

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on November 25, 2024

M.L. 2021 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2024

Project Title: Minnesota Green Schoolyards

Project Manager: Anna Callahan

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Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08g

Appropriation Amount: \$250,000

Amount Spent: \$250,000

Amount Remaining: -

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

Trust for Public Land piloted the Minnesota Community Schoolyards program, including a demonstration project at Jefferson Elementary in Faribault, MN. This showed a replicable model for transforming underutilized schoolyards into restored native habitat, expanded tree canopy, and enhanced outdoor educational spaces; and engaging the next generation of environmental champions.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Across Minnesota, schools face many environmental, learning, and social challenges, including habitat and tree canopy loss; extreme heat and rain events; learning loss; mental health and behavioral issues; teacher burnout; and disconnection from the outdoors. Only a fraction of schoolyards are designed as quality outdoor spaces to protect and preserve the environment.

Utilizing M.L. 2021-097 ENRTF funding, Trust for Public Land piloted the Minnesota Community Schoolyards program to demonstrate Community Schoolyards as a statewide solution to address the lack of quality nearby nature opportunities at schools and untap schoolyards' ecological potential. Community schoolyards add native plants, pollinator habitats,

green infrastructure for stormwater management, trees, outdoor classrooms, gardens, nature play, porous surfaces, and hard surface removal.

Due to funding provided by the ENRTF as recommended by the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Trust for Public Land:

- Developed the first-in-the-nation statewide analysis of 2,500 schools. The assessment identified high-need locations using environmental, health, demographic, and park-need data at both school- and community-levels. This tool helped select the location of the demonstration project site and identify priority geographies and districts for schoolyard transformations.
- Created a 5-year programmatic strategic plan to connect Minnesota children and families to quality nature and learning spaces. This would establish nature-filled community schoolyards as the standard and best practice for Minnesota schools.
- Formed an initial network of 15 early schoolyard champions and cross-sector partners in cities, counties, and school districts across the state to break down institutional barriers, red tape, and siloes to advance this work with the Minnesota Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.
- Completed a demonstration project at Jefferson Elementary in Faribault, MN showcasing a replicable proof-of-concept design
- Developed and refined a Student Leader Class curriculum, activities, and assignments, specific to Minnesota's climate and local context, that can be replicated across schools

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Various webpages were created including MN schoolyard program page (<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/minnesota-community-schoolyards>) and Jefferson Elementary demonstration project page (<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/jefferson-elementary-community-schoolyard>).

The statewide schoolyard mapping resource was shared widely to partners and school agencies, presented the tool to a handful of webinars and groups, and also hosted online: <https://web.tplgis.org/healthy-community-schoolyards-a-discovery-map/>.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2021 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: January 3, 2025

ID Number: 2021-097

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Project Title: Minnesota Green Schoolyards

Project Budget: \$250,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Anna Callahan

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

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Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: November 25, 2024

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: November 25, 2024

Project Completion: June 30, 2024

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08g

Appropriation Language: \$250,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with The Trust for Public Land to assess, promote, and demonstrate how schoolyards can be adapted to improve water, air, and habitat quality and to foster next-generation environmental stewards while improving health, education, and community outcomes.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project will assess, promote, and demonstrate how schoolyards can improve water, air, and habitat quality; foster next generation stewards, while improving health, education, and community outcomes.

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

Across Minnesota, there are approximately 2,500 primary and secondary schools. The land on which these schools sit accounts for tens of thousands of acres of publicly owned land. Unfortunately, the typical schoolyard includes turf grass, impervious surface, and aging playground equipment and athletic facilities, which provide little to no benefit to Minnesota's environment and natural resources. Current schoolyard conditions - unintentionally - contribute to storm and groundwater issues, loss of pollinator habitat, and heat island impacts. Additionally, a lack of nearby natural amenities limits the ability of schools to better integrate environmental education, use the outdoors as a classroom, and foster next generational environmental stewards.

Green schoolyards are a solution to this problem. What's missing is a supportive infrastructure and group of committed partners to: further understand schoolyards' hidden potential; organize community leaders; coordinate efforts across multiple jurisdictions, agencies, and groups; generate on-the-ground green schoolyard examples specific to Minnesota; and create avenues to support the expansion of green schoolyard efforts statewide.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project imagines, funds, and builds schoolyards packed with trees, native plants and grasses, gardens, and other features that capture and treat stormwater. Green schoolyards reduce the risk of flooding, and combat the heat island effect, keeping our communities cooler. They're places where birds and pollinators find refuge, and double as outdoor classrooms where kids can learn about the natural world all year long. And since every green schoolyard is open to the public outside of regular school hours, green schoolyards serve as neighborhood parks, where anyone is welcome to pause, breathe, and experience nature's benefits. Additionally, green schoolyards have shown to improve physical and mental health, increase community resilience, improve student educational outcomes, reduce behavioral issues, and increase community access to natural spaces.

Through an investment from LCCMR, we will set the stage to advance statewide green schoolyard efforts. This work includes building a broad-based green schoolyards network; assessing the need, potential impact of, and interest in pursuing green schoolyard improvements at each of Minnesota's schools; constructing on-the-ground green schoolyard demonstration projects; and growing local leadership, skills, and capacity through direct support to school staff, and creation and dissemination of resources and data.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

Collectively, this pilot project aims to create and support the long-term structures, information, and capacity needed to launch and sustain a statewide effort to improve Minnesota's schoolyards, foster thousands of new environmental stewards across our state, and restore and permanently conserve natural resources. This LCCMR-funded work will result in innovative methods to utilize schoolyards as a means to create, protect, restore and conserve publicly-owned natural land. As a result of this pilot effort, one schoolyard will be renovated to address issues of air, water, and habitat. Lessons learned will be disseminated for additional impact.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Statewide

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Advisory Committee Leadership: information dissemination, cross-sector project oversight, and efforts for a long-term impact, statewide policy, and funding

Activity Budget: \$8,000

Activity Description:

Establishing the Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project will begin with creation of a Advisory Committee representing conservation and natural resource organizations; public health; education and academia; nonprofit and community organizations; youth organizations; and state agencies. The Advisory Committee will support and advance local, regional, and statewide schoolyard programs, policies, and initiatives, and disseminate learnings from the project. The Advisory Committee will help break down the institutional barriers, red tape, and siloed efforts that currently limit green schoolyard efforts. This group will meet regularly to ensure that all aspects of the program receive collective input from cross-sector partners. Once available, Advisory Committee members will disseminate data and evaluation results to decision makers and the public through websites, journalism, presentations, and resource creation with the aim of longer term statewide implementation of green schoolyards. Ultimately, the Advisory Committee will produce an action plan to sustain and expand the pilot’s impact, leading to longer term statewide implementation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Formalize Advisory Committee membership, structure, and create work plan, timeline, and goals	September 30, 2021
Develop long-term action plan	December 31, 2022
Support data analysis, demonstration schoolyard transformation, resource dissemination, and technical assistance	June 30, 2023
Hold regular Advisory Committee meetings	June 30, 2023

Activity 2: Demonstration Project: one demonstration project to provide proof of concept, learning opportunities, and on-the-ground environmental improvements

Activity Budget: \$225,000

Activity Description:

To provide local examples and improve the environment, one school will be selected for construction and demonstration of green schoolyard improvements. The site will be selected through an open application process using a set of criteria including but not limited to high potential environmental and natural resource impact; school administration-supported projects; project readiness; and commitment of matching funds from a combination of school, watersheds, and local government. The school will be expected to secure local commitments to ensure long-term maintenance, teacher support for use of outdoor classrooms and space, and will agree to provide community access to green schoolyards outside of regular school hours. Information from the statewide schoolyard assessment will help provide guidance in determining final selection criteria. ENRTF funds will support construction and design of green schoolyard infrastructure including but not limited to trees, landscaping, stormwater improvements, outdoor classrooms, gardens, nature play, walking paths, and educational signage. Local partners will design the site and address site-specific issues. TPL and C&NN will support the project through technical assistance, facilitation of participatory design and community engagement, integration of natural resources and use of the outdoors in school curriculum and programming, and general project management.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Open RFP demonstration project application to school site	August 31, 2021
Using statewide assessment, gauge demonstration project interest amongst high need and opportunity sites	August 31, 2021
Review and score proposals, select demonstration project site	October 31, 2021
Finalize school site work plans, timeline, and budgets	December 31, 2021
Prepare and execute curriculum development and site programming plans	January 31, 2022
Conduct community participatory planning and design efforts	November 30, 2022
Complete and secure green schoolyard designs, budgets, and approvals	April 30, 2023
Collect and share lessons learned, evaluation, and success stories	June 30, 2023
Complete construction of demonstration project	August 31, 2023
Hold grand opening celebration	September 30, 2023

Activity 3: Capacity Building and Technical Assistance – provide technical assistance, training support, capacity building, and resource creation

Activity Budget: \$17,000

Activity Description:

The Minnesota Green Schoolyards project will share and disseminate findings to partners, schools, and community organizations. TPL and C&NN will host trainings and webinars, deliver conference presentations, provide limited on-call technical assistance, and create project resources. Technical assistance efforts will guide additional school sites in their local efforts while building long-term green schoolyard delivery by supporting local leaders, expanding the number of schools planning for eventual capital improvements, and building integration of environmental stewardship into school curriculum.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Offer trainings and conference sessions to share resources and lessons learned	September 30, 2023
Create and share program resources, guides, and how-tos	September 30, 2023
Provide limited technical assistance to additional school and community partners	September 30, 2023

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jaime Zaplatosch	Children & Nature Network (C&NN)	Children & Nature Network will be on the Steering Committee, and will co-lead the dissemination of data collection and evaluation findings, resource creation, technical assistance and trainings at the local and state level with the Trust for Public Land. C&NN leads a global movement to increase children's access to nature.	Yes
Jeremy Vann	Minnesota Department of Health - SHIP	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). SHIP supports community-driven solutions to expand opportunities for active living, healthy eating and commercial tobacco-free living, working directly with local SHIP staff who represent 41 Community Health Boards, covering all 87 counties.	No
Shelli-Kae Foster	Youth Eco Solutions (YES!)	Steering Committee member representing Youth Eco Solutions, a youth-led natural resources and environment group. YES! will also support school planning and engagement activities.	Yes
Jonee Bingham Kuhlman	University of Minnesota - GreenStep Schools	Steering Committee member representing GreenStep Schools which is a free and voluntary statewide best practices framework and recognition program for public and private K-12 schools and districts to reduce environmental impact and costs, and provide effective environmental and sustainability education. GreenStep Schools is housed at the University of Minnesota.	Yes
Karen Harrison	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - School Forests	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - School Forests Program. The Minnesota School Forest Program is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota schools. The program provides a variety of benefits to increase outdoor education activities.	No
Kristin Raab	Minnesota Department of Health	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health - Environmental Health division.	No
Anna Lynn	Minnesota Department of Health	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health Child and Family Health (CFH) division. CFH provides collaborative public health leadership that supports and strengthens systems to ensure healthy families and communities.	No
Jill Chamberlain	Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN - Center for Prevention.	Steering Committee member representing a community-oriented business perspective, preventative health expert with deep statewide connections and experience with Safe Routes to School work. The Center for Prevention works statewide tackling the leading causes of preventable disease to increase health equity, transform communities, and create a healthier Minnesota.	No
John Olson	Minnesota Department of Education	Steering Committee representing education, will bring deep statewide connections and network, and curriculum development skills.	No
Dave Cowan	Minnesota Department of Transportation	Steering committee member representing Minnesota Department of Transportation - Safe Routes to School	No

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

Our multi-faceted and well-connected steering committee will help to ensure project findings, data, and lessons learned are disseminated within Minnesota and nationally. Both The Trust for Public Land and Children & Nature Network as non-profits with a national reach have the infrastructure to share and disseminate information easily. Project partners such as state agencies, Blue Cross, and other education- and environment-focused organizations will be engaged as well. The long-term intent of project partners is to scale Green Schoolyards across the state, so dissemination of information

and the benefits of the work is crucial to our success. We hope to share findings through social media, print and web-based resource creation, webinars, and network building.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

A primary goal of the pilot project is to institutionalize a model for green schoolyards across the state of Minnesota, including making the case for public and private funding. With baseline data and demonstration projects, we aim to raise awareness of the multiple benefits and collective impact of green schoolyards. Project partners will add knowledge and capacity to their respective organizations to ensure capacity exists to support Minnesota green schoolyards efforts long-term. Data and evaluation will be disseminated to decision makers and the public through websites, statewide trainings, journalism, and resource creation.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Strategic Lands Protection	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09f	\$750,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
Project Assistant		Project and community engagement support			48%	0.6		\$38,000	-	-
Project Staff		Project management and support, technical assistance provider, steering committee coordination, data analysis support			48%	0.6		\$56,000	-	-
							Sub Total	\$94,000	\$94,000	-
Contracts and Services										
Faribault Public Schools	Subaward	Design-build services for competitively awarded playground contractor to support site-specific schoolyard design and build.				0.5		\$155,000	\$155,000	-
							Sub Total	\$155,000	\$155,000	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Capital Expenditures										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel In Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-

Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Other Expenses										
		Classroom Supplies	Supplies and printing to support classroom engagement					\$1,000	\$1,000	-
							Sub Total	\$1,000	\$1,000	-
							Grand Total	\$250,000	\$250,000	-

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
			State Sub Total	-	-	-
Non-State						
In-Kind	Trust for Public Land	Staff time, foundational analysis work	Secured	\$150,000	\$150,000	-
Cash	School demonstration site local match minimum. School will be expected to bring at least \$25,000 in capital expense match to be eligible.	Capital expenses	Secured	\$25,000	\$25,000	-
Cash	Trust for Public Land	Community engagement minigrant support to community groups	Secured	\$5,000	\$5,000	-
In-Kind	Children & Nature Network	Staff time	Secured	\$60,000	\$5,000	\$55,000
Cash	Children & Nature Network	Travel to Minnesota	Secured	\$2,250	-	\$2,250
In-Kind	Blue Cross Blue Shield	Steering Committee participation	Secured	\$15,000	\$15,000	-
			Non State Sub Total	\$257,250	\$200,000	\$57,250
			Funds Total	\$257,250	\$200,000	\$57,250

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [14c347ac-ddc.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Minnesota Green Schoolyards - The Trust for Public Land (with image of green schoolyard)

Minnesota's schoolyards hold endless untapped potential. Green Schoolyards - school properties redesigned to be packed with trees, gardens, stormwater improvements, pollinator gardens, outdoor classrooms, and nature play - can improve the local environment while fostering new environmental stewards and improving health, learning, and community outcomes.

Immediate Impact, Long-Term Strategy (image of befo...)

Financial Capacity

File: [00442494-8f0.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
TPL Letter of Authorization	90e1ad8d-0be.docx

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Health	c051d3f8-7ac.pdf
Letter of Support - Blue Cross Blue Shield	8b3752bc-98a.docx
Letter of Support - Children & Nature Network	b4e06d6d-5a2.pdf
Letter of Support - GreenStep Schools	48393dc0-a89.pdf
Letter of Support - University of Minnesota Extension	a1fe5f27-9b1.pdf
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	09a2a9f2-d22.docx
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Education	90725fa3-63a.pdf
ENRTF Background Check Certification Form	69f30f9a-cdf.pdf

Media Links

Title	Link
TPL GIS Schoolyard Assessment Map	https://web.tplgis.org/healthy-community-schoolyards-a-discovery-map/
Jefferson Elementary Demonstration Project Page	https://www.tpl.org/our-work/jefferson-elementary-community-schoolyard
TPL Minnesota Community Schoolyards Website	https://www.tpl.org/our-work/minnesota-community-schoolyards

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Given the large budget revision we've had to make several cuts to our program, most notably a reduction in demonstration sites from six to one, reduced support for our steering committee, cancellation of plans for the Green Schoolyards Summit, staffing and technical assistance reductions, and removal of the creation of a website. Given the

budget and timeline, we've been able to fund the majority of the statewide assessment through other funding sources, which will allow us to reduce our project timeline from three to two years. Conducting the statewide assessment during the spring of 2020 will set us up for demonstration site selection sooner, allowing us the opportunity to be ready to go with schoolyard renovation planning and engagement beginning in the fall of 2021.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

Yes

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Activities and Milestones • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies • Budget - Travel and Conferences • Budget - Printing and Publication • Budget - Other 	This amendment helps us better meet project needs based on changes to approach and timeline. Particularly with rising inflation, we want to dedicate more resources towards schoolyard improvements to ensure the realization of outdoor impacts and community vision.	December 14, 2022	Yes	December 16, 2022
2	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 07/31/2023 New Completion Date: 06/30/2024	Due to Covid and staffing changes, we have seen a delay in the project. We seek an extension to allow for greater flexibility / to take advantage of the full summer construction months.	October 4, 2022	Yes	December 5, 2022
3	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Eric Weiss (eric.weiss@tpl.org) New Manager: Anna Callahan (anna.callahan@tpl.org)	Project manager, Eric Weiss, is leaving the organization	May 24, 2023	Yes	May 25, 2023
4	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info • Other • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Other 	We seek a change in our budget for our subaward to Faribault Public Schools for the demonstration project. With rising inflation and vendor competition coming out of COVID, we had costs for our demonstration project increase slightly to be competitive and fully realize the outdoor impact and community vision.	December 1, 2023	Yes	December 13, 2023
5	Reporting Schedule	Previous Reporting Schedule: Dec 1 / Jun 1 New Reporting Schedule: Feb 1 / Jan 1	-		Yes	December 13, 2023
6	Reporting Schedule	Previous Reporting Schedule: Feb 1 / Jan 1 New Reporting Schedule: Dec 1 / Jun 1	-		Yes	December 13, 2023

7	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 06/30/2024 New Completion Date: 12/31/2024	LCCMR Staff workaround for final reporting system logic conundrum	August 23, 2024	Yes	August 23, 2024
8	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 12/31/2024 New Completion Date: 06/30/2024	LCCMR Staff workaround for final reporting system logic conundrum	September 5, 2024	Yes	September 5, 2024

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update August 14, 2024

Date Submitted: September 6, 2024

Date Approved: October 15, 2024

Overall Update

Our pilot program was successful thanks to the support from LCCMR and the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund. We completed our pilot site, made great strides towards the creation of a broad coalition to support a green schoolyard movement, identified high-need schools across Minnesota supported by quantifiable metrics, and cultivated green schoolyard programs across the state through resource sharing and technical assistance. We demonstrated a model for green schoolyards that can be replicated across the state of Minnesota.

Activity 1

With LCCMR funding, TPL developed a first-in-the-nation statewide analysis of every school. The assessment identified high-need locations using environmental, health, demographic, and park-need data at both school- and community-levels. This tool informed selection of the pilot site and first cohort.

We developed a five-year programmatic strategic plan to establish Community Schoolyards as the norm within Minnesota. Our goals include (1) collect and disseminate data; (2) develop technical and funding resources; (3) advance proof-of-concept projects; (4) build awareness; and (5) cultivate partners and action. We cultivated an initial network of early schoolyard champions and connected cross-sector partners in cities, counties, and school districts across the state. We began leading one of the working groups advancing the Minnesota Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights—of which green schoolyards will be critical to deliver on this vision. Participating organizations include conservation and natural resource; public health; education; nonprofit and community organizations; youth organizations; and state agencies. We are excited about how this group will continue to break down institutional barriers, red tape, and siloed efforts that currently limit green schoolyard efforts. We will continue to recruit new members and engage current members to help advance and implement our Schoolyard Strategic Plan.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

We completed a demonstration project at Jefferson Elementary in Faribault, MN showcasing proof-of-concept for green schoolyards. We selected the site through a competitive RFP process with interest from schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings from all corners of the state. During the 2021-2022 schoolyear, we launched our schoolyard design process with 7-weeks of project-based student learning and design, complemented by a robust teacher, parent, and community engagement. The final concept plan was reviewed and vetted by community and school leaders before going out to bid and constructed in Summer 2023.

Despite budget constraints and inflation in the post-COVID era, schoolyard improvements included an outdoor learning area, nature play, and native plantings—plus circulation and landscape school-funded improvements. Students have been thrilled about the new additions to their schoolyard and spaces for outdoor learning. We held a ribbon-cutting ceremony with students, teachers, and other invited guests in September 2023. Improvements were celebrated at the school’s back to school event. The school, with support from TPL, then launched a fundraising campaign to fund new play equipment needed. With the completion of our first demonstration site, we began development of a stewardship program to support and continue site activation at completed schools.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 3

With our LCCMR funding, we developed a Student Leader Class curriculum, activities, and assignments—one specific to Minnesota’s climate and local context—and first, tested it with students at our demonstration site before refining it through our next cohort of 5 school sites funded with our 2023-135 LCCMR grant. We plan to continue to augment and refine moving forward. We also developed and refined our broader community engagement process to streamline participatory design in future schoolyard projects.

During our LCCMR grant, we heard interest from schools across the state in developing their own green schoolyards—and provided guidance and support to schools interested in transforming their spaces into Community Schoolyards, such as St Paul and St Cloud. TPL developed a green schoolyards “how to guide” for school partners planning their own capital improvements. We received a strong response from our RFP/ call for schools interested in transforming their spaces into Community Schoolyards. Overwhelmingly, the largest limitation we've heard from these schools has been lack of resources and funding.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

Despite COVID limiting some of our planned dissemination routes, through conversations with partners at state agencies, nonprofits, and advocates, we shared information about the green schoolyards movement and their benefits. One notable example is sharing the green schoolyard work with Rep Omar who met with TPL and students at FAIR School in Crystal. She wrote about the visit and our work in her newsletter. We’ve also hosted site visits of current and future schoolyards to share about our work with key partners. Online, our MN schoolyard program website and associated project pages details the program and their benefits. We also disseminated the statewide schoolyard mapping resource widely to partners and school agencies and presented the tool to a handful of webinars and groups.

Additional Status Update Reporting

Additional Status Update August 14, 2024

Date Submitted: May 31, 2024

Date Approved: August 23, 2024

Overall Update

“Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.”

Activity 1

“Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.”

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 3

“Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.”

Dissemination

“Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.”

Status Update Reporting

Status Update June 1, 2024

Date Submitted: May 31, 2024

Date Approved: August 23, 2024

Overall Update

We've made great progress in the development of our program thanks to the support from LCCMR and the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund. We completed our pilot site, made great strides towards the creation of a broad coalition to support a green schoolyard movement, identified high-need schools across Minnesota supported by quantifiable metrics, and cultivated green schoolyards across the state through resource sharing and technical assistance.

Activity 1

We continue to connect with cross-sector partners at cities, counties, and school districts across the state. We have been evaluating our current Advisory Committee composition, exploring new members to recruit, and engaging current members to help advance and implement our Schoolyard Strategic Plan. We are also excited about participating and leading one of the working groups advancing the Minnesota Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights—of which green schoolyards will be a critical piece to deliver on this vision. Participating organizations include conservation and natural resource organizations; public health; education and academia; nonprofit and community organizations; youth organizations; and state agencies. We are excited about how this group will help break down the institutional barriers, red tape, and siloed efforts that currently limit green schoolyard efforts.

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 3

Our program and the green schoolyard movement continues to grow. After formally launching our schoolyard program last August, we are advancing our first cohort of 5 schools across the state. We've refined our resources and community engagement process from our first participatory design, including a full suite of redesigned activities and worksheets.

In addition, we continue to hear interest from schools across the state in developing their own green schoolyards—and provide guidance and support to schools and districts interested in pursuing schoolyard projects and policies. These efforts will hopefully expand the number of schools adopting a green schoolyard model. Overwhelmingly, the largest limitation we've heard from these schools has been lack of resources and funding.

Dissemination

Through conversations with partners at state agencies, nonprofits, and advocates, we've been sharing information about the green schoolyards movement and their benefits. One notable example is sharing the green schoolyard work with Rep Omar who met with TPL and students at FAIR School in Crystal. She also wrote about the visit and our work in her newsletter. We've also been hosting site visits of current and future schoolyards to share about our work with key partners. Online, our MN schoolyard program website and associated project pages details the program and their benefits.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update December 1, 2023

Date Submitted: December 1, 2023

Date Approved: December 13, 2023

Overall Update

We're making great progress in the development of our Minnesota Community Schoolyards program. We completed site improvements at our pilot site in September and formally launched our statewide schoolyard program this summer, with our first official cohort of five schools.

Activity 1

With staffing changes and program expansions this summer, we've paused our regular Advisory Committee meetings over this summer and fall. However, with new capacity joining our team, we plan to reactivate the Advisory Committee, including expanding and recruiting membership. The Advisory Committee will support us in facilitating policy, system, and environmental change at the state and local levels—and with disseminating the Community Schoolyard program, benefits, and resources.

Activity 2

Work (known as Phase 2) at our demonstration project was completed this summer. Improvements included an outdoor learning area, nature play, and native plantings. Students have been thrilled about the new additions to their schoolyard and spaces for outdoor learning. We held a ribbon-cutting ceremony with students, teachers, and other invited guests in early September and the improvements were celebrated at the school's back to school event. The school, with support from TPL, launched a fundraising campaign to help support new play equipment needed at the site. With the completion of our first demonstration site, we've also begun initial development of a stewardship program for completed schools to support and continue site activation and programming.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 3

As mentioned above, our program continues to grow. This summer, we received a strong response from our RFP/ call for schools interested in transforming their spaces into Community Schoolyards. Our first cohort of five school sites across the state is moving forward with support from our 2023-135 LCCMR grant. Through our demonstration project work at Jefferson Elementary and conversations with our colleagues across the state, we continue to refine and improve our Student Leader Class curriculum, activities, and assignments. With added capacity joining us this winter, we hope to have a new student workbook created, a refined community engagement process, and a template for storytelling and reporting.

Dissemination

In the coming year we really plan to increase dissemination. As our work at Jefferson Elementary concludes, we will shift to sharing lessons learned, creating and sharing resources, and evaluating the demonstration project and distributing findings. LCCMR/ENRTF funding are always attributed in our work.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update June 1, 2023

Date Submitted: June 2, 2023

Date Approved: August 8, 2023

Overall Update

We're making great progress in the development of our program and the advancement of the pilot site. We have adopted a ten-year strategic plan, plans for site improvements are underway, and we're refining and improving our Student Leader Class program and community engagement processes.

Activity 1

For a variety of reasons, we've taken a pause on hosting regular Advisory Committee meetings. There have been several staffing transitions, and we felt it necessary to take a pause as plans and strategy are developed. With a new program strategic plan now in place, with five clear goal areas, we anticipate restarting the Advisory Committee, recruiting new members, and actively engaging members in implementing the strategic plan. The plan outlines our strategy to establish Community Schoolyards as the norm within Minnesota. We will pursue policy, system, and environmental change at the local and state level. This work will be driven through five goal areas, including collect and disseminate data; develop resources; advance school projects; build awareness; and cultivate partners and action. Included is a goal of completing 20 schoolyard projects in the next decade and securing a sustainable statewide funding source.

Activity 2

Work at the demonstration project location is progressing nicely. The nature-based project funded through LCCMR (known as Phase 2) is slated for construction this summer, with an anticipated ribbon-cutting as kids return to for the new school year. Improvements will include outdoor learning, play, and gathering spaces, as well as trees, bushes, and habitat. Teachers are especially excited about the new outdoor classroom, which will provide a new space for environmental education. Phase 1, which included site circulation improvements, new sidewalk, a rain garden, and new trees was completed last year with school funds. Now, the school and TPL are planning Phase 3, which will include new play equipment, shade, landscaping, accessible equipment, and a mini soccer pitch. That work is funded with outside funds. We're also excited to share that three other school sites are moving forward, with more to come.

Activity 3

As mentioned above, our program is growing. We have additional school sites moving forward and we're hearing interest from schools around the state. Through our demonstration project work at Jefferson Elementary we were able to develop and now refine our process. Already, we're testing improved Student Leader Class curriculum, activities, and assignments with students at another school. By the end of the summer, we hope to have a new student workbook created, a refined community engagement process, and a template for storytelling and reporting.

Dissemination

In the coming year we really plan to increase dissemination. As our work at Jefferson Elementary concludes, we will shift to sharing lessons learned, creating and sharing resources, and evaluating the demonstration project and distributing findings. LCCMR/ENRTF funding are always attributed in our work.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update December 1, 2022

Date Submitted: December 14, 2022

Date Approved: December 16, 2022

Overall Update

We are making significant progress in the growth of the Community Schoolyards program in Minnesota. Through support of LCCMR, we established a partnership with Jefferson Elementary in Faribault where we continue engagement and planning. Other efforts to build out resources, connections/networks, and internal capacity continue.

Activity 1

We continued to meet with the Advisory Committee through spring of 2022. Since, we have paused efforts due to staff capacity limitations. As we look to hire in the next month or two, we will re-start Advisory Committee efforts. This will likely include a concerted effort to recruit new committee members. At this current moment, we feel other areas of work are more pressing.

Activity 2

Efforts at our demonstration site in Faribault are progressing well. We completed work with the Student Leader Class in the spring. A draft concept plan was developed over the summer based upon student, teacher, and parent feedback. Additional feedback has resulted in an improved plan. Due to budget limitations and inflation, we have identified implementation phasing and broken site improvements into 3-4 phases. An RFP for design-build services for Phase 2, schoolyard nature-based improvements, is currently out for bid. Our intent is to construct schoolyard improvements in the summer of 2023.

Activity 3

We continued to build and improve upon our engagement and planning process. Last spring was our first effort implementing the Student Leader Class curriculum. Working with four 3rd-grade classes we were able to ascertain which activities worked well and which didn't and are making improvements to the program - especially in a "post covid" school environment. We are also developing systems and resources to streamline processes and have ready-to-go documents, marketing materials, and guides for future project sites.

Dissemination

The statewide schoolyard mapping resource we created has been disseminated widely to partners and school agencies. We have presented at a handful of webinars and groups. As we ramp up efforts to grow the program, we will expand upon dissemination this coming spring.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update June 1, 2022

Date Submitted: June 13, 2022

Date Approved: July 6, 2022

Overall Update

Progress is well underway, despite the disruptions schools faced related to Covid-19. Over the summer/fall of 2021, following a competitive RFP process, we selected Jefferson Elementary in Faribault as the green schoolyards pilot site. We had interest from schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings from all corners of the state. In the fall of 2021 we began planning efforts with Jefferson Elementary. Classroom work began in the spring of 2022. In May, we completed student project-based learning and design. Over the summer, we'll work to develop concept plans, which will be further reviewed and vetted by the community and school leaders in the fall of 2022. Meanwhile, we continue efforts alongside statewide partners. The advisory committee has continued to meet. An annual meeting is planned for summer 2022.

Activity 1

The statewide advisory committee has met a number of times over the past year. TPL is assisted in this work by Children & Nature Network and the National Park Service. The advisory committee reviewed and scored applications for the competitive pilot selection process. The committee continues to guide the development of the program and initiative. In the summer of 2022, a strategic planning session will be held with the goal of creating a five year strategic plan.

Activity 2

Trust for Public Land's Research and Innovation team developed a first-in-the-nation statewide analysis of every school facility. The assessment tool utilizes school- and community-level data to create an index of statewide school sites. The assessment includes environmental, health, demographic, and park-need data. The assessment has been used to identify high-need locations and was used in the consideration and selection of the pilot site.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 3

In part due to the green schoolyard project, the school district pursued a larger overhaul of the school site. To manage the project, we've broken construction into two phases. The first phase includes parking lot, circulation, safety, and stormwater improvements, which will be paid for by the school district. This first phase of construction will take place during the summer of 2022. The second phase will include schoolyard gathering, play, and learning areas and will be paid for in part by funds from LCCMR. Some additional funds may come from the school and private fundraising. Plans for these green schoolyard improvements are being developed this summer. Given the limited window for construction at a school site, we anticipate construction of green schoolyard components during the late spring/early summer of 2023.

Activity 4

Trust for Public Land has created a green schoolyards "how to" guide that is available for school partners. In the future, we hope to create a version specific to Minnesota's climate and local context. Additionally, a green schoolyards curriculum, specific to Minnesota, has been created and used at two school sites - Jefferson Faribault (funded through LCCRM) and Brooklyn Center Elementary. The curriculum will be refined over the summer of 2022. TPL has been providing guidance and program planning support to schools in St. Paul and St. Cloud.

Dissemination

We have been meeting with partners and potential school sites regarding the program. Dissemination has been somewhat limited due to the pandemic and minimal in-person gathering opportunities, but we look forward to a return

to normalcy in the coming months. We are exploring opportunities to present our work at a conference and to expand partnerships.