



ECHO
EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH OUTDOORS

Dear Library Partners,

Thank you for your interest in Early Childhood Health Outdoors (ECHO), a program of the National Wildlife Federation. ECHO enhances nature play and learning wherever young children spend their time, and our vision is that every young child experiences nature daily for the health of our kids, communities, and planet. With ECHO, we can ensure children grow and thrive by creating greater access to healthy, natural spaces for families and caregivers to play and learn together.

We seek to partner with a library who will engage their community in a comprehensive planning and implementation process to create a healthy and engaging outdoor space that meets the needs of the community and provides opportunities for play for young children and their families. The selected library will work closely with the ECHO team over the course of several months to create a vision for their outdoor spaces and engage multiple audiences to plan and review the vision. The selected library will also plan for site activation and receive supports from the ECHO team to use their outdoor spaces for programming and family engagement. Finally, in partnership with the ECHO team, the selected library will create or enhance an outdoor space that embraces nature play for children of all ages and their families.

In a brief letter of interest, please tell us about your community and why working with ECHO supports your current community engagement efforts and enhances the vision for your library. Details regarding the expectations for sites, eligibility, and more information about ECHO are outlined below. Please submit your letter of interest by 5:00pm on October 30, 2020 to the ECHO team at echo@nwf.org.

Again, thank you for your interest in partnering with ECHO. We look forward to learning more about your communities and how ECHO will enhance your existing efforts.



About Early Childhood Health Outdoors (ECHO)

ECHO enhances nature play and learning wherever young children spend their time, and our vision is that every young child experiences nature daily for the health of our kids, communities, and planet. With ECHO, we can ensure children grow and thrive by creating greater access to healthy, natural spaces for families and caregivers to play and learn together.

ECHO is based on a decade of research by North Carolina State University's Natural Learning Initiative on the Preventing Obesity by Design model. This research showed that by improving the design of outdoor spaces through affordable interventions and training early childhood professionals, young children and early childhood programs enjoy substantial benefits:

- Children are more physically active in the outdoors and engage in social interactions more often.
- Children, and providers enjoy naturalized outdoor spaces, and spend more time outside, supporting healthy behaviors.
- Hands-on gardening encourages the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Parents are more likely to linger at child care programs, improving the community experience.

ECHO is more than a grant, it is a process of engaging families and community members in reimagining outdoor spaces to include natural elements and multiple choices for play. The selected site will work with a professional landscape designer with specialized expertise in early childhood settings to develop a comprehensive master plan of the library's outdoor spaces. The ECHO team will collaborate with the site to create a custom action plan outlining how to maximize the grant funds. The selected library will have numerous opportunities for professional development through ECHO trainings and the opportunity to connect with and learn from existing ECHO site representatives who are leading nature play and learning movements across the state.

ECHO will support the library through the entire building and implementation process for their outdoor spaces. This current opportunity provides \$10,000 in seed grant funds to help the site begin to implement their master plan. However, we recognize that this grant will not cover all costs involved in installing the entire master plan, so the ECHO team will also provide the site with additional tools and resources for fundraising and community engagement.

The selected library will join a network of 74 existing ECHO sites across Colorado, nine of which are designated ECHO Demonstration Sites. These nine programs open their doors for trainings and tours (and have pivoted to doing so virtually) so that others can experience their high-quality, nature play spaces first-hand.

To learn more about ECHO, please visit <http://www.nwf.org/echo>.



Selected sites will receive:

- Landscape design support (valued at \$15,000)
- Comprehensive master plan detailing phased improvements to your outdoor play spaces
- Action plan for first phase of implementation
- \$10,000 to begin to implement the master plan
- \$3,000 stipend for staff and/or community participation in design and planning activities
- Professional development opportunities

Selected site will learn:

- Best practice in design principles for outdoor spaces for young children
- How to engage families and the community to support play space improvements
- Fundraising methods and opportunities
- Strategies to engage children outdoors

Expectations of library site:

- Participate in Design Workshop in partnership with a professional landscape architect.
- Engage community constituents, families, and caregivers in review and planning process through meetings, presentations, and surveys.
- Plan for site activation including volunteer engagement.
- Engage in communication with the ECHO team. Many communications are time sensitive and require a response within 24 hours.
- Participate in annual evaluation (i.e. pre/post base line survey, photos, reflection survey).
- Spend grant funds as outlined in Action Plan developed in partnership with your lead landscape architect.

Selection:

Preference is given to libraries that serve families and children facing multiple barriers, which can be demonstrated by meeting any of the following criteria:

- Demonstration of economic need for population served (e.g., percent of families eligible for need-based child care subsidies in the county, number of low-income families that may be experiencing housing or food insecurity)
- Serving a diverse population, including a high percentage of ethnic and racial diversity
- Serving children who are English language learners
- Serving children with disabilities or special health care needs
- Preference is given to libraries located in the seven metro counties of Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson.

Note: The ECHO team is currently conducting all site assessments, meetings, and workshops virtually.

For questions about ECHO, please contact:

Adrienne Sedlak, Education and Outreach Manager, National Wildlife Federation



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