

CITIES CONNECTING CHILDREN TO NATURE
City of Austin Implementation Plan
September 16, 2016





City of Austin

Steve Adler, Mayor

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August 29, 2016

Mr. Andrew O. Moore
Director, Youth & Young Adult Connections
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 550
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Moore,

I am writing to express my support for the City of Austin's Cities Connecting Children to Nature Implementation Plan. The extensive research and highly collaborative strategic planning process conducted by our Core Planning Team and six Working Groups ensures that children's equitable access to nature will be a top priority for the City of Austin and our partners.

The enthusiasm and commitment to this mission was readily apparent throughout the planning process. With representatives from my office and City Council, ten city departments, two school districts, the University of Texas, Dell Children's Medical School, and dozens of nonprofits, this initiative helped build and strengthen relationships across departments and sectors that had not existed previously.

I firmly believe that these partnerships and the collaborative efforts of the plan will help Austin achieve these long-term outcomes:

1. Every child has abundant & equitable access to nature at their home, neighborhood & school.
2. Every parent, health professional & teacher knows & understands the importance of access to nature for a child's healthy development. And every child considers outdoor play a top option for free time.
3. City codes & school curriculum are designed to allow & encourage kids to play outside in nature more frequently.
4. Austin is seen as an innovator & leader in the Children in Nature Movement.
5. Kids Choose nature

With a focus on greening school yards and creating a new network of school parks, Austin will be able to provide daily access to rich nature environments for tens of thousands of students across the city and strengthen communities with access to new park space. We look forward to the opportunity to contribute to this burgeoning national movement and build a relationship with the school district that is stronger than it has ever been.



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Furthermore participation in the CodeNEXT process and dedication to prioritizing nature access across department master plans bolsters key policy goals in my administration including:

1. Mobility – providing a multi-modal transportation network for families and children to get to their neighborhood school parks is a part of the proposed 2016 Bond election
2. Sustainability and climate resiliency – opportunity to build the environmental stewards of the future through “early and often” childhood connections.
3. Early childhood education - outdoor play builds strong bodies and imaginations and fits well with and reinforces preparation for academics, and
4. Equity and affordability - as Austin seeks to reduce residential segregation, ensuring access to nature for all children can serve as an effective indicator of what we want in every neighborhood.

My administration also endorses the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights resolution which will be brought before City Council in November. We will also help support the subsequent public awareness campaign surrounding issues of children’s healthy development as it relates to nature connection.

City of Austin leadership and representatives from key city departments will recommit to the Core Leadership Team to engage with and guide implementation over the next three years. Participating departments include The Mayor’s Office, City Council, Parks and Recreation Department, Office of Sustainability, Watershed Protection, Transportation, Public Works, Austin Water Utility, Resource Recovery, Health and Human Services and Planning and Zoning.

We look forward to continued collaboration and information sharing with National League of Cities, the Children & Nature Network, and the six cohort cities as we discover new and better ways for city leadership to institutionalize equitable nature access. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this planning initiative and look forward making our plan a reality for all children in Austin.

Sincerely,

Steve Adler

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to those individuals and organizations that provided financial and staff resources for Austin’s Cities Connecting Children to Nature strategic planning process

**Austin Parks Foundation
Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin
West Cave Outdoor Discovery Center**

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APPENDICES

Appendices can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/site/austinimplementationappendices/>



SECTION 1 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last decade Austin has gained considerable momentum by building a strong and holistic network of organizations, governmental departments, healthcare professionals, and educators dedicated to the idea that children who have regular access to the natural world are healthier, happier, and perform better in school. Austin is at a critical tipping point for success and innovation in this field as evidenced by:

- The Austin Independent School District has established a full-time Sustainability Manager and Outdoor Education Specialist and an Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee. In the 2016/2017 school year AISD will adopt a policy mandating that all elementary school students receive 30 minutes of unstructured outdoor playtime each day.
- The Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin (CiNCA) has over 40 member organizations and a full-time manager.
- The Parks and Recreation Department has begun to incorporate nature playscape elements into existing playgrounds as they are renovated.
- The newly formed Austin Area School Garden Collaborative has developed a system that allows school cafeterias to serve food grown by students in school gardens.

Historically Austin has battled systemic issues of equitability and residential segregation that have created major barriers to nature access for many children across the city. Austin’s Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) planning initiative views the issue of equitable nature access as a deeply complex social problem that no single policy, government department, organization, or program can solve on its own. Therefore, we adopted a Collective Impact approach to guide the creation of an implementation plan that contemplates sustained efforts of city leadership acting in concert across sectors to ensure that every child in Austin has abundant and equitable access to nature.

Austin’s CCCN Initiative established a Core Planning Team and six Working Groups with interdepartmental and cross-sectors members. Working Groups researched and identified major gaps, barriers, opportunities, and priorities across several domains, including access, policy, health, education, and programing. The Core Planning Team used this information to inform the strategic planning process and identify a backbone organization, common agenda, shared metrics, mutually reinforcing activities, and a sustainable communications system that will guide the implementation process over several years.

This planning process yielded the following long-term goals:

- Every child has abundant and equitable access to nature at their home, neighborhood, and school.
- Every parent, health professional, and teacher has been exposed to the importance of spending time in nature for a child’s healthy development. Every child considers outdoor play a top option in their free time.
- City codes and school curricula allow and encourage kids to play outside in nature more frequently.
- Austin is seen as an innovator and leader in the Children and Nature Movement.
- Kids choose nature.

To achieve these goals we conducted extensive research and mapping to identify areas of Austin with the largest gaps in nature equity. This informed our selection of the areas where priority implementation strategies will be focused.

Priority Strategies include:

- **Greening School Yards:** Creating a new network of “school parks”
- **Citywide Public Awareness Campaign:** Informing residents on the importance of regular nature access for overall healthy development
- **Program and Park Activation:** Creating a comprehensive nature-based program directory and aligning programs with available park space in neighborhoods of need
- **Policy Tracking:** Developing and proposing nature access policy initiatives for inclusion in city development code and department master plans

Over the next three years Austin’s Leadership Team will plan and execute these strategies with the help of community partners throughout Austin. Progress and success will be measured by a number of indicators and metrics chosen specifically for each strategy and assessed on a quarterly basis. Proposed metrics include number, frequency, and duration of children’s time spent outside in nature; measures of attitudinal change and restorative outcomes, policy implementation, and marketing impressions.

City and industry leadership are thoroughly energized as witnessed by the substantial participation and collaboration seen throughout the CCCN planning process. We are excited to carry this momentum into the implementation process and we look forward to continued collaboration and information sharing with the National League of Cities, the Children & Nature Network, and the cohort cities. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this planning initiative and look forward to transforming communities and providing rich nature access for all children in Austin.

SECTION 2 - COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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2A: CO-PRODUCTION WITH THE COMMUNITY

Based on a Collective Impact model, Austin’s CCCN planning process engaged over 40 representatives from multiple sectors and industries to collect data, establish a common agenda and shared metrics, and determine a backbone organization to sustain the process in the long-term¹. The Core Planning Team was made up of representatives from 10 City departments, Mayoral and City Council Member aides, Austin ISD, healthcare providers and hospitals, a state agency, and six nonprofit organizations². **The Core Planning Team** met 10 times (twice a month for four months) to participate in high-level strategic planning led by Mission Capital, a nonprofit that supports organizations in the social sector. As part of the Collective Impact planning model the Core Planning Team developed:

- A Shared Vision Statement³
- An initial Logic Model⁴
- An Implementation Strawman Plan (Timeline Overview, Major Activities Grid with proposed Common Agendas and Shared Metrics, and Pilot Incubation Project Model)⁵

Working Groups met three times (once a month) each to develop specific strategies in the following focus areas:

- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Developed the “Nature Equity” Score Map using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and created the Program Survey.
- **Education:** Identified nature-based gaps, barriers, policy initiatives, and priorities within the school system and helped cultivate relationships with AISD administration.
- **Nonprofit:** Identified gaps and barriers within the nonprofit community in getting children connected to nature and assisted in distributing the Program Survey.
- **Health:** Identified health policy initiatives that complemented the CCCN project and helped build relationships with the University of Texas School of Public Health.
- **Policy:** Developed the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights and honed policy tracking methods around CodeNEXT⁶ and Departmental Master Plans within the City.
- **Community Engagement:** Created and distributed the Community Survey, developed the focus group meeting structure and outline, and helped build relationships with community organizations and trusted leaders⁷.

1 Complete listing of Core Planning Team and Working Group meeting agendas and notes <https://sites.google.com/site/austincccn/>
 2 See Appendix 2 for list of Core Planning Team & Working Group Members and Project Participation Fact Sheet
 3 See Appendix 2 for Vision Statement
 4 See Appendix 2 for Initial Logic Model
 5 See Appendix 2 for Implementation Strawman Plan
 6 CodeNEXT is the new City of Austin initiative to revise the Land Development Code, which determines how land can be used throughout the city – including what can be built, where it can be built, and how much can (and cannot) be built.
 7 See Appendix 2 for list of Community Organization and Trusted Leader Meetings

2B: DATA POINT HIGHLIGHTS

Data Points: Demographics and Places

The Data and Gap Analysis Working Group designed an in-depth GIS Model that established a Nature Equity Score for each zip code in Austin. The GIS model analyzes eight nature factors and ranks them across a scale. The **model**⁸ included the following factors:

<p>Nature Score Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All public park land within the Austin City Limits • Park acreage and tree canopy • National Recreation and Parks Association park status • Trust for Public Land – land use definition 	<p>Potential for Impact Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median household income • Child population • Inverse tree canopy
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Nature Equity Scores: Nature Scores and Potential for Impact Scores were overlaid by zip code to reveal the biggest gaps in Nature Equity. These scores quantifiably identify three areas of Austin to focus the efforts of the Implementation Plan. These three focus areas had the highest Potential for Impact Scores with low to average Nature Scores across Austin:

<p>Focus Area 1 – Northeast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zip codes: 78758 & 78753 • PFI Score: 20 • Nature Score: 239 	<p>Focus Area 2 – South Austin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zip codes: 78744 & 78745 • PFI Score: 18 • Nature Score: 381 	<p>Focus Area 3 – East Side:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zip codes: 78702 & 78741 • PFI: 18 • Nature Score: 404
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The above GIS model data points clearly identified the areas of Austin with the most need for nature access. With this information we reached out to and built relationships with trusted leaders and organizations in those communities with the goal to share research and partner in community engagement activities.

Data Points: Partnerships and Collaborations

AISD (80,000+ students) and the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin (40+ member organizations and more than 60 individual teachers) have a long-term working relationship on such projects as AISD’s Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee, the CiNCA Leadership Team, and the Partnership for Childhood Wellness. This partnership has laid the groundwork for the CCCN initiative to impact tens of thousands of children by executing our School Park strategy citywide.

Additionally, our CCCN initiative will partner with Learn All the Time (LATT), Austin’s new out of school time network. LATT’s mission is to build a systematic approach to out-of-school time, increasing capacity, access, and community involvement through research, partnerships and information sharing. Furthermore, LATT is working regionally and will provide a means for CCCN to expand to other ISDs when appropriate and resources are available.

Data Points: Programs

Over **90 organizations responded to our “CCCN Program Survey”**⁹ that was designed to determine the breadth of nature-based programming offered in Austin by nonprofit organizations, schools, the City of Austin, and private industry. This survey data will be the basis of a comprehensive directory that will help align programs to better serve nature-deficient elementary school yards.

⁸ GIS Model Link: <http://austin.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=f77ea201c8d04425a1942f5e5f234a6c>
⁹ See Appendix 2 for Program Survey Template and Response Report

Data Points: Baseline Policy Scan

City Policy

CodeNEXT is a comprehensive revision of Austin’s Land Development Code. The Policy Working Group participated in the public review stage of CodeNEXT to propose code provisions that will prioritize nature access for children. To date the Policy Working Group has reviewed and submitted public comment on two Code Prescription Papers¹⁰. Prescription Papers and public comment will be used when writing code language that will be presented to City Council for adoption in 2017. The CCCN Core Leadership Team will continue to participate in the CodeNEXT process and communicate with code writers to ensure, where possible, code language reinforces equitable nature access across Austin.

The CCCN team will also explore department Master Plans and assess how priorities in each departmental plan might advance or complement the CCCN Initiative. Master Plans are updated and revised on a regular basis, affording the CCCN team the opportunity to track and imbed policy and actionable goals for children’s access to nature. The Policy Working Group has created a CodeNEXT and Master Plan Tracking Grid to facilitate ongoing work and communications around these policy opportunities. *See section 3B for detailed information about the grid and tracking/communication process.*

Education Policy

The Core Planning Team reviewed the existing Shared Ownership Agreement between AISD and the City’s Parks and Recreation Department. This agreement covers 25 AISD campuses and provides the opportunity to institutionalize green schoolyard practices on school campuses that will ultimately serve dual functions as community park space. *See details of this policy initiative in section 3A.* AISD’s Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee is developing a districtwide Sustainability Master Plan for the 2016/2017 school year. This plan aligns with the CCCN Initiative and will help mandate nature access across the district.

Health Policy

In 2017 the City’s Health and Human Services Department will update its Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan. This provides an opportunity for the CCCN Core Leadership Team to institutionalize nature access needs within that department.

Data Points: Community Survey and Focus Groups

The Community Survey is an eleven-question survey that was distributed electronically and physically through NextDoor, Parks Department social media, partner organization’s newsletters, YMCA and Parks Department summer camps, and citywide canvassing. In total, 819 surveys were completed. *See the full set of Community Survey materials and results in Appendix 2¹¹.* The most **compelling data points** related to:

Biggest Barriers to Nature:

- Too hot outside in the summer – 61%
- Lack of Time – 29%
- Lack of parks nearby – 13%
- Parks nearby are not very nice – 12%

Favorite spaces to engage in Nature

- Lake, Creek, River, or Woods – 46%
- Park near their home – 34%
- Their yard – 30%
- Swimming pool – 29%

Focus Groups were conducted in each of the three Focus Areas as an opportunity to engage in a conversation with a small group of residents around the issue of “children in nature”. Attendees were invited through a combination of community organization networks and Parks Department outreach. *See Focus Group materials and compiled highlights and trends in Appendix 2¹².* The **key data points** were:

¹⁰ See Appendix 2 for recommendations submitted for Mobility and Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription Papers
¹¹ Community Survey Templates (English and Spanish), Community Survey Response Data by Zip Code
¹² Focus Group Structure and Outline, Focus Group Flyers, Focus Group Comparative Grid

- **Accessibility:** Desire for more hiking and bike trails in their neighborhoods and improved sidewalks to connect to parks.
- **Amenities:** Desire for diverse and engaging activities for kids of all ages (including teenagers) at parks.
- **Communications:** Need an easier way to get information about the parks and natural spaces near by.

The Community Engagement Working Group also partnered with **Velocity Skillpoint Alliance**, an organization that builds partnerships among industry, education, and the community, leading to college and career success for Central Texans, while meeting employers’ needs for a qualified workforce. Through their Velocity: High School STEM Internship Program, we worked with a group of 20 students from Reagan High School who spent six weeks researching and developing solutions to the issue “How can we connect more children to nature more equitably?”. The students collected data and created a **comprehensive plan**¹³ that was presented to CCCN representatives and their peers on August 10th.¹⁴

SECTION 3 - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

3A(i): PRIMARY STRATEGY DESCRIPTION

The primary implementation strategy for the CCCN Project in Austin is a Green School Parks Initiative that will be launched with a Pilot Incubation Project on an elementary school campus. Schools provide the only public land in the community specifically designated for the benefit of children. From the Pilot Incubation Project we will develop a Green School Park model that can be replicated on all school campuses.

Strategy Goal: The goal of the Green School Parks Initiative will be to create nature-rich environments on school campuses in areas of Austin with low Nature Equity Scores. These School Parks will serve as a natural outdoor space for students, providing garden-based education and school-based nature play as a means to integrate nature experiences into school curriculum. The school parks will also serve the surrounding community during out-of-school time hours, creating rich nature environments in areas of Austin that are park deficient and lacking in nature access.

Strategy Lead and Staffing: The Parks and Recreation Department will hire a dedicated Implementation Plan Manager to lead and staff strategy implementation.

Moving Key Indicator: Strategies to ensure more children are connecting to nature through School Parks include:

- Creating new Green School Park space
- Elevating the value of school parks and building the Parks Department’s working relationship with AISD
- Strengthening existing Shared Ownership Agreements to assist with current and future scaling of the project
- Training teachers to integrate nature into curriculum
- Aligning nature-based out-of-school time programming for the campus
- Building communities around park space

School Selection: One school will be selected for the Pilot Incubation Project during the first year of implementation. Selection will be based on the following criteria:

- The school must be within the boundaries of one of the three Focus Areas determined by our GIS model and the calculated Nature Equity Score
- The school must be included in the existing City-AISD Shared Ownership Agreement
- The school’s administration, PTA, and Campus Advisory Council must express an active interest in participating and supporting the work of the project
- There must be clear support and engagement within the school and from the surrounding community

¹³ *Velocity Skillpoint Alliance Presentation <https://prezi.com/bhbkaskhkuca/natures-alliance-2016/>*
¹⁴ *See Appendix 2 for Velocity Skillpoint Alliance Student Data Collection and CCCN RFP*

The top three candidates for the pilot school are Wooldridge Elementary School, Barrington Elementary School, and Cook Elementary School, all within Focus Area 1. Project leaders will interview the Principals and Parent Support Specialists at each school to determine interest and capacity to succeed. The two schools that are not selected for the Pilot Project will serve as control schools against which to measure data from the selected school. Our goal is to execute the Green School Park Model on the control school campuses in years two and three of implementation so that every school will have the opportunity to integrate nature on their campus.

Partnerships and Resources: Once the pilot school is selected, we will work with school administration, teachers, parents, the PTA, and the surrounding community to develop a plan for how the school can green their school yard and implement curriculum to get more students outside and connected to nature. The Parks Department and the Implementation Plan Manager will oversee management of the pilot project with the following partners:

- Dr. Alfred McAlister with the University of Texas School of Public Health has expressed great interest in partnering in the project to provide scientific data collection and monitoring as part of a study with the school.¹⁵
- The National Park Service has offered to facilitate community meetings and design charrettes.
- OLE! Texas¹⁶ in partnership with the Natural Learning Institute will provide an online training course for Parks Department landscape architects on best practices for designing outdoor learning environments for children 0-5.
- The CiNCA will facilitate communication between nonprofit partners, The Environmental Stewardship Advisory Council, The Austin Area School Garden Collaborative, and the Community Collaborative for Child Health as well as manage the Program Directory to activate out of school time programming on the campus.

3A(ii): STRATEGY RATIONALE: Trends/Assets/Gaps

Nature Gap: Barriers to Connecting to Nature. Community feedback from conversations, focus groups, and surveys reveals **two main barriers** to kids connecting to nature: **safety** in parks and **lack of access to nearby park space**. Transforming school yards will physically and perceptually create a “park” where parents already feel comfortable taking their children, essentially creating new, safe park space in an area of high need.

Location Selection: Of the three focus areas Rundberg has the highest nature deficit score and is at the end of a three-year federal grant, The Restore Rundberg Revitalization Project, which implemented innovative crime solutions and complementary social services in the area. The project has made strides in revitalizing these neighborhoods but, with the grant ending in September 2016, there is an opportunity to build upon this momentum in the Rundberg community.

Trend: Shared Ownership. A key project strategy is to take advantage of the existing Shared Ownership Agreement between the Parks and Recreation Department and AISD. Our goal is to establish a more collaborative working relationship between the two sectors and build community by promoting use of jointly owned school parks.

Assets: Partnerships. Existing and potential partnerships also present opportunities that informed our strategy. Key City of Austin partners and collaborators include AISD, the University of Texas, and a number of nonprofit organizations (e.g. YMCA, Austin Parks Foundation, Keep Austin Beautiful.)

3A(iii): STRATEGY SUPPORTS

Austin’s Parks and Recreation Department will be the “backbone organization” for sustaining the project long-term. It will hire a position to manage the Implementation Plan and oversee the Pilot Project. This staff person will manage the timeline, action items, communications, planning project partner meetings, and provide project updates.

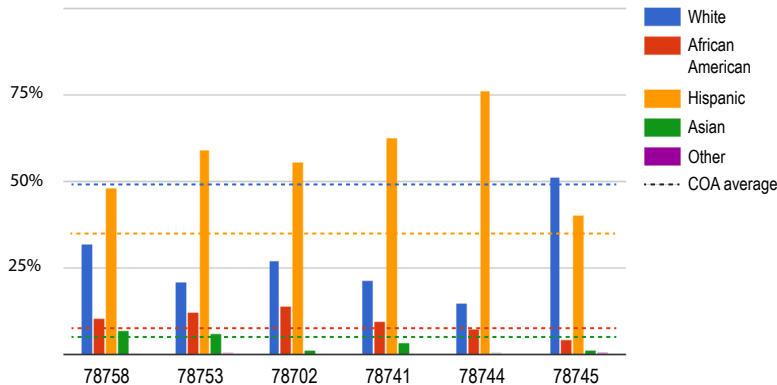
¹⁵ See Appendix 3 for Dr. McAlister’s Research Project Notes

¹⁶ OLE! Texas is a multidisciplinary intervention to promote early childhood health through improving the outdoor learning environment (OLE) at childcare facilities for children 0-5. OLE! Texas is supported by the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section of the Texas Department of State Health Services and Center for Disease Control and implemented through a statewide project leadership team with the Natural Learning Initiative and the National Wildlife Federation.

The UT School of Public Health has committed to provide data collection and analysis to support the project. The project will be a model that can be implemented on other campuses, not only elementary schools, but also pre-school, middle school, and high school campuses.

3A(iv): EQUITY GAINS

Our strategies are designed to reach and impact a significant number of low-income families and children of color. The six focus area zip codes are more racially diverse and have a lower average income when compared to City averages. In total, these six zip codes represent 28% of the city’s child population, or 78,684 children.



- **By October 31, 2017** the newly adopted Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights will serve the 266,000+ children in Austin. The Green School Parks pilot project will serve 550-650 elementary students and the surrounding community.
- **By the end of the first 36 months of implementation** we plan to have completed our public outreach campaign to achieve 2,000,000+ impressions through radio, TV, and online marketing to a target audience of parents (ages 25-45) and children (ages 10-17). The marketing campaign will be launched citywide with particular presence in the six focus area zip codes.
- **Over five years** we expect to have implemented our pilot project model on nine campuses serving approximately 6,000 elementary students in the underserved focus areas. Additionally, within the context of the overall plan, we will have completed our public policy and public awareness campaign across the city.

3A(v): ASSESSMENT METHODS

The CCCN Core Leadership Team and Implementation Plan Manager will use a measurement framework to understand baseline conditions and the success of the implementation plan strategies within Austin. The Austin Measurement Framework¹⁷ is divided into four categories: Basic Common Measures (also measured by CCCN cohort cities), Advanced Measures, Green Infrastructure Measures, and Potential for Kids to Engage with Nature (also measured by CCCN cohort cities). The Advanced Measures and Green Infrastructure measures will build upon the data collected through the Program Survey and nature gap analysis in the planning phase.

In conjunction with Austin’s Measurement Framework, the UT school of Public Health will create their own set of indicators and metrics for the study that will be tracked at the pilot school and two control schools. These will include both (1) observational measures of green spaces in which the numbers of visitors, duration of visits, and activities are systematically recorded, and (2) self-report surveys of students to assess the frequency and duration of visits to natural green spaces, activities there, and the receipt of restorative outcomes. In recent pilot research in Texas a brief scale for measuring these restorative outcomes has demonstrated both reliability and validity (McAlister, et al., 2016), and this scale will be used in measuring our project’s immediate benefits of exposure to nature, and recreation within nature¹⁸.

¹⁷ See Appendix 3 for full account of Austin’s Measurement Framework
¹⁸ See Appendix 3 for Dr. McAlister’s Dimensions of Natural Restorative Outcomes

3B(i): ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES DOMAINS OF ACTION

The following key additional strategies are part of the “Major Activities Grid” which outlines high-level focus areas and goals of the Implementation Strategy moving forward¹⁹:

1. Citywide Public Awareness and Marketing Campaign:

A key finding of our strategic planning process and community outreach efforts is that there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding of the benefits to children who have regular interaction with nature. We will plan and execute a citywide public awareness campaign to reinforce an understanding of the importance of unstructured play in nature with the ultimate goal to change attitudes and behavior. We will model marketing efforts after state-wide campaigns like the anti-smoking efforts led by Dr. Alfred McAlister and Dr. Philip Huang in 2001 in Jefferson County in Southeast Texas and the Don’t Mess with Texas campaign.

Additionally, we heard common themes from residents that they are rarely aware of what is available to them in their neighborhoods to connect with the outdoors. The public awareness campaign would include targeted communications to neighborhoods on what they can do within one-quarter to one-half mile of their home to access parks and nature resources.

We had preliminary meetings with EnviroMedia and Incite Capabilities²⁰ to understand what it would take to plan and launch such a campaign. We will also leverage existing marketing resources within the Parks Department and other city departments to create and fund the campaign. **The first year of implementation will be dedicated to planning and fundraising for the campaign. The second year of implementation will be devoted to execution and data tracking.**

To bolster marketing efforts and create a higher profile for the project, the CCCN Policy Working Group has created a Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights²¹ that will be brought as a resolution to Austin City Council in November 2016. This resolution will serve to provide public recognition of the CCCN Project and create public awareness around the Children and Nature mission. We have also created a pledge form that organizations, companies, and individuals can sign to publicly support the resolution.

2. Program and Park Activation:

Austin has a rich network of collaborative environmental organizations that provide nature-based programs for youth. Program strategies for the CCCN initiative focus on developing a cohesive network of nature-based program providers, activating programs in underutilized parks, and ensuring nature curriculum is prioritized within Austin’s out of school time network, Learn All the Time.

Program Directory: The Program Directory (*outlined in section 2B Programs*) will give the initiative a comprehensive understanding of what and where programs are offered in Austin and will act as a baseline to start collecting data and tracking metrics.

Learn All the Time (LATT): LATT is the newly formed out-of-school time network for Austin and surrounding cities. The CCCN Core Leadership Team will:

- Work with LATT to provide nature-based programming information for quality assessments and best practices
- Build a relationship between CiNCA and LATT
- Present at the Fall LATT Conference
- Share information for membership development within LATT
- Share data collection and metric assessment methods

¹⁹ See Appendix 3 for Major Activities Grid (page 2 of the Implementation Strawman Plan)

²⁰ See Appendix 3 for Incite Capabilities Presentation

²¹ See Appendix 3 for Children’s Outdoor Bill of Right Poster, Resolution, and Pledge Form

Park Activation: Based on feedback about the lack of programming that exists within our focus areas, the Parks and Recreation Department will begin scheduling park activities this fall, initially at parks adjacent to metro recreation centers. Programming will include extended hours, a Loose Parts trailer, and Park Ranger interpretive hikes. The CCCN Team will work with community organizations in the focus areas to identify program gaps and align resources to implement nature-based programming on school campuses and in existing parks.

3. CodeNEXT and Master Plan Tracking:

The CodeNEXT and Master Plan Tracking Grid²² is a communications system designed to track policy initiatives across city departments in order to develop and imbed policy that encourages nature access across city agencies. The Implementation Plan Manager will schedule quarterly phone calls and/or meetings with the appropriate department contacts to assess progress and changes to applicable components of each plan or code document. Within six key city departments (Parks and Recreation, Office of Sustainability, Watershed Protection, Transportation, Public Works, Austin Water Utility, Resource Recovery, Health and Human Services, and Planning and Zoning) we will identify relevant plans, a contact person, revision timeline, and related goals.

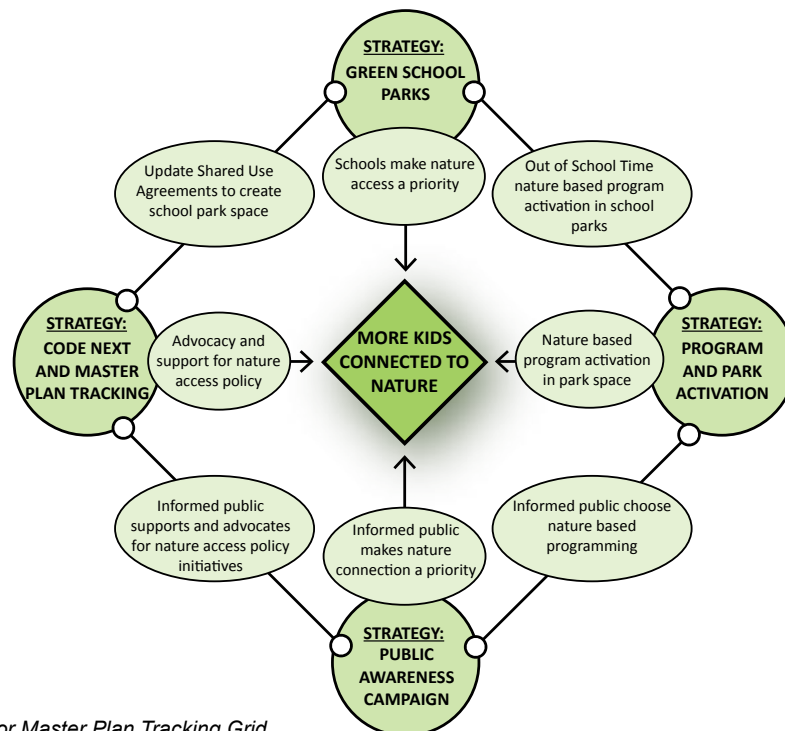
Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Department will revise its Master Plan beginning in 2017. Conversations are already underway for this process and the CCCN Core Leadership Team will have the opportunity to set and imbed goals with a focus on creating equitable access to nature for all children in Austin.

3B(ii). ACTIVITY BY YEAR

Fundraising will be a large part of our extended efforts for long-term planning. We will seek funding for the public awareness campaign, the pilot project, and its expansion over time. We have had preliminary conversations with the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the St. David’s Foundation about potential partnerships and how the CCCN project can fit into their long-term funding goals.

3C: INTERCONNECTIONS ACROSS STRATEGIES

The following graphic demonstrates how project strategies will interconnect and mutually support our goal to connect more kids to nature:



22 See Appendix 3 for Master Plan Tracking Grid

SECTION 4 – ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

4A: ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK APPROACH

Austin’s CCCN Team modeled the planning process around a Collective Impact framework. In the implementation phase we will continue to use the Collective Impact framework to guide strategy and planning efforts. The Planning Team’s Major Activities Grid²³ consolidates and details the following core features of our Collective Impact framework:

- **Common Agenda:** Refine common agendas over the first 18 months of Implementation (see grid).
- **Shared Measuring System:** Refine metrics using guidelines set out by the National League of Cities²⁴.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** The Major Activities Grid will act as a strategy guide to build and refine goals and activities.
- **Continuous Communication:** The Implementation Plan Manager will coordinate partner communications.
- **Backbone Organization.** Austin’s Parks and Recreation Department will be the project’s backbone organization.

To inform our Collective Impact model and the creation of the Major Activities Grid, the Planning Team also created a Logic Model to understand how the resources we have within the City and across sectors can ultimately produce measurable activities and change towards our desired outcomes.

Sample of Logic Model²⁵

Cities Connecting Children to Nature Implementation Plan Logic Model <i>For a world in which all children play and learn and grow with nature in their everyday lives.</i>				
	Inputs/Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
City of Austin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Range Plan updated • Department master plans (CHA, CHIP, etc.) Imagine Austin/CodeNext • Full time staff person lead Marketing plan Leadership Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass COBOR Data collection/analysis of green space • Nature deficiency score • Increase trails • Activate park spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of parks and green spaces by children and families • CCCN Project creates funding opportunities for PARD • Higher use of parks • Higher support of funding for parks and natural spaces • Increased multi-partner planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthier Families & Communities & Higher Quality of Life • Policies and planning reflect increase prioritization of use of parks and green spaces.

The Core Leadership Team will meet quarterly to assess progress towards our objectives and pre-determined timeline (detailed in Section 5.)

4B: MILESTONES AND TARGETS

Austin’s CCCN Project has the following Year One Milestones:

- Hire Implementation Plan Manger
- Pass Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights Resolution with City Council
- Identify Pilot Project School
- Finalize Green School Park Plan with the school and surrounding community
- Complete build out of the Green School Park
- Review and revise (where appropriate) the Shared Ownership Agreement with AISD

Key Milestones for outcomes extending beyond year one are:

- Apply for grants to fund project expansion and the Public Awareness Marketing Campaign
- Provide input to Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan

²³ See Appendix 3 #19 for Major Activities Grid and overview of common agendas, possible metrics, and major activities/goals

²⁴ See Appendix 3 #17 for Austin’s Measurement Framework

²⁵ See Appendix 4 for full Logic Model

SECTION 5 - TIMELINE AND GANTT CHART²⁶

TASK	START DATE	FINISH DATE	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
Policy			
Pass Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights	10/1/16	11/1/16	CCCN Manager & Policy Working Group
CCCN Input to PARD Long Range Plan	10/1/16	5/31/17	CCCN Manager & Policy Working Group
CCCN Input to Biophilic Cities Application	1/1/17	3/31/17	CCCN Project Manager
Ongoing Input to COA Dept. Master Plans	10/1/16	6/30/19	CCCN Manager & Policy Working Group
Revamp Shared Ownership Agreements with AISD	1/1/17	9/1/17	PARD & AISD & Policy Working Group
CCCN Input to AISD Sustainability Plan	10/1/16	6/30/17	AISD & CCCN Policy Working Group
CCCN Input to CHA/CHIP Health Plan update	10/1/16	6/30/17	CCCN Health & Policy Working Groups
Support NGO & Community Advocacy re. CCCN Plan Goals	10/1/16	6/30/19	CCCN Manager/Core Team/Working Groups
Leadership			
Hire FTE Project Manager for CCCN Plan	10/1/16	11/30/16	PARD & CCCN Project Manager
Execute Cross-Dept. CCCN Communicaitaion via Master Plan Tracking	11/1/16	12/31/16	CCCN Project Manager
Scope Public Awareness Campaign / Produce RFP	1/1/17	12/31/17	CCCN Project Manager & Marketing Firm
Execute Public Awareness Campaign	1/1/18	12/31/18	CCCN Project Manager & Marketing Firm
Recruit/Manage New Leadership Committee	10/1/16	6/30/19	CCCN Project Manager
Build Trusted Leader/Youth relationships	10/1/16	6/30/18	CCCN Project Manager& Nonprofit Partners
CCCN Rep on AISD Student Health Council	10/1/16	6/30/19	CCCN Project Manager or Policy Group
CCCN Rep on Health Equity Policy Council	10/1/16	6/30/19	CCCN Project Manager or Policy Group
Programming			
Annual Program Survey updated & distributed	3/31/17	6/30/17	CCCN Project Manager
Create of Program Directory	10/1/16	1/1/17	CCCN Project Manager& CINCA
Cont. Program Alignment & Partnership Bldg.	10/1/16	6/30/19	CCCN Manager/Core Team/Working Groups
Develop Outdoor Teacher Training Program	3/31/17	9/1/17	CCCN Manager & Educ. Working Group
Partner w/ Out of School Time Network "LATT"	11/1/16	6/30/17	CCCN Project Manager
Community Engagement re. School Parks	1/1/17	5/31/17	CCCN Project Manager & School Parks Group
Places & Access			
Nature Equity GIS Scoring System improved and mapped annually	10/1/16	6/30/17	CCCN Manager & GIS Data Working Group
Support Early Child. to Increase Green Space	1/1/17	6/30/19	CCCN Project Manager
Support School Gardens w/ Sustain. Office	1/1/17	12/31/17	CCCN Project Manager & School Parks Group
Support Built Environ. Initiatives w/ HHS	11/1/16	6/30/19	CCCN Project Manager & Health Group
Green School Yard Project			
Vet & ID Pilot and Control Schools	9/1/16	10/1/16	CCCN Project Manager
Form Pilot Project Committee	10/1/16	11/1/16	CCCN Project Manager & Pilot Project Committee
Baseline Data Collection with UTSPF	10/1/16	11/1/16	UTSPH
Create School Park Plan with School & Community	11/1/16	12/15/16	CCCN Project Manager & Pilot Project Committee
Execute School Park Plan	1/1/17	5/31/17	CCCN Project Manager & Pilot Project Committee
Implement School Park Teacher Training	1/1/17	5/31/17	CCCN Project Manager & Pilot Project Committee
Asses & Retool School Park Model	5/31/17	8/31/17	CCCN Project Manager & Pilot Project Committee
Gather post project data	5/31/17	12/15/17	UTSPH
Expand model to school #2	5/31/17	5/31/18	CCCN Project Manager & Pilot Project Committee

²⁶ See Appendix 5 for Timeline with Gantt Chart

SECTION 6 - CAPACITY TO SUCCEED

6A: STAFF LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

Staff: The Parks and Recreation Department played a major leadership role in the project's planning phase. The department has committed to assigning a dedicated employee to manage the CCCN Implementation Plan over the next three years. The position will be funded in the first year by additional pass-through funding from the grant and from Capital Improvement Projects funding. Department leadership will roll this position into the 2018 budget for years two and three.

Operational/Leadership Structure:

CCCN's Implementation Phase leadership structure will be similar to the Planning Phase leadership structure. Parks Director, Sara Hensley, will ask each department to recommit a representative to the Core Leadership Team and invitations will be sent to cross-sector partners to commit to serve on the Executive Committee and/or Core Leadership Team.

- **Executive Committee:** Comprised of high-level directors and decision makers, this group will serve the Core Leadership team in a strategic and advisory capacity. They will be invited to participate in Core Leadership Team meetings but will not be required to attend all meetings.
- **Core Leadership Team:** This group will meet quarterly to define strategy, goals, action items, assess progress, and represent their department and industry as it relates to children and nature. This team will be made up of representatives from:
 - o Key City departments
 - o Key nonprofit organizations
 - o Health sector
 - o AISD and other ISDs in the Austin area
 - o Focus area City Council districts
 - o Trusted leaders
- **Pilot Incubation Project Committee:** This committee will be an extension of the Core Leadership Team and will include key players from the selected pilot school including the parent support specialist, Principal, and PTA, as well as UT School of Public Health and other community partners.

6B: PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHS, CAPACITY, AND PERFORMANCE

Our planning process was designed to encourage a high level of interdepartmental and cross-sector collaboration and partnership. In particular, the community engagement phase of planning allowed the CCCN Planning Team to build relationships with a number of key community partners who will be vital to our successful implementation. **Notably, representatives of the Mayor's office and several City Council members were actively involved in the planning phase.** Our elected leaders support the project and see it as a component to larger policy initiatives around equity, sustainability, and mobility that are essential to Austin's long-term vision.

The Parks and Recreation Department will be able to count on the continued support of our CCCN Planning partners: representatives of elected officials, AISD, Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin, Westcave Preserve, UT School of Public Health, Austin/Travis County Health Department, COA Watershed Protection Department, COA Sustainability Office, National Wildlife Federation, United Way, Sustainable Food Center, Dell Children's Hospital, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Our previous working relationships with these partners, based on our common agendas and their consistent participation and support during our CCCN planning process, demonstrates their commitment and capacity to execute on our CCCN plan going forward. Already our community has benefitted from a more strategic alignment of many mutually reinforcing activities that are already being performed by these large and impactful organizations.

The project will also engage partner organizations that share the CCCN goals. These groups include Latino Healthcare Forum, Austin Voices Family Resource Centers, Restore Rundberg Coalition, YMCA – Let's Move Outside Campaign, Learn All the Time, and the U.S. National Parks Service. These new partners are representative of cross-sector groups that will extend our reach and strengthen capacity.

6C: SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Full-time Staff:

- **The Parks and Recreation Department’s** commitment to staff the project is key to project sustainability. This position establishes the Parks Department as the backbone organization for the project. Having a person with the ability to manage all the moving pieces and understand the interconnectivity of all involved parties and partners will be essential to maintaining momentum and achieving long-term project success.
- **AISD:** The full-time Sustainability Manager and Outdoor Education Specialist will contribute ongoing support and resources for our green school park project
- **CiNCA:** CiNCA has a full-time Manager who will build and sustain relationships among nongovernmental organizations.

Master Plan Tracking: Working interdepartmentally within the City to understand and leverage master plans creates an opportunity for the CCCN Team to prioritize nature access and equity within long-term planning and department policy.

Fundraising: A major milestone within the first year of Implementation is to identify funders to partner in the Public Awareness and Marketing Campaign and eventual expansion of the Pilot Project.

Pilot Project Model: The goal in embarking on the Pilot Incubation Project is to develop a replicable model for all schools to use to improve nature access on school grounds, implement beneficial provisions of the City-AISD Shared Ownership Agreement, and build community. This model is designed to be scaled across the district.

Community Leaders’ Commitment: The broad-based CCCN Executive Committee will strengthen our capacity to succeed by elevating the value of green schoolyards to decision-makers citywide. Additionally, these key community leaders can immediately help increase awareness of our CCCN Plan by supporting Austin’s Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights. Their involvement will also work to systematically connect and focus efforts going on now to green schoolyards across Austin, thus leveraging resources and vastly improving scalability.

SECTION 7 - RISKS AND CHALLENGES

The Collective Impact planning model has the inherent challenge of bringing a large and diverse set of stakeholders together around a central objective. With such a wide ranging set of stakeholders (over 75 people and 40 organization have been at the table) it will be time consuming and an ongoing challenge to maintain a common agenda, stay focused on the main objective, and maintain the long-term commitment of our Core Leadership Team through three years of implementation.

Staff and team leadership will need to continually reassess and realign the Implementation Plan when planning and execution go off course. By scheduling only quarterly meetings, we have tried to be mindful of the time commitment of other city departments and organizations with complex operations. The Implementation Plan Manager will monitor the project’s time demands on busy people.

There is also a risk in creating a priority strategy centered on a school district that is a large bureaucracy apart from the city. However, we have been strategic in building relationships and involving AISD staff, administration, executives, and volunteers throughout the planning process in order to establish commitment to our goals at all levels. We feel that the largest impact for nature access and connection will be made on school campuses. In order to realize that impact we are committed to building a stronger relationship between the City and AISD.

SECTION 8 – PROJECT BUDGET

The following budget outlines how the CCCN Implementation Plan will utilize the initial \$50,000 of pass-through funding and the potential expenses for an additional \$40,000 in funding. The budget also includes estimated in kind contributions from the City of Austin and our partner organizations.

DOMAINS OF ACTION	CCCN EXPENSE ITEMS Q4 2016 - Q3 2017	\$50,000 BUDGET	\$40,000 BUDGET	COMBINED \$90,000 BUDGET	Estimated Inkind PARD / COA Contribution	Inkind NGO Partner Contribution	12 Month Schedule
Policy							
	"Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights" - Awareness Campaign & Collateral	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	Q4 2016
	Shared Ownership Best Practice Consult.	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	Q4 2016
	NGO Advocacy & Tools	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	Q1 2017
Access							
	Pilot N'hood School Parks Equitable Awareness, Access & Activation	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00	Q2 2017
	"Green Schoolyards Best Practices - Virtual Summit"	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	Q1 2017
	Incubator Project - Design Diagram	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$4,000.00	Q2 2017
	Incubator Project - Nature Element(s)	\$8,000.00	\$7,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00	Q3 2017
Programs							
	"Outdoor Program Provider Directory" printing & distribution	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	Q1 2017
	"Outdoor Teacher Guidebook" - online training module	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$3,000.00	Q3 2017
	Elem. Schools w/ Shared Ownership - Inventory by Master Naturalists	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$4,000.00	Q1 2017
	Community Engagement - Pilot Neighborhoods	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$4,000.00	Q4 2016
Leadership & Communication							
	CCCN Implementation Plan Manager (matched by PARD for 2016 - 2017)	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$10,000.00	Q4 2016
	Mission Capital - Collective Impact Common Agenda & Communication Plan	\$3,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	Q1 2017
	CCCN Marketing Campaign design, scoping and RFQ/RFP	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	Q1 2017
	Early Childhood and Health Awareness Campaigns, scoping and RFQ/RFP	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	Q1 2017
	C&NN 2017 Int'l Conference Registration, Lodging & Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	Q2 2017
	Youth Engagement & Leadership Training	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$4,000.00	Q3 2017
Metrics							
	"Nature Equity" GIS Mapping system technical assistance	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$2,000.00	Q1 2017
	UTSPF Guided Research on physical, cognitive, mental improvement. Grad. students research and full report	\$5,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	Q4 2016
SUB - TOTALS		\$50,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$90,000.00	\$59,000.00	\$75,000.00	
GRAND TOTAL		\$224,000.00					

SECTION 9 - COMMITMENT TO SHARED LEARNING AND LESSONS FROM PLANNING PHASE

9A: Assessment and documentation of progress, impact, and lessons

Within our main strategies we will establish baseline metrics to measure number, duration, frequency, and attitude change about nature play and learning through a combination of baseline data collection and surveying. In some cases data will be collected and shared by project partners (Example: Green School Park Project and UT School of Public Health). In other cases hired consultants will report data collection (Example: Public Awareness Campaign and Incite Capabilities). The Implementation Plan Manager will track some data internally, including progress on policy and code work within city departments and development of the Nature-Based Program Directory. The Implementation Plan Manager and Parks Department staff will produce an annual progress report for presentation to the CCCN Core Leadership Team, Parks Department Executive Team, and elected officials.

9B: Sharing emerging lessons with others in the cohort during the planning phase.

During the planning process we shared details of how we created the Nature Equity Score GIS Model with the cohort cities. We also shared our Program Survey questions and provided metrics that Dr. Alfred McAlister of UT School of Public Health shared with the Austin planning team to inform the national metrics framework conversation.

9C: Learned from technical assistance or peer learning opportunities during the planning phase.

We hired our consultants, Mission Capital, to help lead us through the Collective Impact Planning Model. Mission Capital has extensive experience conducting full scale Collective Impact Projects and has helped us modify the model given our time restrictions. Additionally, we used Louisville’s Community Survey as a model for our Community Survey.

9D: A lesson learned from the planning phase that would benefit other communities.

We learned that every city has the capacity to build a Nature Equity Score using existing GIS information. We would advise the other cities to begin the community engagement process as early as possible. Cities will also benefit from meeting with as many organizations and community leaders as possible to help build their network.

9E: Provide recommendations or requests for TA support during implementation phase.

The Austin CCCN Team would benefit from assistance relating to Green School Garden Initiatives and how to work with the existing City-AISD Shared Ownership Agreement to accomplish our goals.