

2023 Status and Needs Report of Wisconsin Environmental Education Related Organizations

During the first quarter of 2023, we distributed a web-based survey to 112 environmental education (EE) organization leaders across the state of Wisconsin. The purpose of the survey was to conduct a status and needs assessment of the EE industry in Wisconsin. A version of this survey was distributed previously in 2014, 2016, 2019, and 2021. This survey covered a spectrum of topics related to environmental education including diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), curriculum and instruction, general information about organizations, staff, and participants, and information on training and professional development.

General EE Organization and Participant Information

65 organizations responded to the survey. Of the environmental education organizations surveyed, a majority of respondents chose “public” (22%), “outdoor learning/nature centers” (19%), “camps” (15%), and “conservation-based” (13%) as key descriptors for their organization.

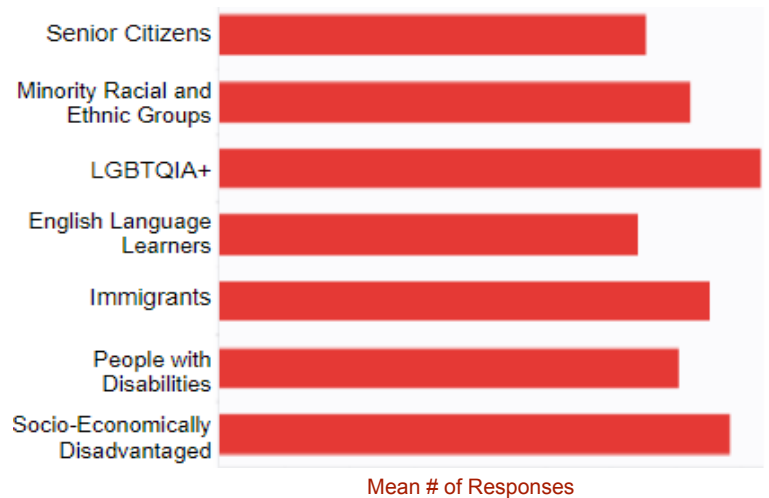
How often do non-urban organizations serve students from urban locations?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
9%	5%	18%	68%

Respondents indicated most strongly supporting students grades K-8 within their organization.

Respondents also indicated that the largest demographic served is White. In much smaller amounts, respondents indicated serving Black and Hispanic visitors. Very few respondents indicated serving Asian, Middle Eastern, or American Indian visitors.

Respondents indicate often their EEO serves each group on average



Curriculum and Instruction

Do your curriculum or lesson plans include activity ideas for learners from different cultures or backgrounds?

No	Yes for Some	Yes for All
47%	35%	18%

69% of respondents signified that the content and materials used by their organization was able to be differentiated for (or accessible to) a variety of learners, and 56% indicated that their EEO's staff is prepared to provide instruction for learners of varying ability.

Does your EE organization have resources and content available in other languages?

No	Yes
68%	32%

However, **0%** of respondents signified that staff in their organization tailors instruction to students' strengths, interests, or needs, and **0%** indicated that their organization makes adjustments to the content, learning process, or product of lessons based on student need.

Are your organization's programs and/or instructional materials correlated to standards?

No	I Don't Know	Yes
57%	14%	29%

“The benefits of time in nature should be accessible to all. Conservation won't happen successfully if all groups aren't included”

-Survey Response

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

When asked to describe the level of priority placed on increasing DEI at each respective EE organization, a majority of leaders indicated a moderate to high level of priority for DEI (80%), while only 20% indicated it to be low-level priority.

“Social justice and equity should be core values of society and are required for democratic advancement of healthy ecological and human communities”

-Survey Response

While planning and implementing DEI initiatives, did you encounter any **areas of resistance**?



**Respondents estimated the strategies in place to-
Share BIPOC Student and Scientist Voices**

No Strategies in Place	Partially Implemented Strategies in Place	Fully Implemented Strategies in Place
56%	8%	24%

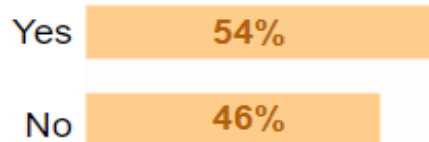
Engage BIPOC in Organizational and Decision-Making Processes

No Strategies in Place	Partially Implemented Strategies in Place	Fully Implemented Strategies in Place
60%	28%	12%

70% of respondents indicated having resources or options available to serve and provide instruction to students and/or participants from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Key resources include funding or scholarships (50%), transportation (17%), and free or low-cost programming to students (17%). Other notable responses indicated establishing partnerships, providing community resources, and supporting staff.

Staff Development and Training

Does Your Organization Provide Training on DEI?



Current Staff Development for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion-

When asked how many hours of trainings respondents engaged with in the last year that integrated DEI materials, skills, or content, a majority (32%) reported 3-6 hours, 28% reported over 7 hours, 20% reported 1-2 hours, and 20% reported not attending any training or that they did not know. Implicit bias, using inclusive language, and designing programming to engage diverse audience members are the top three topics covered.

Survey participants were asked to list any specific environmental education programming areas they or their EEO staff would benefit from training in. Shown below is a sample of responses indicative of common issues and themes-

- “Programming that would be geared towards neurodivergent folks”
- “Tying stem/steam to our curriculum and matching with state standards”
- “Equity and inclusion in natural areas”
- “Integrating indigenous knowledge into EE programs. Conducting climate change EE programs”
- “Environmental Justice trainings, any specific action-oriented trainings geared towards high school students, General JEDI trainings”
- “Group/classroom management trainings that help provide strategies for small groups in short time frames”
- “Culturally relevant curricular connections - trauma-informed classroom management”
- “Networking with other programs to see what has been successful in their programs”

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These series of reports, beginning in 2014, have had many contributors, including: Isabelle Herde, Zoe Goodrow, Steve Kerlin, Joy Kacoroski, Kendra Liddicoat, Joey Zocher, Zaynab Baalbaki, Tempestt Morgan, Sarah Olsen, Katie Ellis, Emily Crampe, and Danica Hendrickson, with continued support from the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education. Funding supported this project through the The **Humanities Education for Anti-racism Literacy (HEAL) in the Sciences and Medicine** project is based at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and funded by the Mellon Foundation’s [Just Futures Initiative](#). For more information please contact Dr. Justin Hougham justin.hougham@wisc.edu

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