

NOAA Chapter of

Blacks In Government (NOAA BIG)

Strategic Plan (2010 – 2015)

## NOAA Chapter of Blacks In Government (BIG) Strategic Plan (2010 – 2015)

### **President's Message**

Blacks In Government (BIG) is an employee support and advocacy organization whose primary mission is to protect civil liberties, promote education, and enhance training opportunities. There is a tendency for some to believe that we've achieved an equal society and level playing field when, in fact, we have not. There are three important components to our mission; civil rights, educational opportunities and economic self-sufficiency. The NOAA chapter of BIG believes in making big things happen, in a small way, incrementally. Our programs are intended to benefit chapter members, NOAA black 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 on our employment.

Think for a moment and envision our chapter as one which is motivated by giving, inspired by helping others, grounded by integrity, and saturated with love for one another. These are the qualities our past leaders held in high esteem and saw our members as the embodiment of them. How much more could we accomplish if these were our sole guiding principles? I believe the single most consequential challenge for our chapter is to subordinate our personal interests in order to facilitate the ideals 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. Equally, through personally challenging assignments, collective experiences, and NOAA BIG support, our individual needs can easily be met. **With hard work, sincerity, and commitment, the NOAA Chapter of Blacks In Government will be great.**

### **Executive Summary**

Job discrimination remains a stumbling block to the full realization of job satisfaction. Although there has been progress in many areas, exclusions, restrictions, and preferential treatment continue to exist and create embittered conflicts. Disproportionate representation at higher pay bands and GS levels as reported in FY 2008 Workforce Data Tables show that Government practices based on prejudice and bias violate employees' rights. It also reduces productivity, damages relations between co-workers, and employees and their supervisors. As a result, NOAA BIG's mission as an employee advocate for equal opportunity is to fight for fundamental employee rights. 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

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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 outreach and collaboration with local businesses, non-profit organizations, and educators.

### **Increase Membership**

NOAA BIG has long maintained a membership that has led Region XI. We have sent some the highest numbers of delegates to the Annual National Training Conference because of the number of members on our roles. However, 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 we will initiate incentives and outreach strategies designed to attract those types of individuals that will both benefit from and serve as a benefit to the organization.

### **Increase Career Development 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.

You, your ingenuity, your unique spirit, and the insights of your rich experiences are needed here with the NOAA Chapter of Blacks In Government. Collectively we can drastically improve the morale and internal communication between NOAA BIG and NOAA management which will ultimately facilitate learning, empowerment, and enable NOAA leadership to relate more positively *to us* and *us to each other*.

When you need to feel included in your professional work environment, NOAA BIG will be there. Inclusion means job quality, job enrichment, and work motivation which can only strengthen your personal development.

***Training:*** NOAA BIG will work with the various line offices, agency leadership, and membership to identify the most appropriate training to facilitate placing NOAA employees in the best position possible to further their careers.

***Job Swap:*** NOAA BIG will encourage job swaps which involves the reassignment of two employees who swap jobs when no vacancy exists and if neither employee is satisfied with their current position. A job swap will enable employees to learn new skills and obtain job satisfaction. Job swapping is also a good alternative when differences between the employee and supervisor cannot be resolved.

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***Upward Mobility:*** NOAA BIG will work with higher level officials to create and/or re-institute upward mobility positions. Although these types of positions are often tailored to meet the mission and organizational needs of the Agency, they should also enable employee to assume more progressive work. 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.

***Education:*** NOAA BIG will support educational initiatives for employees and publicize educational opportunities offered by public and private organizations. This will be accomplished through e-mails and posting announcements on bulletin boards located in the lobbies in the Silver Spring Complex.

***On-The-Job-Training:*** NOAA BIG will encourage managers/supervisors to create opportunities for on-the- job training (OJT), because NOAA BIG believes it is the responsibility of the supervisor and managers to use available resources to train, qualify and develop their employees. Oftentimes, announcements for training are forwarded to higher level officials, but do not make its way down the chain of communication. NOAA BIG will work with the Human Resource Office to determine if announcements for training can be sent to our official website.

***Individual Career Plan:*** NOAA BIG will encourage and assist employees with Individual Career Plans (ICP) to help determine specific competencies needed to advance to the next level, or to qualify for a position in a different field. In so doing, NOAA BIG will help employees identify necessary training and the best methods to accomplish training (on-the job, class room, detail, etc.).

**Advocate for NOAA Employees**

Our goal is to establish routine relations with high level officials to review government policies and practices which appear to create or perpetuate discrimination of any kind. For example, the percentages of Caucasian employees promoted over minority employees with basically the same skill level. Also, the numbers of Minority managers, as opposed to the numbers of Caucasian managers. The purpose of these meetings 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 will meet with supervisors, on behalf of employees, to help mediate disputes. To accomplish this, NOAA BIG will confidentially meet with the individual employee to first determine the facts of the dispute. Subsequently, NOAA BIG will meet with the supervisor to discuss a resolution to the dispute.

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It would be an informal Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) session. At the conclusion of the meetings, NOAA BIG will produce a written record (detailing the facts of the case) describing both parties positions. This record will include the opinions and recommendations of NOAA BIG and become an official document, should mediation prove to be unfeasible and the employee decides to present it to a grievance board.

### **Implement Innovative Fund Raising Strategies**

NOAA BIG has been a self sustaining organization since its inception through membership contributions. As activities and programs increased so did the need for additional financial support. One way the chapter addressed the need, was to become part of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) as a means to support our philanthropic employee focused efforts to improve the quality of life for NOAA Federal employees specifically and our community generally. The move was beneficial, but only demonstrated that the CFC represented one more piece of a complete financial picture.

To complete the picture, NOAA BIG will identify approaches to increase the chapter's treasury by approximately twenty thousand dollars (\$20K) by 2015. This will be accomplished through innovative fund raising activities, e.g., vendor bazaars, candy and raffles sales, coordinating bowling, sports, theater, and musical trips, and other imaginative events focusing on what our members and community enjoy most.

### **Increase Partnerships through Outreach**

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 by exploring the feasibility of becoming part of the local chamber of commerce.

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 also include participation in forums and other professional meetings, e.g., National Training Conference, by 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.

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**VISION**

The NOAA Chapter of Blacks In Government is the premier organization fostering an environment where NOAA African American employees can thrive and excel while helping NOAA achieve its mission.

**MISSION**

The NOAA Chapter of Blacks In Government will promote opportunities and fairness affecting the rights of African American NOAA employees.

**NOAA CHAPTER BIG CORE VALUES**

- Support the development, advancement, and improvement of the NOAA African American employees and the African American community.
- Respectful and open communication between members.
- Esteemed honesty and integrity among members.
- Exploiting power to make a difference.
- Conducting business professionally providing a unified and congenial atmosphere for members to socialize and network.

***Goals/Supporting Objectives***

***GOAL A: Increase Membership and Membership Support***

- Establish new member orientation program.
- Develop profile data base 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.

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- Participate on 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.
- Membership awareness programs (i.e. newsletter).

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

**Objectives:**

- Work with NOAA management to identify training needs and resources.
- Sponsor internal and external workshops and seminars.
- Sponsor leadership training seminars.
- Assist with employee career advancement.
- Support employees' education initiatives.
- Assist in developing members' IDPs/ICDPs.
- Sponsor formal training for NOAA employees.

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

**Objectives:**

- Assist in mediating disputes between BIG members and their supervisors.
- Assist members with professional development.
- Establish routine relations with high level NOAA management.
- Review NOAA data, policies, and practices which appear to create or perpetuate racial discrimination.

**GOAL D: *Identify and Implement Primary Funding Streams for NOAA BIG (\$20,000.00)***

**Objectives:**

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

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

**Objectives:**

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

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## **Blacks In Government (BIG)**

Blacks In Government 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 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 response 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.

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**Core Value Statement Intentions**

**Support development, advancement, and improvement of the NOAA black employees:** 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 whites have had and still benefit from within the White Corporate Structure. 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.

**Open communication between members:** We all view the world differently. As chapter members, we pledge to be open-minded, respectful, and transparent. Our communication is grounded in fairness and honesty.

**Honesty and integrity among members:** The chapter will conduct business with integrity. We will ensure each member's interest is recognized and discuss issues of concern in confidentiality. Together, we will accommodate the most optimum recourse and protocol to whomever we serve.

**Power to make a difference:** We understand the importance of making our chapter equal partners with NOAA. We are a potent force and will assist NOAA in achieving its mission through communicating the interest of NOAA black employees and insisting upon mutual respect.

**Conduct business professionally:** 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.

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## 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.

**Bazaars** - The opportunity for African American vendors to showcase and sell merchandise.

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

**Civil Servant** - A member of the government's public sector where appointments are determined by competitive examination.

**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.

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

**Individual Career Development Plans (ICDP)** – 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.

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**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.