



THE

COASTAL
SOCIETY

DIVERSITY,
EQUITY &
INCLUSION
STRATEGIC
PLAN

2022-2027

INTRODUCTION

Since 1975, The Coastal Society (TCS) has worked to collaboratively address emerging coastal issues through communication and professional networking activities. Its workable size, welcoming nature, and broad focus areas offer opportunities for personal growth and learning that distinguish it from other professional environmental organizations. While TCS's offerings have evolved over the years to stay relevant for members, the organization continues to primarily consist of professionals from majority backgrounds, professions, and identities. Improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strengthens our ability to achieve our mission and ensures all have an opportunity to benefit from TCS' professional offerings.

Established in 2020, the TCS DEI workgroup is dedicated to ensuring DEI principles are adopted and integrated into all operations of the organization. The group has made significant progress, but more dedicated direction and prioritization is needed to help maximize impact with limited resources.

THE COASTAL SOCIETY MISSION

The Coastal Society is an organization of private sector, academic, and government professionals and students that is dedicated to actively addressing emerging coastal issues by fostering dialogue, forging partnerships and promoting communications and education.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION VISION

The Coastal Society strives for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture with leadership that cultivates and respects different perspectives, languages, and backgrounds, and an engaged membership that reflects the populations we serve.

GOALS AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this diversity, equity, and inclusion Strategic Plan is to:

- Create a more inclusive culture within TCS membership, associated events, and partnerships by being actively anti-racist and anti-discriminatory;
- Dismantle barriers that prevent historically excluded groups and individuals from fully engaging in TCS activities, and provide more equitable opportunities for future engagement; and
- Prioritize discussions and practices that enhance the diversity of subject matter expertise, life experiences, and personal identities in TCS, and by extension, the field of coastal practitioners.

To achieve these goals, the strategic plan provides an overview of key targets and initiatives to ensure that TCS aligns with the mission, vision and purposes above. The strategic plan includes tangible metrics to ensure continuous assessment and improvement in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organization.

The Coastal Society's DEI Working Group will lead this work, but implementing this DEI vision will require a committed effort from every member, volunteer, and committee in TCS. The ultimate goal is for DEI to be seamlessly integrated into all of the work that TCS does.

KEY DEFINITIONS

TCS respectfully embraces the definitions of our partner, the National Sea Grant Program, for these important terms and values:

- Diversity: The full representation of and collaboration between people with different identities, knowledge sets, experiences, and perspectives.
- Equity: The allocation and accessibility of resources for fair distribution of services, benefits, and burdens.
- Inclusion: The creation of an open and welcoming environment that recognizes and affirms the value and dignity of all people.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: ASSESS THE CURRENT STATE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN TCS AND IDENTIFY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Strategy 1.1:** Require new members to read and acknowledge of the TCS Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy as a condition of membership.
- **Strategy 1.2:** Distribute an anonymous demographic survey to TCS members to establish a baseline understanding of the current demographics of our membership and gather feedback to identify major gaps in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Include optional link to survey with new membership application.
- **Strategy 1.3:** Brainstorm a list of strengths and weaknesses for TCS following the survey results to identify DEI projects and targets.
- **Strategy 1.4:** Establish a virtual, anonymous concern/suggestion box for members to safely share feedback and ideas for how to improve without fear of retribution.



OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASE REPRESENTATION AND DIVERSITY ON THE TCS BOARD, EXECUTIVE TEAM, AND MEMBERSHIP

- **Strategy 2.1:** Review the nomination process for Board of Directors and officer positions, and provide recommendations to achieve a more diverse leadership moving forward.
- **Strategy 2.2:** Actively build workshops and events with diverse speakers from underrepresented racial/ethnic, cultural, and ability groups.
- **Strategy 2.3:** Evaluate diversity of TCS award recipients, and encourage nominations for future awards – especially early career awards – to be diverse with respect to underrepresented racial, ethnic, cultural, and ability groups.
- **Strategy 2.4:** Require all Directors and Officers in TCS to participate in annual discussion and/or training focused on enhancing DEI in the organization.
- **Strategy 2.5:** Develop follow-on guidance for reporting discrimination and harassment violations by people in power.

OBJECTIVE 3: EXPAND THE REACH OF TCS ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS TO BETTER ENGAGE HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED AND UNDERSERVED INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

- **Strategy 3.1:** Coordinate with the Margaret A. Davidson Professional Development Committee to identify and implement new engagement approaches to increase diversity of speakers and participants at Coastal Career Development Events.
- **Strategy 3.2:** Re-evaluate current fee structure for programs and events and identify opportunities to subsidize registration costs to eliminate barriers and encourage more diverse participation.
- **Strategy 3.3:** Create and maintain a contact list of organizations and individuals that are committed to increasing DEI in the coastal profession, with a particular emphasis on those with capacity to partner directly with TCS on this work.
- **Strategy 3.4:** Explore feasibility of establishing a student chapter at a minority serving institution.
- **Strategy 3.5:** Establish additional sources of grant funding to hire a part-time coordinator to assist with this work.
- **Strategy 3.6:** Explore and coordinate with the Communications Committee to plan Coastal Connections webinar series that highlight and amplify black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and other underrepresented voices in coastal science.



OBJECTIVE 4: FOSTER A MORE INCLUSIVE CULTURE AT THE COASTAL SOCIETY

- **Strategy 4.1:** Actively recruit new members to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group and encourage TCS Board to promote DEI principles in other committee activities.
- **Strategy 4.2:** Promote and regularly update “Bystander Toolkit” to provide members with tools to promote inclusive behavior across TCS.
- **Strategy 4.3:** Encourage the sharing of personal pronouns at TCS events, when appropriate.
- **Strategy 4.4:** Encourage student chapters to host events that include targeted DEI elements and to update individual chapter bylaws to include more inclusive language.
- **Strategy 4.5:** Write a forward-looking “Values statement” to indicate to future and current members that DEI is a core value of TCS.
- **Strategy 4.6:** Promote Indigenous reconciliation by providing space for conversations on Indigenous-related topics (e.g. decolonization in coastal planning) and including Indigenous Land Acknowledgement on TCS website and at TCS meetings, when appropriate.



OBJECTIVE 5: TRACK PROGRESS AND UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEI INITIATIVES OVER TIME, AND FIND IDEAS FOR CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

- **Strategy 5.1:** Evaluate progress based on the set of metrics outlined below.
- **Strategy 5.2:** Submit annual progress reports to the Executive Team and Board of Directors.
- **Strategy 5.3:** Work with the Communications Committee to establish a plan to communicate this work and progress to the broader TCS membership.
- **Strategy 5.4:** Update metrics, resources, and strategies as we continue to learn.

METRICS & REPORTING

The effectiveness and progress of diversity, equity and inclusion efforts will be reported to the Executive Team and TCS Board of Directors for review and approval on an annual basis. Reports will include measurable metrics to quantify success. In the first year of implementation of this strategic plan, TCS will endeavor to collect baseline data to set reasonable targets for improvement. In the subsequent years, the reports will be revised to include progress against specific targets.

- **The number of speakers from historically excluded groups who participate in TCS events and activities.** This includes Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) community, people who have disabilities, people from low-income backgrounds, women, and others who continue to be underrepresented in coastal and marine science and decision-making.
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Event Registration Page
- **The number of participants from underrepresented or historically excluded groups who participate in TCS events and activities.**
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Event Registration Page, Demographic Survey
- **The increase in number of members from underrepresented or historically excluded groups**
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Demographic Survey

- **The increase in the number of TCS officers, directors, and other leadership positions from underrepresented or historically excluded groups**
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Demographic Survey
- **The number of professional events that include a dedicated element of DEI on their agenda.**
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Event Agendas
- **The number of DEI-specific communication/recruitment pathways (e.g. listservs for affinity groups) used to promote TCS events.**
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Individual workshop reports
- **The number of student chapters that actively are involved in the TCS DEI workgroup.**
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Workgroup roster
- **The number of student chapters who establish goals explicitly related to DEI.**
 - Suggested Measurement Pathway: Chapters Committee annual meetings and reports

CONCLUSION

Increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion creates tangible benefits for individual members, the organization, and the coastal community as a whole. With these targeted efforts to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion are core tenants of the TCS mission, we improve opportunities and outcomes for all coastal professionals.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan was created by The Coastal Society's Diversity Equity, and Inclusion Working Group with broad input from members and leaders across TCS.

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REFERENCES

National Sea Grant's 10-year Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Vision, Version 2. (2021). [Strategic Plan]. The National Sea Grant College Program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Please visit The Coastal Society's Website at www.thecoastalsociety.org for more information about our work and to access the resources below:

- Anti-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy
- Bystander Toolkit
- Demographic Survey



THE COASTAL SOCIETY