

Wraparound Social Services in SeaTac

ESSER III

Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$625,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$100,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the office to contract with an organization located in SeaTac, Washington to provide wraparound social services and expand and maintain existing education and family engagement programs that serve students and their families in the Federal Way and Highline public school districts. The work of the organization must focus on housing and social services, education, and economic development for African immigrant and refugee communities.

Purpose

To provide opportunities for African Diaspora immigrant and refugee communities, families, and individuals in King County to attain health and housing stability, economic development, high-quality education, and referrals to legal services.

ACHD's Vision: An informed African immigrant and refugee community that is engaged in the holistic development of their families, communities, and environment.

Description of Services Provided

The 2023-24 school year was very promising and engaging for African Community Housing & Development (ACHD). Funding helped build their capacity to provide high-quality meaningful programs for youth and families. ACHD worked with students from the Highline and Federal Way School Districts and conducted meaningful parent engagement conversations that allowed them to understand parent needs and share them with family engagement staff from the school districts.

ACHD's culturally relevant education programs for African Diaspora youth prioritize emotional self-regulation and growth, positive cultural identity development, leadership, and conflict resolution; in addition, programs incorporate holistic wraparound case management to meet whole-family social determinants of health. By building conflict resolution and emotional regulation skills during adolescence, ACHD disrupts the cycles of violence that impact the community and heals collective community trauma to build towards restorative justice. During their family engagement events, parents expressed their worry about safety issues both inside and outside the schools, including gun violence, drugs, students skipping classes, behavioral issues, and more. There is no justification for the recent deaths of the African Diaspora community's young people, and ACHD is deeply motivated to work collaboratively to find solutions and save lives.



Throughout the school year, ACHD served students eligible for free or reduced lunch, connecting them and their families with holistic case managers that supported them in meeting their needs from housing to food access to job training. ACHD hosted Community Café Conversations at least twice a semester in each district, gathering families and staff to share ideas over dinner and using the valuable insight gained from these discussions to inform program development and refinement. These conversations also guided our work with the school districts as they deepened their community engagement activities.

ACHD's out-of-school-time programming, Outdoor Adventurers, targeted STEAM, outdoor, and SEL competencies for students in grades 3-12, organized in grade-level bands: Outdoor Explorers (3rd-5th grade), Outdoor Leaders (6th-8th grade), and Outdoor Advocates (9th-12th grade). Each grade-level band's cohort met weekly and had a monthly Saturday excursion to an offsite location, ensuring that students had multiple opportunities to experience learning both inside and outside our Learning Center.

ACHD also hosted Family Nature Days to bring families together to experience the healing power of nature. ACHD staff guided families through multi-generational outdoor learning experiences, including recreation and relaxation to build comfort and confidence in natural environments.

In addition, ACHD hosted two camping experiences: the Outdoor Leaders (OL) Spring Break Leadership Intensive in April 2024, and the Family Camping Trip in late June 2024. The Spring Break Leadership Intensive provided a safe space for our middle schoolers to work on their self-esteem, leadership, and teamwork abilities while sharpening their outdoor skills and applying some of their previous lessons on environmental science. The Family Camping Trip, an overnight experience that brought together participants of all ages, allowed for some OL participants to apply those lessons in a different context—allowing others to benefit from the OL participants' previous experiences in a campground.

ACHD believes that exposure to nature is deeply beneficial for youth and families. "Natural settings have been evidenced within the literature to have psychological, physical and therapeutic benefits" (A perspective on trauma, Corbett & Milton). ACHD also knows that exposure to nature can support violence reduction efforts: "Contact with nature appeared to have a significant effect on promoting community ties and reducing violence." ("Exposure to Nature May Reduce Crime, Strengthen Communities," Carolyn Gregoire).

ACHD does not simply take participants into nature; they utilize nature as a healing tool. Nature exploration goes hand-in-hand with intentionally designed culturally relevant social-emotional learning programs to maximize healing and restorative justice. Their skilled staff ensure that families are connected to the resources and wraparound services they need like housing support, food access programs, job training services, and health and wellness resources. They worked to build intergenerational relationships that reinforce a positive cultural identity and create resource networks for the youth they serve.

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

- Enrollment in partnered school districts (Highline and Federal Way)
- Eligible for free or reduced lunch
- Identifying as African Diaspora immigrant or refugee (not required but preferred)

Beneficiaries in the 2023-24 School Year

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of School Districts | 2 |
| Number of Schools | 11 |
| Number of Students | 79 |
| Number of Educators | NA |
| Other/ Club youth & teens | 101 |

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

| Fiscal Year | Amount Funded | Actual Expenditures |
|-------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 2024 | \$625,000 | \$624,365 |

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

| Fiscal Year | Number of Beneficiaries |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| 2024 | 193 |

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

N/A

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

One of the desired outcomes of ACHD's Education programs is to build students' sense of independence and resiliency, especially when being exposed to new experiences. Comfort in the outdoors, which is often an unfamiliar environment, is one of the core goals. When asked to reflect on how comfortable youth felt in outdoor spaces after their ACHD program participation, the students provided very high ratings. The average ranking across all age groups was over 7 on a scale of 1 to 10, with Outdoor Leaders and Advocates (middle and high school) reporting the highest ratings. Similarly, students shared that participation in the program helped them learn how to better navigate outdoor space. More than 74% answered "Definitely YES" or "Yes." The Outdoor Advocates were the most positive, with all of them indicating it had helped them.

ACHD also wanted to measure the effectiveness of our social-emotional learning and interpersonal skill development curriculum, so the survey asked youth whether the program had helped them understand and manage their feelings. Overall, over 80% answered “Definitely Yes” or “Yes,” with the Outdoor Advocates (high school) age band reporting the most positive responses. When asked if the program helped them manage their feelings, 100% answered “Yes” or “Definitely Yes”.

Building competency and knowledge in science and building on this new knowledge using applied learning in nature is a core element of all ACHD’s education programs. One of the key desired outcomes of experiential learning is for students to understand that they can apply scientific principles and critical thinking to real life experiences. To determine if students understand the lessons taught in the program, the survey includes a question asking if they felt the program helped them understand that science doesn’t just happen in a lab or science class. Overall, 84% answered “Definitely Yes” or “Yes,” to this question. The Outdoor Advocates (high school) all (100%) answered positively, with Explorers and Leaders slightly less positive (80% and 75%, respectively).

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

This school year brought a variety of challenges for the ACHD team, all of which allowed an opportunity to come together and creatively grow and improve. ACHD found that varying school schedules made it difficult to maintain consistent start times for every cohort, so they adjusted each cohort to match the times for their schools and figured out the rest of the logistics from there. They also found themselves doing similar reshuffling as they encountered changing directives and guidelines from different school districts, which led them to start partnering directly with individual schools for ease of communication. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as these partnerships turned into close relationships that facilitated student referrals and even the use of facilities for Community Cafés and programming later on.

As ACHD expanded programming into Federal Way, finding safe, high-quality, accessible facilities space proved to be a challenge. They sought a location that was safe for kids, suitable for both programming and some administrative space, and affordable in the long term to ensure program sustainability. With OSPI’s support, ACHD partnered with African Young Dreamers Empowerment Program International (AYDEPI), who were already providing services to youth in Federal Way, so that their funding and their labor could together impact the lives of more youth. AYDEPI went above and beyond during the length of their subcontract, and with their support ACHD was able to introduce their services to the Federal Way community and begin establishing themselves in preparation for their expansion to middle and high school for the upcoming school year.

In addition, program expansion meant more space needed for staff to work. We were able to secure another office in our headquarters’ SeaTac building and moved the entire education team to the new office. The original Education office space became a combination classroom and makerspace which will remain flexible to meet our program’s evolving needs.

Future Opportunities

One of the most valuable parts of the outreach conducted by ACHD this year, was Community Café Conversations, as we were able to get actionable feedback from parents and other community members on programming, and gain insight into community issues. As ACHD looks toward the future and seek to get more parent feedback specifically on program outcomes, they look forward to hosting an end-of-year Community Café focused around program evaluation, providing drop-in hours for in person survey taking, and offering a QR code for electronic survey access once they have multiple language versions available electronically.

ACHD has been inspired by their wonderful relationship with Sunnycrest and are also looking forward to expanding engagement with other partner schools. In 2024-25 ACHD will create a partner school network where the schools they serve can have relationships with one another and can share resources with one another. ACHD greatly benefited from participating in several learning cohorts with peers throughout this year, and are hoping this will be equally supportive for other partner schools.

Finally, ACHD has been examining service delivery data. The largest percentage of services, based on hours provided, consists of their STEAM, outdoors, and SEL programs—which makes sense, as that had been their goal for this fiscal year. ACHD is working with their Housing and Social Services department to strengthen the financial development support they offer to participants, as that is the smallest percentage of the services that were tracked. ACHD recognizes that increasing referrals to their workforce development program is an obvious solution, but they continue to investigate ways to integrate supports into their own programs. For example, ACHD is developing a career-focused pathway for the high school programming to offer alternatives for students who may be interested in certifications additional to and/or instead of postsecondary education.

Other Relevant Information

N/A

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.](#)

Program Contact Information

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| Name | Jocelyn Nunez |
| Title | Program Supervisor |
| Phone | 360-584-2439 |
| Email | jocelyn.nunez@k12.wa.us |