BAY AREA CODES

Bay Area Codes:
Final Evaluation Report (2015–2018)

Prepared for The San Francisco Foundation

July 2018

Prepared by:

BRIGHT RESEARCH GROUP

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to Grantees

The Bay Area Codes Cohort grantees have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to making opportunities in the technology industry available to youth of color from all socioeconomic backgrounds. This project and report would not have been possible without the contributions and cooperation of the following organizations:

- Black Girls Code
- Hack the Hood
- David E. Glover Education & Technology Center
- The Hidden Genius Project
- Qeyno Labs
- #YesWeCode
- United Roots / Youth Impact Hub
- Young Community Developers

To learn more about the Bay Area Codes Cohort, please visit bayareacodes.org.

About The San Francisco Foundation

The San Francisco Foundation mobilizes resources and acts as a catalyst for change to build strong communities, foster civic leadership, and promote philanthropy. Since 1948, The San Francisco Foundation has been firmly committed to serving the people of the Bay Area as an incubator for community investment, original ideas, and passionate leadership. As one of the nation's largest community foundations in grantmaking and assets, they give millions of dollars a year to make the Bay Area the best place it can be. To learn more, visit sff.org.

About Bright Research Group

A women- and minority-owned firm based in Oakland, Bright Research Group (BRG) is a cutting-edge consultancy that helps clients design, test, refine, and evaluate innovations in community health, youth services, and public safety. Bright Research Group specializes in evaluation, consumer research, and capacity building for entities working to achieve greater social impact. To learn more, visit brightresearchgroup.com.

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Introduction

The San Francisco Bay Area is home to one of the most innovative and revolutionary economic engines in human history—Silicon Valley. While the technology industry is driving much of the local job creation and economic expansion, the Bay Area's diverse communities are not reflected in the workforce of the tech sector. According to estimates by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the tech workforce in Silicon Valley is only 3% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 36% women. In addition, the tech industry's rapid growth and expansion is leading to the gentrification and displacement of communities and neighborhoods of color. Young people of color are excited about, and interested in, learning about science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), but historically, they have not had access to learning opportunities and experiences that support their ambitions and skill development in these sectors. Over the last several years, a number of local nonprofits have sprung up to offer programs to youth of color that prepare them to pursue careers in tech and to close the opportunity gap in this economic sector.

In 2015, with the generous support of a significant donor, The San Francisco Foundation launched a $5.9-million investment in a cohort of nonprofits that provide youth of color with education, experiences, and job and entrepreneurship opportunities in the tech sector. The foundation provided three-year grants to eight local nonprofits that offered programs in Oakland and adjacent Bay Area neighborhoods. The vision for the foundation's cohort investing model was to provide individual grants to each organization, convene and offer opportunities for collaboration among the cohort, and build the capacity of these organizations to develop an ecosystem of connected programs and services. The cohort aimed to support more than 5,000 youth to develop computer and coding competencies, graduate from high school, enter into advanced technology training/education, enter the tech sector as talented employees, and/or become entrepreneurs by starting their own social-impact venture.

The San Francisco Foundation's Investment Goals for the Bay Area Codes Cohort

- Increase the number of young people accessing tech learning opportunities and programming
- Create a pipeline for low-income youth of color to pursue employment in the tech sector or become entrepreneurs in the tech sector
- Influence and shift social norms in the tech sector toward more inclusive employment and hiring practices

About the Evaluation

The San Francisco Foundation engaged Bright Research Group to conduct a developmental evaluation for the duration of the project (July 2015–June 2018). In addition to this report, interim reports were developed annually to assess grantees' progress and development over time. A mixed-methods and developmental approach was used to answer the following questions:

- What was the value and impact of the Bay Area Codes Cohort programs on youth participants?
- What did the Bay Area Codes cohort investment model achieve for the sector?
- What do emergent organizations within the cohort need in order to become sustainable and thriving organizations?

Methods

The evaluation incorporated the following methodologies:

Method	Description	Frequency
Interviews	Key informant interviews with grantees, foundation staff, and other stakeholders in the diversity in tech field	Annually
Surveys	Conducted with youth served by grantees	Once (N = 132)
Pop-up Interviews	Conducted with youth served by grantees	Once (N = 38)
Observation	Attendance at cohort meetings and retreats	Quarterly
Youth Profiles	Video and written case studies of individual youth served by cohort grantees, coproduced by Bright Research Group and Green Eyed Media, a project of United Roots	Once
Progress Report Review	Scan of grantee reports and other background documents	Ongoing
Evaluation of Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance	Assessments of each grantee's capacity to conduct an evaluation, and tailored support in building evaluation capacity, developing a theory of change, designing information management systems, and collecting data to assess impact	Ongoing

About the Bay Area Codes Cohort

The Cohort Experience

A key goal of the Bay Area Codes Cohort investment was to establish a coordinated ecosystem of organizations providing youth of color with tech learning opportunities. In addition to providing individual grants to each of the Bay Area Codes Cohort organizations, The San Francisco Foundation designed and facilitated a cohort experience for the grantees in order to facilitate the development of that ecosystem. The San Francisco Foundation engaged an organizational coach to convene and support collaboration among grantees. Grantees were convened on a quarterly basis in a learning community setting to establish and work on shared objectives, projects, and campaigns. In several instances, the Foundation provided additional financial support and/or engaged subject-matter experts to help advance the cohort's collective goals.

The Cohort Experience

Learning Community | Annual Youth Retreat | Evaluation Grants | 1-on-1 Technical Assistance & Coaching | Communications Campaign

The Bay Area Codes Cohort Grantees

Black Girls Code

Formed in 2011, Black Girls Code (BGC) provides programs to introduce girls of color to the skills needed to compete for high-tech jobs. It employs a culturally- and gender-specific curriculum to energize girls and encourage them to pursue careers in computer programming and technology. Through outreach programs, including workshops and after-school programs, BGC introduces underprivileged African American, Latina and Native American girls to basic programing skills. BGC aims to provide young women with a chance at well-paying professions with prestigious companies and the ability to enter into the field as entrepreneurs and leaders of technology.

Center for Media Change Inc. / Hack the Hood

Hack the Hood (HTH) employs a holistic approach to equip youth of color with hard skills in technology and digital literacy, and soft skills in tech workplace culture. At HTH, youth develop career paths through "boot camps" supported by ongoing career coaching and interaction with the HTH alumni network. HTH also pairs youth with industry mentors who provide hands-on, real-world work experience. Through training, mentoring, field trips to companies such as Google and Facebook, and conversations with tech professionals who look like them, youth develop valuable tech and soft skills, and start to see themselves as entrepreneurs and tech professionals. HTH provides a safe space for youth in a supportive community of mentors and peers who affirm youths' interests and talents and support their path toward professional careers capable of lifting them and their families out of poverty.

David E. Glover Education & Technology Center (DEGETC)

DEGETC was established in 1997 by OCCUR with support from the US Department of Commerce to respond to the ever-widening divide in technology access and computer literacy in East Oakland. DEGETC provides free computer and internet access as well as free to low-cost computer classes for youth and adults in English and Spanish. It trains more than 400 users each week and is nationally recognized as a commuter technology center, providing a creative and safe out-of-school learning environment for underserved youth ages 10–18 where they can work with mentors to explore their own ideas, develop skills, and build self-confidence in the use of technology.

Hidden Genius Project

Hidden Genius Project (HGP) is an Oakland-based nonprofit founded in 2011 that introduces Black male youth to entrepreneurial thinking and technology creation in the software engineering and design fields. HGP's mission is to cultivate and support future generations of aspiring software technologists. HGP has two major programs. Their selective high school program works to cultivate a community of self-taught technologists. Their middle-school program encourages youth to explore technology in a safe and supportive environment. Although the two programs take different forms, they have similar goals: to expose Black male youth to technology and make technology-career pathways accessible to them.

Qeyno Labs

Qeyno Labs (QL) was founded in 2010 in Oakland. Its goal is to guide youth residing in low-opportunity settings into career pathways for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). QL runs three-day immersion academies that empower disadvantaged youth of color with the knowledge it takes to build their ideas into useful technology applications (apps) and promote their apps in a public forum. This supports the development of entrepreneurial skills and portfolios. Through the use of coding literacy, art, and mentorship, QL employs a playful learning experience with the goal of making "hackathon" a household word among youth in many disadvantaged neighborhoods.

#YesWeCode

#YesWeCode (YWC) is an initiative of DreamWorks Animation, a national field-building organization with a goal of training 100,000 youth of color to become computer programmers and technologists. YWC works with local grassroots tech-education, job-training programs and end employers to build a solid job pipeline connecting youth of color to coding training and tech jobs. YWC is currently in the process of building an Employer Council, comprised of leaders in the tech sector, such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter, who are committed to increasing workforce diversity by investing in YWC's youth opportunity pipeline strategy.

United Roots / Youth Impact Hub

Youth Impact Hub (YIH) operates an arts and technology center with media labs, computer labs, and classrooms in downtown Oakland. Its mission is "to engage and empower marginalized youth in a socially innovative way." YIH has a track record of collaborations supporting the development of youth-led social enterprises, such as Symphony Productions, a youth-led media production company employing four youth with contracts totaling over $20,000. YIH's fellowship program creates a pipeline for low-income Oakland youth to participate in entrepreneurship that serves North, West, and East Oakland.

Young Community Developers

Young Community Developers' (YCD) mission is to empower residents of Southeast San Francisco toward educational attainment and to remove barriers to employment. Through comprehensive preparation and training techniques targeted toward enhancing workforce readiness coupled with an inclusive set of additional services, YCD seeks to assist in the removal of employment and education barriers for disenfranchised youth and young adults. YCD specializes in transitional employment and provides workforce development services such as job readiness and training, certifications, subsidized job placement, intense case management, and mentoring.
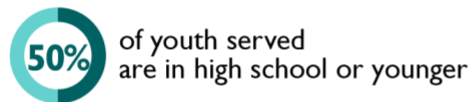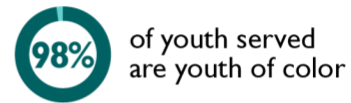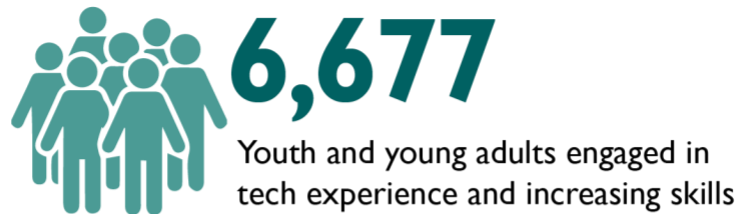
Findings

What was the value and impact of Bay Area Codes Cohort programs on youth participants?

Grantees in the Bay Area Codes Cohort offered a variety of programs to youth, including hackathons, academies, entrepreneurship programs, and after-school and summer programs. First, the cohort was able to achieve the foundation's goal for numbers served—reaching approximately 6,677 youth in the Bay Area. Second, the demographics of the youth served reflect the intended target population of this investment, with 98% of participants being youth of color and 75% coming from low-income households. Third, the cohort was able to deliver immersive, experiential, and interesting programs with high levels of participant satisfaction.

Contributions of Bay Area Codes Cohort 2015-2018

6,677 Youth and young adults engaged in tech experience and increasing skills

75% of youth served are low-income

90% of youth served are African American

98% of youth served are youth of color

50% of youth served are in high school or younger

40% of youth served identify as female

45 programs offered by the cohort

64 tech employers engaged with and visited by youth of color

159 youth and young adults received employment

III events convening youth, young adults, and professionals

Data source: Combined data from three years of grantee progress reports. For two of the organizations (Black Girls Code and Qeyno), data for year 3 was not available at the time of this report, so the data they provided in year 2 was used as an estimate. Please note that data on youth served might be duplicated for youth who participated in programs for multiple years.

Reaching Diverse Youth

The cohort shared a commitment to reaching young people who are historically underrepresented in tech, without defining narrow eligibility criteria. During this three-year investment, the cohort developed and expanded programming and opportunities for young people of color across socioeconomic lines to equip them with tech-related skills, expose them to the diversity of roles in tech, and provide them with exciting and engaging STEM learning experiences that create access to careers or additional education/ apprenticeship opportunities in tech-career pathways. Organizations were intentional about their efforts to reach and engage underrepresented youth. They located programs and events in communities, schools, and neighborhoods that have little access to tech, and hired staff and engaged mentors who reflected the target populations they were trying to reach. The result was an overwhelming demand and interest in their programs by youth of color and youth of color from low-income households.
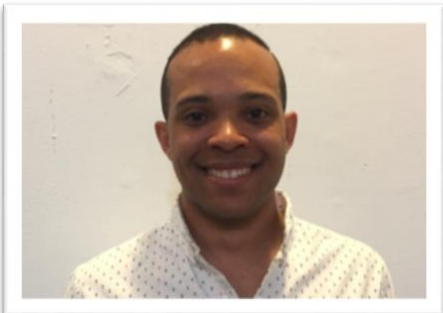
Kelvin, 25, of YesWeCode

Why is it important for us to have programs like YesWeCode?

Kelvin: "It is important for us to have programs like YesWeCode to reach out to everyone that feels like they've been left behind or that it's too late. It is important that we as a society start including groups of people through education and that we actually open the doors for success and what it means to be a software engineer as a whole. It's important that the technology we're building is reflective of the majority."

To respond to the unique needs of this population, the cohort aimed to deliver services that were culturally affirmative and built on a positive youth development model. Although few of the grantees designed programs that provided individual or family interventions for youth living in poverty, the cohort has continued to learn about what is needed to effectively support young people in their programs who are living in poverty and impacted by trauma. For youth engaged in programming for a sustained period of time, the grantees identified the need to add services and supports, including additional staff, to address the social, emotional, and economic needs of low-income families.

Rebecca, 17, and Kimora, 14, of Black Girls Code

What's important about Black Girls Code?

Kimora: "I'm a young girl learning about tech and coding and making all these apps and web pages, and it's cool that you can be any age and start at this time. There's a lot of stereotypes out there against African Americans, and the fact that you have this opportunity is really cool."

Rebecca: "I think it's really cool how you are able to meet so many young girls that look like you. [I've been around] people like Kimora and other girls at BGC for years at this point, and they're my friends. It's important because Black girls need to be in the field — they just need an in."

Learning Experience

The cohort delivered experiential, immersive learning opportunities to youth of color from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. As people who look like and share life experiences with the youth they serve, the cohort provided a unique and highly valued experience for youth who are historically underrepresented in the tech sector. *The impact of the learning experience on youth was documented in a short video about Bay Area Codes Cohort. Visit https://vimeo.com/224529354 to watch the video.*

Self-Directed and Experiential Learning

Cohort programs prioritize experiential and skill-building learning opportunities that allow youth to be creative and see their own ideas come to fruition. This model differs from curriculum-focused programs that emphasize improving content knowledge or academic-achievement metrics (e.g., test scores, other performance metrics). Across the cohort, organizations shared the vision of allowing youth to be directive and select experiences and skills that they were interested in learning or participating in. Youth were encouraged to be creative and use their creativity to develop real products, apps, and businesses that displayed their unique perspective and full potential. This experience-focused program model offers a corrective experience for youth of color, who often face discrimination, racism, and low expectations from traditional educational institutions or settings. This experience builds protective factors for young people, such as improved self-efficacy, increased positive outlook for their future, caring relationships with adults, and access to challenging opportunities in safe and supportive spaces.
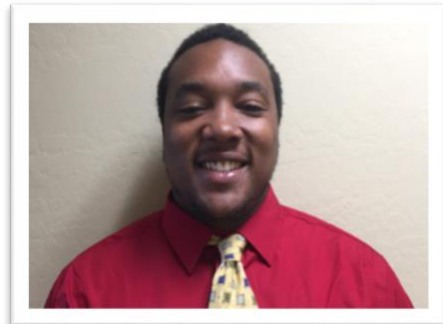
Don, 25, of Hack the Hood

Why is it important for young people like yourself and the Oakland community to have organizations like Hack the Hood?
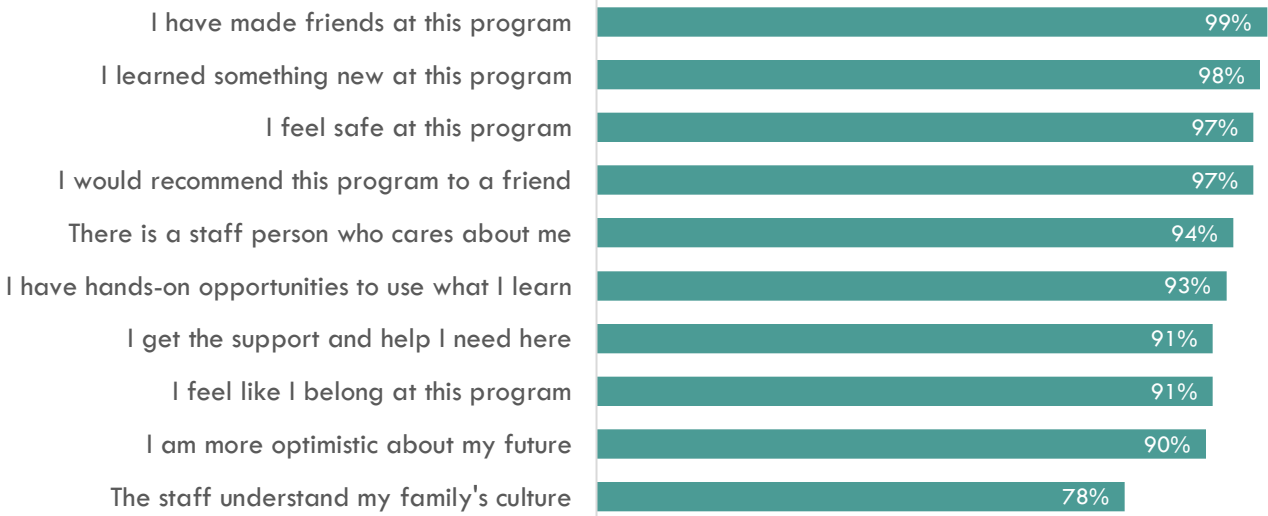
Don: It is important for cities like Oakland to have organizations like Hack the Hood because they serve underrepresented populations of people; it serves in a way where you breed a certain number of successful people that have a connection within the community and can give back to the community, and the city doesn't really have to fix it all themselves. It becomes a community of people trying to repair the community.

Youth Experience and Impact

Data from youth served revealed high satisfaction with programming provided by the cohort. In interviews and surveys, youth described feeling "at home" in programming classes. In addition, youth felt that they were in a community while participating in the programs. They valued meeting and working collaboratively with other youth and instructors who reflected their own ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Many felt that Cohort programs were more interesting than school or other academic programs. Youth were excited to learn tangible skills that could help them secure jobs and succeed professionally.

For many youth, coding and other learning experiences provided them with an opportunity to harness their creativity and realize their ideas in the form of tangible products or outcomes. Youth felt that a major benefit of the program was their ability to turn their ideas into games, websites, apps, graphics, or other tools. One young person said it best: "I can just come up with a cool idea, and I can actually make it real." This new paradigm empowered some to believe that they could be change agents and actors in their own lives and communities.

Percent of Youth Participants Who Agree or Strongly Agree with the Following Statements (n =130)

Statement	Percent
I have made friends at this program	99%
I learned something new at this program	98%
I feel safe at this program	97%
I would recommend this program to a friend	97%
There is a staff person who cares about me	94%
I have hands-on opportunities to use what I learn	93%
I get the support and help I need here	91%
I feel like I belong at this program	91%
I am more optimistic about my future	90%
The staff understand my family's culture	78%

These experiences often make youth participants eager for opportunities to learn more about education and career paths in tech and coding. Of youth surveyed, 87% were participating in a Bay Area Codes Cohort program to learn more about coding, get a tech job or an internship, participate in a tech apprenticeship/ certification program, or study a tech-related major in college. In interviews, some youth felt that the skills they were gaining would also allow them to access information that could help their less tech-savvy family and community members find jobs or other resources.

Percent of Youth Participants with Future Goals to ... (n = 130)

Goal	Percent
Learn more about coding	32%
Get a coding/tech job	25%
Study a tech field in college	13%
Get a tech-company internship	13%
Not interested in tech jobs	8%
Don't know	5%
Tech apprenticeship/certification program	2%
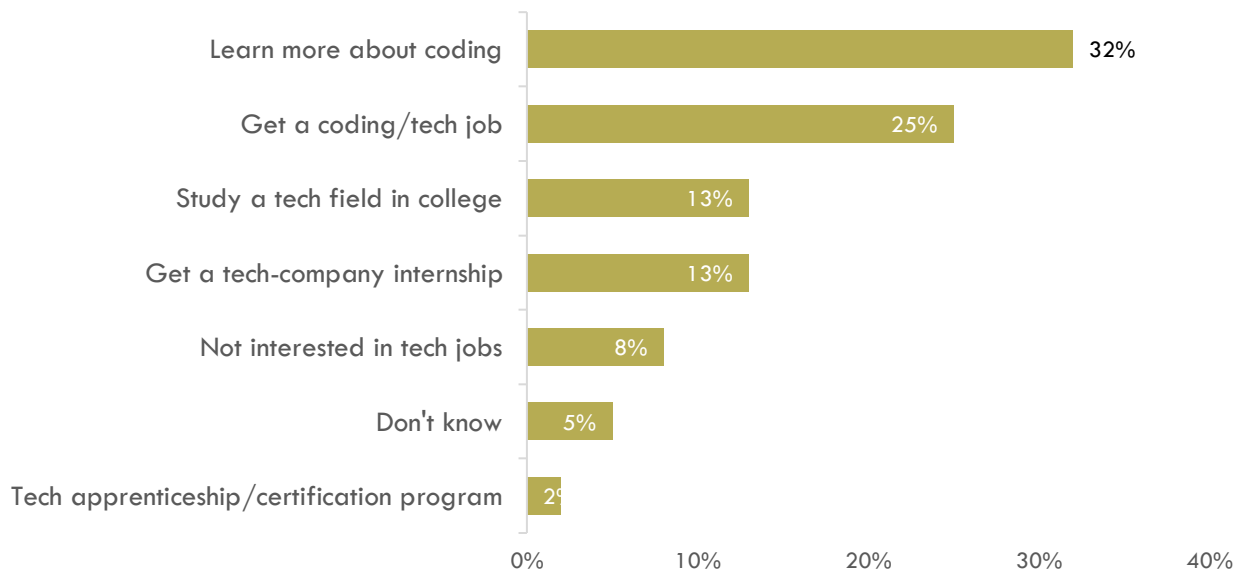
Grantee Program Staff and Leadership Diversity

Cohort organizations are primarily led, managed, and implemented by people of color—often from the same communities or racial/ethnic backgrounds as the youth in their programs. Organizations run and staffed by people of color eliminate many of the engagement and retention issues faced by traditional nonprofits. Young people enjoy participating in the program; feeling seen, heard, and affirmed; and engaging in the learning experiences offered by grantees. Additionally, most of the leadership and senior-level management at grantee organizations bring lived experiences as people of color working in tech and/or did not start their organizations after a long career in the nonprofit sector. Collectively, the outsider status of most of these nonprofit staffers has conferred many benefits to the program model and curriculum, including more innovation and a deeper focus on intentionally designing the participant experience and learning agenda. Interviews and surveys reveal that youth put a high premium on the experience of meeting and learning from people of color who have knowledge or personal experience with coding or tech jobs.

What did the Bay Area Codes cohort investment model achieve for this sector?

The San Francisco Foundation made an intentional investment in delivering a cohort experience for these grantee organizations because of the potential for these organizations to collectively impact the tech sector. The foundation convened grantees on at least a quarterly basis to establish and work on shared objectives, projects, and campaigns. In several instances, the foundation provided additional financial support and/or engaged subject-matter experts to help advance the cohort's collective goals. The foundation looked to grantees as experts in the field and offered opportunities for grantees to establish themselves as thought leaders and innovators in the conversation on diversity and inclusion in tech.
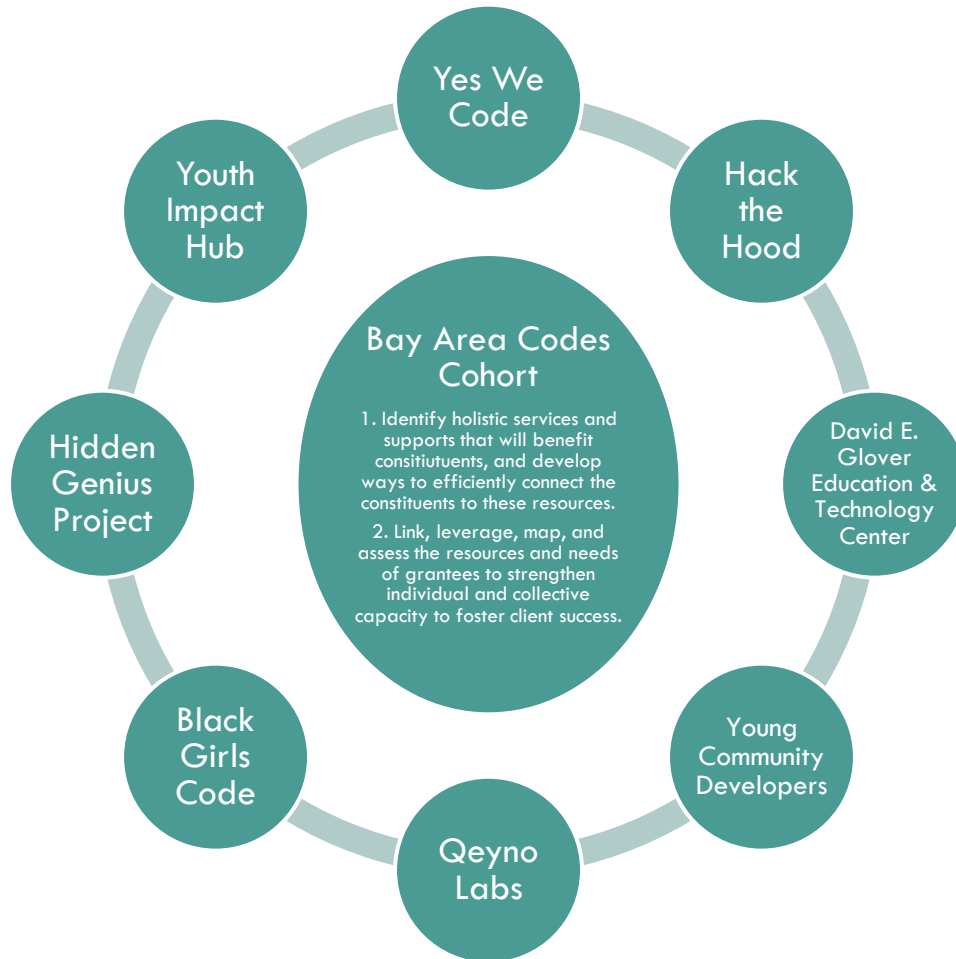
From Pipeline to Ecosystem: Shifting the Narrative on Diversity and Inclusion in Tech

Although the initial goal for the cohort was to strengthen each organization's ability to provide a ladder from introductory exposure to employment in the tech industry, the grantees' vision of their influence on the field has expanded and evolved through the duration of the grant. When the investment first began three years ago, the vision for tech diversity was for grantees to create pipelines for young people to be competitive for jobs at established tech giants (e.g., Google, Facebook). However, youth who were getting internships or jobs at these companies often felt tokenized, stigmatized, and unseen in these companies. With many youth of color facing community and intergenerational trauma, the grantees felt that these experiences were becoming more enriching for the tech companies than for the youth themselves. Tech companies need to invest deeply in organizational culture change in order to create safe and inclusive spaces where youth and young professionals of color can thrive.

As a result, over the course of this investment, the cohort's theory of change shifted to create the conditions for youth of color to bring technology into their own communities, develop their own enterprises, and gain 21st-century skills that will allow them to compete and excel in any career or enterprise they pursue. Grantees aim to harness their collective power to create a well-connected ecosystem of programs to provide youth of color with the self-vision and creativity to see a future for themselves as technologists, entrepreneurs, scientists, and creatives. This approach allows youth served by grantees to enter and navigate the burgeoning tech sector with more autonomy and agency than conventional career ladders and professional-development systems. As part of this model, grantees are developing non-tech curriculum and services for their staff and participants, including financial support, mentorships, trauma-informed

healing approaches, parent engagement, and mental health services. Establishing a supportive ecosystem grounded in holistic youth development is a key strategy to ensure that low-income youth of color have all their needs met to enable them to become tech leaders and change agents.

> **VISION**   *To open doors to opportunity and foster an ecosystem for lifelong success for Bay Area youth and their communities by collectively working at the intersections of tech, equity, and youth development in order to influence the school, government, business, and human-service systems that shape their life outcomes.*

Bay Area Codes Cohort

1. Identify holistic services and supports that will benefit constiituents, and develop ways to efficiently connect the constituents to these resources.

2. Link, leverage, map, and assess the resources and needs of grantees to strengthen individual and collective capacity to foster client success.

(Surrounding circles: Yes We Code, Hack the Hood, David E. Glover Education & Technology Center, Young Community Developers, Qeyno Labs, Black Girls Code, Hidden Genius Project, Youth Impact Hub)

Cohort Objectives and Achievements

During the three years of this project, the Bay Area Codes Cohort identified and worked collaboratively on several key objectives that aimed to operationalize this new vision.

❖ *Developing an ecosystem of tech learning-opportunities among cohort members to improve outcomes for youth participants.* Grantees developed memorandums of understanding (MOU) among themselves to provide multilayered programs and support to youth in those programs; created referral pathways among youth who were aging out of their programs or who were interested in programming offered

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by another grantee; hosted joint events, hackathons, or academies to bring their youth and strategic partners together; shared programmatic space, technology, and other resources to ensure that they could meet the growing demand for programs and the lack of affordable office space. In addition, the foundation funded an annual youth retreat for youth participants in all grantee programs. The youth retreats were an opportunity to convene and showcase skills, apps, and businesses developed by youth program participants.

❖ *Developing coordinated efforts to engage policymakers, stakeholders, and the tech industry to expand opportunities and access for youth*. Grantees identified a need to raise awareness of their programs among schools, after-school providers, policymakers and decision-makers, the tech sector, and other funders. Policy efforts have included creating partnerships with local government, school districts, and tech companies to offer more in-school or out-of-school programming and developing standards for diversity and inclusion practices at tech companies.

❖ *Building a shared communications agenda and platform*. Grantees developed a unified platform (bayareascodes.org) to promote Oakland's homegrown approach to tech learning-opportunities for youth of color. In addition, the San Francisco Foundation engaged a communications firm—Spitfire Strategies—to develop a communications plan that supports the cohort's key objectives and thought leadership in this space. Communications efforts aim to build the capacity to tell stories that raise the profile of these programs and change the narrative of diversity and inclusion efforts in the tech sector to foster a community-centered, equity-driven, and entrepreneurial approach.

❖ *Supporting organizational growth and sustainability*. Bright Research Group conducted an assessment of grantees' readiness to participate in program-level evaluation and identified a need to build the capacity of grantees to articulate their theory of change and institute data-collection protocols and systems that would allow for an evaluation to take place. As a result of this assessment, organizations were offered the opportunity to receive an additional $50,000 one-time grant to support their organization's ability to collect data, conduct an evaluation, and make other investments in their organizational functioning and stability, such as strategic planning, board development, etc.

❖ *Offering financial and social-emotional support to youth*. Many of the youth participating in grantee programs are survivors of interpersonal or community trauma, or are currently experiencing adverse experiences that affect their ability to participate in programs. For example, several youth participants were robbed or had their cars or homes burglarized, causing the loss of technology such as cell phones and laptops which would be financially difficult to replace. Other youth were facing significant trauma, such as homelessness, that led to a lack of basic needs like food or clothing. Many youth had no bank accounts or access to any financial-literacy education. The San Francisco Foundation engaged Community Financial Resources (CFR) to offer basic checking accounts, financial products, and emergency funds to meet some of these needs. Aside from financial stability, these and other conditions, such as the violent deaths of friends or family members and involvement in the criminal justice system, were causing significant emotional trauma for some young people. Grantees have been sharing practices and resources for meeting the social-emotional needs of these young people, including hiring social workers or trained therapists, scaffolding curricula with social-emotional learning and healing practices, and incorporating other trauma-informed approaches.

❖ *Prioritizing self-care, wellness, and trauma-informed care for nonprofit staff*. Because of the conditions that many of their youth participants face in the community, some staff at grantee organizations

experienced vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and/or burnout. This reality was further complicated by political and policy changes as well as movements on the national stage that were directly impacting the safety and well-being of youth participants and staff. Grantees developed a shared practice of wellness breaks and instituted trauma-informed practices to ensure that meetings and collaborations fostered healing and self-care.

What do emergent organizations need in order to become sustainable and thriving organizations?

Through the provision of funding, capacity-building opportunities, and resources to develop internal evaluation systems, The San Francisco Foundation aimed to create the conditions to catapult new and emerging organizations to become sustainable and thriving.

Fully Funding the Cost of Programs

Many of the grantees in this cohort had never received institutional funding before or had never received a grant of this scale. Combined with strategic evaluation and sustainability resources, this funding opportunity allowed grantees to fully fund their programs, strengthen their organizational infrastructure, and secure additional grants and investments, allowing them to scale their model regionally and nationally. Several organizations are either starting cohorts in other communities or providing training and technical assistance to those communities on how to replicate their model.

Autonomy and Ownership of the Cohort Experience

For cohort initiatives that seek to organize meetings between leadership staff from multiple organizations, convenings need to offer the flexibility for participants to utilize time as they see fit within the context of pursuing cohort goals and projects. For example, executive staff might prefer convening time to be designated as project work time versus connecting time, or to reserve parts of the quarterly meetings for sharing experiences and best practices regarding organizational development. TSFF effectively pivoted in response to grantee feedback during the second year by restructuring cohort meetings to promote grantee ownership, enhancing the quarterly meetings as a space for collaboration and planning. Cohort-level goals should be defined in partnership with grantees and should have measurable deliverables and resources attached to their achievement. At the same time, the foundation should be more direct and transparent about the participation requirements and expectations for grantees when it comes to advancing cohort goals and then building these into the grant agreement.

Incentivizing and Funding Organizational Capacity Building

Emerging organizations in this cohort expanded quickly as a result of this grant and their ability to leverage that grant to attract additional investments. For many organizations, managing the rapid expansion of their programs, addressing organizational functioning and priorities, and participating in a rigorous cohort experience was too demanding on their time and capacity. All grantees identified the need to receive support in strategic planning for growth, scale, sustainability, fundraising, evaluation, and board development early on in the cohort experience. In response to this need, TSFF offered a one-time $50,000 grant to support evaluation capacity-building and organizational-functioning efforts. Grantees easily expended that funding and required additional funding and incentives to achieve their individual

organizational objectives. Grantees also expressed interest in receiving training and technical assistance on organizational functioning and workforce training and development efforts. Investments in emerging organizations may require a formalized, intentional capacity-building program. Lessons learned and options for capacity-building programs include the following:

- Assess grantees on their capacity-building needs with regard to organizational functioning and sustainability at the beginning of an investment, and establish key organizational-functioning milestones as part of the grant agreement.

- Develop a training and capacity-building plan with a set calendar through the grant term whereby grantees can access trainings, workshops, learning communities, and individual coaching to hit each milestone, with a focus on business planning and sustainability. This can occur within the context of quarterly meetings or separately.

- Require a certain amount of the grant award to be dedicated to infrastructure and/or the achievement of milestones that support organizational functioning and sustainability. For example, a key barrier to attracting additional funding is having clear audits and balanced books. All organizations should have a financial-management/accounting resource to fulfill this function. If any of the organizations in the next cohort are lacking this resource, TSFF should require that grant awards be used to address this.

- TSFF may incentivize participation in capacity-building activities by connecting those organizations that do hit specific milestones with additional funders and/or investing in capital improvements for those grantees who demonstrate sustainability.

Conclusion

The San Francisco Foundation invested over $5.9 million in eight organizations from 2015 to 2018 in a cohort of nonprofits that provide youth of color with education, experiences, and job and entrepreneurship opportunities in the tech sector. Through the cohort investment model, grantees established and worked on shared objectives, projects, and campaigns. In several instances, the foundation provided additional financial support and/or engaged subject-matter experts to help advance the cohort's collective goals. As a result of this investment, Bay Area Codes Cohort grantees served 6,677 youth of color and low-income youth with immersive, experiential, and interesting programs that harnessed their creativity and leadership. The cohort developed a collective new vision that shifts the narrative on diversity and inclusion in tech toward a community empowerment approach. Grantees created a coordinated ecosystem of programs and services for youth participants, engaged in shared advocacy efforts and campaigns in the sector, layered their programs with financial and social-emotional supports for trauma-impacted youth, built a shared communications platform and campaign, offered annual youth retreats, and scaled their organizations to become more sustainable. The San Francisco Foundation's vision of a cohort investing model created added benefits for the youth participants in programs and for grantee organizations. As the foundation plans its second cohort investment in these programs, focusing on investment strategies that build organizational sustainability, functioning, and capacity will ensure the deep rooting of thriving organizations in this expanding economic sector.