

Promise Neighborhood **Site PROFILE**

Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

Youth Policy Institute

LOCATION:

Los Angeles, CA

FEDERAL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT:

Date of grant award:
December 2012

Date grant agreement with U.S. Department of Education executed:
December 2012

Total investment:
\$60 million (\$30 million federal grant and \$30 million in matching funds) over five years

COMMUNITY CONTEXT/TARGET POPULATION

The Los Angeles (LA) Promise Neighborhood includes two separate communities, Pacoima and Hollywood, which are about 17 miles from each other. The lead agency drew the boundaries for one of the two communities based, in part, on the location of existing partnerships on which it could draw. They chose to expand their service model to a second community with few nonprofits, despite the need for services.

- **Pacoima.** According to the 2010 census, 40,734 residents, including 13,168 children, live within the Pacoima community.¹ The population is 90 percent Latino, and about half of the residents are immigrants. In Pacoima, the majority of students perform below state standards and more than half of adults have less than a high school diploma. Within the boundaries of the neighborhood, 55 to 75 percent of families with children live in poverty and face serious public safety threats.
- **Hollywood.** The Hollywood community is home to 57,044 residents, including 10,236 children. Nearly half of the residents are Latino (48 percent), 34 percent are white, 12 percent are Asian, and 4 percent are African American. More than half of the population is foreign born. In 2010, only 50 percent of neighborhood high school students graduated, and the unemployment rate was 19 percent, substantially higher than the national rate. In some of the most distressed areas of the neighborhood, up to 85 percent of children live in poverty.

When it reaches full scale in 2017, LA Promise Neighborhood plans to serve 65 percent of children within the two communities, including all 12,820 students attending LA Promise Neighborhood target schools. Neighborhood students not attending a target school can access the initiative's services through neighborhood community resource centers.

KEY PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

The lead agency for the LA Promise Neighborhood, the Youth Policy Institute (YPI), has provided a range of education, training, and technology services for low-income families and communities in Los Angeles, beginning in community centers and expanding into Full-Service Community Schools. YPI works with more than 60 partners to implement the initiative, including nearly 30 Promise Neighborhood subcontracted partners who provide direct services, as well as partners who provide in-kind services (see the sidebar on page 2 for a list of key service-provider partners). In addition, the Promise Neighborhood has "symbolic" partners such as public officials who provide non-monetary support for the initiative.

The Los Angeles Unified School District and the neighborhood's 18 target schools, three of which YPI operates, are key partners in the initiative. Partner schools include traditional public schools, charter schools, pilot schools, and small learning community schools. Other major partners include organizations providing tutoring services, namely the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); partners that provide enrichment activities, such as the Unusual Suspects Theatre Company; and case management partners such as the Thai Community Development Center.

THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

YPI's main goal in applying for a Promise Neighborhoods grant was to create a program model that would help alleviate poverty in its target communities by providing educational and wraparound services to whole families. Both communities offer services in each of the Promise Neighborhoods pipeline components, although the specific activities offered

Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Key Partners



Early Childhood

First Five LA
Los Angeles Education Partnership
MEND-Meet Each Need with Dignity Para Los Niños



Academic Support

AmeriCorps
Communities in Schools
LA Youth Network
Los Angeles Unified School District
Spark
UCLA Community Based Learning Program



Family Support

Citi Community Development
El Nido Family Centers
Friends of the Family
Phoenix House
Public Counsel
Thai Community Development Center

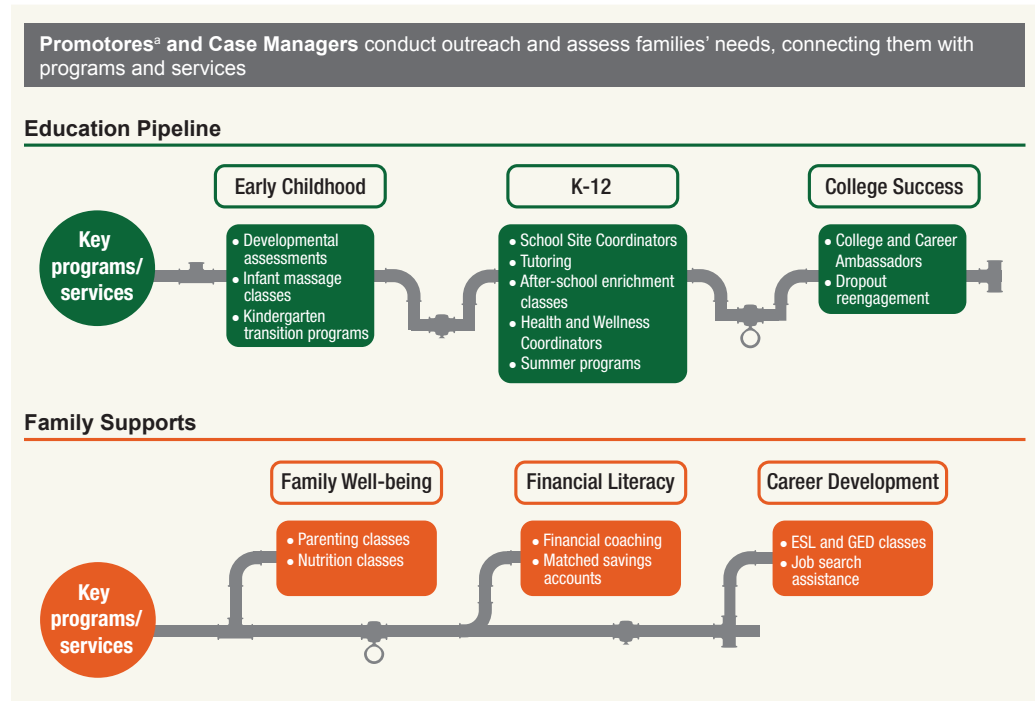


College and Career Readiness

College Summit
Los Angeles Mission College
Salvadoran-American Leadership & Educational Fund

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Figure 1. Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Pipeline Components



Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This figure highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhood offers.

^a Promotores build relationships with the neighborhood residents and help publicize the initiative through presentations throughout the community.

ESL = English as a Second Language; GED = General Educational Development.

vary depending on the community's need and the local partners. The central elements of the pipeline are laid out in Figure 1.

The target schools and community resource centers are the focal points for all Promise Neighborhood activities. In addition to serving as the primary location for Promise Neighborhood K-12 programs, family support activities are also offered at the schools. The LA Promise Neighborhood community resource centers function as one-stop shops, offering a range of activities across the initiative's continuum of services for both children and their families.

- **Programs.** In the early childhood area, LA Promise Neighborhood provides developmental assessments, baby massage classes, and summer kindergarten transition programs, and its partner the Los Angeles Education Partnership offers playgroups for children up to age 3.

Each partner school has a School Site Coordinator who conducts outreach to students and families and connects them with Promise Neighborhood services. The initiative's K-12

services include academic supports such as tutoring; health and wellness activities such as fitness classes and self-esteem workshops; music, art, and theater classes and workshops; and student mental health services. Summer programming includes camp activities such as science projects, nutrition instruction, and gardening clubs, as well as summer youth employment and middle-to-high school transition programs.

College and Career Ambassadors answer high school students' questions about college and careers and help them fill out financial aid forms and college applications, explore their career interests and options, and draft cover letters and resumes. Some education pipeline programming occurs at school sites whereas other services are available at the community resource centers. For example, tutoring services are provided at the schools and the community centers, and dropout reengagement activities are held at community resource centers.

- **Families.** LA Promise Neighborhood supports families through parenting classes, adult education and career classes, and family health

Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Key Partners
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Enrichment/Out of School Time

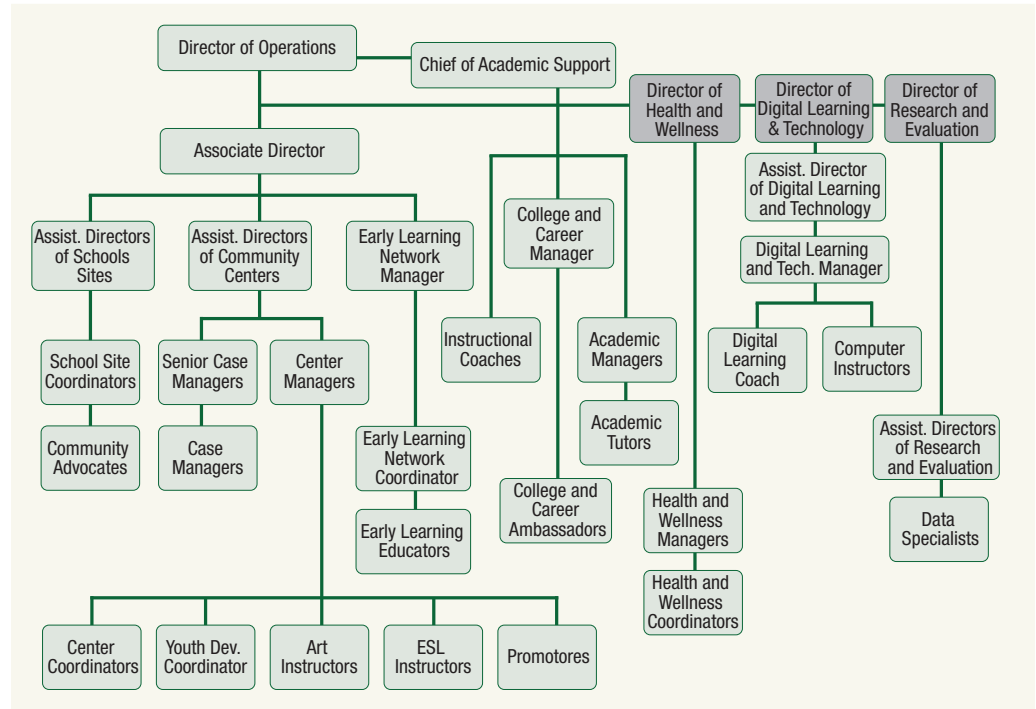
- Artworx
- Boys & Girls Club of Hollywood
- Create Now
- Harmony Project
- L.A.C.E.R. Afterschool Programs
- The Actors' Gang
- The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company



Health/Mental Health

- Focus Fish
- Hollygrove
- Northeast Valley Health Corporation
- SOSMentor

Figure 2. Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Organizational Structure



Source: Background documents from Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood.

Note: The staff positions listed in light green boxes are funded by the LA Promise Neighborhood. The gray boxes represent other YPI positions.

ESL = English as a Second Language.

services. The initiative offers My Parent and Me classes, which teach parents communication skills and how to promote their children's health and literacy. Free childcare services enable parents to participate in General Educational Development (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, or workforce development services. Family health supports include nutrition classes, Zumba, and drug awareness workshops. As with the education pipeline programs, these services are provided at schools or the community resource centers, depending on the activity.

LA Promise Neighborhood staff host monthly community collaborative meetings in both communities. These meetings give community-based organizations and community members a space to share information on resources within the community.

Promotores housed within the community resource centers build relationships with the neighborhood residents and publicize the initiative through presentations throughout the community. The community resource centers also provide case management services to link families to needed services.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STAFF ROLES

YPI manages a number of community initiatives in addition to the LA Promise Neighborhood, and the directors of many of these initiatives are members of the LA Promise Neighborhood leadership team. This overlap facilitates communication, coordination, and the leveraging of resources among the various initiatives YPI manages. The Promise Neighborhood initiative also draws on existing YPI support structures, including staff from the finance, human resources, development, and research departments.

The Director of Promise Neighborhood Operations manages the coordination and provision of the initiative's services, overseeing the associate directors of the school sites and community resource centers and the Early Learning Network Manager, and collaborating with the Chief of Academic Support to provide instructional services (Figure 2). Additional Promise Neighborhood staff supervised by YPI's directors of Health and Wellness, Digital Learning and Technology, and Research and Evaluation divisions support the initiative. There are separate

administrative structures for school site and community resource center staff in each of the two communities: There is an Assistant Director of School Sites for Pacoima and one for Hollywood; likewise, each community has its own Assistant Director of Community Resource Centers. The assistant directors of the other areas oversee services across the two communities. LA Promise Neighborhood also employs a variety of part-time staff, such as academic tutors; Promotores; instructional coaches; ESL, art, and computer instructors; and early learning educators.

PROGRESS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Population reached.** LA Promise Neighborhood served more than 11,000 children during its first year of implementation, reaching nearly half of the children in the two communities.² The initiative also served more than 4,000 family and community members.
- **Enhanced services and new community served.** YPI has provided academic and community services to the Pacoima community for more than 10 years. Through the Promise Neighborhoods grant, YPI enhanced the services provided within Pacoima without duplicating efforts. The grant also enabled YPI to replicate their program model in Hollywood, a community with previously unfilled needs, and add an early learning component in each community to complete a cradle-to-career pipeline. LA Promise Neighborhood leadership commented that establishing a presence in Hollywood was one of the initiative's major accomplishments in the first year, as the community had few existing resources from which to build the infrastructure to launch the Promise Neighborhood.
- **Collaboration enhanced.** LA Promise Neighborhood leadership highlighted the strong partnerships the initiative has fostered, for example, facilitating collaborative and coordinated work toward mutual goals between neighborhood schools. The LA Promise Neighborhood partner schools include traditional public schools, charters, small learning community schools, and pilot schools. In the past, little coordination took place between the schools with different forms of governance, but now they are communicating with one another and working toward

the same measurable goals. For example, they are engaging in coordinated curriculum planning and working together to help students transition between schools.

- **Promising early outcomes related to student academic achievement.** Promise Neighborhood leaders reported that the Academic Performance Index³ (API) of the 18 LA Promise Neighborhood target schools increased an average of 18 points from the 2011–2012 to the 2012–2013 school year, with eight schools increasing by more than 30 points. During the same period, the overall statewide average API decreased by 2 points. The initiative's leaders attribute these increases to programs initiated in the target schools during their planning grant year in 2010.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Building new relationships.** Although the foundation of the Promise Neighborhood model has been established in Hollywood, the lead agency has not developed solid relationships with all partners yet. Some partnerships were hindered by the initial implementation pressure. LA Promise Neighborhood staff are trying to strike a better balance between the need to quickly initiate Promise Neighborhood programs and services while building relationships and supporting new partners.
- **Brief time window for long-term change.** LA Promise Neighborhood leadership reported feeling a sense of urgency to implement the pipeline components. Although achievement of the ultimate goal of neighborhood transformation is beyond the scope of the five-year Promise Neighborhoods grant, LA leaders feel pressured to demonstrate within those first five years that they are positively affecting the community. One respondent commented that with core services now in place, the initiative will need to focus on systems-level and policy changes to effect greater change.
- **Lack of comparable data.** Based on recommendations from their grant technical assistance provider, LA Promise Neighborhood submitted a revised data plan in April 2014. They have identified new sources of data for the performance indicators they are required to submit to the U.S. Department of Education. They will

ABOUT PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS CASE STUDIES

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at Policy Link (PNI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods, including Los Angeles. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and three-to-four-day site visits to each selected Promise Neighborhood at the end of the 2013–2014 school year.

be unable to compare the data they collected previously with the data they are now collecting. Thus, they have not established baseline values or targets for their early learning and family support performance indicators, but they anticipate having the data to do so by March 2015. Similarly, they do not have baselines or targets for their academic indicators because the Common Core-aligned Smarter Balanced Assessment will replace the California Standards Tests in the 2014–2015 school year. The new assessment was piloted in 2013–2014, but the results will not be publicly released. Thus, LA Promise Neighborhood does not have comparable data from which to set academic indicator benchmarks and targets, and they are exploring other sources of data to provide context for the new scores. Leadership also highlighted that assessment tools for kindergarten preparedness are inconsistent across schools—an issue YPI will address this year, pushing all of the schools to identify and define kindergarten readiness using the same assessment, then making a proposal to the district.

LOOKING FORWARD

- **Early development services enhancement.** Before the Promise Neighborhoods grant, YPI had limited experience in the area of early childhood development. During year one, LA Promise Neighborhood established partnerships with a number of organizations that provide services to neighborhood children ages birth to 5. In fall 2014, they intend to convene work groups to plan additional early development services and are working to build relationships with early childhood providers.
- **Use of outcomes data.** In recognition of their partners' varying levels of experience with performance measurement, in year one LA Promise Neighborhood only required partners to submit attendance data. In year two, partners will be asked to track additional outcomes. The Promise Neighborhood leadership plans to use outcome data, as the information becomes available, to guide their programming, including convening work groups to discuss outcomes.

- **Plans for sustainability.** YPI is working toward matching the \$30 million they received from the U.S. Department of Education to reach \$60 million total in the fifth year of the Promise Neighborhoods grant. By developing and strengthening coordination among partners and schools, they hope to also continue work after the grant period ends. When partners identify funding opportunities, YPI shares its development staff with partners to build their capacity and enhance the overall quality and success of the LA Promise Neighborhood. YPI, in collaboration with other organizations, is working on a statewide ballot initiative for 2016 and related legislation that would create a \$700–800 million annual allocation for child poverty in California. Promise Neighborhoods would be one of the featured strategies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ENDNOTES

¹ Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood implementation grant application, 2012.

² Queen, J., Epps, Z., Whiting, D., & Stone, M. (2014, August). Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood annual grants performance report. Rockville, MD: Results Leadership Group.

³ California uses the API to measure schools' academic performance and improvement based on students' performance on statewide assessments.

Suggested Citation

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