



**Wisconsin's Plan
for Environmentally Literate
and Sustainable Communities**



Wisconsin Environmental
Education Board



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Foreword

The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) has enthusiastically adopted and supports the implementation of *Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities*. This plan is the latest in a long line of environmental education initiatives in the state. Beginning with the Conservation Movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s through the Environmental Movement in the 1960s and 70s and on to today, residents of Wisconsin have played a key role in shaping the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individuals, groups, and organizations with respect to environmental issues at the national, regional, and local levels. As a new century has just begun, this plan provides a pathway for all of us to build upon this prior work and move forward in developing an environmentally literate society comprised of sustainable communities.

The goals of this plan are broad and far-reaching and will only be attained through the efforts of a variety of individuals and organizations. Overall, this plan looks to build awareness and capacity, promote access to information and experiences, identify strategies, foster research, and assess progress. While the WEEB, along with the Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation and the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, intend to support and help implement this plan, as you read through this document, you will undoubtedly find ways to contribute and collaborate with others. We encourage you to do so. *Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities* is a plan for all residents of Wisconsin, thus all of us need to play an active role in making certain the goals are met, and hopefully exceeded.

We face many challenges; challenges that are too large and too complex for any one organization or group to solve. Only by collectively bringing all resources together can we ensure that we not only meet the goals described in this document, but that we provide our children and our children's children an example of how to identify an issue, investigate it carefully, and take action in a responsible manner.

Sincerely,



Scott Ashmann, Chair
Wisconsin Environmental
Education Board



Janet Brandt, Chair
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Education Foundation



Karla Lockman, Chair
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Contributors

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities was developed through the efforts of many organizations, agencies and contributors. Throughout the development process, significant effort was made to include a diversity of sectors and Wisconsin communities in producing the end result you see here. This is, therefore, a document created by and for all people in Wisconsin. While project steering and guidance was sustained by a Managerial Committee, the bulk of the inspiration and input for this document was devised by a diverse Advisory Team representing numerous Wisconsin communities.

Sectors Represented

Agriculture	Education (PK-12)	Faith	Media/Communications
Architecture/Building	Endangered Resources	Families	Sustainability
Business	Engineering	Foundations	Technical Colleges
Commerce	Environment	Government	Tourism
Conservation	Environmental Education	Human Resources	Tribes
Early Learning	Forestry	Latino	Youth Groups

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Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAE)



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Introduction

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities (referred to in this document as the “Plan”) serves as a strategic plan for achieving the vision of environmentally literate and sustainable communities across Wisconsin. The *Plan* is meant to build capacity, awareness, and support for environmental literacy and sustainability at home, work, school, and play. It encourages funding, research, and education for environmental literacy and sustainability and it supports *Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools*.

This *Plan* was developed through input from diverse representatives from around the state, all of whom—like many before them—are attentive to the health and well-being of Wisconsin's people, the stewardship of our natural resources, the sustainability of our communities, and to leaving a positive legacy for the future. Wisconsin people value the state's natural resources and the functions these resources serve at home, work, school, and play. This commitment to protecting and conserving valued resources can and does lead to sustainable communities that enjoy a healthy environment, a prosperous economy, and a vibrant civic life. The purpose of this *Plan*, therefore, is to provide a roadmap, a course of action, individuals, organizations, businesses and governments should take to attain environmental literacy and sustainable communities. By providing a shared vision, mission, and goals, encouraging the use of common language, and promoting collaborative efforts, the *Plan* offers the opportunity for extraordinary impact and change.

The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) is charged with leadership for environmental education for all people in the state and develops a strategic plan every ten years. WEEB's previous strategic plan, *A Plan for Advancing Environmental Education in Wisconsin: EE2010*, had seven goals that were based on the central purposes of providing positive leadership; developing local leaders; developing and implementing curricula; and furthering

Environmental Literacy

Possessing knowledge about the environment and issues related to it; capable of, and inclined to, further self-directed environmental learning and/or action.

Environmental literacy consists of four essential aspects:

- *developing inquiry, investigative, and analysis skills;*
- *acquiring knowledge of environmental processes and human systems;*
- *developing skills for understanding and addressing environmental issues;*
- *practicing personal and civic responsibility for environmental decisions.*

(North American Association for Environmental Education)

Sustainability

Meeting current needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs.

(Brundtland Report)

professional development. An assessment provided insight into this plan's successes and what remains to be done. Major successes include:

- The creation of a website, EEinWisconsin.org, which acts as a tool for statewide communication and a clearinghouse for both formal and non-formal environmental education in Wisconsin.
- The WEEB's use of the goals in its grants program.
- The initiation of research in environmental literacy and sustainability.
- The establishment of the Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation, which is leading the way toward more sustainable funding for environmental education.

The assessment found more work needs to be done to support and enhance non-formal and non-traditional environmental education. The *Plan* addresses this need and sets new goals.

Related Statewide Efforts

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities considers educational needs and responses for the whole community and supports sustainable practices at home, work, school, and play. The *Plan* is coordinated with and supported by two additional statewide efforts to advance the implementation of the *Plan's* goals and the integration of sustainability:

Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools addresses multiple aspects related directly to pre-kindergarten through high school student learning to ensure every student graduates environmentally literate. (dpi.wi.gov/cal/environmental-ed.html)

Cultivating Education for Sustainability in Wisconsin builds capacity and support for schools and communities to focus student learning on sustainability. It provides recommendations for resources and services to implement education for sustainability in schools. (www.uwsp.edu/wcee/efs)

Benefits of a State Plan

- Provides a common vision and set of goals for people in Wisconsin to work toward.
- Guides decision-making, policy making, and priority setting.
- Serves as justification for and purpose behind creating or continuing programs, tools, and resources.
- Sets priorities for development and delivery of educational programs, business plans, and community efforts.
- Supplies a rationale and guidance for funding and research efforts.

How to Use the *Plan*

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities is not an organization, but rather a document that serves as the state strategic plan requiring partnerships and collaboration. It is designed to serve as reference material for individuals, businesses, and communities and as a guide in setting priorities and making decisions regarding environmental literacy and sustainability. As Wisconsin people work toward achieving the four main outcomes, this *Plan* can help guide attitudes, planning, actions, and endeavors.

Each goal listed in this document includes a rationale, objectives, and sample action items that may lead to achieving the final goal. Although great effort was made to include a variety of action ideas suitable to many sectors in Wisconsin, the “sample action items” listed are intended to serve as examples. Similarly, where specific organizations are mentioned, those references are intended to serve as sample organizations or groups. Any lists of organizations in the “sample action ideas” section are not intended to be all-inclusive.

This *Plan* is designed to serve as a ten-year plan and provides five long-term goals for Wisconsin people to work towards. It is not, however, a static document. As objectives are accomplished or contributors find areas to improve upon, the *Plan* will be updated and enhanced.

Implementation

Three statewide organizations are committed to providing leadership for the *Plan*, but rely on other contributors for meaningful results. The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB), as the state’s sanctioned consensus-building authority for environmental education, has already provided the vision for the *Plan* and aims to further support the implementation and evaluation of the *Plan*. Specifically, the WEEB’s environmental education grants program will correspond to the goals listed in the *Plan*. The Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAEE), the state’s non-profit professional organization for environmental education, will put many aspects of the *Plan* into effect by supporting and training educators, administrators, and others who play a direct role in implementing the *Plan*’s action ideas. The Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation (WEEF) is pledged to facilitating the fundraising needed to meet the *Plan*’s goals.

While these agencies provide leadership for the *Plan*, ultimately, the *Plan* goals can only be accomplished with the participation and contribution of diverse individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and sectors throughout Wisconsin. In short, the *Plan*’s success depends on a collaborative effort by all people in Wisconsin.

Outcomes of Successful Implementation

All people in Wisconsin use sustainable practices at home, work, school, and play.

All people in Wisconsin have access to clean and sustainable natural resources.

All people in Wisconsin have access to quality outdoor experiences.

All people in Wisconsin have opportunities to learn about the natural world and their place in or connections to it.

At Home, Work, School, and Play

Sustainable Communities

A sustainable community can persist over generations, enjoying a healthy environment, prosperous economy and vibrant civic life. It does not undermine its social or physical systems of support.

*Rather, it develops in harmony with the ecological patterns it thrives in.
(Minnesota Pollution Control Agency)*

Opportunities for Wisconsin residents to become environmentally literate and implement sustainable practices are everywhere. There are four locations where we commonly gain our knowledge, skills, and attitudes: home, work, school, and play. From lifestyle choices we make as family units and the health and welfare of employees, to hands-on learning in schools and outdoor recreation, providing knowledge and effecting change that advances environmental literacy and sustainability can be a part of everyone's life. Our knowledge, attitudes, skills, and actions in each location can ensure the health of our communities and natural resources. While the *Plan* is a goal-based plan, special attention is paid to the places where people learn and make choices. Below are the four locations with suggestions for action.

At Home

Today, there are many opportunities to strengthen environmental literacy in the home setting. This location includes families, consumers, and faith based groups. In the home setting, people can access information when making decisions as a family unit and they can make wise consumer-choices when exercising purchasing power. Choices made in the home include buying goods and services that are affordable, economically and socially responsible, and environmentally friendly. Faith communities can provide a supportive community that sustains people in their attitudes and actions towards environmental literacy and sustainability.

The *Plan* outlines suggestions for creating resources, designing programs, and serving Wisconsin residents in the home. The following considerations should be made when providing education for environmental literacy and sustainability for those in the home setting:

- A broad definition of what constitutes a family should be used.
- Providing guidance and education in the home can help families make socially responsible and environmentally friendly lifestyle choices, can help in creating wise consumers, and can support faith communities with moral and ethical considerations.
- Multi-generational programs and sensitivity to cultural diversity can offer many rich opportunities for furthering environmental literacy and sustainability.
- Careful planning should be used to develop projects and programs that can be shared and worked on over longer periods of time (longer than what is attainable in other educational settings).

At Work

Developing a greater sense of the importance and impacts of environmental literacy and sustainability in the workplace can not only shift attitudes and actions but also increase productivity, efficiency, and profitability. Workplace settings include business communities, landowners and producers, the media, and governmental units and organizations of all levels.

Often, the best way to achieve business success and impact the business community is through networks that supply or support guidance for environmental literacy and sustainable practices. If this guidance is to be useful and relevant it must consider the mission of the organization or business, provide information that relates to the success of the business, and take into account the needs and goals of future generation employers and employees. Conceivably, shifts toward sustainability in the workplace should also positively affect the health, safety, and welfare of employees and employers.

The *Plan* objectives address ways businesses, producers, governments, and the media can effect change in their communities. The following considerations should be taken into account when striving for environmental literacy and sustainability in the workplace:

- Workplace programming should maintain sensitivity to economic conditions.
- Best practices within a business or industry should be recognized, shared, and replicated.
- Relationships between businesses and their local communities should be created and/or strengthened.

At School

Integrating education for environmental literacy and sustainability across all disciplines and at all age-levels should not only help learners gain necessary knowledge and skills related to natural resource use, but also make learning experiences more fulfilling and relevant to the world around us. Whereas *Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools* focuses on the traditional school setting, this *Plan* includes not only pre-kindergarten through high school students, but also formal and non-formal teachers and administrators, students and faculty at institutes of higher education, homeschool communities, and early childhood education and care settings.

The *Plan* suggests ways educators and administrators can affect education in our schools and learning communities and proposes ways in which the greater community can help educational programs foster environmental

Environmental Education

Environmental education is a lifelong learning process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, ethical awareness and sensitivity for the relationship between humans and the environment, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions. By these actions, environmentally literate citizens will help ensure an ecologically and economically sustainable environment. (WEEB)

literacy and sustainability. Educational programs, projects, and experiences for environmental literacy and sustainability should consider the following:

- Education for environmental literacy and sustainability should be integrated into the existing curriculum, including traditional and non-traditional disciplines.
- Programming should be relevant to the educational and developmental levels of all students and inclusive of all learners.
- In-school instruction and guidance can and should support academic achievement in all subject areas.
- Environmental and sustainability education opportunities should be made available for formal and non-formal teacher training at all levels and in all subjects.

Education for Sustainability (EfS) provides people with the knowledge, skills, ways of thinking, and opportunities to promote a healthy and livable world. It is a holistic and systems-based approach to teaching and learning that integrates social justice, economics, and environmental literacy. The ultimate outcome of EfS is to sustain both human and natural communities.

(WCEE)

At Play

Connecting Wisconsin residents to their community and local environment through play or recreation can help build sustainable and safe communities. Traditionally, building an appreciation of nature and a conservation ethic for hunting and fishing was a focus at the play location. These components should be maintained but also supplemented by a broader vision of connecting play and sustainability. Involving residents in their community through outdoor activities and civic engagement, as considered with this location of “play,” should not be perceived as merely extracurricular, but rather as a critical part of achieving environmental literacy and sustainability.

The *Plan* provides suggestions that help establish safe and healthy communities where residents can be active, engaged, and involved. When programs, resources, and projects are created at play, the following considerations should be made:

- Educational opportunities at play should include methods like service learning or community-based programming that builds relevancy and meaning to the learning experience.
- Programs should be accessible to everyone while including elements that are customized for diverse age groups and cultures.
- Recreational outdoor public spaces should be safe, welcoming, accessible, and promote awareness of environmental literacy and sustainability.
- Events, programs and learning activities should promote healthy lifestyles and recognize and promote opportunities for synergy between play, health, and sustainability.
- Program providers should recognize the potential of unbuilt environments in urban and suburban areas for environmental literacy and play.
- Public learning opportunities should be offered by a variety of agencies, organizations and individuals, including (but not limited to) nature centers, parks, museums, residential learning centers, club centers, and zoos.

Executive Summary

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities recognizes that Wisconsin's rich environmental, cultural, and economic heritage is based directly on the natural resources around us. The *Plan* acknowledges that in order to use, enjoy, and preserve these resources, individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments must have the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to ensure the health of our communities and natural resources. The *Plan* fills the need for a state strategic vision for environmental literacy and sustainability, and provides a shared set of goals for all people in all sectors of Wisconsin to work towards. It was developed by a diverse set of stakeholders and with the distinct aim to include numerous voices and perspectives in the process. From this process the following goals were established:

Vision: *Environmentally literate and sustainable communities.*

Mission: *To provide opportunities for Wisconsin residents to become environmentally literate and implement sustainable practices at home, work, school and play.*

1. Build awareness of environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

- 1.1: Develop and implement communication methods for diverse audiences.
- 1.2: Identify and promote best practices and successes in environmental literacy and sustainability.
- 1.3: Develop and strengthen the capacity of community leaders to communicate the value of environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

2. Promote access to educational experiences needed to support environmental literacy and sustainable communities at home, work, school, and play.

- 2.1 Provide support to achieve the goals of *Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools*.
- 2.2 Help the formal education setting support education for environmental literacy and sustainability outside the scope of PK-12 schools..
- 2.3 Encourage education for environmental literacy and sustainability outside of the formal educational setting.

3. Build the capacity of individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments to advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

- 3.1 Identify tools and resources that support environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
- 3.2 Facilitate access to identified tools and resources.
- 3.3 Facilitate innovative collaborations between diverse individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.

4. Promote research and assessment to identify strategies that advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

- 4.1 Assess Wisconsin's progress toward environmental literacy and sustainable communities.
- 4.2 Inventory and connect existing research.
- 4.3 Identify strategies for accomplishing research priorities.
- 4.4 Conduct needed research related to environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
- 4.5 Educate the public on research findings.

5. Develop strategies to secure funding to achieve environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

- 5.1 Develop diverse strategies to secure funding to accomplish the *Plan's* goals and objectives.
- 5.2 Build the capacity of groups to obtain funding to educate for environmental literacy and sustainability.

Goal 1:

Build awareness of environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Communication

***Rationale:** Goal one strives for effective communication to help increase environmental literacy in Wisconsin and make available resources that help communities become more sustainable. It tries to provide a communication plan that all stakeholders can use whether at home, school, work, or play.*

Objective 1.1 Develop and implement communication methods for diverse audiences.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Develop key strategies for addressing audiences that are disengaged from environmental issues. Strategies may include (but are not limited to) community building, social networking and media, educating people on the impact of individual choices, or recognizing individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments for their actions.
- Promote environmental literacy and sustainability as a shared common value for individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.
- Identify audiences underserved in environmental literacy and sustainability. Identify barriers and develop strategies to address the barriers. Characteristics of typically underserved audiences may include urban, rural, low-income, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse.
- Support marketing strategies that are community and audience based and develop a common understanding of environmental literacy and sustainability. Example strategies: using diverse, high profile individuals that can influence particular audiences (for example businesses, youth), using public service announcements and social networking or marketing, developing consumer guides, or highlighting best practices and new initiatives.

Objective 1.2 Identify and promote best practices and successes in environmental literacy and sustainability.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Share successes via statewide networks and online:
 - Highlight specific examples of Wisconsin individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments that have successfully implemented sustainable practices. Demonstrate how they and others in Wisconsin benefit from their successes.
 - Recognize businesses and organizations that use effective strategies to develop sustainable, local communities and that consider ecological and social performances in addition to financial performance (i.e., meeting or surpassing the “triple bottom line”).

- Acknowledge accomplishments of those who are designing holistic solutions to environmental and social issues at the community, regional, or state level.
- Seek out successful models of networks and partnerships that transcend political boundaries (from, for example, other states or Native American Tribes) in order to foster policies and practices that support environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Objective 1.3 Develop and strengthen the capacity of community leaders to communicate the value of environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

Sample Action Ideas:

- The following action ideas are about communicating the value and benefits of environmental literacy and sustainability:
 - Help develop community leaders' own understanding of the value of environmental literacy and sustainability so they can better communicate these values to those in their community.
 - Support community leaders, especially those from sectors that are not traditionally associated with environmental education, in teaching individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.
 - Provide guidance to local individuals, organizations, and businesses on ways to effectively communicate with government officials, boards, and policy makers.
 - Support the work of state agencies, such as UW–Extension and the Department of Natural Resources, whose efforts are directly related to strengthening the capacity of community leaders.
- Help government officials and boards gain an understanding of the value and importance of environmentally literate and sustainable communities.
- Partner with the health community to encourage healthy, environmentally literate, and sustainable life-style choices.
- Strengthen statewide memberships in organizations and associations, such as Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, Wisconsin Green Schools Network, and 4H, that directly further environmentally literate and sustainable communities.

Goal 2:

Promote access to educational experiences needed to support environmental literacy and sustainable communities at home, work, school, and play.

Education

Rationale: The need to educate for environmental literacy and sustainability is important because it helps society understand and promote environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and healthy communities. Educational opportunities need to be available and accessible to everyone through both formal, school and non-formal, community-based sites.

Objective 2.1 Provide support to achieve the goals of Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools.

Sample Action Ideas:

- See the goals in the sidebar on page 11. The entire plan can be viewed at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/cal/environmental-ed.html>
- Create and encourage partnerships between school districts and the community that support environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

Objective 2.2 Help the formal education setting support education for environmental literacy and sustainability outside the scope of PK-12 schools.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Support the vision of advancing education for environmental literacy and sustainability in early childhood learning centers to encourage an appreciation for nature in the very young.
- Advance education for environmental literacy and sustainability in institutions of higher education. Sample strategies: integrating environmental literacy and sustainability into non-environmental courses, instilling sustainability as a part of campus culture, connecting post-secondary students and faculty with pre-kindergarten through high school schools and other community efforts.
- Support statewide leadership positions that directly advance education for environmental literacy and sustainability.

Objective 2.3 Encourage education for environmental literacy and sustainability outside of the formal educational setting.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Encourage sectors that are not traditionally associated with environmental education to support or provide environmental and sustainability educational programming within their communities.
- Support non-formal educators in helping people of all ages develop a clear understanding of the value of environmentally literate and sustainable communities.
- Ensure non-formal educators have opportunities for enhanced preparation and ongoing professional development related to education for environmentally literate and sustainable communities.
- Foster education for environmental literacy and sustainability at home, work, school, and play.

Home

- Promote environmentally literate and sustainable practices at home.
- Enhance school-based learning through family activities.
- Help faith communities provide information and foster community atmospheres that encourage environmental literacy and sustainability.

Work

- Partner businesses with schools in developing workers needed for a sustainable future.
- Develop environmental knowledge and sustainability skills relevant to the worksite.

School

- See Objectives 2.1, 2.2, and sidebar

Play

- Extend student learning through environmental and sustainability education during out-of-school experiences.
- Connect environmental knowledge and sustainable practices with recreational activities.
- Encourage community centers, civic organizations, and other community-based groups to incorporate environmental education programming into their offerings.
- Encourage children and families to get out and enjoy nature.
- Endorse policies that ensure children have access to outdoor experiences.

Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools goals embedded within 2.1:

Prepare students to understand, analyze, and address the major environmental and sustainability challenges facing Wisconsin, the United States, and the planet.

Provide field experiences as part of the regular school curriculum and create programs that contribute to healthy lifestyles through outdoor recreation and sound nutrition.

Create opportunities for enhanced preparation and ongoing professional development for teachers and school leaders by improving environmental and sustainability subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills in teaching about environmental and sustainability issues, including the use of interdisciplinary, field-based, and research-based learning, effective assessment practices, and innovative technology in the classroom.

Goal 3:

Build the capacity of individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments to advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Community Resources

Rationale: To connect individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments with the information and tools they need to take action, goal three encourages innovative partnerships that can help community members understand the social, political, economic, and environmental systems they live in and addresses how environmental literacy and sustainability can help sustain those systems.

Objective 3.1 Identify tools and resources that support environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Inventory current environmental literacy resources, including programs, internships, employment and professional development opportunities, and grants. Identify where gaps exist and bring attention to exemplary resources.
- Identify successful and innovative methods, tools, and resources to use as models.
- Identify ideas and solutions that make global issues relevant at a local level.
- Determine if there is existing legislation or policy that supports achieving the *Plan* vision. Identify where gaps exist and bring attention to exemplary policies.

Objective 3.2 Facilitate access to identified tools and resources.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Enhance EEinWisconsin.org, Wisconsin's central clearinghouse for environmental literacy, in order to expand its reach and usefulness to:
 - appeal to all sectors;
 - regionally connect resources and audiences;
 - provide simplified audience-specific links for home, work, school, and play; and
 - share the long-term benefits and values of sustainable practices and the cost-benefit of making environmentally-based and socially responsible decisions at home, work, school, and play.
- Foster the distribution and awareness of existing resources that are directly related to environmental literacy and sustainability through conferences, expos, and forums.
- Promote the use of existing resource centers that directly foster environmental literacy and sustainability, such as the Wisconsin Environmental Education Resource Library, Department of Natural Resources outreach tools, UW–Extension Environmental Resources Center, and other community or nature centers.

Objective 3.3 Facilitate innovative collaborations between diverse individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Facilitate partnerships between otherwise unconnected individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments, using values shared within various Wisconsin communities regarding environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
- Help providers of environmental literacy and sustainability education understand how they can most effectively reach new audiences through the use of common language, goals, priorities, and values.
- Encourage individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments to collaborate with government officials, boards, and other decision-makers to educate all audiences on the value and non-partisanship of environmental literacy and sustainable practices. Encourage these collaborators to include unique sectors (such as tourism, manufacturing, urban planners, and health) and to use inclusive language.
- Provide support to government officials, boards, and other decision-makers in developing policies and community infrastructure that support environmental literacy and sustainability (in sectors such as waste management, land use, and energy use).
- Support community leaders in educating individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments about the benefits of sustainable practices and how to develop and implement them.
- Partner with the business community to develop specific strategies that encourage and demonstrate the relevance of environmental literacy and sustainable practices within the business setting.

Goal 4:

Promote research and assessment to identify strategies that advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Research and Assessment

Rationale: Environmental education practices and programs are more efficient, effective, and relevant if grounded in findings from both educational and scientific research and evaluation. Goal four addresses the need to understand what research has already been done, what still needs to be accomplished, and how to best communicate information and data to the greater community.

Objective 4.1 Assess Wisconsin's progress toward environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Compile a list of indicators of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions needed to be environmentally literate and to implement sustainable practices at home, work, school, and play.
- Conduct a baseline assessment of Wisconsin's environmental literacy and sustainable practices using the identified indicators. Create a plan for conducting follow-up assessments in the future.
- Create community report cards to measure environmental literacy and sustainability. Create self-assessment tools that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of environmental and sustainability programs and educators.
- Share successful assessment tools for unique audiences found at home, work, school, and play via statewide networks and online.
- Partner with organizations, businesses, school systems, and governments to integrate environmental literacy and sustainability assessments into evaluations they currently use.
- Use assessments of environmental literacy and report cards of progress in environmental literacy to report on the effectiveness of current programming and resources at a statewide level.

Objective 4.2 Inventory and connect existing research.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Identify and organize research that is already done or being done regarding environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
- Ensure all Wisconsin-specific research is included in Wisconsin Environmental Education Research Database (WEERD).
- Seek out existing research projects being conducted within other potentially relevant disciplines (for example health, psychology, agriculture, conservation) and connect or add environmental literacy or sustainability components.
- Support the work of state agencies, such as UW-Extension, that evaluate existing research and help make connections between researchers and the community.
- Conduct a gap analysis to determine where further research is needed.

Objective 4.3 Identifying strategies for accomplishing identified research priorities.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Identify and inventory specific tools that can be used to best gather research data pertaining to environmental literacy and sustainable practices. In seeking the best research tools, special consideration should be made for tools that use: Wisconsin-specific data, current and efficient technology, already existing resources, non-partisanship, “citizen scientist” or student researchers, collaboration, and incentives for funding.
- Investigate potential partnerships with sectors not traditionally associated with environmental education (for example business, industry, and tourism) to cultivate funding opportunities for environmental literacy or sustainability research.
- Communicate with government officials, boards, and other decision-makers to determine methods, tools, and strategies that can be used by local and state governments to support research priorities.

Objective 4.4 Conduct needed research related to environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Partner with universities, colleges, and other research institutes to create and share an inventory of needed research topics. Topics should be based on the gap analysis (objective 4.2).
- Encourage researchers to conduct research related to environmental literacy and sustainability topics identified in gap analysis (objective 4.2) as missing, lacking, or out of date. Sample topics may include: current status of environmental literacy; benefits of environmental literacy and sustainable practices; people’s behavior changes as a result of education for environmental literacy and sustainability; impacts of the *Plan* vision on education; attitudes and behaviors and their origin as they relate to the *Plan* vision; the role of policy or legislation in achieving the *Plan* vision; funding needs to support the *Plan* vision; how to work with communities in achieving the *Plan* vision (for example how to build collaboration or how to address differing world views and cultures).

Objective 4.5 Educate the public on research findings.

Sample Action Ideas:

- The following action ideas are about research regarding environmental literacy and sustainability.
 - Provide easy access to research findings via statewide networks and online.
 - Devise the best way to communicate research findings and their interpretations to specific audiences.
 - Promote and publicize research findings to all audiences, such as government officials, the media, schools and school administrators, businesses, parents, and other community leaders.
 - Use research and assessment to demonstrate a need for additional environmental literacy and sustainability funding at the local, state, and federal levels.
 - Increase awareness and use of Wisconsin Environmental Education Research Database (WEERD).

Funding

Rationale: Goal five addresses the need for financial strategies and partnerships that provide access to a diverse set of funding sources in order to implement plans that advance environmental literacy and sustainability across all sectors of Wisconsin society.

Goal 5:

Develop strategies to secure funding to achieve environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Objective 5.1 Develop diverse strategies to secure funding to accomplish the *Plan's* goals and objectives.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Identify funding levels needed to accomplish the *Plan's* goals and objectives.
- Develop and share a diverse set of tools and strategies for raising funds to support the *Plan* vision. Tools and strategies should support long-term financial stability. Examples may include: social media and online mechanisms, fundraising events or products, secured revenue streams from foundations or state monies, memberships, grants, and corporate sponsorships.

Objective 5.2 Build the capacity of groups to obtain funding to educate for environmental literacy and sustainability.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Connect individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments that have shared values concerning environmental literacy and sustainability and identify potential strategic funding partnerships.
- Foster partnerships between environmental education centers and businesses or civic organizations to fund local environmental and sustainability education programs and projects.
- Encourage partnerships with sectors not traditionally associated with environmental education (for example tourism, agriculture, media, faith) that can help garner funds for environmental literacy and sustainability.
- Establish collaborative efforts to seek funding and meet mutual funding needs. Use collaborative coalitions to leverage more funding from regional, national, or global sources and to minimize competition for funds.
- Disperse information on successful funding tools, best practices, strategic funding partnerships, and collaborative funding coalitions via statewide networks and online.
- Compile and share research and assessments that justify the need for funding for education for environmental literacy and sustainability at local, state, and federal levels.
- Communicate to potential funders how fostering environmental literacy and sustainability can directly support their mission and benefit business and the community.
- Inform government officials, boards, and other decision-makers on the need and importance of funding for environmental literacy and sustainability.