

Imagining a Virginia Without Invasive Plants

A Statewide Future Search Strategic Planning Workshop

Building a Statewide Coalition and Strategic Blueprint to Reduce Invasive Plants and Increase the Availability of Native Plants.



December 12-14, 2023

The Wool Factory in Charlottesville
1837 Broadway Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902

ATTENDEE INFORMATION & FAQs

Who can I contact with questions before the workshop or during the event?

Up until Monday, December 11, please contact the event's facilitators with any questions:

- Candy Castellanos | cvc@ignitepositivechange.com, (206) 427-1248
- Amber Peterson | amber@petersonperme.com, (218) 213-1303

If you have questions or concerns on the day of the event, please call (434) 218-9139.

What time should I arrive each day?

Each day, we have a "gathering time" which includes refreshments and connection.

- On Day One (12/12), you are welcome to join us anytime between 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. The workshop starts promptly at 1:00 p.m.
- On Day Two (12/13), you are welcome to join us between 7:00 - 8:00 a.m. The workshop resumes promptly at 8:00 a.m.
- On Day Three (12/14), you are welcome to join us between 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. The workshop resumes promptly at 9:00 a.m.

Where do I park?

Once you arrive at the Wool Factory, follow the signs for 'Dine In' parking. If you need handicap parking, follow the signs for 'Takeout' to the rear parking area of the building.

What if I cannot attend all three days?

It is critical in building common ground across the group that participants join us for the entire event. Missing a day or part of a day means you will miss vital discussions which create the momentum and understanding toward shared action. There are only 80 spots available for participants. If you can only attend part of the workshop, we kindly ask that you notify us so we can find a replacement for your spot.

What if I can attend all three days but need to step away for a small part of the event?

We understand that asking for three days of someone's full time and attention is a significant ask, especially for those who may find themselves being pulled in many directions.

You are being invited to participate in this strategic planning workshop because Blue Ridge PRISM and the Steering Committee planning this event believes you and your organization play a critical role in helping build a Statewide coalition and strategic blueprint to reduce invasive plants and increase the availability of native plants. Your perspective, your role within your organization, and your experience are key ingredients to this workshop's success. Having your voice "in the room" for the whole workshop is very important. Plan to be present for the duration of the workshop. If something arises and you need to step away briefly, please let one of the facilitators know.

Can I bring others to the workshop?

Family/Partner: Your family or significant other are welcome to join you during your stay in/near Charlottesville. However, only those who have been specifically invited to the workshop are welcome to join us at The Wool Factory for the event and event meals.

Co-workers/Colleagues: You are welcome to bring what you learned back to your co-workers and back into your network of colleagues! However, only those who have been specifically invited to the workshop are welcome to join us at The Wool Factory.

I know someone who would really like to attend - where do I direct them?

Please connect them with Nicole at nicole@blueridgeprism.org. Blue Ridge PRISM is the event sponsor, and the planning team will add them to the waitlist and actively assess if there is extra space available within the workshop.

I RSVP'ed "Yes." What if my availability has changed?

It is essential that everyone who can come, can come for the whole event. It's important that we know as soon as possible if your availability has changed, and to the degree which it has changed. To help us understand your new availability, please be in touch with Candy and Amber as soon as possible.

Are meals being provided?

All but one meal is being provided at the event and will be prepared by The Wool Factory kitchen. The cuisine is thoughtfully built around Chef Yoder's culinary expertise and his decades-long relationship with local farmers and purveyors - the menu will always reflect Virginia's freshest seasonal offerings.

Meals provided are:

- Day 1 / lunch, snack, dinner
- Day 2 / breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack
- Day 3 / breakfast, lunch

On Wednesday night you will be responsible for finding dinner on your own.

In the workshop there will be seating for all attendees. However, this is a unique event, and we will **not** have tables for the time which we are engaged in the workshop activities, as we will be moving around

a lot! Tables **will** be available for mealtimes.

Where can I eat on Wednesday night?

Visit <https://www.charlottesville.guide/> for a complete list of options for restaurants and cafes in the Charlottesville area.

What should I bring and how should I prepare?

This event is an “in-tact” experience and is specifically designed for you to simply show up, be there, and do the work in the room! We ask that you bring all your experiences, knowledge, and passion with you to the workshop, and be ready to share what you know and make meaning of what is happening throughout the event.

You will be given a workbook when you arrive to use for reference for all the activities. There will be plenty of space for adding notes. (No need to bring any electronics - laptops or tablets. We will be moving around a lot and the only tables used during the workshop are for meals.)

BRING: To open the event, we do ask that you bring a “symbol” (a small object, picture, or item) that represents your stake in this issue. Be ready to share what it means to you!

OPTIONAL/OPPORTUNITY: In one of the activities, you will work with others to create a “future scenario” and present it to the whole workshop. Props are encouraged! Feel free to bring items that can easily be moved around and stored in the workshop space. Art supplies will be provided, but if you have something special in mind, we encourage you to add it to the mix.

What should I wear?

It’s important that you are comfortable and ready to fully engage. Feel free to dress casually - we suggest you dress in layers to ensure you can moderate your own comfort throughout each day. Best to wear shoes you are comfortable moving around in and standing in.

All of the activities occur in circles where you are facing each other, both in the large group and in small groups. These circles will be made with chairs but will not involve tables.

Are there volunteer opportunities?

Yes! There are a few spots for individuals to join the event as volunteers. Please email Candy at cvc@ignitepositivechge.com and Amber at amber@petersonperme.com if you have someone to recommend.

Volunteers are expected to attend a training session a week before the event. All volunteers will be able to participate in event meals during their shift.

Roles needed:

- 2 People: Parking / Directional help (Tuesday 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)
- 2 People: Sign-in, Recorders (daily, 1 hour from start to close)
- 2 People: Supply restock throughout the workshop, Mic runners (daily, 1 hour from start to close)
- 1-2 People: Event photographers (workshop hours)

I have special dietary needs, what do I do?

When you RSVP you will have the opportunity to describe any dietary needs you have. The event team will be in touch to confirm your request and confirm that the Wool Factory kitchen is able to accommodate what is being requested.

What happens if it snows? How will I find out if the weather is impacting the event schedule?

We will contact you via email leading up to the event, including a final confirmation on Monday, December 11th.

If inclement weather or some other kind of significant event changes how or when we arrive together, we will contact you as soon as we can via email.

If you have questions, please contact the Blue Ridge PRISM staff at (434) 218-9139

What is the strategic planning Workshop's purpose?

The purpose of the Future Search workshop is to identify and launch a series of new statewide initiatives and action plans to make dramatic progress against invasive plants and, as part of that effort, support the use of native plants.

Why now?

For hundreds of years invasive plants have been introduced into Virginia's wild and cultivated landscapes. Since 2014 Blue Ridge PRISM has been working with partners and volunteers to reduce the negative impact of invasive plants in counties along the northern Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. We believe the next step in the fight to suppress invasive plants across Virginia is to build a broad coalition of stakeholders to create a shared vision and a systemwide strategic plan.

What are we hoping to accomplish?

This three-day strategic planning workshop is a targeted effort to reduce the presence of invasive plants in Virginia. To do this we are bringing together a microcosm of the interconnected system in Virginia that interacts with, influences, and intersects with invasive plants. By the end of the third day, we aim to have identified two to six statewide initiatives to make progress against the tsunami of invasive plants, and leave the workshop with plans for each initiative, including next actions, who will lead, and who will participate, and empower a leadership team that will drive each of the initiatives over the following months and years.

Why am I an important piece of this puzzle?

You are being invited to participate in this strategic planning workshop because Blue Ridge PRISM and the Steering Committee planning this event believes you and your organization play a critical role in helping build a Statewide coalition and strategic blueprint to reduce invasive plants and increase the availability of native plants. Your perspective, your role within your organization, and your experience are key ingredients to this workshop's success.

A total of eight stakeholder groups have been identified as the primary interconnected pieces in the puzzle of successfully addressing the invasive plant issue. Whether you wear one or many of the stakeholder "hats," you have a critical role to play.

By attending this event, what am I committing to?

The three-day workshop is an intensive, all-hands interactive experience. It is very important that each attendee can be present for all three days. As a participant in this workshop you will be asked to bring your “whole self” to the meeting, meaning all of your experiences and knowledge, and all of the hats you wear.

At a few specific moments within the workshop, you will be asked to work with others who represent a similar, particular point of view or “stake” in the future of invasive species within the State of Virginia. You will be asked to represent one particular view during these times, even though you are likely to represent many. For example, someone may be asked to represent those with a stake in educating the public on reducing invasive plant use, yet that person is also a landowner in Virginia and is interested in social action. For only part of the meeting, you will be asked to work with a small group from this specific point of view. In all other mixed group exercises and whole group discussions, you will have the opportunity to speak from all the multiple “hats” you may wear.

By agreeing to attend this workshop we are assuming that you will work collaboratively and in support of reducing invasive plants in Virginia. This will include a variety of approaches which may include legislative remedies to remove plants from the trade.

Everyone attending the workshop will be asked to:

- Self-manage time and tasks
- Facilitate discussion in their groups
- Keep the meeting purpose front and center
- Provide information and make meaningful, focused recommendations
- Help develop a vision for the future and commit to action steps

Which Stakeholder Groups have been invited to participate in this event?

A Future Search workshop is a highly structured three-day event that is organized around facilitated activities that take place within Stakeholder Groups and within mixed groups made from representatives from each of the Stakeholder Groups. The Stakeholder Groups, when combined all together, are intended to represent a microcosm of the interconnected system in Virginia that interacts with, influences, and intersects with invasive plants.

The workshop’s Steering Committee has identified 8 Stakeholder Groups for the Blue Ridge PRISM Future Search workshop. You can learn more about them on the Blue Ridge PRISM event registration page.

What is Future Search?

Future Search was created in the 1990’s by Sandra Janoff and Marv Weisbord as an open-source strategic planning methodology that is highly structured and designed to create an environment where action-based strategies around complex issues and systems are possible. This method helps people transform their capability for action very quickly. The meeting is task-focused and brings together 64 to 100+ people in one room or hundreds in parallel rooms.

A successful Future Search brings people from all walks of life into the same conversation – those with authority, resources, expertise, information and need. At the event, attendees meet for 20 hours spread across three days. People tell stories about their past, present and desired future. Through dialogue

they discover their common ground. Only then do they make concrete action plans. The meeting design comes from theories and principles tested in many cultures for the past 50 years and relies on mutual learning among stakeholders as a catalyst for voluntary action and follow-up: people devise new forms of cooperation that continue for months or years.

Future Searches have been run in every part of the world and in every sector of society. There are four core principles: 1) Get the "whole system" in the room. Invite a significant cross-section of all parties with a stake in the outcome – those with authority, resources, expertise, information and need. 2) Explore the "whole elephant" before seeking to fix any part. Get everyone talking about the same world. Think globally, act locally. 3) Put common ground and future focus front and center while treating problems and conflicts as information, not action items. 4) Encourage self-management and responsibility for action by participants before, during and after the Future Search.

Open-Source Resources: <https://futuresearch.net/>