New England Environmental Education Alliance Recommended Practices:
A Handbook for State Organizations

First Edition

Compiled from NE State EE Organization Leaders' Retreat
November, 2003

Compiled and edited by: Stephanie Bongiovanni and Mary Moulton

Editorial review by: Adrian Ayson, Diane Bartlett and Jim Lafley

CONTRIBUTORS:

Connecticut Outdoor and Environmental Education Association (COEEA)
        Kim Benton
        Brook Coffee
        Paula Coughlin
        Mary Moulton
        Christopher Shepard

Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA)
        Jim Chandler
        Drew Dumsch
        Dot Lamson
        Pat Maloney
        Christine Smith
        Kara Wooldrik

Massachusetts Environmental Education Society (MEES)
        Adrian Ayson
        Mary Beers
        Mike Dattilio
        Kathy Davis
        Stacey Hill-Niamble
        Pam Landry
        Kim Noyes
        Kathy Richards
        Kris Scopinich
        Jay Walsh

New Hampshire Environmental Educators (NHEE)
        Susan Cox
        Scott Fitzpatrick
        David Moon
        Jess Talbot
        Amy Yeakel

Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RIEEA)
        Stephanie Bongiovanni

Vermont State-Wide Environmental Education Programs (VT SWEEP)
        Annie Guion
        Nancy Notterman
        Marcia Whitney
        Lidie Whittier Robbins

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The New England Environmental Education Alliance (NEEEA) was established by the six state environmental education organizations to provide regional support and professional development for environmental educators. It holds an annual conference, rotating through the six New England states, hosted in partnership with that state's environmental education (EE) association. NEEEA also offers professional development workshops. These workshops are offered in alternate years for either the leaders of the state EE organizations or EE administrators.

This publication is the product of the State Leadership Retreat held in November 2003. It is an attempt to document the discussion of the challenges, strategies and successes of managing our statewide organizations. The nine topics of discussion were generated by the state associations and the NEEEA board. Future workshops will include other topics as well as further development of these areas.

SECTION 1: LEGAL ISSUES

Rationale:

Standing as a legal entity allows an organization to conduct business, have bank accounts and make valid contracts for services with institutions, caterers and other service providers. Acquiring legal status involves registering with your state. The organization must have a formal structure (Constitution and By-Laws) and may need to be incorporated. Without such legal standing, Board Members may be held personally liable for contracts, debts and damages incurred.

Recommendations:

Each organization should be a legal entity, duly incorporated and registered with the appropriate agency(s) in the state it serves. Each state has its own annual reporting requirements and fees to maintain legal status. Legal standing requires a statement of purpose – the reason for being. It makes the organization real and provides Board Members some level of protection from law suits.
Each organization must decide for itself the value of a 501(c)(3) ruling from the IRS. Such a ruling does give an organization and its members benefits, allows for tax deductible donations and assures members that no one is personally profiting from their membership fee.

1:1   INCORPORATION & NON-PROFIT STATUS

This is may be a complicated issue and a best practice is to seek legal advice in your state if your organization is not already a legal entity. You may be able to get this advice donated. When you register with the state, you will get a Federal Employee Identification Number (FEIN or EIN).

1:1A   INCORPORATION

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: 　　Be legally incorporated in your state. 　　Maintain annual filings and know to what state and federal offices you must report. 　　Have a system in place to ensure legal requirements are met annually. 　　Establish an archive for records and them keep in a safe place. 　　Create Board notebooks noting who is responsible for the required filings and an annual calendar of filing deadlines. 　　Be prompt about filing address changes when Officers change. 　　Keep By-Laws separate from Incorporation Declaration for ease of revision. 　　Keep Board information current with state, federal, and banking offices (address and position changes). 　　Budget for filing fees. Advantages: 　　Gives Board Members liability protection – state stands with you in a law suit. 　　　　　　　　　-cont.- 　　First step to being non-profit.	Avoid: 　　Ignoring the legal issues. Having only one person knowing what needs to be reported and to whom. Using personal SSNs for bank accounts.

Provides legal standing.	

1:1B   NON-PROFIT

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: 　　　Review and understand advocacy limits related to your non-profit status. This information can be found at the IRS website (www.irs.gov). (There are many kinds of non-profit designations. For example, an organization that plans on doing a lot of lobbying may be a 501(c)(4) and contributions would not be tax-deductible.) Advantages: 　　　A non-profit 501(c)(3) organization may be eligible for certain grants and donations, exempt from income or sales taxes and gifts may be tax-deductible, depending on non-profit status. (It may require considerable paper work and filings.)	Disadvantages: Requires considerable work and filings, so consider if you want to go this route.

1:2   ORGANIZATIONAL LIABILITY

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: 　　　Have event insurance. If you have property or facilities, you should have coverage for these as well. 　　　Have Directors and Officers (Board) insurance. If you are incorporated and a volunteer Board, you may be reasonably covered by your incorporation in case of a lawsuit. Review this policy every few years.	Disadvantages: 　　　Cost can be prohibitive so explore options for coverage.

1:3   BY-LAWS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: 　　　Schedule a regular review of By-Laws. A good time to do it is when new Board Members come on. 　　　Review annually for compliance, and every few years for a more comprehensive look at By-Laws. 　　　　　　　　　　　-cont.- Make sure your Board understands the By-Laws and the	Avoid: 　　　Setting a specific date for the annual meeting . (Note: Your state may require that your annual meeting be held within a certain timeframe relative to your fiscal year.)

process for making changes. In some states, changes to By-Laws need to be part of annual filings with the state agencies and offices. Equal Opportunity statements can be in your By-Laws. If your By-Laws are old, you may want to seek legal advice. Make sure Board Members understand the difference between By-Laws and policy.	

1:4 A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

> ➢ Single insurance coverage for NEEEA and all the state organizations?
> ➢ NEEEA to welcome new leaders and help keep them aware of important issues.
> ➢ Put manual up as PDF on website.
> ➢ List links to NAAEE website to view examples of documents.
> ➢ NEEEA might provide a single safe place for archives.
> ➢ NEEEA might someday have a staff person who manages all the paperwork for the states that want this service.

<u>SECTION 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING</u>

Rationale:
Strategic planning focuses the efforts of the organization on a shared vision. A vibrant plan creates energy to accomplish specific goals that support the purpose of the organization. It gets everyone working to accomplish real tasks and a way to see how their work fits into a larger plan.

Recommendations:
Each organization should have an active strategic plan. The plan should be refreshed every five years, with annual goals reviewed each year by its Board.   It may need to contain reminders about the nitty gritty of organization management.

2:1   PLANNING TO PLAN – HOW AND WHY

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
 	
    Bring expertise from outside our field in to define the realities we need to plan for, e.g. school superintendents, bank presidents, municipal planners.
    Have a clear idea of pertinent factors influencing your organization.
    Obtain buy-in for planning. (Example: NH board survey)
    Create a forum where all voices can be heard.
    Maintain clear communication.
    Ensure the planning environment accepts differing perspectives.
    Use an outside facilitator.
    Make sure participants are aware of the needs that precipitate planning.
    Establish a clear decision making process.
    Define how planning process will be communicated.
    Communicate the particular process to stakeholders.
    Ground-truth ideas before the plan is completed.
    Include a user-friendly executive summary.
    Create supportive environment: food, adequate time, etc.
 	
Advantages:
 	
    Establishes a clearer picture of multiple political factors influencing our field.
    Sets goals and objectives for the organization (Board) to work towards.
	Avoid:
	
	    A small committee planning in isolation.
	    Presenting finished project to members without interim communication.
	    Making assumptions.
	    Burning out active members with a lengthy and complicated process.

2:2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Annual plan of work is based on the strategic plan.
    Implement the plan!
    Revisit the plan regularly.
    Annual plan should be an annual agenda item.
    Allocate resources efficiently.
    Employ marketing strategies.
    Assign leadership.
    Define clear outcomes – evidence of accomplished tasks.
    Filter ideas for new work against the plan: plan is sounding board.
    Establish clear timelines.
    Integrate new ideas into current practices.
    Celebrate successes.
	Avoid:
	    Creating a strategic plan that is too big to affect annual work plan.
	    Spending too much time on strategic planning at the expense of regular work.

2:3 A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

➢ Peer review of plans would be helpful.
➢ Should we collaborate among states?
➢ Should we get states in synch with each other so that all six are planning during the same year?
➢ It would be good to have a N.E. strategic planning resource list with funding sources, methods, consultants, etc.
➢ While the practices above are useful, don't let them overwhelm and slow the process. Just do it.
➢ Are trends such as internet connectivity, federal legislative priorities, social changes threatening the relevance of professional associations?

SECTION 3: MEMBERSHIP

Rationale:
The state EE organizations are membership organizations and should maintain an effective membership strategy. Members are the lifeblood of the organization and drive programming and planning. They provide financial support and are a source of Board Members, committee members and program presenters.

Recommendations:
A strong membership plan includes database, tracking, and mailing systems that are efficient and effective. In addition, worthwhile membership benefits will retain members and attract new members.

3:1   INCREASING DIVERSITY

Diversity includes: individuals and organizations; cultures**;** formal and non-formal educators; students and professors; urban and rural educators; minorities; from all around the state; both men and women; from a variety of organizations involved in environmental education.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Personal contacts and asks are the most effective.
    Benefits offered should attract members.
    Elevator speech – be ready at any time to sell the organization – have talking points (success stories and anecdotes) ready.
    Board Members should all be recruiters.
    Identify target groups of potential members and recruit them where they work or congregate. (ex. colleges and universities who interact with pre-service teachers)
    Know your audience. Respect different cultures/groups by dressing and speaking appropriately.
    Be enthusiastic.
    Offer automatic membership through programming.
    Provide membership discount for events.
    Targeted programming to reach out to specific audiences.
    Get the word out about programs to everyone.
    Reach out through other organizations' events. (science teachers, workshops, etc.)
    Share lists or membership with other organizations.
    Co-sponsor events – collaborate or partner with other groups when possible.
Have membership brochures. It's an easy contact. Hand out the brochure in person and say, "Call me".
    Address fears and concerns of teachers.
    Publicize events.
    Reach out to non-science teachers.
    Distribute brochures through organization members.
                   -cont.-
    Membership sections by interest. [CT has sections for
	Avoid:
	    Membership through programming should not be the only way to join.
	    Board Members only talking to others they already know. (Being seen as cliquey.)
	    Out-of-date membership information.
	
	Disadvantages:
	    May be hard to connect with new members if they are an obvious minority in your organization.
	    It's hard to make the time to recruit new members with everything else that's to be done.
	    Not everyone is comfortable talking to strangers.

non-formal educators; youth group leaders; formal {K-12} educators] Membership by geography. (Divide by county or region.) Offer a diversity of programming – keep up with current issues. Broaden stereotypical ideas of what EE is and who is an environmental educator. Be professional.

3:2   TRACKING MEMBERS -- DATABASE

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Use easy to share software. (Excel; Access; Filemaker)
    Provide training for person (people) who does it. (Rent a computer room.)
    Have a workshop day to train <u>many</u> people in managing database.
    Up-date the database regularly.
    Collaborate with another organization who will maintain database. (ex. NH PLT; NEEEA MITS)
    Let members know this (database management) is an opportunity to be involved and contribute.
    Assign a liaison person to feed information to the database person or organization.
    Use email.
    Track members' email addresses.
    Establish a list-serve.
	Avoid:
	    Don't have just one person responsible.
	    Avoid database incompatibility if sharing information with others.
	
	Disadvantages:
	    It's hard to find someone to do it.

3:3 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: Evaluate member benefits. Ask: are we meeting needs of members with our programs and benefits? Conduct a member survey. To expand membership, survey people outside of membership who you want to reach. Use personal contact or phone calls. (Not a paper survey. It's a turn-off) Create Section Chairs to address different audiences – by topic or region. (i.e. elementary teachers or county) Send reminder notices or postcards to say, "We miss you" to non-renewing members. Print expiration date on mailing label. Publish timely newsletters. Welcome new members in newsletter. Host annual meetings. Remember, networking is a primary reason to join professional associations Create opportunities for personal connections. Have several membership meetings a year. Renew members at one time each year. Offer programs throughout the year free to members but non-members pay. Keep programming fresh and current. Include membership fee in annual meeting or conference fee. Be professional in what you do – offer quality experiences and events. Get other educators to see they are or can be environmental educators. Inspire and enrich members through contacts and networking.	Avoid: Don't provide benefits to people who are not members or have not renewed. Avoid allowing folks to fall through the cracks. Don't do paper surveys to non-members. Avoid negative stereotypes of dress and behavior. Don't be sloppy. Disadvantages: Not enough time or manpower to conduct surveys.

3:4 A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

- ➢ Share success stories across states.
- ➢ NEEEA fashion consultants.
- ➢ Register on-line with a credit card.
- ➢ Paperless recruitment.
- ➢ MITS database. (one central database for all states-- ME, MA, RI interested)
- ➢ Uniformity – database compatibility throughout New England.
- ➢ Make connections across state lines for positions. (Treasurer. Secretary. Database)
- ➢ Database training for state organizations.

<u>SECTION 4: BOARD DEVELOPMENT</u>

Rationale:
A strong Board is vital to a healthy organization. Strong Boards have members willing to do the work of the organization. Some Board turn-over is healthy, but continuity and institutional knowledge need a way to be preserved and protected.

Recommendations:
Each organization should establish procedures for inviting new members onto the Board and removing non-functioning members from the Board

4:1   GETTING BOARD MEMBERS:

Diversity on the state boards is a primary concern across New England. Diversity can be defined as maximum variety with respect to cultural, educational, skill, gender, ethnic, formal and non-formal educators, non-profit, government and geographic parameters.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    MEES used a grid system to determine beforehand categories that needed to be filled. (Mike Dattilio-MEES)
    Another helpful tool was MEES' recruitment letter. (Pam Landry)
    Ask a personal contact to join the board.
    CT-To ensure geographic diversity they have county representatives on the COEEA Board.
    NH- had success with a board membership survey. (Amy Yeakel)
    Develop mentorships.
    Communicate to members what the board is doing – e.g. a Board Corner section in the newsletter highlighting projects, goals, how members can help, etc.
    Host events smaller than an annual conference to facilitate more communication and networking within the state.
    Increase board capacity by involving or delegating tasks to members who are not Board Members.
    Collaborating with other organizations.
    Getting newsletters out on time.
    Conduct a member survey (NH).
	Avoid:
	    Taking any warm body.
	
	Recruiting a person solely for who they are or what category they are from instead of what they can contribute to the board.

4:2   **TRAINING** BOARD MEMBERS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: Team-building should be on-going with the goals of: - developing a sense of achievement through a quick success project. - having a project focus (ie. accomplishing something). - celebrating achievements. - holding an annual board retreat in the spring at new Board Members' first meeting. - hosting round tables, outside speakers or other professional development opportunities (i.e. NEEEA State Board Retreat). Maintain a Board Manual, including job descriptions Include strategic plan information in new board member orientation. Give new Board Members a Welcome Packet. (NH – Amy Yeakel) Develop a behavior agreement for meetings and involvement. (Mike Dattilio – MEES) Balance work and fun. Share responsibilities by: - having mentorships (ie. experienced conference registration person works alongside new member to both train and share the workload). - spreading the workload into do-able chunks is important. (MEES Mike Dattilio's Enterprise Model may be helpful.)	Avoid: Lack of sense of community or team-building while in training. A feeling of isolation among members who are in training.

4:3   MAINTAINING ENGAGED BOARD MEMBERS

General goals include motivation and increasing attendance at meetings. No one serves on a board because they have to. They do it because they want to.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
 	
    Set clear expectations from the beginning:
        o outline them in a formal welcome letter (MEES).
        o reiterate expectations verbally at the kick-off meeting with new Board Members.
    Send out agendas before state board meeting with action items attached to names for accountability and as a reminder.
    Create term limits.
    Recycle old Board Members after a significant break in service.
    Have a President Elect position to help ensure a smooth leadership transition.
    Maintain structural continuity in meeting practices, including consistent and timely minutes, agendas, budget reports, reminders and meeting dates.
    Maintain an energetic board by encouraging non-contributing members to leave and make room for fresh energy through term limits.
    Create a balance of work and fun.
 	
Examples of what others do:
    Each state varied with respect to meeting times, dates, locations and content.
    RI meets 2nd Tuesday every month, same location.
    MEES meets 2nd Tuesday every month, same location, pizza.
    CT meets 1st Tuesday every even month from 7-9, location changes.
    NH meets 1st Wednesday from 6:30 – 8:30 (except Jan. & July), same location.
    Maine meets bimonthly and rotates locations.
	Avoid:
	
	    Burnout.
	    Unmotivated Board Members.
	    Long or unstructured/unfocused meetings.
	    Board Members for life.
	    Last minute reminders
	    One meeting per year
	    Stepping outside of job descriptions.

4:4   A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

Implementing many of the best practices would increase a sense of accomplishment on the state boards because more would be accomplished due to increased efficiency and motivation. This would also increase the professionalism of the board. Sharing best practices through this manual as well as a commitment to update the information is important. Sharing newsletters between states needs to be facilitated by NEEEA. NOTE: see Communication, pp 19 - 22

SECTION 5: AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Rationale:
Acknowledging the talents, accomplishments, and strengths of individual people and programs in the EE field reinforces the value of our profession. Both the state EE organization as well as the recipients benefit from this practice. The nomination and award process can serve as an opportunity to involve and inspire members, can be a source of publicity for the state EE organization, and highlights current work in the field.

Recommendations:
Each organization should consider a process for awards and recognition.
Overall there was a consensus that, when thoughtfully done, awards were a good thing.
There was a range of practices among states from not giving awards to fairly elaborate processes.

5:1   WHO SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED?

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: 　　Have clear categories of awards [i.e. formal educator, informal educator, administrator, service (Board Member), secondary teacher, elementary teacher, college or university faculty, special awards (such as a founders of the organization]. 　　You will truly honor the best practitioners if both members and non-member are eligible. 　　Must be a member to nominate someone. 　　Ask school principals to nominate. 　　Share call for nominees with other states. 　　Allow self nomination. 　　Consider giving school administrators free memberships. Advantages: 　　Giving an award to a non-member gains publicity.	Avoid: 　　Nominating active Board Members except for a service award. Perceived as a conflict of interest. Giving away too many memberships if the budget is tight. Disadvantage: 　　Difficult to choose between veteran vs. up and coming educator.

5:2   HOW TO DECIDE AND HOW TO PRESENT AWARDS

5:2A   CRITERIA

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: 　　Have clearly defined criteria for each award. Be specific yet simple. (See NEEEA nomination form for an example) 　　Share your criteria with other states. 　　Make the criteria reflect the award. 　　Remove personal bias with a clear, objective process. 　　Establish a rating system where there must be at least a minimum number of points or you don't award at all.	Avoid: 　　Picking someone for the sake of having a winner.

5:2B   NOMINATING PROCESS/FORMS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Should be rigorous without overwhelming.
    Send out call for nominations electronically.
    Include a copy in your newsletter.
    Mail to school principals.
    Make it part of secretary's job description to archive award recipients.
    Create an awards committee notebook to be passed along each year.
    Post award recipients on website.
	Avoid:
	    Cumbersome nomination requirements.

5:2C   WHO DECIDES

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Award recipients of last year become part of the committee for the following year, with a board member as chair.
    Respect privacy, confidentiality of nominees.
    Consider sending list of previous winners with the nomination forms to avoid duplicate or repeat nominations.
	Avoid:
	    Single person deciding.
	    Repeated recipients.

5:2D   CEREMONY

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Hold ceremony at annual conference, which will provide a big audience.
    Create press releases and submit to local news media.
    Have the nominator present the award to the recipient.
    Have a statewide presentation at another event.
    Invite award recipient's co-workers and family.
	Avoid:
	    Lengthy speeches.
	    Absence of award winner.
	    Misspelled and mispronounced names.

5:3   WHY HAVE AWARDS?

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Advantages:
     To honor good work in our profession.
     It is good publicity for the organization and the
     profession.
     Inspiration for others and validation for their work..
     Makes winners feel good.
     Organization gives value to the contributions of others.
     Raises the visibility and credibility of the state
     organization.
	Disadvantages:
	     Possible feelings of
	     animosity within work
	     place.
	     There may be a perception
	     of favoritism or back room
	     politics.
	     It takes time and money.
	     away from other things.
	     Jealousy.

5:4   WHAT SHOULD BE AWARDED?

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
     Collaborate with corporations who have environmental
     interests to fund awards.
     Actual award can include:
          o   money.
          o   plaque or certificate.
          o   charitable donation.
          o   gift certificate.
          o   membership.
          o   free meal.
          o   free attendance at the award event.
	Avoid:
	     Getting in too deep with
	     cost, effort and time.
	     Large freebies to awardee's
	     family and friends.

5:5   A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

➢ Coordination of state and NEEEA awards.
➢ Have state award recipients automatically nominated for the next round of NEEEA awards.

SECTION 6: COMMUNICATIONS

Rationale:
Communication involves many facets. Internal communication within an organization allows the Board to share information with members and members to be heard by the Board. It can also allow members to get information from each other. External communication spreads information about the organization to the public and interested parties outside of the membership through public relations or publicity. Networking is a primary benefit of any professional association.

Recommendations:
Each organization should establish a method to communicate regularly with its membership, and, in turn, have a way for members to share and communicate with the Board and other members. This sharing of information should support the purpose of the organization and help move the organization toward its goals.

6:1A NEWSLETTERS
Current Newsletters Practices by Each State (as of November 2003):
CT: Quarterly. One editor, each county representative on the Board recruits a contributor.
ME: Quarterly, but in practice 2 or 3x/yr. One editor has been paid a stipend in the past, but not now. Contemplating paying a stipend again. Contemplating having an electronic newsletter.
VT: Quarterly. One editor. One week's worth of time. Person paid for layout.
MA: Quarterly. Newsletter committee: 6 people; chair is the editor. One person is the lead for each one. Lead person changes each time. One person on the committee does layout each time. Topics are tied to conference theme.
NH: Quarterly. One person produces the newsletter. Converted from paper to e-newsletter to save time.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Newsletter can include specific parts/sections such as:
  o letter from president.
  o board corner.
  o teacher interest.
  o local news.
  o calendar of up-coming EE events.
  o best practices.
  o activity.
  o organizational spotlight.
  o specific questions and responses.
  o book reviews/resource corner.
  o photographs.
    Sharing newsletter state to state by email.
    Consider stipend to editor and/or layout manager.
    Share editor responsibilities through:
  o committees.
  o rotating lead person on each edition.
  o dividing layout/mailing duties.
    Themed articles relate to annual conference Theme.
-cont.-
	Avoid:
	    Calendar untimeliness.
	    One person's responsibility (burn-out).
	    Overlap with other organizations' newsletters.
	
	A lot of pages in each issue as it
	
	    gets expensive to mail and bulky to assemble.

Mentor hand off from one editor to another. Plan ahead to give time to recruit contributors.	

6:1B INCREASING NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTORS TO NEWSLETTERS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Share/divide contribution responsibility. Have each Board Member solicit one article.
    Get contributions from conference presenters.
    Approach personal contacts outside organization.
    Ask award recipients to contribute article.
    Use contributions from other organizations' newsletters.
    Look for ideas in other newsletters.
    Rotate lead person on each edition.
    Solicit themed articles.
    Relate theme of newsletter to annual conference theme.
    Plan ahead to give time to recruit contributors.
	Avoid:
	    Contributors only recruited by one person.

6:1C ELECTRONIC OR PRINTED NEWSLETTER?

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Give members a choice of print or email.
    Offer brief articles or titles with links to more in-depth articles.
    Article link should be contained in the body of email.
    Set up links so reader can click on the article to read it in full.
    Provide a way for recipients to unsubscribe.
 	
Advantages:
    Saves time, money and resources (postage, printing, paper).
    Information is distributed quickly so it remains timely.
	Avoid:
	    Out of date email address database.
	
	Disadvantages:
	    Not eye catching – members may not read.
	    Need access to Frontpage, Pagemaker, or other computer program for newsletters.
	    Not sure members receive/open/read. Some people do not like to read on computer. Some just do not open or cannot open attachments.
	    Members need email access.
	
	    -cont.-
	    Address updates (database

	management) can be time consuming and overwhelming if not done on a regular basis. May not have technical expertise to do a good job with an electronic format

6:2   LIST SERVES

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: Organization needs to ask itself: o What is the purposeof having a list serve? o Does it make sense? o Will it meet our needs? Have a moderator/webmaster to sift out junk submissions. Use it as a supplement for a quality newsletter to post upcoming events, reminders, job postings and state happenings. Use the list serve to invite subscribers to view the newsletter at your website. Use existing list-serves (ex.: NEEEA) instead of starting your own. Use the list serve to spread grant information. Make sure content is valuable and piques interest. Advantages: Can cut down on paper use.	Disadvantages: Technical difficulties. May be active at first, then dies out. Not everyone in organization will want to be on it. Can't count on reaching everyone.

6:3   WEBSITES

Current New England EE organization websites:

Maine: meeassociation.org

Massachusetts: massmees.org

Vermont: vermontsweep.org, a volunteer set it up, but person is paid to maintain

NH: has a page on the NEEEA website (neeea.org), not a stand alone site.

COEEA and **RIEEA**: no sites yet.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
 	
    Keep site or page current. Update regularly.
    Post timely content in pdf format. If you provide a click-on link you can switch content for easy updates rather than integrating new information into the website.
    VT: pays someone within organization to set up and maintain (few hours / month).
    Should look professional to make a good-first impression.
    Websites can be a way for new people to you're your organization.
    Include membership application in your website.
    Use the website in conjunction with a list-serve or newsletter for current members.
    Plan how to manage incoming information.
 	
Must have committed webmaster or the site could discourage
     visitors.
	Avoid:
	    Outdated information.
	
	Disadvantages:
	    Time factor to maintain.
	    May need money to pay someone.
	    May need pdf software.

6:6   A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

Practical ideas to implement now:
- Share newsletter among editors/coordinators
- Share state Board Meeting minutes with all other state Board Presidents

For the future:
- Training by NEEEA. E-training on such topics as website creation and management; database issues.
- Sharing websites, newsletters, etc.
- Sorting out best fit for organization: use one, two, or all three: list-serve, e-newsletter and website. Need to determine what is most effective for each organization with its available resources.
- State-level training to members re: list-serve use, etc.

SECTION 7: PROGRAMS

Rationale:
Each organization should recognize that programs are a basic membership benefit. As a membership benefit, programs can help fulfill a state organization's mission. They can also generate income, attract potential members, provide opportunities for professional development, and support EE in the state.

7:1   CONTENT OF PROGRAMS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Do a needs assessment using:
      o a survey, comment card, etc.
  o hand forms out after conferences.
      o use incentives: give participants benefits (ex.: food, gift certificates) if they fill out the survey.
    Solicit the best presenters.
    Select specific topic areas that engage people.
    Get references for presenters and keynotes.
    Include fun elements in your programming.
    Program offerings can include:
    o quarterly round tables for members.
    o annual meetings.
    o conferences.
    o workshops.
    o networking socials.
    Take advantage of current trends (trends for themes as well as trends for pedagogy). – e.g. geo-cache, service learning, inquiry-based learning.
    Take a topic that is trendy and weave the environmental piece into it.
    Link EE to issues affecting individual's personal life and community (taking action).
    Have state Board take a purposeful lead to focus on offering quality workshops.
    Content should:
    o sharpen or add to skills of practitioners.
    o meet the needs of different levels of environmental educators.
    o encourage diversity.
    Programs offered should support the organization's mission and vision.
	Avoid:
	    Trends that are not applicable.
	    Taking just any workshops or presenters.

7:2   LOGISTICS OF PROGRAMS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Draw other people in who are interested in organization to help with Board projects.
    Draw from members.
    Draw from people who attended conference to include new faces.
    Pay attention to student fees and pre-service teachers.
    Work with teachers' colleges and school administrators to get student teachers to attend. Have a person on board who focuses on attracting this audience.
    Keep with a consistent site for conferences or regular meetings to save time and money. No site visit necessary and the directions and rooms will be familiar.
    Ask members about ideal dates, times, site, etc.
    (NH offers late afternoon/evening to pull in teachers/new audience. Offered dinner instead of lunch.)
    Plan at least one overall meeting for the entire state organization.
    Offering evening activities for networking, sharing of ideas, etc.
	Avoid:
	    Waive fee for presenters. (MEES waives lead facilitator, but not co-facilitators.)
	    Conflicting dates with other conferences, etc.
	    Dates that do not appeal to the majority of your membership (i.e., in some organizations, the membership may not come out on a weekend for a conference, in others, they may not like weekdays).
	    Do not send people away with a giant bag of plastic junk.

7:2A ASIDE BRAINSTORM

- ➢ Is it bad to offer free programs? Does price reflect quality to the market?
    - People have found it works both ways.
- ➢ Any tricks to get people to register in a timely fashion?
    - Should there be a discount for early registrants?
    - Should the discount be bigger?

7:3   BUILDING MEMBERSHIPS THROUGH PROGRAMS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Include membership fee in registration fee.
    Offer social events on a county or regional level.
    Offer membership benefits that connect to program discounts or members only events.
    Expand content of programming to expand membership.
 	
Advantages:
    Quality content can bring in new members.
	Avoid:
	    Do not promise what you cannot do.
	    Don't do things that are contrary to your mission to build memberships.

7:4   PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROGRAMMING

(See also Collaborations, Section 8.)

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Use EE as a local assessment strategy by partnering with school superintendents, etc.
    UNH received money to partner with NHEE to host sessions and to tell members about the sessions. UNH used the state association name to gain credibility for the project.
 	
Advantages:
    Positions our field (EE) as the best way to assess/evaluate knowledge. E.g. students learn concepts in school and put it to use in the field. The field work becomes an evaluation tool. (Keep records through the use of portfolios, etc.)
	Avoid:
	    Partnerships for the sake of partnerships
	    Always be true to your mission: partner with organizations that fit into your goals.

7:5   A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

- State organizations:
  - ✓ guide programs within state.
  - ✓ Operate as a clearinghouse for statewide EE.
- Provide a clearinghouse in New England for teachings for pedagogy, methods, etc.
- Create a list of resources of good facilitators and speakers.
- Compile a resource list for diverse audiences (teachers, youth groups, corporations).
- Draw from experts outside of our field to bring new skills. E.g. administrator retreat last year on community based social marketing and stress reduction.

SECTION 8: COLLABORATIONS

Rationale:

As statewide organizations, we form collaborations in order to give the EE community a larger voice. When developed through partnerships, programs and activities have greater impact and reach a larger audience. There are several practical reasons for working in collaboration. First, granting foundations look favorably upon collaborations, as they perceive that the partner organizations are looking to share resources rather than compete for them, are striving toward common goals, and are reducing repetitiveness in programming. Second, EE organizations can form partnerships in order to share information, prevent duplication of activities, and take on projects requiring the expertise and resources of more than one organization. Finally, through collaborations, the partner organizations may receive reciprocal benefits, such as discounts on conferences, programs, and site visits.

Recommendations:

Each state organization should explore partnering with other organizations to increase visibility and effectiveness, while keeping their own mission and goals in mind.

Definition of collaboration: partnership where everyone wins.

State Examples:

CT: COEEA has an appointed position that sits on the State Math and Science and Technology Leadership Council.

ME: MEEA working with Department of Education and the University of Southern Maine to create an Assessment Course

NH: Project Learning Tree office manages NHEE database

8:1   LOOKING BEYOND EE: NON-EE PARTNERS -- ETHICS AND MISSION

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Get to know your partner.
    Be open to new possibilities.
    Be clear on intention of collaboration.
    Re-evaluate vocabulary and transform "we" and "them" to "us".
    Find commonality and shared purpose.
    Clarify respective roles and expectations of outcomes.
    Evaluate and conduct post-assessments.
    Have a clear policy about partnership, especially with a controversial partner so everyone understands the relationship (especially members of both groups).
    Have a good exit strategy, just in case.
    Communicate openly among all partners.
	Avoid:
	    Conflicting organizational ethics and/or missions.
	    Viewing collaboration from the perspective of what *you* get. Remember, everyone needs to benefit and will learn from each other.
	    Partnership merely for a name or a signature on a proposal.
	    Discounting potential partners on first appearance.

8:**2** INCREASE IMPACTS AND CREATE SYNERGY

State Examples:
MA: MEES used a National Science Foundation grant to collaborate with the State Department of Education in order to have a regional effect.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: Build capacity: connect with an organization that has staff, skills or facilities. Work together to obtain additional funding that is usually marked for larger projects Honest needs assessment by each state board before engaging in collaboration for collaborations sake. Stay involved in process after agreement is reached.	Avoid: Not assessing the needs of each partner honestly.

8:3 INCENTIVE DISCOUNTS AND BENEFITS

State Examples:

Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA): reduced entrance fee at centers for people that are members of one of the other ANCA orgs. Like a library, join one and you can borrow from any in the system.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: Exploring the possibility of offering discounts for members at EMS, REI, Natural New England, Yankee Magazine, state parks, Green Teacher, etc. Advantages: Gaining credibility. Be able to articulate what we bring to the table so that we will be valued.	Avoid: Collaboration where benefits may be a conflict or compromise of mission

8:4 COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS COLLABORATIONS

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages
Best Practices: Sharing databases, mailing lists or email addresses among collaborators. Providing space in newsletter for other organizations so that we can get space in theirs. Creating honorary membership for collaborators. Having a regular publication schedule so collaborators can advertise. Including your organization on the NAAEE website. If you have a representative on another organization's Board, being sure that they report out regularly to both Boards. Updating partners when officer positions change	Avoid: Sharing mailing lists liberally or with a partner who may send out "junk" mail. Duplication of names on mailing lists.

8:5   A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

➢ NEEEA provides workshops on bioregional issues such as invasive species.
➢ NEEEA might help raise funds for:
   ✓ all state conferences.
   ✓ targeted toward a specific regional project such as Envirothon.
➢ NEEEA might facilitate the implementation of Best Practices by helping one successful state to train others who are struggling in a particular area.
➢ If an attendee to an annual conference of any of the New England state EE organizations is a member of their home state organization, they can get the member rate for that conference registration.
➢ Sharing databases among New England state EE organizations.
➢ EE organizations partner with teachers to assess and evaluate EE impact.
➢ EE organizations partner with teachers, scientists, and state agencies to use EE knowledge gained from EE activities for real world applications.
➢ Provide a clearinghouse for teachers for pedagogy, methods, etc.
➢ Share resources such as lists of facilitators, and lists for diverse audiences such as teachers, youth groups, corporations.
➢ Draw from experts from outside EE field to bring new skills.

SECTION 9: FUNDRAISING

Rationale:
Money moves our society and allows organizations to accomplish their goals. Board Members are responsible for the fiscal health of an organization. This fiscal responsibility includes oversight of budgets and spending, establishing plans for income generation and policies for Board reimbursements.

Recommendations:
Each state organization should have a clear idea of where their money comes from and where it is spent.

9:1   STRATEGIES ON HOW TO FUNDRAISE

Make it fundable; sponsorship benefits; development plan; how much to ask from whom; how to avoid fundraising.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
 	
    Develop on-going fundraising plan (See Oregon state plan from NAAEE) not just at conference time.
    Think of fundraising as part of your mission strategy.
    Articulate your organizational assets.
    Maintain your fundraising history, records, contacts.
    Make fundraising a part of Board orientation.
    Learn fundraising as a professional development skill.
    Make requests for funding specific, defined and clear.
	Avoid:
	
	    Having a one person committee for fundraising.
	    Waiting until the NEEEA conference year to do fundraising.
	    Making generalized requests for funding.

9:2   ISSUES ABOUT FUNDRAISING

Legalities, competition and ethics.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
 	
    Establish ethics policies ahead of time.
    Have clear guidelines for your state and federal employee members (what they can and cannot do).
    Communicate with member organizations about fundraising opportunities.
    Search for collaboration with member organizations.
	Avoid:
	
	    Competing with your own members for a limited funding source.
	    Compromising your mission.

9:3   CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FUNDRAISING

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
 	
    Fundraising is on the agenda of state board meetings perennially.
    State Board asks a member organization director to come to one Board meeting to conduct a small scale training for the state organization.
	Avoid:
	
	    Waiting for all the answers before you start.

9:4   SOURCES OF FUNDING

Grants; corporate support; membership fees; creative fundraising; endowments; product sales; newsletter ads; license fees; workplace; individuals.

Best Practices/Advantages	Avoid/Disadvantages

Best Practices:
    Seek grants in a partnership connected to state education trends.
    Long-standing connections with utilities in the state as a regular funding source.	

9:5   A LOOK AHEAD: POSSIBLE NEEEA ROLE

- ➢ NEEEA Board provides template for state fundraising.
- ➢ Set aside a portion of states' membership fees for funding the NEEEA conference.
- ➢ Administrators' Workshop provides training for NEEEA conference fundraising.

RESOURCES

For more information, consult the following literature and websites:

"Worst Case Scenario Guide to Membership Development," Jeremy Higgins, NEEAP

"Making Environmental Education Organizations Effective: A Planning Handbook," NAAEE Affiliates Subcommittee Project

"Case: Fundraising," Linda Rhodes, Environmental Education Association of Oregon

"The Nature Center Handbook Volume 1," Association of Nature Center Administrators (www.natctr.org)

Also contact NEEEA's NAAEE liaison for information

www.naaee.org

www.boardsource.org

www.icl.org