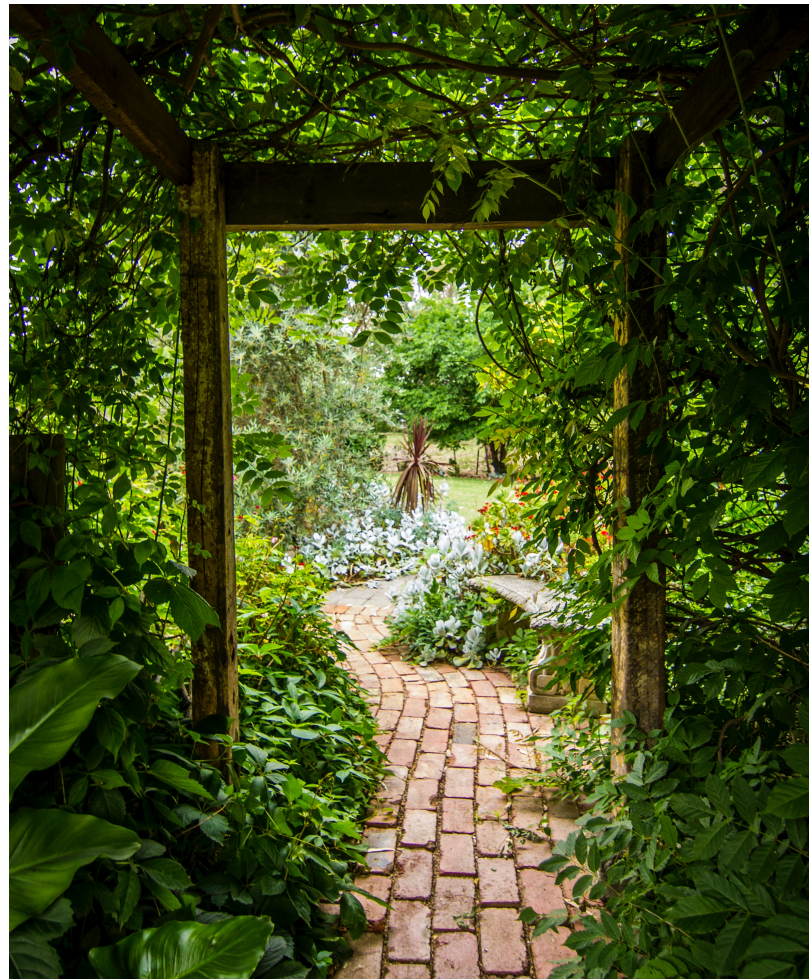




Engagement, Outreach, and  
Education Attribute



# Garden Workbook:



**Climate &  
Sustainability  
Alliance**

# Table of Contents

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Introduction ..... 1

Engagement Goal 1 ..... 2-3

Engagement Goal 2 ..... 4

Engagement Goal 3 ..... 5-6

Engagement Goal 4 ..... 6-7







## Introduction

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**The Engagement, Outreach, & Education Attribute** highlights the important role public gardens serve as the ultimate outdoor classrooms. As open spaces, wildlife habitat, and plant biodiversity continue to dwindle, public gardens have become powerful educational tools that underscore the importance of sustainable initiatives, strengthening the resolve to reverse this trend so future generations have the opportunity to explore, study, and learn from the natural world. As the human population continues to grow alongside urbanization, it is even more important for public gardens to communicate the value of plant conservation and inspire the broadest audience possible.

Engaging community members and finding ways for them to view your garden as a safe, inclusive, recreational, and educational place is an important part of every public garden. Public gardens can inspire and facilitate important connections among community members, businesses, and other cultural organizations.

This document lists the Goals and KPIs that have been identified as standards for gardens to better address this Attribute in their policy and practice. Please refer to this document as a workbook for what items gardens should try to prioritize (as it makes sense for your gardens needs).

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### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The Public Gardens Sustainability Index is intended to share examples of how gardens are contributing to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to inspire gardens to advance their own garden programs to further the mission of their institution while connecting to local, national, and global sustainability efforts. This Index is a first step guide on how to “get started” with implementing the SDGs from 2015. It aims to help gardens of all sizes and governance models understand the SDG Agenda, to start an inclusive dialogue on SDG implementation, and to prepare SDG-based local or national development strategies (or align existing plans and strategies with the goals).



Despite progress, the world failed to meet the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. In 2013, the latest year for which data are available, 59 million children of primary-school age were out of school. Estimates show that, among those 59 million children, 1 in 5 of those children had dropped out and recent trends suggest that 2 in 5 of out-of-school children will never set foot in a classroom.



# Engagement Goal 1: Understand and know who is participating in your programming (who they are, where they live, and what they are concerned about - environmentally, socially, economically, and otherwise).

## Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

a. Garden develops evaluation processes for all on-site or virtual/online educational programs/projects.

## Outcomes

- a. Garden does a pre, mid, or post-survey/evaluation of on-site or virtual/online educational programming.
- b. Garden has metrics for measuring program/project impact to compare with goals to evaluate success.
- c. Garden collects/tracks and evaluates number of participants along with demographic information (gender, age, income level, race) for programming and events.
- d. Garden compares on site audience demographics to the local community.
- e. Garden representatives attend community meetings to gather information about issues of concern and these issues are shared with relevant staff.

## Suggested Strategies



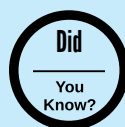
Rely on primary and secondary data sources (surveys, polls, town hall meetings, or individual/group interviews with community members). Secondary data could include previously gathered demographics/statistics, as well as summaries of prior workshops, surveys, program/events, meetings, or interviews. This can also include government-based data such as census information narrowed down to county or state or non-government organizations that may have demographic data, as well as survey and interview data with local residents. Other nonprofits, such as health care, social services, and community organizations may have demographic data. Additionally, cultural nonprofits such as museums and art galleries may have performed research on audience, visitorship, and membership, with thought to accessibility, relevance, and barriers. (Engagement.1.a).



Determine a methodology such as a scorecard rating system or evaluation form for analyzing current and future educational programming. (Engagement.1.a).



Before an event or program is implemented, it is helpful to have an evaluation plan and to develop learning outcomes. What are you hoping people will learn or experience? This will help to simplify the evaluation process, as it can be a challenge to find the time to assess program success post-event. (Engagement.1.a).



A clear objective for demographics data collection will communicate the importance and necessity of the research to all participants, as well as identify possible actions as a result of the research. Here is an example: "ABC Botanical Gardens would like to add new programs and events to connect with our diverse community (you!). Possible additions include grandparent/child play dates, cultural holidays and events, after school programs, garden tours, and culinary workshops. In order to create these programs, ABC Botanical Gardens requires information on the demographics of our members, visitors, and community members so that it can tailor its programs and events to your needs!".





**Engagement Goal 1:** Understand and know who is participating in your programming (who they are, where they live, and what they are concerned about - environmentally, socially, economically, and otherwise).

## Suggested Strategies Continued



Determine which staff members will be involved in short and long term monitoring, as well as the type of assessment best suited to the program, garden resources, and time allocated. For example, allocating a half hour period the day after an event for an employee to fill out a scorecard could be one way of quickly writing down feedback. Another example would be to send out surveys to workshop participants post-event, and allow half a day for an employee to read through results and extrapolate future improvements. (Engagement.1.a).



Anonymity when surveying is key in achieving honest results, as well as protecting identities. Group together labels that only have one or two respondents, for example if only two people answer "transgender", and one person answers "non-binary" in a demographics survey question on gender identity, the three can be grouped together into "transgender/non gender conforming." Consider current cultural and social issues, and remember and respect that individuals may not be comfortable giving data such as gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, or religion, despite best intentions of the organization and assured anonymity. Do not force participation of each question, and allow for participants to "prefer not to answer," as this ties in with building trust in your communities. (Engagement.1.a).



When writing demographic survey questions, consider the information that your organization might need now, and in the future. Common questions include age/age range, race/ethnicity, gender, ability, income bracket, and employment status. Other questions can include sexual orientation, veteran status, educational background, Indigenous status, etc., depending on the data your garden wants to collect. (Engagement.1.a).



**Engagement Goal 2:** Identify valued and relevant topics of sustainability in your region and include educational programming that addresses them (e.g. food systems in cities, water in drought prone regions, etc.).

### Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

a. Garden devotes resources (staff and budget) to community focused educational programs. EXAMPLE: Lewis Ginter has a Community Engagement Coordinator.

### Outcomes

- a. Garden takes time to meet with diverse community members to listen and learn what role they can play in facilitating education core to their mission.
- b. Garden has implemented programming and/or hosted events to inspire diverse community members to come and participate.
- c. Garden collaborates with external organizations, businesses, institutions that can connect diverse community members to programming and events of interest.
- d. Garden hires multi-lingual staff or volunteers that can help support educational programming and expand outreach into diverse communities.

### Suggested Strategies Continued



Create goals with a specific timeframe to procure funding for local underrepresented demographics that are interested in your educational programming, but lack funding or accessibility to your garden. Identify members of your staff responsible for the growth and development of educational programs targeted at these demographics. Hire or train employees to work with communities to develop appropriate programming, develop marketing and communication strategies, and determine current and future resources (staff, outside instructors, budget, space, materials and equipment, volunteers etc.) needed to successfully implement programs. (Engagement.2.a).



In the planning stage, it's important to engage people and listen to their stories to understand what they already know and can contribute. Using stories and narratives are a great way to connect diverse communities with the garden, and acknowledging the contributions and prior knowledge of the community. By identifying assets as well as areas of improvement, facilitating new collaborations, and being open to creative and holistic projects, a garden may be better equipped to develop long-term environmental projects with community buy-in. (Engagement.2.a).



Reach out to local consultants/businesses, colleges/universities, government agencies for research and data collection projects and connect these efforts to relevant on-site programming. This can then lead to ways for visitors to become involved in data collection processes, such as citizen science plant identification, pollinator projects, seed collections, and plant labelling. (Engagement.2.a).





## Engagement Goal 3: Fully engage with broad and diverse community members, ensuring equitable, inclusive, and accessible offerings.

### Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

a. Garden educational programming supports underserved demographics/community members. EXAMPLE: The Executive Director at Queens Botanical Garden noticed that the diversity of the borough was not reflected in the Botanical Garden's attendance. To address that, she started The Ambassador Program to reach out to ethnic communities and find out what they wanted in their public garden.

### Outcomes

- a. Garden offers free or affordable professional development training, events, classes, programs on site, accepting those that qualify for social and financial aid benefits (SNAP, EBT, etc.).
- b. Garden offers free or affordable online learning opportunities (webinars, online classes, etc.).
- c. Garden offers after school programs (taking into consideration time of day programming and events are offered to maximize inclusive participation).
- d. Garden provides transportation or reimbursement for the cost of transportation for teens or low-income families attending after-school or weekend programming.
- e. Garden provides free or affordable spaces for the community to use for recreational, educational, cultural, or religious purposes.
- f. Garden marketing and communications is accessible and easy to understand (in print and online, clearly stating the point of contact, who the program is for, registration policies and procedures, etc.).
- g. Garden educational programming includes certifications and other job training standards.
- h. Garden offers programs in multiple languages to serve a broader audience (refugees, immigrant populations).
- i. Garden offers horticultural therapy, nature immersion, or other wellness programs that serve people with a range of different abilities, and different mental and physical health needs.

### Suggested Strategies




Gardens that have identified communities where the language is not predominately English should strive to provide detailed information on food, parking, fees, rules of the garden, and educational panels and brochures in bilingual forms so that first time visitors might feel more comfortable and have a stronger connection to the garden. (Engagement.3.a).



Some gardens could also engage the community through local organizations that serve, for example, Latino families. (Engagement.3.a).



When looking to engage diverse ethnic communities, it is important to remember that there is a lot of difference and variation within ethnicity, race, and cultural communities. (Engagement.3.a).

 **Engagement Goal 3:** Fully engage with broad and diverse community members, ensuring equitable, inclusive, and accessible offerings.

**Suggested Strategies Continued**



The Latino community, for example, could be from Mexico, South America, or Central America. They could be recently immigrated, or primarily second generation with young families. It's crucial to understand your specific segment, gather direct input from the community if possible, and not make assumptions or generalizations based on race and ethnicity. (Engagement.3.a).



Some gardens offer family admission passes (2 adults and 2 children) to Title I schools to coincide with schools breaks (winter, spring, summer). Specifically targeting schools in underserved areas is one way to reach new diverse audiences. For gardens that charge admission, offering free admission days to broaden reach to low-income families and individuals is also a good way to increase accessibility. (Engagement.3.a).

**Strategy In Action**

Denver Botanic Gardens Go2Gardens community shuttle provides free admission and transportation between various Denver metro area cultural organizations, community centers and residences to Denver Botanic Gardens York Street and Chatfield Farms.



**Engagement Goal 4:** Increase community and regional participation in educational programming, identifying demographics that have not previously visited or participated in educational programming and events.

**Key Performance Indicator (KPI)**

- a. Garden collaborates with other external organizations to develop programming that serves the community.
- b. Garden educational programming is inclusive and diverse and geared towards different audience demographics (Garden offers a variety of educational programs and can identify a target audience, topic of interest, and need served for each of these offerings).
- c. Garden educational and public programming covers a diverse range of topics (Garden responds to community needs by offering a variety of educational programming that addresses local interest in sustainability, health, and community pride).

**Outcomes**

- a. Garden assesses and reviews the number of collaborations and/or partnerships for programs and events on-site and online regularly.
- b. Garden educational programming is inclusive, diverse, and geared towards different audience demographics. Garden offers a variety of educational programs and can identify a target audience, topic, and need served for each offering. Examples include: Adult education programs, internships, research opportunities, child/youth/family education programs, citizen science and volunteer projects, programs aligned with national and state learning goals, and programs for seniors.
- c. Garden educational programming fulfill identified community needs relevant to mission. Program participation and impact is continuously evaluated, monitored, and reported on annually.





## Engagement Goal 4: Increase community and regional participation in educational programming, identifying demographics that have not previously visited or participated in educational programming and events.

### Suggested Strategies



Think about what connections you have to a community, if there is a community member who can act as a volunteer or (paid) part-time or contract outreach officer/liaison, and ways that that community can be involved in programming or events. (Engagement.4.a).



Consider financial oversight, such as sourcing community partners and suppliers, marketing and advertising to specific audiences (in additional languages if necessary), and consulting with community stakeholders. (Engagement.4.a).



Support and build on a partnership with a local community organization by using local vendors, businesses, artists, and cultural practitioners in future events. (Engagement.4.a).



Often education, engagement, and outreach with local communities can be achieved by a garden playing the role of facilitator or partner. There are a lot of other organizations whose mission may align with yours. Use that to your advantage to partner with them for programming and events by offering your space or resources to help projects or initiatives that they support or advocate for. (Engagement.4.a).



Support existing external local goals or programs that the garden can help contribute to. This might be helping college students by offering internships that can lead to a career in public horticulture or supporting a specific education initiative by offering a free tour or program for public school students. Analyze who your garden currently serves and if there is a specific trend to visitorship and membership and if there is capacity or need to improve or expand programming. (Engagement.4.b).



Qualitatively and quantitatively share your garden's impact on education for internal and external purposes. (Engagement.4.c).



Staff that are involved in educational programming, volunteerism, and event planning should track the hours, participants, and outcomes of the work being done. This can be shared with stakeholders and help determine what kind of impact you are having locally and what work there is left to do. (Engagement.4.c).

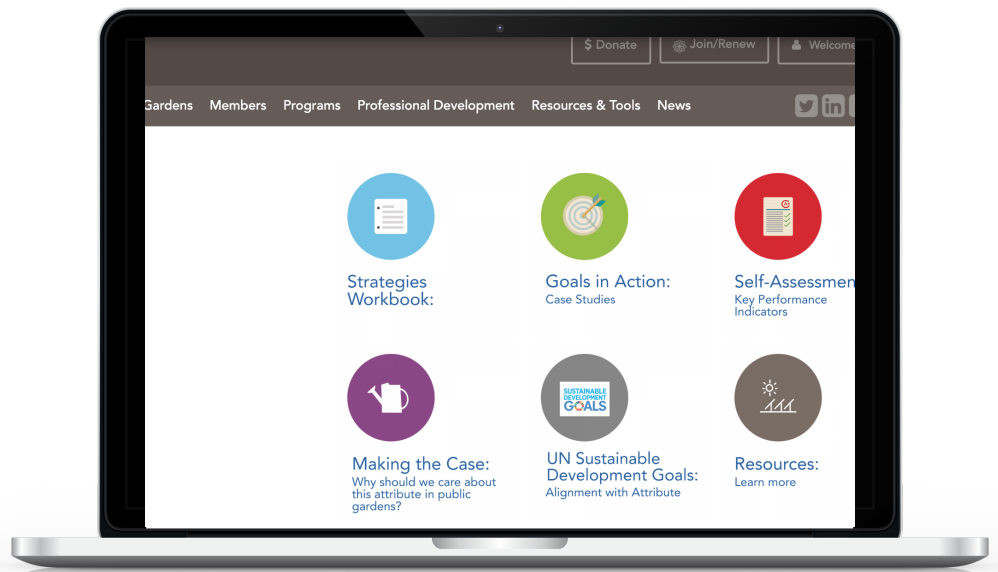


Build in components of educational programming that visitors and participants can take home with them. This could be growing their own garden on their property, sustainability best practices, how to commit to greener energy, conserving water, etc. (Engagement.4.c).



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the sustainability index attribute pages for more case studies, resources, and a self-assessment!



<https://www.publicgardens.org/sustainability-index/attributes/social-engagement-outreach-education>