



FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF
COMMUNITY-DESIGNED PROGRAMS
AND THE HOME VISITING SYSTEM
IN KING COUNTY



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is made possible by the Best Starts for Kids (Best Starts) levy. Best Starts builds on the strengths of communities and families so that babies are born healthy, children thrive and establish a strong foundation for life, and young people grow into happy, healthy adults. Best Starts is the most comprehensive investment in child development in the nation. King County's investments span from prenatal development through young adulthood, building strength and resilience in our communities along the way.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all who generously contributed their time, expertise, and perspectives to this evaluation.

THANK YOU TO THE COMMUNITY-DESIGNED HOME-BASED SERVICES AND PARENT/CAREGIVER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT GRANTEES:

Atlantic Street Center
Center for Human Services
Communities of Rooted Brilliance (CRB)
Divine Alternatives for Dads Services
East African Community Services
El Centro de La Raza
Families of Color Seattle
HopeCentral
Iraqi Community Center
Korean Community Service Center
Open Arms Perinatal Services
Open Doors for Multicultural Families
Refugee Women's Alliance
Somali Health Board
St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County
United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
Voices of Tomorrow
West African Community Council

THANK YOU TO CAPACITY-BUILDING SUPPORT PROVIDERS:

3E Integrity
Balahadia Consultation
DSK Culturally Responsive Educational Services, LLC
Rooted in Vibrant Communities (RVC)
The Capacity Collective
YWCA Seattle | King | Snohomish

THANK YOU TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CORE LEADERSHIP GROUP (CLG).

THANK YOU TO THE THOSE WHO SUPPORTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHASE 1 CAPACITY-BUILDING TOOLS:

Balahadia Consultation
Bulle Consulting
DSK Culturally Responsive Educational Services, LLC
National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)
University of Washington Northwest Center for Public Health Practice
University of Washington School of Nursing

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All photos provided by Best Starts for Kids

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, Best Starts for Kids (Best Starts) funded robust capacity-building support for partners who received awards to design programs in two prenatal-to-five strategy areas: home-based services and community-based parenting supports. Best Starts partnered with Cardea to conduct an evaluation to understand if Phase 2 of capacity building supported initial program implementation, enabled the scale up to full implementation, and helped to achieve positive shifts in organizational capacity.

Four capacity builders were selected through an application process to build capacity in the design, programmatic and organizational infrastructure, and environmental conditions that support successful and sustainable service delivery among grantee agencies. The capacity builders were tasked with tailoring individual, group, and systems supports that focused on:



Well-defined programs:

Partnering with community to develop well-defined, culturally responsive programs embedded in community



Effective implementation:

Strengthening equity-informed data collection and use and equitable and effective organizational practices



Supportive environments:

Engaging community voices in systems design and ongoing feedback to inform building responsive systems

Capacity-building support was provided across two phases:

PHASE 1

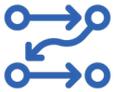
- Design, develop, and initially plan for implementation of program services
- Facilitate group-based and organization-based capacity-building activities
- Produce program practice profile, racial equity theory of change, implementation plans, and performance measurement plan

PHASE 2

- Increase capacity to collect and utilize data
- Increase organization and/or program capacity in human resources, strategic planning, and staff culture
- Amplify the voices and improve structural supports of communities of color by engaging families, providing service provider resources, and increasing access to culturally responsive trainings in primary language of provider

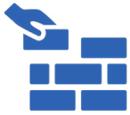
EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this evaluation is to:



Phase 1 Objective

- Describe early changes in program implementation resulting from Phase 1 activities



Phase 2 Objectives

- Understand how Phase 2 capacity builders assess and provide tailored supports to grantees from multiple perspectives
- Preliminarily describe increased capacity resulting from Phase 2 support

In partnership with Best Starts, capacity-builders and community-designed service providers, Cardea used a predominantly qualitative approach to meet the goals and objectives, and answer the evaluation questions.

*“[Capacity building support has] been amazing. I love that [Best Starts for Kids] has given us this opportunity, I think that **it’s truly made a huge difference in our program** and how smoothly we run.”*

Home-Based Service Provider

*“I think we all experience personal growth by dealing with the capacity builders just because...[they’re] **subject matter experts in their fields** and you get help **[and you] pick up some of the qualities they bring to the table** and hopefully try to transmit it down across the organization.”*

Parent-Caregiver Information & Support Provider

*“We sit at these tables as the voice of our community...saying “give us the resources prioritize us...when you prioritize us, everyone is lifted.” **When the person who is in the most harm is lifted, then everyone lifts...**We sit at the tables... saying that practice or policy is going to harm us because it doesn’t address racism in this way... we sit at the tables already having conversations about prioritizing the voice of the person who is the most oppressed and the person who receives the service as valuable voice.”*

Core Leadership Group Member

KEY FINDINGS

CAPACITY BUILDERS SPENT DEDICATED TIME WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS, BUILT STRONG RELATIONSHIPS, AND SUPPORTED PERSONAL, PROGRAM, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND SYSTEM CHANGE



Capacity building was seen as a valuable activity that many service providers would like to continue engaging in.

- Many service providers shared that they have stronger teams and organizational systems to support their work because of their engagement with capacity building



Strong relationships between capacity builders and service providers facilitated impact. Time and funding for relationship building supports capacity building outcomes.

- Service providers said that investment of time and energy in building authentic, safe, friendly, and trusting relationships with capacity builders facilitated change and progress



Capacity building support created change for individual staff, programs, organizations, and systems.

- Individual service provider staff gained confidence and felt valued because of capacity building
- Capacity building strengthened service providers' ability to support families through their programming
- Capacity building supported organizational transformation through strengthened internal relationships and internal data culture
- The Core Leadership Group, formed to affect change in the King County home visiting system, was successful in achieving many of their goals



Capacity builders spent significant time preparing for and leading capacity building support. This dedicated time facilitated systems, organizational, program and personal change.

- Capacity builders spent up to the equivalent of more than five work weeks building relationships, co-creating plans, and supporting individualized coaching and support for some individual participating programs



CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Capacity-building support was provided in a complex approach that was tailored by each capacity builder to meet the needs of the 19 unique programs. Further, this evaluation did not directly capture data related to Phase 1 and began while Phase 2 capacity building was already under way. Consequently, there are some aspects of capacity building support provided before this evaluation began in 2020 that are not fully represented. Nuances in capacity building may be difficult to ascertain, creating challenges for the development of an overarching understanding of the process and impact of support. The qualitative evaluation approach provided rich data to understand potential nuances and increase the ability to discuss overarching themes.

COVID-19

COVID-19 impacted the work of the Phase 2 capacity builders, the implementation of programs, and the evaluation timeline. Capacity builders and service providers were firmly focused on responding to community and organizational needs related to COVID-19, while adjusting their models to the realities of remote work. To keep evaluation participation manageable, Cardea only asked service providers and capacity builders to engage in one intensive round of data collection instead of the two rounds that were originally planned.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EVALUATION WORK

- Explore the long-term impacts of capacity building on community-designed programs. This might include exploring the sustainability of changes attributed to capacity building.
- Explore the continued use and iteration of guiding principles as a foundation for capacity-building work. Exploring how the use of guiding principles evolves over time could help illuminate emerging partner and community needs.
- Explore how staff transition and level of staff engagement in capacity building affects sustainability of capacity-building outcomes. Staff transition is inevitable, so it is important to explore ways to support the transfer of knowledge and ensure minimal disruption to maximize the potential for positive, sustained outcomes.