



Cities
Connecting
Children to
Nature

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

HOW CITIES CAN MAINTAIN EQUITABLE NATURE ACCESS

To generate momentum toward equitable access to nature for children and families, municipal leaders and their community partners must work to sustain and embed strategies of funding, partnerships, and resource and data collection into policies and practices at the local level.

This Project Sustainability Framework serves as a tool to assist city teams to sustain initial efforts to connect children to nature more equitably. The framework contains six categories, each broken down into multiple questions, and a simple rating scale to provide cities with opportunities to assess their areas of strength and opportunities for growth. The tool provides flexibility to suit local conditions and can generate new ideas. Its use gives cities and their local partners collaborative opportunities to identify local capacities and opportunities to take a systematic approach to sustainability at any stage of planning or implementation.

To complete this tool, CCCN staff recommend a planning group brainstorming exercise followed by wider stakeholder engagement in sustainability opportunities to create broad engagement at all stages of the project. This engagement might result in a more formalized Project Sustainability Plan to reference and adjust as necessary throughout the project.

For the purposes of this framework, CCCN defines “sustainability” as the endurance of systems, policies and practices that allow children, youth and families to connect to nature equitably across a city.



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Vision & Long-Term Plan for Implementation

ACTION	STATUS		
	SOLID	STARTED NEEDS ATTENTION	NOT YET STARTED
Vision: <i>Do you and multiple stakeholders have a shared long-term vision for your city?</i>			
Alignment with Citywide Efforts: <i>Have you taken steps to align your vision with other city/mayoral priorities and community-based efforts and/or initiatives?</i>			
City Leadership: <i>Does the leadership that resides in the city fully understand, support and amplify the vision and plan of action?</i>			
Goals & Strategies: <i>Does your implementation plan include specific goals, strategies and activities that tie to the long-term vision?</i>			
Balanced Portfolio of Strategies: <i>Have you adopted a portfolio of strategies that combines short-term wins to sustain early momentum and more ambitious, systemic strategies with long-term impact?</i>			
Communicating Momentum: <i>Have you identified a variety of communications strategies that will allow you to share early wins to gain further support for your long-term vision and implementation plan?</i>			
Flexibility & Longevity: <i>Do you have a vision for how the strategies identified in the 3-year Implementation Plan might seize new opportunities or continue beyond the 3-year period?</i>			

What actions and next steps will support your success?

What information, resources and support would help as you take next steps?

Management of Initiative Operations

ACTION	STATUS		
	SOLID	STARTED NEEDS ATTENTION	NOT YET STARTED
Support Staff: <i>Does an organization provide dedicated or shared staff who can plan, manage and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection, and logistical planning?</i>			
City Staff: <i>Do city government staff coordinate and assure alignment among activities and initiatives?</i>			
Guiding Team: <i>Do you have a guiding team or steering committee in place to engage the stakeholders and ensure that the work is accomplished?</i>			
Working Teams: <i>Do you have working teams established for specific projects? If so, does each team have project timelines, deliverables and metrics?</i>			
Communications: <i>Do you have effective communications practices among organizations?</i>			
Continuous Communications: <i>Have you scheduled a regular series of meetings and work sessions?</i>			

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Continuous Engagement of Community Stakeholders

ACTION	STATUS		
	SOLID	STARTED NEEDS ATTENTION	NOT YET STARTED
Community Organizations: <i>Do you have a plan for continued engagement of organizations in the community who might provide added value, capacity and expertise to the initiative?</i>			
Priority Populations: <i>Do you have a mechanism to continuously engage stakeholders from priority neighborhoods or populations?</i>			
Seat at the Table: <i>Have you engaged community stakeholders in a way that goes beyond “outreach” by creating mechanisms for meaningfully informing and influencing citywide decision-making?</i>			
Youth: <i>Have you engaged youth in an ongoing way as strategic informants and co-implementers of projects? Do these youth represent populations that need more systematic connections to nature?</i>			
Mutually Reinforcing Roles/Activities: <i>Have you defined the roles of stakeholders clearly, encouraging each stakeholder to undertake the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and coordinates with the actions of others?</i>			
Expanding Capacity: <i>Have you added net capacity to undertake additional actions? Have you intentionally connected community stakeholders with one another in support of your strategies, so as to expand capacity and impact?</i>			

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Securing & Leveraging Funding

ACTION	STATUS		
	SOLID	STARTED NEEDS ATTENTION	NOT YET STARTED
Making the Case: <i>Have you defined a vision and outcomes that describe what difference(s) the initiative will make in terms that matter for each funder audience?</i>			
Cost Estimates: <i>Have you developed cost estimates and projections for the whole project and components of the project?</i>			
City Funds: <i>Have you developed a solid assessment of existing resources within your city budget that leaders could realign or repurpose to support your initiative? What steps would the team need to take to tap those funds, and in what budget cycle?</i>			
Leadership: <i>Do you have consistent access to leadership who can work with you to align the project with additional resources within the city budget? Have you determined the steps each leader would need to take to tap those funds?</i>			
Non-Public Funds: <i>Do you have prospects among local, regional or national funding partners who might support your short-term and long-term needs for operating capacity or specific projects within your implementation plan? Have you assigned responsibility within the team or partners to follow up on those prospects?</i>			
Leveraging Momentum: <i>Have you identified ways in which you may leverage stories, impact and momentum in your CCCN initiative to garner attention of city leadership and community funding partners?</i>			
Fundraising Coordination: <i>Have you determined a person or organization with the capacity to coordinate public and private fundraising efforts for the initiative?</i>			

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Making Changes in Policies, Plans & Practices

ACTION	STATUS		
	SOLID	STARTED NEEDS ATTENTION	NOT YET STARTED
Policy Scans: <i>Have you conducted a policy scan to identify existing or potential policies that will support and sustain the initiative, determined priorities and assigned responsibilities for follow up?</i>			
Strategic Plan: <i>Do you have a plan to strategically influence the city's policies, plans or operating practices in ways that will support the initiative?</i>			
City Priorities: <i>Have you identified emerging or existing city policy priorities in other areas which you might leverage to advance strategies and long-term vision for the initiative?</i>			
Leadership: <i>Have you involved elected officials and other strategic leaders who might influence long-term institutionalization of children and nature efforts?</i>			
City Departments: <i>Have you involved (or developed plans to involve) multiple city (or county) departments to lead or host aspects of the initiative (e.g., health, utilities, transportation, law enforcement, parks, libraries, public works)?</i>			
Institutional Partnerships: <i>Have you established partnerships between city government and other relevant institutional actors (e.g., school district, hospitals, county government)?</i>			

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Measuring Impact with Data

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Indicators Linked to Strategies: <i>Have you established a short-list of key indicators that “tell impact stories” (e.g., that clearly define desired results and measure the effects of specific efforts)?</i>			
Data Capacity & Sharing: <i>Have you taken steps to add capacity as needed to gather, share, disaggregate, and manage key data, including establishing necessary data-sharing agreements—and considered or identified a data and evaluation partner such as a local university or think tank?</i>			
Performance & Equity Scorecards: <i>Have you created and established a system to maintain, regularly update and share the results of an agreed upon set of measures that address outcomes for low-income children?</i>			
Public Reporting: <i>Have you established a regular schedule for publicly reporting results from strategies and discussing related course corrections, if any?</i>			
Cross-Organizational Learning & Shared Measurement Systems: <i>Have you established a platform (such as a short list of indicators) for attention among an ongoing learning community in a way that maintains attention on continuous quality improvement and gradually increases the effectiveness of all stakeholders? Do you have a means to gather evidence that stakeholder organizations share attention to measures internally as well as across organizations?</i>			

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Other Project Sustainability Actions

ACTION	STATUS		
	SOLID	STARTED NEEDS ATTENTION	NOT YET STARTED

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