



fuel for **50**



Community-First Approaches to Support Early Childhood

SPRING 2022 REPORT



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Community-First Approaches to Support Early Childhood

At Robin Hood's Fund for Early Learning (FUEL), we are working to transform New York City into an early learning metropolis, where every child can get a bright and equitable start in life. We launched in 2016 with a mandate to invest \$50 million in sustainable, evidence-based programs that support early childhood—and to improve understanding of what works best for families impacted by poverty. To date, we have forged partnerships with community-based organizations, public institutions, city and state agencies, and researchers to support programs reaching more than 75,000 children and caregivers.

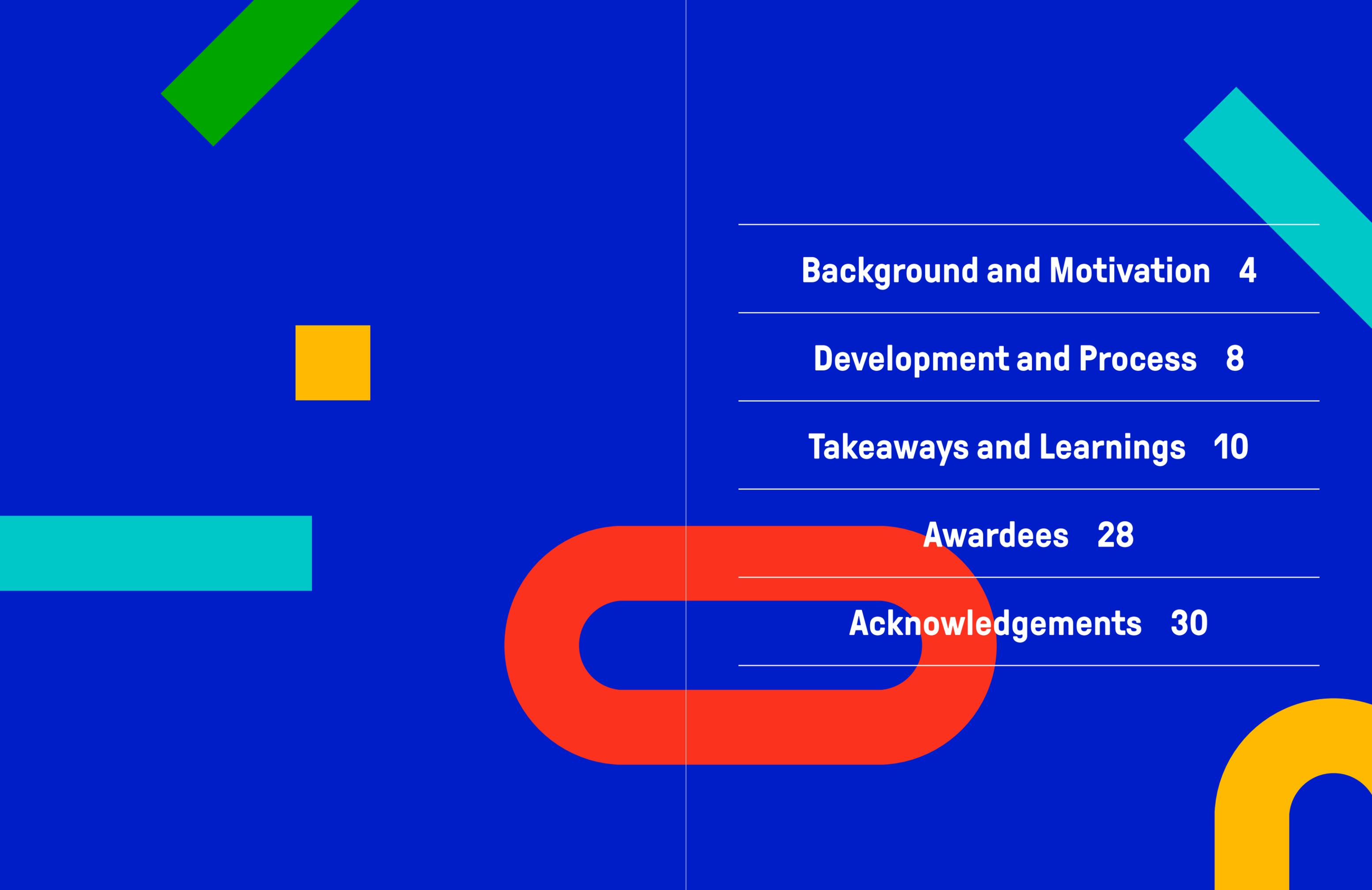
Still, in a city where children are significantly more likely than adults to live in poverty—and where systemic racism amplifies these effects in communities of color—there is clearly much more to do to make our systems of support more equitable and extend our work in underfunded neighborhoods throughout New York City. In early 2018, we began work on our first-ever open funding challenge, FUEL for 50, with two goals: to reduce the barriers and investment required to access FUEL support and to recognize and reward the diverse community organizations that step up for vulnerable families in our city.

In August 2021, we put out an open call for applications for FUEL for 50, offering no-strings-attached funding for 50

organizations that support children's first teachers and support systems: parents and caregivers. We hoped to get the word out to community programs supporting families impacted by poverty, both long-standing and newly established. And the response was overwhelming. We received more than 350 applications, most from organizations that did not consider child development a primary focus. Applicants ranging from hospital systems and universities to programs for legal services and reentry support proposed creative approaches to meeting the needs of parents and other caregivers of young children.

Through this process, we've identified 50 organizations that exemplify what FUEL is all about. Support from Robin Hood will help these awardees, introduced at the end of this report, develop and extend their critical work, including through opportunities for up to \$1 million in future funding. Though we could only give 50 awards, we heard from many more compelling programs that we believe worthy of recognition. As such, we highlight key takeaways from the entire applicant pool here. We are confident these programs will bring us closer to fostering an early learning metropolis in New York City, and we hope this report will inspire fellow funders and practitioners to focus on the relationships that support our youngest and most vulnerable New Yorkers.





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Background and Motivation

WHY EARLY CHILDHOOD?

The science is clear: early childhood matters. Research increasingly supports the common-sense wisdom that the earliest years of life, from birth to age 3, are the most important for a healthy future.^{1,2} Skills learned in early childhood, like how to move, how to think, and how to interact with others, all set the stage for a lifetime of learning and interacting with the world. Just watching a baby trade smiles with a loving adult or a soon-to-be toddler take their tentative but determined first steps confirms this truth.

Behind the scenes of these interactions, the time from birth through age 3 is one of rapid brain-building.³ This early brain architecture lays the foundation for success in work, relationships, and life. During this time of rapid growth, the brain is more sensitive to both positive and negative experiences. For example, children who experience warm and responsive interactions with caregivers and supportive adults in infancy and toddlerhood build strong connections within the brain.⁴ These connections develop and strengthen key skills—such as planning, attention, and self-control—that help children navigate their world and

continue to learn and grow.⁵ In contrast, when infants and toddlers experience scary, threatening situations or large amounts of stress during this time, as often happens when families live in poverty, children’s developing brains and bodies can be impacted in long-lasting, negative ways.⁶ In other words, stress can slow or derail the developmental process. Young children need strong supports in their lives to provide positive early experiences, protect against negative ones, and build resiliency in every situation.



WHY CAREGIVERS?

Whether they’re biological or adoptive parents, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or childcare providers, adult caregivers are young children’s first teachers and support systems. Since children need someone to ensure that they are safe and receive the essentials they need to grow and thrive, caregivers are uniquely positioned both to provide positive, enriching experiences and to protect against stress, keeping development on track.⁷

What sometimes goes unnoticed is the broad ecosystem of adults in a child’s life that facilitates this growth. We know that children don’t exist in a bubble but instead depend on the presence and involvement of caring, stable, and supportive adults to help them build all the foundational skills needed for their future success. We’ve all heard the phrase “it takes a village to raise a child,” and all types of caregivers play critical roles in supporting the growth and development of our youngest members of society. What this supportive community looks like will vary based on culture and family configuration, but by lifting up the important adults in their lives, we give young children the stability and

support they need to thrive, too.

We also know that investments in efforts to support young children and their caregivers have huge payoffs. Research demonstrates that support during this critical time yields significant returns, particularly compared to interventions that occur later in life.⁸ Programs that help young children to stay on track developmentally are good for the children, their caregivers, their communities, and our society.

WHY NOW?

At FUEL, we're committed to connecting research in child development with community-led programs and approaches. Science can tell us how important early childhood is and how impactful support for parents and caregivers can be, but these insights are most powerful when put to work with guidance and insights from the community organizations that know our city best. We know that there isn't one perfect parenting practice that works best for all children, and philanthropy and government have too often overlooked the community-led programs that parents and caregivers rely on.

That's why we created FUEL for 50. Departing from our traditional funding model, we've committed to engaging with and learning from organizations outside our current network. We issued an open call for applications to broaden our reach and to elevate not only those who work directly with children, but any organizations working to build skills, alleviate stress, or otherwise support parents and caregivers. We know that community-based organizations are leading efforts to support our city's most vulnerable families, and we hope that our fellow funders, practitioners, and researchers will join us in learning from this open process.

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STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: THREE KEY AREAS

Child development research has increasingly highlighted the critical role of parents and caregivers in supporting infants and toddlers. Building on this insight, three key focus areas to guide supports for early childhood brain development have emerged.⁹

Inspired by this research, we asked FUEL for 50 applicants to let us know which of the following best describe what their program does:

- Strengthening children's core language and socioemotional skills
- Building nurturing relationships
- Reducing sources of stress

Applicants' responses, shared later in this report, highlight how programs are thinking about the needs of caregivers as a way to promote early childhood brain development.

Development and Process

CREATING FUEL FOR 50

We know that the goals and expectations of traditional grants can often be divorced from the realities of the communities they may be trying to reach. FUEL for 50 is about closing this gap, hearing directly from communities in need, and providing no-strings-attached financial support. In a departure from our typical process, we engaged communities across New York City from the very beginning of FUEL for 50.

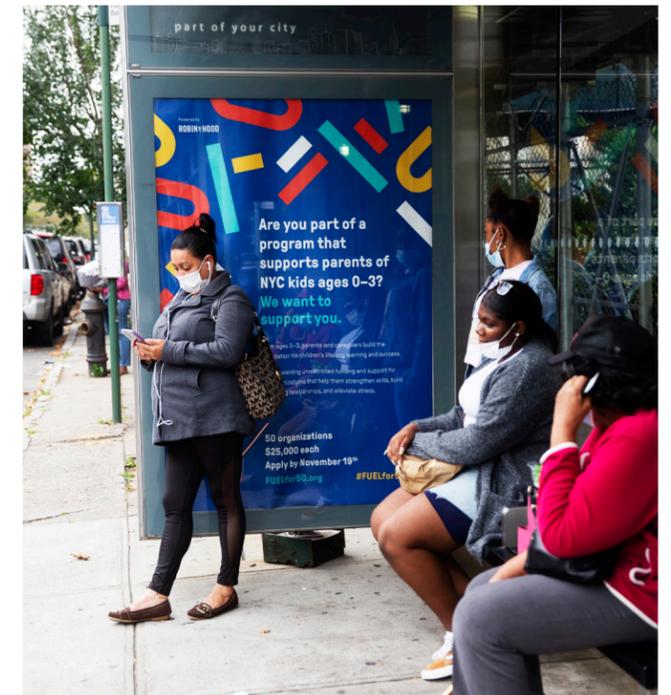
This initiative arose through Robin Hood’s critical examination of FUEL’s vision and strategies and candid feedback from local partners, nonprofit leaders, and parents. In planning FUEL for 50, we reflected on our historical strategies and challenged ourselves to better engage communities of the greatest need and opportunity. First, we examined the geographic landscape of our previous grantmaking in NYC, particularly noting neighborhoods with families in need of support where Robin Hood investment had been limited. Next, we heard directly from community organizations about their thoughts on a challenge like FUEL for 50. In partnership with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), FUEL conducted two

sets of focus groups with organizations across the city. During one group, we gained insights about current work supporting children and caregivers, and in the other, we gathered feedback from community organizations about our draft plans for FUEL for 50.



PUTTING LEARNINGS INTO ACTION

We took concrete steps to integrate what we learned from these reflective activities into the design and implementation of FUEL for 50. First, we oriented the open call for applications for FUEL for 50 towards a holistic, family-centered interpretation of early childhood development—inclusive of both organizations that do more “traditional” early childhood development work, as well as those who support caregivers or families but don’t work with children directly. The language and thoughts of the focus group participants were critical in ensuring that our communications and application wording conveyed this inclusive vision of early childhood development. Second, we made the call open to all ideas about supporting children and families, so that organizations who need funds to continue an already successful program could be elevated alongside organizations looking for funding to try something new. Our intent is to support communities both in sustaining effective work they are already doing and in realizing their dreams. Third, we have highlighted in our communications that the \$25,000 FUEL for 50 award is “no-strings-attached” funding that awardees can use as they see fit, with no requirements for reporting or evaluation. In addition to the



\$25,000, awardees have the opportunity to participate in up to 16 organizational development workshops to support their programmatic vision. Finally, we developed a multifaceted outreach strategy, including targeted subway and bus shelter ads as well as person-to-person efforts, to spread the word about FUEL for 50 to communities that may have not been aware of or previously funded by Robin Hood as well as organizations who support caregivers but may not work directly with children.

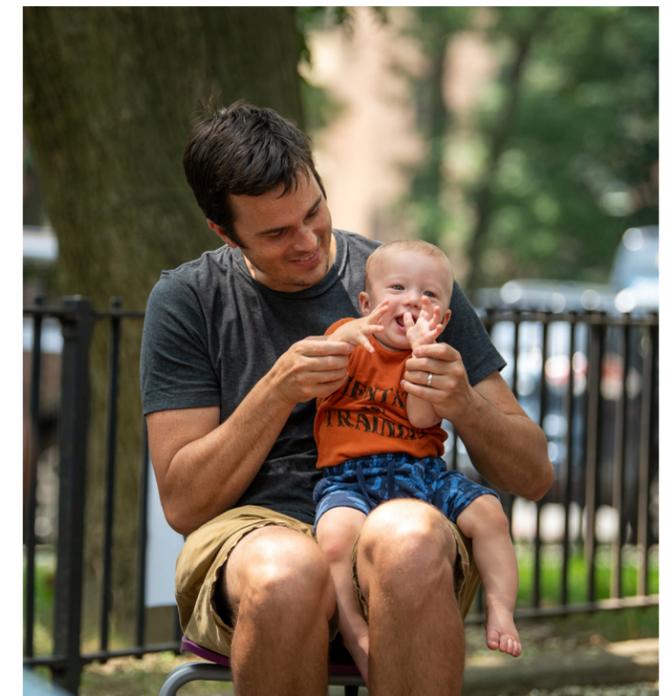


Takeaways and Learnings

TAKEAWAYS: WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD FROM NYC

It is clear that much of the most creative and promising early childhood work in New York City is already underway. From workforce development and reentry programs to shelters for families experiencing violence and homelessness, community organizations are actively identifying the needs of children and caregivers and adapting to support them, regardless of whether they consider child development a core focus.

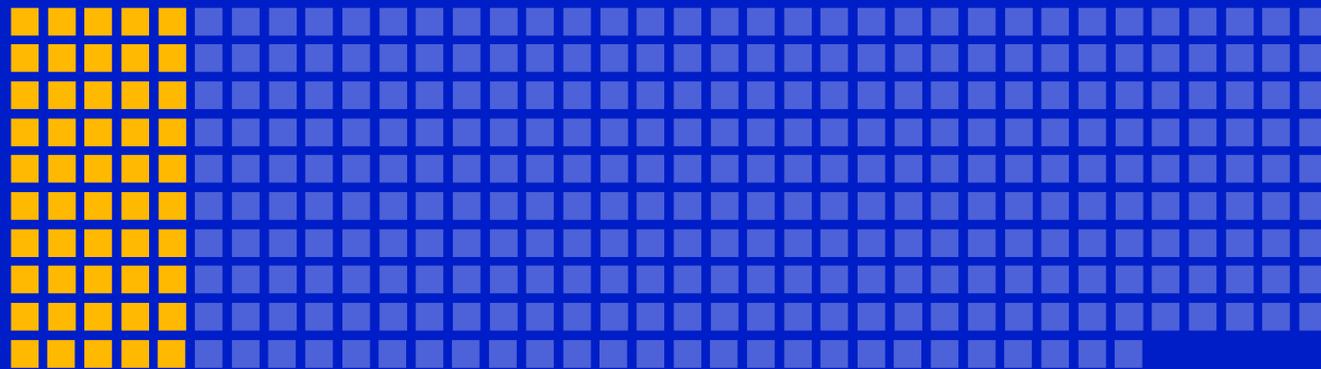
We heard from 355 organizations ranging in size, location, and strategic direction. These groups all shared a common goal: to support important adults in the lives of young children. In this section, we've highlighted trends and insights from this applicant pool, with sample programs from both FUEL for 50 awardees and other promising applicants.



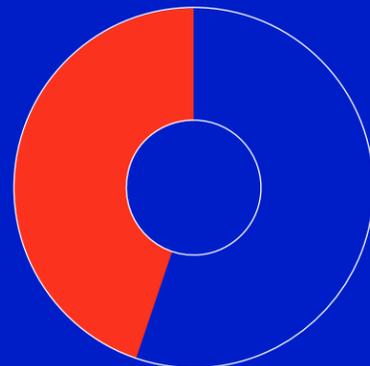
FUEL for 50: An Overview

Hundreds of community organizations responded to our open call for proposals to support caregivers of children 0–3 across New York City. Organizations were diverse in both where they are headquartered and which communities they serve. Programs touched on three key areas important for child development, with nearly half addressing all three.

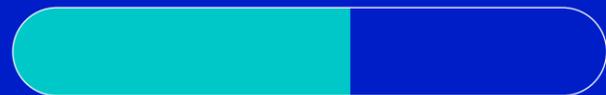
■ 355 TOTAL APPLICATIONS ■ 50 AWARDEES



PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS RELATED TO EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT



All 3 key areas
44.8%



Strengthening children's core language and socioemotional skills 56.6%



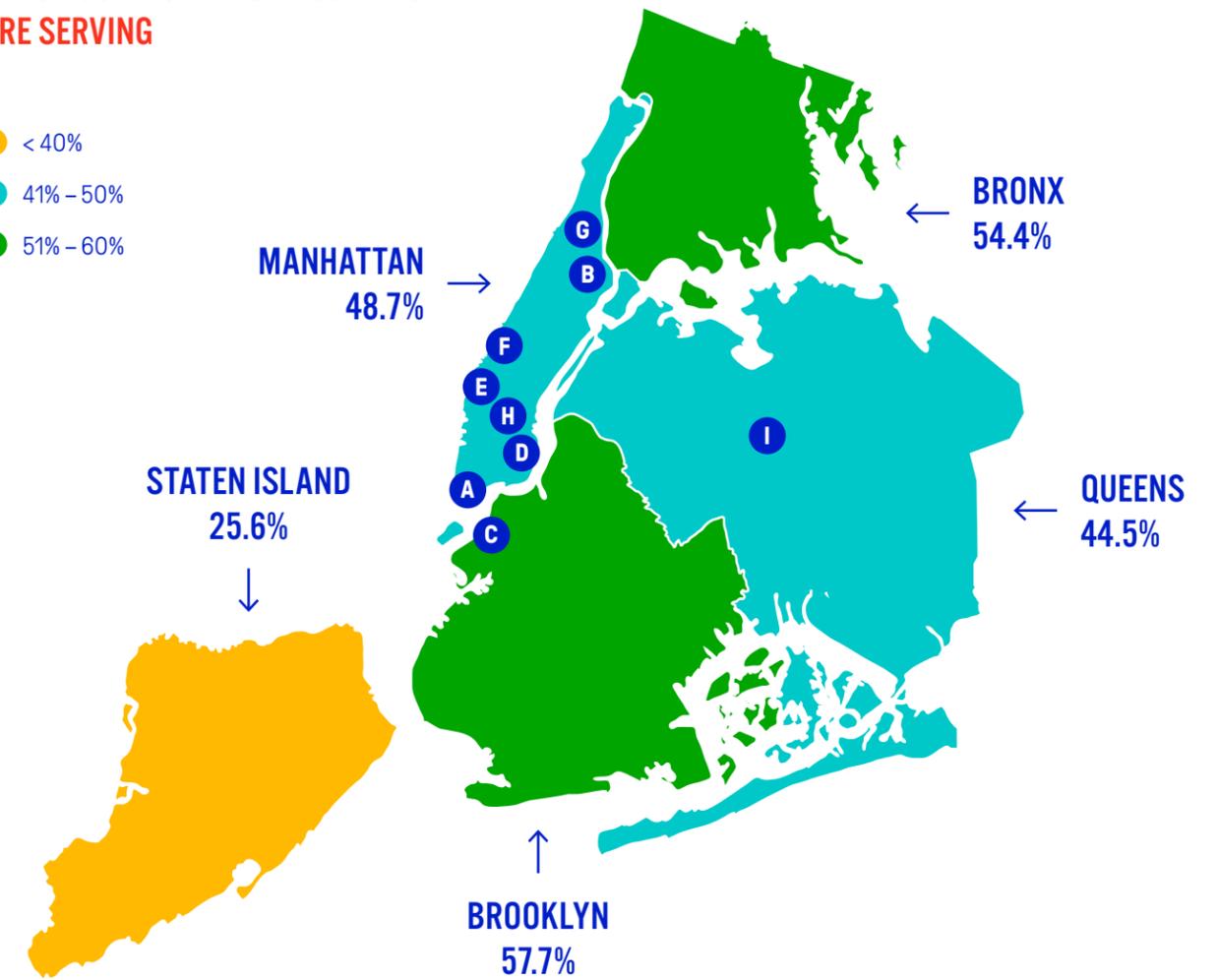
Building nurturing relationships 78%



Reducing sources of stress 82.5%

WHICH COMMUNITIES PROGRAMS ARE SERVING

- < 40%
- 41% – 50%
- 51% – 60%



ZIP CODES WITH MOST APPLICANTS		
A. Lower Manhattan / Battery Park	10004	10
B. East Harlem	10029	10
C. Downtown Brooklyn / Brooklyn Heights	11201	10
D. Lower East Side	10002	9
E. Chelsea	10001	8
F. Midtown West	10018	8
G. Central Harlem / Morningside Heights	10027	7
H. Union Square / Lower East Side	10003	6
I. Forest Hills	11375	6



TAKEAWAY 1

Community organizations of all shapes and sizes are already thinking creatively about early childhood.

Representing all five boroughs and annual budgets ranging from less than \$10,000 to more than \$25 million, FUEL for 50 applicants showed us myriad ways that nonprofits are adapting to meet caregivers' needs. Among our applicants were religious organizations, universities, health centers, legal services providers, community centers, and adult education programs.

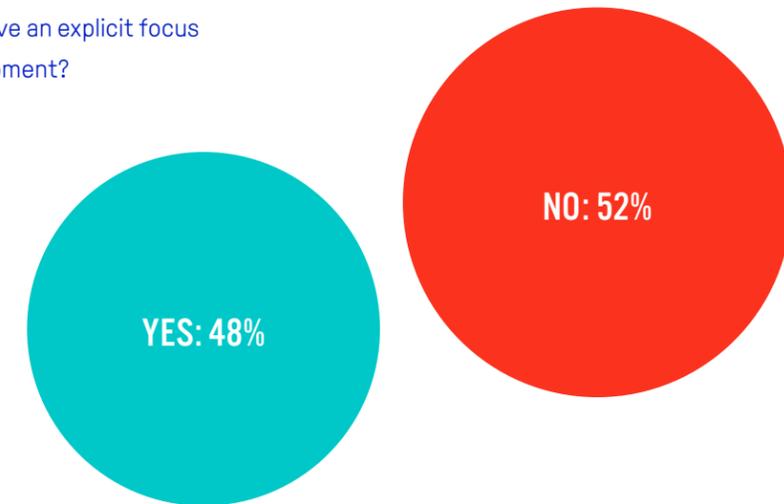
Excitingly, more than half of FUEL for 50 applications came from organizations outside the traditional early childhood category. And while we've become accustomed to conversations shifting toward direct services, applicants were as likely to reference caregiver mental health (44%) as they were early childhood education (42%). In response to our question about approaches to child development, 45% of applicants said their programs address ALL of our three focus areas: strengthening children's core language and socioemotional skills, building nurturing relationships, and reducing sources of stress.

Many organizations told us that one of the best ways to help infants and toddlers is to help their caregivers to be their best self, whether that is by offering support and education around parenting, a way to further their own education and job training, or pathways for better health through dance or yoga. Some program strategies were tailored to the characteristics and needs of specific boroughs and communities (e.g., heritage language programs, support for pregnant women) while others were universal in their relevance to caregivers (e.g., mental health support). Organizations are also thinking creatively about types of caregivers, with some programs focused on early childhood education and childcare providers who offer invaluable and often underappreciated care work.

Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP), a FUEL for 50 awardee, provides litigation and advocacy services, technological resources, and education and support in navigating work permits and immigration systems. Over time, their focus has shifted primarily to helping immigrant families access the resources they need to work in the US. According to Conchita

"BIG TENT" FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Does your organization have an explicit focus on early childhood development?



Cruz, ASAP's Co-Executive Director, **"When we polled our members, their number one concern was 'How can I even feed my family during this process?' Asylum is long, and their priority is supporting their family."** FUEL for 50 will support ASAP services to help families secure work permits, recognizing that access to employment can be a turning point toward stability for caregivers of young children.

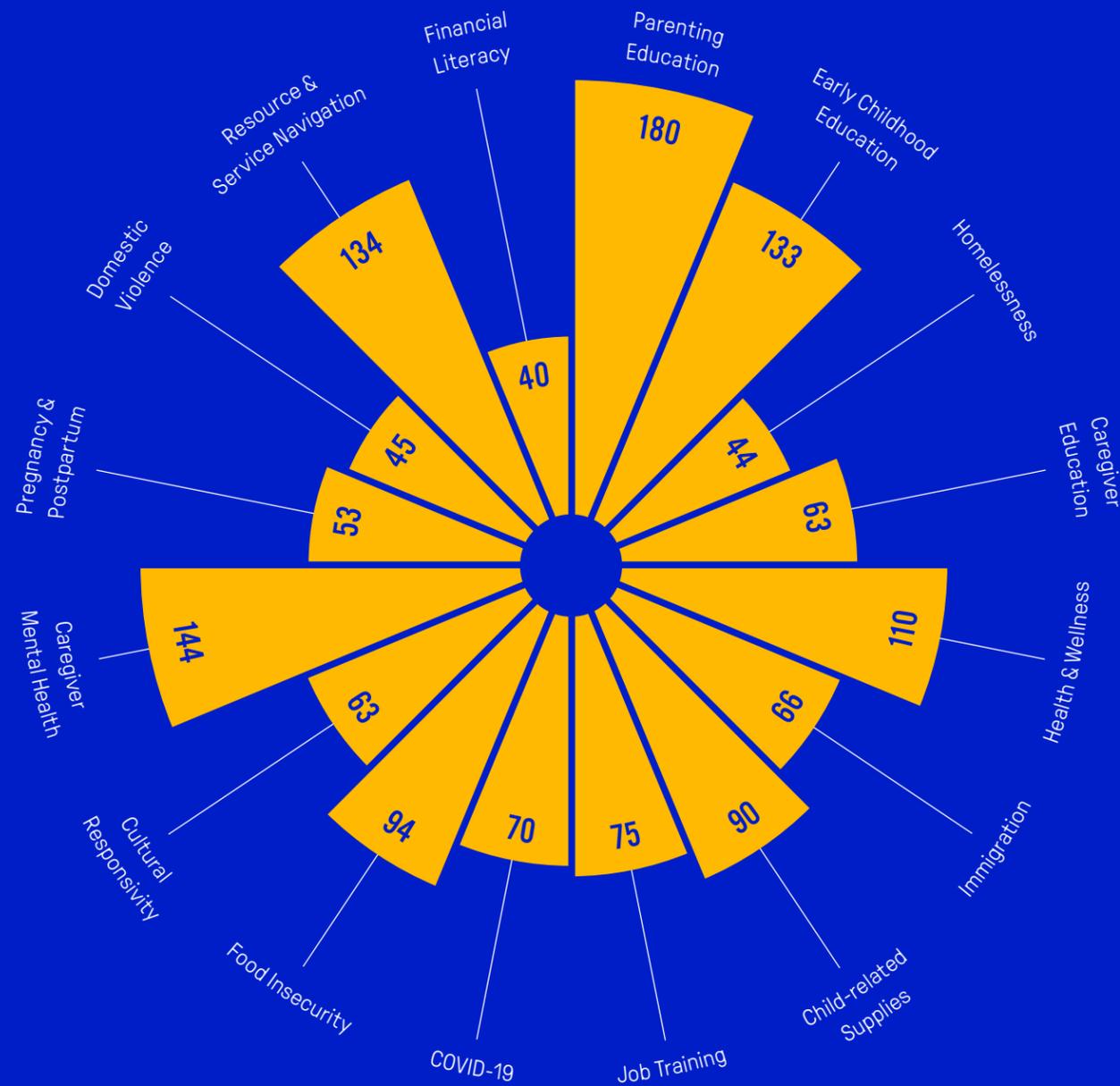
Around 17% of applicants sought funding for something new: never-before-implemented community programs, extensions of their existing work to reach new populations, or development of new strategies to address unmet needs. FUEL for 50 applicant Dance Project of Washington Heights (DPWH) is working to adapt their existing dance classes specifically for low-income young pregnant women. **"It's been on my mind for years to provide this space for younger moms, to be able to help bonding with their baby"** shared DPWH's Executive Director Heather Godfrey. DPWH seeks to supplement dance classes designed for prenatal fitness with workshops about important prenatal and postpartum topics such as labor and delivery and newborn

care. **"Movement can help so much, whether it's breathwork or gentle stretching,"** says Sarah Panayiotou, Early Childhood Program Manager at DPWH. **"Letting these young caregivers know that each child develops differently, and then caregivers forming relationships with each other, to have that love and support—community is so interwoven with all that we do."** This small pilot project represents a creative, community-informed way to support new caregivers while simultaneously building community.

By the Numbers

APPLICATION KEYWORDS

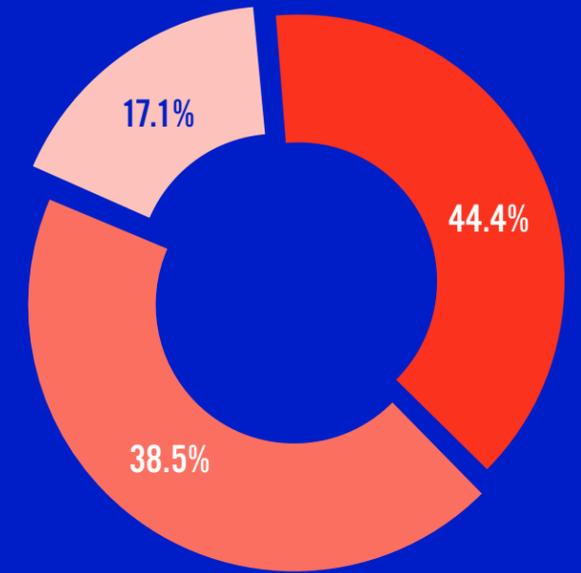
Coding each application revealed non-mutually exclusive key areas of focus, which are represented for the entire application pool in the wheel below.



LENGTH OF IMPLEMENTATION

We asked applicants to describe how long they have been implementing their program, and their answers showed a range from not yet implemented to long-term implementations.

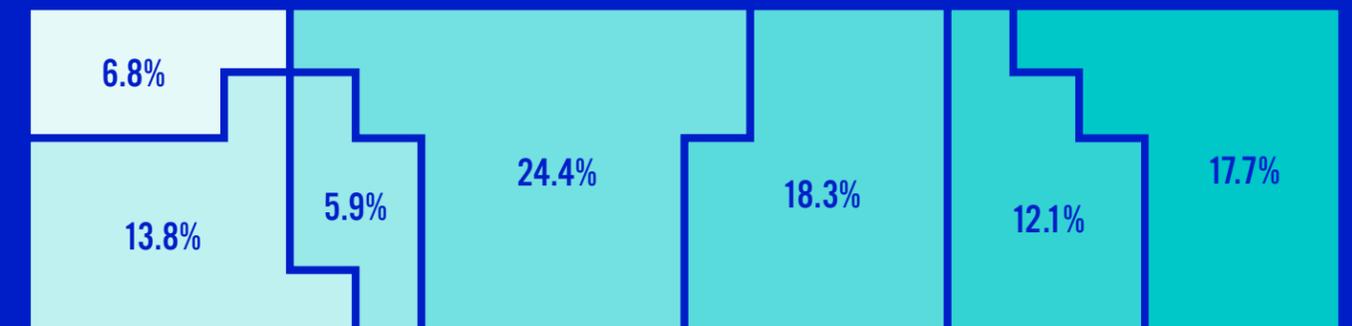
- A long time
- Still relatively new
- Not yet implemented



ORGANIZATION OPERATIONAL BUDGET

Applicants also reported their organization's operating budget. FUEL for 50 applications came from organizations with small budgets less than \$10,000 to those with large budgets of over \$25 million.

- \$0 – \$10,000
- \$1,000,001 – \$5,000,000
- \$10,001 – \$50,000
- \$5,000,001 – \$25,000,000
- \$50,001 – \$100,000
- > \$25,000,001
- \$100,001 – \$1,000,000



TAKEAWAY 2

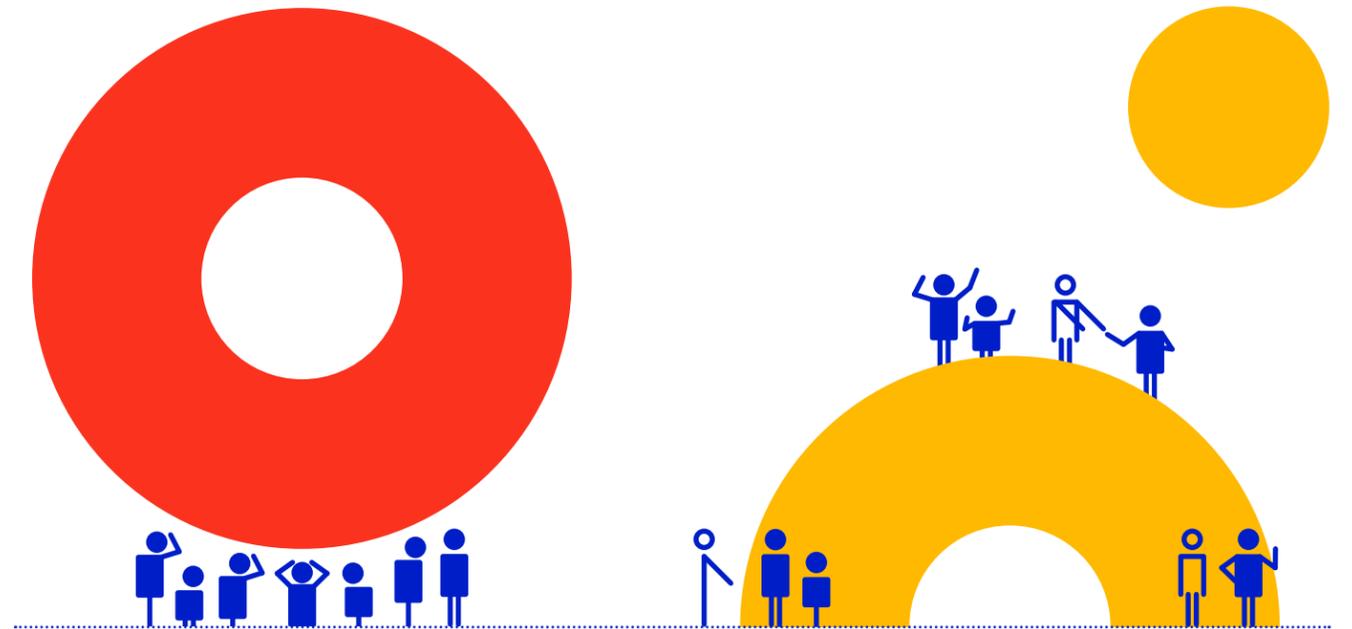
Pandemic responses have deepened community organizations' expertise and relationships.

Through two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, community organizations have adapted again and again to support the caregivers of young children, who have been disproportionately set back. Many organizations have years of experience with supporting basic services, education, and childcare; however, the challenges of the last two years have made resources scarce just as community needs are reaching new heights. Neighborhood- and community-specific organizations have risen to this challenge to address needs around food insecurity, social support, and direct monetary relief.

Mercy Center, a FUEL for 50 applicant, has a longstanding commitment to empowering immigrant women and families in the South Bronx with education programs, skills-focused workshops, and community-building. **“We’ve always tried to serve the whole person. If someone comes to us for an English class, we try to give them all the support they need so they’re successful in learning English, which means we ask, ‘How do we support you and support your entire family?’”** explained Paula Sarro, Associate Executive Director. Their whole family approach addresses

caregivers' financial stability and educational goals while also supporting their young children through programming like *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors*. With the onset of the pandemic, Mercy Center expanded its programming to include food and cash distribution to meet those most in need. This also deepened their relationships and existing mission, as community members were able to train and participate as volunteers in the food and meal distribution. As Debbie Panek, Director of Family and Youth Programs, described, **“It became a community event every time we had a food delivery. Families came to help—they were unloading boxes and bags and facilitating the food getting to as many families as possible.”**

FUEL for 50 awardee ImmSchools aims to support the entire immigrant experience, including but not limited to assistance through the intricacies of the immigration process. For caregivers, ImmSchools helps provide the information and confidence they need to navigate the educational system with their children and access mental health services and resources. During the pandemic,



ImmSchools pivoted to provide direct relief to families who were unable to access federal relief sources due to their immigration status.

“COVID disproportionately affected immigrant families, and undocumented families even more so, so we knew we needed to center them,” explained ImmSchools Co-Founder & Chief Program Officer Vanessa Luna. **“We asked them directly about their concerns, and the number one need was financial help.”** ImmSchools also responded to an expressed need for accurate information during the pandemic: **“Families have told us again and again that WhatsApp groups are a way to access resources that feel accessible and safe for them, so we incorporated that,”** shared Luna.

For children who have had most of their lives impacted by COVID-19, FUEL for 50 is more relevant than ever. Nearly 20% of applications explicitly addressed pandemic-related needs and services. The programs highlighted above show that community organizations have renewed and expanded their commitment to caregivers in this time of great need.

As we work to expand the network of organizations engaged with early childhood, we hope we can build on the creativity and ingenuity of NYC communities rising to the challenge of the moment.



Mercy Center

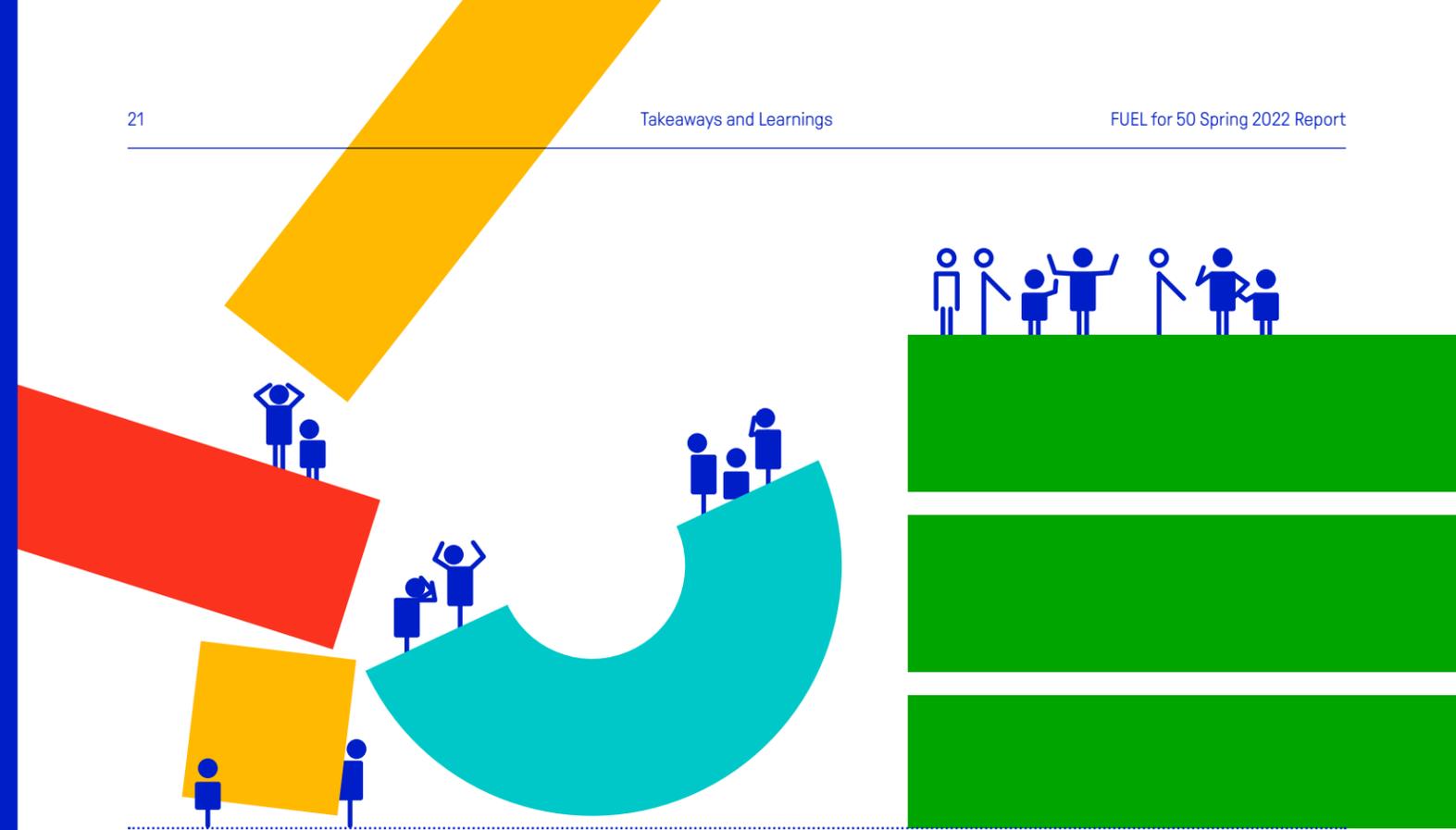
TAKEAWAY 3

Caregiver stress should be a priority for anyone working in early childhood.

Stress, and how to minimize it, is a first-order concern for caregivers and the organizations that serve them. Over 80% of FUEL for 50 applications selected caregiver stress as a focus of their programming and supports. Their strategies for reducing stress recognize time constraints from childcare and working outside the home, with many acknowledging experiences of trauma from stressors like poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, or recent immigration to the US. Among our applicant pool were programs focused on reducing caregivers' burden in the public education space, facilitating access to legal support, and equipping caregivers with knowledge and skills to recognize and reduce their own stress responses. These empowerment strategies directly relieve common stressors for caregivers living in poverty, allowing them to attain more stability and more time, energy, space, and confidence to support their young children.

The Full Circle Life Enrichment Center, a FUEL for 50 awardee, proposed expanding a stress management program they have developed and piloted called R.E.S.T. (Rest-Enjoy-Smile-

Timeout!). The program began with recognition of the high levels of stress experienced by Head Start staff the Center was trying to support. The resulting stress management program was so loved by the staff that they wanted to bring it to parents, particularly those with children 0 to 3. **“You’re like a portal, especially for the youngest children. Your child will pick up your stress, your negative energy, and even your body language, and a parent can pass all that on to their child,”** explained Darcel Dillard-Suite, Executive Director of the Full Circle Life Enrichment Center. To address caregivers in particular, they shortened the workshop series to three weeks centered around empowering parents to recognize their own responses to stress and how their stress responses might impact their children—as well as teaching them stress reduction and relaxation techniques including massage, aromatherapy, music, laughter, and yoga. Touch therapy through massage has been particularly impactful: **“Touch therapy teaches parents a very small simple way to care for themselves. They can give each other hand massages, foot massages and teach their children to do it as well—it gives them an implementable**



easy tool that teaches them resiliency, and teaches them about their bodies,” described Dillard-Suite.

FUEL for 50 applicant Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) was created specifically to support low-income clients navigating the family court system. **“We think about the stress on the parent who is working multiple jobs, who is a single parent, who is trying to make ends meet—they call us and they get a human being on the line who will help them figure out what they need to do,”** shared Cathy Cramer, LIFT CEO. For parents of children 0–3, the stakes and stressors of family court can feel even higher. **“Some of the stuff isn’t hard, but if you get it wrong, it will delay your case by one, two, or even three years, which is very meaningful for the young children of these parents,”** explained Cramer. Having access to an attorney whom families can talk to about their case can make the situation feel less stressful. Their Family Legal Connection program provides access to legal representation via a videoconferencing platform and has already been implemented in rural Upstate New York.

LIFT is working to replicate the program for the many low-income families in New York City. **“We’re working on lots of different tools to make legal information accessible, even on mobile devices,”** explained Andrea Miller, Manager of Institutional Giving. Increased accessibility is particularly relevant for caregivers with young children in poverty who often have many constraints on their time.

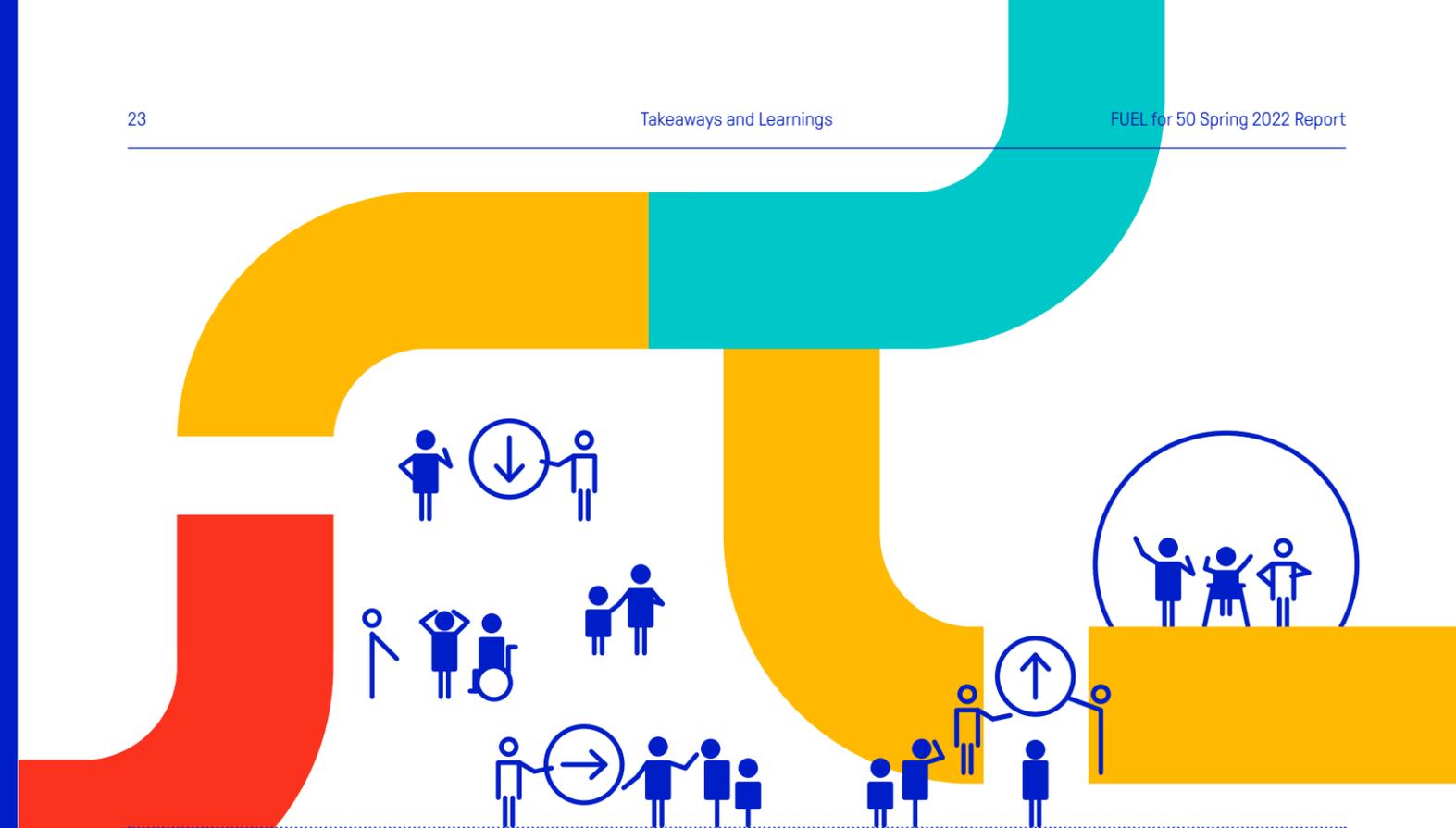
TAKEAWAY 4

Service navigation can support vulnerable families and unlock existing resources.

Particularly for families navigating the challenges of poverty, homelessness, immigration status, and English language literacy, our existing government and social services systems present tremendous barriers and unmet needs. Nearly 40% of FUEL for 50 applicants are helping caregivers navigate and access social services. Our applicant pool included programs to help caregivers enroll their children in early childhood education programs, pursue early intervention services for children demonstrating a developmental delay, and find providers for both their children's and their own health needs. These organizations are helping to leverage public dollars, which we know will be critical to any work towards solving poverty at scale.

At the FUEL for 50 awardee Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC), their KHCC Connect program ensures all family engagements start with a comprehensive assessment to determine which government and KHCC services will be most beneficial. In response to gaps identified by their in-house tool, KHCC has expanded the services they offer onsite, while maintaining relationships with partnership

organizations for any additional needed services that can be accessed via warm handoffs. This referral coordination system helps caregivers access resources like SNAP enrollment assistance, housing assistance, an onsite food pantry, parenting education, and vocational training, to take care of themselves and their families. **“We’ve put a lot of intentionality behind our approach,”** shared Margare Della, KHCC CEO. **“If we’re supposed to keep the child successful, how are we supposed to do that without providing supports for the whole family? We’ve tried to expand the support for early childhood families so that there’s this broader look at all of these interconnected pieces.”** A critical part of this support for families with young children has been providing resources for essentials such as diapers and formula. **“Emergency cash assistance support is a huge part of our work, which we’re able to provide through gift cards. If a family comes through our food pantry, but they need formula or something else, a gift card provides them flexibility and autonomy to meet their own needs,”** explained Alex Martinez, Director of Adult Services.



The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF), a FUEL for 50 applicant and Robin Hood Power Fund grantee, has learned through decades of work that early care and other social programs are often underutilized by non-native English speakers, despite the number of such programs that are available. CHCF filled this gap with their Parent Support Services, which involve wraparound support to help caregivers navigate available social services and build their own advocacy skills. **“We provide 100% of our services in Spanish and in English,”** shared Lennia Clark, Director of the Early Care & Education Institute, making CHCF services accessible for immigrant families. By educating caregivers on how to advocate for themselves within these systems, CHCF hopes to build a “train the trainer” model where caregivers who access this programming will subsequently support others. **“We’re empowering families to help them learn how to navigate for themselves and teaching them a skillset so that they can help their community, too,”** explained Alan Yu, Director of Development.

Direct services are often hard to access, and agencies do not always communicate with one another. For caregivers who often need to access education, legal, and health services for themselves and their children, community organizations are bridging gaps. This service navigation assistance is especially needed for undocumented caregivers who, in addition to challenges associated with English literacy, are often rightfully hesitant to access services for fear of deportation.



Shubhra Mishra, Kingsbridge Heights Community Center

TAKEAWAY 5

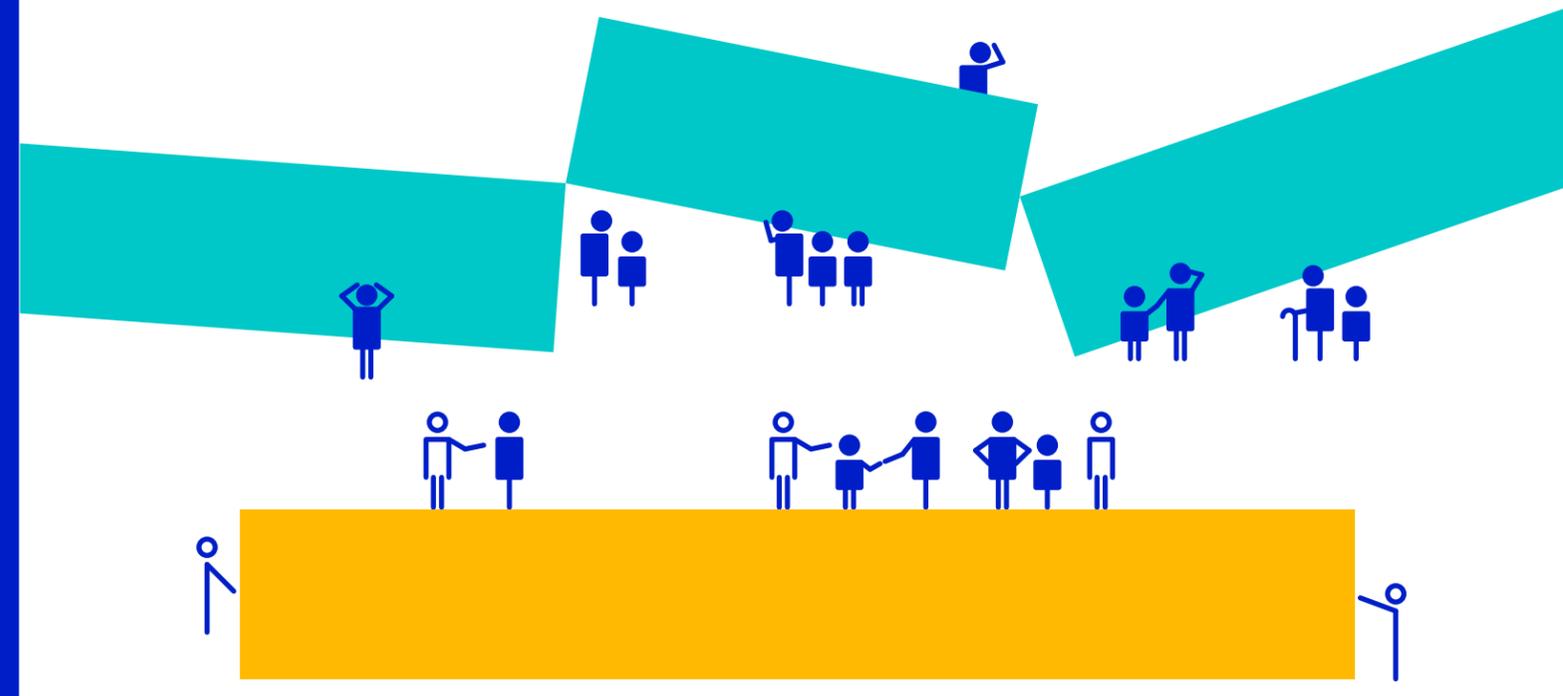
Responsive mental health support can be layered into existing programs to meet an urgent need.

At a time when all parents and caregivers face unprecedented strains and our existing health systems are stretched thin, we were not surprised to see mental health as a focus of 40% of FUEL for 50 applications. Caregivers' mental health is critical to creating an environment for learning and development, and we know that parents experiencing poverty are disproportionately affected by maternal and postpartum depression. From support managing parenting and the extreme stresses of poverty to more intensive therapeutic approaches for processing trauma, the organizations best positioned to listen and build relationships with caregivers who are struggling are finding ways to support them.

FUEL for 50 applicant Project New Yorker serves Bangladeshi immigrant women and families in Jamaica, Queens, primarily through public benefit application assistance. The organization is run by Bangladeshi women and provides critical services in languages accessible to those they serve in a trusted community context for vulnerable, often undocumented caregivers. Based on need, Project New Yorker has also begun to offer mental health workshops for caregivers.

“We provide a directory of which providers accept insurance and which don’t have copays,” explained Afsana Monir, Founder and Executive Director. They are also developing their own content specifically for caregivers to increase awareness of mental health and available treatments. **“We’re providing educational materials in plain language on what mental health is and what the benefits of accessing mental health services can be. We also provide clinical & non-clinical mental health services including support circles and individual counseling for adults,”** shared Monir. Increasing accessibility to treatment is also a high priority: **“Currently we don’t have any mental health services in South Asian languages, so we are also working on bringing more culturally appropriate mental health services to our community.”**

Chances for Children (CFC), a FUEL for 50 awardee, has been providing mental health services focused on promoting positive attachment between caregivers and their young children in the Bronx for many years. The clinicians at CFC incorporate play and strength-based approaches like



highlighting positive parent-child interactions via video to strengthen the bond between caregivers and their children. **“Many of the families we serve grapple with an immensity of psychosocial stressors, community violence, and then the pandemic. In sessions with families, recording and then playing back interactions between the parent and child brings the parent back to that unique moment with their child,”** explained Co-Executive Director Silvia Juarez-Marazzo. In addition to focusing on the caregiver-child relationship, the services at CFC also directly address caregiver mental health. **“We are often asked how we support the mental health of the mom—we sit with her feelings and welcome them all,”** Juarez-Marazzo shared. Since the pandemic began, they transitioned to providing services via telehealth and have seen attendance rates increase by nearly 20%. CFC has also worked to keep its high-quality therapies as accessible as possible for the community. **“When a family is first introduced to our program, we don’t ask for identifying information beyond name and date of birth. We are very gentle in what we ask. Our services are completely free to families and are**

provided in English and/or Spanish,” described Juarez-Marazzo.

Quality, accessible mental health services are needed now more than ever, and organizations that have already established relationships and community trust are often best positioned to introduce them with sensitivity and success. Partnerships and funding for these community-led interventions may offer a more swift and effective opportunity for addressing this growing crisis.



Project New Yorker

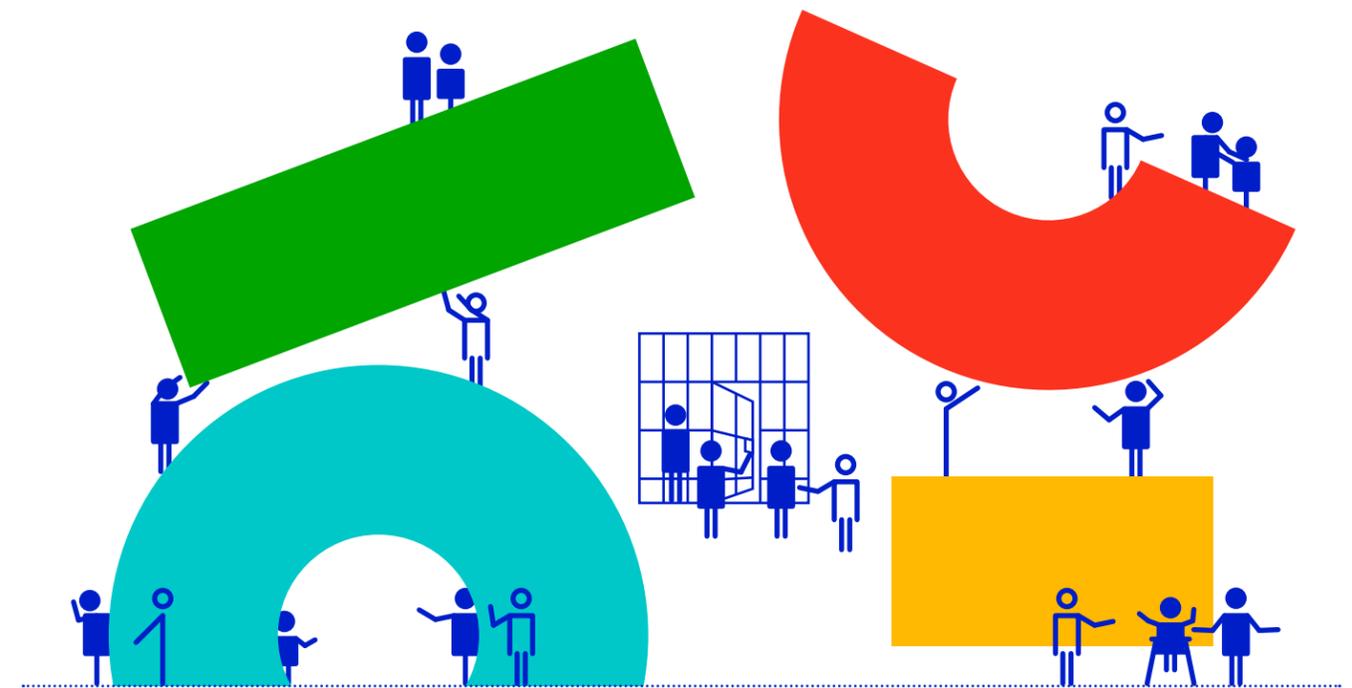
TAKEAWAY 6

Lived experience inspires responsive and equitable programs.

Again and again, FUEL for 50 applicants cited community knowledge, experience, and trust in their program design and approaches. It is clear that those with the lived experience of stressors like poverty, recent immigration, or incarceration are the experts on their own challenges and needs. Multiple FUEL for 50 applications came from organizations that were founded and led by individuals who reflect the communities they serve, and many applicants also elicited feedback on needs and programming from their clients and neighbors.

FUEL for 50 awardee Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison supports the vulnerable population of incarcerated men and women through higher education and transitional support for reentry. Integral to their work is the lived experience of incarceration amongst their team, which is made up of over 70% formerly incarcerated individuals. Their FUEL for 50 project focuses on expanding their services for incarcerated women specifically. With the support from Hudson Link around pursuing higher education during and after their incarceration, these women are able to

obtain more stable, higher paying employment and experience empowerment around their skills and capacities. **“Women who have children, who are grandmothers, can now connect with their children and grandchildren on a different level that they never knew was possible through education,”** explained Eldredge Blalock, Hudson Link Development Manager. Blalock experienced this with his own children during and following his incarceration: **“It was my education that allowed me to communicate with my children. There was no way I could understand the rigors of their schooling, understand their experience, without it,”** he shared. Hudson Link’s responsive programming provides the support incarcerated women need as they navigate their caregiver role both during and after their incarceration. **“I’ve witnessed that the reentry process is so much more difficult for women and their children,”** explained Hudson Link Executive Director Sean Pica, who is also formerly incarcerated. In addition to educational support, Hudson Link also provides business attire, resume support, and housing to meet the unique needs of those reentering society.



Domestic Workers United (DWU), a FUEL for 50 applicant, proposed to leverage the knowledge of their worker members—mostly nannies who are women of color and have been working in the care field for decades—to educate new parents about caretaking in a public forum format. This program developed naturally from workers’ experiences of trying, often unsuccessfully, to share their knowledge of childcare with caregivers for whom they worked. Christine Lewis, Secretary / Cultural Outreach Coordinator at DWU and a nanny with 32 years of experience, provided more context for the work at DWU: **“As nannies, we are everything to the parents we work for. No particular guideline of work here. We are window washers, dog-walkers, plumbers, night nurses, pre-K teachers, even decision makers. All for poverty wages.”** Eileen Condon, DWU’s pro bono grant writer, explained, **“There are stories I’ve heard, where nannies really have something to teach young parents, yet there’s hesitation to share and, if it’s shared, it’s not always heard.”** With the proximity of the workers’ experience to the leadership of DWU, this public forum concept would honor workers’ underappreciated

expertise while providing a more accessible format for a community of young parents.

One of our core objectives was to identify and elevate community-led programs already in action on the ground, and FUEL for 50 applicants gave us ample opportunities to do just that. Organizations run by individuals with the lived experience of those they serve are co-creating thoughtful programs to serve caregivers and, in turn, the children they support.

Awardees

Asiyah Women's Center

Project RECOVER

Instagram: @asiyahwomenscenter

Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)

Securing Work Permits for Asylum-Seeking Families

asylumadvocacy.org

Bangladeshi American Community Development and Youth Services (BACDYS)

The Blooming Flower Project

bacdys.org

Barbershop Books

Barbershop Books

barbershopbooks.org

Betances Health Center

Healthy Parents, Healthy Baby

betances.org

The Brave House

Supporting Immigrant Survivor Mothers with

Community and Resources

thebravehouse.com

Brooklyn Community Housing & Services

Fresh Start

bchands.org

CAMBA

Ready, Set, Go!

camba.org

Carroll Gardens Association

We Rise Nanny Training

cganyc.org

Chances for Children-NY

Babies Can't Wait

cfcny.org

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech

Paving the Way for Listening and Language Success

clarkeschools.org

Cornell University Cooperative Extension

Tree of Life Center Partnership – Strong Together

nyc.cce.cornell.edu

CounterForce

CounterForce Parent Helpline

Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation

Magic Doors / Puertas Magicas

cypresshillchildcare.org

Day One NY

Early Prevention Initiative for Children (EPIC)

dayoneny.org

East Harlem Tutorial Program

Family Engagement in Literacy

ehtp.org

FamilyCook Productions

Nibble With Willow

familycookproductions.org

Forestdale Inc.

A Window to Healing (AWTH)

forestdaleinc.org

Friendship Circle of Brooklyn

Parent Support Network

FCBrooklyn.com

Full Circle Life Enrichment Center

Full Circle R.E.S.T Program for Parents/Caregivers

fullcirclelifeny.com

Henry Street Settlement

Holistic Parent Counseling Services

henrystreet.org

Her Justice

Supporting Survivors with Children

herjustice.org

Her Village Inc.

Diaper Bank

wearehervillage.org

Homes for the Homeless

New Parents Initiative

hfhny.org

Hour Children Inc.

Hour Tots Café

hourchildren.org

Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison

Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison

hudsonlink.org

Hunts Point Alliance for Children

Family School Skills

huntspoint.org

ImmSchools

Fostering Immigrant Families' Resilience Through Family Workshops

immschools.org

Jericho Project

Family Scattered Site Supportive Housing

jerichoproject.org

Kingsbridge Heights Community Center

KHCCconnect

khcc-nyc.org

La Colmena

Mujeres Unidas

lacolmenanyc.org

Lexington School for the Deaf

Deaf Mentor Program

lexnyc.org

Life of Hope

Central Brooklyn Healthy Immigrant Families

lohnyc.org

Literacy Partners

La Fuerza de Familias Latinas

literacypartners.org

Literacy Inc.

Early Childhood Programming and Very Involved Parent (VIP) Academy

lincnyc.org

LSA Family Health Service

Parent and Child Development

littlesistersfamily.org

Lutheran Social Services of New York

Therapeutic Training at Our Sisters' Place

lssny.org

Masa, Building Resilient and Healthy Indigenous and

Immigrant Families from the Start

masany.org

Mixteca

Support Groups: Families Together

mixteca.org

New York City College of Technology Division of Continuing Education, Together Time

citytech.cuny.edu/continuinged

New York Council on Adoptable Children

Family Support Program for Children and Families Affected by HIV/AIDS

coac.org

The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Therapeutic Supervised Visitation Program

nyspcc.org

New Yorkers For Children

Emergency Grants Program Integration with Parent Supports

newyorkersforchildren.org

North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence

Parenting from Power

northbrooklyncoalition.org

Northside Center for Child Development

Early Childhood Care and Education

northsidecenter.org

Relume Foundation

Ni Abule-In the Village

relumefoundation.org

Safe Families for Children

Family Friend Program

newyorkcity.safe-families.org

Safe Horizon

Safe Way Forward (SWF)

safehorizon.org

Sheltering Arms

Reaching Parents Where They Are

shelteringarmsny.org

Vibrant Emotional Health

The Bronx and Queens Family and Youth Peer Support Service Alliances

vibrant.org

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Jamar Vailes	Megan Smith	Wendy Wilcox

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**Community-First Approaches to
Support Early Childhood**

SPRING 2022 REPORT

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