

2023 Report

Boston Children's Collaboration for Community Health

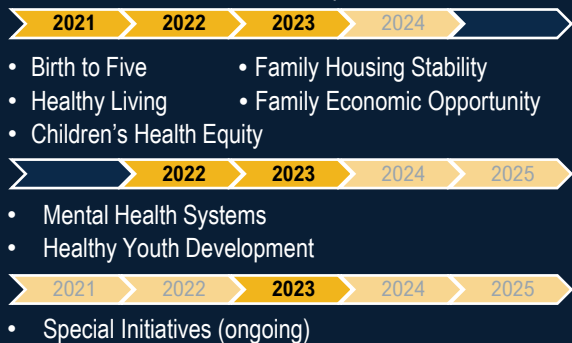


❖ About the Collaboration for Community Health

Boston Children's Collaboration for Community Health (the "Collaboration") was launched in 2018 with the goal of improving the health and well-being of children and families in communities disproportionately impacted by systemic injustices and inequities in health and social determinants of health. The Collaboration pursues this overarching goal by increasing community capacity and advancing child-centered methods, ideas, and investment strategies.

❖ Our Initiatives

The Collaboration has eight equity-focused strategic initiatives that are the focus of this report. Within these initiatives, the Collaboration partners with "funded partners"—community-based organizations, public agencies, academic institutions, and others—to implement activities. Below are the initiatives and timeframes included in this report:



Important Highlights in Boston: 2023

The end of the federal public health emergency led funded partners to address the impact of reduced SNAP benefits and Medicaid coverage loss. The **spend-down of pandemic relief funds** have impacted funded partner operations in schools and communities.

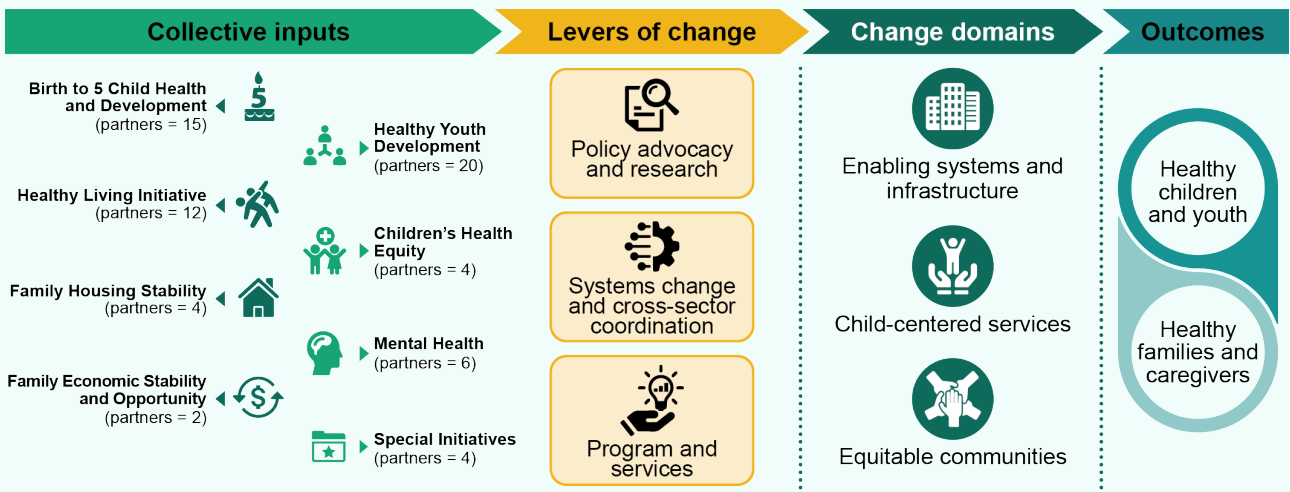
A rise in developmental and behavioral challenges among children and youth posed challenges for funded partners in implementing programs. Funded partners are addressing **shortages** of linguistically and culturally-congruent mental and behavioral healthcare providers.

The housing shortage and affordability crisis in greater Boston continues to impact the progress of housing-focused organizations. This, along with an **influx of migrant families** to greater Boston, led the state to direct funding to increase emergency shelter capacity.

The City of Boston's **new Office of Early Childhood** supported the development of a **report** on early education supply and demand. The Office awarded \$5.6 million in **Essential Worker & Stimulus and Stability Funds** to expand the early childhood workforce.

Progress along pathways to change

The Collaboration's Theory of Change demonstrates the pathways through which strategic initiatives advance our goals. Funded partners work through three **levers** to catalyze changes in the root causes of children's health inequities, which lead to improvements across three broad **domains** that influence child health and wellbeing. Ultimately, these short- and mid-term changes contribute to longer-term goals of **healthy children, youth, families, and caregivers**.

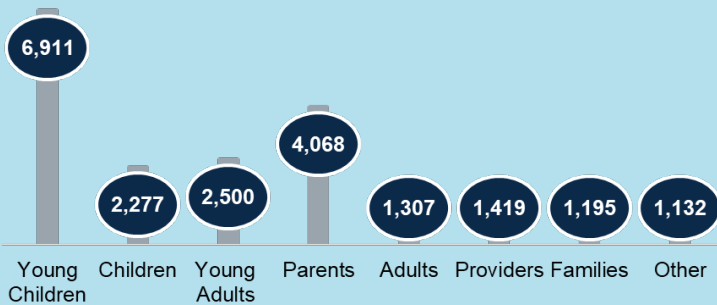


The initiative-level spotlights that follow highlight areas of progress along these pathways.

Read on for more details. ➔

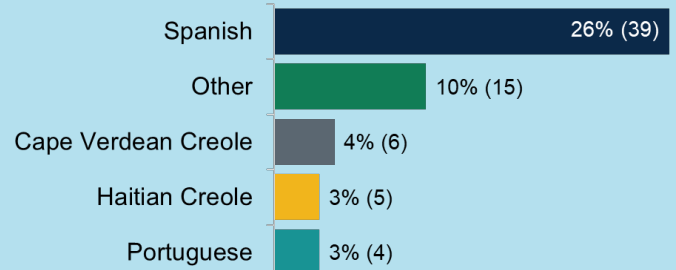
Who we are reaching

The Collaboration primarily engaged young children, parents, and young adults in health-promoting programs

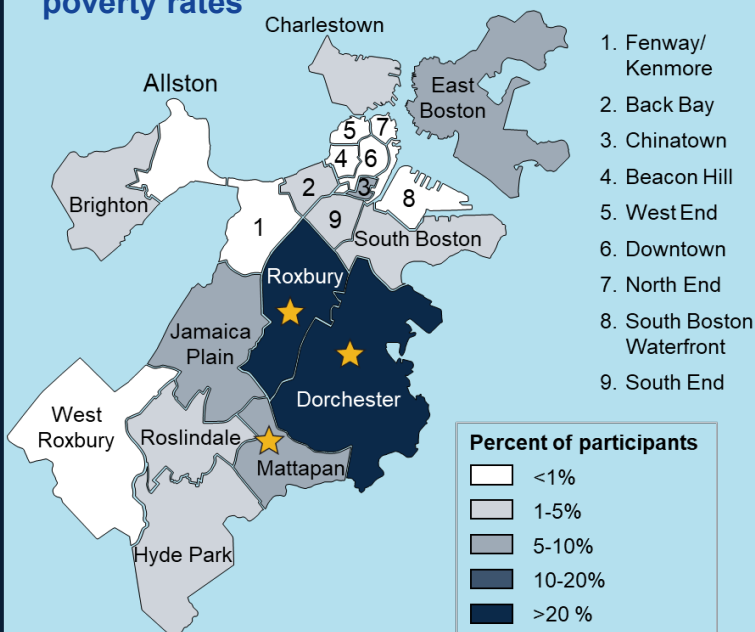


Six Mental Health Systems funded partners educated and trained linguistically diverse mental and behavioral health providers

Number of providers capable of providing services in a language other than English



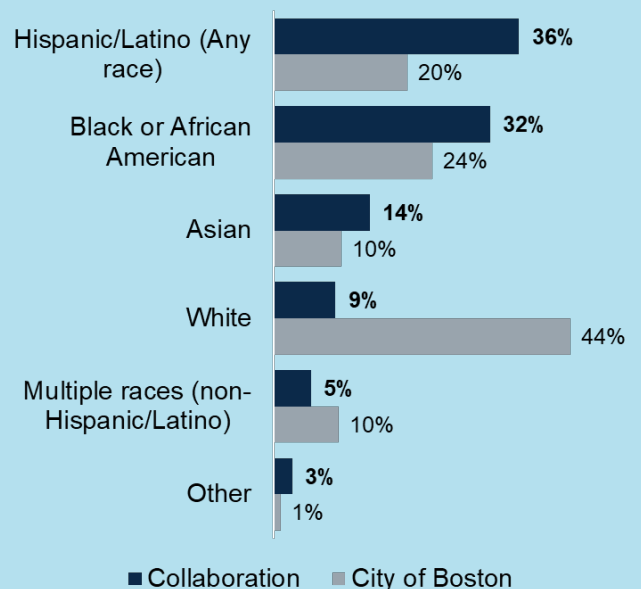
Key communities served include Boston neighborhoods with the highest childhood poverty rates



1. Fenway/Kenmore
2. Back Bay
3. Chinatown
4. Beacon Hill
5. West End
6. Downtown
7. North End
8. South Boston Waterfront
9. South End

Includes participants with Boston zip codes only.
 ★ Indicates Boston neighborhoods with largest concentration of children in poverty.
 Source: The Boston Indicators Project.

Two-thirds of individuals reached by the Collaboration are Black or Hispanic/Latino, compared to 44% of Boston residents



Spotlight on Special Initiatives

Over the last year, the Collaboration extended flexible funding opportunities to respond to emerging needs and support organizations with innovative approaches to improving child health. Below, we describe progress made possible by this funding in the past year.

Housing

Heading Home made progress toward opening the **largest Permanent Supportive Family Housing project** in the state, which will open for occupancy in 2024. The development will offer developmentally-appropriate programming for children living in the Dorchester housing development.

New Hope Community Capital completed construction on an affordable housing project in Jackson Square, using a pre-development loan from Boston Children's. In Fall 2023, **110 mixed income housing units** opened for occupancy at 250 Centre Street.

Economic Opportunity

Local Initiatives Support Corporation Boston invested \$375k in three minority-owned small businesses through their **capital fund**.





Birth to Five

Progress from September 2021 – August 2023

Goal: Set children ages birth to five years on a high trajectory for success in school and life. Funding supports organizations serving children from birth to 5 years old, including supporting training, strengthening education quality, and increasing access to parenting resources and support services.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

Strengthening child development

115 children demonstrated new skills in domains of **kindergarten readiness**

Strengthening parent knowledge, skills, and support

718 caregivers reported **increased self-efficacy, knowledge, confidence, and/or awareness of resources**

"I want to thank the...team for your ongoing support provided to me and my child. I went from being helpless and scared to knowing... that I can do something to help my child."

–Parent program participant

231 caregivers improved reading quality, such as using dialogic reading with children or frequency of reading with children

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

Creating infrastructure for stronger early childhood services

50 providers and parents advocated for change as **leaders and ambassadors**

Eleven Parent Fellows with Families First conducted family engagement and outreach.

5,318 children screened for **developmental concerns**

Funded partners also referred families to services, such as early intervention.

Access to culturally appropriate supports for families

3,621 parents, children, or families engaged in **multi-lingual programming on personal well-being, parent-child relationships, or child development and literacy**

The Community Builders hosted Parent Cafes in Spanish where mothers shared parenting strategies and tips for things like picky eating and counting objects.

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

Expanding opportunities for provider and parent learning and advocacy

25 events for parents and providers on **advocacy principles**

Strategies for Children trained advocates in "Advocacy 101." Advocates went on to use those skills to reach families and elected officials.

"This program...made me see that... there are things in my daily life that will help my community be a better place. It taught me how to properly advocate for my children, and help others do the same."

–Parent leader

322 educators trained in **early education concepts**

The Basics provided trainings for Children's Services of Roxbury on the five principles for childhood development.

3,353 multi-lingual parent and family-focused workshops, home visits, and coaching sessions

Raising a Reader's Community Ambassadors and staff spoke Spanish, French, Arabic, Chinese, Cape Verdean Creole, and Portuguese.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$2.89m in Year 1-2 funding

(8.18m in total funding since 2018)

To 15 funded partners

Over 11,000 community members engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain.

Common approaches

- Build early childhood providers' capacity to address social determinants of health and social, emotional, and behavioral health
- Develop parent and provider capacity to advocate for increased investments in early childhood and family-centered programs and services
- Connect families with free culturally and linguistically appropriate community resources



Healthy Living

Progress from September 2021 – August 2023

Goal: Improve resources and opportunities for the adoption of healthy living in communities experiencing inequities in health.

Funding supports organizations conducting projects to increase physical activity and recreation opportunities and/or increase access to healthy food options.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

Youth outcomes

47 youth accessed resources to support healthy living as a result of mental health screenings

94 youth increased their knowledge of health, nutrition, and social determinants of health through trainings

Caregiver outcomes

278 parents adopted healthy behaviors after participating in healthy living conversations

"Increased health knowledge and self-efficacy [has] motivated participants to implement positive behavioral changes: eating more fruits and vegetables, reducing salt intake, and scheduling medical checkups."

-Partner Organization

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

Improvements to local food systems

50,868 servings of fresh, locally-grown produce distributed and purchased

The Food Project offered extended farmers market days in neighborhoods with limited healthy food access in Roxbury and Dorchester.

Increased access to physical activity programs

2,482 youth and adults participated in physical activity programs

In Bikes Not Bombs' Bike School, youth engage in physical activity, learn safe biking skills, and earn a bicycle on graduation. In partnership with Children's Services of Roxbury, youth also learn social-emotional skills in a supportive peer setting.

"We observe youth to be riding bikes with greater frequency. These bikes open many doors: opportunities for ongoing beneficial exercise and a way to explore the city beyond their own neighborhoods."

-Partner organization

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

New opportunities for youth leadership

353 youth leading Healthy Living activities

Youth at Haley House lead community events at Thornton Street Farm and the produce distribution program for seniors.

"In planning programs, teens... gain a sense of comfort with and enthusiasm for the vegetables they have grown and become ambassadors for healthy eating within the neighborhood."

-Partner organization

Coordination & expansion of services

100 partnerships enabled funded partners to provide or promote services

345 sessions of culturally and linguistically relevant healthy eating and farming education

Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition offers cooking classes informed by dieticians of color.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$1.17m in Year 1-2 funding

(3.56m in total funding since 2018)

To 12 funded partners

Over 2,250 community members engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester.

Common approaches

- Engage children and families in physical activity
- Engage youth in urban farming, provide nutrition education, and support local food systems
- Educate caregivers about healthy eating and active lifestyles
- Engage youth as leaders within programs
- Distribute free meals and produce to families



Family Housing Stability & Economic Opportunity

Progress from September 2021 – August 2023

Goal: Promote affordable, safe, and quality housing for children and families in priority neighborhoods and foster improved family economic stability and opportunity. Funding supports organizations that help to keep children and families in their homes and/or foster youth and family economic stability and mobility.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

Family access to affordable housing

434 families newly housed

Families secured housing through the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance [STASH](#) program, Boston Higher Ground's [Family Led Stability Initiative](#), and Chinatown Community Land Trust's acquisition of Oxford Place.

"[Parents] typically come in expressing fear, anxiety ("panic attacks" is a phrase we hear commonly), and/or depression... they reference immediate relief when they learn they have rights and they are not alone in their fight. Once they win an affordable lease, they report an even deeper sense of relief and improvement in symptoms.
- Partner Organization

20 families improved asthma or reduced lead, pests, and/or chemical exposure after buying a home through the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance first generation homebuying program

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

Expanded affordable homeownership infrastructure in Boston

\$630 million secured for new affordable homeownership units

The Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance and Chinatown Community Land Trust advocated for funding through the American Rescue Plan Act and the Acquisition Opportunity Program.

Improved housing security through family support services

1,810 households participated in housing and/or economic support services

Community Labor United matched childcare providers with families to support parents working full-time jobs.

Increased resident leadership on affordable housing advocacy

941 residents engaged in local housing advocacy

City Life/Vida Urbana has organized over 90 direct actions attended by residents including rent control rallies, city government listening sessions, and court support mobilizations.

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

Uplifting resident-led advocacy and collective action

1,943 articles and posts about housing organizing and policy

2,329 units covered by tenant associations to collectively organize

City Life/Vida Urbana organized tenant associations to contest substandard living conditions, rent increases, and unfair evictions.

51 meetings with policymakers to discuss affordable homeownership policies

"The right to housing should be the right of every single person in Boston. We voted for you we need you to support us with this important bill." – Resident leader, speaking to Mayor Wu

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$1.24m in Year 1-2 funding

(4.13m in total funding since 2018)

To **6 funded partners**

Nearly 3,000 residents and families engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Chinatown, Dorchester, and Roxbury.

Common approaches

- Engage residents in advocacy efforts to improve availability of affordable housing and protect tenants' rights
- Build strategic partnerships to improve policymaker knowledge of tenant-driven housing policy
- Provide individual counseling, rental assistance, and/or financial savings programs



Mental Health Systems

Progress from May 2022 – August 2023

Goal: Improve accessible, culturally responsive systems of mental and behavioral health care by expanding and diversifying the mental and behavioral health workforce. Funding supports projects that recruit and train mental and behavioral health providers from underrepresented backgrounds and support the professional development and retention of existing providers.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

Provider outcomes

Students enrolled in training programs shared that mentors supported their well-being by offering strategies and resources

"Having a mentor to stick with me through the troubles of this semester was great. [It] helped with how to not always feel like I have to solve the problems. Learning how to rest, learning about services other fellows are in were also helpful."

-Graduate student

"It is helpful to express and share experiences and frustrations about the workplace/workload in a cultural/linguistical manner. It is validating and freeing."

-Practitioner in field placement

Practitioners receiving culturally aligned supervision reported feeling supported to process their clinical experiences

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

Expanding a diverse mental health workforce in underserved areas

28 students and professionals received coaching or mentoring

More accessible, culturally responsive, and supportive mental and behavioral health services

303 clinical students and community members trained in culturally responsive care

Boston College School of Social Work students meet monthly to discuss case studies and share strategies to approach cultural dynamics that prevent families from accessing services.

37 students increased their knowledge or skills in offering trauma-informed, culturally responsive care

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

Expanded training opportunities for providers

110 students and professionals enrolled in social work, counseling, and clinical psychology training programs

42 seminars and workshops for students and professionals

Springfield College held seminars and workshops covering topics such as trauma-focused CBT, cultural competence and humility in working with youth with disabilities, and intergenerational trauma and provider recruitment.

Diversified field placement opportunities

11 honoraria offered to partner agencies for field placements

William James College offered honoraria to partner agencies serving primarily lower-income communities and communities of color in the Boston area.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$1.02m in Year 1 funding

(\$4m in total funding since 2019)

To 6 funded partners

152 students and providers engaged

Funded partners engaged providers primarily working in Boston Public Schools and students at 12 Boston-area universities.

Common approaches

- Supporting racial/ethnic and linguistically diverse students to enter the mental health (MH) provider workforce
- Providing accessible educational opportunities for clinical graduate students, MH providers, and community members to deliver trauma-informed support



Healthy Youth Development

Progress from May 2022 – August 2023

Goal: Support youth-centered and engaged programming and services to promote healthy youth development.

Funding supports projects that support trauma-informed, youth-centered programming and services to promote healthy youth development and resilience.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

Youth outcomes

292 youth increased social-emotional competencies

Youth who met with a social worker at Sociedad Latina felt better prepared to deal with stress.

34 youth improved their wages or employment status, promoting future financial stability

34 youth improved connections with mentors, adults, and peers

High school students who completed Young Man with a Plan's mentoring programs reported stronger brotherhood and quality of relationships.

"The best part...[is] being part of a brotherhood and getting to receive advice from positive role models who want the best for me. Meeting new people and having fun. Everyone bonding and getting along."

-Youth mentoring program participant

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

Increased engagement in youth development programs

575 youth engaged in education success and career pathway programs

290 youth engaged in leadership development trainings

Improved connections to community-based resources

533 youth and caregivers received mental health or trauma support services

85 referrals for youth to additional programs and services

Youth in the Boston Alliance of LGBTQ+ Youth's education and career programs were referred to behavioral health resources geared towards LGBTQ+ youth.

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

New opportunities for youth leadership and development

186 youth led and developed community programs

The Center for Teen Empowerment hired 43 youth organizers to lead events on violence prevention.

1,654 sessions offered related to mentoring, mental health, career and/or education

Peer Health Exchange nearly doubled the number of selfsea users, a mobile app co-designed with youth to provide identity and health information. Selfsea content is inclusive, evidence-informed, and delivered by peers.

Enhanced service coordination

54 partnerships to advance programming and facilitate referrals

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$972k in Year 1 funding

(2.32m in total funding since 2019)

To 20 funded partners

Over 3,000 youth, families, and staff engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain.

Common approaches

- Develop or expand programming that supports youth college readiness and employment
- Promote youth leadership and development
- Connect youth with resources for their physical and mental health



Children's Health Equity

Progress from January 2021 – June 2023

The Children's Health Equity Initiative advances child health through a place-based, collective impact approach. Four collaboratives, based in Boston neighborhoods, foster collaboration and cohesion in communities disproportionately impacted by inequities in health.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

Caregiver outcomes

344 caregivers engaged in shaping their children's education

The Resilient Families Surround Care School Community Coalition provided incentives to increase caregiver civic engagement in parent-teacher advisory groups.

135 caregivers improved financial well-being (new employment, increased income, reduced debt)

Youth outcomes

84 youth reported greater access and awareness of youth programming & services

The Living Safely in Jackson Square Collaborative reported their members can build on the trust that other members have already established with youth and other residents, allowing them to engage individuals they wouldn't have been able to reach before.

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

Youth, parents, and residents taking ownership of their communities

99 youth and residents taking on leadership roles

Fields Corner Crossroads Collaborative's Youth Council led a participatory budgeting process to allocate \$100k to community projects.

"This fostering of connections amongst different housing developments in Jackson Square through the [building captains] has been a key means of building more community and social cohesion."

-Collaborative leader

Wins supported by collaboratives:

- Three Building Captains with Living Safely in Jackson Square won election to the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
- Fields Corner Crossroads Collaborative fought to preserve the 18 bus route in Fields Corner
- Nubian Neighborhood Network facilitated an agreement that Dearborn STEM Academy graduates will be accepted to Franklin Cummings Tech

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

Increased cross-sector coordination

869 referrals facilitated access to community programs for youth and parents

The Living Safely in Jackson Square Youth Network strengthened relationships among youth-serving organizations.

"[Our] partner organizations meet biweekly and share what each organization offers to address the SDOH [social determinants of health] needs of residents and how to make referrals to one another."

-Collaborative leader

New opportunities for skill-building

159 workshops and trainings built residents' skills and increased awareness of local policy issues

Nubian Neighborhood Network supported STEM workforce training for parents, with the goal of increasing economic mobility for families in the Dudley Neighborhood.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$4m in Year 1-3 funding

(4.75m in total funding since 2018)

To 4 funded collaboratives

Over 2,500 community members engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Dorchester and Roxbury

Common approaches

- Develop resident leadership and expand communities' power to address the social determinants of child health
- Increase coordination among service providers and address service gaps
- Address disparities in neighborhoods and schools through targeted expansion of supports and services

Acknowledgements

Boston Children's Office of Community Health would like to thank our funded partners, recognized in this report and listed below, for sharing progress and lessons learned with us. None of this would be possible without our funded partners and their commitment to advancing the health and well-being of children and families in Boston. Boston Children's also thanks our evaluation partner, Mathematica, for their leadership in developing this report. We appreciate Mathematica's commitment to building the evaluation capacity of funded partners, identifying opportunities for growth, and helping us to communicate the impact of the Collaboration. Lastly, we want to acknowledge the members of the Boston Children's Board Committee for Community Health and Community Advisory Board for their leadership and dedication to creating a healthier future for Boston's children and families.

Birth to Five

The Basics Inc.
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
Boston Opportunity Agenda
The Community Builders
East Boston Social Centers
Families First
First Teacher
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Neighborhood Villages
Nurtury Inc.
Raising a Reader Massachusetts
Room to Grow
Strategies for Children
Urban College of Boston

Family Economic Stability and Opportunity

Community Labor United
Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance

Family Housing Stability

Boston's Higher Ground
Chinatown Community Land Trust
Urban Edge
City Life/Vida Urbana

Healthy Living

Bikes not Bombs and Children's Services of Roxbury
Dorchester Food Co-Op
The Food Project
Haley House
Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition
Playworks New England
Sociedad Latina
Somali Parents Advocacy Center for Education
South Street Youth Center and Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center
Urban Farming Institute of Boston
WalkMassachusetts
Youth Enrichment Services

Mental Health Systems

Boston College School of Social Work
Children's Services of Roxbury
Simmons University School of Social Work
Springfield College Department of Social Work
UMass BIRCh Project
William James College

Children's Health Equity

Fields Corner Crossroads Collaborative
Living Safely in Jackson Square
Nubian Neighborhood Network
Resilient Families Surround Care
School Community Coalition

Healthy Youth Development

BAGLY Inc.
Beats Rhymes and Life and Children's Services of Roxbury
Boston Private Industry Council
Brookview House Inc.
Bridges Homeward
The Center for Teen Empowerment Inc.
Freedom House Inc.
Greatest MINDS
Hyde Square Task Force
Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción
Madison Park Development Corporation
MissionSAFE: A New Beginning Inc.
Mothers for Justice and Equality Inc.
Peer Health Exchange
Project RIGHT Inc.
Silver Lining Mentoring
Sociedad Latina
Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center
West End House
Young Man with a Plan

Special Initiatives

City Fresh Foods 94 Shirley Street Project
Heading Home
Local Initiatives Support Corporation Boston
New Hope Community Capital

