



RAND PROJECT AIR FORCE

# IMPROVING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Across multiple sectors, leaders are striving to ensure that their workforces represent the communities that they serve and seeking to intentionally integrate individual differences into organizational functions and decisions. This document highlights RAND Corporation research on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that may be applicable to Department of the Air Force (DAF) DEI efforts.

### **MORE THAN DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS**

Diversity and inclusion mean different things to different people. Demographic diversity includes differences with respect to an individual's age, race/ethnicity, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, family status, disability status, and geographic origin. Organizations must comply with applicable federal laws that often focus on demographic characteristics and are designed to combat unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunity in the workplace.

Many organizations, however, consider broader workforce differences when seeking to improve diversity. These include not only demographic characteristics but also differences with respect to skills, styles of thinking, and previous experiences. In addition, organizations have increasingly moved to both address diversity and promote inclusion. Facilitating inclusion involves creating an organizational culture of mutual respect in which all individuals feel free to contribute, with no impediments to their success.

### **DATA-DRIVEN APPROACHES TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

RAND researchers have substantial experience and expertise in designing and conducting studies to support organizational diversity and inclusion initiatives. RAND staff include more than 600 doctoral-level researchers with expertise in a wide range of topics. RAND relies on state-of-the-art methods to evaluate research questions, test hypotheses, and provide organizations with actionable recommendations. RAND researchers have used various methods to conduct DEI studies, including

- survey design, administration, and analysis
- interviews with subject-matter experts
- focus groups with members of underrepresented groups
- analysis of demographic differences across the federal, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), and civilian labor forces
- examination of job applicant data
- expert panels on defining and improving DEI efforts.

# INSIGHTS INTO ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION



RAND research has provided several insights into how organizations can more effectively advance workforce DEI efforts.

## ACTIVELY ENGAGE AND HOLD LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE

To make meaningful, sustainable change, organizations must assign responsibility for that change. Chief diversity officers and diversity managers help keep organizations and their members focused on DEI goals, engage with other organizations to solicit and provide feedback on DEI initiatives, and track progress toward goals. Involving other organizational leaders, such as unit leaders, in the process of promoting diversity also gives those individuals the opportunity to become DEI champions.

## IMPLEMENT EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Organizations are better able to understand and mitigate potential limitations when they select evidence-based or informed programs, practices, policies, and procedures that have measurable outcomes, and then implement and monitor progress with the highest quality assessments available. Many DEI training programs, for example, are not based on relevant theory or research; as a result, few DEI training programs appear to have the intended effects.

## FOCUS ON THE FULL PERSONNEL LIFE CYCLE

Attracting a diverse pool of applicants is only the first step in improving workforce diversity. After individuals join, an organization must ensure that its members, particularly those from underrepresented groups, feel respected and supported, providing individuals with opportunities to excel. This requires examining each phase of the career life cycle: recruiting, career development, promotion and advancement, and retention. To improve diverse representation at higher organizational levels, in particular, policies must address the entire personnel life cycle.

## SET GOALS, MEASURE, AND LEARN

Organizations must either have or set goals for DEI. For example, U.S. federal organizations that hire civilians, such as the DoD, are expected to demonstrate workforce representation levels similar to those seen in the relevant U.S. civilian labor force. If this goal is not met, then organizations must perform an analysis of barriers to employment.

## RAND RESEARCH ADDRESSES NUMEROUS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION QUESTIONS



### TREND AND BARRIER ANALYSIS

RAND researchers have analyzed trends in workforce diversity and has informed, designed, and performed in-depth and systematic examinations of discrepancies in the employment of different groups within organizations. These analyses have assisted in identifying factors that may hinder the participation and success of certain groups within an organization. Drawing from the results of these examinations, RAND researchers have provided recommendations on how to address and more quickly and accurately identify barriers to employment.

For example, RAND researchers have analyzed barriers to employment experienced by specific groups in the DoD civilian workforce, including Hispanic personnel and persons with targeted disabilities, and barriers to minority participation in special operations forces. RAND researchers have also extensively studied barriers to the employment of women across multiple organizations, including the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the DoD civilian workforce. RAND researchers have subsequently drawn from these study results to provide recommendations for how to modify identified policies, practices, and procedures to remove employment barriers.

RAND researchers have also analyzed issues affecting demographic diversity, more broadly, within organizations. For example, previous RAND studies have addressed barriers to demographic diversity in law enforcement agencies and in the U.S. Air Force officer corps. These studies

included clear and detailed guidance on how organizations could perform their own analyses to identify barriers to diversity, as well as steps they could take to increase demographic diversity, including among organizational leadership.

As part of its trend and barrier analyses, RAND researchers have also conducted multiple studies focusing on particular stages within the career life cycle: Analyses have focused on minority recruitment in the Army and Navy, recruitment and selection to promote diversity among law enforcement personnel, minority and gender differences in military officer career progression, and diversity among senior military leaders. Drawing from this focused research, RAND researchers have provided guidance on which policies may most effectively promote diversity at the specified stages.

#### **Hispanic Representation in the Department of Defense Civilian Workforce: Trend and Barrier Analysis**

**RR-1699-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR1699](http://www.rand.org/t/RR1699)**

#### **Representation of Persons with Targeted Disabilities: An Analysis of Barriers to Employment in the Department of Defense Civilian Workforce**

**RR-2297-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR2297](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2297)**

#### **Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces**

**MR-1042-SOCOM, [www.rand.org/t/MR1042](http://www.rand.org/t/MR1042)**

### **Addressing Barriers to Female Officer Retention in the Air Force**

**RR-2073-AF, [www.rand.org/t/RR2073](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2073)**

### **Improving Gender Diversity in the U.S. Coast Guard: Identifying Barriers to Female Retention**

**RR-2770-DHS, [www.rand.org/t/RR2770](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2770)**

### **Women's Representation in the U.S. Department of Defense Workforce: Addressing the Influence of Veterans' Employment**

**RR-2458-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR2458](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2458)**

### **Identifying Barriers to Diversity in Law Enforcement Agencies**

**OP-370, [www.rand.org/t/OP370](http://www.rand.org/t/OP370)**

### **Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps**

**RR-495-AF, [www.rand.org/t/RR495](http://www.rand.org/t/RR495)**

### **Recruiting Minorities: What Explains Recent Trends in the Army and Navy?**

**MG-861-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/MG861](http://www.rand.org/t/MG861)**

### **An Examination of Recruiting and Selection Practices to Promote Diversity for Colorado State Troopers**

**RR-2999-CSP, [www.rand.org/t/RR2999](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2999)**

### **A New Look at Gender and Minority Differences in Officer Career Progression in the Military**

**TR-1159-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/TR1159](http://www.rand.org/t/TR1159)**

### **Officer Classification and the Future of Diversity Among Senior Military Leaders: A Case Study of the Army ROTC**

**TR-731-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/TR731](http://www.rand.org/t/TR731)**

## **OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY CHANGES**

In addition to supporting DEI efforts with trend and barrier analyses, RAND researchers have also assessed additional topics relevant to workforce diversity. Acknowledging that developing a diverse workforce takes time, these assessments have examined both the short- and long-term implications of policy changes on diversity, and they have analyzed organizational factors,

including problematic behaviors, that might hinder the success of different underrepresented groups.

RAND research has addressed the impacts that certain policies can have on workforce diversity. Such research has included investigating the impact of force reductions on demographic diversity in the U.S. military, considering gender integration in military training and within certain forces, examining the implications of allowing transgender troops to serve openly, and providing analysis considered in the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

RAND researchers have examined how complaints involving discriminatory experiences among DoD civilians, or Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints, are processed. Drawing from systematic interviews conducted with key personnel and analyses of administrative databases, RAND researchers have provided recommendations on ways to improve the timeliness of EEO complaint processing.

RAND analyses have also addressed diversity leadership in DoD. Through a review of relevant research literature, analysis of job postings for senior diversity leaders, and interviews with diversity leaders internal and external to DoD, RAND researchers identified the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personal characteristics needed in individuals responsible for implementing strategic DEI plans.

RAND researchers have extensive experience conducting research on problematic behaviors that can impact a culture of respect and cooperation within organizations. They have designed, implemented, and analyzed survey research addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment in the U.S. military, and they have analyzed investigations and court-martial records from closed cases of convicted and other alleged Air Force sexual assault offenders to identify the characteristics of sexual assault situations, settings, and offender behaviors. They have also conducted systematic interviews with military service providers to address the needs of sexual assault victims and provided recommendations for measuring the performance and effectiveness of sexual assault prevention programs.

RAND researchers have also addressed multiple additional problematic behaviors. For example, they conducted research to inform hazing prevention policy and practices in the

U.S. military, and they provided guidance for commanders on how to prevent hazing.

**Force Drawdowns and Demographic Diversity: Investigating the Impact of Force Reductions on the Demographic Diversity of the U.S. Military**

**RR-1008-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR1008](http://www.rand.org/t/RR1008)**

**An Assessment of Options for Increasing Gender Integration in Air Force Basic Military Training**

**RR-1795-AF, [www.rand.org/t/RR1795](http://www.rand.org/t/RR1795)**

**Considerations for Integrating Women into Closed Occupations in U.S. Special Operations Forces**

**RR-1058-USSOCOM, [www.rand.org/t/RR1058](http://www.rand.org/t/RR1058)**

**Assessing the Implications of Allowing Transgender Personnel to Serve Openly**

**RR-1530-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR1530](http://www.rand.org/t/RR1530)**

**Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND's 1993 Study**

**MG-1056-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/MG1056](http://www.rand.org/t/MG1056)**

**Improving the Timeliness of Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Processing in Department of Defense**

**RR-680-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR680](http://www.rand.org/t/RR680)**

**Diversity Leadership in the U.S. Department of Defense: Analysis of the Key Roles, Responsibilities, and Attributes of Diversity Leaders**

**RR-1148-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR1148](http://www.rand.org/t/RR1148)**

**Effects of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment on Separation from the U.S. Military: Findings from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study**

**RR-870/10-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR870z10](http://www.rand.org/t/RR870z10)**

**The Relationship Between Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Findings from the RAND Military Workplace Study**

**RR-3162-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR3162](http://www.rand.org/t/RR3162)**

**Risk Factors for Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Findings from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study**

**RR-870/9-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR870z9](http://www.rand.org/t/RR870z9)**

**Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military, Volume 5: Estimates for Installation- and Command-Level Risk of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study**

**RR-870/7-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR870z7](http://www.rand.org/t/RR870z7)**

**Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military, Volume 4: Investigations of Potential Bias in Estimates from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study**

**RR-870/6-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR870z6](http://www.rand.org/t/RR870z6)**

**Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military, Volume 2: Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study**

**RR-870/2-1-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR870z2-1](http://www.rand.org/t/RR870z2-1)**

**Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Top-Line Estimates for Active-Duty Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study**

**RR-870-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR870](http://www.rand.org/t/RR870)**

**Air Force Sexual Assault Situations, Settings, and Offender Behaviors**

**RR-1589-AF, [www.rand.org/t/RR1589](http://www.rand.org/t/RR1589)**

**Needs of Male Sexual Assault Victims in the U.S. Armed Forces**

**RR-2167-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR2167](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2167)**

**Measures of Performance and Effectiveness for the Marine Corps' Sexual Assault Prevention Programs**

**RR-2220-USMC, [www.rand.org/t/RR2220](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2220)**

**Hazing in the U.S. Armed Forces: Recommendations for Hazing Prevention Policy and Practice**

**RR-941-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR941](http://www.rand.org/t/RR941)**

**A Commander’s Guide to Hazing Prevention**

**TL-168-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/TL168](http://www.rand.org/t/TL168)**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

To support systematic changes to promote diversity, RAND researchers have provided guidance for organizations engaged in strategic planning and implementation.

RAND research has provided guidance on the initial steps that DoD leaders can take in developing a department-wide strategic plan to achieve greater diversity within its active duty and civilian leadership. RAND researchers have also created a framework for improving diversity and inclusion in DoD through accountability. This work addresses how diversity is defined, mission and goals for diversity, measures to evaluate progress involving diversity, and choices for DoD leaders.

RAND researchers also have provided recommendations for improving diversity within specific segments of the DoD workforce, such as by identifying steps toward DoD STEM workforce diversity.

**Implementation of the DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan: A Framework for Change Through Accountability**

**RR-333-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR333](http://www.rand.org/t/RR333)**

**First Steps Toward Improving DoD STEM Workforce Diversity: Response to the 2012 Department of Defense STEM Diversity Summit**

**RR-329-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/RR329](http://www.rand.org/t/RR329)**

**Planning for Diversity: Options and Recommendations for DoD Leaders**

**MG-743-OSD, [www.rand.org/t/MG743](http://www.rand.org/t/MG743)**

**RAND HAS CONDUCTED MULTIPLE STUDIES ON OTHER RELEVANT TOPICS, INCLUDING**

- DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY
- GENDER DIVERSITY
- RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY
- PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS

## WORKING WITH US

### WHAT WE DELIVER

Project AIR FORCE's (PAF's) studies and analyses are tailored to the needs of the sponsor. Generally, PAF provides

- continuous interaction with PAF subject-matter experts throughout the project
- accessible, timely, and policy-focused reports that address senior leader concerns and recommend courses of action
- descriptive, transparent, and rigorous supporting materials that describe the project's methodology and support the project's conclusions
- as appropriate, additional outreach materials to help socialize the work to other interested stakeholders, such as the DAF, the U.S. Department of Defense, Congress, or the public.

### SPONSOR IDENTIFICATION

All PAF research projects must be sponsored by a U.S. Air Force general officer (GO) or member of the senior executive service (SES). Most sponsors assign one or more action officers (AOs) to manage the technical and administrative aspects of their PAF projects.

### LINES OF FUNDING

DAF organizations can initiate a PAF research project in two ways:

1. **Centrally Funded** (also referred to as "core projects"). Air Force Studies, Analyses, and Assessments (SAF/SA; formerly HAF/A9) employs a rigorous, iterative, GO/SES voting process to select projects for inclusion in its annual research plan. This process accounts for about 70 percent

of the projects that PAF will conduct during a fiscal year. Funding for these projects is part of a line item in the congressional budget and is awarded through the competitive selection process. Project topics are submitted in January and the research plan is approved by a steering group consisting of three- and four-star GOs between June and July. Maintaining a balance of projects across the DAF and the four PAF programs is key to this selection process.

2. **Sponsor Funded** (also referred to as "add-on projects" because they are add-ons to the core research agenda). This process accounts for about 30 percent of the projects that PAF will conduct during a fiscal year. Funding for these projects comes directly from the organization requesting the research and does not require a competitive selection process because the requesting organization is paying for the research (and not competing with others). DAF sponsors may initiate a PAF add-on research project at any time of the year by requesting the work, submitting required documentation, and transmitting organizational funds. Ideas and requests for PAF add-on projects may originate from a variety of circumstances (e.g., continuation of prior PAF work or new challenges). To initiate the process, a sponsor or AO typically contacts the appropriate PAF program director or subject-matter expert. The timeline of add-on projects is flexible.

PAF also supports DAF organizations in many informal ways. To request RAND research reports highlighted here or to discuss pressing DAF challenges, contact PAF leadership at [www.rand.org/paf/about/pafmanagement](http://www.rand.org/paf/about/pafmanagement).

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