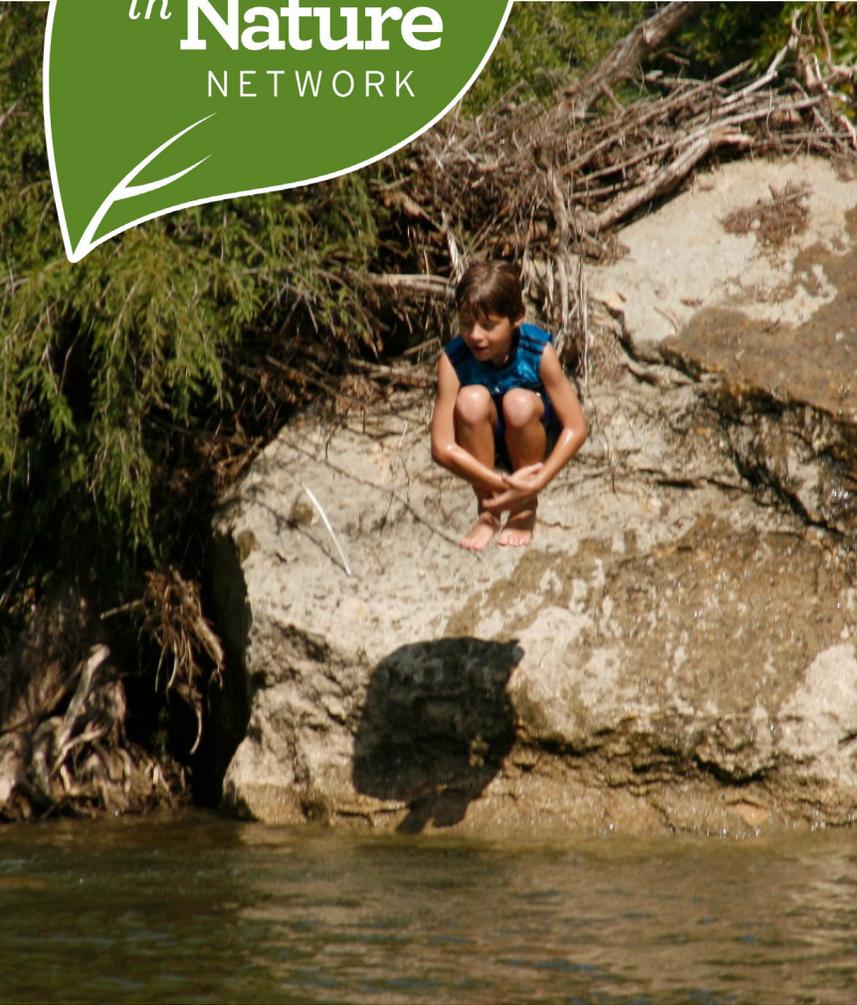


TEXAS
Children
in **Nature**
NETWORK

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021





Texas Children in Nature Network Visioning Lab

SPRING 2020



WHERE WE'VE BEEN

A Program of TPWD

Loosely organized collection of regions

Financially dependent on TPWD, limited fundraising

Diffused vision with many areas of activity

Role of regions vs state organizations not clearly defined

Focused on regional groups as an organizing principal

Equity is a part of all pillars, but particularly focused in access

Anchored in informal education

Overlap and confusion amongst programs and brands

WHERE WE ARE GOING

An Independent Network

A powerful network that amplifies impact at the state level

Financially independent w/ strong fundraising

Focused on cultivating leadership and building capacity

Mutually reinforcing relationship between state, regions and programs

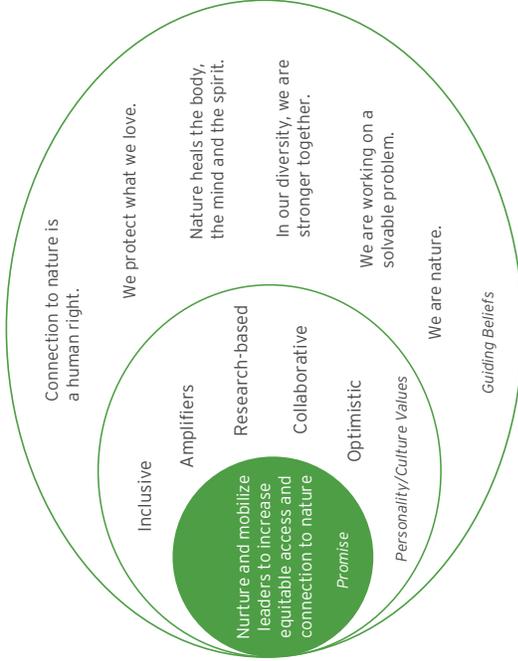
Focused on strategic goals and regions as organizing principals.

Elevate equity in the outdoors as a central organizing principle

Building innovative relationships with formal education and health care

Working at state level to advocate for policy change

TEXAS CHILDREN IN NATURE NETWORK BRAND FRAMEWORK



TCINN IS

Powerful network amplifier

Holistic perspective: Health, Education, Community

Includes families and communities

Diverse and inclusive

Invested in leadership throughout the state

Building capacity to expand impact



“ If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it. ”

- David Sobel



HOW WE DO IT:

CONVENE AND CONNECT Texans to ideas, inspiration, and one another

LEVERAGE the power of our network to **AMPLIFY IMPACT**

ADVOCATE for policy change

BUILD capacity to **DEVELOP LEADERS**

WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE:

Annual Summit (Leadership Conference)

Facilitating network conversations to explore key issues, share research + resources, and align communication

Policy work and legislative support around strategic goals

Professional development opportunities to train and elevate leaders at regional and local levels with a DEI lens

SIX WORD MEMOIRS

- 🌱 Nature for everyone, found everywhere
- 🌱 Texas experiences outbreak of children outdoors
- 🌱 Throw open the doors; embrace nature
- 🌱 Diversity in the enjoyment of nature
- 🌱 Families regularly spending time in nature
- 🌱 Cultivating abundance and equity for all
- 🌱 Nature wins with us; in us

LAB PARTICIPANTS

Addie Broussard
 Anne Muller
 Andy Gerhart
 Cindy Nguyen
 Darcy Bontempo
 Dustin Miller

Eddie McKenna
 Erica Sanchez
 Margaret Russell
 Melody Alcazar
 Molly Stevens
 Monica Lopez Magee

Nancy Herron
 Sandra Williams
 Sarah Coles
 Dr. Stephen Pont
 Thea Platz
 Trevor Hance

Weave/wēv/ To unite in a coherent whole

Merriam-Webster

“ It’s powerful to think about network in a new way. It’s beyond a passive collection of people and about having the power to **weave**. ”

HAPPIER, HEALTHIER, SMARTER

Letter from the Board of Directors, Texas Children in Nature Network

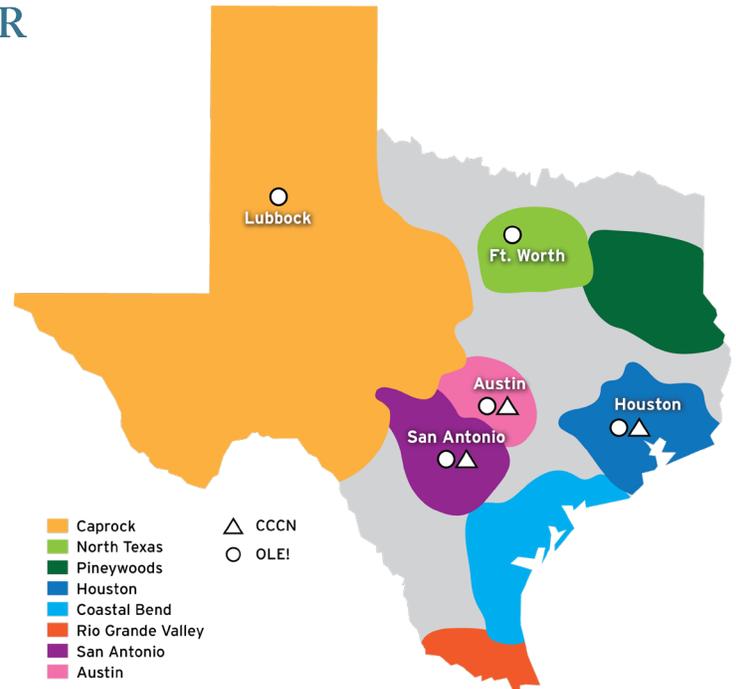
We are so pleased to share the TCiN Strategic Plan with our community of partners, funders, and with other individuals and organizations who are committed to increasing nature in children's lives. Our strategic plan is the result of more than 100 hours of discussion with dozens of leaders across Texas who are committed to our mission to **ensure equitable access and connection to nature for all children in Texas**. We are very grateful to those who have contributed their time and talent to this plan.

2020 has been the perfect year for both introspection and forward thinking, fueled by the reawakened understanding of the importance of nature in our lives. Yet the lack of access and connection to nature for many communities has also come sharply into focus during this time. It is in the light of these considerations that we have drafted our strategic plan.

After a decade of incubation, growth and invaluable support from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, we were ready to become a fully independent, non-profit organization. On January 1, 2021, Texas Children in Nature Network became an independent non-profit.

TCiNN has always found its strength and resilience in its many partnerships across Texas, which is why our name now reflects the importance of our network of partners. We hope you will help support and shape our organization so that we can bring nature into the lives of all children across Texas. Please join us in the work ahead!

The Board of Directors
Texas Children in Nature Network



- TCiNN has 8 regional collaboratives: Caprock, North Texas, Austin, San Antonio, Pineywoods, Houston, Coastal Bend and the Rio Grande Valley
- Texas currently houses three Cities Connecting Children to Nature communities and five OLE! Texas pilot cities

CASE STATEMENT

Texas has one of the fastest growing populations in the United States, now home to 10% of the nation's school-aged children. For decades children have become increasingly disconnected from nature. The negative impact of this disconnect is profound, leading to physical and emotional health problems as well as a growing sense of isolation.

Easy access to nature is also complicated by a lack of public land in Texas, where only 5% of the land is open to the public. There are not enough safe outdoor spaces close to home for most Texas children, especially for children from economically disadvantaged families. **There is also a vast body of research that supports that children who play and learn in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school.**

Texas Children in Nature Network is committed to working on a solvable problem. We do this by strengthening and leveraging the work of over 600 state and local partners across Texas in equity, access to nature, better health outcomes, community development, outdoor education, and conservation.

With our partners and the support of donors and members, we are working to *create equitable access and connection to nature for all the children in Texas*.





TEXAS CHILDREN IN NATURE NETWORK STRATEGIC PLAN

NETWORK

Leverage the power of a diverse network to amplify impact

- Objective 1: Nurture and mobilize diverse Texas Children in Nature Network leadership
- Objective 2: Share best practices and resources with our network partners across the state, including a high-energy compelling and content-rich annual Summit for Texas Children in Nature Network
- Objective 3: Support local community leadership and sustainability through regional collaboratives and peer-to-peer learning
- Objective 4: Create opportunities for diverse youth leadership across the state
- Objective 5: Celebrate the diversity of Texas and history of our natural spaces through events and professional development
- Objective 6: Reflect the diversity of our state (race/ethnicity, age, gender, discipline, LGBTQ+, geographic region) in our board, leadership team, and regional collaboratives

ACCESS TO NATURE

Increase the number of welcoming natural spaces accessible for all children

- Objective 1: Work with statewide programs such as Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN), Green Schoolyards, and Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE!) Texas to increase access and connection to nearby nature
- Objective 2: Partner with the National Recreation and Park Association to advocate for the "10 Minute Walk" to a park campaign
- Objective 3: Promote and support green spaces and partners organizations that foster equitable access and connection to nature and share success stories to encourage more organizations to do the same
- Objective 4: Promote access to, and uses of, public and private land and waters for children in Texas
- Objective 5: Share resources that support Universal Design (ADA Accessibility) as well as signage and virtual content in multiple languages and representative of multiple cultures

EDUCATION

Inspire educators to use outdoor classrooms and nature-based learning

- Objective 1: Facilitate training and professional developments on outdoor classrooms and nature based learning for early childhood through collegiate educators
- Objective 2: Support and advocate for the transition of traditional schoolyards into "Green Schoolyards" and "OLE! Texas" sites
- Objective 3: Develop and promote "Green Play to Green Pay" programs for students together with our partners
- Objective 4: Promote the integration of nature play as a tool to foster social, emotional and cognitive development



HEALTH

Engage the health community to use nature as a health strategy

- Objective 1: Raise awareness that children who spend time in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school
- Objective 2: Facilitate training and/or training tools together with health partners for use in professional development and community education settings about the health benefits of nature for children
- Objective 3: Encourage outdoor education partners to facilitate nature-based experiences for health care professionals
- Objective 4: Build relationships with health-related groups and professional associations

COMMUNITY

Encourage nature-based experiences through community organizations

- Objective 1: Support strong regional collaboratives across the state to influence sustainable, effective and relevant action in local communities
- Objective 2: Support Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN), Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE!) Texas and family nature clubs, and seek replicable models for other Texas cities
- Objective 3: Seek, engage and inspire new and diverse organizations both regionally and across the disciplines to encourage children and families to connect with nature
- Objective 4: Develop strategic partnerships to welcome and support people of all ages, abilities, ethnicities/races, gender orientation and identification to connect with nature



POLICY

Advocate and promote state, regional and municipal level planning, policies, and funding to support outdoor play and learning

- Objective 1: Seek out statewide planning and policy opportunities to increase the time children spend in nature during in and out of school time
- Objective 2: Advocate for the integration of nature opportunities as a health strategy in health and child-care guidelines
- Objective 3: Elevate the conversation around issues of environmental justice and the historic conditions which affect children's ability to learn and play outdoors
- Objective 4: Promote transportation and safety policies for nature access within urban and community planning
- Objective 5: Advocate for public funding to support equitable access and connection to nature for all children in Texas



MARKETING

Raise awareness of and increase engagement in nature through consistent and unified communication

- Objective 1: Raise awareness about the importance of time spent in nature
- Objective 2: Promote research regarding the impact and benefits of nature and nature-based experiences
- Objective 3: Promote equitable opportunities and connection with nature
- Objective 4: Promote the work of our network and partners in engaging children in nature
- Objective 5: Develop and maintain a consistent communications plan, including easy to use tool-kits for partners
- Objective 6: Foster growth of our network through the use of outreach materials



THANK YOU TO OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PARTNERS

Addie Broussard - Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center - Austin, TX
Alicia Mein-Johnson - Citizens' Environmental Coalition - Houston, TX
Amalia Sollars - Northside ISD - San Antonio, TX
April Torres Conkey* - Community Leader - Kingsville, TX
Bianca Banda - Texas Parks and Wildlife Department - Mission, TX
Brittany Johnson - Community Leader - Houston, TX
Cheryl Potemkin - Botanical Research Institute of Texas - Fort Worth, TX
Christie Cowan - Texan by Nature - Austin, TX
Darcy Bontempo* - Texas Parks and Wildlife Department - Austin, TX
Dustin Miller* - Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden - Dallas, TX
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Hayden Brooks* - American Realty - Austin, TX
Jaime Gonzalez - The Nature Conservancy in Texas - Houston, TX
Dr. Jay Maddock - Texas A&M University - College Station, TX
Margaret Russell* - Community Leader - Austin, TX
Melody Alcazar - City of Austin, Parks and Recreation Department - Austin, TX
Molly Stevens* - Moontower Coaching - Austin, TX
Nancy Herron* - Community Leader - Austin, TX
Ryan Spencer* - Meadows Center for Water and the Environment - San Marcos, TX
Shelly Plante - Texas Parks and Wildlife Department - Austin, TX
Susan Rowe - Lubbock Lake Landmark - Lubbock, TX
Thea Platz* - North East ISD - San Antonio, TX
Tanya Zastrow - Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - Austin, TX
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Photos provided by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Kuhlken Photography