

Technical Assistance for Connecting Children to Nature REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS – Due January 31, 2017

Opportunity and Background

Over the last few decades, childhood has moved indoors, leaving too many kids disconnected from the natural world. This trend has profound consequences which include high rates of obesity, diabetes, stress and depression in children — all of which disproportionately affect low-income populations and children of color. Benefits of access to nature include:

- Improved health outcomes
- Higher academic achievement
- Enhanced social and emotional learning
- Stronger social connections
- Increased creativity, self-esteem and focus
- A greater sense of environmental stewardship

The **Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN)** initiative offers local officials guidance and support to establish more equitable connections between children and nature, through technical assistance, training on promising practices, and peer learning opportunities. Beginning in 2018, CCCN will engage a new cohort of cities committed to taking up high-impact strategies such as green schoolyards, early childhood nature play, and increasing use of parks. This effort builds on early gains achieved in seven pilot cities whose engagement began in 2015. *(For more on existing strategies and the pilot cohort, please see Key Resources below.)*

GOALS

The CCCN technical assistance initiative will support six cities over a 2.75 year period to:

1. Engage elected leaders in improving equitable access to nature through goals integrated across city agencies and operations.
2. Implement strategies that promote equity and abundance of high quality natural spaces.
3. Draw children and families to those natural spaces through programs, partnerships and policies that foster their experience.

ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION CRITERIA

To be eligible for this technical assistance, offered by the National League of Cities (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education, and Families and the Children & Nature Network (C&NN), the mayor and City team representing a city of at least 75,000 residents must demonstrate broad commitment to participate throughout a nine-month planning period and two-year implementation period, from February 2018 through October 2020. The mayor must attend the Mayor's Institute described below. CCCN partners will give preference to cities that:

- Demonstrate strong mayoral commitment and city interest and capacity for connecting children to nature more equitably,
- Enlist a broad set of city agencies and partners, including typically underrepresented stakeholders,
- Emphasize increasing access for low-income residents and people of color, and
- Hold current NLC membership.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) ACTIVITIES & BENEFITS

Technical assistance guides cities as they:

1. Conduct a local asset/gap assessment, including a policy scan, partnership mapping and equity analysis
2. Identify priority strategies in an implementation plan to increase city capacity to connect children to nature more equitably
3. Implement strategies and increase measurement capacity to understand baselines and track progress

CCCN partners will assist participating cities in collecting and analyzing local data to identify opportunities for progress, developing and implementing strategies that redress local gaps and needs, and maximizing local potential to equitably increase children's connection to nature.

The Mayor's Institute on Connecting Children to Nature constitutes a key component of the technical assistance, designed to serve mayors of the six-city cohort, along with key staff members and partners. Mayors will engage in data analysis, preparation of a case statement, and an intensive discussion among peers and national experts about each city's challenges and goals related to equitably increasing children's connection to nature.

Benefits gained by selected cities include:

- 2.75 years of technical assistance including
 - Access to resources and national experts.
 - Guidance to develop a case statement for discussion at the Mayor's Institute describing a challenge the mayor commits to tackling and on which the mayor seeks peer advice.
 - Ongoing technical assistance to use data to develop and implement local action plans.
 - At least one site visit by CCCN partners to engage with a full range of stakeholders in the participating city.
- Extensive peer learning with city counterparts to share lessons learned and address challenges.
- Tools (e.g., ParkServe®) and resources (e.g., Parkdogy™) from the 10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign, a partner initiative.
- \$25,000 in Planning Phase and \$50,000 in Implementation Phase leverage able pass-through funds.
- Eligibility to apply for an additional catalytic grant in Year 3.
- Option to match and leverage \$6,500 CCCN pass-through funds to add an Americorps [VISTA](#) to assist with capacity-building.
- Visibility as a national leader in the children and nature field.

CITY COMMITMENTS

- Participation of elected leaders in addressing children's access to nature based on commitment to kids' full and healthy development.
- Readiness to take a comprehensive approach to the challenge of inequitable connection to nature.
- Mayor and staff attendance at the September 2018 Mayor's Institute, dates TBD.
- Project participation by a four-person core team including (a) the mayor or mayor's representative, (b) one designated project manager (preferably the mayor's office representative), and (c) one member from a non-government stakeholder organization representing a neighborhood or population facing substantial nature access inequity. Cities may draw the remaining core team members from city or county agencies, or other relevant partners.
- Shape and participate in all planning and implementation phase activities, including submission of an implementation plan, core team participation at annual cohort meetings, and hosting at least one site visit.

PROJECT TIMELINE

The technical assistance period will occur February 2018 through October 2020.

Activity	Estimated Dates
Informational webinars for potential applicants (interested cities strongly encouraged to attend)	1pm ET, Fri. Jan 12, 2018
City applications due to NLC	8pm ET, Wed. Jan 31, 2018
TA cohort cities selected and notified	Feb 14, 2018
Ongoing Planning Phase (technical assistance and monthly calls)	Feb-Oct 2018
Planning Phase Site Visits	Mar and Apr 2018
Cities Leadership Summit (1 rep per city)	May 21-22, 2018
Planning Phase Cohort Meeting & Mayor's Institute	Sept 2018
Ongoing Implementation Phase (technical assistance, monthly calls, annual cohort meetings, and leadership summits)	Nov 2018-Oct 2020

Application Instructions

To be considered for participation in CCCN Technical Assistance, cities must submit an application that includes the three segments described below, completed and saved in PDF format.

- I. **Challenge & Opportunity:** To get a head start on planning activities and the Mayor's Institute down the road, please articulate a statement that summarizes a potential children and nature challenge the city wants to address. The summary should be **one to two pages**, and include the following:
 - A. The **challenge** facing the city related to children and nature.
 - B. **Existing assets** that the city can muster to make progress, such as existing policies, agreements, systems, or resources.
 - C. Connections between this issue and the **mayor's broader agenda and priorities** for the city, as well as any strategies of particular interest for the mayor to lead.

- II. **Commitment and Capacity:** In **three pages or less**, demonstrate your city's capacity and commitment to equity and connecting children to nature by describing:
 - A. **Efforts to Date:** Briefly describe what your city has done or unsuccessfully tried to do to connect children to nature more equitably.
 - B. **Focus on Equity:** What opportunities exist to increase equitable connection to nature in your city? What equity work have you done in this area, or others related to children and families? How do you propose to deepen analysis of relevant barriers and demographic data?
 - C. **Partnership exploration:** Describe any high impact partnerships the city proposes to leverage during the initiative to advance children's connections to nature.
 - D. **Resource leveraging:** Briefly list the current investments from public and private sources as well as potential, new support for increasing children's equitable connections to nature.
 - E. **Potential Obstacles and Desired Assistance:** Indicate any potential obstacles to increasing access to nature for which you would seek specific assistance during the initiative from CCCN partners and other initiative faculty, advisors, or outside experts.

III. **Application Form:** See below.

IV. **Commitment Letters**

- A. Attach signed letter(s) reflecting the commitment of the mayor and other key team members to all of the following:
1. Attend the Mayor's Institute (mayor)-**Sept.**
 2. Designate a project manager- **Mayor's office or hire with funding**
 3. Send project manager to all meetings-**May 21-22 Oakland**
 4. Share relevant information, data, and lessons learned with city peers and upgrade data capacity as needed
 5. Participate in CCCN efforts to document and understand program efforts
 6. Availability to speak publicly on behalf of the CCCN initiative.

Submission Instructions

Deadline for electronic submission (no hard copies accepted):

8:00 p.m. EST on Wednesday, January 31, 2018

Please send to
Priya Cook, Principal Associate, Connecting Children to Nature
cook@nlc.org (202)626-3044

APPLICATION FORM

City Name, State: City of San Antonio **Population:** 1.5 million

Number of Children: 28.6% Low-income residents: 19.5% Residents of color: 73.5%

City government structure:

Mayor-Council Council-Manager Commission Town meeting
 Other: _____

Date of next city election: 2019

Is your mayor eligible for re-election or planning to run? Please note any other anticipated transitions in leadership, and plans to ensure continued support for the project throughout any such transitions. Ron Nirenberg was elected mayor of San Antonio on June 10, 2017. His term ends 2019 at which time he would be eligible for reelection.

Please list upcoming policy change opportunities in your city or close agency partners like school districts (for example: master planning, park planning, code revisions, etc.).

Policy opportunity **Date:** 1-31-18

The City of San Antonio is presently engaged in several policy initiatives designed to strategically address resource connectivity within our diverse and growing community. Each of the following initiatives also enables the City to broaden its approach of connecting children to nature. In 2017, the City Council shifted to an equity lens approach to allocating resources and making investments through the budget process. As part of the FY 2018 Budget Development process, the Mayor and City Council implemented increased investments in historically low-income and underserved council districts addressing several top funding priorities, to include: public safety, transportation, streets and sidewalks, and general neighborhood improvements. The City's Parks and Recreation System Plan is currently in development with community input and will guide future planning decisions on the expansion, capital improvements, and programming of the more than 240 City-owned parks and recreational facilities, 16,000 plus acres of green space, and over 181 miles of trails. Park System Plan updates will leverage the work coordinated through the SA Tomorrow initiative, which includes an Urban Forestry Strategic Plan, and will recommend future funding goals and objectives. Adopted by San Antonio City Council in 2016, SA Tomorrow is a roadmap for enhancing our community's quality of life while balancing the impact of expected growth with existing economic, environmental and social resources. SA Tomorrow targets key components of the City's dynamic nature to help benefit residents from all walks of life. Together, these policy initiatives provide a solid framework to address and resolve chronic issues in San Antonio, including the critical need to connect children in our urban core to nature and recreation opportunities.

Related Initiatives

Please indicate any related initiatives in which your city participates:

10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign Mayors for Parks (Member of the City Parks Alliance)
 Other: Smart City initiative

Core Team Members

Name your four core team members including (a) one mayor or mayor's representative, (b) one designated project manager (preferably the mayor's office representative), and (c) one member from a

non-government stakeholder organization representing a neighborhood or population facing substantial nature access inequity. Cities may draw the remaining team members from city or county agencies, or other relevant partners.

PROJECT MANAGER NAME:

Title and Organization: Grant Ellis, Natural Resources Manager, San Antonio Parks and Recreation

Phone: 210-207-2815 Email: Grant.Ellis@sanantonio.gov

Grant manages the Natural Resources Division which includes the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program, Tree Mitigation and City Forestry, and Natural Areas Division. These programs and divisions are responsible for the stewardship of 150,000 acres of conservation easements over the Edwards Aquifer, nearly 5,000 acres of Natural Areas green spaces, and programs focused on youth and adult education outreach in parks and trails throughout San Antonio. As project manager, he will facilitate communication between the Core Team, be liaison with the Mayor's Office, and coordinate the process overall.

TEAM MEMBER 2 NAME: Thea Platz

Title and Organization: Texas Children in Nature, San Antonio Co-Leader, Outdoor Education Director, North East School District

Phone: 210-407-0360 Email: Tplatz@neisd.net

Thea Platz is a Nature Specialist with North East Independent School District. As a representative from one of San Antonio's largest school districts, she comes to this project with broad experience working with large and diverse educational organizations (including school leadership, teachers, parents and students) and in creating exciting nature-based educational experiences. She has been a long-time Parks and Recreation partner, assisting with delivering informal education programming in Natural Areas Parks.

TEAM MEMBER 3 NAME: Matthew Drifill

Title and Organization: Recreation Superintendent, San Antonio River Authority

Phone: 210-302-3222 Email: mdrifill@sara-tx.org

The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) is a critical natural resources partner through its management and preservation of the San Antonio River. They manage the ever-popular and award-winning Mission and Museum Reach trail systems which run through the heart of San Antonio. Matthew manages recreation activities in several SARA parks and would be a great asset to this team.

TEAM MEMBER 4 NAME: Ibissa Azcona

Title and Organization: Beacon Hill Neighborhood Association, Community Member

Phone: 956-346-3109 Email: ibissa.e.azcona@gmail.com

Ibissa is an active community leader currently involved with numerous efforts with the Beacon Hill Neighborhood Association (which is located within San Antonio's urban core.) She has advanced Spanish language skills and was also an active and engaged student leader during her time at The University of Texas-Austin. She is passionate about serving in causes that help children and low-income/minority communities. Currently, she is a working professional and knows the importance of time management and follow-through on critical projects.

Other possible CORE TEAM members if needed:

San Antonio Parks and Recreation is ready to commit staff and resources to this effort, to include Education Coordinators and management of the Americorps Vista team member.

Budget

Do you plan to utilize the opportunity to add an Americorps VISTA staff member to your team, which includes matching and dedicating \$6,500 in planning funds? Yes **X** No

Describe your proposed planning phase (February-October 2018) budget, including \$25,000 in CCCN pass-through funds:

Funds would be used to facilitate a series of community workshops that would focus on collecting feedback to hone in on needs and proposed solutions/projects/policies. We will also be able to leverage a large amount of community feedback from recent workshops and surveys from similar initiatives. San Antonio Parks and Recreation is planning on taking a leadership role in this endeavor by allocating staff and resources accordingly and by serving as liaison to the Mayor's Office.

Item	Rationale	CCCN funding	Additional funding
Personnel			
AmeriCorps Vista Team Member	Provide leadership assistance to the project.	\$6,500	Up to \$6,500 in necessary matching funds
Parks and Recreation Staff	Designate park staff members to assist with planning phase efforts. Liaison with Mayor's Office and facilitate process and community meetings.		\$10,000 (In Kind)
Consulting			
Contractual Services	Data Discovery Process (Facilitate community/event workshops and analyze data)	\$6,000	
Meetings/Events			
February Meeting	Feb. 2018	-	
Community Meetings	Solicit feedback and identify need areas (PR, hospitality, etc)	\$2,000	
Supplies/Promotional Items	Incentives for public to attend community workshops	\$2,000	
Site Visits	March 2018	-	
Travel			
Cities Leadership Summit	May 21-22, 2018	\$1,500	
Mayor's Institute	Sept. 2018	\$7000	
Total		\$25,000	\$16,500

KEY RESOURCES

Municipal Action Guide

http://www.nlc.org/sites/default/files/users/user75/CCCN%20Municipal%20Action%20Guide_webready.pdf

Metrics Toolkit

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CCCN-Metrics-Toolkit.pdf>

Resource Hub

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/initiatives/cities/cccn-hub/>

CCCN Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9Uhrh-Qo2c&t=1s>

CCCN Peer Learning Network Newsletter sign-up

<http://nlc.us12.list-manage1.com/subscribe?u=71f5c3cd13a5ca1872e5f72f4&id=654fead976>

