



Portland Children's Levy
Community Engagement



investing in our future

Portland Children's Levy
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Report

April 2019



Portland Children's Levy Community Engagement Report

Complete Report

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INTRODUCTION

In her last speech before her death in 1965, playwright Lorraine Hansberry incisively described the nature of racial bias in America. She did not speak about a fairer way of punishing the crimes of Black people; rather, she identified “the paramount crime in the United States” as “the refusal of its ruling classes to admit or acknowledge in any way the real scope and scale and character of their oppression of Negroes.” She did not describe racial bias as an aberration to be eliminated from the system. On the contrary, according to Hansberry, the oppression of Black people “is not a random, helter-skelter, hit-or-miss matter of discrimination here and there against people who just happen to be of a different color . . . It is, as that ruling class perfectly well knows, a highly concentrated, universal, and deliberate blanket of oppression pulled tightly and securely over 20 million citizens of this country” (Roberts, 2008).

Working with the community to make change is something that many people on our team dedicated our lives to. We take great honor in being chosen to promote community solutions toward the path of ending inequities. Before we begin, we thought that it would not be appropriate to present solutions to community challenges before properly highlighting root causes of these inequities in Oregon. The Portland Children’s Levy was created as a kind, humane response to symptoms of White supremacy culture and values. The symptoms of White supremacy such as poverty, mass incarceration, education and health disparities are created by historical inequities manifested by the continued perpetuation of White supremacist values, culture, and systems of exclusionary practices based on skin color.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND IMPACTS

White immigrants who came to present day Oregon during the 1840s and 1850s generally opposed slavery, but many also opposed living alongside African Americans (Nokes, 2018). In 1857, as Oregon sought to become a state, it wrote the exclusion of Blacks into its constitution: “No free negro or mulatto, not residing in this State at the time of the adoption of this constitution, shall ever come, reside, or be within this State, or hold any real estate, or make any contract, or maintain any suit therein; and the Legislative Assembly shall provide by penal laws for the removal by public officers of all such free negroes and mulattoes, and for their effectual exclusion from the State, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the State, or employ or harbor them therein.” During this time, any White male settler could receive 650 acres of land and another 650 if he was married. This, of course, was land taken from the indigenous communities of this land” (Brown, 2017).

With the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, Oregon’s laws that prevented people from the African diaspora from living in Oregon and owning property were superseded by national law. Oregon did not ratify the 14th Amendment—the Equal Protection Clause—until 1973 which was initially ratified in 1866, rescinded in 1868 and ratified again in 1973(Nokes, 2018). Oregon did not ratify the 15th Amendment, which gave Black people the right to vote, until 1959,

making Oregon only 1 of 6 states that refused to ratify that amendment when it passed. It was illegal for Black people to move to Oregon until 1926 (Nokes, 2018)

Let us not forget that in 1849, Joseph Lane, Governor of the new Oregon Territory, began his duties by traveling to Walla Walla to secure the surrender of 5 Cayuse Indians accused in relation to the Whitman Massacre (Rector, 2010). In the 1880s Chinese immigrants were driven out by mobs in Oregon City, Mount Tabor, and Albina. A reduction in Chinese immigration contributed to a dramatic increase in Japanese immigrants to Oregon. Many restaurants and businesses posted signs reassuring customers that they employed no Asian help. The 1917 Immigration Act imposed a head tax and excluded “immigrants over 16 who could not read in any language.” (US Department of State, 2009) Its provisions banned almost all Asian Immigrants. The city repeatedly undertook urban renewal projects (such as the construction of Legacy Emanuel Hospital) that decimated the Black community. A 2011 audit found that landlords and leasing agents here discriminated against Black and Latino renters 64 % of the time. (Semuels, 2016) Black and Brown people were made to pay higher rents, deposits and additional fees.

African American students are suspended and expelled at a rate 4 to 5 times higher than that of their White peers. While annual incomes for Whites nationally and in Multnomah County, where Portland is located, were around \$70,000 in 2009, Blacks in Multnomah County made just \$34,000, compared to \$41,000 for Blacks nationally (KGW, 2017). Today, an audit of Portland Public Schools (PPS) and the Oregon Department of Education was released by Secretary of State Dennis Richardson's office and showed that PPS has a 53% achievement gap between its White and Black students, and similar gaps exist for students who are Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander and those who are economically disadvantaged (KGW, 2017). The impact of historical inequities on people of color and people with disabilities is no accident. If you are wondering why we chose to include African Americans so much it is because the state of African Americans in Oregon represents the progress that we have made in Oregon as a community. Once we properly serve the people with the darkest skin at the very bottom in Portland, everyone else along the color line will inherently benefit. If this theory holds true, the current pulse of Portland is best summed up here, “The number of Black Portlanders decreased from 41,589 to 35,667 between 2000 and 2015; also in that window, the number of Black Portlanders living in poverty increased from 26% to 39%” (McCurdy, 2018). This is the progress that we have made as a community.

The Portland Children’s Levy was a humane response to symptoms of historical inequities. City voters passed the Portland Children’s Levy in 2002. The Levy’s initial investments included Early Childhood, After-School & Mentoring and Child Abuse Prevention/Intervention. The Levy was renewed in 2008 and 2013, additionally investing in Foster Care and Hunger Relief through offering healthy and nutritious meals to children and families. And lastly, the Levy was renewed in 2018 by 83% of voters for another 5 years, from July 2019 through June 2024. Currently, about 74 programs are supported by the Levy with an annual budget of \$17.8 million.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Every 5 years the Portland Children's Levy performs a community engagement process to inform the next 5 years of Levy funding. The Levy wanted to facilitate the engagement process differently during this cycle. It was recommended that Levy find a consultant with longstanding relationships with diverse communities. Through a competitive process, in September 2018, the Empress Rules project team was selected to connect with the community and carry out the responsibilities listed in the proposal. The project team met and worked in collaboration with Portland Children's Levy staff to create a community engagement plan that would help us meet the project objectives which include:

- Understand perspectives from diverse stakeholders about the most effective and most needed services for children, especially children most affected by historical inequities.
- Identify community solutions to improve outcomes for children and families.
- Cultivate positive relationships with traditionally marginalized populations.
- Promote community understanding of the Portland Children's Levy funding process, services funded, and demographics of children and families served.

METHODS AND APPROACH

For the community engagement process, we used 3 collection methods to collect community input which include 500 questionnaires; 500 surveys; and 8 focus groups with youth, parents, service providers, foster parents, and general community members.

Interest Questionnaire

A 25 question, close-ended interest questionnaire was created in collaboration with Levy staff. The intention of the interest questionnaire was to gather basic demographic information and experiences of community members. We used contact and demographic information from the questionnaire to invite community and service provider survey participants who have diverse identities and and experiences. The interest questionnaires were uploaded to SurveyMonkey and made available in English, Spanish, Somali, Russian Chinese and Vietnamese. The questionnaire was distributed via an online social media ad campaign, direct messaging, email correspondence, community-based organizations and in-person community gatherings and events. A total of 758 people responded to the questionnaire, and 500 people completed the questionnaire and its entirety.

Community Survey

The community survey is a close-ended, 25 question survey inquiring about the most needed services and community solutions under the Levy's 6 program areas and Levy-wide. The survey was also used to gauge respondents' interest in participating in a paid focus group. The survey

was designed in collaboration with the Empress Rules facilitation team and the Levy staff. Participants were selected using demographic and contact information from the interest questionnaire. In order to participate, community members had to meet the criteria of living in Portland and identify as a parent, foster parent, youth, or general community member. We sent the survey questions to family, friends and colleagues for feedback. Community surveys were disbursed online via email and in person at community events. Surveys were made available in English, Spanish, Somali, Russian, and Vietnamese. All community members who completed a survey were compensated \$10 cash for in-person meetings and a \$10 online gift card for online participants. A total of 405 community members completed the community survey.

Provider Survey

Ninety-five Portland service providers participated in a 30 question survey. 26 of those questions were open ended questions asking about the most needed services for children and families, barriers to community participations in services and recommended investment strategies under the Levy's 6 program areas and Levy-wide. In order to meet participation criteria, service providers had to work in Portland and work directly with families. The provider survey was created in collaboration with Levy staff and the Empress Rules facilitation team consisting of Danise Elijah, Nikia Solbjor, and Kheoshi Owens. We reached out to colleagues, family, and friends to provide feedback on survey questions.

The Empress Rules team used the constant comparative method, based on the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967). The process includes reading all of the feedback collected from provider surveys and selecting a question that we wanted to analyze. If the participant response answered the question, we gave it a title or code that describes the comment. Then we looked at the next response, and if it was a similar answer, we gave it the same code. If it differed, we gave it another code that best described the response. This process continued until all data was exhausted, and then we moved on to the next question (Krueger, 2014). Once all of the data was properly coded, we wrote a narrative that best articulated the major themes and highlights in each program area.

Focus Groups

The intention of focus groups was to understand the perspectives from communities who have truly been impacted by historical inequities and to equitably create community solutions to help communities thrive. After meeting with the Levy staff on numerous occasions, it was decided that we would hold 8 focus groups through the lenses of 2 Spanish-speaking groups, 2 youth groups, 1 immigrant refugee group, 1 foster care impacted group (parents who were foster parents or were in foster care as a child), 1 parent-provider group (parents who are service providers) and 1 disability impacted group (parents who either have a disability or have a child who has a disability). Focus group participants were selected from the community survey. In order to participate in the focus groups, participants had to live in Portland, and be impacted by one of the focus group lenses. We work to make the focus groups as racially and ethnically diverse as

possible, in addition to underlying identities such as the inclusion of LGBTQ community members people who have experienced homelessness, and diversity in age, income and education.

The team invited focus group participants via email and communicating through community advocates. Eight focus groups were conducted with 85 Portlanders in January and February 2019 to solicit input about priority areas for investment of Portland Children’s Levy funds. Focus groups were held at Open School East and consisted of community building exercises (e.g., sharing a meal, small group conversations) and a group interview guided by Empress Rules–designed protocol (see Appendix I). Professional Facilitators from Empress Rules moderated group interviews.

RMC Research staff audio recorded and took notes at the group interviews. Two focus groups were conducted in Spanish. An interpreter dictated to an audio recorder and to RMC Research staff, who also took notes in English. One focus group included East African and Tongan immigrants who did not speak English. Interpreters translated participants’ perspectives to the entire group in real time. Participants received \$100, a free meal, and childcare in exchange for their participation. RMC Research conducted inductive thematic analysis of notes taken at the focus groups and referred to audio recordings for clarification of notes and quotation extraction.

The following is a description of the demographics for participants in all 3 strands of community input including the community survey, the provider survey, and focus groups.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

The sample of 405 community members who completed the community survey included 272 parent/caregivers, 56 foster parents, 69 youth, and 8 general community members. Participants were asked basic demographic information. The charts below represent the findings.

Exhibit 1 – Age

38% of community survey respondents were adults aged 30-39 and 15% were youth 14-17.

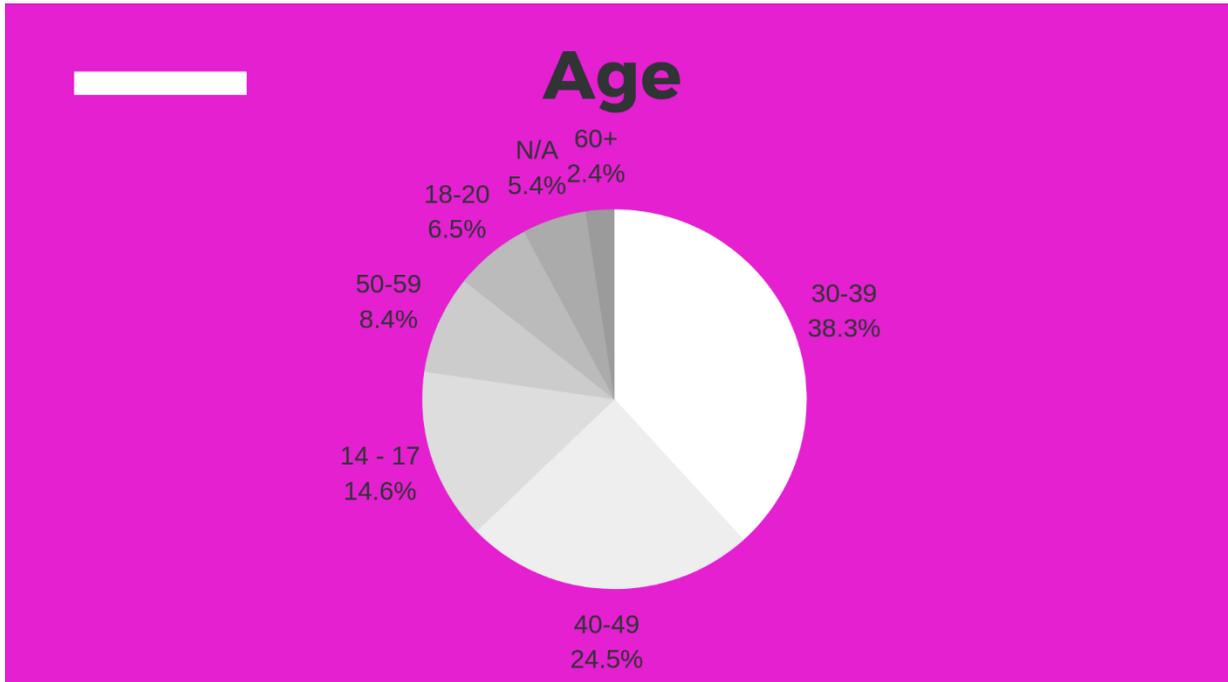


Exhibit 2 – Children Aged 0-5

43% of parents had children aged 0-5.

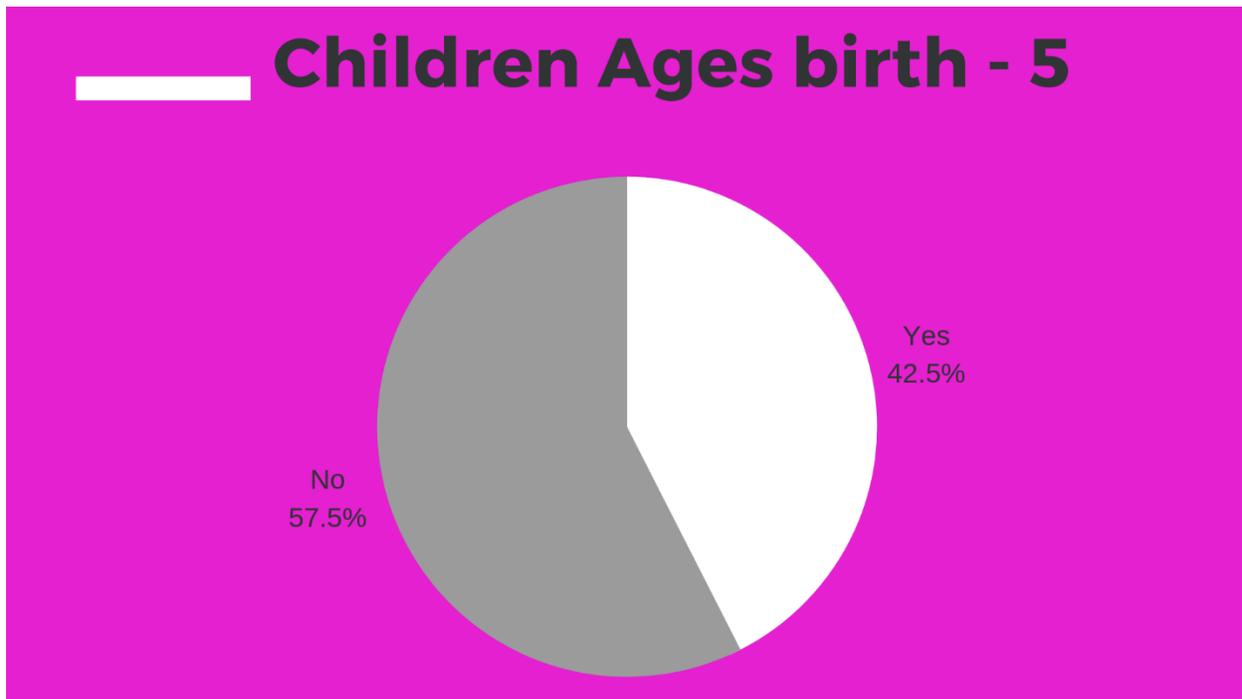


Exhibit 3 - Children Aged 6-18
60% of parents had children aged 6-18.

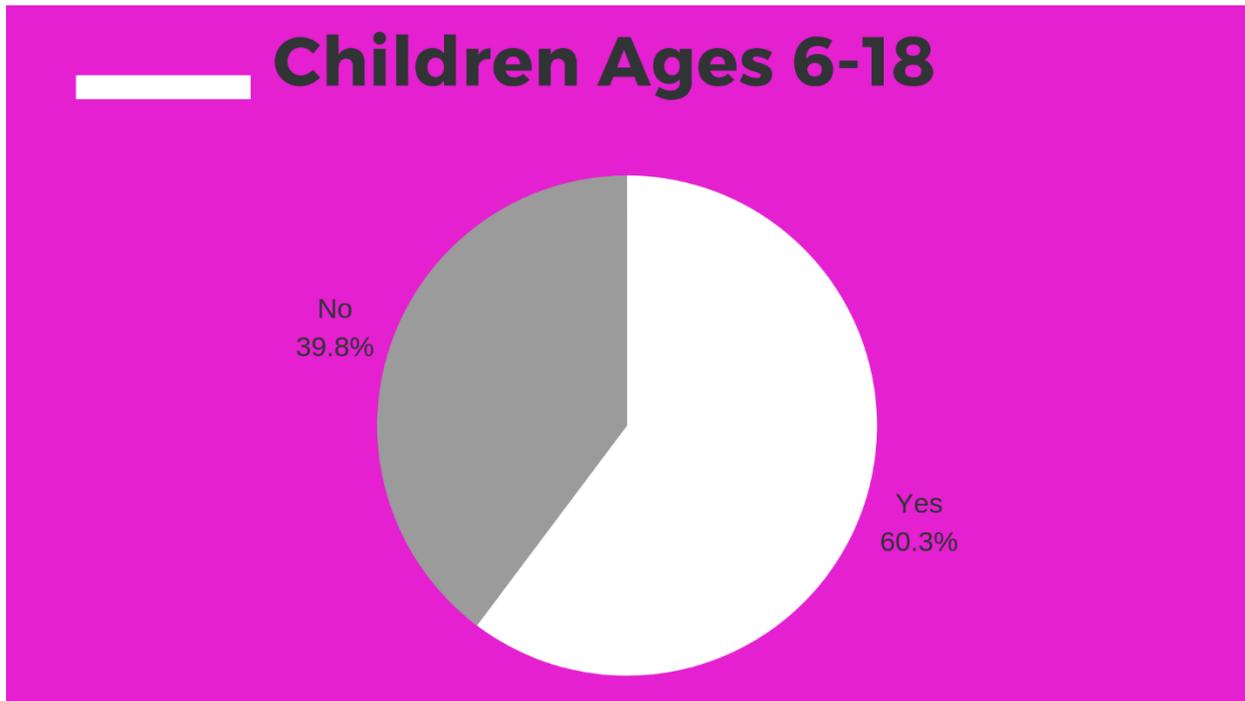


Exhibit 4 – Disability Impacted
20% of respondents had a child with a disability and 11% reported having a disability.

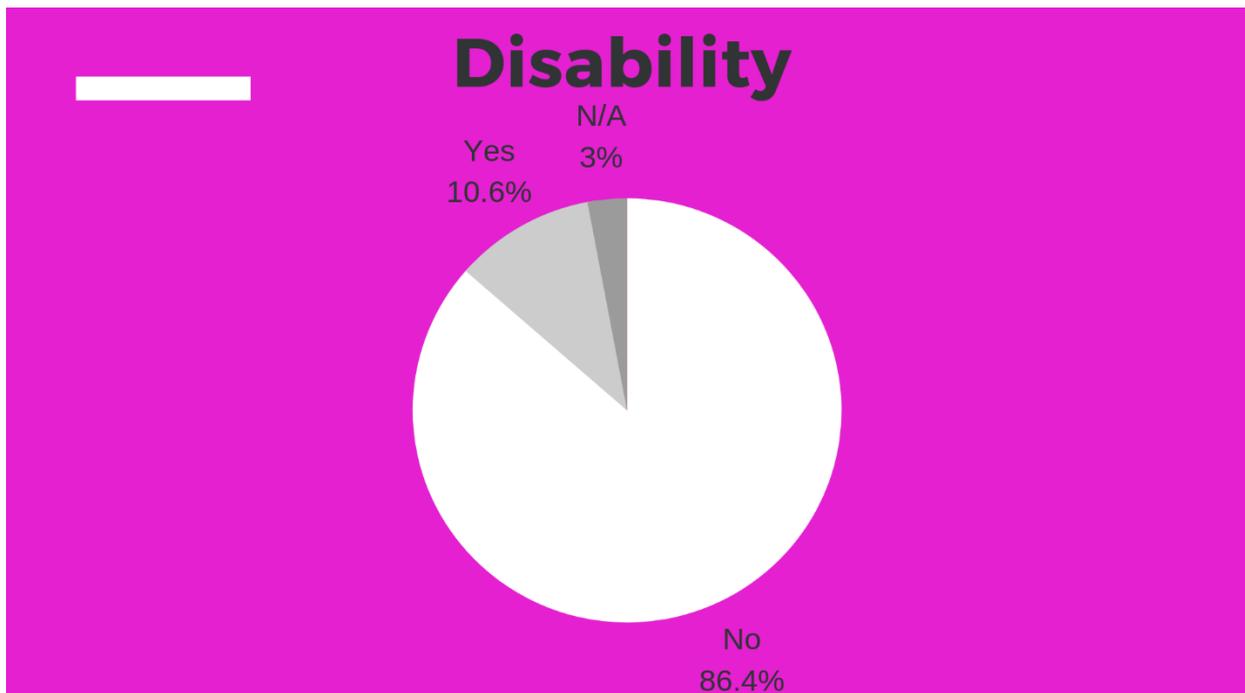


Exhibit 5 – Education

24% of respondents had earned less than high school education.

(13% of respondents were youth aged 14-17 and likely still in school).

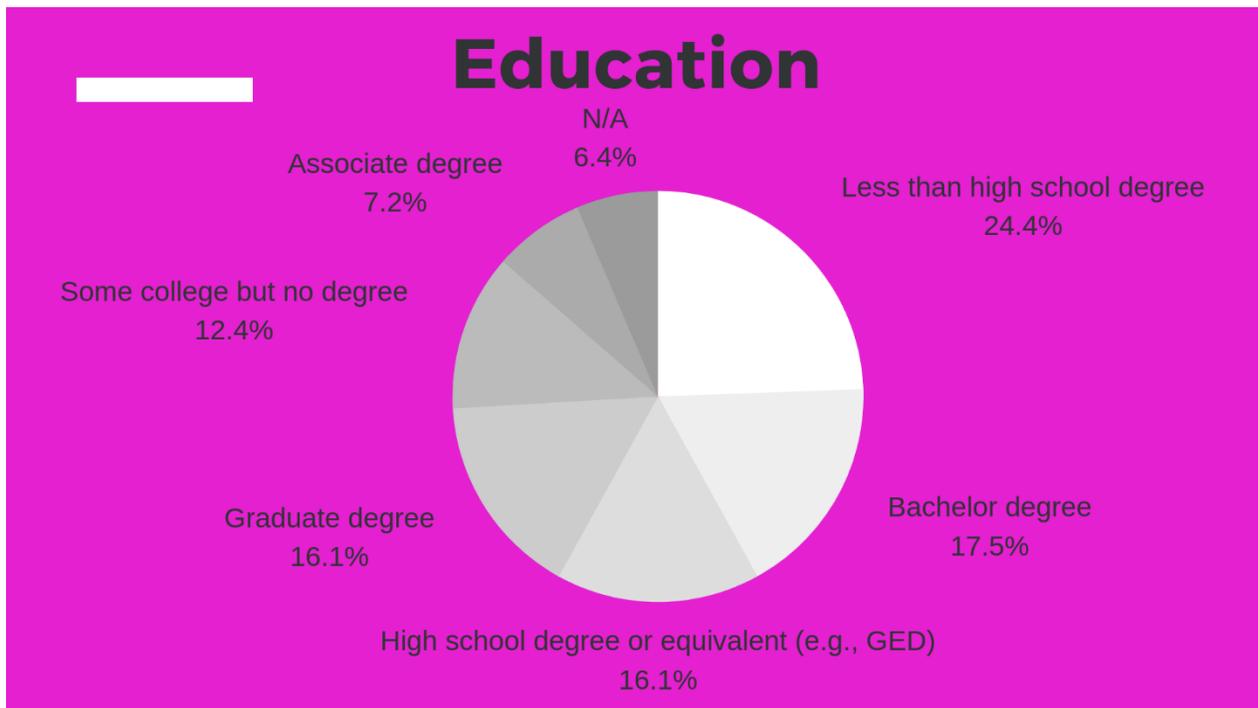


Exhibit 6 – Foster care

24% of respondents had been or were currently involved in the foster care system.

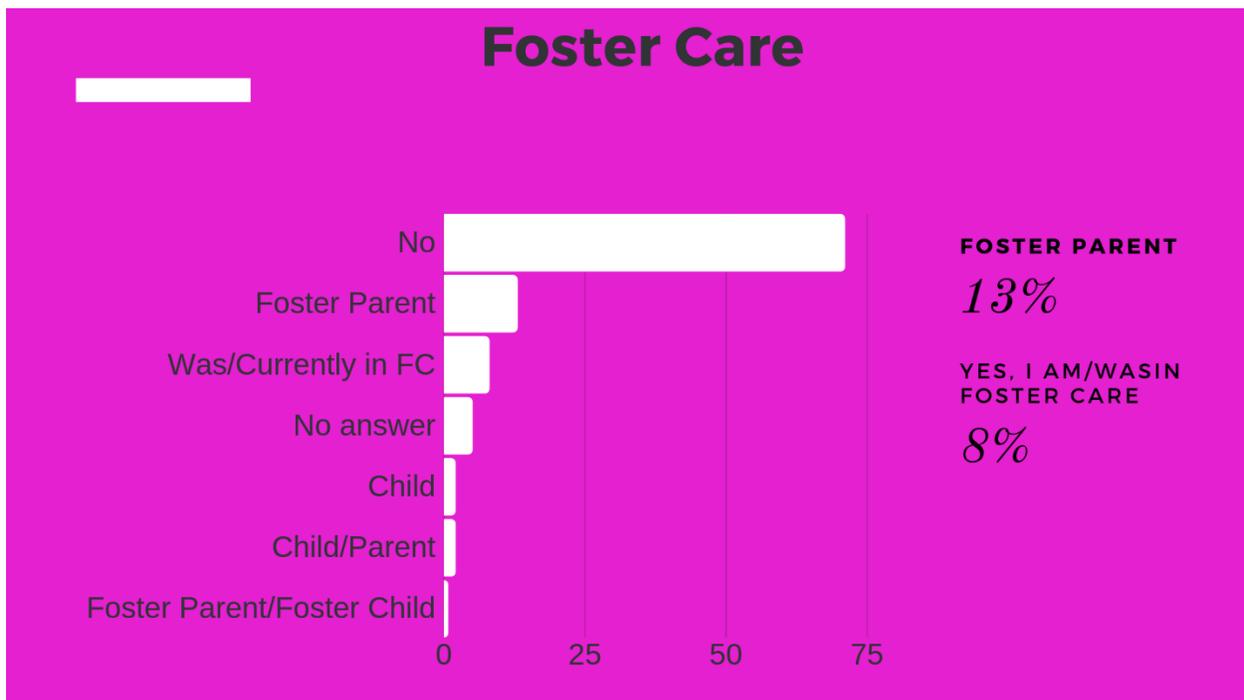


Exhibit 7 – Gender Identity
66% of respondents identified as female.

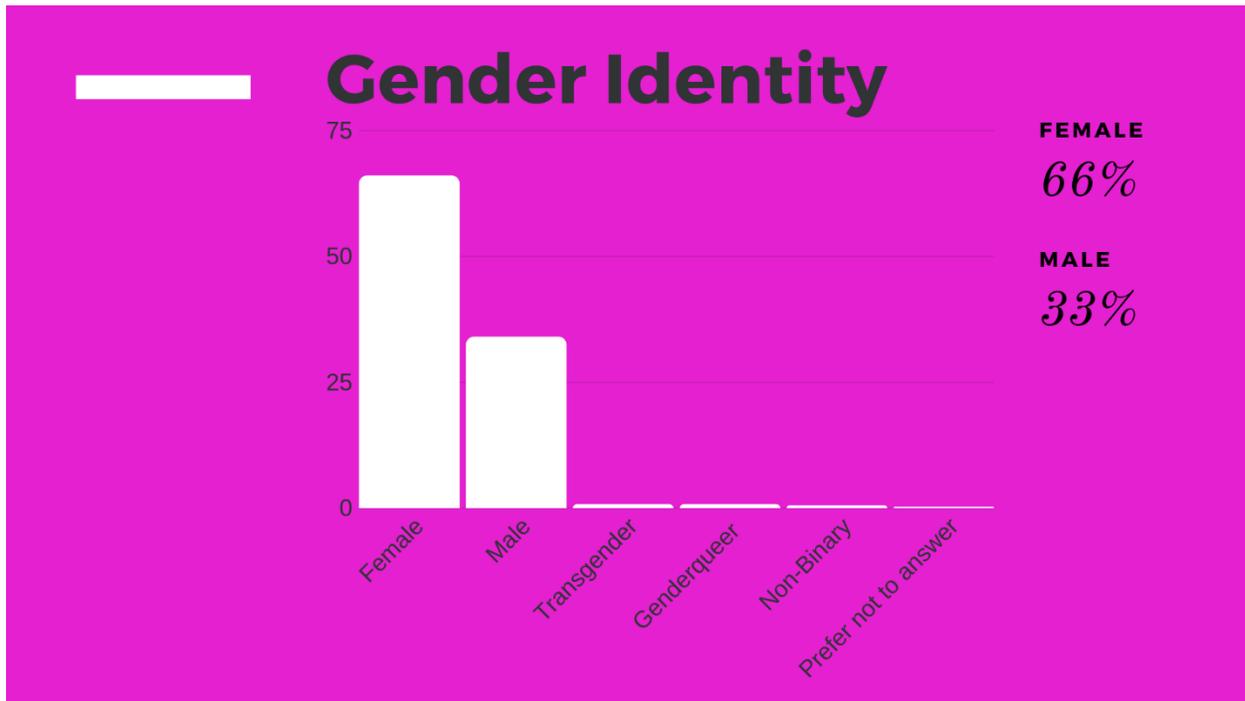


Exhibit 8 – LGBTQ+
19% of respondents identified as a LGBTQ+.

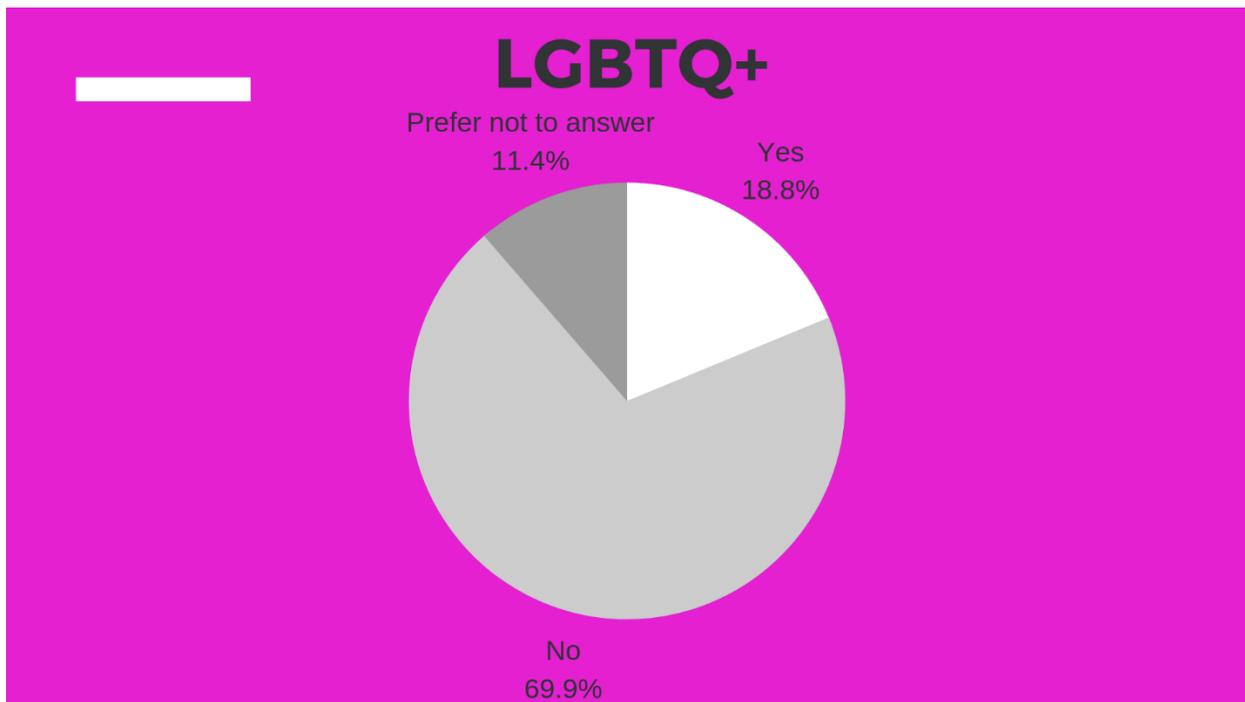


Exhibit 9 – Houselessness
27% of respondents had experienced houselessness.

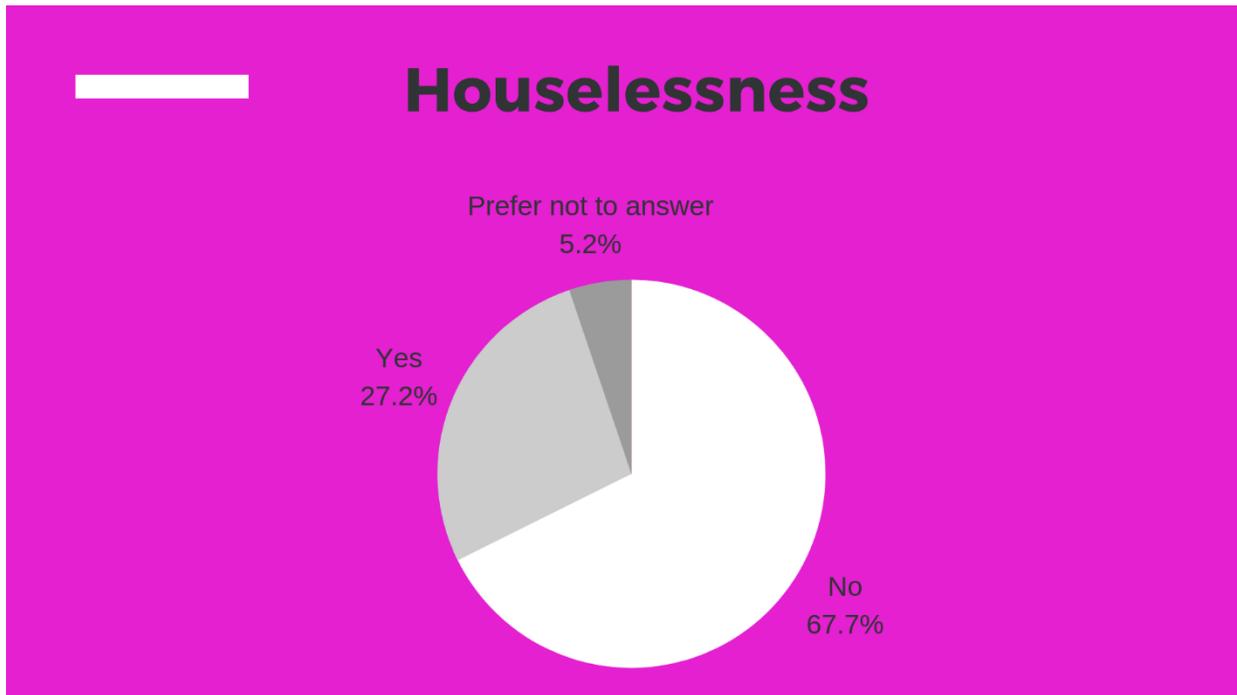


Exhibit 10 – Identity
67% of respondents identified as parent/caregivers.

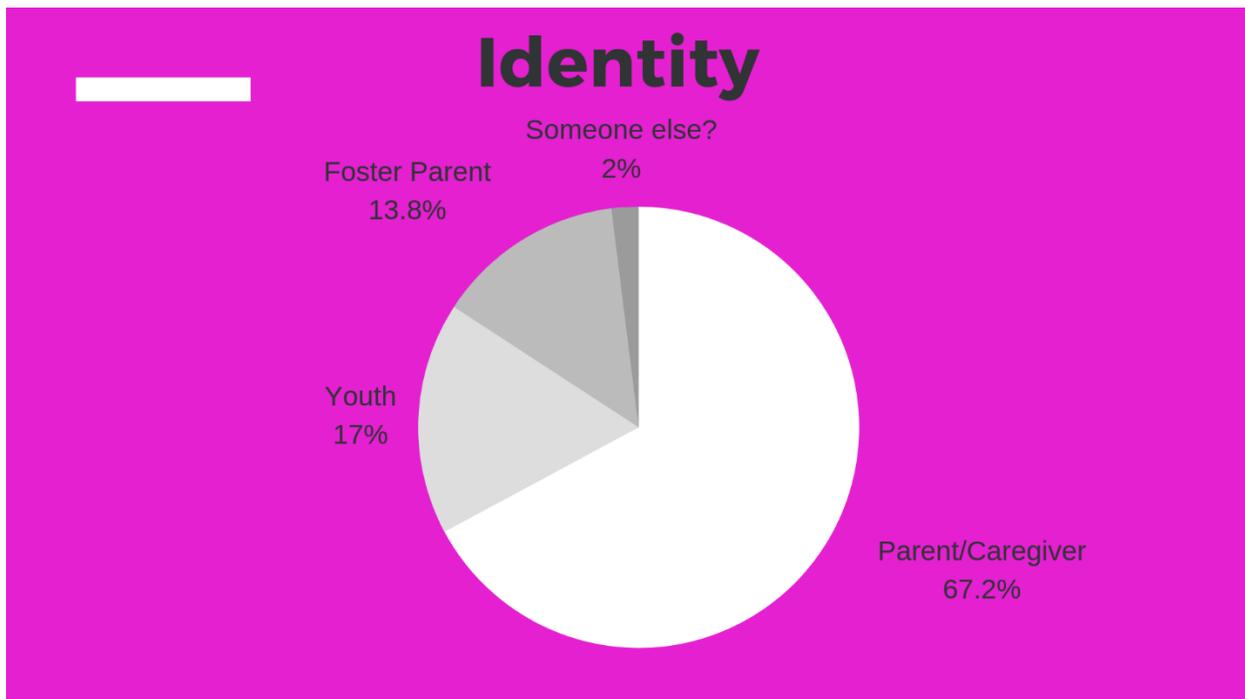


Exhibit 11 – Immigrant/Refugee
32% of respondents identified as an immigrant/refugee.

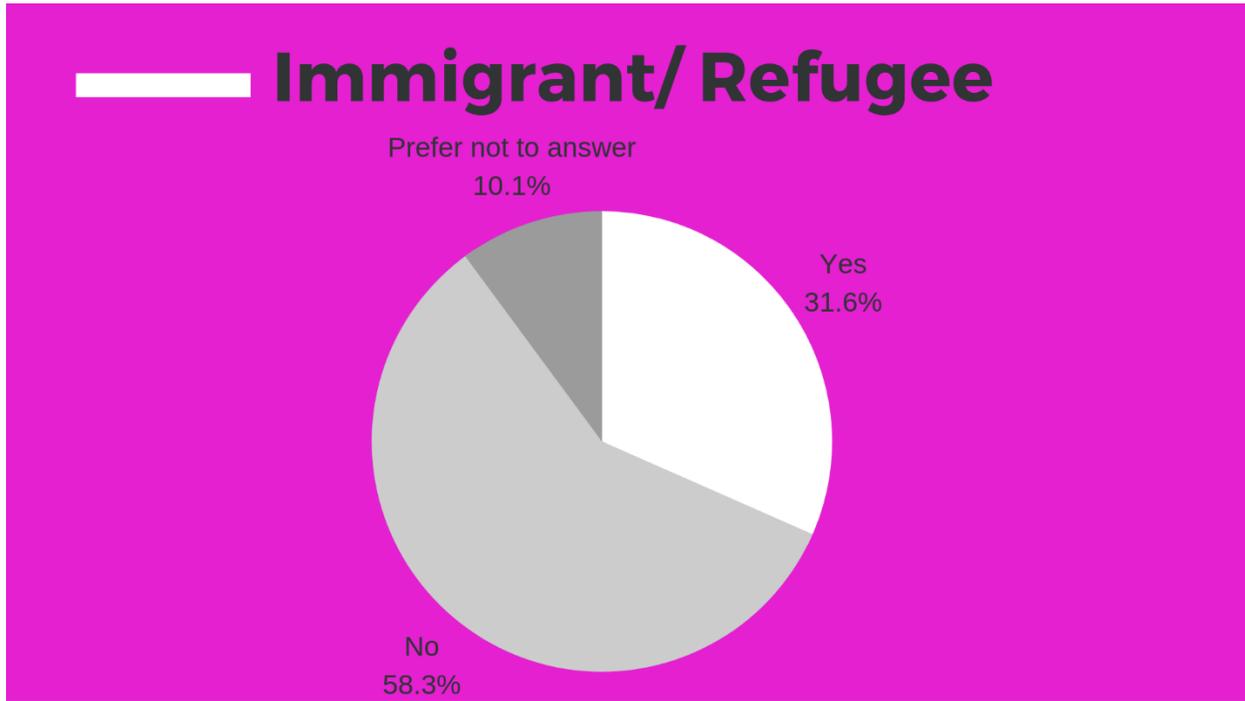


Exhibit 12 – Income
49% of respondents earned less than \$50,000 per year.

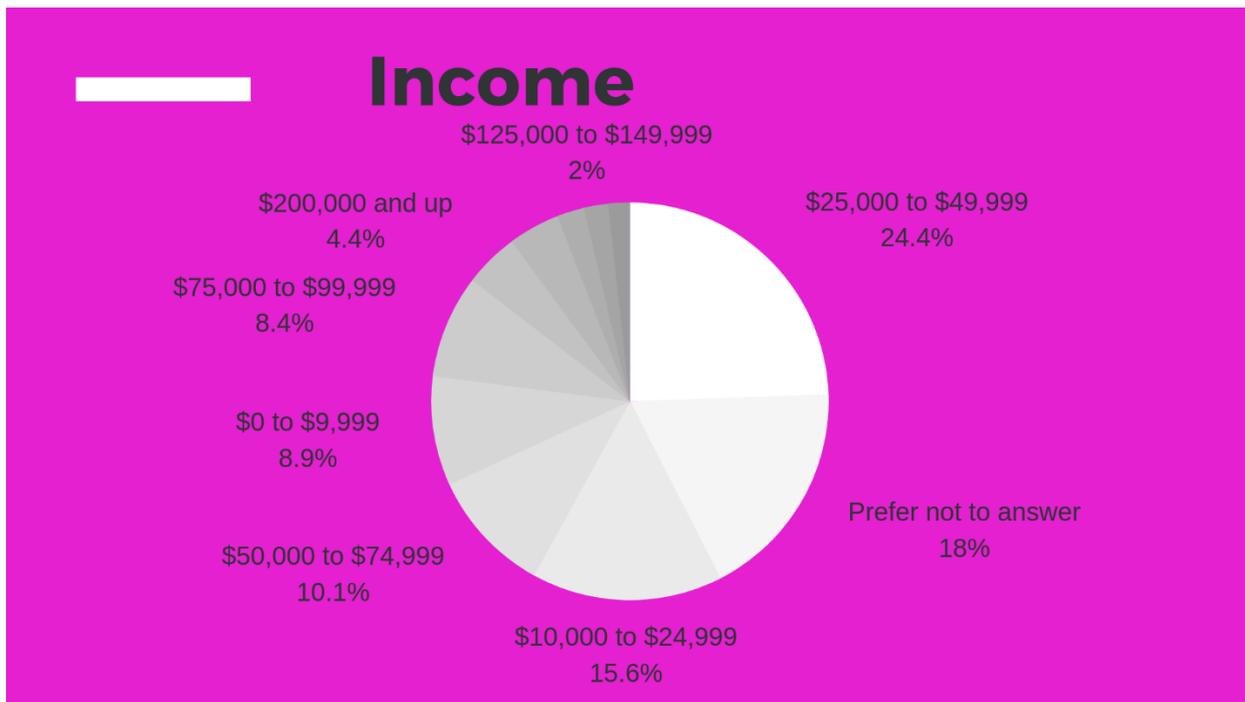


Exhibit 13 – Language
52% of respondents primarily spoke English at home.

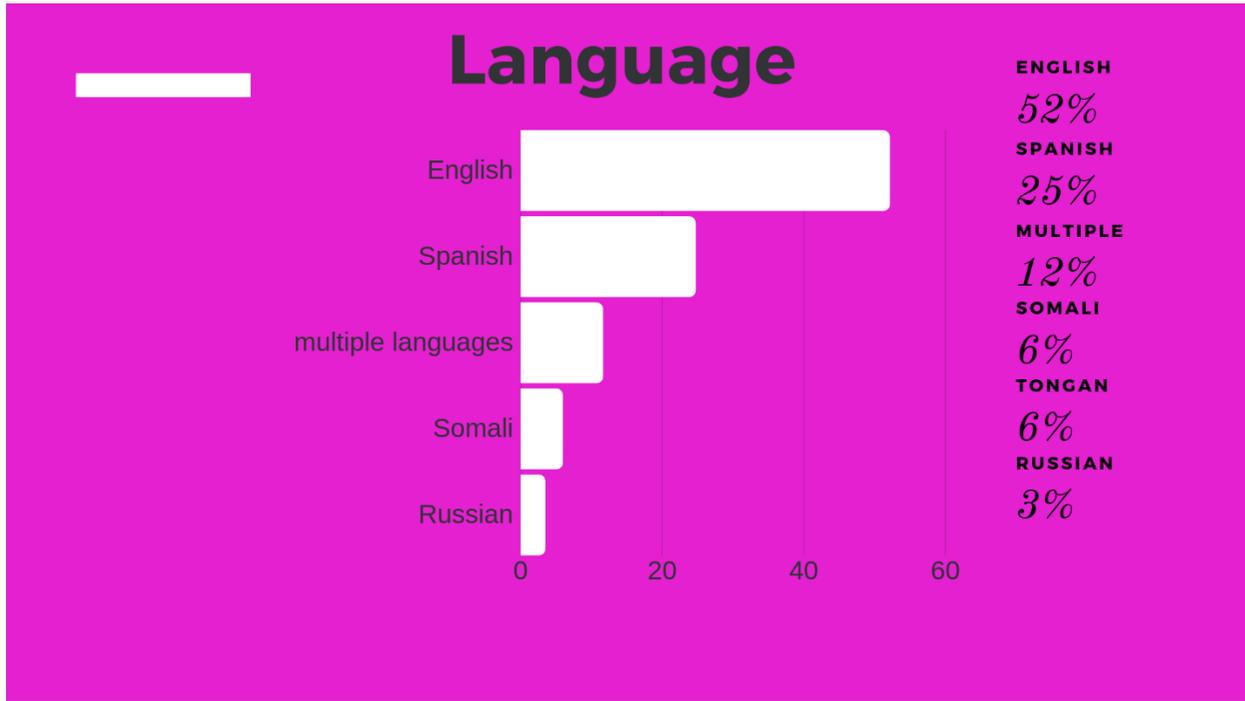


Exhibit 14 – Children with Disabilities
20% of respondents had a child with a disability.

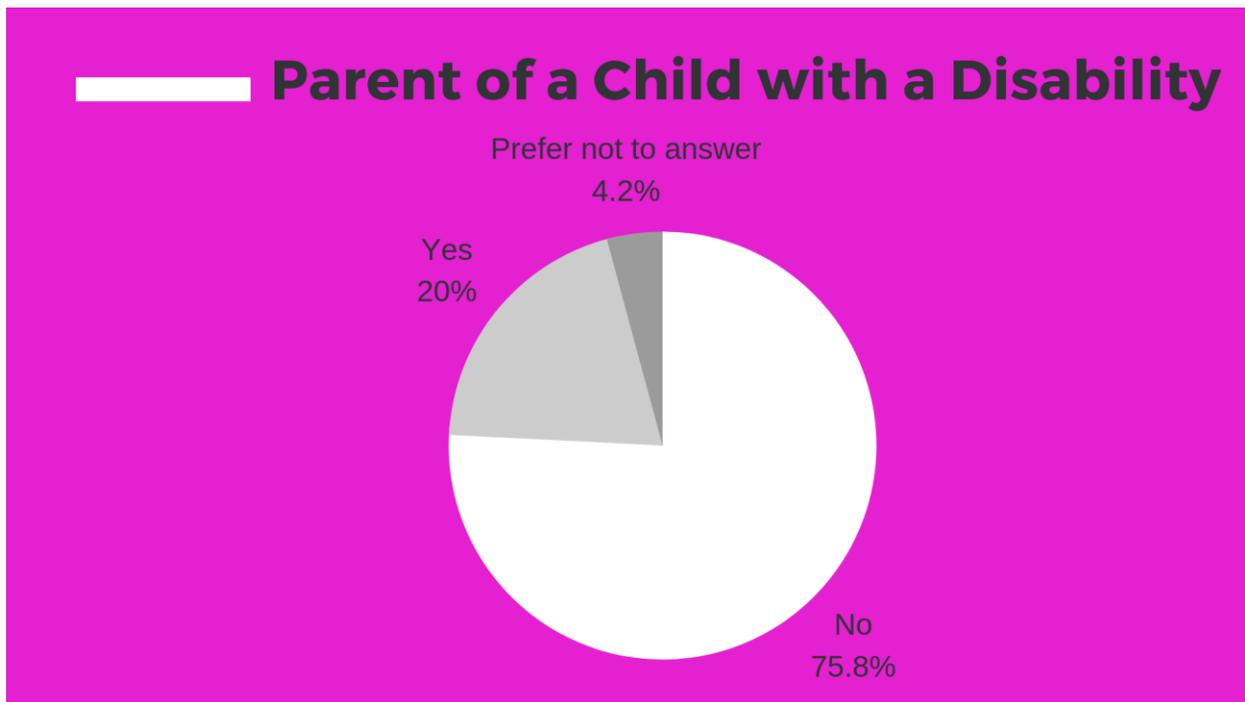
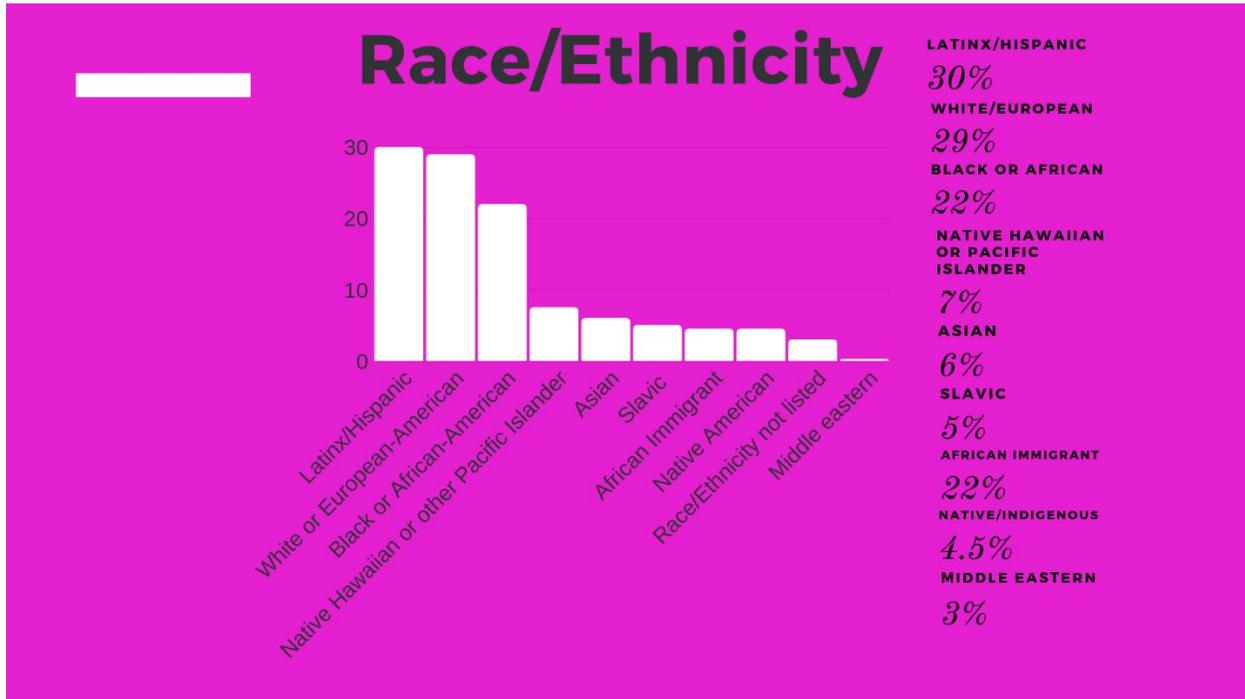


Exhibit 15 – Racial/Ethnic Identity
 Respondents indicated their racial/ethnic identity by checking all that apply.



PROVIDER SURVEY RESULTS

Ninety-five- people responded to the service provider survey. The following are the demographic findings for the provider survey respondents.

Exhibit 16 – Age

44% of providers were aged 30–39.

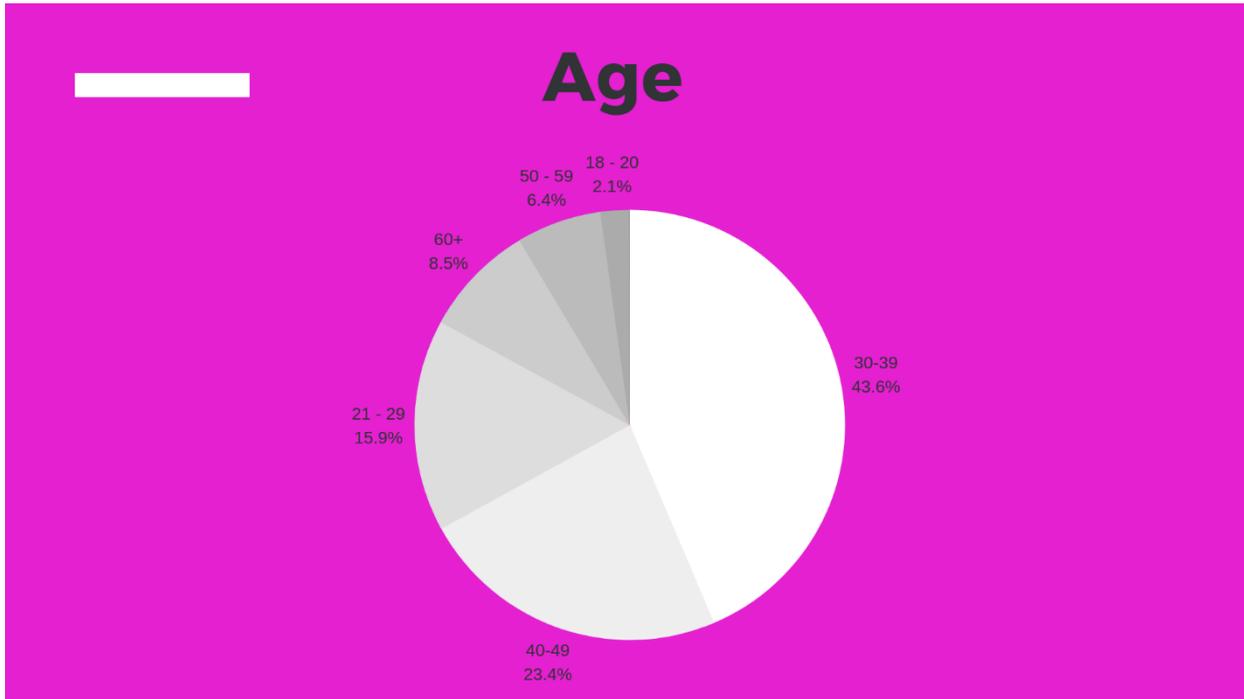


Exhibit 17 – Gender Identity
88% of providers identified as female.



Exhibit 18 – Immigrant/refugee
10% of providers identified as an immigrant/refugee.

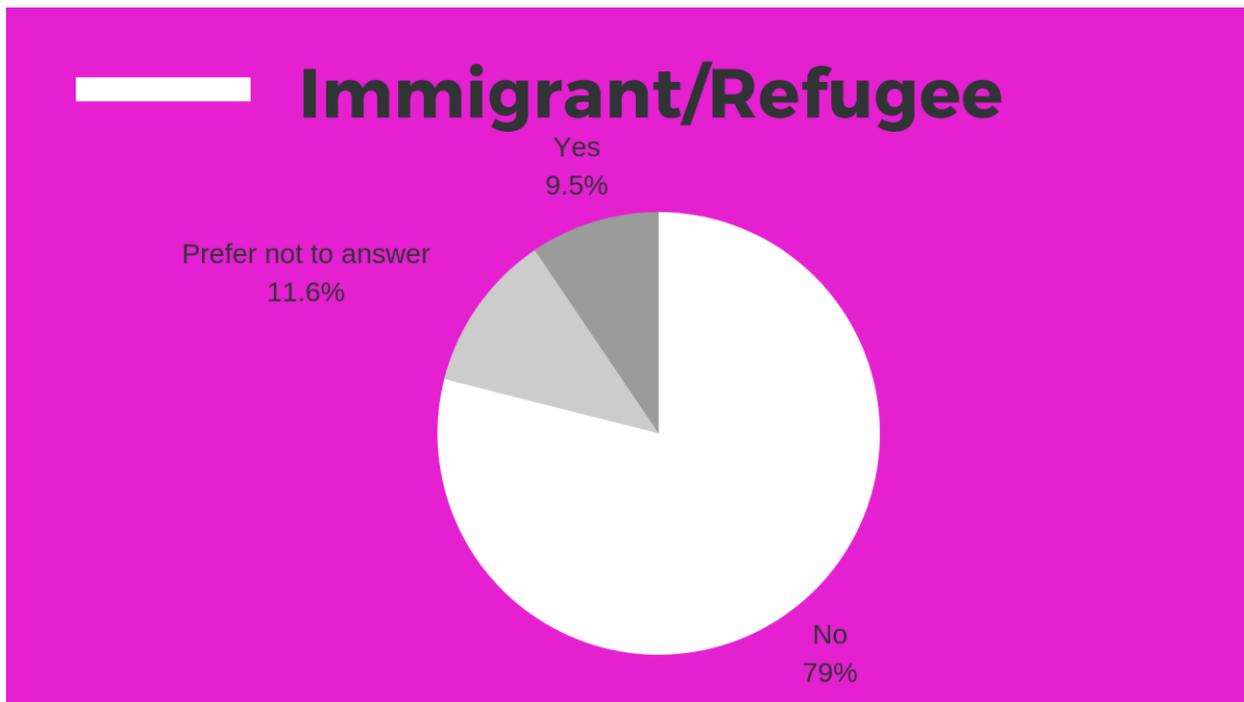


Exhibit 19 – Language
 81% of providers primarily spoke English at home.

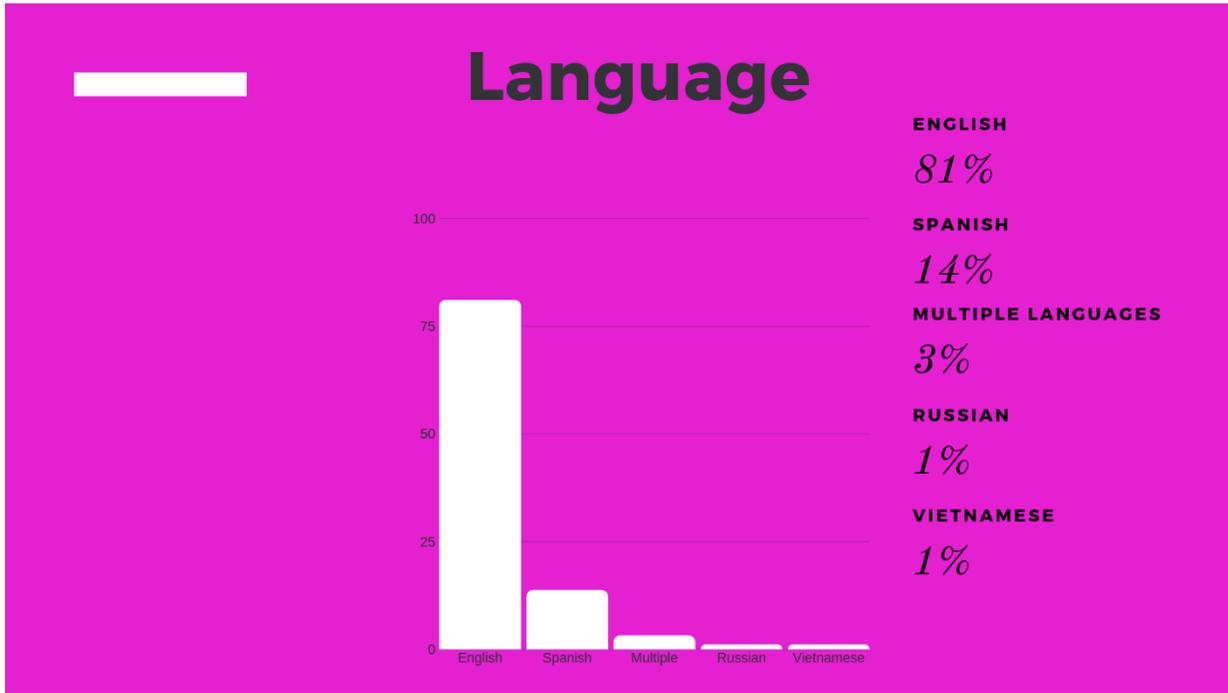


Exhibit 20 – Race/Ethnicity
 Providers indicated their racial/ethnic identity by checking all that apply.

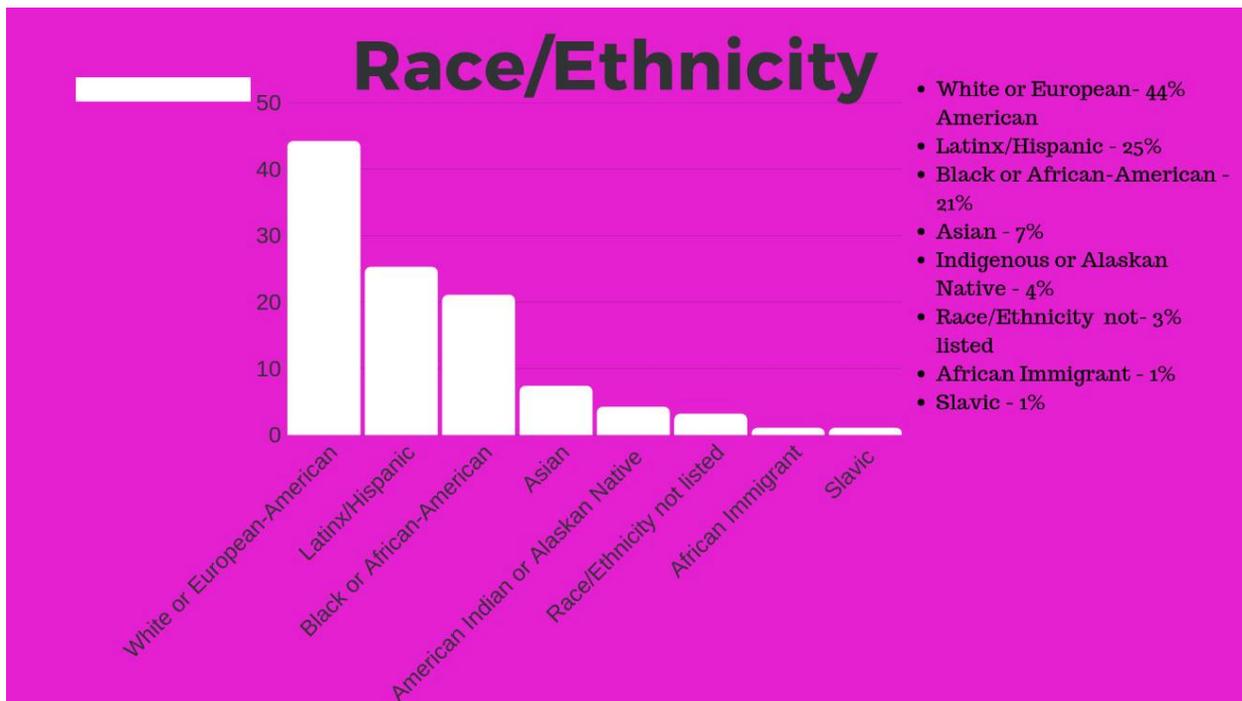


Exhibit 21 – Familiarity with the Portland Children’s Levy
44% of providers were somewhat familiar with the Levy.

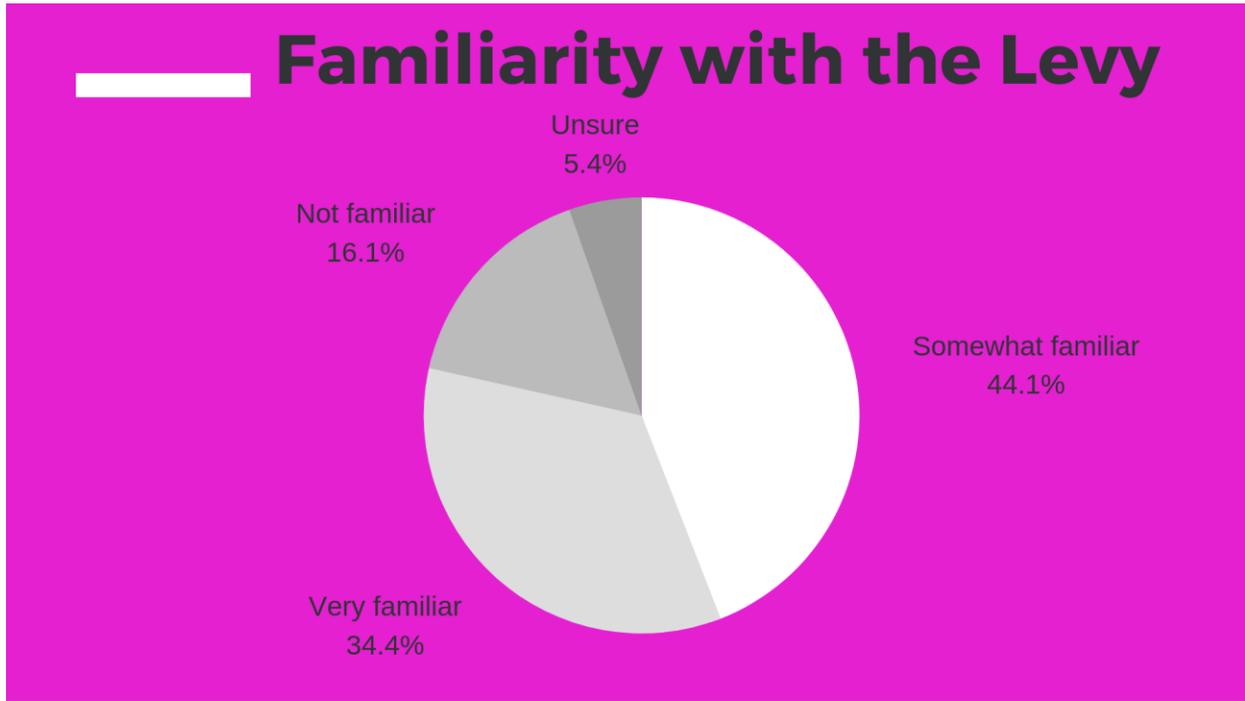


Exhibit 22 – Levy Funding
52% of providers received Levy funding

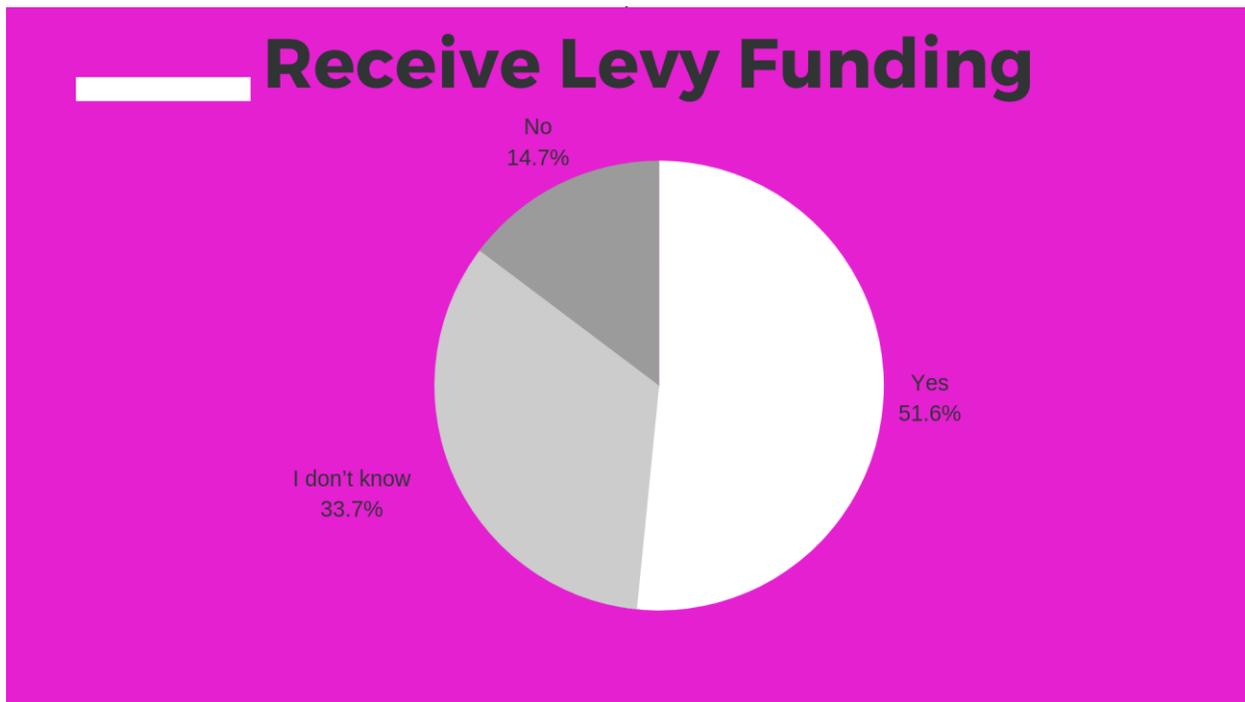


Exhibit 23 – Type of Services Provided
 62% of services provided were early childhood focused.

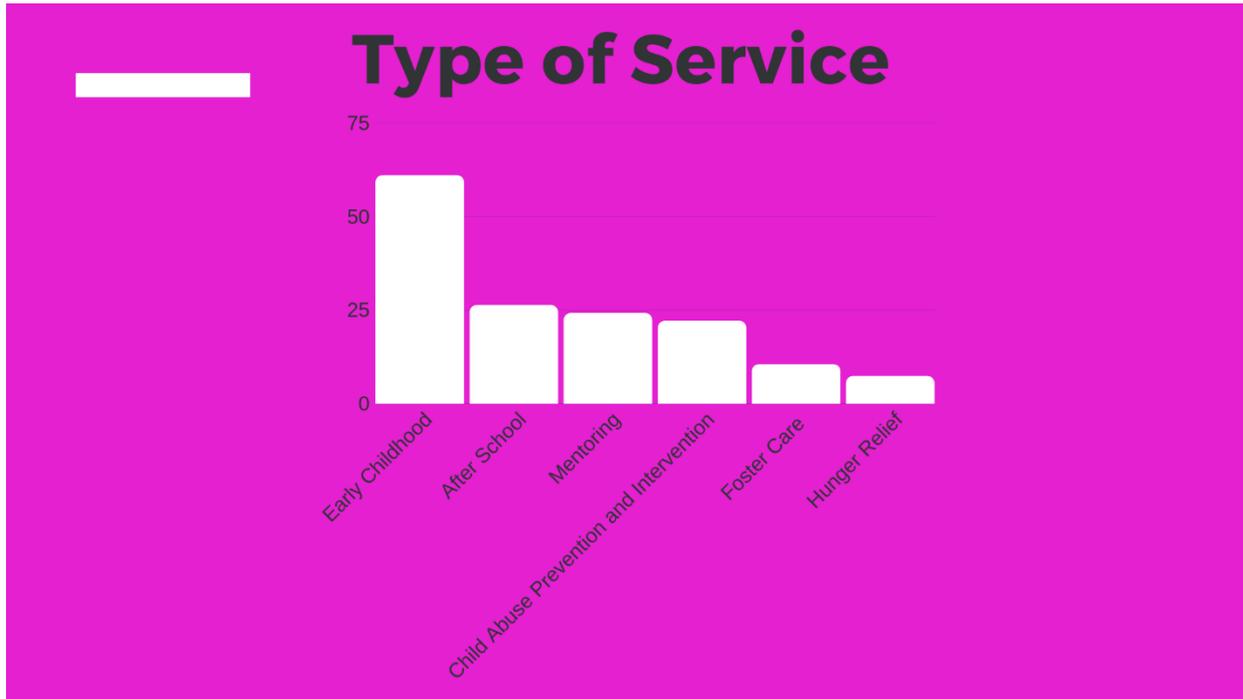
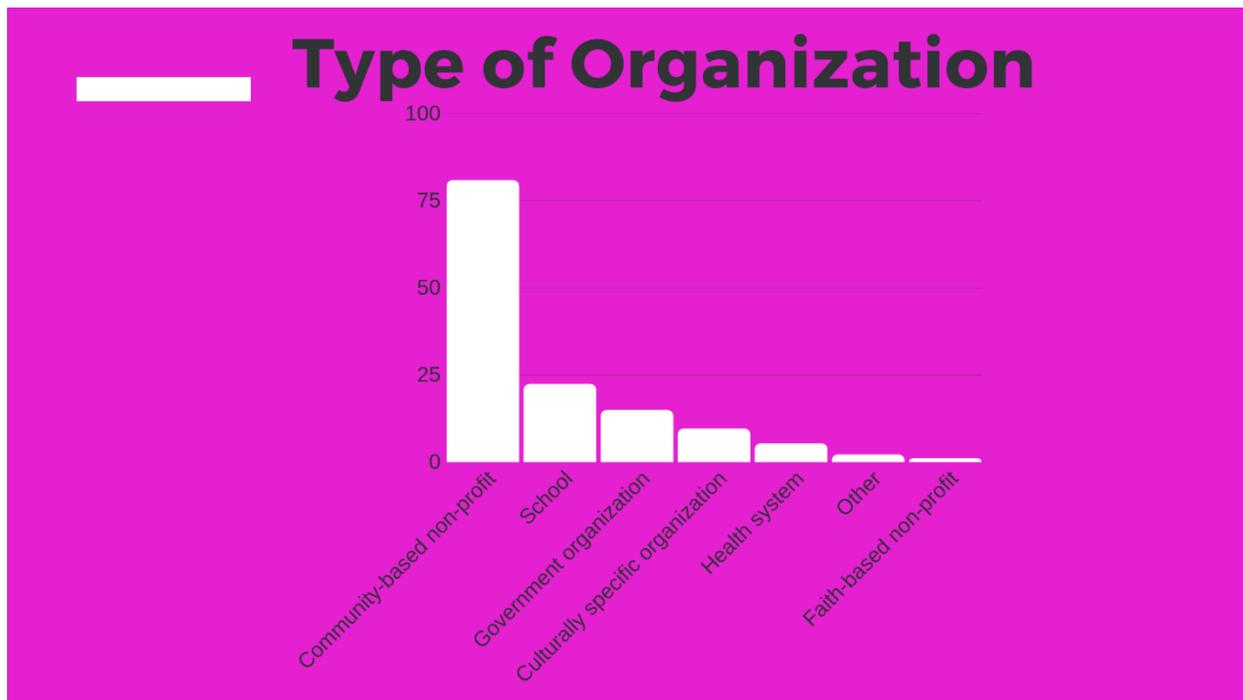


Exhibit 24 – Type of Organization
 Providers indicated the type of organization they work for by checking all that apply.



FOCUS GROUPS

We invited 85 people from survey participants to participate in 8 focus groups. 2 youth groups and 6 adult parent groups. We worked to select people who listed the most diverse identities within identified ethnicities in order to maximize perspective. Focus groups were centered in the following lenses:

- Parent-provider group—Includes parents who are service providers.
- Foster care impacted—Parents who were in foster care as a child, foster parents, parents who have children in the foster care system and parents impacted by various combinations of all 3.
- Disability impacted—Parents who are impacted by disability and/or have a child impacted by disability or both.
- 2 Spanish speaking parent groups with diverse identities.
- Immigrant/Refugee—Parents who identified as immigrant/refugees.

We did not center focus groups on race. Assuming race or ethnicity is the primary distinguishing factor may cause us to overlook other critical factors such as income, education, age, gender, culture, or language. In focus group interviews where ethnicity or race is the primary factor for inclusion in a group, then there is a tendency for participants to identify race or ethnicity as the dominant issue and for other factors to become subordinate. However, when race or ethnicity is mixed in the focus group, the discussion becomes more nuanced and complex. A strategy to consider is to use several different groupings of participants. Some groups might be based on racial or ethnic categories, but then others might be based on geography, income, age, or other factors. This allows the researcher the opportunity to compare and contrast the results (Krueger, 2014).

FINDINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Five hundred parents, youth, foster parents, service providers and general community members were asked their opinion about the most needed services for children and families and to identify community solutions to improve outcomes for children and families under the 6 program areas and Levy--wide. Survey questions included what services are needed to promote kindergarten readiness, successful after-school and mentoring programs, help prevent child abuse, needed supports and identified barriers for parent and children impacted by foster care and the best methods to relieve hunger in diverse communities. (See Appendix F and Appendix H for specific questions). We based our recommendations on the community survey results by highlighting the top 3 community solutions for each question asked.

Provider Survey and Focus Groups

To arrive at service provider and focus group findings and recommendations, we carefully read through each provider statement and gave each statement a code or multiple codes. For example: If a provider wrote "Families need access to transportation, food, and services that are

no/low cost.” The codes that were given would include “Transportation, Food, Low/no cost.” Once all of the data was coded, we identified emerging themes based on frequency of codes. After themes were identified, we presented community solutions that fell under each of the emerging themes. Example: If the questions discussed how to get food to families in need and the code was transportation, we included all community solutions that were found under codes listed for that specific question such as, “Invest in mobile food pantries.” (See Appendix G for frequency of mentions and provider responses.)

Key Findings

After completing the community survey, provider survey and focus group analysis, we looked at themes that emerged through all 3 streams of community input, for example, culturally responsive services was a major theme that occurred in all three strands of community input. The following charts and summaries represent the findings from each strand of community engagement including the community survey, the provider survey, focus group feedback; common themes and highlights between all 3 strands; and community solutions to identified challenges.

LEVY--WIDE FINDINGS

ACCESS

70% of participants from the community survey indicated that they want access to high quality programs with the following qualities:

- Flexible hours of operation, no/low cost, with food/snacks/transportation provided.
- Adequate funded programs that will attract and retain highly qualified staff and in turn help make children feel emotionally safe and supported by adults.
- Access to community resources.
- Support for communication between families and providers.

EQUITY

"This one is hard because I think it's more about changing the perceptions of society and not necessarily the services" (service provider).

- Invest in programs that promote culturally responsive and reflective mentors, staff and support for families from diverse backgrounds, including translation services, staff who represent diverse cultures, an understanding of norms related to school success in families' home countries and communities, and classes to empower parents to help their students.
- Communities of color should not just be involved in the planning process for services, but should lead, deliver, assess and evaluate services.
- Parents, providers, and youth have a strong desire to become more involved in community decision making with regards to the Portland Children's Levy and the city of Portland more generally.
- People of color are needed in city of Portland leadership positions, including in the Portland Children's Levy. The organizations that the Portland Children's Levy funds also need people of color in leadership positions.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Support staff training that promotes cultural inclusivity, racial equity, and trauma-informed care.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

In your opinion, what is the most important characteristic of high-quality services for children and families?

25% Access (flexible hours of operation/no cost/Transportation provided)

22% Communication between program and family

22% Culturally responsive and culturally relevant programs

In order for children and youth to succeed, the Levy should invest in organizations that: (Choose 1 answer)

23% Listens to, and are responsive to, the voices of the youth/families they serve

20% Engage with parents and students when building policies that affect them

18% Have consistent staff relationships with youth and families

What needs to happen so that resources can be accessed equitably?

27% Hire people from my community/my culture

23% Include me/my family in the planning process

14% Have the community allocate the resources

PROVIDER SURVEY FINDINGS

Characteristics of services that would help to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in wellbeing and school success include:

- Adequate funding of programs will attract and retain highly qualified staff and in turn help make children feel emotionally safe and supported by adults.
- Assistance accessing high quality, safe programs that provide transportation, food/snacks, translation services and access to community resources.
- Culturally responsive and reflective mentors, staff and support for families from diverse backgrounds, including translation services, staff who represent diverse cultures, an understanding of norms related to school success in families' home countries and communities, and classes to empower parents to help their students.
- Staff training that promotes cultural inclusivity, racial equity, decolonizing of curriculum and classroom expectations and trauma-informed care.
- Communities of color should not just be involved in the planning process for services, but should lead, deliver, assess and evaluate services.
- In order for resources to be accessed equitably families need accountability and assessment of programs to adequately identify community needs, culturally inclusive practices, building community relationships between lawmakers and enforcers and adequate financial support for programs.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- Parents, providers, and youth have a strong desire to become more involved in community decision making with regards to the Portland Children’s Levy and the city of Portland more generally.
- Regular and ongoing community involvement (e.g., focus groups) in city activities—and follow-up from the city on those conversations—is highly desired.
- People of color are needed in city of Portland leadership positions, including in the Portland Children’s Levy. The organizations that the Portland Children’s Levy funds also need people of color in leadership positions.

FUNDING ALLOCATION

405 Community survey respondents were asked to rank which program area should receive the most funding out of the 6 Levy program areas. Early Childhood was ranked highest to receive priority funding out of the 6 Levy program areas with a ranking of 4.29. Hunger Relief ranked 2nd with a ranking of 3.71; Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention ranked 3rd with a score of 3.57; After School ranked 4th at 3.25; Mentoring ranked 5th with a score of 3.11 and Foster Care ranked 6th with a score of 3.07. Service providers were not asked this question.

The Levy’s total annual funding must be divided among 6 program focus areas. Please rank the below program focus areas in order of which should receive most funding, 1 being the area that should receive the most funding, 6 being the area that should receive the least funding.

4.29	Early Childhood
3.71	Hunger Relief
3.57	Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention

Note. Ranking questions calculate the average ranking for each answer choice, so you can determine which answer choice was most preferred overall. The answer choice with the largest average ranking is the most preferred choice.

COMMUNITY SURVEY, PROVIDER SURVEY, AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Below represents the findings and highlights from all 3 strands of the community engagement process about the most needed services and community solutions for children, youth and families under the Levy’s 6 program areas and Levy--wide. Participants were asked questions about barriers to accessing services, the most needed services, and resources that can be leveraged within the community to meet those needs. The following findings represent the findings from and highlights of all 3 strands of community input.

EARLY CHILDHOOD FINDINGS

CULTURALLY RELEVANT SERVICES

- Bicultural and bilingual home visitors, childcare caregivers, and staff at levy-funded programs are needed.
- Providers said that information about culturally-specific services needs to be centralized in one accessible location.

HIGH QUALITY CHILDCARE AND PRESCHOOL

- One Spanish-speaking parent said finding quality child care is, “our biggest challenge.” More affordable options that meet the State of Oregon’s teacher/student ratio, last the entire work day, and have caring staff are needed. Providers noted that spots in Head Start are limited.
- New immigrants may not know the importance of early childhood education because it is not offered in their home countries.
- Providers suggested that preschools organize parent engagement events to promote community before school begins.
- Teachers and support staff need training on the impact of trauma and abuse on children’s brain development and on appropriate disciplinary practices for young children.
- Promote early literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), speech therapy, and occupational therapy at preschools.

FAMILY AND PARENT SUPPORT

Parents are tired and overworked. One youth said, “Parents need more help than children themselves.” Specifically, families and parents need:

- Wraparound services including transportation for kids to and from daycare, behavioral health services, job training programs, assistance with immediate needs (e.g., clothing), and respite care.
- Parent support groups to get questions answered and find out about services.
- Education on child development, including how trauma and abuse impact children’s brain development, and parenting in general.
- Home visiting programs that support new parents, connect families to services, support domestic violence victims, and advise on preventative healthcare.
- Inpatient drug treatment programs for parents where their children can stay with them.
- Assistance with electronic communication or electronic paperwork submission for parents who are unable to access the internet.
- Programs should make sure to include men (e.g., fathers) in communications with families.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Promote kindergarten readiness through:

- Increased parent-child events at community centers and libraries (e.g., book babies).
- Increased parent interaction with school before child begins Kindergarten (e.g., holding community events at school).
- Improved connection to medical providers so young children's development, vision and behavior can be monitored.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

More effective dissemination about early childhood services is needed. Suggestions to connect community members to services include:

- Bilingual and bicultural ambassadors who visit communities regularly.
- DHS Self-Sufficiency and Child Welfare referring children directly to early childhood programs.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Resources for kids with disabilities are, as one provider said, "severely lacking."
- Preschool children who are not successful in therapeutic classrooms have no place to go until kindergarten because there are no day treatment programs for young children.

SUPPORT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE PROVIDERS

Service providers have specifically requested support with:

- Developing forums where service providers can exchange information and support each other.
- Ensuring union representation of direct service providers.
- Allowing service providers to report concerns about service provision directly to funders rather than mediating their voices through overworked supervisors.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES

- Families are impacted by systemic barriers such as racism, poverty, and historical trauma. Indirect service providers, such as judges, family law professionals, and child protective services, need education about the impacts these barriers have on child development and mental health.
- Immigrant parents are afraid to engage with state agencies because of attitudes towards immigrants in the current political climate.
- Providers noted that social service systems are complex and confusing for parents to navigate.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Participants were asked 6 questions regarding the most needed services for children and families. The tables below represent the findings.

I think the biggest way that the Children's Levy can help children be ready to start kindergarten is:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 40% | Help with access to affordable, high-quality preschools (small child to caregiver/teacher ratios/follow state standards) |
| 30% | Programs supporting families, child care providers and teachers in teaching their child and guiding the child's behavior. |
| 13% | Access to information to prepare parents for important milestones (when to start school, programs available, child wellness check-ups, available resources) |

I think parents and families of young children in my community would like support with:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 36% | Information about child development |
| 35% | Choosing or paying for childcare of their choice |
| 32% | Access to education classes about parenting |

To best prepare children for success once they enter Kindergarten, the most important thing for an early childhood childcare setting to offer is:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 33% | Teachers and support staff who are trained to stay up to date on current research about brain development to provide a challenging, nurturing, supportive environment for young children |
| 27% | Planned learning activities with materials appropriate to children's age and development |
| 19% | Frequent, positive, warm interactions among adults and children |

When service providers conduct home visits with families with young children, it is most important that the person is someone who:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 40% | Speaks my language, understands my culture/values (culturally specific) |
| 22% | Offers resources to parents if there are concerns or needs (for the parents or the child; e.g. diapers, clothing, food) |
| 12% | Helps families understand typical development for a baby or young child |

If home visits happen, I think the person who visits a family's home should:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 32% | Have experience working with families |
| 32% | Understand and respect other cultures and identities |
| 14% | Share the culture or identity of the people they serve |

I think parents and families in my community want child care (either for children under age 5 or for children in elementary school) that:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 25% | Is available around working parents' schedules |
| 22% | Is culturally responsive, culturally relevant, or is in their language |
| 21% | They choose for their child and is no or low cost |

PROVIDER FINDINGS

- Service providers were asked questions about services that are critically needed to promote kindergarten readiness. Major themes include: culturally responsive programs and services, kindergarten readiness early literacy programs, access to high quality preschools/kindergarten transition programs, parent education and support, improved quality of services (e.g., less staff turnover), wraparound services, social emotional support.
- Resources that could be leveraged to promote kindergarten readiness include: engaging the community, parents and family, community and school based programs and providing access to preschool/early transition programs.
- Barriers and gaps to accessing early childhood services include: access (cost/income guidelines, availability/open slots), awareness of programs, language barriers, transportation, lack of parent engagement/understanding the importance of preschool, communication between service providers and families, not enough individualized support, professional development for staff, more culturally responsive staffing services, early literacy programs, and social emotional support services.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- Culturally relevant services and supports are needed including bicultural and bilingual home visitors and culturally-specific representatives at levy-funded programs. Providers indicated that information about culturally-specific services needs to be collected and centralized in one accessible location.
- Finding affordable, high-quality childcare and preschool that lasts the entire work day is, as one participant said, "our biggest challenge." New immigrants may not know the importance of early childhood education because it is not offered in their home countries.
- Information about early childhood services needs more effective dissemination. Bilingual and bicultural ambassadors who visit communities regularly were suggested as a method to distribute information about services.
- Parents are tired and overworked and need parent support groups to get questions answered, find out about services, and find respite. One youth said, "Parents need more help than children themselves."
- Parents need education on how trauma and abuse impact children's brain development.
- Resources outside of the system, such as stable families supporting families in need and parents passing down information to other parents, are useful.
- Parents need help with transportation to and from daycare and other early childhood resources.

AFTER SCHOOL FINDINGS

ACADEMIC SUPPORT/HOMEWORK HELP

Students need support with:

- Learning academic skills to catch up (reading, writing, math skill building) and tutoring.
- Liaisons between parents and schools to help parents support their children academically.
- Access to Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM).
- Literacy programs.
- Low staff-to-student ratios.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP BUILDING/BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

The Levy needs to invest in programs and services that provide access to:

- Healthy relationship building, support, and/or help with behavior.
- Programs that help students create a sense of physical and emotional safety/sense of belonging.
- Exposing students to new opportunities.
- Helping providers identify learning disabilities and other barriers to learning.
- Interactive games with family.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT/ENGAGING CLASSES AND SERVICES

- Some teachers do not understand diverse cultures and after-school and school curriculums are catered to White students. Youth expressed a desire for culturally relevant after-school classes, such as cooking East African food, and Tongan parents described a desire for culturally relevant sports (e.g., rugby) and other activities.
- Cultural programming (e.g., culturally specific dance, music, art, cooking, crafts) is needed.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Families would like their students to have access to:

- Recreational / sports / exercise programs.
- Offer life skills training (e.g., finding a career, money management, cooking).

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Participants were asked 2 questions regarding the most needed services for children and families. The following tables represent the findings.

The most important way to promote academic success for children and youth is:

34%	Help students learn academic skills to catch up (reading, writing, math skill building)/provide tutoring to keep them on track
22%	Provide healthy relationship building, support, and/or help with behavior
19%	Have a liaison between parents and schools to help parents support their children academically

I think after-school programs should offer:

57%	Recreational / sports / exercise programs
43%	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)
40%	Cultural programming (e.g., culturally specific dance, cooking, crafts)

PROVIDER

- Service providers were asked about the most critical components of a constructive after-school program; comments include, access to high quality programs and trained staff, low student ratios with individualized support, safety, social emotional support, and transportation.
- Barriers to providing after-school programming that is safe, constructive, and promotes academic achievement include: Funding, inexperienced staff, understaffed programs, low provider wages, transportation, language barriers, partnerships between school and community, academic support, access to resources, early literacy, social emotional support, student disengagement, challenges with finding space for programming, support for staff training/professional development, staff turnover/burnout and systemic barriers.

FOCUS GROUPS

- Some teachers do not understand diverse cultures and after-school and school curriculums are catered to White students. Youth expressed a desire for culturally relevant after-school classes, such as cooking East African food, and Tongan parents described a desire for culturally relevant sports (e.g., rugby) and other activities.
- After-school programs should provide more robust academic support, offer life skills training (e.g., finding a career, money management, cooking), and provide opportunities in STEM, art, and music. After-school programs could also be more trauma-informed.
- Parents said that there is a dearth of after-school care, particularly in winter, and care ends before parents are finished with work. Transportation to after-school activities is also needed.

MENTORING FINDINGS

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

- Invest in programs that support youth with academic achievement and school success and Individualized support.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE/SHARED EXPERIENCE

One provider wrote that there is a “lack of truly culturally responsive programs that can serve a diverse group of young people effectively and programs where the staff look like and can relate to the people they are mentoring.” Invest in mentoring programs and services that provide youth with:

- Mentors who are men of color.
- Mentors who share an identity/experience with youth (racial, ethnic, religious, language, LGBTQIA).

RECREATIONAL/SPORTS/EXERCISE PROGRAMS

“Youth groups that promote not only academic/ educational activities but sport, cultural and recreational activities after-school are the best to engage the participation of youth.”

- Invest in mentoring programs that provide youth with recreation/exercise.

TRAINED AND EXPERIENCED MENTORS

One service provider wrote, “Staff are not trained to deal with trauma responses experienced by children.”

- Invest in programs who have mentors with training and experience in working with children and youth and provide support with professional development for mentors to provide support for families.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING/SUPPORT

Invest in programs that provide:

- Youth opportunities for new experiences.
- Social-emotional support.
- Support youth in a specific interest (science, art, music, etc.).
- Access to wraparound services.
- Mentor match support.

COMMUNITY BASED MENTORSHIP/REFERRALS

Invest in community-based youth services:

- Youth are finding mentors in community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, schools, and programs/services.
- Youth are finding mentors that are regular members of their community (neighborhood, school, faith community, etc.) that have relationships with their family/not paid for mentoring.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Participants were asked 2 questions regarding the most needed services for children and families. The following tables below represent the findings.

I believe the role of a mentor should be to:

34% Support youth with academic achievement and school success

20% Offer youth opportunities for new experiences

19% Support youth in a specific interest (science, art, music, etc.)

I think it is important that children and youth have mentors:

38% Who have training and experience in working with children and youth

24% Who are regular members of their community (neighborhood, school, faith community, etc.) that have relationships with their family/not paid for mentoring

18% Who share an identity with them (racial, ethnic, religious, language, LGBTQIA)

PROVIDER FINDINGS

- Critical components of quality mentoring programs include academic support, high quality and culturally responsive staff who are caring and have shared experiences with students, individualized support, social emotional support, referrals to community resources, program consistency, family engagement, ongoing staff training, low student ratios/individualized support and the opportunity to build relationships.
- Barriers and gaps to youth accessing quality mentoring services include awareness of programs, transportation, parent engagement, opportunities for relationship building, shame/stigma, staff professional development/training, availability and lack of funding for mentors, cultural and language barriers, trust and cost.
- Youth are connecting with mentors through youth groups, peers, community-based organizations), faith-based organizations/church, school referrals from teachers and counselors, Department of Human Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, word of mouth/outreach and youth employment programs.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- Youth described mentors who motivated them and held them accountable. More youth mentors are needed, especially mentors who are men of color.

- Providers commented that youth need mentors who are consistent and reliable. One provider said when he first started mentoring teenagers he was surprised at how little kids needed to thrive.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION FINDINGS

PARENT SUPPORT

“Programs that let children know that abuse is not okay. Hearing this from their community and elders. Parenting classes or support.” (Service Provider) Families specifically need:

- Parenting classes to educate about developmentally appropriate behavior, how to identify signs of potential abuse before abuse starts, US concept of abuse, body safety rules, and how to have conversations with their children about sexual abuse.
- Education about U.S. laws regarding physical abuse.
- Honest dialogue about abuse (e.g., with doctors).
- Parent meet-ups.
- Respite for parents.

PARENTING CLASSES

Parents are requesting access to:

- Training/classes around consent, body safety rules, and healthy boundaries.
- Parenting education classes focused on managing child behavior at different stages of development.
- Social-emotional education.
- Training/classes on how to identify signs of potential abuse before abuse starts.

WRAPAROUND SUPPORT SERVICES/SUPPORT PLAN

A service provider recommended that the Levy should invest in “Programs that promote empathy for families that are struggling, help for substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health.” Children and families specifically need programs that support:

- Addiction education.
- Connection to needed services and resources (e.g., housing, food, financial, medical care, jobs).
- Connections with hospitals at birth.
- Domestic violence supports and services.
- Mandatory inquiry.
- School involvement with safety checks.
- Support for making a plan to keep the family safe.
- Wraparound support in the community and school that is understanding of trauma.
- Mental health therapy/counseling for children, parents, and families.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Participants were asked 4 questions regarding the most needed services for children and families. The following tables below represent the findings.

What support do families need if there are concerns about physical abuse happening?

20%	Parenting education classes focused on managing child behavior at different stages of development
18%	Mental health therapy/counseling for children, parents and families
17%	Domestic violence supports and services

What support do families need if there are concerns about neglect happening?

24%	Mental health therapy/counseling for children, parents and families
20%	Connection to needed services and resources (housing, food, financial, medical care, jobs, etc.)
10%	The removal of systemic barriers that stand in the way of accessing resources

What support do families need if there are concerns about sexual abuse happening?

35%	Mental health therapy/counseling for children, parents, and families
22%	Wraparound support in the community and school that is understanding of trauma
17%	Support making a plan to keep the family safe

I believe that there would be less child sexual abuse in my community if:

28%	More adults, youth, and children understood when there is and is not consent (when it is ok to touch my/someone else's body when it is not ok to touch my/someone else's body)
21%	More adults, youth, and children understood body safety rules (ok touch and not ok touch)
13%	More adults, youth, and children understood healthy boundaries (ok sharing and too much sharing)

PROVIDER FINDINGS

- Essential services to prevent and address child abuse include addiction education, parenting classes and meet-ups, social-emotional education, mental health services, respite for parents, honest dialogue about abuse (e.g., with doctors), school involvement with safety checks, connections with hospitals at birth, transportation, culturally responsive and specific services, wrap around services, domestic violence prevention and intervention and food.
- Services that would help shift social norms that contribute to child abuse include domestic violence support, parent education on how to recognize the signs of abuse and have conversations about abuse with their children and family, respite care for parents to get a break, and wrap around supports.
- Barriers include access to resources, awareness of programs and resources available, cultural differences/beliefs, parent education, wrap around services, stress/poverty, shame/stigma, distrust, fear of being separated/isolated from families or being deported, and preventative and intervention services.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- There is cultural variation on how communities view physical discipline, that is, it is more accepted in some cultures than in others. Immigrant parents need education about U.S. laws regarding physical abuse. Sexual abuse is not talked about in some cultures, and families need education on how to discuss it.
- Youth are afraid to speak out about abuse because they do not want to be taken away from their families. Youth suggested providing “safe houses” where they can stay while Child Protective Services negotiates with parents.
- Provide behavioral health services to parents who abuse children, education on how abuse affects children, and alternative strategies to physical discipline.
- Identify signs of potential abuse before abuse starts. One provider said, “Rather than mandatory reporting, have mandatory inquiry.” School social workers, like those used in California, could be used to identify children at risk for abuse.

HUNGER RELIEF FINDINGS

A service provider cleverly stated that “Hungry kids can't learn.” Families are requesting:

ACCESS

- Access to healthy nutritious/culturally responsive food.
- Access to fresh food that meets dietary restrictions.
- Partnerships with farmers markets WIC, SNAP benefits.
- Providing fresh perishable foods such as eggs, milk, fruits, and vegetables.

MEAL PREP CLASSES

- Collaborations with local grocery stores that provide meal preparation and other classes.
- Training on budgeting, meal preparation, and smart shopping is desired.
- Offer food classes in the community, or fresh food vouchers.
- Fund food-related education programming for families and students.

FOOD BOXES/FOOD PANTRIES

- Food banks at schools and levy-funded programs, specifically (a) programs that send food home with children, (b) food pantries or food boxes available in schools, (c) food pantries or food boxes available in community places in my neighborhood, and (d) evening food banks.

TRANSPORTATION/MOBILE FOOD BANKS

- Mobile food banks or food banks that deliver.
- Food truck delivery service that brings food to certain locations consistently each month (i.e., school, Head Start, shelter, community center).
- Transportation stipend per family size.

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY BASED FOOD PROGRAMS

- One provider mentioned putting “food banks at every school.”
- “Families have access to the food they need not the best quality food. Schools are not offering healthy, nutritious food and they should be the ones promoting it.”
- School program (free breakfast, lunch, dinner).
- School gardens.
- Summer lunch program.

AWARENESS OF SERVICES

- Advertisements that normalize accessing food banks.

- Information communicated to families on how they can access services.
- Utilize 211 to promote food bank services.

SHAME/STIGMA/RELEASING PERSONAL INFORMATION

- “More focus on families at the lowest income—whatever resource is funded, ensure ALL other Portland Children’s Levy program staff have information on how to access it, advertise it and normalize it! Libraries, schools, WIC offices, County Health Clinics.”
- Easily accessible low proof barrier.
- Offer food gift cards to families in need so that they do not have to feel embarrassed getting food.
- Lowered income guidelines.
- Support programs that send food home from school with children, and programs that provide nutrition information to parents in their homes.
- Bringing food to certain schools/events.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Participants were asked 3 questions regarding the most needed services for children and families. The following tables below represent the findings.

Have you/someone in your household ever experienced food insecurity, that is, not knowing where your next meal is coming from, or involuntarily eating less than you need, on a regular basis, for a period of time lasting more than a month?

62% No

38% Yes

When families and children in my community are in need of nutritious and healthy food, the best way for them to get the food is:

51% Food pantries or food boxes available in community places in my neighborhood

42% School program (free breakfast, lunch, dinner)

39% Food pantries or food boxes available in schools

The main barriers to accessing programs that provide food are:

45% People do not know about programs that help with food

34% People do not feel comfortable with the process of getting the food (releasing personal information, documentation requirements e.g. proof of residency, proof of need, referral letter)

27% People lack transportation to get the food

PROVIDER FINDINGS

- Critical services that are needed to address food insecurity include: universal free school meals from preschool to high school; food banks that offer culturally-relevant, fresh food

that meets dietary restrictions; mobile food banks or food banks that deliver; urban gardens; create partnerships with local grocery stores that provide meal preparation and other classes; more food banks in general, and food banks at schools and levy-funded programs specifically; school based and summer lunch programs that send food home with children; and information and advertisements that build awareness and normalize accessing food banks.

- Barriers to accessing food resources include: transportation; lack of grocery stores in neighborhoods; shame of accessing food banks; lack of food banks that are open on the evenings and weekends; requirements to show identification when accessing food banks; overly burdensome paperwork requirements; religious and racial discrimination; lack of awareness of services; and not enough income to purchase healthy foods.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- Community-based food resources—such as urban gardens and neighborhood food pantries—are desired. Food distribution programs should purchase from farmers and businesses owned by people of color.
- Families praised school-based food programs such as free summer lunches, harvest shares distributed at after-school programs, and other free food giveaways at schools. Food giveaway events should not give away food before the scheduled start time, so food is still available for those who arrive on time.
- Youth enjoyed a program where students with a food handling card provided cooking classes for other students.
- While food banks are a valuable resource, food is all cans and is often expired. Educate food banks not to provide expired food. One parent said, “Don’t insult people with food you wouldn’t eat.”
- Food banks should also make sure they are open at hours convenient for community members. Employing diverse individuals and offering culturally relevant food may make diverse communities more comfortable accessing them.
- As neighborhoods gentrify, cheaper grocery stores leave and transportation to stores becomes necessary. Carrying groceries on public transportation is difficult. A mobile food bank, food banks that deliver, or programs like Urban Gleaners could help community members find food security.
- Training on budgeting, meal preparation, and smart shopping is desired. Families also may feel ashamed to access food resources and may need encouragement to do so.

FOSTER CARE FINDINGS

A service provider wrote a statement that expressed the frustrations of service providers:

Our foster care system desperately needs more foster care families, but also needs current and new families who are truly committed to supporting children and who have the knowledge and skills to do so. DHS needs to better leverage community providers and funders to address this. Our foster care youth are disproportionately Black and Brown, end up homeless, and are being trafficked. They are commonly are most vulnerable youth. We need ongoing, dedicated resources to support them. In addition, to more health families fostering youth, we need other intervention services, including shelters/transitional housing, and programs that support them as they are aging out of the system and forced to be on their own—often without family or other supports. There also needs to be LGBTQ+ specific resources, since this is another population disproportionately represented in foster care, homeless services and programs/services for youth being sex trafficked.

Foster families and children in foster care need support with:

CULTURALLY RELEVANT/RESPONSIVE

- Advocacy for children to be placed with foster parents from the same culture.
- “Better screening, higher engagement with communities of color so youth of color can be placed within their own community.”
- Culturally specific programming.

FOSTER PARENT/FAMILY SUPPORT/REUNIFICATION

“Strong reunification services with birth family, connection to steady mentor, access to culturally appropriate and enriching activities.”

- Counseling/mental health/substance abuse support.
- Including bio parents in the planning process.
- Opportunities offered to incarcerated fathers with children in foster care.
- Placing foster children as priority status in getting into Head Start/Early Head Start and other preschool programs.
- Programs connecting children to their parents during this separation. Safe visit places, prison bonding programs, more support for fathers working through foster care systems.
- Providing foster parents the ability to partner with biological parents.
- Removal prevention.

- Support groups for families and children, access to quality services, and more incentive to be a foster parent.
- Programs that support fathers in becoming primary caregivers.

CONSISTENT RELATIONSHIPS

- Programs that provide youth with a support network.
- Programs that support consistent relationships with supportive adults who are not related, as mentors.
- Family Sibling nights, full family involvement with community events or DHS collaboration.
- "Meet ups with children. Fun outings so all the Children who are there all have something in common." (Service Provider)
- Outreach to families to recruit more families that can do foster care and are capable and willing to create secure attachments with the children and commit to long-term foster care in order to reduce the number of placements for children.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

- Training on trauma-informed care and understanding children from diverse backgrounds for Foster Parents.

TRANSITION SUPPORT

Youth in foster care need:

- Financial literacy (money management skills).
- Guidance/support in making the transition between foster care and independent living.
- Higher education & vocational opportunities.

BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

Foster families need support with:

- Information about how to provide a safe, structured environment for children.
- Skills and training in managing behavior.
- Access to skills trainers for children who do not have adequate hygienic practices.
- Rapid referrals to behavioral health care for traumatized children.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Participants were asked 3 questions regarding the most needed services for children and families. The following tables below represent the findings.

I think the most important service children and youth in foster care need is:

30%	Counseling/support
28%	Consistent relationships with supportive adults who are not related, as mentors
17%	Guidance/support in making the transition between foster care and independent living

I think the most important thing that children and youth in foster care need to make a successful transition out of foster care is:

25%	A support network
18%	Higher education & vocational opportunities
13%	Financial literacy (money management skills)

I think the most important thing that foster parents need to support children and youth in their care is:

23%	Understand the impact of trauma on children
21%	Information about how to provide a safe, structured environment for children
20%	Skills and training in managing behavior

Note. 18% of respondents indicated “Support gaining cultural understanding when fostering across differences” as their top choice.

PROVIDER FINDINGS

- The most needed services for foster youth include counseling, consistent relationships, guidance during transition to foster care, academic support, foster parents who are culturally responsive, support for stability and communication between foster parents and bio parents, wrap around services, social emotional support, mentoring services and support building and maintaining relationships.
- Resources that can be leveraged to help children and youth in foster care succeed are access to wrap around services, mentors who are relatable, community based programs, and programs that support family reunification and healing from trauma.
- Barriers and gaps to accessing services include communication/partnership with DHS, overloaded caseworkers, stability (children continuously moved from home to home, missing school), social emotional supports, transportation, culturally responsive services, follow up and follow through on behalf of DHS and trusting adults, and family reunification services.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- Place children with foster parents from the same culture because removing children from their culture is traumatizing. Several providers stated that there are not enough foster parents, and especially not enough foster parents of color.

- Trauma-informed care and understanding children from diverse backgrounds should be required education for foster parents. Recertification should happen annually and include a polygraph test to prevent abuse.
- Resources and assistance need to be readily available to foster parents including skills trainers for children who do not have adequate hygienic practices, rapid referrals to behavioral health care for traumatized children, and child access to SNAP benefits.
- Communication strategies in the foster care system could use enhancement. Foster parents suggested that agencies include foster fathers in communications (rather than only foster mothers), that foster parents have the ability to partner with biological parents, and that foster parents have the ability to participate in the foster care system's decision-making.

COMMUNITY SURVEY SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

During the community engagement process, the Empress Rules engagement team reached out to diverse community partners to attend 51 community events to collect community input. Below describes the challenges and successes of the community engagement process, how we were able to meet these challenges and lessons learned from the process.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

One of the challenges that our team faced is that we did not have community members on our team who spoke Somali, Tongan, Russian, Chinese or Vietnamese. In order to meet this challenge, we partnered with community-based organizations and individuals to translate for us at community gatherings.

Language barriers were also a challenge when recruiting for focus groups. We found people that we were interested in inviting to participate in focus groups, but we could not invite them due to language barriers. In addition, some community members are still learning to read and write in their home language and in English. We reached out to community advocates and they supported us by making recommendations for community members that they believed would be a good fit to participate in the community survey and focus groups. Community Advocates also assisted us by translating and helping community members complete the survey. We paid community members a small stipend for translation services and also built new community relationships.

CROSS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

In addition to language barriers, when we tried to connect with different communities online and in social media groups, we had challenges with engagement because communities did not know who we were. Also, everyone on the engagement team had brown skin and visually appear as people of color. Specifically, for the Slavic community, Facebook group administrators would allow posts from other community members but not from the engagement team. One individual contacted a member of the team and asked her why she was in the Russian group on social

media, despite the fact that her Facebook postings explaining community engagement opportunities were written by native Russian speakers.

Our team member shared with him information about the Portland Children's Levy, and this conversation led to a meaningful and rich discussion about racism and his perspective on how some members of the Slavic community perceive Black people.

In response, the Empress Rules engagement team attended the Slavic heritage celebration at IRCO and developed community relationships which led to the engagement team being invited to attend a Slavic parent group. The engagement team brought community members their favorite Danish and compensated them \$10 for completing the survey. This method also worked best for connecting for the Pacific Islander, Latinx, and Somali communities as well.

During all community gatherings, community members were welcoming, willing to share their experiences and looked forward to having a deeper connection with the Portland Children's Levy and other similar opportunities to engage with policymakers.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Many community members did not have access to technology. For this reason, we should have administered a combined interest questionnaire and survey at the same time. We did not anticipate that people would not respond once we invited people from the interest questionnaire to participate in the survey. It felt as if we had to start the project over again as everyone that we invited to participate in the survey did not complete the survey in its entirety.

To meet this challenge, we collaborated with service providers from different organizations. We brought printed surveys, cash stipends, and stipend receipt forms to community-based organizations. When community members arrived at the organization, they were able to complete the survey and sign for their \$10 cash stipend on their own time. Our team later returned to collect the surveys and participant signature.

We also recruited from our own neighborhoods. We saw teenagers with their families playing outside, so we asked them if they wanted to participate in the survey. We promoted in our neighborhoods and apartment complexes and personal community groups. We shared information with friends and family through text messaging, email and Facebook. We asked community members, current and former students to share links with their friends and family. We leverage teacher partnerships and teachers allowed their students to participate in the survey as a checkout activity.

SYSTEMS ISSUES

One of our biggest challenges of reaching population was follow through in communication between our team and systems. We created specific links for organizations that would notify us when someone clicked a specific link and completed the survey. We noticed that some of the links were not shared. We later found out that the city and various other organizations had been overly utilizing community-based organizations to support community engagement projects



without additionally compensating the organization or direct staff for the additional burden. Our recommendation is that if the City values community-based organizations as a resource, that they compensate them when creating an additional workload and this additional financial burden should not be placed on the consultant, but written into the City's policy.

LESSONS LEARNED

INVOLVE COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Most of the planning was done between the Empress Rules team and the Levy. Though we believe that we had an excellent community engagement process full of rich, meaningful conversation, we do not believe there was sufficient time to complete this process in the way that we had hoped. We would have liked more time to involve the community in the planning process and to develop deeper relationships with community. This project felt rushed, especially since it occurred over the holiday season. Our hope is that the next community engagement process, last 10 months to a year.

We should have involved more perspectives such as community-based Leaders, organizations, faith-based organizations and general community members in the planning process. Recruitment was the easiest when we worked in collaboration with other community-based individuals. Equitable practices benefit everyone, especially when we listen to the people that we are working to serve.

ATTEND EVENTS THAT ARE ALREADY HAPPENING

Community-based organizations already have their work cut out for them, and it is easier if we attend community events that are already happening instead of trying to work with organizations to create an event for community members to attend.

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY LIAISONS

The work does not always have to come from community-based organizations. We can also engage and directly invest in trusted, passionate members of our community. Many community members are already doing the work because it's the right thing to do and are not being compensated for it. It is recommended the city and other organizations and entities intentionally seek out these individuals and involve them in community projects and opportunities. People want opportunities to invest in their community and provide for their families and it is these types of direct investments that economically stimulate our community and bring us one step closer to ending poverty by providing opportunities for communities to help themselves.

Data Limitations: Race/Ethnicity

In the design of the community engagement process, we wanted community members to select as many identities that applied to them. Our team acknowledge that race is a social construct and that people are so much more than the color of their skin. I also acknowledge that by not having some indicator of where the color of their skin lies along the color line, it is challenging to tell if we are focusing on those with the most challenges: people with the darkest skin.

In a report H.L. Jayne, Professor of Government, Professor of African and African American Studies, and Harvard College Professor wrote, “Affirmative action policies similarly benefit the relatively advantaged among African Americans. In this case the mechanism is class; recipients of affirmative action policies in universities, law firms, and even police departments are disproportionately well off and well educated—and we saw earlier that light skinned Blacks attain higher family incomes and more years of schooling than do their dark-skinned counterparts. We have seen one proposal to include photographs in college applications so that there could be affirmative action to offset colorism, but it was made in a tone of heavy irony without any serious intention behind it.” (Hochschild, 1969).

The areas of growth for this particular method is that by continuing to categorize people under a few labels, we negate all of their other identities/ethnicities. We did not have a supplemental question that asked participants if they had to choose one race, which race would they most identify with, we are unsure of how survey participants visually show up in the world. In the future, regarding reporting of racial identities, the Coalition of Communities of Color made these 9 recommendations on how to report racial / ethnic identity in the future:

- People of color should be actively encouraged to identify their race and origin accurately and complexly.
- Racial designations should be “race or origin” so as to be inclusive and to capture identity more fully and without practices of “othering” participants.
- Latinx should be included as an equivalent community among other communities of color.
- Individuals should be allowed to self-designate their identifies, having major groupings pre-named, with additional open spaces for supplemental identities. These categories should be developed in consultation with communities of color so as to reflect local conditions which are dynamic.
- Practice that allows multiple designations to be defined should continue.
- Multi-racial category should be omitted as an identifier due to its potential to obscure the experiences of our communities of color. Instead of the multi-racial designation, 2 supplemental questions can be asked: do you identify as a person of color; and if you had to identify as only one race, what race would you like used?
- Wherever possible, data collection tools should be administered by those who share the same race as those completing the form, and in their local language wherever possible.
- All contracts, subcontracts and grants should require compliance with, and reporting of, these same practices.
- Disaggregated data should be available to the community and readily accessible by the general public (Curry-Stevens, 2011)

Perhaps, if there is a method to incorporate a color scale where people cannot only identify ethnically but also a follow-up- questions where participants can indicate where their skin tone lands on the color line.

Time and Budget Constraints

The Levy staff was very supportive through this process. Due to time and budget constraints, we felt pressure to present our findings in a traditionally White way. We wondered how different this process could have been if we had more time and resources. Perhaps the Levy could explore multiple perspectives and alternative ways of connecting to community, such as exploring diverse cultural methods of collecting information, relaying information and facilitating services.

More Vietnamese and Male Representation

Though we understand that social work is a female-dominated profession, we would have liked to have had more male representation on the community and provider surveys. We also would have appreciated more input from the Vietnamese community. In future planning processes, we will ensure that we include communities with the least amount of participation in the planning process to promote engagement of community voice.

Confusing Questions

On the community survey, parents, youth, foster parents, and community members were asked if they were service providers or not, and though all of them selected that they were not service providers, some community members later indicated that they provided services under the Levy's 6 program areas.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Oregon was founded on a history of perpetuating White supremacist culture, values, and norms. We have a human responsibility to hold each other accountable for the perpetuation of systemic barriers/exclusionary practices. Suggestions for Deeper Partnerships We offer the following recommendations for Levy partnerships to make more of an impact towards ending historical inequities:

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEEPER PARTNERSHIPS

- Build stronger community partnerships between schools, housing, social service agencies, private organizations, medical providers, libraries and nonprofits to collaborate as part of a connected network.
- Help organizations that already serve families establish, sustain and maintain food pantries at their various locations.
- Partnerships with farmers markets.
- Work with Lawmakers and enforcers of the law to have a better relationship with the community.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

A service provider eloquently wrote that “Services that are delivered, measured and overseen by individuals from marginalized populations, which are representative of the faces and identities being served. Services that are trauma-informed, collaborative and strengths-based, that: aim to call out individual and institutional bias, identify systemic oppression, hold accountable those in power to situate their power and privilege, reshape the positions of power to welcome more diverse leaders. More accountability for those in positions of power. Greater representation of racial and ethnic minorities in leadership roles in the schools. Continuing education requirements for White and majority-culture-identifying persons (e.g., teachers) to understand their positionality and privilege and the ways in which their privilege holding withdraws all of the air from the room of those that continue to be unseen and unheard by virtue of their identity.”

The following represents recommendations of methods and best practices for Portland Children’s Levy to connect with connect with the community and take concrete steps towards ending historical inequities:

- Advocate for families to receive Housing vouchers and scattered site low-income housing would reduce segregation and concentrated poverty and give children of color impacted by inequities better access to resources, schools and social capital they can use to get ahead. (9 Ways to Reduce Poverty)

- A service provider recommended that "The people at the top need to realize they need insight from the people of the community. Connecting with the people and understanding what their need are, like food, housing, and money to pay bills by more opportunities within the community. Programs that help parents. Helping parents help the children."
- Advocate for mass incarceration and immigration policy reform.
- Advocate for school policies that support healthy and free options for children living in poverty.
- Bring fresh food banks/pantries to where people live or visit frequently. Focus on apartment complexes/neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. Assess what foods are culturally responsive and meet dietary restrictions for each specific location/school/faith-based institution.
- Change the Levy mission to "End racial disparities" and instead of "reduce."
- Connect with immigrant/refugee communities to provide more detailed data collection and disaggregation so that their needs don't get lost in the data.
- Create a community-led advisory committee that oversees the Levy to provide support with achieving outcomes, funding recommendations and to hold the Levy accountable. Work in collaboration with this advisory council to create specific, measurable obtainable outcomes for recommendations defined by the community.
- Create parent groups centered on engaging fathers.
- Create smaller grants for community-based individuals/small business who are already doing the work for free (such as mentoring) so that they can build capacity and help meet community needs (such as cultural responsiveness) and provide opportunities for economic advancement.
- Examine staff capacity. Does the Levy have the capacity to carry out its mission and if not, what changes need to be made so that goals are realistic, measurable obtainable and Levy staff and grantees can feel supported?
- Facilitate an assessment of average transportation costs for communities in specific neighborhoods to travel back and forth to get food and take their children to school. Provide communities with a transportation stipend based on family size and how far families would need to travel to get services.
- Fund, promote, and facilitate training for teachers and providers to attend and dive deep into racial equity, cultural inclusion, and trauma-informed care.
- Hire people from the community to be a part of the Portland Children's Levy staff.
- Hold cross-cultural events that bring the community together to share information and build deeper, authentic relationships.
- "I think there are a lot of systemic changes that would need to happen for resources to be accessed equitably across our society. As far as the PCL is concerned, I'd love to see an expansion of the focus areas to better include organizations that are working to eliminate racial disparities and are providing early learning support to kids. Adding a focus area around early literacy, for example, would include community-based organizations that are

helping kids reach the third-grade reading benchmark, a critical benchmark for academic success in which there are currently big disparities by race." (Service Provider)

- Invest in community-based research training and activities. 5 years is too long to evaluate the needs and progress of the community. Create economic opportunities for community members to be liaisons between the Levy and the community.
- People of color need to be given positions of power within agencies that are offering these resources.
- Sponsor multicultural events to encourage cross-cultural relationship building.
- Subsidize affordable, high-quality child care so that parents can get a high-quality education for their kids without sacrificing income for rent or food.
- Transparency - Create a newsletter to keep communities informed about what the Levy is doing, the progress that it has made towards working with the community to achieve goals, opportunities/events that are happening in the community and what the Levy/community could use support with.
- Use the Levy website as a community resource that lists all community resources under the 6 program areas in multiple languages.

The office of Equity and Human rights wrote a report on promising practices in governments to advance racial equity. The city is using 3 strategies to achieve Equitable outcomes: (a) ensure racial equity in city programs and services, (b) work with community-based organizations, and (c) lead regional and national networks for racial equity with other governments and institutions, the private sector and philanthropy.

The Levy should investigate the framework used to achieve equitable outcomes. The framework is based on 6 strategies which include:

Normalize

- Use a racial equity framework: Jurisdictions must use a racial equity framework that clearly articulates racial equity, implicit and explicit bias, and individual, institutional and structural racism.
- Operate with urgency and accountability: While there is often a belief that change is hard and takes time, it has been repeatedly seen, that when change is a priority and urgency is felt, change is embraced and can take place quickly. Building in institutional accountability mechanisms via a clear plan of action will allow accountability. Collectively, greater urgency and public will must be created to achieve racial equity.

Operationalize

- Implement racial equity tools: Racial inequities are not random; they have been created and sustained over time. Inequities will not disappear on their own. Tools must be used to change the policies, programs and practices that are perpetuating inequities. New policies and programs must also be developed with a racial equity tool.
- Be data-driven: Measurement must take place at 2 levels – first, to measure the success of specific programmatic and policy changes, and second, to develop baselines, set goals

and measure progress towards goals. Use of data in this manner is necessary for accountability.

Organize

- Build organizational capacity: Jurisdictions need to be committed to the breadth and depth of institutional transformation so that impacts are sustainable. While the leadership of elected and top officials is critical, changes also take place on the ground, and infrastructure that creates racial equity experts and teams throughout local and regional government is necessary.
- Partner with other institutions and communities: The work of local and regional government on racial equity is necessary, but it is not sufficient. To achieve racial equity in the community, local and regional government needs to work in partnership with communities and other institutions to achieve meaningful results.” (Office of Equity and Human Rights, 2011)

The community looks forward to connecting with the Levy on a deeper level and working towards creating thriving, equitable communities.



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