Project Get Outdoors

A Guide for Moving Forward

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ONE

Executive Summary

Project Get Outdoors (Project GO) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing opportunities for children to explore and engage in unstructured play outdoors. The purpose of this work is to encourage kids to live healthier lives and to be stewards of the environment. Project GO was founded in 2006 and, with the support of multiple past partners, has successfully implemented programs in 14 communities in southeastern Minnesota. Despite this, the organization struggles to find ample and stable funding to support needed organizational capacity. To this end, Project GO partnered with the University of Minnesota Extension\(^1\) to conduct research to gain insight about what is unique about Project GO and how the organization can leverage opportunities and take new action in these areas.

To find pragmatic practices for gaining stability and learning how Project GO is unique amongst similar organizations, nine organizations, beyond Project GO, were interviewed. An analysis of interview and selective literature review findings highlights a number of capacity building best practices and lessons learned. The analysis is laid out in the form of a discussion, articulating findings with examples that provide Project GO as well as other organizations with relevant observations.

Based on the analysis findings and Project GO’s current constraints and needs, six broad opportunities were outlined. Of these six, three were identified as providing the largest potential benefit in the near-term, mid-term, and long-term: 1. jump start a \textit{culture of philanthropy} and formalize it through the creation of a \textit{fundraising plan}, 2. grow awareness of Project GO and the need to increase kids’ outdoor exploration through local forums, and 3. adopt key fundraising best practices that are relevant to Project GO’s weaknesses.

The recommendations vary in scope and anticipated benefit, but together provide a balanced portfolio of actionable tasks considering Project GO’s current capacity. Where helpful, recommendations detail first steps and guidelines to increase implementation effectiveness and efficiency.

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\(^1\) through the SE Regional Sustainable Development Partnership

TWO

Report Introduction

Project Get Outdoors Background

Project Get Outdoors (Project GO) is a nonprofit organization based out of Rochester, Minnesota that aims to increase unstructured play for underserved child populations in greater Minnesota. Project GO does this by providing the tools communities need to initiate their own unstructured play programs, utilizing Project GO staff and local volunteers. The programs provide kids with regular opportunities to engage in safe, outdoor play that is neighborhood oriented, and thus easier for kids and parents to replicate.

Project GO’s mission is to facilitate outdoor experiences that develop healthy kids and increase environmental stewardship. To this end, Project GO envisions a world in which all kids, everyday, spend time outdoors; where high-quality, resilient, outdoor programs are embedded in communities and have stable funding. Project GO sees these programs linking youth and caring adult-volunteers to exploration, play, and reflection in nature in nearby local areas. The goal: to help children grow to be healthy adults, that are comfortable outdoors, and knowledgeable and passionate about their land and community.

The Project GO approach for supporting outdoor kids exploration is unique in multiple ways, the least of which is the way programs are developed and administered. Project GO believes that each community knows its own assets and needs better than anyone else and believes that in order for a program to be sustainable, community members need to become highly invested in program development. For this reason, Project GO has established a “kit” that walks a community through the three phases of programming: planning, growth, and ongoing implementation and maintenance. The “kit” provides step-by-step rules for how to move through each of these steps, tools and templates for completing this work, as well as examples from previous Project GO programs, relaying
successes and the intent of each procedure or action. It is intended that this community-centered approach always be at the heart of individual project planning and programming.

Project GO was established by Sara Grover, a naturalist who saw the need to build opportunities for underserved kids to explore nature. While Project GO has grown in quantity of programs, the staff has never been larger than one full-time employee and has never found stable funding to consistently support this level of capacity. The board of directors is a collection of nine environmental and education experts that is led by the four executive members and meets quarterly.

Most Project GO programs are set-up as after school programs where local volunteers organize what the kids are going to do, help provide the snacks, and when necessary organize the transportation. They will then also lead the kids on outdoor journeys. The program is built on learning from and enjoying nature through experiencing it, as opposed to being taught about it by experts. This enables community volunteers to be outdoor activity leaders and teaches kids that nature can be found anywhere, by anyone.

Since incorporating as a non-profit in 2006, Project GO has created programs in over 14 communities in Minnesota, mostly across the southeast portion of the state. They have built partnerships with 4-H, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, and at different times have found support through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Winona State University, the University of Minnesota and other services from the University (i.e. U of M Extension and SE U of M Regional Sustainable Development Partnership). While partnerships have not been maintained with all of these organizations and institutions, a few have. Additionally, as interest in Project GO has grown, the organization has helped locals establish a Project GO program by providing them with the program kit, helping local volunteers make connections with schools, and potentially providing them with some minor funding support.

Purpose of Research

This report has been created to provide guidance as to how Project Get Outdoors can make a successful transition from a start-up nonprofit with no full-time staff to one with a small permanent staff that can focus on further growth. While Project GO has been successful in carrying out programs in multiple Minnesota towns and cities, the current operation model is not sustainable. Making this transition may incorporate many changes. However, for the purpose of this report, two main questions were explored as ways to understand how a sustainable increase in capacity could be achieved in the near-term (two to four years).

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Project Get Outdoors, both organizationally and what about it is unique for funders?

2. How can Project GO maximize its organizational and financial stability?

To carry out the mission of facilitating outdoor play for underserved populations across the state, Project GO envisions an organizational structure that includes regional staff that can support local volunteers that plan and champion individual programs. To do this, consistent staffing, that can focus on outreach, programming, and fundraising, will be needed – as well as regional partners and champions.

Beyond the primary purpose of providing direction to Project GO, the intent of this report is to share the results of this research with organizations that have similar objectives and challenges. Thus, the discussion section of this report caters to an audience of organizations beyond Project GO. Instead of highlighting findings and lessons learned that are particularly germane to Project GO, the discussion provides a variety of observations from the analysis. The intent of this resource is not only to share the information, but to also start a dialogue with organizations that find this work important and challenging. Findings that are particularly relevant to Project GO are outlined in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section.
THREE
Methodology

While Project GO looks to expand and improve its reach and capacity within Minnesota, there are many organizations and initiatives to learn from as well as funding and partnership opportunities that reach beyond the borders of the state. For this reason, research aimed to learn from nonprofits with a mission, audience, or goal that is similar to Project GO – whether in Minnesota or beyond. This approach provides an opportunity to know more about local organizations that might compete for funds from the same pot as well as learn from ideas that come from other contexts and that might provide inspiration for local challenges.

Research consisted of two main components:
1. Organization leader interviews
2. Focused literature review

A preliminary review of approximately 50-60 programs and organizations was done to screen what organizations should be looked at in more detail. Upon identifying those organizations that had at least one of four Project GO characteristics seen in Table 1, a refined number of organizations were selected to be interviewed.

Table 1. Preliminary indicators for further research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Structure or source of funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Extent of focus on direct engagement of kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(compared to programs that focus on bringing kids to non-local sights, increasing costs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Types of populations served (low-income, rural residents, parents, families, kids, et al.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ten interviews (including Project GO) were conducted to gather first hand information from various programs across the U.S. and beyond that provide some level of direct outdoor, unstructured play for kids. Many organizations provide education to teachers, program coordinators, community leaders, and parents about how to engage kids with the outdoors and how to teach them about nature. While there are many nonprofits that serve this educational role within the network of organizations that help to increase outdoor play, this is not the focus of Project GO and these organizations were excluded from the interview sample.

Interviews were conducted by a single researcher and were administered to either the organization director or a program manager, providing both a level of research consistency as well as a high level of knowledge from interviewees. Appendix A provides a table summarizing those interviewed, the organizations they represent, where the organizations are located, and their title/position.

While there are a number of organizations that focus on getting kids outdoors, the last five to ten years have provided a new surge of initiative around the issue as the lack of outdoor play has been seen as a public health issue and a challenge for future environmentalism. With most of these organizations being so new, there is little literature written about them. For this reason, the analysis portion of the research focused on the interviews conducted. However, a small number of issues were further researched through a modest literature review. This research helped to broaden the discussion while providing points by which interview findings could be compared and supported. For example, a number of issues that showed up in interviews were also found to be objects of discussion in reports about capacity building and fundraising.

While by no means is the literature review for this report extensive, it provided the triangulation needed for reporting on the two research questions posed in the Purpose of Research section. A much larger literature review could be done to find other suggestions for building capacity, however, the de-emphasis of this research is purposeful, as the findings discussed later are meant to be pragmatic and actionable for a small organization in an early phase of maturity.

Interviews were conducted using a set number of 11 questions, sometimes asking additional questions based on the strengths of the organization and its similarities to Project GO (See Interview Questions in Appendix A). The consistent set of questions helped to put all interview
content into comparable formats that could be further analyzed. While some organizations have broader missions than Project GO, but house programs that are comparable to Project GO, interview questions were asked in the context of those programs. To capture this, “organization/program” is used throughout the report to describe the subject of interview findings.

The analysis had two parts. First, all organizations were compared using the same four factors that were used to determine if interviews would be conducted (see Table 1). This side-by-side comparison highlighted the top-four organizations that Project GO would be analyzed against in greater depth. The second level of analysis highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each organization. This comparison served to not only examine Project GO opportunities to improve weaknesses and capitalize on strengths, but to look at the strengths of other organizations and how they can inform Project GO weaknesses and help leverage opportunities.2

The scope of the recommendations is based on the findings from the analysis described above and the best practices brought forth by the reviewed literature. Final recommendations reflect solutions that could be feasibly carried out, considering Project GO’s current capacity (as perceived from conversations held with Sara Grover, other support staff, and board members). All recommendations fall into one or more of the following categories:

1. Unique approaches or offerings from Project GO that should be looked at as an opportunity for differentiation as Project GO seeks funding
2. Common strengths held by the study organizations that Project GO could use to complement current weaknesses and prevent potential threats
3. Other organizational and financial stabilizing practices deemed important by interviewees and capacity building literature

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2 A full SWOT analysis was conducted for Project GO, but threats for other organizations were not studied. In general, this research sought to focus on opportunities so threats were deemphasized all around. See Table 4 for the Project GO SWOT.

FOUR
Interview Summaries

Interview Snap-Shots

The following summaries of nine different organizations give you a consistent format in which you can learn about organizations in and out of Minnesota that have a goals similar to Project GO. In addition to the contextual information for each program or organization, the right side of each page provides information that is customized for the interest of Project GO. This includes organizational strengths, weaknesses, lessons learned, and takeaways that are relevant for Project GO’s report objectives.

To be clear, the “organizational” strengths and weaknesses are not necessarily about the structure or organization of a program, but critiques and observations of the organization/program overall. Lessons learned were sometimes called out directly in an interview, but when they were not, were taken from the context of the interview. Further detail about the interviews and interviewees can be found in Appendix A.

While reading about each organization, the Similarity Score table in the upper right corner will provide you with quick reference rating of how similar a particular organization/program is to Project GO. This rating is based on four indicators, the same indicators that were used to decide if they should be interviewed (found in Table 1). On a scale of one to four, four represents a greater similarity to Project GO. The indicators that are similar to Project GO are highlighted in light or dark green in the Similarity Score table to help highlight the scoring.

Of the nine organizations studied (beyond Project GO), only one is located in Minnesota. Seven of the nine organizations are in the United States and two are non-domestic. While this sample represents a broad geographic area, the international organizations brought interesting perspective and insight. For the sake of looking at the Similarity Scores side by side, Table 2 provides a comparison across all organizations for these and other...
attributes. While four indicators were observed to define the study sample, direct engagement and local/neighborhood engagement were the two most important factors.

During the original screening of organizations, it was observed that entities seeking to increase unstructured play outdoors for children fell into two categories:
1. Educating those that will engage kids outdoors
2. Providing direct outdoor engagement opportunities for kids

Based on the screening of organizations done for this report, a large portion fall into the first category – directly serving kid educators, not kids. This may be telling of a trend in the U.S. (where this coalition has existed) or it could be that these organizations tend to be better organized, better funded, or more established. This is a broad way for organizations focused on category two to differentiate themselves.

While it was not overly challenging to find organizations that provide outdoor play opportunities for children, it was significantly more challenging to find organizations that provide these opportunities in local areas – such as neighborhood parks and backyards. The same is true of the populations served. A very small number of the organizations originally screened, as well as those studied and summarized in Table 2, focus on underserved populations. Interestingly, few organizations provide transit for their activities and events. Many make efforts to help organize and coordinate transportation amongst parents; however, those that provide it are the same as those most focused on underserved populations (Inner City Outings, Sierra Club).

The number of kids reached each year by these organizations/programs ranges greatly, while the quantity of staff ranges only modestly. The largest paid staffs are those working for programs spread across large geographic areas, such as the Bureau of Land Management’s Take it Outside program, working in 12 states. While the high quantity of kids reached by programs like Nature Play in Western Australia can be attributed to the quantity of start-up money they currently have, there are examples of under-funded and under-staffed organizations that are able to reach a substantial number of participants annually due to their successful partnerships and messaging efforts. While direct engagement organizations were the target, many organizations that provide direct play opportunities also participate in awareness building and even advocacy. This will be discussed later, but this activity is seen by these organizations as a strong contributor to their survival and success.

Funding sources and partnerships were two of the most interesting areas of study in this report. While this sample of organizations is too small for significant quantitative data analysis, based on qualitative findings, organizations that had three or more types of funding sources talked about their funding (or ability to obtain funding) as either a strength, or did not highlight it as a weakness. From another standpoint, those organizations that served the largest number of kids each year are those that receive reoccurring government funding. While they are still subject to funding cycles, their budgets tend to be larger. It is worth noting that the two largest organizations, by geographic area served, are on opposite ends of the spectrum; Take it Outside, having modest to intermediate federal funds each year and Inner City Outings, a Sierra Club sponsored program that relies completely on volunteers at the local level and serves 50 urban communities – more than Take it Outside.

In the area of partnerships, Project GO and a few other organizations signaled having the fewest active partnerships (those that help carry out events and activities, not just believe in your mission). Nature Play (Western Australia) and MORE Nature (Omaha, NE) had the widest array of deeply engaged partners. While both organizations/programs currently have steady funding, they were both initiated by monumental concern at the state and city level, creating the momentum to bring together large partnerships. Even when not directly engaging kids or families at the community level, they have made these connections through other points of entry, such as schools, local attractions (zoos, parks, etc.) and noticeable messaging campaigns.

While there are broad differences between many of the organizations in Table 2, Project GO has a relatively unique organizational model that seeks to serve a subset of population that is not yet a focus for many organizations. Inner City Outings (ICO) was found to be the most similar
in mission, model, and programming of all the organizations studied. While it is under the national Sierra Club name, this sponsorship has been very loose and varies across the county. It is the only studied program that relies on dedicated community members to start a local chapter and to do so with no staff funding. This resembles Project GO’s approach of having outstate Minnesota communities gather the interest and capacity needed to start up a local program. Like Project GO, ICO aspires to move towards a regional hub structure, but at a national level instead of the state level. Due to sparse financial resources, the regional structure has not been fully realized, yet the number of local chapters across the country tends to grow. Different than ICO, Project GO is not affiliated with any larger organization, government entity or coalition. While Project GO has studied the benefits and detriments of being affiliated with a larger entity or government agency, for programs like Inner City Outings this loose and trusted connection has been integral to survival and growth.

After the individual interview summaries, both Table 2 and Table 3 provide a comparison of the organizations studied across a variety of attributes. A more in-depth discussion of similarities, differences and other observations will be framed in the following section.

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3 Project GO has had loose association with MN DNR in the past
4 Inner City Outings Interview, National
Take It Outside!

A Bureau of Land Management program
Southern and Western United States

Program Mission
To ensure that young people from all backgrounds have access to outdoor recreational opportunities on public lands while fostering future generations of public land stewards. Take it Outside was prompted by a growing national concern that children are spending significantly less time outdoors.

Organization Structure and Partnerships
Take it Outside was designed as a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) initiative, and continues to be overseen and funded by the federal government through BLM. Offices dedicated to Take it Outside exist in southern and western states, with 12 state offices in the west and regional offices in the south (the states in which BLM owns land). All activities take place on federal lands, such as a National Park, and transportation is left to individual participants or the partnering organization or school.

Program Development
Take it Outside provides knowledge of the outdoors and the ability to plan activities on-site leaving participant (kids and or families) gathering to partnering entities. Take it Outside staff work to form relationships with local schools and organizations to build program and activity opportunities. State or regional level staff at Take it Outside or an interested partner, such as a school, initiate an event or series of activities by expressing interest and ideas.

Program Activities
Stressing health, family, fun, and stewardship, Take It Outside provides opportunities for young people to engage in outdoor recreation, non-formal education, and volunteer projects. Activity examples include:

- Digs
- Day hikes and education
- Camps

Plans for Program Growth
BLM already has Take it Outside offices in the region or states that have BLM lands, however, their recently revised strategic plan emphasizes increased outreach to partners in areas where they have an existing presence.

Program Strengths
- The breadth of activities that they offer
- Able to infuse creativity into their programming and activities, bringing ideas from staff and from partners

Program Weaknesses
- Their funding comes from a single source, which can cause large swings in capacity
- Funding is unpredictable as it is tied to the Federal budget, things that are far out or BLM’s control

Lessons Learned from Program Development
- Even for a program at the national scale, it is still about the local relationships staff build on the ground, such as those with teachers and schools that become partners and champions

Takeaways for Project GO
- Single source funding makes long-term planning challenging
Home Place Adventures
formerly the Youth Outdoor Exploration Program

A Tuleyome program
Sacramento Valley, CA

Program Mission
Tuleyome’s mission is to protect the wild and agricultural heritage of the Inner Coastal Range and the Western Sacramento Valley for current and future generations.

Tuleyome Home Place Adventures works with partner groups in the Berryessa Snow Mountain region to reintroduce underserved youth to outdoor teaching, providing leadership, teamwork, and education.

Organization Structure and Partnerships
Tuleyome is a registered California non-profit organization.

Program Development
Two full-time staff are in charge of programming and carrying out of most youth activities. Home Place Adventures pairs with youth program partners to help gain a participant base. These partners and the parents of youth/families are responsible for transportation to and from events, which happen once a week. These are developed based on available funds, individuals that know particular neighborhoods with particular needs, and how this happens is still developing, as the youth aspect of this originally land conservation driven organization takes on new opportunities.

Program Activities
Help youth teach the importance of caring for and contributing to one’s home place.

Activity examples include:
- Rafting trip
- Visit the county dump
- Nature’s Theater (have the kids put on these plays at local schools)

Plans for Program Growth
The larger organization is involved in legislative advocacy around land conservation and is looking to grow this work, but also looking to grow its youth mission.

Similarity Score  (1 low, 4 high)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Structure of program / funding</th>
<th>Donation / Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Direct or indirect activity provider</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide local outdoor engagement</td>
<td>No / Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Populations served</td>
<td>Youth, underserved youth, families</td>
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</table>

Program Quick Reference

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<tr>
<th>When host entity was established</th>
<th>2002</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When program was established</td>
<td>2007 Approx.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>6 FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary type of funding</td>
<td>Donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary type of funding</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of volunteer utilization</td>
<td>Yes, as experts, mentors, and parent involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal nature or programming</td>
<td>Summer &amp; Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant fees</td>
<td>Underserved youth free $5 individual/event $10 adult/event $35 yr. member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide free transit</td>
<td>No, sometimes partners provide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantity of annual participants:
400+ youth/families in Sacramento Valley area

Examples of partners:
YMCA, regional youth programs

Program Strengths
- Having some very dedicated and generous local donors, of both time and other resources (land)
- Intelligent staff that finds new resources

Program Weaknesses
- While legislative work has given the org broader recognition, Tuleyome is not publicly associated with youth work, a challenge for growing their youth mission, internally and externally.

Takeaways for Project GO
- Educate your donors about the work that you do and the importance of having less restrictive funds; let them know your needs
- Find a funder that has legacy goals
- Funding should come from nonprofit, corporate, and public funds to be most stable
Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment
Arlington, VA

Program Mission
Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE) promotes stewardship of natural resources in Arlington County and practical solutions to a sustainable lifestyle in order to protect water, air, and open spaces in the area.

Organization Structure and Partnerships
ACE is an unincorporated entity that is one prong of a three-prong non-profit collaboration, which enables them to share some staff resources. They work with citizens, civic associations, and local and national government agencies to fulfill its mission. ACE provides volunteer opportunities and environmental education to Arlington County residents and is supported primarily by the Arlington County government under a grant from the Department of Environmental Services Solid Waste Division (their roots). Additional funding is secured through government and foundation grants and donations from individuals and organizations.

Program Development
Programs are developed by ACE staff, but are directed by a volunteer citizen board. Additionally, as some grants make up their funding source, the activities they carry out are dependent on the funder relationships they can grow and the grants they can secure.

Program Activities
Programs engage kids, young adults, and families, at all socio-economic levels, to invest in their community and environment through participation in community activities. Additionally, ACE serves as an information resource to the community when they want to know how to address a local environmental problem, such as composting, energy consumption, etc. Activity examples include:

• Trash cleanup
• Greening Expo
• Day hikes and education

Plans for Program Growth
They have been spending too much time fixing internal needs. They need to find a better internal-external balance through more focus on evaluation, finding the right leadership, retaining staff, and applying for four grants each year instead of three (usually awarded one).

 similarity Score (1 low, 4 high) 2
1. Structure of program / funding Funds funneled through partnering fiscal agent
2. Direct or Indirect activity provider Both
3. Provide local outdoor engagement Some / No
4. Populations served All community

Program Quick Reference
When host entity was established Late 1970’s
When program was established na
Staﬀing 1 FTE, 2 PT, 1 contractor
Primary type of funding Local government
Secondary type of funding Individual donation
Frequency of volunteer utilization About 600/yr
Seasonal nature or programming All year
Participant fees Mostly no
Provide free transit No
Quantity of annual participants: 3,500 (of which 2,000 are k-12)
Examples of partners: Arlington County; 2 other prongs to entity that help each other; Have phased out involvement with Children and Nature Network

Program Strengths
• Good local resource to answer questions
• People-focused and community-oriented, offering programs and resources to served and underserved populations

Program Weaknesses
• Haven’t been able to grow capacity, preventing them from growing messaging as desired
• Want to look past just the county as a main funding source
• Need to build more employee costs into their grants (i.e. benefits) reducing financial strain

Lessons Learned from Program Development
• They have been looking at America VISTA Corp. as a viable way to help them build capacity

Takeaways for Project GO
• Local community views ACE as a resource, not only providing activities, but also being a one-stop shop for local environmental questions. They bring “added value” to the community.
The P.I.N.E Project  
Toronto, Canada

Program Mission
The P.I.N.E. Project’s mission is to build healthy communities, deeply connected to the natural environment. To achieve this, we deliver programs focused on building relationships between self, others, and the environment. We use music, drama, storytelling, naturalist studies, stewardship, survival skills, outdoor games and play, weaving a “culture of nature connection” empowering our mantra: be more, need less.

Organization Structure and Partnerships
The P.I.N.E Project incorporated immediately as an 501(c) 3 equivalent. The organization offers a variety of activities and programs, ranging from those that are fully paid for by participants to those that are free. The remaining 15-25% gets paid for through grants, and individual and corporate donations, in the form of money and gear. The City of Toronto has allowed the organization to use public park space to host activities, helping to lower program costs.

Program Development
Programs and activities are designed for specific groups: toddler, 4-7, 7-10 and 14-18 year olds. Programs are designed by naturalist staff and are intended to build an understanding of the connection between self, nature, and community. Programs are also designed so that kids can smoothly move from one level to the next.

Program Activities
Some activities are seasonal and meet multiple times a week. The free activities are held monthly and teach kids how to track (observe and learn from terrestrial clues). Activity examples include:

- Nature-based school (cost)
- Community-connected experience (cost)
- Tracking activities (free)

Plans for Program Growth
The program is already well established in a number of Toronto neighborhoods. They are looking to expand into new neighborhoods and find new champions. Looking to mentor more volunteers to grow their naturalist knowledge so they can help add more valuable capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarity Score (1 low, 4 high)</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Structure of program / funding</td>
<td>Fees, grants, donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Direct or Indirect activity provider</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide local outdoor engagement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Populations served</td>
<td>Under 18, Families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Quick Reference</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When host entity was established</td>
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<td>Participant fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide free transit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Strengths
- Have done a good job of using their success stories and champions to help them expand
- Knowledgeable staff that can lead activities
- Try to capitalize on doing more with less mantra
- Very strong vision and sense of programming

Program Weaknesses
- Inexperience with budgeting and fundraising
- Need to expand ways to cater to underserved populations – trying to develop scholarships

Lessons Learned from Program Development
- Their success has been largely due to the relationships that they have built with city staff, the naturalist community, and parents that have helped spread the word by mouth

Takeaways for Project GO
- Have tapped into an international network interested in outdoor play and naturalistic activity, offering the young organization much needed mentorship and legitimacy for funding.
Fresh Air Family
Birmingham, AL

Program Mission
Fresh Air Family brings together a diversity of families – young and not-so-young, married, single, adults and children – along with highly trained experts to explore the natural world. The organization tag line is: In search of nature, we find family.

Organization Structure and Partnerships
Fresh Air Family is a 501(c)3 to provide free (in nearly all instances) activities to kids and adults of all ages, as well as families. While members and non-members can participate in all activities, membership provides lower prices for activities and first access to sign-up. While Fresh Air Family develops the programs, they have begun to write join grants with some of their partners.

Program Development
They have developed programs all over the state, focusing in small and medium size cities, some with large underserved populations. They put on about 400 activities across the state each year. Programs and activities will be hosted in local and non-local places: neighborhood parks, city attractions, and state/national parks. Multiple programs have been designed to fill a need of directly engaging kids with the outdoors, while also finding a way to fit into the interests of a federal government grant.

Program Activities
Fresh Air Family staff and volunteers help organize rides for participant, but do not provide actual transportation. Activity examples include:
- Digs (fee)
- Gross-Out Camp
- Summer camps – families (free)
- Botanical garden trips (free)

Plans for Program Growth
The organization is looking to hire a director, as they need a person dedicated to this role full-time. They have found corporate donations to be the most stable source of funding, as many grants have been cumbersome to report on at the end of the grant period. They plan to have an organizational audit completed to help them improve their program evaluation, accounting, and capacity building techniques.

Program Strengths
- Good at getting the word out and messaging: social media, newsletters, online calendar
- Building relationships with private donors and partners
- Safety conscious

Program Weaknesses
- Beyond parent helpers, volunteers hard to find
- Do not have the structure and organization needed internally to comply with many grants

Lessons Learned from Program Development
- Important to get families active in the programs, but harder to raise money for ‘families’
- Strong grant writer, receiving about 50%, but need a dedicated staff person for this work

Takeaways for Project GO
- Fiscal instability has made growth challenging, but having contract employees has worked well
- See schools (private schools especially) as fierce competitors for funding

Similarity Score (1 low, 4 high)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Structure of program / funding</td>
<td>Grants / Gov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Direct or Indirect activity provider</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide local outdoor engagement</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Populations served</td>
<td>Kids and families (some underserved)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Quick Reference

- When host entity was established: na
- When program was established: 2006
- Staffing: (Varies) Now 6 PT
- Primary type of funding: Grants (foundations and Gov. agencies)
- Secondary type of funding: Individual & Corp. donations
- Frequency of volunteer utilization: Sometimes
- Seasonal nature or programming: Year round
- Participant fees: Mostly none
- Provide free transit: No
- Quantity of annual participants: 10,000 participants, touch ~400 kids per year
- Examples of partners: After school programs; Birmingham Botanical Gardens
Metro Omaha
Resources for Exploring Nature
Omaha, Nebraska

Program Mission
MORE Nature is a collaborative initiative to bring more outdoor, nature-based play to the children of the Greater Omaha area. The initiative has four main goals:
1. Educate the Greater Omaha Community about the value and power of outdoor, nature-based play
2. Provide our community with new and expanded opportunities for nature play—both through self-guided, unstructured play and through more defined, adult-led activities
3. Serve as the community’s advocate for expanding and enhancing nature-based play
4. Secure tangible community support for the work

Organization Structure and Partnerships
The initiative is not an organization, as the local government serves as its fiscal agent. They program is staffed by two full-time workers, but whom are employed through partnering organizations. A Core Committee of 10 provides guidance for the programming. These 10 represent the 40 entities that make up this collaboration.

Program Development
Programming is developed by volunteers – in the form of committee members and other volunteers. Volunteers are also utilized to help carry out the activities, while hired speakers, biology specialist, etc. are utilized to provide expertise for an activity. Both members of the staff are responsible for planning and organizing most activities.

Program Activities
Activities are geared towards families as much as they are kids and explore how one can play outside in their own yard and city. The program has fostered creative partnering, like the Builders Assoc. of America, help to achieve shared goals. Activity examples include:
- Nature Night
- Street of Dreams
- Part-Child workshops

Plans for Program Growth
Two years after the program began, MORE Nature held a community forum with Omaha City Council members and state legislators. This helped to revitalize the relevant issues within the community. They hope to host similar forums every few years to sustain momentum.

Program Strengths
- Advocate at the state and local level for resources to support unstructured outdoor play activities for kids, which help keep the message and funding alive
- The core committee has broad diversity, helping build broader, stronger partnerships and keep interest alive
- Have a large network from which they can seek volunteers

Program Weaknesses
- Messaging/edu. opportunities with the healthcare community, but have had a hard time breaking into that community (making partners)

Lessons Learned from Program Development
- Develop programs with partner shared interests

Takeaways for Project GO
- MORE Nature has created a strong presence locally, making it a point of pride for the community/city/residents

Similarity Score (1 low, 4 high)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Structure of program / funding</th>
<th>Local Gov./NGO collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Direct or Indirect activity provider</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide local outdoor engagement</td>
<td>Yes &amp; No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Populations served</td>
<td>Kids and Families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Quick Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When host entity was established</th>
<th>na</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When program was established</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>2 FT staff (supplied by other orgs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary type of funding</td>
<td>In the form of staff &amp; partner giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary type of funding</td>
<td>Donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of volunteer utilization</td>
<td>Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal nature or programming</td>
<td>All year (summer focus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant fees</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide free transit</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of annual participants:</td>
<td>Serve about 5,000 per year (youth and family members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of partners:</td>
<td>Local school districts, Early Childhood Prof. Develop. Association (ECCOA) NE Parks Commission, Zoo, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nature Play WA
Western Australia

Program Mission
Nature Play’s mission is to work innovatively and collaboratively to make nature play a normal part of childhood again so that they can develop into resilient, healthy and creative members of the community.

Organization Structure and Partnerships
Nature Play WA is a collaborative organization working with 18 founding partners from the areas of health, education, environment, and parenting, to encourage the WA community to value nature play and families to prioritize it in children’s lives. The organization's primary role is to spread the nature play message and to work to increase access to nature play resources, events and programs. Schools from all across WA are participating in the Homework Diary program. They also partner with WA universities to find volunteers to help carrying out events.

Program Development
Nature Play organizes events that engage kids and parents in direct outdoor play, however its key role is to change the way kids think about being active and to provide a new social norm of what good, safe parenting is. Programs are developed internally and with the current budget, work collaboratively with schools, web developers, and the government to help broadcast the programs.

Program Activities
Staff work to capture the hearts and minds of kids and parents to help change their perspective. They have done this through advocacy, large events that touch tens of thousands of kids, as well as journalistic messaging. Direct engagement activities include:
- Geocaching
- School Homework Diary including ‘play’
- Passport missions

Plans for Program Growth
In approximately two years seed funding from the government will be exhausted. They are making efforts to find corporate partners and generate their own revenue by providing consulting services. The ultimate goal is to no longer exist because the vision has been fulfilled.

Program Quick Reference

| When host entity was established | na |
| When program was established    | 2011 |
| Staffing                        | 1-80%, 4-50% time (5 total staff) |
| Primary type of funding         | Funding from Sport and Rec. Dept. via Parliament |
| Secondary type of funding       | (none to date: corp. donation & consult revs. intended) |
| Frequency of volunteer utilization | Sometimes |
| Seasonal nature or programming  | All year |
| Participant fees                | No/Nominal |
| Provide free transit            | No |
| Quantity of annual participants:| Over 100,000 children sign-up, about 10% register; a couple thousand kids have participated in events |
| Examples of partners:           | Australian Medical Assoc.; Primary School Principals’ Association; Island Wood Bainbridge, WA state (USA) |

Program Strengths
- Have been successful at capturing the hearts and minds of policy makers and government leaders leading to a strong nation-wide coalition
- Innovative about how to grab the attention of kids; ability to integrate technology while not diminishing quality/quantity of outdoor play

Program Weaknesses
- Evaluation of program development (measuring and reporting baseline information; need to get better at if plan to get future funding)

Lessons Learned from Program Development
- Making a concerted effort to help parents redefine what “being a good parent” is and helping them reconsider what is safe play

Takeaways for Project GO
- Importance of partnerships
- This work is about messaging and awareness
**Program Mission**

*Inner City Outings* is a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban youth and adults, predominantly low-income, to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world.

**Organization Structure and Partnerships**

*Minnesota Inner City Outings* (MN ICO) of Sierra Clubs’ North Star Chapter, leads small groups of youth on, what is for many, their first wilderness experience. Using outdoor recreation as its primary vehicle, MN ICO relies on close-knit, dedicated, and well-trained volunteers to create an unforgettable experience for its participants.

Currently working in collaboration with four community-based agencies, MN ICO runs trips one to three times a month to protected natural areas throughout the metro area. Each agency is responsible for recruiting participants, while MN ICO supplies outing leadership, equipment, transportation, and food.

Annual funding for MN ICO is approximately $5,000, of which about $500 comes from SC national, about $3,000 from individual or corporate donors, and the remainder from small donations and tax donations.

**Program Development**

All program development and implementation is left up to volunteers, who also are usually the initiators of a local program. They rely on local low-income communities that have the staff capacity to help them organize and get out the word to potential participants. On the ICO side, it is up to the volunteer(s) to decide what the outings will be, prepare for them, and lead them (as well as find other support volunteers when necessary).

**Program Activities**

The volunteer Program Chair or other volunteers decide what activities will be carried out within the given budget. Activity examples include:

- Hiking
- Biking
- Camping
- Canoeing
- Backpacking
- Dog sledding

**Plans for Program Growth**

Sierra Club is looking to change its reputation, to be less political and more environment and youth focused. ICO is also looking to serve kids outside of just urban areas.

**Program Strengths**

- Dedicated volunteers make it all possible
- Partnerships with housing communities in MN

**Program Weaknesses**

- Lack of volunteer participation (it is often cyclical, providing very dedicated volunteers that is followed by a dry period while new volunteers are recruited)

**Lessons Learned from Program Development**

- Youth programs are often an early budget item that gets cut, so being an entity that will provide this work for little to no cost is a real asset.

**Takeaways for Project GO**

- Need to find inner-community leaders
- About getting key people in key areas
- Opportunity for collaboration with MN ICO
Program Mission

*Inner City Outings* is a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban youth and adults, predominantly low-income, to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world.

Organization Structure and Partnerships

*Inner City Outings* is a Sierra Club established program that from the beginning has been volunteer run. It is rooted in the original purpose of Sierra Club founder John Muir, which is to connect with, learn from the outdoors. The small amount of funds that Sierra Club sets aside for ICO only covers the one national level staff person. Beyond providing training programs, volunteers are responsible for building local partnerships, sometimes raising funds when a local chapter cannot provide minor funds, and even for transporting themselves to trainings. They will organize outing transportation for the kids, and design the outings so that kids can reach the destinations, but are not encouraged to do the actual transporting themselves.

Local ICO groups are to hook-up with existing social service programs that have existing support staff (unlike ICO), but do not have the staff or capacity to take kids outdoors. Transportation is often the largest cost, so groups seek out partners that have their own access to transportation. So local Sierra Club chapters have provided the vehicles to the local ICO, like Los Angeles.

Program Development

Agency/social service program staff will usually accompany ICO volunteers on the outings. Permission slips from parents are used for all outings. The level of parent involvement in outings is left up to local groups. Some groups will bring along teachers or make trips multi-generational. Meals are sometimes provided, but for longer trips usually just some food is provided.

Program Activities

The volunteer Program Chair or other volunteers decide what activities will be carried out within the given budget. Activity examples include:

- Hiking
- Biking
- Canoeing
- Backpacking

Plans for Program Growth

Sierra Club is looking to change its reputation. Included within this is the renaming and branding of ICO, with the hope of making it a better known Sierra Club program. ICO national hopes to provide regional staff that can support local volunteers with volunteer recruitment and training.

Program Strengths

- Local chapter flexibility allows volunteers to serve needs they see in a specific community

Program Weaknesses

- Need more centralized resources that can be provided to local chapters regularly so volunteers can spent time delivering programs

Lessons Learned from Program Development

- You can do so much with passionate dedicated volunteers and good partnerships, even when a budget is tight and somewhat unpredictable

Takeaways for Project GO

- Research shows that it is not just city kids that are not getting outdoors. ICO will be looking to make a shift to not be so urban focused.
Table 2. Analysis One - Comparison of Studied Organizations

This table provides a general overview of the attributes important for understanding high-level differences between this set of organizations, having at least direct outdoor engagement of kids in common. Here differences and similarities can start to be tracked. It also helps to map potential sources of strengths and weaknesses. The ‘Score’ on the far right reflects the Similarity Score given to each organization/program in the interview summaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Child Engagement</th>
<th>Activity Locations</th>
<th>Target Audience/Population</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Primary Source of Funds</th>
<th>Partner Types</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project GO</td>
<td>MN</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Inner City Outings (national)</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Direct</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Inner City Outings (Mpls./St. Paul)</td>
<td>MN</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
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<td>3 Fresh Air Family</td>
<td>AL</td>
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<td>4 MORE Nature</td>
<td>NE</td>
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<td>5 Nature Play WA</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Youth Outdoor Exploration Program</td>
<td>CA</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 The P.I.N.E Project (Primitive Integrated Naturalist Ed.)</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Take It Outside</td>
<td>southern &amp; western states</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE)</td>
<td>Arlington, VA</td>
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</table>

Note A: For programs that are housed within a host organization, Primary funding is above based on how the organization as a whole receives funds. Staffing represents how many paid staff are dedicated to the specific program at hand.
FIVE
 Discussion

Table 3 compares Project GO to the four organizations studied that are most similar in the areas of populations served, direct outdoor engagement to kids, focus on local outdoor play, and that receive funding in similar ways. This does not mean that they are the same in each of these areas, but in at least two. Table 3 has organized strengths and weaknesses under five categories so that the areas of strength and weakness for Project GO are comparable and digestible for readers. All strengths and weaknesses recorded throughout the report are categorized based upon how they were framed by the interviewee, as some could fit into more than one category. A discussion according to each of the five categories follows.

Appeal

The first category is that of appeal. For the purpose of this report, appeal encompasses marketing, awareness building, outreach and messaging or broadcasting activities that an organization or program might take on. While messaging is not directly a part of Project GO’s mission, it was such a dominant trait amongst the other organizations interviewed that it needed to be delineated. Three of the organizations seen in Table 3 call out messaging and marketing as one of their strongest traits. Not only do these organizations say they are good at marketing and building awareness, but that it is a way of sustaining the organization.

Interestingly, Fresh Air Family and Play Nature WA are both led by professional journalists. As Fresh Air Family founder Verna Gates put it, “I am good at getting the word out.” She feels that some of Fresh Air Family’s greatest success have come from keeping youth informed about what activities are coming up and reminding them to get involved. Gates keeps the website very up to date so that it is a reliable source for broadcasting. She also will write articles in local and non-local news publications (as she still writes professionally for Reuters and CNN) that complement the work that she does with her organization.

Play Nature of Western Australia is led by journalist Griffin Longley who previously wrote about recreation and health for news publications in Western Australia. After helping ignite a national interest around the deficiency of physical activity and unstructured play outdoors through a well timed campaign targeting national politicians, he was asked to lead the new, government-funded initiative. While Nature Play offers a variety of direct and semi-direct outdoor engagement opportunities for kids, Griffin feels his most vital role is to make people care. “It is a very competitive market for kid’s attention and parent’s time,” said Longley. “We need to sell this idea to the public imagination.”

While this is not the core responsibility for either leader, as they each have the equivalent of two to three full-time staff, they see this as central to their work. Neither has advocated directly for certain policy-making, but for there to be raised concern around the issue of depleting time outdoors for kids. Whether directly or indirectly, this work has created a greater awareness for parents as well as for partners and funders.

Inner City Outings (ICO) is in a different position. As a very loosely sponsored Sierra Club program, that is all volunteer driven, ICO does not participate in advocacy in any way. However, being attached to the Sierra Club, it is undeniable that the program benefits from the reputable namesake it carries and from the environmental advocacy work it does across the country. So, while ICO does not spend time on its messaging, it has been important for attracting dedicated volunteers.

From a report called UnderDeveloped, put out by Compass Point, a national resource for nonprofits, social media and storytelling were both discussed as ways of developing a strong message and creating appeal. The latter in particular was also seen as a way to develop funding relationships, but this will be discussed more under the category of resources. Overall, in the area of appeal, Project GO did not have the quantity or quality of strengths of the other organizations. This should be looked at as an area for
improvement, especially as the organization finds even some moderate funding.  

Model

The category labeled model groups together the attributes of organization and structure and how well it fits the needs of the entity, as well as the services they provide. It may

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Analysis Two - Comparison of Strengths and Weaknesses amongst Focus Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The following table provides a comparison of strengths and weaknesses across the four organizations/programs that received the highest Similarity Scores (&quot;focus organizations&quot;). Strengths and weaknesses are each discussed under five categories in which nearly all interview comments fell.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths / Weaknesses</th>
<th>Project GO</th>
<th>Inner City Outings (Twin Cities)</th>
<th>Fresh Air Family</th>
<th>MORE Nature</th>
<th>Nature Play WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRENGTHS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal Awareness, Marketing, Messaging</td>
<td>AWARENESS: community members invest time and planning to get kids playing outdoors and help spread awareness</td>
<td>AWARENESS: Sierra Club helps grow awareness around this issue at a national and state level</td>
<td>MARKETING: Good at spreading awareness as well as informing the public of events</td>
<td>AWARENESS: Hold community forums to boost public interest, residents as well as decision makers</td>
<td>AWARENESS: Successful and getting the message out to a broad and large populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Goals, Structure, Organization, Planning</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>PARTNERS: find partners that they pair well with, complementing the capabilities they both do not have (staff versus time)</td>
<td>PARTNER: Have strong partnerships that cut across multiple sectors of business and interest (Gov., non-profits, associations)</td>
<td>PARTNER: Have a broad and strong coalition of partners that are collaborating to reach common goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING: Foster the importance of local play</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING: Flexible programming model that allows them to use funds based on availability</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING: A strong sense of safety and a good track record / reputation</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING: Innovative use of technology in creating events and ways to maintain and account for play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Fundraising, Support/Training, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LEADERSHIP: Have enthusiastic founders and some board members who went to see the project succeed</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP: Enthusiastic founder who has carried much of the weight to date, getting paid for some work and putting money in other areas</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP: Current director is a journalist who is great at messaging and sees the value in making an emotional case</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUSTAINABILITY: Project does not account for ways to encourage direct play after they leave the program</td>
<td>STRUCTURE: Lack the structure needed to comply with many grants (especially larger grants)</td>
<td>STRUCTURE: Board is so large, it is difficult to get input from all members that is actionable (and possibly time)</td>
<td>STRUCTURE: Have not done a good job of setting up metrics that will allow them to evaluate their program implementation and from the beginning</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Goals, Structure, Organization, Planning</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>PARTNER: Do not have a regional / national affiliation from which the program can garner support and marketability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Fundraising, Support/Training, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All entities, whether incorporated non-profits, unincorporated entities, or partnerships, are all referred to as “organizations” in the above table.  

*PROJECT GO GUIDE FOR MOVING FORWARD | 21*
also include the appropriateness of the goals in meeting the mission of a given organization. Over all this is a weak area for each of the five focus organizations. Only one focus organization reported a strength in the category of organization or program model. Accordingly, four of the five focus organizations, including Project GO, showed that they had weaknesses in this area.

Omaha’s MORE Nature program is the one entity that reported a strength in this category. Christine Jacobsen, one of the two full-time staff running MORE Nature said that the staff and board were very good at not falling prey to mission creep. They have stayed focused on play and have not gotten distracted by the parallel movement to provide kids with environmental or naturalist education. They simply have provided experiences in which kids can play. Jacobsen sees this as a form of organizational efficiency.

While there are limited strengths, the weaknesses pointed out a number of lessons learned. In addition to a strength, MORE Nature also highlighted the difficulty of having such a large board of directors. With approximately 40 different partners supporting the program (as it is not an incorporated nonprofit), it was reported that decision-making can often be very cumbersome and time consuming. While the breadth of partnerships that MORE Nature has is seen as a strength, this has been difficult to balance at the leadership level. The fact that it has a 10-person core committee seems to balance this challenge a little. While large, strategic decisions at the board level are still challenging, the implementation side is shared amongst this committee, which is well-suited (capacity and skills wise) to carry out the needed tasks.

Both Fresh Air Family and Nature Play commented about not having the training and organization desired to tracking indicators that are necessary for effective program evaluation. From experience, Fresh Air family knows that if they want to be competitive for federal government grants, they are not organized enough to complete the post-funding report. Even more pressing, they may not even comply with the government grant requirements needed for future federal grants. Fresh Air Family is looking to get audited and evaluated so that they can become more organized internally and re-frame staff positions to be more specialized. Since the program inception, Nature Play staff have educated themselves on what they should be tracking to measure program progress, but they wish they had done this from the start, as it would be helpful for catching the interest of more funders.

One potential weakness of Project GO is the disconnect between creating opportunities for kids to experience unstructured play (as Sara and other board members have mentioned) while delivering this through a program. Funders are often interested in sustained value of a program or initiative. While of course there is the immediate value of increased recreation and the opportunity to learn about the outdoors, it is worth crafting an additional goal as to how the benefits of semi-structured activity can deliver sustained activity for kids. Fresh Air Family, MORE Nature, and Nature Play have all targeted parents as well as kids, in part, for this reason. Additionally, Griffin Longley from Nature Play spoke strongly about how the goal of the organization is to cease to exist; if the job is done well, the need to provide such programs will not longer exist. This shows funders a desire to add value to a community through funding, not just value to the organization it self.

Project GO has envisioned an organizational model that supports local volunteers with regional staff. To date Project GO has not had the resources needed to realize this structure. Findings from a capacity building report put out by the Minnesota Council for Nonprofits described the difficulties of rural focused organizations. Compared to urban focused organizations, rural programs may have greater travel expenses while lower average family incomes. Also, it was cited that in some non-profit areas, local government and residents are trending towards getting services not from non-profits, but from small businesses; however, no reasons were given.

While the partnership category will discuss some of this in greater detail, there may be opportunities for Project GO to utilize shared staff or volunteer staff at the local level instead of a regional level. Small, rural communities would see this as an investment in them, helping create local value and loyalty rather than staffing regionally in mid-size towns and cities, where potentially no larger quantity of programs are hosted.

\[\text{An Analysis of the Nonprofit Capacity-Building Industry in Minnesota}\]

\[\text{An Analysis of the Nonprofit Capacity-Building Industry in Minnesota}\]
Both the UnderDeveloped report and the Study of Nonprofit Capacity Building in Minnesota report discussed the importance of having certain organizational plans. While a financial plan and a succession plan are not essential for carrying out daily business, they are integral strategic documents that will help keep an organization moving forward. A financial plan will help communicate financial needs and goals to all board members and future staff. Additionally, it is a formal place to set fundraising goals. Best practices recommend setting realistic fundraising goals, as it will help to focus fundraising efforts and establish quality relationships with funders\(^7\), especially as a young organization. The succession plan could likely be applicable for Project GO in the near future as its purpose is to help smooth transition periods by preparing a communications plan, identifying vulnerabilities, identifying the organization and board directions up to five years out and building board leadership opportunities.\(^8\)

**Partnership**

**Partnership** is one of the two categories that provided extensive insight (along with resources) relevant to Project GO and other organizations. In this category, partners refers to fiscal supporters, networks, coalitions, and direct collaborators – meaning other entities that help carry the work burden. While Project GO has worked with the 4-H Club and the Boys and Girl Scouts in various communities, these are the types of partnerships that can be further developed, both at a local scale and across the state.

As mentioned before, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits report discussed the benefits of innovative fundraising, such as describing to potential funders the way in which you will add long-lasting value to a community.\(^9\) Along this vein, MORE Nature, Fresh Air Family, and Nature Play have each built connections to communities and neighborhoods through schools, local parks, gardens, and zoos or directly through local government and community leaders.

By virtue of it origin, MORE Nature has a strong connection to the Omaha community, as a group of 40 entities (governmental, for profits and non-profit) established the unincorporated organization. MORE Nature’s connection with Bellevue Public Schools, the third largest district in the state of Nebraska, has helped to spread its messaging to not only kids, but parents. Partnerships with Omaha’s Botanical Center, Hitchcock Nature Center, and Zoo have opened up local hosting opportunities exposing kids and families to new nature learning experiences, particularly for low-income families that might not have the opportunity to go without a program offering. Of course, this partnership is also in the best interest of those businesses and organizations, expanding their exposure to new audiences.

Despite MORE Nature’s robust network, one frustration expressed by Jacobsen in the interview was the seemingly impenetrable healthcare industry. They are interested in getting them on board with messaging so that kids and families can hear reinforcement about outdoor play from a professional and authoritarian perspective. Thus far the organization has not accomplished this.

On a much smaller scale, Fresh Air Family has built relationships with individual schools and districts in various parts of the Alabama, providing for them after school programs. One organization reported working with schools as challenging because they were in competition for out-of-school program funding. On the other hand, Fresh Air Family, especially when dealing with schools with a high percentage of low-income families, found partnering with schools to be a niche area of service. Many schools do not have the funding to provide these programs and are happy that there is an organization like Fresh Air Family to facilitate these programs (for which the organization uses its contract staff and some parent volunteers).

Nature Play has established an impressive collection of supporters and collaborators across Western Australia. They have triangulated what might be a model network to carry out their mission: health foundations and professionals, recreation advocates, primary school associations, and parenting networks – some of which includes government agencies. This broad collaboration has brought innovative ideas to action, such as when a school principal suggested that recreational play be part of kids homework, and like a math assignment, parents need to sign-off that the outdoor play was completed. These

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\(^7\) UnderDeveloped and An Analysis of the Nonprofit Capacity-Building Industry in Minnesota

\(^8\) Building Leaderful Organizations, Succession Planning for Nonprofits

\(^9\) An Analysis of the Nonprofit Capacity-Building Industry in Minnesota
partnerships amplify their messaging and provide them with resources that are still unfolding. Some examples of this are the interest that the healthcare and insurance industry has in educating kids and families of the benefits of increased recreation. Another might be messaging campaigns that reach out to parent associations, providing them with educational materials and expressing new parenting norms.\(^\text{10}\)

For all of the cities and towns that organizations like Nature Play, Fresh Air Family, or MORE Nature operate in, these organizations are seen as adding value to the larger community. This is not just because of the programs they provide, but the experience they are gaining and the future information resources they will be to future leaders, parents, and kids in these cities and regions.

While The P.I.N.E Project is not a focus organization (the four organizations, in addition to Project GO in Table 3) for this report, it was their young executive director and founder that spoke most emphatically about the value of a network of supportive organizations. Each organization leader interviewed expressed frustration or disbelief about the lack of information available about organizations doing similar work, whether in the same state or across the world. While this research is by no means exhaustive, the most visible cohesion amongst the organizations that were screened early on was found between those that support related policy issues (e.g. the Children and Nature Network). Second to this were those organizations that educate adults about how to teach kids about the outdoors.\(^\text{11}\) There appears to be great opportunity to grow a network in the area of entities directly engaging kids outdoors.

Beyond each organization showing interest in connecting with Project GO, seeing this final report, and being interested in connecting with similar organizations to share best practices, research shows a host of benefits from having an organizational network.\(^\text{12}\) Mission creep can be a threat to an organization, but working with other organizations tends to reduce this tendency, as an organization is often filling a particular role. This often keeps an organization focused on assigned scopes of work that reflect organizational goals. Also, whether in the form of a network or a partnership, organizations can learn from each other. Not only does mission related knowledge get shared, but internal culture and communicated can be observed first hand. Lastly, if two or more organizations partner to obtain grants or contracts, larger sources of funding will become accessible.

**Programming**

Programming refers to program development and implementation, as well as other considerations, such as the populations that these programs serve and the scope of the services and activities offered. In most of these areas, Project GO reported having a variety of strengths that equaled or exceeded those of other organizations, as perceived by the interviewees.

Project GO and Inner City Outings (ICO) are the only two organizations interviewed that heavily focus on underserved populations. While some organizations target geographic areas that include kids from families with varying socio-economic means, only these two focus solely on these populations. ICO, both nationally and in the Minneapolis - St. Paul area focus on urban populations, leaving Project GO the only organization in the state, and possibly the whole country, that facilitates direct play engagement opportunities, emphasizing local contexts (as opposed to traveling to state parks or other such destinations), and serving underserved populations in rural communities. Project GO caters to a group of kids that are rarely a focus for environmental non-profits across the country. While there are some social service organizations that provide similar field-trip opportunities (e.g. People Serving People in Minnesota\(^\text{13}\)), according to this research, they are never focused on exposing kids to outdoor exploration and learning.

Another aspect of population is Project GO’s choice to fulfill its mission by providing activities for kids, and not families. Amongst the focus organizations, none have chosen to serve just kids. Instead they provide activities for both kids and parents, designing some activities for just kids, just parents, or a mixed group. Nature Play sees not just the

\(^\text{10}\) During the Nature Play interview, Longley talked about the opportunity to reduce the perception that increased emphasis on child safety does not always equal better parenting and as what cost this might happen.

\(^\text{11}\) http://www.childrenandnature.org/

\(^\text{12}\) An Analysis of the Nonprofit Capacity-Building Industry in Minnesota

\(^\text{13}\) Interview: Nick Tousley, Inner City Outings (MN)
behavior of kids, but also the behavior of parents and their perception of what is good parenting as one of the barriers getting kids outdoors. By engaging adults in activities, outdoor play become a family activity and helps parents gain comfort and appreciation for the experiences their kids are having. With respect to the age of targeted participants, Project GO was very comparable to the other focus organizations. However, when looking at the larger sample of interviewed organizations, some had a wider range of ages that they catered to, topping out at 18 or having no age limit at all. This does not appear to be a weakness for Project GO, but may be a potential opportunity for expansion if there is demand.

In addition to serving a unique population subset, Project GO provides programming all year round. While northern states appear to do this more (The P.I.N.E Project of Toronto and MORE Nature of Omaha both provide year round events and activities) than mid-latitude states -- where weather may be a deterrent for outdoor activity – this is another relatively unique feature of Project GO programs. This may give Project GO a competitive advantage over other organizations applying for funds.

The issue of transportation was an interesting one. None of the organizations interviewed provide transportation for their participants. Organizations like Fresh Air Family noted that they often times help coordinate transportation, but it is up to the participants to get themselves to an event. In the case of Inner City Outings, some chapters have stronger financial support from the local Sierra Club chapter, such as in Los Angeles, where they put most of their funds towards transporting kids. \(^{14}\) Across the board transportation was seen as an issue and large expense that was mostly dealt with by avoiding it. \(^{15}\) One of the benefits of working in suburban and rural areas is that open space is often much closer. Project GO’s current practice of minimizing travel for activities is important; however, partnerships with local businesses that might be willing to provide vehicles is an approach that was mentioned. Also, by partnering with organizations like the Minnesota Zoo or regional heritage centers, there may be new opportunities to minimize these costs.

Providing feedback when comparing organizations and their philosophy on charging fees for their programs and services is difficult as there is strong research to support both sides. \(^{16}\) As was previously established, the audiences served by the organizations other than Project GO and ICO are often not in chronic financial hardship. That being said, Fresh Air Family works with a lot of low-income schools, where over 50% of kids are on free and reduced lunches, offering special/no-cost “rates” to these kids/families. While Nature Play has the advantage of economy of scale, they charge families a fee equivalent to just $0.50 for the passports, which cost much more than that to produce. Depending on the types of programs being provided (after school, camps, weekly clubs, etc.) incorporating nominal fees may be an effective way to communicate the value of Project GO programs, while not being restrictive for families and kids.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Fees Assessed for Program Participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project GO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inner City Outings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh Air Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>MORE Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature Play</td>
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</table>

The last element of programming that is necessary to discuss is the use of technology. While use of more, or more sophisticated technology, is not an option for many organizations that are operating on tight, unpredictable budgets, there does seem to be a viable compatibility between web based platforms and computer interfaces and outdoor play. While it is a fine line, sometimes the best way to fix large problems is with small changes, such as having computer games encourage or require outdoor play that is void of the devices themselves. Activities like geocaching and “missions” (a passport with a list of activities that all kids should experience by age 12 and space for logging their completion) meet kids half way, incorporating technology and competition in exchange for more individual, outdoor activity and exploration.

Resources

The resources category is where the majority of both the strengths and weaknesses fell for the focus organizations,

\(^{14}\) Interview: Debra Asher, Inner City Outings (national)

\(^{15}\) An issue also pointed out in the report, An Analysis of the Nonprofit Capacity-Building Industry in Minnesota

\(^{16}\) An Application of Behavioral Economics Report
as is easiest to see in Chart 1 and Chart 2. Resources considers the access to funds, skills, and volunteer time as well as the type of leadership and leadership culture that is needed to run an organization successfully.\(^\text{17}\) When looked at as a group of organizational assets, more resource attributes were considered strengths than weaknesses, which may be counter to anticipated responses.

Culture of philanthropy

The primary resource strengths mentioned by interviewees was strong leadership and dedicated volunteers. Not one of the interviewed organizations feels that they have enough resources – funds, support, skills – or capacity to meet their needs. It follows that strong leadership exists for many of these organizations, as it has perhaps made the difference when other organizational assets have been lacking. Leadership was brought up both in the context of directors, as well as board members and sponsors (e.g. parent organizations). Fresh Air Family is an example of an organization that has been sustained in many ways by the dedication of founder Verna Gates, who has put in endless amounts of her own time, and sometimes even her own money.

While this is true, the UnderDeveloped report emphasized the importance of building a culture of philanthropy amongst leaders, staff, and board members. While the organization leaders were not asked outright if they felt the burden of raising funds, or if it was shared across the organization, none of the interviewees highlighted this as a bright spot, saying that they are well organized and good at sharing fundraising responsibilities. Best practices encourage all staff and board members to be philanthropic ambassadors and fundraising solicitors. For a young organization, the role of the board can be pivotal, as they themselves can help be custodians of fund development and can help create the tools to guide evaluation of fundraising operations.\(^\text{18}\) As a counter point, it is important that a board is up to the task, which can be hard for start-up organizations that often have board members serving longer terms (e.g. Project GO does not have a term limit for its board members).

While none of the interviews highlighted organizations with boards that have taken an active role in fundraising, some board member relationships have afforded the development of organizational partnerships (MORE Nature) or access to philanthropists interested in supplying legacy funding (Tuleyome).

The purpose of fundraising is not to raise money, but to raise donors.

- Kim Klein, Fundraising for Social Change

To help create a culture of philanthropy, it is important to keep development activities relatively transparent so that the whole organization understands how funds are raised and where the funding gaps exist. Communication between executive directors, development personnel, and the board should be strong and fluid. Surveys have shown that 39% of self reported “high-performance” organizations have executive leaders that were previously development professionals. For more modestly performing organizations, only 24% of directors had previously been in development positions.\(^\text{19}\) This finding encourages organizations to select leadership that has fundraising experience, as there is a greater correlation to financial stability.

Sources of funds

Due to environmental education programs facing fundraising challenges, some recent research has looked to analyze this problem. According to a report released in 2012 in The Journal of Environmental Education, it was found that environmental education funding represents a small portion of all environmental funding in the country, approximately 5%. This was based in a small sample of just 12 organizations, but is up-to-date research, as it looked at giving between 2003 and 2007.\(^\text{20}\) More funding was reported to go to issue related activities, such as climate change and energy related work. This is a disconcerting finding, but other research points to innovative fundraising as a path forward. This includes fundraising methods such as crowd-funding, and messaging through social media, as well as innovative expression of the value a program or organization brings to a community – not just the value

\(^\text{17}\) Success being defined by those that were interviewed
\(^\text{18}\) UnderDeveloped Report
\(^\text{19}\) UnderDeveloped Report
\(^\text{20}\) Trends in Philanthropic Support: Foundation Giving in Environmental Education
that will be added to an organization alone. Grant-makers often times are more interested in funding organizations that are seeking supplemental fundraising, as it serves to create a more sustainable organization.

A bright spot for all of the focus organizations was that they expressed an understanding of the value of building relationships with funders, not just asking for money. Lindsey Dawkins of Tuleyome’s *Home Place Adventures* talked about how hard they work at communicating the value of their programs to their potential funders. She expressed this as being very much of an ongoing task that is essential to finding sustained funds.

For a great number of organizations, the concept of multiple funding streams has been a big lesson learned. All of the organizations interviewed, that are not sponsored by government entities, work hard to build relationships with communities, businesses, and foundations. Building relationships with companies that have community ties in the towns and cities that the organization works, especially those with a strong social or philanthropic mission, has been the practice of organizations like *Fresh Air Family, Nature Play, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment,* and *The P.I.N.E. Project.* While *MORE Nature* has found it difficult to build partnerships with the healthcare community in the Omaha area, Minnesota has a very robust network of healthcare providers with substantial philanthropic armatures, which could be an advantage for Project GO.

A modest list of potential sources of funding or partnerships for Project GO has been kept, which can be found in *Appendix B.* While this list is just a starting point, this research has helped start a dialogue with the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, one of the principal organizations dedicated to providing free and low-cost guidance to nonprofits.

**Staffing and volunteers**

A number of organizations highlighted staffing and volunteer capacity as strengths. While there are no groundbreaking examples here, the stories of three organizations in particular, offer a healthy array of benefits. The first of these is *MORE Nature.* The “organization” is an unincorporated entity that is made up of just two full-time staff, each of whom are officially employed by other organizations (two separate organizations). Being that other organizations already had the tools and structure to support these individuals, *MORE Nature* has been able to leverage the benefits of dedicated employees hosted by other organizations. This has provided them not only with a certain level of work environment stability, but additional networks that they can tap.

*Fresh Air Family* has taken a different road, as it has never hired a full-time employee, but instead contracts its work to a pool of individuals that are interested in part-time work. This model has worked well for the organization during its initial phase (established 2006), as they have had some very large grants that required a ramp-up in personnel, as well as times where funds could only sustain the founder and nominal amounts of other part-time employment. However, this is not the model that *Fresh Air Family* intends to move forward with if it wants to achieve greater stability as an organization. The contract employee model has also contributed to the weaknesses they have seen in evaluation of programs and operations.

Lastly, *Inner City Outings* is an impressive example of what can be done with a durable reputation and volunteer commitment. All 50 chapters of ICO across the country (plus or minus two, depending on the year) operate with pure volunteer hours. The local chapters are able to do so because they have established the right relationships with local organizations, that provide the services they are unable to take-on, which is gaining access to participants – gathering and organizing. And ICO does not see this changing, as most chapters run on an annual budget of just $5,000. ICO understands that volunteer dedication is cyclical and every four to eight years each chapter usually experiences volunteer attrition, as many volunteers in their mid-20’s are entering a new stage of life. Despite this, ICO Twin Cities maintains a four to one ratio of volunteers to kids on their outings. ICO is viewed as a valuable and enjoyable volunteer experience and thus it is not uncommon for past volunteers to return.

While none of these staffing scenarios is seen as ideal, they have fit a certain need or stage in the life of an organization. Often in early stages of organizational development there is not time to think about how human resources can be

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structured more effectively, because the focus is so much on “doing” – delivering programs. However, there may be alternative staffing models that fit the moment.

**Opportunities for Project Get Outdoors**

While many of the opportunities for Project GO have been woven in to the above discussion, *Table 4* summarizes the primary findings from the full SWOT analysis that was conducted. As the focus of this report is to help Project GO find growth opportunities for the near term, *existing* strengths and weaknesses were evaluated. The opportunities included in *Table 4* are a combination of analyzing the strengths and weaknesses as well as learning from the other focus organizations and strengths and opportunities upon which they have capitalized. Some of these opportunities include the leveraging of existing relationships with organizations and communities and the potential to grow family and kid interest in Project GO, which in the long-term could be a fundraising asset.

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**Organizational Stability**

Project GO, like many of the organizations interviewed, is working to grow capacity to a level that is more sustainable. Part of the purpose of this report was to help provide guidance for how Project GO can do this. Consequently, as the concern around the issue of outdoor play is still a relatively new one, many organizations working in this area are still young, and were stunted by the recent economic recession.22

When asked about their strengths, weaknesses, and hopes for organizational/program growth in the next five years, all organizations, even those housed within the federal government (e.g. *Take it Outside*) talked about the lack of certainty in funding and the difficulty of trying to grow a program with these conditions. Thus, each organization’s definition of stability is different and of the nine organizations interviewed, only two, *Take it Outside* and *MORE Nature* expressed little to no concern about program stability. Their interview responses focused on efforts to maintain and expand current programs geographically or in depth – through additional staffing and variety of programs.

Many of the strategies and general best practices for organizations to develop funds and capacity have been discussed above, but there is a real opportunity not only for Project GO, but also for all organizations carrying out direct outdoor engagement with kids to form a network. The benefits of the network could be broad:

1. helping to grow awareness for the lack of child recreation and loss of unstructured play across the country
2. sharing best practices in programming and fundraising
3. signaling to funders the importance of this issue and the need for funding as well as the worthiness of this cause for businesses with philanthropic interests

Loose networks like this have been formed for educators who can lead and encourage outdoor exploration for kids and environmental learning. The former *Children in Nature Network* is a good example of an advocacy coalition that brought some of these organizations together, but a network that could fulfill the above needs has yet to exist.

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22 Interview: Verna Gates, Fresh Air Family
Table 5. Project GO SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

Each strength, weakness, and threat provides Project GO with a potential opportunity to increase capacity, stability, and reputation. For continuity, Project GO strengths and weaknesses are organized as they are in Table 3, but show resulting types of opportunities, how they could be applied, and where in the research each particular approach was discovered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project GO</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>By type of Strength</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Example Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal Awareness, Marketing, Messaging</td>
<td>AWARENESS: community members invest time and planning to get kids playing outdoors and help spread awareness</td>
<td>AWARENESS BUILDING &amp; NETWORK DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Help connect them to a larger national network like to help legitimize need for outdoor play for kids and help to grow further interest</td>
<td>Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment &amp; The P.I.N.E. Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Mission, Structure, Organization, Services</td>
<td>ADDED VALUE FOR COMMUNITIES: Research showing opportunities for promoting added value to a community</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING</td>
<td>Communicate to potential funders the added value Project GO regional staff could provide to a town/city, beyond supporting their own staff, such as providing environmental knowledge and awareness building through presentations and having a local presence</td>
<td>Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Partners, Networks, Collaborations</td>
<td>LEVERAGE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS: Project GO has worked to develop relationships with 4-H and Girl/Boy Scouts</td>
<td>PARTNER &amp; NETWORK</td>
<td>Ask sites you work in and existing / past partners to help you build new relationships with local businesses or funders</td>
<td>Under/Developed report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming Method, Population, Scope</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING: Promote the importance of local play (focusing on neighborhoods, but aren’t more than specific sites and attractions)</td>
<td>FUNDRAISING</td>
<td>Use this a marketing edge</td>
<td>(Interview analysis finding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP: Have enthusiastic founder and board members who want to see the organization succeed</td>
<td>AWARENESS BUILDING</td>
<td>Current board members promote unstructured play issues for children while target new board members that are tied to the awareness building side of the issues</td>
<td>MOVE Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
<td>RESOURCE: Have access to low-cost capacity through VISTA and university students</td>
<td>RESOURCE OPTIMIZATION</td>
<td>Optimize volunteer capacity at the regional level and within individual communities</td>
<td>Inner City Outings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
<th>By type of Strength</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal Awareness, Marketing, Messaging</td>
<td>APPAREL: Branding doesn’t do a lot to motivate those that are unaware of the issues with lack of unstructured play outdoors</td>
<td>MARKETING</td>
<td>Collaborate to grow messaging, utilizing emotional appeal through discussing potential consequences of not acting (see stats and research to reach parents and communities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Mission, Structure, Organization, Services</td>
<td>SUSTAINABILITY: Project does not account for ways to encourage direct play after they leave the program</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING</td>
<td>Encourage current/past kid participants to become active in the community Project GO planning committee in the future, reinforcing how a Project GO aims to create a sustainable program model at the community level, increasing funder interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Partners, Networks, Collaborations</td>
<td>PARTNER: Do not have a regional / national affiliation from which the program can garner support and marketability</td>
<td>PARTNER &amp; FUNDRAISING</td>
<td>Capitalize on the awareness and sharing of best practices done by organizations working on the same issue, both regionally and nationally (e.g. Children and Nature Network, B Shields Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming Method, Population, Scope</td>
<td>KG-OWNERSHIP IN PROGRAMS: Potential lack of kid ownership in the program, as adults organize to get kids together and outdoors</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING</td>
<td>Create opportunities for kids to engage in planning, organizing, and leading the outings, as this will increase kid ownership in the programs and help to grow organic interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
<td>RESOURCES: Do not have a dedicated staff person or paid support staff</td>
<td>FUNDING / SPONSORSHIP</td>
<td>Find a local or corporate sponsor to provide boiler plate funding or staff [1 or 2] for at least 2 years so they can organize other capacity building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREATS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal Awareness, Marketing, Messaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model Mission, Structure, Organization, Services</td>
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<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
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**Table 3. Project GO SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)**

Each strength, weakness, and threat provides Project GO with a potential opportunity to increase capacity, stability, and reputation. For continuity, Project GO strengths and weaknesses are organized as they are in Table 3, but show resulting types of opportunities, how they could be applied, and where in the research each particular approach was discovered.

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<tr>
<th>Project GO</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>By type of Strength</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Example Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal Awareness, Marketing, Messaging</td>
<td>AWARENESS: community members invest time and planning to get kids playing outdoors and help spread awareness</td>
<td>AWARENESS BUILDING &amp; NETWORK DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Help connect them to a larger national network like to help legitimize need for outdoor play for kids and help to grow further interest</td>
<td>Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment &amp; The P.I.N.E. Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Mission, Structure, Organization, Services</td>
<td>ADDED VALUE FOR COMMUNITIES: Research showing opportunities for promoting added value to a community</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING</td>
<td>Communicate to potential funders the added value Project GO regional staff could provide to a town/city, beyond supporting their own staff, such as providing environmental knowledge and awareness building through presentations and having a local presence</td>
<td>Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Partners, Networks, Collaborations</td>
<td>LEVERAGE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS: Project GO has worked to develop relationships with 4-H and Girl/Boy Scouts</td>
<td>PARTNER &amp; NETWORK</td>
<td>Ask sites you work in and existing / past partners to help you build new relationships with local businesses or funders</td>
<td>Under/Developed report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming Method, Population, Scope</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING: Promote the importance of local play (focusing on neighborhoods, but aren’t more than specific sites and attractions)</td>
<td>FUNDRAISING</td>
<td>Use this a marketing edge</td>
<td>(Interview analysis finding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP: Have enthusiastic founder and board members who want to see the organization succeed</td>
<td>AWARENESS BUILDING</td>
<td>Current board members promote unstructured play issues for children while target new board members that are tied to the awareness building side of the issues</td>
<td>MOVE Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
<td>RESOURCE: Have access to low-cost capacity through VISTA and university students</td>
<td>RESOURCE OPTIMIZATION</td>
<td>Optimize volunteer capacity at the regional level and within individual communities</td>
<td>Inner City Outings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
<th>By type of Strength</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal Awareness, Marketing, Messaging</td>
<td>APPAREL: Branding doesn’t do a lot to motivate those that are unaware of the issues with lack of unstructured play outdoors</td>
<td>MARKETING</td>
<td>Collaborate to grow messaging, utilizing emotional appeal through discussing potential consequences of not acting (see stats and research to reach parents and communities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Mission, Structure, Organization, Services</td>
<td>SUSTAINABILITY: Project does not account for ways to encourage direct play after they leave the program</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING</td>
<td>Encourage current/past kid participants to become active in the community Project GO planning committee in the future, reinforcing how a Project GO aims to create a sustainable program model at the community level, increasing funder interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Partners, Networks, Collaborations</td>
<td>PARTNER: Do not have a regional / national affiliation from which the program can garner support and marketability</td>
<td>PARTNER &amp; FUNDRAISING</td>
<td>Capitalize on the awareness and sharing of best practices done by organizations working on the same issue, both regionally and nationally (e.g. Children and Nature Network, B Shields Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming Method, Population, Scope</td>
<td>KG-OWNERSHIP IN PROGRAMS: Potential lack of kid ownership in the program, as adults organize to get kids together and outdoors</td>
<td>PROGRAMMING</td>
<td>Create opportunities for kids to engage in planning, organizing, and leading the outings, as this will increase kid ownership in the programs and help to grow organic interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
<td>RESOURCES: Do not have a dedicated staff person or paid support staff</td>
<td>FUNDING / SPONSORSHIP</td>
<td>Find a local or corporate sponsor to provide boiler plate funding or staff [1 or 2] for at least 2 years so they can organize other capacity building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREATS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal Awareness, Marketing, Messaging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Mission, Structure, Organization, Services</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Funding, Skills, Leadership, Volunteers, Time</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A
List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Interviewee Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Date Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MORE Nature</td>
<td>Omaha, NE</td>
<td>Christine Jacobsen</td>
<td>Education Specialist</td>
<td>(402) 315-1713</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cjacobse@papionrd.org">cjacobse@papionrd.org</a></td>
<td>March 21, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Play WA</td>
<td>Perth, Australia</td>
<td>Griffin Longley</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>(08) 9287-1003</td>
<td><a href="mailto:griffin@natureplaywa.org.au">griffin@natureplaywa.org.au</a></td>
<td>May 2, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Outdoor Exploration Program</td>
<td>Woodland/Davis, CA</td>
<td>Lindsay Dawkins</td>
<td>Program Co-Leader</td>
<td>(530) 902-0152</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pklein@blm.gov">pklein@blm.gov</a></td>
<td>March 1, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take It Outside</td>
<td>Bureau of Land Management (nation wide)</td>
<td>Patti Klein</td>
<td>National Program Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:pklein@blm.gov">pklein@blm.gov</a></td>
<td>February 15, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE)</td>
<td>Arlington, VA</td>
<td>Eleanor Hodges</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>(703) 228-6427</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elenor@arlingtonenvironment.org">elenor@arlingtonenvironment.org</a></td>
<td>March 22, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Air Family</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL</td>
<td>Verna Gates</td>
<td>Director and Founder</td>
<td>(205) 540-6642</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Verna@FreshAirFamily.org">Verna@FreshAirFamily.org</a></td>
<td>March 29, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The P.I.N.E Project (Primitive Integrated Naturalist Eds.)</td>
<td>Toronto, Canada</td>
<td>Andrew McMartin</td>
<td>Director and Founder</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:andrew@pineproject.org">andrew@pineproject.org</a></td>
<td>March 27, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner City Outings (national)</td>
<td>National Office, San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>Debra Asher</td>
<td>ICO Administrator</td>
<td>(415) 977-5568.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:debra.asher@sierracclub.org">debra.asher@sierracclub.org</a></td>
<td>April 18, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner City Outings (Mpls./St. Paul)</td>
<td>St. Paul, MN</td>
<td>Nick Tousley</td>
<td>Local ICO Chair (volunteer)</td>
<td>(612) 722-2172</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rmtravel98@yahoo.com">rmtravel98@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>March 27, 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: All domestic interviews were conducted over the phone and both international interviews via Skype.

Phone/Skype Interview Questions

1. Who started the organization/program and how? Over how many years was it established? (Learn more about org structure and how it fits into a larger program/org if applicable)
2. What struggles were experienced in getting early support and funding for organizational/program development?
3. How do you use partnerships?
   a. What breadth of partnerships do you have?
   b. How do they serve you and how do you serve them?
4. How many youth do you serve annually? Is there an emphasis on underserved youth populations?
5. Can you offer examples of program activities you provide?
   a. OPTIONAL: If the organization engages in advocacy and public awareness building how much do you believe this helps provide you with funding opportunities – whether this is due to funder interests falling more in line with this work or because it provides greater recognition for the organization?
6. How are volunteers utilized and how has this served to help the organization or its programs?
7. Costs:
   a. Do participants have a participation fee?
   b. What are the program’s main sources of funding?
8. Program/organization strengths?
9. Program/organization weaknesses?
10. What are the most unique features of the program/organization?
11. What are the plans for growth in the next 5-10 years?
   a. What is envisioned?
   b. What barriers are you encountering as you reach for this?
Sources


