2014-2017 Strategic Framework
Delivering on Our Promise as a Force Multiplier in Environmental Education
Imagine a future...

... where environmental education is celebrated as a catalytic force in the pursuit of a sustainable world.

... where NAAEE is widely recognized and supported as a force multiplier in the field of environmental education.

... where policymakers, philanthropists, corporations and civil society readily connect the dots between environmental education, social responsibility and citizen well-being.

... where every job is a green job, every school is a green school, every home is a green home.

... where everyone everywhere understands the inseparable bond between a healthy environment and the quality of human life.

... where environmental and social responsibility drive individual and institutional choices.

This is the world we want to live in—one that optimizes human potential and propels us to a healthier, more equitable future.

It’s impossible not to be deeply concerned about the unprecedented environmental, social, and economic challenges we face as a global society—from climate change and loss of species and habitats, to declines in civic engagement, decreasing access to nature, a growing gap between the haves and have nots, and other threats to our health, security, and future survival. The need for environmental education has never been greater—and the opportunity never so clear. The work of NAAEE has the potential to transform lives and society by addressing these challenges and helping to create a motivated citizenry.

Environmental education informs, inspires, and enlightens. It builds human capacity, influences attitudes, and galvanizes the masses. And most importantly, it can help people make informed decisions about the environment that lead to stewardship and a more sustainable society.

This strategy lays out a path forward for the next three years that works to build our core—to create a stronger, more vibrant organization that can serve as a backbone leader for the field we call environmental education. It also creates that foundation that will allow us to realize our larger vision of integrating environmental learning and civic engagement into all aspects of society to create a healthier and more robust environment and thriving communities everywhere.

Judy Braus  
Executive Director

Pepe Marcos-Iga  
Board Chair
The Earth is what we all have in common.  
—Wendell Berry

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Introduction

NAAEE is 43 years old in 2014.

This strategy is, in a sense, a birthday celebration to an organization that was created to strengthen environmental education. For more than four decades, NAAEE has accomplished two significant things: It has helped support the professionals and leaders who carry the EE torch—from teachers to university professors to business leaders to naturalists to science educators and so many others who are working to create a more sustainable society. It has also been the glue to help strengthen the field as a whole by promoting innovative programming, developing guidelines and best practice, creating a research platform that demonstrates impact, convening members, and advocating for public policies to support the field.

This strategy is designed to highlight NAAEE’s unique significance in a crowded nonprofit space and continue to build its reputation as a strong, vibrant organization. In developing this strategy, we have looked at trends in associations, and what membership organizations are doing to be more relevant and robust at a time when people are not joining organizations or supporting traditional association models. We are also working to strengthen the relationship between NAAEE and the Affiliate Network, reinforce our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and clearly articulate the outcomes that will move us closer to our vision.

NAAEE Background

For more than four decades, NAAEE has served as the professional association, champion, and backbone organization for the field of environmental education, working with a diverse group of educators in the United States, Canada, and Mexico to advance environmental education. Our audiences include those who reach others, including teachers and naturalists, researchers, conservationists, outdoor educators, scientists and science educators, resource and environmental managers, environmentalists, foundations and corporations, and others who care about how education and engagement can help create a more environmentally informed, committed, and active citizenry.

NAAEE is built on the principles of sustainability, focusing on how people and nature can exist in productive harmony. As the Brundtland Report stated (Our Common Future, 1987), “to create a more sustainable society, we need to determine how to meet the needs of the present without compromising our ability to meet the needs of the future.” The work in this field focuses on building ecological integrity, and environmental health, and creating a fair and just society with shared prosperity.

Environmental education (EE), at its core, is built on underpinnings reflected in the work of NAAEE, including a focus on learners of all ages—from early childhood to seniors. It also focuses on the importance of experiential, interdisciplinary education, helping learners of all ages develop problem solving and decision-making skills, promote civic engagement to help protect the environment, link EE to important societal issues—from the Next Generation Science Standards to STEM to climate change education, and thinking about how EE can help create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable society and helping to diversify the environmental movement itself.

The following plan outlines a phased approach to advancing environmental education, while creating a stronger, more vibrant, and more effective organization. It is designed to steer NAAEE’s course for the next three years and set our sites for the future.
NAAEE Through a New Lens

As we look to the future, we envision an NAAEE that is a champion for environmental education and achieves impact with innovative approaches, creative partnerships, and a strong global network. Globally, it is a recognized leader in how to best address environmental and social challenges through education. NAAEE is also known for building the capacity of members, partners, and stakeholders. NAAEE is all about learning and enhancing social capacity.

Our Vision

Our vision is a sustainable world where environmental and social responsibility drive individual and institutional choices.

Our Mission

Our mission is to accelerate environmental literacy and civic engagement through the power of environmental education.

Our Strategies

Our strategies are based on more than five decades of research about what motivates individuals and communities to learn, take action, and create positive societal change. They are also based on the latest thinking about what makes associations and non-governmental organizations more effective, and how to collaboratively and effectively scale up our collective impact.

Annually, we will work with our board, affiliates, organizational members, individual members, and other colleagues to complete an implementation plan, including fundraising targets and other needed resources. Measures of success are five-year targets. They will be revised periodically as needed.

Our Approach

This NAAEE blueprint focuses on setting ambitious but achievable goals that will allow us to do two critical things:

- **Strengthen Our Core**: We intend to build on the platforms and systems NAAEE has shaped for the past four decades and strengthen the value we provide to our members, partners, and other stakeholders.

- **Stimulate Innovation and Progress**: We will also work to enhance our ability to create greater impact, creating more value to our current and future members and strengthening the field in meaningful and long-lasting ways.

This plan includes three major strategic goals and six operational imperatives. Large-scale change takes both leadership and management. Leading the way to “doing the right things” requires a clear vision of the changes needed, effective strategies for making those changes, alignment of individuals and coalitions behind the vision and strategies, and an explicit set of values that motivate and inspire people to produce the changes. Managing the change process—“doing things right”—requires effective planning, budgeting, and organization.
A sustainable world where environmental and social responsibility drive individual and institutional choices

To accelerate environmental literacy and civic engagement through the power of environmental education

To galvanize civic stewardship
To accelerate environmental literacy
To demonstrate the impact of environmental education
To demonstrate how EE drives conservation and climate change solutions

By being a force multiplier in environmental education

By promoting best practice and impact through the dissemination of guidelines, research, tools, and professional programs

By uniting the field in a collaborative, inclusive pursuit of innovative education and engagement strategies

By advocating for the field and the policies that will advance our mission

Guidelines & Professional Development

Conferences & Partnerships

Advocacy & Communications
NAAEE Core Values

**Optimistic**
We are unabashedly hopeful about the possibilities for lasting change.

**Inclusive**
We embrace diversity and celebrate our differences to drive excellence and social progress.

**Positive**
We are pathologically positive even when the going gets tough.

**Collaborative**
We know that saving the world is a team sport—that we’re stronger together than apart.

**Impact-oriented**
We focus relentlessly on the essential outcomes and impact of our work.

**Disruptive**
We spread insights and innovations that change hearts and minds and our collective future.
Strategic Goals

NAAEE is a force multiplier for the field. We achieve greater impact by working with our Affiliate Network, our partners, and our individual and organizational members to create change at all levels of society. Our strategy focuses on these three broad strategies to advance environmental literacy:

1. **Driving Excellence**: NAAEE sets the standards for the Environmental Education field. We promote excellence and impact through the dissemination of guidelines, research, tools, and professional programs.

2. **Cultivating Collective Impact**: We unite the field in a collaborative, inclusive pursuit of innovative public education and engagement strategies. We provide learning opportunities for the EE community—from an annual international conference to online forums, regional gatherings, and other opportunities for learning, sharing, and promoting best practices.

3. **Mobilizing Multi-Sector Support**: We work to galvanize global support for the field and to advocate on behalf of environmental education to strengthen state, federal, and international policies that drive environmental literacy and civic engagement.

Guidelines for Excellence

As an initiative of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education promotes the development of balanced, scientifically accurate, and comprehensive environmental materials and programs by establishing sets of guidelines. These guidelines are designed to help educators create meaningful, high-quality environmental education programs that nurture environmental literacy and empower program participants with the skills, knowledge, and inclinations to make well-informed choices and exercise the rights and responsibilities of members of a democracy. To date, the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education has published five sets of guidelines, each of which is relevant to the work of formal and nonformal environmental educators. These guidelines have been used around the world to improve practice and professionalize the field.

Operational Imperatives

As part of our strategy, we need to ensure a strong operational core. The operational imperatives collectively support the achievement of our strategic goals and objectives. They focus on building NAAEE’s capacity and strengthening our internal structures and practices so that we can more effective in delivering our strategies. Without resources to support these goals, it will be impossible to achieve our strategic goals.

- Fortify the NAAEE Affiliate Network to unify the field of EE and deliver high-quality professional development, programming, funding and others activities to support the national and state strategic goals.
- Redesign NAAEE development and membership strategy to meet fundraising needs.
- Align the NAAEE business model and governance structure with the strategy.
- Empower a talented, diverse team that is effective in achieving the strategic and operational goals and promote excellence.
- Integrate diversity, inclusion, and equity considerations into all NAAEE work.
Core Values That Underpin Our Strategy

• Optimistic: We are unabashedly hopeful about the possibilities for lasting change.
• Positive: We are pathologically positive even when the going gets tough.
• Collaborative: We know that saving the world is a team sport—that we’re stronger together than apart.
• Inclusive: We embrace diversity and celebrate our differences to drive excellence and social progress.
• Impact-oriented: We focus relentlessly on the essential outcomes and impact of our work.
• Disruptive: We spread insights and innovations that change hearts and minds and our collective future.

Our Transitions: Looking Back to Look Ahead

We need to thank all of our predecessors at NAAEE who have championed the cause of environmental education for the past forty-three years and helped build the organization and the field. Our current team has been together for about two and a half years—strengthening our core operations and focusing on developing a transition strategy to support the field without disruption. In the past two years, we have brought together a talented team that has implemented robust accounting measures to firm up our financial controls, updated our brand, conducted two successful conferences, participated in key conferences and workshops across North America and throughout the world, and established a number of exciting partnerships.

What Is Environmental Literacy?

An environmentally literate person is someone who, both individually and together with others, makes informed decisions concerning the environment; is willing to act on these decisions to improve the well-being of other individuals, societies, and the global environment; and participates in civic life. Developing a Framework for the Assessment of Environmental Literacy (NAAEE, 2011)

Building a Stronger Affiliate Network

NAAEE’s affiliate network reaches across North America, serving as the association’s community presence. At the state, provincial, and regional level, our affiliates further the goals of NAAEE and work to create a more environmentally literate society. Our intent is to help build the network so that each state and province has a thriving affiliate building environmental literacy at all levels—and collectively we can work together locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The Critical Role of Research

The field of EE relies upon a strong research base that guides practice. Programming must be based on what we know works and we must continue to learn how to be more effective. Also, as educators, we need to understand what the research community has found to work—and how to increase impact. NAAEE will continue to support a research-based culture and an ambitious research agenda.
Valuing Diversity, Promoting Inclusion and Equity

NAAEE embraces the principles and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion not only because of underlying moral imperatives. Diversity, equity and inclusion are mission-critical drivers of our strategy and our collective identity.

NAAEE respects the differences that exist in our respective life experiences and cultural backgrounds. We work to establish a workplace environment that allows each person to make his or her unique contributions to the organization’s mission. We need to reflect the diversity of disciplines, income, sexual orientation, and geography to achieve our mission and must continue to demonstrate relevance to address the social, economic, and environmental challenges we face as a society. (See Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Statement on page xx.)

What’s In a Name?

In the next few years, we will work to strengthen our core and stimulate progress so that the field can thrive and grow. We recognize a need to create a more dynamic brand while acknowledging our 43-year history and name recognition throughout the world. We also acknowledge that we are not serving Canada and Mexico in the way that we would like. As we gain stability and hone our strategy, we will revisit the issue of rebranding the organization.

If you want a strong society, it has to be inclusive. If you have to push a boulder up a hill, do you want 10 people or 100? If you weed out color or gender, you get 10.

—Cyndi Lauper
Our Business Model

Our biggest limitation to growth and impact is a lack of stable income, including unrestricted funding that supports staff and overhead and can help build reserves for the future. For the next three years, we will focus on a multi-pronged approach to support NAAEE that includes three elements: creating a stronger association model; providing EE technical assistance to organizations, agencies, and foundations; and developing and implementing signature programs with our partners to promote innovation and ground-truth what works. Our goal is to strengthen environmental literacy and bring in enough resources to stabilize and grow the organization and the field.

Creating a Stronger Association Model

In the past decade, associations have gone through incredible transitions. Societal trends have spurred change. According to “Race for Relevance” and other resources, we know that people are joining fewer organizations, are busier than ever, have access to more information and ideas than ever before, and are facing budget and travel constraints that can affect membership, conference attendance, and other aspects of running a successful association. In the next three years, we will work on the following activities to help strengthen our core association work:

• Create a more robust membership model with individuals and organizations and work with the Affiliate Network to develop a joint membership relationship
• Continue to ensure the conference is financially sound by increasing and diversifying participation
• Review and expand services to our members and supporters (including a relationship to the journal of EE and other benefits)
• Build a robust technology and learning platform to support the field and promote professional development opportunities

The biggest risk is not taking any risk... In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.
—Mark Zuckerberg

A 3-Pronged Approach

Increasing Our Financial Stability

Association Revenue
Conference, membership, resources, and other revenue

Technical Assistance
EE support to Corporations, Foundations, NGOs, and Government

Signature Programs
Programs that promote innovation and help NAAEE achieve its mission
Providing Technical Assistance to Corporations, Government, and NGOs

NAAEE is a network of talented experts in multiple disciplines with a range of expertise and experiences. For the past two years, we have provided assistance to corporations, government agencies, foundations, and our non-profit partners. As a way to bring in additional revenue and also promote excellence in the field, we intend to offer an EE consulting arm that would help match requests with the right talent:

- Continue to provide expert services to our colleagues to advance environmental education and meet our goals
- Develop criteria to help determine appropriate projects within the capacity of our team, board, and network

Implementing Innovative Signature Programs

For the past forty-three years, NAAEE has partnered with colleagues to develop and promote innovative programming. As we look to the future, we will continue to take part in signature programs that advance the field. We’re currently a proud partner of EECapacity, a coalition funded by the US EPA to bring new voices, innovation, and ideas to EE, with an emphasis on reaching under-served audiences and looking at how EE can best respond to an increasingly urban world and strengthening the field of environmental education. We’ve also launched the Natural Start Alliance—a new initiative to promote early childhood environmental education. As part of our next steps, we will develop criteria that will guide project choices so as to ensure alignment with NAAEE’s strategy.
Structure to Fit Strategy

As we strengthen our core and shape our future, we need to be sure our structure supports this vision. Associations have changed dramatically in the past two decades, and research shows that every association must adjust to societal changes, because:

- people are much busier than ever before
- internet and social media is making it much easier for people to find what they need without belonging to an association
- people aren’t joining, especially younger generations
- economic concerns impact how many groups people can join
- professionals, including staff at many government agencies, aren’t attending as many conferences

We are drawing on research from Board Source on best practices in association management, from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), and from other colleagues in non-profit organizations about recommendations for board structure, committees, board-staff roles, and other ways to strengthen small organizations. We would not have survived for so long without the support and talent of our past presidents, board members, association members, colleagues, and funders. As we look to the future, we want to build on the past and incorporate new thinking into how we grow NAAEE.

In light of our analysis, we are recommending the following structural changes:

- Transition to a self-perpetuating board, where board members will screen and vote on nominees. As part of this transition, we will work to develop “job descriptions” for our board and identify key skills and expertise that will help us create a stronger organization. We will reach out to our members, colleagues, and other stakeholders to help identify the best possible candidates.

- Transition from a practitioner-majority board to a governing and fundraising board, with skills that can directly increase support for NAAEE and build the operational support systems of the organization. Key skills would include fundraising, strategic communications, governance, legal, and marketing. The board will have fiduciary responsibilities and will include a chair, a treasurer, and a secretary, with a total of 7-15 members.
• Create a new practitioner-led **NAAEE Advisory Council** that serves as a brain trust to advise the Executive Director about educational and programmatic strategies to achieve our vision. This will be a prestigious group of experts from across the membership. The Executive Director, working with the Chair, board, and staff, will appoint advisors. Members can submit nominees (including themselves) to the Executive Director, and slots will be filled based on needs and funding. This Advisory Council will be modeled after other advisory groups for associations and organizations and will ensure that NAAEE is focused on best practice and keeping current on new trends and thinking in the multiple disciplines that make up our field.

• **Shift our focus to Special Interest Groups:** Based on research from ASAE and the capacity of our staff, we will be creating opportunities for members to be involved in the activities of NAAEE through our conference and other convenings, like the Blue Sky Funders Forum, our new learning site, eePRO, and special interest groups. We will separate the special interest groups that are for member engagement from the actual work of the organization’s board. We will also initially limit board committees to those that we need to accomplish our core work (governance, finance, and development), and add additional committees, if needed, in the future. The board will have the option to appoint special Task Forces (limited duration) or Advisory Boards, but will limit the number to those that are absolutely necessary to achieving the mission of the organization.

• **Board Criteria:** We hope to transition to our new governing and fundraising board and seek individuals who have skills in legal and governance issues, communications and marketing, fundraising and development, and technology. We have made a concerted effort to raise increased levels of unrestricted funding over the past two years. We have diversified our funding stream from 80 percent government funding to a mix of foundations, corporations, government, donations, and earned revenue. But we need more development expertise to realize our vision. At the same time, we have been fortunate to work with incredible colleagues who have provided pro-bono services to help us move forward. But to turn the corner and to remain sustainable, we need consistent and long-term help from our board. We will also be looking for board members who have a willingness and enthusiasm to serve and ability and time to assist with creating a stronger organization and achieving deeper impact.

**Our Unique Significance**

NAAEE is the largest professional membership association focused on advancing environmental literacy and civic engagement. However, we work in a very congested field. What makes NAAEE unique is that we are the only Association that has an Affiliate Network with boots on the ground throughout North America and an international research arm dedicated to advancing environmental literacy and working for a more sustainable future. We support our members and the profession of EE, support research to provide the underpinning of the field, and take on creative and innovative projects and technical assistance that help advance environmental literacy.

1. Strategic Goal: Drive Excellence in EE Practice

Promote excellence and impact through the dissemination of guidelines, research, tools, and professional programs.

What Success Looks Like:

- The field is adopting and “living” the Guidelines for Excellence
- Practitioners are using best practice to deliver effective programming
- The field is represented by highly qualified, certified professionals
- NAAEE is credited with being the driver of excellence
- EE is valued by leaders in foundations, corporations, government, schools, universities, and NGOs
- There is a significant increase in students who are majoring in environmental education and related areas of study
- Environmental education is integrated throughout formal and informal learning
- NAAEE signature programs help support excellence in the field and new learning and innovation

Milestones:

- Guidelines for Excellence in the Field are updated and disseminated and serve as best practice in the field.
- Our affiliates, partners, universities, and others have access to the guidelines and understand how to use them to improve practice.
- eePRO is launched and active, with professionals at every level, from novice to expert, actively participating in learning opportunities and using tools and resources on the site.
- NAAEE is the reliable source for information about the field of environmental education and related subfields.
- All professionals in the field have access to the latest research and best practices in the field.
- Every professional in the field has an opportunity to become certified in environmental education, with a focus on best practice.

NAAEE’s Strategy:

- Update the NAAEE Guidelines for Excellence to include a greater emphasis on sustainability, links to STEM and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), new research about behavior change, cultural competency, and more. Also include examples of best practices, featuring programs and people that illustrate the guidelines.
- Develop a more robust strategy for disseminating the Guidelines, via the web and on-going training opportunities, and identify funding sources to support professional development workshops throughout North America and with our global partners.
- Create an online learning site (eePRO) to promote learning opportunities in the field that showcase best practice, share research findings, and strengthen the field.
- Identify specific ways to evaluate impact with the guidelines, eePRO, certification, and other efforts to professionalize the field.
- Continue the partnership with UL to advance E-STEM, which supports excellence in environmental education and STEM.

However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.
—Winston Churchill
2. Strategic Goal: Cultivate Collective Impact

We work to unify a fractured field to accelerate environmental literacy. We convene and align through forums, conferences, the Blue Sky Funders Forum, regional gatherings, the research symposium, special events, and other professional development and network (or capacity) building opportunities. We work in partnership with the Affiliate Network to strengthen our work throughout North America. We integrate diversity, inclusion, and equity into all our work and ensure that EE is mainstreamed throughout society.

What Success Looks Like:

• There is an increase in conference attendance (in person or online) who say they are there to learn, network, and leverage large-scale change
• Through Blue Sky and other efforts, the field raises more than $3 million to deliver the Anecdotes to Evidence campaign, demonstrating the catalytic role of EE in creating an environmentally literate society
• Significant research is published to demonstrate the impact of EE
• A landscape assessment of the field of EE is published to help articulate the multiple sub-groups that are part of the environmental literacy movement

Milestones:

• By 2017, the annual conference attracts more than 1,500 attendees and virtual participants, achieves networking and learning goals, and earns unrestricted revenue to support the organization.
• NAAEE’s contribution to EECapacity and other initiatives helps advance the field and increase diversity and inclusion throughout the profession.
• NAAEE’s Research Symposium promotes learning and innovation in the field and helps provide mentoring for young researchers working in the field.
• NAAEE’s Affiliate Network is the strongest network of environmental education professionals in North America and growing around the globe.
• NAAEE establishes new partnerships with organizations representing a diverse constituency of disciplines, approaches, and members.
• Environmental Issues Forums have spurred interest in how communities can collaborate to address environmental issues. Successful forums on climate change and other critical issues are held in diverse communities across the country.
• Sector leaders collaborate more to increase impact on issues ranging from climate change education to E-STEM.

NAAEE’s Strategy:

• Conduct an annual professional international conference to promote networking, learning, innovation, and best practices in the field.
• Conduct an annual research symposium, in partnership with the Research Special Interest Group, to promote cutting edge research and thinking to support the field of environmental education.
• Work with the Affiliate Network to raise funding to help support the affiliates.
• Bring sector leaders together to enhance collaboration and promote learning, sharing, and impact.
• Partner with Blue Sky Funders Forum to increase funding and support for the field of EE and serve as the convener for NGO and government leaders.
• Promote a new era of collaboration to expand the reach and impact of all NAAEE activities.
• Lead signature programs such as the Natural Start Alliance that advance the field and promote innovation and learning.
• Partner with the Kettering Foundation to develop a series of environmental issues forums to help promote community discussion about key issues and the role of societal engagement.
• Provide substantive volunteer opportunities to advance NAAEE’s mission and goals.
3. Strategic Goal: Mobilize Multi-Sector Support for EE

Galvanize global support for environmental education and advocate on behalf of the field to strengthen state, federal, and international policies that will build environmental literacy.

What Success Looks Like:

• Complete an “Anecdotes to Evidence” article to demonstrate the impact of environmental education; complete an audit of the research (what works, where are the gaps)
• NAAEE leads a field-wide communication strategy to unify the field and its ability to talk about significance and impact
• Public support for EE increases, including reauthorization of the NEEA and other federal support for EE in the United States
• There is an increase in the number of professionals trained in advocacy techniques to advance environmental literacy
• International support for EE increases, with more country-wide mandates for environmental education and more integration of EE and sustainability into formal and nonformal learning opportunities; NAAEE partners with EPA and GEEP (Global Environmental Education Partnership)
• More than half of the states are implementing environmental literacy plans, with support from NAAEE and leaders in the Affiliate Network

Milestones:

• Audit completed on research that exists, focused on priority themes.
• Research gaps are identified and the research community develops a plan for addressing them.
• Communications opportunities identified, and tools and resources disseminated through key external stakeholders.
• A robust advocacy plan is developed.

NAAEE’s Strategy:

• Strengthen the EE Action Network to increase public and private support for environmental education. Create staff capacity to oversee our advocacy initiatives.
• Develop and implement an advocacy training initiative for NAAEE affiliates and partner organizations.
• Serve as a global ambassador for environmental education, supporting our global partners and engaging in selected international activities sponsored by IUCN, UNEP, WECC, and UNESCO.
• Oversee the transition of the NCLI coalition to NAAEE and explore opportunities for increasing participation of the Department of Education in EE.
• Support the implementation of Environmental Literacy Plans throughout the country and demonstrate the impact of these plans.
Operational Imperatives

Redesign NAAEE development and membership strategy to meet fundraising needs.

Strategy:

- Implement our new development plan to increase unrestricted funding and bring in additional support to the organization.
- Strengthen the role of the board to assist with development.
- Conduct an assessment of our current membership strategy (including an analysis of who our current members are) and outline how to increase individual and organizational membership.
- Strengthen our overall technology platforms to support NAAEE's strategic goals, including fundraising, development, marketing, and communication.

Strengthen the NAAEE Affiliate Network.

Targets:

- Strengthen the state model and help build regional strength and consider partnerships with other state EE efforts.
- Create a new shared membership model (that would allow everyone to be part of a powerful network)
- Revisit certification and accreditation and the role of NAAEE and the Affiliate Network
- Focus on joint fundraising and learning opportunities, including webinars, workshops, etc.
  and how to raise funds for NAAEE to hire an affiliate liaison to strengthen the affiliate network strategy and execution
- Explore better ways to share best practices and offer professional development opportunities, including mentoring, etc.
- Increase affiliate web presence on the revised NAAEE site; provide opportunities for affiliate input into NAAEE’s web strategy
- Explore more pilot programs that benefit the Affiliates and NAAEE, such as EE Giving Week
- Engage in joint advocacy efforts, with NAAEE providing national-level leadership and the Affiliates providing on-the-ground strategic action
- Develop joint communication and marketing tools that can be adapted at the local level
- Work together on our “Anecdotes to Evidence” initiative

Strategy is about making choices, trade-offs; it’s about deliberately choosing to be different.
—Michael Porter
Align the NAAEE business model and governance structure with the strategy.

Targets:

- Continue to build our three-prong business model, including increasing membership and conference revenues, building the consulting arm of NAAEE, along with the development of signature programs
- Identify and promote key benefits for individuals and organization to join NAAEE and stay engaged
- Develop fundraising tools (case statement) that will help address varied funder interests (conservation, education, health, etc.)
- Complete the revision of the bylaws to develop a new structure that will better support our organizational goals

Integrate diversity, inclusion, and equity considerations into all NAAEE work.

Targets:

As we strengthen our organization, we will focus on four key areas to advance our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. See page xx.

Empower a talented, diverse team that is effective in achieving the strategic and operational goals and promote excellence.

Targets:

- Provide on-going professional development and support to all staff and volunteers.
- Ensure that our policies reflect best practice, as outlined in the HR handbook
- Build a strong sense of team and camaraderie
- Create a culture of transparent and open communication
- Reward hard work, along with work-life balance to enhance productivity and job enjoyment
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Mission Critical

NAAEE embraces the principles and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion not only because of underlying moral imperatives. Diversity, equity and inclusion are mission-critical drivers of our strategy and our collective identity.

A sustainable future depends not only upon respecting the differences among people of all backgrounds and beliefs. Respect is essential but insufficient. A sustainable future demands that we leverage population diversity to accelerate environmental literacy and civic engagement. Large-scale environmental stewardship goals are achievable if environmental education programs are designed to appeal to the widest possible audience. Inclusion is a strategic imperative: a matter of relevance, responsibility and respect.

So whether promoting best practices, cultivating collective action, or mobilizing multi-sector support for environmental education, NAAEE’s unique responsibility as a force multiplier in the field will be fueled by diversity, equity and inclusion considerations.

Looking Forward

As we strengthen our organization overall, we will focus on four key areas to advance our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts:

- **Making the Case:** More effectively articulate and demonstrate the business case for why diversity, equity, and inclusino are imperative for our success
- **Integrating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into the Fabric of Our Work:** Work to align diversity, inclusion, and equity into our strategy and all aspects of NAAEE work
- **Building Cultural Competence:** Provide support for NAAEE staff, board, volunteer leaders, members, and partners to take part in learning and sharing opportunities to increase cultural competency throughout the organization and field
- **Diversifying Our Membership and Building a Pipeline:** To grow and diversify our membership, we need to increase our reach and relevance among all aspects of society in key identify groups (LGBT, disability, people of color, young professionals, and more)

We are working to identify additional resources and partnerships that will help us implement our work in this area, including support for training and outreach activities to build our cultural competency as an organization. As we work to strengthen our core systems and capacity, we will be better equipped to advance our work in this area. Our goal is to create an environment that is inclusive, respectful, and equitable, and to employ the talents of people with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to accomplish the mission of NAAEE.

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We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value, no matter what their color. —Maya Angelou
Creating a Powerful Force for EE: NAAEE and the Affiliate Network

NAAEE and its Affiliate Network are a driving force for creating a more environmentally literate citizenry through education. As we look to the future, we envision a robust and dynamic network of Affiliates across North America working with NAAEE to achieve our shared mission. Our challenge in the next three years is to put a strategy in place that strengthens both NAAEE and the Affiliates to achieve the greatest impact possible.

Background

The Affiliate Network of NAAEE was created to help strengthen the Affiliates through shared learning and support. Each Affiliate organization is its own 501c3, with a unique set of goals, strategies, and structure. The Affiliate Network was designed to improve practice and create a stronger and more unified voice for EE at all levels in North America. There are currently 54 state, provincial, and regional associations, with 51 in the United States, three in Canada, and one in Mexico. The Affiliates have joined forces to create the Affiliate Network. NAAEE serves on the steering committee of the Network.

Each Affiliate member pays a small fee to be an Affiliate member of NAAEE. The Affiliate Network Steering Committee approves any additions to the Network, and membership is based on identifying one Affiliate organization in every state or territory in the United States, Canada, and Mexico that can best further the goals of NAAEE and advance environmental literacy.

Why the Affiliate Network is Important

We believe that one of NAAEE’s most powerful assets is its Affiliate Network. Together, NAAEE and the Affiliate Network represent the leaders in the environmental education community, with a joint mission to advance environmental education and improve practices on the ground. The members of NAAEE and the Affiliate Network include more than 17,000 educators who come from a variety of backgrounds—preschool to higher education and all the learning environments outside of the formal school system.

As we look to the future, we realize that we need to be a more powerful and consistent force for environmental literacy. NAAEE is committed to the following actions to enhance our collaboration with the Affiliate Network:

- Strengthen the affiliates so that they have the staff and funding to better lead environmental education efforts in the states, regions, and provinces where they work. (Currently, more than 75% of the affiliates are volunteer-based organizations.)
- Diversify the breadth and depth of the work that Affiliates support. (Many currently support traditional nature education, but need more support to focus on issues that are relevant to a wider and more diverse audience, including climate change, health and community well-being, diversity and inclusion, conservation outcomes, and shared prosperity.)
- Build a leadership pipeline so that staff, board, and volunteers better reflect the demographics of the areas they serve.
- Strengthen the partnership between the Affiliate network and NAAEE to operate as a stronger force for EE.
How do we build a stronger network?

Currently, the affiliates represent a very diverse group of organizations, with different strengths, financial support, abilities to achieve results, and overall reach and impact. We recently had a planning meeting with a number of representatives on the Steering Committee to talk about how to develop a strong MOU with each Affiliate and NAAEE and work more strategically together.

At the meeting, attention focused on some of the challenges of managing a decentralized network, including how to set quality guidelines, build in financial sustainability, determine appropriate “network” and “headquarters” roles, given that all the Affiliates are separate organizations, and how to use the power of the network, in partnership with NAAEE, to advance environmental literacy. Many of the affiliates rely heavily on volunteers, which is a difficult model to sustain. The network also doesn’t always operate as a “network,” and some of the stronger states are playing much more active roles in making decisions about the network.

During our discussions, we outlined a process for creating a roadmap going forward that will help support a North American agenda and create a win-win strategy for both the Affiliates and NAAEE. At the meeting, we explored a number of exciting opportunities that could take place in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term, including:

- Strategies to strengthen the state models, help build regional strength, and consider partnerships with other state EE efforts
- Creating a new shared membership model (that would allow all of us to be part of a powerful network)
- Revisiting certification and accreditation and the role of NAAEE and the Affiliate Network
- Focusing on joint fundraising and learning opportunities, including webinars, workshops, etc., and how to raise funds for NAAEE to hire an affiliate liaison to oversee the affiliate network strategy and execution
- Better ways to share best practices and offer professional development opportunities, including mentoring, etc.
- Increasing affiliate web presence on revised NAAEE site; and provide opportunities for affiliate input into NAAEE’s web strategy
- Exploring more pilot programs that benefit the Affiliates and NAAEE, such as EE Giving Week
- Engage in joint advocacy efforts, with NAAEE providing national-level leadership and the Affiliates providing on-the-ground strategic action
- Developing joint communication and marketing tools that can be adapted at the local level
- Working together on our “Anecdotes to Evidence” campaign

We now have a much better idea of how to structure individual MOUs with each affiliate and what an exciting phased NAAEE-Affiliate strategy might include.
Mobilizing Our Membership

NAAEE membership is a robust, cross-sector ecosystem of corporations, foundations, government agencies, educators, community organizations, conservationists and scientists, researchers, and individuals dedicated to a more sustainable future. More than any other collective, NAAEE membership embraces the catalytic role of environmental education. As an organization, NAAEE bolsters this group’s capacity to drive environmental literacy and civic engagement.

To fulfill its promise as a force multiplier in the field, NAAEE will work to: (1) reassess and realign member benefits with the evolving needs of our member segments; (2) identify and harness the highest points of leverage within discrete member segments; and, (3) facilitate valuable opportunities for collaborative impact across member segments.

Mobilizing our membership is an ongoing priority with specific initiatives already underway, such as the Blue Sky Funders Forum, the “Anecdotes to Evidence” initiative, eePRO online, and the Affiliate Network MOU. In the coming months, we will identify even greater opportunities to unleash our membership’s collective potential by tackling such challenges as:

- What kind of membership structure best serves the field?
- What role do our corporate members play in environmental education?
- How can technology drive collective action and accelerate adoption of best practices?
- How can membership-wide communications guidelines strengthen the EE “brand”?
- How can advocacy strategy help government agencies connect the dots between environmental education and climate change mitigation?
- What are the key themes and areas of interest for our members and how can we best support these themes through our work and our partners’ work?

Times have changed, stakeholder needs have evolved, priorities have shifted, and the fundamental need to unify and focus our efforts is more profound than ever. NAAEE takes to heart its lead responsibility for propelling its membership out ahead of these changes and enabling them to be the wind at the back of the larger changes we all hope to see in the world.