



**NOAA** NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



# Welcome Onboard

**A Guide For New Employees**



## *Welcome Aboard!*

### **A Guide to Early Success for New Employees at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:**

This guide helps new employees:

- quickly learn about NOAA and its culture
- understand how they fit in with NOAA and the department
- establish healthy working relationships with your team and new supervisor

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## What does it mean to come Onboard?

Onboarding is the process of integrating and acculturating new employees into the organization and providing them with the tools, resources and knowledge to become successful and productive.

The process starts with your first interaction with the organization and continues through the end of your first year of employment. A significant percent of employees leave the organization in the first year.

Why? They give three reasons:

- I didn't feel I fit in;
- I never got any feedback;
- I didn't get any help.

At NOAA, we want you to be a part of accomplishing our mission from the first day. We want you to feel pride in your contributions to the accomplishment of all of NOAA's missions.

### **Onboarding is a process, not an event.**

It is ongoing. It starts before you arrive and continues through the first year of employment and beyond. Onboarding can be overwhelming for new staff members, even those with experience. So be sure to reach out to your supervisor and teammates. Ask questions and get involved in what is going on.



## Clarifying Expectations and Responsibilities

It's your role to work with your supervisor and teammates to learn the ropes and establish credibility within the organization. They will be there to help you. Remember, it is in everyone's best interest that you start contributing as soon as possible.

Here are some ways to learn the ropes and get started.

### 1. Be clear about your supervisor's expectations right from the start.

- Even the most detailed job descriptions leave something out. Ask questions to be sure you understand what is expected of you.
- Don't assume that you know exactly what you were hired to do. Ask questions and be sure.
- Your supervisor will welcome your questions.

### 2. You know you are qualified for the job, but that doesn't mean you can jump in right away with out some information and guidance.

- Everyone has strengths, but also have opportunities for improvement.
- Seek feedback on your strength, and be on the look out for opportunities to develop.

### 3. Seek out information on the organizational and department goals, culture, and dynamics.

- Ask questions of your supervisor, teammates and others to discover as much as possible.
- Areas to seek information include
  - The "big picture" topics for NOAA and your department: mission, overall strategy, strategic plans, and especially how your department supports the organization's mission.
  - The organizational & departmental culture. How do we all succeed?
  - Internal customers. Who are they and what are their needs?
  - Pitfalls and past mistakes of the team and/or previous position holders
- See page 9 for a list of possible questions to ask.

### 4. Listen.

- When you first come on

## Listening Tips

### Do:

- Eye contact (if appropriate)
- Face the speaker and lean forward (if appropriate)
- Nod your head to show that you are listening (if appropriate)
- Listen for main points



- Try hard to understand what the other person is saying and how they are feeling
- Ask open-ended questions to gain more information
- Paraphrase content and feelings to show that you are listening and hearing

**Do not:**

- Interrupt to tell what you think or give advice
- Tell about your own experiences (unless asked to share)
- Tell about your own feelings (unless asked to share)



## **Mission Alignment Guide and How We All Fit In: Linking NOAA Mission and Individual Staff Contribution**

Creating an alignment between organization mission and the role of every employee is a basic management challenge. Every employee should understand how his or her role supports the NOAA mission. Each department and workgroup should have a written mission statement that supports NOAA's mission, making it easy to see how the department ties into and supports the overall organization; this is called cascading.

Additionally, objectives will be cascaded down throughout the organization. Your supervisor should be able to provide clear links between your objectives and job tasks and the objectives and the purpose of your department. Objectives that start at the top of the organization are more general and as they move down into specific departments and individuals, they should become more specific and operational. In the end, each individual should have objectives that link all the way back up to the corporate mission.

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Mission**

To understand and predict changes in Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our Nation's economic, social, and environmental needs.

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Strategic Priorities**

#### **Ecosystem Strategies**

- Engage and collaborate with our partners to achieve regional objectives by delineating regional ecosystems, forming regional ecosystem councils, and implementing cooperative strategies to improve regional ecosystem health.
- Manage uses of ecosystems by applying scientifically sound observations, assessments, and research findings to ensure the sustainable use of resources and to balance competing uses of coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Improve resource management by advancing our understanding of ecosystems through better simulation and predictive models. Build and advance the capabilities of an ecological component of the NOAA global environmental observing system to monitor, assess, and predict national and regional ecosystem health, as well as to gather information consistent with established social and economic indicators.



### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Strategic Priorities (cont.)**

- Develop coordinated regional and national outreach and education efforts to improve public understanding and involvement in stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Engage in technological and scientific exchange with our domestic and international partners to protect, restore, and manage marine resources within and beyond the Nation's borders.

### **Climate Strategies**

- Improve the quality and quantity of climate observations, analyses, interpretation, and archiving by maintaining a consistent climate record and by improving our ability to determine why changes are taking place.
- Improve the quantification and understanding of the forces bringing about climate change by examining relevant human-induced increases in atmospheric constituents.
- Advance sub-seasonal to inter-annual climate predictions and climate change projections by improving analysis of the climate system, using ensembles of multiple, high-end climate and Earth system models.
- Develop the ability to predict the consequences of climate change on ecosystems by monitoring changes in coastal and marine ecosystems, conducting research on climate-ecosystem linkages, and incorporating climate information into physical biological models.
- Develop and contribute to routine state-of-the-science assessments of the climate system for informed decision-making.
- Work with customers in order to deliver climate services and information products involved in health, safety, environmental, economic, and community planning that increase the effective application of this information.

### **Weather and Water Strategies**

- Improve the reliability, lead-time, and effectiveness of weather and water information and services that predict changes in environmental conditions.
- Integrate an information enterprise that incorporates all stages from research to delivery, seeks better coordination of employee skills and training, and engages customers.

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Strategic Priorities (cont.)**

- Develop and infuse research results and new technologies more efficiently to improve products and services, streamline dissemination, and communicate vital information more effectively.



- Work with private industry, universities, and national and international agencies to create and leverage partnerships that foster more effective information services.
- Build a broad-based and coordinated education and outreach program by engaging individuals in continuous learning toward a greater understanding of the impacts of weather and water on their lives.
- Employ scientific and emerging technological capabilities to advance decision support services and educate stakeholders.

### **Commerce and Transportation Strategies**

- Expand and enhance advanced technology monitoring and observing systems, such as weather and oceanographic observations, ice forecasts and nowcasts, hydrographic surveys, and precise positioning coordinates, to provide accurate, up-to-date information.
- Develop and apply new technologies, methods, and models to increase the capabilities, efficiencies, and accuracy of transportation-related products and services.
- Develop and implement sophisticated assessment and prediction techniques, products, and services to support decisions on aviation, marine, and surface navigation efficiencies; coastal resource management; and transportation system management, operations, and planning.
- Build public understanding of the science and technology involved and the role of the environment in commerce and transportation through outreach, education, and industry collaboration.



## **Understanding the Organization and Unit Culture**

Below are some questions to ask your supervisor and others

1. How would you describe the environment (e.g., fun, serious, data driven, complex, etc.)?
2. What are the informal rules on the unit?
3. What does the manager like/dislike?
4. What is positive and advances us? What hinders us?
5. What does the unit value most?
6. How are decisions made? Who is involved with the process?
7. Who, outside the unit, are important stakeholders in decision making? How powerful or influential are they? What is the informal hierarchy?
8. What do you need to be successful on the unit?
9. What are you rewarded for?
10. What are lessons to teach, so new employee don't learn those lessons the hard way?
11. What are the most important three things to know about the organization?



## New Employee Checklist

Use this checklist to help you ask questions during your orientation.

<b>Working Environment</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to Work Group and Work Space	<input type="checkbox"/> Coat Areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms	<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee Area
	<input type="checkbox"/> Where to eat
<b>Job Duties and Description</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Performance Expectations and Goals
<input type="checkbox"/> Duties and Responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Job Duties and Description
<input type="checkbox"/> Customer Service Focus	
<b>General</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Work Hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Parking and Transit benefit
<input type="checkbox"/> Breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> Time Sheets
<input type="checkbox"/> Mealtimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Leave Request Process & Forms
<b>Internal and External Resource Availability</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Telephones	<input type="checkbox"/> Fax Machine
<input type="checkbox"/> Voice Mail	<input type="checkbox"/> Keys, Tools and other issued items<
<input type="checkbox"/> Copier	<input type="checkbox"/> Department Automobiles
<b>Computer System</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Log-On	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet, Intranet<
<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> Software
<b>Safety and Loss Control</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Exits and Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Reporting Injuries
<input type="checkbox"/> Injury Prevention	<input type="checkbox"/> Workplace Violence Issues
<b>Self - Guided Training</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Manuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Web-Based Training
<input type="checkbox"/> Workbooks	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Training Opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer Software	