



2022-2025

Strategic Plan



**Oakland Starting
Smart & Strong**



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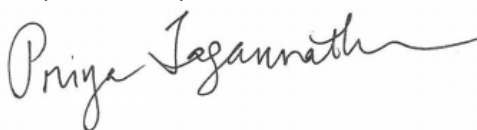


Letter from the Director

Dear City of Oakland Residents, Partners, and Colleagues:

I am excited to share Oakland Starting Smart & Strong's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. This three-year strategic roadmap details our vision, mission, values, newly updated pillars and outlines five key goals and related strategies to drive our work forward as a critical leader in identifying, seeding, and driving equitable solutions to strengthen the City of Oakland's early childhood ecosystem. At the heart of our plan is a push for OSSS and our partners to be bold in our approach to create an early childhood ecosystem that addresses systemic racism and is equitable for all children and families. Over the past 8 years, Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS) has built a strong, cross-sector collaborative table to advocate for policies that build and improve the systems that support Oakland's young children and families most impacted by racial and economic inequity. Our collaborative strives to center the leadership and experiences of Oakland families and early childhood practitioners and ensure their voices are captured in this plan to leverage the power of our collaborative's stakeholders. This plan builds on our past successes, maps a clear strategic direction forward, and is deeply rooted in our commitment to racial justice and equity. OSSS and our partners look forward to continuing to partner with Oakland's parents and caregivers, communities and institutions to ensure **all children, families, and early educators thrive in Oakland** by creating an early childhood ecosystem that effectively serves all children 0-5, their families, caregivers, and educators.

In partnership,



Priya Jagannathan

Director, Oakland Starting Smart & Strong

Who We Are



History

In 2014, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, recognizing the daunting disparities and challenges in Oakland's early childhood ecosystem and the potential for significant impact by local advocates and stakeholders, provided a 10-year grant to establish Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS). OSSS employs a collective impact framework that brings together a broad and diverse range of organizations and individuals from Oakland to create a strong early learning network, to develop and amplify solutions, and to lead bold policy to create lasting change. OSSS advances a set of innovative, community-informed strategies that include service provision, systems coordination, and policy and advocacy efforts. Over the past two years, OSSS was able to respond nimbly and effectively to the trauma and disruption caused by the pandemic by providing resources to community members most impacted by structural racism and economic inequity. Additional funding and support from the Hellman Foundation and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation make this work possible. The collaborative is fiscally sponsored by the Oakland Public Education Fund.

Our Structure

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong is a broad, active and diverse collaboration with core leadership of parent advocacy groups, early care and education providers, city and county systems leaders, and representatives of elected officials, community based organizations, philanthropy, and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). We convene our 100+ member Task Force several times a year to promote coordination and communication. Our structure also includes an Executive Committee, a Lead Planning Team that meets monthly, and key Committees and Working Groups that drive our programmatic and policy work. OSSS also partners closely with public and private funders, including the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Hellman Foundation, the Rainin Foundation, First 5 Alameda County, the City of Oakland's Fund for Children and Youth, and Oakland Early Childhood Funders Table. The collaborative's staff and consultant team, led by Priya Jagannathan, serves as backbone support for this collective impact effort.

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong Task Force:

A broad work group that shares data, resources and best practices



Our Organizational Framework



Vision

Our collective vision of success is that all children, families and early educators flourish in Oakland.



Mission

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS) is a citywide collaborative that advances racial justice, develops and amplifies community-driven solutions, and advocates for changes in policy and resources to create an early childhood ecosystem that effectively serves children 0-5, their families, caregivers, and educators.



Values

Our core values are deeply rooted in the belief that systems change requires a justice-centered collective impact approach. We continually seek to grow, refine, and redefine our work and support of young children, families, and the early learning community, while upholding the following values:

- **Justice: racial, economic, wage, gender, disability and every form of necessary inclusion**
- **Transparent open communication**
- **Accountability**
- **Collaboration and partnership**
- **Community knowledge, experience, and strength**

OSSS focuses on the following outcomes to achieve our vision of success:

- ➔ Each child in Oakland has access to high quality and inclusive early learning experiences that build on their individual and family strengths, racial and cultural background, and language(s)
- ➔ Every adult in each young child's life has the resources, tools, and information necessary to support them
- ➔ Schools and neighborhoods are designed with family leadership to support the healthy development of every child and narrow racial disparities, with educators and leaders reflecting the communities served
- ➔ In Oakland, families, caregivers, providers and educators work together with systems and policymakers to remove barriers, improve policies, and increase resources to support and celebrate the early learning years



The Pillars

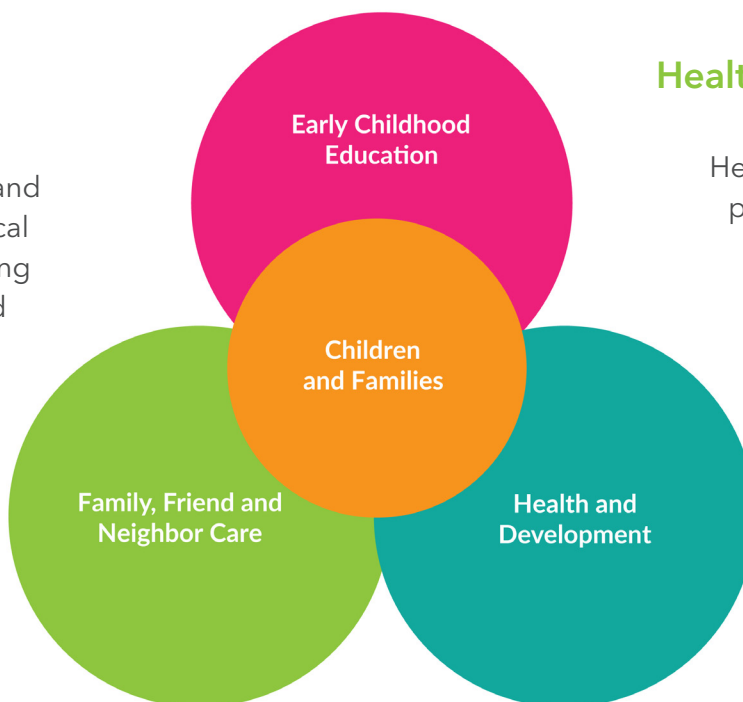
OSSS has identified three pillars that represent the core focus of our work. During this strategic planning process, we reviewed and updated our pillars. Each of these pillars is reflected in our goals and strategies. These pillars directly support the City of Oakland's children and families, who are at the center of all that we do. Our collective efforts prioritize listening to and learning from our families, advocating on behalf and in partnership with our families, and working to create a city where all children and families thrive.

Early Childhood Education

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong focuses on improving the quality of early childhood education provided in formal settings such as preschool, infant care, and licensed family child care. We work in partnership with early childhood educators to provide them with the tools and training they need to foster quality connections and engaging learning activities that address the needs of each child. We also lift up their voices in our advocacy efforts.

Family, Friend and Neighbor Care

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong focuses on a critical sector of our early learning ecosystem – families and informal caregivers. We collaborate with informal caregivers and provide them with tools and resources they need to nurture educational joy and work to amplify their role in the early education system.



Health and Development

Healthy children are better prepared for school and for life. Oakland Starting Smart and Strong works to ensure that young children are screened for developmental, social, and cognitive needs and that necessary services are provided to address those needs.

Our Impact

For the past eight years, OSSS has been a driving force in supporting the early learning system, providers and caregivers, and the children and families served by the system. As a collective table we have:

- Improved the quality of formal early childhood education settings
- Provided support and resources for informal caregivers of young children in the City of Oakland
- Used data and research that centers community voice and leadership to drive systems and policy change
- Raised awareness about the importance of developmental screening and ensured OUSD is able to screen and serve children who have developmental, social, and cognitive needs

“

OSSS has thought about data differently with a shift towards whether systems are ready for kids, rather than the deficits kids bring.”

- Focus Group Participant



Key Programs and Initiatives

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

OSSS raised and administered funds for COVID-19 relief and cash distribution to community-based organizations and families with young children. In partnership with the UCSF Center for Child and Community Health, OSSS sponsors sessions with physicians to provide information about COVID-19 safety and vaccines to ECE providers and families.

Resilient Oakland Communities and Kids (ROCK)

ROCK builds knowledge among early childhood educators about trauma and its impact on children's health and learning, protective factors and resilience, and classroom-based trauma informed practices. The program also supports self-awareness in adults about their own experiences with trauma and teaches self-care strategies they can use to support their well-being. ROCK has created an ongoing teacher training framework – that includes group trainings, monthly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and coaching in the classroom – based on evidence-based trauma informed practices.

Developmental Screening

OSSS is working to ensure that young children are screened for developmental, social, and cognitive needs and that necessary services are provided to meet those needs. OSSS and our partners at Oakland Unified School District, with the support of Help Me Grow/First 5 Alameda, have successfully scaled developmental screenings at all OUSD Child Development Centers, providing valuable information to parents and providers.

OSSS Policy and Advocacy Committee

The OSSS Policy and Advocacy Committee has developed a community-driven Policy and Advocacy Agenda, which outlines policy and systems change priorities for the collaborative. These priorities are grounded in three equity areas: systems change for Oakland's youngest learners, parent and family leadership in community investment, and equity for early childhood educators and child care providers.

Boys of Color Workgroup

OSSS launched the Boys of Color Workgroup to address institutional racism in early learning settings and create strength-based environments that are responsive to the brilliance, interests, and promise of our young boys of color. The Workgroup identifies, recommends, and supports the development of effective practices, programs, and policies for people working with young boys of color. Most recently, the Workgroup worked with educators and researchers to develop 10 Promising Practices in Early Learning for Black Boys: Action Toolkit. These 10 Promising Practices represent fundamental actions that move toward dismantling an educational system that does not work for all children and moves toward building one that does.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

OSSS has supported and funded the use of the EDI, a community snapshot of Kindergarten children's health, development, and school readiness in Oakland. The results inform place-based planning to optimize healthy development for all young children. Stakeholders can use the results to look back and assess how the Oakland early childhood community can better support young children. The results can also help us look forward to addressing the needs of students in Kindergarten as they progress through school.

Early Learning Symposium

Born out of a collaborative effort among early childhood education providers, the Early Learning Symposium provides professional development offerings to early learning professionals across settings. Speakers are local experts working with children and families and breakout sessions are facilitated by early childhood teachers and community members. Let's Talk Early Learning are informal, drop-in sessions offered for early learning professionals in between the Symposium webinars. These are facilitated by OUSD preschool teachers and offer a confidential space for peer sharing.

Family Child Care (FCC) Policy Program

The FCC Policy Program is led by a diverse group of FCC providers and parent advocates who are supported by OSSS, BANANAS (our local Resource & Referral Agency), and First 5 Alameda County. The FCC Policy Program uplifts provider voices in policy conversations about our early childhood mixed delivery system. Grounded in racial and economic justice values, this program centers FCC providers as educators, community leaders, and bridge builders for Oakland children and families.

Strategic Planning Process

In Fall 2021, building on our rich 8-year history, well-honed organizational structure and framework, core initiatives and key outcomes, OSSS launched a participatory strategic planning process to evaluate our strategic priorities and create a roadmap for the future. On the heels of a global pandemic and a renewed focus on addressing systemic racism in our country, OSSS sought to develop a strategic roadmap to guide, scale, and sustain our work over the next three years.

The process included the following phases:

Phase 1

Stakeholder Engagement

We listened to and learned from more than 300 stakeholders, including staff, collaborative members, parents, providers, and key partners to elicit their input and ideas on OSSS' structure, impact, successes, challenges, and strategic opportunities. This engagement process included:

- **Engagement of a Strategic Planning Committee** that included OSSS staff and Lead Planning Team members to inform the stakeholder engagement process, co-design the planning retreats, and guide the creation of strategic priorities, goals, and strategies.
- **An online survey**
- **17 one-on-one interviews**
- **8 virtual focus groups** with a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including OSSS Boys of Color Workgroup members, OSSS Family Child Care Policy Program members, center-based early learning providers, parents from the San Antonio Parent Action Research Team, Oakland 0-5 Family Resource Center Network members, First 5 Alameda, OSSS Staff, and LPT members.

With the support of Deena Margolis and Laura Valles of Focali Consulting, LLC, our strategic planning process focused on the following priorities:

- To confirm OSSS' vision, values, and strategic priorities
- To engage and reflect community voice and wishes in the plan
- To assess and determine our organizational structure and staffing plan
- To identify and evaluate our strategic priorities
- To gain commitments from partners about their level of involvement and support for the OSSS strategic plan
- To develop the process and strategies through a race equity lens

Phase 2

Strategy Design & Development

We undertook a collaborative process over a two-day virtual retreat to affirm our vision, mission, and values; updated the core pillars driving our work; and shaped the goals and strategies of this plan. We also used this time to reflect on the stakeholder engagement feedback and connect as a collaborative community. We developed and reached consensus on a set of goals and strategies that were assessed using a strategy screen tool developed to guide us in the identification and pursuit of strategies that align with our mission, values, and capacity.

What We Learned: Key Stakeholder Engagement Themes

Through the engagement process, OSSS' stakeholders overwhelmingly affirmed the value and contribution of the collaborative to Oakland's early learning system. OSSS is seen as providing:

- **Unique assets and expertise to support the early learning community**
- **Effective, action-oriented collaborative space**
- **Valuable focus on the City of Oakland**

Our stakeholders agreed that OSSS' main accomplishments since its inception include:

- **Data collection, analysis, and sharing**
- **Integrating trauma-informed practices in early learning sites**
- **Supporting and strengthening OUSD's Early Childhood Education Department**
- **Influencing policy**
- **Offering quality early learning professional development**

Our stakeholders aligned around three areas for OSSS to focus on over the next 3 years:

1

Strengthen and support the early childhood education (ECE) workforce

2

Strengthen parent and provider engagement in the work of OSSS

3

Improve the systems that support children, families, providers and communities

What we heard from our stakeholders and partners

OSSS provides a space that allows for:

"...productive, healthy conversation" - Focus Group Participant

"....systems [to] come hear directly from community providers"
- Interviewee

"...providers to be a part of a community and not feel isolated"
- Interviewee

“

There was a lot that changed within OUSD around prioritizing early care and education in the early years that Oakland Starting Smart and Strong really helped facilitate."

- Focus Group Participant

“

If OSSS didn't exist there wouldn't be a place to grapple with difficult conversations"

- Interviewee



Our Strategic Framework

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong's strategic framework will drive our efforts and focus over the next three years. The strategic framework is organized around 5 strategic priority areas and the pillars. OSSS identified a goal for each strategic priority area, and the 3 pillars are reflected in the strategies.

Racial Justice

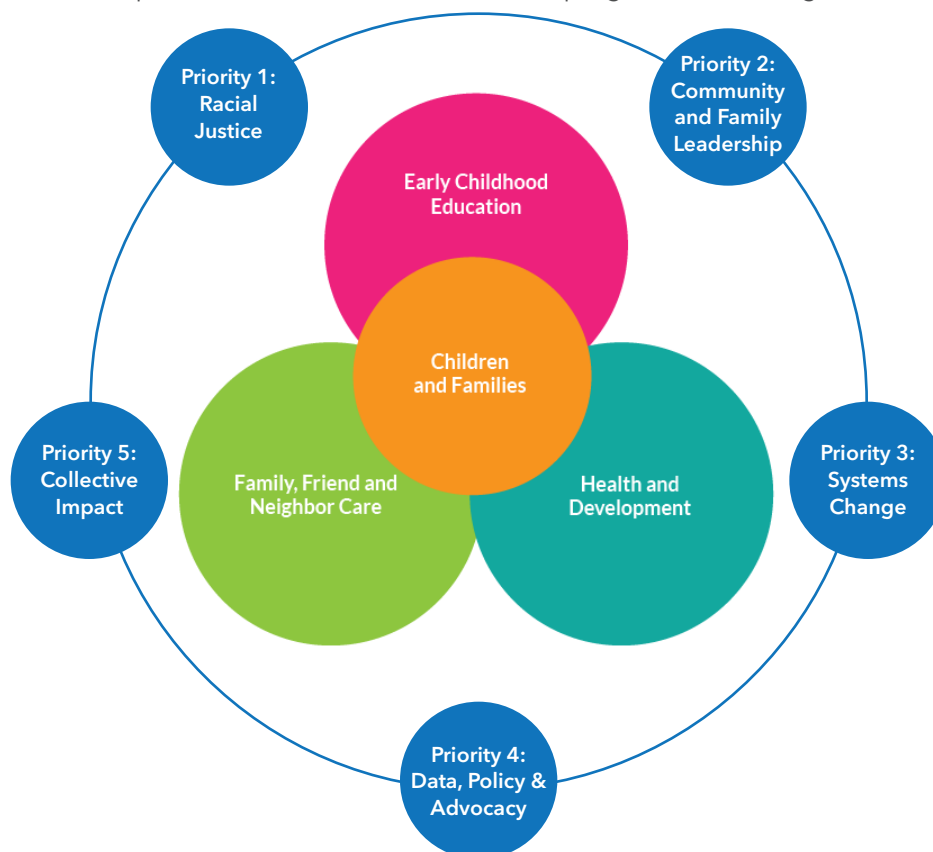
OSSS has long centered equity in its work and this strategic plan deepens our commitment to building an anti-racist, trauma informed system that provides quality environments and opportunities for all children and families in Oakland, regardless of their zip code.

Community and Family Leadership

OSSS recognizes that real change can only occur with meaningful participation of communities and families. Building on our existing efforts to lift up community and parent voices, we are expanding opportunities for leadership, engagement, and dialogue to ensure parents and communities are the driving force behind the policy and programmatic changes we seek in Oakland.

Collective Impact

For the past eight years, Oakland Starting Smart and Strong has become a leader, working to make the early childhood systems effective and equitable. We are committed to sustaining and scaling this collective impact effort and its backbone support beyond the ten-year investment from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.



Systems Change

OSSS will continue to serve as a leading voice in the City of Oakland to strengthen the systems that touch the lives of children and families. We will continue to work towards a city where our public investments and systems fully support Oakland children and families most impacted by racial and economic inequity.

Data, Policy & Advocacy

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong is committed to continuing its data, policy, and advocacy efforts. We deepen our commitment to centering community voices and leadership in data collection and analysis and working to ensure that our data, policy and advocacy efforts drive meaningful change in Oakland.

2022-25 GOALS & STRATEGIES

Racial Justice

Goal 1

By 2025, OSSS will expand and improve Oakland's early childhood ecosystem for children farthest from opportunity, with a focus on Black and brown children

- Strategy 1:** By 2025, OSSS will expand trainings and resources on anti-racist, trauma informed, multi-lingual, and inclusionary practices to include more formal publicly-funded early childhood education settings in Oakland.
- Strategy 2:** By 2025, OSSS will engage informal caregivers in community conversations about anti-racist, trauma informed, multi-lingual, and inclusionary practices to improve early childhood services.
- Strategy 3:** By 2023, OSSS will identify racial disparities in ECE developmental screening and intervention referrals in Oakland and develop recommendations to address them, with a focus on high-priority neighborhoods.



Community and Family Leadership

Goal 2

By 2025, OSSS will ensure the voices of families, early childhood educators, and community-based providers are centered in decisions affecting Oakland's early childhood ecosystem.

- Strategy 1:** By 2023, OSSS will partner with publicly-funded early childhood education providers to create and expand leadership and advocacy opportunities for early childhood educators.
- Strategy 2:** By 2025, along with partner organizations, OSSS will fund and coordinate opportunities for parents/caregivers, not typically at decision making tables, to provide input on early childhood and family supports to systems and City leaders.
- Strategy 3:** By 2024, OSSS will work with early childhood providers and family advocacy groups to develop recommendations on how the developmental screening and referral process can be improved to ensure children can get the supports they need.



Systems Change

Goal 3

By 2025, OSSS will advocate for investments in Oakland's early childhood system that are sustained, aligned, and equitably implemented.

- Strategy 1:** By 2025, OSSS will elevate early childhood education as a priority in city government and the school district.
- Strategy 2:** By 2024, OSSS will support the development of a sustainability plan for the Oakland 0-5 Family Resource Center (FRC) Network, including the identification of funding resources, coordination of trainings, and cultivating shared practice among Network members.
- Strategy 3:** By 2023, OSSS will convene a health and development workgroup to identify community and collaborative priorities and begin implementing a clearly defined scope of work.



Data, Policy and Advocacy

Goal 4

By 2025, OSSS will inform early childhood policy and resource decision making in Oakland through asset-based, community-designed research, data, and tools.

- Strategy 1:** By 2024, OSSS will engage community partners and educators in the 3rd round of Early Development Instrument (EDI) implementation and support the creation of neighborhood zone profiles that highlight community perspectives
- Strategy 2:** By 2025, OSSS will engage in participatory based research that supports the priorities of informal caregivers.
- Strategy 3:** By 2023, OSSS will review recommendations from the developmental screening research project and identify next steps.



Collective Impact

Goal 5

By 2025, OSSS will be a fully established and sustained cross-sector collaborative that leverages and coordinates efforts to make the early childhood system in Oakland more effective and equitable.

- Strategy 1:** By 2023, OSSS will update the communications plan to support the strategic goals and strategies of the collaborative and improve internal and external communications.
- Strategy 2:** By 2025, OSSS will develop and launch a business plan that secures sustainable funding for the collaborative.
- Strategy 3:** By 2024, OSSS will determine the organizational structure and roles necessary for staff, consultants, and partner organizations to implement the collaborative's goals and strategies.

OSSS looks forward to working in partnership with our collaborative members, parents, providers, funders and policymakers to achieve these goals and strategies over the next three years.



Acknowledgements

We are grateful to have such a robust, committed, and diverse collaborative committed to strengthening our early childhood system. The collaborative represents our multiple and diverse community, systems and sectors that impact Oakland's early childhood community – including community members, community-based organizations, Oakland's school district, Alameda County public health and social services agency, and public and private funders, including the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Hellman Foundation, the Rainin Foundation, First 5 Alameda County, the City of Oakland's Fund for Children & Youth and the Oakland Early Childhood Funders table.

Lead Planning Team Collaborative Members



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Key Partners

We are grateful to our philanthropic partners for their generous and ongoing support of OSSS.



HELLMAN FOUNDATION

OSSS gratefully acknowledges the following collaborative partners and stakeholders who participated and added their voice to our strategic planning process. A special thank you to members of the Strategic Planning Committee (denoted in red):

Alisa Burton, City of Oakland Head Start	Johana Flores, East Bay Agency for Children
Allison Delgado, East Bay Agency for Children	Julie Hadnot, All IN Alameda County
Angela Louie Howard, Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center	Keith Welch, OUSD Early Childhood Education
Anna Luna, Hirsch Philanthropy Partners	Kiko Malin, Alameda County Public Health
Annette Wright, OUSD Early Childhood Education	Kristin Spanos, First 5 Alameda County
Bernadette Sangalang, David and Lucile Packard Foundation	Kym Johnson, BANANAS
Bethina Woodridge, Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center	Kyra Mungia, City of Oakland Mayor's Office
Betsy Merzenich, Hirsch Philanthropy Partners	LaWanda Wesley, OUSD Early Childhood Education
Carla Keener, First 5 Alameda County	Leanna Mayoral, Lee Lees Babies
Carol Cohen, Family Resource Navigators	Lisa Forti, First 5 Alameda County
Carolina Padilla, East Bay Agency for Children	Loren Farrar, First 5 Alameda County
Chris Nguon, Lincoln Families	Margarita Garcia, El Carrusel WeeCare
Christie A. Herrera, OUSD Early Childhood Education	Maria Sujo, OUSD Kindergarten Readiness
Clarissa Douthard, Parent Voices Oakland	Melanie Moore, Oakland Thrives
Curtiss Sarikey, OUSD Office of the Superintendent	Members of the San Antonio FRC Parent Action Research Team (PART)
Dana Cilono, Kenneth Rainin Foundation	Nancy Harvey, Li'l Nancy's Primary Schoolhouse
David Harris, Urban Strategies	Neva Bandelow, formerly with Alameda County Office of Education
David Silver, City of Oakland Mayor's Office	Nini Humphrey, OUSD Early Childhood Education
Dawn Edwards, Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center	Noni Galloway, Parent Voices Oakland
Diana Garcia, First 5 Alameda County	Ouida Joi Cooper Rodriguez, Prescott-Joseph Center
Diveena Cooppan, City of Oakland Head Start	Pecolia Manigo, Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network (PLAN)
Drew Giles, OUSD Early Childhood Education	Pedro Arista, Hirsch Philanthropy Partners
Erika Takada, Engage R+D	Rha Bowden, Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center
Esly Morales, Unity Council	Sanam Jorjani, Oakland Literacy Coalition
Etelvina Lopez, La Plazita Preschool	Savitha Moorthy, Tandem, Partners in Early Learning
Harold Scoggins, City of Oakland, Human Services Department	Shruti Argawal, Shruti's Family Daycare
Isobel White, Lightbox Collaborative	Taji Brown, OUSD Early Childhood Education
Jackie Perl, formerly with Oakland Thrives	Thomas Williams, Consultant
Janani Krishna, The Little Butterflies	Tuwe Mehn, OUSD Kindergarten Readiness
Janet Hornage, Unity Council	Varshini Kannan, Bodhi Montessori
Jeff Sunshine, David and Lucile Packard Foundation	Veronica Anderson, Penultimate Group
Jennifer Cabán, Alameda County Social Services Agency	Vincent Cheng, First 5 Alameda County
	Zach Gilbert, OUSD Early Childhood Department

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**Oakland Starting
Smart & Strong**