FUNDING THE NEXT GENERATION

SAN FRANCISCO'S LANDMARK CHILDREN AND YOUTH FUND

FACT SHEET

In 1991, San Franciscans made national history – passing an amendment to the city charter to create a dedicated Children's Fund and making SF the first city in the country to guarantee funding for children each year in the city budget, while preventing any cuts in previously funded services. In 2000, the Children's Fund was renewed overwhelmingly by the voters, passing by 74%. It was renewed by 74% again in November 2014, this time for a tenure of 25 years and being renamed the Children and Youth Fund.

What does the Children's Amendment to the city charter do?

- Creates a Children and Youth Fund by setting aside 4% of the local property tax revenues each year for services for children, youth, and their families, which will be approximately $120 Million in 2023.

- Requires that the Fund be used to serve persons under age 18 and disconnected transitional-age youth up to age 25. Services that can be funded are: Affordable childcare and early education; Recreation, cultural, after-school and arts program; Health services; Training, employment, and job placement; Youth violence prevention; Tutoring and educational enrichment; Support services for families of children receiving other services from the Fund.

- Requires the City to establish a Children and Youth Baseline Budget, calculating expenditures for children and youth as of the passage of the charter amendment. Prevents budget cuts in the baseline and requires that Children and Youth Fund monies go for new services, over and above baseline, thus preventing supplantation. The 2022 baseline is $209 Million.

- Creates a 5-year cycle planning process for all children's services, mandating a community needs assessment and a transparent allocation plan for funding of children's services, as well as program evaluation, an oversight committee and widespread community input.

- Creates a citizen oversight committee which approves Fund expenditures and plans.

How did the Children's Amendment and Children's Fund come to be?

- Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, an independent non-profit organization using advocacy and organizing to promote San Francisco policies for children, youth, and families, with a particular focus on prevention, equity, and community-based services was founded in 1975. Coleman was the driving force behind the Children's Amendment.

- Four years of foundational work by San Francisco children's advocates, led by Coleman, to create the springboard for the charter amendment and the Children's Fund, including the community-driven development of a children's budget, vigorous local budget advocacy; and research and documentation about expenditures and cost-benefits of services.

- Creation of an ongoing Children's Budget Coalition consisting of service providers, community activists, civic and neighborhood organizations, professional associations, and parent and student groups whose frustration with inadequate progress led to the motivation to make, renew and sustain a more permanent and institutionalized change in children's services.

- Drafting of a charter amendment and seeking political support for the amendment throughout the city. Important to note: At the outset, no local official supported the measure until it was placed on the ballot by a community-run campaign.

- Decision to circumvent the political establishment and place measure on ballot through a signature campaign, collecting 68,000 signatures, led by Coleman and community budget coalition partners.

- Three election campaigns (1991, 2000, 2014), making the case for passage, utilizing a variety of campaign strategies including media, community outreach for endorsements, mailings, signs, demonstrations, and significant parent and youth engagement.

- Each iteration of the Children and Youth Fund legislation made significant improvements – increasing the funding amount, adding accountability and oversight measures, expanding the tenure of the Fund, and expanding the age which can be served.

- Ongoing monitoring of the Fund and children's services planning process by Coleman and community advocates, highlighting concerns and successes in newsletters, meetings with political and city officials, reports, testimony at public hearings, and convening a children's budget coalition. Organizing community coalitions for the two re-authorization campaigns.

What is the impact of the Children and Youth Fund and Children's Amendment?

- As of 2023 will allocate over $120 million. The Children's Fund supports over 400 programs, serving over 35,000 children.

- Prevented budget cuts in locally funded children's services since 1992.

- Empowered an entity in city government to be a voice and program-generator for children – Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF), which manages the Children and Youth Fund, develops a Community Needs Assessment and a Children and Youth Services Allocation Plan and has resources to implement innovation and community-prioritized services.

- Led to development of new models of service, new neighborhoods being served, program expansion and new populations receiving specialized services.

- Leverages funds and other resources. Programs funded through the Children's Fund report leveraging 20% to 100% increases from other funders.

- Created a powerful children's constituency in city – able to influence city government on many issues.

Public Policy Lessons Learned

- A local dedicated funding stream for children's services can be the stimulus for developing a hub for the planning and coordination of children's services within local government, such as an office of children's services within a Mayor's office.

- A local funding stream with discretionary dollars for children's services can allow local government to meet new and specific local priorities.

- The strategic expenditure of local dollars can attract other funding and lead to significant leveraging of private, as well as state and federal dollars, and increases in the overall funding for children's services.

- A discretionary local funding stream for children's services can be used to facilitate inter-departmental programs on behalf of children, thereby promoting greater efficiency of existing resources.

- Having the flexibility provided by a local funding stream for children's services can facilitate innovation and experimentation, and allow for new ideas to flourish. It can help communities overcome some of the limitations imposed by the rigid regulations required by most other funding streams.

- Having local government become a primary funder of community services puts a local executive in a strong position to improve accountability of the entire service delivery system, including developing a data collection and evaluation system, as well as building the capacity of service providers.

- The structure created to administer a new funding stream can provide the venue and incentives to develop comprehensive and integrated policies to strengthen children, youth and families.

- A local funding stream for children has the potential to become very popular with the general public and can be a political advantage to elected officials who support the funding.

- A fund for children's services that is passed by voters creates a sense of ownership of the fund by the public, and can be a powerful incentive for the public's investment and engagement in issues and programs impacting children, youth and families, including fostering a strong youth and parent voice.

- In San Francisco the Children's Fund and the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families has transformed the children's services delivery system and government's leadership role in promoting the well-being of the community's children.

Lessons learned for child advocates

- Be the first to frame the issue: Mount an "I love children" campaign. No one wants to mount the "I don't love children" campaign.

- Success takes time. Building the foundation of a success requires lots of homework.

- Blend idealism with pragmatism – propose solutions that are big enough to matter, small enough to win.

- Take the initiative – circumvent the political establishment, if necessary. When the people lead, the politicians will follow.

- Risk losing – no pain, no gain. Don't stop just because some of your "best friends" or political allies oppose.

- Wining campaigns rest on specific proposals – not problem statements or vague rhetoric.

- It takes a dedicated army, but commitment is more important than size. Change most often depends on "small group of committed citizens." – Margaret Meade

- Build a base of coalition partners and have some unexpected allies.

- Inspire service providers to be advocates. Providers can play a special core role, but they need training, support and unity to overcome their silos and fears of losing funding.

- Empower others – the authentic voices of parents and youth are the most influential.

- Capitalize on elections – they are ready-made forums for the public to support change.

- Children are a winning argument that cuts across political divides. When debate is open, it's hard to oppose helping kids. When decisions are behind closed doors, it's much too easy.

- Money is the best trigger for change – how funds are allocated reflects community priorities. Budget advocacy is where it's at.

- Maximize the potential of advocacy at the local level – where there are important issues, opportunities for civic engagement and innovation, and readily visible results.

- It's political - policy change requires political action, best done if it is non-partisan. Despite beliefs to the contrary, non-profits can play. Legally.

- It's never over! Effective advocacy requires persistence and constant vigilance.