

DIVERSITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND INCLUSION

STRATEGIC PLAN - FY 2026 – 2027



Virginia Marine Resources Commission

380 Fenwick Road, Building No. 96, Hampton, Virginia 23651

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MESSAGE FROM VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSIONER



The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) reaffirms its commitment to maintaining a workplace, service and public environment that upholds the principles of equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and inclusion consistent with Executive Order 9 (2026).

VMRC prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, political affiliation, disability, or veteran status, and supports appropriate employment preferences for veterans. We remain dedicated to fair, consistent, and ethical practices across all operations.

VMRC recognizes that a diverse workforce enhances our effectiveness and strengthens our service to the Commonwealth. VMRC is committed to implementing recruitment, selection, and outreach processes that are free of bias and barriers, ensuring equitable access to all. Furthermore, VMRC will implement regular training programs to ensure all employees understand and adhere to the Commonwealth's equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and inclusion requirements. These training initiatives will equip staff to promote diversity, inclusion, and opportunity in all aspects of VMRC operations and to uphold the standards set forth in Executive Order 9.

As Commissioner, I affirm VMRC's ongoing responsibility to foster an inclusive, respectful, and equitable workplace that reflects the communities we serve. We will continue to improve our policies and actions to ensure full compliance with Executive Order 9 and uphold the highest standards of public service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph D. Grist". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Joseph D. Grist
Commissioner, VMRC



COMMITMENT STATEMENT

The leadership of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) recognizes the importance of ensuring equal opportunity for all Virginians. Consistent with the vision outlined in Governor Spanberger's Executive Order 9 (January 17, 2026), VMRC is committed to fostering a workplace and service environment that promotes opportunity, accessibility, fairness, and respect throughout all aspects of agency operations.

VMRC is dedicated to maintaining employment practices and delivering public services that are consistent with applicable federal and state laws while cultivating a professional workplace where employees are treated with dignity and respect. We recognize that drawing upon a broad range of perspectives, experiences, and ideas strengthens decision-making, supports employee engagement, and enhances the agency's ability to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth.

VMRC is committed to establishing measurable objectives that promote continuous improvement, accountability, and organizational excellence. Through these efforts, we strive to maintain a workplace where all employees have the opportunity to contribute, develop professionally, and support the agency's mission of responsibly managing Virginia's marine and aquatic resources for the benefit of the Commonwealth.



INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) is one of the oldest agencies within Virginia State government, serving the Commonwealth for more than a century. The agency's mission is to balance the demands of economic development, commerce, and recreation with the conservation and protection of Virginia's marine resources, aquatic habitats, and tidal waters for the benefit of current and future generations.

VMRC recognizes that its employees are its greatest asset. The agency is committed to fostering a professional workplace that promotes opportunity, respect, accountability, and employee engagement. Through effective recruitment, retention, training, and development efforts, VMRC strives to attract and retain a highly qualified workforce capable of meeting the agency's mission and serving the citizens of the Commonwealth.

VMRC is dedicated to providing a work environment where employees are valued for their contributions and have access to opportunities for professional growth and development. The agency also recognizes the importance of engaging with the communities and stakeholders it serves through outreach, collaboration, and transparent communication.

This plan supports the objectives of Governor Spanberger's Executive Order 9 (2026) and VMRC's commitment to fostering a workplace that promotes equal opportunity, accessibility, fairness, and respect. VMRC will establish measurable objectives, evaluate progress, and pursue continuous improvement to strengthen organizational effectiveness, support employee development, and advance the agency's mission of serving the citizens of the Commonwealth.





Administrative Professionals Day Recognition



Marine Police Officers-in-training



Saltwater Tournament Event

DEFINITIONS

To ensure that there is an established framework for language regarding concepts and practices of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion (DOI), the Virginia Marine Resources Commission adopted the definitions of DOI based on the language from the “D5 Racial Opportunity Tools” glossary, the “U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission”, and *DHRM DOI Plan* disseminated in January 2024.

DIVERSITY is broadly defined as all the characteristics that make individuals unique. It is the practice of appreciating and involving individuals who are different from one another. Diversity encompasses the different characteristics that make national origin, religion, disability, race, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, veteran status, family structure, etc. unique.

OPPORTUNITY refers to an equal distribution, among individuals, of opportunities for education, training, employment, pay, career development, promotions, and the exercise of power without their being disadvantaged on the basis of their sex, race, language, religion, economic, sexual orientation, or family situation, and so forth. It is the elimination of barriers that have prevents the full participation of marginalized groups in society. It is the process of allocating resources, programs, and opportunities to employees, customers and residents, to address historical discrimination and existing imbalances. Opportunity refers to meeting people where they are to ensure they have the same access, resources and opportunities as others.

INCLUSION is the act of creating an environment where individuals or groups are welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate in any setting. “Inclusive” and “welcoming” are indicative of embracing difference and offers respect in words and actions, for all people. Inclusion connects a culture to everyone of an organization. It encourages collaboration, flexibility and fairness. It leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all employees can participate and contribute to their full potential. It fosters a sense of belonging and respect for the differences and uniqueness that all employees bring to the workplace, without the impact of inequities.

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY is to develop and maintain relationships with diverse colleges and professional organizations to improve a recruitment talent pool of candidates and pipeline, to develop a high-performing workforce from all segments of society.

SUSTAINABILITY is to develop strategies and processes to promote an inclusive culture and equip organizations with the ability to manage diversity, articulate expectations and accountability, measure results, and adjust and refine approaches based on collected data.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Agency Goal 1: Access and Success

Objective 1:

Continue to monitor and focus on advanced equitable hiring by refining processes that increase reach, reduce familiarity bias, and attract talent from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and experiences, expanding access and appeal to a wider range of qualified candidates from underrepresented diverse communities.

- Continue to assess and measure recruitment, interview and selection processes against hiring diversity results.
- Explore new sources of recruitment focusing on diverse applicants and populations.
- Develop and deliver targeted training for interview panelists and direct supervisors on inclusive recruitment practices, emphasizing the strategic benefits of diverse perspectives in hiring decisions.

Objective 2:

Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.

- Continue to support a robust internship program while expanding and refining apprenticeship opportunities to strengthen future talent pipelines and create more equitable, accessible career pathways within VMRC for historically underrepresented and diverse populations.
- Implement intentional outreach to high schools and colleges to increase awareness of environmental study programs.
- Utilized interagency retention focused working groups to identify avenues of retention and promotion within current workforce.

Agency Goal 2: Welcoming and Respectful Culture

Objective 1:

Foster and sustain a supportive, respectful and harmonious workplace culture rooted in inclusion—where diverse perspectives and lived experiences are not only welcomed but meaningfully integrated into daily operations, and where embracing diverse perspectives fuels creativity and continuous improvement.

- Ensure employees with disabilities receive the accommodation they need to thrive and succeed in their roles.
- Facilitate cross-functional collaboration and continuous learning to strengthen employee development, broaden perspectives, and cultivate creative solutions.

- Organize, promote and/or host events that celebrate diversity and independent thinking, reinforcing a culture of inclusion, respect, and appreciation for varied perspectives and contributions.

Objective 2:

Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.

- Implement employee relations program where HRD partners with field supervisors, providing site visits to MRC field offices to encourage communication and collaboration. Focus should be on employee communication as well as coaching and training field supervision on civility in the workplace and communication avenues with Human Resources.
- Advocate for effective conflict resolution methods such as mediation, counseling, and training, emphasizing the importance of respecting free speech and expression.
- Ensure swift intervention in cases of inappropriate workplace behavior, maintaining a positive and respectful work environment.
- Disseminate and train on DHRM standardized process for promptly addressing concerns and complaints, ensuring consistency and fairness in resolution procedures.

Agency Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure

Objective 1:

Strengthen and integrate the agency's DOI infrastructure across all operations to ensure consistency, transparency, and alignment with strategic opportunities in diversity.

- Maintain ongoing review and evaluation of internal policies and procedures across MRC to identify areas for enhancing organizational effectiveness and excellence.
- Incorporate the DOI plan into the agency's broader strategic and reporting frameworks to reinforce its role in guiding organizational priorities and outcomes.

Objective 2:

Continue to create structures and processes of accountability to increase organizational effectiveness with the Department of Human Resource Management.

- Develop and implement standardized DOI metrics and reporting tools to monitor progress, promote accountability, and inform continuous improvement across all agency operations.

- Integrate DOI responsibilities with existing human resources functions, ensuring alignment and establishing a dedicated point of contact within the MRC leadership or HR department.
- Maintain ongoing review and evaluation of internal policies and procedures across MRC to identify areas for enhancing organizational effectiveness and excellence.

Objective 3:

Ensure ongoing access to training and educational resources for all employees.

- Provide diverse training and educational options covering skills enhancement, leadership cultivation, and career progression.
- Establish talent management initiatives encompassing internships, succession planning, and ongoing professional growth.
- Ensure accessibility of training programs to all employees through various facilitation methods such as classroom sessions, virtual learning, self-paced online modules, seminars, and conferences.
- Expand the range of training opportunities available to foster continuous learning and development.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The progress and outcomes of our strategic plan for Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion (DOI) will be reviewed and reported annually. These reports will be submitted to both the Commissioner and the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM). The review process will evaluate the implementation of planned actions, track measurable progress, recognize achievements, and highlight areas for improvement. Evaluation will include both qualitative and quantitative analysis—assessing action completion, as well as the strategy’s impact on employee perceptions and experiences within the agency's culture. The findings of this evaluation will inform the development of future action plans, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with our diversity, opportunity, and inclusion objectives.



SUMMARY

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission remains committed to fostering a professional workplace that promotes equal opportunity, respect, accessibility, and employee engagement. We recognize that employees with varied experiences, skills, and perspectives strengthen our ability to serve the Commonwealth and fulfill our mission effectively.

VMRC will continue to support initiatives that enhance recruitment, employee development, retention, and organizational effectiveness while ensuring employees have access to opportunities for growth and success. Through these efforts, we seek to maintain a workplace culture grounded in professionalism, accountability, collaboration, fairness, and continuous improvement.

Achieving these objectives requires the commitment of leadership and employees at all levels of the organization. By working together, we will strengthen our workforce, enhance service to the public, and advance the principles of equal opportunity, accessibility, and organizational excellence consistent with Governor Spanberger's Executive Order 9 (2026).



Employment Opportunities Plan

Fiscal Year 2026

Summary of Efforts to Increase Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) is committed to increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through equitable, accessible, and competency-based employment practices. During this planning cycle, VMRC strengthened hiring practices by implementing a standardized Hiring Policy and Procedures and enhancing selection processes to promote consistency, transparency, and accountability. The agency will continue reviewing employment practices, supporting workforce development, and fostering an inclusive workplace that promotes equal employment opportunity and reduces barriers to employment.

Fiscal Year Workforce Breakdown and Metrics - Employees with Disabilities

(Metrics Reflect Classified Employees Only)

■ Less Than 3.5% ■ 3.6% To 4.9% ■ 5.0% or Greater



4 Total Classified Employees with Disabilities ▲ 1

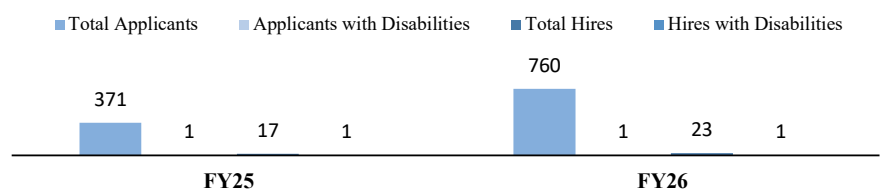
1 ◀▶ 0
Are in a Leader or
Supervisory Role

1 ◀▶ 0
Are in an
Executive Role

0 ◀▶ 0
Employees with
Disabilities are
Veterans

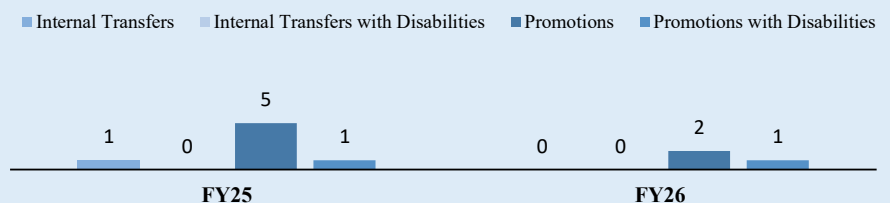
FY Agency Applicants / Hires

1 ◀▶ 0 1 ◀▶ 0
Employees with Employee with
Disabilities Applicants Disabilities Hires



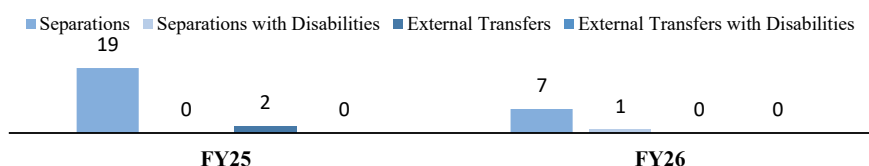
FY Internal Mobility

0 ◀▶ 0 1 ◀▶ 0
Employees with Employee with
Disabilities Transfers Disabilities Promotions



FY Voluntary Separations

1 ▲ 1 0 ◀▶ 0
Employees with Employee with
Disabilities Disabilities Transfers



Alternative Hiring

3 ▼ 2

0 ◀▶ 0

0 ◀▶ 0

Process Metrics:

Applications Received
through the Process

Individuals Hired
Through the Process

Hired Individuals
Transitioned to Classified

Agency SWOT Analysis for Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

Brief Overview of SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis identified key workforce strengths, challenges, opportunities, and external factors that informed the agency's strategic priorities. Findings highlighted the need to strengthen equitable hiring practices, leadership development, and workforce readiness while building on the agency's commitment to organizational improvement, employee engagement, and inclusive employment practices. These findings informed the agency's strategic objectives and workforce priorities for the upcoming planning cycle.

Strengths

VMRC has strengthened hiring practices, employee engagement, and organizational effectiveness through recent HR initiatives and leadership support.

Weaknesses

Leadership development and consistent application of structured selection practices remain opportunities to strengthen organizational consistency and workforce readiness.

Strengths	
Recruitment	Retention
Implemented Hiring Policy and workforce tracker to improve consistent, equitable and compliant hiring.	
Engagement	Learning / Development
Agency leadership promotes employee engagement through collaboration, Commission participation, and employee recognition.	

Weaknesses	
Recruitment	Retention
Heavy reliance on informal referrals and traditional recruitment practices may limit outreach to diverse applicant pools.	Continued retention efforts will support long-term workforce stability.
Engagement	Learning / Development
	Expanded leadership, supervisory, interviewing, and inclusion training to strengthen employee development and support a equitable workplace.

Opportunities	
Recruitment	Retention
Promote structured selection practices that support equitable, consistent, competency-based hiring decisions.	Strengthen retention through employee engagement, organizational alignment, and workplace stability.
Engagement	Learning / Development
	Expand leadership and supervisory training to strengthen employee development.

Threats	
Recruitment	Retention
Competition for specialized talent and state salary constraints may limit recruitment of qualified candidates.	State budget priorities may affect workforce growth, retention, and employee development.
Engagement	Learning / Development
	Legislative and regulatory changes may require ongoing training and workforce adaptation.

Opportunities

Expanding leadership development, equitable hiring, and employee engagement provides opportunities to strengthen workforce readiness and long-term organizational success.

Threats

Competition for talent, budget priorities, and legislative changes may impact workforce stability, recruitment, and long-term organizational readiness.

Upcoming Fiscal Year Action Plan

◀MODIFIED▶ Objective: Objective 1 – Equitable Hiring & Selection

Strengthen equitable hiring through structured, competency-based selection practices that promote fairness, consistency, accountability, and transparency in hiring decisions.

Action Item: Use Workforce & Recruitment Tracker data to monitor recruitment, evaluate selection practices, and promote consistency, accountability, and transparency throughout the hiring process.

Action Item: Strengthen implementation of the new Hiring Policy and Procedures through training, standardized selection practices, and accountability for consistent policy compliance.

Action Item: Monitor and reinforce consistent application of structured, competency-based selection practices through coaching, guidance, and continuous improvement.

Objective Progress Summary: Progress has been made to strengthen equitable hiring through implementation of the Workforce & Recruitment Tracker and the agency's new Hiring Policy and Procedures. These initiatives have strengthened oversight, accountability, and standardized selection practices, establishing a stronger foundation for consistent, transparent, and equitable hiring decisions. Continued training and monitoring will support consistent policy application and ongoing process improvement.

◀MODIFIED▶ Objective: Objective 2 - Inclusive Workplace Culture

Promote an inclusive and engaged workplace culture by encouraging cross-functional collaboration, continuous learning, and opportunities for employee development.

Action Item: Facilitate cross-functional collaboration and continuous learning to strengthen employee development, broaden perspectives, and cultivate innovative solutions.

Action Item: Expand employee development opportunities that encourage collaboration, knowledge sharing, and continuous learning across divisions.

Action Item: Recognize and encourage employee contributions that promote teamwork, inclusion, innovation, and organizational engagement.

Objective Progress Summary: Leadership has expanded opportunities for employee engagement through increased communication, greater transparency, more inclusive Commission meetings, and the reintroduction of recognizing new employees during Commission meetings. These efforts have strengthened organizational awareness, encouraged collaboration across divisions, and reinforced a culture of openness, inclusion, and continuous improvement.

◀MODIFIED▶ Objective: Objective 3 - Diversity, Opportunity & Inclusion Integration

Embed diversity, opportunity, and inclusion principles into agency policies, practices, and workplace culture to support equitable decision-making, employee engagement, and continuous improvement.

Action Item: Conduct ongoing reviews of agency policies, procedures, and employment practices to identify opportunities to strengthen diversity, opportunity, and inclusion.

Action Item: Integrate diversity, opportunity, and inclusion priorities into workforce planning, strategic
◀MODIFIED▶ *initiatives, and organizational decision-making.*

Action Item: Develop and monitor DOI metrics and reporting tools to measure progress, support accountability,
◀MODIFIED▶ *and drive continuous improvement.*

Objective Progress Summary: The agency has begun embedding diversity, opportunity, and inclusion principles into workforce planning and employment practices through ongoing policy review, implementation of the new Hiring Policy and Procedures, and greater emphasis on standardized, equitable hiring practices. These efforts have strengthened accountability, transparency, and the integration of DOI considerations into strategic decision-making.

◀NEW▶ Objective: Objective 4 - Employee Development & Workforce Readiness

Support employee growth and organizational capability by promoting professional development, continuous learning, and workforce readiness to meet current and future agency needs.

Action Item: Encourage leadership, supervisor, and interview panel development through targeted training
◀NEW▶ *initiatives that strengthen management capability, workforce readiness, and organizational effectiveness.*

Action Item: Provide training for supervisors and interview panel members on structured, competency-based
◀NEW▶ *selection practices and consistent application of the Hiring Policy and Procedures.*

Action Item: Expand professional development opportunities that strengthen employee skills, encourage
◀MODIFIED▶ *continuous learning, and prepare employees for evolving agency needs.*

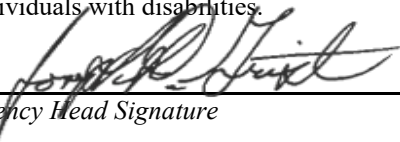
Objective

0

*Objective Progress Summary: **No Update Provided at this Time.***

Statement of Commitment

Marine Resources Commission is committed to the Commonwealth's policy and its efforts to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



Agency Head Signature

Rebecca R. Herrington

Employment Lead, Individuals with Disabilities

Rebecca R. Herrington

Human Resource Director