

# APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT

## I. PLANNING PROCESS

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A key component of OFCY's strategic investment planning process was a community and stakeholder engagement effort to hear from Oakland's residents, youth, service providers, funders, and other system investors about the strengths and needs of Oakland's communities, gaps in services, and areas where OFCY could strategically target its funding to maximize the benefit for Oakland's children and youth. The goal of gathering community input was to solicit perspectives on the needs and opportunities for strengthening the health and well-being of young people and to identify gaps and opportunities in programming for children and youth. OFCY also used community input forums to share preliminary strategic directions and proposed strategies on how to solicit stakeholder ideas and feedback on these directions. To see a list of community input activities, please refer to section 3 of the Strategic Investment Plan.

## 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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### 2.1 Early Childhood

*Strategy 1: Engage and Support Parents in the Healthy Development of their Children*

- Parent engagement in early learning programs that are currently funded under OFCY have been very well received by Latino families. Agencies have used creative measures to increase participation from African American families, including linking engagement activities to broader community events to recruit families into playgroups and parent cafes.
- There is significant interest in Family Resource Centers among providers and system stakeholders, though several system partners/investors suggested that further study and mapping of the Family Resource Centers is needed. Stakeholders pointed to specific examples of Family Resource Centers that have flourished in Oakland, including the Hawthorne Family Resource Center and, more recently, Room to Bloom. Stakeholders in the Packard Foundation Starting Smart and Strong Collaborative, a convening of early care and learning investors and providers, identified a need to conduct a full assessment of the landscape of Family Resource Centers in Oakland.
- Stakeholders agreed on the value of investing in place-based strategies in underserved neighborhoods. Stakeholders felt that Full Service Community Schools at Oakland Unified School District should include parent engagement work and early childhood support at their sites.
- System partners and providers reported that Help Me Grow was a useful referral resource.
- Parents want places where they can socialize and enjoy their families in their communities, which decreases their overall level of stress.

- Stakeholders and providers agreed that families must be empowered and engaged in designing and delivering services.
- Stakeholders emphasized the need to focus on engaging fathers.
- There is a need to continue to support experiences for preschool-age children who do not participate in preschool.

*Strategy 2: Strengthen Preschool Quality through Consultation with Early Childhood Educators*

- Provider agencies wanted more flexibility to choose specific sites where they could provide services. They shared the fact that sites had varying degrees of readiness or preparation for fully integrating and using mental health consultations effectively. Some providers felt that less formal settings, such as playgroups, could benefit from developmental consultations, and that individual mental health consultations with children are needed.
- Many providers and system partners agreed that there is a need for more trauma-informed approaches in working with underserved or under-resourced neighborhoods.
- Stakeholders suggested that the early childhood mental health strategy provides an important service to the early childhood system (Head Start and OUSD) that would not otherwise be funded, but that services could be provided with a more intentional focus (i.e., based on an assessment of site needs and willingness to participate) to enhance their effectiveness.
- Stakeholders also felt that this approach improves teachers' ability to manage the classroom and helps teachers implement Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) standards.

## **2.2 Student Success in School**

*Strategy 3: Ensure Youth Access to High-Quality School-Based After-School Programming*

- OFCY funding and support for after-school programming is seen as necessary for the sustainability of school-based after-school programming by community stakeholders.
- Schools in Oakland's neighborhoods with the highest levels of poverty have higher costs of programming due to the need to cover security officer costs, greater demand for services, and other site needs.
- Stakeholders and funders highlighted the opportunity for collaborations between organizations to support the offering of enrichment, technology, arts, sports, and other programming that youth enjoy. Providers described the importance of using subcontractors to provide specialized curriculum and instruction in arts, literacy, sports, and other culturally relevant programming. However, they shared that funding levels currently do not support robust subcontracting. Providers wanted additional flexibility in engaging with partner agencies rather than having to train their own staff to become content experts in each of the areas of the curriculum requested by OUSD and OFCY. Additional financial support would strengthen agency collaborations.
- High-quality programming at schools requires greater flexibility in programming and additional funding to support after-school instructors and additional enrichment staff.

- Providers concurred that OUSD is placing additional requirements on lead agencies, without providing additional funding. These pressures make it hard to retain qualified staff, a key factor in delivering a high-quality program.
- Small community-based programs that have culturally competent and real relationships with the community face significant challenges when trying to meet contracting standards with public agencies. Allowing for collaboration and partnership with these CBOs improves the quality and relevancy of programs provided by afterschool providers.
- Most elementary afterschool programs are at capacity year-round, and many have waiting lists of students at the beginning of the year.

*Strategy 4: Strengthen Student Engagement in Learning*

- Stakeholders noted the need for additional programming for students in middle school.
- Stakeholders and community members emphasized the need to engage parents as partners in student success and learning and for strategies that build system capacity to decrease the disproportionality of suspensions among students.
- Stakeholders expressed the importance of building literacy and numeracy skills in children at a young age as a positive predictor of future success.

## **2.3 Youth Development and Empowerment**

*Strategy 5: Create Access to Youth Development and Empowerment Opportunities Year-Round*

- Stakeholders identified the need to articulate the role of violence prevention as a strategy within this goal area. Providing a safe space for youth to enjoy and thrive was seen as an important aspect of this strategy.
- Youth want programming that builds on their assets and capabilities, not their deficits.
- Youth want access to programming and suggested the need for additional outreach, especially to a broader range of youth.
- Stakeholders noted the need for supporting small and emerging programs, as well as science, technology, and other innovative programming.
- Stakeholders noted the need to reach specific populations, such as unaccompanied minors, youth exposed to violence and trauma, homeless youth, and LGBTQ youth, but there was some consensus that creating a targeted funding pool was not viable.
- Stakeholders noted the need for trauma-informed approaches.
- Stakeholders expressed the importance of supporting reading and writing programming to support youth voice and expression.
- Stakeholders see OFCY as a resource to support project-based, hands-on learning programming that builds youth skills and their interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

*Strategy 6: Create Access to Academic Support and Enrichment during the Summer Months*

- Young people want access to enriching programs that build on their assets and strengths, not just their risk factors and deficits.
- There is strong community and stakeholder support for expanding access to free or low-cost summer enrichment and academic programming for low-income children and youth. Summer is

a difficult time for childcare for parents; there is a need for activities to keep children and youth busy and engaged in a productive way during the summer. OFCY is the main local supporter of free and low-cost summer programming and plays an integral role in supporting positive summer experiences for children and youth.

- There are several community efforts focused on supporting literacy and mitigating summer learning loss. Summer months provide an opportunity for children and youth to build mastery in a specific area or topic and retain their academic achievements during the school year.

## 2.4 Transitions to Adulthood

### *Strategy 7: Expand Access to Career Awareness and Academic Support for Older Youth*

- Youth emphasized the need for academic and workforce programming to support a broad section of Oakland's youth, and not just youth who are on probation or parole, in foster care, or disconnected from school and work. While those groups do need services, there is a network of public support for these populations that do not provide any support for the broader populations of youth.
- System stakeholders agreed that other workforce funding streams prioritize enrollment of those with the highest risk.
- There is a need for educational opportunities to develop financial literacy among young people.
- There is a need for programs that support young people within the contexts of their families and communities.
- New workforce funding streams in Oakland allow OFCY greater flexibility. There is a need for coordination among workforce funders.
- Providing middle school youth with project-based, hands-on learning activities will help build their interest and awareness in STEM and help to increase enrollment in STEM career academies.
- Stakeholders noted the opportunity for OFCY to support reengagement centers, where opportunity youth (i.e. disconnected from school and work) could receive academic and workforce support that reengages them to complete high school, attain a GED or higher education, while gaining workforce experience and exposure.
- Stakeholders felt that OFCY should support programming that aligns with City of Oakland priority industries and OUSD career academies.
- Youth need support in both academics and in workforce to successfully transition to adulthood; successful programs are able to address both service needs (i.e. academic and workforce support) to transition-age youth.