



Ocean Legacy Foundation
Gender Equity, Inclusion and Safe Workplace Policy

Policy owner	Executive Director / Board of Directors
Review cycle	Annual review, and earlier where required by law, donor conditions, or material organizational change

1. Purpose

Ocean Legacy Foundation is committed to gender equity, non-discrimination, dignity, safety, and meaningful participation across its workplace, governance, programs, partnerships, and externally funded actions. This policy establishes the Foundation’s commitments, standards, responsibilities, and procedures to prevent and address gender-based inequality, discrimination, harassment, sexual exploitation, abuse, and retaliation, and to promote an inclusive and respectful organizational culture.

2. Policy alignment

This policy is designed to support compliance with donor and institutional expectations applicable to Ocean Legacy’s work, including a human rights-based approach, gender equality, intersectionality, safe participation, accountability, and inclusion of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and other groups facing exclusion.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, directors, officers, managers, contractors, interns, consultants, volunteers, and any person acting on behalf of Ocean Legacy Foundation. It also applies, where relevant, to project participants, community partners, implementing partners, and third parties engaged through Foundation-funded activities or sub-granting processes.

4. Guiding principles

- Human rights-based approach: all people are entitled to dignity, equal treatment, participation, access to information, and accountability.
- Gender-transformative approach: the Foundation will seek not only to avoid discrimination, but to challenge harmful norms, barriers, stereotypes, and unequal power relations where it has the ability to do so.
- Intersectionality: the Foundation recognizes that gender can intersect with age, disability, Indigenous identity, ethnicity, language, geography, migration status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, caregiving responsibilities, and other factors that shape experiences of exclusion or harm.
- Do no harm: all activities must be designed and delivered in ways that reduce risks of discrimination, violence, retaliation, stigmatization, and exclusion.

- Participation and inclusion: women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and underrepresented groups should have meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making, leadership, consultation, and program design.
- Confidentiality and survivor-centred response: concerns relating to harassment, exploitation, abuse, or discrimination will be handled promptly, respectfully, confidentially, and with appropriate protection from retaliation.

5. Definitions

Gender equity: The fair treatment of people of all genders, taking into account different needs, barriers, and lived realities in order to achieve equitable outcomes.

Gender equality: The equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities, access, and treatment of people of all genders.

Intersectionality: An approach that recognizes overlapping systems of disadvantage and discrimination affecting individuals and groups.

Harassment: Unwelcome conduct that demeans, humiliates, intimidates, or creates a hostile, unsafe, or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment: Any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal, physical, online, or implied.

Sexual exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting socially, politically, or financially from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual abuse: Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Retaliation: Any adverse action taken against a person because they raised a concern, made a report, participated in an investigation, or supported another person in doing so.

6. Organizational commitments

6.1 Employment and workplace practices

- Recruitment, hiring, pay, promotion, training, and leadership opportunities will be based on transparent, fair, and objective criteria.
- Job postings, interview practices, and selection processes should be designed to reduce bias and encourage diverse applicants.
- The Foundation will work toward equitable participation of women and underrepresented groups in leadership, governance, technical roles, and public representation.
- Employees and personnel will have access to a respectful workplace free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, and gender-based violence.
- Reasonable flexibility and accommodation will be considered, including with respect to caregiving responsibilities, disability, health, pregnancy, family status, religion, and safety concerns, consistent with operational realities and applicable law.

6.2 Programming and external actions

- Projects and partnerships should integrate gender and inclusion considerations at the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages.
- Where relevant, Ocean Legacy will assess who benefits, who participates, who may be excluded, and who may face harm or barriers because of gender or intersecting inequalities.
- Consultation and engagement processes should promote safe, meaningful participation of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, local communities, and others facing systemic exclusion.
- Communications, advocacy, and public-facing materials should avoid stereotypes and support equitable representation.
- Where Ocean Legacy administers financial support to third parties or works with local partners, selection and monitoring processes should include safeguards on non-discrimination, safeguarding, and equitable access.

6.3 Zero tolerance commitments

- Ocean Legacy Foundation maintains zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, intimidation, and retaliation.
- Any person in a position of authority or trust must not use that position to obtain sexual, personal, financial, or professional advantage.
- Concerns involving possible sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment must be taken seriously, documented, assessed promptly, and escalated appropriately.

7. Roles and responsibilities

Board of Directors: Approves the policy, oversees accountability, and supports a culture of equity, safety, and compliance.

Executive Director: Ensures implementation, adequate resourcing, appropriate response to complaints, and integration of this policy into organizational operations and funded projects.

Managers and supervisors: Model respectful conduct, apply equitable practices, identify barriers, respond appropriately to concerns, and support safe reporting.

Operations / HR function or delegated leadership: Maintain records, support confidential reporting and resolution processes, coordinate training, and monitor implementation actions.

Personnel, volunteers, and representatives: Comply with this policy, treat others respectfully, participate in required training, and report concerns in good faith.

Partners and funded third parties, where applicable: Meet relevant safeguarding, non-discrimination, and inclusion obligations incorporated into partnership agreements, sub-grants, or contracts.

8. Reporting, complaint handling, and protection from retaliation

- Reports may be made to a supervisor, the Executive Director, a designated Board contact, or another identified safe reporting channel.
- Where the complaint involves the direct supervisor or senior leadership, the report should be directed to the Board Chair at Chair@oceanlegacy.ca.

- Reports may be verbal or written. The Foundation will document concerns, assess immediate safety risks, and determine an appropriate response pathway.
- The Foundation will seek to protect confidentiality to the fullest extent possible, subject to legal, safety, and procedural obligations.
- No person will be penalized for making a report in good faith or participating in a review process.
- Corrective action may include informal resolution where appropriate, formal investigation, protective measures, training, disciplinary action, removal from duties, termination of relationship, or referral to external authorities where required.

9. Safeguarding and survivor-centred response

- Responses to sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment must prioritize safety, dignity, informed choice, and non-retaliation.
- The Foundation will avoid victim-blaming and will provide information on available supports, accommodations, and referral options where appropriate.
- Anyone involved in receiving or reviewing a complaint must handle the matter discreetly and with sensitivity to power imbalances, trauma, and cultural context.

10. Training and awareness

- All personnel will receive orientation on this policy and the Foundation's expectations for respectful conduct.
- Periodic refresher training will address gender equity, harassment prevention, unconscious bias, safeguarding, and safe reporting.
- Managers, Board members, and project leads will receive additional guidance proportionate to their responsibilities.

11. Monitoring, documentation, and continuous improvement

Ocean Legacy Foundation will maintain practical implementation measures proportionate to its size and operations. These may include:

- periodic review of recruitment, pay, promotion, and leadership participation patterns;
- tracking completion of required training;
- recording and reviewing complaints, response actions, and trends while protecting confidentiality;
- reviewing project and partnership processes for inclusive participation and safeguarding risks; and
- updating procedures, templates, and partner requirements as needed for donor compliance and organizational learning.

Where required for a specific donor or program, the Foundation may adopt an implementation plan, indicators, or action log to demonstrate progress on gender equity and inclusion commitments.

12. Non-discrimination statement

Ocean Legacy Foundation does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, colour, ethnicity, Indigenous identity, language,

religion, disability, age, marital or family status, pregnancy, socioeconomic status, political opinion, migration status, or any other protected or comparable ground under applicable law.

13. Review and approval

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and may be updated sooner to reflect legal requirements, donor obligations, organizational growth, or lessons learned from implementation. Material updates should be approved through the Foundation’s governance process.

Revisions Approved by:  Date: 2026-04-02

For the Board of Directors

Policy Revision Tracker

Version	Date Approved	Changes Made	Reason for Revision	Approved By	Effective Date	Next Review Date
1.0	2022-03-15	Initial policy adopted	New policy development	Executive Director	2022-03-29	2023-03-29
1.1	2024-11-07	Board Chair and contact information updated	New Chair and contact email created for incident reporting	Board of Directors	2024-11-07	2025-03-29
1.2	2026-04-02	Added HRBA, intersectionality, anti-SEAH language, monitoring requirements	Alignment with EU Commission Standard	Board of Directors	2026-04-02	2027-03-29