



Transforming LA Year 2 Report

Prepared by Fractal Strategies for Community
Partners and the LA County Department of
Mental Health

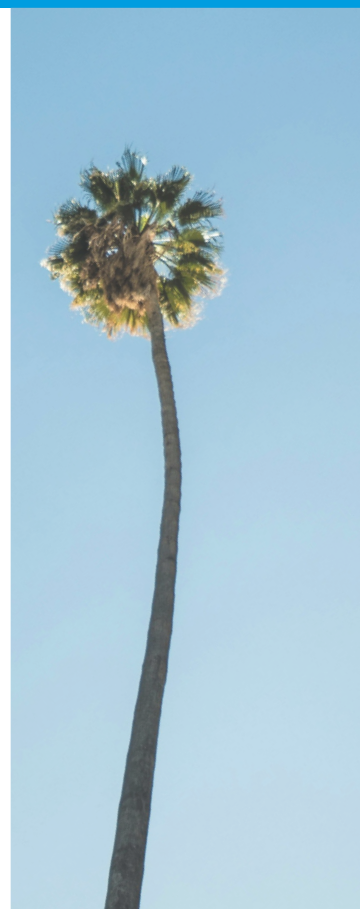


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Executive Summary

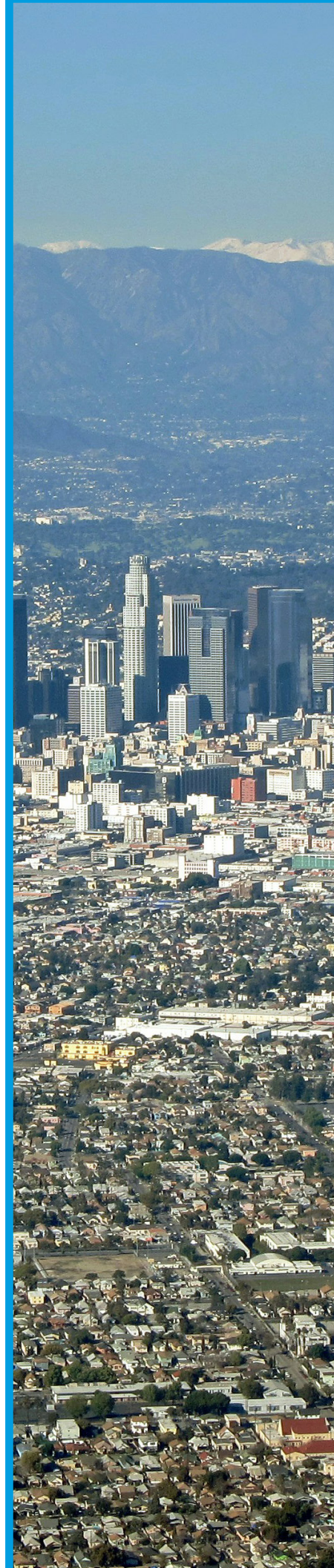
Los Angeles County's data shows that well-being is distributed inequitably, and the gap falls hardest on the communities the mainstream mental health system reaches least well. The fifteen organizations in the Transforming LA (TLA) cohort close that gap. They are not simply located in these communities. They are built from them, led by people who share their language, culture, and lived experience.

For two years, TLA strengthened the infrastructure behind that access. It replaced informal, undocumented operations with strategic plans, data systems, board governance, and fund development capacity. These were the foundations that enabled these organizations to build their sustainability beyond a grant period.

The result is concrete. Over the past year, this cohort served 8,493 individuals, made 6,215 referrals into the County's broader safety net, and produced validated improvements in mental health and well-being, sustained through wildfire recovery, immigration enforcement, and a countywide funding transition.

This report shares the evidence that the TLA capacity building model works, and that community-rooted, culturally competent prevention must be a priority for behavioral health in LA County. TLA sunsetted on June 30, 2026, just as the County's own 2026 well-being data names these communities as the ones furthest from care, and just as Department of Mental Health leadership names community engagement and culturally competent care as a priority going forward for the County's behavioral health system.

The themes from the TLA initiative are organized around five findings.



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 on well-being. The cohort concentrates exactly there.

These organizations are irreplaceable because they are embedded.

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

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

Across the organizations that completed organizational self-assessments, average capacity rose from 2.83 to 3.17 on a four-point scale, with the strongest gains in the infrastructure that outlasts any single staff member. Every organization finished the initiative reporting full contract readiness.

Service held steady under pressure, and outcomes were measured.

The cohort sustained high service volume under severe external pressure and documented validated mental health gains where it could measure them.

The model is proven, and the timing of its end is the risk.

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





TLA grantee cohort 2 at a workshop at Plaza de la Raza, December, 2024.

About TLA and this evaluation

Transforming LA (TLA) is a two-year capacity building initiative funded by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) and administered by Community Partners. The initiative supports community-based organizations that deliver preventative mental health services to communities across the County. Year 1 centered on workshops and peer learning. Year 2 added individualized capacity building projects, making the most recent year the fullest expression of the model.

This evaluation lands at a moment DMH has named as pivotal. In her foreword to Measure of America's 2026 Portrait of Los Angeles County, DMH Director Lisa Wong describes the County's Behavioral Health Services Act planning process and the central role of community engagement and culturally competent care in making behavioral health services accessible and equitable. The TLA cohort shows what delivering on those priorities looks like in practice, through organizations

built around the specific communities they serve.

The cohort.

Fifteen organizations made up the FY 25–26 cohort, supported by subcontracts totaling approximately \$2.9 million for the year. Awards ranged from \$75,000 to \$300,000, with a median of \$180,000. Nine organizations continued existing programs and six launched new ones. The cohort spans a large range of organizational scale, from emerging groups with annual budgets under \$100,000 to established institutions operating on several million dollars a year.

The model.

TLA combined several forms of support into a single program:

- **Flexible funding** that organizations could direct where it was needed most, often toward staffing.
- **Individualized capacity building projects** that paired each organization with a consultant matched to its specific needs.
- **Facilitated workshops and quarterly convenings** that built shared skills across the cohort.
- **Peer learning** that connected leaders who often work in isolation.
- **One-to-one technical assistance** from program staff throughout the year.
- **Accessibility and cultural relevance** as design principles shaping every component.

The evaluation questions.

Three questions have guided this evaluation from the start of the initiative:

1. What impact has TLA had on the organizational capacity of its grantees?
2. How has participation in TLA affected the grantees' contract readiness over time?
3. What changes would improve TLA's effectiveness for current and future grantees?

The method.

Fractal Strategies served as the external evaluator for TLA. This report draws on six sources of evidence gathered across the final program year:

- **End-of-year interviews** with leaders from fifteen organizations, providing the qualitative core.
- **A pre-and-post organizational self-assessment** measuring capacity change across twenty-three domains.
- **Four quarterly reports** documenting service delivery and outcomes.
- **Intake data** establishing the cohort baseline.
- **Workshop evaluations** capturing the cohort's experience of the training program.
- **Consultant final reports** detailing the individualized capacity building projects.

Through these sources, a rich set of data allows the report to show both what changed and why.



Data and Evaluation Training by Dr. Lucretia Taylor (Dr. Cre) with TLA grantee cohort 2 at The California Endowment, September 2025.

Who We Serve: The Gap, and Who Closes It

The communities most underserved by the mainstream mental health system are the communities this cohort was built to reach, and these specific organizations can reach them in ways larger institutions cannot.

The County's own data documents the gap.

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 own goal. Underneath that single number are significant disparities.

Foreign-born residents score 4.95, more than a full point below their US-born neighbors at 6.06. Countywide racial and ethnic averages conceal as much as they reveal: the "Asian" category, highest among major groups at 7.68, ranges

from 9.38 for Indian Angelenos down to 4.76 for Cambodian Angelenos, while Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents hold the lowest score of any group at 4.01.

By place, the County stretches from its wealthiest communities above 9.0 down

to Southeast Los Angeles at 3.03, with the lowest-scoring places concentrated across South and Central LA. LGBTQ Angelenos report depression at 21 percent against 10 percent for non-LGBTQ adults, and 24 percent of transgender and nonbinary adults report having attempted suicide, against 3 percent of cisgender non-LGBTQ adults.

Who the TLA Cohort Serves

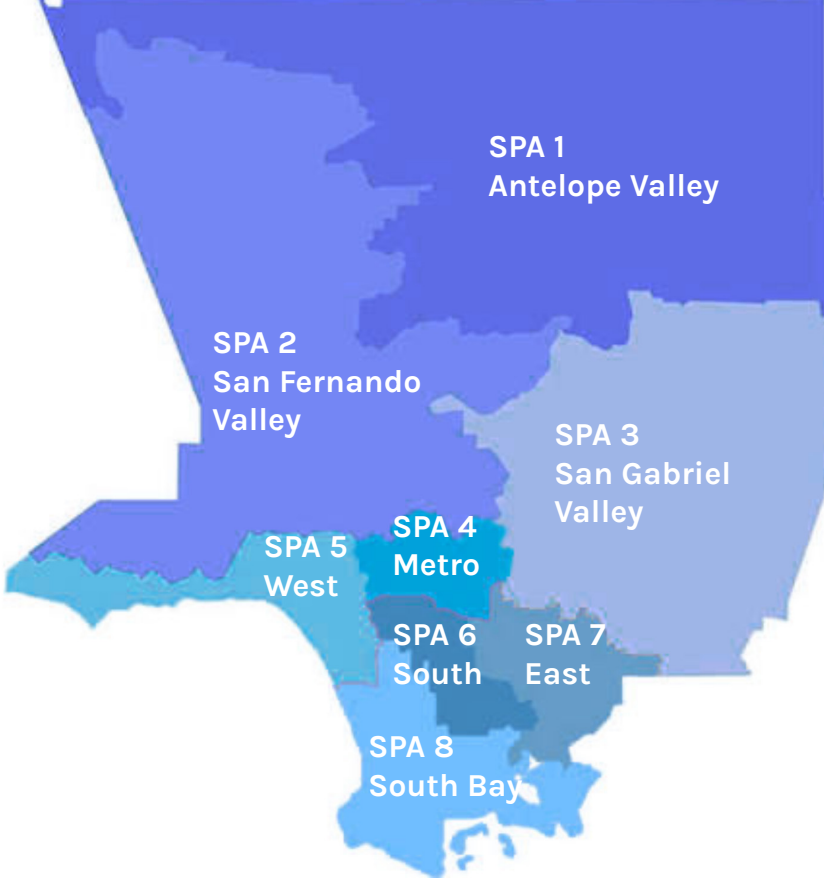
Language & Immigration Status	
Our House	Monolingual Spanish-speaking grievors
Search to Involve Pilipino Americans	Filipino and broader immigrant communities
YouStar	Korean American immigrants
Generaciones en Accion	Immigrant families, older adults, and youth
Ability & Identity	
Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness	Deaf and hard of hearing residents
The Laurel Foundation	Transgender, LGBTQ, and HIV-accepted 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 teh Eastside
Veterans	
Reality Center	Veterans accross the County
Cultural & Creative Access	
Alliance for California Traditional Arts	Folk and traditional artiss and their communities
Music For Your Mental Health	Young people reached through music

The cohort concentrates exactly where those gaps are deepest.

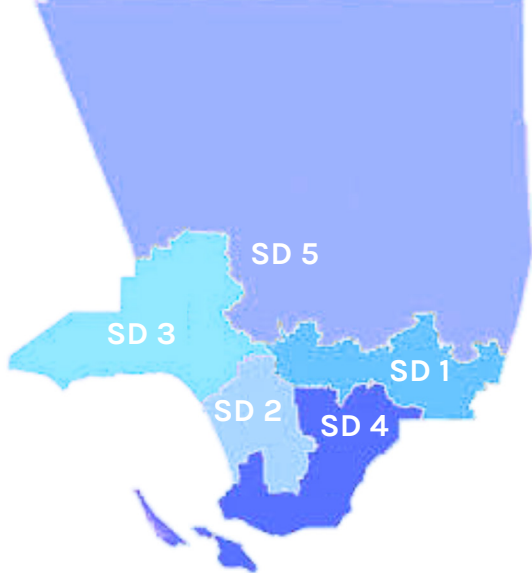
South Los Angeles, home to some of the County’s most underserved neighborhoods, is served by twelve of the fifteen organizations, particularly the South LA youth and families the County’s data places at the bottom of its range. Additionally, the cohort reaches the Spanish-speaking and Latino families whose access to culturally grounded care is thinnest and the Asian and Pacific Islander communities that countywide averages render invisible.

- **Generaciones en Acción** reaches immigrant families and older adults who would not otherwise seek clinical care through a free mental health play.
- **Our House** provides Spanish-language grief support with no comparable option for monolingual families.
- **Therapeutic Play Foundation** and **Southern California Community Empowerment Corporation** work in the South LA neighborhoods where the County’s own well-being data documents the deepest gaps.
- **Search to Involve Pilipino Americans** removes both cost and immigration status as barriers, offering completely free clinical services regardless of either.

These organizations are irreplaceable because the access they hold cannot be transferred.



Los Angeles County Service Planning Area	Organizations serving this area
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



Los Angeles County Supervisorial District	Organizations serving this area
SD 1 Solis	11
SD 2 Mitchell	9
SD 3 Horvath	7
SD 4 Hahn	7
SD 5 Barger	8

Several operate the only program of their kind in the County. Their reach depends on trust built over years, in the right language, inside communities that have reason to be wary of outside institutions. A larger provider would not be able to absorb that work.

- **Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness** operates the only fully accessible Deaf and hard of hearing-centered mental wellness program in the County.
- **Sacred Path** is the only nonprofit focused specifically on American Indian and Alaska Native mental health countywide.
- **YouStar** runs the only Korean-language mental health warm line for suicide prevention in Los Angeles.
- **The Jeffrey Foundation** reunifies families with children in the child welfare system, work that no comparable provider replicates.

“We helped prevent a family from being disintegrated. This work helps families stay together.”
— The Jeffrey Foundation

What Changed: Organizational Capacity

Access to services is only as durable as the organization behind it, and for two years, TLA built that durability directly. The systems, plans, and staffing structures documented in this section matter for a specific reason: they protect each organization’s ability to reach its community in the right language, through the right cultural frame, by people that community already trusts. The capacity described here is the scaffolding beneath that irreplaceable work.

The organizational self-assessment was the starting point. Before the work began, each organization rated itself across twenty-three domains of capacity, giving both the organization and Community Partners a shared picture of where the greatest needs and growth potential lay. That picture shaped what followed. Community Partners used it to design workshops around the areas of broadest need across the cohort, and organizations used it to

Organizational Self-Assessment Domain	Year 1 (Baseline)	Year 2	Change
Buildings and Office Space	2.62	3.46	+0.85 (32%)
Databases and Management Systems	2.50	3.31	+0.81 (32%)
Community Presence and Standing	3.04	3.62	+0.58 (19%)
Communication Strategy	2.69	3.23	+0.54 (20%)
Partnerships and Alliances	3.08	3.62	+0.54 (17.5%)
Staff	2.85	3.31	+0.46 (16%)
Strategic Planning	2.69	3.08	+0.38 (14%)

define what they wanted their technical assistance consultants to work on. At the end of the two years, organizations completed the assessment again. The comparison is not a precise science, since organizations are rating their own progress, but it is a meaningful indicator of where growth happened.

The direction is clear. Average capacity rose from 2.83 to 3.17 on a four-point scale, with gains in twenty-two of twenty-three domains. The largest gains cluster in the areas where the capacity building projects concentrated their work.

The path was rarely linear. The self-assessment pointed to where organizations wanted to grow, but naming a gap and knowing how to close it are different things. Several technical assistance consultants found they needed to conduct additional assessment or auditing before a project could even begin, because the

organization was less operationally ready than the self-assessment alone had revealed. TLA's design scaffolded that learning, workshops for shared needs, consultants for individual ones, and peer learning across the cohort, but the sequence looked different for every organization. The following findings trace where that scaffolding produced the clearest change.

The deepest shift was from informal operations to formal ones.

Two domain gains tell this story directly. Databases and Management Systems rose from 2.50 to 3.31, and Staff rose from 2.85 to 3.31, both describing organizations replacing improvised practice with durable systems, from data infrastructure to formalized roles and staffing structure. Across the cohort, organizations moved away from verbal agreements and undocumented processes toward structures that hold.

- **Sacred Path** grew from eight staff to more than forty, adding a policy handbook, HIPAA compliance, and a client registration portal.
- **Search to Involve Pilipino Americans** rebuilt its compliance systems from the ground up after recognizing that infrastructure had to come before a county contract.
- **Alliance for California Traditional Arts** brought a new Salesforce data system online three months ahead of schedule, connecting its programming to measurable outcomes for the first time.
- **Maternal Mental Health NOW** completed its separation from a fiscal sponsor and established itself as an independent nonprofit, a structural change that positioned it to pursue Medi-Cal billing directly.
- **Southern California Community Empowerment Corporation** tightened its accounting and internal infrastructure.

One-on-one work with consultants gave organizations strategic direction.

The Strategic Planning domain rose from 2.69 to 3.08, and behind that movement are organizations that began the initiative with no documented direction at all. Working one-on-one with consultants, they built it.

- **Search to Involve Pilipino Americans** completed a strategic plan in four months, giving the organization a clear roadmap for growth and a foundation for pursuing funding.

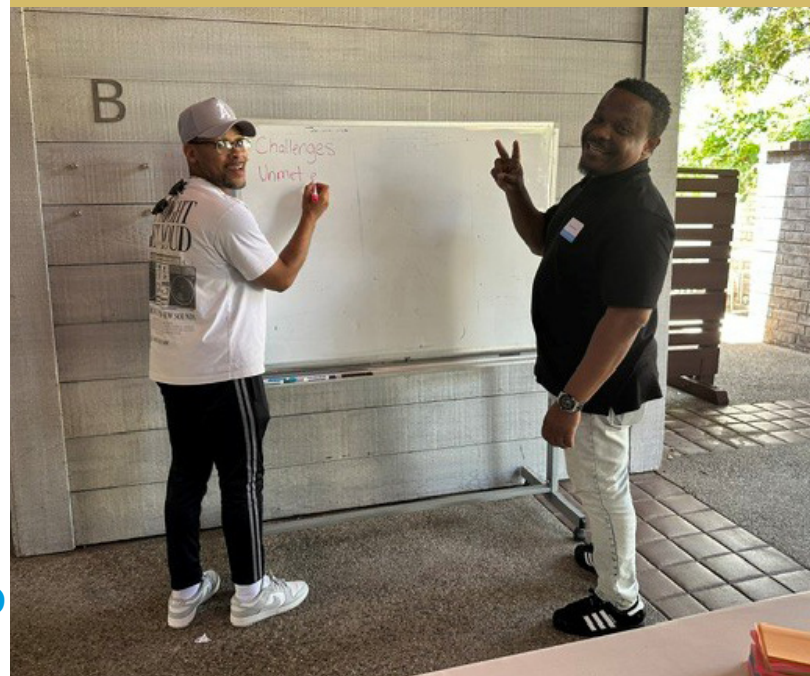
- **Generaciones en Acción** now holds a strategic plan, a clarified mission, and a new logo.
- **Sacred Path** completed a written strategic plan for the first time in its history, a critical step in its path toward becoming a Medi-Cal billing entity, alongside a financial audit and enrollment in the County's Incubation Academy.

For these organizations, a documented direction is the difference between accessing institutional funding and being shut out of it.

Workshops and peer learning shifted how leaders saw themselves.

This is the one change the self-assessment cannot measure, because confidence is not a capacity domain. It surfaced instead through the interviews, which traced a leadership arc that the numbers alone would miss.

Haskel Jackson and Jared Baisley of Music for Your Mental Health at the closeout training at Hungtington Gardens, May 2026.



- **Generaciones en Acción** — TLA’s workshops and peer cohort helped the executive director find her voice and build her confidence.
- **Variety Boys & Girls Club** — through peer learning alongside more established organizations, staff moved from timid to confident storytellers.
- **Music For Your Mental Health** — the leader described the shift, prompted by workshop content and peer conversation, as moving from excited and inexperienced to a deeper understanding of the systems the work requires.

Fund development and board engagement improved, and both remain unfinished.

Nearly every consultant engagement touched fundraising in some form, and the fundraising and grant-writing workshop was among the most attended sessions in the program. The workshops shifted how some leaders approached fundraising. At the **Laurel Foundation**, the executive director described

individual giving as a funding avenue she had never considered before a TLA session introduced the framework, and one she is now actively building into the organization’s fundraising strategy. Yet fund development planning and board involvement in fundraising were the two lowest-scoring domains at the close of the initiative, and the funding model domain moved the least of all. Revenue diversification and board activation depend on relationships built over years, not a single engagement cycle, so slower movement here is expected. The consultant reports, the interviews, and the self-assessment data all point to fund sustainability as the area further investment should address.

Contract readiness was a cohort-wide result.

By Year 2, every organization that completed the assessment reported full contract readiness across all five measures, a central marker of what this evaluation set out to track. This result holds across the full range of individual organizational gains. The cohort finished

TLA Grantee cohort 2 at a training at Magnolia Place, February 2026.



the initiative positioned to pursue and hold public contracts.

These are the gains that make access to services durable: a documented strategy, working systems, and a path to public funding.

What Continued Investment Looks Like: The Alumni Cohort

The gains detailed above are two years old, which raises a useful question: where do they lead with time? Seven organizations from an earlier TLA cohort, known as the Alumni CBOs, offer insights. Alumni CBOs continued to receive funding and access to peer learning through the first year of TLA in FY25-26, without a new round of individualized capacity-building projects. They had the option to attend in-person workshops, and were required to participate in panels, sharing their own experience directly with this year's cohort. Their outcomes suggest what today's cohort might achieve, given the same continued investment over time.

- **Contract readiness became a reality**, rather than a goal still being worked toward. One Alumni organization now administers state and city grants, while another began the formal legal entity provider process, building on systems it had already put in place.
- **Internal systems reached full maturity.** Alumni organizations reported cost allocation plans, formal HR policies, and digital case management tools fully in place, the kind of infrastructure this cohort is



TLA Grantee Cohort 2 training featuring a panel discussion and alumni conversation with Cohort 1 grantees at the Japanese American National Museum, May 2025.

- only now beginning to build.
- **Programs scaled meaningfully**, growth made possible by infrastructure built in earlier years holding steady under expansion. One organization grew from 11 sites to 23.

Peer learning extended past its original cohort as well. Alumni organizations shared their experience directly with this year's cohort through panels and informal exchange, generating peer learning by carrying lessons from one group of organizations into the next.

“We grew from a grassroots effort to a sustainable operation within four years. A key shift was our ability to build the internal systems and infrastructure necessary to manage large-scale government grants.” – Alumni CBO



Custom coffee blend gift to TLA from Cohort 1 grantee Casters Coffee based in Lancaster, CA.

What Changed: Service Delivery and Outcomes

Durable infrastructure matters because of what it enables organizations to deliver. Stronger capacity is valuable because it sustains service to the communities that the County’s data identifies as left behind. Across FY 25–26, the fifteen organizations delivered preventative mental health services in every Service Planning Area and every Supervisorial District of Los Angeles County.

The cohort’s defining achievement this year was consistency. It held this volume steady through wildfire recovery, intensified immigration enforcement, and the County’s transition from the Mental Health Services Act to the Behavioral Health Services Act funding framework. Sustaining output through that environment is a meaningful finding in its own right.

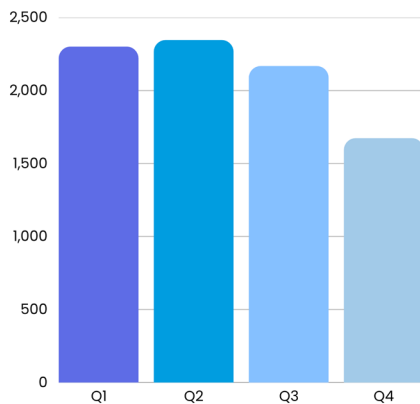
The cohort functions as connective tissue in the County’s safety net.

The 6,215 referrals reach far beyond mental health. They route residents to legal and immigration aid, housing, food assistance, WIC and childcare, transportation, domestic violence support, and culturally specific resources including legal services for Deaf and hard of hearing communities, Tribal law centers, and Korean-language counseling. [The Jeffrey Foundation’s](#) referrals grew every quarter, tracking rising demand from families navigating both the child welfare system and immigration concerns. These warm handoffs take years to build and are easily lost when funding ends.

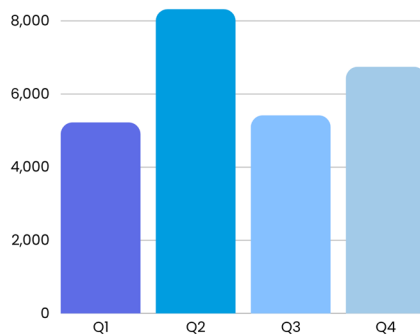
Measure	FY 25–26 total
New unduplicated individuals served	8,493
Total attendance and participation	25,712
Programmatic activities convened	1,719
Referrals and linkages to services	6,215

TLA Cohort Service Delivery by Quarter, FY25-FY26

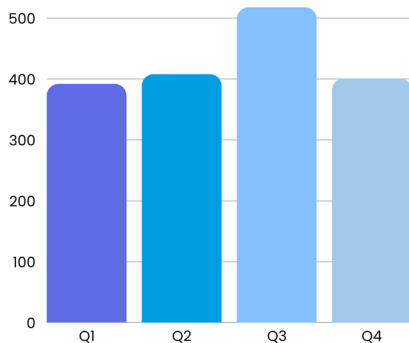
New unduplicated individuals served



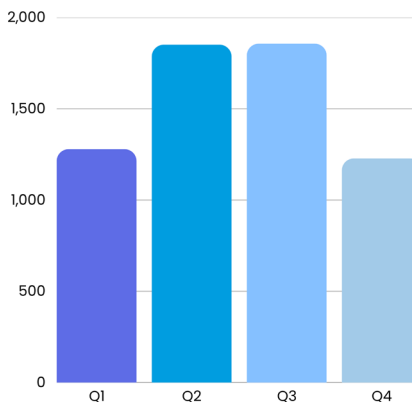
Total attendance and participation



Programmatic activities convened



Referrals and linkages to services



Scope-of-work performance strengthened across the year.

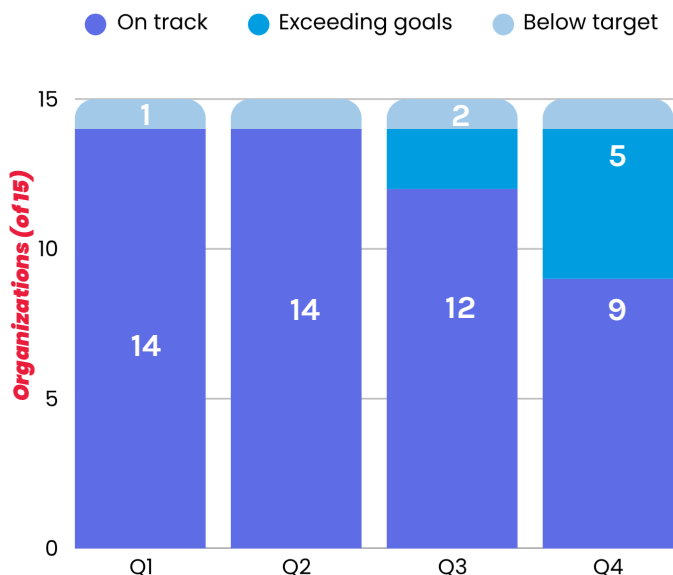
Organizations meeting or beating their targets rose steadily. In the first half of the year, fourteen of fifteen were on track with none exceeding. By the fourth quarter, five organizations were exceeding their goals and nine remained on track. One organization finished below target. The shortfall reflected delays in its DMH-clinic partnerships during the funding transition, and demand for its services remained strong.

Where outcomes were measured against validated instruments, the results are strong.

- **Reality Center** – its veteran biofeedback program, evaluated by UCLA, showed statistically significant gains from before to after sessions across every item on two validated well-being scales, with measurable improvement in protective factors for more than seventy percent of participants, results the evaluators noted exceed typical benchmarks for veteran interventions
- **Therapeutic Play Foundation** – its school-based ArtGard model produced positive results across three school sites and earned recognition as a finalist for a regional healthcare leadership award.

These are credible, externally validated signals that the prevention model works.

Scope of Work Status by Quarter, FY25–FY26



“Our community is more likely to connect with each other through activities like art and gardening. What brings joy and regulation? Food, being outside, and being with other people.” — Therapeutic Play Foundation

The most powerful outcomes show up as stabilized lives.

- **The Jeffrey Foundation** reported ten to thirteen families per quarter either closing their child welfare cases and reunifying with their children or beginning reunification and retaining custody.
- **YouStar’s** Korean-language warm line grew from sixty calls in one quarter to more than a hundred calls and texts

delivering thousands of minutes of culturally responsive support in the next.

- **Our House** participants created more than ninety commemorative quilts and formed grief groups that continued meeting on their own.
- **Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness** placed Deaf and hard of hearing clients into housing and employment and reached thousands through hybrid, ASL-accessible programming.

The County’s investment produced measurable service volume, documented outcomes, and a safety-net role that took years to build.

Strengths, Gaps, and the Decision Ahead

This section answers two questions the evidence raises. Why did this model work? And what does it mean that it is ending now?

What worked:

Tailored support met each organization where it stood.

No two organizations received the same scope. Consultants built strategic plans for some, board governance systems for others, data platforms or fund development roadmaps for others still. For **Variety Boys and Girls Club**, an organization already operating at a high standard, the



TLA hosted the last in-person training and alums activity of 2025 in May at the Japanese American National Museum. Source: Community Partners

value was different: the consultant engagement confirmed that its practices were sound, and that validation gave leadership the confidence to build from a position of strength. For [Southern California Community Empowerment Corporation](#), the tailored scope provided a communications and marketing engagement that built the content library and data systems needed to tell its story to funders. This tailoring let the TLA program serve a cohort that ranged from emerging groups under \$100,000 to established institutions operating on millions, a range that would defeat a one-size curriculum.

Cultural and linguistic alignment drove the deepest work.

The clearest pattern in the consulting engagements was that shared language, culture, and lived experience made the difference. Where a consultant brought

that alignment, the work reached deeper and built real trust. A consultant fluent in ASL and in the culture of Deaf and hard of hearing communities could engage [Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness](#) directly, without the mediation an outside consultant would have required. A breakthrough in fundraising culture at [YouStar](#) came through shared Korean language and context. These engagements reflect the principle the cohort itself embodies: care reaches people only when those providing it share their language and cultural context. Future initiatives should consider this alignment as a design principle.

“The most innovative and effective solutions come from within the communities being served. Programs like TLA give the orgs with that lived experience the resources to do this work.”
— Reality Center

Accessibility reflected the program’s values in practice.

TLA built accessibility into its own convenings rather than treating it as an afterthought. The program arranged ASL interpretation, Korean-language interpretation, captioning, and recorded sessions, and it asked participants directly how they wanted to engage. [Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness](#) named being asked how they preferred to be seated as a moment

of genuine inclusion. **YouStar** named the cohort waiting together for Korean translation of the presentation as a moment of community. These choices signaled respect and shaped how fully participants could take part.

Embedded program staff were a structural asset.

Interviewees named the Community Partners program lead repeatedly and unprompted as a distinct source of support. Organizations described her one-to-one guidance on what to include in a contract, patient help understanding requirements, and a team accessible enough that leaders felt safe asking what they called the silly questions. The **Laurel Foundation** described this kind of direct access as the support that helped it navigate the initiative's requirements. That same relational value extended to DMH itself. **Search to Involve Pilipino Americans'** leadership recalled DMH Division Chief, Dr. Darlesh Horn reaching out to them individually before the initiative began, taking the time to

understand where their organization actually stood before connecting them to the initiative that became TLA.

Peer learning produced durable reorientation.

The cohort model delivered something workshops alone could not, leaders learning from organizations in different developmental stages than them. For a sector of small, often isolated nonprofits, the room itself was a deliverable. **Search to Involve Pilipino Americans'** leadership described this as a defining feature of the initiative from the start, noting that the culture of mutual support among organizations was set from day one and carried through both years.

Opportunity Areas

What the cohort named as gaps.

- **Readiness and scope were not always matched.** Several technical assistance consultants found more

Inaugural kick-off training and orientation at the California Community Foundation, October 2024.



foundational gaps than the project scope anticipated. A pre-engagement readiness assessment, recommended by multiple consultants, would improve both matching and scope-setting.

- **Capacity building needs a runway.** Building a tool and supporting its adoption are different tasks. The structure allowed enough time to create assets but not always enough to embed them. Future programs should plan for implementation support in addition to deliverable production.
- **Even with transition support, the smallest organizations remain exposed.** TLA provided sustainability workshops, funder meet-and-greets, and panels to help organizations prepare for the close. This programming was valuable, but it could not substitute for the funding itself. The exposure is most acute

among the smallest organizations, where the TLA award met or exceeded the entire annual budget, and the end of funding removes the operating foundation on which the year depended.

- **The cohort connection requires investment to survive.** Several leaders warned that the peer network will not sustain itself without support. The relationships TLA built are an asset that will erode without deliberate stewardship.

Lessons Learned

What this points toward.

For sector leaders who are designing the next initiative, the following findings emerge from across the full body of evidence. Each appeared independently in the consultant reports, the interviews, the surveys, and the service data, which is what makes them worth carrying forward.

Custom quilt gifted to TLA Cohort 2 from Claudia Reyes and Jenny Rivera-Cruz of Our House Grief Center.



Match the support to the organization's readiness. The cohort spanned a diverse range, from organizations for whom the TLA award was about one percent of their annual budget to organizations for whom it was several times their entire budget. That range meant the same award carried a completely different weight depending on who received it. For **Alliance for California Traditional Arts**, an organization delivering programming across California, the award included technical assistance funding for a data system that strengthened how it tracks and connects its work statewide. This

was a discrete project layered onto an operation that already had the staff and systems to support it. For an emerging organization like **Generaciones en Acción**, an organization built around two staff members, an award of similar size constituted the organization's entire operating budget for the year. These two situations call for different kinds of support. A mature organization needs a focused project built on infrastructure it already has. An emerging organization needs that infrastructure built from the ground up, and often needs more help identifying what to build than the intake process alone can surface. Several technical assistance consultants found deeper gaps once the work began than the original project scope had anticipated. A future initiative should assess operational readiness before scoping projects, and should decide at the outset whom it is building for, so that scope, budget, and support can follow from that choice.

“Small orgs under \$2 million are doing more boots-on-the-ground work that wouldn’t otherwise be touched. This program helps educate the organization to build stronger programs.” — Laurel Foundation

Meeting communities and organizations where they are takes time. A program built around the



Peer learning workshop at the final training and networking meeting at the Huntington Gardens, May 2026.

specific needs, culture, and stage of development of each organization it serves needs that time to work. Matching consultants to organizations took time and depended on understanding each organization well enough to know what it needed. The same was true of the ongoing guidance Community Partners' program lead provided throughout the year, one-to-one help with contract requirements and the kind of sustained attention that let leaders feel safe asking what they called the silly questions. That guidance depends on a person who knows the cohort well enough to notice what each organization needs before that organization can ask for it, which requires continuity that a shorter or outsourced engagement could not provide. Future initiatives will feel pressure to move quickly while still offering this kind of high-touch, responsive support. Because speed can affect responsiveness, plan from the start for the time it takes to design and deliver services, and staff for it accordingly.



TLA Cohort 2 and Dr. Lucretia Taylor (Dr. Cre) at the Data Storytelling Training at the California Endowment, September 2025.

“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

Sequence the support, and start early.

When support arrived mattered as much as what it was.

- Capacity building projects were originally planned to be developed in year one and implemented in year two. Delays in the TLA program’s start, compounded by the 2025 wildfires, shortened that runway considerably. This resulted in technical assistance that reached organizations later than planned and left less time to put the work into practice. Building a tool and adopting it are different tasks, and adoption is what suffers when the timeline compresses. Technical assistance that began in year two left little time for organizations to put the work into practice. Building a tool and

adopting it are different tasks.

- Organizations said that sustainability planning can begin in year one to prepare for the close of the initiative.

A future initiative should plan this sequence from the start, and should build in a buffer for the disruptions, whether administrative or external, that can compress it. Assess readiness first and consider beginning tailored support in year one.

Fund the relationships, not just the deliverables. The clearest finding in the evaluation is that relationships drove the deepest results. This showed up in three separate places. Consultants who shared a community’s language, culture, or lived experience moved faster and went further than those who did not; the consultant working with **Maternal Mental Health NOW** had partnered with the organization three times before, and that history enabled the work to move through a complex fiscal transition. Organizations named Community Partners’ program lead as an essential source of support. Across two years of workshops, participants rated peer connection the single most valuable part of every session.

These relationships are hard to write into a budget and easy to cut when money is tight. They rarely appear as line items. Yet they produced the outcomes organizations valued most. A future initiative should fund the embedded staff, the culturally matched consultants, and the peer cohort as deliberately as it funds any tool or plan.



TLA Group Meet & Greet at the Department of Mental Health, March 2026: Cohort 2 grantees met with LA County's Department of Mental Health and Department of Health Services to discuss contracting opportunities with the County.

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

Two capacities determine whether an organization survives past a grant: fund development and an engaged board. These were the hardest to move. Both were the lowest-scoring areas at the close, even though fund development was the most requested support and nearly every consultant engagement touched it. Revenue diversification and board activation depend on relationships built over years that a single grant period cannot resolve.

The risk is sharpest at the end. For four organizations in this cohort, the TLA award met or exceeded their entire annual budget. **Reality Center**, for instance, used its flexible funding to retain two staff members permanently, but for organizations in that position, the end of funding removes the very foundation the year was built on. A future initiative should treat sustainability as a first-year priority and consider resourcing the transition out of funding as carefully as it resources the work itself.

**“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**

The decision ahead.

The evidence in this report describes a model that works. It builds durable capacity in organizations that serve the communities the County’s own data identifies as furthest from care, and it does so through the community-rooted, culturally responsive care the County’s behavioral health leadership has named as central to the work ahead.

This is what makes the TLA cohort’s work relevant to the moment. The Behavioral Health Services Act elevates community engagement and culturally

responsive care as guiding priorities for behavioral health in the County. The organizations in this cohort already embody that approach. They reach specific communities in the languages those communities speak and through the cultural frames they trust, and they do it as a matter of design rather than aspiration. Their work offers a concrete picture of what these priorities look like in practice.

TLA has now ended, but its most important lesson is the understanding that capacity built inside community-rooted organizations can endure, and that the communities furthest from care are best reached by organizations that belong to them. That lesson is what carries forward into the priorities the County has set for the work ahead.

“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.” — Our House