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association *for*
environmental
education

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ASSOCIATION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION

Strategic Plan

2024-2029

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About WAEE

Who We Are

The Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education is a member-based, professional community of individuals and organizations with diverse backgrounds that promotes responsible environmental action, elevates voices for environmental justice, and celebrates excellence in environmental education. Three pillars frame our work: Advocacy, Networking, and Recognition.

Our Vision

We envision an environmentally-literate, action-oriented community that communicates, connects, and advocates for a sustainable, resilient Wisconsin.

Recognizing that the current environmental education field does not represent all communities, WAEE supports the North American Association for Environmental Education's vision of "a sustainable future for all where environmental and social responsibility drive individual and institutional choices".

Our Mission

The Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAEE) nurtures individuals and organizations working towards sustainable, resilient communities.



About our Strategy

Goals

WAEE's staff and board of directors collaborated to identify five key goals to guide our organization over the next five years. While these goals don't cover all aspects of our work, they were strategically selected to strengthen our organization and address needs expressed by our partners and members in environmental education.

Recognizing the importance of inclusivity, we aim to refine our strategic plan goals and strategies through formalized processes with community input. Despite limitations in our current planning period, we plan to enhance inclusivity in our next strategic planning phase by implementing surveys and fostering collaboration opportunities. These improvements will be integrated into the preparations for our next strategic plan in 2028.

JEDIA in WAEE

WAEE Recognizes that the principles of Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (JEDIA) are fundamental to our mission of nurturing individuals and organizations working towards sustainable, resilient communities. Integrating these values into our strategic plan is more than a commitment to social responsibility; it is recognition of the inherent interconnectedness of environmental and social well-being. To fulfil our vision, we must work to make the field more inclusive, equitable, and accessible for all.

By prioritizing JEDIA principles, WAEE strengthens its impact and relevance in a rapidly changing world. Our commitment to justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility is not only an ethical imperative, but also a strategic advantage. It positions us to better serve the diverse needs of our members, partners, and the communities we engage with. Incorporating JEDIA principles into our strategic plan is a continuous commitment to creating an organization that reflects the values we espouse. It is through intentional and sustained efforts that we will contribute meaningfully to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world through environmental education.

Impact Tracking

Throughout each year, WAEE board and staff will diligently monitor and evaluate the objectives, key performance indicators, and strategies outlined in our strategic plan. We will encapsulate the outcomes of these efforts in our annual report, sharing our achievements and impacts with our membership during the annual member meeting, typically held at our fall conference. These reports are accessible to the public on WAEE.org, with our aim being to finalize each year's report by March of the subsequent calendar year.



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A letter from the Executive Director



The Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education has a vast, rich history as a leader of conservation education and environmental education in the state of Wisconsin. WAAE has an impressive 50-year history of a working board taking on major projects like continuously advocating for the field at the capitol and assisting in drafting statewide strategic plans, such as "[Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate & Sustainable Communities](#)". WAAE is an organization of truly committed professionals and passionate individuals who work tirelessly to promote compassion for and connection to the environment through environmental literacy and outdoor experiences. Recently, the board worked very hard to raise the funds to hire the organization's first Executive Director with the hopes that this position would be able to strategically drive the organization forward with consistent leadership.

I am honored to have been hired in 2022 by the board and our membership to lead this work. We've worked the last year to revamp our communications with members, membership structure, fundraising initiatives, and so much more. One of our biggest goals for the first two years was to create a strategic plan with intentional focuses and straightforward strategies, so we could analyze our impact and focus our attention on areas of growth most important for the strength of the organization and the field as a whole. Through this process we've had to critically analyze our past impact and decide what priorities will define our work as we enter the second-half of a century as an organization. We have decided to prioritize justice, equity, accessibility, and advocating for the field of environmental education, as well as building our strength as an organization to make sure we are here for years to come. This plan will strengthen WAAE's capacity, support the field as a whole, and drive the field toward greater accessibility and equity, contributing to the realization of a sustainable and resilient Wisconsin that benefits all communities across the state.

I would like to say thank you to all of our board members, volunteers, organizational partners, and sponsors who support our work and drive our projects forward with endless hours of dedication and fiscal support. We wouldn't be entering our 50th year as an organization without you or our past volunteers who laid the path for WAAE to get to this exciting, dynamic time in the organization. Let's continue the great work you've all done!

Beca Borkowski
WAAE Executive Director

A handwritten signature of Beca Borkowski in black ink.



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Goal 1. Elevate our role as a trusted provider of resources, content, and professional development to advance JEDIA in EE throughout Wisconsin.

Objective 1: Build an organizational identity that embodies justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Objective 2: Equip all board members with historical understandings, inclusive terminology, and growth opportunities to further JEDIA internally and externally.

Objective 3: Provide training and resources on a range of justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility topics to address various inequalities and injustices in the field. WAEE will actively seek trainers and speakers that represent diverse communities and backgrounds.

Goal 1 Strategies

- Actively recruit diverse board and student board members annually.
- Establish partnerships with organizations and individuals that specialize in JEDIA to enhance the quality and diversity of training resources.
- Collaborate with partner organizations representing diverse communities to conduct an organizational assessment and identify areas for improvement.
- Strengthen advocacy efforts for environmental justice.
- Utilize landscape analysis to track JEDIA trends in Wisconsin and assist with data interpretation for potential grant funding.
- Expand accessible events guidelines and share with partners and the public.

Goal 1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- New board members will complete the 15-hour JEDI in EE Moodle Course within their first 6 months.
- Host at least 2 JEDI 101 courses per year.
- Maintain a minimum of 30% representation from diverse communities and backgrounds among trainers and speakers engaged by WAEE.
- Respond to needs identified in the "Building Bridges" grant, prioritizing at least one per year.
- Maintain communication with 100% of the organizations interviewed in the "Building Bridges" grant, recruit at least 50% of grant participants as organizational members through equitable membership pricing structures.



Goal 2. Increase organizational strength, resiliency, and capacity to best support our mission and vision through equity-focused work.

Objective 1: Practice transparent, accountable, consistent, and fiscally responsible governance by strengthening internal processes and guiding documents.

Objective 2: Support and grow our capacity through the development of reliable, consistent funding needed to sustain the organization.

Objective 3: Create an inclusive and equitable working environment for the board, staff, and all volunteers.

Goal 2 Strategies

- Create key documents: Staffing Plan, Theory of Change, Development Plan, Impact Tracking Reports, Operations Manual, etc.
- Grow staff capacity by hiring additional positions, such as a Development Director or Program Coordinator, or by expanding the current positions to full time.
- Create a formalized training process for new board members and for new staff members.
- Cultivate an advisory board of diverse, experienced individuals from various fields to support the growth of WAE.
- Improve budget and accounting processes to allow more transparent and accurate reporting of our impact.

Goal 2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- By the end of Year 1 (2025), have the Operations Manual, Donor Database, Member Database, and training processes completed.
- Conduct annual reviews to ensure key documents are updated and aligned with organizational goals.
- Implement regular internal audits to ensure transparency and accuracy in financial reporting.
- By the end of year 1 (2025), create a staff development plan to set funding goals for additional staff or expanded staff hours.
- By the end of year 3 (2027), all staff positions will be funded by reliable, consistent revenue streams.
- By the end of year 5 (2029), the Executive Director will be a full time position.



Goal 3. Strengthen our organizational identity as a leader in advocacy for the field of environmental education in Wisconsin.

Objective 1: Broaden advocacy initiatives to strengthen support for environmental justice and equity, concurrently advocating for increased funding for environmental education in schools, parks, and public spaces at state, county, local, and tribal levels.

Objective 2: Educate WAAE members on legislative actions impacting environmental education. Provide resources for civic engagement in support of the community's interests.

Objective 3: Enhance partnerships and collaboration efforts with organizations of similar values to collectively bolster advocacy efforts.

Goal 3 Strategies

- Engage with policymakers at various levels to advocate for increased funding for environmental education, emphasizing the intersectionality of environmental education and environmental justice.
- Create accessible and informative materials, such as fact sheets and infographics, summarizing key legislative issues for accessible member understanding.
- Create an online submission tool for members to inform WAAE of local issues impacting EE in their community.
- Work more intentionally with local and national advocacy groups to share urgent advocacy requests with our membership.
- Establish joint initiatives, such as co-hosted events, collaborative projects, or shared resources, to amplify advocacy efforts.
- Partner with universities to encourage EE programming.

Goal 3 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Conduct annual surveys to measure member awareness and satisfaction with WAAE's advocacy efforts.
- Host at least 4 advocacy events per year (educational webinars, action days, etc.).
- Connect with other state leaders in conservation/EE advocacy at least twice a year to identify collaboration opportunities (Wisconsin's Green Fire, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, The Nature Conservancy, etc.).
- Update the advocacy page on WAAE's website monthly to maintain up-to-date legislative information.



Goal 4. Cultivate collaboration to strengthen the EE community.

Objective 1: WAEE will work to strengthen existing partnerships and relationships with organizations we have worked with in the past.

Objective 2: Actively seek out, build relationships, and earn trust with organizations representing diverse or marginalized communities that have not been represented within WAEE in the past.

Objective 3: Work with partners to establish opportunities for collaboration, including joint trainings, networking events, grant proposals, etc.

Goal 4 Strategies

- Co-Lead the Midwest/EPA Region 5 Statewide environmental education organizations to foster collaboration, shared communications, and regional capacity building.
- Identify strategic collaborative opportunities with the "EE Collaborative" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, UW-Stevens Point, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and WAEE).
- Strengthen the "Nature Center Collaborative" and the early childhood nature based learning community through strategic partnerships.
- Support collaborative grant applications through data analysis supported by the landscape analysis that will be available Spring 2024.

Goal 4 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Host at least 4 webinars or joint trainings with partner organizations each year.
- Grow our membership by 25% each year by leveraging organizational partnerships, the Nature Center Collaborative, and the new early childhood collaborative efforts.
- By the end of year 5 (2029), have at least 30% of the EE organizations in Wisconsin registered as organizational members.
- Host a networking event or collaborative project with partners every quarter, aiming for a 20% increase in participation each year.
- Establish connections with at least three new organizations representing diverse or marginalized communities each year.



Goal 5. Support the field by filling environmental education gaps in our state to expand access and subject material for educators and environmental education program administrators.

Objective 1: Enhance the credibility and value of our professional development by pursuing accreditation from recognized organizations such as Wisconsin Master Naturalist and the Wisconsin Registry.

Objective 2: Broaden and diversify our professional development programming and resources to engage a more extensive educator community.

Objective 3: Utilize data, community input, and collaborations with environmental education organizations to deliver valuable and unique trainings that complement our partner organizations in the field.

Goal 5 Strategies

- Work with the North American Association for Environmental Education network to develop and deliver trainings which are unique for our EE community in Wisconsin.
- Increase accessibility of professional development opportunities by working with partner organizations to (a) provide free or reduced rates for diverse individuals when possible, and (b) work with partner organizations to bring some of their trainings online through our Moodle platform.
- Seek funding to hire diverse moderators or content experts to develop and lead courses whenever possible.

Goal 5 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Increase the number of available Moodle course offerings by a minimum of one per year over the next 5 years. (at least 7 courses offered throughout the year in 2029).
- Achieve a 25% increase in enrollment year over year.
- Secure funding for at least two courses per year that include diverse moderators or content experts.
- By the end of year 2 (2026), hire a program coordinator to manage the Moodle site and webinars using Moodle revenue.

Thank you for your ongoing support of WAEE!



waee.org/donate

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