



CITY KIDS
WILDERNESS PROJECT

SY2022-2025
3-Year
Strategic Plan



MISSION

City Kids Wilderness Project's mission is to build resiliency, broaden horizons, cultivate community, and develop skills for success in DC youth through a long-term, cohort-based model that utilizes both the wilderness and urban environment to encourage growth. City Kids aims to inspire youth to use their personal power to shape the future of their own lives and change in the greater community.

VISION

A world where individuals, communities, and systems evolve to create a bright, inclusive, and just future for all youth. A community of cohesion and allyship where youth have the support they need to develop into confident young adults who are aware of their personal power.

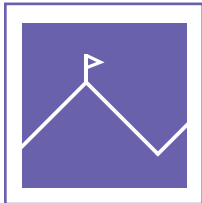


CITY KIDS CORE VALUES



JOY

We honor the power of play and presence of magic created through community and outdoor experiences. Through connection, creativity, belonging, accomplishment, and time spent outdoors, play deepens to joy.



EFFORT

Harnessing our personal power for growth and change, we put effort towards our visions and take personal responsibility for our commitments. Whether on the trail or in the office, we know that there is satisfaction to be realized when we try hard and explore the bounds of possibility in service to our mission.



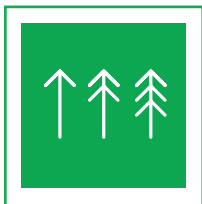
CONNECTION

We recognize our interdependence and nurture meaningful relationships of mutual accountability and care. Centering collectivism versus individualism teaches us that finding resolution, honoring needs, and supporting one another keeps our community whole. Relationships extend to the animals, plants, places, and cultures around us and we bring awareness and compassion to those encounters.



PREPARATION

We plan and prepare for the task at hand to set ourselves up for success. This creates clarity and consistency so that those around us feel supported in engaging with new, challenging, and changing experiences.



EVOLUTION

People and organizations blossom over time. We encourage evolution by maintaining awareness of change, honoring what works, improving what we can, and letting go of things that no longer serve our community and mission. Through patience, observation, repetition, revision, and long-term commitment, we are witness to the manifestation of this shared vision.



INTRODUCTION

At City Kids a strategic plan is more than a marketing project, more than a story about how we are pivoting due to the pandemic. **This is the culmination of a multi-year reflection process dedicated to clarifying our identity and determining the bold investments required to make City Kids a place where people, particularly youth, come to thrive and grow.** Since our inception, we've taught future generations how to navigate "wild places," literally and metaphorically. Yet, **this moment in history requires a reexamination of how we connect to each other** – the tools we use, the relationships we build, the skills we teach, and the places we convene. The nature of social interaction and community connection has radically changed over time, profoundly impacting how we all, particularly youth, see ourselves and our place in the world around us.

For 25+ years City Kids has worked to design programs and spaces that foster the skills required to navigate the opportunities and challenges youth will necessarily face as they grow. In our next three years, **our foundational mission to build resiliency, broaden horizons, cultivate community, and develop skills for success will not waiver.** In fact, we believe that this moment in history demands a deeper focus on immersing youth in environments that create

healthy habits and support them to reclaim their own personal power. However, *how* we do that needs to be refreshed and contextualized to address the needs and interests of today's DC-based youth and evolving workforce.

Simply put, City Kids SY22-25 Strategic Plan invests in quality programs, partnerships, and talent. More specifically, our strategies focus on:

- **Youth Impact: Institutionalizing evidence-based models in City Kids programs**
- **DC-Based Programs: Deepening DC-based community partnerships and enriching participant experiences**
- **Talent: Developing and retaining exceptional, impact-focused leaders**

By nurturing these three forests, we believe we can deepen our impact. The next three years will carry the organization into a new stage of maturity uniting programs, locations, families, and supporters within the wild places we all inhabit and belong.

The actions we take now, together, will determine our future in fundamental ways. Thank you for joining us.

PILLAR 1

Youth Impact

Institutionalizing evidence-based models in CK programs.



THIS STRATEGY AIMS TO

Reclaim City Kids “Why” by embedding and measuring the full benefits of a programmatic model anchored in building socio-emotional skills. This includes building intentional curriculum centering Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Positive Youth Development (PYD) frameworks, training staff on the key tenets and impact of SEL and PYD-centered programs, and positioning City Kids as thought leaders on the intersection of these frameworks and the outdoor education/youth development industry.

Today’s American teenagers bring a unique vision, perspective, and new set of values to our culture. Confident in their needs, our newest generations are teaching their elders and each other the opportunities that come from being brave enough to share one’s voice and are inspiring innovations in ways we all engage with the world. At the same time, the multitude of crises -a global pandemic, a climate emergency, systemic racism, global war -have resulted in the highest rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide recorded in history. This is a dynamic time to work with all youth, increasingly so for youth of color. As such, this is a consequential moment for City Kids to show up for our participants, their families, and the broader DC community.

Our intervention to foster the skills and bonds necessary for life-long well-being won’t work just by bringing kids outdoors and providing an alternative to electronic devices. We believe that the complexity of challenges youth face requires a solution equally layered and involves a multitude of stakeholders. For 25+ years City Kids has immersed youth in outdoor adventure experiences surrounded by a community of trusted peers and mentors, using natural, yet controlled environments, to build life skills. This will and should continue. Yet, **City Kids’ strategic focus to institutionalize evidence-based learning models is about re-contextualizing our program around today’s challenges, opportunities, and frameworks of learning that have proof-points of success for today’s young people.**

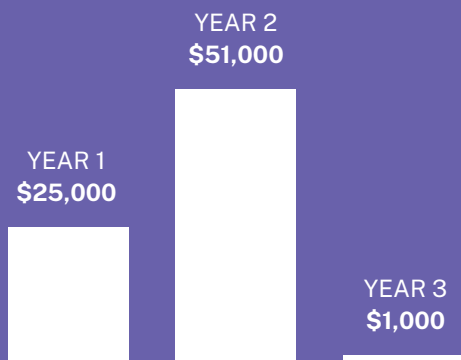
The ultimate goal? Youth acquire and feel empowered to use the skills, tools, and community bonds necessary to thrive in today’s world, even amidst the challenges they confront; Staff have the capability and competency to teach those skills. Over the next three years, **City Kids aims to build a more intentional curriculum centered around Positive Youth Development and Socio Emotional Learning frameworks, deepen staff training centering these frameworks, embed program evaluation tools that measure socio-emotional impact, and position ourselves as thought leaders on the intersection of these frameworks and the outdoor education/youth development industry.**



KEY PROJECTS INCLUDE

- Build a curriculum map/programmatic playbook for each City Kids cohort
- Utilize program evaluation tools that measures SEL outcomes
- Design and implement staff training modules centering SEL and PYD frameworks

PILLAR 1 BUDGET ADDITIONS



WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Increase in measures of participant self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making; Youth build the competency in life skills to activate their growth and build resilience into adulthood.

80% of youth will increase in measures of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

City Kids participant graduation rate exceeds DC Public School average.

90% of CK participants enroll in college, military, or vocational training after completing the City Kids program.

PILLAR 2

DC-Based Programs

Deepening DC-based community partnerships and enriching participant experiences.



THIS STRATEGY AIMS TO

Strengthen participants' bond with DC's outdoor spaces and provide opportunity to build mastery in the skills learned as a result of a robust, year-round program. The work of this strategy is to deepen our partnerships in an effort to enrich programming, curriculum, and infrastructure in DC.

Over the past year we have spoken to hundreds of stakeholders about the unique characteristics of the City Kids program. The opportunity for participants to travel to Jackson, WY for a summer camp experience filled with fresh mountain air, endless outdoor adventure, and internship opportunities at Jackson-based establishments is a unanimous highlight. It's clear that the historical focus of our reputation has been centered around what happens in Jackson. But, we are intentionally based in Washington DC and Jackson, Wyoming because we believe our consistent, year-round presence in DC is essential to our programmatic impact and cohesion. DC is a home base ripe with potential for deep learning and exploration. And, because we are located in DC all four seasons of the year, it is also perfect grounds to cast a wider net of adventures for youth to participate in, deepen mastery in the skills they learn, and introduce post-secondary opportunities that apply the knowledge and leadership skills they have acquired throughout the 6+ years they are in the program.

City Kids' strategic focus on deepening DC-based community partnerships and enriching participant DC-based experiences is our conscious effort to disrupt a narrative that we must leave the city in order to have profound and impactful adventures in nature.

Over the next three years, City Kids aims to more strategically and deeply **collaborate with mission-aligned partners** equally committed to making DC's outdoor spaces in underinvested communities accessible to all. We want to **connect young people in DC with the unique outdoor jewels that exist in surrounding areas**. Similarly, we want to **design experiences and develop robust curriculum that fosters the skills and learning that comes with building mastery**.

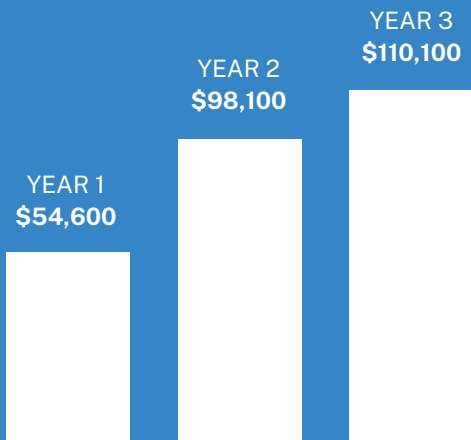
If our foundational mission is to *Build Resiliency, Broaden Horizons, Cultivate Community, and Develop Skills for Success*, we know that this must happen 365 days a year and must leverage the resources and capacity of partner organizations to do so.



KEY PROJECTS INCLUDE

- Strategically partner with DC-based organizations and schools that help build out outdoor programs, expand place-based and experiential learning curriculum, and expand recruitment pipelines
- Design Alumni programs that engage participants in DC-based activities and events
- Build Alumni staffing pipeline for DC trips, Update/ Relocate DC-based facility

PILLAR 2 BUDGET ADDITIONS



WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

By 2025, City Kids youth utilize local DC outdoor spaces as a powerful source of community, healing, and growth.

5 new partnerships with organizations and schools.

90% of City Kids youth will report feeling more competent and confident in the skills they are learning as a result of the program.

85% of City Kids youth will participate in monthly DC-based programming.

90% of City Kids youth will report feeling more deeply connected to DC's green spaces.

PILLAR 3 Talent

Develop and Retain Exceptional, Impact-Focused Leaders.

THIS STRATEGY AIMS TO

Launch our organization into the next stage of maturity by investing in talent. The work of this strategy is to build and enhance the systems, structures, practices, and behaviors required to develop and retain exceptional impact-focused staff and Board leaders.



City Kids' **strategic focus on organizational vitality and growth demands a distilled focus on programmatic impact and how we maximize it.** We have learned from and studied the characteristics of thriving organizations both inside and outside of our field of practice - from Board governance to programmatic partnerships, operational and talent systems and culture, and everything in between.

City Kids is steadfast in our long-term commitment to youth. Investments of time, heart, adventure, and learning are made in each participant for 6+ years to best equip them to succeed to, through, and beyond high school. We asked ourselves the question, "What would happen if we created an organization where staff felt the same level of investment in themselves? It's tempting to tinker with the entire organizational engine to ensure our success. However, **we believe a critical element is to build and enhance the systems and practices required to develop and retain exceptional impact-focused leaders.** This will launch our organization into the next stage of developmental maturity.

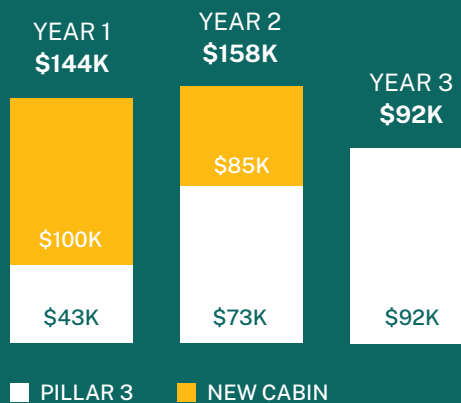
We are determined not to subscribe to the norms of most nonprofits our size: to manage expenses with a scarcity mentality. Rather, **we are committed to investing in our talent because we believe attracting and retaining high quality and committed staff,** regardless of the department they sit in, is **directly correlated with our programmatic impact.** The work of this pillar is a **comprehensive change in a talent structure and philosophy that makes it possible for staff to thrive and grow** as a result of their employment with us.



KEY PROJECTS INCLUDE

- Redesigned cash and non-cash compensation model
- Updated employee evaluation system
- Board succession plans & updated board structure
- 3-year technology strategy
- New cabin at Broken Arrow Ranch in Jackson, WY
- Updated DC office space
- DC-based trip staffing strategy
- Training and development plans for across all City Kids roles

PILLAR 3 BUDGET ADDITIONS



WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

By 2025, City Kids will acquire, develop, and retain a staffing team that models the skills and values the City Kids program teaches youth and alumni participants.

95% of staff will report that they recommend City Kids as a source of employment to their friends.

City Kids employee tenure exceeds the average length of other youth development nonprofits of its size.

ORG CHART

In the past three years, a quarter of nonprofits have had to make the tough decisions to lay off or furlough employees. With an already lean and efficient team, City Kids was able to secure, and in some departments grow, the existing team structure by adapting the roles and functions of each position in response to the incremental change that has occurred throughout the pandemic. As we go forward, our approach to building the organizational chart that will successfully carry out this strategic plan is to maintain the organizational resiliency and efficiency that have been trademarks of ours for the past two decades.

Many of the strategies and projects in the plan will pull on existing roles and functions, with a goal to deepen, not expand. However, we believe to remain dynamic and stable, we must also invest in new talent to implement the growing initiatives and partnerships we think are foundational to achieving the missional goals and outcomes of the strategic plan. **As such, City Kids has identified the following division of labor over the next three years:**

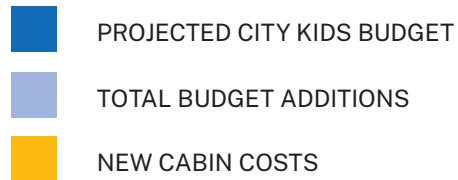
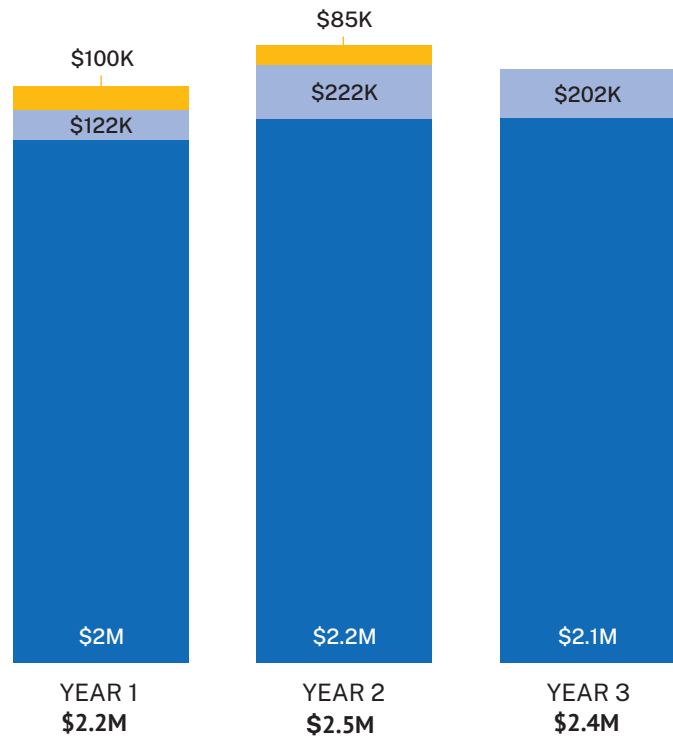
TIME PERIOD / ROLE	WE AIM TO
SY22-SY25 Back Office Administrative Support	Redistribute administrative tasks to outsourced back office organizations. This allows City Kids to eliminate part-time administrative roles and associated overhead costs.
SY22-SY23 Training and Development Specialist	Dedicate resources to develop and design staff training and professional development. This allows City Kids to develop a robust training program with staff equipped to implement and support the City Kids program.
SY22-SY23 Alumni Outreach Coordinator (Part-time)	Expand Alumni services. This allows City Kids to continue supporting and connecting with City Kids youth through age 25.
SY22-SY25 Trip Instructor (Hourly)	Establish pipelines of skilled trip instructors. This allows City Kids to have trip instructors who are trained in specific outdoor skills as support staff for City Kids programs. Trip instructors will be credentialed and will attend trips alongside full-time staff and volunteers.
SY22-SY25 Deputy Director	Build sustainable leadership pipelines and capacity to actualize strategic priorities and missional goals.
SEASONAL / PART-TIME Camp Operations Manager	Build and unify systems and operations to run an efficient and playful camp program in Wyoming.
SEASONAL / PART-TIME Camp Trip Coordinator	Double-down on administrative and operational support to enhance and streamline City Kids summer programs.

FINANCIALS

By 2025, City Kids will raise: \$2.4M

This represents the cost to achieve our aspirational missional goals by 2025:

- By 2025, youth build the competency in life skills to activate their growth and build resilience into adulthood.
- By 2025, City Kids youth utilize local DC outdoor spaces as a powerful source of community, healing, and growth.
- By 2025, City Kids will acquire, develop, and retain a staffing team that models the skills and values the City Kids program teaches youth and alumni participants.



HIGH LEVEL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

City Kids development plan mirrors the strategic plan - a bold approach to ensuring that youth reclaim their personal power. Crafted with the pillars of the strategic plan in mind, it is the roadmap for achieving our major financial goals to fuel the plan's broader objectives.

We believe the pillars of this strategic plan are highly fundable as they span a variety of philanthropic priorities: positive youth development, workforce development, college and career readiness, mental health, healthy living, collaborative partnerships, building scalable models, and equity and social justice. In key stakeholder interviews with City Kids's youth and families, we heard loud and clear these priorities rising as most critical for City Kids to invest in if we are to address participant needs and accelerate their interests. Likewise, current and potential donors have shared their interest in funding the intersection of these priorities, as research around the benefits to youth when organizations get these priorities right around.

This strategic plan represents strategic investment in building a fundraising operation set to scale. City Kids' cost to raise \$1.00 will increase from \$0.15 to the industry average for a scaling development department: between \$0.20-\$0.30 by 2025. The priority investment in development is in talent. City Kids will add a new Development Manager position to support institutional giving and development operations. City Kids will also contract with Seed Fundraisers, a talent development organization, to hone the skills of the team, develop rhythms and habits for high performance, and determine next-up investments in the growth of the department.

After careful analysis, our top two fundraising strategies are those that have proven their return on investment in the past as well as show alignment with our strategic priorities: grants and major gifts. We plan to dedicate 90% of our development resources to fully operationalize these strategies to scale revenue in the coming years. We have built a track record of garnering generous committed donors and look forward to reinforcing the value of their giving and building on this momentum.

Join us in activating this bold vision!

If you share our vision of changing the status quo for youth in our cities, consider building City Kids into your philanthropic priorities each year. By giving generously to this organization, you are actively working to ensure that youth reclaim their innate power. Please reach out to Sarah Cryder, Executive Director, to begin a conversation about your giving.

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