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., Parkology™) from the 10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign, a partner initiative.
● $25,000 in Planning Phase and $50,000 in Implementation Phase leverageable 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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Estimated Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informational webinars for potential applicants (interested cities strongly encouraged to attend)</td>
<td>3pm ET, <strong>Wed. Dec 13</strong>, 2017 1pm ET, <strong>Fri. Jan 12</strong>, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>City applications due to NLC</td>
<td>8pm ET, Wed. Jan 31, 2018</td>
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<td>TA cohort cities selected and notified</td>
<td>Feb 14, 2018</td>
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<td><strong>Ongoing Planning Phase</strong> (technical assistance and monthly calls)</td>
<td><strong>Feb-Oct 2018</strong></td>
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<td>Planning Phase Site Visits</td>
<td>Mar and Apr 2018</td>
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<td>Cities Leadership Summit (1 rep per city)</td>
<td>May 21-22, 2018</td>
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<td>Planning Phase Cohort Meeting &amp; Mayor’s Institute</td>
<td>Sept 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ongoing Implementation Phase</strong> (technical assistance, monthly calls, annual cohort meetings, and leadership summits)</td>
<td><strong>Nov 2018-Oct 2020</strong></td>
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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)
      2. Designate a project manager
      3. Send project manager to all meetings
      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: ____________________________       Population: ________________

Number of: Children_________   Low-income residents_________   Residents of color_________

City government structure:

☐ Mayor-Council   ☐ Council-Manager   ☐ Commission   ☐ Town meeting
☐ Other: __________________________________________

Date of next city election: ___/___/___

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.
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

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:
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Related Initiatives
Please indicate any related initiatives in which your city participates:
☐ 10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign   ☐ Mayors for Parks   ☐ Other: ____________________________

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: ________________________________________________________________
Phone: _______________________ Email: ________________________________
Brief description of the team member’s ability to lead the city’s work in connection with this technical assistance initiative and commitment of time to coordinate the effort (80 words max):
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
TEAM MEMBER 2 NAME: ________________________________________________
Title and Organization: ________________________________________________
Phone: _______________________ Email: ________________________________
Brief description of the team member’s ability to lead the city’s work in connection with this technical assistance initiative and commitment of time to coordinate the effort (80 words max):
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

TEAM MEMBER 3 NAME: ________________________________________________
Title and Organization: ________________________________________________
Phone: _______________________ Email: ________________________________
Brief description of the team member’s ability to lead the city’s work in connection with this technical assistance initiative and commitment of time to coordinate the effort (80 words max):
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

TEAM MEMBER 4 NAME: ________________________________________________
Title and Organization: ________________________________________________
Phone: _______________________ Email: ________________________________
Brief description of the team member’s ability to lead the city’s work in connection with this technical assistance initiative and commitment of time to coordinate the effort (80 words max):
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

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  □ No

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

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>CCCN funding</th>
<th>Additional funding</th>
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<td>Consulting</td>
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<td>Meetings/Events</td>
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<td>Travel/Supplies</td>
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KEY RESOURCES

Municipal Action Guide

Metrics Toolkit

Resource Hub
https://www.childrenandnature.org/initiatives/cities/ccc-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=654f9d976