

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

# Creating Cultural Change through Data: The American Meteorological Society Equity Assessment

**AMS** needs *your* support—the support of all members, volunteers, and staff—to create a welcoming and inclusive culture. As the director of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the chair of the Culture and Inclusion Cabinet, we are excited to share more about *why* AMS has initiated an Equity Assessment, *how* you can get involved, and our next steps once the Culture Survey is complete. The Equity Assessment process gathers information, through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and the Culture Survey, about members' experiences with AMS. We hope that this article will inspire you to participate in the Culture Survey, which will be released in mid-September.

The AMS is committed to creating an inclusive, equitable, and welcoming culture that fosters creativity, innovation, and collaboration. Our mission is to advance science and services for the benefit of society. At the core of AMS's mission is the personal and professional well-being of AMS staff, the volunteer members, and the communities that the Society serves.

We know that diverse perspectives and backgrounds enhance our research and contribute to solving scientific challenges. In order to create a welcoming, inclusive, and just Society, where everyone belongs, it is crucial that we focus our efforts on “the inclusion of and equity for individuals over the benefits to” AMS.

## Why has AMS initiated an Equity Assessment?

In order to build a stronger organization, it is absolutely critical to understand where we are in our equity, inclusion, and justice (EIJ) work. For 50 years, the Board on Representation, Accessibility, Inclusion, and Diversity (BRAID) has been instrumental in creating a more welcoming and inclusive AMS. Building on our history, the Equity Assessment (EA) is the next step on our path toward these goals. Through the EA we want to

- understand peoples' experiences of belonging and/or exclusion within the Society, why they are having these experiences, and develop strategies to increase belonging;
- ensure our programs, opportunities, and resources are accessible and meet everyone's needs;
- understand when biases occur and develop a plan to mitigate bias;
- inform strategic improvements around EIJ and create an intentional culture of belonging;
- be leaders in the Weather, Water, and Climate Enterprise by creating a welcoming organization.

To achieve these goals, AMS is partnering with Integrated Work, a woman-owned, woman-led firm that specializes in customized equity assessments. The American Institute of Physics (AIP) Venture Fund is funding the first steps of the Equity Assessment process.

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**Culture Survey  
Response Goal:**  
**50% of current AMS  
members. Your participation  
will help us reach this goal!**

# What is an Equity Assessment?

1. Assess the current culture: review policies, practices, interview stakeholders

2. Design and implement Culture Survey



4. Repeat process every several years to track improvements and continued areas of need

3. Develop EIJ Strategic Plan: goals, benchmarks, strategies, metrics

An Equity Assessment is a structured set of activities that illuminates an organization's current culture, reveals the experiences of its members and staff, and provides strategic direction and transparency to create an equitable, inclusive, and just organization.

The Equity Assessment, initiated at the 103rd Annual Meeting, is not meant to isolate our efforts to a single project. Rather, it is meant as a catalyst for sustained engagement and will allow us to more fully integrate EIJ into our programmatic activities and policies, foster a sense of belonging for our membership and staff, and guide the activities of the Society over the short and long term.

The Culture Survey, which will be released mid-September 2023, is a way for all AMS members and staff to share their experiences around equity, inclusion, and belonging.

## How is the Culture Survey different from the Membership Survey?

The AMS has been conducting a Membership Survey since 1975, but this is the first time we will conduct a Culture Survey. AMS will continue to implement the Membership Survey, and we are working with current and former BRAID leadership to ensure there is no overlap between surveys.

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Goals	Membership Survey	Culture Survey
Understand perceptions of culture, belonging, and bias		✓
Track membership value of AMS benefits and activities	✓	
Prioritize EIJ needs to be addressed at the Society		✓
Understand impact of EIJ on member experiences		✓
Collect demographic information of survey participants to understand how experiences differ by identities	✓	✓

• *We all have a role and responsibility to create a welcoming Society. Join us! Take the Culture Survey in mid-September. Engage in the EIJ planning process. Support our strategic goals through action.*

Presurvey Focus Groups

- 1. Town Hall at 103rd Annual Meeting—Equity Assessment Summit: Creating Cultural Change Through Data
- 2. Leadership Focus Group—Thirteen individuals who serve as commissioners and as members of the Executive Committee and Council participated in a presurvey focus group in mid-May.
- 3. Equity Assessment Task Force Focus Group—The task force is made up of 14 individuals from across the 6 Commissions as well as representation from staff. Nine task force members participated in one of the presurvey focus groups.

When is this happening?

We are conducting the equity assessment between January 2023 and May 2024.



How will this happen?

Setting out: Building trust and defining focus

We’ve gathered qualitative data through three presurvey focus groups with core stakeholders as well as a review of policies and practices. This qualitative data will be included in the assessment analysis and will also be used to design the assessment priorities for the larger AMS population.

Data collection: Gathering, synthesizing, and refining

The bulk of data collection will come from the Culture Survey instrument. This survey will be primarily composed of quantitative questions (likert scale) measuring member and staff experiences of equity and inclusion at AMS. Where respondents report negative experiences, we will provide additional space for qualitative responses (open-ended) to better understand their experiences.

An important component of the Culture Survey is the collection of demographic questions that will allow us to understand the social, cultural, and job sector identities of AMS members that participate in the survey. Responses will be confidential. No individual will be identifiable by the demographic information they provide, no matter how unique their demographics. Demographic information will be reported in aggregate and will ensure anonymity for all respondents.

We will also use four postsurvey focus groups to gather additional qualitative data to deepen our understanding of equity and inclusion at AMS. The topics and participants for these focus groups will be collaboratively determined as we analyze the data from the Culture Survey.

### **Reporting out: Setting ourselves up for action**

Integrated Work will provide us with tangible and actionable recommendations—not just something that sits on the shelf. These recommendations will focus on achievable actions that will create change at AMS.

Integrated Work will provide three facilitated conversations to share the Culture Survey results. These facilitated conversations are another source of qualitative information to guide the development of the Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (EIJ) Strategic Plan and create momentum for strategic, coordinated action. We will present recommendations at 104th Annual Meeting during the Equity Assessment Summit town hall as well as a webinar after the Annual Meeting. Both report-outs will be recorded so that all members can engage with the results of the data analysis. The third will be determined based on needs that we identify during the process.

### **What's next? The Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Strategic Plan**

Data collected from the first steps in the Equity Assessment process (Culture Survey, pre- and postsurvey groups) will be used to develop a strategic plan that will guide our EIJ organizational goals. These goals will be developed with continued input from AMS members and staff.

The Strategic Plan will lay out strategies and tactics that we will employ to increase equity and inclusion at AMS. It will apply metrics and benchmarks that we will use to measure our progress over time. The metrics will be used to direct resources to the most successful strategies, and to iteratively improve the design and implementation of training, processes, and policies. The EIJ Plan will serve as a guideline for AMS and will support the integration of equitable and inclusive practices in all AMS activities.

We all have a role and responsibility to create a welcoming Society. Join us! Take the Culture Survey in mid-September. Engage in the EIJ planning process. Support our strategic goals through action.

—KATY PUTSAVAGE, AMS DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY,  
EQUITY, & INCLUSION, AND MELISSA A. BURT,  
CULTURE AND INCLUSION CABINET CHAIR

### **FOR FURTHER READING**

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