



United Way of San Antonio  
and Bexar County

# SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS IMPACT COUNCIL

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## WHITE PAPER

Version 1



# SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS WHITE PAPER

## Preamble

United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County (United Way) is a strategic, mission-driven organization with a clear goal: help all community members achieve and maintain self-sufficiency to the greatest extent possible. United Way brings value to our community by working every day to increase the organized capacity of people to care for one another.

We do this by investing in expert research and performing regular community assessments to identify the areas of greatest need and advance the best strategies to address these needs. We work with strategic partners including other funding entities, businesses, human services agencies, schools, faith-based organizations and governmental institutions to ensure the investment of community dollars is maximized to support individuals and families toward self-sufficiency.

Based on our history of investing in key issues and knowledge gained from current national level research and local community assessments, United Way has selected ready children, successful students, strong individuals and families and safety net services as areas of significant need in our community. Our investments in each of these areas will be guided by Impact Councils composed of community leaders, content experts, residents, funders and public sector representatives committed to United Way's goals.

This paper outlines the results of our research and assessment process for the Successful Students Impact Council and focuses on the efforts we must undertake to improve the educational outcomes of school-age children in San Antonio. To meet San Antonio's future workforce demands, we must raise educational attainment levels, prepare students for college entry courses and provide afterschool care. We are aware that not all populations are represented in this paper. Other populations may be addressed in future iterations as the Impact Council further explores the conditions of students in Bexar County.

The Successful Students Impact Council seeks to expand and define what it means for school-age children – specifically those in grades third through twelfth – to grow, graduate, and become successful adults. Three themes critical to successful students emerged in the research: 1) strategies that focus on students graduating ready for college and/or career, 2) strategies that focus on providing a stable environment conducive to learning and 3) strategies that focus on ensuring students have supportive adults to help them realize their academic potential. The below results are informed by Child Trend's *Integrated Student Supports*<sup>1</sup> model and Intercultural Development Research Association's *Quality School Actions Framework*<sup>23</sup> that outline the integration of influential factors, core components and supports to achieve educational outcomes. Out of this research, three result areas emerged, denoted below as "S3 Powered".

## "S3 POWERED"

### SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS IMPACT COUNCIL RESULT STATEMENTS

Result 1: Successful Students – All Bexar County children graduate ready for college and/or career ready

Result 2: Stable Communities – All Bexar County children live and grow in an environment conducive to learning

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014-07ISSPaper2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.idra.org/change-model/quality-schools-action-framework/>

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Result 3: Supportive Adults – All Bexar County children have adults in their lives prepared to support them to realize their academic potential

**Result 1: Successful Students – All Bexar County children graduate ready for college and/or career ready.**

According to a broad range of education research, certain levels of attainment at particular grade levels are predictive of future success. For instance, a student’s reading level by the completion of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is a predictor of whether a student will graduate on time. From birth to third grade, emphasis is on *learning to read*; following third grade, educational emphasis is on *reading to learn*. Therefore, a student being on grade level reading by the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is crucial. Beginning in 4th grade, students read to learn and use their skills to build content information in subjects such as math, science, problem solving and critical thinking. In fact, up to half of the printed fourth-grade curriculum is incomprehensible to students who read below their grade level.<sup>4</sup> Third grade is also the first standardized testing grade in the state of Texas. The learning loss experienced by children of poverty when school is not in session is significantly greater than the loss experienced by children of higher income brackets. Investing and supporting summer learning programs that promote reading and other subjects will aid in preventing summer learning loss.<sup>5</sup>

### National Research – Successful Students

Researchers have confirmed the link between high school graduation rates for children at different reading skill levels and with different poverty rates. Annie E. Casey Foundation reports about 16 percent of children who are not reading proficiently by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers. About 31 percent of poor African American students and 33 percent of poor Hispanic students who did not hit the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade proficiency mark failed to graduate compared to White students with poor reading skills. However, the gaps close when students master reading by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and are not living in poverty.<sup>6</sup>

In May 2017, *Building a Grad Nation Report* shows the national graduation rate has increased to 83.2 percent.<sup>7</sup> However, there is some skepticism as to whether it paints too glowing a picture as to the real disparity among the racial and ethnic groups. For example, the national African American graduation rate has increased to 74.6 percent. When compared to the much smaller Asian/Pacific Islander student population’s 90 percent graduation rate, the 15.9 percent African American student population reveals a potential equity issue.<sup>8</sup> For Latino students, the national graduation rate is 77.8 percent. (Appendix 1)

### Local Research – Successful Students

In 2008, the American Community Survey approximated 5.1 million young adults age 18-24 left the school system without a high school diploma. For the state of Texas, only 20 percent of eighth graders in 2006 graduated from college by 2017.<sup>9</sup> This is very disturbing news for the future of the Texas and San Antonio workforce in terms of skilled labor and the potential to reduce income disparity across the state and city given 36 percent of Texas jobs require a college degree. This data point is crucial to making the

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early\\_Warning\\_Full\\_Report-2010.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND\\_MG1120.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1120.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://gradnation.americaspromise.org/report/2017-building-grad-nation-report#driver-2-black-and-hispaniclatino-students>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/05/10/record-us-graduation-rate-not-seen-as.html>

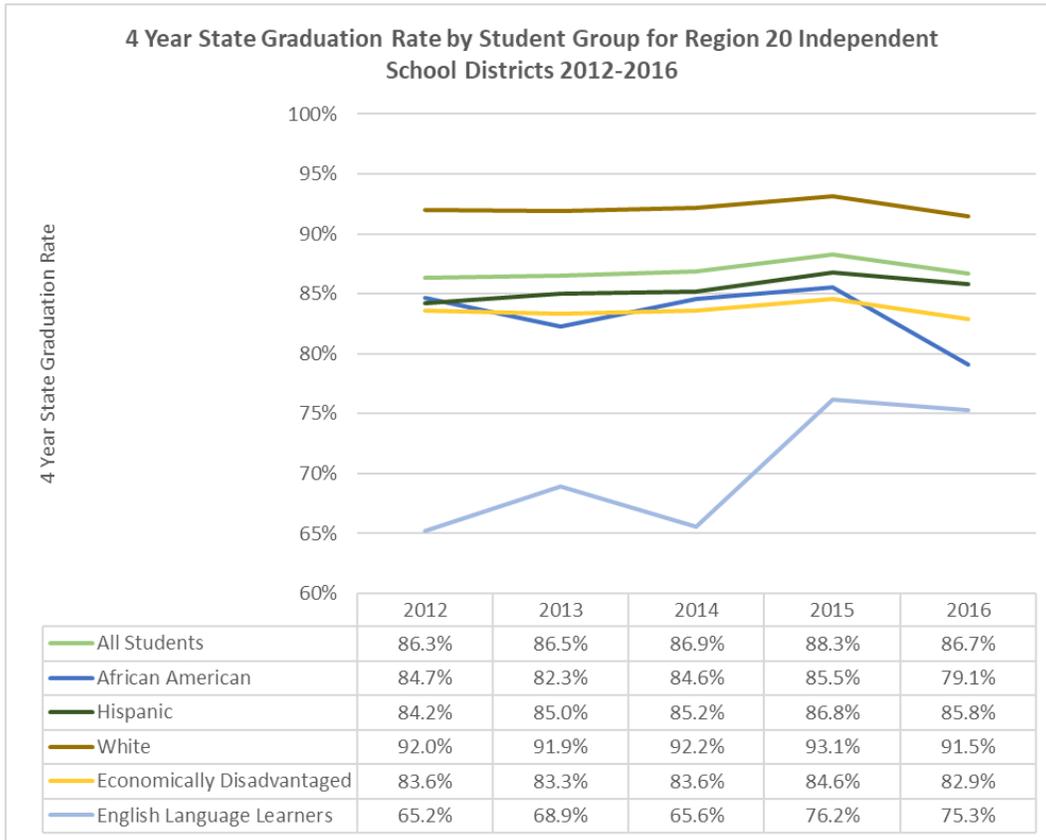
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.tribtalk.org/2017/09/22/the-texas-sized-hole-in-our-workforce/>

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case for UWSA to continue to focus on interventions that improve the educational outcomes of children especially for students residing in the most vulnerable areas of the city and county.

Table 1 summarizes the disparity among the racial and ethnic groups for all students in districts within Bexar County in the Region 20 area over a five-year period. While Bexar County graduation rates are higher than the national average, the graduation rate for all groups dropped from 2015-2016.

**Table 1**



The Texas Education Agency annually issues a performance rating for Texas districts and campuses on a scale of A-F as part of the accountability process. The process measures achievement in three domains: Student Achievement, School Progress and Closing the Gaps.<sup>10</sup> House Bill 22 (85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature) mandates TEA to redesign the rating system to search for correlations between letter grades and student demographics as well as the feasibility of incorporating indicators for extracurricular and co-curricular student activities in measuring student progress. The implementation and first reporting of the new system coincides with United Way’s strategic alignment implementation timeline of July 1, 2019.

The following indicators and strategies were selected based on the research presented above.

Indicators	Strategies
Students are reading to learn - Proficiency in 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade reading	Summer Reading Programs Reading Buddies

<sup>10</sup> <https://tea.texas.gov/2017accountabilitymanual.aspx>

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	Out of school time (OST) Texas state-mandated STAAR testing support
Students are ready for middle school – Proficiency in sixth grade reading	Sixth grade boot camp OST First Book – book distribution program
Sixth grade reading scores Students are ready for high school – seventh/eighth grade GPA	House Bill 5 career preparation OST High school boot camp STEM programming
Students are ready for high school – Proficiency in eighth grade reading	House Bill 5 career preparation First Book
Students are graduating from high school on time	Summer internship Mentoring programs STEM OST
Students are ready to enter college – as defined by the Texas Education Agency	Dual credit AP/IB credit courses Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSI)
Texas Success Initiative scores in ninth grade	In school supports

Recognizing United Way’s Ready Children and Strong Individual Families Impact Councils focus on preparing children for school and the well-being of the entire family respectively, the indicators and strategies for this particular result seek to focus on transitions from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school and high school to college and career.

### **Result 2: Stable Communities – All Bexar County children live and grow in an environment conducive to learning**

Defining how a stable environment affects a student’s likelihood of succeeding can be tricky as data is not often easy to come by and it can be heavily qualitative. However, the academic attainment of a child is heavily dependent upon the child’s environment or community as addressed in the previous section. Another Impact Council will address the financial stability of the family, but this one will seek to address the developmental environment.

The Search Institute identified 40 building blocks of healthy development for all children – commonly referred to as Developmental Assets – that help children become healthy, caring and responsible adults. Each developmental stage builds on its own set of assets. For example, for ages 12-18 years research demonstrates a focus on studying and strengthening developmental relationships.<sup>11</sup> A developmental relationship helps young people to attain the psychological and social skills essential for the developmental relationships framework focusing on five overarching elements: express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power and expand possibilities, success in education and in life.

Healthy development can take on many forms from internal factors (school climate, peer-to-peer relationships, and teacher-student relationships) to external factors (housing, drug addiction, abuse, safety).

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>

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## National Research – Stable Communities

Positive Youth Development (PYD)<sup>12</sup> is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups and families in a manner that is productive and constructive. It recognizes, utilizes and enhances young people’s strengths. PYD promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

Over time, practitioners, policymakers, funders, and researchers have determined that promoting positive asset building in youth was a critical strategy.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the youth development field began examining the role of resiliency — the protective factors in a young person's environment — and how these factors could influence a youth's ability to overcome adversity. These factors included, but were not limited to, family support and monitoring, caring adults, positive peer groups, strong sense of self, self-esteem, future aspirations and engagement in school and community activities.

## Local Research – Stable Communities

According to the 2016 Texas House Select Committee on Mental Health,<sup>14</sup> half of mental health conditions begin by age 14. Nearly 250,000 Texas children suffer from a serious emotional disturbance and approximately 50 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have an unmet need for mental health treatment. There are socio-economic factors that also prevent children from seeking help. The One in Five Minds Campaign, sponsored by Clarity Child Guidance, reports 80,000 children in Bexar County suffer from mental, emotional or behavioral problems.<sup>15</sup> For the 2016-2017 school year, the Texas Education Agency reported 46,601 school-age children in the Region 20 Education Service Center (ESC20) area have been diagnosed with a disability (see table below).<sup>16</sup>

2016-2017 Type of Primary Disability		
	Region	State
Intellectual Disabilities	43.0%	44.5%
Physical Disabilities	22.3%	21.9%
Autism	11.9%	12.5%
Behavioral Disabilities	21.8%	19.9%
Non-Categorical Early Childhood	1.1%	1.3%

Texas currently uses 13 indicators to identify students at-risk of dropping out of school. Of these 13, six are connected to the either an emotional, behavioral or social condition. <sup>17</sup> For the 20 school districts in ESC20, 247,637 students – or 52.1 percent - are at-risk. This is slightly above the state average of 50.3 percent. Excel Beyond the Bell San Antonio reports students participating in member out of school time (OST) programs have fewer disciplinary incidents supporting the need for quality and accessible after school programming. (Appendix B)

<sup>12</sup> <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

<sup>13</sup> <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.house.state.tx.us/media/pdf/committees/reports/84interim/Mental-Health-Select-Committee-Interim-Report-2016.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.1in5minds.org/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2017/static/region/region20.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/peims/standards/1314/e0919.html>

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The following indicators and strategies were selected based on the research presented above.

Indicators	Strategies
Disciplinary actions	Restorative practices
Mental health	Family supports School and program staff training
Reduce school mobility	Community gardens Civic engagement Community beautification School climate policy
Percent of at-risk students	In and out of school supports

### **Result 3: Supportive Adults – All Bexar County children have adults important in their lives prepared to support them to realize their academic potential.**

According to the 2017 Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *Race for Results*<sup>18</sup>, children and their families are more likely to thrive when they live in communities with strong social and cultural institutions, positive role models and the resources to provide safety, good schools and quality support services. Supportive adults speaks not only to the parent’s role in a child’s life, but to that of the teacher, principal, mentor, program provider, neighbor or any adult outside of the home who may play a role in shaping a particular young person’s future.

Attendance as part of the child’s assets demonstrates the strength of behavioral interventions (in support of academic achievement) and a sense of community (household mobility, supports for families, citizenship). Attendance can be assessed using three measures: average daily attendance, chronic absences (students missing 10 percent or more of school) and truancy.

#### **National Research – Supportive Adults**

*The Mentoring Effect: Young People’s Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring*,<sup>19</sup> a report commissioned by MENTOR in conjunction with the National Mentoring Partnership found a connection between a powerful mentoring effect as demonstrated by the life experiences of the young people surveyed and mentoring’s link to improved academic, social and economic prospects. This mentoring effect is growing and, if harnessed, has the potential to help meet a range of national challenges and strengthen our communities and economy. The experiences of the young people surveyed showed significant positive outcomes for those who had a mentor. At-risk young people with mentors were more likely to attend and enroll in college than their peers without mentors. They were more likely to report participating in sports and other extracurricular activities and to regularly volunteer in their communities.

#### **Local Research – Supportive Adults**

When we speak of parents as teachers, we must first distinguish it from parenting. Parenting programs tend to operate on the principle of teaching a person or persons to become better parents from a behavioral standpoint. Parents as teachers makes the parent an equal partner along with the teacher and

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.aecf.org/resources/2017-race-for-results/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.mentoring.org/program-resources/mentor-resources-and-publications/the-mentoring-effect/>

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child in advancing the child’s educational journey. Engagement of parents must begin in the early grades, be culturally relevant, interactive and sensitive to the parent’s level of education.

UWSA has spent more than a decade creating a parent network via the parent room model in 31 schools in four school districts. Officially called the Family School Community Partnership, the initiative converts classroom space into a “parent room” and serves as a hub for parents to interact with one another in a safe environment, receive leadership training and community resources, meet with teachers and access computers. Parent volunteers conduct home visits throughout the school year to strengthen relationships with school administrators in the best interest of the students, parents, faculty and community. Many of the parents who began as volunteers in the rooms have gone onto leadership roles as parent coaches and parent facilitators with the managing partner agencies. One parent who was one of the first volunteers continued to show tremendous leadership abilities and now serves as the program coordinator overseeing the managing partner agency’s program. Countless parents have earned a GED and advanced degrees and certifications all due to the skills learned volunteering in the parent rooms. The success of the parent room model was a significant factor in UWSA receiving the Eastside Promise Neighborhood grant in 2011. Seeing the value of integrating parent leaders into the school environment, in 2013, San Antonio ISD created the Parent Family Liaison (PFL) position for all of its schools. In schools where a UWSA parent room exists, the PFL and parent room coach work closely to meet the needs of the principal and act as a support for one another as well as other parents and students.

The following indicators and strategies were selected based on the research presented above.

Indicators	Strategies
Increase in parent involvement in school activities	Parent rooms PTA
Increase in parents seeing resources	Parent rooms OST providers Community colleges
School staff view parents as partners in promoting academic success and decision-makers in overall campus improvement	PTA Parent/teacher conferences Professional development
Program provider view parents as partners in promoting academic success	Professional development
Increase Average Daily Attendance	Parent engagement OST
Reduce chronic absenteeism	Intense interventions

### Acknowledgement

United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County wishes to sincerely thank our local stakeholders and nonprofit agency partners for their contributions in helping inform the Community Impact priority areas: ready children, successful students, strong individuals and families and safety net services.

United Way teams analyzed local and national data, conducted interviews with subject-matter experts, reviewed annotated bibliographies and research submitted by nonprofit agencies and community partners and studied community resources and evidence-based programs. It is important to note that in only a handful of places was disaggregated data by race and/or ethnicity provided. As we move further into this work, having these conversations will be critical to ensuring we are addressing needs that may only present themselves once data is disaggregated.

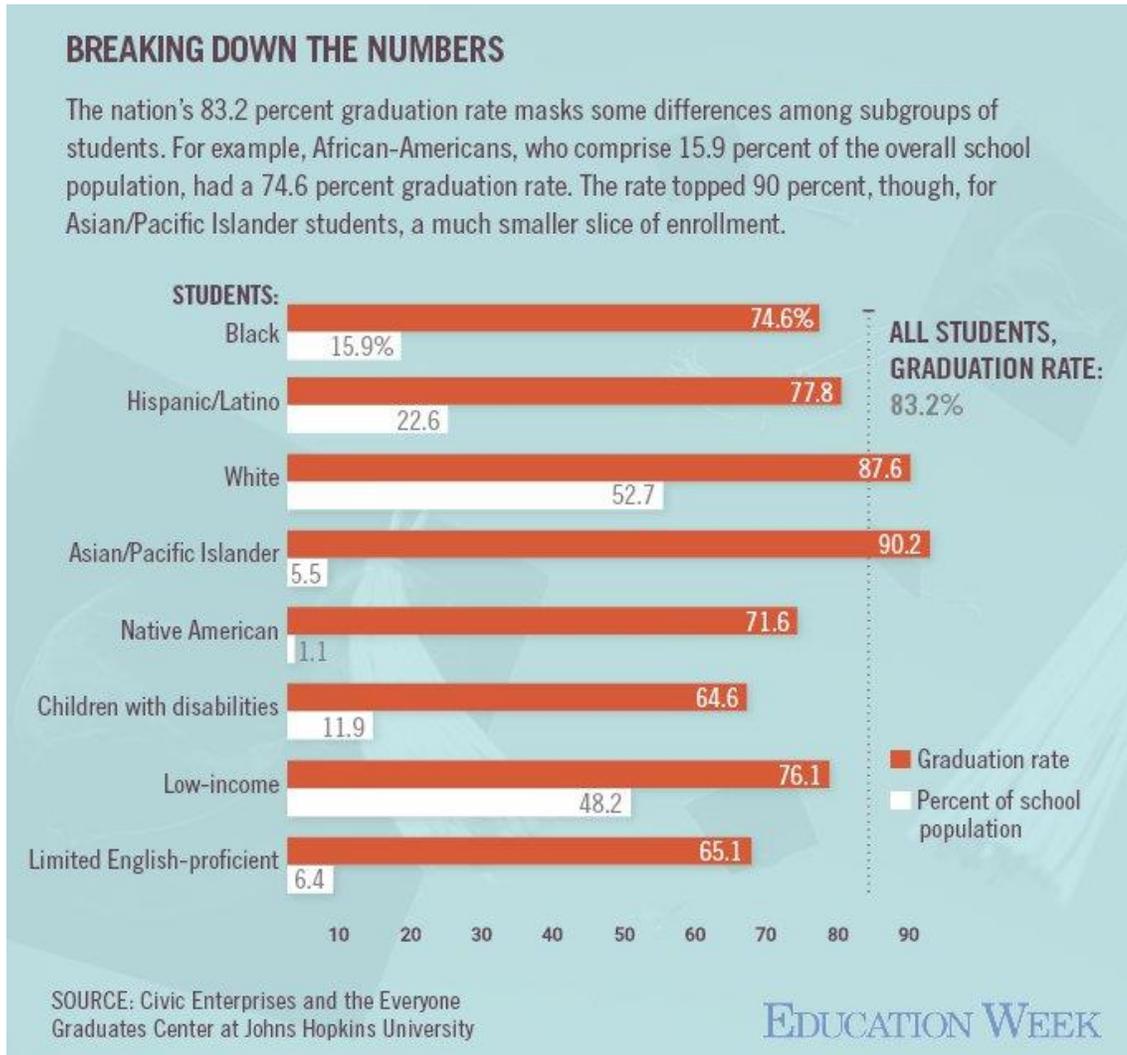
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As changes in the social, demographic, economic and environmental landscape influence changes in the well-being of a community, United Way's business model and funding priorities strategically shift to effectively drive change with limited resources. By investing in a streamlined set of priorities that focus on those groups with the greatest needs, United Way will continue to bring the community together to achieve meaningful and measurable results that help others achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

United Way's work is and remains, by design, iterative and is intended to be informed by and responsive to community conditions to inspire the most good and create the most change.

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## Appendix 1



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## Appendix B



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