be developed to roll out the initiatives through a detailed implementation plan that includes strategy and evaluation components. These guidelines are intended to provide an overarching framework for the ongoing programmatic work of NOPC staff through a public-facing plan (document) adopted by the Leadership Team. This should be accessible and shared across the coalition to build alignment and understanding of NOPC's DEI commitments and goals. The work should be tracked, and progress will need to be shared on an on-going basis where coalition members can engage in discussions. This can lead to increased levels of accountability and transparency across the coalition. (External resource: [State Coastal Conservancy](#))

DATA

NOPC should establish qualitative and quantitative progress metrics to understand and visualize how the organization is moving in its DEI journey. An example of a qualitative marker would be the defining of DEI as it relates to the organization. In contrast, a quantitative marker example would be the share of communities of color represented by NOPC members.

A communications platform to allow ongoing internal discussion about DEI among members and staff would also facilitate accountability and progress tracking. This can also be a forum for discussion for data collection and constant feedback to inform progress and offer a space for reflection to adjust strategy, as needed.

Evaluation is an ongoing process and should not be left until the end. Data collection should be contracted to an external consultant to ensure unbiased and prioritized collection.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK

Area of Focus

Recommendations

Culture

- ▶ Ensure priorities, strategy, decision-making process align with strategic plan
- ▶ Identify management and professional development opportunities
- ▶ Implement 360 evaluations and assessments for staff and executive director
- ▶ Establish clear roles and responsibilities for staff and members for consistent contributions to NOPC's DEI vision
- ▶ Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and work of staff and executive director in measurable goals as part of work plans
- ▶ Confirm that NOPC's values guide strategy and decision-making process
- ▶ Connect programs, strategy, and campaigns and the overall goals of the organization to align with strategic plan goals
- ▶ Build into practice and welcome feedback on DEI goals
- ▶ Work towards behaviors and decisions of coalition members are inclusive and unbiased and are reflected in the overall coalition culture

Capacity Strengthening

- ▶ Conduct organizational needs assessment
- ▶ Identify critical operational needs of the organization
- ▶ Implement standardized, transparent and accessible policies and procedures
- ▶ Establish standardized hiring and retention policies and procedures center and include diversity, equity and inclusion practices
- ▶ Support and prioritize capacity strengthening initiatives in budgets and funding decisions
- ▶ Identify infrastructure of membership at large and contributes to overall capacity strengthening priorities

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK, CONTINUED

Area of Focus	Recommendations
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Develop onboarding process for new members▶ Clearly define roles and expectations▶ Create accessible written information for all members
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Develop competencies and capabilities for leadership▶ Ensure staff and board leaders exhibit model behaviors and manage performance reviews, project assessments, surveys, and other forms of professional and/or leadership development▶ Communicate via performance reviews, and stated clear expectations, so individuals have specific annual goals, actions, and measures for assessing their impact integrated throughout their work plan▶ Developing leadership transitions (e.g., succession planning, recruitment and onboarding, new executive director leadership training, etc.)▶ Clearly define role and responsibilities of working groups and their chairs
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Identify resources and trainings needed for individuals and member organizations▶ Offer ongoing learning opportunities on topics tied to the specific DEI competencies and expectations/needs of staff▶ Translate learning opportunities into day-to-day work and interactions.▶ Evaluate specific training(s) on biases, microaggressions and macroaggressions, white fragility▶ Consider offering sessions for being a pro-active ally, addressing whiteness in the workplace, and other trainings that look at all aspects of diversity (age, LGBTQIA+, gender, ableness/disability)▶ Engage in management trainings that center DEI, such as the Management Center trainings, SMARTIE, MOCHA, Managing for Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Results▶ Lead quarterly DEI trainings for members

Organizational Effectiveness Framework | Supporting Research

CULTURE

NOPC can foster a deeply rooted and radically inclusive workplace culture, where DEI is a core competency for all staff, board, and members. In doing so, all individuals part of the coalition can buy into its mission and feel ownership over NOPC's DEI values.

Cultural humility is defined as the practice of self-reflection on how one's own background and expectations impact a situation, openness to others' determining the relevance of their own identities to any given situation and committing to redress the effects of power imbalances. (External resource: [American Library Association](#))

Centering DEI at NOPC is a process. It means not just merely creating benchmarks. Admittedly, this takes time. The process should be reflected in agendas, meetings, strategy documents, and other organization items. Ultimately, this will result in cultural changes that are systemic and interconnected, moving beyond hiring diverse staff, which by itself will not result in meaningful change if the cultural space is not redesigned as an equitable and inclusive work culture. (External resource: [State Coastal Conservancy](#))

Given responses to the survey regarding inclusion in the coalition, NOPC should make a concentrated and deliberate effort to include all voices into the positions and actions it takes, particularly those outside of the Beltway.

NOPC can communicate best practices and lessons learned during this process and lead other organizations who see NOPC as leaders in its DEI commitment. (External resource: [Greenlining](#))

CAPACITY BUILDING

As NOPC strategically grows in the short-term, leadership should hire an operations director to support NOPC's programs and organizational effectiveness, such as fundraising, partner organization management, budgeting, and administrative tasks.

As NOPC grows and increases its staff size, it will be essential to administer a robust employee orientation and onboarding programs for new employees and leaders. Secondly, NOPC can create internal employee resource groups or affinity groups to support learning, thought partnership, and accountability among staff. (External resource: [NOAA](#))

MEMBERS

As NOPC deepens and grows its membership and partnerships, an onboarding process for new and returning members will need to be formalized. Doing so will allow for a more cohesive and efficient process. Such steps include identifying roles and responsibilities for onboarding new members, identifying roles and responsibilities of existing members and the broader membership, drafting clear definitions of all NOPC roles and working groups, and developing materials to educate new members about NOPC and its priority issues. Additional materials can include an organizational chart, list of members with contact information, description of workgroups, factsheets, and live or recorded webinars on priority issues. Part of this process includes deciding responsibilities for material development and whether a "Membership Working Group" is needed to accomplish these tasks.

Diverse groups can minimize some of the negative impacts of groupthink, a process in which specific ideas, practices, and traditions become dominant regardless of their efficacy. Interacting with individuals who bring a range of diverse perspectives and lived experiences can strengthen NOPC's work. (External resource: [National Sea Grant Network](#))

Organizational Effectiveness Framework | Supporting Research

LEADERSHIP

Leadership that centers DEI should extend beyond the core NOPC Leadership Team and staff to elevate and orient DEI leadership in the ocean conservation community.

To establish an inclusive work environment, NOPC can lead and manage programs that build cultural awareness and appreciation of diversity, strengthen communication across the coalition and enhance staff development opportunities from day one. (External resource: [NOAA](#))

NOPC Leadership must ensure individuals define how they will advance DEI and build awareness of best practices across the coalition in their roles. By weaving DEI principles into work plans, day-to-day activities, and interpersonal interactions, NOPC's work will be better equipped to serve oceanic communities. (External resource: [National Sea Grant Network](#))

LEARNING

Equally important, professional development opportunities should be developed to ensure a consistent framework of understanding across programs. Work plans that do not incorporate DEI professional development may limit personnel from spending time on these issues.

NOPC leadership, working groups, and staff need professional development on DEI topics to have the knowledge and tools to broaden participation in their programs and work. A basic understanding of these topics is required to increase staff diversity. For example, implicit bias training is useful in considering the challenges and strategies to applying DEI principles in NOPC programs as well as establishing a commitment to them. Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions unconsciously. It is pervasive; all humans are biased (External resource: [National Sea Grant Network](#))

Training can serve as common DEI capacity strengthening activities. When executed well, training can help NOPC advance to the next stage of development, provide opportunities to learn about and practice "the how" of DEI, and surface root causes of racial inequity. Through the various training opportunities, NOPC can develop high-impact approaches to creating an inclusive and equitable culture. Additionally, training can help NOPC build DEI awareness, knowledge, and skills on an individual level are vital to advancing DEI effectively on the organizational level. Training can build this personal competence and awareness, especially for DEI beginners. Training, if done well with experiences and appropriate consultants, can be a most effective DEI capacity strengthening activity. (External resource: [J.E.D.I Heart](#))

PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK

Area of Focus

Recommendations

Communities

- ▶ Treat communities not merely as recipients of the organization's services but rather as stakeholders, leaders, and assets to the work
- ▶ Include a critical mass of people who represent key constituencies most impacted by the issues on which the organization works; this includes ensuring there is more than one person of each race at a minimum, and not lumping together all people of color
- ▶ Identify and name the most impacted groups
- ▶ Develop analysis of structural inequities and power that conveys why their leadership and engagement is so important to solving the issues on which the organization works

Partnerships

- ▶ Develop, build, and sustain partnerships via authentic, trusting collaboration with partners, and centers the needs and expertise of those with lived experiences and closest knowledge of ocean conservation problems to co-lead on policy and political solutions
- ▶ Participate in coalitions and shared ventures that are led by those most affected and by members of historically underrepresented groups
- ▶ Develop explicit partnership principles that make them unique to NOPC's mission and work

Programs

- ▶ Confirm that programs are culturally responsive and explicit about race, racism, race equity, and inclusion
- ▶ Continuously plan and assess programs by clarifying and discussing how they may or do impact people by group identity equitably or differently

PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK, CONTINUED

Area of Focus	Recommendations
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Frame ocean conservation issues to include justice, equity, and disproportionate impacts▶ Communicate effectively with a wide array of constituencies and equity are core competencies for communications staff▶ Intentionally engage specific constituencies with attention to respectful engagement that isn't tokenizing▶ Intentionally choose media channels and language translation with specific constituencies in mind▶ Focus language access demonstrating translation and interpretation is well resourced with resonant cultural framing rather than mere word translation or interpretation▶ Prioritize accessible information for the language and learning needs of individuals▶ Lead equitable communications practices for NOPC and member organizations or affiliates▶ Prioritize storytelling of NOPC'S DEI origin, journey and successes and growth, including inclusive engagement of communities
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Broaden and innovate major donor prospecting▶ Include a critical mass of women and people of color in donor population▶ Effectively engage many white donors about the importance of equity and inclusion

Programmatic Framework | Supporting Research

COMMUNITIES

For NOPC to retain its current relationships, while fostering new relationships and strengthening partnerships with communities, NOPC will need to make space for new, emerging and established leaders of color and elevate them to ensure community and voices are well represented and integrated at every level of coalition membership and its Leadership Team. This means centering working group goals and plans around the needs of the communities and providing avenues to enter the conversation by sharing knowledge resources equitably.

To bring and bridge environmental justice allyship via NOPC's work and efforts, individuals must shift from an interest in inclusiveness to a commitment to building equitable relationships and trust to ensure all stakeholders have a voice and feel they belong. Developing relationships with change agents, local leaders in communities, and staying up to date on locally relevant current events will help NOPC fulfill this commitment.

Strategies employed to address justice issues require dedicated time and resources. Communication strategies may be time-intensive to reach specific audiences, including phone calls, texts, and attending community meetings organized by the community. To encourage stakeholder participation in programming, NOPC should consider peoples' access to transportation, time, and funds. Some communities may require that a meeting be held at a central location to decrease transport costs or a specific weekend or weeknight time to accommodate work schedules; others may prefer a more neutral virtual space. Some communities may benefit from having childcare, interpreters (language access), vouchers, or reimbursements to cover meeting costs. (External resource: [National Sea Grant Network](#))

PARTNERSHIPS

NOPC can create equitable partnerships through an inclusive process while identifying who isn't at the table and should be focused on connecting with and elevating more individuals (i.e., youth, indigenous communities, faith-based organizations, etc.) This means developing a community-based stakeholder process. Such strategies include developing a system to identify community needs (i.e., a community needs assessment), identifying barriers experienced by different communities, and working with grassroots organizations to gather information in a culturally appropriate way, such as literacy level, language access, cultural issues/attitudes. (External resource: [Racial Equity Toolkit](#)).

In specifically working with indigenous tribes, NOPC will need to ensure consultation with tribes occurs early in project development and throughout project implementation, ensuring tribal concerns are respected and archaeological and cultural resources are protected. NOPC can also work to include these issues in its overall project goals, which may consist of seeking solutions to state contracting issues that affect tribe sovereignty, assisting tribes with regaining access to ancestral lands, enabling traditional stewardship and cultural practices, promoting co-management of ancestral lands and natural resources, and ensuring programs include indigenous voices, leadership, and perspectives. (External resource: [State Coastal Conservancy](#))

PROGRAMS

Current public awareness of NOPC's agenda and work may be limited to traditional stakeholders, who may or may not reflect the changing demographics of the communities with which NOPC is seeking to work. This presents a challenge, and an opportunity, to explore new relationships and seek out non-traditional partners. Consequently, to build equitable partnerships with communities, NOPC will need to build awareness of population demographic change. (External resource: [National Sea Grant Network](#))

Programmatic Framework | Supporting Research

COMMUNICATIONS

NOPC needs to be aware of potential language issues within its community and seek relevant, equitable best practices (asset framing, equitable communications focus). Communicators should reflect on best practices to consider DEI in all communication modes, including social media, visuals and graphics.

NOPC can improve communication across the coalition by developing talking points that reflect all communities and support their visions. Specifically, to ensure culturally competent communications related to Black, Indigenous and communities of color (BIPOC) members, prospective members and allies.

NOPC will need to consider that its strategy in implementing programs may lack the necessary tools or resources to create equitable communications and deliverables that are accessible to diverse audiences. For example, translation, interpretation, or closed captioning may be needed to make accessible videos for certain audiences, as well as cultural relevance.

DEVELOPMENT

Fundraising and development initiatives can center DEI practices that will allow for transparency on funding and clarity on funding decisions among NOPC members. An initial first step is to write up and agree on a clear decision-making structure and create processes for making budgetary decisions. Secondly, there is an opportunity to explore developing a fundraising working group to identify new funding opportunities that are better aligned with NOPC's DEI priorities, and as a result, promote awareness of DEI issues in the ocean conservation space externally through its donors. And lastly, to consider different ways of allocating funding, such as prioritizing building capacity and funding for smaller groups to participate in the coalition. (External resource: Ocean Foundation)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Area of Focus

Recommendations

- | Area of Focus | Recommendations |
|---------------------------|---|
| Executive Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Leadership Team and Executive Director (ED) develop a DEI work plan to ensure ED is positioned for self-evaluation, learning and growth in racial justice and antiracism, training and ongoing opportunities to stay current on inclusive and equitable management practices and movement building. Similar recommendation for Leadership Team. |

Seven (7) Immediate To Do's for NOPC

1. WEBSITE

One of our most immediate recommendations is creating a public-facing center for members and interested audiences to engage with and learn about NOPC. This can be as simple as a single landing page or as intricate as a complete website with multiple sections. However, the core sections of the website or landing page produced should include an *About the Organization, Mission and Vision, Leadership, Working Groups, Members, and How to Get Involved*. This will allow for a public-facing center to inform and educate interested audiences about NOPC and its priorities as well as differentiate it from other ocean conservation groups and the National Ocean Protection Coalition.

2. STORYTELLING

In order to best convey the story of NOPC and its origins, as well as void confusion with the *National Ocean Policy Coalition*, the organization should engage in storytelling of three key areas and publishing stories on either the website mentioned above or in a media publication. The three immediate stories we see an opportunity for include:

- ▶ **The NOPC Origin Story:** The story of how and why the coalition was founded and by whom, as well as Amy Kenney's ties to the coalition in its formative years.
- ▶ **Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Story:** A look back on the efforts of various members engaged with the local community and indigenous groups in this fight, NOPC's role, and that of other organizations to establish the world's largest marine protected area.
- ▶ **Racially Diverse Scientist Group:** A forward-looking narrative on the work NOPC is undertaking in 2020 to engage and amplify the voices of racially diverse scientists in the ocean conservation community along what these individuals hope to achieve.

3. DEI COMMITTEE & FACILITATOR

NOPC should begin forming a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee or launch with focus groups that will form the committee and assign working group functions to members, under the facilitation of an external consultant. The committee's composition should reflect, not only the existing diversity within the coalition, but the diversity it seeks to achieve as a greater reflection of the nation. Committee membership should also prioritize those who have been active in pushing NOPC on DEI and antiracism grounds, without discounting those who immediately volunteer. This committee would oversee several vital tasks in NOPC's DEI journey, including defining key terms and oversight of the implementation plan noted in this document. It is crucial that the committee is formed with a facilitator, defined co-chairs, and member processes informed by this report. A recommended benchmark would be to launch with a minimum of 50 percent leadership of color.

4. DEI SHARED VOCABULARY AND DEFINITIONS

In efforts to develop a shared vocabulary for engagement and focus on creating a culture of belonging via inclusive practices to inspire more intentional and equitable communications, one of the first projects a DEI working group could undertake is to define diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice as they all relate to the ambitions and efforts of NOPC, using the NOPC survey definitions as a jumping-off point to best embrace the membership's shared vision.

5. REDEFINE MISSION AND VISION

As the committee undertakes the project of defining DEI for NOPC, a joint team of senior leadership and DEI Committee co-chairs should also undertake a reevaluation of NOPC's Mission and Vision statements to be more inclusive of these new definitions as well as the achievements the organizations seeks to accomplish in establishing MPAs while working with a developing DEI Framework.

6. INCREASING TRANSPARENCY

NOPC should strive to improve transparency across all facets of the organization, including long-term strategy development, coalition planning, membership procedures, and its DEI journey. An essential first step is making this report open and accessible to all NOPC member organizations and interested staff from those organizations. Further action would include the publishing of this report as part of a newly launched website.

7. NON-TRADITIONAL PARTNERS

Begin networking with coalitions outside of the ocean conservation space, look for a mentorship partner and opportunity to reimagine your coalition with a DEI lens.

Consequences of Inaction: Greater Action Needed & Negative Manifestations

Promises of action followed by a lack of follow-through or an incomplete attempt to address diversity and inclusion issues can result in the need for additional work on DEI issues. Our team identified one social justice coalition and one private sector company of fewer than 100 employees with significant DEI issues in conducting the external research phase. For the purposes of this report, the identity of these two organizations will remain anonymous.

The social justice coalition highlights the importance of prioritizing DEI issues, particularly when they are brought up by coalition members. This coalition hired one consultancy to conduct two exit interviews with previous executive directors to identify themes and recommendations for the coalition to address.

The subsequent interviews resulted in consistent challenges being raised about coalition member and leadership roles, accountability, hospitable workplace environments, and authority. These issues were ultimately not addressed and required hiring a second DEI consultant less than a year after the first report was released. The second report, which highlighted several similar issues, was ultimately used to create a DEI Steering Committee that created a new set of recommendations based on, but not identical to, the recommendations from the first report.

Once more, due to a lack of organizational will, the recommendations were left unimplemented. Continued discussion from coalition members, the steering committee, and the current Executive Director required them to release an RFP for their third DEI consultant in less than a year and a half.

While organizational DEI challenges are difficult to address and often clash with existing organizational priorities, kicking the can down the road can make matters worse and more challenging to manage, indeed with even less credibility and trust from your coalition members.

While the example of the social justice coalition is relatively benign, the private sector company's experience is even more distressing. This company's experience is an exhibit of one of the worst manifestations of staff and member dissatisfaction: a public voicing its challenges and issues.

In this case, the company was mostly composed of white male staff, with most diversity and female hires making up the lowest levels of staff and administrative roles (with a small minority of white women in leadership positions). For over a decade in existence, the company experienced high turnover, internal negative experiences among associate-level staff, and promises of action followed by apparent inaction. These elements combined to result in several former employees posting about their experiences on a popular job search and company review website. The resulting fallout led to a reduction in applications to the company, particularly from candidates of color, and tense internal debates about how to respond.

After months of internal challenges brought on by the reviews, the company was forced to address the issues in a very public manner to its staff. They are currently undergoing their own DEI journey.

Conclusion

This report is intended to provide organizational guidance to NOPC with a set of comprehensive recommendations from three key frameworks – DEI, Organizational Effectiveness, Programmatic – that the coalition can implement and build over time to increase equity and inclusivity, while improving its collective strength. Recognizing the NOPC Leadership Team’s desire to jumpstart its work, among the recommendations offered to the coalition are seven immediate recommendations that the López-Wagner Strategies and ALRAS Digital team believe are among the first NOPC action items to implement.

As NOPC moves forward on its DEI commitments and goals, it will be critical for the coalition’s leadership to build its capacity and infrastructure, in addition to standardizing process and internal process. We caution against a “check-the-box” approach and mentality which can root the work in tasks versus fostering the growth of an inclusive and equitable culture. The survey findings have provided the groundwork to inform actionable next steps around defining key terms, fostering DEI, and addressing concerns from membership. The recommendations and feedback from members should be seen and valued as being essential, especially as NOPC moves to work with a DEI lens and framework to undertake new campaigns and programs to establish, expand, and defend new and existing marine protected areas, while bringing people to the forefront of its work.

This report is the first step in a long journey that will ultimately lead to more effective and meaningful change in ocean conservation and the communities that rely on the ocean as a lifeline. Overall, NOPC’s commitment to centering DEI and its community of ocean advocates will enable successful implementation of these recommendations and, ultimately, a more inclusive environment for change to take place.



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