

NBEP DEIJ Assessment Plan | Draft Updated: June 1

The purpose of this regional DEIJ assessment is to gather information that will provide key insights into how to better integrate environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion into regional conservation efforts. Many communities in the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) region have historically been underserved by or underrepresented in environmental planning, outreach, and initiatives. NBEP's region includes the Narragansett Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Coastal Ponds in RI, MA, and CT. This research will help NBEP and other regional organizations address inequities in how communities have been engaged in environmental decision-making and disproportionately impacted by poor air and water quality, flooding, and lack of access to nature. NBEP wishes to be a catalyst for change, setting an example for key players in regional environmental work by conducting this assessment, publicly sharing the results, and formally responding to the results of this work through new strategies that have real positive impact on quality of life in these communities¹.

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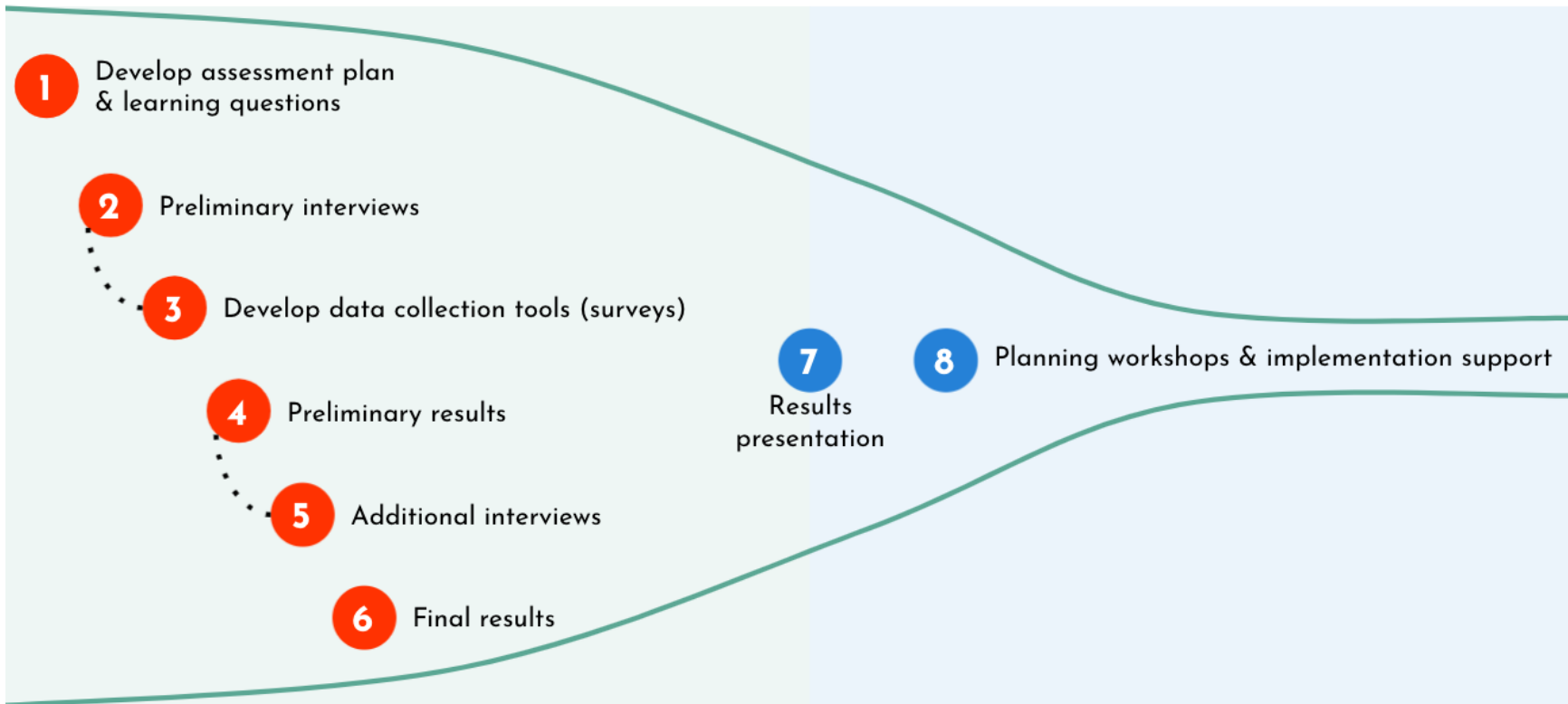
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1 - Source: NBEP Planning Kick-off Call Activity 1, Column 1:<https://padlet.com/watkinslaurena/96zel6lkyf8s51rx>

NBEP DEIJ Assessment Roadmap

Regional DEIJ Assessment
(~3 months)

Post-assessment Workshops
(~2 months)



Goals of this assessment and integrating results into Vision 2032

Increasing access to the region's many natural resources and quality of life for communities by identifying gaps in community members that are being reached and/or served by local organizations' environmental and outreach initiatives. An increase in access will require:

- Decreasing the burdens experienced by communities and addressing barriers that prevent them from engaging in environmental decision-making.
- Amplifying communities' abilities to participate in environmental work efforts, integrating them into these efforts early and consistently, listening to their needs carefully, and working collaboratively for solutions.
- Addressing inherent and disproportionate inequities that result from NBEP, its partners, and systemic historic and persistent injustices that are being experienced by underserved and underrepresented communities.

Fostering an uptake of planning strategies that integrate environmental justice and DEI by creating and implementing tools that consider the inseparable links between environmental justice, climate change, quality of life, and conservation. These strategies will:

- Build capacity for the program to identify inequities and champion DEIJ work
- Evaluate how to better fund and build capacity for people, organizations, and groups that have been historically under-funded or excluded from environmental decisions and work
- Embedding policies that address environmental justice and DEI into formal documents and processes, *the most critical part of making this work a reality that leads to change.*

Benefits of the Assessment

We believe integrating the results from this assessment into NBEP and other regional organizations’ approach to environmental work can have these benefits²:

For Communities	For NBEP	For Regional Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced resilience to climate change and flooding and improve the region’s air and water quality ● Increased access to nature ● Broadened ownership of regional environmental work through increased engagement in decision-making, by amplifying voices of local leaders and youth, and ensuring local leaders and youth are seen as collaborators and partners in this work. ● Local leadership in environmental planning and initiatives is increased at multiple levels ● Policies, programs, and projects that benefit all communities, especially those that have historically and systemically experienced negative disproportionate environmental impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vision 2032 (10-year plan) will go above and beyond traditional planning by leading the region in shifting approaches to plan for and address environmental justice by being more inclusive, equitable, and aware of the impact of proposed action ● Diversified voices will be integrated into NBEP’s work and amplified, thus increasing NBEP and partners’ impact and reach in the region ● Better collaboration between new and existing partners through an increased understanding of community members’ needs ● Increased trust and buy-in from diverse community members and organizations ● Support creation of new written documents (policies, plans) that codify our commitments in this space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding and partnerships are better aligned with regional needs and more equitably distributed ● Broadened and more appropriate and coordinated engagement with underserved and underrepresented communities ● Ability to shift from reactive to proactive approaches to environmental work that address the roots of systemic inequities ● Build bridges for groups to embrace planning for and addressing environmental injustice and DEI in all they do, and that doing so is seen as foundational

2 - Source: NBEP Planning Kick-off Call Activity 1, Columns 2-4:<https://padlet.com/watkinslaurena/96zel6lkyf8s51rx>

Assessment Plan

Research Questions ³	Proposed Methods					Comments
	Desktop research	Initial Interviews (n=6)	Survey	Interviews after preliminary results (n=10)	Results Workshops	
What underserved or underrepresented communities and environmental organizations exist in the region?	✓	✓				<p>IbD, NBEP, and NBEP partners to create a specific list of communities based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EPA environmental justice mapping tool - Organizations that we are aware of in the area but have not engaged with - Padlet activity #2, column 2 - audiences <p>Interviews will begin with 2-3 individuals. Then, snowball sampling is conducted during initial interviews to gather additional insights regarding people, communities, and organizations that should be included in the survey or in future interviews.</p>
What negative environmental impacts do these communities believe they are experiencing?		✓	✓			<p>Participants for community survey will be identified partially through in-depth interviews via snowball sampling. We will ask interviewees to assist in disseminating the survey.</p>
What do local organizations in these communities and community representatives need or want from regional environmental organizations?		✓	✓			
What barriers are local organizations and community representatives experiencing in engaging in local		✓	✓			<p>Depending on what we uncover in the interviews, we can assess barriers in the survey as well if needed.</p>

environmental work, scaling up their own work, getting their communities engaged in environmental work, and having their voices heard and prioritized?						
What do these communities and organizations think about local environmental organizations? How much do they trust them?			✓			We can consider asking if people have heard of specific organizations, and then how much they trust each one (if they'd heard of them).
What people, organizations, and resources are trusted sources of information on environmental issues? Who in these communities are the best messengers for promoting engagement in regional environmental work?		✓	✓			NBEP can be the group in our region that starts the snowball rolling for others to address a lack of networking and co-learning where groups are and how they can support one another. <i>Perhaps NBEP can develop a tool through this work that showcases these relationships and helps others network?</i>
How can environmental organizations engage with these communities, people, and organizations to support their work, meet their needs and gain input from their social circles and constituents?		✓	✓			Explicitly: "What can we do?" I.e.: in terms of payment, daycare, and other actions that show respect and care, and to honor their time. <i>**Compare 'internal' people to 'external' peoples' responses.**</i>
Are environmental organizations in the region prioritizing DEIJ and environmental justice work? If so, how? Is it being done effectively? What do organizations wish was being done better?	✓		✓	✓		Participants for the second round of interviews will be chosen based on preliminary results. Some research questions may shift or be added as a result of what we learn from the survey and initial interviews. <i>**Compare 'internal' people to 'external' peoples' responses.**</i> We may also be able to glean from websites and other sources if well-known organizations are prioritizing DEIJ and EJ into their work.

<p>What barriers are local environmental organizations experiencing in integrating DEIJ and environmental justice into their work? Barriers that community members and local reps are experiencing to getting engaged?</p>			✓	✓		<p>Barriers we assess in the survey will be gleaned from initial interviews. The survey will use skip-logic at the beginning to divert people to their designated set of questions based on two audience types (those working the environmental space and those that are not). Then, data can be analyzed based on the community, race, ethnicity, or other variables we identify.</p>
<p>Are people in underrepresented and underserved communities interested in participating in Vision 2032 planning, and if so, how can NBEP best engage them?</p>			✓	✓		<p>Second round interviews could include an invitation to participate and questions around what would motivate and enable them to do so.</p>
<p>What issues (uncovered in this assessment) does the broader NBEP partnership have the ability to address, or have the ability to catalyze others to address?</p>				✓	✓	<p>If this is included in second round interviews will depend on who/how we prioritize those based on survey results. We can certainly address this through the results workshops.</p>
<p>What roles/actions can NBEP take at the program level to address issues (uncovered in this assessment) via the Vision 2032 work plan?</p>					✓	<p>Exploring roles and actions could include more training for staff, new staffing needs, etc. to make sure NBEP is trained to take on this work.</p>

3 - Source: NBEP Planning Kick-off Call Activity 2: <https://padlet.com/watkinslaurena/ywzdybi3d0ojdac2>

Target Audiences Color Coding: 'Internal and External/Community' External/Community only