

**Year 2 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)  
Office of Workplace Violence Prevention and Response  
(WVPRO)**

**Optimizing Prevention: Training the NOAA Workforce and Leaders on  
Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct**

**Relevant Rubric Area(s):**

*Response:* Leadership Education and Skill Development

**Description of Work:**

**Background.**

The NOAA WVPR relies on leadership at all levels to champion the reduction and elimination of sexual misconduct. Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) is built into our risk dashboard, which provides opportunities for engagement with senior and political leadership. SASH-reduction strategies are a priority for leadership and their support for many WVPR events is providing confidence and competence on the subject matter.

**Webinar Series**

NOAA has spent the past year creating a robust training platform for its workforce (see NOAA's related [Year 1 Description of Work](#)). By working with highly respected training partners, we provided tools to defuse uncomfortable situations using bystander intervention methods, as well as providing clear avenues for NOAA personnel, including leaders at all levels, on reporting and responding to inappropriate behaviors in the workplace.

NOAA believes the key to reducing sexual harassment, sexual assault, and gender-based harassment is creating healthy and inclusive workspaces. To that end, two separate summits and a specialized series of workshops were provided for the workforce. In October 2020, NOAA's first Workplace Violence Prevention and Response virtual summit took place. This was a culmination of seven months of 20 webinars with 9100 registrations focused on work-life alignment, finding purpose in a pandemic, and utilizing strengths to flourish in the workplace. The virtual summit's theme was "Working Well Together: Charting the Course to Workplace Wellness." Attendees learned some tools to maintain a positive work-life balance to help boost productivity, particularly in a COVID-19 environment. Starting with opening thoughts from senior leaders within NOAA, the virtual summit engaged attendees on topics such as combating challenges to working well together, mitigating virtual fatigue and burnout, learning prevention methods that could be immediately implemented, and completing various mindfulness exercises.

## **Addressing Micro-Aggressions**

In Spring 2021, the NOAA Workplace Violence Prevention and Response team hosted multiple training sessions with Amanda Houpt, of Chrysalis Training and Learning Solutions, on the topic of micro-aggressions. These skill development sessions, attended by the NOAA workforce and leaders at all levels, showcased how micro-aggressions can negatively impact workplace dynamics. Attendees learned what these behaviors are, how to address them and how to respond when they are the aggressors.

In July 2021, NOAA hosted “We are NOAA” Week, culminating in a SASH summit with the theme of “Turning the Tide on SASH.” With subject matter expert panelists discussing both prevention and response, training by Ms Houpt on micro-aggressions and grooming, and a keynote from Rosie Hidalgo, Senior Advisor on Gender-Based Violence and Special Assistant to the President, White House Gender Policy Council, attendees increased their understanding of workplace violence issues, response mechanisms and leadership roles. In addition, with the reflective space built into this summit, attendees were able to foster self-discovery while inspiring change within themselves and their sphere of influence.

## **Anchoring DEIA into SASH**

Understanding the intersectionality between DEIA and SASH, NOAA’s WVPR team is heavily engaged with the White House’s Gender Policy Council to provide input on the national framework to address gender-based violence as well as collaborate on the most recent Executive Order from the President tied to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

Gleaning data from NOAA employees through the We Are NOAA Workplace Culture Survey, NOAA has partnered with highly respected training providers to create evidence-based training platforms to provide the NOAA workforce with tools to address inappropriate behaviors or defuse uncomfortable situations. Because NOAA’s recent Workplace Culture Survey identified some opportunities for sponsoring and amplifying the voices of the marginalized to create an inclusive, safe environment for NOAA’s workforce, NOAA will be incorporating a DEIA training component in addition to a leadership training component that will help guide leaders to advance DEIA culture within their organizations.

## **Culture of Accountability**

NOAA intends to create a culture of accountability by standardizing training for front-line supervisors and key stakeholders on the disciplinary aspect of incidents tied to SASH. The NOAA WVPR program was recently audited by the GAO. The audit, entitled: “SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT: NOAA Has Made Substantial Progress in Prevention and Response, but Could Further Improve its Processes (GAO-21-560)” reflected six recommendations, most of which are resolved or in the process of being resolved. Notably, one recommendation

discussed implementing a mechanism requiring oversight by senior agency leaders of all disciplinary actions involving misconduct related to sexual assault and sexual harassment before such actions are finalized. NOAA is actively collaborating with stakeholders on modifying the standing policy to incorporate all relevant legal requirements, to include the elevation of disciplinary oversight as well as training for managers and decision makers on their roles and responsibilities tied to SASH. NOAA anticipates the updated policy will be released in early 2022.

**Website for further information (if applicable):** <https://www.noaa.gov/workplace-violence-prevention-response-program>

**Point of Contact Name:** Kelley Bonner and Dr. Lisa Charles

**Email Address for Point of Contact:** [kelley.bonner@noaa.gov](mailto:kelley.bonner@noaa.gov), [lisa.charles@noaa.gov](mailto:lisa.charles@noaa.gov)