



INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH,
EDUCATION, AND FAMILIES

2021 Annual Report

OCTOBER 2020 - SEPTEMBER 2021



THE STATE OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD SUCCESS

Meeting the Moment



About National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America’s cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions.

About YEF

NLC’s Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

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Letter from the Director

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, economic decline, and national reckoning with racism and injustice have upended the lives of Americans and those around the world. Alongside the tremendous loss and challenges we have experienced as a nation, there has come stories of innovation and fortitude from cities, towns and villages across the country. As we feature and highlight successes to date, the stories of how cities are responding to this moment is still being written. But insights are emerging that tell us something about the most resilient communities. They're the ones that focus on the well-being of young children and they put families at the center of policy and program development. They're the ones with crisis response and recovery plans that address both human and physical infrastructure.

As we work to help cities rebuild and recover, NLC's Early Childhood Success Team is working to improve outcomes for all children, youth and families – no matter their zip code. Our commitment to equity demands that we serve all cities and all residents according to their needs, no matter where they are and that all young children reach their full potential. For 20 years our Early Childhood Success team has been partnering with municipal leaders across the country to build thriving communities that work for all young children and families. Communities that serve the early childhood workforce. Communities where all children are thriving by age 3, ready at age 5, and on their way by age 8.

In 2021, team members showed tremendous resilience, responsibility and resolve to support one another and member cities, and in doing so, have served the nation well. I am incredibly proud of our team and with continued support from our faithful funders, I look forward to an innovative 2022.

With gratitude and hope for today and for a brighter tomorrow,



Tonja Rucker, Ph.D.

DIRECTOR, EARLY CHILDHOOD SUCCESS
INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH, EDUCATION, AND FAMILIES
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES



“
The true character of
society is revealed in how
it treats its children.”

Nelson Mandela

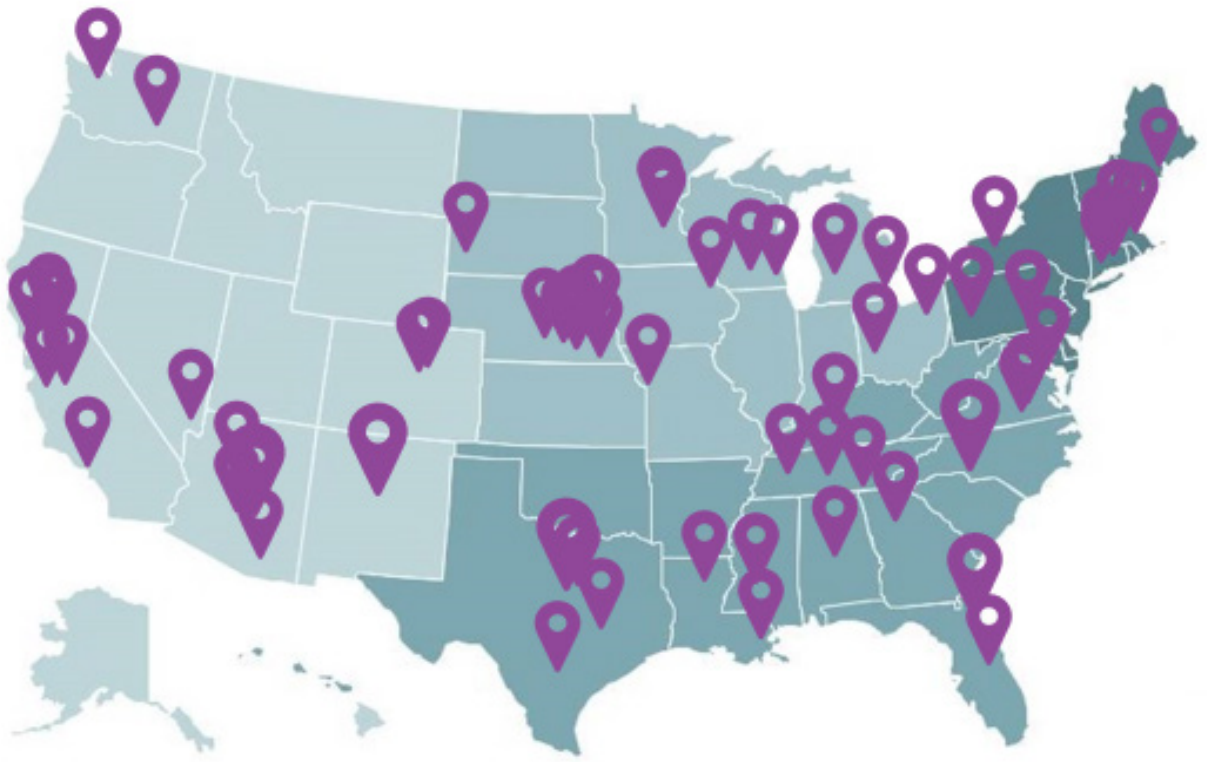


**2021
MEETING
THE MOMENT**

Placing young children and families **at the center** of local policies, practices, and programs

REACHING **MORE THAN**
25.8
MILLION PEOPLE

IMPACTING **MORE THAN**
2.9
MILLION CHILDREN,
AGES 0-8 YEARS.



WORKING WITH CITY LEADERS SO EVERY CITY, TOWN & VILLAGE IS A
GREAT PLACE TO GROW AND BECOME WHO YOU ARE MEANT TO BE.

Cities for Early Childhood Success

During 2021, NLC's Early Childhood Success Team provided more than: 40 technical assistance and coaching sessions, 18 blogs, 5 briefs, reports & fact sheets, 10 webinars & presentations, and more. Network cities implemented policies, practices, and programs, improving conditions and outcomes for young children and families. NLC is proud to be a partner with and learn along side local leaders during this unprecedented year.

2021 CITY IN ACTION: Early Childhood Municipal Wins from Across the Country

NORTHEAST & MID-ATLANTIC

- ◆ **Record-low infant mortality rate for Black infants.** 75% reduction to 3.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in the Upton/Druid Heights neighborhood, resulting from [B'more for Healthy Babies \(BHB\)](#) program with consistent local investment, outreach, and education. *Baltimore, MD*
- ◆ **Childcare providers awarded grants to increase the number of high-quality early learning programs.** The City of Pittsburgh Office of Equity through the [Child Care Quality Fund](#) (CCQF) has awarded \$387,250 in grants to 11 local licensed childcare facilities to implement strategic improvements to ensure that young children have access to safe and high-quality early learning and care. *Pittsburgh, PA*
- ◆ **Codified Mayors Early Childhood Cabinet and solidified new partnerships** to provide parents and caregivers with children's assessment information at local WIC offices. *Waterbury, CT*

SOUTH

- ◆ **[Investment of \\$450,000](#) to connect low-income workers to better jobs.** The Economic Development Department hired an Early Childhood Education Navigator to build career pathways for early childhood educators. *Albuquerque, NM*
- ◆ **New grant program exclusively for family childcare learning home programs** [PAACT: Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive](#), a citywide alliance convened by [GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students](#), in partnership with the [Low-Income Investment Fund \(LIIF\)](#), launched with 20 family childcare homes received funding awards ranging from \$7,000 to \$18,500 to cover operation costs such as payroll, rent, utilities, and insurance. *Atlanta, GA*
- ◆ **Changes to the land development code to support access to child care facilities.** Louisville Metro Planning and Design Services is planning to [hold community meeting in October 2021](#) in response to the mayors declaration of racism a public health crisis and call for an Equity Review of Land Development Code. *Louisville, KY*
- ◆ **Voters reauthorized funding** for another 8 years of PreK for SA. This city administered program is using root cause analysis and equity framing in its quality improvement efforts. *San Antonio, TX*

MIDWEST

- ◆ **City-wide Early Childhood Plan adopted** by City Council in 2021. *Madison, WI*
- ◆ **[Equity Talks](#) video series released.** First Steps Kent in collaboration with partners seeks to dismantle structural racism and improve outcomes by offering videos to support conversation and compassion. *Grand Rapids, MI*
- ◆ **[Preschool expansion](#)** with services now available to 3-year-olds and expanded communities for 4-year-olds through public private investments in Preschool Promise. *Dayton, OH*
- ◆ **Office on Equity and Inclusion created** in February of 2021 and is tasked with conducting a racial equity audit of all city departments. *Milwaukee, WI*
- ◆ **[Guaranteed Income Pilot](#)** using federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to support equitable economic recovery for families. *Minneapolis, MN*

WEST

- ◆ **Universal PreK pilot classroom opens.** [Elevate PreK opened its pilot classroom at Kinsey Elementary](#) and strengthen partnerships with the city, non-profit partners, philanthropic funders through participation in NLC cohort, especially with economic development. Flagstaff, AZ
- ◆ **Resolution urging cross-departmental and partnership collaboration passed.** In March 2021, the resolution urges the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development to collaborate with the Office of Early Care and Education, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF), Homeownership SF, and other partners to establish a homeownership down payment assistance pilot program for licensed, quality family child care home operators. San Francisco, CA
- ◆ **Refreshed child care subsidy system** to expand eligibility and switched to Cost of Care model to support children, families, and providers. Seattle, WA
- ◆ **Child Care Feasibility Study.** The city was awarded a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce to conduct a child care feasibility study to assess opportunities to expand child care access and improve affordability. Walla Walla, WA.

Meeting the Moment - Tools, Resources, and Networks

In 2021, the Early Childhood Success Team continued to build momentum and support for local leaders, by leveraging the broad city expertise of NLC and connecting early childhood success with city issues.

The team's peer network & communities of practices provide a place for leaders to come together, learn and take action, utilizing the robust resources & tools. The network, communities, tools and resources have steadied the team as together with cities, towns, and villages across this nation, we came together to respond, recover and rebuild.

The ECS team is a:



BRIDGE:

Connecting city leaders to each other and with local community stakeholders, and national experts;



ARCHITECT:

Helping municipal leaders and their partners design policies and programs to support young children and their families; and



COACH:

Building the capacity of city leaders to partner with diverse stakeholders and advocate for the issues that matter most in their communities.

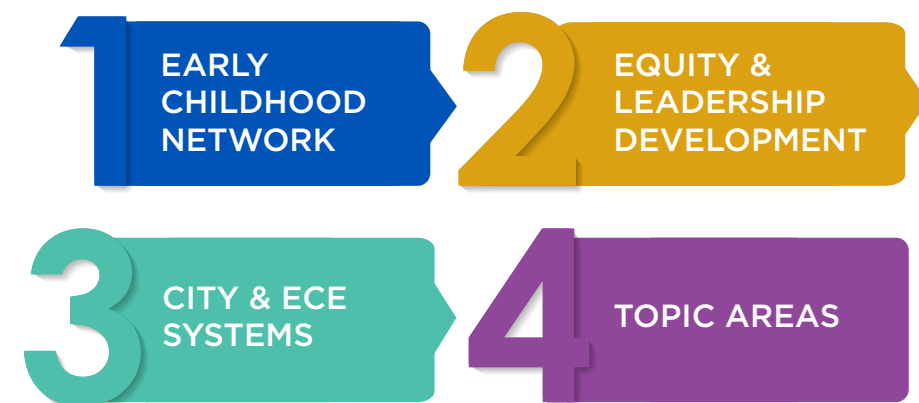




Peer Network & Communities of Practice

NLC's Early Childhood Success Team employs a 4-level strategy within its network and communities of practice, connecting early childhood with broader city issues to leverage municipal policies, practices, and programs to improve outcomes for young children, their families, and those who care for them.

4-Level Strategy for Early Childhood Success



1 BUILDING MOMENTUM WITH A STRONG AND WIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD NETWORK OF LOCAL LEADERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Early Childhood Success Network: The network connects local leaders and local early childhood stakeholders working on issues related to early childhood to build cities that work for young children and families. City leaders have access to:

- ◆ NLC's exclusive ECS on-line community for elected officials and local leaders;
- ◆ ECS team's tools, resources, and learnings
- ◆ Quarterly newsletter; and
- ◆ ECS outreach including webinar series, opportunities to engage with NLC, connection to broad NLC resources and expertise.

2 EQUITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Early Childhood Municipal Fellowship: A leadership development program to equip municipal leaders with the knowledge and skills to navigate the political landscape, utilize regulations and work across multiple government agencies to place young children and families at the center of municipal policy, practices, and programs.

3 SYSTEMS BUILDING & ECE

Early Learning Nation Alliance: Participating in codesign process with 6 national partners with the shared vision and coordinated approach to support diverse leadership for early learning communities.

Municipal Policy Alignment for Early Childhood Success:

Community of practice and peer network to improve early childhood outcomes by leveraging city-wide policies and practices.

4 DEEP-DIVE FOCUS AREAS

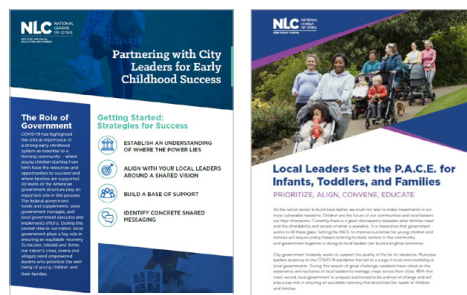
Cities Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Technical assistance and peer learning delving into cities' work on early childhood workforce issues within the formal and informal settings, highlighting successes across the country, and connecting local leaders to one another.

City Leadership for a Strong Prenatal to Age 3 (PN-3) Agenda:

Momentum building initiative designed to increase engagement and activation of key stakeholders, including local and state government to support greater investments in infants, toddlers, and their families

Aligning Arizona Pre-K: Light-touch regional technical assistance initiative to deepen partnership and trust and increase alignment of regional efforts.

New Resources & Tools



POLICY BRIEFS

[Creating Equity for the Early Childhood Workforce](#)

[Embedding Equity Into How Your City Does Business for Early Childhood Success](#)

[Navigating the Political Landscape for Early Childhood Success](#)

BUILDING EQUITABLE SYSTEMS BEGINS WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS

[Setting the P.A.C.E for Infants, Toddlers and Families](#)

[Partnering with City Leaders for Early Childhood Success](#)

Respond, Recover, Rebuild

Throughout 2021, local leaders were working hard every day to respond to critical health issues, support economic recovery and build stronger communities for the future. With equity central in their efforts. NLC is excited that after a year-long advocacy campaign, Cities are Essential – NLC Delivered – which resulted in \$65 billion of DIRECT aid to EVERY city, town or village across the country, within the American Rescue Plan. This is a time of great opportunity – an opportunity to re-imagine and rebuild our communities – so they work for people – for our young children and families and child care providers. And the National League of Cities' Early Childhood Success Team is here with the information, tools and resources.

[NLC's COVID-19 and ARP Resource Hub](#)

[Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Playbook](#)



HIGHLIGHTED EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCES

[COVID-19 Local Response Principles: Supporting Early Childhood Providers and Other Caregivers](#)

[Supporting Early Childhood with the American Rescue Plan Act](#)

[Feeding More Youth While Strengthening Child Care Businesses](#)

[Early Childhood is Critical to Recovery: Utilizing Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to Support Vulnerable Children and Families](#)

[Connecting More Residents to the Child Tax Credit](#)

[Partnering with Cities: Leveraging ARPA Funds for Early Childhood Success](#)

[ARPA Office Hour: Community Impact 101](#)



2022 AND BEYOND...

WITH RECOGNITION OF the importance of early care and education for families, the economy, and communities, along with the historic investments in expanding access to child care, supporting universal preschool, and building equitable cities, local leaders play a critical role in ensuring that communities have the early childhood infrastructure in place to support those efforts. 2022 brings focus to five areas of intentional investments:

- 1 Leadership development** supports at multiple levels, including elected officials, senior city staff and local government and community implementers (those charged with implementing early childhood plans and programs).
- 2 Local, state, and federal alignment** through efforts with local leaders, regional approaches, and intentional engagement of state and federal agency leaders through federal roundtable at NLC's Congressional Cities Conference, state municipal leagues, and state advocacy efforts.
- 3 Diverse and sustainable pipeline of early care and education providers** so that all providers regardless of setting are well-trained (including professional development), well-compensated (salary & benefits), and well supported (cost of providing care is not fully supported by what families are able to pay).
- 4 Facilities for early childhood classrooms** by embracing mixed-delivery models; addressing maintenance and safety needs of current facilities; and developing essential space through new facilities and/or redesigning existing space.
- 5 Supports for quality improvement** so all children and families have access to the high-quality services and resources they need.



ABOUT US

Early Childhood Success

Working with municipal leaders so every city, town, and village is a place where all young children reach their full potential and with their families live safe, healthy lives, starting from the very beginning and at every stage of development, prenatal through 3rd grade.



OUR VISION

Every city, town and village has healthy babies and happy families, and all children are thriving by 3, ready at 5, and on their way by 8.

OUR MISSION

Improve city leaders’ capacity to reach across neighborhoods, align programs, design policies, and ultimately build equitable systems that are responsive and supportive of young children and their families.

Meet the Early Childhood Success Team



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Sign up for NLC’s Early Childhood Success quarterly newsletter
at: <https://www.nlc.org/news-insights/newsletters/>

The NLC Difference

NLC’s YEF Institute empowers municipal leaders to drive policy and systems change that advances equity for all residents, regardless of their race, wealth, or background. NLC’s YEF Institute is the “go to” resource and network for local leaders and their staff to take action to improve the lives of families in their communities. In striving to solve a broad range of big problems, mayors and other municipal officials are now leading community-wide efforts to support families and help all children thrive – even when they have no direct authority over key programs and funding streams. And they are working with NLC to build a brighter today and tomorrow for young children and families.

NLC’S EARLY CHILDHOOD SUCCESS CONTRIBUTIONS:

- ◆ Broad knowledge of and skills to leverage municipal government, including real-time research and strategies,
- ◆ Early childhood systems building tools and resources, including resources focused on specific focus areas,
- ◆ Connections to leaders across America through peer learning network, and
- ◆ Coaching, technical assistance, partnership, and support.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE:

- ◆ City teams gain **skills and critical processes** to continue their work, including **connections to the broader community** and levers across multiple sectors, beyond early learning,
- ◆ Increased opportunities for **peer networking**,
- ◆ Improved **alignment and increased collaboration** within their local government and across their cities and collaboration across peer cities, and
- ◆ **Accelerated local early childhood plans** that improves the lives of children, their families and the early childhood workforce.

