

Getting Started: *Guidelines for Excellence* Workshop Resources

Welcome to the *Guidelines for Excellence* Workshop Resources. Here you will find a series of workshop outlines designed to help you plan and lead professional learning experiences focusing on each of the five *Guidelines for Excellence* publications produced through the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education:

- ✓ *Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence*
A set of recommendations for developing and selecting environmental education instructional materials.
- ✓ *K–12 Environmental Education: Guidelines for Excellence*
Developed to support state and local environmental education efforts by setting expectations for performance and achievement in grades 4, 8, and 12, along with its companion piece, *K–12 Environmental Education: Guidelines for Excellence—Executive Summary*.
- ✓ *Environmental Educator Knowledge and Skills: Guidelines for Excellence*
A set of recommendations for the preparation and continuing education of environmental educators.
- ✓ *Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence*
A set of recommendations for the design and implementation of comprehensive nonformal environmental education programs.
- ✓ *Early Childhood Environmental Education: Guidelines for Excellence*
A set of recommendations to be used in the development of comprehensive early childhood environmental education programs or to trigger improvements in existing ones.
- ✓ *Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence*
This set of guidelines focuses on community wellness and is designed to help environmental educators create inclusive environments that support effective partnerships and collaborations.
- ✓ *Educating for Climate Action and Justice: Guidelines for Excellence*
This set of guidelines was developed for the many individuals and organizations who facilitate climate education, with a focus on going beyond educating *about* climate change and *moving toward* climate action and justice.

Some Background: National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education

The National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education, initiated by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) in 1993, has developed a series of guidelines that set the standards for high-quality environmental education. Each of these publications was developed by a diverse team of professionals, and each has gone through a substantive review by thousands of professionals prior to its publication.

Through the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education, NAAEE is taking the lead in establishing guidelines for the development of balanced, scientifically accurate, and comprehensive environmental education programs and materials. Quality environmental education programs help develop an environmentally literate citizenry that can compete in our global economy; has the skills, knowledge, and inclinations to make well-informed choices; and exercises the rights and responsibilities of members of a community.

In an effort to ensure that these guidelines reflect a widely shared understanding of environmental education, they were developed through a national process of review and comment. For each publication, a writing team comprised of environmental education professionals from a variety of backgrounds and organizational affiliations was formed. The writing team took on the challenge of turning ideas about quality, gleaned from environmental education practice and research literature, into a detailed outline. This outline, along with successive drafts of the guidelines, was circulated widely. Revisions were made based on an analysis of comments from literally thousands of individuals and organizations. Review comments were used not only to test and revise the basic framework for the guidelines, but also to develop every detail of the final document from overall structure to examples, and glossary terms to references.

Looking for More Background Information?

For more information about the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education visit the following sites:

- ✓ NAAEE's website (<https://naaee.org/our-work/programs/guidelines-excellence>)
- ✓ Simmons, B., Bahgwanji, Y. and Ribe, R. (2015) Promoting Excellence in Environmental Education. In Monroe, M.C, and Krazny, M. (eds) *Across the Spectrum*. Free download available at : https://eeepro.naaee.org/sites/default/files/eeepro-post-files/acrossthespectrum_8-1-16.pdf
- ✓ NAAEE's *Guidelines for Excellence* eePRO discussion group: <https://eeepro.naaee.org/community/groups>

Want to Access the Workshop Materials?

The latest versions of printed materials in the *Guidelines for Excellence* series are available as free downloadable pdfs on the NAAEE website (<https://naaee.org>). You may purchase bound copies of the *Guidelines for Excellence* series from Acorn Naturalists.

Getting Started

Organizing a workshop takes time and effort, especially if you don't conduct workshops regularly. Using the following checklist may make the process a bit easier.

Pre-workshop Planning and Preparation

- ❑ Discuss workshop plans with your sponsor and host and build institutional support
- ❑ Decide how you will advertise the workshop and recruit participants
- ❑ Identify your audience and conduct a needs assessment, including an assessment of participant background, knowledge, and interests
- ❑ Locate and reserve an appropriate workshop site and consider its suitability (e.g., parking availability, access to public transportation, room configuration, access to food and other refreshments, availability of AV equipment, and other attributes that may impact the success of your workshop)
- ❑ Identify and address needed accommodations for people with disabilities
- ❑ Select which *Guidelines for Excellence* publication will be the focus of your workshop
- ❑ Develop workshop goals and objectives
- ❑ Determine workshop format, techniques, and time requirements
- ❑ As the facilitator, thoroughly read the *Guidelines for Excellence* publication being introduced to the participants, including information on the "Roots of Environmental Education"
- ❑ Explore potential for partnerships and assistance (e.g., funding, in-kind support, logistical support)
- ❑ Decide if you would like a co-facilitator or to include additional presenters with specific expertise
- ❑ Determine evaluation strategies and criteria, and how results will be used and communicated

Plan the Learning Sequence

- ❑ Review the participant needs assessment and use it to plan the workshop and, if necessary, revise specific workshop elements such as the learning objectives, activities, icebreakers, and areas of emphasis
- ❑ Review the appropriate workshop module and select activities that fit your audience, focus, objectives, and available time
- ❑ Decide how you will engage participants before and after the workshop
- ❑ Create a detailed workshop agenda that maps out the flow of learning and time necessary for each activity (see workshop modules for ideas):
 - Revisit your workshop objectives and plan appropriate learning progressions
 - Determine how you will engage participants throughout the workshop and ensure that each participant receives the experiences and time needed to process learning
 - Make sure you allow time throughout the workshop for reflections and at the end for closure

- Map out strategies for staying on schedule. If time adjustments must be made, identify what can be trimmed without losing too much learning, and what activities can be seamlessly drawn out or inserted to extend learning meaningfully
- Include wrap-up time at the end of the workshop and budget time for evaluation.
- Decide how you will encourage and provide opportunities for participants to extend and deepen their learning following the workshop
- Consider promoting networking among workshop participants
- Compile your facilitator's agenda and develop a participant's agenda

Plan for Active Participation

- Contact participants, as needed, several days prior to the workshop
 - Welcome them, thank them for signing up, confirm attendance
 - Confirm logistics of time and place, and include helpful hints such as driving directions, use of public transportation, appropriate dress, and nearby restaurants
 - Provide participants with an overview of the workshop, objectives, and agenda—tell them what they'll be learning and why
 - E-mail participants any pre-workshop activities or reflection questions
 - Depending on the workshop module selected, ask participants to bring computers, electrical cords, thumb drives, copies of activity guides, and copies of state or national student standards
- Determine what "table roles" you wish to use during group work
 - Timer
 - Reporter (can have more than one)
 - Recorder
 - Table energizer leader—at around halfway time, give the group a 17-second movement break to get glucose to the brain and refresh, energize
 - Table leader—in larger groups
 - Joke of the day—this person will return from lunch with a joke to share with the group
- Decide if you want to use a "parking lot" (chart paper listing of items that come up for discussion and should be discussed by the end of the day). Determine how you will use a "parking lot," including how you will describe it to the participants

Plan Resource Needs

- Identify and gather workshop supplies (e.g., chart paper, easels, tape, markers, note cards)
- Print handouts
- Purchase or create reflective journals for each participant
- Preorder *Guideline for Excellence* publications as needed

- ❑ Identify and gather needed AV and computer technology, and determine if the workshop site has Internet access
- ❑ Develop a PowerPoint presentation, if needed
- ❑ Identify and gather additional equipment needed for the support and comfort of workshop participants (e.g., coffee maker, hot water for tea, refrigerator or ice chest for cold drinks)
- ❑ Prepare table buckets with supplies that allow for reflection, notetaking, participation, etc.
- ❑ Decide if you will want candy or snacks for tables (suggested for longer workshops)
- ❑ For all day workshops, make plans for lunch (e.g., arrange for lunches to be catered, ask participants to bring a brown bag lunch, identify nearby restaurants)

Some Things to Think About

- ❑ Keep the workshop as interactive as possible
- ❑ Avoid “death by PowerPoint.” Determine the best use of technology, and be familiar with all of the resources to be employed
- ❑ Use cooperative learning strategies to encourage discussion and problem-solving
- ❑ Incorporate nonlinguistic representations such as models and drawings, tap into as many sensory experiences as possible, and create opportunities to elicit emotional connections
- ❑ Use formative assessment strategies and gauge participant engagement throughout by listening and watching for evidence of understanding and adjust the timing and strategies accordingly.
- ❑ Think through best uses of the available learning environment, including outdoor spaces
- ❑ Familiarize participants with the layout of the meeting building, addressing comfort and safety issues
- ❑ Arrange tables, workspaces, and graphic displays so all participants can access materials and presentations comfortably

During the Workshop

- ❑ Early in the workshop, do the following:
 - Walk participants through the agenda, including the workshop objectives (tell participants what you are going to tell them)
 - Clarify the purposes of the workshop
 - Introduce yourself and establish your credibility as the facilitator
 - Establish that this workshop is designed to introduce participants to a set of tools to ensure quality environmental education practice
 - Allow time for participant introductions to establish a sense of involvement and connection to others
 - Use an icebreaker that helps participants get to know one another, but also introduces an important component of the topic (see individual workshop modules for suggestions)

- Depending on the audience and workshop goals, discuss the following:
 - What makes environmental education unique
 - Definition of environmental education
 - How environmental education helps learners build their identities as environmental stewards
 - How environmental education can play an important role in the development of 21st-century thinking and systems thinking skills and the implementation of state and national standards (e.g., NGSS, CCSS)
- Provide background information on the *Guidelines for Excellence*, including the following:
 - How the guidelines were developed
 - Because the guidelines were based on research and developed through a participatory process, they are based on our collective wisdom and articulate best practices
 - Development of the guidelines continues to be an intentional, iterative process with widespread input and consensus (thousands of individuals and organizations have provided input)
 - Because environmental educators come from many sectors, the *guidelines* can help educators with different backgrounds share language and ideas
 - Even though the guidelines were first developed over a period of time, they are updated regularly so that they remain relevant to current thinking
 - Each product has similar hierarchical structure—overarching idea (e.g., key characteristic), specific features of that overarching idea (e.g., guidelines), and examples or indicators
- Take time to reassure participants that most educators address 70–80 percent of these guidelines already, just by being conscientious educators. The guidelines were developed to ensure that the additional 20–30 percent of educators are “filled in” and make sure that important practices are not unintentionally overlooked
- During the workshop, do the following:
 - Highlight specific workshop objectives as they are covered:
 - For this specific workshop or audience, highlight most critical or most relevant objectives
 - Commonalities of objectives of all sets (for example, ongoing evaluation is fundamental to all, and ensuring balanced approach is always key)
 - Unique aspects of objectives of specific sets (for example, K–12 is a learning progression, or early childhood is more program-oriented)
 - Spend time addressing how participants can use the guidelines to improve their practice

- Point out how the guidelines can be used for
 - gap analysis
 - comparative assessment
 - self-reflection
 - Reinforce that this workshop is designed to familiarize participants with the guidelines so they can use them as tools going forward, building our profession's capacity
 - Provoke thinking in terms of both immediate applications and that which needs to be built upon over time
- Workshop Wrap-Up and Closure
- Summarize main ideas (tell them what you told them)
 - Elicit final, culminating reflections
 - Ask participants to complete a workshop evaluation