CREATING A CITY DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A Strategy To Improve the Well-Being of Young People in Cities

By Funding the Next Generation

This guide is about…

…divisions of city government dedicated to promoting a broad vision and commitment to the well-being of children and youth. Many cities have divisions within city government that manage one or more specific children and youth programs, usually within departments of recreation, workforce, or libraries. This guide addresses the benefits of a single division within city government with a mission that goes beyond managing a few programs, and instead focuses on the broad functions of planning, coordination, civic engagement, allocation of funds, policy development and building a comprehensive city-wide infrastructure and commitment to children and youth.

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Preface

By Margaret Brodkin,
Founder/Director, Funding the Next Generation

In the past two years, four major cities in California have decided to create a separate and new governmental entity devoted to addressing the needs of children and youth. Los Angeles is creating two departments; San Diego, Long Beach and Sacramento are each creating offices. These new entities are in the process of figuring out how they can operate to best meet the broad goals which inspired their creation, following a path set forth in 3 other California cities with separate divisions addressing the needs of young people – starting with San Francisco in 1989, then Oakland in 1996, and finally Richmond in 2018. This recent development in 4 other cities, primarily promoted by community advocates, inspired me to look more closely at the benefits, strategies and challenges of a city governmental body specifically devoted to children and youth, as I believe that little has been written exploring this issue.

I have a particular interest in and knowledge of this subject because as an advocate (the Executive Director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco), I led the campaign in San Francisco to convince the mayor create what we then called the Office of Children, Youth and Their Families. Sixteen years later I had the privilege of heading the office, that had subsequently become a department of the city – the first in California. The Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (known as DCYF) came to oversee the largest dedicated fund for kids in the country, per population, as the result of a 1991 ballot measure led by myself and many other advocates. While I have been focused over the past seven years on helping groups create local ballot measures to fund children and youth services, I believe that understanding the benefits of a separate entity in city government devoted to young people might be as important as understanding how to generate and allocate funds. Furthermore, the creation of such a division in local government can be a powerful step toward passing local measures for sustainable funding for services and opportunities for children, youth and their families.

II. Introduction

A. Importance of establishing a deep commitment to children, youth, and their families

There is no more important function of government than to ensure that children and youth thrive. New structures are not ends in themselves – they are put in place to help government meet its top priorities. Structures can evolve and devolve and become stronger or weaker in their ability to meet their purpose. They can also change depending on politics, specific leaders, community needs, and shifts in overall governmental organization. But most important for any governmental entity is the ongoing and overriding commitment to the well-being and equity for children and youth. A city department may not be the right structure through which to implement this commitment forever. Cities and counties will experiment with children's cabinets, interagency coordinating councils, joint powers of agreement, and various types of task forces and policy czars.

However, at the city level, a department or office offers a unique vehicle for the important work of focusing the human and financial resources of a city, engaging all sectors of the community, and building a potent force for children, youth, and families. Without a strong structure committed children and youth, equity is not possible. Decisions get made by default – those with the greatest access to the power structure control the agenda and the resources. A city department or office for children and youth can be a powerful mechanism to bring in all voices, especially the most marginalized, to make a city a great place for all its young people and their families.

B. Why cities? In the context of counties and schools

There is great interest in local policy and funding to improve the well-being of children and youth at the city, county, and school district levels. This guide focuses on cities because cities are where there is great opportunity to make significant progress at this moment.

Unfortunately, many city governments believe that most children's issues are not their responsibility. **Creating a new department is one way to firmly rebut that argument and declare that indeed children and youth are core responsibilities of city government. Here's why:**

- People identify with the cities in which they live, and institutions within a city are therefore motivated to work together toward common goals related to their kids. A department can perform that task.

- There is no other part of city government that addresses the comprehensive needs of children and youth.

- There are important issues and services related to kids that cities could address and when not addressed leave major gaps – such as after-school and summer programming, training and access to technology, workforce development, family support and violence prevention.

- Public safety is widely recognized as a core city function, and youth development is a key element of public safety.

- Many departments of city government could do more for children and youth if there were some entity inspiring them, providing assistance, and coordinating their work with others.

- Cities have great policy and program flexibility in that they are independent entities governed in many cases by their own charter; they are not controlled by the state. They can respond specifically to the unique needs of their residents.

Every level of government has an important role to play in addressing the needs of children and youth – and brings different resources and assets to the table to play that role. Counties are arms of states and generally provide a host of state and federally funded and regulated services for children and youth, particularly in the areas of health, welfare, and juvenile justice. Like cities, counties need structures to improve the effectiveness of those resources and that work. At the county level, there are already strong departments in charge of children's services, and rather than creating a new department, it might make more sense to develop an inter-departmental coordinating and planning mechanism to increase the effectiveness of the existing departments that address the needs of children. We will leave this issue to a future discussion.

Schools, as described later in this guide, are where the most kids are most of the time. They are the only independent governmental entity that is only about children and youth. One of the most important functions of both county and city entities devoted to children and youth is to build collaborative partnerships with schools.

It is important to note at the outset that this work is by definition cross-jurisdictional – work that cannot be done at any level of government in isolation. Those in a city-level office or department or division can play a role in spawning cross jurisdictional work through many of the strategies described in this guide.
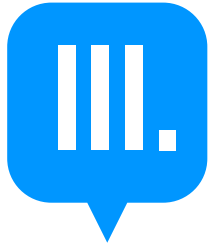
III. Organizational Issues

C. Division, Office, or Department?

People mean different things by the terms they use when referring to entities in city government with the broad charge of addressing the needs of children and youth, but the general interpretation in California is below, recognizing each city has different nuances within its structure.

Division – A division devoted to children and youth is housed within an existing department, such as Recreation and Parks or Community Services. Often that means someone else speaks for the division to the city council and other government officials. The division's flexibility and resources are limited by the department that houses it; and the division has less status within the city bureaucracy. Oakland's entity devoted to children and youth has dedicated resources; however, it is wedged into an existing department and its efforts to build a broader and more coordinated agenda for the city are often frustrated, which is why after 25 years of having a division, some advocates have started a campaign for a separate department.

Strong Mayor vs Weak Mayor

California's two largest cities, Los Angeles and San Diego, have a strong mayor structure, as do San Francisco, Fresno, and Oakland. San Jose, Sacramento, and most other cities have a weak mayor form of government. A strong mayor is the chief executive officer of the city – making appointments, overseeing departments and day to day operations, and with the power to veto votes of the city council. A weak mayor is simply one vote on the city council. It is the city council that has final legislative and executive powers. A city manager is the top executive in a weak mayor city. Whatever form of government a city has, a department head has accountability to both a city council and a mayor or city manager if there is one. The department will likely be strongest with a direct report to a strong mayor, especially one who is enthusiastic about the mission of the department. In a weak mayor system, the city council becomes the most important place to report to for the department.

Office – An office usually refers to an arm of the mayor's office, or possibly a part of the city manager's office. Being part of the office of the top manager in the city usually gives the office power and flexibility. A direct report to a mayor probably offers the strongest positioning, especially with a strong mayoral government. City managers, who are often appointed officials, tend to be less expansive and creative in their thinking than mayors who as elected officials are directly accountable to the public and more open to public input. In any case, the amount of power and flexibility of an office will depend on the relationship with the top executive and the power bestowed by the top executive on the office. But while an office created by an elected official can have needed authority, it can be much less durable as elections can result in changing priorities, policies, and personnel.

Department – A separate free-standing department is likely to get the most resources and have the greatest status in city government. Depending on how the city is organized, it would probably mean direct accountability to the city manager who is responsible for administering all aspects of government in cities that do not have a strong mayor structure. Department heads have more authority over functions and staff, compared to heads of offices and divisions.

Lifespan: It's a Gamble

How a new entity is created will often determine its probable lifespan. Entities in city government to address the needs of children are created in the following ways:

A Mayoral Action
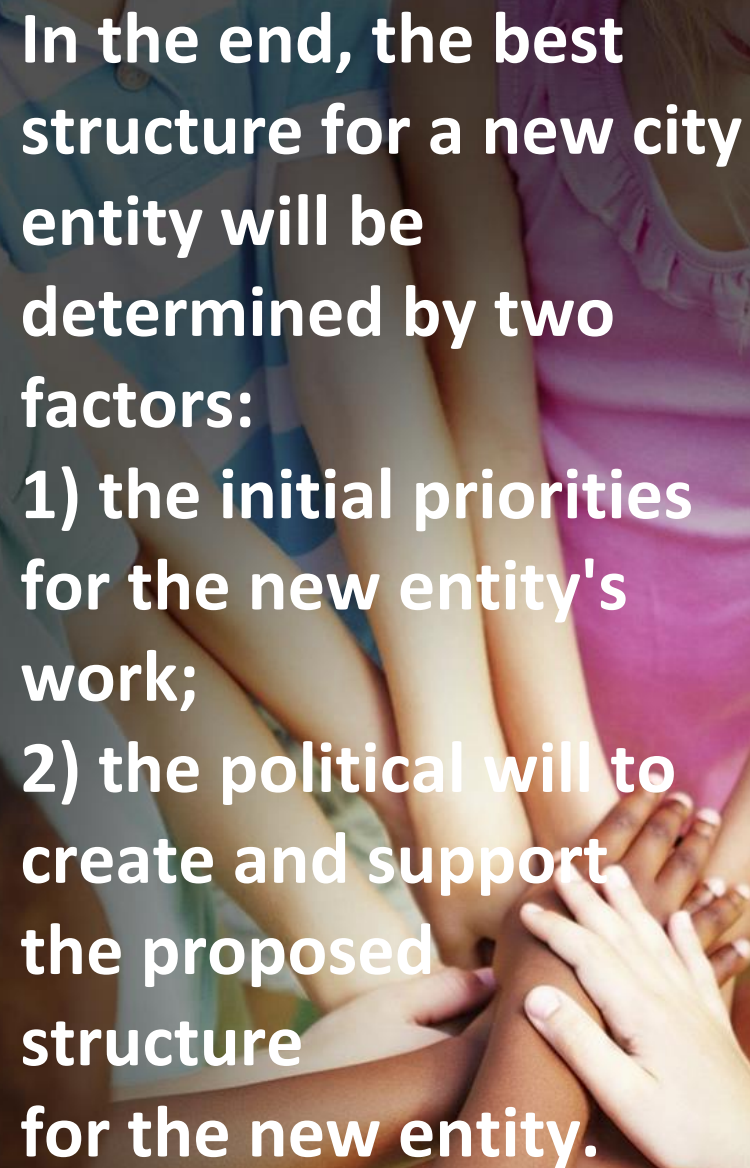
City Council Legislation

A Charter Amendment

Often a Mayor and City Council will take the initiative to create a department together.

A choice made only by a mayor is probably the least permanent entity as it is dependent on a specific politician; an amendment to the city charter is the most permanent; and legislation by the city council is somewhere in between. A children and youth agenda is long term, so less durable structures, where people come and go with elections, are more limited in what can be accomplished. It should also be noted that the list to the left is in the order of how easy it might be initially to create a new entity – with a division of an existing department receiving the least political push-back, and an entirely new department receiving the most.

In the end, the best structure for a new city entity will be determined by two factors:
1) the initial priorities for the new entity's work;
2) the political will to create and support the proposed structure for the new entity.

But a department head has less inter-departmental flexibility and influence than heads of offices located within the mayor's office. That is because department heads are peers within city government, whereas personnel who are part of a mayor's office could have more authority to bring departments together to promote collaborative planning, priority setting and policy recommendations. Performing all desired inter-departmental city-wide functions within the context of a single department can be a challenge. It requires successful management, combined with planning and policy, and being a champion citywide for all children and youth.

Two departments – Demonstrating that ideas about this subject evolve as needs, policymakers and personnel change, San Francisco improved its services by splitting its Department of Children, Youth, and their Families in two – creating a separate and independent Office of Early Care and Education - with both departments directly accountable to the mayor. Whereas in Los Angeles, the city has started by creating two separate departments – one for youth and the other for children and families.

Circumstances change, and there is no one right structure, and certainly not one that remains the same over time. As planning for a new entity in city government devoted to kids evolves, it is important to keep potential differences and pros and cons in mind. In the end, the best structure for a new city entity will be determined by two factors: 1) the initial priorities for the new entity's work; and 2) the political will to create and support the proposed structure for the new entity.

For purposes of this document, we will use the word "department" to mean any of the three entities described in this section – department, office, division.

D. Structure – Staff and Budget

The size of a department depends on the scope of work. But given that these are often not departments that manage programs (other departments are left intact), the size will vary from one person who reports to a mayor to 50 if the department is managing a large, dedicated fund and performing other functions as well. Generally, the minimum staff level should be three (more if managing money), with a director performing the external outreach and coordinating functions, a person who performs a planning function along with related tasks such as data, and a person who might do everything

CITY YOUTH REPORT

Sacramento Youth Commission
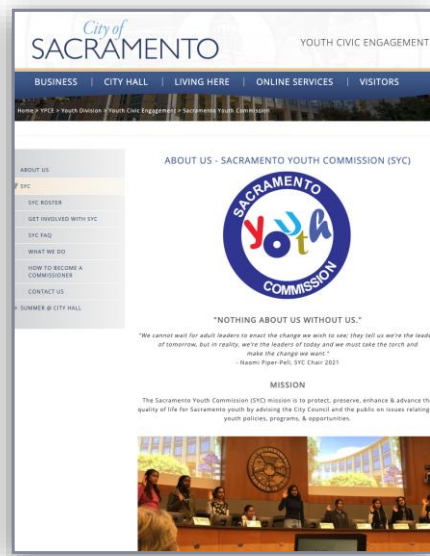
from special projects to administrative support. Having a strong visible and credible "face" for the department (the director) is essential and can be transformative for a city in terms of the attention that will be given to issues related to children and youth. The budget of the department will depend on the number of staff, as well as oversight over various funding streams.

- The initial **budget requests for San Diego were modest**

- Compare that to the **staffing of the state's largest department, DCYF in San Francisco** (note: SF is both a city and a county)

Ultimately most departments should fall between these two examples.

E. Oversight

It is essential for a department to have an oversight or advisory board. This could be part of the legislation creating the department. A board can ensure that there is a place for ongoing public input about the work of the department – both from members and the broader public. A strong advisory/oversight board will meet regularly, have open well-publicized meetings, have adequate dedicated staff, and be composed of a broad and informed cross-section of stakeholders, including parents and youth. Such a body will usually be appointed by a city council or a mayor or preferably both. Sometimes a body will have its own staff, which is ideal. Sometimes it will be staffed by the department it oversees. In that case, it is incumbent on the director to fully utilize the board in making critical policy and budget decisions. Ideally, the functions of the oversight body will be stated in implementing legislation.

CITY YOUTH REPORT

"I just want to say, please, please listen and take our considerations into account and have youth sit at the table when making decisions about their future."

— Sydney Johnson
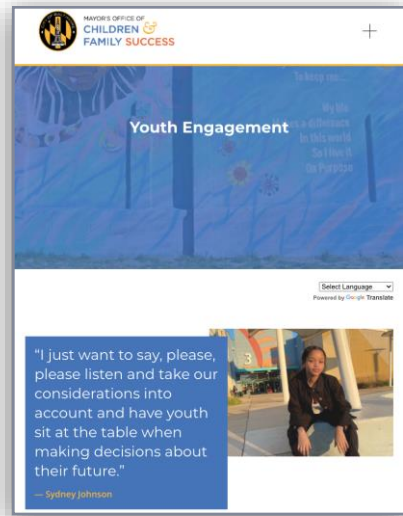
The importance of an active oversight or advisory board that is willing to take risks and initiative cannot be over-emphasized. It is very easy to let such a board slide – with the appointing authority falling behind schedule and staff of a department being lax in its support. It is a diverse oversight body that reflects the many community voices, particularly those most marginalized, that keeps a department from being an insulated bureaucratic entity. A functional oversight body will have lively, well-attended meetings that ultimately guide many of the policies of the city. It is the oversight body that must ensure that the department truly becomes a table for the community.

F. Youth Leadership and Youth Voice

Several city departments in California were initiated through advocacy and organizing by young people, particularly marginalized

youth. Uplifting the voices of marginalized young people has become the priority of these departments. Regardless of how the department started, maximizing the voices of youth should be at the core. There are many ways to do this. If a city has a Youth Commission, it can be brought into the department's orbit. A Youth Commission can be provided office space, staffing and technical assistance, and the opinions of its members can be solicited on a regular basis. If there is no Youth Commission, a department can start one and provide staff support.

What can youth committees do?

- review grants
- identify unmet needs
- advocate for changes in city policies
- promote civic engagement among young people throughout the city
- evaluate programs

In some cities, it is youth who do the bulk of the work to create the city's plan for children and youth. They facilitate forums, design surveys, conduct outreach, synthesize material, and produce various ways to communicate with the public. Leadership training can also be a function of a department. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that these opportunities focus on the youth who otherwise have the least access and opportunity. And lastly, but importantly: it's great to pay young people for the services they provide.

G. Overcoming Challenges

Starting anything new in government can pose a challenge – bureaucracies tend to resist experimentation and change. Some of the challenges a department for children and youth face are related to inserting a population-focused arm of government into a structure primarily organized around function. A new department cuts across other governmental functions and raises the question of whether those functions (such as libraries or recreation) become part of a new governmental division or the new department functions alongside existing children's services, but with the over-arching function of coordination, innovation, and planning. Most have opted for the latter. But this unique positioning of a department can also cause ambiguity and sometimes tension

CITY YOUTH REPORT

Long Beach, their strategic plan was youth-driven.
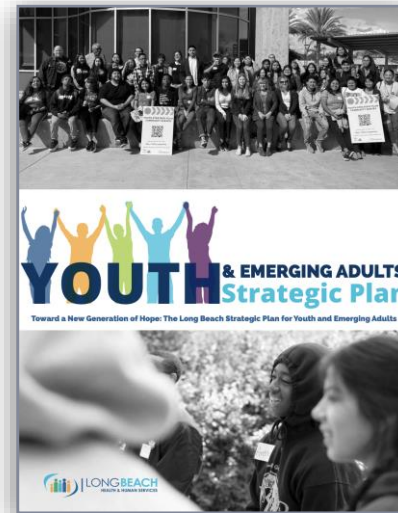
CITY YOUTH REPORT

In Los Angeles, a youth task force created the plan that led to a new department for youth
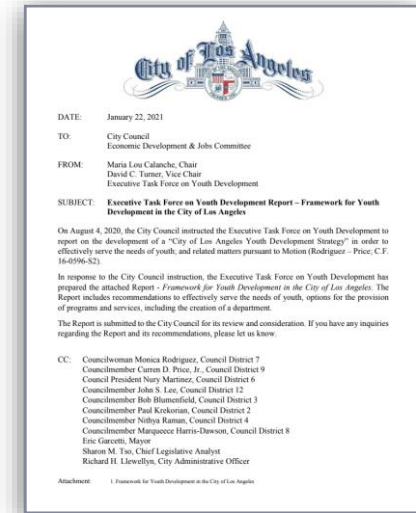
with existing departments as issues of turf inevitably arise along with issues about the source of authority of the department and how tensions will be resolved. Each city will work out these issues differently. But the chief executive of the city (mayor or city manager) is key to resolving issues related to turf, authority, and jurisdiction of responsibility.

Finding the right personnel for a department is key to its success. A leader must be able to work collaboratively with a wide range of people and possess a combination of inspirational leadership and political savvy. Department staff can be difficult to recruit as they also must have multiple skills in a lean staff structure.

EARLY CHALLENGES IN CREATING A DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Personalities
- Source of authority
- Population orientation, unlike other departments
- Getting the right staff
- Relationship to existing departments - turf
- Finding the right leader
- Issues cross jurisdictional boundaries

VI. What Does a Department Do?

H. Goals and Values?

An early step for a new department (or a step that precedes having a department) is developing core values and goals for the city's children. There is enormous similarity among various cities in these aspirations. Here is an example of the guiding principles of the Long Beach plan for its kids:

- Inclusivity and acceptance
- Equity
- Strategic relationships
- Community voices
- Intersectionality
- Commitment to continuous review and improvement
- Caring communities

In Santa Fe, the value system is expressed this way:

- We believe in **connection**; therefore, we will work collaboratively to make decisions to benefit our community

- We believe in **connection**; therefore, we will listen to and integrate feedback from agencies we work with and the community.

- We believe in **equity**; therefore, we will work to eliminate barriers to opportunity and value every voice at the table.

- We believe in **equity**; therefore, we will learn about disparities in our communities to promote fairness and address discrimination.

- We believe in **imagination**; therefore, we will seek creative and innovative solutions.

- We believe in **imagination**; therefore, we will think beyond what has been done previously.

- We believe in **gratitude;** therefore, we will celebrate successes.

- We believe in **gratitude**; therefore, we will be thankful for the strengths and diversity of our community.

- We believe in **compassion**; therefore, we will acknowledge hardship and meet people where they are at.

- We believe in **compassion**; therefore, we will respect differences, listen to each other, and hold the people we serve in mind.
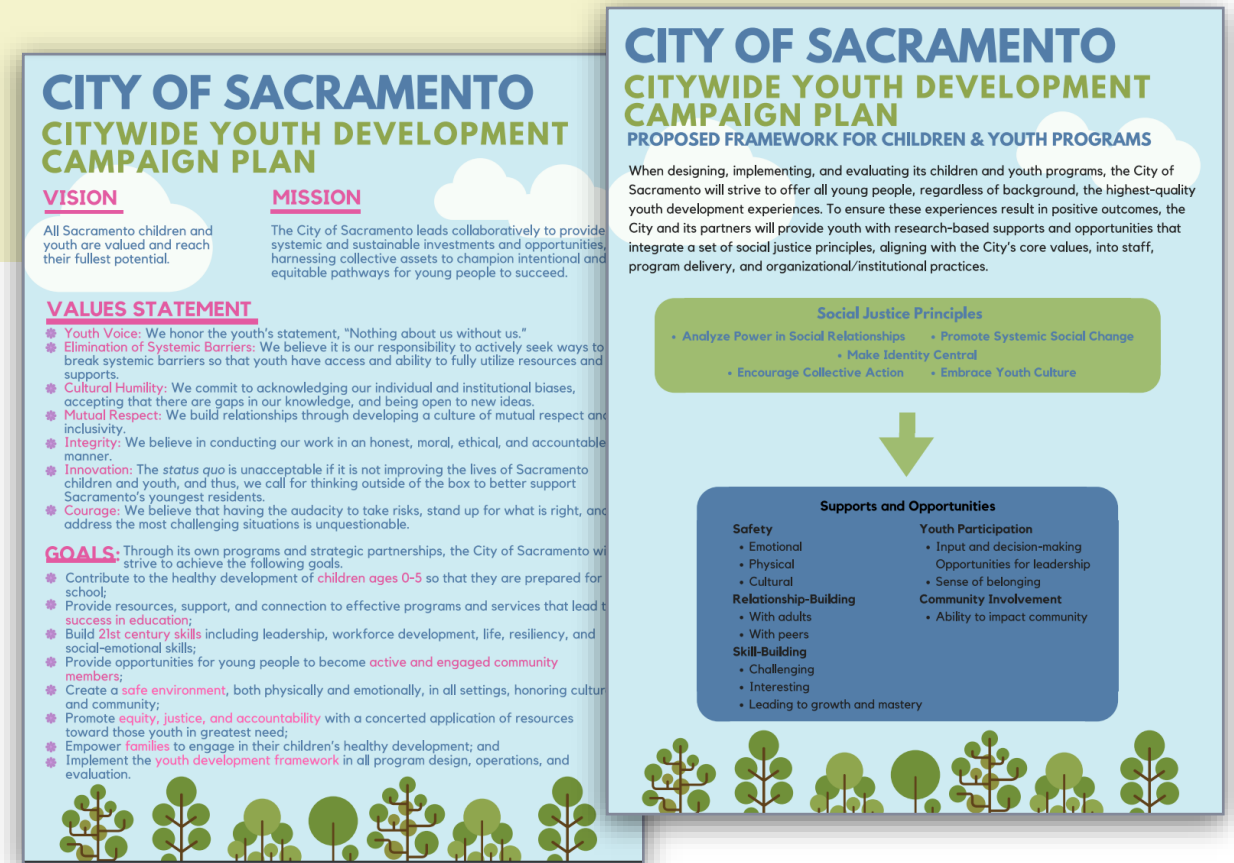
The goals of the Department of Children and Youth in Richmond, California:

- To ensure that Richmond's children, youth, and young adults are physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially healthy, educated, successful in school, and live in stable, safe, and supported families and communities

- To increase safety for children, youth, young adults, their parents/guardians, families and the communities in which they live by preventing problems and enhancing the strengths of children, youth, young adults, and their families

- To ensure young people are provided with gender responsive, trauma-informed, population specific and culturally competent services.

- To strengthen collaboration among public agencies and community-based organizations around shared outcomes among all service providers for children, youth, young adults and their parents/guardians.

- To ensure an equitable distribution of resources to all of Richmond's young people in recognition of the importance of investment in their futures from birth through young adulthood.

- To fill gaps in services and leverage other resources whenever feasible.

Sacramento youth vision for the city was put into a [very public and youth-friendly format](#) and is a great example for beginning the process of articulating the grounding goals and principles

The mission statement of the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth and the division that houses it: to heal trauma, advance equity, and elevate opportunity for Oakland's children and youth from birth to age 21.

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CITYWIDE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN PLAN

VISION

All Sacramento children and youth are valued and reach their fullest potential.

MISSION

The City of Sacramento leads collaboratively to provide systemic and sustainable investments and opportunities, harnessing collective assets to champion intentional and equitable pathways for young people to succeed.

VALUES STATEMENT

- Youth Voice: We honor the youth's statement, "Nothing about us without us."
- Elimination of Systemic Barriers: We believe it is our responsibility to actively seek ways to break systemic barriers so that youth have access and ability to fully utilize resources and supports.
- Cultural Humility: We commit to acknowledging our individual and institutional biases, accepting that there are gaps in our knowledge, and being open to new ideas.
- Mutual Respect: We build relationships through developing a culture of mutual respect and inclusivity.
- Integrity: We believe in conducting our work in an honest, moral, ethical, and accountable manner.
- Innovation: The *status quo* is unacceptable if it is not improving the lives of Sacramento children and youth, and thus, we call for thinking outside of the box to better support Sacramento's youngest residents.
- Courage: We believe that having the audacity to take risks, stand up for what is right, and address the most challenging situations is unquestionable.

GOALS: Through its own programs and strategic partnerships, the City of Sacramento will strive to achieve the following goals.

- Contribute to the healthy development of children ages 0-5 so that they are prepared for school;
- Provide resources, support, and connection to effective programs and services that lead to success in education;
- Build 21st century skills including leadership, workforce development, life, resiliency, and social-emotional skills;
- Provide opportunities for young people to become active and engaged community members;
- Create a safe environment, both physically and emotionally, in all settings, honoring culture and community;
- Promote equity, justice, and accountability with a concerted application of resources toward those youth in greatest need;
- Empower families to engage in their children's healthy development; and
- Implement the youth development framework in all program design, operations, and evaluation.

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CITYWIDE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN PLAN
PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMS

When designing, implementing, and evaluating its children and youth programs, the City of Sacramento will strive to offer all young people, regardless of background, the highest-quality youth development experiences. To ensure these experiences result in positive outcomes, the City and its partners will provide youth with research-based supports and opportunities that integrate a set of social justice principles, aligning with the City's core values, into staff, program delivery, and organizational/institutional practices.

Social Justice Principles
- Analyze Power in Social Relationships
- Promote Systemic Social Change
- Make Identity Central
- Encourage Collective Action
- Embrace Youth Culture

Supports and Opportunities

Safety
- Emotional
- Physical
- Cultural

Relationship-Building
- With adults
- With peers

Skill-Building
- Challenging
- Interesting
- Leading to growth and mastery

Youth Participation
- Input and decision-making Opportunities for leadership
- Sense of belonging

Community Involvement
- Ability to impact community

I. Basic Responsibilities

The importance of various functions will depend on whether the city has a dedicated fund over which the department has control. However, not having a dedicated funding stream to allocate does not prevent a department from being extremely valuable and productive. Also, a department can help increase funding for services for children and youth in ways other than allocating a voter-approved dedicated funding stream.

"I ran the department with the largest dedicated fund in the country. I personally was more interested in the functions of the department related to planning, coordination, policy development, civic engagement and youth empowerment than I was in giving away money,"

> – Margaret Brodkin, Founder/Director
> Funding the Next Generation

Funding – If the department has control over a dedicated fund, managing that fund becomes a central function, with many other functions done in support of the funding. Allocating money is a major responsibility and will consume most of the staff time, but it is impossible to do well without all the other functions listed in this

guide. In addition to these other functions (planning, needs assessment, community engagement, capacity building,) overseeing a dedicated fund has some important specific requirements.

What a department must develop to oversee a dedicated fund

- A robust and dynamic understanding of community assets and needs
- A fair, equitable and strategic grant selection process
- Grant monitoring and evaluation
- A contract management and data collection system
- Support for grantees

Strategic Investment Plan
Richmond
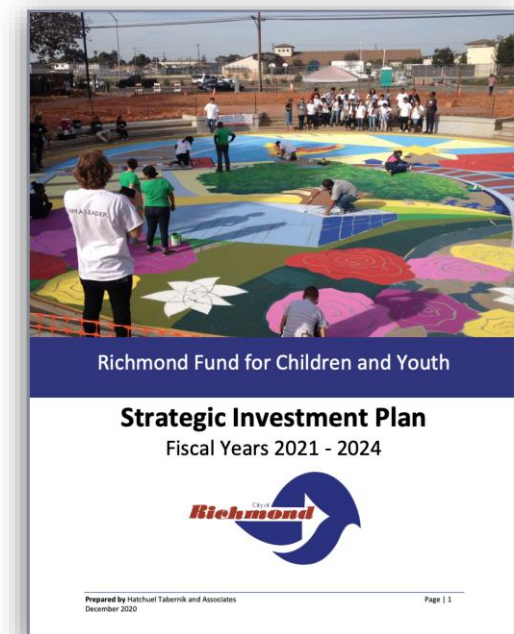
Philanthropic grant-making provides some excellent guidelines and models, although public grant-making has unique characteristics in that it must be responsive to the residents and policymakers of the city, as opposed to the interests of specific philanthropists or foundation boards.

Dedicated funding streams in cities offer unique opportunities (see sections below) and will be guided by the legislation creating those streams. The legislation will include goals, populations to be served, categories of services, and desired outcomes.

Throughout this guide, there are links to plans for how grants will be allocated in three different cities in California – San Francisco, Richmond, and Oakland.
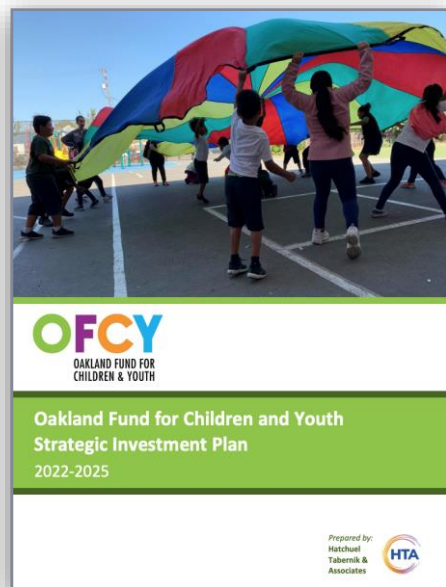
Fund for Children and Youth Strategic Investment Plan
Oakland

Leveraging funding and resources – Regardless of whether a department has authority over a dedicated fund, increasing funding as well as leveraging and maximizing the use of existing city funding is a key function.

**How a department can leverage resources**:

- *Securing state and federal grants* – This will be an increasingly important function as more grant funding becomes available. A department focused on kids will greatly enhance the likelihood that the city will benefit from these funds

- *Initiating model innovative programs with philanthropic dollars or reallocated city dollars* – The opportunity to try new approaches to helping young people should be taken.

- *Facilitating inter-agency collaborations and joint departmental out-stationing of services* – Existing dollars will go further.

- *Creative use of city-owned space to provide opportunities for children and youth* – Increasing access to safe spaces is a plus.

Planning and data collection – Aside from funding, most departments see planning the children's services delivery system as their most important function. This entails a lot of collaboration with all aspects of government and the community. The San Francisco and Richmond charters spell out very detailed planning processes, that include players who must be involved, and specifics

on the creation of both a community needs assessment and a services allocation plan. While these required documents are often the hallmarks of a planning process, planning continues year-round – sometimes through committees or task forces that departments establish to deal with special issues, and sometimes short-term *ad-hoc* groups that get established as a result of a crisis. Documenting, disseminating, and getting approval of plans is a key part of the process.

Examples of strategic planning:
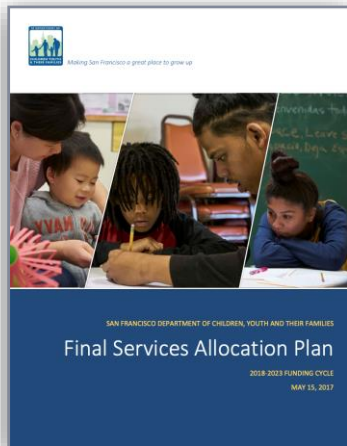

San Francisco Allocation Plan
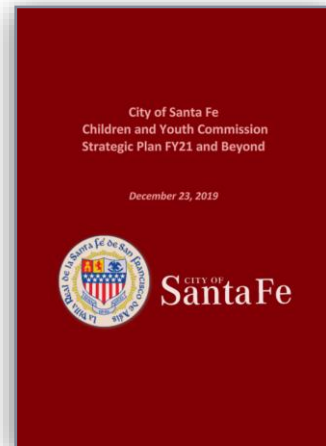
Santa Fe Strategic Plan

Five examples of plans are linked in Section VI and to the plans' cover illustrations throughout this document.
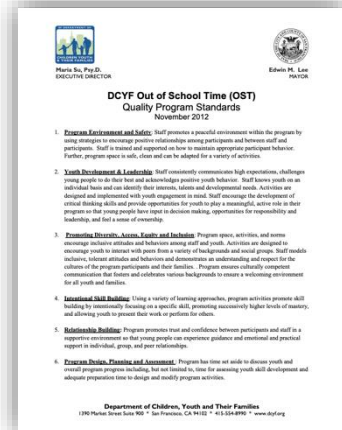
Program management – Many departments avoid running programs themselves, although that does happen, especially when there is a program that needs a home. Administering programs that are needed but don't fall within the jurisdiction of other departments in government can be an essential function. This happened, for instance, in San Francisco with the summer food program, and in Oakland with Headstart. Or the department can manage a program that needs a temporary home, like a federal grant that does not fit neatly into another department and has inter-departmental impacts. However, most service delivery for children in cities is done through grants, most often with community-based organizations, so the department can focus on funding, accountability, planning, community engagement and other functions.

Capacity-building – Improving the quality of city-level children and youth services can be a major contribution of a department. Non-profit services are often the target of this work, but city-run services in other departments should also be included. The department can develop standards for various types of programs, provide coaching

and technical assistance with individual agencies or types of programs, and offer conferences and workshops. Diversity and cultural responsiveness of services offered is key to a vibrant service delivery system; a department can play a critical role in making those hallmarks of services. A department that oversees funding is of course responsible for providing technical assistance and quality oversight for the programs it funds. This responsibility lays the groundwork for capacity building that can expand throughout the city beyond programs funded.
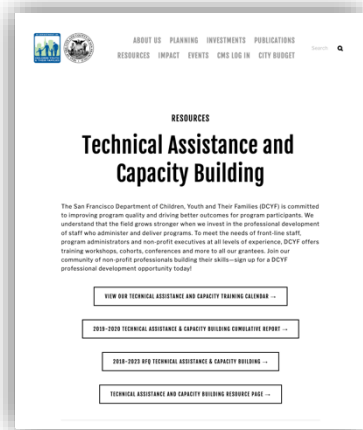
San Francisco – DCYF capacity building strategies

San Francisco – DCYF Out of School Time standards

Information dissemination – An often-overlooked function of a department is informing the public about resources, activities, and

policies for children, youth, and families. A family fair sponsored by the department can draw in the public and share information about programs for kids; a youth summit can inform young people about their rights; neighborhood events can bring city departments together to share information about everything from health to voting while offering fun activities. San Francisco created an on-line resource directory for parents and funded a youth-led outreach program to provide information about a variety of topics from jobs to crisis services.

J. Partnerships, Partnerships, Partnerships

By developing collaborations among the many players in the city with a stake in the well-being of children, a department can create an infrastructure and system of care out of fragmented efforts. Partnerships are the tools the department uses to build a city-wide commitment to nurturing children.

Relationships within city government – One of the most gratifying functions of a city department is working with other programs and departments in the city that serve or could serve young people. A department provides an umbrella under which all types of coordinating strategies can occur – from regular interagency problem-solving and information-sharing meetings to time-limited task forces that address a crisis or expand a specific service. For

instance, a department can work with the city airport or public works department to develop a youth workforce training program; facilitate programming between libraries and recreation and parks; or work with a transportation department to make buses more child and youth friendly. This inside city government work could also entail coordinating, streamlining and standardizing grantmaking processes and establishing quality standards among all city departments. Creating youth internships in city departments is also a great way to utilize the richness of a city to benefit young people – without huge costs. And special projects related to emerging needs, such as work on the Census or on COVID recovery, is also a way for a department to mobilize resources within city government on behalf of children and youth. It is important to note that turf issues can get in the way of this type of work, so managing relationships with other department heads is essential. Those relationships can be the backbone of the work described above.

Relationship with county – Despite the fact that cities exist within counties, and counties provide the most funding to serve children, there is often very little relationship between these two governmental entities. Those who work at the county level must take their knowledge and skills into the workings of the city, and vice versa. A department can facilitate that connection through a shared vision and goals. This past year San Diego provided a perfect

example of how this can work. When the county Board of Supervisors was considering using emergency federal funds for childcare, they reached out to the government of its largest city to match the investment. A department can facilitate this type of ongoing coordination – it does not have to be a one-time event.

Relationship with schools – Some of the most exciting and productive work can come from fostering close working relationships between a city and the school districts (or schools) within its boundaries. Because jurisdictions don't totally overlap, this can sometimes be a bit tricky, but there are ways to target schools within city boundaries. The potential is great for collaborations.

Examples of how departments can collaborate with schools

- sharing resources
- outstationning programs at schools
- collaborating around common goals
- building community support for schools
- sharing data to better target needs of children
- mobilizing the business community to support schools
- supporting early learning and preparation for kindergarten

A department can convene regular meetings between city personnel and school leadership, and even formalize partnership agreements between school boards and city councils. A department can also facilitate a community school vision where schools become centers of community and agencies provide services in the schools. San Francisco's department sponsored a regular YouthVote in the schools. The city formalized a city/school ongoing committee comprised of program and policy leadership.

Link to the **Partnership for Achievement**, an MOU between SF schools and the city.

Relationships with non-profits – It is important for a department to have very close relationships with the community-based organizations serving children, as they are often the most trusted organizations in the community. In cities with dedicated funds, grants are primarily made to non-profits. Because cities themselves often provide only limited direct services to children and youth (usually through Parks and Rec and Public Libraries), it is the non-profit sector that provides the major service infrastructure. A city department should see supporting and cultivating that infrastructure

as one of its major responsibilities. Non-profits are often the bridge between a department and the community.

Convening regular meetings with non-profits can help ensure ongoing support and collaboration.

Strategies to bolster the non-profit sector and include:

Providing technical assistance to improve quality and administrative capacity

Helping non-profits align with the city's overriding plan for children and youth

Assisting with fundraising through grants, philanthropy and businesses

Featuring non-profits in literature and publicity

Creating a table for non-profits to advise the city and develop their own agenda

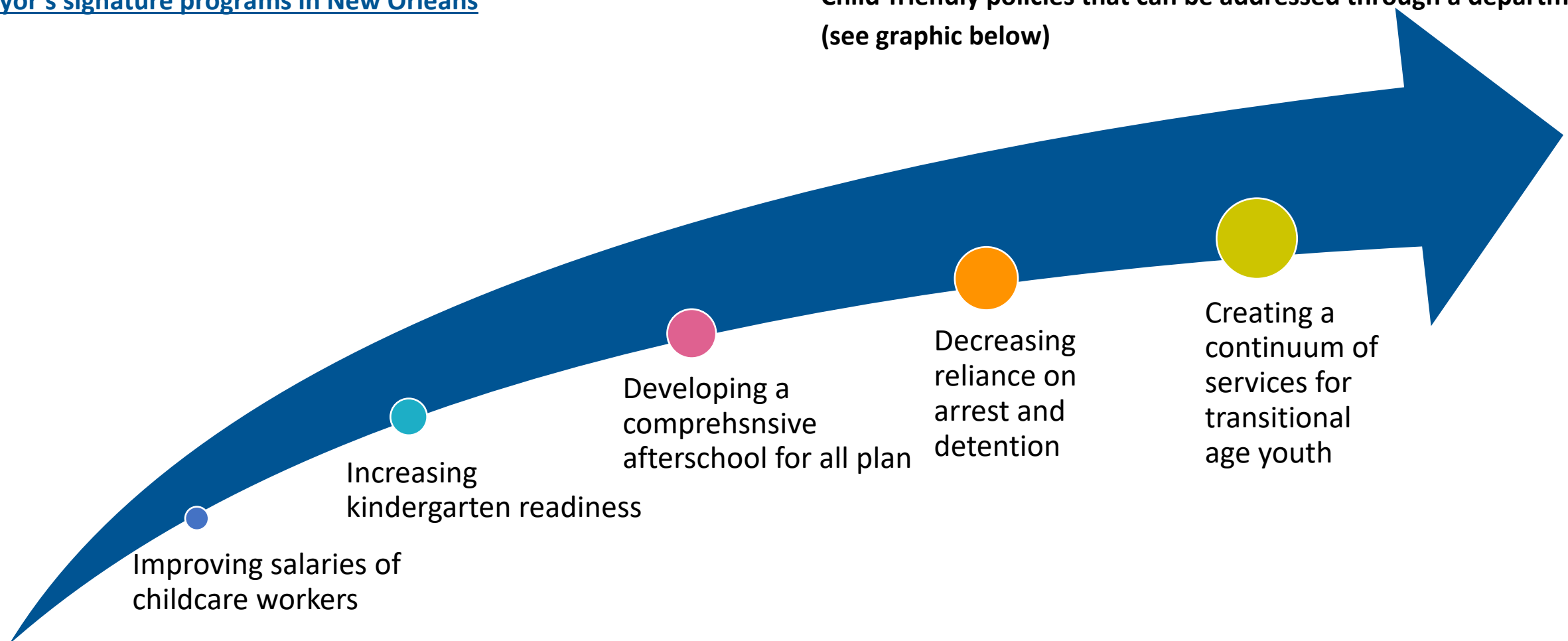**Relationships beyond government and the service delivery system** — Relationships between a department and other stakeholders in the city can certainly go beyond work with the non-profit sector and other players within government. It can include working collaboratively with the business sector around childcare and workforce development, with the philanthropic sector to initiate new model programs, and with the religious sector to collaborate in serving the highest need families.

Mayor's signature programs in New Orleans

K. Child and youth-friendly city policy

While a department may not have the authority to create city policy (only a legislative body does that), it does have a bully-pulpit, convening power and in some cases a strong policy advisory function. For instance, a department director can appoint (or use the power of the mayor to appoint) specific task forces to make recommendations.

Child-friendly policies that can be addressed through a department (see graphic below)

Improving salaries of childcare workers

Increasing kindergarten readiness

Developing a comprehsnsive afterschool for all plan

Decreasing reliance on arrest and detention

Creating a continuum of services for transitional age youth

City departments, non-profit providers, policy leaders, county and school district personnel, business leaders, parents and youth are all stakeholders who can be involved in a policy advisory function. Another option is to create (or have the mayor or City Council create) an ongoing child and youth policy advisory committee that will be staffed by the department. Such a committee could become a place where the mayor or city council comes for advice on key issues, or the policy council could identify its priorities and issue recommendations to elected officials. The committee becomes a platform where diverse voices are heard, and, as a result, a greater emphasis on equity is imbedded in city policy.

L. Thinking outside the box

One of the most fun parts of having a local department for children and youth is that there is a huge amount of flexibility to respond to large and small needs of the city. This can range from single events to long-term projects, to ongoing campaigns, to responding to emergencies like a pandemic or a fire. Two important opportunities of a department are promoting innovative approaches to empowering young people and focusing on prevention.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Examples from San Francisco:

Events	• Summer resource fair for parents who don't know what to do with their kids over the summer, • Conference for all children and youth service providers to create common goals and share best practices, • Community celebrations of families, and a free day at all the city museums and attractions.

New projects and initiatives	• Online parent-to-parent service guide for youth and/or parents, • Conducting a Youth Vote in partnership with the schools to assess youth priorities and unmet needs and to learn about the power of voting, • Organizing a city-wide campaign to raise awareness about nutrition and physical well-being, • Bringing employers together to be inspired to create afterschool or summer jobs for youth, • Identifying conveners in every neighborhood who bring providers together to coordinate services and improve community access, single point of entry.

Emergency response	• Providing the anchor for kids programming during the pandemic when schools were closed.

San Francisco's department funds a unique service area entitled "Enrichment, Leadership and Skill-building" which includes

- Arts and Creative Expression
- Service Learning
- Identity Formation
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
- Youth-led Philanthropy
- Youth Organizing

V. The Future of City Departments for Children and Youth

M. Equity

One of the greatest benefits of having a department is that it can advise on the allocation of resources of a city related to kids and give voice to people and ideas that are often marginalized. This is true in every function listed in this guide. Without an entity in city government performing these functions, resources and policy considerations go to those with the most power and access - by default. A department provides structure and leadership and many strategies to ensure equity in addressing the special needs of children and youth. This is done through establishing goals, creating plans, collecting data, engaging stakeholders, seating an oversight body, developing new programs, and increasing resources. A department can change the power structure when it comes to the needs of young people by using an equity approach in every aspect of its work and promoting an equity lens with all partners and stakeholders.

N. Getting Started with A New Department

Getting started with a government entity can be overwhelming – there is so much that can be done, and for sure, not enough staff to do it all. Knowing that, here are some possible strategies to use when setting early priorities:

- Engage the public in a high visibility planning process, such as a city-wide summit

- Develop roles for key stakeholders whose support is needed for future work

- Create a signature project – particularly one popular with elected officials

- Generate new money – leverage state, federal, philanthropic sectors

- Provide new information or amenities for public – e.g., freebies, info on services

- Launch a bold policy recommendation

O. How a New Department Creates a Pathway to a Local Dedicated Funding Stream

The four cities in California that are developing new entities for children and youth in city government are, in part, doing so with the idea that it will lead ultimately to passing measures creating dedicated funding streams for kids.

Here are some of the ways a department can lead toward dedicated funding:

- Creates visibility and momentum
- Identifies unmet needs
- Forges the infrastructure to implement funding
- Builds a constituency and public support
- Inspires important stakeholders, including political leaders, with early success

P. Conclusion

Given the potential benefits of a separate entity in city government to address the needs of children and youth, city elected officials and policymakers should seriously consider creating one. And advocates should consider making a new entity a priority of their agenda and a step toward even more expansive and equitable policy, programmatic and resource improvements. A new office, division or department should not be considered "just one more layer of bureaucracy," as some might argue. **Outcomes for a new entity could include:**

- expanded resources for children and youth,
- greater equity in the distribution of resources,
- new and creative programs,
- greater emphasis on prevention,
- more diverse voices in the civic arena,
- maximizing all that the city has to offer to benefit children and youth.

It can result in a greater and more equitable city-wide commitment from multiple sectors and stakeholders to the next generation.

Creating A Table for the Whole Community

A department's most important function can be to create a place where diverse community voices guide their city's work to address the needs of the city's children and youth. A city department can become the hub for conversations, advocacy, and community-building. Ways this can happen are discussed throughout this guide: youth voices, diverse oversight, partnerships galore, information dissemination, and planning processes. In the end, a department for children and youth can set a model for how a government bureaucracy can function as a lively space to build community and guide the direction and priorities of a city.

VI. Resources

California City Departments and Divisions

Los Angeles, CA

- **One of the best documents** there is about the rationale for a city department and the various functions it could undertake is a youth-driven vision for a department of youth created by the Executive Task Force on Youth Development, appointed by the City Council. It was submitted to the Council in January 2021.

  Much appreciation to Lou Calanche, Executive Director of Legacy LA, who co-chaired the Task Force on Youth Development and led much of the youth advocacy efforts to create the report and the department.

San Francisco, CA

- **Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF);** there is much in the website of the oldest city department in the state, created in 1987.
- **DCYF Services Allocation Plan**
- **DCYF capacity building strategies**
- DCYF Examples of program standards:
    - **Workforce**
    - **Out of School Time**
    - **Specialized teen programs**
- **Office of Early Care and Education**, split off from DCYF into a separate department in 2013
- **Needs Assessment San Francisco Office of ECE**
- **Our Children, Our Families Council**, a separate coordinating council for children and youth services, created in 2016
- **Benchmarks for Equity**

Long Beach, CA

- Office of Youth Development and **link to Strategic Plan for Youth Development**
- **Youth and Emerging Adults Strategic Plan**

Oakland, CA

- **Oakland Fund for Children and Youth**
- **Children and Youth Services Division**

Richmond, CA

- **Office of Children and Youth**
- **Community Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan**

Sacramento, CA

- **Youth Commission**
- **Youth Development Plan**

San Diego, CA

- **Proposal for an office and Advocacy**

Other divisions and departments in cities around the country

Baltimore, MD

- **Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success**

Decatur, GA

- **Typical children's services division**

Denver, CO

- **Mayor's Cabinet** (not an office)

New Orleans, LA

- **Signature Programs**
- **Data Book**

Philadelphia, PA

- **Office of Children and Families**

Poughkeepsie, NY

- **Mayor's call to create a city division of youth services**
- **Children's Cabinet**

Providence, RI

- **Mayoral initiatives** (not a separate office)

Santa Fe, NM

- **Children and Youth Commission Strategic Plan**, FY 21 and Beyond
- **Policy indicators of desired results**

St. Louis, MO

- **Youth and Family Services Division**

Florida

State legislation in Florida allows counties to establish Children's Services Councils and pass local property taxes to fund services on a county basis. There is much to learn from this long-standing strategy. Below is some information:

- Statewide organization of the councils – **Florida Children's Council**
- **Broward County Children's Services Council**
- **Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County**

The National League of Cities

The Institute for Youth, Education and Families of NLC has long been a tremendous resource for what can be done in cities around the country for children and youth. Its website is rich with information and ideas about everything from early childhood to youth engagement to the role of Mayor's in education.

There are other **resources about cities on the general site** on issues such as use of ARPA funds, addressing the digital divide, and embedding equity into how a city does business.

Children's Funding Project

The Children's Funding Project has created many resources that can help develop a department.

A Children's Cabinet is also a structure for coordinating services and developing a unified plan. **Their toolkit is here.**

Here is their information on Local Dedicated Funds

About Funding The Next Generation

Funding the Next Generation was the nation's first initiative to support communities in developing local ballot measures to create dedicated funding for children and youth. The initiative has worked with hundreds of advocates and policymakers throughout California and has prepared numerous documents and tools for those interested in sustainable funding streams and the role local government can play   Previously sponsored by San Francisco State University, it is now sponsored by the Children's Funding Project. As partners they are working to create a national movement to develop local structures and funding to support children, youth, and families.

www.fundingthenextgeneration.org

About Margaret Brodkin

Margaret is the founder and Director of Funding the Next Generation. She worked in mental health, foster care and community centers before becoming Executive Director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in 1978, in San Francisco, where for 26 years she led organizing and policy efforts to promote the well-being of San Francisco's children and youth. She became nationally known for her work to create local dedicated funding streams for children, the first in California and among the first in the country. Following her work at Coleman, for five years she ran the city's Department of Children Youth and Their Families.   She ran New Day for Learning, an initiative to promote community schools before founding Funding the Next Generation in 2013. She has a BA from Oberlin College and a master's degree in social work from Case Western Reserve University.

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