

# Rubin Observatory

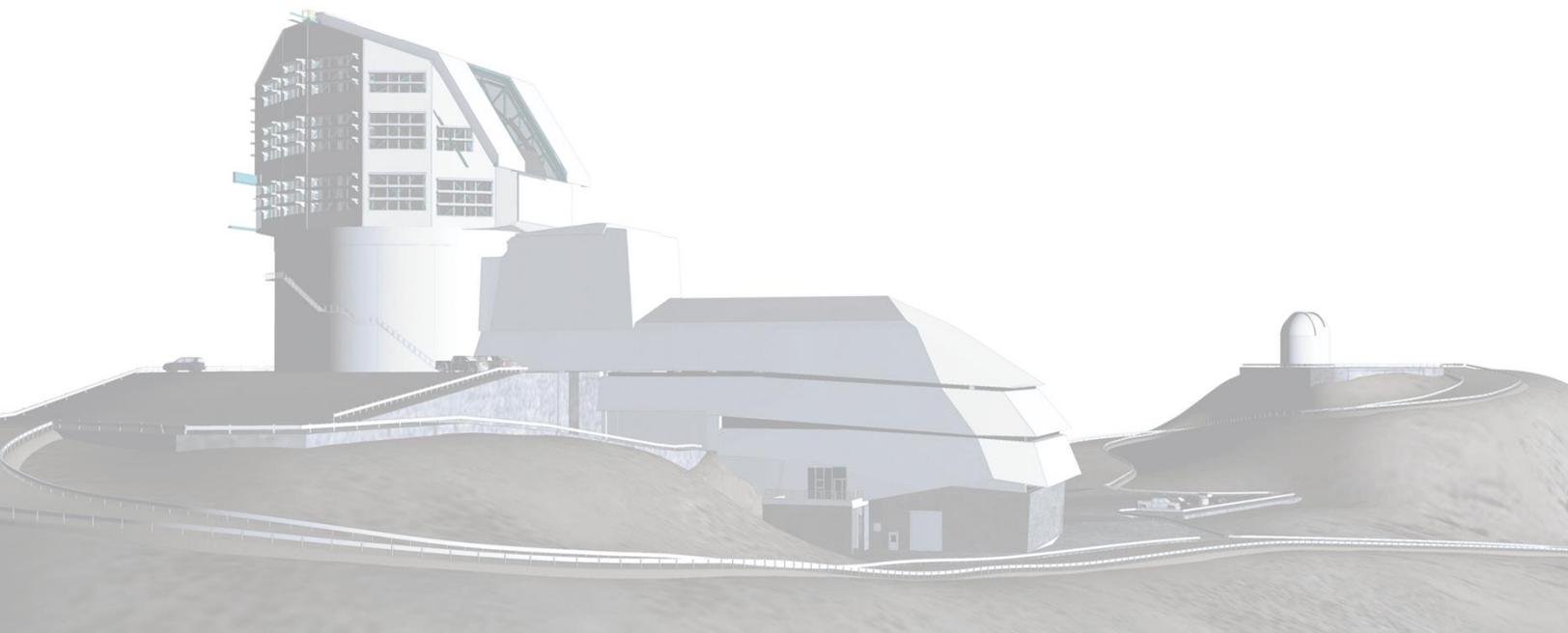
## Vera C. Rubin Observatory Workplace Culture Improvement Proposal

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**Document-35993 (release 2.0)**

**Latest Revision Date: October 14, 2020**





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# Workplace Culture Improvement Proposal

## Summary

This document describes the proposal to start improving the workplace culture at Rubin Observatory resulting from a collaboration between the workplace culture advocates, the communication team, training and diversity advocate representative.

## Definitions of Terms

**Workplace Culture** – A workplace culture is the environment that you create for your employees and encompasses a variety of external elements that surrounds our work.

## Reference Documents

“Bullying and Harassment Complaints Procedural Manual” (LPM-171)

# Workplace Culture Improvement Proposal

## 1 Workplace Culture

### 1.1 Definition

A workplace culture is the environment that you create for your employees and encompasses a variety of external elements that surrounds our work.

It includes people we are working with, meeting interactions, leadership styles, communication, recruitment process, clarity of mission goals, physical offices.

The workplace culture is dictated by the leadership, from their actions and policies.

A positive workplace culture is a group of values that

- Attract a diverse and talented workforce
- Drive motivation and retention
- Increase happiness and satisfaction

As a result, the performance of the Rubin Observatory would be improved.

**A1:** One action item for this group is to define more clearly what is a healthy workplace culture and what is a toxic one. Putting words on the concept will help others understand how to achieve our goals.

One issue that we as an organisation are facing is the means of quantifying the points listed above. The method we have used so far was to conduct a survey every couple of years. We conducted one last year and the results are summaries in the next section.

**A2:** An additional goal we have is to increase the number of metrics and improve their reliability.

## 1.2 Project Survey Results

The project conducted a survey in August 2019, targeting the communication and culture satisfaction. The summary points of this survey are listed below with an attempt to categorize them according to the goals mentioned above:

### **Workforce Diversity and Skills:**

1. Diversity: In general, it is felt that LSST is trying but perhaps could do better, lack of diversity was especially noticed in engineering and on the summit.
2. Valued most: colleagues/team and flexible working

### **Motivation/Retention:**

1. Some comments indicated uncertainty and concern about future employment

### **Happiness/Satisfaction:**

1. It was felt that there is room for increased recognition for hard work
2. Many project members commented that information flow from leadership needs to increase/improve
3. Slack was mentioned many times, a point that came up in 2017 came up again specifically about decisions/discussions made in Slack not being communicated outside of slack nor being officially documented.
4. It was also required to have more 1-1 meetings with managers

## 1.3 Proposal Mission

We are proposing to work on a few different aspects to improve our workplace culture and focus on the different areas: lower stress, increase recognition, improve communications. One other topics that we will focus on is diversity and inclusion improvement.

## 1.4 Workplace Culture Advocates

In the last year, the workplace culture advocates <https://project.lsst.org/workplace-culture-advocate> are working towards the following points:

## Monitoring and reporting

- Partnering up with the communication team, the WCAs will continue to use results from climate surveys to adjust action items that would lead to a healthier workplace. The WCAs are also available to listen to anyone in need.

## Education of the collaboration and the project

- We, Rubin, are working towards finding material and training to educate the project on different aspect of the workplace: diversity and inclusion, stress, motivation...

## Recommendations:

- This document illustrates a series of recommendations to the management team to move forward. We are also including a series of possible implementations.

## 2 Communication improvements

Communication is a vast subject as it includes communication from managers to employees, project to employees, and peer to peer communications. The main area we all can focus on is showing by example and educating ourselves as well as others.

### 2.1 Enable Feedback

**A3:** We are here proposing to set up feedback mechanism that staff can interact with WCA

- Add a "contact us" link for the web page/ confluence page and explain that the contact us goes to the group for feedback/questions and that you can individually email members if preferred.
- Create a WCA email distribution group
- Create an electronics suggestion box

### 2.2 Communication/Meetings Tips

**A4:** Regularly (every months?), a couple of advice on communication and/or meetings code of conduct is being sent out to the project. The goals of these tips are to remind people on how they can

communicate to create a cordial, pleasant and positive work environment.

Here are example of format and content that were discussed:

- Think about creative ways to distribute
  - Make them entertaining/light with a catchy title
  - One or two bullets to keep it short
  - An email that is very short, with a comic reference maybe
  - We should have a link for suggestions and a link to the combined resources
- It could be twice a month
- Content:
  - Send to WCA first for approval\ How to run a meeting
  - Rules for engagement
  - Different working styles/preferences
  - What medium will work best for your message and your recipient?
  - Structuring emails for broader impact according to different personalities
  - Different communication pitfalls to look out for in electronic/video conference
  - How to run an efficient meeting?
  - Give more visibility to meetings available to create a more inclusive environment

## 2.3 Communication with Managers

This is an attempt to increase communication between the leadership team and everyone to have everyone feel more included. This is linked to the survey results from 2019

**A5:** Add a goal for managers/supervisor to have at least monthly meetings with their employees (in their performance appraisal)

Others?

### 3 Recognition

Recognition is not an easy topic as different people see being recognize differently and as a result, a manager may think she/he recognizes someone while that someone does not feel like it.

#### 3.1 People highlights

**A6:** Among things we can do as a project, we are thinking of focussing first on people highlights. The idea is to prepare a small description along with a picture for 5 people each month. The choice of the people needs to be based on fair criteria such as their month anniversary or how long they've been on the project (related to the builder's list). These highlights would be presented on digital signage, by email and also printed on a piece of paper.

#### 3.2 Supervisor Workshop/Training

**A7:** If we want to improve our recognition efforts, we are also recommending to organize a workshop for supervisors on how to recognize people or at least find training videos. For instance, a manager can decide with the employee to increase someone's responsibility with the goal of a potential promotion. Defining clear goals provides transparency and fairness in the performance appraisal process.

#### 3.3 Others

Among other ways of recognitions are:

- **A8:** Training – ensure we all have the opportunity for improving our technical, management **and/or soft skills.**
- A9: Allowable swags – we heard that people are really proud to wear their T-shirts, jackets etc. with the LSST (now Rubin) logo on it. They feel that they are part of something big and feel included.
- Try to restrain asking the same people to be part of committees, hiring committees. NASA, for instance, asks more junior scientists to take notes as reviews to get familiar with the process.
- Be careful not to mention only a subset of people when talking in public. Acknowledge a group without necessarily naming individuals (otherwise it is likely to miss someone).
- Continue to organize gatherings to celebrate group achievements or milestones as a way of

recognizing people's good work.

## 4 Stress Management

Being a construction project inevitably induces stress. There are all sorts of training on the domain but we highlighted a few things we can do as a project to lower the stress:

- Make more efficient meetings to avoid the feeling of losing time (this links to the meetings tips described above).
- Provide clear goals and responsibilities for people to allow them to have the satisfaction to do their jobs. Provide regular follow-up with their supervisors.
- Provide a safe, diverse and inclusive workplace to ensure that the stress does not come from our environments (see section 5).
- **A10:** Organize regular unconferences to allow a venue for any topics that would not usually be discussed to be brought up.

## 5 Diversity and Inclusion

Improvement can be made at different levels of one person's career, from the hiring process, to creating opportunities for everyone to get a chance to be a leader.

### 5.1 Hiring

Even though the hiring process has improved over the last few years, there is still room for improvement. In an attempt to understand more about the potential gaps, we will:

- **A11:** Look at hiring best practices across the different institutions involved in Rubin Observatories. What questions are best to give us information on someone's behavior related to diversity of culture, background, ethnicity, etc.
- **A12:** Make a list of websites, forums where we can advertise jobs to encourage minorities to apply. Add the budget associated with these advertisements.

## 5.2 Inclusion with Working Groups

Another way to promote inclusion is to facilitate access to working groups, committees, and decision making.

**A13:** the action is to define a list of recommendations for everyone to increase inclusion. They can involve the following:

- Working group: prepare guidelines for such working groups. For instance, while not always, we tend to often reach the same people because it's easy and quick. When possible, these people should think about delegating to more junior engineers, scientists or at least make the effort to relay the information when meeting with them. That would start with the pool of people.
- Include junior people in project level review committees even if they are only observers or scribes (with the opportunity to give their opinions of course).
- Inclusion of people in the decision making: there is a communication issue here. How to solve it?
- In order to lead by example leaders need to learn these things to provide an inclusive environment for a workforce that includes minorities:
  - Give up your spot to speak - pass it on to a minority
  - Listen and provide feedback, give credit for ideas
  - Invite to high level meeting to provide exposure
  - Promote minorities (define how exactly we can do this)

## 5.3 Training

In addition to broadening the hiring process, there are some training or potential grants that could be set. The two categories of people targeted are students (to increase the hire of a diverse workforce) and professional (to ensure promotion of a diverse workforce).

- Training of students, encouraging minorities: we envision this part to be done in collaboration with EPO, with extra funding requested from the NSF, DOE or LSSTC? **A14:** The action here is to figure out what is being done already and how to improve. A good example can be the SE group hiring students/junior professionals. The pool of candidates for these positions could be

more focused on underrepresented workforce.

- Leadership training: for example, training called "Concrete steps to diversify your workforce through recruitment of minorities" and "The 1, 2, 3 of creating an inclusive retention focused culture."
- Training of professional: is it possible for the NSF to offer grants to follow workshops on how to become a leader, encouraging underrepresented workforce to attend? And while this would benefit to Rubin it goes way beyond our own project. (in a same way as NASA program pi-launchpad) **A15**: ask the senior management to understand on what's possible.

## 5.4 Key Parameters

As the diversity and inclusion starts to be more in the spotlight, we need to have more quantified metrics. Awareness of managers/supervisors on diversity and inclusion using performance metrics. These metrics can include for instance:

- Diversity metrics in the hiring process
- Demographic of the workplace
- Bonuses and promotions
- Retention

**A16**: help management define these metrics and present them at the reviews, even if it is not asked from the NSF and at other high visibility meetings.

## 5.5 Workshops

Discussion on how to improve the diversity parameters is important. Defining workshops with clear goals and deliverables on one specific way we can change the workplace is preferable. At Rubin, there are two being planned:

- A workshop at the 2020 virtual PCW. *Put the goals here*
- There was a proposal submitted to the LSSTC to get funding for a workshop on equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), biases, and anti-racism in astronomy.

## 5.6 Mentorship

Mentorship of any employee at any level is important. It helps forging one's career path/aspirations as well as helping thinking through specific tasks, assigning stretch goals, identifying opportunities. Mentors can be assigned during the onboarding process and might not necessarily be tied to the supervisor.

**A17:** Research and provide a mentorship program/process

## 6 Communication Channels

Several communication channels exist and each of them may be appropriate for a certain action and goal. The table below gives a summary of the relationships between communication channels, actions and impact.

Channels							Action	Impact			
Web	Paper	AHM	Slack	Email	Digest	DS		Stress	Recognition	Comms	Diversity & Inclusion
x	x	x	x		x	x	Meeting/comm tips			x	x
x	x			?	x	x	Staff highlights		x		x
x			x		x	x	"Sentence"	x		x	
x			x	x	x	x	Suggestions box	x		x	x
						x	Recognition + Reward workshop		x		x
			x			x	Unconference	x	x	x	x
						x	Training				x