

# Born Learning Trail

The *Born Learning Trail* is an interactive, playful and visible community engagement tool. It is part of the *Born Learning* campaign, designed to help parents, caregivers and communities support early learning. The *Trail* is a community change strategy, helping boost children's language and literacy skills – and encouraging families to get active. It's a great way to elevate awareness of early childhood education and connect volunteers.

## WHAT IS IT?

The *Born Learning Trail* captures 9 fun outdoor games on engaging signs to help parents and caregivers create learning opportunities for a young child. Whether installed in a local park, at a child care center or school, in a library or next to a children's museum, the *Trail* can be a valuable community resource for early learning.

## GENERATING SUPPORT

The Born Learning *Trail* toolkit costs \$1,250 to \$1,450, depending on your choice for sign material. Supplies – like posts, backerboards and paint – will cost about \$200.

You can minimize costs with in-kind contributions from your local hardware store, or equipment rental donated by a local rental company.

United Ways are budgeting anywhere from \$1,500 to \$5,000 for the trail, including additional materials and kickoff events. Most costs for opening ceremonies and trail kick-offs can be underwritten by sponsors. Localizing the *Trail* with your sponsors' logos serves as a permanent, visible thank you.

## SELECTING THE SITE

A *Born Learning Trail* can be sited almost anywhere. Designed for outdoor spaces, the signs can be used indoors – so zoos, malls or museum grounds make great *Born Learning Trail* sites!

Think about who you're targeting, and where those children and families go – to play, pray, shop, work and live. Make sure the site is safe, accessible and offers a venue for children to explore their world. Although anti-graffiti laminate protects the signs from some vandalism, you don't want signs to go where you wouldn't take your own children!

Ownership of the site is a critical issue to focus on up front.



The *Trail* fits virtually any footprint, indoor or outdoor. But be sure to walk your potential site in advance. Is there enough space for the active, movement games depicted? Is the terrain uneven or dangerous for small children? Mapping it all out as much as possible beforehand can help you trouble-shoot any site, painting and installation issues.

## BUILDING A TRAIL



Building a *Born Learning Trail* is a fun and enriching way to engage volunteers.

Putting up the 10 signs (9 games and 1 welcome sign) and painting the stencils is a perfect half-day project for a group of 10-12 volunteers, although more can help out with site refurbishment and landscaping.

Doing the advance work pays off. Walk the site early on, mapping out the placement of each sign. Line up power tools and experienced volunteers to oversee their use. The more

skilled volunteers you have on site, the better!

Planning committees for landscaping, publicity, activities, food and drink etc. can help you involve more volunteers at different points along the planning timeline.

However you organize your volunteers, take the time to help them understand how they're making a difference in the lives of children. Set up a briefing meeting as part of your volunteer training – bring in a parent educator to help volunteers understand the challenges families in your communities face. Create a fact sheet that spells out language and literacy or obesity difficulties your community's children face, and the challenges the *Trail* could address –be specific about how the *Trail* is part of a solution.



For more information on born learning, visit [www.bornlearning.org](http://www.bornlearning.org).