

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS SURVEY DECEMBER 2016 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary reviews key findings from a survey designed to assess the initiative’s progress on core elements of Bright Beginnings Theory of Action. The Bright Beginnings Theory of Action illustrates the collective impact path the initiative is taking in order to see improvements for early childhood development in Monterey County. Sixty-one CAT facilitators, CAT members, Backbone members, and MCCC members received the survey; a total of 28 people responded, including 13 CAT facilitators/members and 15 Backbone and/or MCCC members.

Summary

According to survey respondents involved in the initiative, Bright Beginnings has made significant progress over the past year in terms of increasing collaboration and action towards improving the early childhood system in Monterey County.

CI Element	Strengths	Challenges and Priorities
Common Vision	Stakeholder agreement on a common vision, recruiting nontraditional and diverse partners, and regularly sharing information with stakeholders.	Some CATs report less success engaging parents and informal child care providers. CATs also noted the need to develop better relationships with nontraditional leadership groups and local community leadership organizations, as well as outreach to the faith and business communities.
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Respondents report the initiative has increased focus on refining action plans and aligning activities with partners, and the majority of respondents believe Bright Beginning uses defined values to guide the initiative’s work. Bright Beginnings is successfully sharing information with stakeholders to facilitate alignment and is partnering on small county-wide action projects. respondents feel the iterative grassroots approach is responsive to local needs	Participants identified two priority areas where they see the most room for improvement in this area: 1) Working with partners to develop strategies that align with action plans, and 2) Partners coordinating activities and resources to align with the action plan. Important partners identified for building relationships with include: data and evaluation specialists, financial supporters, the business sector, caregivers, and other community partners.
Shared Measurement	Bright Beginnings has successfully fulfilled key aspects of the Exploring phase, including initiative members understanding the value of a shared measurement system, understanding the strengths and challenges of their communities, conducting asset mapping in communities, and prioritizing common core indicators.	While there is interest among the CATs to design a collaborative process around data, several mentioned that limited resources, skills, and capacity inhibit their ability. The largest areas for improvement include continually reviewing data and using feedback loops for decision making, having a common understanding of what data to collect, having signed data sharing agreements, and clarifying as an initiative what data needs to be the priority.

CI Element	Strengths	Challenges and Priorities
Continuous communication	<p>The initiative has worked to engage external stakeholders in regular meetings, integrate their feedback into the overall strategy, create talking points for a variety of different audiences, and create a variety of different outreach methods. The initiative is now focused on developing external communication plans that communicate the impact of the initiative to the larger community.</p>	<p>The initiative sometimes falls short in communicating changes and sharing resources across the broader initiative.</p> <p>The continuous communication element of the initiative had the most diverse opinions regarding what communication strategies to prioritize for 2017. CATs recommended the initiative focus on communicating progress updates within the initiative, while leadership recommended a focus on communicating to the broader community. However, both CATs and leadership agree a key priority is for CATs to communicate needs to leadership. Respondents believe that the initiative would benefit from communication channels that allow members of the Backbone and the MCCC to be more responsive in addressing the interests and needs that CATs bring forward; opportunities for CATs to communicate their unique needs to leadership; and convenings that create space for informal interaction among and between CATs, Backbone, and MCCC members.</p>
Backbone Infrastructure & Support	<p>The initiative has established a Steering Committee which guides vision and strategy, a Backbone that effectively informs the Steering Committee members of strategic issues, and both groups contain diverse perspectives from multiple sectors. The initiative is continuing to work on leadership reaching out to policymakers and CATs identifying local, state, and national policies to work on. Bright Beginnings trainings have been the most highly valued technical support, followed by the Policy Advocacy Network and convenings.</p>	<p>Areas for improvement include defining and communicating leadership roles, the MCCC-Steering Committee’s use of data to inform decisions, and leadership building relationships with policymakers. Overall, survey results show a lack of knowledge around leadership structure and processes, especially among CAT members, and reveal an opportunity for increased transparency around decision-making processes and leadership-level discussions.</p> <p>In many cases, respondents either have not used supports yet or did not know they existed, suggesting an opportunity for Bright Beginnings to make sure members and partners are aware of the supports available and how and when to use them. Recommendations for additional assistance fell into three categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership. Joint clarification of goals and direction; periodic leadership attendance at CAT meetings; increased emphasis on parent leadership; leadership assistance in obtaining funding. 2. Data and Evaluation. Resetting indicators; providing local data and evaluation support; more creative data collection tools that fit the reality of families. <p>Meetings and Convenings. Spanish language childcare with appropriate accommodations; increased focus on CATs and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning; options for meeting spaces to convene with families.</p>

CI Element	Strengths	Challenges and Priorities
Learning Culture	The initiative has implemented structures and processes to support ongoing learning and a culture of trust, respect and humility among partners. The majority of respondents feel Bright Beginnings fosters a culture of respect and humility (74%). Several learning structures were called out as particularly valuable in open-ended responses, including convenings, the facilitator learning community, and the Strive Together training.	Respondents identified three key priority areas to help develop a learning culture in 2017: 1) continuing to foster a culture of respect and humility, 2) asking the community for feedback, and 3) using shared learning to make decisions.
Collective Impact Capacity	Bright Beginnings is focused on developing champions and influencers, having representatives from multiple sectors involved at the leadership level, having anchor agencies that help facilitate the CAT process, and CATs identifying necessary resources to move the initiative forward.	Leadership was more likely to believe Bright Beginnings was building skills and capacities of people involved in the initiative than were CATs. However, both leadership and CATs believe both of these areas should be priorities for the initiative in the next year.

The table below shows key priorities for 2017 identified by survey participants.

Initiative Element	Priorities for 2017	CATs	Leadership
Common Vision	• Bright Beginnings involves diverse people from the community in planning for the work, including community members personally impacted by early childhood issues	✓	
	• People and organizations in the community prioritize and contribute to moving the work forward		✓
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	• Bright Beginnings' partners coordinate activities & resources to align with the action plan	✓	✓
	• Bright Beginnings works with partners to develop strategies aligned with the action plan	✓	✓
Shared Measurement	• People and organizations involved with Bright Beginnings understand the value of a shared measurement system	✓	
	• People and organizations involved with Bright Beginnings have signed data sharing agreements		✓
Continuous Communication	• Bright Beginnings regularly communicates progress updates within the initiative	✓	
	• Bright Beginnings regularly communicates progress updates to the broader community		✓
	• CATs regularly communicate their needs to the Backbone and MCCC-Steering Committee	✓	✓
Backbone Infrastructure & Support	• Bright Beginnings clearly defines and communicates roles and responsibilities of the Backbone and the MCCC-Steering Committee	✓	
	• The Backbone and MCCC-Steering Committee connect to and build relationships with policymakers		✓
Learning Culture	• Bright Beginnings fosters a culture of respect and humility that allows for people of different cultures and backgrounds to feel respected and heard	✓	✓
	• Those involved in Bright Beginnings ask community members and organizations for feedback and act on the information collected	✓	✓
	• Those involved with Bright Beginnings use shared learning to make informed decisions	✓	✓
Collective Impact Capacity	• Bright Beginnings develops influencers and champions that are respected and can bring others to the table	✓	✓
	• Bright Beginnings contributed to increasing the skills and capacities of people and organizations involved in the initiative	✓	✓