Year-Round Youth Development and Empowerment Learning Paper

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Prepared by:

Verenice Chavoya-Perez
Mika Clark
Heather Lewis-Charp
Social Policy Research Associates (SPR)

OFCY
OAKLAND FUND FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

INTRODUCTION

Support for positive youth development and leadership is a fundamental value of the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY). Their values statement articulates that OFCY seeks to "*promote the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual development of children to instill individual and community pride and leadership.*" This broad focus on different aspects of positive youth development is evident in its Year-Round Youth Development and Empowerment (YDE) funding strategy, which is the largest and most diverse set of programs supported by OFCY in the 2016-2019 funding cycle. Serving nearly 9,500 youth in 2016-2017, the goal of these programs is to "develop leadership skills, build on their strengths, improve their connections to adults and peers, and contribute to their communities through arts, technology, entrepreneurship, sports, and other enrichment programming."[1]

In keeping with the overall goals of the strategy, all YDE programs seek to promote positive youth development through a focus on relationship building, skill building, social-emotional learning, promotion of positive peer relationships, and leadership development. Program staff emphasized the resilience of the young people they serve and the importance of building strong relationships between participants and adults—as a way to retain youth in programming, provide stability, and offer mentorship. In addition, all programs in this strategy incorporate leadership development, although the depth varies by the length of time that youth engage in the program, the readiness of the target population, and the capacity and/or skills of staff.

Although these programs share a common youth development framework, the activities and approaches they use to engage young people are very diverse. These differences relate to the particular young people that these programs are seeking to attract and serve, with an understanding that programs need to be tailored to the diverse interests and identities of Oakland youth. This aligns with research on the importance of providing young people with choices and "specialized" programming, particularly for the recruitment of older middle and high school aged youth, who are unlikely to participate in programs unless it speaks to their unique passions and interests.[2]

This brief provides an in-depth description of four different types of programs or "sub-strategies" that fall under OFCY's YDE strategy, to better understand the distinct populations served by different types of programs, as well as the unique practices and approaches they use to support youth development. We worked with OFCY staff to group the 36 programs into the following four sub-strategies (see Appendix for full list of programs):

- Arts
- Community-Based Afterschool
- Population-Specific
- High School Academic Support

Cover images provided by East Oakland Youth Development Center (left image) and Attitudinal Healing Connection, Inc. (right image).

The brief draws on a variety of data sources:

- Seven site visits to OFCY programs during the spring of 2018: two arts programs, two community-based afterschool programs, two population-specific programs, and one high school academic support program
- Seven program director interviews (spring of 2017)
- Cityspan service data, demographics, and program descriptions (2016-2017)
- Online sources, such as program websites

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[1] Bright Research Group. Oakland Fund for Children and Youth Strategic Investment Plan 2016-2019. (2015).

[2] Deschenes, S.N., Arbreton, A., Little, P.M., Herrera, C., Baldwin Grossman, J., Weiss, H.B., Lee, D. Engaging Older Youth: Program and City-Level Strategies to Support Sustained Participation in Out-of-School-Time. (2010). Harvard Family Research Project and Public/Private Ventures.
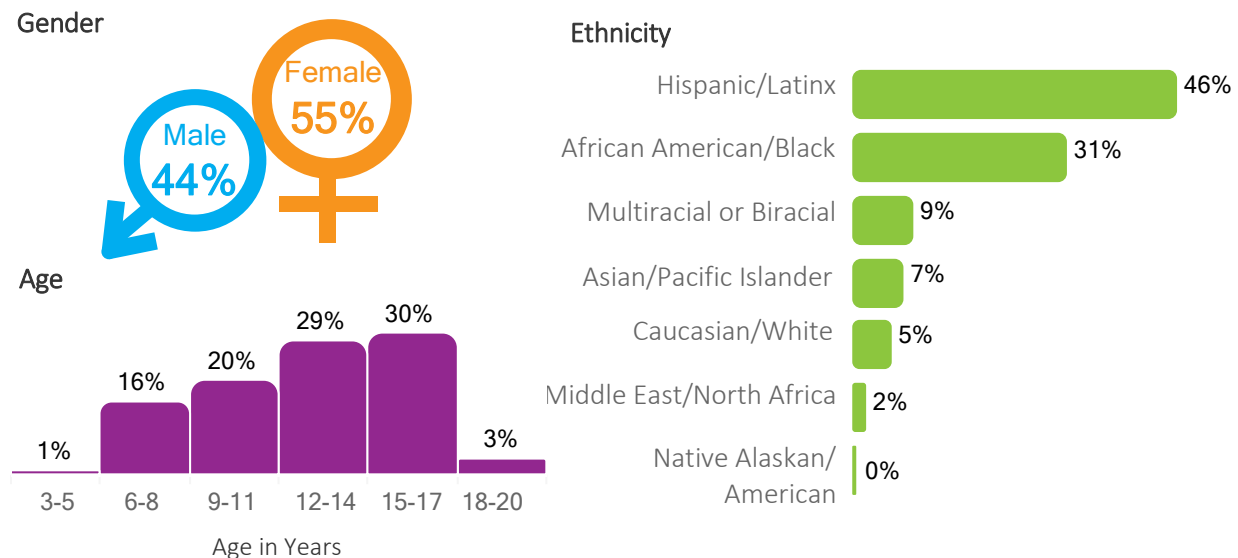
ARTS PROGRAMS

OFCY funds eight art-based programs under the YDE strategy. These programs combine youth development activities with hands-on experiences in different disciplines of art, including creative writing/spoken word, visual arts, music, media arts, and dance. For this learning paper, we visited Attitudinal Healing Connection, Inc.'s West Oakland Legacy and Leadership Project (WOLLP) and Dimensions Dance Theater's Rites of Passage and conducted interviews with program staff, an observation, and youth focus groups. This section is also informed by a review of program description information provided through CitySpan.

Youth characteristics

During the 2016-2017 program year, 1,643 children and youth participated in arts programming under the Year-Round YDE strategy. As described in the figure below, over half of participants in arts programs were between 12-17 years old and 46 percent were Hispanic/Latinx youth--compared to other youth engagement programming, arts programs served a higher proportion of Hispanic/Latinx youth.

Arts Based Programs: Participant Demographics in FY2016-2017

Gender

Male 44%

Female 55%

Age

| 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | 15-17 | 18-20 |
| 1% | 16% | 20% | 29% | 30% | 3% |

Age in Years

Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latinx	46%
African American/Black	31%
Multiracial or Biracial	9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7%
Caucasian/White	5%
Middle East/North Africa	2%
Native Alaskan/American	0%

Program staff of the two programs we visited described their participants as resilient, articulate, creative, and excited about their futures. Participants bring a deep capacity for self-expression that can continue to be fostered through arts programming. For example, staff from WOLLP described how their participants "bring an innocence that allows them to see the world in a different way than adults do." Program staff indicated that the programming aims to help youth express their perspectives through the arts in a way that can teach others and create change in the world.

The participants we spoke with sought out arts programming because they enjoy the opportunity to express themselves creatively, they were eager to develop technical skills in performing and/or visual arts, and because they wanted an engaging activity to participate in after school.

Practices to Build Confidence Through Art and Expression

Research suggests that arts-based programming has a positive impact on youth development. Engaging children and youth in various arts, such as dance, singing, performing, visual arts, or creative writing can lead to the development of positive social and emotional behaviors, including building self-confidence.[3] The two programs we interviewed for this paper place a strong emphasis on building youth confidence through art and expression. Program staff stressed the importance of self-confidence as a protective factor that helps youth make healthy decisions, avoid risky behavior and stand up for themselves. Self-confidence also gives children and youth a voice, so that they can contribute to positive change in the world. As described by Rites of Passage staff:

> "It's really about developing the whole person. If they become a dancer, great, if they don't, great, but they will have at least had that discipline and that understanding of self-worth, so that they can go forward and be fabulous in whatever they choose to do. Just taking that courage to step out."
>
> — Rites of Passage Staff

> *We want them to have the confidence to say* "No, I'm not doing that. That doesn't feel right to me." *To really trust their gut, because we are often told not to trust ourselves.* To give them the empowerment to say "No, *I know my self-worth*, I know this is not going to be good, I'm going the other way."

Instead of turning to surveys or other tools to monitor their progress, program staff observe their participants' behavior and attitudes to watch their confidence grow over time in the program. They see children and youth talking more, laughing more, and engaging more. They look for the pride that radiates when they complete a work of art or perform at a higher level. Thus, arts-based youth-development programming can be an effective vehicle for building confidence—it provides opportunities to learn a new skill, take healthy risks, express oneself, and exhibit talents to friends, family, and the larger community. The following practices were used by programs to build confidence:

Providing Opportunities for Youth to Demonstrate New Skills. Participants in arts programs can see tangible growth in their technical skills over time, and have opportunities to demonstrate their skills to family, friends, and the larger community in performances and exhibits. For instance, WOLLP finds opportunities for children and youth to contribute to public art in Oakland neighborhoods and schools and organizes an annual art show for children and youth to exhibit and even sell their art, while Rites of Passage dancers perform at shows throughout the year.

Staff from both programs acknowledged the direct connection between learning a new skill and developing self-confidence, as well as the value of providing a venue for students to exhibit their work. A high school basketball player studying art at Attitudinal Healing Connection's WOLLP program, for instance, surprised himself after completing a piece of art for an upcoming art show. This was a turning point for the student, as he realized he had more options

> "The look on their faces and how proud they are that they sold their work that they had spent months creating? It is huge."
>
> — WOLLP Staff

> "There are some students who are quiet, but when they go on stage, it's a different person with the growth in their self-esteem and confidence... It can be a turning point."
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> — Rites of Passage Staff

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[3] Arts-Based Programs and Arts Therapies for At-Risk, Justice-Involved, and Traumatized Youths. (2016) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Retrieved from: https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Arts-Based-Programs-for-Youth.pdf

for his future than he had realized. He explained to staff "I didn't know I was good at art. I thought I was just good at sports." This was also observed during our youth focus groups, where participants discussed their pride and excitement when they get to exhibit how much they've grown during performances and art shows.

Promoting Healthy Risk Taking to Increase Confidence. Art can be a vehicle for promoting healthy risk taking, a critical developmental task that helps youth form an identity, develop self-efficacy, and learn to fail in a safe environment. WOLLP asks young artists to be vulnerable and share a personal message through their art and in their artist statements. Teachers at Rites of Passage encourage youth to "take a leap" and embrace the possibility of failure. Participants in our focus groups stressed how the support they receive from their instructors gives them the security to try something new or uncomfortable, as in this story recounted by a thirteen-year-old Rites of Passage participant:

> "We create an environment that is caring and nurturing, but also that provides a challenge that will **push them beyond their comfort zone.** We tell them, "Go ahead and step out, the ground will be there for you... **It's okay not to get something right.** You're not a failure if you didn't get it right the first time. "
>
> — Rites of Passage Staff

I had a solo in ballet and it was really hard for me. I was telling myself I couldn't do it, but with the support from different teachers that've seen me grow up and them telling me that I could do it and them giving me good advice about it... I could see the proudness in their eyes and it just made me feel like, "Okay, I can do this. I know I can do this, I can do this!"

Providing Opportunities for Self-Expression. Art programs of all disciplines provide opportunities for youth to develop their voice and practice using it. WOLLP instructors encourage children and youth to infuse their artwork with a strong message they want to convey, and emphasize the power these messages can have: "We always tell them 'Your work can teach people. Your work can change people's minds.' We want our students to be active citizens. We want them to be change makers. We want them to think about how we make this world more beautiful, more peaceful." Students create artist statements with each of their pieces, which allows children and youth to share the message behind their work. One WOLLP fifth grade student explained that she avoids expressing her feelings in person, but she enjoys expressing herself through her artwork.[4]

Using dance as a tool for self-expression, Rites of Passage teachers allow participants to create the concepts behind their dance routines that speak to a message they find important. For example, the middle school hip hop class created a skit and dance piece that portrayed girls speaking out against social isolation and bullying at a slumber party. The goal of the program is more than learning to dance; teachers want participants to "not be afraid to stand in front of somebody and do what they do and be able to talk and speak, and not just from a script that they've been given to say, but really speak from their own perspective."

> "When I first came I was really scared and really shy, and now I'm just talking all the time. When I came I saw how everybody was together and how fun it was. Dance just makes me really happy and lets me express myself."
>
> — Rites of Passage Participant

Promoting Identity Exploration through Arts Curriculum. Art programs can draw on the cultural heritage of their participants to promote identity formation and pride.

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[4] Due to miscommunication, we also conducted a focus group with participants from AHC's school-based afterschool arts program at Hoover Elementary School.

WOLLP intentionally touches on the cultural influences of all participants' heritage so that youth see their culture honored. To this end, their curriculum has included aboriginal masks, African symbolism, Islamic pattern mosaics, Aztec and Mayan designs, and mandalas. WOLLP also encourages youth to explore their identity through their "Self as Super Hero" curriculum, a life-sized self-portrait project that invites children and youth to identify their personal strengths and re-envision themselves as superheroes improving their community. At Rites of Passage, instructors draw the connection between participants' ancestry and the dance techniques whenever possible. As one participant explained, "we have all these different dances that we do and we've learned a lot about them, too. Like which African nation they come from and what the movements mean. That was also a gift."

Building Relationships to Maintain Youth Engagement. Staff from both programs discussed how building confidence and skills takes time. To build long-lasting relationships, the programs try to work with participants over many years and help them transition to other programs within their agency. As evidence of these sustained relationships, several members of Dimensions Dance Theater's professional company and the agency's dance instructors have been involved with the agency since they learned to dance as children in the Rites of Passage program and later as teacher assistant in the company's apprenticeship program. Similarly, WOLLP relies on former participants, some of whom first worked with the agency as seven year-olds, to volunteer at the agency's annual art show. As explained by their program staff, "that's the goal, those long-term relationships with the child and the family."

> "Trust is built over time, **confidence is built over time** and the depth of relationships also develop over time."
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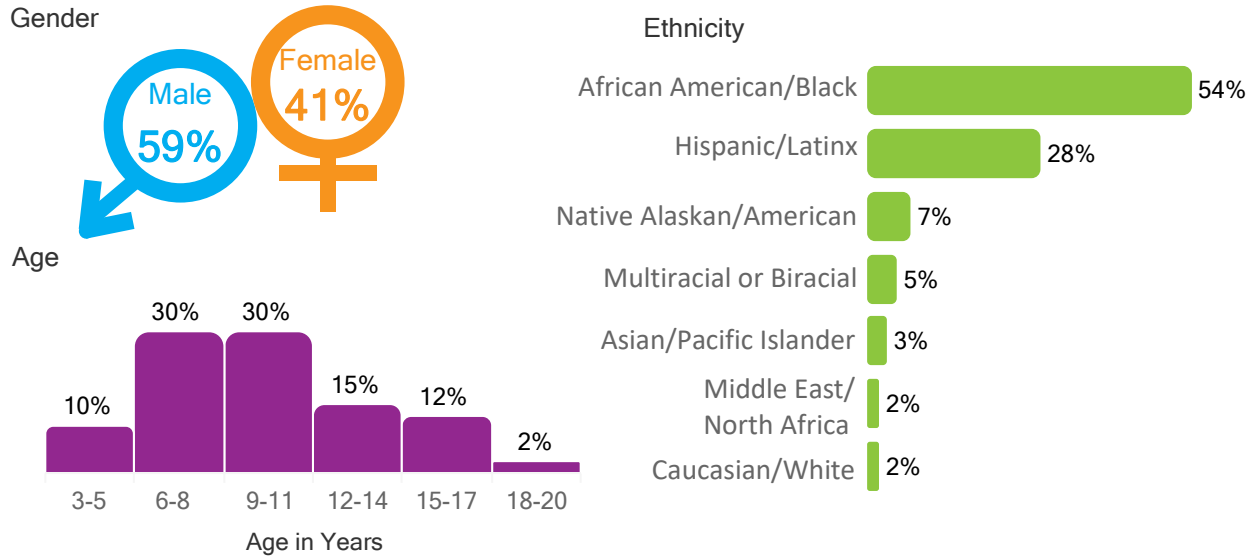> – WOLLP Staff

COMMUNITY-BASED AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

OFCY funded nine community-based after school programs, which are characterized by their focus on providing a combination of academic support and enrichment activities that promote youth development and empowerment. For this learning paper, we visited East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC)'s After School Leadership Academy and Brothers on the Rise's Brothers, UNITE!. To further our understanding of the programs in this area, we also read through our interview of Boys & Girls Clubs of Oakland's Educational Programs for the Youth of Oakland from spring 2017 and reviewed program documents.

All programs in this area focused on providing academic, remediation, or literacy support, but varied in how they provided youth development and leadership activities. Programs in this sub-strategy provided leadership-focused workshops, arts/media education, college/career support activities, STEAM, health and wellness, violence prevention and conflict resolution, and mentoring.

Youth characteristics

During the 2016-2017 program year, 3,616 children and youth participated in community-based after school programs under the Year-Round YDE strategy. Compared to other YDE participants, children and youth in these programs were more likely to be male and African-American. These programs also primarily served younger youth; youth in these programs were more likely to be in elementary school, and approximately 60% of youth were within the ages of 6-11. Notably, of the 273 Native Alaskan/American participants from the YDE strategy, over 90% participated in community-based afterschool programs.

Community-Based After-School Programs: Participant Demographics in FY2016-2017

Gender

Male **59%**   Female **41%**

Age

10%   30%   30%   15%   12%   2%

3-5   6-8   9-11   12-14   15-17   18-20

Age in Years

Ethnicity

African American/Black	54%
Hispanic/Latinx	28%
Native Alaskan/American	7%
Multiracial or Biracial	5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%
Middle East/North Africa	2%
Caucasian/White	2%

Program staff from both programs we visited described their participants as being resilient, knowledgeable, and ready to learn, despite living in communities that experience violence and poverty. As a Brothers, UNITE! program staff member describes in the following quote:

> Our youth bring their funds of knowledge that come from their own families or the communities they come from—whether it's West Oakland, or the American South, Oaxaca, Guatemala. Each one brings their different life experiences.

Youth that we spoke with were interested in attending these programs because of the different enrichment activities, field trips, and physical activities both programs provided. One participant from EOYDC's After School Leadership Academy states, "Our community can be violent, but it's important to know where to be and where not to be …. Being here is about safety, so I know we feel safe and we have our own community."

Practices to Build Youth Leadership

While community-based after-school programs provide both academic support and diverse enrichment activities, the two programs we visited emphasized the importance of providing opportunities that increase youth leadership. Given that programs in this sub-strategy serve younger youth, engaging and providing youth with leadership opportunities that center on building relationships and decision-making skills is a key component to their youth development.

Youth leadership can benefit youth-serving programs in addition to benefitting youth themselves. In this capacity, youth serve as equal partners to adults in designing programs, services, and activities that are fun, interactive, and engaging for youth participants. Youth are able to develop critical *internal* leadership skills including decision-making, self-esteem, and motivation, as well as *external* leadership skills such as the ability to positively influence others, serving as a role model, and affecting community change. As these programs tend to primarily serve youth that are between 6-11 years old, program staff from the two programs we visited highlighted the following best practices for promoting youth leadership:

Utilizing a cascading mentorship model. The two programs that we visited use a cascading mentorship model to promote leadership development. Cascade mentoring is described as a "learning-by-teaching" approach where youth who have gained leadership and other skills can teach and mentor younger or newer youth. EOYDC provides opportunities for community college and high school participants to mentor and work with younger youth. This program recognized that the mentorship model "bridges the gap" between participants and staff. Brothers, UNITE! emphasizes connections with adult mentors out of the recognition of the importance of male role models for young boys and men of color. Thus, they have set up their cascading mentorship model so that adults mentor older youth interns and interns and older youth mentor younger participants.

Developing opportunities to empower youth as partners in the program. Programs in this sub-strategy have developed structured approaches to engage youth as partners in program design and implementation. EOYDC developed a "Core Team" comprised of paid Youth Leaders that help staff with designing enrichment activities and life skills development workshops. Staff in this program trained youth to design curriculum as well as write proposals to request to lead activities. Youth leaders in both programs were also able to take on supervisory roles and partner with enrichment instructors to supervise groups of students.

> "These kids come to the program alone, as one, but **when they're done, they leave as twelve.** They leave as a band of brothers. They all come with different learning levels, they all learn differently, and you immediately can see who has stronger learning abilities and because of what gets created through the programming, the **kids with a stronger ability begin to support the younger kids with program activities.**"
>
> – Brothers, UNITE! Staff

> "One of the things that we've seen, is that a lot of **our young people**, as they have been in the youth leader position [for some time] **start looking for other opportunities to be able to lead in different ways and challenge themselves.** They will start to ask about how they can take on other roles and further their leadership."
>
> -- EOYDC Staff

Practices to Develop Social and Emotional Learning

In providing youth development and leadership programming, community-based after-school programs also centered their approaches on developing participants' social and emotional learning. In particular, programs focused on building self-awareness, self-regulation, relationship building, and communication and interpersonal skills. Developing social and emotional learning skills provides children and youth with the "knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain relationships, and make responsible decisions."[5] The two programs we visited shared the following key practices to supporting social and emotional learning:

Provide workshops and activities that help youth and participants develop social and emotional learning. Both After School Leadership Academy and Brothers, UNITE! provide workshops to help youth develop self-awareness skills, including identifying their emotions and building confidence and self-management skills such as resiliency, coping skills, stress management, and self-discipline. For example, Brothers, UNITE!

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[5] What is SEL? Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2018) Retrieved from: https://casel.org/what-is-sel/

provides a "Checking your Lava Flow" activity for their elementary-aged participants to help them describe and explore their feelings. Following this activity, staff facilitate conversations that help participants develop skills to be more aware and learn how to manage their behaviors. EOYDC's After School Leadership Academy provides martial arts workshops to teach participants about self-defense while using this as an opportunity to share the importance of developing positive interpersonal communication skills for conflict resolution.

Developing a safe space that fosters social and emotional learning. A key practice to fostering social and emotional learning is developing a safe space that can allow youth to understand and explore their emotions, learn how to communicate effectively with others, and develop relationships. Brothers, UNITE! staff intentionally develops their programming to support relationship-building between youth, older participants, and staff. As reflected in the quote to the right, program staff believe in valuing youth voice and empowering them by showing that other people care about their experiences. EOYDC's After School Leadership Program adopted the six "Pillars of Character" of CHARACTER COUNTS! to build social and emotional learning, which include respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. In order to build understanding around these pillars, EOYDC staff leadership has been trained and certified since 2008. They continue to draw upon these pillars to design activities in their curriculum that allow youth to learn about each pillar and practice applying it.

> "It's empowering them to say, your voice means a lot to people. People who are around you, people want to be around you. We want to hear what you have to say."
>
> — Brothers UNITE! Staff

POPULATION-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

OFCY funded fourteen programs that serve specific populations through their youth development programming.

- Five programs focused on serving populations with barriers such as youth and children with incarcerated parents, youth with physical disabilities, transition-aged foster and homeless youth, youth of color exposed to violence, and teen mothers.
- Seven programs focused on specific identity-based populations which included: Hispanic/Latinx, Native American, unaccompanied minors, refugees, immigrants, boys of color, and LBGBTQI or ally youth.
- Two programs defined their target populations more broadly as either youth that come from "vulnerable" or "high-stressor" neighborhoods.

> "The children and youth in our program bring a maturity that they are forced to carry with them because of their migration experience, but it's also incredible to see the skills they build, their resilience, their leadership potential. All of this leads to community leadership which just adds value to our work."
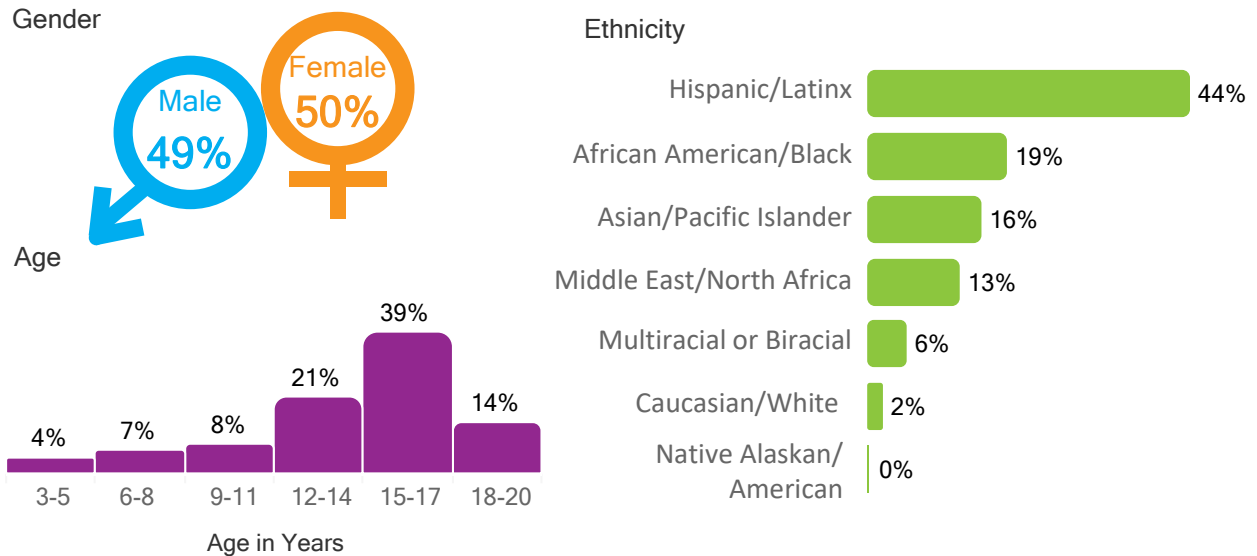>
> — Refugee Transitions Staff

In the spring of 2018, we visited La Clinica de la Raza's Youth Brigade program, which works with high school youth at risk of violence and Refugee Transitions' Newcomer Community Engagement Program, which works with newcomer, unaccompanied minor, and refugee participants. To augment our understanding of programs in this area, we also reviewed our interviews with Communities United for Restorative Justice (CURYJ)'s Homies 4 Justice and Community Works West Inc's Project WHAT conducted in spring of 2017. CURYJ primarily works with youth of color who are system-impacted while Project WHAT primarily targets youth who have or have had a parent incarcerated.

Youth characteristics

During the 2016-2017 program year, 2,171 children and youth participated in programs that focus on specific populations within the Year-Round YDE strategy. About 75% of participants in these programs were between 12-17 years old. Compared to other YDE programs, those focused on special populations were less likely to serve African American youth.

Population-Specific Programs: Participant Demographics in FY2016-2017

Gender

Male 49%
Female 50%

Age

Age in Years	Percent
3-5	4%
6-8	7%
9-11	8%
12-14	21%
15-17	39%
18-20	14%

Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latinx	44%
African American/Black	19%
Asian/Pacific Islander	16%
Middle East/North Africa	13%
Multiracial or Biracial	6%
Caucasian/White	2%
Native Alaskan/American	0%

Program staff at Youth Brigade and Refugee Transitions described the youth in their program as resilient, sensitive, and empathetic leaders, but they also recognized that youth experience trauma and complex challenges. Youth Brigade staff acknowledge the stigma that many of their participants face as they explore their sexual and gender identities. Refugee Transitions staff further described that the children and youth they work with have experienced interrupted formal education, have literacy and language acquisition needs, and have difficulties navigating the school system.

Youth focus group respondents also mentioned the many challenges that their and other families face in their communities, including: gentrification and displacement, poverty, violence, and homelessness. Given these challenges, however, youth are appreciative of their programs and continue to be engaged because staff are warm and welcoming, are knowledgeable of their communities, and provide opportunities for them to share their stories and experiences with other youth.

Practices to Explore and Affirm Identities

A key component of positive youth development and empowerment is centered on youth having opportunities to explore identity formation. Programs in this sub-strategy develop programming that allows youth to explore their identities as a way to develop self-confidence. Identity formation and exploration can be fostered in different ways but may focus on allowing youth to develop a sense of belonging, using culturally-affirming frameworks that deepen understanding of individual differences, and developing safe spaces that value youth identities, histories, and experiences. Programs in this sub-strategy highlighted the following key practices to promote identity exploration and formation:

> "This **program is the only constant thing in my life**. Life is constantly changing and there's so much chaos and responsibilities that we have. **The chaos is blocked once the [program] door closes.**"
>
> – Youth Brigade Participant

Employing culturally-affirming frameworks to develop a sense of belonging. Using culturally-responsive or affirming approaches is a key practice that values children and youth diversity, language, backgrounds, and histories to develop a sense of belonging. Our site visits with Refugee Transitions and Youth Brigade underscored the importance of developing programming that promotes a sense of belonging for their respective participants. Youth Brigade models their programming after the Circle of Courage, a framework that integrates Native American philosophy with contemporary resiliency research. The Circle of Courage is centered on four universal growth needs of all children and youth: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.[6] This program develops workshops and activities for youth to focus on one, some, or all of these components to help youth explore their identities through meeting the four growth needs. The other program, Refugee Transitions, partners with Soccer without Borders to bring a sense of community to their newcomer participants. Through soccer and meeting other youth, the program emphasizes dialogue, learning about different communities, and developing cross-cultural friendships that allow youth to speak about themselves with confidence.

Structuring opportunities for youth to explore their identities and learn about each other's differences. Programs in this sub-strategy develop curriculum, activities, and workshops that allow youth to learn from each other, take risks to have challenging conversations about their identities, and affirm and value differences. Youth Brigade staff provide the example of using icebreaker activities as a way to provide conversational opportunities that contribute to identity exploration. As stated by a Youth Brigade program staff:

> One of our icebreaker activities, called the "Campaign Manager" is a paired activity where youth chat with each other and point out each other's gifts or unique qualities that they see in their partner. Afterward, each of them introduces each other in front of the whole group and shares their qualities to the group. Through this whole process, this ends up being a pretty transformative experience for youth.

Another program, Project WHAT, begins this process as youth complete the enrollment phase to join the program. The program asks current participants to conduct interviews with interested youth as part of the application process. Program staff describe this to be an "affirming exchange" that not only builds current

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[6] Reclaiming Youth International. Circle of Courage. (2018). Retrieved from: https://www.starr.org/training/youth/aboutcircleofcourage

youths' confidence and leadership, but also shows interested participants that the program is welcoming while allowing youth to speak about themselves with youth their own age.

Developing safe spaces that value youth experiences. Three programs that we spoke with highlight the importance of developing safe spaces that empower youth to share their experiences. Program staff recognize that outside of their programs, youth experience violence, stigma, and other forms of trauma. By developing safe spaces, staff provide an environment where youth can speak freely about their identities and experiences and develop skills to speak about their needs. Youth Brigade program staff shared the example of providing youth with a "warm welcome" each time they attend program activities, which shows youth that program staff care that they are attending. Refugee Transitions program staff connect newcomer participants with a home-based volunteer that can not only serve as a mentor but can also provide academic support and referrals to other services within the comfort of their home.

> "We accept them as they are. I think that is very unique. Our facilitators stand by the door and are always welcoming them. The kids, as soon as they see that, they smile. They know someone really cares about them."
>
> — Youth Brigade Program Staff

Practices to Develop Youth as Advocates of Change

Although population-specific programs provide leadership opportunities in varied ways, based on a review of their program descriptions, we saw that five programs work with identity-focused populations to build youth capacity as advocates of change in their schools and communities. To build leadership skills that promote this outcome, these programs used the following practices:

Providing workshops to build youth advocacy capacity. Three programs (Homies 4 Justice, Youth Brigade, and Project WHAT) that we spoke with in this sub-strategy highlighted the importance of building youth knowledge and awareness around specific issues affecting diverse youth in Oakland. While these programs work with different populations (youth of color, system-impacted youth of color, and youth with incarcerated programs), staff develop and work with youth to provide information on several issues, including: legislation that impact LGBTQI communities, political education, racism and discrimination, and violence. These workshops are also designed to encourage youth to speak openly about these issues and how it affects their own experiences. In addition, all three programs highlighted that the workshops develop technical skills such as facilitation and public speaking skills.

Empowering youth to lead community engagement events and inform policy change. Youth Brigade, Homies 4 Justice, and Project WHAT staff provide youth the opportunities to plan community engagement events, lead awareness raising events with school teachers and staff, and inform programs on policies that impact their lives. As part of their efforts to develop inclusive and safe spaces for LGBTQI students, Youth Brigade staff work with youth to develop LGBTQI 101 workshops geared for school staff, teachers, and peers to share information on LGBTQI identities, how to support LGBTQI youth, and develop "ally-ships." Homies 4 Justice youth create community events that bring diverse youth together around issues such as community violence, police brutality, and cross-racial community events. Youth in this program lead the planning, logistics, and content of these events. Project WHAT youth help program staff by attending program presentations, partnership meetings, and lobbying events at the local and state level; program staff

> "Increasing knowledge of and engagement in community is really important for us. Not only for [youth]to learn about what's going on in Oakland but learning their own roles as advocates and being able to teach others."
>
> — Youth Brigade Program Staff

intentionally provide these opportunities to ensure that the youth experience and perspective is voiced and informs the development of policies.

HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC SUPPORT

OFCY funded five programs that provide high-school age youth with leadership opportunities while also enhancing connections to school, promoting academic goals, and supporting transitions to adulthood. Although all programs focus on general youth development and leadership, the other outcomes they prioritize varied. Notably, only two explicitly focus on academic support: College Track Oakland, which offers tutoring and other support to ensure students graduate high school eligible to attend a 4-year college, and Alternatives in Action's Youth Development Leadership Communities (YDLC), which offers a literacy curriculum to support students who are reading below grade level. About one-third of all units of service provided by these two programs fell under the Academic Programming, College Prep, or STEM categories in Cityspan.[7] Two other programs, Fresh Lifelines for Youth, FLY Law and Leadership Program and Kids First Oakland's REAL HARD Youth Leadership is focusing on providing youth leadership and peer led activities to promote change within their schools and communities. Oakland Leaf's Love Cultivating Schoolyards focuses on nutrition and social awareness through gardening and community building at their schools.

In spring of 2018, we visited Alternatives in Action's Youth Development Leadership Communities (YDLC). To provide more information about the programs in this sub-strategy, we also reviewed our interview with Oakland Leaf's Love Cultivating Schoolyards from spring of 2017 and reviewed other documents and online sources related to the other programs.
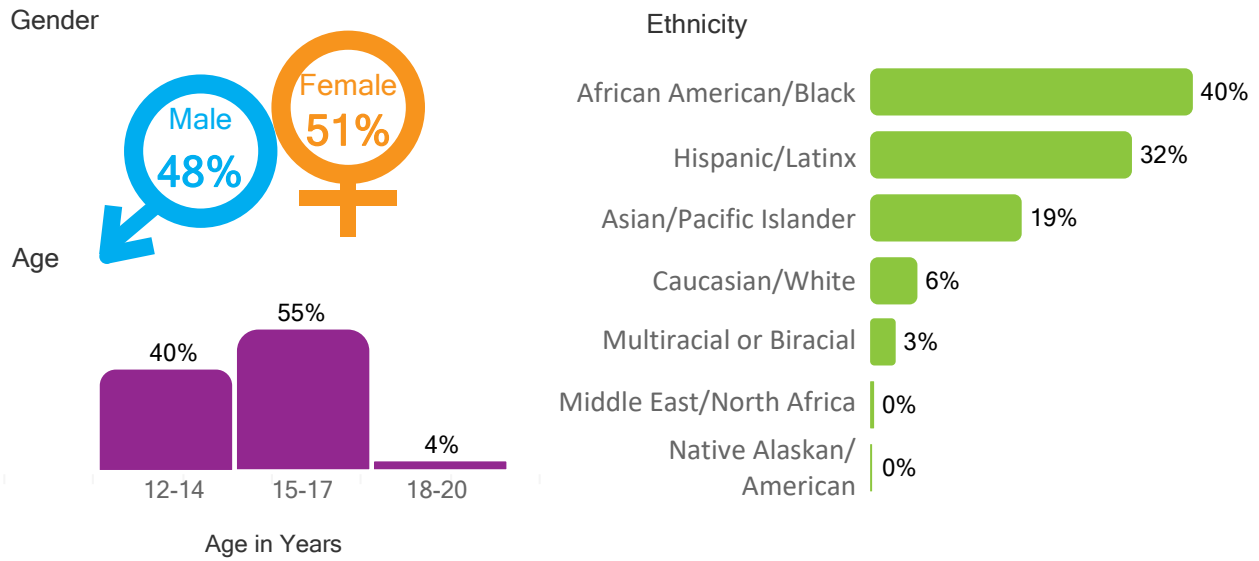
Youth characteristics

During the 2016-2017 program year, 2,058 children and youth participated in programs that focus on high school academic support under the Year-Round YDE strategy. About 95% of participants in these programs were between 12-17 years old, with 55% of participants being between 15-17 years old. Compared to other youth engagement programming, high school academic support programs served a higher proportion of Asian youth, mostly due to their strong representation in REAL HARD Youth Leadership and College Track Oakland.

Program staff from Life Academy described their participants as resilient, street smart, and emotionally intelligent. Although the youth may experience trauma and poverty, and the majority are reading below their grade level, they know how to read people, navigate systems, and stay focused on what they need to do.

The students we spoke with attend the program because of the relationships they build with the staff and other students and the emotional support they receive. According to one participant, "Building those personal relationships with people, is the real thing that is happening." Another commented, "Being in this program, you get to know people. Who they truly are. Not just the outside looking in."

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[7] In 2016-2017, 32% of YDLC units of service and 36% of College Track units of service fell in these categories.

High School Academic Support Programs: Participant Demographics in FY2016-2017

Gender

Male 48%

Female 51%

Age

55%

40%

4%

| 12-14 | 15-17 | 18-20 |

Age in Years

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percentage
African American/Black	40%
Hispanic/Latinx	32%
Asian/Pacific Islander	19%
Caucasian/White	6%
Multiracial or Biracial	3%
Middle East/North Africa	0%
Native Alaskan/American	0%

Practices to Promote Leadership Among High School Students

Although all five High School Academic Support programs aim to develop youth leadership, their focus on youth leadership varied. Youth leadership for high school students centered on providing life skills, personal development and leadership training programs. Due to the variety of program approaches within this sub-strategy, we reviewed program descriptions along with YLDC and Love Cultivating Schoolyards interview data to identify the following key practices for promoting youth leadership in high school students:

Providing life skills and postsecondary preparation. Two programs offer specialized, targeted programming to help youth prepare for adulthood. In the FLY Law Program, participants take a twelve-week course that educates youth about the law and teaches life skills. The program identifies participants who would benefit from additional support and encourages them to enroll in an intensive leadership program that combines case management, group leadership training, and service learning projects. College Track supports personal development to motivated, college-bound high school students through its Student Life workshops that provide students with the opportunities, resources, and tools to explore their passions while preparing for college success.

Providing leadership opportunities to inform school and community change. Like several programs in the population-specific sub-strategy, three programs in the high school academic support program provide leadership opportunities to become agents of change within their schools and community. For instance, REAL HARD Youth Leadership provides leadership training to 50 youth, developing the research, base-building, and critical thinking skills needed to solve problems in, and become more attached to, their school community. As described in the quote below, leaders in turn engage their peers in a school culture campaign.

"REAL HARD is focused on shifting school culture from punitive to restorative by expanding leadership roles for students to become culture drivers, implement shared values, and create respectful learning spaces."[8]

Similarly, YDLC offers all youth opportunities, including non-traditional leaders, to make a meaningful contribution to their community through clubs. These youth work on a community impact project where they identify an issue in their community that they want to address and collaboratively develop and execute an action plan. For example, youth wanted to address homelessness in their neighborhood, so they came up with an action plan to distribute bagged lunches to people in need around their community. Love Cultivating Schoolyards trains high school student interns to maintain school gardens and lead afterschool enrichment classes for elementary and middle school students. Interns take turns writing lesson plans, leading different parts of the gardening class, posting on the program's blog, and managing different aspects of the school gardens. As staff explained, "by the spring, we're not running programs; kids are running programs. That's how we want it to be. That we've modeled it for them in such a way that it is a culture of contribution; it is a culture that youth have a voice."

Practices to Support Social Emotional Learning

During our visit, YDLC staff frequently described the complex issues their participants face and the risky behaviors they are often exposed to in their communities. Because 80% of their participants are reading below grade level, they offer daily tutoring and a literacy curriculum to provide extra academic support, but they focus most intently on promoting social-emotional learning and problem-solving skills to support their success in college, career, and community. YDLC staff explained that social-emotional learning has been infused in their model to give youth the 21st Century skills to successfully cope with their problems and ultimately sustain jobs, be good people, and think beyond their own individual successes and about those around them. This focus was evident during the focus group, when one participant explained, "I feel like I grew as a person. I learned to be more responsible. I've learned to be more compassionate to others. I've learned to be more open. To not be so judgmental." Another added, "I come here to be interactive and talkative and social. It helps me with my people skills." YDLC staff and participants identified three crucial ingredients they use to support social emotional learning:

> "If I'm not dealing with my emotions, then I'm acting out in class, I'm fighting, I'm smoking weed. I'm coping in these negative ways. If I can really deal with my emotions and what's going on with me, I can have better ways to cope, so that I'm not a hindrance to myself."
>
> — YDLC Staff

Providing coaching to support social and emotional learning. YDLC staff utilize a coaching model to develop social and emotional learning, support problem solving, and promote healthy decision-making. Under this model, staff help youth identify the issues they are facing, identify solutions, and provide scaffolding so youth can ultimately problem-solve independently. They are "cheerleaders" for the youth and help them talk through problems they are facing, but they also let the youth make their own decisions and sometimes their own mistakes:

> "Coaches don't just help you develop your skill, they also champion you and help you see what is golden inside of you. They help you identify your strengths and celebrate those. They also help you identify your areas of growth, so that you're working to grow that skill set as well."
>
> — YDLC Staff

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[8] https://www.oaklandkidsfirst.org/real-hard/

We can't just tell them what to say or what to do. We have to give them opportunities to fail, to learn from their mistakes, to have those follow-up conversations with peers and adults around how could you have done this differently.

Developing trusting relationships. This coaching model relies on strong, trusting relationships between youth and adults. Adults build trust by showing interest in participants' lives, opening up about their own lives, being available when anyone needs someone to talk to, offering emotional support, and demonstrating humor. They also show they care by offering help when necessary, from something as simple as providing a ride home to helping a homeless participant locate a shelter. As one staff reflected, "the staff here love these kids. Whatever you do, that means a lot, especially when a significant number of adults in their lives, in the world are giving them the message that they're not loved." The power of this support was obvious in the words of one YDLC youth: "I always knew I was capable to do good, but when I'm feeling down, and I feel like I can't do this, it's always good to hear somebody say 'You can do it. I've got you. Let's do this.'"

Developing opportunities for peer-led education to promote social and emotional learning. During the 2017-18 program year, a group of students in YDLC's media class have worked on an emotional intelligence project. They presented about healthy coping strategies for a group of their peers and they are currently planning monthly events around different emotional intelligence topics. These peer-led education opportunities not only help youth to develop leadership skills, but also to actively develop their peers social and emotional learning.

LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS FOR OFCY

Within its YDE strategy, OFCY provides funding to a broad array of programs which attract and engage youth of different ages, identities, abilities, and interests. The programs are so diverse and can be difficult to categorize into discrete program types. Our detailed analysis into the nuances of these different programs types has surfaced some lessons learned and implications for OFCY to consider, particularly as it shapes its Request For Proposals (RFP) for the 2019-2022 funding cycle:

- **Having a broad array of programs is important for attracting and retaining older youth**. In keeping with research on this topic, the presence of programs that offer a range of different types of skill-building opportunities while promoting youth development is important for engaging older youth with different interests and passions.

- **Programs are increasingly focused on how to develop Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills in the young people they serve**. These skills include self-awareness, emotional regulation, impulse control, social understanding, decision making, and resilience. OUSD, along with other school districts across the nation, are placing a stronger focus on SEL outcomes. Because the structure of afterschool and youth development programs lend themselves well to supporting SEL outcomes, this may be an area where OUSD and OFCY can come into better alignment, and where programs can have a broader impact.

"We have that level of relationship. It's much more than a job. It's feeding them when they're hungry. It's giving them money for a bus fare, taking them home at night. We strongly invest in them and their success. Then, I think we're able to get inside information. They let us in. People trust us because of that."

— YDLC Staff

- **Support for youth leadership varies considerably across programs, depending in part on participant age and the focal point of the program**. Programs serving older youth are more likely to build in meaningful leadership opportunities for youth. Promotion of leadership for younger youth is more likely to focus on decision-making and skill development. It might be useful for OFCY's funding approach to be informed by a research-supported framework that clearly defines a leadership progression for different age groups.

- **The high school academic support programs do not fit well as a program "type."** The primary feature that these programs have in common is that they serve high school students. OFCY may want to think more carefully about what types of outcomes it would like its high school academic support programs to focus on. For instance, if the goal is to have programs provide "academic support" then OFCY might want to further define what activities it hopes programs within this category might engage youth in.

- **The population-specific category is really two separate categories: programs that serve youth who have self-defined identities (e.g. ethnic group or sexual identity) and programs focused on youth who share common needs or barriers (e.g. teen moms, youth with disabilities).** Both sets of programs are important for making sure that OFCY reaches priority populations, but they do not necessarily share common goals. Identity-focused programs are very similar in that they focus on creating safe spaces for youth to explore aspects of identity that are likely to be consistent across situations and time and woven into an individual's sense of self and personhood. Programs that focus on common needs or barriers are less similar to one another, as they often prioritize specific skill-building opportunities, social support, or leadership building.

ARTS

Agency and Program	Total Number Served	Unique Focus	Phone Interview (2016-17)	Site Visit (2017-18)	Focus Group (2017-18)	City Span (2016-18)	Avg. Hours of Service per Participant
Attitudinal Healing Connection, Inc. – West Oakland Legacy & Leadership Project	220	Visual Arts Leadership Development Environmental Awareness		✔	✔	✔	44
Bay Area Girls' Rock Camp – Girls Rock After School Program (GRASP) and Girls Rock Summer Camp	65	Music Life Skills Female Mentorship				✔	36
Chapter 510 INK – Department of Make Believe	339	Creative Writing Relationship Building Tutoring				✔	14
Dimensions Dance Theater, Inc. - Rites of Passage	95	Dance Life Skills Apprenticeships		✔	✔	✔	239
Music is Extraordinary, Inc. - Preparatory Studies in Music	212	Music Performance Teen mentorship				✔	44
Oakland Public Education Fund - Media Enterprise Alliance	195	Media-Arts Education Career Building Leadership Development Team-Building Skills				✔	79
Safe Passages - Get Active	74	Visual Arts Civic Engagement Leadership Development Life Skills Conflict Resolution				✔	191
Youth Speaks, Inc. - Arts in Education	435	Spoken Word Poetry Creative Writing Performance Leadership Development				✔	9
Arts Sub-strategy Total	1635						50

COMMUNITY-BASED AFTER SCHOOL

Agency and Program	Total Number Served	Unique Focus	Phone Interview (2016-17)	Site Visit (2017-18)	Focus Group (2017-18)	City Span (2016-18)	Avg. Hours of Service per Participant
American Indian Child Resource Center - Culture Keepers	43	Cultural Preservation Leadership Development Civic Engagement				✓	143
Boys & Girls Clubs of Oakland - Educational Programs for the Youth of Oakland	1,551	Academic Support Enrichment	✓			✓	60
Brothers on the Rise - Brothers, UNITE!	169	Social Emotional Learning Cascading Mentorship Leadership Development		✓	✓	✓	98
East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation - Lion's Pride	138	Literacy Academic Success Social Emotional Learning				✓	228
East Bay Spanish Speaking Citizens' Foundation - LIBRE (Leading the Independence of our Barrios for Raza Empowerment)	191	Peer Support Leadership Development				✓	29
East Oakland Boxing Association - SmartMoves Education and Enrichment Program	436	Education Health and Wellness Leadership Development				✓	183
East Oakland Youth Development Center - After School Leadership Academy	420	Leadership Development Cascading Mentorship Academic Success Life Skills	✓	✓		✓	133
Native American Health Center, Inc. - Community Wellness Department Youth Services	388	Holistic Wellness Leadership Development Case Management Cultural Arts				✓	72
Oakland Parks and Recreation - Oakland Discovery Centers	280	Academic enrichment Experiential learning Fitness/Sports				✓	122
Community-Based After School Sub-strategy Total	3616						97

POPULATION-SPECIFIC

Agency and Program	Total Number Served	Unique Focus	Phone Interview (2016-17)	Site Visit (2017-18)	Focus Group (2017-18)	City Span (2016-18)	Avg. Hours of Service per Participant
Alameda Family Services - DreamCatcher Youth Services	109	Unaccompanied Minors, LGBTQI youth, and youth exposed to trafficking and homelessness Leadership Development Support and Advisory Groups Mental Health				✓	21
Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) - AYPAL: Building API Community Power	79	Asian and Pacific Islander and refugee families Leadership Development Civic Engagement Cultural Arts Activism				✓	273
Bay Area Outreach & Recreation Program - Sports & Recreation for Youth with Disabilities	37	Young people with physical Disability or vision impairment Sports and Recreation Relationship Building	✓			✓	135
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice – Homies 4 Justice	30	Young people impacted by systems Leadership Development La Cultura Cura Community Organizing	✓			✓	248
Community Works West Inc – Project WHAT!	28	Young people with incarcerated parents Leadership Development Policy Change	✓			✓	93
Covenant House California - CHC Transitional Services	134	Opportunity youth and homeless youth Transitional Housing Services Referrals				✓	8
First Place for Youth - First Steps Community Resource Center	188	Transition-age foster and homeless youth Workshops Individual intervention				✓	31
Health Initiatives for Youth (HIFY) - Youth Development and Empowerment	95	LGBTQI and ally youth Socioemotional support Leadership Development				✓	20

Agency and Program	Total Number Served	Unique Focus	Phone Interview (2016-17)	Site Visit (2017-18)	Focus Group (2017-18)	City Span (2016-18)	Avg. Hours of Service per Participant
La Clinica de La Raza, Inc - Youth Brigade	289	Older Youth Peer leadership Conflict Resolution Healthy Decision-Making Community Engagement		✓	✓	✓	14
Project Re-Connect Inc - Family Connections/ Leaders Connect	45	Youth and Families Socioemotional Skills Leadership Development Career Awareness				✓	19
Refugee Transitions - Newcomer Community Engagement Program	982	Refugee children and youth Unaccompanied Minors Academic Support Family Support and Engagement Leadership Development Enrichment	✓	✓	✓	✓	39
Teen Success, Inc - Supporting Teen Mothers Program	46	Teen Mothers Peer Learning Coaching Academic Support				✓	28
Youth Alive - Teens on Target Youth Leadership	111	Middle School Students High School Students Leadership Development Peer Educators				✓	58
Youth UpRising – LOUD: Loving Our Unique Design	132	LGBTQI and ally youth Support Groups Peer Educators Youth Leadership Summit				✓	5
Population-Specific Sub-strategy Total	2305						43

HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Agency and Program	Total Number Served	Unique Focus	Phone Interview (2016-17)	Site Visit (2017-18)	Focus Group (2017-18)	City Span (2016-18)	Avg. Hours of Service per Participant
Alternatives in Action - Youth Development Leadership Communities (YDLC)	646	Social Emotional Learning Leadership Development Literacy		✓	✓	✓	78
College Track - College Track Oakland	315	College Access and Success Leadership Development				✓	143
Fresh Lifelines for Youth, Inc - FLY Leadership Program	105	Law Education Case Management Leadership Development				✓	24
Oakland Kids First - REAL HARD Youth Leadership	942	Positive School Culture Leadership Development Peer Engagement				✓	13
Oakland Leaf Foundation - Love Cultivating Schoolyards	50	Nutrition Social Justice Awareness	✓			✓	106
High School Academic Support Sub-strategy Total	2058						56