

# Cities Connecting Children to Nature

## 2019 LEADERSHIP ACADEMY: CITIES CONNECTING CHILDREN TO NATURE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS by April 19, 2019

Join National League of Cities and Children & Nature Network for a fully subsidized two-day convening, June 12-14, 2019 in Denver, Colorado, to develop strategies and initiatives for more equitable connections to nature for children.

### Opportunity for City Leadership

Beginning in 2014, the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (NLC) seized a new opportunity for city leadership in whole child development by entering into a strategic partnership with Children & Nature Network (C&NN), thanks to the generous support of The JPB Foundation. The partnership combines the grassroots strength and experience of C&NN with the policy reach and municipal leadership within NLC. In the ensuing five years, the Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative (CCCN) has grown to include a [cohort of eighteen cities](#) that have developed and begun to implement citywide action plans for getting more young people outdoors and connected to biodiversity in parks, green spaces, and natural areas.

The [Municipal Action Guide](#) for CCCN highlights city opportunities to bring about more equitable access to nature through policies, programs, and infrastructure. Examples include:

- revision of zoning and land use policies,
- increased nature-based activities during Out of School Time and in early childhood settings, green schoolyards, and
- nature play installations at parks and libraries.

Coordinated efforts between city departments and partners such as school districts and community-based organizations can maximize benefits to children and their communities. Benefits to children of systematic connections to nature entail:

- improved health outcomes,
- greater self-esteem, focus, cooperation, and executive function, and
- stronger academic skills, achievement, and engagement.

### WHAT: June 2019 Leadership Academy

The CCCN partners invite leaders of cities not yet involved in the initiative to send teams with policy and decision-making authority to gain skills and knowledge, assess policy and leadership options, engage in information and policy exchange, and formulate citywide action plans at the 2019 CCCN Leadership Academy. CCCN will accept applications that outline city interest and team make-up until COB April 19, 2019. The academy provides participants access to national experts, promising practice examples, and opportunities for peer learning and local action planning.

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## **WHAT: June 2019 Leadership Academy, continued**

Selected city teams will learn about promising practices and lessons learned from the 18 CCCN cohort members, C&NN's ongoing review of research literature, and thought leaders in the field. Teams will explore successful efforts to improve access to nature in cities across the country, with a focus on children from communities with historic or recent lack of access. City teams will receive guidance from experts who approach this issue from multiple disciplines, including planning, policy, metrics, equity, and youth development. Participants will also strengthen their relationships with colleagues in cities across the nation.

Following the leadership academy, participating cities will receive invitations to join the CCCN Peer Learning Network, which provides ongoing opportunities for city leaders to learn and receive support from nationally-recognized experts in the field and city peers.

## **WHY: Why focus on connecting children to nature more equitably?**

Childhood's move indoors in recent decades has diminished connections with the natural world. Research shows that this trend has profound implications for children's health and wellbeing, and disproportionately affects low-income children and children of color. A movement is taking shape to help all children make stronger connections with nature, with an important role for cities and their community partners to play in closing this "nature gap."

Notably, efforts to connect children to nature more equitably can leverage existing city goals and mandates related to health and wellness, green space access, education, out-of-school time, resilience, EPA consent decrees, stormwater management, parks master planning, transportation and land use, and equity.

## **WHEN & WHERE: Wednesday, June 12 - Friday, June 14, 2019 in Denver, Colorado**

The CCCN Leadership Academy commences at 1:00 PM on Wednesday, June 12 and concludes by 12:00 PM on Friday, June 14. The Leadership Academy includes the following opportunities:

- Sessions led by national experts and city pioneers in the field
- Workshops for drafting action plans
- Dinner and networking with key thought leaders
- Field visits illustrating key strategies

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**WHO:** CCCN requests that city elected officials form teams of two-three persons consisting of senior city staff and other community stakeholders.

CCCN will select up to 12 cities to send teams to the leadership academy. Each city may nominate a team of two or three representatives that must include *at least one of the following individuals: the mayor; a city council member; or a senior representative of the mayor's or city manager's office.* Other team members may include but are not limited to: senior representatives of city agencies such as the equity office, health and human services, environment department or sustainability office, parks and recreation, urban planning, or utility; and school districts, community-based partners, or service providers with a potential partner role in connecting children to nature or reducing inequities in access to nature. Team make-up remains subject to approval by CCCN.

CCCN will select, on a competitive basis, a diverse set of cities of various sizes from different regions of the country to participate in the leadership academy. **Preference will go to cities that hold NLC membership in good standing.** In selecting cities, CCCN will look for evidence of: high-level municipal leadership and commitment to improving nature access outcomes for youth in underrepresented communities; interest in or a record of creating structures for collaboration among relevant city, county and state agencies; a diverse team make-up in terms of race, gender, city departments represented, and expertise; and clear indications of ways the leadership academy can catalyze local efforts.

**HOW:** City teams are invited to submit applications and a statement of interest by Friday, April 19, 2019.

## Applications Due Friday, April 19

Please complete the following [online application](#) and upload a one-page statement of interest including a description of the:

- programs, policies, and infrastructure in your city to connect children to nature including the stage and scope of the effort,
- city plans, initiatives, commitments, or special projects in your city that may relate to or complement strategies to connect children to nature more equitably; examples include: Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities, Biophilic Cities, and 10-Minute Walk to a Park,
- ways your city prioritizes equity as it relates to access to nature and parks and any known data (by race or income) that substantiates priorities,
- particular strategies or topics you most want to learn about, and
- experiences or resources in the area of connecting children to nature you can share with a network of peers.

Responses will help NLC & C&NN assess your community's interest, capacity and commitment to engage in and lead initiatives to connect children to nature more equitably. Each city may submit only one application. The CCCN team encourages early applications. Cities at all stages of planning and development for creating more equitable connections to nature for children are also encouraged to apply. For questions, please [email](#) Monica Lopez Magee.

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## Cities Notified of Selection on Wednesday, May 1

CCCN will notify cities as to acceptance of their application on Wednesday, May 1.

## Travel Subsidy & Accommodations

NLC will reimburse participants for airline travel (up to a maximum of \$600) as well as two nights' accommodation at the hotel and other travel-related costs in accordance with NLC's travel reimbursement policies. Meeting participants will receive reimbursements promptly upon submission of travel receipts following the convening.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Cities Connecting Children to Nature

The Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) initiative offers local officials guidance for establishing new and enhanced connections between children and nature, through training on promising practices, access to national experts, and peer learning opportunities. Key CCCN developments and products to date include:

- A [CCCN Resource Hub](#) featuring tools and materials developed and tested in pilot cities
- An updated review of the scientific [literature](#) that provides evidence and documentation of the benefits of connecting children and nature
- 18 cities who receive technical assistance to plan and implement citywide strategies to reduce disparities in access to nature

### National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. Working in partnership with the 49 state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 19,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities.

### Children & Nature Network

The [Children & Nature Network](#) is leading a global movement to increase equitable access to nature so that children and natural places can thrive. C&NN powers this movement by investing in leadership and communities through sharing evidence-based resources, scaling innovative solutions and driving policy change.