



OAKLAND STARTING SMART AND STRONG PARTNER MAPPING :

# WORKING TOGETHER FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

SPRING 2020

the David &  
Lucile Packard  
FOUNDATION

# INTRODUCTION

As S3I reaches the fifth year of this ten-year initiative, the Packard Foundation was interested in understanding **the extent to which organizations in each community are working together to create a comprehensive early learning system**. The Foundation partnered with Engage R+D, to survey key stakeholders in each community on the extent to which they are building relationships and working together.

Engage R+D fielded the online in the spring and summer of 2019 to survey of leaders from organizations in the early learning system in each S3I community. This included the **school district, county office of education, First 5, Head Start, childcare resource and referral agency, and other local and community-based organizations**. These organizations were selected because they represent the main institutions serving young children and families in each community. While some of these organizations had been directly funded through S3I, most had not. The **purpose of the survey was to understand the extent to which key stakeholders in the early learning system in each community are working together compared to before the start of the initiative**.

This document presents findings from the survey of leaders within **Oakland Starting Smart and Strong**.



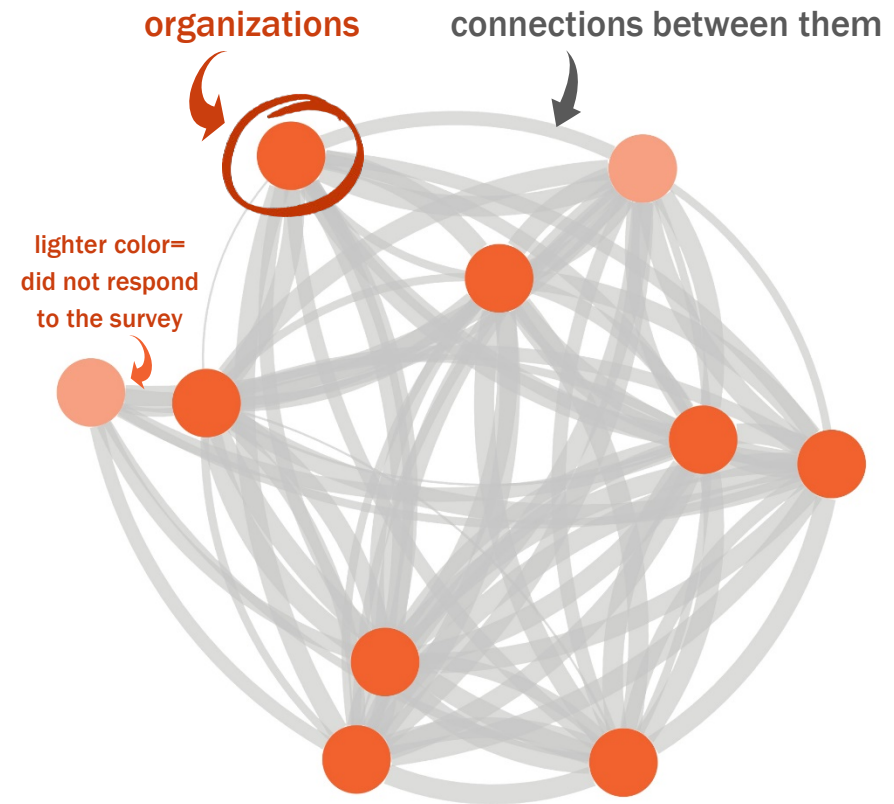
# READING NETWORK MAPS

The data from the survey can be used to create a series of network maps showing the connections between organizations in each community. By measuring the connections between these stakeholders, we can better understand the extent to which they are working together.

In the map at the right, survey participants are represented by the **orange dots**. Organizations in lighter orange did not respond to the survey. They are included in the map because we have some information about them from the survey respondents. However, without their response, this information is incomplete, meaning they may appear to be less connected to the network.

The connections that respondents reported with other organizations are shown by the **grey lines** connecting them. Thicker lines represent a stronger connection between the organizations on the scale from minimal interaction to formal partnership (see full definitions on the previous page). Each map in this report is accompanied by data charts to further display and quantify these connections.

To understand how connected the mapped stakeholders are overall, we use a metric called **network density**. Density is calculated as the number of connections in the map as a percentage of the total possible number of connections. If every stakeholder in the map is connected to every other stakeholder, the network density would be 100% because all the possible connections between stakeholders had been made.



# OAKLAND



In Oakland, partners built on previous collaborations to come together as Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS). The Lead Planning Team, which includes a wide range of organizations and community leaders, supported professional development trainings for educators, channeled resources and supports to informal caregivers, increased access to quality health care and development screenings, and ensured that services for children and families were accessible and culturally-responsive. These efforts required the collaboration of the school district, local government agencies, and family resource and referral organizations working across the early learning system.

**The number of partners in Oakland working together on joint activities or as a formal team increased by 38 percentage points after five years of S3I.**

Before the start of S3I, the majority of these organizations were connected (95% density). However, more than a third of these relationships (40%) were characterized by minimal interaction (level 1), meaning that many organizations may have been aware of one another but did not regularly communicate, share information, or work together.

After nearly five years of participating in Oakland Starting Smart and Strong, the level of engagement between these organizations had notably increased. The density of connections between

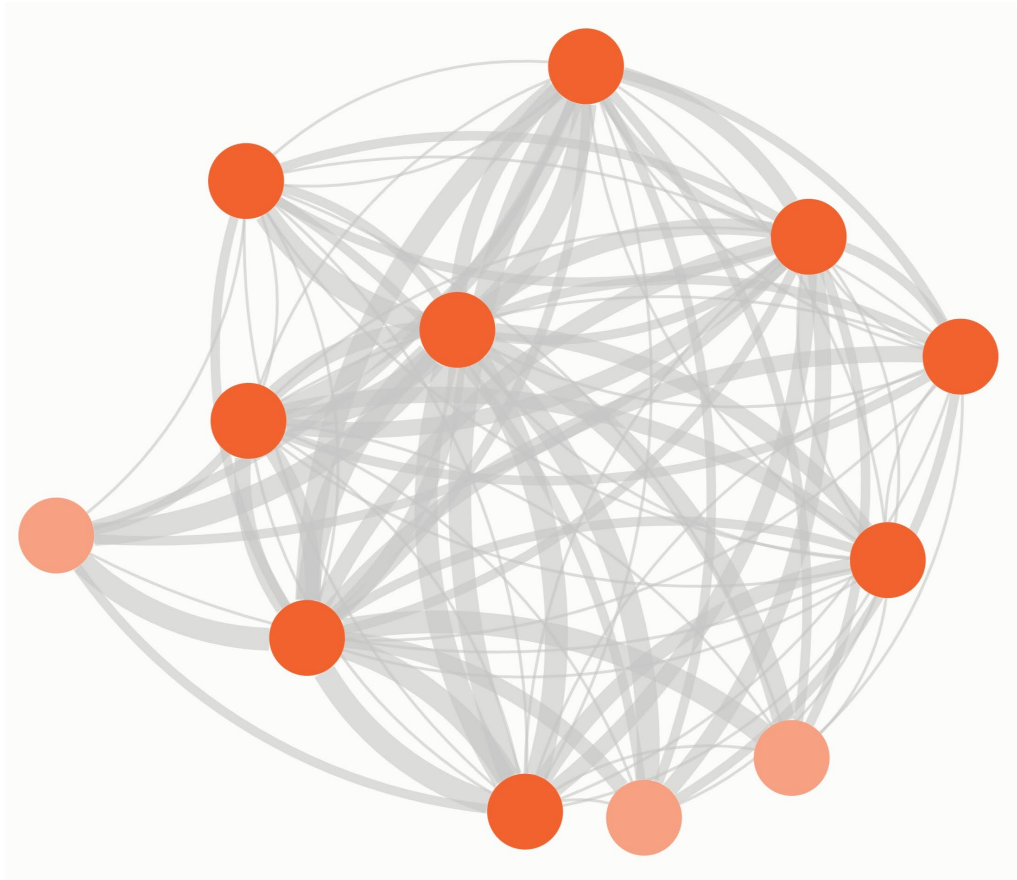
organizations working together on joint activities such as collaborating to provide a service, hosting a joint training, or sharing data (level 3) had increased by 15 percentage points, from 15% in 2015 to 30% in 2019. The density of connections for organizations working together as a formal team with an MOU or specified responsibilities (level 4) also increased, from 17% to 40%. Altogether, this means that nearly three-quarters of all the connections between organizations involved meaningful collaboration, from working together on joint activities to establishing a formal partnership. This is an increase of 38 percentage points from the start of S3I to now. These changes are illustrated on the following pages.

In Oakland, participants reported working together through Oakland Starting Smart and Strong on issues such as “professional development,” “resource and referral,” “joint advocacy,” and “developing data benchmarks for measuring progress.” As one partner described, “Through OSSS we were able to work more intensively with the Oakland early childhood education field and plan activities and programs through the Lead Planning Team.”

**“We are building awareness of what each organization is doing through OSSS. It’s helpful to have these relationships to reach out to specific people that can help to align efforts for children and communities.”**

# OAKLAND BEFORE S3I

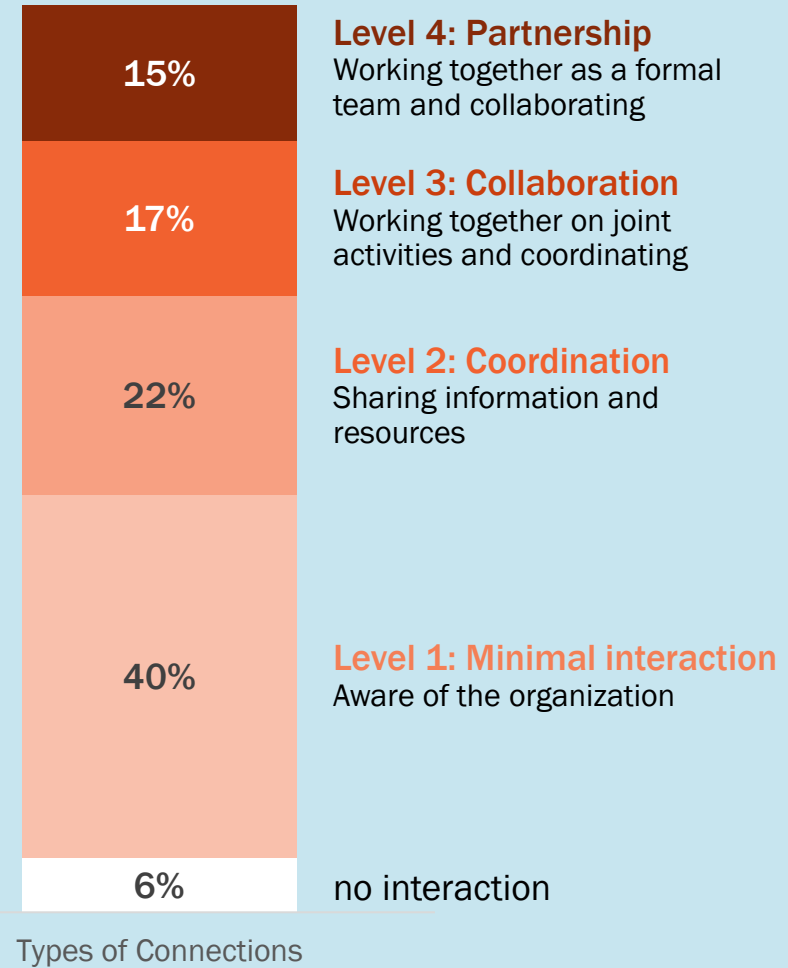
(n=12)



Key: Thicker lines show greater levels of interaction.

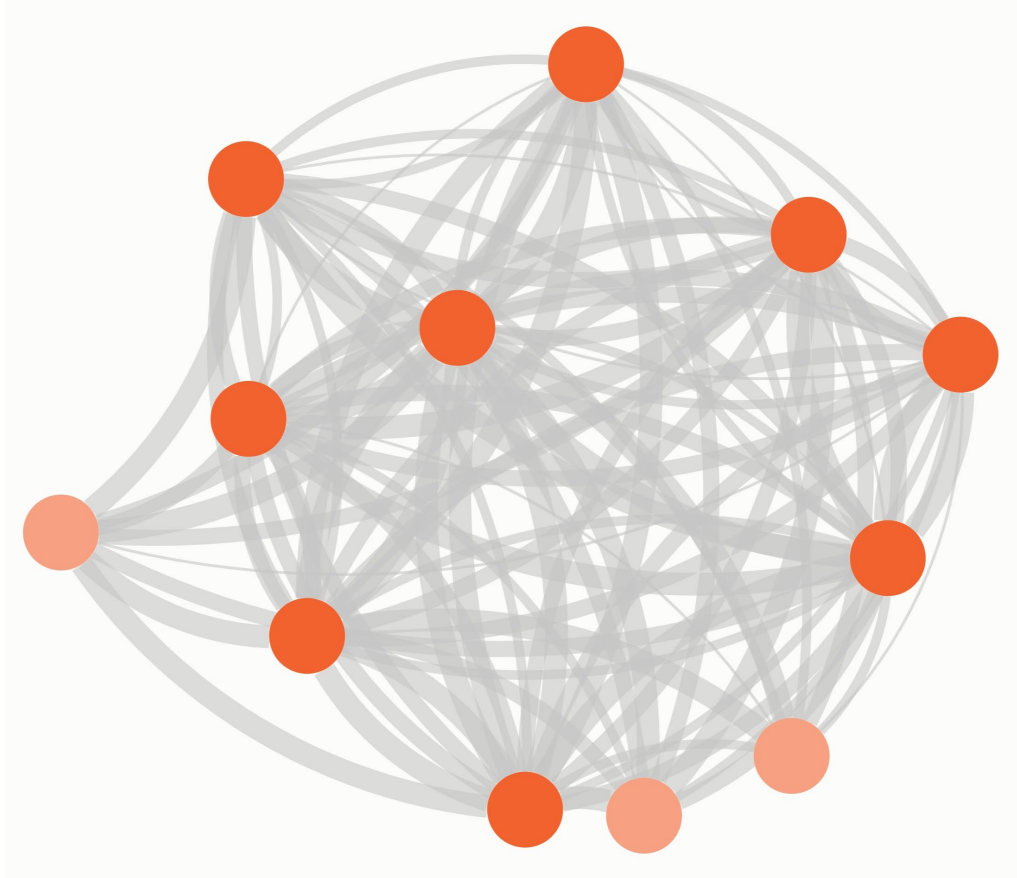
Organizations in lighter orange did not respond to the survey; therefore, information on them is incomplete.

95% OF ALL POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS ARE OCCURRING BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS:



# OAKLAND IN 2019

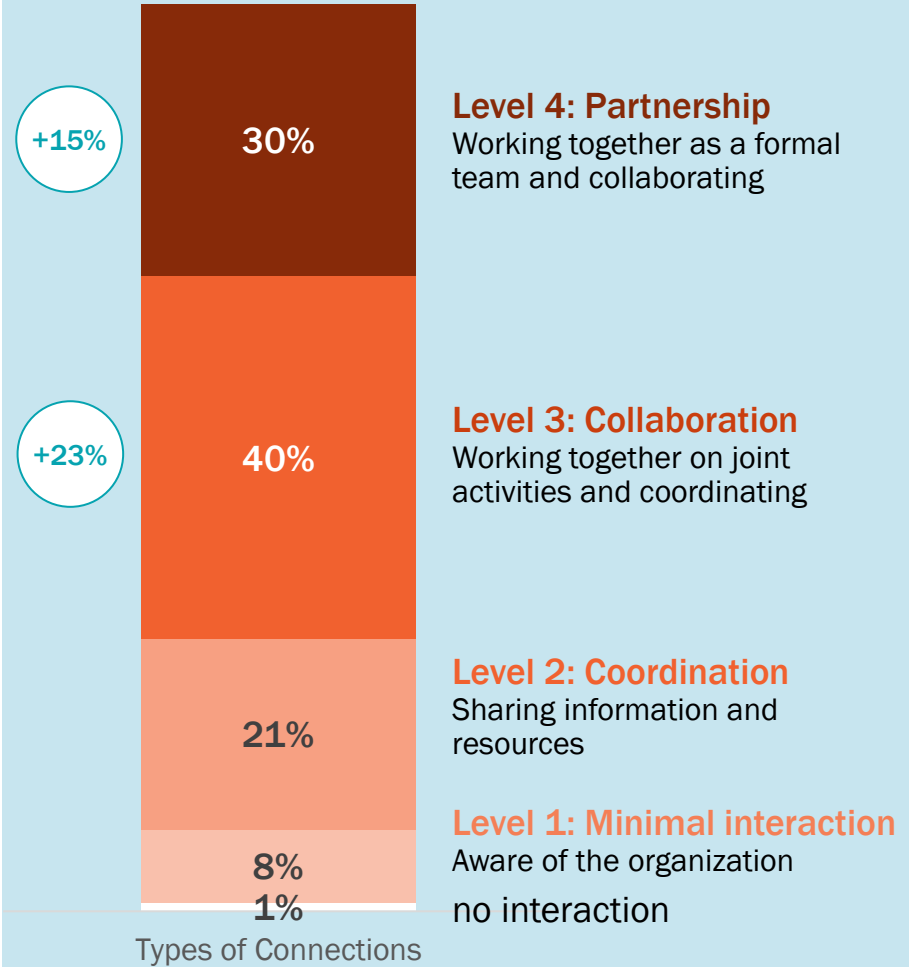
(n=12)



Key: Thicker lines show greater levels of interaction.

Organizations in lighter orange did not respond to the survey; therefore, information on them is incomplete.

100% OF ALL POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS ARE OCCURRING BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS:



# OUTCOMES BY PILLAR

In addition to rating their relationships, participants were also asked to rate their community’s progress toward systems change work across several factors. This page shows Oakland’s progress toward early learning work in the areas of formal, informal, health, and parent voice. On average, participants reported that they were “on their way” to accomplishing work across the four pillars. The “OSSS platform has accelerated the ability of OUSD to support professional development opportunities for their staff and integrate Help Me Grow in Oakland programs,” noted one partner. In reference to parent voice, another commented, “The group has had discussions on how they can better incorporate parent/family feedback. Simple things like times we meet or training programs that support the building of parent leadership and engagement are in the works but the group is not there just yet.”

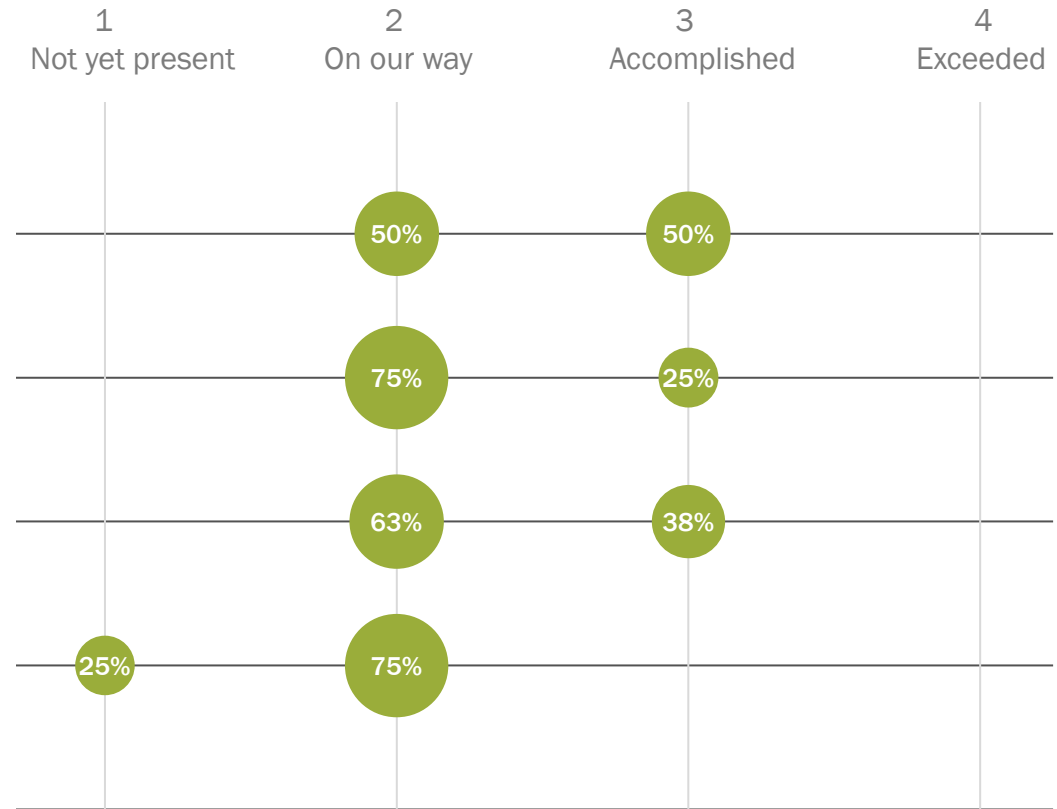
## Percentage of respondents at each rating level:

**Formal pillar:** Professional development opportunities create quality care in formal early learning settings (i.e., preschool, licensed child care).

**Informal pillar:** Programs and resources improve the quality of informal care in our community.

**Health pillar:** Families receive the support they need through the developmental screening and referral system.

**Parent Voice:** Parents are regularly engaged to assess whether programs and service are meeting their needs



# SYSTEMS OUTCOMES

This page shows participants' average ratings on aspects of systems change work including data, partnerships, leadership, and sustainability. Partners in Oakland rated their progress as “on their way” or “accomplished” on all these areas except sustainability, which they rated as “not yet present.” Participants recognized the strength of the Oakland Starting Smart and Strong table in these efforts, as well as trauma informed practices and data collection. “[We have had] thoughtful and scaled efforts to conduct assessments and utilize and share data for our children to see where there is need and where there has been growth, reported one partner. However, others reported that resources, parent engagement, and competing agendas among partners posed challenges to the work.

## Percentage of respondents at each rating level:

**Data:** Early learning classroom and child data are used across organizations to inform quality improvements in the formal sector.

**Data:** Relevant data about children, families, and/or communities are shared between organizations and sectors.

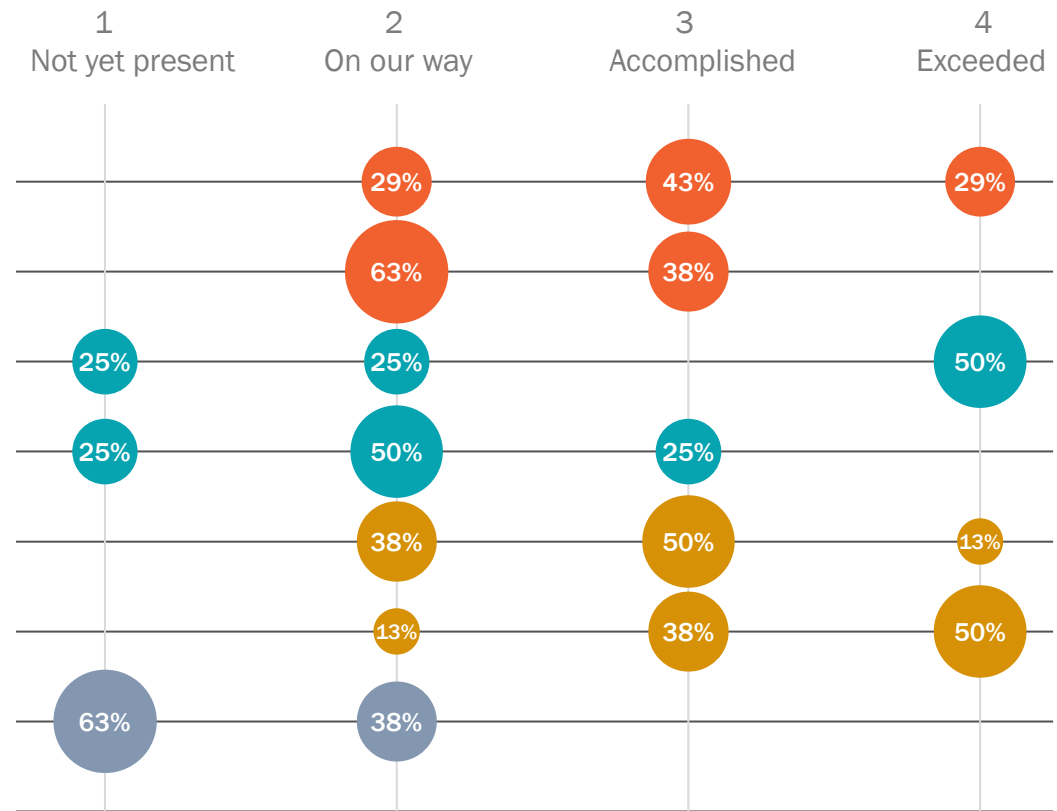
**Partnerships:** There is a central place for organizations to come together to identify community-wide early learning goals and strategies.

**Partnerships:** Professional development opportunities create quality care in formal early learning settings (i.e., preschool, licensed child care).

**Leadership:** Organizations share a common vision for scaling early childhood services to reach as many people in the community as possible, including those most in need.

**Leadership:** There are champions for early learning at multiple levels in our community

**Sustainability:** There are adequate resources and funding available to serve all children and families in need.





# APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

In the spring and summer of 2019, Engage R+D fielded an online survey of leaders from organizations in the early learning system in each S3I community. This included the school district, county office of education, First 5, Head Start, child care resource and referral agency, and other local and community-based organizations. These organizations were selected because they represent the main institutions serving young children and families in each community. While some of these organizations had been directly funded through S3I, most had not. The purpose of the survey was to understand the extent to which key stakeholders in the early learning system in each community are working together compared to before the start of the initiative.

## Response Rate by Organization:



To measure these relationships, the survey asked participants to rate their interactions with the other organizations in the early learning system both before 2015, when S3I activities had begun in each community, and currently, at the time the survey was taken in 2019. The survey used the following five-point scale:

- **Level 0 - Unaware:** Not aware of this organization and have had no interaction in any way
- **Level 1 - Minimal interaction:** Aware of this organization but have had no interaction or minimal interaction (e.g., know of this organization but have minimal or no communication with staff, etc.)
- **Level 2 - Coordination:** Aware of this organization and sharing information or resources with each other when an opportunity arises (e.g., sharing best practices, answering each other's questions, etc.)
- **Level 3 - Collaboration:** In addition to sharing information, we work together on joint activities (e.g., collaborating to provide a service, hosting a joint training, sharing data, etc.)
- **Level 4 - Partnership:** We work together as a formal team with specified responsibilities to achieve common goals (responsibility for each participating organization is usually outlined in a memorandum of understanding or other agreement)

# METHODOLOGY (continued)

Participants were also surveyed on the extent to which systems change factors are present in their community. This work builds on earlier efforts to track systems development in S3I communities such as the 2018 Formal Systems Self-assessment Tool (FSAT) and can be further contextualized by recent interviews with practitioners and funders in each community.

In the survey, participants rated the extent to which the following systems change factors were present in their communities:

- **Formal pillar:** Professional development opportunities create quality care in formal early learning settings
- **Informal pillar:** Programs and resources improve the quality of informal care in our community.
- **Health pillar:** Families receive the support they need through the developmental screening and referral system.
- **Parent voice:** Parents are regularly engaged to assess whether programs and service are meeting their needs
- **Data:**
  - Early learning classroom and child data are used across organizations to inform quality improvements in the formal sector.
  - Relevant data about children, families, and/or communities are shared between organizations and sectors
- **Partnerships:**
  - There is a central place for organizations to come together to identify community-wide early learning goals and strategies.
  - Organizations share a common vision for scaling early childhood services to reach as many people in the community as possible, including those most in need.
- **Leadership:**
  - Leadership of this work is shared among a diverse group of partners from different sectors.
  - There are champions for early learning at multiple levels in our community.
- **Sustainability:** There are adequate resources and funding available to serve all children and families in need.

Participants rated the current status of the above systems change work in their communities using the following four-point scale:

- **Not yet present:** Our community has not yet started working on this.
- **On our way:** Our community has started making progress on this but has more to do.
- **Accomplished:** Our community has accomplished this.
- **Exceeded:** Our community has exceeded our goals for this.

# LIMITATIONS

The following data limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings presented in this report:

- **Recall Bias:** Participants were asked to recall their interactions with other stakeholders dating back five years. Where participants had trouble recalling interactions, they may have been more inclined to report relationship growth. To gauge the extent of this effect, we compared how participants rated each other and found that they generally reciprocated one another's ratings.
- **Causality:** This study is correlational in nature, meaning that it cannot make causal inferences about the extent to which S3I led to the observed changes in people's relationships over time. People may have interacted with each other in other contexts over the same time period (e.g., other professional meetings or collaborations) which contributed to relationship growth.
- **Social Desirability:** Social desirability is the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a way that will be viewed favorably by others. Respondents may wish to appear as if they've made more connections than they actually have. To mitigate this effect, we used careful wording to avoid implying that we expected respondents to have made certain connections.
- **Selection bias:** Participants who responded to the survey could differ in important ways from other stakeholders who did not respond. To limit selection bias, we worked to achieve a high response rate in each community.

# PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Alameda County Early Care and Education Program
- Alameda County Public Health Division, Family Health Services
- Alameda County Social Services
- BANANAS
- City of Oakland Office of the Mayor
- City of Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY)
- City of Oakland Head Start
- First 5 Alameda County
- Lotus Bloom
- Oakland Education Fund
- Oakland Unified School District
- Parent Voices