

Communities matter



Photo: Danielle Elliott

Communities matter if children, youth and families are going to be healthy and thrive.

Race, income and zip code are still major predictors of how healthy we are and even how long we live. Best Starts for Kids invests in Communities of Opportunity to promote greater health, social, economic and racial equity in King County so that all people thrive and prosper, regardless of race or place.

Communities of Opportunity is a network of residents, communities, decision-makers and funders who believe every community can be a healthy, safe and thriving community. Best Starts has furthered this effort knowing that the most meaningful, just and sustainable solutions are generated in partnership with people who are most affected by these inequities.

A unique community–public–private partnership funded jointly by Best Starts for Kids and Seattle Foundation, Communities of Opportunity is deepening our impact as we build on community-driven policy and systems change efforts that are transforming the health and well-being of King County residents.

COMMUNITIES MATTER 2019 OUTCOMES

3,129 capacity-building, community and workforce development events brought communities together.

39,903 community members participated in partner events.

257 capacity building events focused on skill-building workshops and meetings to educate policy and decision-makers.

410 community members took on leadership positions within their communities.

77 new partnerships developed to support progress toward policy and/or systems change.

By investing in communities and tapping into their strengths:

- Relationships within communities are strengthened, which is critical for community well-being.
- Equity is integrated into policies at all levels: neighborhood, organizational, city, county and state.
- Children, youth and families have access to what they need to be healthy and strong.
- Community members have voice to shape solutions that affect them and can express it through civic engagement and leadership.
- **Communities of Opportunity supports communities' power to influence the decisions that affect them most.**

Building a place of hope, unity and belonging



Photo: Mel Ponders Photography

The White Center Community Development Association (WCCDA) has deep roots in the community, embodied in their ability to organize and implement community vision. “Our work is to elevate the voices of families and communities in White Center. We have the ability to build and hold relationships in a different way — relationships that are centered on an anti-racist, relational approach to systems change,” says Sili Savusa.

“The story of the WCCDA is really about the community getting a sense of their own power.”

A project for self-determination and community ownership, the White Center Community HUB shows that power coming to life. Led by the WCCDA, in partnership with Southwest Youth & Family Services, HealthPoint, Capitol Hill Housing and King County, the new building will provide valuable education, health and housing services while embracing White Center’s cultural diversity and sense of community.

Communities of Opportunity supports the WCCDA in their community-building and trust-building work. That work has created a strong foundation for the HUB project throughout the early phases of planning and pre-development.

Designed in response to the identified priorities of White Center community members, the HUB development is envisioned to be a place of “Hope, Unity and Belonging,” a place where working families can find affordable housing along with essential services that provide stability and create greater opportunity. The vision for the project includes the creation of 86 high-quality affordable homes and a place of learning, health and welcome where the community can connect.

“ The best way we know how to do this work is to make sure the community is our partner. ”

— Sili Savusa, Executive Director of the White Center Community Development Association and resident of White Center.

The HUB will celebrate White Center’s diversity through art, music and community-wide events and activities. A culturally relevant family resource center will offer alternative education classrooms, workforce training, small business incubation, youth development, integrated behavioral and physical health services and a community garden. It will serve as a home for the WCCDA and other White Center community-based organizations.

As the community works toward an expected groundbreaking in early 2022, the HUB incorporates the spirit of the vibrant, ethnically and culturally diverse community that is White Center, where two-thirds of the residents are people of color and almost one-third of the residents are immigrants/refugees. Acknowledging that the project is on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People past and present, the WCCDA and partners are working alongside tribal leadership to make that acknowledgement real in both the design and function of the building.

The leaders at WCCDA hold a unique role in their ability to organize and implement a community vision of physical and social spaces that affirm and strengthen the assets of all members in the community.

Communities of Opportunity

Delivering impact

\$5.55M invested in 2019

110 collaborators

In 2019, Communities of Opportunity supported new and ongoing projects and efforts promoting leadership; influencing changes to institutions, systems and policies; and seating the base of power within communities, not outside them.

COO invested in **6 place-based partnerships**, in White Center, Rainier Valley, SeaTac and Tukwila, Kent, Seattle's Central District and the Snoqualmie Valley; and **3 culturally rooted partnerships** through the Comunidad Latina de Vashon, Transgender Economic Empowerment Coalition and the Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits. Additionally, we supported **27 organizations** focused on changes that lead to more equitable systems and policies.



Photo: Sharon Chang at the NW African-American Museum

2019 outcomes

- The **first-ever community needs assessment of the Snoqualmie Valley** was completed by a partnership between several nonprofits providing access to region-specific data. The Supportive Community for All coalition is using these data to develop new infrastructure and programs to connect residents across an expansive rural and urban area to networked social and health services and foster collaboration among providers.
- Church Council of Greater Seattle led the process of gathering input from residents in South King County to identify policy solutions to address affordable housing challenges. This effort led to passage of **affordable housing policies in Burien, including Rental Licensing and Inspection and Just Cause Eviction**, and the creation of a housing ombudsperson.
- The Food Innovation Network (FIN) **increased opportunities for women, immigrants and refugee food entrepreneurs to launch businesses** through the FIN incubator program. In addition to providing one-on-one training and technical assistance, FIN connects small businesses with catering orders and features businesses in the Taste Around the Globe booth at farmers markets.
- A Beautiful Safe Place for Youth's Corner Greeters and neighborhood intervention program held **24 youth-led events** and surveyed **271 community members** for their views on public safety. A community- and youth-led approach coordinated by Rainier Beach Action Coalition and partners, this program addresses issues of community safety and building stronger and more connected neighborhoods.

Communities of Opportunity supports small businesses

In 2019, Communities of Opportunity addressed the growing challenge many King County communities face with displacement resulting from rapid development, which inequitably affects communities of color and low-income communities. Small businesses are integral to the economic fabric of King County, but rapid economic growth has threatened to displace these businesses. A new program is developing models and tools for small businesses, with a specific focus on neighborhood areas that are part of Communities of Opportunity. This Commercial Affordability Pilot Program will help to support a segment of our regional economy that is key to the vibrancy of our community and as places of employment.

“ Thanks to Communities of Opportunity, more adults are coming forward to be a part of the change that can be brought forth with the power of community. Being drawn in by the youth, they are taking on bigger roles in economic actions, idea creation and considering leverage points for systems change. ”

— Latino Community Fund (Comunidad Latina de Vashon)

