

KENTUCKY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 2021

# REGIONAL EE NETWORKS

## A HOW-TO GUIDE



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Regional environmental education (EE) networks can help increase the quality and scope of EE initiatives, ultimately advancing environmental literacy, environmental behavior, and community well-being. The following guidebook is built off the experience of Kentucky's first two regional EE networks and informed by the North American Association of Environmental Education's (NAAEE) Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence. This guide is designed to give interested participants and funders an understanding of the benefits of EE networks and, perhaps more importantly, provide the tools and knowledge to initiate new EE networks.**



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

**INTRODUCTION.....03**  
WHAT IS EE?.....04  
WHY EE NETWORKS?.....05  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENCE.....06

---

**FIRST STEPS.....07**  
WHY SHOULD YOU UNDERTAKE A NETWORK?.....08  
SELF-ASSESSMENT.....09  
DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR REGION.....11  
QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DEFINE YOUR REGION.....12  
THE BARREN RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NETWORK.....13  
IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS.....14

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**THE ASSESSMENT.....15**  
TYPES OF COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS.....16  
STEPS FOR CONDUCTING AN ASSESSMENT.....17  
CLARK COUNTY ASSESSMENT.....18  
BARREN RIVER ASSESSMENT.....21  
ASSESSMENT RESOURCES.....23

---

**FORMING THE NETWORK.....24**  
ITS ABOUT PEOPLE.....25  
THE MAIN SUPPORTS.....26  
CLARK COUNTY EE NETWORK.....27  
FACILITATION.....29

---

**SUSTAINING THE NETWORK.....32**  
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY 5-D CYCLE.....33  
CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF ENGAGEMENT.....34  
FUNDING.....35  
CLARK COUNTY PROGRESS.....36  
BARREN RIVER PROGRESS.....37

---

**EXPANDING THE NETWORK.....38**  
THE COLUMBIA BASIN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NETWORK.....39

---

**CONCLUSION.....40**  
THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PROJECT.....41  
REFERENCES.....42

---

**APPENDICES.....43**  
APPENDIX 1:  
    ORGANIZING MEETING FOR A REGIONAL EE NETWORK: PART ONE  
    SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE .....43  
APPENDIX 2:  
    ORGANIZING MEETING FOR A REGIONAL EE NETWORK: PART TWO  
    SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE.....46  
APPENDIX 3:  
    ORGANIZING MEETING FOR A REGIONAL EE NETWORK: PART THREE  
    SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE.....49

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# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

**"Networking is not about just connecting people, it's about connecting people with people, people with ideas, and people with opportunities."**

**- Michele Jennae**

Environmental education (EE) improves individual, community, and ecological well-being and gives citizens the knowledge and tools to address pressing environmental problems (National Environmental Education Foundation [NEEF], 2021). EE networks help increase the quality, scope, and reach of local EE endeavors, multiplying their benefits. This guidebook is designed to help communities successfully form, sustain, and grow regional EE networks. It shares best practices, process steps, and examples from two regional networks formed in Kentucky.

While this guide contains valuable lessons and perspectives, one must consider that there is not a single correct way to form an EE network. Every group and community is different.

Thus, while a coherent structure and solid examples pervade the document, it is meant to be flexible and adapted to your own organizational and community needs.

The guidebook's sections are ordered according to the general developmental stages of the environmental education networks formed in Clark County and Barren River watershed. While not crucial to network formation, this guide explores how to plan and conduct local EE assessments, as they generated community insights, built relationships, and catalyzed the formation of both the example networks. In addition, this document covers and explores the various components of planning, facilitating, and sustaining a fledgling network and provides valuable resources to help you get started!

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# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

"Environmental education is a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, and develop skills and understanding about how to address global challenges." - NAAEE (n.d. -a)

Humans are vitally connected to and dependent on the environment, so an understanding of the natural world--and our impact on it--is paramount to survival. For pre-modern humans, this understanding consisted of knowledge of the flora, fauna, and natural cycles. Today, however, not only have human-caused environmental problems become more serious and complex, but adults and children have fewer direct interactions with and knowledge about the environment.

The modern field of environmental education, which began in the 1970s, attempts to tackle this deficit of experiences and knowledge about the natural world and provide people with the tools and motivation to

address environmental problems. While EE is broad (including botany walks, corporate energy-saving lectures, high school biology classes, and more), it has proved to be highly effective. Research on K-12 EE found that effective EE not only increases environmental literacy, but it also increases environmental behavior, and academic achievement, problem-solving skills, and civic engagement. (Ardoin, Bowers, Roth, & Holthuis, 2017). Learning about and connecting to nature can strengthen communities and "support happiness and more purposeful, fulfilling, and meaningful lives" (NEEF, 2021). This potential to improve the well-being of human and natural communities is significant and warrants both funding and attention.



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## LEARN MORE:

[About EE and Why It Matters - NAAEE](#)

[Benefits of Environmental Education](#), [eeWorks](#), [K-12 Benefits of EE](#),

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# WHY EE NETWORKS?

**“By sharing resources, ideas, and best practices, the field of environmental education becomes stronger, more inclusive, and more impactful.” - NAAEE (n.d. -c)**

Environmental education networks at all levels bring environmental educators together to build capacity, which advances environmental literacy and the ability to address environmental challenges. These networks exist and operate at various levels.

At the international and national level, networks like the Global Environmental Education Partnership (GEEP) and the North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) focus on establishing and communicating overarching best practices and connecting large initiatives. Statewide networks, like the Kentucky Association of Environmental Education (KAEE), focus on providing training and networking opportunities to individual educators in their states.

Regional EE networks, while currently sparse, have a unique opportunity to connect and convene the myriad of local educators who directly provide EE to a local community or region, including those who would otherwise not be formally involved in the field. Local networks can directly address local environmental issues through place-based education and initiatives. They can also help to identify gaps and duplication of EE efforts, leverage assets, and collaborate to ensure all community members have access to well-rounded, high-quality environmental education that is tailored to their own needs, interests, and localities.

## CLARK COUNTY'S EXAMPLE

Clark County's EE network, Winchester Inspired by Nature (WIN), formed after a needs assessment of environmental education and outdoor recreation identified a lack of knowledge of existing programs and an interest among educators to increase collaboration and communication between local EE providers (Sliney, 2019). The group has met monthly since July of 2019 and includes representatives from community groups, local businesses, and non-profit and government organizations. The Community & Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) of the University of Kentucky, the Kentucky Association for Environmental Education (KAEE), and KEEC were all involved during the initial stages of this pioneer network.



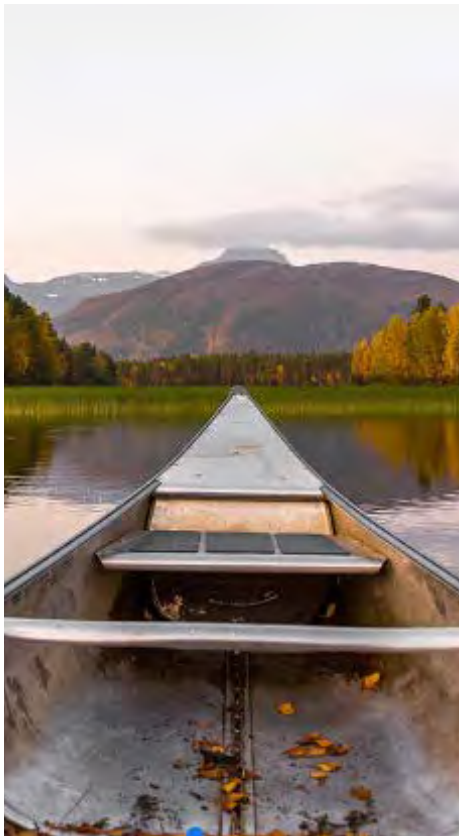
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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENCE

**"...created by environmental educators for environmental educators who want to work in partnership with communities to strengthen the underpinnings of well-being--environmental quality, social equity, shared prosperity, and the capacity to pursue these goals together." (Simmons, 2017, p. 9)**

This report should be read alongside the North American Association for Environmental Education's (NAAEE) [Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence](#), which helped to inspire and guide both the Clark County and Barren River Networks. Developed through participatory and deliberative processes as part of the [National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education](#), it compiles the best and more current EE resources and guidelines to help organizations and communities "design programs that strengthen the interwoven strands of environment and community" (Simmons, 2017).

To support their conclusion that "there is no single 'ideal' model for community engagement," the authors provide many different resources to "fit a wide range of situations" so that readers can "select and adapt components that help them work more collaboratively and effectively with their communities" (Simmons, 2017, p. 9). While this guidebook will discuss tools and approaches most applicable to regional network building, readers are urged to further explore the Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence and its resources related to inclusion, social equity, relationship-building, and long-term change.



## BARREN RIVER'S EXAMPLE

In October 2018, Drs. Terry Wilson and Jeanine Huss from Western Kentucky University attended a special pre-conference workshop at the NAAEE conference held in Spokane, Washington, which provided participants with an in-depth examination of the Community Engagement Guidelines. Participants in this special training were encouraged to return home and put the guidelines to work in an EE community education initiative that would focus on the unique EE strengths of their own region. Terry and Jeanine decided to explore the creation of a network of community-based environmental education programs, projects, and resources that already exist in the Barren River watershed in southcentral Kentucky, with the idea of using the guidelines to strengthen current efforts and build new connections between and among them.



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# FIRST STEPS

## UNDERSTANDING SELF, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND READINESS

To work effectively in communities, environmental educators and their organizations need to examine their motivations for working with others, and understand the capacity they have to achieve their goals."

- Simmons (2017, p. 80)

In addition to its wide-reaching impacts on environmental literacy, quality, and behavior, spearheading an EE network can offer many rewards on the individual, organizational, and community level. These potential benefits (listed in the following page) include increased outreach, capacity, and a robust support group for EE endeavors. Before undertaking network development, however, it is important to first understand your individual, organizational, and community readiness and capacity. Specifically explore your motivations for undertaking the endeavor, but also assess your individual, organizational, and regional interest, and available time and resources. Creating a network boasts many benefits, but like any new endeavor, it takes time, and there are likely tradeoffs to consider. Exploring the questions in the Self-Assessment below will help you realistically assess your capacity to manage the network and recognize the potential benefits and tradeoffs.

While you can explore these questions strictly through self-reflection, engaging potential

stakeholders or participants with diverse backgrounds and perspectives will help spark interest, generate ideas, build relationships, and ultimately increase future network success.

These conversations can take place in a formal meeting setting, but perhaps a conversation over coffee in a comfortable location would prove more generative.

Also, while it is important to be honest about individual and organizational readiness, it is best not to dwell or overly focus on deficits, or what you don't have. Instead, focus most attention assets. What has worked well for your organization and partnering organizations? This asset-based and/or Appreciative Inquiry approach will help build upon and amplify those positive aspects instead of amplifying the deficits. Remember, rather than trying to fit into one ideal model, examine your motivations, assess your capacity, and plan your network formation process so that it aligns with your needs and interests and takes fullest advantage of your organizational and community assets.



# WHY SHOULD YOU UNDERTAKE A NETWORK?

## UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS AND TRADEOFFS OF SPEARHEADING AND PARTICIPATING IN AN EE NETWORK

**There are many potential benefits of an EE network!**

**Below is a list of benefits seen in the Clark County and Barren River case studies. Consider benefits and tradeoffs for not only you and your organization, but also for potential network members, and community residents.**

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS

#### ORGANIZER BENEFITS

- EXPERIENCE IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
- KNOWLEDGE YOU HELPED INCREASE THE SCOPE AND REACH OF EE IN YOUR AREA
- EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH NAAEE'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENCE AND BEST PRACTICES
- ALL MEMBER AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

#### COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- IMPROVED QUALITY AND REACH OF EE ENDEAVORS
- INCREASED AWARENESS OF LOCAL EE HAPPENINGS
- INCREASED ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY, BEHAVIORS, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
- OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING
- INCREASED PRIDE AND APPRECIATION FOR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

#### MEMBER BENEFITS

- EXPANDED PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS
- OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLABORATE ON AND COORDINATE EE ENDEAVORS AND OUTREACH EFFORTS
- ACCESS TO EE TRAINING AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
- INCREASED EFFECTIVENESS AND REACH OF EE PROGRAMS
- POTENTIAL TO HELP FURTHER ORGANIZATION AND INDIVIDUAL EE MEMBERS
- ALL COMMUNITY BENEFITS

### POTENTIAL TRADEOFFS

#### ORGANIZER/MEMBER TRADE-OFFS

- LESS TIME, ENERGY, MONEY OR OTHER RESOURCES TO PROVIDE DIRECT EE AND COMPLETE OTHER INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS
- POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT BETWEEN GROUP MEMBERS OR WITH THE PUBLIC
- POTENTIAL FOR FAILURE OR CRITICISM

#### COMMUNITY TRADE-OFFS

- TEACHING ABOUT SOME OF THE VAST AND SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF OUR CURRENT WORLD CAN TRIGGER HOPELESSNESS OR AN IMPENDING SENSE OF DOOM. PLACE-BASED AND AGE-APPROPRIATE EE CAN HELP AVOID THIS.

# SELF-ASSESSMENT

## ARE YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION READY? INTERESTED?

"A realistic view of the capacity and readiness of environmental education organizations to work closely with the community can help lay the groundwork for long-term success." -Simmons (2017, p. 53)

### SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. **Why are you interested in starting an EE network?**
2. **How might you benefit from initiating and participating in this network?**
  - a. **How might your organization benefit?**
  - b. **How might other participants benefit?**
  - c. **How might your community benefit?**
3. **What are your assets?**
  - a. **Your organization's assets?**
  - b. **Other potential members' assets?**
4. **How can you best leverage your available assets to spearhead and sustain network formation?**
5. **What may be some potential tradeoffs for investing in this network?**
6. **Is this a way you would like to spend your working or personal time?**
7. **How much time can you commit?**
8. **How long can you commit to the network?**
  - a. "Working with communities to create change is typically a long-term initiative, requiring a commitment to relationship building and an ongoing and evolving process of engagement." (Simmons, 2017, p. 53)
9. **What are your perspectives, friends, upbringing, and implicit biases?**
  - a. **How does this differ from community members and potential members?**
10. **How can you make sure every potential member feels comfortable, worthy, and accepted?**

# SELF-ASSESSMENT, CONT.

## DO WE HAVE THE SKILLS?

"EE organizations need to determine which skills they have within the organization, which they might find through partnerships, and for which they may need training." - Simmons (2017, p. 81)

### SELF-ASSESSMENT SKILLS QUESTIONS

1. **What skills do you think would be necessary or helpful to have when forming and sustaining this network?**
2. **Which skills do you have?**
3. **What skills might you be able to utilize within your organization?**
4. **What skills might be able to find through partnerships?**
5. **Which skills might you need training?**
6. **For which skills might you want to hire someone?**
  - a. **Do you have the funding to do this?**

### POTENTIAL NECESSARY SKILLS

- Cultural Competence
  - "...having an awareness of one's own cultural identify and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families." - National Education Association as cited in Simmons (2017, p. 112)
- Research and Data Analysis
- Community Organizing
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Leadership
- Facilitation
- Administrative and/or Organizational
- Fundraising and/or Financial Management

### RESOURCES

- The University of Kansas [Community Toolbox](#)
- [Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence](#), Resource #4

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# DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR REGION

## WHO WILL YOU INCLUDE?

**"From the perspective of environmental education, it makes sense to think of community as a system--or a system of systems. From the natural systems that sustain us (e.g., forests, wetlands, soils, water, air), to the social systems that shape our lives (e.g., housing transportation, legal, educational, spiritual), to governments and economic systems, no element of community exists in isolation. An understanding of the interlocking systems is a critical foundation for building people's capacity to create a healthy, sustainable, and resilient future." - Simmons (2017)**

What is a region? Oxford Languages defines it as "an area or division, especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries." This guidebook will expand upon that definition to include a somewhat cohesive area of land and its' encompassing human and ecological communities.

The way to define each specific region is flexible. It can be a county, a group of counties, an urban area, or a watershed. Different sizes and definitions will be appropriate for different areas, but to be most helpful, a regional EE networks should generally be on a smaller than existing national, provincial, or statewide EE networks. This allows it to fulfill roles not otherwise filled by the larger networks.

An advantage of this smaller scale is that it encourages engagement to be more place-based. Place influences the landscape and natural communities as well as human culture. Culture, in turn, influences how people interact with the land. Modern land boundaries are usually political lines seemingly arbitrarily drawn on a map. While useful, is this really the best way to understand your place? There has been a recent focus on looking at a "bioregion" or "eco-region," a region more defined by its geological and ecological boundaries and differences (McGinnis, 1999). The questions on page 12 will prompt you to explore your region in terms of both the human and natural features, which can help you best decide how to form your regional boundaries.





# QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DEFINE YOUR REGION

## WHEN DEFINING YOUR REGION, CONSIDER:

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### **CULTURAL**

HOW WOULD MOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS DEFINE THE REGION?  
HOW WOULD MOST EE PROVIDERS DESCRIBE THE REGION?  
WHAT WERE/ARE THE BOUNDARIES OF INDIGENOUS TRIBES ON THE LAND?  
WHAT SOCIAL/CULTURAL BOUNDARIES EXIST IN THE REGION?

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### **POLITICAL**

WHERE ARE THE STATE, COUNTY, CITY BOUNDARIES?  
WHAT AREAS DO THE SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS WITH WHOM THE NETWORK MIGHT WORK SERVE?  
WHERE ARE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE LARGER EE NETWORKS THAT ENCOMPASS YOUR REGION?

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### **ECOLOGICAL**

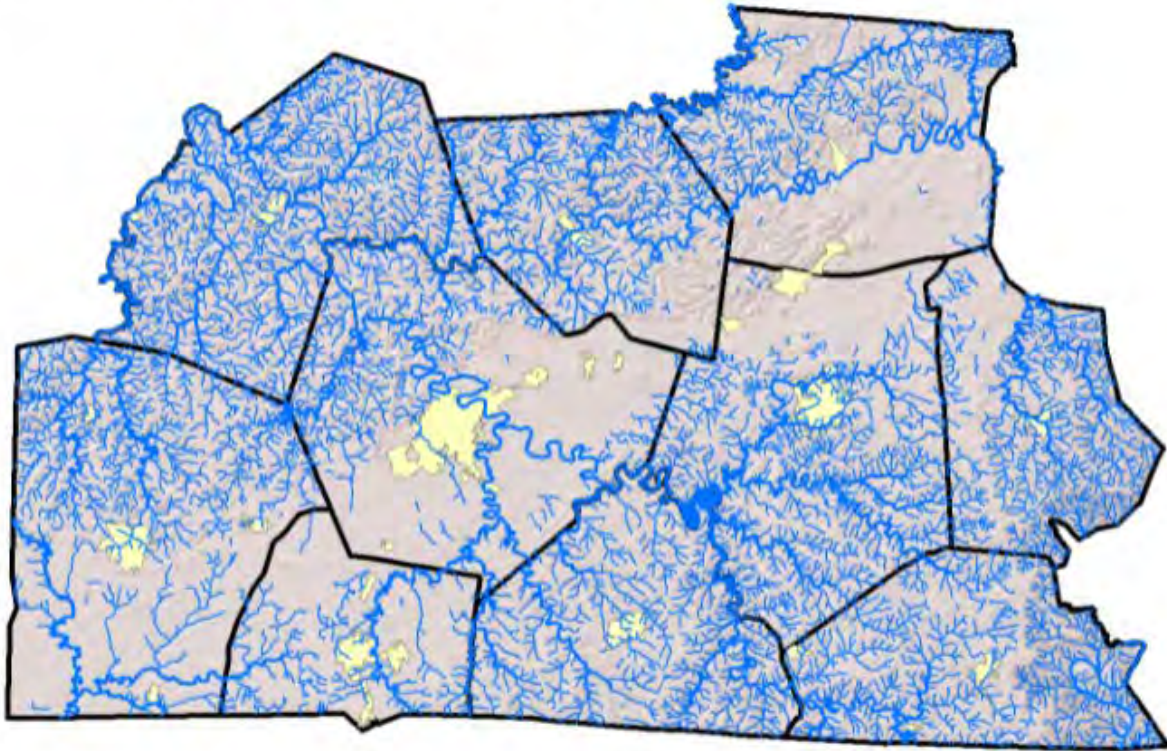
WHERE ARE THE WATERSHED BOUNDARIES?  
WHERE ARE THE PLANT HARDINESS BOUNDARIES?  
WHERE ARE THE ECOREGION BOUNDARIES?  
EXPLORE YOUR ECOREGION HERE: [EPA ECOREGIONS](#)

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### **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

WHAT REGIONAL DEFINITIONS WILL MAKE IT EASIEST TO ASSESS?  
WHICH AREAS DO LOCAL EE PROVIDERS SERVE?  
WHAT AREA(S) DO YOU AND THE NETWORK WANT TO INCLUDE? (REMEMBER, BOUNDARIES CAN BE PURPOSEFULLY INCLUSIVE TO EXPAND EE TO UNDERSERVED AREAS)

## Barren River Region Hydrography



# THE BARREN RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NETWORK

## EDUCATORS WHO SHARE A WATERSHED

Instead of using political boundaries, Terry Wilson and Jeanine Huss, defined their EE network's region as the Barren River watershed. Thus, the educators in this group not only have a common connection to Barren River and the area's karst topography, but it allows participants to coordinate and improve education specific to the unique environmental education needs of this watershed.



Sinkhole plain before a rain.

Sinkhole plain after a rain.



# IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS CAN BE FOUND ACROSS MANY SECTORS. DO SOME RESEARCH, FIND THEM, AND REACH OUT!**

## **PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS**

City and county governmental and organizations, depending on their size, may have several positions that include some form of environmental education, including stormwater management, solid waste management, and emergency management. Additionally, look to parks, schools, library, nature preserves, and USDA county conservation districts.

## **LOCAL BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRY**

Health food stores, outdoor stores, farms, and nature schools may offer EE classes or include educational outreach material. Larger businesses or industries may have an employee or entire department that focuses on community outreach and service. A local economic development specialist may prove helpful for identifying such potential partners.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

College and universities may offer environmental science or sustainability classes, have a learning garden, agricultural research center, or sustainability center. Also look to agriculture extension and 4-H agents through your county's Cooperative Extension Office.

## **LOCAL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

Museums, parks, science centers, preservation and conservation groups, environmental and environmental justice organizations may be participating in or interested in supporting EE efforts.

## **COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS**

Look for nature, hiking, environmental and environmental justice groups to invite. There are likely local representatives of Audubon, Ducks Unlimited, sierra Club, or other environmental groups, among others.

### **Some Helpful Tips:**

- Check the calendar in the local newspaper for EE events or features.
- Ask teachers, residents, and identified EE providers to help you identify others.
- Don't be afraid to reach out!



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# THE ASSESSMENT

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

**"Needs and asset assessments can provide valuable information to inform strategic decisions about how to best use resources. They can be used to inform strategic planning and fund development efforts...create buy in, [and] understanding about the reasons decisions are made."**

**- Tice (2009)**

An assessment is a process of collecting and interpreting data for the purpose of deepening understanding. In EE, assessments are often used as a best practice to evaluate the need for, effectiveness, or outcome of a program. They can also provide a methodical way to better understand the beliefs, values, and behavior, of diverse community members as they relate to EE and the environment. This can often help to provide a more clear and unbiased understanding of the community and enable educators to design community programming that is pertinent and inclusive. Documented assessment results also strengthen grant applications. Furthermore, simply the process of conducting comprehensive and community-based research can build relationships and increase community awareness and capacity.

In the Clark County example, a needs assessment, directly catalyzed the development of their EE network, Winchester Inspired by Nature.

In addition to generating data to paint a thorough picture of EE in the county, the data collection process itself sparked new relationships between the researcher, residents and program leaders. This is especially true of the focus group, which provided an opportunity for local environmental educators to meet together and brainstorm ways to improve and expand EE in the county. The focus group discussion was the ultimate impetus for the network.

Similarly, an asset mapping exercise was the initial pretext for gathering the EE providers that would become The Barren.

Thus, while formal assessments aren't crucial to the development of EE networks, they are encouraged for their ability to gain a better understanding of the community, align efforts with needs and assets, strengthen grant applications, engage community members and stakeholders, and even potentially spark network formation.



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# TYPES OF COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS

## NEEDS AND ASSET ASSESSMENTS



Both needs and asset assessments are community assessment approaches that can incorporate and utilize many different data collection methods to determine the state of a given community. They primarily differ in that one mostly focuses on what the community has (assets) and the other on the gaps between the current and desired state (needs). While needs assessments can and do consider community assets in order to determine the deficits between the current state and the desired state of the community, some argue that they can put too much emphasis on what the community doesn't have, and thus amplify the perceptions of these deficits. For this reason asset assessments and asset mapping can serve as a useful alternative to needs assessments.

As a complement, once needs are identified, assessing assets can help communities determine how to address those needs. Alternatively, like in the Barren River example, communities can focus solely on identifying assets and then determine ways to leverage assets to help improve the community. This approach, which aligns more with Appreciative Inquiry, can create more positive-thinking ideas and possibilities. Perhaps, however, it falls short of documenting and fully understanding the future towards which the community would like to move. Thus, likely a combination of considering assets and needs will provide the best understanding of your community and its desired future direction, while staying positive and focused on leveraging assets will help your network thrive.

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# STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

AS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE [COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENCE, RESOURCE #3](#)

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## **STEP ONE: PRE-PROJECT PLANNING**

WHAT ARE YOUR ULTIMATE GOALS?  
WHO WILL YOU WORK WITH?  
WHAT SIMILAR STUDIES HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED?  
WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU HAVE AVAILABLE? (TIME, MONEY, OFFICE SUPPLIES, RESEARCH EXPERIENCE, ETC.)

## **STEP TWO: DEFINE GOALS AND COMMUNITY**

WHAT SPECIFIC GOALS DO YOU HOPE TO REACH THROUGH THIS ASSESSMENT?  
HOW WILL YOU DEFINE THE BOUNDARIES OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

## **STEP THREE: IDENTIFY COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS**

HOW DOES THE COMMUNITY DEFINE ITSELF?  
WHAT ARE THE GEOGRAPHICAL, POLITICAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR COMMUNITY?  
WHAT ARE THE PEOPLE LIKE?  
WHICH OF THESE ASPECTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO ANALYZE TO MEET YOUR ASSESSMENT GOALS?

## **STEP FOUR: IDENTIFY ASSESSMENT METHODS**

HOW WILL YOU COLLECT YOUR DATA TO MEET YOUR ASSESSMENT GOALS?  
DOES THIS INFORMATION ALREADY EXIST?  
DO YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO GENERATE NUMERICAL DATA (QUANTITATIVE DATA) OR NARRATIVES TO CAPTURE THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND EXPERIENCES (QUALITATIVE DATA)?  
COMMON QUANTITATIVE METHODS: RESEARCH, SURVEYS  
COMMUNITY QUALITATIVE METHODS: INTERVIEWS, CASE STUDIES, FOCUS GROUPS

## **STEP FIVE: ANALYZE RESULTS**

HOW WILL YOU STORE YOUR DATA SO IT IS READILY ACCESSIBLE BUT ALSO SECURE?  
HOW WILL YOU ORGANIZE AND ANALYZE YOUR DATA TO BEST ANSWER YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION(S)?  
HOW WILL YOU SHARE YOUR FINDINGS SO THAT OTHERS CAN UNDERSTAND AND BENEFIT?

## **STEP SIX: SELECT AND IMPLEMENT BEST STRATEGIES**

WHAT DO THE RESULTS MEAN FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION, PROJECT, AND COMMUNITY?  
HOW WILL YOU ADJUST YOUR EE ENDEAVORS TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF YOUR COMMUNITY?  
WHAT OTHER QUESTIONS STILL REMAIN?  
SHOULD MORE RESEARCH BE CONDUCTED?

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FOR MORE INFORMATION REFER TO THE EPA'S [COMMUNITY CULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT: A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING PLACE.](#)

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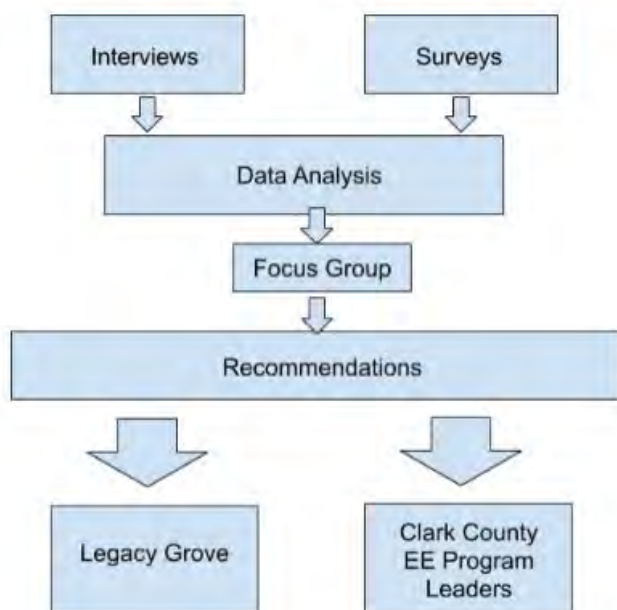
# CLARK COUNTY'S ASSESSMENT

## A THOROUGH ACADEMIC APPROACH

Erin Sliney conducted the needs assessment [An Investigation of the Need for and Availability of Environmental Education and Outdoor Recreation in Clark County, Kentucky](#), in the spring of 2019 while serving as an [Environmental Education Leadership Corps](#) member for Legacy Grove, a new privately-owned public park. Its purpose was to inform the development of programming for the park and increase the capacity of EE in Clark County by:

- collecting and compiling data about the community's interest and participation in EE programs,
- educating program leaders about community needs and interests.
- engaging community stakeholders, and
- identifying opportunities for future research and collaboration.

## PROJECT STRUCTURE



## What is a needs assessment?

A needs assessment is a "systematic way to assess the gaps between current conditions and desired conditions," used to inform planning and decision-making. In EE it is often used as a formative assessment to help inform program development that meets community needs and interests.

The Clark County assessment followed a Three-Phased Needs Assessment model initially proposed by Witkin and Altshuld (1995) and exemplified by Hintz and Lackey (2017):

### PHASE ONE: WHAT IS?

Conduct **research**, semi-informal **interviews** and **surveys** of program leaders to identify:

- What programs are being offered?
- What are barriers to offering programming?
- What programs are most successful? Why?
- Who is and is not being served?
- How are programs being publicized?

### PHASE TWO: WHAT SHOULD BE?

**Survey** teachers and residents to identify:

- Who currently participates in EE or OR programming?
  - What do they attend?
  - What draws them to participate?
- Who does not currently participate?
  - What would encourage or enable them to participate more?
- What specific topics interest residents?
- How do people hear about community programs?

### PHASE THREE: HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Conduct a **focus group** with program leaders to identify:

- How should existing organizations work together to improve the capacity of EE and outdoor recreation in the county?
- Which organizations can fulfill the community's various needs and interests?

# CLARK COUNTY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOUND **SIGNIFICANT UNMET INTEREST IN EE PROGRAMS AND SIGNIFICANT LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EE PROGRAMS**. DESPITE THERE BEING 19 ORGANIZATIONS OFFERING EE PROGRAMS IN SOME FORM, MOST RESIDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER PROGRAM LEADERS DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THEM!

## OTHER KEY FINDINGS:

- Teachers
  - Most were interested in EE programs, but didn't participate.
  - Budget and transportation were cited as the biggest barriers to participation
  - Held high interest in programs about Weather & Climate, Ecosystems, and Earth Systems.
  - Preferred to receive info about programs via email.
- Residents
  - Most were interested in EE programs, but didn't participate.
  - Time constraints, schedule conflicts, and lack of knowledge were cited as the biggest barriers to participation.
  - They are interested in special events, spending time outside with friends and family, and programs that incorporate live music, arts and crafts, and health and well-being.
  - Most respondents preferred to receive information about programs via Facebook.
- Program leaders
  - Several organizations offer programs!
  - Displayed a general lack of knowledge about other EE programs
  - Held incorrect perceptions and assumptions of residents' needs and interests.
  - Expressed interest in collaboration and communication among program leaders

Along with questions regarding the EE interest and , the survey also collected demographic information. This generated substantial data, which the researcher then analyzed to identify trends among residents of different ages, genders, races, income levels, etc. This advanced the understanding of the needs and interests of residents of different groups of people, and identified ways to better engage marginalized members of the community and those who were otherwise not participating.



# CLARK COUNTY ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

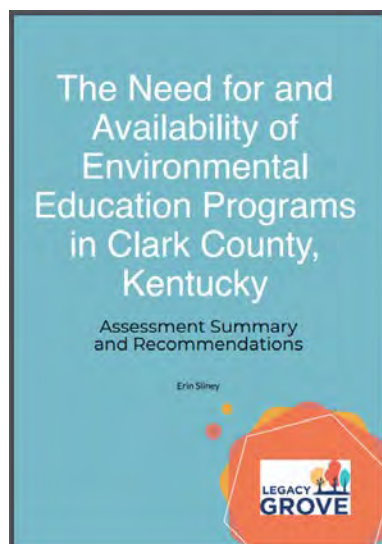
## APPLYING WHAT WAS LEARNED

**SHARING THE RESULTS IN A USABLE FORMAT IS ONE OF THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT (EPA - CE). CLARK COUNTY SHARED THEIR DATA IN A FEW DIFFERENT WAYS:**

### FOCUS GROUP: SHARING AND BRAINSTORMING

The results of the resident, teacher, and program leader surveys were first shared with the focus group via a PowerPoint presentation. The researcher then led the program leaders through a set of discussion questions to help identify ways to improve the capacity of EE in Clark County, considering the assessment results. In addition to enlightening the program leaders to community needs and interests, which contradicted many of their initial assumptions, the focus group was the ultimate impetus for the Clark County EE Network. During the discussion portion, members of the group not only identified the need for a Clark County EE Network, they also volunteered to help start one and agreed to leadership positions. This ultimately increased dedication from program leaders, and the ultimate success of the network. Instead of attending a network to support someone else's plan, these providers were participating to help realize their own vision of EE in their community.

**SHARING RESEARCH FINDINGS ENLIGHTENED LOCAL EE PROVIDERS TO COMMUNITY NEEDS AND INTERESTS AND WAS THE IMPETUS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE CLARK COUNTY EE NETWORK.**



**PDF SUMMARY: EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND SHARE**  
Results were also shared through a visually-appealing and easily-digestible 5-page document. This was shared at the initial Clark County EE network and to several non-profit boards, and has been kept in the files of the group to refer to and serves as the foundational research which has guided many of the group's actions. The full academic document, an applied professional master's project, is also available and can serve as a detailed guide to help inform and direct future projects. Read the [summary](#). Read the [full academic document](#).

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# BARREN RIVER'S ASSET MAPPING PROCESS

## CONVENING EDUCATORS TO IDENTIFY AND CELEBRATE EE ASSETS

The group of educators who became the BREEN, first convened to participate in an asset mapping exercise. Asset mapping refers to "the process of creating an inventory of the skills, talents and resources that exist within a community or neighborhood" (Community Legacy, 2012). Identifying, honoring and leveraging these assets can help communities and organizations thrive by building upon strengths, revealing existing connections and potential partnerships, and instilling pride. For additional information on the purpose and process of asset mapping, see [Community Building Tool Packet: Community Asset Mapping Workbook](#).



## THEIR STORY

Upon returning to Bowling Green, Kentucky inspired by the Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence training in Spokane, Washington, Huss and Wilson identified an initial group of individuals that are known to be leading community EE programs in the region. These individuals were invited to an introductory workshop in 2019 which was designed to do the following:

- Introduce the group to the NAAEE Guidelines for Excellence initiatives, with particular emphasis on the guidelines on community engagement.
- Involve the group in an asset mapping process to begin to identify what is already happening in EE in the Barren River region. (This process was modeled at the Spokane NAAEE preconference workshop.)
- Identify a subgroup, which would compile the initial results of the asset mapping process for use in subsequent meetings of the network and to build upon the breadth and depth of the network as it developed.
- Initiate a process for identifying additional community-based programs that could become part of the network as the process continues over the next several years.

# BREEN'S ASSET MAPPING PROCESS

To better understand the positive initiatives already in place in the region, the participants of the BREEN's initial meeting were encouraged to brainstorm EE assets, write them on a sticky note, and place them near their corresponding locations on a physical map of the region.



As was modeled by NAAEE, this process was intended to yield information that was:

- asset-based, uncovering services, talents, skills, and resources found in the community right now;
- internally focused, relying on the community's assets, not on those found outside of it; and
- relationship-driven, seeking to build linkages among local people, institutions, and organizations.

The entities initially identified in this exercise were classified into the categories of Places, Non-Profit Organizations, Business/Industry, and Public Agencies. The visual above shows the results of the asset mapping that was done during the first year of the network's existence. These were all programs and resources that were community-based.

Although many of the actual programs being implemented by and through these entities targeted or included formal education, such as public and private schools, the idea was to get a picture of the community-based efforts, many of which were more non-formal in nature.



# ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

**These key resources will help you further understand and plan your community assessment.**

## **COMMUNITY CULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT: A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING A SENSE OF PLACE**

This EPA resource "addresses the social and cultural aspects of community-based environmental protection....It gives leaders in government agencies and in nongovernmental organizations and tribes (such as directors of watershed groups, public health officials, outreach coordinators, environmental educators, and environmental justice workers) technical tools for more effectively working with the public on environmental protection efforts."

## **MY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION RESOURCE ASSISTANT (MEERA)**

MEERA "is an online 'evaluation consultant'" for environmental education programs. It helps you decide which evaluation would be best for your EE needs and direct you through the steps and to resources that will help effectively evaluate your program or community.

## **COMMUNITY TOOLBOX**

"Developed by the University of Kansas this valuable resource is a hub to "get help taking action, teaching, and training others in organizing for community development....Find help assessing community needs and resources, addressing social determinants of health, engaging stakeholders, action planning, building leadership, improving cultural competency, planning an evaluation, and sustaining your efforts over time." A helpful tool for organizing assessments can be found at <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/develop-a-plan/main> and includes resources for assessing community needs and identifying assets.





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# FORMING THE NETWORK

## HOW TO BRING EVERYONE TOGETHER

### **GATHERING TOGETHER LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS IS IMPORTANT WORK!**

**In a regional EE network, connections are made that can spark new projects and collaborations; information about local EE efforts, best practices, and environmental problems are shared; and efforts are coordinated so that educators most efficiently and effectively provide residents with equitable access to quality EE. This all ultimately leads to expanded or improved EE, advanced environmental literacy and eco-friendly behaviors, and increased health and well-being of the natural and human communities in your region. So let's get them together!**

The network development process can and should be molded to meet the varying needs and assets of the organizer, the organization, and the community. If you have followed the pre-assessment projects, you will already have gathered some information about EE in your community, generated ideas and momentum, and built new relationships or strengthened existing ones. This will help provide direction to the formation process and increase stakeholder engagement. If not, this can also be accomplished during the network's inaugural meetings.

These first meetings should be structured to determine the purpose and vision of the group, but also the willingness and capacity for educators to participate in such a network.

You might find you have a dedicated group interested in meeting frequently to work on specific projects, but you may also find that educators in your area are interested, but busy, and would prefer quarterly lunches to maintain relationships and share upcoming events.

The Barren River and Clark County networks share some similarities in their formation process worth noting. First, they evolved into a "concentric circle" structure to allow for varying levels of involvement.

Second, the assessment gave them a compelling reason to initially convene. Third, a dedicated person or group of people ultimately took charge to ensure the forward movement and success of the network.

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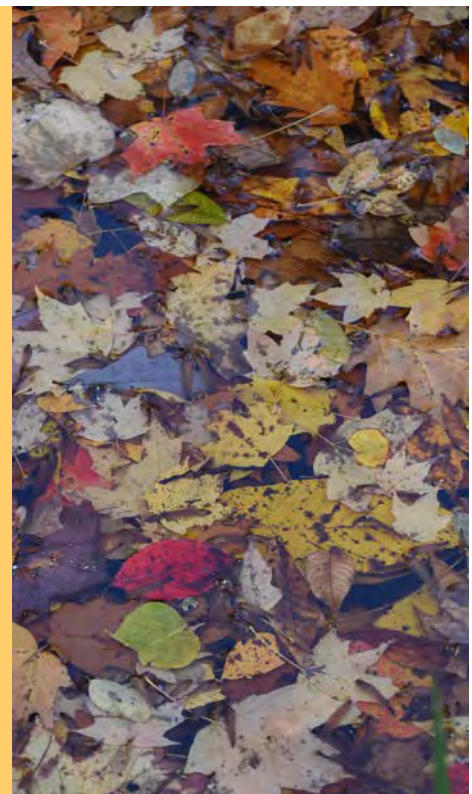
# IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE!

Remember that network formation ultimately involves people. People get hungry, thirsty, and have feelings, preconceptions, friend groups, identities, as well as varying experiences of privilege and oppression. To ensure network success, it is important to be aware of members' physical and emotional needs, embrace differences, and ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all. Different members with different skills or interests can help ensure that all these needs are being met.

People coming from differing backgrounds also means that they carry different opinions and stances on many different political issues. Sometimes these issues can trigger emotional responses, be divisive, and harm group dynamics. Remember that this network is a network of environmental educators, NOT a network of environmentalists or people representing a certain political party. Always reframe issues to be about how to expand increase environmental literacy and how to improve the wellbeing of the community.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

**The diversity of educators does not always match the diversity of the public audience. Therefore, environmental educators need to be aware of the demographic makeup, beliefs, implicit biases, and backgrounds of yourself, your members, and how these might differ from the residents of your community. Exploring this can be uncomfortable, but it is important that all organizations and fields reassess their relationship to and role in the underrepresentation and exclusion of people of color and various marginalized members of society in EE and outdoor fields. The resource links below will help you better understand injustice in EE, provide you with some resources to assess and restructure your network and partnering organizations to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.**



### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in EE Resources**

[Organizational Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion | NAAEE](#)

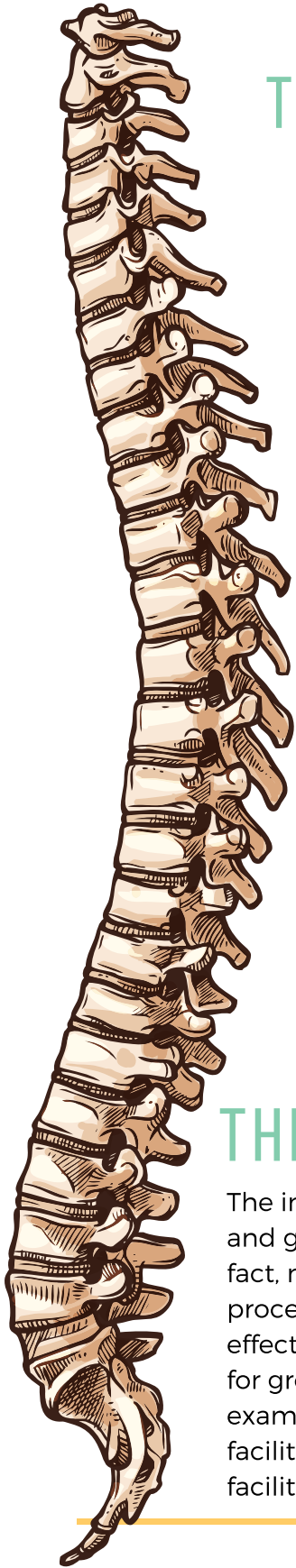
[Equity and Inclusion Best Practices - KAAE](#)

[Enhancing Cultural Competence - Community Toolbox](#)

[Community Engagement - Guidelines for Excellence - Resource #12 - Engaging with Diverse Partners and Community Members](#)

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# THE MAIN SUPPORTS



## THE CHAMPION

A network is best formed through multiple people collaborating and communicating. Many successful community projects, however, have one or two people who are ultimately driving progress. These "champions," or organizers, are crucial to the success of the project by ensuring tasks are accomplished and the group continually moves forward on its goals. Ideally, these people possess critical-thinking, administrative, and communication skills, but most importantly, they should be passionate about and dedicated to the network. This does not mean that this person will control the group or lead every meeting or project, but throughout the endeavor, they will hold the group members accountable for hosting and leading meetings.

## THE BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

***"Collaborations among multiple organizations are simple in theory, but difficult in practice. Making them work requires a backbone organization that pays close attention to the needs of all participants."*** - [Crespin & Moser \(2018\)](#)

While ideally multiple individuals and organizations will help, the backbone organization takes ultimate responsibility for supporting the network. This could be through employing the "champion" of the EE network and/or otherwise dedicating administrative time and resources to support the group. Organizations dedicated to furthering EE, who would significantly benefit from network formation and participation, are likely the best suited for this position.

## THE FACILITATOR

The initial stages of network formation are heavily dependent on gathering the input and generating ideas from many individuals, or facilitation. Facilitation is not easy! In fact, many books have been written about how to effectively facilitate group processes. You should decide for yourself whether you have the internal skills to effectively facilitate these visioning meetings, whether to invest in facilitation training for group members, or rather hire an outside facilitator. As explained in the following examples, Clark County benefited greatly from eliciting the help of an outside trained facilitator, while Barren River used their own expertise. Either way, the included facilitation guide includes helpful tips to facilitating a group meeting.

# CLARK COUNTY'S EE NETWORK

## A FORMALIZED APPROACH

The development of an EE network in Clark County was extremely tied to the assessment. Not only did the surveys and interviews point to a need for increased collaboration and communication among providers, but the providers themselves proposed the formation of the network and eagerly started assigning roles and planning meetings during the focus group. This increased excitement and investment among the educators and provided the initial organizer, Erin Sliney, and supporting organization, Legacy Greenscapes, valuable insight into the needs and possibilities of such a network. Instead of starting the network immediately, however, they decided step back and approach the network formation more intentionally. To ensure successful group formation, they elicited the help of Daniel Kahl, a trained facilitator from the Community Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) at the University of Kentucky and met together to strategically plan the first three meetings.

The initial members included representatives from the city and county government; industries, businesses, and nonprofits conducting EE; the county extension office; the local nature preserve; parks, and dedicated volunteers from a local nature group. They had the meetings at accessible locations and tried to integrate fun and interesting activities in order to keep people involved, and to also build comradery and a sense of community. An outline of the meetings is shared below and detailed agendas are included in the appendices.

Some of the first activities gauged interest, perception of need for this group, and how participation would benefit individual members and their organizations. Then, Kahl walked them through activities using an appreciative inquiry approach and various decision making techniques to determine the vision, mission, common values, goals, and prioritized action items.





# CLARK COUNTY'S FIRST THREE MEETINGS

MEETING	OBJECTIVES
<b>MEETING 1</b> JULY 2019	<b>Make Introductions</b> <b>Establish Purpose</b> <b>Establish Ideas for Action</b>
<b>MEETING 2</b> AUGUST 2019	<b>Establish a common vision</b> <b>Establish goals for the Network</b> <b>Prioritize goals and establish action steps</b>
<b>MEETING 3</b> SEPTEMBER 2019	<b>Establish a name</b> <b>Revisit and confirm action goals</b> <b>Establish a clear structure for communication</b>

Thorough facilitation guides of these first three meetings are included as Appendices 1, 2, & 3.

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# FACILITATION

## SUCCESSFULLY PLANNING AND MANAGING INITIAL MEETINGS



While the emerging leadership of the network will gain a clearer picture of WHAT they want to accomplish, the support of a facilitator can help them determine HOW they will get there. While project leaders focus on the project goals, the facilitator can focus on the processes to get the group there. In order to help get your network started on the right foot, consider utilizing an outside facilitator. Pages 30 & 31 provide facilitation guides and agendas strategically developed and used for the Clark County network's initial meetings. These step-by-step guides will walk your network through the process of developing organization and vision statement, shared values, and prioritized goals.

### FACILITATION IS A NEUTRAL PROCESS THAT FOCUSES ON:

- WHAT NEEDS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED
- WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED
- DESIGN, FLOW AND SEQUENCE OF TASKS
- COMMUNICATION PATTERNS, EFFECTIVENESS AND COMPLETENESS
- APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION AND THE USE OF RESOURCES
- GROUP ENERGY, MOMENTUM

# BUILDING AN EE NETWORK

## A CONCEPT FLOW CHART

When hosting the process, the facilitators and conveners should pay attention to two simultaneous aspects of group formation. Staying attentive to the *structure* of what gets done to create a strong organization and being attentive to the *process* to reach those goals. While project leaders focus on the project goals, the facilitator can focus on the processes to get the group there.

The accompanying facilitator guides for the first three meetings are designed to encourage network building (see table below) through actions and discussions that establish how the network will organize and methods that allow members see how they fit into the group structure.

WHAT GETS DONE (STRUCTURE)	HOW IT GETS DONE (PROCESS)
NETWORK DEVELOPMENT/ RESOURCE SHARING	Strengthen Relationships'/Trust building, Facilitated sharing through repeated introduction activities Small group work
VISIONING	Establish common values, group discussion, shared agreement
ESTABLISH SHARED VALUES	Individual submission, group discussion, shared agreement
GOAL SETTING	Align energy, shared priorities assets and skills
ACTION ON PROJECTS	Establish structure for communication, responsibilities, action prioritization

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# FACILITATOR FUNDAMENTALS

## WHEN FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EE NETWORK, KEEP IN MIND

### THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE IS TO:

1. Serve the interests of the group and enable them to achieve the **group's** outcomes, not the facilitator's outcomes.
2. Help the group imagine what success could look like, and then help the group to describe the structure they need to reach that success.
3. Enable the group to make quality decisions.
4. Support and encourage relationship building.
  - a. To form a network is to invite strangers together. Hospitality is central to helping strangers feel they belong.
  - b. Common interests and purposes unify. Identify the common interests of this EE group, and build upon them.
  - c. Build relationships gradually. Design opportunities for small interactions and sharing, working to larger interactions and sharing. You must create the physical and psychological space for relationships to grow.
5. Make certain group expectations clear.
  - a. While the facilitator can suggest some ground rules, the list of how the group needs to interact to reach their goals should be established and agreed upon by the group.

### A CAUTIONARY NOTE:

Beware of prioritizing members. No one member of a network is most important. Networks, by definition, need many members. No one tree in the forest is more important than the other trees for keeping the forest growing. Keep the group focused on the value and importance of having a broad and diverse network. If a core group is formed, let the group form itself. If someone takes it upon themselves to “pick the team”, It risks losing the involvement and support of those not chosen. Beware of perceptions of inclusion. Let people decide for themselves and value their engagement at whatever level they choose. Be flexible to changing levels of involvement as the network progresses.





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# SUSTAINING THE NETWORK

## ENSURING FUTURE SUCCESS

**Determining a clear structure, vision, mission, and goals during the initial formation process will help to ensure future success, as it will prevent the group from feeling aimless or stuck. Still, there may be times when the network hits some speed bumps. Don't get discouraged! Below we've included some tips and tricks to help you.**

### CLEAR AGENDA

If you are having more formal meetings, create an agenda with clear and intentional goals, time frames, and identified speakers. Also, ensure meetings consistently start and end on time.

### CLEAR LEADERSHIP

Ensure individuals are clearly in charge of the various tasks needed to support the network.

### FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

Keep your foundational documents handy, especially the prioritized goals that adhere to a timeline. They provide direction upon which the group already agreed, or, can help determine whether new opportunities will align with the mission, vision, and larger goals, and thus, be worth pursuing.

### KEEP IT INTERESTING!

If meetings become dull, think of ways to spice them up! Clark County began meeting at the workplaces of their differing partners and including a tour of their grounds. Perhaps someone agrees to provide a different fun dessert at each meeting. Remember, people are

people and appreciate fun and food! You want members to look forward to these meetings.

### ASSESS PROGRESS

Periodically assessing network progress through surveys, small group discussion, or facilitated exercises, can help members reflect on their success, re-inspire action, and could inform possible new changes to the group. If done more formally, this information could be included in grant applications.

### REVISIONING

If you find the group has strayed from their initial goals or vision, the network may need to participate in a revisioning process. After operating for over a year, Clark County's network, brought in a trained facilitator to help them to reassess what goals were still relevant and their overall structure.

### CELEBRATE!!!

If you've reached a goal or are making significant progress, celebrate it! You've worked hard and achieved success!

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY 5-D CYCLE

## FOCUSING ON WHAT HAS WORKED WELL AND DREAMING BIG TO REFOCUS AND INVIGORATE

Following the steps of this model can help reinspire network members and provide clear direction to accomplish future goals.

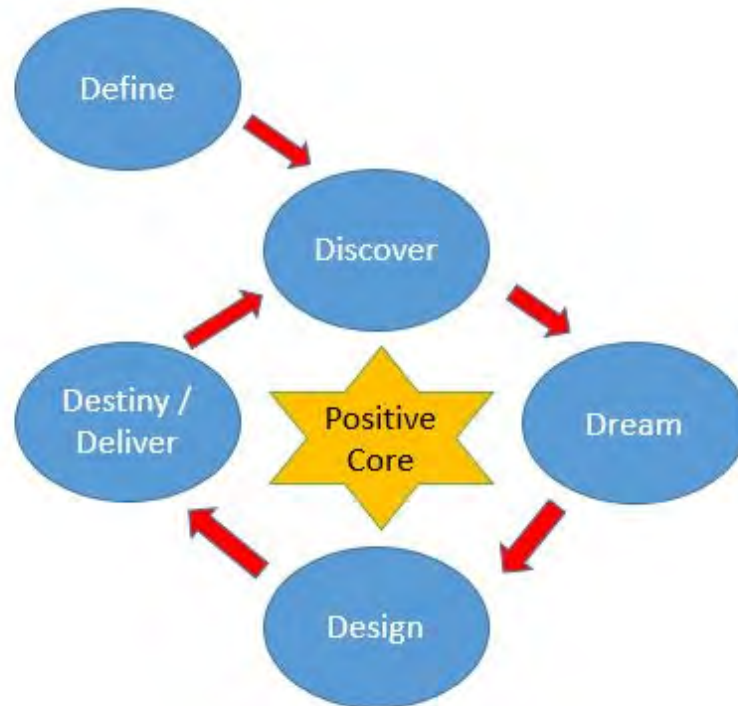


Image : The Appreciative Inquiry Commons (n.d.)

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is both a process and an attitude. The Appreciative Inquiry 5-D Cycle can be used to help group walk through the steps of:

- **Define** - What is the focus of the inquiry? Define the purpose and what needs to be achieved.
- **Discover** - use storytelling, interviews, and group discussion to determine what has worked/is working the best for the group and as an individual.
- **Dream** - Imagine the best possible scenario of your group. What does it look like? What big goals can help you get there?
- **Design** - how can you make these dreams a reality? What changes should be made?
- **Deliver/Destiny** - which dreams and design statements does the group agree upon? What does this commitment look like?

**"AI IS A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN THE OVERALL PERSPECTIVE TAKEN THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE CHANGE PROCESS TO 'SEE' THE WHOLENESS OF THE HUMAN SYSTEM AND TO 'INQUIRE' INTO THAT SYSTEM'S STRENGTHS, POSSIBILITIES, AND SUCCESSES."**

- Stavros, Jacqueline, Godwin, Lindsey, & Cooperrider, David. (2015).

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# CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF ENGAGEMENT

STRUCTURING TO ALLOW FOR MULTIPLE LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION



**EE NETWORKS CAN HAVE DIFFERENT "LAYERS" TO ENGAGE EDUCATORS AT VARYING INTEREST LEVELS AND AVAILABILITIES**



Both the Barren River and Clark County networks found that members were interested in different levels of involvement. They had members excited to meet monthly, but also others that preferred to simply receive periodic updates and occasionally attend events. Thus, Barren River began to think of their network as operating in "concentric circles," where a core group would meet more frequently and disseminate information out to other members, who would meet less frequently. Clark County adopted a similar model, but also formed additional groups that meet outside of the monthly meeting to work on specific projects. This model may not work for every region, but thinking of it this way helped the leaders of these networks ensure that the network was meeting the needs of the largest number of potential educators.

# FUNDING

## FINDING AND USING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUR NETWORK

Your organization DOES NOT need to have funding in order to successfully operate.

You can still have effective meetings, collaborate on projects, and build relationships without funding. BUT, funding can increase network capacity and help ensure continual success. In fact, the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network, indicated that solidifying funding sources was one of the biggest factors in their success of their robust and exemplary regional network. Funding can help your network achieve more ambitious endeavors, increase outreach, host quality trainings, and compensate the time of those facilitating the network.

While achieving non-profit status will allow the network to directly receive donations and grants, you can also work with partnering organizations with 501c3 status, as explained below. Establishing solid foundational documents and progress data will help you better communicate with funders, but other factors you might want to consider before seeking funding include:

- What are you trying to achieve?
- How will this improve/expand EE in your area?
- Does this project match with your goals, mission, and vision?
- How much funding will you need?
- How will you track expenditures?

### Related Resources:

EE Grants: [NAAEE](#), [KAEE](#), [The National Environmental Education Foundation \(NEEF\)](#), [EPA](#), foundations and businesses in your region  
[Council of Nonprofits](#); resources for forming and sustaining nonprofit organizations

## CLARK COUNTY GRANT

During their first year of operation, the Clark County Network received a \$2,000 grant from the Sisters of Loretto to "establish community bonds through educational opportunities" and spread network awareness. Being an informal group without non-profit status, they were able to work with a member non-profit organizations who served as the "fiscal agent." This grant money funded the establishment of a container learning garden. Pictured right is a Scout troop in front of their freshly-planted container.

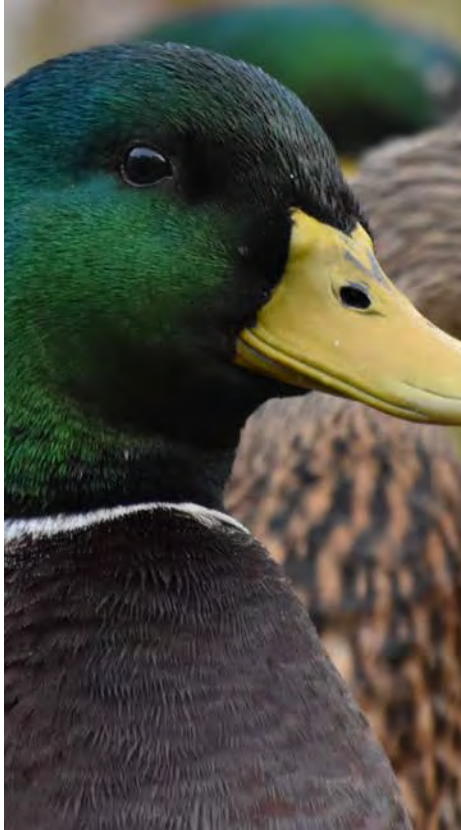


# CLARK COUNTY PROGRESS

At the time of this report, a group of Clark County EE program leaders have been meeting monthly for over two years. In the spring of 2020, the network decided to officially merge with and adopt the name of Winchester Inspired by Nature, a local nature group who's consistent dedication has proved invaluable to the sustained success of the EE network. When the number of monthly meeting attendees began to dwindle, a survey found that time constraints and schedule conflicts were preventing members from attending more and that most would still like to be involved in a less time-intensive manner. This led Clark County's network to consider a version of the Concentric Circle of Engagement model originally proposed by the Barren River group. Now, there are two individuals identified as the organizational "core" who facilitate project groups, training opportunities, and the continued collaboration and communication of local educators.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To address a lack of knowledge about EE programming, the network began compiling and distributing a quarterly newsletter, which contains information about upcoming EE events, resources, and the network. They also distribute information on local EE happenings via a [Facebook page](#) and started a private group to share information internally. The group received \$2,000 in grant funding and installed an educational container garden in downtown Winchester. Members of the group have also leveraged the skills and expertise to help advise, support, and improve EE programs hosted by their own organizations, including an Earth Day festival, an Earth Week, and a BioBlitz. The network is also excited to provide guidance to a newly-forming 4-H environmental club and has recently received another \$3,000 grant from the Sisters of Loretto support capacity building.



## REVISIONING

The network has struggled with turnover and an unequal share of the responsibilities for both the operation of the network and related endeavors. These were discussed in a revisioning process in January 2021, with the intention to reevaluate their goals, celebrate their progress, and potentially change network structure considering member desires and lessons learned from their first year of operation. The revisioning meeting sought to address the two questions:

- What has worked well?
- What has not worked well?
- What suggestions does the group have to improve the problems.

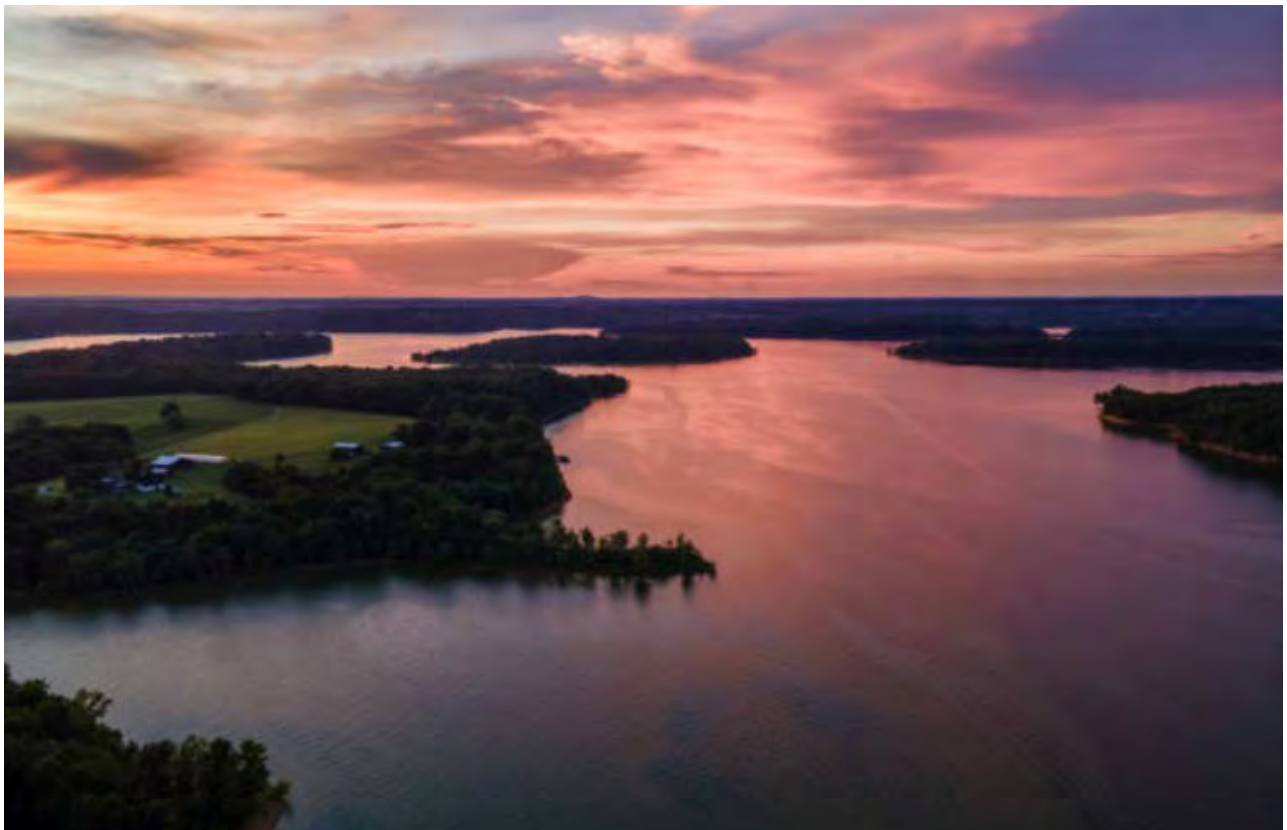
This meeting helped them to reestablish, solidify the structure and leadership, and ultimately benefited the group and the county.

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# BARREN RIVER PROGRESS

Over the past two years the Barren River network has had limited “in person” meetings due the global pandemic. However, it has been working informally to maintain the inaugural group of individuals and organizations, and to include additional programs that become identified. As this process of “spreading the wings” of the network advances, a concept of building “concentric circles” of involvement is being explored.

That simply means that some groups may choose to participate at the core of the network, guiding its development and organizational structure, while others may want to participate in more of an advisory capacity. These organizational decisions will be made as the group reconvenes in the near future to determine the best ways to coordinate and promote community based environmental education in the Barren River watershed of southcentral Kentucky.





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# EXPANDING THE NETWORK

## CREATING AN INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM OF REGIONAL NETWORKS

The more regional EE networks are created and sustained, the more the field of EE will grow and prosper. The networks and their impacts will be even further augmented if there was a system to connect these networks. Perhaps this is best adopted by state or other larger-scale EE networks, who could organize virtual and in-person networking and training opportunities for representatives of regional networks. They could share helpful resources, lessons learned, and perhaps develop further opportunities for collaboration and learning. The next page highlights the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network (CBEEN).

While the CBEEN covers a much larger geographical area and has a much larger membership than our previously-discussed example networks, it has achieved astounding success and can be used as an effective example and guiding beacon for EE network growth.

Of particular note, is how they have effectively coordinated with EE networks larger than them and also helped inspire, create, and support smaller networks. In fact, the CBEEN director credits a big part of their recent membership surge (now over 500) to investing in 8 sub-regional networks. While these sub-regions are volunteer-led, CBEEN covers the expenses for them to attend an all-inclusive training and conference at an awe-inspiring location, and they provide each sub-region with \$1000 CAD a year to support their endeavors. While this is funding intensive, it has proved a noteworthy and effective model. It is, however, far from the only alternative. What you think can be accomplished? What kind of system would help support your organization? Remember dreaming big, develop “Big Hairy Audacious Goals” and considering how you can design your program to accomplish these goals will help guide you in all phases of network development, and get you one step closer to accomplishing it!



# THE COLUMBIA BASIN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NETWORK

## **AN EXEMPLARY LONG-RUNNING REGIONAL EE NETWORK**

Founded over 20 years ago with a mission to "encourage environmental stewardship and sustainability in the Canadian Columbia Basin by supporting environmental educators."

(Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network, (2019), CBEEN has become a remarkable robust regional EE Network with a membership of over 500 environmental educators. They have attained non-profit and charity status, as well as substantial funding to support its various workshops, trainings, and programs, like Wild Voices, which connects specialists to schools and communities. They attribute much of their success to being able to solidify funding and keeping so many volunteers excited and engaged through their annual getaways.

### **PLACE-BASED**

While the Columbia Basin area is technically encompassed within the North American (NAAEE), Canadian (EECOM), and British Columbia (C2C) EE

Networks, founders of the CBEEN found that educators were often travelling outside of the area to attend trainings. They saw an opportunity to take more of a bioregional approach--to encourage place-based education and focus their network on their specific landscape, in this case the Columbia River Basin. While CBEEN still participates in and collaborates with the larger networks, they now offer an impressive selection of programs and trainings available in their region and have engaged many more educators.

### **MULTI-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT**

The CBEEN has also helped start 8 different sub-regional EE networks. They allow for EE to be even more place-based and reach even more educators.

These volunteer-led networks all have different formats and leaders according to their local assets and needs. To inspire, train, and support these sub-regional networks, CBEEN funds attendance at an annual all-inclusive conference amidst beautiful scenery and provides each group with \$1,000 Canadian to support their endeavors. This has helped to increase CBEEN membership. It also exemplifies the potential power of regional EE networks to increase the capacity and quality of EE in communities, regions, and more.



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# CONCLUSION

## LET'S GET TOGETHER

Environmental education networks improve and expand environmental education, which is “one of the most critical elements of an all-out attack on the world’s environmental crises” (UN General Assembly, 1972) and will help create healthier and happier natural and human communities. EE and EE networks are important. EE networks serve as hubs to develop relationships, share best practices, spark inspiration, and coordinate EE endeavors. Regional networks specifically allow for a place-based approach with the potential to reach many more educators than state and national networks alone. They are uniquely positioned to directly engage environmental educators in their community, and help increase their knowledge of the human and natural community, environmental education as a field, and knowledge and participation in local EE efforts.

Currently, there are few regional EE networks. The ones that do exist, however, have taken successful steps to increase EE in their community and proved effective. Furthermore, a recent survey at the KAEE conference showed that several more educators across Kentucky are interested in either spearheading or participating in regional networks. Thus, this guidebook is designed to allow different regions to develop and grow these networks with the flexibility to suit their needs, but also provide enough structure and concrete examples to help guarantee success and inspire these networks.

Remember, it doesn't have to be perfect to have wide-reaching positive impacts.

So, let's start getting together, get to know each other, learn from each other, and improve and expand environmental education in our own regions in Kentucky, the nation, and beyond.



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# CREDITS

## THE PEOPLE BEHIND THIS PROJECT

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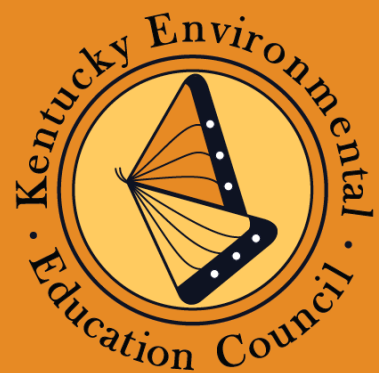
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## APPENDIX 1

# THE FIRST ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE FIRST MEETING

1. Form a network of EE resources: meet colleagues that share professional interests in EE.
2. Learn about the initiatives, groups, programs around the region providing EE.
3. Identify individual and common interests.
4. Create a list of EE resources in the region.
5. Identify the benefits of establishing a network.
6. Establish ideas for action to improve EE in the region

### MEETING LOGISTICS

Identify a time that is optimal for group participation. Anticipate 2 hours of core meeting. Consider recording or broadcasting for those unable to attend. Depending on the time of day, consider coffee, snacks, or providing a lunch. Identify a location central to the region large enough to host the number of attendees you expect with room for small group work and interaction. Tables and chairs, or an amphitheater or location conducive to working.

### MATERIALS FOR THE MEETING

- Participant sign in sheet [Objectives 1,2, & 4. Sample Included]
- Flip Chart Paper and easels or Sticky paper
- Large sticky notes
- Colored Flip Chart Markers
- Name tags
- Regional Environmental Education Interest Form
- Interesting nature objects (more objects than people in the meeting. Suggested items from nature that people can pick up and hold - i.e. pebbles, flowers, minerals, seeds, deer antler, turtle shell or other engaging items). Place items on tables before the meeting.
- Copies of research or evidence of need for the group. For example - "The Need for and Availability of Environmental Education in Clark County, Kentucky: Report Summary and Recommendations"
  - It is a good idea to share this document with a team member before the meeting who is willing to lead the group in a discussion of the document [see - Establishing Purpose, #2]
- Post-meeting Questionnaire [objectives 2, 4, &5. Sample Included]

#### Note:

The facilitator should post a meeting agenda on a flip chart or white board prior to the meeting.

A simple recommended agenda title:

Exploratory meeting for a Regional EE Network:

Introductions

Identifying value and purpose

Ideas for Forming a Network

Adjourn

## APPENDIX 1

# THE FIRST ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### INTRODUCTIONS [OBJECTIVES 1 & 2]

**Note: Inviting people into the meeting should be fun and interactive.**

As people enter the meeting invite them to make a name tag for themselves and select an item from nature that represents them in some way. Once they have selected an object, they can be seated. Ask participants to pair up with someone near them and introduce themselves. For the introduction:

- share their name
- share where they work or interest in Environmental Education
- share the nature object they selected and why they selected it

Allow 8-10 minutes for introductions. Once the majority of pairs seem to finish or at your designated time, ask partners to introduce the person they are sitting with by name and organization.

### ESTABLISH PURPOSE

Objective 5: Identify the benefits of establishing a network.

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4 to 5 participants. Give each small group flipchart paper and markers. Ask for a volunteer recorder from each group who will report the summary of the group discussion. Ask each group to discuss and record responses to this question.

#### ***Why is forming an EE network important to this region?***

Allow 8-10 minutes of discussion. Once conversation has died down, or the time limit is reached, ask the representative from each group to share one reason their group identified. Allow groups to report out round robin to contribute new ideas until all ideas have been listed.

The Facilitator should title a flip chart: "Why an EE Network is Important" and record each reason provided to create a master list.

2. Share the copies of the research or evidence report. Ask a group member to summarize the document and respond to the questions. It is assumed that this report affirms the reasons the group raised and may also add a few key points. If the survey is local, it may also highlight new ideas of local importance.

**Note:**  
While time-consuming, expanding the network of relationships and knowledge about EE resources in the region are key outcomes of the meeting. Allow the time for connections to take place.

**Note:**  
This process allows everyone in the room to share ideas, and results in a comprehensive list of reasons to support the development of a network.

## APPENDIX 1

# THE FIRST ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### ESTABLISH IDEAS FOR ACTION

#### OBJECTIVE 6: ESTABLISH IDEAS FOR ACTION TO IMPROVE EE IN THE REGION

Ask participants to re-group as before, OR have them realign into groups of 4-5 if you would like to continue to expand the networking opportunities. Give each person sticky notes and a pen or markers. Ask each person to take three minutes to record ideas (one idea per card) in response to this question:

*What tools or strategies would improve EE in our region?*

After three minutes, ask for a volunteer recorder from each group who will report the summary of the group discussion. Ask each group to share their cards and record a master list of group responses to this question. Allow 8-10 minutes of discussion. Once conversation has died down, or the time limit is reached, ask the representative from each group to share the ideas their group identified. Allow groups to report out round robin to contribute new ideas until all ideas have been listed.

### WRAPPING IT UP

To conclude the meeting, the facilitator should give a quick summary of the progress made and thank participants for attending. Before leaving, however, it is important to accomplish two more goals: 1) complete an exit questionnaire, and 2) establish a time for a second meeting.

- Think of who else might have interest in this effort and invite them.
- Think about what this network might accomplish and bring ideas to the next meeting.

#### Note:

This process allows everyone in the room to share ideas, and results in a comprehensive list of ideas to improve Environmental Education in the region. After meeting the organizers should document a master list of **Tools and Strategies to Improve EE** to share back to the group at the second meeting.

### HOMework

Ask participants to think about what the group should call itself. Ask members to email them to a coordinator, or bring their ideas to the second meeting.

## APPENDIX 2

# THE SECOND ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### OBJECTIVES FOR MEETING

1. Network Building
2. Establish a common vision for the regional network of Environmental Educators
3. Establish goals for the Network
4. Prioritize goals and establish action steps

### MEETING LOGISTICS

Identify a time that is optimal for group participation.

Anticipate 2 hours of core meeting. Consider recording or broadcasting for those unable to attend. Depending on the time of day, consider coffee, snacks, or providing a lunch.

Identify a location central to the region large enough to host the number of attendees you expect with room for small group work and interaction. Tables and chairs, or an amphitheater or location conducive to working.

### MATERIALS FOR THE MEETING

- Large sticky Flip Charts
- Flip Chart Markers
- Nature pictures or photos
- Large notecards (5" x 8") -3 cards per participant
- Three different colors of sticky dots, enough for each participant to have one of each color
- Results of the Information gathered in the first meeting including:
  - The initial list of participants
  - A summary of meeting one evaluation responses
  - Ideas for Action
- Tools and strategies for building an EE network (from meeting one) summarized on flip chart paper.
- Post-meeting Questionnaire [Assesses all meeting objectives. Sample Included]

#### Note:

Facilitator should post a meeting agenda on a flip chart or white board prior to the meeting.

A simple recommended agenda title:  
Second meeting to explore a Regional EE Network:  
Introductions  
Ideas for a Name  
Review progress  
Establish a vision  
Identifying action priorities

On a second sheet of flip chart paper, write the title:

"Name suggestions for our EE Network:"

Leave colored markers with the chart and have it displayed before the meeting.

Ask participants to add their name suggestions to the page.

## APPENDIX 2

# THE SECOND ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### INTRODUCTIONS [OBJECTIVE 1]

**Note: Inviting people into the meeting should be fun and interactive.**

As people enter the meeting invite them to make a name tag for themselves and select a nature picture or photo that represents their teaching or philosophy of environmental education in some way. Once they have selected an object, they can be seated. Ask participants to pair up with someone near them and introduce themselves. For the introduction:

- share their name
- share where they teach or their interest in Environmental Education
- share the nature picture they selected and how it represents their teaching or philosophy

Allow 6-8 minutes for discussion. Once the majority of pairs seem to finish talking, or at your designated time, ask participants to introduce themselves in response to these questions. 1) Tell us who you are, 2) the organization or place where you do most of your EE teaching and 3) what topic or focus of the environment are you most passionate about teaching?

(Record the names and EE topics on a flipchart)

**Note:**

While time-consuming, expanding the network and relationships and knowledge about EE resources in the region are key outcomes of the meeting. Allow time for the connections to take place and people to share their interests.

**Note:**

The progress recap is very important to remind participants what progress has been made, and to introduce new members into the development process.

### PROGRESS RECAP [OBJECTIVE 1]

Group organizer leads a quick recap of what the group is and why we are exploring the development of a network. Welcome new members and update them with a summary of what was discussed in the first meeting. Discuss the conversation points that were raised in meeting one when the group responded to: ***Why is forming an EE network important to this region?***

In addition to the broad benefits, draw attention to the evaluation responses to questions:

1. ***Why or how is the formation of an Environmental Education network important to you?*** and
2. ***Why or how would an EE network or organization be important to your organization?***

Take a moment to allow participants to discuss. Note that the strength of the network depends on clear benefits of participation. Discuss what those benefits are and how to highlight those benefits within the participating organizations. Share with the group that today we are going to dream a bit about what success might look like for an expanded EE collaborative. While preparing for the visioning activities, remind the group of the homework assignment of naming the network. Allow people to post their ideas if they had not, or to add new ideas to the list now. Share that you will vote on name suggestions at the end of the meeting.



## APPENDIX 2

# THE SECOND ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### ESTABLISH AND PRIORITIZE GOALS FOR THE NETWORK

#### [OBJECTIVES 3 & 4]

Pass out the color sticky dots to each participant. Identify one color as top priority (i.e., green), one color as second priority (i.e., yellow), and one color as third priority (i.e., red). [It may be helpful to write the color key on the flipchart] Have a flip chart marker available.

Post the chart with the listed tools and strategies for improving EE that were collected in meeting 1 (responses to the conversation about: **What tools or strategies would improve EE in our region?**) Tell the group that today we are going to prioritize action steps. Ask if there needs to be clarification of any of the ideas, or if any of the ideas are duplicated. Ask the group if there are additional ideas that people would like to add to the list.

Once the group is comfortable with the list, give them dots to vote.

Tell the group we are going to answer two important questions in the same activity. First, we want to know **what you believe is the most important overall strategy for improving the EE network in the region.** To indicate that, we are asking you to take the marker and place a star next to that action on the flipchart.

Second, we are asking you to **rank the three priority actions you think are most important to start on to organize our network.** For this, you will use the three colored dots indicating first, second, and third priority. You may place the dots on any action that you feel should be prioritized work of the network.

Invite participants up to the flipchart to place their dots and indicate their overall strategy.

### WRAPPING IT UP

To conclude the meeting, the facilitator should give a quick summary of the progress made and thank participants for attending. Before leaving, however, it is important to accomplish three more goals: 1) vote on a name for the group, 2) complete an exit questionnaire, and 3) establish a time for a second meeting.

## APPENDIX 3

# THE THIRD ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### OBJECTIVES FOR MEETING

1. Network building
2. Establish a name for the group.
3. Establish a common vision for the regional network of Environmental Educators
4. Consider an organizational description (mission)
5. Revisit and confirm Network action goals for the initial year.
6. Establish a clear structure (who does what when) for communication and moving forward.

### MEETING LOGISTICS

Identify a time that is optimal for group participation.

Anticipate 2 hours of core meeting. Consider recording or broadcasting for those unable to attend. Depending on the time of day, consider coffee, snacks, or providing a lunch.

Identify a location central to the region large enough to host the number of attendees you expect with room for small group work and interaction. Tables and chairs, or an amphitheater or location conducive to working.

### MATERIALS FOR THE MEETING:

- Large Flip Charts
- Flip Chart Markers
- White roll paper for timeline
- Puzzle pieces – enough for everyone to have one and that will form a completed puzzle (ideally earth or EE themed picture)
- Sticky notes [5x8 cards work best]
- Results of the Information gathered in the first two meetings including:
  - The initial list of participants
  - A summary of meeting one evaluation responses
  - Ideas for Action
- Proposed Organizational Mission Statement [see note below]
- Post-meeting Questionnaire [Assesses all meeting objectives. Sample Included]

### FACILITATOR PREPARATION:

While the first two meetings focus was on creative brainstorming and group building, this meeting will require facilitated decision making. Because regular voting results in winners and losers, a participatory process is preferred for decision making. A modified consensus decision making process can be used to strengthen agreement. Resources for facilitating these processes can be found here:

Justice, T., & Jamieson, D. (2012). *The facilitator's fieldbook*. Amacom. Modified Consensus Decision Making: Pp.223-225.

Kaner, S. (2014). *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making*. John Wiley & Sons.

## APPENDIX 3

# THE THIRD ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### FACILITATOR PREPARATION, CONT.

Note:

Facilitator should post a meeting agenda on a flip chart or white board prior to the meeting. A simple recommended agenda titled: Establishing a Regional EE Network:

- Introductions
- Results of Votes for a Network Name
- Finalizing a Vision Statement
- Recap of Goals
- Develop a timeline of action priorities
- Identifying core organization and responsibilities

On a second sheet of flip chart paper, write the suggested name of the Network.

On a third sheet of flip chart paper, write the proposed vision of the network. For example: The [group name] serves as an environmentally focused, multi-sector collaborative communication network and seedbed of education and activity to support environmental sustainability in \_\_\_\_ County.

On a fourth sheet of flipchart paper, write an organizational description of the group. For Example: The \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental Education Cadre' is a network of individuals, business and organizational representatives, and educators who share a passion for expanding environmental awareness and education in the region.

Using a chalk board or roll paper, create a three-year time line on the wall.

### INTRODUCTIONS [OBJECTIVE 1]

Note: Inviting people into the meeting should be fun and interactive.

As people enter the meeting invite them to make a name tag for themselves and draw a puzzle piece from a bowl or bag. Once they have selected the puzzle piece, they can be seated. To begin the meeting, ask members to (re)introduce themselves and say why they are excited about this network. Then ask them to bring their puzzle piece to an open table where they can construct the puzzle. Once they have stood and introduced themselves, they can join the growing group at the front table. When everyone is there, let participants construct the puzzle.

## APPENDIX 3

# THE THIRD ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### PROGRESS RECAP [OBJECTIVES 1 & 2]

Group organizer leads a quick recap of the history of the group. Welcome new members and update them with a summary of the progress from the first and second meetings. Highlight for participants how the network is coming together. From Meeting 1 & 2, we have a growing member contact list with areas of contributions; and feedback on how the network can benefit the organizations represented. From meeting 2, the group established the foundation of a vision of what this network could aspire to accomplish. Then, we determined and prioritized goals to move toward that vision. Today, the group is going to finalize the vision and detail the actions needed to move the network forward.

Note:  
Upon completion of the puzzle, celebrate!  
Ask for a volunteer to summarize what they just did. What was necessary to be successful? Ask how this exercise resembles the work of building an EE network.

### ESTABLISHING THE NAME

Review results of the voting for the name of the organization. Using modified consensus decision making, get an overall ranking of support from the group on the name that received the highest votes. For those that feel it does not fully capture what the group name - Allow suggestions for modification. Have the group rate the modification using modified consensus to see if overall support increases. Continue until you have strong group support.

### ESTABLISHING THE VISIONS

Review the proposed vision statement. Using modified consensus decision making, get an overall ranking of support from the group. Allow modification suggestions to improve the statement. Test the group response to see if overall support increases. Continue until you have a vision statement with strong group support.

### ESTABLISHING ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Note: Inviting people into the meeting should be fun and interactive.

Celebrate the establishment of the vision, and ask the group to think about the overarching values that should be held by the group. Explain that you would like to get their suggestions on the bedrock values for this organization. To do this, ask members to write their responses on the notecards you provide them. Ask them to write one value per card. Ask them to complete this statement:

***The [Organization name] is founded on the following core values:***

Allow everyone time to write their responses and pile their responses in the center of the table.

Have an assistant collect all responses and read them off one at a time. The facilitator should write each core value, and put a small check or hash mark by the value each time that it is repeated. The resulting list should be a short list of suggested values. Some will be widely shared, while others may need someone to clarify what was meant. Once the list is up, ask the group if there is full agreement on the list, or if there are values that are not shared by the entire group that should be discussed. Use modified consensus to seek agreement on the values.

## APPENDIX 3

# THE THIRD ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### ESTABLISHING A TIMELINE FOR ACTION PRIORITIES

#### [OBJECTIVES 3 & 4]

Refer to the posted priority goals sheet created in meeting 2. Look at the 3-5 goals that received the highest priority votes. Ask the group to create planning teams for each goal.

Ask the group to sit together. Their task is to answer the following questions. Tell them we will start with 10 minutes and will add time as needed. Give each group a stack of colored sticky notes (one color per goal). Ask each group to record their answers to each question and appoint a reporter for the group.

Given the goal assigned to the group:

1. ***If this goal were done properly, what should be the characteristics of a good outcome?***

[Write goal characteristics on a large notecard]

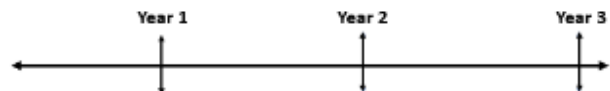
2. ***When should this goal be completed by?***

3. ***What steps will need to be accomplished to reach the goal (and by when?)***

[Write each step on an individual sticky note]

#### Sample Timeline

Allow the teams a little more time if needed.



Ask each team to report their thinking. As they do, post the card with the characteristics of the outcome on the timeline at the point when the group thinks it should be completed. Post the steps to accomplishment on the timeline at the anticipated completion time. As each group reports their actions, discuss with the full group.

Repeat the activity with teams to address the starred (MOST IMPORTANT) goals identified in meeting two. Use the same three questions:

1. *If this goal were done properly, what should be the characteristics of a good outcome?*

[Write goal characteristics on a large notecard]

1. *When should this goal be completed by?*

2. *What steps will need to be accomplished to reach the goal (and by when?)*

[write each step on an individual sticky note]

This round may go faster because the short-term goals may align with the long-term priorities. Give the groups time to discuss and report out as they did with the short-term goals.

#### Note:

This planning exercise may need to be extended due to the lack of information, uncertainty, or for other circumstances. If time is short, try to complete one priority goal and then return to the activity in the next meeting to address additional goals.

## APPENDIX 3

# THE THIRD ORGANIZING MEETING OF A REGIONAL NETWORK, CONT.

## SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

### **ACTION RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NETWORK [OBJECTIVES 3 & 4]**

The goal of the network activation is not to saddle one person with responsibility to do the work of the team. Once action steps are posted on the timeline, ask who will be on an action team to accomplish the goal. Ask each team to identify or appoint a communication coordinator. Ideally each goal will have 4 or more leaders who will gather information, seek resources, or push the goal forward. Ask them to organize and report back to the larger group at the next meeting.

Note: This team action strategy assumes that there is a “backbone organization” serving as a coordinating entity. Resources that may help the teams align include:

Friedrich, T. L., Vessey, W. B., Schuelke, M. J., Ruark, G. A., & Mumford, M. D. (2009). A framework for understanding collective leadership: The selective utilization of leader and team expertise within networks. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(6), 933-958.

Collective Impact Framework:

<https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact>

### **WRAPPING IT UP**

To conclude the meeting, the facilitator should give a quick summary of the progress made and thank participants for attending. Before leaving, however, it is important to accomplish two more goals: 1) complete an exit questionnaire, and 2) establish a time for a next meeting.