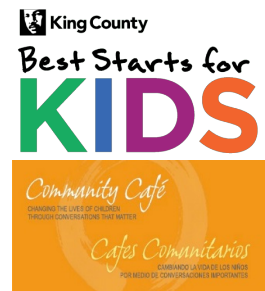


# 2016-2017 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey Data Dive

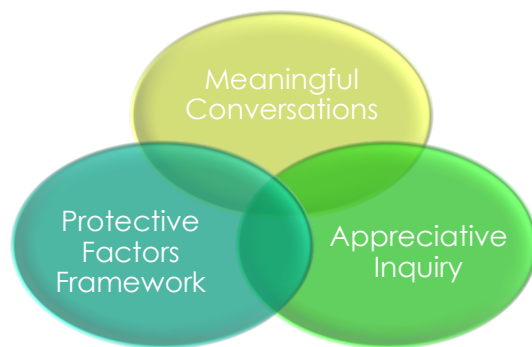
## Hosting Community Cafés to Strengthen Partnerships

### Overview

In response to the 2016-2017 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey (BSKHS) conducted by Public Health – Seattle and King County<sup>i</sup>, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) partnered with the Community Café Collaborative (CCC), a grassroots non-profit working to strengthen families through meaningful conversations, and local community leaders to host conversations amongst African American, Latinx, Somali, Samoan, and LGBTQ2S communities in south King County.



The Community Café approach is a research-based best practice of sparking leadership to build the relationships needed to strengthen families. Using a Protective Factors Framework<sup>ii</sup>, World Café<sup>iii</sup> principles for hosting meaningful conversations, and Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Community Cafés are culturally relevant neighborhood and/or community-based dialogues designed and hosted by community or parent leaders with the support of at least one community-based organizational partner<sup>iv</sup>. This approach



was created by a diverse group of parents who formed a volunteer-based nonprofit to promote the use of this approach as a social justice strategy. The CCC team provides coaching support to parents, caregivers, and practitioners. The approach

intentionally prioritizes the building of “bonding” social capital amongst families and “bridging” social capital amongst community partners to inform program, practice, and policy development.

The focus of the BSK project was to gather culture-specific information and feedback to the data BSK gathered relating to parent-child attachment, family resilience, parent support, thriving children, and child resilience in the face of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). BSK sought to understand how communities interpreted the data and if it was reflective of their lived experiences. This information would go on to help better inform future BSK program decisions, data-gathering practices, and build stronger relationships between BSK and historically marginalized communities. Families with children under age five participated by responding to the quantitative data collected through the BSKHS, presented in the form of infographic posters and placemats. Throughout these conversation events,



# 2016-2017 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey Data Dive

## Hosting Community Cafés to Strengthen Partnerships

Community Café and parent hosts gathered stories and other qualitative information that added texture and context to the statistics generated from the BSKHS.

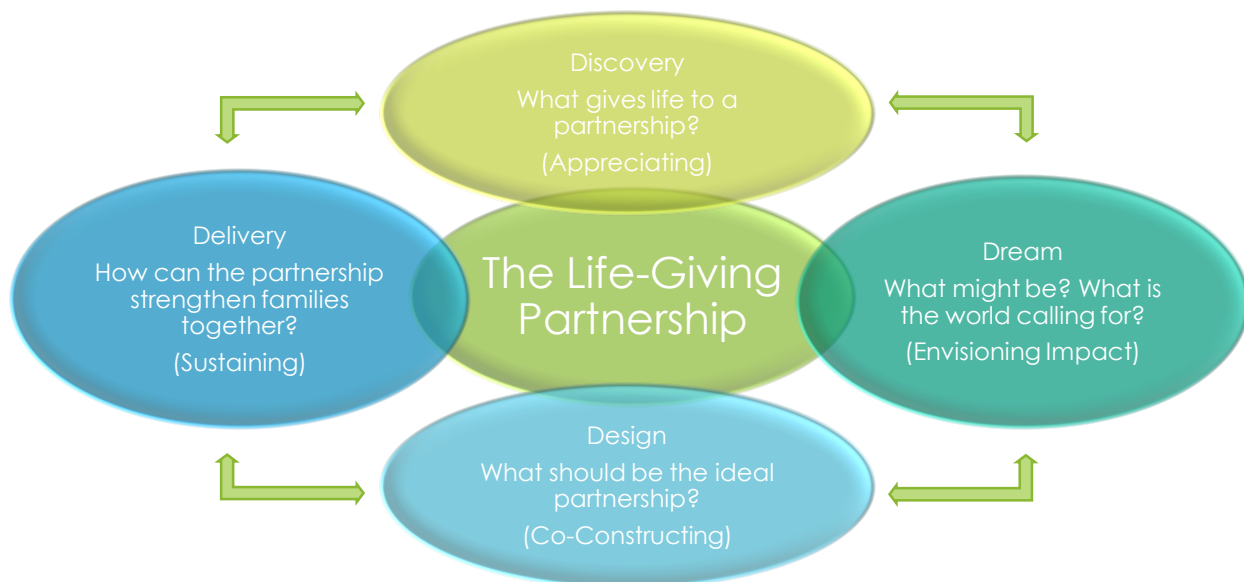
At the beginning of each Café, a BSK staff representative presented an overview of Best Starts for Kids and, specifically, the purpose, methodology, and results of the BSKHS. Café hosts then invited participants to respond to the following questions:

- What is your knee-jerk reaction to this information? How does it compare to your family's experience and the experience of other families you know?
- What questions come up for you? What more do we need to talk about together?
- What might be some important next steps? If we spoke with one voice, what would we be saying?

Each event featured adults engaging in meaningful conversation in one room, children engaging with kid-friendly versions of the same questions, and whole-group presentations of the children's responses at the end of each event. Each hosting team synthesized the information gathered from each conversation into a harvest form that was distributed to participants after each Café.

### A Positive Start

The CCC and BSK set a priority of training, developing, and coaching Café hosting teams at the onset of this project to ensure cultural relevance and positive partnership building between BSK and other organizational partners. Part of supporting Café hosts was situating their work within an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework. Using this approach allows all parties involved to focus on what is working well and how to leverage community strengths and personal relationships to create positive change<sup>v</sup>. This is a strategy to mitigate the negative effects of institutionalized racism that has historically



# 2016-2017 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey Data Dive

## Hosting Community Cafés to Strengthen Partnerships

referred to marginalized communities or cultural groups as “at-risk populations,” “communities in need” or even “poor neighborhoods.” This perception creates a barrier for formal systems to appreciate families from marginalized communities as assets and respected consultants. Each Community Café host was given the opportunity to decide how they wanted to contribute their talents, social networks, and skills to organizing the Café.

AI has four phases, often referred to as the “4 Ds”: Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver. Each phase asks a set of different generative questions for participants to share ownership and stewardship of a process. This report summarizes the CCC/BSK partnership within the AI framework to demonstrate how an alternative to the common deficit-based approach yielded greater community partnership, individual leadership, and culturally-responsive practices in public health initiatives.

### Discovery: What gives life to a partnership?

Effective partnerships build, draw from, and replenish social capital amongst all stakeholders. To initiate the Café planning process, BSK/CCC identified trusted leaders and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in each of the five culture-based communities. Individuals from these communities and CBOs already had a strong connection with families and existing avenues with which to spread the word about upcoming Cafés. Furthermore, hosting teams chose venues that provided a safe, neutral space in which community members feel welcome. Partnering organizations and businesses included:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| ☼ Somali Youth and Family Club        | ☼ Overcomer Covenant Church                                  |
| ☼ Kona Kai Coffee                     | ☼ Maia Midwifery   |
| ☼ Samoan Nurses Organization of WA    | ☼ Hillman City Collaboratory                                 |
| ☼ Midway Samoan AOG Church            | ☼ APICAT (API Families Advocating for Healthier Communities) |
| ☼ La Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal M.I. |  |

In addition to leveraging existing social capital, Café hosts intentionally designed events that would be inviting to others in their community and eliminate typical barriers to participation. A key component of this partnership was allowing hosts to decide the best use of funds based on what would be most relevant to each community. For example, the Somali community offered transportation to and from families' homes while other communities granted mileage reimbursement. Still, others provided gift cards to participants that could be used to cover fuel or other family expenses. Additionally, funds were made available to cover expenses before the event, reducing the financial burden of parent hosts and organizational partners. Hosting teams ordered culturally-relevant food from small local caterers, enlisted volunteers to cook, or purchased refreshments that considered Halal, kosher, and other dietary preferences. Personal invitations

# 2016-2017 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey Data Dive

## Hosting Community Cafés to Strengthen Partnerships

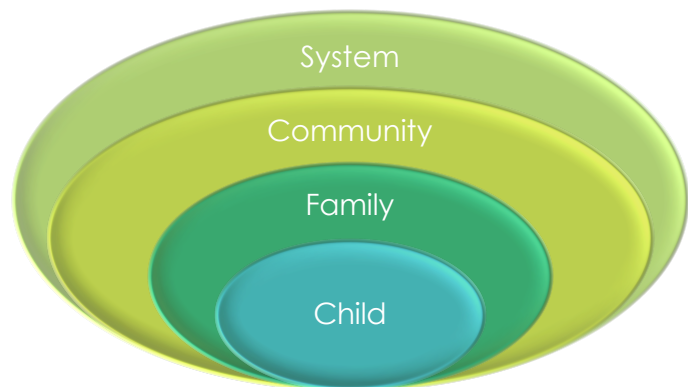
allowed for hosts to ensure families had equitable support. This kind of personalized attention ensured all families felt welcomed and considered.

Childcare is often a major barrier for parents when deciding whether to participate in a program or event. Families appreciated being able to attend something together that is enjoyable for all ages. Taking this factor into account, CCC supported hosts to create a family-friendly event in which children were not only cared for but also engaged in a meaningful way that paralleled the adult conversations. The Community Café approach promotes meaningful engagement of young people. Through conversation, art activities, games, and reading culturally-relevant books together, children engaged with the topic of strengthening families in a safe, positive, creative environment. Children presented their harvest at the end of each Café, which allowed their often-marginalized voices to be heard. Parents expressed appreciation for giving their children an opportunity to be community advocates.

### Dream: What might be?

In authentic family and organizational partnerships, families have a meaningful role in program practice and policy decisions. Typical project design and data gathering methods do not allow for enough meaningful conversation time which is important to relationship building. This relationship building is needed to overcome trust issues, especially in communities that have been historically marginalized.

Meaningful conversations throughout this project allowed time for participants to share what is working well, their strengths, and how the data reflected their personal perceptions. Challenging self, group, and system perceptions in a judgement-free environment was the first step in establishing trust and sparking creative energy.



The Café process allowed for every person in the room to have an equal voice; family members reported feeling like their participation mattered. There was adequate time on the agenda for participants to share family stories and participants were encouraged to speak from their own experience and were reminded of how valuable their contributions were to the whole community. In this case, their family stories and diverse perspectives led to formal system changes. This approach is essential to mitigating the impacts of institutional racism and promotes equity in decision making. By the end of the Café conversations, it was common for family members to offer help to BSK to collect more and better data in the future.

# 2016-2017 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey Data Dive

## Hosting Community Cafés to Strengthen Partnerships

---

### Design: What should be the ideal partnership?

BSK/CCC understood that community members engage with material when it is presented in their home language and can be discussed in their home language. Cafés with the Somali, Latinx, and Samoan communities took place in their home languages, with interpretation available for BSK staff and CCC coaches. For the Latinx community, BSK materials were translated into the kind of Spanish reflective of the primarily Mexican community that was engaged; the Somali Café host relied less on printed materials and more on large group conversations, a reflection of their oral culture. Hosts were provided with a foundational understanding of the CC approach before planning their community gatherings and were encouraged to use what they know about their communities to create a meaningful event. Hosts chose the location, date, time, meal options, and advised the Kids Café on culturally-relevant books and activities. By offering an agenda template, hosts had the freedom to adjust their conversation style to fit the group.

Another important component of an ideal partnership is honoring what each partner brings to the table. Many of the Café hosts had strong, trusting, established personal relationships with members of their community. This allowed for rapid outreach to communities that are often unreached by many human service providers. Hosts were provided with a gratitude stipend that included their time for doing outreach. Additionally, the CC coaches that provided the technical assistance to Café hosts could relate to the culture of the community and tailored their support to fit the needs of each host team.

### Delivery: How can the partnership strengthen families together?

Throughout the BSK Data Dive, BSK was committed to staying in contact with Café hosts, participants, and organizational partners. Many participants commented that this was the first time they had heard about BSK, and they left the event hopeful that BSK could improve their lives by co-developing culturally relevant services. BSK staff came prepared to talk about next steps and their openness to continue to build a relationship with each community; this was a stark contrast to many typical practices of organizations who have isolated focus groups facilitated and designed by professionals who don't live in or can relate to the culture of the community.

As communities and Café hosts experienced these data dive conversations, their interest in continuing to dialogue together grew. As is typical with positive events that are shared through word-of-mouth, participants wanted more than one opportunity to share in meaningful conversations about how BSK can partner with them to improve their communities. Although this collaboration budgeted for one-time gatherings, BSK found additional funding to support three more Cafés with the African-American, Somali/East African, and Latinx communities. These subsequent Community Cafés supported by BSK

# 2016-2017 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey Data Dive

## Hosting Community Cafés to Strengthen Partnerships

helped inform the language and criteria used in BSK's Request for Proposals (RFP) for both Community-Designed Home-Based Services and Community-Based Parenting Supports. Participants built on their previous conversations to engage with the following questions:

- ❁ Share a story of the strengths or resources your family relied on to get through a challenging time.
- ❁ Imagine you're talking with a family that has just arrived to your community. What knowledge and resources would you want them to know about?
- ❁ How did that service gain your trust?
- ❁ Let's dream together. Kids arrive to school happy, healthy, and ready to learn. All families are supported. What more is being done?
- ❁ Of all the ideas you talked about, what is urgent right now and why?

Participant numbers exceeded expectations. As BSK looks to the future, staff are considering the advantage of funding a series of Community Cafés for each community to build on the social momentum established in each Café.

BSK and CCC presented this project at a national Help Me Grow Forum in April 2018 to promote community partnerships in data gathering. Help Me Grow King County is currently planning how to incorporate Community Cafés as part of its "Family and Community Outreach" component. One parent host is now volunteering for the regional advisory council despite speaking very limited English, and is also contributing to a BSK blog. BSK has incorporated the Community Café approach into its ongoing strategy for developing community partnerships. There is also growing interest in this work across both King County Departments that support BSK: Public Health and Community and Human Services.

The results of these Community Cafés have informed how the survey will be distributed, analyzed, and described, and BSK is developing strategies to build on the success of these new partnerships.

"Four years from today's date, our communities will testify the impact of BSK initiative, its footprints and the effort made by each one of us, this includes King County leaders and BSK employees, community leaders, and BSK parents."

- Somali Café Host

<sup>i</sup> For more information on the BSKHS, see: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/initiatives/best-starts-for-kids/survey.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> For more information on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework, see: <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies/about/protective-factors-framework>

<sup>iii</sup> For more information on the World Café methodology, see: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

<sup>iv</sup> For more information on the Community Café Collaborative, see: <https://www.thecommunitycafe.org/>

<sup>v</sup> For more information on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, see: <http://www.davidcooperrider.com/ai-process/>