

The Mimi and Peter Haas Fund

Model Centers Capacity-building Initiative San Francisco, California

Sponsoring Organization

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Service Delivery Area

City and County of San Francisco

Type of Organization

For over 25 years, the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund has supported programs that provide high quality early childhood education to low-income children in San Francisco through a mix of Trustee and staff-generated grant making activities.

Summary of Approach

The Initiative offers training and technical assistance through a shared consulting model to build the individual and collective organizational capacity of Model Centers – a cohort of five early childhood education agencies that serve primarily low-income children and families in the city and county of San Francisco.

Type of Approach:

Shared capacity-building services.

Services Provided:

1. Organizational assessment;
2. Group training based on mutually shared organizational capacity-building priorities; and
3. Direct, one-on-one technical assistance and support.

Narrative describing services provided:

The Model Centers Initiative is a cohort of five high quality early childhood education centers that serve primarily low-income children and families in the city and county of San Francisco. The Initiative is designed to support their organizational capacity.

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The Six Areas of Excellence

The Mimi and Peter Haas Fund developed the Six Areas of Excellence that constitute the organizational framework for the Model Centers Initiative. This framework provides a common language and vision for the Model Centers, in addition to providing a starting point for organizational development. The Six Areas of Excellence are:

1. Governance and Leadership,
2. Professional Development,
3. Programs and Curriculum,
4. Learning Environment,
5. Family, Partners and Community, and
6. Financial Resources and Administrative Systems.

Capacity-building Initiative

The Model Centers are high quality early childhood education programs committed to the optimal development and school readiness of children ages 0-5. However, their impact is often limited by the challenges of running an effective organization, e.g. challenges associated with finances, administration, leadership, staffing, management, communication, and technology. The Capacity-building Initiative is designed to overcome the barriers that limit the individual organization's effectiveness by identifying the strengths and areas for improvement of each agency and using this information to address individual as well as collective challenges.

Participating Model Centers understand that their organizations pass through developmental stages and that one organization may be at a different stage of development than another in any one of the target areas of excellence. The Initiative is designed to 'level the playing field' among Model Centers. This is accomplished through the provision of training and technical assistance tailored to each center's stage of development and specific capacity-building needs and priorities. The initial effort is focused on strengthening internal management capabilities in the area of Financial Resources and Administrative Systems.

Capacity-building Services

The capacity-building services occur in the context of strong, meaningful and long-term relationships with the individuals, organizations and communities served. The services include three key components:

- 1. Organizational Assessment.** A participatory and in-depth assessment of organizational strengths and challenges that provides a baseline of knowledge and understanding for each center. The assessment typically takes the form of a series of discussions with staff guided by a tool called the Capacity Self-Assessment Tool. The Initiative will use this initial assessment to guide and develop a plan for the highest priority training and technical assistance needs of each center and to further each center's organizational development.
- 2. Group training based on mutually shared organizational capacity-building**

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priorities. The training component provides opportunities for specific organizational knowledge and skill development. Trainings are targeted, hands-on, interactive, and create a dynamic learning environment in which information and skills are shared, practiced and reinforced.

- 3. Direct, one-on-one technical assistance and support.** One-on-one technical assistance represents the main focus of the approach. Sessions are designed to be as responsive as possible to specific identified challenges and to deepen the learning initiated through the training series. Participants develop learning objectives and technical assistance plans to further enhance learning opportunities.

Staff at Network Coordinator or “Umbrella” Organization

N/A

Typical Staff in local sites

Providers have the typical range of teaching and administrative staff in addition to having enrollment specialists, janitorial staff, facilities staff, and drivers.

Date Program/Alliance Began

October 2009

Funding

Foundation grant

Participating Providers

The network currently includes five early childhood education providers. Collectively they serve 350 children ages 0-5 with a total staff of approximately 100 administrative and teaching positions. All sites are funded through the California Department of Education and all sites participate in the local First 5 San Francisco Preschool for All Initiative. Four out of five providers are part of multi-site agencies. One provider is NAEYC accredited. City departments including First 5 San Francisco, the Department of Children, Youth and their Families (DCYF), and the San Francisco Human Services Agency (HSA) are design partners and potential funding partners for possible city-wide replication and implementation.

Population served

The agencies serve a diverse group of families – primarily low-income families many, of whom are receiving public child care subsidies.