



Kids in Parks Strategic Plan



2020-2022



MISSION *Engage kids and families
in outdoor recreation to foster lifelong
wellness and meaningful connections
to public lands.*



VISION *All kids and families cultivate wellness and meaningful connections to nature through outdoor experiences.*

VALUES

STEWARDSHIP *Create the next generation of stewards for our parks, public lands, and nature.*

CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE *Develop meaningful connections with nature through outdoor experiences.*

EDUCATION AND LEARNING *Facilitate life-long learning through increased interest in the natural world.*

PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS *Improve park and public land health through increased use and visitation.*

HEALTH AND WELLNESS *Improve health and wellbeing through outdoor recreation and exposure to nature.*

COMMUNITY *Link partners, users, and communities together through common values.*

SENSE OF PLACE *Cultivate a sense of place in participants through knowledge and connection.*

History of the Program

Kids in Parks started with a goal of making existing trails more attractive and fun for novice users. In 2008, the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, National Park Service, and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation joined together to formally link the health of children to the health of parks by creating a network of trails and partners along the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia.



However, since the issues of childhood obesity, nature deficit disorder, and declining visitation rates affect kids and parks across the country—not just those living near the Blue Ridge Parkway, or the Parkway itself—the program expanded beyond the Parkway’s corridor in 2011. Due to the program’s effectiveness and ease of implementation, land management agencies across the country rapidly embraced Kids in Parks. Today, the program provides a national network of self-guided trails that include hiking, disc golfing, paddling, biking, geocaching, and citizen science adventures. To date, people have completed more than one million TRACK Trail adventures, discovering the joys of outdoor recreation and reconnecting with nature.



“By turning existing, outdoor trails into kid-friendly hiking trails, the Kids in Parks (KIP) program increases access to and the number of places for physical activity. KIP influences multiple levels of the socio-ecologic model by directly changing the community environment and by providing incentives and organizational supports to promote physical activity through hiking, disc golf and other outdoor activities. Kids in Parks is a practice-tested intervention.”

Center for Training and Research Translation, 2013
UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Measures of Success

Kids in Parks’ TRACK Trails are low-cost, proven interventions with built-in evaluation tools, making them an effective public engagement strategy for parks. Program data demonstrates that Kids in Parks gets kids unplugged and engaged in outdoor recreation.

THE HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN:

- 11% of registrants were first-time hikers
- 650,000+ miles hiked on TRACK Trails
- 325,000+ hours of “unplugged” outdoor adventures
- 100+ million calories burned on TRACK Trails

THE HEALTH OF OUR PARKS:

- 53% of registrants visited the park for the first time
- 51% intentionally visited the park to hike the TRACK Trail
- 47% of registrants returned for a second adventure
- 88% of return users visited more than one TRACK Trail

The Kids in Parks program is innovative because it partners with a variety of parks and land management agencies, healthcare providers and public health departments, schools and community organizations, and foundations and corporate organizations to implement a singular on-the-ground program—linking often isolated groups together through a unified vision. The problem affects us all and the solution will take all of us working together.


12+ States

1,000,000+ Adventures



TRACK Trail partners and locations are continuously being added to the network.

**Blue Cross and Blue Shield
of North Carolina Foundation
BlueCross® BlueShield®
of South Carolina Foundation
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
National Park Service
National Park Foundation
REI Inc.
Appalachian Regional Commission
Be Active Appalachian Partnership
Blumenthal Foundation
Wythe-Bland Community Foundation
Private Individual Donor Support**



TRACK
R *Outdoor Activity in Nature*

Patient's name: _____

Today's Date: _____ Recommended Dosage: _____

☐ Play outside

☐ Play in a park

☐ Go for a walk, run or bike ride

☐ Play an active game or sport with friends

☐ Go for a hike on a TRACK Trail

☐ Other: _____

Unlimited refills!

Health professional's signature: _____

Parent/child signature: _____

KID SIN PARKS

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Register your adventure at:
kidsinparks.com

Serial Number: **KIP-RX1-001**

Over the past few years, the Park Prescriptions movement (Park Rx) has continued to grow, with healthcare providers prescribing parks and nature activities to kids and families in an attempt to improve the overall health and wellbeing of patients. Due to Kids in Parks' network of trails in different park settings, variety of outdoor recreation activities appealing to many age groups and audiences, incentive system with built-in assessment measures, and suite of TRACK Rx materials, the program has become one of the leaders in the national Park Rx movement.

Goals & Objectives

Areas of Strategic Focus:

1. TRACK TRAILS Partner with public land management agencies—national, state, and local—to expand the national network of TRACK Trails using a cluster approach, maintain the program’s existing infrastructure and relevance, develop new trail types and content, and link partners together through a common vision.

2. TRACK RX Expand TRACK Rx program by strategically partnering with healthcare providers—hospitals, doctor offices, school nurses, and other relevant partners—within TRACK Trail regions to promote outdoor recreation and the regional network of TRACK Trails through the use of the TRACK Rx program’s materials and data.

3. STEM EDUCATION Develop a series of STEM materials for schools that cultivate the next generation of environmental stewards through curriculum-based educational activities for students in grades K-5, create teacher resource kits, and measure pre-/post-attainment outcomes associated with the program.

4. MARKETING AND OUTREACH Strengthen partnerships through intentional marketing and outreach efforts that promote the program to stakeholder groups through traditional and social media outlets, eNewsletter and other forms of communication, and annual events that bring partners and families together to celebrate TRACK Trails.

5. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY Collaborate with foundations, corporations, healthcare organizations, land management agencies, and private donors to diversify funding streams that sustainably support expansion of program initiatives, maintenance of program infrastructure, and the overall administration and operations of the program.

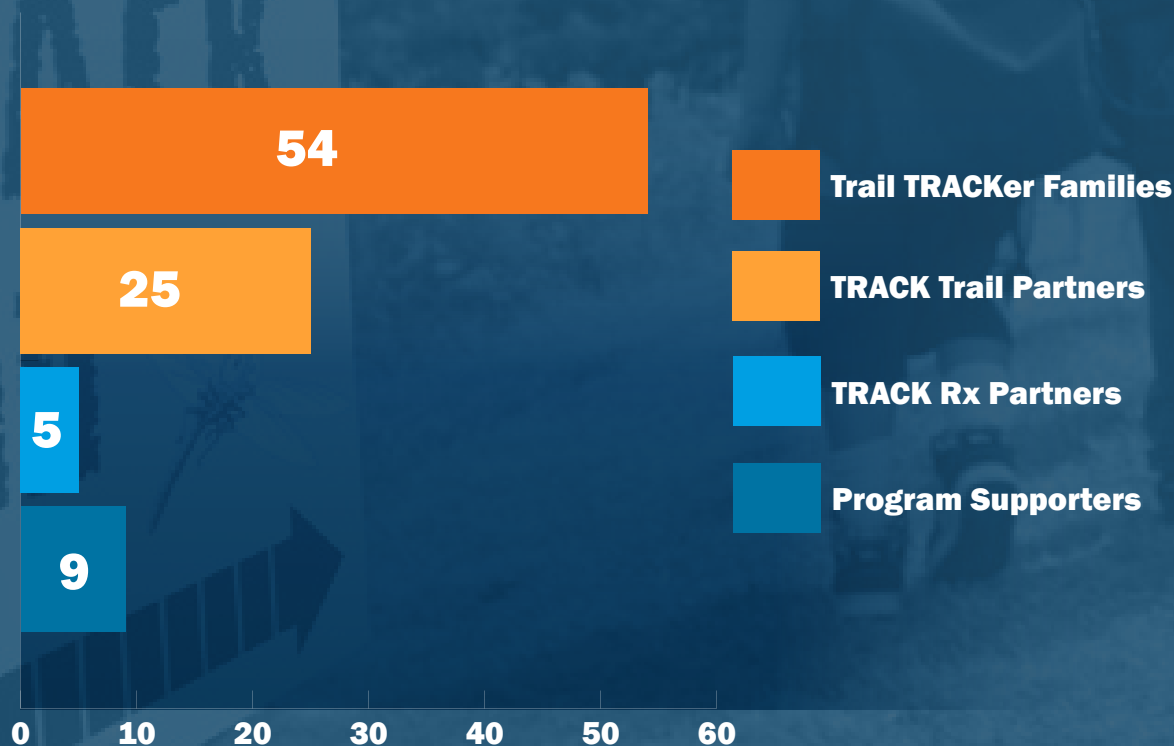
6. DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE Advance the children and nature movement through the collection and analysis of data that informs peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations, and offer resources for current and future partners that support their efforts to provide families with meaningful connections to nature.

How this plan was created

Kids in Parks, a program of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, embarked on a strategic planning process in 2019 to determine the strategic direction of the program. To inform planning, Kids in Parks reached out to key stakeholders inviting their opinions, thoughts, and advice, working with planning consultant Beth Trigg of Taproot Consulting.

Kids in Parks invited a broad range of stakeholders to participate in online surveys or telephone interviews. Survey and interview questions were created by Kids in Parks staff in consultation with the planning consultant. Online surveys were sent to all park partners and all Trail TRACKer families. More in-depth surveys were sent to a smaller group of families, including one-time TRACK Trail users and frequent or long-time participants. Interview requests were sent to a group of TRACK Trail partners, TRACK Rx partners, and program supporters, including funders and donors.

In response to survey and interview requests, Kids in Parks received input from:



Responses from surveys and interviews were reviewed and synthesized by Kids in Parks and Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation staff, and utilized in creating this plan.



Our Leadership Team



Olson Huff, MD, FAAP

Medical Director Mission Children's Hospital - Retired
An award-winning pediatrician and founder of the Kids in Parks program, Dr. Olson Huff has had a lifelong passion for helping improve the overall health of kids and communities.



Carolyn Ward, Ph.D.

Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, CEO
Carolyn Ward, an award-winning author, researcher, professor, and program designer, created Kids in Parks to give kids the connection to nature she found as a girl in the Blue Ridge Mountains.



Jason Urroz

Kids in Parks, Director

A dedicated program designer, Jason Urroz has provided kids with meaningful connections to nature throughout his career, serving as the Kids in Parks Director for the last eight years.

Contact Us

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Kids in Parks Founding Partners

