

# National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) Program Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Plan

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NEON is a major facility sponsored by the U.S. National Science Foundation and proudly operated by Battelle

## A Message from Battelle President and CEO, Lou Von Thayer

At Battelle, we're driven by our mission "to translate scientific discovery and technology advances into societal benefit." Our success is made possible by attracting, engaging, developing and retaining the best and brightest individuals who solve some of the world's most difficult challenges.

Our employees, we call them "Solvers," come from all walks of life. Embracing and celebrating their diversity ensures that the widest range of perspectives are brought forth when tackling big problems. We work to make sure every employee feels welcome, safe and valued so they can bring their authentic self to solving on behalf of our customers.

We approach diversity with the widest lens possible to include race, color, ethnicity, age, sex and gender, (including pregnancy, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation), religion, national origin, educational background, physical ability, veteran and socio-economic status.

Our focus on diversity doesn't end with recognizing what makes individuals unique, we also work to ensure that each Solver is treated equitably. Recognizing that there may be barriers to opportunity that impact individuals differently based on their identities, we strive for transparency and work together to remove those barriers.

Over the past several years, our work has begun to pay off. Battelle scored a perfect 100 on the most recent Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index. We have robust processes in place to ensure pay equity. And, understanding the value of providing students with meaningful STEM work experiences, we created the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Consortium, a program that deepens the relationships between Battelle and partner HBCUs and their students, to broaden our recruiting efforts and to help emerging scientists and engineers enter the workforce.

In the pages that follow, you will see the progress we are making and our continued focus on investing in STEM education so that every student has visibility to the power of science and discovery. There is much more to do. And, at Battelle we are steadfast in our belief that "it can be done."

Lou Von Thayer  
President and Chief Executive Officer

# Battelle: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Overview

Building an inclusive culture does not happen without an intentional focus and commitment to equitable policies and practices that help foster and grow a diverse workforce.

Recruiting from diverse talent pools ensures that we are hiring the best and brightest to help us solve some of the world's most challenging problems. Battelle collaborates with regional and community-level minority development councils and events to promote career paths in STEM and to identify future Solvers.

## Learning and Development

Battelle offers a variety of professional development opportunities to support employees at every level. Annually, all employees are required to complete the annual ethics and harassment awareness training courses (Code of Business Ethics and Conduct; Preventing Workplace Harassment) to ensure they are aware of Battelle's Code of Conduct and the expectations for legal, ethical, and inclusive behavior. The Workplace Harassment training has an additional component specifically designed for managers that provides them with tools to recognize and address workplace harassment. Battelle also requires employees to annually review its Policy Manual. This manual, with accompanying e-learning, specifies that Battelle is an equal opportunity employer, and that discrimination, harassment, and non-inclusive behaviors are in violation of Battelle's policies and Code of Conduct and will be addressed in accordance with these policies.

To support leaders in strengthening a safe and inclusive culture, Battelle offers leadership-focused learning experiences. Training for managers and employees is available on Battelle's online training system and includes the Manager Learning Experience (MLE) for all new managers. The MLE is a comprehensive leadership development program covering topics from performance management to compliance and providing resources to help leaders develop the skills they need to better guide their teams. The MLE includes a three-part e-learning component and checklist to help managers understand unconscious bias and how it shows up in the workplace, plus gives managers tools to challenge and disrupt these biases.

## Mission First

Mission First, a collective effort to strengthen Battelle's culture, is about ensuring that Battelle remains world-class in technical advancements, is an employer of choice, and is continuously growing to fulfill our philanthropic and STEM education goals. Unity, Creativity, Collaboration, Excellence, and Appreciation are Battelle's values that form the foundation for Mission First. They exemplify how we work with one another and with clients, and they help ensure that we are all working toward the same goal and purpose. More than just ideals to strive for, our values are the attitudes, characteristics, and behaviors that guide our decision-making and actions.

We help our staff stay engaged and connected both to Battelle’s mission and to that of the NEON program by giving them the tools to be at their best. We want our staff to be innovative and creative, remain curious, have a “blue chip” mindset, and bring their best selves to work. Building and maintaining a Mission First culture begins with employees attending a mandatory, day-long immersive session to learn about Battelle values, actions that support these values, and how to implement them referred to as “unfreezing.” This learning is not limited to full-time employees. Individuals who join the NEON team as seasonal workers (i.e., temporary field technicians) are integral to our work and their development is critical to fostering a safe and inclusive culture. To support their efficacy and sense of belonging, these employees participate in a condensed version of Mission First referred to a “Mini Thaw.” In addition, interested and engaged participants can join our Mission First Champions, a group of Battelle employees that champion the Mission First culture within their teams or locations. The Champions meet monthly to revisit key Mission First themes and learn new ways to bring the concepts to life at the forefront of our business. Mission First concepts are integrated into our approach to work and relationships.

In addition, employee-led workshops are held throughout the year, covering topics ranging from challenges faced by marginalized communities to leveraging more inclusive language and building allyship skills to promote belongingness. These workshops are sponsored through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and the topics are informed by employee needs.

## **Policies, Annual Reporting and Analysis**

Annually, Battelle submits its EEO-1 and VETS 4212 report as required by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Labor.

Further, Battelle annually assesses its progress toward its affirmative action goals pursuant to Executive Order 11246. The Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs periodically audits Battelle to ensure compliance with this Executive Order and monitors Battelle’s progress as it relates to goals for women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. As part of this annual review, Battelle monitors the progress to goals for employees.

## **Pronouns and Preferred Names in the Workplace**

Everyone deserves to be recognized by their self-ascribed name and pronouns and respected in the workplace. At Battelle, employees have the option of articulating their preferred name. Using a person’s chosen name and desired pronouns is a form of mutual respect and basic courtesy that is reinforced through Battelle’s Preferred Name and Personal Pronouns Policy. Battelle published formatting recommendations for employees to voluntarily add pronouns to their email signatures. This standard has been promoted and adopted throughout the enterprise. Employees are also encouraged to share their pronouns, as they are comfortable, when introducing themselves.

## **Self-Identification Campaign**

Battelle is committed to building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture that embraces and celebrates the qualities and experiences that make our employees unique. To recognize, celebrate, and support all our employees, including improved benefit considerations and other support services and programs, we must understand how employees identify themselves. Battelle provides opportunities for applicants, new hires, and current employees to self-identify their LGBTQ+ status, race/ethnicity, disability status, and veteran status. Additionally, employees can self-identify with a gender that most closely reflects their identity beyond binary-only options. In this form, Battelle clearly states to applicants, new hires, and employees that Battelle does not discriminate based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, and that Battelle's goal is for each employee to have the opportunity to grow their abilities and to achieve personal and organizational objectives. As part of this voluntary self-identification process, applicants, new hires, and employees are provided resource and documents with terms defined: bisexual, gay, gender expression, gender identity, lesbian, LGBTQ, queer, sexual orientation, and transgender. This information is provided to all new hires during onboarding and is accessible to all existing employees at any time, along with the forms on self-identification of race/ethnicity, disability status, and veteran status. Since 2020, Battelle has engaged in campaigns and activities to educate employees on the importance of accurate self-identification and leveraged technology to make it easier for employees to do so throughout their career at Battelle. The organization continues to leverage communications channels and employee resource groups to promote self-identification.

## Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index

The Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index is a national benchmarking tool that evaluates and assesses corporate policies and practices for LGBTQ+ employees. In 2020, our inaugural year of participation, Battelle received a score of 75/100. There were 1,059 businesses across the country that participated. Battelle improved its score - a 95/100 followed by a perfect 100/100 - on both the 2022 and 2023/24 indexes by partnering with internal stakeholders and employee resource groups, and by continuously evaluating its policies and practices to create a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ employees, vendors, and clients.

## Annual Pay Equity Analysis

Battelle conducts an annual pay equity analysis as it relates to women and minorities. Specifically, Battelle reviews all its jobs and performs a statistical analysis to ensure that its employees are compensated fairly and equitably.

## Tracking

Battelle uses a variety of tools and surveys to measure both qualitative and quantitative data over time. Battelle monitors the percentage of employees who are women, of racial/ethnic diversity, individuals with disabilities, individuals who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community, active military, and veterans. These data are gathered at the enterprise level as well as the NEON programmatic level and reported to NEON leadership from the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. These data, along with qualitative data from the annual culture survey, help to identify successes and areas of opportunity

around the demonstration of inclusive behaviors.

## Hiring Activities

Battelle is committed to hiring passionate, qualified individuals to fill positions that contribute to the overall strategic success of the company. Each employee is hired to make a significant contribution to Battelle and our strategic success is deeply intertwined with our ability to attract, hire, and retain a workforce that reflects the diverse world in which we operate. It is Battelle's policy to promote an organizational culture that recognizes the importance of a diverse workforce and a commitment to uphold equal employment opportunity standards, which ultimately drive business outcomes. As part of this commitment, all employees involved in the recruitment, selection, and hiring of Battelle employees will engage with Battelle's Talent Acquisition and Recruiting team for the management of all internal and external recruitment activities.

To ensure our recruitment process aligns with our commitment to DEIA, we adhere to the following best practices:

- **Structured Recruitment Process:** We maintain a structured recruitment process that is consistently applied to all candidates to mitigate biases. Job descriptions are carefully crafted to focus on the essential skills and qualifications necessary for the roles, ensuring they are free from gendered or culturally biased language. We also ensure that the appropriate Equal Opportunity clauses are flowed down to any vendors or subcontractors.
- **Diverse Hiring Panels:** We ensure our hiring panels are composed of diverse members who bring different perspectives to the selection process. This helps in minimizing unconscious biases and promotes fairness in the evaluation of candidates.
- **Inclusive Job Advertisements:** We regularly review our job descriptions to ensure they are free of biased language to help reach a diverse audience. We also utilize a variety of channels and platforms, particularly those that are frequented by underrepresented groups. This broadens our talent pool and enhances the diversity of our applicant base. All job descriptions also include a statement about Battelle's commitment as an equal opportunity employer.
- **Affirmative Action Program:** As a federal contractor, we adhere to our obligations under the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP). Our Affirmative Action Program (AAP) with the OFCCP is a management plan reviewed annually to ensure we are providing applicants and employees with equal employment opportunities. Our AAP documents our organizational structure; demographic composition of our workforce and applicant pool; and the policies, practices, and procedures we use to ensure qualified applicants and employees receive an equal opportunity to apply and compete for jobs, promotions, training, and other employment opportunities. We use the results of our annual analysis to continue to refine and improve our commitment to DEIA.
- **Distribution of Job Advertisements:** Through our membership with our Direct Employers Association, we ensure job listings are provided to the requisite state job banks and local employment service delivery systems in a manner and format "permitted" by those entities. Additionally utilizing the association's partner network tool, we regularly network with organizations that help promote our jobs to historically underrepresented or underserved

communities.

- Targeted recruitment events: On an annual basis, we review our job fair/recruitment event strategy to ensure we include as many diversity-focused events as possible from a variety of underrepresented or underserved communities. We regularly participate with groups such as the National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE), Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), Grace Hopper, Women in Cyber Security (WiCYS), and Association for Women in Science. We also regularly engage with our ERGs to gather feedback on events we should consider participation in.
- Inclusive Interviewing Guide: We have created an inclusive interviewing guide for our recruiters and hiring managers to ensure an inclusive hiring process. This guide is updated regularly as needed and it helps provide guidance to hiring teams on preparing inclusive job descriptions, selecting and preparing a diverse interview panel, mitigating interview bias, developing consistent and structured interview questions, and an overview of employment laws to prevent discrimination.
- Comprehensive DEIA Training for Recruiters: Our recruiters undergo regular training on DEIA principles, unconscious bias, equal employment opportunity, and culturally competent recruiting practices to ensure they are equipped to conduct their roles effectively and fairly.
- Accessibility and Accommodation: We ensure that our recruitment process is accessible to all, including people with disabilities. Accommodations are provided as needed to ensure that candidates can participate fully in the recruitment process.
- Feedback and Continuous Improvement: We actively seek feedback from candidates and new hires about their recruitment experience, which we use to continually improve our practices.

By embedding DEIA into our recruitment practices, we not only enhance our competitive advantage but also contribute to a more just and equitable society. We are committed to continuous improvement and innovation in our recruitment practices to ensure they remain aligned with our organizational values and goals.

## Employee Engagement Programs and Activities

### Affinity Board

Battelle's Affinity Board focuses on advancing strategies that promote employee engagement, develop supportive leaders and encourage a diverse and inclusive workforce. The Board works closely with Battelle employees, such as the Board's Executive Sponsor, Senior Leadership Team and ERGs to ensure missions and efforts are aligned with Battelle's diversity, equity and inclusion strategy. The primary focus of the Affinity Board's work is the recruitment, engagement and retention of high-performing and diverse and representative talent.

### Employee Resource Groups

Battelle's ERGs are key to fostering a culture of inclusion and providing opportunities for employees to develop their leadership skills, receive support and encouragement, and grow personally. Our ERGs are voluntary, employee-led teams that nurture a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace in alignment with our mission, values, strategy, and culture. Battelle ensures that the employees supporting the NEON program are aware of these ERGs and are afforded the opportunity to participate.

Battelle ERGs include:

- The African American & Black Leadership Excellence ERG is committed to making Battelle an employer of choice for Black and African American employees by helping the company to best recruit, engage, retain and develop Black and African American talent at Battelle.
- The Embrace ERG promotes and advocates for an inclusive workplace for employees of multicultural backgrounds, including underrepresented ethnicities and races.
- The Military Support ERG aims to bring together Battelle’s military veterans, employees in the National Guard or reserve, and military families and friends to support those who served to defend our nation.
- The NextGen ERG’s mission is to advocate for early career and passionate business professionals within Battelle, as well as provide a strategic resource for improving Battelle’s ability to attract, develop, retain and engage a diverse workforce.
- The Prism ERG supports and advocates for Battelle’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) and allied employees in a way which makes all people feel safe, supported and welcome regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression so that employees, potential employees, customers and business peers see Battelle as an employer and business partner of choice.
- The Women’s Network ERG raises employee awareness and fosters greater understanding and participation by all employees so that Battelle is successful in achieving its business goals and is increasingly recognized as an employer of choice for women seeking to reach their full potential.

### Solver Allyship Series

Battelle’s Solver Allyship Series provides opportunities for employees to learn and develop active allyship skills during quarterly, interactive-hybrid meetings. During these sessions, employees learn from leaders, peers, and guests who lend their expertise and share personal experiences around differences and ways to be upstanders rather than bystanders, both at work and in life.



# National Ecological Observatory Network

NEON is a Large Facility of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and operated by Battelle. In alignment with NSF core values, the Observatory is designed to advance scientific discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning while broadening the participation of underrepresented groups.

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Integrated Product Team (IPT)

NEON supports an employee-led internal advisory group, the DEIA IPT, that brings in staff from departments across the Observatory to ensure best practices are followed to institutionalize a culture of inclusion. The DEIA IPT exists to listen to the needs and concerns of staff and to elevate them to leadership or responsible parties in Battelle for actionable solutions. The scope of DEIA issues under consideration ranges from internal culture, hiring and recruiting, to outreach and engagement. This group also provides a periodic review of DEIA goals and strategies and identifies best practices for conduct in external engagement activities including supporting the NEON Code of Conduct.

## Engagement with Diverse Groups

NEON program field employees actively seek opportunities to engage with and involve underrepresented groups in STEM. As part of this effort, NEON has established a yearly goal for each NEON Domain field office to conduct at least one outreach activity involving an underrepresented group in STEM as the primary audience. Each year NEON reassesses its overarching plan for engagement strategy that guides these plans and goals.

In collaboration with the American Geophysical Union (AGU), NEON has facilitated professional growth opportunities for NEON Domain field staff. One opportunity was through AGU's Thriving Earth Exchange (TEX) program, an initiative to enhance scientists' engagement with local communities to address community-driven priorities related to natural resources, climate change, and natural hazards. Sixteen NEON field staff helped raise community awareness about science and its applications. The NEON partnership with AGU TEX was impactful, and NEON continues to explore new partnerships and opportunities in community engagement.

NEON supports 'Explore NEON' workshops each year to provide data skills training and introduction to NEON data. There is an application process for host institutions; in both recruiting and selection, Minority Serving Institutions are given preference. These are typically in-person events. Adapting to a virtual format during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed NEON to reach broader audiences by reducing barriers to access, such as travel funds.

Among efforts to expand NEON partnerships, staff attend meetings of organizations such as the NSF Biological Sciences synthesis center, the Environmental Science Innovation and Inclusion Lab (ESIIL), and societies that focus on broadening participating such as the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science. NEON utilizes internships with Kupu and the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program to provide local opportunities to Native Hawaiian and

Alaska Native communities respectively. In addition, NEON partners with Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation to provide opportunities to directly support NEON science by assisting with instrumentation and sampling. Partnerships with other environmental science research institutions leverage existing training resources, best practices, and audiences to ensure a wide reach, for example, NEON partners with the Rising Voices Center for Indigenous and Earth Sciences at the National Center of Atmospheric Research. NEON continues to strategically seek new partners and strengthen existing partnerships to build capacity and reach broader audiences across numerous scales, from local to continental.

## A Message from the NEON Chief Scientist and Observatory Director

With the rest of Battelle, the NEON program is committed to cultivating an inclusive culture and work environment that reflects the diversity of our communities. Specifically, we aim to have a workforce that represents communities who influence and are influenced by our work. We strive to provide a safe and welcoming environment that promotes employee engagement, development, retention, collaboration, and innovation. In the upcoming years, we want to better understand diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging approaches that will further improve our internal culture and our services to the scientific community and public. Whether you are a member of our NEON staff or part of the scientific and education community that we seek to enable through NEON data and infrastructure, I encourage you to reach out to us with any questions, concerns, or ideas for improvement.

Paula Mabee  
Chief Scientist and Observatory Director

***BATTELLE***

**It can be done**