
2021–2022 Program Year Annual Report: Evaluation of the Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together (BEST) Program

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Executive Summary

Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together (BEST), the funding arm of the San José Youth Empowerment Alliance (formerly known as 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, government agencies and faith-based entities in San José to provide services consistent with BEST goals. PRNS then awards individual grants for each program year to 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 findings from the implementation and outcomes study of BEST for Program Year (PY) 2021–2022 (September 2021 to August 2022). PY 2021–2022 marked a transition point when services, by design, were fully back to in-person operation and Emergency Services were no longer funded as an eligible service area. This report discusses ways in which grantees still needed to incorporate lessons learned from recent years around service delivery, given the continuing COVID-19–related public health measures as the pandemic was waning, but not fully over.

BEST Program Services

During PY 2021–2022, grantees provided BEST services in school, community-based, and juvenile justice settings. As schools resumed in-person schedules after a year and a half of remote and hybrid school delivery, BEST grantees were able to resume services in schools, exceeding their projections in most services areas.

- Grantees provided over 100 percent of the projected number of units of service (UOS)¹. They delivered 121,753 UOS, compared to the 99,479 that were projected. The number of UOS provided was 8 percent more than in the previous program year.
- Personal Transformation UOS provided increased by almost 50 percent over the previous program year, marking a return to in-person services after schools returned to mostly normal schedules.
- Street Outreach/Intervention UOS provided increased by 7 percent over the previous program year, despite having one fewer grantee providing these services. The two

¹ UOS = total number of sessions x average number of participants per session x average number of hours per session.

remaining grantees provided services at all hot spots, including an additional emerging hot spot to the 24 from the previous year.

Returning to In-Person Services

PPY 2021–2022 largely signaled a return to in-person service delivery for schools and BEST grantees alike. While some remote and online options remained, such as online sessions and 1-on-1 coaching, they supplemented rather than replaced in-person activities.

- Youth said programs helped them develop their social skills, improve school performance, and think about their futures. These youth noted how BEST activities helped them connect and interact with their peers, taught them healthy study habits, and empowered them to believe in their dreams and make goals more attainable.
- As BEST grantees resumed in-person services, they continued to adapt programming in response to the pandemic and evolving youth needs. While services were primarily in-person, grantees occasionally had to shift to virtual or hybrid options when a spike in COVID-19 cases required social distancing.
- School-based grantees continued working closely with their partners. Partners included administrators, teachers, counselors, resource specialists, and social workers who recruited participants and delivered services to BEST youth. Partner organizations communicated closely with BEST grantee staff to make referrals, provide supportive services, and coordinate service delivery.
- BEST grantees were able to hold more sessions during and after school hours which resulted in a significant increase in the number youth enrolled in the program.

Grants and Grant Spending

In PY 2021–2022, PRNS awarded \$2,658,192 in BEST grants to 15 community-based organizations.

- Overall funding for BEST programs increased slightly in PY 2021–2022 compared to the past two program years. This was driven by increases in both matched funding and one-time funding, especially since base grant funding decreased slightly.
- While most grantees were able to meet their financial goals, including setting appropriate goals for matched funding, obtaining matched funding, and expending grant funds, a small number unable to meet some or all of these goals. Further investigation into grantee successes and challenges in meeting these goals may better inform future funding.

BEST Participants

With increased in-person programming, BEST programs enrolled more children and youth in PY 2021–2022 compared to the previous year.

- BEST grantees enrolled 3,036 program participants in PY 2021–2022. This is a 24 percent increase from the 2,448 program participants enrolled by grantees in PY 2020–2021.
- One grantee (Caminar) enrolled approximately one-third (31 percent) of all BEST participants. This grantee reached a wider service population by providing services to youth and their families in public housing settings.
- In addition to enrolled participants, grantees made 2,640 contacts with youth through Street Outreach. This is similar to the number of contacts made in PY 2020–2021.

Participant Outcomes Analysis

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

- The number of surveys collected from BEST participants was far greater in the PY 2021–2022 program year than in previous years. This is due in part to return to in-person services following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- BEST participants were generally satisfied with the services they received through the program, although youth (ages 14–24) reported somewhat higher levels of satisfaction than children (ages 7–13). Both groups being particularly satisfied with how the program’s adults listened to what they had to say, their perceptions of feeling safe in the program, and that there was an adult in their life that cared for them.
- Overall, BEST participants reported experiencing numerous positive psychosocial, educational, and employment outcomes. For example, over 90 percent of all youth respondents reported that they stayed in school, felt good about their ability to succeed, and were able to say no when pressured by friends to do something they did not want to do. Among child participants, more than 80 percent of respondents reported positive outcomes on six of seven measures.
- There were several statistically significant differences between the outcomes reported by more established participants compared to those newer to the program, suggesting an association between the program and these positive outcomes. Established participants (both youth and children), compared to participants at baseline, felt better able to say no when pressured to do something they did not want to do and that they knew an adult they could trust.

Conclusion

During PY 2021–2022, PRNS and BEST grantee staff returned to providing mostly in-person services in schools and community settings, as the COVID pandemic subsided. While staff had to pivot to remote services at times, and some online options remained, they supplemented rather than replaced in-person activities. Staff and youth expressed appreciation for being able to return to a more normal routine after the disruptive months of the pandemic, but challenges remained including staff turnover in grantee programs and learning loss and mental health issues for youth.

As a result of in-person services, BEST grantees were able to hold more sessions during and after school hours which resulted in a significant increase in the number of UOS provided as well as youth enrolled in the program. While UOS increased by 8 percent, enrollment of youth increased by 24 percent. The increase in youth 13 to 18 in the program also reflected the easier access by BEST programs to students in school settings. Program participants continued to express satisfaction with BEST program services and perceive that the program helped them improve educational and psychosocial outcomes.

I. Introduction

Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together (BEST), the funding arm of the San José Youth Empowerment Alliance (formerly known as 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, government, and faith-based community organizations in San José to be placed on an eligible service provider list as part of a three-year cycle (i.e., a triennial period). Program year 2021-2022 is year three of the triennial period that was then extended for an additional year. PRNS then awards individual grants for each program year (September 1 through August 31) of the triennial period. In the past several years, the total amount allocated for BEST has been around \$2.5 million annually.

San José Youth Empowerment Alliance

Established in 1991, formerly called the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force of San José, California, the Youth Empowerment Alliance is a strategic youth violence prevention initiative. It includes the BEST program, operated by grant-funded community-based organizations, the city-staffed Youth Intervention Services, and Neighborhood Services. It also organizes a broad coalition—including law enforcement, school and government leaders, faith- and community-based organizations, and residents—to collaborate on, plan, and implement solutions for reducing gang-related activity and crime.

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) 2021–2022, PRNS organized services into five eligible service areas that encompass a range of prevention and intervention services: Personal Transformation, Street Outreach, Vocational/Job Training, Parent Awareness/Training, and Case Management.³ Grantees delivered these services at multiple locations, including community-based organizations

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

³ Eligible service areas are described further in Chapter III and Appendix B.

(CBOs), schools, and juvenile detention facilities, as well as on the street in designated geographic areas.

While BEST grants support service delivery across all of San José, they are designed to target certain areas where leadership from the MGPTF, in partnership with CBOs and the San José Police Department, has identified higher rates of youth violence and gang-related crime. In their applications and contracts, grantees specify populations, services, and geographic areas, including “hot spots” for Street Outreach, where 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 that examined data from PY 2010–2011 to PY 2017–2018. The findings from that evaluation showed that cumulative provision of BEST services for a given San José Police Department beat was associated with decreases in gang incidents and youth arrests in both 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. The BEST theory of change (see the next section) suggests that the program 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, suggest that the program may have even larger impacts on the above-mentioned short- and medium-term outcomes.

Since then, SPR has released three annual reports that present findings around the implementation and outcomes of BEST (Levin et al., 2020, 2021, 2022). These past reports examined the ways in which grantees implemented their programs, including the delivery of services and expenditures of program funds as compared to planned activities for each year. This research also examined the ways in which the city and grantees had to adapt to ever-changing pandemic conditions that began in early 2020, which included the introduction of Emergency Services as a temporary eligible service area and the adaptation of service delivery to ensure personal safety through remote and hybrid services as well as considerable periods of social unrest.

These past reports also examined participants’ short- and medium-term outcomes, finding that participants were generally satisfied with the services they received and that youth participants (ages 14–24) showed modest levels of improvement from early in the program to

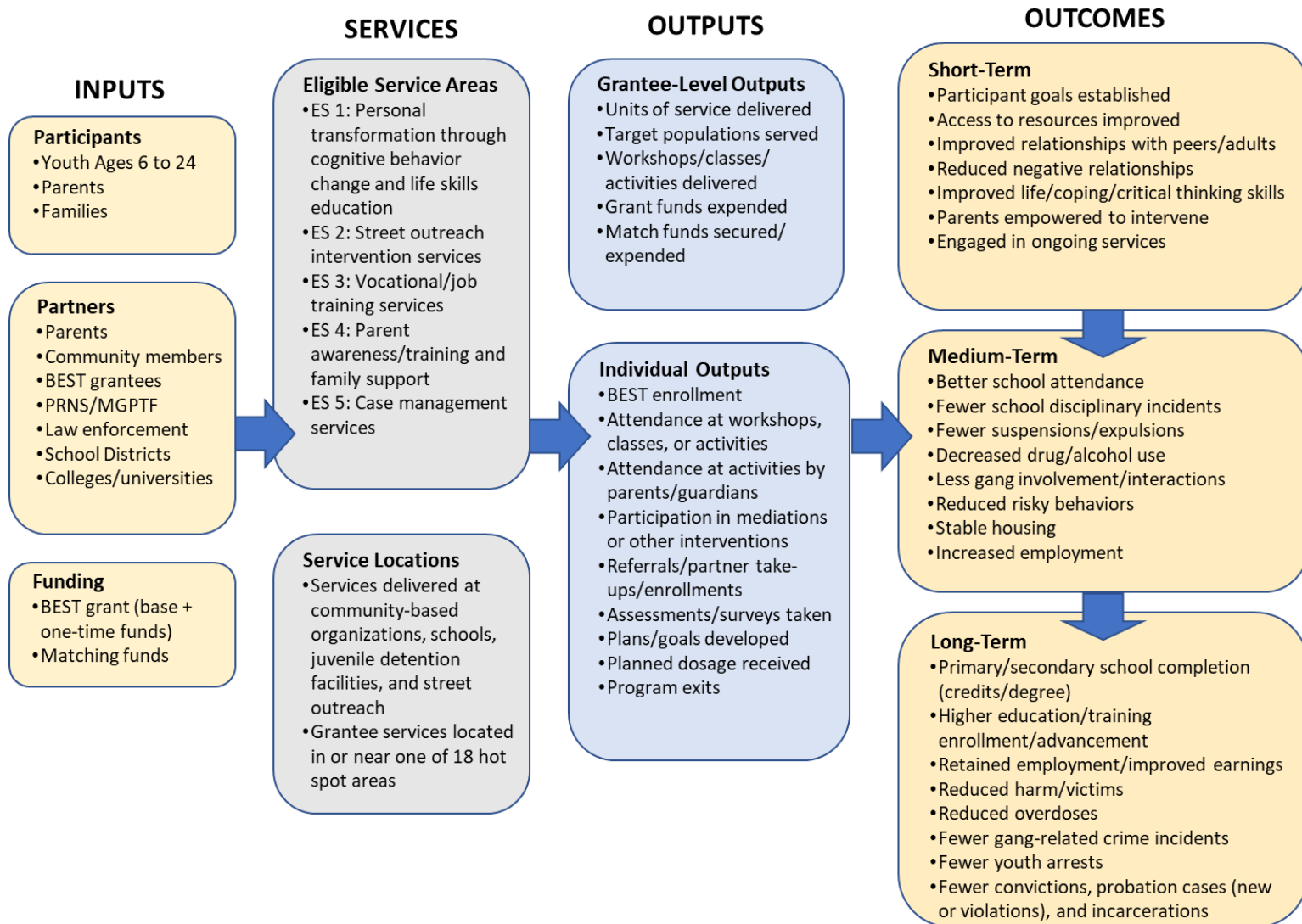
later in the program on some psychosocial measures. The current report continues to examine these trends.

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, and exits) and outcomes (e.g., measures of psychosocial well-being, educational engagement, health and well-being, and criminal justice involvement). This theory of change is rooted in and adapted from 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, and improved connectedness) and increased education (e.g., improved attendance and reduced disciplinary measures). Less directly, BEST services are designed to lead to improvements in longer-term outcomes, like academic engagement and reduced criminal justice involvement (e.g., reduced arrests and probation involvement).

Exhibit I-1: The BEST Theory of Change



Evaluation Approach

This report is designed to identify and understand the accomplishments of PY 2021–2022 BEST grantees—including their performance relative to past years of BEST operations and given the current community context—and the effects BEST has had on the youth and families it serves. To achieve these goals, the evaluation team set out to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. What were the main characteristics of the program as delivered by BEST grantees in PY 2021–2022, 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 2021–2022 (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, and risk level), and the units of service (UOS) planned for and delivered?
3. Did program participants from PY 2021–2022 experience positive outcomes—such as improved psychosocial outcomes, increased school engagement, and less frequent involvement with the criminal justice system—compared to before starting the program?

The evaluation includes both an implementation study and an outcomes study. The implementation study answers the first two evaluation questions by describing how service delivery and program operations (e.g., funding, participants, and UOS) unfolded relative to plans for PY 2021–2022 and as compared to prior program years. The outcomes study answers the third question by examining youth outcomes through survey data collection.

Data Collection

The evaluation relied on the collection of the following types of data:

- **Grantee contracts and workbooks.** From PRNS, the evaluation team collected contracts and workbooks for each grantee, which together provided information on budgets and expenditures and planned and delivered UOS, as well as some additional details around program implementation. Additional accounting and tracking documents managed by PRNS supplemented the workbook and contract data.
- **Participant demographic data.** From PRNS, the evaluation team obtained individual-level demographic data on program participants, including background data on participant age, gender, race/ethnicity, and risk level.
- **Staff interviews and participant focus groups.** SPR conducted staff interviews and participant focus groups between April and July 2022. SPR held interviews with staff from all 15 grantee organizations to document how programs have been

implementing services and activities this program year, including topics such as key partnerships and biggest adaptations to program operations. The evaluation team held eight focus groups with youth and adult participants from eight of the grantee organizations (Alum Rock Counseling Center, Bill Wilson Center, Caminar, Catholic Charities, Fresh Lifelines for Youth, Girl Scouts, San José Jazz, and Ujima) to learn about their experiences in BEST programs.

- **Partner interviews.** Between August and October 2022 SPR held five interviews with public and nonprofit partner staff to understand how organizations work with BEST grantees, concerns about and goals for youth, how the BEST program is helping them address these concerns, and feedback on BEST services and ways the program could work better to support youth in their communities.
- **Participant surveys.** The evaluation included surveys for children (ages 7–13),⁴ youth (ages 14–24), and parents enrolled in parenting services provided by BEST grantees. The evaluation team designed these surveys to measure psychosocial outcomes (e.g., resilience and self-efficacy) and satisfaction. 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 949 complete responses across the three types of surveys.⁵

Data Analysis

For the implementation study (and to address the evaluation’s first two evaluation questions), the evaluation team analyzed grantee contracts and workbooks, participant demographic data, and staff and participant interviews and focus groups. 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. Furthermore, the evaluation team compared these aspects of program implementation to past program years.

The implementation study also included qualitative analysis of the information contained in grantee workbooks and collected during staff interviews and focus groups. In particular, this analysis focused on partnerships with schools and delivery of services where the pandemic created ongoing service-delivery and operational challenges for grantees. The evaluation team organized these data into themes and identified the common implementation challenges faced and successes realized by grantees, partners, participants, and PRNS staff.

⁴ BEST serves youth ages 6 to 24. However, based on institutional review board requirements, 6-year-olds were excluded from the survey, as were incarcerated youth.

⁵ There were 781 completed youth surveys, 142 completed child surveys, and 26 completed parent surveys, for a total of 949 completed surveys.

For the outcomes study, the evaluation team compiled data from the surveys and used them to describe outcomes generally and to compare outcomes of participants who had been enrolled for shorter versus longer periods of time. 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 from the analysis due to small sample sizes) are included in Chapter VI, 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 staff and participant perspectives, the types and levels of services delivered, budgets and expenditures, and the participants who enrolled. Chapter VI presents findings from the outcomes study. Chapter VII offers conclusions and recommendations.

II. Returning to In-Person Services

PY 2021–2022 largely signaled a return to in-person service delivery for schools and BEST grantees alike. While some remote and online options remained, such as online sessions and one-on-one coaching, they supplemented rather than replaced in-person activities. School and grantee staff agreed that in-person programming was the best approach to building trusting relationships with youth, and as a result programs were able to provide more services than in the previous year and extend those services to younger youth. However, service delivery was not without its challenges as grantees continued to grapple with effects and after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter describes program implementation as agencies were returning to pre-pandemic operations and explores some outcomes of the program as conveyed by BEST grantee program staff, partner staff, and participants.⁶

Key Findings

- **Youth said programs helped them develop their social skills, improve school performance, and think about their futures.** These youth noted how BEST activities helped them connect and interact with their peers, taught them healthy study habits, and empowered them to believe in their dreams and make goals more attainable.
- **As BEST grantees resumed in-person services, they continued to adapt programming in response to the pandemic and evolving youth needs.** While services were primarily in-person, grantees occasionally had to shift to virtual or hybrid options when a spike in COVID-19 cases required social distancing.
- **School-based grantees continued working closely with their partners.** Partners included administrators, teachers, counselors, resource specialists, and social workers who recruited participants and delivered services to BEST youth. Partner organizations communicated closely with BEST grantee staff to make referrals, provide supportive services, and coordinate service delivery.
- **BEST grantees were able to hold more sessions during and after school hours** which resulted in a significant increase in the number youth enrolled in the program.

⁶ BEST partners include CBOs, education providers (e.g., public and alternative schools), and local agencies (e.g., workforce development board and county departments). Typically, organizations that partner with BEST grantees offer complementary services to similar populations to provide holistic supports to youth and their families.

Evidence of Improved Youth Outcomes

In their interviews and focus groups, grantees and participants described the positive outcomes from BEST program services and activities, such as increasing self-confidence, making new friends, getting better grades at school, and developing healthier habits. (Chapter VI further describes participant outcomes.)

Why youth participated in BEST

In focus groups, youth described a number of reasons why they participated in BEST.

“I feel like without this place, I wouldn’t be here. This program cares about the youth. It’s comforting...I went to a shelter for adult men, and they didn’t really help me. Here there’s groups, and it’s helpful to understand what other people are going through.” – Participant

“It’s nice having a more open-minded person to talk to.” – Participant

“The program helps me prepare for the future, and when I start working, it will help me find a job.” – Participant

“Everyone was talking about their insecurities and what didn’t make them feel confident, and that helped me because I had some insecurities with some girls in the group, so I learned that I’m not alone and it’s okay to have these insecurities, and I felt better about myself.” – Participant

- **Many grantees cited the value and importance of being the adult figures that were consistently in youths’ lives.** For example, program staff reported working closely with school educators to show students that there was a team of adults looking out for them. When students disrupted class lessons, staff took them aside and helped them understand that there were adults who supported them.

“Kids need emotional and social supports; they need a caring adult and consistent connection. My staff has been doing a good job at staying connected and providing consistency in their life.” – Grantee staff

“In the beginning, a lot of our workshops were lighthearted activities around getting to know youth. Gradually, they shared more about themselves. Next year will be easier now that we have relationships with [them] again.
– Grantee staff

“Youth need to know that there are adults there that care. It’s important to listen to their needs and meet them where they are. Being consistent and having empathy in their lives is important because they don’t have that elsewhere. Building trust day by day or hour by hour.” – Grantee staff

- **Several youth recognized and were grateful for the efforts made by staff.** One participant explained that staff go above and beyond their roles by providing additional assistance: “They help a lot with taking us to job fairs, applying for jobs at the mall, and I did get interviews. The staff call and check in. They helped us put the resume together last year.” Another participant added that staff were available to help them when needed: “If we need someone to talk to, they are there. They give good advice.” Similarly, youth at another program expressed that staff primarily helped them by connecting them to resources and services like housing, workforce programs, rehabilitation centers, and public benefits.
- **Across grantees, youth described feeling safe in their programs.** Many youth noted how staff made an effort to help them feel comfortable, often providing snacks and rides home, having individual conversations with youth, and taking the time to get to know them. One participant observed, “I think [the grantee program at the school is] a safe place at school. Not that school isn’t safe; it’s just more comforting here.” Similarly, participants at another grantee expressed that they felt safe at the program because they were surrounded by other youth. One explained, “It’s a safe place because we’re not in a shelter with older people who know more of the game. We’re young; they’ll take advantage of us. Here it’s safe because we’re all young adults.”

BEST supported the development of social skills

Youth observed that BEST programs helped them improve their social skills. For example, youth at one grantee expressed that the program’s group classes on communication have been helpful, and one participant at another grantee noted that their internship helped them feel more comfortable interacting with others.

“We get better coping mechanisms. At the beginning of the year, I couldn’t be in class with certain people, and I would leave. [Now] I’m learning how to manage time and make time for self-care.” – Participant

“My internship helped me get out my comfort zone. Instead of keeping to myself, I had to put myself out there, and I ended up making friends.” – Participant

“During quarantine I didn’t leave my house or talk to anyone. The program convinced me to get a job, which helped me talk to strangers. That was a big step that improved my anxiety.” – Participant

Programming helped youth improve school performance

Participants also reported how BEST programs helped them do better in school by teaching good study habits and providing a space to work on homework. For example, several participants explained that they needed to have at least a C+ grade in order to get a work permit through school, and that they were able to do their homework while at the BEST program and could ask staff for homework help. A participant at another grantee mentioned that she had recently been struggling with her Advanced Placement classes and “it was taking a toll.” Staff helped her drop one of the classes, and her grades are now improving.

Grantee and partner staff encouraged youth to think about their futures

In addition to practical skills, youth participants reported that BEST programming helped change the way they think about their futures. For example, youth at one grantee described how staff empowered them to believe in their dreams and make goals more attainable. At another grantee, two participants expressed that the program gave them a foundation for the future. One youth described the program as a “stepping block until you jump off or get help.” Another youth stated that “it’s given us foundation for our lives. I’d say the people that come here have changed the way I think.” Similarly, at a third grantee, two participants felt more motivated after being in the program, and at a fourth grantee, one youth mentioned that her thoughts on going to college changed after seeing that her friends in the program will also be going to college.

“Before, I was scared about the future, now not so much. I learned to plan things out more...instead of being scared and afraid to grow up, I’m more happy.” – Participant

“We do a lot of talking about time management and how we can help ourselves and do better. Not just like with our personality but with our dreams...I have this goal where I go to college, but it’s, like, really hard, and it feels almost impossible to make it there. Staff make it feel more positive instead of focusing just on the negatives.” – Participant

“When I first started coming here, we were doing online school and my grades were bad, and coming here made me motivated to get my grades up. Now I’m planning to go to university, which I never thought I would do.” – Participant

Adapting to In-Person Service Delivery

During PY 2021–2022, BEST services began to operate increasingly as they did prior to the beginning of the pandemic. Grantees typically offered in-person services, relying on virtual or hybrid options on the occasions when participants were unable to come to program sites (e.g., telehealth services and virtual instruction for juvenile hall students) or when a spike in COVID-19 cases required temporarily moving back to remote service delivery. Notably, with an increased ability to offer in-person services, grantees and participants report improvements in youth engagement and greater levels of youth enrollment. Despite this inevitable shift back toward pre-pandemic operations, grantees continued to face the following pandemic-related implementation challenges.

COVID-19–related challenges

Even though grantees tried to increasingly shift to in-person services, COVID-19 continued to present challenges that impeded participant enrollment and engagement. Shifting pandemic guidelines resulted in changes to how, when, and where services were delivered. BEST staff found it extremely challenging to continually have to adapt programming every time there was a new surge in COVID-19 cases. For example, following the December 2021 and January 2022 surge in the omicron variant, school sites required students and staff to quarantine, so programs that were offering in-person services had to suddenly transition to virtual and remote service delivery. Grantees pointed out that constant changes to how programming was delivered resulted in increased costs to the programs. For instance, one grantee had to adapt its programming by hiring guitar teachers because it could not use wind instruments per the schools' COVID-19 guidelines. Further, it had to purchase new guitars and related equipment and set them up at each school site.

“All agencies struggled during the second quarter [because we would] adjust to being in person, experience a surge, and then have to move very quickly to virtual [platforms].” – Grantee staff

Further, many interruptions to in-person service delivery occurred, resulting in low participant engagement. For example, when working with juvenile hall, one grantee reported dealing with multiple pandemic-related lockdowns and cancellations, making it difficult to schedule meetings with youth and keep them engaged during virtual activities. Another grantee reported that when it had to shift to virtual services, it saw a significant drop in attendance because, for example, students could not play instruments with their classmates. Grantees adapted accordingly, typically shifting to remote or virtual activities instead, but noted that as spaces in the community opened back up and school campuses were open, the willingness to participate in virtual programming declined.

Overcoming staffing challenges

Several grantees had staffing challenges over the last program year, though they were able to deliver necessary services and supports through their strong partnerships with school and district staff, educators, and local organizations. Staff turnover led to high youth-to-staff ratios. One grantee had two staff start and immediately quit that same day. It then had to recruit an entirely new team and in fact continued to have open positions to fill throughout the program year. To continue to provide a safe environment, it modified its hours to ensure adequate staff ratios before filling vacancies. Moreover, at least two grantees had trouble finding enough chaperones to support all the youth that wanted to participate in activities and help transport youth to and from program services. Another grantee had to reduce its class sizes to keep staff and teachers safe. Typically, it had three teachers managing 30 students. Due to COVID-19, it decreased the student-to-teacher ratio to 15 to 2. This resulted in low staff engagement and the feeling that the staff’s “cohesiveness as a team” had suffered.

To address staffing challenges, school-based grantees continued working closely with administrators, teachers, counselors, resource specialists, and social workers to recruit participants and deliver services to youth. One grantee indicated that school sites that were well-staffed and well-managed helped to increase program attendance numbers, and another grantee worked closely with several schools’ wellness centers to deliver its programming to students.

“All of our partners have contributed to the success of the program. Without their support we wouldn’t be successful. School counselors, principals, teachers, and social workers are advocates for the program. You need just one person to have your back.” – Grantee staff

“Our school staff, school providers, and educators are key partners. Those relationships are really important because they know the kids the best and they can help with referrals and promoting and supporting the program.” – Partner staff

In addition, grantees appreciated the return of MGPTF resources designed to support BEST programming. The return to in-person services also saw the return of two supportive resources: MGPTF Tech Team meetings and the All-Service Provider meetings⁷ which, when in person again, were ways grantees could stay apprised of available services for youth. While virtual meetings provided opportunities to share upcoming events, grantees and partners

⁷ MGPTF Tech Team meetings are opportunities for partners—including police officers and leaders from CBOs—to convene, network, and discuss pressing issues. All-Service Provider Meetings are open to agencies providing services to youth and adults in San José.

noted how in-person meetings made it easier to network directly. One grantee said, “Now that we’re back at the Tech meetings, the last few have been helpful. We could connect a little more with people at specific sites as well as with other BEST grantees. I’m hoping that as this new year starts, we’ll be able to connect even more.”

Youth engagement challenges

Grantee and partner staff described a number of challenges to youth participation in BEST programs, including scheduling, building trusting relationships, meeting program requirements, and availability of childcare, mental health supports, and transportation.

- **It was difficult to build relationships with youth after 18 months of online service delivery.** Staff from many grantees commented on how youth did not know or remember that their programs existed. They spent the first quarter of the program year reintroducing themselves to participants. A guidance counselor observed that many students did not know that programs like BEST were available to them.
- **Youth did not always meet program requirements and therefore did not enroll in services.** At least two partners observed that finding youth who met program requirements was a barrier to participation. This included correctly filling out and turning in applications and providing the appropriate eligibility documents. “Even getting back a signed permission slip or any sort of form can be a challenge,” said a staff person from one of these grantees.
- **Inadequacies in childcare, mental health supports, and transportation options were barriers for participating in BEST programming.** According to at least four grantee and partner staff, lack of childcare posed a significant challenge, and access to affordable on-demand mental health care was a critical need for youth. In addition, staff from two partner organizations remarked that there were few secure transportation options for youth, and though some partners could provide bus tokens, public transportation was not always the safest option.

Responding to Ongoing Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

PY 2021–2022 began with pandemic complications, including the emergence of omicron, a new COVID-19 variant. Uncertainties around lockdowns, masking, and social distancing requirements continued throughout the program year. Despite these challenges, the majority of programming took place in person, which was an immense benefit to engaging youth in classroom-based services. Grantee staff uniformly reported that youth-centered services were especially vital over the last program year as the economic and social stresses from the COVID-19 pandemic persisted. They noted that parents struggled to find high quality jobs,

students' social skills were stunted after more than a year of distance learning, affordable housing in the Bay Area remained unattainable, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth and families continued to contend with racial and political injustices. Staff at partner organizations observed several similar trends among youth and family wellness over the past program year, including increased demand for supportive services, social skills challenges, a need for financial resources, and increased housing insecurity.

“Youth are still dealing with the impacts of the pandemic, and they’re bringing that with them to school. That has been something that is still very present.” – Grantee staff

- **Youth appeared more anxious, nervous, and stressed as schools transitioned back to in-person teaching.** This was due to a number of reasons, including having few opportunities to build meaningful relationships during lockdown, feeling increased pressure to make up or catch up on coursework for college admissions, and generally dealing with uncertainty around COVID-19 protocols, such as not knowing when to enforce masking, not knowing when classes may switch to online and remote learning, and not knowing how the pandemic would affect students' ability to attend school. Grantees noticed more truancy and delinquency among high school youth, which was present during distance learning but then increased when schools reopened. They reported that some students had trouble readjusting to in-person learning after having the flexibility to attend (or not) virtual classes.

“What we definitely see is that children are behind with their emotional and social health. Working with a junior in high school was more like working with a sophomore.” – Grantee staff

- **Youth emerged from social distancing with poorer social skills.** One partner noted how the pandemic affected the participants' overall well-being and another added that the youth are “disconnected from who they are” and are finding new outlets for expression, ones that “are not the healthiest.” They also noticed a drop in social and emotional skills. “Now that they’re out and interacting, it’s been hard to filter things. It’s a shift, for sure. You can notice [it] in the way they interact with each other. It’s been difficult.”

“Everyone is still recovering from the past few years, having to relearn socialization within a couple of months.” – Grantee staff

- **Grantees also observed household-level challenges for participants, like unmet housing, financial insecurity, or family mental health needs.** For example, staff from one grantee noted that some participants coming from low-income households experienced distinct conflicts (e.g., parents were incarcerated or had substance abuse

issues), which became barriers for participation (e.g., youth could not get permission slips signed or medical forms filled out). Moreover, youth and families needed more supportive services, including housing, food, and transportation. Since the start of the pandemic, partner staff noticed an increased demand for housing referrals and access to healthy food, and they saw an increase in economic hardships. For example, more youth have asked for help paying for gas to get to and from work.

Because of the way BEST program staff engaged with youth, both during and outside of school, they were often well-positioned and played a critical role in supporting the well-being of BEST participants and their families. As the landscape of service delivery and education was still shifting with the pandemic subsiding, this often meant adjusting existing activities or creating new ones to effectively engage youth in programming. The following section describes these processes in more detail.

Summary

In PY 2021–2022, BEST grantees and their partners largely returned to in-person service delivery and continued to adapt programming in response to the pandemic and youth’s evolving needs. Participant youth and partner organizations alike saw BEST grantees as critical community assets and essential to supporting youth’s academic and personal well-being. Moreover, many grantees exceeded their goals and positively impacted youth and their families.

III. BEST Program Services

As in prior years, some PY 2021–2022 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 (MGPTF, 2018). During PY 2021–2022, grantees provided BEST services in school, community-based, and juvenile justice settings. This chapter describes the services these grantees provided, and the total UOS grantees planned to provide and delivered, as compared to recent program years.

Key Findings

- **Grantees provided 122 percent of the UOS they planned to provide, and 8 percent more than in the previous program year.** Grantees planned to provide 99,479 UOS and they delivered 121,753 UOS. Grantees surpassed their planned UOS in four eligible service areas: Case Management, Parent Awareness/Training, Personal Transformation, and Street Outreach/Intervention. Units of service in Vocational/Job Training fell short of the planned UOS by 20 percent.
- **Grantees increased the Personal Transformation UOS they provided by almost 50 percent over the previous program year.** This was related to the return of in-person services in schools, which allowed grantees to attract more students to their programs during and after school hours.
- **Grantees increased the UOS they provided in Street Outreach by 7 percent over the previous program year,** despite having one fewer grantee providing these services.

Eligible Service Areas in PY 2021–2022

PY 2021–2022, BEST grantees provided services in five eligible service areas: Personal Transformation, Case Management, Street Outreach, Parent Awareness/Training & Family Support, and Vocational/Job Training.⁸ The total number of grantees providing services in each eligible service area varied widely, as did the number of eligible service areas in which each grantee provided services (Exhibit III-1). All 15 grantees provided services in Personal Transformation, 9 provided Case Management services, 2 provided Vocational/Job Training, and 1 provided Parent Awareness/Training. Notably, only 2 grantees provided services in

⁸ See Appendix B for a definition of each eligible service area.

Street Outreach; this was down from 3 in the prior year because a grantee that provided these services in the prior year did not receive a BEST grant in PY 2021–2022. Nine grantees provided services in two or more eligible service areas.

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

Grantee	Personal Transformation	Street Outreach	Vocational /Job Training	Parent Awareness /Training	Case Management	Total # of Service Areas
Alum Rock Counseling Center	✓				✓	2
Bay Area Tutoring Association	✓					1
Bill Wilson Center	✓		✓		✓	3
Caminar	✓			✓	✓	3
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	✓	✓			✓	3
ConXión to Community	✓		✓		✓	3
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	✓				✓	2
Girl Scouts of Northern California	✓					1
New Hope for Youth	✓	✓			✓	3
San José Jazz	✓					1
Teen Success, Inc.	✓				✓	2
The Art of Yoga Project	✓					1
The Tenacious Group	✓					1
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	✓				✓	2
Uplift Family Services	✓					1
Total Number of Grantees	15	2	2	1	9	

Planned Versus Delivered Units of Service

PRNS employs a formula that uses participants, sessions, and time per session to determine the quantity of services delivered by BEST grantees under their grants.⁹ As part of their PY 2021–2022 contracts, grantees indicated the number of UOS they planned to provide in each eligible service area. Exhibit III-2 displays the amended total projected UOS across grantees, organized by eligible service area, for both PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022. Significantly,

⁹ UOS = total number of sessions x average number of participants per session x average number of hours per session.

grantees provided 8 percent more UOS in PY 2021-2022 compared to the previous program year.

**Exhibit III-2: Planned and Delivered UOS by Eligible Service Area
(PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022)**

Eligible Service Area	PY 2020–2021		PY 2021–2022	
	Projected UOS	Actual UOS	Projected UOS	Actual UOS
Personal Transformation	39,519	37,865	47,553	56,509
Street Outreach/ Intervention	16,311	22,595	15,453	24,164
Vocational/Job Training	2,374	2,407	1,972	1,558
Parent Awareness/Training	4,318	3,590	4,408	4,775
Case Management	32,825	36,156	30,093	34,747
Emergency Services	9,177	10,200	-	-
Total Projected UOS	104,524	112,813	99,479	121,753

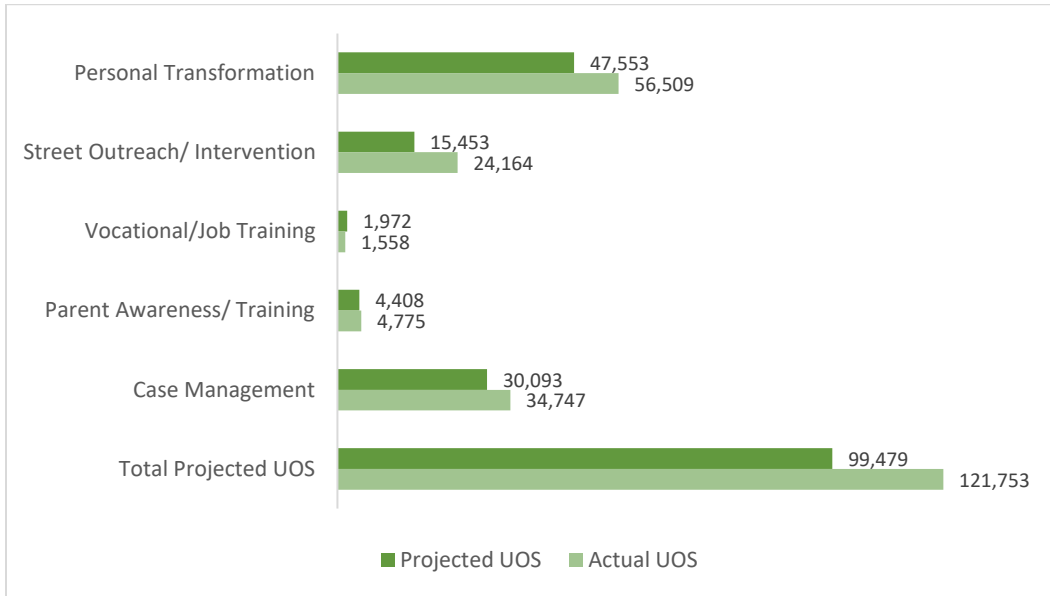
Source: BEST grantee contracts and contract amendments

Emergency Services was a temporary eligible service area created during the COVID-19 pandemic that was not continued in PY 2021 - 2022.

Overall, planned UOS decreased by about 5 percent from PY 2020–2021 to PY 2021–2022. However, there was a significant increase in planned UOS in the Personal Transformation service area, where grantees projected a 26 percent increase from the previous year’s actual UOS and far surpassed it by providing UOS that reflected a 49 percent increase. This includes the elimination of the temporary Emergency Services UOS and increased participation in school-based programming as schools returned to in-person services. Also notably, despite planning a 5 percent decrease from the previous year’s projections for Street Outreach, and one less agency providing Street Outreach services, actual UOS continued to increase from the previous year by 7 percent.

Despite this decrease in planned UOS, grantees provided 122 percent of the projected number of UOS (121,753 of 99,479). As Exhibit III-3 shows, grantees significantly surpassed their planned UOS in Personal Transformation, Case Management, and Street Outreach. Vocational/Job Training was the only service area in which fewer UOS were delivered than planned UOS.

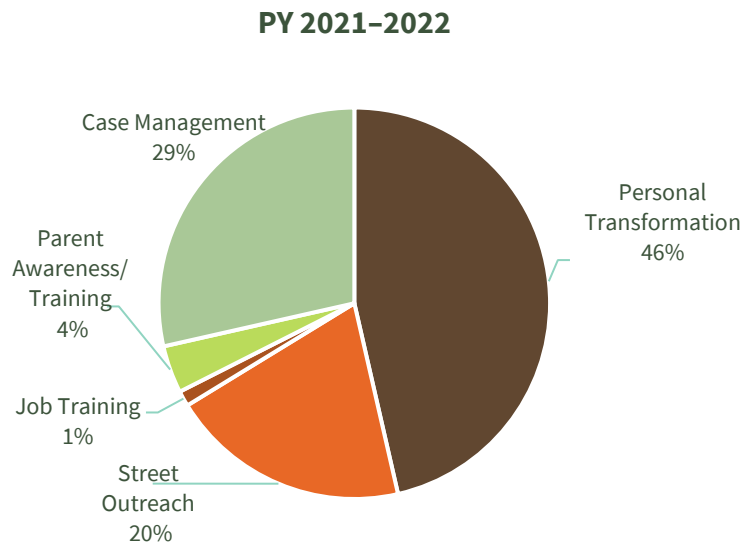
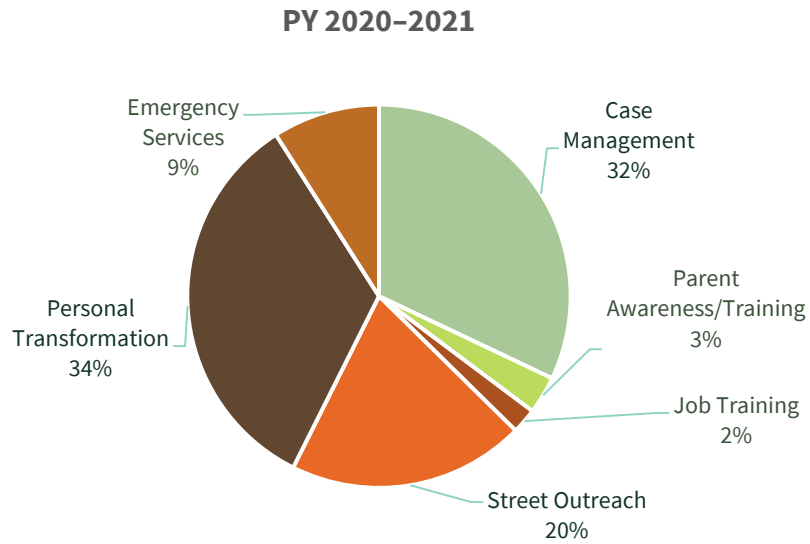
Exhibit III-3: Planned and Delivered UOS by Eligible Service Area (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST grantee contracts, contract amendments, and workbooks

Personal Transformation made up the largest share of UOS provided in PY 2021–2022 (46 percent), followed by Case Management (29 percent), and Street Outreach/Intervention (20 percent). The other eligible service areas represented far less of the total UOS delivered, with Parent Awareness/Training and Vocational/Job Training representing only 4 percent and 1 percent, respectively. Exhibit III-4 depicts the UOS delivered by eligible service area as a percentage of the total UOS delivered for both PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022.

**Exhibit III-4: Overall Distribution of UOS Delivered by Grantees
(PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022)**



Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

Summary

As schools resumed more consistent in-person schedules, BEST grantees were able to resume services in schools, exceeding their projections in the Personal Transformation service area. Grantees continued to respond to the need for services in the Street Outreach service area, with two grantees assuming the work that had previously been done by three.

IV. BEST Grants and Grant Spending

In PY 2021–2022, PRNS awarded \$2,658,192 in BEST grants to 15 CBOs. This chapter provides information about the funding BEST grantees received, the amount they leveraged through matched funds, and their expenditures during the program year. It also compares PY 2021–2022 grantee funding to funding in prior program years.

Key Findings

- **Overall funding for BEST programs increased slightly in PY 2021–2022 compared to the past two program years.** This was driven by increases in both matched funding and one-time funding, especially since base grant funding decreased slightly.
- **Most grantees were able to meet many of their goals, including setting appropriate goals for matched funding, obtaining matched funding, and expending grant funds.** Nevertheless, a small group were unable to meet some or all of these goals. Further investigation into grantee successes and challenges in meeting these goals may better inform future funding.

Current Qualified Providers and PY 2021–2022 BEST Grantees

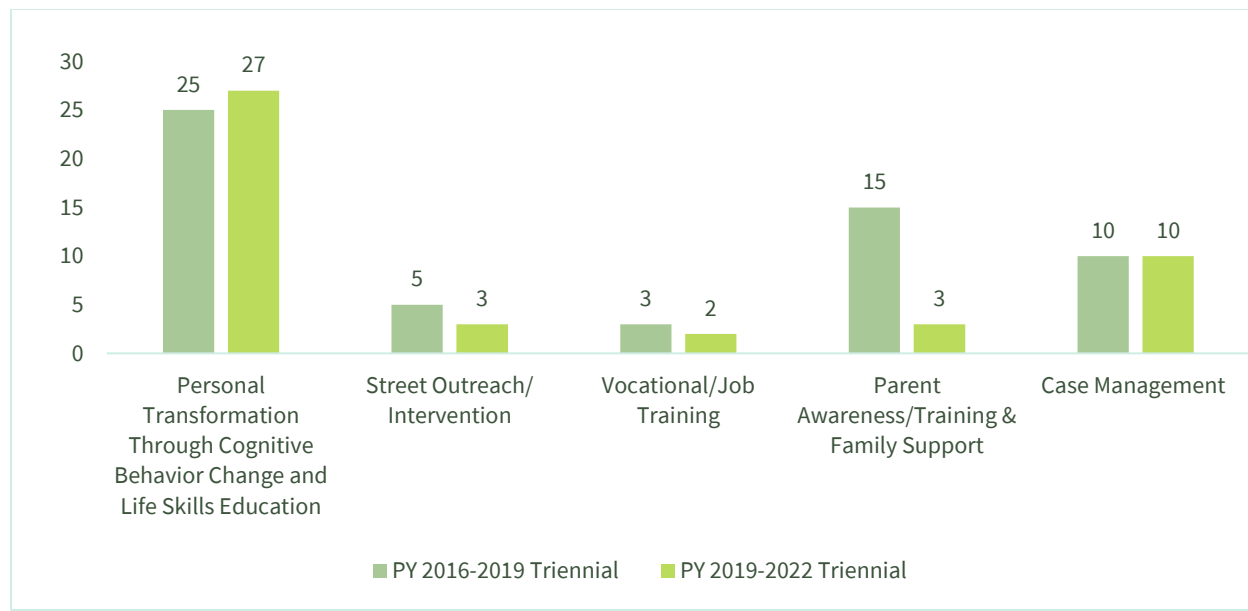
The BEST program typically operates on a three-year (triennial) cycle. For each triennial period, PRNS uses a request for qualifications process to identify interested and qualified CBOs providing youth services in San José. These qualified service providers are invited to engage in the MGPTF Technical Team Meeting and may be eligible for BEST funding. PY 2021–2022 was the third year in the triennial cycle.

As discussed in SPR’s two prior BEST evaluation reports (Levin et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2021), PRNS selected 28 qualified service providers for the triennial period that spanned PY 2019–2020 to PY 2021–2022, which was somewhat fewer than the 39 identified in the triennial period immediately prior to it (which ran from PY 2016–2017 to PY 2018–2019).¹⁰ As shown in Exhibit IV-1, despite the overall change in the number of qualified providers, the number of providers offering services in each of the five main BEST eligible service areas (which represents the BEST program’s capacity to provide planned services) remained mostly the

¹⁰ According to PRNS staff, applicants for the current triennium request for qualifications included 6 new agencies that had not applied previously and excluded 17 agencies that did not reapply (Levin et al., 2020).

same. The one exception is Parent Awareness/ Training, in which there were substantially fewer applicants.

Exhibit IV-1: Number of BEST Qualified Service Providers by Eligible Service Area (PY 2016-2019 and PY 2019-2022 Triennials)



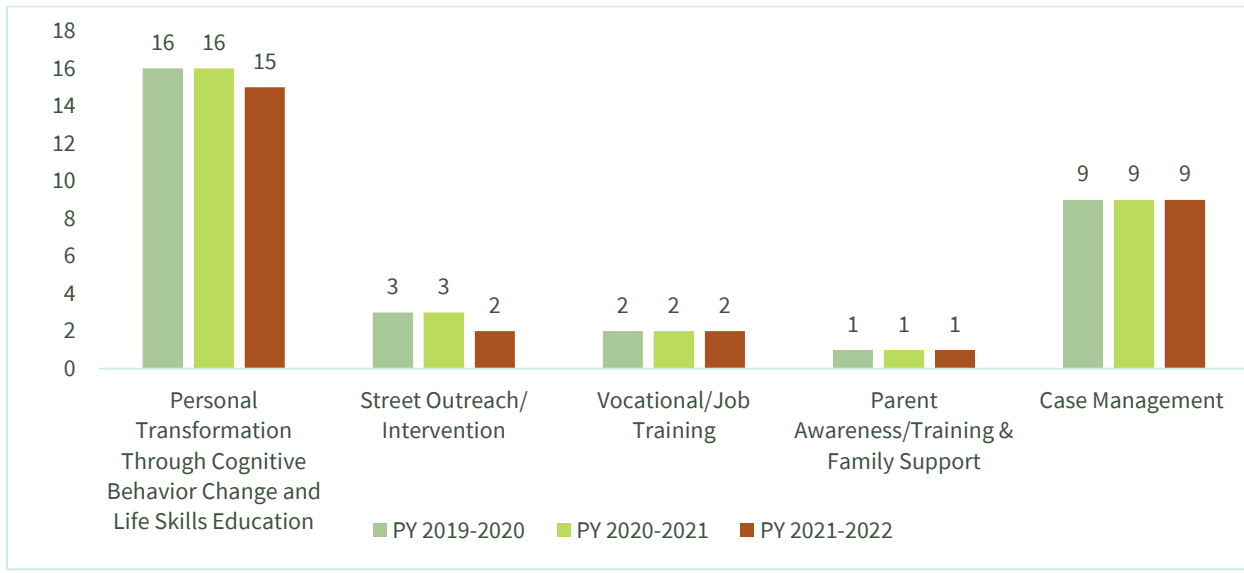
Source: BEST grantee documentation and contracts

Note: Qualified service providers can provide services in more than one eligible service area. As such, the numbers in the exhibit sum to more than the total number of qualified service providers (39 in the first triennial period and 28 in the second one). During PY 2019–2020 and PY 2020–2021, PRNS also provided funding to grantees for the provision of a sixth eligible service area pertaining to the provision of emergency services, allowing them to respond to COVID-19 pandemic conditions. These funds were not part of the request for qualifications since they were not part of BEST at that time.

Of the 28 qualified service providers in the PY 2019-2022 triennial period, PRNS awarded BEST grants to 15 grantees in PY 2021-2022. That is one fewer grantee than in PY 2020-2021 and two fewer than in PY 2019–2020, continuing the trend of slightly decreasing numbers of BEST grantees over the last six program years.¹¹ As shown in Exhibit IV-2, the number of PY 2021–2022 grantees providing services in each eligible service area remained mostly unchanged from the two prior program years.

¹¹ PRNS awarded BEST grants to 21 agencies in PY 2016–2017, 18 agencies in PYs 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, 17 agencies in PY 2019–2020 (although one was unable to complete its grant obligations), 16 agencies in PY 2020–2021, and 15 agencies in PY 2021–2022.

**Exhibit IV-2: Number of BEST Grantees by Eligible Service Area
(PY 2019–2020 through PY 2021–2022)**



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 sum to more than the grantees included in the exhibit for each program year (16 grantees in PYs 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 and 15 grantees in PY 2021–2022). PRNS awarded BEST grants to 17 organizations in PY 2019–2020, but one was unable to complete its grant obligations. Emergency Services is not included in the figure because it was a temporary service area created midway through PY 2019–2020 solely to respond to COVID-19 pandemic conditions and only continued through PY 2020–2021. It was not provided in PY 2021–2022.

BEST Funding Types and Levels

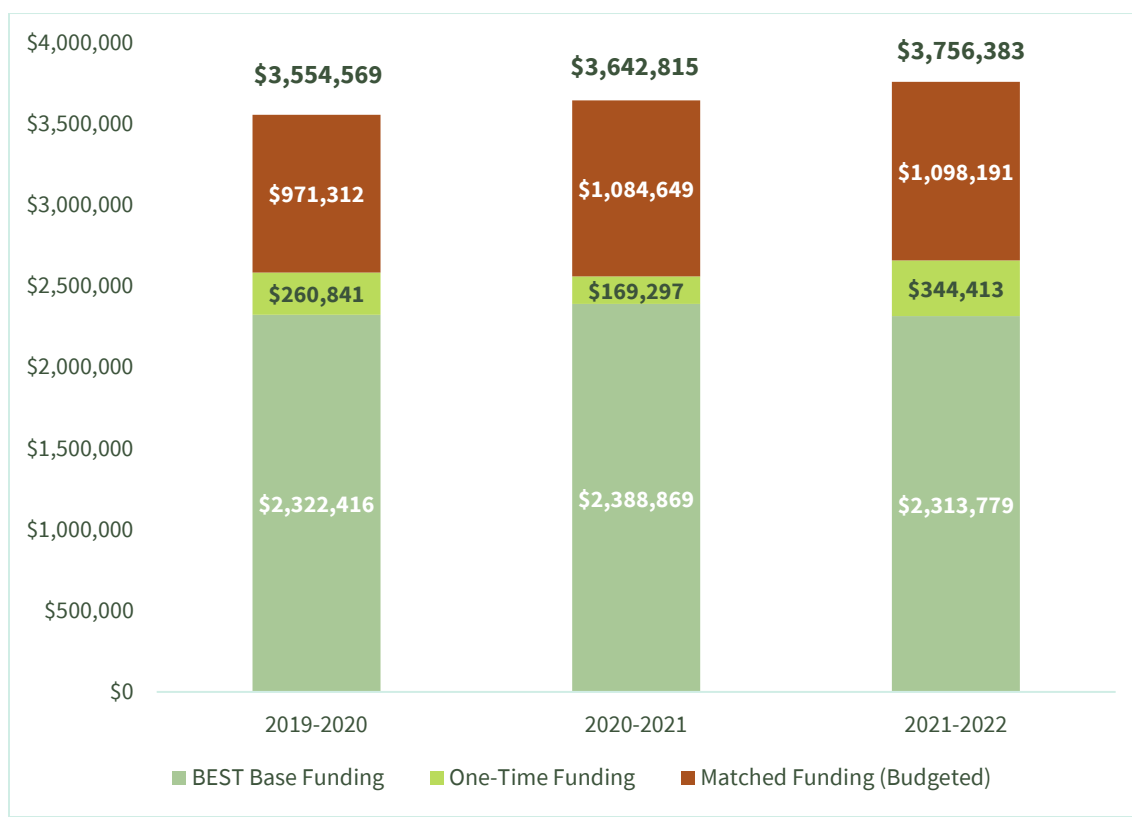
Grantees use three types of funds to pay for BEST services. First, PRNS supplies base funding, which is based on the UOS each grantee plans to provide in the eligible service areas. Second, PRNS supplies one-time funding, which can include support from emergency reserves, carryover funds (or unspent funds from previous years, related to decreased awards, defunded grantees, etc.), and funding for other modes of service delivery from the MGPTF, such as for emerging hot spots, late-night gym services, and other activities.¹² These first two types of funding comprise the BEST grants that PRNS awards. The third component consists of matched funding, which can come from various sources (e.g., school district funds, state grants, foundations, private donors, etc.) outside of PRNS’ BEST grant. As part of receiving the

¹² In PY 2021–2022, PRNS provided one-time funding for late-night gym services, which were not delivered in the prior two program years due to COVID-19; emerging hot spot services, provided for areas of more intense criminal activity; and an evaluation cohort stipend, which was unique to PY 2021–2022 and supported grantees in providing feedback around improvements to future data collection activities. These funds were awarded to select grantees; only some grantees received each type of one-time funding.

BEST grant, each grantee is required to provide matched funding that is a minimum of 20 percent of the base grant funds received.

Exhibit IV-3 shows the levels of these three types of funding in PY 2021–2022 and the prior two program years. As shown in the Exhibit, base grant funding decreased slightly in PY 2021–2022, compared to the prior two years. This is due in part to there being one fewer grantee than in the prior two programs years and PRNS’ elimination of Emergency Services as a service area.¹³ That said, one-time funding increased substantially in PY 2021–2022 (after having decreased substantially earlier in the pandemic), meaning that the overall amount funded through BEST grants in PY 2021–2022 increased slightly as compared to the prior two program years.

**Exhibit IV-3: BEST Program Funding by Type
(PYs 2019–2020, 2020–2021, and 2021–2022)**



Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

¹³ In all three years shown in the exhibit, grantees provided services in the five eligible service areas described above. During PYs 2019–2020 and 2020–2021, grantees also provided services in a sixth eligible service area, known as Emergency Services, which was added partway through PY 2019–2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Emergency services were not funded in PY 2021–2022.

The amount of matched funds grantees expected to generate was also higher in PY 2021–2022 than it was in the prior two program years, meaning that the overall amount of funding grantees budgeted for their BEST programs consistently increased over these three program years. However, as discussed below, a few grantees had difficulty meeting their match requirement, meaning that the total available funding was, in fact, less than the budgeted amount of matched funds shown.

Further funding details can be found below in Exhibit IV-4, which shows each grantee’s BEST grant amount, broken out into both base and one-time funding, the matched funding amount, and matched funding as a proportion of BEST grant base funding. Total BEST grant funding, which is the sum of base and one-time funds, ranged from \$15,801 to \$690,161 across grantees. This considerable variation in funding levels is expected given the widely varying numbers of participants each grantee served, the amount of UOS they planned to provide, and the level of matched funding they had at their disposal. In other words, this variation is by design and reflects a wide range of programs.

Also shown in Exhibit IV-4 is information about each grantees’ matched funding, including information on the amount of matched funding each grantee planned to obtain (budgeted), the proportion of this (budgeted) matched funding amount to their base grant amount, and information on the extent to which grantees were able obtain their matched funding goal. Overall, it is notable that 13 out of the 15 grantees met or exceeded their matched funding goals, which the grant specifies should be at least 20 percent of base grant funding. As shown in the exhibit, all grantees, except one, specified a budgeted matched funding amount that was at least 20 percent of the base grant amount, and that grantee was very close at 19 percent. Furthermore, while six grantees fell short of their matched fund goals (falling between 34 and 93 percent of these goals, as indicated by asterisks in the exhibit), four of these still met or exceeded their 20 percent goal. Only the grantee noted above and one other that fell short of its goal were below the 20 percent mark. These results suggest it may be worth exploring funding sources and what helped or hindered grantees in meeting their match goals as a way of helping all grantees better meet this goal.

Exhibit IV-4: Funding Types by Grantee (PY 2021–2022)

Grantee	BEST Grant Base Funding	BEST Grant One-Time Funding	Matched Funding (Budgeted)	Matched Funding (Budgeted) as a Proportion of BEST Grant Base Funding
Alum Rock Counseling Center	\$70,609	\$7,118	\$131,631*	186%
Bay Area Tutoring Association	\$47,307	\$6,419	\$9,462	20%
Bill Wilson Center	\$234,703	\$7,041	\$48,349	21%
Caminar	\$226,992	\$11,810	\$47,760	21%
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	\$562,069	\$101,862	\$104,008*	19%
ConXión to Community	\$123,084	\$8,693	\$33,120*	27%
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	\$90,058	\$7,702	\$102,924	114%
Girl Scouts of Northern California	\$15,341	\$460	\$164,218*	1070%
New Hope for Youth	\$529,283	\$160,878	\$105,857	20%
San José Jazz	\$68,000	\$7,040	\$183,747*	270%
Teen Success, Inc.	\$55,815	\$6,674	\$107,979*	193%
The Art of Yoga Project	\$60,255	\$6,808	\$12,051	20%
The Tenacious Group	\$58,237	\$6,747	\$11,647	20%
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	\$79,100	\$2,373	\$16,295	21%
Uplift Family Services	\$92,926	\$2,788	\$19,143	21%
Total	\$2,313,779	\$344,415	\$1,098,191	47%

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

*Indicates the grantee was between 34 and 93 percent of its match goal

Grant Funding and Expenditures

Exhibit IV-5 shows each grantee’s BEST grant funding and expenditures for PY 2021–2022. Overall, grantees expended 94 percent of the BEST funds awarded to them, which is the same as PY 2020-2021 and slightly lower than PY 2019-2020, when grantees expended 97 percent of their BEST grants. The underspending in PY 2021-2022 was driven by three grantees (it should also be noted that two grantees reported spending more than 100 percent of their grant budgets, which affects the overall average). Some further investigating may be useful to find

out the nature of the particular challenges that led to this level of underspending and to ensure it can be addressed adequately in future funding cycles.

Exhibit IV-5: BEST Grant Funding Compared to Grant Expenditures (PY 2021–2022)

Grantee	Total BEST Grant Funding (base + one-time funds)	Total Best Grant Expenditures	BEST Grant Expenditures as Percentage of Grant Funding
Alum Rock Counseling Center	\$77,727	\$77,727	100%
Bay Area Tutoring Association	\$53,726	\$53,726	100%
Bill Wilson Center	\$241,744	\$156,291	65%
Caminar	\$238,802	\$238,802	100%
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	\$663,931	\$588,815	89%
ConXión to Community	\$131,777	\$125,708	95%
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	\$97,760	\$97,760	100%
Girl Scouts of Northern California	\$15,801	\$15,756	100%
New Hope for Youth	\$690,161	\$687,936	100%
San José Jazz	\$75,040	\$79,424	106%
Teen Success, Inc.	\$62,489	\$62,489	100%
The Art of Yoga Project	\$67,063	\$67,063	100%
The Tenacious Group	\$64,984	\$64,984	100%
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	\$81,473	\$89,171	109%
Uplift Family Services	\$95,714	\$95,646	100%
Total	\$2,658,192	\$2,498,204	94%

Source: BEST grantee contracts and workbooks

Summary

Much about PY 2021–2022 BEST grantees and their funding levels was consistent with recent prior years. There was a slight decrease in the number of grantees, a slight increase in overall funding, and a small (but slightly increased) degree of underspending. For future operations, some additional investigating, looking into reasons why grantees were or were not able to obtain matched funding or expend grant funding, may prove useful.

V. BEST Participants

BEST programs enrolled more children and youth in PY 2021–2022 compared to the previous year. Some continued to face challenges due to the pandemic, for example difficulty recruiting or retaining participants and in-person service interruptions as COVID-19 cases surged with new variants. BEST grantees continued to serve a diverse set of participants, from school-aged children and their families to young adults from various communities across San José.

Key Findings

- **Fifteen BEST grantees enrolled 3,036 program participants in PY 2021–2022.** This is a 24 percent increase from the 2,448 program participants enrolled by 16 BEST grantees in PY 2020–2021.
- **One grantee (Caminar) enrolled approximately one-third (31 percent) of all BEST participants.** This grantee reached a wider service population by providing services to youth and their families in public housing settings.
- **In addition to enrolled participants, grantees made 2,640 contacts with youth through Street Outreach.** This is similar to the number of contacts made in PY 2020–2021.

Participant Enrollment

Just as grantees received different levels of BEST funding, individual programs varied in terms of the numbers of participants they served. As shown in Exhibit V-1, enrollment numbers for PY 2021–2022 ranged from 49 to 953 participants. The average enrollment in PY 2021–2022 was 202 individuals. In total, the 15 PY 2021–2022 BEST grantees enrolled 3,036 program participants, a 24 percent increase from the 2,448 program participants enrolled by the 16 BEST grantees in the year before (Exhibit V-1).

Eleven of the 15 grantees enrolled more participants in PY 2021–2022—on average, 73 more—than the previous year. The other 4 grantees enrolled an average of 25 fewer participants than in the previous program year. BEST grantees were able to adapt their programming and engage participants in new ways as they resumed in-person services. Although surges in COVID-19 cases and shifting pandemic guidelines created challenges for many grantees in PY 2021–2022 (as discussed in Chapter II), more grantees were able to meet target enrollment levels than in the previous program year, when services remained fully virtual.

Exhibit V-1: BEST Program Enrollment (PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022)

Grantee Name	Number of Participants Enrolled in PY 2020–2021	Number of Participants Enrolled in PY 2021–2022
Alum Rock Counseling Center	171	412
Bay Area Tutoring Association	96	80
Bill Wilson Center	198	128
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	99	163
Caminar	836	953
ConXión to Community	56	90
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	18	65
Girl Scouts of Northern California	179	194
New Hope for Youth	97	132
San José Jazz	44	72
Teen Success, Inc.	54	49
The Art of Yoga Project	200	263
The Firehouse Community Development Corporation	115	--
The Tenacious Group	118	111
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	81	175
Uplift Family Services	86	149
Total	2,448	3,036

Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: The Firehouse Community Development Corporation did not have a contract with PRNS in PY 2021–2022.

Notable in the numbers above is Caminar, which enrolled nearly one-third (31 percent) of all BEST participants. In fact, Caminar’s enrollment numbers increased from 836 participants in PY 2020–2021 to 953 participants in PY 2021–2022. This grantee continued to provide services in public housing settings in PY 2021–2022 and, as a result, reached a wider service population, which included youth and their family members outside of the 6-to-24 age range.

Street Outreach Contacts

One important caveat to the enrollment numbers shown in Exhibit V-1 is that they do not include youth contacts through Street Outreach services. That is because grantees do not track specific individuals in their street outreach efforts but rather count the number of individual contacts that they have. Street outreach services are important in that grantee staff use these contacts with youth to build their trust and subsequently engage and enroll them in other BEST (and San José Youth Empowerment Alliance) services. However, staff do not actively enroll individuals or collect information on them during street outreach activities since doing so might impede those trust-building efforts. Also, it is important to note that PRNS funds grantees for Street Outreach Intervention Services by Hot Spot Area only. In PY 2021–2022, two grantees—Catholic Charities and New Hope for Youth—conducted Street Outreach and related services to youth in 25 hot spot areas¹⁴ (one more than the previous program year). In PY 2021–2022, these two grantees reported an estimated 2,640 contacts with youth through Street Outreach.¹⁵ This is similar to the 2,646 contacts reported in PY 2020–2021.

Program Target Populations

The San José Youth Empowerment Alliance 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. Complete definitions are included in Appendix A, but, in brief, these four populations are defined as follows:

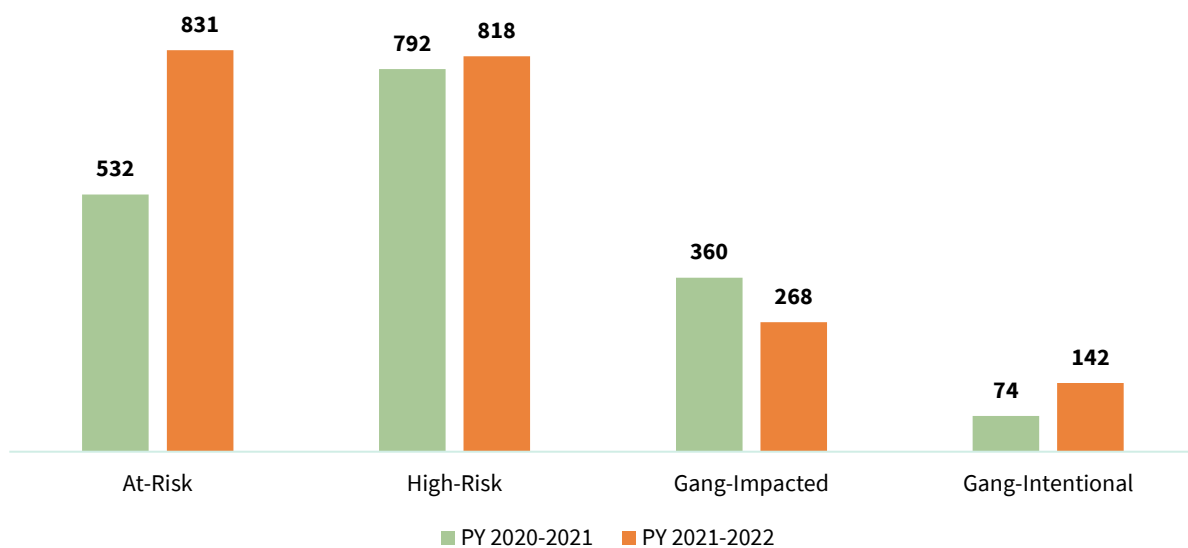
- **At-risk:** Youth who reside in high-risk communities with potential gang-risk characteristics
- **High-risk:** Youth who have higher levels of intensity at which they adopt characteristics associated with a gang lifestyle
- **Gang-impacted:** Youth who exhibit high-risk behaviors related to gang lifestyles
- **Gang-intentional:** Youth who self-identify as gang members or who are engaged in the gang lifestyle

¹⁴ Hot spot areas are geographic locations, often several square blocks, that experience higher rates of crime relative to comparable areas; hot spots are identified and periodically revised by the SJ Youth Empowerment Alliance in partnership with SJPd.

¹⁵ To calculate the total number of contacts, SPR staff added the number of estimated contacts at each Street Outreach location reported in grantee workbooks to arrive at the total estimated number of contacts in the program year. These numbers include duplicate youth within and across hot spot areas.

During PY 2021–2022,¹⁶ most BEST participants were designated as either at-risk (40 percent) or high-risk (40 percent). In contrast, 13 percent of participants were designated as gang-impacted and 7 percent as gang-intentional. These results are largely consistent with data from PY 2020–2021, except for at-risk and gang-intentional youth (who made up a smaller percentage in PY 2020–2021) and high-risk and gang-impacted youth (who made up a larger percentage in PY 2020–2021). Exhibit V-2 shows the number of participants enrolled by target population for PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022.

Exhibit V-2: Number of Participants Enrolled by Target Population (PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: In PY 2020–2021, out of the 2,448 participants BEST participants enrolled, grantees served 1,768 participants between the ages of 6 and 24; of these, 10 were not assigned a risk level. In PY 2021–2022, grantees served 3,036 participants; of these participants, 2,353 were between the ages of 6 and 24, and 294 were not assigned a risk level. Participants without an assigned risk level are not included in the figure.

Participant Demographics

The demographic information below (except in areas where risk levels are included) focus on BEST program participants of all ages. As shown in Exhibit V-3, a large proportion of BEST participants in PY 2021–2022 were Latinx (62 percent) and between ages 13 to 18 (56 percent).

¹⁶ Some of the 3,036 individuals served by BEST programs in PY 2021–2022 were parents or family members of participants. Examinations of target populations are limited to participants with assigned risk levels who were ages 6 to 24 at the time of enrollment.

Unsurprisingly given the focus of the program, 73 percent of all participants were age 18 and younger. Participant demographics in PY 2021–2022 changed from those in PY 2020–2021 in the following ways:

- A larger proportion of BEST participants were ages 13 to 18 (56 percent in PY 2021–2022, compared to 50 percent in PY 2020–2021).
- A smaller proportion of BEST participants were ages 25 and over (20 percent in PY 2021–2022, compared to 26 percent in PY 2020–2021).
- Participants who identified as female made up about half (51 percent) of BEST participants in PY 2021–2022, a decrease from 62 percent in PY 2020–2021.

The slight increase in the proportion of BEST program participants ages 13 to 18 tracks to the overall increase in participant enrollment across grantees in PY 2021–2022 and reflects the return to in-person recruitment and programming for school-age youth. Although the proportion of participants ages 25 and over decreased from PY 2020–2021, Caminar continued to drive BEST enrollment for this population. Caminar’s focus on serving multigenerational households in public housing apartment complexes resulted in 61 percent of its service population being ages 25 and over in PY 2021–2022 (compared to 75 percent in PY 2020–2021).

Forty-eight percent of female participants were in the at-risk target population (compared to 33 percent of male participants) and 43 percent were in the high-risk target population (compared to 40 percent of male participants). Conversely, male participants were more often in the gang-impacted population (16 percent compared to 5 percent of female participants) and the gang-intentional population (10 percent compared to 4 percent of female participants).

The proportion of female participants in the at-risk target population (48 percent) increased (compared to 30 percent in PY 2021–2022), whereas the proportion of female participants in the high-risk (43 percent) and gang-impacted populations (5 percent) decreased (compared to 53 percent and 16 percent respectively in PY 2020–2021). The proportion of male participants in the gang-impacted target population (16 percent) also decreased (compared to 26 percent in PY 2020–2021).

Exhibit V-3: Characteristics of BEST Participants (PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022)



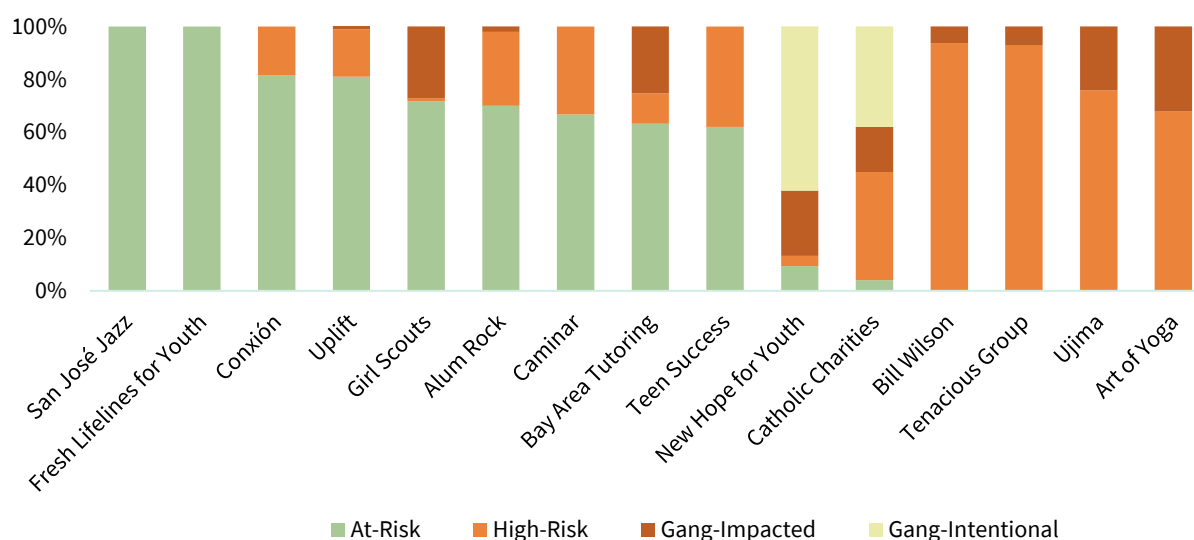
Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: In PY 2020–2021, grantees served 2,448 participants; of these, 83 did not specify a race/ethnicity, 10 were under the age of 6, and 22 had missing gender information. Out of the 1,768 participants who were ages 6 to 25, 10 were not assigned a risk level, 21 had missing gender information, and 10 identified as nonbinary. In PY 2021–2022, grantees served 3,036 participants; of these, 158 did not specify a race/ethnicity, 39 were under the age of 6, and 149 had missing gender information. Out of the 2,353 participants who were ages 6 to 24, 294 were not assigned a risk level, 93 had missing gender information, and 22 identified as nonbinary.

Participants by Target Population

BEST grantees were funded to work with participants at varying risk levels. Five of the 15 grantees reported enrolling participants in at least three of the San José Youth Empowerment Alliance -identified target populations, with most enrolling participants in at least two target populations. Exhibit V-4 illustrates the target populations grantees reported serving. Some, like San José Jazz, Fresh Lifelines for Youth, and Conxión, overwhelmingly served at-risk participants; the two Street Outreach/Intervention grantees—New Hope for Youth and Catholic Charities—primarily served participants in the gang-impacted and gang-intentional target populations. Although The Art of Yoga Project did not provide Street Outreach/Intervention services, this grantee also served gang-impacted target populations, through the services they provide to youth detained in juvenile hall.

Exhibit V-4: Target Populations Served by BEST Grantees (PY 2021–2022)



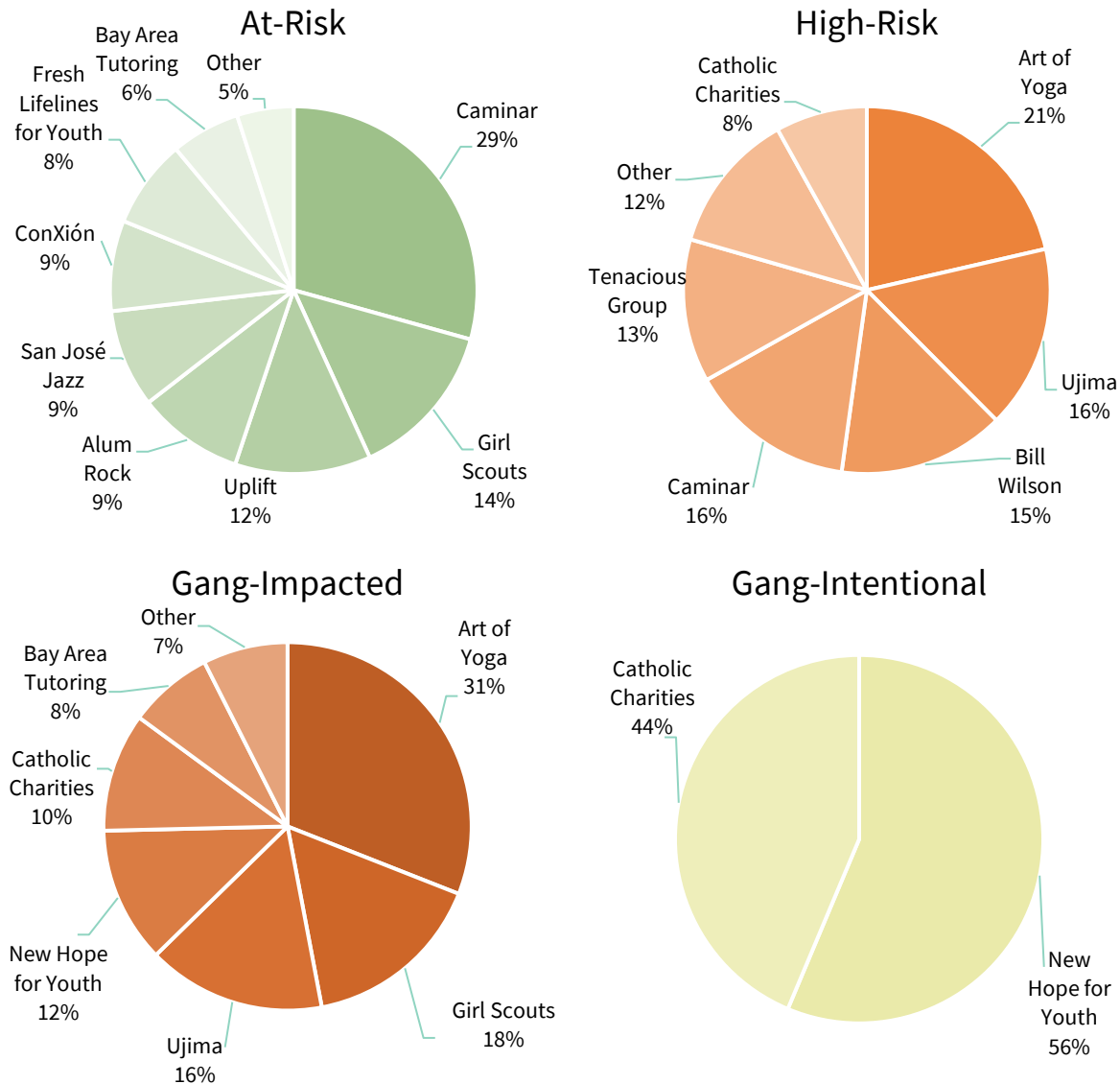
Source: BEST grantee workbooks

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. The total number of participants with non-missing risk level information included in the calculations is 2,059.

Because of their large target enrollment sizes combined with the types of youth they served, some grantees served a considerable proportion of youth in certain target populations. For example, The Art of Yoga Project accounted for 31 percent of gang-impacted participants, and New Hope for Youth accounted for 56 percent of gang-intentional participants. Exhibit V-

5 displays the grantee distribution within each target population and provides a visual depiction of the funding priorities in PY 2021–2022, the populations BEST served, and which grantees served them.

Exhibit V-5: Best Grantees Serving Each Target Population (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST grantee workbooks

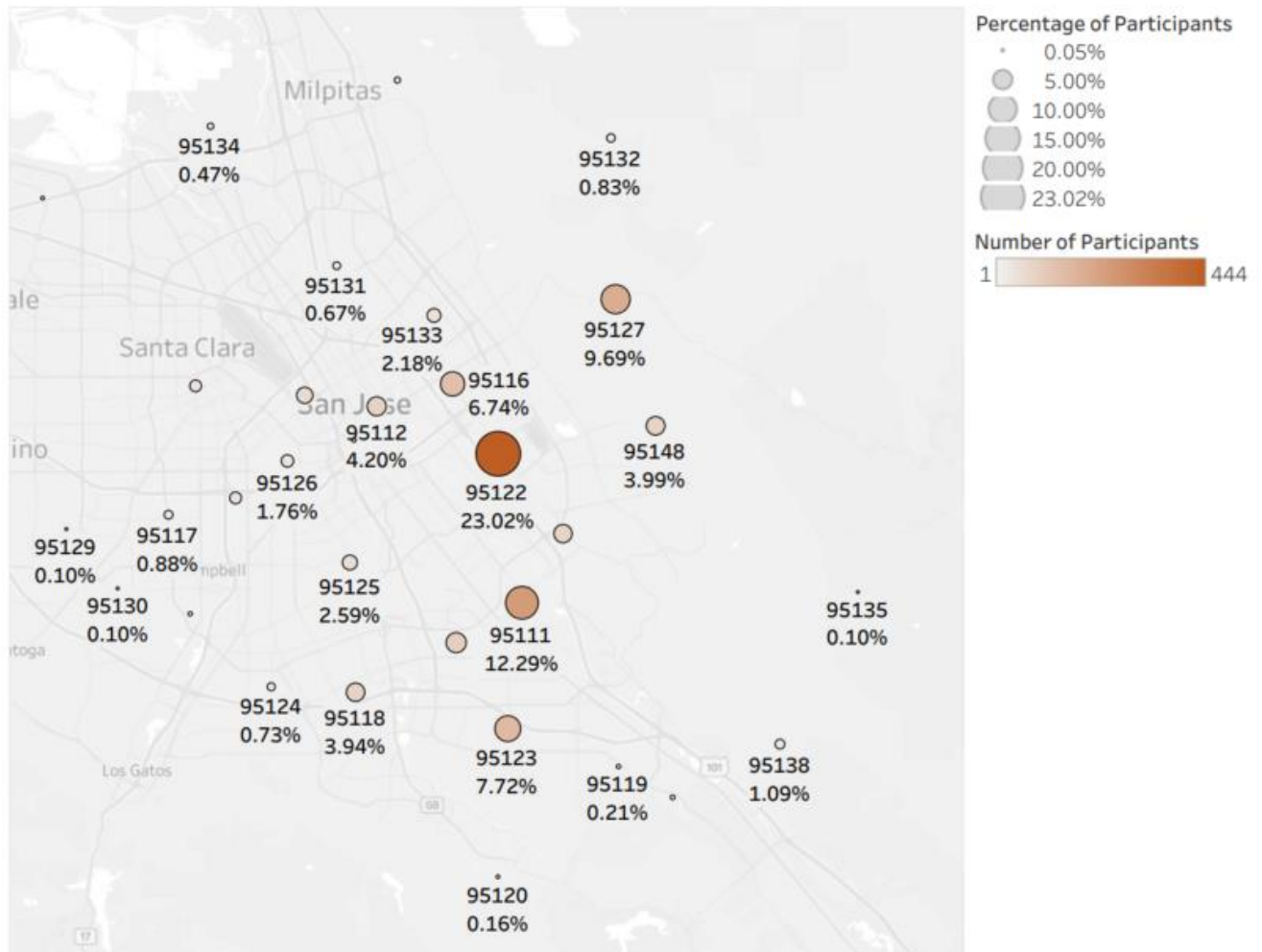
Note: “Other” represents grantees that served less than 5 percent of the target population.

Participant Residences by Zip Code

To be eligible for the BEST program, individuals must reside in San José. In PY 2021–2022, more than half (60 percent) resided in 5 of San José’s 59 zip codes: 95122, 95111, 95127,

95123, and 95116 (see Exhibit V-6). Fifty-five percent of participants in the gang-impacted and gang-intentional target populations lived in these 5 zip codes, as did 61 percent of at-risk and high-risk participants. These 5 zip codes correspond with 15 hot spots identified by the San José Youth Empowerment Alliance.

Exhibit V-6: Map Showing Percentage of BEST Participants in Each Zip Code (PY 2021–2022)

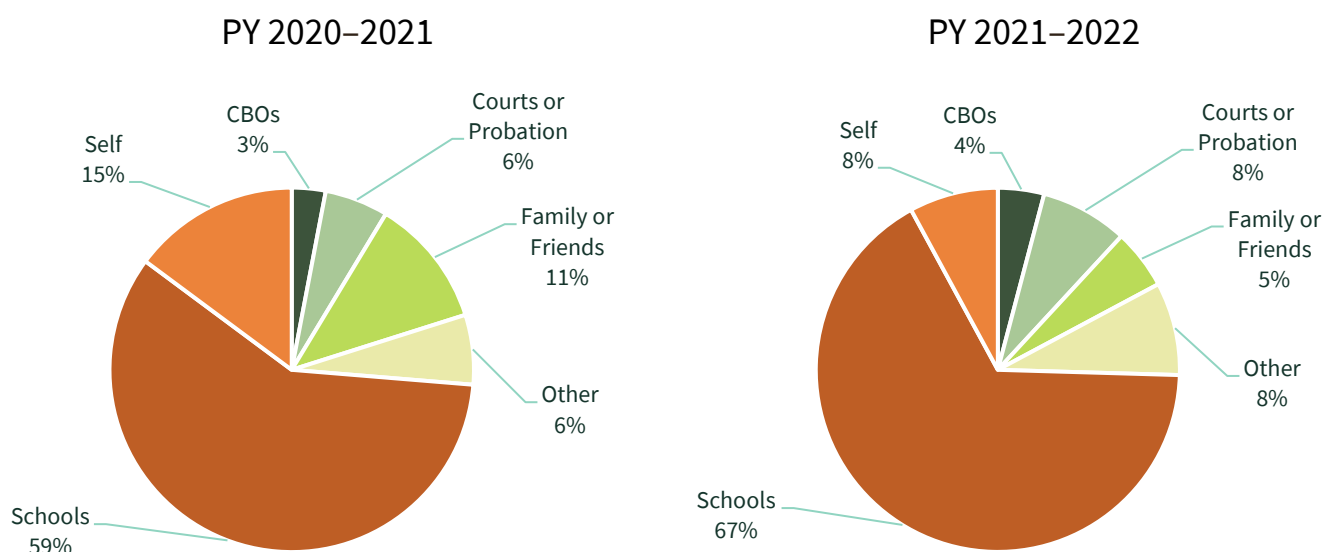


Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Participant Referral Sources

As in PY 2020–2021, schools were BEST grantees’ largest referral source. In PY 2021–2022, schools were responsible for referring 67 percent of participants to BEST, compared to 59 percent in PY 2020–2021. The increase in referrals from school likely reflects the overall increase in participant enrollment and in-person, school-based programming in PY 2021–2022. Referrals from CBOs (4 percent), the courts or probation (8 percent), and other sources (8 percent) all increased from PY 2020–2021. In contrast, self-referrals (8 percent) and referrals from family or friends (5 percent) decreased from PY 2020–2021. Examples of other referral sources in PY 2021–2022 include public housing and apartment complexes. Exhibit V-7 compares the various referral sources identified by BEST-funded programs across PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022.

**Exhibit V-7: Referral Sources for BEST Program Participants
(PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022)**



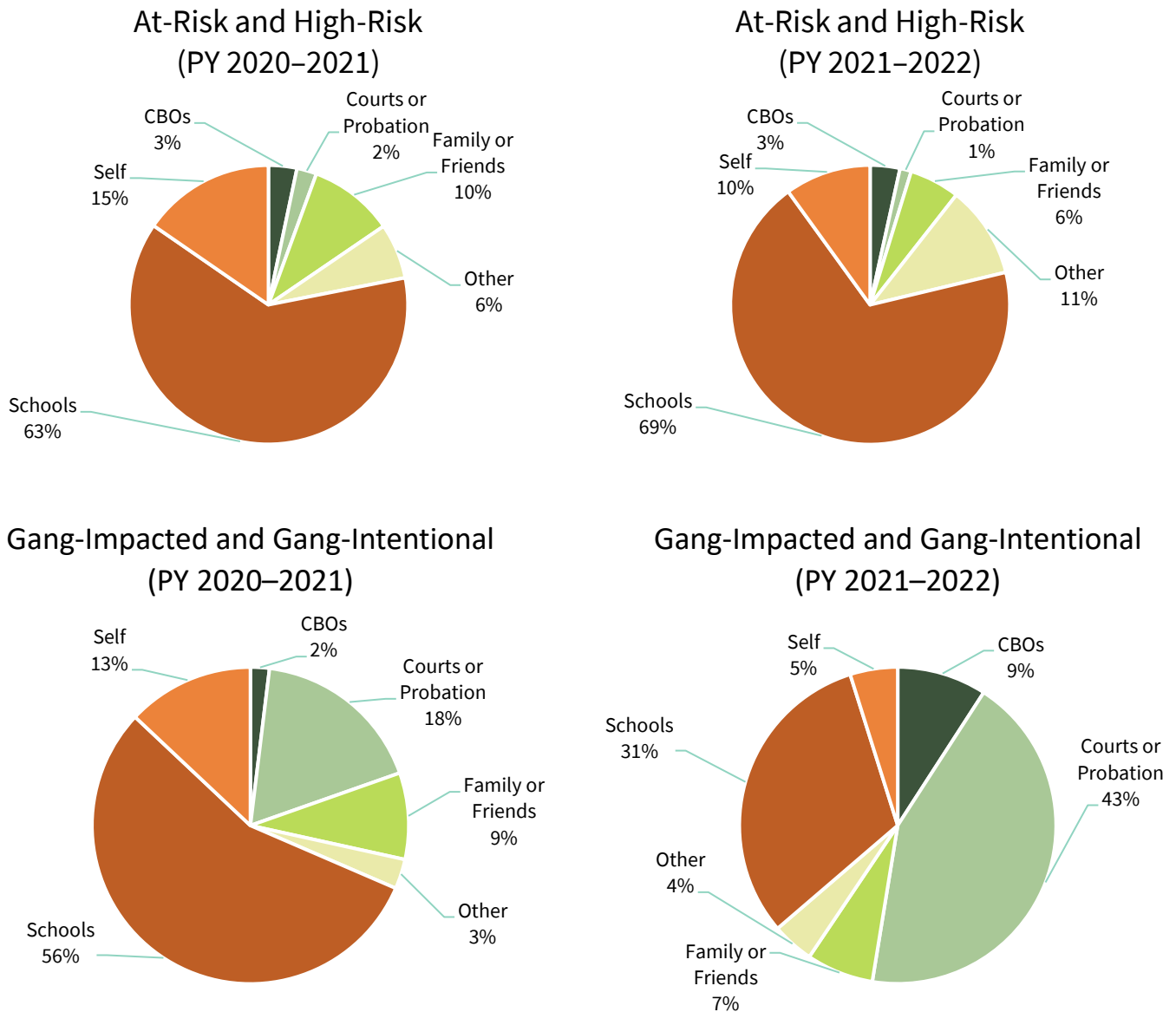
Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: Total number of participants with non-missing referral source information included in the calculations is 1,665 for PY 2020–2021 and 2,239 PY 2021–2022.

As in the prior program year, youth in the two lower risk categories (at-risk and high-risk) more frequently came to BEST programs through schools—representing 69 percent in PY 2021–2022. In PY 2021–2022 there was a notable increase in the number of gang-impacted

and gang-intentional youth referred by the courts or probation, as they returned to a full level of service after pandemic-related interruptions (Exhibit V-8).

Exhibit V-8: Referral Sources for BEST Participants by Target Population (PY 2020–2021 and PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST grantee workbooks

Note: Total number of participants with complete referral source and risk level information included in calculations is 1,578 for PY 2020–2021 and 1,945 for PY 2021–2022.

Summary

In PY 2021–2022, 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 2020–2021, but there was a shift in the participant enrollment levels of grantees, with most enrolling more youth than in the prior year.

VI. BEST Participant Outcomes Analysis

The primary objective of the outcomes analysis was to describe participant outcomes and to understand how these outcomes may have changed over time in relation to participant involvement in BEST. Given the program's theory of change, the evaluation focused on a relatively broad range of outcomes, including those related to satisfaction, various short-term psychosocial measures of well-being, and medium- to long-term, self-reported outcomes related to education, employment, and criminal justice involvement.

Key Findings

- **BEST participants were generally satisfied with the services they received through the program.** Youth (ages 14–24) reported somewhat higher levels of satisfaction than children (ages 7–13) with both groups being particularly satisfied with how the program's adults listened to what they had to say, their perceptions of feeling safe in the program, and that there was an adult in their life that cared for them.
- **Overall, BEST participants reported experiencing numerous positive psychosocial, educational, and employment outcomes.** Over 90 percent of youth survey respondents reported that they stayed in school, felt good about their ability to succeed, and were able to say no when pressured by friends to do something they did not want to do. Among child respondents, more than 80 percent of respondents reported positive outcomes on six of seven measures.
- **There were several statistically significant differences between the outcomes reported by more established participants compared to those newer to the program, suggesting an association between the program and these positive outcomes.** Established participants (both youth and children), compared to participants at baseline felt better able to say no when pressured to do something they did not want to do and that they knew an adult they could trust. In addition, established youth participants also felt more confident that they could handle what came their way, felt more comfortable solving conflicts, and were more likely to be employed than youth at baseline. Established child participants compared to those at baseline also felt they had a space in which they could safely talk to others.

Participant Survey Data Used in the Outcomes Analysis

The data used in the outcome analysis came from participant surveys administered during PY 2021–2022. Grantees administered one of three different surveys, with questions 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 measure participant (or parent) satisfaction with the program, psychosocial outcomes (e.g., resilience and self-efficacy), and other (self-reported) outcomes, including those related to education, employment, and criminal justice system involvement (the parent survey did not measure this last group of outcomes). Grantees generally administered two or three rounds of surveys during two time periods: fall 2021 and spring 2022. These surveys were administered in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The English language version of the kid, youth and parents survey can be found in appendix D.

This effort resulted in 142 completed child surveys, 781 completed youth surveys, and 26 parent surveys.¹⁷ The number of survey responses was substantially higher in PY 2021–2022 than in the prior two program years.¹⁸ These larger numbers were likely due, at least in part, to the reengagement by grantees with participants as they transitioned back to in-person services, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to subside. These larger response rates provided a sample size sufficient for the study team to examine results and to examine distinctions based on age, sex, race, and ethnicity using data from this just current program year alone. In contrast, the evaluation team had to pool results over two program years for the PY 2020–2021 report, due to the low numbers of survey respondents in the past two years.

One important consideration about the survey data is that survey responses were not uniformly reflective of all BEST participants:

- Some BEST grantees contributed a greater proportion of survey responses than their overall proportion of BEST participants.
- The demographic profile of an individual grantee’s survey respondents often did not match that of the program’s BEST participants.
- The participant characteristics of survey respondents did not match BEST program participants, as a whole.

These imbalances are not unusual in surveys of program participants, as some individuals are more likely to respond than others and some programs place a greater emphasis on participants completing a survey. To account for these and other differences between the survey sample and the total population of BEST participants, the evaluation team created

¹⁷ Due to the small number of parent respondents and the different nature of these respondents and the questions on the survey, the evaluation team has included a small section describing the results of the parent survey at the end of this chapter but has not included these surveys in most of the analyses in this chapter.

¹⁸ In PY 2019–2020, there were 133 completed child surveys and 394 completed youth surveys. In PY 2020–2021, there were 59 completed child surveys and 415 completed youth surveys.

poststratification weights and used these weights in all the participant analyses presented in this chapter.¹⁹

Analytical Approach

The analytical approach included two main strategies:

- A **descriptive analysis** of participant satisfaction with the program and several self-reported outcomes participants had obtained
- An **analysis of differences in outcomes** between respondents who had been in the program less than one month (i.e., baseline participants) and those who had been in the program for at least one month (i.e., established participants)

The first of these analyses was designed to provide a descriptive overview of participants' overall satisfaction with the program and assessments of different aspects of the program. Because many survey items asked participants' opinions about BEST or some aspect of program operations, participants cannot be expected to have an opinion about these until they have had a chance to experience them. Given this, these initial analyses focus solely on the distribution of responses overall and by major sociodemographic subgroups.

Descriptive Analysis

The following section focuses on a descriptive analysis of both participant satisfaction and self-reported outcomes around education, employment, and criminal justice involvement.

Descriptive Analysis of Participant Satisfaction

Measuring satisfaction with BEST services is important for understanding how program participants assess the value of their time in the program. It may also be useful for PRNS and grantees in assessing whether program improvements are needed or where to focus their efforts to improve. Accordingly, the surveys included multiple questions that aimed to measure participants' satisfaction with BEST. The responses to these questions provide important feedback on participants' overall experience in the program during PY 2021–2022.

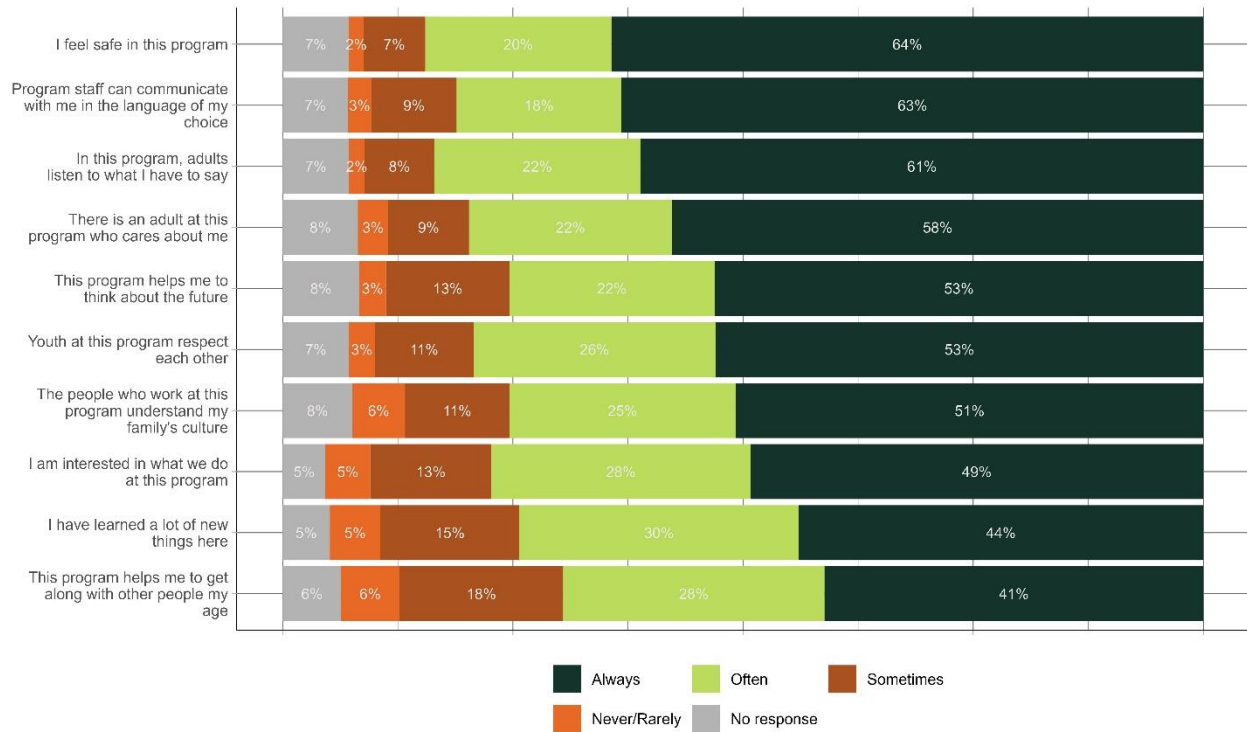
As shown in Exhibits VI-1 (youth) and VI-2 (children), overall satisfaction with the program was high. Most respondents answered “often” and/or “always” to most of the survey questions. As

¹⁹ Without weighting, all sample members have the same “importance.” Weighting changes this, so that a single respondent may “count” as more or less than one respondent depending on whether a category that 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.

in prior years’ analyses, respondents appeared to be particularly satisfied with how well adults in the program listened to what youth have to say, their perception of safety within the program, and the ability of program staff to communicate in participants’ own languages and to understand participants’ cultures (Levin et al., 2021, 2022). The perception of safety, in particular, is on par with or has increased over the past two program years, which suggests that staff have helped to create a safe space for their youth participants.

As in PY 2020–2021, the items that received somewhat lower ratings from both youth and child respondents were those related to the program’s ability to help participants work together in learning new things. 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 “I have learned a lot of new things at this program.”

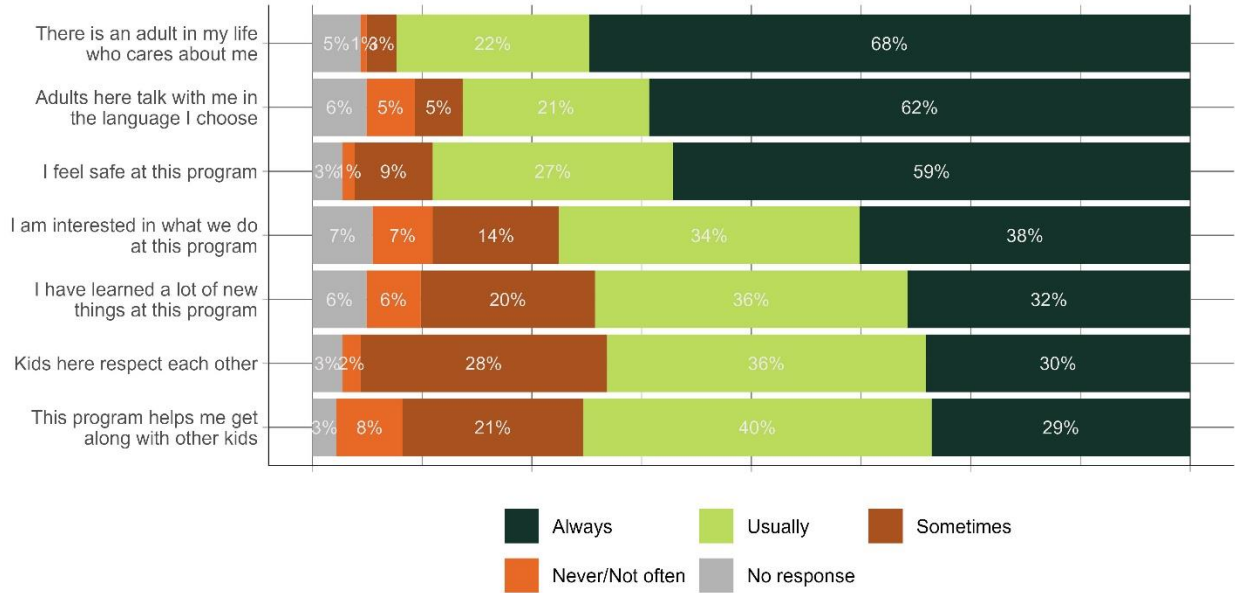
Exhibit VI-1: Satisfaction with BEST Program for Youth Participants, Ages 14–24 (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST youth surveys

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

Exhibit VI-2: Satisfaction with BEST Program for Child Participants Ages 7–13 (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST child surveys

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

Self-Reported Medium and Long-Term Outcomes

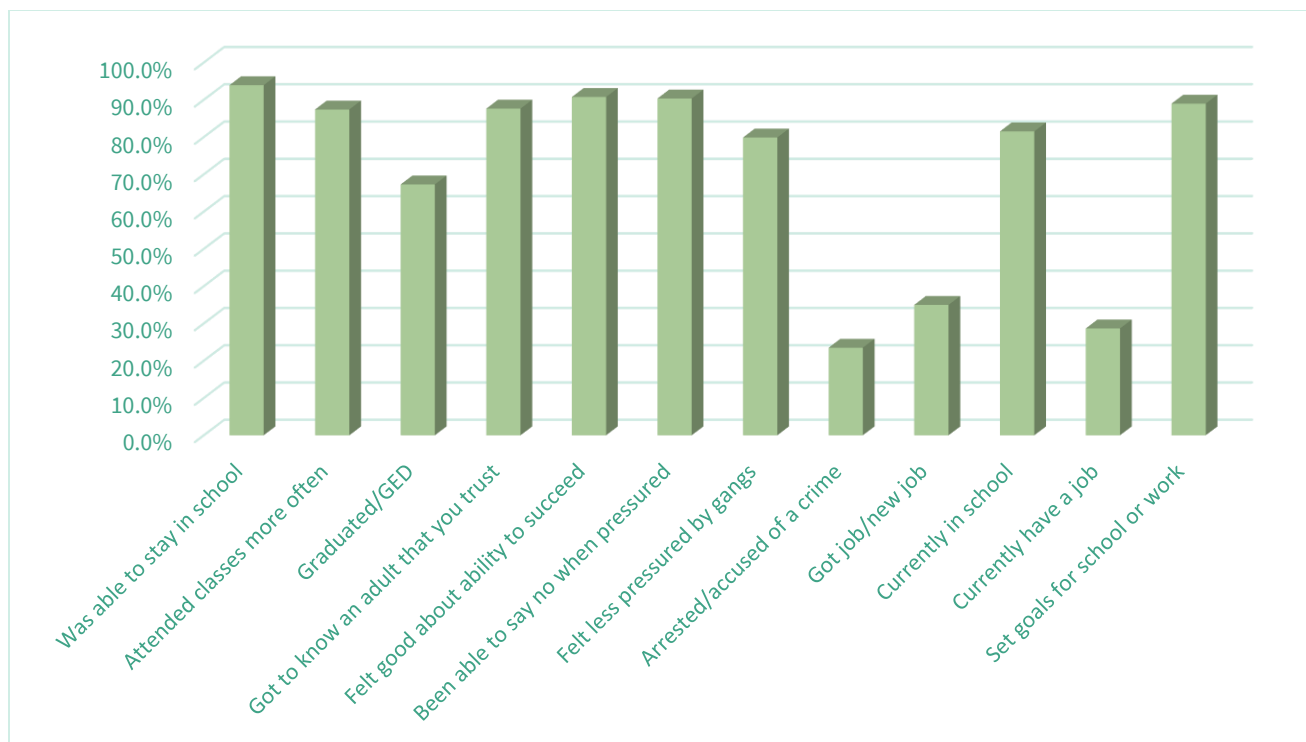
The PY 2021–2022 participant surveys included a new section designed to measure self-reported, medium and long-term outcomes related to education, employment, and criminal justice involvement (see Exhibit I-1 for a reminder about these program outcomes). There are several challenges with self-reported data on these types of outcomes, including concerns about accuracy and a desire by respondents to report more positive outcomes than were actually obtained. However, other data sources that may be more reliable, such as administrative data from public agencies, were not available.²⁰

Exhibit VI-3 describes the responses to these new questions for youth respondents. Overall, responses from BEST youth participants point to positive outcomes for youth in many areas, with over 90 percent of youth respondents reporting that they stayed in school, felt good about their ability to succeed, and were able to say no when pressured by friends to do

²⁰ As described in the PY 2019–2020 report (Levin et al., 2020), the evaluation team has previously explored obtaining administrative data. However, the rate of consent for administrative data collection was low and the number of agencies needed (there are 17 school districts alone in San José) was very high. As such, administrative data collection was decided not to be feasible for the given budget and overall design.

something they did not want to do. Further, between 80 and 90 percent of youth respondents reported attending classes more often than they had before, feeling less pressured to engage in gang activities, getting to know an adult they could trust, and currently being in school. Other responses were less promising, but often were outcomes that take longer to achieve or are not entirely age appropriate for all youth, such as graduating from school or getting a job. Fewer than one-fourth of all respondents reported being arrested or accused of a crime.

Exhibit VI-3: Self-Reported Outcomes for Youth Participants, Ages 14–24 (PY 2021–2022)



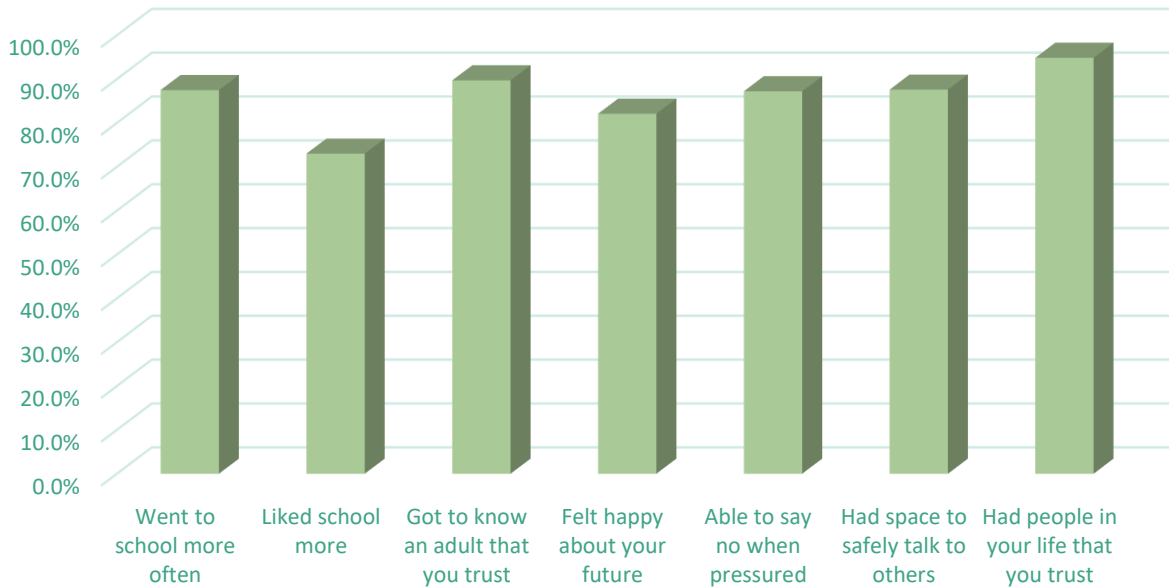
Source: BEST youth surveys

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

Responses from the child survey on these medium and long-term outcomes are shown in Exhibit VI-4. Because some of the outcomes included in the youth survey are inappropriate for younger children, only a subset of these same questions were included on the child survey.²¹ As can be seen in Exhibit VI-4, more than 80 percent of respondents reported positive outcomes for all but one of the measures.

²¹ Additionally, some of the questions were re-worded slightly to be easier for younger children to understand/interpret.

Exhibit VI-4: Self-Reported Outcomes for Child Participants, Ages 7-13 (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST child surveys

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

Differences in Outcomes Based on Length of Time in Program

The second set of analyses conducted for this report explores whether program experience is associated with improvements in participant outcomes. It does so by examining whether “established participants,” or participants who had been in their programs for one month or more, showed stronger outcomes than “baseline participants,” or participants who had been in the program for less than one month. Another way to think about this approach is akin to a pre-post analysis where baseline participants are the “pre” program participants, given their limited exposure to program services, while established participants are “post” program participants, given their more extensive exposure to program services.

The proportion of survey respondents by length of participation in the program is shown in Exhibit VI-5.²²

²² The relatively 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 are not as precise as they could have been. Small sample sizes can increase the likelihood of Type II errors, which occur when researchers fail to observe a difference when in truth there is one.

**Exhibit VI-5: Distribution of BEST Participants by Length of Participation
(PY 2021–2022)**

Length of Participation	Youth Survey	Child Survey
Less than a month (baseline participants)	14.0%	18.8%
A month or more (established participants)	86.0%	81.2%

Source: BEST participant surveys

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

Analyzing differences between established and baseline BEST participants’ outcomes is a potential indicator of whether the program had an effect on 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 have been 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 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.²³ 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.

Because this approach does not measure changes within individual participants, but rather between two distinct groups of participants, comparisons between these 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 lends greater confidence that the pre- and post- groups were comparable.²⁴

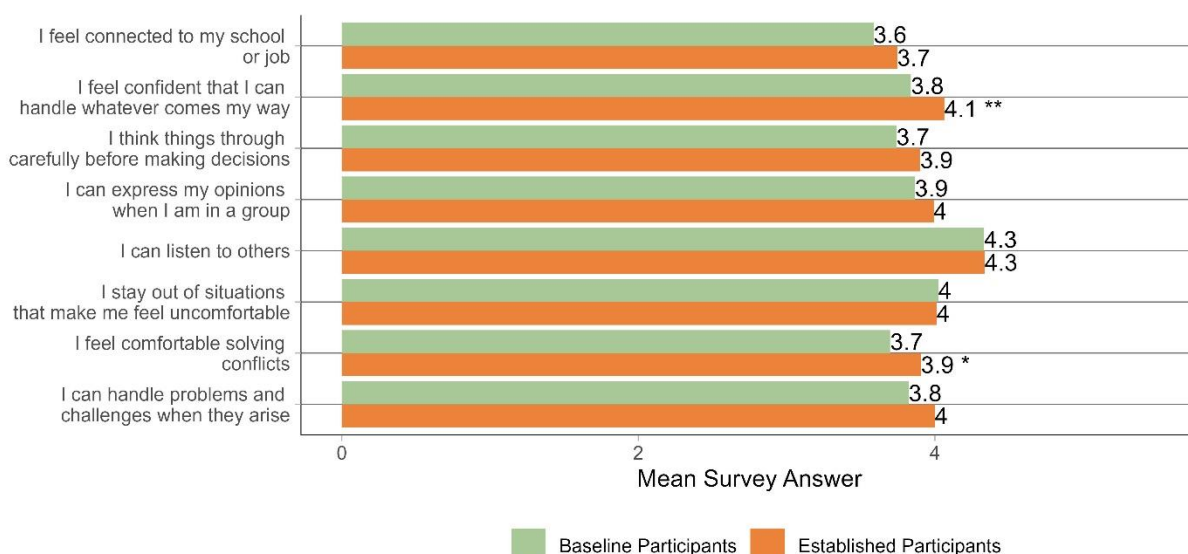
²³ The anonymous nature of the participant surveys means that respondents could not be matched with BEST program data containing service dosage for program participants. Therefore, an estimation of the correlation between service dosage and pre–post outcome changes could not be conducted.

²⁴ A significant limitation to this analysis (or any similar analysis) is that there may be substantial differences in characteristics that were not measured that could have important impacts on the outcomes observed.

Comparison of Psychosocial Outcomes

The first comparison the evaluation team made was between baseline and established participants across eight separate indicators of psychosocial well-being. Exhibit VI-6 presents the findings of these comparisons for the youth survey. All survey items were measured using a Likert scale with values ranging from 1 to 5.

Exhibit VI-6: Comparison of Psychosocial Outcomes for Baseline and Established BEST Youth Participants, Ages 14–24 (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST participant surveys

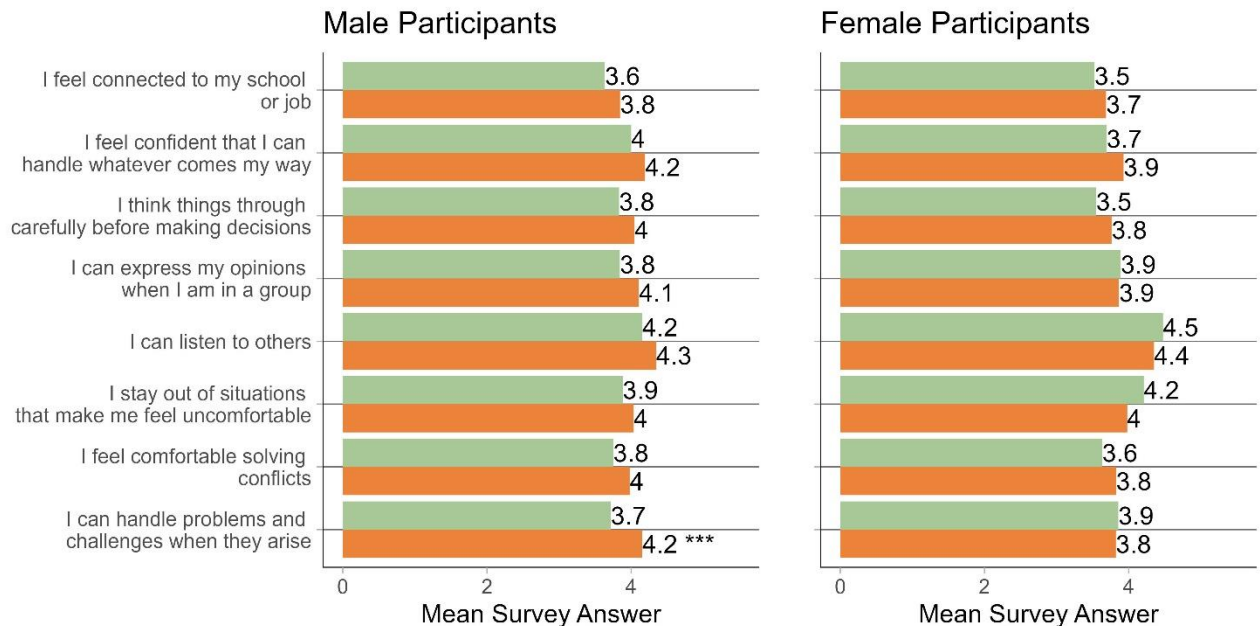
Note: Results are weighted to adjust for differences between survey takers and BEST participants overall.

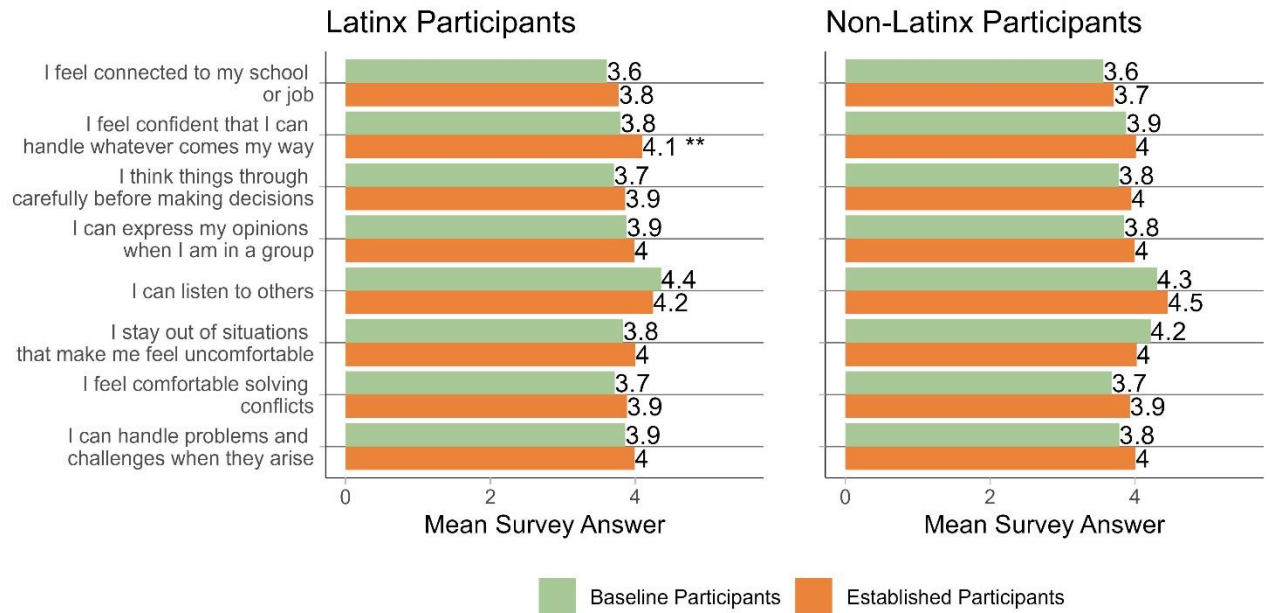
* Statistically significant at 90%; ** Statistically significant at 95%

As seen in this exhibit, there were few differences between the average scores of established youth participants and those of baseline participants. The only items for which there was a significant difference were participants' confidence that they can handle whatever comes their way and their comfort in solving conflicts. For these items, established participants reported a higher overall score than did baseline participants, perhaps reflecting the program's ability to provide participants with tools to handle and overcome challenges. But for the remaining six items, there were no statistical differences between established and baseline participants. This differs from results presented in prior years' reports, in which established participants had consistently higher scores on these eight psychosocial outcomes than did baseline participants.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the lack of significant differences between baseline and established participants, there were relatively few differences in these comparisons by subgroup (Exhibit VI-7). A small number of the comparisons do, in fact, show statistical differences within specific subgroups. For example, compared with baseline participants with the same characteristics, established younger participants (ages 14-18) were more likely to report feeling safe in the program, established male participants were more likely to report that they were comfortable handling problems and challenges when they arrive, and established Latinx participants were more confident they could handle whatever comes their way. Overall, however, the number of significant differences within these subgroups is less than one would expect by sheer chance, suggesting that there are no clear patterns of differences on these psychosocial outcomes by age, sex, race, or ethnicity.

Exhibit VI-7: Psychosocial Outcomes for BEST Youth Participants, Ages 14–24, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity (PY 2021-2022)





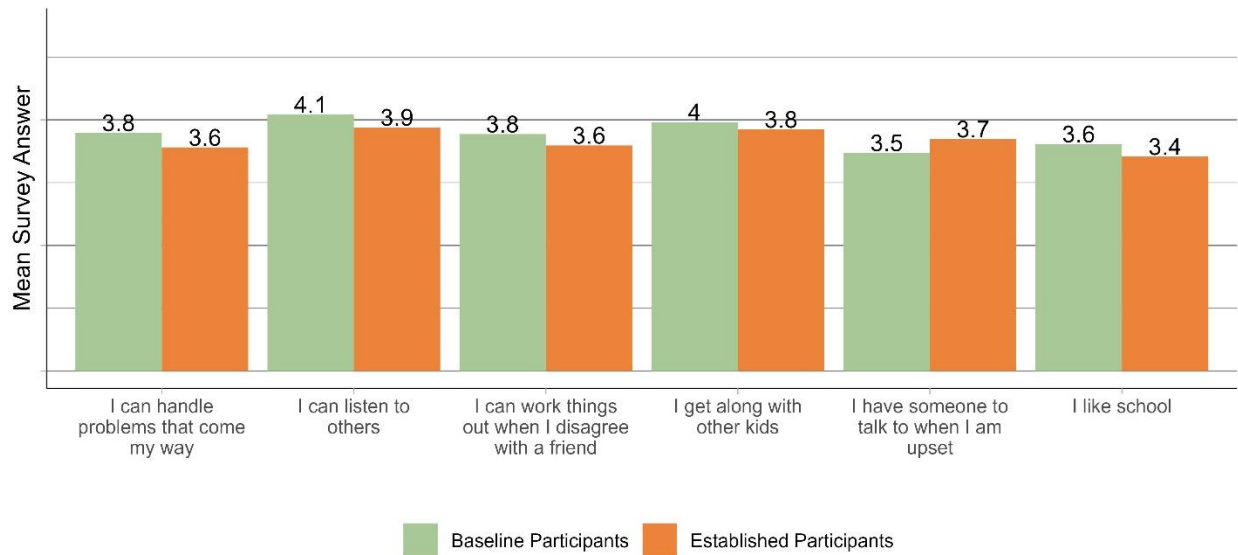
Source: BEST participant surveys

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

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

The findings from the child survey reveal a somewhat different picture compared to the youth survey (Exhibit VI-8). For all but one measure, established program participants had slightly *lower* average scores compared to those at baseline. However, these differences are very small, and none are statistically significant.

Exhibit VI-8: Psychosocial Outcomes for BEST Child Participants, Ages 7–13 (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST participant surveys

Note: Results are weighted to adjust for differences between survey takers and BEST participants overall. None of the difference shown were statistically significant.

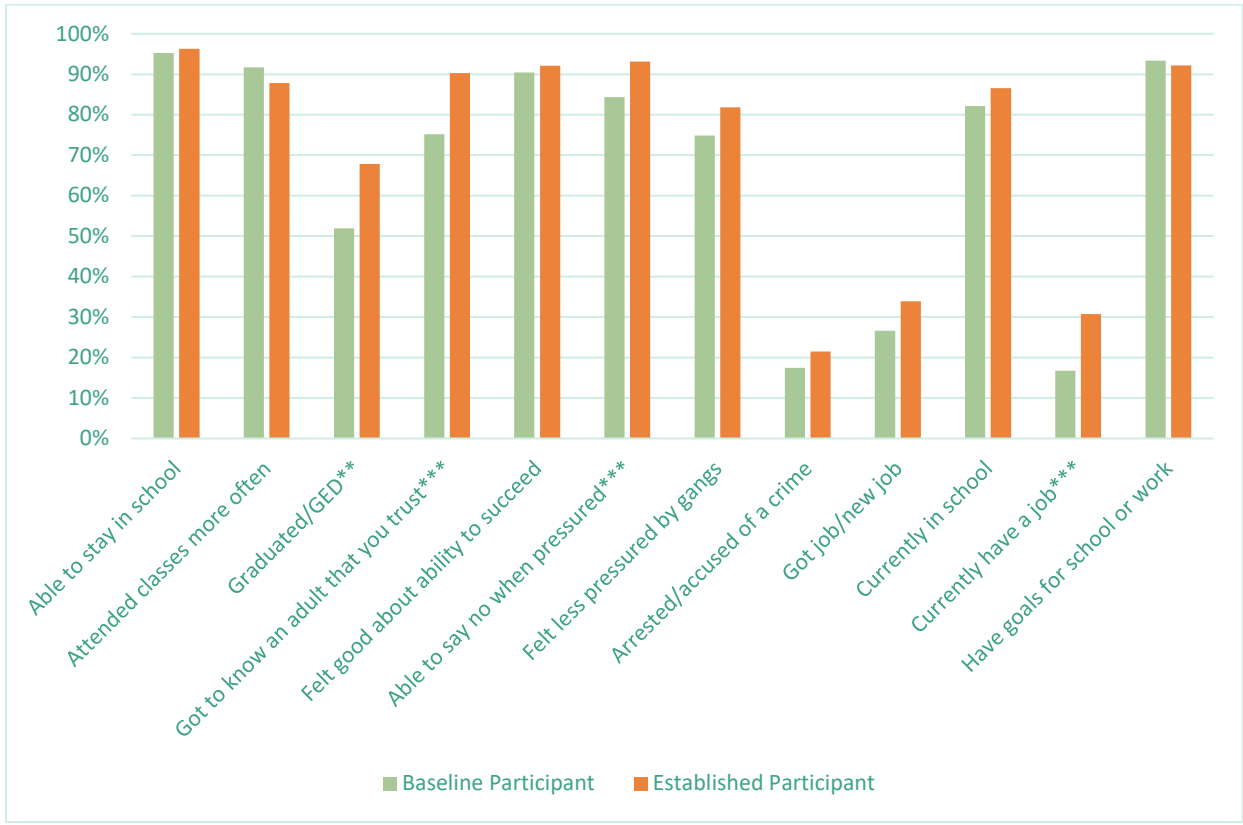
Comparisons of Other Outcomes

In addition to psychosocial outcomes, the evaluation team also examined differences between baseline and established participants on various educational, employment, and criminal justice related outcomes. Exhibit VI-9 shows these comparisons for youth participants.

Some of these comparisons are not entirely valid, in that some of the measures can only increase over time. Given that, it stands to reason that established participants will report higher levels on these measures compared to baseline students. For instance, established participants are significantly more likely to have graduated (from middle school or high school) or obtained their GED since more time has passed for them and they are closer to graduating. It also likely explains why established participants have higher rates of having been arrested or accused of a crime.

However, not all the measures are structured in this way, and there are still some significant differences between established and baseline participants. For example, established participants were more likely to report having gotten to know an adult they could trust, being able to say no when pressured by a friend to do something they did not want to do, and having a job at the time of the survey.

Exhibit VI-9: Educational, Employment, and Criminal Justice Outcomes for BEST Youth Participants, Ages 14–24 (PY 2021–2022)



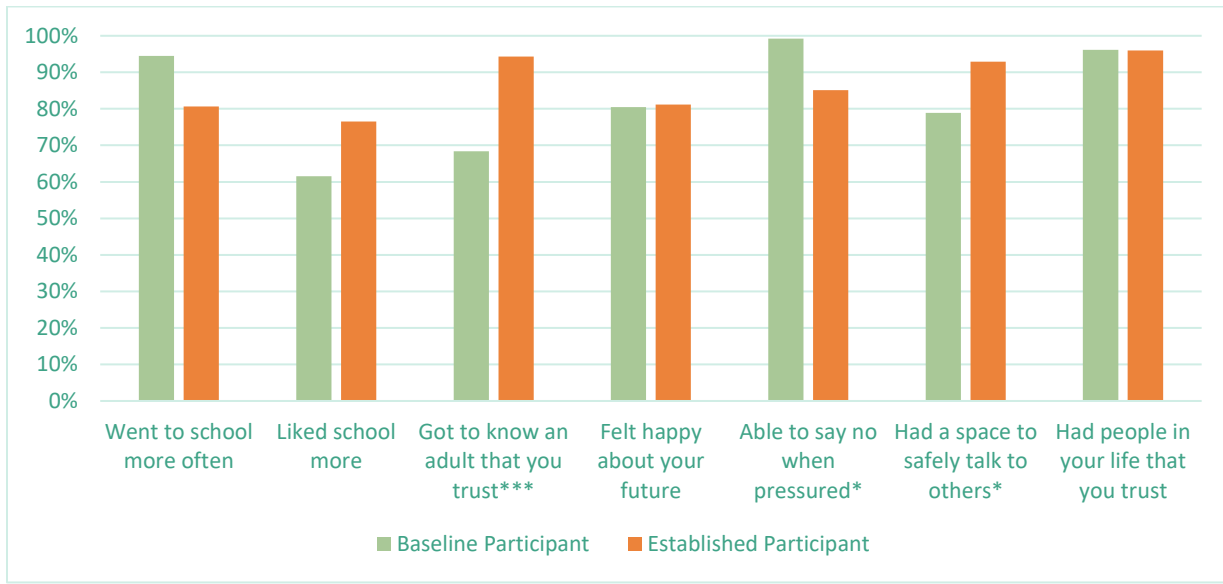
Source: BEST participant surveys

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

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

Data for child participants look somewhat different, with only one significant difference in the comparisons reaching at least the 95 percent confidents level, in part because of the much smaller sample size for these surveys. Results of these comparisons are shown in Exhibit VI-10. As seen in this exhibit, baseline participants were higher on some outcomes, though the only measure for which this was significant was their ability to say no when pressured by a friend to do something they did not want to do. In contrast, established participants were more likely to report having gotten to know an adult that they trusted and to have a space they felt they could safely talk with others.

Exhibit VI-10: Educational, Employment, and Criminal Justice Outcomes for BEST Child Participants, Ages 7–13 (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST participant surveys

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

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

Parent Experiences Survey Data

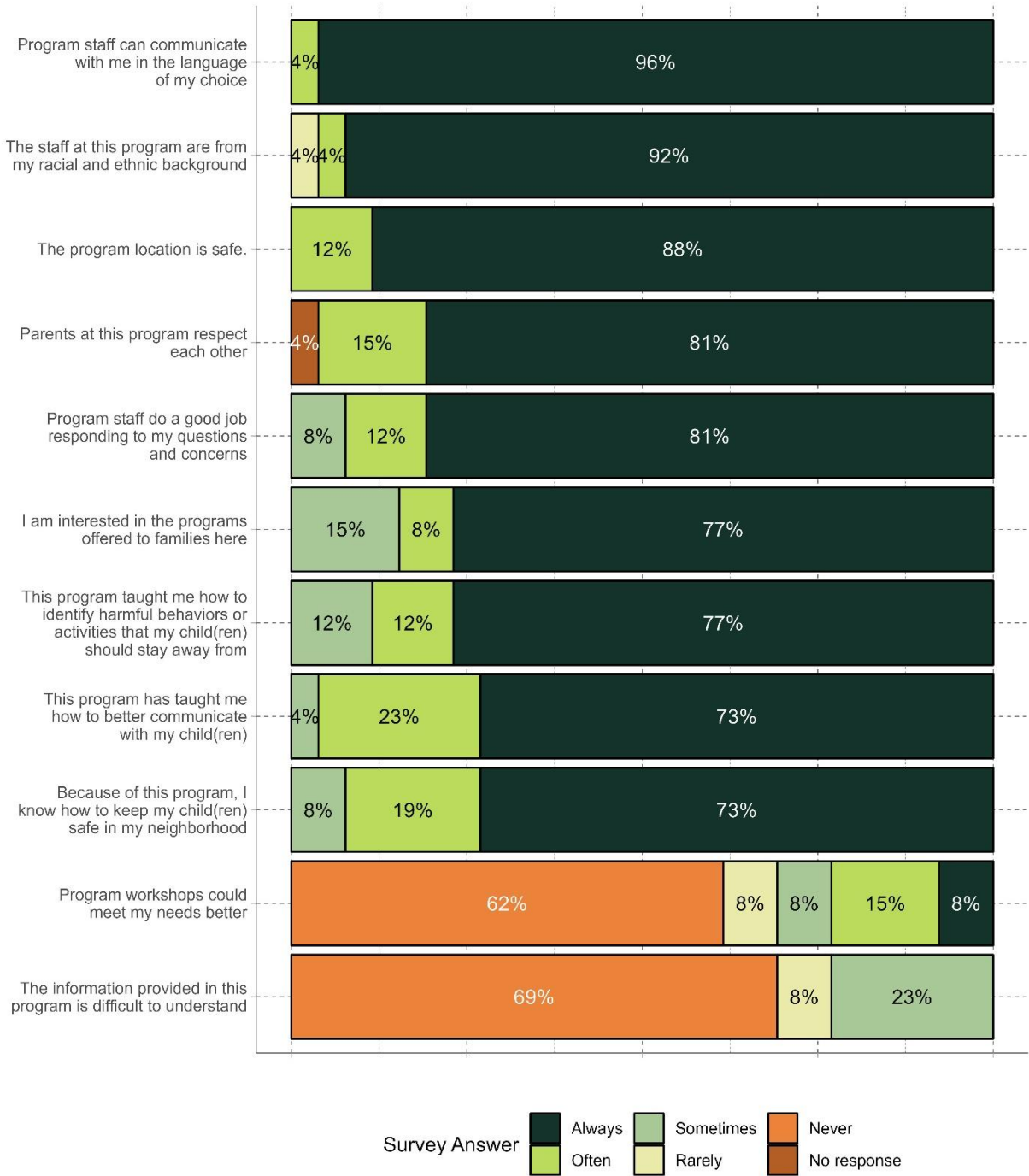
Caminar, the only grantee providing services in Parent Awareness/Training, administered parent surveys to parent participants during PY 2021–2022, as they had done in prior program years. The parent survey was intended to measure parent satisfaction with the program as well as provide data on parenting outcomes (e.g., communicating effectively with their children). In PY 2021–2022, Caminar collected 26 parent surveys, which marked a substantial increase in the response rate compared to prior program years.²⁵ However, while the rate was higher, the sample size is still quite small and may not be representative of all parents receiving these services from Caminar. Because of the relatively small sample size, this report describes these survey results but does not provide any further analyses of these data.

Of the 26 parents who responded to the survey, most were female (n=22) and Latinx (n=21). Twenty-two (85 percent) of these respondents reported attending Caminar parenting services for one to three months, while the rest reported attending parenting services for four to six months. Most parents (81 percent) reported attending parent services for one hour a week.

²⁵ In previous program years, the evaluation team had fewer than 10 parent surveys. These surveys were not reported to protect the anonymity of respondents.

As shown in Exhibit VI-11, most parents were highly satisfied with the services they received. Respondents reported being particularly satisfied that program staff were from the same racial and ethnic background as they were, could communicate with them in the language of their choice, and that they felt safe within the program. Parents also reported that the program helped improve their interactions with their children. For example, most respondents reported that the program often or always taught them better ways to communicate with their children (23 percent and 73 percent, respectively). While most parents responded favorably to most survey questions, a small percentage of respondents said the program workshops could meet their needs better either often or always (15 percent and 8 percent respectively).

Exhibit VI-11: Parent Experience Responses (PY 2021–2022)



Source: BEST parent surveys

Summary

Overall, the outcomes study suggests that BEST participants in PY 2021–2022 were highly satisfied with the program and reported relatively high levels on psychosocial, educational, and employment outcomes. Survey data also indicate that established participants reported stronger outcomes than baseline participants across several psychosocial, educational, and employment measures. Nevertheless, there were not as many significant differences between established and baseline participants in terms of psychosocial measures as there were in the prior program year and the data more closely resemble what was seen in PY 2019–2020.

There are a number of reasons why these year-to-year trends might be seen. The transitions from in-person to remote services and back again as well as the other disruptions that occurred over the past few years of program operations, mostly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also social unrest and wildfires, must be considered as confounding factors in these analyses and mean any given year has been subject to wide ranging historical and environmental factors. Also, the methodology for the survey data analysis was slightly different in PY 2020–2021, where data from that and the prior program year were pooled, creating both a slightly larger but also duplicative sample. In addition, it is important to remember that any analysis of pre- post- differences are diminished because baseline participants have received some level of services.

To improve any analysis of trends over time, PRNS will likely want to collect additional years' data as well as consider ways to strengthen the power of the analysis by ensuring that baseline data is collected at the point when participants are enrolled in the program. Year to year comparisons, however, should not cloud the fact that the evaluation indicates is that there are still several areas in which the program appears to positively effect, and make a real and substantial difference in the lives of the children, youth, and parents that it serves.

VII. Summary and Recommendations

The previous chapters described the implementation and outcomes of the BEST program for PY 2021–2022. This concluding chapter summarizes these findings and provides recommendations for program improvement gathered from BEST grantee and partner staff.

Summary

During PY 2021–2022, PRNS and BEST grantee staff returned to providing mostly in-person services in schools and community settings, as the COVID pandemic subsided. While staff had to pivot to remote services at times, and some online options remained, they supplemented rather than replaced in-person activities. Staff and youth expressed appreciation for being able to return to a more normal routine after the disruptive months of the pandemic, but challenges remained including staff turnover in grantee programs and learning loss and mental health issues for youth.

As a result of in-person services, BEST grantees were able to hold more sessions during and after school hours which resulted in a significant increase in the number of UOS provided as well as youth enrolled in the program. While UOS increased by 8 percent, the number of youth enrolled increased by 24 percent. The increase in youth 13 to 18 in the program also reflected the easier access by BEST programs to students in school settings.

Program participants continued to express satisfaction with BEST program services and perceive that the program helped them improve educational and psychosocial outcomes. Notably, youth enrolled in BEST programming longer, reported higher levels of connection to an adult they could trust, felt better able to say no when pressured to do something they did not want to do, and were more likely to be employed after participating in the program.

Feedback and Recommendations from Grantee and Partner Organization Staff

This evaluation cycle included feedback from BEST grantee and partner organization staff. Generally, staff viewed BEST programs as critical community assets and essential to supporting youth academic and personal well-being.

BEST grantees were critical hubs for youth and families

A partner observed that BEST and its network were a “web of knowledge” for youth and families who needed access to important resources. Another partner credited its own success largely to its partnership with BEST: “In the year that I’ve worked with them piloting the tutoring program, they were responsible, responsive, and analytical with ideas and

suggestions for how to improve. I took their feedback to make the most of what we can do to serve our kids.”

At times, BEST grantees provided services that were not available anywhere else. For example, one grantee was the only location providing drop-in services five to seven days a week in the downtown San José area and was a crucial resource fulfilling basic needs for youth. Its partner saw this grantee as a valuable resource for adults and families in addition to youth: “Many other agencies are doing transitional housing, but no one is doing a drop-in center for adults or families, and they certainly aren’t doing it as well as [this grantee].”

BEST grantees enhanced partners’ ability to serve youth

Just as BEST grantees provided critical resources to youth and families, they were also instrumental in helping partners support their own communities. One partner described how a grantee helped it make connections with youth. The program coordinator remarked, “Grantee staff are very willing to give me access to their cohort. It’s been so easy to tap into their cohort given how much they like and respect grantee staff. So, they can trust me because I’ve been “screened” by them. I’ve been able to have a direct relationship with youth, which has been very helpful.” Another partner explained that a grantee helped it build a peer tutoring program, which cut down on student truancy and supported English language learners at the high school: “We have over 400 students who are English learners, and 118 are taking English development classes. Having bilingual staff is significantly helpful as a resource, not only to get students support but also to get them basic needs. Our Spanish-English learners got a lot of support from grantee staff.”

Recommendations for BEST

In reflecting on the quality of collaborations with BEST, partner staff had a few recommendations for how the program could improve its supports to youth and their families.

- **BEST has many regulations and requirements, making it difficult for agencies to be innovative and meet youth where they are.** One staff person noticed, “There’s so much creativity that could be done outside of these rules. It would be helpful for [BEST grantees] to work outside of straight, narrow lines. For example, they would benefit having field trips; taking youth outside of these four walls would do a lot for them.” Another stated that BEST grantees have “intense” reporting requirements for the amount of funding they receive.
- **Partners would like more support around outreach and recruitment.** Staff at one organization said BEST could market partner programming to participating students.

For example, BEST could host workshops where partner organizations can explain their programs and application processes to youth and families. On a related note, another partner observed that BEST grantees could intentionally outreach to and recruit English language learning students, who often do not realize academic supports like tutoring and peer mentoring exist.

- **At least one partner would like to see BEST grantees apply harm reduction or trauma informed care models when working with youth.** This is especially important for staff working with youth who are having trouble with substance abuse and need to feel supported and safe.

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Appendix A: Target Population Definitions

Following are the four PRNS 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 2020–2021, BEST grantees offered programming to youth in one or more of five 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 plans and/or specialized intervention plans. Program activities include personalized one-on-one coaching, goal setting, and home visits.

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.

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 qualitative data collection with grantee staff, participants, and partner staff:

- **Staff interviews and participant focus groups.** SPR conducted staff interviews and participant focus groups between April and July 2022. SPR held interviews with staff from all grantee organizations and eight focus groups with youth and adult participants from Alum Rock Counseling Center (3 participants), Bill Wilson Center (9 participants), Caminar (6 participants), Catholic Charities (4 participants), Fresh Lifelines for Youth (17 participants), Girl Scouts (10 participants), San José Jazz (11 participants), and Ujima (4 participants).

Interviews with grantee staff were conducted to document how programs have been implementing services and activities this program year and included topics such as key partnerships and biggest adaptations to program operations. Focus groups with participants were conducted to learn about their experiences in BEST programs and included topics like why they decided to participate in the program, how services helped improve their lives, and recommendations for program improvement.

- **Partner interviews.** Between August and October 2022 SPR held five interviews with public and nonprofit partner staff to understand how organizations work with BEST grantees, concerns about and goals for youth, how the BEST program is helping you address them, and feedback on BEST services and ways the program could work better to support youth in your community. Interviews were conducted with staff from the Office of Supportive Housing and Valley Medical Center (Bill Wilson Center partners), SJ Works and

Yerba Buena High School (ConXión partners), Opportunity Youth Academy (Shine Together/Teen Success partner), and Ubuntu Wellness (Ujima partner).

- Participant surveys.** The evaluation also included surveys for children (ages 7–13), youth (ages 14–24), and parents enrolled in parenting services provided by BEST grantees. The evaluation team designed these surveys to measure psychosocial outcomes (e.g., resilience and self-efficacy) and customer satisfaction. These efforts yielded a total of 993 complete responses across the three types of surveys. The evaluation team used the same surveys that were developed and implemented in the previous program year. Grantees administered these anonymous surveys at various points throughout the program year on a semi-structured schedule, customized to each grantee’s program cycle. 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 2021–2022)

	Child	Youth	Parent	Total
Alum Rock Counseling Center	40	32	0	72
Bay Area Tutoring	30	8	0	38
Bill Wilson Center	2	141	0	143
Caminar	9	86	26	121
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County	0	41	0	41
ConXión to Community	0	38	0	38
Fresh Lifelines for Youth	1	57	0	58
Girl Scouts of Northern California	4	33	0	37
New Hope for Youth	0	168	0	168
San José Jazz	32	1	0	33
Teen Success, Inc.	0	18	0	18
The Art of Yoga Project	28	38	0	66
The Tenacious Group	0	96	0	96
Ujima Adult and Family Services, Inc.	0	37	0	37
Uplift Family Services	0	27	0	27
Total	146	821	26	993

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 compared implementation in PY 2021–2022 to past program years and provided a detailed discussion of these findings. The tables in the main body of the report include cross-year comparisons.

The evaluation team conducted separate qualitative analysis of the information collected during 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 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 weighted mean was calculated for each group defined by

baseline status. Then, a difference in means across groups was calculated, giving a basic difference between point estimates. From here, the pooled variance for the answer was calculated. The pooled variance was divided by the sum of squared deviations for the baseline group, and the square root of this expression was obtained to yield the standard error of the point estimate.

The difference in means was divided by the standard error to determine the t-statistic for a weighted difference in means test. This t-statistic was then used to get the p-value for a two-tailed test of significance to determine if the difference in point estimates was statistically significant. The p-value determines if a result is significant and its corresponding level of significance.

This methodology is consistent with PY 2021–2022 survey analysis, which used a linear regression to determine if there was a significant difference between participant groups. This round of survey analysis was also verified by running a weighted linear regression where the outcome was regressed on a baseline status indicator to verify that the p-values and point estimates were correct. A different approach was used to create a specific desired data structure optimal for data visualization in R.

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-2 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 participants whose racial identity was “other” and overrepresented the proportion of Latinx participants; 19- to 24-year-old participants were underrepresented, while 14- to 18-year-old participants were overrepresented; other differences were relatively minor.

Exhibit C-2: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics for BEST Youth Population and Youth Survey Respondents, Ages 14–24 (PY 2021–2022)

	PY 2021–2022 BEST Population	PY 2021–2022 Survey Respondents
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	217 (13.6%)	60 (7.3%)
Asian	121 (7.6%)	36 (4.4%)
Latinx	896 (56.3%)	399 (48.6%)
Multiracial	68 (4.3%)	55 (6.7%)
Native American/Alaskan Native	17 (1.1%)	9 (1.1%)
White/Caucasian	124 (7.8%)	35 (4.3%)
Other/Missing	148 (18%)	227 (27.6%)
Age		
14–18 years old	1350 (84.9%)	596 (72.6%)
19–24 years old	174 (10.9%)	144 (17.5%)
25 years old	3 (0.2%)	12 (1.5%)
Age Missing	64 (4%)	69 (8.4%)
Gender		
Men	787 (49.5%)	356 (43.4%)
Women	668 (42%)	325 (39.6%)
Gender Non-Binary	16 (1%)	21 (2.6%)
Gender Missing/Decline to State	120 (7.5%)	119 (14.5%)

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 a raking algorithm), which 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-2. 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-3, the survey respondents appeared to differ from the population of BEST participants, from the perspective of both race/ethnicity and especially gender. In particular, the number of survey responses that fall into the “other” category for race account for a greater proportion of the child survey data. The evaluation team calculated raking poststratification nonresponse weights using the sociodemographic characteristics in Exhibit C-3. These weights were used to compute all survey findings shown in Chapter VI.

Exhibit C-3: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics for BEST Child Population and Child Survey Respondents, Ages 7–13 (PY 2021–2022)

	BEST Population PY 2021–2022	BEST PY 2021–2022 Survey Respondents
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	23 (2.8%)	3 (2.1%)
Asian	135 (16.6%)	19 (13%)
Latinx	431 (53.1%)	50 (34.2%)
Multiracial	120 (14.8%)	14 (9.6%)
Native American/Alaskan Native	5 (0.6%)	1 (0.7%)
White/Caucasian	27 (3.3%)	2 (1.4%)
Other/Missing	71 (8.7%)	57 (39%)
Gender		
Boys	427 (52.6%)	64 (43.8%)
Girls	316 (38.9%)	67 (45.9%)
Other/Missing	69 (8.5%)	15 (10.3%)

Source: BEST program data and participant surveys

Appendix D: Survey Instruments

The following appendix lists the survey instruments for the youth, kids, and parent surveys. This is provided as a reference for the questions asked to participants. Each of the following surveys appear as they were administered in person; an online version was also available. The youth survey was administered to participants age 14-24/25+, and the kids survey was administered to participants age 7-13. The parents surveys are administered to parents of participants who attend grantee workshops or receive BEST parent services. Surveys were fielded in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese to provide each respondent with the opportunity to take the survey in the language in which they have the highest degree of fluency.

————— SAN JOSE —————
**PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**

San José BEST and Youth Intervention Services 2021-2022 Kids Survey (Ages 7 -13)

This survey is a way to hear about how this program is working for you and how to make the program better.

This program gets money from the City of San José. The City, along with its partner, Social Policy Research Associates (known as SPR), is conducting a research study of all the programs that receive BEST funding. They will use this survey to help them learn how our services help people and how to make the program better. There are three things you should know.

1. **This survey is anonymous.** In other words, you should not include your name or any identifying information about you on the survey, and there is no way for anyone to know who filled out the survey. We hope that this makes it easier to be honest in your answers.
2. **This survey is optional.** You do not have to fill out this survey or any questions if you do not want to. If you choose not to, it does not affect your participation in the program.
3. **You will not be paid for completing this survey.**

If you choose to take this survey, please read each question and mark the answer that makes the most sense to you. This survey is not a test. There are no wrong answers. It is about what you feel and believe to be true.






- **If you do not agree to take this survey, you may stop and throw away the packet.**
- **If you agree to take this survey, please turn the page to begin.** ↗

If you have questions about the survey, please contact Christian Geckeler at Social Policy Research Associates at (510) 788-2461 or christian_geckeler@spra.com. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in the study, you may also contact Solutions IRB (the body that oversees protection of study participants) at (855) 226-4472 or participants@solutionsirb.com.

Agency: _____ Date: _____

San José BEST and Youth Intervention Services 2021-2022 Kids Survey

We want to hear your opinions to help us improve the program. Please read each item and mark the answer by placing an "X" in the box. This survey is not a test; there are no wrong answers. This survey is optional.

	Never	Not often	Sometimes	Usually	Always
					
1. I like school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I can handle problems that come my way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I get along with other kids.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I can listen to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I can work things out when I disagree with a friend.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I have someone to talk to when I am upset.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I have learned a lot of new things at this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I am interested in what we do at this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Adults in this program tell me what I am doing well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. There is an adult in my life who cares about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Adults here talk with me in the language I choose.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Since being in this program, I am better at something that used to be hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Since being in this program, I work better on a team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Kids here respect each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I feel safe at this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. This program helps me get along with other kids.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. This program helps me with problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please turn over 

18. Since you started the program, have you:

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gone to school more often?

Liked school more?

Got to know an adult that you trust?

Felt happy about your future?

Been able to say no when a friend asked me to do something I didn't want to do?

19. Do you feel you have a space where you can safely talk to others about how you feel?

20. Do you have people in your life that you trust are looking out for you?

I am:

a Girl

a Boy

Not a girl or boy

Prefer not to say

My current grade is:

3rd

4th

5th

6th

7th

8th

I have been attending this program for:

Less than a month

1-3 months

4-6 months

7 months to a year

Over a year

Not sure

What is your race/ethnicity? (mark all that apply)

African
American/
Black

Latinx/
Hispanic

Pacific
Islander

Asian

Native
American/
Alaskan
Native

White/
Caucasian

Multiracial
or Biracial

Other

Prefer not
to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey!

————— SAN JOSE —————
**PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**

San José BEST and Youth Intervention Services 2021-2022 Youth Survey

This survey is a way to hear about how this program is working for you and how to make the program better.

This program gets money from the City of San José. The City, along with its partner, Social Policy Research Associates (known as SPR), is conducting a research study of all the programs that receive BEST funding. They will use this survey to help them learn how our services help people and how to make the program better. There are three things you should know.

1. **This survey is anonymous.** In other words, you should not include your name or any identifying information about you on the survey, and there is no way for anyone to know who filled out the survey. We hope that this makes it easier to be honest in your answers.
2. **This survey is optional.** You do not have to fill out this survey or any questions if you do not want to. If you choose not to, it does not affect your participation in the program.
3. **You will not be paid for completing this survey.**

If you choose to take this survey, please read each question and mark the answer that makes the most sense to you. This survey is not a test. There are no wrong answers. It is about what you feel and believe to be true.

- **If you do not agree to take this survey, you may stop and throw away the packet.**
- **If you agree to take this survey, please turn the page to begin.** ↗

If you have questions about the survey, please contact Christian Geckeler at Social Policy Research Associates at (510) 788-2461 or christian_geckeler@spra.com. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in the study, you may also contact Solutions IRB (the body that oversees protection of study participants) at (855) 226-4472 or participants@solutionsirb.com

Agency: _____ Date: _____

San José BEST and Youth Intervention Services 2021-2022 Youth Survey

We want to hear your opinions to help us improve the program. Please read each item and mark the answer by placing an "X" in the box. This survey is not a test; there are no wrong answers. This survey is optional.

These questions are about your experience in this program:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I am interested in what we do at this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have learned a lot of new things here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. This program helps me to get along with other people my age.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I feel out of place at this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. There is an adult at this program who cares about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. In this program, adults listen to what I have to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The people who work at this program understand my family's culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Program staff can communicate with me in the language of my choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. This program helps me to think about the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Youth at this program respect each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I feel safe in this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

These questions are about you:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
12. I feel connected to my school or job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. There is an adult I can go to (at home, school, or somewhere else) if I need advice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I feel confident that I can handle whatever comes my way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I think things through carefully before making decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I can express my opinions when I am in a group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I can listen to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I stay out of situations that make me feel uncomfortable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I feel comfortable solving conflicts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I have someone I talk to about my feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I can handle problems and challenges when they arise.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please turn over ↗

22. Since you started the program, have you:

	Yes	No	N/A
Stayed in school (if you were in school at the start of the program)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attended school classes more often?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduated from middle or high school or earned a High School Equivalency/GED?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gotten to know an adult that you trust?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Felt good about your ability to succeed in school or in life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been able to say no when pressured by a friend to do something you didn't want to do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Felt less pressured to participate in gang activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had any contact with/Been arrested or accused of a crime by law enforcement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gotten a job or a new job?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
23. Are you currently in school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Do you currently have a job?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Do you have goals for school or work that you want to achieve?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How long have you been in this program?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A few weeks	1-3 months	4-6 months	7 months to a year	Over a year	Multiple years	Not sure

How often do you attend this program?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been a few times	Once a month	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday	Not sure

Do you identify as:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
young man	young woman	gender non-binary	prefer not to say

What is your current age group?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14-18	19-24	25+

Which of the following best describes you?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heterosexual (Straight)	LGBTQ+	Don't know	Prefer not to say

What is your race/ethnicity? (mark all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
African American/Black	Latinx/Hispanic	Pacific Islander	Asian	Native American/Alaskan Native	White/Caucasian	Multiracial or Biracial	Other	Prefer not to say

What zipcode do you live in? (Fill in)

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Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey!

————— SAN JOSE —————
**PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**


San José BEST 2021-2022 Parent Participant Survey

This survey is a way to hear about how this program is working for you and how to make the program better.

This program gets money from and is part of something called BEST, the Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together program, which is run by the City of San José. The City, along with its partner, Social Policy Research Associates (known as SPR), is conducting a research study of all the programs that receive BEST funding. They will use this survey to help them learn how our services help people and how to make the program better. There are three things you should know.

1. **This survey is anonymous.** In other words, you should not include your name or any identifying information about you on the survey, and there is no way for anyone to know who filled out the survey. We hope that this makes it easier to be honest in your answers.
2. **This survey is optional.** You do not have to fill out this survey or any questions if you do not want to. If you choose not to, it does not affect your participation in the program.
3. **You will not be paid for completing this survey.**

If you choose to take this survey, please read each question and mark the answer that makes the most sense to you. This survey is not a test. There are no wrong answers. It is about what you feel and believe to be true.

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SAN JOSE
PARKS, RECREATION & NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

San José BEST 2019-2020 Parent Participant Survey

We want to hear your opinions to help us improve the program services offered to families. Please read each item and mark the answer by filling in the bubbles. This survey is not a test; there are no wrong answers. This survey is optional.

These questions are about your experience in this program:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I am interested in the programs offered to families here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. This program has taught me how to better communicate with my child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Program workshops could meet my needs better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Program staff do a good job of responding to my questions and concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. This program taught me how to identify harmful behaviors or activities that my child(ren) should stay away from.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The information provided in this program is difficult to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Because of this program, I know more about how to keep my child(ren) safe in my neighborhood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The program location is safe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The staff at this program are from my racial and ethnic background.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Program staff can communicate with me in the language of my choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Parents at this program respect each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

These questions are about you:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
12. I know how to help my child(ren) when they are having a problem with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I feel confident in my ability to make choices about my child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. There are people I can turn to for support.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I don't have other parents I feel I can confide in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have the resources I need to help me with issues concerning my child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. In the last 12 months I have been actively involved in my child's or children's school(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please turn over ↗

How long have you been attending this program?

- A few weeks 1-3 months 4-6 months 7 months to a year Over a year Multiple years Not sure

How often do you attend this program?

- I've been a few times Once a month A few times a month Once a week A few times a week Everyday Not sure

Do you identify as:

- man woman gender non-binary prefer not to say

What is your race/ethnicity? (mark all that apply)

- African American/Black Latinx/Hispanic Pacific Islander Asian Native American/Alaskan Native White/Caucasian Multiracial or Biracial Other Prefer not to say

What zipcode do you live in? (Fill in)

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How many children do you have?

- 1 2 3+

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey!