

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS)

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong is a ten-year initiative focused on creating universal access to high-quality early learning opportunities and the promotion of healthy development for young children 0-5.

Background

In 2013, assessment results showed that only 40% of OUSD kindergarteners were ready for school. Of particular concern to Oakland is the racial and ethnic disparity in outcomes; less than half of students of color enter school with the early literacy skills associated with later literacy, compared to 75% of their White counterparts. Preschool early literacy skills are predictive of both 3rd grade reading skills and high school graduation rates. The OSSS collaborative is committed to improving these outcomes so that all of Oakland's young residents have the opportunity to succeed.

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS)

OSSS was created to develop a citywide integrated, quality early childhood system. It is one of three place-based efforts in the ten year Packard Foundation Starting Smart and Strong Initiative. OSSS is an active collaborative of 100 stakeholders who share the overarching long-term goal to create universal access to high-quality experiences that promote healthy child development and that result in kindergarten-ready children, regardless of race or family income level. OSSS is focused on systems changes across Oakland that will have impacts over time. The following four pillars guide OSSS:

- Improve quality and promote innovation in **formal early childhood education** settings, including professional development for early childhood educators.
- Support quality and improve access to resources in the **informal caregiving** realm, including family, friend and neighbor care and in community settings such as family resource centers, play groups or libraries.
- Increase access to **screening and assessment** efforts for early identification and support of health or developmental concerns, delays and disabilities.
- Using data, research and innovation, test new concepts and **bring effective practices to scale.**

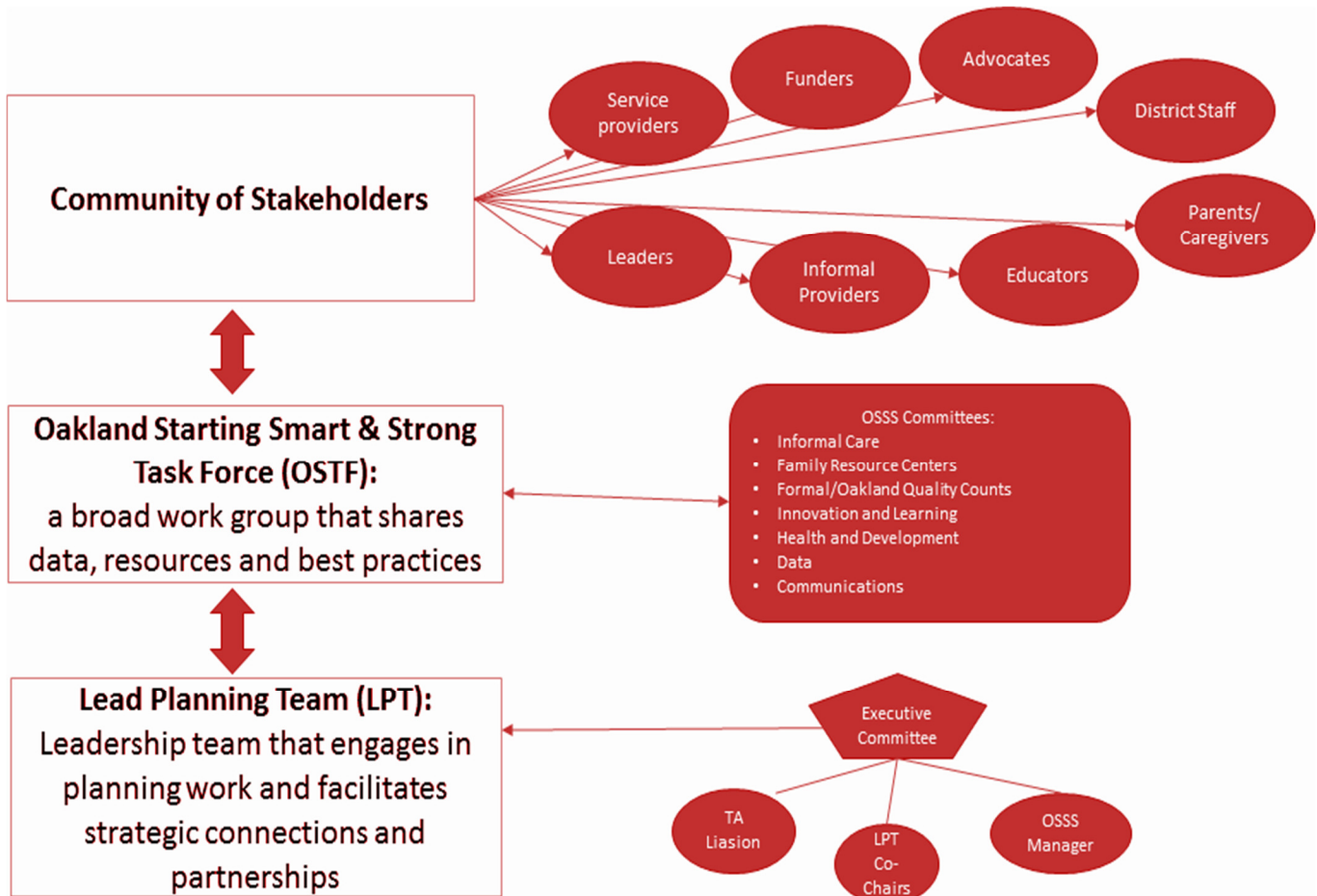
VISION - OSSSI envisions a high-quality early childhood system that every child has what they need to enter kindergarten healthy and engaged in learning.

This system is guided by 10 key principles:

1. **Equitable:** Giving all children what they need to be kindergarten ready.
2. **Holistic:** Taking the whole-child approach that considers various strengths and needs of children.
3. **High Quality:** Regardless of care setting or provider type, informal or formal, children are in high-quality, safe, clean and accessible learning environments.
4. **Supportive of Practitioners, Caregivers and Families:** Offers streamlined supports for teachers, caregivers, parents and families.
5. **Continuum of Coordinated Care:** Mindful of seamless transitions across agencies and care types.
6. **Relationships:** Places adult-child relationships at the center.
7. **Family Centered:** Offers family-driven, culturally responsive and language appropriate services.
8. **Maximizing Resources:** Leaving no dollar behind.
9. **Data Driven:** Applying a research- and evidence-based approach.
10. **Unified:** Vision is shared by all ECE stakeholders in Oakland and driven by their effective collaboration.

The Collaboration

OSSS represents multiple and diverse subsectors within Oakland’s early childhood community. With over 100 members, the Task Force (OSTF), which meets quarterly, includes funders, advocates, service providers, educators, parent leaders and administrators from a variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations. OSTF members engage in a variety of activities including participating in Task Force meetings; sharing data, reports, resources, and best practices; contributing to fund development efforts; and providing technical assistance in their areas of expertise. An OSSS Lead Planning Team (LPT) meets monthly to guide this effort. The LPT provides updates to the large OSTF on the work of established committees and on the progress of the overarching Work Plan. Currently, there are seven OSSS committees: Informal Care, Family Resource Centers, Healthy Development, Formal Care, Innovation and Learning, Data and Communications. The Oakland Public Education Fund serves as the OSSS Fiscal Agent.



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