



Cities Connecting Children to Nature

MAXIMIZE RESOURCES THROUGH COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

STRATEGY

Develop partnerships between city government and a group of community organizations in order to maximize resources and achieve shared goals to advance children's equitable access to nature in a city or region. These local or regional groups of organizations, often called collaboratives, join forces to achieve specific goals or a shared agenda. City governments can partner with these collaboratives to further achieve city, state and regional goals and maximize resources and efforts.

OPPORTUNITY

Organizations joining forces to create children and nature collaboratives that engage city agencies represents a rapidly developing field that has only begun to emerge. Examples from five [Cities Connecting Children to Nature](#) (CCCN) cities – Baltimore, MD; San Francisco, CA; Cincinnati, OH; and Austin and Houston, TX – show promise in how collaboratives can work with city leaders to enhance efforts to equitably connect children to the benefits of nature.

Children and nature collaboratives represent a powerful grassroots base largely composed of local nonprofits and business leaders from the outdoor, health and

education sectors. As strong champions, collaboratives play a key role in advocating for city involvement in implementing and sustaining equity-focused nature connection strategies.

KEY BENEFITS

With expertise in nature connection strategies and their benefits, children and nature collaboratives are uniquely positioned to make the case for the equitable access to nature and to support program implementation. Their position outside of city government affords them opportunities to advocate for policy changes and resource allocation, and to test new policies and programs that the city agencies alone would not have been able to achieve.

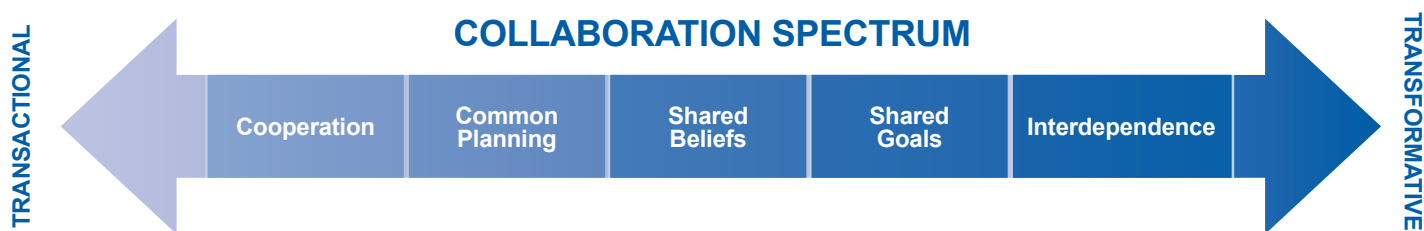
ROLES & ASSETS

WHAT COLLABORATION CAN LOOK LIKE

Partnerships between cities and collaboratives fall across a continuum ranging from general consultation to joint planning and implementation of shared goals and strategies. In some partnerships, such as in San Francisco, Austin, and Houston, Texas, there is even dedicated funding for a city position focused on partnership.

Successful partnership requires:

- cities to be receptive to community input,
- community leaders in the children and nature collaboratives to build the confidence and tools to properly advocate for progress,
- development of shared language, and
- where possible, formal agreements between the cities and collaboratives to clarify roles and responsibilities.



	CITY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES	CHILDREN & NATURE COLLABORATIVES
WHO <i>Target Audience</i>	Mayoral leadership, public libraries, parks and recreation division, health departments, sustainability offices, stormwater management agencies, office/department of early learning, equity and transportation.	Community leaders, school districts, and nonprofit organizations, and businesses from various sectors including outdoor and recreation, health, education, and sustainability.
WHY	Uniquely positioned to advance efforts at a systems level that include policies, budgets, city-level decision makers and municipal clout.	Bring staff capacity, knowledge of nature connection and its benefits, and ability to mobilize local organizations and elected officials, capacity to advance policies, and additional funding opportunities.
WHAT	<p>Open to community engagement and conversation</p> <p>Conduct landscape scans by coalescing and layering city data</p> <p>Convene agency leads and stakeholders</p> <p>Lead agency for coordinating implementation of citywide strategy for children's equitable access to nature</p> <p>Integrate nature connection into city policies, programs and experiences, and infrastructure</p>	<p>Build relationships for engaging residents and youth</p> <p>Navigate city government from the outside in to identify local champions</p> <p>Leverage grassroots momentum for bringing nature connection as a citywide strategy</p> <p>Advocate for policies and resource allocation</p> <p>Serve as a fiscal agent and apply for grant funding circumventing government bureaucracy</p> <p>Constitute working committees to support implementation of CCCN strategies</p>

EMERGING EXAMPLES

Local Level

San Francisco Children & Nature Collaborative

(SFCN) was founded in 2017 alongside the city's participation in the CCCN initiative and built upon existing movements such as the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBOR), which passed as a city resolution in 2014. San Francisco's COBOR recognized that "direct exposure to nature is a necessary component of a child's physical and emotional wellbeing, and cognitive development." The creation of the collaborative provided a structured mechanism to engage more than 30 government agencies, non-profit institutions, and community-based organizations in working towards a shared vision for advancing equitable access to nature for children. The collaborative is supported by a full-time director housed in the City's Parks and Recreation Division. They have three working groups, which meet every two months to plan and execute priority strategies, share best practices, collaborate, and learn from each other. Work groups focus on: nature connection design (placemaking), early childhood education, and community and youth engagement.

Greater Baltimore Children and Nature

Collaborative (GBCAN) is also led by the city's park and recreation division. Baltimore City Recreation and Parks recognizes the importance of nature connections to develop the health and wellbeing of children. By

adopting GBCAN, Baltimore Recreation and Parks embraces a collaborative spirit that honors the strengths of local stakeholders including engagement of park friend groups, pediatrics association, and natural history, environmental education, and youth serving organizations as well as facilitating workshops to raise awareness and build capacity for children's nature connection.

Statewide

Texas Children in Nature Network (TCiNN)

illustrates how a collaborative can help cities equitably connect children to nature. Initiated nearly twelve years ago, TCiNN has organized nine local/regional collaboratives with more than 600 partner organizations across the state. TCiNN sets a state-wide vision and agenda for nature connection, hosts an annual conference, creates Texas-focused resources, and connects resources and people across and within regions and cities. The grassroots momentum led three cities in Texas - Austin, Houston, and San Antonio to apply for and participate in the CCCN initiative with mayoral support and cooperation with multiple city agencies in each city. The three cities register Texas as the most substantial commitment in any one state. With funding from the Texas Department of Health Services via Texas Parks and Wildlife, TCiNN secured three Health and Nature Fellows who look at barriers to nature access, create responsive action plans to address the barriers, and making nature a public health strategy in the Dallas Fort Worth area, Houston, and

HOW TO ENGAGE

FIND RESOURCES

Explore the CCCN Resource Hub, www.childrenandnature.org/cccn offering a Municipal Action Guide, planning materials, and strategy tools.

GET CONNECTED

Sign up for the CCCN newsletter at www.childrenandnature.org/cccn and follow [#citykids2nature](https://twitter.com/citykids2nature).

Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) is an initiative of the National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network, made possible with support from The JPB Foundation. CCCN helps city leaders and their partners ensure equitable opportunities for children to play, learn and grow in nature, from urban parks and community gardens to the great outdoors. Find more planning resources at the [CCCN Resource Hub](http://www.childrenandnature.org/cccn).