

Sitting at the Head Table:

Parent Power in Portland, Oregon

Prepared for the 2017 Collective Impact Forum

Molly Day and Lupe Campos

(Here we are) →



(Lots of sparsely populated areas and some denser population centers)



(Picture
perfect
Portland)



綠林城市
Portland Oregon
www.uyau.com

(Our
Portland)



Why
do you do what you do?

We believe the misery in this country is rooted in racism—structural, institutional and personal racism. So we go for the root.



(Thinking about the “golden circles” of why, how and what--and keeping the focus on the why.)

How
do you do what you do?

We create ways to share
power because that is the
most effective way to
disrupt racism.



What the heck do you do?

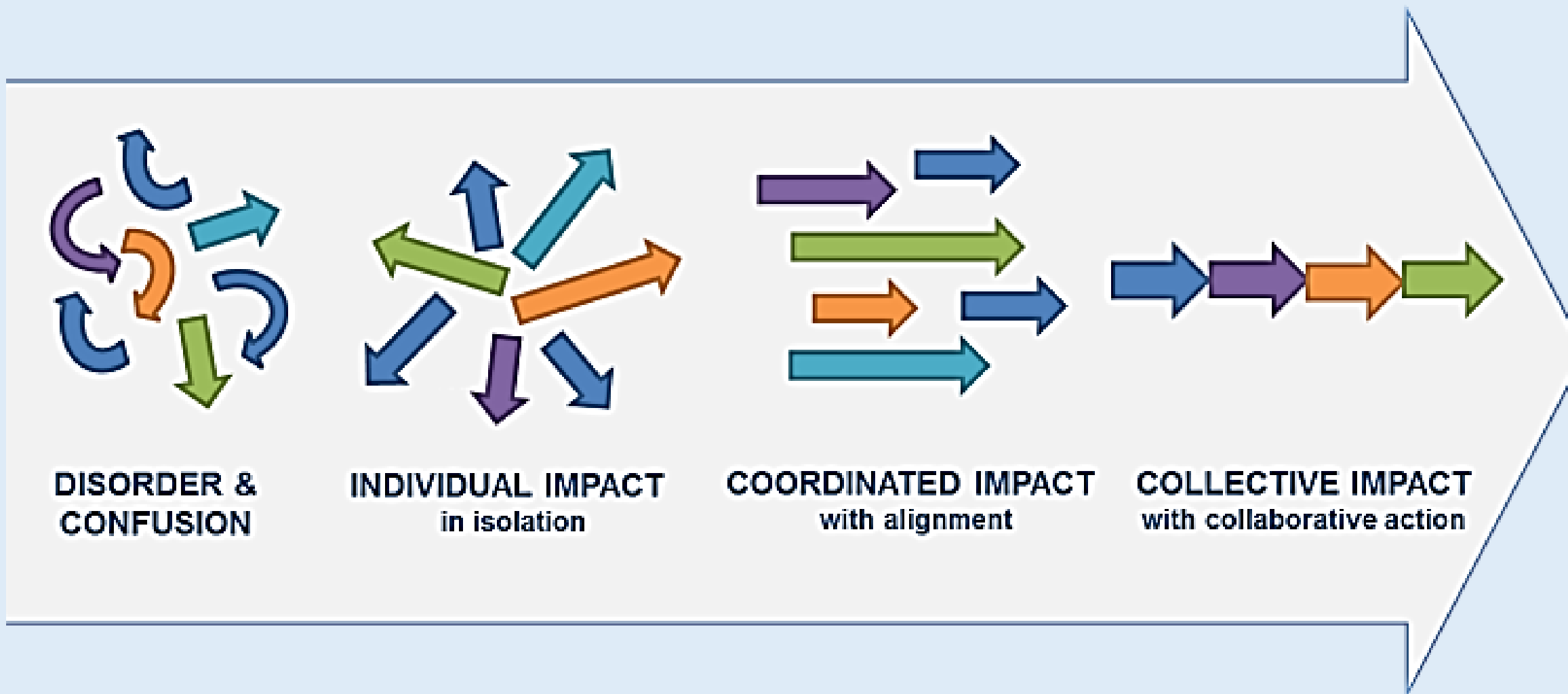
We align public investments around early childhood education in and around Portland, Oregon. We manage a \$4.5 million dollar annual investment from the state department of education.



Why we do what we do

(Backbone orgs in collective impact are deliberate about who they seat at the head table—using a wedding planner analogy—and pay attention to the seating dynamics of others so everything flows well. Our “why” is to disrupt racism by sharing power so what if the families/community members/parents were the head table? What if the mayor’s office had to apply to join them instead of the other way around? How would that look? How would it work?)





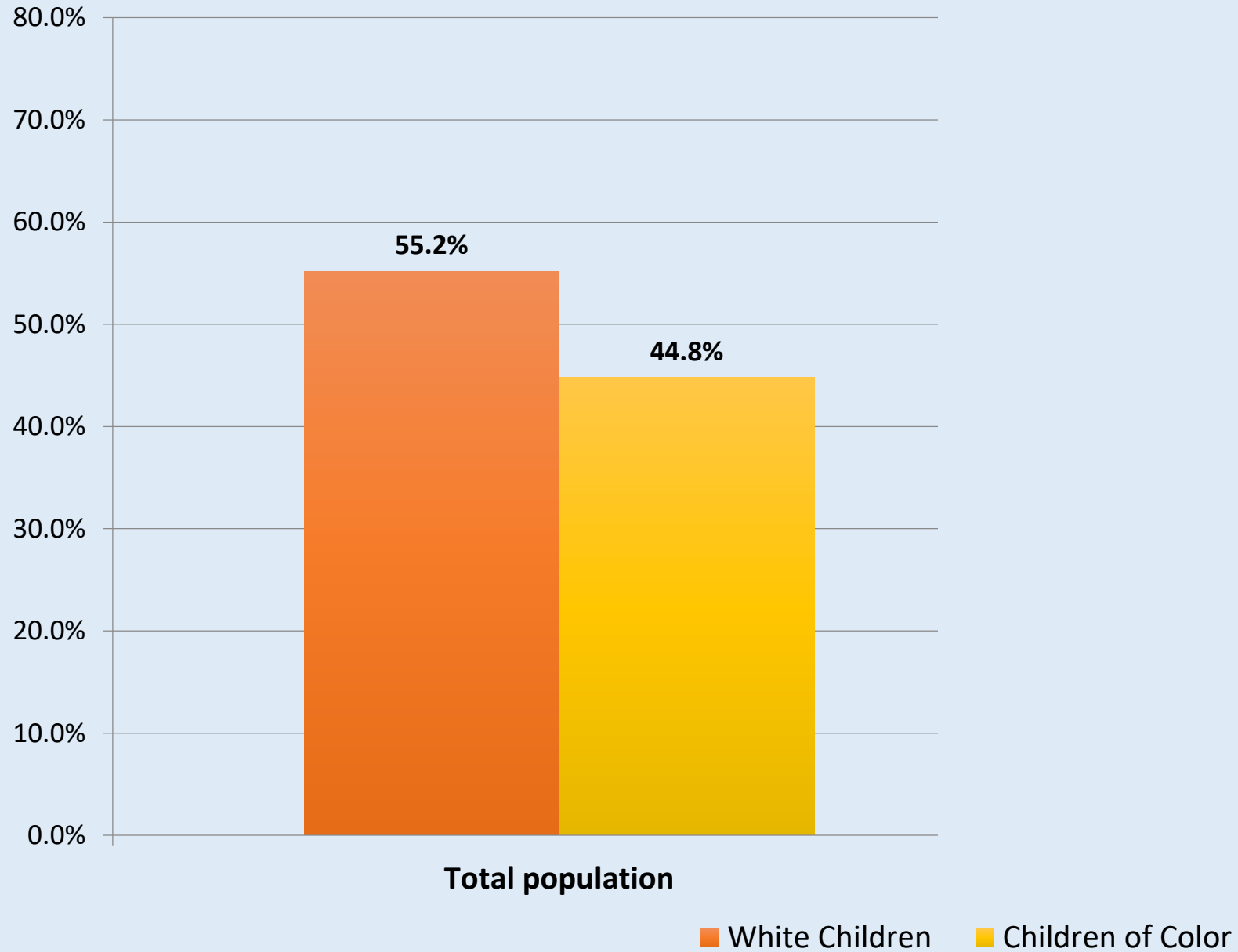
(Because our “why” is disrupting racism we pay attention to the white arrow in the background—the context for how all the little arrows get lined up. Who decides? How?)

We live in Multnomah County, Oregon. We are a state that is very White... if you only look at adults.

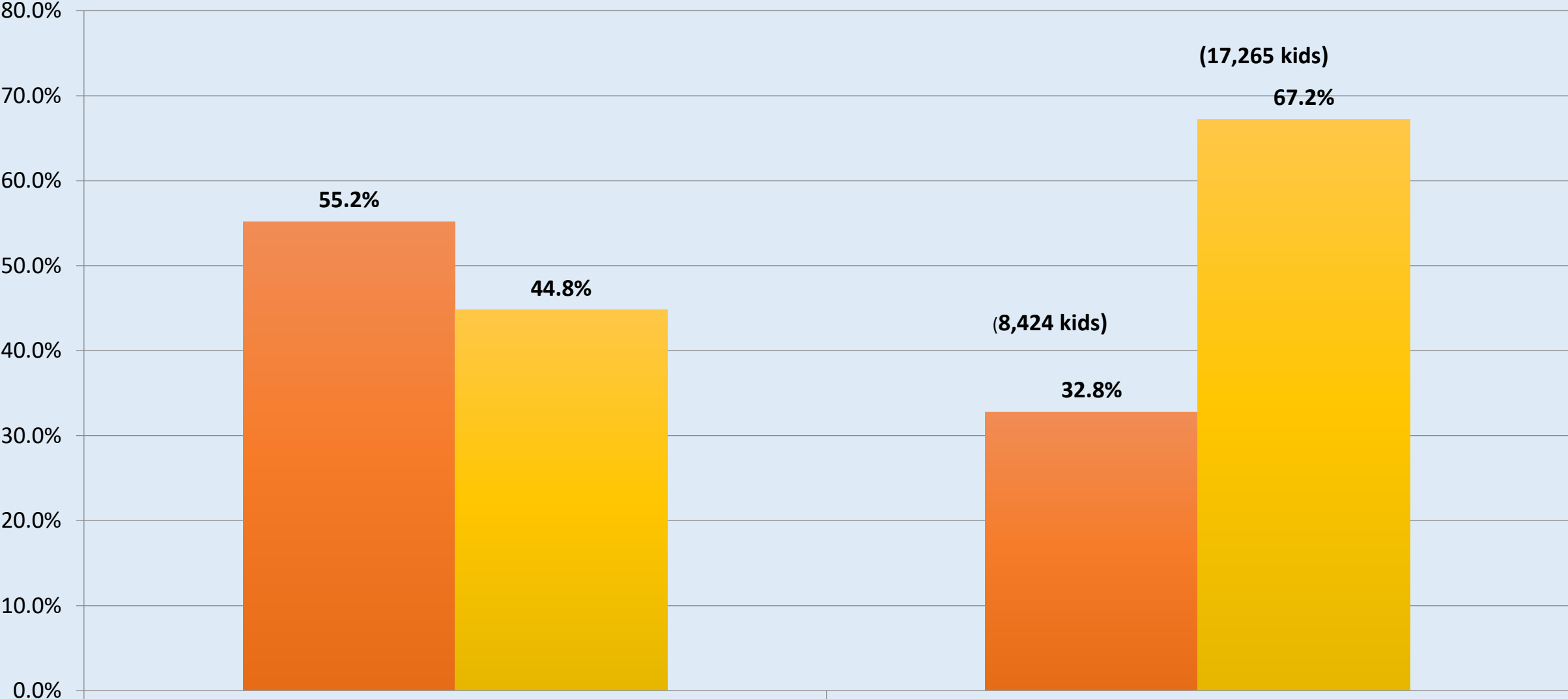
(72.2% of adults in the city are white and 6.2% are Black. But half of our children are from Communities of Color. They are African American, Native American, Latino, Asian, Slavic, and African. Half of our young children experience poverty. And most of those children--almost 70%--are from Communities of Color.)



Total population by race for 0-6 yr. olds in Multnomah County



Poverty by race for 0-6 yr. olds in Multnomah County



Total population

Children living in poverty

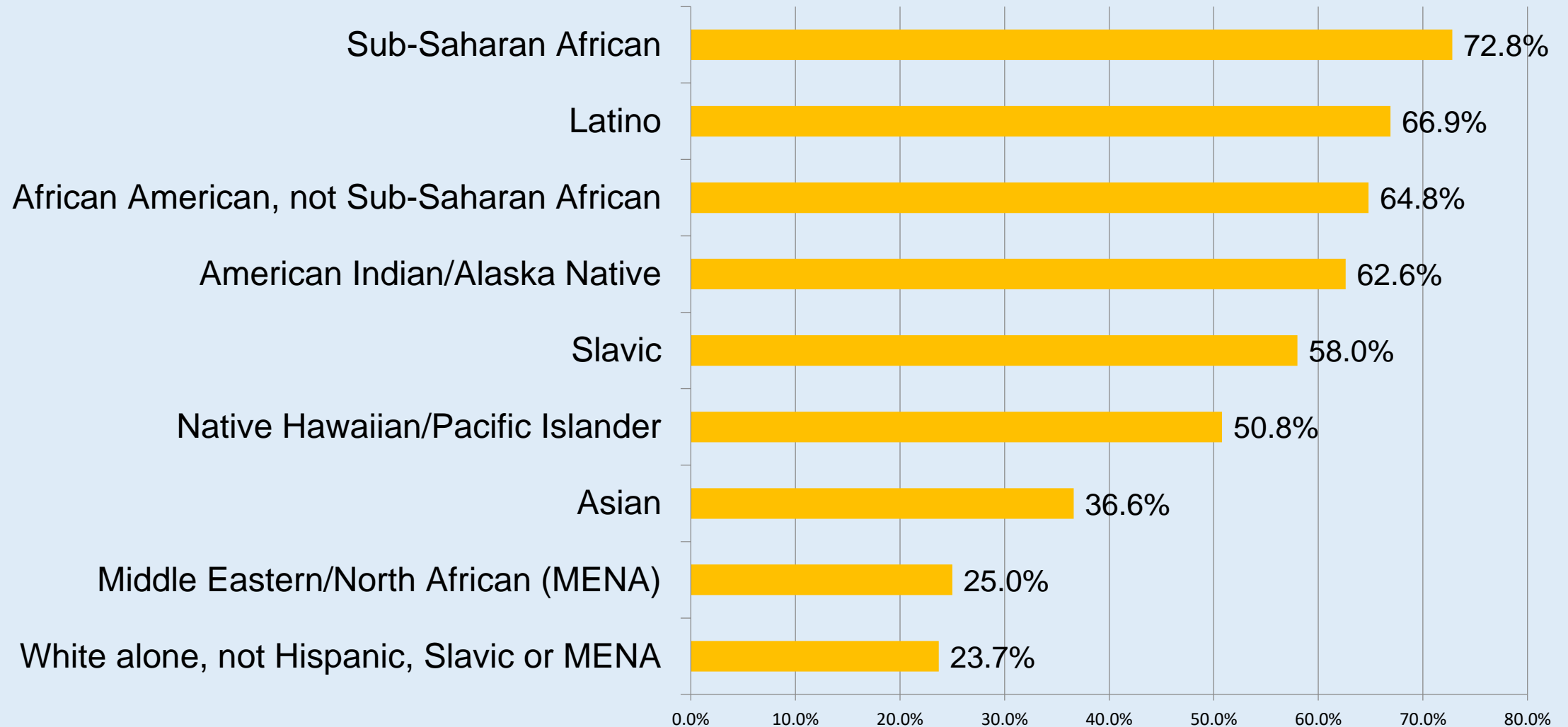
White Children Children of Color

(This is why we focus on racism and not poverty)

Source: Based on ELM analysis of ACS 2011-2013, 3 year estimates.

Six racial/ethnic subgroups have poverty rates of more than half.

Percent of 0-6 yr olds in each racial/ethnic group living in poverty



Source: ACS 2011-13, 3 year estimates



Parent Accountability Council

(We do a lot of things but PAC is the focus for the presentation today. The PAC is the heart of what we do and how we do it.)

Better known as the PAC

We are Latinos,
African Americans,
Native Americans,
African Immigrants,
Vietnamese and
members of the Slavic
community.

We are family.

(We make sure that our early learning hub is guided by strong family voice. What is our early learning hub? We call it ELM for “Early Learning Multnomah”.)



We work to disrupt racism so that every child in Multnomah County is prepared to succeed in school and life, regardless of race, ethnicity or class.

(Our first task was to write five guiding principles for all that ELM does.)



We have a **priority population**.

We focus on children who are called “at risk” but who are really “full of promise”.

We say:

“We want all children to thrive.”



We work for **equity**.

We make the invisible, visible.

We say:

“We are here. We are all equal. See us. Respect us.”



We are **parent-centered**.

There is nothing done about us without us.

We say:

“We are raising the children. We are your best resource.”



We create **family engagement**. We support the family to support the child.

We say:

“Support us as we take care of our children. Meet us where we are.”



We build **system coordination**.

We all work together to partner with families.

We say:

“Talk to us. And talk to each other. It takes all of us to make life better for our children.”

(At ELM we don't invest state funds or take action unless it clearly meets these five guidelines, and the PAC holds us accountable.)



How we do what we do

(Early on we tried a more traditional council but the parents were clear that the format didn't work for them. They taught us about Popular Education.)



How we do what we do

We use Popular
Education as the
basis for our
meetings

(See handout for a summary. It leads to very different meeting styles—much more fun and interactive and respectful . And we get a lot of work done.)



(This video link won't work in a PDF but the video will be posted in a few weeks on our website: earlylearningmultnomah.org. This short video shows the PAC in action with narration by PAC members and our facilitator.)



**EARLY LEARNING
MULTNOMAH**



The PAC meets once a month for 2 hours.

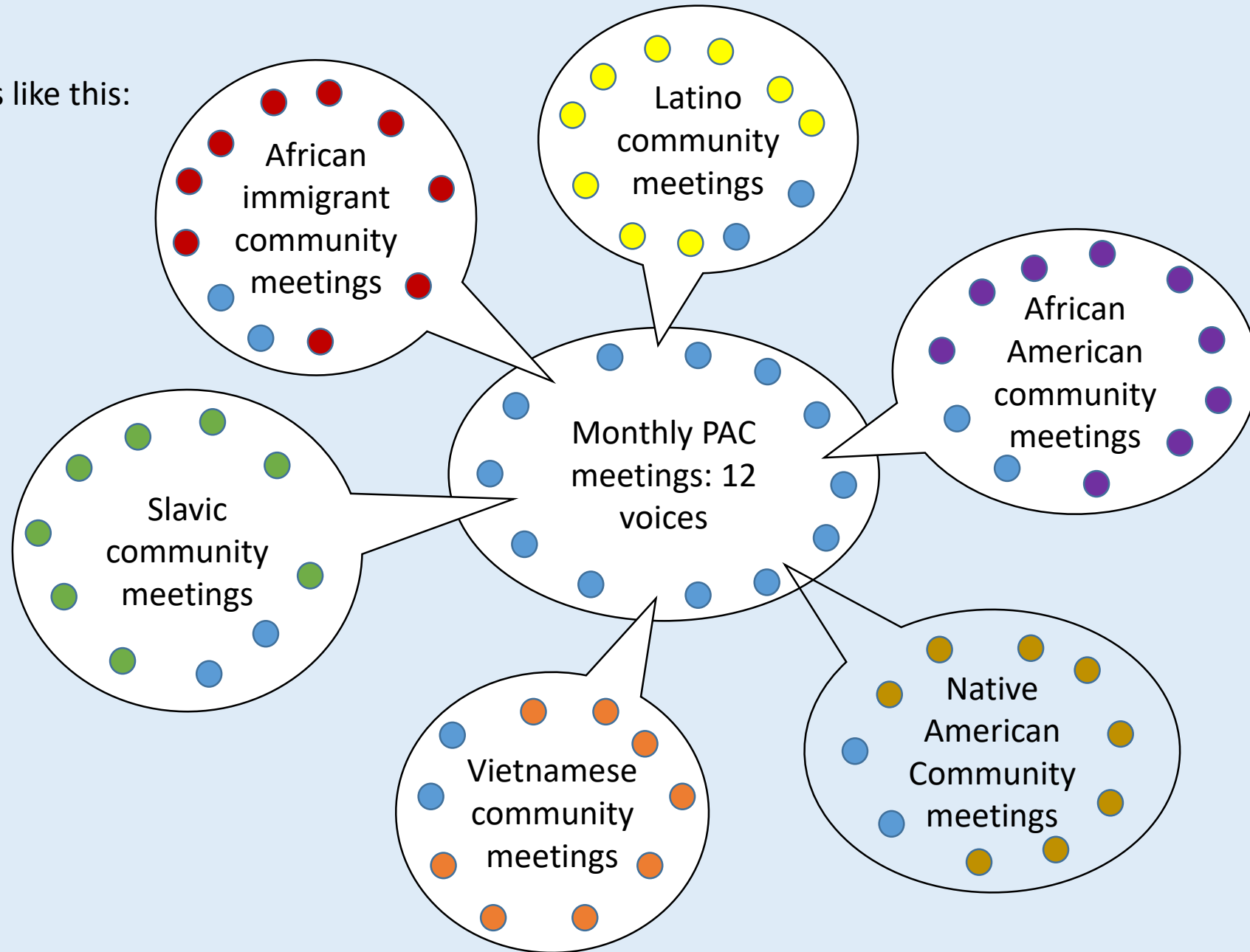
(There are 12 of us: two from each of the six communities. We also have support staff from culturally specific community based organizations and interpreters. ELM staff come, too.)



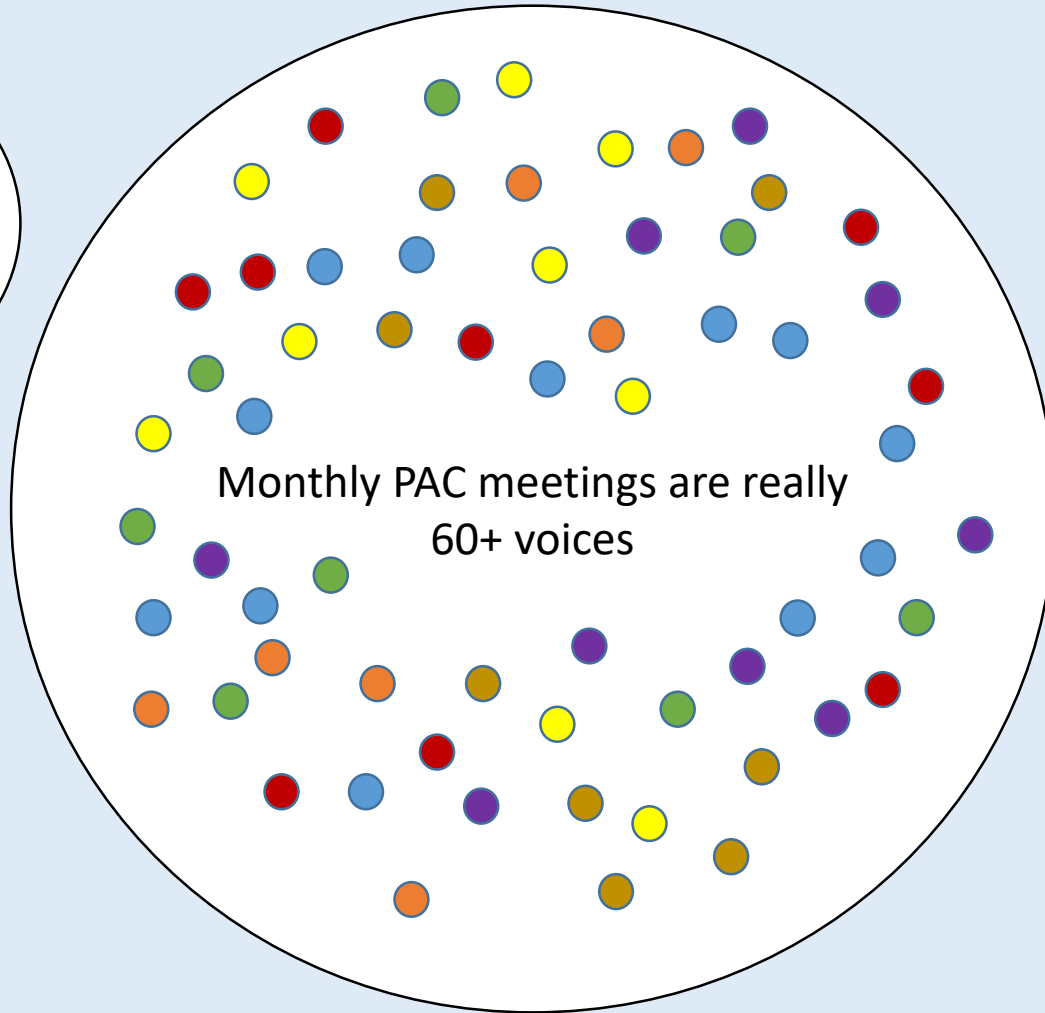
(We sort through which issues to bring to PAC that month and how to present them. We figure out how to run the meeting so that everyone can understand and participate.)

Every month the support staff and the ELM staff get together to plan the next PAC meeting. We also plan the quarterly PLTs (Parent Leadership Teams).

It looks like this:



(Every quarter each community gathers more families together to talk about what is going on in the PAC. These families give their ideas and opinions to the PAC members who bring it to the monthly meeting.)



Which means the monthly PAC meeting... is bigger than it looks

What makes PAC meetings great

- Facilitator skilled in Popular Education
- Meetings designed as “lesson plans”
- Meaningful work to do
- Staff from culturally specific organizations
- Intentionally creating community across cultures



What makes PAC meetings great

(We have a great facilitator, Pei-ru Wang. We love her. We start our meetings with our agenda, our objectives, our group agreements and our vision. We get focused.

Then we work on the topic we need to learn about or make a decision on. Pei-ru designs good ways for us to think together. We don't all speak the same language but we care about the same things. We like to think with our hands and with our voices and sometimes we are even quiet when we think. We really like to turn our thinking into art.

We always have an opening dinámica. It gets us moving, laughing and thinking. Sometimes we disagree about things. We don't always understand each other. But we always try to find common ground.

ELM staff listen closely to what we discuss. They ask us questions to make sure they understand. At the end of the meeting we do a closing dinámica. It helps to bring us together and makes us look forward to the next month when we will see each other again. We fill out an evaluation about the meeting, say our goodbyes and go home. Until next month.)



What we've done in our first three years

- Invested \$8 million
- Held programs accountable to follow ELM's Guiding Principles
- Advocated at local and state level
- Sparked the creation of other parent accountability councils



(We've advised early childhood programs on how to put our guiding principles into action. They have to work for racial equity. They have to have strong family voice. They have to support both families and children. And they have listened. They have to if they want to partner with ELM.)

Questions asked during the presentation in Boston and very, very short answers meant to be provocative. Contact us for more conversation:

mollyd@unitedway-pdx.org

Lupe@latnet.org

- Do you have white families in poverty on the PAC? *We don't because our "why" is disrupting racism by sharing power. See data slides.*
- Do you use RBA or something on your PAC investment? *We don't because the PAC is not about "doing good" via a project but about sharing power. We also don't use RBA on any other groups of leaders. Would love to know if there are good ways to measure sharing power.*
- How much does it cost? *Roughly 5% of our budget of \$7.7 million. Working on a useful line item budget to share with those who asked for it in the session. Email me if interested: mollyd@unitedway-pdx.org*