

MA'AT YOUTH LEADERSHIP

AT HOMELESS CHILDREN'S NETWORK:

Findings from July 2024 to June 2025



HOMELESS CHILDREN'S
NETWORK

This report was prepared by Indigo Cultural Center as part of an independent evaluation of Ma'at Youth Leadership. The perspectives and interpretations presented here are those of the evaluators and are not intended to represent the official views of the Homeless Children's Network.

Detailed information about Indigo Cultural Center, Homeless Children's Network, Ma'at Youth Leadership, and the literature guiding this report are available at the end of this report in the section, *Background and Context*.

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MYL youth assembling care packages for unhoused community members.

Introduction

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to evaluate Ma'at Youth Leadership at the Homeless Children's Network (HCN). Through partnership with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) over the past five years, Ma'at Youth Leadership has supported highly vulnerable, low-income/very low-income youth and adolescents who are at risk of not making successful transitions into adulthood within San Francisco, with a focus on Black/African American youth and youth in the Bayview and Western Addition neighborhoods. The goal of this initiative is to help youth develop leadership and life skills, and to support their transition to adulthood by fostering an understanding of systemic inequalities, related traumas, and challenges within a culture of wellness and healing. A full description of the program activities can be reviewed in Appendix A.

COLLABORATIVE PROCESS AND PARTICIPANTS

Together, with HCN, Indigo Cultural Center evaluated the impact of Ma'at Youth Leadership this year. In line with a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) rooted in racial equity, HCN's staff, including the HCN Ma'at Youth Leadership team, collaborated with the Indigo Cultural Center team on evaluation design, survey development, data collection, and the interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings.

Ma'at Youth Leadership's Contracted Performance Objectives for the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year

Ma'at Youth Leadership met its goals of serving and engaging youth participants in developing personal and professional skills.

This year,

• 16 students Enrolled	Objective Exceeded
• 13 students • Engaged in the PAQ process • Identified goals • Achieved goals	Objective Exceeded
• 38 Group Meetings Held	Objective Exceeded
• 16 students participated in Life Skills Training	Objective Exceeded
• 13 students participated in Workplace Skills Training	Objective Exceeded
• A youth-led community workshop was held	Objective Met
• 15 students attended the community workshop	Objective Met
• 2 youth-led staff trainings were held	Objective Exceeded
• 9 staff participated in youth-led trainings	Objective Exceeded
• 10 outreach events completed	Objective Met
• 76 outreach materials distributed	Objective Exceeded

Ma'at Youth Leadership met performance objectives and supported youths' successful transition to adulthood.

For additional, detailed information about the program's achievement of contracted performance metrics see the table *Ma'at Youth Leadership Performance Objectives* on page 4.



MYL Youth disseminating care packages.

The current evaluation continues our exploration of Ma'at Youth Leadership by examining the impact for youth participants during the 2024-2025 school year. Specifically, this study sought to address the following questions:

1. Were Ma'at Youth Leadership's program objectives met?
2. How did the youth leaders experience the impact of Ma'at Youth Leadership in the three key outcome areas:
 - a. Connection
 - b. Skill building
 - c. Leadership development

Youth participated in a survey at the beginning of the program to share their goals (13 of the 16 participants completed this survey). In addition, youth participated in a second survey on the final day of the program in May 2025 to share the program's impact

and to provide feedback (7 of the 16 participants completed this survey).

The evaluation participants were middle school and high school leaders attending public schools in San Francisco. The youth surveys participants identified as Black/African American and their average age was 15.5 years old. The majority of survey participants identified as female (57%), followed by male (29%), with 14% of participants identifying as non-binary. Additionally, we utilize administrative data to track performance metric service goals and objectives.



Evaluation Findings

MA'AT YOUTH LEADERSHIP EXCEEDED PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

We find that not only did Ma'at Youth Leadership meet every performance metric, but that the program exceeded objectives and expectations in 10 of the 13 metrics. Meeting and exceeding these metrics demonstrates the overall impact of the program for participants and within the community, such that youth not only received more opportunities to learn skills and engage in leadership, but *more* community members were engaged with the participants than expected. The table below demonstrates the extent to which programmatic objectives and expectations established by HCN leadership and funders were met.

Ma'at Youth Leadership Performance Objectives			
Performance Objective	Goal	Actual	% Completion
Number of youth leaders enrolled	12	16	133%
Number of needs assessments completed	12	13	108%
Number of group meetings held	20	38	107%
Number of youth who participated in life skills training	12	16	133%
Number of youth who participated in workplace skills training	12	13	108%
Number of youth-led community workshops held	1	1	100%
Number of community workshop attendees	15	15	100%
Number of youth-led staff trainings	1	2	200%
Number of staff attendees at youth-led trainings	8	9	112%
Number of outreach events engaged in	10	10	100%
Quantity of outreach materials distributed	75	76	101%
Number of youth who identified goal in needs assessment	12	13	108%
Number of youth who successfully addressed needs assessment goals	12	13	108%

YOUTH LEARNED TO SET AND ACHIEVE GOALS

At the beginning of the program, youth leaders identified a goal they wanted to achieve during the program. Youth leaders identified goals related to the following areas:

- Maintaining or improving GPA
- Gaining financial literacy and stability
- Graduating high school
- Preparing for college
- Gaining skills for future career path

As they participated in the program, youth made progress towards achieving those goals, a key objective of the program. Engagement in structured activities, group discussions, and one-on-

one mentorship with the program coordinator were highlighted as important for goal progress. Specifically, one-on-one sessions with the program coordinator supported individual goal-setting and also created structures of accountability that allowed youth to track their progress. **By the end of the program, every youth leader (100%) reported achieving the goals they set.** The table below provides additional youth perceptions of the way Ma'at Youth Leadership helped them to set and achieve their goals. Together, these findings indicate that the program's hands-on, personalized approach to leadership and self-development provided an empowering pathway for future success.

Ma'at Youth Leadership Capacity Development for Identifying and Achieving Goals	
Capacities Statements	% of youth who agreed
Ma'at Youth Leadership helped me know how to work towards achieving my goals.	83%
Because of Ma'at Youth Leadership, I feel more confident in what I can achieve.	83%
Ma'at Youth Leadership helped me to identify and make a plan to achieve my goals for the quarter, semester, or school year.	71%
Ma'at Youth Leadership helped me learn how to set goals for myself moving forward.	71%



YOUTH LEARNED TO BUILD SKILLS

Through Ma'at Youth Leadership program activities, youth gained valuable personal, academic, and leadership skills. The program activities highlighted as important to their skill building were the professional development activities, workshops on relevant topics, and peer discussions.

As a result of engaging in the program, youth reported most meaningful growth in the following skill areas:



Increased academic readiness (high school & college)



Increased ability to take care of their mental health



Increased ability to advocate for their community



Increased leadership skills



Increased self-confidence



Ma'at Youth Leadership focused on fostering one additional, important skill for youth — public speaking. Building public speaking skills equips youth to effectively communicate their ideas, advocate for themselves and others, and present themselves with clarity and professionalism in both academic and real-world settings. We found **83% of participants** reported greater confidence in public speaking.

"I definitely learned how to not be nervous speaking in public, [and learned] what I want/need to do and how to get there." - High school participant

YOUTH BECAME STRONGER LEADERS

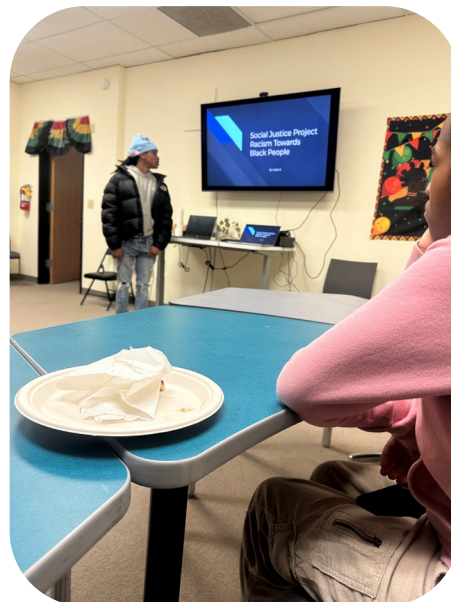
This year in Ma'at Youth Leadership, 9 high school participants took on active mentorship roles, guiding 7 middle school peers as they prepared for the transition into high school. High school participants reported that this mentorship opportunity strengthened their sense of leadership by offering real opportunities to practice empathy, support their peers, and build confidence in their ability to be a positive influence on others. The table below provides youth ratings about their leadership perceptions from participating in Ma'at Youth Leadership. Ultimately, we found that by creating space for youth to lead and support one another, the program fostered a culture of responsibility and confidence, inspiring youth to be the positive change for the future.

“

This program helped me prepare for high school by just showing me what I can get done and how I can get it done.

- Middle School Participant

”



MYL youth presentations on social and environmental inequities.

Ma'at Youth Leadership High School Participants Leadership Development Experiences	
Leadership Development Experiences	% of youth who agreed
Being a good role model/mentor is important to me.	100%
I would like to continue being a mentor to others.	100%
Ma'at Youth Leadership helped me learn how to be a good mentor to others.	80%
I am a good mentor/role model.	80%

Implications



Findings from this study emphasize the importance of HCN's Ma'at Youth Leadership program in fostering academic achievement, goal-driven mindsets, and leadership among Black middle school and high school youth in San Francisco. Based on the findings from this study, there are several implications for both policy and practice.

First, despite our findings of the success of this program from both this evaluation and fiscal year [2023-2024](#), funding for this program is in jeopardy. **Sustained funding is critical for the Ma'at Youth Leadership program.** The program is well-positioned to continue delivering impactful, culturally responsive services given its strongly rooted community relationships and established infrastructure. Sustained

funding would ensure both the immediate continuation and long-term success of this work—directly benefiting youth who are most at risk.

In addition, findings from this study demonstrate the program fostered youths' perseverance towards achieving their goals and promotes positive academic and personal adjustment among the youth leaders. **Ma'at Youth Leadership should be looked to as a proven model for empowering youth.** Other youth-serving programs, including after-school initiatives, should look to Ma'at Youth Leadership as a model for how to promote healing-centered engagement, skill development, and leadership cultivation.

Conclusion

The Ma'at Youth Leadership program model has a multi-year record of strong evidence demonstrating its effectiveness in empowering youth through healing-centered engagement, personal and professional development, and leadership cultivation (see [2023-2024 Ma'at Youth Leadership Program Evaluation Report](#)). However, funding has been cut for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Though the loss of this critical program for youth will be felt by the San Francisco community, HCN continues to support transitional age youth from historically marginalized communities, including Black youth, through its other culturally-responsive community-based leadership programs. For example, HCN's Jabali Youth Leadership program offers high school students the opportunity to learn about critical topics relevant to their communities such as

understanding substance use disorder prevention and engaging in leadership activities to educate, connect, and empower their schools and communities (report forthcoming).

Nevertheless, the present study demonstrated the Ma'at Youth Leadership program developed leadership and life skills for racially marginalized and historically underserved youth, ultimately supporting their transitions to adulthood. The Ma'at Youth Leadership program represented an essential opportunity for marginalized youth to receive the opportunities and support necessary to promote healing, confidence, and build capacities to succeed.



APPENDIX A

Summary of Ma'at Youth Leadership Program Activities

Ma'at Youth Leadership Program provided a wide range of culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate activities, grouped into five core focus areas:

1. Individualized Mentorship & Personal Development

One-on-one mentorship with Program Coordinator

Goal-setting sessions (quarterly, semester, or annually)

Activities on building self-confidence, self-esteem, and personal identity

Wellness check-ins and positive affirmations

Reflective exercises and journaling

Highlight Project: A youth-designed

Roblox simulation that explored racial inequities in public transit access for Black communities

Group initiative on homelessness:

Research and presentations using Google Slides

Creation and distribution of care packages for unhoused individuals

Reflections on empathy, direct action, and systemic advocacy

2. Leadership Development & Public Speaking

Public speaking workshops and skill-building

Youth-led presentations, including:

Reflections on personal growth and program impact

Presentations on goal attainment and future planning

Peer mentorship: High school students mentoring middle school participants

Feedback and group sessions building communication and leadership skills

4. Academic and Career Readiness

College and career planning workshops

Resources and guidance on:

Financial aid and scholarships

Goal-setting for academic and professional futures

Resume writing and workplace skills

3. Social Justice Education & Civic Engagement

Individual projects addressing systemic issues such as:

Homelessness and housing inequality

Gender inequality

Environmental racism

Public transportation inequities

5. Enrichment & Community Connection

Participation in community events (e.g., **Black History Month Parade**)

Networking with local community leaders and organizations

Group sessions focused on:

Mental health and well-being

Community impact and youth advocacy

Critical thinking and systems change



Background and Context Supplementary Materials

Literature Guiding this Evaluation Report

The adolescent growth stage is a critical period for young people, establishing progress in the development of critical skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to make a successful transition into adulthood. However, equitable access to the tools and resources that ensure stable development is marred by structural barriers such as socioeconomic level, and discrimination based on race and/or sexual orientation (San Francisco DCYF Justice Services Youth Impact Report, 2023).

Youth development programs designed for Black/African-American youth that promote an Afri-centric cultural orientation (e.g., collectivism, community engagement) are a significant predictor for positive youth development, serving as a psychological protective function for Black/African American youth that face racial, environmental, and social stressors (Grills et. al, 2015). Youth development programs that encourage African-centered cultural consciousness among Black-identifying youth support their collective understanding of the systemic and intergenerational effects of racism and tools to confront and heal from this trauma (Grills et. al, 2015). Culturally-centered and resilience-based programming has the ability to positively influence Black youths' identity, psychosocial and behavioral adjustment, and future aspirations and ambitions (Lateef & Balakrishnan, 2023); additional transitional success indicators among Black youth that participate in culturally sensitive interventions include self-esteem, life satisfaction, academic and personal adjustment, resilience against drugs and racial identity (Lateef et. al, 2022).

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Indigo Cultural Center

A Note About the Agency and People Conducting this Evaluation

Indigo Cultural Center (a predominantly BIPOC- staffed organization) is led by executive director Dr. Eva Marie Shivers, who identifies as a bi-racial African American, cisgender woman. The Institute of Child Development Research and Social Change at Indigo Cultural Center is an action-research firm that specializes in infant and early childhood research and evaluation conducted with an anti-racist lens. The Institute is led by director Dr. Jayley Janssen, who identifies as a white, cisgender woman. The evaluation of HCN's Ma'at Youth Leadership was led by Ronae Matriano, a Filipina woman and a small team that consisted of a Black multiracial woman, two Black bi-racial women, a Black woman, and a white woman.

Indigo Cultural Center's mission is to conduct rigorous policy-relevant research on mental health, education, and development by partnering with community agencies and public agencies that are dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth, and families in BIPOC communities. Since its inception, Indigo Cultural Center has employed the use of community-based participatory research in all our evaluations. What this means is that we use a collaborative model and working style that involves our clients – who we prefer to call 'partners' – in the planning, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination processes of evaluation. We recognize the strengths that our partners bring to each evaluation project, and we build on those assets by consulting with our partners initially and at key milestones throughout the project, integrating their input and knowledge into all aspects of the project, asking for feedback on a regular basis, and seeking consensus on key issues and outcomes.

Our Voice and Terminology used in this Report

Our evaluation team employs the use of feminist methodology and the use of first-person voice when writing reports (e.g., 'we', 'us'; Leggat-Cook, 2010; Mitchel, 2017). Throughout this report, we use the terms Black and African American interchangeably. We use LGBTQIA+ as an acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community. We use queer to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. We use gender rather than sex as an inclusive term that acknowledges that gender is socially and contextually constructed and is a multidimensional facet of identity.

Homeless Children's Network

Homeless Children's Network History

HCN's trusted provider status among historically marginalized communities in San Francisco is built on 33 years of innovative, relationship-based, and culturally responsive approaches to program development, community outreach and engagement, service delivery, and evaluation. Our culturally responsive programs, citywide partnerships, and visionary leadership deliver services to 2,500+ community members annually at no cost to youth and their families. As a city leader in programming development and delivery, HCN is dedicated to advancing systemic equity and reaching the most underserved youth, families, and communities that remain overlooked and marginalized by many systems of support including mainstream philanthropic agencies. HCN offers extensive services providing San Francisco's historically marginalized youth, families, adults, and communities with the tools, resources, and support needed to navigate complex systems and overcome challenges through collaborative efforts.

Three decades ago, leaders from six shelters recognized a critical gap in services for San Francisco families experiencing homelessness. These organizations provided emergency shelter, domestic violence assistance, and transitional housing, but because of their structure, they could only serve families for a short time. This limited period of care created cycles of attachment and loss—youth and families would build relationships with staff, only to be uprooted again. This instability made it hard for families to remain open to accessing support. In 1992, the community came together to break this cycle. They founded HCN to provide families in crisis with a lasting source of connection and care. Over the next three decades, in close collaboration and communication with our community members, community stakeholders, and community partners, HCN has evolved into an organization that directly addresses inclusion, community empowerment, and systemic equity.

What began as a network of six shelters has now grown to a vibrant hub of an HCN Collaborative of 60+ service agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) serving the hardest-to-reach youth and families, including those with experiences of or at risk for homelessness and violence. HCN's robust Collaborative network includes Childcare and Education Centers; San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) schools; primary care; LGBTQIA+ services; substance use treatment; transitional housing and shelters; Family Resource Centers; permanent supportive housing; foster care, and others. HCN is positioned in every San Francisco neighborhood and has worked with SFUSD providing onsite and mobile case management and mental health and wellness services for students and their families since 1997. The organization provides Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) via an MOU and currently have HCN therapists onsite in 20+ SFUSD schools.

Homeless Children's Network (continued)

Homeless Children's Network's Programming and Approaches

HCN welcomes and affirms everyone, while engaging an Afri-centric lens to address the historical legacy of intergenerational racism, inequity, and trauma. HCN's Afri-centric approach is a way of embracing all historically marginalized communities based on community-defined evidence based practices, which include: affirmation of cultural inclusion, trauma- and love-informed practices, self-acceptance and resilience focuses, identification of clients' unique strengths and normalization of their experiences, reframing of mental health stigma, acknowledgement of a range of spiritual practices, family and community member integration into services, collective grief processing, fear without judgement, and addressing resource and basic-need access barriers.

The heart of HCN's Afri-centric approach lies in holding space for cultural rhythm and nuance while creating a sense of home—a safe, culturally grounded space where people can fully express themselves and be seen without judgment. HCN's programs and services provide SF's most marginalized children, families, providers, and communities with the tools, resources, and support needed to navigate complex systems and overcome challenges through collaborative efforts. The seven cardinal values of HCN's Ma'at Program model are our core values: 1) Balance, 2) Order, 3) Righteousness, 4) Harmony, 5) Justice, 6) Truth, and 7) Reciprocity. This approach is unapologetically culturally affirming, soul-inspiring, and grounded in a shared commitment to holistic wellness and Ma'at's seven cardinal values.

Over the past several years, there has been a call to decolonize the field of mental health. One important way to achieve this is by expanding the construct of wellness to include a more explicit focus on community mental health in marginalized communities. It is increasingly important that we avoid reinforcing mainstream narratives that pathologize our communities by failing to recognize the broader systemic forces affecting the well-being of those who have experienced historical and ongoing marginalization and oppression. Community-based programs designed to promote healing, wellness, and positive mental health do not simply unfold in isolation. Homeless Children's Network's vision embodies emergent work that always reflects the time and space in which it is happening.

HCN's approach to youth community mental health places the youth at the helm of program curriculum, acknowledging youth as the experts of their reality and affirming youth's cultural and communal perspectives within the larger community context. Indeed, a more universal philosophy encourages the tenets of Ubuntu - "I am what I am because of who we all are" - and teaches us that "all things have an impact on each other, and this interconnectedness and interplay is universal" (Marumo & Chakale, 2018).

HCN's Ma'at Youth Leadership

Ma'at Youth Leadership targets highly vulnerable, low-income/very low-income youth and adolescents aged 12-18 who are at risk of not making successful transitions into adulthood (TAY) within San Francisco, with a focus on Black/African American youth and youth in the Bayview and Western Addition neighborhoods. Youth served may identify themselves as part of any or multiple of the following communities: LGBTQIA+ community; have children; history of substance use; sex work; gang affiliation, justice system; and/or CPS involvement. The goal of the initiative is to develop leadership and life skills for historically marginalized and underserved youth with a focus on the particular needs of Black/African American youth. Ma'at Youth Leadership supports youths' transitions to adulthood by supporting youths' understanding of systemic inequities, and associated traumas and challenges through the establishment of a culture of wellness and healing.

Ma'at Youth Leadership offered two age-appropriate tracks for middle school and high school students. HCN's services, including Ma'at Youth Leadership, approach healing journeys through a whole-person, Afri-centric, culturally-responsive, and heartfelt approach that acknowledges and addresses the historical legacies of intergenerational trauma, racism, and inequity while encouraging participants to advocate for themselves and their community.

During weekly meetings, Ma'at Youth Leadership participants engaged in group discussions exploring career paths, post-secondary education (e.g., four-year university, community college, trade school, apprenticeships) and financial support resources, community advocacy, and the legacy of influential Black leaders, locally and nationally.

Youth also engaged in skill-building activities which emphasized goal-setting, including presentations on what it takes to reach goals and attain success; critical thinking; resume-building; public-speaking; and social connectedness. As part of the program curriculum, Ma'at Youth Leaders also received weekly one-on-one mentorship from Ma'at Youth Leadership Program Coordinator, taking time and space to set and explore personal, academic, and social goals, and reflect on hardships and successes. The group then created closing presentations to HCN staff about the impact of Ma'at Youth Leadership on their lives.

- **1-on-1 meetings with Ma'at Youth Leadership Program Coordinator**
 - **Goal-setting**
 - **Self-confidence/self-esteem**
 - **Understanding strengths and unique, individual power**
 - **Reflection**

HCN's Ma'at Youth Leadership (continued)

Additionally, participants identified social or environmental inequities within their community and led individual social justice research projects, encouraging the youth to think critically about the root causes of local crises, analyze the historical contexts of systemic inequities, and brainstorm holistic, multi-stakeholder solutions to these crises.

One way that the youth shared their learnings was through presentations on topics including homelessness/housing inequality, gender inequality, environmental racism, impact of public transportation on Black communities. Youth gained experience with public speaking, refining leadership skills, and accepting feedback.

Collectively, Ma'at Youth Leadership youth participants planned and implemented a real-world, community service project to advocate for marginalized groups. As part of the program curriculum, in an effort to engage youth in meaningful community engagement and advocacy that adds to youths' perspectives, understanding, and skills to address societal challenges, Ma'at Youth Leadership participants created and personally distributed care packages containing essential items such as toiletries, non-perishable food, and print-outs of HCN's resources and local resources, providing immediate support to community members without housing. Through this community service project, youth took the time to engage individuals that are often overlooked by society with respect, empathy, dignity, kindness, and a listening ear.

Finally, HCN's staff also facilitated opportunities for the youth to participate in community events and field trips to support youth to network with community organizations, local activists, and community leaders.

MA'AT YOUTH LEADERS EXPLORE:

- **Critical thinking**
- **Community impact and advocacy (larger community and/or school)**
- **Mental health**
- **Positive affirmations**
- **Post-high school education options & resources to help students get there (e.g., financial aid, scholarships)**
- **Career preparation/discussion**
- **Resume-building**

HCN's Ma'at Youth Leadership (continued)

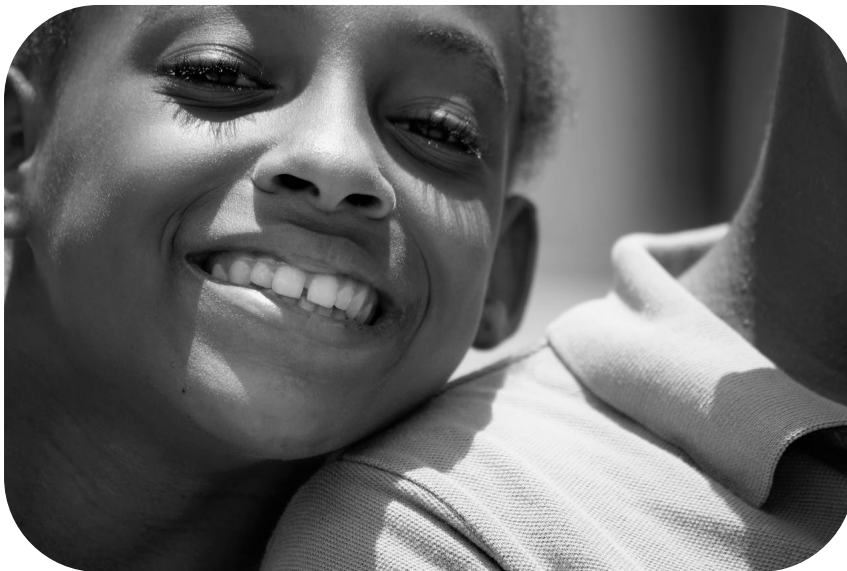
A standout from the Social Justice Projects: One student in Ma'at Youth Leadership took a unique and innovative approach to their social justice project by using Roblox to illustrate the long-standing inequities in public transportation for Black communities. Recognizing that many of their peers connect with digital platforms, they designed a virtual experience that showcased the struggles Black individuals have faced in accessing fair and reliable transportation—both historically and today. In their Roblox world, they recreated significant moments in transportation history, such as segregated buses during the Civil Rights Movement and the ongoing challenges of transportation deserts in low-income Black neighborhoods. Through interactive storytelling, players could experience firsthand how inadequate public transit options continue to limit opportunities for education, employment, and healthcare access in marginalized communities. During their presentation at the Homeless Children's Network office, the student walked the audience through their Roblox simulation, explaining the research and real-world data behind their project. Their innovative approach not only captured attention but also sparked conversations about how technology and gaming can be used as tools for advocacy and education.

A standout from Community Social Justice Project: Youth collaborated on a social justice initiative designed to create a positive impact within local homeless communities. This project was intended to not only educate students about historical and systemic factors which contribute to homelessness but also engage youth in tangible community support efforts. The initiative began with an in-depth exploration of the history of homelessness in San Francisco. Students utilized Google Slides as their primary tool for research and presentation development, allowing them to collaborate effectively and compile their findings in a structured manner. This digital approach facilitated real-time collaboration, enabling students to share resources, insights, and feedback seamlessly.



HCN's Ma'at Youth Leadership (continued)

Through this process, they examined various aspects, including economic, social, and policy-related factors that have influenced the current state of homelessness in the city. Understanding the historical context is crucial, as it provides insights into the systemic challenges that have led to the present situation. By analyzing past and current policies, economic trends, and societal attitudes, students can identify patterns and root causes of homelessness. This knowledge equips them to think critically about potential solutions and the roles they can play in advocating for change.



In addition to their research, the students are actively participating in community service by creating care packages to distribute to individuals experiencing homelessness. These care packages typically include essential items such as toiletries, non-perishable food, socks, and blankets. The process of assembling these packages fosters a sense of empathy and responsibility among the students, as they consider the immediate needs of those they aim to help. The act of distributing care packages serves multiple purposes. It provides immediate relief to individuals facing hardships, offers students firsthand experience in community engagement, and humanizes the issue by allowing personal interactions. Such experiences can be transformative, encouraging students to become lifelong advocates for marginalized populations.

HCN's Ma'at Youth Leadership (continued)

Furthermore, this project aligns with educational strategies that promote active learning and civic engagement. By involving students in real-world issues and community service, educational programs can enhance students' understanding of societal challenges and their roles as active citizens. This approach not only enriches their academic experience but also contributes to personal growth and social responsibility. Students came together to create thoughtful care packages filled with essential hygiene products (e.g., snacks, resource guides). Beyond handing out supplies, this community engagement encouraged human connection and empathy.

Gratitude

We express deep gratitude to the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) whose generous funding made this evaluation possible.

Thank you to Ma'at Youth Leadership participants who shared their experiences and perspectives with us to use as data.

Thank you to the HCN staff, including Dr. April Y. Silas, Dr. Kenneth Kim, Cameron Smith, Diontae Burden, Sarah Griffiths, Daniella Severs, and Sara Ferree who supported the design, implementation, and interpretation of this evaluation. Your thoughtful insights, dedication to the process, and genuine belief in our approach have been deeply appreciated.

Thank you to our amazing Indigo Cultural Center team for their assistance and amazing attention to detail in gathering, entering, managing and analyzing various aspects of the vast amounts of data for this evaluation. And for all the administrative and emotional support required to move this work to completion.

