

# Vermont Natural Resource Conservation Districts

## DEI Growth Guide



April 2022

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# Introduction

In February 2021, a group of Vermont Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCD) and Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) staff sought out master's students studying at the University of Michigan's (UM) School for Environment and Sustainability to conduct research supporting efforts on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at the NRCDs. Over the course of 14 months, this group of staff—referred to here as the Core Team—worked diligently with the UM Research Team to explore the wants and needs of the NRCDs pertaining to DEI. Both the Core Team and the UM Research Team sought to center the voices of NRCD and VACD staff and board members in this DEI work.

## What is DEI?

DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) is a term used by organizations and institutions to describe efforts towards the representation and participation of underrepresented groups. Tuskegee University and the Cooperative Foundation created the following definitions to describe diversity, equity, and inclusion in this context.

**"Diversity** is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. Populations that have been-and remain- underrepresented among practitioners in the field and marginalized in the broader society."

**"Equity** is promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society."

**"Inclusion** is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse actually feel and/or are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group."

**Throughout this guide, we refer to DEI as a whole, which encapsulates the pursuit, realization, and implementation of the collective goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

### **Why are Vermont NRCs making DEI a priority?**

Vermont NRCs are seeking to better understand how they can serve diverse populations, consistent with national conversations on DEI. The development of DEI programming with insights about best practices has been adopted widely by land grant universities and federal agencies, such as the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Vermont NRCs recognize the pressing issues at the intersection of natural resource work and DEI, and are making them a priority.

To assess attitudes, beliefs, and visions for the future of DEI at the NRCs, the UM Research Team, with the guidance of UM professor Kyle Whyte, employed the Delphi model—an iterative process in which a small, committed group of interviewees helps create a well-calibrated survey for their community. After multiple productive interview and feedback sessions, the UM Research Team analyzed participant input for consensus on the development of a final survey, the 2022 NRC Survey. The final survey was sent out to staff and board members from all 14 conservation districts and the VACD between December 2021 and January 2022, and had a 77% response rate. **The DEI Self-Assessment and Growth Guide are informed by these survey responses.** To learn more about the research that produced the DEI Self-Assessment and Growth Guide, please see the Research Methodology section of this document (p.25).

Both the Self-Assessment Tool and Growth Guide are intended as living documents, and should grow with the NRCs as progress is made on DEI. Certain criteria have intentionally been omitted from the Self-Assessment Tool, with the expectation that the NRCs will add additional relevant criteria at a later date. For instance, diversity of staff and board members is an important aspect of organizational DEI, but was not included as a benchmark in the DEI Self-Assessment Tool given the current absence of identity self-reporting mechanisms. See the DEI Committee Recommendations section for more information on how this Growth Guide can grow with you (p.6).

**Note: All infographics and statistics found in the Growth Guide are from the 2022 NRC Survey.**

# How To: Interacting with this Guide

**There are two complementary instruments to facilitate the districts in their DEI work: (1) the DEI Self-Assessment Tool and (2) the DEI Growth Guide.**

Growth Guide: This document (the Growth Guide) is intended to make all aspects of the Self-Assessment Tool clear and accessible, while providing context for the assessment material. The Growth Guide provides resources and general recommendations to steer districts forward in their DEI implementation work. This guide can be read on its own, but will be particularly useful after districts perform their annual self-assessment as it is intentionally designed to mirror the Self-Assessment Tool.

DEI Self-Assessment Tool: This tool, available as a Google Sheet, is designed to be used annually by each of the 14 conservation districts. Annual completion of this tool will document and quantify efforts being made in DEI work and help steer the following year's plans and actions in this field. To learn more about the DEI Self-Assessment Tool, click the blue hyperlink above.

After your district completes its annual assessment using the Self-Assessment Tool, you will turn to the Growth Guide using the following steps:

1. Identify your district's lowest scoring categories (e.g., Organizational Culture & Safe Space Practice)
  - \*Many districts are just starting this work and may have low scores in multiple areas. It is suggested that you prioritize working on lower-scoring categories, but it is important to continue pursuing growth in all categories regardless of score
2. Find your lowest scoring category within the guide (remember, the Self-Assessment Tool and Growth Guide mirror each other) to find guidance for your next steps
3. Review the content and resources, and implement them into your goals for the next year

## DEI Committee Recommendations

In order to make the best use of this guide, it is recommended that the NRCDs create an organization-wide DEI Committee composed of at least one staff or board member from each district. This committee should convene at least twice a year—prior to the districts completing their self-assessments and post-completion.

The committee will be responsible for:

1. Deciding the annual due date for the NRCD's DEI Self-Assessment Tool score submissions
2. Reviewing and publishing annual DEI Self-Assessment Tool scores in an email to all district staff and board members, as well as providing these scores to VACD to be included in the Annual Report
3. Updating the DEI Self-Assessment Tool so it remains relevant as a majority of districts consistently achieve the highest point potential in each section
4. Reviewing writings submitted by districts for the final step of the Self-Assessment Tool benchmark process, as well as approving and adding them into the DEI Growth Guide in the appropriate section

## Growth Areas and Steps

The DEI wants and needs of the Vermont Natural Resource Conservation District staff and board members are organized into two categories: **Inward-Facing Community** and **Outward-Facing Community**. These categories were established after careful analysis of survey responses from the 2022 NRCD Survey and differentiate the NRCD's internal and external culture and operations. Sections were also developed using survey data to address different priority areas within these categories. For more information on how these categories and sections were developed, visit the Research Methodology section (p.25).

**Under each section, you will find information on specific benchmarks in the Self-Assessment Tool that need more context as well as general recommendations and additional resources.**





## Inward-Facing Community

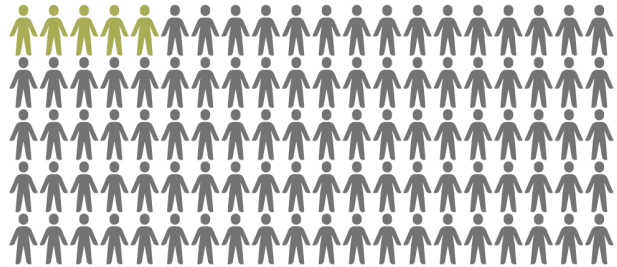
In order for a district to best serve their community, they need to have a strong, functioning team of staff and board members. This requires inward-facing community work like building a healthy organizational culture, creating safe-spaces, educating staff and board on DEI issues, and ensuring the implementation of DEI practices.



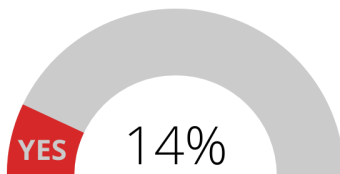
## Organizational Culture & Safe-Space Practice

An organizational culture that fosters safe space is one that allows people of all identities to feel comfortable to exist and work together productively without fear of judgement or discrimination. In the 2022 NRCD Survey, 5% (n=4) of staff and board members revealed that they have felt afraid to disclose an identity out of fear of retaliation or exclusion. By working on the benchmarks in this section, your district can create a workplace that is inclusive for all.

Have you been afraid to disclose an identity of yours out of fear of retaliation or exclusion in your current workplace?



Have you witnessed or experienced discriminatory behaviors in your current workplace?



As a way of creating a workplace that is safe for everyone, it is recommended that the districts have a way to report discriminatory/harmful behaviors that are experienced or perceived in the workplace. This is important, because without an avenue to report these behaviors, employees and board members are left unprotected and vulnerable to unequal power dynamics. In the 2022 NRCD Survey, 14% of staff reported witnessing or experiencing discriminatory behaviors.

Throughout the Self-Assessment Tool, there are benchmarks that call for the creation of certain workplace groups:

1. **The monthly study group that is open to staff and board members of all identities to study DEI issues:** This group will empower continued learning and allow for the practice of discussing sensitive topics together as colleagues.
2. **Affinity groups that allow for people with shared identities or interests to meet and discuss different topics of importance:** Many organizations form affinity groups as a way to create a safe space for staff with minority identities. The suggestion of a white affinity group is to ensure that there is a space focused on unpacking white supremacy and working on anti-racism efforts in a way that does not unintentionally cause harm to BIPOC folks within the organization. In the NRCD Survey, the word “diversity” was

mentioned 79 times when participants were addressing opportunities of growth in their district. As the districts evolve and become more diverse, other affinity groups should be created to encompass the changing needs and demographics of the districts.

## Resources

It is important to build a trusting relationship with your coworkers, one that enables strong communication, especially around high-stakes topics (e.g., race or gender). [Sassy Facilitation](#) offers "[My Communication Style](#)" worksheets to aid in healthy organizational culture. These worksheets are meant to be completed by all staff and board members, and should be accessible to all. With the implementation of this resource, staff and board members can consult the communication style worksheets of their colleagues to foster better working relationships. An example of a completed communication style sheet can be found [here](#).

Sassy Facilitation also provides a [Basics of Safe Space](#) write-up and [video](#). These resources can help support districts in their process of creating a safe-space agreement for their workplace. Doing so will empower districts to have high-stakes dialogue in a way that feels safe and productive for all involved.

### Additional Resources:

- [Race and Ethnicity Conversation Guide](#) | LivingRoom Conversations
- [Types of Diversity in the Workplace You Need to Know](#) | Bailey Reiners
- [Agreements for Multicultural Interactions](#) | Adapted from Visions Inc., "Guidelines for Productive Work Sessions"
- [Meeting Check Out: Self and Group Evaluations](#) | Sassy Facilitation
- [Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send](#) | Adapted from Sue, Derald Wing, [Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation](#)
- [Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism](#) | The New York Times

## Hiring & Recruitment

A comprehensive hiring and recruitment plan that encompasses DEI, will create a space that is welcoming to diversity and retention. Below are a few key steps for bringing DEI into your hiring and recruitment process.

1. Collect data as to how applicants discovered available career opportunities. This can be a question added to the application process, and the data can be used to ensure that you are expanding outreach when advertising for open positions.
2. Throughout the hiring paperwork process, include an optional section for new hires to self-identify. Collecting this confidential information can help guide future diversity efforts.
3. Conduct exit surveys as staff and board members transition out of their positions. These surveys will gauge how departing staff and board members think the NRCDs have advanced their skills and experience. In addition, this information can be valuable to improving the recruitment process as you better understand your organization's top reasons for staff turnover.

\*Due to the small size of many districts and familiar organizational relationships, it's important that these be conducted as anonymous surveys to ensure transitioning staff and board members are honest about their experience in the organizations and do not detract from the purpose of the exit survey.

#### Additional Resources:

- [Public Sector Jobs: Opportunities for Advancing Racial Equity](#) | Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity
- [A Toolkit to Mitigate Bias in Recruitment and Hiring](#) | The Avarna Group
- [Uncovering Bias: A New Way to Study Hiring Can Help](#) | The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania
- [7 Practical Ways to Reduce Bias in Your Hiring Process](#) | Rebecca Knight
- [Want to Close the Pay Gap? Pay Transparency Will Help](#) | Kristin Wong
- [How to Make Salary Transparency Work at Your Company](#) | Katherine Johnson
- [Your Ultimate Guide to Exit Interviews](#) | Qualtrics XM

## Staff Leadership & Board

Making DEI a priority in the workplace requires staff leadership and board members who are able to set an example for the NRCDs as arbiters of diversity, equity, and inclusion while being receptive to feedback and change. Staff leaders and board members should seek to embody the principles of DEI by reflecting a diversity of identities and ensuring pathways to leadership are accessible and equitable for all staff and the community at large).

To grow in the area of staff leadership and board, the NRCDs can take steps to attract diverse candidates to the organization while encouraging their retention and promotion. Steps and resources for attracting diverse candidates are mentioned in more detail under the Hiring & Recruitment section of this guide (p. 10), but there are additional considerations for undertaking hiring and recruitment with the goal of fostering diverse leadership. These considerations include statewide efforts to change statutes requiring land ownership to participate in elections of board members and making it clear that it is not a requirement for board members to be landowners.

Staff leadership and board members can also support DEI by creating a culture in which DEI is prioritized and valued. This includes: acting consistently around DEI by making time for DEI matters to be addressed at regular meetings; supporting the DEI Committee and encouraging staff and board participation; allocating resources for DEI initiatives; and encouraging advocacy on behalf of DEI as part of the NRCD's broader work.

Additional Resources:

- [Ensure Your DEI Work Takes Toot: How to Engage Your Board of Directors in DEI](#) | YW Boston
- [Strategic Planning for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity](#) | Berkeley University
- [Guide to Developing a Strategic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan](#) | SHRM

## Trainings

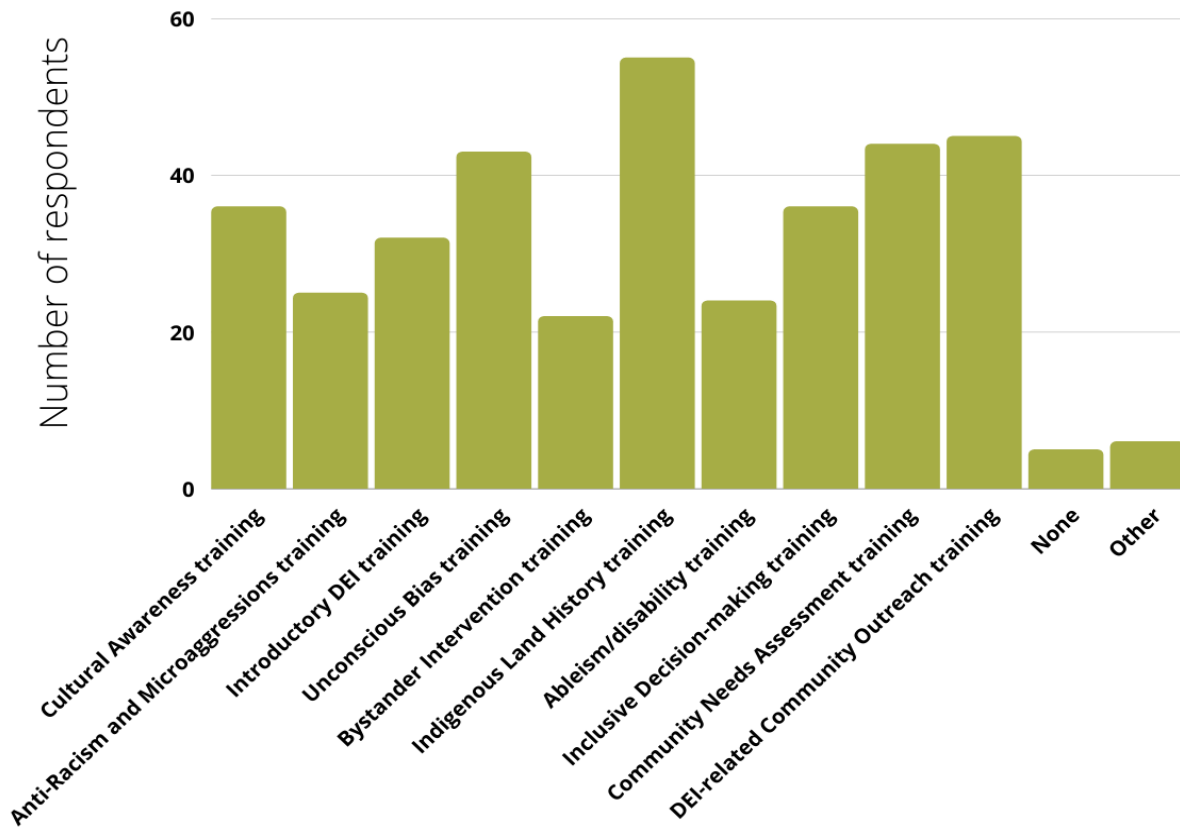
To ensure that your district can properly and purposefully embody the tenets of DEI, it is imperative to pursue educational opportunities that staff and board members can participate in. Organized trainings are one of the most effective ways to internalize and reinforce ideas and values of inclusivity and self-awareness. Typically, training should happen on a recurring basis to account for attrition and to allow for knowledge-building as staff and board members learn new concepts. In addition to holding trainings, districts should focus on incorporating lessons learned into their work to see operational/cultural outcomes.

**49%**

**of respondents felt that DEI-related trainings provided by NRCD/VACD/NRCS in 2019-2022 led to operational/cultural outcomes.**

Any training the districts participate in should be facilitated by an outside organization, partner, or qualified conservation district staff. The graphic below delineates common DEI trainings, as well as their perceived benefit in NRCDs.

Notably, out of the 373 responses for this question, 98.66% of respondents indicated their district could benefit from at least one of the following trainings.



Additional Resources:

- [Diversity & Inclusion Microlearning Program](#) | Grovo
- [Project Implicit\\*](#) | Harvard
- [Sassy Facilitation](#)
- [Diversity Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace](#) | Coursera
- [Gender and Sexuality: Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace](#) | Coursera
- [What does it mean to identify as Transgender or Gender Non-Conforming?](#) | Coursera

- [Culture-Driven Team Building Specialization](#) | Coursera
- [Optimizing Diversity on Teams](#) | Coursera
- [Leading With Effective Communication \(Inclusive Leadership Training\)](#) | edX
- [Becoming a Successful Leader \(Inclusive Leadership Training\)](#) | edX

\*[Some sources](#) suggest taking the Implicit Association Test many times to get an accurate evaluation of your implicit associations and biases. The tool is not designed to make such evaluations after a single test - but it is still a good learning tool to explore.

## Planning & Implementation of DEI

For DEI to become a reality across a state-level organization like the NRCD, substantial attention is required throughout the planning and implementation stages. DEI should be a priority item in the NRCD's strategic planning process as well as annual plans and budgets. By including DEI in these planning efforts, the NRCD can guide the acquisition of grants and other sources of funding towards DEI training and initiatives that address both inward and outward-facing community needs.

Before incorporating DEI into annual and long-term planning efforts, you should engage staff and board members in exercises that help create consensus on what DEI can and should look like for the organization. Visioning sessions and DEI statements are a great way to get started with this work.

### How to Complete a Visioning Session

Visioning can take place at any stage of the planning process but it is recommended that you hold a visioning session at least once a year, either before or after completing the Self-Assessment Tool . This work will never truly be complete and is something that the organization will always be working towards, but visioning allows you to imagine and use those ideas to create tangible DEI-related goals.

When asked the question, **“what would our workplace look and feel like once we have reached a diverse, equitable, and inclusive future?”**, survey respondents gave a variety of thoughtful answers:

*“Clear communication across all roles in the company; quarterly DEI trainings; active partnerships with community orgs doing DEI work; biannual outreach event accessible to*

*all; diverse workplace and customer base; openly speaking about biases in the workplace; policy in place for addressing injustices and holding people accountable - clear steps to take if you are harmed by a colleague"*

*"Our workplace would look like the community we serve, at least as much as is possible with a small staff. Our decision making processes would include input from all segments of our community."*

*"Better service to a greater number of community members, greater staff retention, better partnerships with other conservation organizations, better and more holistic conservation outcomes..."*

Below is an example of what a visioning session might produce. The quote boxed in green, in response to the above prompt, is from the 2022 NRCD Survey. From there, arrows point to examples of tangible goals that can be pulled from a visioning statement.

## Visioning Session Example

Develop at least 1 partnership with an organization in our community that is BIPOC-led or working on their DEI efforts



Begin planning to host an event with a partner to further the relationship and bring in community



*"I think that some key pieces would be representing and supporting a wider range of people through our work, developing more partnerships and relationships within our community. Also having a board that is more diverse and more supportive of the DEI work we are trying to do."*



Complete a community assessment to understand how to support more people through our work



Host 1 DEI training with the board and debrief the importance of DEI work in our district (incorporate the community assessment here)

### How to Develop an Official DEI Statement

Creating a shared DEI statement is a useful exercise that helps to ensure a team is on the same page when embarking on DEI work. Sharing a DEI statement publicly lets the



community you serve know that your district is committed to DEI, and reminds staff and board members about their commitment to the work. Below is a possible framework for a DEI statement. Feel free to use this framework, or to create your own. The table below includes some of the Values and Actions listed by staff and board members in the 2022 NRCD Survey when asked to fill in the blanks in the provided framework sentence. These lists are included for your inspiration in the creation of your district's official DEI statement.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion means that we value \_\_\_\_\_ and we act in accordance with our values by (actions)\_\_\_\_\_.**

Values	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All people and their intersecting identities and experiences</li> <li>● Every person and their present &amp; historical connections to the land</li> <li>● The contributions to land stewardship and agriculture by indigenous people, immigrants, queer farmers and farmers of color</li> <li>● All people and communities</li> <li>● Voices, experience, and expertise of all residents of our district</li> <li>● The power of working all together as a community to better our environment and create a better life for everyone</li> <li>● You as a unique individual</li> <li>● The presence of differences within our organization, such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective</li> <li>● Everyone's history and experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Making an active effort to reach out to, listen to, and collaborate with all members of our community</li> <li>● Providing equitable access to resources</li> <li>● Empowering all people to participate in decision-making</li> <li>● Committing to our shared education, growth and efforts to create a place for everyone to work together toward a better future</li> <li>● Acknowledging the repeated history of injustices including racial exclusion, violence, and land theft which continue to reverberate through our agricultural systems</li> <li>● Pledging to support our LGBTQIA+ individuals, BIPOC, women, immigrants, and low income persons, and any other under-represented individuals and groups by making our programs accessible and inclusive</li> <li>● Actively build enhanced structures for participation in District activities and programming and environmental decision-making for historically underserved residents of our District</li> <li>● Working with all groups and people to conserve and protect soil, water, and natural resources for the local</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cultural heritage, socioeconomic realities, and diverse perspectives of all residents and users of resources in our district</li> <li>• Opinions and beliefs</li> <li>• All people that have lived, live, and will live in Vermont</li> <li>• Empowerment of Vermont's unrepresented communities</li> <li>• All, focusing on underserved and marginalized populations</li> </ul>	<p>community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring each voice is heard</li> <li>• Striving to represent these opinions and beliefs across our work</li> <li>• Bringing underrepresented groups to the forefront</li> <li>• Actively standing up to bias in the workplace</li> <li>• Engaging with the community on DEI topics</li> <li>• Striving for the involvement of everyone in our employment and programs, especially those who are typically underrepresented in the fields of conservation and agriculture in Vermont</li> <li>• Ensuring that our programs and assistance is available and accessible to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, or any other historically underserved identity</li> <li>• Recognizing that DEI efforts are central to ensuring positive and holistic conservation outcomes</li> <li>• Recognizing many communities have been denied access to conservation efforts and funding and/or their contributions have been willfully forgotten</li> <li>• Intentionally seeking out partnerships with groups that we have been less engaged with in the past including BIPOC and people who do not own land but do have a stake in our collective care for our natural resources</li> </ul>
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Additional Resources:

- [Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A Resource Guide to Put Ideas into Action](#) | Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity
- [Equity and Inclusivity Toolkit](#) | International City/County Management Association

## Outward-Facing Community

In addition to working internally on creating the space and conditions necessary for DEI work to be successful, there is much the NRCs can do to foster DEI efforts rooted in their interactions with the external community. Through collaboration practices, programs and services, and relationships with Indigenous people, the districts can begin to integrate DEI into building and maintaining their partnerships, and integrating their community's needs into their work.



## Collaboration Practices

Essential to your DEI efforts is building a foundation of trust between participating members of your district and those of partnering organizations. Adrienne maree brown identifies moving at the speed of trust as a principle organizations must use in their strategies; it means working at a pace that allows you to prioritize making thoughtful and meaningful connections that center mutually beneficial relationships in order to do the work. Power dynamics inherent in any engagement, particularly in professional settings, will influence how readily trust can be established. To ensure mutually beneficial partnerships, it is important to reflect on the particular power dynamics present in any of your district's partnerships and to manage them effectively.

70% of survey respondents identified barriers to starting relationships with BIPOC groups/organizations. It is important to reflect on barriers and brainstorm ways in which districts can effectively build collaborative relationships.

Additional Resources:

- [From Seed to Harvest: A Toolkit for Collaborative Racial Equity Strategies](#) | Race Forward
- [The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#) | Facilitating Power

## Programs & Services

Program design is fundamental in ensuring that not only can a program function, but it meets its goals in addressing the needs of populations that have historically been underserved. To improve program outcomes and service accessibility for underserved communities, the district needs to have the input of the communities themselves. A community needs assessment should be implemented to

**54.5% of respondents said their districts are taking steps to address the needs of underserved groups within their communities. Here are the communities they identified as underserved:**

A word cloud of underserved communities. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'Indigenous people' in the center. Other words include 'People of color', 'Black people', 'low-income people', 'non-land owners', 'minorities', 'immigrants', 'New Americans', 'farmers-of-color', and 'new farmers'.

Indigenous people

People of color

Black people

low-income people

non-land owners

minorities

immigrants

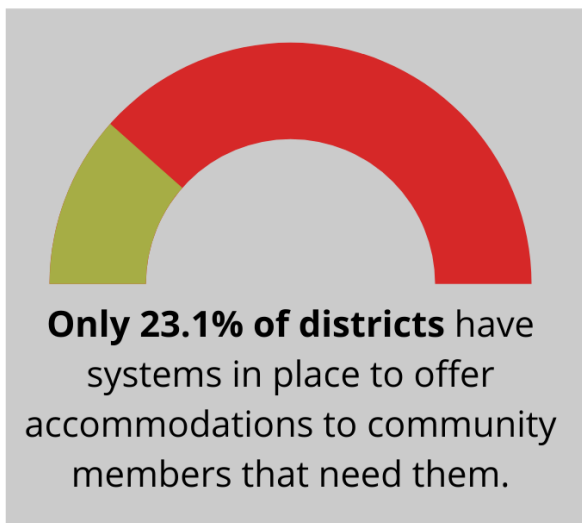
New Americans

farmers-of-color

new farmers

gather data on the ways in which community members want to and can be engaged. By establishing the means that optimize community engagement, you can create an environment that enables community involvement. From there, existing and future program design can be reviewed and guided upon the recorded needs of the population. Overall, program design decisions would use the community needs assessment as a base and follow the [Equity and Empowerment Lens](#) (a resource listed in the Self-Assessment Tool).

Another key facet to addressing issues in internal and external DEI efforts is the ability to maintain direct lines of communication between your district and community. This kind of task asserts that basic operations that facilitate communication must be accessible as possible for all potential participants/users. The most direct example of improving accessibility to services and programs hosted by your district would be to review website language and outreach. Foremost, your district's website and other modes of communication i.e. newsletter, email communications, and/or community bulletin boards should be available in multiple languages. District communications should also be readily available in multiple formats that serve as disability aids ranging from providing captions/audio descriptions for videos to providing screen readers. Not only should these alternative aids be made available but they must be made well known to the public.



76.9% of respondents (n=78) indicated that their district does not have a system in place for interacting or communicating with individuals in the community that need translation services or other special accommodations.

Systems currently used in some districts to interact with and communicate with individuals that do not have access to a computer:	Systems currently used in some districts to interact with and communicate with individuals that need translation services or special accommodations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Phone calls</li> <li>● Mailings (e.g., newsletters, programming announcements, flyers, etc.)</li> <li>● In person outreach (e.g., in district office)</li> <li>● Site visits</li> <li>● Newspaper press releases</li> <li>● Outreach at local venues or events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hire a translator when needed</li> <li>● Utilize resources from the state or other organizations (such as VAWQP partner, Lake Champlain Basin Program, UVM Extension, etc.)</li> <li>● Call phone service line for translation services</li> </ul>

Additional Resources:

- [Make Your Websites More Accessible](#) | National Disability Authority
- [Community Needs Assessment Participant Workbook](#) | Center for Disease Control
- [Putting Locally Led Conservation to Work](#) | Arkansas Conservation District Directors Training Manual
- [Resource Needs Assessment: A Guide for Conservation Districts](#) | Nevada Association of Conservation Districts

## Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

In the 2022 NRC D Survey, Vermont’s Indigenous communities were the most identified underserved demographic by NRC Ds. Before undertaking the work to address this shortcoming, it is important that you lay the right foundation for working with Indigenous communities. The districts should put meticulous effort into crafting meaningful Indigenous land acknowledgements and commit to learning how to build meaningful, reciprocal relationships.

An acknowledgement of the land is a formal expression of recognition, respect, and gratitude towards the original inhabitants of the territory on which a district exists. It is one practice for honoring the Indigenous Peoples that stewarded the land for thousands of years before colonization. It is a means for uplifting the current, present existence of the

Indigenous Peoples of the territory and acknowledging the long-standing history of forced migration from their lands, oppression, marginalization, and discrimination by colonists that has resulted in the numerous inequities Indigenous peoples continue to face today.

Research and learning is an essential component for honoring Indigenous peoples and Native Lands and establishing relationships. It is foundational for historical accounts of the Districts and your land acknowledgement, and important to do prior to contacting Indigenous groups for consultation and collaboration.

**See the [Appendix](#) for a more detailed guide to crafting Indigenous land acknowledgements and supporting Indigenous peoples through your work.**

As mentioned above, land acknowledgements are an important practice of respect towards Indigenous peoples, but they are just one step. Without taking real action to support Indigenous peoples, there is very little value in a land acknowledgement. The [Native Governance Center](#) writes, "If you're contemplating writing a statement, we encourage you to commit the bulk of your writing time to outlining the concrete ways that you plan to support Indigenous communities into the future. Otherwise, your land acknowledgement statement simply becomes yet another form of 'optical allyship.'"

Keep learning, unlearning, and driving your commitment to respecting and uplifting efforts for justice for Indigenous peoples. Below are resources to utilize, and suggestions to consider for taking actions beyond a land acknowledgement (but keep doing those too!).

Some Suggested Actions:

- Include updates on local and/or state Tribal programs and events that are open to the public related to land stewardship in newsletters and on websites
- Build relationships with members of the Abenaki Nation that are willing to work with organizations and learn how you can support them
  - As you seek consultation for approval and guidance on work that involves Indigenous peoples, be certain that you are consolidating these efforts with other districts to ensure that the community is not overburdened as you begin this work.
  - Remember to always offer compensation, even if it is not requested, when working with Indigenous groups.

## Resources

Relationship building with Indigenous groups must be done with care. For this reason, utilizing resources developed by Indigenous peoples is highly encouraged. The [Honoring Native Land Guide](#) was developed by the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture and outlines steps for crafting a land acknowledgement. The [Indigenous Ally Toolkit](#) contains essential information for being an ally of Indigenous Peoples. It is written for a Canadian context, so some content is not applicable, but the high level information is important.

### Additional Resources:

- [Beyond Territorial Acknowledgement](#) | âpihtawikosisân
- Page 10 of the Honoring Native Land Guide highlights:
  - [Indigenous Environmental Network](#)
  - [Standing Rock Syllabus](#) | NYC Stands with Standing Rock
  - [An Indigenous People's History of the United States](#) | Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz
- [A Self-Assessment](#) | Native Governance Center
- [10 Ways To Be A Genuine Ally To Indigenous Communities](#) | Amnesty International
- [Honoring Indigenous Sovereignty](#) | Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust
- [Traditional Ecological Knowledge](#) | Melissa K. Nelson and Dan Shilling
- [Braiding SweetGrass](#) | Robin Wall Kimmerer



# Research Methodology

## Delphi Process

Through initial meetings between the Core Team and UM Research Team, it was clear that the success of DEI efforts at the NRCDs depended in large part on what staff and board members thought and felt about DEI in their workplace. It was important to assess the organization's strengths and weaknesses, what current DEI efforts looked like, how they envision the organization's future in DEI work, and what staff and board members wanted and needed to achieve DEI goals. With guidance from Dr. Kyle Whyte, the UM Research Team determined the best method for assessing these aspects of DEI at the NRCDs was through the Delphi survey model and the subsequent creation of an all-staff and board DEI survey.

The Delphi model is used as a form of group communication, bringing the knowledge of experts in a certain field or topic to gain consensus on a set of priorities (Brown, 2018). The UM Team used the Delphi process to gain consensus on questions for a final DEI survey relevant to the NRCD's work. The expert recruitment process was conducted through a district manager meeting and follow-up communications that sought to drum up as much interest as possible. In total, 19 staff and board members signed up to participate in a process that would entail one hour-long interview with a UM Team member and two 30-minute feedback sessions. Of those 19 volunteers, 16 completed the initial interview, 9 completed the first iteration of the survey, and 7 completed the second survey iteration.

After each step in the Delphi process, the UM Research Team analyzed and coded responses, paying particular attention to metrics and measurable goals, points of confusion, and recommendations for changes to the final survey that would go out to all staff and board members. At the end of the second iteration of the survey, few edits were needed as the participants reached a consensus on the survey questions.

## Final DEI Survey Creation

After the three rounds of the Delphi process were complete, the UM Team worked to create the final survey, which was intended as a census of all NRCD staff and board members as well as some VACD general and technical staff. The UM Team worked closely with Dr. Whyte and the Core Team to ensure question clarity and proper flow logic, as well as ensuring relevant questions were presented to the appropriate respondents (NRCD staff

and board members vs. VACD staff). Responses to multiple choice questions were chosen strategically to inform the creation of the Self-Assessment Tool and Growth Guide.

For the final product, question topics ranged from individual attitudes and beliefs about DEI in the workplace, to current internal operations pertaining to dimensions of DEI and applications of DEI in external communications. A final section was also added to gather insight into what respondents felt should be included in the Growth Guide to assist their journey towards a future grounded in DEI principles. Survey responses were kept anonymous and respondents consented to having their data used in the collaboration project with the Core Team as well as for additional reports by the UM Team.

The DEI Survey was administered via email to NRCD district managers and a VACD point-person, with hard copies of the survey available as needed. Written responses to the survey were mailed back to the UM Team and entered verbatim into the survey form for the purpose of analysis. Altogether, the survey was available for one month between December 2021 and January 2022. Once the survey closed, a total of 92 responses were gathered from the 120 NRCD and VACD members, for a 76.7% total response rate.

## Self-Assessment Tool Creation

All responses to the final survey were coded using NVIVO Qualitative Research Data Analysis Software. Some answers were coded for “Benchmarks” and “DEI Gaps in Understanding” while questions that asked specifically for DEI statements were coded for “Actions” and “Values.” The “DEI Gaps in Understanding” code was used to flag misunderstandings of DEI and ensure they would be addressed in the Self-Assessment Tool and Growth Guide. The “Benchmarks” code was used to capture “should, could, would, want” statements, as well as any actions currently enacted by districts, to inform the benchmarks used in the Self-Assessment Tool. The “Actions” and “Values” codes were used to assess the values and actions of the districts in the context of how they define DEI.

The most commonly used words in all “Benchmarks” codes were collected using the word frequency query function in NVIVO and the top 50 words were analyzed by the research team. The words that could be used as organizing themes for the Self-Assessment Tool were: community, organizing, helping, serving/services, diversity, trainings, educational, programs, support, outreach, collaboration, relationships, accessible, inclusive/include. For reference, “community” was mentioned 151 times. “Diversity” was mentioned 79 times. Using these commonly used words, the research team created the current framework for the Self-Assessment Tool.

# Appendix

## Developing an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

**Disclaimer:** This is not intended as an ultimate nor comprehensive guide to honoring native land, but a **starting point**. It is highly encouraged that you refer to other resources such as those included in this guide, other toolkits and guides, and through respectful engagement with Indigenous Tribes, **when appropriate**.

### Suggested steps to get started:

#### Step One: Research & Identify

Identifying the traditional inhabitants of the lands you're on is important. This may vary by district, it may not. There are likely multiple Indigenous groups that identify with the land you're on historically and/or presently. Many places in Vermont and across the U.S. are currently home to Indigenous peoples who have inhabited this land from time immemorial. There are also Indigenous peoples that have been who have come from elsewhere, and those relocated to other lands that still honor their original, ancestral lands. Even if there is no established Tribe within your district, you still can and should craft a land acknowledgement, since Indigenous peoples did steward these lands prior to colonization. The point here, and indeed the goal of acknowledgement, is recognizing and uplifting the original inhabitants of the land you're on—not perpetuating neglect or division.

Proceed with care. Conduct solid research with intention, paying attention to sources, before crafting your statement of acknowledgement.

### Resources to jumpstart your research:

- A [webinar recording](#) from the Vermont Historical Society for evaluating sources when researching Indigenous peoples' histories
- [Native-Land.ca](#), a highly cited, comprehensive map of Native Lands
  - Check out their [teaching guide](#) to engage deeper with the map
- [Native Languages](#), a site with information by state on local tribes, with contact information
- University of Vermont's [Place-Based Landscape Analysis and Community Engagement \(PLACE\) Program](#) offers current and historical information by town within the state

- [Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs](#) website on state-recognized tribes
  - Individual Tribe and Band websites:
    - [Elnu Abenaki Tribe](#)
    - [Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation](#)
    - [Ko’asek Traditional Band of the Sovereign Abenaki Nation](#)
    - [Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi](#)
      - **Note:** State recognition is given to groups that identify as Native but do not meet criteria for federal recognition. There is a storied history regarding federal recognition of Indigenous peoples of Vermont, which you can [read a little about here](#).
- [Recognizing Place: Indigenous Land Acknowledgments](#) | Audubon Vermont

### Step Two: Draft Acknowledgement

After identifying the group or groups that must be recognized for the land your district is located on, craft a land acknowledgement statement. It’s suggested to get feedback on your statement at this stage in the process. Some starting points may be knowledgeable coworkers that did not help draft the statement, other districts working on land acknowledgements, knowledgeable VACD staff, individuals or groups outside your Districts’ direct sphere such as UVM resources, the Vermont Native American Affairs Office, etc.

### Some important notes:

1. Always capitalize:
  - a. Indigenous
  - b. Tribe
  - c. First Nations
  - d. The Nation or Tribe you are referencing
2. Don’t say “our Indigenous peoples” or “Vermont’s Indigenous Tribes” etc.
3. Don’t use “Indians” unless referring to specific organizations or Tribes that identify with that term
  - a. First Nation peoples and groups identify with different terms, be sure to make note of which is preferred by a local group when researching

There is no specific template for a land acknowledgement. Each should be tailored to the particular circumstances of a district based on localized research and further reflection of the district’s place.

The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, in their guide *Honor Native Land: A Guide And Call To Acknowledgment* (cite location of this resource), suggest considering the level of detail you want to include, and provide the following outline for doing so:

At its simplest, an acknowledgment could look like this:

**“We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the \_\_\_\_\_  
People.”**

Beginning with just this simple sentence would be a meaningful intervention in most U.S. gathering spaces.

From there, there are many other elements to bring into acknowledgment:

Often, statements specifically honor elders:

**“I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the  
traditional lands of the \_\_\_\_\_ People, and pay my respect to elders both  
past and present.”**

Some allude to the caring, reciprocal relationship with land:

**“I want to respectfully acknowledge the \_\_\_\_\_ People, who have  
stewarded this land throughout the generations.”**

Acknowledgments may also make explicit mention of the occupied, unceded nature of the territory in which a gathering is taking place:

**“We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we  
gather is the occupied/unceded/ seized territory of the \_\_\_\_\_ People.”**

**“I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in \_\_\_\_\_, the  
ancestral and unceded territory  
of the \_\_\_\_\_ People.**

Source: United State Department of Arts and Culture (2017). *Honor Native Land: A Guide And Call To Acknowledgment*. United State Department of Arts and Culture

### Step Three: Implement

After finalizing your land acknowledgement, practice delivering the statement aloud. Learn the pronunciation of Native group names until you can say them without stumbling or

hesitation. Then, articulate your acknowledgement during your next meeting at the opening of the session. Offer it at your next public gathering, event, or program at the start of welcoming remarks. Continue to do this from here on out.

Often, engaging in this practice becomes an empty gesture—just another piece of the agenda without intention and meaning behind it. Delivered quickly, without respect or reflection, before moving on to the meeting topic.

Avoid this. Approach the practice not as an obligation or box to check, but rather, offer your acknowledgement with awareness, intention, and presence. Build in moments of authentic reflection. Consider your own positionality within the history of colonization and land use today in Vermont. Encourage meeting, event, and program participants to do the same, and give them a moment to consider your words through this lens. Continue to develop your acknowledgement, change the structure and build on the meaning.

Strong land acknowledgements are not just words. Strong acknowledgements can prompt meaningful introspection and lead to uplifted awareness and further action within the community. Momentum builds on itself. Be the catalyst for that momentum.

Also after the finalization of your land acknowledgement, see how it looks on your district website or VACD webpage. Consider the ideal location for it and make layout adjustments as needed. Aim to have it be visible on the top of the homepage so viewers see it as soon as they navigate to your website.

Additionally, incorporate your research from Step One into your website beyond the land acknowledgement. Expand the narrative on your district's "history" page, if you have one, or create a new section to highlight the Native peoples that stewarded the land for thousands of years prior to colonization. You can include your land acknowledgement here again as well, or offer an expanded one linked to the land history. This section is also a good place to uplift the Indigenous peoples within your district by featuring their artwork, resources on land stewardship they've published, and other digital elements to honor their current presence on the land.

### **Additional Resources:**

- [7 Tips on Building Relationships with Indigenous Peoples](#) | Indigenous Corporate Training, Inc.
- [The Ethics of Traditional Knowledge Exchange in Climate Change Initiatives](#) | Earthzine
- [On the role of traditional ecological knowledge as a collaborative concept: a philosophical study](#) | Kyle Powys Whyte

## DEI SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

### Navigating the Tool:

At the bottom of this page there are 3 tabs: "**Directions**," "**SA Tool**," and "**Reflection**." You are currently on the "**Directions**" tab, which has directions for the Self-Assessment Tool and Reflection. By clicking on each tab, you will be navigating to other pages of this document. The second tab, "**SA Tool**," is the Self-Assessment Tool itself. The third tab, "**Reflection**," is a sheet with prompts for reflection that correspond to each section of the Self-Assessment Tool.

*\*Under "File" in the toolbar above, select "Make a copy" to duplicate this entire worksheet to fill out each year and retain this one as a template.*

### DEI Self-Assessment Tool Directions (Tab 2):

This annual Self-Assessment Tool is split into two categories highlighted in blue: **Inward Facing Community** and **Outward Facing Community**. Within these categories are sections boxed in red, such as Organizational Culture & Safe Space Practice. All cells in this document that require your engagement are highlighted in grey.

Under each section, you will find a list of **Benchmarks** and **Resources** with corresponding check boxes highlighted in grey. Please check the **one box per Benchmark/Resource** that best fits the present reality for your district. Upon checking the the boxes for each section, fill out the **Checks per column in section** cells, also highlighted in grey. This Google Sheet will calculate your **Point Totals** and **Section Total** at the end of each section. If you are completing this Self-Assessment outside of the Google Sheet, the calculation instructions are included in parentheses throughout the sheet.

At the end of the Self-Assessment Tool page, you will find the **Final Score** cell. This cell value will also be calculated by the Google Sheet and manual instructions are included in parentheses. This score, as well as your section totals can steer your future DEI work and should be reported to the DEI Committee for publication.

### DEI Self-Assessment Tool Reflection Worksheet (Tab 3):

This space is for reflecting on the different sections of the Self-Assessment Tool and can earn your district points in the tool itself. As in the Self-Assessment Tool, the two categories are highlighted in green and the sections within the categories are boxed in yellow. You can fill the reflections out while taking the Self-Assessment or work on them at a different time, whatever works best for you and your district.

Along the left-hand column are prompts to help spark ideas, but think of the prompts as simply suggestions. Use the space in whatever way will be most valuable for steering your future DEI work and continuing your district's growth.

Reflections can be on an entire section or individual benchmarks. It may be useful to document any challenges or barriers encountered in your DEI work to help digest them and chart possible directions forward. Perhaps record accomplishments and milestones as a way to celebrate them; this can also be useful to problemsolve future challenges. Or maybe simply documenting a process of working toward a goal might be most valuable.

You may find reflecting to be a helpful exercise for setting goals and planning next steps for the coming year. Reflections can be a living record of the districts DEI journey -- a reminder of hard work and achievements, as well as an account for future district staff to understand the path the district has taken thus far. The space is



## Inward Facing Community

### Organizational Culture & Safe Space Practice

Benchmarks	Haven't yet started work in this area points = 0	We have evidence that we have started work in this area points = 3	We have integrated this work into our operations and programs points = 5	We have documented our process for implementing this benchmark into our work and submitted it to the DEI committee. points = 7
We have a clear and established procedure for reporting any discriminatory/harmful behaviors experienced or perceived in the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a system in place to hold coworkers and superiors accountable when inappropriate/harmful workplace behavior is reported.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We are trained in and understand the reporting process and process for accountability in full, and a reminder of the process takes place each year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We encourage a healthy work/life balance (ex: people take breaks, eat meals, stop work activities on time, do not work off the clock).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We build space into the workplace for staff to share their diverse skills, perspectives, and stories (ex: staff bulletin board or virtual board, email chains, time during meetings, retreats).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We create opportunities to celebrate and learn about holidays, histories, and cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a monthly study group in our district, or in partnership with other districts, where people of all identities meet to learn together about pressing issues in DEI work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a monthly white affinity group, where white staff members can study anti-racist works and unlearn white supremacy together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have incorporated the Safe Space model into our work communications (see <b>Resources</b> below).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	We have not engaged with this resource points = 0	We have engaged with this resource points = 3		
Communications Style and Preferences Sheet ( <a href="#">Template</a> , <a href="#">Example</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<a href="#">Basics of a Safe Space</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<a href="#">Safe Space Video</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<a href="#">White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet: Organizational Culture &amp; Safe Space Practice</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Checks per column in section:</b>				
<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>	0			

### Hiring & Recruitment

Benchmarks	Haven't yet started work in this area points = 0	We have evidence that we have started work in this area points = 3	We have integrated this work into our operations and programs points = 5	We have documented our process for implementing this benchmark into our work and submitted it to the DEI committee points = 7
We recruit new staff and board members from places not traditionally recruited from in order to encourage diversity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	We review our compensation for all staff to ensure equitable salaries and benefits.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	We review salaries and adjust them annually to keep up with inflation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Salary information for staff and leadership is internally available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	We administer exit surveys for staff and board members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	In our application process, we collect data on how applicants are learning about career opportunities within our organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	In our hiring paperwork, there is an optional employee self-identification section to help guide future diversity efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Resources</b>		<b>We have not engaged with this resource</b>	<b>We have engaged with this resource</b>		
		points = 0	points = 3		
	<a href="#">What Is Pay Transparency and How to Do It Right</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet: Hiring &amp; Recruitment</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>Checks per column in section:</b>				
	<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>	0	0	0	0
	<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>	0			

**Staff Leadership & Board**

<b>Benchmarks</b>		<b>Haven't yet started work in this area</b>	<b>We have evidence that we have started work in this area</b>	<b>We have integrated this work into our operations and programs</b>	<b>We have documented our process for implementing this benchmark into our work and submitted it to the DEI committee</b>
		points = 0	points = 3	points = 5	points = 7
	We are involved in a statewide effort to change statutes requiring one to be a landowner to participate in elections of board members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Our communications to the board, staff, and community members explicitly state that it is not a requirement for board members to be landowners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Resources</b>		<b>We have not engaged with this resource</b>	<b>We have engaged with this resource</b>		
		points = 0	points = 3		
	<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet: Staff Leadership &amp; Board</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>Checks per column in section:</b>				
	<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>	0	0	0	0
	<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>	0			

**Trainings\***

<b>Benchmarks</b>		<b>We have not had this training</b>	<b>We had this training with less than 75% of our staff in attendance</b>	<b>We had this training with 75% or more of our staff in attendance</b>	<b>This is a training that we have on a recurring basis</b>
		points = 0	points = 1	points = 3	points = 5
	*Facilitated by an outside organization, partner, or qualified conservation district staff:				

Indigenous Land History training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEI-related Community Outreach training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Needs Assessment training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unconscious Bias training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusive Decision-making training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Awareness training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Introductory DEI training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning About Racism/Anti-Racism and Microaggressions training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ableism/Disability training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bystander Intervention training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>		
	points = 0	points = 3		
We formally debrief lessons learned in DEI related trainings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
We develop concrete steps for how lessons learned from DEI trainings can be integrated into the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet: Trainings</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>Checks per column in section:</b>			
	<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>			
	0	0	0	0
	<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>			
	0			

**Planning & Implementation of DEI**

<b>Benchmarks</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>		
	points = 0	points = 3		
We held an annual visioning meeting in which we set an attainable DEI related goal(s) for the year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
We completed the 6 month DEI goal check-in this year. (PAGE #)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
We accomplished the attainable DEI related goal(s) we set in our last annual visioning meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
We have increased our score in at least one growth area in the past year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
We integrate annual engagement with the Self-Assessment Tool and the accompanying Growth Guide into our annual and strategic plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A member from our district and/or board is on the DEI Committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
We have developed an official DEI statement and have it posted publicly (ex: website, job listings, newsletters)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Resources</b>	<b>We have not engaged with this resource</b>	<b>We have engaged with this resource</b>		
	points = 0	points = 3		
Visioning Worksheet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet: Planning &amp; Implementation of DEI</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>Checks per column in section:</b>			
	<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>			
	0	0	0	0
	<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>			
	0			

# Outward Facing Community

## Collaboration Practices

Benchmarks	Haven't yet started work in this area	We have evidence that we have started work in this area	We have integrated this work into our operations and programs	We have documented our process for implementing this benchmark into our work and submitted it to the DEI committee
	points = 0	points = 3	points = 5	points = 7
We learn about an organization's history, values, and goals before reaching out in hopes of creating a partnership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have developed partnerships with groups that advocate for those who are historically disenfranchised or DEI more broadly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have grown genuine partnerships within the past year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When working with other organizations/partners, we take our time to build meaningful, genuine relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We make decisions collaboratively with members of the organizations with which we are in partnership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We ensure that with each relationship we initiate and maintain, we are providing resources that are valuable for the partner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	We have not engaged with this resource	We have engaged with this resource		
	points = 0	points = 3		
Before beginning a new partnership, fill out the <a href="#">Collaboration Preparation Worksheet</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet</a> : Collaboration Practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Checks per column in section:</b>				
<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>				
	0	0	0	0
<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>				
	0			

## Programs & Services

Benchmarks	Haven't yet started work in this area	We have evidence that we have started work in this area	We have integrated this work into our operations and programs	We have documented our process for implementing this benchmark into our work and submitted it to the DEI committee
	points = 0	points = 3	points = 5	points = 7
We provide and publicize translation services and other accomodations, particularly at district-led events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We make our programs and events accessible to people with physical disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our website is accessible (ex: options for translation, compatibility with screen reader software, refreshable braille display, screen magnification).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our website is accessible (ex: text descriptions for visuals, compatibility with screen reader software, refreshable Braille display)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have performed a community needs assessment of the general district population that gathers data on how community members want to be engaged and served by our district (ex: wants, needs, resources, program ideas).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Our programs and services are informed by a current community needs assessment (i.e. one compiled in the last 5 years).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	We request community members' feedback after events and programs, and integrate it into future events and programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	We have incorporated the Equity Empowerment Lens and/or DEI Lens into our regular decision-making (See <b>Resources</b> below).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	We developed our own Equity Lens for decision making in regards to programs and services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Resources</b>		<b>We have not engaged with this resource</b>	<b>We have engaged with this resource</b>		
		points = 0	points = 3		
	<a href="#">Equity and Empowerment Lens</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<a href="#">DEI Lens</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<a href="#">Scale of Collaboration</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet: Programs &amp; Services</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>Checks per column in section:</b>				
	<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>	0	0	0	0
	<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>	0			

**Relationships with Indigenous Peoples**

<b>Benchmarks</b>	<b>Haven't yet started work in this area</b>	<b>We have evidence that we have started work in this area</b>	<b>We have integrated this work into our operations and programs</b>	<b>We have documented our process for implementing this benchmark into our work and submitted it to the DEI committee</b>
	points = 0	points = 3	points = 5	points = 7
We are educated on and aware of the historical and present Indigenous community(ies) in our district.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We include educational resources in our onboarding training about local Indigenous community (ies).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We include Indigenous community(ies) with local ties in our verbal communications of the conservation districts' history.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In our written communication of the conservation district's history, the local Indigenous community(ies) are included (ex: public materials, website).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have crafted an Indigenous land acknowledgement based on research and following recommendations outlined in this guide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We acknowledge the Indigenous land we work on and the original inhabitants of these lands before meetings and public events (ex: our district's land acknowledgement is given, we hold a moment of reflective meditation, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**\*\*Advisory Note: In reference to consultation below, please note when requesting consultation, you must ensure that the same Indigenous individuals are not overburdened with these voluntary consultation requests .**

	We have consulted the relevant Indigenous community(ies) for approval of our land acknowledgement and history telling before making them publicly available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Resources</b>		<b>We have not engaged with this resource</b>	<b>We have engaged with this resource</b>		
		points = 0	points = 3		
	<a href="#">Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call Acknowledgement</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<a href="#">Indigenous Ally Toolkit</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

	<a href="#">Reflection Worksheet: Indigenous Land &amp; Community</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>Checks per column in section:</b>				
	<b>Point Totals (# of checks per column in section multiplied by point value):</b>	0	0	0	0
	<b>Section Total (Sum of Point Totals):</b>	0			
				<b>Final Score (Sum of all Section Totals):</b>	0

## Inward Facing Community

### Organizational Culture & Safe Space Practice

**Prompt of Reflection:**

What are we are we doing that is working?  
What barriers and challenges are we facing?  
Who could we collaborate with in this process to further develop our efforts?  
How can we implement changes into our work to progress further in this area?

### Hiring & Recruitment

**Prompt of Reflection:**

What are we are we doing that is working?  
What barriers and challenges are we facing?  
Who could we collaborate with in this process to further develop our efforts?  
How can we implement changes into our work to progress further in this area?

### Staff Leadership & Board

**Prompt of Reflection:**

What are we are we doing that is working?  
What barriers and challenges are we facing?  
Who could we collaborate with in this process to further develop our efforts?

How can we implement changes into our work to progress further in this area?

### Trainings

**Prompt of Reflection:**

Please use this space to debrief any trainings the district attended in the past year.

- What were the main takeaways?
- How have you implemented the lessons into our work?
- What felt challenging?
- What are some ways to continue learning about these areas of DEI?
- Will this be a recurring training?

### Planning & Implementation of DEI

**Prompt of Reflection:**

- What are we doing that is working?
- What barriers and challenges are we facing?
- Who could we collaborate with in this process to further develop our efforts?
- How can we implement changes into our work to progress further in this area?

## Outward Facing Community

### Collaboration Practices

**Prompt of Reflection:**

What are we doing that is



What are we doing that is working?  
What barriers and challenges are we facing?  
Who could we collaborate with in this process to further develop our efforts?  
How can we implement changes into our work to progress further in this area?

### Programs & Services

**Prompt of Reflection:**

What are we doing that is working?  
What barriers and challenges are we facing?  
Who could we collaborate with in this process to further develop our efforts?  
How can we implement changes into our work to progress further in this area?

### Indigenous Land & Community

**Prompt of Reflection:**

What are we doing that is working?  
What barriers and challenges are we facing?  
Who could we collaborate with in this process to further develop our efforts?  
How can we implement changes into our work to progress further in this area?