

CERF 2021 Event Code of Conduct Transparency Report

CERF has made it a priority to have the Biennial CERF Conference, and all CERF events, be safe and welcoming for all participants. For CERF 2021, we implemented a revised Event Code of Conduct to make it more robust and to address the virtual nature of the conference. We communicated the Code broadly, developed clear mechanisms for reporting incidents, and trained all staff and two Executive Committee members on how to handle reports.

As part of our efforts to make CERF conferences safer and more welcoming, CERF is releasing this transparency report summarizing incidents and consequences. The Code of Conduct has a strong emphasis on confidentiality; this report has been written in such a way to avoid linking reporters with specific incidents. The goal of this transparency report is to provide the community with a sense of how the Code of Conduct functions so they can build trust in the process and recommend improvements.

At CERF 2021, one incident was reported through our formal system; however, there was high visibility of the incident and CERF leaders received several additional informal/verbal reports that corroborated the formal report. Based on this information, the violator was given a verbal warning. In addition, on 28 June 2022, diversity consultant Beatra Wilson (IDEATION308) led a listening session about the incident which was open to all. Wilson, through a facilitated discussion, worked to collect ideas, interests, and opportunities for the upcoming 2023 CERF Conference. With the entire CERF Executive Committee present, the group was reminded of the commitment to correct missteps in 2021 and provided this platform to make recommendations to the 2023 conference team to consider. A confidential email inbox was also made available for invitees to engage anonymously with the diversity consultant. IDEATION308 identified the following themes from the facilitated discussion and confidential inbox:

- **Timing:** Participants expressed disappointment with the 8- month time lapse from the conference to the listening session, with some still wanting to see more ownership, responsibility, and apologies for the failure and poor planning from CERF leadership. IDEATION308 recommends creating a CERF reaction timeframe and protocol to build public-facing trust and impose accountability on current and future CERF leadership.
- **Expertise:** Participants praised CERF for providing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) resources such as workshops and webinars, and for hiring a professional diversity consultant to lead facilitated this discussion and provide recommendations to the 2023 conference team. IDEATION308 recommends that CERF consider a contractual model to obtain professional diversity consulting services on an on-going basis and to continue to invest in the DEI priorities identified in past surveys and assessments.
- **Creating Safer Spaces at CERF 2023:** The facilitated discussion with the 2021 participants and the debrief with the 2023 conference team reflected clear, consistent focus that the collective CERF membership wants to see from CERF to recruit and retain the next generation of marine scientists. IDEATION308 observed that open-minded, progressive ideas were thoughtfully received and considered by the conference team and CERF leadership, demonstrating that camaraderie and morale exist when the focus

is on the inclusive future of CERF. IDEATION308 recommends that CERF consider breaking out affinity groups into social convenings, and ensure that a professional facilitator, moderator, or room monitor be considered if the inclusion event maintains existing format. Another recommendation made by participants was to make DEI experiences free, even if this requires soliciting sponsorships and donations. If costs are necessary, costs should be kept to a minimum.

All members of the CERF Executive Committee were present at the listening session, and both CERF leadership and 2023 conference team members attended a de-brief with Wilson where results and recommendations were shared and discussed. There have been continued discussions of and a commitment to implement these recommendations. We thank the participants for their thoughtful input and feedback and look forward to making the conference and all of CERF a more welcoming and inclusive environment.

As a follow-up to the conference, CERF asked if participants were aware of the Event Code of Conduct in an anonymous survey. Of 102 respondents, 83.3% of respondents said they were aware of the Code, an increase from 77% in 2019. Eleven respondents commented about the reported violation. There was also a comment about an attendee being disruptive and inconsiderate during a discussion session. This information helps CERF to better understand the extent of violations, as well as how we may better implement the Code.

If you have suggestions for how we can make the next meeting more welcoming and supportive, contact spark@cerf.science.