

2018–2019 Program Year Annual Report

Evaluation of the San José Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together (BEST) Program



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Executive Summary

The Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together (BEST), a program of the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF), is a youth violence prevention and gang-related crime reduction initiative operated by the City of San José Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) Department. Through BEST, PRNS identifies and selects nonprofit community organizations in San José to provide services consistent with BEST goals. PRNS then awards individual grants for each program year (PY) that support services for youth ages 6 to 24 (and their families) who fit one of four target population profiles—at-risk, high-risk, gang-impacted, or gang-intentional.¹ PRNS hired SPR to conduct an evaluation of BEST PY 2018–2019. This report provides the findings from the implementation study, a key component of this evaluation.

BEST Program Services

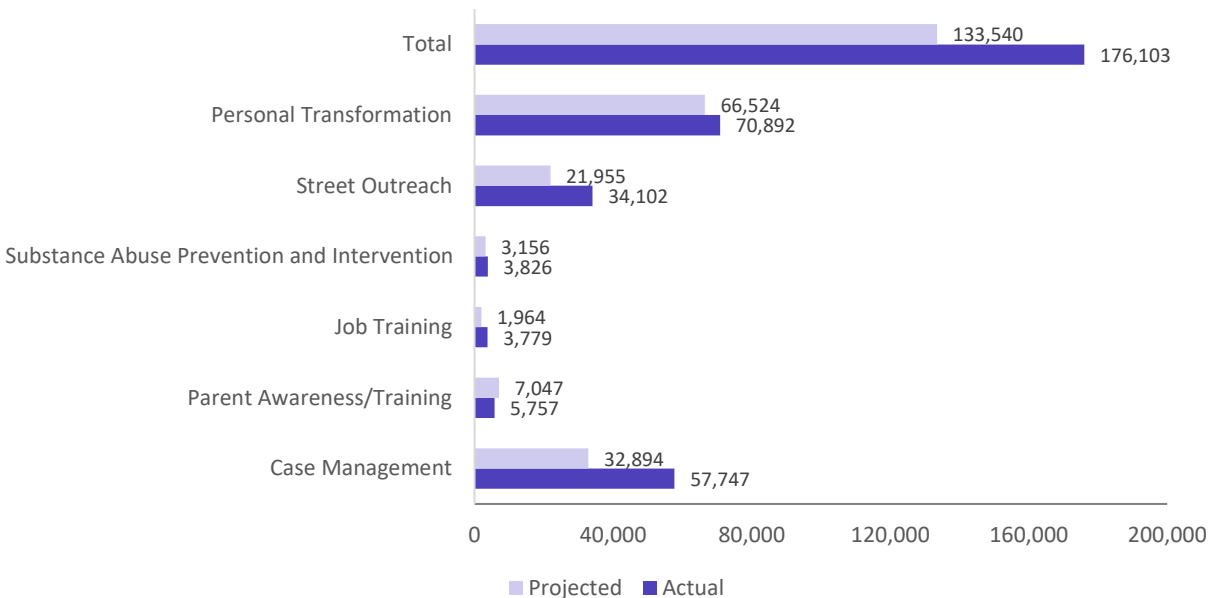
In PY 2018–2019, as in prior years, BEST grantees provided important services for youth and families living in neighborhoods at high risk for gang-related violence and for youth who themselves were at risk of becoming involved in gang activity or of becoming victims of violence. BEST PY 2018–2019 activities spanned six eligible service areas and included a wide range of specific interventions, including case management and mentoring of youth, provision of safe spaces both in and out of school, and training in positive parenting approaches.

- **Collectively, grantees exceeded their service goals in all but one eligible service area (parent awareness/training).** Each grantee set goals for the Units of Service (UOS) they planned to provide for specific eligible service areas. While individual grantees varied in achieving their goals, collectively they achieved or exceeded the overall goals.
- **The number of UOS provided and eligible service areas offered were aligned with PRNS’ priorities.** Most UOS provided by grantees were in personal transformation (40 percent) and case management (33 percent), which were the two eligible service areas where PRNS focused grant funding.
- **The total number of UOS delivered by BEST grantees steadily increased over the last three program years, notably in the street outreach and case management service areas.** However, the UOS for some eligible services areas decreased or fluctuated over this period.

Grantees set goals for the total UOS to be delivered by service area. As shown in Exhibit ES-1, the total number of UOS grantees provided (176,103) surpassed the projected number (133,540).

¹ See Appendix A for a detailed definition of each target profile as defined by the BEST program.

Exhibit ES-1: Units of Service by Eligible Service Area, Projected and Actual, PY 2018–2019



Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

BEST Grants and Grant Spending

In PY 2018–2019, PRNS awarded BEST grantees \$2,439,456 in grants and one-time funding. Grantees spent 99 percent of granted funds.

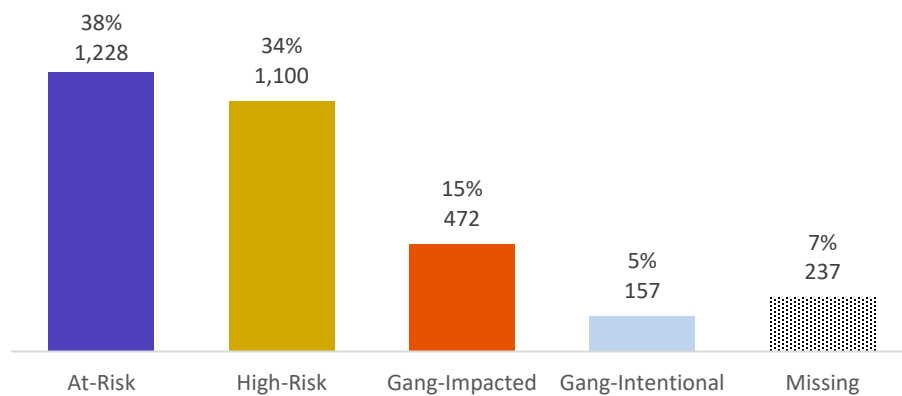
- **Overall, BEST grant funding remained constant from PY 2016–2017 through PY 2018–2019.** However, some components of BEST grant funds and additional matched funds fluctuated over this period.
- **The amount of matched funding that BEST grantees provided decreased over the triennial period.** The extent to which individual BEST grantees relied on matched funding to support their programs varied, with some grantees providing substantially greater or lesser amounts of matched funding.
- **Grantees generally expended PY 2018–2019 BEST grant funds as planned.** There was some variability in the difference between funding and expenditures across grantees, but it was relatively minor.

BEST Participants

San José BEST grantees served a diverse set of participants, from school-aged children and their families to young adults.

- **During PY 2018–2019, 3,194 children, youth, and parents participated in BEST-funded programs.** Participants enrolled from across the city of San José, with strong representation from the eastern and southern areas.
- **Most BEST participants were at the lower end of the risk-level range.** BEST grantees must categorize participants into one of four target populations: at-risk, high-risk, gang-impacted, or gang-intentional. A majority of participants (72 percent) were categorized as at-risk (38 percent) or high-risk (34 percent). (Exhibit ES-2).
- **Two grantees (Girls Scouts of Northern California and Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County) enrolled about one third of BEST participants.** Together, these agencies enrolled 1,029 participants.

Exhibit ES-2: Percentage and Number of Participants Enrolled by Target Population



Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Note: BEST PY 2018–2019 served 3,194 participants.

BEST Staff and Participant Perspectives

The evaluation team conducted focus groups and interviews with BEST grantee staff members and program participants to learn about ways the program was working to support youth development and prevent youth violence.

- **BEST programming provided safe locations for youth to engage in enriching activities.** Participants discussed how taking part in BEST services helped them stay connected in school, at home, and with their communities.
- **BEST participants reported challenges related to finding safe environments that support pro-social behavior with peers, doing well in school or work, and forming positive peer and adult relationships.** Younger youth (ages 12-18) reported challenges related to issues with self-esteem and social skills, while older youth (ages 19-24) reported challenges avoiding interactions with police.

- **BEST staff members and participants reported several ways in which they perceived the program improved youth outcomes.** In particular, they said the program had positive effects on youth well-being and development, education outcomes, and criminal justice involvement.

Data Limitations and Recommendations

The process of compiling program data for this report highlighted limitations with these data and the underlying data collection system. In response, the evaluation team recommends the adoption of a management information system or an online data collection tool which would create an easier, more user-friendly and effective system to collect and analyze program data.

Conclusion

In PY 2018–2019, as in prior years, BEST grantees provided important services for youth designed to improve aspects of youth development, interpersonal behavior, and educational outcomes and reduce involvement in gang activity and exposure to violence. The evaluation team plans to work with PRNS to use the findings of this implementation study to inform future evaluation and program planning efforts.

I. Introduction

The Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together (BEST) program is a youth violence prevention and gang-related crime reduction initiative operated by the City of San José Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) department. Through BEST, PRNS identifies and selects nonprofit and faith-based community organizations in San José as part of a three-year cycle (i.e., a triennial period). Organizations identified as qualified to provide services consistent with BEST goals are placed on an eligible service provider list. PRNS then awards individual grants for each program year (September through August) of the triennial period. Since 2010, PRNS has awarded between \$1.6 and \$2.5 million annually to support BEST programming.

BEST grants support services for youth ages 6 to 24 (and their families) who fit one of four target population profiles—at-risk, high-risk, gang-impacted, or gang-intentional.² Program services are organized into six PRNS-defined eligible service areas that encompass a wide array of prevention and intervention services, including case management, street outreach, and other supportive services. Grantees provide services at community-based organization offices, in schools, at juvenile detention facilities, and on the street in designated hotspots.

While grants support service delivery across the entire city, they are designed to target services in and around “hot spot” areas where members of the San José Police Department (SJPD) and leadership from the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF) have identified higher rates of youth violence and gang-related crime. In their applications and contracts, grantees specify populations, services, and geographic areas in which they plan to provide services with BEST funding.

In 2017, PRNS contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate eight program years (PY) of the BEST program (PY 2010–2011 to PY 2017–2018). That evaluation marked a change in approach from past evaluations of the BEST program by examining longer term outcomes based on administrative data. The findings from that evaluation showed that cumulative provision of BEST services for a given SJPD beat was associated with decreases in

Established in 1991, the City of San José Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF) is a strategic youth violence prevention initiative. The MGPTF funds the BEST program and the city-staffed Youth Intervention Services and Neighborhood Services. It also organizes a broad coalition—including law enforcement, school and government leaders, faith- and community-based organizations, and residents—to collaborate on, plan, and implement solutions for reducing gang-related activity and crime.

² These four target population profiles describe a range of risk levels, from being at risk of becoming involved in gang or criminal activity to being heavily involved and likely to have a history with the criminal justice system. See Appendix A for a detailed definition of each target profile as defined by the BEST program.

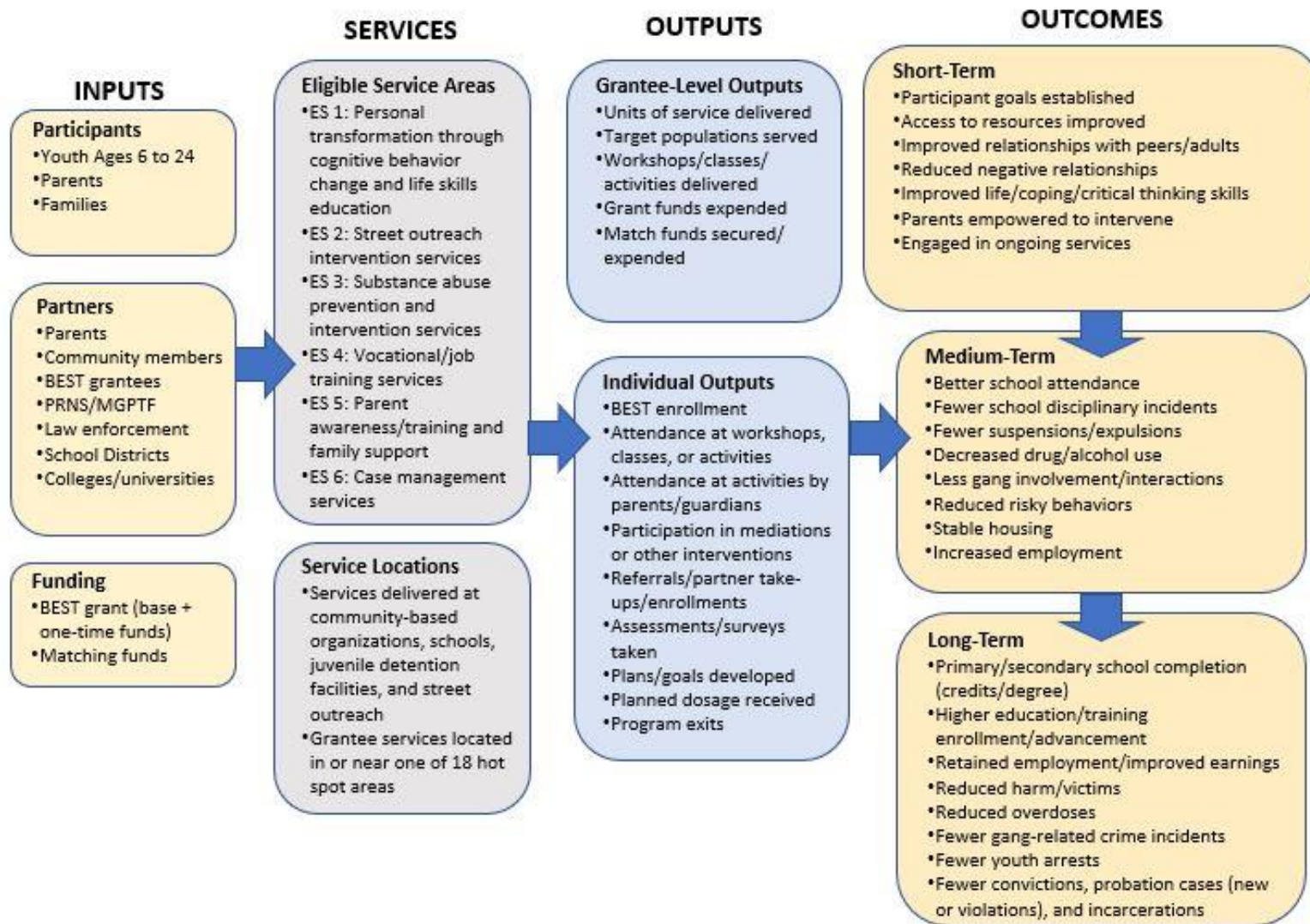
both gang incidents and youth arrests in that beat and adjacent beats (Geckeler et al., 2019). Furthermore, it found that BEST-funded programs and services were designed to improve many short- and medium-term outcomes in addition to, and often as a means to, improving long-term criminal justice outcomes. They do so by providing youth with the skills, supports, alternative activities, and sense of purpose needed to avoid becoming involved in criminal activity. Together, the modest impacts observed on crime suggested that the program may have had even larger impacts on these intermediate outcomes.

As a continuation of this work, PRNS hired SPR to conduct an evaluation of BEST for PY 2018–2019. This report provides the findings from the implementation study of this program year. It describes the participants enrolled in BEST and the services they received. It also sets the context for a future outcomes study that will examine matched participant-level data.

BEST Theory of Change

PRNS has developed a theory of change for BEST that defines how each eligible service area operates, showing the services to be provided and their connection to different types of outputs and outcomes. This theory of change is rooted in the implementation study findings described in SPR’s prior report and additional efforts that PRNS conducted with grantees to understand their program models and approaches. As seen in Exhibit I-1, the outcomes that BEST services are designed to change build on one another: short-term outcomes, such as those focused on positive youth development (e.g., improved self-esteem, improved coping mechanisms), can support improved intermediate outcomes, like those related to education (e.g., reduced disciplinary measures and improved academic engagement), and long-term outcomes, like those related to criminal justice (e.g., reduced arrests or involvement with probation).

Exhibit I-1: San José BEST Theory of Change



BEST PY 2018–2019 Evaluation Design

SPR designed the PY 2018–2019 BEST evaluation to build on the lessons learned from the previous multiyear impact study and theory of change described above. The goal was twofold: to shift the focus towards individual-level participants (as compared to geographic zones) and to do so for short- and medium-term outcomes, such as educational engagement and school attendance, in addition to longer-term outcomes like those associated with involvement in the criminal justice system. This approach is intended to help PRNS learn about how BEST services lead to improved outcomes for program participants. For this evaluation SPR is using an approach that relies on a variety of data sources, including qualitative data, program service data and administrative data. The evaluation team is also helping PRNS gain access to additional types of data by negotiating data sharing agreements with multiple public agencies and piloting a new participant survey for use in future evaluation efforts.³

The evaluation of BEST PY 2018–2019 was designed to help answer the following research questions:

- What were the main characteristics of service delivery in PY 2018–2019, including grant amounts expended, eligible service areas and units of service provided, and locations where services were provided?
- What were the main outputs of service delivery for PY 2018–2019, including the number of participants enrolled (by grantee) and the demographics of those participants (e.g., race, age, risk level, etc.)?
- Did program participants in PY 2018–2019 experience positive changes in outcomes—such as less frequent involvement with the criminal justice system and higher school engagement—compared to before starting the program?

The evaluation design includes an implementation study and an outcomes study. The implementation study, presented in this report, provides an overall picture of BEST in PY 2018–2019 from the perspective of service delivery and program outputs, answering the first two research questions. The outcomes study, which will be explored in future evaluation reports, will examine individual-level outcomes.

³ The evaluation team is currently working with PRNS to put in place a process to obtain administrative data from SJPD, the County of Santa Clara Probation Department (CSCPD), and various education agencies.

Implementation Study Data Collection

The implementation study relied on data from two sources: grantee contracts and workbook data, and focus groups and interviews.

- **Grantee Contracts and Workbook Data.** The evaluation team worked with PRNS to gather data from grantee workbooks, which are the main tool used by BEST grantees to report to PRNS on their overall grant implementation and performance. Workbooks include grantee-reported data on participant characteristics, service delivery, and grant expenditures as well as narrative information on program successes. A summary of grantee workbook data can be found in Appendix B. Grantee contracts also provided important data on projections of service provision.
- **Focus Groups and Interviews.** During the program year, the evaluation team conducted focus groups and interviews with BEST grantee staff and participants to learn their perspectives on how the program was working to support youth development and prevent youth violence. Staff members from 15 out of 18 grantee organizations participated in focus groups. Evaluation team members also conducted focus groups (and a small number of individual interviews) with youth from six of the 18 grantees twice during the program year. The focus groups were conducted at the sites of grantee organizations, with a total of 35 youth participating.

II. BEST Program Services

BEST-funded programs provided a wide range of services in PY 2018–2019. Some grantees provided primarily preventative services and worked with youth who were at-risk or high-risk, while others primarily served youth who were gang-intentional or gang-impacted. This diversified service approach was consistent with the strategic direction adopted by the MGPTF to emphasize prevention and intervention services (Resource Development Associates, 2017). During PY 2018–2019, 18 grantees provided BEST services in school, community-based, and juvenile justice settings. The services were organized into six eligible service areas. This chapter describes these eligible service areas and the total units of service (UOS) projected and delivered as compared to recent program years.

Key Findings

- **Collectively, grantees exceeded their service goals in all but one eligible service area (parent awareness/training).** Each grantee set goals for the UOS they planned to provide for specific eligible service areas. While individual grantees varied in achieving their goals, collectively they achieved or exceeded the overall goals.
- **The number of UOS provided and eligible service areas offered were aligned with PRNS' priorities.** Most UOS provided by grantees were in personal transformation (40 percent) and case management (33 percent), which were the two eligible service areas where PRNS focused grant funding.
- **Grantees delivered increasing numbers of UOS in recent years, notably in the street outreach and case management eligible service areas.** Over the last three program years, the total number of UOS has steadily increased despite variations within specific eligible service areas over this time period.

Eligible Service Areas

BEST grantee organizations offered programming to youth in one or more of six eligible service areas. These eligible service areas were as follows:⁴

Personal transformation through cognitive behavior change and life-skills education. This service area included a wide array of intervention and education services. Services focused on developing internal thinking and attitudes as they relate to external personal/social

⁴ These definitions come (with some limited modifications) from documents including request for qualifications, grantee workbooks, and other grantee documents.

attributes and behaviors, improving intrapersonal and interpersonal problem-solving, and enhancing school engagement. Examples of program activities and curricula include mentoring, life skills classes, legal education, jazz instruction, and yoga classes.

Street outreach/intervention. Street outreach workers engaged with youth in designated hot spot communities to provide pro-social activities and case management. Staff worked with service providers, schools, and families providing outreach and mediation services in targeted neighborhoods and surrounding communities. Examples of program activities included preventing gang activity through “cold” street contact as well as group outings to locations such as nature areas and theme parks.

Substance abuse intervention and prevention. Services, whether peer-to-peer or staff-driven, aimed at decreasing student use of alcohol and drugs as well as alcohol or substance abuse early detection and intervention services. Examples of program activities include therapy and support groups.

Vocational/job training. This service area provided youth with educational and vocational training as well as work opportunities. Examples of program activities included education completion support as well as job coaching and placement.

Parent awareness/training and family support. Grantees provided programs designed to increase parent-child bonding and communication skills. Curricula educated parents and youth about positive decision-making skills. Examples of program activities included support groups, character education classes, as well as family gatherings such as barbeques.

Case management. Services included initial one-on-one scheduled assessments and client appointments in home, school, and community settings. These services helped grantee staff establish an understanding of youth life challenges, current problems and issues, family influences, skills/abilities, personal strengths, interests, and aspirations. Grantees used risk and needs assessments to inform the tailoring of an individual service and/or specialized intervention plan. Examples of program activities included personalized one-on-one coaching, goal setting, and home visits.

Half of the grantees (nine of 18) provided services in only one eligible service area while the other half provided services in two eligible services areas (five grantees), three eligible service areas (three grantees), or four eligible service areas (one grantee). Most grantees provided services in the personal transformation (15 grantees) and/or case management eligible service (seven grantees) areas. The city also contracted with three grantees to provide street outreach, three grantees to provide parent awareness/training, two grantees to provide substance abuse prevention and intervention services, and two grantees to provide job training. Exhibit II-1 shows the eligible service areas in which each grantee provided services and the total number of grantees providing services in each eligible service area.

Exhibit II-1: Eligible Service Areas Provided by Each BEST Grantee

	Personal Transformation	Street Outreach	Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention	Job Training	Parent Awareness/Training	Case Management	Total # of Service Areas for Each Grantee
Alum Rock Counseling Center, Inc.	✓					✓	2
Bay Area Tutoring Association	✓				✓		2
Bill Wilson Center	✓			✓		✓	3
Caminar					✓		1
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	✓	✓	✓			✓	4
ConXión to Community	✓			✓			2
Empowering our Community for Success	✓						1
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	✓					✓	2
Girl Scouts of Northern California	✓						1
Happy House					✓		1
New Hope for Youth		✓				✓	2
San José Jazz	✓						1
The Art of Yoga Project	✓						1
Teen Success, Inc.	✓						1
Firehouse Community Development Corporation	✓	✓				✓	3
The Tenacious Group	✓						1
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	✓		✓			✓	3
Uplift Family Services	✓						1
Total # of Grantees	15	3	2	2	3	7	

Source: PY 2018–2019 BEST contracts.

Projected Units of Service

To measure the amount of service delivered by BEST grantees under their grants, PRNS uses UOS—a formula that uses participants, sessions, and time per session to determine the quantity of services delivered.⁵ As part of their PY 2018–2019 contracts, each grantee indicated the number of UOS they planned to provide in each eligible service area. Exhibit II-2 displays

⁵ Units of Service (UOS) = Total Number of Sessions x Average Number of Participants per Session x Average Number of Hours per Session.

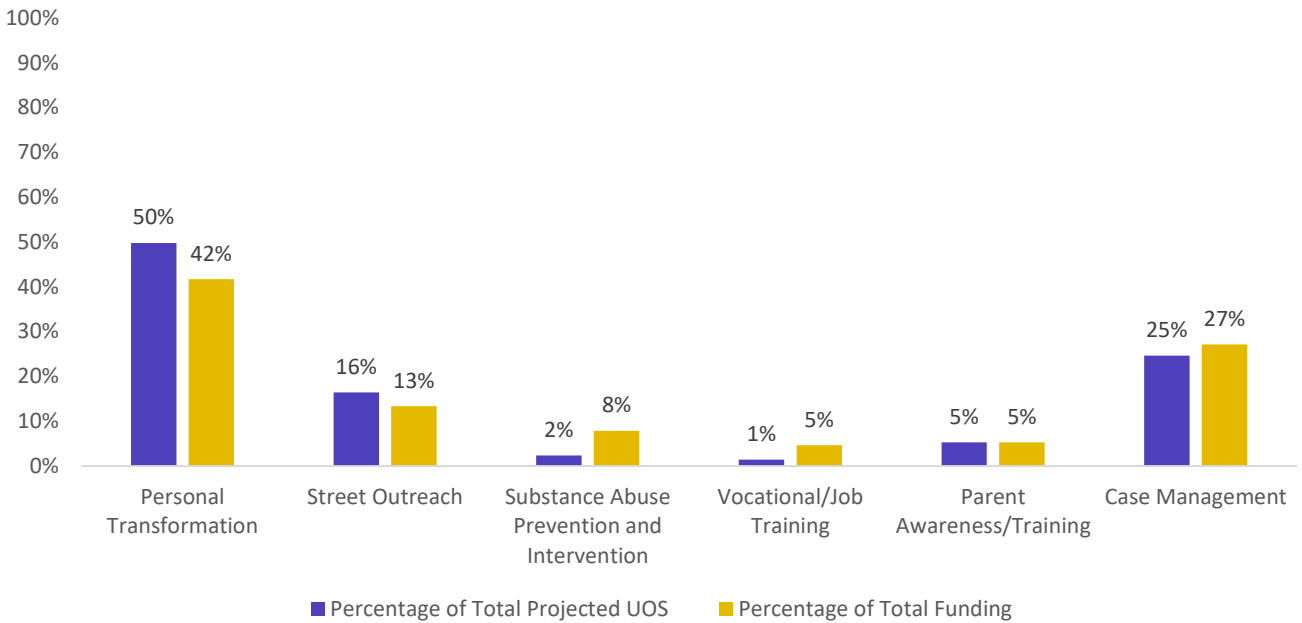
the total projected UOS across grantees, organized by eligible service area, the number of grantees providing services in each eligible service area, and the BEST funding granted for each eligible service area.

Exhibit II-2: Grantees, Projected UOS and BEST Funding by Eligible Service Area

Eligible Service Area	Number of Grantees Providing Services	Projected UOS	BEST Funding
Personal Transformation	15	66,524	\$1,016,909
Street Outreach/Intervention	3	21,955	\$325,600
Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention	2	3,156	\$192,746
Vocational/Job Training	2	1,964	\$113,300
Parent Awareness/Training and Family Support	3	7,047	\$128,750
Case Management	7	32,894	\$662,151
<i>Source:</i> Data for number of grantees and BEST funding come from grantee contracts. Data for Projected UOS come from grantee workbooks. BEST funding in this table reflects base plus one-time funding. See Chapter III for an explanation of these different funding types.			

Exhibit II-2 illustrates how the types of services that grantees planned to provide generally aligned with BEST program funding. In general, BEST grantees planned to provide more UOS in eligible service areas where funding was greater. However, this relationship was not exact, which may be due to factors including variation in the underlying cost of service provision, and the level of matched funding grantees obtained to provide these services (i.e., greater matched funding may have resulted in the capacity to provide more services). To visualize the variation in the relationship of grant funding to UOS, Exhibit II-3 displays a comparison of the percentage of total projected UOS with percentage of grant funding for each eligible service area. The next chapter discusses BEST funding and expenditures in greater detail.

Exhibit II-3: Projected UOS Compared to BEST Funding for Each Eligible Service Area

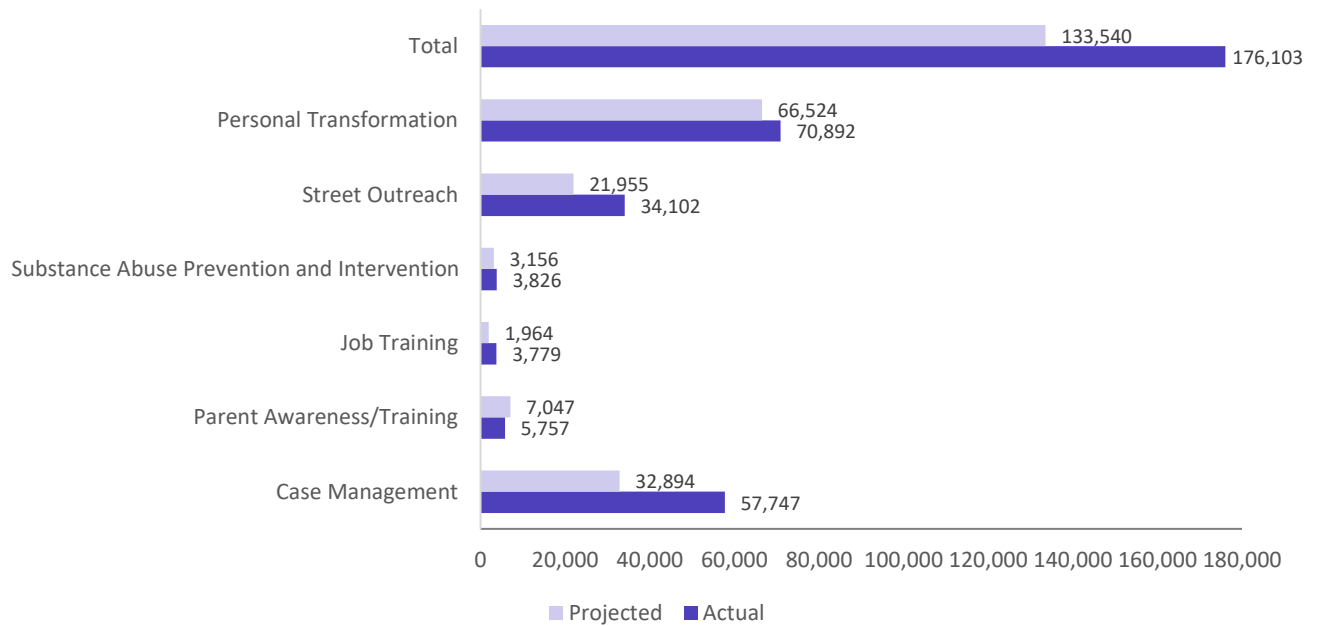


Source: BEST grantee contract and workbook data.

Projected and Actual UOS

As part of their contracts, BEST grantees also reported throughout the year (through their workbooks) on the number of UOS they provided. Exhibit II-4 shows the UOS that the 18 grantees planned to provide and actually provided, overall and in each eligible service area. The total number of UOS grantees provided (176,103) surpassed the projected number (133,540). This held true in all eligible service areas except parent awareness/training.

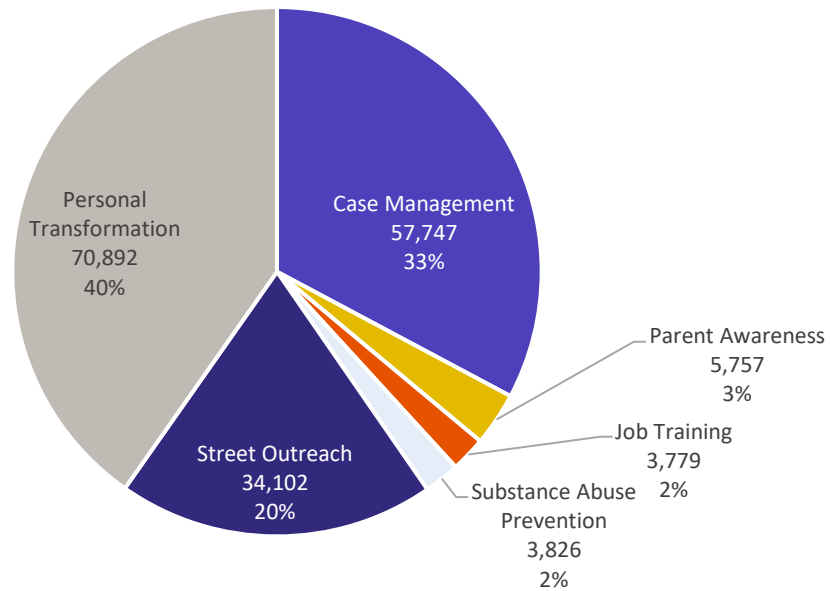
Exhibit II-4: Projected and Actual UOS by Eligible Service Area, PY 2018–2019



Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Grantees provided more UOS in some eligible service areas than in others. Exhibit II-5 depicts the actual UOS delivered by eligible service area as a percentage of the total UOS delivered. Personal transformation was provided most often (40 percent), followed by case management (33 percent) and street outreach (20 percent). The other eligible service areas represented far less of the total UOS delivered, with parent awareness/training, substance abuse prevention and intervention, and job training each representing three percent or less.

Exhibit II-5: Overall Distribution of UOS Delivered by Grantees, PY 2018–2019

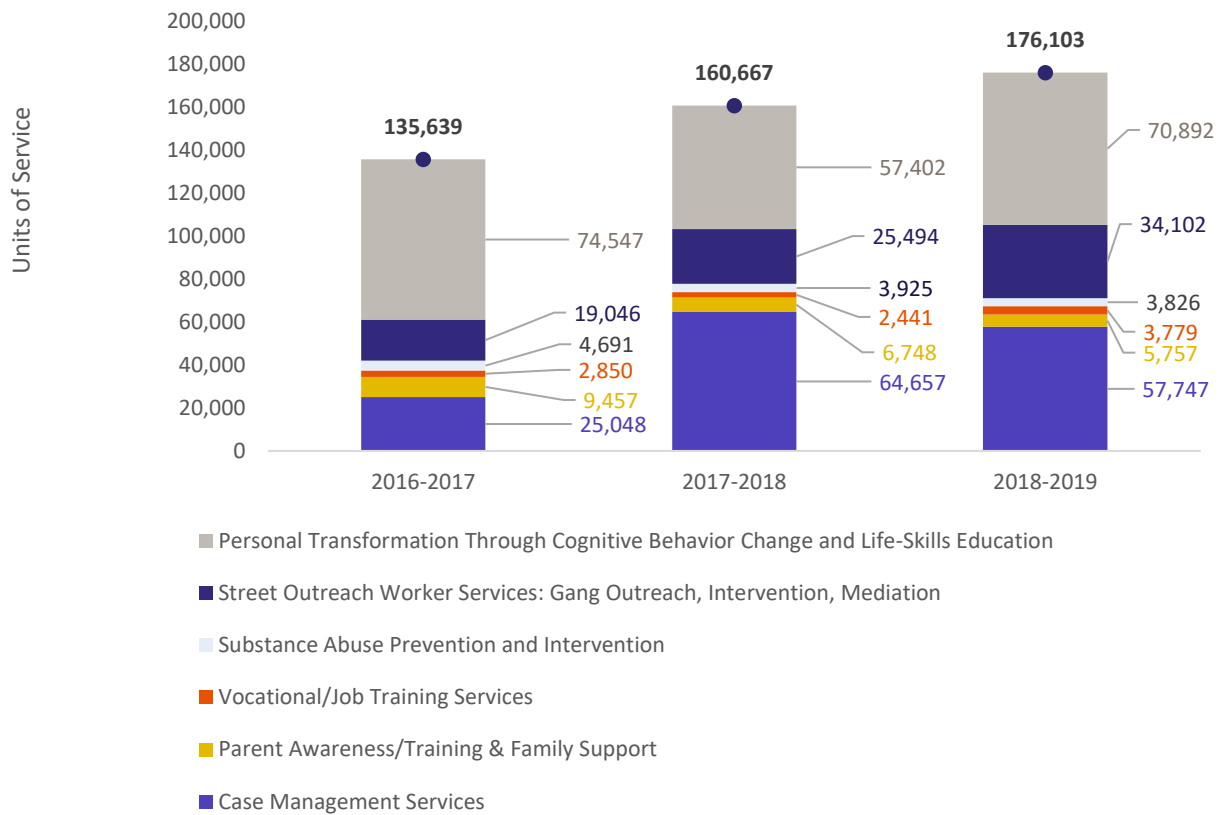


Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Actual UOS Over Time

The final analysis in this chapter looks at the provision of UOS over the 2016–2019 triennial period. Exhibit II-6 shows that the total number of UOS delivered by grantees for the past three program years (from PY 2016–2017 to PY 2018–2019) increased each year during this period. In terms of individual service areas, the number of UOS that grantees delivered in street outreach also increased each year during the triennial period (from 19,046 in PY 2016–2017 to 34,102 in PY 2018–2019), while the total number of UOS delivered in other eligible service areas fluctuated from year to year.

Exhibit II-6: UOS Delivered by All BEST Grantees, by Eligible Service Area, PY 2016–2017 to PY 2018–2019



Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Summary

Overall, these findings indicate that grant funding drove service delivery as intended and suggest some areas for future analysis. Since grantees changed relatively little over the triennial period, and some have been BEST grantees for many years, the trend toward higher UOS delivery may be the result of increased efficiency at delivering BEST services over time. If that is the case, this might warrant an adjustment of UOS projections. Additional information about the costs of providing specific services to different target groups would be useful for informing future decisions. Also, driven by grant allocations, service provision was heavily concentrated in a few eligible service areas. PRNS may wish to consider whether a different balance of funding and service provision is needed, ideally driven by further assessment of community needs and available resources.

III. BEST Grants and Grant Spending

In PY 2018–2019, PRNS awarded BEST grantees a total of \$2,439,456, which included \$2,262,475 in base-funding and \$176,981 in one-time funding. This chapter provides an overview of BEST funding and grant spending during PY 2018–2019 and over the last triennial period (PY 2016–2017 to PY 2018–2019), including the number of BEST grants awarded compared to the number of qualified service providers and the degree to which these grants supported BEST-funded programs.

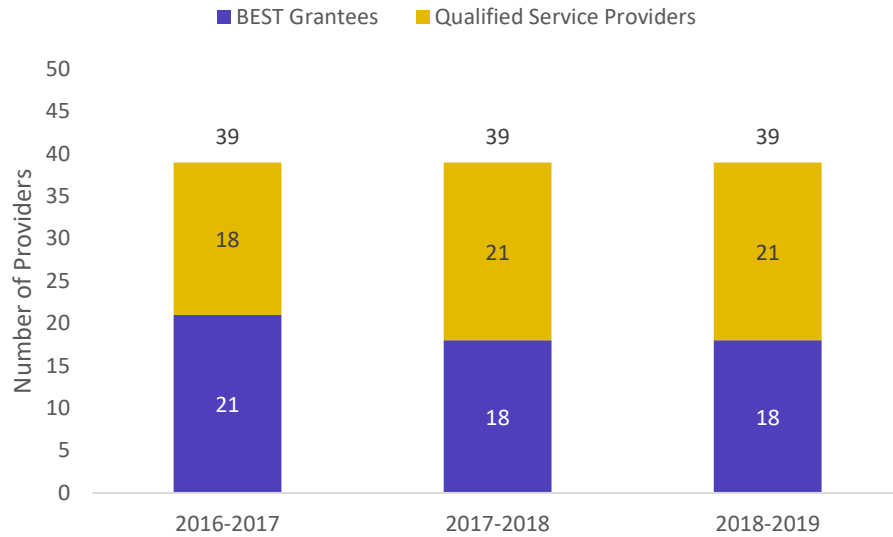
Key Findings

- **Overall, BEST grant funding remained constant during the triennial period.** However, some components of BEST grant funds and additional matched funds fluctuated over this period.
- **The amount of matched funding provided by BEST grantees decreased over the triennial period.** The extent to which individual BEST grantees relied on matched funding to support their programs varied, with some grantees providing substantially greater or lesser amounts of matched funding.
- **Grantees generally expended PY 2018–2019 BEST grant funds as planned.** There was some variability in the difference between funding and expenditures across grantees, but it was relatively minor.

BEST Grants and Grantees

In PY 2018–2019, PRNS awarded BEST grants to 18 of the 39 qualified service providers that PRNS had selected for the triennial period. As shown in Exhibit III-1, the number of funded BEST grantees decreased slightly from PY 2016–2017 to PY 2017–2018 but then stayed the same from PY 2017–2018 to PY 2018–2019.

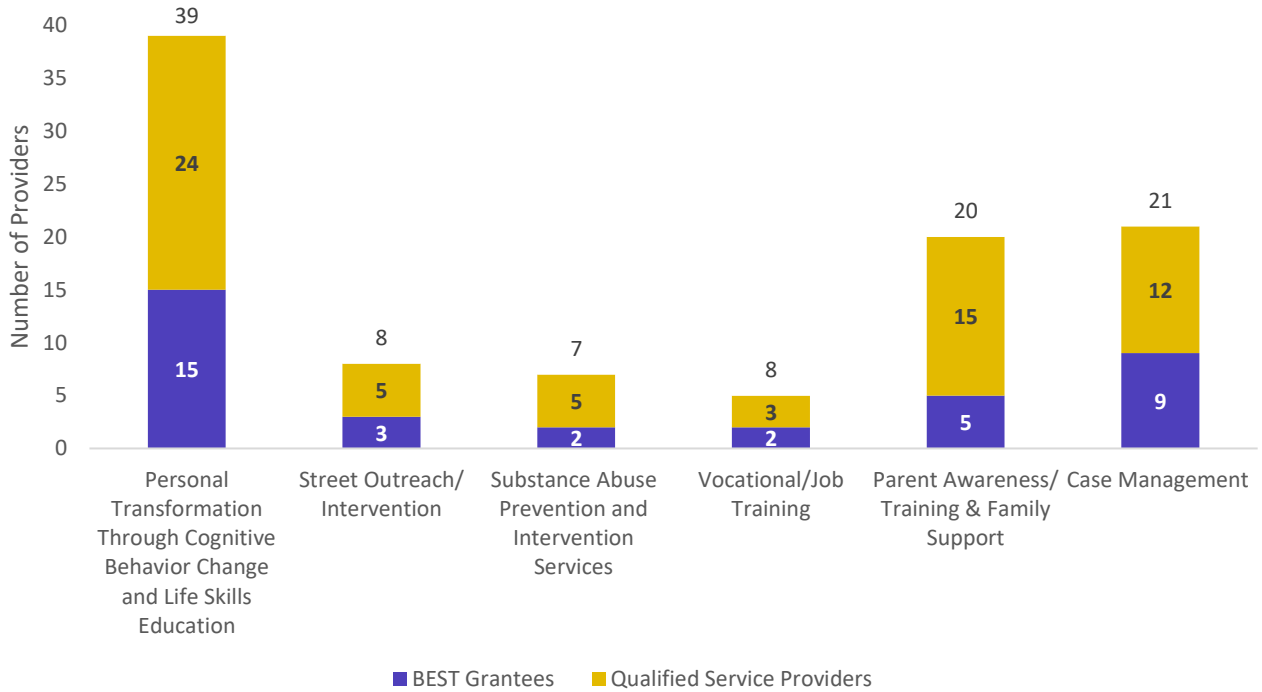
Exhibit III-1: Number of BEST Grantees and Qualified Service Providers, PY 2016–2017 to PY 2018–2019



Source: BEST administrative data.

The number of qualified service providers differed by eligible service area (Exhibit III-2). The largest number of qualified service providers were in the personal transformation through cognitive behavioral change and life skills education service area (n=39). There were fewer qualified eligible service providers in the parent awareness/training (n=20) and case management (n=21) service areas. The selection of grantees was driven by MGPTF priorities as evidenced in BEST funding for each eligible service area described in Chapter II. As a result, about half of the qualified service providers for the case management service area received BEST grants, while only one third of the qualified service providers for parent awareness/training received BEST grants. Notably, there were fewer qualified service providers in the street outreach (n=5), substance abuse prevention and intervention (n=7), and vocational/job training (n=5) service areas. However, similar to other eligible service areas, the number of BEST grantees in these service areas was proportionate to the number of qualified services providers. Between 25 to 40 percent of the total qualified service providers received BEST grants in each service area.

Exhibit III-2: Number of BEST Grantees and Qualified Service Providers by Eligible Service Area, 2018–2019



Source: BEST administrative data and BEST contracts.

Note: There were 18 grantees in PY 2018–2019. Qualified service providers (n= 39) were selected for the entire triennial period. Grantees and qualified service providers can provide services in more than one eligible service area, so the total number indicates the total number of all possible eligible service providers in each eligible service area.

BEST Funding Levels

The funding used to support BEST programs consists of three main components. First is base funding, which is a somewhat static amount across each triennial period. Second is one-time funding, which includes support from state and federal grants, carryover funds (related to decreased awards, defunded agencies, etc.), and funding for other modes of service delivery from the MGPTF, such as late-night gym support or funding for emerging hot spots. Third is matched funding, which comes from various sources (e.g., school district funds, state grants, foundations) and supports the same services that BEST grants support. In other words, BEST grant funding represents only a portion of the total funding used to support BEST-funded services.

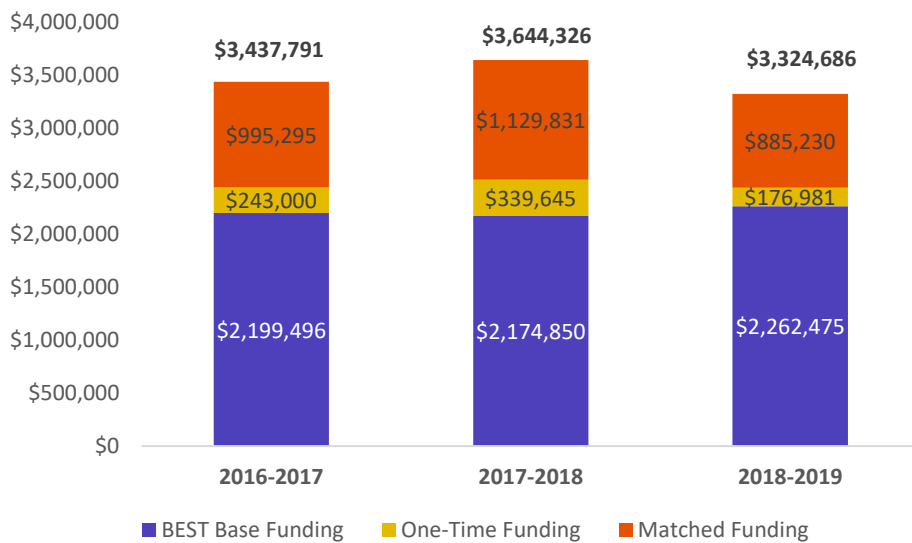
Exhibit III-3 shows the amounts recorded for each of these types of funding for each year of the triennial period. There are two significant trends during this period:

1. BEST program funding—including base and one-time funding—remained about the same across the triennial period. While there was a slight decrease in BEST base funding

from PY 2016–2017 to PY 2017–2018, one-time funding increased to compensate. Conversely, while BEST base funding increased from PY 2017–2018 to PY 2018–2019, one-time funding decreased during between those years.

- Grantees indicated they had \$244,601 less in matched funding in PY 2018–2019 than in PY 2017–2018, and overall there was a decrease of \$110,065 in matched funding during the triennial period. The evaluation team’s earlier impact evaluation report identified the same downward trend from PY 2011–2012 to PY 2014–2015, which suggests that BEST grantees were becoming more reliant on BEST funds to support their programs (Geckeler et al., 2019).

Exhibit III-3: BEST Program Funding for PY 2016–2017 to PY 2018–2019



Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbook data.

While overall matched funding decreased, some grantees relied more heavily on matched funding than others. Exhibit III-4 shows how BEST funding as a percentage of overall program funding fluctuated considerably across grantees. The differing plans for matched funding may be related to its availability and other factors such as variability in the target populations that a BEST grantee served and the services they provided. For example, grantees who provided more intensive services may have had higher program costs than those who provided lighter-touch services and thus needed more matched funding to meet overall program costs.

Exhibit III-4: BEST Grant Funding as a Percentage of Total BEST Program Funding

PY 2018–2019 BEST Grantees	Total BEST Grant Funding (base + one-time funds)	BEST Funding as a Percentage of Grantee Program Budget
Alum Rock Counseling Center, Inc.	\$205,727	77%
Bay Area Tutoring Association	\$66,950	84%
Bill Wilson Center	\$135,960	83%
Caminar	\$82,400	57%
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	\$353,122	86%
ConXión to Community	\$169,950	77%
Empowering our Community for Success	\$41,200	84%
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	\$118,244	40%
Girl Scouts of Northern California	\$68,485	52%
Happy House	\$20,600	82%
New Hope for Youth	\$324,362	83%
San José Jazz	\$66,950	57%
The Art of Yoga Project	\$46,865	83%
Teen Success, Inc.	\$64,303	41%
The Firehouse Community Development Corporation	\$277,200	79%
The Tenacious Group	\$77,250	93%
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	\$157,148	92%
Uplift Family Services	\$162,740	68%
Total	\$2,439,456	--

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbook data for PY 2018–2019.

Grant Funding and Expenditures

In addition to reporting on other funding sources that support their BEST programs, grantees also reported on BEST grant expenditures. Exhibit III-5 shows each grantee’s BEST grant funding and expenditures for PY 2018–2019. While grantees’ funding varied considerably, overall, grant expenditures were relatively close to grant funding amounts.

Exhibit III-5: BEST Grant Funding and Grant Expenditures

PY 2018–2019 BEST Grantees	Total BEST Grant Funding (base + one-time funds)	Total Best Grant Expenditures	BEST Grant Expenditures as a Percentage of BEST Funding
Alum Rock Counseling Center, Inc.	\$205,727	\$200,737	98%
Bay Area Tutoring Association	\$66,950	\$66,950	100%
Bill Wilson Center	\$135,960	\$135,960	100%
Caminar	\$82,400	\$82,400	100%
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	\$353,122	\$341,580	97%
ConXión to Community	\$169,950	\$160,271	94%
Empowering our Community for Success	\$41,200	\$40,818	99%
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	\$118,244	\$118,244	100%
Girl Scouts of Northern California	\$68,485	\$68,485	100%
Happy House	\$20,600	\$20,648	100%
New Hope for Youth	\$324,362	\$324,362	100%
San José Jazz	\$66,950	\$66,700	100%
The Art of Yoga Project	\$46,865	\$46,865	100%
Teen Success, Inc.	\$64,303	\$64,302	100%
The Firehouse Community Development Corporation	\$277,200	\$270,971	98%
The Tenacious Group	\$77,250	\$77,250	100%
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	\$157,148	\$157,148	100%
Uplift Family Services	\$162,740	\$162,740	100%
Total	\$2,439,456	\$2,406,431	99%

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbook data for PY 2018–2019.

Summary

Overall, BEST grantee spending mostly matched their funded grant amounts and grant funds remained relatively constant with prior years funding. However, during the current triennial period, matched funding supplied by BEST grantees decreased and these trends notably vary

across grantees. One potential area for further research may be gaining additional insight into what funding challenges affect individual grantees and perhaps how grantees might share lessons across one another in better leveraging matched funds.

IV. BEST Participants

San José BEST grantees serve a diverse set of participants, from school-aged children and their families to young adults, with the aim of providing them with services needed to engage in positive and productive activities. This chapter describes the demographic features of BEST program participants.

Key Findings

- **During PY 2018–2019, 3,194 children, youth, and parents participated in BEST-funded programs.** Participants enrolled from across the city of San José, with strong representation from the eastern and southern areas.
- **Most BEST participants were at the lower end of the risk-level range of BEST participants.** BEST grantees must categorize participants into one of four target populations: at-risk, high-risk, gang-impacted, or gang-intentional. A majority of participants (72 percent) were categorized as at-risk (38 percent) or high-risk (34 percent).
- **Two grantees (Girl Scouts of Northern California and Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County) enrolled about one third of BEST participants.** Together, these agencies enrolled 1,029 participants. Furthermore, Girl Scout participants accounted for 32 percent of the total female participant population, and Catholic Charities accounted for 22 percent of the overall male participant population.

BEST Participant Enrollment

In total, BEST grantees enrolled 3,194 program participants in PY 2018–2019, and individual BEST grantees enrolled anywhere from 63 to 612 participants (Exhibit IV-1). While the average was 177 individuals, enrollment numbers were not evenly distributed across grantees. Five out of 18 grantees—Girl Scouts of Northern California, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, Caminar, Uplift Family Services, and Alum Rock Counseling Center—together enrolled 57 percent of all BEST participants. Girl Scouts enrolled the largest number of individuals (19 percent of all BEST participants) and also served the largest number of female-identified participants, enrolling 35 percent of all female BEST participants. Catholic Charities enrolled the largest number of male-identified participants, enrolling 22 percent of all male BEST participants. That said, grantees provided different levels of service to youth and had different levels of both BEST grant and matched funding and so some grantees were much more easily able to serve larger numbers of participants than others.

Exhibit IV-1: BEST Program Enrollment Numbers by Grantee

Grantee Name	Number of Participants Enrolled	Percentage of Overall Enrollment
Girl Scouts	612	19%
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	417	13%
Caminar	392	12%
Uplift	186	6%
Alum Rock Counseling Center	181	6%
San José Jazz	168	5%
Art of Yoga	153	5%
Firehouse	122	4%
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	122	4%
New Hope for Youth	121	4%
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	121	4%
Bay Area Tutoring	102	3%
ConXión to Community	101	3%
Bill Wilson Center	92	3%
Happy House	90	3%
Tenacious Group	87	3%
Teen Success	64	3%
Empowering our Community for Success	63	2%
Total	3,194	100%

Source: BEST grantee workbook data for PY 2018–2019.

Note: BEST PY 2018–2019 served 3,194 participants.

BEST Program Target Populations

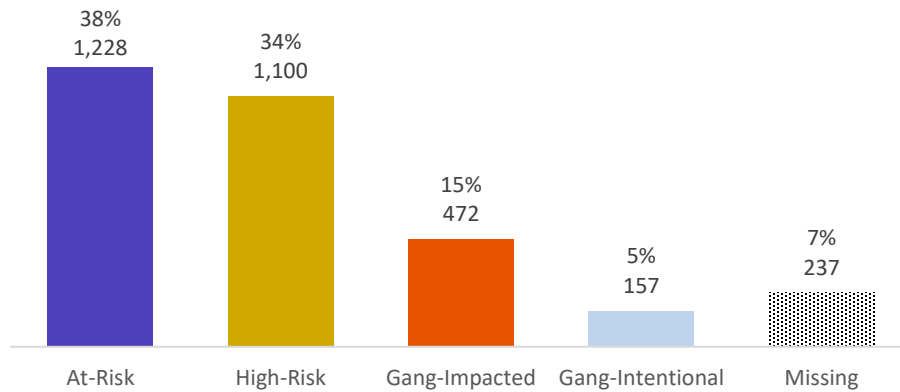
The MGPTF has defined four BEST target populations with consideration to characteristics associated with different risk levels for gang involvement, including residence in high-risk environments and past or present involvement in gang-related activities. The four BEST target populations, described in greater detail in Appendix A, are summarized as follows:

1. **At-risk:** Youth who reside in high-risk communities with potential gang-risk characteristics.

2. **High-risk:** Youth who have higher levels of intensity at which they adopt characteristics associated with a gang lifestyle.
3. **Gang-Impacted:** Youth who exhibit high-risk behaviors related to gang lifestyles.
4. **Gang-Intentional:** Youth who self-identify as a gang member or engaged in the gang lifestyle.

Out of the 3,194 individuals who participated in a BEST-funded program during PY 2018–2019,⁶ most were designated as either at-risk (38 percent) or high-risk (34 percent). Another 20 percent were designated as gang-impacted (15 percent) or gang-intentional (five percent), with seven percent not having an identified target population indicator. Exhibit IV-2 shows total participants served in each target population.

Exhibit IV-2: Percentage and Number of Participants Enrolled by Target Population



Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Note: BEST PY 2018–2019 served 3,194 participants.

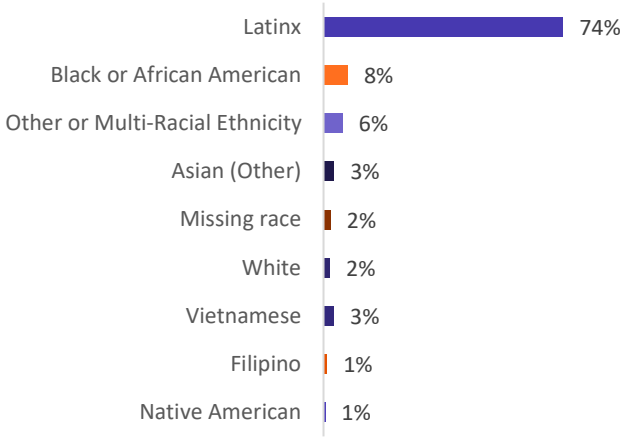
BEST Participant Demographics

As shown in Exhibit IV-3, a majority of BEST participants in PY 2018–2019 were Latinx (74 percent), aged 13–18 (67 percent), female (61 percent), and from one of the two lower risk categories. Unsurprisingly given the focus of the program, grantees enrolled mostly school-aged youth; 79 percent of participants were 18 and younger.

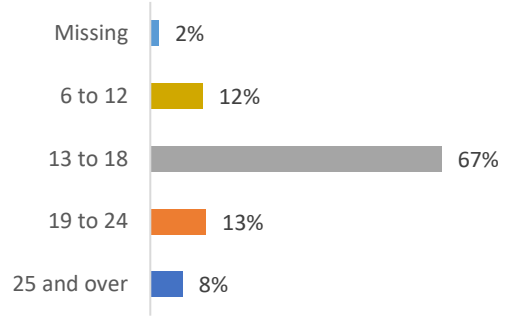
⁶ BEST programs reported serving a total of 3,194 individuals, some of whom were parents of participants served in the parent awareness, training and family support service area. For this analysis, we limited the population to participants age 6 to 24 at the time of enrollment, except for individuals over age 24 who were served by the three grantees awarded contracts in the Parenting Awareness and Training Eligible Service Area. We included 64 individuals with missing ages who participated in eligible service areas not targeted to individuals under 6 or over 24 and who were presumed to be within that age range.

Exhibit IV-3: Characteristics of BEST Participants

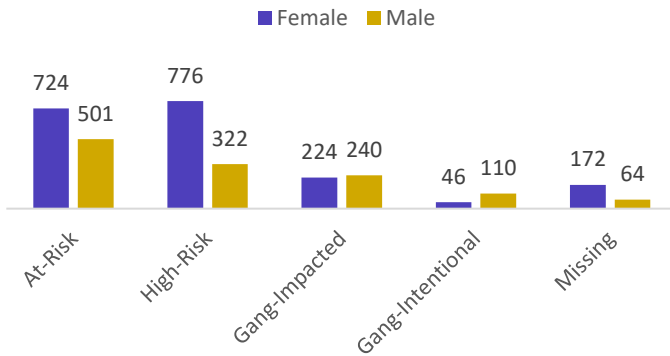
Participants by Race/Ethnicity



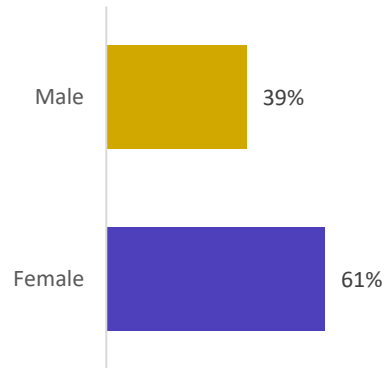
Age of Participants



Target Populations of Participants, by Gender



Gender of Participants



Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Note: BEST PY 2018–2019 served 3,194 participants. Of these, 11 had missing gender information and 5 identified as non-binary and are not shown in the figures above.

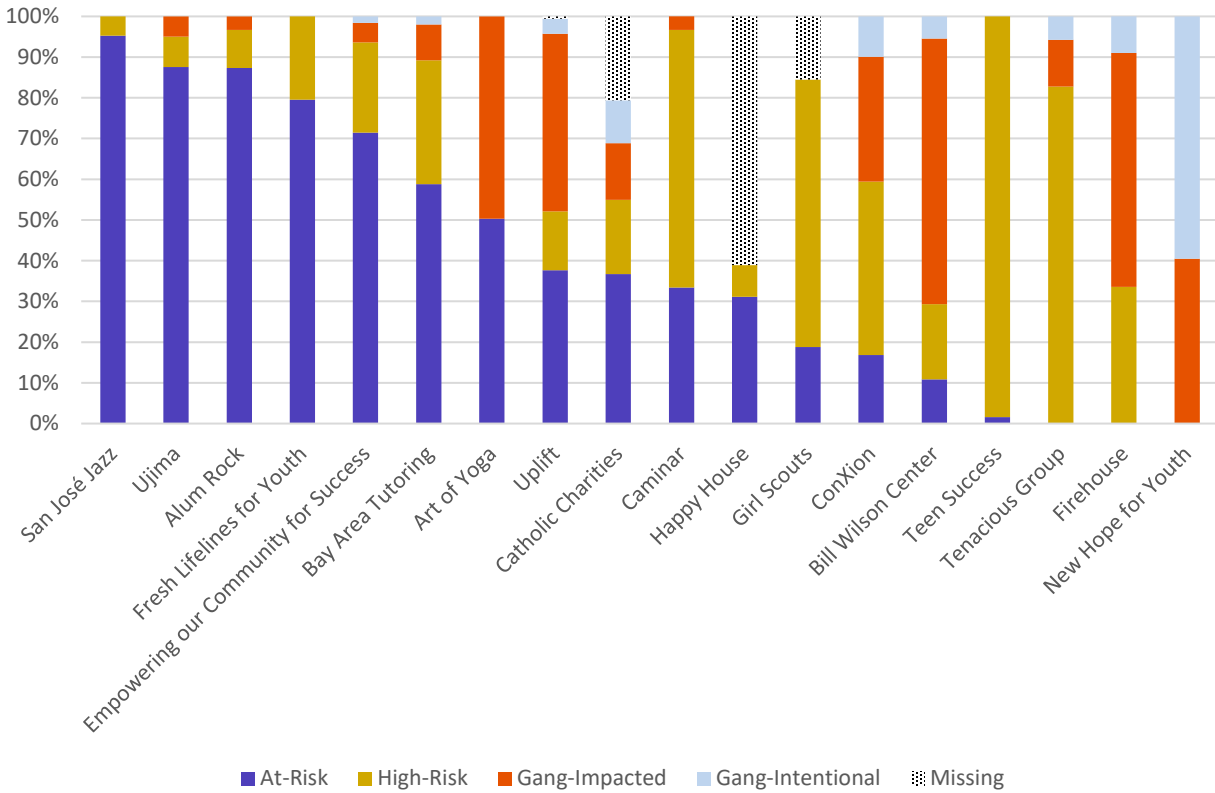
Demographics by Target Population

While females made up more than half of BEST program participants, they also constituted a majority of individuals in lower-risk target populations. Female participants made up 59 percent of those in the at-risk target population and 71 percent of those in the high-risk category. Male participants made up slightly more than half of the individuals in the gang-impacted category (51 percent) and a majority (70 percent) in the highest risk category.

This is likely due to the populations served by grantees, as those with larger enrollment numbers have a greater effect on demographic trends. For example, Girl Scouts of Northern California enrolled the largest number of participants of the grantees and their participants were all female-identified, largely in the lower risk categories. Indeed, Girl Scouts participants accounted for 25 percent of all at-risk and high-risk enrollments. Furthermore, historically, males have participated in gangs at higher rates than females (National Gang Center).

Also of note, 11 of the 18 grantees enrolled participants in at least three of the MGPTF-identified target populations, indicating that most grantees were funded to work with BEST participants with varying risk levels. Indeed, all grantees enrolled participants in at least two target populations. However, most focused their attention on just one or two of the identified target populations. Exhibit IV-4 illustrates the target populations grantees were funded to serve. Some programs, like San José Jazz, Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc., and Alum Rock Counseling Center, overwhelmingly serve at-risk participants, while others, like New Hope for Youth, primarily served participants in the gang-impacted and gang-intentional target populations.

Exhibit IV-4: Target Populations Served by BEST Programs, by Grantee

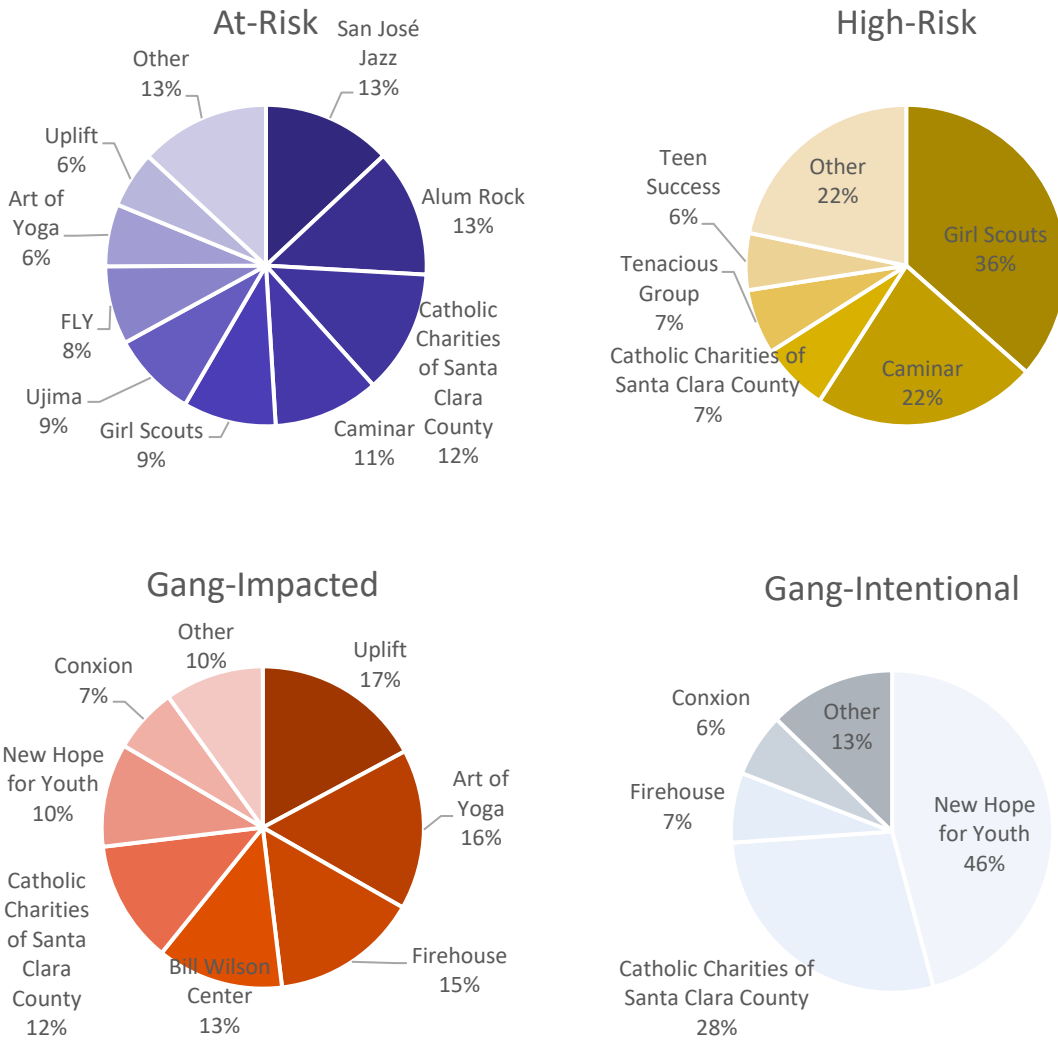


Source: BEST grantee workbook data for PY 2018–2019.

Note: BEST PY 2018–2019 served 3,194 participants.

While most grantees enrolled individuals in one or two target populations, this tells us little about how each grantee contributed to a specific target population overall. Exhibit IV-5 showcases grantees that were funded to serve the most participants in each target population. Because of their large grant sizes, some grantees affected the number of participants in a certain target population considerably. For example, Girl Scouts of Northern California overwhelmingly contributed to the high-risk target population, accounting for almost 45 percent of the 1,100 high-risk BEST participants. New Hope for Youth and Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County had the majority of enrollment for the gang-intentional target population, with almost 71 percent of these participants. These figures provide a visual depiction of the funding priorities during PY 2018–2019, the populations BEST served, and which grantees served them.

Exhibit IV-5: Target Populations Served by BEST Grantees



Source: BEST grantee workbook data for PY 2018–2019.

Note: ‘Other’ represents grantees who served less than 5 percent of the target population.

Participants’ Residence by Zip Code

To be eligible for the program, BEST participants must reside in San José. An analysis of the grantee workbook data shows that participants tended to come from just a few of the 59 zip codes within San José; almost half of participants resided in three zip codes—95111, 95122, and 95116 (Exhibit IV-6). These three zip codes included equal amounts of participants in lower and higher risk target populations. Just over half (51 percent) of participants in the gang-impacted and gang-intentional target populations lived in these three zip codes, as did 47

Exhibit IV-6: Map of PY 2018–2019 BEST Participant Zip Codes



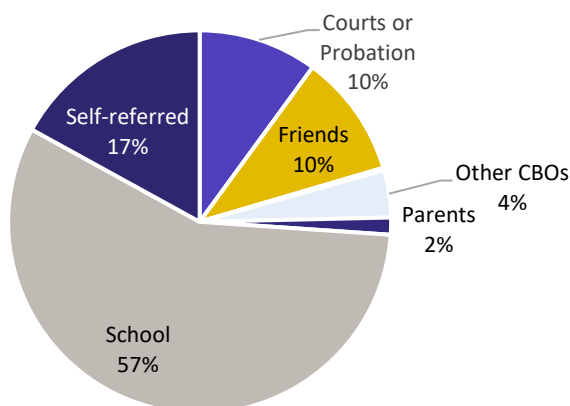
Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

percent of the at-risk and high-risk participants. Moreover, these three zip codes correspond to hot spots identified by the MGPTF in 2017.

Referral Sources

Participants learned about BEST through school, courts or probation departments, friends, other organizations, and parents. In PY 2018–2019, schools served as BEST grantees’ largest referral source, sending 57 percent of participants. Nearly one in five participants (17 percent) self-referred, and 10 percent were referred from courts or probation. Other BEST participants were referred by friends, other community-based organizations, or parents (14 percent total). Exhibit IV-7 illustrates the various referral sources identified by BEST-funded programs.

Exhibit IV-7: Referral Sources for BEST Program Participants

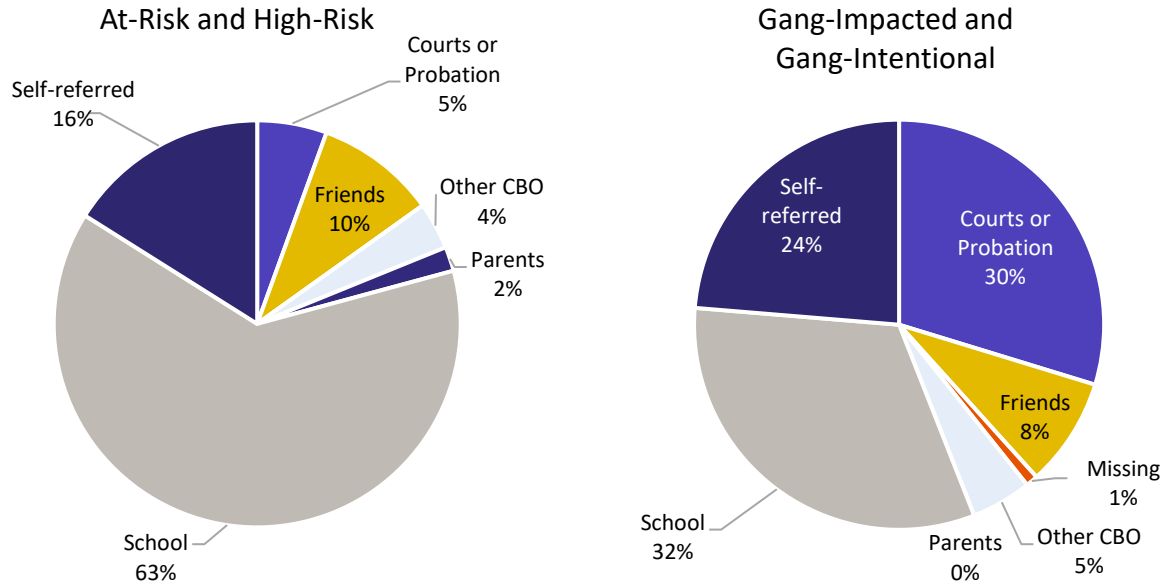


Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Note: BEST PY 2018–2019 served 3,194 participants. Of these, 7 had missing referral information and are not shown in the figure above.

Youth in the two higher risk categories (i.e., gang-impacted and gang-intentional youth) more frequently came to BEST programs through court or probation referrals and less often from schools than did at-risk and high-risk youth. These differences are illustrated in Exhibit IV-8.

Exhibit IV-8: Referral Sources for BEST Program Participants, by Target Population



Source: BEST grantee workbook data.

Note: BEST PY 2018–2019 served 3,194 participants. Parents did not provide any referrals for youth in the gang-impacted and gang-intentional target populations.

Summary

BEST grantees provided a wide range of services to a diverse group of children, youth, and families in targeted San José neighborhoods. BEST services aimed to address a range of youth, family and community needs. The next chapter provides a snapshot of how participants and staff perceived of the effects of these services.

V. BEST Staff and Participant Perspectives

As described in Chapter I, the evaluation team conducted focus groups and interviews with BEST grantee staff members and participants to learn about ways the program was working to support youth development and prevent youth violence. Staff member focus groups were conducted with 15 of the 18 grantees. Youth focus groups and interviews were conducted with six of the 18 grantees.⁷ This chapter describes the findings from these interviews and focus groups, including perspectives on the program's effects and outcomes.

Key Findings

- **BEST programming provided safe locations for youth to be engaged in enriching activities.** Participants discussed how taking part in BEST services helped them stay connected in school, at home and with their communities.
- **BEST participants reported challenges finding safe environments that support pro-social behavior with peers, doing well in school or work, and forming positive peer and adult relationships.** Also, younger youth (ages 12–18) reported challenges self-esteem and social skills, while older youth (ages 19–24) reported challenges avoiding interactions with police.
- **BEST staff members and participants reported several ways in which they perceived the program improving youth outcomes.** They said the program had positive effects on youth development, education outcomes, and criminal justice involvement, which are all outcomes named in the program logic model.

Grantee Staff Perceptions on Youth Outcomes

In focus group discussions, BEST grantee staff shared their perceptions on a range of topics, including youth outcomes that BEST-funded services were designed to improve. These conversations yielded valuable information about where grantee staff members saw their programs making the greatest changes in participants' lives. These insights can help further inform the program's current theory of change.

⁷ Staff focus groups were conducted with: Alum Rock Counseling Center; Bay Area Tutoring Association; Bill Wilson Center; Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County; ConXión to Community; Fresh Lifelines for Youth; Girl Scouts of Northern California; Happy House; New Hope for Youth; San José Jazz; Teen Success, Inc.; The Art of Yoga Project; Firehouse Community Development Corporation; Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.; and Uplift Family Services. Youth focus groups were conducted with participants at Alum Rock Counseling Center; Bill Wilson Center; Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County; and ConXión to Community. Interviews were conducted with youth participants from Caminar and Ujima Adult and Family Services.

The following are examples of individual BEST program goals that align with the key elements of the overall program’s theory of change.

- **Positive youth development, pro-social skills, and improved interpersonal behaviors.** Examples include improving parenting skills and family cohesion, gaining confidence and improved self-image, learning to apply conflict resolution and anger management skills, improving communication skills, building cultural identity, and being more connected to others.
- **Improved education-related outcomes.** These include outcomes such as staying enrolled in school, obtaining a GED or diploma, or attending college or advanced training programs. Just as often, coordinators mentioned improved aspects of school behavior, including improved school attendance or reduced negative incidents/punishments at school.
- **Crime reduction and improved public safety.** BEST program coordinators discussed reducing crime, decreasing the juvenile justice system involvement of participants, keeping youth out of jail or prison, reducing gang activity or violence, reducing arrests, reducing the generational cycle of gangs, and improving community safety.

“When I first came to the unit, I was angry and upset all the time. But yoga has consistently been able to calm me down while in the unit, and I am planning to continue to do yoga after I leave the unit.”

—BEST Program Participant

“A youth stopping smoking pot and starting to go to school regularly, even if they go from Fs to Ds—that is a great outcome.”

—BEST Grantee Staff

“The number one goal is to keep them out of Juvenile Hall and keep them alive.”

—BEST Grantee Staff

A few coordinators mentioned other outcomes, such as improved employment, better physical health, and stable housing which all contribute to improved overall safety for program participants.

Youth Perspectives

The evaluation team conducted focus groups and interviews with BEST program participants in fall 2018 and spring 2019. Altogether, 35 youth between the ages of 12–24 from six grantees participated in focus groups or individual interviews. These six grantees were Alum Rock Counseling Center (high school and middle school), Bill Wilson Center, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, ConXión to Community, Caminar, and Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc. The discussions that took place focused on youth perceptions of the challenges they face and how the BEST program supports their success in school, life, and the broader community.

Youth Challenges

The types of challenges that youth described differed based on age. The biggest challenges older youth (19–24 years old) expressed were:

- staying safe,
- making peer relationships that are not focused on self-destructive behaviors,
- finding trusted adults to talk to, and
- avoiding trouble with the police.

The biggest challenges younger youth (12–18 years old) discussed were:

- doing well in school,
- forming positive peer and adult relationships,
- issues with self-esteem and social skills, and
- finding safe environments that support pro-social behavior with peers.

How BEST Grantees Supported Youth

In discussions with youth, grantees pointed to several ways in which BEST programs supported them to overcome challenges. They discussed experiences in BEST programs that fit into several of the short- and medium-term outcomes defined in the BEST theory of change. Youth reported that without the program they would have been part of a gang or other peer groups focused on illegal or self-destructive behavior, such as committing violent acts or consuming drugs or alcohol.

Improved Relationships with Peers and Adults

Youth reported that the program helped them find a positive community of peer and adult role models that supported them and encouraged them to succeed in school and in life. Often, case managers served as positive role models, supporting and encouraging youth to succeed. Youth

“[Program] staff are there and trustworthy, so we can talk to them and feel comfortable that there is someone there to support us.”

—BEST Program Participant

described how case managers taught them to value doing homework, assisted them in getting jobs, and helped them prepare for college. One youth described how her case manager helped her both apply to college and get her first apartment.

BEST programs also helped youth interact with caring adults with whom they could build trusting relationships. They described being able to turn to these

adults in times of crisis, even after program exit, for support and encouragement to stay on the right path. One young woman described how her case manager “gives a mom perspective” that helped her work through conflict and improve her relationship with her mother.

Decreased Drug and Alcohol Use

Youth also reported that the BEST program provided them with a safe place to come back to, even after the program was over. Several youth spoke about instances when they found themselves in trouble or in need of advice and support. For example, one young man came back to drop-in programming for legal counseling after getting a DUI; he felt that participating in the program helped him avoid drinking after work. Youth at other grantees explained that they went back because grantees provided them with a safe, accepting space—with people they referred to as their “family.”

Decreased Gang Involvement

Another way in which programs helped youth was by providing an environment in which they could relax and have fun with peers, without having to worry about violence. Youth reported lacking these safe spaces at home or in their neighborhoods. For example, one youth stated that, “They keep you off the streets, and safe. I have a place to go where you have friends and support.”

Multiple programs also had opportunities for youth to become peer leaders and return to the program to facilitate groups, lead activities, and build their skills. This allowed youth to grow their self-confidence and leadership skills and to become mentors to younger youth in the group.

“[The program] provided a safe space and a second home, helped me avoid gang activities and take part in constructive activities.”

—BEST Program Participant

Improved Life, Coping, and Critical Thinking Skills

Youth found that BEST programming helped them improve their emotional well-being. They reported that it helped them reflect on their experiences and process their feelings. Youth reported having had very traumatic experiences prior to coming into BEST—for example, having parents with substance abuse issues, experiencing domestic violence, or witnessing street-level violence. One youth reported that the program had “given [him] someone to talk to about difficult things that have happened to [him].” Another explained how the program “helped with my communication skills, because I was kind of like an angry child. They helped me to learn how to express myself properly. It became more about a verbal explanation than a physical explanation.”

Some BEST programs also helped youth explore their culture and combat prejudice about their identities and their communities by addressing negative stereotypes and providing youth with positive examples of people in their communities. For example, one participant explained that the program provided her with experiences that “broke the negative stereotypes” of African American people. Since she grew up in a predominantly Latinx and Asian neighborhood, the program helped her learn more about her culture. Youth attended leadership summits and held meetings with successful community members that reflected their racial or cultural backgrounds, such as business owners, who showed participants that they too can be successful.

“I didn’t really grow up in a household where we talked about [my culture] or anything. It really changed my perspective on how I see us. It made me more appreciate my history.”

—BEST Program Participant

Parents Empowered to Intervene

The parent awareness and training strategy supported parents to help keep their children safe and be aware of gang activity and involvement. Sometimes these programs were conducted with the parents and children together to give them opportunities to learn as well as build relationships with each other. One mother explained that the program helped her learn to “talk to them about gangs. I learned how to communicate with them and that they trust me to be honest with them and with others.” She said she noticed changes in herself and her children as a result of the program, and she could “now...talk to them slow and clear with respect and honesty. I respect myself as a mother. I have tranquility, honesty, and am responsible.”

Summary

BEST programming fills a need for safe activities and community enrichment for San José’s youth who are at varied levels of risk for gang involvement. Youth reported experiencing positive outcomes in school and increased safety and prosocial attitudes as a result of BEST

programming. PY 2018–2019 activities spanned a wide range of target populations, interests, and needs, including activities that grow prosocial skills and improve connections to positive activities. Grantees did so through a wide range of approaches, from taking participants camping and ziplining, to preparing them for a jazz concert or taking a yoga class, to conversations about parenting. As discussed more in Chapter VI, there may be some ways for PRNS to further support these activities. Overall, it is promising that grantee staff members and participants talked about the program in a way that aligned with the larger program goals expressed in the program’s theory of change.

VI. Conclusion

This report provides information about BEST program operations by identifying patterns in enrollment, service delivery, and funding. It also provides insights into the effectiveness of the program by examining the observations of participants and staff about the ways in which BEST supported youth in staying safe, reducing their involvement in violence and gang activity, completing their education, forming positive bonds with peers and adults, and strengthening connections with their communities.

This concluding chapter summarizes the findings presented in earlier chapters. It also discusses some underlying data collection challenges and approaches for addressing them, makes recommendations that may be useful to PRNS in shaping future grantmaking and program evaluation efforts, and outlines the next stages of the ongoing evaluation of the BEST program.

Summary of Implementation Study Findings for BEST PY 2018–2019

In PY 2018–2019, as in prior years, BEST grantees provided important services for youth living in neighborhoods at high risk for gang-related violence and for youth who themselves were at risk of becoming involved in gang activity or of becoming victims of violence. BEST PY 2018–2019 activities spanned six eligible service areas and included a wide range of specific interventions, including case management and mentoring of youth, provision of safe spaces both in and out of school, and training in positive parenting approaches.

While the typical participant was an adolescent Latinx youth in the lower level of risk for gang involvement, grantees ranged widely in term of the types of youth they served, with different grantees focused on specific populations of youth (e.g., African American youth, homeless youth, heavily gang-impacted youth, etc.). Further, given that the number of youth each grantee served varied considerably (i.e., some grantees served many more youth than others), the typical participant profile was largely driven by some of the larger grantees. Overall, it is worth noting that BEST grantees served youth of all eligible ages, a diversity of races and ethnicities, and all four program-defined risk levels.

This report also presented important findings around the services that BEST grantees provided, the funding provided to deliver those services and the costs of delivering them. Over the last three years, BEST grantees have slightly increased the UOS they delivered while funding remained about the same. That said, there was variation across grantees. While many exceeded their service delivery goals, others fell short. Also, while many were able to stay within their expected costs and meet matching funding requirements, others were not. Furthermore, grantees were not uniform in their service delivery; they offered different combinations of eligible service areas and different UOS for these services areas. Some of this variability may

have had to do with the populations served and how grantees served them; services to higher risk participants and more intensive service models typically cost more. While it appears that funding decisions and services provided are linked, other factors may also explain this variation such as overall experience in operating these programs, having support through other funders, or overall levels of experience in providing different types of services.

Finally, BEST programming appears to fill a need for safe activities and community enrichment for the city's youth who are impacted by crime or violence. BEST participants reported experiencing positive outcomes in school as well as increased safety and prosocial attitudes as a result of BEST services, factors which PRNS believes will lead to better long-term youth outcomes around crime and violence. Grantee staff expressed the belief that their services prevented negative crime-related outcomes for youth and improved education outcomes.

Overall, these findings convey the important work that BEST grantees have done and suggest the following questions for future inquiry.

- **Is the overall composition of youth served by BEST consistent with the overall sociodemographic profile of the targeted areas served?** Future analysis could compare these youth to the neighborhoods being served in line with the goals of the program (targeting high crime neighborhoods). There may be other goals BEST could meet by targeting different types of youth that would warrant prioritizing these goals in future requests for proposal and grant awards.
- **Does the trend toward higher overall UOS delivery warrant any program changes?** Future evaluations could explore why some grantees exceeded and others fell short of their service delivery goals and whether these contributing factors can be shared or nurtured across all grantees. Likewise, PRNS and the city may wish to consider whether UOS projections should be adjusted.
- **Does the variability across eligible service areas need adjusting?** Future evaluation efforts could explore whether the services delivered address the needs of participants and make sense given the availability of other services. PRNS and the city may separately want to assess whether the current mix of services is the right one given larger city goals.

Improving Program Data

The process of compiling program data for this report highlighted several limitations with workbook data and the underlying data collection system. First, data were not always provided in a timely manner, which made ongoing review by PRNS and analysis by the evaluation team difficult. Second, the information was not always complete. Some participants were missing demographic data, which could easily be omitted and only had a minor effect on the analysis.

These instances are noted in tables and discussion throughout the report. However, other information, such as status in school, was incomplete for large numbers of participants for most grantees, making it impossible to analyze some areas of participant service delivery and demographic data.

Furthermore, our conversations with grantees and PRNS staff highlighted some potential ongoing issues with the current data collection system that may be worth considering. First, grantees typically had limited time and resources to put towards administration and data management, especially when their BEST grants were small in proportion to their total organization budgets. Having a more efficient system was important to them. Second, the current system of collecting spreadsheets increased the opportunity for error. Version control became a considerable issue for both grantees and PRNS. While PRNS has been exploring new and different approaches to data collection over the years—including piloting some new approaches in PY 2019–2020—these approaches still ultimately fall short of meeting both program management and evaluation needs.

In order to address this issue, the evaluation team recommends the adoption of a management information system or an online data collection tool. Utilization of such a tool by PRNS and BEST grantees would create an easier, more user-friendly system and therefore help minimize the time grantees spend on initial data entry. It would also reduce error by standardizing certain data entry procedures and allowing for immediate and seamless transmission. Ideally, such a tool could be useful to grantees as well (e.g., for case management). Such a tool could also prove useful for programs beyond BEST, including other MGPTF services or even other PRNS services. There are many such systems available that may be of interest, and the evaluation team has already worked with PRNS to suggest some options. Programs similar to BEST such as the City of Oakland’s Violence Prevention Fund as well as the City of San Francisco’s Department of Children, Youth, and Families, have implemented such systems with success and improved efficiencies for city program managers, direct program staff, and evaluators. Notably, this recommendation is consistent with a recommendation made in a recent report from the San José Office of the City Auditor (2019).

Evaluation Next Steps

Examining individual-level outcomes and ways in which BEST may alter these outcomes over time is an important next step for the evaluation of the program. This effort draws upon the findings outlined above, responds to interest on the part of PRNS and the City Council to better understand the effects of the BEST program, and builds on SPR’s past impact evaluation.

The evaluation team has taken the following steps and is working to complete an outcomes study of BEST.

- **Obtaining consent to collect individual outcomes data.** Obtaining the consent of participants (including from parents or guardians of participants who are under age 18) is critical for procuring individual-level data on a wide range of outcomes of interest to the BEST program, such as those related to education and criminal justice. The evaluation team developed a consent form and worked with BEST grantees to introduce it into their application and enrollment processes late in PY 2018–2019 and as part of PY 2019–2020 and is currently collecting completed participant consent forms.
- **Surveying program participants.** The evaluation team developed a participant survey as part of the PY 2018–2019 evaluation and has trained PY 2019–2020 grantees on fielding it. The survey is designed to track changes in participant attitudes and life skills at different stages of receiving BEST services.
- **Collecting individual-level outcomes data.** The evaluation team is in the process of establishing or has established data sharing agreements with multiple agencies for obtaining education and criminal justice system data, including the SJPD, the CSCP, and local school districts.
- **Conducting outcomes analyses.** Future evaluation reports will detail the analysis of different types of participant outcomes to help describe the intermediate and long-term effects of BEST participation and any changes in participant outcomes that occur over time. This analysis will explore the relationship between various program features and improved participant outcomes in order to help PRNS identify where the program is working well and what additional supports or changes may be needed to support improved participant outcomes.

It is important to acknowledge that these efforts are not without challenges. As many program staff have expressed in conversations with the evaluation team, BEST grantees have experienced barriers to collecting written consent for administrative data collection from program participants. Participants' concerns center on a deep distrust of many government entities, especially law enforcement, given a long history of racial discrimination and concerns about immigration enforcement. For these reasons, many families have been reluctant to provide consent for data collection. The evaluation team is currently working with PRNS and the grantees to determine the best ways to address these concerns.

The SPR evaluation team will continue to expand upon and sharpen the findings shared in this report. In so doing, the team will utilize new data collection and analysis approaches to provide PRNS and other key stakeholders with information that can be used not only to make better informed decisions about the program but also to inform a larger audience interested in programs similar to BEST.

References

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Appendix A: BEST Target Population Definitions

The following are PRNS's definitions of the four Target Population Profiles that grantees use to describe participants in BEST-funded services.

At-Risk: This category may be distinguished from other at-risk youth in that they are residing in a high-risk community (identified as a "hot spot" area) and have some of the following gang risk characteristics.

- Has a high potential to exhibit high-risk gang behaviors.
- Has not had any personal contact with juvenile justice system.
- Exhibits early signs of school-related academic, attendance, and/or behavior problems.
- Has periodic family crises and/or is a child welfare case.
- Is low-income and/or lives in overcrowded living conditions.
- Knows some neighborhood gang members but does not associate with them.
- Is beginning to experiment with drug/alcohol use.

High-Risk: This category may be distinguished from the "at-risk" population based on the additional characteristics and level of intensity of the following:

- Admires aspects of gang lifestyle characteristics.
- Views gang member as "living an adventure."
- Lives in gang "turf" area where the gang presence is visible.
- Has experienced or participated in gang intimidation type of behaviors or has witnessed violent gang acts.
- Feels unsafe being alone in neighborhood.
- Has family members who have lived or are living a juvenile delinquent, criminal, and/or gang lifestyle.
- Has had several contacts with the juvenile justice system and law enforcement.
- Does not see the future as providing for him/her; has a perspective of "you have to take what you can get."
- Casually and occasionally associates with youth exhibiting gang characteristics.
- Has a high rate of school absences, experiences school failure or disciplinary problems.

- Uses free time after school to “hang out” and does not participate in sports, hobbies, or work.
- Is suspicious and hostile toward others who are not in his/her close circle of friends.
- Does not value other people’s property.
- Believes and follows his/her own code of conduct, not the rules of society.
- Only follows advice of friends; does not trust anyone other than friends.
- Uses alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Has had numerous fights and sees violence as a primary way to settle disagreements and maintain respect.
- May have been placed in an alternative home or living arrangement for a period.
- Does not have personal goals/desires that take precedence over gang-impacted youth groups.

Gang-Impacted: Youth exhibiting high-risk behaviors related to gang lifestyles.

- Has had several contacts with the juvenile justice system and law enforcement. Has likely spent time in juvenile hall. Has had a probation officer and/or may have participated in delinquency diversion program.
- Has had numerous fights, and views violence as primary way to intimidate, settle disagreements, and maintain respect.
- May claim a turf or group identity with gang characteristics, but still values independence from gang membership.
- Personally knows and hangs out with identified gang members.
- Considers many gang-related activities socially acceptable.
- Feels he/she has a lot in common with gang characteristics.
- Views gang involvement as an alternative source for power, money, and prestige.
- Wears gang-style clothing and/or gang colors/symbols.
- Promotes the use of gang cultural expressions and terminology.
- Identifies with a gang-related affiliation and/or turf, but has not officially joined a gang. Is ready to join a gang.
- Does not seek employment, and regards “underground economy” as a viable option.

- Probably has gang-related tattoos.
- Has drawing of gang insignia or symbols on notebook/book covers, other personal items.

Gang-Intentional: This category is distinguished from all other categories in that youth must be identified and/or arrested for gang-related incidents or acts of gang violence through the justice system (police, DA, probation, etc.).

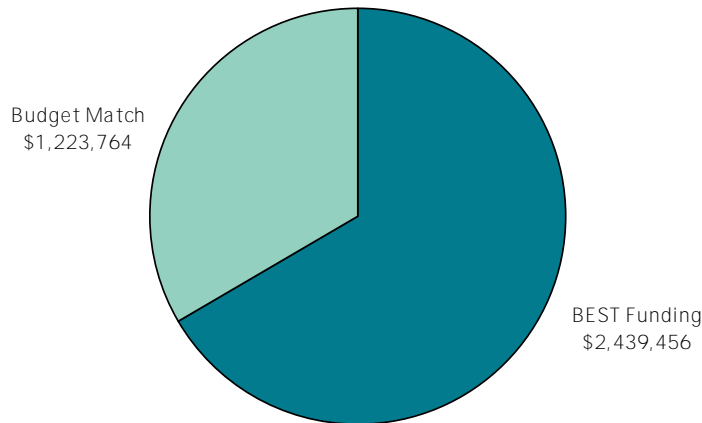
- May have been identified or certified as a gang member by law enforcement agencies.
- Associates almost exclusively with gang members to the exclusion of family and former friends.
- Views intimidation and physical violence as the way to increase personal power, prestige, and rank in gang. He/she is active in “gang banging.”
- Regularly uses/abuses alcohol and other drugs.
- Self identifies as a gang member.
- Has spent time in juvenile hall, juvenile camp, or California Youth Authority.
- Regularly deals with gang rival and allied gang business.
- Has gang-related tattoos.
- Identifies specific individuals or groups as enemies.
- Is engaged in the gang lifestyle.
- Rejects anyone or any value system, other than that of the gang.
- Believes that the gang, its members, and/or his/her family live for or will die for the gang.
- Has fully submerged his/her personal goals and identity in the collective identity and goals of the gang.
- Has adopted and/or earned gang status within the gang system.

Appendix B: BEST Data Dashboard

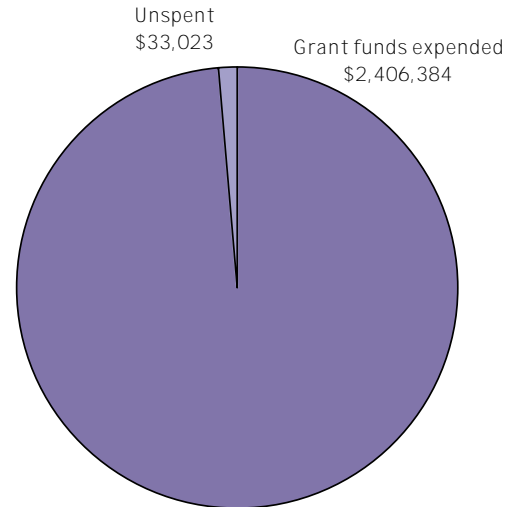
The Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together (BEST) program is a youth violence prevention and crime reduction initiative operated by the City of San José’s Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) Department and is part of the larger Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF). Through BEST, PRNS awards individual grants to qualified community organizations to provide a wide variety of youth services.

Finances

Total BEST Program Funding



Grant Amount: \$2,439,456

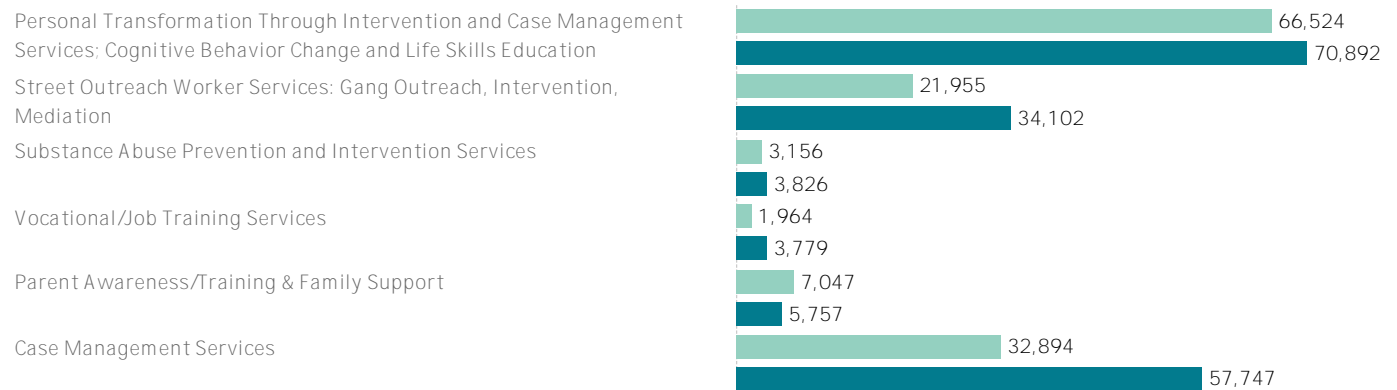


Service Delivery

Contracted Units of Service Completed



Contracted Units of Service Completed - By Eligible Service Area



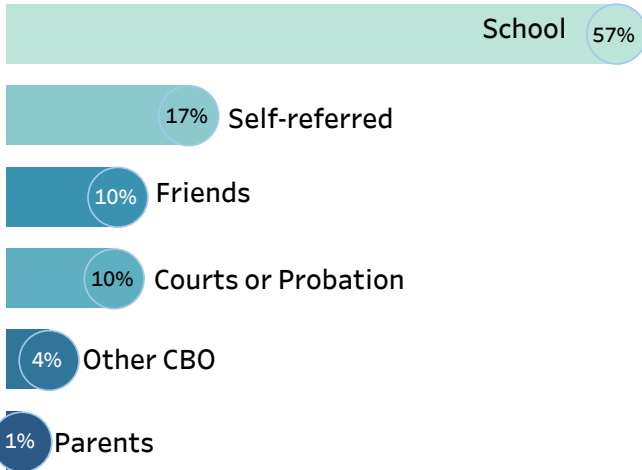
Measure Names

Projected UOS Actual UOS

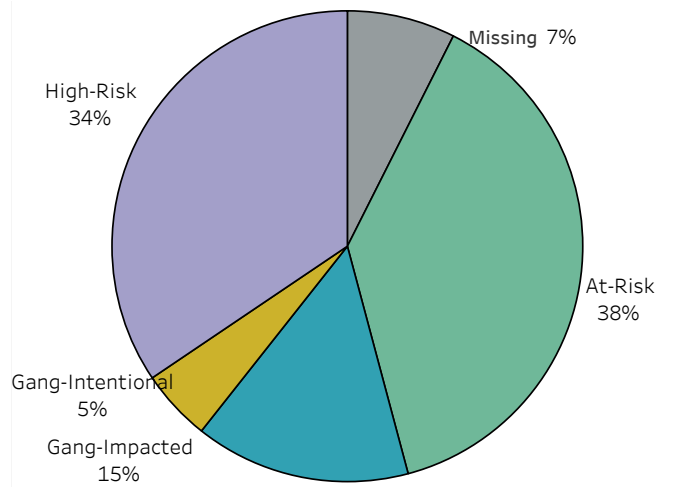
Source: BEST grantee documents and workbooks from PY 2018-2019, Quarters 3&4

Notes: Units of service = (average number of participants per session) x (total number of sessions) x (average number of hours per session)

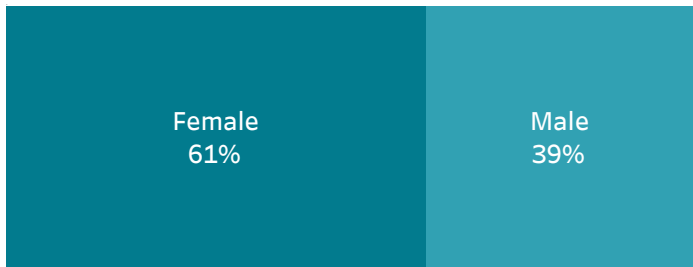
Referral Source



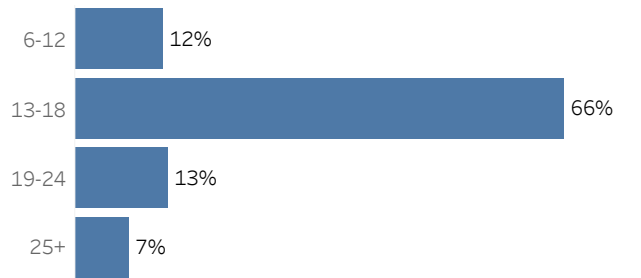
Number of Participants Served: 3,194



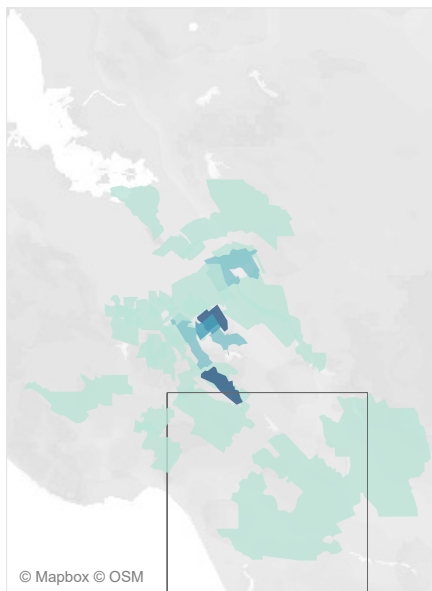
Gender



Age



Zip Code of Residence



95111	20%
95122	17%
95116	10%
95127	6%
95121	6%
95112	6%
95110	4%
95123	4%
95117	3%
95136	3%
95126	2%
95133	2%
95125	2%
95131	1%
95128	1%
95118	1%
95148	1%
95132	1%
Missing	5%
Out of San Jose	4%
95138	1%

Race/Ethnicity

