
Best Start LA Pilot Community Evaluation Case Study Report 2

Implementing Best Start LA: Momentum Grows in *Metro LA*

Prepared for: First 5 LA



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For more information about First 5 LA and its initiatives, go to <http://www.first5la.org>. For more information about Best Start LA, go to <http://www.beststartla.org>.

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Executive Summary

Best Start LA (BSLA) in *Metro LA* has made good progress during its second year of implementation—the investment has gained momentum and its services have become more firmly established in the downtown Los Angeles pilot community. Home visiting through *Welcome Baby!* has emerged as a very strong intervention that could serve as a model throughout Los Angeles County. Community strategies have begun through the funding of a large number of “first step” contracts with a variety of local agencies. And systems-level work, while somewhat disconnected from the *Metro LA* pilot community itself, appears to be laying the groundwork for important changes that could make Los Angeles communities more family-friendly for parents with young children.

These are the primary findings from the second case study conducted by the Urban Institute under its evaluation of BSLA in the *Metro LA* pilot community. Under contract with First 5 Los Angeles (F5LA), the Institute and its partner—the University of California, Los Angeles—are conducting a broad range of evaluation activities over the course of the six-year study, including annual case studies of implementation; focus groups with home visiting clients, home visiting staff, and community stakeholders; a longitudinal household survey of parents; and analysis of secondary data to monitor community change.

Key Findings

As described in the evaluation’s first case study, BSLA is composed of multiple interwoven strategies designed to strengthen both the capacity of families to raise children and the capacity of communities and broader systems to support families (Hill, Benatar, Adams, and Sandstrom 2011). While BSLA will ultimately be implemented in 14 communities across Los Angeles County, F5LA launched the model first, as a pilot, in a seven-square-mile neighborhood designated as *Metro LA*. F5LA has contracted with a variety of community-based organizations and service providers in *Metro LA* to implement the following core strategies:

- ***Welcome Baby! Home Visiting:*** This family-level activity brings home visitors to visit families prenatally, at birth, and postpartum.
- ***Community Mobilization and Place-Based Strategies:*** This community-level activity aims to mobilize community members and facilitate their identification of community needs and of strategies and services to address those needs.
- ***Systems Change Activities:*** Investments at the systems level promote the development of family-friendly services, policies, and systems at the community and county levels.

Based on analysis of information collected through interviews with over 30 key informants during a site visit conducted in April 2011, we provide the following key findings:

- ***Welcome Baby! home visiting provides a strong and important foundation for Best Start LA in Metro LA.*** Though the intervention has struggled with certain implementation challenges—including maternal outreach and retention—it has worked hard to address these issues, while fine-tuning and strengthening its protocol to better meet the needs of high-risk mothers, infants, and their families. Maternal and Child Health Access (MCH Access) deserves recognition for its adaptability and professionalism; *Welcome Baby!* nurses and parent coaches have now served over 1,000 clients and show every indication that they will continue to expand their efforts to more needy families.
- ***First 5 LA would be well served by deploying the Welcome Baby! model in the 13 new BSLA communities.*** The home visiting component of BSLA, as implemented by MCH Access, has already shown itself to be a well-designed, adaptable, and highly valued service for mothers with new infants. As such, it represents the most tangible component of the BSLA investment. This distinguishes it from other parts of the BSLA model (such as community mobilization), which are more conceptual and less concrete, and thus more challenging to explain to community members and other stakeholders. A *Welcome Baby!* home visiting component in the additional 13 communities identified in F5LA’s new strategic plan could similarly ground the efforts of BSLA and provide community members with a similarly tangible benefit. To build a stronger BSLA “brand” identity, F5LA should consider requiring other communities to adopt the same (or at least a similar) model, and to employ the *Welcome Baby!* moniker.
- ***While few tangible changes were observed in Metro LA, Para Los Niños appears to be more on track, well engaged with the community, and facilitating positive movement.*** As discussed in this report, Para Los Niños (PLN) has moved past initial setbacks, stabilized and improved its staffing, and helped its Community Guidance Body (CGB) and task forces make progress. The organization built on its Year 1 lesson regarding parent involvement, conducted additional parent engagement events, and supported the placement of parents in leadership positions. Parents’ priorities for community improvement appear to be driving planning agendas, a situation that is well supported by other stakeholders.
- ***The “mini grant” process, while imperfect, has succeeded in getting the community to take action and put community strategies in place.*** Faced with a difficult challenge of what to do with unspent monies, F5LA and PLN responded creatively by devising a process that effectively, albeit hurriedly, pushed nearly a half-million dollars out the door in support of community projects. This sudden development, after two years of process that was not clearly leading to action, was universally described as very positive and promising. Though not implemented at the time of our visit, these projects appear to be

well distributed across *Metro LA*, focused on BSLA goals, and appropriately reflective of parents' primary concerns. It will be important to see how these projects are implemented and whether they contribute to an overall improved sense of community during Year 3 implementation. Conversely, it will be critical to assess whether the hurried nature of project development undermines in any way their success. Questions for the evaluation going forward include whether projects were well conceived to begin with, well executed as contracts, and able to effect sustainable change. Importantly, F5LA has already begun planning for a similar "first step" process in the 13 new BSLA communities, and is framing it as a more deliberative, several-month process. This seems wise and should help these communities make tangible progress more quickly, but also more pragmatically.

- ***Metro LA's Community Guidance Body is showing promise and potential for strong leadership.*** Building on findings from this evaluation's focus groups (Hill and Adams 2011), our Year 2 case study observes that *Metro LA's* CGB is composed of a dedicated, creative, and cooperative group of individuals representing a broad swath of the community. Its decision to make a parent the chair of its Executive Committee has set an important tone. The group has increasingly asserted its leadership and independence, and this has allowed PLN to naturally shift its role to that of a neutral convener, which both PLN and community members seem to embrace. The benefits of the CGB's spirit of inclusiveness and collaboration appeared to outweigh any negatives associated with its processes for deliberation and decision making, which were described as slow and very time consuming. It will be interesting to watch this group evolve in the coming year and observe the extent to which it can build on the actions set in motion by the mini grant process.
- ***Systems-level investments, while making important progress, are falling short of becoming fully integrated with other components of BSLA.*** As described in this report, each of the systems-level contractors has continued to perform important work, and communication among and between the various contractors (at all three levels) appears to have marginally improved. Yet systems-level efforts for some of the contractors still appear somewhat disconnected from the child-, family-, and community-level components of the Best Start investment, perhaps simply reflecting the very different kinds of work with which they're involved. Zero to Three, for example, is poised to implement its train-the-trainer model in *Metro LA*, yet PLN does not appear to have prioritized the need for advancing the workforce development goals of the investment. Similarly, while Parents Anonymous has completed its information needs assessment/environmental scan, the actual creation of an integrated information system seems well off in the future, and contractors involved with other components of BSLA appeared to be only peripherally aware of the work of Parents Anonymous. Overall,

therefore, while the silos identified in our Year 1 case study appear to be less formidable, they do still seem to exist between the systems-level efforts and the rest of BSLA.

- ***The BSLA concept and identity has been slow to take hold.*** In contrast to other systems-level contractors, Fenton Communications’ products have been applied at all levels of the investment; the group has worked closely to support community events in *Metro LA* and with *Welcome Baby!* to design a logo and brochure for the program, and it continues to support F5LA, system wide, in its promotion and messaging for BSLA. Yet the actual concept and broad goals of BSLA remain somewhat elusive for some. According to key informants we interviewed, the BSLA “brand” has not yet been well established in *Metro LA*. What’s more, some expressed concern that BSLA is not well associated or connected with F5LA, an observation that is troubling to the agency that has invested so much time and so many resources in the place-based effort. Fenton Communications appears, however, to be the right firm for the job and should be able to continue its effective messaging and marketing efforts in support of First 5 LA and Best Start LA.

In summary, Best Start LA in the *Metro LA* pilot community has made good progress during Year 2 and appears to be gaining momentum in its implementation. It is hoped that this detailed analysis of implementation is helpful to First 5 LA officials and community stakeholders in *Metro LA*—as they continue their work—as well as in the 13 new Best Start communities that will launch similarly ambitious efforts.

I. Introduction

Best Start LA (BSLA) is a place-based community investment that aims to improve the health, wellbeing, and development of children, ages 5 and under, and their parents. Initially supported by a \$125 million allocation by First 5 LA (F5LA)—a child advocacy organization launched after the 1998 passage of Proposition 10 (the California Children and Families Act)—the investment has grown and is now targeting a total of 14 communities across Los Angeles County.

BSLA works to affect change at three levels—child and family, community, and systems—and thus includes multiple, interwoven strategies designed to strengthen both the capacity of families to raise children and the capacity of communities and broader systems to support families. Originally, BSLA set out to improve 10 core outcomes, including 4 related to families, 3 related to communities, and 3 related to systems and policies that support families with children. During 2009, however, F5LA developed a new strategic plan that, among other things,¹ streamlined the outcome objectives of BSLA. Today, the investment aims to achieve four outcomes for children—specifically, that they are:

- Born healthy;
- Maintain healthy weight;
- Protected from abuse and neglect; and
- Ready to learn upon enrollment in kindergarten.

While BSLA will ultimately be implemented in 14 Los Angeles County communities, the initiative was first launched in 2009 in a pilot community referred to as *Metro LA*. The *Metro LA* area encompasses parts of four different downtown Los Angeles neighborhoods—Pico-Union, Koreatown, the Byzantine Latino Quarter, and South L.A. (Figure 1). F5LA’s intent is to use lessons from implementation of BSLA in *Metro LA* to inform the future scaling up of BSLA in the 13 additional communities.

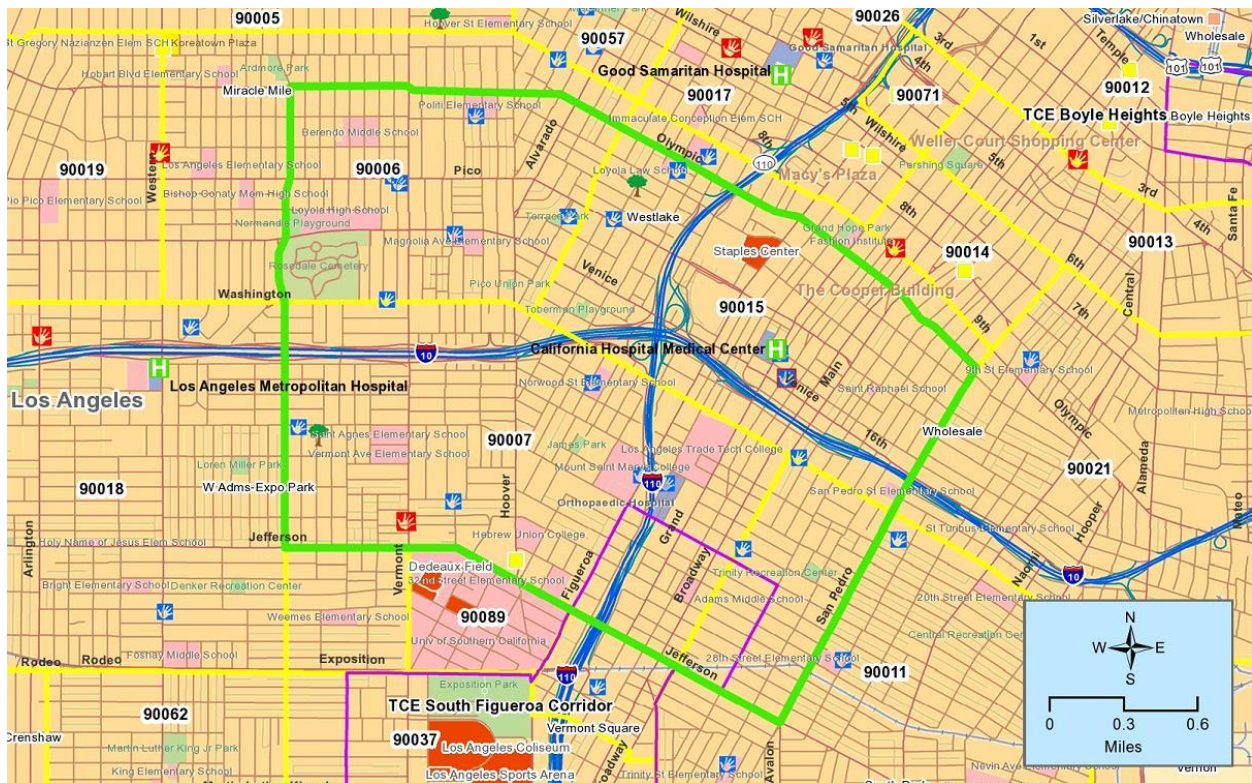
To achieve its goals, F5LA has contracted with a variety of community-based organizations and service providers in the pilot community to implement the following core strategies:

- ***Home visiting:*** This family-level activity brings nurses, college-educated parent coaches, and paraprofessionals to visit families in the home prenatally, at birth, and postpartum to provide breastfeeding support, guidance on infant health and development, and referrals to needed resources and services.

¹ First 5 LA’s 2009 Strategic Plan for Best Start LA also expanded the target group of children from its original zero to 3 focus to include four and five year-olds.

- **Community Mobilization and Place-Based Strategies:** This community-level activity empowers a community-based “lead entity,” supported by Community Based Action Research methods, to mobilize community members and facilitate identification of needs in their neighborhoods, and then to initiate strategies and services to address those needs.
- **Systems Change Activities:** Investments at the system level promote the development of family-friendly services, policies, and systems at the community and county levels.

Figure 1: Map of Metro LA Pilot Community



This report was developed as part of the BSLA Pilot Community Evaluation under a six-year contract between F5LA and the Urban Institute. The evaluation was launched in 2009 to document and assess the implementation and impacts of the program. The Institute and its partner—the University of California, Los Angeles—are conducting a broad range of evaluation activities over the life of the contract, including a longitudinal household survey of parents, focus groups with families and community members in *Metro LA*, and analysis of community indicators from a variety of secondary data sources. In addition, the evaluation includes annual case studies of implementation of BSLA in *Metro LA*; this report summarizes the findings from

our second case study and builds on the lessons learned presented in the first case study (Hill et al. 2011).

II. Methods

To gather information for this second case study of BSLA implementation in *Metro LA*, researchers from the Urban Institute conducted a three-day site visit to Los Angeles in April 2011 and held one- to two-hour interviews with over 30 informants. Key informants included F5LA staff as well as agency staff and leadership from each of the BSLA partner contractors. All interviews with key informants were conducted by evaluation staff using structured protocols tailored to each key informant category. Before starting all interviews, key informants were told that their participation was voluntary, that they didn't have to answer any questions they weren't comfortable answering, and that they would not be quoted without their permission; all informants consented to these ground rules before interviews began. (A list of informants by category is included in Appendix 1.)

Based on information and insights gathered from our interviews, this report describes BSLA implementation efforts in the *Metro LA* community, beginning with activities targeting children and families, followed by efforts aimed at improving outcomes at the community and systems levels. Much of the discussion is organized around the large number of agencies and service providers involved in BSLA. For each of these contractors, we provide a recap of their scopes of work, responsibilities, and initial implementation activities in 2009 and early 2010, followed by a more detailed description of activities they have engaged in over the past year. We then assess the contractors' continued progress in achieving BSLA objectives, as well as any challenges they have faced during the implementation process. This report concludes with a discussion of the cross-cutting lessons that continue to emerge from *Metro LA*, lessons that should inform F5LA as well as stakeholders in the 13 additional communities preparing to launch their local BSLA initiatives

III. Findings – Best Start LA Taking Hold in *Metro LA*

As discussed above, the BSLA model encompasses a broad range of strategies designed to effect change at the child and family, community, and system levels. Strategies are being carried out by a large number of organizations with whom F5LA has contracted, described by this evaluation's Year 1 Case Study as a "constellation" of services to engage with families and community organizations, and to facilitate systems improvement (Hill et al. 2011). The remainder of this section summarizes our findings related to ongoing implementation of BSLA in *Metro LA*, addressing, in turn, child and family investments, community investments, and systems investments.

A. Child and Family Investments

There are two organizations involved with BSLA's home visiting strategy in *Metro LA*—Maternal and Child Health Access (MCH Access) and the California Hospital Medical Center (CHMC). CHMC is the designated birthing hospital for the *Metro LA* community, and MCH Access is a community-based organization located in downtown Los Angeles that, under a subcontract with CHMC, is leading the home visiting component of BSLA, called *Welcome Baby!*

Welcome Baby! is a free, voluntary family engagement program offered to all women who give birth at CHMC and live within a five-mile radius of the hospital. The home visiting program focuses on education and support for pregnant women and mothers of newborns. Women can be recruited into the program prenatally (by parent coaches from MCH Access) or just after giving birth before discharge from the hospital (by hospital liaisons at CHMC). The home visiting protocol used by *Welcome Baby!* comprises up to three prenatal contacts, a hospital visit, a nurse home visit within 72 hours of discharge, and up to three postpartum home visits.

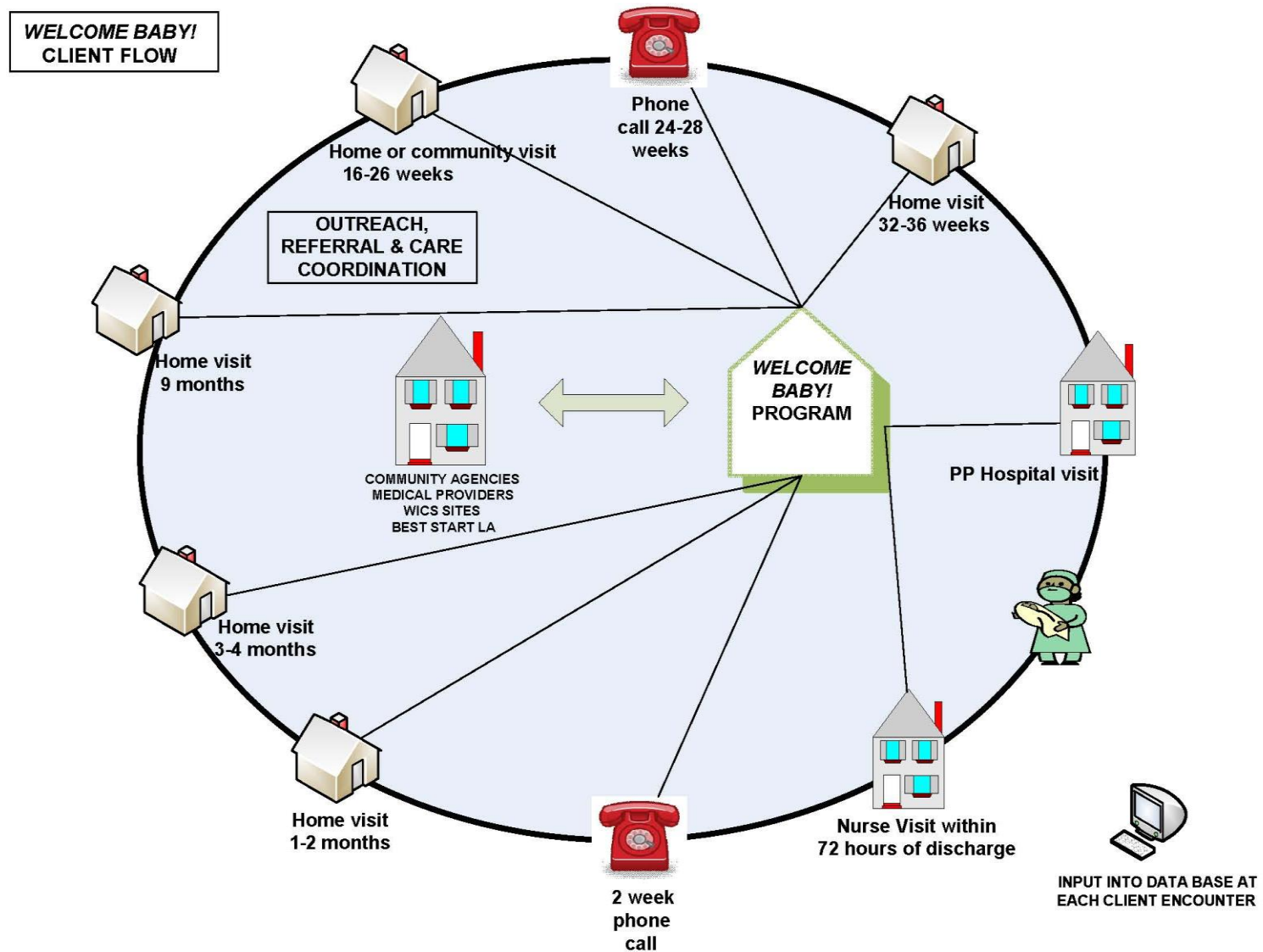
1. Year 1 Recap

This evaluation's first case study found that *Welcome Baby!*—launched in November 2009—had grown steadily during its first year of operation, expanding its reach in *Metro LA* by the end of 2010 by serving nearly 750 mothers and children. Some delays were initially encountered by MCH Access after launch, including slower-than-planned hiring of home visiting staff, resultant slower recruitment of mothers into the program, and challenges with the information system designed to support and report on *Welcome Baby!* activities (Hill et al. 2011). But the home visiting intervention quickly proved to be a well-managed and well implemented program, led by skilled and professional staff.

Most importantly, *Welcome Baby!* is extending a highly valued service to its target population. Indeed, focus groups with mothers receiving home visiting revealed that parents were very satisfied with the service, reporting that the service had played a valuable role in providing critical information and education about their children's health and development, while also connecting families to important resources in their community. Mothers also described having developed very close and trusting relationships with their parent coaches, who offered them tremendous emotional support as they dealt with the stresses of childbirth and raising a newborn (Hill and Adams 2011).

The case study and focus groups also revealed, however, that the home visiting intervention likely needed some modification. *Welcome Baby!* was originally designed as a low- to medium-intensity intervention, with a limited number of contacts made by staff composed of a blend of

Figure 2. *Welcome Baby!* Client Flow Chart²



² Source: MCH Access. This represents the *Welcome Baby!* model as of June 2010. The 16–26 week prenatal visit was initially only permitted between weeks 20 and 26. The prenatal phone call was added to bridge the gap between the first and second prenatal visits.

clinical, nonclinical, and paraprofessional personnel. During its first year of implementation, however, MCH Access officials observed that women giving birth in *Metro LA* are often at very high risk; many are adolescents or first-time mothers, living in poverty and substandard housing, and/or experiencing mental and behavioral health problems. As a result, there was a strong sense that most, if not all, *Welcome Baby!* enrollees could benefit from receiving more visits and assistance than the model permitted. MCH Access approached this challenge with creativity and flexibility, extending extra care when home visiting schedules permitted. And with the support of F5LA, by the end of 2010, the agency had begun recommending changes to the *Welcome Baby!* protocol so that it could be more responsive to the needs of its target population of pregnant and parenting mothers and their infants.

2. Year 2 Activities

By the time of our second site visit in April 2011, *Welcome Baby!* had served its 1,000th client. Reaching this milestone provided evidence that MCH Access had continued to expand its reach and grow its program. Program officials reported that they were fully staffed and that nurses and parent coaches were carrying full caseloads of approximately 60 clients each.

Despite growing enrollment, MCH Access managers interviewed for this study spoke at length about their desire to increase outreach effectiveness. Data have shown that 77 percent of all births at CHMC are among women who live within the *Metro LA* boundaries, totaling roughly 400 births per year. At this point, program managers believe that their acceptance rate into *Welcome Baby!* is about 40 percent, and thus they see plenty of room for improvement. In particular, they hope to enhance their ability to recruit women prenatally, so that they can help pregnant women prepare for childbirth, develop stronger relationships earlier in the process, improve retention, and ultimately improve overall outcomes. At this point, only 32 percent of women are recruited into the program during pregnancy, while almost 70 percent are enrolled at CHMC after giving birth.

One leading strategy for bolstering outreach adopted over the past year was the decision to hire a full-time outreach coordinator. MCH Access received permission from F5LA to redirect funds from its original staffing plan to support this new position (which had not yet been filled at the time of our visit). MCH Access envisions that the outreach coordinator will help centralize the program's outreach function. Specifically, the coordinator will concentrate her efforts on prenatal recruitment and will more proactively and systematically recruit at health care provider sites, as well as WIC centers, throughout the community. Parent coaches will still conduct outreach as well, but will hand off responsibility for follow-up with new recruits to the outreach coordinator. The coordinator will also work more closely with other outreach resources in *Metro LA*, such as the promotoras that have recently been hired at PLN, to broaden the reach of *Welcome Baby!*

Retention of women in the program is also an ongoing challenge. Roughly 3 out of every 10 *Welcome Baby!* enrollees do not complete the program's full course of visits. One-quarter of these women actively drop out of the program, while fully three-quarters are simply lost to follow up—that is, parent coaches are unable to contact and locate them, even after following the protocol's requirement of making between three and five attempts. Interestingly, analysis of available data has found that 90 percent of all women who don't complete the program are enrolled at the hospital, and most reportedly are lost (or drop out) during the period between hospital discharge and their first scheduled home visit. MCH Access staff believe that, if they do a better job recruiting women prenatally, they will have more opportunity to firmly establish relationships with clients before they give birth which will, in turn, lead to stronger retention rates.

During the second year of implementation, MCH Access managers and *Welcome Baby!* home visitors continued to develop a more in-depth understanding of their clients and their clients' needs. Growing from that, they also developed several ideas for how to adjust the program protocol and expand the number of contacts for higher-risk women. By the time of our visit, several changes had already been approved by F5LA and implemented—namely, that parent coaches could visit pregnant women as early as 16 weeks gestation (instead of 20 weeks), and that a telephone contact should occur at two weeks postpartum to keep in touch with new mothers before their first scheduled home visit at one to two months. During Year 2, the following additional protocol modifications were suggested:

- Making the first contact (at two weeks postpartum) an in-person home visit, rather than a phone call to improve the quality of that contact, making it more personal;
- Adding a home visit at six months postpartum to bridge the long gap between the three- to four-month and the nine-month visits; and
- Adding a final visit at 12 months postpartum, around the time of the baby's first birthday, to round out the protocol to a more natural end point.

Overall, the goal of these changes would make *Welcome Baby!* a “higher touch” (i.e., more intensive) model of home visiting, more responsive to the needs of higher-risk mothers who needed more help.

Given the often extensive needs of high-risk mothers, *Welcome Baby!* parent coaches often make referrals to other services and resources in the community. In all, MCH Access reported that home visitors had made approximately 2,300 referrals for their 1,000 clients. Most often, these referrals have been for either basic need items or health and medical services. But other categories of referrals (in descending order of frequency) include child development, health education, psychosocial services, legal assistance, and career and education services. Unfortunately, finding needed resources can be challenging. Anecdotally, parent coaches report

that resources most lacking in *Metro LA* include affordable housing, transitional housing for couples, accessible and high-quality child care, adult mental health services, early intervention services, and Early Head Start programs.

A final area of discussion during our site visit centered on the Data Collection and Reporting (DCAR) system, which was still causing frustration at MCH Access. Managers interviewed for this case study acknowledged that both F5LA and the DCAR contractor had worked hard to adjust the system and make it more responsive to MCH Access's needs. But staff reported that it was still very hard to work with, required many work arounds to generate useful reports and summary data, and still didn't support the program management functions they thought were necessary (including scheduling and caseload management). The expressed hope of MCH Access, and some F5LA officials, is that DCAR will ultimately be replaced by the Best Start Information Engine (BSIE), which is being developed with the help of Parents Anonymous under the systems-level component of BSLA (discussed below).

B. Community Investments

At the community level, two organizations were selected by F5LA to implement BSLA in *Metro LA*. Para Los Niños, a nonprofit family service organization, is the "lead entity" charged with mobilizing the community, facilitating the community's identification of needs, and assisting with the development of place-based strategies to make *Metro LA* more family-friendly. Special Service for Groups (SSG), a multiservice organization that provides research and evaluation, technical assistance, and capacity building services to community-based organizations, was retained to support PLN's mobilization effort by directing a Community Based Action Research (CBAR) process in the neighborhood.

1. Year One Recap

For a variety of reasons, community-level activities got off to a slow start in *Metro LA* during the first year or so of implementation. As described in this evaluation's Year 1 case study (Hill et al. 2011), the initial launch of PLN's work was delayed when tensions arose between PLN and another organization in the community that believed it should have been awarded the lead entity contract; tensions that were ultimately addressed through an extended, formal mediation process. Work progress was also interrupted when, on three occasions, project leadership at PLN changed. Despite these disruptions, PLN launched considerable outreach to the *Metro LA* community. Staff identified nearly 1,000 potential stakeholders within the community's boundaries, including community-based agencies, schools, providers, businesses, and public agencies. Three "information sessions" were organized and conducted in late 2009 designed to introduce BSLA to the community, describe what the investment hoped to achieve, and invite individuals and organizations to get involved and join the BSLA Partnership. Unfortunately, these first sessions were marred by poor attendance.

PLN turned an important corner in early 2010 when it shifted its focus directly to parents. Its fourth information session was re-cast as a “parent engagement” event, outreach was focused on schools, and the principal of a community elementary school (San Pedro Elementary) agreed to let PLN use the school as its meeting place. The event was a huge success, drawing roughly 160 parents and community members and generating letters of intent to participate in future BSLA efforts from half the attendees. Building on this, PLN completed numerous important tasks, including conducting a “retreat” with 25 community stakeholders to establish guiding principles and a governance structure for the initiative as it moves forward; forming a Community Guidance Body (CGB) made up of community representatives to coordinate the development of action strategies; launching several task forces made up of community members to design and oversee the major community initiatives of BSLA; and recruiting a number of prominent community leaders and professionals to serve on *Metro LA*’s Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and assist with policy and sustainability issues.

Meanwhile, SSG also experienced delays during the first year of implementation, which is unsurprising given how closely interwoven its work was with that of PLN (Hill et al. 2011). Nonetheless, SSG eagerly provided PLN with support during the first year, participating in information sessions and the parent engagement event, in an effort to interest potential partners in the planned CBAR effort. At various meetings, SSG staff spent time explaining to community members how CBAR worked and how they could expect it to be used. In addition, SSG staff attended PLN’s retreat in June 2010, where they provided training on CBAR to participants who would become members of the CGB.

While signs of community-level progress were appearing by late 2010, a significant question remained at the end of year one: When would tangible place-based strategies actually emerge? Beginning with PLN’s parent engagement event and continuing with the work of the CGB and its various task forces, a vision for the multiple community improvement strategies that might be established in *Metro LA* had begun to take shape, including proposals to build community gardens, create green spaces, promote public safety, and hold parent education classes. But momentum seemed hard to come by, and many key informants interviewed for the evaluation feared that implementation of such strategies might still be “two to three years off” (Hill et al. 2011).

2. Year 2 Activities

The following sections describe, in turn, Year 2 activities at the community level by PLN and by SSG.

Para Los Niños. The early portion of PLN’s second year of implementation, beginning in the late-fall 2010 and continuing through the first months of 2011, was described by staff as one of reflection and regrouping. A new director was hired to provide overall leadership. A new associate director for outreach was brought on to work more closely with parents in the

community, the CGB, and the CAC. An administrative planner with extensive community-level experience was added to the staff to coordinate community events more effectively. Finally, three part-time promotoras were hired to serve as the outreach arms of PLN, extending the group's reach into the community by directly communicating with parents and other community members about BSLA and its efforts.

During Year 2, PLN continued its transition from the role of lead entity to that of neutral convener, while the CGB assumed increased leadership and took on a role described by PLN officials as the project's board of directors. An important milestone was reached at the end of 2010 when the CGB adopted a charter to guide its operations and, as part of that, decided to align *Metro LA* with the new BSLA strategic plan framing the rollout of BSLA in 13 other communities across Los Angeles County (discussed above).

The convening of two more parent engagement events at local elementary schools—Norwood and Vermont—also occurred in early 2011; these built on the success of the initial parent engagement event at San Pedro Elementary School. Both events were well attended, with agendas focused on identifying ideas and strategies for improving the *Metro LA* community's support of families with young children.

The formation of various task forces—required as part of PLN's scope of work with F5LA and composed of a wide range of community members—continued during Year 2. The Parent's Task Force, whose coordinator also serves as the chair of the CGB's Executive Committee, was described as the most active. By the time of our visit, it had been meeting on a monthly basis for several months and was on the verge of convening a retreat designed to provide leadership training to its parent members. The Community Mobilization Task Force had been formalized in early 2011 and was working with SSG to plan its CBAR project. A Communications Task Force had also recently formed and was beginning work with Fenton Communications to develop messaging strategies to promote BSLA in *Metro LA*. The remaining task forces identified in the scope of work—place-based, policy, training and technical assistance, sustainability, evaluation, and Welcome Baby!—were not formalized at the time of our visit.

The first formal activity of the Community Advisory Committee occurred in February 2011 and was described by PLN officials a “huge and successful” event, according to PLN officials. CAC members (identified in Appendix 2), accompanied by representatives of both the CGB and PLN, toured the *Metro LA* community by bus and observed its various neighborhoods. The chairperson of the CGB, a mother and teacher at a local elementary school, hosted the tour and described the community's various resources and assets (such as schools and farmers markets) as well as its many challenges (including evidence of poverty, gang activity, and violence) over the course of the morning. The goal was to provide CAC members with a meaningful and realistic look at the community and to demonstrate why it was an important investment. CAC members shared their observations over lunch after the tour, and reflected on what they had seen and

heard. Encouragingly, many expressed both excitement and commitment to working with BSLA in *Metro LA* in the future.

Perhaps the most significant development during Year 2 was the launch of a series of Collaborative Partner Mini Grants supporting community-based projects within *Metro LA*. F5LA, observing that PLN was facing the prospect of having to return almost \$500,000 of unspent monies from its Year 2 contract, worked with the agency to design a strategy to push the money out to the community instead. Specifically, they designed and released in February 2011 a call for projects, soliciting letters from community-based agencies proposing ideas for how monies could be invested to strengthen *Metro LA*. Relatively little guidance was provided regarding how monies could be spent; as long as proposals were for projects that fit within one of BSLA's four outcomes goals³ and aligned with the parent priorities identified during PLN's parent engagement events,⁴ they were eligible for consideration. The major constraint facing the effort was time: for monies not to revert to F5LA, they needed to be contractually obligated by June 30, 2011, leaving just four months for proposal development, review, award, and obligation.

Despite this time constraint, 39 applications requesting roughly \$1.3 million were submitted within one month of the call for projects. Given the large response, PLN and the CGB decided to devote an additional \$100,000 to the cause, reallocated from its budget for the place-based activities. Proposals were evaluated by a panel composed of external reviewers and CGB members, and selections were further reviewed by F5LA, a process that took an additional six weeks. In the end, however, 18 awards were made by April for funds totaling \$477,500 (ranging from \$17,000 to \$60,000, and averaging \$26,500 each).

As summarized in Table 1, the array of projects supported by these "mini grants" is both diverse and impressive. They include projects promoting family health literacy, early learning resource fairs, healthy cooking classes, parenting classes, classes on preventing abuse and neglect, public park beautification, community clean-ups and tree planting, stress management workshops for parents, childhood obesity prevention, and parent and youth leadership skills. Geographically, they tend to be concentrated in the Northwest and Southwest quadrants of *Metro LA*, be focused on BSLA goals #3 and #4 (children are free from abuse and neglect, and children are ready for kindergarten), and most commonly address Parent Priority #1 (supporting Parent Education, Leadership, and Empowerment). At the time of this writing, all monies had been obligated through contracts between community agencies and contractors, and PLN and F5LA officials were excited to observe implementation over the remainder of 2011.

³ Children are born healthy, maintain healthy weight, are free from abuse and neglect, and are ready for kindergarten.

⁴ Parent education, leadership, and empowerment; community beautification/improvement; health, nutrition, and lifestyle; community safety; advocacy and policy; and community capacity building.

Table 1: Best Start Metro Los Angeles Collaborative Partner Mini Grants: 2011

| Name of Project | Grantee Organization | Quadrant of Metro LA | | | | Best Start Goals | | | | BSLA Parent Priorities | | | | | Project Description |
|--|---|----------------------|----|----|----|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|
| | | NW | NE | SE | SW | Children are born healthy | Children maintain a healthy weight | Children are free from abuse and neglect | Children are kindergarten-ready | Parent Education, Leadership, and Empowerment | Community Beautification/Improvement | Health, Nutrition, Lifestyle | Community Safety | Advocacy/Policy | |
| Berendo Community Garden | Children's Institute Inc. | x | | | | | x | | | x | x | x | | | Enhancement of the existing Berendo Community Garden |
| Collaborative Multisensory Education and Pediatric Screening | John Tracy Clinic | x | x | x | x | | | | | x | | x | | | Pediatric hearing, vision, and speech screening; educational workshops for parents and professionals |
| Community Safe Enhancements | Norwood Healthy Start | | | | x | | | | | x | | | x | | Safety Valet Program and Neighborhood Block Group |
| Early Learning Resource Fair | Norwood Healthy Start | | | | x | | | | x | x | | | | | Fair with 10–15 early learning providers and 250–300 participants |
| Estrella Park Improvement and Community Beautification | LA Neighborhood Land and Trust | | | | x | | x | | | x | x | | | | Installation of toddler-friendly play structures; park-clean up; literacy event |
| Family Science | Koreatown Youth and Community Center | x | | | | | | | x | x | x | | | | Customization of a California Science Center preschool curriculum for Korean-language |
| Healthy Cooking Classes | Norwood Healthy Start | | | | x | | x | | | | | x | | | Healthy eating and nutrition classes for 30 parents for children ages 0–5 |
| It Takes a Community | Echo Center | x | | | | | | x | x | x | | | | | Culturally appropriate parenting and school readiness classes to parents of children ages 0–5 |
| La Hora del Te | Esperanza Community Housing Corporation | | | | x | | | x | | | | x | | | Stress management program for parents |
| Los Angeles School Policy Activities League | Los Angeles School Police Activities League | | | | x | | | x | | x | | | x | | Parenting classes, social worker services, school supplies, school aides, field trips |

| Name of Project | Grantee Organization | Quadrant of Metro LA | | | | Best Start Goals | | | | BSLA Parent Priorities | | | | | Project Description | |
|---|--|----------------------|----------|----------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---|
| | | NW | NE | SE | SW | Children are born healthy | Children maintain a healthy weight | Children are free from abuse and neglect | Children are kindergarten-ready | Parent Education, Leadership, and Empowerment | Community Beautification/Improvement | Health, Nutrition, Lifestyle | Community Safety | Advocacy/Policy | | Community Capacity Building |
| Magnolia Community Leadership Project | Children's Bureau of Southern California | x | x | x | x | | | x | x | x | x | | | | x | Parent leadership project focusing on mobilizing parents and residents to plan and execute a community improvement project, workshops for parents, training for community leaders |
| Maintaining Healthy Weights in Young Children | Esperanza Community Housing Corporation | | | | x | | x | | | | | | x | | | Development of training on children's nutrition, obesity, food choice, physical activity |
| NuParent | Esperanza Community Housing Corporation | x | x | | x | | | X | | x | | | | | | Parenting program focused on child development, nutrition, health, and safety |
| PACE ECE Health Care Institute | Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment | x | | x | | | | | x | x | | | x | | | Parent health care trainings |
| Parent and Youth Leadership Endowment | El Shaddai Prayer and Deliverance Center | x | x | | x | x | | | x | x | | | x | | | Workshops for expecting parents and parents of infants, toddlers, and youth |
| Parents as Leaders | All Peoples Community Center | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | x | | x | Parenting program |
| SAIF Start Community Project | United American Indian Involvement | x | x | x | x | | | x | | x | | | | | | Educational workshops for parents, caregivers, families, and youth |
| Trees for Kids | Koreatown Youth and Community Center | x | | | | x | | | | | x | | | | | Parent workshop series to address recycling, energy, water conservation, green space, and tree planting; community clean up component |
| TOTALS: | | 11 | 6 | 5 | 13 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 14 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 1 | |

On reflection, the urgent push to award the mini grants within a very truncated timeframe was both an “opportunity and a blessing,” according to one PLN official. The deadline forced everyone to act quickly, and the work of community members to consider and identify priorities over the preceding 12 months provided fertile ideas for community projects. To an extent, this excitement was tempered by a realization that the process was hasty, and some key informants when interviewed expressed concern that such short-term grant making ran counter to BSLA’s goal of facilitating sustainable change. Yet, most agreed that this was an effective process for spurring action and finally getting community strategies in place. Indeed, F5LA was so pleased with the concept that it was already planning to include some version of the mini grants in its rollout of BSLA in the additional 13 communities.

Special Service for Groups. SSG is the BSLA contractor responsible for facilitating community mobilization and advising PLN and residents of *Metro LA* regarding CBAR, a method of research that directly involves members of the community in defining a problem, gathering data to provide evidence, and planning for change. Given start-up delays with PLN, SSG’s second year of implementation was similarly off to a slow start, as the task force responsible for CBAR—the Community Mobilization Task Force—only held its first independent meeting in February 2011. The Community Mobilization Task Force is being headed by leadership from Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), and has 30 active members. IDEPSCA has extensive experience with community-driven research and was founded to engage immigrants in organizing and identifying ways to improve the communities in which they live. IDEPSCA has several promotoras on staff, all with experience conducting CBAR, who will be integrated into the research process. Many CBAR meetings are currently being held in Spanish, the preferred language of the majority of those involved.

Despite the initial delay, SSG had a fairly busy spring in 2011, ramping up to complete the first CBAR project by June 30, 2011. PLN had allocated \$100,000 for this effort. At the time of our site visit, SSG was coordinating two retreats with the task force to facilitate the project, which had been designed to help community members choose a research topic, develop research questions, and decide upon a methodology for data collection. In addition, SSG was poised to provide a training workshop on research methods and to prepare parents and promotoras to go out into the community to collect data. They were considering using a research method known as “photo voice,” which would entail using a camera to document community conditions.

As community investment efforts begin to take hold, SSG’s supportive role is becoming more relevant. The June 2011 deadline for using funds dedicated to CBAR spurred action late in Year 2 and has led to a promising research endeavor directed by residents and community partners.

With regard to future activities, SSG reported that it would be facilitating CBAR efforts in at least five additional BSLA communities (beyond *Metro LA*), and with approval from the F5LA

commission, possibly all 13 communities. Additional CBAR projects could focus on such issues as nutrition, food access, and healthy weight to align with the goals of BSLA going forward.

C. Systems Investments

Systems-level investments in Metro LA are designed to inform the policy, practice, and infrastructure that support families and young children and that contribute to sustainable capacity-building in the community. Specifically, the following systems-level efforts have been launched in *Metro LA*:

- Targeting of workforce development, led by ZERO TO THREE (ZTT);
- Technology assessment and design of an integrated data system that meets the needs of community residents and stakeholders, researched by Parents Anonymous, Inc.;
- Promotion of hospital policies that encourage breastfeeding, following the Baby Friendly Hospital model, facilitated by the Perinatal Advisory Council/Leadership Advocacy and Consultation (PAC/LAC); and
- A comprehensive branding and messaging effort for F5LA's Best Start investment, led by Fenton Communications.

1. Year 1 Recap

During the first case study of *Metro LA*, we found that the contractors leading these efforts were poised to proceed with their scopes of work but were waiting in the wings for other components of the BSLA investment in *Metro LA* to catch up. In turn, delays in the progress of other components of the BSLA investment were trickling down to systems-level activities.

ZERO TO THREE. As described in this evaluation's Year 1 Case Study, ZTT is a national nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policy makers, and parents in the effort to improve the lives of infants and toddlers, and is charged with assessing and promoting workforce development capacity in *Metro LA* and county-wide. ZTT's Year 1 scope of work focused on establishing a set of core competencies for developing and supporting a cross-sector workforce, as reported in this evaluation's first case study (Hill et al. 2011). ZTT's original scope of work was focused on developing the workforce engaged with 0- to 3-year olds and expectant parents, but the F5LA strategic plan expanded the population of interest to 5 year olds. ZTT has indicated that the work they have done will be reasonably adaptable to the older set.

During its first year, ZTT conducted a literature review on relevant core competencies and convened a task force of experts to ultimately decide on a set that would be most relevant to a multidisciplinary workforce providing support and services to infants, toddlers, and expectant

parents. Throughout this effort, ZTT had limited interaction with other components of the Metro LA community, and felt that the lack of collaboration was a missed opportunity.

Parents Anonymous, Inc. is an international not-for-profit organization focused on strengthening families, preventing child abuse and maltreatment, and building community capacity. Its role in BSLA is to assess the technology capabilities and needs of the residents and providers of *Metro LA* and initiate a request for proposals for the development of an integrated data system, known as the Best Start Information Engine (BSIE). Facing initial delays and adjustments to their scope of work, Parents Anonymous' first year of implementation was somewhat truncated. They were asked to delay their work with the hope that other components of the investment might catch up, but were given the green light to proceed in early 2010. During its first year of implementation, Parents Anonymous conducted a literature review to gather information on other integrated data systems that have been implemented in low-income settings. Additionally, Parents Anonymous conducted two focus groups with community members, finding out where residents access technology as well as their preferences regarding where, when, and what sort of information they want to access. Parents Anonymous initially met challenges coordinating with PLN and the other contractors in *Metro LA*, but the efforts of this past year have proven more successful.

Perinatal Advisory Council/Leadership Advocacy and Consultation (PAC/LAC) was charged with identifying county hospitals with poor breastfeeding rates, providing them with a needs assessment, and helping them to qualify for Baby Friendly USA status, a UNICEF designation that recognizes pro-breastfeeding policies and practices. Implementation of PAC/LAC's scope of work during the first year was fairly smooth. They developed a needs assessment tool and worked with many hospitals to assess their Baby Friendly readiness. In tandem, F5LA had funded several hospitals to support the changes needed to attain Baby Friendly status. As of early 2010, seven hospitals had been funded, including CHMC, and F5LA intended to make a second round of awards to up to nine additional hospitals. However, additional funding to hospitals interested in pursuing Baby Friendly USA designation had been delayed as of April 2011, following a request from the commission.

Fenton Communications was hired to support the BSLA investment within *Metro LA* as well as county-wide. A public relations and communications firm brought on just prior to our first site visit in 2010, Fenton's role is to develop and promote a consistent brand and compelling messaging regarding Best Start in *Metro LA* and throughout the county. To support the message and brand of BSLA, Fenton developed during its first contract year a logo, style guides, a BSLA web site, and collateral materials for various events, including a very successful launch event for Best Start in *Metro LA* at LA Trade Tech College in September 2010.

2. Year 2 Activities

Implementation during the past year was a mix of continued progress and persistent delays. While coordination and communication with PLN seems to have improved thanks to stabilization among the organization's leadership and the formation of the CGB, integration of the work being done at the systems level and at the community or family level remained a challenge. The following discussion summarizes Year 2 activities for the four systems-level contractors.

ZERO TO THREE. ZTT's Year 2 scope of work focused on developing a training approach and curriculum, training master trainers, and bringing workforce development to the *Metro LA* community. To develop its training plan, ZTT convened a group of 10 experts who met a dozen times over the year to consider evidence-based training approaches that would meet the needs of a multidisciplinary workforce and promote the core competencies established the prior year. To implement this training approach, ZTT recruited eight lead trainers who will ultimately train 25 community members representing different sectors of the workforce. These 25 trainers will be trained to further disseminate the model by training their staff and other relevant community members. This model is being piloted in *Metro LA* and Long Beach for eventual replication in the other 12 Best Start communities.

Piloting the training model in *Metro LA* relies on coordination with PLN and members of the CGB Workforce Development Task Force, which ZTT reports has remained a challenge. While ZTT was poised to forge ahead and begin training the 25 community members, the community's task forces in *Metro LA* were generally still in their infancy or, as in the case of the Workforce Development Task Force, had yet to be formed. According to ZTT, however, communication with PLN was much improved from a year ago. Furthermore, they noted that PLN, as an organization, had been more inclusive of ZTT and receptive to its contributions.

Parents Anonymous. Over the past year, Parents Anonymous completed most of the tasks specified in the organization's contract with F5LA. It conducted 13 focus groups (10 with parents and 3 with other community residents), over a dozen key informant interviews with each of the Best Start *Metro LA* contractors,⁵ conducted community "walk-throughs" to better understand the neighborhood strengths and limitations, and collected data through a short survey instrument distributed to community residents.

Drawing on these data to inform recommendations for development of the BSIE, Parents Anonymous developed an environmental scan and feasibility study, which they submitted to F5LA in June 2011. Early findings from this work corroborate *Welcome Baby's* experience that the community has an exceptional number of high-need residents with few resources.

⁵ This activity was also discussed in our Year 1 case study report (Hill et al. 2011), and took place toward the end of 2010.

Furthermore, Parents Anonymous found that safety concerns in the neighborhood impact residents' comfort with using public technology resources.

While Parents Anonymous has made progress on its scope of work, uncertainty remains regarding the role that the information gathered will play in either *Metro LA* or subsequent BSLA communities. In parallel, F5LA has hired a consultant, Confluence, to assess the overall technology capabilities of the organization, including contractors and products developed to benefit F5LA projects. Some of the key informants with whom we spoke understood that the Confluence effort was specific to F5LA alone, and would not hold implications for BSLA communities. But other information collected suggests that the efforts of Parents Anonymous may be combined with the efforts of Confluence to create a unified system. One challenge for Parents Anonymous is the perception that poor communication within F5LA and among the Best Start contractors in *Metro LA* has led to a lack of awareness of the work Parents Anonymous has been performing, with a resulting diminished interest in the group's contribution.

Moreover, uncertainty remains among the key informants with whom we spoke regarding whether or not the BSIE will ultimately replace DCAR, the data management system initially designed to support *Welcome Baby!* As noted earlier, MCH Access has from the beginning reported difficulty deriving useful information from DCAR. While Parents Anonymous hopes the BSIE could supplant DCAR, others are skeptical and anticipate that DCAR may still be utilized in a similar manner in subsequent BSLA communities.

Proud of the work it has done, Parents Anonymous remains concerned about missed opportunities derived from the siloed nature of the BSLA investment. In their opinion, data collection opportunities are being missed and could be captured in an integrated data system, though the reality of that system remains far off.

PAC/LAC. PAC/LAC received a no-cost extension that allowed it to keep working through June 2011. With this extension PAC/LAC was able to provide a quality improvement workshop for hospitals that had received F5LA funding to support Baby Friendly designation.

PAC/LAC was originally tasked with developing a hospital assessment tool, which was distributed to 31 of the county's hospitals identified as having the lowest rates for exclusive breastfeeding at discharge. The tool was designed to help hospitals identify what policy and practice changes would be required to gain certification as a Baby Friendly Hospital. In addition, PAC/LAC conducted interviews with key hospital staff. They were successful in collecting assessments and conducting interviews for approximately half of the 31 hospitals identified throughout the county and, based on the findings, prepared a score card for each hospital identifying major hurdles and specific recommendations for improvements that were important to establishing Baby Friendly Hospital status readiness. PAC/LAC observes that many hospitals that did not respond to the assessment or to requests for interviews, had no

intention of pursuing Baby Friendly status, and therefore did not see the value of this time investment.

During the no-cost extension mentioned previously, PAC/LAC developed and provided follow-up instruction to hospitals that received funding from F5LA to pursue Baby Friendly status. PAC/LAC held a class for nine of the F5LA grantees and provided them with training focused on putting together a program, noting that while many quality improvement programs provide a menu of steps that need to be implemented, no such guidance exists from Baby Friendly USA. PAC/LAC therefore sought to provide instruction on program design and implementation. The staff at PAC/LAC believes that this instruction will be key to these hospitals achieving Baby Friendly status, and may have been a beneficial first step in the process. Based on its observations, PAC/LAC is hopeful that approximately one-third of the hospitals funded by F5LA will be successful in becoming Baby Friendly within the specified 3- to 5-year time frame. They also acknowledge that, regardless of individual hospitals' success in acquiring the designation, the decision to fund these efforts has had wide-spread positive implications for the county.

Fenton Communications. After a slow fall 2010, attributed in part to the staffing transitions at PLN, Fenton's activities picked up in early 2011. The group provided support to the newly formed CGB's Communications Task Force and produced collateral material for PLN as needed. Fenton reported holding weekly communications calls with PLN and the CGB to discuss their needs related to materials and marketing support. In addition, Fenton created a group web site that allows PLN, the CGB, and other BSLA contractors to access BSLA marketing materials directly. Fenton is looking forward to leveraging the investments recently funded through PLN's mini grants to promote BSLA in *Metro LA* and county-wide. They hope that the ability to say "this is what Best Start LA can do" will help to concretize an investment that is sometimes difficult to articulate.

Furthermore, Fenton worked with MCH Access this past year to develop a logo and collateral material for *Welcome Baby!* and described plans to roll out a bus stop advertising campaign later in 2011. In addition, it had created a brochure and other materials for provider audiences, clinic staff, and WIC locations. Fenton and MCH Access hold weekly calls during which Fenton provides marketing and advertising recommendations aimed at building brand recognition for *Welcome Baby!* Fenton has also provided some limited marketing support to ZTT.

During our site visit, Fenton officials also described how they had begun working with other BSLA communities identified for subsequent roll out. This work included attending community meetings and working with F5LA to promote the BSLA brand county-wide. In May 2011, they began working on broader community efforts, providing support for the "parent academies" being held with parent leaders from each of the 14 communities. These parent academies will include parents from *Metro LA* and other communities, and are designed to foster leadership

among this group. They aim to have 25 parents from each community attend and become involved with planning activities, including design of the community strategic plans slated for submission to F5LA by the end of 2011.

Fenton had not encountered the same challenges as other contractors working to effect change at the systems level. This is likely attributable to the nature of its work. Fenton works closely with PLN and other components of the BSLA investment, but because it provides support to PLN, F5LA, and other BSLA contractors, it is not dependent upon their progress to move forward.

In all, systems-level investments in *Metro LA* continue to make good progress toward accomplishing their scopes of work, though full integration of systems activities into the BSLA investment remains a challenge. Monthly interagency meetings with all BSLA contractors have helped to facilitate relationships that were more challenging a year ago, and progress by the lead entity has made collaboration more fruitful. While challenges remain, improvements are clearly taking place and hold the promise of improved collaboration and swift implementation of systems investments that are poised to launch.

IV. Lessons Learned

At the two-year mark, BSLA has become more firmly established in the *Metro LA* community, and implementation efforts have shown good progress and increased momentum. Based on analysis of information collected during our second evaluation site visit, we provide the following observations and lessons learned, intended to help not only stakeholders and F5LA officials working in the *Metro LA* pilot community but also those designing and implementing BSLA in the other 13 Los Angeles County communities.

- ***Welcome Baby! home visiting provides a strong and important foundation for BSLA in Metro LA.*** Though the intervention has struggled with certain implementation challenges—including maternal outreach and retention—it has worked hard to address these issues while simultaneously fine-tuning and strengthening its protocol to better meet the needs of high-risk mothers, infants, and their families. MCH Access deserves recognition for its adaptability and professionalism; *Welcome Baby!* nurses and parent coaches have now served over 1,000 clients and show every indication that they will continue to expand their efforts to more needy families.
- ***First 5 LA would be well served by deploying the Welcome Baby! model in the 13 new Best Start LA communities.*** The home visiting component of BSLA, as implemented by MCH Access, has already shown itself to be a well-designed, adaptable, and highly valued service for mothers with new infants. As such, it represents the most tangible

component of the BSLA investment. This distinguishes it from other parts of the BSLA model (such as community mobilization) which are more conceptual and less concrete, and thus more challenging to convey to community members and other stakeholders. To help BSLA launch in the additional 13 communities identified in F5LA's new strategic plan, a *Welcome Baby!* home visiting component could similarly ground the efforts and provide community members with a similarly tangible benefit. To build a stronger BSLA brand identity, F5LA should consider requiring other communities to adopt the same (or at least a similar) model, and to employ the *Welcome Baby!* moniker.

- ***While few tangible changes were observed in Metro LA, Para Los Niños appears to be more on track, well engaged with the community, and facilitating positive movement.*** As discussed in this report, PLN has moved past initial setbacks, stabilized and improved its staffing, and helped its CGB and task forces make progress. The organization built on its Year 1 lesson regarding parent involvement, conducted additional parent engagement events, and supported the placement of parents in leadership positions. Parents' priorities for community improvement appear to be driving planning agendas, a situation that is well supported by other stakeholders.
- ***The mini grant process, while imperfect, has succeeded in getting the community to take action and put community strategies in place.*** Faced with a difficult challenge of what to do with unspent monies, F5LA and PLN responded creatively by devising a process that effectively, albeit hurriedly, pushed nearly a half-million dollars out the door in support of community projects. This sudden development, after two years of process that was not leading to clear action, was universally described as very positive and promising. Though not implemented at the time of our visit, these projects appear to be well distributed across *Metro LA*, focused on BSLA goals, and appropriately reflective of parents' priority concerns. It will be important to see how these projects are implemented and whether they contribute generally to an improved sense of community during Year 3 implementation. At the same time, it will be critical to assess whether the hurried nature of project development undermines in any way their success. Questions for the evaluation going forward include whether the mini grant programs were well conceived to begin with, well executed as contracts, and able to effect sustainable improvement. Importantly, F5LA has already begun planning for a similar first step process to occur in the 13 new BSLA communities, and is framing it as a more deliberative, several-month process. This seems wise and should help these communities make tangible progress more quickly, but also more pragmatically.
- ***Metro LA's Community Guidance Body is showing promise and potential for strong leadership.*** Building on findings from this evaluation's focus groups, our Year 2 case study observes that *Metro LA's* CGB is composed of a dedicated, creative, and

cooperative group of individuals representing a broad swath of the community. Its decision to make a parent the chair of its Executive Committee has set an important tone. The group has increasingly asserted its leadership and independence, and this has allowed PLN to shift to its new role of neutral convener, which it and community members seem to embrace. The benefits of the CGB's spirit of inclusiveness and collaboration appeared to outweigh any negatives associated with its processes for deliberation and decision-making, which were described as slow and very time consuming. It will be interesting to watch this group evolve in the coming year and observe the extent to which it can build on the actions set in motion by the mini grant process.

- ***Systems-level investments, while making important progress, are falling short of becoming fully integrated with other components of Best Start LA.*** As described in this report, each of the systems-level contractors has continued to perform important work, and communications among and between the various contractors (at all three levels) appears to have improved at least marginally. Yet systems-level efforts for some of the contractors still appear somewhat disconnected from the child-, family-, and community-level components, perhaps simply reflecting the very different kinds of work they do. ZTT, for example, is poised to implement its train-the-trainer model in *Metro LA*, yet PLN does not appear to have prioritized the need for advancing the workforce development goals of the investment. Similarly, while Parents Anonymous has completed its information needs assessment/environmental scan, the actual creation of an integrated information system seems well off in the future, and contractors involved with other components of BSLA appeared to be only peripherally aware of the work of Parents Anonymous. Overall, therefore, while the silos identified in our Year 1 case study appear to be less formidable, they do still seem to exist between the systems-level efforts and the rest of BSLA.
- ***The Best Start LA concept and identity has been slow to take hold.*** In contrast to other systems-level contractors, Fenton Communications' products have been applied at all levels of the investment; the group has worked closely to support community events in *Metro LA* and with *Welcome Baby!* to design a logo and brochure for the program, and it continues to support F5LA, system wide, in its promotion and messaging for BSLA. Yet the actual concept of BSLA and its broad goals appear to remain somewhat elusive. According to key informants we interviewed, the brand does not seem to have been well established in *Metro LA* yet. What's more, some expressed concern that BSLA is not well associated or connected with F5LA, an observation that is troubling to the agency that has invested so much time and so many resources in the place-based effort. Fenton Communications appears, however, to be the right firm for the job and should be able to continue its effective messaging and marketing efforts in support of F5LA and BSLA.

In summary, Best Start LA in the *Metro LA* pilot community has made good progress during Year 2 and appears to be gaining momentum in its implementation. Home visiting through *Welcome Baby!* has emerged as a very strong intervention that could serve as a model throughout Los Angeles County; community strategies have finally gotten started; and systems-level work, while somewhat disconnected, may yet lay the groundwork for important changes. Again, it is hoped that this detailed analysis of implementation is helpful to First 5 LA officials and community stakeholders both in *Metro LA*, as they continue their work, and in the 13 new Best Start communities as they launch their similarly ambitious efforts.

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Appendix 1: Key Informants Interviewed for Case Study

| Name | Affiliation |
|------------------|---|
| Hayley Roper | F5LA, SRA - BSLA Evaluation |
| Christine Aque | F5LA, RA BSLA Evaluation |
| Amado Ulloa | F5LA, PO - AJWI (DCAR) |
| Holly Campbell | F5LA, PO - Parents Anonymous |
| John Bamberg | F5LA, PO - Para Los Niños |
| Heather Tunis | F5LA, PO - SSG |
| Lee Werbel | F5LA, SPO - Community Capacity Building |
| Michael Arnot | F5LA, PO - Zero to Three |
| Lucy Lin | F5LA, PO - PAC-LAC and MCH Access |
| Lynn Kersey | MCHA |
| Luz Chacon | MCHA |
| Vicki Kropenski | Hope Street |
| Rachel Zupa | Hope Street |
| Sandra Hoffman | MCHA |
| Sandra Williams | Parents Anonymous |
| Peggy Polinski | Parents Anonymous |
| Haijin Li | Parents Anonymous |
| Augusto Minakata | Parents Anonymous |
| Grace Lee | SSG |
| Eric Wat | SSG |
| Leticia Lara | ZTT |
| Joyce Yip Green | ZTT |
| Sheena Nahm | ZTT |
| Wendy Ramallo | PLN |
| Lisa Marin | PLN |
| Jessica Martinez | PLN |
| Brenda Aguilera | PLN |
| Laura Deep | Fenton |
| Jenny Thom | Fenton |
| Debi Kar | Fenton |
| Cindy Fahey | PAC LAC |

Appendix 2: Community Advisory Council Members

| | |
|---|---|
| Bank of America | Gina Adams, VP Market Development Manager |
| Children's Bureau | Alex Morales, President/CEO |
| Dearden's | Ronny Bensimon, President/COO |
| HealthNet | Margita Thompson, VP, External Communications |
| HOPE | Helen Torres, Executive Director/CEO |
| KCET | Val Zavala, Executive Producer |
| LAANE | Madeline Janis, Executive Director |
| LA's Best | Carla Sanger, President/CEO |
| LA Area Chamber of Commerce | Gary Toebben, President/CEO |
| Los Angeles Board of Public Works | Cynthia Ruiz, Trustee |
| Los Angeles Community College District | Miguel Santiago, Trustee |
| LA Conservation Corps | Bruce Saito, Executive Director |
| Lanterman Regional Center | Diane Anand, Executive Director |
| LAUP | Celia Ayala, President/CEO |
| LAUSD | Whit Hayslip, Director, Infant Preschool Support Services |
| Loyola Law School | Victor Gold, Dean |
| MTA | Arthur Leahy, CEO |
| National Assn of Women Business Owners | Jane Pak, CEO |
| New Visions Foundation | Paul Cummins, CEO |
| Promerica Bank | Maria Contreras Sweet, Founder and Chairwoman |
| SEIU Local 99 | Frank Torres, Political Director |
| The California Wellness Foundation | Julio Marcial, Program Director |

Represents membership as of February 2011