

NATURE EVERYWHERE EVALUATION

Executive Summary

Nature Everywhere is a national initiative co-led by the Children & Nature Network, the National League of Cities, and KABOOM! The goal of the initiative is to expand equitable access to nature for children in 100 U.S. communities by 2025. Building on lessons from the Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) initiative, Nature Everywhere provides technical assistance, funding, and peer learning opportunities to help cross-sector teams embed nature access into local systems where children live, learn, and play. Nature Everywhere uses strategies to influence systems that support children's access to nature, such as Early Childhood Nature Connection for children up to age 5, Green Schoolyards for K–12 schools, and Nature Exploration Areas to foster partnerships with parks.

This evaluation, conducted by Education Northwest in collaboration with The Sustainable Learning Projects, used a developmental approach to assess implementation and progress of Nature Everywhere. The evaluation focused on three questions:



1 What are the core elements of Nature Everywhere?



2 What change is happening in Nature Everywhere communities?



3 What support and resources do teams need to successfully progress through each stage of the theory of change and overcome the challenges they face?

Core Elements of Nature Everywhere

Nature Everywhere is anchored in a logic model co-developed by the evaluation team and initiative staff members. Communities advance through four milestone stages: Explore, Plan, Implement, and Sustain. This model tracks progress toward systems change, focusing on shifts in policies, practices, resource flows, relationships, and mental models that limit equitable access to nature. To support this work, the initiative offers:



Technical assistance. Monthly sessions with national experts to guide strategy, maintain accountability, and connect teams to resources, guided by the Nature Everywhere logic model.



Funding. \$40,000 seed grants for capacity-building and engagement; \$50,000 catalytic grants for implementation for select teams.



Peer learning. Virtual sessions and in-person convenings (e.g., Vision Labs, Nature Everywhere conferences) to share strategies and build networks.



Resources. Toolkits for community assessment, visioning, and implementation planning. Evidence-based resources to support case-making with institutional leaders and community partners.

Change happening in Nature Everywhere communities

Of 25 teams analyzed, 72 percent completed the Explore stage, forming diverse cross-sector teams, engaging leadership, and selecting strategies such as Green Schoolyards, Early Childhood Nature Connections, and Nature Exploration Areas. As teams progressed through the milestones, they made progress toward relational, structural, and transformative change.



Relational change. Nature Everywhere supported relational change in most communities through expanded and deepened collaboration. Most teams reported having stronger partnerships and collaboration due to their participation in Nature Everywhere, including connections with institutional leaders and community partners.



Structural change. Nature Everywhere supported structural change in some communities through policy updates, as well as increased community resources and infrastructure. Some Nature Everywhere teams have also made progress on the policies, practices, and resource flows at the structural level of systems change, although many of these changes are still in progress.



Transformative change. Nature Everywhere helped build communities' vision for nature access. Vision development began shifting mental models, although these changes require more time.

The support and resources teams need

We looked closely at the communities that successfully moved through Nature Everywhere milestones and identified the key characteristics and supports that contributed to their success.



Technical assistance. Nature Everywhere technical assistance was crucial to supporting teams' progress toward systems change. Technical assistance was critical for accountability, legitimacy, and systems change guidance. Teams that engaged technical assistance consistently progressed faster through the milestones.



Systems change focus. Nature Everywhere technical assistance was most effective when teams understood the concept of systems change from the beginning. These teams were more likely to progress through milestones and achieve broader goals.



Team leadership and composition. Nature Everywhere technical assistance was most effective with teams with appropriate leadership and composition. Successful teams require members with a mix of commitment, authority, and capacity to make progress.



Funding and convening. Nature Everywhere funding and opportunities to connect with other teams were also important to team progress. Seed funding enabled teams to build their capacity and capability, while in-person convenings built momentum and clarified goals.

To sustain and scale Nature Everywhere, the initiative needs to focus on supporting well-equipped teams with key resources and time. Well-equipped teams have a systems change focus and are staffed with leaders and team members who have the commitment, authority, and capacity to make progress. Teams need Nature Everywhere technical assistance, funding, and opportunities to convene. They also need time to deepen partnerships and make progress on systems change goals.

