



NAAEE Affiliate Network 2.0 Final Network Goals Report & Summary

Overview

Across North America, state, provincial, territorial and regional environmental education associations are supporting the many types of educators who teach concepts we all need to understand: how natural systems work, what we must do to interact responsibly with our environment, and how we can protect natural resources for future generations. These associations, when linked together through the NAAEE Affiliate Network, create an extensive circuitry of programs, initiatives, and supports to energize environmental education across the continent. These network connections allow ideas, learnings, and successes to flow across the network powering ongoing innovation.

The NAAEE Affiliate Network is part of the largest network of environmental educators in the world, connecting us to over 150,000 educators annually. Collectively, we support educators, schools, and communities to impact conservation, education, social justice, health and wellness, and youth development.

The Affiliate Network has grown in capacity over the past 5 years. The number of Affiliate Organizations with paid staff has more than doubled. And NAAEE has increased its investments in supporting individual Affiliates and the network through capacity building initiatives such as ee360 and staffing dedicated to Affiliate Network activities. To continue innovating and increasing representation and transparency, in fall 2020, an NAAEE Affiliate Network 2.0 working group was established and resourced with a facilitation team to conduct a collaborative three-month design sprint imagining 2021 and beyond.

Out of this design sprint came new draft network goals for the NAAEE Affiliate Network which were then presented to the full network for feedback over the first quarter of 2021. Now completed this report presents how these goals were generated, a summary of the network-wide feedback on the goals and presents the next steps final goals for the NAAEE Affiliate Network.

Background & Approach

Network Goals can help a network focus joint efforts and investments, increase common understanding, and encourage innovative/spontaneous collaboration and coordination.

New NAAEE Affiliate Network goals were developed in a collaborative and iterative process that included five drafts.

The first draft was generated through several rounds of listening by the facilitation team. This initial listening included:

1. Discovery review of notes from recent network-wide sessions (2019 workshop, 2020 COVID calls)
2. The working group's feedback provided in onboarding calls and opening survey
3. Review of the network context of individual affiliate and NAAEE stated goals
4. Discussion and review with working group Co-Chairs and additional one-on-one conversations
5. Promising practices in other networks and organizations

The working group indicated overall agreement that the first draft was close to right, with a few updates needed. Those updates were made in a second draft circulated to the working group along with a survey form for additional input. During its third call, the working group indicated unanimous support for a third and "final" draft of the goals.

Once these "final" draft goals (draft three) were approved by the working group outreach was conducted to solicit full network-wide feedback between February and March 2021. After collating the responses it is our conclusion that the working group was successful in collecting broad, network-wide feedback. Between the Affiliate Network 2.0 Draft Goal Survey and two listening sessions. Feedback was received from 144 Affiliate leaders representing 48 Affiliates from across the NAAEE Affiliate Network. Of the 48 Affiliates that provided feedback, 42 Affiliates had responses from 2 or more representatives. This feedback was then synthesized into several options (draft four) for the working group to discuss during its final meeting in April 2021. After taking into consideration adjustments and feedback from the working group, the fifth and finalize Affiliate Network Goals can be found below.

Final Goals

NAAEE Affiliate Network Goals

The NAAEE affiliate network advances environmental literacy to create a more just, equitable and sustainable future. As a network, we collaborate on joint efforts and share learning to:

- 1) Build and strengthen the capacity of individual NAAEE affiliates, the Affiliate Network and NAAEE to advance the field of Environmental Education
- 2) Center social and environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility* in our work as environmental educators, individual Affiliates, the Affiliate Network and NAAEE.
- 3) Elevate and increase support for environmental education through advocacy and shared messaging to magnify the reach and impact of our work.
- 4) Provide space and opportunity for fostering innovation, shared learning, and addressing emergent issues.

*working definitions for these terms can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Next Steps

Recurring Process: these big picture and conceptual goals should be the starting place for a recurring process by which individual Affiliates, the Affiliate Network, and NAAEE work together to:

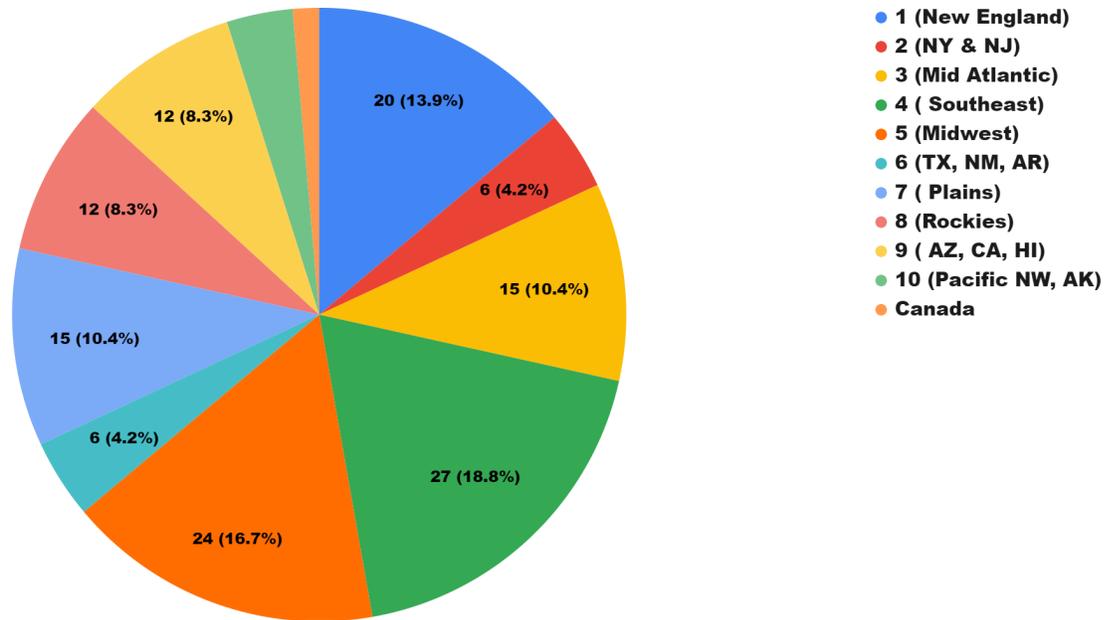
- A. Note past and/or current efforts relevant to each goal
- B. Explicitly define terms within each goal, important everywhere and essential for goal #2
- C. Establish measurements or targets for the goals and timeframe (90 - 360 days) where possible
- D. Indicate which group(s) of people are lead for advancing the goals for the timeframe
- E. Identify approaches (joint initiatives, trainings, convenings, etc) for pursuing the goals

Work Plan to Implement Goals: With the goals finalized the newly established Affiliate Network Working Group will work together with a consultant(s) to create a work plan to operationalize and implement the new network goals.

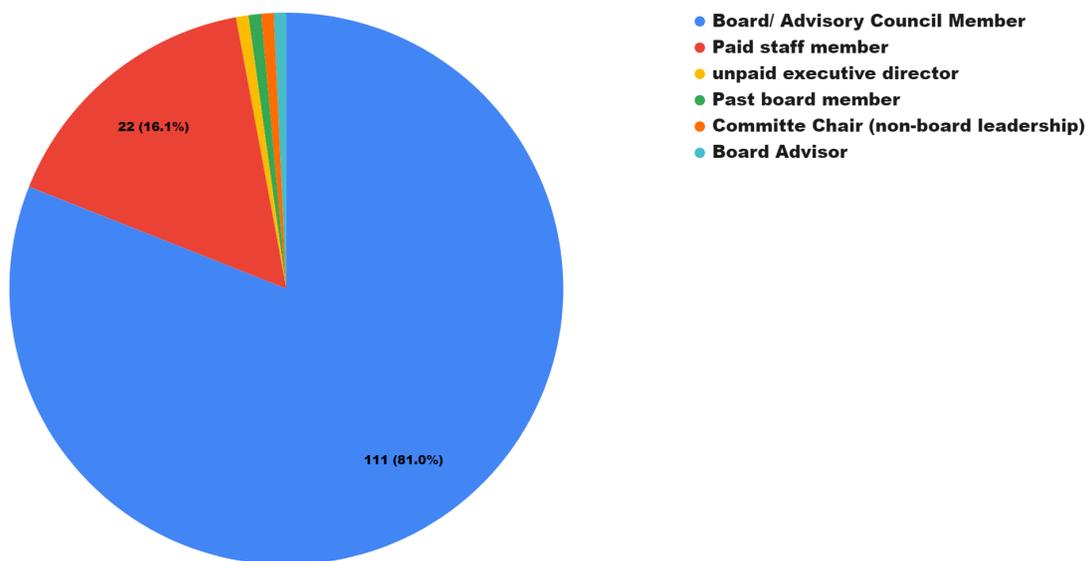
Summary of Affiliate Feedback on Draft Goals

Feedback on the draft goals has come from various levels of Affiliate leadership (board members, executive directors, staff members) with a wide geographic distribution. We also received feedback from Affiliates with varying capacities as indicated by the charts below. (Full sized charts of this data can be found here and in Appendix B of this report)

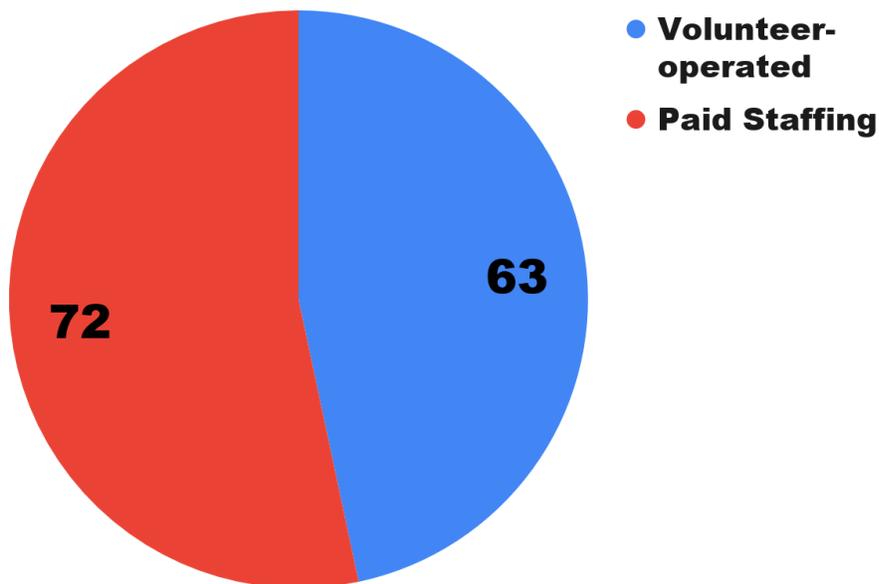
Geographic Distribution of Response



Your Current Role With Your Affiliate



How does your Affiliate Operate?



Draft Goals

The draft goals as presented in listening sessions & survey engagement:

The NAAEE Affiliate Network advances environmental literacy to create a more equitable and sustainable future. As a network, we collaborate on joint efforts and share learning in order to:

- 1. Build the capacity of individual NAAEE affiliates, NAAEE, and the affiliate network to advance the field of Environmental Education*
- 2. Increase equity and inclusion in Environmental Education through initiatives at individual NAAEE affiliates, NAAEE, and the affiliate network*
- 3. Reach more people and increase support for Environmental Education through joint Advocacy and Messaging*
- 4. Advance additional efforts to be a just, effective, and innovative network as they emerge*

General Feedback

There was a generally positive response to the draft network goals. Many respondents noted their appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback as well as gratitude for the work of the 2.0 Working Group for creating them.

There was overwhelming support for Goals 1, 2, and 3, while the response to goal 4 was mixed (see more below).

A few examples of positive feedback for the goals overall:

“The draft goals are straightforward and address some really important and timeless (also long past due) considerations. They also provide and demonstrate strong guidance for the individual affiliates.”

“The new goals provide clarity for our efforts as a network. Especially like the inclusion of advocacy and messaging and we need to do a better job of amplifying our work and finding policy solutions on the local, state, and federal level. I am also hopeful that we can continue to work to build capacity for our network.”

“I appreciate that NAAEE has put so many resources and support into affiliate organizations and sees value in strengthening both the individual affiliates and the affiliate network as a whole.”

“I like the goals very much. I think they can easily occur at each level mentioned (affiliates, NAAEE, and the Affiliate Network). I also think they make sense for how I have heard people describe what the Affiliate Network should or could be.”

“There is clear support for local, national, and network-based partnerships throughout each of these goals. The intentional recognition of a need for more equity, inclusion and sustainability is evident throughout the goals.”

“The goals are targeted in regards to the different aspects of the Affiliate Network and many of the goals that are emerging with individual affiliates. They are also broad enough so that there is room for the strategies to reach these goals to evolve.”

“There is power in numbers, and this set of goals addresses several examples of where we can collaborate for the good of all affiliates.”

Specific Positive Feedback to Each Goal (What do you like about the draft goals?)

Goal 1

- I like that the first goal is to build capacity and that it specifies individual affiliates and the network both.
- Recognizing that affiliates are at different capacity levels. Those of us at smaller capacity often rely on the work of larger affiliates. This work is appreciated as well as the effort to find different levels of engagement.
- Everyone needs more capacity, that helps across the board. We should always be striving to have everyone represented at the decision making table and in our programs, so goals to address that are needed and appreciated.
- I liked the focus on both individual affiliates AND the affiliate network. It acknowledges the differences and highlights the bond.

Goal 2

- I like how they elevate equity to a higher level of focus. It serves to hold the network more accountable to doing work at this level. Additionally, it emphasizes how equity is built from the ground up through our affiliate partners.
- I like that they include equity and inclusion and focusing on a just future for all and how we as env. educators have an important role in that.
- I like the focus on equity and inclusion, as well as the goal of creating a "more equitable and sustainable future." I like the specific call out that equity and sustainability are inherently intertwined.
- After the broad, core focus, equity and inclusion are clearly articulated as a strong goal

Goal 3

- The joint advocacy goal is really important so that we speak with a common voice and language.
- Joint advocacy and messaging--we at the local level are so busy managing day-to-day programming and efforts to grow our state organization we have no bandwidth left to craft effective messages or identify where and how to advocate for systemic changes
- I like the idea of joint advocacy and marketing. Most local affiliates probably do not have the capacity to do this on their own.

Goal 4

- I like the last goal. We don't know what the future holds, but focusing on staying innovative and responding to change is important.
- The focus on flexibility and adaptability for emerging issues is an important addition.
- I like the focus on innovation under item four. One thing that EE is often lacking is the ability to adapt and adjust to things on the fly

Overall Suggested Improvements (What could be improved?)

Though feedback was overall positive and supportive of all goals there were some improvements that were suggested about the whole presentation of the goals, specifically some indicators of how these goals will be achieved and what success would look like to meet these goals. We (Katie, Sarah, Bruce) did confirm that this would be the next step in moving forward with the goals. Below is a summary of recurring feedback that was received for each individual goal as well as some additional feedback that may help frame the final goals.

General Improved/ Comments Around Wordsmithing, Specificity & Clarity

In a review of all collective feedback there did emerge some feedback around general wordsmithing, need for clarification, and a desire for more specificity.

- A suggestion is to make the language in the goals more proactive and measurable, perhaps by setting targets for capacity building, increasing equity and inclusion, outreach. However, such measurable outcomes can also be included as objectives within each goal.
- I don't know the difference between "affiliates" and the NAAEE AFFILIATE NETWORK"- maybe others won't either?
- I see multiple mentions of environmental education, but no references to environmental educaTORS. I think that as an organization that supports educators, their best interest should be front and center in the organization's goals.
- something around helping the field broaden its scope and definition of EE to include outdoor educators, food and farming education, env. and social justice education.
- To me, there needs to be language about the audience the affiliates serve. When I think about increasing equity and inclusion in EE, that happens through us but mostly through our affiliate's network.

Goal 1 Improvements

- Goal 1: Consider switching the order so it reads individual affiliates, affiliate network, and NAAEE (demonstrates scaffolding).
- other goals or objectives: shared resources, infrastructure, staffing, resources, connections, etc to improve sustainability of ee providers (including ee affiliates)

Goal 2 Suggested Improvements

- Addition of environmental justice and specifically call out environmental racism.
- I believe they can benefit from more language around diversity and the role of EE in social justice. While this message may be implied, it is more powerful when clearly stated as a goal.
- I don't see anything in the goals specifically about diversity. I wonder if this is a missed opportunity
- Considering there is a focus on advocacy, would it make sense to include 'justice' in the equity/inclusion statement?
- I would like to see "access" and "diversity" added to "equity and inclusion" in goal #2.
- It's important to define the terms included in the work, as "inclusion" and "environmental justice" may have very different meanings for different people

Goal 3 Improvements

- This goal needs clarification, What kind of advocacy and messaging? Who are the people/ audience for Goal #3
- What tools or resources will be provided to do advocacy/ support messaging at the individual Affiliate level?
- Seems like there is a better way of saying "reach more people" such as "expand our outreach" "increase our audience" "increase membership" "expand the reach of our message"
- Consider adding partnership/partnering to joint advocacy & messaging
- Can you better clarify what you mean by "reach more people?"
- For #3, reaching more people and advocacy/increasing support are two different things and could be separated into two goals. It would be great to have joint messaging and reach more people (i.e., EE researchers or practitioners) in other affiliate networks, but that is different than reaching more funders, legislators, etc.

Goal 4 Improvements

- Provide an example of emergent projects (i.e. eeGuidance)
- Consider removing the 4th goal - it's vague and feels like an add-on/catch-all that might detract from the first 3, which are really strong. *(note: there seems to be an even split on this goal between it being too vague vs. liking its forward-thinking nature)*
- What project might emerge that wouldn't fit in advocacy, capacity, or equity?
- It seems that Goal 4 could be incorporated into Goals 1-3 by adding short phrases at the end of each goal statement to create a set of three goals.
- I am unsure of the intent of the fourth goal. "As they emerge"...As who emerge? Perhaps the wording could be changed to be more clear.
- Goal number 4 seems like a throw in. I feel like the ideas of being "a just, effective, and innovative network" can be incorporated into the first three goals.

Additional Feedback (What else would you like to say?)

- This survey makes me wonder whether NAAEE sees a difference in its organizational goals and its "affiliate network goals." If so, how are they different?
- Increase mentorship on recurring topics
- Not sure where this fits but possibly more cross affiliate programs. We all have so much to learn from each other. A speaker bureau from affiliates and their members.
- I would like to see a 5th goal or add it to one of the others. It would be to facilitate the exchange of approaches/ideas between affiliates
- My next question after reading these goals is "How?" These goals are essential, and articulating how we can work to see them enacted will be imperative. Is that the next step? Will the

strategies and benchmarks be published along with the goals? I suggest including the plan to accompany the goals before these are released broadly.

- Good work listening and synthesizing! I am proud to be part of a professional community that lives its values. Thank you.
- Consider some kind of “welcome packet” that could be shared with new board members of affiliates? Something that could be easily shared and help them understand the various roles
- Drafting/creating some type of “value statement” on what and who the affiliate network is for, and how the goals support that work.
- How are the NAAEE affiliates, NAAEE, and the Affiliate Network related? I think I could benefit from a diagram to make sense of the connections and overlap.
- I don’t know the difference between “affiliates” and the NAAEE AFFILIATE NETWORK”- maybe others won’t either?
- I especially appreciate that all affiliates can contribute in some way, regardless of capacity and that our relative strengths are amplified through this effort. Is there a way to communicate that? Perhaps in the preamble.
- I find that our affiliate is at a severe disadvantage because we don't have paid staff, therefore no one can commit time to doing everything that is put out by the affiliate network - or take advantage of everything that's offered. I'm hoping that there are representatives on the working group that are just volunteers that might have a similar perspective. It's overwhelming sometimes and our affiliate feels like we're not as involved as we should be because everyone has other full-time jobs.
- Let's continue to strengthen and pursue further ways that affiliates can work closely with the national offices, and support each other in ways that we collaboratively identify. With the varied and widespread nature of our affiliate network that I'm sure isn't a simple task, but it feels like we are moving in a meaningful direction.
- Let's continue to strengthen and pursue further ways that affiliates can work closely with the national offices, and support each other in ways that we collaboratively identify. With the varied and widespread nature of our affiliate network that I'm sure isn't a simple task, but it feels like we are moving in a meaningful direction.
- NAAEE has been a lighthouse as we've navigated all of the events of the past year!
- I am very appreciative of this network and the work that goes into it. Thank you to all!
- I am happy you are looking at this type of goal planning so inclusively.
- The support to affiliates is so important - especially given the range (100% volunteer run - 2+paid staff). I would love to see more support on structural components (e.g. fundraising, nonprofit 101) etc. As a new chair I know I really struggled with this and could still use help navigating the next set of growing pains for our fledgling organization

A complete collection of feedback from both survey responses and listening sessions can be found [here](#).

APPENDIX A

Sample Draft Living Glossary of JEDIA Definitions

This is a sample of JEDIA definitions currently being considered by an internal NAAEE workgroup through a review process. We are actively thinking about how the new Working and Advisory Groups, along with the Affiliate Network Equity & Inclusion workgroup may benefit from participating in a similar process. They are offered here to clarify the terminology used in the new draft goals.

Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings. (Alliance of America Museums)

Diverse/Diversity – The demographic mix of a specific collection of people, taking into account elements of human difference. (e.g., racial, and ethnic groups, income, spectrum of built environment settings (rural to urban), faith communities, LGBTQ+ populations, people with disabilities, gender, relationship to the natural environment) (DEIJ in Action Guide).

Equity: the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while also striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups. (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity).

Inclusion: the act of creating environments in which any individual or groups can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces, differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity).

Inclusion: Celebrating, centering, and amplifying the perspectives, voices, values, and needs of people who experience systemic barriers, mistreatment, or disadvantages based on their identities in order to ensure they feel a sense of belonging. Inclusion is not merely tolerating or accommodating differences; it's about actively valuing and honoring it. (Avarna Group)

Social Justice - a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. (EPA)