

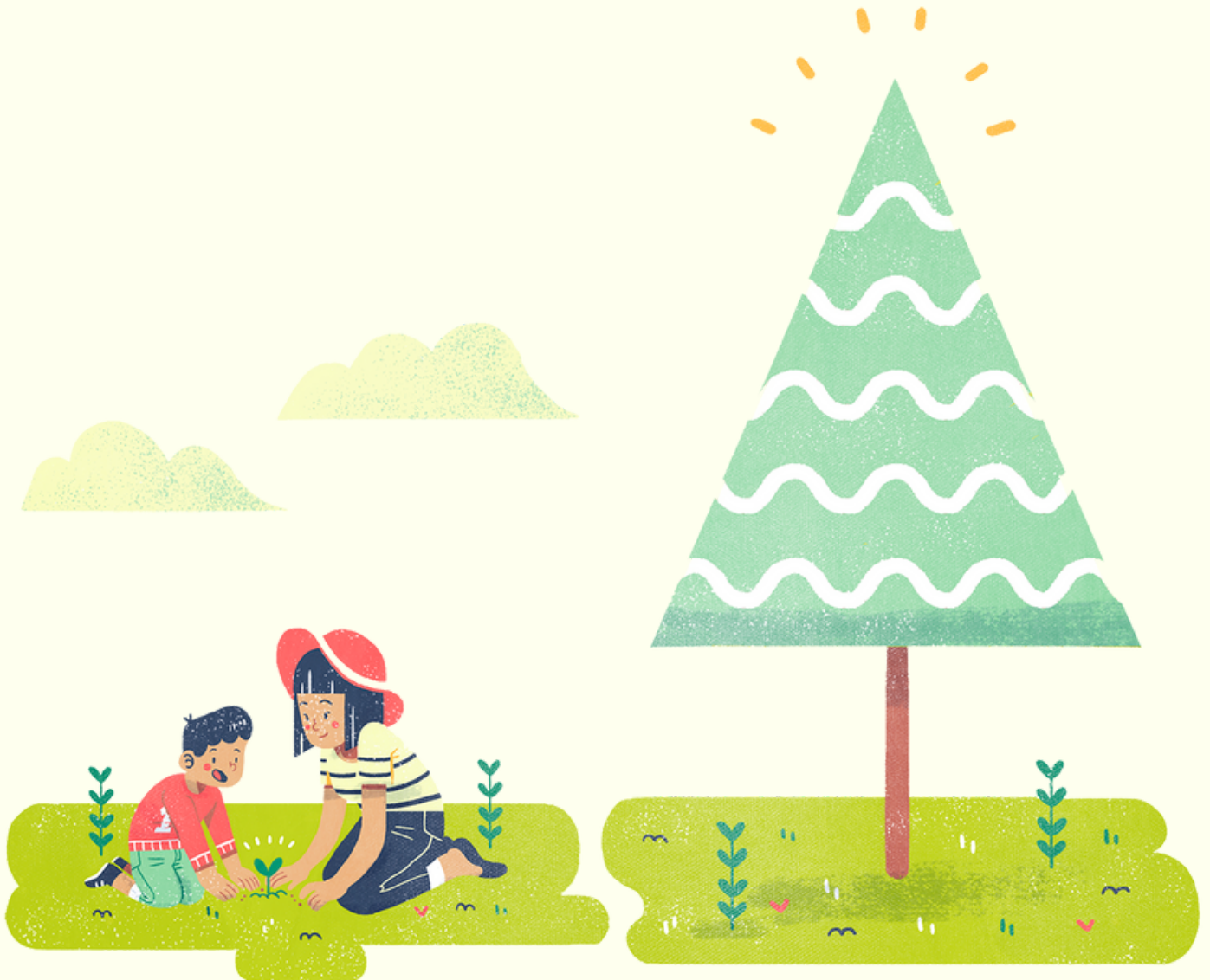


Neighborhood Forest  
*giving trees to children*

# IDEABOOK

VIRTUAL IDEATION EVENT

July 2022



# Thank you!



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Neighborhood Forest  
*giving trees to children*





## Insights for Growing

What best practices and insights would you share with a founder whose startup is growing rapidly?



## New Partnerships

What partnerships would take Neighborhood Forest to the next level? Think funding, distribution, scaling, marketing, and more.



## Think BIGGER

What haven't we thought of yet? Dream with us about the possibilities. Sky is the limit. Help us think bigger about pursuing this mission.



## From the survey

This is what we heard after the event.

# How to use these ideas

## For the Neighborhood Forest team



Print this Ideabook.



Read through the entire document. Get a feel for what is in here.



Read it again. This time, cross out the items that are not for you or don't fit your roadmap.



Circle the ideas that are "no-brainers" and can be implemented quickly and easily.



Put a question mark next to those that require more information or more time to contemplate.



This is not another "to-do" list. What follows are options, thoughts, and data points. Add to your roadmap and prioritize accordingly.



## Insights for Growing

What best practices and insights would you share with a founder whose startup is growing rapidly?

Break everything down into small problems.  
Reduce costs, increase sales pipelines  
Look into cloning trees  
How do you guide your customer to make it extremely easy? Example: Do a single grade every year.  
Compartmentalize aspects or specialization of roles. To isolate specific needed functions.  
Systems scalability is key  
Start the logistics process earlier.  
Sourcing nurseries closer to endpoints, use local nurseries for regions  
Getting the right people in the right seats is important  
Increasing partnerships to add support  
Outbound marketing  
Continue being very thoughtful on strategic partnerships. Could there be a partner for sourcing the trees...which could be tied into carbon offsets to help with fundraising?  
Understanding your zone of genius and delegating beyond that to make the most of your time.  
Assess who are current donors and use donor data to inform the next steps  
Don't be afraid to experiment with different solutions to problems and adapt quickly if they are not working.  
Being strong in your mission to be able to weigh your opportunities to see if they're aligned

Develop best practices for partners to successfully deliver trees. Solve logistics challenges at the library/school/church level.  
Plan for raise to take 1-5 months  
Mission, vision, 3-5 year goal, purpose - and communicate with stakeholders  
Take breaks to eat, walk, look at trees enjoy life! And NAP  
Remember why you're doing the work.  
For hiring...chief operational officer can help to keep things running so Vikas can stay focused on vision and direction.  
Have an expandable and extensive infrastructure  
Need to invest in systems, don't be afraid to invest in systems that allow scale IE payments, signing up for trees etc.  
Finding creative ways to expand your mission beyond what you think you can do today  
In terms of growth - continue to keep the message simple & communicate through stores. Stories are impactful and capture more stories.  
Scale infrastructure and HR based on where you want to be in 3-5 years instead of where you are now  
Have deliverable KPIs to know where the impact is, the leading and the lagging

# ① Cont'd

Having mastermind groups with people who have a variety of viewpoints and experiences...kind of like this event  
Upon intake, ask, "what would be the best way to reach out to you once your tree arrives?"

Reviewing and optimizing workflows as you grow

Be open to the potential of the org - it can be bigger than what you intend.

Translate stories into the media and content etc...

Local Library window display

Prioritize and address needs that are urgent vs long-term initially

Keep collaborators and supporters up to date along the way

Learn from people who have done it before

The organization's STORY and individual stories are impactful.

Continue to collect these transparent, honest, and frequent communication

Expect and embrace mistakes - they're the only way to learn

Document workflows to allow for others to take over aspects

Use the recipients of trees and their families to solicit feedback.

Robust marketing and cohesive fundraising start together. People need to know the work that you're doing and connect that to fundraising.

Keep it personal in terms of stories; tell the story through your journey or the children's journey. How the kids grow with their trees...etc.

Upon intake, ask, "Do you need additional support to pick up your tree?" are there barriers to reaching the library we can solve for?

Organic marketing, local news and podcasts within the different cities that you are serving

Work with local schools

Leverage network and media partners.

Build your media presence

Establish CRM system for customers/recipients/donors.

Transparent, honest, and frequent communication

Videos are impactful - continue creating more content. Talk about how NHF is like a grown-up teenager now.

Know what you can do, and don't say yes to too much

Establish a mailing list/email list.

Moving from a place where people are "jacks of all trade" vs at a bigger size needing more specialized people. So

needing to be intentional about what you can do within in house and intentional about what you outsource

Need to bring on good people and delegate, lead but let go of control,

People are looking for solutions.

Understand who is interested.

Look at things that are impossible and figure out how to do them anyway

YouTube videos to demonstrate/train others.

A warning a bit... Focus is good at the beginning, but often when projects grow like this, they can get off track and, so it's important to maintain that focus

Increased follow-up communication, higher engagement with partners

Leverage or partner with other

community organizations doing things like this. (e.g.- Jewish holiday)

Keep the structure and processes simple

## ① Cont'd

What kind of growth matters? What kind of impact matters? Sometimes deeper growth is more impactful than fast.

Establish a local champion in each city to be the lead Neighborhood Forest in that area.

When a lot is happening faster than you expected - having visibility into the overall scope can help you understand what's happening. When you know what your mission is- you know your story, you can make sure you 1) are consistent in who you are across different experiences, 2) you know what to say yes to.

Partner updates/communications  
extending communications

Develop a reputation for consistency and reliability for donations.

Spokespeople. Media Focus on being trustworthy

Question: How will donations be distributed to the organization?

Establish a forum for the community to collaborate, share tips, and troubleshoot.

Put new partners in touch with current parents.

Get involved with local communities who can market for you... e.g., working with little league teams who can have your logo on their jerseys.

Recommendations from students, keep it short, young spokesperson.

Consider EOS as an operation system  
Lean into the seasonality. Know what the focus should be at certain parts of the cycle

keep asking what we can do to make this less complex

Can partners just order ~100 trees and ask people to fill out some info on the backend? Seems easier to get trees into peoples' hands

Have a one-page playbook for a daily check-in with mission, goals, etc. (See Patrick Lencioni's book, The Advantage)

Can this program meet schools' social/emotional programming requirements? Or a company's carbon offset goals? How does this program meet an existing mandate or requirement for a partner so that they can outsource this job to you?

Connect with local small businesses

Connect with local Nurseries and local Community Gardens.

Could we get a giant like Lowe's or Home Depot to join us on Earth Day to distribute Free Trees to Customers?

# 2

## New Partnerships

What partnerships would take Neighborhood Forest to the next level? Think funding, distribution, scaling, marketing, and more.

Partnerships with private schools with their funding for these kinds of projects could also help cover costs for public schools.

Encouraging current engaged members to challenge others in their networks to get engaged.

Work with local government agencies - arborists, DNRs, etc.

Locally: Cargill (Landscape Arb through Tree give away)

Contact each state arborist association. They might be able to help with funding, marketing, and general promotion.

Reach out to home-school groups through the local school districts, and to larger home-school groups directly.

Carbon offset partnerships. Certain companies create a lot of carbon -- tech companies, such as Apple.

Most states also have green industry associations, which could help with sourcing.

Game Changers 500 - List of companies who care about the planet and people, in addition to profit. There may be some alignment around values here

Green Schools Initiative & US Green Building Council

Value and position in ESG funding convo.

Can this program meet district STEAM requirements? How would this program take something off a school's plate to make their lives easier?

Partner with native plant society/groups who can offer resources and exposure.

More visuals of trees planted = effect/impact of carbon reduction

Libraries and networking with schools - who can take the lead? Science departments?

Events - proposed through schools."

Community Libraries (that helped NHF go viral) but keep working with community libraries...

B corporations - "B Lab" - similar to game changers idea

How do you get trees into the kid's hands if they can't get to the location?

Partner with a ride-sharing option or some sort of transpiration.

Wealthy entrepreneurs with passion/interest.

Corporate Foundations with clear message & easy ask -- it's a time when corporations want to partner with schools & environmentalism

Connect with the recipients' families.

They may have an interest in giving back.



## ② Cont'd

Having the local library or possibly PTA orgs that could serve as a coordinator for the distribution.

Contact every state library to get on their list of recommended programs.

Tree desert areas, focus on them.

Educate those communities.

Some companies claim that they plant trees, but you don't necessarily hear about them protecting those trees or know what happens to them. Perhaps these companies would connect with this project because it is local.

Using social media to reach out to as many groups as possible

Mental Health for children & students!

Connect with tree removal

organizations. It may also be a positive marketing opportunity for the tree removal companies.

Parent groups other than PTAs at the schools. Scout troops.

Partnership with Little leagues

Green Bank - focus on investment firms that have a pool of money for charitable donations. Connect with those firms and give them a new opportunity to donate.

Partner with Master

Naturalist/Gardeners programs

Coordinate with nature sites and destinations in locations

State EPA equivalents- Depts of Natural resources

Partner with local plant-trading/gardening groups, master gardening programs, social media (Facebook) groups.

Program participants should become partners at grassroots level. Advocates.

Community grows

Corporate campuses- use those as places to plant trees and visit

Kids moving into their teenage years may be very interested in helping with social media marketing. Create templates they could use or challenges for the most creative ways to reach out. Submit a business case for something like an insurance company; for every policy, they sell X amount of trees planted.

Groups who are getting trees can promote the org to solicit additional individual donations

Partner with DNR with tree planting locations (full history) and increase awareness. ecosystem education and contribution.

Identify companies with sustainability in their mission and let them know what you are doing. Find out if there are ways that they are interested in helping.

Churches, youth groups, camps - consider selling it as a conservation project.

Go to the Sustainable Brands conference and connect with many big companies who care about things that matter to build opportunities for partnership and potential funding. Explore the possibility of NF fulfilling school curriculum requirements (STEAM).

Education & Marketing is key. Start a new campaign, tap into a passion and create a marketing campaign around that. Educate the public. Find firms that are interested in off-setting their carbon.

REI

## ② Cont'd

Center for Wellness and Environment (get info on the name from Ivor Kiwi) Wellness solution. You could tie it into company wellness plans

To scale tree planting, the future extension needs to do it on an acreage of land. Urban kids living in cities, hot summer. Connect urban kids and tree planting on state lands.

Maybe retailers like REI would get on board to collect donations. Possibly, add \$1 to the register receipt.

Paper companies, logging, lumber, etc partnering to offset carbon

Governments & Institutions -

Minneapolis 2040 plan for increasing mass transit, biking & infrastructure... part of that is LOTS of tree planting.

Boulevards get widened but sit empty for years-- so partnership there & they have funding-- to plant trees in the boulevards - they have funding but maybe no one to plant trees, so partnering there.

Girls Scout and their similar groups focused on the outdoors. They have a wide footprint.

Could the businesses (e.g., Target) who fund NForest take pictures or have some visual as "proof" seeing a child with a tree vs planting trees that could get (for example) turned into paper pulp? There is an org called b1g1.com Access list of investors (angels) from participating groups

Build legitimacy, so people feel comfortable giving.

Gardner Builders - who do corporate & residential real estate

partner with plant nurseries...want to donate a tree to a kid with your order?

Partner with local nurseries to donate \$ for every tree purchased in a period of time

Leverage Recovery Act funding in communities

Build social media. Put pictures up and show a strong presence. Kindly.org is democratizing donor-based funds so that people would volunteer time and/or funds. This app helps build connections with the community around climate change

Smile by Amazon - You can ask your community to designate Neighborhood Forest as a charity designation.

National Arbor Foundation

Transform old funky playground into a nature place with trees

Nature deficit disorder & getting kids outside

Try to have a booth at state fairs or other local events

Arboretums/Nature Center partnerships  
Government grants

Connect with library associations (state and nationwide) and attend library/school trade shows.

Fair booth - with kid activities

4H groups, Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts

Get Vikas more back-end help!

When new housing development - talking directly with developers & it'd be great PR for them-- kids will come plant in our new development

Add a fundraising resource who has done this before

PTAs, mom groups, grassroots



## Think BIGGER

What haven't we thought of yet? Dream with us about the possibilities. Sky is the limit. Help us think bigger about pursuing this mission.

Education on native plants and ecosystems

Explore getting artists to perform at fundraising events (just like the old days in Fairfield, but BIGGER).

Trees as gifts - during certain holidays - eCommerce

Opportunity to increase marketing.

Reach out to organizations like The Western Reserve Land Conservancy Bees.

Fruit trees in food desserts.

Countdown timer to earth day

Partner with big corporations that support nature programs (e.g. REI, Vertical Endeavors, Sky Zone).

Connect NF to diversity, equity, and inclusion -- how can we form partnerships to bring trees to kids in the inner cities?

If sourcing trees is a challenge, focus on native plants.

Noticed that when 92 families order trees, they get 100 trees... maybe partner with the DNR or similar environmental organization to use/plant extra trees

Work with Neighborhood Night Out as a potential fundraising time/marketing opportunity

Create a donor experience and a donor loyalty approach. More than an annual report to build a relationship with donors

Register your tree! Emails from your tree on its birthday - you've created this much oxygen, etc., plus a prompt to share and to send in a picture of your tree.

Explore white-labeling or custom-labeling for a major donor. The company "owns" the project, NF handles logistics.

Form partnerships with community garden orgs in the spirit of The Gorilla Gardener - bring food to inner cities  
Extra/too many trees - parkland that maybe a group of kids take ownership for a little mini forest that's in a park or near houses...

Provide donors with helpful feedback about who their money is being used and provide ongoing communication.  
impact of ocean and tree foliage -- how can we plant trees underwater - new opportunities

partner with nature conservancies.

Succession planning.

Partner with outdoor adventure/training programs (e.g. National Outdoor Leadership, Outward Bound)

Partner with libraries to offer tree-planting "lending libraries" like gardening equipment,

Segment Tree market, maybe for more affluent donors - offset the cost but have the receive pay a fee and then donate a tree to a child from there.

### ③ Cont'd

Get bigger: What about getting involved with national organizations and Earth Day?

Group trees with lesson planning (project wild) with school districts to help with buy-in. Curriculum lends credence to NF, enriches the experience for students/teachers

Partner with youth groups like Scout programs, 4-H

Engage with crypto/NFT communities. Could be an NFT project, a partnership with an environmental NFT project, or carbon offset for those who feel guilty about crypto emissions.

Finding other organizations who may be able to support via matching sales or donations

International sister programs & national organizations like earth day

Artist collaborations & a story behind all of these things

An executive program with carbon credit exchange

Target School District - create a partnership to reach more schools.

Farm-to-table restaurants -- fruit trees another angle

Impact of trees beyond CO2 management: water distribution, housing animals/birds, masses of trees supporting ecosystems

Explore reforestation programs in areas that recently experienced wildfires.

Most families have limited space to plant trees yearly, so finding space to plant is vital.

Make it monthly or quarterly or some other cadence to alleviate seasonality.

Impact measurement and management tool. IRIS+ [iris.thegiin.org](https://iris.thegiin.org)

Videos - content on trees, nature background, care for types of trees, how-tom etc, so people can learn from videos on the website (e.g. I have this tree, where do I plant it, how big will it get?)

High School Students need volunteer hours, have them be the ones to go to middle and elementary schools and teach the smaller kids how to plant. Focus on cities as much as suburbs Connect with orgs, sharing the message that trees rewire our brains, help release trauma, and contribute to higher IQs

E.g. victims of domestic violence (Samaritan Inn)

Partner with local advocacy groups Big corporations contributing to their campuses

Tree species for smaller spaces, communicating that option up front (size, native, sourcing)

Could you partner with the city or neighborhood associations to plant trees in neighborhoods and have fundraising events associated with that?

Expand beyond Earth Day

Look at food forests planting, trees contribute to hunger alleviation

Some way to allow parents to pay for their part in a very easy way doesn't require them to go out of their way to contribute.

### ③ Cont'd

Add Trees-Planted Counter to the website, set local and nationwide goals for a number of trees planted, and possibly add friendly competition between schools/libraries/communities.

Kickstarter campaigns

Reach out to businesses that are willing to donate - libraries, access to grant

Provide option for smaller size trees:

info on sourcing, size, native plants, learn from the city of Minneapolis parks & rec; city of MSP has the largest urban forest & largest parkland. Learn from them & see how those lessons

could be transferred to other cities - maybe video info featuring cities doing great things for the environment & having lots of green space & parks.

Chamber of Commerce with leadership programs, get connected with them, start a project, or even a junior league that can help connect with local companies.

Is there some connection that could be made between NF and Diana

Beresford-Kroeger? She is a botanist who has been called the "Jane Goodall of trees" and has written many books, incl To Speak for the Trees. Is there some way to involve her in this project as a public figure?

Getting people more involved & feeling like they own the outcome - higher engagement in terms of the difference they're making

Form partnerships with similar-minded organizations (burning man communities, jr achievement)

Get featured on popular shows & news shows... e.g. modern family - one of the characters plants a tree!!

Upcharge for a "specialty tree" option  
Branch out into edible trees/bushes.  
Then you can get into the urban foraging market.

Grow your interns: tree planters heading into HS, college, and beyond support NF with fundraising, marketing, etc.

Please watch: Western Reserve Land Conservancy (explores the connection between trees and equity, trees and children's IQ and health):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49\\_wiUFOTPk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49_wiUFOTPk)

Tree-centered book club. Read a book like Overstory (for adults) or something school-age appropriate in March leading into Arbor Day.

Connection with the Jewish Holiday of TuBshvat, the festival of trees. Many organizations give away trees. I bet there is a good connection to distribute trees effectively! Jewish Community Centers, Jewish National Fund (JNF) Connecting with product placement people that can partner NHF with TV shows... I know someone that does this (worked on Modern Family - one of my other idea examples) - Let's connect & I can connect you with her (Tara). XO  
Katie Strand

# 4

## From the survey

This is what we heard after the event.

"The combination of carbon offsets and children provides powerful incentives for corporate sponsors and funders. It's a corporate PR department's dream."

"Great event. Glad to be part of it."  
"I think sending fruit trees (or other food-providing plants) to communities in food deserts would be a great way to increase visibility/awareness."

"I'll be moving to Iowa City soon and would like to get schools, libraries, and businesses in that area to partner with NF."

"The format of today's meeting stimulated lots of ideas. There are no additional new ideas, but I'm hopeful I can put some of those into action in our school and community."

"Would love to discuss pr/social efforts as they expand - I think there is a ton of potential there to garner grassroots and grassroots awareness."

"Work to find a few 'Ambassadors' in each state (or the region you want to be involved with) in order to lend credibility to the project. These could also serve as local points of contact for those involved or who have questions."

"Big on the idea of teaching kids to clone local trees to reduce cost and increase MarketShare  
Keep up the great work!"

"Many great ideas had been collected in the zoom meet from all participants-I will continue to brainstorm!"

"I just want to say that businesses and organizations that are adding to the world are so inspiring. Stick to your vision, and I believe the world will ultimately see the value of what you are doing and support you."

"Better packaging needed before shipping trees. Trees arrived in less than optimum shape (perhaps the length of shipping time had an effect). We could also use a wider variety of promotional material (pre-made social media posts, flyers, etc., that can be customized). Can't wait to participate again next year!"

"The only feedback for the event was that it was unclear how I could donate/invest or recommend my friends to donate to Neighborhood Forest. When there is a button on the website, it might make sense to follow up with the attendees to share that info. Thanks. Best of luck on this really inspiring journey."

## ④ Cont'd

“I would look into contacting new construction and affordable housing developments, their plots are underdeveloped when it comes to greenery; the health benefits and curb appeal of adding trees to the landscape I feel would be a no-brainer for the developers if they didn't already have a landscaping plan.”

“Keep going, Vikas! It's exciting to see the growth and the energy behind your movement! -Mo”

“When partnering with libraries suggest Friends groups to help fund the program. Sustainability is a hot button issue at the California State Library right now, and your organization was mentioned in a grant program as an example of who to partner with to get the grant. I've applied, by the way, and if we're awarded we'll be sponsoring the trees for our library patrons for the next Earth Day event. So getting the word out to State Libraries, American Library Association, and State Library Associations would expand your reach. I have a network of people I know from local native plant societies, university extension offices, master gardeners, and climate action groups that I go to for information and educational programs, and I think they would be great resource to reach out to. Homeschool groups in our library have rapidly expanded and are rapidly increasing since the Covid outbreak, so partnering with some of the larger homeschool organizations and school districts to access smaller networks

might be useful. I'm having a meeting soon with my network of plant people and I'll be talking about Neighborhood Forest. I recently read a book about groups of people who were working with PTSD vets, sex trafficking victims, and inner city children by bringing them out into forests because after 3 days in nature it rewires your brain and helps to release trauma. I think maybe partnering with groups like this? Offering participants trees to take home after their experience to keep them connected to the the life-changing and healing experience they just had would be wonderful. Also, libraries do book programs where they encourage a city to read the same book and have discussions about it. The book that comes to mind that talks about planting trees to combat climate change is To Speak for the Trees by Diane Beresford-Kroger. Maybe that can factor into library partnerships, and a children's book selection made available too. We also do STEM programming around Earth Day and trees for kids of all ages. So suggesting curricula to tie in to tree giveaways. Building networks of local and native plant nurseries to provide varieties of trees so people have choices. Some of the families gave up their trees when they found out how large they were going to get and didn't have room for them. Also, when considering DEI and Belonging, reaching food desert and inner city kids who don't have access to places to plant trees in their neighborhood, maybe partnering with guerilla gardeners like Ron Finley,



## ④ Cont'd

to plant fruit trees in community gardens to provide food for communities. I hope I was able to contribute something. Sounds like you're already doing many wonderful things. Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this! Let me know if there are other ways I can help you."

### **From the Zoom chat:**

"Explore planting community orchards."  
- Michael Halley

"This was awesome." - Natasha Gaffer

"That was fun! some folks from my group asked for the link to the video I made with NHF in 2021:  
<https://youtu.be/PlWDwsalhf4>" - Katie Strand

"Good times. Nice to meet you all. Go Neighborhood Forest!" - Marcel

"Thanks for the smooth facilitation, Tim. Efficient and productive process." - Richard Beall

"Yes, find those community champions to help take the mission forward!" - Barbie Garcia

"I didn't expect to get teary about the photos of kids and their trees." Jennifer Arave

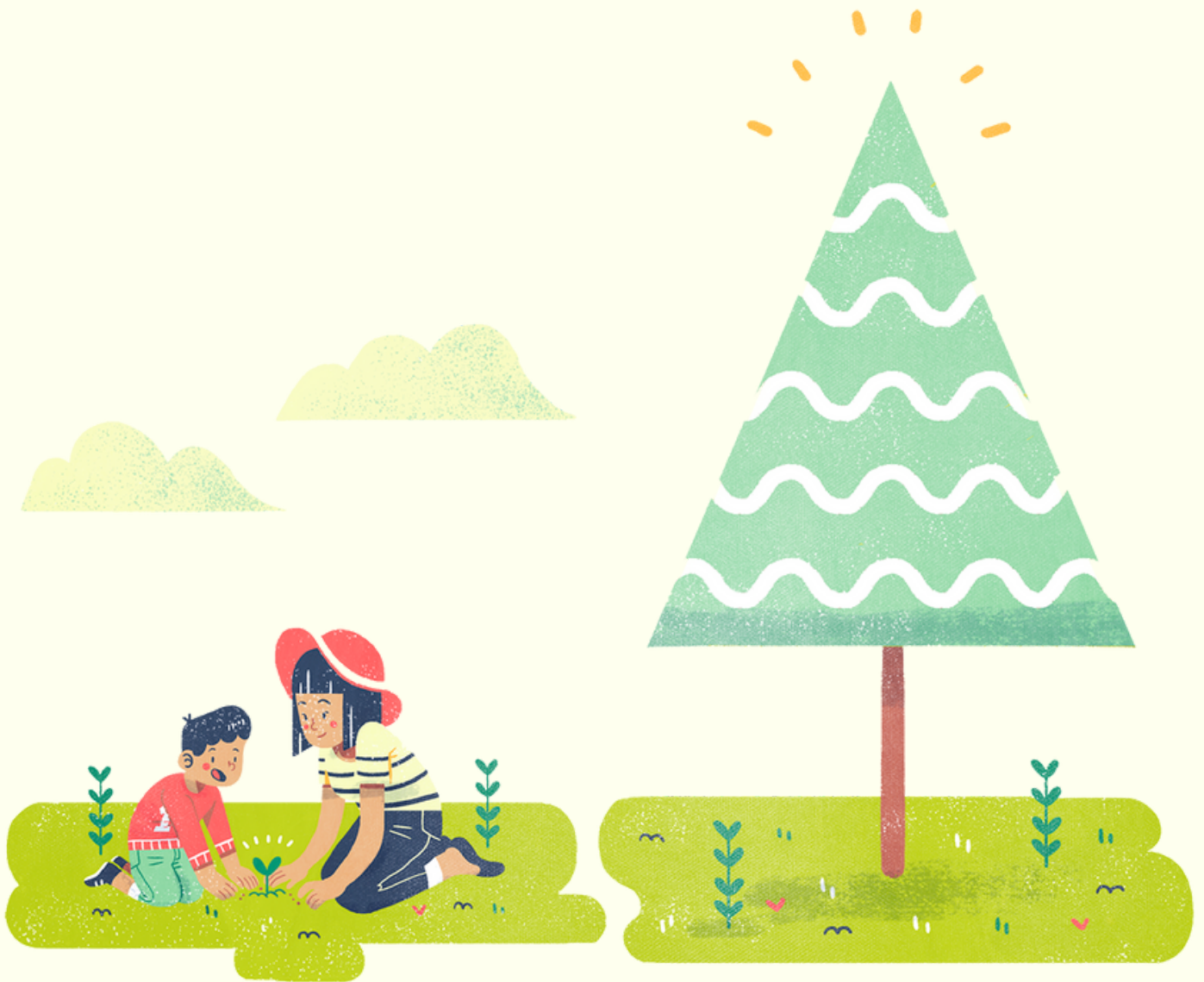
"Authenticity is in short supply these days and that is your superpower!" - Kyle Wilson

"The kids and teachers LOVE getting the trees and being part of something good for our planet. Thank you for doing this work!!" - Erika

"Vikas & Priya, what a gift it is to be part of this ideating with you! I love your emphasis on not just trees, but the kids' engagement in the environment THROUGH this process. You are enriching our neighborhoods!" - Liz Otteson



# Thank you!



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