No Oregon Child Left Inside

Working Group Report – February 2013

A Path Toward Implementation of the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan: Toward a Sustainable Future
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INTRODUCTION

On January 28th and 29th 2013 a working group of No Oregon Child Left Inside (NOCLI) volunteers met with a facilitator to chart a path toward implementation of the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan: Toward a Sustainable Future (OELP). Specific questions the group addressed were:

- What, specifically, do we mean when we talk about implementing the OELP? What outcomes do we anticipate? Who is the audience?
- What organizational framework is required to move the OELP forward?
- What near-term action could effectively advance the plan toward implementation, resulting in anticipated outcomes?

This report submitted by the session facilitator provides a summary of the findings of this group, which was comprised of:

Larry Berrin – Oregon Department of Forestry
Lara Christensen – Gray Family Foundation
Norie Dimeo-Ediger – Oregon Forest Resources Institute
James Little – Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Traci Price – NOCLI Coordinator
Susan Sahnow – Oregon Natural Resources Education Program
John Sheehan – Metro Regional Government/Oregon Zoo

FINDINGS

Imagining the Future of the OELP

NOCLI Working Group members discussed the future they each imagine for the OELP. There were significant differences among the individual visions, but also commonalities. Commonalities included:

- Embrace of the vision (outcomes) outlined in the OELP.
- The need for a small set of focused priorities culled from the “30,000ft overview” articulated in the plan.
- The primary audience is educators – formal and non-formal – who are best engaged through a focused implementation-level version of the plan that provides “simple tools” for achieving environmental literacy goals.
- There is potential for OELP goals to be scaled to fit available resources, or to be phased in over time.
Scale is a Variable

During discussions, working group members framed ambitious goals for the OELP. However, the group acknowledged that large-scale goals face significant and time-consuming hurdles, such as:

- Obtaining an implementation mandate through an official channel such as the Office of the Governor, the legislature, or the Department of Education.
- Securing substantial funding.

The following is a sample of the different approaches suggested by individual group members when thinking about scaling outcomes to fit uncertain resources and an urgent deployment timeframe.

**Environmental Literacy:**

An individual’s understanding, skills and motivation to make responsible decisions that consider his or her relationships to natural systems, communities and future generations.

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**Large Scale / Desirable Outcomes**

“All kids have green spaces to learn and play.”

“Students are engaged as citizens, in ways that add up to personal and academic achievement.”

“Environmental education is a formal part of education that is required teaching at all grade levels.”

“A high percentage of schools have outdoor education programs and a high percentage of teachers are engaged in environmental education.”

“A strong environmental literacy curriculum is established that teachers are required to teach at all levels.”

**Small Scale / Doable Outcomes**

“One field trip per year converted to environmental education in every school.”

“10% increase in schools participating in, and 10% of teachers are incorporating, environmental education.”

“Simple, guidelines for environmental literacy at different levels – guidelines, not content.”

“Kids have basic environmental literacy per grade level.”
Design Principles for OELP Deployment

As a result of its discussions, the working group identified the following principles and guidelines for OELP deployment as they sought to describe “what we mean when we talk about implementing the OELP.”

• The OELP can stand, without revision, as a founding, visionary document. Deployment of the plan can focus on the products that support the vision.
• A mandate is not a requirement of OELP deployment. Environmental literacy teaching can proceed without “official” mandate.
• The audiences for OELP deployment information and resources are formal and non-formal teachers. Different resources may be needed for each, and should also be available for parents.

Plan deployment should focus on clear, concise guidelines and resources that provide information and examples of what others are doing around the state and that link people doing the work. Guidelines should connect to learning strands outlined in the OELP. Guidelines and resources can be made easily available on the web, potentially as a wiki.

• Guidelines and resources should be organized by grade level, articulating a short list of knowledge, experience and ability that kids should have at each level.
• It is neither doable nor desirable for the guidelines to be exhaustive or “built from scratch.” Guidelines can be a very short list of models, tools, and best practices drawn from the toolkits of educators who are doing this work already.
• Guidelines should be a flexible resource that can be tailored in the individual teacher, group of kids, and situation.
• It will be necessary to connect with formal and non-formal teachers to make them aware of the proposed “by grade level” approach and the tools and resources available. A high-profile event like a statewide conference may be necessary in the early stages of deployment.
• A structural framework will be necessary to push deployment forward.
• Diverse statewide participation is a critical success factor. OELP deployment cannot be, or be perceived as, a metro-area-based endeavor.

Environmental Literacy Vision:

Oregonians lead healthy lifestyles, enjoying frequent interaction with the outdoor environment. Oregon’s vibrant and comprehensive education system leads us to develop a sense of wonder and curiosity about our natural world. We understand the interconnections between community, economy, and environment, are able to examine issues from multiple perspectives, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of being an environmentally literate citizenry.
AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR THE OELP

Functions of an Appropriate Structure

Working group consideration of an organizational structure for the OELP began with a list of functions the structure would need to perform and the products or outcomes it would need to support or produce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership/Governance/Admin/Finance</th>
<th>Work Products</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Decision-making</td>
<td>• Partner and educator outreach and communication</td>
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<td>• Establishing and tracking priorities / strategic planning</td>
<td>• Marketing and promotions</td>
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<td>• Coordinating among partners / stakeholders</td>
<td>• Assessment and evaluation (responsibility for)</td>
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<td>• Contract management</td>
<td>• Training and/or educational resources development and provision, best practices identification, educator options</td>
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<td>• Staff oversight and support</td>
<td>• National trends tracking</td>
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<td>• Administration</td>
<td>• Networking and linkage creation with formal and non-formal educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Funding development</td>
<td>• Volunteer oversight and leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Advocacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Alliance networking and management with primary, secondary and tertiary partners</td>
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</table>
**Organizational Models**

Several organizational models were considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consortium or Task Group</strong></td>
<td>The advantage of these ad hoc models are that they can “start tomorrow” with little or no red tape. An Implementation Team to organize the efforts of participants and make decisions within a framework approved by a broader membership would be necessary. The lack of formality of these models makes them poor choices for an endeavor that needs to receive funds or have a clear identity with which partners and potential funders can affiliate over the long term.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>501c3</strong></td>
<td>Options include situating within an existing 501c3 such as Environmental Education Association of Oregon (EEAO) vs. creating a new. The most significant advantages of the 501c3 model is that it provides a clear and unique identity and a framework for receiving funds. Disadvantages are the additional level of formality/complexity.</td>
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<td><strong>Foundation program or Agency partnership</strong></td>
<td>Exploration of settling the OELP into a foundation or agency setting revealed that these options limit flexibility and, in the case of agency partnerships, limit the latitude for funding options – for instance, establishment of an endowment would be difficult or disallowed. Suitable foundation or agency situations / “homes” could not be identified by members of the working group at the time of the meeting, although further research might result in options that were not surfaced in this discussion.</td>
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After considering the options the group arrived at the following conclusions.

- Ultimately it is desirable for NOCLI and the OELP to have its own organizational “home.” The 501c3 structure seems to offer the best fit for the leadership/administration and product/outcome functions the endeavor will require.

- Since NOCLI wishes to start OELP deployment as soon as possible, the endeavor can initiate as an informal consortium, whose role includes advancing toward 501c3 status.

- The queue-up to 501c3 status will allow work on OELP deployment to move forward - including meetings with funders and assembly of professional development resources - while options for creating the 501c3 are explored. For instance, it may be preferable for NOCLI to merge with EEAO, if the EEAO board and NOCLI find the arrangement amenable.

- Ideally the queue-up period should not last longer than one year, unless there is a clear reason for a longer timeline, for instance, if an option for an alternative organizational structure or host agency emerges that needs further exploration, or if the required level of funding is not secured.

- It may be advisable to come up with an entirely new name for the eventual organization. There is confusion about the “alphabet soup” of NOCLI, OELP and EEAO.

**A CHARTER FOR AN OELP IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE**

The purpose of the charter (Attachment 1) is to clarify the scope of membership, roles and responsibilities, authority to make decisions in the interim period before a 501c3 is established, at which point the charter will expire in favor of formal bylaws. The attached charter was improvised based on a template provided by the session facilitator.

The NOCLI working group is unanimous in their excitement about the approach outlined in this report. All of the members are willing and interested in stepping up to the roles outlined in the Charter (provided they have organizational or agency support), however it will require additional volunteers from the NOCLI community in order to adequately populate the consortium and provide sufficient capacity to drive the workplan (see next page).
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Task Force launch</td>
<td>ASAP: Member-ship, charter &amp; roles, tasks established. ASAP: Committees established</td>
<td>RFP circulated to selected “home” candidates</td>
<td>(IF “already established home”) Integration agreement negotiated</td>
<td>(IF “already established home”) Strategic Plan established</td>
<td>Task Force dissolved</td>
<td>(IF “new home”) Strategic Plan established</td>
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<tr>
<td>501c3 status</td>
<td>Specifications for an organizational “home” determined. RFP drafted</td>
<td>Decision on established home vs. new home made. (IF “new home”) Application submitted</td>
<td>Final circulated.</td>
<td>Levels determined</td>
<td>Resources Toolkit assembled, including providers and best practices by grade level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Literacy by grade level toolkit</td>
<td>Draft of proposed levels created by Implementation Task Force</td>
<td>Draft circulated</td>
<td>Feedback incorporated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication with partners and audiences</td>
<td>ASAP: Report out</td>
<td>Update</td>
<td>Update</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fund-raising</td>
<td>ASAP: “Elevator speech” flyer done. ASAP: In-kind contributions documented Priorities &amp; budget established.</td>
<td>Fundraising plan for the budget established. Proposal to hold $20K made to the Grays. Grant and donor opportunities explored</td>
<td>Grants and donors explored</td>
<td>Grants and donors explored</td>
<td>Grants and donors explored</td>
<td>Grants and donors explored</td>
<td>Grants and donors explored</td>
<td>Grants and donors explored</td>
<td>Endowment seeded ($25K min.)</td>
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<td>Conferences and provider professional development</td>
<td>Professional development needs assessment revisited and refocused.</td>
<td>Gray Family Gathering held</td>
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<td>OELP Statewide conference held</td>
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PROPOSED: NOCLI OELP IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE CHARTER

Charter Purpose

The purpose of this charter is to establish an informal but structured framework to implement the OELP workplan. It is anticipated that this charter, and the task force framework, will be in place through March 2014 or until a formal framework has been established.

Members

Those participating in NOCLI are considered members, however any mission-aligned organization or party that is willing to participate, contribute resources (human, financial, or in-kind) and is aligned with the OELP vision can participate as a member.

Roles and Responsibilities of Members and Members’ Representatives

- Participate in accomplishing the work of the task force, including serving on committees and providing review and comment on work products e.g. professional development resources, and organizational structure documents and proposals.
- Contribute resources (financial, human - expertise, knowledge, influence, committee work - or other resources).
- Make a best effort to attend any meetings or conference calls of the whole membership that may occur during the term of the task force.
- Represent the perspective of your organization while maintaining and advancing a state-wide perspective.

Any member is welcome to include multiple representatives to participate in task force work initiatives and any meetings or events. If the membership is polled to weigh in on an issue or to submit comments on a work product, each member organization should submit a single response, not individual perspectives or comments from multiple members.

Implementation Task Force

An Implementation Task Force will meet regularly to oversee and shape implementation, make decisions and commit resources within the broad direction set by the whole membership.

The Implementation Task Force will be comprised of at least 5 but not more than 11 members.
The Implementation Task Force may find it expedient to appoint a Convener that serves as a point person/single point of communications for the purposes of staying organized.

**Decision-Making among the Membership and on the Implementation Task Force**

Consensus among all members of the task force is highly desirable. Decisions will be made among the membership of the task force through a consensus-intention process, in which the consent of all members will be actively sought. In the event of a stalemate an action on a decision can be taken with the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present.

For the purposes of establishing consensus, or in the event of a vote to break a stalemate, each member organization has one voice or vote regardless of the number of representatives present.

**Committees / Sub-Groups**

Committees are appointed on an ad hoc, as needed basis. The timeframe for committee work will depend on its mission and goals. Committees that are anticipated now include:

- Fund-raising and Budget Committee
- Professional Development Committee

Membership on committees is ad hoc but with an eye toward organizational diversity that is generally representative of the membership and of the state.

Committees should establish *simple* (e.g. half-page) charters that list committee members and state the committee goals and anticipated milestones and timeline for review by the Implementation Task Force.

**Working Agreements for the Implementation Task Force and Committees**

**We agree to:**

- Participate in meetings
- Contribute to the effort (financial or in-kind)
- Commit to the overall task plan and timeline and complete work commitments in a timely manner
- Communicate between committees and the Implementation Task Force about the progress of work
- Expect to spend a significant amount of time in 2013 forwarding this effort
CREDITS:
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http://www.nocli.org

Submitted by the session facilitator on behalf of the NOCLI Working Group

Formatted by Traci Price

Special thanks to the Gray Family Foundation
http://www.grayff.org/

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