Mighty Acorns
Partner Guide

We strive to build an environmentally literate next generation that has the know-how and inspiration to take care of nature in their communities, resulting in a healthier planet.
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Welcome

“Hey! Wanna play hide-and-go-seek...?”

Oh these sacred words! Nothing, in childhood, captivates the mind, body, and soul like the phrase “hide-and-go-seek”. These highly impulsive words create a surge of feelings, slightly hasty yet addictively enjoyable. For many, this simple game creates an energetic pulse to run, jump, and hide. The name can inspire happiness, laughter, or childhood memories filled with summertime play with friends and loved-ones.

Although easy to learn and fun to play, outdoor games like hide-and-go-seek are quietly becoming games of the past. While it may only require kids and access to an outdoor space, many children are instead indoors playing on tablets and phones and other screen-based media.

According to 12,000 people surveyed by the Nature of Americans report, “parents noted that their kids spend three times as much time on screens as they do playing outside each week” (Kellert, 2017). This means “childhood has moved indoors,” as stated by Richard Louv (2005), and now we as adults must actively enforce what outdoor play, already, teaches children: how to socially interact, quietly observe, and how to use nature as a healing force.

Angela Hanscom, who has researched the decline of outdoor play and environmental knowledge amongst elementary-aged children, also mentions that “children who have experienced play in a positive outdoor environment are more likely to exhibit behaviors such as improved motor, sensory, and social experiences verses decreased attention, trouble reading, poor posture, and increased aggression” (Hanscom, 2018).

In addition, Jessica Fong, a former elementary teacher at Spry Elementary in Chicago conducted video research after noticing student behavior at a local environmental play space, where she realized how positive environmental settings encouraged constructive interaction and problem solving. Fong documented that in “the traditional playground, 50% of the language was minimal — meaning that children in the videos were not talking or just screaming and yelling — and 27 % was conflict language, meaning the children were arguing or fighting. In the nature playground, it was a lot less: 8% minimal language and 15% conflict language (2018)."

This type of documentation shows us the power of programs like Mighty Acorns and why becoming a Mighty Acorns partner is so beneficial for kids.

Since 1993, the Mighty Acorns program has engaged over 120,000 students in hands-on environmental science throughout a four state region through the work of 20 organizational partners. This program addresses community health challenges through outdoor learning activities while creating enthusiasm for outdoor play and for productive community involvement through teacher and environmental educator collaboration.

To continue this mission, we need partners like you to help connect children to nature in their communities.

Learn how you can join the Mighty Acorns program to provide children with meaningful, sustained interactions with the natural world.
What is this Guide?

The Mighty Acorns Partner Guide will introduce you to the Mighty Acorns program and present the necessary first steps to implementing the Mighty Acorns program. Topics include how to choose an appropriate location, how to find prospective Mighty Acorns students and sustainable funding, and how to engage with staff and committed volunteers to pull off a successful Mighty Acorns program.

This guide is intended for prospective Mighty Acorns partners whose organizations are situated within the Chicago Wilderness region (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin). Types of partnering organizations may include public/government agencies, park districts, non-profits, schools, land trusts, or educational and cultural institutions, among others. Each partner must have a formal relationship with a natural area through which the partner can involve students in stewardship, exploration, and outdoor educational activities.

Examples of how current partners implement the program include:

- **Park Districts and Forest Preserves**: Engage students in Mighty Acorns on their land
- **Schools**: Utilize school grounds, local parks or preserves to connect kids to nature through Mighty Acorns science lessons.
- **Cultural institutions/Museums**: Guide students from Mighty Acorns schools in stewardship activities on their or other public land.
- **Land Trusts**: Partner with outside organizations to bring students to their land or engage directly with schools to organize the Mighty Acorns program.

How can Mighty Acorns improve your community?

Due to the longevity of the Mighty Acorns program, Mighty Acorns partners have been able to assess on-the-ground impacts and long-term community enhancements as a result of the program.

Over the past 25 years, the Mighty Acorns program has helped to create pride for one’s community through involvement in hands-on stewardship activities that emphasize clean water, clean air, and a healthy environment for both humans and nature. These hands-on outdoor learning activities have also created a sense of place, civic responsibility, and communal ownership for Mighty Acorns students who often tout an appreciation for the environment and a greater interest in nature due to the program.
Mighty Acorns Mission and History

Mighty Acorns is an elementary environmental education program that engages third, fourth, and fifth grade students and teachers in the Midwest in stewardship, exploration, and meaningful interactions with their local ecosystems through field studies and hands-on action-based learning opportunities that allow them to develop a lasting connection with nature.

Mighty Acorns Values

Mighty Acorns is guided by the Mighty Acorns Partnership to achieve our mission. The Mighty Acorns partnership is committed to:

- Facilitating an effective collaborative approach with formal and informal education partners to implement the Mighty Acorns curriculum throughout the Midwest
- Providing equal opportunities for all young people to experience nature by supporting field-study trips to local natural areas with students in order to foster a personal connection with local biodiversity
- Providing educators with the tools and skills needed to help their students tackle real-life environmental challenges and deliver hands-on learning opportunities that reinforce learning standards

Mighty Acorns Timeline

Although Mighty Acorns has evolved over the past 25 years, its focus remains the same: to foster a personal connection to nature through stewardship activities, exploration, and learning.

1993
The Nature Conservancy and Forest Preserves of Cook County creates Mighty Acorns

1998
Mighty Acorns expands from two partners and 2,500 students to 15 partners and 6,500 students

1999
Dunes Learning Center begins operating Mighty Acorns Nature Camp

2006
Mighty Acorns wins the Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Conservation Award

2007
Wetland Addendum incorporated into Mighty Acorns curriculum

2014
Mighty Acorns program expands from 1,400 students in Northwest Indiana to 3,549 students. Mighty Acorns partners are supported by a full-time partnership coordinator housed at the Field Museum

2015
The Mighty Acorns curriculum is revised to reflect current Next Generation Science and Common Core Standards

2017
Twenty partners and 12,000 students participate in Mighty Acorns annually

2018
Mighty Acorns celebrates 25 years
Mighty Acorns Partnership

The Mighty Acorns Partnership began as a collaborative effort of The Nature Conservancy and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County in 1993, as a way to engage young people from diverse communities in the Chicago area in stewardship activities. Currently the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois houses the Mighty Acorns Partnership and supports the Mighty Acorns Coordinator position to ensure further development of the program and advancement of the partnership.

Twenty Mighty Acorns partners provide meaningful, nature-based, science learning experiences to elementary-aged students. The partnership offers shared resources, professional development, program support, training, curriculum, materials and effective communication within the Chicago Wilderness region. Mighty Acorns Partnership Gatherings occur regularly to celebrate Mighty Acorns accomplishments as well as plan for future improvements to the Mighty Acorns program. To learn more about the partnership roles see the Partnership Agreement on page 17.

The Mighty Acorns Partnership is governed by the Mighty Acorns Leadership Team which consists of partner representatives who meet regularly throughout the year.

Chicago Wilderness

Mighty Acorns is also apart of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance. The Chicago Wilderness Alliance consists of 250 organizations in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan, is a leading regional force whose purpose is to preserve, improve, and expand nature and quality of life. This alliance also prides itself on connecting leaders in conservation, health, business, science, and beyond to tackle challenging issues to ensure a resilient region. If you are interested in learning more about the Chicago Wilderness Alliance visit chicagowilderness.org.
Mighty Acorns emphasizes affinity for nature and introduces students and teachers to green spaces within their communities, while teaching students about native flora and fauna species that encompass woodland, prairie, and wetland habitats. As a result of this exposure, students acquire the know-how and inspiration to care for nature through stewardship activities in their communities, resulting in a healthier planet.

How Mighty Acorns Works

Re-written for Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core Standards in 2015, this curriculum is divided across three levels. The curriculum commences with Level 1 (third grade), continues to Level 2 (fourth grade), and wraps up with Level 3 (fifth grade). Each level acts as a marker for student growth within the Mighty Acorns curriculum. Levels can also be adapted to various age groups and learning styles, thus incrementally building upon student knowledge in environmental science and ecology each year as shown in Figure A.

During the school year, students participate in in-class activities and three seasonal outdoor field studies. Field studies should take place at a designated local natural area where students are able to observe seasonal changes throughout the year. As shown in Figure B, each season is comprised of four main activities — the pre-field study activity (in-class), the field study activity which promotes hands-on outdoor learning activities, the post-field activity (in-class), and the summer camp.
Section 2: Why become a Mighty Acorns Partner?

Mighty Acorns is a successful and award-winning program with meaningful impact for kids and nature. By working together, the Mighty Acorns Partnership achieves far more than individual organizations can on their own. The Mighty Acorns Partnership has a strong 25 year history of working together to provide high-quality student learning experiences in the outdoors by sharing resources, expertise, and more.

There are many benefits to working partnership. From learning about best practices and useful environmental education resources, to professional development and access to the latest research on land management techniques, student development, and nature conservation.

Power of the Mighty Acorns Partnership

- Professional Development
- Adaptable classroom-friendly resources
- Shared evaluation measures
- A network of 20+ educators and 12,000 students
- Support from the Mighty Acorns Coordinator in building and sustaining your Mighty Acorns program

Benefits of the Mighty Acorns Partnership

- Support from Mighty Acorns Partnership
- Professional Staff
- NGSS-aligned curriculum
- Partnership letters of support upon request
- Quarterly Mighty Acorns e-newsletter, “The Seedling”
- Invitation to Partner Gatherings where partners have fun, share ideas, and learn new skills in the environmental education field

- Be part of a network of professionals that share best practices, funding, and professional development opportunities
- Support from Mighty Acorns partners for help and assistance with Mighty Acorns and/or other programs and projects
- Use partnership data and information collected for reporting and funding opportunities
- Use of the Mighty Acorns name in grant proposals and support in grant writing
- Use of the Mighty Acorns logo
Who participates in a successful Mighty Acorns program?

The Mighty Acorns program is strongest when partners, teachers, and the community work together to carry out the in-class and field curriculum.

Prospective partners should first consider the amount of staff necessary to implement the Mighty Acorns curriculum or if it is best to encourage teachers to teach the Mighty Acorns in class lessons and field studies. You may want to work with the Mighty Acorns Coordinator to help train staff on how to implement the Mighty Acorns curriculum.

Field Study Rotation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Stewardship</th>
<th>Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 9:15</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 – 9:45</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 – 10:15</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 – 10:45</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each station is intended for up to 15 students for a rotation time of approximately 30 minutes with a minimum of one adult to lead each station. Mighty Acorns staff, volunteers, teachers, and chaperones can help lead these various field study stations. This format provides for manageable sized groups and actively involves teachers, chaperones, and others in the field study.
Where does Mighty Acorns take place?

Stewardship activities can ingrain feelings of belonging and accomplishment where students actively learn about biodiversity through hands-on activities such as planting native flora, collecting seeds, removing invasive species and much more. It is good to consider if Mighty Acorns participants will be able to conduct the field study stewardship activities at your local natural area.

Below are some questions to consider when assessing a potential Mighty Acorns natural area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proximity to School</th>
<th>Access to Natural Areas</th>
<th>Need for Stewardship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Is the school close to the natural area? | Do students have access to natural areas or habitats, ideally one that provides a wetland, prairie, or woodland? | Does the natural area have a need for improvements such as:  
• trail creation/maintenance  
• removing invasive plant species  
• plantings  
• monitoring or other activities |
| Are natural areas within walking distance from the school or within a 10-15 minute bus ride? | Are the land owners/managers okay with students visiting the natural area? Are there rare plants or animals to keep in mind while at the site? | Can students safely do the above activities to improve the natural area through Mighty Acorns?  
To protect rare plants and animals, partners should ensure stewardship activities are in line with the natural area’s land management plan. |
How is Mighty Acorns funded?

Finding funding for your Mighty Acorns program is an important step, here are several ideas to help get you started.

1. Consider applying for grants that have an environmental, science, teaching, sustainability, or related focus.
2. Consider partnering with individuals and groups (i.e. Rotary Clubs and local businesses) in your community to support the Mighty Acorns program.

Budgeting

The main costs associated with the Mighty Acorns program are transportation, materials, and staff. Below are estimated numbers for the amount of money needed to launch a Mighty Acorns program. The following page will explain transportation, materials, and staff line items in further detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Item</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buses Cost: Fall, Winter, Spring</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>$700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Classroom Activities</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre &amp; Post Activity Kits</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>$4,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>Varies</td>
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<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>$7,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See additional budget details in Appendix B
Transportation

Most partners provide buses for their Mighty Acorns school to attend three field studies per year. Number of buses needed as well as cost of buses may vary by bus company.

To prepare for adequate busing throughout the Mighty Acorns year, first consider the number of classes per grade, from third-fifth. Then consider the number of students in each class versus the number of seats on the school bus.

Use the example equation below:

\[
\text{(Number of grades} \times \text{Number of classes in a grade}) \times \text{Number of buses/class} \times \text{Cost of bus}
\]

Classes Per Grade: 3 Grades (2 classes in a grade) = 6 grade school classes
Number of buses: 1 bus (45 seats)
Cost of Bus: $200

\[
6 \times 1 \times 45 \times 200 = 1,200 \text{ for one season}
\]

\[
1,200 \times 3 = 3,600 \text{ for three seasons (Fall, Winter, and Spring)}
\]

Materials

Program support materials are designed to help with the day-to-day logistics of the Mighty Acorns program. The cost of each item will vary based on the seasonal needs of each activity and the number of schools in your Mighty Acorns program. For further calculations please refer to the field study section in Appendix B.

Staff

Staff cost will vary depending on organizational wages and staffing. The bullet points listed below should be considered when budgeting indirect costs for your Mighty Acorns program.

- Number of Mighty Acorns staff
- Wages and number of hours worked
- Field study preparation hours
- Actual field study hours
How is Mighty Acorns evaluated?

Mighty Acorns evaluation can occur in several ways. Successful evaluations can derive from Mighty Acorns staff, administration and teachers, and/or students. The Mighty Acorns Partnership is another great resource to utilize for program evaluation and can provide numerous evaluation examples to assist with program assessment.

Mighty Acorns Partnership can provide:
- More than 25 years of varied evaluation results

Mighty Acorns Coordinator can provide tools for partners to assess:
- Teacher involvement and comprehension of the field study and in-class lessons
- Student knowledge of seasonal field study objectives, like comprehension of nature-based vocabulary words
- Student and teacher behavioral changes on field studies

Administration/Teachers can assess:
- Student behavioral changes
- Willingness to play outdoors or participate in free exploration

Student evaluation assessments can show:
- Changes in perception with pre-field study and post-field study drawings of nature

How is liability handled?

Partners are encouraged to consider liability when speaking to prospective Mighty Acorns schools about the Mighty Acorns field study.

In most cases, the Mighty Acorns school generally assumes liability for students on school grounds and on field studies to local natural areas. It is important, however, to discuss with school administrators to confirm who should assume liability for the Mighty Acorns program. Additional waivers from schools, partner organizations, or land owners may be necessary. Below are examples of different approaches to handling liability. If further information is necessary please reach out to the Mighty Acorns Coordinator.

An example of school based liability are Indiana partners, Dunes Learning Center and Shirley Heinze Land Trust
- Shirley Heinze Land Trust partners with Dunes Learning Center to conduct the Mighty Acorns program. The Land Trust provides land and staff for Dunes Learning Center’s field study stewardship activity in Indiana.

The Mighty Acorns school assumes liability responsibility [https://duneslearningcenter.org/permission](https://duneslearningcenter.org/permission)

An example of a partner based liability is Illinois partner, The Conservation Foundation
- The Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit land and watershed conservation organization dedicated to preserving and restoring open space, protecting rivers and watersheds and promoting stewardship of the environment in Northeastern Illinois. The foundation encourages all their Mighty Acorns schools to enforce permission slips.

The Conservation Foundation assumes liability responsibility.
How do I get started?

Connect with the Mighty Acorns Coordinator via the Mighty Acorns website (www.mightyacorns.org) to get started!

The Coordinator will meet with you to go over the Mighty Acorns program, display Mighty Acorns materials, supply a monthly timeline of events, provide a workshop of the 3rd-5th grade Mighty Acorns curriculums for Mighty Acorns staff and teachers, conduct a field study stewardship site assessment, as well as provide:

- Digital access to the Mighty Acorns curriculum
- Quarterly e-newsletter “The Seedling” with partner updates to learn more about Mighty Acorns partners
- Biannual calendar for the Mighty Acorns Partnership Gatherings
- Connections to other Mighty Acorns partners through partner gatherings and sub-committees
- Mighty Acorns Partner Agreement (see page 17)
- Contact with other Mighty Acorns partners to shadow a Mighty Acorns field study or the pre-field and post-field studies (in-class lessons)

Make your Mighty Acorns Plan

After the Mighty Acorns Coordinator has visited your organization and presented on the Mighty Acorns program, the next steps will help develop your organization’s Mighty Acorns plan. The Mighty Acorns plan should consist of several meetings with potential Mighty Acorns stakeholders to discuss institutional ability to launch the Mighty Acorns program.

These initial conversations should include:

- Staffing Plan
- Program Funding
- Transportation
- Stewardship Location
- Staff Mighty Acorns Training Plan
- Plan for outreach to prospective Mighty Acorns schools
Section 3: Next Steps — Build your local Mighty Acorns community

How to connect with local schools

Prospective Mighty Acorns schools are everywhere and there are many ways to reach out to administrators and teachers.

To assist with reaching out to a prospective Mighty Acorns school, the Mighty Acorns partnership has drafted an administration outreach letter. This easily alterable letter is designed to set the foundation for positive communication amongst the Mighty Acorns partner and their prospective Mighty Acorns schools. When sent to administrators, this letter helps to create building blocks to potentially engage all 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students. When sent to a prospective Mighty Acorns teacher, this letter helps to establish direct collaboration with the teacher and his or her students, which could create a pathway for engaging all 3-5th grade students in the future. While effective, the administration letter is not your only option. Consider the different methods below to pitch your Mighty Acorns program.

• Email, call, or drop by the local school to engage with administrators and teachers about the Mighty Acorns curriculum. Administrators and teachers may be interested in integrating Mighty Acorns into existing science curriculum and adapting it to meet specific learning objectives. The Mighty Acorns curriculum may also supplement all in-class curricula from language arts to social studies and can act as the prospective school's social science curriculum depending on the needs of the prospective teacher and the abilities of their students.

• Direct prospective Mighty Acorns schools to the Mighty Acorns website to learn about the curriculum, field study visits, and the summer camp. Remember to follow up with prospective schools to strengthen communication for future field studies, classroom visits, and professional developments.

• Notify the Mighty Acorns Coordinator to accompany you on administrative and or teacher visits. The Coordinator can assist in outreach to prospective schools as needed.

• Prep meeting discussion points to include: Mighty Acorns NGSS aligned curriculum with interdisciplinary units, classroom resources, transportation policies, program costs, in-class staff support (if available), school testing dates, and future field study dates.

• Remember to ask questions! This will show your prospective Mighty Acorns school that your organization is a valuable resource.

• Remember the Mighty Acorns Coordinator can assist you with any of the above!
How to engage the community

Choosing the right staff members and volunteers to conduct any program can be difficult, however if done right -- can be extremely rewarding. For this section one should consider organizational needs and the current job responsibilities of your staff. Can they take on another program? Do current staff and volunteers have the skills to conduct field studies with elementary aged students?

Volunteers

Volunteers are a wonderful asset to any program but especially to an organization with limited staff. These valuable individuals can add environmental knowledge to the Mighty Acorns experience.

Volunteers may add value to the:

- Mighty Acorns field study: exploration station, educational activity, and stewardship
- Pre and Post In-class activities
- Field study as chaperone personnel

Chaperones

Mighty Acorns field studies are best when adults take an active role. Invite of enthusiastic parents to chaperon — they are a valuable resource when given clear guidance on how to assist with the field study.

Keep a few things in mind while working with chaperones. Most chaperones are partnered up to a 1:10 ratio (1 adult per 10 students) while monitoring students on seasonal field studies. To prepare your chaperone, provide them with a chaperone tip list to help them view themselves as a leader with naturalist skills on the Mighty Acorns field study.

Encourage chaperones to instruct students to

- Slow down and take a closer look. The natural environment is too big to see in one day. Help students take time to investigate their surroundings through their senses.
- Ask students lots of questions. Who...? What...? Where...? When...? Why...? How...? Students enjoy talking about what they are seeing. These types of conversations also help students to process and remember information.
- Help students use materials provided (field guides, magnifying glasses, etc.) to identify unknown plants and animals while exploring.

And remind chaperones to

- Stay with their students at all times and to assist the leader in maintaining a good learning environment.
- Help and protect our natural environment by reducing litter during the field studies. Allow for clean up time if needed.
- Not disturb or collect natural objects. Do not take any natural objects with you. Return all insects and animals to where they were found.
- Not smoke or use cell phones unless taking authorized Mighty Acorns pictures.
Conclusion

Mighty Acorns is a successful environmental educational partnership program. The curriculum gives partners seasonally structured activities that build knowledge, skills, and love for nature, year after year, through hands-on environmental activities inside and outside of the classroom.

Partners benefit from working together through the Mighty Acorns Partnership. They share resources and a sense of pride in engaging the next generation of environmental leaders throughout the Chicago Wilderness region. In turn, these shared resources contribute to student learning and engagement with local ecology in their community. Thus encouraging students to see themselves as agents of change as well as understand the importance of environmental education via the Mighty Acorns program.

If your organization is interested in learning more about Mighty Acorns contact the Mighty Acorns Coordinator at info@mightyacorns.org and inquire about the next steps to joining the Mighty Acorns program. We look forward to partnering with you!
Bibliography


Appendix A: Mighty Acorns Partnership Agreement

Mighty Acorns is an environmental education program that connects students to multiple, meaningful and sustained interactions with their local ecosystems. Partners can be found all throughout the Chicago Wilderness region working together with local schools and land owners to provide program experiences to elementary-aged students. Mighty Acorns is over twenty years old and has grown to reach over 13,000 students each school year and will continue to be a model for environmental education programming in the Midwest.

The Mighty Acorns program would not be sustainable and successful if not for the strong partnership between organizations, institutions, government agencies and schools. Together, partners collaborate and share ideas and resources in order to make the most impact. This Partner Agreement creates a voluntary network of independent agencies and organizations that share common goals for the Mighty Acorns program. The Partner Agreement reflects a commitment among the partners to work together to fulfill the vision and mission of Mighty Acorns.

I. Mighty Acorns Vision

We strive to build an environmentally literate next generation that has the know-how and inspiration to take care of nature in their communities resulting in a healthier planet.

II. Mighty Acorns Mission

Mighty Acorns is an elementary environmental education program that engages 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students and teachers in the Midwest in stewardship, exploration, and meaningful interactions with their local ecosystems through field studies and hands-on, action-based learning opportunities that allow them to develop a lasting connection with nature.

III. Mighty Acorns Partners

Mighty Acorns Partners consist of federal, state, county and local agencies, education institutions, not for-profit agencies and foundations that provide and/or support the mission of the Mighty Acorns program and are willing to commit resources to the fulfillment of the vision and mission of Mighty Acorns. There are two types of Mighty Acorns Partners: Providers and Supporters. A Mighty Acorns Partner can be both a Provider and a Supporter

A. Partner Providers (must adhere to all bullet points):

- Deliver and/or facilitate the Mighty Acorns program in a manner that aligns with the mission and vision
- Assign staff to serve on a Mighty Acorns team to assist with furthering the partnership’s annual goals.

Mighty Acorns Partner Benefits

- Use of the Mighty Acorns logo.
- Use of the Mighty Acorns name in grant proposals and support in grant writing.
- Receive partnership letters of support upon request.
- Be part of a network of professionals that share best practices, funding and professional development opportunities.
- Invitation to Partner Gatherings where partners have fun, share ideas, and learn new skills in the environmental education field.
- Support from Mighty Acorns partners for help and assistance with Mighty Acorns and/or other programs and projects not related.
- Use partnership data and information collected for reporting and funding opportunities.
- Receive a Mighty Acorns monthly email update.
• Attend at least one Partner Gathering each year.

• Provide information to the Mighty Acorns Coordinator such as number of Mighty Acorns students, schools, and land restored through the program.

• Provides stories, pictures, and other program information to the Mighty Acorns Coordinator.

• Respond to partnership emails, phone calls, and other communications in a timely manner.

• Inform the Mighty Acorns Coordinator of any problems or difficulties that may arise within the Mighty Acorns program throughout the year to ensure that help is received and partner feels supported.

• Implement the most current Mighty Acorns curriculum and ensure materials and supplies are up to-date with the curriculum.

B. Partner Supporters (must adhere to at least one bullet point):

• Provide land for Mighty Acorns student stewardship opportunities.

• Provide direct funding for Mighty Acorns programming.

• Provide in-kind staff time by volunteering for Mighty Acorns events, programs, and/or serving on Mighty Acorns teams.

• Work directly with students to get them involved with Mighty Acorns (teachers, schools, and school districts).

Any partner may withdraw from the Mighty Acorns Partnership at any time by providing written notice of intent to withdraw. A member that does not meet commitments may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the Leadership Team.

IV. Organization

The Mighty Acorns Partnership is organized as follows:

A. The Mighty Acorns Leadership Team: Members of the Leadership Team include a diverse range of partners lengths of involvement with the program, geographic locations within Chicago Wilderness, sizes of organizations, and more. Each member’s term is two years, with option to renew.

The Leadership Team, with support from the Mighty Acorns Coordinator, will:

• Provide overall direction for the Mighty Acorns Program.

• Govern decisions of the larger Mighty Acorns Partnership.

• Oversee current projects/teams.

• Ensure that all teams are adequately staffed.

• Manage budget/financial resources.

• Administer Partner Agreement.

• Communicate with all partners.

• Establish policies and procedures for the Partnership.

• Perform other duties as necessary.

B. The Mighty Acorns Marketing and Impact Team: Members of the Marketing and Impact Team include a diverse representation of our partners including range in: length of involvement with the program, geographic location within Chicago Wilderness, the size of organization they represent, etc. Each member’s term is two years, with option to renew.
The Marketing and Impact Team, with support from the Mighty Acorns Coordinator, will:

- Create and guide the marketing and communications plan for the Mighty Acorns Partnership.
- Govern decisions of marketing and communication vehicles used to communicate the Mighty Acorns message.
- Oversee marketing and communication vehicles (website, handouts, social media, etc.).
- Communicate with partners how marketing and communication vehicles are used and how to get the most out of them.
- Establish policies and procedures for communication and marketing vehicles.
- Manage projects and teams that are specific to marketing and communications.

C. Other Mighty Acorns Teams: Other Mighty Acorns Teams can form based on program needs, funding, and partner interests. The Mighty Acorns Coordinator will gauge partnership needs in order to form a new team and then work with partners to get a team together, goals developed, and provide overall direction.

Future teams could be but are not limited to: curriculum and assessment, Mighty Acorns Nature Camp, professional development and networking, and fundraising.

D. Mighty Acorns Coordinator: The Mighty Acorns Coordinator maintains communication among partners, recruits new partners, coordinates fundraising opportunities, manages the supporting grant(s) for the overall program, serves as primary contact for the program and partnership, attends all committee and board meetings, assists each committee as needed and provides general support for the program and partnership. This position is a paid (full-time) position hosted by a Mighty Acorns partner organization.

Fundraising for the position is the responsibility of the partnership.

V. Meetings

A. Meetings of the Mighty Acorns Teams: The Mighty Acorns teams meet independently at least six times a year.

B. Partner Gatherings: The partnership organizes at least two professional development gatherings each year. These meetings are intended to provide partners with:

- A forum for networking with other partners.
- Training on how to utilize or implement the results of current partnership projects.
- Opportunities to learn best practices for implementing the curriculum and/or program components.
- Connections to Chicago Wilderness projects that is relevant to Mighty Acorns educators.
- Engage in professional development opportunities.
VI. Mighty Acorns Partner Signature:

By signing this Mighty Acorns Partner Agreement you are distinguishing between being a Mighty Acorns Partner Provider, Supporter or both. You agree to the requirements outlined in the agreement and able to contribute to the partnership that will maintain the integrity and value of the Mighty Acorns vision and mission.

__________________________
Agency

__________________________
Print Agency Executive Council Representative Name

__________________________
Signature of Agency Executive Council Representative  Date

Please Check Whether You Are a Mighty Acorns Partner Provider, Supporter, or Both:

____ Provider
____ Supporter
____ Both
Appendix B: Additional Budget Detail

Field Study Activity

The Field Study activity composes of a stewardship rotation, an exploration rotation, and an education rotation. Each rotation should have ideally no more than 15 students. However it may be a great idea to budget in extra materials.

Stewardship

Example: (estimate # of students per rotation x # of stewardship materials per student)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Students</th>
<th>Approximate Cost of stewardship material</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 students</td>
<td>15in. Loppers = $18.99</td>
<td>15 students x 1 loopers x $18.99 = $284.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 1 looper per student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 students</td>
<td>Youth to Adult Gloves = $10 - $17</td>
<td>15 students x 1 set of gloves = $150 - $255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 1 set of gloves per student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 students</td>
<td>Wire Mesh Safety Glasses = $8 - $10</td>
<td>15 students x 1 pair of goggles = $120 - $150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 1 pair of goggles per student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Estimated Cost = $550 - $700
**Exploration**

Provide one Mighty Acorns exploration backpack for each student (15 students) or Provide one Mighty Acorns exploration backpack for the exploration leader with the items listed below (enough for each student).

- bug boxes
- seasonal identification cards (Field Museum Color Guides)
- binoculars or monoculars
- magnifying glasses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Cost of Exploration Material</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 15 students x 1 backpack per student | • Bug Boxes = $13.90 (pack of 10)  
• Field Museum Color Guides = $0  
• Monoculars = $19.98  
• Magnifier = $1.75  
• Black Backpack = $17.82 | • $13.90 a pack x 2 packs of bug boxes = $27.80  
15 students x $0 = $0.00  
15 students x $19.98 = $299.70 per monocular  
15 students x $1.75 per magnifier = $26.25  
15 students x $17.82 per backpack = $267.30 |
| **Total Estimated Cost:** $621.05 |
| 1 backpack x exploration leader | • Bug Boxes = $13.90 (pack of 10)  
• Field Museum Color Guides = $0  
• Monoculars = $19.98  
• Magnifier = $1.75  
• Black Backpack = $17.82 | • 1. $13.90 a pack x 2 packs of bug boxes = $27.80  
15 students x $0 = $0.00  
15 students x $19.98 = $299.70 per monocular  
15 students x $1.75 per magnifier = $26.25  
Black Backpack = $17.82 |
| **Total Estimated Cost:** $371.57 |
**Education**

While seasonal educational activities may vary in supplies needed, all field study educational activities are designed to engage 15 students at a time. Pre-check field study educational kits before field study to assess supplies. The Mighty Acorns Coordinator can share the Materials to Order document to assist with supply purchases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Fall Education</th>
<th>Winter Education</th>
<th>Spring Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Who Has The Better Beak  $210.80</td>
<td>Predator And Prey $125.98</td>
<td>Calling All Birds = No Extra Material Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All About Seeds $95.42</td>
<td>Every Tree for Itself $37.20</td>
<td>What About My Needs = No Extra Material Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>The Great Food Chase $86.82</td>
<td>We’re All In This Together $21.49</td>
<td>What’s The Impact $62.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre and Post Field Study (In Class Activities)**

Each teacher should receive one Mighty Acorns binder and should have 1 or 2 Mighty Acorns kits to share with other grade level teachers. Partners should remember to collect and restock the Mighty Acorns kits at the end of the school year.

**Mighty Acorns Curriculum Binders**

Printing in house, if available, could be more cost effective but if this option is not available consider a professional printing source. Printing the curriculum in bulk may produce varied prices versus ordering one curriculum copy per level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Binders</th>
<th>Cost of Curriculum Binder</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Binders for Levels 1 - 3</td>
<td>Round Ring Binder $10.99 (pack of 4)</td>
<td>$10.99 a pack x 3 packs of binders $32.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 = 89 colored pages</td>
<td>$40-$50 for 1 color copy</td>
<td>$40-$50 x 10 copies $445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 = 114 colored pages</td>
<td>$60-$70 for 1 color copy</td>
<td>$60-$70 x 10 copies $950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 = 78 colored pages</td>
<td>$40-$50 for 1 color copy</td>
<td>$40-$50 x 10 copies $445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Estimated Cost** $1,872.97
Mighty Acorns Curriculum Pre and Post Field Study Activity Kits

Supplies can be purchased from a variety of places. The Mighty Acorns Coordinator can share the Materials to Order document to assist with supply purchases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Pre/Post Activity Kits</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kit Organizational Supplies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laminator, Poly envelopes, rubber</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bands, kits, laminator paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level Education Materials:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 Kit Books, food coloring</td>
<td>$29.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toy insects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Kit Books, ziplock bags</td>
<td>$48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kidney beans, tweezers, yarn,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magnify lens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Kit Yarn, books, 25ft.</td>
<td>$19.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of rope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labeling</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery Labels</td>
<td>$11.99 (300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labels in package)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Estimated Cost Per Kit = $547.07