

**Family Policy Council
Year-End Report 2015-16**

2015-16 FAMILY POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

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Mari Gashaw	Jeffrey Young
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**Family
Policy
Council**

Nancy Tauber, Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

The Family Policy, officially known as the Coordinating Council for Children, Youth and Families was created in 1991. It is chaired by the Mayor, and its members include residents, elected officials, department heads within the City, community and non-profit leaders, business, early childhood, philanthropic, university, state agency and youth representatives. The Council is dedicated to developing policy and program recommendations aimed at improving the quality of life for children, youth and families in the city of Cambridge.

Area of Focus 2015-16

Develop recommendations to close persistent opportunity gaps and make it easier for families to access information, services and resources in Cambridge

FIND IT CAMBRIDGE

Background

Cambridge has a wealth of resources, including many resources designed to support and enrich the lives of families. One of the greatest barriers to access, according to interviews and surveys, is that the systems are so complex that families are often unaware of resources that would be available to them. This dizzying array of options and networks can be overwhelming, and we need to find effective and sustainable solutions.

Since the fall of 2013, the following efforts have been made to gather feedback from Cambridge stakeholders representing families and city, school, and community partners who work with them.

- Interviewed 91 parents and 122 providers to find out what type of information families are looking for, where they go to find it, challenges and suggestions.
- Partnered with volunteers from Code for Boston to help develop and design a centralized online resource.
- Conducted a one-day Design Sprint with 14 stakeholders to start the process of co-producing a new and improved easy-to-use, multi-lingual, single point portal.
- Disseminated a survey taken by over 1,250 people.
- Led 3 sessions with a total of 35 people who work with Cambridge families to brainstorm ideas for the Information Hub Network and identify pros, cons and feasibility for each idea.
- Analyzed all the information gathered to determine what actions need to be taken to create an Information Hub Network so that families, youth, and those who support them can easily find the activities, services and resources they are looking for in Cambridge.

Desired Outcomes

- Families have a clear entry point for services, supports and information.
- Families are aware of and can easily access all the resources available.
- Families and those working with them have people to talk to and a place to go.
- Translation and cultural barriers are reduced.

- Build off what we already have so that we can avoid duplication and service families more effectively and efficiently.

Cambridge Information Hub Network Proposal

- **Find It Cambridge** The Family Policy Council is working with Code for Boston and Terravoz to develop and design Find It Cambridge – www.finditcambridge.org. Families, youth and those who work with them will have the technology to find what they are looking for, when they are looking for it, and it will be centralized, up-to-date, accurate, easy to use and eye-catching.
- **Connectors** Official information/referral people who will provide updated, accurate information and be available for people to call, visit or email.
- **Hotline** One main phone number people can call to talk to a person about information and referral and get connected to the appropriate person/department. Phone # will be posted on www.finditcambridge.org.
- **“Information Hub” Outposts** Places that already exist where people can go to get information and access to services and resources in Cambridge.
- **Mobile “Information Hub”** An energy efficient truck/van or bicycle that travels around the City of Cambridge with staff equipped with tablets with access to www.finditcambridge.org.

Google Community Grant

Developing a resource-rich website is not enough, we need to familiarize users with Find It. We plan to do this through face-to-face connections by which we will increase access and reduce barriers so that a diverse range of citizens are encouraged and empowered to benefit from Find It.

Fortunately, the Family Policy Council received a Google Community Grant for \$22,360 to enhance the capacity of the Find It website. We will be creating a team of *Find It Finders* to reach out and educate both Cambridge providers and expected users, with special attention to the traditionally underserved, under-resourced and/or those affected by the digital divide.

We will recruit and train *Finders* to engage with potential end users and content providers of Find It Cambridge. Equipped with bicycles and mobile devices, the *Finders* will be the friendly human face of the website. They will be charged with 1) going to the different neighborhoods of Cambridge to raise awareness about Find It and 2) collecting data on the website’s usability so that we can make improvements thus augmenting its impact over the long term. In addition, the *Finders* will meet with content providers whose program and activity information is posted on the website. The *Finders* will 1) encourage these providers to input and update their

information 2) show them how to do it and 3) ask them how we can improve the system. This exercise will also let providers know that this is a tool they can use to advertise their services and help families find needed resources in Cambridge.

CAMBRIDGE BOOK BIKE

The Book Bike is a collaboration between the Agenda for Children Literacy Initiative, Center for Families, Cambridge Public Library, Summer Food Program, and Liz Phipps Soeiro (School Librarian at the Cambridgeport School). Their goal is to make sure all children in Cambridge have a home library with quality literature. During the summer, the book bike delivers FREE books to kids in 5 parks 4 days a week to support literacy and promote reading as something fun to do. Children also have the opportunity to participate in the Summer Food program and listen to stories and participate in many activities.

Last summer the Book Bike pilot program proved to be very successful at Hoyt Field, Greene-Rose Heritage and Gold Star Mother's Parks. This year the Family Policy Council recommended the City support the continuation of the Book Bike program. The Family Policy Council also purchased a second bike to serve North Cambridge at Danehy Park and Russell Field so that the program could expand to North Cambridge.

FY16 BUDGET: \$13,669.55

- Distributed 2,600 books
- Visited 5 parks for 7 weeks
- Average of 80 books given away at each park visit
- Site Coordinator at each site (4 hrs.)
- 2 Center for Families and Agenda for Children staff at each site (1.5 hrs.)
- 2 Mayor's Youth Employment students at each site

FY17 Request: \$17,739.55

- \$4070 be added to the contract this year to cover:
 - Additional 850 books
 - Additional activity sets

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM (CET)

Since 2012, the Family Policy Council has been working with the CET to seek ways to enhance the capacity of this multi-agency collaborative that reaches out to under-served Cambridge families and connects them to community events and resources, develops community leaders, and supports agencies in working with a diverse community. Over the years, the Family Policy has continued to support the CET in various ways:

- Hire additional outreach workers and increase current hours to work on special projects.
- Cambridge Public Schools contract with CET for 832 hours of outreach worker time.
- Continue the partnership between the CET and Cambridge Public Schools.
- Hire a full-time CET Program Assistant.

- Plan and develop a series of training modules for outreach workers across the city.
- Pilot the training program for those who do outreach and engagement work in Cambridge.
- Continue the implementation of the *Making Connections* training program.

OPPORTUNITY GAPS IN CAMBRIDGE

- After the College Success Initiative presentation, the Family Policy Council decided to focus on the persistent opportunity gaps that exist in Cambridge.
- CYC led a discussion at the April meeting to start brainstorming how the Family Policy Council can make a difference.
- The Family Policy Council agreed to establish a working group to develop a proposal over the summer and present to the whole group at the September, 2016 meeting.

CAMBRIDGE YOUTH COUNCIL (CYC)

The Cambridge Youth Council is the youth civic engagement component of the Cambridge Family Policy Council. The Youth Council is comprised of a diverse group of young people ages 14 to 18 who work on projects related to the Family Policy Council's goals and topics that are of interest to the young people.

CYC 2015-2016 Goal

Aligned with the Family Policy Council's vision of Family Engagement, the Youth Council has been addressing the Opportunity to Learn Gap in both the middle schools and high school in Cambridge. Their goal is to find new ways to make sure youth voices in Cambridge are heard and that we use that information to better the lives of youth in Cambridge.

This past year CYC created a Facebook campaign called *Cambridge Raw Perspectives*, which aims to provide an open forum for the community to share their unique perspectives and insights regarding race and equity in education. For more information, check out:

<https://www.facebook.com/cambridgerawperspectives/>

CYC members also:

- Featured on Channel 5's Chronicle (<http://www.wcvb.com/chronicle/whiz-kids-making-a-difference/37540888>)
- Represented the City of Cambridge at the National League of Cities Conference in Washington
- Collaborated with Workforce Development and hosted a workshop with their 8th graders in order help them with their transition to high school
- Joined the Middle School Network at their Summer Planning and Placement workshops at the Upper Schools and Amigos
- Continued the tradition of participating in the CRLS Incoming Freshman Orientation
- Led a portion of the Be All Right event at CRLS

- Helped organized the Many Helping Hands MLK Day of Service Food Drive and thanks to the generous support of hundreds of residents and the Department of Public Works, over 500 bags were delivered to City Hall
- Provided valuable input to the Envision Cambridge project