

# Vital Village Networks Impact Report

2021



**VitalVillage**

BELONG • LEARN • ENGAGE • TRANSFORM

N E T W O R K S

**"This network has  
inspired me to keep going  
in a difficult year."**

—Vital Village Networks Community Partner  
Annual Survey, July 2021

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# Letter from the Director

# 1

## Letter from the Director

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For over a decade, Vital Village Networks has worked to optimize child, family and community wellbeing by asking a fundamental question: *what can we do together that we cannot accomplish alone?* In response to this question, we have worked to foster a community leadership ecosystem to advance racial justice and structural change that builds the foundation for community health and wellness.

Community residents and caregivers have always been committed to leading early childhood systems transformation to support equity and justice. For far too long, the leadership, innovation and wisdom of community change agents have been overlooked. Yet in this past year, we see a growing awareness of the essential role of community-driven strategies for fundamental and sustainable social, policy and structural change. Communities are rising!

As we celebrate the growth and progress in 2021, we pause to acknowledge these collective efforts required the support and leadership of partners and members like you, championing change and supporting this shared aim. Looking ahead, we acknowledge there continues to be much work to be done. As we work to achieve sustainable, social transformation that advances racial equity and social justice for all children and families we look forward to continuing to work and learn alongside you. Thank you for all of your support.

Onward Together,

Renee Boynton-Jarrett, MD, ScD  
Founding Director, Vital Village Networks



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# Vital Village Networks

# 2

## About Vital Village Networks

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Build **Community Capacity** to promote child wellbeing and prevent adversities and advance racial justice



**Data Sharing** and research to inform advocacy



Increase **Social Connectivity** through networks and family and community engagement



Acknowledge and support development of **Community Leaders**

Vital Village Networks Four Strategic Pillars

Vital Village Networks (VVN) builds community capacity to optimize child wellbeing, prevent early life adversities, and advance equity by developing leaders, connecting institutions, and building research evidence and shared data systems.

We use **collaborative approaches** to shape opportunities and co-create solutions. We engage caregivers as key designers of strategies to best leverage community assets.

We recognise that **cross-sector engagement** is needed to support protective factors. We convene networks and provide a means of enabling cross-sector work.

We recognise **data is a catalyst for community engagement** and accountability and, we develop dashboards and tools to share ownership of benchmarks for child wellbeing.

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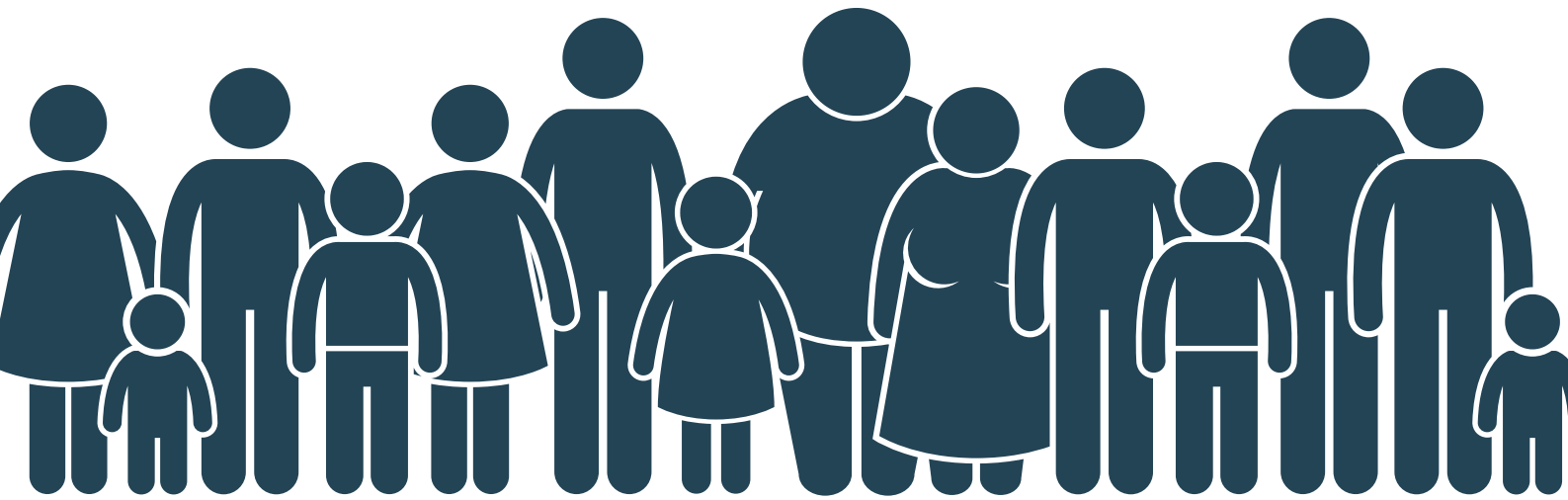
# About the Impact Report



# 3

## About the Impact Report

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This impact report seeks to understand the national impact of Vital Village Networks and its effectiveness in building community capacity and advancing equity. This report highlights some of our accomplishments and innovations during 2021 while working in partnership with community residents and organizations, whilst assessing key areas for intentional investment moving forward, based on community needs.

This 2021 Vital Village Networks Impact Report synthesizes data collected through our 2021 Bi-Annual Network Surveys in addition to program data in order to capture the level of success Vital Village has had at reaching each of its seven goals:

- Increasing access to tools and resources to improve wellbeing for children and families
- Building community capacity to promote child wellbeing
- Empowering individuals through advocacy and leadership development,
- Supporting cross-sector collaborations, (
- Growing and expanding social networks for families and organizations
- Disseminating data on child family and community well-being
- Supporting partners to define aims and track outcomes

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# Our Impact by the Numbers

# 4

## Impact by the Numbers

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In 2021, the Vital Village Networks team continued to build momentum and support by leveraging expertise and working collaboratively. The Vital Village Boston team hosted more than 227\* community meetings, with an estimated 2,469 participants. Public engagement was high this year: of the 111 public engagement meetings held, 1,768 people attended. To support this level of engagement 164 volunteers contributed over 200 hours to plan and co-lead the meetings - working collaboratively to foster healthy, holistic spaces for children and families to thrive.

\*These numbers are specific to the Boston Local Team and do not account for meetings held by VVN teams: NOW and CRADLE.

## Areas of Impact

Areas where we are performing well and where there is room for growth, derived from the results of our 2021 Bi-Annual Survey Reports.

### Performing well



Sharing tools, resources around caregiver and child wellness



Building capacity and connections to new opportunities



Impacting how we engage with families/promote self care

### Performing moderately well



Increased outreach, networking and dissemination of resources



Sharing data to support Network partners' aims and outcomes



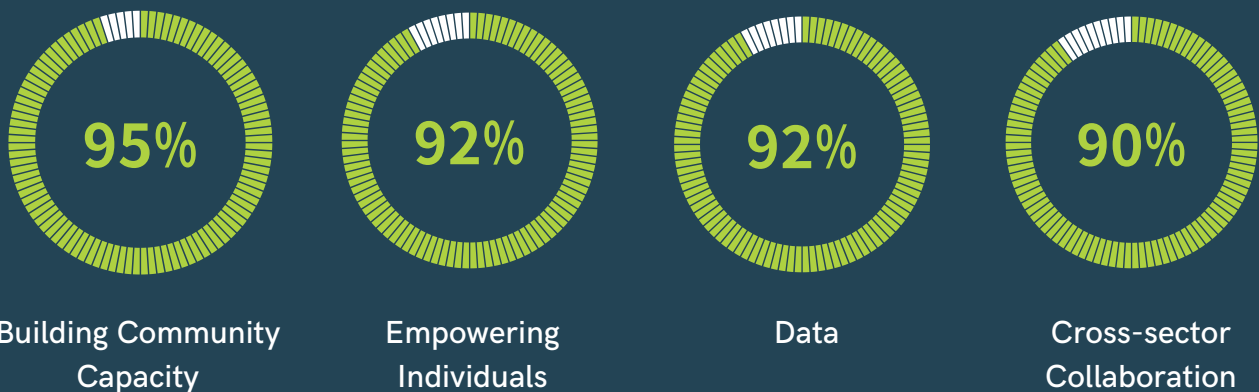
Language offerings and technical accessibility

# Vital Village Impact by the Numbers

We have been successful in advancing towards our goals in 2021. The results from our 2021 Bi-Annual Survey for our National Partners and Local Boston Teams are demonstrative of this.

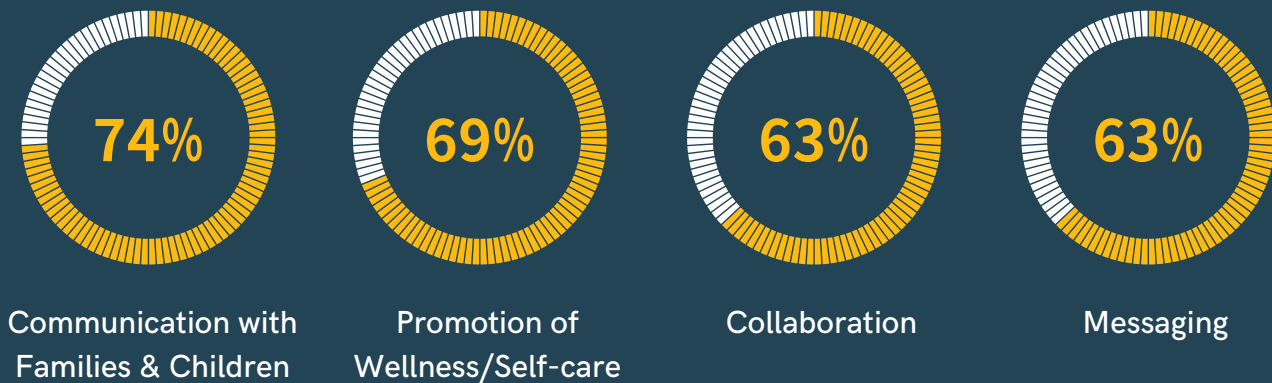
## Village Goals: how successful have we been in achieving our goals?

Combined percentage for 'very successful,' 'completely successful' and 'successful'



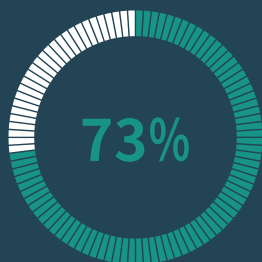
## Village Impact: how has involvement with us impacted your work?

Combined percentage for 'quite a bit much' and 'very much'



## Collaboration: difficult for one organization to accomplish the work alone.

Combined percentage for 'agree' and 'strongly agree'



Difficult to Accomplish Alone

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# 2021 Impact Highlights

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## 2021 Impact Highlights

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### We are Engaging Communities

We are impacting how we engage with families and promote self-care. Our Vital Village Networks team have been working tirelessly to improve our engagement in 2021. Some highlights of the work we've done this year, include:



**Network Connection Meetings:** Our local team started a practice of Family Friendly Wellness activities during monthly Network Connection Meetings. The activity has been facilitated by various team members and Community Partners.



**Technology Justice:** To increase technology justice we partnered with Tech Goes Home, developed a curriculum and led 18 hours of training for a cohort of residents on advanced technology.



**CONtexts:** We incorporated language justice in our text messaging platform for families with children 0-5 years - CONtexts - and we're exploring a dedicated Spanish language service.



**Male Engagement Taskforce:** We implemented a new strategy to focus on housing resources and policies that affect single fathers with children in Boston.



**Abundance App:** We met with community members, organizations and families to find ways to improve the Abundance App. Improvements included adding new food sites, updates to the app and website, and adding resources for Spanish speakers.



**Children's Mental Health Storytimes:** In response to feedback from families with children returning to school in-person, we created a back-to-school recording series that focused on themes of separation and anxiety, loss and grief, and consent and boundaries. These storytimes, hosted in collaboration with Boston Public Librarians and Mental Health Committee members take place weekly.

## We are Empowering Individuals

We are sharing tools and resources around caregiver and child wellness. Our Vital Village Networks team have been working tirelessly to improve tool and resource sharing in 2021. Some highlights of the work we've done this year, include:



**Civic Engagement Platform:** We began to explore options for a platform for volunteer engagement and tracking of civic engagement, service and leadership and learning trajectories for partners, as well as continued to work with partners to determine the features needed.



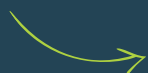
**CONtexts:** We promoted inclusion of our CONtexts text messaging system on Vital Village social media platforms in a continual rotation and included resource shares through internal and external partners.



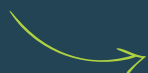
**Male Engagement Taskforce:** We utilized social media and text messages to share resources and support the family and community wellness.



**STRIVE:** In collaboration with the Child Witness to Violence Project our STRIVE trauma-informed practices training was transformed a two-day in-person training to be a 6-part online course where early educators can receive Continuing Education Units (CEUs) after completing the course.



**Abundance App:** We developed an online interactive map visualizing food resource data from Abundance for organizations and families without access to smartphone applications.



**COVID-19 Resource Maps:** We streamlined and automated the data upload process for resource layers, reducing staff time while adding new contact information, hours, and notes for each mapped location.

# 100%

... of respondents in the 2021 Boston Survey believe VVN has been successful in increasing access to tools and resources to improve child, family and community well-being.

## We are Building Community Capacity

We are building community capacity and connection to new opportunities. Some highlights of the work the Vital Village Networks Boston team has done this year in collaboration with partners and families, include:



**CONtexts:** We expanded this weekly text message system to engage Spanish-speaking community members and families by incorporating language justice.



**Abundance App:** We strategically partnered with new community-based organizations to help share the Abundance App with more families in Boston, highlighting 80 new community-led food initiatives.



**Data storytelling:** We supported parent leaders and leadership councils, community champions, public health students and practitioners in developing data posters for the 2021 National Community Leadership Summit that highlight community leadership and impact.



**Social Justice Mediation Program:** In partnership with Social Justice Mediation Institute Instructors, Leah Wing and Deepika Marya, we hosted our second virtual social justice mediation training and launched a committee to explore virtual community mediations.



**Mental Health Committee:** A group of five Mental Health Committee community leaders came together to form a Youth Mental Health Forum subcommittee. Two events were held in 2021, creating a space for the youth in our communities to discuss mental health and engage their peers on important topics.



**STRIVE:** STRIVE provided online workshops on trauma-informed practices to early educators and family child care providers across Massachusetts with the Attorney General's Office and, to early educators, family engagement coordinators, and parents and caregivers connected to the Boston Public Schools Universal Pre-K program.



**Baby Cafes:** We established a relationship with Boston Medical Center's Pediatrics Mobile Van team, which engages in mobile clinical offerings to families, particularly those with newborns, and started a referral system with the team to connect families with the BMC Baby Cafe for breastfeeding support.



**Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) Scholars Training:** Eight Breastfeeding Scholars embarked on our first virtual CLC training, an adaptation from the typical in-person training. This 2021 cohort of Community Peer Lactation Scholars was selected by a peer-based scholarship selection committee and supported by a community-led mentorship team.



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# 2021 Network Highlights

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## 2021 Network Highlights

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### VNN National Community Leadership Summit 2021

The VNN National Community Leadership Summit has been an annual event since 2012. Since 2020 the Summit has adopted a virtual delivery model. The summit honors and showcases community leadership centered on upholding the dignity of children, families, and communities. It creates opportunities for community leaders to learn from others about how they are working collaboratively to foster healthy, holistic spaces for children, families, and communities to thrive.

### Leadership Summit by the Numbers

**465**

Registered  
Attendees

**77%**

Attended the  
Summit

**9.3**

Overall Score out of  
10

**12**

Countries  
Represented

### Community-Powered Food Systems

In 2021, Vital Village Networks launched a participatory, community co-design process, with the aim of developing a blueprint for building local capacity to advance community-powered food systems. This initiative focuses on strengthening the community engagement and leadership of caregivers, parents and families, uplifting strengths-based narratives, and fostering collaborative leadership to scale community-identified solutions and cross-sector partnerships. Key components include planning for our inaugural Community Food Systems Fellowship program and launching the application process, and a mixed-methods landscape scan to deepen our understanding of community-level and grassroots food systems efforts that exist at the intersection of community power building, resident leadership development, and healing and resilience within local food systems.

### Community Data Science

2021 saw the relaunching of the Community Data Workgroup and the improvement of our Abundance App to include 80-new community-led initiatives and expanded strategic partnerships.

### National GROWbaby Research Network

The CRADLE Lab launched the GROWBABY Research Network (CPRN) in early 2021 engaging 7 community health and/or academic medical center partners across the country in a series of monthly steering committee meetings to co-design the CPRN. Currently, the practice-based Research Network is operative in eleven clinical sites nationwide. This year saw the establishment of a Data Coordinating Center and the launch of the first IRB-Approved pilot study using Electronic Health Record Data.

### NOW Playbook: Transformative Community Capacity to Advance Equity

We have expanded our national footprint to create the Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW) Innovation Forum and Learning Community. NOW is a national network created to foster peer learning that empowers community-based efforts to succeed. Drawing upon the learnings from the NOW Learning Community in 2018-2020, we published the first of a series of tools that captures key resources and learnings from our journey together, the NOW Playbook: Transformative Community Capacity to Advance Equity. The NOW Playbook is a resource guide designed to provide tools for local leaders, community coalitions and networks, educators, practitioners, and policymakers working to promote the well-being of children and families, advance racial equity and healing, and align systems of care and education in early childhood.

## NOW by the Numbers

424

NOW PlayBook  
Downloads

1,454

Total Podcast  
Listeners

222

Webinar  
Attendees

330

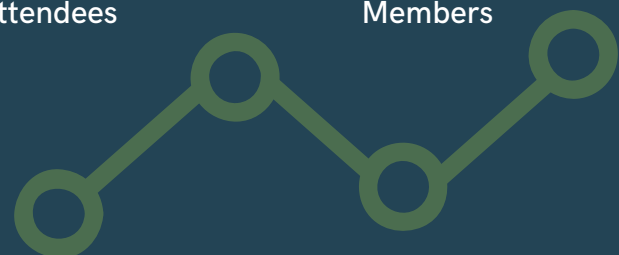
Forum  
Members

600

Resources

7

New Blogs



## Notable changes from 2020 to 2021

Vital Village Networks is growing:

- Relaunch of our Student Research Assistant program with five Research Assistant
- Eleven full-time staff, five part-time staff, up from nine full-time staff in 2020
- Three medical center partners, up from just one in 2020
- Operative in fourteen states, up from twelve in 2020
- Dedicated funding for our National Community Leadership Summit
- An estimated 350 Active Community Leaders up from 250 in 2020
- An estimated 1000 families engaged up from 800 families in 2020



**2022 and  
Beyond**

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## 2022 and Beyond

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Vital Village Networks is growing, and so is our impact. Before year's end, we expect to be working with 1600 families and 500 Active Community leaders, facilitated by staffing, partner and location growth. With the recognition of our aims, goals and current level of social impact, 2022 brings focus to three areas of intentional investment:



**Increase outreach, networking and dissemination of resources around child mental health** in order to improve community capacity and enhance the success of the Network's aims. As part of this, four key areas of intentional investment have been identified: improving health and wellness practices, growing spaces for community conversation and small group/child engagement activities and ensuring networking is sustained beyond meetings.



**Share data to support our partners' aims and outcomes** and encourage organizations and businesses to share their stories and experiences of working to improve child well-being. Our National Capacity Building Partnerships have had an emphasis on the Northeast region of the US and made significant progress over the past year. While each partnership is unique, the core of their request for working with us is focused on authentically engaging with and building the capacity of local leaders to drive transformation, through human-centred design and dignity principles. We aim to improve data sharing and accessibility, in order to enhance our current level of social impact.



**Enhance language offerings and technical accessibility** in order to support future program growth. We are exploring the opportunity to work with Spanish-speaking parents/families to improve our program delivery, particularly in relation to CONtexts. Expanding our free text messaging service to include resources for English and Spanish-speaking families is an area of key intentional investment.



# Acknowledgements

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## Acknowledgements

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We thank you for your continued support.

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