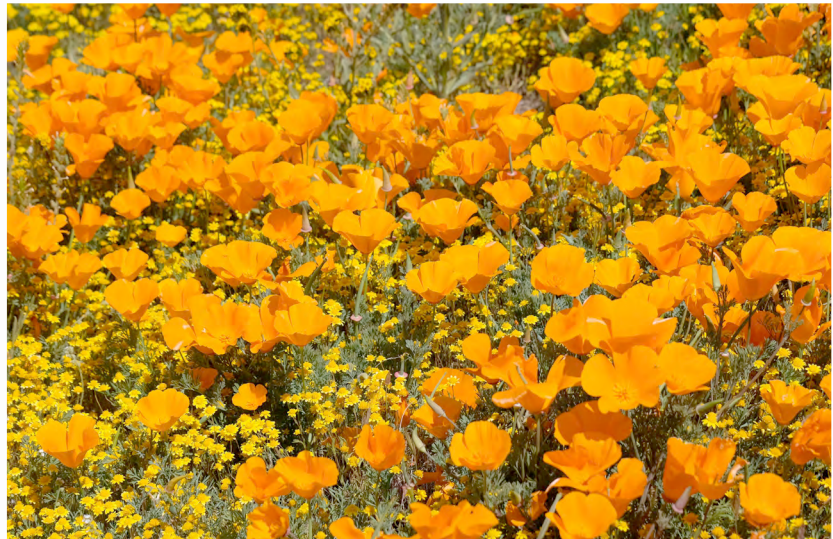CALIFORNIA
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Community-Based Partner Network Toolkit

CREATED BY THE

**California Environmental Literacy Initiative's
County Office of Education Innovation Hub**

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Introduction

As stated in *Educating Every California Student In, About, and For the Environment: A Call to Action for County, District, and Educational Leaders* (2019), environmental literacy is a critical outcome of K–12 education for California's students. Environmental literacy community-based partner (CBP) networks can play an important role in supporting the environmental literacy development of students, teachers, and administrators. CBP networks are a regional network of organizations with a common goal of supporting environmental literacy, environmental justice, and outdoor education by providing schools and districts with greater access to community resources and organizations that address local environmental issues. Sometimes the backbone agency that helps organize the network is a county office of education. CBP networks can look very different from region to region, but each network can be a valuable environmental literacy resource for its area.

"An environmentally literate person has the capacity to act individually and with others to support ecologically sound, economically prosperous, and equitable communities for present and future generations. Through lived experiences and education programs that include classroom-based lessons, experiential education, and outdoor learning, students will become environmentally literate, developing the knowledge, skills, and understanding of environmental principles to analyze environmental issues and make informed decisions."

**Definition of environmental literacy from
California's A Blueprint for Environmental Literacy (2015)**

Seeing the great potential of connecting stakeholders within California's education system to CBPs, the California Environmental Literacy Initiative (CAELI) has invested in the development of this guidance document, which has been specifically designed to help facilitate the creation and sustainability of CBP networks throughout California. The hope is that this toolkit will help organizations such as CBPs, school districts, and community-based partners establish and maintain CBP networks to help expand environmental literacy within California's K–12 educational landscape.

In creating this toolkit, the CAELI CBP innovation hub first surveyed existing CBP networks throughout the state. Data was gathered regarding the partnerships, overall benefits, key stakeholders and roles, design, construction, and funding and sustainability efforts of these networks and the methods used for assessing their equitable impact on a region. Key insights from the survey have been curated and incorporated into this toolkit to provide guidance to organizations interested in developing an CBP network for their region or strengthening an existing network.

Creating More Equitable Education Systems

The range of benefits CBP networks provide are outlined in this toolkit, but at the heart of this work is the opportunity to create a more equitable education system. Across a state as large and diverse as California, creating equitable education systems requires enormous commitment, honest assessment, and a customized approach to address unique regional needs. Data clearly shows that environmental health threats, such as exposure to pollution from pesticides in air, water, and soil, disproportionately affect communities of color and low-income communities (Adamkiewicz, et al., 2011). Additionally, students in low-income communities often have less access to local natural resources and outdoor education programs (Gosalvez, 2020). The legacy of exclusion created by racist ideology within the founding of the environmental conservation movement at the turn of the 20th century is just beginning to be openly acknowledged by our country's largest conservation organizations as they seek to acknowledge the past and build a movement inclusive of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (Purdy, 2015).

Currently, there is great inequity in terms of student access to outdoor education and environmental science programs. CBP networks can play a key role in supporting more equitable access to outdoor education, environmental education, green careers, and community programs that address local, state, and national environmental challenges. CBP networks can provide assistance in the form of educational programs, leadership, partnership, and financial assistance through grants for sustainability programs in communities most severely impacted by environmental health threats and environmental injustice. They can foster supportive relationships with local community and youth advocacy groups, and they have the potential to address environmental injustices affecting a community.

Networks can also contribute greatly to systemic change. They can enable stakeholders to take collective action to achieve goals by creating an environment with high trust, information flows, and resource sharing (Butler & Berger, 2020). A CBP network can become a key support for systemic change that increases equitable student access and connection to:

- Academic engagement, motivation, and achievement in science, civics, and other subjects

- Campus sustainability programs

- Green career information, mentoring, and leadership opportunities

- Indigenous communities in the region

- Information and tools to address local environmental health threats and environmental injustice

- Local natural resources, urban and rural green spaces, and public lands

- Outdoor education programs and resources

- Social-emotional learning, health, and wellness support

Environmental Literacy Community-Based Partners

CBP organizations vary in terms of size, core mission, funding, cost to access services, access to resources, geographical footprint, environmental focus, and so on. To help ensure equity and access to a wide variety of resources, organizations that want to establish a CBP network should consider the inclusion of the many types of CBPs in their region. At the same time, keep in mind that as CBP networks grow in geographical footprint, they may become less useful to a specific community. Networks that focus on a county-sized region or even a school district are often the most effective at meeting the needs of a community directly.

TYPES OF CBPs

WHAT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS MIGHT MAKE UP A CBP NETWORK?

- After school/expanded learning program providers
- Early learning providers
- Healthcare providers (e.g., hospitals, doctors, clinics)
- Higher education
- Industry/business
- Local curriculum providers
- Municipal/county/district natural resource management agencies

- *Air quality*
- *Energy*
- *Mosquito and vector control*
- *Waste management*
- *Transportation*
- *Water, including stormwater*
- Museums, aquariums, and zoos
- Nonprofit environmental education organizations
- Open spaces, parks, and recreation

- *City parks*
- *County and regional parks*
- *National parks*
- *Open space trusts*
- *State parks*
- PreK–16 education liaisons *(curriculum and facilities)*
- Residential outdoor science schools
- Social service/youth development organizations

CBP RESOURCES

WHAT TYPES OF RESOURCES DO CBPs OFFER SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS?

- Content expertise
- Curriculum or pre– and post–field trip lessons for the classroom
- Field trips
- Funding opportunities
- "Push in" to school programs

- Residential outdoor science camp education
- Teacher professional learning workshops
- Technical assistance
- Virtual programs
- Volunteer and community programs

CBP Networks

CBP networks exist on a wide variety of scales and levels, including national, state, regional, and local. Large-scale networks, such as those at the national and state levels, are valuable for their capacity to influence policy, provide research, increase awareness through large-scale media campaigns, and organize conferences to support practitioners in the field. Small-scale networks, such as those at the county and local levels, have the ability to address local equity issues and leverage local resources to work toward systemic change that reaches the student level.

COEs can be highly effective backbone organizations for a network because they are uniquely able to bring together a range of education stakeholders from schools and the community. COEs maintain relationships with district leaders, provide professional learning in alignment with current education standards and frameworks, and disseminate information to K–12 schools through established communication channels. COEs are also in a position to identify opportunity gaps and to surface equity issues across a region. Similarly, large districts and community-based environmental education organizations may also have the capacity to serve as the backbone of a local network.

TABLE 1 provides examples of CBP networks at different scales.

TABLE 1

NATIONAL

Children and Nature Network

Latino Outdoors

North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)

Outdoor Afro

School Garden Support Organization Network

STATE

California AfterSchool Network

California Association for Environmental & Outdoor Education

California Environmental Education Interagency Network

California Outdoor Schools Association

California Regional Environmental Education Community

REGIONAL

Central California Environmental Justice Network

Environmental Education Collaborative of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties

Mid-peninsula Environmental Educators Alliance

Water Energy Education Alliance

LOCAL & COUNTY

Monterey Bay Environmental Educators Network

San Joaquin County Office of Education

San Mateo County Environmental Education Community-Based Partner Network

Sonoma Environmental Education Collaborative

Benefits of CBP Networks

CBPs both receive and provide benefits from their involvement in a regional network. When CBP networks throughout California were surveyed regarding these benefits, a theme that emerged was that CBP networks are better able to serve communities because of the elevated perspective a network brings to environmental literacy work. When CBPs share their regional coverage and focus with one another, they can see which districts, schools, and students are not receiving services. Addressing these opportunity gaps has the potential to more equitably serve a region.

There are myriad other benefits that CBP networks can receive from and provide to a region.

"Organizations, including those who support educators in both formal and informal learning settings, the business community, and many other groups can play an important role in the implementation of the CA NGSS by providing resources, feedback, and support to schools and the broader education system."

Science Framework
for California Public Schools (2016)

Making education more relevant: Foremost, CBPs are often working on addressing local real-world environmental issues and have first-hand experience with rich local environmental phenomena within a community or region. They often provide historical context of a community in terms of knowledge of Indigenous people, ecological history of the land, and perspective on environmental and social justice challenges.

Combining expertise for greater impact: Involvement in networks allows CBPs to share best practices in terms of pedagogical approaches, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, culturally relevant teaching, strategies for connecting with schools and districts, and inclusive practices to make sure all students are effectively engaged in the environmental literacy efforts. With a COE as the backbone organization, CBPs benefit from the formal education expertise and connections at the COE, and the COE benefits by having a structure that supports increasing access, quality, and relevance of environmental education programs available to schools. This partnership can result in well-planned educational experiences that provide a complementary combination of the formal and nonformal sides of environmental literacy education.

Increasing collaboration and decreasing competition: CBPs within a network can help one another navigate the school systems they serve and avoid duplication efforts. This increased collaboration and decreased competition can increase the likelihood that the CBPs can provide services to more students within a community and break down silos in which only one district or school was benefiting previously. Thus, an CBP's involvement in a network can enhance its trustworthiness and relevance to the district or schools it serves.

Highlighting collective impact: A network provides all participating CBPs with the ability to come together in larger regional events. For example, a green career fair can be organized within the CBP network, bringing visibility and greater access to careers in environmental literacy for students within a community. Similarly, CBPs working on a given topic (e.g., climate change literacy) can collaborate to put on an event that collectively magnifies their impact.

Increasing quality of programs: A network provides a structure for CBPs to work with a backbone organization in order to become more relevant to the schools and districts they serve. For example, an organization that has expertise in current education standards and frameworks, such as a COE, can provide CBPs with training and access to learning opportunities. And CBP organizations within a network that have greater capacity and unique expertise can provide peer training to elevate the quality of programming across the region.

Innovating together: Networks allow members to combine their expertise and resources to pilot new ideas and programs that would not be possible for a single organization to implement. For example, a coalition of six CBP organizations designed a week-long outdoor education week in Santa Cruz County in response to a request from a school to brainstorm solutions for teachers who lacked the time to prepare for hybrid instruction while teaching in 100% distance learning classrooms. The partners divided up the grade levels and provided virtual instruction to all K–8 classes while teachers had planning time with their principal. Programs throughout the week focused on standards-based science, nature connection, social-emotional learning, and environmental stewardship projects.

Securing funding: CBP networks have the ability to leverage their collective power to access funding that may not otherwise be available to a single CBP. There is strength in a coordinated approach, and funders may find providing funds to the collective to be more impactful than providing funds to a single CBP.

Key Stakeholders and Roles

CBP networks have a variety of stakeholders that they serve and support. Each stakeholder plays an important role in the education process to expand environmental literacy for all students. To help with the thinking and planning process for the creation and sustaining of CBP networks, Table 2 identifies these stakeholders, their roles, and the assets and actions they can provide.

TABLE 2: Key CBP Stakeholder Roles, Assets, and Actions

STAKEHOLDER & NETWORK ROLE	ASSETS & ACTIONS
Environmental education community-based partner *Network role:* Primary member, possible backbone organization if the organization has the capacity and expertise	• Provide expertise to the education community regarding environmental topics and challenges. • Provide a real-world context that the formal educational sector can utilize. • Provide opportunities for students to better understand environmental issues and careers. • Share resources and curricula that can support other environmental literacy outreach efforts in the region. • Share educational programs, expertise, and outreach strategies with peer CBPs.
County Office of Education *Network role:* Possible backbone organization for the CBP network, key advisor	• Provide expertise and professional learning that connects California standards and frameworks, environmental literacy, and best practices in instructional pedagogies. • Introduce CBP's to local districts, schools, and teachers and promote district partnerships. • Provide networking opportunities across formal and nonformal education, provide a location to convene the network, and establish infrastructure for network (e.g., web presence).
School and district administrators *Network role:* Key advisors, potential partners	• Create partnerships between CBP's and the school districts. • Share with other administrators within the school district about the partnerships and education that CBP's provide. • Encourage other teachers from the site or district to engage with CBP offerings.
Teachers *Network role:* Key advisors, potential partners	• Integrate the environmental topics, CBP offerings, and other standards-based environmental literacy resources into lesson and experiences for students. • Provide a clear line of communication between the CBPs and the school.

STAKEHOLDER & NETWORK ROLE	ASSETS & ACTIONS
Curriculum specialists and coordinators, teachers on special assignment *Network role:* Key advisors, potential partners	• Provide support for CBPs who would like to develop instructional materials for local education agencies (LEAs). • Facilitate partnerships between CBPs and LEAs.
Students *Network role:* Key advisors	• Receive learning from CBPs regarding local environmental issues affecting their community. • Develop the skills to be one of the change agents that will help address local and global environmental challenges of the present and the future. • Potentially serve in government, social service sectors, and environmentally-focused careers later in life.
Family and caregivers *Network role:* Key advisors	• Share knowledge, professional expertise, and relationships with their community. • Learn about environmental issues facing their community. • Learn from their students about environmental literacy and environmental awareness. • Provide students with access to museums, environmental programs, parks, and other environmental literacy programs.
Indigenous communities *Network role:* Primary members, key advisors, partners	• Share knowledge and expertise, and lead efforts to protect the environment and culture within their community. • Provide real-world connections to local environmental phenomena and environmental injustices that can be linked to outdoor education programs and curricula. • Provide a community with an authentic historical or scientific perspective.
Researchers, scientists, historians, elders *Network role:* Potential members, key advisors, potential partners	• Share knowledge and expertise, and lead efforts to protect the environment and culture within their community. • Provide real-world connections to local environmental phenomena that can be linked to outdoor education programs and curricula. • Provide a community with an authentic historical or scientific perspective.
Funders *Network role:* Key advisors, potential partners	• Provide funding to address specific barriers to equitable access to environmental literacy programs, such as transportation or program fees. • Provide pilot funding for collaborative partnerships among CBPs, or provide funding for capacity building and professional learning within an CBP network.

Examples of CBP Network Models

Table 3 shows examples of the range of existing structures and approaches to network models. These examples show how increases in complexity and investment may correspond to increasing influence on systemic change. There is no single "correct" way to do this work—CBPs and backbone organizations should be guided by the needs and capacities within their network.

TABLE 3: Examples of CBP Network Models

NETWORK MODEL			
TRADITIONAL NETWORK MODEL	**COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MODEL**	**COLLECTIVE IMPACT MODEL**	**BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP MODEL**
NETWORK Mid-peninsula Environmental Education Alliance	Monterey Bay Environmental Educators Network	San Mateo County Environmental Education Community-Based Partner Network	Water Energy Education Alliance
MODEL PURPOSE Leverage expertise among the group to support shared goals, build capacity, and increase collaboration.	Focus on a shared goal, develop action plans, and share results of implementation.	Provide equitable access to K–12 outdoor education programs through the formal education system.	Engage cross-sector stakeholders in order to accomplish common goals.
EXAMPLE GOAL Sponsor roundtable sessions to share on a variety of relevant topics (e.g., volunteer training and retention, school program marketing).	Align outdoor education programs to support NGSS implementation.	Provide in-depth professional learning programs that partner teachers with environmental education providers for implementation of integrated programs.	Build industry-focused career technical education programs for Southern California high school students.

	TRADITIONAL NETWORK MODEL	COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MODEL	COLLECTIVE IMPACT MODEL	BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP MODEL
PARTICIPANTS	Backbone organization with capacity to provide minimal administrative support.	Backbone organization with expertise in formal education standards and frameworks (e.g., COE, environmental education organizations, teacher advisors)	Backbone organization with expertise in formal education standards and frameworks (e.g., COE, environmental education organizations, district or school partners)	Coalition of leaders in education, the water and energy industry, and school districts.
BACKBONE INVESTMENT	Provide administrative support for organizing meetings and communication tools.	Design and provide professional learning for CBPs to establish common understanding of NGSS. Collect data on programs and provide tools and review process for NGSS alignment. Coordinate meetings using shared leadership practices.	Design in-depth professional learning with community of practice for implementation. Facilitate professional learning and convenings. Collect data on lessons and provide tools and review process for NGSS alignment. Coordinate work plans and reflection to support continuous improvement.	Provide administrative support and serve as liason to connect industry goals to education programs.
BUDGET	Minimal to no funding required. Staff time for outreach and administration.	Program director $10-15K (optional) Staff time for administration, training, and project management.	Professional learning institute costs $100–150K (i.e., stipends, venue rental, food, materials, staff time) Additional staff time for lesson review and project management.	Seed funding provided by backbone leader with request for matching funding from additional members from industry.

California's County-Level CBP Networks

Add your network: We are collecting information on existing and newly emerging CBP networks for future work in order to connect and leverage the strengths of different networks. If you lead a network or are launching one, please complete this **form**. Table 4 provides several examples of existing county-level networks and their websites. Check it out to help you explore different approaches to organizing and maintaining networks and to see if there are any networks near you!

TABLE 4: Existing County-Level CBP Networks

NETWORK NAME	COUNTY/REGION	WEBSITE
Central Coast Environmental Education Partnership	Ventura	Link
Environmental Education Collaborative	Riverside and San Bernardino	Link
Humboldt County Guide to Environmental Education	Humboldt	Link
Mid-peninsula Environmental Educators Alliance	San Mateo and Santa Clara	Link
Monterey Bay Environmental Educators Network	Santa Cruz and Monterey	Link
San Francisco Children & Nature	San Francisco	Link
San Joaquin COE Community Partners for Environmental Literacy Network	San Joaquin	Link
San Mateo County Environmental Education Community-Based Partner Network	San Mateo	Link
Santa Clara COE Environmental Literacy Leadership Collaborative	Santa Clara	Link
Sonoma Environmental Education Collaborative	Sonoma	Link

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Quick Start Guide to Beginning a CBP Network

Regardless of the network model you choose, a key to success for all is investing time and energy in building trust and synergy among the group and connecting the work to real needs and goals. It is vital at the outset to include strategies and best practices for working with diverse communities. We analyzed the practices of effective networks across California and identified six key steps for launching an CBP network, logistics to consider, and strategies for building equity, inclusion and shared leadership.

Further recommendations and best practices can be found in NAAEE's *Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence* (NAAEE, 2017).

Building Equity From the Beginning

RESOURCES:

Explore resources regarding equity, such as Justice Outside's _Guide to Cultural Relevancy_ (2017) and the _Youth Development Executives of King County School-Community Partnership Toolkit_ (2019).

STRATEGIES:

Begin your work by engaging with Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the community and implementing transparent strategies for equity and inclusion. Potential strategies include the following:

- Engage in relationship building by consulting residents and leaders who connect with the broader community.
- Work to understand the existing goals of community-based organizations before imposing the goals of the CBP network.
- Explicitly express the network's commitment to equity and inclusion in all outreach materials and communication. Take into consideration that an inclusive and equitable process may take longer than some people are accustomed to.
- Seek support from organizations or professionals who have expertise in facilitating conversations around equity and inclusion.
- Engage the group in examination of the impacts of colonialist and white supremacy values that impact environmental education work, starting with self-reflection and honest conversation about environmental education programs as they are now and about their goals for the future.
- Launch an equity-focused working group within the network to provide introspection and recommendations as the group regularly revisits the network's vision and model.
- Engage community members in helping to identify service-oriented or culturally specific organizations that are respected and trusted within the community.

DEFINITIONS:

Develop shared definitions of equity, inclusion, cultural relevance, and environmental justice, and create shared value statements about commitment to equity and justice for formal and nonformal educators.

SCHEDULING:

When scheduling meetings, events, and communication, prioritize to ensure Black, Indigenous, and members of color are represented.

ADVISORS:

Seek thought partners with expertise in equity, inclusion, and cultural relevance who can serve as external advisors to the network.

Findings From the Field: Key First Steps

We analyzed the practices of effective networks across the state and identified six key steps for launching a CBP network.

1. CHOOSE A MODEL

Identify the network model or structure that is the best fit for your goals and CBP landscape. Include stakeholder input in the choice and design of the model.

2. ENGAGE WITH CBPs

Consider the range of stakeholders and organization types that impact environmental literacy and justice in your region and recruit via email, phone, or a convening. Ensure that all outreach is relevant in terms equity, inclusion, and culture, and include leadership from among Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the community. Consider who is missing from the table. Are there environmental allies among the political leaders in the region? Are classroom educator and student perspectives represented directly or indirectly?

Consider outreach to organizations or networks beyond the environmental and education sectors. By developing relationships with organizations working on issues that intersect with environmental literacy and environmental justice, such as public health, youth development, and social services, you can create bridges to communities that are not well represented within the environmental education community. Potential partners come from a variety of sectors and will vary considerably from region to region.

- Some regions may have institutions of higher education that can provide environmental research and resources.
- Others may have a wealth of outdoor education programs offered by nonprofits or by national, state, or county parks. In some areas, most land may be agricultural or privately owned.
- In regions that do not have many environmental education organizations, CBP networks may include government agencies such as water departments, county environmental health organizations, municipal waste management agencies, or natural resource management agencies.

As you conduct your outreach, share potential benefits and address possible barriers for stakeholder participation. If you want direct participation from certain groups, be attentive to your choice of meeting times for maximum inclusion, especially at the beginning when you are presenting the initial idea for a network and seeking buy-in.

For example:

3. OFFER YOUR PROPOSAL

Host an initial convening to propose the network and solicit buy-in.

- Briefly share examples of existing networks and their benefits.
- Propose a network model for your region and share its potential benefits.
- Articulate an initial vision and solicit input.
- Engage the group in identifying their common interests and goals that intersect around environmental sustainability and justice, community health and wellness, and education.
- Articulate immediate next steps:
    · groups survey/needs assessment;
    · co-creation of group agreement; and
    · co-creation of vision and goals.
- Solicit buy-in. This should be demonstrated by a commitment to complete the needs assessment survey.

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4. SURVEY THE NETWORK

Gather the following information from each organization. (Feel free to copy and adapt this **sample survey form**.) Actively seek to include people who are often missing from conversations.

- Key contacts
- Mission of the organization
- Strengths
- Needs/areas for growth
- Basic programs and services
- Audiences (areas served, number of people, demographics)
- Capacity for participation (meeting frequency and times)
- Environmental issues affecting the region that are of most concern to the organization
- Community/education needs that are of most concern to the organization
- Recommendations for other stakeholders for the network

5. LAUNCH CONVENINGS

Begin regular convenings, being sure to include the following:

- Creation of group agreements. (See this **overview and example** of a group agreement from Seeds for Change.)
- Co-creation of mission and vision; shared definitions of equity, inclusion, and cultural relevance; and network goals. (Identify a mix of easy initial goals and ambitious long-term goals that can inform the development of your network's action plan, logic model, or theory of change.)
- Clarification of roles and support offered by backbone organization.
- Collaborative processes for agenda setting and decision-making.

6. SHARE OWNERSHIP AND BUILD TRUST

Include time in every convening for building relationships and trust, with an ongoing focus on equity, inclusion, and cultural relevance. Explore NAAEE's **Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence** (2017), "Resource #14: Collaborative Leadership" (pg. 123).

Logistics for Launching a Network

MEETING SPACE:

Many meeting spaces are free, donated as in-kind support, or low-cost. Some networks rotate hosting duties among member organizations that have space, and the hosting CBP often incorporates a small tour or presentation of the organization's programs into the meeting agenda. Be mindful of travel (e.g., traffic patterns), and strategize to avoid repeatedly placing the burden of travel on the same people. Offer virtual attendance options when possible.

FOOD:

Many networks operate with minimal or no budget for food. However, small snacks and water are appreciated to keep everyone comfortable. Providing a meal together can be a bonding experience when funds are available.

MEMBERSHIP:

No formal membership process is required. The backbone agency launching the network should maintain a record of its initial outreach and create a list of the organizations that commit to the CBP network. Acknowledge from the start that different organizations within the network will have different capacities. Be explicit in framing this as a strength. Every organization brings unique experiences and perspectives that together enable the network to better understand the needs regarding environmental education for the organizations and the students they serve.

In some cases, a network may decide to institute a system for jointly funding the networks or for collecting dues, and then the resulting funds can be used for the benefit of the group as a whole. For example, dues funds could be used to pay for a consultant speaker on a topic of interest to the group or to cover the cost of snacks and beverages at meetings.

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San Mateo County Office of Education

FISCAL AGENTS:

Many networks function without a fiscal agent, but if your network is likely to seek funding as a collaborative, the group should identify which of its organizations have the capacity to receive and manage a grant on behalf of the network. This function can fall to the backbone organization but does not necessarily need to.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS:

Communication tools may include a website, social media, shared folders and documents, or virtual meeting spaces. The backbone organization may provide support for these, or the management of different elements may be divided among participating organizations based on their capacity and expertise. Include translation options to provide greater access to all audiences.

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Maintaining a Strong, Effective Network

After the initial launch of a network, its success depends upon maintaining a certain level of synergy and energy among the group. Leading with a focus on inclusive practices, shared leadership, and appreciation of unique assets within the membership will help create a shared value for diversity and maintain a common sense of purpose. Building redundancy into the leadership of the network can help prevent turnover of personnel that may lead to the potential collapse of the network.

Findings From the Field: Building Community

In surveying effective networks, the following best practices were identified for building and maintaining a strong collaborative community.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS:

This was the strongest theme of the survey. Getting to know the identities, values, talents, and passions of those in the group is invaluable in building trust and the shared purpose needed to sustain the work of an effective network. Network leaders all expressed the importance of allocating time within meetings for people to network and get to know who is at the table. Other recommendations include beginning each meeting with a "connector" activity that is focused on social-emotional learning and providing informal opportunities to gather outside meetings.

LEAD AS A FACILITATOR:

To encourage collaboration and shared ownership of the work, leaders can foster the development of partnerships by not only bringing together complementary expertise, but also by encouraging network members to share stories of successful collaborations. Frame all members as having expertise that benefits the group, regardless of the differing size and status of member organizations. At each meeting, leaders can enlist a different community-based partner to share its program and an area of expertise.

UPHOLD GROUP AGREEMENTS:

After co-creating group agreements, take time to revisit and revise them on a regular basis. Reflect explicitly on the value of maintaining them and shared decision-making processes. Consider integrating a process checker into each meeting to reflect on how well the group is "walking the talk." (See the section "CBP Network Self-Assessment Rubric" at the end of this document for an example of a useful process checker.)

SHARE LEADERSHIP:

Useful shared-leadership practices include co-creating meeting agendas, co-constructing group feedback surveys, taking notes collectively, and sharing facilitation of the meetings. Formalize shared leadership by rotating the role of leading a connector activity or observing with the process checker. As a rule, ask for perspectives, ideas, and expertise from within the group before supplying resources, ideas, and solutions from outside. Recognize that the capacity of member organizations will vary. A larger organization may be able to provide a training program or resource that a smaller organization may not have the capacity to offer. A smaller organization may be able to offer expertise on a specific topic or insight into a community that others lack. In this way, the network as a whole increases its knowledge base and skills.

STAY RELEVANT:

Design agendas, topics for discussion, and collaboration that are meaningful and timely. Make sure to address the important question, "What's in it for me?". Networks have a tendency to break down unless they are relevant to the participants involved.

FOCUS ON GOALS:

Maintain clear, shared goals even as new ideas are introduced. Consider using a logic model as a living document to help assess whether new ideas fit within the group goals and to adjust plans as the work evolves. When the group identifies a new priority, consider organizing a working group or subcommittee to carry out the corresponding tasks and projects.

REASSESS NEEDS:

Engage as a group in regularly reassessing needs in order to maintain common goals and strategies.

Equity Strategies for Evolving Networks

AUDIT:

Conduct an equity audit. Examine organization materials, program materials, recruitment, and hiring policies and ask, "Whose voice and presence is not currently in the collaborative? Who has power? Who does not?"

WORKING GROUP:

Create an equity working group within the network whose role is similar to that of an advisory group that provides observations, reflections, and inquiry focused on equity and inclusion.

CALENDAR:

Create a calendar to share facilitation of connector activities and of self-assessment using a process checker.

ACTIVITIES:

Use connector activities that build cultural inclusion.

FACILITATION PRACTICES:

Use facilitation practices that ensure an equitable voice among participants and that create an inclusive environment. Examples can be found in the *Youth Development Executives of King County School-Community Partnership Toolkit* (2019) in the section "Working Together."

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Katie Beck

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Funding Considerations

Launching a network requires little to no direct funding at the start. Planning time by staff at the backbone organization is adequate support. As the network matures, however, pursuing collaborative funding opportunities is a highly likely opportunity for growth. To promote collaboration and avoid competition, the network should work toward transparency when seeking funding. One approach when applying for grants could be to develop a tiered level of network member involvement that is connected to tiered levels of grant funding and support. For example, a larger proportion of funds from a specific grant could go to the leadership team that executes the bulk of the work in the proposal, while other members of the network may benefit by receiving training that requires a smaller stipend. In this way, a proposal may be strengthened by showing greater impact across the region, and more network members will benefit by being involved at the level that matches their current capacity. Here is one example of a **collective funding proposal**, prepared by the San Mateo County Community-Based Environmental Literacy Partners. For networks at different stages of development, the following are typical items that may need funding.

Initial Funding Considerations for Years 1–2

- ○ Time for staff of backbone organization to plan and coordinate
- ○ Logistics (e.g., meeting room rental fees)
- ○ Food or snacks
- ○ Guest speaker honoraria
- ○ Training consultants
  (e.g., for equity, inclusion, access, and diversity training)

Expanded Funding Considerations for Years 3–5+

- ○ Time for staff of backbone organization and network steering committee to develop more robust mission, vision, goals, and objectives and varied levels of network member capacity for use in pursuing funding
- ○ Time for staff of backbone organization and network steering committee to systematize orientation of new members and training to address opportunity gaps in professional learning
- ○ Compensation for advisory councils
- ○ Landscape analysis
- ○ Web-based environmental education directory
- ○ Impact study leading to collective funding opportunities for the collaborative
- ○ Grant writer

CALIFORNIA
ENVIRONMENTAL
LITERACY
INITIATIVE

Suggested Network Activities

For networks at different stages of development, the following checklists suggest group tasks, meeting topics, collective impact projects, and so on.

Activities for New Networks in Years 1–2

○ Share mission and goals of member organizations and identify common goals.

○ Co-create network goals (a mix of short-term and long-term).

○ Define roles and responsibilities of members.

○ Identify opportunities for members and the capacities that the network would like to build.

○ Establish communication channels the group would like to use
(e.g., listserv, website, meetings, peer advice and training, liaisons to outside stakeholders).

○ Familiarize partners with content standards and curriculum frameworks and review
environmental education programs in order to strengthen standards alignment.

○ Share best practices of successful CBPs.

○ Address current challenges faced in education outreach.
(The involvement of a COE as a backbone organization is a strength in this regard.)

○ Analyze an equity map of the region to see which students
currently receive services from CBPs.

○ Determine environmental topics that are and are not covered by the network.

○ Establish "what's in it for me" for the CBP and link to network goals.

○ Investigate individual strengths and share them with one another.

○ Guide meeting content by embedding ongoing formative assessments.

○ Use a self-assessment tool annually, beginning with
gathering baseline data and setting goals.

Activities for Established Networks in Years 3–5+

- ◯ Develop outreach tools and strategies to approach strategic new partners such as districts and funders. (The involvement of a COE as a backbone organization is a strength in this regard.)

- ◯ Explore how economic inequality, social movements and other contemporary problems are affecting environmental literacy programs, network members and target audiences.

- ◯ Expand partnerships (among members, districts, or both) within the region and build connections with other networks to share capacity-building strategies.

- ◯ Take on collective-impact projects, working together to meet goals collectively.

- ◯ Online directory of programs that have been vetted for standards alignment and that promote ties to curriculum scope and sequence.

- ◯ In-depth professional development and community of practice with formal educators to embed environmental education programs into core curriculum.

- ◯ Green school technical assistance programs

- ◯ Youth leadership programs

- ◯ Seek collective funding.

- ◯ Refine a self-assessment tool annually in order to monitor the network's custom goals.

CBP Network Self-Assessment Rubric

Reflection and assessment are key practices that enable a network to gauge progress, adjust plans, and identify achievements. Conducting periodic self-assessment and data collection yields information that can guide revision of strategic plans and goals, provide evidence of progress, and support the creation of compelling arguments for initiatives and funding. A combination of flexible, ongoing, embedded formative assessments and a long-range assessment tool will help your network be responsive to immediate needs while staying on course toward larger goals.

To help get started on assessment plans, we have created the CBP network self-assessment rubric, (also pictured below) which can be adapted to your group's goals. This rubric is organized to reflect research on network development, and its criteria encompass the best practices outlined in this toolkit.

Other rubric and assessment resources you may find useful include _WestEd's California Standards Implementation Matrix_ (n.d.) and _Youth Development Executives of King County's School-Community Partnership Toolkit rubrics_ (2019).

CBP Network Self-Assessment Guidance

This self-assessment tool is intended as a template for you to adapt to your network's goals. This is not an evaluation tool; there is no judgement in being at any stage of development in the rubric. Conducting periodic self-assessment and data collection yields information that can guide the revision of strategic plans and goals, provide evidence of progress, and offer support for making compelling arguments for initiatives and funding. The rubric is organized to reflect research on network development. The table is organized into four dimensions that can be used to measure networks: structure, function, strength, and content (Perry et al., 2018). Elements of each dimension are listed in the table.

In addition, references to key differences in the developmental stages of networks are reflected across the rows:

Cooperative: Also thought of as the activation phase, emphasis is on building relationships, establishing core mission and values, and determining whether this network should exist. Membership is often more focused on individual organization benefits.

Collaborative: A stable membership emerges, and coherent processes create a stable network with high commitment to the network and shared goals. Leadership is increasingly shared. This phase is heavily dependent on personal relationships.

Integrated: Network processes become more efficient so that new members are easily integrated. Though relationships remain important, network processes are no longer dependent on individuals. Leadership is distributed, and as founders retire, new leaders emerge. Commitment is at organizational level.

BEGINNING (COOPERATIVE)	DEVELOPING (COLLABORATIVE)	HIGH FUNCTIONING (INTEGRATED)	DATA TO TRACK
**Structure:** The architectural aspect of networks, including the presence and patterns of linkages between members, the overall size of a network, and how tightly knit a network is.			

CRITERIA

	BEGINNING (COOPERATIVE)	DEVELOPING (COLLABORATIVE)	HIGH FUNCTIONING (INTEGRATED)	DATA TO TRACK
EQUITABLE ACCESS	CBPs look at equity practices in their own organizations.	CBPs share equity practices to help inform others within the network.	Network provides equitable benefits to participants and stakeholders. Network increases equitable access to CBP programs and resources.	• CPB's equity policy and practices • Network equity policy and practices
BROAD RANGE OF STAKEHOLDERS	CBPs include varied organization types and stakeholders; focus is on outreach to other groups. Focus is on outreach to organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color and to those serving students who have lacked access to environmental literacy instruction.	A wider range of stakeholders is included. Organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color and those serving students who have lacked access to environmental literacy instruction are meaningfully included.	Network includes a wide range of organization types: CBPs, districts, governments agencies, higher education organizations, environmental educators, funders, families, and students. Network elevates needs and leadership from organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color and from those serving students who have lacked access to environmental literacy instruction.	• Publications and correspondence • Diverse stakeholder presence on network website • Annual stakeholder feedback survey • Planning meeting attendance

CRITERIA	BEGINNING (COOPERATIVE)	DEVELOPING (COLLABORATIVE)	HIGH FUNCTIONING (INTEGRATED)	DATA TO TRACK
	Function: The types of exchanges, services, or supports accessible through ties to members of the network (e.g., emotional support, instrumental aid, appraisal, monitoring)			
SHARED LEADERSHIP	Input is gathered from some members for network decisions. Communication norms are in place and monitored by facilitators.	Input is gathered from most or all members for network decisions. Community agreements are co-created. Agreements are connected to group interactions.	Decision-making protocols are transparent and efficient. Facilitation practices ensure opportunity for all members to actively participate. Meeting agendas are co-created by stakeholders.	• Representative leadership from CBPs within subcommittees. • Evidence of shared decision-making (e.g., votes on initiatives) • Planning meeting attendance.
NETWORK GOALS & OUTCOMES	A process is in place for identifying goals for each CBP and for collective network goals. Measurable outcomes are identified.	Data collection informs goal-setting. SMART goals are created. Trusting relationships are developed. Information flows smoothly.	Network goals are clearly identified. Network goals are meaningful to all participants. CBPs share accountability for reaching goals. Data is shared strategically and ethically among organizations.	• Network agendas • Network goals • Annual impact reports
INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM ALIGMENT	Awareness of CA curriculum frameworks and standards, Environmental Principles and Concepts, and environmental literacy goals and approaches is increased.	Alignments between CBP programs and CA standards and Environmental Principles & Concepts is increased.	Programs support shifts in instruction in frameworks, such as constructing knowledge with students. Differentiated instruction, including for English language learners.	• Trainings involving standards and frameworks • Technical assistance to review curriculum

	BEGINNING (COOPERATIVE)	DEVELOPING (COLLABORATIVE)	HIGH FUNCTIONING (INTEGRATED)	DATA TO TRACK
CRITERIA				
	Strength: The intensity and duration of bonds between members within the network			
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS	CBPs have built a trusting relationship with a few of the members of the network.	CBPs have built trusting relationships with many or all members of the network.	CBPs have built trusting relationships with most members of the network. Network recruits and expands membership.	• Annual survey data • Network attendance
INCLUSION & CULTURAL RELEVANCE	CBPs share their individual approaches to providing services to all students. CBPs share their approaches to bringing cultural relevance to their programs.	Approaches to enhance equity, inclusion, and cultural relevance are included implicitly in group goals, communication, and group interactions.	Equity and inclusion and cultural relevance are explicit in group goals, communication, and group interactions. All members are respected and treated fairly at meetings. Funding is coordinated to benefit the entire network.	• Map/spreadsheet of school districts served by network • Network goals • Network communication • Network activities

	BEGINNING (COOPERATIVE)	DEVELOPING (COLLABORATIVE)	HIGH FUNCTIONING (INTEGRATED)	DATA TO TRACK
CRITERIA	**Content: The substance of social networks (e.g., beliefs, tangible experiences, collective memory, information, resources, knowledge, skills)**			
SHARED VISION	Mission and goals of individual organizations are shared. Common goals are identified.	CBPs co-create shared network vision.	Network shared vision becomes institutionalized.	• Annual review of vision • Use of language
CAPACITY-BUILDING THROUGH SHARED EXPERTISE	CBPs share expertise within the network. The network explores shared training models. The network explores collaborative funding models.	CBPs share expertise within the network to increase capacity of organizations or partnerships. Shared training models are implemented. Collaborative funding models are supported.	Expertise from within the network to increase capacity and sustainability of organizations and partnerships is leveraged. Shared training models are expanded to new groups. Innovative collaborative funding models are explored. Data collection with expert partners (e.g., university researchers) is expanded.	• Annual self-assessment • Ongoing embedded assessments in training meetings

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