

PropelNext In Action

Puente

As the region's only Community Resource Center, Puente serves the South Coast rural communities of Pescadero, La Honda, Loma Mar, and San Gregorio in San Mateo County, California. The South Coast is the least densely populated region of the Bay Area, and many neighborhoods there lack basic infrastructure, such as a sewer system, drainage ditches, or internet service. Many residents have little to no access to affordable food, clean water, public transit, or medical care.

Puente provides a wide range of approximately 40 programs and

services that respond to critical needs, including early childhood education, adult education, youth leadership development and employment, economic security, and health and wellness. Puente's strength is to find solutions to infrastructural and service needs. For example, since the South Coast has no hospitals, doctors, or dentists, Puente hosts a health clinic a

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propelnext

an initiative of the
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation



few hours every week in partnership with local health providers. Puente also works to advocate for the communities it serves, and leverages resources that foster economic prosperity and security and that promote individual and community health and wellness.

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According to executive director Rita Mancera, one of Puente’s greatest challenges is the breadth of services the organization provides. With the help of PropelNext, Puente is becoming a continuous learning organization that is better able to articulate its program goals and make connections to desired outcomes.

“Our organization has been able to serve youth in a very individualistic way – whatever they need, Puente provides,” Mancera said. “Now, with PropelNext, we are thinking about

the specific services they need. And we want to see the areas that are most effective and determine what is best to keep.”

In its work with PropelNext, Puente is focusing on its youth programming, which has been in existence for 13 years and encompasses three program components: 1) academic support, 2) enrichment activities, and 3) paid internships. “It’s not necessarily that the [youth] program is losing components – it’s getting better articulated on the outcomes that we want to see,” Mancera explained. “What are the 10 things we need to do to get to the same outcomes, instead of providing 25 things?”

Puente is launching a new program in August 2019 with the new school year. The idea behind the new initiative is to spread youth programming components throughout the entire year. In the past, programming was concentrated during the summer months while students are participating in a paid summer internship. Puente is planning to use this pilot program to determine the effectiveness of spreading their youth programming throughout the entire school year in preparation for the summer internship and develop a system of quality control within its components.

PropelNext is a program of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation that helps promising nonprofits convert their passion for serving disadvantaged youth into data-driven insights and practices that increase their impact on young people’s lives. This is a look into Puente, a PropelNext grantee in their Northern California 2021 cohort, and the organization’s experience thus far in the program. The Sobrato Family Foundation is the co-investor for Puente.