



Oakland Leaf's 2019–25 Strategic Plan

Cultivating Generations of Empowered Oakland Youth

APRIL 2018

Executive Summary

ABOUT OAKLAND LEAF FOUNDATION

Through free, school-based programs and community services, we at the Oakland Leaf Foundation (Oakland Leaf or OL) help students and the families that support them access the tools they need to succeed and excel. By cultivating community transformation via creative education for youth and families, Oakland Leaf aims to spur young leaders to actualize a more loving, just, and vibrant Oakland.

WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

The past few years at Oakland Leaf have been characterized by rapid organizational changes and new opportunities. Oakland Leaf pursued an organizational strategic planning process to build on our recently completed Theory of Change and provide guidance on how we can make strategic and intentional decisions regarding growth, change, and the pursuit of opportunities.

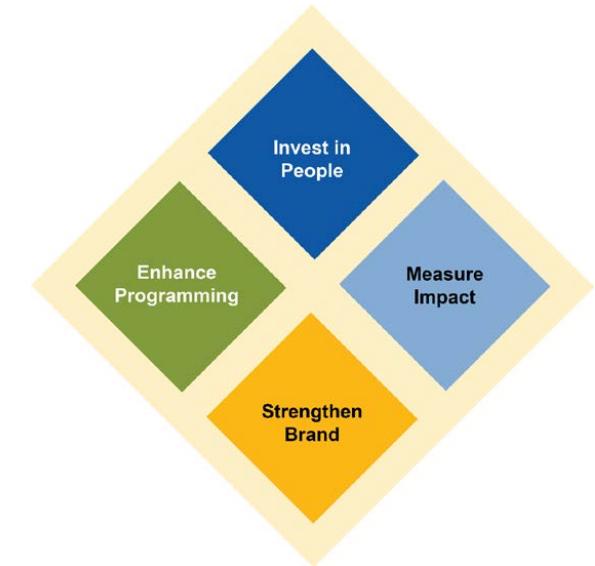
In service to the communities Oakland Leaf engages, the strategic plan will help the organization:

- become **stronger and more focused**
- **increase our impact**

NORTH STAR & GOALS

Oakland Leaf creates and cultivates relationships, pathways, and environments that strengthen and sustain generations of empowered Oakland youth.

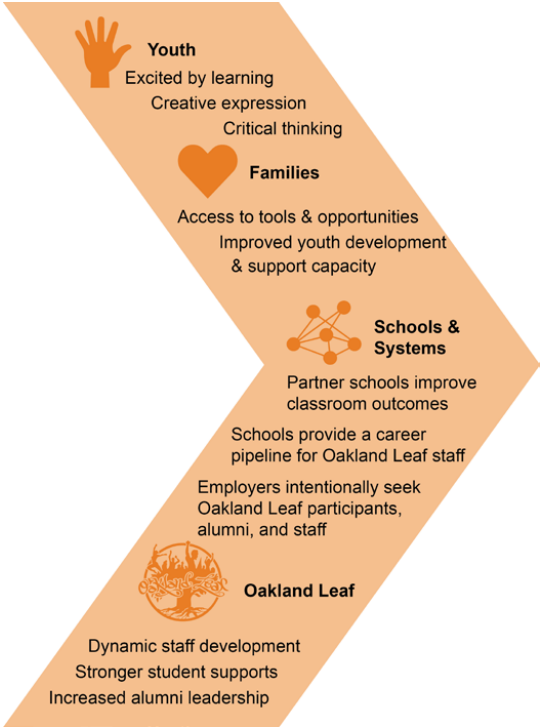
Guided by this North Star, Oakland Leaf will pursue four strategic goals:



WHAT’S NEXT FOR OAKLAND LEAF

With Love in Action, Community, Voice, Critical Thinking, and Cultivation all persisting as the core values of Oakland Leaf, this strategic plan aims to propel Oakland Leaf toward student, family, organization and systemic outcomes that contribute to a just and loving Oakland community.

In FY19 Oakland Leaf will strengthen and grow with a sense of urgency knowing we are essential for Oakland, where the educational and economic inequalities are growing every day. During this strengthening year, we will determine where the greatest area of programmatic growth is needed for our community and concentrate our efforts there. The strategic plan will guide how we will plant seeds to grow, to root in, rise up, and branch out. This plan gives the map of our continued commitment to Oakland.



Oakland Leaf: Cultivating Community

Oakland Leaf helps Oakland students achieve academic success and develop into thoughtful, creative citizens. We work in partnership with other local agencies, schools, and programs to provide a series of free, school-based programs and community services that give students and families with limited financial resources access to the tools they need to excel.

MISSION & VISION

Mission

To cultivate community transformation through creative education for youth and families.

Vision

Youth and families are creative leaders who actualize a more loving, just, and vibrant Oakland.

CORE VALUES

Love in Action

We are rooted in love, transformational justice, and restorative practices. We practice peace, self-care, and empathy.

Community

We create safe, supportive, and loving environments where we thrive individually and collectively.

Voice

We hear, respect, and develop voice and creative expression. We provide opportunities for input and accountability for ourselves and others.

Critical Thinking

We embrace the process of challenging the dominant narrative. We reflect, question, and dig deep with intention.

Cultivation

We acknowledge, honor, and nurture potential by providing a space for growth. We look to the future.

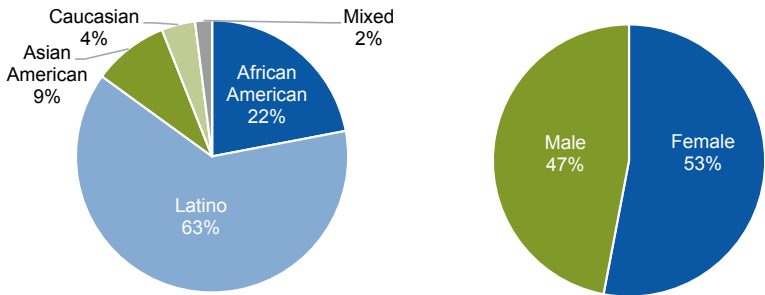
Reaching Students & Their Families

Working with partners such as Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and the City of Oakland, Oakland Leaf serves 1,000 students and their families annually. The majority of students served are young people of color, particularly Latino and African American students, with roughly equivalent numbers of male- and female-identified youth.

Oakland Leaf offers after-school enrichment programs in six of the 73 schools serving elementary and middle school students in OUSD. The average daily attendance (ADA) in 2016–17 ranged from 113 to 151. In addition to these core enrichment programs, Oakland Leaf leads the Oakland Peace Camp (2016–17 ADA of 108) and Love Cultivating Schoolyards (ADA of 31). A distinguishing feature of all of Oakland Leaf’s work is our grounding in restorative justice practices and principles. The emphasis on these principles and Oakland Leaf’s success engaging young people of color have been important considerations for the Strategic Planning Committee, and guide the Committee’s interest in expanding Oakland Leaf’s influence to the school day, families, and other partnership opportunities.

Oakland Leaf Student Demographics

Oakland Leaf Student Survey, 2015–16



Through Creative Programming & Transformative Experiences

Comprehensive After-School Programming

Oakland Leaf provides free, comprehensive, and innovative after-school programs at six elementary and middle schools. By interweaving five core components—literacy, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), art and culture, health and wellness, and empowerment and leadership—these programs provide youth with a safe environment to be creative stewards, critical thinkers, and active participants in their schools in order to bring change to their communities. Oakland Leaf’s culturally sensitive, responsible, and responsive after-school programs empower students to explore their identity, love who they are, and build communities where all voices are valued and respected. Oakland Leaf utilizes restorative justice programming, which is a youth- and growth-centered effective alternative to punitive disciplinary action in schools. Inspired by indigenous traditions, the principles and approaches of restorative justice programming bring together the persons harmed with the persons responsible for harm in a safe and respectful space, promoting dialogue, accountability, and a stronger sense of community.

Love Cultivating Schoolyards

In the Love Cultivating Schoolyards program (LCS), youth become active keepers of the land through hands-on garden activities and leadership opportunities. Youth interact with the natural world through planting seeds, growing plants, harvesting fruits and vegetables, picking flowers, studying insects, digging in the earth, and composting. LCS includes paid internships for high school students and recent high school graduates, and inspires after-school students through gardening classes. The gardening class component of this program consists of weekly gardening clubs led and taught by LCS interns. Integrating the interns into the program makes gardening and science “cool,” thereby engaging younger students who view the interns as role models.

Oakland Peace Camp

Oakland Leaf Peace Camp (OPC) is a free four-week camp for all Oakland students entering grades six through twelve. The camp’s arts and social justice curriculum aims to further the goals of youth empowerment, positive identity formation, community transformation, and creative expression in a safe, supportive, and fun environment. Peace Camp utilizes fun enrichment activities like graffiti and mural art, dance, and music production to help students gain awareness of and raise questions about issues impacting youth coming of age in Oakland. Peace Camp gives youth a safe place for healing and expression.

For Over 15 Years

2001

A “collective of East Oakland educators with deep community ties” comes together with a “shared commitment to *cultivate community transformation through creative education for youth and families.*”¹

2002

Oakland Leaf incorporates as a nonprofit.

August 2004

Oakland Leaf begins a partnership with ASCEND School in Fruitvale district lead agency for after-school programming.

September 2006

Oakland Leaf begins Youth Roots.

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

Spring 2001

First All Oakland Youth Talent Showcase

Summer 2003

Oakland Leaf holds our first Oakland Peace Camp (OPC), a summer camp for middle and high school students that gives youth a safe place for healing and expression.

August 2004

Oakland Leaf starts running the Family Resource Center (FRC) at ASCEND.

August 2007

Oakland Leaf begins Love Cultivating Schoolyards (LCS), a school gardening program that includes an internship for high school students to learn about ecology, environmental stewardship, professionalism, and responsibility.

2011

Oakland Leaf stops running Youth Roots.

August 2013

Oakland Leaf becomes the lead after-school agency at Bret Harte Middle School and Learning Without Limits.

May 2016

After seven years, Oakland Leaf stops running Rise and Shine.

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

Spring 2009

Oakland Leaf starts the literacy program Rise and Shine.

May 2013

Last All Oakland Talent Show

August 2012

Oakland Leaf becomes the lead after-school agency at EnCompass, International Community School, and Think College Now.

May 2015

After 11 years, Oakland Leaf stops running the FRC at ASCEND.

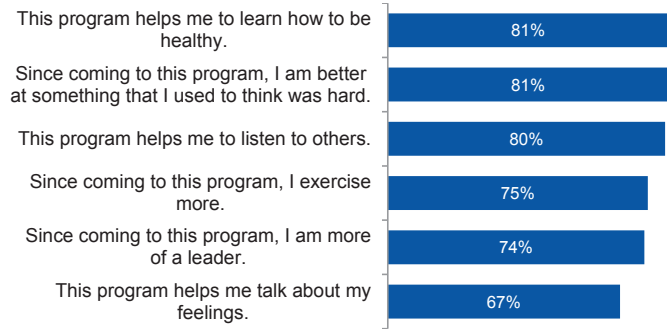
¹ Oakland Leaf. (n.d.). Our History. Retrieved March, 2018, from <http://www.oaklandleaf.org/about-us/our-history/>

Cultivating Students

Over the last several years, Oakland Leaf has conducted surveys with program participants and has received consistently high ratings. Students report growth in their physical, social, and emotional well-being due to their participation in our programs. Oakland Leaf prepares students for active participation in their communities: students learn to be better listeners, leaders, and communicators. Students also indicate that Oakland Leaf helps them access educational and career pathways, particularly immediate pathways in their schools and communities. We continue to strengthen our efforts to educate students about post-secondary academic and career paths and opportunities.

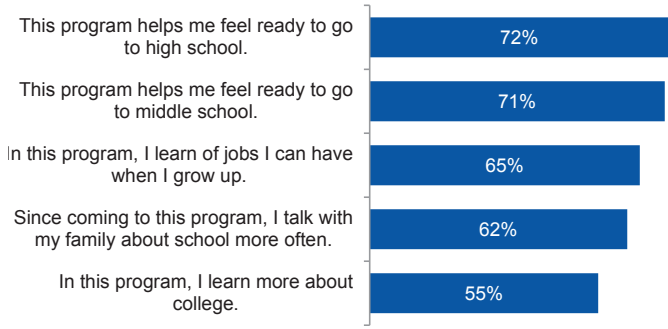
Oakland Leaf contributes to young people’s growth and health.

Oakland Leaf Student Survey, 2015–16



Oakland Leaf cultivates pathways for young people, but these pathways could be strengthened.

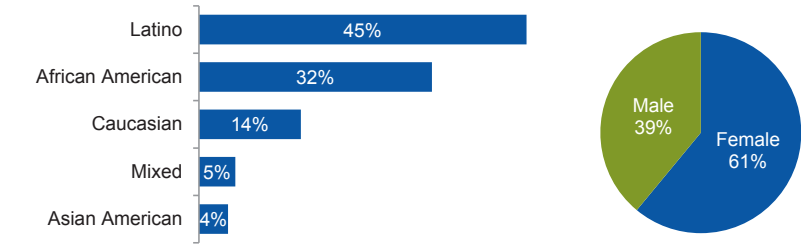
Oakland Leaf Student Survey, 2015–16



Staff feel appreciated, valued, listened to, and able to be effective contributors to cultivating young people and their families through their work with Oakland Leaf. Oakland Leaf has increased our staff retention from 78% in 2014–15 to 98% in 2016–17. The Planning Committee seeks to find opportunities to sustain successful retention and support professional growth and transitions for staff into other professional roles (e.g., teaching).

Staff reflect the demographics of Oakland Leaf participants.

Oakland Leaf Staff Survey



Staff grow and feel valued through their work with Oakland Leaf.

Oakland Leaf Staff Survey



Cultivating Change: Strategic Issues

In 2017, Oakland Leaf set out to structure a Theory of Change to articulate how our programming will support East Oakland youth to thrive, be creative, and contribute to their communities. This process included a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, leading the organization to consider several directions in which to advance and sustain academic success, leadership, and service among youth participants, as well as physical, social, and emotional well-being. These directions for Oakland Leaf included becoming a stronger and more focused organization driven by our Theory of Change; creating and supporting effective pathways for career and personal development for youth and staff; increasing our use of data to measure, understand, and increase impact and growth; and maintaining financial stability and growth.

The past few years at Oakland Leaf have been characterized by rapid growth, organizational changes, and new opportunities. Oakland Leaf pursued an organizational strategic planning process to build on our Theory of Change and provide guidance on how to make strategic and intentional decisions regarding growth, change, and the pursuit of opportunities. We engaged in the strategic planning process in order to:

- become **stronger and more focused**
- **increase our impact**

In June 2017, we partnered with Informing Change—a strategic learning firm in Berkeley, CA—to embark on a nine-month strategic planning process. Our Planning Committee included four Oakland Leaf Directors (the Executive Director, Deputy Director, Development Director, and Program Director), two Oakland Leaf Program Managers, and one representative from the organization’s nine-member Board of Directors. Working collaboratively and drawing on new and existing information, the Planning Committee articulated a North Star to guide the strategic plan and the organization; identified long- and short-term outcomes that align with, but also extend beyond, Oakland Leaf’s programmatic Theory of Change; and designed strategic goals through a mixture of discussion, evidence-informed decision-making, and stakeholder feedback.

To explore how Oakland Leaf can continue to transform the lives of young people, Informing Change facilitated eight interactive planning sessions; reviewed materials, data, and other information; and conducted stakeholder interviews with board members, front-line staff, schoolteachers, principals, and parents and caregivers of youth participants. Informing Change also gathered feedback periodically from the Planning Committee, Oakland Leaf Board, and staff about components of the plan.

The North Star

Oakland Leaf creates and cultivates relationships, pathways, and environments that strengthen and sustain generations of empowered Oakland youth.

This North Star is intended to support and guide ongoing and upcoming directions for Oakland Leaf. Oakland Leaf invests in successfully cultivating relationships, pathways, and environments for youth. The North Star is intended to highlight the importance of documenting, coordinating, and understanding the effectiveness of these components of Oakland Leaf.

The North Star is inspirational as well. Committee members want to ensure that programming changes are intentional and keep in mind this relationships-pathways-environments focus. Even more, the Committee wants to ensure intentional and explicit goals for intergenerational approaches to promoting and sustaining communities that advance youth and family well-being, by calling attention to the importance of “sustaining generations of empowered” youth.



Strategic Goals	Strategies	Organization Outputs & Outcomes
#1. Enhance programming Strengthen pathways for youth by creating and implementing structured Oakland Leaf curriculum and programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop and implement OL’s framework and curricula across sites.Develop and implement a formal internship program for high school students.Increase partnerships with schools and community-based organizations.Determine how programming can better connect families to resources for youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OL implements a consistent, impactful, and recognizable curriculum.More high school students are engaged through the OL internship program.Program Instructors have access to more support through the internship program and curriculum and framework guides.Schools, families, and students view OL as an important resource.More schools, families, and students are attracted to OL programs.OL interns and alumni take up leadership positions in Oakland Leaf and their communities.
#2. Invest in People Create workforce pathways where staff further develop their skill sets, professional development, and education to actualize their career goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhance and elevate staff recruiting, onboarding, training, and development.Manage, coach, and support staff to bring their best healthy selves to the work.Develop and implement an education/youth development fellowship.Improve advancement and earning opportunities for staff.Increase partnerships with higher education, workforce development, and community-based organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OL provides more professional development and career paths for staff.OL staff work more collaboratively across schools and programs.OL increases our presence and reputation in the educational field to support staff and alumni in building their own networks.OL increases the number of professionals in Oakland’s youth development and education workforce.OL supports the educational goals of current staff.
#3. Measure impact Ensure effective programming and operations by assessing, improving, and sharing Oakland Leaf’s performance, reach, and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Articulate core metrics and benchmarks.Develop and implement an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system.Share progress and impact findings to core audiences.Implement metrics and data into goal setting, feedback, and evaluations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OL uses data and metrics to increase impact and improve programming and instructor skill sets and capacity.OL establishes a functional and useful information and reporting system.OL increases effective, data-informed decision-making.OL shares our story to increase interest among new schools, communities, families, and funders.
#4. Strengthen Brand Expand Oakland Leaf’s visibility and appeal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establish a brand identity and strategy.Create a consistent brand identity, materials, and online presence.Train OL’s staff and board on our marketing and communication plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OL staff and board have a clear and consistent message about what OL is and does.OL is better able to reach new partners and funders in different sectors due to consistent branding.

Through our strategic goals, Oakland Leaf strives to have the following impact for our youth, families, schools, and systems. These outcomes align with our existing Theory of Change, are dynamically interrelated, and plot a path toward the North Star.

Outcomes for	1–2 Years	3–5 Years
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Youth are excited by and have fun learning.Youth seek out and participate in creative forms of expressing themselves.Youth become critical thinkers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Youth see a role for themselves in and take advantage of learning, leadership, and relationship-building opportunities.Youth demonstrate confidence in their leadership, voice, and capabilities.Youth successfully navigate pathways to education and careers, and go on to have a positive impact in their communities.Youth become active social change agents.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Families have access to supports to help their children grow and develop.Families have access to tools and opportunities that help them navigate their children’s education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Families have confidence in their ability to navigate systems that support their children.Families understand and appreciate the importance of social-emotional learning for their children’s development.
School & Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partner schools improve classroom outcomes.Schools provide a career pipeline for Oakland Leaf staff.Employers intentionally seek Oakland Leaf participants, alumni, and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Oakland Leaf is an effective marketing tool for schools.Schools maintain a culture of conflict avoidance, peaceful resolution, and principles and practices of restorative justice.Schools reduce the use of suspension and recourse to law enforcement and criminal justice systems.



Strategic Goal #1: Enhance Programming

Strengthen pathways for youth by creating and implementing structured Oakland Leaf curriculum and programming.

Why: A survey of the Strategic Planning Committee and additional Oakland Leaf stakeholders surfaced a recommendation to implement a consistent Oakland Leaf curriculum across program sites. At present, Oakland Leaf curricula vary across instructors and partner sites, and exist primarily in the instructors’ heads rather than being institutionally codified. Explicitly articulating and standardizing curriculum content will empower Oakland Leaf to better address our staffing needs. The curriculum design will keep in mind Oakland Leaf’s holistic Theory of Change. Potential 2019–24 action steps for this strategy include:

Implement Oakland Leaf curricula across sites:

- Articulate Oakland Leaf’s curriculum, framework, brand, and expertise by key program areas
- Hire staff or a consultant to design the curricula and framework
- Implement curricula and framework
- Determine curriculum partnerships necessary to run well-rounded programming

Structure internship program:

- Identify the priorities, needs, and opportunities for youth interns to increase leadership, personal development, and advancement
- Design and implement a formal, consistent internship program with new pathways and curriculum to support intern advancement and development
- Strengthen partnerships that facilitate pathways
- Increase high school engagements through internships and other programs

Assist youth and families in navigating the education and related systems:

- Determine how programming can better connect families to resources in order to best support youth pathways
- Develop staff guidelines for informing young people and their families about educational and career pathways, both locally and nationally
- Share resources with youth and families through ongoing Oakland Leaf activities
- Increase engagement with our school partners and other family access points



Strategic Goal #2: Invest in People

Create workforce pathways where staff further develop their skill sets, professional development and education to actualize their career goals.

Why: For the past three years since starting annual staff surveys, Oakland Leaf’s greatest area for improvement has been in onboarding, training, professional development, and long-term career development. In addition, there is a severe lack of teachers of color and bilingual teachers even though research shows they bring significant benefits to schools. Each year, Oakland Leaf has made small improvements and has noticed the transition of some of our staff into school day positions. Oakland Leaf now wants to make systematic changes so we can retain great staff, more intentionally develop a diverse workforce, and continue to develop young adults to be impactful youth developers and educators in Oakland. Potential 2019–24 action steps for this strategy include:

Increase effective and relevant staff development and cross-staff trainings:

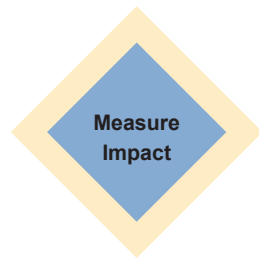
- Establish a training lead and coordinator to structure training objectives and activities
- Define core cross-staff training priorities
- Train all staff on core Oakland Leaf curricula
- Establish cross-staff orientation and schedule ongoing trainings
- Implement and track a range of trainings (e.g., management, human resources), including some content-related trainings (e.g., youth development, restorative justice)

Develop and implement an education/youth development fellowship:

- Create a fellowship manager position
- Structure enhanced pathways and opportunities for staff career advancement, particularly in schools and other systems connected to Oakland Leaf
- Increase partnerships with higher education, Oakland workforce development organizations, and community-based organizations
- Create a support system to ensure that staff attain educational goals

Strengthen opportunities for staff advancement and earnings mobility:

- Assess the strengths and limitations of current pathways and opportunities for staff mobility
- Implement a consistent and impactful Individual Development Plan (IDP) method across all levels of the organization to support staff mobility goals and desires
- Structure and implement enhanced pathways and opportunities for internal staff mobility (e.g., revisit pay scale for line staff)



Strategic Goal #3: Measure Impact

Ensure effective programming and operations by assessing, improving, and sharing Oakland Leaf’s performance, reach, and impact.

Why: Throughout the planning process, stakeholders and planners expressed an interest in measuring the impact of Oakland Leaf programming. The need to quantify Oakland Leaf’s impact derives from the desire to better serve students and to be able to share Oakland Leaf’s story. The impacts on young people and their communities can be quantified through structured and focused survey outreach to participants, alumni, families, and community stakeholders. These approaches can be used to identify successes, opportunities of growth, and needed resources and training, and can serve as a tool to coach staff and strengthen their skills. These approaches can also be used to identify the direct impact of programs on youth growth and to investigate the indirect effect of this growth on youth contributions to communities, social justice, and future generations. Oakland Leaf has already begun some of this work. Recognizing a lack of impact data, Oakland Leaf has been partnering with a UC Berkeley MA candidate in public policy since January 2018 to conduct an analysis of Oakland Leaf’s impact using existing data and resources; develop basic systems for collecting and sharing information with stakeholders; and identify gaps in data collection, systems, or practices that should be addressed. This consultant will generate those deliverables as part of his end-of-semester project. Potential 2019–24 action steps for this strategy include:

Collect and analyze impact-relevant data:

- Articulate core areas and metrics
- Enhance and expand information systems and data collection to align with core areas and metrics
- Develop and implement an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system

Disseminate impact findings:

- Develop impact reporting guidelines and templates
- Integrate the use of data and evidence throughout Oakland Leaf’s operations and programming in processes such as goal setting, feedback, and evaluations



Strategic Goal #4: Strengthen Brand

Expand Oakland Leaf’s visibility and appeal.

Why: At present, Oakland Leaf staff and stakeholders talk about the organization in a multitude of ways. This dispersion in messaging is also reflected in Oakland Leaf’s current inconsistent use of branded and communications materials. Among families surveyed in our afterschool programs, only 64% knew that Oakland Leaf was their child’s afterschool program provider. This shows that we are not clearly communicating to our stakeholders who we are, what we do, and how we do it. Oakland Leaf needs to establish a brand identity, strategy process, and most importantly, a shared language for describing our organization and work, along with a communications plan to ensure consistent uptake and use of this renewed language. Potential 2019–24 action steps for this strategy include:

Establish the Oakland Leaf brand identity and strategy:

- Reexamine mission, vision, values, and North Star statements
- Articulate brand
- Rebrand, update website, and develop merchandise
- Implement consistent practices and policies
- Create a marketing and communications strategy that supports our brand

Establish new and leverage current partnerships:

- Begin working with new sectors and organizations
- Engage new funders
- Determine what new partnerships are needed in our communications strategy
- Determine how to best utilize our current partners



WHAT'S NEXT

Oakland Leaf will use the strategic plan to guide decision-making, create annual goals and budgets, select partners and funding, and guide the organization over the next five years.



If you would like to support Oakland Leaf, please make checks payable to Oakland Leaf Foundation and mail to:

OAKLAND LEAF FOUNDATION
1212 Broadway, Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94612

Or make a monthly/yearly gift through our website that help keep the lights on: www.oaklandleaf.org/donate/

Oakland Leaf Foundation is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

For more information about our programs, please contact us at:
admin@oaklandleaf.org
or call (510) 564-4334.