



CommUnify

Empowering people. Transforming lives.

2026 - 2029

Strategic Plan





Strawberry fields in Santa Barbara County

Message from our CEO



Pat Keelean, CommUnify CEO

Over the past year, the CommUnify Board of Directors has worked closely with leadership, staff, and community partners to review the Community Action Plan and Community Needs Assessment and identify clear, mission-aligned priorities for the years ahead. This collaborative process ensured that the direction of this Strategic Plan is grounded in lived community experience and guided by our shared values.

The insights gathered helped shape goals that support our mission, strengthen our identity, and expand opportunity for vulnerable residents. This plan reflects who we are, what we value, and how we intend to move forward—with clarity, purpose, and a commitment to service and community voice.

Pat Keelean

Your Board, Your Community

We are pleased to present the CommUnify Strategic Plan—a focused roadmap that strengthens our mission, sharpens our identity, and positions us to meet the evolving needs of Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable residents. This plan builds on CommUnify's long-standing strengths: trusted relationships, culturally responsive services, and deep community commitment.



We Are CommUnify

CommUnify is a nonprofit human services organization serving individuals and families across Santa Barbara County as they move from uncertainty toward stability. Through four core departments—Behavioral Health Services, Children’s Services, Community Services, and Family & Youth Services—and the leadership that guides us, CommUnify delivers coordinated services that strengthen health, resilience, and financial security.



Behavioral Health
Services

Children’s
Services

Community
Services

Family & Youth
Services

Central
Administration

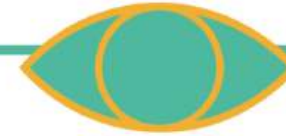
Our Mission



We serve Santa Barbara County's vulnerable through education and coordinated services that support stability, foster opportunity, and enable all to thrive.

Our Vision

Empowering Sustainable Independence



Our Values



Service • Advocacy • Belonging

These values guide how we lead, serve, and expand opportunity—shaping a culture of compassion, accountability, and collaboration.

Whether in behavioral health, children's services, family services, or community support, these values shape every interaction and decision, inspiring a team that shows up with purpose, compassion, and accountability.

Together, these shared attitudes create a workplace culture that strengthens collaboration, fuels meaningful outcomes, and supports the life-changing impact CommUnify delivers to the communities we serve.



Our Strategic Plan in 4 Steps



Our work is rooted in strong relationships and responsive service delivery. By meeting people where they are and providing consistent access to care, resources, and opportunity, CommUnify helps individuals build the capacity for lasting change while strengthening the well-being of the broader community.

This Strategic Plan reflects a clear understanding of who we are and how we serve. It is informed by a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment, organizational and community data, and engagement with clients, staff, leadership, and the Board of Directors. Together, these insights clarify the direction ahead.



STEP

1

Understanding Community Needs

Current Realities, Future Direction

CommUnify begins this plan in an environment marked by growing need, high housing costs, and widening disparities that disproportionately affect young adults, families, and essential workers. Households face instability driven by low-wage work, geographic barriers, and limited access to essential supports. Environmental and climate-related events add further strain.

Despite these challenges, CommUnify's trusted relationships, service-driven culture, and values-guided workforce provide a strong foundation. These realities inform the strategic goals that follow—goals focused on expanding opportunity, strengthening stability, and advancing well-being across Santa Barbara County.



Key Community Challenges

These key community challenges were identified through our Community Needs Assessment (CNA)



Economic instability underlies most community challenges



Healthcare access remains insufficient



Affordable housing is a persistent barrier



Food insecurity continues to rise



Childcare access is essential to family stability



Needs are interconnected and require systemic solutions



STEP

2 Ready for the Path Ahead

Organizational Readiness

During the next three years, CommUnify moves forward with ambition and clarity, guided by a strong understanding of its role within the community and the people it serves. This readiness is rooted in insights drawn from the Community Needs Assessment, the Community Action Plan, and a strategic planning process shaped by the voices of community members, partners, staff, agency leadership, and the Board of Directors.

The planning process confirmed that this readiness reflects long-standing strengths. CommUnify understands its capacity and how those strengths translate into action—positioning the organization to move forward with confidence, purpose, and sustained community-centered impact.

Equitable Human Services: How Our Services Reach People

Equitable human services are designed to ensure that individuals and families can access the right support at the right time, regardless of language, income, background, or life circumstance. Data consistently show that communities experience need differently—by geography, race and ethnicity, age and disability.

Equitable service systems respond to these differences by removing structural barriers to access and tailoring delivery models so that services reach those most likely to be underserved or experience poorer outcomes.

Research across health, education, and social services demonstrates that trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and linguistically accessible programs lead to higher participation rates, stronger engagement, and more durable outcomes. When services reflect the lived experience of the communities they serve—through trusted messengers, accessible formats, and culturally relevant practices—families are more likely to seek help early, remain connected to services, and achieve positive results.

In this way, equity is not an added layer of service, but a performance strategy that strengthens outreach, improves participation, and supports more effective use of resources across the agency.



Our Strengths

Consistent, Person-Centered Support

CommUnify offers consistent, person-centered support that fosters inclusion, connection, and opportunity, helping individuals and families build stability and move toward self-sufficiency.

Trust and Integrity

Families, youth, and community members rely on CommUnify's integrity and responsiveness. Decades of compassionate service have built strong trust and lasting confidence in the organization's mission.

Culturally Responsive Services

Staff reflect the community's diverse voices and experiences, creating authentic connection, belonging, and culturally responsive services that honor each individual's identity and needs.

Vital Program Lifelines

Programs such as Head Start, 2-1-1, and Aging Services provide dependable, high-quality support through crisis and everyday challenges.

Regional Collaboration

CommUnify unites partners and aligns efforts to advance shared solutions across Santa Barbara County.

STEP

3 Our Five Strategic Priorities

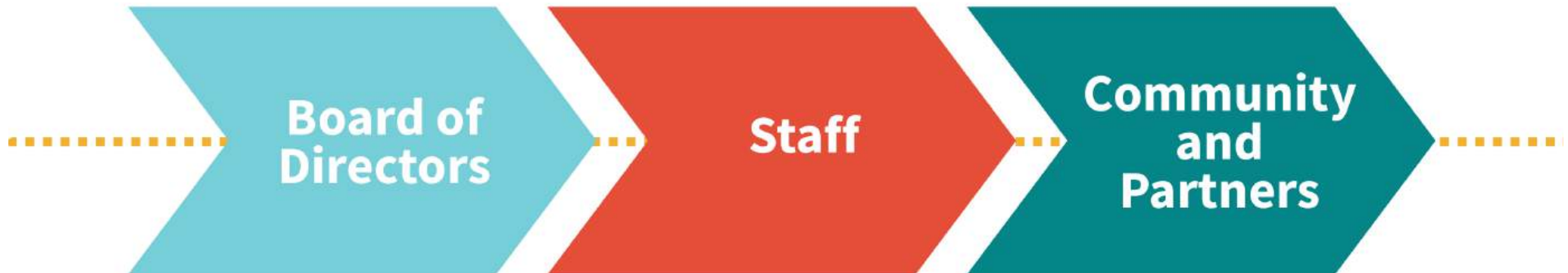
Input Drives Our Unified Priorities

CommUnify's strategic priorities were shaped through intentional input from leadership, staff, community members, and partners. These perspectives ensured alignment across governance, operations, and service delivery.

Board of Directors: Long-range vision, fiduciary stewardship, and mission oversight

Staff: Operational insight, workforce realities, and service delivery expertise

Community and Partners: Systems-level perspective and opportunities for collective impact



Together, this input informed five unified strategic priorities that will guide CommUnify's focus for 2026–2029.



Our Five Strategic Priorities

Our five strategic priorities are expressed as the following goals, each representing a focused area of action that will guide us forward.

Goal 1: Promote the Mission and Public Identity

Clear identity aligns how CommUnify presents itself internally and externally as a trusted community partner.

Goal 2: Sustaining Our Mission

Financial resilience ensures stability, flexibility, and responsiveness to changing community needs.

Goal 3: Talent Development and Empowerment


Talent growth strengthens organizational capacity and prepares future leaders.

Goal 4: Trauma-Informed and Relevant Services

Relevant services remove barriers, strengthen outcomes, and reflect community needs.

Goal 5: Cross-Sector Partnerships and Community Collaboration

Collaborative leadership advances systems change through aligned action and advocacy.



Goal 1: Promote the Mission and Public Identity

A clear and consistent identity strengthens trust, improves engagement, and ensures that CommUnify's mission is understood and recognized across the community.



GOAL

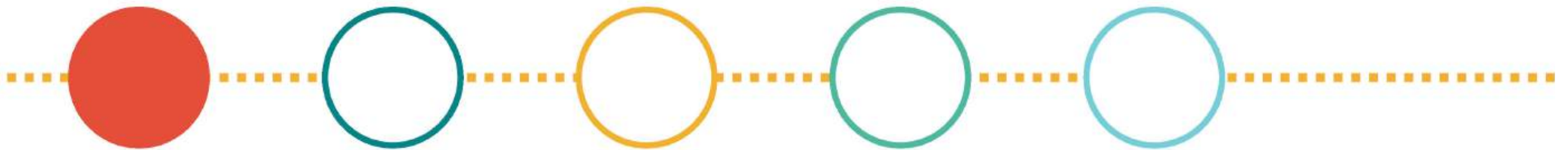
1

Target

Increase brand recognition and mission awareness.

Key Strategies

- Strengthen a unified and trusted public identity so staff, Board members, partners, and the community consistently recognize CommUnify as a leader in human services across Santa Barbara County.
- Activate the mission through a coordinated marketing and communications approach, including brand storytelling and public recognition that authentically reflects community impact.
- Standardize outreach practices and incorporate ongoing feedback from surveys, events, and partners to maintain clarity, relatability, and a recognizable public voice.



Goal 2: Sustaining Our Mission

Financial resilience ensures long-term stability, reduces risk, and supports CommUnify's ability to adapt to evolving community and policy environments.



GOAL

2

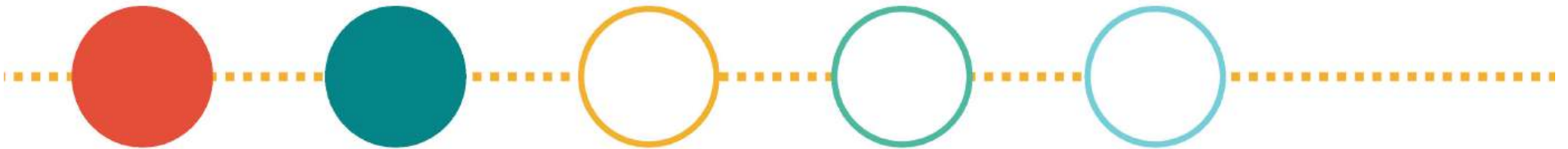


Target

Develop an internal asset map and establish additional, diversified revenue streams.

Key Strategies

- Identify, map, and regularly update organizational assets across financial, operational, programmatic, and relational areas to inform strategic decisions.
- Explore sustainable funding models including fee for service opportunities, micro fundraising strategies, and potential development of a social enterprise.
- Establish planned and legacy giving options aligned with donor intent and long term mission sustainability. Assess facility ownership and partnership models that support long term stability, with progress and opportunities shared through annual Board updates.



Goal 3: Talent Development and Empowerment

An engaged, supported workforce is essential to delivering high-quality, person-centered services and sustaining organizational impact.



GOAL

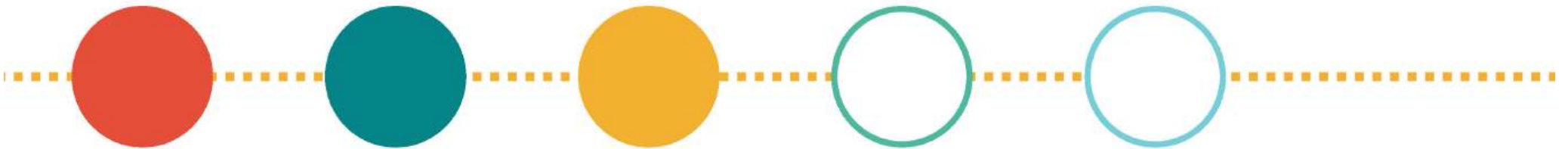
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Target

Reduce staff turnover, improve retention, and strengthen workforce wellness.

Key Strategies

- Invest in workforce wellness, professional development, and market competitive compensation to support staff stability and long term career commitment.
- Define and communicate clear career pathways, leadership development opportunities, and succession planning to support internal growth and continuity.
- Foster a culture of transparency, belonging, and engagement that values staff voice, strengths, and contributions.



Goal 4: Trauma-Informed and Relevant Services

Trauma-informed and culturally responsive services improve access, engagement, and outcomes for individuals and families.



GOAL

4

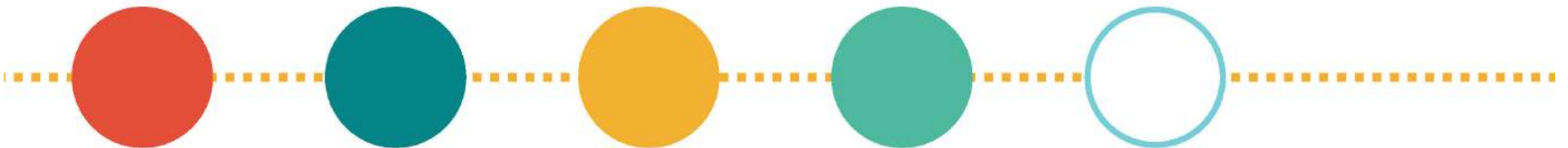


Target

Operate as a trauma informed and culturally relevant organization across all programs and services.

Key Strategies

- Embed trauma informed principles and cultural humility as organizational standards across leadership, operations, and service delivery.
- Expand access through multilingual resources, universal intake practices, and accommodations that meet the needs of people of all abilities, backgrounds, and life circumstances.
- Implement annual training, assessment, and feedback cycles to ensure services remain responsive, relevant, and continuously improving.



Goal 5: Cross-Sector Partnerships and Community Collaboration

Collaborative leadership strengthens systems, aligns resources, and advances community-wide solutions that no single organization can achieve alone.



GOAL

5

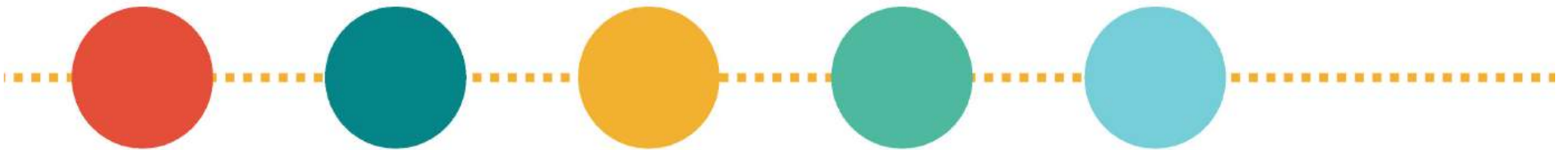


Target

Drive cross-sector solutions, policy advocacy, and adaptive community strategies.

Key Strategies

- Serve as a trusted convener and harmonizer by bringing together community members, policy leaders, service providers, and faith based partners.
- Facilitate coordinated community action planning that aligns programs, advocacy, and policy efforts to advance equity and reduce poverty.
- Strengthen and sustain roundtables, faith networks, and legislative partnerships that balance strategic planning with collective action and measurable outcomes.

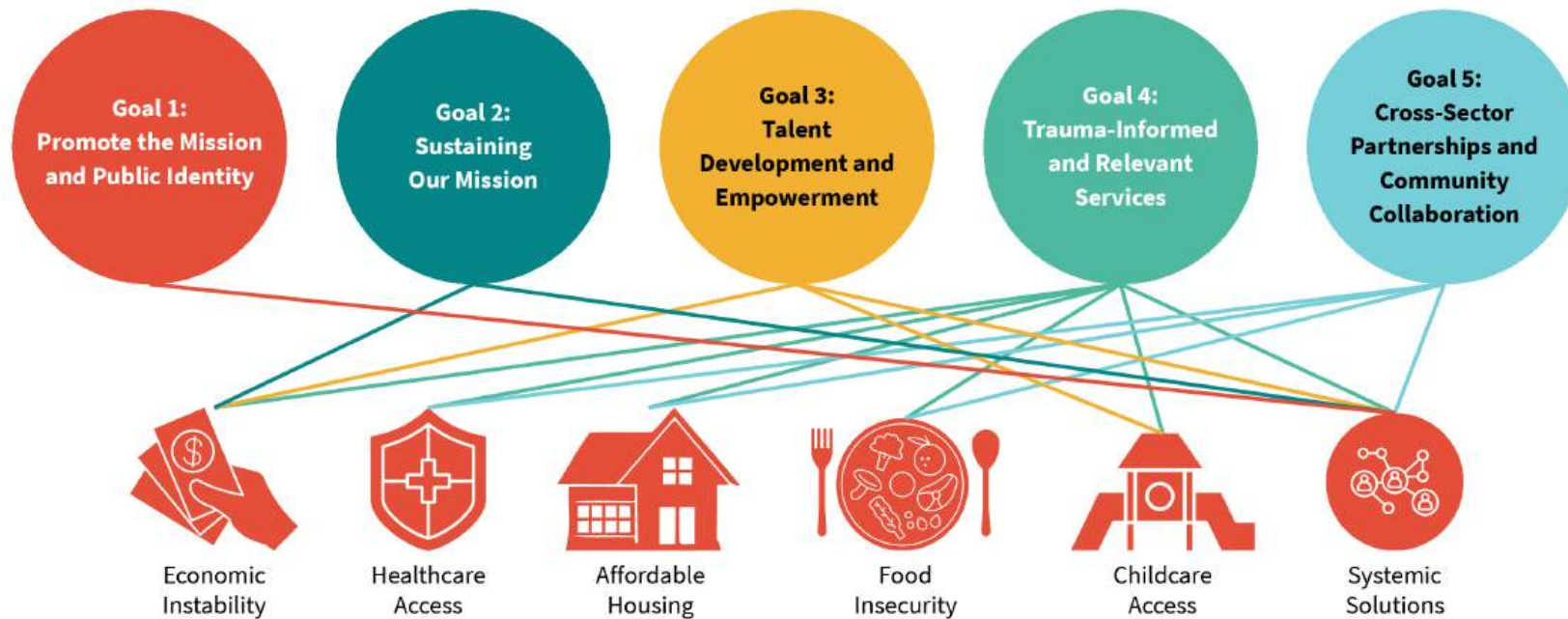


How Our Strategic Goals Align With Community Needs

We listen to our community, and we respond with purpose. The community needs identified through the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) listed earlier in this document connect directly to CommUnify’s strategic priorities. Each statement reflects a way CommUnify shows up in response to what community members identified as most important.

The strategic goal linkages below illustrate how these community-identified needs are addressed through the agency’s priorities, values, and approach to service delivery, partnership, and systems change. In many cases, a single community need aligns with more than one strategic goal—highlighting CommUnify’s integrated, human-centered approach to supporting families.

Together, this linkage demonstrates that the strategic plan is not separate from the Community Needs Assessment. Instead, it translates community voice into clear priorities that guide how CommUnify directs its work, resources, and partnerships moving forward.



CommUnify's Roles in the Community

CommUnify serves Santa Barbara County in multiple interconnected roles:



The roles the organization plays in the community represent the practical ways it delivers on its strategic priorities, translating identified community needs into on-the-ground action through each function it serves.

STEP

4 Where We'll Go Next

Implementation will translate strategic priorities into action through:

Implementation Plan: A living work plan, updated annually, will align strategic priorities with actionable initiatives, timelines, and responsible parties.

Communication Plan: Clear and coordinated communication will guide how progress and outcomes are shared with staff, partners, funders, and the community.

Measurement and Goals: Performance measures and internal goals will track progress and support data-informed decision-making.

Capacity Building: Training on project management, data tracking, adaptive planning, fundraising, governance and advocacy for staff and the board.

Outcomes Analysis: Ongoing analysis will assess impact and inform continuous improvement.

Results Oriented Management Accountability (ROMA) Cycle: The ROMA Cycle will guide planning, implementation, evaluation, and results-driven learning.

Together, these steps ensure CommUnify's strategy remains actionable, responsive, and grounded in measurable impact.



Implementation Plan: Annual Production of a Work Plan

The operating environment is rapidly changing, and resources are increasingly volatile. To ensure this Strategic Plan remains active, responsive, and relevant, the agency will use a structured annual implementation and work plan to guide execution. The annual work plan will:

- Translate strategic goal areas into annual priorities, goals, and tactics
- Allow flexibility to respond to evolving conditions and emerging needs
- Serve as the primary vehicle for tracking progress and implementation
- This work plan will be presented to the Board of Directors annually as part of the agency's Strategic Plan update process.

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Acknowledgements

We thank the parents, participants, staff, partners, and Board members whose insight, creativity, and leadership shaped this Strategic Plan.

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