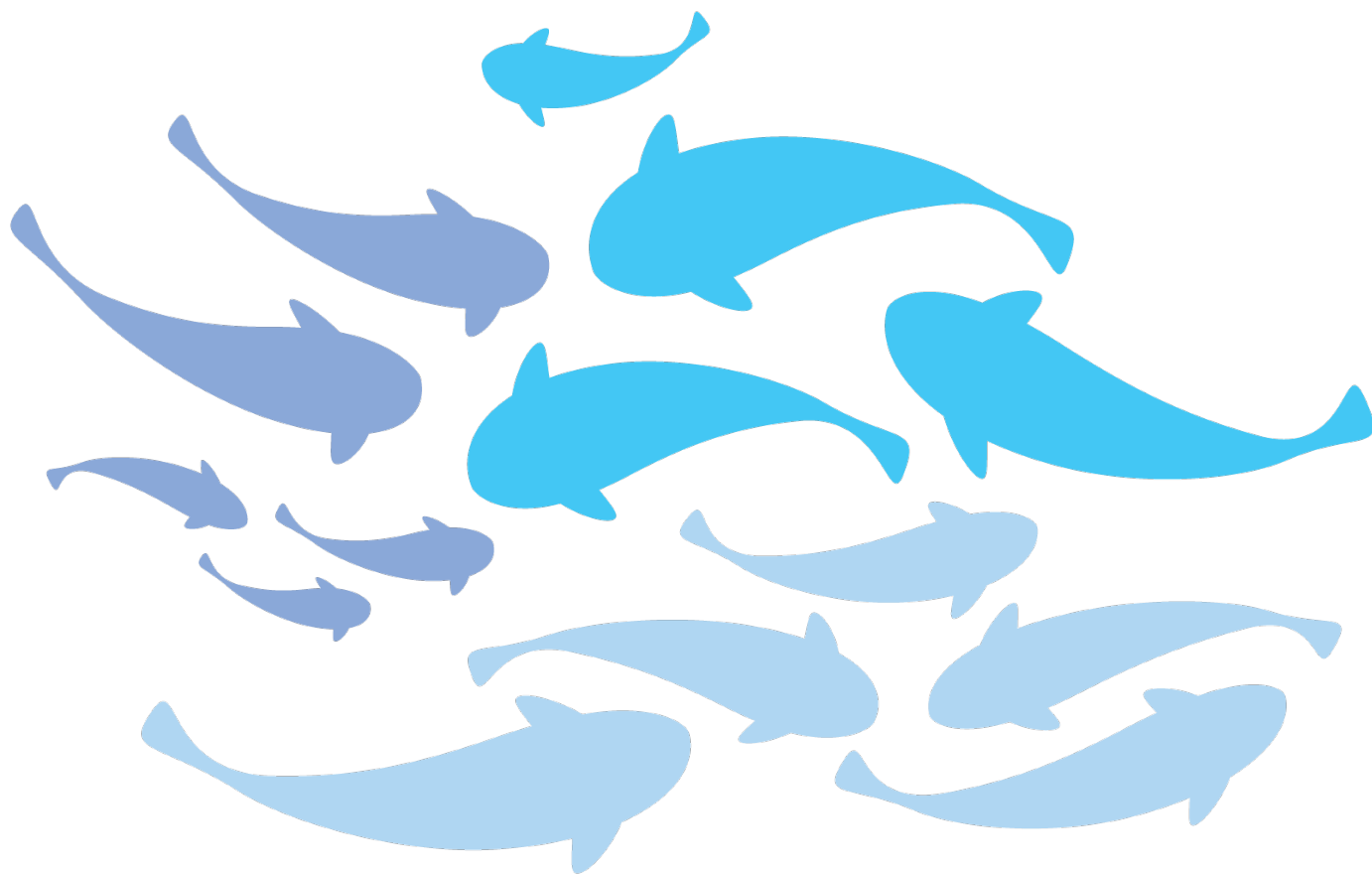




NOAA
FISHERIES

New England/Mid-Atlantic
**Equity and Environmental
Justice Implementation Plan**



Executive Summary

NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center endeavor to equitably serve all communities, fisheries, and other parties affected, interested, impacted, or served by our stewardship of marine and anadromous fish and fisheries, protected species, and their habitats. Engagement with a wide range of coastal communities, as well as more inland communities, is critical for us to be effective stewards. This includes engagement with those who fish for subsistence, commercial and recreational fishing communities, and Indigenous communities, among others. We recognize the unique government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribes and are committed to honoring this relationship through the development of a regional tribal engagement plan that will include consideration of the tribes' equity and environmental justice (EEJ) issues and concerns. As outlined in our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, we recognize both the importance of promoting EEJ in our decision-making processes and the impact of climate change on both the species we manage and the communities and individuals who depend on them for food or employment, or for whom these species and landscapes hold traditional and cultural importance. Using guidance set forth in NOAA Fisheries' national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#), this implementation plan for the New England and Mid-Atlantic region incorporates and prioritizes EEJ in our ongoing and future activities.

We strive to incorporate principles of fairness and justice into our resource conservation and management efforts and to consider the social, economic, and environmental impacts of our actions on communities at the forefront of systemic inequity. We are committed to improving and increasing engagement and accessibility with these communities in our region. We remain committed to establishing a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve and promoting a culture of inclusivity and accessibility within our organizations. We will work toward providing equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background or identity, and ensuring that our programs and services are accessible to all members of the public. These are crucial elements to continued excellence and innovation within our region. This plan is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

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EEJ Objectives Implementation

Using the objectives framework of NOAA Fisheries' national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#), we have identified priority actions, the resources needed to implement these actions, and our commitment to measuring our progress through actionable metrics. The national strategy identifies six barriers to equity and environmental justice that communities face: 1) unawareness of communities at the forefront of systemic inequity, 2) structural barriers, 3) barriers to engagement and accessing services, 4) System complexity, 5) gaps in expertise, and 6) gaps in representation. The actions identified in our plan attempt to overcome these barriers, recognizing that progress cannot be achieved quickly. The actions we identify are ones that can be started with our current resources, but their long-term success will be dependent on sustained funding. This plan will evolve as our capacity and resources grow and evolve, and we regularly reassess how we engage with and provide services and support to communities.

Initial Engagement Methods for Developing the Plan

Between 2022 and early 2024, we took several steps to begin our initial engagement with developing an EEJ Implementation Plan. An internal GARFO/NEFSC EEJ Working Group team was convened, with representatives from a variety of management, policy, and research branches. Team members provided other regional staff with presentations and updates on the national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#), and met separately with staff who have a significant presence in various communities (i.e., GARFO's Port Agents, NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement, and Sea Grant Extension Agents) to provide additional context, laying the groundwork for future training, needs assessments, and implementation collaboration.

The national strategy was also presented to the New England and Mid-Atlantic fishery management councils, with input sought from Council members and staff on priorities, needs, gaps, and next steps. These presentations were a first step in our community engagement efforts. Additionally, in fall 2022 we hosted a webinar for tribal nations in the region on the national EEJ strategy and announced that we were developing a regional plan. We plan to incorporate the feedback received into the tribal strategy we will be developing (see action items). In addition, we heard from tribes that the current EEJ tools may not accurately reflect community dynamics and characteristics. For example, some of the EEJ tools are at the county level and do not capture some communities appropriately.

During this initial phase, GARFO also increased its presence at several regional outreach events, particularly those targeting environmental educators (i.e., Northeast Ocean Science Education Collaborative). While we did not request public input on EEJ implementation planning at these events, we used this as an opportunity to meet new community members and leaders—relationships that will help to facilitate longer term conversations on community needs.

This implementation plan was developed based on our initial internal communication and assessments, the limited public input that was received, and needs that have been observed through participation at local and community events. Community engagement is at the forefront of this implementation plan, but the following actions take into consideration that this engagement must be done thoughtfully and authentically to build trust and ultimately build shared goals with the communities we serve.

Resources Needed

GARFO/NEFSC will require resources to implement the activities in this plan. First, **leadership support** for prioritizing EEJ in our management, outreach, and research programs is necessary. This support will foster internal capacity building and an empowering environment and allow for systemic changes and allocation of resources to be directed toward incorporating EEJ principles and goals in our regional strategic planning. Our leadership committed to this with the release of this plan and intends to continue to support its implementation. Second, **sustained funding** is necessary to staff, facilitate, and support increased regional EEJ activities as new business practices are adopted, new partnerships are developed, and services are expanded. Leadership support and sustained funding will then allow GARFO/NEFSC to plan for and support a third common resource— **staff prioritization of EEJ**. With increased prioritization of EEJ across GARFO/NEFSC, staff (new and existing) will build the time, capacity, and skill sets needed for working more collaboratively with communities we serve.

Because our intention is to integrate EEJ throughout the work of our divisions, we have not identified specific divisions to carry out the action items at this time. Our EEJ team, with representatives from all the divisions, will be conducting internal engagement and developing best management practices to be implemented across the region.

Environmental Justice Scorecard

We are committed to making progress in line with the priorities of the [Environmental Justice Scorecard](#). With that in mind, we have conducted:

- **Two** EEJ presentations in 2023 to the fishery management councils to seek early input on the national NOAA Fisheries EEJ Strategy and upcoming regional planning
- One listening session with tribal nations on the national EEJ Strategy
- One tool or resources to advance environmental justice
- 12 staff who work on environmental justice, either in a full- or part-time capacity
- One regional internal training for staff on environmental justice
- Two new or strengthened integrated regional internal working groups

Metrics

While we are committed to developing actionable and measurable metrics, we have not included metrics here. We believe that the most valuable metrics for measuring progress to our goals can only be developed in partnership with the audiences and communities the actions will affect. This will allow us to tailor the metrics appropriately to the specific issue or action and ensure we focus on the services, impacts, and outcomes that are most meaningful toward our long-term goals and that meet community needs. The implementation plan will be updated to include these metrics as they are developed.

Revision Process

This is a living document, and its associated action items will be evaluated each fiscal year for progress and modification, based on feedback received from staff and input received through engagement with community members.

Empowering Environment

Objective: Provide the institutional support, including training and resources, needed to implement multiple EEJ approaches. Internal leadership and management will identify EEJ as priorities and encourage staff to consider EEJ in every aspect of their work.

For this strategy to be sustainable and effective, it is important that all leadership and staff participate to form a culture of inclusion and equity that promotes and prioritizes EEJ in all we do. Leadership must embrace and promote this culture and support staff efforts to grow their expertise. This will help overcome the gaps in expertise that are currently a barrier.

To create an empowering environment, members of the GARFO/NEFSC EEJ Working Group have begun to attend webinars and trainings dedicated to improving their own awareness. Working Group members will use the knowledge gained from these training sessions to inform strategic internal conversations and planning so that other staff members may take part in necessary EEJ-related training and/or webinars.

Next steps in this process will include region-wide facilitated discussions and training for all staff, supported and facilitated by the following goals and actions.

Table 1: Empowering Environment Goals, Actions, and Progress¹

Goal	Actions	Progress
Make EEJ inclusion and understanding a priority for staff, leadership, and contractors.	Incorporate language into manager and staff performance plans. Include EEJ language in statements of work for staffing contracts to allow contract staff to participate in EEJ work.	In progress
Identify, prioritize, and implement EEJ in Strategic Plan and Annual Priority Document.	Incorporate EEJ actions into GARFO/NEFSC Strategic Plan and Annual Priority documents.	In progress
Conduct internal EEJ inventory and training for all GARFO and NEFSC branches.	Host GARFO/NEFSC All Hands meetings to develop shared understanding of EEJ principles and goals. Following the initial meeting, plan bi-annual GARFO/NEFSC All Hands meetings on EEJ issues and progress, providing quarterly updates as needed. Create an accessible list of GARFO and NEFSC NOAA services and known audiences for services. Identify regional training needs for staff and leadership. Incorporate EEJ into services through the development and implementation of GARFO and Center-wide plans Identify research needs for addressing EEJ issues.	In progress

¹ As described on page 5, we will update this table with metrics to measure progress towards these goals once those metrics are developed in collaboration with the affected communities.

Goal	Actions	Progress
Support staff development, training, and EEJ engagement.	Provide training for staff and leadership to foster a shared understanding of the concept of EEJ and how to implement these concepts. Continue support for staff participation in GARFO/NEFSC EEJ Working Group. Create GARFO intranet page of EEJ resources to promote staff self-study and continuous learning. Division/branch-wide inclusion of EEJ issues and progress in staff meetings. Mandatory training for mentors to build a more inclusive community.	In progress and ongoing
Long-term planning for EEJ monitoring and implementation.	Review staffing plans to identify opportunities for EEJ coordination within the region.	Not started

Policy and Planning

Objective: Ensure that our policies do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for communities at the forefront of systemic inequity. That is, our policies promote equal opportunities for all.

GARFO is responsible for implementing several mandates in river and marine environments, including the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and National Aquaculture Act. When GARFO implements regulatory actions under these authorities, we follow administrative laws that often provide for public review and comment. This includes engaging interested parties through public hearings and meetings, responding to public comments, evaluating impacts of proposed actions on the environment and communities, and publishing final rules and decisions in the *Federal Register* and *Code of Federal Regulations*. We also undertake a number of non-regulatory actions (e.g., restoration or recovery planning, voluntary programs) that require community engagement to ensure success.

However, our current engagements do not reach the broad range of individuals, organizations, and governments that may be interested in our policies and actions. Our outreach often is not accessible to non-English speakers, those with limited broadband access, or those who do not have access to our agency or the regional fishery management councils.

Through our Policy and Planning goals and actions, we hope to expand the audiences reached and engaged throughout the engagement process, and make sure meetings, materials, and regulations are more equitably implemented, reducing any unintended burdens for communities that have been at the forefront of systemic inequity. This goal should help us to minimize structural barriers associated with unjust or inequitable regulations and policies.

Table 2: Policy and Planning Goals, Actions, and Progress²

Goal	Actions	Progress
Ensure equitable access to public meetings and hearings (in-person, hybrid, and virtual) in compliance with existing laws and policies.	Develop a plan for assisting divisions with location selection so that public meetings may be accessible to all communities and community members impacted by meeting decisions. Identify and provide translation services for common community languages. Provide staff training on meeting accessibility. Develop best practices to accommodate vision, hearing, and other accessibility needs (e.g., ADA requirements and/or meeting location in relation to public transportation).	Expected to begin FY 2024.
Make regulatory language and associated communications easier to understand.	Use plain language for regulatory actions and/or plain language summaries of actions to accompany regulatory text. Provide translations of regulatory text and any accompanying summaries or outreach materials.	In progress and ongoing

Research and Monitoring

Objective: Identify communities at the forefront of systemic inequity and their needs, conduct collaborative research, and assess impacts of management decisions.

Research is especially important as we work to address the unawareness of communities at the forefront of systemic inequity as a barrier. Using the tools available to us (e.g., Crew Survey, [Voices](#) (oral history archive), [NOAA Fisheries Social Indicators for Coastal Communities](#) and the soon-to-be-released NOAA Fisheries Community Environmental Justice Explorer Tool) as a basis for framing our initial audience, we have begun to identify communities to engage with and learn from. However, we recognize the limitations of these tools and are committed to identifying and exploring other tools to inform this plan. Through our initial engagement with GARFO/NEFSC staff, we have started to identify organizations working with communities that have been at the forefront of inequitable access to NOAA resources and staff, and/or who have been historically or systemically excluded from NOAA resources and/or research.

Results from our ongoing [Crew Survey](#) have shown that [fewer new and young individuals \(i.e., 18 to 24 year olds\) are entering into commercial fishing](#) since the survey began collecting socioeconomic information about crews and hired captains in 2012. According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), Hispanic, Latino, and multiracial groups are among the youngest in the United States, while the white-alone population is the oldest. This indicates a need to understand how commercial fishing demographics may shift over time as the general population changes. However, the Crew Survey has faced challenges gaining an adequate representation of black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) due to language barriers, concerns about privacy, and other complicating factors related to staff time and resources to obtain adequate samples of

² As described on page 5, we will update this table with metrics to measure progress toward these goals once those metrics are developed in collaboration with the affected communities.

respondents overall. Some additional information on the constraints and supports young fishermen encounter can be found in this set of oral histories, [Young Fishermen in the Northeast United States](#).

The social indicators (and the upcoming Community Environmental Justice Explorer Tool) will allow us to identify the more socially vulnerable communities in our region, as well as those at risk of inundation due to sea level rise and storm surge—factors that are increasing in severity with climate change. Additional climate indicators in the final stages of development will help to identify which Northeast Region communities are most dependent on species that are themselves at higher risk due to factors associated with climate change, such as ocean acidification and ocean warming.

Recognizing that the current state of information about communities at the forefront of systemic inequity is inadequate, NEFSC and GARFO staff and leadership will need to substantially increase investments in time and funding toward the identification of communities in the Greater Atlantic region. This must also involve the meaningful inclusion of underserved community members through cooperative development of research to address their specific needs. This will be accomplished by increasing the number of studies that identify and characterize communities at the forefront of systemic inequity and increasing the number of cooperative research engagements with external research partners (academia, NGOs, etc.) to collect these data, especially whenever new federal data collections are not possible or feasible. In addition, research aimed at identifying

and understanding the extent and needs of communities at the forefront of systemic inequity must also incorporate the meaningful involvement of underserved community members through the co-development of research that empowers those who have been historically marginalized from such services and products. We recognize this can be challenging due to concerns over privacy and trust issues working with federal government agencies, and we will work to improve and build these relationships with community leaders and groups through these participatory processes.

Table 3: Research and Monitoring Actions and Progress³

Goal	Actions	Progress
Identify and characterize communities at the forefront of systemic inequity and participants by prioritizing social, cultural, economic, and demographic research.	Support research to identify and characterize underserved and marginalized groups within coastal communities, fishing communities, and other affected communities. Identify barriers to involvement in fisheries management and science, which then can be addressed by cooperative science or more inclusive governance practices. Utilize Voices archive to highlight stories and perspectives from Indigenous and BIPOC communities.	In progress
Co-develop/co-create knowledge in partnership with underserved and marginalized community members/leaders.	Prioritize the advancement of research that specifically partners with EJ community members/leaders to co-create knowledge and information.	In progress and ongoing
Analyze the social, cultural, and economic impacts of actions, opportunities, and collaborative research on communities at the forefront of systemic inequity.	Seek funding through NOAA and outside grants and student fellowships to gather relevant data that are not currently available.	In progress and ongoing
Incorporate, as appropriate, local ecological knowledge and/or Indigenous knowledge in research and decision-making.	Work with the NEFSC/GARFO tribal liaisons and EEJ Working Group to develop best management practices (BMPs) for incorporating Indigenous and local ecological knowledge into our work.	In progress and ongoing

Outreach and Engagement

Objective: Build relationships with communities at the forefront of systemic inequity to better understand their engagement preferences and improve information sharing with all communities.

Outreach and engagement are essential for GARFO/NEFSC’s strategic goals. In order to successfully and adaptively manage fisheries for sustainability and economic competitiveness, and safeguard protected species and propel their recovery, it is essential that all parties affected—directly and indirectly—better understand our work, and why and how we do it.. Outreach and engagement efforts should also reflect needs identified by community members through community-based listening sessions.

To date, GARFO and NEFSC’s outreach documents and events target English-speaking communities, focusing on audiences that are most easily accessed through historical and political relationships. While GARFO/NEFSC’s constituencies extend throughout the entire region, in-person engagement has primarily been focused on coastal communities because of their proximity to our offices. Through this plan, we intend to increase staff engagement with audiences from inland urban and rural communities, while maintaining and better supporting coastal communities.

³ As described on page 5, we will update this table with metrics to measure progress towards these goals once those metrics are developed in collaboration with the affected communities.

As we look to overcome *barriers to engagement and accessing Services*, we will develop means to reach out to constituents that may not be aware of the services we provide, and ensure that we increase access to these services by also reducing language barriers or other accessibility issues.

Outreach should also include engaging and funding GARFO staff participation in educational programs to expand GARFO/NEFSC’s services to the next generation of marine, ocean, habitat, and climate stewards in communities that have historically and systemically been denied fair access to NOAA’s resources. Educational programs should also prioritize the development of community-based partnerships with schools and EEJ non-profits through authentic engagement on locally relevant issues that are linked to GARFO/NEFSC’s strategic planning goals. This will be done by maintaining collaboration with NOAA’s Office of Education on the on-going Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) environmental education grant program, and also exploring new regional educational collaborations.

Table 4: Outreach and Engagement Goals, Actions, and Progress⁴

Goal	Actions	Progress
Build authentic community relationships.	Host meetings leveraging existing community ties to engage with communities via partnerships and get input, ideas, and feedback. Participate in EEJ working groups with federal partners to minimize burden on community organizations. Increase community access to GARFO port agents, OLE officers, gear specialists, and/or community liaisons and other field staff by increasing opportunities for staff to work with communities at the forefront of systemic inequity and engage with these communities in person.	In progress and ongoing
Develop engagement strategy for federally recognized coastal tribes.	Host listening sessions with federally recognized tribes to learn more about tribal needs and issues important to them, and get feedback on successful engagements and opportunities to improve. Through the listening sessions and tribal consultation, develop a regional engagement plan to outline ongoing work and future opportunities to strengthen our relationships and work with the tribes.	In progress; beginning FY 2024
Make outreach materials accessible.	Translate outreach materials promoting involvement in our fishery management process, protected species conservation, and other areas that require community engagement. Make sure materials are written in plain language. Explore website translation services. Use social media platforms to expand information dissemination to new audiences.	Expected to begin FY 2024
Incorporate EEJ best practices into outreach and educational event planning.	Ensure staff participation at outreach and education events is equitably distributed across sectors and geography. Develop best practices to help managers and scientists prioritize outreach and educational events by type, topic, and audience (see Table 5. Equitably Distribute Benefits).	In progress and ongoing

⁴ As described on page 5, we will update this table with metrics to measure progress towards these goals once those metrics are developed in collaboration with the affected communities.

Goal	Actions	Progress
<p>Expand and support educational programs and opportunities to engage communities in activities related to our mission.</p>	<p>Support the New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program K-12 educational program.</p> <p>Collaborate with regional education and environmental education partners to better support students, teachers, and informal educators in communities that face systemic and historical barriers to accessing NOAA educational resources.</p> <p>Staff participate in Northeast environmental education, environmental justice, and climate resilience working group (called the Northeast Design Team) that will bring together community based organizations in a convening in May 2024.</p> <p>Proactively engage community organizations with informal educational opportunities that are NOAA-mission driven and culturally and locally relevant.</p> <p>Educational events are tracked by the Education Coordinator.</p> <p>Explore options for staff participation at and sponsorship of conferences with environmental literacy and environmental justice focus.</p>	<p>B-WET support is in progress and ongoing</p> <p>Northeast Design Team support and coordination is in progress and ongoing</p> <p>Education and outreach event tracking is ongoing</p> <p>Geographical and audience inventory of educational events</p> <p>GARFO staff participate in is expected to begin FY 2024</p> <p>Tracking of staff participation at environmental literacy and environmental justice conferences is ongoing</p> <p>GARFO served as a sponsor for the Northeast Ocean Literacy Summit (Gloucester, MA) and is expected to be a sponsor for the 2024 National Marine Educators Conference (Boston, MA). Other sponsorship exploration is ongoing.</p>

Equitably Distribute Benefits

Objective: Distribute benefits equitably by increasing the access to opportunities for communities at the forefront of systemic inequity.

GARFO is responsible for the regional administration of two competitive grant programs: the [Saltonstall-Kennedy Grants](#) (SK) for supporting the promotion, development and marketing of U.S. fisheries; and [B-WET](#) (see above). GARFO also manages the unique [Research Set Aside \(RSA\) program](#) where research funds are generated through the sale of set-aside allocations for quota- or days-at-sea managed fisheries. Distribution of these resources has historically been biased toward larger research or non-profit organizations with prior knowledge and capacity for applying for and monitoring access to federal funding. The federal grant application process is intrinsically complicated, with applicants needing to complete a host of federal forms and requiring a base level of understanding of the application process. Steps are being taken on a national level through NOAA’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) in Grantmaking working group to discuss making federal funding opportunities more accessible to communities and organizations historically and systemically excluded from these opportunities. But there is much work to be done, and GARFO staff continue to explore new means of making available these opportunities and other innovative funding resources.

Staff time and attention is also a resource that is not always equitably distributed among communities, fisheries, and other parties affected, interested, impacted, or served by GARFO and NEFSC’s research and resource management due to limited staff capacity. However, we are dedicated to exploring new opportunities to allow for this increased access (see also Outreach and Engagement).

We will focus on overcoming this barrier to engagement and accessing services by working to build capacity in communities to access the services provided by GARFO and the NEFSC.

Table 5: Equitably Distribute Benefits Actions and Progress⁵

Goal	Actions	Progress
<p>Ensure equitable access to competitive Fisheries Grants and Research Set Aside (RSA) opportunities.</p>	<p>Participate in national DEIJ in Grantmaking working group and other equity in federal funding discussions.</p> <p>Develop and implement DEIJ best practices when publishing competitive Notice of Funding Opportunities.</p> <p>Provide applicant resources for how to apply for competitive federal opportunities.</p> <p>Provide competitive application reviewer training and/or resources on reducing bias in grant application reviews.</p> <p>Inventory the last 3-5 years of competitive grant/RSA recipients to identify community, audience, geography, and partnership gaps.</p> <p>Develop a communication strategy to promote competitive grant/research opportunities to new networks (e.g., promote RSA to HBCUs) and increase visibility of opportunities using social media.</p> <p>Request grant applicants, when permissible, to describe the activities and strategies they will incorporate to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in their research/grant projects.</p> <p>Host regional informational sessions specific to competitive opportunities and general workshops on how to apply for federal funding.</p> <p>Continue to improve outreach and accessibility of competition staff to provide support for potential applicants.</p>	<p>Ongoing participation in national discussions</p> <p>Implemented DEIJ best practices in B-WET</p> <p>Notice of Funding Opportunity FY 2023</p> <p>Competition inventory began FY 2023, expected to be completed FY 2024</p> <p>Applicant website expected FY 2024</p> <p>Competitive grants/RSA communications strategy expected to begin FY 2024</p> <p>Informational sessions for FY 2023 competitions were completed for the SK and B-WET programs</p> <p>General grants workshop development has been delayed due to the grants management system transition. Expected FY 2025</p>
<p>Ensure equitable access to funding.</p>	<p>Explore federal partnerships that may help to provide funding for, or help build capacity of, community-based projects while alleviating the typical barriers that prevent smaller organizations with limited capacity from applying through the federal grants process.</p>	<p>In progress and ongoing</p>
<p>Ensure equitable access to staff.</p>	<p>Ensure staff participation at outreach and education events is equitably distributed across affected communities (place-based and interest-based) (see Table 4. Outreach and Engagement).</p> <p>Develop best practices to help managers and scientists prioritize outreach and educational events by type, topic, and audience (see Table 4. Outreach and Engagement).</p>	<p>In progress and ongoing</p>
<p>Increase visibility of NOAA internships in new communities.</p>	<p>Develop a standing internship opportunity with a DEIAJ focus.</p> <p>Develop a GARFO internship strategic plan that prioritizes programs with DEIAJ focus.</p>	<p>Both GARFO and NEFSC are committed in staff time and resources to supporting the Inclusive NOAA Fisheries Internship Program (IN FISH). This is in progress and ongoing.</p> <p>GARFO Internship Strategic Plan is in progress</p>

⁵ As described on page 5, we will update this table with metrics to measure progress towards these goals once those metrics are developed in collaboration with the affected communities

Inclusive Governance

Objective: Enable the meaningful involvement of communities at the forefront of systemic inequity in decision-making processes.

Many of GARFO’s resource management policies require working with regional fishery management councils and other technical teams and advisory panels. These groups are primarily composed of white English-speaking individuals and do not necessarily represent all demographics or communities impacted (directly and indirectly) by the policies, decisions, or recommendations that are made to the agency from their meetings and discussions. Therefore, in order to work toward overcoming the gaps in representation barrier, we will coordinate with the Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Office of Protected Resources, and other branches (internally and nationally) to increase inclusion of diverse representation on councils, resource management teams, and/or advisory groups involved in our decision-making. These goals will be supported by internal actions and best practices developed under Policies and Planning.

Table 6: Inclusive Governance Goals, Actions, and Progress⁶

Goal	Actions	Progress
Increase diversity of engagement with fishery management councils and other teams and advisory groups.	<p>In partnership with the councils and other regional institutions and organizations, review the current makeup of advisory panels and technical teams as they relate to the communities impacted by actions and identify ways to support and increase diversity of representation in these advisory bodies and technical teams .</p> <p>Share best practices to accommodate vision, hearing, and other accessibility needs (e.g., ADA requirements and/or meeting location in relation to public transportation) (see Table 2. Policy and Planning).</p>	In progress; beginning in FY 2024
Increase engagement for public hearings and public comment periods.	<p>Investigate new ways of disseminating information on public hearings and comment periods.</p> <p>Explore new tools to enhance and improve the participatory process for development of fishery management actions, especially as it relates to changing stock distributions and access as the result of climate change, in partnership with the councils.</p> <p>Explore the development of a multi-regional advisory body to better understand the priorities and barriers to participation of recreational and non-commercial fishing communities, in partnership with the councils.</p> <p>Explore and engage other regional resource management advisory groups and teams in development of tools to enhance and improve the participatory process for the development of other marine resource management actions or planning.</p> <p>Implement best practices to accommodate vision, hearing, translation services in common community language(s), and other accessibility needs (e.g., ADA requirements and/or meeting location in relation to public transportation) (see Table 2. Policy and Planning).</p>	In progress; beginning in FY 2024

⁶ As described on page 5, we will update this table with metrics to measure progress towards these goals once those metrics are developed in collaboration with the affected communities.

List of Acronyms

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

NEFSC: Northeast Fisheries Science Center

DEIJ: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice

DEIAJ: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Justice

EEJ: Equity and Environmental Justice

FY: Fiscal Year

GARFO: Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

HBCU: Historically Black Colleges and Universities

MREP: Marine Resource Education Program

NOAA Fisheries: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service

RSA: Research Set-Aside program