



# WORK PLAN 2025-2029

**Roots Community Health Center**

Oakland, Alameda County

Neighborhoods Ready for School Initiative

*Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) is a place-based initiative launched by First 5 Alameda County in 2018 to support equity and neighborhood-led investment, programming, and policy related to early childhood development, family health and well-being, and kindergarten readiness.*

This work plan was prepared by the NRFS team at Roots Community Health Center: Dr. Noha Aboelata (Founder & CEO) and Jamaica Sowell (Director of Programs and Policy).



## Executive Summary

Roots Community Health Center, initiated in 2008 by two volunteers in a single exam room, has evolved into a substantial organization of more than 200 employees across ten sites, driven by the vision of addressing health disparities among Oakland's low-income Black and Brown communities. Roots supports families through a comprehensive approach to holistic health, including medical care, behavioral health services, case management, and more. Understanding the critical impact of neighborhood environments on child development, Roots actively engages in neighborhood development initiatives in East Oakland's 40x40 area. The four-year plan, which is rooted in community input, has key goals that encompass fostering home daycare capacity, nurturing parent leadership, creating family-friendly spaces, and revitalizing parks to support mental wellness and education. The success of these initiatives will be gauged by metrics such as the number of mini-grants offered to home daycares, council participation levels, and the creation of vibrant and engaged community spaces. Roots aims to ensure a resilient, self-sufficient, and self-determined future for Oakland's families of African descent, striving for exemplary Black birth outcomes and fostering conducive learning environments for Black children.



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# Our Story



Roots Community Health Center (Roots) started in 2008 with two volunteers in a single exam room. In the years since, we have grown from having two individuals volunteering their time to an organization with 200+ employees and ten different sites. We exist because our founding CEO, Dr. Noha Aboelata, saw how health disparities and the social determinants of health are disproportionately impacted by the inequitable distribution of resources for low-income Black and Brown residents in East Oakland.

**Jamaica Sowell, Director of Programs and Policy**

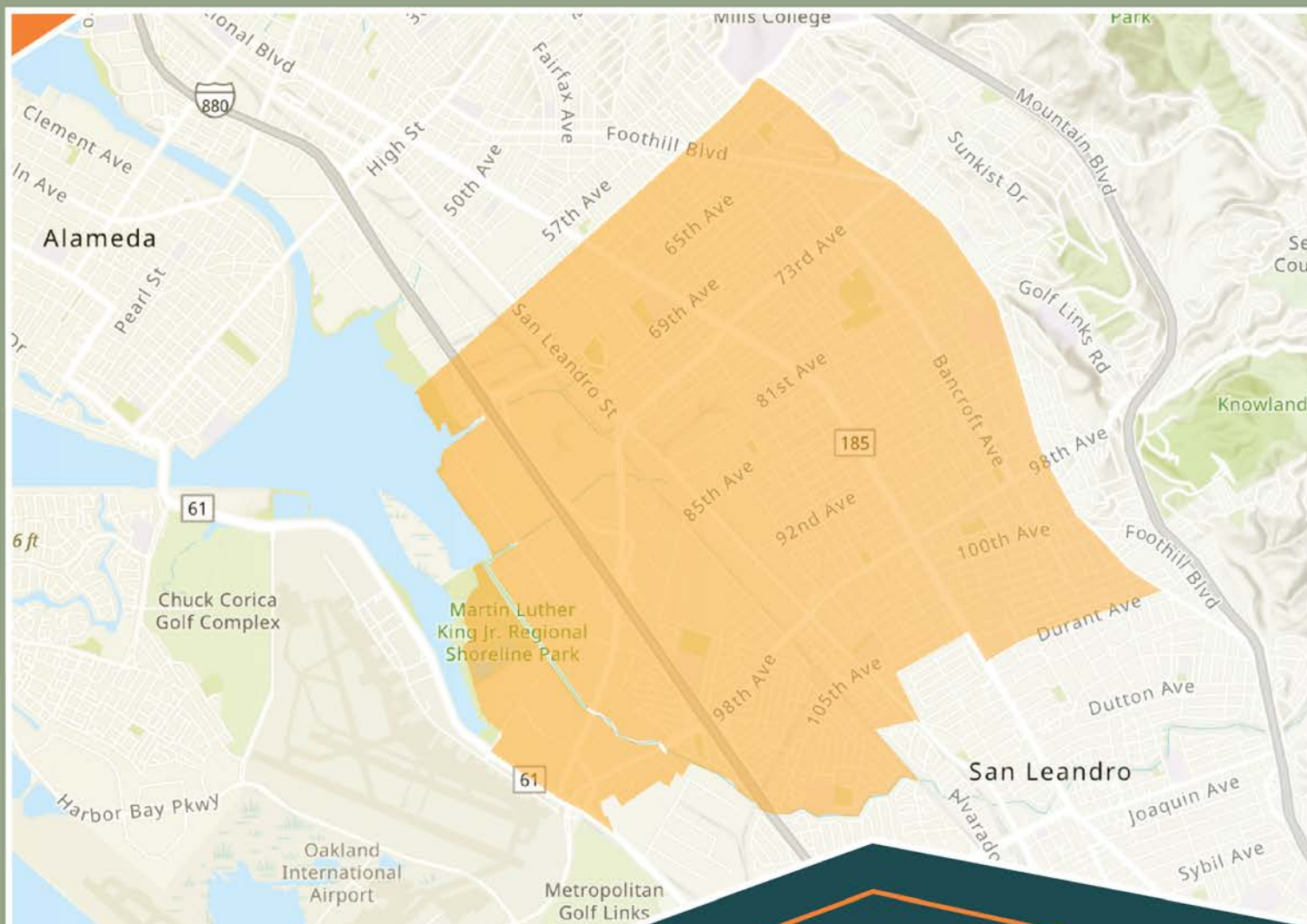
There are a lot of key inequities that unfortunately East Oakland is facing. There isn't a grocery store. There are air particles associated with asthma as it relates to how East Oakland sits between two freeways and is subjected to multiple polluting industries.

Today, Roots not only provides high-quality, affordable medical care, but we also provide behavioral health care, health navigation, benefits enrollment, basic-needs access, and many more wraparound whole health services to the residents of our community. A family navigator may talk to any given parent three or four days a week; they are very deeply involved in the lives of our community members, and as such we rely on them to inform our strategy by relaying what their clients are dealing with, what they want to see, and how they can best be supported.

We know that changing the health of our community starts even before birth. Black women and birthing people are three times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth and to experience more maternal health complications and two times more likely to live in poverty or experience hardships during pregnancy. Because of this, Roots is deeply invested in making intergenerational change for our people. Our medical team starts prenatal care as soon as someone knows they are pregnant. Pregnant clients are reached out to by a family navigator who starts working with the soon-to-be parents to prepare them for, and support them with, practices for a healthy pregnancy. Navigators also help first-time parents understand what to expect and how to prepare for a new baby.

Once a child is born, our pediatricians work with families and support the health and wellness of our young patients. We then start our postpartum nutrition care program, Nourish!, in partnership with Mothers-for-Mothers for Postpartum Justice. Through Nourish!, six weeks of healthy, dietician-advised meals are delivered to new parents free of charge to ensure postnatal dietary needs are being met. We also offer a range of classes and workshops for parents to engage with, including parenting skills, child development education, balancing parenting and life's demands, and more. We have community spaces for parents of color in East Oakland to connect with each other—it really does take a village! We bring in educators to read to children, because we know how important reading aloud is for social, emotional, and language development. Family navigators continue working with families as their children grow, supporting all aspects of their lives and well-being. For parents in crisis, navigators connect them to our basic needs services with everything from fresh food to utility bill assistance. They support parents enrolling in daycare and talking about options for kindergarten and transitional kindergarten. Navigators continue to make connections for parents as their children approach kindergarten age.

Roots, more than anyone, is faced with the fact that the area where a child is raised makes a deeply significant impact on the health and safety of that child as they grow and develop. This is why neighborhood development is such a central tenet of our strategy for the roughly 40x40 block area of East Oakland that we call the 40x40.



40x40

## Our Vision for Neighborhoods Ready for School

Roots envisions an Oakland where all families of African descent are resilient, healthy, self-sufficient, and self-determined. We see a future for our community where Black birth outcomes are exemplary, where creating a family is a positive, beautiful experience, and where Black children are given learning environments that foster their growth from day one.

### Jamaica Sowell, Director of Programs and Policy

The Stay Ready for School program that has been funded by First 5 is really targeted towards our Black families here in East Oakland to provide resources that they may not have access to.

## Community-Driven Priorities

Neighborhood is that person's support system. So that's where all their resources come from, their friends. People go within their comfort zone so within that person's neighborhood they're more comfortable seeking help.

—Danay Johnson, Parent Leader

Roots Community Health Center has always been by the community, for the community. Not only is our team composed of members of the East Oakland community, we are always striving to empower community members and clients to guide the direction of our work. A large subset of our team works directly with our clients every day. Not only do we ask for participant feedback after every event to ensure that we are responding to the changing profile of what our families are looking for, we also host and empower multiple community-based action councils. We create space for community members of all ages and experiences to give input and change the course of how their communities are being served.

- The People's Advisory Council (PAC) meets monthly and is made up of Black community leaders and residents who live in (or have lived in) the 40x40, with a vested interest and knowledge of the issues impacting their community.
- The Youth Advisory Council meets monthly. The purpose of Roots' Youth Advisory Council is to provide a space for youth to discover and use their voice on public health issues that impact their lives. The council is focused on spreading information, providing knowledge and awareness, and using digital media messaging that is truthful and entertaining. Young people on the Council are fostering an environment for discussion with other young people in their community. The Youth Advisory Council creates a space where youth can come together to be leaders and lead others. Young people are taking initiative on spreading information on public health priorities that impact our community by gaining knowledge. The Youth Advisory Council provides a space to organize amongst ourselves and create the change we want to see.
- The Telehealth Patient Advisory Clinic (TPAC) meets quarterly and the mission is to bridge the gap in health disparities by giving healthcare providers a viable option to reach patients they have never been able to reach before due to non-virtual barriers. The vision is to advance the improvement and quality of telehealth services by providing access to patient and family perspectives that will ensure the delivery of high-quality care.
- The Barbers Advisory Council meets monthly with the mission is to strengthen the capacity of barbers and cosmetologists to be health educators, navigators, coaches, and community leaders. The vision is that Black barbershops and salons can be places of health promotion and outreach, community building, and treatment for the Black community (<https://cuthypertension.org/about>).

In the future, we are planning to continue offering these councils increasing autonomy to address issues directly and support their voices in realms like policy advocacy. We are also working to create community-led committees that work in direct service to their communities. For example, we envision disrupting cycles of violence in the community by working with residents to address their issues through nonviolent means with Peace Committees. We have completed training for these committees and are building out implementation.

Being a member of Roots came at a really tough time during the pandemic. It kind of provided an outlet. The navigator that I had was really resourceful. She was really into her clients, checking in, making sure we had the things that we needed.

—Danay Johnson, Parent Leader



## Four-Year Priority Goals

1. Provide mini-grants to neighborhood home daycares to help fill capacity gaps.
2. Support a council of participants who have children ages 0-5 in leadership development.
3. Create safe spaces for people in the 40x40 that support families, including children ages 0-5.
4. Support parks and other family spaces to make them vibrant and resilient for mental wellness and educational development.

## Activities & Timeline

**Goal 1:** Mini-Grants for Neighborhood Family Child Care Providers

Steps	Staff Leads	Partners	Timeframe
Build relationships with more caregivers.	NRFS Program Manager, Program Coordinator, and Program Specialist	NRFS families and their networks, existing child care partners	Year 1
Identify community members who would be interested in providing home daycare if given support.  Formalize an application process.	NRFS Program Manager, Program Coordinator, and Program Specialist	NRFS families and their networks, existing child care partners	Year 1
Dispense mini-grants to applicants.  Create evaluation framework and evaluate the program's impact annually.	NRFS Program Manager, Program Coordinator, and Program Specialist	External training organizations for caregiver capacity building	Years 1-4

### Expected Outcomes and Progress Tools:

For our child care mini grants, the simplest and most direct way to measure success is simply through how many applications we receive and how many grants we give out. We would also like to see the number of applicants grow year after year. The longer we offer these grants, the wider our reach should be. This data will be tracked by the Program Administrator, after being collected by the NRFS Program Coordinator. As this gets off the ground, we would like to run focus groups with cohorts of grantees, being able to record not only how the grant impacted them but also what the pitfalls and difficulties in their process were so that we can begin to offer more support than just a lump sum of capital. However, perhaps a more satisfactory metric for the impact of the project on our community might be about the ability for parents to access affordable child care in their area. Currently, affordable child care is one of the most common needs we hear about from the parents in our program. If, in four years, we are able to refer every parent to child care they can afford with known openings, we will be able to see the tangible benefit of this program on the lives of parents in the 40x40. This information, like so much data we rely on, will come by way of our navigators in their direct interactions with parents.

# Activities & Timeline

**Goal 2:** Leadership Development for a New Council of Participants With Children Ages 0-5

Steps	Staff Leads	Partners	Timeframe
Define scope and purpose of an agency leadership council for parents and caregivers with children ages 0-5.	CEO, Director of Programs and Policy, Family Navigators, SRFS Program Coordinator, Training and Evaluation Manager	Participants for their involvement in the council	Year 1
Identify potential interested participants.	CEO, Director of Programs and Policy, Family Navigators, SRFS Program Coordinator, Training and Evaluation Manager	Participants for their involvement in the council	Year 2
Coordinate leadership development programming to support their growth. Launch council and maintain connection with council participants.	CEO, Director of Programs and Policy, Family Navigators, SRFS Program Coordinator, Training and Evaluation Manager	Participants for their involvement in the council Other NRFS Sites	By End of Year 2

## Expected Outcomes and Progress Tools:

We envision a thriving community within this council, and we will strive to ensure that participants with children 0-5 are not just involved in this council, but supported in developing their skills and applying their experience to the work. Success can be measured only through multiple channels. The first is the level of participation. We want a council that has every seat enthusiastically filled. We want every participant to be interested in joining, and to know that they have the opportunity to do so. The council application data will be monitored by the Program Administrator, but the real source of qualitative information about the perception of the council will be shared through navigators, as they will likely be the team members encouraging participation and having the casual conversations that will elicit unfiltered opinions from parents. Other metrics that will be very valuable to us have to do with council-level successes: time to their first formalized policy recommendation, how long it takes for the council to generate its own agendas, how much supervision and guidance they require, and so forth.

# Activities & Timeline

**Goal 3:** Safe Spaces for People in the 40x40 That Support Families With Children Ages 0-5

Steps	Staff Leads	Partners	Timeframe
Work with our neighborhood-based councils to identify high-impact areas.	Associate Director of Neighborhood Development	Our 40x40 partners Neighborhood Council leaders The Land Trust	Years 1-2
Understand what support families need most in each neighborhood in the 40x40. Support residents in building their own Resident Action Councils just for residents, as desired.	Associate Director of Neighborhood Development	Our 40x40 partners Neighborhood Council leaders The Land Trust	Years 1-2
Acquire property or work with partners building resilient safe spaces.	Associate Director of Neighborhood Development	Our 40x40 partners Neighborhood Council leaders The Land Trust	By Year 4

## Expected Outcomes and Progress Tools:

The creation of family-friendly safe spaces within the 40x40 is a large and ambitious goal. This is a process that will largely be carried out by our 40x40 neighborhood development team, informed by the NRFS program staff as subject matter experts. Safe spaces for families look many different ways, and as such, a large part of tracking our goals will be working with residents to identify what would make the most meaningful difference to families in their neighborhood. Beyond that, work planning for whether we need to make a new space, update an existing space, or support the transformation of one space into another is also a large milestone. It is important to name how vital our partners in the 40x40 Council will be to this process. Across our different organizations, we have many investments in different areas that we can leverage. We will feel complete when we can say that every neighborhood in the 40x40 region has at least one space for families that is being improved or developed. The completion of these spaces will be a long-term goal that may extend into our 10-year plan. We expect to have concrete road maps and make material progress within these four years.

# Activities & Timeline

**Goal 4:** Vibrant and Resilient Parks and Other Family Spaces for Mental Wellness and Educational Development

Steps	Staff Leads	Partners	Timeframe
Work with resident councils on advocacy with the City of Oakland.	Associate Director of Neighborhood Development, Director of Programs and Policy, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator	Oakland Public Works Oakland Public Library	Years 1-4
Plan programming at parks, libraries, and other family spaces to enrich the space and encourage families to utilize them.	Associate Director of Neighborhood Development, Director of Programs and Policy, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator	Oakland Public Works Oakland Public Library	Years 1-4

### Expected Outcomes and Progress Tools:

Parks and other child-oriented third spaces are a massive part of what makes up a “good city to raise a child in.” In the past, we have successfully worked with Resident Action Councils to work with the City to revitalize parks that were no longer serving the community. The difficulty with this is that parks, libraries, and other similar spaces are often governmentally managed. As such, the first large milestone to reach is advocating for the City to recognize the need for improvement. After this large milestone, getting project budget and project management staff assigned are the next big steps to completion. In addition to city-sponsored efforts, we envision revitalizing these spaces in more grassroots ways. We have worked with our partners in Sobrante Park to host resident-led clean up days; we can work to bring more programming to these spaces to bring neighbor engagement and interest as we have done with the Department of Violence Prevention for Town Nights; and we have even seen the creation of independent child-friendly spaces like our 40x40 partner, Black Cultural Zone, has done with Liberation Park.

# Plan Investment

Roots Community Health Center’s ‘24-’25 budget prioritizes funding the personnel needed to continue NRFS program operations for the ‘24-’25 fiscal year. NRFS programming is currently run throughout the 40x40, including five neighborhoods: Sobrante Park, Brookfield, Eastmont, Elmhurst, and Castlemont. The aim of the ‘25-’27 budget is to more intentionally target the Eastmont neighborhood by doubling programming in Eastmont over those two years.

Our visionary budget for the whole 40x40 is to expand more deeply into all five neighborhoods, as we plan on doing in Eastmont in the coming years. This includes increasing mini-grants for home daycares, increasing the budget of the Community Fund to support each neighborhood in its specific needs, and supporting at least a few home daycares in each neighborhood by providing supplies, food, and other types of support.

Budget Tiers			
Budget Line Items	FY 24-25	FY 25-27	Visionary Budget
Personnel Expenses	\$160,154	\$320,308	\$1,601,540
Benefits	\$40,038	\$80,076	\$400,380
General Expenses	\$44,634	\$89,268	\$446,340
Subcontractors	\$98,000	\$196,000	\$980,000
Roots Community Fund	\$7,500	\$15,000	\$500,000
Childcare Mini-Grants	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$300,000
Staff Development	\$0	\$0	\$20,000
Safe Spaces Projects	\$0	\$0	\$500,000
Indirect	\$55,175	\$110,350	\$441,396
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$410,501</b>	<b>\$821,002</b>	<b>\$5,189,656</b>

# Acknowledgments

First 5 Alameda County and Kristin Spanos, CEO

Alameda County Community Food Bank

Village Connect

Healthy Black Families

Tandem Time

Coach Diedra, Sisterhood Circle

Tanya Burrell, Parenting Toolkit

Dr. Patricia Nunley - Black Wellness Parenting Series

Cities & People Advisors

Mothers-for-Mothers Postpartum Justice

Nourish!





**FIRST 5**



**rootsclinic.org**  
**first5alameda.org**

Cities & People Advisors provided coordination and guidance for the Neighborhoods Ready for School work plan development process.



**Cities & People**