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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOD DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE THROUGH
ACCOUNTABILITY

NELSON LIM | ABIGAIL HADDAD | LINDSAY DAUGHERTY

Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

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Summary

Two recent policy documents lay out a new vision for diversity in the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD): the Military Leadership Diversity Commission's (MLDC's) *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st Century Military* and the *Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2012–2017*. These documents define the mission, set goals for diversity, and provide a general strategic framework for achieving these goals.

DoD has adopted a new definition of diversity:

All the different characteristics and attributes of the DoD's Total Force, which are consistent with our core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and reflective of the nation we serve.

With this expansive definition, the *Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2012–2017* contains three broad goals: (1) ensure leadership commitment to an accountable and sustained diversity effort; (2) employ an aligned strategic outreach effort to identify, attract, and recruit from a broad talent pool reflective of the best of the nation we serve; and (3) develop, mentor, and retain top talent from across the Total Force. Each of these broad goals is then broken into several narrower objectives, which in turn consist of one or more strategic actions and initiatives for accomplishing them. While the overall definition and goals are broad, the actions and initiatives are extremely specific. However, the document currently lacks structure: It does not suggest a prioritization among the actions/initiatives, objectives, or a timeline for accomplishing them. We suggest that to effectively imple-

ment these strategic objectives, DoD should approach the initiatives by classifying them according to which of three issues they address:

- DoD needs to clarify the relationship between equal opportunity (EO) compliance activities and diversity efforts.
- DoD needs to develop and implement communication strategies for its diversity vision for internal and external stakeholders.
- DoD needs to establish formal coordination among organizations that are responsible for various aspects of personnel policies and practices to sustain the momentum required for lasting diversity efforts to achieve the mission.

For each of these issues, we frame the stages of implementation into three major phases: short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions. The short term corresponds to the next 1–12 months, the mid term (1–3 years), and long term (4+ years). In addition, DoD will need to prioritize initiatives that can be implemented quickly and lay the groundwork for longer-term initiatives. In this austere fiscal environment, the prioritization of initiatives and coordination among stakeholders are essential elements for successful implementation of the strategic plan.

The purpose of this report is to provide a framework to support DoD in the implementation of its strategic plan, and to ensure that the resources devoted toward these efforts are targeted for long-term success. We argue that an enduring accountability system will be central to driving the significant changes across DoD that are needed to move toward the new vision for diversity. This accountability system will both anchor the goals by holding employees responsible for helping to meet them and allow DoD to measure progress and refine its processes on the basis of these outcomes. We also recommend communicating to employees how these goals fit in with DoD's mission and culture. We conducted a review of the general management, diversity management, and change management literature to build the framework for change through accountability. We supplemented our literature review with extensive policy discussions with the leadership of DoD's Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODMEO).

While we did review literature on this topic, it is difficult to fully ground recommendations in empirical evidence. Literature in this area tends to be highly theoretical, and even studies that attempt to measure the effects of certain types of policies or actions can rarely conduct the sort of experiments that are ideal for establishing the causal effects of policies or actions. Instead, researchers tend to perform case studies on organizations, or show correlations between policies or actions and outcomes. Because of this, while our recommendations are grounded in the appropriate literature, they are most properly viewed as hypotheses: We believe that these will help DoD reach its goals in this area, but we stress the importance of creating specific goals and tracking progress toward them.

Additionally, this study does not provide analysis of the suitability of DoD's diversity vision and its accompanying goals. DoD has already outlined its vision and goals; here we provide recommendations for how to better meet them. In addition, while we provide a high-level framework for the creation of an accountability system, we do not speak directly to how policies should be implemented. Given the current fiscal and organizational environment, DoD is undergoing often-drastic structural changes. Any attempt by us to fully describe how various organizations will execute different initiatives will quickly become obsolete, since the organizations themselves are changing as we write this report.

A Framework for Change Through Accountability

Accountability brings responsibility, and leaders who are made accountable and hold others accountable for supporting the vision for an organization will help to ensure that stakeholders move toward goals for accomplishing that vision (Babcock, 2009). We argue that the accountability system must be enduring, as DoD is a large organization characterized by constant change and frequent turnover in leadership. The system must be designed to cover the Total Force—i.e., both the military (active, reserve, and guard members) and civilian workforces—and be able to sustain personnel changes and shifts in leadership focus.

The DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan emphasizes this as well, suggesting both the creation of a senior oversight body and the creation and monitoring of key diversity metrics. The framework for change through accountability is built on *compliance*, *communication*, and *coordination*—the three Cs—as shown in Figure S.1.

Pillar One: Compliance

The first pillar of the framework is *compliance*. If there are no clear and enforced rules about who is responsible for upholding diversity and inclusion-related policies and procedures, or for tracking metrics and meeting interim goals, then we believe it is unlikely that DoD will make significant progress toward its long-term goals for diversity and inclusion. Additionally, DoD must be compliant with two distinct, but related, aspects of diversity. The legal obligation to provide equal opportunity to protected groups and DoD policies on EO remain

Figure S.1
Framework for Change Through Accountability: The Three Cs

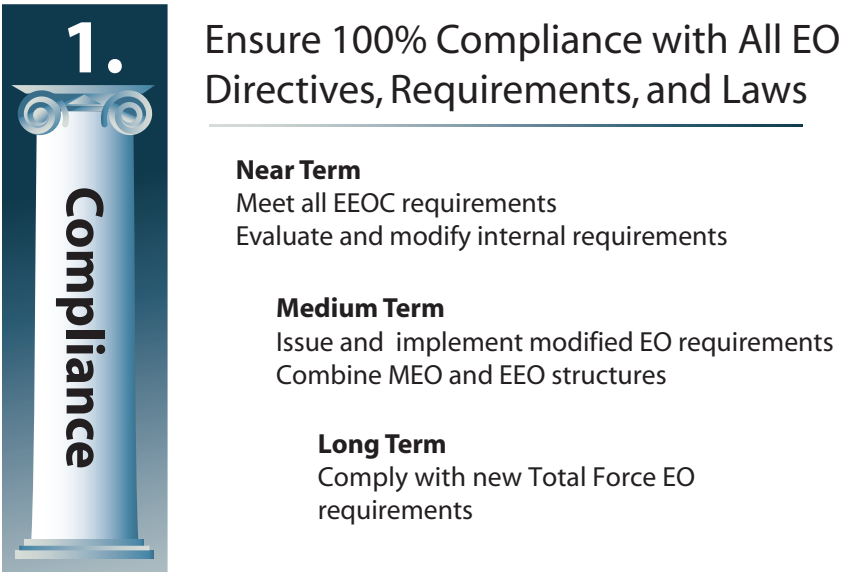


intact, and DoD must continue to protect these groups and monitor progress in demographic diversity. In particular, DoD must ensure that EO reporting requirements are being met, as there have been incomplete efforts to assure reporting of compliance in recent years. By standardizing EO metrics and reporting requirements, DoD can increase the transparency and consistency of this aspect of the accountability system for diversity. However, EO compliance is just one small part of the overall accountability system we propose. Diversity as it is more broadly defined by DoD requires an expanded set of compliance efforts to ensure that DoD is moving toward its newly defined goals of harnessing diversity to ensure mission effectiveness by creating an inclusive climate that allows all participants to reach their maximum potential.

As suggested by the old adage of “What gets measured gets done,” metrics play a central role in compliance and are critical to accountability. As DoD moves to a broader view of diversity and an expanded set of goals centered on mission effectiveness, the metrics used to track compliance must be reconsidered and strategically refined to ensure alignment with these new goals. In recognition of this, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, in a section titled “Diversity in the Armed Forces and Related Reporting Requirements,” mandates that over the course of FY 2013, a “standard set of metrics and collection procedures that are uniform across the armed forces” shall be developed. DoD tracks a range of metrics related to demographic differences and collects data on workplace climate, but additional metrics, ones related to inclusion and that identify organizational barriers to diversity, are likely to be useful. Currently, DoD surveys service members regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault; the services may want to perform climate assessments related to other issues as well. The diversity metrics cover the employment life cycle of service members and civilian employees, including pre-accession outreach activities, accessions, assignments, educational opportunities, selections, and retention. By adopting a broad set of metrics aligned with diversity goals and standardized across the entire workforce, DoD can provide the foundation needed for a strong accountability system that will drive change.

Drawing on this conceptualization, we propose a prioritization scheme for compliance-related initiatives in Figure S.2. In the near term, or the next year, we recommend that DoD come into compliance with current Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) requirements and evaluate existing internal requirements. Using the results of this evaluation and with an eye toward the eventual standardization of metrics across services and the combining of EO and military equal opportunity (MEO) structures—the structures within DoD that exist to ensure DoD compliance with internal EO requirements and external EEOC requirements—we also recommend that in the near term DoD create new internal metrics and procedures for evaluating compliance with EO requirements. In the medium term, or one to three years from now, we recommend that DoD issue and implement these new requirements. In the long term, or 4+ years from now, we recommend that DoD comply with these requirements.

Figure S.2
Recommended Steps and Timeline for Compliance Initiatives



Pillar Two: Communication

Communication should explain the changes being made and convey both the importance of compliance to the organization and the consequences if compliance does not occur. It is also an opportunity to anchor the changes within the language and organizational values of the organization. Communication intended to drive movement toward a goal is often referred to as “strategic communication,” which plays an important role in bridging the gap between organizations “knowing what they should do” and what is actually put into action (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000). Too often, leaders in the midst of organizational change make the mistake of not communicating in the correct way, or not communicating enough (Riche et al., 2005). On the other hand, communication must not be seen as a substitute for action; communication should be designed to inspire action.

To ensure success in driving and managing change, strategic communication on diversity should be an active process, with DoD developing a plan around its goals, implementing the plan, evaluating the effectiveness of the communication strategies, and adjusting as necessary. In addition, communication that is driven by leadership and attentive to audiences will improve the likelihood of success in meeting DoD goals.

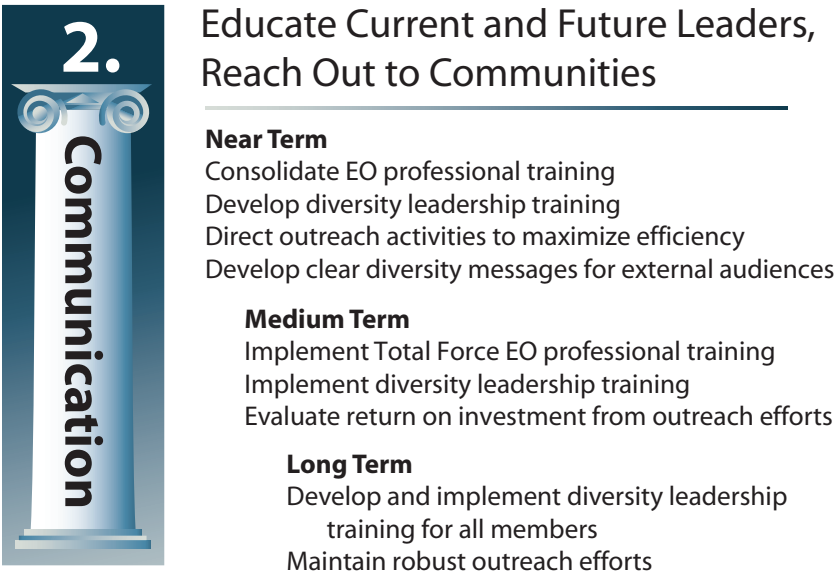
DoD faces a particular challenge in strategically communicating its new vision for diversity, because diversity efforts are typically seen as “head-counting exercises” focused exclusively on racial/ethnic and gender representations. One possibility for communicating the new vision for diversity as a concept distinct from EO policies is to integrate diversity leadership training into traditional leadership training, while retaining EO training as a separate effort. This integration reinforces the message that the ability to leverage differences for mission effectiveness is equal in importance and value to any other facet of leadership.

We also recommend, as suggested by organizational change literature, communicating how this plan fits into the organizational values of the services (National Defense Research Institute, 2010). The military is a meritocratic organization in which fairness is a major value. Training should stress both that discrimination is at odds with those values and that efforts to increase diversity and create an inclusive envi-

ronment are intended to make sure that recruiting, training, hiring, and promotion processes are fully inclusive of potential talent, regardless of demographic or other factors, in an effort to make the services as high-performing and successful as possible. While communicating internally to the workforce is critical, communication strategies can also be used to reach external audiences, as these audiences play an essential role in DoD’s ability to recruit a diverse workforce.

Drawing on this conceptualization, we propose a prioritization scheme for communication-related initiatives in Figure S.3. In the near term, or the next year, we recommend making some changes to existing training, both to consolidate current EO professional training and develop new diversity leadership training. We also recommend engaging in recruiting aimed at increasing personnel diversity. In the medium term, or from one to three years from now, we recommend implementing both diversity leadership and Total Force EO training as well as assessing the return on the near-term outreach efforts and

Figure S.3
Recommended Steps and Timeline for Communication Initiatives



modifying them if necessary. In the long term, or 4+ years from now, DoD should continue its outreach efforts and expand diversity leadership training to the Total Force, including service members in enlisted and officer training courses, such as the service academies.

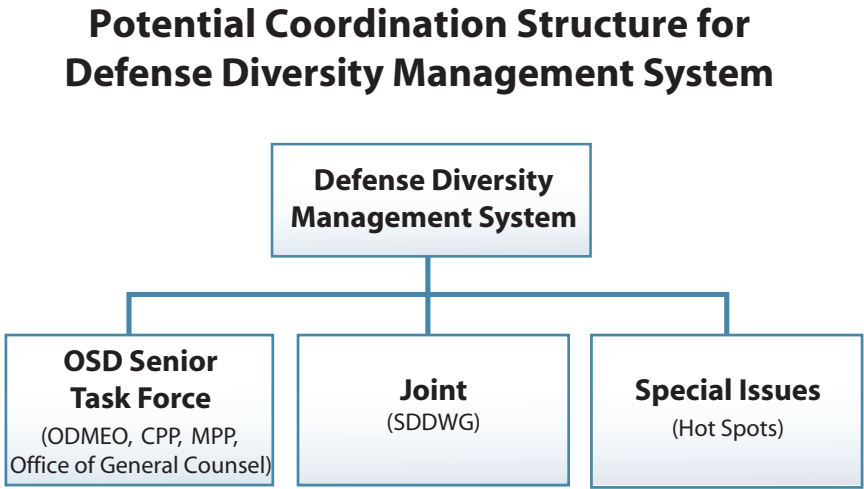
Pillar Three: Coordination

To ensure that the accountability system achieves a consistent vision for diversity across DoD's large and diverse workforce, *coordination* is necessary. Coordination among stakeholders can also improve efficiency and reduce cost. Large organizational efforts can be hindered by complicated processes, overlap in efforts, and delays driven by differences in implementation. Enhanced coordination of effort can help further the new DoD diversity vision and its corresponding goals by appropriately allotting resources; assuring that all strategy-driven, planned efforts are in agreement; and developing operationally focused recruiting/hiring, training, development, and promotion efforts that work toward one vision.

Since 2006, ODMEIO, under the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), has been responsible for promoting EO and overseeing diversity policy for DoD (MLDC, 2011f, p. 96). ODEMO has organized the Defense Diversity Working Group (DDWG) to help the services synchronize efforts (MLDC, 2009b). We contend that the synchronization of efforts should be expanded and formalized. One possible way to formalize the coordination among key stakeholders is to establish the Defense Diversity Management System (DDMS) depicted in Figure S.4.

Coordination needs to happen not just among organizations that are responsible for diversity policies and practices; it must also include other “special-issue” organizations (which we refer to as “hot spots”) that currently are considered to be outside the DoD diversity organizations. For instance, DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response is the organization responsible for the oversight of DoD sexual assault policy, including tracking data on sexual assault. DoD may also want to track other indicators that are also more indirectly related to inclusiveness of environment rather than overall diversity numbers. For instance, in the 1980s, black service members were overrepresented among court-

Figure S.4
An Example of a Formal Coordination Structure: The Defense Diversity Management System



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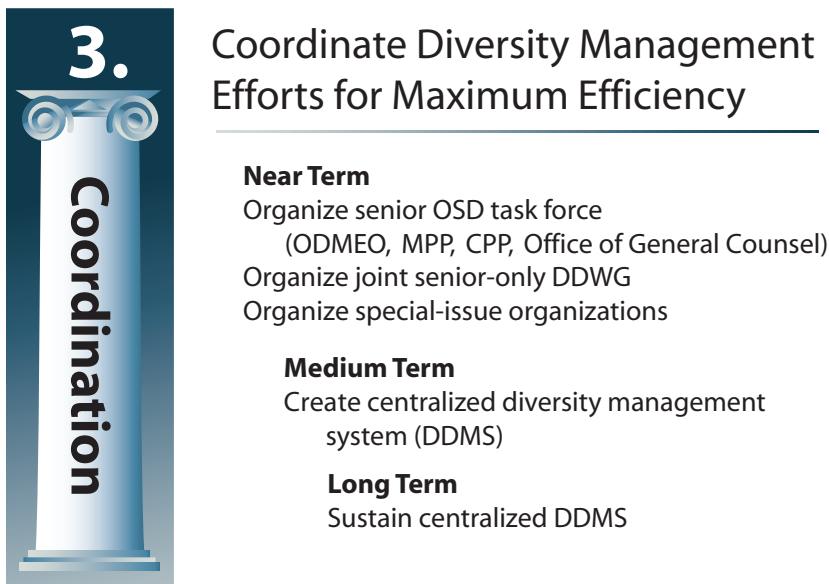
martial convictions (Walker, 1992). It is not clear whether this is still the case, but this could be the sort of metric that DoD would look at as it goes beyond a focus on diversity numbers and looks at the broader environment. Moreover, coordination must also occur among ODMEO and other personnel organizations, such as Military Personnel Policy (MPP) and Civilian Personnel Policy (CPP), as well as the Office of General Council. The diversity organizations alone cannot improve diversity and create a climate of inclusion throughout DoD. For one thing, the diversity organizations have fewer resources than larger personnel organizations. More importantly, all personnel policies and practices—including outreach, recruiting, training, assignments, promotion, and retention—must be aligned with the overarching goal of promoting greater diversity and creating a more inclusive work environment. Support from the Office of General Counsel is imperative for a successful implementation of diversity efforts, as such efforts often involve interpretation of the law in dealing with protected groups in

personnel policies. Without effective coordination, alignment among key stakeholders will not happen.

We suggest several areas in which coordination could be enhanced to support diversity efforts in additional ways, including increased leadership support, a specific leadership position for diversity, streamlined data management, and a process to coordinate focus on key diversity issues.

Based on this conceptualization, we propose a prioritization scheme—the DoD Diversity Management System (DDMS)—for coordination related initiatives in Figure S.5. In the near term, or the next year, DoD should organize several efforts: a senior OSD taskforce with representatives from various DoD agencies involved in personnel policy, the DDWG, and groups organized around specific issues (or “hot spots”), such as sexual assault, that hinder diversity. In the medium term, or one to three years from now, DoD should focus on creating the DDMS or a similar structure to oversee and coordinate

Figure S.5
Recommended Steps and Timeline for Coordination Initiatives



the three groups organized in the near-term step. In the long term, of 4+ years in the future, DoD should continue to sustain these efforts.

Recommendations

We provide DoD leadership with two recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Develop the accountability structure for diversity and inclusion based on the framework we proposed.

The framework we proposed is consistent with the *Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2012–2017*. Table S.1 displays how the three Cs can be mapped onto DoD diversity strategic goals, objectives, actions, and initiatives, specified in the strategic plan.

It is important to communicate to employees that these initiatives, and the larger focus on diversity and inclusion, are a permanent change and not a function of the current political leadership (Terrieff, 2007). Many government accountability programs are created “after the fact” of unsatisfactory efforts to reach goals or address problems (Curristine, 2005; Camm and Stecher, 2010); we recommend that DoD begin earlier, to avoid negative outcomes, rather than later, in response to them. We recommend that initial efforts related to each of the three Cs begin

Table S.1
The Three Cs Correlate with DoD Strategic Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Initiatives

Three Pillars	DoD Diversity Strategic Goals	Metrics
Comply	Action 1.1.1	Action 1.1.2 (2nd, 3rd, 4th initiatives)
Communicate		
Internal (Educate)	Action 3.1.1, Action 3.3.1	
External (Awareness)	Objective 2.1, Objective 2.2, Action 1.2.1	
Coordinate	Action 1.1.2 (1st initiative)	

NOTE: Remaining strategic actions concentrate on force sustainment.

early enough to seed a culture of change through accountability across DoD. A workforce that has accountability ingrained within its culture is more likely to be committed to the diversity vision, no matter who is leading the organization at a given time. By staying focused on accountability, DoD will be able to readily assess its workforce diversity as needed, disclose its performance, and refine and improve the functioning of the system across all components of the organization.

Recommendation 2: Establish a clear timeline of implementation milestones and publish annual status of progress toward these milestones for greatest transparency and accountability for progress.

Accountability must start with DoD diversity organizations, including ODMEIO for the timely implementation of the strategic initiatives. Establishing a clear timeline of implementation milestones will facilitate discussions about resources and responsibilities among the stakeholders whose coordination is essential for successful implementation of DoD's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

ODMEIO should publish a progress report to inform external and internal stakeholders. This annual publication can become an important impetus that sustains the DoD diversity accountability system.