

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A review of city climate action plans highlights the opportunity to better engage early childhood, K-12, and higher education to support children and youth in a changing climate.

Children and youth are increasingly confronted with climate-related challenges that threaten their health, well-being, and opportunity. Every sector has a responsibility to act. Many cities have responded proactively by creating comprehensive climate action plans (CAPs) to mitigate, adapt, and build resilience. These strategies have profound implications for all community members, particularly children and youth. Despite this progress, systems and programs that support children and youth remain largely underutilized.

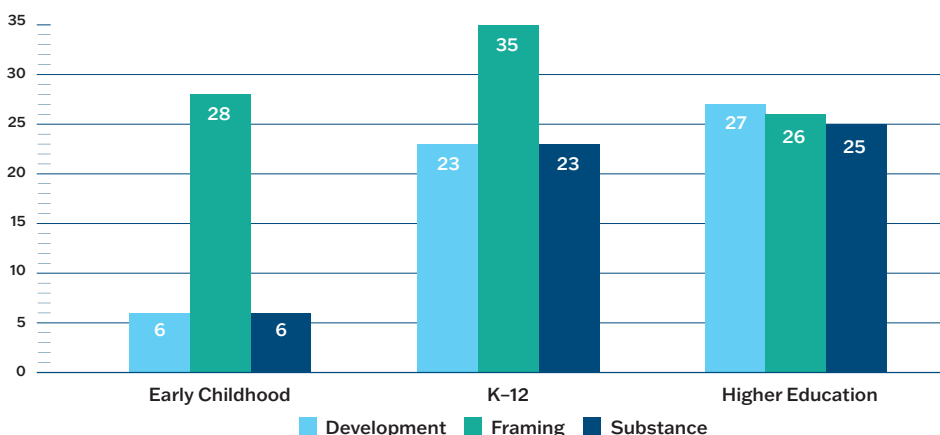
Early childhood, K-12, and higher education systems extend their influence far beyond the classroom, reach deep into the community, and hold significant potential to contribute actively to municipal-level climate action plans. By integrating these systems into climate strategies, cities can reduce the impact of climate change on healthy child development, promote climate literacy, reduce the education sector's sizable carbon footprint, prepare young people for the clean economy, and empower them to be agents of change. Additionally, with 73 million individuals under 18 and nearly 19 million students enrolled in postsecondary institutions — 25% of the US population — activating these systems can drive tremendous change now and in the future.

In this report, we examine the inclusion of children and youth, as well as early childhood, K-12, and higher education systems, in the climate action plans of the 40 most populous US cities.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Cities can further include children, youth, and the systems that serve them, particularly in the development and substance of climate action plans.** Although children and youth were cited frequently in the *framing* of the reviewed climate action plans, the extent to which early childhood, K-12, and higher education systems were included in the *development and substance* of the plans varied greatly.
- **Bright spots exist.** Many cities also demonstrated how early childhood, K-12, and higher education can be effectively integrated into city climate action planning, creating potential models for others to follow.

EDUCATION SECTOR PRESENCE IN CLIMATE ACTION PLANS



CALL TO ACTION

Cities have an opportunity to more deeply engage children, youth, and the systems that serve them in climate action plans to build lasting change for a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future.