Program Area Strategies for 2020- 2025

Introduction
The Allocation Committee adopted these program area service strategies during their June 17, 2019 meeting. PCL staff will incorporate the strategies into the Request for Investment (RFI), funding application, in each of the Levy’s 6 program areas. We anticipate publishing RFIs in late September. Organizations will have until mid-November to submit grant funding applications in response to the RFIs.

PCL Goals
PCL has the Levy-wide goals shown below, and the program area goals shown throughout this document.

- Prepare children for school.
- Support children’s success inside and outside of school.
- Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in children’s well-being and school success.

Development of Program Area Strategies
In 2019-20, PCL hired Empress Rules Equity Consulting to design and conduct the community engagement process to inform the 2019-20 funding round. Consultants focused on engaging a diverse range of community members. They asked questions to elicit more input on how services are delivered, what qualities and features the services should have, and preferred types of service activities in each program area. Empress Rules engaged over 500 people, analyzed their input, and reported the results. The report recommendations focus on equity and inclusion and demonstrate a preference for services that:

- Are culturally relevant, responsive and focused, and trauma informed;
- Listen and respond to the voice and preferences of youth and families;
- Pay attention to accessibility and address barriers to access including hours of operation, location and transportation;
- Employ staff who are of and grounded in the cultural communities they serve.

PCL relied on these results in drafting program area strategies. In the foster care program area, PCL staff also met with Oregon Department of Human Services, District 2 staff (approximately 50 people) to assure that strategies are relevant for children in DHS custody. Staff also used on local data focused on children’s needs. Last, staff considered national, state and other local best practice and policy frameworks related to Levy program areas such as Center for Disease Control’s framework for prevention child abuse and neglect, Oregon Early Learning Division’s “Raise Up Oregon” policy framework, Oregon Youth Development Commission policy focus, All Hands Raised collective impact framework and indicators.

Features outlined in each program area emphasize PCL’s priorities, not requirements, for strategies.
Early Childhood Strategy and Rationale

**Program Area Goal:** Support children’s early development and readiness for kindergarten.

**Common Outcome Goals:** Children meeting developmental milestones, parents improving and/or demonstrating positive parenting practices, children up-to-date on immunizations.

PCL seeks to invest in early childhood programs with the following features:

- Experience, intentionality, and success in supporting child development and school readiness of children of color and other historically underserved populations such as children with disabilities, children of immigrant/refugee families, and families experiencing housing instability
- Parent voice and leadership in identifying their needs and solutions to meet their needs
- Built on current and emerging science of brain development and child development
- Foster community and connection among and between parents and families
- Offer connection to resources that meet families’ basic needs and reduce transportation barriers to participating in services
- Diversity and cultural responsiveness in their early childhood workforce, including people speaking the home language of the children/families they serve
- Commitment to training/developing staff with current research in brain development, child development, and/or parenting

1. **Provide affordable, high quality preschool- programs with small adult: child ratios and focused on quality standards**

   Possible service approaches include:
   - Early Head Start, Head Start, Oregon Prekindergarten, and early learning programs that meet other quality standards

2. **Enhance parent/family support of child development and nurturing**

   Possible service approaches include:
   - Family/home visiting, parent/child programs, or parenting programs that support children’s development and strengthen their family’s skills with information and tools to offer nurturing, developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant/responsive learning opportunities.

3. **Support families, childcare providers, and teachers with guiding child behavior**

   Possible service approaches include:
   - Infant/early childhood mental health consultation and other research-informed prevention supports for children in their early care and learning settings to support positive behavior

**Rationale**

- Community engagement prioritized affordable preschool that meets quality standards; access to early learning and care with staff that have research-based training to offer planned learning activities, create nurturing environments and guide children’s behavior; and services that build
parents’ skills and knowledge for supporting child development and behavior while connecting families to resources and to each other. Priorities included that early childhood staff, particularly home visitors, understand the culture and speak the home language of the families they serve.¹

- Community engagement also highly prioritized affordable, quality childcare, however not only in early childhood. That priority will be considered as a strategy on its own, crossing program areas, and brought to the Allocation Committee separately from this strategy process.

- Local data in Multnomah County indicate that the young population is becoming more racially/ethnically diverse, poverty disproportionately affects very young children of color and immigrants/refugees, and significant numbers of children in E Portland and with home language other than English enter kindergarten without preschool experience.²

- Studies and policy efforts continue to emphasize the importance of quality, affordable preschool for supporting positive child development and school readiness, especially for children with the least opportunity to access preschool.³

- National efforts by the Center for the Study of Social Policy call on leaders in early childhood programs and systems to center parent voice and leadership as a strategy for racial equity.⁴

- Harvard’s Center for the Developing Child, focused on early brain development research and its impacts over the life span, urges 3 principles to improve outcomes for children and families: support responsive relationships for children and adults, strengthen core life skills (for children and adults), and reduce sources of stress in the lives of children and families.⁵ These principles include policy and practice recommendations that support the 3 proposed strategies.

- National policy leaders in early childhood recommend an array of services that build high-quality childcare and early education, strong parents, healthy and economically stable families.⁶
Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Strategy and Rationale

Program Area Goal: Prevent child abuse and neglect and support vulnerable families.

Common Outcome Goals: Parents improving and/or demonstrating positive parent-child interaction, parents connecting with and/or utilizing community supports, children meeting developmental milestones.

PCL seeks to invest in child abuse prevention and intervention programs with the following features:

- Culturally relevant, culturally responsive and culturally focused programming, including staff who speak the language of the children/families they serve
- Listens to, and is responsive to, the voices of the youth/families served
- Experience, intentionality, and success in serving children and families exposed to toxic stress or trauma, including African American and Native American children and families, immigrant children and families and children with disabilities.
- Offers accessible services - flexible hours of operation and provides transportation
- Staff receive on-going training on cultural inclusivity, racial equity and trauma informed practices

1. Enhance parenting skills to promote healthy child development – programs explicitly focused on reducing risks for child abuse and neglect and enhancing protective factors.

Possible service approaches include:

- Home visiting services that provide parenting information, caregiver support, training about child health, development and care to families in their homes.
- Parenting skill and family relationship approaches, including but not limited to parenting classes, that provide support to parents and caregivers to teach positive parenting practices and behavior management to create safe families and protect children from harm.

Rationale

- Providing parenting education and support to families at risk of abuse and neglect was highlighted as a need across all three strands of community input and by DHS District 2 Child Welfare Management teams.
- Local data on the number of child abuse reports and confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect point to the need for additional support for children and families.
- This strategy and service approaches are included in the Center for Disease Control’s core set of strategies for preventing child abuse and neglect, align with the Strengthening Families framework, and other current research on improving outcomes for children and families and avoiding entry into the child welfare system.

2. Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk – treatment for children and families exposed to trauma, toxic stress and/or child abuse and neglect with a focus on healing and preventing future risks.
Possible service approaches include:

- Behavioral parent training programs designed to teach parents specific skills to build safe, stable and nurturing relationships with their children.
- Treatment and other healing approaches\(^\text{13}\) for children and families to lessen the harms of trauma, toxic stress and abuse and neglect exposure.
- Treatment and other healing approaches for children and families to prevent problem behavior and later involvement in violence.

**Rationale**

- Providing mental health therapy and counseling for children, and their families, where there are concerns about abuse and neglect was highlighted as a need across all three strands of community input\(^\text{14}\) and by DHS District 2 Child Welfare Management teams.
- Local data shows there is a demonstrated need for this service. In 2017, there were 16,652 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect and 1,741 victims of child abuse and/or neglect in Multnomah County.\(^\text{15}\)
- Strong evidence has emerged in the past few decades demonstrating that a child’s exposure to violence, among other adverse childhood events (ACEs), can lead to lifelong health, behavioral, and social problems, including substance use.\(^\text{16}\)
- The Center for Disease Control includes this strategy and services approaches in their core set of strategies for preventing child abuse and neglect.\(^\text{17}\)

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3. **Connect families to needed resources and supports for stabilization** – access to basic need resources explicitly focused on reducing risks for abuse and neglect and enhancing protective factors.

Possible service approaches include:

- Case management/navigation services designed to connect families to resources needed to stabilize family unit (e.g. housing, food, medical care, job/skills training, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention services, domestic violence services respite care).
- Client assistance funds to meet basic needs of families on a short-term basis to avoid crisis situations and help stabilize families. The intent is to fill in gaps until long-term solutions are in place. This service approach would need to be tied to at least one other proposed service approach related to this strategy or other child abuse prevention and intervention strategies; it is not intended to be a stand-alone fund to be accessed by any program.

**Rationale**

- Connecting families to needed services and resources (housing, food, jobs, etc.) was identified by community survey respondents\(^\text{18}\) as a top service need when child neglect is a concern. Service provider survey respondents identified a lack of accessible supportive services as the top barrier for families in accessing support needed to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- In 2016 the child poverty rate in Multnomah County was 18.7%. Child poverty rates are higher for children of color than for white children and higher than the county-wide child poverty rate.\(^\text{19}\)
- Strengthening economic supports to families is included in the Center for Disease Control’s core set of strategies for preventing child abuse and neglect. Strengthening economic supports at the individual family level reduces risk and increases protective factors for families.
**Foster Care Strategy and Rationale**

**Program Area Goal:** Support the well-being and development of children and youth in foster care.

**Common Outcome Goals:** Children and youth actively engaged in/attending school, youth increasing life skills, placement stability, children and youth improving permanency status.

PCL seeks to invest in foster care programs with the following features:

- Culturally relevant, culturally responsive and culturally focused programming
- Listens to, and is responsive to, the voices of the youth/families served
- Experience, intentionality, and success in serving children and youth in foster care, including African American and Native American youth, youth who identify as LGBTQ+, older youth, youth with disabilities and youth with behavior challenges
- Has an established working relationship with DHS child welfare, understands the child welfare system and successfully supports youth, foster parents and birth parents to navigate the system
- Offers flexible hours of operation including evening and weekend hours
- Provides transportation or can demonstrate transportation provided by another entity for program participants
- Staff receive on-going training on cultural inclusivity, racial equity and trauma informed practices

1. **Enhance support and training for foster parents to promote healthy child development** – services explicitly focused on providing supportive home environments, maintaining placements, recruiting and retaining foster parents.

Possible service approaches include:

- Engage with the community, especially communities of color, to recruit people interested in becoming DHS-certified foster parents
- In-home visits to provide service to children and support foster parents with skills and education training to address the individual needs of the children in their care
- Facilitate and support partnering relationships between foster parents and birth parents
- Respite care, specialized supports for relative foster parents and grief support for foster families when children leave their homes

Rationale

- Providing support and training for foster parents was identified as a critically needed service by community and service provider survey respondents, focus group participants and DHS Child Welfare Branch management teams.
- There is a shortage of family foster care homes in Multnomah County and throughout Oregon. Part of the reason for this shortage is that foster parents are not well supported in the role.
- In FY 17/18, 2,083 children and youth in Multnomah County spent at least one day in foster care indicating a substantial population in need. The median length of time in care for a child in Multnomah County is 28.2 months.
- Research shows that loving, supportive families – whether birth, kin or foster- are critical to the healthy development of all children and the importance of supporting all important adults, including foster parents, on whom vulnerable children rely.
2. **Individualized support to promote child and youth well-being** – services and supports for children, youth and birth families with a focus on healing and healthy development.

Possible service approaches include:
- Mentoring that provides children and youth with consistent, caring support and model important life skills
- Support and guidance for youth in the transition from foster care to adulthood
- Reunification support including visitation between parent and child, visitation between siblings (if separated), parent skill building and intensive in-home support when the child returns home, connection to concrete services (e.g. transportation, job training, housing, respite care, day care, mental health and substance abuse services), and assistance developing social support networks.
- Advocacy/case management for children and youth in foster care and those who have aged out of foster care to assure their needs are met

**Rationale**
- Providing individualized support – mentoring, support in the transition from foster care to adulthood, reunification services – to children and youth in foster care was identified as key to supporting the well-being of children and youth in foster care by community and service provider survey respondents, focus group participants and DHS Child Welfare Branch management teams.
- In 2017, 88 youth aged out of foster care in Multnomah County. Aging out refers to the point in time when youth leave the foster care system because they were not reunified with their birth parent(s) or adopted and are too old to stay in care.
- Safe and timely family reunification is the preferred permanency option for most children who are removed from their parents. Statewide, 56.5% of children who left foster care in 2017 were reunified with their families.
- Child-adult relationships that are responsive and attentive have a double benefit: stimulating children’s brain development and providing buffering protection against toxic stress effects.
After-School Strategy and Rationale

**Program Area Goal:** Provide safe and constructive after-school and summer programing that supports children’s well-being and school success.

**Common Outcome Goals:** Attending 90% of school days, no suspensions/expulsions from school, demonstrate or increase positive social behaviors, self-confidence, positive attitude toward school, school engagement, skill in content area of program.

PCL seeks to invest in after-school programs with the following features:

- Culturally relevant, culturally responsive and culturally focused programming
- Staff to student ratios that allow for individual attention and support for youth
- Provides transportation or can demonstrate transportation provided by another entity for program participants
- Staff receive training on cultural responsiveness, trauma informed practices and youth development principles

1. **Provide intensive academic support and tutoring that includes attention to individual student needs, and staff who act as a liaison between schools, students and caregivers.**

   Possible service approaches include academic goal setting, homework support, tutoring, academic skill building, credit recovery, advocating for students with school personnel, assisting and supporting parents to advocate for their children with school personnel.

   **Rationale**
   - The need for academic support and tutoring was a theme across all strands of input.
   - The need for staffing to support communication and understanding between students, schools and families in order to support student success was a theme in both the community and provider survey responses.
   - Local data on academic disparities and current graduation rate for students of color all point to the need for additional academic support, particularly for students of color.
   - Multiple studies and meta-studies have found that after-school programs help improve academic performance, particularly for students at risk for failure in math and reading, and narrow the achievement gap, particularly for low income students. Studies have also found that participants in after school programs demonstrate improved school attendance, decreased likelihood of dropout, and improved school behavior.

2. **Support healthy relationship building, positive behavior and social emotional skill development.**

   Possible service approaches include curriculum and activities that embed or are focused on social emotional skill building (cultural identity, belonging, interpersonal skills, goal setting, growth mindset, self-management, perseverance, engagement, self-efficacy), mindfulness, healthy relationships in families and with peers, bullying awareness and prevention.

   **Rationale**
   - The need for programming that supports development of a range of social emotional skills was a theme in all strands of input.
• Local data on youth meeting the state benchmark for positive youth development show less than half of 8th graders meeting the benchmark, and 11th graders of color meeting the benchmark at lower rates than white youth.\textsuperscript{32}

• Research supports the importance of social emotional skill development for academic and career success and provides evidence that after school programs impact development of these skills.\textsuperscript{33}

3. Provide engaging enrichment opportunities attractive to children and youth including recreation, sports, physical activities, arts (fine, performing, music, expressive writing), STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) and culturally focused programs.

Service approaches include stand-alone enrichment activities and classes, and enrichment opportunities embedded in summer and after-school programs offering a range of activities.

Rationale
• Community survey respondents rated all these activities highly among choices for after-school program focus. The need for STEM programming was a theme in focus group input.
• Research confirms that after school and summer programs should allow students to choose from a variety of high-quality activities and experiences that they find engaging and interesting.\textsuperscript{34}
Mentoring Strategy and Rationale

**Program Area Goal:** Connect children and youth with caring adult role models that support their well-being.

**Common Outcome Goals:** Youth demonstrating positive engagement in school, youth attending 90% of school days, no expulsions or suspensions, making progress toward graduation, and those classified as seniors graduate from high school.

PCL seeks to invest in mentoring programs with the following features:

- Experience, intentionality, and success in serving youth populations marginalized by public education systems and who need support staying connected to and successful in that system, including youth of color, and/or youth who identify as immigrant/refugee, as having a disability, as LGBTQ+
- Family and youth’s voice, engagement, and leadership in identifying their needs and solutions to meet their needs
- Rely primarily on paid staff whose job focuses on and emphasizes mentoring- who are experienced, trained and share an identity with the youth they serve, and/or speak their home language
- Low youth/adult ratios that assure individualized support for youth and give youth/adults the opportunity to build meaningful relationships over time
- Commitment to ongoing staff training and development on the role and importance of culture in mentoring relationships

**Support youth’s academic success and positive development**

Possible service approaches include:

- Individualized and/or group mentoring of youth to support school success where mentor serves as a liaison between child/family and school/teacher(s)
- Individualized and/or group mentoring of youth to support positive youth development and youth’s goals for careers, health relationships/behavior, or interests (e.g. art, math, science)

**Rationale**

- Need for mentors to support academic success, positive youth behavior, healthy relationships and/or provide opportunities for new experiences related to youth’s interests, especially in arts, sciences, math, careers were strong themes across all community engagement related to mentoring needs and priorities.
- Paid staff in youth development/mentoring/youth-focused programs act as mentors in PCL’s experience, and in order to support community priorities for quality, especially the supply of available mentors that share an identity with youth, PCL wants to support mentoring programs that rely on paid, experienced, well-trained staff that serve as mentors, rather than rely exclusively or primarily on volunteer mentors.
- Mirrors national movement toward “Critical Mentoring” practice, advanced by the Center for Critical Mentoring and Youth Work, which centers culture as the primary driver of a mentee’s learning and of the mentor/mentee relationships
• Research on best practices in mentoring supports these features\textsuperscript{37} and studies indicate that quality mentoring programs are associated with positive youth outcomes in social emotional development, academic success, and reduced risky behaviors.\textsuperscript{38}

• Local data on youth of color, who identify as an immigrant/refugee, as having a disability, as LGTBQ each experience disproportionate barriers to school success such as homelessness, bullying, poverty, and lower rates of academic achievement and positive youth development.\textsuperscript{39}
Hunger Relief Strategy and Rationale

**Program Area Goal:** Expand access to healthy, nutritious food for hungry children.

PCL seeks to invest in hunger relief programs that include the following features:

- Conducts significant outreach to improve awareness of resources
- Employs strategies to reduce stigmatization for people accessing services
- Is demonstrably responsive to community needs and preferences on location for access, hours of operation and culturally appropriate foods
- Has and uses nutrition and/or quality standards to screen food distributed to children and their families.
- Provides fresh, perishable foods including fruits, vegetables, dairy, eggs and meats.

1. **Provide food for pickup by families at a variety of community locations including schools.**

Possible service approaches include food distribution at community-based locations such as churches, schools, parks and organizations serving children/families, and distribution methods such as food pantries and fresh food “markets” that allow people to select needed foods, pre-prepared food boxes, and backpacks filled with non-perishable foods for weekends.

Rationale

- Community and school-based food distributions were prioritized across all strands of input as a best way to provide healthy nutritious food to children and their caregivers.
- Schools are geographically dispersed and reasonably convenient locations for many families with children to access.
- Lack of grocery stores in some neighborhoods create food deserts that make it difficult for many low-income families to access quality, nutritious foods.
- Food insecurity and child poverty affect a significant portion of children and families in Portland, and both disproportionately impact children and families of color.
- Food insecurity influences health and life outcomes for children and families.

2. **Provide mobile food banks or pantries and/or home delivery of food to children and families experiencing food insecurity.**

Rationale

- Transportation to no-cost food resources and grocery stores was noted as a significant access barrier in all strands of public input, and the need for these services was a theme in focus group input.
- Mobile food resources can address the issue of limited hours of operation at food distribution sites.
- Transportation barriers are the most frequently cited reasons for seeking to access the food delivery program currently funded by PCL.
- Some caregivers with disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, and caregivers whose children have disabilities or chronic health conditions disproportionately experience transportation barriers in accessing other community food resources.
3. Provide training and education on nutrition, cooking, food budgeting, smart shopping, accessing local food resources, gardening for food production and community gardening resources to children and their caregivers.

Rationale

- The need for training and education on these topics was a theme in focus group and provider input.
- Food insecure families eat less nutritious diets because low cost foods are often calorie dense but nutrient poor.\(^4\)
- Education on food selection, nutrition and budgeting can decrease food insecurity and improve health outcomes.\(^5\)

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7. Ibid. Owens, K, pp. 33-35
8. Ibid. Portland’s Children: Overview of Key Local Data, 2018, pp. 17-21
12. Treatment and other healing approaches would be limited to services that are not eligible for coverage by Medicaid/Insurance (because the service is not eligible or because the participant does not have insurance coverage). Applicants could choose to propose to enhance existing services by requesting PCL funds to cover programmatic expenses that are not reimbursable or could propose new or additional services that are not covered by Medicaid Insurance.
13. Ibid. Owens, K.
14. Ibid. Portland’s Children: Overview of Key Local Data
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Violence Prevention website
https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html


Ibid. Owens, K. p. 34

Ibid. Owens, K. pp.39-42


Ibid. Owens, K.

Ibid. Portland’s Children: Overview of Key Local Data

Ibid. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University


Ibid. Owens, K.

For more on Critical Mentoring, see the work of Dr. Torie Weisten-Serdan (https://www.criticalmentoring.org/ and https://criticalperspective.org/2015/06/20/critical-mentoring-a-definition-and-agenda/)

From Successful Relationships & Programs resource for mentoring, on Youth.gov https://www.youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/best-practices-mentoring-relationships-and-programs


30% of Portlanders live within a half mile of a grocery store; 70% of Portlanders in the Central City live within a half mile of a grocery store. The Portland Plan, 2012, p. 130. [19]


22% of children in Multnomah County were food insecure in 2015; approximately 30% of African American, Native American and Latino individuals were food insecure in Multnomah County (2014-2016). 50% of children in Portland schools are enrolled in the federal school lunch program; 70% of children attending school in the 4 East Portland school districts were enrolled (David Douglas, Parkrose, Centennial, Reynolds). Portland’s Children, Overview of Key Local Data, 2018, p 24. [20]


The Importance of Nutrition Education in the 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization, Center for Food, Education and Policy, Columbia University; see article and accompanying citations to multiple studies. [22]