

National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration  
Chapter of  
Blacks In Government  
**(NOAA BIG)**



Strategic Plan  
(2019–2024)

March 20, 2019

Thank You for Thinking BIG!

## **BLACKS IN GOVERNMENT (BIG)**

BIG was conceived by Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) black Federal employees at the Parklawn Building in Rockville, Maryland. Based on a wide assortment of racially motivated problems in government agencies; the organization was viewed as an essential black civil service employee group. The umbrella organization was initially formed to address only the problems of HEW federal black employees but soon recognized that many other black Federal employees were faced with the same or similar employment issues.

Considering that no other single civil rights organization had its primary objective to preserve and protect black civil servants, it became apparent that all black civil servants had to unite to safeguard their rights. For many, protecting the rights of black civil servants meant putting their careers at risk, to some, it meant duplicating efforts of other organizations, and to others, it meant very little or wasted time and effort. Nonetheless, BIG was organized in 1975 and incorporated as a non-profit organization under the District of Columbia jurisdiction in 1976.

Since that time, BIG has been a national responder to the needs of African Americans in public service and has corporately organized their collective strengths around issues of mutual concern confronting workplace and community issues. With chapters throughout this nation and abroad, representing more than 3.0 million public employees, BIG is the largest organization dedicated to serving the interest of black civil servants, and has become one of the 100+ most influential professional development organizations in America.

## **NOAA BIG**

NOAA BIG is one of several active employee organizations of NOAA. Ruth Johnson, a highly proactive civil rights focused employee of the National Marine Fisheries Service, began putting together the framework for NOAA BIG in late 1993. On February 28, 1994, via a letter to Ms. Jolmson, NOAA BIG was extended official recognition by NOAA Administrator Dr. D. James Baker. As required under Department of Commerce Department Administrative Orders, NOAA BIG Bylaws were submitted and accepted by NOAA. In March of 1995, Deputy Under Secretary Diana Josephson, and the first President and founder of NOAA BIG, Ruth Johnson, signed a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

## **MISSION**

NOAA BIG promotes opportunities and fairness affecting the rights of African American NOAA employees.

## **VISION**

NOAA BIG will remain the premier organization fostering an environment where NOAA African American employees can thrive and excel while helping NOAA achieve its mission and Diversity and Inclusion Goals.

## **NOAA CHAPTER BIG CORE VALUES**

**Support the development, advancement, and improvement of NOAA African American employees and the African American community.**

The primary objective of the chapter is to support African American employees in the workplace. Historically, African Americans have not had the support system that other employees have enjoyed. BIG was founded to be a support structure for African American employees. To continue in the tradition of BIG, the chapter must work hard to support African American employees and extend that support to the African American community.

**Respectful and open communication between members.**

Our communications are grounded in integrity, fairness, and honesty. We all view the world differently. As chapter members, we pledge to be open-minded, respectful, and transparent.

### **Develop relationships with Leadership to make a difference.**

We understand the importance of making our chapter relevant within NOAA. We will assist NOAA in achieving its mission through communicating the interest of NOAA black employees and insisting upon mutual respect.

### **Conducting business professionally providing a unified and congenial atmosphere for members to network.**

The chapter will, at all times, conduct business professionally and responsibly. We will promote a positive environment and present a unified front in business and/or social settings. When conducting our affairs, each member is responsible for creating a congenial atmosphere where everyone is valued and appreciated while advancing the chapter's goal and needs.

### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

BIG is an employee advocacy organization and national affinity group. BIG's primary mission is to promote equity, excellence and opportunity for the professional development of African Americans and others dedicated to justice at all levels of government; to develop and promote programs which enhance ethnic pride and educational opportunities, and establish a mechanism for gathering and disseminating information for African Americans in government. In 1975, BIG became the voice for African Americans at the Federal, state and local government levels, and remains the only organization dedicated to those interests.

NOAA BIG is a chapter within the national affinity group of BIG; is a member of BIG Region XI Council, representing the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area; is a partner with the Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and a resource for NOAA's Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Employment Opportunity goals. The important components to our mission include, but are not limited to; civil liberties, professional growth and development, economic self-sufficiency, youth programs, and community outreach.

NOAA BIG believes in making big things happen for our stakeholders. Our programs are intended to benefit chapter members, NOAA employees, and the African American community at-large. Accordingly, we seek to accomplish our objectives and goals by promoting equality, excellence, and opportunity in government through our varied programs and initiatives. Our commitment is to promote equity in all aspects of African American lives, elevate excellence in public service, and promote opportunity for all Americans.

As we do business, NOAA BIG will strive to make a difference in the lives of African American public servants by addressing those issues, which have a direct impact in our employment and our community. Envision our chapter as one that is grounded by integrity, motivated by giving, inspired by helping others, and has respect for one another. These are the qualities our past leaders held in high esteem and we seek to maintain. I believe the challenges for NOAA BIG are dispelling the biases associated with people of color and then to facilitate the values and ideas of our chapter. Collectively, we can make a tremendous difference in the lives of NOAA employees.

Under the NOAA BIG banner, we can utilize the full range of our talents to increase our capacity to accomplish all of our organizational objectives, requirements, and needs. Through challenging assignments and collective experiences coupled with NOAA and NOAA BIG support, our individual needs can be met. The pathway to BIG success is people, purpose, and passion. With hard work, sincerity, and commitment, NOAA BIG will continue to be successful.

***“Inclusion is not a matter of political correctness. It is the key to growth.”***

Jesse Jackson, Politician and Civil Rights Activist (Source: Crain's)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although there has been some progress in employment practices for African Americans in government, preferential treatment continues to exist in areas that include, but are not limited to, promotions, performance evaluations, and training opportunities. These types of exclusions and restrictions create embittered conflicts. Employment opportunity disparities remain a stumbling block to the full realization of job satisfaction.

Disproportionate representation at higher pay bands and GS levels as reported in FY 2018 Workforce Data Tables, show that Government practices indicate possible prejudice and bias that violates employees' rights. It is counterproductive to esprit de corps in that, it damages relationships between co-workers, employees and their supervisors. As a result, NOAA BIG's mission, as an employee advocate, is to foster an environment wherein Black NOAA employees can thrive and excel, while helping NOAA achieve its mission. We believe all employees are entitled to respect and fair treatment. NOAA BIG will do the following:

- (1) increase NOAA BIG membership through incentives and outreach;
- (2) increase career development and advancement opportunities for all employees by helping to formulate strategies, find available resources for professional development, and providing the necessary training;
- (3) serve as employee advocates for equal opportunities by meeting with management to help adjudicate employee disputes and by making them aware that we serve as a resource to assist them;
- (4) implement funding streams through innovative marketing and sales; and
- (5) build partnerships through youth programs and community outreach activities, and collaboration with local businesses, non-profit organizations, and educators.

## NOAA BIG GOALS & SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

### GOAL A: Increase Membership and Membership Support

NOAA BIG's membership consists of employees within the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. Membership can potentially include other NOAA locations, e.g., Hawaii, Oregon, and Colorado, if no other chapter exists. Due to our high number of membership, we have maintained a significant representation of National Delegates within Region XI to attend the Annual National Delegates Assembly. We cannot be merely satisfied with the status quo in order to continue to grow; we must be infused with new energy and fresh ideas that is associated with new membership. To achieve that, NOAA BIG will initiate incentives and outreach strategies designed to attract individuals that will benefit from and serve the organization.

Potential members, your ingenuity, your unique spirit, and the insights of your rich experiences are needed within NOAA BIG. Collectively, we can drastically improve the morale and internal communication between NOAA BIG and NOAA management, which, will ultimately facilitate learning, empowerment, and enable us to positively relate to each other.

### GOAL A Tasks: Increase Membership and Membership Support

- ☉ Establish new member orientation program.
- ☉ Develop profile database of members to identify their areas of interests, expertise, and talents.
- ☉ Make membership materials and records easily accessible and relative to chapter's needs.
- ☉ Provide resources, information, and services for potential members for their first three (3) months of consideration for joining.
- ☉ Plan an annual retreat.
- ☉ Advertise National and NOAA BIG Websites, [www.bignet.org](http://www.bignet.org), [www.noaabig.org](http://www.noaabig.org).
- ☉ Develop incentives for on-time membership renewal.
- ☉ Promote "The Top 10 Reasons Why You Should Join BIG".
- ☉ Display board in lobbies to get people's attention visually.
- ☉ Membership awareness programs (i.e. newsletter).
- ☉ Re-establish BIG's Service Awards Selection Committee.

- ☉ Assemble, catalog and preserve photographs for chapter's website.
- ☉ Develop incentives for inactive members to become more involved with chapter activities.

**GOAL B: Increase Career Development and Advancement Opportunities**

NOAA BIG will communicate and promulgate, through advertisements and promotional campaigns, its commitment to assist members with difficult job situations. We will develop procedures for requesting assistance and protocol for making these situations known to the Chapter. When you need to feel included in your professional work environment, NOAA BIG will be there. Inclusion means an all-embracing ideology that provides job quality, job enrichment, and work motivation, which only strengthens your personal development.

**GOAL B Tasks: Increase Career Development and Advancement Opportunities**

- ☉ Sponsor formal training for NOAA employees.
- ☉ Work with NOAA management to identify training needs and resources.
- ☉ NOAA BIG will encourage and promote participation in NRAP via email and broadcast notices.
- ☉ Sponsor internal and external workshops and seminars.
- ☉ Sponsor leadership-training seminars.
- ☉ Assist with employee career advancement.
- ☉ NOAA BIG will support educational initiatives for employees and publicize educational opportunities offered by public and private organizations.
- ☉ NOAA BIG will encourage and provide training to employees to create Individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- ☉ NOAA BIG will encourage managers/supervisors to create opportunities for on-the- job training (OJT).
- ☉ NOAA BIG will assist in forwarding announcements for training down the chain of communication.
- ☉ NOAA BIG will work with the Office of Human Capital Services to determine if announcements for training can be sent to our official website.
- ☉ NOAA BIG will work with higher-level officials to recommend the creation and/or re-institute of upward mobility positions for GS-5 through GS-11 or equivalent.
- ☉ NOAA BIG will stress to high-level officials the importance of creating opportunities for their employees, which ultimately enhances employee morale and engenders greater job satisfaction.

**GOAL C: Advocate Equal Opportunity for NOAA BIG and NOAA Employees**

Our goal is to establish routine relationships with high-level officials to review policies and practices which appear to create or perpetuate discrimination of any kind. The purpose of these relationships are to establish and encourage ways to eliminate barriers, as well as to discourage behaviors or practices that tend to polarize the workforce. When problems arise, NOAA BIG may meet with supervisors, on behalf of employees, to help mediate disputes.

**GOAL C Tasks: Advocate Equal Opportunity for NOAA BIG and NOAA Employees**

- ☉ Establish routine relationship with high level NOAA management.
- ☉ Review NOAA data, policies, and practices, which appear to create or perpetuate racial discrimination and brief the review results to appropriate management.
- ☉ Assist in mediating disputes between BIG members and their supervisors.

**GOAL D: Identify and Implement Primary-Funding Streams for NOAA BIG (\$10,000.00)**

NOAA BIG has been a self-sustaining organization through membership fees, contributions, and fund raising activities. Participating in the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) has afforded us the opportunity to provide scholarships and community outreach activities for NOAA employees and our community. NOAA BIG will identify approaches to increase the chapter's treasury by approximately ten thousand dollars (\$10K). This will be accomplished through innovative fund raising

activities focusing on what our members and community enjoy most.

**GOAL D Tasks: Identify and Implement Primary-Funding Streams for NOAA BIG (\$10,000.00)**

- ⑥ Develop fund raising initiatives.
- ⑥ Seek partnerships, coalitions, and corporate sponsors.
- ⑥ Hold at least six (6) annual bazaars.
- ⑥ Develop chapter extracurricular activities.

**GOAL E: Build Partnerships through Outreach to Support NOAA and NOAA BIG Mission**

NOAA BIG recognizes the importance of establishing working relationships with NOAA leadership and local businesses. To facilitate this, NOAA BIG will develop partnerships with NOAA leadership on employee training and professional development incentives. NOAA BIG will compliment partnership initiatives with outreach efforts by developing and conducting presentations outlining NOAA BIG's accomplishments and way forward. In addition, NOAA BIG will establish partnerships with local businesses.

Coupled with partnership development, NOAA BIG will implement outreach initiatives that will include using NOAA BIG's webpage to inform the community of ongoing NOAA BIG efforts. Our outreach efforts will include participation in forums and other professional meetings, attending the BIG National Training Institute, conducting presentations, distributing brochures, and displaying informative posters. Another outreach method NOAA BIG will implement is submission of articles for publication on the Regional and National websites.

**GOAL E Tasks: Build Partnerships through Outreach to Support NOAA and NOAA BIG Mission**

- ⑥ Utilize outside speakers to promote NOAA BIG.
- ⑥ Identify NOAA BIG mentors and join a mentoring program.
- ⑥ Support NOAA and D.C. Educators Moving Ocean Science Forward Project (NEMO).
- ⑥ Develop links to Black Colleges Outreach Programs.
- ⑥ Develop links to local PTA partnership.

**GLOSSARY**

**Advocate** - Agent or mediator for equal opportunity for fundamental employee rights.

**Alternative Dispute Resolution** - Intervention on behalf of employee; providing an opportunity for deciding between two or more courses for resolution.

**Career Advancement** - An employee's progressive pursuit of personal and professional improvement.

**Coalitions** - Individuals and group alliances formed to complete the vision of an organization(s).

**Discrimination** - Racially motivated, prejudice outlook and/or unfair treatment to an individual or group.

**Voluntary Employee Organization** - Organizations representing Federal employees that can provide views and services which will contribute to improved Department operations, personnel management, and employee effectiveness.

**Office of Human Capital Service** - Office responsible for assisting and meeting the needs of employees' professional growth and development.

**Individual Development Plans (IDP)** - An action plan and joint agreement between employee and supervisor that identify career goals which link employees' strengths, interests, and needs with organizational goals.

**Mentoring** - Enhancing another person's growth, knowledge, and skills in ways that will prepare them for greater productivity in the future.

**Mission** - A clear purpose for a group or entity to fulfill a visionary objective.

**NOAA Management** - The agency's leadership responsible for providing guidance for the management, conservation, and protection of living marine resources within the United States' Exclusive Economic Zone (water three to 200 mile offshore).

**Partners** - Individual/organization with whom we can work as a team to achieve our goals and fulfill our mission.

**Public Servants** - A civil servant or *public servant* is a civilian public sector employee working for a government department or agency.

**Sponsors** - Entity given the power and/or authority and assumes responsibility for planning and carrying out a project or activity.

**Vision** - The future target ambition(s) for NOAA BIG.