

Nature Everywhere Communities Action Challenge Gathering Stakeholders

After completing a [landscape scan](#) to identify who in the community has a stake in advancing children's access to nature, the next step is to bring stakeholders together to listen to their interests and needs. In this instance, stakeholders may include nonprofits, public agencies, funders or leaders who already facilitate or whose mission includes nature connection for children. Engaging local stakeholders helps align new children and nature strategies with previous efforts and [community goals](#). It can also help maximize local resources and build connections with new stakeholders who may value children's well-being but may not currently use nature connections. Stakeholders to include, as they are often excluded, are community-based organizations led by people of color.

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS TO ENGAGE

- City, school district and institutional leaders
- Park leaders
- Local and regional funding partners
- Out-of-school providers
- Nature and environmental education program providers
- Public health agencies
- Youth development organizations such as YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, community- or faith-based- youth organizations, etc.

COMMUNITY EXAMPLES OF STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Faribault, Minnesota

The Nature Everywhere Community team in Faribault, Minnesota (population: 24.5K) convened local stakeholders in December 2024 to build on the city's growing momentum around expanding nature access for children and their caregivers.

This half-day gathering brought together a diverse group, including the mayor, elected officials, funders, parks and natural resources staff, health agencies, business leaders, advocates, educators, law enforcement, and the school superintendent. Participants engaged in discussions on community feedback and explored opportunities for collaboration to enhance nature connections for Faribault's diverse and growing youth population.

The convening strengthened support for the initiative and set the stage for the Faribault team to introduce a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights to the City Council in Spring 2025.

Lowell, Massachusetts

The Nature Everywhere Lowell team hosted a community kickoff meeting to engage local organizations in a conversation about the challenges and opportunities for expanding access to nature in Lowell. The meeting included 35 stakeholders from 20 organizations, including city agencies and local community nonprofits.

The event unfolded in two key phases. A week prior to the kickoff, the team met with local high school students to gather their perspectives on outdoor access—identifying obstacles they face and the changes they hope to see in their city. The team then shared these valuable insights at the stakeholder meeting, fueling a collaborative discussion on creating more inclusive and accessible natural spaces. The Lowell team is integrating the feedback gathered into its implementation plan, ensuring community voices shape the city's vision for nature access.

Flagstaff, Arizona

Flagstaff Green Schoolyards, led by Terra Birds, Flagstaff Unified School District, and the City of Flagstaff's Sustainability Manager, convened a diverse group of stakeholders to explore ways to connect children to nature through green schoolyards across the district. Each organizing entity leveraged its networks to bring key voices to the table, including County Supervisors, teachers, students, community members, and representatives from the Indigenous community.

With strong support from the Mayor and Superintendent, the convening provided a valuable platform to gather input on green schoolyard initiatives. The Superintendent highlighted ongoing facilities master planning efforts and saw this gathering as an opportunity to integrate community feedback into the process.

AGENDA COMPONENTS FOR A STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Objective: Setting a clearly defined, high-level reason for bringing stakeholders together is an important first step. The objective should answer the questions, “What is the end result of the meeting?” and “What will be true when this meeting ends?” It often helps to write the objective in “participants will...” or “participants will be able to...” format. This gives meeting participants a “north star” and organizers a goal by which to determine the activities of the meeting.

Sample Stakeholder Meeting Objectives: Participants will...

- Map stakeholder programs, interests and resources to identify opportunities and gaps for moving forward.
- Provide input on anticipated next steps and identify interest and opportunities for future engagement.
- Deepen stakeholders' understanding of initiative to strengthen support and encourage active collaboration.
- Increase local momentum through on-the-ground inspiration and in-person, immersive exposure to the process and/or projects.
- Secure approval for work to begin, ensuring timely coordination with key partners.

Sample Stakeholder Agenda Topics and Discussion Questions

Topics	Key Questions
Goals and Vision Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the community's and stakeholder goals? What do they want to see accomplished?• What is the community interested in regarding nature access for children?• What vision do they have for the future of the community?
Landscape Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the nature-based initiatives that should be included that aren't currently present? Consider initiatives by age group, time of day, type, and primary goals.• What is needed to further advance equitable access to nature or nature-based initiatives locally?
Reflect and Analyze	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What trends, patterns and opportunities exist across the landscape?• What opportunities could emerge via stronger collaboration?• Who/what is missing from the list?• How do we learn from and support each other in working together?• What roadblocks might arise?
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What could the next steps from this conversation be?• What other topics would we want to explore in future meetings?• Who else should be invited into this conversation moving forward?• When and with what frequency should we meet?• What steps can each of us take in the meantime?

This resource guide supports two of the Coalition Builder Actions for Nature Everywhere Communities Action Challenge: 1) Convene stakeholders to ensure the community has input in developing a vision for equitable nature connection; 2) Partner with a Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color (BIPOC)-led organization.