

Executive Summary

Prepared by **Fractal Strategies** for Community Partners and the LA County Dept. of Mental Health.

Los Angeles County distributes well-being inequitably across its communities, and the gap falls hardest on the ones the mainstream mental health system reaches least well. Measure of America's 2026 *Portrait of Los Angeles County* scores the County's overall well-being at 5.64 on a ten-point scale — a modest gain that fell short of the County's goal.

That single number conceals wide disparities, and the lowest-scoring places concentrate across South and Central LA. **Transforming LA (TLA)** was a two-year capacity building initiative funded by the LA County Department of Mental Health and administered by Community Partners, supporting fifteen community-based organizations that deliver preventative mental health services. The cohort shows what the County's stated priorities — community engagement and culturally competent care — look like in practice.

THE GAP, IN THE COUNTY'S OWN DATA · WELL-BEING SCORE (OF 10)

5.64

County overall

6.06

US-born residents

4.95

Foreign-born residents

4.01

Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander



TLA Grantee Cohort 2 at Plaza de la Raza, December 2024

01 **The communities this cohort serves are the ones the County's data identifies as furthest from care.**

Foreign-born residents, the neighborhoods of South and Central LA, and specific cultural and language communities all score below the County average. The cohort concentrates exactly there. These organizations are built from the communities they serve, led by people who share their language and lived culture.

02 **These organizations are irreplaceable because they are embedded.**

Many operate the only program of their kind in the County. Their access rests on trust that cannot transfer to a larger institution, and the deepest progress came precisely where technical assistance consultants shared the community's language and culture.

03 **Capacity grew, and it grew where it makes organizations durable.**

For two years, TLA replaced informal, undocumented operations with strategic plans, data systems, board governance, and fund development capacity — the infrastructure that outlasts any single staff member.

2.83 → 3.17 Average capacity, of 4	22 / 23 Domains that gained	100% Full contract readiness
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04 **Service held steady under pressure, and outcomes were measured.**

This cohort served **8,493 individuals** and made **6,215 referrals** into the County's broader safety net — sustained through wildfire recovery, the MHSA-to-BHSA funding transition, and intensified immigration enforcement. Where organizations measured against validated instruments, the results were strong.

8,493 Individuals served	6,215 Referrals & linkages	25,712 Total participation	1,719 Activities convened
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05 **The model is proven, and the timing of its end is the risk.**

TLA sunsetted on June 30, 2026. The infrastructure is new, the smallest organizations are the most exposed, and the funding that created these pathways has ended. **What TLA built will hold only if the investment continues.**

"Transformation happens in small moments. TLA challenged me to look inward at the ways grief, culture, and family history have shaped how Latino grievers move through the world."

WHO THE COHORT SERVES

These organizations are built from the communities they serve. The cohort reaches every Service Planning Area of the County, concentrating in South LA — home to some of the County's most underserved neighborhoods, served by twelve of the fifteen organizations.

SPA 1 · Antelope Valley	7
SPA 2 · San Fernando Valley	6
SPA 3 · San Gabriel Valley	7
SPA 4 · Metro	11
SPA 5 · West	8
SPA 6 · South	12
SPA 7 · East	7
SPA 8 · South Bay	10



Organizations serving each of LA County's eight Service Planning Areas.

LANGUAGE & IMMIGRATION

Our House — monolingual Spanish-speaking grievers

Search to Involve Pilipino Americans — Filipino and broader immigrant communities

YouStar — Korean American immigrants

Generaciones en Acción — immigrant families, older adults, and youth

ABILITY & IDENTITY

Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness — Deaf and hard of hearing residents

The Laurel Foundation — transgender, LGBTQ, and HIV-affected youth

Sacred Path — American Indian and Alaska Native families

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Maternal Mental Health NOW — perinatal parents

The Jeffrey Foundation — children with special needs and their families

Southern California Community Empowerment Corporation — justice-impacted youth and families in South LA

Therapeutic Play Foundation — justice-impacted youth and families in South LA

Variety Boys & Girls Club — children, youth, and families on the Eastside

CULTURAL & CREATIVE ACCESS

Alliance for California Traditional Arts — folk and traditional artists and their communities

Music For Your Mental Health — young people reached through music

VETERANS

Reality Center — veterans across the County

"Having two years of funding to grow what we do allowed us the credibility to expand and legitimize our work. We weren't a here-today-gone-tomorrow type of organization."

— SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT CORPORATION

WHAT THE EVIDENCE POINTS TOWARD

Five directions for the next initiative, drawn from gaps the cohort named and patterns that appeared independently across the consultant reports, interviews, surveys, and service data.

01 Match support to readiness.

The same award weighed one percent of one organization's budget and several times another's. Assess operational readiness before scoping projects, and decide at the outset whom the initiative is building for.

02 Give capacity building a runway.

Building a tool and embedding it are different tasks, and adoption is what suffers when timelines compress. Sequence support to begin early and plan for implementation, not only deliverable production.

03 Meet organizations where they are.

Support built around each organization's needs, culture, and stage depends on continuity — on knowing the cohort well enough to see needs before they are voiced. Plan and staff for that responsiveness from the start.

04 Fund the relationships, not just the deliverables.

Culturally matched consultants, an embedded program lead, and peer connection drove the deepest results. These rarely appear as line items, yet they produced the outcomes organizations valued most — and deserve deliberate funding.

05 Build for sustainability from the first year, and protect the exit.

Fund development and board engagement were the hardest capacities to move and the lowest-scoring at the close. The exposure is sharpest for the smallest organizations, where the award met or exceeded an entire annual budget. Make sustainability a first-year priority, and resource the transition out of funding as carefully as the work itself.

"I couldn't imagine figuring this out without TLA. TLA was the glue, the answers we needed, a soft place to land."

— MUSIC FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

THE DECISION AHEAD

The evidence describes a model that works — one that builds durable capacity in the communities the County's own data identifies as furthest from care, through the community-rooted, culturally responsive care the Behavioral Health Services Act names as central.

TLA ended just as the County named these priorities. The lesson that carries forward: **the communities furthest from care are best reached by organizations that belong to them.**