



CITIES OF OPPORTUNITIES:
**Turning Crisis into
Pathways for Equity
and Resilience**

2021 ACTION COHORT FINAL REPORT



About the 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 relentlessly advocates for, and protects the interests of cities, towns and villages by influencing federal policy, strengthening local leadership, and driving innovative solutions.

About the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

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. 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. Throughout the YEF Institute’s 22-year history, it has recognized 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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All of this is only possible because of the work of the teams from the cities of Fremont, California; Houston, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Missoula, Montana; Plainfield, New Jersey; and South Fulton, Georgia. NLC is gratified to see the depth of relationship building across city functions and external partners in each team, and the joint commitment that they are in this for the long haul - together. It is an honor to walk alongside them on their journey to advance health, opportunity and racial equity in their communities. The photos included in this report were provided by participating cities as a reflection of their work.

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OVERVIEW

Theory of Change and Deepened Learning

THE National League of Cities' (NLC) Cities of Opportunity (CoO) initiative takes a holistic approach toward transforming systems that have historically and disproportionately burdened certain communities, while disproportionately advantaging others. This approach has particular resonance with cities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and an unprecedented infusion of federal funding to the local level in 2021. Cities are challenged with “building back better” by improving systemic drivers of equity and wellbeing.

Through the [CoO Theory of Change](#), the work is grounded in the **Vision** of equitable opportunity, health and wellbeing for city residents, with a focus on racial equity.

- ◆ CoO is **centered around cities**, which are uniquely positioned to address factors that affect health and racial disparities and to advance equity and wellbeing for all their residents.
- ◆ CoO **strategies** are centered on equity/race and sustainability. They embrace multiple entry points and a developmental pathways that embraces civic engagement, data, financing, multi-sector collaborations and cross-city integration.
- ◆ CoO cities produced **multiple outcomes** toward comprehensive change for racial and health equity. These include deepened cities' understanding of their role in equitably advancing health; strengthening multi-sector partnerships; lifting up community voice and authentic civic engagement; engaging in strategic use and analysis of data; and effective alignment of city policies, practices and programs. CoO cities also strengthened advocacy for systems change; increased and diversified sources of funding; and institutionalized equity in their structures and processes to sustain advances in racial and health equity.

Over the course of a 12-city Pilot (2018-2019), a five-city Action Cohort (2019-2020), and the seven-city 2021 Action Cohort, CoO built on learnings over time and deepened its support to participating cities. CoO continued to deliver city-centered and context-specific targeted technical assistance with NLC's systems transformation strategic partner Consilience Group, LLC.

In 2021, for the first time, NLC engaged an evaluative partner for CoO. Success Measures produced the Theory of Change and a thematic analysis based on interviews and surveys of participating cities (primarily from earlier cohorts). See the brief from the study: [Cities of Opportunity: Pathway to Equity](#).

The 2021 CoO Action Cohort had the broadest and most diverse set of cities, city leaders and external partner organizations from **Fremont, California; Houston, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Missoula, Montana; Plainfield, New Jersey; and South Fulton, Georgia**. These cities are in four time zones across the country, and represent a mix of small, medium and large municipalities. (See Appendix B for a list of the leaders from the CoO teams and the partner experts who participated the 2021 Action Cohort.)

This report highlights the accomplishments, learnings and next steps of the 2021 teams. It also outlines the participants' insights, suggestions for improvement and how CoO will guide their future work. NLC is especially gratified that the teams are well-positioned to continue progress beyond the formal program into the years ahead.

“All cities can be Cities of Opportunity. We want to be a City of Opportunities for all.”

Christopher Pike, City of South Fulton



CITIES OF OPPORTUNITY: **Accomplishments and Learnings from 2021 Action Cohort**

OVER the 2021 program year, CoO delivered peer learning via four cross-city convenings and seven city-specific technical assistance sessions, supplemented by tools to help teams focus, plan, measure progress and modify actions as they steadily advanced toward their goals. For the 2021 cohort, CoO added a new feature, conducting three Executive Briefings over the course of the year for Mayors and City Managers. Well received by the top city leaders, the Executive Briefings served to reinforce the work of the teams and solidify mayoral and elected official championship and support of CoO work. All sessions were conducted online as the COVID-19 pandemic persisted through 2021 into the following year.

At the closing convening, each city team was asked to present on the following:

- ◆ What are your city team's accomplishments?
- ◆ What has your team learned through your experience in this program?
- ◆ What are your key next steps (1-2 years) and how will you apply what you've learned?

Table 1 presents the Vision and Accomplishments of each CoO team. Appendix A provides further information on the cities' Context, Learnings and Next Steps.

(Photo on opposite page): South Fulton, Georgia. Turkey giveaway, part of food insecurity efforts.

TABLE 1: VISION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2021 COO ACTION COHORT TEAMS

CITY	TEAM VISION	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
FREMONT, California	All City residents have equitable access to appropriate and coordinated health, housing, and social services that promote positive outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developed a multi-sector partnership with city, county and hospital for strategic shared data capacity on behavioral and mental health crises: defined target population for pilot with intent to expand to more high utilizers of servicesIncreased coordination in response to behavioral health crisesReengaged the South County Partnership as a platform to advocate for policy and systems changes related to behavioral health in the County/region
HOUSTON, Texas	<p>A risk-based, equitable decision-making process for planning, design, implementation, and maintenance of infrastructure that prioritizes people and communities.</p> <p>An equitable infrastructure that meets the needs of each neighborhood, city-wide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developed cohesive and aligned vision on risk-based equitable decision-makingConducted peer-review to obtain best practicesDeveloped definition of compounded risk for inequities: infrastructure vulnerability + people's equity vulnerabilityCreated new structure for equitable prioritization of Green Storm Water investments in particular locations with greatest needs and the most impact to advance equityInitiated beta testing and integration into policy & decision-making, with the goal of learning from process to influence future Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) resource allocations for equity
KANSAS CITY, Missouri	Kansas City, MO acknowledges and addresses past and current inequities by fostering equitable community and economic development that supports all residents with opportunities for a high quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deepened shared understanding of city's role in equitably advancing health: e.g., LifeX (place-based approach in 5 zip codes, 94% below FPL)Strengthened multi-sector partnerships with a shared focus on equityBuilt foundation for equity dashboard: data collection, track/shareAligned work and data with partners, e.g., KC RisingLaunched planning to align City Programs/Policies to support greater equity across issuesConducted Regional Equity Summit with partners in architecture and planning fields, developed collaborative equity lens for built environment

CITY	TEAM VISION	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin	A City where <u>all</u> residents have fair access to stable, quality housing and other opportunities that promote health, social and economic well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evolved from narrowly focused plan on addressing affordable housing to more global systems approach across city-wide ARPA plan; invested \$25.8 M of ARPA funding for housing, home ownership and other quality of life issuesSupported all levels of city government to infuse racial equity through ARPA allocation process; nearly \$100 million allocated to address urgent needs of residents disproportionately affected by poverty and COVID-19Identified opportunity for more intentional community engagement for next tranche of ARPA funds; leveraged CoO consulting pool support to develop collective city-partner guiding principles in partnership with community stakeholders
MISSOULA, Montana	<p>A just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive Missoula--free of systemic and structural inequalities--where our community is connected and honors our individualities.</p> <p>A healthy and vibrant community where we are welcomed and valued, and our physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs are met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developed community-wide cohort team and network of partnersAdopted both City and County JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) Resolutions with city budget and staffing to support workInstitutionalized JEDI initiative as a priority for elected and staff leadershipTrained City Senior Leadership in the foundation of JEDI to equip them to support JEDI departmental accountability and operationalize key strategic goalsSupported the County-led process of assembling JEDI Advisory Board development team, began Fall 2021
PLAINFIELD, New Jersey	Plainfield is a city where all residents have equitable and fair access to healthy neighborhoods, economic opportunities, businesses that serve them, and universal resources that meet their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strengthened relationship between city and non-profit community partners on CoO team – all better understand Plainfield's historic and systemic equity barriersIdentified priorities improve city policies and practices to ensure sustained action and impactful structural changes: better community engagement and align resources across city departmentsDesigned cross-sector community-based Equity Advisory CommitteeDevelop realistic multi-stage plan of action for equity

CITY	TEAM VISION	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
SOUTH FULTON, Georgia Focus: Equitable Community & Economic Development	A safe, resilient and prosperous community where all residents have a sense of belonging and equitable access to a full range of opportunities, resources and amenities for a high quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applied an equity lens to City's first Comprehensive Plan ▪ Developed ordinances to create opportunities for wealth and equity: Economic Development Incentive Ordinance connects incentives offered to developers with community benefits such as the allocation of specific percentage of commercial development space to house locally owned business; Small Business Resource Center train entrepreneurs for set-aside spaces; Local Business Preference Program for city services/contracts ▪ Partnered with community organizations and stakeholders to improve access to healthy food options, including data partners to measure food insecurities and program partnership with local farmers ▪ Aligned internal policies for wealth building for residents

“What we’re trying to do to get to the root here is eliminating causes of suffering and being agnostic about issues to address it. Wellbeing as a right we all deserve rather than the luck of the draw. We need bravery to do this work.”

Mayor John Engen, City of Missoula

Houston, Texas.
Carnegie High School green roof.



Here is a synthesis of major strands across the seven participating cities – accompanied by their own words.

Center social determinants, the factors that affect health and equity

Centering CoO's vision to advance health and racial equity, the teams deepened their appreciation and developed processes for the role of multiple, intersecting social, physical and structural determinants of health on individual and community wellbeing.

- ◆ **KANSAS CITY, MO** established reducing disparities in Life Expectancy as the shared result to guide decisions for economic and physical development in the city. They have included community-identified, place-based equity indicators in land use plans.
- ◆ **SOUTH FULTON, GA** is building wealth in the city by dedicating investments in local businesses through incentives for developers and trainings for local entrepreneurs, as well as expanding healthy food access in a wide region with food deserts.
- ◆ **HOUSTON, TX** is prototyping a framework for risk-based, equitable decision-making to identify the highest impact projects based on both equity and infrastructure needs for capital investments in GSI, recognizing that GSI investments can solve multiple challenges at once. This framework will be considered as a model for all capital improvement investments.

“We can’t have climate mitigation without resilience, and we can’t have resilience without Equity.”

Mayor Sylvester Turner, City of Houston

Leverage city authority and assets to infuse equity

City leaders across teams recognized that they could leverage existing programs and processes that do not require additional funding to advance racial and health equity. They established and implemented city policies and procedures to:

- ◆ Incentivize developers who devote substantial physical space to local businesses.
- ◆ Utilize city contracts and processes to support local entrepreneurs.
- ◆ Build capacity of neighborhood and community groups to organize, collaborate and identify mutual goals. The community's voice and partnership, especially with marginalized groups, are essential.

“Now we’re working on guiding principles for authentic community engagement, in tandem with community partners who are part of our team as well as other grassroots organizations and individuals.”

Nikki Purvis, City of Milwaukee

Plainfield, New Jersey.
City leaders cutting ribbon at Elmwood Square.



Deploy the power of data and diverse stories to address root causes

Team members recognized data is vital to identify and address the root causes of issues faced by people who had been marginalized. With the support of NLC data partner mySidewalk, they better understand appropriate use of data, data availability, benefits and shortfalls, and have steps to track progress, measure outcomes, capture and deploy data for advocacy. As well, quantitative data must be paired with people intelligence from community residents and partners to illuminate root causes of disparities and guide equitable solutions.

“Data is vital, but data itself doesn’t do the work. It takes collaboration and aligning with partners and the community.”

Jeff Williams, City of Kansas City

This work, including reviewing data together, creates an environment that embodies truth and transparency. Allow people to educate you with equity in mind. And reappraise every year to make sure we’re still relevant.”

Dr. Rashara Fuller, City of Plainfield

Align city leadership across departments and with partners

Teams recognized the essential role of collaboration, alignment and mutual accountability for shared outcomes across both city departments and external partners.

“Expand partnerships to have proper stakeholders at the table, and together, define a clarity of vision all can buy into.”

Karena Shackelford, City Manager, City of Fremont

We have long-standing, positive relationships with our community-based organizations – yet we were all working in “Silos of Good!”

Shep Brown, City of Plainfield

The first I heard about partnering with the city on mental health was a conversation that our CEO had with the City Manager, which was unprecedented, and having that level of commitment cleared a lot of hurdles in the organization.”

Angus Cochran, Washington Hospital Healthcare System, Fremont

Address skeptics of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

This work is hard on a multitude of levels, especially when experiencing resistance particularly to race equity. This was experienced by multiple cities requiring various approaches depending on context. As a predominantly white city, Missoula, MN took an educational approach to highlight how this work benefits everyone.

“We’re often challenged with WHY spend tax money on the 5% of people of color in our population?! Our stance is that we all do better when we all do better! We try to speak to things that matter to all people: care of children, access to public infrastructure, access to education – everyone values those things.”

Donna Gaukler, City of Missoula

Really appreciate what Missoula is doing. I often think it is more impactful for Whites to own and lead on justice, equity and inclusion efforts. It’s great that Missoula gets it, especially in light of its demographics.”

Sharon Robinson, City of Milwaukee

Drive systemic change: Focus in now and go big later

For some cities a focused approach allowed them to apply the CoO approach, with the intent of scaling the approach to other areas over time. Fremont, CA and Houston, TX made the intentional decision to operationalize equity into practice in more narrow areas, with the intention to take what they learned to other issues and populations across the city.

“ This year we’ve done a lot of planning so we can focus on implementing and scaling initiatives to advance racial and health equity years into the future. The findings of our pilot cohort will expand to include more clients from a wider variety of backgrounds.”

Mayor Lily Mei, City of Fremont

We want to do good but we also want to be impactful and transformational. People can’t see what’s done for them if we try to meet everyone’s needs at the same time. Hence we selected 10 neighborhoods that have been underserved for decades in our Complete Communities initiative and partnered across the city and with external partners to align support....And we will use the Resilient Infrastructure scorecard and Diversity & Equity Indicators to track our impact.”

Shep Brown, City of Plainfield

Invest time to lead transformative change

Partnership and trust building are necessary to create sustainable approaches to creating equity and bringing power to those who have been historically excluded. The teams saw the value of investing the time to build relationships at the front end and commit to nurture it continuously.

“ From lived experience, we know that social change is incremental and sometimes you have to go slow to go fast, “perseverance” is important!”

Suzanne Shenfil, City of Fremont

True collaboration and trust-building is slow. We have to explain, over and over, that slow is not a sign of weakness. It’s a sign of deep listening. It’s progress.”

Kelly Webster, University of Montana

Fremont, California.
Clean Start Project.



Seize the moment

Be it city-specific factors or those that affected all cities (e.g., the pandemic, ARPA funding), CoO cities seized the moment to catalyze systemic change.

“CoO made us go deeper and came at the right time – we adopted Racism is a Public Health Issue in 2019, but CoO stimulated the building of a sustainable structure in the city to address equity.”

Shep Brown, City of Plainfield

As a new city, we’re in the middle of completing our first comprehensive plan. We’re using that plan to infuse equity in policies and capital investments throughout the city.”

Tammi Saddler Jones, City Manager, City of South Fulton

Missoula, Montana.
View of the north hills



Align American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) resources

Participating cities leveraged the first infusion of ARPA funding in different ways. Milwaukee, WI developed a comprehensive ARPA plan with commitments to invest in racial equity across all city departments. Plainfield, NJ and Missoula, MN are investing in building the infrastructure for advancing and sustaining equity across city government and in collaboration with partners.

“We thought through how to spend this huge infusion of ARPA dollars. We convened all departments to build equity into all allocations – in line with our purpose for joining CoO. We’re insistent on making every decision through an equity lens, at every juncture. How to make sure it’s not on the backburner, but our front burner. Every decision of the city is a sign of our commitment.”

Tom Barrett, Mayor, City of Milwaukee

Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
City skyline.



Leverage technical assistance and deepen capacity

Expert assistance is essential for cities and partners to make informed decisions, allocate resources and do effective service delivery to improve residents' lives. This support also helps cities maintain the momentum beyond the program year.

“Key elements of the CoO planning framework and process to operationalize equity and racial equity can be applied to other city initiatives and replicated in partner organizations. I can use it in my own organization.”

Dr. Kerri Powell, Plainfield Health Services Corporation

Missoula, Montana.
Planning team working session.



Deploy communications power of city officials

City teams realized that they were uniquely positioned to share information and positively impact community understanding and perception of equity-based work.

“We have a crisis of trust in this country. We have a constituency who trusts our team. Continuing to engage to keep that trust is important. It’s not going to be easy, but nothing important is simple and I think we’re up to the challenge.”

Dale Bickell, City of Missoula

Engaging the community is important. Elected officials must tell the story, making sure their constituents understand what we’re doing and why we’re doing it. We must be intentional and passionate!”

Tammi Saddler Jones, City Manager, City of South Fulton

Rooted in Accountability

- ◆ Building accountability across partners was of central importance across teams. NLC applied the Results Framework approach to support cohort teams. [Action Roadmaps](#) helped each team unify around their Vision, Community Outcomes, Indicators and Strategies, and [Workplans](#) aided them in planning out key steps/milestones and track progress.
- ◆ Team members are able to see where progress was made; and if not, they're able to stop and ascertain the reasons and adjust as needed.
- ◆ They saw their work further undergirded by the [CoO Theory of Change](#), a visual guide with an overview of CoO's vision, purpose, strategies and outcomes. Participants noted the Theory of Change spurs them to see how their strategies yield outcome, as well as to check on the strategies as they track outcomes.

“ I really appreciate this group, all of you are eager to hold yourselves accountable. Not only are you not afraid of it, you run to it!”

Traci Sampson, Consilience Group LLC

*(Photo on opposite page): Fremont, California.
Mural at the housing navigation center.*





CITY REFLECTIONS:

What Worked, What To Do Differently, What To Continue

NLC integrated the evaluation of this CoO Action Cohort into synchronous, city-specific and collective reflections at the closing of the cohort in December 2021. Participants focused on the following areas: important outcomes from this program, reflections on lessons learned and applying lessons forward.

Outcomes

Beyond specific accomplishments on their Workplans, the most important Outcomes for the teams from CoO were: **Safe Space, Trust, and Synergy with Community Partners.**

SAFE SPACE

Creating a “safe space” among city teams and partners to have difficult conversations was essential to operationalize equity and move the work forward at the systems level.

TRUST

Building or strengthening relationships and sustaining trust was foundational: with the community, within and across city government, and with partners. Trust is vital to catalyze actions to advance equity and sustainability for the future.

SYNERGY WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The city teams came into CoO with good relationships and networks of community partners. They also discovered that they are doing important work in “silos of good.”

(Photo on opposite page): Houston, Texas.
Green community infrastructure.

They saw that they could accomplish so much more by working together, and to truly address inequities it cannot happen alone or in silos.

All of this together led to what teams here have experienced, that you have to “go slow to go fast.” And they found it much more rewarding to launch real progress together!

Lessons Learned

Knowing what they know now, the top things teams would do differently are: *the Pandemic, More Diverse Voices, and a Balanced Team.*

NAVIGATING THE PANDEMIC

This is hard work that requires relationship-building and would have benefitted from in-person contacts that were not possible due to the pandemic. At the same time, CoO leaders seized the moment and used the spotlight on inequities that were elevated over the past two years to advance CoO efforts to address inequities and systemic racism.

MORE DIVERSE VOICES

The teams want to work harder to include a wider range of voices *earlier* in the conversations about what was needed and how to do important racial equity work in the city. Again, this is vital at the community level and among the city staff, elected officials and organizational partners.

BALANCED TEAM

This Action Cohort required strong coordinators and all team members’ time to build relationships and define strategies and alignments. A blend of people in leadership positions in cities and senior staff with the time to do the work is essential. Several of the teams did have this configuration and it has worked well.

Applying What’s Been Learned

Major ways CoO teams have applied what they learned are *Peer Connections*

with Other Cities, Applying Multiple Experiences and Strategic Use of Data.

PEER CONNECTIONS WITH CITIES

Learning from the experiences of other cities is directly applicable to the specific challenges the teams faced. Individual cities felt less alone when they saw they have similar issues to tackle and can learn from one another.

APPLICABILITY TO MULTIPLE EFFORTS/INITIATIVES

Related to the above, every participating city cited one or more aspect of the Action Cohort process, learning or connections that they are able to apply directly to their equity initiatives. Multiple experiences matter.

STRATEGIC USE OF DATA

Using data strategically to inform plans and actions is a critical early step in framing how to move on equity. As well, data must be shared with partners and residents to build mutual understanding, trust and solutions.

Looking Ahead

The teams will apply this learning to their work moving forward by *Replicating*

the CoO Process to Other Parts of the City, Applying Community Engagement, and Recognizing this is just the Starting Point.

REPLICATE COO PROCESS TO OTHER PARTS OF CITY

Key elements of the Action Cohort planning framework and process to operationalize equity and racial equity can be applied to other city initiatives and also in partner organizations.

APPLY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Lessons about more inclusive community engagement can also be more broadly applied across issues facing cities and partner organizations. Since the inception, CoO is about strengthening city leaders' capacities in foundational areas that are applicable AGNOSTIC of the issue they're addressing.

THIS IS THE JUST THE *STARTING POINT*

Today - each day - is the starting point. With a framework, plans and the relationships needed to move forward together, each CoO team is prepared to take vital and necessary next steps toward their "true north."



Building strong trust, grace with and for each other, and persistence will lend well to our next steps."

Donna Gaukler, City of Missoula



*(Photo on opposite page): Plainfield, New Jersey.
Food partnership in action.*



WHAT'S NEXT:

Augmenting CoO Value

In creating CoO, NLC has effectively walked alongside cities to advance equitable policy and systems changes that improve health and well-being.

NLC has leveraged its deep knowledge of how cities function and how leaders and staff learn in order to help cities advance important changes in policies and practices that will improve equity and well-being for residents. Over time, NLC has made continuous improvements and adjustments to CoO to meet the needs of participating cities and keep pace with a dynamic environment.

NLC will build on the participants' advice in designing the next CoO Action Cohort while strengthening the features that have worked so well. NLC will inform and guide CoO into 2022 and beyond with a focus on further advancing racial equity, spreading and scaling of model city policy/practice, and deepening readiness for policy action.

(Photo on opposite page): Kansas City, Missouri.
City view.

Appendix A: Summary of City Accomplishments, Learnings and What’s Next

CITY	CONTEXT	COO TEAM'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS	WHAT TEAM LEARNED IN COO PROGRAM	KEY NEXT STEPS HOW APPLY WHAT'S LEARNED	ASKS AND COMMITMENTS: MAYORS, CITY MANAGERS
<p>FREMONT, CALIFORNIA</p> <p>TEAM VISION:</p> <p>All City residents have equitable access to appropriate and coordinated health, housing, and social services that promote positive outcomes.</p>	<p>Majority Asian city in California with 230,500 population, high average income, and high disparities</p> <p>Focusing on the most vulnerable: residents experiencing behavioral and mental health crises</p> <p>“No wrong door” approach and build out from this to create larger system with multiple inter-related dimensions</p>	<p>Developed multi-sector partnership with city, county and hospital for strategic shared data capacity on behavioral and mental health crises: defined target population for pilot with intent to expand to more high utilizers of services</p> <p>Increased coordination in response to behavioral health crises</p> <p>Reengaging the South County Partnership as a platform to advocate for policy and systems changes related to behavioral health in the County/region</p>	<p>Partners can be aligned through shared goals – focusing on a common set of clients, using data and better coordination to improve health outcomes</p> <p>Must have right players at the table – through the year, team expanded to include County EMS and Fire Department</p> <p>Deepened city role in equitably advancing health given lack of behavioral health resources in area and the acuity of need</p> <p>Gained insights on owning data processes</p> <p>Data will be crucial to assist in advocacy for more services in region</p>	<p>Focused on systems work and program development in 2021 – will focus on implementation and evaluation of pilot in 2022 and beyond</p> <p>Scale initiatives to advance racial and health equity – expand program to include clients from wider variety of backgrounds</p> <p>Prototype experiences can inform potential policy changes - advocacy that can be shepherded by the Regional Partnership</p>	<p>Uphold program's success by continuing support for the partnership with Washington Hospital Health System through an equitable framework so the work can be sustained and expanded into the future.</p> <p>Support scaling of pilot to wider systems change that will benefit a larger number through broader eligibility of community members for support</p>
<p>HOUSTON, TEXAS</p> <p>TEAM VISION:</p> <p>A risk-based, equitable decision-making process for planning, design, implementation, and maintenance of infrastructure that prioritizes people and communities.</p> <p>An equitable infrastructure that meets the needs of each neighborhood, city-wide.</p>	<p>Largest city in this Action Cohort with 2.3 million population</p> <p>Past and recent history of extreme weather events and disastrous consequences particularly for low-income people of color</p> <p>Chose to prioritize equity and capital investment in a politically-feasible area: GSI (Green Stormwater Infrastructure) - as GSI can deliver multiple co-benefits and solve for various challenges at once</p>	<p>Developed cohesive and aligned vision on risk-based equitable decision-making</p> <p>Conducted peer-review to obtain best practices</p> <p>Developed definition of compounded risk: infrastructure vulnerability and people's equity vulnerability</p> <p>Created new structure for equitable prioritization of GSI investments in particular locations with greatest needs and the most impact to advance equity</p> <p>Initiated beta testing and integration into policy & decision-making, with goal to learn from process to influence future Capital Improvement Plans (CIP).</p>	<p>Goal setting, roadmap creation, shared vision drafting all simplified a complex process</p> <p>Abundance of data does not necessarily mean the right data – must identify interdependencies to properly measure and select the criteria that will be impactful</p> <p>Opportunities exist for continuous improvement</p> <p>How to catalyze inter-departmental and multi-sector collaboration for policy and systems change</p> <p>Most important takeaway is to emphasize authentic community engagement, and to go back to community stakeholders with actions/results in response to what residents have already told the city</p>	<p>Draft and adopt GSI Executive Order</p> <p>Optimize framework for equity-focused GSI prioritization through beta testing</p> <p>Prototype framework that can be applied to future CIP decisions.</p> <p>Scale to other CIPs across city – embed prototype in CIP prioritization</p>	<p>Advance Executive Order on Green Stormwater Infrastructure</p> <p>Continue support, visionary contributions, and leadership to advance this work; and towards implementing this process to other city infrastructure prioritization decisions</p>

CITY	CONTEXT	COO TEAM'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS	WHAT TEAM LEARNED IN COO PROGRAM	KEY NEXT STEPS HOW APPLY WHAT'S LEARNED	ASKS AND COMMITMENTS: MAYORS, CITY MANAGERS
<p>KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI</p> <p>TEAM VISION: Kansas City, MO acknowledges and addresses past and current inequities by fostering equitable community and economic development that supports all residents with opportunities for a high quality of life.</p>	<p>Larger city in Midwest region: population 500,000 over 318 square miles</p> <p>Built on boulevard and parkway system that's over 120 years old –planning, land use and development strategies major impact on equity</p> <p>Opportunity to be case study for best practices and to push the envelope</p>	<p>Deepening understanding of city's role in equitably advancing health: e.g., LifeX (place-based approach in 5 zip codes, 94% below FPL)</p> <p>Leveraging multi-sector partnerships for equity</p> <p>Building equity dashboard: data collection, track/share</p> <p>Aligning work and data with partners, e.g., KC Rising</p> <p>Identify alignment of City Programs/Policies to support greater equity across issues</p> <p>Conducted Regional Equity Summit with partners in Architecture & Planning fields, framed collaborative equity lens for built environment</p>	<p>Affirmed Life Expectancy as ultimate shared metric for city progress</p> <p>Distinguish between economic growth and equitable economic – lessons learned from community listening sessions</p> <p>Importance of culture of belonging as foundational to equity</p> <p>Understand and explain what data can and cannot do</p> <p>Establish value of utilizing low tech and high-tech options – Data is vital, but people do the work!</p>	<p>Get to human-centered starting point for all government assistance</p> <p>Reinforce equity strategies in planning efforts - identify data equity</p> <p>Scale development to advance and grow racial and health equity</p> <p>Include community-identified place-based equity indicators into land use plans</p> <p>Track school readiness as a driver for increased life expectancy, work with educators re: economic participation across lifetime</p> <p>Strengthen community engagement - build trust, eliminate barriers with neighborhood groups</p>	<p>Resources – Opportunities to utilize city-owned properties or contracts for neighborhood business creation/growth</p> <p>Communications - Elected leaders imbed equity principles and progress measures into statements and development initiatives</p> <p>Technology & Infrastructure – Dedicate funding to support startup and local businesses in underinvested communities; establish intermunicipal agreement to fund platform to host indicator dashboard</p>
<p>MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN</p> <p>TEAM VISION: A City where <u>all</u> residents have fair access to stable, quality housing and other opportunities that promote health, social and economic well-being.</p>	<p>Legacy city in Midwest with 577,000 population</p> <p>Wanted to seize the moment with the triple crises and cities in the spotlight to accelerate the work of the new Office of Equity & Inclusion</p>	<p>Evolved from narrowly-focused plan on addressing affordable housing to more global systems approach across city-wide ARPA plan; invested \$25.8 M of ARPA funding for housing, home ownership and other quality of life issues</p> <p>Challenged all levels of city government to infuse racial equity through ARPA allocation process; nearly \$100 M allocated to address urgent needs of residents disproportionately affected by poverty and COVID-19</p> <p>Identified opportunity for more intentional community engagement for next tranche of ARPA funds and leverage consulting pool support to develop collective city-partner guidance principles in partnership with community stakeholders</p>	<p>Transformative change is difficult, uncomfortable and time intensive</p> <p>There is value in adopting methods through learning from other cohort cities</p> <p>Critically important to build leadership capacity around data utilization and literacy</p> <p>Community's voice and partnership, especially for marginalized groups, are essential – "Nothing about us without us"</p>	<p>Develop guiding principles for authentic community engagement</p> <p>Collaborate with decision makers to create a more community-driven, equitable and inclusive ARPA allocation process</p> <p>Continue to develop an internal infrastructure, and create more opportunities for capacity building to advance racial equity</p>	<p>Mayor's continued support and flexibility for more collaborative ways to do more equitable community engagement processes and to find more ways to serve underserved populations.</p>

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<p>MISSOULA, MONTANA</p> <p>TEAM VISION:</p> <p>A just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive Missoula--free of systemic and structural inequalities--where our community is connected and honors our individualities.</p> <p>A healthy and vibrant community where we are welcomed and valued, and our physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs are met.</p>	<p>Urban hub in very rural state in Western, Mountain region: population 74,000</p> <p>Broad scope - Intentional commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) in city that's over 90% white</p>	<p>Developed community-wide cohort team and network of partners</p> <p>Adopted both City and County JEDI Resolutions with City budget and staffing to support work</p> <p>JEDI initiative is priority for elected and staff leadership</p> <p>Training City Senior Leadership in the foundation of JEDI to equip them to support JEDI departmental accountability and key strategic goals</p> <p>Supported the County-led process of assembling JEDI Advisory Board development team, began Fall 2021</p>	<p>CoO Action Roadmap – identified challenges and desired outcomes</p> <p>Measures – Clarified: 1) data is vital to identify and address root causes of issues faced by historically marginalized groups; and 2) understand data availability, shortfalls and next steps to measure outcomes</p> <p>Strengthened partnerships with educational institutions (University of Montana and Missoula Public Schools).</p>	<p>Assess city ordinances, policies and practices to identify and address findings of systemic racism</p> <p>Better align efforts with community partners</p> <p>Convene residents to review collective impact plan – ask what really matters, listen to and learn from them</p>	<p>Continue Mayor's leadership to prioritize JEDI work within the city and demonstrate respect for this priority in public meetings</p> <p>Allocate resources necessary to conduct this work</p>
<p>PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY</p> <p>TEAM VISION:</p> <p>Plainfield is a city where all residents have equitable and fair access to healthy neighborhoods, economic opportunities, businesses that serve them, and universal resources that meet their needs.</p>	<p>A city of 55,000 “with all the big city problems” of its neighbors in Northeast U.S.</p> <p>Majority-minority city with large Black population in city & business leadership; need to better engage its large Hispanic population and other residents</p>	<p>Strengthened relationship between city and non-profit community partners on CoO team – all better understand Plainfield's historic and systemic equity barriers</p> <p>Focus on city's policies and practices to ensure sustained action and impactful structural changes: better community engagement and align resources across city departments</p> <p>Designed cross-sector community-based Equity Advisory Committee</p> <p>Develop realistic multi-stage plan of action for equity</p>	<p>Plainfield's community-based organization are effective, committed equity advocates</p> <p>Build collaborations – good network of partners but need to align efforts; no sector can do equity work alone</p> <p>City leadership is key to develop/ operationalize equity, with mechanism for full and equitable resident participate</p> <p>Need technical assistance and data-building</p>	<p>Launch Equity Advisory Committee in 2022 for sustained community engagement (2022-24)</p> <p>City infrastructure: Equity training for all levels of city staff and elected officials; do Racial Equity Assessment in all city departments; and point person in each department for implementation</p> <p>Develop initial Equity Strategic Plan (2022-24)</p>	<p>Support launch of Community Equity Advisory Committee (2022) Build out infrastructure in next 2 years (all city leadership team trained so approaching equity from same lens, use common definitions, have clear roles and act from the same plan)</p> <p>As we learn and build equity strategic plan, ensure it's sustainable and entrenched in the culture of the city.</p>

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<p>SOUTH FULTON, GEORGIA</p> <p>TEAM VISION:</p> <p>A safe, resilient and prosperous community where all residents have a sense of belonging and equitable access to a full range of opportunities, resources and amenities for a high quality of life.</p>	<p>A new city (5 years in May 2022) with population of 107,000 - more than 90% Black</p> <p>City government culture still being established</p> <p>Focus on wealth building and increasing access to healthy food access and other basic quality of life issues for residents</p>	<p>Applied an equity lens to City's first Comprehensive Plan</p> <p>Developed ordinances to create opportunities for wealth and equity: Economic Development Incentive Ordinance connects incentives offered to developers with community benefits such as the allocation of specific percentage of commercial development space to house locally owned business; Small Business Resource Center train entrepreneurs for set-aside spaces; Local Business Preference Program for city services/contracts</p> <p>Healthy foods and food options – partner to measure food insecurities, with local farmers for markets</p> <p>Aligned policies for wealth building for residents</p>	<p>Team found new ways to evaluate the city organization – work on corporate culture</p> <p>Shared resources and synergy in working with other city departments produced more efficiency and way more results than previously</p> <p>Coordination across departments and with partners strengthened services to residents</p>	<p>Identify funding and enhance staffing to expand and accomplish opportunities</p> <p>Develop additional partnerships for success</p> <p>Build central accountability structure to measure effectiveness and evaluate success</p> <p>Ensure community is informed of successes and needed improvements</p> <p>Use data to inform future decisions</p>	<p>Identify financial resources to develop more robust partnerships and expand programming into next several years</p> <p>Use city's first Comprehensive Plan to infuse equity in policies and capital investments</p>

Appendix B: City Team Participants and Expert Faculty/Partners

CITY TEAM PARTICIPANTS

NLC gratefully acknowledges the following city team members for their generous participation in the 2021 Cities of Opportunity Action Cohort. Some leaders have moved to other positions, but the teams continued steady progress. NLC has learned much from their courage, passion, accomplishments and advice. It is an honor to serve them and to share their insights with city leaders across the country.

FREMONT, CA

- Lily Mei**
Mayor
- Karena Shackelford**
City Manager
- Karen Grimsich**
Family Services Administrator
Human Services
- Nino Stillitano**
Sargent, Police Officer
- Sean Washington**
Chief of Police
- Candice Rankin**
Team Co-Lead
Management Analyst II
City Manager’s Office
- Suzanne Shenfil**
Team Co-Lead
Director, Human Services

- Lucy Hernandez**
Community Outreach Manager
- Kimberly Hartz**
Chief Executive Officer

HOUSTON, TX

- Sylvester Turner**
Mayor
- Shannon Buggs**
Director, Complete Communities
- Clyde Drayton**
Resilience Fellow
- Carol Haddock**
Director, Houston Public Works
- Laura Patiño**
Team Lead
Deputy Chief Resilience and Sustainability Officer
- Priya Zachariah**
Chief Resilience and Sustainability Office

- Marissa Aho**
Previous Chief Resilience Officer
(2019-2021)

CITY PARTNERS

- Washington Hospital Healthcare System:*
- Angus Cochran**
Chief, Community Support Services

CITY PARTNERS

- Jay Maddock**
Professor, Dept. of Environment & Occupational Health/School of Public Health, Chief Wellness Officer
Texas A&M University
- Earthea Nance**
(former) Associate Professor, Dept. of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy
Texas Southern University

- Ana Parras**
Co-Director
Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services
- Bridget Simon-Friedt**
Post-doctoral Fellow
Houston Methodist Hospital, Center for Outcomes Research

KANSAS CITY, MO

- Quinton Lucas**
Mayor
- Brian Platt**
City Manager
- Kyle Elliott**
Team Co-Lead
Division Manager
Long Range Planning & Preservation Division
- A.J. Hermann**
Mayor’s Aide / Mayor’s Office
- Brian Jackson**
Team Co-Lead
(former) Planner, City Planning & Development

- Frank Thompson**
Director of Health, KCMO Health Department

- Jennifer Tidwell**
Director, Housing & Community Development
- Jeff Williams**
Team Lead
Director, City Planning & Development
- John Wood**
(former) Assistant City Manager

CITY PARTNERS

- Sheri Gonzalez**
Vice President and Director of KC Rising
The Civic Council of Greater Kansas City
- Lauren Palmer**
Assistant Community Development Director
/Local Government Services Director
Mid-America Regional Council
- Emmet Pierson Jr.**
President & Chief Executive Officer
Community Builders

MILWAUKEE, WI

Tom Barrett
Mayor

Lafayette Crump
Commissioner of City Development

Marlaina Jackson
Interim Commissioner of Health Department

Kate Pawasarat
Community Analytics Analyst, Office of Equity

Nikki Purvis,
Team Co-Lead
Chief Equity Officer

Sharon Robinson,
Team Lead
Director of Administration

CITY PARTNERS

Nicole Angresano
Vice President, Community Impact
United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County

Johanna Jimenez
Program Manager, Take Root Wisconsin
Wisconsin Community Action Program Association

Raphael F. Ramos
Coordinator, Eviction Defense Project
Legal Action of Wisconsin

MISSOULA, MT

John Engen
Mayor

Dale Bickell
Chief Administrative Officer

Donna Gaukler
Team Co-Lead
Director, Missoula Parks and Recreation

Eran Pehan
Team Co-Lead
Director, Community Planning, Development and Innovation

Ashley Brittner Wells
Team Co-Lead
NLC JEDI Coordinator

CITY PARTNERS

All Nations Health Center

Skye McGinty
Executive Director

Amber Shaffer
Community Organizer

Missoula City-County Health Department:

D’Shane Barnett
Health Officer

Lisa Beczkiewicz**
Health Promotion Supervisor and Invest Health Missoula Team Leader

Sarah Garber
Coordinator for Health Equity

Missoula County

Jamar Galbreath
Equity Coordinator

Rozlyn Haley
JEDI Fellow

Missoula County Public Schools:

Rob Watson
Superintendent

Amy Shattuck
Federal Grants Director

Partnership Health Center

Laurie Francis
Executive Director

Leo John Bird
Senior Community Health Specialist, Equity & Anti-Racism

Zachary Clare-Salzler
Data Analyst and Reporting Coordinator

University of Montana

Jordynn Paz
Community Equity Initiative Associate
University of Montana

Kelly Webster
Chief of Staff
University of Montana

PLAINFIELD, NJ

Shep Brown
Team Lead
Director, Dept. of Health and Social Services

Brittany Claybrooks
Economic Development Project Manager

Rashara Fuller
Director, Dept. of Community Relations and Social Services, Plainfield Action Services

Sharon McGuire
Team Co-Lead
Program Development Specialist, Culture and Heritage Department of Health and Social Services

CITY PARTNERS

Juanita Ayala-Vargas
Vice President of Programs and Operations
United Way of Greater Union County

Julienne Cherry
Executive Director
Summit Medical Group Foundation

Wesley McWhite
Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission

Kerri Powell
Chief Executive Officer
Plainfield Health Services Corporation

SOUTH FULTON, GA

Tammi Saddler Jones
City Manager

Nikki Graham
Director, Human Services

Nathan Mai-Lombardo
Team Lead
(former) Planning and Zoning Administrator

Keith Meadows
Chief of Police

Christopher Pike
Team Lead
Director of Economic Development

Shayla Reed
Team Lead (former)
Director, Community Development & Regulatory Affairs

Don Toms
Assistant City Manager

CITY PARTNERS

Tsedey Betru
Just Opportunity Director
Partnership for Southern Equity

Christina Cummings
Vice President of Operations
Partnership for Southern Equity

Brian Green
Community Development Manager
Georgia Power

Jared Lombard
Senior Principal Planner
Atlanta Regional Commission

Monica Robinson
(retired) Director, Office of Performance
Management and Strategy, Environmental
Justice Program
Fulton County Board of Health

Andrew Smith
Principal Planner
Atlanta Regional Commission

Participating Expert Faculty and Partners

National League of Cities would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the following partners for their contributions made to the Cities of Opportunity Action Cohort

CONSILIENCE GROUP, LLC
(COO STRATEGIC PARTNER)

Traci Sampson
Managing Principal

SUCCESS MEASURES
(COO EVALUATION PARTNER)

Maggie Grieve
Vice President, Success Measures

Brooke Finn
Senior Vice President, Evaluation,
Leadership & Peer Learning, NeighborWorks
America

Linda Kahn
Manager, Communications & Marketing

Helen Moore
Project Associate, Equitable Evaluation

Jessica Anders Mulcahy
Director, Success Measures Philanthropic
Evaluation Strategies

Debra Dehab
Principal, Enquire Research (Consultant
Partner)

Elissa Schloesser
Visual Voice (Information Design Consultant
Partner)

MYSIDEWALK
(COO DATA PARTNER)

Brandon Gumm
Director of Solutions Development

Josh Boehm
Solution Architect

Alex Doller
Customer Success Manager

Kyle Kane
Account Executive – Partnerships, Growth
and Renewal

Drew Stiehl
Data Scientist

COO ALUMNI LEADERS

Bob Cowell
City Manager, City of Roanoke, VA

Kathi Thomas-Gibson
Director, Office of Community Services
City of Las Vegas, NV

Chris Parker
Director of Global and Population Health
and Research Assistant Professor
Georgia Health Policy Center

Michael Wallace
Legislative Director, Community &
Economic Development
National League of Cities

