

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020–2025

INTRODUCTION

For 20 years, Identity has listened and responded to the hopes, worries and aspirations of Latino youth and their families. We began by conducting the very first assessment of the needs of Latino youth in Montgomery County and partnering with Gaithersburg High School to serve its small but growing population of Latino students. Today, we work in 16 public schools, two community-based centers and the county's correctional facility serving 3,500 young people and their families every year.

This year, we celebrated our first 20 years by focusing on the future, as we have always done, which included a revisioning of our Strategic Plan. Together with staff, Identity's Board designed an inclusive strategic planning process, investing most of our energy learning together, and focusing on what Identity needs to prioritize over the next few years in order to make the greatest difference toward advancing our mission.

The plan provides strategic direction for Identity to execute its mission, but does not anticipate a radical shift in emphasis or strategy. After school, in the community and on playing fields, we will continue to help youth improve social-emotional skills, achieve academic success and prepare for work through direct services. And we will continue to advocate for systems changes

that address disparities in opportunities and outcomes for Latino and other historically underserved youth. To this end, we reaffirmed Identity's founding vision, core values and program hallmarks and updated our mission, which reasserts our focus on the Latino community while asserting our broader inclusiveness and welcoming approach with all youth from communities disadvantaged by inequities.

The plan defines key priorities that will be made operational by the Executive Director and the staff leadership team. Over the next several years, we will focus on becoming a model trauma-informed organization; increasing opportunities to help close chronic gaps in academic achievement; scaling and expanding access to sustainable employment; further developing Identity's capacity for advocacy and community organizing; and better supporting talented staff and Board members for success.

Above all else, we are inspired by our clients' personal perseverance and ability to successfully push beyond obstacles related to trauma, poverty, language isolation, acculturation, educational disadvantages and fear.

Thank you to all who were involved in creating this plan, and who will help fulfill the priorities outlined within.

-Identity's Strategic Planning Committee

-Identity's Board of Directors

-Identity's Staff



WHAT WE DO

Identity was co-founded in 1998 by Candace Kattar and Diego Uriburu to create opportunities for Latino youth to reach their highest potential. We are honored to have supported the successful growth and development of tens of thousands of young people over more than 20 years, assisting students and disconnected youth living in high-poverty areas of Montgomery County, Maryland who are most at risk for poor social-emotional, academic and work-life outcomes. Working with more than 3,500 youth and their families annually, Identity supports their successful transition into adulthood after school, in the community, and on playing fields with bilingual and trauma-informed programs that strengthen social-emotional wellbeing and support academic success and job readiness and workforce development.

Identity's rigorously evaluated, culturally competent and trauma-informed programs are grounded in the Positive Youth Development model that reduces risk factors, increases protective factors, and strengthens social-emotional, academic and workforce skills and development. Identity's parent education and leadership training helps parents get involved in their children's schools, and lend their voices to promoting equitable opportunities for all young people. Wraparound services, available to clients, include comprehensive family case management, and mental health and substance abuse counseling including family strengthening support for those who have experienced trauma and family separation. Identity youth report real improvements in their ability to resolve conflict, speak up for themselves, avoid substance abuse and delinquent behavior, and connect to school, work and the community. Identity youth show improved school attendance and achievement, and their families report improved communication and more involvement in their children's lives after participating in our programs.

At the same time, because helping one child at a time, one school at a time is simply not enough, we increasingly focus on bringing about systemic changes that would disrupt patterns of underachievement, unemployment or underemployment as well as lost hope and disconnection.

In partnership with collaborating organizations and members of the community, Identity champions equitable access to sufficient resources, supports and opportunities for all youth to succeed.

PLANNING PROCESS

Identity engaged Engel Associates, an organization development and management consulting firm, to facilitate the development of our new strategic plan. A Board-appointed Strategic Planning Committee developed the plan in consultation with all members of the Board and staff. The process, which began in April 2019, included:

- An in-depth review of key documents such as recent needs assessments, proposals, evaluation reports, and news coverage.
- Almost 120 confidential interviews of clients, parents and program alumni, funders, elected officials, field experts, key influencers, staff and Board members, and other stakeholders.
- Several in-person meetings with the full Board and with small groups of staff.
- Five Strategic Planning Committee sessions.

Engel Associates produced three documents which, taken together, informed this document, *Identity's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan*:

1. A Context and Recommendations Report for use internally that describes Identity's image, strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and obstacles.
2. A Post-Context Report for use internally that summarizes new thinking and new questions as a result of debate and discussion of the Context and Recommendations Report.
3. And, with the Strategic Planning Committee, a Strategic Planning Guide also for use internally that unites the mission, new priorities, key achievement benchmarks and accountability.

We will use the *2020-2025 Strategic Plan* to create detailed plans for program, evaluation, fundraising, communications and finance as well as staff and Board development. We will also use this plan to track progress against our priorities and to help the staff and Board make decisions about whether to modify or take on different work to better advance our mission



CONTEXT

We developed this plan against a complicated backdrop of heated xenophobic and divisive rhetoric across the country and alarming data about the emotional, educational and employment vulnerabilities of Montgomery County's community of Latino youth and their families.

The Promise of Latino Youth in Montgomery County, (research released in October 2018 by the University of Maryland School of Public Health) confirmed a stark contrast between the hope and motivation of Identity youth and the reality unfolding for them. Latino youth in Montgomery County report high academic motivation, high academic expectations and a positive outlook for the future, which diminish markedly as they get older and/or face significant challenges. In actuality, they face barriers to success in their studies, work, and life – starting school unprepared for kindergarten, reading below grade level throughout elementary school, experiencing the school system's highest dropout rates, struggling to earn a post-secondary credential, and experiencing high rates of adversity and psychological distress.

While previous Identity needs assessments had already exposed extreme and disproportionate rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) among Identity youth and parents, emerging data on immigration specific ACES for just the second half of 2019 is shocking: 87% of immigrant youth and 74% of parents who migrated to the United States at 18 years of age or younger reported immigration specific ACES such as being afraid of dying, being lost, lacking food and water during their journey to the United States, and having to leave their home country because of gang or political violence. One third of all Identity middle and high school youth surveyed worried about a family member or close friend being deported. Nearly 10% of these youth had seen someone beaten or killed by gang members, soldier and/or police. And, Identity's 2019 Early Care and Education Needs Assessment for Latino Families in Montgomery County confirmed intergenerational impacts of trauma. More than 78% of surveyed parents reported having experienced their own childhood traumas (36% of those traumas were related to physical or sexual abuse), informing the lack of trust that was their most significant barrier to attempting to enroll their young children in an early care and education program.

Additionally, Education Resource Strategies studies commissioned in 2019 by Montgomery County Public Schools found systemic patterns of inequity that prevent primarily Black, Brown and low-income students from attaining their full academic potential. These studies confirmed what students and families have been saying for decades and accelerated the creation of the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence by Identity and the NAACP Parent Council.

These realities underscore the urgency of focusing on a set of priorities that we believe will make the greatest difference toward advancing our mission.

The consultants' Context and Recommendations Report provided additional perspective, validating the effectiveness of Identity's holistic approach to social, emotional, academic and workforce development. Stakeholders hold Identity in high esteem, recognizing the value of our commitment to client and community empowerment and our evidence-based approach to programs. Board and staff members are admired for their passion, expertise and influence. At the same time, limited resources hamper Identity's ability to more adequately meet community needs by growing significantly in terms of the number of people served, the range of services provided and our geographic reach without straining our already stretched staff and infrastructure.

2020 VISION, MISSION, VALUES, HALLMARKS

We reaffirmed Identity's vision.

We envision a just and equitable society that nurtures all youth and is enriched by their contributions.

We updated Identity's mission statement.

In pursuit of a just, equitable and inclusive society, Identity creates opportunities for Latino and other historically underserved youth to realize their highest potential and thrive.

This change both reaffirms our focus on the Latino community and asserts our inclusive and welcoming approach to all youth from communities disadvantaged by inequities. This approach does not mean that all youth receive the same services. It does mean that Identity is more intentionally inclusive and welcoming in all aspects of our work including our communications, relationships, and partnerships. In order to advance our mission, Identity recommitted to seeing that youth have equitable supports and opportunities to thrive socially and emotionally, to achieve academically, and to succeed in the workplace.

We reaffirmed the organization's values for Identity's decisions and programs:

- Young people come first.
- All youth have great potential.
- Youth deserve more than one chance.
- Society is enhanced by cultural diversity.
- To serve others is a privilege and requires excellence.

We reaffirmed our quality-driven hallmarks:

- Research-based programming.
- Integrated service delivery.
- Rigorous evaluation.
- Bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff.
- Flexible and responsive.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 1. Become a model trauma-informed organization**
- 2. Increase strategies to help close chronic gaps in academic achievement**
- 3. Scale and expand Workforce Development**
- 4. Develop our capacity for community organizing and advocacy**
- 5. Support talented staff and Board members for success**

Our holistic approach has proven itself time and again to be effective and crucial to the success of our youth. We will continue to help youth improve social-emotional skills, achieve academic success and prepare for work with a range of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed and inclusive direct services and advocacy for systemic changes that address disparities in opportunities. We will also continue to evaluate and pursue promising initiatives that have the potential to increase the number and/or improve the outcomes of young people served.



EQUITABLE SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

In order to advance Identity’s goal of ensuring that Identity youth have access to equitable supports and opportunities to thrive socially and emotionally, we will:

■ **Become a model trauma-informed organization**

Desired Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Reduce the effects of traumatic experiences among clients and reduce the effects of secondary trauma among staff.</p> <p>Position Identity to support other organizations in becoming trauma-informed and meeting the trauma-related needs of their communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adopt a culturally competent organizational framework based on research-based best practices related to trauma and healing. ■ Develop staff knowledge and skills to identify and respond to client trauma. ■ Ensure staff have the supports necessary to lessen compassion fatigue and turnover. ■ Ensure staff have the tools to assist other organizations in becoming trauma-informed.
<p>Reflect culturally competent best practices in the field and our increased understanding of community needs related to traumatic experiences in all core social-emotional curricula.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure core social-emotional curricula are reviewed and updated.
<p>Improve the sustainability and impacts of recreation programming as a key to healing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify and secure additional resources to adequately staff the recreation programming. ■ Develop and implement an expanded range of offerings to advance desired outcomes related to trauma.

EQUITABLE SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE ACADEMICALLY

In order to advance Identity’s goal of ensuring that Identity youth have access to equitable supports and opportunities to achieve academically, we will:

- **Expand summer programming**
- **Pursue opportunities to improve elementary school outcomes**
- **Introduce a STEM component**

Desired Outcomes	Strategies
Decrease summer slide and improve student preparedness to navigate major academic transition years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase availability of programs and activities that maintain and/or improve academic skills, including expanded approaches to summer programming. ■ Increase availability of programs and activities that improve social-emotional skills linked to academic success including persevering at key academic transition points.
Sustain and scale our successful elementary school literacy program to advance on-level reading by 3rd grade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Qualify for ESSA program validation. ■ Increase the number of elementary school students served in Title 1 and Focus Schools.
Explore strategies to increase quality early care and education and other kindergarten readiness approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Test the feasibility of a partnership to increase high-quality, culturally competent, accessible early care and education slots in early care and education “deserts.”
Increase awareness of and enthusiasm for science and technology-based 21st century skills and careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Add a science and/or technology complement to the elementary school literacy program. ■ Increase opportunities for hands-on experiences and exposure to science and technology enrichment activities and opportunities across the organization.

EQUITABLE SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SUCCEED IN THE WORKPLACE

In order to advance Identity's goal of ensuring that Identity's clients have access to equitable supports and opportunities to succeed in the workplace, we will:

■ Scale and expand Workforce Development

Desired Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Expand access to sustainable career pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase and diversify the available types of training, internships and apprenticeships. ■ Increase the number of clients who successfully obtain industry valued credentials and progress towards living wage employment. ■ Strengthen our partnerships with Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College and Universities at Shady Grove.
<p>Expand eligibility for Identity's Workforce</p> <p>Develop programming beyond youth enrolled in the Youth Opportunity Centers with particular attention to serving parents in order to promote a two generation career readiness strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Add and/or adapt programming for youth who are not enrolled in a Youth Opportunity Center as well as for parents of Identity youth. ■ Strengthen the connection and collaboration of other Identity programs with Workforce Development.
<p>Develop a model for employer driven and sponsored career pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pilot, evaluate and modify an employer driven and sponsored career pathway model. ■ Increase partnerships with potential employers. ■ Position Identity as a source of talent.

JUST, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

In order to advance Identity's goal of advancing our commitment to a just, equitable and inclusive society, we will:

■ Further develop our capacity for successful community organizing and advocacy

Desired Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Lead, partner and/or follow opportunities to advance our mission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure the necessary resources to strengthen our capacity for high-level and continuous community organizing and advocacy work.
<p>Collaborate with impacted communities in order to advance goals articulated in The Promise Challenge and by the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence.</p> <p>The Promise Challenge calls for radically bending the trajectory of five trend lines in order to close the gap and harness the potential of Latino youth: social-emotional wellbeing; kindergarten readiness; on-level reading by 3rd grade; high school graduation; and work readiness. The Black and Brown Coalition calls for eradicating systemic and institutionalized patterns of resource inequity so that all students, and particularly Black and Brown students, have access to effective and diverse teachers and leaders and access to the resources, opportunities and supports they need to be successful in college, career and life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Band together with communities who suffer similar injustices and partners who believe every child has potential and deserves equitable resources, supports and opportunities to thrive. ■ Train and support groups of young people and parents to speak up and get involved in addressing disparities in social-emotional, academic and workforce outcomes. ■ Train and support emerging youth and parent leaders to assume leadership roles in efforts to address disparities in social-emotional, academic and workforce outcomes.
<p>Hold ourselves and others publicly accountable for progress against our advocacy goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Document, share, and publicize measurable progress in altering institutional inequities as a result of advocacy with transparency about gains and challenges.

STAFF AND BOARD DEVELOPMENT

In order to advance Identity's goal of engaging staff and Board members who share our core values and are well equipped and supported to fulfill the demands of their current and future position, we will:

- **Support staff and Board members for success**
- **Ensure long term financial sustainability**

Desired Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Reduce staff turnover and increase retention of high potential/high performing staff.</p> <p>Develop an organizational structure that supports growth and innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve staff recruitment, hiring and on-boarding processes. ■ Increase opportunities for in-house professional growth, leadership development and advancement. ■ Increase participation in external opportunities for professional development. ■ Increase compensation to better reflect the market. ■ Evaluate organizational structure options to better support scaling existing work and our capacity to embrace new initiatives.
<p>Implement newly adopted Board development goals.</p> <p>Increase Board's success in fundraising</p> <p>Access resources that support growth and sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase the size and skillsets of the Board to include more business, fundraising and governance expertise. ■ Implement standing committees. ■ Enhance Board's ability to act as ambassadors and advocates. ■ Lead a Capital Campaign to support implementation of our Strategic Plan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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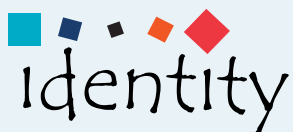
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