



**Brielle Bennett**  
Community Manager  
AGU LANDInG

► DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION  
► GEOSCIENCES  
► SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

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## COULD YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO OUR READERS? TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE COMMUNITY YOU MANAGE.

My name is Brielle Bennett, and I am currently a Senior Program Specialist for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) at the American Geophysical Union (AGU). Part of my role is to serve as the community manager for the [AGU LANDInG](#) (Leadership Academy and Network for Diversity and Inclusion in the Geosciences). In addition to managing the Community of Practice (CoP), I oversee content updates on the AGU LANDInG program and AGU Ethics and Equity Center websites and provide operational support to several AGU programs. A small portion of my role is to also serve as a DEI department representative at cross departmental AGU meetings.

Our CoP, which officially launched on 1 March, 2022, will provide opportunities for a broad community of current and aspiring diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) champions in the geosciences to engage in discussions, share resources, build networks and participate in professional development. An equitable and inclusive geoscience discipline requires a systemic cultural shift. While leaders play a critical role in fostering inclusive and equitable workplaces, shifting a culture to support DEI success within any discipline requires the entire community - including both formal and informal leaders acting as champions to foster change. This is where the CoP will come in.

## WHAT WAS YOUR PATH TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT? WERE YOU TRAINED AS A SCIENTIST OR DID YOU COME BY ANOTHER ROUTE?

After finishing college with a bachelor’s degree in social work, I will admit that community management was not part of my career plan. I spent a number of years working with historically underserved youth, and I thought I would continue down this path. But I was drawn to the AGU because of its members’ dedication to community science and STEM equality.

I started out working in the AGU’s Executive Office, where I managed various aspects of volunteer leadership and supported some diversity initiatives. In 2021, once the funding opportunity came from NSF to launch AGU LANDInG, I fully transitioned into working in our DEI department with a goal of building out the CoP.

I didn’t have any formal training in managing online communities, but CSCCE’s [Community Engagement Fundamentals course](#) and other shared resources really served as a great foundation for me to move the vision for the CoP forward.

## CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR ROLE? HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY SPEND YOUR TIME?

My responsibilities look a little different than they will once our community is established. At the moment, I spend most of my time on:

- **Strategic planning:** Since this is a new community, I needed to develop strategies for launch and, looking beyond that, our vision for the community. This includes marketing, content development, and creating methods for engaging stakeholders.
- **Platform development and design:** We did not have a platform developed when I started, so I worked alongside our project manager to oversee its development.
- **Ambassador management:** I knew I could not manage this community alone, so I developed a community ambassador program to help with maintaining and evolving the community.

Post launch my role will lean heavily into community engagement and community building. My team has spent months designing a strategy to make members feel comfortable engaging and see value in their engagement. Implementing this strategy will involve speaking with groups about the importance of this platform, holding webinars and training sessions, and seeding discussions. I will also be ensuring that our Community Ambassadors have what they need to facilitate meaningful dialogue within the affinity groups we have available.



#### KEY

- INTERPERSONAL
- PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
- PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
- COMMUNICATION
- TECHNICAL



#### BRIELLE'S SKILLS WHEEL SIGNATURE

The CSCCE skills wheel is composed of five core competencies, with nine skills within each competency. Skills wheels are a common way of visualizing and curating information about skills that also allow for the creation of a job "signature" or "fingerprint" based on the particular skills in use. This wheel is representative of the skills Brielle used over the last 12 months.

► For more information, see [the CSCCE skills wheel](#).

## LOOKING BACK ON THE LAST YEAR, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON?

Wow, this past year has been full of milestones as we've prepared for launch. My favorite project was developing our Community Ambassador program.

Since the CoP is focusing on building diversity, equity, and inclusion champions, we felt it was important that the role of leading the discussions and determining the direction of the community was not centralized to just the community manager. Through a process involving our Advisory Board, Steering Committee and the AGU Diversity and Inclusion Committee, we were able to identify individuals who are champions of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and had a track record of engaging groups of people around these topics. On 18 February, 2022, we onboarded a very diverse group of 15 into the program. The Ambassadors will be responsible for maintaining and growing the CoP by posting and facilitating discussions within the platform, spreading awareness of the CoP to their networks, and providing the AGU LANDInG team with feedback on how we can improve.

## DO YOU SHARE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT DUTIES WITH ANYONE ELSE? WHERE DOES YOUR POSITION FIT WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Currently I am the sole community manager for the CoP. However, I share some of my work, such as website design, marketing, and program evaluation, with a team comprised of several other AGU staff members from the AGU's Project Management Office and Communications, Marketing and Media Department, plus a handful of external folks. We also have a program steering committee with 25 members, most of whom are volunteers. Our team sits within AGU's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion department.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A COMMUNITY MANAGER?

I love the endless possibilities of how you can manage a community. There's really no set way of doing things, so as a person who loves innovation and creativity, I thrive in this space. Sometimes I come up with random engagement strategies at 10pm and have the flexibility to try them out, if my team is on board.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED AS A SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGER? ARE THERE WAYS IN WHICH YOUR ROLE COULD BE MADE EASIER – SUCH AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES OR SOMETHING ELSE?

The biggest challenge I've faced was navigating a territory I was unfamiliar with. Prior to taking Community Engagement Fundamentals, I really had no clue how much went into building a successful community. The training helped lay the foundation for me to understand my role. I am also very lucky to have a team to collaborate with. I can only imagine how tough it is for someone who has to manage this work alone.

## AND ZOOMING OUT A LITTLE, WHY DO YOU THINK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT TO SCIENCE? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN ACTIVE MANAGEMENT IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNITY?

I think that online communities break down silos. In an online community, you are able to network with someone who you otherwise would never have come across. Therefore, community management is important to science because it facilitates the connection of people to make sure that we're building a stronger and more inclusive scientific community.

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