The Pacoima community is characterized by their strong infrastructure for collaboration and sense of neighborhood identity. While facing many challenges, Pacoima has been able to develop capacity by attracting investment and building relationships among stakeholders. Community leaders have come together to address issues including school readiness, healthy babies, and childcare, engaging parents in decision-making through participation in the work of collaboratives and boards. One example of Pacoima’s experience and success in collaboration is the work of area hospitals and community-based organizations coming together to create a continuum of care.

Community leadership in Pacoima is described as “strong,” “proactive,” “involved,” “empowered,” “plentiful,” and “committed to community.”

Why Pacoima

In 2009, Pacoima adult residents (age 25+) were twice less likely to hold a high school diploma or equivalent than Los Angeles County adults as a whole, and the area’s third graders were nearly one-third more likely to score below or far below basic on the 2008 English Language Arts California Standards Test in comparison Countywide. Pacoima also has a higher proportion of children and adults participating in a WIC program when compared to the Los Angeles County as a whole.

Pacoima has already made some progress in addressing these challenges through their collaborative efforts and cultivation of resources including a high-rate of zero-to-five year old targeted funding from Los Angeles Universal Preschool. The community also has a high rate of children with licensed child care seats.
Leadership
“At the core, what so many of these collaboratives are trying to do is strengthening families and communities.”

In the Pacoima community, leadership is expressed through the work of the many collaboratives. Emerging issues in the community are shared with leadership through “a strong e-mail circuit.” In an effort to fill gaps, agencies in the community are seen as willing to take on projects that may not fall under the scope of what their agency usually does. The beginning of a collaborative culture can be traced back more than 10 years with many of these collaboratives really taking off in the last 5-6 years. Residents often become engaged via the few Neighborhood Action Councils in Pacoima and San Fernando. There is also some additional grassroots organizing through the County’s Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) and alignment with the Children’s Council. Residents are also organizing around the efforts of Pacoima Beautiful in addressing lead poisoning and other environmental issues in the community.

Engaging Multiple Sectors
“We really tried to bring all the stakeholders together that provide the different aspects of a continuum of care.”

The Pacoima community has strong engagement across county and city government, public education, and faith-based sectors, in addition to their long history of collaboratives. There is collaboration between area hospitals and community-based organizations which provides a continuum of care. The community understands the need to serve families across this continuum and bring the necessary partners to the table. According to community members participating in focus groups, there is active involvement with County Departments through county representation at collaboratives. The Schools in San Fernando and Pacoima are described by focus group participants as very open to partnerships, while the growth of the charter movement in the area is opening the door to even further collaboration.

Infrastructure
“The community is rich with weekend activities and special events – healthcare, carnival, or resource fairs put together by different agencies or the city council.”

There is a strong sense of community identity and presence of infrastructure in the Pacoima community. Residents of Pacoima tend to stay within the community for recreational activities, services and shopping. Overall nonprofit infrastructure in Pacoima is generally described as large and doing well in this economy and residents who live, work, and play in the community are evident.

Investments
“Two major retailers have recently opened new sites. Economic development in Pacoima is starting to pick up.”

Pacoima is often targeted for investments by city and county government agencies as well as some foundations. Both San Fernando and Pacoima receive School Readiness funding from First 5 LA and there is a broader San Fernando Best Babies Collaborative as well as a Partnership for Families Collaborative that serve some of the zip codes in this area. Pacoima has also seen some recent economic development with the opening of two large retail stores. City and county investments are evident as well in the community’s designation as a city Gang Reduction Youth Development (GRYD) zone and selection as a service integration site by the County CEO office.

*Unless otherwise noted, this profile was informed by community focus groups and interviews.