



BEST STARTS FOR KIDS FIRST LEVY EVALUATION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

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

COMMUNITY PARTNERS/AWARDEES

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:

African Community Housing & Development
Africans on the Eastside
Africatown Center for Education & Innovation
Africatown Community Land Trust
Alliance for Gun Responsibility Foundation
ALR Grant Writing Services
alterNative Consulting
Amara
ANEW
Arts Corps
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
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Atlantic Street Center
Auburn School District
Bella's Creative Learning Center
Bellevue Boys & Girls Club
Birth to Three Developmental Center
Black Star Line African Family
BRAVE- Building Resilience Awareness & Variations of Excellence
Cascade Middle School
Cascadia Consulting Group
Catholic Community Services
Celebrating Roots
Center for Human Services
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Cham Refugees Community
Chief Seattle Club
Childhaven
Children's Home Society of Washington
Children's Therapy Center
ChildStrive

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Community Network Council
Community Passageways
Congolese Integration Network
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Crescent Collaborative
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Divine Alternatives for DADS Services (D.A.D.S.)
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Eastside Baby Corner
Eastside Pathways
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Empower Youth Network
Empowering Youth & Families Outreach
Encompass Northwest
Enumclaw School District Birth to Five Center
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Families of Color Seattle
Federal Way Public Schools
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 Doula
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
India Association of Western Washington
Ingersoll Gender Center
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
Kinderling
Korean Community Services Center
Lake Washington School District
Lambert House
Latino Community Fund
Listen and Talk
Living Well Kent
Look, Listen, and Learn
Madison Middle School
Mentoring Urban Students and Teens
Mother Africa
Multi-Service Center
National Development Council
Navos
NeighborCare Health
Neighborhood House
New Horizons
North Seattle College
Northshore School District
Northwest Center
Northwest School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Children
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Open Doors for Multicultural Families
Pacific Islanders Health Board
Para Los Niños
Partner in Employment
Partners for Our Children/University of WA School of
Social Work
Perinatal Support Washington
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
Zeno

EXTERNAL EVALUATORS & CONSULTANTS

We appreciate the input from representatives from the following organizations. These organizations provided external evaluation services, tool development, and consultation for Best Starts partners. One to three representatives from each of the following organizations participated in interviews:

Cardea Services
Pollock Partners
Puget Sound Educational Service District
School Readiness Consulting
Seattle Children's Hospital
The Capacity Collective
University of Washington, College of Education
University of Washington, Evans School of Public Policy & Governance
University of Washington, School of Medicine
University of Washington, School of Social Work
WestEd

COMMUNITY LEADERS

We appreciate the input from individuals in the greater community who participated in interviews. The following leaders, recommended by the Children and Youth Advisory Board, participated in interviews:

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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 of initiative administrators. The recommendations are grouped across three areas.

Recommendation 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

Recommendation 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

Recommendation 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