

LAWSON
FOUNDATION

SRDC  SRSA

Outdoor Play Strategy



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POSITION STATEMENT ON ACTIVE OUTDOOR PLAY

Position



Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.

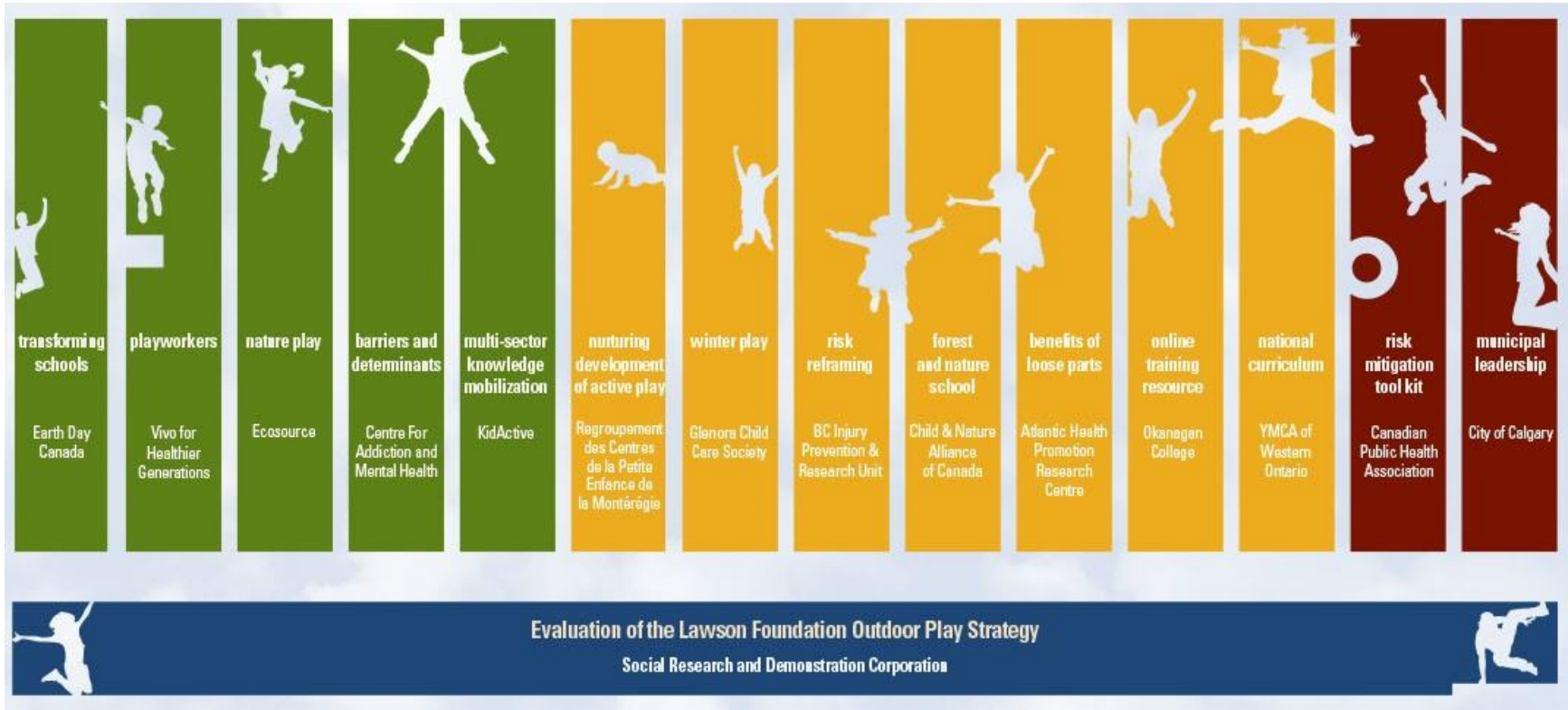
Components of the Strategy – more than \$

1. Fund multiple projects in various sectors and with diverse approaches, but with a common focus on outdoor play.
2. Cohort approach – build capacity of diverse but complementary group of organizations and projects that will convene periodically and be networked to support and learn from one other.
3. Develop collaborative relationships with key stakeholders.
4. Evaluation is embedded in the Strategy from the beginning to maximize sharing of knowledge and learning, build capacity, and improve implementation of the Strategy.

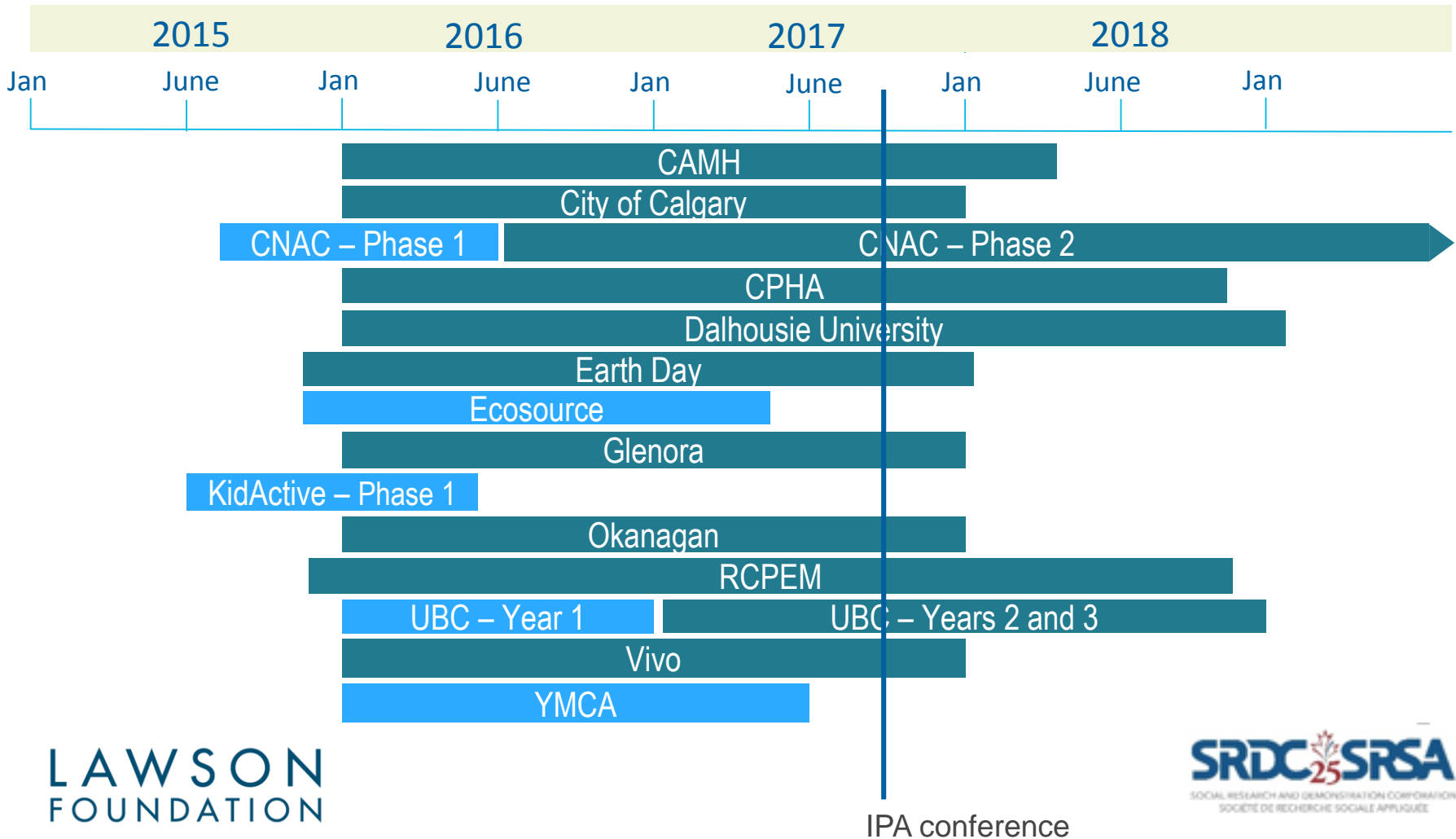
Desired long-term results

- Learning from the Strategy (e.g., training, resources and implementation models) is used in the communities of funded projects and elsewhere to increase opportunities for children's self-directed play outdoors in all settings.
- A strong, coordinated, multi-sectoral national coalition exists of sector leaders, funders, and policy makers supporting children's outdoor play at multiple levels
- OP is accepted, normalized, and broadly supported

Multi-sector and diverse approaches



Timelines of Strategy projects



The Strategy has achieved its short-term outcomes

Short-term Outcomes



Learning

Learning – increased knowledge about other projects and how to overcome implementation challenges



Networking

Networking – meeting to exchange information, ideas, knowledge



Partnerships

Collaboration - development of partnerships or joint work



Sense of community

A sense of community among grantees



Increased awareness

Increased awareness of the importance of supporting outdoor play among leaders, funders, and policy makers across multiple sectors

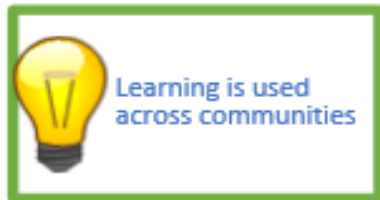
Progress towards all five medium-term goals

Intermediate Outcomes

-   Increased capacity → Grantees' increased capacity to deliver on project-level goals and for project evaluation
-   Learn to enable OP → Enhanced learning/understanding of how to support Canadian communities to foster children's opportunities for outdoor play among project stakeholders
-   Established community of practice → An effective community of practice established among grantees
-   Empower and influence stakeholders → Empowerment and influence of all stakeholders such as parents, educators, funders, and policy makers engaged in the sector to advocate for OP
-   Interest from others → Interest from others outside the sector in supporting outdoor play (e.g., media, education and health sectors)

Working towards long-term outcomes

Long-term Outcomes



Learning from the Strategy (including training, resources, research and implementation models) is used in the communities of funded projects and elsewhere to create enabling environments for Canadian children's self-directed play outdoors in all settings



A strong, coordinated, multi-sectoral national coalition exists of sector leaders, funders, and policy makers supporting children's outdoor play at multiple levels



OP is accepted, normalized, and broadly supported

Concrete resources and models for the emerging field in Canada...



Municipal Play Charter – City of Calgary



Implementation model for **municipal mobile adventure playgrounds** – City of Calgary



7 policy briefs and a **policy framework in development to support outdoor play** in child care, schools & municipalities - CPHA



Website for shifting risky play perceptions for parents (& other adults) – UBC outsideplay.ca



Recreation pilot of community **Play Ambassadors** – Vivo



Integration of **loose parts play in community gardens** – Ecosource



Free online training for early learning and child care professionals – Okanagan College - available at outdoorplaytraining.com



Risky outdoor play training to enhance the YMCA **Playing to Learn** ECE curriculum – YMCA



Scaling **Forest and Nature School training** for educators – CNAC



Transformation of **early learning & child care programs** to include quality outdoor play (RCPEM, YMCA) and particularly winter play (Glenora CC Society)



Evaluation of **physical literacy outcomes** following loose parts intervention - Dalhousie



Adaptation of the **OPAL model for schools** in Canada



Adaptation of **POEMS tool for infants and toddlers** – RCPEM



Research into **barriers and determinants of outdoor play for middle schoolers** – CAMH



Articulation of national multisector leadership organization, **Outdoor Play Canada** – KidActive



Glossary of outdoor play terminology by Outdoor Play Canada (to establish shared language across sectors, soon to be published)

Cohort's learning on outdoor play

Re: building the capacity of adults to support children's outdoor play:

- **Intentionality is key** in fostering OP for children– OP doesn't simply happen with the introduction of loose parts
- Shifting attitudes and practices of adults working with children requires more than training. Grantees report that **additional support, mentoring/coaching** appear to be successful approaches, consistent with good training practices
- Seeing and doing is believing; relatively quick transformations through **experiential learning**
- Parents value outdoor play but **perceived pressure from other parents and society can be a powerful barrier** to their engagement and participation.

Cohort's learning on outdoor play

In terms of community implementation models:

- Reaching diverse, marginalized and unconverted populations has been a challenge for some projects; ways of reaching beyond the converted requires further thoughts and effort
- Some projects are discovering synergies between outdoor play and Indigenous practices and ways
- A challenge is to view weather as a facilitator of play, not simply a barrier
- There is a lot of interest about outdoor play from communities – there has not been as much pushback as expected but it might be more prevalent in policy work.

Cohort's learning on outdoor play

On moving the needle on policy:

- **Still in the early days...** building from the local level
- **Open conversations and relationships with stakeholders** are building blocks in moving the outdoor play agenda forward and breaking down policy barriers
- **Need to work within systems** despite the challenges

Supporting this work by convening and connecting...

Convening

- Adds huge value
- Need a mix of structured and unstructured activities
- Project updates are essential
- Appreciation for new/different perspectives
- Preparation is key
- An appetite for collective problem-solving

Connecting

- Requires lots of work behind the scenes:
- Intentionality is key and appreciated

... and communicating and evaluating

Communicating

- All grantees connect but degree and mode vary
- Webinars work well for sharing information
- Facilitated communication needs time and resources
- Challenge: how to balance grantees' needs and preferences

Evaluating

- Helps develop learning and evidence
- Technical support helps build capacity - challenge providing and resourcing the 'right' level of support
- Third-party evaluations can be a mixed blessing
- OP sector needs a mix of evaluation evidence

Progress on building an outdoor play agenda in Canada

- Increasing awareness (Outdoor Play Strategy, media attention)
- Projects are being implemented successfully in pilot communities
- Community demand to scale and share knowledge about “how-to” is strong
- Continuing to find and connect with practice across Canada
- Outdoor Play Canada is emerging! www.outdoorplaycanada.ca
- Working with Ontario Trillium Foundation to explore a funders’ affinity group
- Lawson Foundation committed to a 10 year horizon for the OPS

Thank you!

For more information visit

www.lawson.ca

Or contact

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