

RIGHTING THE SHIP MIDSTREAM



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DEPARTMENT OF CHILD YOUTH AND FAMILIES

San Francisco's Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF) is a public agency with an exceptionally broad and important mandate – supporting local families by funding a portfolio of programs that touch almost every aspect of their lives. The agency's mission is nothing short of ensuring that San Francisco children and youth are healthy, succeeding in school, and that they live in safe, supported, and viable communities.

When the newly-appointed Executive Director of DCYF contacted Fern Tiger Associates (FTA), the agency was engaged in a strategic planning process that had been underway for at least 18 months. At this point, the goal was to organize their expansive workload and develop an intentional approach to moving DCYF forward with a clear sense of feasible and achievable goals. As part of that process, the agency sought input from scores of local organizations that provide direct services to youth and families, many of which partner closely with – and are funded, in part, by DCYF. This roster includes the San Francisco Unified School District, large nonprofit organizations, and neighborhood groups providing counseling to new parents.

However, after a significant time investment, the plan had yet to reach a point of conclusion, dissemination, and implementation. So DCYF approached FTA to shape and structure the Plan into a usable and visual

Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF) was begun as a result of a voter initiative that set aside local tax dollars to benefit children. One hundred children delivered the 68,000 signatures to S.F. City Hall in four red wagons.



THE S.F. DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES (DCYF) creates policies and programs to enhance the learning opportunities of children and youth while supporting healthy family and community environments to promote school success.

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document which would invite the community to better understand the complex thinking embedded within it.

One of the immediate challenges was that the working document lacked a cohesive voice or an organizing structure. It also lacked a story that provided both the backdrop for the goals and strategies. FTA set to craft a concise explication of the real world needs that were driving the agency toward its goals; and a process to track how well the organization was meeting those specific goals.

As part of the project, FTA interviewed several organizations and partners who work closely with DCYF. Along with providing invaluable perspective, this also enabled the document to include mini case studies of DCYF-funded nonprofits. FTA created a usable, graphic, reader-friendly, 92-page publication, heavily laden with documentary photographs taken by FTA at youth programs throughout the city — a document that included salient details for practitioners working with DCYF. Additionally, the publication highlighted the vital role DCYF plays in the lives of San Francisco's youth.



DCYF is a key local funder, allocating more than \$60 million to a wide range of initiatives that serve children and families.

