

INTRODUCTION

This document provides a summary of market research for the North American Association for Environmental Education. The following report includes findings related to three major areas: Memberships, Services and Initiatives. The findings are based on the results of market research activities conducted during the fall of 2008 that included an online survey, interviews, focus groups and annual conference sessions.

Methodologies

1. NAAEE Online Survey

This online survey was distributed on November 24, 2008 and closed on December 22, 2008. Information gathered from previous strategic planning efforts, organizational documents, as well as information obtained from focus groups and interviews conducted, helped guide the development of relevant survey questions. The survey was sent to current, lapsed and non-NAAEE members, totaling approximately 7,800 e-mails. The link to the survey was also distributed via the EE News and other networks. In total the survey received 971 responses. A Raw Data Report of the survey findings is appended to this report.

Respondent Demographics

Table 1

	Current Members	Former Members	Non-Members
Female	74.9%	76.1%	71%
Latino/Hispanic	2.6%	4.5%	4.7%
Non-White	8%	9.7%	10.2%
Age: 45 or older	44.5%	57.8%	35.8%
11 or More Years in Environmental Education	53.8%	66.5%	32.1%

Of the total number of respondents (971), 31 were from Canada and 2 respondents were from Mexico. Across all of these respondents, 55% are current NAAEE Members, 17% are lapsed NAAEE Members, and 28% have never been a NAAEE Member.

2. NAAEE Annual Conference Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted at the NAAEE Annual Conference. These included an Affiliate Focus Group, a Committee Focus Group and a Commissions Focus Group. The groups responded to questions about NAAEE Membership, Programs and Initiatives. Feedback from the focus groups was recorded and transcribed and highlights are presented throughout this report.

3. NAAEE Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at the 2008 Annual Conference. The face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight individuals representing a variety of stakeholder including EETAP and USDA Forest Services representatives, Committee Chairs, Affiliate members and leadership, NAAEE Board members, and former and current NAAEE staff. Highlights from these interviews are included in this report.

4. NAAEE Affiliate Luncheon Table Discussion

A luncheon for Affiliate members was held at the Annual Conference. Each table was given questions about the NAAEE's work and partnership with Affiliates. NAAEE Board members recorded the responses at each table. The discussions were held at 8 tables with approximately 100 participants. Highlights from these table discussions are included in this report.

5. NAAEE Strategic Planning Open Forum

At the NAAEE 2008 Annual Conference, an open forum session was held allowing attendees to respond to several questions regarding their vision for NAAEE. Participants were asked to record their responses to chart packs on easels. Participants were free to respond to three questions: What is your vision for the future of NAAEE, What do you and your organization most need from NAAEE, and What are the most critical issues in environmental education today?

MEMBERSHIP

In all the market research methodologies, participants were asked about their experience with NAAEE membership. Overall, participant responses suggest that NAAEE membership is valued. Respondents indicate that the membership provides important networking opportunities and enhances their professional credibility.

When asked about reasons for membership in the interviews and focus groups many gave more philosophical reasons, including the critical role of environmental education in the world today.

“Being a NAAEE member is just the right thing to do.”

“There has never been a more exciting time for environmental education, this is our time.”

“NAAEE adds credibility, legitimacy to the field.”

“Together WE are making a positive change happen in education and the environment. Thank you for providing an avenue to make this happen.”

A number of membership topics were explored, including: Membership Value, New Member Benefits, NAAEE Organizational Members, Membership History, Membership Cost, Other Professional Memberships and NAAEE Nonmembers.

Membership Value

NAAEE Members participating in the online survey identified the most important reasons for originally becoming a member as the opportunity for professional networking other than at the conference (62%), the opportunity to attend conference (45%), and enhanced professional credibility (44%).

These themes were supported in the interviews and focus groups in which participants indicated they joined originally to attend a conference, participate in state affiliate activities or for professional credibility.

In the online survey, NAAEE current members ranked the current NAAEE member benefits most important to them. Identified as most important was discounted NAAEE conference registration (62%), access to EE-News (52%), discounted publications (33%), and subscription to the NAAEE Communicator (30%). Of least importance was Participation in Commissions (5%).

While respondents to the online survey were able to respond directly to lists of NAAEE Member Benefits, participants in the interviews and focus groups expressed some confusion as to what specific NAAEE Membership Benefits included. In all participants expressed a lack of certainty and awareness as to what the current NAAEE member benefits include.

“I’m not sure what role NAAEE member benefits play.”

“I’m not sure what benefits are available, and whether the benefits add value to the membership.”

New Member Benefits

Current and former NAAEE members were asked how interested they were in seeing specific new benefits. Of the respondents, 67% indicated they were interested or very interested in joint membership with their local environmental education association. Equally, 67% also indicated they were interested or very interested in discounted regional meetings.

NAAEE Organizational Members (includes Affiliate Members)

A total of 82 respondents identified themselves as NAAEE organizational members. Of organizational members, 37% ranked discounted NAAEE conference registration as most important to them (compared to 43% for individual members) and 33% selected Access to EE-News as most important (compared to 25% for individual members).

Of possible new member benefits, 70% of organizational members were interested or very interested in member benefits for more than one person at their organization.

32 respondents to the online survey identified themselves as Affiliate members. When asked about programs they are interested in seeing NAAEE provide to Affiliates; 83% were interested or very interested in mini-grants from NAAEE for local/Affiliate activities; 75% were interested or very interested in leadership for grant-writing that seeks funding for collaborations between NAAEE and Affiliate organization; and 66% were interested or very interested in a conference strand at the NAAEE annual conference for Affiliate issues/topics.

Affiliate members in interviews and focus groups identified a desire for an “enhanced partnership with NAAEE.”

“Developing a relationship with the state affiliates needs to be front and center.”

“View affiliates as true partners as opposed to satellites of NAAEE there to serve NAAEE.”

Membership History

Of the respondents 41% first became member 1 to 5 years ago and 43% first learned about NAAEE as a professional, through their organization.

When asked to explain why, if ever, they let their membership lapse, most indicated financial reasons. In some cases, respondents indicated individual financial reasons, and in others they reported that the previous sponsoring organization was no longer funding the membership.

“It used to be paid for by a government agency. Since I began working for a non-profit it became too expensive for either the organization or me to pay for.”

“Originally membership in the local affiliate included membership at the national level. When this changed, we continued to support the local affiliate, but the budget did not allow for additional membership at the national level.”

Some members indicate that they do not renew their memberships in years in which they do not attend the conference. Others indicate that they have other organizations to which they belong that take priority.

“I have other national organizations, which are more important to my education work.”

Membership Cost

Of current and former NAAEE members 39% said that the most they or their organization would pay for an annual NAAEE individual membership is between \$35 and \$55. Of the remaining respondents, 14% would pay less than \$35, 14% would pay between \$56 and \$65; and 19% would pay between \$66 and \$75.

When asked about organizational membership costs, 45% of organizational members indicated the most they would be willing to pay for the current NAAEE membership package would be \$150 to \$199. Of the remaining respondents 39% would pay less than \$150 and 13% would pay between \$200 and \$299.

For a membership package that includes additional benefits in which they are most interested AND individual member benefits for up to 5 people in their organization, 53% of respondents indicated they would be willing to pay \$200 or higher. However, of those 32 respondents, almost half would pay only between \$200 and \$249.

When asked what, if anything could NAAEE do to encourage purchase of a current membership reducing cost was the most common answer. Respondents suggested offering a reduced membership for non-profit members and including an NAAEE membership in local affiliate membership.

Other Professional Memberships

In the online survey, members and nonmembers identified their membership in other professional organizations. The majority of respondents (67%) indicated membership of an environmental association in their state/province/territory.

The most prevalent other professional memberships for current members were National Wildlife Federation (46%), Project Learning Tree (41%), National Audubon Society (40%), National Science Teachers Association (40%) and National Association of Interpretation (33%).

NAAEE Nonmembers

NAAEE nonmembers were asked to indicate their likelihood of participating in various NAAEE programs. Only 8% indicated they would be likely or very likely to attend an annual conference.

Of the nonmembers who responded, only 11% indicated they would be likely or very likely to purchase a NAAEE membership, compared with 40% who reported that they would be likely or very likely to purchase a membership to their local state/province/territory's environmental education association.

SERVICES

In all the market research methodologies, respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with the work of NAAEE. In the online survey, most services received a satisfied or very satisfied ranking by at least 45% of respondents. Only 38% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the category “Providing useful members-only programs and services.”

When asked to rank satisfaction with current NAAEE services the most common category that received a “Very satisfied” response was advocating for legislative support for environmental education (64%), followed by publishing high quality environmental education publications (62%), and supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators (58%).

Advocating for legislative support received either a “satisfied” or “very satisfied” response from Former Members, Current non-Affiliate Members and Current Affiliate Members.

The total list of services, and percentage of total responses, are listing in the following table.

Satisfaction Ranking for NAAEE’s Work

Table 2

Advocating for legislative support for environmental education (n = 573)	64.4%
Publishing high quality environmental education publications (n = 569)	62.4%
Supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators (n = 569)	58.2%
Implementing a materials review program based on the Guidelines for Excellence (n = 567)	54.5%
Providing professional development opportunities for environmental educators (n = 573)	52.9%
Promoting cultural diversity within the field of environmental education (n = 572)	48.4%
Supporting and partnering with state, provincial and regional environmental education associations (n = 573)	47.5%
Implementing an environmental education certification program (n = 570)	45.1%
Implementing a program to accredit teacher preparation programs in environmental education (n = 570)	44.4%
Providing useful members-only programs and services (n = 572)	37.9%

Note: Percentage who responded "satisfied" (4) or "very satisfied" (5) on a scale of "not at all satisfied" (1) to "very satisfied" (5)

Organizational Focus

Another theme that emerged from the interviews, focus groups and open forum conference session was centered on organizational focus. Concern was expressed over the number of initiatives and a certain amount of confusion of the goals of the organization.

“NAAEE should focus on actions at the national and tri-national level that can’t be accomplished at the state/province level by the Affiliates.”

“Less is more!”

“The Staff, Board and Volunteers are completely overwhelmed by the ridiculous number of priorities.”

“Avoid mission drift.”

“Would rather see the Association do less, better. Challenge is making the choice.”

INITIATIVES

Key findings across market research methodologies indicate the relative support for three major initiative priorities. These include advocating for legislative support for environmental education (59%), supporting and partnering with state, provincial and regional environmental associations (47%), and supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators (47%).

Respondents prioritizing the following NAAEE initiatives:

Table 3

Advocating for legislative support for environmental education. (n = 532)	59.2%
Supporting and partnering with state, provincial and regional environmental education associations. (n = 529)	47.3%
Supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators. (n = 544)	46.9%
Publishing high quality environmental education publications. (n = 521)	34.5%
Implementing an environmental education certification program. (n = 519)	32.0%
Implementing in environmental education accreditation program. (n = 528)	30.3%
Promoting cultural diversity within the field of environmental education. (n = 528)	25.4%
Implementing a materials review program based on the Guidelines for Excellence. (n = 529)	18.7%

Interestingly, two of the new initiatives that received the top ranking are also among those that garnered the some of the strongest satisfaction ranking in the assessment of current services on the online survey: advocating for legislative support for environmental education and supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators.

Interviewees and focus group participants also stressed the importance of advocacy.

“I feel [advocacy] will help provide opportunities to accomplish the other prioritized initiatives. It also has the power to rally folks around national/regional/local issues and initiates conversations with new audiences, partners and constituents.”

Supporting and partnering with state, provincial and regional environmental associations was a common theme throughout all the methodologies.

“Provide opportunities for organizations with similar missions to collaborate.”

“Promote sharing of resources among affiliates.”

“NAAEE is doing good things without a doubt...NAAEE can help support this action by continuing to host conferences, supporting affiliates and leadership development, bring together common ways to assess and quantify EE programs and make that data available to the states. Promote as a whole affiliates as the backbone for getting things done and use the direct results of the combined affiliates and their programs to help sell EE and leverage additional funding.”

In addition, supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators was a theme that emerged in the interviews and focus groups.

“NAAEE helps keep me up to date on research, theories and application of environmental education, primarily through the conference. For me as a graduate student it is a ‘no-brainer’ to belong.”

There were some similarities in how Former Members, Current Non-Affiliate Members and Current Affiliate Members ranked their top important new initiatives. Advocacy and supporting/partnering with state, provincial and educational associations both ranking among the top three initiatives.

In the table that follows, the top 5 ranked areas of importance for NAAEE’s future out of a list of nine initiatives are shown. The nine initiatives also included: Providing useful members-only programs and services and Implementing a materials review program based on the Guidelines for Excellence. Importance is ranked on a 9-point scale from most important to least important.

Market Research Highlights Report

Prepared for the North American Association of Environmental Education

The following highlights express what initiatives and services NAAEE current-affiliate members, current-nonaffiliate members, and former members would like to undertake:

Table 4

Note. These are the top 5 ranked areas of importance for NAAEE's future out of a list of nine initiatives that also included:

	Former Members	Current_Individual Members	Current_Nonaffiliate Members	Current_Affiliate Members
1.	Advocating for legislative support for environmental education (58%, n=103)	Supporting and partnering with state, provincial, and regional environmental education associations (85%, n=399)	Supporting and partnering with state, provincial, and regional environmental education associations (55%, n=40)	Advocating for legislative support for environmental education (70%, n=27)
2.	Supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators (49%, n=106)	Implementing an environmental education accreditation program (76%, n=398)	Advocating for legislative support for environmental education (54%, n=39)	Supporting and partnering with state, provincial, and regional environmental education associations (54%, n=26)
3.	Supporting and partnering with state, provincial, and regional environmental education associations (49%, n=105)	Advocating for legislative support for environmental education (66%, n=398)	Supporting networking opportunities among environmental educators (44%, n=39)	Implementing an environmental education certification program (35%, n=26)
4.	Publishing high quality environmental education publications (33%, n=103)	Implementing a materials review program based on the Guidelines for Excellence (61%, n=399)	Implementing an environmental education certification program (39%, n=39)	Implementing an environmental education accreditation program (33%, n=27)
5.	Implementing an environmental education certification program (29%, n=104)	Publishing high quality environmental education publications (58%, n=398)	Implementing an environmental education accreditation program (32%, n=38)	Promoting cultural diversity within the field of environmental education (33%, n=27)

Providing useful members-only programs and services and Implementing a materials review program based on the Guidelines for Excellence. Importance is ranked on a 9-point scale from most important to least important. This question was not answered by non-members.

Blocks highlighted in yellow indicate the only two initiatives that were not mentioned by any other group.

Other Emerging Initiative Themes

Diversity/Internationalism

When the online survey participants were asked to identify other initiatives they would like to see NAAEE undertake the largest category of response was related to a focus on diversity, primarily related to an increase in international focus, even though diversity was present on the offered initiatives to rank.

“I have been disappointed by the US-only focus of a supposedly North American Association. All of the discussions and keynotes tend to focus on US issues, with Canada and Mexico getting only token mention and attention.”

This theme also appeared in the interviews, focus groups and open forum discussions.

“We need to be more inclusive of who is sitting at the table. As a result of policy developed a few years ago the Board is fairly diversified now. But we need to reflect diversity in leadership, members and audience.”

Partnerships

The second largest area identified of new initiative priorities in the online survey was the development of effective partnerships. The partnerships identified included Affiliates, Formal Education (teachers) and Federal Agencies (serving as a bridge between various federal agency efforts).

“Providing opportunities for organizations with similar missions to collaborate. For example, many schools and organizations are doing work with school gardens, etc.”

“Create/promote linkages formal links with Federal Environmental Agencies and partnerships to promote/support International activities.”

This theme was also present in the interviews, focus groups and open forum discussions.

“Diverse partnerships, well-rounded programs and breaking the traditional mold of EE and what it looks like so we can be inclusive rather than exclusive, is what will carry the EE movement into the 21st Century.”