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Advancing Equity and Environmental Justice in Underserved Communities of the Southeast Region

February 21, 2024

Joint District Advisory Panel Meeting

Caribbean Fishery Management Council

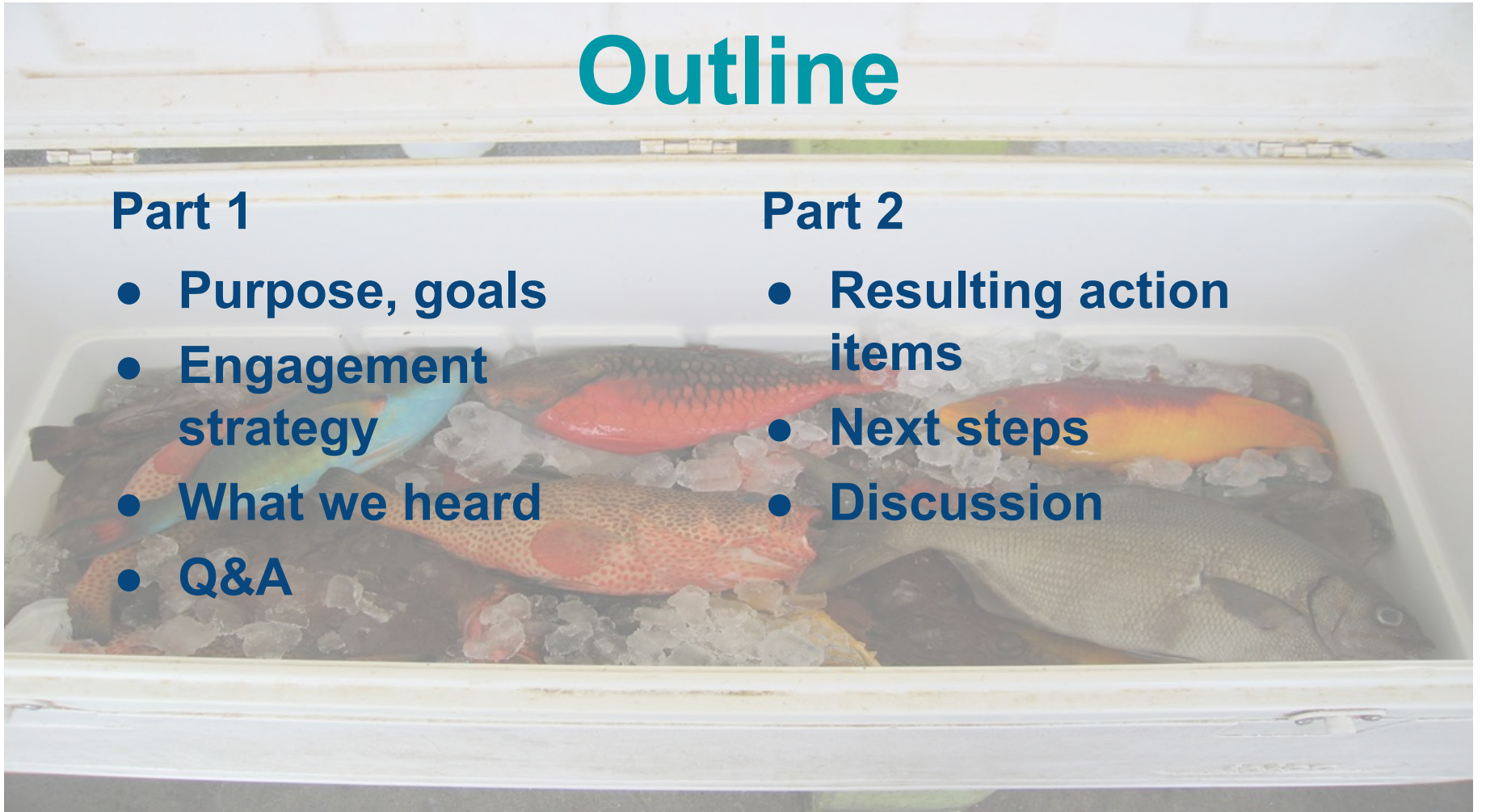
Outline

Part 1

- Purpose, goals
- Engagement strategy
- What we heard
- Q&A

Part 2

- Resulting action items
- Next steps
- Discussion



NOAA Fisheries' EEJ Strategy

- Establishes national framework for advancing EEJ through our mission-related work
- Requires regional implementation plans -- due April 5, 2024


NEWS

NOAA Fisheries Releases Final Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy

May 22, 2023

Agency to incorporate equity and environmental justice into the vital services we provide to all communities.

[Feature Story](#) | [National](#)




More Information

- > [Final Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy \(PDF, 41 pages\)](#)
- > [Final Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy—Spanish \(PDF, 41 pages\)](#)

Recent News


VIDEO

[Climate Change and Marine Animals: A Conservation Challenge](#)
National



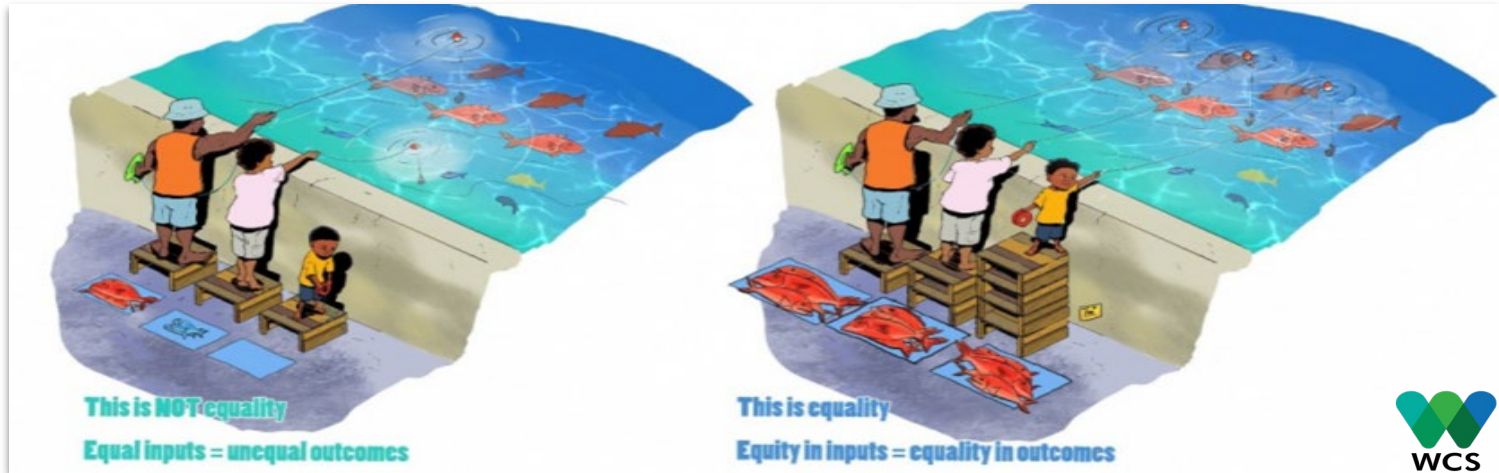
FEATURE STORY

[Celebrating Seaweed by the Seashore](#)
[New England/Mid-Atlantic](#) | [National](#)

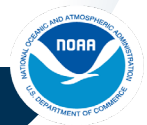


Key Terms: Equity

Equity means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.



Definition from Executive Order 13985.



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Key Terms: Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies including but not limited to:

- Equitable protection from environmental and health hazards
- Equitable access to decision-making processes
- Equitable opportunity for disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized



Definition from the Environmental Protection Agency.



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Key Terms: Underserved Communities

Underserved communities have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

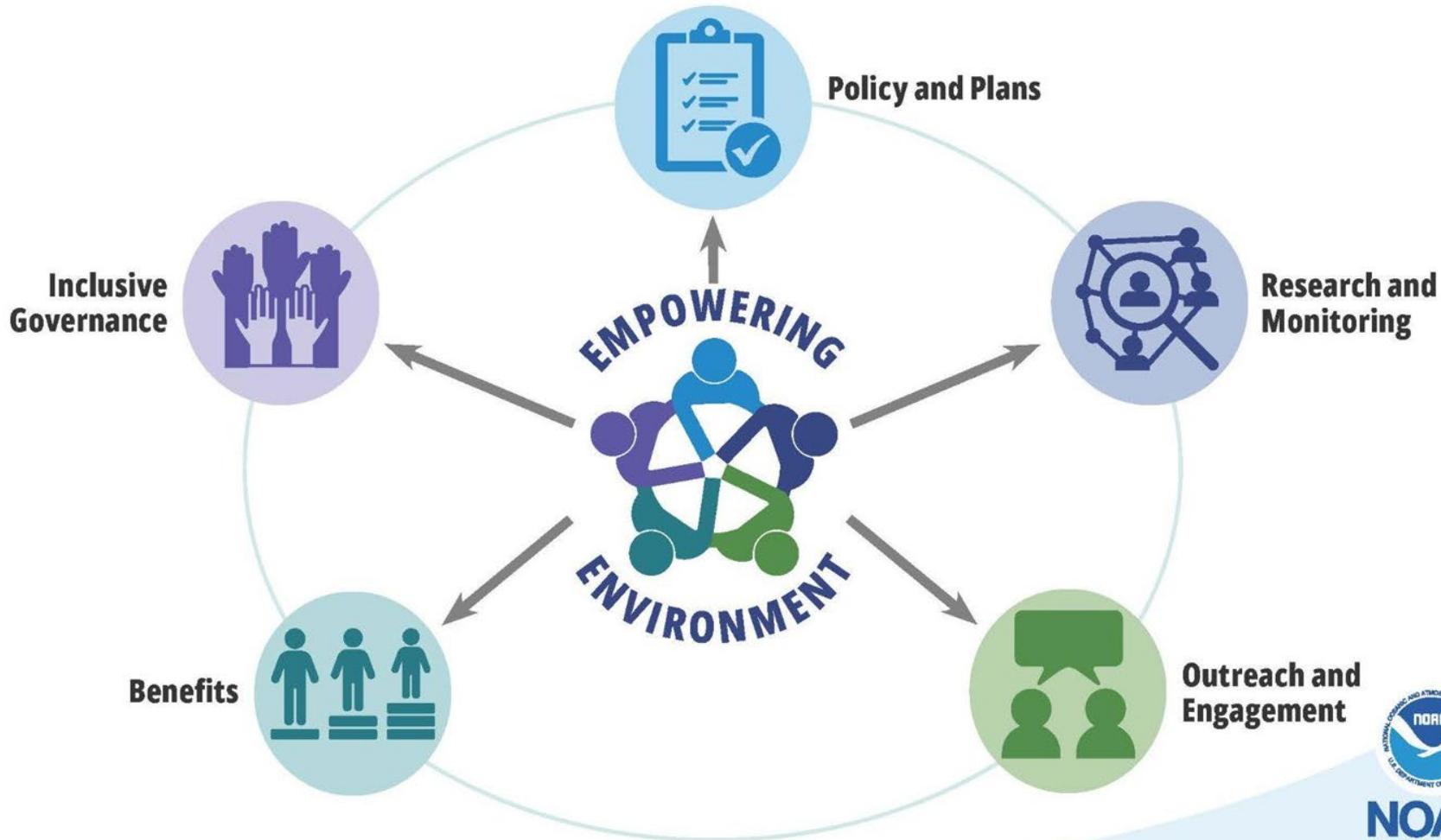


These include **geographic communities** as well as **populations sharing a particular characteristic** such as: **women and girls; Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons***, **Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders**, and **other persons of color**; persons facing discrimination or barriers related to **gender identity**; members of **religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+)** persons; persons with **disabilities**; persons who live in **rural areas**; and **persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality**.

Definition based on Executive Order 13985



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Southeast Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan: Engagement Strategies

- **Six focus groups** with underserved community members and liaisons

Puerto Rico

- North Coast-Dorado
- Cabo Rojo
- Ponce
- Ceiba

USVI

- St. Croix
- St. Thomas / St. John
- FAC Meetings



- **Public request for information** (closed September 30, 2023)
- **Virtual multilingual listening session** (conducted September 28, 2023)

Who We Engaged



- Various Ethnicities, Genders, Education Levels, Ages, Employment Backgrounds
- Focus Groups, Scoping, Group Meetings, Informal Interviews, Key Informant Interviews

Key Takeaways - Regionwide

- Improve our efforts for communication and outreach to better address the needs of underserved communities
 - Location
 - Timing
 - Education Level
 - Technological Capability
 - Language
- Increase presence in communities and engage/use knowledgeable community liaisons (Sea Grant, port agents, community NGOs) where applicable
 - Recognize / acknowledge the value of community liaisons
 - Formally create ways to communicate with community liaisons
- Understand cultural and historical context of fishing to the islands

Key Takeaways - Regionwide

- Underserved communities do not feel decision makers understand, consider, or represent their perspective and viewpoints
- Underserved communities feel exploited by industry and federal projects (e.g., coastal development, offshore wind)
- Underserved communities are depending on us to partner with each other and other state and federal agencies to find solutions



Key Takeaways - Puerto Rico

- Support addressing pollution
- Greater transparency with government at ALL levels
 - Desire to know what funds are for and how they are spent, especially disaster assistance
 - Desire to collaborate on development of funding priorities
- Improved access to opportunities
 - Infrastructure maintenance and (re)development
 - Grants and loans – language and navigating the process
 - Research and management – language and collaboration
 - Vocational and education system
- Greater NOAA presence
- Enforcement – capacity and training



Key Takeaways - USVI

- Development and replacement of FADs to ease pressure off inshore fisheries (STX)
- Enforcement – Not enough; better trained; need funding; incorporate education to assist enforcement (STX)
- Safe fishing zone – Lang Bank (STX)
- Better awareness of opportunities to collaborate on research, find scholarships, take part in internships, other (STT)
- Notification/engagement of local fishermen in research (STT)
- Disaster assistance: More timely assistance after disasters; Desire to collaborate on development of funding priorities; transparency on use of funds; assistance to fishers to navigate the process (STX; STT)
- Assistance for writing grant proposals, applications (STT)
- Improved communication with community liaisons (awareness of available opportunities for education, grants, other)



Questions?



Action Items - Methodology and Types

- **Methodology**

- Based on responses to Request for Information, focus group meetings, scoping, other informal meetings/conversations
- Binned by national objective
- Incorporate potential ranking criteria (short-term/long-term, funded/unfunded, +)

- **Types**

- Green -- seemingly straightforward, primarily related to accessibility
- Yellow -- may need to further consider roles, responsibilities, applicability
- Pink -- adopted from national EEJ strategy
- Blue -- other commonly heard/requested items acknowledged but not addressed in regional EEJ implementation plan (e.g., perceived sector inequities, enforcement)

Action Items

SECOND DRAFT Action Items and Perf Metrics for SE EEJ Implementation Plan

docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18EJsyrErgT_iiY_jk8b5TryWZ05eHDFsSnQ5NcwCwLw/edit?pli=1#gid=421324655

Inside SERO GovTA E2 Solutions - CW G... PAWS RETURN 'EM RIGHT! GMFMC CFMC SAFMC ID.me FDMS SE EEJ Web Page All Bookmarks

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AD3

	A	B	C	E	F	G	H	I	N	Q	U	V
1	Policies and Plans: Ensure that our policies promote equal opportunities for all and do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for underserved communities.											
2	Barrier (from national strategy)	General, High Level Action (what we want to do)	Action Item (specific -- how we will do it)	Performance Metric	Implementation Timeframe (how soon the action could be implemented if funded)	Resources Needed	Resourced? (can be implemented with existing funds?)	Applicable Geographic Region	Underserved Community(s) Targeted / Affected by the Action	Requires partnership?	Other Partnership Opportunities	Notes
3	Barrier #2 Structural / Aquaculture	Prioritize advancement of equity and environmental justice in ongoing and future activities, including in equitable climate mitigation, and conservation and management solutions (SE Geographic Strategic Plan, 2023-26)	Develop regional guidelines to enable fair and equitable provision of offshore aquaculture opportunities among underserved fishery participants who seek alternative forms of ocean employment	Relative percentage of underserved fishery participants receiving MREP-AQ training, aquaculture grants, or other aquaculture-related opportunities	Long-Term (3+ years)	Staff time	Uncertain	All	All	No		
4	Barrier #4 Complexity / Aquaculture	Streamline the permitting process for persons ready to pursue marine aquaculture	Collaborate with state and federal permitting agencies to develop permitting guides for aquaculture projects where applicable	Number of permitting guides developed	Short-Term (1-3 year)	Staff time; Funding; translation	Uncertain	All	All	Yes; states, territories, EPA, USACE		Where do we already have permitting guides in place?
5	Barrier #4 Complexity / Aquaculture	Streamline the permitting process for persons ready to pursue marine aquaculture	Prioritize and fund MREP-AQ to inform and assist prospective aquaculture lease operators, and	MREP-AQ is funded and executed, percentage of	Short-Term (1-3 year)	Staff time; Funding; translation	Uncertain	All?	All	Yes; GMRI		

Obj 1: Empowering Environment | Obj 2: Policies and Plans | Obj 3: Research and Monitoring | Obj 4: Outreach and Engagement | Obj 5: Benefits

Action Item Types - Research & Monitoring

Identify underserved communities and their needs, conduct collaborative research, and assess impacts of management decisions

- **Increase understanding of who our underserved communities are, along with access and engagement barriers**
 - Fishing
 - Aquaculture
- **Inform impact analyses**
 - Commercial seafood markets and imports
 - Climate change
 - Fishery disasters
 - Offshore wind
 - Fishery regulations (closures, projected vs. actual outcomes, cumulative effects)
- **Collaborative research and science**
 - Increase co-production and co-development of assessments, research, monitoring
 - Integrate local and traditional ecological knowledge into decision making process
- **Additional research areas**
 - Explore significance of diversification, subsistence use, literacy issues, +

Action Item Types - Outreach & Engagement

Build relationships with underserved communities to better understand engagement preferences and improve information sharing

- **Diversify communication strategies**
(electronic, social media, video, text, radio, community newspapers...)
 - Fishery regulations
 - Opportunities
 - Fishery disaster information
- **Make information more accessible**
 - Simple plain language
 - Translation/interpretation services
 - Community liaisons
 - Tech support for virtual meetings
- **Proactive and tailored outreach**
 - Use special strategies for rural areas
 - Target underserved populations (e.g., women)
 - Stakeholder feedback
- **Multilingual stakeholder support**
 - In-house multilingual liaisons for seamless communication
- **Other strategic initiatives**
 - Educational opportunities
 - Language that demonstrates we're listening

Action Item Types - Policies & Plans

Ensure that our policies promote equal opportunities for all and do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for underserved communities

- **Equitable access**

- Cooperative research
- Fishery disaster assistance
- Seafood and permit markets
- Climate research and response
- Decision making processes
- Lang Bank

- **Strategies and guidelines**

- Offshore aquaculture
- Local and traditional ecological knowledge
- Small-scale fisheries

- **Streamlined and transparent information collection**

- Surveys
- Fishing permits



Action Item Types - Benefits

Distribute benefits equitably by increasing access to opportunities

- **Technical Support**

- Grants
- Fishing permits
- Fishery disaster assistance

- **Financial Support**

- Grants (outreach and education, capacity building)
- Strategies to increase access to capital

- **Educational Support**

- Vocational training
- Scholarships, internships and mentorship programs

- **Other**

- Collaborative projects to preserve working waterfronts, protect fishing communities impacted by wind energy and other federal initiatives
- Strategies to remedy identified access or allocation disparities

Action Item Types - Inclusive Governance

Enable the meaningful involvement of underserved communities in decision-making processes

- **Engagement opportunities**
 - Public meetings and input processes; research, monitoring, and science
 - Logistics and scheduling
 - Communication strategies
 - Partnerships and financial assistance
- **Representation on advisory and decision bodies**
 - Fishery Management Council
 - Other
- **Educational initiatives**
 - Informational materials
 - Marine Resources Education Program

Action Item Types - Empowering Environment

Provide institutional support to implement EEJ

- **Training**
 - Specialized -- port agents, grant reviewers
 - Plain language -- all staff
 - EEJ -- all staff; Council, AP, Committee members
- **Interagency Workshops**
 - Resource and information sharing
 - Partnerships to address cross-jurisdictional challenges
- **Resources to Support this Work**
 - Full-time anthropologists / non-economic social scientists at SERO and SEFSC
 - EEJ Coordinators at SERO and SEFSC
 - Funding to Councils for EEJ Coordinators
 - EEJ funding strategy



Next Steps



- Review draft action items in the table we provided
- Provide feedback by March 14, 2024
 - How does the Caribbean Council already support EEJ efforts?
 - How would you prioritize the action items we are considering? What are your top 3 priorities?
 - What else could the Council do to support EEJ efforts?

THANKS!

Discussion...

