



Statement on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility at The Ocean Foundation

The Ocean Foundation (TOF) remains steadfastly committed to excellence in marine conservation through merit-based hiring and inclusive policies and practices that strengthen our mission, and help us retain all staff. Our commitment to equal opportunity and inclusive excellence represents our understanding that the most qualified candidates emerge when artificial barriers to opportunity are removed, allowing all talent to compete fairly.

UNDERSTANDING EXCELLENCE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ocean Foundation's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives were established to ensure we identify and select the most qualified candidates, particularly those who might have been overlooked by ineffective hiring practices. These policies help us recognize and evaluate merit more accurately and comprehensively. Our experience shows that building teams with diverse perspectives and backgrounds enhances our problem-solving capabilities and strengthens our conservation outcomes.

Research consistently demonstrates that organizations making hiring decisions without structured processes often overlook highly qualified candidates due to unconscious biases and incomplete evaluation methods. While having no hiring process can lead to randomness or unfairness, a biased hiring process is more insidious—it may appear structured and consistent, but it still disadvantages certain groups based on unconscious preferences or stereotypes. A study by McKinsey & Company found that companies in the top quartile for diversity were 35% more likely to have financial gains above their respective industry median.¹ Our systematic approach to equitable hiring ensures we don't miss exceptional talent that could advance our mission.

We operate within all federal and state legal requirements. Federal laws prohibit discrimination based on national origin, race, color, religion, disability, sex, and familial status. We embrace both the letter and spirit of these laws, recognizing that they exist to ensure fair competition and equal opportunity.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Our recruitment process exemplifies our commitment to merit-based selection while ensuring equal access to opportunity through:

- Public job postings with clear qualification requirements
- Posted salary ranges to ensure fair compensation

- Widescale recruitment efforts to attract diverse pools of qualified applicants
- Panel interviews with multiple evaluators
- Structured interview processes that focus on job-relevant skills
- Standardized evaluation criteria focused on skills and experience
- Skills-based assessments, when applicable
- Professional reference checks
- Accessible recruitment practices with reasonable accommodations
- Final approval through established procedures

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

We recognize that effective talent management extends beyond recruitment. Our commitment includes:

- Equal access to professional development, training, and mentorship programs
 - Clear pathways for career growth
 - Employee Resource Groups that create inclusive and supportive spaces for all staff
 - Trainings on workplace practices that support inclusion and retention of all staff
- Equal access to all aspects of employment, including reasonable workplace accommodations

ASSESSMENT AND INTEGRATION

We continuously monitor and improve our practices by:

- Tracking the success of our policies in recruiting and retaining qualified talent
- Creating clear protocols for reporting discrimination or harassment
- Establishing feedback loops for employees to provide input on workplace experiences
- Integrating principles of belonging and inclusion into our organizational culture

MARINE CONSERVATION AND INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Marine conservation faces complex challenges that require drawing from humanity's entire talent pool. When artificial barriers prevent qualified individuals from contributing their expertise to ocean conservation, we all lose. Our commitment to inclusive excellence ensures we can access the broadest possible pool of qualified candidates to advance our mission.

The evidence is clear: Organizations that systematically remove barriers to opportunity consistently outperform those that don't. Promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce is not only the right thing to do, but it's also more profitable and leads to better conservation outcomes.² This is about raising standards by ensuring we don't miss qualified candidates due to systemic obstacles or incomplete evaluation methods.

MOVING FORWARD

We remain committed to merit-based hiring while recognizing that merit can only be truly assessed when all qualified candidates have genuine access to opportunity. Our hiring and retention practices will continue to focus on identifying and selecting the most qualified individuals while ensuring our evaluation processes are systematic, fair, and designed to recognize excellence in all its forms.

The Ocean Foundation maintains high professional standards through:

- Clear job-related qualification requirements
- Objective performance criteria
- Transparent advancement opportunities
- Regular review of practices to ensure fairness and effectiveness

We stand firm in our belief that excellence in marine conservation requires tapping into humanity's full talent pool. When we remove artificial barriers and evaluate candidates systematically and fairly, we strengthen our ability to fulfill our mission of protecting and restoring our oceans.

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1. McKinsey & Company, "Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters," May 19, 2020, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#/>
 2. As noted in the Multi-State Guidance document issued by the Attorneys General of Massachusetts, Illinois, and fourteen other states (February 13, 2025), "Diverse and inclusive organizations that prioritize equitable practices tend to outperform their peers, with higher returns, lower turnover, and a more attractive workplace for top talent."