

Our Children, Our Families Council

Summary of the San Francisco Beacon Steering Committee

(Last updated 5/14/15)

Goals of the Effort

The San Francisco Beacon Steering Committee (BSC) is an advisory board initially created to bring the Beacon model from New York City to San Francisco in 1994. Now, the BSC is the main governing body of the San Francisco Beacon Initiative (SFBI) and facilitates collaboration between SFBI's joint funders and community partners. The BSC sets the overall mission, vision, values, principles, strategic directions, and policies of the Initiative. The BSC is responsible for the quality of the Beacon Centers and works to build a unified voice, foster collaboration, and provide leadership in the broader fields of youth and community development. In 2012, with 8 Beacon Centers already in operation throughout San Francisco, the BSC set five new strategic priorities for the next five years which a focus on becoming a more external-facing organization.

These priorities are:

1. Sustain a foundation of strong, connected, neighborhood Beacon Centers that remain responsive to their local low-income communities while they also implement a shared Beacon brand and recognizable core characteristics. Continue to innovate, demonstrate and adopt best practices at local sites.
2. Establish the San Francisco Beacon Initiative (SFBI) as an active and known systems change policy advocate and collaborative partner at the city, state, and national levels. Move multiple public organizations into different, synergistic relationships with one another to maximize limited resources.
3. Increase the influence of SFBI's comprehensive youth and community development brand and model. Package the Beacon model for scaled up investment and implementation across the current Beacons and further afield in schools across the City and nationally.
4. Secure SFBI's position as an integral education system partner with DCYF, SFUSD, and Principals and collaborate with them to advance academic achievement and leverage SFBI's infrastructure to implement and scale up new education initiatives. Position and align SFBI with SFUSD's Community Schools and Wellness initiatives.
5. Develop high quality professionals skilled at a comprehensive youth and community development approach, both in the Beacon system and in the larger field.

The mission of the San Francisco Beacon Initiative, more broadly, is "to transform public schools into youth, family, and community centers. Drawing on the existing strengths of our communities, Beacon Centers are committed to a cohesive, comprehensive, and collaborative approach that creates pathways to lifelong learning."

Focal Population of the Effort

The SF Beacon Initiative focuses first and foremost on providing programming and a safe environment for school-aged youth (elementary, middle, & high school students) in eight neighborhoods. Because the SFBI also uses public school sites as hubs for programming for families and community members, the initiative also targets parents and other adults in these target communities.

Impact

Since convening in 1994, the Steering Committee has achieved a number of successes. First and foremost, they were successful in bringing the Beacon Model from NYC to SF, and there are now 8 Beacon Centers operating across the city. In addition, a new Beacon Center will be opening at Willie Brown Middle School in the fall of 2015, also a testament to

the work of the Steering Committee advocating for the expansion of this model. Currently, the centers collectively serve 10,000 children and adults each year, and according to the most recent independent evaluation from 2012, consistent participation at a Beacon Center had a positive impact on student attendance and in academic gains in some sub-groups. The success of the Beacon Model in San Francisco is a testament to the committed stakeholders on the Beacon Steering Committee.

Challenges

Pam Pradachith-Demler, the Executive Director of the SFBI, which advises the Steering Committee and brokers partnerships on behalf of the Beacon Centers, identifies the Beacon model's lack of scalability as the biggest challenge. Because the model entails comprehensive programming at school sites, it is expensive and therefore couldn't be reasonably scaled to all the city's schools. She and the members of the Steering Committee are continuing to explore ways to make aspects of the Beacon model scalable at more school sites.

Origins of the Effort

The San Francisco Beacon Steering Committee (BSC) began as a group of individuals who were inspired by the idea of schools serving as community centers after school hours and who therefore collaborated to bring the Beacon model from NYC to San Francisco in 1994. In 1996, the first Beacon Center opened in San Francisco and seven more have opened since then, with a ninth center coming soon. Strategic Priorities were developed in 2012 through interviews with Steering Committee members and key stakeholders, focus groups, and a strategic leadership review process. The Steering Committee's Bylaws have evolved with the organization over time and are periodically updated through a review process.

Leading the Effort

While the Chairperson of the BSC is Maria Su, the Director of the SF Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (DCYF), the SFBI employs three full-time staff (funded by public/private partners) to shape Steering Committee priorities, plan the meetings and retreats, and broker partnerships. Since 2013, the Pam Pradachith-Demler has served as the Executive Director of the SFBI and should be considered the lead contact for the BSC and the SFBI more broadly.

Members of the Effort

The SF Beacon Initiative is a public-private partnership that includes DCYF, SFUSD, community organization, and local foundations, led by the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. Oversight for the Initiative is provided by the BSC, which includes representatives of each stakeholder group, 15 in total:

Maria Su (Chairperson): Director, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families

Lisa Villarreal: Program Officer, the San Francisco Foundation

Jora Atienza Washington: Beacon Director, North Beach-Chinatown Beacon Center at Francisco Middle School

Kevin Truitt: Associate Superintendent, SFUSD

Sherrice Dorsey: Manager for Younger Youth K-8, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families

Michelle Cusano: Beacon Director, Richmond Village Beacon Center at Washington High School

Theresa Garcia: Program Director of Education Equity, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

Curt Yagi: Executive Director, Real Options for City Kids

Mele Lau-Smith: Executive Director of School Partnerships, SFUSD

Ed Center: Vice President of Education, United Way of the Bay Area

Takija Gardner: Executive Director, Bayview Hunter's Point YMCA

Jeannie Pon: Assistant Superintendent, LEAD – Middle Schools Division, SFUSD

Ericka Lovrin: Principal, Washington High School

Dante Calloway: Assistant Site Coordinator, OMI/Excelsior Beacon Center

Structure of the Effort

The BSC convenes approximately every other month, six times per year. One of these meetings is a retreat, while the other five are traditional meetings. At any given meeting, approximately 70% of the Steering Committee members are

in attendance. In between meetings, communication takes place through email, phone calls, or in-person meetings when necessary.

The Role of Data

The SFBI staff and BSC use data to evaluate their progress in strategic priorities. The most recent comprehensive evaluation of the SFBI utilized attendance and achievement data from SFUSD, a youth survey, a parent survey, and an interview tool for all Beacon Center Directors and Principals at the various Beacon Center school sites. Moreover, in 2015, the SFBI began using the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality's assessment tool to measure and improve the quality of Beacon programs.

Related Documents

- San Francisco Beacon Initiative – Steering Committee Members, 2013-2016
- The San Francisco Beacon Initiative Steering Committee BYLAWS (Approved 2.25.11)
- SFBI Collaborative Leadership Roles & Responsibilities Handout (April 3, 2012)
- SFBI website < <http://sfbeacon.org/>>, which includes a link to the most recent evaluation of the program from 2012 < <http://sfbeacon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2011-12-SFBI-Evaluation-Initiative-Level-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>>