



Strategic Plan 2020-2023
APPROVED December 2, 2019

STRATEGIC VISION

Thorne's success in achieving the goals and objectives set forth in this strategic plan will result in the following:

- Thorne will remain an efficient and effective organization with an exceptionally talented and motivated team of staff, board, and volunteers who have the knowledge and capacity to deliver the highest quality of programs to connect youth and families to nature.
- Thorne will further improve its financial capacity, including expanded earned income and philanthropic support through exceptionally marketed and implemented programming and fundraising that effectively maximizes on our community's desire to engage in and support programs that connect youth and families to nature.
- Thorne will be a more inclusive organization, whose board and staff are representative of the demographics of Thorne's participants.
- No Boulder County youth or families will experience barriers to participating in Thorne programs.
- The Nature Kids/Jovenes de la Naturaleza collective impact project, which delivers nature programs to underserved youth, will be successfully operating in Lafayette, Boulder, and Longmont.
- Thorne will operate a robust family program that effectively engages families from all backgrounds in connecting youth to nature.
- Thorne will operate a successful and profitable Nature Preschool.
- Thorne's Early Childhood Education programs will have expanded to reach underserved populations.
- Boulder County's Environmental Education Community, with Thorne as its leader, will be more effective at delivering a continuum of whole-child environmental education programs from pre-k to high school.
- Boulder County policy makers, government agencies, and parents will be more engaged in supporting efforts to connect youth to nature, including growth in both the number of nature play areas and opportunities for youth to spend unstructured time in nature.
- Thorne's headquarters at Sombrero Marsh will provide staff with an efficient and effective work environment and youth and parents and students and teachers with an exceptional site to connect with and explore in nature.

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan was designed to provide Thorne Nature Experience with a road map for the most efficient, effective, and meaningful way to achieve its mission to build Earth stewardship by connecting all youth to nature through joyful, place-based, hands-on environmental education experiences that foster an emotional connection to nature.

Thorne's Board and staff completed substantial research and invested significant time in debating and deciding upon the goals and objectives set forth in this plan. Research included review of Thorne's current strategic plan, a 360 degree organizational assessment, analysis of community trends, and analysis of trends in the field of environmental education within our community and nationally.

The Board and staff agree that the plan is ambitious, and that all of the programmatic, collaborative, advocacy, and organizational goals and objectives may not be achievable in the coming four years. As such, progress in achieving the plan's goals and objectives will be reviewed during the first quarter of 2023 to determine if the plan should be revised and extended to include 2024 or 2025 or if it is appropriate to begin a new planning effort and write the next strategic plan for the organization.

In the event that not all goals and objectives can be met according to the timeline prescribed, it is important to understand the Board and staff's general preference is to always maintain Thorne's excellence in the delivery of its own programs with a preference towards outdoor versus indoor programs and more immersive programming like Preschool, Summer Camp, and After School as compared to Field Trips or In-School. Board and staff believe Collaborative efforts serve as a logical outgrowth of exceptional direct service programming and advocacy work as an outgrowth of collaborative programs. Equity and inclusion goals must be a focal point of and achieved through all direct service, collaborative, and advocacy efforts. Finally, the Board and staff are very interested to understand how its mission might be served even better through family programs and understand that as our knowledge of the impact and potential of family programs grows, we may prioritize those efforts over some existing direct service programs. Priority ratings are included within the plan to help identify the preferences expressed above.

In addition to charting a course for Thorne's near future, this strategic plan will prove invaluable in helping Thorne determine when to deviate from its chosen path. It is inevitable that along the journey, Thorne will encounter numerous unforeseen challenges and opportunities. In each of these instances, the plan will provide Thorne with a clear understanding of what it is giving up when it chooses to take a different path towards achieving its inevitably bright and successful future.

NOTE: The following abbreviations are used to designate leadership objectives: BOD – Board of Trustees; E.D. – Executive Director; P.D. – Program Director; D.D.M. – Director of Development and Marketing; F.D. – Finance Director; P.S.D. – Preschool Director; C.P.D. – Community Partnerships Director; A.D. – Administrative Director; S.P.M. – School Programs Manager; S.C.M. – Summer Camp Manager; V.M. – Volunteer Manager; I.M. – Inclusiveness Manager.

PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

Goal P1:

Measure success of programs, including their ability to build Earth Stewardship, and use information to adjust programs and program delivery as needed

Objectives:

1. Establish annual evaluation goal to advance organizational understanding of the impact of Thorne's programs at achieving Thorne's mission
 - Timing: ongoing annually during goal setting and budget process
 - Lead: P.D., Staff
 - Priority: MANDATORY

Goal P2:

Expand reach of Thorne's **Early Childhood Education Programs**

Objectives:

1. Expand Nature Preschool program in accordance with existing business plan
 - Timing: ongoing
 - Lead: P.D., P.S.D.
 - Priority: HIGH
2. Design and implement plan to expand impact of Thorne's Early Childhood programs into Thorne's Nature Immersion Initiative Schools
 - Timing: design by 12/31/2021, implementation beginning 09/30/2022
 - Lead: P.D., Staff
 - Priority: MEDIUM/LOW

Goal P3:

Improve impact of **School Year Programs** to best serve youth participants and contribute towards advancing Thorne's mission and the E-Movement E-Guidelines

Objectives:

1. Collaborate with BVSD and SVVSD to determine goals and objectives for ensuring Thorne's school based programs help the districts in advancing new NGSS standards
 - Timing: design by 12/31/2020, implementation ongoing beginning 9/1/2021
 - Lead: P.D., S.P.M.
 - Priority: HIGH
2. Conduct best practices research project and design and implement goals and objectives for ensuring Thorne's school based programs optimally utilize resources to serve youth participants and advance Thorne's mission and the E-Movement's E-Guidelines (NOTE: There is a desire to invest in more immersive programming like After School and reduce less immersive programming like In-School)
 - Timing: design by 9/30/2021, implementation ongoing beginning 1/1/2022
 - Lead: P.D., S.P.M.

- Priority: HIGH
- 3. Establish annual curriculum development goals for school based programs
 - Timing: annual during goal setting and budget process beginning 9/1/2022
 - Lead: P.D., Staff
 - Priority: MEDIUM

Goal P4:

Optimize **Summer Camp** program to increase profit

Objectives:

1. Explore and implement opportunities to expand Thorne Summer Camp to other Boulder County locations
 - Timing: design by 9/30/2020, implementation ongoing beginning 12/1/2020
 - Lead: P.D., S.C.M.
 - Priority: HIGH
2. Research current and future potential of Littleton Summer Camp location and either close location or bolster efforts to expand program
 - Timing: design by 9/30/2020, implementation ongoing beginning 12/1/2020
 - Lead: P.D., S.C.M.
 - Priority: HIGH
3. Conduct best practices research project and determine goals and objectives for improving profitability of Summer Camp, including creating increased value for parents
 - Timing: design by 9/30/2021, implementation ongoing beginning 12/1/2021
 - Lead: P.D., S.C.M.
 - Priority: HIGH

Goal P5:

Ensure Thorne's expertise and resources are required for the delivery of any **programs outside of Boulder County** and that delivery of these programs does not negatively affect programming within Boulder County

Objectives:

1. Complete analysis of SCFD funding potential at tier 2 and tier 3 and use findings to determine goals and objectives for expanding or contracting programming outside Boulder County that best aligns with Thorne's operational guideline related to programming outside Boulder County
 - Timing: research and design by 9/30/2020, implementation ongoing beginning 1/1/2020
 - Lead: E.D., P.D., F.D.
 - Priority: HIGH
2. Bi-Annually compile profit and loss statements, including value of management and administration, for any programs operating outside Boulder County and as needed cease operations of any programs outside of Boulder County that are not

profitable or whose operations are a distraction to Thorne's Boulder County programs

- Timing: bi-Annually during 2nd quarter beginning 4/1/2020
- Lead: F.D., E.D., P.D.
- Priority: MANDATORY

Goal P6:

Ensure students at Thorne's NIP schools have **equitable access** to Thorne school year and Summer Camp programs and improved access to nature outside of Thorne programs

Objectives:

1. Implement Latino parent engagement program to engage parents of students at Thorne's NIP schools in growing their awareness around the value of nature to their children, supporting their children in developing a love for nature, and participating in family nature activities
 - Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2021
 - Lead: C.P.D., I.M.
 - Priority: HIGH

Goal P7:

Develop a robust and impactful **Family Nature Program**

Objectives:

1. Conduct best practices research project for family programs, including researching programs for higher and lower income youth and dominant and non-dominant cultures
 - Timing: by 12/31/2021
 - Lead: P.D.
 - Priority: HIGH
2. Design and implement family nature program as either an expansion of Thorne's total programmatic output or through a pivot away from existing Thorne programming
 - Timing: design by 3/31/2022, implementation ongoing beginning 6/1/2022
 - Lead: P.D.
 - Priority: HIGH

COLLABORATION/ADVOCACY GOALS

Goal CA1:

Ensure **equitable access** to nature and the outdoors for Boulder County youth

Objectives:

1. Continue role as backbone organization through providing leadership, support programming, and evaluation for Nature Kids/Jovenes de la Naturaleza Lafayette collective impact project, with emphasis on supporting programming versus capital projects
 - Timing: ongoing

- Lead: E.D., C.P.D.
- Priority: HIGH
- 2. Explore opportunities to expand Nature Kids model collective impact programming to Boulder and as appropriate serve as backbone organization through providing leadership, support programming, and evaluation, with emphasis on supporting programming versus capital projects
 - Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2020
 - Lead: E.D., C.P.D.
 - Priority: MEDIUM
- 3. Explore opportunities to expand Nature Kids model collective impact programming to Longmont and as appropriate serve as backbone organization through providing leadership, support programming, and evaluation, with emphasis on supporting programming versus capital projects
 - Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2022
 - Lead: E.D., C.P.D.
 - Priority: MEDIUM/LOW

Goal CA2:

Ensure **networking and collaboration** within Boulder County's environmental education community

Objectives:

1. Maintain a leadership role within the E-Movement while engaging other organizations in sharing leadership responsibilities
 - Timing: ongoing
 - Lead: E.D., C.P.D.
 - Priority: MEDIUM

Goal CA3:

Advocate for access to nature and the outdoors for Boulder County youth

Objectives:

1. Develop and implement plan to advocate for all Boulder County youth to have access to nature/outdoors with county and local government agencies and school districts
 - Timing: design by 6/30/2021, implementation ongoing beginning 7/1/2021
 - Lead: E.D., C.P.D.
 - Priority: LOW
2. Develop and implement plan to advocate for all Boulder County youth to have access to nature/outdoors with parents and families
 - Timing: design by 9/30/2021, implementation ongoing beginning 1/1/2022
 - Lead: P.D.
 - Priority: Medium

Goal CA4:

Advance **continuum of environmental education programming** for Boulder County youth

Objectives:

1. Coordinate efforts for E-Movement collaborators to better understand and develop strategies to address gaps (pre-k, middle school, high school) in Boulder County environmental education continuum
 - Timing: by 12/31/21
 - Lead: E.D., CP.D.
 - Priority: LOW

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Goal O1:

Maintain **financial** health of organization

Objective:

1. Maintain 3-month operating revenue (1/4 annual expenses, excluding Summer Camp, Preschool, and pass-through) as cash reserve balance (total equity, less current value of restricted assets)
 - Timing: ongoing
 - Lead: E.D., Finance Committee, BOD
 - Priority: MANDATORY

Goal O2:

Continue to enhance the effectiveness of the **Board of Trustees**

Objective:

1. Establish and implement annual Board goals and work plan and Board self-evaluation
 - Timing: ongoing
 - Lead: BOD, E.D.
 - Priority: MANDATORY
2. All Trustees to attend one Thorne program within first three months of service and one additional program during each two-year term served. Thorne programs include summer camp and in-school programming, edventurer events, and Latino family events (or other related Latino community programming).
 - Timing: ongoing
 - Lead: BOD, P.D.
 - Priority: MANDATORY
3. Conduct Board best practices research project and determine goals and objectives for improving effectiveness of Board
 - Timing: design by 12/31/2020, implementation ongoing beginning 1/1/2021
 - Lead: BOD, E.D.
 - Priority: HIGH

Goal O3:

Invest in **learning and innovation** to ensure Thorne remains a best in class environmental education center

Objectives:

1. All new staff to participate in a facilitated conversation on DISC and 5 Behaviors within 6 months of being hired by Thorne.
 - Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2020
 - Lead: A.D.
 - Priority: MANDATORY
2. All staff to participate in a minimum of one and up to two days of training and professional development every year
 - Timing: ongoing
 - Lead: E.D., P.D.
 - Priority: MANDATORY
3. Conduct a day-long all-staff training to enhance effectiveness and cohesion of Thorne team every other year
 - Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2020
 - Lead: A.D.
 - Priority: MANDATORY
4. Each program staff member to spend a minimum of one and up to two days researching and shadowing programs from another environmental education center every other year
 - a. Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2020
 - b. Lead: E.D., P.D.
 - c. Priority: MEDIUM

Goal O4:

Practice what we preach

Objective:

1. Establish annual goal for all staff members to improve their own personal connection to Thorne mission (nature connection, earth stewardship)
 - d. Timing: ongoing
 - e. Lead: E.D., Staff
 - f. Priority: MEDIUM

Goal O5:

Offer **thought leadership** to help build the field of environmental education beyond Boulder County

Objective:

1. Present at one to two national conferences annually and one to two state conferences annually
 - g. Timing: ongoing
 - h. Lead: E.D., P.D., C.P.D.
 - i. Priority: MEDIUM
2. Board to assess value to Thorne of an increased role in thought leadership beyond Boulder County
 - Timing: by 6/30/2022
 - Lead: E.D., BOD.
 - Priority: LOW

Goal O6:

Undertake initiatives to make Thorne and its programs more **inclusive and authentic**

Objectives:

1. Hire an Inclusiveness Manager to lead efforts to ensure Thorne and its programs are inclusive and authentic
 - o Timing: by 1/31/2020
 - o Lead: C.P.D
 - o Priority: HIGH
2. All new staff to participate in an inclusiveness training within 6 months of being hired by Thorne.
 - o Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2020
 - o Lead: I.M.
 - o Priority: MANDATORY
3. All new Trustees to participate in a facilitated conversation or training on inclusiveness as part of orientation.
 - o Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2021
 - o Lead: I.M.
 - o Priority: MANDATORY
4. Conduct a day-long all-staff inclusiveness training every other year
 - o Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2021
 - o Lead: I.M.
 - o Priority: MANDATORY
5. Review and update Thorne's Inclusiveness Plan and Implement
 - o Timing: update by 12/31/2021, implementation ongoing 1/1/2022
 - o Lead: I.M., E.D., BOD
 - o Priority: HIGH

Goal O7:

Invest in **senior leadership** staff to ensure sustainability of organization at current level of programming and build foundation for future growth

Objectives:

1. Hire Deputy Director or Director of Business Operations to lead finance and business operations for Thorne and other tasks to be assigned that best utilize knowledge and expertise of new hire and compliment skill sets of current Program Director and Executive Director
 - j. Timing: by 3/30/2020
 - k. Lead: E.D., BOD
 - l. Priority: HIGH

Goal O8:

Optimize **efficiency of Thorne office space**

Objectives:

1. Design and implement plan to renovate Thorne office space to efficiently accommodate the maximum number of staff possible within current office footprint

- Timing: Timing: design by 3/31/2020, implementation by 12/31/2020
- Lead: ED, Staff
- Priority: HIGH

Goal O9:

Increase general operating **fundraising** and fundraising for existing programs

Objectives:

1. Hire Major Gifts Officer with goal of generating \$50,000 in new or expanded gifts from individuals annually in 2020 and \$200,000 annually thereafter
 - Timing: hire by 3/31/2020 and achieve goal by 12/31/2021
 - Lead: E.D., Staff
 - Priority: HIGH
2. Increase foundation and corporate grant and sponsorship support for existing Thorne programs (school programs and Summer Camp) by \$50,000 per year for two years and maintain into the future
 - Timing: by 12/31/2020 and 12/31/2021 and ongoing
 - Lead: E.D., BOD, Staff
 - Priority: HIGH

Goal O10:

Enhance program and community value of **Sombrero Marsh Environmental Education Center**

Objectives:

1. Design and implement plan to add nature play and gazebos and enhance public access at Sombrero Marsh
 - Timing: Timing: design by 6/30/2020, implementation by 12/31/2020
 - Lead: ED, Staff
 - Priority: MEDIUM/LOW
2. Establish and achieve annual Marsh infrastructure enhancement goals
 - Timing: ongoing beginning during goal setting and budget process for 2021
 - Lead: E.D., Staff
 - Priority: LOW

Goal O11:

Continue to **hire, support, and retain** the best environmental educators and **staff**

Objectives:

1. Bi-annually assess current and future workload for existing staff positions and restructure job descriptions and expand or contract staff as necessary to create both a sustainable workload for all Thorne employees and a highly efficient and skilled team capable of achieving the organization's strategic plan
 - m. Timing: bi-Annually during 3rd quarter beginning 7/1/2020
 - n. Lead: E.D., P.D.
 - o. Priority: MANDATORY
2. Bi-annually assess current salary and benefits packages for all staff, including comparison with Colorado Nonprofit Salary Survey, and design and implement a

plan to ensure salary and benefits are appropriate to recruit and retain a highly efficient and skilled team capable of achieving the organization's strategic plan

- Timing: bi-Annually during 3rd quarter beginning 7/1/2021
- Lead: E.D., Finance Committee
- Priority: MANDATORY

Goal O12:

Strengthen **marketing and outreach** efforts to increase revenue for earned income programming and support increased fundraising

Objectives:

1. Design and implement integrated organization wide marketing and outreach plan that builds brand awareness, generates interest in fee-for-service programs, fosters relationships with customers and donors, demonstrates the value of environmental education/nature based programming, and creates awareness of Thorne's Nature for All and Collaborative programs
 - Timing: design by 12/31/2020 and ongoing beginning 1/1/2021
 - Lead: D.D.M
 - Priority: HIGH
2. Hire Marketing and Outreach Coordinator
 - Timing: hire by 12/31/2021
 - Lead: E.D., D.D.M
 - Priority: MEDIUM

Goal O13:

Ensure **Oakleigh Thorne's** lasting legacy as founder

Objective:

1. Formalize and market planned giving program to support Oak Thorne Vision Fund to potential donors
 - Timing: ongoing beginning 1/1/2021
 - Lead: Oakleigh Thorne, E.D., BOD
 - Priority: MEDIUM/LOW

Goal O14:

Ensure **key organizational partnerships (BVSD, OSMP, etc.)** are operating effectively and optimally benefiting the Thorne mission

Objectives:

2. Bi-annually assess value of key partnerships and design and implement a plan for improvements to ensure key partnerships are optimally benefiting the Thorne mission
 - Timing: bi-Annually during 1st quarter beginning 1/1/2021
 - Lead: E.D., P.D., BOT
 - Priority: MANDATORY

Goal O15:

Make annual investments to enhance **efficiency** and effectiveness of organization

Objectives:

1. Establish and achieve annual efficiency goals
 - Timing: ongoing beginning during goal setting and budget process for 2021
 - Lead: E.D., Staff
 - Priority: MANDATORY
2. Evaluate current data management systems (Campminder) and determine goals and objectives to improve the value and effectiveness of data management systems
 - Timing: by 12/31/2021
 - Lead: E.D., Staff
 - Priority: MEDIUM

Goal O16:

Optimize **volunteer** engagement in delivery of Thorne programs

Objectives:

1. Design and implement a plan to utilize volunteer support at weekend Open Hours at Sombrero Marsh
 - Timing: design by 9/30/2020, implementation ongoing beginning 6/1/2021
 - Lead: V.M.
 - Priority: MEDIUM
2. Contribute to the continuum of nature education by adding Summer Camp Assistant Instructor staff positions aimed at engaging long-term teenage participants and Teaching Assistant volunteers
 - Timing: by 6/1/2021
 - Lead: V.M. and S.C.M.
 - Priority: LOW
3. Update Thorne's Current Volunteer Plan
 - Timing: by 9/30/2021
 - Lead: V.M.
 - Priority: MEDIUM
4. Add high-level internship opportunities with a stipend for skilled volunteers to support In School and Nature Preschool programs
 - Timing: by 9/30/2021
 - Lead: V.M.
 - Priority: MEDIUM
5. Increase opportunities for family volunteering
 - Timing: design by 9/30/2022, implementation ongoing beginning 6/1/2023
 - Lead: V.M.
 - Priority: LOW