

April 2021



# San Francisco

# Community Hubs Initiative

# Mid-Year Synthesis

Prepared for San Francisco's Department of Children Youth and Their Families

**Social Policy Research Associates**

**Rachel Estrella, PhD**

**Heather Lewis-Charp**

**Mika Clark**

**Juan Carlos Piña**

**with contributions from Sehej Singh**



# Acknowledgements

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) would like to thank staff members from the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF) who have worked with us on this evaluation project, including Jillian Berkin, Lamont Snaer, Sarah Duffy, and Sherrice Dorsey-Smith. We would also like to thank everyone who participated in interviews that informed this analysis, including staff from DCYF, San Francisco Beacons Initiative (SFBI), Recreation and Parks Department (RPD), and the San Francisco Public Library. Finally, we are incredibly grateful to the parents and Hub staff that responded to surveys, as this report would not be possible without their candid feedback.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1   INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
CONTEXT FOR THE COMMUNITY HUB INITIATIVE .....	2
MOBILIZING CITY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS.....	3
EVOLVING VISION FOR THE HUBS .....	6
OVERVIEW OF THIS REPORT.....	6
<b>2   PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE .....</b>	<b>7</b>
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE COORDINATION.....	7
COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM PLANNING .....	11
REFLECTIONS ON THE PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS .....	16
<b>3   HUB IMPLEMENTATION.....</b>	<b>19</b>
LOCATIONS AND FACILITIES .....	19
STAFFING.....	21
PUBLIC SAFETY FEATURES .....	23
PROGRAM ACTIVITIES .....	24
REFLECTIONS ON HUB IMPLEMENTATION.....	26
<b>4   OUTREACH &amp; ENROLLMENT .....</b>	<b>27</b>
THE OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS.....	27
SHIFTS IN THE PROCESS OVER TIME .....	31
REFLECTIONS ON THE OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS.....	32
<b>5   PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES.....</b>	<b>33</b>
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS.....	33
STUDENT OUTCOMES.....	35
OTHER OUTCOMES.....	38
REFLECTIONS ON CHI OUTCOMES .....	39
<b>6   CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED.....</b>	<b>41</b>
LESSONS LEARNED.....	41
CONCLUSION .....	45
<b>7   APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>46</b>
APPENDIX A: LIST OF SOURCES .....	47
APPENDIX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES .....	48
APPENDIX C: LIST OF TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS .....	49
APPENDIX D: LIST OF NEIGHBORHOOD SITES .....	50

# 1 | Introduction

In the summer of 2020, San Francisco’s Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) and the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (RPD), in partnership with other City departments, rolled out the Community Hubs Initiative (CHI), an ambitious plan to mitigate learning loss and support the social and emotional development of the city’s most vulnerable youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2020, DCYF and its partners had launched 78 Hubs in recreation centers, community centers, libraries, and nonprofit organizations across the city.<sup>1</sup> These Hubs, which are concentrated in higher need neighborhoods, prioritize low-income children and families of color, those living in public housing, homeless youth, those in foster care, and English Learners.

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) was engaged by DCYF to conduct a developmental evaluation of the CHI, documenting the evolution of the initiative and providing evaluation data to inform program improvement. This Mid-Year Evaluation Report documents the story of the CHI’s development, emerging outcomes, and lessons learned through the end of 2020. It is informed by observations of CHI program planning meetings, interviews with staff from DCYF and CHI city partners (e.g. RPD), a survey of anchor agency staff<sup>2</sup> completed about one month after opening their Hub, a parent survey that was administered in December 2020, and attendance data from San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). See Figure 1 and Appendix A for detailed data sources and Appendix B for a list of interviewees. SPR will produce a Final Report in summer 2021, which will provide more detail on student, family, and agency-level outcomes.

**Figure 1: Evaluation Data Sources**

Data Source	Description
<b>Planning Meetings</b>	Observations of twenty-four CHI planning meetings between August 3 and December 10, 2020.
<b>Survey of Agency Leads</b>	Two surveys (for phase 1 and phase 2 Hubs) of agency leads in November 2020 and December 2020, respectively.
<b>Parent Survey</b>	Survey of parents of Hub participants in grades K-8 Hubs in December 2020 (completed by 384 parents).

---

<sup>1</sup> Additional Hubs continued to launch after the time period covered in this report.

<sup>2</sup> Anchor agencies operate the Hubs. They include all organizations leading a Hub, including those operated by CBOs and RPD (which also serves as a city partner).

Data Source	Description
<b>Interviews and Focus Groups</b>	Four one-on-one interviews and six focus groups that solicited feedback from twenty-eight unique stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the CHI.
<b>Document Review</b>	Spreadsheets of Hub characteristics, student data dashboards, maps of Hub placements, planning documents, health and safety guides developed by the state, attendance data from SFUSD, and presentations created by city departments.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of factors leading to the development of the Hubs, core partners who mobilized to support their development, and early shifts in the vision for the Initiative. Subsequent chapters provide an overview of the CHI planning process, key features of the CHI implementation to date, student characteristics, and emerging outcomes. The report concludes with lessons learned and recommendations.

## Context for the Community Hub Initiative

In late December 2019 and early January 2020, news outlets began to report on a dangerous new virus that was circulating in Wuhan, China, which would eventually be named COVID-19. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the Bay Area was reported in Santa Clara County on January 31, 2020. On February 25, San Francisco declared a state of emergency, followed by a regional shelter-in-place order on March 16. On March 27, San Francisco, along with six other Bay Area counties, expanded the shelter-in-place order in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and asked schools to transition from in-person classroom instruction to virtual learning. With the severity of the global public health crisis intensifying, SFUSD announced on April 7 that school sites would provide virtual distance learning to all students through the end of the 2019-2020 school year (June 2, 2020).

The pandemic and resulting shelter-in-place order had immediate wide-spread impacts on families across San Francisco. Many parents and caretakers lost their jobs or had reduced workloads that threw their families into crisis, compromising their ability to pay for shelter or feed their families. Parents who were able to work from home had to balance their work life with the need to take care of their children and support distance learning. Many children and youth who could not log in for online classes, due to lack of technology or knowledge about how to connect, began to fall behind academically. Meanwhile, both parents and children struggled with the mental health effects of social isolation.

“We want...to make sure that... our most vulnerable, most disconnected [kids]-- the ones that were struggling pre COVID-- had a space in which they could connect and not fall further behind.”

– Sherrice Dorsey, DCYF Deputy Director, Program Planning and Grants

City and community leaders immediately sought to reduce the differential negative impact of the shelter-in-place order on the city's most vulnerable families by mobilizing to provide these families with laptops, internet access, educational materials, meals, and other forms of support. DCYF-funded organizations, in coordination with SFUSD, reached out to families to identify and meet their needs. A small group of DCYF-funded organizations and RPD recreation centers opened their sites, converting them to Emergency Child and Youth Care Centers (ECYCs) that provided emergency childcare for healthcare professionals, disaster service workers, and other essential workers. As the 2019-2020 academic year came to an end, however, it was clear that this type of outreach and support was not, in and of itself, enough to bridge educational inequities or to meet the needs of low-income parents who needed safe places for their children to be while they worked.

On July 15, 2020, SFUSD released a statement that schools would continue with distance learning at the start of the 2020-2021 school year's fall semester (starting on August 17, 2020). One week after SFUSD's statement, on July 23, Mayor London N. Breed and DCYF's Director, Maria Su, announced the launch of the CHI, a commitment to transform facilities around the city into supervised learning centers to support distance learning for high need students.

## Mobilizing City Agencies and Organizations

Providing facilities, technology, and staffing to support 78 Hubs in neighborhoods across San Francisco was a citywide effort coordinated by DCYF, requiring the collaboration of the Mayor's Office, RPD, San Francisco Public Libraries (SFPL), the Hope SF, the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Technology, the San Francisco Beacon Initiative (SFBI), community-based organizations (CBOs), and other stakeholders. Mayor Breed knew this from the onset of the CHI and acknowledged that "it will take a village to address the wide range of learning needs for our city's children and youth during the COVID-19 pandemic."<sup>3</sup>

“ Kids of color or kids that speak different languages, kids with special needs... they are experiencing COVID-19 and learning from home with more difficulty. They're sliding [backward] disproportionately deeper and faster than other kids. We know about those kids is that personal connection is important and being in the same physical space is important....So, when [DCYF] said [we would open Hubs], I was like, 'that's a magnificent idea.'”

– CHI partner

“ I feel adamant that the reason why this works so well is because we have deep relationships with people.”

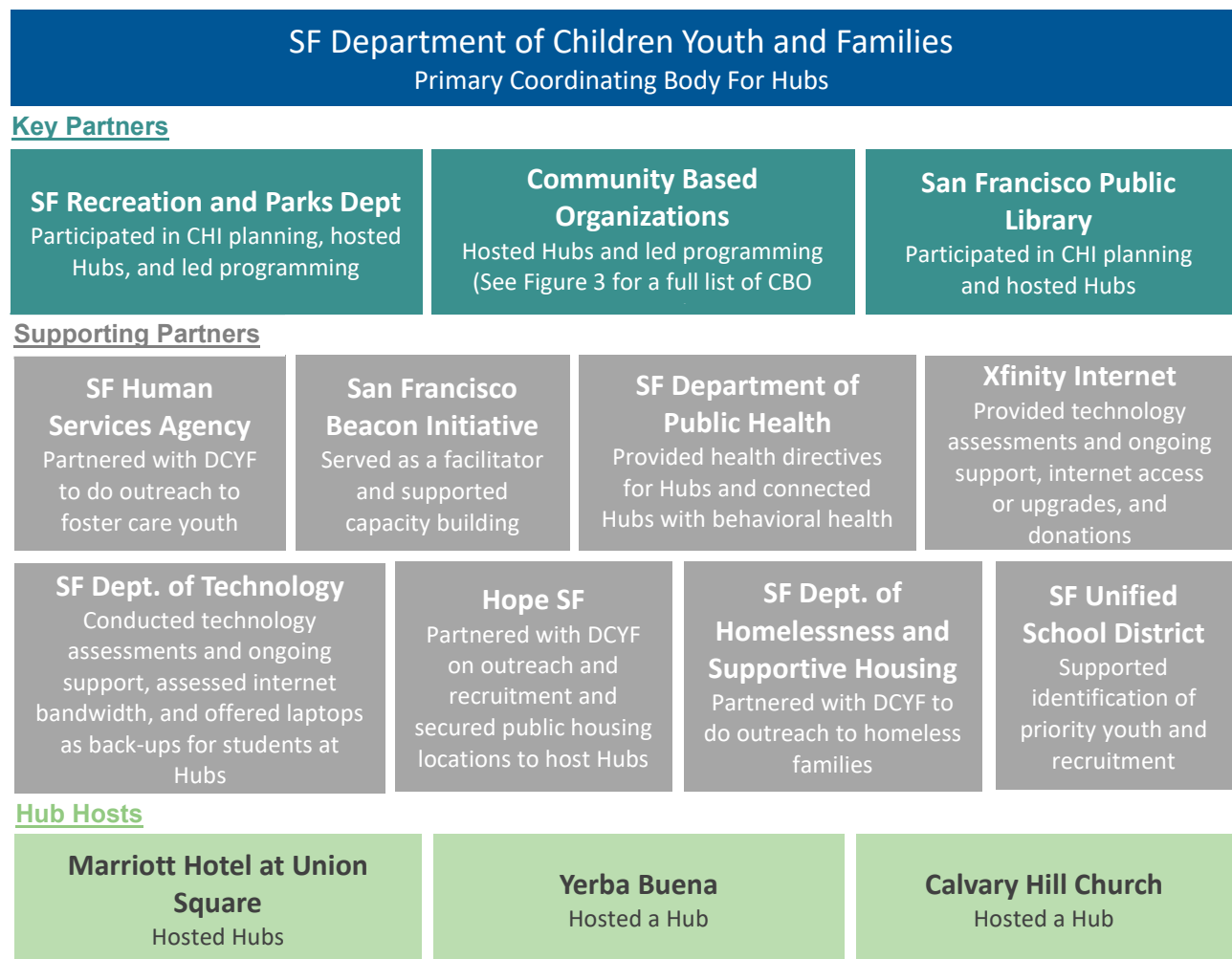
– Maria Su, DCYF Director

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://sfmayor.org/article/mayor-london-breed-announces-community-learning-Hubs-support-distance-learning-and-extension>

DCYF worked with city officials and departments to agree on which students and neighborhoods would be prioritized. Available spaces and facilities had to be assessed for student capacity and for the technology infrastructure needed to support distance learning. CBOs serving as anchor agencies were brought into the planning and implementation phase of the CHI to help determine the types of services and programming that would be offered at the Hubs. Finally, when the details of the CHI were solidified, DCYF coordinated with multiple city agencies to deploy the resources (e.g., internet connectivity, meals, laptops, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)) necessary to open fully functional Hubs. Figure 2 provides an overview of the role of city agencies and partners who helped to support the Hubs, while Figure 3 highlights all the partners who offered Hub programming or hosted the Hubs.

**Figure 2: Hub Partners and Roles**



The speed with which city leaders and agencies coordinated to launch the Hubs was enabled by a shared commitment to equity, at the highest levels of city government, and a healthy infrastructure of social supports and relationships. DCYF served as “connective tissue,” helping to coordinate city agencies and translate public health information to their extensive network of community partners.

Along the way, the CHI faced many challenges that could have derailed the initiative, including conflicting public health guidelines, labor concerns, and high levels of uncertainty associated with the pandemic and its spread. The ability of the city to successfully launch the Hubs is a testament to the leadership, hard work, and determination of a diverse ecosystem of agency and organizational staff dedicated to doing whatever they could to meet the needs of San Francisco’s most vulnerable children and youth.

**Figure 3: CHI Host Organizations and Sites**

Community-Based Anchor Agencies

- Asian Pacific American Community Center
- Bay Area Community Resources
- Bayview Hunters Point YMCA
- Booker T. Washington Community Service Center
- Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco
- Buchanan YMCA
- Buena Vista Child Care
- Catholic Charities
- Chinatown YMCA
- City of Dreams
- Collective Impact
- Community Youth Center of San Francisco
- Donaldina Cameron House
- Embarcadero YMCA
- Family & Child Empowerment Services SF
- Felton Institute
- First Graduate
- Glide Foundation
- Good Samaritan Family Resource Center
- Hamilton Families
- Indochinese Housing Development Corporation
- Ingleside Community Center
- Jamestown Community Center
- Jewish Community Center of San Francisco
- Mission Graduates
- Mission Neighborhood Centers
- Mission YMCA
- Our Kids First
- Peer Resources
- Portola Family Connection Center
- Potrero Hill Neighborhood House
- Presidio Community YMCA
- Real Options for City Kids
- Richmond District Neighborhood Center
- Richmond District YMCA
- Samoan Community Development Center
- Shih Yu-Lang Central YMCA
- Southeast Asian Development Center
- Stonestown Family YMCA
- Success Center San Francisco
- Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center
- Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation
- The Salvation Army
- United Playaz
- Up on Top
- Urban Ed Academy
- West Bay Pilipino Multi-Service Center
- Young Community Developers
- Youth First

Recreation and Parks Department Sites

- Betty Ann Ong Rec Center
- Eureka Valley Rec Center
- Herz Playground
- Joseph Lee Rec Center
- Minnie & Lovie Ward Rec Center
- Mission Arts and Rec
- Palega Rec Center
- Youngblood Coleman Park



## Evolving Vision for the Hubs

The initial vision for the Hubs was that they would provide a “kaleidoscope of service providers” to support diverse enrichment activities for students. As discussed further in Chapter 2, DCYF and anchor agencies worked closely with SFPD throughout the planning phase to understand how to provide diverse enrichment while keeping Hub staff and students as safe as possible. By late August, however, it was clear that the original vision for the Hubs would need to shift in response to state public health orders limiting the number of adults that could be in one physical space. Ultimately, the anchor agencies that operated the Hubs needed to provide most of the core services with minimal assistance from partners, thus limiting the range of enrichment activities that could be provided. These guidelines also limited the number of youth that could attend the Hubs, reducing their reach from the original goal of 6,000 to closer to 2,000.

The vision for the longevity of the Hubs also evolved over time. When originally conceived, the Hubs were a short-term solution until the schools could re-open with in-person instruction. As the 2020-2021 school year wore on and rates of infection continued to rise, it became clear that the Hubs would need to operate all school year in some shape or form. In the words of one DCYF staff member, the vision shifted from a “sprint” to a “marathon.”

At the end of 2020, when this report was written, the vision for the Hubs was still evolving in response to changing conditions and a better understanding of the virus. For instance, over the course of the fall, programs had been able to incorporate increased enrichment, mentoring, and online supports into their services. Looking forward, DCYF stakeholders wondered whether aspects of the Hubs might be sustained even after the pandemic ends and in-person instruction begins again, contemplating the role that CBOs might have in transforming education to be more equitable.

“There's concern [about] what if youth don't have anything to do.... And so I just wonder, what is the long-term damage that's happening if they don't have an opportunity to go to a Hub, or be in person and get that support? What happens?”

– DCYC Program Specialist

## Overview of this Report

The remaining five chapters of this report provide an in-depth profile of the Hubs and who they were serving as of the end of 2020. Chapter 2 describes key activities during the planning phase, including meetings and capacity building. Chapter 3 details factors influencing Hub implementation, including facilities and locations, staffing, public safety features, and program activities. Chapter 4 outlines the Hub enrollment process, detailing the strategies used to identify and enroll students most in need of support. Chapter 5 highlights the characteristics of students served and preliminary outcomes for students and families. The report concludes with a discussion of lessons learned to date.

## 2 | Planning and Infrastructure

Once the Mayor announced her support for the Community Hubs Initiative in late July, planning began in earnest. Given the targeted September 14 launch date, DCYF and its partners had only seven weeks to secure Hub sites, recruit CBO partners to implement programming, identify priority populations and recruit youth from within those populations, and provide the Hubs with all of the equipment and support necessary to run Hubs safely and effectively. This chapter describes the massive efforts undertaken by DCYF and key partners—within an extremely compressed timeline—to provide the resources and equipment necessary for the Hubs to operate effectively and safely, to recruit and engage collaboratively with CBO partners around program planning, and to develop an infrastructure of support so that the Hubs could get their needs met during a rapidly changing context.

### Infrastructure Development and Resource Coordination

A significant amount of behind-the-scenes work was required to ensure that Hubs would be in place and properly equipped, staffed, and ready to operate in time for the September 14 launch. Though the short time frame for planning and preparation was stressful, DCYF staff operated with a sense of urgency, recognizing the need to have the Hubs in place in order to support the youth who faced the biggest barriers to academic success and social emotional wellbeing and who were thus most likely to experience the greatest harms as a result of the pandemic and being forced to shelter in place. As DCYF's Planning and Program Manager described it,

***“These kids have been failed. We cannot be going on with this digital tech divide looming—that we knew existed pre-COVID—and then give them an opportunity like this and just drop the ball at the most important part. Because these are the kids that need it the most.”***

The CHI thus became DCYF's highest priority and was described by multiple staff as an “all-hands-on-deck moment,” with staff at all levels and from multiple departments becoming involved and adding CHI support to their existing workload. [See Figure 4 on page 10 for a description of key CHI planning and implementation roles and the staff assigned to those roles.] Launching the Hubs was a huge undertaking, particularly considering that the city had never launched an initiative like this before and there was no blueprint for how to do this, particularly in the midst of a global pandemic. DCYF thus took on the responsibility of serving as “the backbone” and developing an infrastructure to provide Hubs and Hub staff with the resources and supports they needed to function safely and effectively. There was a steep learning curve to this work and it proved much more complex than staff originally realized.

Key areas of infrastructure investment included:

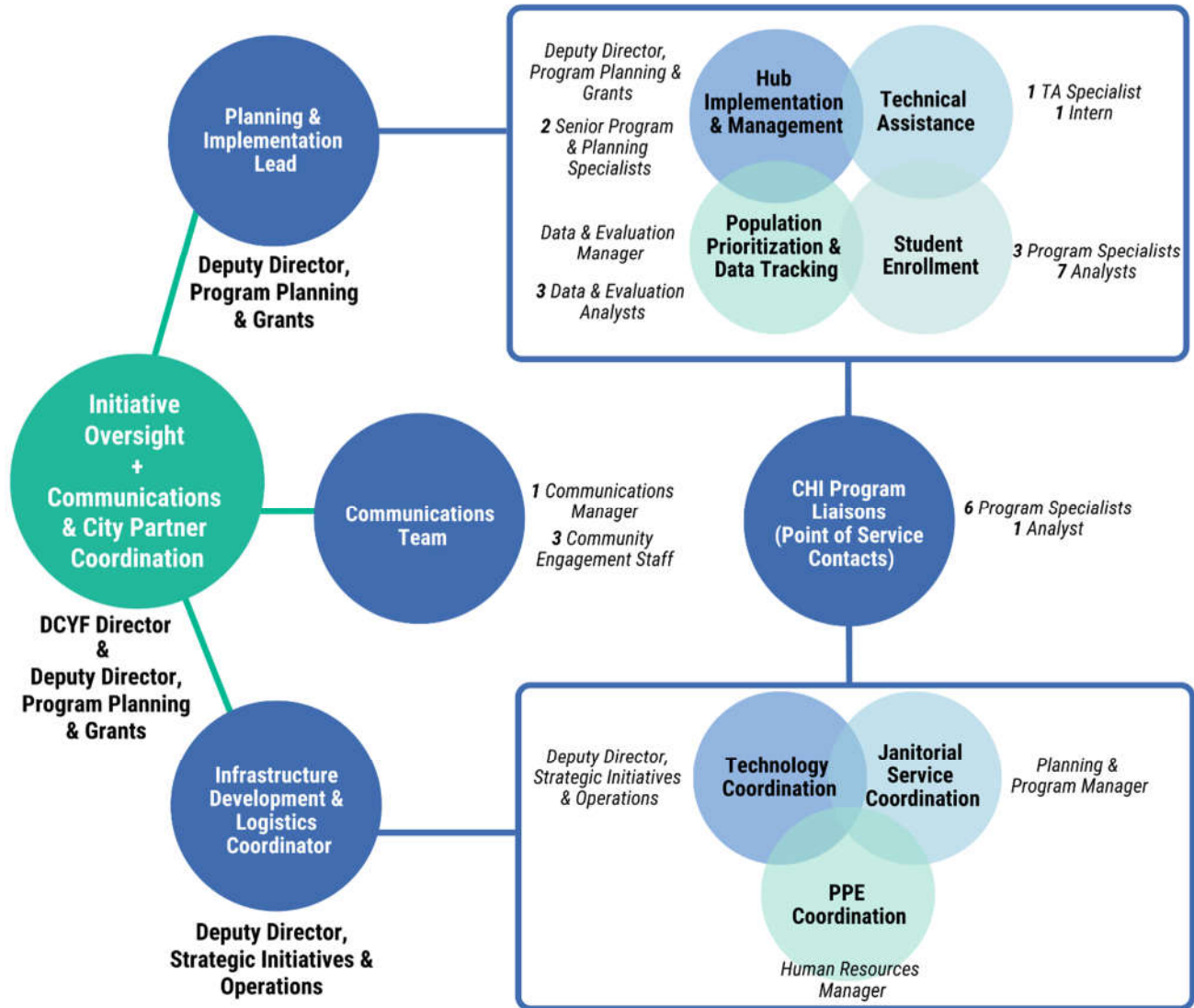
- **Technology Support.** Supporting the technology needs of Hubs proved extremely complicated and layered. It included procuring enough laptops and headphones to ensure that all students had the equipment they needed to engage in distance learning, that Hubs had storage and charging carts to keep their technology safe and powered up, and ensuring facilities had internet access and WiFi, as well as enough bandwidth to cover the needs of all of its students. DCYF coordinated with San Francisco's Department of Technology (DT) and the Office of Digital Equity, to address these needs. Together they provided the assessments, and DT provided the initiative with 1300 Chromebooks and ran a help desk to help Hub organizations with their tech-related questions. Xfinity Internet also partnered with DCYF, providing upgrades to Hub organizations that were Xfinity subscribers.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Procurement and Distribution.** DCYF took on the responsibility of procuring and distributing PPE, recognizing that it would cost too much and be too burdensome for grantees to try to procure them individually. This was described by staff as a "huge undertaking," involving everything from securing the supplies, storing them, sorting them, preparing them to go out to sites, delivering them to sites, and tracking inventory. DCYF's HR manager oversaw staging and delivery, which took place at the Moscone Convention Center, and was supported in this effort by a multitude of DCYF staff. Though DCYF had a strong pool of staff volunteers, they realized that they still needed to enlist the help of contract labor, which they borrowed from another department, to do some of the "heavy lifting," since the PPE came in pallets and required the use of forklifts, and they also needed trucks and more staff to do the PPE delivery.
- **Janitorial support.** The need for intensive janitorial support to do frequent cleaning was not initially on DCYF's radar when it first began its planning efforts, but it became a responsibility that DCYF staff took on. Figuring out how they could get a team on board was difficult, particularly given the fighting that was happening amongst labor unions and the complexity of the level of coordination needed, since each site had a different set of hours, needs, and access support. One solution that DCYF deployed was to partner with one of their grantee agencies that focused on workforce development and was already running a program to train janitors.

“ We knew there were many kids of color that were going to have this experience. And we wanted them to feel the love that we knew they were going to get from the CBOs. But as a city, we felt we had to stand up this backbone piece so that whatever happens, they know we care enough to make sure everybody has what they need from day one.”

– Jasmine Dawson, DCYF Planning and Program Manager

- **Public health guidelines and behavioral health support.** It was not easy to keep up with the evolving knowledge around COVID-19, best practices to ensure community safety, and ever-shifting guidelines about program practices and restrictions for in-person youth programming. DCYF forged a strong partnership with the city's Department of Public Health (DPH) to support the Hubs in receiving the most up-to-date information related to the virus and public health requirements. DCYF also leaned on DPH to provide more targeted mental health and behavioral supports for students with extreme behavioral challenges. To that end, DCYF staff worked with DPH to create a referral system so that students experiencing these challenges could have direct access to a therapist through DPH.
- **Student recruitment and enrollment support.** DCYF originally hoped to partner with SFUSD to prioritize and recruit students most in need of Hub support. Since SFUSD chose not to participate in the planning and launch of the Hubs, DCYF pivoted and worked with its Data and Evaluation staff to identify priority youth who were already served by a DCYF-funded program so that they could more readily access key demographic and contact information about these students from within its own system. To create a streamlined process and ease the burden of recruitment from grantees DCYF assigned 11 staff (3 Program Specialists and 7 Analysts) to serve as Enrollment Specialists. These specialists were responsible for overseeing enrollment of youth into Hubs, processing applications, engaging with families, and coordinating with Hub organizations around recruitment questions and processes and checking in with them about attendance. (More information about the enrollment process is provided in Chapter 4.)
- **Program and administrative point-of-service support.** DCYF recognized that Hub organizations would need significant support, particularly given the newness of the initiative, the ever-shifting public health guidelines related to COVID-19, and the challenge of having to adapt programming to meet extremely strict public health guidelines while also keeping students and their staff safe. To this end, DCYF's technical assistance specialists provided training support for Hub organizations and seven DCYF staff took on the responsibility of serving as CHI liaisons. CHI liaisons serve as "point of service" contacts for Hub organizations so that Hubs could more efficiently get their questions answered and their needs met. Each CHI liaison was responsible for specific neighborhoods and the number of sites they supported ranged from six to 17. Almost all CHI liaisons also serve as Program Specialists, so while the volume of their work increased significantly, the nature of their work was aligned with what they were already doing as Program Specialists. The difference, according to the CHI liaisons, was that in the COVID context, there was more to coordinate (e.g. technology support, PPE and food distributions) and it was even more critical for them to be extremely attentive and responsive so that all Hub organizations were afforded the most up-to-date COVID information and the equipment and resources necessary to ensure the safety of all participants. CHI Liaisons shared that they had to learn a lot very quickly to effectively support the Hubs. As one Liaison shared, "It's a lot of work, a lot of shifting our hats...but it works well when you have existing relationships and trust with the folks in your workload."

**Figure 4: DCYF Staff Roles in the CHI**



DCYF devoted a significant number of its staff to support the Hub initiative and ensure that Hubs had the resources they need to launch and implement their programs successfully. While supporting the Hubs increased staff workloads exponentially (since they still had their “regular” job duties to fulfill), every staff member we interviewed relayed a sense of commitment to the CHI’s success, rooted in deep concerns about the welfare of the children and youth that they serve and a belief in the urgency and importance of this initiative.

“We were in a time crunch and the work never stops. You just had to suck it up and get it done. From week one, we were operating with the idea that this has to be good. This cannot fail. This was the mindset that a lot of folks had and that was the motivation that got people to put in all that extra time.”

– Aumijo Gomes, Deputy Director of Strategic Initiatives and Operations

Moreover, a survey of agency leads indicate that these investments paid off. Responses to questions regarding the provision of resources were extremely positive, with the majority of respondents (96%) rating the provision of all resources as useful or very useful. At least three respondents noted that having access to technology supports was especially beneficial and lauded the IT support team for its responsiveness. A couple of respondents shared that having DCYF procure and distribute PPE to the programs was helpful because it would have been too challenging for them to pay for it through their limited program budgets. Another couple of respondents shared that receiving guidance directly from DPH was helpful in terms of providing clarity on health and safety considerations, though a few respondents also reported confusion around shifting guidelines, as well as a general feeling of pandemic “information overload” from a range of sources.

## Collaborative Program Planning

While multiple DCYF staff members were focused on ensuring that Hubs had an infrastructure of support and the resources necessary for successful program implementation, still other staff members (and often the same staff members who were also working on infrastructure supports) were focused on recruiting community-based organizations to lead and staff the Hubs and engaging in collaborative program planning. In order to meet the ambitious launch date for the Hubs while also recognizing the challenges of having all the necessary pieces in place in such a short period of time, DCYF created a two-phased approach for program planning and implementation. Phase 1 had a launch date of August 24 and was designed to support students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Phase 2 opened up service to students in grades 7 through 12 and was scheduled to launch on September 14. Having a phased approach enabled DCYF and its partners to open as many hubs as possible as quickly as possible while continuing to focus on securing more facilities to host the hubs and recruiting more organizations run them. It also enabled DCYF and its program partners in Phase 1 to iterate and refine their program practices, and to share their learnings with each other and with new organizations that participated in Phase 2.

DCYF began its organizational recruitment efforts by first inviting a cross-section of community-based organizations and school-based programs into a conversation about the Community Hubs Initiative. Many of these organizations also manage Beacon Centers. The Beacon Community School Model seeks to center youth and families in schools and includes the following core program elements: family partnership and engagement, behavioral health and wellness, school transitions, and expanded learning.<sup>4</sup> Inviting agencies that oversee Beacon programs to serve as CHI anchors seemed a wise choice, given the comprehensive nature of the Beacon program model and its alignment with the CHI vision, as well as Beacon staffs’ deep community ties and strong understanding of the lived experiences of the students being prioritized for support through the CHI.

---

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the SFBI program model, please go to <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OkgNDeFDFSfPC-BppqvMR0TIUnSinwQ/view>



DCYF then expanded the invitation to all of its Out of School Time programs. Given the complexities of the planning process and the need to build trust across all partners to succeed in their collaborative efforts, DCYF also contracted SFBI to facilitate the planning meetings.

### *Planning Meetings*

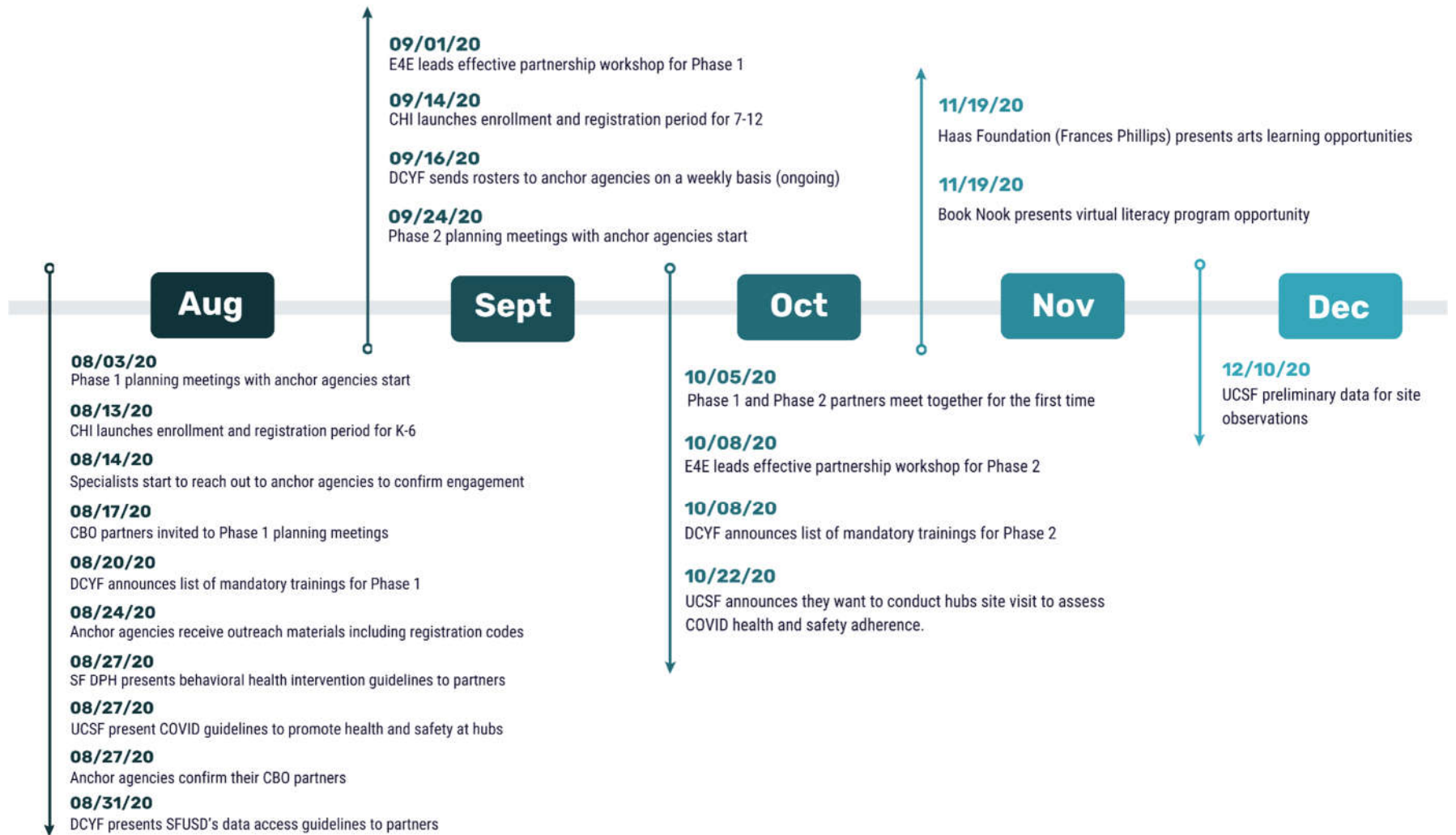
DCYF frequently referred to the effort to plan for and implement the Hubs as analogous to “building a plane as they were flying it.” As such, the program planning effort was fairly intensive—representatives from CHI sites engaged in two-hour program planning meetings twice a week, and the meeting agendas were packed with information sharing and activities. Each meeting included time for community building and peer learning across organizations, information updates, logistics discussions, and time for question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions with DCYF staff. Meetings also included presentations from SFDPH on topics such as COVID-19 guidance and addressing behavioral health needs during the pandemic. Some meetings offered presentations of opportunities and supports in areas such as literacy or STEM that were being offered through external providers and made available free of charge to the Hubs. The timeline shared in Figure 5 on the next page provides a more detailed picture of key meeting activities and content.

Results from SPR’s November survey of agency leads indicate that, in general, program staff found much of the meeting content useful, though a few expressed dissatisfaction with certain logistics, such as the number and length of meetings and the repetition of content. That said, the repetition also seemed necessary, given how challenging it was to communicate comprehensively and consistently in a compressed period of time, and recognizing that scheduling constraints often resulted in inconsistent attendance. The meeting content that was rated most useful by respondents was the sharing of public health information and guidelines (69%), followed by dedicated time to connect with DCYF staff to answer questions and support individual planning (62%). Open-ended survey responses also indicated that participants valued having time for peer learning opportunities to share lessons learned, to help them anticipate challenges, and to learn about successful strategies on a variety of fronts.

“ Meeting with DCYF and other community organizations was [helpful] in understanding the direction forward.”

- Hub Staff

**Figure 5: Timeline of CHI Program Planning Activities**





Given the fact that DCYF and all partners in this effort were embarking on something that they had never tried before (and for which there was no blueprint)—and trying to do so within a compressed timeframe and extremely complicated context—a range of challenges naturally arose during planning meetings. For example, multiple programs expressed concerns about whether and how they could continue to meet their commitments to serve students and schools to which they had already committed *and* support a Hub, given their staff size and staffing restrictions under COVID-19. One area of common frustration was around the continuously shifting public health guidelines. In the span of one month, four different sets of guidelines and health orders were issued (the first by SFDPH in early August, followed by three other guidance documents issued by the state department of health). While the need to update guidance was critical, given the unpredictability of the virus and the new research that continued to emerge, the shifting guidelines made it difficult for anchor agencies to plan, especially since the guidance dictated strict limits around adult-to-student ratios in programs. This made it particularly challenging to assess staff capacity, the number of students that could be served in a program, and how to implement programming within the allotted timeframe without going into overtime, while also adhering to public health staffing guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

Though these challenges were formidable, and not always completely in DCYF’s power to control or fully address, DCYF—with support from SFBI—created intentional meeting space to discuss these concerns and address what they could. SFBI staff described the process as “taking their concerns, figuring out what we had answers for, and bringing in the people that needed to speak to everybody.” To that end, many of these discussions took place during breakout sessions designated specifically for DCYF Q&A and problem solving. Some discussions took place during peer-learning sessions in planning meetings, wherein programs were able to share some of the ways in which they addressed specific challenges. To address certain concerns that were not in DCYF’s purview, (such as COVID-19 guidance), they brought in guest speakers, such as representatives from SFDPH or doctors and researchers from the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF). Additionally, in an effort to be transparent and consistent in its communications, DCYF made it a practice to log program staff’s questions and concerns (except those that fell into sensitive or confidential arenas) into an FAQ document, which they regularly updated and shared at staff meetings.

“ Learning together on this new challenge with a safe space to express concerns was very helpful in taking us to where we are now.”

- Hub Staff

---

<sup>5</sup> DCYF had no control over the ever-shifting public health guidelines, but in their efforts to provide programs with the most up-to-date public health guidance, some organizations were left with the misunderstanding that they had to follow multiple health guidelines by multiple agencies, though DCYF noted several times before the launch of programming that they were ultimately required to follow the state’s guidelines, which were more restrictive than the guidelines proposed by the city.

## Trainings/Capacity Building

To further support effective Hub implementation, DCYF's technical assistance (TA) team also provided trainings designed to support Hubs with effective program planning and implementation within the COVID-19 context. [For a full list of training topics, see textbox below.] Their challenge was to rapidly design and provide TA offerings that could (1) meet the needs of staff with a wide range of youth programming experience, and (2) incorporate key guidance around programming during COVID-19, all while still recognizing and respecting the limitations of program capacity to participate. To that end, DCYF TA staff developed a series of trainings that covered the same topics that they typically offered to programs pre-COVID-19, but with content that was adjusted to more intentionally align with the ways in which schooling had shifted during the pandemic and the resulting impacts on students, staff, and families. In addition to adjusting their training content, DCYF reduced the number of training offerings, recognizing how challenging it would be for programs to find time to attend everything. Moreover—whereas DCYF used to provide a wide range of trainings to support its grantees across a number of topics in ways that align with different levels of staff experience—for the CHI grantees, the TA team chose to focus on

“ [We considered] what program planning looks like now. How does program planning relate to the new health order? What does homework help look like? Because it's super different, right? We're really intentional around making sure that agencies had a health and wellness plan set up for their staff [to address] their staff stressors... and [the challenges] young people were bringing to the table.”

- DCYF Technical Assistance Specialist

### Mandatory Training Topics



Classroom Management in the Age of COVID



It Takes a Village: Family Engagement



Trauma and Intersection of COVID-19



Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 Provider Wellness



Mandated Reporting

providing just a few core topics, adapted for different age groups, and then to offer them repeatedly. They therefore focused on supporting the CHI grantees with core program needs (e.g., program planning, classroom management, and addressing trauma) with pandemic-aligned adaptations. They also assessed how much repetition would be needed for certain topics by monitoring demand (i.e., which workshops were “selling out”). See Appendix C for a comprehensive list of trainings and workshops.

Our survey of agency leads indicates that respondents generally found DCYF trainings to be useful, with consistent utility ratings across all session topics. A few challenges were noted by participants, including difficulty finding time to attend trainings and a lack of clarity around which trainings were mandatory. These are common challenges associated with these types of trainings, but they were somewhat exacerbated by the compressed timeline and the communications challenges related to with the general sense of information overload.

## Reflections on the Planning and Infrastructure Development Efforts

Ultimately, efforts to develop a strong infrastructure for resource coordination and support, as well as the collaborative program planning efforts revealed important strengths that grantees and CHI partners all brought to the effort, particularly in terms of their creativity, persistence, and flexibility, as well as the tensions and complications that arose in trying to do such complex work within an extremely difficult context. These tensions, however, were ultimately rooted in deep concerns about the well-being of youth most negatively impacted by COVID-19, and frustrations with barriers that impeded their ability to move as quickly and efficiently as they would have hoped. It is also important to note that these concerns were shared by *all* parties—anchor agencies, partners, and DCYF staff alike. That said, despite all the challenges, the majority of Hubs successfully launched according to schedule during Phase 1, with only five agency leads noting that they started a week or two later than planned. This was a remarkable achievement, particularly given the compressed planning timeframe. Reflecting back over the course of the Planning Phase, some key facilitators that contributed to their success included:

“ I know this is hard. So how can we get as much information out to the grantees as possible? The only solution we have right now is multiple offerings and then offering it morning and afternoon if it's mandatory and recorded. And then we just really pay attention to what's selling out.”

– DCYF Technical Assistance Specialist

“ One thing that I'm proud of is I've learned a lot about how nimble and innovative [our grantee] organizations are. How they were able to adapt in this particular moment.”

- DCYF CHI Liaison

- **Creating teams to carry out the work.** DCYF staff reflected that they “learned the hard way” that they needed to parse out the work in ways that were manageable. While they would not have been able to know from the start just how much work would be involved in setting up and supporting the Hubs, a key lesson shared by DCYF’s Planning and Program Manager was to “Break up the work, figure out what the work is, and then have strike teams come in and hold those pieces.” She added that “the work doesn’t stop. But if you designate point people, you don’t kill yourself trying to do everything.”
- **Investing in strong facilitation.** Given the number of voices, issues, and challenges that needed to be addressed during the Planning Phase, having a thoughtful and experienced third-party intermediary in place to facilitate coordination, communication, and planning was essential. Having SFBI serve in this role proved invaluable, not only because of the facilitation expertise of its staff, but also because of its existing relationships and trust with both DCYF and the grantee organizations. This enabled the facilitators to keep forward momentum while adeptly supporting participants in naming and moving through challenges.
- **Focusing on relationship building.** Including dedicated time for relationship building into every planning meeting helped to create a sense of community and support, which was helpful for learning and morale. Moreover, a few grantees shared that by getting to know other organizations that do similar work across the city, they were able to refer parents to those organizations when they had questions about getting social supports in different neighborhoods.
- **Creating safe space to discuss concerns.** As noted throughout this chapter, tensions arose during the planning phase as participants wrestled with their deep desire to serve and their concerns about a host of issues that could affect their ability to do so safely, effectively, and in ways that would allow them to honor prior commitments. DCYF leaders recognized that for the CHI to succeed, they needed to understand all of the potential challenges that could impact staff and students. Thus, rather than shy away from difficult topics, DCYF and SFBI created intentional space during planning meetings to name and discuss these challenges so they could try to address them to the best of their ability. Given the unique circumstances of each anchor agency, DCYF staff noted that having one-on-one conversations with agencies was often much more effective in problem solving than trying to address organization-specific issues during general planning meetings.

“Hearing [other grantees] share what they knew, how they were doing things, and how they too were confused was [validating] because we were all feeling the same [while] trying to navigate with the information we had.”

– Hub Staff

- **Providing peer learning opportunities.** Given varying degrees of experience supporting distance learning and implementing programming safely within a COVID-19 context, grantees shared that seeing examples of success from other programs was extremely helpful. To that end, organizations that already successfully implemented in-person learning as part of their summer programming shared examples of different program offerings, strategies for handling specific issues, and generally provided reassurance about the ability to do this work well, even within a restricted environment.

After the Planning Phase, during the first grantee meeting that occurred at the launch of Phase 1, there was a marked difference in tone, with staff from multiple Hub sites expressing joy at being able to do the work (instead of planning for and worrying about the work). Many shared that it was clear how much the youth they were serving needed extra support and how gratifying it was to be able to offer them those supports. One facilitator described the shift in tone this way:

*“There were these waves of uncertainties, and then [we] figured that out. But then there was something else: once people got kids, even one kid, they were like, this is why we’re here. This all makes sense.”*

The next chapter will provide more information about Hub implementation, delving into more detail about issues related to facilities, staffing, public safety measures, and program activities.

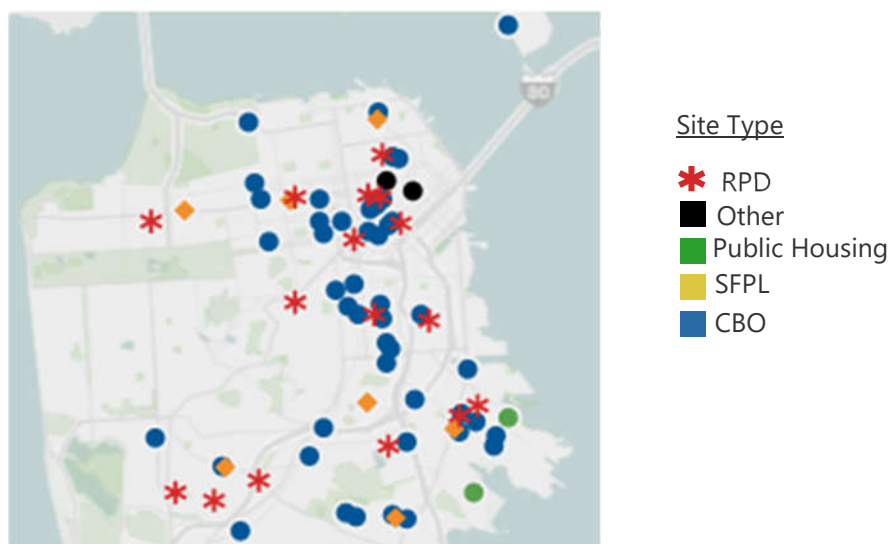
# 3 | Hub Implementation

As the Community Hubs Initiative wrapped up the Planning Phase, anchor agencies shifted their focus toward program implementation. The CHI was structured to promote autonomy and flexibility in the rollout of the Hubs so that anchor agencies could capitalize on their strengths and adapt as needed to meet the needs of students and their families. With support from DCYF, anchor agencies selected their launch date, recruited and trained staff, established channels of communication between partners (e.g., city departments, CBO partners, educators, and families), operationalized distance learning supports, and delivered program services—all while tending to state and local health and safety regulations. This chapter provides an overview of Hub implementation, with a focus on the Hubs’ locations and facilities, staffing, public safety features, and program activities.

## Locations and Facilities

From the onset, the CHI sought to position Hubs in the neighborhoods with the highest levels of need to best reach priority populations such as English Learners, low-income families, and youth living in public housing, experiencing homelessness, or in the foster care system. To the degree possible, CHI partners also worked to position Hubs close to public transportation so that they could be easily reached by priority populations without access to vehicles. As illustrated in Figure 6, as of the end of 2020, Hubs were located all over the city but were concentrated in the highest-need neighborhoods: almost half of all Hubs (38) were located in the neighborhoods of Bayview-Hunters Point (13), the Mission (9), the Tenderloin (7), South of Market (SOMA) (5), and Visitacion Valley (4). Appendix D includes the number of Hub sites in each neighborhood.

**Figure 6: Hub Locations as of December 31, 2020**



One of the early challenges facing CHI coordinators was identifying facility space for the Hubs, a process that was made more difficult by SFUSD’s decision to not open their school buildings to serve as Hub sites. Although most anchor agencies (including RPD sites) had access to their own physical space, 12 did not. DCYF staff combed through neighborhoods looking for churches or community centers with adequate facilities to host Hubs. Fortunately, city departments, such as SFPL and Hope SF (public housing), offered their facilities to CBOs that needed a physical space in which to open a Hub, including 7 sites at libraries and 2 at Hope SF Public Housing. In addition to these sites, 2 Hubs were hosted at the Marriott hotel at Union Square and 1 was hosted at the Yerba Buena Museum, as shown below in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Host Sites for Hubs\***



*\* as of December 31, 2020*

Our program and parent surveys uncovered some challenges specifically related to facilities and space. Anchor agencies with smaller spaces found it more difficult to implement social distancing requirements and to make room for both distance learning and enrichment. Furthermore, Hubs without access to sufficient outdoor spaces could not offer regular recreation for students, resulting in long days spent in front of the computer. For instance, Hub staff from one site said that they “desperately” needed access to outdoor space for recreation, and that their plan to use local parks for recreation was delayed due to inadequate insurance coverage. At a couple of sites, students and staff needed to leave the Hub space to access the bathrooms, which was disruptive and made it challenging to enforce consistent hand washing. As was true with so many aspects of Hub implementation, staff worked with the space available to them, using creative strategies (such as plexiglass barriers) to follow health guidelines and meet the needs of their students.



## Staffing

Staffing the Hubs required a shift in how anchor agencies have traditionally done their work: they could not, as they typically would, rely on part-time staff and partners to create a diverse network of enrichment supports for youth. Guidelines set out by the CADPH set the adult-to-student ratio for the Hubs at a maximum of 2:14, and also emphasized that sites should minimize adult-to-adult interaction, since this is the most common way that the virus spreads. To satisfy this requirement, programs created “pods” of students within the Hubs, each with a ratio of 2:14 or smaller, and made efforts to minimize adult interaction across pods as much as possible. Furthermore, most Hubs were staffed by full-time or close-to-full-time employees, and programs minimized the use of partners to reduce the number of adults who interact with each pod. The overall effect of these shifts was that staffing for the Hubs was leaner than anchor agencies are used to, and staff worked longer days with limited breaks.

Logistical concerns aside, one of the most stressful aspects of operating the Hubs for anchor agencies was concern for the wellbeing of their staff and worries about exposing them and their families to infection. One of the strengths of youth organizations is that their staff often reflect the diversity of the youth being served, which means that many of the Hub workers who took on higher levels of risk identify as Black, Indigenous, Multi-racial or People of Color (BIMPOC)—a group that has disproportionate infection and death rates from COVID-19. Because of these concerns, managers from many anchor agencies raised questions about equitable access to hazard pay and health insurance for their staff.

“ We already have a history of collaborating with previous programs and events in the neighborhood, so we have good and open communication between staff and managers.”

- Hub Staff

“ The core strengths staff are leaning on are flexibility, the ability to provide differentiation, the ability to connect and provide positive adult support, the strong relationships staff have built with families, and ability to trust and depend on one another.”

- Hub Staff



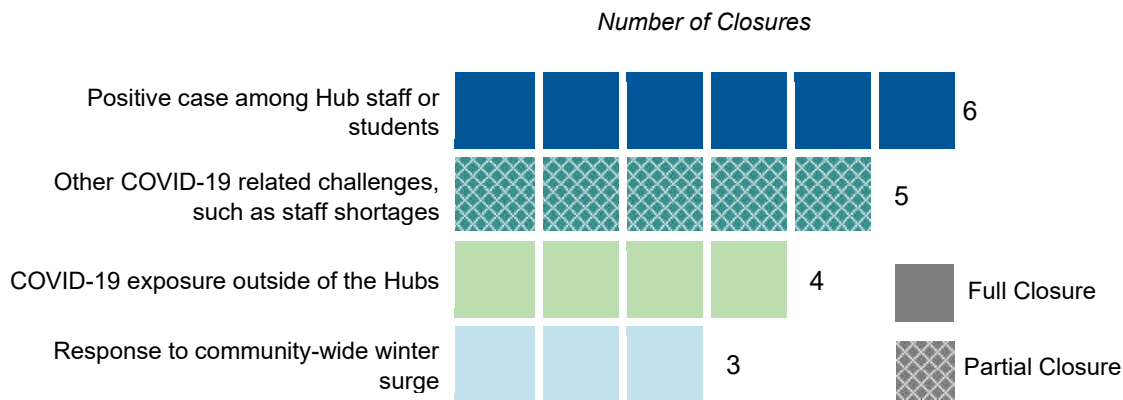
Respondents said that they had a difficult time recruiting and retaining Hub staff because of the risk of exposure to the virus, lean staffing, the high needs of the student population served by the Hubs, and the requirement that staff work longer days. Other barriers to staff retention included the requirement that Hub staff get regularly tested for COVID-19, difficulty accessing tests, and the need for some staff to use vacation time when they tested positive for COVID-19 or needed to quarantine. To address this, some programs built in wellness days and additional paid time off. At least one anchor agency created a pool of substitutes, who could be drawn on to support pods if Hub staff needed a break, got sick, or needed to quarantine.

**Staffing at Hubs**

Although staffing numbers have fluctuated due to turnover and other factors, the available data indicates that over 550 staff work at the 78 Hubs. Staffing ranges from 2-22 staff per Hub (depending on the number of pods and other staff roles), with an average of 7 staff at each.

Despite these challenges, Hubs were able to satisfactorily staff their programs with relatively few shutdowns or infections. In 2020, programs reported 13 full Hub closures and 5 partial closures (the closure of one cohort) related to COVID-19. As shown in Figure 8 only six of these closures were due to positive COVID-19 tests among staff or students. During these closures, Hubs were closed from 1-10 days, with an average closure of 5 days.

**Figure 8: Reasons for Program Closures\***



\* As of December 31, 2020

In surveys and interviews, anchor agency leaders underscored that their efforts were enabled and supported by staff members' deep commitment to the CHI's mission and willingness to do whatever it took to meet the needs of vulnerable students and families. Hub staff oversaw the implementation of health and safety regulations, built relationships with families, kept track of multiple school schedules, supported distance learning, and tended to students' social and emotional needs. They also often connected families with additional supportive services and engage with teachers, social

workers, and school administrators as needed to help support their students. Across the board, leaders of anchor agencies highlighted staff's flexibility, adaptability, and patience as critical assets to the successful implementation of the CHI and marveled at their resourcefulness and ability to handle high degrees of uncertainty and stress.

## Public Safety Features

As described in the previous section, Hubs grouped students in small pods or cohorts, with an adult-to-student ratio of no more than 2:14 to meet CADPH guidelines. Because the physical space varied from one Hub to the next, anchor agencies were in charge of implementing their own safety precautions as long as they followed state health orders. Programs emphasized social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing, and took extra steps to keep pods separated. Although anchor agencies were responsible for implementing public safety features, DCYF and city partners played a key role in distributing the supplies necessary to launch the Hubs, such as plexiglass frames, temperature assessment devices, hand sanitizer, and PPE such as gloves and masks.

In our survey, anchor agency managers indicated that they needed to be creative in order to get children (and parents) to follow the safety guidelines. Many programs drew on their youth development background to identify youth-friendly ways to encourage students to follow health protocols. Hubs working with elementary and middle school youth found that the most effective strategy was to use signs with visual cues: they strategically placed posters to remind students to wash their hands, keep their masks on, and social distance from their peers. Another Hub had students use six-foot long pieces of rope to periodically assess if they were too close to their peers. Some Hubs adopted a "start small and then grow" approach: they enrolled a small number of students during the launch of a Hub to establish health and safety norms, and then slowly increased their enrollment numbers. Staff found that slowly enrolling students into an environment where their peers were already subscribing to health and safety protocols was a successful approach. Above all, anchor agency managers said that these strategies were made effective by their staff members' commitment to modeling effective health and safety precautions by following the protocols themselves.

### Examples of Public Safety Practices at Hubs

- Mask wearing
- Physical distancing
- Small, stable cohorts
- Good hand hygiene
- Appropriate ventilation
- Symptom screening
- COVID-19 testing

“*Incorporating a youth development mindset alongside the health order guidelines has worked well for us.*”

- Hub Staff

## Program Activities

The primary goal of the CHI was to provide safe, supportive locations with internet access where students engage in distance learning with the support of adults. In keeping with this goal, Hubs designated most of their time to supporting distance learning and to the provision of academic support. As they got into the rhythm of running the Hub, programs worked to provide more recreation, enrichment, and support for social and emotional learning. Programs also sought to support families, by connecting them with additional supports.

The following bullets highlight the specific activities that fall into each of these activity areas:

- **Distance learning and academic support.** Common distance learning support included managing student schedules, assisting with technology, confirming students log in to class, and liaising between educators and parents. Staff also provided considerable academic support through individual tutoring across multiple subjects.
- **Translation and language support.** Bilingual staff provided translation support with written materials for English Learners and also served as interpreters for students and their families when communicating with educators to review academic plans. In the parent survey, three parents identified language support as a valuable support offered to their children by the Hubs.
- **Recreation and enrichment.** Staff reported that students were becoming increasingly frustrated by the routine of having to sit in front of a computer screen all day. Thus, whenever possible, Hubs that had access to outdoor spaces regularly engaged youth in recreation, sports, and play. Enrichment activities included card games, arts and crafts, and other interactive learning activities. Parents noticed and appreciated that Hubs expanded the range of activities offered to students, noting in surveys that facilitated student interaction helped to establish a "sense of normalcy."
- **Social emotional learning (SEL).** Recognizing the stressful academic, health, economic, and social times in which students were living, the CHI emphasized the importance of SEL support. Given the demands of distance learning, there was limited time and capacity for most programs to regularly provide structured SEL-focused activities. Hubs that had enough staff capacity reported creating unique opportunities for students to learn and practice SEL skills in ways that felt less like the classroom and more like "real life." For example, staff took time to sit down with students and coach them through behavioral challenges and personal frustrations. Staff also sought to provide consistent positive reinforcement and modeling for

“We provide enrichment ....and the positive aspect of that is you can make a quite strong personal connection with the students. And so the teachers are reaching out in a way that's different than a group setting.”

- Hub Staff

students so that they felt safe asking for support. In addition to supporting SEL in the Hub setting, Hub staff referred families to therapists through their partnership with the Department of Public Health.

- **Support for families.** Anchor agency staff shared that during the student drop-off and pick-up times, many families would disclose concerns about their financial and health conditions due to the pandemic. There were parents who experienced a reduced work schedule or lost their jobs altogether, making it challenging to provide financial stability for their families, and ultimately impacting their mental health. These personal conversations prompted staff to refer families to social service programs to apply for food benefits, financial assistance, and mental health services. The CHI's nimbleness to provide family support strengthened the partnership between parents and staff that is required for their children's continual success.

There were also a number of challenges related to implementing program activities. By far the most common challenge had to do with managing distance learning for students who attend different schools, are in different grade levels, and have different teachers. The diversity of the students and the varied expectations of them on the part of their schools made it very challenging for staff to stay on top of their assignments and log-in times, and to navigate between the different technological platforms that students needed to use in order to fulfill the requirements of their classes. The second most common challenge identified by anchor agency leads was that the students often needed a lot of specialized academic and social support that Hub staff were not trained to provide. Furthermore, even students without special needs often started at the Hub with so many missed assignments that it seemed impossible for them to catch up. Finally, the distance learning and academic support aspects absorbed so much of the day that programs had limited time to provide the types of recreational, enrichment, and SEL activities that they wanted.

“ [Students] have different times that they have to be on Zoom [or] their lunch break. There's no consistency for the staff to organize the [Hub] and that is really hard. You could literally have a [single] staff person for three kids.”

- Hub Staff

## Reflections on Hub Implementation

If the pandemic was uncharted territory for all of the CHI stakeholders, equity and the desire to support those most likely to be left behind by distance learning were the compass that helped stakeholders navigate implementation challenges along the way. At each turning point, stakeholders based their decisions on a shared commitment to serve students and families most negatively impacted by the virus. Agency leads who responded to our survey, parent survey respondents, and interviewees agreed that the dedication and sense of comradery that staff and partners had around supporting students and families was the driving force behind the CHI. Reflecting back on implementation, some key themes emerged.

- **Learning from early adopters and summer programs.** Some anchor agencies were already operating programs during the summer months leading up to the implementation of the CHI, which was invaluable to maneuvering around anticipated challenges. These summer programs were already operating under strict health and safety regulations and limited staff capacity, so they were able to plan accordingly. These organizations also helped to educate other anchor agencies about what steps they needed to take to implement public safety guidelines.
- **Building on a foundation of strong trusting relationships.** Communication was eased by the longstanding connections and trust that exist between DCYF and the CBOs due to years of collaboration in youth development and afterschool programming. This allowed CHI partners to have honest discussions about sharing responsibilities in the day-to-day operations of the Hub, like adequately allocating staff, confirming hours of operation, setting expectations for families, establishing norms for students, and in some cases even sharing the financial burden of running the Hub. CBOs also drew on partner CBOs to help outreach to students.
- **Providing one-on-one problem-solving support.** Because agencies all faced their own unique challenges to implementation and had their own space constraints, DCYF specialists and RPD staff found it useful to have one-on-one meetings with Hub leaders and anchor agencies to work out solutions tailored to their unique situation.

Over the course of five months (August – December 2020), partner stakeholders successfully opened 78 Hubs, with over 1,600 students enrolled by the end of December. Getting that many Hubs up and running was a tremendous collective effort on the part of city agencies and community-based organizations, motivated by a deep commitment to equity and supporting San Francisco's children, youth, and families. In the next chapter, we share information on the recruitment and intake process, and provide an overview of the characteristics of those served by the Hubs thus far.

# 4 | Outreach & Enrollment

DCYF set out to serve the students they felt would be most negatively affected by distance learning. Specifically, city leaders sought to prioritize youth experiencing homelessness; students in the foster care system; residents of HOPE SF, public housing, and single-room occupancy units (SROs); English Learners; and students from low-income families.<sup>6</sup> As this chapter demonstrates, the recruitment and enrollment process was shaped with this intention as the guiding principle.

This chapter begins with a description of the recruitment and enrollment process, shifts in that process over time, and reflections from the first four months of enrollment.

## The Outreach and Enrollment Process

To streamline the process and ensure that the students with the most need received priority, DCFY initially took responsibility for outreach and recruitment activities that their funded partners traditionally manage. This decision was made to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Ensure that the highest-need students, not only the students already served by anchor agencies, had an opportunity to participate.
- 2) Lessen the burden for anchor agencies to manage outreach and enrollment so that they could focus on Hub design and implementation.
- 3) Guarantee that Hubs did not exceed the mandated staff-to-student ratios.
- 4) Avoid inviting families to apply if there were no available slots for them by pacing the distribution of applications with the number of slots being made available.

### CHI Priority Students:

- Residents of HOPE SF, public housing, RVs and SROs
- Students experiencing homelessness
- Children in the foster care system
- English Learners
- Low-income families, with a focus on historically impacted communities, including people who identify as African American, Latino/a/x, Pacific Islander, and/or Asian.

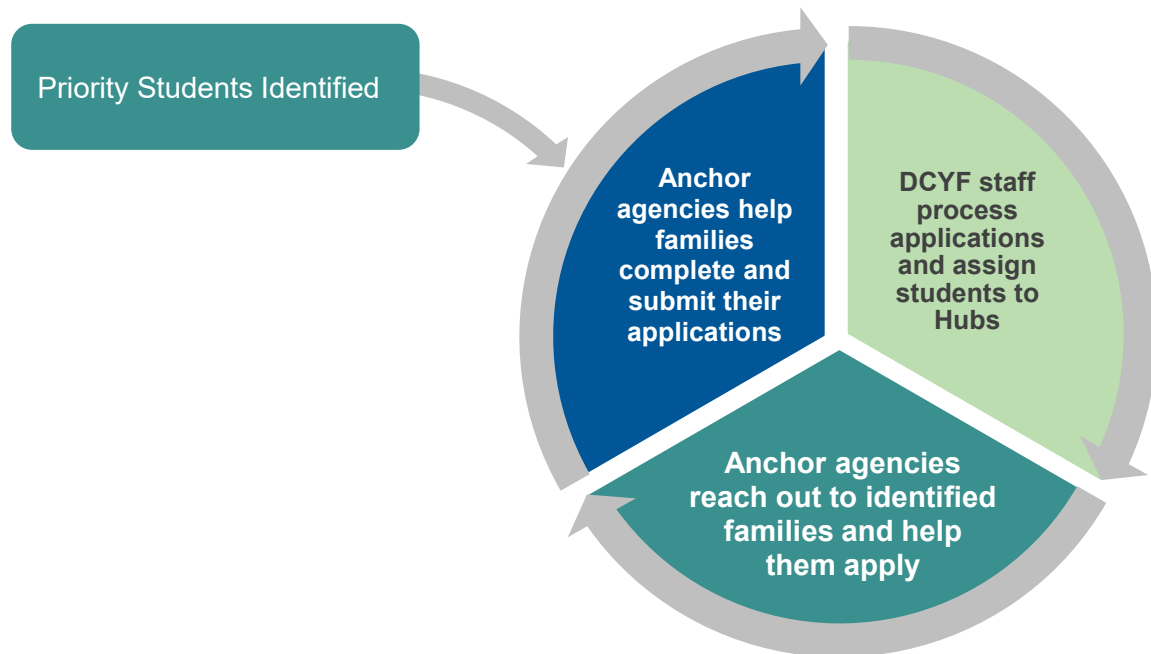
“ We took a careful approach to avoid waitlists with hundreds of people who will never be placed... We don't want to let people down, we don't want people to hear about [the Hubs], plan for it, and never get placed.”

- DCFY Enrollment Specialist

<sup>6</sup> The HOPE SF initiative seeks to transform four of San Francisco's most distressed public housing sites into thriving communities through revitalization. The definition of homelessness in San Francisco includes individuals who are “doubled-up” in the homes of family or friends.

DCYF designed the recruitment and enrollment process with these goals in mind. The iterative process to enroll students, detailed in Figure 9 below, was repeated for Phase 1 and Phase 2 enrollment. Below we identify three critical components of the process, how they were meant to achieve the goals outlined above, and how they operated in the real world.

**Figure 9: Overview of Recruitment and Enrollment Plan**



### **Identification of the highest priority students**

Because SFUSD had not joined the CHI when planning and recruitment began, DCYF took the lead in identifying the highest priority students. In August, DCYF’s Data and Evaluation team used existing student data that had been entered by DCYF-funded agencies into its database to identify students who met the priority criteria for its first wave of recruitment, which focused on grades K-6. DCYF staff acknowledged that, although many Hubs already served a high proportion of students who fit the priority eligibility criteria, the first round of recruitment may have missed some of the highest need students because they did not have established relationships with DCYF-funded organizations, HSA, Hope SF, or the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing or because the information in DCYF’s database did not capture all their risk factors. Beginning in mid-September, DCYF worked with SFUSD to identify the highest need students at their schools for the second wave of recruitment.

“Unapologetically sticking with [our priority criteria] was a key milestone that helped us set up everything else. We didn’t have to worry if we were getting the right students because we had established that early on and everything we did reinforced that.”

– Sherrice Dorsey, DCYF Deputy Director, Program Planning and Grants



## Outreach to students and families

DCYF sent each anchor agency a list of eligible students who had been served by that agency in the past and anchor agencies were tasked with contacting their families to inform them of the opportunity to enroll in a Hub and guide them through the application process. The official enrollment opened on August 24. Each selected family was assigned a unique code that was required for enrollment. If families were not able to fill out online forms, anchor agencies provided paper forms that were then entered electronically by their staff. When possible, youth were assigned to Hubs anchored by agencies with which the student has a preexisting relationship.

In practice, this step sometimes created a bottleneck. Because the families identified in the first round of enrollment were the most in need, it was often difficult to reach parents. According to anchor agency staff, they often had to follow up with some families multiple times. In the meantime, anchor agencies knew families who were not on the list but would have been eager to take a slot immediately. In addition, anchor agency staff reported that many families did not understand how to complete the online applications and consent forms; they found the process to be lengthy and cumbersome. As a result, anchor agency staff often spent a great deal of time helping families complete the application.

In addition to these challenges, anchor agencies struggled to answer questions from families not on the initial eligibility lists about the Hub, the eligibility requirements, and the application process. One anchor agency staff member reported: "When we direct them to 311 they only receive basic information, yet no information on who to contact, how to sign up, etc.<sup>7</sup>. Having these answers before the Hub started would have been helpful."

In the second wave of recruitment, SFUSD took the lead in identifying the highest-need students. DCYF gave SFUSD unique codes that they could distribute to the selected families. Schools either

““ Some of the youth who are most in need, who have had the hardest time connecting to school and virtual learning, might be disconnected from our CBOs entirely.”

- DCYF Enrollment Specialist

““ The youth who are in really high need, their lives are pretty chaotic under normal circumstances, and especially right now. It's harder to reach parents, it's harder to confirm things...So to hold those spots open and wait for those youth would be to deny other youth that are ready.”

- DCYF Enrollment Specialist

---

<sup>7</sup> 311 is a non-emergency hotline used to ask questions about community resources without tying up emergency lines.



reached out to families directly or worked with anchor agencies that typically partner with them to help them fill out the application forms.

### *Assignment of students to Hubs*

Seven DCYF staff members and one RPD analyst were assigned to serve as neighborhood-specific enrollment specialists, allowing these specialists to develop extensive knowledge about the Hubs in their areas. For example, for each of their sites, specialists track the number of available slots, staff language capacity, site proximity to public transit, and the Hub's ability to accommodate special needs. Enrollment specialists reviewed applications from families in their assigned neighborhoods, then contacted families directly to learn more about their students and concerns they might have. Specialists then matched youth to Hubs by balancing student needs, family preference, site capacity, transportation issues, and geography. They processed applications and assigned students in batches every week, enabling specialists to sort out the competing needs of families and ensure that families with specific needs were placed in the most appropriate Hub. Some Hubs had already operated summer learning programs with eligible families and were able to continue working with these students and fill remaining slots through the Hub recruitment process.

After being assigned to a Hub, families received an acceptance letter that had to be signed and returned within one week; otherwise, the slot went to the next youth. In these cases, the family was still eligible to participate, but they were placed at the end of the queue.

During this step, enrollment specialists spent a great deal of time communicating with both anchor agency staff members and families. Specialists reported that they communicated over phone, email, and text with anchor agency staff throughout the week to monitor changes in enrollment; check on their capacity to take on different ages, languages, and special needs; and answer their questions. As described above, specialists reached out to families while determining Hub assignments to discuss their needs and concerns about participation. The specialists also reported that, because they still had other, non-CHI related responsibilities, the time intensity of this position required them to frequently work during their off-hours.

Enrollment specialists believed that balancing myriad considerations and needs helped achieve the most equitable assignments, but this step caused delays between a family's submission of their application and their registration at a Hub. Two factors at times exacerbated these delays: first, the caseload was unevenly distributed among enrollment specialists, with some coordinating enrollment for as many as 17 Hubs simultaneously. Second, there were delays when enrollment specialists required translation support when communicating with families in languages other than English or Spanish.

## Shifts in the Process Over Time

The enrollment process generally met the goals outlined above. By the end of December, over 1,600 students were enrolled in a CHI Hub. DCYF and the CHI partners balanced the competing needs of families and avoiding waitlists of students that were never served. Still, the process also created other challenges that CHI partners addressed with some shifts over time.

DCYF and anchor agency staff identified two distinct bottlenecks in the Phase 1 process. As described above, anchor agencies spent a great deal of time contacting families on their list and guiding them through the application process. Second, assigning students to Hubs in batches led to a delay between application and enrollment, especially if any of the information in the application was incorrect or required follow up from enrollment specialists.

As a result of these delays, it took longer than expected for slots to be filled at some Hubs, causing frustration considering the known need for these services. Some anchor agencies also felt that these delays may have compromised trust in their programs among families who did not expect to wait so long between applying to the Hubs and being placed.

Although anchor agency staff understood the desire to prioritize those most in need, they also argued that working with youth with whom they already have relationships would make enrollment more efficient, put students in the Hubs more quickly, and allow them to build on the strong relationships they have with youth (as strong relationships are known to strengthen youth development programming). Moreover, anchor agencies that operated school-based programs prior to school closures felt torn between continuing to serve the students from their school and participating in the CHI.

To address these challenges, program specialists worked individually with their assigned Hubs to identify more flexible processes, which often involved allowing sites to fill a portion of their openings without going through the DCYF assignment process. Some anchor agencies, including RPD, ended up doing their own recruitment to fill their slots. After SFUSD took the lead on identifying students in the second phase of recruitment, Hubs could work directly with staff from specific schools to help them recruit and enroll the highest-need students.

Looking to the future, the enrollment specialists we interviewed reflected on their desire for more coordination among DCYF staff to further streamline the enrollment process. The specialists observed that having multiple teams from DCYF involved in the process created efficiencies but also some challenges. The DCYF Data and Evaluation team houses the data for enrollment, including site capacity and hours of operation; DCYF program

“ It's natural that CBOs want to serve the youth that they already know, that they've spent years building relationships with. It's entirely different for them meet and support new youth in a crisis that they don't have an existing relationship with, during a pandemic.”

- DCYF Enrollment Specialist

specialists work with anchor agency staff around programmatic expectations; and enrollment specialists communicate with sites about their capacity and with families about their needs. Having different points of contact with anchor agency staff creates the risk of different information being shared. For example, enrollment specialists were not always aware of negotiations between anchor agency staff and program specialists about the number of slots agencies would fill themselves, or when a Hub was only accepting participants who were identified by their school. Enrollment specialists suggested that holding regular meetings with anchor agency staff members, program specialists and including enrollment specialists on communication between program specialists and anchor agencies would allow everyone to have shared knowledge and expectations.

## Reflections on the Outreach and Enrollment Process

Over the course of five months, DCYF designed and executed a system for identifying, recruiting, and enrolling children and youth in 78 Hubs across the city. Although challenges arose, DCYF and CHI partners worked together to balance the desire to serve the highest-need students with the desire to get as many vulnerable students as possible back into enriching learning environments as soon as possible.

Stakeholders, including enrollment specialists, anchor agency staff, and DCYF leaders, identified what facilitated the recruitment and enrollment process:

- **Dedicated enrollment specialists.** While many anchor agency staff wanted more clarity earlier on about the enrollment process, they also agreed that DCYF staff have been responsive, flexible, understanding, and willing to problem solve. The recruitment and enrollment process played out more smoothly when enrollment specialists set expectations around communication, required paperwork, and the logistics of the process in detail with anchor agency staff prior to launching enrollment.
- **Systems to reduce burden on anchor agencies.** Many anchor agencies appreciated that they did not have to create application and consent forms, although some partners suggested that Hubs should have the option of using their own established procedures, systems, and software if available.
- **Recruitment building on pre-existing relationships.** Anchor agencies have relationships with families and work directly with schools in their Hub communities that they can leverage to quickly begin providing services. For example, one site held ongoing meetings with school social workers and principals to identify and coordinate outreach to their students with the greatest need.

As shown in this chapter, DCYF and CHI partners balanced tensions between the desire to quickly deliver needed services to children and youth and the desire to prioritize the highest need—and often hardest to reach—students. In the next section, we present emerging outcomes for students, families, teachers, and schools engaged in the CHI.

# 5 | Preliminary Outcomes

The most notable outcome emerging from the Community Hubs Initiative is that, despite the extremely compressed timeline, not having a clear blueprint for implementation at the onset, and the multiple challenges posed by the pandemic, the partners in this initiative were able to successfully open Hubs and start serving students within their estimated timeframe. Over the course of five months, the CHI successfully opened 78 Hub sites, serving over 1,600 high-needs students across over 30 neighborhoods, resulting in successful partnerships across city agencies and strengthened relationships across organizations that support youth throughout San Francisco. In this chapter, we share other emerging outcomes, primarily at the student level, but also at the family and school levels. While these outcomes offer insights into emerging areas of progress, since the Hubs had only been in operation for three months as of the drafting of this report, these outcomes are preliminary.

## Student Characteristics

As of December 2020, a total of 1,605 students were enrolled in a Hub. As demonstrated in Figure 10 below, Hubs successfully enrolled students who fit DCYF’s priority criteria.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 10: Alignment with Priority Criteria (Number of Youth Falling into Priority Areas)**

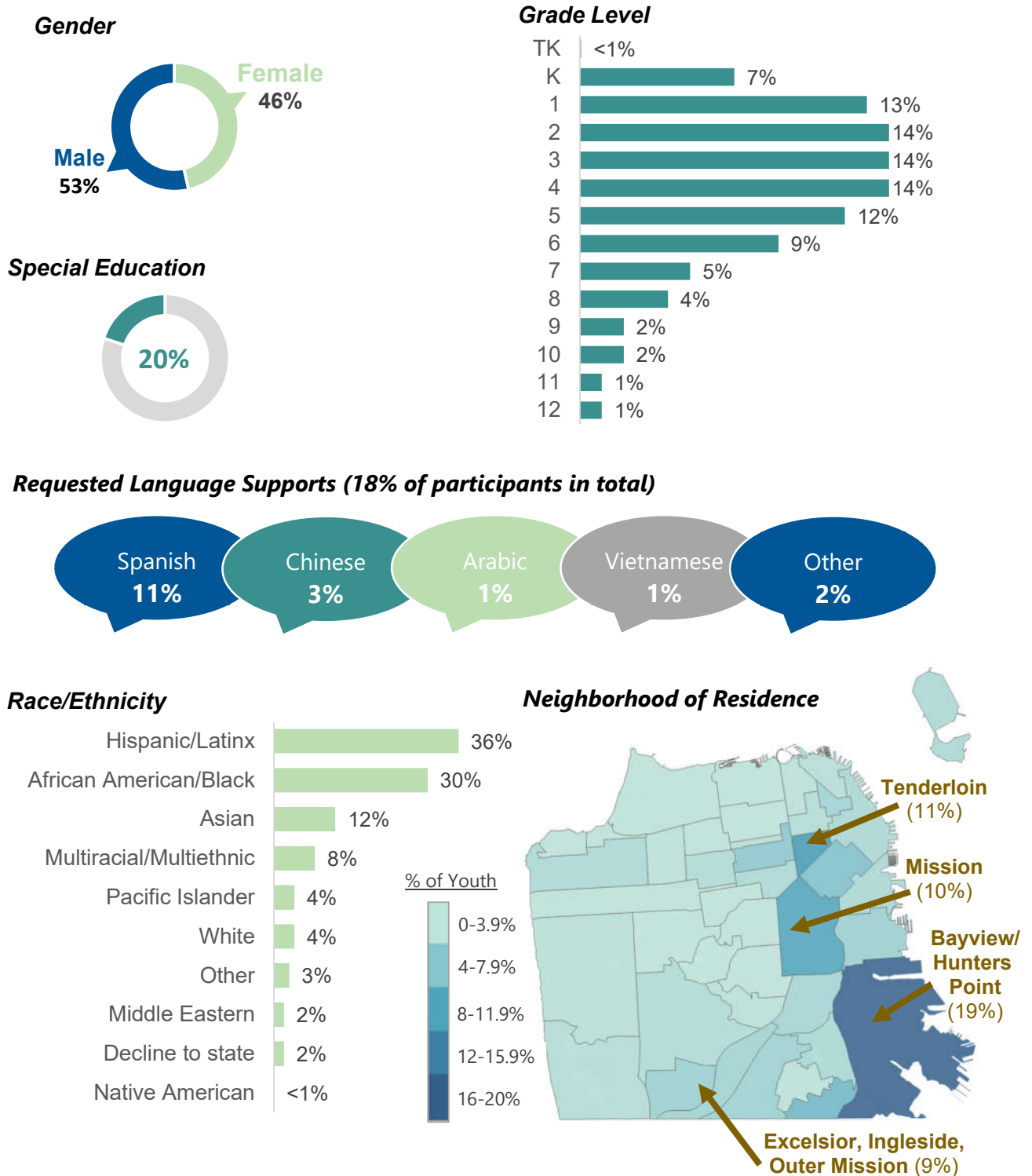
<b>Students experiencing homelessness or residing in public housing/SROs</b>	<b>679 youth (42% of Hub participants)</b> Over one-quarter of CHI participants reside in public housing (453), 10% (158) were from families experiencing homelessness, and 4% (68) resided in SROs.
<b>Students in the Foster Care System</b>	<b>18 youth (1% of Hub participants)</b> Across San Francisco, 5% of all foster youth aged 6-17 attended a Hub.
<b>English Learners</b>	<b>411+ youth (34% of SFUSD Hub participants*)</b> At enrollment, 18% of participants requested language supports.
<b>Students from Low-Income Families, with a focus on historically impacted communities</b>	<b>847+ students (71% of SFUSD Hub participants*)</b> Close to two-thirds of participants were enrolled in at least one county-operated safety net program, and over 80% identified as African American, Latino/a/x, Pacific Islander and/or Asian.

\* Of the 1,200 SFUSD students who were enrolled in a Hub as of 11/20/2020. This data came from SFUSD records; it was only possible to calculate this percentage for SFUSD students.

<sup>8</sup> According to the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, there were 332 foster youth in San Francisco as of 10/1/2020. *California Child Welfare Indicators Project*. Accessed 1/27/21 from <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>.

We provide more information related to CHI participant demographics below in Figure 11. Notably, while 12 percent of SFUSD students were enrolled in Special Education, 20 percent of SFUSD CHI participants were enrolled in Special Education. Because the first phase of enrollment focused on K-6 graders, it is not surprising that CHI participants were most likely to be in elementary school.

**Figure 11: CHI Participant Demographics (1,605 students enrolled as of December 22, 2020)**



## Student Outcomes

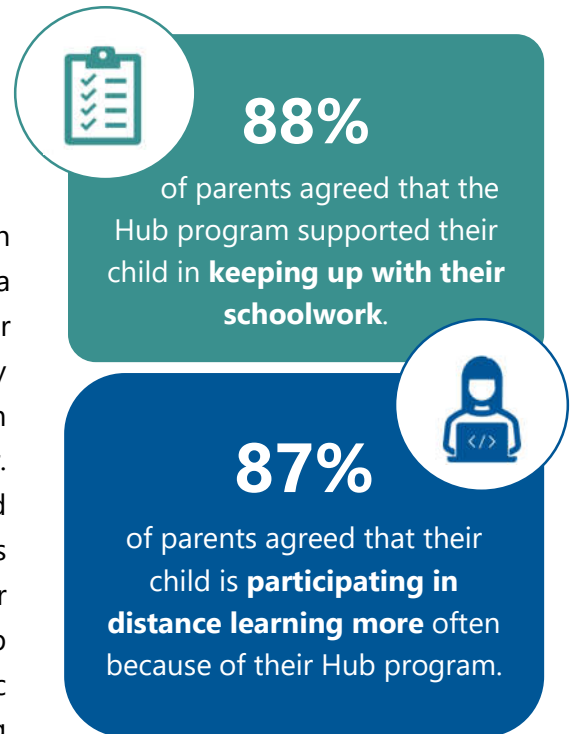
As noted in Chapter 4, the Hubs were designed to support students who were least likely to succeed in a distance learning environment and under the added pressures introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section we highlight emerging student outcomes related to two key focal areas: academic engagement and social emotional wellbeing.

### Academic Engagement

*“I saw major improvements in my daughter’s involvement in class, academics, and attitude when she began attending the program. Her teacher can attest to this as well.” - Parent*

Concerns about learning loss due to COVID-19 and the shift to distance learning has made supporting academic engagement one of the Hubs’ most urgent priorities. Indeed, some Hub staff shared that several of the students in their programs were extremely behind in their assignments, and some had never even logged into a Zoom meeting. While some Hub staff thought that their support was perhaps most impactful for these extremely disengaged students, results from the parent survey from December 2020 indicate that the impact has been broader. The majority of parent survey respondents (87%) agreed that their child’s participation in distance learning has increased, and they are better able to keep up with their schoolwork because of their participation in the Hub (88%). Parents expressed gratitude for the extra academic support the Hubs have provided to their children, noting that the successful implementation of the following program elements contributed to their child’s engagement:

- **Conducive learning environment.** Many parent survey respondents shared that their children were better able to engage academically because the Hub environment is much more conducive to learning than their home environment. In addition to having the necessary equipment and internet access for students to effectively engage in distance learning, Hub staff shared that students often needed help with technical logistics and navigating the virtual classroom environment, noting that parents are often unable to provide this kind of support. Indeed, 62% of parent survey respondents reported that they enrolled their child in a Hub specifically because they needed this type of support in coordinating distance learning activities.



- **Individualized attention.** Hub staff noted that for a number of their students, simply having consistent, caring adults watching over them helped improve student academic engagement. This helped students complete their assignments, as Hub staff were able to make sure that students were actually attending their classes and could help keep the students “on task.” As one Hub staff member shared, “For a lot of these children, they’re getting the attention and the support that they really have needed for years, even to have someone just stand by your side while you’re trying to figure something out.”

“ My child is a very active and restless kid. Having remote classes at the community [Hub] is a very important issue for him. Thanks [for] the help of every teacher at the community center who has been so warm-hearted in helping with his study every day. As [a] parent, I am greatly indebted to every one of the teachers in the community [Hub]. Thank you!”

- Parent

- **Academic support.** Some parents shared that as a result of their children’s participation in the Hubs, their children were doing better academically, with a few noting that they were seeing an increase in reading ability and learning retention. They attributed this success to the academic tutoring provided by Hub staff as well as the staff’s efforts to support students in following better study habits. Some Hub staff have shared that the academic supports provided by the Hubs are not just appreciated by parents, but also by teachers and school administrators, with one Hub staff sharing that they “have all voiced their appreciation for the Hub, especially for the students with learning difficulties, with whom schools had previously struggled to find a place that could support them.” That said, multiple staff members have also shared concerns about their ability to adequately support students with special needs, given capacity and training constraints. Supporting students with special needs was, in fact, the area where programs rated themselves as least effective.

### Social Emotional Wellbeing

*“Personally, it has helped my child so much with his emotional state. His stress level has decreased, he is much calmer. My child always goes to the programs and has always enjoyed attending, and he likes to participate in the activities. For us, these programs are very essential, especially for our children.” – Parent*

Responses to the survey of agency leads indicated that Hub staff felt they were most effective in their efforts to provide a safe space for students to come to regularly, which was critical to supporting their social emotional wellbeing. Staff added that many of the students they serve live in high-stress



environments and being able to go to the Hub on a daily basis has provided them some respite. As one Hub staff noticed, “[Students’] mental health and level of well-being has improved, just simply by being away from home and onsite at the program.” Another shared that the Hubs “are providing [students] with a stress-free, worry-free space outside of all the chaos between politics, family struggles, and the pandemic.”

Respondents to the parent survey acknowledged the stress their children have been feeling, with one parent noting that “while this pandemic has been hard for us all, I can only imagine how hard it’s been for the kids. So having [this] program is very important to me.” Many parents shared that they saw improvements in their children’s mental health and happiness as a result of Hub participation. In fact, 90 percent of parent survey respondents agreed that their child was doing better emotionally because of the Hub program. Parents and Hub staff connected improvements in overall mental health and wellbeing to the Hubs’ effectiveness in implementing the following strategies:

- **Creating a sense of “normalcy and consistency” for students.** Parents shared that the Hubs created a sense of “normalcy” and “consistency,” which helped students persist through the disruptions and stresses caused by the pandemic and are critical to their social emotional health. Hub staff agreed, with one sharing that “the Hub is sustaining an overall sense of normalcy amidst the pandemic. The routine and consistency is providing a sense of safety.”
- **Providing opportunities for healthy social engagement.** Parent survey responses indicated that a key benefit of the Hubs has been that they provide their children with opportunities to engage socially with peers, which they have otherwise been unable to do at home, and which parents feel is critical to their child’s emotional wellbeing. Ninety-



**95%**

parents/caregivers agreed that their child **feels safe** at their Hub program



**97%**

of parents agreed that their Hub program genuinely **cares** about their child.



**91%**

of parents agreed that their child has more **opportunities to make friends** because of the Hub program.

“*Being at home is very frustrating for my children. Having the ability to continue with their routine, leave home, and be in a different environment helps them emotionally and psychologically in order to forget about the situation and alleviate their stress.*”

- Parent



one percent of parents agreed that their child has more opportunities to make friends because of the Hub program. In addition to being able to socialize with other children, parents also appreciated the healthy and supportive relationships their children were forming with Hub staff, with 97 percent of parents agreeing that staff at their Hub program genuinely care about their child. Several parents also

connected the opportunities for social engagement with increased academic engagement, with one parent sharing, "It gives my child an opportunity to get out, connect with other children, and stay grounded so he can sustain distance learning."

- **Supporting physical wellbeing.** A key way in which Hubs have been able to support the social emotional wellbeing of students is by also attending to their physical wellbeing. While COVID-19 guidelines and space limitations created challenges for some Hubs to fully implement their physical activity/recreation activities, parents expressed gratitude for these opportunities when they were made available, noting how important physical activity was for the mental health of their children. Hub staff also supported students' physical wellbeing by providing them with meals and snacks. Some Hub staff expressed worry about the effects of economic insecurity on the students they serve, noting that through the Hubs they are able to ensure that students experiencing food insecurity are receiving meals on a consistent basis.

““ *Students have become more focused, less tired, read more, talk to each other, and there are definitely a lot more smiles and laughter.*”

- Hub Staff

## Other Outcomes

While the Hubs' main priority was to support students through the pandemic, by doing so, they were ultimately also supporting others who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the wellbeing of these children and youth—namely, families and teachers, on whom we focus in this section.

### Family Support

While the Hubs' main priorities are to support students, Hub staff were also keenly aware of the increased challenges faced by their families during the pandemic. On multiple occasions, Hub staff shared their concerns for families, suggesting that there should be community Hubs focused on supporting parents and caregivers through the pandemic as well. With capacity stretched thinly, the Hubs have done their best to support families by connecting them with supportive services, but this was an area where staff felt less effective compared to their ability to directly support students. At the same time, Hub staff also

““ *As a single mom, the program helps me so that my child does not stay alone at home. I am very thankful for the program because I can come to work without worrying. In these difficult times I do not have the luxury to stay home without employment.*”

- Parent

recognized that supporting students through the pandemic ultimately meant that they were supporting families. A strong majority (88%) of agency leads who responded to our survey rated their Hubs as being impactful in helping families to feel supported. Multiple Hub staff reported that parents and caregivers have expressed appreciation for the Hubs, sharing that having a safe place for their children to go allows parents to focus on their own responsibilities, thereby helping their own mental wellbeing. As one Hub staff shared, “Parents have expressed their gratitude for the program as most parents start going back to work find it difficult to support their child at home.”

### **Support for Teachers and Schools**

Program staff reported that the Hubs have increased coordination between educators, families, and program staff. This level of coordination has been invaluable for both teachers and parents, who have also felt challenged by the abrupt shift to distance learning. Hub staff shared that teachers have expressed appreciation for their support and are realizing the value of expanded learning providers and youth development professionals in supporting students’ wellbeing and their academic progress. Program directors hoped that this enhanced appreciation of their role will allow them to deepen relationships with schools and teachers after the shelter-in-place ends.

“ Our staff have been actively in communication with teachers and parents to make sure children are doing their work and completing their daily tasks. Teachers reach out to us directly to give us updated schedules and we work with them for additional academic support options.”

– Hub Staff

## **Reflections on CHI Outcomes**

Despite compressed timelines and extremely challenging circumstances, Hubs have done a remarkable job in helping students to engage academically, socialize safely, and participate in physical activities. They have helped parents and caregivers to feel reassured that their children are being safely cared for and supported, which has allowed them to focus on their jobs or other pressing needs. And Hubs have reduced the stress on parents, caregivers, and teachers whose capacities were being stretched so thinly in their efforts to support students through distance learning. While the supports they have been able to offer thus far have been invaluable, Hub staff also cautioned that there are key areas in which students would benefit from more support:

- **Additional SEL and mental health support.** Several programs reported that students still need more SEL and mental health support than they have the capacity to provide. Moreover, many staff members are not trained to support students with special needs or those with behavioral challenges. While DCYF now has a mental and behavioral health referral system in place with DPH, program staff suggested that trained professionals should conduct weekly

check-ins with students, stakeholders should provide additional trainings on behavioral management for staff, and students with special needs should have access to paraprofessionals for additional support.

- **Increased individualized support.** Many students would benefit from more individualized support than Hubs can offer, particularly considering limitations in staffing capacity and the fact that Hub staff support students in different grades, who go to different schools, and are working on different assignments that represent a range of content areas. Having additional tutors, including virtual tutors who can work one-on-one with youth, would help alleviate the strain on Hub staff and provide more targeted academic support for students.

“ We knew this wasn't going to be easy, but it's just a reminder that we aren't trained in all of these things at the same time. It is important to remember that we are youth development professionals, but we are not professionally trained teachers and that's okay. We are helping teachers get access to kids. We are facilitating the teaching.”

– Hub Staff

With the end of the pandemic nowhere in sight, the need to support children and families during this stressful time remains high. The emerging outcomes shared in this chapter indicate that, in a short period of time, Hubs have made considerable progress in providing critical supports for children, youth, families with the highest needs. In the next chapter we offer overarching lessons emerging from the planning and initial implementation of the Community Hubs Initiative.

# 6 | Conclusion and Lessons Learned

As highlighted throughout this report, the CHI is an exceptionally complex project, initiated and driven by a deep commitment among city leaders to support San Francisco's most vulnerable children, youth, and families. When it became clear that SFUSD schools would not provide in-person instruction in the fall of 2020, DCYF, RPD, anchor agencies, and other citywide partners mobilized quickly, without a road map, to conceptualize, plan, and implement the Hub model. Despite numerous challenges, the CHI successfully launched 78 Hubs across San Francisco, helping to build a sense of normalcy and constancy for children and their caregivers in a time of crisis. This final chapter identifies key lessons learned to date that may help inform the efforts of others looking to implement an effort similar to the CHI.

## Lessons Learned

Each chapter of this report includes some reflections on key learnings related to different facets of the initiative, such as planning, implementation, and recruitment. These concluding, high-level lessons learned are for city agencies, school districts, and/or community-based organizations that are looking to the CHI as a model as they seek to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable students in their own communities.

- **Get support from high-level city leaders.** Early support from the Mayor, as well as that of other department heads, was essential for the CHI's quick mobilization of human and financial resources across city agencies. DCYF leaders said that the "Mayor set the tone" from the beginning, crediting her unwavering support for their ability to get the Hubs successfully launched. Once the Hubs were launched, DCYF organized visits of the city Supervisors to the Hubs in their districts, which helped to strengthen support for the Hubs. A representative from SFPL described that these visits were "very strategic and effective in garnering the political support for this important work" and at illustrating "how city government can work collaboratively and come together in a united fashion to leverage resources."
- **Tap into flexible dollars to support innovation.** DCYF is supported by the Children and Youth Fund, an amendment to San Francisco's charter that puts aside four percent of local property tax revenues each year to support programs for children, youth, and families. This flexible funding stream provided the resources needed to support the Hubs. Other city

“ It's really important that you've got leadership who will support you and you've got department heads who, even if you step on their toes, will work through the conversation with you.”

– Maria Su, DCYF Director

agencies, school districts, or counties looking to replicate the CHI will need a funding source flexible enough to support frequent shifts in program design and implementation.

- **Be prepared to navigate conflicting responses from core stakeholder groups.** DCYF leaders reported that they received polar opposite reactions to their announcement of the CHI. One sector of the public, including many parents, were highly supportive, immediately seeing the value of the Hubs for students and their families. At the same time, another sector of the public expressed deep concerns that CHI would be putting students and providers in danger, describing the effort as potentially “reckless.” Implementers of similar initiatives should be prepared for navigating these differences in opinion and for spending a lot of time in stakeholder meetings and conversations focused on explaining the model and how it will attend to public safety.
- **Expect varying participation among partners.** Although there was broad buy-in among most key partners for the CHI, SFUSD did not embrace the Hub model until late in the fall of 2020. The initial refusal of SFUSD to allow their buildings to be used or to share student information complicated the CHI’s efforts to locate facilities and made it more challenging to identify the students most in need of Hub services. While DCYF staff and CHI partners continued to talk with district leaders about the value of the Hub model, some anchor agency leads reached out to individual principals, social workers, and teachers at their partner schools to identify students who would benefit from the Hub model. This incremental approach gradually increased alignment between the district and the CHI around their shared goal of serving students who had become disconnected from distance learning. The lesson for others seeking to use this model is that, while you should move forward with a coalition of the willing, there are also opportunities to bring on additional partners over time.
- **Take stock of logistical issues that may influence roll-out and implementation.** In order to coordinate the launch of CHI, DCYF staff took on roles well outside that of their ordinary job descriptions. In addition to managing grants and doing outreach to community-based organizations, DCYF staff had to oversee a complex logistical puzzle, involving recruitment and enrollment, technology upgrades, janitorial services, and the unloading and distribution of PPE to Hubs across the city. For the PPE issue alone, they had to secure supplies, store them, sort them, prepare them to go sites, and deliver them to sites across the city. Others who are looking to implement similar models should step back to anticipate logistical issues that may come up, while also building in time for staff to handle unanticipated needs and challenges.
- **Ensure capacity to address media attention and requests for information.** As soon as the Mayor and DCYF announced the CHI, media outlets and leaders from other cities began to reach out for more information so that they could report on and learn from the CHI. It was so time intensive to field these requests that senior leaders were soon spending a good portion of their time doing interviews and fielding informational calls. The media attention

also sometimes brought to light differences of opinion and approach among key partners that had to be smoothed over. Given all of these demands, it would be helpful to have a communications team and protocol in place to field and respond to informational requests.

- **Create data tracking systems so you can easily tell your story to your stakeholders.** DCYF has a data and evaluation team and a communication team, which has enabled them to create dashboards and other mechanisms to track key metrics, such as the number of students attending each of the Hubs. This has been a crucial resource for DCYF to “tell the story” of the Hubs and quickly turn around data for city Supervisors and others interested in understanding how many students are being served from particular neighborhoods or districts.
- **Move quickly, capitalize on established relationships and public trust.** Almost all of the CHI partners that we interviewed emphasized that they were able to move quickly and in concert because DCYF, partners, and anchor agencies had a long track record of collaboration and a foundation of trust. Without that trust it would have been much harder for them to quickly build public will to embark on an effort as ambitious as the CHI. This trust allowed partners to sign on despite the uncertainty and unpredictability of providing services in the midst of the pandemic. As one CHI partner said, “The willingness for so many CBOs to say yes to this, even though they didn't know what they were saying yes to, is an achievement in and of itself.”
- **Continuously center the interests of the most vulnerable students and families.** The CHI was developed to support students who were not being well-served by distance learning and it has continuously evolved in response to the needs of these students and their families. In a project as

“Don't underestimate the importance of tracking data. Don't move forward, because you're working on what the variable is. But also don't underestimate the need to be able to respond quickly to [requests for] numbers and data and information.”

– DCYF Program Specialist

“This works because of relationships...Establish the relationships, not just with the CBOs, but with your other city partners, any entity that [serves] a child, youth, or their families...If we didn't have the relationships that we had, it would have been a harder struggle.”

– Sherrice Dorsey, DCYF Deputy Director, Program Planning and Grants

“At the end of the day, we're really focused on these young people and bringing all these [partners] together for their benefit just feels like an incredible thing.”

– Aumijo Gomes, DCYF Deputy Director, Strategic Initiatives and Operations

complex as the CHI, it is easy to get diverted by challenges and tangential issues. The CHI has been successful because it has been able to continuously refocus the attention of partners and stakeholders on the students and families that the CHI seeks to serve. This shared vision has helped partners to navigate through challenges and uncertainty in pursuit of a common purpose.

- **Be prepared to address multi-layered issues related to equity.** As described in previous chapters, the CHI is grounded in a desire to promote equity for the students who are least prepared for distance learning and most likely to fall behind. Yet, in seeking equity for these students, DCYF and CHI partners surfaced additional equity issues related to the differential risk faced by providers, including their uneven access to hazard pay and health care. A DCYF program staff described that, “One of the things that came up was who was put out on the front lines to serve kids and who had the privilege not to.” Because anchor agencies have different policies and staffing arrangements, DCYF acknowledged that there was no one-size-fits all approach to addressing these concerns, but they helped agencies share different staffing models with one another so that they could figure out the best strategies for supporting their staff members. As others embark on this work, they should be prepared for the complexity of equity issues that emerge in crisis-laden situations like the pandemic.
- **Draw on a trusted intermediary to support learning and relationship building.** DCYF was able to draw on the San Francisco Beacon Initiative (SFBI) to facilitate its planning and learning meetings with anchor agencies. This helped to offload DCYF staff, but also was useful for creating safe spaces for anchor agency staff to voice their concerns and anxieties about opening Hubs and to share best practices. DCYF staff explained that SFBI “stepped up” and worked with them on “the best way to have these really hard conversations.” Their role was pivotal for positioning the anchor agency staff to “have an open mind and a willingness to bring really hard things to the table.”
- **Balance group engagement with more tailored one-on-one support.** In order to get anchor agencies headed in the same direction, DCYF used a combination of group meetings, focused on information sharing and community building, and one-on-one problem-solving meetings with anchor agency leaders and staff. The one-on-one conversations provided a space for anchor agencies to share frustrations and fears. Collectively, these approaches helped to ensure standardization of practice, while addressing the individual needs of specific agencies.



- **Build in time and resources for staff self-care.** The CHI required an extraordinary amount of work and dedication on the part of DCYF, RPD, and the community-based partners that operated the Hub sites. Staff worked long hours in challenging and uncertain conditions, driven by a shared commitment to serving the most vulnerable kids in San Francisco. To sustain such an effort and avoid burn out, the city provided staff with additional time off so that they could attend to self-care and managers encouraged staff to “pace themselves and take breaks.”
- **Keep moving forward with “grace and humility.”** Ultimately, the CHI required many city and anchor agency staff to “suspend disbelief” so that they could collectively do something that had not been done before. DCYF program specialists shared that one of their most powerful tools when talking with anchor agencies was just to admit when they needed help or when they did not know the answers to their questions. “Human” expressions of “grace and humility” helped to reduce power dynamics and ground their work in patience and care for one another.

“ Be transparent.

*Recognize that just because you're government, you don't have all the answers. Guess what? Maybe the community does and they can help you think through the hard stuff. Be transparent in saying you need help. As a city, it goes a long way....The humanistic pieces need to exist because we are all living through the pandemic.”*

– DCYF Program Specialist

## Conclusion

As of the end of 2020, the CHI had committed to supporting the Hubs through the end of the 2020-2021 school year (June 2021). The structure of their programming will depend on shifting public health conditions and SFUSD decisions about whether instruction will resume full time for some students, be delivered using a hybrid model of in-person and distance learning or continue to be delivered to most students via full-time distance learning. Regardless of how the CHI model evolves over the rest of the 2020-2021 school year, it has demonstrated the commitment of CHI partners and anchor agencies to serving San Francisco’s most vulnerable students, and the unique role that community-based organizations can play in supporting the wellbeing of students and families. Looking beyond the pandemic, many of those we interviewed pointed to the CHI as a model of the role that community organizations could play in helping to build equitable educational systems that meet the needs of all students.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: List of Sources

This list illustrates the range of quantitative and qualitative sources that SPR used to inform the CHI’s mid-year synthesis report.

Source	Description
<b>Planning Meetings</b>	SPR attended twenty-four CHI planning meetings between August 3 and December 10, 2020. The meetings took place twice a week and were facilitated by the San Francisco Beacon Initiative (SFBI). Core attendees included DCYF’s Sr. Program Specialists, anchor agencies, and CBO partners. These meetings were created to onboard partner stakeholders. Activities included building community, vision alignment, framework development, measurement and evaluation, individual Hub planning, and monitoring implementation.
<b>Survey of agency leads</b>	SPR launched two surveys for phase 1 and phase 2 Hubs in November 2020 and December 2020, respectively. The online survey included a series of close-ended (Likert-scale) and open-ended (written response) questions designed to understand the CHI’s Hub structure, program components, planning activities, implementation processes, and emerging outcomes for students served. The survey sample was identified in collaboration with DCYF; it included anchor agencies’ site lead managers at operational Hubs. For phase 1, thirty-one (46%) out of sixty-seven sites completed the survey. For phase 2, ten (37%) out of twenty-seven sites completed the survey. Because there were some site lead managers that oversaw multiple Hubs but only submitted one survey, it is likely that the response rates are higher.
<b>Parent Survey</b>	In December 2020, DCYF in collaboration with SPR launched a survey of parents of participants in grades K-8. The survey was administered in multiple language via online and in-person (paper). The survey included a series of closed- and open-ended questions designed to understand the extent to which the CHI was supporting the academic, social, and emotional development of their children. The survey sample was identified by DCYF; it included parents of children who enrolled and attended a CHI Hub. There was a total of 384 completed surveys; it included 281 English, 94 Spanish and 9 Chinese speaking parent respondents.
<b>Interviews and Focus Groups</b>	To gather in-depth insights and feedback, SPR conducted four one-on-one interviews and six focus groups that solicited feedback from twenty-eight unique stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the CHI. Discussions focused on the planning and implementation of the CHI in the COVID context; including partner agency roles, contextual factors influencing the rollout of the Hubs, perspectives on the CHI moving forward, and lessons learned to date.
<b>Documents</b>	SPR reviewed resources made available by DCYF and SFBI. DCYF shared spreadsheets of Hub characteristics, student data dashboards, and maps of Hub placements. SFBI shared copies of materials shared during planning meetings like planning documents, health and safety guides developed by the state, and presentations created by city departments. The document review informed the development of the survey of agency leads, interview and focus protocols, and the analysis on the effectiveness of the CHI between August – December 2020.

## Appendix B: List of Interviewees

SPR conducted interviews with staff from various partner agencies that supported the CHI.

### *Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)*

#### **Senior Staff**

- **Maria Su**, Executive Director
- **Sherrice Dorsey-Smith**, Deputy Director, Program Planning & Grants
- **Aumijo Gomes**, Deputy Director, Strategic Initiatives and Operations
- **Jasmine Dawson**, Programs & Grants Manager

#### **Other DCYF Staff**

- **Veronica Chew**, Our Children Our Families Council Senior Analyst
- **Simone Combs**, Our Children Our Families Council Family Support Navigator
- **Monica Flores**, Sr. Program Specialist
- **Mitzi Chavez Gallardo**, Data & Evaluation Analyst
- **Teodora Ildfonzo-Olmo**, Sr. Technical Assistance Specialist
- **Glen Jermyn Andag**, Sr. Program Specialist
- **Armael Malinis**, Program Specialist
- **Lina Morales**, Sr. Program Specialist
- **Prishni Murillo**, Sr. Program & Planning Specialist
- **Greg Rojas**, Sr. Contracts & Compliance Specialist
- **Johanna Rosales**, Sr. Program Specialist
- **Jasmine Serim**, Sr. Program Specialist
- **Lamont Snaer**, Sr. Program & Planning Specialist
- **Debbie Tisdale**, Sr. Program Specialist
- **Helen Lee**, Program Specialist

### *San Francisco Department of Recreation & Parks (RPD)*

- **Lorraine Banford**, Superintendent of Recreation and Community Services
- **Anne Marie Donnelly**, Support Services Manager
- **Amina Zaidi, Jr.** Administrative Analyst

### *San Francisco Public Libraries (SFPL)*

- **Michael Lambert**, City Librarian

### *San Francisco Beacon Initiative*

- **Carol Hill**, Executive Director
- **Sally Jenkins-Stevens**, Associate Director
- **Erica Hernandez**, Program Manager

## Appendix C: List of Trainings and Workshops

This list illustrates the full list of trainings and workshops that DCFY’s technical assistance (TA) provided. These trainings were designed to support Hubs with effective program planning and implementation within the COVID context.

Type	Training & Workshop Title
Training	Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 Provider Wellness
Training	Child Abuse Mandated Reporting
Training	It Takes a Village: Family Engagement
Training	It Takes a Village: Family Engagement
Training	Provider Wellness
Training	Trauma and the Intersection of COVID-19 (Grade 3-6)
Training	Trauma and the Intersection of COVID-19 (Grade K-2)
Training	Trauma and the Intersection of COVID-19 (MS and HS)
Workshop	Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Provider Wellness
Workshop	Back Pocket Activities
Workshop	Collaboration and Power Building
Workshop	Collaborative Planning
Workshop	College Readiness & Access
Workshop	Conflict Management and Resolution for Our Current Climate (TAY)
Workshop	Cultural Responsive Supervision
Workshop	Economic Outlook
Workshop	Educating the Black Child Series
Workshop	Fundraising Series: Year-End Fundraising During Time of Crisis
Workshop	Leading Wellness Activities with Teens and TAYs
Workshop	Supporting Literacy through Read Alouds and Fun Activities
Workshop	Supporting Math Learning through Game and Fun Activities
Workshop	Supporting Positive Behavior at Home
Workshop	Why do they do that. Child Development 101 (K-6th)

## Appendix D: List of Neighborhood Sites

This list depicts Hub distribution across San Francisco neighborhoods and the city departments that offered their physical space for Hubs to operate.

Neighborhood	Community-Based Organizations	Recreation and Parks Department	SF Public Library	Public Housing	Other	Total
Bayview Hunters Point	8	2	1	2	0	13
Bernal Heights	1	0	1	0	0	2
Castro/Upper Market	0	1	0	0	0	1
Chinatown	2	1	0	0	0	3
Excelsior	2	0	0	0	0	2
Financial District/South Beach	0	0	0	0	1	1
Hayes Valley	2	0	0	0	0	2
Inner Richmond	0	0	1	0	0	1
Japantown	0	1	1	0	0	2
Lakeshore	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lone Mountain/USF	1	0	0	0	0	1
Marina	0	0	1	0	0	1
McLaren Park	1	1	0	0	0	2
Mission	8	1	0	0	0	9
Mission Bay	1	0	0	0	0	1
Nob Hill	0	0	0	0	2	2
North Beach	1	0	1	0	0	2
Oceanview/Merced/Ingleside	1	2	0	0	0	3
Outer Mission	1	1	0	0	0	2
Outer Richmond	0	1	0	0	0	1
Portola	1	1	0	0	0	2
Portero Hill	1	1	0	0	0	2
Presidio	1	0	0	0	0	1
Presidio Heights	2	0	0	0	0	2
South of Market	4	1	0	0	0	5
Tenderloin	5	2	0	0	0	7
Treasure Island	1	0	0	0	0	1
Visitacion Valley	3	0	1	0	0	4
Western Addition	2	0	0	0	0	2
	<b>50</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>78</b>