# BEST STARTS FOR KIDS FIRST LEVY EVALUATION

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Prepared by Illuminate Evaluation Services, LLC
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is made possible by the Best Starts for Kids levy. Best Starts for Kids builds on the strengths of families and communities so that babies are born healthy, children thrive and establish a strong foundation for life, and young people grow into happy, healthy adults. For more information on the Best Starts for Kids levy, go to www.kingcounty.gov/beststarts. *Opinions contained in these materials reflect those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of King County.*

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We appreciate the King County and Best Starts for Kids staff who provided support on the evaluation, provided background and introductions to awardees, offered feedback on the evaluation, and participated in interviews.

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We appreciate the feedback and guidance from members of the *Evaluation Advisory Group* and the *Children and Youth Advisory Board*.

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We appreciate the time and commitment from the community partners/awardees, external evaluators, and community leaders who participated in the evaluation.

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Staff members from the following organizations provided input on the evaluation through interviews and/or surveys. A total of one to four staff members represented each organization. The partner organizations are:

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Birth to Three Developmental Center
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BRAVE- Building Resilience Awareness & Variations of Excellence
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Eastside Pathways
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Empowering Youth & Families Outreach
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Families of Color Seattle
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Federal Way Youth Action Team
FEEST
Filipino Community of Seattle
First Five Years and Beyond
Freedom Project
Friends of Youth
Front and Centered
Gage Academy of Art
Gender Diversity
Global Perinatal Services (formerly Somali Doulas Northwest)
Glover Empower Mentoring
Greater Maple Valley Community Center
Hazelwood Elementary School
Headwater People
HealthPoint
Highline Public Schools
HomeSight
HopeCentral
Hummingbird Indigenous Doula and Family Services
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Institute for Community Leadership
InterCultural Children and Family Services
International Community Health Services
Iraqi Community Center of Washington
Kandelia
Kent School District
Kent Youth & Family Services
KidsQuest Children's Museum
Kindering
Korean Community Services Center
Lake Washington School District
Lambert House
Latino Community Fund
Listen and Talk
Living Well Kent
Look, Listen, and Learn
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Mentoring Urban Students and Teens
Mother Africa
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National Development Council
Navos
NeighborCare Health
Neighborhood House
New Horizons
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Northwest School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
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Pacific Islanders Health Board
Para Los Niños
Partner in Employment
Partners for Our Children/University of WA School of Social Work
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POCAAN
Program for Early Parent Support
Progress House Association
Puget Sound Sage
Refugee Women's Alliance
Restore, Assemble, Produce
RHL Consulting LLC
Riverton Park United Methodist Church
Rooted in Vibrant Communities
School's Out Washington
Seattle CARES Mentoring Movement
Seattle Children's PlayGarden
Seattle Indian Health Board
Seattle King County NAACP
Seattle Parks and Recreation
Seattle Public Schools
Skykomish School District
Somali Family Safety Task Force
Somali Health Board
South Seattle Women's Health Foundation
Southeast Youth and Family Services
Southwest Youth and Family Services

St. Vincent de Paul/Centro Rendu
Start Early Washington
Statewide Poverty Action Network
STEM Paths Innovation Network
Surge Reproductive Justice
Tenants Union of Washington State
The Arc of King County
The Capacity Collective
The DOVE Project
The Imagine Institute
The Joseph Project
Tilth Alliance
Tiny Trees Preschool
Trail Youth
Treehouse
United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
Unleash The Brilliance
Urban Family Center Association
Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
UTOPIA Washington
Vashon Youth & Family Services
Verrenti Consulting
Voices of Tomorrow
Wa Na Wari
WA-BLOC
Washington Association of Infant Mental Health
We.APP (We Act. Present. Perform)
Wellspring Family Services
West African Community Council
WestEd
WestSide Baby
White Center Community Development Association
White Water Aquatic Management
Wonderland Child & Family Services
World Relief
YMCA of Greater Seattle
YMCA of Greater Seattle (CCORS)
Young Women Empowered
Youth Eastside Services
YWCA of Seattle, King County and Snohomish County
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## EXTERNAL EVALUATORS & CONSULTANTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, King County voters authorized the Best Starts for Kids Initiative (Best Starts), a six-year property tax levy designed to provide resources and opportunities for kids to grow up happy, healthy, safe, and thriving. The goals of this evaluation are to assess the successes, challenges, and implementation learnings from the Best Starts first levy period from 2016-2021 and to inform implementation of the 2022-2027 levy. The overarching question guiding the evaluation is:

*To what extent and in what ways has the Best Starts initiative improved health and well-being and advanced equity for children, youth, families, and communities in King County?*

The following data sources contributed to this evaluation: (1) analysis of interview/focus group data from 112 respondents [72 community partners, 6 community leaders, 16 external evaluators/contractors, and 18 King County/Best Starts staff members]; (2) analysis of 173 Community Partner Surveys; (3) review of partners' biannual reports over eight reporting periods [2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; total of 1750 reports] and 43 community conversations; (4) meta-evaluation of 32 publicly available reports; and (5) review and analysis of existing Best Starts data [Population Indicators, Performance Measures, financial data, RFP process data, and survey data].

### KEY FINDINGS

Systems improvement takes time and requires a consistent, concerted effort. These evaluation findings show that important foundational elements for systems change were put into place across King County during the first Best Starts levy period. Below we identify four key findings:

**Key Finding #1: The Best Starts for Kids first levy initiative has laid the foundation for systems changes that are driven by meaningful community engagement**

- King County's focus on equity and shift in procedures and policy has increased trust with community partners.
- Technical assistance helped community-based organizations apply for funding, and capacity building strengthened their organizational capacity and program implementation.

**Key Finding #2: Best Starts demonstrated that centering equity is both a process and an outcome**

- Leading with equity and focusing on race and place directed support to the populations historically most harmed by government policies and systems.
- Performance measures show alignment with Best Starts' commitment to undoing historical inequities.

**Key Finding #3: King County children, youth, and community-based organizations have benefited from additional resources and programming that improved their self-efficacy, skills, and knowledge to the benefit of their communities.**

- Community partners reported improvements in the quality and quantity of programming that enhanced outcomes for children, youth, and parents/caregivers.
- Performance measures showed high levels of satisfaction and engagement with Best Starts programming.
- Performance measures do not tell the full story of Best Starts' impact and should be paired with narratives and other measures of accountability to tell the full story of Best Starts.

**Key Finding #4: Understanding the context in which the Best Starts initiative has unfolded to date is critical for assessing implementation.**

- Population measures have remained steady or improved over time, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, but often differences by region and by demographic remain. While some positive changes have been observed in King County, there is much work that remains to be done to give kids, young people, and communities the best possible start.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We offer the following recommendations for the Best Starts second levy, which focus on actionable steps for Best Starts staff in their role as initiative administrators. The recommendations are grouped across three areas.

**Recomendation Area #1: Actively sustain the focus on equity in administration of Best Starts**

a. Continue centering Best Starts on equity
b. Continue to improve administrative processes
c. Continue to refine the RFP process
d. Consider the unique needs of partners with multiple grants
e. Continue to provide organizational support
f. Support sustainability planning of community partners

**Recomendation Area #2: Enhance Evaluation and Performance Measurement to Measure Impact**

a. Reconsider the data collection requirements for both population-level indicators and performance measures
b. Continue to use participatory and equitable evaluation approaches
c. Focus on impact
d. Develop a centralized system for data management
e. Consider collecting additional information on organizations during the RFP process
f. Consider revising data-sharing agreements with external agencies

**Recomendation Area #3: Continue to Advance Systems Change for Greater Equity**

a. Continue to pursue, document, and evaluate systems change
b. Continue to build the infrastructure and scale up Best Starts

# BEST STARTS FOR KIDS
# FIRST LEVY EVALUATION

## INTRODUCTION

In 2015, King County voters authorized the Best Starts for Kids Initiative (Best Starts), a six-year property tax levy designed to provide resources and opportunities for kids to grow up happy, healthy, safe, and thriving. The goals of this evaluation are to assess the successes, challenges, and implementation learnings from the Best Starts first levy period from 2016-2021 and to inform implementation of the 2022-2027 levy. The overarching question guiding the evaluation is:

*To what extent and in what ways has the Best Starts initiative improved health and well-being and advanced equity for children, youth, families, and communities in King County?*

The key evaluation questions, identified by the Best Starts evaluation staff and confirmed by the Children and Youth Advisory Board (CYAB) are as follows:

1. What do annual, strategy-level performance measures tell us about the outcomes of Best Starts across years and across strategies?
2. What were the key challenges during the first levy period? Which challenges have been resolved and which are continuing?
3. What can we learn from implementation of Best Starts during the first levy period?

## BEST STARTS FOR KIDS BACKGROUND

With funding approved in 2015, and the *Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan* approved by the King County Council in November 2016, Best Starts implementation began in 2017.[1]

### THEORY OF CHANGE

The Best Starts Theory of Change (see Exhibit 1), developed at the onset of the initiative, illustrates how Best Starts investments drive program and system level changes, leading to changes in population-level indicators. At the program level, children, youth, families, and communities served by Best Starts will increase protective factors and decrease risk factors. At the system level, the investments will improve access to and quality of services, leading to changes in the population indicators and reductions in disparities and disproportionalities. Throughout the first levy, the Best Starts team built upon the Theory of Change to develop a Theoretical Framework, adapted from the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Youth Thrive framework (2015)[2] that illustrates the relationship between protective factors, risk factors, and outcomes (see Exhibit 2).

**Quote**

*Best Starts is a funding stream, policy framework, and initiative working to fund what science has said kids need, prenatal to 24.* – Best Starts staff member

[1] Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan (2016). See: Implementation Plan.

[2] Browne, C., Notkin, S., Schneider-Munos, A., & Zimmerman, F. (2015). Youth thrive: A Framework to help Adolescents Overcome Trauma and Thrive. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work, 25,* 33-52.

Based on a review of documents[3] and interviews with King County leaders, below are some of the foundational components of Best Starts' Theory of Change and Theoretical Frameworks.

- ***Community Engagement and Community Voice****:* Prioritizing equitable decision-making and engagement with communities, focusing on communities historically most harmed by government policies and systems. Through community conversations, advisory groups, the media, and more, Best Starts has engaged the community throughout the whole process, from conceptualizing the vision and programming, identifying and designing the investment areas and strategies, selecting the funded organizations, and reviewing and analyzing data to inform improvements and the implementation plan for 2022-2027. This component emphasizes relational change.
- ***Equity and Social Justice:*** Addressing the root causes of inequities to eliminate disparities by race, ethnicity, geography, immigration and refugee status, income, ability, sexual orientation, and involvement in the welfare system leading to a better quality of life.
- ***Upstream funding*****:** Making investments in promotion and prevention activities instead of crisis intervention and allocating the largest investments in supports for prenatal and early childhood (P-5).
- ***Community-Based Organizations (CBOs):*** Making investments in local CBOs that directly work with the community using emerging, innovative, and culturally-appropriate services to support children, youth, families, and the community.
- ***Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:*** Implementing technical assistance to help CBOs apply for funding and eliminating linguistic, cultural, and procedural barriers. Implementing capacity building for funded CBOs to strengthen capacity (e.g., finance, human resources, information technology), support sustainability, and manage funds.
- ***Multiyear Flexible Funding:*** Using a multiyear funding approach with some flexibility in how the funds are utilized so CBOs can grow and stabilize their organizations, make course corrections to programming, and deliver lasting impacts.
- ***Data and Evaluation.*** Using data and evaluation to tell the story, improve service delivery, ensure accountability, and support decision-making.

In addition, the following approaches were used to understand who stood to benefit from Best Starts and how to support King County residents in an equitable, targeted way:

- ***Life Course Approach*****:** Identifying physical and social hazards that may occur during gestation, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and midlife that affect chronic disease risk and outcomes in later life (Kuh and Ben-Shlomo, 1997).[4]
- ***Targeted Universalism*****:** Achieving specific goals by meeting the specific needs of the most disadvantaged communities and investing in the areas with the highest concentrations of young people, young people in poverty, and families of color.
- ***Prevention:*** Allocating funds to prevent rather than react to problems, which helps to sustain early gains and reduce risk factors.

[3] Best Starts for Kids Assessment Report (October 2020). Assessment Report.

[4] Kuh DL, Ben-Shlomo Y. *A Life Course Approach to Chronic Disease Epidemiology; Tracing the Origins of Ill-health from Early to Adult Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

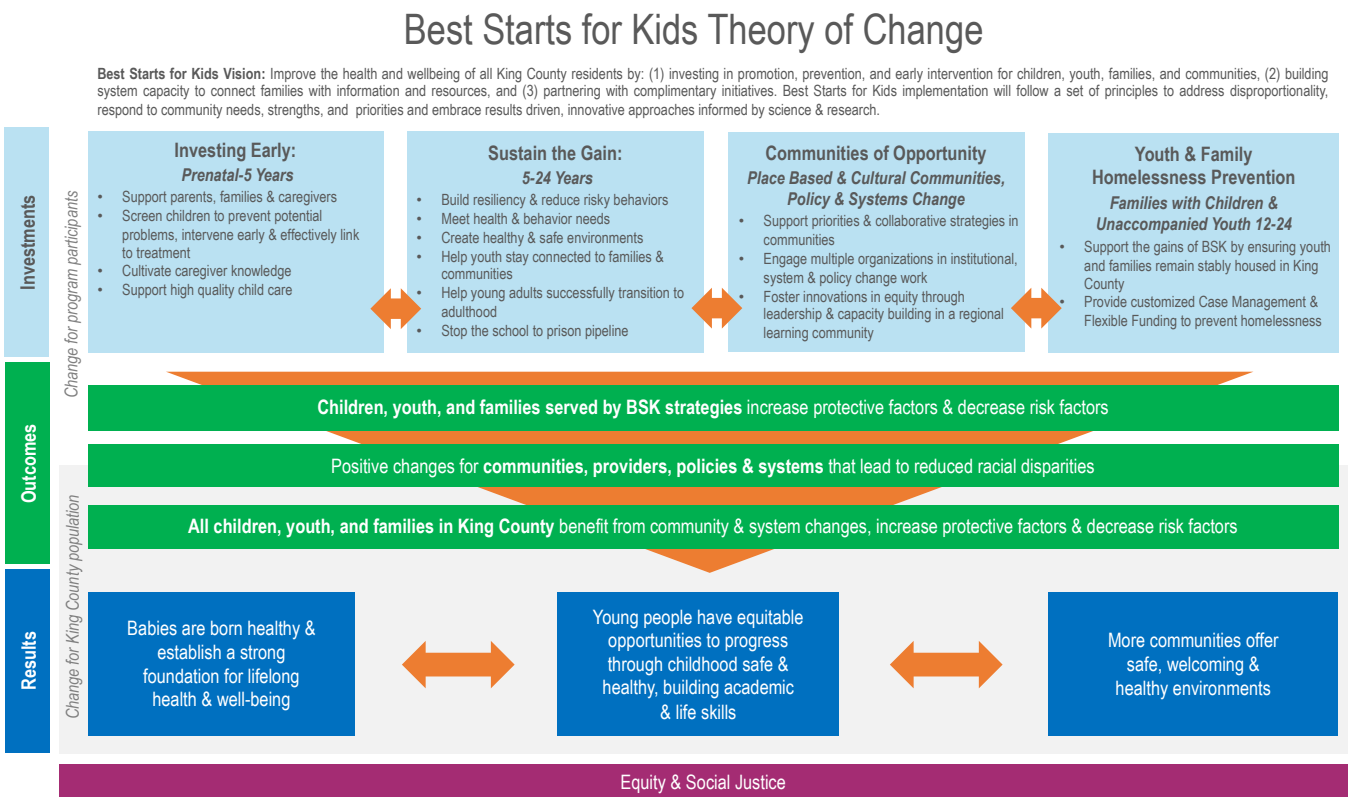



***Exhibit 1.*** **Best Starts for Kids Theory of Change**

***Exhibit 2.*** **Best Starts Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks, along with community feedback obtained during the planning phase, guided the development of Best Starts investment areas and strategies (see Exhibit 3).[5]

**Exhibit 3.**
***Best Starts for Kids: Investment Areas and Strategies***

| BEST STARTS FOR KIDS: INVESTMENT AREAS AND STRATEGIES |
|---|
| Invest Early (Prenatal to 5) |
| Help Me Grow |
| Developmental Promotion and Early Support |
| Workforce Development |
| Home-based Services |
| Community-Based Parenting and Supports |
| Public Health Programs |
| VROOM |
| Child Care Health Consultation |
| Innovation Fund |
| Technical Assistance and Capacity Building |
| Sustain the Gain (5 to 24) |
| Youth Development |
| School Partnerships |
| Family and Community Connections |
| Transitions to Adulthood |
| Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline |
| Technical Assistance and Capacity Building |
| Communities of Opportunity |
| Communities of Opportunity |
| Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative |
| Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative |
| Results Focused and Data Driven |
| Internal and External Measurement and Evaluation |

[5] Best Starts for Kids 2021 Annual Report. See 2021 Annual Report.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the first levy, Best Starts funding created a network to support kids, ensuring they are happy, healthy, safe, and thriving. Through partnerships with 376 unique community-based organizations, Best Starts launched 570 new programs, providing direct service to more than 490,000 children, youth, and parents/caregivers, while also working with the community to support policy and systems change. The sidebar highlights some of the outcomes accomplished during the first levy. These will be discussed in more detail in the *Performance Measures* section.

During the first levy, there were three phases to Best Starts: Planning (2016), Early Implementation (2017-2018), and Full Implementation (2019-2021). During the Planning Phase, King County finalized their implementation plan, established an advisory group, staffed the initiative, and adopted practices to support implementation. During the early Implementation Phase, the first round of grants was awarded to community partners. The evaluation plan was approved in July 2017, and performance measures were developed after awards were made. During this phase, technical assistance and capacity building were initiated, and community partners developed infrastructure (e.g., creating school-based health centers, increasing staffing), planned, and piloted programs. During Full Implementation, additional community partners were awarded grants, implementation broadened, and technical assistance and capacity building efforts increased. During the grant awarding process, King County continued to revise and refine administrative processes and offer technical assistance and capacity building supports to organizations. COVID-19 hit as partners were implementing their programs. Exhibit 4, on the following page provides a general timeline of the first levy period, 2016-2021.

In alignment with the growth in implementation, the amount invested in Best Starts grew each year (see Exhibit 5), as did the number of community partners and total people served (see Exhibit 6). This progression occurs in initiatives where there is an initial period of planning and developing, which is then followed by implementation of programs. A higher percentage of people served by Best Starts identify as female compared to male and were in the below-5 or 5 to 17 age groups, which aligns with the Best Starts focus. The majority identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) (see Exhibit 7). Collectively, most of the people served were from the South and Seattle regions of King County since those regions have larger overall populations and higher concentrations of young people, young people living in poverty, and communities of color.[6] These regions are also lower on the Child Opportunity Index (COI)[7], which means they have less access to quality schools, parks and playgrounds, clean air, healthy food, health care, and safe housing.

**376**
Community Partners

**570**
New Programs

**490,000**
Children, Youth, and Parents/ Caregivers Reached

**14,000+**
Events

**17,000+**
Capacity Building Hours

**2,000+**
Resident Leaders

**81**
New Policies

[6] Best Starts for Kids Assessment Report October 2020, pg. 39.
[7] A national index of neighborhood resources and conditions that help children develop in a healthy way. See: Article Link.

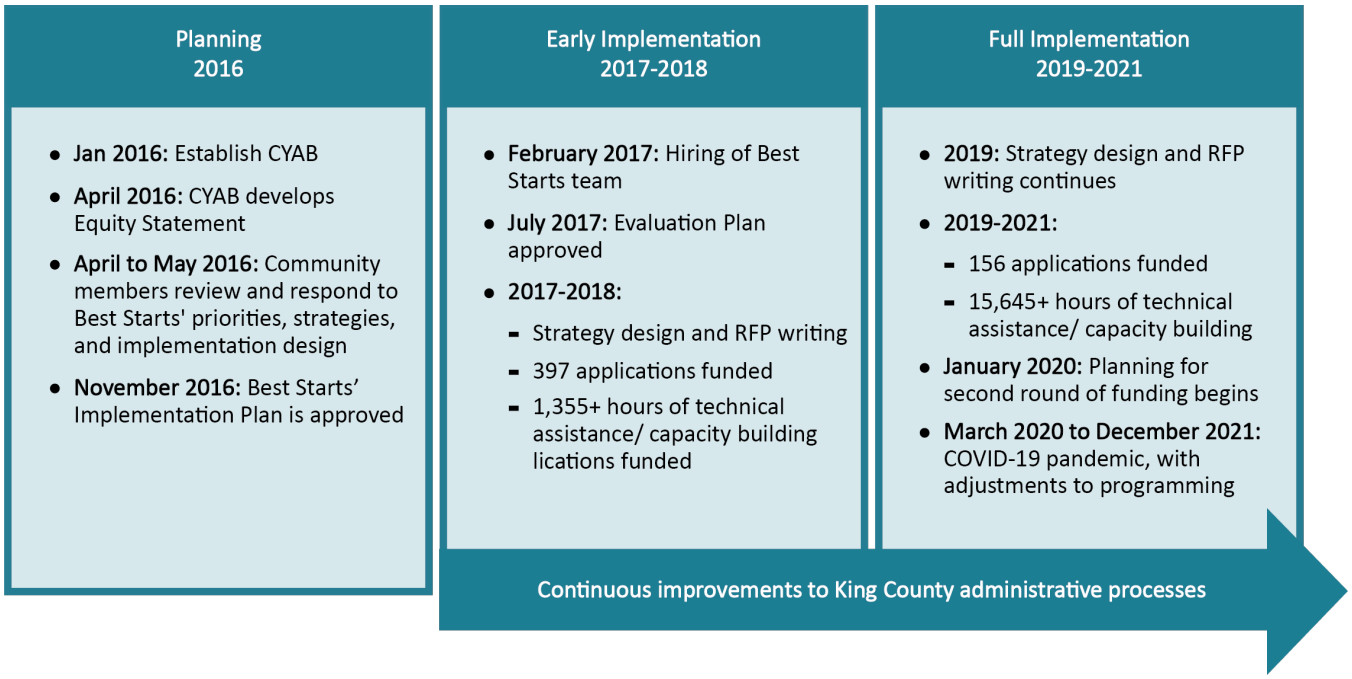



***Exhibit 4.*** **Best Starts for Kids Timeline (2016 – 2021)**

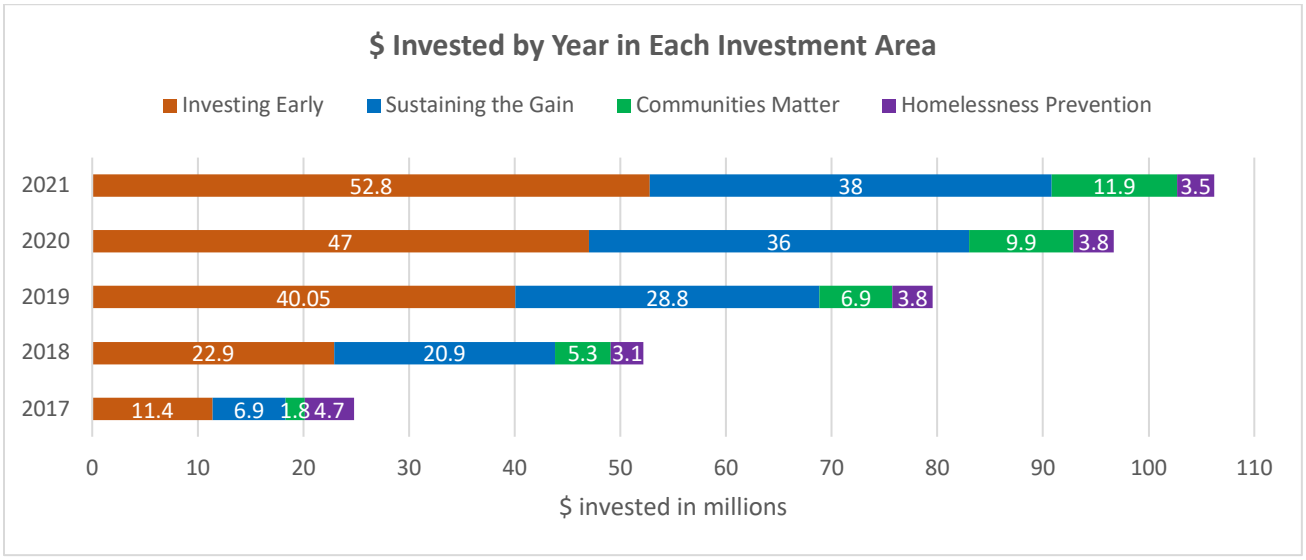
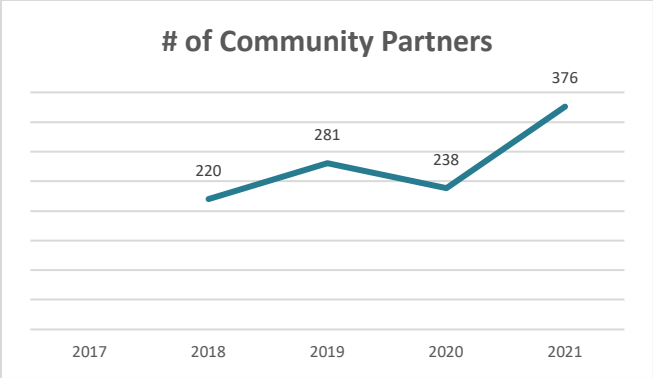



***Exhibit 5.*** **Funds Invested by Investment Area: 2017-2021**

Note. Data from Best Starts annual reports



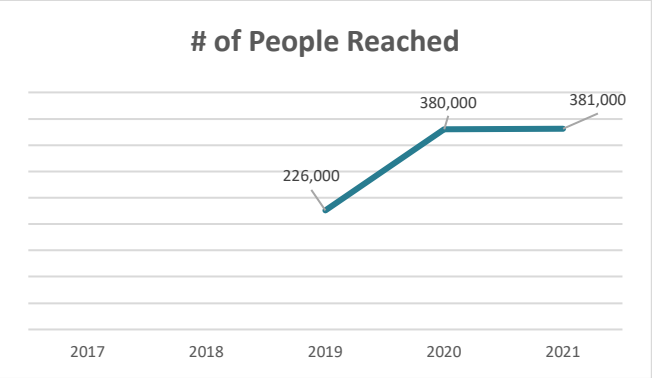
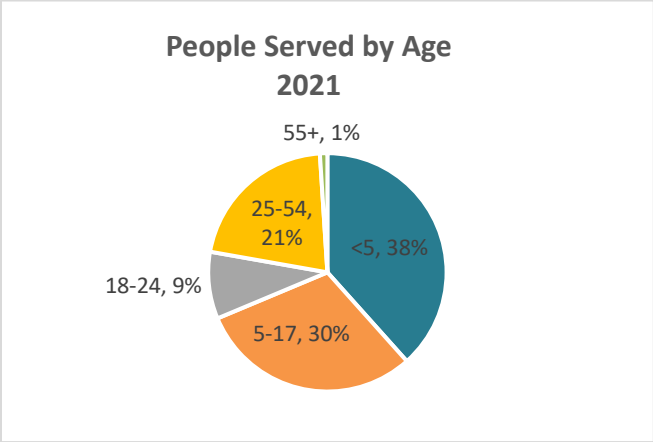
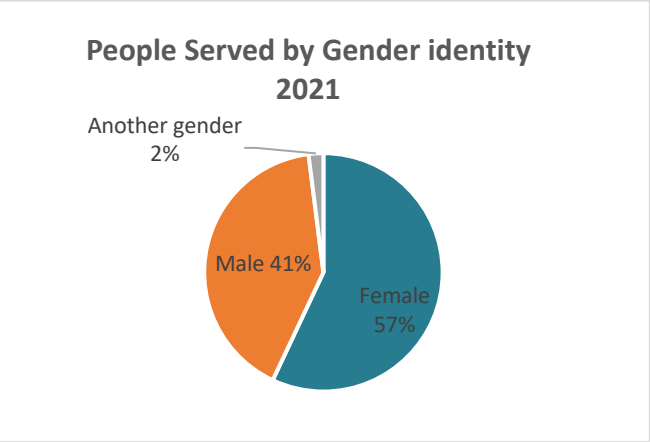
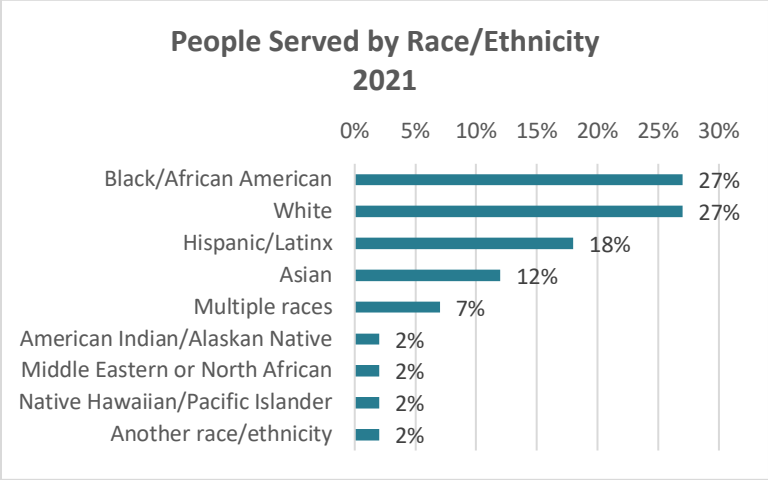




***Exhibit 6.*** **Number of Community Partners and People Reached by Year**
Note. Data from Best Starts annual reports



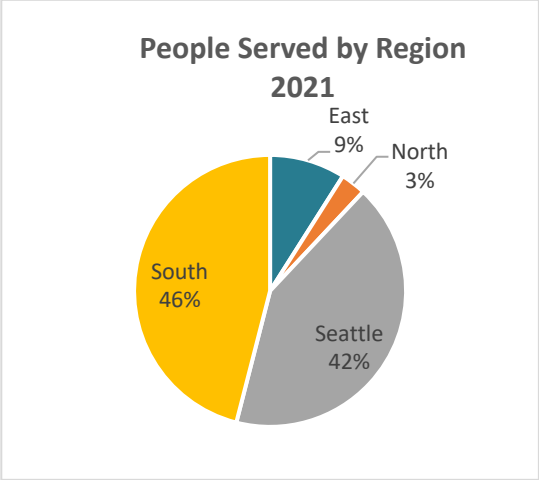




***Exhibit 7.*** **Percent Reached by Region, Gender Identity, Race/Ethnicity, and Age**
Note. Data from 2021 Best Starts annual report

Over the course of the levy, 1,487 applications for Best Starts funding were submitted by community partners, of which 570 were funded. About one-third of the funded applications were from community partners who were funded for more than one program; thus, the number of funded applications is more than the number of community partners (see Exhibit 8). Of those funded organizations, 39% had BIPOC leadership and served BIPOC communities. Since most of the Requests for Proposals (RFPs) were released in 2017-2018, most of the

applications were funded during those years (see Exhibit 9), and RFPs released in later years were often renewals or building off the programs initially funded in 2017-2018. The average amount requested by community partners who received awards was a little over $230,000, but the average amount requested by all applicants (awarded and not awarded) was higher at about $283,000, suggesting that there is more need for support and resources than can be provided.

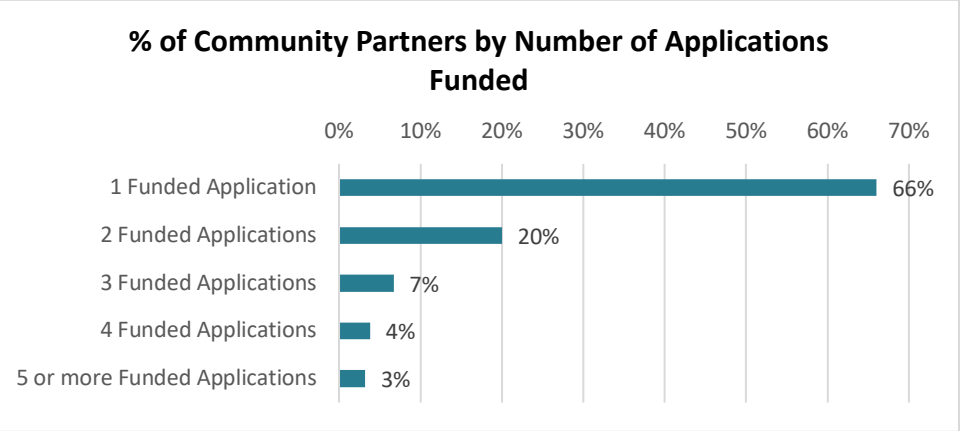



***Exhibit 8.*** **Percent of Community Partners by Number of Applications Funded**

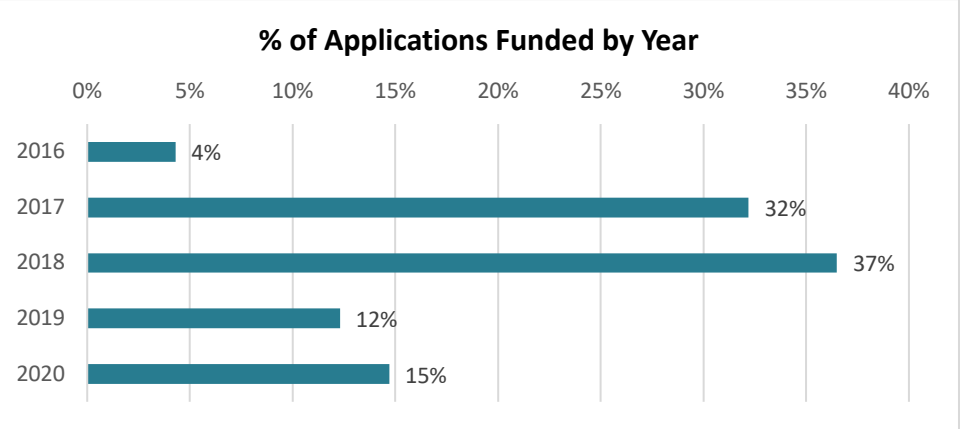



**Exhibit 9. Percent of Applications Funded by Year**

## EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation utilized a mixed-methods design, using qualitative and quantitative data, to assess the implementation and impact of the first levy. The CYAB provided input on the original Request for Proposal (RFP) for the evaluation, evaluation design, and findings. Data collection tools were reviewed and revised based on feedback from the Best Starts evaluation and program staff. Illuminate grounded the evaluation using an equity approach and systems lens. The sections below address the data sources, analyses, and systems frameworks that were included. See Appendix A for a glossary of terms and abbreviations. See Appendix B for more details on the methodology.

## DATA SOURCES

Illuminate collected primary data through interviews, focus groups, and community partner surveys. We also collected secondary data from Best Starts program staff, as well as publicly-available data on the Best Starts' website. Below is a detailed description of each data source.

***Primary Data***

- ***Interviews and focus groups:*** Conducted interviews and focus groups with 112 participants, representing 45 randomly selected funded organizations, referred to as community partners (n=72 participants); external evaluators from 11 agencies (n=16 participants); community leaders and CYAB members (n=6 participants), and King County Best Starts leaders and randomly selected program staff from Public Health Seattle & King County and Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) (n=18 participants). Interview protocols were designed to be tailored to each group. The interviews included questions about their work with Best Starts, implementation, contextual factors, equity/inequity drivers, successes, challenges, impacts, and recommendations for the second round of funding.
- ***Community Partner Surveys:*** Collected and analyzed surveys from 173 unique community partners that were funded during the first levy. The survey included questions about Best Starts' Organizational Support of and interactions with partners. Other topics included equity, systems change, implementation, and challenges, as well as open-ended questions. The results are integrated into the report, with a full summary in Appendix C.

***Secondary Data***

- ***Qualitative Data Collected and Coded by Best Starts:*** Best Starts provided a database of coded qualitative data from 43 Community Conversations they conducted in 2020 and from 1750 narrative reports completed by partners annually or semi-annually over eight reporting periods between 2018 and 2021. In the reports, partners explore successes, challenges, and program changes. These data were used to augment and validate the other findings in this evaluation and are summarized in Appendix D.
- ***Evaluation Reports and Document Analysis:*** Conducted a meta-evaluation of 32 publicly-available Best Starts reports, including external evaluations, programmatic reports and tools, and assessment and annual reports. The analyses included a categorization of the types of information available, documentation of evaluation methodologies and equity-centered approaches, analyses of rigor, and a synthesis of key findings, challenges, and recommendations.
- ***Existing Best Starts Quantitative Data.*** Obtained and analyzed existing Best Starts data. The data sources included:
    - Population Indicators (headline and secondary)
    - Performance Measures
    - Financial Data (summary data and award amounts by partner/location)
    - RFP Process Data (partner characteristics; awardees compared to non-awardees)
    - Survey Data (2020 Best Starts for Kids Survey administered July 2020 to partners, organizations, and community members; Understanding Best Starts Grantee COVID-19 Impact & Experiences Survey)

## DATA ANALYSES

As described above, Illuminate collected and analyzed data provided by Best Starts, publicly-available data, plus additional primary data. The general approach to data collection and analyses emphasized the following dimensions:

- **Thematic Analyses:** Conducted content analysis of qualitative data.
- **Equity:** Disaggregated results, when possible, with an emphasis on race/ethnicity and region.
- **Change over time:** Investigated change over the life of the levy, when possible, including conditions prior to levy implementation.
- **Reducing gaps**: Examined whether gaps in services between different racial/ethnic groups or between regions are reducing over time and leading to greater equity.
- **Comparison Analyses:** Used publicly available data to provide comparisons when feasible. Comparisons include comparing Best Starts data to Washington State averages or comparing King County to other counties. Some of the analyses compare King County to comparison counties in California and Oregon.[8]

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Best Starts for Kids is a complex system change initiative with multiple interventions being implemented across King County. The goal is to improve both programs and systems to contribute to population-level improvements for kids, young people, and communities in King County. To make sense of Best Starts and to analyze Best Starts implementation and impact, the Illuminate team's analysis was informed by three distinct, but complementary evaluation frameworks that take into account programmatic performance, types of systems-level improvements attempted, and Best Starts' contribution to population-level indicators. The evaluation frameworks are described below.

*Inverted Triangle framework.* The Inverted Triangle framework was described by Kania, Kramer, and Senge's (2018)[9] interpretation of systems change reform (see Exhibit 10). In this model, funders interested in systems change must assess their practices internally as well as externally by recognizing that to impact change, it is necessary to work at all three levels. This framework helps funders: (1) advance equity by shifting structural conditions that hold the problem in place, (2) see how their own ways of thinking and acting must change, and (3) work at three different levels of change – explicit, semi-explicit, and implicit.

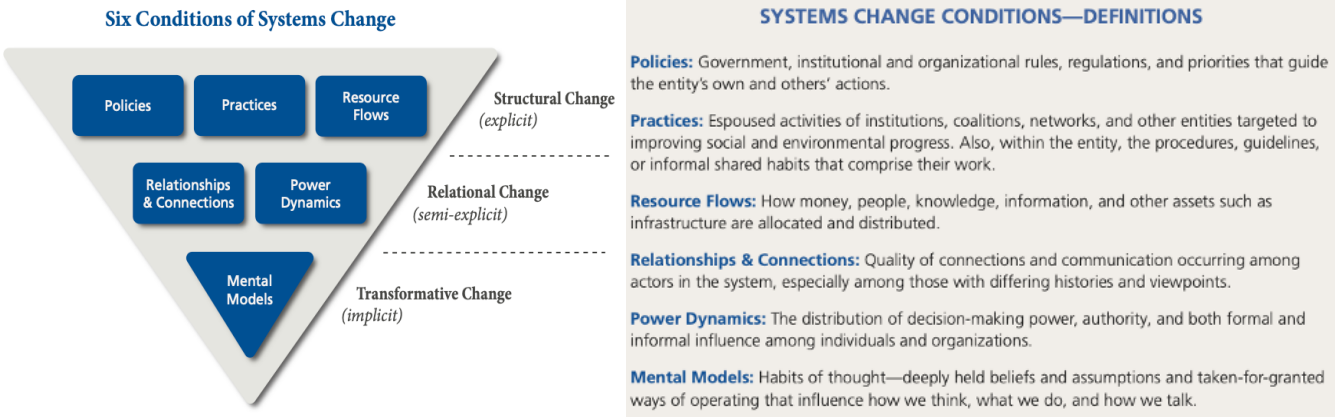



***Exhibit 10.*** **Inverted Triangle Framework**

[8] The comparison counties are "peer counties" identified by the CDC's Community Health Status Indicators project through cluster analysis. For a summary of the methodology see: Peer County Methodology.

[9] Kania, J., Kramer, M., Senge, P. (2018). *The Water of Systems Change.* FSG. See The Water of Systems Change.

*Build Initiative Framework.* The Build Initiative Framework[10] outlines five types of system-level activities, outcomes, and impact. Exhibit 11 illustrates the five areas of systems change and the basic logic of how the areas work together to produce systems-level impact. While the figure implies a linear sequence, initiatives can focus on multiple areas simultaneously. Some areas may receive more attention than others depending on the point in time, the greatest needs, and opportunities available. Understanding the areas of focus helps to identify activities, expected outcomes and impacts, and evaluation approaches.

***Exhibit 11.*** **Build Initiative Framework**

*Results Based Accountability (RBA).* In early 2017, a detailed evaluation and performance measurement plan[11] was adopted for Best Starts. Fundamental to the plan was the concept of Results Based Accountability.[12] This framework sets out a structure for two types of accountability: ***population accountability*** and ***performance accountability***. Population accountability is measured with Population Indicators, which assess the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities throughout King County. To track population-level changes, Best Starts analyzes headline and secondary indicators for each investment area. The Population Indicators are seen as long-term and aspirational, and can be affected by many factors, not just Best Starts efforts. Performance accountability is measured using Performance Measures collected from the Best Starts funded programs who are directly serving children, youth, families, and communities. These measures are collected on an ongoing basis and help determine what is working in Best Starts programs and what may need adapting. These measures are developed together with funded partners and have been modified throughout the levy. The tracking of these measures helps Best Starts personnel determine how the funding has impacted the children, youth, families, and communities who are directly served and allows for continuous improvement. Each program is required to report in three areas:

1) How much did we do?
2) How well did we do it?
3) Is anyone better off?

Taken together, the above frameworks help to make sense of the many types of changes (both expected and unexpected) that were observed in the Best Starts first levy. Each of these frameworks includes many components. For the purposes of this evaluation, Exhibit 12 provides a summary of the key areas of interest from each framework and their application to this evaluation.

[10] Coffman, J. (2007). *A Framework for Evaluation Systems Initiatives.* See Build Framework

[11] Best Starts for Kids Evaluation and Performance Measurement Plan. See Evaluation and Measurement Plan

[12] Results Based-Accountability. See Results-Based Accountability

**Exhibit 12.**
***Framework Summary***

| FRAMEWORK SUMMARY | |
|---|---|
| **Key Concept** | **Application** |
| ***Inverted Triangle Framework*** | |
| Calls out a typology of conditions that must be in place to achieve lasting systems change:<br>1. Structural Change<br>2. Relational Change<br>3. Transformative Change<br>Implication: lasting systems change is achieved when all three types of changes are in place. | Informed analysis of types of systems changes observed in Best Starts, particularly in analysis of the role of evaluation investments made to support program design. |
| ***The Build Initiative Framework*** | |
| Describes types of strategies that can be used in systems change work, organized by the area of a system that is targeted for improvement: Context, Components, Connections, Infrastructure, and Scale. | Informed categorization of program interventions, specifically the analysis of prior evaluation investments. |
| ***Results Based Accountability*** | |
| Presents two types of accountability measures: Population accountability, and Performance accountability. | Informed analysis of performance measures for funded programs as well as analysis of changes in population indicators. |

Additionally, the field of systems change evaluation continues to evolve, with more scholars contributing to analytic approaches and constructs to help make sense of complexity in innovative and ambitious social investments such as Best Starts. As such, the emerging practice is for evaluators to use different frameworks that make sense for their context, rather than naming a single best framework.[13]

## CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations and considerations that should be taken into account while reviewing this report.

*Data collection challenges due to the pandemic.* The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Best Starts programming and data collection from 2020 through the end of the first levy. Some of the data collection had to move to a virtual format, which was challenging, as participants may have been less comfortable sharing information without in-person connections being established. Additionally, some surveys were not collected at all or had a high rate of skipped questions resulting in missing data. Engagement in services was also somewhat unpredictable during this time, as some programs experienced reduced participation for pandemic-related closures and restrictions, while other programs had higher participation due to increased need. New programs were also started during this period. Collection of Population Indicators was also highly impacted by the pandemic, as some of the institutions collecting the data paused or delayed data collection during this time.

[13] What We Know So Far About: Sets of Principles for Evaluating Systems Change Principles. Cabaj,.M. for Tamarak Institute. Retrieved at: Article Link.

*Response bias.* We collected primary data through interviews and surveys. Community partners and Best Starts staff were selected to participate in interviews through a stratified random sampling process. This methodology helps to reduce bias. Of the 58 community partners invited to participate in interviews, 45 participated, and another 5 submitted a survey but declined the interview. An analysis of participating community partners versus non-participating community partners shows consistent participation across investment areas, and no significant differences between the average amount of funding requested and number of awards.

The survey was sent to partners in all funding strategies that had updated contact information, but there were several non-respondents. An analysis of respondents shows that they were well distributed across the investment areas. However, there were some differences. Survey respondents requested a larger amount of funding compared to non-respondents (Mean: $268,038 compared to $207,285) and had a larger number of awards (Mean: 2.0 compared to 1.4). This is an indication that survey findings may be biased towards partners who received more grants and higher levels of Best Starts funding.

*Funder and grantee relationship.* Much of the data captured for this evaluation came from the community partners funded through the Best Starts initiative. It is possible that community partners under-emphasized challenges because of the importance of this funding to their organization and to avoid criticizing the county. However, the use of a third-party evaluator and promise of confidentiality helps to mitigate this potential effect. Additionally, a review of the data shows acknowledgement of successes and challenges. Additionally, interview and survey respondents included participants who did not get funding during the second round of the levy. Responses by both groups demonstrated similarities.

## RESULTS

*To what extent and in what ways has the Best Starts initiative improved health and well-being and advanced equity for children, youth, families, and communities in King County?*

### WHAT DO ANNUAL, STRATEGY-LEVEL PERFORMANCE MEASURES TELL US ABOUT THE OUTCOMES OF BEST STARTS?

The Theory of Change and Theoretical Frameworks, as described previously, explain how Best Starts for Kids is expected to lead to change by providing a road map that identifies how Best Starts will work to change outcomes and deliver impact. Taken together, Best Starts leaders and staff reported that the Theory of Change and Theoretical Frameworks continue to effectively describe how and why Best Starts should produce change, and they noted that the performance measures align with the Theory of Change. If revisions were made, the only area identified for improvement was to highlight how Equity and Social Justice are integrated into the initiative. A Best Starts staff member described, "*I think we have been able to build a huge amount of data, and it aligns with the theory of change of improving promotive factors and decreasing risk factors.*"

The following sections highlight the outcomes for Best Starts during the first levy. Community partners played a central role in data collection, so we begin this section with a description of how capacity builders worked with community organizations to build capacity for data collection. Following that description, we include a synthesis of evaluation findings and how they were used in the first levy, an analysis of the population and performance measures, and a synthesis of the outcomes identified by community organizations.

## CAPACITY BUILDING TO COLLECT DATA WAS EFFECTIVE FOR PARTNERS AND INFORMATIVE FOR BEST STARTS

The Best Starts initiative provided community partners with resources to support data collection, including organizational capacity building and data collection tools designed specifically for Best Starts. Partners' baseline capacity for data collection, Best Starts' emphasis on participatory evaluation, and the role of capacity builders are discussed below, along with the impact and challenges of capacity building for data collection. A Best Starts representative observed that evaluation is one area of Best Starts that has been gaining momentum: "*There was a lot of interest in evaluation and telling the story. The Best Starts evaluation is different as it is community driven and meets the needs [of communities].*"

*Partners' Baseline Capacity for Best Starts Data Collection.* At the beginning of the initiative, partners varied widely in their experience with and capacity for reporting and data collection. Retrospectively, 24% of the partners reported challenges with performance measurement and evaluation during the first levy (see Appendix C, Exhibit C-9). While some partners had existing evaluation procedures and in-house evaluation staff, others had minimal experience and resources. Rather than limiting the grants to organizations with the existing capacity to meet Best Starts' data reporting requirements, Best Starts incorporated support into the initiative to develop partners' skills and knowledge. To that end, the county contracted independent evaluators to provide capacity building services, as well as to conduct external evaluations. In providing this support, Best Starts was also able to learn what partners needed to be able to collect data. They also learned about the concerns around data collection in the communities.

**Quote**

*This has been a challenge, because of the learning curve. Our strength is our multi-lingual, multi-cultural perspective. Managing a non-profit contract is a different set of skills. … Managing this really needs that organizational capacity. Our staff isn't there, but we are trying.* – Community Partner

**Quote**

*There is a great desire to ensure equity, and when we presented a finding, people wanted to dig into it. We looked at caregiver engagement across [ethnic] groups and one was lower. They wanted to make sure they didn't marginalize that community, so they started asking, 'does that group need something different?'* – External Evaluator

*Emphasis on Participatory Evaluation.* According to interviews with the contracted evaluators and other stakeholders, Best Starts placed a high emphasis on participatory evaluation. Participatory evaluation approaches are integral to equitable evaluation[14] and align with Best Starts' commitments to equity and to community-driven strategies. Participatory and equitable evaluation approaches are intended to ensure inclusion of voices that are historically excluded, not only in the data collection but in the development of the evaluation design and tools and in the interpretation of the data. Consequently, these approaches require sufficient time and flexibility to be implemented. Examples of participatory approaches to data collection and evaluation used in Best Starts included:

- Seeking input about evaluation priorities from program teams and participating agencies;
- Co-developing evaluation designs with partners and their young people, families, and communities;
- Convening stakeholder advisory panels that included community members, youth, family members, and caregivers, sometimes in dialogue with service providers and content experts;
- Obtaining input from young people, families, communities, and program staff during survey development; and
- Involving families, providers, and community partners in data collection and interpretation through data reflection activities.

[14] Equitable Evaluation Initiative. See: https://www.equitableeval.org/

*Role of Capacity Builders for Best Starts Data Collection.* Best Starts contracted capacity builders to support partner cohorts who were working within the same focus areas or strategies. The capacity builders met with Best Starts staff members and the partner cohorts throughout their contracted period, although the frequency and nature of the meetings varied with their responsibilities and the ways each cohort functioned. Capacity builders did not exclusively work with cohorts, as they also worked one-on-one with some grantee organizations. Across the initiative, capacity building supported the following common evaluation and reporting components as needed:

- Program plan and target outcomes (program design, Theory of Change, Logic Model)
- Evaluation tools, such as surveys (design, development, testing)
- Data collection (data collection protocols, implementation of data collection activities)
- Data compilation (database development, data entry)
- Data interpretation and use (understanding the meaning of the data, using data to document the successes and challenges of the program, sharing the data with the community, reporting data to Best Starts)

*Challenges of Capacity Building for Best Starts Data Collection.* Several challenges related to capacity building for data collection were recounted during interviews. Delays in Best Starts contracting of partners and capacity builders impacted the roll out of capacity building activities and data collection. The initial planning period for capacity builders was reduced, as was their time for co-planning with partners, training partners, and gathering community input to guide data collection and evaluation. One capacity builder observed, *"We needed more time to accomplish the things they [Best Starts] asked us to do, particularly for using a more community-engaged approach."*

Effective data collection, particularly data that accurately reflects the experiences and perspectives of program participants, requires building several layers of trust. This includes trust in the confidentiality of the information they share, in the accurate interpretation and representation of the data, and in the final use of the data. Many partners who were interviewed said their program participants expressed concerns, particularly in providing personal information. They were reluctant to pressure participants into providing data, not wanting to breach the trust they had built with them. Specifically, they did not want participants to decline services in an effort to avoid participating in data collection. Partners reported that they received positive responses when they raised these concerns with Best Starts program managers and capacity builders, and efforts were made to balance the needs for data collection with the needs of community participants. This type of flexibility was often cited as an example of Best Starts' decentralized decision-making and responsiveness to community needs.

**Quote**

*Re-examine the performance measures. I've had to do more reporting on this grant than I ever have in academia, and I wonder how much the organizations were able to do this…The reporting BSK asks for is meaningful, but there's a lot of reporting.* - External Evaluator

In addition, there were tensions between the reporting timelines and the participatory approach. In one example, partners and community members participated in development of evaluation processes and tools. During the development process, however, their understanding of evaluation grew, and they ultimately recommended a different approach for data collection in their communities. In another example, as partners saw the value of the data being collected, they requested the capacity builder support additional separate analyses for the partner's individual sites. In these and other examples from the participatory processes, capacity builders encountered challenges related to meeting the needs of the community and partners, while also adhering to their contracted timelines, scope of work, and deliverables. Most sought solutions that represented a compromise, such as training the partner to support their individual sites. An external evaluator provided an example, *"The survey needs to be developed prior to any organization being funded. It was*

*backwards. We were rushed to develop something they could use right now. It takes more time because it has to be participatory from all levels of BSK, including funding agencies."*

Several capacity builders noted that they were not aware of how much consistency there was across these capacity building efforts. One commented, "*It's a little unclear if what we are doing is similar to other programs. Is there a systemic 'ask' across programs?*" Several reported that, initially, there was more interaction among the capacity building teams and that it appeared their approaches varied. This perception is supported by the descriptions of capacity building in the evaluation reports. While variations are expected when using a participatory approach, capacity builders and partners also believed there are benefits to creating some initiative-wide consistency and alignment and to sharing experiences and approaches.

*Impact of Capacity Building for Best Starts Data Collection*. During interviews, many partners reported that their understanding of program evaluation and data collection had increased as a result of participating in Best Starts initiative activities. Some noted that learning to use their own data directly benefited their organization and community. For example, one program used data to identify subgroups within the community who were not engaging with the services offered, and they developed a plan to reach that demographic. In addition to partners, community members have been engaged in working with data through advisory groups, thus distributing knowledge into the community of how data is collected and used. One partner described,

> "*The areas we wanted to focus on [in the evaluation] were defined by the community and the feedback we got. Prior to BSK, those things were pre-defined. With BSK, there was a lot of room… There was a lot of help. What is it you are already collecting? How can we build on that?*"

Partners commented that learning to use the data in this way was empowering, noting that historically, data from BIPOC communities has been used to their detriment. According to the analysis of Best Starts reports, 78% of evaluations clearly described the use of participatory methods, such as co-designing the evaluation methods and tools and making sense of the findings. Other evaluations may have also used participatory methods, but they were not clearly described.

**Quote**

*For the public, they have to expect a slow rolling change. I wouldn't expect BSK to abandon all performance measurement in the next round, but I think there is an opportunity to balance it and share out, here is what is successful, what we are learning, and what we are doing about it. At some point, BSK has to establish themselves to the be the lead in changing how the public thinks about data. I don't know if that's this time or two years from now. I see it as a responsibility for leaders in the field to push back on how public funding is decided. It we keep funding things based on data that isn't necessarily aligned with the goals of the community, that's problematic. I recommend they keep examining this and talking with the community about it, and BSK is great at both*. – External Evaluator

Best Starts' community-centered approach to the initiative and the prioritization of participatory evaluation enabled both evaluators and partners to customize some aspects of data collection and reporting. This flexibility benefited partners, allowing them to build and maintain trust with their communities and to gather data that is meaningful. At the same time, it limits Best Starts' ability to provide conventional data reports that represent the whole initiative. Partners entered this initiative with a range of knowledge, experience, and resources for data collection. At both ends of that spectrum, they have struggled with Best Starts' data collection, reporting, and/or the evaluation processes. Those with limited experience and resources have sometimes struggled to gather and report data, even with capacity building. In contrast, those at the other end of the spectrum reported being frustrated by the absence of a comprehensive approach to data gathering and reporting, which can contribute to the development of standards of practice, support effective disaggregation to identify gaps in service, lead to improvements in services, and assist in obtaining further funding.

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION FOCUSED ON AND SUPPORTED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Best Starts first levy made a strong investment in data and evaluation. Best Starts allocates approximately 5% of all levy money towards data and evaluation efforts to measure impact and ensure accountability to public funds. The Illuminate team conducted an in-depth analysis of prior evaluations and assessments commissioned by King County Best Starts. The purpose of Illuminate's analysis was to gain a macro-level understanding of the types of evaluations and assessments done, their focus, and subsequently the type of evidence produced.

An analysis of 32 reports produced in the first levy period (publicly available and internal by June 30, 2022) included a combination of external evaluation reports (n=12 reports), internal reports (n=10 reports), and other (n=10 reports), such as landscape analyses (see Exhibit 13).

**Exhibit 13.**
***Types of Evaluations and Assessments***

| TYPES OF EVALUATIONS AND ASSESSEMENTS COMMISSIONED FOR BEST STARTS | |
|---|---|
| **Evaluations and Assessments** | **Types** |
| External Evaluations: 12 Reports | • 83% Implementation/Formative/Process (10 reports)<br>• 8% Impact/Outcome/Summative (1 report)<br>• 8% Developmental (1 report) |
| Internal Reports: 10 Reports | • 70% Program Management/Data Analysis (7 reports)<br>• 20% Developmental (2 Reports)<br>• 10% Implementation/Formative Process (1 Report) |
| Other: 10 Reports (Survey Development; Literature Reviews; Community Conversations; Landscape Analyses; etc.) | • 6 Developmental<br>• 2 Needs Assessments/Landscape Analysis<br>• 2 Program Management/Data Analysis |

*Evaluations focused on process, less on impact.* While Best Starts commissioned many evaluations and other assessments, they provided limited evidence on the contribution of Best Starts interventions to changes in population-level indicators. Most of the commissioned evaluations (83% or 10 of 12 total external evaluations) focused on process, implementation, or formative analyses, relying primarily on observational comparisons, without using controls for confounding variables. This type of evaluation design is less rigorous than designs that include quasi-experimental methods, which use control or comparison groups to explore impact. However, quasi-experimental designs are not appropriate for all programs. For Best Starts, only a single summative impact evaluation was available to review.

Overall, most of the evaluations focused on lifting insights from implementation and program development, producing evidence that is largely descriptive in nature. These types of evaluation are helpful and important when programs are developing, as is the case of Best Starts where most programs are at the developmental stage. The information they gather is helpful for successful implementation and important for guiding course corrections. At the same time, this also means that there is very limited summative evidence about the impact of the Best Starts -funded programs and their potential contribution to shifting population-level indicators. This does not mean that Best Starts *as an initiative* has had limited impact. This does mean that the evaluations commissioned to date have not focused on teasing out summative impact. Moving forward, it will be important to identify areas that are ready for more rigorous evaluation to begin to measure impact.

*Equity in Data Analysis and Design.* A strength of the commissioned evaluations was the strong focus on using participatory methods to involve partners in co-developing evaluation designs, making sense of findings, and

designing tools for carrying out the evaluations (78%). Participatory design methods help mitigate some of the power imbalances present between evaluators and non-evaluators. In addition, most of the evaluation designs collected and disaggregated data for subgroups: race/ethnicity, language, and region/location where the most common categories. Almost half of the evaluations disaggregated and analyzed group differences (44% and 48% respectively). About half of the evaluations (52%) took care to ensure that instruments were culturally valid across different local contexts.

*Evaluation Reporting on Findings, Barriers/Challenges, Recommendations, and Limitations.* All evaluations provided findings specific to the area studied. Collectively, the evaluations provided insight into implementation, factors that contributed to strong implementation, usage of services, and levels of participant satisfaction. There were common barriers and challenges across the evaluations that impacted implementation, including low participation levels (e.g., limited numbers of people completing surveys or accessing services), linguistic or cultural barriers, staffing and leadership changes, and disruptions from COVID-19. Common recommendations included strengthening coordination and communication about programs, greater representation of youth and parents/caregivers voice, and diversifying the way data is collected.

A number of the reports noted limitations in the evaluations which influenced the findings. These included (1) small sample sizes; (2) selection processes for interviewees often relied on volunteers, which may lead to bias; (3) limited input from program participants; (4) multiple initiatives making it difficult to isolate impact; and (5) inconsistent and poor-quality data. During interviews, evaluators noted that, to address some of these issues, evaluations should span a longer period of time, ensure strong participatory approaches, and gather more information directly from young people, families, and communities. One external evaluator commented, *"There is pressure to evaluate the results, but not enough time to get it right."* Ideally, the evaluation period begins early in a program's planning phase, allowing evaluators to collaborate with program leaders and community members on evaluation design and approaches to data collection. Similarly, it extends sufficiently after data collection has been completed in order to provide time for community input on the findings. These are the hallmarks of developmental and participatory evaluation.

*Systems Changes in Early Stages*. The analysis of the types of systems changes sought and achieved across the commissioned evaluations suggests that a variety of system changes were pursued, specifically policy, practice, and resource flow changes. Few of the evaluations reported evidence of action steps taken or evidence of systems change. Using the Inverted Triangle framework to interpret the findings, most of the systems change strategies were reported as being either in the planning or developing stages and were structural (74% for Policy changes, 95% for Practice changes, and 65% for Resource Flow changes). There was some evidence of Relational change, with 91% referencing work on building relationships and connections, but less focus on Power Dynamics. Similarly, shifts in Mental Models, associated with transformative change, received little focus. This pattern is expected given systems change is developmental and takes time. Through the lens of the Build Initiative Framework, the areas of greatest focus have been Context, Components, and Connections. Given the early stages of the initiative and Best Starts' focus on systems change, the use of implementation, formative, and process evaluations is appropriate. As the work continues to deepen, planning and resourcing the inclusion of summative evaluation approaches and contribution analyses may be appropriate, feasible, and warranted. A Best Starts staff member shared,

> *With BSK, the user interface has to be simple. We need to make it easiest for community, and then that is the efficiency we can create within the County. That has been a super big push, and we still haven't made all the changes. How do we take on that burden? How do we challenge our own processes?*

Since the timelines for implementation of specific interventions vary, what should be noted from this analysis is most of the evaluations considered the system changes to be in their early stages. It can be inferred that allowing for a longer observation period of the evaluation may or may not result in a different assessment. However, as systems changes are complex because there is not a single path to impact, it is important to have multiple ways to capture shifts and progress.

## SUBSTANTIAL DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING OCCURRED THROUGHOUT THE LEVY WITH PUBLICLY AVAILABLE REPORTS AND DASHBOARDS

The data collection and reporting effort undertaken for Best Starts is substantial. As of 2021, over 50 Population Indicators and over 400 Performances Measures were collected by Best Starts in an undertaking that requires data-sharing agreements and coordination with many community partners, local organizations, and state departments. The evaluation and performance measurement plan also included the development of a Best Starts indicators website,[15] which was publicly available in early 2017 and contains data for all Population Indicators and Performance Measures. This website features interactive data visualizations which allow the user to disaggregate the data by a variety of demographic variables, as well as by geographic area and to look at data over time.

### *POPULATION INDICATORS*

The following section summarizes Population Indicators. Population Indicators assess the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities throughout King County. To track population-level changes, Best Starts collects headline and secondary indicators for each investment area. The Population Indicators are seen as long-term and aspirational, and can be affected by many factors, not just Best Starts efforts.

As mentioned previously, several data collection challenges emerged due to the pandemic, including data collection being delayed or missing data for several time periods. Due to these issues, we focused this in-depth analysis on a subset of the Population Indicators, chosen for inclusion based on the following considerations:

- Indicators least impacted (i.e., least missing data) by the pandemic
- Indicators with several years of data available
- Indicators with data available at a level necessary for valid statistical analyses (i.e., schools, zip codes)
- Alignment with the percentage of funding invested in each area
- Alignment with what partners/stakeholders want to know about Best Starts implementation
- Indicators representing each investment area
- Indicators continuing to be used in the next levy cycle

The Population Indicators selected for analysis by investment area are displayed in Exhibit 14. The exhibit shows the specific indicator, noting the data source as well as the timeframe in which data were available for analysis.

[15] Best Starts Indicators Website: Indicators Website.

**Exhibit 14.**

***Population Indicators by Investment Area for In-Depth Analysis***

| POPULATION INDICATORS BY INVESTMENT AREA FOR IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Population Indicator** | **Data Source** | **Timeframe** |
| ***Invest Early (Prenatal -5)*** | | |
| Infant Mortality Rate | CDC – VS[16] | 2014-2019 |
| Preterm Birth Rate | March of Dimes[17] | 2016-2020 |
| Kindergarten Readiness | OSPI[18] | 2017-2021[19] |
| Children Received Recommended Health & Developmental Screenings | Best Starts Health Survey | 2017 & 2021 |
| Children who are Flourishing & Resilient | | |
| Reading & Singing to Children Daily | | |
| ***Sustaining the Gain (5-24)*** | | |
| Youth who Graduate On-Time | OSPI[18] | 2017-2021 |
| Youth who are Flourishing & Resilient | Best Starts Health Survey | 2017, 2019, 2021 |
| Youth have Supportive Adults in Their Lives | | |
| ***Communities Matter*** | | |
| Self-Reported Health Good to Excellent | WA State DOH Center for Health Statistics – BRFSS[20] | 2014-2020 |

The following sections summarize key findings of the trends observed during the timeframe for each of the selected Population Indicators. An expanded description of the analyses can be found in Appendix E.

*Infant Mortality.*[21] The infant mortality rate in King County remained mostly steady across the years of available data, with some fluctuations (see Exhibit 15). King County's rate was consistently lower than the rate for other counties within Washington State. Other counties in Washington were steadily closing the gap as their infant mortality rates declined. In King County, the gap in infant mortality rates between Black infants, and White and Asian infants has increased from 2017-2019. During 2019, the infant mortality rate for Black infants was more than six times higher than the rate for Asian infants and more than three times higher than the rate for White infants. The data also shows the mortality rates for Hispanic infants are higher than the rates for Asian and White infants. The comparison counties had a similar pattern of lower infant mortality for White and Asian infants compared to Black infants.[22] The difference between the infant mortality rate for Hispanic infants versus White and Asian infants were smaller in the comparison counties than in King County. These analyses should be interpreted with caution as the single-year estimates from the Center for Disease Control fluctuate considerably and have a large confidence interval which means the estimate is less precise.

[16] National Vital Statistics System

[17] March of Dimes Preterm Birthrate. See: Preterm Birthrate Data.

[18] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. See: Report Card Data.

[19] Data not available in for the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID pandemic. This assessment was rolled out over 2014-2016 so data during this time period is not available for all school districts.

[20] Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

[21] The infant mortality rate includes all deaths during the first 365 days after birth. The number of live births is used in the denominator and the rate is expressed per 1,000 live births.

**Exhibit 15.**

***Infant Mortality Rates***

| INFANT MORTALITY RATES BY YEAR | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
| King County | 4.14 | 3.61 | 3.80 | 3.24 | 4.07 | 4.11 |
| Other Counties in Washington | 4.60 | 5.39 | 4.60 | 4.22 | 4.94 | 4.29 |
| Comparison Counties[22] | 3.46 | 3.49 | 3.42 | 3.38 | 3.59 | 3.11 |

Note. The comparison counties are "peer counties" identified by the CDC's Community Health Status Indicators project through cluster analysis. Peer counties were defined using 19 county-level variables. These variables include demographics and social and economic determinants of health. The comparison counties for King County include five counties located in California: Almeda, Orange, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara.

*Preterm Birth.*[23] Preterm birth rates in King County and other Washington counties remained similar across the timeframe examined (see Exhibit 16). King County's rate was slightly higher than the rate for other Washington counties during each year. During 2020, the preterm birth rate declined by one percentage point in King County and in the rest of the state. Our analysis of preterm birth rates suggests that King County's rate was like that of the other counties in the state of Washington. King County and other Washington counties experienced similar patterns of change in preterm birth from 2016 to 2020. Taken together our models indicate there was no change in preterm birth rate over time and that King County's rate mirrored other counties in the state of Washington.

**Exhibit 16.**

***Preterm Birth Rates***

| PRETERM BIRTH RATES BY YEAR | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| King County | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 7% |
| Other Counties in Washington | 7% | 7% | 7% | 7% | 6% |

*Kindergarten Readiness.*[24] Across academic years and domains, King County had higher levels of readiness than the state average. The percentage of students demonstrating readiness increased from 2017 to 2021 for 5 of the 6 domains; however, the size of the gains differed. The overall gains during this time period were largest in the language (77% in 2017 vs. 81% in 2021) and cognitive (79% in 2017 vs. 82% in 2021) domains. Although readiness tended to rise for all racial groups, equity gaps persisted. For example, Black (71%) and Hispanic (73%) kindergartners' cognitive readiness was below the King County average for all kindergarteners (82%) during the 2021-22 academic year. The largest gaps occurred in the math domain. The overall King County average was 79% in 2021, but African American (66%) and Hispanic (61%) students had much lower readiness levels. This data should be interpreted with the understanding that "children grow up embedded within interactive systems of family, community, and school…and that better preparing children for kindergarten calls for addressing structural inequities," such as "socioeconomic inequities that result in unequal access to resources that support kindergarten readiness."[25]

[22] Comparison counties are located in California.

[23] Births born before 37 weeks gestation.

[24] The kindergarten readiness indicator measures the percent of kindergarteners that demonstrate readiness in the six learning and developmental areas: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy and math. This assessment was rolled out over 2015-2017 so data during this time period is not available for all school districts. Additionally, data was not available for the 2020-21 academic year due to the COVID pandemic.

[25] Bernzweig, J., Branom, C., & Wellenkamp, J. (2021). *New directions in kindergarten readiness.* ZERO TO THREE Journal, 41(Supp.).

*Children Received Recommended Health & Developmental Screenings.*[26] The proportion of caregivers who reported their child had received recommended health and developmental screenings was similar across regions and across years (2017 compared to 2021). Our analysis did reveal some differences based on demographic information, such that caregivers with higher incomes, older children, and those from homes where the primary language is not English were less likely to report developmental screening. For each additional level of income, the odds of reporting a developmental screening decreased by 6%. For each additional year of age, the odds of reporting a developmental screening decreased by 13%. Caregivers' odds of reporting developmental screenings were 24% lower for caregivers from homes where the primary language was not English than the odds for caregivers from homes where the primary language is English. The odds of reporting developmental screening were higher by caregivers with higher educational attainment and for boys. For each additional level of education, the odds of reporting a developmental screening increased by 15%. The odds of reporting a developmental screening for boys were 18% higher than the odds for girls.

*Reading and Singing to Children Daily.*[27] Although most caregivers in all regions reported reading, singing, or telling stories to their child daily, we found significant regional differences. Caregivers in the East and the South regions were less likely to report reading, singing, and storytelling to children than caregivers in the Seattle region. Caregivers in the East region's odds of reading, singing, and storytelling to children were 41% lower than the odds for caregivers from Seattle. Similarly, the odds for caregivers from the South region were 33% lower than the odds for Seattle caregivers. Additionally, there was a trend from 2017 to 2021, with caregivers reporting they were more likely to read, sing, and tell stories to their child in 2021 than caregivers reporting in 2017. Caregivers in the 2021 data collection had 28% higher odds reporting using these behaviors than caregivers in the 2017 sample. Higher income caregivers were more likely to report reading, singing, and storytelling than lower income caregivers. For each additional level of income, the odds of reporting these behaviors increased by 13%. The odds were also lower for older children and for male children. For each additional year of age, the odds of using this behavior decreased by 13%. Boys' odds were 34% lower than the odds for girls.

*High School Graduation Rate.*[28] In King County, several groups have seen marked improvement in graduation rate over time. For example, American Indian/Alaskan Native students have experienced a 20-percentage point gain in graduation rate from 2013 to 2021, increasing from 51% to 71%. Similarly, Black students experienced a 16-percentage point gain, from 64% to 80%. Hispanic students increased from 60% to 77%. Other groups of students have also gained ground over time, but their increases have not been as dramatic. For example, Asian and White students experienced 10 and 6 percentage point gains, respectively. The large improvements for American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students, coupled with the more modest gains for Asian and White students, have narrowed but not entirely closed the graduation rate gap between the groups. The data on the comparison counties provide important context for the gains made in King County (see Exhibit 17).[29] During the five years in which we have comparison data, American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students enrolled in high schools in the comparison counties have experienced stagnating or falling graduation rates. These comparison

[26] This indicator comes directly from the BEST STARTS Health survey question: *During the past 12 months, did a doctor or other health care provider have you or another caregiver fill out a questionnaire about specific concerns or observations you may have about this child's development, communication, or social behaviors?* Caregivers answer yes or no.

[27] The reading, singing, or storytelling indicator represented the answer to a yes/no question from the BEST STARTS Health Survey about whether the parent read, sang, or told stories to the child daily.

[28] Graduation rate was computed by dividing the number of students who graduated in four years by the number of students in the adjusted cohort. The adjusted cohort includes students who started at a given high school in the ninth grade while accounting for the number who transferred in or out of the high school during the four-year period.

[29] Comparison counties are located in California.

data demonstrate that continued increases in graduation rate are not assured and that sustained intervention may be necessary to maintain and exceed current student performance. Taken together, these data also show that large discrepancies in this key educational outcome still exist between Asian and White students, on one hand, and historically marginalized groups on the other hand.

**Exhibit 17.**
***Graduation Rates***

| GRADUATION RATES BY YEAR | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
| King County | 81% | 82% | 83% | 85% | 86% |
| Comparison Counties[29] | 82% | 82% | 82% | 84% | 81% |

*Children and Youth who are Flourishing and Resilient.*[30] After controlling for demographic factors, we did not find regional differences or differences over time for this indicator. However, we did find that caregivers with higher incomes were more likely to report that their child was flourishing. For each one level increase in income, the odds of children flourishing increased by 7%. Older children and male children were less likely to be reported as flourishing. For each one-year increase in a child's age, their odds of flourishing decreased by 22%. Similarly, the odds of boys flourishing were 26% lower than the odds for girls. Children from homes where the primary language was not English had higher odds of flourishing than those from homes where the primary language was English. Their odds of flourishing were 28% higher than the odds for children from homes where the primary language was English. Black children had higher odds of flourishing than White children. Black children's odds for flourishing were 36% higher than the odds for White children.

*Youth have Supportive Adults in Their Lives.*[31] Caregivers in the North region were more likely to report that their child had another supportive adult in their lives. Their odds were 30% higher than the odds for parents from Seattle. Caregivers responding to the 2021 survey were less likely to report that their child had another supportive adult in their lives compared to caregivers responding to the 2017 survey. Caregivers' odds of saying the child had another supportive adult in their lives declined by 25% between the two time points. More affluent and more educated caregivers were more likely to respond affirmatively. For each additional level of income, caregiver's odds of reporting that their children had another supportive adult rose by 5%. Similarly, the odds rose by 8% for each additional level of education. Older children were more likely to have other supportive adults in their lives. For each additional year of age, the odds of having an adult in their life increased two-fold. Male, Asian, and children from non-English speaking homes had lower odds of having another trusted adult in their lives. The odds for boys were 18% lower than the odds for girls; Asian children's odds were 20% lower than White children's odds; and non-English speaking children's odds were 59% lower than the odds for English speaking children.

*Self-Reported Health Good to Excellent.*[32] Data for this indicator were not available for individual respondents, which limited the ability to perform statistical analyses. However, trends in the overall data show King County data have improved on this indicator slightly over time (see Exhibit 18). Data for placed-based sites and from

[30] This indicator comes from a flourishing variable calculated from the Best Starts Health survey and is a composite of a variety of yes or no questions concerning a child's emotional stability and academic readiness. Children who received a score of 1 were categorized as flourishing.
[31] This indicator comes directly from the Best Starts Health survey question: *Other than you or other adults in your home, is there at least one other adult in this child's school, neighborhood, or community who knows this child well and who they can rely on for advice or guidance?* Caregivers answer yes or no.
[32] Data for this indicator come from Communities of Opportunity data: COO Headline Indicator Data.

cultural communities generally show improvement over time, with the exception of SeaTac/Tukwila, Kent, and Snoqualmie/North Bend/Skykomish. However, these observed differences were not statistically significant. [33]

**Exhibit 18.**
***Self-Reported Health Good to Excellent***

| SELF-REPORTED HEALTH GOOD TO EXCELLENT BY YEAR | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2014 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| King County | 87.8% | 88.0% | 88.0% | 87.9% | 88.4% |
| ***Original Place-Based Sites*** | | | | | |
| Rainier Valley (SE Seattle) | 81.0% | 86.3% | 85.4% | 85.8% | 89.4% |
| SeaTac/Tukwila | 82.2% | 86.6% | 87.6% | 85.8% | 77.7% |
| White Center | 81.4% | 75.4% | 75.2% | 79.1% | 83.7% |
| ***Newer Place-Based and Cultural Communities*** | | | | | |
| Central Seattle | | 85.0% | 87.1% | 89.1% | 91.4% |
| Kent | | 82.9% | 82.6% | 81.0% | 82.5% |
| Snoqualmie/North Bend/Skykomish | | 88.1% | 88.7% | 86.8% | 86.5% |
| Latino in South KC | | 73.3% | 72.5% | 74.1% | 75.7% |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | | 76.2% | 75.9% | 76.4% | 79.5% |
| African American | | 80.4% | 80.0% | 81.5% | 82.3% |

In the context of the Best Starts levy, the population-level indicators provide important contextual information to understand the direction and magnitude of changes for specific outcomes of interest for children and young people in King County. Overall, there were several positive changes in some key Population Indicators, including increases in Kindergarten Readiness; increased rates of parents reading, singing, and storytelling to children daily; improvements in graduation rates, especially among Native American, Black, and Hispanic students; and slight increases in overall health indicators. Population Indicators where there has been no observed change or where an indicator has either stagnated or decreased include infant mortality, preterm birth, and receipt of developmental screenings. Exhibit 19 displays a summary of some of the main highlights from the analysis of the Population Indicators.

Taken together, these population indicators suggest that while some positive changes have been observed in King County, there is much work that remains to be done to give kids, young people, and communities the best possible start. This evaluation has focused on understanding the types of impacts observed in the context of several Best Starts efforts. It should be noted that as these combined efforts are focused on transforming systems and improving outcomes at the population level, the purpose of the evaluation is not to focus on attribution but rather to understand potential contribution, directionality, and the magnitude of change.[34] Moreover, there are many factors that make it difficult to link the individual-level initiatives to changes at the population level. First, estimating the relationship between interventions and outcomes is always difficult, even in carefully designed studies that use methods to control for threats to validity. A key challenge in designing experimental or quasi experimental evaluations is identifying an appropriate comparison group.[35] In the case of Best Starts, there were multiple interventions across a large county. Appropriately, the focus on impact is about looking at the larger picture of the way in which change occurred in the King County. These population-level

[33] Data for this indicator come from Communities of Opportunity data: COO Headline Indicator Data.
[34] Tamarack Institute Evaluating Impact. See: Evaluating Systems Change.
[35] Rossi, O.H., Lipsey, M.W. & Freeman, H.E. (2004). Evaluation: A Systematic Approach (7th Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

indicators should be assessed side by side with the program-specific performance measures to identify promising strategies focused on the Population Indicators where positive gains were observed. These promising indicators included kindergarten readiness, child development education campaigns (reading and singing) and efforts to close the race/ethnicity graduation rate gap for high school students. As Best Starts considers how to continue its evaluation efforts, it should focus on how its initiatives may have supported gains in these indicators.

**Exhibit 19.**
***Highlights from Population Indicator Analysis***

| HIGHLIGHTS |
|---|
| ***Infant Mortality***<br>• The infant mortality rate in King County remained mostly steady across years. King County's rate was consistently lower than the rate for other counties within Washington State, but other counties are closing the gap.<br>• The gap in infant mortality rates between Black children and White and Asian children has increased over time.<br>***Preterm Birth***<br>• Preterm birth rates in King County and in other Washington counties remained similar from 2016 to 2020. King County's rate was slightly higher than the rate for other Washington counties each year.<br>***Kindergarten Readiness***<br>• King County had higher levels of readiness than the state average. Scores went up from 2017 to 2021 across 5 of the 6 domains.<br>• Although readiness tended to rise for all racial groups, equity gaps persisted. African American and Hispanic students in King County had much lower levels of readiness than the King County average.<br>***Children Received Recommended Health & Developmental Screenings***<br>• The proportion of caregivers who reported their child had received recommended health and developmental screenings was similar across regions and across years.<br>• More affluent caregivers, older children, and those from homes where the primary language is not English were less likely to report developmental screening.<br>***Reading and Singing to Children Daily***<br>• A higher rate for caregivers reading, singing, and storytelling to their child was found for 2021 compared to 2017.<br>• Caregivers in the East and the South regions were less likely to report reading, singing, and storytelling to children than caregivers in the Seattle region.<br>• Higher income caregivers were more likely to report reading, singing, and storytelling than lower income caregivers.<br>• A lower percentage of caregivers reported using this behavior with older children and for male children.<br>***Graduation Rate***<br>• In King County, there were large improvements over time for American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students, coupled with the more modest gains for Asian and White students, which has narrowed but not entirely closed the graduation rate gap between the groups.<br>• During the five years in which we have comparison data, American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students enrolled in high schools in the comparison counties have experienced stagnating or falling graduation rates.<br>***Children and Youth who are Flourishing and Resilient***<br>• No regional differences or differences over time were found for this indicator. |

- Caregivers with higher incomes were more likely to report that their child was flourishing. Similarly, the odds of boys flourishing were lower than the odds for girls. Children from homes where the primary language is not English had higher odds of flourishing than those from homes where the primary language is English. Black children had higher odds of flourishing than White children.

***Youth have Supportive Adults in Their Lives***

- Caregivers responding to the 2021 survey were less likely to report that their child had another supportive adult in their lives compared to caregivers responding to the 2017 survey.
- Caregivers in the North region were more likely to report that their child had another supportive adult in their lives.
- More affluent and more educated caregivers were more likely to respond affirmatively.
- Older children were more likely to have other supportive adults in their lives.

***Self-Reported Health Good to Excellent***

- Trends in the overall data show King County data has improved on this indicator slightly over time. Data for placed-based sites and from cultural communities generally show improvement over time.

## *PERFORMANCE MEASURES*

Performance Measures are collected from the Best Starts funded programs who are directly serving children, youth, families, and communities. These measures are collected on an ongoing basis and help determine what is working in Best Starts programs and what may need adapting. These measures are developed together with funded partners and have been modified throughout the levy. The tracking of these measures helps Best Starts personnel determine how the funding has impacted the children, youth, families, and communities who are directly served and allows for continuous program improvement. Each program is required to report in three areas:

1) How much did we do?
2) How well did we do it?
3) Is anyone better off?

*Limitations of Performance Measures.* Several concerns were raised during interviews and focus groups about the Performance Measures, many of which are discussed in the challenges section of the report. The main concern with the measures is that they are so detailed and program specific that they end up not being meaningful for sharing overall levy progress. Additionally, since many of the measures have been modified throughout the levy and/or updated during the final year of the levy, many cannot be used to look at overall outcomes over time. Finally, since only a few programs report unduplicated counts of participants, figuring out the total number of people served is difficult. Taken together, although the performance measures may be helpful for specific programs, these challenges make it difficult to present overall results for the levy over time. However, this predicament of the value of generalizing across such a diverse system change initiative like Best Starts is very common in evaluating systems changes where impact is captured across distinct types of efforts.

*Interpretation of Performance Measures.* Despite the above-mentioned limitations, we attempt to provide some summary data of how much was done, the characteristics of people reached through the levy, and we were able to classify some of the Performance Measures into themes and present averages for all the measures fitting into those themes. When reviewing this data, it is important to note many of the Performance Measures have been modified throughout the levy, with many updated during the final year of the levy. Additionally, programs reporting within each investment area may change from year to year, and individuals may enroll in more than one program funded by Best Starts. Lastly, Best Starts funded programs often leverage funding from

multiple sources. This makes it difficult to speak about the unique contribution that Best Starts funding made, as the funding is often combined with other resources.[36] However, this is a common situation for systems change initiatives that deploy multiple strategies to make change. Performance Measures provide valuable information to manage implementation and remain agile as contextual factors change over time.

*Summary Outcomes for Performance Measures.* Data from the Performance Measures show, over the course of the levy, about 490,000 of King County's youngest children and their families were reached, along with about 40,000 youth and young adults.[37] The majority of the people reached were in the South or Seattle regions of King County and were people of color (see Exhibit 20). The regional distribution of services reflects Best Starts' commitment to undoing the historical inequities impacting King County residents and the deployment of services to populations and regions facing the largest disparities in health and well-being. The majority of people served were under the age of 18 and a higher percentage were female than male. As described previously, over the course of the levy, a total of 376 organizations were awarded funding through the levy, of which greater than 39% were BIPOC.[38] Over 14,000 events occurred, 81 policies were changed, over 17,000 hours of capacity building were provided, and over 2,000 resident leaders were developed.

A summary of Performance Measures by theme (i.e., satisfaction, increase in skills/knowledge) is presented in Exhibit 21. This summary represents the 2021 average for all Performance Measures within a particular theme. For example, there were a total of 10 Performance Measures having to do with satisfaction, with 6 measures from Investing Early programs and 4 from Sustaining the Gain programs. We averaged these 10 measures to calculate an overall average for satisfaction. This data shows high levels of reported satisfaction with services (94%) provided by Best Starts partners and for engaging in programming (90%) for programs measuring these indicators. Most people reporting on these measures also believed their skills/knowledge (82%) and/or confidence (87%) increased. Finally, for those participating in the Youth & Family Homelessness Prevention Intervention, 94% stayed in stable housing. Quotes from interview participants are presented alongside these findings.

Data on these themes is reported in more detail by investment area in Exhibits 22-24. More detailed data for each Performance Measure by investment area, strategy and program is presented in Appendix F.

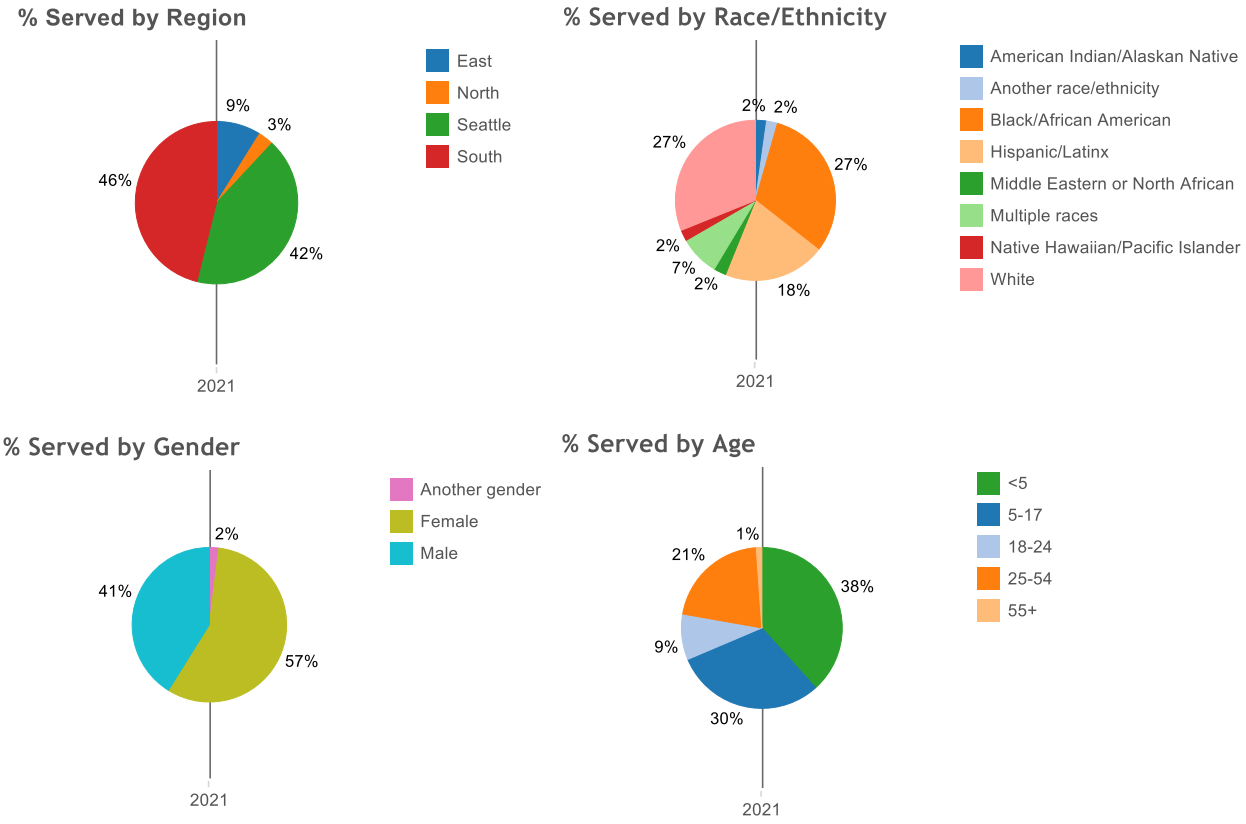
[36] What We Know So Far About: Sets of Principles for Evaluating Systems Change Principles. Cabaj, M. for Tamarak Institute. Retrieved at: Report Link.

[37] Best Starts for Kids Outcomes. See: One Page Report.

[38] BIPOC organizations were identified by Best Starts staff as part of a Seattle Times request for information. For this request, a BIPOC organization was defined as an organization that serves a particular population or cultural community. This definition is narrow and may underestimate the number of BIPOC organizations. For example, a BIPOC-led organization may not be counted in this definition if it serves all young people, rather than a specific BIPOC population or cultural community.

**Over the course of the first levy:**
**490,000 of King County's youngest children were reached,**
**along with about 40,000 youth and young adults**

## DEMOGRAPHICS




## SUMMARY DATA

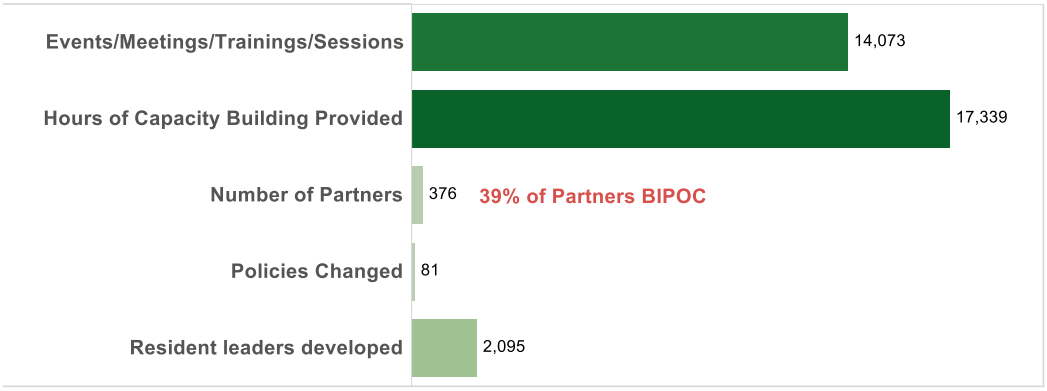
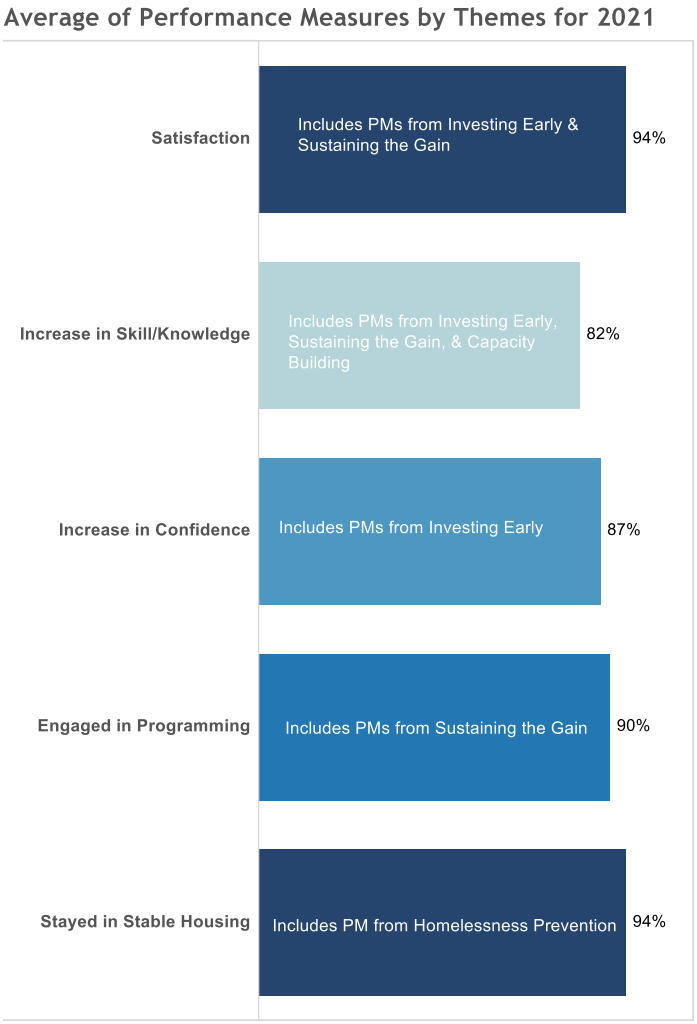



***Exhibit 20.*** **Overall Outcomes**

## THEMES




"We are seeing an increase in satisfaction. The vast majority feel they are benefiting from the program, and they feel listened to."
*- Community Partner*

"[Our participants] were getting parenting information and developing skills; using culturally relevant tools."
*- Community Partner*

"I believe they see BIPOC can be leaders, their voice matters, and their confidence has changed. I think people have seen and felt this is a different space."
*- External Evaluator*

"This has had a huge impact on kiddos, guardians, and parents. The curriculum has so much heart, spirit, knowledge, and indigenous life ways. It sounds simple, but families want to engage."
*- Community Partner*

"We have 94% of people with stabilized housing. We have people working with extremely vulnerable households. It is a credit to the case managers, and it is a successful program."
*- Best Starts staff member*

***Exhibit 21.*** **Overall Outcomes**

## Investing Early

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Events/Trainings** | Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Large Group Trainings | Number of large group trainings | 2021 | 18 |
| | Help Me Grow King County: Collaborative CBO Partnership | Total number of events/groups by the HMG KC Collaborative CBO Partnership | 2020-2021 | 177 |
| | Innovation Fund | Number of meetings, trainings, or events held | 2021 | 465 |
| | Family Planning Health Education | Number of direct education sessions and outreach activities | 2017-2021 | 2,765 |
| | | Number of Technical Assistance & Professional Development services sessi.. | 2017-2021 | 505 |
| | Community Connectors | Number of outreach events led by Latinx and Somali Vroom Community Connectors | 2018-2021 | 194 |
| | Large Group Trainings | Number of large group trainings | 2019-2021 | 56 |
| | Workforce Collaboratives | Number of Workforce Collaborative sessions on each topic area | 2021 | 59 |

| Theme | Program | Title | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction | PCIS | Percent of caregivers who are satisfied with services or activities, or would recommend services or activities to friends by PCIS | | | | | 96% |
| | Service Delivery | Percent of child care providers and administrative staff served by CCHC teams that are satisfied with the services they received | | | 98% | 93% | 95% |
| | Help Me Grow King County: Screening and Referral Services | Percent of families (with identified need) who report satisfaction with referral and by type | | | | | 91% |
| | Help Me Grow King County: Collaborative CBO Partnership | Percent of parents/caregivers who are satisfied with quality of services/supports from HMG KC | | | | | 97% |
| | Community Designed | Percent of caregivers who were satisfied with services or would recommend services to a friend | | | | 72% | 98% |
| | Innovation Fund | Percent of participants who are satisfied with services | | | | | 95% |
| Increase Skill/ Knowledge | PCIS | Percent of families with increased knowledge of parenting and child development by PCIS | | | | 99% | 53% |
| | Service Delivery | Percent of child care providers that report increased knowledge of community resources | | | 99% | 82% | 96% |
| | | Percent of child care providers that report increased knowledge of consultation and training topics | | | 93% | | 97% |
| | ESIT | Percent of children with progress acquiring knowledge/skills | 70% | 73% | 75% | 71% | 74% |
| | Help Me Grow King County: Workforce Improvements | Percent of participants who reported an increase in knowledge related to equity as a result of the workshop/event | | | | | 91% |
| | Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Large Group Trainings | Percent of participants who reported an increase in knowledge related to equity as a result of the training | | | | | 91% |
| | | Percent of participnats who reported an increase in knowledge related to the promotion of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) as a .. | | | | | 92% |
| | Help Me Grow King County: Collaborative CBO Partnership | Percent of families with increased knowledge of parenting and child development | | | | | 89% |
| | Innovation Fund | Percent of participants reporting an increase in knowledge or skills | | | | | 93% |
| | Large Group Trainings | Percent of participants who reported an increase in knowledge related to equity as a result of the training | | | | 88% | 90% |
| Confidence or Increase in Confidence | ASQ/ASQ:SE Provider Training | Percent of providers with increased confidence in their ability to discuss a developmental concern with a family | | | 88% | 87% | 88% |
| | | Percent of providers with increased confidence in their ability to explain why screening is important | | | 93% | 94% | 88% |
| | Help Me Grow King County: Screening and Referral Services | Percent of families who report confidence in next steps | | | | | 96% |
| | Help Me Grow King County: Workforce Improvements | Percent of participants who report confidence in their ability to apply new knowledge as a result of the workshop/event | | | | | 97% |
| | Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement | Percent of grantees who reported an increase in confidence in their roles as an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) provider | | | | 88% | 71% |
| | Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Reflective Consultation | Percent of participants reporting increased confidence to talk about social and emotional development with families | | | | 75% | 78% |
| | Large Group Trainings | Percent of participants who reported confidence in their ability to apply something new they learned from the training to their work | | | | 87% | 92% |
| | Workforce Collaboratives | Percent of members who reported increased confidence that they have the skills to help families support their child's development as a result of the .. | | | | 93% | 88% |

Year

***Exhibit 22.*** **Investing Early – Performance Measures by Theme**

## Sustaining the Gain

| Theme | Program | Title | Years | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Policies Changed** | HSE | Number of policies changed | 2017-2021 | 56 |
| **Trainings/Workshops** | HSE | Number of trainings, workshops | 2017-2021 | 643 |

| Theme | Program | Title | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction | Kinship Care | Percent of parents/caregivers satisfied with programming | 97% 99% |
| | Positive Family Connections | Percent of parents/caregivers satisfied with programming | 68% 96% |
| | | Percent of youth/young adults satisfied with programming | 48% 92% |
| | TIRP | Percent of students/scholars satisfied with the TIRP LV Programming | 81% |
| Increase Skill/Knowledge | Kinship Care | Percent of parents/caregivers increasing their knowledge or skills related to strengthening family relationships | 66% 68% |
| | Positive Family Connections | Percent of parents/caregivers increasing their knowledge or skills related to strengthening family relationships | 92% 86% |
| | | Percent of youth/young adults increasing their knowledge or skills related to strengthening family relationships | 84% 91% |
| | Youth Development General | Percent of youth/young adults with improved knowledge or skills | 33% 35% |
| | Youth Development Relationships | Percent of youth/young adults with improved knowledge or skills related to healthy relationships | 49% 69% 94% |
| Engaged | Positive Family Connections | Percent of parents/caregivers engaged in programming | 97% 89% |
| | | Percent of youth/young adults engaged in programming | 100% 97% |
| | Community Supports | Percent of youth/young adults who engaged in programming | 94% |
| | Youth Development General | Percent of youth/young adults who engaged in programming | 49% 81% 89% |
| | Youth Development Relationships | Percent of youth/young adults who engaged in programming | 26% 69% 79% |

2018 2019 2020
Year

***Exhibit 23.*** **Sustaining the Gain – Performance Measures by Theme**

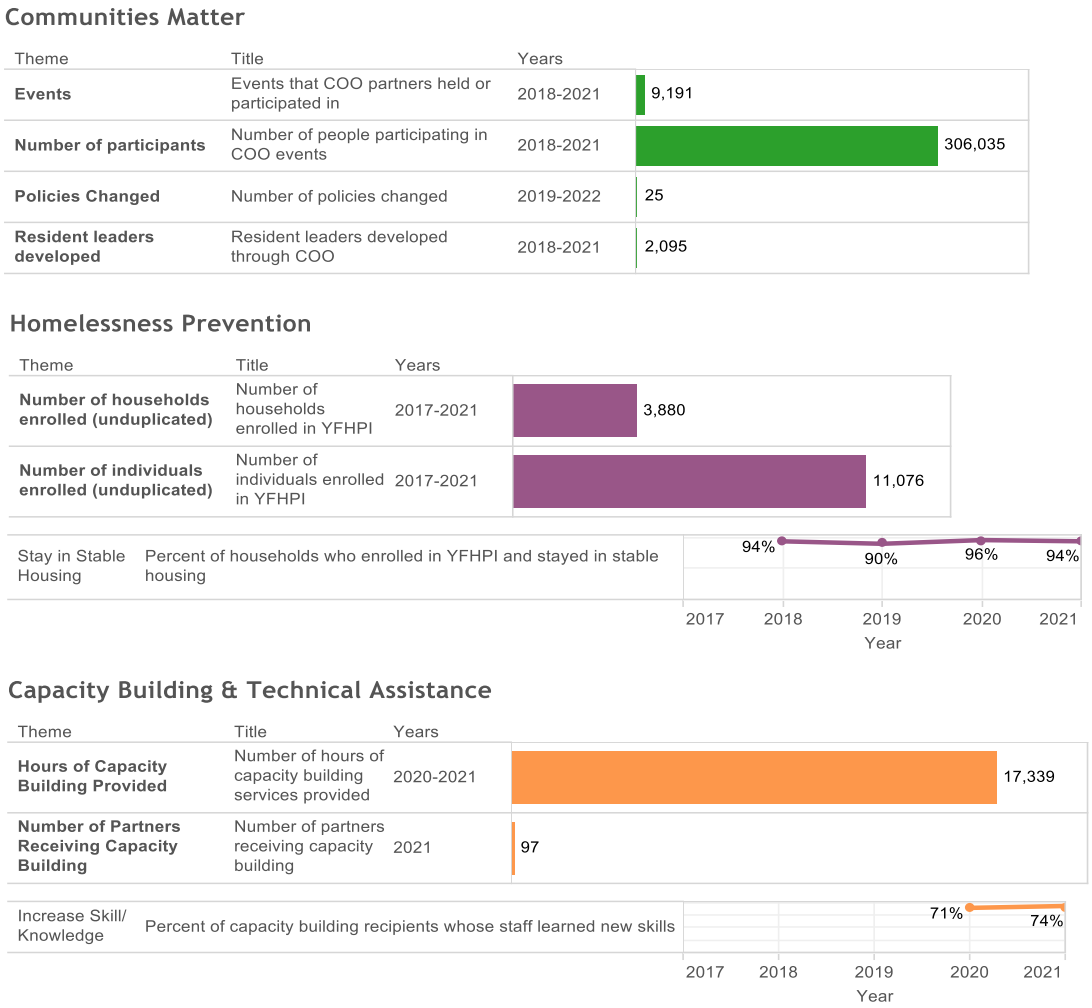



***Exhibit 24*. Communities Matter, Homelessness Prevention, Capacity Building & Technical Assistance – Performance Measures by Theme**

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IDENTIFIED IMPROVEMENTS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN, YOUTH, PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Throughout this evaluation, interviewees noted that performance measures provide essential information and align with the theory of change, but the narrative or story is important to make sense of the performance measures. One partner said, "Quantitative data is not enough for making decisions, but hearing what people are saying and how they are saying it, all that can help." Qualitative data obtained from partners provides insights into the outcomes experienced by the community organizations. The data includes new qualitative data obtained during the evaluation through the Partners Survey and interviews and focus groups with a stratified random sample of partners (see Appendix C). It also includes Best Starts' existing database of previously coded qualitative data from partners' narrative reports, submitted for the third and fourth quarters of 2021, and Best Starts-led Community Conversations in 2020.

Outcomes reported by partners fall broadly into three categories: improvements for program participants, enhanced programming, and greater organizational capacity to support participants' outcomes. Key outcomes are provided for each area, along with examples.

*Program Participants.* Best Starts partners reported a range of outcomes that reflected positive impacts for the participants of their programs. They saw improvements in a variety of outcomes for individuals and institutions, such as:

- Better decision-making within families
- Improved parenting and child behavior
- Stability in finances, housing, and/or parenting
- For youth specifically, increased self-efficacy, self-advocacy, academic performance, and leadership
- Caregivers' mental health
- Families and individuals planning for the future
- Youth encountering the legal system being diverted toward interventions
- Improved relationships and communication between program staff and participants
- Improved school climate

A number of programs have focused on improving outcomes for youth by providing leadership development and opportunities to assume roles in the community. For example, youth have participated on advisory committees, provide peer mediation, and served as mentors to younger children. Students may receive stipends for these activities. For those who must work, this makes participation more feasible.

Several partners noted the role of the Best Starts network in creating positive outcomes for young people, families, and communities. One partner observed, *"People don't understand the breadth of support needed to get families to a place of stability…We need to be part of that connected network to take good care of these families."*

*Programming.* Best Starts partners described improvements in the quality and quantity of their programming. For example, they reported increases in:

- Understanding their community and young people and families who participate in their programs
- Programming, including the number, breadth, formats, frequencies, and times of programs offered (examples: adding new sessions; expanding the topics addressed; adding workshops, community cafés, online sessions, educational forums, or listening sessions)
- Demand for services
- Participant enrollment and the overall number served; *or* working with the same number of people more deeply or over longer periods of time
- Participant access to their programs through travel assistance and online programs
- Creating/obtaining new physical programming spaces
- Range of outreach approaches, such as visiting community gathering spaces, creating a blog
- Materials produced, such as curricula and informational materials
- Provision of material resources, such as school supplies, food, clothing, kits for self-care or at-home care, play or learning kits
- Participant satisfaction
- Community engagement with and trust in the organization/program

A number of partners reported improvements in the cultural relevance of their programs, as indicated by better receptivity in the community. They attributed this to obtaining community input, providing cultural and linguistic matching between interventionists and participants, holding community trainings, and creating advisory panels consisting of community members.

Programs and institutions often use screening tools to identify children, youth, or families who may benefit from certain interventions or services. However, individuals may reject these screening tools for variety of reasons, including linguistic or cultural barriers, lack of information about how the tool will be used, and/or stigma associated with participation. As a result, segments of the community may not receive key services. Several Best Starts Partners reported successful revision of screening tools and/or screening processes. In some cases, these were simple fixes, such as adding translated versions of the tools or having them reviewed by members of the community for accuracy and cultural sensitivity. In other cases, additional staff or cultural partners through Best Starts helped expand the use of the tools. For example, cultural partners worked with community members to address concerns about stigma.

Other linguistic and cultural barriers were addressed as partners implemented or expanded their programs. Many partners observed that language and cultural gaps in the services in King County discourage some groups from seeking resources and support. One community partner working to address this said,

> *The families we were serving mentioned that they access these services through other [cultural] communities. They say, 'we wish that we were sharing West African values and languages. We wish there were more organizations who took us into consideration in planning for certain programs…' They understand they are in a different culture [here] and are ready to embrace that, but there are too many layers to getting the services*

Partners also reported that a key focus and outcome of their Best Starts projects was to improve their relationships with their communities. This included organizations that have worked with their constituents for many years but lacked the resources to obtain constructive input from the community. Through Best Starts, partners reported gaining the expertise and resources to obtain that input. One noted, *"A highlight [of being in Best Starts] was community feedback. We gathered feedback from the community, so we can serve the community the way they would like it. It increased trust."*

*Organizational Capacity.* Partners also reported increased organizational capacity that improved program implementation and participant outcomes. They include but are not limited to increases in:

- Number of staff, especially those with experience that aligns with the needs of the organization and community
- Number of networked partners and agencies
- Numbers of referrals made and received
- Direct collaborations that support service delivery
- Planning efforts through mission statements, goal setting, or logic model development
- Evaluation practices, including using program feedback to make program improvements
- Use of policy to benefit participants, such as policies related to safety

Two key aspects of Best Starts funding that supported growth in capacity and services were mentioned throughout the evaluation. There were numerous references to the effects of Best Starts' promotion of a living wage for the staff of the partner organizations. Many spoke of the high burn-out rate in social services, noting that poor wages exacerbate the problem. Providing a living wage reduced turnover and enabled partners to retain employees who were committed to the community. Partners also discussed the importance of early funding support. This allowed them to hire the staff needed for program expansion, rather than expanding the program at the expense of existing staff until the programming can financially support new positions. One person commented, *"Just having the additional early support funding, per child, made it possible to increase our child count by about 50-60% and made it possible to hire proactively, rather than reactively. That's important because it can take three to six months to hire.""* Further, this enhanced the quality of programming.

**Quote**

*In the last five years, we have become a stronger organization, moving away from just volunteers to a professional staff working with volunteers.* – Community Partner

Collaborations and networking have been significant for a number of organizations. During the Community Conversations, this theme arose as an area of success for the first levy. A Partner commented, *"We are absolutely focused on collaborative work with community partners and have found additional ways to enhance our program. Because of the collaborative work, we are linked across the county."* Periodic meetings have enabled organizations to understand each other's resources and to make informed referrals.

The resources provided by Best Starts have had a significant impact on small organizations. For example, one organization hired its first full-time staff member and, through Best Starts connections, developed new elements to their program. As a result, they have improved their ability to help individuals secure housing and stay housed.

## WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES DURING THE FIRST LEVY PERIOD? WHICH CHALLENGES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED AND WHICH ARE CONTINUING?

Best Starts has experienced some challenges during the first levy period. The challenges are arranged in three categories: (1) challenges that are improving; (2) challenges that continue; and (3) contextual issues that affected implementation and outcomes.

### CHALLENGES THAT ARE IMPROVING

*Best Starts Communication and Messaging*. To support Best Starts, King County made substantial changes to their internal processes, by supporting the initiative through two departments, Public Health and DCHS, and making connections to other departments and initiatives such as the Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development Division. The cross-departmental work was new and, combined with the implementation, required additional staffing and training. Because of these efforts, alignment across departments has improved.

Despite these improvements, communication and messaging has continued to be a challenge. This was evident in interviews, and during Community Conversations where this area arose as a challenge and an area where partners would like to see improvement for the second levy. The combination of multiple investment areas and

**Quote**

*We often didn't get timely communication, or we would get late requests. We aren't a huge shop … and to get last minute requests pulls on our capacity. That is a challenge, and I feel that it has gotten better. This work is challenging, but we have been able to figure it out.* – Community Partner

strategies supported by different program managers, leadership and staffing changes, and a remote work environment contributed to late messaging or inconsistent messages from different people. As an example, several partners reported receiving mixed messages about the transition from the first levy to the second. When applications for the second round did not go out and funding from the first levy was extended, community partners were uncertain how much funding they would have for programming, which made it difficult to ensure cohesive, ongoing programming. A Best Starts staff member reflected,

> *I feel that some of our systems are inefficient. Also, I think we are learning to work with the CBOs, and some need more technical assistance support on how to report and keep them in the system. … We are a human run organization, and there will be mistakes, but it doesn't represent the whole. We continue to work on communications.*

*Best Starts Administrative Processes.* The Best Starts administrative processes has been challenging for community partners. On the Community Partners Survey, only 44% of respondents found the processes easy; 24% reported challenges in performance measurement and evaluation, 21% with the administrative process once funded, and 12% with the RFP process. Interviewees and survey respondents identified the following improvements: (1) RFP process became more transparent; (2) contracting process became clearer; (3) reporting was more streamlined; and (4) systems were in place to support data collection and evaluation. Community partners reported that the willingness of Best Starts staff to review and modify processes based on feedback, combined with technical assistance and capacity building, has contributed to improvements. A community partner shared, "*They are improving, but the reporting process was arduous. We spent about 8 hours on the first report, but at the end we were only spending about an hour. It seemed they didn't know what to ask in the beginning. There are still areas unclear."* During Community Conversations, technical support was identified as an area of success during the first levy period. They offered the following recommendations for continuing these improvements.

**Quote**

*We have created technical assistance that goes across departments, joint decision-making teams where heads of departments will make decisions about funding together. We now have one template for RFPs and one contract for Best Starts – ideal to have more of that synergy across King County – that has been huge.* – Best Starts staff member

- ***Clarify program requirements within the application:*** Provide more information about requirements once a project is funded. Partners reported they needed more information on requirements to attend different learning opportunities, as well as auditing requirements.
- ***Application:*** Provide more details about the intent of the award and eligibility requirements, so community partners apply only for investment areas that align with their focus. Provide a longer time period for partners to develop the application.
- ***RFP Selection Process:*** Provide more clarity on the selection process, who is reviewing the applications, and the steps taken to ensure they use an equity lens. Some cultural organizations raised concerns that information provided in their application may not be assessed equitably.
- ***Reporting:*** Continue to streamline and simplify the reporting process. For example, use consistent reporting forms across all investment areas and strategies, and use one platform for all Best Starts management processes. Allow a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data.

*Limitations of Performance Measurement.* As described previously, performance measurement has been difficult. Interview participants recognized the inherent tension of public funding – the need to be held accountable – but also wanting data to accurately describe successes and challenges. Several concerns were raised. The main concern was that the measures are too numerous and detailed that they end up not being meaningful in discussions regarding levy progress and or in telling the story of the levy over time. Additionally, community partners reported that it is time consuming to report on measures that do not fully tell the story of their project. Collectively, respondents suggested using broader, more common measures complemented with narrative data.

**Quote**

*The Performance Measures are overwhelming. If this was more focused, they could have fewer. I think it is hard for organizations to measure and hard for the county to make meaning of the data on that many Performance Measures.* – Community Leader

Community partners also noted that gathering some of the data requires asking participants for more information than is their typical practice (e.g., demographic data). This can create a tension when trying to establish trust with a new participant and, potentially, this could contribute to some groups not participating. Several others thought having Performance Measures was critical to provide a "quantifiable framework" but can be harmful when not paired with narrative reports. The narrative reports help to contextualize the data and describe the changes that are not evident with the quantitative data alone. A community partner shared, "*It isn't about the numbers. You need to elevate the voices, and the impact of the individuals needs to be highlighted."* A Best Starts staff member countered, "*There is a ton of energy spent on the narrow measures of success at an expense of the richer, fuller stories."*

Additionally, since many of the measures have been modified throughout the levy and/or updated during the final year of the levy, many cannot be used to analyze change over time. Finally, since measures are so program specific, they cannot easily be analyzed across strategies to summarize outcomes. Programs also counted participants differently, with some counting each unique participant and others counting visits which may double count participants, making it problematic to understand the extent of unique participants utilizing the services. Collectively, interviewees and survey respondents noted that Best Starts needs to invest time to prioritize the performance measures, simplify them, and make them meaningful.

*Multiple Contracts Adding to Reporting Burden.* Community partners with multiple contracts focusing on different strategies had difficulties with different administrative processes and aligning the work across contracts. They noted that each strategy had different reporting requirements, as well as different days and requirements for learning opportunities. Furthermore, some RFPs were released for particular investment strategies, at the same time that reports were due, taxing community partners' capacity.

**Quote**

*As an organization with several grants, the number of people, processes, and deadlines are so different, and having to track them is a real challenge. While we are grateful to be funded, it has taxed us to manage that. We have had to calendar deadlines and create a system to manage the complexity of the contracts.* – Community Partner

Some community partners also noted that funding projects under different strategies contributed to silos within their organization. While community partners considered the different projects to be complementary when initially developed, they were ultimately supported by Best Starts under separate strategies making alignment difficult. A community partner shared,

*We want to take the different buckets of funding to see how some grants could complement the work, but because it is two different RFPs and decision-making bodies, we couldn't be guaranteed to piece it together. It puts us in a challenging situation, where we want to be thoughtful on how to use these resources in a way that supports each other. Because it is segmented, and we can't. It is hard.*

Because of this issue, community partners approached multiple contracts in two ways. Some were able to hire someone to coordinate the different strategies and/or dedicate leadership to align the different strategies. Others approached the projects separately, with different leadership and staff assigned to the projects. In these cases, the projects were siloed, and during interviews, community partners working on one contract were unable to talk about the work associated with other contracts.

To mitigate these issues, community partners made some recommendations:

- ***Align reporting processes:*** Develop reporting templates that are the same across different investments and strategies.
- ***Develop a master calendar:*** Create a master calendar to identify when RFPs are released and applications are due, and when reports are due. Review the calendar to ensure timelines for similar investment areas do not conflict.
- ***Align professional learning opportunities in similar areas:*** Review learning opportunities to identify areas of overlap. Community partners reported that they see many of the same partners at trainings across different strategies. Consider aligning opportunities where there is overlap to reduce the burden on community partners and connecting community partners working on different strategies.
- ***Combine strategies:*** Combine some of the funded strategies to create more cohesion.

*Sustainability.* As the first levy ended, community partners who were not funded in the second levy needed more support to build a transition or sustainability plan. This issue is amplified because Best Starts is levy funded, and ongoing funding is not guaranteed.

Although the community partners had access to capacity building to support the growth of their organization (e.g., human resources, fundraising, etc.), many were still unprepared when they were not refunded. Leaders from some of these organizations questioned the reasons why they were not funded, speculating that it might be the organization's size or the population served, and they requested more information. They also noted that it impacted their ability to offer continuous support. While some of these partners have been able to continue their services, other have had to lay-off staff, cut back on the level of support, and/or require a small fee for services. A community leader shared, "*There are grassroots community efforts that are being elevated with Best Starts funding. It is catalytic, and I am curious about the sustainability of how we build the infrastructure with the dollars.*"

To address these issues, partners made the following recommendations:

- ***Provide information on why the application was not funded:*** Provide more information to community partners about why applications were not funded to help them determine if they should reapply and how to make changes to their programming.
- ***Provide support to develop a transition or sustainability plan:*** Begin discussions about sustainability at the onset of funding. This will help partners build the infrastructure necessary to support ongoing programming.
- ***Create longer funding periods:*** Consider funding grants for a three-year period. Longer-term grants allow more time for planning and a strategic roll out, as well as time to implement and build the infrastructure to support sustainability.

*COVID 19.* COVID-19 presented an unprecedented challenge, but also an opportunity for community partners. On the Community Partner Survey, 87% of community partners reported they experienced some or significant disruption. At the same time, 68% reported they also experienced some or significant positive impacts. Some of the disruptions included making changes to the service delivery model by offering virtual/remote services and outdoor activities, changes in the number of community members served, reduced training and collaborative opportunities for staff, and burnout and staff turnover. The changes in service delivery models were also helpful, as some participants preferred the virtual/remote services, and it helped to mitigate transportation or childcare concerns. Further, some partners were able to participate in more training and collaborative opportunities. All of these changes required operational changes, such as building capacity to use technology and building new tools. While difficult, community partners praised the flexibility Best Starts offered. Partners were able to modify programming and support basic needs, which contributed to trust building within their community, and allowed them to target results.

**Quote**

*COVID hit at a critical time, and it caused us to take a shift at an incredible time, and we had to deliver services differently.* – Community Partner

Best Starts leaders and community partners noted that the impact of COVID is hard to measure. It occurred in height of implementation, and nearly all projects had to be modified in some way. Needs changed during this time, with more requests for basic needs (e.g., food, technology) due to loss of income and job insecurity, as well as increased social emotional needs while experiencing social isolation. It made data collection more difficult, and there are some gaps in data as a result. These issues, collectively, make it hard to measure impact.

*Political Environment.* King County is prioritizing racial justice, by implementing the Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, to confront historical and racial inequities.[39] Best Starts is an initiative designed to confront the inequities by targeting investments by race and place and creating policies to disrupt the status quo.

At the same time, some important political shifts occurred in our country that impact perceptions and political will. Notably, the 2016 election, George Floyd's murder, and the Black Lives Matter movement have contributed to polarization and divisions across the County, which can include local politics. These issues have contributed to mistrust of government agencies among some communities. Because this is a levy funded initiative, this can impact long-term funding should communities decide to vote against the levy, in part due to their skepticism of government agencies that responsible for administering Best Starts.

**Quote**

*Until you center race as the nucleus and approach it from a systems perspective, we will only skim the margins. We will improve, but the target will keep moving. Many of our Black and Brown children will not advance because the targets shift. We need to center the efforts on race.* – Community Leader

Several interview respondents noted that long-standing laws and policies make it difficult to disrupt racism, identifying, as an example, I-200 a state law that limits the ability to direct funding based on race and ethnicity. Furthermore, as a levy funded initiative, there is tension between funding all districts equally versus targeting the communities with the most need.

[39] Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan: 2016-2022. See: Equity and Social Justice Plan.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST STARTS DURING THE FIRST LEVY PERIOD?

The stated purpose of Best Starts is "to support every baby born or child raised in King County so they reach adulthood happy, healthy, safe, and thriving."[40] To make this happen, Best Starts invests in community supports and seeks to change systems and policies so that communities across the county thrive and prosper regardless of race or place. As described by Best Starts leadership in an interview, "*[We are] creating a more streamlined community-based infrastructure – how to fund it in an equitable way and allow equity in access to government funding, ensuring families and communities have what they need to succeed.*" The results of this evaluation suggest the following lessons were learned during Best Starts 1.0, the first levy period.

### COMMUNITY, EQUITY, AND RELATIONSHIPS WERE CENTRAL TO BEST STARTS AND TOOK TIME TO BUILD

Throughout interviews, participants consistently emphasized that the focus on community, equity, and relationships was essential for Best Starts' implementation and targeted outcomes. Further, they noted that all three require time, intentional effort, and trust to build. A Best Starts staff member shared,

> *There needs to be a community engagement process, to build trust and listen to their needs and design strategies to address those needs and the root causes of those needs. This process takes time [to] build trust and get feedback from all key players. They need to be listening to the community before developing strategies. It is a mistake to build something without consulting communities most directly impacted by the focus of the efforts. There also needs to be an ongoing component to give community equitable access to contribute and help sustain and calibrate the efforts on an ongoing basis.*

*Best Starts Centered on Community.* Interviewees consistently stressed the community-centered and community-driven features of Best Starts. A Best Starts staff member said, "*I think that Best Starts encourages more community engagement and prioritizes community over protocol. It usually was based on what is easiest for us [the government] to implement and not based on what was easiest for the community…*" Another Best Starts staff member said:

> *We are building work with partnership from the community. We are talking with them about what is working well, what is not, what do you need more of – we tried to do that and truly listen. Creating funding strategies where you have a process and where we use targeted universalism. Where is the need and tell us what is needed and who should be impacting change in your community?*

Examples of the community-centered and community-driven features in practice included:

- Obtaining community input from the outset by meeting with community members in their neighborhoods and using that input to design Best Starts;
- Hiring staff from the communities Best Starts serves;
- Engaging communities in identifying their own needs;
- Engaging community organizations to address those needs;
- Building on existing community actions and resources;
- Building on the innovations of community-based organizations; and
- Engaging communities in evaluation processes and interpretation of findings.

[40] Best Starts for Kids Initiatives. See: Link.

**Quote**

*One of the first things we did was set up advisory boards, such as Communities of Practice, and CYAB [Children and Youth Advisory] … really bring in community partners, enter community voice, collaboration. Technical assistance and capacity building, which are really big pieces of BSK, have done a lot to bring in and understand the voice form the community. What is it that you are missing? How can we best support you?* – Best Starts staff member

The results of this evaluation suggest Best Starts has been successful in prioritizing community. On the Community Partner Survey, 77% of partners agreed that Best Starts staff is knowledgeable of the unique needs and priorities of the community(s) they serve and responsive to the needs and priorities of individual communities in King County. In addition, 89% agreed that their organization seeks feedback from community members on their Best Starts project to ensure they are meeting community needs, and 76% agree that being involved with Best Starts-funded programs and activities has increased their organization's understanding of their intended beneficiaries. Among partners, 73% believed Best Starts staff seeks feedback from community members about how Best Starts can meet their needs.

In interviews, partners noted that Best Starts resources enabled them to increase their knowledge of their communities, enabling them to plan efficient, targeted programs. In some cases, they hired community members to support implementation of their Best Starts funded programs They also strengthened their presence within communities and formed connections with other services, reducing silos. As the work continues, they anticipate improving referrals and minimizing redundant services.

*Best Starts Centered on Equity.* In the review of Best Starts materials, activities, reports, and interviews, the emphasis on equity is explicit. According to a Best Starts staff member, "*Our work is founded in racial equity and elevating the voices of our BIPOC community of providers and others that have not had their voice heard.*" Another observed, "*I think there is explicit language acknowledging the historical trauma and injustice and through strategies and helping marginalized groups.*"

In addition to centering on community, Best Starts used a number of measures to center the initiative on equity. Among them were:

- Adapting administrative practices to create equity (see "adapted practices" section below);
- Requiring equity training for capacity builders, technical assistance providers, and others involved in working with Best Starts and partners; and
- Disaggregating data to understand differential access to service and disparities impact.

The findings suggest that these measures have resulted in better understanding of existing inequities and the structures that maintain them and in changes in practice. On the Partners Survey, the vast majority agreed that Best Starts-funded programs and activities implemented by their organization will reduce racial/ethnic disparities in *access to* (88%) and *utilization of* (86%) to services or resources. In addition, 80% agreed that Best Starts staff provides inclusive and culturally appropriate support to funded organizations, and 80% believe the staff considers cultural differences in understanding program outcomes.

Capacity builders and technical assistance providers also stressed the Best Starts emphasis on equity, both in the county's expectations for their work with partners and in supporting partners' implementation and outcomes. For some contractors, this meant working with equity consultants to develop a deeper understanding of the sources and impacts of bias and learning new ways of working in communities with the partners. One said, *"I learned a lot from my colleagues and the county, and that investment enabled our team to continue to learn about racial equity."* A Best Starts staff member commented, *"You have to be willing to stand in the gap and*

*take conflict, be willing to stand on principles and say 'we are here to be an anti-racism institution.'"* An external evaluator reflected,

> *They [Best Starts] walked the walk, from early on, with racial equity, in particular, even starting with the RFP stage. If you didn't have a lot of experience writing grants, they provided training, and every one reviewing the applications had to go through equity training.*

*Best Starts Centered on Relationships.* Best Starts stresses the importance of relationships as a foundation for creating change. A staff member commented, "Trust and relationship-focused TA [technical assistance] is unique to what we are doing." Best Starts acknowledges that the services provided by partners are largely relationship based. To illustrate Best Starts' emphasis on relationships, interviewees provided a variety of examples, including:

- Program managers and other Best Starts staff responding quickly to questions, listening to concerns, and tailoring responses to the needs of the partners and community members;
- Developing relationships as a foundation to technical assistance;
- Tailoring technical assistance to the needs of partners; and
- Cultivating relationships and collaboration among partners.

The results of the Partners Survey suggest that Best Starts staff members have been effective in building relationship with partners. For example, 82% believed Best Starts staff has open, transparent conversations with partners, and 82% indicated they feel supported and recognized in Best Starts work by Best Starts staff. In addition, 87% agreed that Best Starts staff seeks feedback from partners. Partners also reported that they have developed beneficial relationships with other partners through Best Starts. One said, "*We got to break down silos with community partners… We've had hard conversations with other partners, and [now] are looking at it from a collective view instead of individually.*" They contrasted this with the attitude of competition that typically arises from seeking funding from the same sources.

## KING COUNTY AND PARTNERS ADAPTED PRACTICES ALIGNED WITH BEST STARTS' CORE VALUES AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The Best Starts initiative seeks to change systems and policies, so that all communities across King County can "thrive and prosper regardless of race or place."[41] The Theory of Change references engaging multiple organizations in institutional, system, and policy change work. During Best Starts 1.0, the first levy period, Best Starts adapted practices within the county's administration to align with Best Starts' core values and target outcomes. Similarly, for Best Starts, the county altered its standard practices for overseeing initiatives. Partners changed their practices, as well.

*Adapting King County General Administrative Practices.* From the outset, the Best Starts initiative was designed to instill new ways of operating within King County's administration, specifically for the benefit of King County's children, youth, and families. Several adaptations have occurred within the administration to support Best Starts core values and practices. During interviews, changes in hiring, contracting, and departmental relationships were frequently offered as examples.

[41] Best Starts for Kids Background. See: Link.

To center Best Starts on community and equity, Best Starts leadership sought changes in county hiring practices. For example, Best Starts is committed to hiring program managers from the communities the initiative serves. To facilitate this, they made changes in the criteria for job candidates to include the value "lived experience" rather than relying exclusively on traditional requirements and resumés, and they changed the way the interview and applicant review processes are conducted.

Changes in contracting were also aimed at more equitable practices and simplifying the process for partners, and new standards were set for Best Starts. Best Starts requested the basic contract requirements be reviewed for their relevance to community-based organizations and the type of work they would perform as Best Starts partners. The intent here was to reduce irrelevant barriers to contracting. Additionally, some partners had multiple contracts which created a burden, particularly for organizations with limited administrative and legal resources. Best Starts requested using a single contract with exhibits. A Best Starts staff said the goal is to make the process easier for partners, and then find ways to create efficiency within the county departments.

Departmental relationships needed to evolve in support of Best Starts, as well. Staff members from the Department of Public Health and the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) referenced changes. For example, one said, "*I do think there was greater alignment between Public Health and DCHS. It cultivated relationships because of the need to coordinate efforts. If there are multiple strategies with overlapping efforts, those staff needed to be talking to one another*."

Reflecting on these changes in administrative operations, one staff member commented, "*There has been more flexibility, more of an equity lens in how we do bureaucratic work. It's helping move the needle.*" Staff members and partners have also commented on the increase in diversity within DCHS and Public Health. One person noted, "*Best Starts' hiring from the community…with lived experiences being valued in their hiring practices and finally having so much more diversity than we have ever had…it changes how the department looks at problems.*" Some interviewees believe these changes are expanding within the county administration, beyond Best Starts.

At the same time, there have been challenges. There has been some resistance to change existing practices. The changes also require coordination across multiple departments and digging into the rationales behind certain administrative practices. A Best Starts staff member explained,

> "*They [other departments] work with more than Best Starts. There is still a constant need for us to inform them that this is the Best Starts way, the Best Starts philosophy and values. Think beyond the white supremacy way. What do you need, legally? Those conversations are not easy, and we still have them. We are always asking ourselves, is it practice or is it policy? Is it really needed, or just what has always been done?*"

In addition, changes in practice have been adopted by individual staff or departments without resulting in permanent change in operations or policy. Consequently, staff turnover in administrative areas can undo the changes fostered by Best Starts.

*Adapting King County's Oversight of an Initiative.* Several key practices in King County's approach to overseeing RFP-based initiatives were changed for Best Starts. Most notably, the RFP process itself was adapted in order to base Best Starts work in community organizations, including those with limited experience in seeking public funding. These efforts were intended to reduce barriers to applying for and obtaining funding.

According to Best Starts staff and partners, there were outreach efforts to inform community organizations of the funding opportunity, rather than passively publicize the initiative. One person commented, *"We really tried to have the community drive RFP processes and prioritize the communities most impacted."* The RFP template was adapted to encourage applicants to share the story of their community. Best Starts held workshops for potential applicants to help them translate the community's voice into the language and format of the proposal. They also provided assistance from grant writers.

Best Starts adapted the proposal evaluation criteria to reflect the initiative's core principles and to value an organization's community-based experiences. They trained the review panel to ensure they were able to use the Best Starts lens as they reviewed the applications. The training addressed equity and bias to help reviewers understand how their own experiences and expectations about grant proposals may differ from Best Starts values. They encouraged reviewers to consider the context of the proposed work. A staff member commented, *"For a [Best Starts] RFP, we have an internal training or workshop on equity. Before, we did not have that, it was just the highest number wins."* Best Starts also made it possible for organizations to obtain funding to develop and test promising new models that lack a conventional evidence base.

In addition to changes in the RFP process, there was other adaptions to the county's oversight of an initiative because of the Best Starts values and because of the initiative's complexity. A Best Starts staff member commented, "*There is now a team that did not exist when Best Starts started. There were a lot of headaches before because we needed a more central way of doing this. It is now way easier to go through the process than in 1.0 [the first levy period]*." According to partners, Best Starts staff members frequently attend cohort meetings. There is also a range of technical assistance, and additional mini-grants are available to fill specific needs, such as technology or consultation with experts. During the grant period, they have helped partners manage their grant funds and their reporting requirements. As noted elsewhere in this report, Best Starts has provided capacity building for data collection. They also help grantees learn how to spend down the funding.

## CAPTURING THE AGGREGATE IMPACT OF A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN, COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVE WITH DIVERSE STRATEGIES IS CHALLENGING

Several of Best Starts' hallmark characteristics make it difficult to sum up the initiative's impact in a single page of statistics. The community-driven and community-based nature of Best Starts guarantees there is a wide range of program models implemented across the county. They function in different settings, serve different age groups, and address different needs. Further, each organization serves a community with unique characteristics. This variation, a strength of Best Starts, makes it difficult to aggregate outcomes and describe the overall impact. At the same time, partners and staff are aware that voters have invested in these programs and want to know if the investments are having an impact.

Partners believe that Best Starts has made a considerable effort to support them with data collection and reporting, and those interviewed largely support these efforts. Programs that are large, comprehensive, and based on a common model are more amenable to conventional data collection and to disaggregation to understand whether disparities exist in outcomes based on demographics. However, not all partners fall into this category. For them, there is also interest in finding ways to gather evidence of positive outcomes that do not alienate their participants and reflect the outcomes they observe but may not be evident in numbers.

## THERE IS TENSION BETWEEN THE TIME NEEDED TO CREATE CHANGE AND THE ELECTION CYCLE

There is a need for timely accountability to the public for their investments. However, investments that are intended to produce change that is systemic and transformational across multiple contexts take longer to develop and even longer to reveal their outcomes. In Best Starts, there are several factors that contribute to this. The initiative has intentionally sought to work with community organizations, some of which have needed time to develop the capacity for implementation and data collection. They have also supported some programs that have "slow roll" strategies, meaning they phased implementation due to a process of scaling up, the need to build physical facilities, or other factors.

**Quote**

*We are grateful the levy has been renewed, but we are trying to build sustainable, long-term strategies in five to six years. How do you build long-term outcomes based on short-term funding that you don't even know if it will be renewed?* – Community Partner

Several partners, capacity builders, and technical assistance providers also reported difficulties in creating sustainable change within a levy cycle. Partner organizations, in particular, reported a high degree of stress associated with these uncertainties, as they face the possibilities of cutting off services and discontinuing employee contracts without ongoing funding. They worry disruptions in their services will reduce the community's trust in their organization. An interview commented, *"There are so many services and infrastructures that could be dismantled with only a month's notice. We need sustainable funding mechanisms, but I don't know how we do that."* An external evaluator stated, *"We have been planning piecemeal because we didn't know if there was a future. Maybe it's easier to plan a year at a time."*

## VIEWING BEST STARTS PROGRESS THROUGH THE LENS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE FRAMEWORKS

*The Build Framework for Evaluating Systems Initiatives.*[42] The Build Framework for Evaluating Systems Change suggests a systems initiative might focus on one or more of five areas: Context, Components, Connections, Infrastructure, and Scale. Analyses of Best Starts evaluation reports showed a stronger focus in Context, Components, and Connections. Infrastructure is developing, but there is less of a focus on Scale, at this point. Exhibit 25 provides Best Starts examples for each area. Two key components of Scale are areas of risk for Best Starts: system sustainability and system ownership (defined as a broad array of stakeholders, especially those on the frontlines, assume responsibility for maintaining the scaled-up system).

[42] Coffman, J. (2007). *A Framework for Evaluation Systems Initiatives.* Build. See Build Framework.

**Exhibit 25.**
**Best Starts Examples of Progress Using the *Build Framework for Evaluating Systems Initiatives***

| BUILD FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING SYSTEMS INITIATIVES |
|---|
| **Context**—Improving the political environment that surrounds the system so it produces the policy and funding changes needed to create and sustain it |
| ▪ Increases in issue awareness or salience: Increased awareness of racial disparities<br>▪ Emergence of advocates and champions: Leaders emerging within the county government and in communities<br>▪ Public and political will: Passage of two Best Starts levies<br>▪ New funding: Levy funding<br>▪ Policy change: 81 New Policies |
| **Components**—Establishing high-performance programs and services within the system that produce results for system beneficiaries |
| ▪ New programs or services developed within the system: Support for CBOs and innovations<br>▪ Expanded individual program reach or coverage: Expansion of partners' programs and capacity to deliver services<br>▪ Improved program quality: Partner program improvement due to capacity building, technical assistance, and evaluation fundings; King County program improvement based on community input<br>▪ Increased program operational efficiency: Changes in county contracting |
| **Connections**—Creating strong and effective linkages across system components that further improve results for system beneficiaries |
| ▪ Joint planning across system components: Coordination and planning between county departments<br>▪ Cross-system training: Equity training for multiple entities<br>▪ Shared data systems for tracking individuals: In some projects where interventions are provided |
| **Infrastructure**—Developing the supports systems need to function effectively and with quality |
| ▪ Governance entities that oversee and coordinate subsystems: Best Starts<br>▪ Research and monitoring that encourages the cross-system use of data: Under development through capacity building<br>▪ Practitioner training and technical assistance to support on-the-ground systems development: Best Starts technical assistance programs |
| **Scale**—Ensuring a comprehensive system is available to as many people as possible so it produces broad and inclusive results for system beneficiaries. |
| ▪ System spread: Increased number of programs and people served; spread of Best Starts values and principles<br>▪ System depth: Developing change at the practice level |

*The Six Conditions of Systems Change from The Water of Systems Change.*[43] The six conditions of systems change fall into three categories: Structural (Policies, Practice, and Resource Flows), Relational (Relationships and Connections, and Power Dynamics), and Transformative (Mental Models). Analyses of Best Starts evaluation reports found that the main areas of focus in the first levy were at the structural level, with substantial work also occurring in Relationships and Connections. To further deepen this effort, more effort should focus on addressing Power Dynamics, as well as Mental Models. Exhibit 26 provides Best Starts examples for each area.

[43] Kania, J., Kramer, M., Senge, P. (2018). *The Water of Systems Change.* FSG. See The Water of Systems Change.

**Exhibit 26.**

***Best Starts Examples of Progress Using the Inverted Pyramid Model: Six Conditions of Systems Change***

| SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE |
|---|
| **Structural** |
| **Policies**: Government, institutional and organizational rules, regulations, and priorities that guide the entity's own and others' actions.<br>▪ Best Starts has resulted in county prioritization of community-driven solutions |
| **Practices**: Espoused activities of institutions, coalitions, networks, and other entities targeted to improving social and environmental progress. Also, within the entity, the procedures, guidelines, or informal shared habits that comprise their work.<br>▪ Several key County practices have adapted to Best Starts priorities<br>▪ Hiring practices have changed<br>▪ New procedures and guidelines exist for the RFP process and proposal evaluation<br>▪ Cultural shifts have altered informal shared habits in relevant departments |
| **Resource Flows**: How money, people, knowledge, information, and other assets such as infrastructure are allocated and distributed.<br>▪ Adaptations in the RFP process enabled a wider range of CBOs to access funding<br>▪ Technical assistance and capacity building distributed knowledge to CBOs |
| **Relational** |
| **Relationships & Connections**: Quality of connections and communication occurring among actors in the system, especially among those with differing histories and viewpoints.<br>▪ Best Starts prioritizes relationships by listening to communities, responding to partners, and using practices that build relationships<br>▪ Hiring practices have diversified Best Starts staff |
| **Power Dynamics**: The distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organizations.<br>▪ Best Starts based the initiative on input from communities: their input guided decision-making<br>▪ Partners have been given latitude to make decisions about the use of resources and changes in program implementation |
| **Transformative** |
| **Mental Models**: Habits of thought—deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk.<br>▪ Some Best Starts staff and partners believe changes in beliefs and assumptions are occurring for some County personnel and for RFP review panelists, including a reconsideration of taken-for-granted ways of operating<br>▪ Some capacity builders and technical assistance providers report shifts in beliefs and assumptions<br>▪ Some partners report positive shifts in their staff's and community's perceptions of the government |

## DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

Systems improvement take time, and require a consistent, concerted effort. These evaluation findings show that important foundational elements for systems change were put into place across King County during the first Best Starts levy period. Below are four key findings:

1) **Leading Systems Change.** The Best Starts for Kids first levy initiative has laid the foundation for systems changes that are driven by meaningful community engagement.

    a. ***King County's focus on equity and shift in procedures and policy has increased trust with community partners.*** Best Starts prioritized obtaining community input and participation, building relationships, collaborating with partners, and focusing on equity throughout the initiative. Further, adaptations in King County's administrative processes, combined with technical assistance and capacity building, supported community organizations, including those with limited experience, to seek public funding. These measures cultivated trust from community partners.

    b. ***Technical assistance helped community-based organizations apply for funding, and capacity building strengthened their organizational capacity and program implementation.*** By providing these supports, 376 unique community organizations received funding through Best Starts, a number of which had not previously received public funding. Community organizations developed mission statements, goals, and logic models, and implemented evaluation procedures to make program improvements, often using community input. For example, 81% of the organizations reported beneficiaries had a role in decision-making about Best Starts projects. In addition, the funding helped community organizations pay a livable wage to hire and retain staff members committed to the community.

2) **Centering Equity.** Best Starts demonstrated that centering equity is both a process and an outcome.

    a. ***Leading with equity and focusing on race and place directed support to the populations most harmed by government policies and systems.*** Most of the people reached through Best Starts-funded programs live in the South (46%) or Seattle (42%) regions of King County and were people of color, which reflects the Best Starts commitment to undoing the historical inequities impacting King County residents and the deployment of services to populations and regions facing the largest disparities in health and well-being.

    b. ***Performance measures show alignment with Best Starts' commitment to undoing historical inequities.*** The data shows 490,000 of King County's youngest children and 40,000 youth and young adults were reached through Best Starts. There were 14,000 events, 81 policies changed or adopted, and more that 17,000 capacity building hours to support Best Starts work and to pave the way for continued improvement.

3) **Strengthening and monitoring individual and organizational outcomes.** King County children, youth, and community-based organizations have benefited from additional resources and programming that improved their self-efficacy, skills, and knowledge to the benefit of their communities.

    a. ***Community partners reported improvements in the quality and quantity of programming that enhanced outcomes for children, youth, and parents/caregivers*****.** For example, 87% reported increased connections with other organizations doing similar work, and 82% indicated that their capacity to work with local communities and cultures has improved. In addition, a large majority agreed that Best Starts-funded programs and activities implemented by their organization will reduce racial/ethnic disparities in *access* to services or resources (88%) and will reduce racial/ethnic disparities in *utilization* of services or resources (86%). Through these efforts, organizations increased the numbers of networked partners and agencies, referrals made and received, and collaborations for service delivery, which increase the availability of services.

b. ***Performance measures showed high levels of satisfaction and engagement with Best Starts programming.*** The measures showed high levels of satisfaction with (94%) and engagement in (90%) programs, confidence (87%), knowledge/skills (82%), and staying in stable housing (94%).

c. **Performance measures do not tell the full story of Best Starts' impact in King County.** Many evaluation participants noted the importance of understanding the context, processes, and impact of these changes in order to fully explain the outcomes and to build on successes. It is important to pair performance and accountability measures with rich narratives to develop a more nuanced understanding of how and why change happens, particularly in complex systems change initiatives such as Best Starts.

4) **Monitoring the Best Starts context is critical for assessing implementation**. Understanding the context in which the Best Starts initiative has unfolded to date is a necessary part of noting how Best Starts is unfolding. As Best Starts partners get more experience doing this type of monitoring they are better equipped to focus on changes that matter most for the programs, initiatives, and campaigns being carried out as part of Best Starts across King County.

   a. ***Population measures have remained steady or improved over time, but often differences by region and by demographic remain***. King County graduation rates improved and the gaps in graduation rates narrowed between historically marginalized groups and Asian and White students. Improvements also occurred in kindergarten readiness, reading and singing to children daily, and self-reported health -from good to excellent- although the gaps between groups did not narrow. No changes were observed in infant mortality, preterm birth, received recommended health and developmental screenings, children and youth who are flourishing and resilient, or youth who have supportive adults in their lives. Taken together, these population indicators suggest that while some positive changes have been observed in King County, there is much work that remains to be done to give kids, young people, and communities the best possible start.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We offer the following recommendations for the Best Starts second levy. The recommendations are based on the key findings that emerged and from our experience with evaluating complex systems change initiatives that deploy many strategies to change systems and aim to shift population-level outcomes. While there are many areas of improvement, we focus our recommendations on actionable steps for Best Starts staff in their role of initiative administrators.

### ACTIVELY SUSTAIN THE FOCUS ON EQUITY IN ADMINISTRATION OF BEST STARTS INITIATIVES

Continue to intentionally center equity in your processes so that initiative implementation prioritizes the needs and perspectives of community members that are most impacted by structural inequities.

*Continue centering Best Starts on equity.* A key feature of Best Starts was the focus on equity, relationships, and trust. Continue to engage the BIPOC community members and partners in developing and making decisions about Best Starts. As part of this, create more opportunities for youth voice and for input from the community members who access the services of Best Starts-funded organizations. In addition to encouraging the active involvement of community members in developing and making decisions about Best Starts, centering equity also extends to how initiative administrators and their implementation partners interpret the context in which the

Best Starts work is unfolding. In particular, taking into account how structural racism interacts with personal circumstances to produce outcomes. Specifically, legacies of structural inequities across many domains (i.e., access to quality education, the impact of poverty, school system funding policies) all should be taken into account when considering why gaps exist. Focusing on understanding root causes for observable inequities is another way to continue to center equity in Best Starts.

*Continue to improve administrative processes.* Continue to adapt practices within King County administration that remove barriers to partners' effectiveness. Community partners identified priorities for improvements, including the RFP process, data collection, and reporting (all addressed in their respective sections below).

*Continue to refine the RFP process.* This includes: (1) providing more details about the intent of the award and eligibility requirements; (2) clarifying program requirements up front, within the application; (3) providing more information about the selection process, such as who is reviewing the applications and how they are trained; (4) and reviewing the timelines of RFPs and reporting dates requirements to ensure they do not overlap for grantees who are reapplying. We recommend providing resources (funding, planning time, and necessary trainings) so that community members can be part of the grantee selection process. Ensuring that community member perspectives are represented during the selection process is an important part of shifting from simply obtaining community members' input from to building community ownership of the initiative. Community partners who did not receive funding also requested more information about the reasons their application was not funded. This would help them determine if they should make modifications to programming and apply again.

*Consider the unique needs of partners with multiple grants.* Community partners with multiple contracts focusing on different strategies had difficulties with different administrative processes and aligning the work across contracts. They noted that each strategy had different reporting requirements, as well as multiple, different requirements for learning opportunities, occurring on different days. Furthermore, some applications and reporting requirements occurred during the same time, taxing community partners' capacity. Because of these issues, some organizations hired or identified a staff person to coordinate the different strategies. Others created different teams to approach the work separately, with little overlap. These strategies pulled efforts away from direct programming.

To enhance alignment and reduce burden, the following recommendations emerged: (1) align reporting processes and templates so they are the same across different investment areas; (2) create a master calendar to identify when RFPs are released and when applications and reports are due to ensure timelines do not overlap in similar strategies; (3) review learning opportunities to identify areas of overlap, and consider aligning opportunities when possible across strategies; and (4) consider combining strategies, if possible, to create more cohesion.

*Continue to provide organizational support.* Organizational Support, including capacity building, technical assistance, and learning circles, has been critical in helping community partners apply for funding and develop capacity to support and manage their funding. Continue to provide Organizational Support while also incorporating more time for connections among programs to support learning, team building, and sharing successes.

*Support sustainability planning of community partners.* As the first levy ended, community partners who were not funded in the second levy reported needing help to sustain programming. Continue to invest in sustainability resources for first levy grantees so they can sustain their gains. For the second levy, embed

sustainability planning into all new investments from the beginning. Given partner feedback, it may also be worth considering if longer grant periods (i.e., shifting to three years) is feasible, to allow for a longer period for organizations to build lasting capacity and deepen sustainability planning. Best Starts should look at characteristics of grantees who received more than a single grant to assess the benefits and identify potential risks in moving to longer grant periods. In addition, it is recommended that discussions and expectations about sustainability funding occur early in the granting period, that capacity building activities are directly linked to sustainability, and that organizations develop a transition or sustainability plan.

## ENHANCE EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TO MEASURE IMPACT

*Reconsider the data collection requirements for both population-level indicators and performance measures.* Community partners and evaluators discussed the multiple challenges of meeting reporting requirements. At the same time, the flexibility that allowed grantees to modify program reporting requirements presented substantive challenges when attempting to analyze cross-cutting trends in the initiative. We recommend that the Best Starts staff investigate how data are being used by key stakeholders so that, going forward, it can reduce the reporting requirements, thereby reducing the reporting burden on partners based on demonstrated data utility. In particular, consider how population-level indicators and performance measures can be more easily used to document change across time and across strategies. It may be beneficial for telling the story of the levy to identify a small set of performance measures that are consistent across strategies and measured throughout the levy. This would make measuring impact over time easier and would allow for more analysis and reporting across strategies. However, finding meaningful common measures across the entire initiative will be challenging and should be undertaken using a participatory approach.

*Continue to use participatory and equitable evaluation approaches.* As Best Starts moves into the second levy, it will once again consider what to ask of its evaluation partners. The first set of evaluations collected and analyzed data for subgroups of interests, explored group differences, employed participatory methods, and focused on ensuring their approaches were culturally valid. These are all strengths in the evaluation design that should be carried forward and expected of future partners, if Best Starts wants to be able to talk about how and why the various initiatives implemented are impactful (or not) for an incredibly diverse population across King County. We also recommend starting the work with evaluators earlier and lengthening the time period for evaluations, given the emphasis on participatory evaluation. This will enable partners and the community to develop an understanding of evaluation earlier, which then allows time to adjust the proposed approach if it needs to be changed.

*Focus on Impact.* Evaluation of new programs and systems-level initiatives often require a range of evaluation strategies, particularly during development. A number of the evaluations of the first Best Starts levy period used developmental and formative evaluation designs, appropriate to the stage of the programs they studied. In the next phase of Best Starts, consider how to diversify the data and evaluation investments to commission evaluations that focus on discerning impact and/or contribution to broader population-level indicators. This will require lengthening the evaluation time period to collect data overtime. We also recommend considering how the evaluations fit into a larger impact framework that includes program-level performance, contextual monitoring measures, and population-level indicators. Keeping an eye on what any single evaluation effort is uncovering, in the context of the broader initiative and prior known findings, can maximize the utility of evaluation as a learning and accountability tool. The shift will require more time and intensive evaluation efforts. To support this effort, we recommend directing more funding towards evaluation. Currently 10% is the field standard, and only 5% is allocated to evaluating Best Starts.

*Develop a centralized system for data management.* Developing a centralized system for data management will be important for the second levy. This will ensure data is entered in a consistent way across programs, such as having standard codes for how different demographic data is entered. Data within this system should be available by program and whenever possible include data at the participant level. This system should include a way to store consistent information on partners as well, such as contact information that can be accessed across departments and programs.

*Consider collecting additional information on organizations during the RFP process.* It may be beneficial to collect some additional organizational information during the RFP process, such as having them self-identify on diversity measures and providing information on the size of their organization. From this, a database can be created that allows for analyses across all applicants, both funded and unfunded, and preloads organizational data that is eventually needed from grantees.

*Consider revising data-sharing agreements with external agencies.* It may be helpful to review existing data-sharing agreements to determine whether any revisions could be made for the second levy to allow more data-sharing with external evaluators and to secure more individual level data when appropriate. This will enable more rigorous evaluation methodologies and assessments of impact.

## CONTINUE TO ADVANCE SYSTEMS CHANGE FOR GREATER EQUITY

*Continue to pursue, document, and evaluate systems change.* This evaluation showed evidence of change in the public systems that engage community-based organizations to serve critical communities in King County. This work has shifted "mental models," or the deeply held assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence what people do and how they think. King County has made progress in a number of key practices that support better outcomes for community and more equitable systems, and these efforts should continue. These efforts have included shifting the locus of decision making and authority, leading with data, building organizational capacity, and creating more transparency. Moving forward, it would be useful to identify and codify the policies and practices that have changed within King County agencies to enable collaboration across agencies to benefit implementation of the Best Starts initiative. By taking this inventory and noting what has formally changed and what practices can formally be adopted, King County will move toward institutionalizing the changes, so that knowledge is not lost and processes do not have to be reinvented when there are staff transitions.

Furthermore, lifting up equity-centered practices can support other initiatives and efforts to center equity across the County by providing tangible examples that support adoption of this way of working. As already discussed, moving forward, efforts must be taken to address power dynamics, which refers to decision-making authority and power, both formal and informal. This will involve further gathering of community input, including youth, parents, and caregivers in decision-making roles, and sharing results more frequently with the greater community.

*Continue to build the infrastructure and scale up Best Starts.*

Continue to support capacity building and technical assistance, aligning King County subsystems, providing assistance to sustain programming, and deepening program breadth and depth. It is important to note that systems change takes time and a sustained, focused effort. Sustained change is unlikely to occur in the time period of single levy. The county should continue to intentionally evolve the goals and strategies for systems change as they evaluate progress over time.

# APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Awardee:** An organization that holds a contract(s) with Best Starts, including community-based organizations, schools, school districts, and health care providers. Also referred to as community partner or partner.

**Capacity Building:** Individualized, responsive coaching and training provided to Best Starts partners. Areas of support include financial management, human resources, data and evaluation, IT, marketing, board governance, equity and social justice, legal services, needs assessments, and organizational development.

**Community Partner:** An organization that holds a contract(s) with Best Starts, including community-based organizations, schools, school districts, and health care providers. Also referred to as an awardee or partner.

**Developmental Evaluation:** An evaluation approach that supports innovation by collecting and analyzing real time data for ongoing decision making as part of the design, development, and implementation process.[44]

**Formative Evaluation:** Evaluation that ensures a program or program activities are feasible, appropriate, and acceptable before it is fully implemented. It is usually conducted when a new program or activity is being developed, adapted, or modified.[45]

**Equity and Social Justice:** Full and equal access to opportunities, power, and resources so that all people may achieve their full potential.[46]

**Evaluation**: Systemic collection of information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of a program, set of programs, or initiative to improve effectiveness and/or inform decisions involving procedures that are useful, feasible, and accurate.[47]

**First Levy:** A six-year property tax levy authorized by King County voters to support the Best Starts for Kids initiative from 2016-2021.

**Impact Evaluation:** Evaluation to measure the effectiveness of a program in achieving ultimate goals.[48]

**Learning Circle:** Opportunity where Best Starts grantees and other stakeholders learn from each other, explore issues, and review performance measurement.

**Narrative Reports:** Community partners submit narrative reports to King County to document program changes, successes, and challenges.

**Organizational Support:** Best Starts activities that help organizations effectively implement their programs. This may include capacity building, technical assistance, partner gatherings, learning circles, annual summits, etc.

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[44] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Types of Evaluation. See Link.
[45] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Types of Evaluation. See Link.
[46] King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan: 2016-2022. See Link.
[47] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A Framework for Program Evaluation. See Link.
[48] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A Framework for Program Evaluation. See Link.

**Outcomes:** Program-level changes in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors.[49]

**Outcome Evaluation:** Evaluation to measure the effects on the target population by assessing progress towards outcomes or objectives the program is designed to achieve.[50]

**Participatory Approach:** Process involving partners and the community in providing input and decision-making on the design, data collection, analysis, and results of an evaluation.

**Partner**: An organization that holds a contract(s) with Best Starts, including community-based organizations, schools, school-districts, and health care providers. Also referred to as an awardee or community partner.

**Performance Measures:** Measures that are collected on an ongoing basis to help determine what is working in Best Starts programs and what may need adapted.

**Primary Data:** Primary data is gathered directly by the evaluator. In this project, it included interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

**Population Indicators:** Population indicators assess the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities throughout King County.

**Process/implementation Evaluation:** Evaluation to determine if program activities have been implemented as intended.[51]

**Qualitative Data:** Information in the form of narratives and stories.

**Quantitative Data:** Information in the form of numbers.

**Secondary Data:** Secondary data is data collected by others and provided to the evaluation team. Examples include the Best Starts' data on performance measures and financial data.

**Technical Assistance:** Culturally responsive assistance on program development and responses to RFP opportunities provided through Best Starts.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, People of Color
BSK: Best Starts for Kids
CBO: Community-Based Organization
COO: Communities of Opportunity
CYAB: Children and Youth Advisory Board
DCHS: Department of Community and Human Services
RFP: Request for Proposal
YFHPI: Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative
WaKIDS: Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills

[49] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Types of Evaluation. See Link.
[50] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Types of Evaluation. See Link.
[51] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Types of Evaluation. See Link.

## APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

Illuminate collected primary data through interviews, focus groups, and community partner surveys. We also collected secondary data from Best Starts program staff, as well as publicly available data on the website. The sections below expand upon the data collection methodology presented in the report

### INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUPS AND COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY

Our team conducted interviews and focus groups with 112 participants, and 173 community organizations completed the survey. The following methodologies were used to invite people to complete interviews/focus groups and the survey.

#### INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The following section describes our procedures to identify interview participants. For each group, interview questions were modified depending on the group, and included questions about their work with Best Starts, implementation, contextual factors, equity/inequity drivers, successes, challenges, impacts, and recommendations for the second round of funding.

*Community partners.* We planned to conduct interviews with 50 partners who received Best Starts funding during the first levy cycle. We selected partners for interviews using a stratified, random sampling methodology. We used financial data from the 2021 Best Starts Annual Report to ensure our sampling approximated the funding allocations for each investment area. Exhibit B-1 shows the number of partners we intended to interview in each investment area based on funding allocations. Variables we took into consideration to create the sample included strategy area and King County Council District. We also selected two alternates for each investment area.

***Exhibit B-1.***
***Interview Sample – Number of Partners by Investment Area***

| INTERVIEW SAMPLE | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Investment Area** | **% of Sample** | **Number of Partners** |
| Prenatal-5 | 48% | 24 |
| 5-24 | 34% | 17 |
| COO | 11% | 5 |
| YFHPI | 3% | 2 |
| Other (Capacity Building & Technical Assistance) | 5% | 2 |

In total, 72 participants from 45 randomly selected community partner organizations participated in interviews/focus groups. Of the 50 original partner organizations and 10 alternates, we contacted 58 partners to participate. Two of the original partners had substantial leadership shifts, and were not receiving funding in the second levy, so they were replaced with alternates. Of the 58 partners contacted: six did not respond to messages, three dropped out of Best Starts early and opted not to participate, three did not have capacity to participate, and one did not have a functioning email or business address. However, five of the six community

partners not responding to the interview requests did complete the survey, resulting in feedback from 50 of the 58 community organizations contacted.

*External evaluators.* We invited external evaluators from 14 agencies to participate in interviews and focus groups. The external evaluators were selected because they had produced a report for Best Starts, and that report was included in our evaluation report meta-analysis (see *Evaluation Report and Document Analysis section*, Exhibit B-4). In total, 16 external evaluators from 11 agencies agreed to participate. We were not able to reach evaluators from two agencies due to missing emails or contact information. Representatives from another agency were unable to participate due to a sabbatical.

*Community leaders.* Best Starts leadership and the CYAB identified and invited 12 community leaders to participate in interviews. In total, 6 community leaders participated. Of the non-participants, 5 were unable to participate due to previous commitments, while another planned to participate, but had to cancel due to a school-shooting in a Seattle Public School.

*Best Starts leaders and staff.* We invited 3 Best Starts leaders, and 19 randomly selected program staff from Public Health and DCHS. We randomly selected from a list of employees who were employed in 2021 or before. The sample included an even split between DCHS and Public Health, as well as a mix of roles (e.g., leadership, program, evaluation, fiscal). In total, 18 program leaders and staff participated. The remaining four were unable to participate due to capacity issues.

### SURVEYS

Program Managers from each strategy invited a representative from each funded community organization to complete the Community Partner Survey. The survey was open from August 29 to November 10, 2022. Program managers sent requests out at different times while the survey was open. After the Program Manager sent out the request, a member from the Illuminate Team sent two reminders to non-respondents over a two- to three-week period to complete the survey. In total, 284 funded organizations received a survey request. Many schools did not receive a survey request, as it was sent to the district office.

In total, we received 212 total responses, which reflects 173 valid responses from unique partners**.** Respondents were only included if they received a contract during the first levy, 2016-2021. Additionally, if a partner organization submitted two responses, we used the most complete survey. If both surveys were complete, we implemented a random sampling process to identify the survey to include. Finally, four survey responses were very incomplete and did not include a partner name. These responses were not included.

### INTERVIEW AND SURVEY DISTRIBUTION BY INVESTMENTS AND STRATEGIES

Exhibit B-2 shows a distribution of survey and interview respondents by investment area and strategy. The n-size is the number of organizations represented for each strategy. Please note, in creating the interview sample, community partners organizations were selected randomly using financial data from the 2021 Best Starts Annual Report representing one strategy. However, many of the community partners had funding for multiple strategies, and some interviews included information in those other areas.

**Exhibit B-2.**

***Distribution of Respondents by Investment Area and Strategy***

| RESPONDENTS BY INVESTMENT AREA AND STRATEGY | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Strategy** | **Interviews** | **Surveys** |
| **Invest Early: Prenatal to 5 years** | | |
| Basic Needs Resource | n=1 | n=3 |
| Child Care Health Consultation: Service Delivery | n=3 | n=4 |
| Child Care Health Consultation: Service Development | n=1 | n=1 |
| Developmental Promotion | n=7 | n=8 |
| Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers | n=5 | n=11 |
| Help Me Grow | n=9 | n=22 |
| Home Based Services | n=7 | n=14 |
| Home-Based Services and Community-Based Parenting Supports | n=1 | n=2 |
| Innovation Fund | n=6 | n=12 |
| Kaleidoscope Play and Learn | n=4 | n=14 |
| Parent Caregiver Education and Support | n=5 | n=8 |
| Parent Child Home Program | n=1 | n=6 |
| VROOM | n=1 | |
| Workforce Development | n=1 | |
| **Sustain the Gain: 5 to 24 years** | | |
| Create Healthy and Safe Environments | n=2 | n=11 |
| Out of School Time (SOWA) | n=3 | n=13 |
| Positive Family Connections | n=4 | n=17 |
| School Based Health Centers | | n=3 |
| School Based Health Centers Enhancement | | n=4 |
| Screening and Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment | n=2 | n=8 |
| Stopping the School to Prison Pipeline | n=1 | n=13 |
| Timely Response for Adverse Childhood Experiences | | n=1 |
| Trauma Informed Restorative Practices | n=13 | n=33 |
| Youth Development | n=5 | n=21 |
| Youth Successfully Transition to Adulthood | n=1 | n=4 |
| **Communities Matter** | | |
| Communities of Opportunity | n=8 | n=32 |
| **Youth & Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative** | | |
| Youth & Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative | n=5 | n=16 |
| **Capacity Building & Technical Assistance** | | |
| Capacity Building and Technical Assistance | n=2 | n=3 |

## QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED AND CODED BY BEST STARTS STAFF

Illuminate accessed Best Starts' existing database of partners' narrative reports and documentation of Community Conversations led by Best Starts in 2020. In the narrative reports, Best Starts-funded organizations responded to open-ended questions to explore successes, challenges, and program changes. There were two reporting periods per year, covering the first and second half of each year from 2018 through 2021 for a total of eight reporting periods (see Exhibit B-3). There was a total of 1750 reports over the eight reporting periods, ranging from a low of 87 (early 2018) to a high of 286 (late 2020). Best Starts staff coded the reports to identify common themes in each narrative. However, the coding of themes did not specify whether the theme was absent or present, and frequency analyses were not conducted. We used the data to augment and validate other data in this evaluation. The Community Conversations data were collected and coded in a different manner that enabled frequency analyses. These findings are provided in Appendix C.

**Exhibit B-3.**
***Narrative Reports: Project***

| PROJECTS |
| --- |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2018 Quarter 2 |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2018 Quarter 4 |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2019 Quarter 2 |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2019 Quarter 4 |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2020 Quarter 2 |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2020 Quarter 4 |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2021 Quarter 2 |
| • Best Starts Narratives 2021 Quarter 4 |
| • Community Conversations 2020 |

## EVALUATION REPORTS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Our team conducted a meta-evaluation of publicly available Best Starts reports, including external evaluation, programmatic reports and tools, and assessment and annual reports, as well as other reports provided by the Best Starts evaluation team.[52] The analyses included a categorization of the types of information available, documentation of evaluation methodologies and equity centered approaches, analyses of rigor, and a synthesis of key findings, challenges, and recommendations. Exhibit B-4 identifies the reports we reviewed, as well as additional information supplementing the report that informed the analyses.

[52] The team reviewed reports that were publicly available as of June 30, 2022.

**Exhibit B-4.**
***Annual, Evaluation, and Technical Reports Reviewed***

| ANNUAL, EVALUATION, AND TECHNICAL REPORTS |
|---|
| **Annual Reports** |
| ***Annual Reports***<br>• 2021 Annual Report<br>• 2020 Annual Report<br>• 2019 Annual Report<br>• 2018 Annual Report<br>• 2017 Annual Report<br>• 2016-2017 Annual Report |
| ***Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative Annual Report: 2018 Outcomes*** |
| **Evaluation and Technical Reports** |
| ***King County Speaks their Truth About Racism***<br>• Full Report<br>• African American<br>• Afro-Latina/o/x<br>• Cambodian<br>• Ethiopian<br>• First Peoples (American Indian/Alaskan Native)<br>• Hispanic/Latina/o/x<br>• Middle Easter/North African<br>• Pasifika (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)<br>• Somali<br>• Vietnamese |
| ***Best Starts for Kids COVID 19 Impacts Report through August 2020*** |
| ***Impact of the COVID Pandemic on Parents and Young Children 2021***<br>• Full report<br>• Executive Summary |
| ***Best Starts for Kids Assessment Report*** |
| ***Prenatal to Five Innovation Fund: Technical Assistance Final Report 2021*** |
| ***Prenatal to Five Culturally Relevant Measurement Tool***<br>• 2022 Report<br>• Literature Review<br>• Poster English |
| ***Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Landscape Analysis & Strategic Plan***<br>• Full Report<br>• Strategic Plan<br>• Strategic Plan Summary |
| ***Transforming Community-Designed Programs through Capacity Building***<br>• 2022 Final Report<br>• 2022 Final Report Executive Summary<br>• 2021 Data Snapshot |
| ***Community Conversations Report***<br>• Full Report<br>• Executive Summary |

| |
|---|
| ***School-Based Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment/Services (SBIRT)***<br>• Final Report<br>• Executive Summary<br>• Data Snapshot |
| ***Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) Evaluation Report***<br>• 2019-2021 Evaluation: Executive Summary<br>• 2019-2021 Evaluation: Full Report<br>• 2019 Data Snapshot<br>• 2019 Executive Summary<br>• 2019 Full Report |
| ***Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) Systems Development Project***<br>• Community and Stakeholder Engagement Overview<br>• Executive Summary<br>• Full Report |
| ***School Partnerships***<br>• Full Report (2019-2021)<br>• Data Snapshot (2018-2019)<br>• Executive Summary (2018-2019)<br>• Full Report (2018-2019) |
| ***Youth Development Measurement Tool***<br>• Phase 1 Report: Landscape Assessment and initial Data Collection<br>• Phase 2: Measurement Tool for Youth<br>• Data Snapshot |
| ***Technical Assistance Report***<br>• Full Report |
| ***Developmental Screening Landscape Analysis***<br>• Strategic Plan Summary<br>• Strategic Plan<br>• Full Report |
| ***Early Supports of Infants and Toddlers Child Welfare Landscape Analysis*** |
| ***Theft 3 & Mall Safety***<br>• Brief Report<br>• Process Evaluation of the T3AMS Diversion Pilot in Tukwila Washington<br>• Theft 3 and Mall Safety Evaluation Report |
| ***Understanding the Implementation of King County's Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative (YFHPI): A Qualitative Evaluation*** |

## QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS (EXISTING DATA)

We collected and analyzed existing Best Starts data, as well as a subset of publicly available Population Indicators. The general areas of data collected are displayed in Exhibit B-5. Some of the Best Starts data were available publicly through Best Starts reports, and the online data dashboard, and some of the data were collected directly from Best Starts personnel.

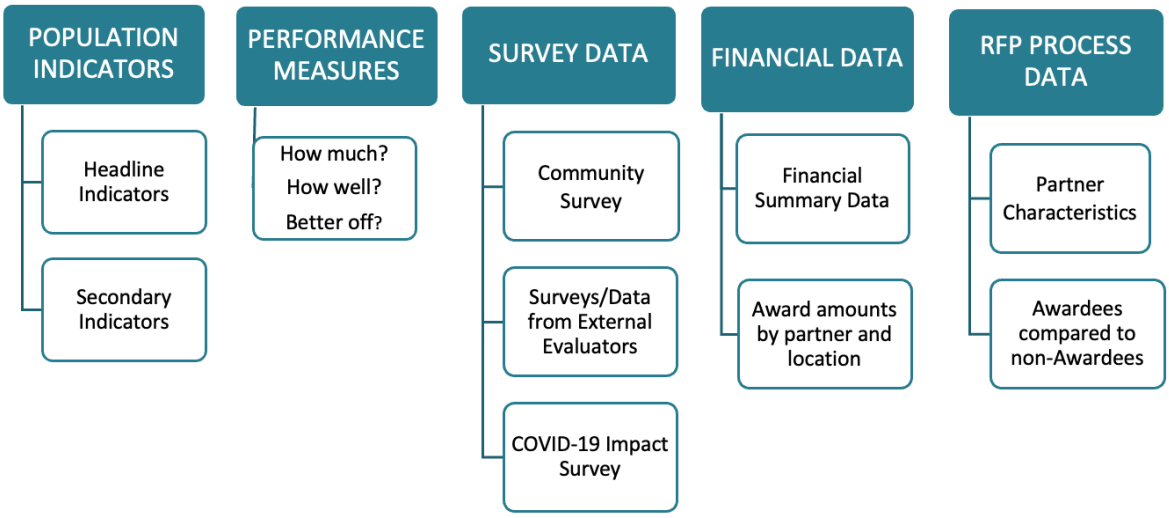



**Exhibit B-5.** ***Data Areas for Analysis***

Several data collection challenges emerged due to the pandemic, including data collection for many of the Population Indicators being delayed or missing data for several time periods. Due to these issues, we decided to conduct a more in-depth analysis, but for a small number of Population Indicators. Indicators for analysis were chosen for more in-depth analyses based on the following considerations:

- Indicators least impacted (i.e., missing data) by the pandemic;
- Indicators with several years of data available;
- Indicators with data available at a level necessary for valid statistical analyses (i.e., schools, zip codes);
- Alignment with amount/percentage invested;
- Alignment with what partners/stakeholders want to know more about;
- Indicators across the lifespan; and
- Indicators continuing in the next levy cycle.

Exhibit B-6 shows the data elements collected and the general analysis strategy for each.

**Exhibit B-6.**
***Data Area, Data Element and Analysis***

| DATA COLLECTED AND ANALYZED | |
|---|---|
| **Data Element** | **Analysis** |
| ***Population Measures*** | |
| • infant mortality rate | • Report over time<br>• Disaggregate by race/ethnicity and region – determine whether gaps are reducing<br>• Compare King County to comparison counties |
| • pre-term birth | |
| • kindergarten readiness | • Report over time<br>• Disaggregate by race/ethnicity and region – determine whether gaps are reducing<br>• Compare King County to other WA counties |

| | |
|---|---|
| • children received recommended health & developmental screenings | • Report over time<br>• Disaggregate by race/ethnicity and region |
| • children who are flourishing & resilient | |
| • reading & singing to children daily | |
| • youth who graduate high school on time | • Report over time<br>• Disaggregate by race/ethnicity and region – determine whether gaps are reducing<br>• Compare King County other WA counties and to comparison counties |
| • youth who are flourishing & resilient | • Report over time<br>• Disaggregate by race/ethnicity and region – determine whether gaps are reducing |
| • youth have supportive adults in their lives | |
| • self-reported health good to excellent | |
| • youth & family homelessness | • Summarize from YFHPI report |
| ***Performance Measures*** | |
| • How Much?<br>• How Well?<br>• Better Off? | • Report by program<br>• Report over time (if available)<br>• Disaggregate by race/ethnicity and region (if available) |
| ***Survey Data*** | |
| • 2022 Community Partner Survey (developed to assess first levy)<br>• 2020 Best Starts for Kids Community Survey<br>• COVID Impacts Survey<br>• Surveys from external evaluator reports | • Summarize |
| ***Financial Data*** | |
| • Financial summary data<br>• Award amounts by partner & location | • Summarize |
| ***Partner Data*** | |
| • Partner characteristics data (# of awards)<br>• Partner location data | • Summarize |
| ***RFP Process Data*** | |
| • Data on awardees and non-awardees | • Compare awardees to non-awardees |
| ***Regional Data to Set Context*** | |
| • Demographic data | • Summarize |

## APPENDIX C: BEST STARTS FOR KIDS, COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY

The Best Starts for Kids Community Partner Survey was administered through SurveyMonkey and was open from August 29 through November 10, 2022. Best Starts program managers introduced our team and the survey to partners funded within their strategy. After introducing the survey, the Illuminate Team followed up with a weekly email prompt to complete the survey over a two-week to three-week period from the initial request. In total, 284 requests were sent to community partners. In many cases, requests for funded school programs went to their district's central office. In a smaller number of cases, there were leadership changes with the community partners, and because the project was no longer funded, program managers did not have a point of contact. The quotations included in this section are drawn, verbatim, from partners' surveys.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

This survey has 212 total responses. The results reflect **173 valid responses** from unique partners, resulting in a margin of error of ±5% at the 95% confidence interval**.** Respondents were only included if they received a contract during the first levy period (2016-2021). Additionally, if a partner organization completed the survey more than once, we used the most complete survey. If both surveys were complete, we implemented a random sampling process to identify the survey to include. Finally, four survey responses were very incomplete and did not include a partner name. These responses were not included in the analyses.

Survey responses were merged with the Best Starts Funding Award Database. The mean request per contract of responding partner organizations was **$270,927** for the full contract. Many respondents had multiple contracts (see Exhibit C-1), and most respondents were awarded contracts in the Five to Twenty-Four investment area or received contracts in multiple investment areas (see Exhibit C-2).

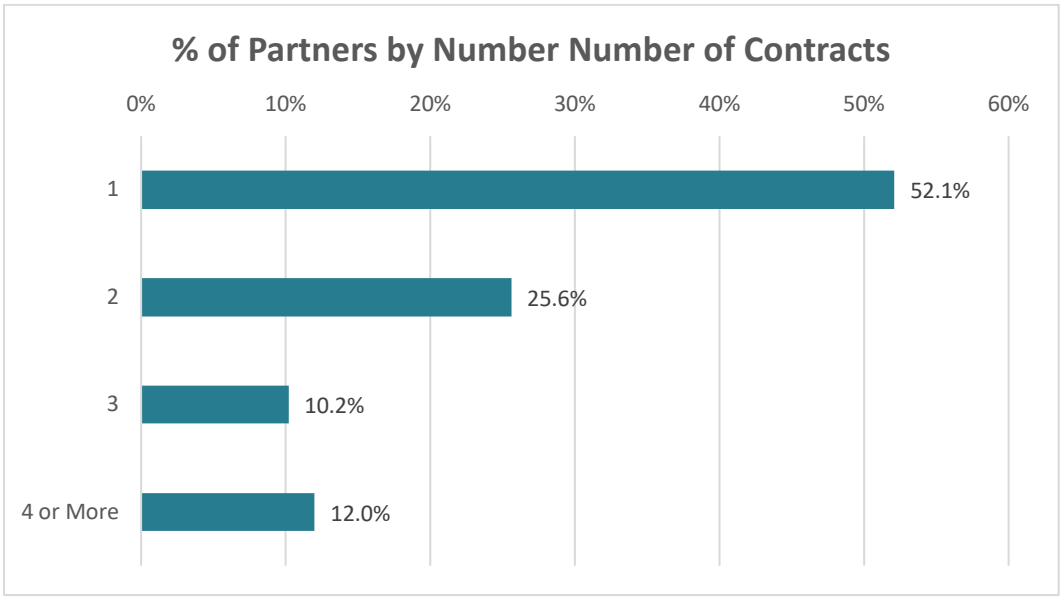



***Exhibit C-1.*** **Percentage of partners with multiple contracts**

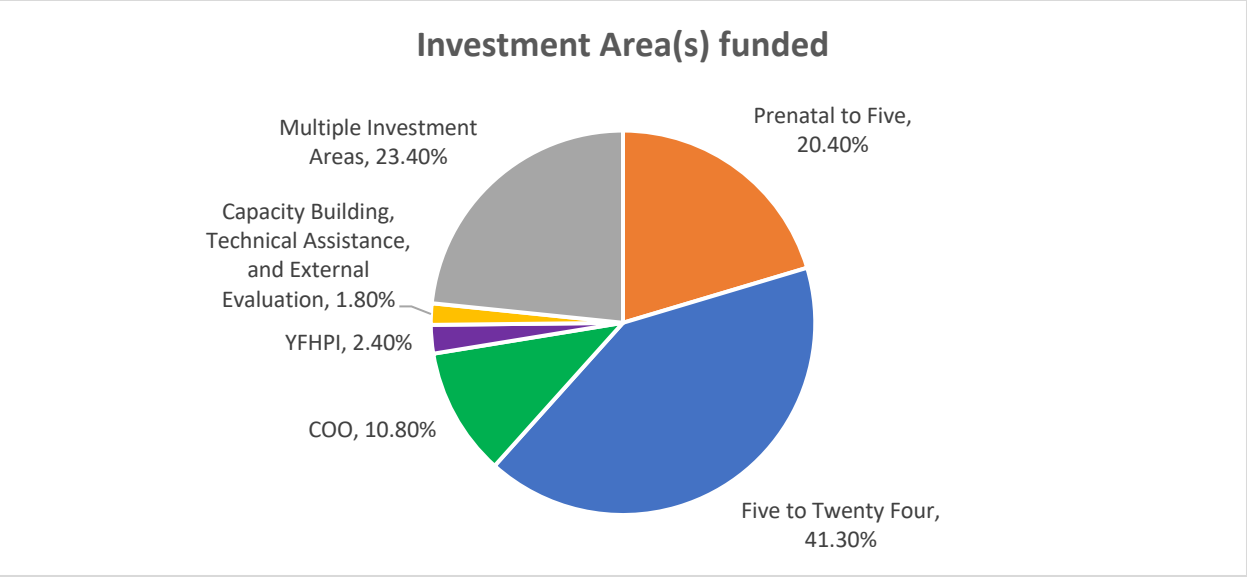



***Exhibit C-2.*** **Percentage of contracts by investment area**

## IMPLEMENTATION

Most partners were able to fully implement their projects as planned or implement with only minor adjustments (see Exhibit C-3). When describing implementation, partners cited the COVID-19 pandemic as impacting implementation. In many cases, partners pivoted to remote programming and supported basic needs. They were appreciative that Best Starts staff allowed the flexibility to modify their project and address emerging needs.

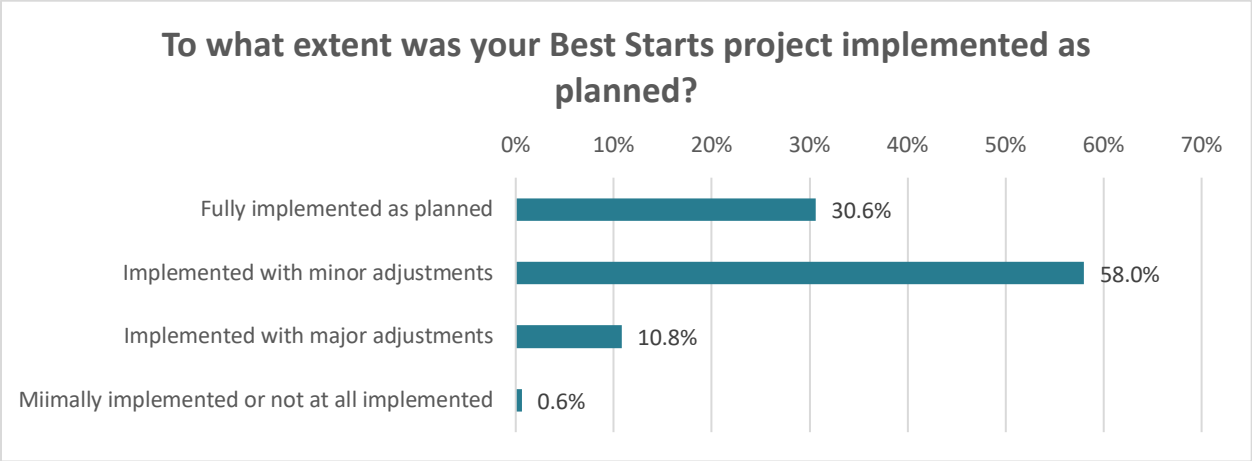



***Exhibit C-3.*** **Implementation**

Partners experienced disruptions and positive impacts from COVID-19 (see Exhibit C-4).

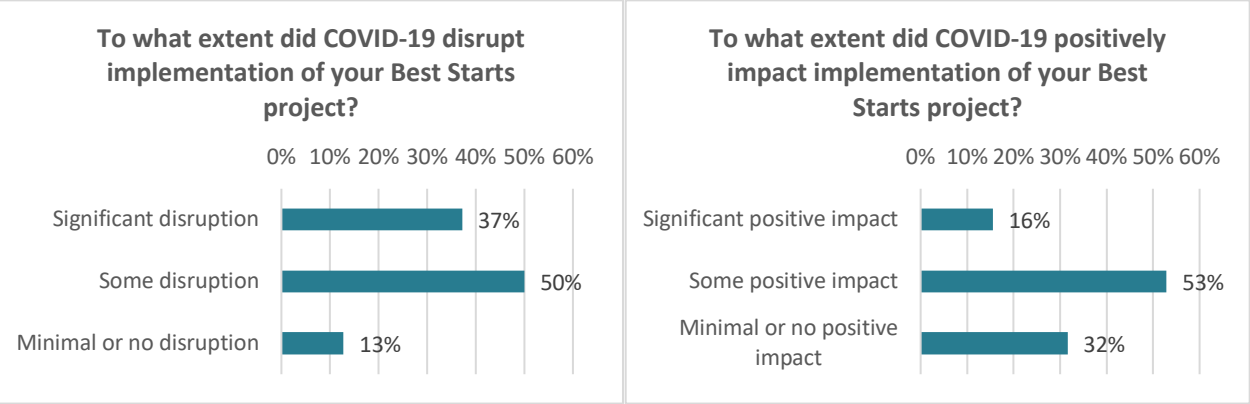



***Exhibit C-4.*** **Positive and Negative Impacts of COVID-19**

## Describe disruptions from COVID-19.

The top themes include:

- ***Changed the service delivery model.*** After a short pause, programs pivoted their service delivery models to include remote programming (e.g., virtual training, telehealth, remote home visits) and outdoor gatherings. Some programming was eliminated.
- ***Changed the number of community members served.*** With the change in programming, some partners experienced reduced participation due to limited access to technology, lack of engagement, or cultural beliefs about technology. However, a smaller number of programs reported increased participation because this mitigated transportation concerns, and there was a greater need.
- ***Reduced training and collaboration opportunities.*** Some staffs had difficulties providing training and collaborative opportunities for internal staff. This was particularly pronounced for small, newer programs. Some coalitions had difficulties with staff attendance.
- ***Increased staff burn-out and turnover.*** Partners experienced increased burnout and stress, as staff members were working full time, homeschooling, and finically impacted. This led to some turnover.

## Describe positive impacts from COVID-19.

The top themes are listed below. It is notable that some of the disruptions also became positive impacts for partners.

- ***Changed the service delivery model.*** Many programs developed a virtual service delivery model. This removed some barriers of attendance, such as transportation and childcare, allowing more participation. Partners were able to offer more check-ins and access speakers from outside the area. Some participants, such as teens and people with disabilities, preferred this platform.
- ***Provided basic resources and access to technology.*** Partners were able to re-allocate funds to provide basic resources and increase access to technology for members in their community. This helped partners understand community members' needs and build trust between the partner and community.
- ***Increased access to training and collaboration opportunities.*** For some partners, more people were able to participate in training and collaborative opportunities because they were virtual. Some coalitions became stronger, developed networks to support their local community, and shared resources.

While COVID-19 impacted implementation, **81% of partners reported that they developed an innovation** resulting from COVID-19 that they plan to continue to use. Many partners plan to continue virtual or hybrid programming. Partners also streamlined some of their processes, such as making online appointments or referrals and recording trainings, which they plan to continue to use. Exhibit C-5 includes some sample qualitative data from this section.

**Exhibit C-5.**
***Sample Qualitative Data***

| SAMPLE QUALITITIVE RESPONSES FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS ABOUT COVID -19 |
|---|
| *We have some disruption, but we were able to adapt and to still maintain our programming. We saw decreased total numbers. However, we largely did what we had hoped to do, with minor disruptions.* |
| *We had originally planned to implement primarily with a program that was closed during the pandemic, so we pivoted to focus on a smaller group of participants. We appreciated Best Starts' flexibility in allowing us to pivot!* |
| *The bonding of our coalition was strengthened in ways through the pandemic, especially in mutual aid. Some of our coalition members are community-based health clinics and they shared opportunities with coalition partners for their community members to access covid vaccinations, and also shared supplies that came their way that they wanted to get out in our most vulnerable communities of color - masks, gloves, etc. It strengthened the communications and mutual support between coalition partners and reflected what we've always said - that we are stronger together - in a way that hopefully saved lives. Another positive was that we were able to expand our coalitions and learning cohorts to cover more King County neighborhoods/regions because of our remote meeting practice - staff of organizations that would have had a more difficult time traveling to an in-person meeting were able to fully participate and benefit from our programs - and we were able to broaden our understanding of needs in communities that we previously didn't reach as often or as deeply.* |

## ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Of the partner respondents, **86% participated in Organizational Support**. On the survey, "Organizational Support" refers to Best Starts activities that help organizations effectively implement their programs. This may include capacity building, technical assistance, partner gatherings, learning circles, annual summits, etc. Exhibit C-6 represents responses about Organizational Support from only community partners who participated in some form of Organizational Support. These results demonstrate that community partners benefited from Organizational Support. Exhibit C-7 includes sample qualitative data from this section.

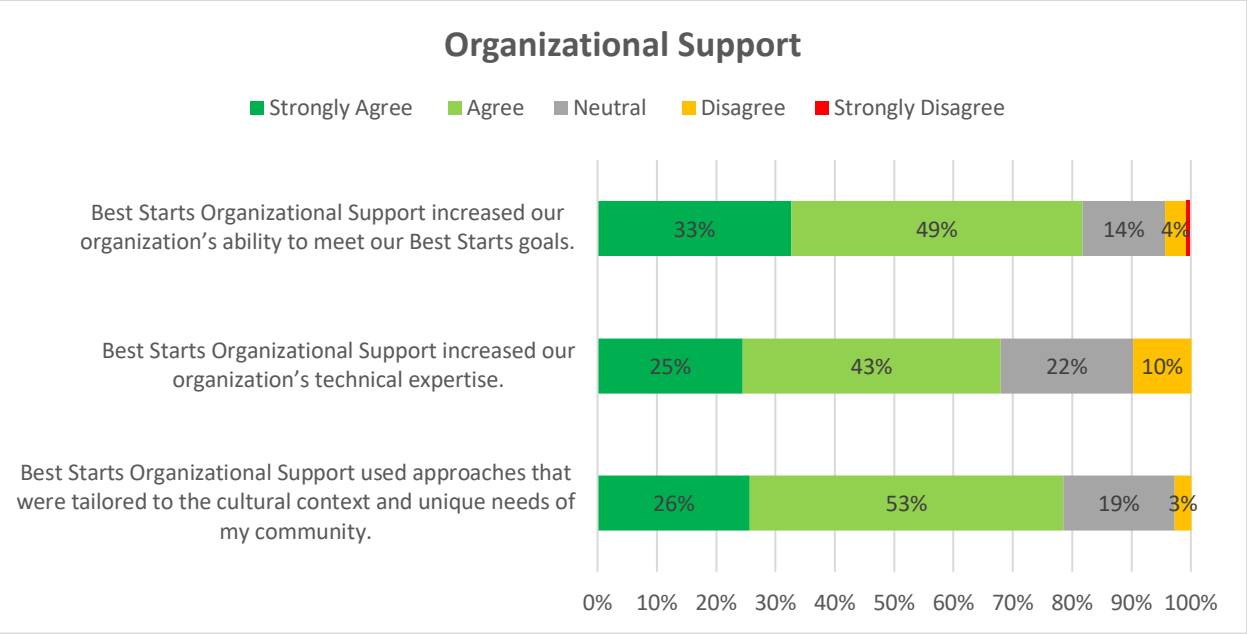



***Exhibit C-6.*** **Organizational Support**

## What aspects of providing Organizational Support has Best Starts done well?

The majority of responding partners engaged in Organizational Support and perceive that it was helpful. The top themes include:

- ***Capacity building and technical assistance in areas they did not have expertise.*** Some examples include data and evaluation, human resources, finance, budgeting, grant writing, application preparation, fundraising, and leadership coaching.
- ***Learning opportunities among partners and Best Starts' staff to share knowledge, collaborate, and build connections.*** Shared learning opportunities, such as Learning Circles and cross-team meetings, help grantees grow their partnerships with other Best Starts partners and staff, learn best practices, and gain new skills.
- ***Flexibility, responsiveness, and ongoing support.*** Capacity builders, technical assistance consultants, and program managers addressed unique needs and answered questions in a timely manner.
- ***High-quality consultants and program managers.*** Partners had access to high-quality consultants and program managers that their organization may otherwise not be able to hire.

## How can Best Starts improve the Organizational Support is offers to Best Starts-funded partners?

The top themes include:

- ***Continue to provide capacity building, technical assistance, and shared learning.*** Continue to provide supports that are specific to partners' needs and reflective of the communities served.
- ***Provide more information on services offered by capacity builders and technical assistance providers.*** Develop an accessible list on capacity builders and technical assistance providers, the services they provide, and ideas and examples on how to use the support.

- ***Align learning opportunities across strategies for organizations with multiple contracts.*** Partners with multiple awards attend many trainings, often with similar partners. Consider aligning learning circles and training for partners with multiple awards.
- ***Offer support to develop a transition or sustainability plan*.** Provide support to help sustain programming. This is particularly important for partners who have funds ending or reduced.

**Table C-7.**
***Sample Qualitative Data***

| SAMPLE QUALITITIVE RESPONSES FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT |
|---|
| *Learning Communities/gatherings of grantee cohorts were great for exchanging ideas and learning from others. Offering T/A [technical assistance] to smaller organizations is a great benefit to build local organization capacity so that they can grow their programs with strong infrastructure and other funding sources.* |
| *It would be helpful to have a transition plan for when the funding ends. Our funding ended in 2021, and we have struggled this year to find Organizational Support that Best Starts had offered.* |

## BEST STARTS FOR KIDS - INTERACTIONS WITH PARTNERS

Partners agree that Best Starts staff has strong communication seeks feedback from partners and community members (see Exhibit C-8). Overall interactions with Best Starts are positive and supportive.

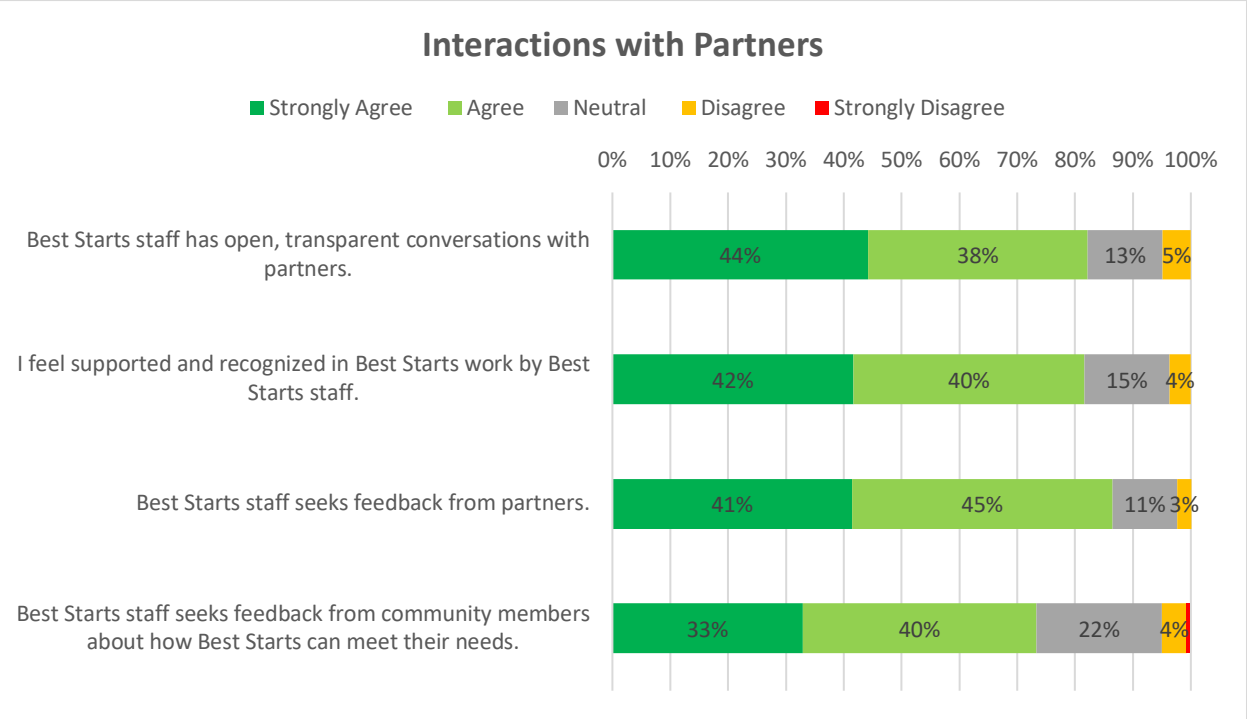



***Exhibit C-8.*** **Interactions with Partners**

## EQUITY

Partners seek feedback from their community members to ensure they are meeting their community's needs, and most believe their funded programs and activities will reduce racial and ethnic disparities in ***access*** and ***utilization*** of services or resources (see Exhibit C-9). Partners also agree Best Starts staff is knowledgeable and responsive to their community's needs, and that support is inclusive, culturally appropriate, and considers cultural differences.

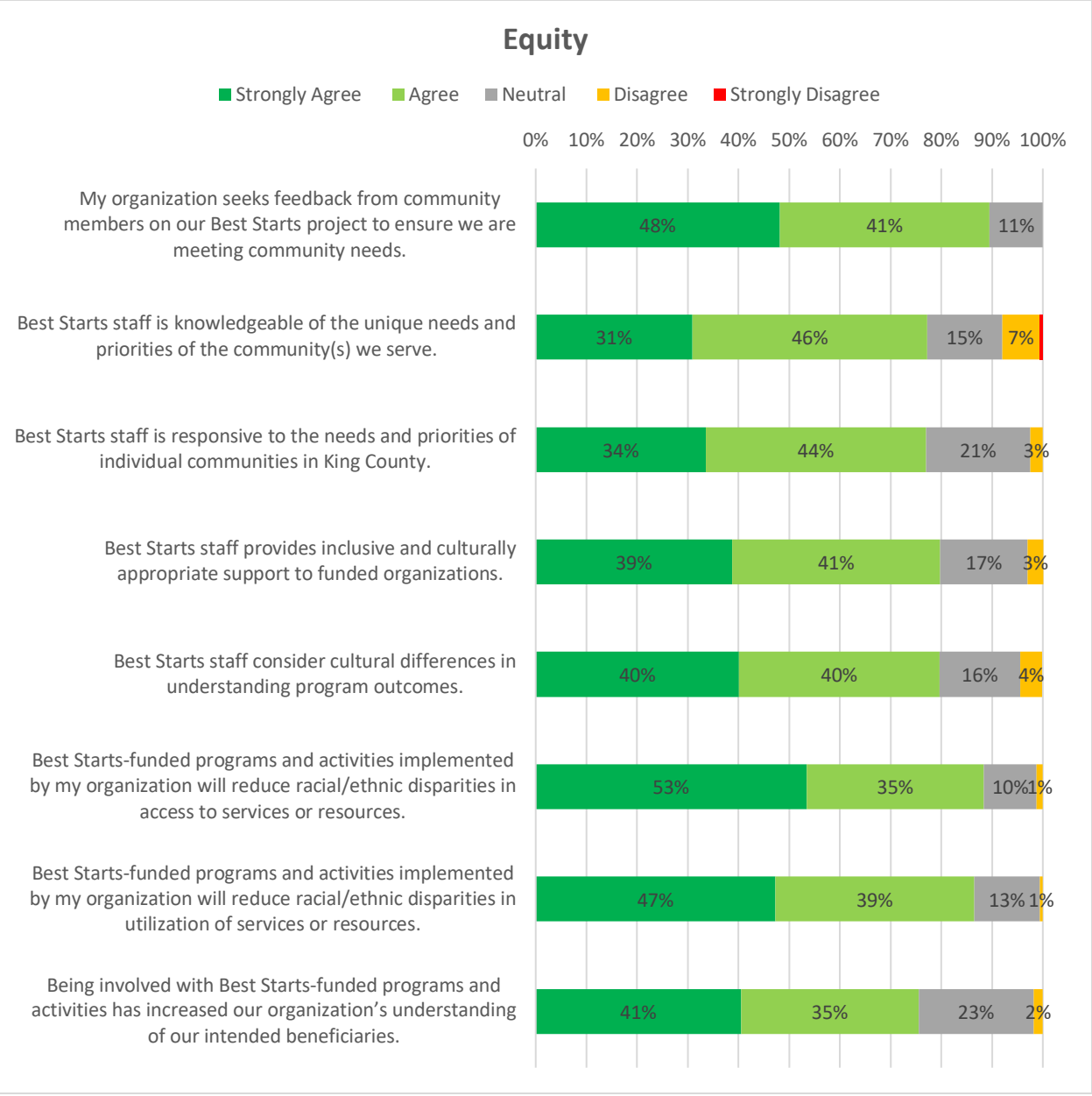



***Exhibit C-9.*** **Equity**

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

Through Best Starts, partners collaborated with other agencies and increased capacity to support their local community (see Exhibit C-10). While the funding was sufficient to meet their project goals, managing the fiscal and administrative requirements presented some challenges.

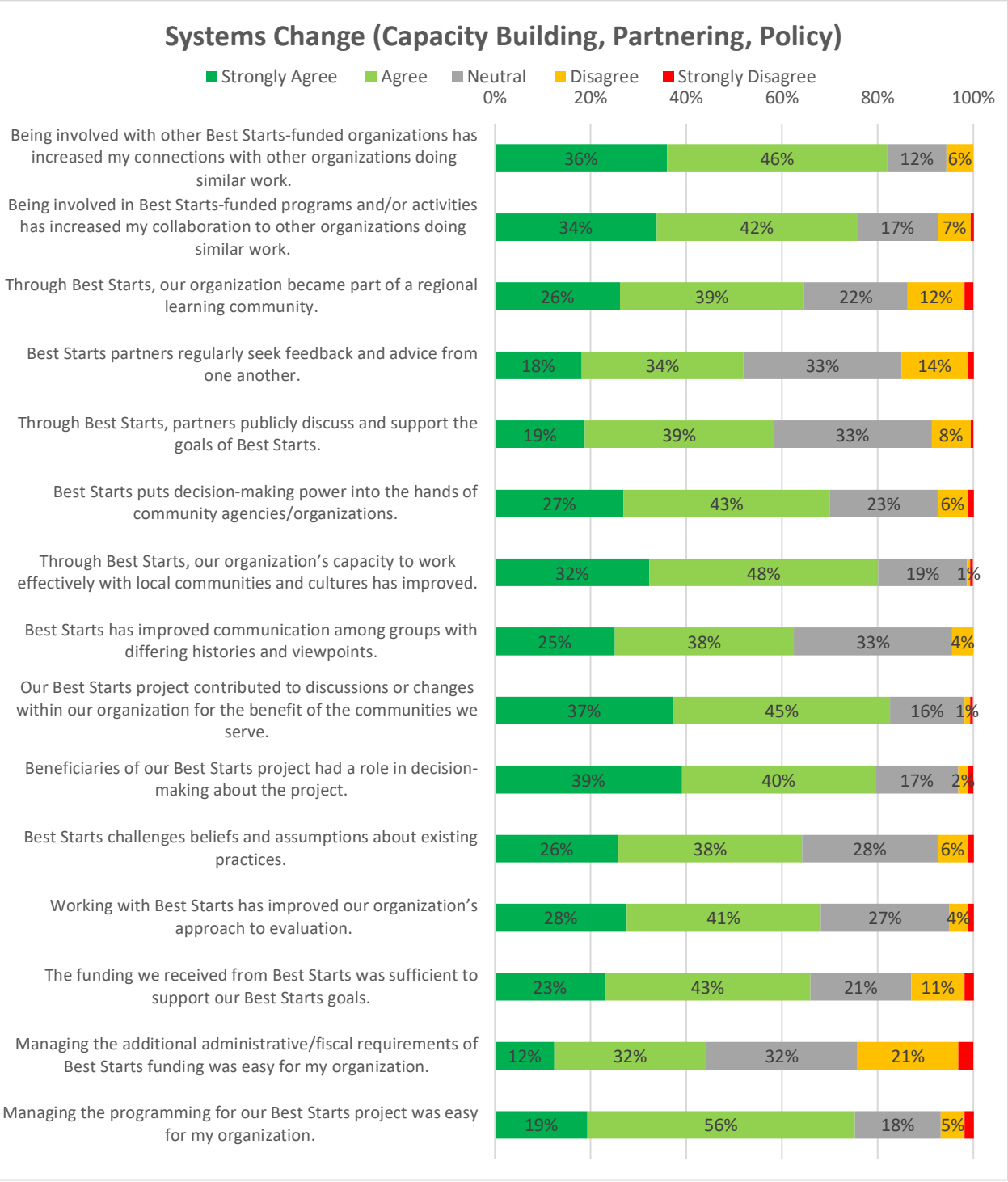



***Exhibit C-10.*** **Systems Change**

## CHALLENGES

Although partners' experiences were positive and many reported meeting their program goals, they also experienced some challenges (see Exhibit C-11). **The most frequently identified challenges included performance measurement and evaluation, as well as the administrative process once funded.** Most of the "other" challenges were related to these issues, such as entering into data-sharing agreements, capturing data from community participants while also trying to establish trust (e.g., managing questions perceived as intrusive), and having the staffing, time, and capacity to manage the administrative process. Others identified COVID-19 as a challenge. Exhibit C-12 details some sample qualitative data from this section.

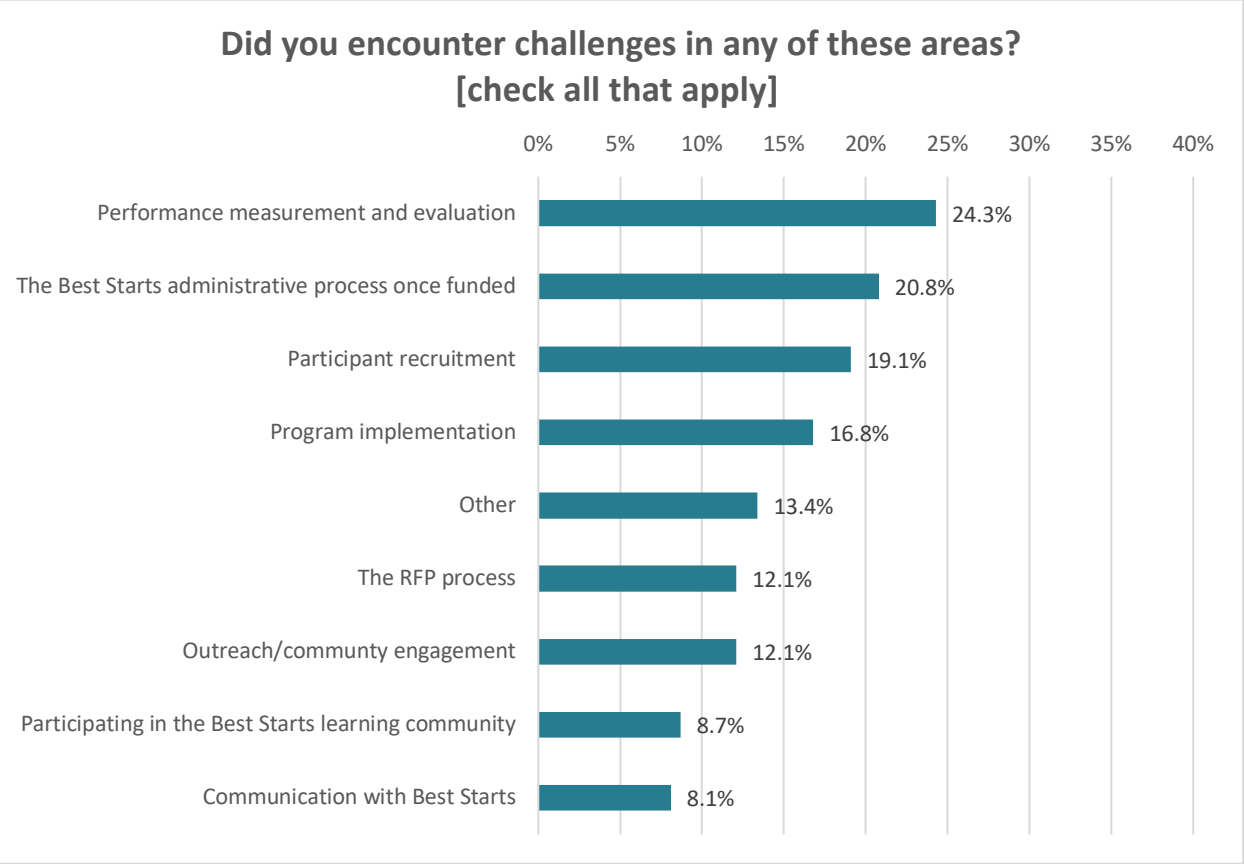



***Exhibit C-11.*** **Challenges**

**Exhibit C-12.**
***Sample Qualitative Data***

| SAMPLE QUALITITIVE RESPONSES FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS ABOUT CHALLENGES |
|---|
| *Given that we are a small organization doing a lot of work with few staff the evaluation and reporting process was at [times] quite time consuming and stretched our staff skillset, as we have staff who know how to lead programming, how to do community outreach etc. but not as much how to do more data analysis. We often struggled to know how to translate qualitative information about our program/ services effectiveness into the measurement tool Best Starts used to track final reporting.* |

Partners provided qualitative data on areas Best Starts has done well and areas for improvement. Overall, partners were very positive and appreciative of Best Starts, reporting that the support has been transformational for their organization. There are instances where partners highlight areas of strength, such as modifying and streamlining administrative processes, whereas other partners identified this as an area of improvement. The main themes are identified below. Exhibit C-13 details some example qualitative data.

## Please share what Best Starts has done well.

1. ***Best Starts staff modified internal processes to support organizations and develop programming based on community input with an equity-centered focus.*** Best Starts:
    a. Removed silos across King County departments and developed processes to improve support for funded partners.
    b. Changed hiring practices to hire high-quality, diverse staff persons, reflective of the community, who speak multiple languages to lead and support the initiative.
    c. Developed programming based on input from the local community.
    d. Sought feedback from partner organizations to modify and streamline administrative processes (e.g., RFP, reporting, contracting) and improve communication.
2. ***Best Starts funded organizations that are most closely tied to and serve communities facing the largest disparities.*** Best Starts:
    a. Funded organizations that typically do not receive government funding, such as small, community-based, under-resourced, grassroots organizations.
    b. Funded organizations that embrace an equity and systems approach by providing services to communities experiencing some of the largest disparities (e.g., multicultural communities, people with disabilities, youth involved with the legal system).
    c. Supported organizations to develop innovative programs, with a focus on prevention and basic needs.
3. ***Best Starts provided training and networking opportunities through Organizational Support, such as capacity building, technical assistance, and learning circles.*** These opportunities:
    a. Increased capacity of partners by providing organizational support (e.g., human resources, fundraising, budgeting, leadership)
    b. Increased partners abilities to apply for Best Starts funding, as well as other funding, through technical assistance, as well as data collection reporting, and evaluation.
    c. Encouraged partnerships and networks to form groups, allowing partners to share resources.
4. ***Best Starts provided flexible, multi-year funding.*** The multi-year funding:
    a. Provided the staffing and resources necessary to fully implement the projects.
    b. Provided the funds to pay staff an equitable, livable wage.
    c. Provided more flexibility to address changes in programming and delivery of basic resources in response to COVID-19.

## In what areas can Best Starts improve?

1. ***Provide ongoing access to Organizational Support, including capacity building, technical assistance, learning circles, etc.*** Partners requested:
    a. Continued access to capacity building and technical assistance to continue to develop organizational capacity and to have continued assistance with data collection, reporting, and evaluation.

b. Continued opportunities for networking, in person and remotely, to develop partnerships and learn from each other.
c. Training topics aligned with the funding strategy and based on partners' needs.

***2.*** **Continue to solicit feedback and improve administrative processes.** Specific areas and requests include:
a. RFP process: (1) provide more time from the release of the RFP to the application due date to allow organizations to complete the process and develop partnerships; (2) clarify the selection criteria to help organizations determine if they should apply; and (3) ensure that the application and review process are informed by an equity lens.
b. Performance measurement and evaluation: (1) ensure performance measurements align with and tell the story of the project; (2) review demographic reporting and data needs to ensure they are necessary and do not add burden to the organization or result in mistrust with the community; (3) streamline reporting processes to reduce administrative burden; and (4) continue to offer technical assistance.
c. Timelines: review timelines of RFPs and reporting to ensure organizations are not burdened at specific times of the year, particularly if they will apply for or have funding in multiple strategies.

***3.*** **Improve communication and program support.** Partners suggested:
a. Streamline communication, as information comes from many different people.
b. Provide consistent training for program staff, as turnover has resulted in inconsistent program support and communication.

***4.*** **Consider the unique needs of partners with multiple grants.** Partners with multiple funded strategies suggested:
a. Streamline reporting processes so they are consistent across different funded strategies.
b. Connect partner organizations that are working on similar projects across multiple funded strategies.
c. Align training for partners, across similar funded strategies, to reduce training burden.

***5.*** **Review funding amounts.** Partners requested:
a. Funding amounts be reviewed to ensure they align with inflation, the increased cost of resources and support, and cost of living.

6. **Provide support for sustainability when funding ends.** Partners who did not receive funding for the second levy reported that lasting change takes time, and they recommended:
a. Provide support to build a transition or sustainability plan for organizations that do not receive continued funding.
b. Provide information about why applications were not funded so organizations can address the concerns and determine if they should apply for future funding opportunities.

**Exhibit C-13.**

***Sample Qualitative Data***

| SAMPLE QUALITITIVE RESPONSES FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS ABOUT WHAT BEST STARTS HAS DONE WELL AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT |
|---|
| **Please Share What Best Starts has Done Well.** |
| *Best Starts was huge for our organization; it gave us funds to create positions/hire new staff, which increased our demographic diversity and positively impacted our programming, community engagement, family engagement and initiated a huge shift for our organization in what we value, how we operate, and this also influenced who joined our organization moving forward (new staff hired, new families participating, etc.).* |
| *Best Starts has really led the way in adopting a community-driven approach to program design, development, installation and implementation; it has allowed for a more naturalistic approach to proposal development and has exhibited an amazing degree of trust that has been somewhat shocking honestly. Over my 30+ years in non-profit work, this is the first time and still one of the few instances in which it feels like we're really partnering with "funders" and government.* |
| **In What Areas Can Best Starts Improve?** |
| *The messages about data reporting requirements that we were given at the beginning of our capacity building phase did not hold up over time. Since data is already a sensitive issue with the clients we work with, this was disappointing. Also, we didn't feel as supported by Best Starts program management staff. We have had many different program managers, and some were really, really difficult to get ahold of.* |
| *The only area I would like to see some flexibility is potentially with ongoing funding. Having a set 2-3 year contract with only the ability to go down (lose funding) is challenging. Our program has been so successful. We have met or exceeded our requirements since day one. I could have really used additional funding to hire a new [staff person] for example to serve more families but there was no room for that but if we had not met our deliverables we would have been penalized. I'm not sure what the solution is here but having more of a buffer and ability to renegotiate when things are going well (or bonuses/increases) when we meet our requirements would be great (and very progressive).* |
| *The scope of funding in the first round of Best Starts for healthy kids was great. I have challenges with this 2.0 version [second levy] as I think many of the programs that were becoming successful were scaled back or cut out. We can't fix what's been broken for decades with a few years of funding.* |
| *To make evaluations for organizations MUCH more streamlined, coherent, and reasonable. Though it is suggested that there are only 3 questions asked, organizations are expected to complete immense and complicated evaluations for Best Starts, so orgs are often surprised and overwhelmed. Also, do not release so many related RFPs in the same period of time as orgs become overwhelmed.* |

## APPENDIX D: QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED AND CODED BY BEST STARTS STAFF

Best Starts provided a Dedoose database of coded qualitive data from partners reports and Community Conversations. As noted in Appendix A, data from the narrative reports were consulted to augment our interview data but were not analyzed further. During 2020, Best Starts staff held 43 Community Conversations, in which they discussed the successes and challenges of the first levy and desires for the second levy. Best Starts staff then coded transcripts for themes from the conversations. Exhibits D-1 through D-2 show the number of Community Conversations in which each theme arose and the number of times the theme arose across all Community Conversations. Exhibit D-1 shows that 24 of the conversations discussed successes around collaboration and/or partnerships, with a total of 36 references across those conversations. Similarly, 23 conversations noted that Best Starts was successfully in being community oriented, with 40 references to this across the 23 conversations.

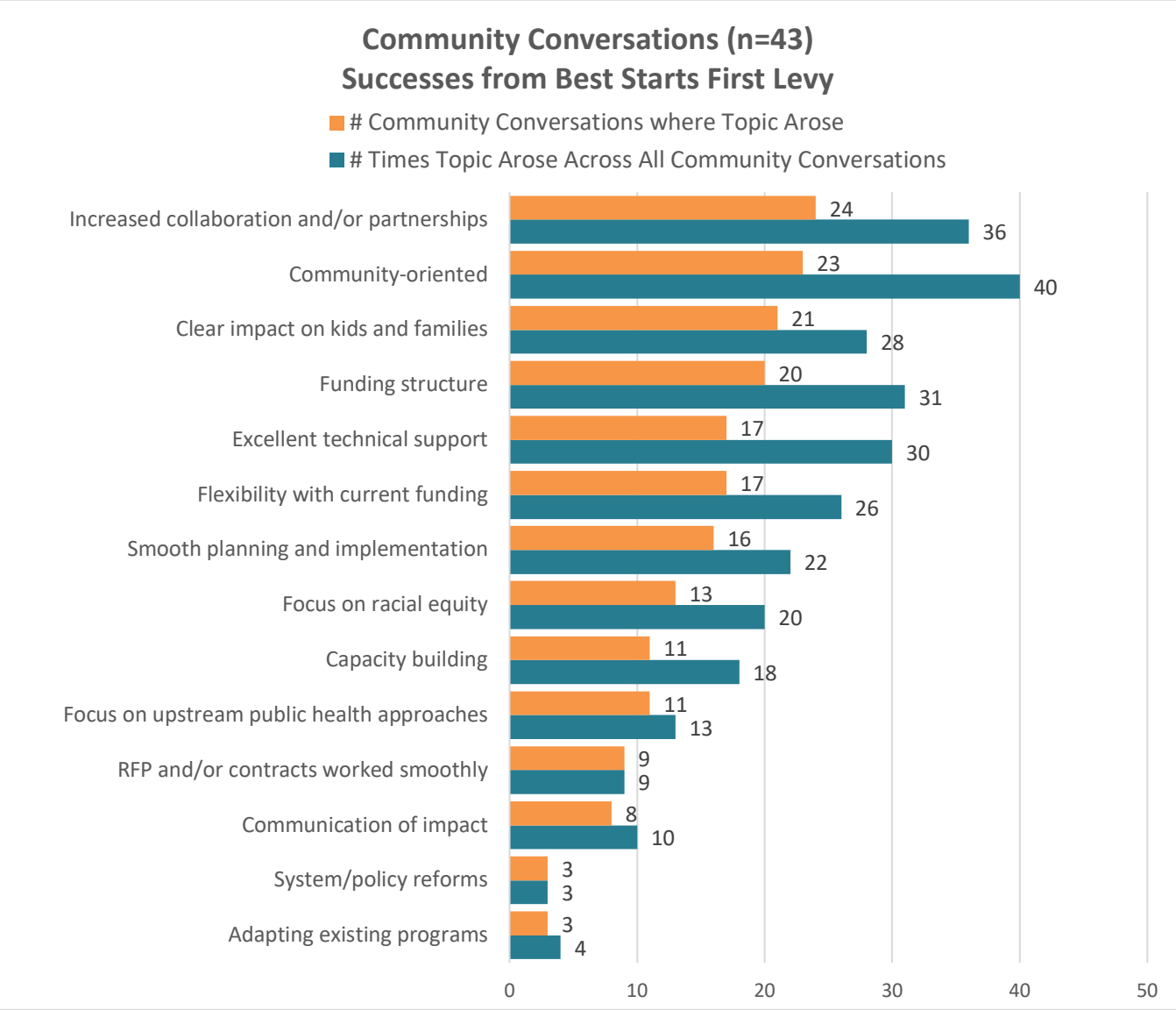



***Exhibit D-1.*** **Community Conversations: Successes from Best Starts First Levy**

Exhibit D-2 shows the challenges that were identified during the Community Conversations. The challenges most frequently discussed were administrative, funding, and data collection, reporting and/or evaluation.

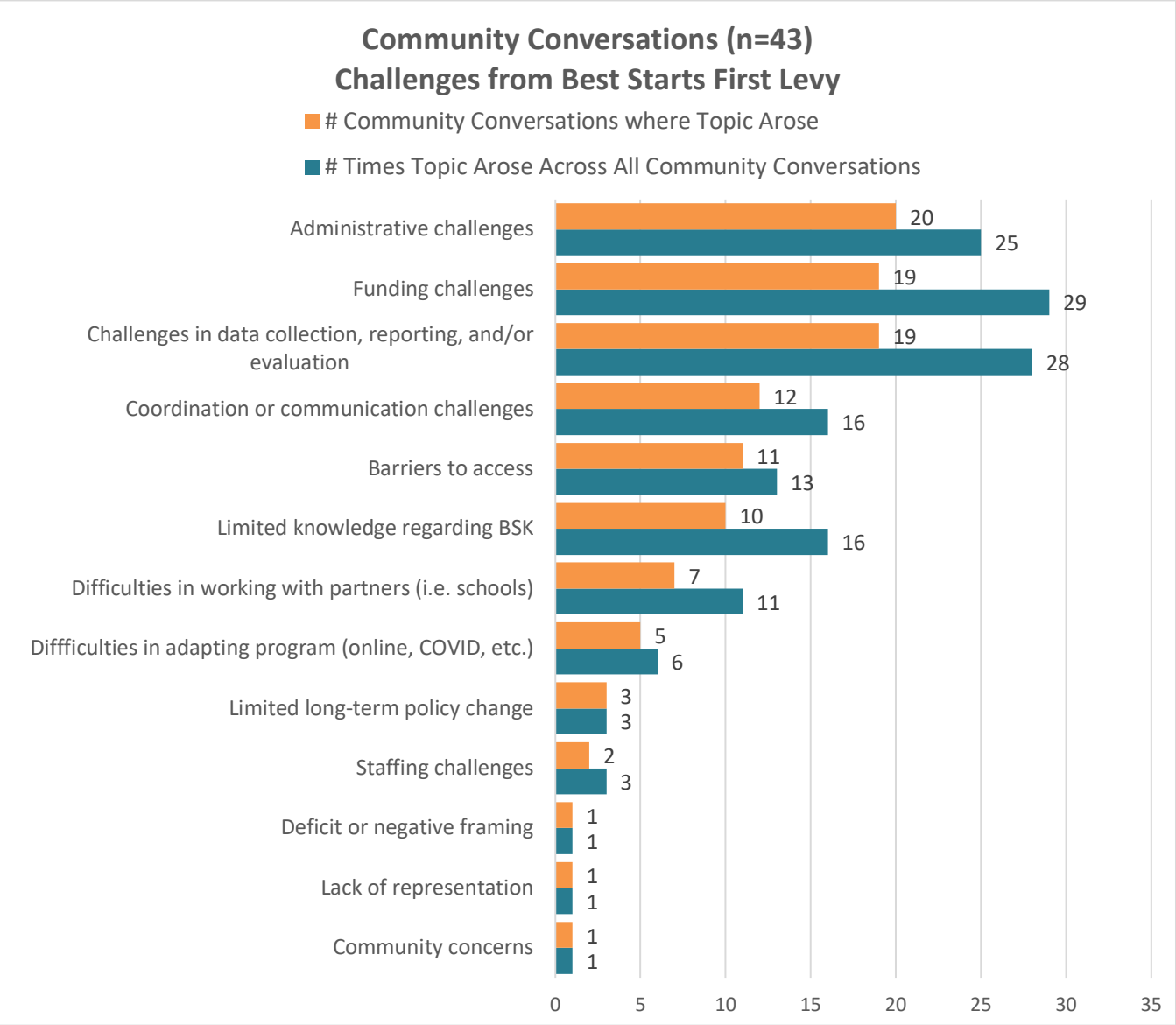



***Exhibit D-2.*** **Community Conversations: Challenges from Best Starts First Levy**

Exhibit D-3 shows the topics that arose in Community Conversations around desires for the second Best Starts levy. Most prominent were the desires for more intentional collaboration and improved external communication regarding Best Starts, which featured in 24 and 21 of the conversations, respectively. Improving or expanding RFPs and more flexibility in funding or program implementation were the next most frequently mentioned improvements for the second levy.

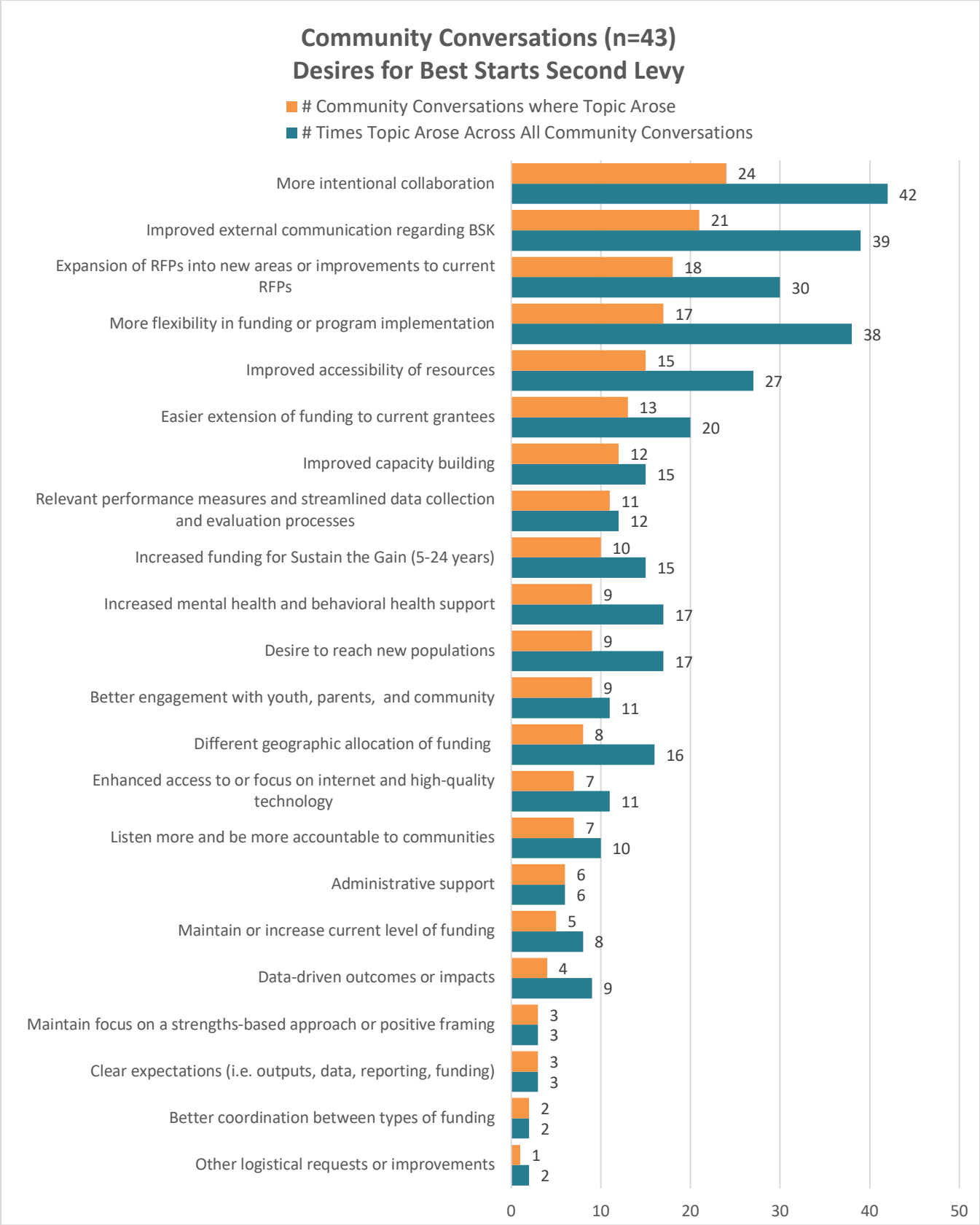



***Exhibit D-3.*** **Community Conversations: Desires for Best Starts Second Levy**

## APPENDIX E – POPULATION INDICATORS ANALYSES

*Infant Mortality.* We examined county-level infant mortality data from 2003 to 2019 using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Vital Statistics system. The system compiles the counts and rates of deaths for children under one year of age. The rate data shows the number of deaths per thousand births in a county. While the data can be disaggregated using a variety of demographic factors, it does not include statistics representing 0 to 9 births or deaths in a particular demographic group. This means that if fewer than 10 children of a particular group die each year or if there are fewer than 10 total births for a particular group, the data will not be reported in disaggregated form. However, this information is included in the county's overall statistics. The present analysis focuses on race and ethnicity in King County, other Washington counties, comparison counties in California, and counties in the rest of the United States.

***Overall Rate Data.*** King County experienced similar infant mortality rates in 2003 (4.48) and 2019 (4.11). However, there were fluctuations between those time points. The smallest rates occurred in 2009 (3.19) and in 2017 (3.24). Other counties in Washington state had relatively higher rates at all time points. In 2003, these counties had a rate of 5.49. By 2019, the rate declined to 4.29, closing the gap with King County.

In contrast to the ups and downs experienced in King County, the California comparison counties showed a steadily declining rate. In those California counties, the rate fell below 4 per one thousand births in 2010 and declined to 3.11 in 2019, the last year of available data. Likewise, the rates in other US counties fell from 6.85 in 2003 to 5.65 in 2019.

***Disaggregated Rate Data.*** At each time point, Black children born in King County experienced higher infant mortality than their White or Asian counterparts. The size of the gap between the groups waxed and waned over time. For example, during 2003, the rate for Black children (8.42) was more than double the rate for Asian (2.66) and White (3.98) children. During 2019, the gap increased, with Black children's rate (12.47) more than six times higher than rate for Asian (1.91) children and more than three times higher than the rate for White children (3.52). Data suppression practices limit our knowledge of the rate for Hispanic children in King County. However, the available data shows that they had higher rates than Asian and White children. For example, in 2014, Hispanic children's rate (5.49) was more than double the rate for Asian children (2.54) and more than one and a half times the rate for White children (3.56).

The comparison counties had similar patterns of rate differences between White and Asian children vis- a-vis Black children. In 2003, Black children's infant mortality rate (10.13) was nearly three times higher than Asian children's rate (3.68) and more than double the rate for White children (4.28). By 2019, rates had improved for all three groups, but the size of the gaps was of a similar magnitude. Gaps between Hispanic children versus White and Asian children were smaller in the comparison counties as opposed to King County. For example, in 2014, Hispanic children's rate (3.48) was marginally higher than the rates for Asian (2.55) and White (3.14) children.

The nationwide data for other US counties shows that Black children have had consistently high rates of infant mortality across the years. Although their rates declined from 2003 (13.68) to 2019 (10.73), there were still persistent gaps with Asian and White children. For example, in 2019, the rate for Black children was more than double the rate for Asian (3.56) and White children (4.82).

*Pre-Term Birth.* We examined county-level preterm birth data from the March of Dimes from 2016 to 2020.[53] Exhibit E-1 shows the preterm births, total births, and pre-term birth rate for counties in the state of Washington. Pre-term birth rates in King County and in other Washington counties remained similar across this timeframe. King County's rate was slightly higher than the rate for other Washington counties during each year. During 2020, the pre-term birth rate declined by one percentage point in King County and in the rest of the state.

**Exhibit E-1.**
***Pre-term births, total births, and preterm birth rate by Washington County, 2016 to 2020***

| PRETERM BIRTHS, TOTAL BIRTHS, AND PRETERM BIRTH RATE | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County | Year | | | | | Total |
| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | |
| **King County** | | | | | | |
| Preterm Births | 1909 | 1884 | 1791 | 1890 | 1577 | 9051 |
| Total Births | 25168 | 24428 | 23525 | 23314 | 22886 | 119321 |
| Preterm Rate | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 7% | 8% |
| **Other Washington Counties** | | | | | | |
| Preterm Births* | 5144 | 5025 | 4932 | 4923 | 4857 | 24881 |
| Total Births | 62511 | 60208 | 59765 | 58849 | 57495 | 298828 |
| Preterm Rate | 7% | 7% | 7% | 7% | 6% | 7% |
| Total Preterm Births* | 7053 | 6909 | 6723 | 6813 | 6434 | 33932 |
| Total Births | 87679 | 84636 | 83290 | 82163 | 80381 | 418149 |
| Average Preterm Rate | 7% | 7% | 7% | 7% | 6% | 7% |

*Note. The data excluded preterm birth information for counties with small numbers of births. Consequently, the total preterm births do not represent the total for the state of Washington.

***Preterm Births Over Time.*** We used negative binomial models to estimate growth curves for infant mortality rate over time. The models were designed to assess changes to the preterm birth rate and whether the pattern of change differed in King County versus other counties in Washington state. The first model included a linear trend, a dichotomous variable to test for differences between King County and other Washington Counties, and a linear trend by King County interaction to assess whether the linear trend differed in King County. The second model added a quadratic trend and a quadratic trend by King County interaction. This model was used to test whether the rate of change in pre-term births differed over time. In model 1, the linear trend was not statistically significant (B = -.008, p = n.s.), which indicates that the preterm birth rate did not change over time. The King County coefficient was also not statistically significant (B = -.091, p = n.s.). This finding suggests that King County's preterm birth rate was like that of the other counties in the state of Washington. The linear trend by King County interaction was not statistically significant (B= -.005, p = n.s.). King County and other Washington counties experienced similar patterns of change in in preterm birth from 2016 to 2020. In model 2, the results were similar. The additional terms were statistically insignificant indicating that the rate of change in preterm births was similar across time. Taken together the two models indicate no change in preterm birth rate over time and that King County's rate mirrored other counties in the state of Washington.

[53] March of Dimes Data. See: Link.

*Kindergarten Readiness.* The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a comprehensive process meant to insure that children have a smooth transition to Kindergarten (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.). The process includes an observational protocol administered by students' teachers throughout the academic year. The protocol assesses many different domains of school readiness, including cognitive, language, literacy, math, physical, and social-emotional. The cognitive domain includes problem solving, curiosity and motivation; flexibility and inventiveness in thinking; recognition and recollection; and classification. The language domain includes using language to express thoughts and needs and using appropriate conversational skills. The literacy domain includes demonstrating phonological awareness; knowledge of the alphabet; knowledge of print; comprehension and response to texts; and emergent writing skills. Math assesses the use of numbers and operations; comparison and measurement; and knowledge of patterns. The physical domain includes traveling, balancing, gross-motor manipulation, and fine-motor strength and coordination. The social-emotional domain includes self-regulation of emotions and behaviors and establishment of positive relationships. Students receive a readiness flag for each domain of Kindergarten Readiness.

We examined data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for all available years between academic years 2014-15 and 2021-22. The data included district and state level data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Although the data extends back to 2014-15, few schools implemented the assessments and there are relatively few data points during the first two years. Most schools and districts had implemented the program by 2016-17. Some data were suppressed because of the small number of students.

Across academic years and domains, King County had higher levels of readiness than the state average. Scores went up from 2014-15 to 2021-22 across all domains, however the size of the gains differed. The overall gains were largest in the physical (82% in 2016-17 vs. 89% in 2021-22) and social emotional (74% in 2016-17 vs. 83% in 2021-22). Although readiness tended to rise for all racial groups, equity gaps persisted. For example, Black (71%) and Hispanic (73%) kindergartners experienced below average (82%) cognitive readiness during the 2021-22 academic year. The largest gaps occurred in the math domain. The overall King County average was 79% in 2021-22, but African American (66%) and Hispanic (61%) students had much lower readiness levels.

*Best Starts Kids Health Survey Indicators.* We examined data from the Best Start Kids Health Survey. The survey instrument included questions about parent and child demographics as well as items pertaining to outcomes of interest, such as whether the child was flourishing emotionally and academically; whether the family read, sang, or told stories with the child; and an overall assessment of the child's health status. The data were grouped by the region of King County in which the family resided. We received data from two survey administrations, one from 2017 and another from 2021. We recoded the race ethnicity variables as a series of dichotomous variables. Similarly, we recoded the home language variable such that English language responses were coded as zero and non-English languages were coded as 1. The average age reported was approximately six years old. Male children made up a little more than half the children in the sample. We recoded the parent income variable such that 1 represented less than $15,000 a year and 8 represented more than $150,000 a year. Most respondents fell into the range of $50,000 to $99,999 a year. Similarly, we recoded the parent education variable such that 1 represented less than a high school diploma and 5 represented an advanced degree. Most respondents had attended at least some college. The three outcome variables were all dichotomous. The flourishing variable was a composite of a variety of yes or no questions concerning the child's emotional stability and academic readiness. Children who received a score of 1 were categorized as flourishing. The reading, singing, or storytelling measure represented the answer to a yes/no question about whether the parent read, sang, or told stories to the child daily. Most respondents said that they did. Finally, the health status question was an overall rating of the child's health where 0 represented a negative response and 1 represented a positive response.

There were important demographic differences between respondents from different regions. A plurality of respondents from the East region were Asian. The percentage of Asian respondents were lower in the North (13%), West (16%), and in Seattle (14%). Similarly, Hispanic respondents were spread across all the regions but had their highest concentration in the South (23%). The bulk of the Black respondents resided in Seattle or the South region. White respondents made up nearly half the respondents from Seattle (47%). More than one-third of respondents in the East (36%) and the South (37%) reported that they spoke a language other than English at home. Average parent income and education were highest in the East Region.

There were also notable differences in outcomes across the regions. Although most respondents in all regions read, sang, or told stories to their children daily, the percentages were nearly 80% of respondents in the Seattle and North regions but less than 70% in the South region. Similarly, respondents from Seattle and the North regions reported the highest levels of flourishing and overall health. The next section explores whether these differences were statistically significant, controlling for demographic factors as well as weighting by the responses in each region.

We ran general linear models on the three dichotomous outcome variables to examine differences by region and demographic factors. We used regression weights and robust standard errors to control for the unequal probability of selection between respondents in different regions. The models included a dichotomous predictor for year, centered on 2017, the year of the first survey administration. The models also included dichotomous variables for each region and demographic variables: age of the child, a dichotomous variable for child gender, and a set of dichotomous predictors for race, and a dichotomous predictor for primary language spoken at home. The Seattle region, girls, White children, and English-speaking homes served as the reference categories for these variables.

*Flourishing.* After controlling for demographic factors, we did not find regional differences in flourishing across the regions. Parents with higher incomes were more likely to report that their child was flourishing (B= .07, t = 2.38, p = .02). For each one level increase in income, the odds of children flourishing increased by 7%. Older (B = -.24, t= -16.24, p <.001) and male (B=-.29, t=-3.57, p <.001) children were less likely to be flourishing. For each one-year increase in children's age, their odds of flourishing decreased by 22%. Similarly, the odds of boys flourishing were 26% lower than the odds for girls. Children from homes where the primary language was not English had higher odds of flourishing than those from homes where English was the primary language, B = .25, t = 2.18, p <.05. Their odds of flourishing were 28% higher than the odds for children from home where the primary langue was English. Black children had higher odds of flourishing than White children (B=.31, t= 1.89, p = .06). Black children's odds for flourishing were 36% higher than the odds for White children. However, the t-value for the coefficient was just outside the conventional range of statistical significance.

*Reading, Singing, and Storytelling.* Respondents were more likely to read, sing, and tell stories to their children in 2021 than they were in 2017, B = .25, t=1.81, p .07), but the p-value was outside the conventional range of statistical significance. Parents in the 2021 data collection had 28% higher odds of using the desired behaviors than respondents in the 2017 sample. We found significant regional differences in reading, singing, and storytelling to children. Respondents in the East (B = -.53, t = -2.54, p = .01) and the South (B=-.40, t= -2.19, p=.03) regions were less likely to report reading, singing, and storytelling to children than parents in the Seattle region. Respondents in the East region's odds were 41% lower than the odds for respondents from Seattle. Similarly, the odds for respondents from the South region were 33% lower than the odds for Seattle residents. Higher income parents were more likely to report reading, singing, and storytelling than lower income respondents, B = .13, t= 3.10, p <.01. For each additional level of income, the odds of reporting these behaviors increased by 13%. The odds were also lower for older (B=-.14, t = -2.74, p <.01) and male children (B=-.43, t=-

3.04, p < .01). For each additional year of age, the odds of the behaviors decreased by 13%. Boys' odds were 34% lower than the odds for girls.

Similarly, children who were Asian (B=-1.04, t = -5.15, p <.001), Hispanic (B=-.98, t=-4.66, p <.001), or Multiracial (B=-.68, t = 3.23, p = .002) had lower odds relative to White children. The odds were 66% lower for Asian children; 62% lower for Hispanic children; and 50% lower for Multiracial children.

*Health.* Respondents in the 2021 reported significantly lower health than respondents in the 2017 administration, B = -.44, t = -5.57, p <.001. The odds of responding positively were 36% lower in 2021 than the odds for respondents in 2017. Higher income respondents had higher odds of responding positively to the question, B = .10, t = 3.75, p <.001. For each additional level of income, respondents' odds of a positive response increased by 11%. Similarly, more educated parents were more likely to respond positively, B = .10, t = 2.23, p = .03. For each additional level of education, respondents' odds of a positive response increased by 10%. Black children (B=.37, t= 2.15, p = .03) and children from homes where the primary language was not English (B=.48, t = 4.61, p <.001) also had higher odds of responding positively in regards to health compared to White children and children from homes where the primary language is English, respectively. Black children's odds were 44% higher than White children's odds and children from homes where the primary language was not English odds were 61% higher than the odds for children from homes where the primary language was English.

*Graduation Rate.* We examined graduation data from both Washington (Washington Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction, 2022) and California (California Department of Education, 2022). Graduation rate was computed by dividing the number of students who graduated in four years by the number of students in the adjusted cohort. The adjusted cohort includes students who started at a given high school in the ninth grade while accounting for the number who transferred in or out of the high school during the four-year period.

The Washington data spanned academic years 2012-13 through 2020-21. The available California data covered the years 2016-17 to 2020-21. We looked at county-level data from both states, focusing on King County in Washington and a collection of five demographically similar counties (Alameda, Orange, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara) in California. The data were disaggregated by race in each county. From 2016-17 to 2020-21, California had a higher graduation rate than Washington state. Rates for King County were higher than the Washington state average at all time points. King County's rates also met or exceeded the rates for the California comparison counties during the available timespan. Overall, King County's rate rose from a low of 78% during the 2012-13 academic year to a high of 86% during 2020-21.

In King County, several groups have seen marked improvement in graduation rate over time. For example, American Indian students have experienced a 20-percentage point gain in graduation rate over the nine-year span, increasing from 51% to 71%. Similarly, Black students experienced a 16-percentage point gain, from 64% to 80%. Hispanic students increased from 60% to 77%. Other groups of students have also gained ground over time, but their increases have not been as dramatic. For example, Asian and White students experienced 10 and six-percentage point gains, respectively. The large improvements for American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students, coupled with the more modest gains for Asian and White students, have narrowed but not entirely closed the graduation rate gap between the groups. The data on the comparison counties provide important context for the gains made in King County. During the five years in which we have comparison data, American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students enrolled in high schools in the California comparison counties have experienced stagnating or falling graduation rates. These comparison data demonstrate that continued increases in graduation rate are not assured and that sustained intervention may be necessary to maintain and exceed current student performance. Taken together, these data also show that large discrepancies in this key educational outcome still exist between Asian and White students compared to historically marginalized groups.

*Graduation Rate Models.* We used negative binomial models to explore the growth of graduation rates over time. The first set of models focused on county-level data from Washington state covering the period from 2012-13 to 2020-21. The model included fixed effects for the linear trend; a dichotomous predictor for King County; a linear trend by King County interaction term to capture differences in the linear trend between King County and other Washington counties; and dichotomous predictors for each racial group. The linear trend was centered at 2012-13, the first year of available data. White students served as the comparison group. There were several statistically significant predictors. The linear trend was statistically significant (B=.015, t = 17.563, p <.001). For each additional academic year, the odds of graduating from high school in four years increased by 2%. The linear trend by King County interaction was marginally significant (B=.008, p < .10), indicating that the increase in graduation rate was slightly higher in King County than the rest of Washington state. The coefficients for American Indian (B=-.020, t = -22.88, p <.001), Black (B=-.07, t = -9.60, p <.001), and Hispanic students (B=-.04, t = -8.04, p <.001) showed that they experienced lower graduation rates relative to White students during the baseline year. The odds of an American Indian student graduating in four years were 18% lower than those for a White student; the odds for a Black student were 7% lower; and the odds for a Hispanic student were 4% lower. In contrast, the odds for Asian students (B=.14, t = 21.03, p <.001) were 14% higher than the odds for White students.

We ran several other more complicated models to assess whether the trends for the various racial groups were different than the overall trend. Model 3 shows that various racial groups had higher than average growth in graduation rates over time. American Indian (B=.024, p<.001), Hispanic (B=.009, p <.001), and Pacific Islander (B=.02, p <.001) students experienced relatively high rates of growth in graduation rate over this nine-year period.

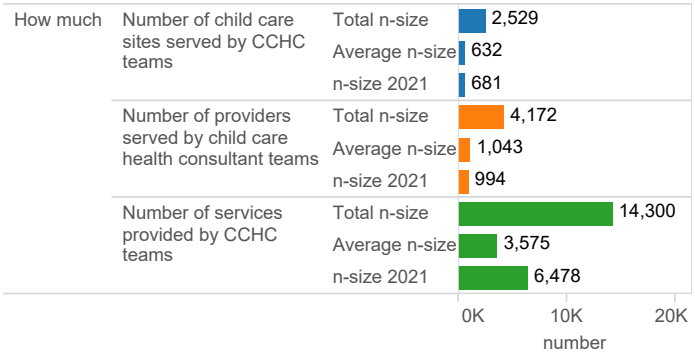
## APPENDIX F – PERFORMANCE MEASURES DASHBOARDS BY INVESTMENT AREA, STRATEGY AND PROGRAM

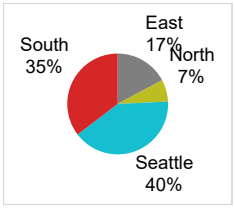
Data for Performance Measures by investment area, strategy, and program are presented in this section. When possible, results are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and region. Additionally, whenever possible we present data over time. More detailed disaggregation's are available on the Best Starts for Kids dashboards.[54] It is important to note when interpreting this data that partners reporting on each measure may change from year to year, and individuals may enroll in more than one program funded by Best Starts.

[54] Best Starts for Kids Dashboards. See: Dashboards.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Child Care Health Consultation
## *Service Delivery*

## How much?

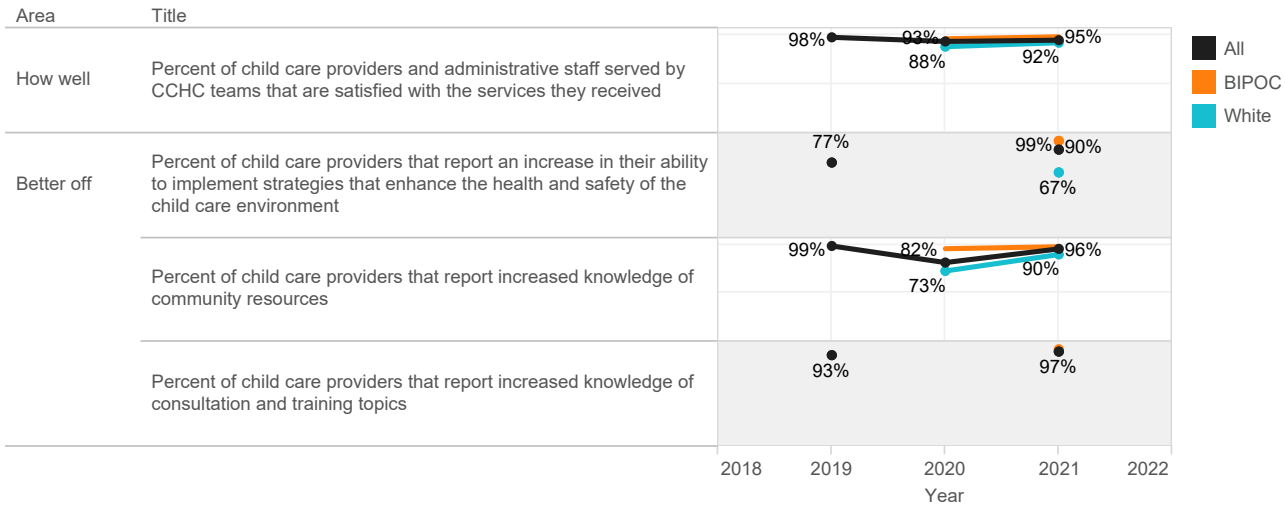



The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
Data collected by Awardees and analyzed by Cardea Services. How much data is deduplicated for each 6 month reporting period.

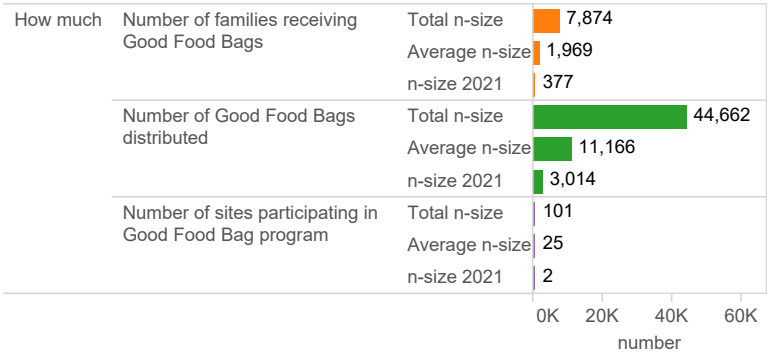
## How well? and Better off?

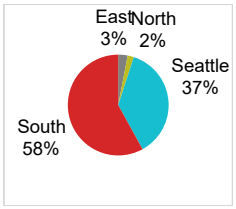



NOTES:
Data collected by Awardees and analyzed by Cardea Services. How well and Better off data is collected with an annual survey of child care providers receiving CCHC services.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Community-Based Parenting Supports
## *Basic Needs Resources - Food*

## How much?

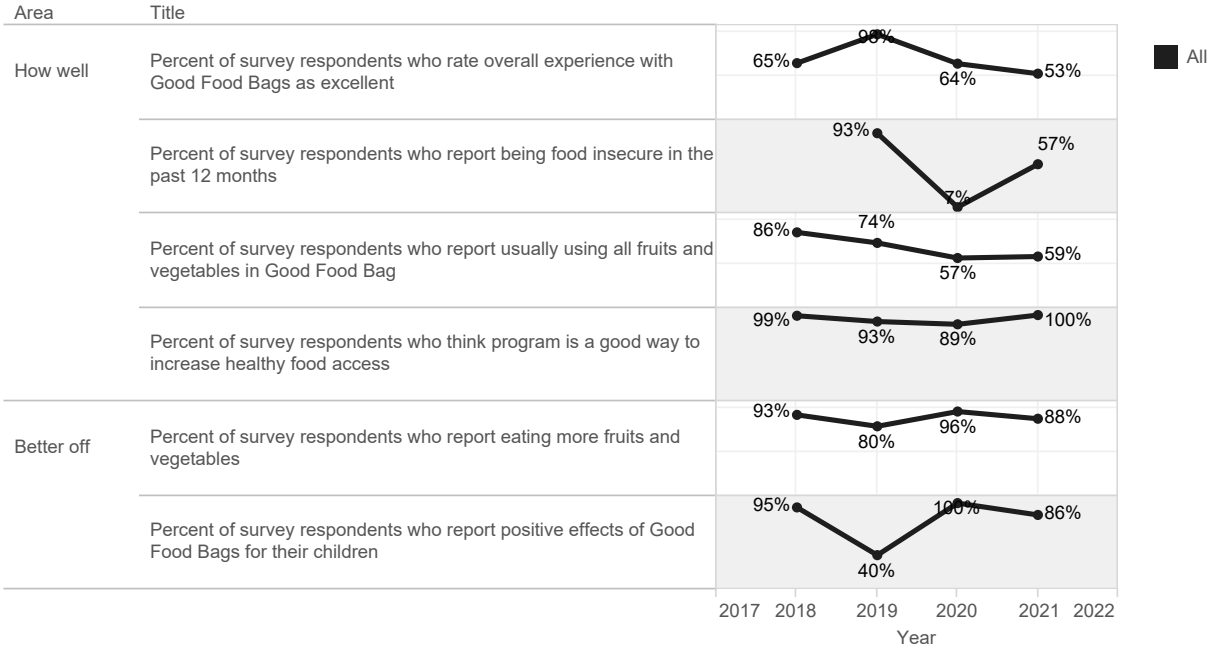



The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
Families served are lower than 2020 since one partner is no longer conducting drive-through bag pick-ups.
Bag numbers are lower than 2020 since one partner is no longer conducting drive-through bag pick-ups.

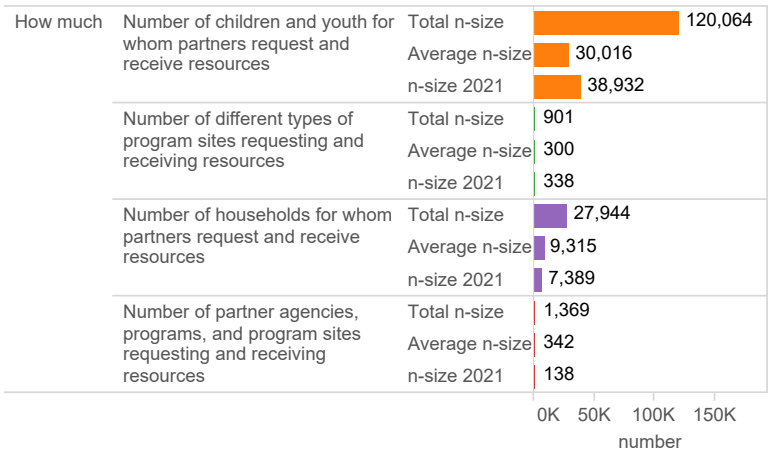
## How well? and Better off?



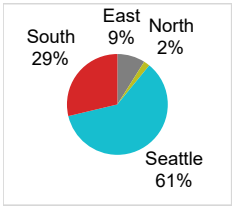

NOTES:
The data for How well and Better off indicators were gathered from the Tilth Good Food Bag Survey.
The total for demographic breakdowns may not be equal to the total served because people may have selected more than one response option or opted not to answer.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Community-Based Parenting Supports
## *Basic Needs Resources - Goods*

## How much?



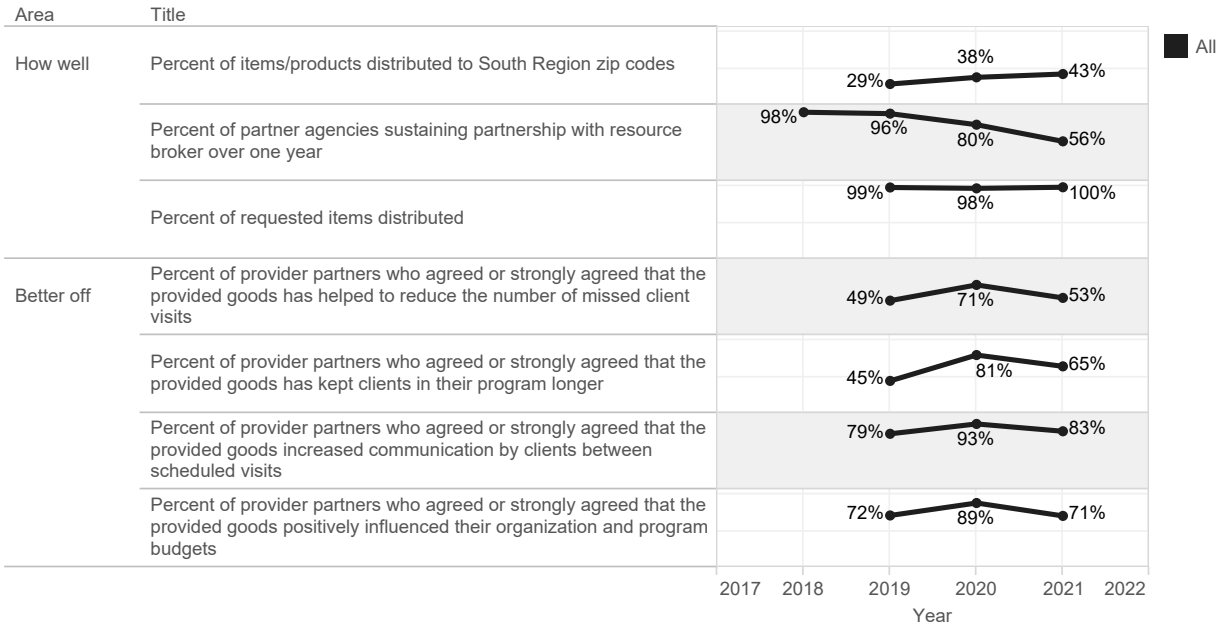
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports.
The total for demographic breakdowns may be greater than the total served because people may have selected more than one response option.

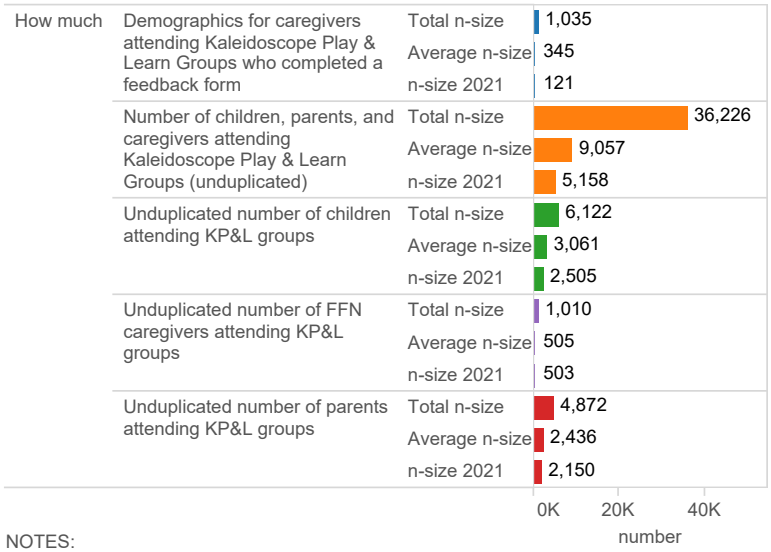
## How well? and Better off?



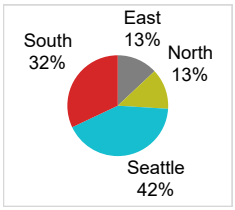

NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Community-Based Parenting Supports
# *Kaleidoscope Play & Learn (PCIS)*

## How much?



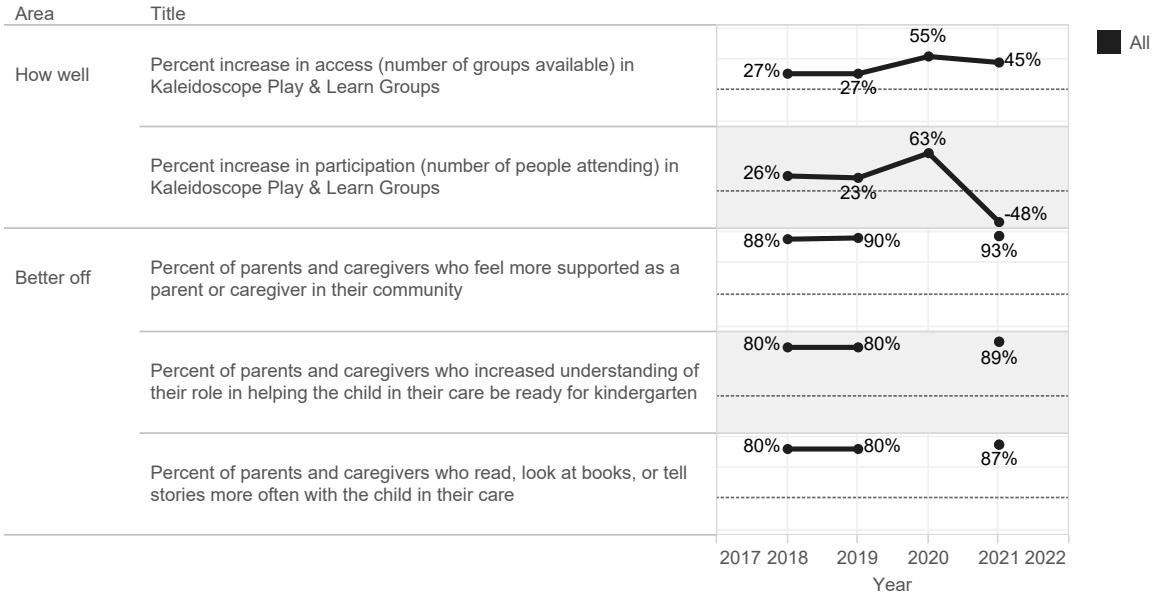
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
Data from King County awardee performance data reports.
Includes braided funding sources. FFN stands for Friend, Family, and Neighbor.
Families may attend groups in more than one zip code.

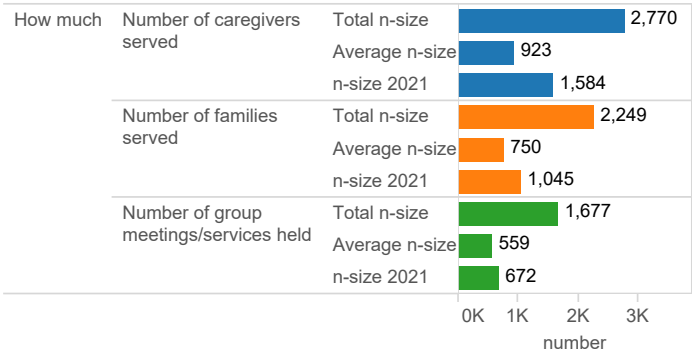
## How well? and Better off?



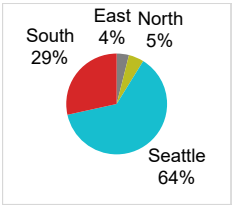

NOTES:
Data from Caregiver Feedback Survey; includes braided funding sources.
This measure was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic since virtual programming affected participation in the caregiver survey.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Community-Based Parenting Supports
## *Parent Caregiver Information and Supports (PCIS)*

### How much?



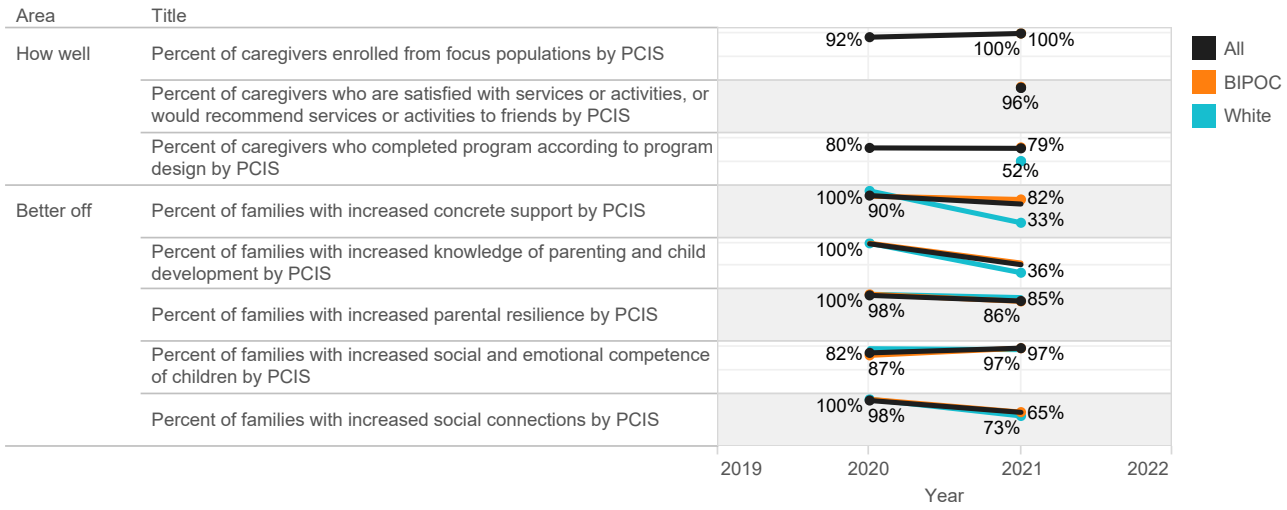
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

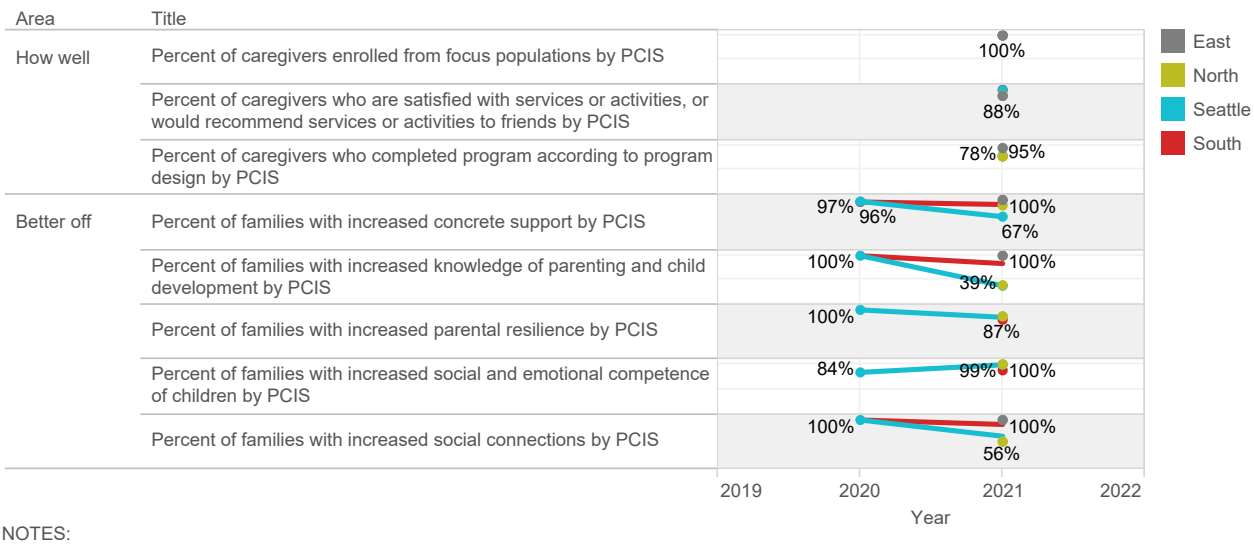



The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
The total for demographic breakdowns may not always equal the total served since people can select multiple response options or decline to answer questions.
COVID-19 innovations increased enrollment (for number of caregivers served) as programs provided additional case management support.

### How well? and Better off?

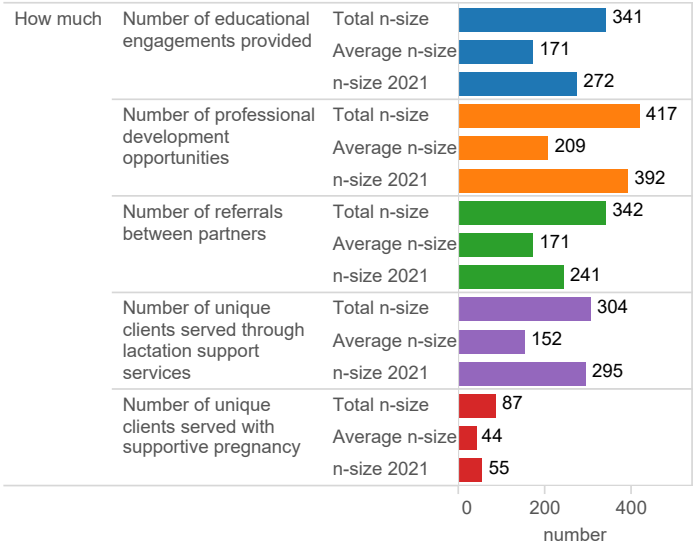


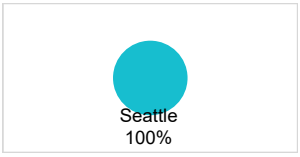

NOTES:
The total for demographic breakdowns may not always equal the total served since people can select multiple response options or decline to answer questions.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Community-Based Parenting Supports
## *Perinatal & Lactation Support Services (PLSC)*

### How much?



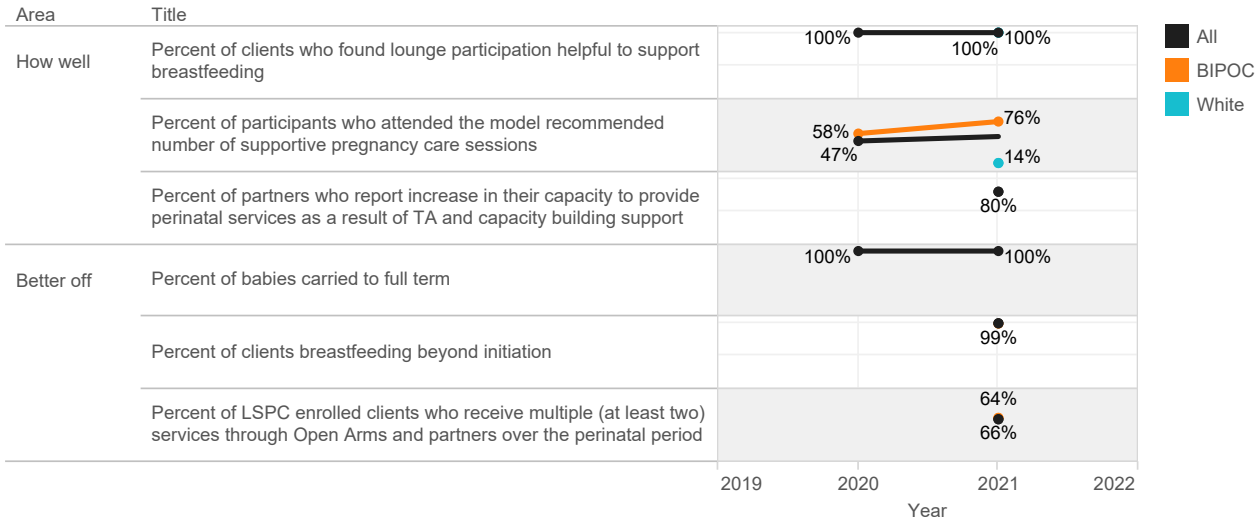
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
Data from King County awardee performance data reports.

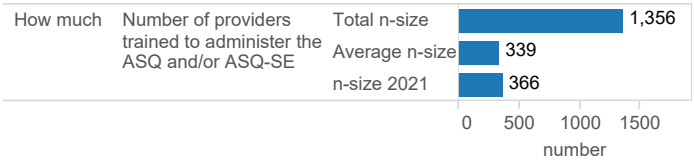
### How well? and Better off?



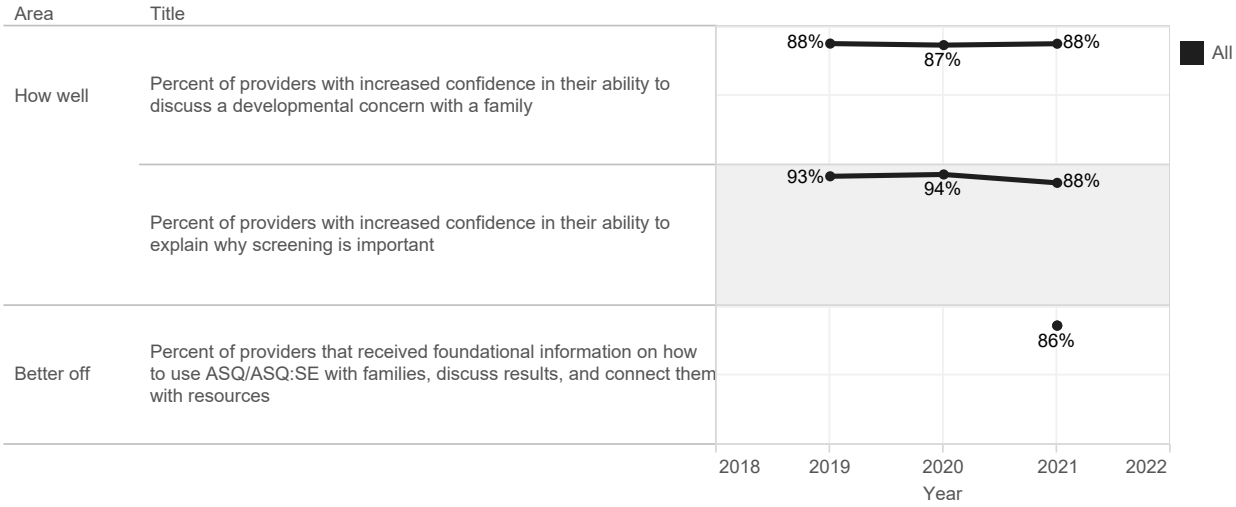

NOTES:
Data from King County awardee performance data reports; demographic totals may not add up due to incomplete data.
The definition for model recommended number of sessions changed from n=10 to n=6 in consultation with March of Dimes.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Developmental Promotion & Early Support
# *ASQ/ASQ:SE Provider Training*

## How much?

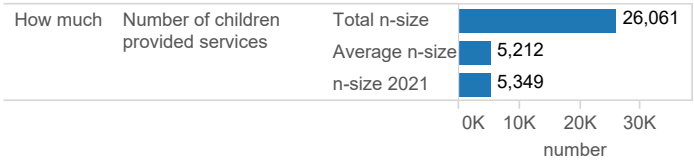


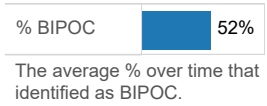

## How well? and Better off?



# INVESTING EARLY
## Developmental Promotion & Early Support
## *Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT)*

### How much?

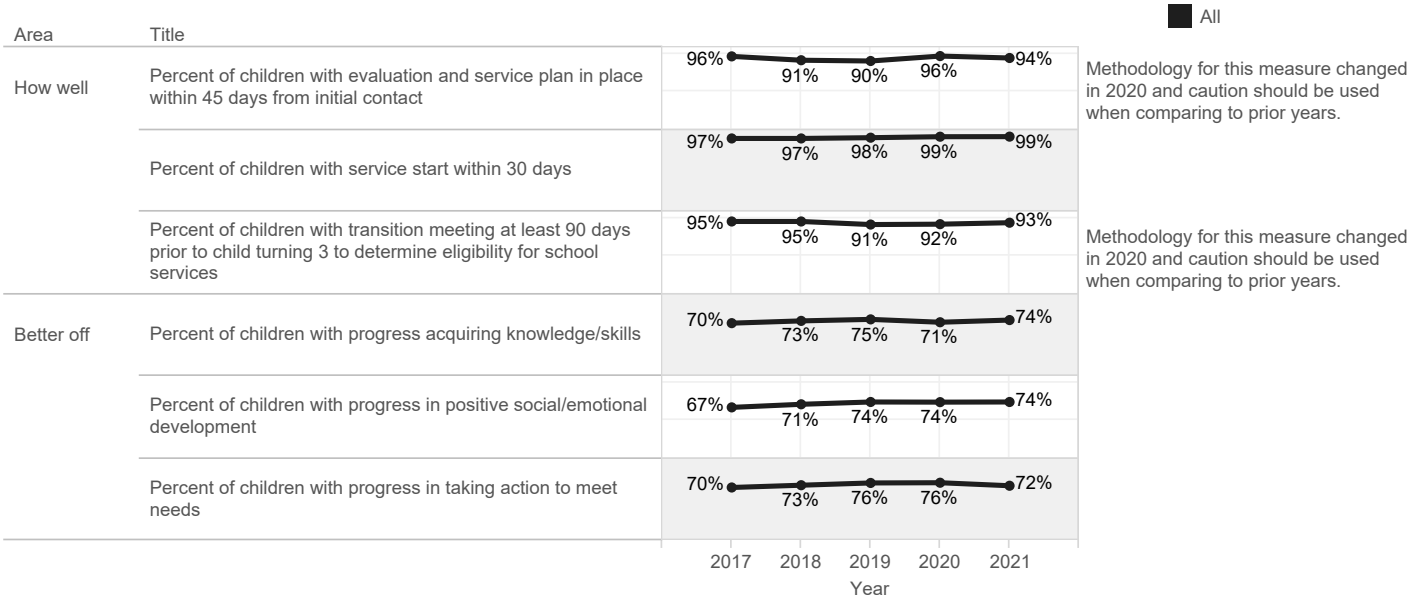



The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

NOTES:
Data accessed from Department of Early Learning (DEL) Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) data management system on 2/18/2022. BSK funding comprised a portion of total King County funding for ESIT services to children and families in 2020.
Total count may undercount total children served if children move out of King County during the year. Children may have resided in more than one school district during the calendar year and school district data may have missing values for some children, therefore school district count does not equal the total number of children served.

### How well? and Better off?



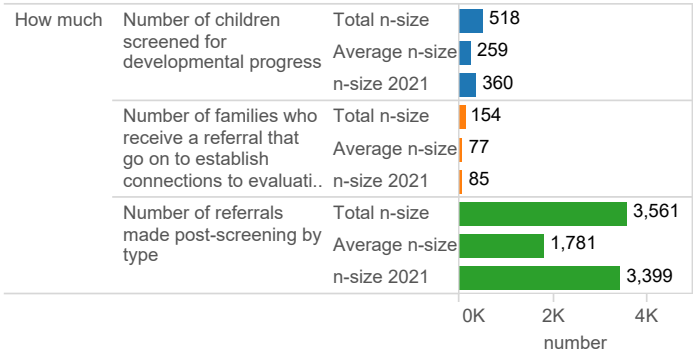

Methodology for this measure changed in 2020 and caution should be used when comparing to prior years.

Methodology for this measure changed in 2020 and caution should be used when comparing to prior years.

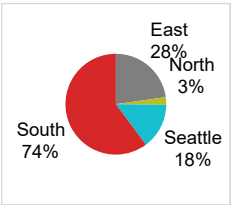
NOTES:
Data accessed from Department of Early Learning (DEL) Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) data management system on 1/26/2022. BSK funding comprised a portion of total King County funding for ESIT services to children and families in 2020.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Developmental Promotion & Early Support
### *Help Me Grow King County: Screening & Referral Services*

## How much?



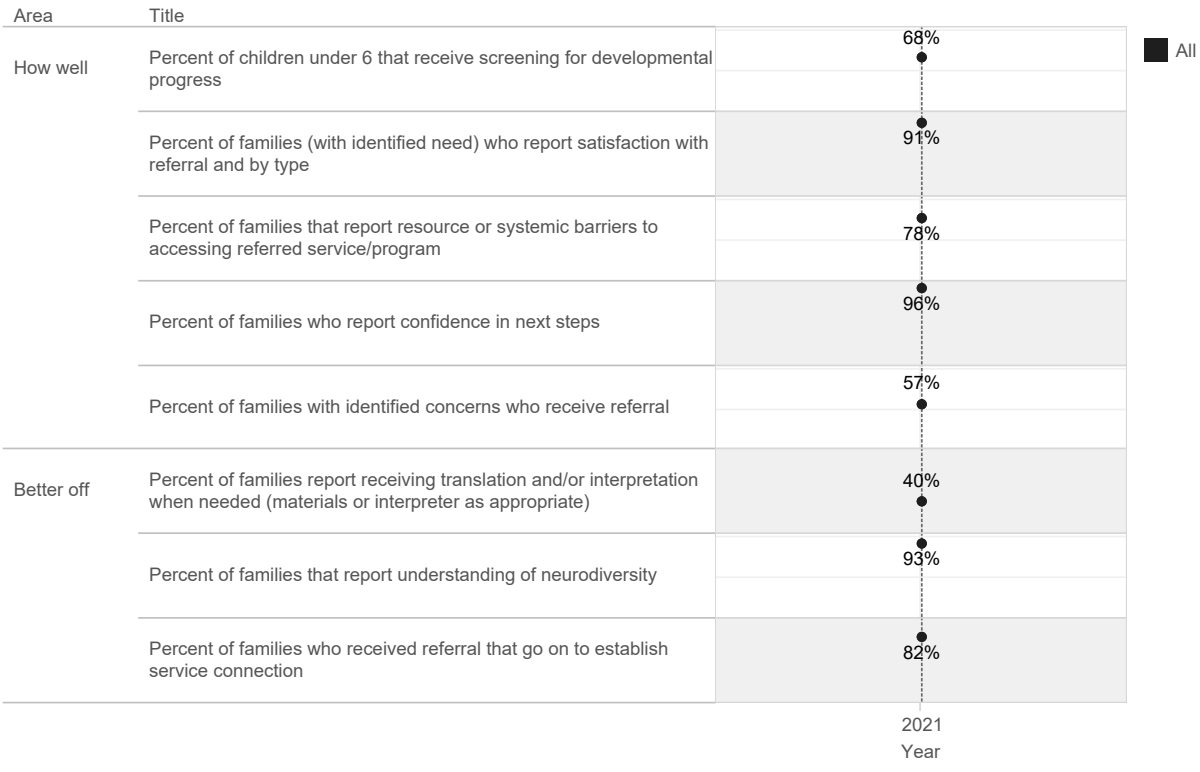
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
Not all programs report these performance measures.

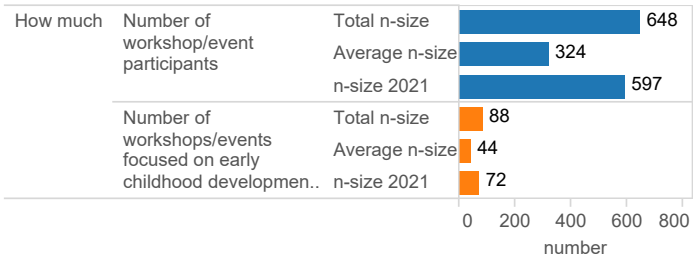
## How well? and Better off?




NOTES:
Not all programs report these performance measures.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Developmental Promotion & Early Support
### *Help Me Grow King County: Workforce Improvements*

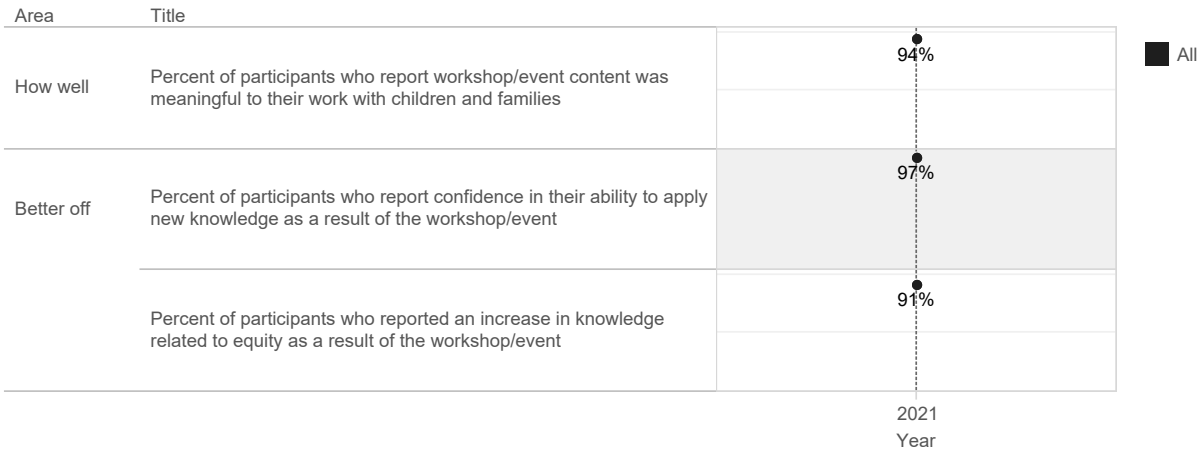
## How much?



The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

NOTES:
Not all programs report these performance measures.

## How well? and Better off?

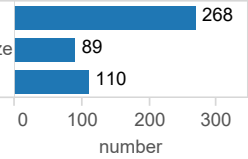



NOTES:
Not all programs report these performance measures.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Developmental Promotion & Early Support
### *Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health: Endorsement*

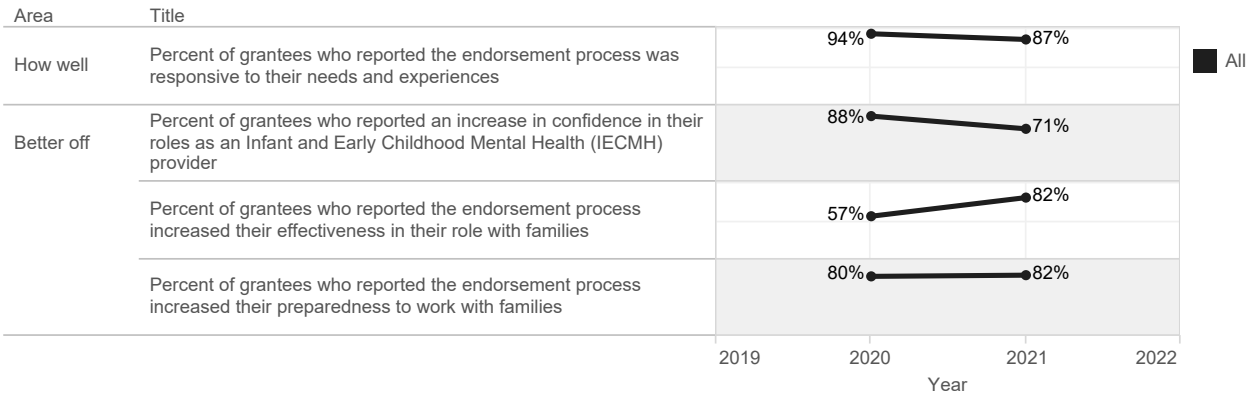
## How much?

How much — Number of providers who initiated the endorsement process



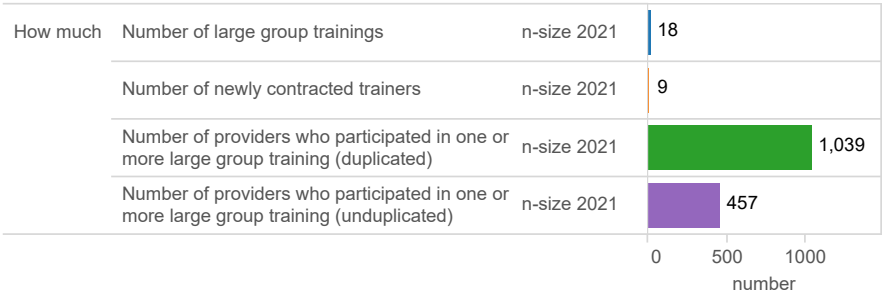
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

## How well? and Better off?



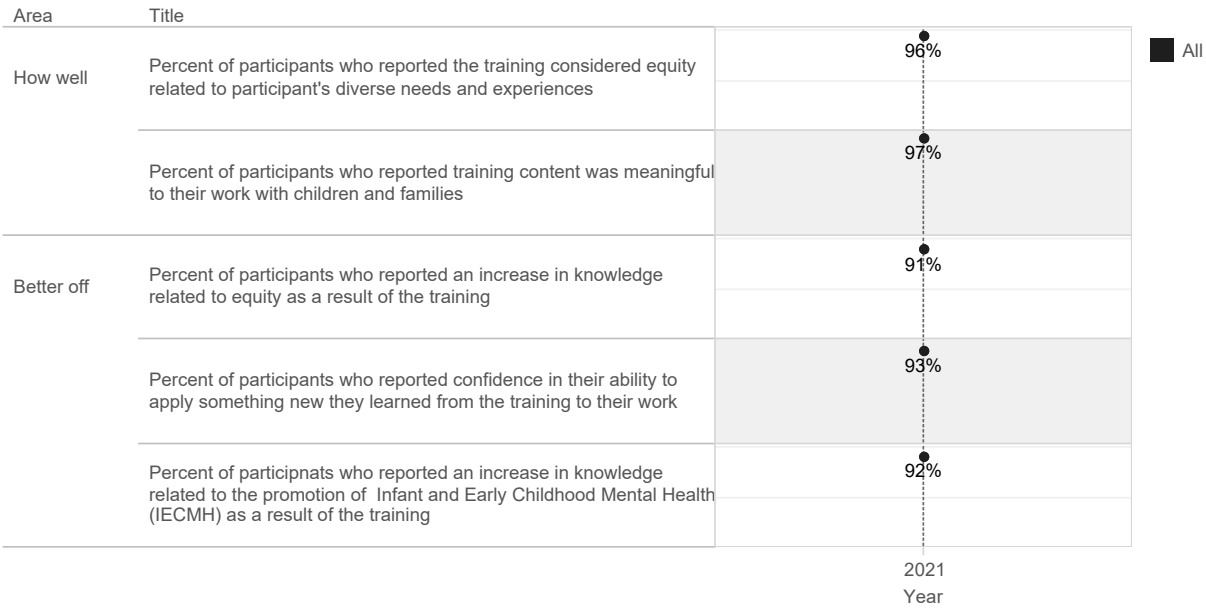
# INVESTING EARLY
## Developmental Promotion & Early Support
### *Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health: Large Group Trainings*

## How much?



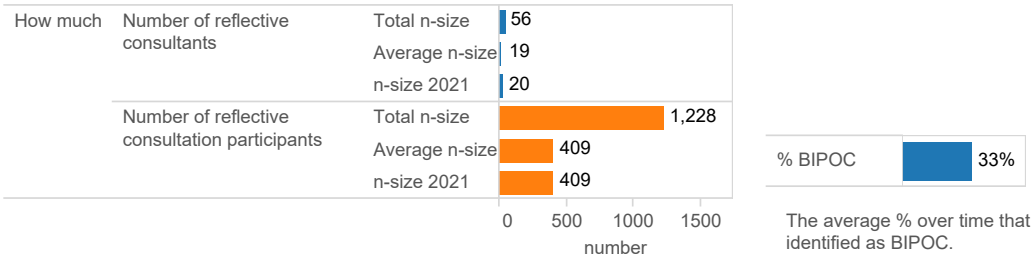
The % that identified as BIPOC.

## How well? and Better off?



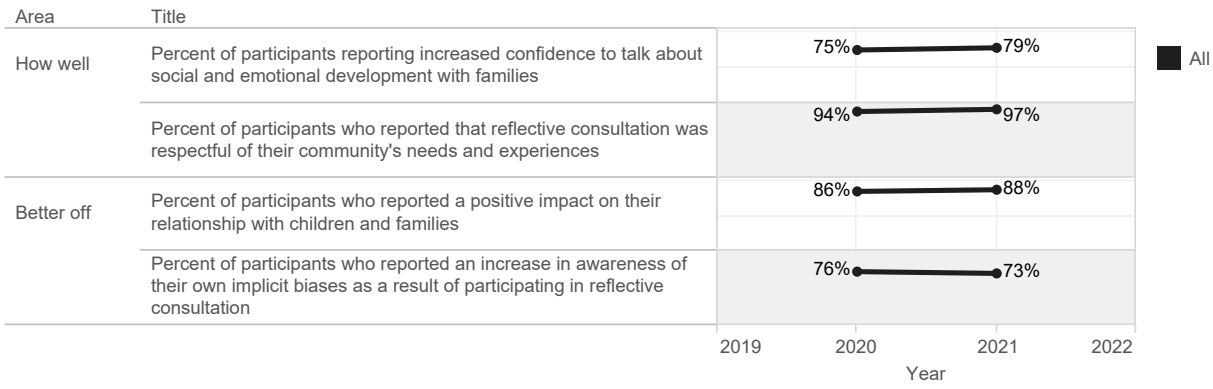
# INVESTING EARLY
## Developmental Promotion & Early Support
## *Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health: Reflective Consultation*

### How much?



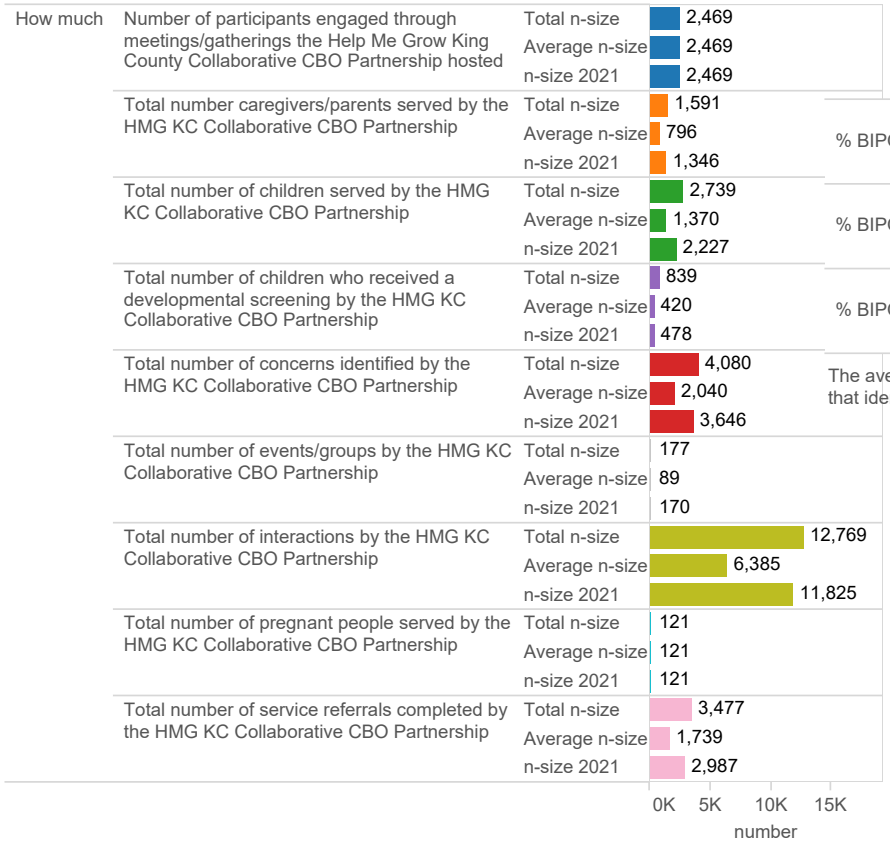

NOTES:
Methodology for the total count of participants changed in 2021. Use caution when comparing to prior years.

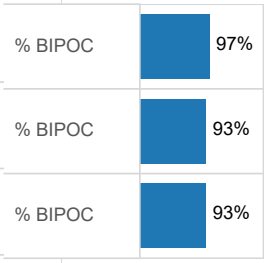
### How well? and Better off?



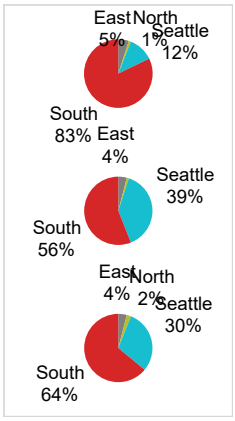
# INVESTING EARLY
## Help Me Grow
### *Help Me Grow King County: Collaborative CBO Partnership*

## How much?



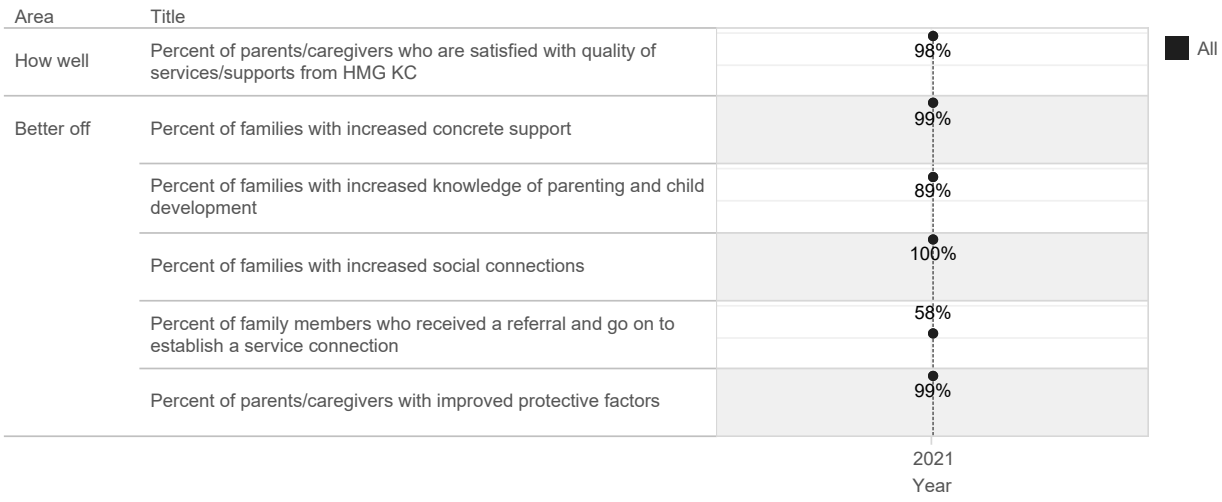

The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each region.

NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports for all of 2021.

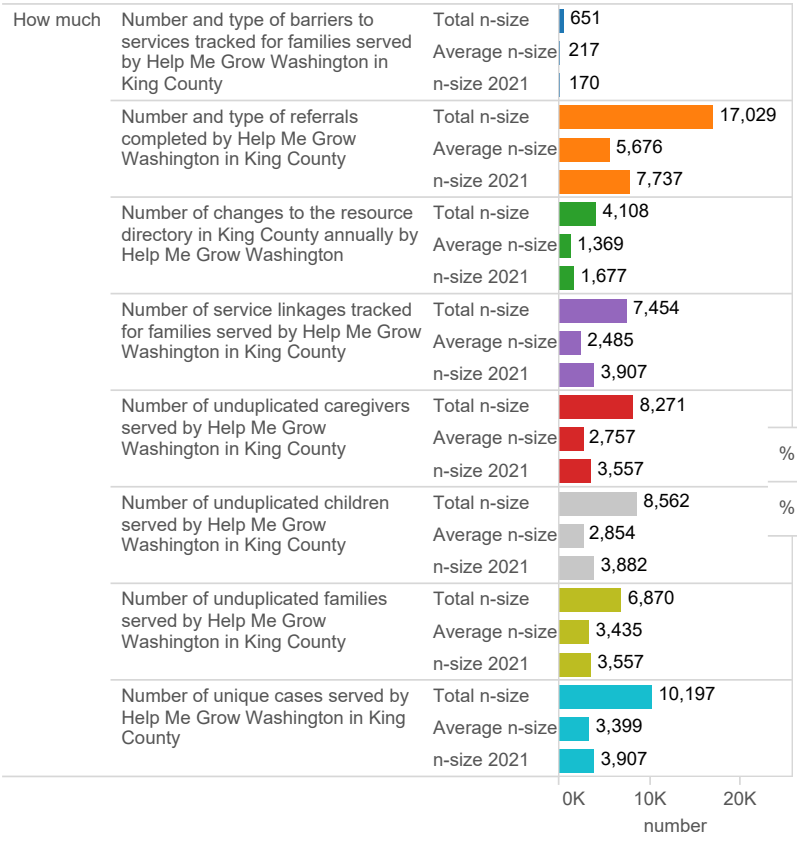
## How well? and Better off?

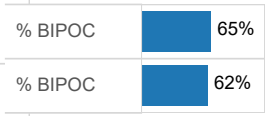



NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports for all of 2021.

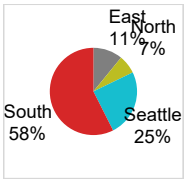
# INVESTING EARLY
## Help Me Grow
## *Help Me Grow Washington*

### How much?



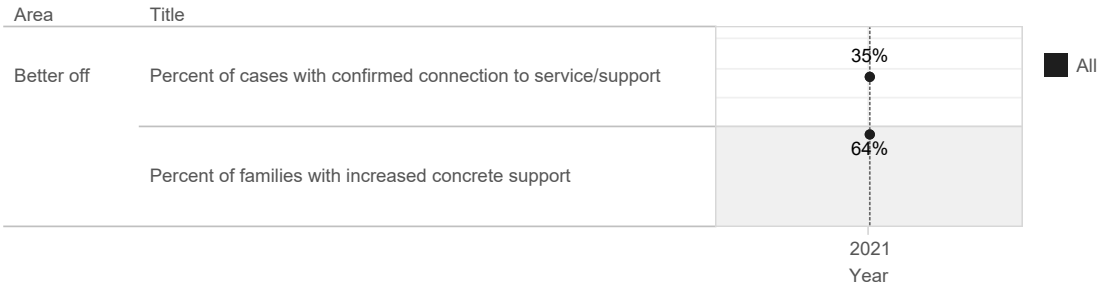

The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each region.

NOTES:
The data were provided by HMG WA/Within Reach to inform Help Me Grow King County. These services were not funded by Best Starts for Kids.

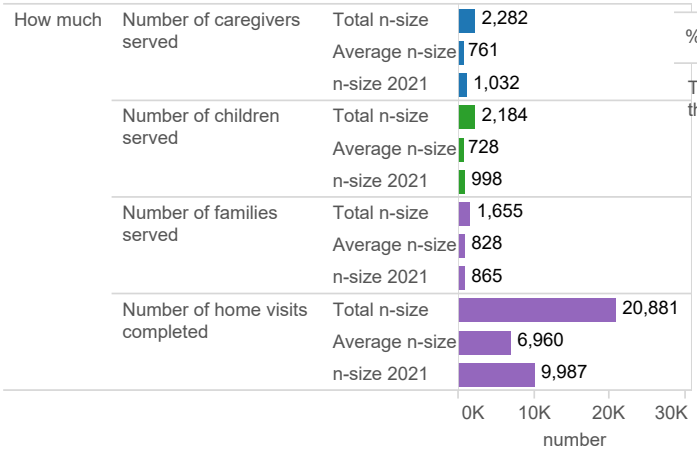
### Better off?



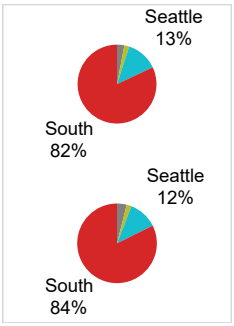

NOTES:
The data were provided by HMG WA/Within Reach to inform Help Me Grow King County. These services were not funded by Best Starts for Kids.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Home-Based Services
## *Community Designed Programs & Practices*

### How much?

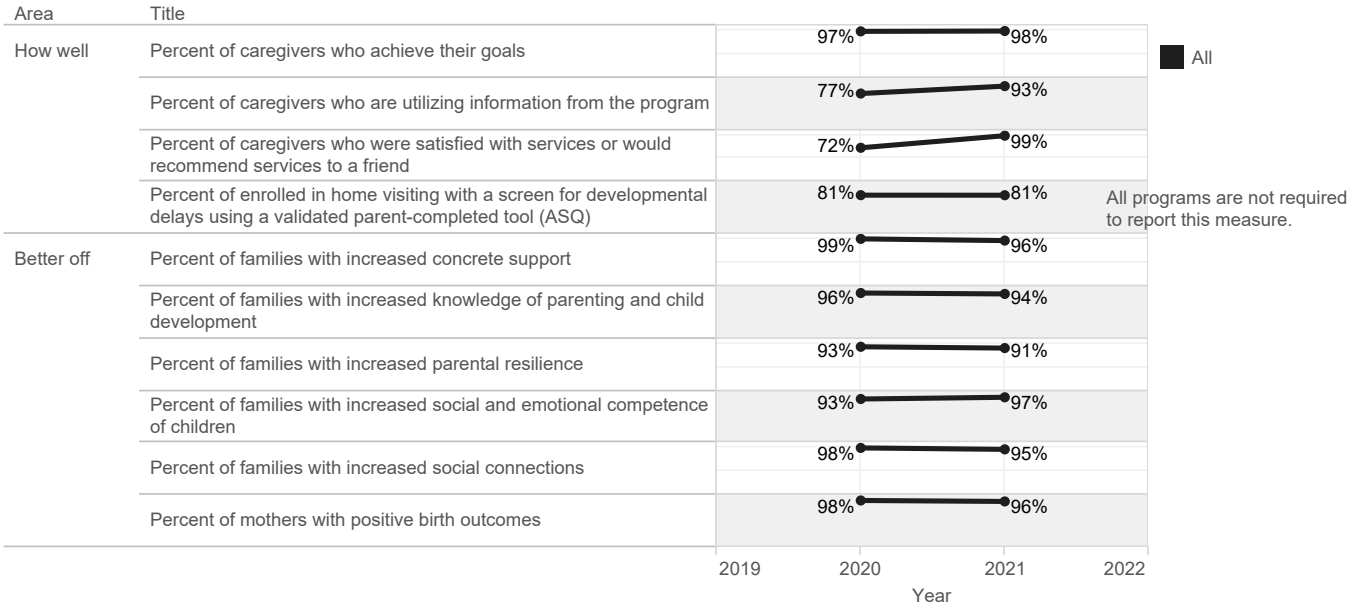


The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

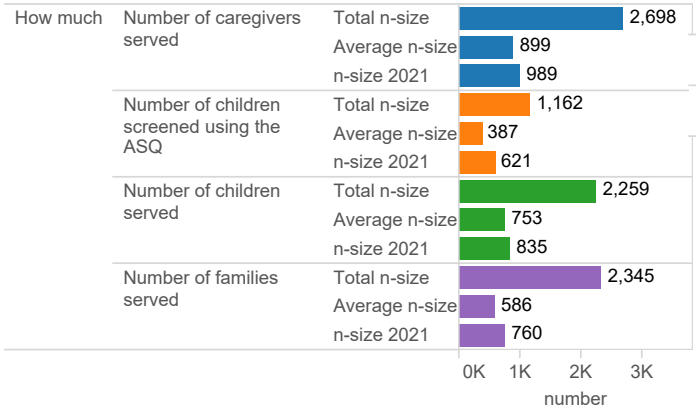
### How well? and Better off?

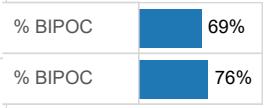



All programs are not required to report this measure.

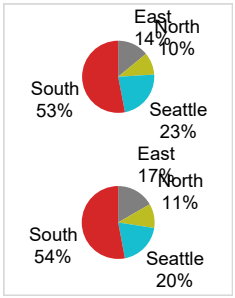
# INVESTING EARLY
## Home-Based Services
### *Evidence-Based & Evidence-Informed Programs*

## How much?



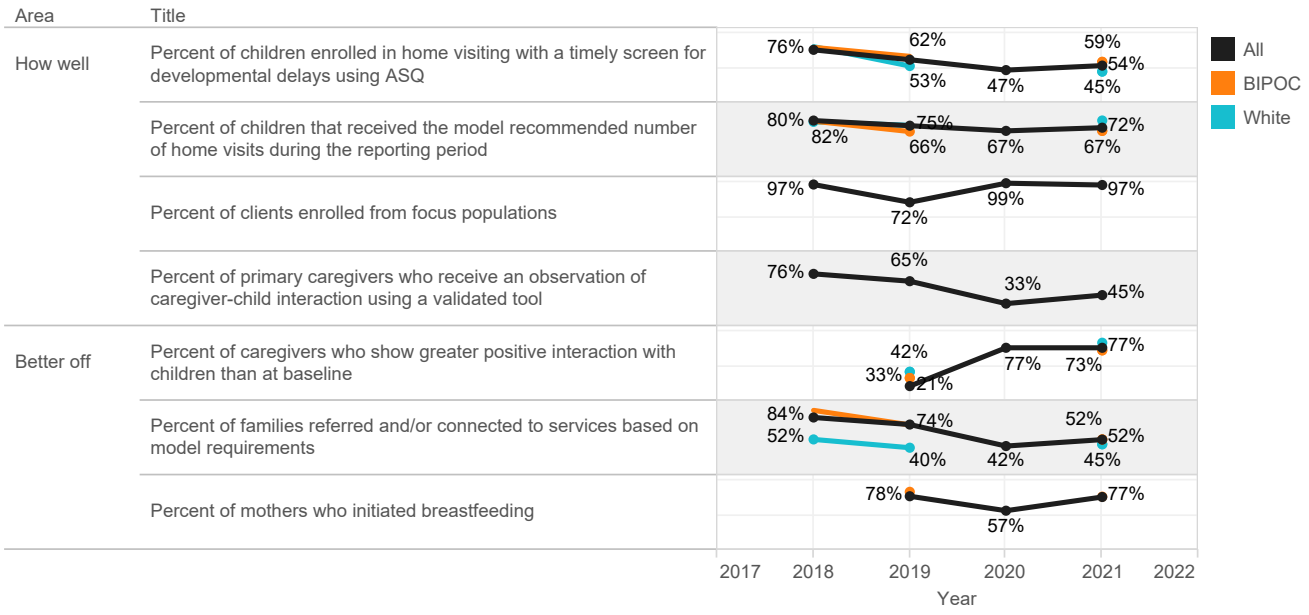

The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports.

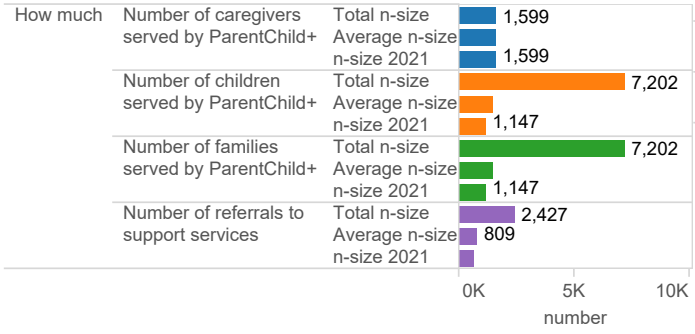
## How well? and Better off?

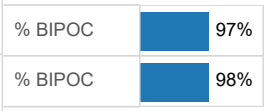



NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports.

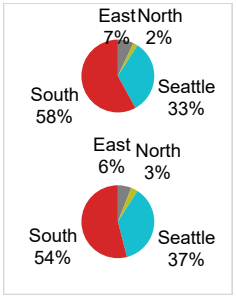
# INVESTING EARLY
# Home-Based Services
# *ParentChild+*

## How much?

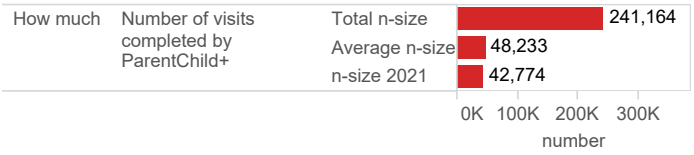


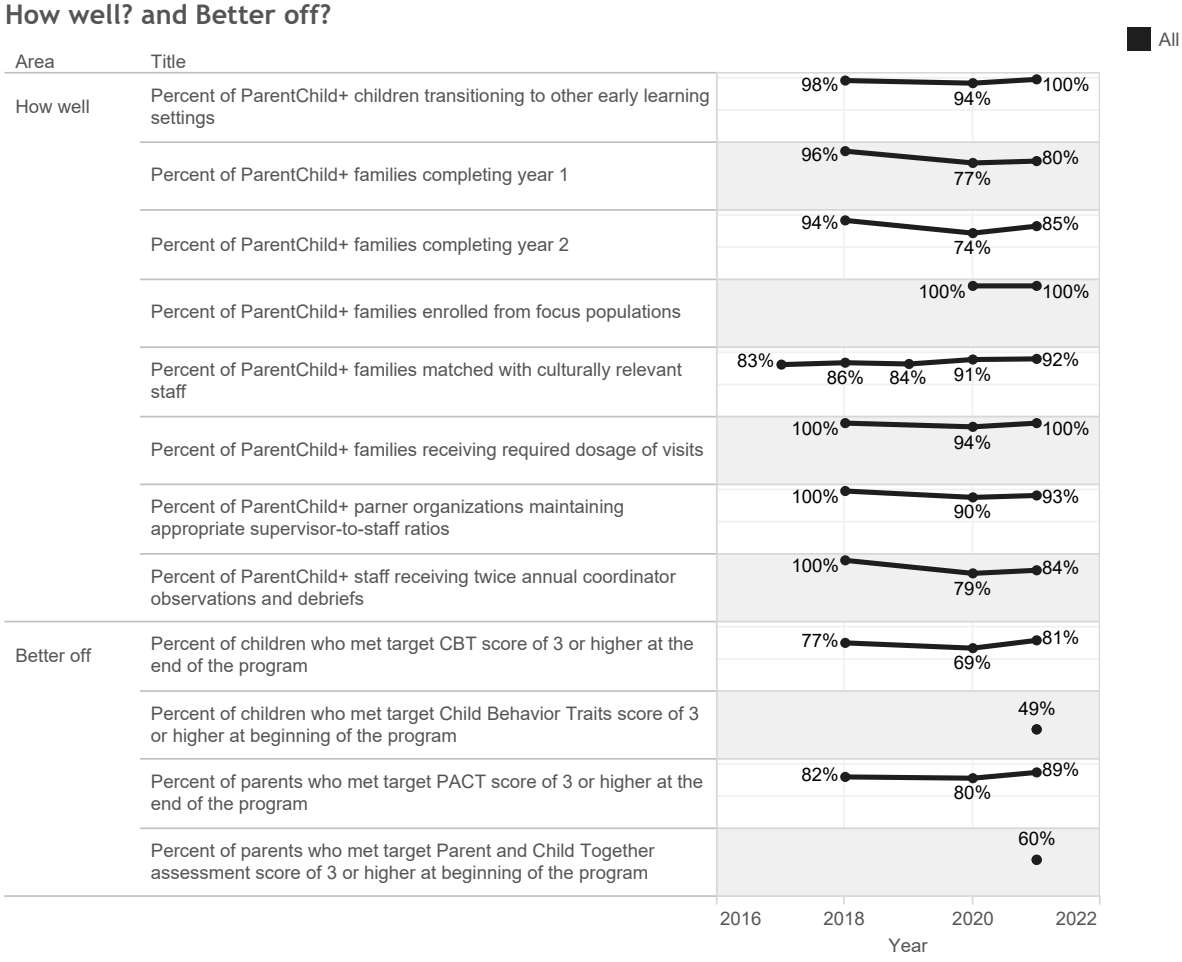

The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.



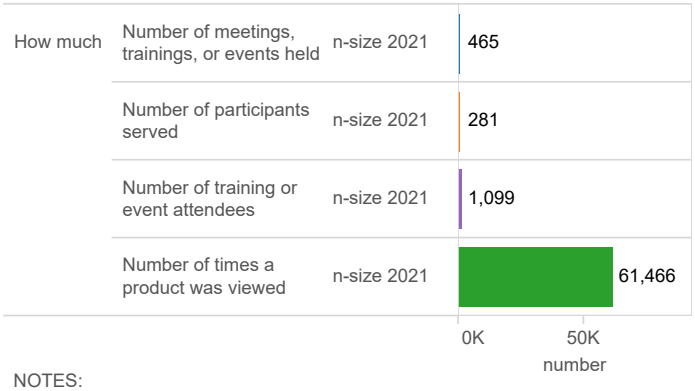

## How well? and Better off?

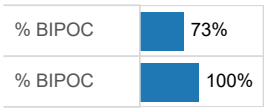



NOTES:
The Better off data includes children who completed years 1 & 2.

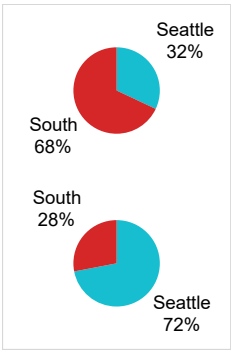
# INVESTING EARLY
# Innovation Fund
# *Innovation Fund*

## How much?



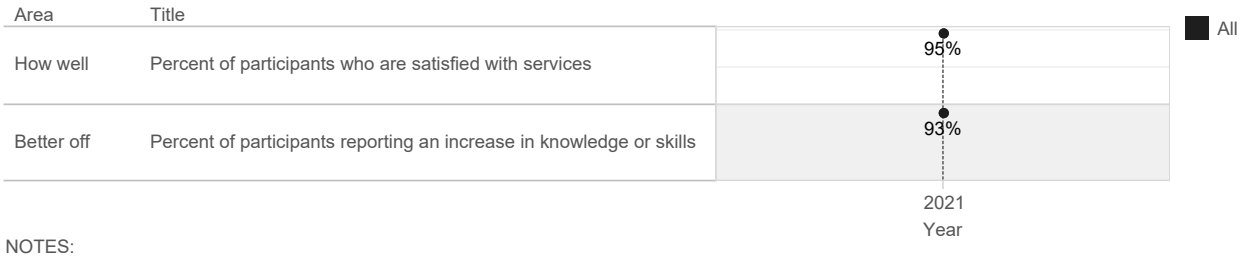

The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
Not all programs report these performance measures.

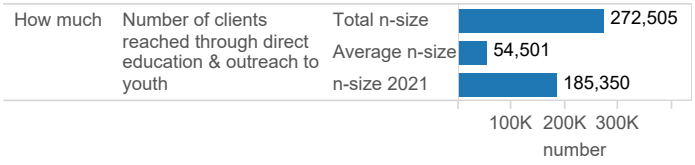
## How well? and Better off?

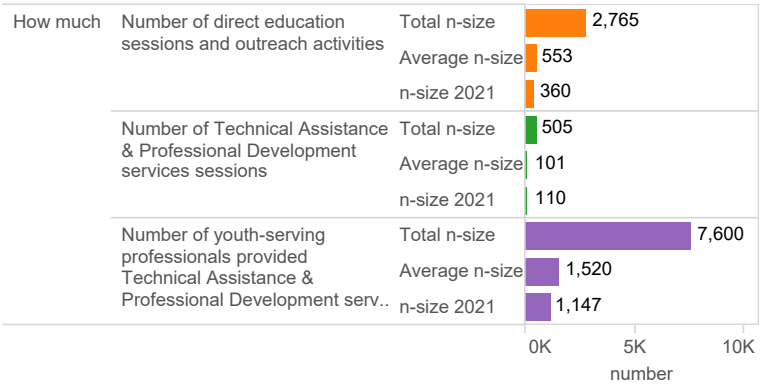


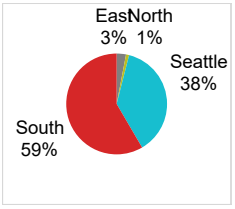

NOTES:
Not all programs report these performance measures.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Public Health Programs
## *Family Planning Health Education*

## How much?

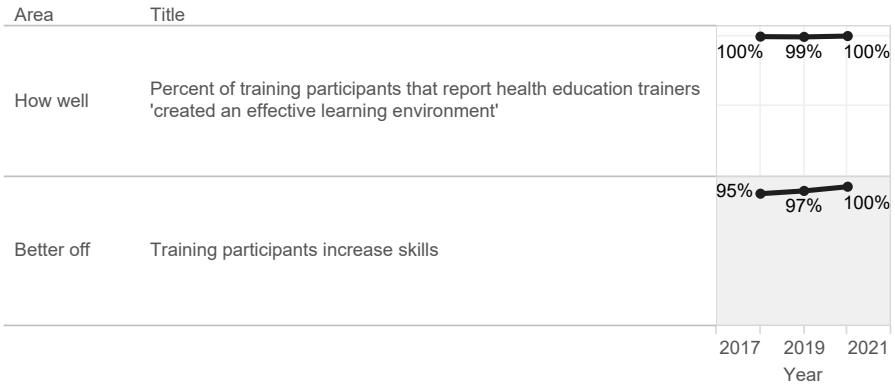



The average % over time from each King County region.

## How well? and Better off?

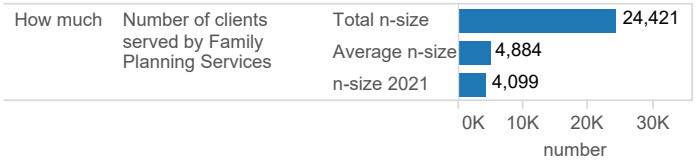



These measures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person, full-day FLASH trainings were put on hold during the 2021 reporting period.

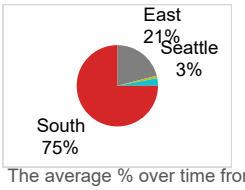
NOTES:
Family planning clinical and health education services were supported by various funding sources, including Best Starts for Kids, Washington Department of Health's Sexual and Reproductive Health Program, and Washington Department of Health's Youth Sexual Health Innovation and Impact Network grant TP2AH000062. Social media reach was included in school based and agency based outreach numbers in 2020 and separated into its own category in 2021.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Public Health Programs
# *Family Planning Services*

## How much?



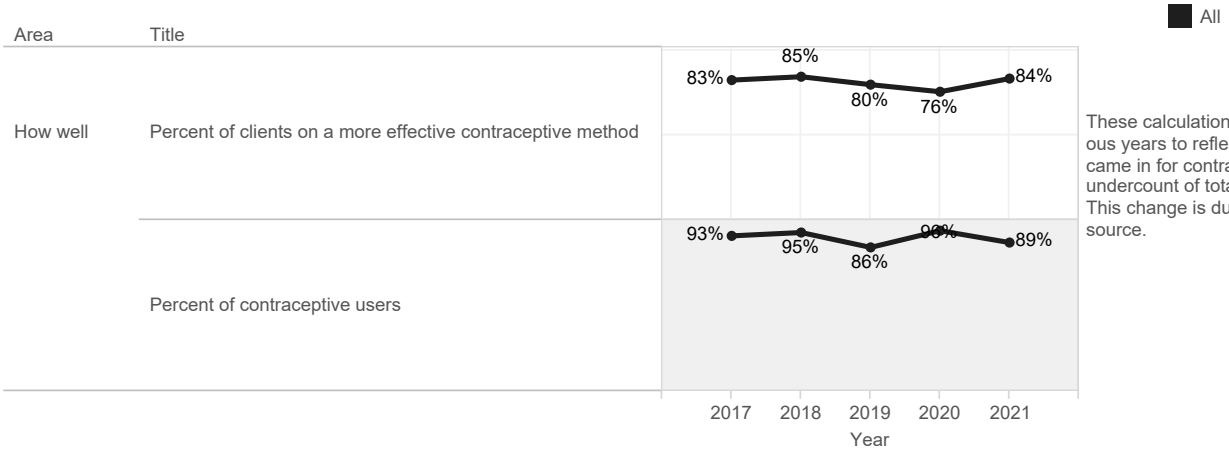
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

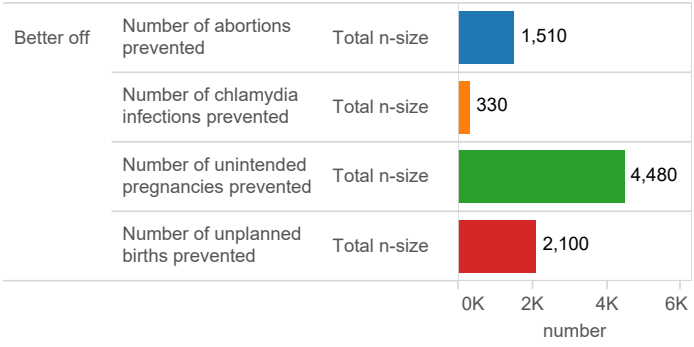
NOTES:
Family planning clinical and health education services were supported by various funding sources, including Best Starts for Kids, Washington Department of Health's Sexual and Reproductive Health Program, and Washington Department of Health's Youth Sexual Health Innovation and Impact Network grant TP2AH000062. Social media reach was included in school based and agency based outreach numbers in 2020 and separated into its own category in 2021.

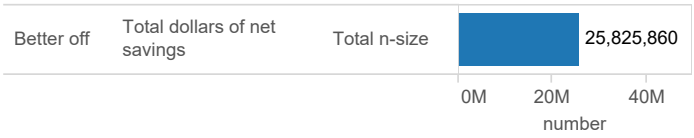
## How well?




These calculations changed from previous years to reflect only clients who came in for contraceptive visits, so is an undercount of total clients on a method. This change is due to a change in data source.

## Better off?

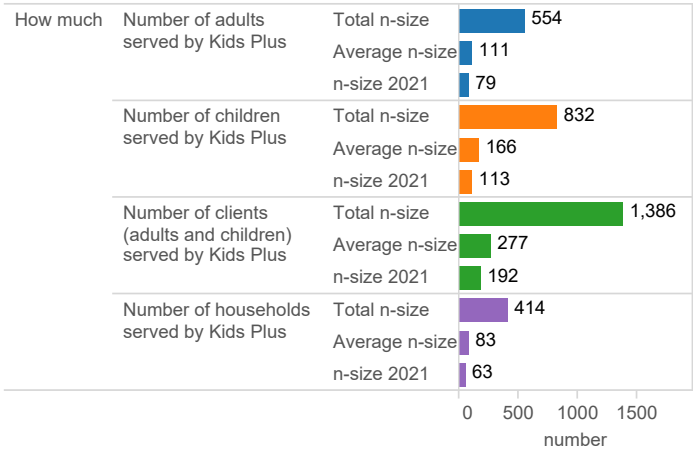



NOTES:
Estimates are based on Washington State Family Planning Title X clinic visit record data and formulas from Guttmacher Institute (Frost JJ et al., Return on investment: A fuller assessment of the benefits and cost savings of the US publicly funded family planning program, The Milbank Quarterly, 2014, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/enhanced/doi/10.1111/1468-0009.12080/>.) This methodology was changed by WA Dept of Health between 2018 and 2019.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Public Health Programs
# *Kids Plus*

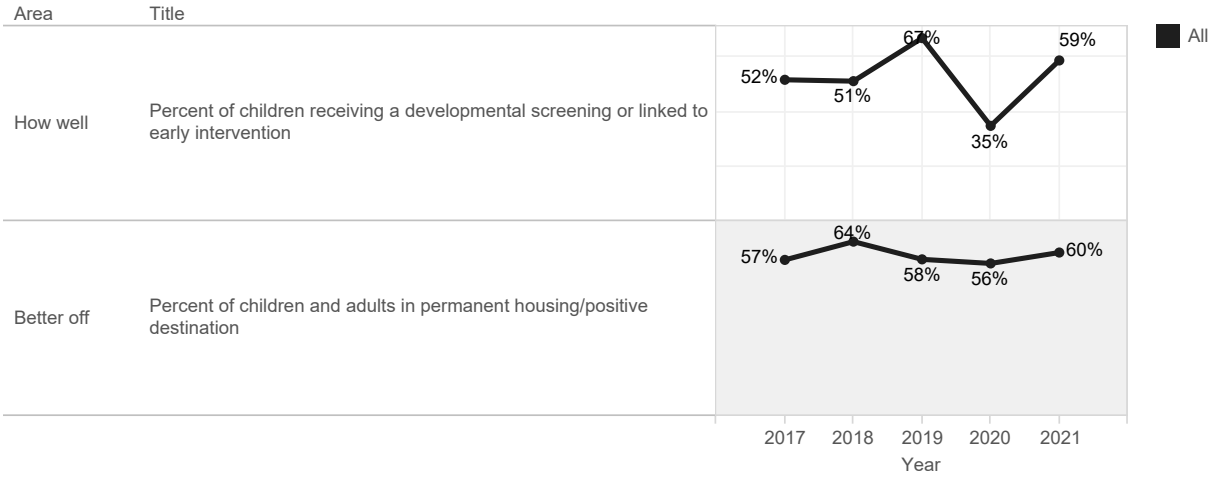
## How much?



The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

NOTES:
BSK funding covers case management, and CHS funding covers any expenses beyond BSK.

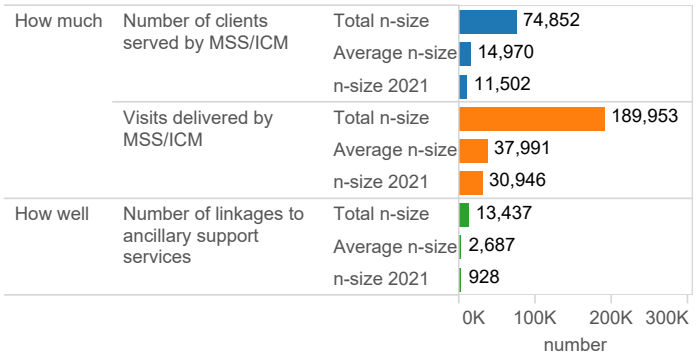
## How well? and Better off?



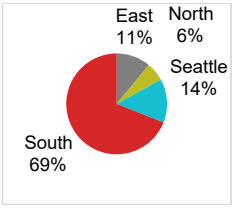

NOTES:
BSK funding covers case management, and CHS funding covers any expenses beyond BSK.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Public Health Programs
### *Maternity Support Services & Infant Case Management*

## How much?



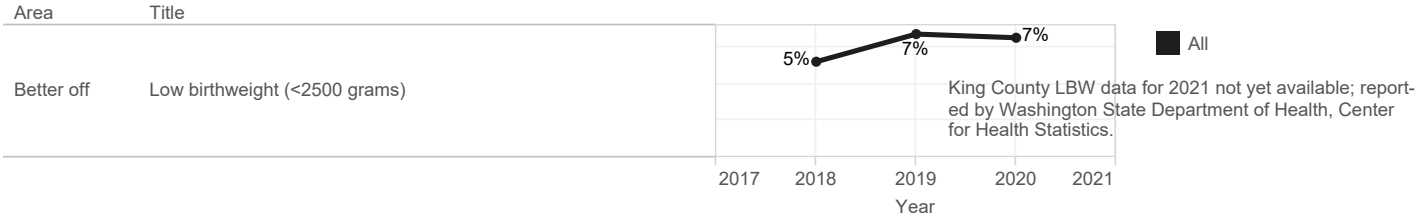
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
All clients regardless of funding. Duplicated across maternal-infant dyad.

## How well? and Better off?

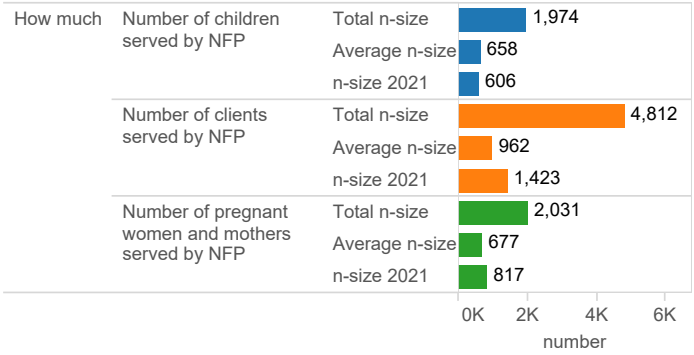


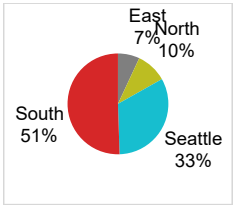

King County LBW data for 2021 not yet available; reported by Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics.

NOTES:
All clients regardless of funding. Duplicated across maternal-infant dyad.

# INVESTING EARLY
## Public Health Programs
## *Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)*

### How much?

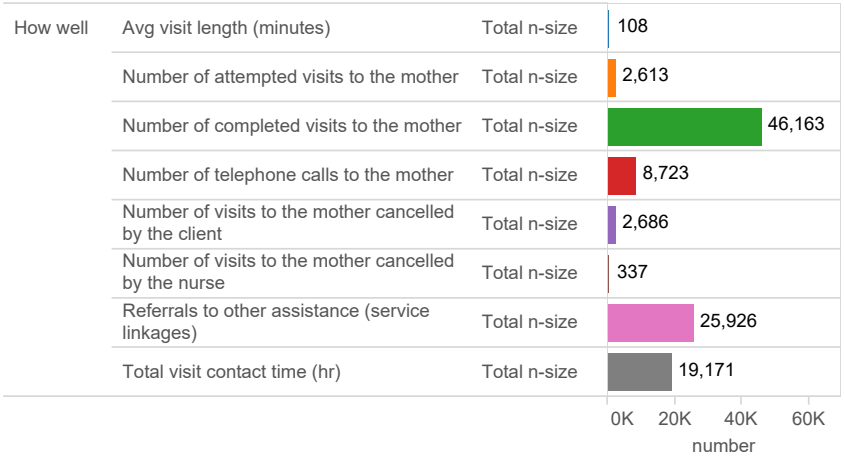



The average % over time from each King County region.

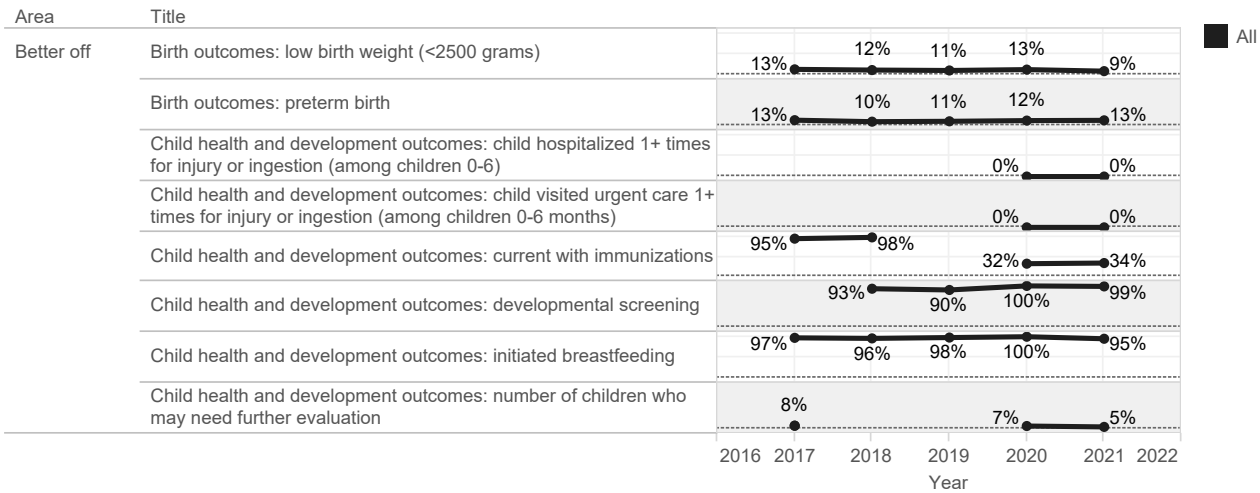
NOTES:
All clients regardless of funding. Clients served includes all clients with a completed or attempted Home Visit Encounter or a phone call in the month. Includes people who enrolled in the program within the previous 2 years and who had not yet graduated.

### How well?




NOTES:
All clients regardless of funding. Clients served includes all clients with a completed or attempted Home Visit Encounter or a phone call in the month. Includes people who enrolled in the program within the previous 2 years and who had not yet graduated.

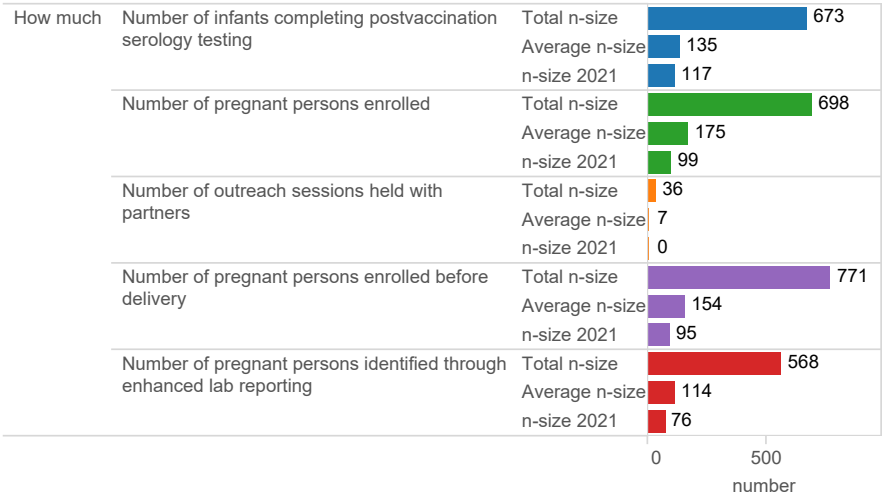
### Better off?

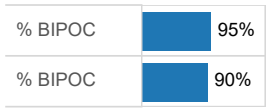



NOTES:
All clients regardless of funding.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Public Health Programs
## *Perinatal Hepitits B Prevention Program (PHBPP)*

### How much?

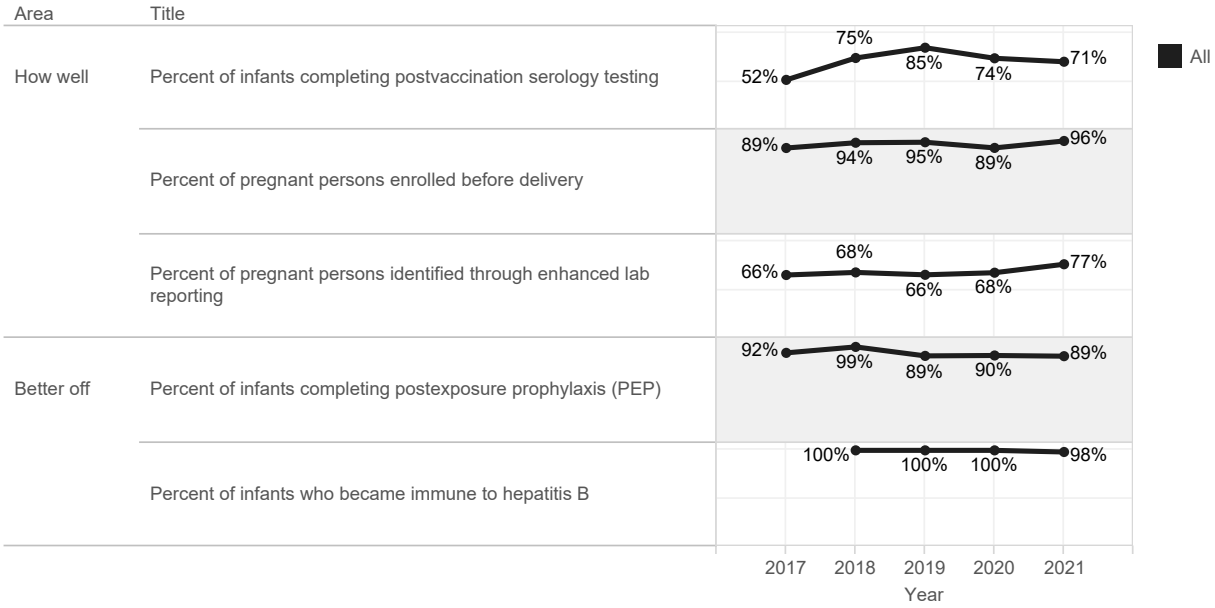



The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

NOTES:
Postvaccination serology testing confirms infants' hepatitis B protection status.
Outreach sessions are held with healthcare providers and other partners to improve referral processes and patient care.
Enrolling pregnant women before delivery provides the best opportunity for follow-up and support.

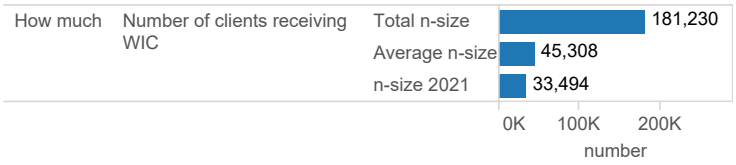
### How well? and Better off?




NOTES:
Postvaccination serology testing confirms infants' hepatitis B protection status.
Enrolling pregnant women before delivery provides the best opportunity for follow-up and support.
Completing postexposure prophylaxis protects infants from contracting hepatitis B.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Public Health Programs
# *Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)*

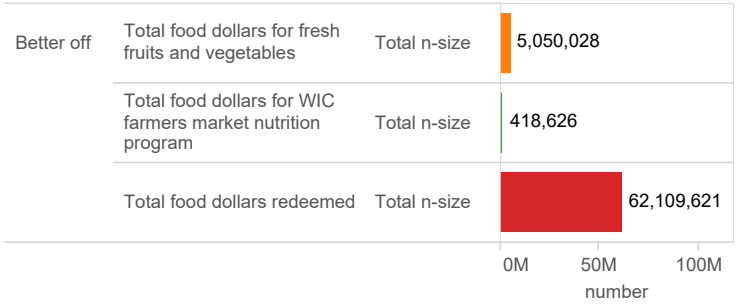
## How much?



The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

NOTES:
Methodology for the total count of participants changed in 2021. Use caution when comparing to prior years.

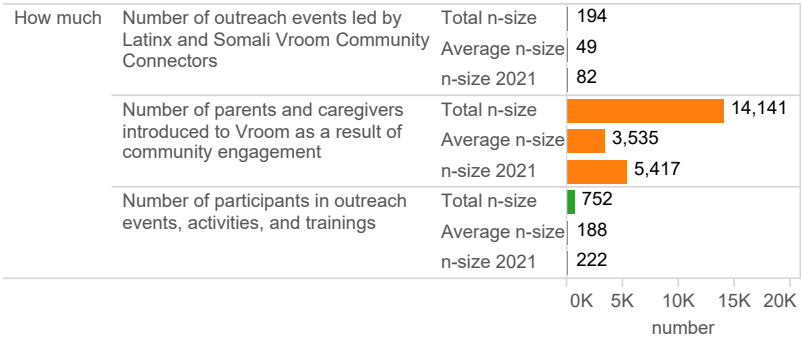
## Better off?




NOTES:
For How well measures - Unable to measure and report data due to COVID-19.
Better off measures missing 2019 due to COVID 19 and 2021 data not yet available; reported by Washington State Department of Health.

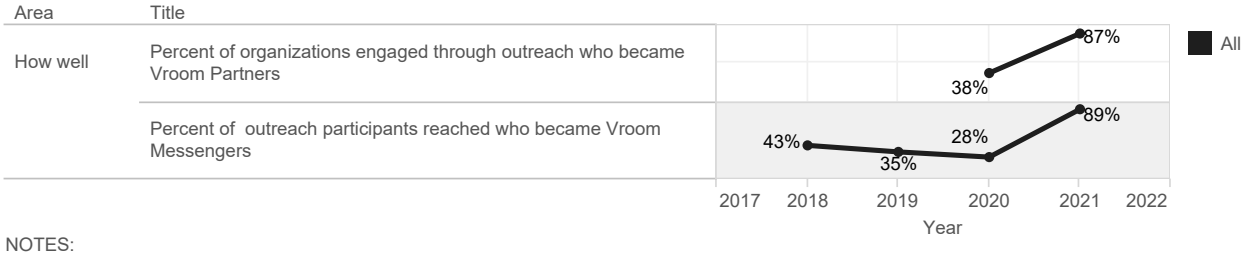
# INVESTING EARLY
# VROOM
## *Community Connectors*

## How much?




NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports.

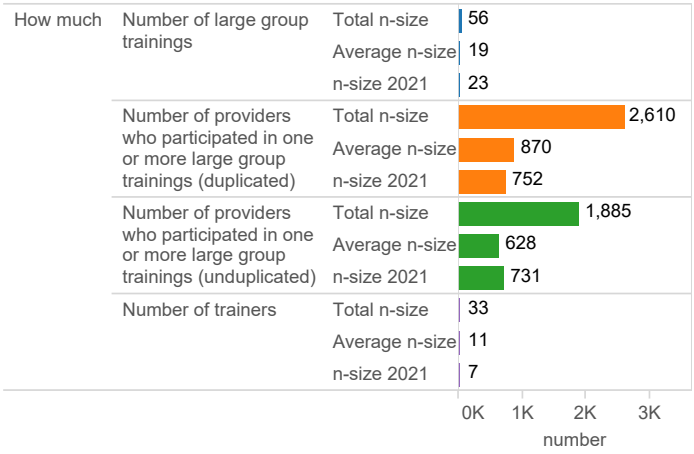
## How well?




NOTES:
The data were gathered from King County awardee performance data reports.

# INVESTING EARLY
# Workforce Development
# *Large Group Trainings*

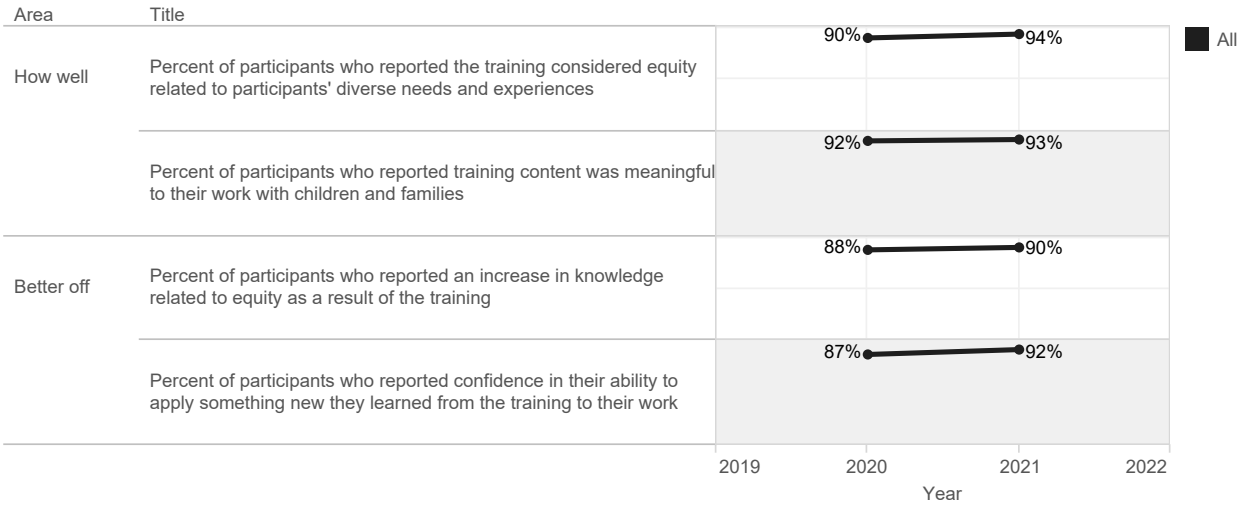
## How much?



The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

NOTES:
Prior to 2021, large group trainings also included trainings for the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health strategy. Use caution when comparing data across multiple years.

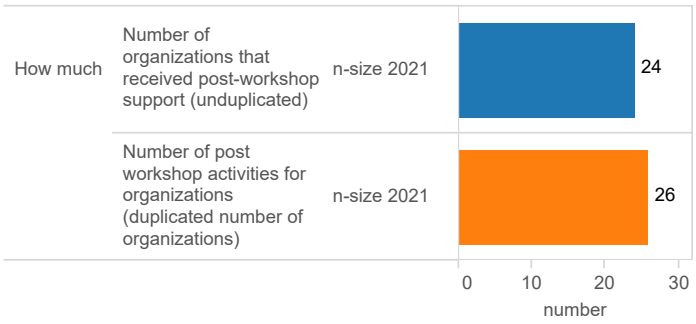
## How well? and Better off?




NOTES:
Prior to 2021, large group trainings also included trainings for the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health strategy. Use caution when comparing data across multiple years.

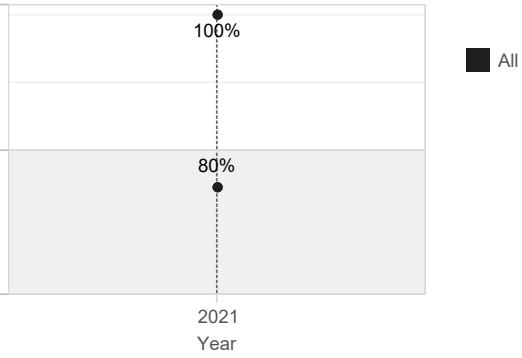
# INVESTING EARLY
# Workforce Development
## *Post Workshop Support Group*

### How much?



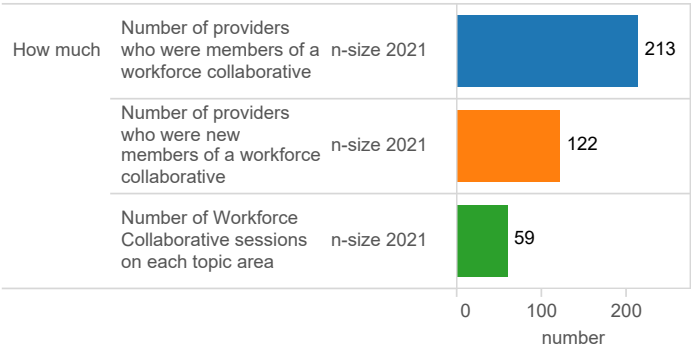

### How well? and Better off?

| Area | Title |
|---|---|
| How well | Percent of agencies that reported the organization improved its ability to support children and families |
| Better off | Percent of agencies that reported the organization developed additional ways to support working with diverse children and families |

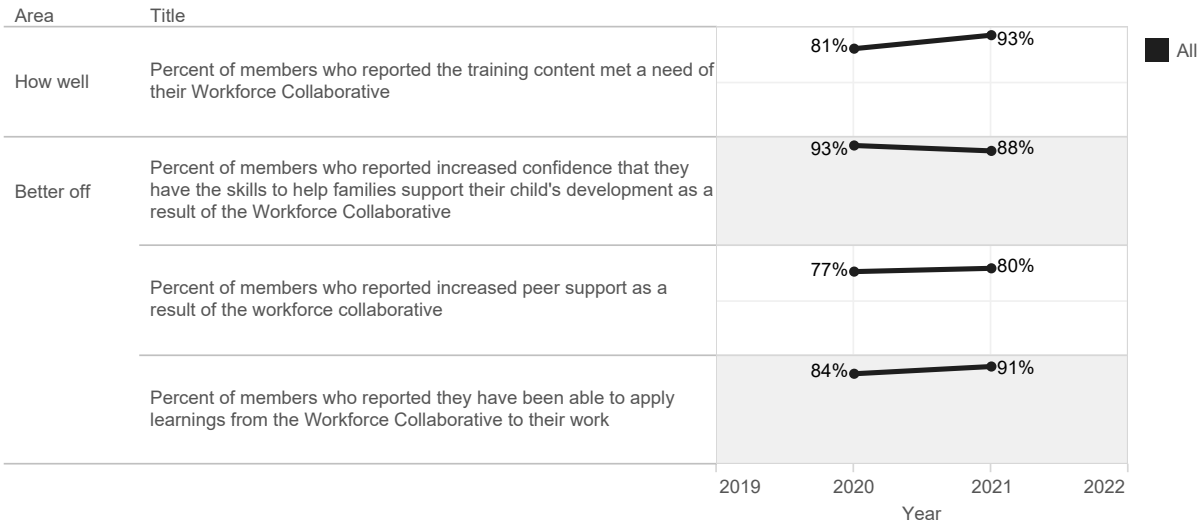


# INVESTING EARLY
# Workforce Development
# *Workforce Collaboratives*

## How much?

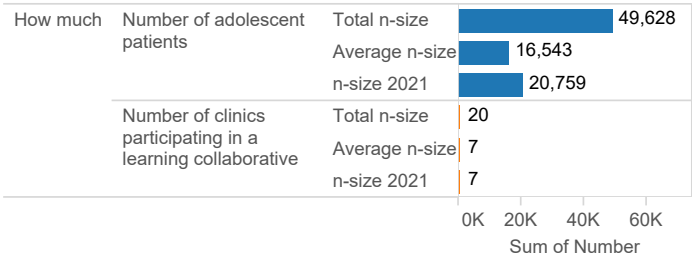



## How well? and Better off?

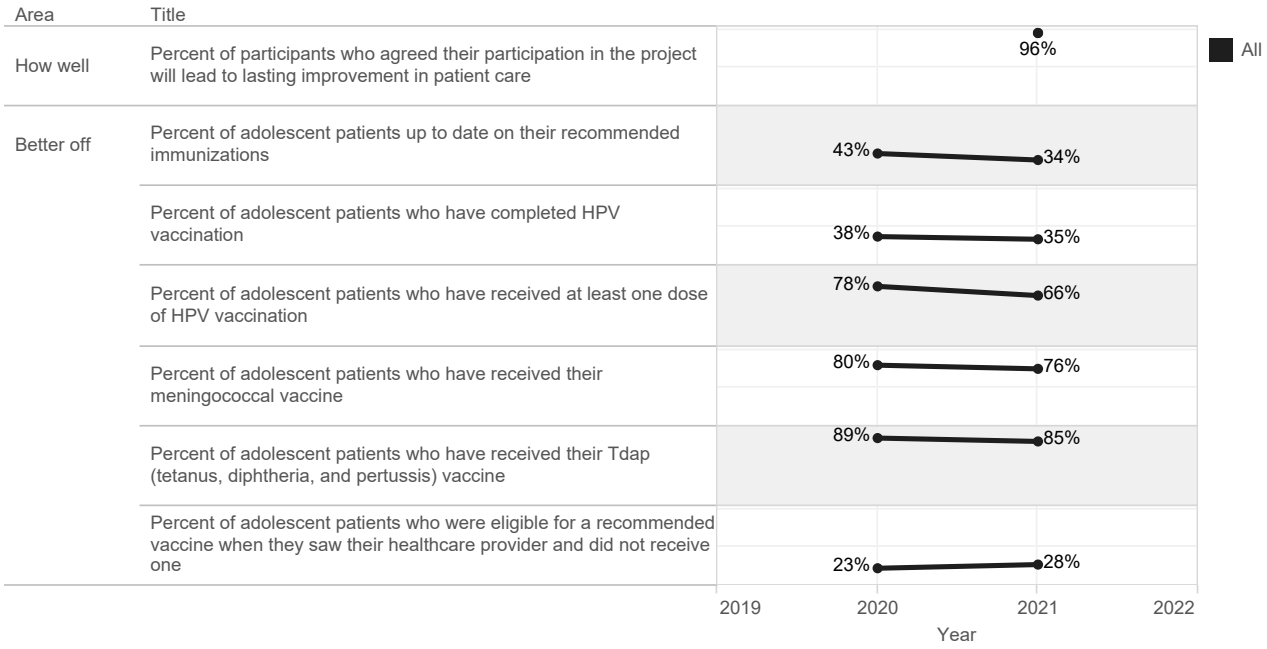


# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Child Health Improvement Partnership
### *Child Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP)*

## How much?

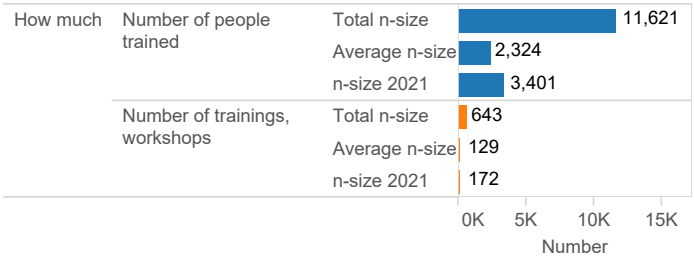



## How well? and Better off?

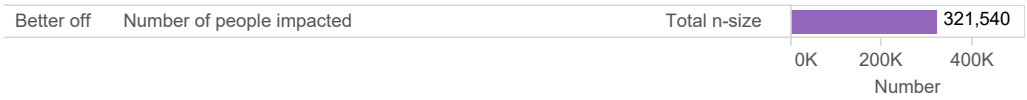


# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Family & Community Connections
## *Healthy & Safe Environments (HSE)*

### How much?

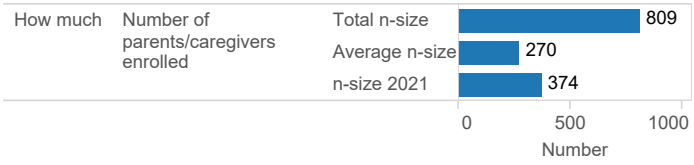



### How well? and Better off?

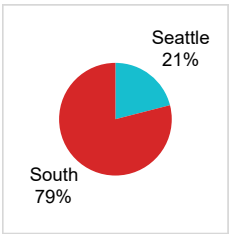


# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Family Engagement
## *Kinship Care*

### How much?

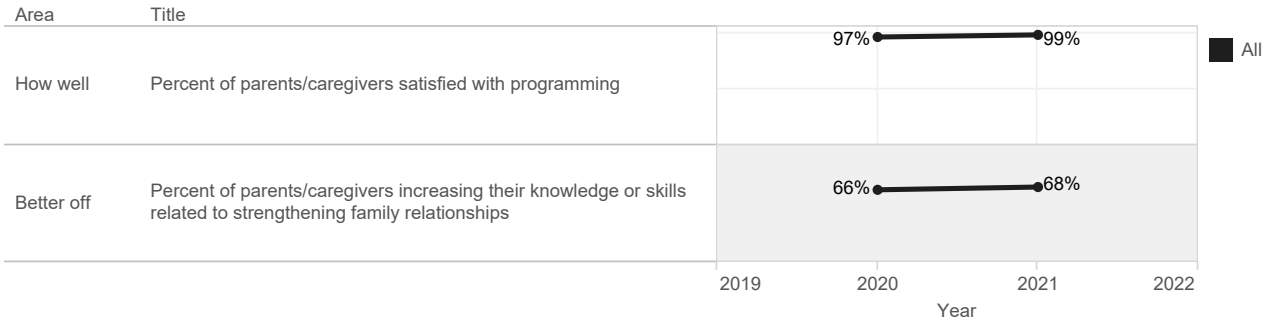


The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

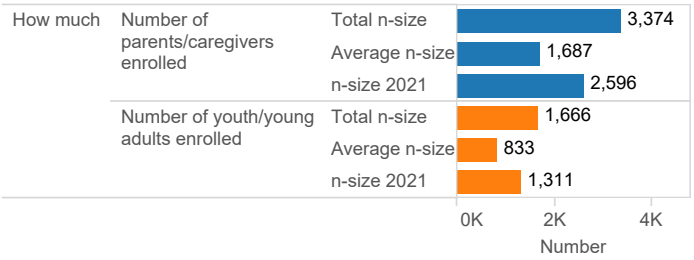
### How well? and Better off?

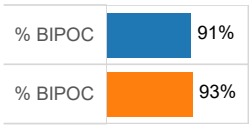



NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began January 2019.

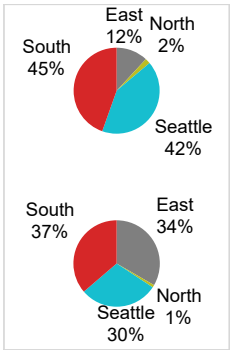
# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Family Engagement
## *Positive Family Connections*

### How much?



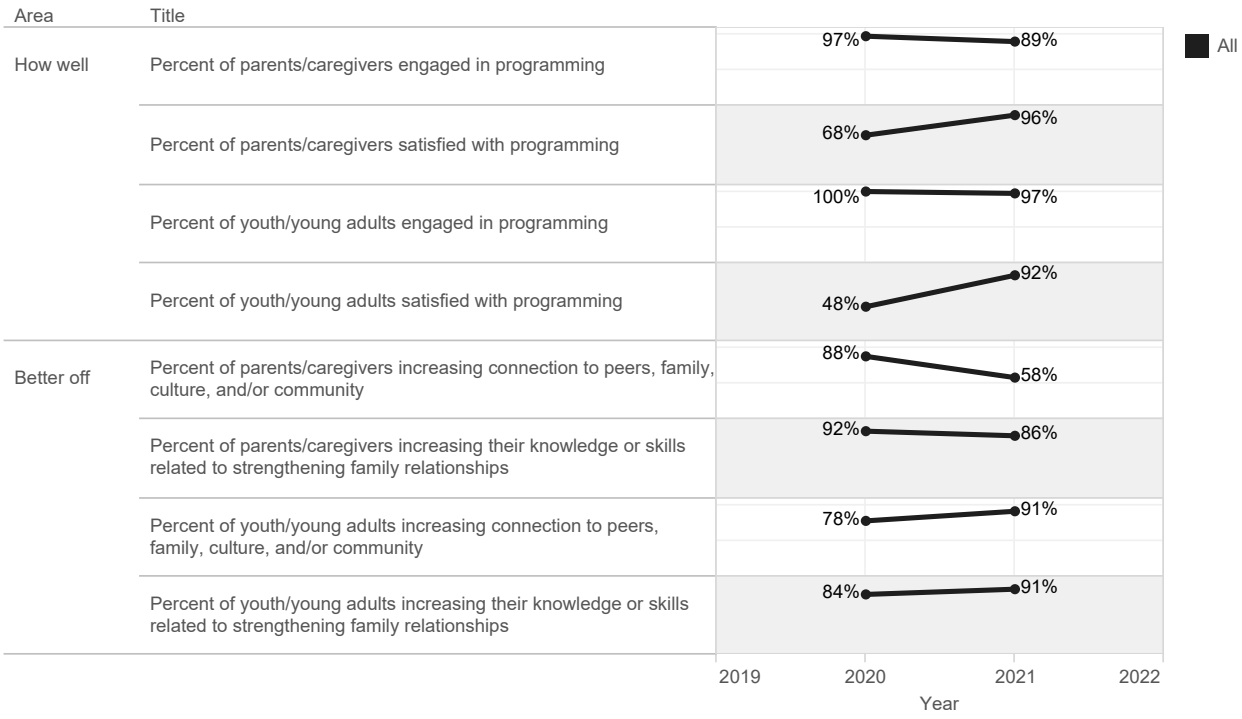

The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began May 2020.
Participants may have reported more than one race/ethnicity.

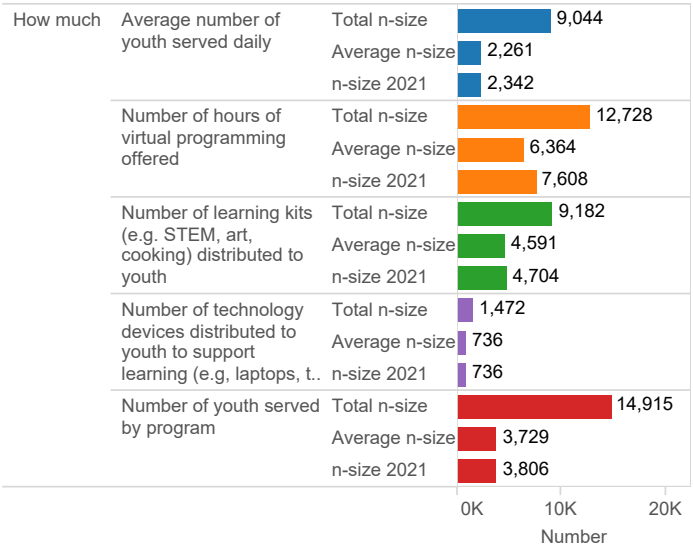
### How well? and Better off?




NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began May 2020.
Not all programs report thse performance measures.

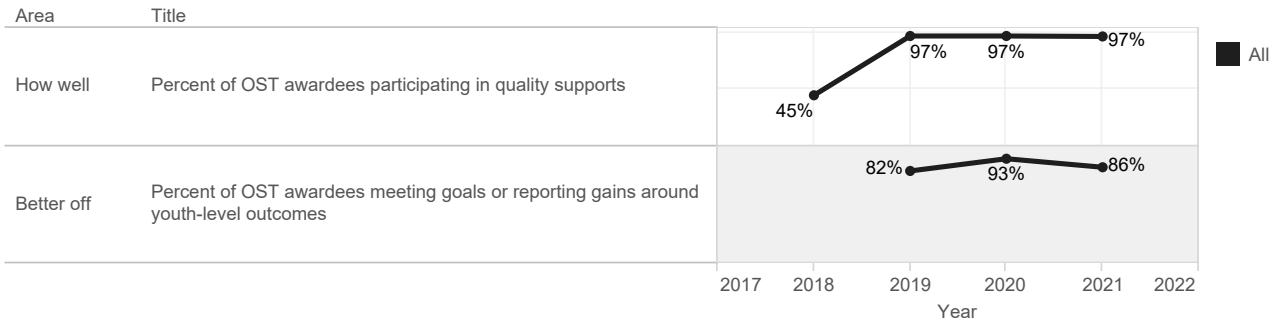
# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
# School-Based Partnerships
# *Out-of-School Time (OST)*

## How much?



The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

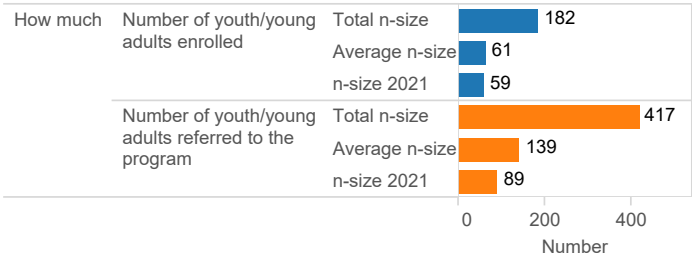
## How well? and Better off?

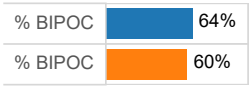



NOTES:
Program quality supports include coaching, professional development, and assessments designed to strengthen the quality of OST programs and increase positive outcomes for youth.
Though many OST programs offered virtual programs due to COVID in 2021, some were able to re-open sites and offer in-person program opportunities to youth. In-person assessments of staff practices were not performed in 2021 and so are not reported here, and outcomes data collection was interrupted at many sites.
6 awardees were not able to collect and report data on their youth outcomes goals due to COVID-19.

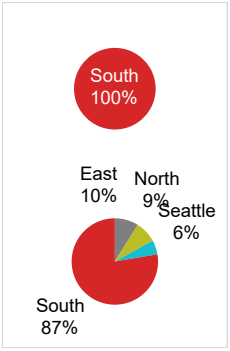
# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline
## *Community Empowered Disposition Alternative & Resolution (CEDAR)*

### How much?



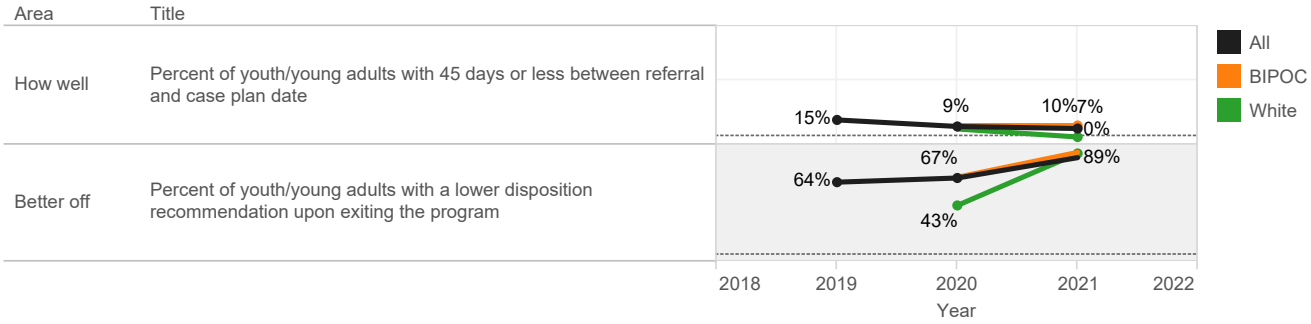




The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

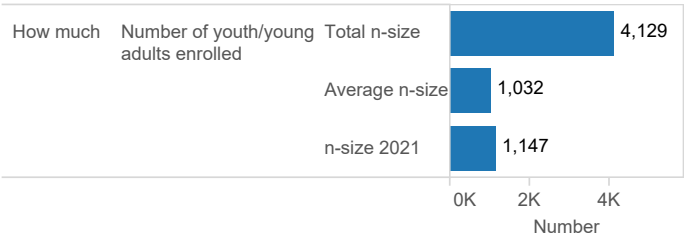
### How well? and Better off?



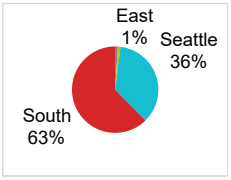

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contract began in Jan 2019.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
# Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline
## *Community Supports*

## How much?

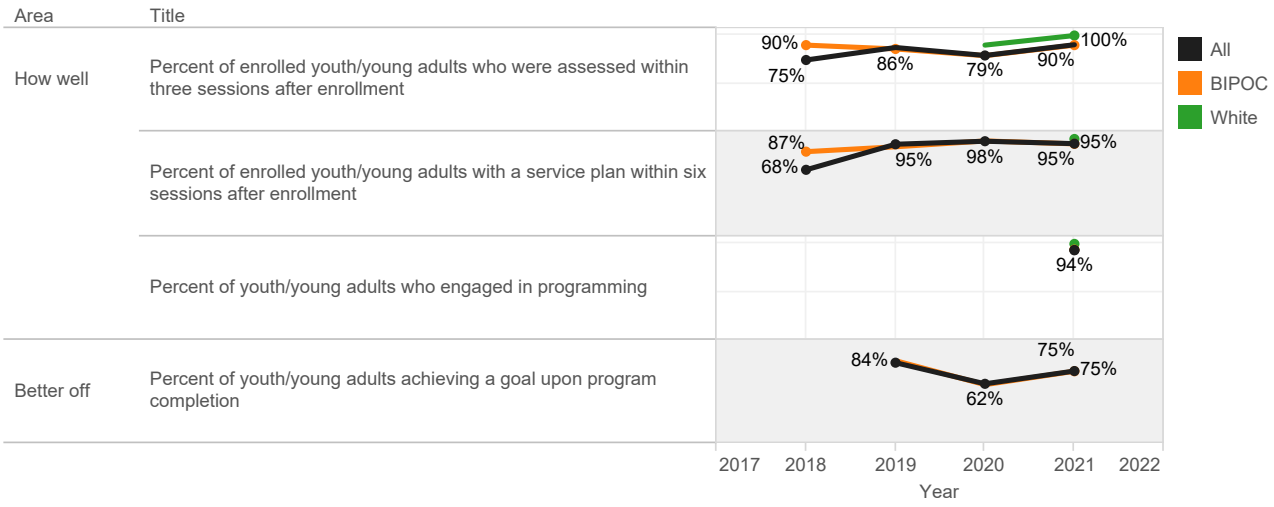


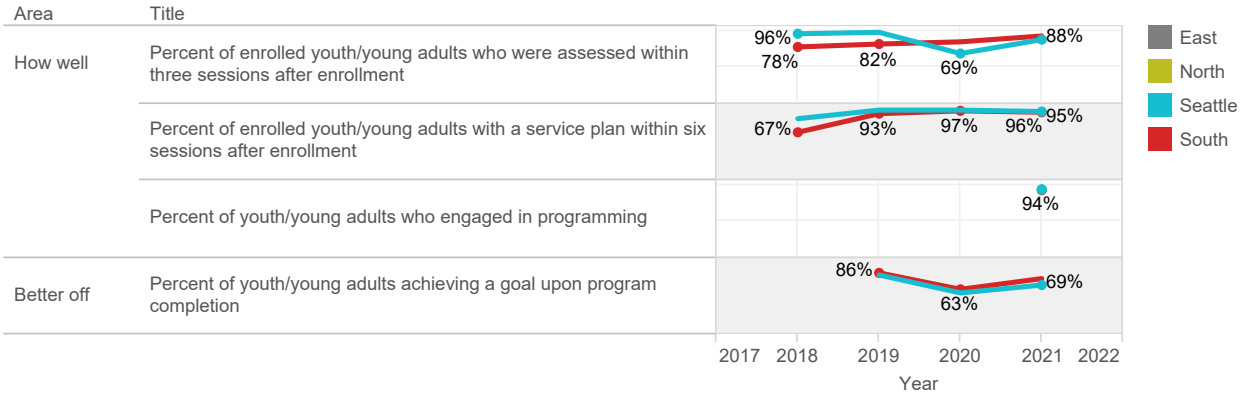
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

## How well? and Better off?

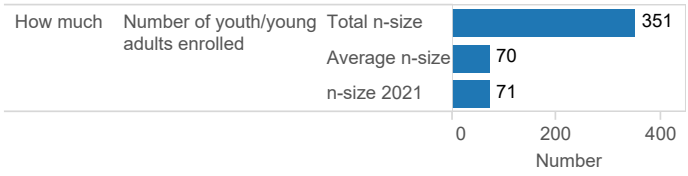


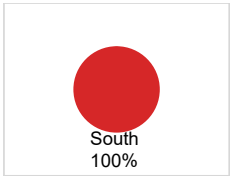

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began Feb 2018.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
# Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline
# *Project SCOPE*

## How much?

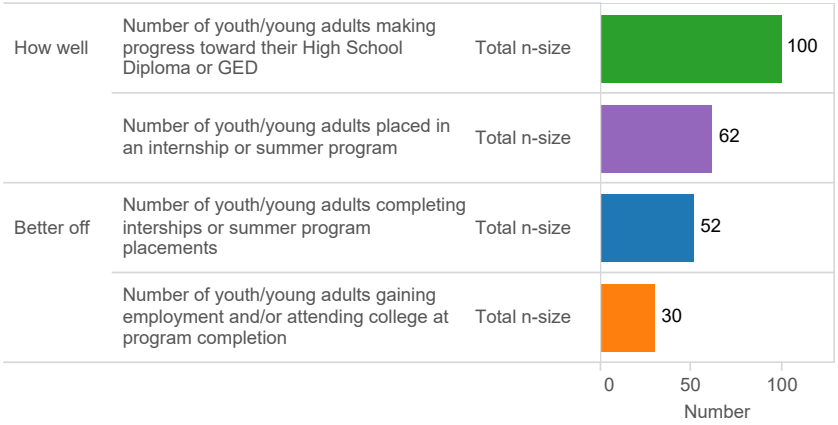


The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

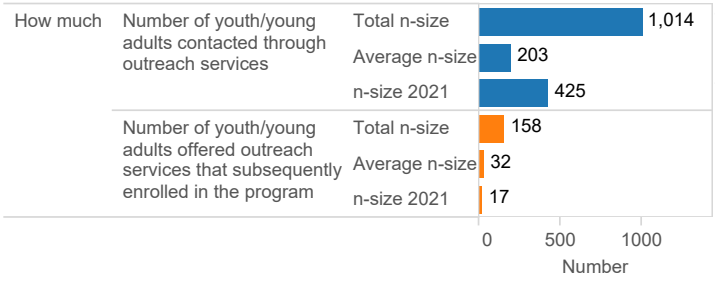
## How well? and Better off?



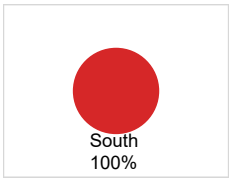

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Programming began summer of 2017.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline
## *Theft 3 & Mall Safety (T3AMS)*

### How much?

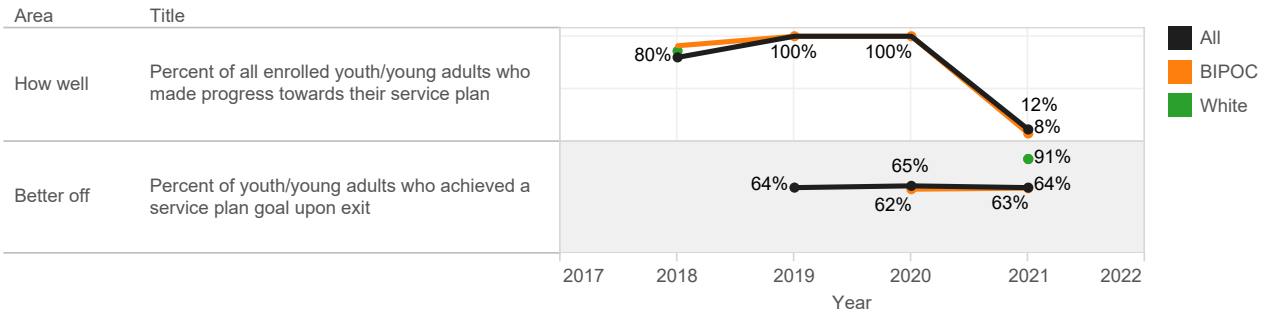


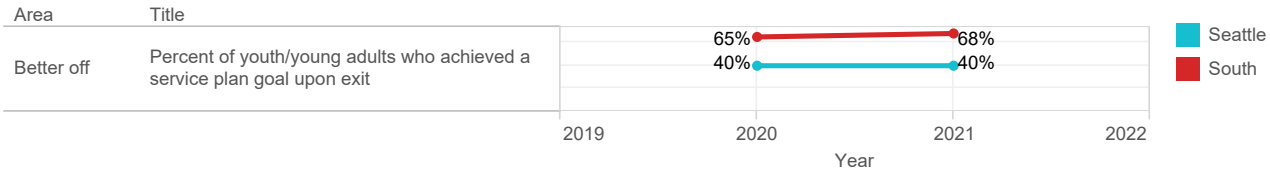
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

### How well? and Better off?

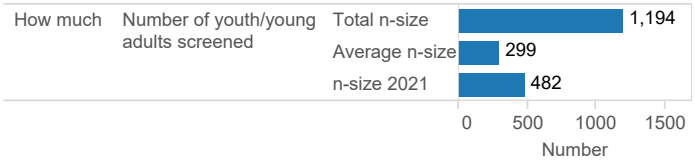


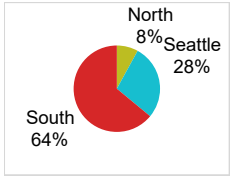

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Programming began in the spring of 2017.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Transitions to Adulthood
## *Behavioral Health in Re-engagement Centers*

### How much?

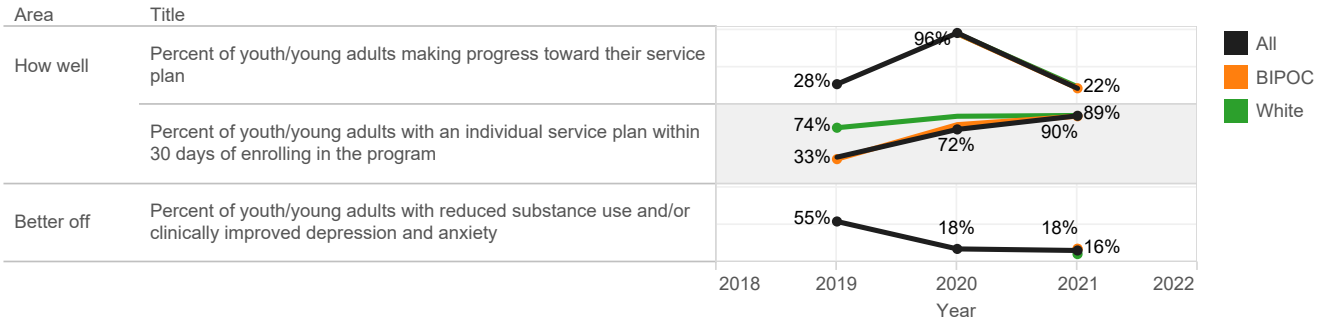


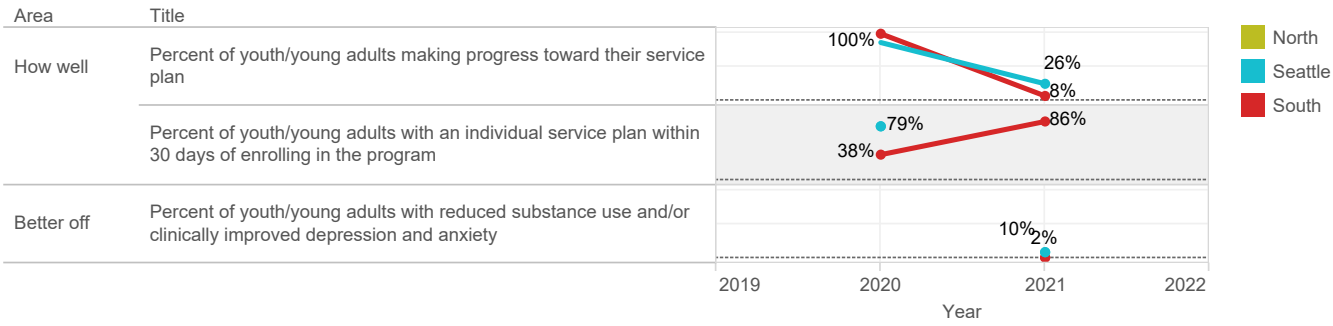
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

### How well? and Better off?

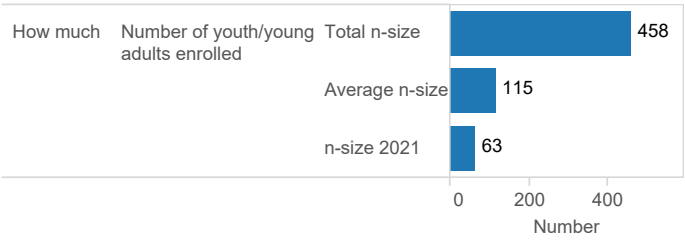


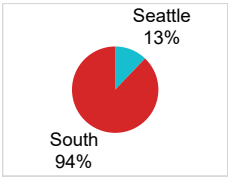

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began Jan 2018.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Transitions to Adulthood
## *Career Launchpad*

### How much?

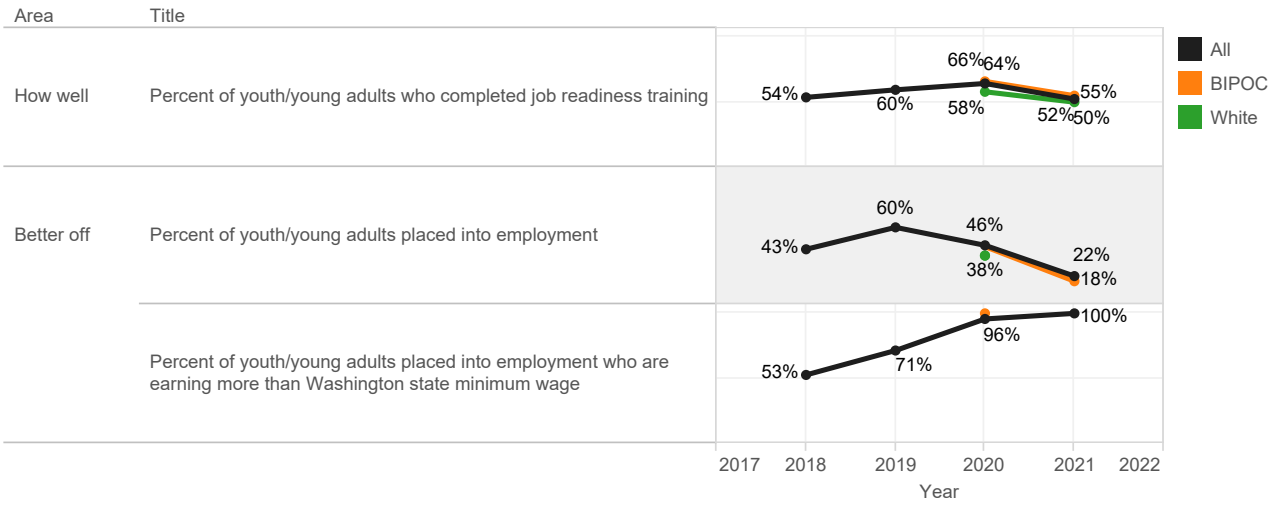


The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

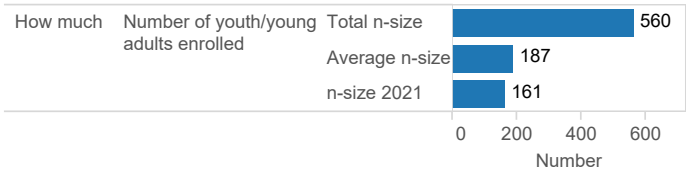
### How well? and Better off?



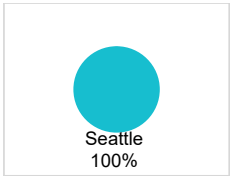

NOTES:
Data from King County performance data reports. Program began March 2018.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Transitions to Adulthood
## *Clear Path to Employment*

### How much?

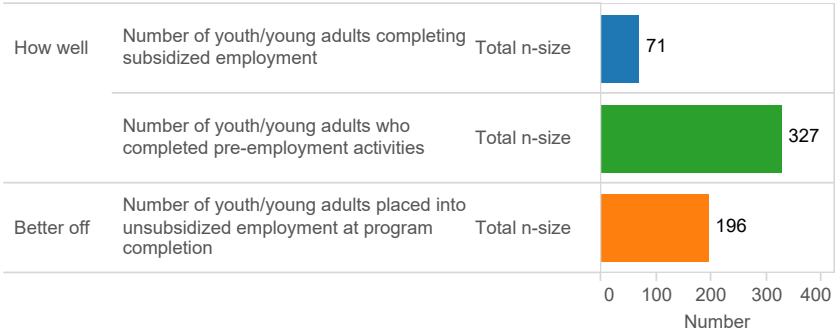


The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

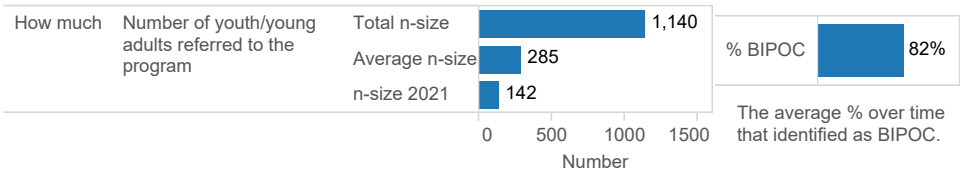
### How well? and Better off?




NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began Jan 2019.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
# Transitions to Adulthood
# *Peer Connectors*

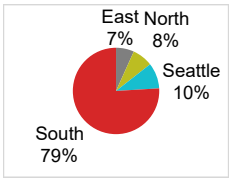
## How much?





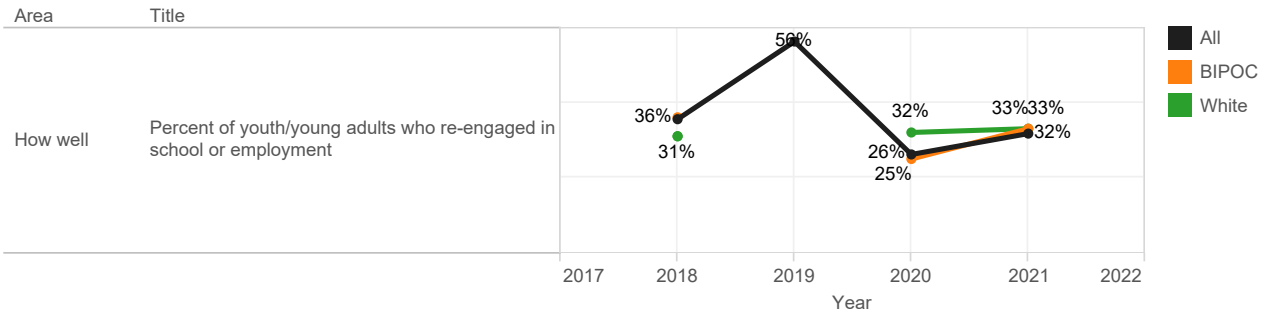


The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

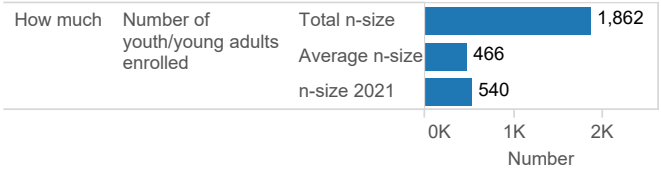
## How well?



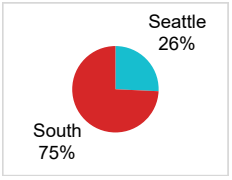

NOTES:
Data from King County performance data reports. Program began July 2017.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Transitions to Adulthood
## *Work Training Education*

### How much?

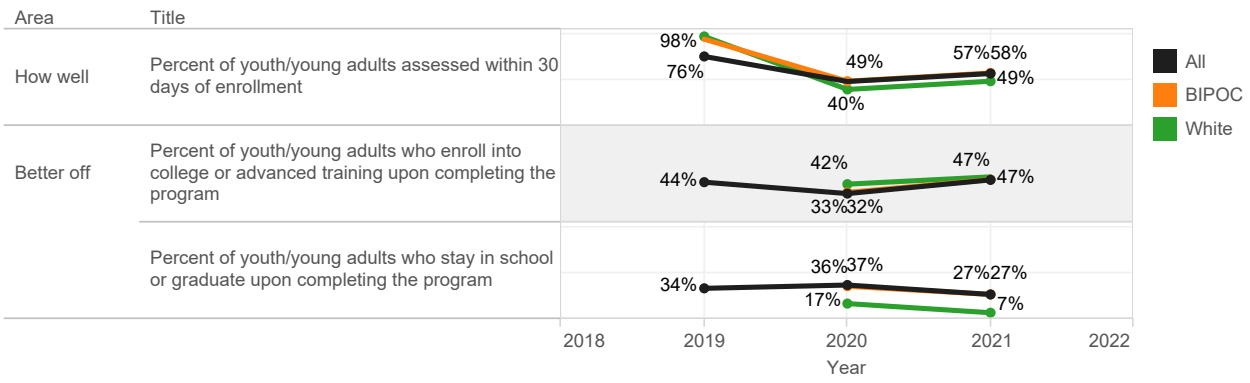


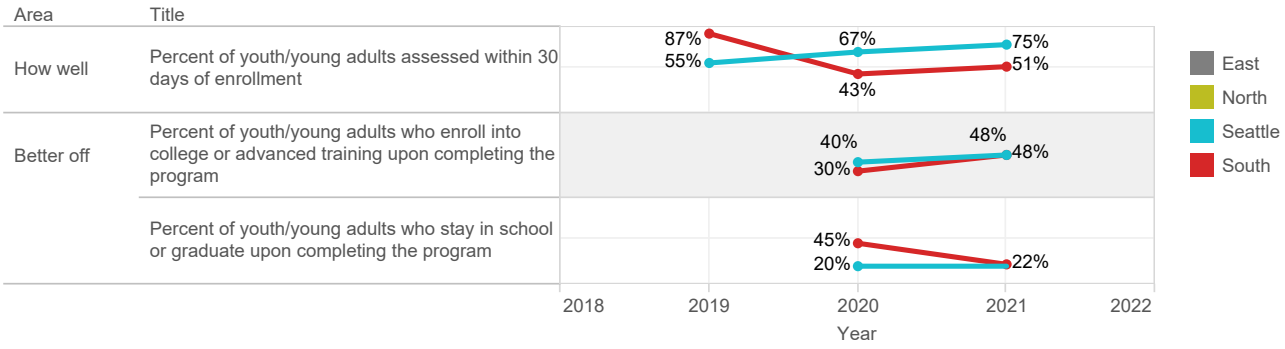
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

### How well? and Better off?

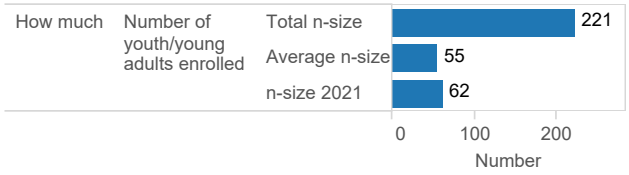


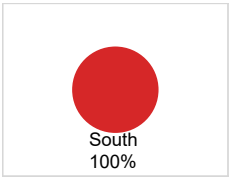

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began Jan 2018. This work is part of Post-Secondary Transitions.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Transitions to Adulthood
## *Work Training Employment*

### How much?

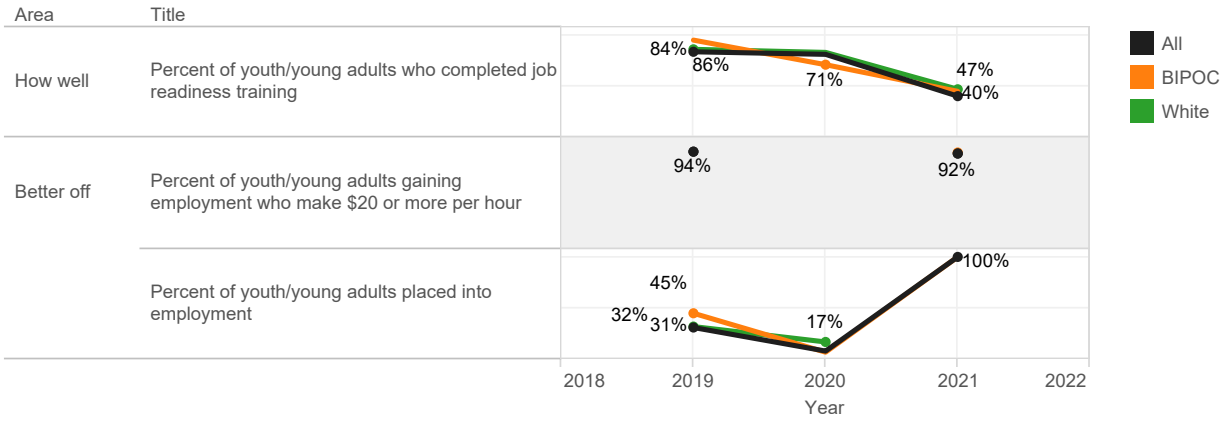


The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

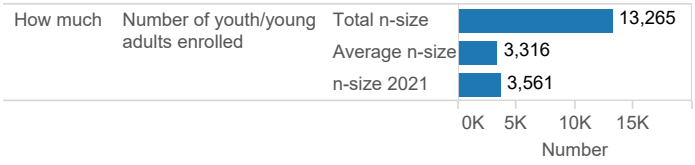
### How well? and Better off?



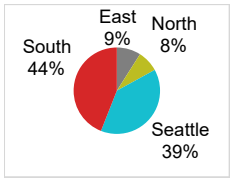

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began Jan 2018. This work is part of Post-Secondary Transitions.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Youth Development
### *Youth Development General*

## How much?

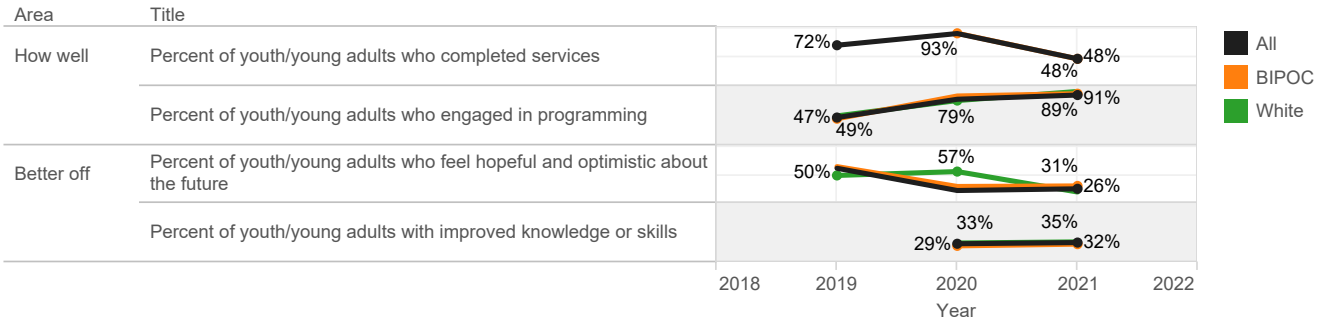


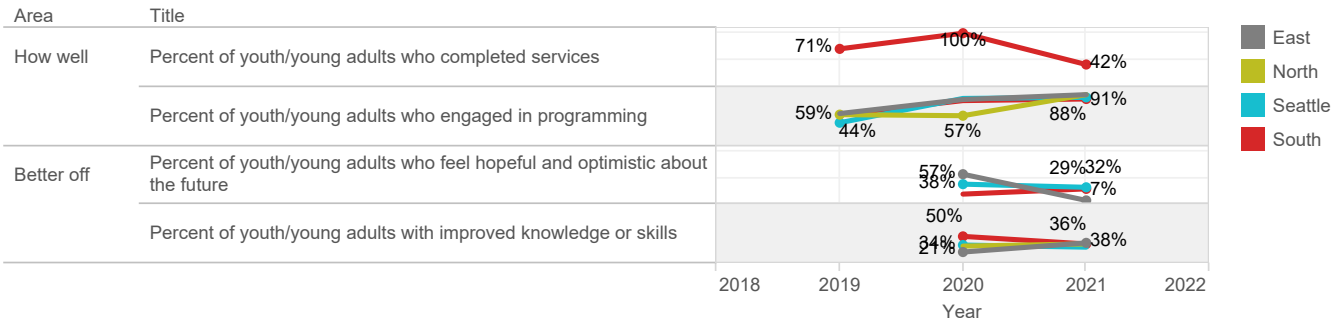
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

## How well? and Better off?

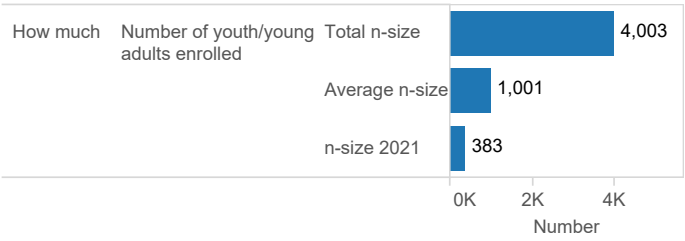


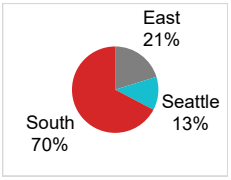

NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began Jan 2018.
Outcomes are based on at least a one-unit increase on the Youth Development Executives of King County Future Orientation Scale between program enrollment and exit.

# SUSTAINING THE GAIN
## Youth Development
## *Youth Development Relationships*

### How much?

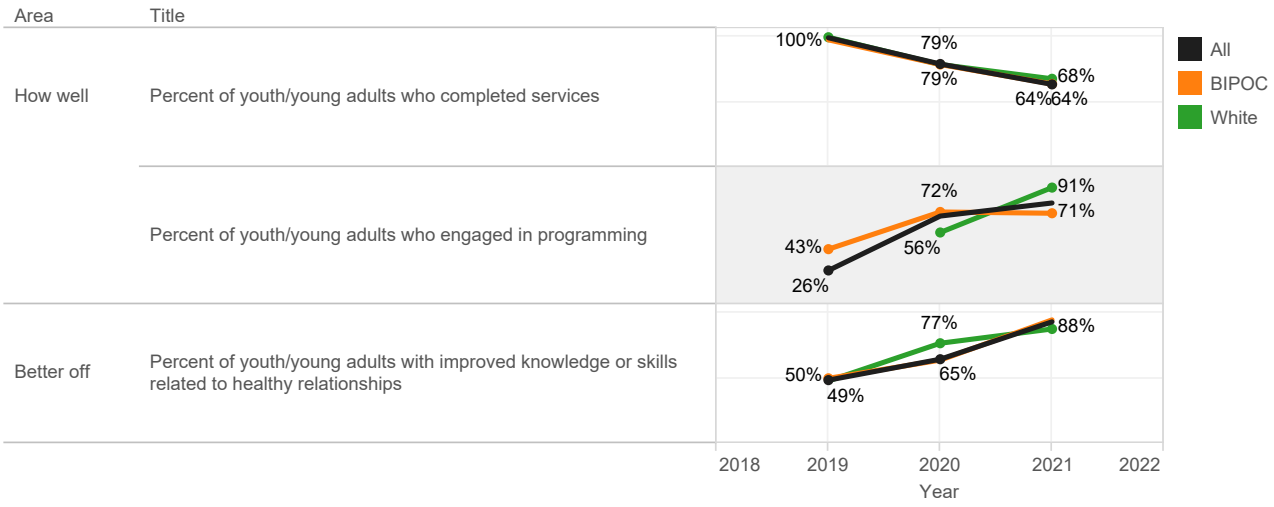


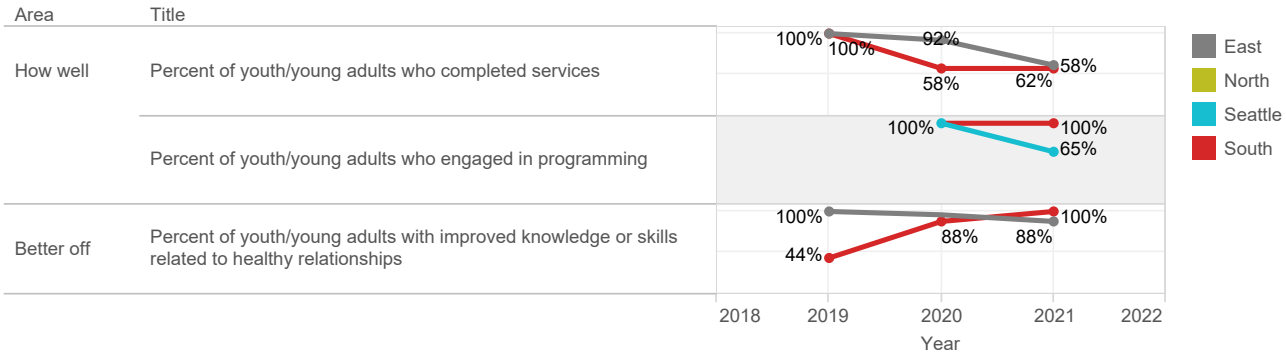
The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.




The average % over time from each King County region.

### How well? and Better off?

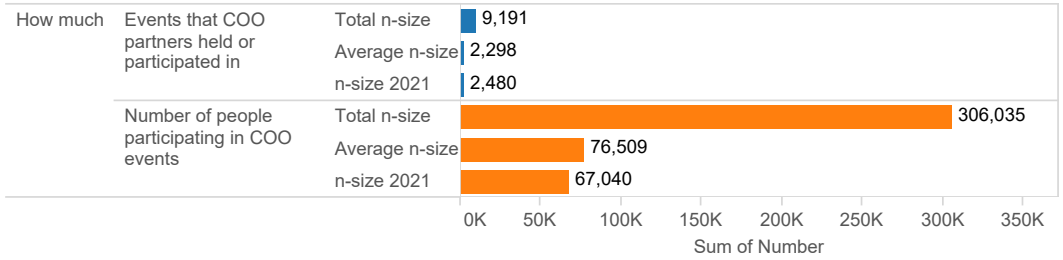



NOTES:
Data from King County contractor performance data reports. Contracts began Jan 2018.

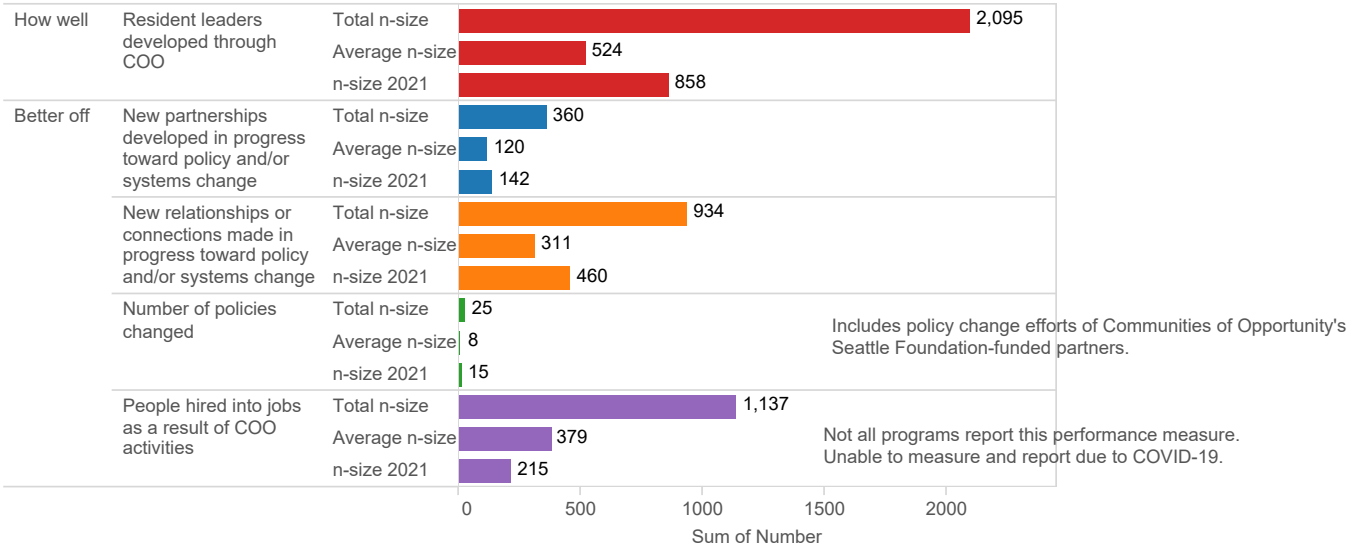
# COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY (COO)

## How much?



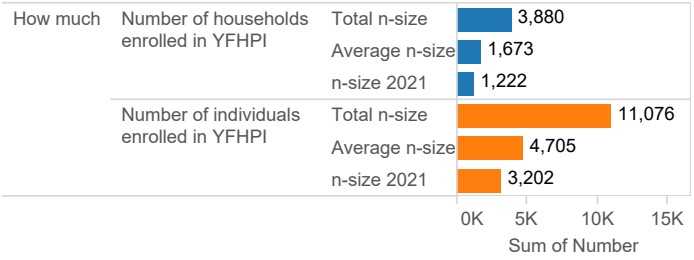

NOTES:
Capacity-building events include workshops, trainings, seminars, and other learning or skills building opportunities. Community events include volunteering, community organizing, celebrations, mentoring, and civic engagement activities like town hall meetings.
Number of people participating may include duplicates across events; high 2020 virtual engagement changed as partners shifted to hybrid engagement opportunities in 2021.

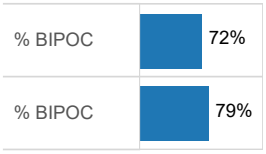
## How well? & Better off?



# HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION
# Youth & Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative (YFHPI)

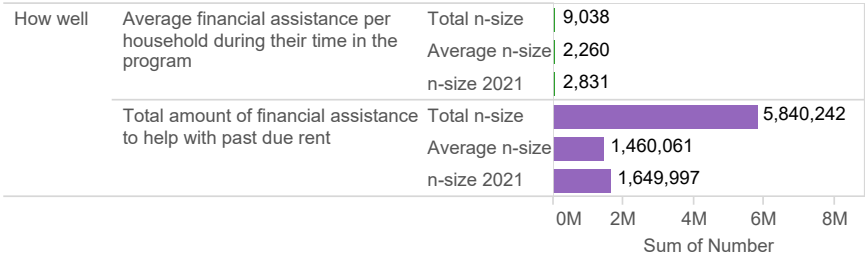
## How much?



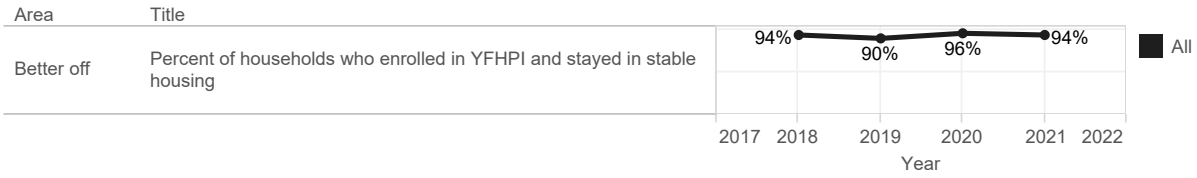




The average % over time that identified as BIPOC.

## How well?

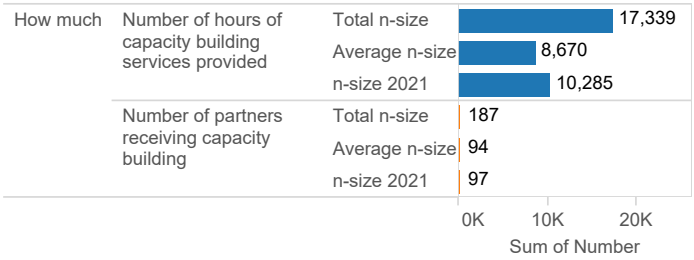



## Better off?

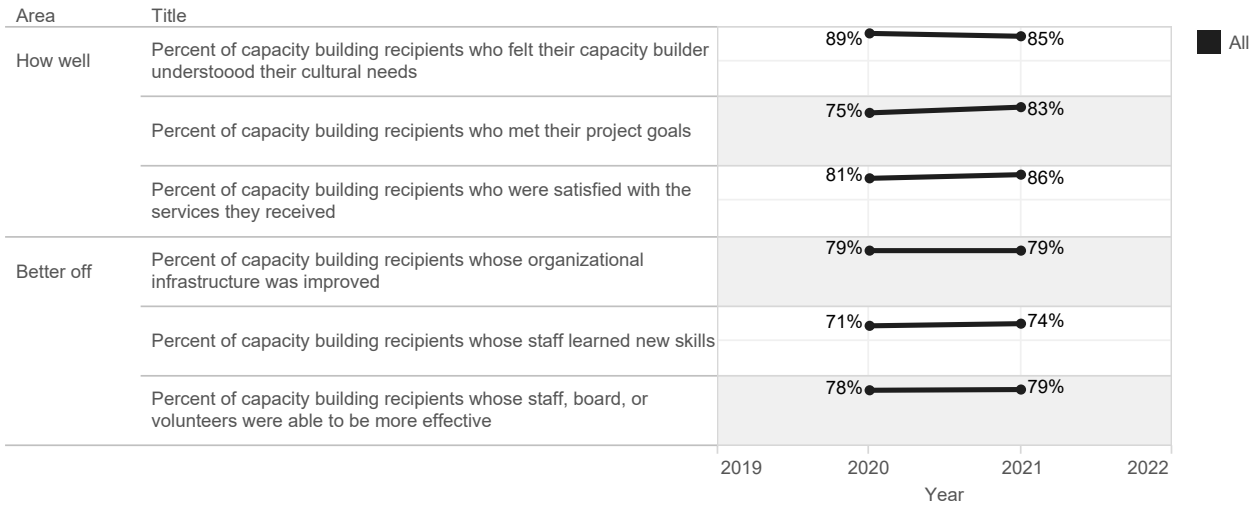


# CAPACITY BUILDING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (CB)

## How much?




## How well? and Better off?




NOTES:
Numbers reflect capacity building recipients who participated in a followup survey, and may not reflect the views of all recipients.