Introduction
Environmental Education (EE) organizations need solid data to inform decision making and programming. The closer that data reflects the local context of the industry, the more educators can effectively respond to current trends. Two state-wide surveys of EE related organizations in Wisconsin inform the broader EE field about the status and needs of organizations to understand available resources and gaps in programmatic capacity. Answers to these questions allow us to fill such gaps, take advantage of available resources and increase our collective impact.

Goals:
- Investigate the current status of Environmental Education (EE) throughout Wisconsin
- Identify the different needs of these organizations in various focus areas
- Assess gaps in programmatic capacity

Participation Rates
In general, five year participation rates at these organizations stayed steady or increased. University Programs experienced the greatest increase, with 40% greatly increasing their participation. State, City or steady or increased. University Programs experienced the greatest impact.

Factors encouraging increased participation
- Increased awareness, marketing and outreach
- Increased grant funding
- Increase in targeting intentional partnerships/relationships

Factors affecting decreased participation:
- Change in school focus and budgets
- Increased costs
- Reduced budgets and staffing capacity

Recording ethnicity and age demographic information of visitors not only informs each Environmental Education organization about their own outreach efforts; when applied statewide can provide a data set used to better understand parity with Census data in the state. This data can be further isolated by region or zip code(s).

Implications
Survey results have helped identify EE organizations in WI as a statewide ecosystem, raising awareness of the large number of jobs and economic impact the EE centers influence. The information that was collected in the surveys is being used to facilitate communication, collaboration, professional development, and outreach services and to increase the quality and quantity of EE in Wisconsin. Results from the surveys are already having positive impacts for WI EE organizations and can be applied to other organizations, states, and regions. The survey questions can also be used in additional studies in other regions to expand the national understanding of the operational capacities of EE organizations.

Professional Development Needs
To increase collective impact, and to initiate responses to current trends, professional development of staff is paramount. Adequately trained staff are able to respond more effectively to participant needs and wants, which allows for expansion of programs and participant demographics. In addition to identifying professional development and staffing needs, organizations also identified those training areas they would be able to lead. This analysis allows for the development of connections and partnerships; ensuring a statewide environmental education network advancing the field as a whole.

Gaps were identified between areas where staff could “benefit from training in” and “staff could lead training in”. Major subject areas that responders could lead trainings include natural history, water quality and plant ecology. Organizational skills where responders could lead trainings include participant management, interpretive skills and program development.