



CASE
STUDY



“When Families Thrive, Children Succeed”

How the Mission Economic Development Agency
Created a Transformational Prenatal-to-Career Model

By **Lynne Sacks and Michelle Sedaca**

MARCH 2024

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Acknowledgements

The authors express our sincere gratitude to all the MEDA, MPN, and partner organization leaders who so generously shared their time and experience with us in developing this case study and learning about the Mission District. We also deeply appreciate the Mission residents and promotoras who shared their stories, their concerns, and their successes. Special thanks as well to EdRedesign's Julie Allen and Rob Watson for their invaluable contributions to the case.

About EdRedesign

Founded in 2014 by Paul Reville, Francis Keppel Professor of Practice of Educational Policy and Administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, EdRedesign provides catalytic support to the cradle-to-career place-based partnership field to drive systems-level change and open personalized pathways to well-being, educational attainment, civic engagement, and upward mobility. To support this growing field to effect transformational change that serves the needs and talents of individual children and youth, our work focuses on talent development, actionable research, our Institute for Success Planning, and our By All Means initiatives. Our mission is to ensure the social, emotional, physical, and academic development and well-being of all children and youth, especially those affected by racism and poverty.

The landscape of opportunities for children, youth, and families is vastly inequitable throughout our nation, in every region and state, from city to city, and neighborhood to neighborhood. Factors outside of school, including structural racism and economic inequity, explain much of the variance in well-being, educational attainment, and upward mobility, yet efforts to achieve equity for children and youth have largely focused on changing what happens in school. To change the status quo, we need strategies that go beyond schools to ensure that all children and youth thrive.

We believe strategies to expand opportunities for children and youth have two critical components: **place-based, cross-sector collaboration** to remove structural barriers and open pathways to opportunity; and **personalized, relationship-based supports**, what we call **Success Planning**, for children and youth to reach their full potential.

EdRedesign believes that communities that engage in both cross-sector collaborative action and Success Planning are pairing two powerful approaches that will fortify local ecosystems and increase access, leading to significant positive changes in policy, practice, and school and life outcomes for children, youth, and families.

SAN FRANCISCO'S MISSION DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE^{1,2}

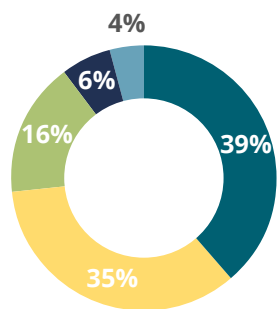
~58,000
people live in the Mission

~6,700
children live in the neighborhood, the majority of whom are Latino

72%
of Latino families in the Bay Area, which includes the Mission, are low income or very low income

12th
highest poverty rate out of San Francisco's 41 neighborhoods

97%
of MEDA clients are low income



- White
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other
- Black

MEDA'S Transformative Impact

San Francisco's Mission District has served for decades as the vibrant epicenter of the San Francisco Bay Area's Latino community.

Rich with art, food, and a strong sense of place, its history of activism during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s has left an enduring legacy of community organizing and empowerment. The Mission's Latino population decreased from 52% to 36% between 1990 and 2019, a decline of approximately 9,000 (or 1 in 3) Latinos. In addition to displacement, the Mission, as it's commonly known, also faces the challenges associated with neighborhoods characterized by poverty and gentrification: a shortage of affordable housing and childcare, financial insecurity, and schools that struggle to meet the multifaceted needs of their students. While these difficulties mirror those of countless other neighborhoods across the United States, the community's response has been far from commonplace. Under the umbrella of the Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA), the Mission has embraced an audacious vision and ambitious set of practices to become a national model for place-based prenatal-to-career strategies designed to "build Latino prosperity, community ownership, and civic power."

There's no better way to understand what MEDA's place-based strategy really means than to start with its building—a vibrant, welcoming space with locally owned cafes, meeting



spaces, classrooms, and offices for staff. A tour of the neighborhood, which has public art on every block, passes numerous businesses and community organizations MEDA has assisted with small business loans or affordable rent, schools that MEDA supports through its Mission Promise Neighborhood program, and housing of all types that MEDA has either built or bought through its Community Real Estate program.

For the people who live there, MEDA has been a lifeline, providing access to stable housing, affordable childcare, afterschool programs, mental health support, financial capability coaching, small business loans, and a host of other services—and as important, the knowledge that there are those who care about them and want to help.

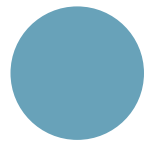
"We've been able to get a glimpse into a future of government—a government that is more community-centered, collaborative, data-driven, and accountable through this process of creating a cradle-to-career collaborative and aligning the systems from the city to the school district down to the community-based organizations and the residents on the street."

Richard Raya,
MEDA Senior Advisor
and former Chief
Strategy Officer



Founded in 1973 to build economic security for the Mission's Latino community, MEDA has grown into a multifaceted organization with a staff of well over 100 people and an annual budget of over \$21 million. Today, MEDA's intersecting activities touch nearly all aspects of the lives of Mission residents. MEDA is the backbone agency for the Mission Promise Neighborhood (MPN), which is the collaborative action initiative of MEDA, the city of San Francisco, the San Francisco Unified School District, and

15 vital community partners serving students and families. Using a nested civic infrastructure approach that includes the neighborhood, city, state, and federal funding streams, MEDA and MPN deploy millions of dollars in the community each year, distributing funds to nonprofit partners for services, grants, low-cost loans, relief funds, college scholarships, and more. MEDA maintains its strong community roots and mission while continuing to expand the scope of its services, its geographic reach, and its national profile.



MEDA Impact

Student Results^{3,4}:

- **71%** of preschool children in MPN's programs whose parents also participated in MEDA's programs and services are assessed as kindergarten ready, according to a 2019 study
- The graduation rate at MPN's target high school increased **31.7%** since 2012 to **90%** during the 2021-2022 academic year

Since its founding in 2014, MEDA's Community Real Estate Program has⁵:

- Preserved/produced over **2,000** affordable residential and commercial units, including new affordable housing apartment complexes
- Leased **low-cost space** in its buildings for early childhood programs, small businesses, arts and cultural organizations, and other nonprofits

In 2022, MEDA^{6,7,8}:

- Served approximately **8,750** clients in its asset building programs and approximately **1,750** residents in its Community Real Estate programs
- Helped **3,000+** clients access nearly **\$3.5 million** in economic relief and another **390+** access **\$9.4 million** in rental relief
- Completed nearly **4,000** tax returns, resulting in an estimated **\$7.9 million** returned to local residents
- Helped place **200+** people into quality jobs
- Assisted **400** small businesses with coaching and business development technical assistance
- Achieved a **98%** repayment rate on its active loan portfolio



MEDA's impact in the community is vast. In 2022, MEDA served an aggregate of approximately 17,000 clients, through an array of culturally responsive programs and services, while their outreach efforts reached over 89,000 people.⁹ In 2022, MEDA helped 200 individuals find quality jobs and more than 3,000 clients access nearly \$3.5 million in economic relief, while assisting clients to file nearly 4,000 tax returns resulting in an estimated \$7.9 million returned to local residents.¹⁰ Seventy-one percent of preschool children in MPN programs whose families also participated in MPN programs and services have been assessed as kindergarten ready, and the graduation rate at their target high school has increased 31.7% since 2012 to 90% during the 2021-2022 academic year.^{11,12} The schools that partner with MPN are also fostering a safe, supportive environment where the majority of youth feel respected and that they can rely on an adult on campus.¹³

MEDA's Community Real Estate program has built contemporary apartment complexes that provide affordable units to families as well as space for co-located early childhood programs, small businesses, arts organizations, and other nonprofits. The Mission's small business community—predominantly comprised of low-income, immigrant, and minority-owned businesses that traditionally lack access to capital—has also benefited from MEDA's services, which include business development technical assistance, coaching, and access to capital with low-interest loans and grants. In 2022, MEDA's community loan fund, Fondo Adelante, served 400 small businesses with recurring, high-quality, and high-touch coaching and technical assistance, which is key to its 98% repayment rate on its active loan portfolio.¹⁴

This case study highlights the strategic steps that propelled MEDA's growth into one of the leading examples of how place-based collaboration can change the life trajectories of local residents while maintaining the culture and heritage of the community.

We highlight MEDA's foundational focus on small businesses to build economic stability as well as the Mission Promise Neighborhood and Community Real Estate initiatives, which are two components that have had particularly significant impact on the Mission's residents. We draw on over a dozen interviews, multiple site visits, focus groups with neighborhood residents, promotoras (community workers), and Family Success Coaches, and the review of numerous organizational documents. This case aims to help community leaders, policy makers, and practitioners understand the prenatal-to-career infrastructure MEDA has built, the impact it has had, and how to replicate the core practices in different local contexts.



MEDA developed a strategic plan that included purchasing a building to serve as their organizational home and put a new priority on operational infrastructure, staffing capacity, and multiple sources of funding.

Building a Foundation to Support Latino Economic Stability

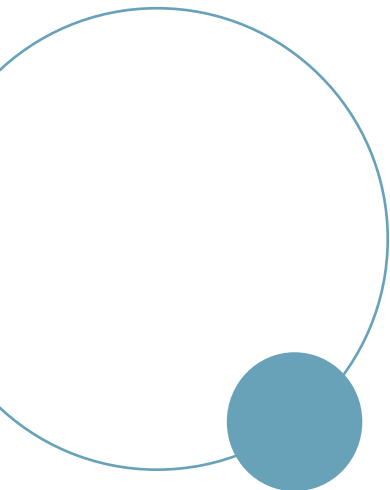
When CEO Luis Granados began working for MEDA 25 years ago, the organization had an annual operating budget of \$300,000 and served several hundred clients per year. Their primary focus at the time was helping clients start, manage, or expand a small local business and access capital. The tech boom that arrived in San Francisco in 1999 brought new challenges to the Mission, with rapidly rising rents and the displacement of Latino residents. MEDA itself was impacted when the owner of the building in which they rented space sold it to a corporation.

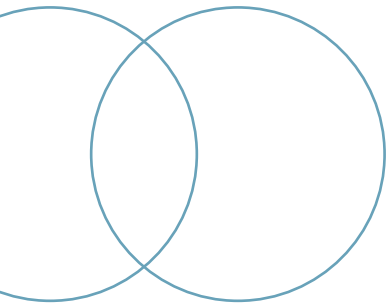
They—and the 26 other tenants—lost their lease. The sense of helplessness MEDA leadership and staff felt at the time led them to rethink their vision of how they could best help their neighborhood and their own practices. MEDA began to develop strategic partnerships with other organizations and to expand their services to support residents’ financial stability. They also took a hard look at their own internal practices. They developed a strategic plan that included purchasing a building to serve as their organizational home and put a new priority on operational infrastructure, staffing capacity, and multiple sources of funding.

10 Takeaways for Place-Based Leaders

MEDA’s success is built on a number of strategic moves that other partnerships can adapt and employ in their own local contexts. While each community has different cultures, assets, needs, histories, and existing initiatives, these strategies address both the mindsets and the actions needed for transformational and sustained cradle-to-career efforts.

1. Keep the community’s needs and aspirations at the center of the work
2. Have an audacious vision
3. Build on what already exists through strategic, relationship-based partnerships
4. Hire and cultivate committed, proximate leaders
5. Embed data—both quantitative and qualitative—to understand needs and measure progress
6. Blend direct services with capacity building and infrastructure development
7. Personalize supports
8. Braid multiple funding streams and networks
9. Advocate to influence structures and policies
10. When you succeed, bring others with you





“We deeply value and focus on the relationships that the businesses have with us, our partner organizations, and our neighborhoods. We believe that you must be present in the community you serve to fundamentally understand your client needs and to create equitable place-based services to best support them.”

Pablo Solares-Rowbury,
Fondo Adelante
Vice-President



As MEDA developed a broader range of programming, according to Granados, their relationships with residents became “less transactional and more transformational” and, over time, more trust-based. MEDA began to address housing displacement, for example, through programs to build credit and financial stability. When a local organization was no longer able to continue to provide free tax filing support for residents, MEDA took over, adding thousands of tax-filing clients each year to whom it could offer additional services. This shift in focus reflects MEDA’s approach to decision-making, which has five components:

1. *Community need—analyzing data from clients, partners, the community, and formal data sources to determine a need for services.*
2. *Management buy-in—bringing decisions to the MEDA leadership team for input, analysis, and buy-in.*
3. *Governance support—ensuring MEDA’s board supports key actions.*
4. *Community buy-in—building support with government, community agencies, and funders.*
5. *Resource development—ensuring resources are available to enter new areas of work, supported by a business plan.*

While MEDA has expanded its scope over time, the organization has maintained its initial focus on the Mission’s small business community. In 2014, MEDA established Fondo Adelante, a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that provides low-interest micro and small business loans to individuals who have

traditionally faced barriers accessing capital. MEDA’s support of small business owners is especially important because entrepreneurship is a key pathway to the job market for many immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented and new arrivals to this country, according to Fondo Adelante Vice-President Pablo Solares-Rowbury. “We deeply value and focus on the relationships that the businesses have with us, our partner organizations, and our neighborhoods. We believe that you must be present in the community you serve to fundamentally understand your client needs and to create equitable place-based services to best support them,” said Solares-Rowbury. His team employs a relationship-based, holistic approach that addresses individual clients’ business needs and connects them to MEDA’s other programs. In partnership with the California Small Business Coalition for Racial Justice, MEDA also introduced the Racial Equity Lens (REL), a loan product that expands options for minority-owned small businesses.

A community-centered talent development strategy undergirds MEDA’s approach to its human resources. MEDA cultivates talent from within the organization and hires staff of color who represent the district. Numerous staff members—some of whom were once clients—have started in entry-level positions and advanced to more senior roles. MEDA nurtures homegrown talent and leadership through professional development opportunities and mentorship. As an example, staff on the Community Real Estate team have participated in trainings related to negotiating real estate transactions, finances, and community development and organizing.



One of the best examples of the multifaceted way MEDA works to both support and empower the Mission's Latino residents is its promotoras—community workers whose role has long been established in many Latin American countries. MEDA's promotoras are all residents of the Mission, and most have been clients of MEDA who have benefited from MEDA's services. In describing their reasons for becoming promotoras, most spoke of a personal connection to their work. Their cultural and physical proximity to the community and its needs makes them trusted sources of information and resources. Promotoras are based in specific geographic areas within the Mission and generally specialize in either health or housing and also provide other supports as needed. Those who focus on housing offer information sessions explaining what supports are available, since residents are often unaware of the services for which they qualify. They also help with the applications for emergency shelter or affordable housing units. On the health side, promotoras provide information about vaccinations (which was particularly important during the peak of the Covid crisis), testing, and chronic conditions that are common in the community, such as diabetes.

WATCH



StriveTogether Mission Promise Neighborhood Spotlight

Video Credit: StriveTogether

Mission Promise Neighborhood: Creating a Prenatal-to-Career Continuum of Support

In 2011, the MEDA leadership team made a decision that would dramatically expand both the size and the scope of their work. In partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District, the mayor's

office, the United Way of the Bay Area, and other local organizations, MEDA applied for and received a Promise Neighborhoods planning grant. The Promise Neighborhoods program of the U.S. Department of Education is a competitive, federally funded strategy designed to "ensure that over time all children in a Promise Neighborhood have access to a continuum of solutions, or pipeline, that support them from cradle to career."¹⁵ Promise Neighborhoods bring together a network of supports that includes multiple local organizations as well as the public school system to create a comprehensive, place-based approach to improving outcomes for children and youth.

Receiving the Promise Neighborhoods grant transformed MEDA. According to Richard Raya, then MEDA's Chief Strategy Officer, "The Promise Neighborhoods grant was pivotal. It was transformational. It launched us into these new lines of work and made us a community backbone agency so we could work collectively." The initial federal grant of \$6 million per year for five years enabled MEDA to adopt an ambitious prenatal-to-career strategy to build "a future where every child excels and every family succeeds."¹⁶ MEDA applied for and was awarded two continuation grants, which provided \$3 million per year for a two-year period and \$1 million per year for a two-year period. Along with funding, the grants came with technical assistance, new partnerships and areas of focus, and a results framework for measuring progress against 10 goals with 15 indicators that span the cradle-to-career continuum.

“The district saw the Promise Neighborhoods grant as a way to sustain a lot of the structural elements of the School Improvement Grant work, including the community schools mode.”

Efrain Barrera,
Former Director
of MPN



Applying for a Promise Neighborhoods Grant

Despite MEDA’s long history in the community, the organization was not an obvious fit for the Promise Neighborhoods program since their work at the time had no direct involvement with the schools. MEDA Chief Operating Officer Jillian Spindle and others saw Promise Neighborhoods as a chance to build a true two-generation, anti-poverty strategy that addressed the needs of both children and their families. MEDA leadership met with the superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District, who felt the Promise Neighborhoods opportunity was closely aligned with the goals of the federal School Improvement Grant they had received to improve schools in the Mission District. Efrain Barrera, former Director of MPN, explained that with the School Improvement Grant ending, “The district saw the Promise Neighborhoods grant as a way to sustain a lot of the structural elements of the School Improvement Grant work, including the community schools model.”

MEDA, as the lead organization, approached the Promise Neighborhoods grant proposal with the same core strategy they followed in the rest of their work: talking to residents and community organizations to learn about the biggest needs facing those who live and work in the Mission District. The listening sessions with families were often harrowing. Barrera, who at the time was working for the school district, said that while he knew in broad terms the challenges families were facing, he and others were shaken to hear the depth of their struggles finding stable housing, employment, healthcare,

and mental health services. This understanding would drive the Mission Promise Neighborhood strategy. MEDA centered family economic success and residential stability as signature tenets of MPN’s two-generation approach. This key decision distinguished MPN from other Promise Neighborhoods initiatives that primarily focus on student outcomes, and ultimately redefined the vision of a Promise Neighborhood.

A core element of the planning period in 2012 involved forging new partnerships with the schools in the Mission District and with the leadership of San Francisco Unified School District, starting with the superintendent and the principals. “Having the leadership buy-in and dedicated capacity from the schools was really important. The actual implementation took time to build trusting relationships throughout the school communities,” according to Spindle. “Over time, the principals became some of the biggest champions of the effort since they were closest to their students and families in crisis and welcomed the wraparound support at their schools,” she said.

MEDA also hosted brainstorming sessions with established community organizations that had histories of working with the schools or with children and families. During the planning period, working groups developed plans for each part of the prenatal-to-career continuum, including early childhood programs, parenting support, job training, afterschool enrichment, and housing. Following the planning grant, the collaborative successfully applied for a Promise Neighborhoods implementation grant in 2012 and began implementation in 2013.

Building trust is essential for the coaches, both with the families and with school principals and other staff. The process of building and maintaining buy-in with the public schools has been a crucial, and at times challenging, element of MPN's work.

Personalizing Supports with Family Success Coaches

Family Success Coaches are the core of Mission Promise Neighborhood's two-generation support to families. The coaches, who are all bilingual in Spanish and English, develop relationships with parents and connect them with the supports they need for their children to thrive. There are nine coaches, one based at each of the eight schools in MPN and one who focuses on families with preschool-aged children. The school-based coaches are present at their school sites four to five days a week with the permission of the principal. In keeping with MEDA and MPN's commitment to having a staff that reflects the community they serve, most of the Family Success Coaches have lived experience that mirrors that of the residents they serve. MPN families describe the coaches as a lifeline to families who are often in crisis. In a focus group, MPN parents expressed deep gratitude both for the concrete help the Family Success Coaches provide and for the coaches' depth of caring about the challenges the families are facing.

Building trust is essential for the coaches, both with the families and with school principals and other staff. The

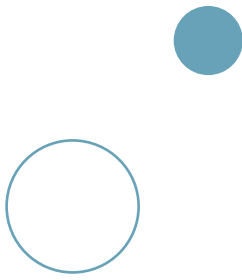
process of building and maintaining buy-in with the public schools has been a crucial, and at times challenging, element of MPN's work. Each coach needed to develop trusting relationships with their school and to find a strategy that worked in each context. The role of the Family Success Coaches was initially seen by some school leaders as replicating roles that already existed in their schools.

In some cases, turnover in school leadership—and among coaches—meant restarting the process. Former Director of MPN Efrain Barrera said building partnerships with schools "definitely took some time and a lot of conversations. The piece around alignment was very important." MPN needed to be very thoughtful about which partners to bring into the schools, since not everyone was a good fit or provided a service that was needed.

The coaches' approach to fostering relationships with families varies by school and coach, with some connecting with each new family as they arrive and others being visible at drop-off and pick-up times to establish credibility and build trust over time.



Celina Castro-Saelao, who oversees the Family Support Coaches in her role as MPN's Family Support Manager, grew up in the Mission moving frequently from place to place. When she was a teenager, her mother was able to get one of the new affordable housing apartments Good Samaritan Family Resource Center, an MPN community partner, had just opened as part of their new strategy giving low-income Mission District households access to affordable housing and supportive services. The new construction replaced Good Samaritan's home for more than 80 years that was severely damaged and condemned after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Castro-Saelao started volunteering at the family resource center next door and then became a youth leader, which changed her life trajectory. She remained involved with youth programming through college, and later became involved directly with MPN as a Family Success Coach.



The main challenges are the lack of availability of services to fully meet the needs and overcoming structural obstacles to connecting families with supports.

"Our role is to break down those barriers, but the barriers are just so ingrained in the system."

Mariana Tejada,
MEDA MPN Family
Success Coach

Each coach has an introductory handout, in Spanish, that tells a little about themselves and what services they offer, which can include everything from emergency food, financial assistance, housing, mental health supports, and job training programs. The Family Success Coaches have been especially helpful in connecting with families on an individual basis, since the families will share other needs they have after they build a relationship with a coach. Once that trust is in place, according to Coach Roberto Aparicio, "that's when the action starts. A lot of them have confidence in the coaches here to open up about everything because we're the point person. They might not have that with the other staff members."

Family Success Coaches refer families to services and programs available through both MEDA and partner organizations based on their specific needs. For example, coaches help families find spots in shelters or apply for affordable housing and also connect families with legal services, mental health counselors, wealth-building strategies, and job training. "The focus is always on how [we] can help families reach their goals," said Ernesto Martinez, Vice-President of MEDA's Asset Building Programs, who started out as an intern at the organization and progressed to the management level. Coaches work collaboratively with families, co-creating goals by utilizing interactive tools such as journey maps and other resources (for example, see the [Viva Toolkit](#)). Parents are invited to participate in Parent Leadership Academies, which provide training on advocacy and help families use their collective voices for change.

Parents who have worked with Family Success Coaches spoke about their impact during a focus group. Many shared stories of facing homelessness and challenges finding work, food, or mental health support and expressed deep appreciation for the connections their coaches had provided to a wide range of resources. Almost as important as the assistance was the feeling that there were people who cared about them and were there to help. The main challenges, according to a focus group with the Family Success Coaches, are the lack of availability of services to fully meet the needs and overcoming structural obstacles to connecting families with supports. "Our role is to break down those barriers, but the barriers are just so ingrained in the system," said Family Success Coach Mariana Tejada.

To ensure each child, in addition to each family, has personalized supports and an adult who serves as their Navigator, MPN joined EdRedesign's [Institute for Success Planning Community of Practice](#) in the summer of 2023. Success Planning is a relationship-based approach that connects each child or youth to an adult Navigator who co-creates a personalized plan for action in partnership with their families and other caring adults. The plan highlights the child's needs and strengths and identifies supports, enrichments, and other resources to remove barriers, help them thrive, and support their goals. Through a whole-child approach, Success Planning provides a mechanism to ensure every child is known, seen, and heard, has a positive connection to a caring adult, and has agency over their pathway to success. The MPN Success Planning initiative will extend the Family Success Coach model to individual students.



Building a Two-Generation Strategy through Trusted Relationships and Partnerships

Close partnerships with community-based organizations that have long histories of providing services to Mission residents have been an intentional element of MPN's work since its inception. Forging these relationships has taken time and thoughtfulness. According to Liz Cortez, MEDA's Director of Promise City Programs and Partnerships, many nonprofits feared displacement—just like residents—due to skyrocketing rent, resulting in perceived competition among some organizations. Over time, however, MPN has engendered trust and an understanding that “we're all working together toward the same things,” said Cortez, exemplified by an openness among partners to share both what is and isn't working well. Spindle, MEDA's Chief Operating Officer, noticed a similar shift in the spirit of collaboration that has occurred since MPN first launched, observing “the difference in how people partner.” (See this [2022 Mission Promise Neighborhood Network Analysis report](#) for an in-depth look at the way MPN collaborates with its partners.)

These partnerships have enabled MPN to support multiple stages of the prenatal-to-career continuum and the two-generation strategy. Family economic and residential stability are at the heart of the MPN two-generation strategy, which reflects the importance of serving parents as well as their children. As a result, MPN and partners' activities include job training, housing and legal assistance, and financial literacy coaching along with early education, strengthening schools, children's mental health support, and afterschool and summer out-of-

school time programs. Complementing these direct services, MEDA is actively pursuing systemic change through several channels, including affordable housing, capacity building, and policy, which are described later in this case.

Organizations that already had established partnerships with the San Francisco Unified School District helped MPN build relationships with the schools. One of these organizations was the Instituto Familiar de la Raza, which had a long history of supporting early childhood mental health and well-being. Cassandra Coe, Director of its Sana Sana program, noted that in some cases school staff were too overwhelmed by their challenges to focus on the possibilities that came with the Family Success Coaches, noting that, “Deeper partnerships with schools require intentional relationship-building and co-creation of goals around our collective work. The challenge can be that this level of partnership requires people to slow down, and schools are often fast-paced, reactive systems in response to very high-needs populations.”

Another of MPN's key partners is the Good Samaritan Family Resource Center, the organization mentioned earlier that has been serving San Francisco's changing immigrant communities since its founding in 1894. When MEDA decided to apply for the Promise Neighborhoods grant, current Executive Director and native San Franciscan Mario Paz was one of the first people to whom MEDA's CEO Luis Granados reached out. The two organizations shared a philosophy that the best way to address children's academic success is to ensure family stability as well as a commitment to centering community needs and voices.

“Deeper partnerships with schools require intentional relationship-building and co-creation of goals around our collective work. The challenge can be that this level of partnership requires people to slow down, and schools are often fast-paced, reactive systems in response to very high-needs populations.”

Cassandra Coe,
Instituto Familiar de
la Raza Sana Sana
Program Director

"There's a strong sense of roots, trust, and bonds with our community, and we partner with families to advocate for community-based responses and lifting up community voice."

Mario Paz,
Good Samaritan
Family Resource
Center Executive
Director

According to Paz, when the original community center and church that served as their headquarters was destroyed in an earthquake in 1989, there was overwhelming support to reimagine the organization to better meet the needs of the Latino community. Instead of rebuilding the church, they built a new center to serve families and 20 family-sized affordable housing units after listening to what the community "really wanted and needed." Good Samaritan also created a two-generation, holistic strategy focused on the social determinants of health—the socioeconomic factors that contribute to physical and mental well-being.

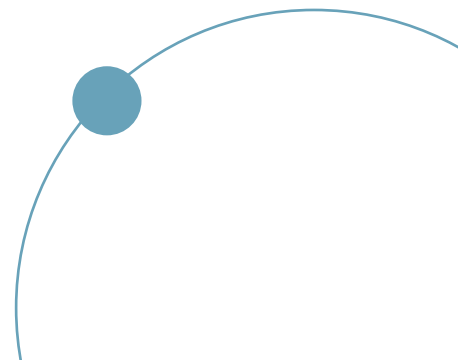
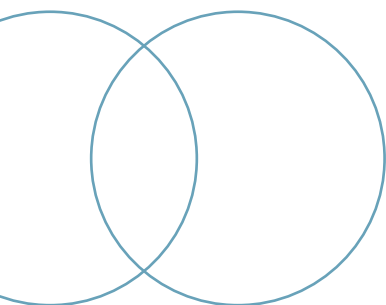
Today, Good Samaritan offers low-income families and newcomers/immigrants services that strengthen families to build on their "own capacities, strengths, experiences, and dreams." They lead programs that provide support for infants and toddlers focusing on early literacy that coincide with programs for parents. The organization also has programs for both children and caregivers/parents together and youth development programs that help youth succeed in school and in life. "There's a strong sense of roots, trust, and bonds with our community, and we partner with families to advocate for community-based responses and lifting up community voice," said Paz.

The Felton Institute, a nonprofit organization that has operated in San Francisco for over 130 years, is another partner organization central to MPN's work. They have over 65 programs, focusing on two-generation strategies for families including early care and education, mental health, and youth supports. The Felton Institute partners

with MPN to run a childcare center serving 45 children and their families located in Casa Adelante, one of MEDA's mixed-use affordable housing buildings. Dr. Yohana Quiroz, the Felton Institute's Chief Operations Officer, was herself a client as a teen. (See Quiroz's story in the *Stories Behind the Numbers* section below.) "When MEDA approached Felton to partner around the MPN work," she said, "we were already mission-aligned." Like MEDA, the Felton Institute takes a systemic approach to "the whole ecological model to see what [they] could do to transform the lives of children and their families."

Building Infrastructure and Sustainable Funding

When MEDA decided to apply for the Promise Neighborhoods planning grant, Myrna Melgar, who is currently the first Latina elected member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, was serving on MEDA's Board of Directors. Melgar was introduced to MEDA through her previous role overseeing grant compliance in the San Francisco mayor's office, and she knew the kind of infrastructure MEDA would need both to apply for and to implement the grant. "We were a scrappy little organization that aspired to a lot, but we didn't necessarily have the systems." Granados hired her as MEDA's Deputy Director, and she in turn hired finance staff, upgraded the database, and put human resources procedures in place.



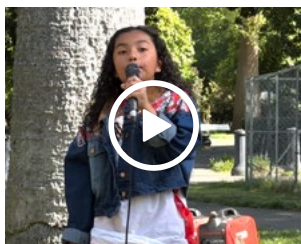
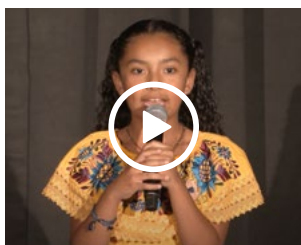
The Promise Neighborhoods grant enabled MEDA to further invest in building its operations. "It allowed us to afford to be able to build our capacity with back-office administration, with creating a policy team, organizing residents, advocating for housing policies which resulted in our becoming a housing developer," said MEDA's Senior Advisor Raya. MEDA also used the new funding to expand its communications and data and evaluation departments. These functions have been essential to MEDA's capacity to undertake and sustain its ambitious agenda.

Staffing is another key element of MEDA's capacity building. For MEDA's Vice-President of Asset Building Programs Martinez, strong infrastructure entails "having the cultural competency and the lived experience from our staff members, and also having very, very high expertise on technical matters." San Francisco Board of Supervisors Member Melgar also emphasized the important role of MEDA's attention to its staffing: "Integral to MEDA's

success is having a really good staff. One of Luis's skills is being able to hire well, people who were committed and who had real skills they could bring to the table. It is a majority Latino organization. He was always committed to hiring people of color who had really good skills to bring to the community." To that end, MEDA ensures staff have access to training and mentorship to ensure they have the necessary skills to succeed in their work.

While the federal grant was pivotal in shaping MEDA's new areas of work, the organization knew it needed to secure other sources of revenue to ensure its longevity. MEDA's development team has steadfastly grown multiple funding streams, including from the city, state, federal government, and philanthropy. MEDA is also working in partnership with state and national networks to advocate for an ongoing investment in Promise Neighborhoods, with the goal of institutionalizing the program at both the state and federal levels (described in further detail later in this case).

WATCH



Poetry by MPN youth
Genesis Ulloa

In 2016, Deyser Ulloa, her husband, and their children found themselves with nowhere to live after being unable to afford rapidly increasing rents. With no other options, they moved into a friend's garage. While they were grateful to be off the streets, the family struggled to survive without running water, heat, or even fresh air as they kept the garage door closed most of the time to prevent the neighbors from knowing they lived there. Ulloa's toddler daughter, Genesis Ulloa, took baths in a plastic basin and huddled next to a space heater when it was cold. Because of the conditions, her daughter often grew frustrated at being unable to play and the whole family's health suffered. When the garage flooded during a storm, the family was desperate to find an alternative. With support from MEDA and Good Samaritan, the family was able to move into a shelter and later into stable housing. Ulloa's daughter, now a student in a Mission Promise Neighborhood elementary school, is not only thriving, she is a spokesperson for her community as a poet who confidently recites her work, in two languages, at public events (watch her perform her poetry in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)). At eight years old, she became the youngest Grand Marshal of San Francisco's annual Carnaval parade. The elder Ulloa is now an outspoken advocate and community organizer for affordable housing.

Meet Dr. Yohana Quiroz



Photo courtesy of Dr. Yohana Quiroz

"For a remarkable 26 years, I've dedicated myself to this organization [Felton Institute]. However, my journey with the Felton Institute began in a vastly different role—as a client, a young, expectant teenager in need of support. The Felton Institute's Early Care and Education programs played a pivotal role in my life, nurturing my daughter from her infancy, and seeing her through graduation. Today, she stands as a 27-year-old educator and a high school counselor who embodies the spirit of learning and giving back. My personal and family's achievements owe a tremendous debt to the holistic, comprehensive services provided by the Felton Institute. It's these services that have been instrumental in our success stories. My unwavering belief in the MPN's mission and model stems from this firsthand and my own personal lived experience. I have witnessed the transformative power of a collective impact approach, where multiple organizations come together with a shared commitment to address the unique needs of each family in a holistic, integrated, and collaborative manner. I am convinced that this is the only path to changing the course of outcomes for children and families." — Dr. Yohana Quiroz

STORIES BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Behind MPN's notable results are real-life stories of individuals whose trajectories have been transformed through its and its partners' two-generation, collective impact approach. Their stories and voices illustrate the potential of this strategy to dramatically improve people's lives.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Yohana Quiroz

Dr. Yohana Quiroz, Chief Operations Officer at MPN partner Felton Institute, knows the power of a multi-generation, comprehensive approach from two perspectives: first as a client and currently as a leader of the organization. She attended an alternative high school for pregnant and parenting teens and received a referral to Felton by her school's wellness center. At Felton, Quiroz worked with a case manager who connected her to an array of services, including health insurance to cover her prenatal care and an academic plan. Quiroz's daughter also benefited from Felton's support, attending an early care and education center that was co-located in Quiroz's high school.

Felton's wraparound services enabled Quiroz and her daughter to flourish. Quiroz graduated early from high school and soon began work as a receptionist at Felton. She entered college that fall and continued to work full time at Felton. Navigating the higher education system as a first-generation college student and balancing her coursework

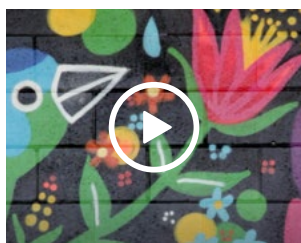
with a full-time job wasn't an easy feat, yet she persisted, earning her associate's degree. She didn't stop there. "I fell in love with education. Education is a pathway for folks to get out of poverty and reach whatever potential they see in front of them," Quiroz described. This passion for education led her to continue on to earn a bachelor's degree, then a master's degree, and finally a doctorate in education leadership.

Quiroz has now worked at Felton for 26 years and believes the organization's partnership with MPN is vital to its ongoing success. "I've lived the mission of the organization. I attribute a lot of my and my family's success to the comprehensive wraparound services that I was able to get at Felton Institute. I really believe in the mission of the MPN model through a collective impact approach," said Quiroz. Like Quiroz, her daughter is also flourishing. She is now 27 years old and is a school counselor, mirroring the same deep commitment to supporting children and youth as her mother.

"When we first started this work in 2014, this neighborhood had already been written off as a neighborhood in gentrification, a neighborhood where the writing was on the wall. We were going to disappear as a neighborhood."¹⁷

Karoleen Feng,
MEDA Chief Community
Real Estate Officer

WATCH



MEDA Real Estate Video

Combating the Mission's Housing Crisis

The housing crisis has caused an outmigration of the Mission's Latino population, which declined from 52 percent in 1990 to 36 percent in 2019.¹⁸ Nearly one in three Latino residents left the Mission between 2000 and 2019 due to gentrification and the rising cost of housing that accompanied San Francisco's tech boom.¹⁹ To counter this trend, MEDA made the unconventional decision to include a multi-pronged approach to affordable housing in its Promise Neighborhoods scope.

Since MEDA launched its Community Real Estate (CRE) program in 2014, it has preserved 303 small site affordable housing units and 439 Rental Assistance Demonstration units, as well as developed 1,302 new construction units and located 9 nonprofits in its commercial spaces.²⁰ In total, MEDA has preserved or developed over 2,000 affordable residential and commercial units.²¹ This feat has required ingenuity, audacity, and partnership. While not easy, MEDA's results reveal an indisputable truth: mitigating displacement of residents from their neighborhood is possible.

Using Numbers and Stories to Demonstrate the Need

MEDA gathered data and first-hand accounts about the shortage of stable, affordable housing and the harmful impact on the families it serves from multiple sources. As part of the initial Promise Neighborhoods grant, MEDA compiled metrics related to indicators

that influence child outcomes, including education, health, nutrition, and housing, among others. MEDA also partnered with the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB) to produce a landscape analysis report on housing and housing affordability. According to the report, the vast majority of low-income families in the Mission are "housing cost burdened," meaning that they spend more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing.²²

Families corroborated these metrics through their vivid stories shared in town halls organized by MEDA. "Through the town halls, we galvanized the community to say this is something we need to address," recounted Karoleen Feng, MEDA's Chief Community Real Estate Officer. Feng lives in the Mission and served on MEDA's Board of Directors before joining the organization in 2013.

MPN's Family Success Coaches also repeatedly heard from the families they were working with about their significant housing struggles. At the same time, residents and community activists in the Mission neighborhood were mobilizing to call attention to this crucial issue. In response, MEDA jointly spearheaded the Our Mission No Eviction/Plaza 16 Coalition, which led marches and protests to urge the city to take action on affordable housing. MEDA has recently created a powerful visual story of residents' housing challenges through the [Mission PhotoVoice Project: "An American Dream?"](#).



To overcome this initial skepticism, leaders marshalled the arsenal of data they had collected—the trendlines showing displacement over time and firsthand stories from families and other residents—to rally political support.

Building Buy-In and Support

While the need for stable, affordable housing was demonstrable, MEDA faced the challenge of convincing multiple stakeholders that the organization should broaden its scope to tackle the issue. In 2013, MEDA developed a business plan and presented it to its Board of Directors, who agreed to this new area of work. Next, MEDA allocated \$500,000 from the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods grant to address housing instability as a strategy for reducing student mobility rates, which in turn hinder educational achievement. According to Feng, the allocation of Promise Neighborhoods funding was a game changer, allowing MEDA to take the next steps on its housing plan.

MEDA also made the case to the city, local foundations, affordable housing developers, and community activists. The organization faced skepticism from existing affordable housing developers. Many community development corporations—which had traditionally developed affordable housing—had halted their housing work because they had either merged or closed following the Great Recession of 2008-2009. Community activists in the neighborhood also needed to be persuaded given the range of different solutions that MEDA planned to implement. According to Feng, "This pivoting of a 45-year-old organization to go into housing was pretty unheard of. It was a big leap even in the affordable housing world."

To overcome this initial skepticism, leaders marshalled the arsenal of data they had collected—the trendlines showing displacement over time and

firsthand stories from families and other residents—to rally political support. MEDA also leveraged the momentum already underway among residents and community activists in the Mission who were organizing around the issue of affordable housing. Ultimately, Feng's role as both a former board member and current staff member with deep expertise in affordable housing, coupled with compelling data and the trust that MEDA had built in the community, were instrumental in activating the internal and external will to launch MEDA's affordable housing efforts.

Mixed-Use Affordable Housing Development and Cultural Placekeeping

Once MEDA had secured the necessary buy-in and support, it established the Community Real Estate (CRE) program in 2014. Feng's team, which works primarily at the local and state levels, created a housing stability plan to serve as a roadmap. During this time, the city of San Francisco selected MEDA to administer San Francisco Public Housing developments that needed maintenance and rehabilitation through the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), which is operated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Another opportunity arose when the city launched a pilot offering \$3 million to purchase buildings in the private market and maintain them as affordable housing.



A distinct feature of MEDA's mixed-use buildings is offering an array of on-site community programs for both residents and the public, such as childcare, afterschool programs, and other activities. Another intentional element is commercial space for small businesses, nonprofits, and arts and cultural institutions.

WATCH



**MEDA Video Showcasing
New Construction**

Since the CRE program's early days, MEDA has continued to maintain and manage public housing complexes through the federal RAD program. It receives funding from the city, which redistributes money from HUD among local nonprofit housing developers. Financing is also available through the City and County of San Francisco's Small Sites Program, which provides acquisition and preservation loans to nonprofit sponsors. MEDA buys and rehabilitates private properties that house low-to-moderate income households who may face eviction. The organization prioritizes buying properties with high percentages of families with children. Properties are typically four- to 25-unit buildings.

Augmenting these efforts, MEDA decided to partner with affordable housing developers to produce new mixed-use buildings to expand options for families and other residents who may face eviction and/or displacement, such as formerly homeless individuals, seniors, teachers, and single-occupant households.²³ Sites of new construction are typically properties that are vacant and underutilized, such as a former bakery and bus yard. Financing for new construction projects comes from a blend of sources, including the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD), the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), low-income housing tax credits, tax-exempt bonds, and funding from private lenders. For all new construction projects, MEDA and its partners lead a deliberate community engagement process to understand community members' key priorities.

A distinct feature of MEDA's mixed-use buildings is offering an array of on-site community programs for both residents and the public, such as childcare, afterschool programs, and other activities. Another intentional element is commercial space for small businesses, nonprofits, and arts and cultural institutions—all of whom are struggling to stay in the Mission as costs continue to rise. As an example, 681 Florida Street is a recently constructed nine-story fossil-fuel-free building with 130 affordable units, 39 of which are designated for formerly homeless families. It also contains a large performance space for the local arts organization *Cultura y Arte Nativa de las Américas (CANNA)*. Another current project involves developing a nine-story, mixed-use building with 63 two- and three-bedroom units for San Francisco-based teachers, in addition to community-serving space.

Among the commercial tenants in MEDA's mixed-use properties are early learning centers and family childcare providers that MEDA selected based on data highlighting the lack of quality early learning and childcare slots and what MPN's Family Success Coaches heard about families' need for inexpensive early learning options. MEDA saw an opportunity to creatively address the disparities in infant and toddler care affecting so many families in the Mission. "We were really digging into the data and finding solutions in our community," recalled Cortez, MEDA's Director of Promise City Programs and Partnerships. By leasing space to early learning and childcare providers, MEDA has added approximately 200 new slots for young children.

MEDA also engages in policy and advocacy efforts to promote affordable housing and prevent displacement of both residents and commercial tenants, including small businesses, nonprofits, and arts and cultural institutions.

In addition to producing new mixed-use buildings, Feng's team is seeking to preserve existing commercial space for small businesses and community-based organizations as part of the city's Small Sites Program.

MEDA's development of mixed-use buildings is an integral part of what it calls its "cultural placekeeping" strategy, which is defined as "embedding arts and cultural infrastructure in an already creative community to keep the place... from disappearing culturally."²⁴ MEDA is implementing this strategy in multiple ways. As an example, MEDA bought a building where tenants such as Precita Eyes Muralists, an arts organization that has painted many of the Mission's murals, and residents faced potential displacement. With MEDA as the landlord, both the arts organization and residents have secure, below-market rate rent. Currently, MEDA is exploring the possibility of purchasing buildings that can be adapted into multi-tenant centers for nonprofit organizations.

Another key component of MEDA's cultural placekeeping strategy involves partnering with local organizations to protect culturally relevant legacy businesses in the Mission's main commercial corridors. MEDA's cultural placekeeping also involves granting access to flexible, low-cost financing—what it calls "non-displacement capital"—and customized business support for small business owners through the organization's CDFI, Fondo Adelante. Finally, MEDA secures various community benefits from new businesses such as local-hire commitments, Spanish menus, and bilingual staff.

MEDA also engages in policy and advocacy efforts to promote affordable housing and prevent displacement of both residents and commercial tenants, including small businesses, nonprofits, and arts and cultural institutions. As an example, MEDA launched a ballot initiative called Proposition X that passed in 2016, limiting the conversion of Production, Distribution, and Repair (PDR) spaces, which range from auto-repair shops to warehouse spaces for artists, into market-rate developments.

By increasing the inventory of affordable housing and commercial space in the Mission, MEDA is transforming the trajectories of many families and children, as well as other vulnerable residents, small businesses, nonprofits, and arts and cultural organizations, who otherwise would have had to move out of the neighborhood. In addition, MEDA is educating families about their rights, including those who are immigrants or may be undocumented, regarding access to public and subsidized housing.

Looking ahead, Feng is optimistic that MEDA's efforts will help reverse the displacement trend in the Mission: "Now there's a sense that we're able to provide some solutions."



Meet Arold Josué Hernández and Samuel Hernández²⁵

STORIES BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Behind MPN's notable results are real-life stories of individuals whose trajectories have been transformed through its and its partners' two-generation, collective impact approach. Their stories and voices illustrate the potential of this strategy to dramatically improve people's lives.

Arold Josué Hernández and his son Samuel exemplify perseverance and resilience. After Hernández's wife was murdered in his native Honduras, he and his young son immigrated to San Francisco, CA. Lacking stable housing when they first arrived, Hernández and his son lived in shelters and accessed services from Compass Family Services, an MPN partner. During this period, Hernández learned about MPN from one of his son's therapists from the San Francisco Unified School District and connected with Ana Avilez, who was then serving as an MPN Early Learning Family Success Coach. Ana informed Hernández about a lottery for a below-market-rate apartment offered through the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development. He applied and won. However, he wasn't able to take the unit because he didn't have a steady income due to health challenges that prevented him from working. Hernández decided to try again the following year as he was recovering from surgery since he was now receiving income from unemployment benefits as well as a housing subsidy from Hamilton Families, another MPN partner. This time he and his son were able to move into the apartment.

In addition to housing, Avilez helped identify other essential services, including food resources and financial aid during the pandemic, and opportunities for Hernández and his son who needs additional supports due to his visual impairment. "The truth is that Ana has been my right-hand person," Hernández shared.



He has continued to work closely with MPN and its partners to build a strong network of support for his family. For example, he connected with Support for Families of Children with Disabilities, which informed him about his rights and the services that his son would receive through his Individualized Education Program (IEP). He also sent his son to one of Felton Institute's early learning centers where his son received individual assistance to help him navigate his space in the classroom, strengthen his motor skills, and build friendships with his peers.

Both Hernández and his son are thriving in their new home surrounded by a supportive community. His son is now attending an SFUSD school and continues to benefit from therapies to foster his growth, development, and learning. Hernández was able to rejoin the workforce after receiving a medical discharge and a work permit through a referral from MPN partner La Raza Centro Legal to a pro bono immigration lawyer.

"When Arold receives a no, he won't stop there. He now knows how he can apply for resources from which his family can benefit. Now they have a permanent home, and the child has all the therapies and a school that can fulfill his needs," Avilez said.

Data—both qualitative and quantitative—is central to MEDA's work at all levels, from understanding the Mission community and its needs to capturing program implementation metrics and tracking outcomes.

Data and Accountability

Data—both qualitative and quantitative—is central to MEDA's work at all levels, from understanding the Mission community and its needs to capturing program implementation metrics and tracking outcomes. The initial Promise Neighborhoods grant funded the expansion of MEDA's data and evaluation infrastructure, enabling MEDA to double the department's staffing and adopt Salesforce as their data platform. MEDA's data and evaluation team, led by Dr. Rajni Banthia, provides a range of training and support to partner organizations on data collection practices. A partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation enabled a number of staff members to be trained in results-based accountability in the early days of the Promise Neighborhoods grant.

To better understand the neighborhood and its needs and to improve service delivery, MEDA conducted neighborhood surveys in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2023 as well as a housing survey in 2017. The goal of the neighborhood survey

is to capture a current snapshot of the Mission neighborhood, as well as neighborhood trends over time. In addition, MEDA administered an MPN school climate survey in 2022.

Two core strategies ground MEDA's use of data: human-centered design and results-based accountability. Human-centered design, which MEDA adopted in 2018, focuses on creating programming and metrics based on community-driven needs and solutions. The goal, according to Banthia, is to identify and design solutions "to get right to the root causes" and to understand the design challenges "so you can try to solve for it thoughtfully." This puts ongoing community engagement and feedback at the center of both the design process and the identification of metrics that matter to constituents, not just to government agencies and philanthropic organizations for reporting purposes. One example is a recent rethinking of the referral process among partner organizations by understanding what it looks like and why it succeeds or fails.

Six accountability results, derived from conversations with community members about what they value, serve as guideposts for MEDA's work. These are:

Result 1: Families are financially thriving

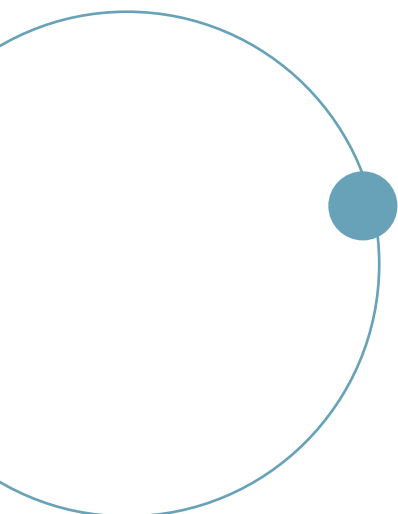
Result 2: Families have affordable and stable housing

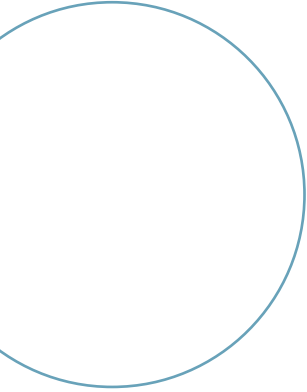
Result 3: Children and youth succeed in school

Result 4: The Mission is a strong and supportive community for Latino residents, businesses, and institutions

Result 5: San Francisco's Latino residents are decision-makers in the institutions and political systems that affect their lives

Result 6: Nationwide, organizations rooted in historically underserved communities are equipped to ensure that families, workers, and small businesses thrive





The data team also leads MEDA's planning function, anchoring an increasingly sophisticated structure to support the organization's growth and to tie MEDA's different components together using a results-based accountability framework. Results-based accountability is an approach to data use with structured practices for collecting, sharing, and using data to accelerate progress towards defined goals. This strategy has guided the development of a strategic plan and an action plan for each department with the six accountability results at the core.

A key element of results-based accountability is holding regular "turn the curve" meetings in which both data leads and practitioners come together to take a close look at the data to see whether the data trends—the "curves"—are showing improvement in each of the six accountability areas. These help the MEDA team and partner organizations identify what to continue doing and what to change programmatically based on the data. The federal Promise Neighborhoods grant and other funding sources come with substantial data collection and reporting requirements. Banthia and her colleague Michelle Reiss-Top work to meet these external data requirements while serving their own internal data and accountability needs. Partner organizations with the infrastructure and staffing capacity to use Salesforce upload their data directly to the platform, while others provide their data to MEDA directly.

One of MEDA's goals is to ensure data is of value to and shared with Mission residents. To help facilitate data transparency, MEDA is in the process of developing a community

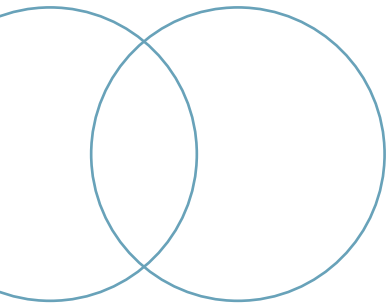
report card that uses online surveys to learn about barriers residents face and to collect reviews of services. Once someone completes the survey, they can immediately see the full results from all respondents, enabling them to make more informed decisions. The process has yielded insights for MEDA staff. The two barriers to well-being most frequently mentioned by residents are immigration status for those who are undocumented and a shortage of services available in Spanish. These findings are already impacting MEDA's advocacy and programmatic efforts and improvements.

Banthia and her colleagues are also eager to create a set of system-level metrics that capture the structural conditions that enable or hinder the success of families and children as a counterbalance to the individual outcomes that are the primary focus of government and philanthropic reporting requirements.



To help facilitate data transparency, MEDA is in the process of developing a community report card that uses online surveys to learn about barriers residents face and to collect reviews of services.





“This type of transformational, community-led initiative should not be a boutique one-off, but rather the normal way that we come together as a society to align systems, fight poverty, and reverse legacies of inequity. This will be the goal of the Equitable Recovery Institute.”

Richard Raya,
MEDA Senior Advisor
and former Chief
Strategy Officer



Building a National Equity Movement

Having established MEDA and MPN as proofs of concept, MEDA is committed to expanding and sustaining Promise Neighborhoods and other cradle-to-career place-based initiatives at the local, state, and national levels. “We’ve defined what a Promise Neighborhood looks like,” according to CEO Granados, incorporating community voice, housing, and economic stability along with school-based supports. According to the organization’s strategic plan, “MEDA occupies a space of relative privilege and we feel an imperative to use that privilege for further good,” pointing to advantages, including the organization’s deep history, longstanding partnerships, location in a sanctuary city and progressive region, and close proximity to tech and finance capital, as well as a strong philanthropic sector.²⁶

As such, in 2018 MEDA launched the Share the Model initiative, which was originally led by the organization’s Asset Building team. Staff provided technical assistance, consultations, and trainings related to financial capability to other nonprofits and community development agencies. In addition, MPN staff shared its two-generation model, focusing in particular on components such as its early learning work and connections to affordable housing and civic engagement, while CRE staff guided San Francisco community development agencies on implementing affordable housing preservation programs.

In 2021, Richard Raya, who had been MPN Director, was named MEDA’s Chief Strategy Officer to spearhead this movement-building work as well

as to build state and national policy to support it more broadly. In 2022, MEDA formalized the Share the Model initiative into the Equitable Recovery Institute. The Institute prepares curriculum and offers technical assistance on a range of key issues, in addition to spearheading advocacy efforts at the local, state, and national levels. “This type of transformational, community-led initiative should not be a boutique one-off, but rather the normal way that we come together as a society to align systems, fight poverty, and reverse legacies of inequity. This will be the goal of the Equitable Recovery Institute,” said Raya when the Institute was first launched.²⁷ In 2022, the Institute worked with 289 organizations, building their capacity and skills to lead cradle-to-career place-based work in diverse settings across the country.

As part of the Institute’s local efforts, MEDA joined forces with the City and County of San Francisco, San Francisco Unified School District, and an array of community-based organizations, with support from Blue Meridian Partners, to create the Promise City. As the first such initiative in the country, Promise City aims to apply MPN’s best practices to establish additional Promise Neighborhoods in San Francisco. This effort is helping to support the implementation of the Mayor’s Children & Family Recovery Plan. The new communities in Promise City serve distinct and traditionally underserved populations of the city: Chinatown, which has been the historical center for the Chinese immigrant community, and District 11, an ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood.

THE CALIFORNIA PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS NETWORK HAS RECENTLY GARNERED STATE FUNDING FOR THE FIRST TIME WITH A

\$12 million appropriation, which will provide three years of operating support grants of

\$1 million to four Promise Neighborhoods sites whose federal funding expired in 2023.

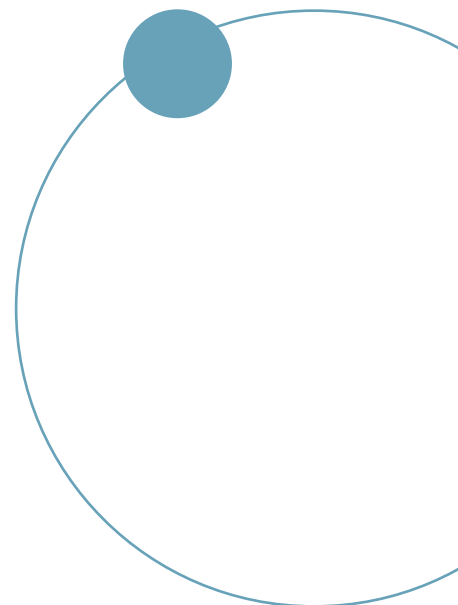
Complementing MEDA's Equitable Recovery Institute, MEDA participates in state and national networks to collectively advance cradle-to-career place-based efforts. In 2017, MEDA formed the California Promise Neighborhoods Network. This network—currently comprised of six Promise Neighborhoods communities—exchanges ideas and strategies, shares their progress, and engages in joint advocacy efforts focused on institutionalizing the model at the state level. Notably, the network's advocacy work recently garnered state funding for the first time with a \$12 million appropriation, which will provide three years of operating support grants of \$1 million to four Promise Neighborhoods sites whose federal funding expired in 2023.

In 2019, MEDA joined the national StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, which brings together approximately 70 cradle-to-career partnerships with the goal of achieving racial equity and economic mobility. StriveTogether provides training and support for leaders of backbone organizations on capacity building, the use of data, and other elements of designing and sustaining collective impact strategies. MEDA is also a community partner of the William Julius Wilson Institute at the Harlem Children's Zone, which provides cradle-to-career place-based organizations with a range of supports, from helping to develop and codify a strategic plan to assisting with fundraising and bringing together stakeholders, including at the annual Summer Institute for Neighborhood Leaders co-hosted with EdRedesign.



As MEDA looks to the future, it is expanding its geographic scope as well as its advocacy and policy efforts. In 2016, MEDA successfully advocated for the passage of Prop N, the Immigrant Parent Right to Vote ballot measure, which ensured immigrant parents the right to vote in school board elections.

In 2022, MEDA and citywide allies jointly led an advocacy campaign to uphold \$24 million per year in affordable housing funding in San Francisco, including \$5 million for the Mission. MEDA is currently working with the California Promise Neighborhoods Network to create a statewide grant program for state-level funding to support cradle-to-career efforts and is also deeply involved in federal advocacy for more resources for these programs.



Meet Ana Avilez²⁸

STORIES BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Behind MPN's notable results are real-life stories of individuals whose trajectories have been transformed through its and its partners' two-generation, collective impact approach. Their stories and voices illustrate the potential of this strategy to dramatically improve people's lives.



Originally from Honduras, Ana Avilez (who worked with Arold Josué Hernández and his son Samuel as their Early Learning Family Success Coach as noted in their story earlier) deeply believes in MPN's mission. That's because—like many of MEDA's staff—she and her family have experienced the impact of its comprehensive, wraparound supports firsthand.

Back in 2014, Avilez attended an MPN community fair where she learned about MEDA's home buying resources and its family council. Avilez next met with MEDA staff and soon learned about an array of programs and opportunities for both her and her children. These included preschool options and job search assistance.

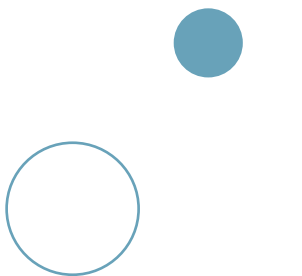
During this time, Avilez supported her family by cleaning houses. She was eager to grow professionally and to further develop her technology skills. As a next step, she enrolled in Mission Techies, a 16-week intensive IT training program. "My mother and my husband were very supportive of me. They went to pick up the children from school. I worked cleaning houses from 8:00 to 12:30, and then came to Techies from 1:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon. Those were long weeks, a lot of effort," Avilez recalled.

She then joined MPN's Community Advisory Council and subsequently became a contractor for MPN's Making Connections program, a digital literacy course for parents. Through this role, she bolstered families' computer and technology skills, assisted them with

obtaining low-cost internet access, and helped them access other resources. She also adapted the curriculum to make it culturally relevant.

Over the years, Avilez has served in additional MPN roles, including Family Success Coach and Parent and Youth Engagement Specialist. Currently, she serves as a Program Associate of MEDA's Promise City initiative, which aims to assist other San Francisco neighborhoods with implementing the Promise Neighborhoods model. "Now I envision MPN leading the way for other communities in the city. The needs of Latinos are not that different from the needs of our Asian or African American neighbors. Families deserve stable and safe housing for themselves and their children. I like the MPN approach because it focuses on the well-being of everyone, not just one person, which is why the role of each partner organization is so instrumental. We know it takes a village to raise a child," expressed Avilez.

In addition to assisting her with finding a financially stable job and buying a house, Avilez credits MPN with helping her to grow professionally, emotionally, and personally. She points to her ability to connect with families as well as her own, in addition to her leadership and advocacy skills. Avilez is a member of her children's school's English Learner Advisory Committee, raising awareness about the importance of interpretation. She also formed a pride club at her son's school to educate students about the LGBTQ community. "I want my children to know that I am there for them and with them," she said.



Building partnerships across different sectors in a community has an amplifying effect on the impact of each partner organization and across multiple units of change, from a single neighborhood, to the district, to the city, and beyond.

10 Takeaways for Place-Based Leaders

MEDA's success is built on a number of strategic moves that other partnerships can adapt and employ in their own local contexts. While each community has different cultures, assets, needs, histories, and existing initiatives, these strategies address both the mindsets and the actions needed for transformational and sustained cradle-to-career efforts.

Keep the community's needs and aspirations at the center of the work

MEDA puts the Latino immigrant community of the Mission District at the heart of everything it does. MEDA operates from the belief that their historically marginalized community deserves to live with dignity, economic stability, and joy—and that the neighborhood residents are the best experts on what they need and can be advocates and leaders themselves. Through multiple forms of direct engagement, MEDA hears the most pressing concerns of community members and, most importantly, takes them seriously and works with them to find solutions.

Have an audacious vision

MEDA's vision for what they can accomplish is, in their own words, audacious. They believe their community not only deserves stability but also deserves to thrive, and they work to create the conditions, secure the funding, and build the capacity to make that possible. This mindset permeates the entire organization and drives their ambitious agenda.

Build on what already exists through strategic, relationship-based partnerships

No initiative starts in a vacuum. MEDA established strategic partnerships with many organizations that already had deep roots and strong programs in the Mission District. These cross-sector partnerships have enabled MEDA and MPN to have a much broader scope than they would otherwise and to take advantage of the substantial, impactful programming that has supported Mission residents for decades. Building partnerships across different sectors in a community has an amplifying effect on the impact of each partner organization and across multiple units of change, from a single neighborhood, to the district, to the city, and beyond. Communication and transparency are both key to effective partnerships, according to MEDA's Senior Advisor and former Chief Strategy Officer Raya.

Hire and cultivate committed, proximate leaders

MEDA hires and promotes exemplary proximate leaders with the capacity and drive to carry out their ambitious agenda and who have a deep commitment to the work and their community. Most have close ties to the Mission District as well. MEDA values and nurtures the talent and expertise within the Mission District, offering training and mentorship to move people into increasingly senior roles. "Being able to elevate the lived experience of the individuals served is what makes MEDA so successful," according to Fenton Institute's Dr. Quiroz.

Addressing complex social issues requires substantial and sustainable funding as well as the technical assistance and cross-community learning that comes from networks of communities working toward similar goals.

Embed data—both quantitative and qualitative—to understand needs and measure progress

MEDA embeds the strategic use of data at all stages of its work, from creating a portrait of who lives in the Mission and how that has changed over time, to capturing information about what the community values, the impact of MEDA and MPN's work, and outcomes for children and families. Key elements of their strategy are regularly looking at data internally to see how well they're doing; sharing data back with the community; and communicating progress to sustain momentum. Having compelling data is also key to their fundraising efforts.

Blend direct services with capacity building and infrastructure development

MEDA has expanded by building its organizational capacity to raise funds, apply for grants, communicate impact, collect and share data, build and maintain partnerships, and advocate for its strategy at the local, state, and national levels. While it can be tempting to use as much funding as possible for direct programming, building capacity ensures long-term sustainability. Having the "right backbone is really important," according to Spindle, MEDA's Chief Operating Officer. "You have to be ready, and it's a long-term commitment," she said.

Personalize supports

MEDA recognizes that each family and child has unique assets and needs. Through Family Success Coaches, promotoras, and their recent commitment to personalized supports for children through EdRedesign's Institute for Success Planning Community of Practice, MEDA takes a personalized approach to identifying and meeting the specific needs for services that will most benefit each family. This personalization is important not only to ensure the right services are going to the people who need them, but as a strategy for building trusting relationships and acknowledging the humanity and personal journey of each resident.

Braid multiple funding streams and networks

Addressing complex social issues requires substantial and sustainable funding as well as the technical assistance and cross-community learning that comes from networks of communities working toward similar goals. While the Promise Neighborhoods funding was transformative, MEDA has diversified and increased its sources of funding and now has a mix of city, state, federal, and philanthropic investments. MEDA also participates in multiple networks, including StriveTogether, the William Julius Wilson Institute, EdRedesign's Institute for Success Planning Community of Practice, and the California Promise Neighborhoods Network, to support and accelerate their work.

Advocate to influence structures and policies

MEDA has been able to achieve as much as it has because it received one of a small number of federal Promise Neighborhoods grants. Nationally, demand for these grants far outstrips their availability, and only a small percentage of highly rated applications are funded. MEDA has increasingly made advocacy for more funding and better policy at all levels of government a priority. As an example, MEDA worked with Promise Neighborhoods leaders from across the country in 2023 to launch the National Promise Neighborhoods Coalition. This group is advocating for increased public funding for the Promise Neighborhoods program.

When you succeed, bring others with you

The goal of this work is not just to create a single proof point that it works, but to galvanize a national movement in which effective cradle-to-career place-based partnership strategies are the norm. MEDA embodies this goal through its Promise City initiative and its Equitable Recovery Institute, both of which share MEDA's learnings and experience with other communities eager to follow their

lead. MEDA is also advancing the cradle-to-career place-based partnership movement through its joint advocacy efforts with state and national networks to institutionalize this cross-sector approach across the entire country, including in neighborhoods, rural communities, towns, and cities.

Looking Toward the Future

Through its bold vision, deep commitment to its community, and a lot of hard work, MEDA has become a remarkable example of the transformational potential of cradle-to-career place-based partnership initiatives. As MEDA continues to expand its scope, it is increasingly serving as a model for other communities looking to replicate MEDA's success within their own local contexts as well as a proof point for the kinds of investments and policies that will make this type of work the new way of doing business nationwide. MEDA's integrated public-private model of data-driven service delivery across multiple sectors and deep partnership with the local community demonstrate the possibilities for creating sustainable strategies to help communities thrive.

All photos except those otherwise noted are courtesy of MEDA.



About The EdRedesign Lab

EdRedesign provides catalytic support to the cradle-to-career place-based partnership field to drive systems-level change and open personalized pathways to well-being, educational attainment, civic engagement, and upward mobility. To support this growing field to effect transformational change that serves the needs and talents of individual children and youth, our work focuses on talent development, actionable research, our Institute for Success Planning, and our By All Means initiatives. Our mission is to ensure the social, emotional, physical, and academic development and well-being of *all* children and youth, especially those affected by racism and poverty.

Appendix A: The MEDA Partnership

MPN-Funded CBOs

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Birth Companions Community Center | Mission Graduates |
| Felton Institute | Mission Neighborhood Health Center |
| Good Samaritan Family Resource Center | Nurse-Midwives of SFZGH |
| Homeless Prenatal Program | Parents for Public Schools |
| Instituto Familiar de la Raza | SFUSD—Early Education Department |
| Jamestown Community Center | Support for Families |
| La Raza Centro Legal | Tandem, Partners in Early Learning |
| MNC Inspiring Success | YMCA Urban Services |

Backbone Support Personnel

| |
|--|
| Promise Neighborhood Director |
| Associate Director |
| K-12 Program Manager |
| Early Learning Program Manager |
| Family Support Manager |
| School-Based K-12 Family Success Coaches (8) |
| Parent and Youth Engagement Specialist |
| Early Learning Family Success Coaches (2) |
| Administrative Coordinator |

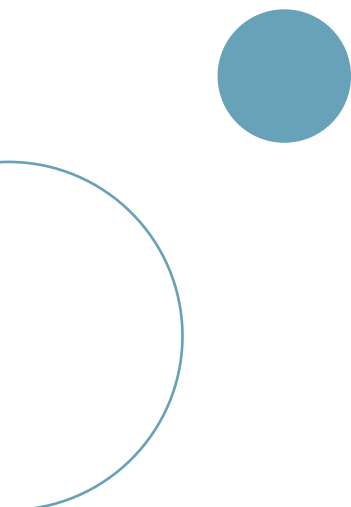
Institutional Partners

| |
|---|
| Department of Children, Youth and Their Families |
| San Francisco Department of Early Childhood |
| San Francisco Department of Public Health |
| San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing & Community Development |
| San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development |
| San Francisco Unified School District |
| San Francisco Office of the Mayor |

Appendix B: List of Interviewees & Focus Groups

| Name | Role & Organization |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Rajni Banthia and Michelle Reiss-Top | Vice-President of Evaluation and Associate Director of Data and Learning, MEDA |
| Efrain Barrera | Former Director of Mission Promise Neighborhood, MEDA |
| Celina Castro-Saelao | Family Support Manager, Mission Promise Neighborhood, MEDA |
| Cassandra Coe | Clinical Supervisor, Instituto Familiar De La Raza |
| Liz Cortez | Director, Promise City Programs and Partnerships, MEDA |
| Karoleen Feng | Chief Community Real Estate Officer, MEDA |
| Luis Granados | Chief Executive Officer, MEDA |
| Ernesto Martinez | Vice-President of Asset Building Programs, MEDA |
| Myrna Melgar | San Francisco Board of Supervisors |
| Mario Paz | Executive Director, Good Samaritan Family Resource Center |
| Dr. Yohana Quiroz | Chief Operating Officer, Felton Institute |
| Richard Raya | Senior Advisor and former Chief Strategy Officer, MEDA |
| Pablo Solares-Rowbury | Vice-President of Fondo Adelante, MEDA |
| Jillian Spindle | Chief Operating Officer, MEDA |

| Focus Groups |
|---------------------------------------|
| Family Success Coaches |
| Mission Promise Neighborhood Families |
| Promotoras |





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