2019–2020 Program Year Annual Report
Evaluation of the San José Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together (BEST) Program

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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

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 Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). 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. This report provides the findings from SPR's implementation study for PY 2019–2020 and an analysis of participant outcomes for PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020.

BEST Program Services

PY 2019–2020 began with some reorganization related to the beginning of a new triennial contract period, including a redefinition of eligible service areas and formulas for generating expected service levels, known as units of service (UOS). Additionally, starting in March 2020, grantees had to adapt their services due to shelter-in-place orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Grantees provided 94 percent of the projected number of total UOS (101,154 of 107,554) in all six eligible service areas, surpassing their projected UOS in four eligible service areas (Emergency Services, Street Outreach/Intervention, Vocational/Job Training, and Case Management) and achieving less than the expected goal in two (Personal Transformation and Parent Awareness/Training).

- The highest proportion of UOS provided by grantees was in Personal Transformation (35 percent), Emergency Services (21 percent), and Case Management (19 percent).

- In May 2020, PRNS created a new eligible service area called "Emergency Services" to respond to the immediate needs of participants and their families. In all, 12 grantees provided 21,524 Emergency Services UOS, representing 21 percent of the total provided UOS.

Grants and Grant Spending

In PY 2019–2020, PRNS awarded 15 BEST grantees a total of $2,459,993, which included $2,333,493 in base funding and $126,500 in one-time funding.[1]

- BEST grant funding and matched funding increased from PY 2018–2019 to PY 2019–2020.

- Grantees generally expended PY 2019–2020 grant funds as planned, despite major disruptions in services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Compared to the last triennial contract period, the number of qualified service providers decreased in PY 2019–2020, while the number of BEST-funded grantees remained relatively unchanged.

BEST Participants

In total, 15 BEST grantees enrolled 3,229 program participants in PY 2019–2020, a slight increase from the 3,194 program participants enrolled by 18 BEST grantees in PY 2018–2019.

- Participants enrolled from across San José, with strong representation from the eastern and southern areas.

- Most participants were at the lower end of the BEST participant risk-level range.

- Two grantees—Caminar and Girl Scouts of Northern California—together enrolled almost half of all BEST participants (48 percent).

Implementation Challenges and Program Adaptations

BEST grantees adapted to the challenges brought about by emergency conditions, including the COVID-19 pandemic and related shelter-in-place conditions, wildfires and poor air quality, and unrest related to racial injustice.

- BEST grantees established meaningful relationships with youth and their families, and strong connections with schools and other community-based organizations before the pandemic.

- While racial injustice and fears around immigration enforcement were not new for many BEST participants and their families, the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place

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[1] There were 17 BEST-funded grantees in PY 2019–2020; due to administrative issues and lack of data reporting, however, two are excluded from most of the data analysis in this report.

ordinances, recent events of racial injustice, and wildfires exacerbated existing challenges for them.

- All grantees reported altering their services to meet emergency conditions and safety protocols, including providing emergency services (e.g., food, personal protective equipment), meeting with clients virtually, offering in-person, socially distanced services, and discontinuing some services (e.g., late-night gym services and group outings).

- Mental health, well-being, and self-care played a larger role for participants, grantee staff, and BEST administrative staff in response to increased stress, anxiety, and depression related to emerging emergency conditions.

Participant Outcomes Analysis

The outcomes analysis used participant survey data to examine a range of psychosocial outcomes and program satisfaction.

- Youth participants showed modest levels of improvement from early in the program to later in the program on some psychosocial measures, such as problem solving and self-confidence.

- BEST participants were generally satisfied with the services they received through the program, with older youth (ages 14–24) having somewhat higher levels of satisfaction than younger youth (ages 7–13).

While the outcomes study was initially designed also to provide an analysis of educational and criminal justice system outcomes using administrative data from public agencies, the limited number of individuals for whom these outcomes data were available made findings too inconclusive to report.

Conclusion

The positive association between program participation and some psychosocial outcomes documented in this report builds on the evaluation team's previously published impact study (Geckeler et al., 2019), which found an association between the delivery of program services and a decrease in arrests and incidents within specified areas of San José. Together, these two sets of findings suggest this program may contribute to positive changes for participants in line with the program's theory of change, even while the picture remains incomplete, requiring further research.

Over the past few years as this research has been conducted, and continuing into the current program year, PRNS and the evaluation team have been working closely together, pursuing

several actions designed to improve the evaluability of BEST and to improve internal program management and support to grantees. With many of these ongoing and forward-thinking changes in mind, the evaluation team makes four recommendations for further improving the program's capacity for evaluation. Specifically, PRNS should:

- Implement a systemwide uniform case management data information system to improve data accuracy for both program monitoring and evaluation.

- Introduce one or more risk and strengths assessment tools to better understand participants' needs for program services.

- Consider alternative ways to gather administrative data that do not require the involvement of a third-party evaluator.

- Improve participant survey and consent completion rates until these more significant changes can be adopted by the program systemwide.

Altogether, the BEST program seems to be moving forward in a way that is aligned with the City of San José's larger goals for increased program accountability and improved performance.

I. Introduction

Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together (BEST) is a youth violence prevention and gang-related crime reduction initiative operated by the City of San José Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). Through BEST, PRNS identifies and selects nonprofit and faith-based community organizations in San José to be placed on an eligible service provider list as part of a 3-year cycle (i.e., a triennial period). PRNS then awards individual grants for each program year (September 1 through August 31) of the triennial period. Over the past decade, the total amount allocated for BEST program services ranged between $1.6 and $2.5 million annually.

BEST grants support a wide range of services designed to assist youth in San José. Programs serve individuals 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] In program year (PY) 2019–2020, PRNS organized services into five eligible service areas that encompass a range of prevention and intervention services.[3] Grantees delivered these services at multiple locations, including in community-based organization offices, in schools, at juvenile detention facilities, and on the street in designated areas.

Established in 1991, the City of San José Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF) is a strategic youth violence prevention initiative. It includes the BEST program, the city-staffed Youth Intervention Services, and Neighborhood Services. The MGPTF 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.

In May 2020, in response to COVID-19, PRNS added an additional interim eligible service area—Emergency Services—to address community needs related to the pandemic and various emergency conditions that San José was facing. In addition, as the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place laws took hold, grantees increasingly sought to deliver services in ways that were socially distanced, including through increased use of remote services and by delivering services outdoors or in locations with enough space to meet in socially distanced ways.

While grants support service delivery across all of San José, they are designed to target certain "hot spot" areas where leadership from the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF), in partnership with the San José Police Department (SJPD), have identified higher rates of youth

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[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 description of each target profile as defined by the BEST program.

[3] Eligible service areas are described further in Chapter II and Appendix B.

violence and gang-related crime. In their applications and contracts, grantees specify populations, services, and geographic areas, including hot spots, in which they plan to provide services with BEST funding.

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) began evaluating the BEST program in 2017, when PRNS contracted with SPR to conduct a retrospective impact and implementation study of BEST, examining data from PY 2010–2011 to PY 2017–2018. The findings from that evaluation showed that cumulative provision of BEST services for a given SJPD beat was associated with decreases in both gang incidents and youth arrests in that beat and adjacent beats (Geckeler et al., 2019). Furthermore, the evaluation found that BEST-funded programs and services were designed to improve many short- and medium-term outcomes, including various psychosocial and education-related outcomes, both for their own sake and as a means to improve criminal justice outcomes for participants. BEST does this by providing youth with the skills, supports, alternative activities, and sense of purpose that might be needed to improve one's life and avoid becoming involved in criminal activity. Together, the modest impacts observed on long-term outcomes, like crime, suggested that the program may have even larger impacts on these intermediate outcomes.

As a continuation of this work, SPR released its annual report for PY 2018–2019, which presented findings around the implementation of BEST in that program year (Levin et al., 2020). The current report examines program implementation for PY 2019–2020 as well as individual-level psychosocial outcomes. This will begin to address the gap in understanding of the intermediary outcomes identified in the original impact study report.

The 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 outputs (e.g., enrollment of target population youth, attendance, participation in services, referrals, exits) and outcomes (e.g., measures of psychosocial well-being, educational engagement, health and well-being, criminal justice involvement). This theory of change is rooted in the implementation study findings described in SPR's prior reports and additional efforts that PRNS conducted with grantees to understand their program models and approaches.

As seen in Exhibit I-1, BEST services are designed to improve short- and medium-term outcomes around positive youth development (e.g., improved self-esteem, improved coping mechanisms, improved connectedness) and increased education (e.g., improved attendance, reduced disciplinary measures). Less directly, BEST services are designed to lead to improvements in longer-term outcomes, like academic completion and those related to reduced criminal justice involvement (e.g., reduced arrests and probation involvement).

Exhibit I-1: The BEST Theory of Change

INPUTS

Participants
- Youth Ages 6 to 24
- Parents
- Families

Partners
- Parents
- Community members
- BEST grantees
- PRNS/MGPTF
- Law enforcement
- School Districts
- Colleges/universities

Funding
- BEST grant (base + one-time funds)
- Matching funds

SERVICES

Eligible Service Areas
- ES 1: Personal transformation through cognitive behavior change and life skills education
- ES 2: Street outreach intervention services
- ES 3: Vocational/job training services
- ES 4: Parent awareness/training and family support
- ES 5: Case management services
- ES 6: Emergency Services

Service Locations
- Services delivered at community-based organizations, schools, juvenile detention facilities, and street outreach
- Grantee services located in or near one of 18 hot spot areas

OUTPUTS

Grantee-Level Outputs
- Units of service delivered
- Target populations served
- Workshops/classes/ activities delivered
- Grant funds expended
- Match funds secured/ expended

Individual Outputs
- BEST enrollment
- Attendance at workshops, classes, or activities
- Attendance at activities by parents/guardians
- Participation in mediations or other interventions
- Referrals/partner take-ups/enrollments
- Assessments/surveys taken
- Plans/goals developed
- Planned dosage received
- Program exits

OUTCOMES

Short-Term
- Participant goals established
- Access to resources improved
- Improved relationships with peers/adults
- Reduced negative relationships
- Improved life/coping/critical thinking skills
- Parents empowered to intervene
- Engaged in ongoing services

Medium-Term
- Better school attendance
- Fewer school disciplinary incidents
- Fewer suspensions/expulsions
- Decreased drug/alcohol use
- Less gang involvement/interactions
- Reduced risky behaviors
- Stable housing
- Increased employment

Long-Term
- Primary/secondary school completion (credits/degree)
- Higher education/training enrollment/advancement
- Retained employment/improved earnings
- Reduced harm/victims
- Reduced overdoses
- Fewer gang-related crime incidents
- Fewer youth arrests
- Fewer convictions, probation cases (new or violations), and incarcerations

SPR

As noted above—and as discussed more extensively in the next few chapters—PY 2019–2020 saw the introduction of the Emergency Services eligible service area, which was intended to respond to various urgent conditions being faced by grantees and the youth and families they serve (i.e., COVID-19 and shelter-in-place rules, fires and forced closures, and social and political unrest related to racial injustice). This temporary eligible service area included important stopgap services and is referenced in, but not formally incorporated into, the BEST theory of change.

Evaluation Approach

The current report was intended to serve two main functions for PRNS, the San José City Council, and BEST grantees. First, it was intended to help identify and understand the accomplishments of PY 2019–2020 BEST grantees, including their overall performance relative to past years of BEST operations and to the current community context in which they are operating. Second, the report was intended to identify the effects BEST has had on the youth and families it has served. To help satisfy both of these broader goals, this evaluation was designed to address the following three research questions:

1. What were the main characteristics of the program as delivered by BEST grantees in PY 2019–2020, including budgets and grant amounts expended, eligible service areas funded and provided, and grantee service locations?

2. What were the main outputs of service delivery for PY 2019–2020 (both overall and by grantee, as available), including the number of participants planned for and enrolled, the demographics of those participants (e.g., race, age, risk level), and the units of service (UOS) planned for and delivered?

3. Did program participants from both PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020 (combined and separately, if possible) experience increased outcomes—such as improved psychosocial outcomes, higher school engagement, and less frequent involvement with the criminal justice system—compared to before starting the program?

To address these questions, the evaluation included both an implementation study and an outcomes study. The implementation study was designed to answer the first two questions by describing how service delivery and program operations (e.g., funding, participants, UOS) unfolded, both relative to plans in PY 2019–2020 and as compared to prior program years. The outcomes study was designed to answer the third question.

Data Collection

Critical to this approach was the collection of following data.

- **Grantee contracts and workbooks.** From PRNS, the evaluation team collected contracts and workbooks for each grantee, which together provided information on grantee plans and the programs they actually implemented, including information on BEST funding, program participants, and program services.

- **Individual-level participant service data.** From PRNS, the evaluation team also obtained individual-level data on the services received by each participant, which provided a detailed account of the ways that participants were supported in BEST.

- **Staff interviews and focus groups.** The evaluation team conducted two rounds of qualitative data collection with grantees. First, SPR staff conducted phone interviews with staff members from 15 grantees in March 2020. These interviews covered program successes and challenges, youth characteristics, and program outcomes of interest. The evaluation team then conducted five virtual focus groups in October 2020—four with grantee staff members and one with PRNS staff members. These focus groups examined changes in programming and adaptations made by grantees between March and August 2020 due to COVID-19, recent events of racial injustice, and the effects of wildfires. In addition, the evaluation team conducted three additional phone interviews in December 2020 with grantees conducting Street Outreach/Intervention services.

- **Participant surveys.** The evaluation included surveys for children (ages 7–13)[4], youth (ages 14–24), and parents that were intended to measure psychosocial outcomes (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy) and customer satisfaction of participants and their family members. Grantees administered these anonymous surveys at various points throughout the program year on a semi-structured schedule that was customized to the grantees' program cycles. These efforts yielded a total of 532 complete responses across three types of surveys.[5]

- **Administrative outcomes data.** The evaluation team worked with the Alum Rock Union School District and the East Side Union High School District to obtain educational records (i.e., attendance, completion, and disciplinary records) for 178 program participants, and with SJPD to obtain criminal justice records (arrests) for 147 program participants. This pool of participants came from both PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020.

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[4] Six-year-olds were excluded from the survey, as were incarcerated youth, based on IRB requirements.

[5] There were 394 completed youth surveys, 133 completed child surveys, and 5 completed parent surveys, for a total of 532 completed surveys. However, as discussed in Chapter VI, there were too few parent surveys to analyze, so the evaluation team only analyzed results from the 527 youth and child surveys.

Data Analysis

For the implementation study, the evaluation team analyzed three types of data on grantee operations, including grantee contracts, grantee workbooks (which record demographic, service delivery, and financial data), and individual participant service data from the 15 grantees with completed contracts that provided BEST services.[6] These data were used to compare the services provided, participants served, and funding expended to the program elements grantees planned to implement and the funding they received to achieve their goals. Further, the evaluation team compared implementation in PY 2019–2020 to that of past program years. The implementation study also included qualitative analysis of the information collected during staff interviews and focus groups, especially around the delivery of services in this year where various emergency conditions created unprecedented challenges for program service delivery. The evaluation team organized data into themes and identified the common implementation challenges faced and successes realized by grantee and PRNS staff.

For the outcomes study, the evaluation team constructed datasets for both the participant surveys and the administrative outcomes data. The team used these datasets to compare participant outcomes prior to participation or at baseline with outcomes later in the program or after participation. Further details on the approach to the outcomes analysis, the data themselves, and challenges and successes encountered in this analysis (including the decision to retain survey data but exclude administrative data due to small sample sizes from the analysis) are included in Chapter VI, where the analysis of these data is discussed, as well as in the technical appendix (Appendix C).

Overview of the Report

The remainder of this report is organized into six chapters. Chapters II–V focus on implementation, describing the types and levels of services delivered, budgets and expenditures, the participants who enrolled, and how BEST staff members and participants adapted to emergency conditions. Chapter VI presents findings from the outcomes study, describing participant outcomes. Chapter VII summarizes key findings and offers conclusions and recommendations.

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[6] Seventeen agencies were funded; due to contract and administrative issues, two were not able to develop and complete workbook and reporting forms.

II. BEST Program Services

BEST-funded programs continued to provide a wide range of services in PY 2019–2020[7]. The program year began with some reorganization related to the beginning of a new triennial contract period. This included a re-definition of eligible service areas and formulas for generating expected service levels. Most significantly, starting in March 2020, grantees had to adapt their services to emergency conditions—specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic and other operational challenges due to racial injustice protests and wildfire conditions that limited outdoor activities because of poor air quality. After March 2020, most services were delivered virtually or in a socially distanced manner. This sometimes resulted in changes to services, such as shorter and more frequent case management meetings or one-on-one instead of group activities.[8]

Key Findings

- **Grantees provided 94 percent of the projected number of UOS (101,154 of 107,554), surpassing their projected UOS in four eligible service areas (Emergency Services, Street Outreach/Intervention, Vocational/Job Training, and Case Management) and achieving less than the expected goal in two (Personal Transformation and Parent Awareness/Training).**

- **Most UOS provided by grantees were in Personal Transformation (35 percent), Emergency Services (21 percent), or Case Management (19 percent).**

- **In response to emergency conditions, PRNS created the Emergency Services eligible service area to respond to the immediate needs of participants and their families. In all, 12 grantees provided 21,524 UOS in this area, representing 21 percent of the total provided UOS.**

As in prior years, some grantees provided primarily preventative services and worked with youth who were at lower risk levels for gang activity, while others provided intervention services to youth at higher risk levels. This diversified service approach is consistent with the strategic direction adopted by the MGPTF to emphasize prevention and intervention services

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[7]   BEST program years begin on September 1 and end on August 31 of the following year.

[8]   See Chapter V for details on implementation challenges and program adaptations.

(Resource Development Associates, 2017). During PY 2019–2020, grantees provided BEST services in school, community-based, and juvenile justice settings. This chapter describes these eligible service areas and the total UOS projected and delivered as compared to recent program years.

Eligible Service Areas in PY 2019–2020

There were two main changes to the eligible service areas in PY 2019–2020 as compared to the program years in the previous triennial. (See Appendix B for a definition of each eligible service area.) First, PRNS recategorized and merged Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention services into the Personal Transformation eligible service area. Second, PRNS developed a new service area in May 2020, Emergency Services, which included distribution of food and personal hygiene and laundry supplies. In addition to these changes, as discussed more in Chapter V, most grantees were obligated to adapt how they delivered services in response to Santa Clara County safety protocols. This required additional changes to how they operated and worked with participants and sometimes required a substantial re-thinking of their service delivery approach.

The number of grantees providing services in each eligible service area varied widely, and there was also variation in the number of eligible service areas in which each grantee provided services (Exhibit II-1). All 15 grantees provided services in Personal Transformation, while three quarters (12 grantees) provided Emergency Services, and over half (8 grantees) provided Case Management. Most grantees provided services in more than one of the eligible service areas; only one grantee provided services in just one eligible service area.

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

	Personal Transformation	Street Outreach /Intervention	Vocational /Job Training	Parent Awareness /Training	Case Management	Emergency Services	Total # of Service Areas
Bay Area Tutoring Association	✔						1
Bill Wilson Center	✔		✔		✔		3
Caminar	✔			✔	✔	✔	4
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	✔	✔			✔	✔	4
ConXión to Community	✔		✔			✔	3
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	✔				✔	✔	3
Girl Scouts of Northern California	✔					✔	2
New Hope for Youth	✔	✔			✔	✔	4
San Jose Jazz	✔					✔	2
Teen Success, Inc.	✔				✔	✔	3
The Art of Yoga Project	✔					✔	2
The Firehouse Community Development Corp.	✔	✔			✔	✔	4
The Tenacious Group	✔					✔	2
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	✔				✔		2
Uplift Family Services	✔					✔	2
Total No. of Grantees	15	3	2	1	8	12	

Source: BEST grantee contracts

Projected Versus Provided Units of Service

To measure the amount of services 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.[9] As part of their PY 2019–2020 contracts, grantees indicated the number of UOS they planned to provide in each eligible service area. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, PRNS met with each BEST grantee starting in June 2020 to negotiate contract amendments, focusing on changes to the UOS to be provided. Eight grantees increased their projected number of UOS, six grantees reduced them, and one grantee did not make a change. The total number of projected UOS actually increased by 3,798 from the original contracts to the amended contracts.

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[9]   UOS = Total Number of Sessions x Average Number of Participants per Session x Average Number of Hours per Session.

Exhibit II-2 displays the amended total projected UOS across grantees, organized by eligible service area, for both PY 2019–2020 and PY 2018–2019. Overall, projected UOS decreased by about 20 percent in PY 2019–2020. It is noticeable that the projected number of UOS was markedly lower in Case Management and Street Outreach/Intervention, decreasing by about half. PRNS staff noted that changes in the request for quotes (RFQ) for the new triennial, which started in PY 2019–2020, drove these changes, which were a result of re-defined eligible service areas and formulas for generating expected service levels. Thus, the decrease in UOS was a product of new triennial program organization rather than an effect of the emergency conditions surrounding the pandemic.

**Exhibit II-2: Number of Projected UOS by Eligible Service Area
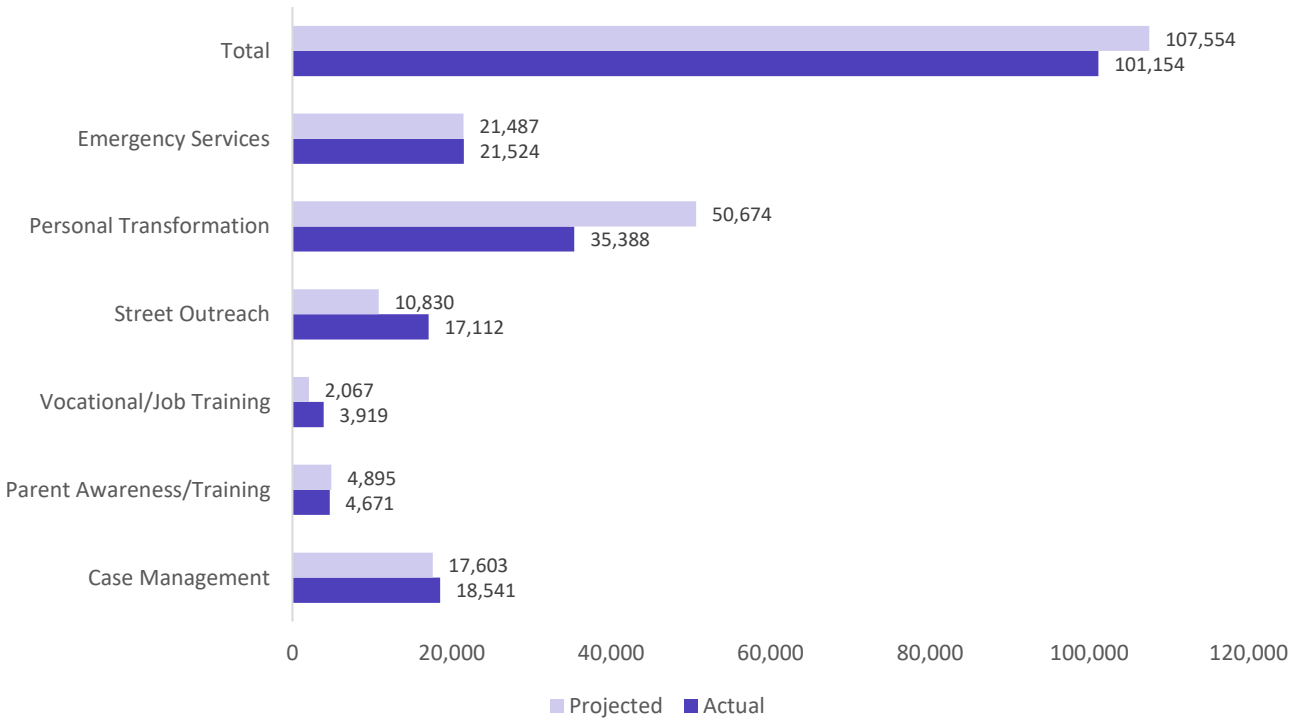(PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020)**

Eligible Service Area	PY 2018–2019 Projected UOS	PY 2019–2020 Projected UOS
Personal Transformation	66,524	50,674
Street Outreach/Intervention	21,955	10,830
Vocational/Job Training	1,964	2,067
Parent Awareness/Training	7,047	4,895
Case Management	32,894	17,603
Emergency Services	N/A	21,487
Total Projected UOS	133,540	107,554

Source: BEST grantee contracts and contract amendments

Note: The total projected UOS for PY 2018–2019 includes 3,156 UOS in Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention, which was combined with Personal Transformation in PY 2019–2020.

BEST grantees reported throughout the year (through their workbooks) on the number of UOS they provided. Exhibit II-3 shows the UOS that the 15 grantees planned to provide and did provide, overall and in each eligible service area. Grantees provided 94 percent of the projected number of UOS (101,154 of 107,554). Grantees surpassed their projected UOS in four eligible service areas (Emergency Services, Street Outreach/Intervention, Vocational/Job Training, and Case Management) and achieved less than their expected goals in two (Personal Transformation and Parent Awareness/Training).

Exhibit II-3: Projected and Actual UOS by Eligible Service Area (PY 2019–2020)

Bar chart showing Projected and Actual UOS by Eligible Service Area:

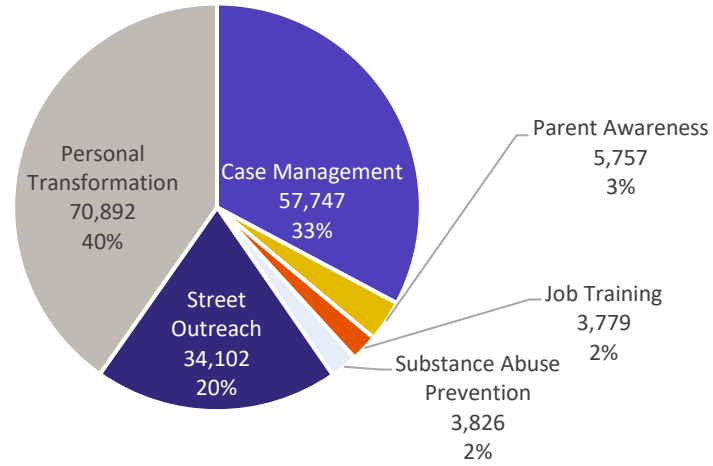| Service Area	Projected	Actual
Total	107,554	101,154
Emergency Services	21,487	21,524
Personal Transformation	50,674	35,388
Street Outreach	10,830	17,112
Vocational/Job Training	2,067	3,919
Parent Awareness/Training	4,895	4,671
Case Management	17,603	18,541

Source: BEST grantee contracts, contract amendments, and workbooks

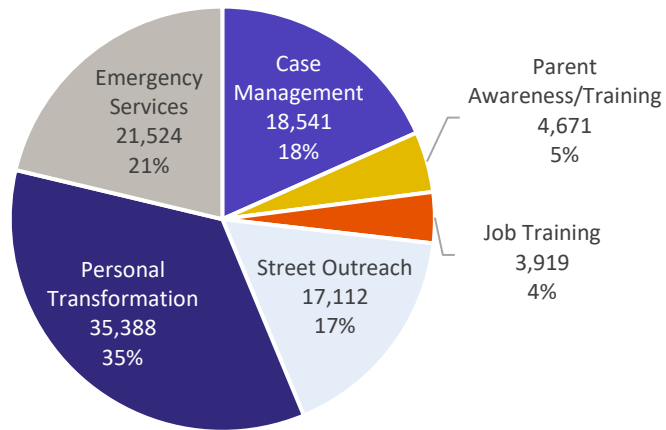*Note:* Amended projected UOS are used for this exhibit.

Personal Transformation made up the largest share of UOS provided (35 percent), followed by Emergency Services (21 percent), Case Management (18 percent), and Street Outreach/Intervention (17 percent). The other eligible service areas represented far less of the total UOS delivered, with Vocational/Job Training and Parent Awareness/Training representing 4 and 5 percent, respectively. These percentages were similar to the previous program year, with Emergency Services claiming a share of UOS that had previously been provided primarily in Case Management and Personal Transformation. Exhibit II-4 depicts the UOS delivered by eligible service area as a percentage of the total UOS delivered for both PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020.

Exhibit II-4: Overall Distribution of UOS Delivered by Grantees (PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020)

PY 2018–2019

Personal Transformation 70,892 40%

Case Management 57,747 33%

Parent Awareness 5,757 3%

Job Training 3,779 2%

Street Outreach 34,102 20%

Substance Abuse Prevention 3,826 2%

PY 2019–2020

Emergency Services 21,524 21%

Case Management 18,541 18%

Parent Awareness/Training 4,671 5%

Job Training 3,919 4%

Personal Transformation 35,388 35%

Street Outreach 17,112 17%

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

Summary

PY 2019–2020 was a challenging year for BEST grantees. They faced emergency conditions that limited their ability to provide services as expected. Nevertheless, they were able to implement and deliver a new eligible service area dedicated to providing emergency services to participants. They were also able to adapt existing services to these emergency conditions and came close to meeting their service goals, delivering 94 percent of their projected UOS.

III. BEST Grants and Grant Spending

In PY 2019–2020, PRNS awarded 15 BEST grantees a total of $2,459,993, which included $2,333,493 in base funding and $126,500 in one-time funding. This chapter provides an overview of BEST funding and grant spending during PY 2019–2020 as compared to the program years in the previous 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

- **BEST grant funding and matched funding increased from PY 2018–2019 to PY 2019–2020.**

- **Grantees generally expended PY 2019–2020 BEST grant funds as planned, despite the major disruption in services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- **The number of qualified service providers decreased in PY 2019–2020 compared to the last triennial, while the number of BEST-funded grantees remained relatively unchanged.[10]**

New Triennial Period

Every triennial period, PRNS selects a group of qualified service providers from which to award BEST funding. In PY 2019–2020, which marked the start of a new triennial period, PRNS introduced a new RFQ, which it distributed widely to youth service providers in the San José area. When it designed the RFQ, BEST staff considered multiple factors and changed the definitions of some of the UOS that agencies used to estimate the costs of providing their services. This was especially applicable to the Case Management and Parent Awareness/ Training eligible service areas.

According to PRNS staff, there were a total of 17 agencies from the previous triennial that did not reapply, and six agencies that did apply that had not applied in the previous triennial. The changes in agency applications can be attributed to several different reasons. For example, the reduced number of applications in Parent Awareness/Training was likely related to the fact that

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[10]   There were 17 BEST-funded grantees in PY 2019–-2020; however, due to administrative issues and lack of data reporting, however, two are excluded from this analysis.

this service area has the smallest funding allocation of the five service areas; in the previous triennial, PRNS was able to fund only four of the 15 qualified agencies. In addition, some agencies' inability to meet BEST monitoring and performance requirements in previous years may have led to them to decide not to reapply to this most recent RFQ. Additionally, collapsing the Substance Abuse eligible service area into Personal Transformation may have increased the number of agencies applying in this service area.

Ultimately, PRNS selected 28 qualified service providers, about a quarter less than the 39 qualified service providers identified in the prior triennial period. As shown in Exhibit III-1, the number of agencies that were qualified service providers in each eligible service area generally remained steady, except in the Parent Awareness/Training service area.

Exhibit III-1: Number of BEST Qualified Service Providers by Eligible Service Area (PY 2019–2020 and Prior Triennial)
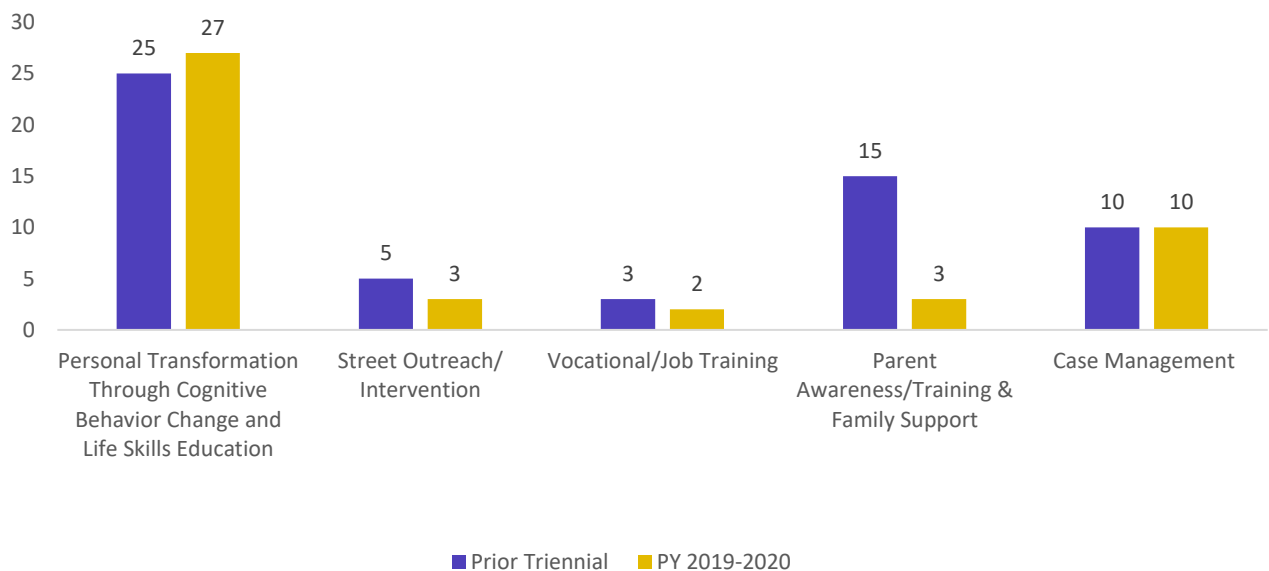
Source: BEST administrative data and grantee contracts

Note: Qualified service providers can provide services in more than one eligible service area; as such, the numbers in the exhibit may sum to more than the total number of qualified service providers. Emergency Services is not included in this figure because it was a temporary service area that was not included in the RFQ.

Of these 28 qualified service providers, PRNS awarded BEST grants for PY 2019–2020 to 17 agencies, the same number of grantees as in PY 2018–2019. While the number of qualified service providers selected for each eligible service area decreased in PY 2019–2020 as compared to the prior triennial period, the number of BEST grantees that provided services in each eligible service area stayed about the same.

As shown in Exhibit III-2, the number of BEST grantees providing Personal Transformation and Street Outreach/Intervention services stayed the same, while the number of BEST-funded grantees in Vocational/Job Training[11] and Case Management both decreased slightly. As explained above, Parent Awareness/Training experienced a substantial decrease in qualified service providers, and this is reflected in the number of grantees. Just one grantee provided these services in PY 2019–2020, compared to five in the prior triennial.[12]

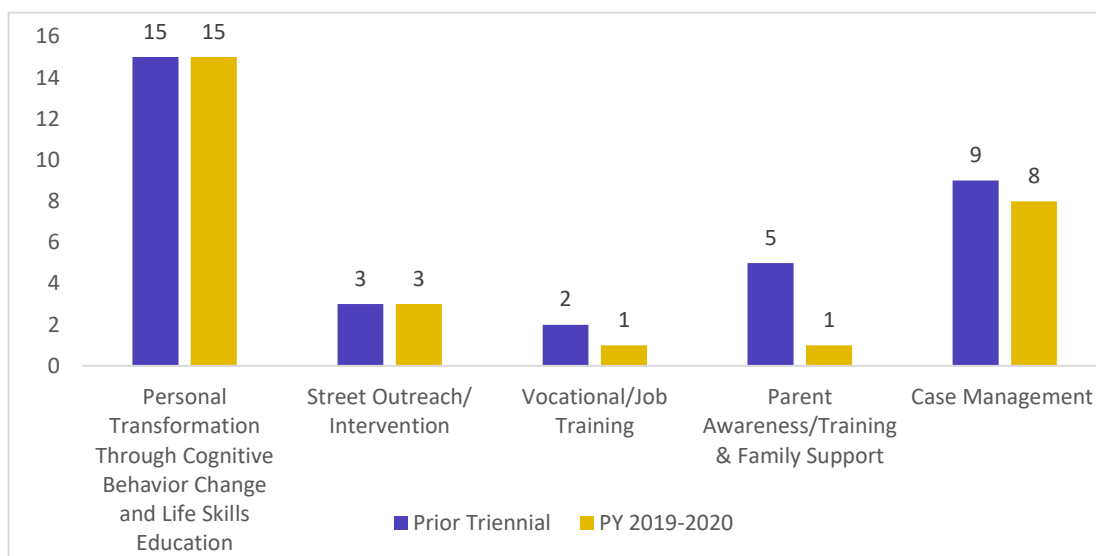**Exhibit III-2: Number of BEST Grantees by Eligible Service Area (PY 2019–2020 and Prior Triennial)**

Source: BEST administrative data and grantee contracts

Note: Grantees can provide services in more than one eligible service area. As such, the numbers in the exhibit may sum to more than the total number of grantees. Emergency Services is not included in this figure because it was a temporary service area that was not included in the RFQ.

BEST Funding Levels

The funding used to support BEST programs consists of three components. First, base funding is a static amount across each triennial period. Second, one-time funding includes support from emergency reserves, 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, matched funding is a requirement for all

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[11]   Vocational training for youth is mainly provided through Work2Future.

[12]   As noted earlier, two grantees are excluded from the analysis because of administrative issues and lack of data reporting. One of these grantees provided Parent Awareness/Training, and the other provided Case Management in PY 2019–2020.

grantees (set at 20 percent of base funding in grant contracts); it 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 grants represent only a portion of the total funding used to support BEST-funded services.

Exhibit III-3 shows the amount for each of these types of funding for the three previous program years and the current program year. There are two significant trends during this period:

- Overall BEST program funding—including base and one-time funding—has remained at a relatively consistent level across this 4-year period. Looking more closely at specific funding types, BEST base funding increased and one-time funding decreased in PY 2019–2020 compared to the 3 previous years.

- In PY 2019–2020, grantees recorded $86,802 in additional matched funding compared to PY 2018–2019. However, the total amount of matched funding ($971,312) was slightly less than the average matched funding across the previous triennial period ($1,003,452).

Exhibit III-3: BEST Program Funding by Type (PY 2016–2017 to PY 2019–2020)

2016-2017 — $3,437,791
- Matched Funding: $995,295
- One-Time Funding: $243,000
- BEST Base Funding: $2,199,496

2017-2018 — $3,644,326
- Matched Funding: $1,129,831
- One-Time Funding: $339,645
- BEST Base Funding: $2,174,850

2018-2019 — $3,324,686
- Matched Funding: $885,230
- One-Time Funding: $176,981
- BEST Base Funding: $2,262,475

2019-2020 — $3,467,305
- Matched Funding: $971,312
- One-Time Funding: $162,500
- BEST Base Funding: $2,333,493

Legend: ■ BEST Base Funding ■ One-Time Funding ■ Matched Funding

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

An important characteristic of BEST grantees is the degree to which they rely on BEST funding for their overall BEST program budgets. Exhibit III-4 shows how matched funding as a percentage of overall BEST program funding varied considerably across grantees in PY 2019–2020, consisting of between 16 and 80 percent of total BEST grant funding. In the exhibit, the total matched funding can appear to be below the 20 percent required match of base funding because of the inclusion of all funding in the total; all agencies met their required 20 percent match. The differing levels of matched funding reflect multiple factors, including the size of the grantee organization and the grantee's access to alternative funding streams (e.g., national parent organization, philanthropic grants, and other government grants and contracts).

SPR

Exhibit III-4: Matched Funding as a Percentage of Total BEST Program Budget (PY 2019–2020)

PY 2019–2020 BEST Grantees	Total BEST Grant Funding (base + one-time funds)	Matched Funding as Percentage of BEST Program Budget
Bay Area Tutoring Association	$41,278	16%
Bill Wilson Center	$229,524	17%
Caminar	$185,908	21%
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	$403,750	54%
ConXión to Community	$182,366	20%
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	$108,204	49%
Girl Scouts of Northern California	$44,577	80%
New Hope for Youth	$451,086	17%
San Jose Jazz	$69,500	66%
Teen Success, Inc.	$60,431	59%
The Art of Yoga Project	$63,083	16%
The Firehouse Community Development Corp.	$313,600	20%
The Tenacious Group	$71,880	21%
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	$129,125	17%
Uplift Family Services	$101,254	16%
Total	**$2,459,993**	--

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

Grant Funding and Expenditures

In addition to reporting on other funding sources that supported their BEST programs, grantees reported on BEST grant expenditures. Exhibit III-5 shows each grantee's BEST grant funding and expenditures for PY 2019–2020. Overall, grantees expended 97 percent of BEST funds awarded to them. While most expended all of their BEST funding, some grantees that expended less attributed it to factors such as decreased enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Exhibit III-5: BEST Grant Funding Compared to Grant Expenditures (PY 2019–2020)

PY 2019–2020 BEST Grantees	Total BEST Grant Funding (base + one-time funds)	Total Best Grant Expenditures	BEST Grant Expenditures as Percentage of Grant Funding
Bay Area Tutoring Association	$41,278	$41,278	100%
Bill Wilson Center	$229,524	$194,988	85%
Caminar	$185,908	$185,908	100%
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	$403,750	$386,622	96%
ConXión to Community	$182,366	$182,366	100%
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	$108,204	$108,204	100%
Girl Scouts of Northern California	$44,577	$44,577	100%
New Hope for Youth	$451,086	$451,086	100%
San Jose Jazz	$69,500	$69,500	100%
Teen Success, Inc.	$60,431	$60,431	100%
The Art of Yoga Project	$63,083	$63,083	100%
The Firehouse Community Development Corporation	$313,600	$306,066	98%
The Tenacious Group	$71,880	$71,880	100%
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	$129,125	$113,978	88%
Uplift Family Services	$101,254	$101,254	100%
Total	**$2,459,993**	**$2,385,149**	97%

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

Summary

Overall, BEST program funding and expenditures in PY 2019–2020 remained relatively consistent with prior years. This reflects the responsiveness of PRNS and BEST grantees to meet the needs of the community during emergency conditions, which allowed grantees to expend BEST funds on desperately needed basic supplies, including food, protective equipment and supplies (e.g., hand sanitizer and face coverings), and innovative remote and socially distanced services.

IV. BEST Participants

San José BEST grantees served 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 2019–2020, a total of 3,229 children, youth, and parents participated in BEST-funded programs.[13]**

- **Participants enrolled from across San José, with strong representation from the eastern and southern areas.**

- **Most BEST participants were at the lower end of the risk-level range.**

- **Caminar and Girl Scouts of Northern California together enrolled almost half of all BEST participants (48 percent).**

Participant Enrollment

BEST grantees provided different levels of service to youth, had different levels of BEST grant and matched funding, and were affected by COVID-19 and shelter-in-place orders to varying degrees. As a result, in PY 2019–2020, some grantees were more easily able to serve larger numbers of participants. For example, San Jose Jazz, a music instruction program, was not able to move its ensemble programs to a virtual format due to sound problems that occur with Zoom and other easily available platforms.

Just as grantees received different levels of BEST funding, individual grantees' BEST programs varied in enrollment size, with anywhere from 44 to 986 participants in PY 2019–2020. In total, 15 BEST grantees enrolled 3,229 program participants in PY 2019–2020, a slight increase from the 3,194 program participants enrolled by 18 BEST grantees in PY 2018–2019. Exhibit IV-1 compares just the 15 organizations that were awarded grants in both PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020. There was a modest enrollment increase—from 2,860 participants in PY 2018–2019 to 3,229 in PY 2019–2020. Eight of the 15 grantees enrolled more participants in PY 2019–2020

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13   This figure does not include individuals served through Street Outreach/Intervention who were not formally enrolled in BEST, estimated to be 1,800 gang-impacted and gang-intentional youth.

than in the previous program year; the average number served for these 8 was 198 more than the previous year. The other 7 grantees enrolled fewer participants than the previous program year; the average number served for these 7 was 174 less than the previous year.

Exhibit IV-1: BEST Program Enrollment Numbers by Grantee
(PY 2018–2019 and PY 2020–2020)

Grantee Name	Number of Participants Enrolled in PY 2018–2019	Number of Participants Enrolled in PY 2019–2020	Change in Number of Participants Enrolled
Bay Area Tutoring Association	102	75	▼
Bill Wilson Center	92	162	▲
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	417	135	▼
Caminar	392	986	▲
ConXión to Community	101	190	▲
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	122	128	▲
Girl Scouts of Northern California	612	566	▼
New Hope for Youth	121	194	▲
San Jose Jazz	168	96	▼
Teen Success, Inc.	64	44	▼
The Art of Yoga Project	153	211	▲
The Firehouse Community Development Corporation	122	136	▲
The Tenacious Group	87	125	▲
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	121	86	▼
Uplift Family Services	186	95	▼
Total	**2,860**	**3,229**	**--**

Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: In PY 2018–2019, grantees served 3,194 participants overall; this table only compares enrollment across the 15 grantees included in both PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020.

While the average enrollment was 215 individuals, numbers were not evenly distributed across grantees. Just two out of 15 grantees—Caminar and Girl Scouts of Northern California— together enrolled almost half (48 percent) of all BEST participants. In PY 2019–2020, Caminar overtook Girl Scouts and Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County as the grantee with the largest number of enrolled participants (31 percent of all BEST participants). According to program staff, Caminar's growth was related to service model changes that moved the location of some

programming into community settings in public housing rather than school buildings. Those grantees that saw a reduction in participants were generally school-based and were especially hampered in service delivery as a result of shelter-in-place orders that closed most schools in March 2020. San Jose Jazz, which focuses on music instruction, faced additional challenges and limitations of online services. These challenges are discussed more fully in the following chapter.

Program Target Populations

The MGPTF has defined four BEST target populations with different risk levels for gang involvement, with attributes that include residence in high-risk environments and past or present involvement in gang-related activities. These four populations are as follows:
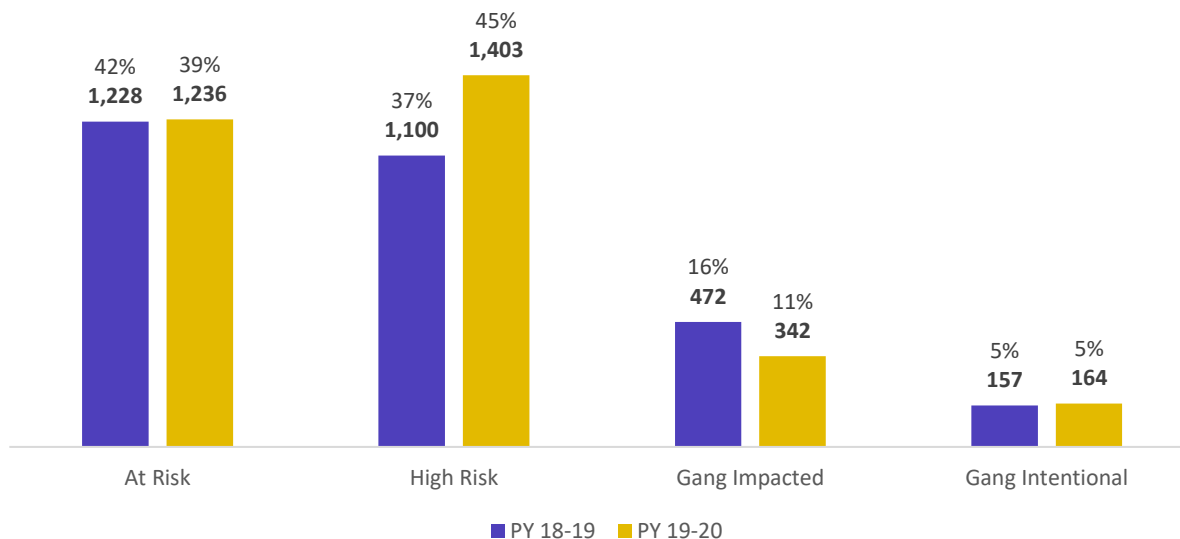
- **At-risk**: Youth who reside in high-risk communities with potential gang-risk characteristics.

- **High-risk**: Youth who have higher levels of intensity at which they adopt characteristics associated with a gang lifestyle.

- **Gang-impacted**: Youth who exhibit high-risk behaviors related to gang lifestyles.

- **Gang-intentional**: Youth who self-identify as gang members or who are engaged in the gang lifestyle.

Out of participants enrolled in a BEST-funded program during PY 2019–2020,[14] the majority were designated as either at-risk (39 percent) or high-risk (45 percent). In contrast, 11 percent of participants were designated as gang-impacted and 3 percent as gang-intentional. These results are largely consistent with data from PY 2018–2019, except for high-risk youth (who made up a larger percentage in PY 2019–2020) and gang-impacted youth (who made up a smaller percentage in PY 2019–2020). Exhibit IV-2 shows the percentage and number of participants enrolled by target population for PY 2019–2020 and PY 2018–2019.

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[14] Some of the 3,229 individuals served by BEST programs in PY 2019–2020 were parents of participants. Examinations of target populations are limited to participants who were ages 6 to 24 at the time of enrollment, except for individuals over age 24 who were served in the Parenting Awareness/Training eligible service area.

Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: In PY 2018–2019, grantees served 3,194 participants; of these, 237 were not assigned a risk level. In PY 2019–2020, grantees served 3,229 participants; of these, 84 were not assigned a risk level.

Participant Demographics

As shown in Exhibit IV-3, a large proportion of BEST participants in PY 2019–2020 were Latinx (62 percent), were ages 13 to 18 (71 percent), and were from one of the two lower-risk target populations. Unsurprisingly given the focus of the program, 79 percent of participants were age 18 and younger. Participant demographics in PY 2019–2020 changed from those in PY 2018–2019 in the following ways:

- A smaller proportion of BEST participants were Latinx, while the percentages of Asian and white participants increased.

- A larger percentage of participants identified as male.

Participants who identified as female continued to make up more than half of BEST program participants in PY 2019–2020 (56 percent). Forty-two percent of these participants were in the high-risk target population (compared to 34 percent of male participants). Conversely, male participants were more often in the gang-intentional population (11 percent compared to 2 percent of female participants). There were roughly equal percentages of male and female participants in the at-risk and gang-impacted populations.

Exhibit IV-3: Characteristics of BEST Participants (PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020)

Participants by Race/Ethnicity

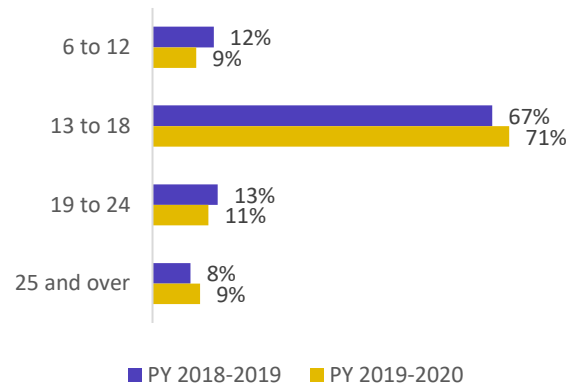| Race/Ethnicity	PY 2018-2019	PY 2019-2020
Latinx	76%	62%
Asian	7%	14%
Multiracial or Other	6%	8%
African American/Black	8%	7%
White	2%	6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	1%

Participants by Age

Age	PY 2018-2019	PY 2019-2020
6 to 12	12%	9%
13 to 18	67%	71%
19 to 24	13%	11%
25 and over	8%	9%

Participants by Gender

Gender	PY 18-19	PY 19-20
Female	61%	56%
Male	39%	43%
Non-Binary	0.2%	0.2%
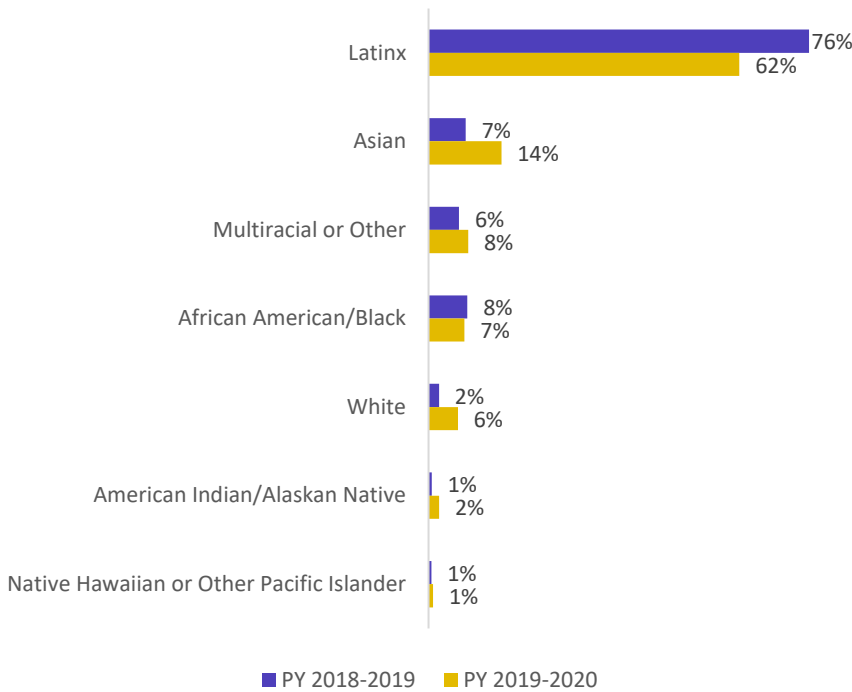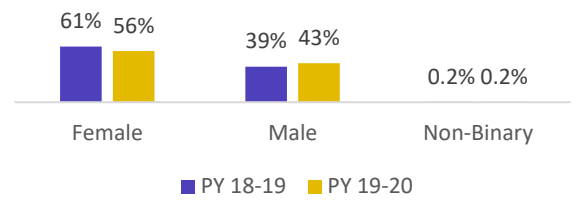
Participant Gender by Target Population Group
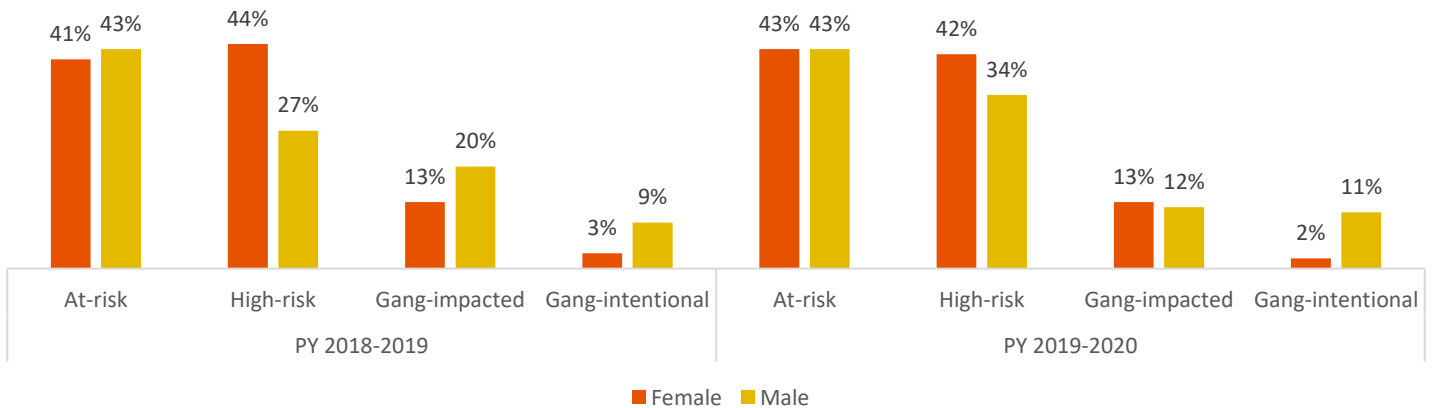
	At-risk	High-risk	Gang-impacted	Gang-intentional
PY 2018-2019 Female	41%	44%	13%	3%
PY 2018-2019 Male	43%	27%	20%	9%
PY 2019-2020 Female	43%	42%	13%	2%
PY 2019-2020 Male	43%	34%	12%	11%

Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: In PY 2018–2019, grantees served 3,194 participants; of these, 10 had missing gender information and 237 were not assigned a risk level. In PY 2019–2020, grantees served 3,229 participants; of these, 380 had missing gender information and 84 were not assigned a risk level.

Demographics by Target Population

BEST grantees were funded to work with participants at varying risk levels. Eight of the 15 grantees reported enrolling participants in at least three of the MGPTF-identified target populations, with all grantees enrolling participants in at least two target populations. Exhibit IV-4 illustrates the target populations grantees reported serving. Some, like San Jose Jazz, Bay Area Tutoring, Fresh Lifelines for Youth, and Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc., overwhelmingly served at-risk participants; the three Street Outreach/Intervention grantees—Catholic Charities, Firehouse, and New Hope for Youth—primarily served participants in the gang-impacted and gang-intentional target populations.

Exhibit IV-4: Target Populations Served by BEST Grantees (PY 2019–2020)
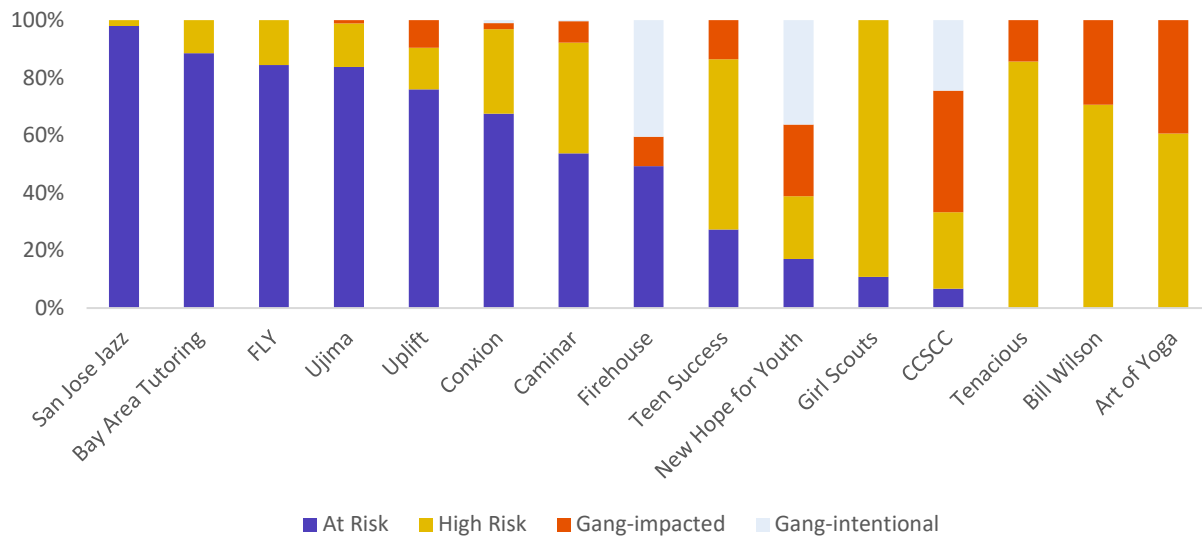
Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: Street Outreach/Intervention cold contacts are not included in these data and make up an additional population of primarily gang-impacted and gang-intentional youth served by BEST grantees.

While grantees enrolled individuals mostly in one or two target populations, this tells us little about how each contributed to a specific target population overall. Because of their large target enrollment sizes, some grantees considerably affected the number of participants in certain target populations. For example, Girl Scouts of Northern California overwhelmingly contributed to the high-risk target population, accounting for 36 percent of the high-risk BEST participants. Exhibit IV-5 displays the grantee distribution within each target population. These figures

provide a visual depiction of the funding priorities during PY 2019–2020, the populations BEST served, and which grantees served them.

Exhibit IV-5: Best Grantees Serving Each Target Population (PY 2019–2020)
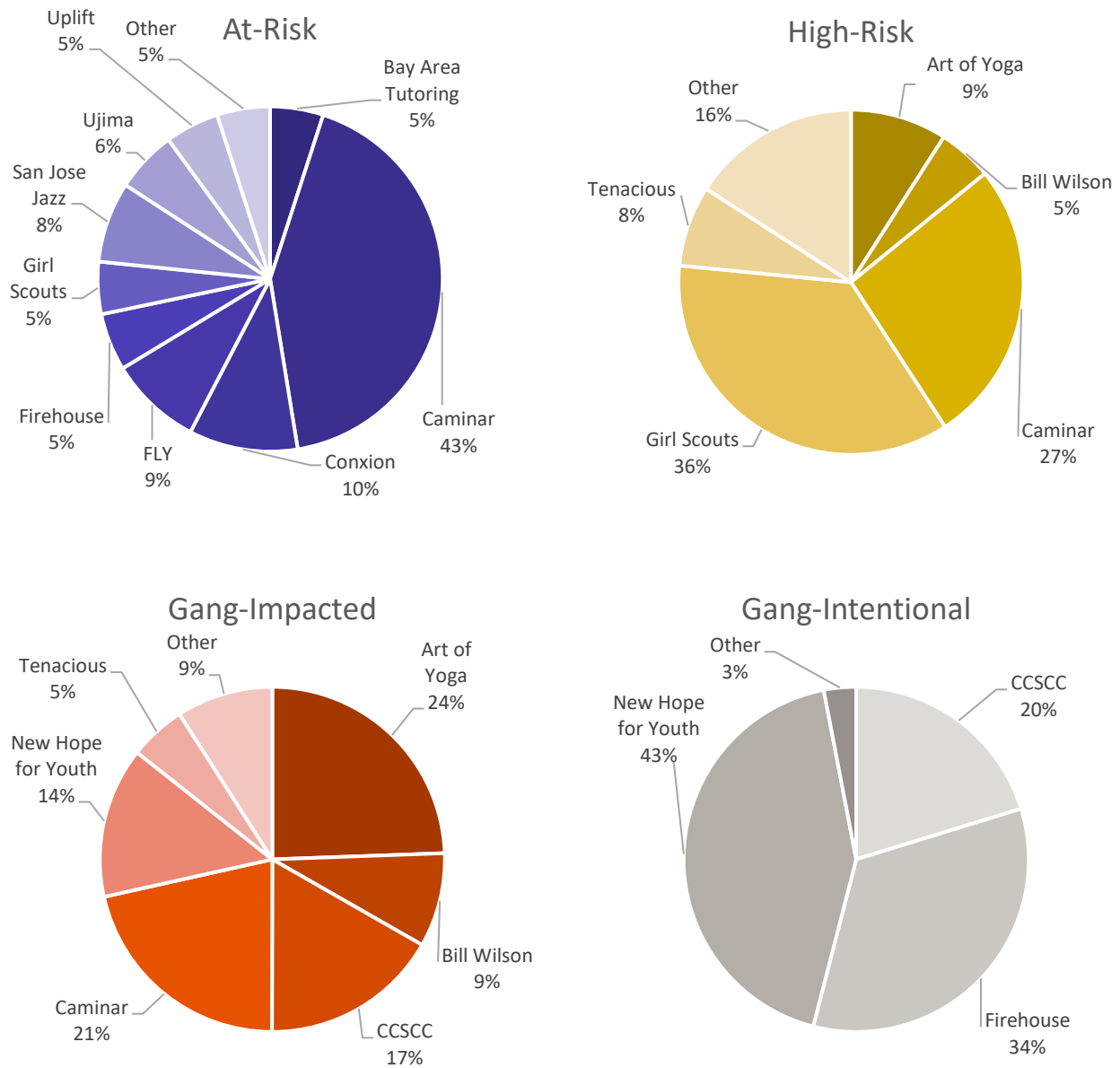
Source: BEST grantee workbooks

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

The most striking difference in these data between PY 2019–2020 and PY 2018–2019 is related to Caminar's significant growth in participants. This impacted the at-risk category most, with Caminar accounting for almost half of the at-risk population in PY 2019–2020. In contrast, in PY 2018–2019 the distribution in this risk category was more even, with nine grantees

representing 87 percent of the at-risk population in roughly equal parts. In addition to the growth in Caminar's service population, some changes in grantees' service populations may be related to service adjustments due to COVID-19 and the provision of Emergency Services.

Participant Residences by Zip Code

To be eligible for the program, BEST participants must reside in San José. An analysis of grantee workbook data for PY 2019–2020 (displayed in Exhibit IV-6) shows that participants were concentrated in a few of the 59 zip codes within San José; almost half (48 percent) resided in three zip codes: 95122, 95111, and 95116. Over half of participants in the gang-impacted and gang-intentional target populations (55 percent) lived in these three zip codes, as did 46 percent of the at-risk and high-risk participants. Moreover, these three zip codes correspond to hot spots identified by the MGPTF in 2017. There were few differences in residence by zip code between PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020.

Exhibit IV-6: Map Showing Percentage of BEST Participants in Each Zip Code (PY 2019–2020)

Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Participant Referral Sources

In PY 2019–2020, as with PY 2018–2019, schools were BEST grantees' largest referral source, sending 69 percent of participants to the program. Self-referrals and referrals from courts or probation saw a drop from PY 2018–2019, with 13 percent of participants self-referring and 4 percent being referred from courts or probation (compared to 17 percent and 10 percent, respectively, in PY 2018–2019). Exhibit IV-7 compares the various referral sources identified by BEST-funded programs across PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020.

Exhibit IV-7: Referral Sources for BEST Program Participants (PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020)
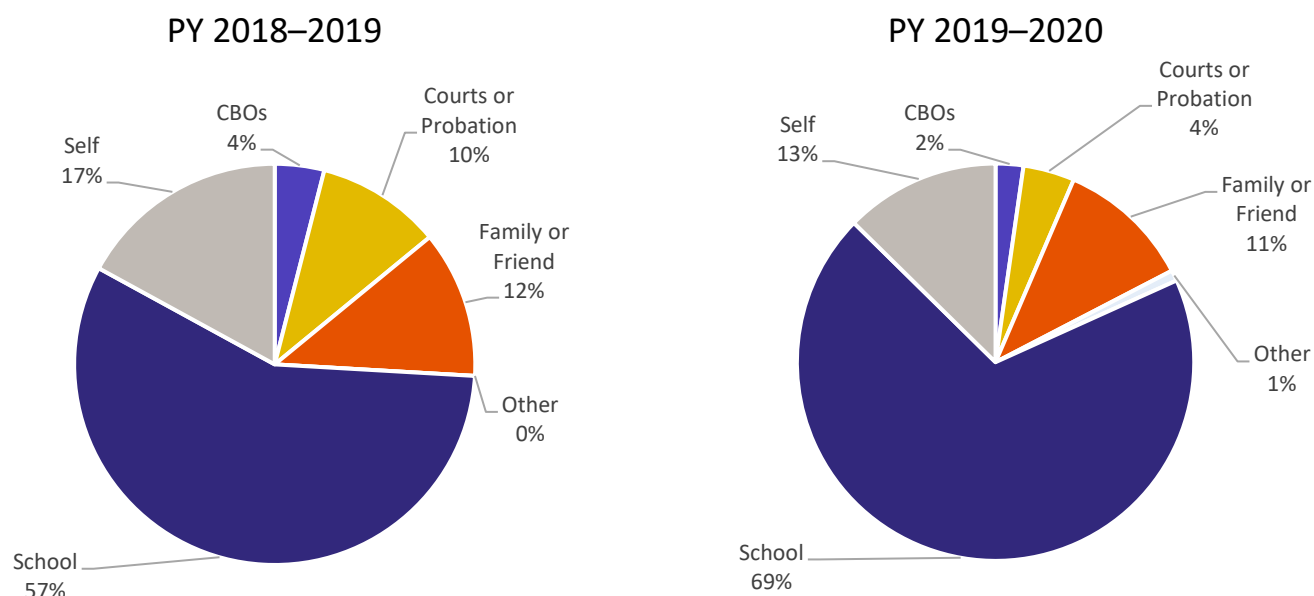
Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: Total participants with non-missing information included in the calculations are 3,187 for PY 2018–2019 and 2,652 for PY 2019–2020.

As in PY 2018–2019, youth in the two lower risk categories (i.e., at-risk and high-risk youth) more frequently came to BEST programs through schools—representing 73 percent in PY 2019–2020. Across both program years, gang-impacted and gang-intentional youth were largely referred by their schools, or by the courts or probation. These data are illustrated in Exhibit IV-8.

Exhibit IV-8: Referral Sources for BEST Participants, by Target Population (PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020)

At-Risk and High-Risk (PY 2018–2019)

CBOs 4%
Self 16%
Courts or Probation 6%
Family or Friend 12%
Other 0%
School 63%

At-Risk and High-Risk (PY 2019–2020)

CBOs 3%
Self 10%
Courts/Probation 1%
Family/Friend 11%
Other 1%
School 73%

Gang-Impacted and Gang-Intentional (PY 2018–2019)

Self 24%
CBOs 5%
Courts or Probation 30%
Family or Friend 9%
Other 0%
School 33%

Gang-Impacted and Gang-Intentional (PY 2019–2020)

CBOs 0%
Self 15%
Courts/Probation 23%
Family/Friend 9%
Other 0%
School 52%
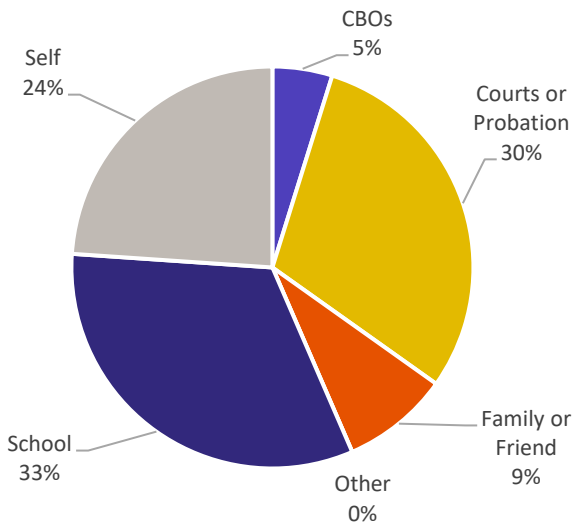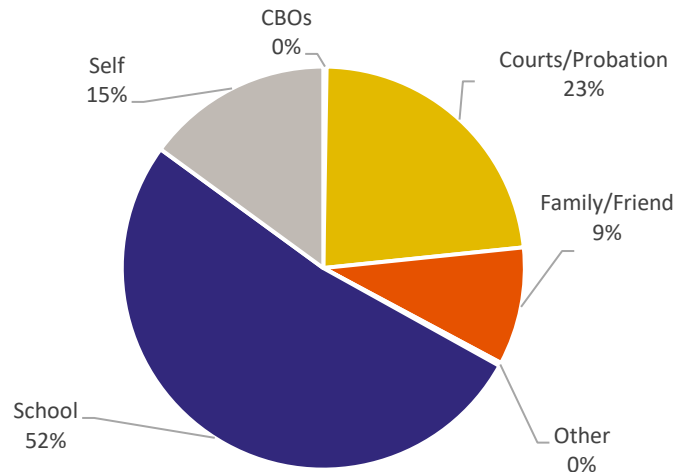
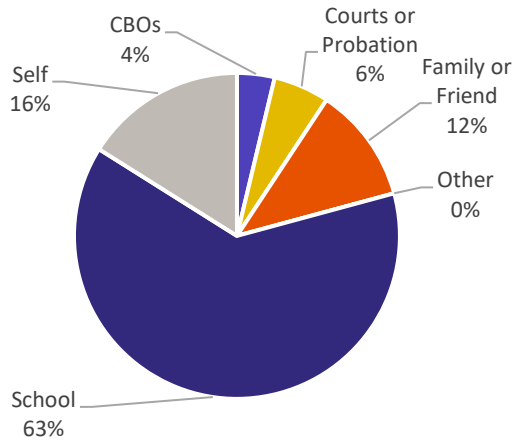*Source*: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: Participants with complete information included in calculations are 2,951 for PY 2018–2019 and 2,577 for PY 2019–2020.
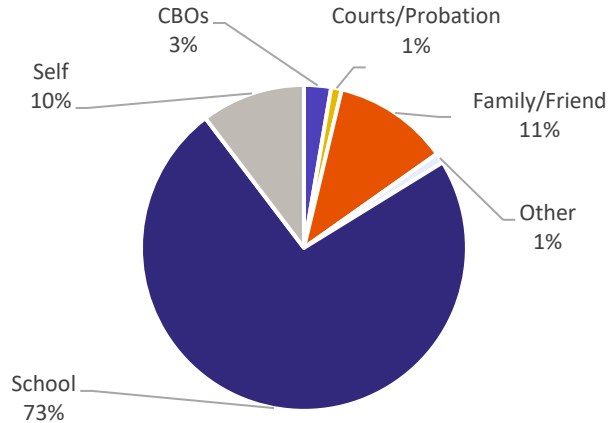
Summary

BEST grantees provided a wide range of services to a diverse group of children, youth, and families in targeted San José neighborhoods, addressing a variety of needs. Overall, there were relatively few changes in the composition of participants from PY 2018–2019 to PY 2019–2020, but there was a shift in the participant enrollment levels of grantees, with some enrolling substantially more or fewer youth than in the prior year.

V. Implementation Challenges and Program Adaptations

This chapter focuses on the program successes and challenges of PY 2019–2020, with particular attention to how BEST grantees adapted to the challenges brought about by emergency conditions, including the COVID-19 pandemic and related shelter-in-place (SIP) conditions, wildfires and poor air quality, and unrest related to racial injustice. This chapter synthesizes findings from document reviews, grantee staff interviews in March 2020, virtual focus groups with grantee and PRNS staff in October 2020, and individual interviews with Street Outreach/Intervention grantees in December 2020.

Key Findings

- **BEST grantees established meaningful relationships with youth and their families, and strong connections with schools and other community-based organizations before the pandemic.**

- **While racial injustice and fears around immigration enforcement were not new for many BEST participants and their families, the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place ordinances, recent events of racial injustice, and wildfires exacerbated existing challenges for them.**

- **All grantees reported altering their services to meet emergency conditions, including providing emergency services (e.g., food, personal protective equipment), meeting with clients virtually, offering online workshops, offering in-person, socially distanced services, or discontinuing some services (e.g., late-night gym services or prosocial outings) based on safety protocols.**

- **Mental health, well-being, and self-care played a larger role for participants, grantee staff, and BEST administrative staff in response to increased stress, anxiety, and depression related to emerging emergency conditions.**

Successes and Challenges Prior to COVID-19

In individual interviews with liaisons prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, grantee staff shared significant successes as well as challenges in their PY 2019–2020 service delivery. The most frequently cited successes were:

- **They had strong connections with some schools.** Program staff reported building strong relationships with individual teachers, who often became their champions. This allowed them to continue to offer programming during in-class time, an important service strategy because programs have a difficult time getting youth to attend afterschool programming.

- **They had meaningful relationships with participants.** Program staff credited their success in building strong relationships and trust with clients to intensive case management and frontline staff having lived experiences similar to their clients'. A few program staff discussed how they were sometimes better able to communicate with students than some school staff.

> *"We are able to advocate for students and young men who won't speak up—when they do, it's out of anger and frustration. They feel like no one sat down face to face instead of pointing at the students and telling them what they did wrong."*
> *-BEST Grantee Staff*

In addition, program staff shared these challenges:

- **Experiences of racism affected youth adversely.** A few grantees recounted stories from youth participants about facing racism in schools and afterschool programs and how school staff were not able to support them.

- **The immigration climate fostered fear and mistrust.** Grantee staff described a continued fear among families across San José that engaging in grantee programs would increase the risk of family members being detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Furthermore, BEST staff noted that those who did not have right to work authorization could not apply for Unemployment Insurance benefits, intensifying existing financial distress. Those who would have qualified for public assistance were hesitant to apply, given the public charge rule.[15]

- **There was misunderstanding of the BEST target population among some community partners.** Some BEST grantee staff noted that some community partners and school staff sent youth to BEST programs when they may have had challenges other than what the programs were equipped to work with, such as behavioral issues or learning disabilities, instead of gang involvement.

- **Some schools in the area may be oversaturated with programs.** Some BEST grantee staff expressed that they felt like they were competing with other student support programs. They were interested in more coordination and collaboration among youth-

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[15] Under the public charge rule, an immigrant to the United States who is classified as "likely" or "liable" to become a public charge—that is, dependent on government benefits—may be denied a visa or permission to enter the country due to a disability or lack of economic resources (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, 2020).

serving organizations to ensure that all youth in need of services would have the opportunity to participate.

Program Challenges and Adaptations Following COVID-19

With the onset of the pandemic and SIP, BEST providers and their participants and their families came under increasing economic and social stresses that both worsened existing challenges and created new ones. In addition, other major events of 2020, including racial injustice incidents and protests and wide-ranging wildfires that limited access to the outdoors due to poor air quality, added stress for the youth and families served by BEST grantees.

Racial Injustice

After multiple events of racial injustice occurred over the summer of 2020, including the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, protests and civil unrest erupted throughout the country, including in San José. Grantee staff members shared that this spurred conversations with participants, resulting in discussions about racial injustice and the role of civic engagement. Grantees whose participants were in middle school noted that even younger students were talking about racial injustice, and at times were more comfortable having those conversations than adults. One staff member said that some of their best discussions focused on addressing implicit and internal biases. Grantee staff noted that it was a process of learning for participants and grantee staff alike. One staff member said, "Youth are trying to process this trauma and, on top of that, we are trying to help clients process something that we are trying to fully understand ourselves."

Grantee staff expressed differing views on the role of the police in working with youth. Some suggested reviewing internal policies and practices or reassessing whether the police should be called at all during situations such as mental health episodes or fights. One grantee staff member wanted to see more communication between the community and police: "The police need to be looking at themselves and getting more support to change." There was general agreement on the importance of continuing to work closely with police department staff through MGPTF meetings and local community meetings.

"It has been a huge wake-up call for our agency, to look at some of our systems in place and how there are some subtle inequities that have gone unaddressed. We are having some strong meetings and focus groups on how we can make some changes within our agency. This has been good; this has been a positive thing for our agency."
-BEST Grantee Staff Member

BEST administrative staff within PRNS shared how their agency and the city government as a whole were also addressing equity issues. They had been working with PRNS management to look at services and funding to ensure that they were equitable. Also, they participated in citywide internal listening sessions through the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. In June 2020, the San José City Council approved the creation of the Office of Racial Equity in the Office of the City Manager. This new office is responsible for advancing a citywide racial equity framework that will examine and improve San José's internal policies, practices, and systems to eradicate any structural and/or institutional racism that may exist in city government.

Wildfires and Climate Change

As wildfires raged across California and the entire West Coast from August through October, the air quality levels became the worst in the world; participants and their families were stuck inside, and some were even displaced or evacuated (Moffit, M, 2020). As one grantee staff member put it, "Even if you weren't directly impacted by a wildfire, it had

> "The fires were another challenge to people's mental health, and the 'orange day' was the worst—it was apocalyptic, another gut punch. It was scary, and the impact on everyone's health was significant, for staff, families, and children."
> -BEST Grantee Staff

some indirect effect on you." One grantee that was focused on mental health and well-being received three to five new client referrals per day during the wildfires; anxiety and depression levels were extremely high among both clients and therapeutic staff. Other staff members mentioned how profoundly the combination of bad air quality and SIP impacted mental health. The smoky air and the high temperatures were uncomfortable in many ways and offered little respite for people who were tired of staying indoors.

Youth Violence and Safety

Several grantees perceived that youth violence in their areas had increased since SIP, although police data did not provide support for this perception. When schools shifted to distance learning, one grantee noticed that youth who were already disconnected were further disengaged by not physically being at school. Grantee staff also perceived that violence in the home environment may have increased. One grantee reported that domestic violence increasingly became a topic of conversation

> "We meet with kids and encourage them to stay off the streets.…We tell youth that they can call us anytime if something happens."
> -BEST Grantee Staff

among participants when SIP went into effect. Another grantee noted that staff were seeing a lot more relationship struggles within families, with parents on the edge of separation or divorce and youth participants exhibiting more aggressive verbal outbursts (though this does

not necessarily lead to physical violence). As adverse childhood experiences continued to pile up, grantees hoped that their prevention services were mitigating some of the trauma.

Through all these additional stresses on the community, grantees increased their focus on self-care and wellness. Many staff members recognized that self-care is integral to the well-being of service providers and the larger community. They emphasized the importance of participants recognizing that staff were experiencing the same world events right there with them.

How Programs Adapted to Adverse Conditions

On March 19, 2020, the SIP order was declared in San José. The majority of PRNS staff were assigned additional emergency duties, and much of their time was devoted to non-BEST activities. Exhibit V-1 illustrates key dates and events in BEST program administration that illustrate how PRNS staff responded to changing emergency conditions.

Exhibit V-1: COVID-19 Administrative Response Timeline in PY 2019–2020

BEST COVID-19 RESPONSE TIMELINE : PY 2019-2020

MARCH 13 - 31
- Interim Program Manager activated to Nonprofit Support Local Response Team
- County SIP orders sent to grantees
- Grants Analysts activated to Nonprofit Support Local Response Team
- COVID impact survey conducted among nonprofit partners
- Ongoing resources, training/technical assistance provided to nonprofit partners

MAY 4-21
- May 4: PRNS senior staff met to determine new scope and initiate Emergency Services eligible service area
- May 7: Community of Learning event
- May 21: Meeting with City Attorney on Emergency Services scope

March | April | May | June | July | August

APRIL 13-27
- PRNS held individual grantee Zoom meetings to get detailed impact information

JUNE 1 - JULY 14
- PRNS staff met with each grantee to negotiate contract amendments.

AUGUST >
- Development and processing of contract amendments

After administering the COVID-19 impact survey in March 2020, BEST administrative staff conducted one-on-one meetings with BEST grantees in April to understand how they were shifting their services and to revise their contracts. After observing the high level of need in the community, and after seeing how so many grantees were providing basic needs and emergency services, PRNS created the Emergency Services eligible service area in May 2020.[16]

BEST staff recognized the need to sustain the City of San José's partnerships with BEST grantees and to support grantees' capacity to remain open for business—including the continued release of payments as agencies weathered the financial impacts of COVID-19, racial unrest, and wildfires. Likewise, BEST staff recognized the importance of revising contract scopes to ensure that the City of San José was maximizing its support of the community in line with MGPTF goals and objectives.

The sections that follow discuss the important ways that grantee staff shifted BEST programming and services to adapt to COVID-19 and SIP.

Emergency Services

As most businesses and schools across San José shut down during SIP, many parents and family members of participants lost their jobs, and in-school youth lost their daily meals and safe places for care during the day. Grantees recognized the

"The mentality for our clients and families is survival mode."
-BEST Grantee Staff

increased need for emergency services, such as food, clothing, laundry, financial assistance, and more, and some began to shift from their regular services to providing these basic needs.

For example, four grantees shifted to emergency food distribution, which they conducted both at their physical locations and through delivery directly to families. One grantee offered laundry services and detergent through a program called "Loads of Hope." Grantees used these services as a way to maintain contact with existing participants and to provide program information to recruit new participants. Although not a BEST-funded service, a few grantees were able to offer emergency funds for needs such as cell phone bills and rental assistance to prevent eviction.

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[16] UOS for Emergency Services and associated funding were reflected in the PY 2019–2020 Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 workbooks.

Virtual Services

During SIP, most grantees continued to offer youth one-on-one meetings, shifting from in-person meetings to phone or video. Group sessions were offered online through various platforms, but grantees reported that youth engagement was challenging. To better engage youth, staff from five grantees described creating activity kits with supplies and materials that they mailed or dropped off at youths' homes. Staff members from multiple grantees discussed that this endeavor was very time intensive; one grantee reported hiring a full-time staff person whose sole duty was creating and distributing these packages. Grantees also discussed finding new and innovative activities or giving youth flexibility for engagement by allowing chat participation in lieu of video and audio, or just inviting youth to listen in.[17] Grantees mentioned participants' "Zoom fatigue," and that it was hard to keep them involved in group services or long meetings. One grantee adapted by holding shorter, more frequent check-in meetings.

> *"All of these packages take a lot of prep—it was like mental gymnastics in the summer."*
> -BEST Grantee Staff

Grantees reported that at the beginning of the pandemic, many youth lacked computers and devices as well as stable internet connections. They reported that this has improved, as many youth have received devices from their schools or through the City of San José. Nevertheless, internet connections and bandwidth can still be challenging, especially for participants with siblings or family members in the home who are using devices at the same time.

> *"We've noticed that shorter but more frequent check-ins have been working better for youth during this time."*
> -BEST Grantee Staff

Socially Distanced Services

Over time, some grantees added options for safe, socially distanced outdoor check-ins with masks and additional protocols, such as temperature checks and symptom screenings. They reported that being able to meet with youth in person has helped with engagement. Other grantees have adapted their programs to continue offering some in-person engagement while reducing exposure. For example, one reported taking youth on walks to have one-on-one check-ins; another described planning a prosocial outing to an outdoor location with three family units using their own cars so everyone could be transported safely. Additionally, one

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[17] During the focus groups, grantees shared resources for virtual activities and online games, such as Family Feud and at-home art activities.

grantee has opened a homework help center with social distance measures in place, including plastic separation panes and limited capacity. Most grantees have not been able to transport youth in their vehicles, or they can only transport a few individuals at a time, and this has restricted their ability to offer services.

Street Outreach/Intervention

Throughout SIP, Street Outreach/Intervention grantees continued to conduct climate checks and in-person, socially distanced, masked check-ins with youth in the community. During the first few weeks, grantees used Zoom, FaceTime, and the phone to reach out to clients, but as soon as they confirmed with county regulations that they were essential workers and guidelines were issued, they went back out into the community. Early in the pandemic, they focused on educating youth and their families about the dangers of COVID-19 and how they could protect themselves.

All Street Outreach/Intervention grantees implemented health screenings before they conducted services; they also provided PPE for staff and clients (e.g., masks and gloves), maintained social distance during meetings with youth, met outdoors as much as possible, and shifted group activities to one-on-one activities. Also, they reported focusing on youth who were in the highest category of risk, for example those just released from juvenile detention or in precarious housing situations. Grantee staff noted that providing PPE to the youth they serve was important to building trust and relationships. According to one staff member, "not being able to make physical contact or having to wear masks was off-putting for clients, so giving PPE to them helped put us on a level playing field."

> *"The reality is, gang members have been hanging out on the street this whole time, but when services stop or pause, the need is still there. Kids are going to continue to hang out regardless."*
> -BEST Grantee Staff

Grantee staff who routinely conduct street outreach shared that it was challenging to provide services safely, especially when working with populations at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. And early in the pandemic there were shortages of PPE, which prevented service delivery. In addition, staff reported that homelessness and poverty increased among the families they serve, which they believed was associated with more mental health challenges, increased use of drugs and alcohol, and increased gang recruitment.

Discontinued Services

Some services could not be adapted to the new environment, such as late-night gym services or full-scale field trips, because they require too much close contact or use of indoor spaces. Grantee staff expressed the hope that these activities would restart as restrictions were lifted.

Collaboration and Communication

For the most part, grantee staff shared that they continued to collaborate with the same community organizations, though the amount of collaboration had increased with food banks and anti-hunger organizations, such as Second Harvest. Grantees worked closely with schools to ensure youth had access to services during distance learning. Again, grantees emphasized that some school staff and school buildings were easier to work with than others. A few grantees expressed having difficulty working with schools early in the pandemic, as they were slower to transition to virtual service delivery and were prioritizing remote learning. Challenges with communication extended to other partners as well. For example, one grantee noted that it took longer to schedule virtual meetings, and issues were not resolved as quickly as they were when in-person meetings were possible.

Self-Care and Well-Being in Stressful Times

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and SIP, several grantees identified the importance of increasingly centering their program focus on the mental health and well-being of participants, families, and staff. Several staff noted that youth were feeling overwhelmed and stressed given their new role as caretakers for younger siblings, because they were working full- or part-time jobs to support their families, and/or because they were managing their own responsibilities as students. Programs pivoted to focus more on reducing anxiety and depression to keep youth from turning to substance use or isolating from their social networks. Additionally, parents had become more aware of their children's emotional well-being and were more likely to ask for support and access to services like family or group therapy. One grantee noted that this "opens up more doors for family support."

PRNS administrators and grantee program staff supervisors also recognized the importance of self-care for the larger community, including direct service providers. One grantee described how staff acknowledged that they were experiencing the same world events as their participants—"everybody is in this together"—which helped them stay grounded in their work and continue to show up for their communities. Another staff member recounted how they had to prioritize which parts of a program to keep after shortening its duration from 12 weeks to 8 weeks because of the pandemic: "We have had to pick out the most important parts to retain…That has changed the program and how we present it." Programs that were performance-based or centered around a long-term project, like a concert, have had to change what success in the program looks like for participants; they are reimagining how participants can demonstrate their newfound skills and expertise.

Other grantees had not changed their services but had modified their intensity or frequency. For example, one held shorter and more frequent case management meetings with participants after moving to remote services. Staff acknowledged the difficulty of meeting clients' needs in the rapidly changing environment, and that trying to stay the course during the pandemic was "a tall order in some areas."

"We are giving ourselves grace because we are not sure how much we can hit [those goals]."
-BEST Grantee Staff

BEST administrative staff acknowledged that they too were experiencing the stresses of the situation. At times, this affected their ability to support agencies as they coped with these stresses in their own lives. "Everyone is just trying to get through the day, and it makes it hard to develop new projects and adapt."

Summary

The difficult conditions during the last 6 months of PY 2019–2020 significantly impacted service delivery and required grantees to innovate services to meet the changing conditions. Some grantees provided emergency services, and most pivoted to ensuring that the youth and families they served had basic needs met, such as food, shelter, and personal protective equipment. Some grantees found that switching to virtual services was time-intensive—especially distributing materials to youth at their homes—potentially causing higher costs for delivering the same or fewer UOS.

VI. Participant Outcomes Analysis

The main goal of the outcomes study was to understand how the outcomes of individual participants changed over time in relation to their involvement in BEST. Consistent with the program's theory of change, the evaluation examined a range of psychosocial outcomes. While the outcomes study was initially designed to provide both an analysis of educational and criminal justice system outcomes and a more detailed understanding of how service delivery strategies may have been associated with different outcomes, the limited number of individuals for whom these outcomes data were available made this aspect of the design infeasible.

Key Findings

- **Youth participants showed modest levels of improvement during their time in the BEST program on some psychosocial measures, such as problem solving and self-confidence.**

- **BEST participants were generally satisfied with the services they received through the program, with youth (ages 14–24) having somewhat higher levels of satisfaction than children (ages 7–13).**

  o Youth appeared to be particularly satisfied with the way they were treated by program staff in terms of their general caring attitude, their ability to communicate with youth in their own language, and their ability to understand their culture.

  o Children identified their program as a safe environment, perceived program staff as flexible and willing to accommodate their specific situations, and indicated being interested in the things they did while in the program.

Participant Survey Data Used in the Outcomes Study

The data used in the outcomes study came from participant surveys, which were administered by BEST grantees for the first time at the beginning of the program year.[18] Throughout PY 2019–2020, grantees administered one of three different surveys, with questions that were customized for different ages and respondent categories: children (ages 7–13), youth (ages 14–24), and parents who participated in BEST parenting strategies. These surveys were intended to

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[18] While additional administrative data were gathered for the outcomes study, they were not used due to small sample sizes. The challenges associated with these data and the reasons for excluding them are discussed at the end of this chapter.

measure the satisfaction of participants and their families with the program as well as their psychosocial outcomes (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy). Grantees administered three rounds of surveys: September–December 2019, January–May 2020, and June–August 2020. This effort resulted in 133 completed child surveys and 394 completed youth surveys. The evaluation team did not report findings on parent surveys due to the small sample size (*n*=5).

After the evaluation team compared the structure of the respondent sample with the structure of the BEST program participants overall, several imbalances were noted. Some of the more notable differences were:

- Survey respondents represented 12 grantees, compared to the 15 grantees analyzed in the implementation study.

- Some grantees' survey contribution was out of proportion to their participants as a percentage of the overall BEST population.

- The demographic profiles of individual grantees' survey respondents did not match their overall participants.

- The survey sample demographics overall did not match the program participants as a whole.

These imbalances are typical for social science surveys. To account for them, the evaluation team weighted the data (by constructing poststratification weights) and used these weighted data in all the analyses presented in this chapter.[19]

Analytical Approach

Our analytical approach included two main strategies: an analysis of pre–post differences in outcomes and an analysis of participant satisfaction with the program. The pre–post analysis aimed to assess whether participants experienced improvements in psychosocial outcomes. In contrast, other survey items asked participants' opinions about BEST or some aspect of program operations. Because BEST participants cannot have an opinion about program services until they have had a chance to experience them, pre–post analysis for these types of outcomes is not possible. Instead, the analysis of these survey items shows only the distribution of responses overall and by major sociodemographic subgroups.

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[19] Without weighting, all sample members have the same "importance." Weighting changes this, so that a respondent may "count" as more or less than one depending on whether a category the respondent represents (such as age, gender, group, or ethnicity) is underrepresented or overrepresented in the sample. The process is repeated for multiple categories until the sample distribution of all the weighting variables is identical to the population. Appendix C offers additional details about imbalances and weighting procedures.

Analyzing differences between BEST participants' outcomes after they have experienced the program compared to before they entered the program (or at the start) is a potential indicator of whether the program reaches its desired outcomes (otherwise known as program effectiveness). Although this analysis does not control for factors other than program participation that might influence pre–post differences in outcomes, and therefore cannot determine whether participation in the program alone caused participants to have positive or negative outcomes after participation, it can still be used to assess whether the program reached its intended outcomes for individual participants.

To measure changes in outcomes over time using surveys, the ideal approach would be to survey the same participants at enrollment and then at subsequent intervals during (and perhaps even after) program participation. However, due to concerns that consent for such an approach might have acted as a deterrent to participate in the survey, and because grantees had limited software and financial resources for tracking participants, the evaluation team designed the survey to be administered anonymously; it was administered at various points in time, with an added question about length of time in the program at the time of the survey.[20]

Survey respondents who indicated that they had been in the program for less than a month were considered "baseline participants" (given their limited experience with the program), and their answers were used to estimate "pre" program outcomes. Respondents who had been in the program longer than this were considered "established participants," and their answers were used to estimate "post" program outcomes.

Because this approach does not measure changes within individual participants, but between two distinct groups of participants, pre–post estimates could be influenced by differences in the characteristics of each group. Differences between the two groups in observable sociodemographic characteristics were, in fact, relatively small, which makes the two groups comparable.[21] After considering the advantages and disadvantages, the evaluation team decided this design could estimate the difference on these items between those who have been in the program compared to those who have not. The proportion of survey respondents by length of participation in the program is shown in Exhibit VI-1[22].

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[20]   The anonymous nature of the participant surveys meant that respondents could not be matched with BEST program data containing service dosage for program participants. Therefore, an estimation of the correlation between service dosage and pre–post outcome changes could not be conducted.

[21]   It must be noted, however, that there could be differences in characteristics that were not measured.

[22]   The small percentage of baseline respondents among the total number of respondents (which was itself small) means that our estimations of pre-post differences in outcomes were not as precise as they could have been. Small sample sizes can increase the likelihood of Type II errors, which occur when we are failing to observe a difference when in truth there is one. Larger sample sizes decrease the likelihood of Type II errors.

Exhibit VI-1: Distribution of BEST Participants by Length of Participation (PY 2019–2020)

Length of Participation	Youth Survey	Child Survey
Less than a month (Baseline Participants)	17.7%	12.9%
A month or more (Established Participants)	82.4%	87.1%

Source: BEST participant surveys

Note: Results are weighted to adjust for differences between survey takers and BEST participants.

Pre–Post Analysis of Psychosocial Outcomes

The evaluation examined changes in participant psychosocial outcomes, including self-confidence, decision making, listening skills, and problem-solving skills. In particular, the analysis includes a series of comparisons between the average psychosocial outcome scores of baseline and established program participants. Exhibit VI-2 presents the findings for the youth survey. All survey items were measured using a Likert scale with values ranging from 1 to 5.

Exhibit VI-2: Psychosocial Outcomes for BEST Youth Participants, Ages 14–24 (PY 2019–2020)

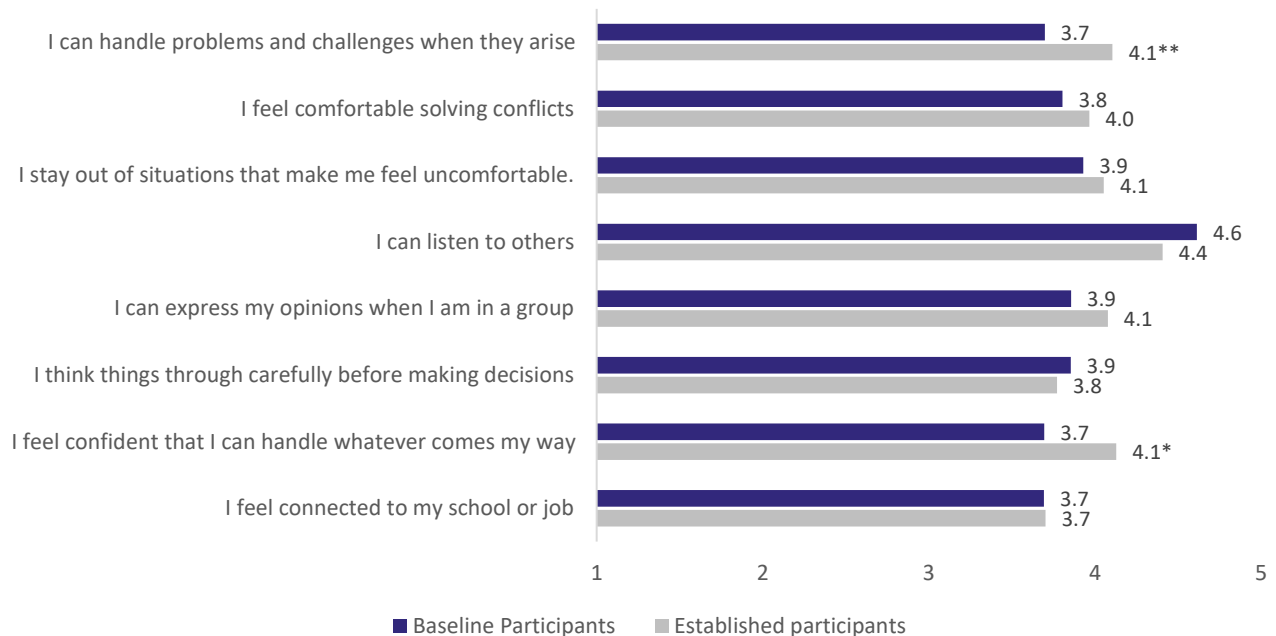*Source*: BEST participant surveys

Note: Results are weighted to adjust for differences between survey takers and BEST participants.

 * Statistically significant at 90%; ** Statistically significant at 95%; *** Statistically significant at 99%

For most survey items, the average scores of established youth participants were higher than those of baseline participants; for two of these items, these differences were statistically significant. [23] These results suggest that youth program participants may experience improvement on some psychosocial outcomes as they go through the program.

Subgroup analysis (Exhibit VI-3) suggests that there were some pre–post differences by subgroup. Among young men, the average scores of established program participants were higher than those of baseline participants for all psychosocial outcomes. For young women, there was a more mixed picture, with both positive and negative pre–post differences, including statistically significant ones for each.[24] For young men, the largest pre–post increase was in their perceived ability to handle problems and challenges; for young women, the largest positive increase was in self-confidence.

Due to the small sample size and the large proportion of Latinx respondents, all the non-Latinx respondents (who were mostly Black/African American and Asian) had to be grouped together. Therefore, it was not possible to conduct a full subgroup analysis by race and ethnicity. These subgroup findings suggest that for both racial/ethnic subgroups, established program participants had higher psychosocial outcomes. However, non-Latinx program participants appeared to experience greater benefits from participation, mostly because of their lower baseline outcomes.

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[23]   All survey items were measured using a Likert scale with 5 categories ranging from 1 to 5.

[24]   Given the small number of gender non-binary individuals in the sample, these respondents were excluded from the analysis to protect their confidentiality.

Exhibit VI-3: Psychosocial Outcomes for BEST Youth Participants, Ages 14–24, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity (PY 2019–2020)

Young Men

Statement	Baseline Participants	Established participants
I can handle problems and challenges when they arise	3.7	4.2*
I feel comfortable solving conflicts	3.9	4.1
I stay out of situations that make me feel uncomfortable	3.9	4.1
I can listen to others	4.2	4.4
I can express my opinions when I am in a group	3.9	4.2
I think things through carefully before making decisions	3.6	3.8
I feel confident that I can handle whatever comes my way	4.3	4.3
I feel connected to my school or job	3.7	3.9

Young Women

Statement	Baseline Participants	Established participants
I can handle problems and challenges when they arise	3.7	4.0
I feel comfortable solving conflicts	3.8	3.8
I stay out of situations that make me feel uncomfortable	3.9	4.0
I can listen to others	4.7	4.4**
I can express my opinions when I am in a group	3.9	4.0
I think things through carefully before making decisions	3.9	3.7
I feel confident that I can handle whatever comes my way	3.5	4.0*
I feel connected to my school or job	3.7	3.6

Latinx

Statement	Baseline Participants	Established participants
I can handle problems and challenges when they arise	3.9	4.2
I feel comfortable solving conflicts	4.0	4.0
I stay out of situations that make me feel uncomfortable	3.9	4.1
I can listen to others	4.6	4.4
I can express my opinions when I am in a group	4.2	4.0
I think things through carefully before making decisions	3.7	3.8
I feel confident that I can handle whatever comes my way	4.0	4.1
I feel connected to my school or job	3.7	3.7

Non-Latinx

Statement	Baseline Participants	Established participants
I can handle problems and challenges when they arise	3.4	4.0**
I feel comfortable solving conflicts	3.5	3.8
I stay out of situations that make me feel uncomfortable	4.0	4.0
I can listen to others	4.6	4.4
I can express my opinions when I am in a group	3.4	4.2***
I think things through carefully before making decisions	4.1	3.7
I feel confident that I can handle whatever comes my way	3.4	4.1*
I feel connected to my school or job	3.7	3.7

■ Baseline Participants   ■ Established participants

The findings from the child survey (Exhibit VI-4) reveal a somewhat different picture compared to the youth survey. For many of the measures, established program participants have lower average scores compared to those at baseline. However, these differences are very small and not statistically significant. Notably, the only statistically significant result is a decrease in listening skills. Whereas this could signify that listening skills are a potential area for improvement, it could also be the result of participants' increased awareness of the importance of listening as a skill and the considerable level of difficulty in mastering this skill.

It does appear, however, that the program might be associated with an increase in children's ability to rely on a supportive adult. This increase is of the same magnitude as the significant estimate discussed above, although it is not itself statistically significant—likely because of the small size of the sample. In the future, larger samples might provide more precise estimates of pre–post differences in outcomes, allowing for more nuanced analysis.

Exhibit VI-4: Psychosocial Outcomes for BEST Child Participants, Ages 7–13 (PY 2019–2020)
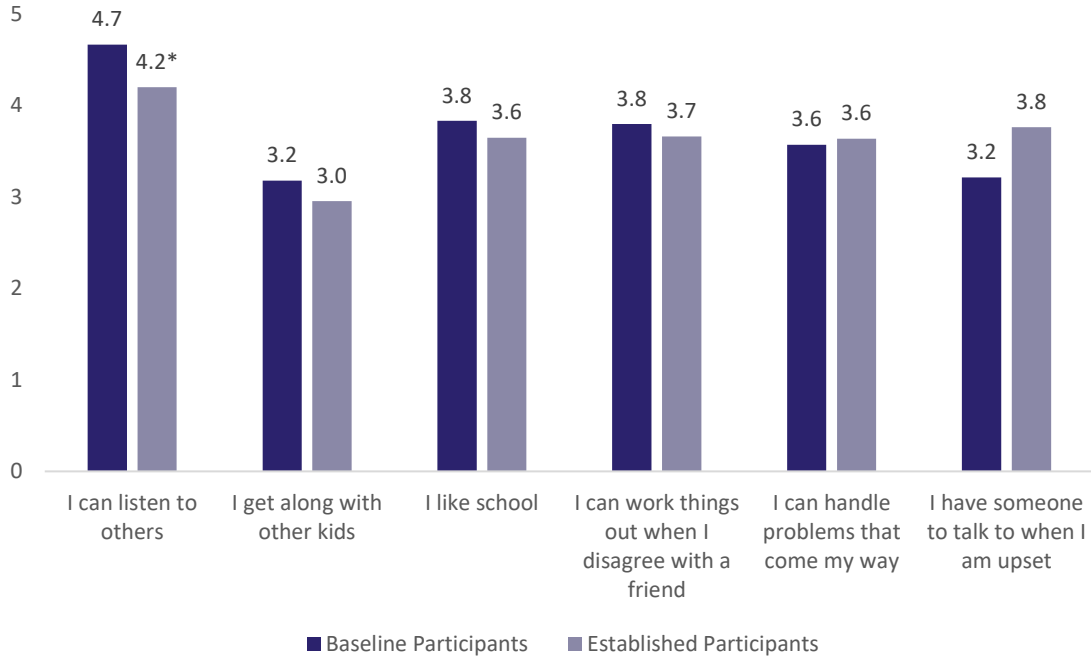
Source: BEST participant surveys

Note: Results are weighted to adjust for differences between survey takers and BEST participants.

 * Statistically significant at 90%; ** Statistically significant at 95%; *** Statistically significant at 99%

Satisfaction With the Program

Measuring satisfaction with BEST services is important for understanding this key outcome for program participants, and it is also useful for PRNS and grantees in assessing the need for program improvements. Accordingly, the surveys included multiple questions that aimed to measure participants' satisfaction with BEST.
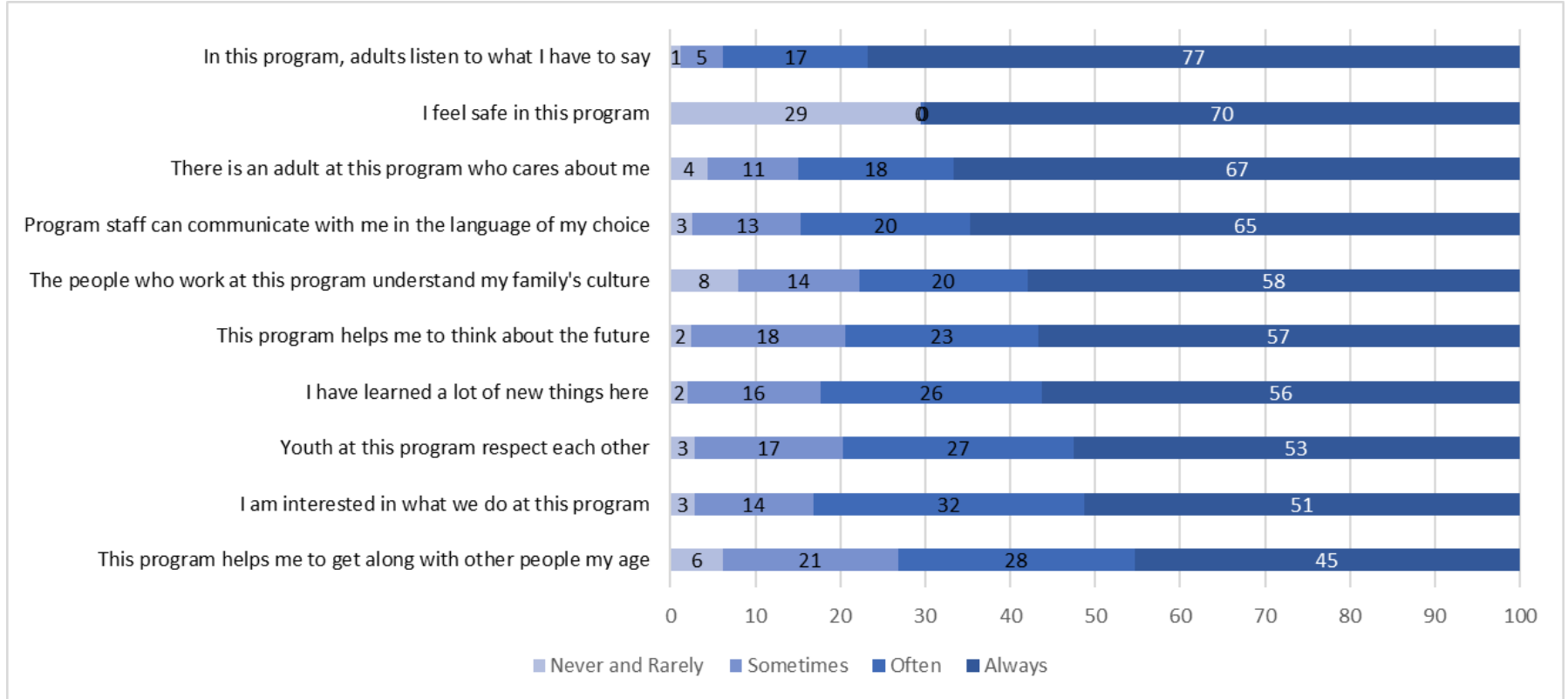
The results from the youth survey, displayed in Exhibit VI-5, suggest that, overall, satisfaction with the program among youth was quite strong: A large majority of respondents answered "often" or "always" to most of the survey questions. Respondents appeared to be particularly satisfied with how they were treated by program staff in terms of their general caring attitude, their ability to communicate in the youths' own language, and their ability to understand youths' cultures. This is consistent with focus group data that SPR staff gathered in previous program years.

It is interesting that, along with the high levels of positive responses to the survey item "I feel safe in this program," there was a significant proportion of negative assessments ("never or rarely") for the same item. This combination of high positive and negative ratings suggests that the evaluation team should assess this question for reliability and potentially make changes. It could also indicate variability in respondents' risk levels that PRNS may want to explore further. As discussed in the final chapter, adding a risk assessment tool to the participant data might allow for further analysis of different subgroups participating in BEST programs.

While the satisfaction ratings were also high in the child survey, they were somewhat lower than in the youth survey (Exhibit VI-6). Children identified their program as a safe environment, perceived program staff as flexible and willing to accommodate their specific situations, and said they were interested in the things they did while in the program.

One of the aspects that received somewhat lower ratings (although it was by no means low) was the program's ability to create an environment supportive of collaboration among children. This is illustrated by the distributions of responses to the following items: "Since being in this program, I work better on a team"; "Kids here respect each other"; and "This program helps me get along with other kids."
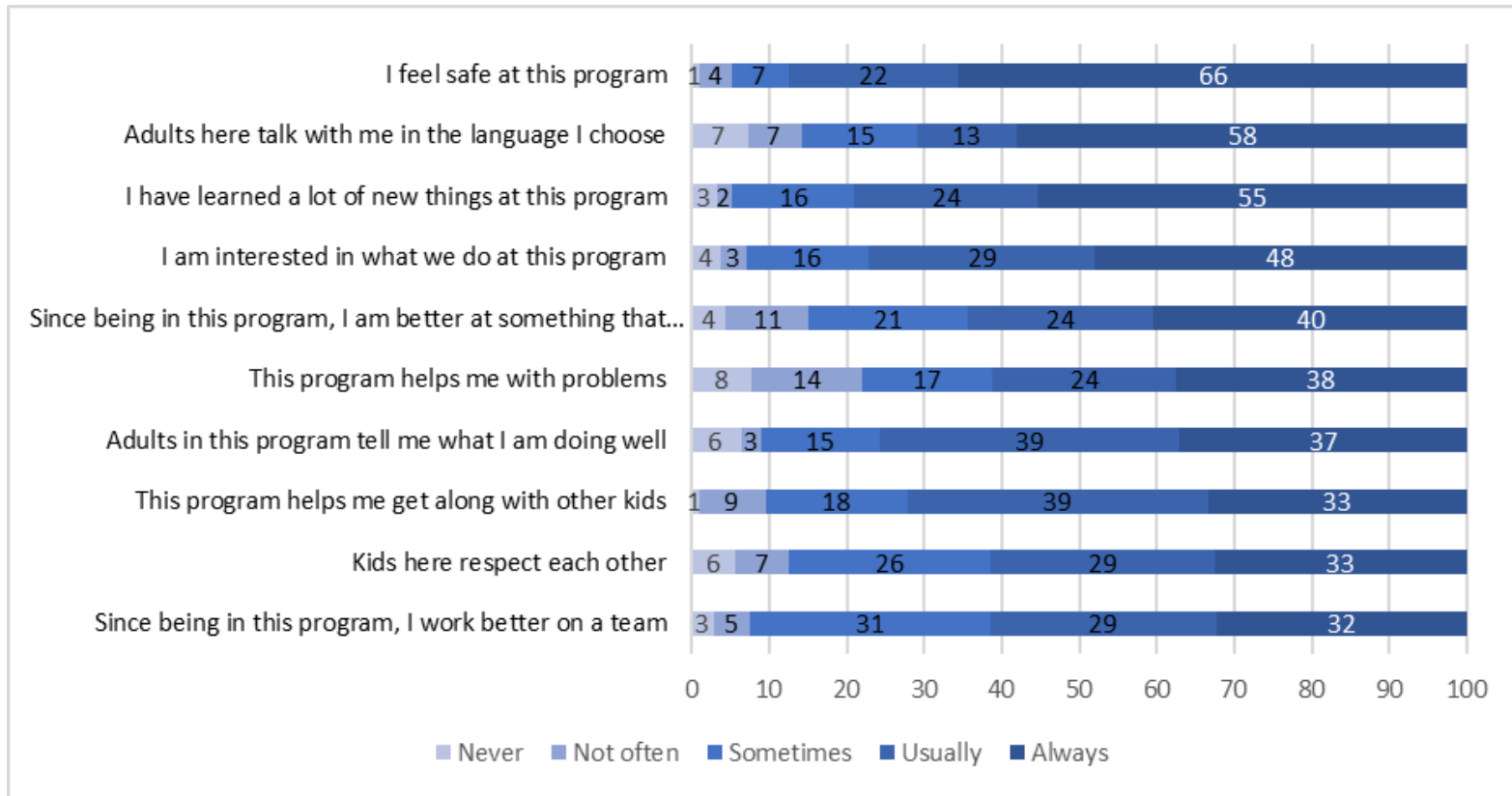
Exhibit VI-5: Satisfaction with BEST Program (PY2019-2020) for Youth Participants, Ages 14–24 (Percent)

	Never and Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
In this program, adults listen to what I have to say	1	5	17	77
I feel safe in this program	29		0	70
There is an adult at this program who cares about me	4	11	18	67
Program staff can communicate with me in the language of my choice	3	13	20	65
The people who work at this program understand my family's culture	8	14	20	58
This program helps me to think about the future	2	18	23	57
I have learned a lot of new things here	2	16	26	56
Youth at this program respect each other	3	17	27	53
I am interested in what we do at this program	3	14	32	51
This program helps me to get along with other people my age	6	21	28	45

Source: BEST youth surveys

Note: Results are weighted to adjust for differences between survey respondents and BEST participants overall.

Exhibit VI-6: Satisfaction with BEST Program (PY 2019–2020) for Child Participants, Ages 7–13 (Percent)

	Never	Not often	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I feel safe at this program	1	4	7	22	66
Adults here talk with me in the language I choose	7	7	15	13	58
I have learned a lot of new things at this program	3	2	16	24	55
I am interested in what we do at this program	4	3	16	29	48
Since being in this program, I am better at something that…	4	11	21	24	40
This program helps me with problems		8	14	17	24	38
Adults in this program tell me what I am doing well	6	3	15	39	37
This program helps me get along with other kids	1	9	18	39	33
Kids here respect each other	6	7	26	29	33
Since being in this program, I work better on a team	3	5	31	29	32

Source: BEST participant surveys

Note: Results are weighted to adjust for differences between survey respondents and BEST participants overall.

Administrative Data Analysis

As noted in the introduction, the original design for the outcomes study included additional analysis of other types of participant outcomes identified in the BEST program's theory of change, including those related to education and criminal justice. As a part of the outcomes study, the evaluation team obtained administrative records from two school districts serving BEST participants (including attendance, completion, and disciplinary records) and from SJPD, including arrest records. Because of the potentially sensitive nature of these data, and given that there is currently no data-sharing arrangement at the agency level between PRNS and school districts or SJPD that would facilitate data transfer, SPR established a method by which individual participants were asked to provide consent to allow SPR to obtain these administrative data on their behalf.

The SPR evaluation team put multiple measures in place to support administration and collection of informed consent. These included obtaining institutional review board approval for these procedures to ensure that they were designed to protect evaluation participants, and providing group training sessions and individual technical assistance to each grantee to assure staff and participants of the overall safety of consenting to provide access to these data. Despite these measures, some grantees expressed that their staff and participants were not comfortable giving access to individual data that they were concerned could be relevant to court or immigration proceedings.

For these reasons, and possibly for other reasons related to the complexity of the informed consent process itself, this effort resulted in very few completed consent forms. For this report, the evaluation team relied on 178 participants with completed consent forms, of whom 31 opted not to have their criminal justice data shared. This resulted in a sample of only 147 participants for the analysis of criminal justice outcomes. Only eight grantees submitted participant consents, with a majority from just a few of those grantees. This is likely a reflection of the concerns they had expressed about the safety of sharing these data.

An additional complexity for obtaining educational outcomes data is that there are 17 school districts that serve San José but no local central repository where data from all of them can be accessed.[25] Given the challenge involved in executing data-sharing agreements with all 17 districts, the evaluation team focused on two districts with the largest proportion of BEST participants—Alum Rock Union School District and East Side Union High School District. After

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[25] While the Silicon Valley Regional Data Trust is working on becoming such a central repository for education data, it does not currently have the data necessary for this analysis; in addition, the evaluation team was denied access to California Department of Education data because the department does not accept requests from for-profit companies—only public agencies and nonprofit corporations.

obtaining data from these districts, however, SPR could match only 45 participants (from six grantees) with consent forms to the school records. In some cases, participants clearly attended other schools; or, due to the wide-ranging ages of BEST participants, many were simply not likely to have been in school during the 4-year window of observation outlined in the consent form.

The evaluation team weighted the results from administrative outcomes data to account for imbalances between the sample of participants with completed consent forms and the BEST participant population from the specific grantees that provided data. Nevertheless, the resulting analysis was based on very small samples and were too inconclusive to consider.

Summary

Overall, the outcomes study suggests that BEST participants were generally satisfied with the program and that program participation might be associated with improvements in psychosocial outcomes, particularly around self-confidence and problem solving for youth (ages 14 and above). Given low participation rates in the survey, these findings should be considered exploratory and confirm the need to improve survey response rates.

Together with the findings from SPR's previous impact study—which found decreases in youth arrests and gang-related incidents in parts of San José associated with greater levels of BEST services—there is some evidence that positive changes in BEST participants are associated with program participation (Geckeler et al., 2019).

Possibly the most important finding from the outcomes study—and a topic taken up in greater detail in Chapter VII—is that the program has several ways in which it can improve with respect to evaluation readiness. The evaluation team can consider making changes in existing tools and suggest some different approaches to overall design, but one of the most straightforward ways to improve the strength of the evaluation would be to increase the number of surveys and consent forms that participants complete. Doing so will make it possible to take better advantage of available education and criminal justice data and to improve the likelihood that the evaluation team can detect any differences in outcomes over time through analysis of either survey or administrative data.

VII. Summary and Recommendations

This report detailed the ways in which grantees implemented BEST services during PY 2019–2020 and the ways in which participants experienced positive changes over the course of being in the program. This concluding chapter summarizes these findings, identifies ongoing challenges around the evaluation of the BEST program, and provides recommendations to improve future program monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Unprecedented Challenges in PY 2019–2020

PY 2019–2020 was an exceptionally difficult year for BEST grantees and their participants. Most prominent were the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and its related SIP and social distancing rules for service delivery, starting in March 2020 and continuing well past the end of PY 2019–2020. Schools closed, affecting how many youth were able to connect with BEST programs and where the programs operated. Also, many community locations where programs operated also had to close. As a result, programs had to adjust their services (meeting remotely or providing in-person, socially distanced services), consider new ways to connect and meet with youth not reliant on schools, and cancel any group activities, such as group meetings, late-night gym services, and prosocial outings.

San José also faced other emergency conditions, including unrest related to national incidents of racial injustice as well as wildfires, which further forced people indoors during periods of high temperatures. All of this further impeded grantees' ability to identify and meet with youth. Also, grantee staff observed how these conditions led to additional psychological concerns among participants and staff and how conditions at home and in participant communities were worsening. Primarily due to the pandemic, many City of San José and Santa Clara County staff were shifted to providing emergency services and away from their regular duties, thus lessening the support they were able to provide to grantees, particularly early in the pandemic.

BEST Grantees Adapted Their Approaches

Overall, BEST grantees adapted to these emergency conditions in the following ways:

- **By adapting how they first identified and then worked with youth, increasingly serving youth remotely or in socially distanced ways.** This resulted in fewer activities than had traditionally been offered and more work on the part of staff to set up new ways to interact with youth.

- **By responding to increased stress, anxiety, and depression related to emergency conditions through services and assistance focused on mental health, well-being, and self-care.** As a result, some programs offered less intensive but more frequent services

to allow more regular check-ins with participants, or they shifted expectations of youth and their approach to services, helping youth and staff see how they were working to get through these challenges together.

- **By providing emergency services, such as food and household supply deliveries or laundry services, and activity kits later used during remote services.** Grantees used these services as a way to maintain contact with existing participants as well as to recruit new participants.

While grantees were able to adapt, and they have taken these lessons with them into PY 2020–2021 as the pandemic continues, their work in PY 2019–2020 represented a considerable investment in midstream redesign. Grantees developed new ways of interacting with youth and identified new ways to locate and recruit participants. They innovated ways to keep youth engaged when services were less intense or did not provide the privacy, security, and direct face-to-face opportunities they had previously relied upon. In summary, grantees had to overhaul how they operated in a very short time frame, while still maintaining their obligation to meet their BEST contracts.

BEST Grantees Successfully Implemented Planned Services

Given these considerable disruptions and changes, it is notable that grantees were able to implement their programs mostly as planned, achieving their contracted service goals and maintaining enrollment numbers and levels of service delivery for the year.

- **Grantees fell only slightly short of their UOS goals.** Grantees provided 94 percent of the projected number of UOS (101,154 of 107,554), surpassing their projected UOS in most eligible service areas (Emergency Services, Street Outreach/Intervention, Vocational/Job Training, and Case Management), but achieving less than the expected goal in the others (Personal Transformation and Parent Awareness/Training).

- **Grantees expended their funding as planned.** BEST grant funding and matched funding increased in PY 2019–2020 compared to the previous program year, and grantees generally expended these funds as planned, despite major disruptions in services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Grantees were able to serve about the same number of participants they typically had in prior years.** During PY 2019–2020, BEST grantees served 3,229 children, youth, and parents in BEST-funded programs, with participants enrolled from across San José.

Survey Data Suggest Positive Outcomes

Another notable finding for this program year came from the analysis of participant survey data, which examined both participant satisfaction with the program and improvements over

time in psychosocial outcomes. While PY 2019–2020 was an unusual year, many of these data came from before the pandemic and shutdown orders hit in March 2020. Thus, they give us a view of the program as it normally operates. The outcomes study found that:

- BEST participants were generally satisfied with the services they received through the program, with older youth having somewhat higher levels of satisfaction than younger youth participants.

- BEST participants that had been enrolled in the program for longer periods tended to have higher outcomes on some psychosocial measures, including in the areas of problem solving and self-confidence, as compared to those who were just recently enrolled.

While these findings are far from conclusive—due to the relatively small number of responses and having to use different groups for the pre- post-test comparisons, which makes it harder to detect changes in outcomes that might be associated with program participation—they do suggest a positive association between program participation and psychosocial outcomes. This helps to address how the program is living up to its theory of change, outlined in Chapter I. Taken together with the findings of SPR's impact study, which found an association between the delivery of program services and a decrease in arrests and incidents within specified areas San José (Geckeler et al., 2019), we have an even more complete understanding of the ways the BEST program theory of change is being addressed, even as further research along these lines is still warranted.

Challenges Associated With BEST Program Evaluation

As discussed elsewhere, PY 2019–2020 was a highly unusual year for BEST due to the disruptions and program adaptations that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergency conditions. Given that these disruptions and adapted program models have become normalized for PY 2020–2021, any evaluation efforts in PY 2020–2021 will have to take these changes into consideration. The BEST program will not begin to return to normal until at least PY 2021–2022, and only then will evaluation efforts examine the program as it was fully intended to operate.

That said, based on the program implementation analysis in this report, data collected prior to the start of pandemic conditions, and evaluation findings in prior years, the factors below speak to the evaluation of the program and could inform future program and evaluation decisions.

Current Grantee Data Collection is Suboptimal

Grantee data are collected using Excel workbooks. This process is slow and prone to errors (both formatting and version control errors) and requires a separate step to transfer.

Furthermore, the review process takes additional time, corrections require resubmission of files, and data are stored in multiple files.

Internally, these data largely track accomplishments through summary-level data in the form of UOS. The UOS design establishes a uniform measure across grantees and is a useful way to monitor the completion of service delivery goals for contracting purposes. However, this measure of program output is less than optimal. First, it does not allow for the examination of different types of services within a given eligible service area to better observe and understand both the types and dosages of services being delivered. Second, using a formula computed by grantees creates the opportunity for mistakes. If all grantees entered individual-level service data into a case management information system, all computations of service delivery could be conducted automatically, and these could be more easily examined by PRNS and program evaluators.

Grantees Have Limited Resources for Program Reporting

While some grantees have established data-tracking systems and administrative capacity, many do not. Grantees regularly voice concerns in interviews and focus groups about the administrative burden of tracking and recording participant data in multiple systems for multiple funders. While data collection is required for a well-managed program, it ideally would not be an excessive burden to service providers.

During PY 2019–2020, PRNS piloted an approach to collecting individual-level participant data; due to implementation challenges and the decentralized manner of data collection involved, however, PRNS ended up having to engage in duplicate data tracking to ensure that the contracted UOS measures could still be gathered. The piloted system attempted to address some of the gaps identified above but introduced new issues—both inefficient data processing mechanisms and increased burden on grantees. An ideal system would minimize this additional layer of work while improving the analytic and reporting capacity of PRNS and BEST.

The Program Would Benefit From Additional Assessment of Youth Risk

While BEST seeks to categorize youth into various risk levels, as a recent auditor's report noted, there is no formal mechanism for classifying youth and thereby identifying their needs so that they can be formally addressed (Office of the City Auditor, 2019). Some programs use their own risk and needs assessment tools, but there is no program-wide tool or risk-level standard, making it difficult for grantees to uniformly assess BEST participants' levels of risk. Without this information, it is difficult to accurately link participants with the types of services that best address their needs and thus help them reach the program's desired outcomes. The use of a standard assessment tool at key points in time may would provide more accurate measures of gains in youth development and fulfillment of participants' needs.

Survey and Consent Participation is Low

As discussed in Chapter VI, take-up rates were low for the participant survey and for consent to access education and criminal justice data. While the levels of survey participation were high enough to allow for some degree of analysis, the evaluation team urges caution in interpreting these findings; larger numbers may allow for the observation of statistically significant changes in outcomes not currently observed due to small numbers. Likewise, the low numbers of participants providing consent means that any analysis of education or criminal justice outcomes data was too inconclusive to report. While the new findings in this report certainly provide reasons for optimism, additional individual-level data analysis could show a more definitive association between program services and each outcome of interest. Clearly, the evaluation would greatly benefit from an increase in response rates for both surveys and consent.

Recommendations for Future Program Planning and Evaluations

Considering the above challenges, the evaluation team offers four recommendations to improve the program's ability to monitor, manage, and support grantees and to improve the overall evaluation of the program.

Implement a Case Management Information System

A case management information system (such as Efforts to Outcomes or Apricot), already under consideration by PRNS, could substantially improve the BEST grantee data collection efforts. Purchase and design of such a tool would allow grantees and PRNS to track individual-level participant data, thus providing the greatest degree of freedom around how program data are analyzed. Through the development of standard reports, the City of San José and grantees could more easily monitor grantee contract compliance and program service delivery in real time, allowing more prompt delivery of City-level grantee support. The increased standardization of service data would allow evaluators to conduct more detailed analyses of services, looking for trends across program outputs and ideally linking these output data to program outcomes.

This system should be accompanied by a sufficient level of technical staff support. This will help ensure that data management and analysis can occur while program monitoring staff remain free to work closely with program staff on contract and implementation issues. Likewise, this will allow program monitor staff to specialize in program content while also being able to request and access data reports from staff with the technical expertise to fully use the data management system. Ultimately, such a system would benefit all involved by making it easier to monitor grantee data collection and analyze program outputs. Furthermore, this system would also be useable by and easily customizable for PRNS's Youth Intervention Services programs.

Introduce a Risk/Needs Assessment Tool

Ideally, PRNS would adopt one of the many validated tools that assess risk and protective factors for youth and young adults; this could be administered by a wide range of program staff. Such a tool would help identify the wide-ranging needs of participants and drive the service delivery plan. Also, the assessment tool could track improvements in youth outcomes over time. The costs associated with this purchase and/or with training staff in using the tool could be substantial. Moreover, it could prove challenging to identify the tool that best serves the wide range of ages and perceived risk levels of individuals in BEST programs; indeed, doing so might require multiple tools. Nevertheless, under advisement from the Office of the City Auditor, PRNS is currently exploring the identification and implementation of such a tool, so this recommendation is already being addressed.

Consider Alternative Means of Gathering Administrative Data

Given the limited success in obtaining participant consent, the City of San José may wish to explore alternative options for collecting education and/or criminal justice system outcomes data. There are several options available, each with different costs and levels of administrative effort. For example, the evaluation team could develop a more extensive participant survey. Another option would be for the City of San José to create data-sharing agreements with the other relevant agencies that house these data (or modifying the service-delivery agreements PRNS already has with these agencies), thus allowing evaluators to examine fully linked, de-identified data. This would create a more streamlined consent process for participants with the City rather than having it conducted through a third-party evaluator. SPR will further explore these options with PRNS as part of its work for the PY 2020–2021 evaluation.

Improve Participant Survey and Consent Completion Rates

While adopting any or all the above recommendations may modify the need for either participant surveys or consent forms as currently used by the evaluation, these recommendations will likely take some time to fully implement and integrate into program operations. In the meantime, additional efforts are needed to increase the completion of participant surveys and consent, as these are the best current means for assessing participant-level outcomes of interest.

Overall, the evaluation team has taken several steps to try to increase this response rate, including providing training and tools to grantees, ensuring third-party oversight of all evaluation procedures to reinforce how participant information is protected, explaining the security measures taken around efforts to protect participant information, making the survey anonymous to protect participant information, and providing ongoing evaluation team support to grantees engaged in these efforts.

SPR conducted initial listening sessions to hear grantee concerns about these procedures after first introducing the consent form in PY 2018–2019 and subsequently modified the forms and tools. Going into PY 2020–2021, SPR has further modified these practices for grantees, including providing additional support from evaluation team members and new, online methods for collecting forms. SPR will continue to work with PRNS and grantees to try to increase response rates around survey and consent forms over the next year and will continue to assess the right approaches as other recommendations are implemented.

Concluding Thoughts

SPR became the contracted BEST evaluator starting with PY 2017–2018, after more than two decades of BEST program operation. Since then, the program has undergone considerable self-reflection and analysis, including formalizing a theory of change and engaging in multiple efforts to gather new kinds of data on program participation and outcomes. Together, these new frameworks and data have been used to better understand how the program operates, how it has changed over the years, and what associations can be seen between service delivery and improved program outcomes.

Of course, the program still faces many challenges. Some of these, like data collection procedures and risk assessment processes, can be improved, but only through considerable efforts and new tools. Others, like the unprecedented program disruptions of the last year, are something programs can merely adapt to as best as possible and then account for in future evaluation efforts. The BEST program is moving forward in pursuing several actions designed to improve its evaluability and to improve internal program management and the support it can provide to grantees. In short, the program is making progress simultaneously in terms of what it is finding out about its ability to help participants through evaluation and its future ability to do so. Altogether, the BEST program seems to be moving forward in a way that is aligned with the City of San José's larger goals for increased program accountability and improved performance.

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Appendix A: Target Population Definitions

The following are PRNS's four target population profiles that grantees use to describe participants in BEST-funded services.

At-Risk: Youth in 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-related risk characteristics:

- Has a high potential to exhibit high-risk gang behaviors.

- Has not had any personal contact with the 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 following additional characteristics and level of intensity:

- Admires aspects of gang lifestyle characteristics.

- Views gang members as "living an adventure."

- Lives in a 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 the 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, including the following:.

- 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 a 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 drawings of gang insignia or symbols on notebook/book covers or 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, district attorney, 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 a 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 Division of Juvenile Justice.

- 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: Eligible Service Areas

During PY 2019–2020, BEST grantees offered programming to youth in one or more of six eligible service areas. These eligible service areas are listed below together with definitions derived (with some limited modifications) from documents that include the BEST request for qualifications, grantee workbooks, and other grantee documents.

Personal Transformation Through Cognitive Behavior Change and Life-Skills Education. This service area includes a wide array of intervention and education services focused on developing internal thinking and attitudes as they relate to external personal/social 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 engage with youth in designated hot spot communities to provide prosocial activities and case management. Staff work with service providers, schools, and families to provide outreach and mediation services in targeted neighborhoods and surrounding communities. Program activities include preventing gang activity through "cold" street contacts and group outings to locations such as nature areas and theme parks.

Vocational/Job Training. This service area consists of educational and vocational training as well as work opportunities for youth. Program activities include education completion support and job coaching and placement.

Parent Awareness/Training. Grantees provide programs designed to increase parent–child bonding and communication skills. Curricula educate parents and youth about positive decision-making skills. Program activities include support groups, character education classes, and family gatherings, such as barbeques.

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

Emergency Services. This temporary eligible service area, introduced by PRNS in May 2020, includes supports designed to address the immediate needs of BEST participants and their families (e.g., food, hygiene supplies) related to COVID-19 and shelter-in-place orders.

Appendix C: Technical Appendix

This technical appendix provides additional information on the data collection and analysis for this evaluation.

Data Collection

This section describes each type of data collected for the evaluation and provides additional detail on the completeness of these data. An important qualification to the PY 2019–2020 analysis is that there were 17 funded agencies but one of them, Lighthouse, was not included in the analysis because it had very limited participant enrollment. For the survey analysis, Alum Rock Counseling Center was included along with the other 15 grantees were included, although they did not submit workbook data so were not included in most analyses in this report.

Grantee Contracts, Workbooks, and Individual-Level Service Data

From PRNS, the evaluation team collected three types of grantee documents. First, contracts and contract amendments provided information on grantee program plans. Second, grantees provided quarterly workbooks, consisting of several sheets that include information on the level of services provided and funding spent. And third, grantees completed separate documents providing information on services received at the individual participant level.

Staff Interviews and Focus Groups

The evaluation team conducted two rounds of qualitative data collection with grantees. First was a round of group interviews with grantee staff members from 15 of the 16 grantees. These were conducted in person in March 2020 and focused on program successes and challenges, youth characteristics, and program outcomes of interest. (Firehouse Community Development Corporation [Firehouse] was not included due to scheduling issues.) The evaluation team also conducted five (virtual) focus groups in October 2020: four with grantee staff members and one with PRNS staff members. (These focus groups did not include two of the 16 grantees: Firehouse and The Art of Yoga.) The groups examined changes in programming and adaptations made by grantees between March and August 2020 due to COVID-19, recent events of racial injustice, and the effects of wildfires.

Participant Surveys

The evaluation team developed surveys for children (ages 7–13), youth (ages 14–24), and parents intended to measure psychosocial outcomes (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy) and satisfaction of participants and their family members. Grantees administered these anonymous surveys at various points throughout the program year on a semi-structured schedule,

customized to each grantee's program cycle. While there were 587 total surveys collected, only 527 completed surveys were usable in the analysis. Exhibit C-1 shows the total numbers and types of surveys collected by each grantee.

Exhibit C-1 Numbers of Each Type of Participant Survey Collected By Grantees (PY 2019–2020)

Grantee	Child Survey	Youth Survey	Parent Survey
Alum Rock Counseling Center, Inc.	23	-	-
Bay Area Tutoring Association	29	-	-
Bill Wilson Center	-	68	-
Caminar	-	-	-
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	-	51	4
ConXión to Community	-	55	-
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	-	35	-
Girl Scouts of Northern California	39	84	-
Lighthouse	-	-	1
New Hope for Youth	-	42	-
San Jose Jazz	42	-	-
Teen Success, Inc.	-	8	-
The Art of Yoga Project	-	36	-
The Firehouse Community Development Corporation	-	-	-
The Tenacious Group	-	50	-
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	-	20	-
Uplift Family Services	-	-	-
TOTAL	133	449	5

Administrative Outcomes Data

The evaluation team worked with the Alum Rock Union School District and the East Side Union High School District to obtain educational records (attendance, completion, and disciplinary records) and with the San José Police Department to obtain criminal justice records (arrests and incidents) for a sample of 178 program participants who provided consent. The evaluation team completed a data-sharing agreement with each agency outlining the terms of the arrangement.

To make it possible to obtain these data, the evaluation team worked with grantees to create an open and transparent consent process for participants. Consent was voluntary, and non-

consent in no way restricted access to BEST services. The team engaged in two steps to ensure the proper use of the consent form. First, to ensure that this research met the internationally agreed upon standards around human subjects' protection in research, the team obtained institutional review board approval of the consent form and consent process. Second, the team developed and conducted training for BEST grantees on the proper use of this consent form.

Completed consent forms were collected at three times throughout the evaluation period to confirm which participants had consented. Exhibit C-2 shows the number of sample participants who consented to both education and criminal justice system data across the 2 program years included in this evaluation. Note that for PY 2019–2020, an option was added to the consent form allowing an individual to opt out of criminal justice data collection while still consenting to the collection of education data. This explains the difference in the number of participants in the sample for each type of data.

Exhibit C-2: Consent Forms Collected by Grantees (PY 2018–2019 and PY 2019–2020)

Grantee	PY 2018–2019 Consents	PY 2019–2020 All Consents	PY 2019–2020 Consents (Education Only)
Alum Rock Counseling Center, Inc.[26]	23	2	1
Bay Area Tutoring Association	-	4	2
Bill Wilson Center	73	20	17
Caminar	5	-	-
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	-	-	-
ConXión to Community	-	33	11
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	7	-	-
Girl Scouts of Northern California	-	3	2
New Hope for Youth	-	-	-
San Jose Jazz	-	-	-
Teen Success, Inc.	1	7	5
The Art of Yoga Project	-	-	-
The Firehouse Community Development Corporation	-	-	-
The Tenacious Group	-	-	-
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	-	-	-

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[26] Alum Rock Counseling Center child surveys were included in the outcomes analysis. Because this grantee did not submit workbook data due to contractual issues with PRNS, they were not included in other analyses.

Grantee	PY 2018–2019 Consents	PY 2019–2020 All Consents	PY 2019–2020 Consents (Education Only)
Uplift Family Services	-	-	-

Data Analysis

This section describes the approach the evaluation team took in analyzing data for both the implementation study and the outcomes study.

Implementation Study Analysis

For the implementation study, the evaluation team cleaned and prepared datasets using grantee contracts and workbook data as well as individual participant service data. It then used those datasets to compare the services provided, the participants served, and the funding provided for and expended on the program elements grantees planned to implement. The evaluation team also compared implementation in PY 2019–2020 to past program years and provided a detailed discussion of these findings. To do so, the team generated grantee dashboards (Appendix D), which show these implementation data for each grantee, comparing what was planned to what was provided. The tables in the main body of the report also include cross-year comparisons.

The evaluation team also conducted separate, qualitative analysis of the information collected during staff interviews and focus groups, organizing data into themes and identifying common challenges and successes identified by grantee staff and PRNS staff.

Outcomes Study Analysis

For the outcomes study, the evaluation team used survey data to examine how individual-level participant outcomes changed over time.

Analysis of Survey Data

Because of study procedures surrounding the protection of human subjects, the evaluation team administered participant surveys anonymously. Therefore, it was not be possible to compare pre–post psychosocial outcomes (i.e., within-person changes). However, all surveys included questions about the length of participation in the program and a limited amount of demographic information. Comparing participants who said they had been in the program for a short time to those who declared they had been in the program for a longer time provided a robust, if imperfect, measure of pre–post changes associated with the program.

Survey findings were weighted to potentially compensate for the nonresponse bias that might arise if survey respondents differed markedly in observable characteristics from the population served by the program (see "Survey Weighting Procedures" below).

Pre–post differences in outcomes were estimated by comparing the means of survey items for "baseline" respondents (who said they had been in the program for less than a month) and "established" survey respondents (who said they had been in the program for a month or longer). For each outcome, a univariate regression (which accepts survey weights) was estimated, with the survey outcome as the dependent variable and the type of respondent (baseline or established) as the only predictor. After each regression was run, the Stata procedure lincom (linear combination of estimates) was used to calculate the difference between the mean of the baseline group and the mean of the established group, its standard error, its p-value, and its confidence interval.

Survey Weighting Procedures

After the evaluation team compared the structure of the respondent samples with the structure of the BEST program participants overall, several sociodemographic imbalances were noted. Exhibit C-3 shows the distribution of available sociodemographic characteristics in the youth population (ages 14–24) and the sample of youth who responded to the survey. The data suggest that the survey sample underrepresented the proportion of Asian participants and it overrepresented the proportion of Latinx participants; other differences were relatively minor.

**Exhibit C-3: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics for
BEST Youth Population and Youth Survey Respondents, Ages 14–24 (PY 2019–2020)**

	PY 2019–2020 BEST Population	PY 2019–2020 Survey Respondents
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	198 (7.3%)	26 (8.1%)
Asian	393 (14.5%)	10 (3.1%)
Latinx	1,648 (61.0%)	229 (70.9%)
Multiracial	195 (7.2%)	38 (11.8%)
Other	270 (10.0%)	20 (6.2%)
Age		
14–18 years old	1,886 (76.1%)	305 (80.7%)
19 years and older	591 (23.9%)	73 (19.3%)
Gender		
Men	1,050 (42.6%)	171 (45.1%)
Women	1,417 (57.4%)	208 (54.9%)

Source: BEST program data and participant surveys

Differences between the survey respondents and the full pool of eligible survey participants could potentially bias the survey findings. To mitigate possible bias caused by nonresponse, the evaluation team created nonresponse weights that were used to compute survey findings. The nonresponse weights were created using an iterative proportional fitting algorithm (also known as raking algorithm) that performs a stepwise adjustment of survey sampling weights to achieve known population margins. The adjustment process is repeated until the difference between the weighted margins of the variables and the population margins are deemed sufficiently close. The poststratification weights for the youth sample were calculated using the demographic variables listed in Exhibit C-3. Weighting through the technique described above resulted in demographic sample proportions that were identical to proportions among the BEST population.

The evaluation team took a similar approach for the child survey. As shown in Exhibit C-4, the survey respondents appeared to differ markedly from the population of BEST participants, from the perspective of both race/ethnicity and especially gender (young women were overrepresented in the sample). The evaluation team calculated raking poststratification

nonresponse weights using the sociodemographic characteristics in Exhibit C-4. These weights were used to compute all survey findings shown in Chapter VI.

Exhibit C-4: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics for BEST Child Population and Child Survey Respondents, Ages 7–13 (PY 2019–2020)

|	BEST Population PY 2019–2020	BEST PY 2019–2020 Survey Respondents
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	6 (2.4%)	3 (2.5%)
Asian	46 (18.6%)	17 (13.9%)
Latinx	164 (66.4%)	68 (55.7%)
Multiracial	12 (4.9%)	21 (17.2%)
Other	19 (7.7%)	13 (10.7%)
Gender		
Boys	113 (47.9%)	31 (25.4%)
Girls	123 (52.1%)	91 (74.6%)

Source: BEST program data and participant surveys

Appendix D: 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.
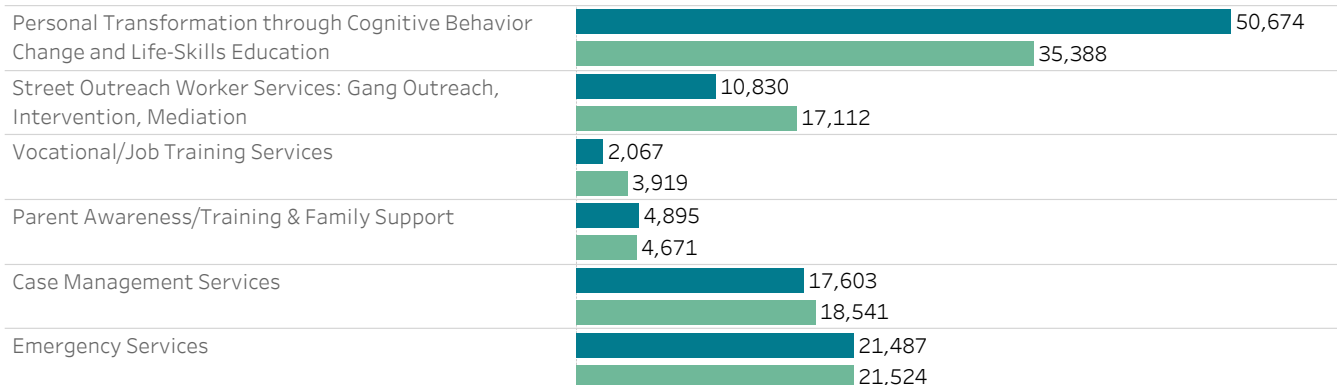
Finances

Budget Match
$968,485

BEST Funding
$2,455,566

Unspent
$74,844

Spent
$2,380,722
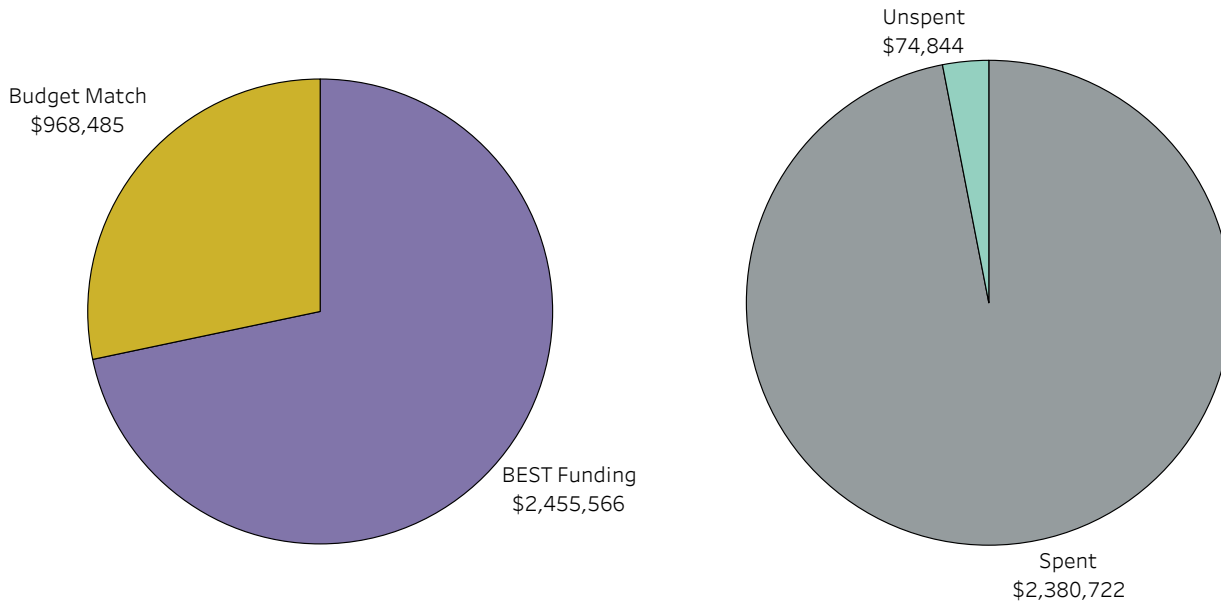
Service Delivery

Total Projected and Actual Units of Service

Total Projected Units of Service	107,554
Total Actual Units of Service	101,154

Projected and Actual Units of Service by Eligible Service Area

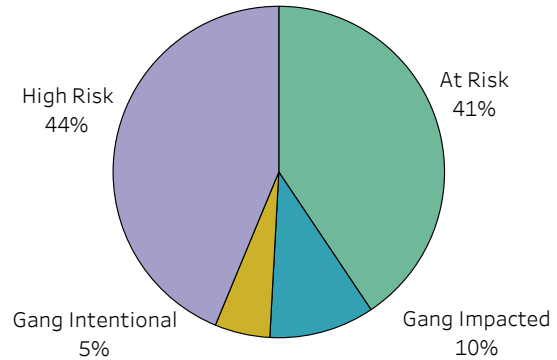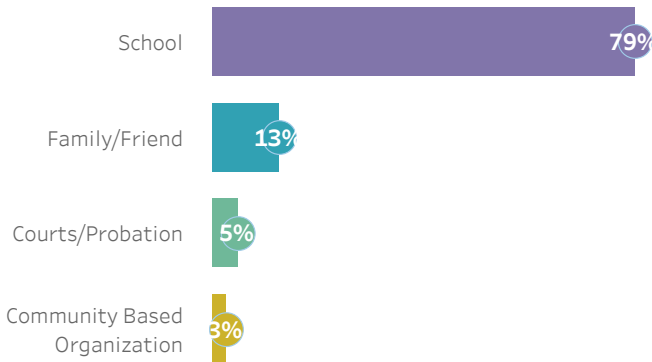| Service Area	Projected	Actual
Personal Transformation through Cognitive Behavior Change and Life-Skills Education	50,674	35,388
Street Outreach Worker Services: Gang Outreach, Intervention, Mediation	10,830	17,112
Vocational/Job Training Services	2,067	3,919
Parent Awareness/Training & Family Support	4,895	4,671
Case Management Services	17,603	18,541
Emergency Services	21,487	21,524

Source: BEST grantee documents and workbooks from PY 2019-20
Note: All data is excluded for Alum Rock Counseling Center and Lighthouse of Hope.

SAN JOSE
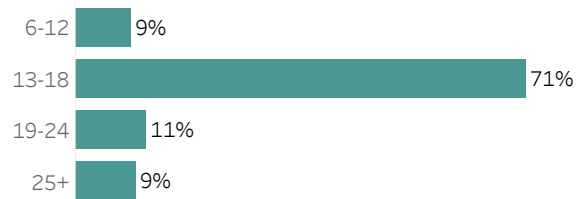PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

BEST 2019-2020
All BEST Grantees

SPR
SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES

Referral Source

School	79%
Family/Friend	13%
Courts/Probation	5%
Community Based Organization	3%

of Participants Served: 3,229 of 2,740

High Risk 44%
At Risk 41%
Gang Impacted 10%
Gang Intentional 5%

Gender

43%	57%

- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary

Age

6-12	9%
13-18	71%
19-24	11%
25+	9%

Zip Code of Residence

© Mapbox © OSM
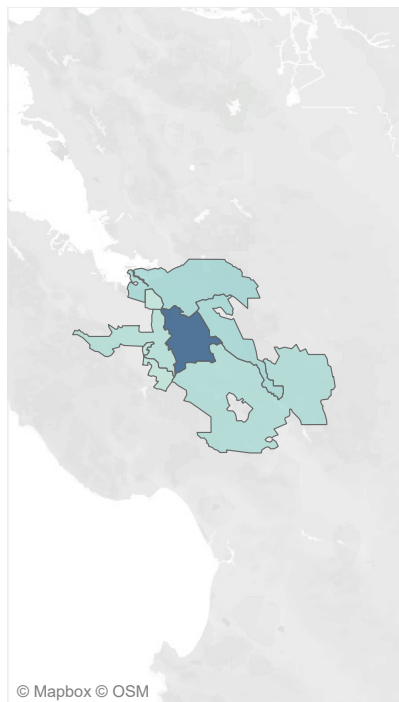
Zip	%
95122	23%
95111	20%
95116	8%
95112	7%
95127	6%
95123	5%
95133	3%
95131	3%
95136	3%
95121	3%
95110	3%
95132	2%
95128	2%
95148	2%
95126	2%
95125	1%
95117	1%
95118	1%
Out of San Jose	4%

Race/Ethnicity

Latinx	62%
Asian	15%
African American/Black	7%
Multiracial	7%
White	6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
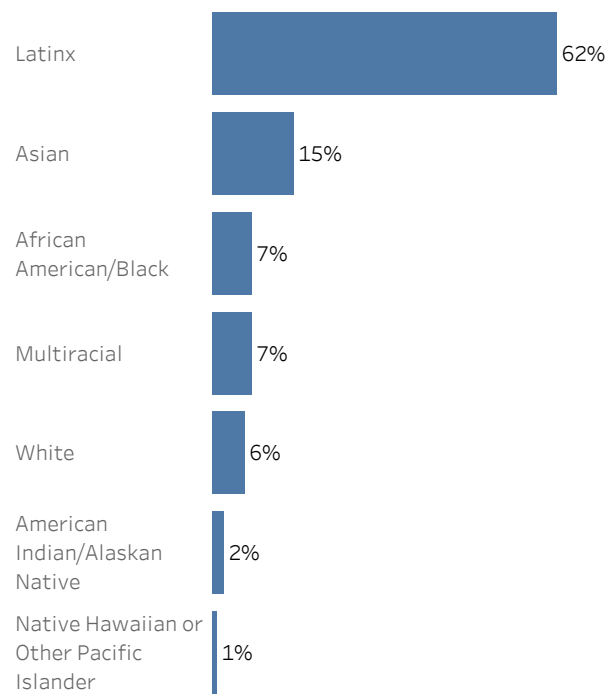
Source: BEST grantee documents and workbooks from PY 2019-2020
Note: Demographic data is missing for Alum Rock Counseling Center and Lighthouse of Hope.
Percentages may not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding.
Percentages are based on the total number of 3,220 participants, except where there are missing values as follows: Referral Source (566), Target Population (84), Gender (386), Age (345), Zip Code (191), Race/Ethnicity (157)
Demographic data excludes participants in street outreach services as grantees do not collect participant information for this eligible service area.1,800 additional participants are estimated to have received street outreach services overall.