

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Office of the Administrator
Mary W. Jackson NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001



July 12, 2023

General Lester L. Lyles, USAF (Ret.)
Chair, NASA Advisory Council
NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546

Dear General Lyles:

Enclosed is NASA's response to the NASA Advisory Council (NAC) Recommendation 2022-02-08: Science Mission Directorate Programs for Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility. This recommendation was publicly deliberated during the NAC meeting held on August 9-10, 2022.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you or the Council would like further background on NASA's response.

I look forward to receiving continued advice from the NAC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson".

Enclosure

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Science Mission Directorate (SMD) Programs for Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) 2022-02-08

Name of Committee:	Science Committee
Chair of Committee:	Dr. Ellen Williams
Date of Council Public Deliberation:	August 10, 2022
Short Title of Recommendation:	SMD Programs for IDEA

Recommendation:

The Council recommends that:

- The Science Mission Directorate (SMD) provide training opportunities for its grant recipients in how to implement IDEA concepts.
- SMD enhance its local efforts to educate communities about NASA's data tools through increased virtual training sessions and other methods.
- SMD continue to refine its outcomes-based indicators for its IDEA goals within the Science Strategic Approach and ensure that these can be tracked and compared over time.
- SMD illuminate, where relevant, the direct impact NASA researchers can have via IDEA through applications of their research with equity and underserved communities in mind.
- SMD take diversity into account when mentoring and hiring for leadership roles.

Major Reasons for the Recommendation:

SMD has developed a holistic plan for integrating NASA's agency Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) initiative into its Science Strategic Approach (IDEA: Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility). This approach incorporates concepts of workforce pipeline, infrastructure, accessibility, community, and relationships, and proposes a set of outcomes-based progress indicators to monitor progress. This is a thoughtful plan that recognizes that incorporating the goals of IDEA is essential to scientific progress and NASA workforce development. NASA's goals to increase diverse participation in Grants and perform a study on barriers are commendable.

Consequences of No Action on the Recommendation:

NASA's agency-wide DEIA initiatives are to be applauded. SMD's IDEA program is specifically designed to apply the agency DEIA into its Science Strategic objectives. Failure to address the coordination and integration of the unique needs of IDEA risks a duplication of initiatives within the agency.

NASA Response: *(Note: NASA is responding to the individual bulleted NAC recommendations.)*

NAC Recommendation:

- SMD provide training opportunities for its grant recipients in how to implement IDEA concepts.

NASA Response:

NASA does not concur with this recommendation and SMD is currently undergoing a study on the limitations in our ability to provide formal training to this community of non-NASA personnel. However, several SMD-organized informational workshops have been effective venues for sharing DEIA-related information such as the Principal Investigator LaunchPad and Inclusion Plan Community of Practice/Best Practices Workshop. These offerings discuss DEIA-related considerations with the community and provide resources for establishing and maintaining inclusive teams.

NAC Recommendation:

- SMD enhance its local efforts to educate communities about NASA's data tools through increased virtual training sessions and other methods.
- SMD illuminate, where relevant, the direct impact NASA researchers can have via IDEA through applications of their research with equity and underserved communities in mind.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs with this recommendation and has multiple activities underway including, but not limited to:

- Development and execution of open science training to supplement existing learning resources on how to obtain and use NASA Earth Data. This training will be free and available in multiple society meetings, summer schools, and online virtual cohorts starting in 2023, which is designated as the Year of Open Science.
- The release of a new cross division program to support Open Science, F.14 Transform to Open Science Training (TOPST) (Research Opportunities in Space and Earth Science 22). TOPST sets a precedent with a more equitable and inclusive language and requirements that will allow the program to minimize or reduce barriers of entry, increase outreach and open science training for underserved communities, and engage in a dual anonymous peer review to facilitate a fair and equitable selection process. Priority will be placed on proposals that hold activities at or are heavily involved with non-R1 Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).
- The release of the Understanding Needs to Broaden Outside Use of NASA Data (UNBOUND) project, a series of coordinated domain-specific workshops designed to match influential analysis and visualization practitioners that are not currently using or are under using NASA data with NASA data scientists and other relevant experts. UNBOUND Environmental Justice (EJ) successfully engaged with 15 new organizations and data practitioners that are working on EJ issues to specifically define barriers to use NASA data. The next UNBOUND is on air quality.

NAC Recommendation:

- SMD continue to refine its outcomes-based indicators for its IDEA goals within the Science Strategic Approach and ensure that these can be tracked and compared over time.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs with this recommendation and has established a centralized tracking system for metrics towards our IDEA goals. Progress and success indicators for Year 1 are being developed by the IDEA Working Group teams and will be provided for review to SMD leadership within the first quarter of the 2023 calendar year and will continue to be monitored and refined to maximize impact of our agile strategy.

NAC Recommendation:

- SMD take diversity into account when mentoring and hiring for leadership roles.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs with this recommendation and has numerous efforts underway to increase mentorship opportunities and consider diversity in hiring practices within the limits set by law. SMD developed a pilot mentorship program for SMD to gain skills for career/professional advancement and has continued its job shadowing program to provide insight into a range of roles across the workforce. The pilot mentorship program with 22 mentor/mentee pairs commenced in July 2022, concluded in December 2022, and was evaluated for continuation in January 2023. SMD added a DEIA performance element to all Senior Executive Service staff.