



## Community Action Guide

New Worldwide Edition  
Pilot  
March 2014

Supported by



The *C&NN Community Action Guide* is respectfully dedicated to the memory of its principal author, Co-Founder of Civic Results and C&NN Board member, John Parr, an extraordinary leader who, every day of his life, worked to make life better for us all and for the future.



The *C&NN Community Action Guide* was originally prepared by

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This version of the Guide has been adapted and edited for international use by Cheryl Charles, Ph.D., Co-Founder, President and CEO Emerita, C&NN. © 2014, 2008 Children & Nature Network



Dear Friend,

Just a generation ago, a connection to the natural world was an integral part of daily life for the vast majority of people on Earth. Throughout history, a deep understanding of nature has meant more and better food, access to clean water, advances in science and medicine, and prosperity for families and communities.

Now, for the first time in human history, more people live in cities than live in rural or suburban areas. New technologies have replaced old ways of doing things, creating greater efficiencies and improving the lives of millions of people across the planet. But with these gains, we are losing something vital: the very connection to the natural world that has allowed humans to survive and fueled human progress. In the 21st Century, virtual reality has replaced time outdoors as the center of action. We've chipped away at our connection to nature so completely, it now seems normal that children throughout the world spend most of their time indoors in front of a screen.

The consequences of not acting on this trend are serious and urgent. In addition to the social costs of diseases resulting from a sedentary lifestyle, there is also the dire concern about who will be the innovators of tomorrow and who will have the capacity, interest, and care to solve the issues that will result from climate change and biodiversity collapse. While we've gained much from technological advances, the loss of our connection to nature has profound implications for human health, child development and the future of the natural places we cherish.

The vision of the children and nature movement is of a nature-rich future, a future that integrates nature into our lives in new and innovative ways. We imagine that all jobs are green jobs—requiring nature smart leaders. We imagine cities where parks are plentiful. We imagine schools that integrate outdoor classrooms and gardens as part of the everyday learning environment. We imagine families reclaiming outdoor time as central to family bonding.

These are not new ideas. For decades, environment educators, conservationists and others have worked, often heroically, to bring more children to nature — usually with inadequate support from policymakers and funders. Recently a number of trends have brought the concerns of these veteran advocates before a broader audience and have brought new allies to the cause. In a remarkably short time, the idea of a worldwide movement to reconnect children with nature has become a reality.

The movement is growing quickly — but it needs to accelerate. Without simultaneous dedicated action from many more of us, the window of opportunity could close. To help meet that challenge, the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) created the *C&NN Community Action Guide: Worldwide*. We hope this *Guide* will be a useful tool to help inspire, support and build the children and nature movement in communities throughout the world.

No one size will fit all—this is, after all, a place-based issue, therefore every region will find its own unique approaches. There is much that we can learn from each other as we work for true change.

This *Guide* is a work-in-progress, one tool among many that are needed in order to grow the children and nature movement. Your journey will offer its own lessons from which the rest of us can benefit. The Children & Nature Network Web site ([www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)) will continue to serve as a portal where all of us can share successes, stories, tools and resources.

Since C&NN's founding in 2006, people from countries from throughout the world have reached out to us—asking for encouragement, sharing stories, providing inspiration. We have heard from people in more than 160 nations, and today there are people from 76 countries actively engaged in our online community, C&NN Connect, at [www.childrenandnature.ning.com](http://www.childrenandnature.ning.com). The Children & Nature Network is a friend and resource in this worldwide effort. We are fueling the movement, along with each of you.

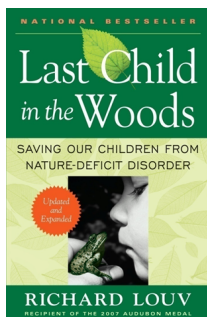
Thank you for helping to heal the broken bond between children and nature.



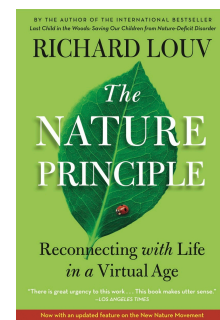
Richard Louv  
Author, *Last Child in the Woods* and  
*The Nature Principle*  
Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus,  
Children & Nature Network



Sarah Milligan-Toffler  
Executive Director  
Children & Nature Network



*Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle* have been translated into 13 languages and published in 17 countries, helping to launch this worldwide movement to connect children and their families to nature



*The members of any community invariably share a set of core values—particularly around the issues of children and nature. They are bonded by hope for themselves, their families, their friends, and the communities within which they live.*



# C&NN COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE: WORLDWIDE

*“The movement to reconnect children to the natural world has arisen quickly, spontaneously, and across the usual social, political, and economic dividing lines.”*

ORION magazine

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Children and Nature Network (C&NN) was created to encourage and support people and organizations, like you, working toward the goal of reconnecting children and nature. C&NN provides a critical link between researchers, individuals, educators, organizations, businesses and government agencies dedicated to children’s health and well-being. C&NN’s priorities include:

- Improving community health through increased time in nature;
- Engaging families in outdoor time in nature;
- Inspiring nature-smart leaders by training and empowering millennial youth; and
- Building the Worldwide Network to Connect Children to Nature.

C&NN promotes fundamental institutional, community and cultural change while providing resources for sharing information, strategic initiatives and success stories. This *C&NN Community Action Guide: Worldwide* is one such resource.

While the children-and-nature movement is developing an international presence, community-based, regional, state, provincial and territorial campaigns will likely be the most dynamic engines. Such efforts are reaching across communities and professions to bring unlikely allies to the table. Conservation organizations, agencies, homebuilders, teachers, artists, business leaders, physicians and elected officials are developing programs, policies and initiatives to foster change in order to reconnect children with nature.

All communities consist of a variety of different and separate perspectives. Communities may be divided by political differences, demographic diversity, religious practices, geographic location, education, profession, age and experiences. Yet the members of any community invariably share a set of core values, particularly around the issues of children and nature. They are bonded by hope for themselves, their families, their friends and the communities within which they live. A shared desire to bring together seemingly disparate groups and individuals around the common vision of connecting children to nature can be a way to create positive change for the whole community. We are seeing that happen in communities throughout the world. *Join us.*





*Start With Where You Are . . .*

*Educate yourself*

*Generate a buzz*

*Map your own community*



## C&NN COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE: WORLDWIDE

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### PHASE ONE: ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY

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These preparatory activities will help you enhance your grasp of the issues involved with connecting the members of your community in a children and nature initiative.

#### START WITH WHERE YOU ARE

**Educate yourself:** Read *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv and other relevant books and articles that speak to the importance and benefits of connecting children with nature. See the Children & Nature Network Web site ([www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)) for annotated bibliographies of research, articles, news and other resources.

**Generate a buzz – Get people talking:** Have conversations with your own personal networks. Share *Last Child in the Woods*. Find out who else might be interested.

**Map your own community:** Create a long list of contacts and organizations that may have an interest in reconnecting children to nature. Your research and analysis will identify a wide variety of characteristics within the community, contributing to the value of the discussion, the richness of the vision, and the resources available. Look for perspectives based on such elements as specific interests, location in the region, whether or not their work touches the lives of children, and their connection to education or nature.

The following table lists **examples** of groups that are likely to have an interest in the Children & Nature Network concept and may be present in your community. You might consider using this list as the start of a spread sheet you fill out with relevant data from your own community: names of individuals, organizations, contact information. This list is not comprehensive. It is intended simply as a starting point, beginning with some of the most obvious potential allies to others equally important but often overlooked. A few cells are filled in as examples to get you started as you adapt this table to your own community.



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### MAP YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

| Organization                                                                                                                        | Why might they be interested?                                                                                                                                                                                   | What might they do?                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Environmental Educators                                                                                                             | Are pioneers in the field, already working with children.<br>Could use the power of an alliance to accelerate their own efforts.                                                                                | Know the existing, conventional links between nature and children.<br>Could be partners in seeking funding.                                                                                            |
| Federal, State, Provincial and Territorial Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Parks, Departments of Natural Resources, and Protected Areas | Already offer numerous programs that help to connect children to nature.<br>Believe connecting children to nature is critical to the future of our natural resources.                                           | Provide special opportunities on public lands.<br>Offer training programs and materials at free or low cost.<br>Provide technical expertise in creating natural areas or in outdoor recreation skills. |
| Nature Centers, Zoos, Arboreta, Children's Museums, Science Centers                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Land Conservation Organizations                                                                                                     | Expands the individuals and foundations that are interested in supporting their work, i.e. people interested in children can become interested in contributing to land conservation efforts.                    | Work with their traditional donors to create new advocates for initiatives to connect children to nature.                                                                                              |
| Nature clubs for families                                                                                                           | Are natural allies and role models                                                                                                                                                                              | Mentor less-experienced families                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Parenting & Grandparenting Organizations                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other Youth Groups                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Early Childhood Education Centers & Care Providers                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Schools at all levels                                                                                                               | Children are at school all day long. Schools are looking for working methods that address attention and behavioral issues. Schools want to engage families and communities, especially at the elementary level. | Incorporate nature-based experience into school days.<br>Offer opportunities for families to learn about and enjoy the outdoors.<br>Measure and report on changes in performance.                      |
| Public Education Districts & Agencies                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Independent Schools: e.g. Eco-Schools, Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio Emilia                                                           | Schools already working with nature-based, experiential education can use this alliance as marketing outreach for their schools to reach like-minded families.                                                  | Can pilot and promote new approaches.                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| School and Landscape Gardeners                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Universities, Community Colleges with Teacher Certification Programs                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Other Community Groups Working With Children – e.g. Children at Risk Programs, Cultural and Heritage Groups |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Community Parks & Recreation Divisions                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Urban Gardeners                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Outdoor Restoration Volunteer Organizations                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Pediatricians, School Nurses and Other Health Care Providers                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Tribal, First Nations and Traditional Peoples                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Public Health Agencies and Organizations                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Public and Private Environmental Agencies                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Outdoor Products Manufacturers and Retailers                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Outdoor Recreation Industries and Associations—e.g., Tourism                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Communities of Faith                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| City Planners                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Homebuilders Associations                                                                                   | Currently sensitized to sustainability – e.g., the Greenbuild Movement. Interested in quality of life amenities because market research shows people want parks, trees, trails and open space. | Financial support. A practical business voice for the movement. Ally for supporting incorporation of natural space in new and renovated developments. |
| Land Developers                                                                                             | A possible marketing niche – e.g., natural learning environments for children in new developments to enhance property value.                                                                   | Financial support. Political contacts. Practical models.                                                                                              |
| General Media – Education & Health Writers; Syndicated Columnists                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Foundations and international NGOs                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Elected Officials, Community and Indigenous Leaders                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |

## CREATE CONNECTIONS

Meet and talk with a number of people in the community from the potential partnering organizations and allies you have identified in your mapping activity. Prior to your meeting, be sure that you have provided them with preparatory materials such as a summary of the need for such an initiative, Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods*, or at least an introductory e-mail with a link to the Children & Nature Network Web site ([www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)). Use these conversations to build your knowledge base about what is happening in your community, region, state, province, territory or nation and who might have a natural affinity, passion and commitment to participating. Be sure to follow up this initial meeting with appropriate communications—a summary of your conversation and meeting notes, thank you e-mails, notes or calls.

**Here are a few sample questions to use in your meetings. Be sure to document your questions and the responses of those you talk with.**

- Discuss some of the **reasons it is important to reconnect children and nature**. For example, spending time in nature can:
  - Reduce stress and improve health
  - Enhance children's cognitive, emotional, physical and social development
  - Improve school performance
  - Enhance creativity, problem solving ability, confidence and self control
  - Establish an ethic of care
- If appropriate, explore their childhood memories and connections with nature as well as their current observations about children and nature.
- Discuss any direct and indirect relationships between their special interests and children's current disconnect with nature—for example, the impact of this disconnect on their organization or issues of interest, how their organization might positively impact this disconnect and their view of potential benefits from restoring the children-nature connection.
- Brainstorm and discuss initial ideas for actions that you, they and other allies might take collaboratively to reconnect children and families to nature in your community.

## INVITE STAKEHOLDERS AND INTERESTED ALLIES TO A PLANNING AND ORGANIZING EVENT

After this initial mapping activity, work with an interested team to consolidate the results. Who has expressed strong interest in helping to launch a collaborative children and nature initiative in your area? From those who are interested, and who represent credible community leadership, **form a steering or planning committee**. It can be informal or formal. It often helps to have an organization that can serve as a "credible convener" to extend invitations on everyone's behalf to this first planning meeting. Identify one or more people who are designated to coordinate the day's activities, and to follow-through with the recommendations for action that result from the planning event.

Invitations to this planning event can include:

- Summary introductory paragraph that includes the name of the event, the time, place, invited participants and purpose;
- Paragraph about the issue and why it is important and relevant to your community;
- More on the desired outcome and preliminary agenda;
- Link to the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) Web site ([www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)) and your own, if you have already established one for your local or regional initiative or a link to convenor's Web site; and
- RSVP deadlines and phone number or email address, including where to go and who to call for more information.

Intended outcomes for this planning event include:

- Participant commitments, as individuals and organizations, to collaborate to help launch your community's children and nature initiative or campaign.
- A sense of celebration and enthusiasm for the shared purpose of reconnecting children, families and communities with nature in their everyday lives.
- A clear set of next steps, with the next recommended step to be a "kick-off event" to engage and inspire even more members of the community to help plan and implement your children and nature efforts.

## C&NN COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE: WORLDWIDE

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### PHASE TWO: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

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#### KICK-OFF EVENT

One recommended outcome from the initial planning committee meeting is something that sparks the imagination and commitment of a wider community of involvement. That can be a "kick-off" event for your area's children and nature initiative. The kick off serves to inspire the participants, create an understanding about the initiative and provide an opportunity for a wider group of community members to commit to ways they can help and support the effort. The kick-off event should be part information, part celebration, and part commitment. It is a social gathering, planning session, media event and could be a time for the community's children to make their case for why reconnecting children and nature is so important—to them and for them, and for the environment they will care for into the future.

The kick off may be preceded by a press conference to help secure community awareness of the initiative, its purpose, and its promise. Ideally, it is the kick off to a larger, deeper planning process of engaged participants that leads to the successful implementation of your area's children and nature initiative.

#### A PUBLIC EVENT AS PART OF THE KICK OFF

You may wish to include a public event as part of the kick off to notify the community at large that something important is about to begin. A large, public evening or mid-day "ice-breaking" event could be held at a high profile venue such as a Nature Center, Eco-school, Botanical Garden, Urban Community Garden, Children's Museum or Museum of Nature and Science—venues that themselves are consistent with the message and can be asked to co-sponsor. Following a reception or perhaps something such as a family and community picnic, an inspiring and knowledgeable speaker or team of speakers—including children and youth—could launch the event.



## SUGGESTED AGENDA MODULES: KICK-OFF AND PLANNING EVENTS

The following modules can be a helpful sequence to engage people who can help design and implement the initiative to connect children and nature in your community. These are examples of community-building efforts that work. How they are used may vary with the size, structure and cohesion of your particular group as well as the amount of time you are able to carve out for your meetings. For example, you may want to start with a full day kick-off event on a weekend and continue the work in a sequence of evening meetings to accommodate participants' work schedules. There is no one right way. Establish an approach that best meets the needs and schedules of your community's stakeholders and key participants.

### Module One: Sample Opening Exercise

After brief introductions and welcoming comments, hand out paper or journals, or ask people to bring out their notepads. Post the following questions. Ask everyone to take the next 20 minutes to answer the questions individually, telling them they can go outside to reflect and respond to these questions (if outdoor space is available).

- What are the primary causes of nature-deficit disorder in our community? Note: Nature-deficit disorder is a term coined by author Richard Louv to describe the social changes that have occurred in which children spend little time in direct contact with nature in their everyday lives. It is not a medical diagnosis.
- Where do you see the effects of nature-deficit disorder showing up in our community (and in the issues we face as individuals, families and, if applicable, as a rapidly growing community)?
- Who else is working in this area? Who is poised to make a positive difference?
- Why are you personally engaged? Why do you have energy for the children and nature idea?
- Why is your organization interested and what can it bring to this initiative?

Ask the participants to come back to the large group to share ideas and discuss their reactions. Enlist volunteers to record responses. Let the discussion occur for about 20 minutes. If done well, this will help focus the group and get to the reasons for participating, creating a sense of relationship and continuity. You can collect the written responses and transcribe them into a tool to utilize in follow-up steps or as a reference point for all participants as the initiative unfolds over time.

### Module Two: Creating a Vision—What Is the Desired Future?

Ask participants to begin thinking about what they would like to have accomplished in 10 to 15 years. A collaboratively developed, community-owned vision, addressing the key issues identified in the scope of a project to effectively connect children with nature, is a highly useful tool. It helps to focus hopes and aspirations and to build the foundation for framing the initiative and setting priorities. In articulating this vision of the desired future, it is important not to be constrained by either political or economic realities. While the vision may not seem achievable in the short term, we believe it is better to aim too high than too low.



Ask stakeholders and participants to reflect and answer these questions:

- What words describe the relationship of children to nature in our community in the year 2030?
- How would we want our efforts to affect the lives of the next generation and the one after that?
- If we could travel to the future what would we want to see?

The participants' and stakeholders' answers to these questions will be integrated and synthesized by whatever steering or planning committee you and others have established. They will form the results into a draft Vision Statement. The statement will reflect the commonly-held values of the community and guide the stakeholders through the rest of their work. At the next meeting, the stakeholders will review and may fine-tune it. This allows the stakeholders to be guided by vision from the beginning, but also able to appropriately modify the vision over time with the benefit of learnings gleaned along the way.

### **Module Three: Current Realities, Trends and Activities**

It is critically important that the stakeholders have a clear understanding of the events, trends and issues that affect and are affected by the current disconnect of our children from an experience of nature. Without agreement on the status of this issue in your community, it won't be possible to reach agreement on where to go, or how to get there. It will be extremely valuable for the stakeholders to reach a rough consensus on how well they think things are going at the current point in time.

- What are the key strengths in our community and who are the groups currently working on these issues?
- What are the key weaknesses and barriers in our community for dealing with these issues?
- What opportunities exist today and may appear on the horizon?
- What threats exist today and may loom on the horizon?
- What capacities can we build on and what gaps must be filled?

Provide participants with some of the data and research available within your community to help inform this discussion. The Children & Nature Network ([www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)) has collected and continually updates a vast compendium of research and resources that can be used directly by your community and combined with your local data, research and resources to help frame your own local initiative.

#### **Module Four: Areas of Focus—Priorities for the Community**

After the stakeholders have articulated their vision, and have identified current realities and trends, they next select priority issues or areas to narrow the focus for the remainder of the process. These “Areas of Focus” will provide the stakeholders a set of clear priorities to guide the work of their community’s children and nature initiative. To choose Areas of Focus the stakeholders will answer the following questions, building off the earlier work:

- What is happening in the children and nature arena right now, and what impact are we having on it? Who are the groups and individuals already working on these issues?
- What are our short and medium-term goals and objectives for getting children outdoors in nature?

Areas of Focus are priorities clustered around thematic issues—or change areas—to inform and guide how the community can get from where it is today to where it wants to be. One way to think about Areas of Focus is that they are based on consideration of a substantive list of priority questions such as:

- Is it important to ensure that the design of our community parks include natural places with opportunities for unstructured play?
- Is it critical to get nature-based experiences and learning into the required curriculum of our public schools?
- Do we need to take action to help families and children feel safe outdoors?
- Is it critical that physicians and other health providers in our area encourage children, youth and families to spend more time outdoors in nature?
- Should we require more green areas in our community’s land use planning?
- Should we develop wildlife habitat plots or corridors within our community?
- Do we need to offer programs that will help individuals and families learn how to play and learn outdoors in nature?
- Do we need a marketing effort to encourage more people of all ages to explore nature?
- Should we work with developers and homebuilders to encourage integrating connections to nature within their developments?

By identifying a manageable number of Areas of Focus, the group will be able to target the key areas that will need to be worked on if the community is to begin moving in the direction of its desired future.

### Module Five: Action Plan Development

At this point in the planning process for your community's children and nature initiative, it often makes sense for the stakeholders and participants to divide themselves into working groups around the Areas of Focus. Additional people may be added to the working groups. Ask each group to answer questions like these:

- What is happening in this issue right now, and what impact are we having on it?
- What are our short and medium-term goals and objectives for this issue?
- What other efforts are under way either within or outside of the community to address this issue?
- What projects or activities could we undertake to achieve the goals and objectives we have identified or to enhance other initiatives already underway to address this issue?
- Which of the projects identified have priority for immediate action and how do they relate to the those being identified by working groups in other Areas of Focus?

For those projects and activities that the working groups feel are most important for immediate action, each group needs to develop an action plan, including:

- The specific steps to be taken to implement their priority project or projects within the community's overall children and nature initiative;
- The people and organizations or groups who could agree to take the lead on coordinating the implementation of each project;
- The resources necessary to implement each project and a plan to acquire them;
- A realistic timetable for the beginning and completion of each project within the initiative; and
- The measurable indicators of success expected from implementation of each project.

Before taking their working group's action plan forward to the rest of the working groups as a whole, each should come to some form of consensus or agreement.

### Module Six: Implementation Plan Elements

Now it is time to bring together all of the goals and recommendations for projects into a comprehensive, integrated action plan and report. Our experience shows that many of the goals and proposed action steps will be complementary and will need to be combined in some way to create a coherent overall strategy document. The steering or overall planning committee will need to distribute this document to the entire group of stakeholders and participants for their review and input. Participants may be invited to submit comments. Establish a process for the steering committee to meet as a whole to affirm the results as the comprehensive plan for your community's children and nature initiative's implementation phase. This is the final and most difficult phase of the planning process, where previous agreements are tested and a final consensus is reached.



The planning committee should test the proposed projects and activities that arise from the working groups' action plans against criteria such as the following:

- Are they highly leveraged, i.e., do the activities get others to take action to support reconnecting children to nature that they otherwise wouldn't have done?
- Can they create a major impact toward achieving the vision?
- Are they areas of activity that would not be accomplished without this intervention?
- Do they take positive advantage of the unique cross-sector collaboration made possible through this effort?
- Do they address core systems issues and not just narrow project ideas, e.g., do they actually facilitate having organizations and agencies change the way they do their work, rather than just undertaking an isolated, specific project?
- Are they doable and viable given existing leadership and resources in our community?
- Do they truly reconnect children to nature in our community?

Drawing from this analysis, the planning committee develops an overall implementation plan. Each of the activities that is ultimately included in the plan should be consistent with the strategic vision established earlier by the group. The implementation plan will not include everything the group has envisioned, but will be designed to make a positive difference. One effective approach is to decide on five to ten "trendbender" projects and activities tied to the Areas of Focus.

The names of specific individuals and organizations, public, private and nonprofit, should be placed beside each action step to either take responsibility for implementation themselves or see to it that implementation occurs, and by what date. Schedules for completion are essential.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Throughout the planning phase, you will want to conduct a number of outreach activities to support the effort. It is critical to ensure that there is widespread public awareness of the work to create a local children and nature initiative and that anyone who is interested can have input into the plan through the planning committee. The outreach strategy should promote a two-way dialogue between stakeholders in their planning work and the community as a whole. At various times in the process, specific input will be needed. For instance, the community will wish to have input on the vision. Also, once the Areas of Focus are selected, the community will wish to have input on potential projects and activities. Further, the stakeholders will likely wish to test their draft plans with the community for refinement and to develop support for implementation.

**PHASE THREE: IMPLEMENTATION**

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When the plan has been adopted, your children and nature initiative moves into its third phase—implementation. The third phase cannot be left to chance but must be treated with the same kind of methodical approach as the first two phases. After the kick-off event and initial planning process, what evolved into a steering committee will now become an implementation committee. Often new people are added at this time and some members may step aside. The purpose is to maintain enough structure and focus in order to build an organization—whether formal or informal—that can sustain the work of the children and nature initiative that has been charted to date. The implementation committee should include the chairs of the working groups for the Areas of Focus. We recommend that Phase Three include these elements:

**IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

- Implementation Committee
  - Manage the ongoing implementation process.
  - Serve as a central clearinghouse and resource to the working groups.
  - Monitor and support individual activities and projects.
  - Help generate resources for individual activities and projects.
  - Provide direction to the overall initiative Coordinator (whether paid or volunteer, a coordinator is needed).
- Working Groups
  - Provide regular updates to the Implementation Committee and Coordinator.
  - Keep getting the word out:
    - When you present to groups or organizations, know what you would ask them to do to help with implementation.
  - Identify organizations and individuals to champion activities and projects.
  - Continue recruiting new participants.
  - Select activities and projects within your community's children and nature initiative for the first round of implementation. Look for those that meet criteria such as these:
    - Good timing.
    - Likely to engage a broad base of support.
    - High confidence it can be implemented.
    - Does not have to be earth-shaking but needs to show how success can be achieved.

## C&NN COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE: WORLDWIDE

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### CONCLUSION

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Ultimately, your community's children and nature initiative should be designed to engender and engage the enthusiasm and commitment of local stakeholders who share the vision of a healthy future for children, communities and the environments that sustain us all. The time is right to foster local and regional initiatives that will in turn inspire and generate actions to reconnect children and nature—now and in the future.

We hope those of you using this *Guide* will share your feedback, stories of success, challenges and opportunities as we all work together, as Richard Louv says, “to heal the broken bond between children and the natural world.”

Visit the Children & Nature Network website at [www.childrenandnature.org/worldwide](http://www.childrenandnature.org/worldwide) for more detailed suggestions, resources, research, news and information about the grassroots movement to reconnect children and nature.

Among the many helpful resources, two are available in Chinese, French, Spanish and English: *Nature Clubs for Families Tool Kit: Do It Yourself! Do It Now!* and *Together in Nature: Pathways to a Stronger, Closer Family* at [www.childrenandnature.org/publications](http://www.childrenandnature.org/publications).

Be sure to register your efforts on C&NN's Directory of individuals, nature clubs for families, programs and more at [www.childrenandnature.org/directory](http://www.childrenandnature.org/directory). And let us hear from you at any time at [info@childrenandnature.org](mailto:info@childrenandnature.org). **Thank you!**



The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is a non-governmental educational organization dedicated to building a worldwide movement to reconnect children and nature. C&NN builds awareness, provides access to state-of-the art resources, supports the grassroots with tools and strategies, develops publications and educational materials, synthesizes the best available research, and encourages collaboration to heal the broken bond between children and nature. Research indicates that children who explore, learn, and play outside on a regular basis are healthier, happier, smarter, more cooperative, more creative and more fulfilled. Their well-being is enhanced while they develop a sense of place and bond with family, community and their environment.

**Contact us at [info@childrenandnature.org](mailto:info@childrenandnature.org).**