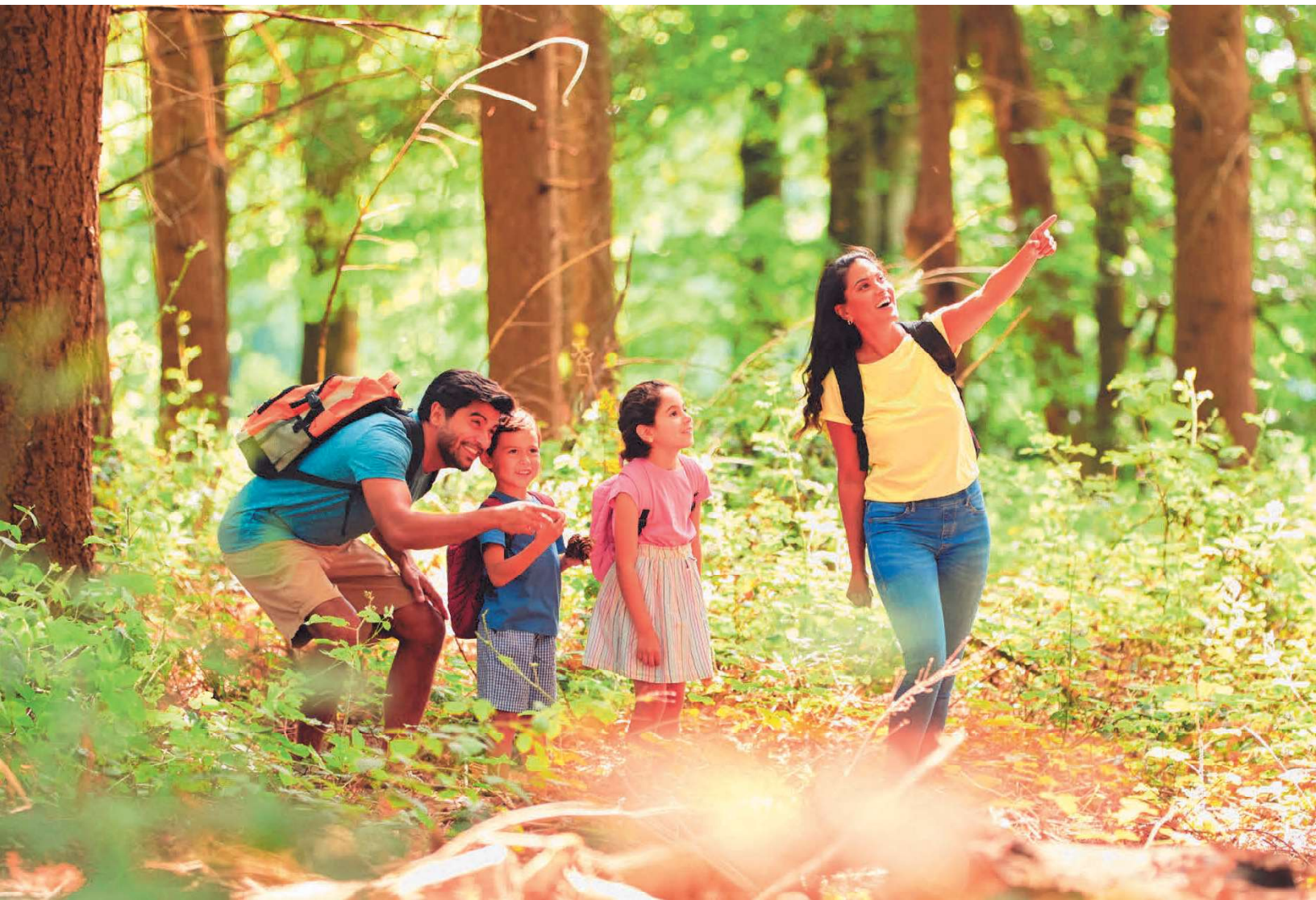


FINAL REPORT

Lessons Learned from the Cities Connecting Children to Nature Initiative

Education Northwest and The Sustainable Learning Projects
October 2023



Introduction

Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) is a joint initiative of the National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network, working to connect children and families to green spaces and outdoor experiences across the country. CCCN partners understand that achieving real and lasting change requires a community-based approach to dismantling systems of inequity. Therefore, the CCCN initiative focuses on educating and supporting cities on strategies for systems change.

The vision of the CCCN initiative is “a world where children have access to the benefits of nature everywhere they live, learn and play.” To realize this vision, since 2014 CCCN has organized cohorts of cities to participate in a network focused on specific themes or strategies.

To understand the work to date and support continuous improvement, CCCN partnered with Education Northwest and The Sustainable Learning Projects to explore successes and lessons learned from the initiative to date. This report answers the following questions:

- 1. What worked?** What lessons emerged from the CCCN initiative regarding activities that cities found most helpful to engage leadership and the community and promote more equitable connections to nature?
- 2. What lessons learned can inform future steps in the initiative?** What can be learned from the first nine years of CCCN?
- 3. What is next?** What do these lessons suggest about ways to increase impact and scale?

For this analysis, we primarily focused on outcomes outlined in the theory of change (see figure A1 in appendix), specifically:

- Activate city leadership with grassroots momentum for nature access
- Implement strategies that change the conditions that hold inequities in place
- Improve child and youth development through regular connection to nature

The methods for this report are described in the appendix.

CCCN initiative overview

Since 2014, five major groups (or cohorts) of cities have joined the CCCN initiative, resulting in the involvement of more than 45 cities. Cohorts comprised seven to 15 cities ranging in size from San Antonio, Texas (population 1.45 million) to Batesville, Arkansas (population 11,166). The CCCN team selected cities based on a review of applications. One requirement for participation was a cross-functional team with at least one city staff representative. Most cities had to show they had support from city leadership to participate.

Groups of cities joined in 2014, 2018, 2021, and 2022 and received 18 to 24 months of intensive technical assistance with the ability to remain a part of the CCCN Peer Learning Network thereafter. For the pilot group in 2014, CCCN welcomed seven cities who all made a broad commitment to work on connecting children to nature more equitably. In 2018, 11 cities joined the initiative.

Based on feedback from the first two groups, CCCN pivoted its selection process. Instead of a broad commitment to improving connections between children and nature, cities joined with a focus on a predetermined, specific, and targeted strategy. In 2019, 12 cities joined with a focus on implementing districtwide green schoolyards. In 2022, 15 cities joined with a focus on early childhood nature connections. A 2021–2023 experiment involved selecting regional or statewide intermediary organizations in six sites, each with a charge to reach out to multiple cities.

Through the evolution of the initiative, the support that cities received from CCCN shifted depending on city needs and strategies. The initiative attempted to improve and evolve the support and experiences of each group of cities based on results from the previous group. This means that the range of support looked slightly different year to year for each group of cities.

Support from CCCN included sharing tools, resources, and case studies; monthly technical assistance calls with CCCN technical experts; attendance at in-person meetings and conferences (once or twice a year); participation in networking calls or virtual gatherings that included cities from across the country and CCCN experts; support with city stakeholder meetings or city planning meetings; support in creating implementation plans or fundraising efforts; and referrals to experts. Many, but not all, cities received some level of grant funding, called catalytic grants, to help kick-start the strategy implementation.

What lessons emerged from the CCCN initiative regarding activities that cities found most helpful to engage leadership and the community and promote more equitable connections to nature?

In this section, we describe what has supported cities in their efforts to connect children to nature, including useful CCCN supports and evidence of city and community partnerships, as well as systems change.



CCCN technical assistance contributes to successful local systems change

CCCN provides support directly to partner cities to advance its mission “to increase equitable access to nature so that children—and the natural world—can thrive.” In interviews and surveys, all partner cities discussed the value of CCCN resources, tools, technical assistance, and general support.

Cities rely heavily on CCCN's resources, gatherings, and staff support

We examined the top supports identified by all 29 cities, as well as the top supports identified by the 11 cities that felt they made progress toward systems change.¹ Cities named five primary supports that advanced their work (figure 1). Other supports appear in table A1 in the appendix.

¹ In this report, we define achieving systems change as meeting a goal associated with mid- and long-term outcomes for CCCN: “implement strategies to change the conditions that hold inequities in place” and “improve child and youth development through regular connection to nature.”

Figure 1. Cities mainly relied on five supports for their work



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

CCCN toolkits and planning resources for cities. The toolkits and planning resources CCCN provides to cities play a vital role in their paths toward systems change. These resources often support cities as they begin their planning journey with CCCN.

“The first interaction I had was the CCCN Municipal Action Toolkit that just explores some of these big ideas. That’s where I saw both the early childhood nature play spaces and Green Schoolyards. That really started this ball rolling: logging on and looking at all this information and these resources.”

– Prescott, AZ

In-person CCCN meetings (e.g., All Sites) and conferences. Opportunities to connect in person, like the Children & Nature Network conference, are crucial for cities to develop their work. While virtual convenings may be more accessible for some cities and allow for more frequent interaction, several interviewees shared how much they value in-person events as an opportunity to learn from other cities.

“The convenings with other cities to envision what this movement could look like at the city level were very important.”

– Madison, WI

“I love the generosity that CCCN has in bringing us out to conferences and convenings. Taking a pause from the work that we do and going somewhere else to connect with other people in the field has been really helpful and inspiring.”

– San Francisco, CA

Opportunities to connect with other CCCN cities. All interviewees said that the connections they make with other cities through CCCN are very valuable. Through connections facilitated by CCCN staff members, city representatives can network, share strategies, and build their capacity to drive change. In surveys, about half of CCCN participants said they have drawn on research or results from other CCCN cities for their own work.

“Having access to see examples of projects on the ground and build relationships with other community leaders and organizations doing this work in other areas has been extremely valuable.”

– White Salmon, WA

Opportunities to connect with CCCN staff. Participants develop close relationships with CCCN staff members who help identify needed resources, connect participants with their own city leadership, and make connections with other CCCN cities. In interviews, participants praised CCCN staff members for their expertise, flexibility, and communication.

“CCCN staff have been such great coordinators, facilitators, and partners. They have connected us with information and examples. They have been an amazing sounding board to sort through next steps and partnerships.”

– Vancouver, WA

Monthly technical assistance calls with CCCN. Participants said CCCN’s monthly technical assistance calls are useful not only because of the support provided by CCCN staff, but also because the calls foster accountability and help cities prioritize the CCCN initiative.

“Regular meetings with a committed staff member who really understood our local work was important.”

– Cincinnati, OH

Using CCCN technical assistance to catalyze early learning success in Prescott, AZ

While assessing community access to nature, Prescott realized that their youngest population was the least served. To connect health equity, early childhood education, and outdoor equity, Prescott launched Nature Niños, a free community nature play program for families with children ages 0–8.

Just as they started the program, **Prescott joined CCCN's Early Childhood Nature Connection cohort, learning from other cities across the country about tools and resources** like The Trust for Public Land ParkScore metric and AARP's Livability Index that could inform their work.

In the short time Nature Niños has been operating, the program has been so successful that other cities in Arizona have expressed interest in replicating it (including Tucson, a current CCCN partner). The program also hosted its first event outside Prescott.

With a new GIS mapping grant from CCCN and plans to establish a gear library for young parents (inspired by another CCCN partner city), **Prescott admits that, in a few short years, "We've gone miles ahead of where we started."**

CCCN one-pagers, infographics, and research on the CCCN website. While fewer respondents elevated these resources as essential, several interviewees were extremely grateful for them.

"I can't even explain, I'm just so grateful for the infographics that the group develops. They really help. We have popped them into reports and presentations. We really appreciate the connection between the research and the infographics, and we use those resources. They have been incredibly beneficial, and I hope that CCCN will continue to produce them."

– Boulder, CO

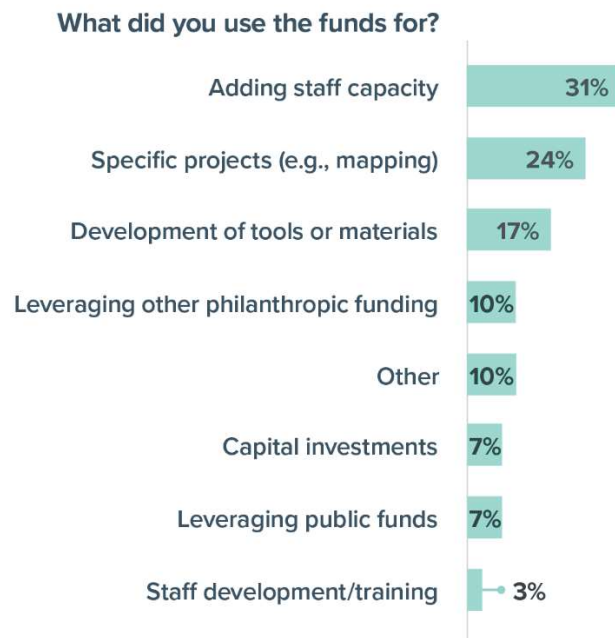
"We have utilized a lot of infographics that CCCN have developed. When we're trying to educate the community on nature play or other outdoor playground spaces, we have found CCCN items to be beneficial to help teach those communities."

– Grand Rapids, MI

CCCN grant funds catalyze cities' progress

CCCN provides some cities with general planning and implementation and catalytic grants to advance their work. Of the cities we connected with, 64 percent received funding, ranging from \$4,500 to \$75,000. Cities primarily used the funds to increase staff capacity and to undertake specific projects, such as mapping the parks in their city (figure 2).

Figure 2. Cities mostly used CCCN grant funds to increase staff capacity and engage in specific projects



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

Cities also used the funding to attend the Children & Nature Network conference, host community workshops, and secure additional technical assistance or consultant time.

Cities that received catalytic funding from CCCN said the funds had a major impact on their success: 78 percent of recipients said they “couldn't have done this work without the money.” Others said the money was critical for communicating the importance of their work to city officials as well as to completing the work. No recipient said the money was just “nice to have.”

“The importance of the catalytic funding at the beginning, really, I think it's what kept us afloat by being able to do even small actions to keep the momentum moving forward that can then grow into something bigger.”

– San Francisco, CA

“Without this money ... our staff person would have never been able to do some of the mapping ... the money's helping us contract help to get some of the work done.”

– Imperial Beach, CA

Regardless of whether cities received direct funding from CCCN, their association with the National League of Cities and CCCN supported their efforts to fundraise from other sources.

“The CCCN team is really good at helping us brainstorm other fundraising opportunities and leveraging the work we're doing with them into future fundraising, as well.”

– Texas (Austin, Houston, San Antonio)

CCCN cities leverage their affiliation with the initiative's national partners

Several cities shared the importance of being associated with the initiative's national brand, including the National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network. When asked about the most beneficial aspect of their partnership with CCCN, a representative from Imperial Beach, California, said that “just being associated with National League of Cities” is very beneficial.

“We really appreciate National League of Cities' networking, their connecting, their resources, their bigger picture. They get us out and away from just our personal scope.”

– Tucson, AZ

Being associated with a respected, nationally known organization opens doors for cities and helps them garner support from elected officials and other city leaders.

“And I've learned over the years that if you bring an outside organization that has a national profile with money, people pay more attention.”

– Flagstaff, AZ

“Being able to communicate to our team, our city department leads, and city leadership and say, ‘This is what the nation is doing, and we as Boulder are a leader in the nation’ ... it really helps make the case.”

– Boulder, CO



CCCN support helps cities initiate partnerships and fosters site-level system change outcomes

CCCN defines systems change as a combination of structural change (policies, practices, and resource flows), relational change (relationships and connections and power dynamics), and transformative change (mental models; figure A2). CCCN participants emphasized that while partnership and relational systems change takes time, they are seeing changes in their cities as a direct result of their participation in CCCN. In several interviews, CCCN participants said their city uses CCCN supports to harness existing momentum around connecting children to nature or adjacent topics (e.g., improving early childhood health outcomes). These participants described their engagement with CCCN as a catalyst toward their goals.

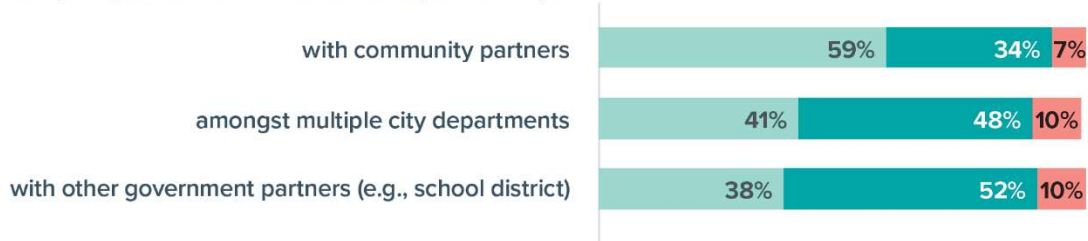
CCCN participation promotes diverse partnerships in participating cities

Partnerships play a crucial role in moving CCCN cities toward relational systems change. Many cities have developed or strengthened partnerships with community and government partners as a result of their participation in CCCN (figure 3).

Figure 3. To activate city government with grassroots momentum, CCCN participants have forged diverse city and community partnerships

● We've met this goal ● We're working toward this goal ● We haven't started working toward this goal yet

To what extent has your participation in CCCN helped you convene and/or build partnerships



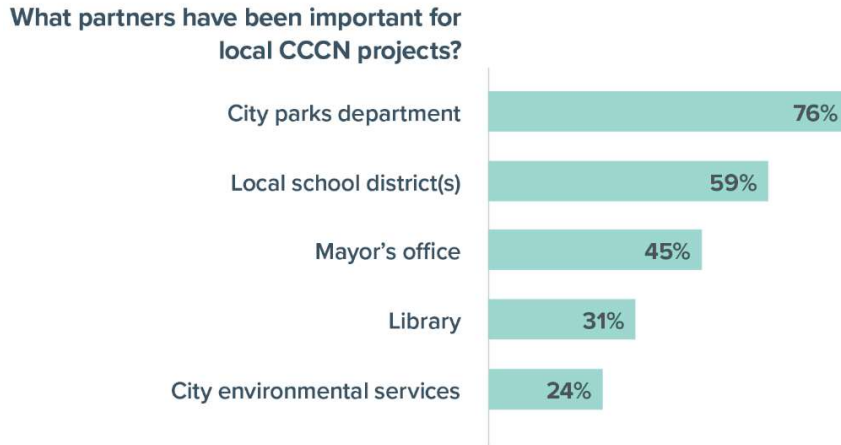
Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

“Collaboration is something our city is working to get better at. This work has truly opened the doors to how we can function, who is helping advance those efforts, and prioritized multilevel systems thinking.”

– Little Rock, AR

When asked about efforts to activate city government with grassroots momentum for nature access, interviewees discussed how they forge partnerships, use research, and build public will to prioritize access to nature. Most interviewees said city leadership, primarily the mayor’s office, is crucial for the ultimate success of CCCN in their city. CCCN participants have partnerships that span local, state, and federal regions and public, nonprofit, and private sectors (figure 4).

Figure 4. City parks departments and local school districts are important partners in local CCCN projects



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

Other partnerships include city public works, stormwater and sewer, and streets or transportation agencies; local child care providers; federal parks, forestry, and wildlife agencies; chambers of commerce; local nonprofits; and others (see table A2 in appendix).

“CCCN really got the mayor's attention at that time. There was support before, but there was a lot more support after. Just engaging the leaders of our city, I think CCCN was instrumental in that for us.”

– Louisville, KY

With these partnerships, just under half of CCCN cities have successfully communicated with and engaged city leaders as they work toward changing mental models and transformative systems change. About one-third have successfully communicated the need to connect children to nature with community members and community organizations (figure 5).

Figure 5. CCCN participation helps cities communicate with and engage city leaders, as well as some community organizations



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

From building public will to implementing policy change in Batesville, AR

When Batesville joined CCCN, they focused on spreading awareness about the importance of equitable access to nature and activating city government. Through social media and direct mail campaigns, they raised awareness about the benefits of nature with the broader public.

Before Batesville joined CCCN, city parks were primarily designed for children ages 6–12. **After using CCCN resources to communicate the importance of equitable and inclusive access to outdoor space to city partners, Batesville began using CCCN language in their requests for proposals. Today, all proposals for new projects or equipment must include infants and toddlers and support gross and fine motor development.**

Batesville recently received a \$320,000 grant for a new park and used mapping completed through CCCN to determine the location. Their efforts to activate city government have led to significant changes in policy.

CCCN cities are working toward systems change by adjusting their priorities and resource flows

CCCN participants work toward structural systems change by actively altering the conditions that hold inequities in place, including policies, practices, and resource flows. In surveys, about one-quarter of partner cities said their participation in CCCN helped them meet the goals of identifying racial and other equity priorities in their city as well as allocating staff and resources toward

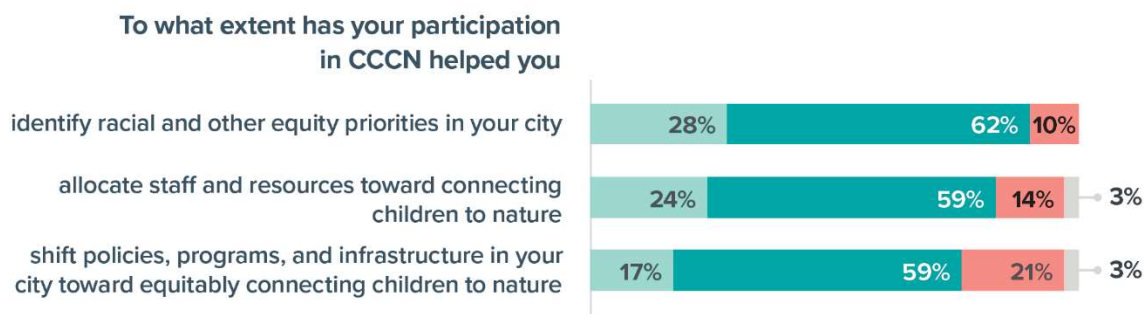
connecting children to nature. Many more partner cities are actively working toward these goals with support from their CCCN participation (figure 6).

“Thinking through systems changes really made us think through what big policies are in place and how we can leverage our partnerships across the state and across the cities to make some of those policy changes. That’s been probably the biggest impact: thinking through what levers we can pull.”

– Texas (Austin, Houston, and San Antonio)

Figure 6. To change the conditions that hold inequities in place, CCCN participants have begun identifying racial and other equity priorities in their city and allocating staff and resources toward connecting children to nature

● We’ve met this goal ● We’re working toward this goal ● We haven’t started working toward this goal yet
● This is not one of our goals



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

“Austin Parks and Recreation, Austin Independent School District, and Austin Watershed were the three main departments working on [Green Schoolyards]. They sat down and thought, ‘How can we make a bigger impact?’ That’s where we identified things like changing education specifications for the city of Austin. It got put into a bond that just got passed. So there are 20 new construction projects that are happening that are going to have Green Schoolyards.”

– Austin, TX

Sites respond to CCCN encouragement to make changes in infrastructure and programming

While our review focused on the outcomes outlined in the CCCN theory of change, CCCN also encourages cities to give attention to policies, programs, and infrastructure as key means to increase equity in children's connections to nature. Most cities mentioned specific infrastructure development and programming that they have been able to launch or sustain because of their participation in CCCN. Many cities further along in their journeys with CCCN have implemented changes in infrastructure, including transitioning traditional playgrounds to nature spaces or creating new nature spaces in child care centers. CCCN participants are excited by the community response to their efforts to better connect children to nature.

“By giving us these ideas of what has worked with other organizations, CCCN helped us improve what we provide to our community. I've seen firsthand how our children react to programming, how they love our programming, how they come back for more and are always interested, asking, ‘What are you going to do next?’ That’s really made an impact.”

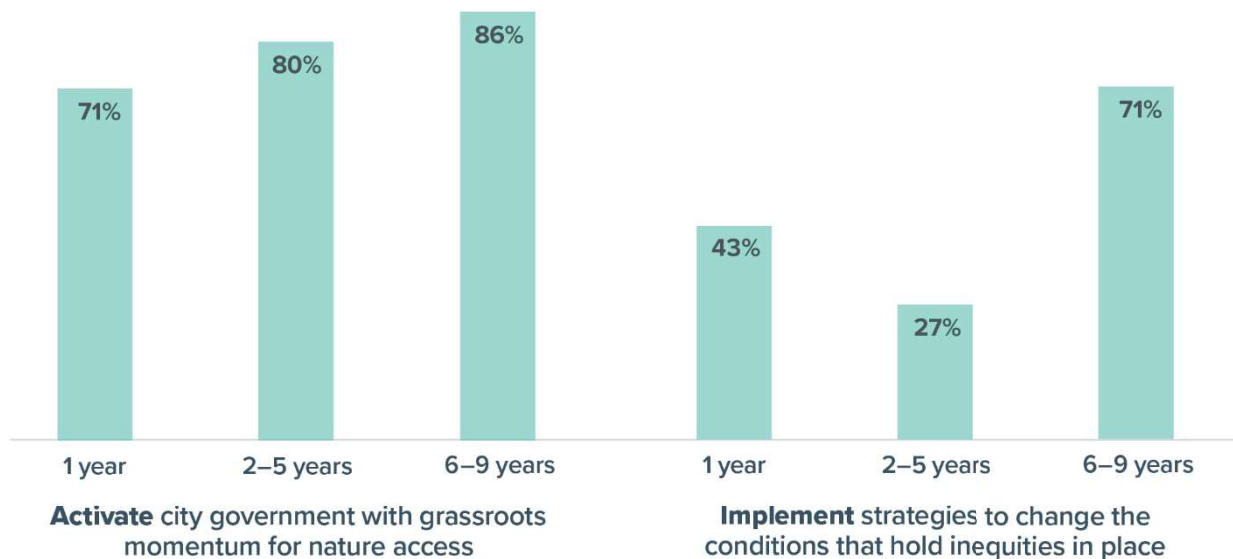
– Doral, FL



Longer involvement with CCCN connects to more systems change results

Systems change takes time. Participants involved with CCCN for six or more years were more likely to achieve outcomes associated with activating city government with grassroots momentum and much more likely to implement strategies to change the conditions that hold inequities in place (figure 7). All outcomes are provided by year in table A3 in the appendix.

Figure 7. Cities are more likely to implement strategies to change the conditions that hold inequities in place after participating in CCCN for six or more years



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant surveys with cities that have participated for 1 year (n = 7), 2–5 years (n = 15), and 6–9 years (n = 7).

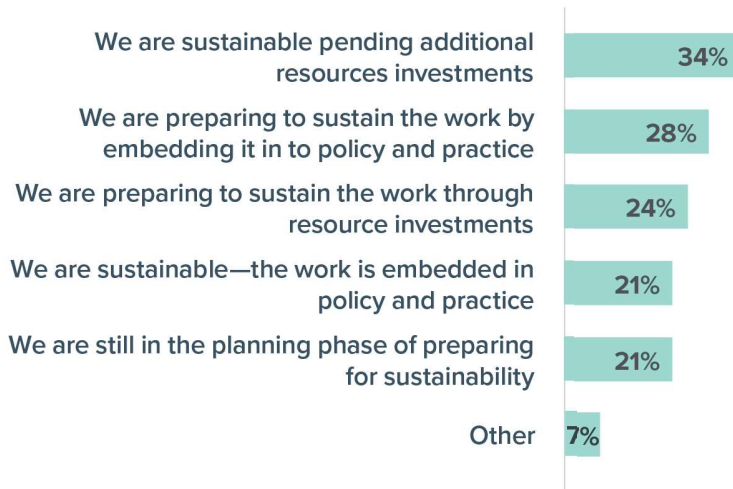
“One of the funders for Preschool Spaces has shifted their philosophy to only do nature play spaces and outdoor renovations. So that’s a big impact and a big shift, and that’s thanks to our collaborative work together that we never would have expected.”

– San Francisco, CA

To achieve these outcomes, CCCN participants must find ways to make their work and projects sustainable over time. Currently, 21 percent of cities said they can sustain the progress they have made in connecting children to nature, and 34 percent said they can sustain progress pending additional resources (figure 8).

Figure 8. CCCN cities are working toward sustainability [cities could select all that apply]

To what extent is your city prepared to sustain the outcomes you have experienced based on participation in CCCN?



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

What lessons learned can inform future steps in the initiative?

Participants appreciate the support CCCN provides to help catalyze their work. However, through a close review of key program documents, interviews with staff members, and interviews and surveys with CCCN participants, we identified some lessons learned from the past nine years of implementation that may inform next steps for the initiative.



Achieving progress on ambitious outcomes can be challenging for sites

While some CCCN participants have made progress on key outcomes associated with partnerships and implementing strategies that address inequities, fewer participants have made progress on the more aspirational outcomes laid out by CCCN (figure 9). Engaging youth in nature initiatives, guiding city vision and strategy, and sharing decision-making with the community have experienced slower progress than other outcomes. Additionally, very few participants have met the goal of improving child and youth development through regular connection to nature.

Figure 9. Most cities are working towards, but have not achieved, CCCN program outcomes



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

Even cities that have participated in CCCN for years and demonstrated success across strategies have found it difficult to measure progress on these goals. All interviewees said that while improving child and youth development through regular connection to nature is an ongoing, long-term goal, they cannot yet quantify it through improved health indicators. Schools, parks and recreation departments, and municipal government bodies historically have not collected the scope of data required to track health outcomes related to regular connection to nature, making it difficult to measure progress on long-term goals.

“We’re always working toward improving and having more regular connection with nature projects. Our preschool renovations, whether they’re full or small implementations, have an effect on the kids who are in child care every day for the next five, 10 years. Promoting more nature play within all our park projects across agencies ... it’s a cumulative exposure to nature that is hard to measure.”

– San Francisco, CA



Staff capacity is essential to success

In interviews and surveys, cities said one of the biggest barriers to successful implementation is staff capacity. Some cities, especially smaller cities with only one person staffed on the initiative, could not join calls on a regular basis or missed technical assistance meetings due to other responsibilities and scheduling conflicts. While 14 percent of cities participate in all CCCN offerings, other cities struggle to engage in activities (figure 10). When asked why they do not participate in all offerings, the most common response was limited staff capacity.

Figure 10. Nearly half of cities participate in a little or some of what CCCN offers



Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

Turnover is a key staff capacity challenge. This includes turnover among staff members directly engaged in the CCCN initiative as well as elected officials and other connected city staff members. Interviewees said the level of dedication and urgency needed for this work can wane during staff and city leadership transitions. However, some evidence shows that CCCN can help mitigate these challenges through consistent engagement.

“The City of Little Rock team had quite a bit of core team turnover in these few short years. The technical assistance provided [by CCCN] ... helped provide continuity and counsel while we worked to get the needed leaders and voices a seat at the table and involved in this work.”

– Little Rock, AR



Greater clarity and continuity in outcomes and processes would benefit the CCCN initiative

CCCN has iterated its process over time, which has led to different strategies, levels of participation, CCCN support, and associated grant funding from year to year. Based on staff interviews, this diversity was driven by iterative improvement or strategic redirection. After examining both internal and externally facing program documentation, we found it difficult to clearly identify program components, processes, participation criteria, and anticipated outcomes. Interviewees also commented on this lack of clarity, particularly those who had participated in CCCN for only a few years.

Lack of clarity makes it difficult for internal audiences to describe the entire scope of the initiative (with individual staff members focused on individual strategies) and for external audiences to understand what specific program components are and what participation entails. Internal and external audiences would benefit from clear definitions of all strategies and clear descriptions of program components, processes, participation criteria, and anticipated outcomes.

What do these lessons suggest about ways to increase impact and scale?

In this section, we describe considerations for CCCN as it makes decisions around scaling its programming. These recommendations were generated through a review of CCCN documents, interviews with CCCN staff members, interviews and surveys with CCNN participants, and our background knowledge of program evaluation and implementation science.



Recommendation 1. CCCN will achieve greater understanding if it adopts a consistent support process

The CCCN initiative would benefit from clearly defining all strategies, including program components, processes, participation criteria, and the expected activities and outcomes associated with each strategy. To achieve this and support scalability, we recommend adopting a consistent support program using a single, flexible implementation road map. This road map should require each city to begin by using partnerships and data to identify the best strategy (or strategies) to improve access to and infrastructure for nature. Cities will likely engage in several activities to implement the strategies they identify, but some activities may be more or less appropriate for each city. We envision an implementation road map that allows cities to choose activities that are best for their context and skip activities that are less relevant. For example, building public will presents a different challenge in Boulder, Colorado, than in Batesville, Arkansas. As a result, building public will may not be a necessary activity for both cities.

Using the implementation road map could alter the scope and type of technical assistance CCCN provides to cities. Technical assistance can include individualized support to cities as they decide how to proceed through the road map. CCCN staff members can still facilitate targeted partnering and sharing between cities while using the shared language of the road map. More specifically, based on our finding that the toolkit is the most highly rated support among participants, CCCN should focus on showcasing and implementing the toolkit. CCCN could spend collaboration time with cities not only sharing the resources from the toolkit (and elsewhere) but also working through the resources collaboratively with cities.



Recommendation 2. CCCN will tell its story better with more explicit, measurable success metrics

To better track progress toward outcomes, we encourage CCCN leaders to consider revising current measures of success to ensure they represent key program implementation milestones and outcomes that can be explicitly defined and measured. These may include the number of joint use agreements developed, Green Schoolyards built, or Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights signed. These measures of success should closely align to the implementation road map to ensure cohesion across the initiative. Clear short-, mid-, and long-term success metrics may enable CCCN to measure nature access or infrastructure over time (regardless of the strategies used by each city). At the same time, more explicit and measurable success metrics will support CCCN in identifying program areas of success and areas that need additional support, potentially leading to more efficient and effective allocation of grant funds.

There is an additional need to track and connect specific CCCN supports and grant funding to data and outcomes. For example, at different times, CCCN has used different amounts of grant funding to support different costs associated with different strategies. There has not been a systemic effort to track the amount of grant funding and connect it to specific costs and outcomes to learn the best use of funding. Retroactively cataloging grant amounts, describing how funds were spent, and linking expenditures to successful outcomes would be an insightful first step. Looking forward, adopting an internal grant tracking process alongside an external reporting system would provide insight into how to best use scarce grant funds.

Appendix

Methods. For this report, the Education Northwest–Sustainable Learning Projects team conducted document review, interviews, and surveys to better understand CCCN structure, supports, and outcomes. We interviewed CCCN and National League of Cities staff about the history and current status of program offerings. Additionally, we interviewed 15 cities and surveyed 14 cities to determine the usefulness of the supports they have received from CCCN and the outcomes their city has experienced. We then analyzed these interviews and surveys collectively, making up the overall percentages found in this report.

Table A1. Participants rated the usefulness of different CCCN-provided supports

	We couldn't have done the work without this support	This was somewhat useful	This was not useful	N/A
CCCN toolkits and planning resources for cities	82%	11%	0%	7%
In-person CCCN meetings and conferences	71%	4%	0%	25%
Opportunities to informally connect with other CCCN cities	64%	32%	0%	4%
Opportunities to informally connect with CCCN staff	61%	29%	0%	11%
Monthly technical assistance calls with CCCN staff	61%	14%	0%	25%
CCCN policy and practice briefs	57%	11%	4%	29%
CCCN infographics	54%	7%	0%	39%
Measurement tools and guidance	43%	25%	4%	29%
Cities Resource Hub on C&NN website	43%	25%	0%	32%
Community of practice calls (podcalls, check-in calls, etc.)	39%	46%	0%	14%
All-cities virtual calls	29%	50%	0%	21%
C&NN research digests	21%	21%	0%	57%
CCCN videos	14%	11%	7%	68%
TRAILHEAD	7%	11%	7%	74%

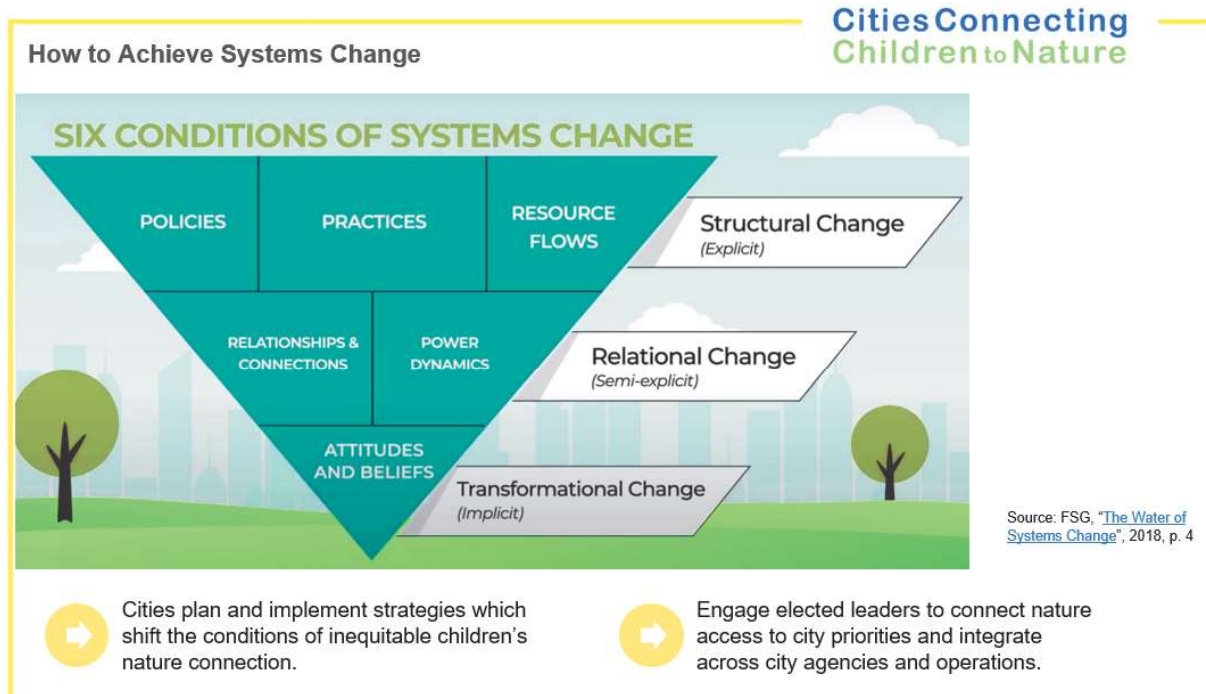
Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

Figure A1. CCCN Theory of Change



Source: <https://www.childrenandnature.org/>

Figure A2. How to achieve systems change



Source: CCCN, adapted from FSG, "The Water of Systems Change", 2018, p. 4

Table A2. CCCN partnerships

Type of partnership	Percentage of cities with this type of partnership
City parks department	76%
Other partner(s)*	62%
Local school district(s)	59%
Mayor's office	45%
Library	31%
City environmental services	24%
City public works	21%
Local stormwater/sewer/watershed agency	17%
City streets or transportation agency	10%
Local child care providers	10%
Federal park/wildlife/forestry/public lands agency	7%
Chamber of commerce	3%
Not applicable, we do not enlist partners or have not yet developed partnerships	3%

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).

*Other partnerships include:

- ACCESS local businesses
- AmeriCorps park rangers, county health department
- City attorney, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- Community-based organizations, youth development department, joint powers authority, county parks
- Conservation nonprofits
- Environmental education nonprofits and agencies
- Environmental education organizations
- Housing and human services department
- Local nonprofits and philanthropy
- Office of sustainability, public health
- Terra BIRDS, the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Office, Coconino County Cooperative Extension, Native Americans for Community Action
- Texas Children in Nature Network
- United Way
- Utah Office of Outdoor Recreations
- YMCA, California Academy of Science
- Zoo, local nonprofits

Table A3. Outcomes by year for CCCN participants

		We've met this goal	We're working toward this goal	We haven't started working toward this goal yet	This is not one of our goals
Communicate the need for connecting children to nature to city leaders	Overall	45%	52%	3%	0%
	1 year	43%	57%	0%	0%
	2–5 years	33%	60%	7%	0%
	6–9 years	71%	29%	0%	0%
Communicate the need for connecting children to nature to community members and community organizations	Overall	34%	62%	3%	0%
	1 year	29%	57%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	27%	73%	0%	0%
	6–9 years	57%	43%	0%	0%
Engage city leaders in supporting nature initiatives	Overall	38%	52%	10%	0%
	1 year	43%	43%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	27%	60%	13%	0%
	6–9 years	57%	43%	0%	0%
Engage youth in nature initiatives	Overall	21%	69%	7%	3%
	1 year	29%	57%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	0%	87%	7%	7%
	6–9 years	57%	43%	0%	0%
Convene and/or build partnerships amongst multiple city departments	Overall	41%	48%	10%	0%
	1 year	57%	14%	29%	0%
	2–5 years	27%	67%	7%	0%
	6–9 years	57%	43%	0%	0%

	We've met this goal	We're working toward this goal	We haven't started working toward this goal yet	This is not one of our goals	
Convene and/or build partnerships with other government partners (e.g., school districts)	Overall	38%	52%	10%	0%
	1 year	43%	43%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	27%	67%	7%	0%
	6–9 years	57%	29%	14%	0%
Convene and/or build partnerships with community partners	Overall	59%	34%	7%	0%
	1 year	43%	43%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	53%	40%	7%	0%
	6–9 years	86%	14%	0%	0%
Guide vision and strategy in your city	Overall	21%	59%	21%	0%
	1 year	14%	43%	43%	0%
	2–5 years	13%	67%	20%	0%
	6–9 years	43%	57%	0%	0%
Draw on research or results from other cities	Overall	45%	52%	3%	0%
	1 year	43%	57%	0%	0%
	2–5 years	40%	53%	7%	0%
	6–9 years	57%	43%	0%	0%
Build public will to support nature initiatives	Overall	7%	86%	3%	3%
	1 year	14%	71%	0%	14%
	2–5 years	0%	93%	7%	0%
	6–9 years	14%	86%	0%	0%

		We've met this goal	We're working toward this goal	We haven't started working toward this goal yet	This is not one of our goals
Identify racial and other equity priorities in your city	Overall	28%	62%	10%	0%
	1 year	14%	57%	29%	0%
	2–5 years	27%	67%	7%	0%
	6–9 years	43%	57%	0%	0%
Shift policies, programs, and infrastructure in your city toward equitable connection to nature	Overall	17%	59%	21%	3%
	1 year	29%	43%	29%	0%
	2–5 years	0%	67%	27%	7%
	6–9 years	43%	57%	0%	0%
Allocate staff and resources toward connecting children to nature	Overall	24%	59%	14%	3%
	1 year	29%	57%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	13%	60%	20%	7%
	6–9 years	43%	57%	0%	0%
Share decision-making with community members, generally	Overall	7%	69%	24%	0%
	1 year	0%	43%	57%	0%
	2–5 years	0%	80%	20%	0%
	6–9 years	29%	71%	0%	0%
Share decision-making with communities of color	Overall	7%	69%	21%	3%
	1 year	0%	43%	43%	14%
	2–5 years	7%	73%	20%	0%
	6–9 years	14%	86%	0%	0%

	We've met this goal	We're working toward this goal	We haven't started working toward this goal yet	This is not one of our goals	
Improve physical and mental health indicators for children through regular connection with nature	Overall	3%	76%	17%	3%
	1 year	0%	86%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	7%	67%	20%	7%
	6–9 years	0%	86%	14%	0%
Foster active citizenship and stewardship among children and youth	Overall	3%	79%	14%	3%
	1 year	0%	86%	14%	0%
	2–5 years	7%	67%	20%	7%
	6–9 years	0%	100%	0%	0%

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2023 CCCN participant interviews (n = 15) and surveys (n = 14).