

PATHWAY TO

# Successful Young Adulthood

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June, 2007



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Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,  
Falls from the sky a meteoric shower  
Of facts . . . they lie unquestioned, uncombined.

Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill  
Is daily spun; but there exists no loom  
To weave it into fabric.

Edna St. Vincent Millay



Funding for the construction of the

**Pathway to Successful  
Young Adulthood**

was provided by

**The W.K. Kellogg Foundation**



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



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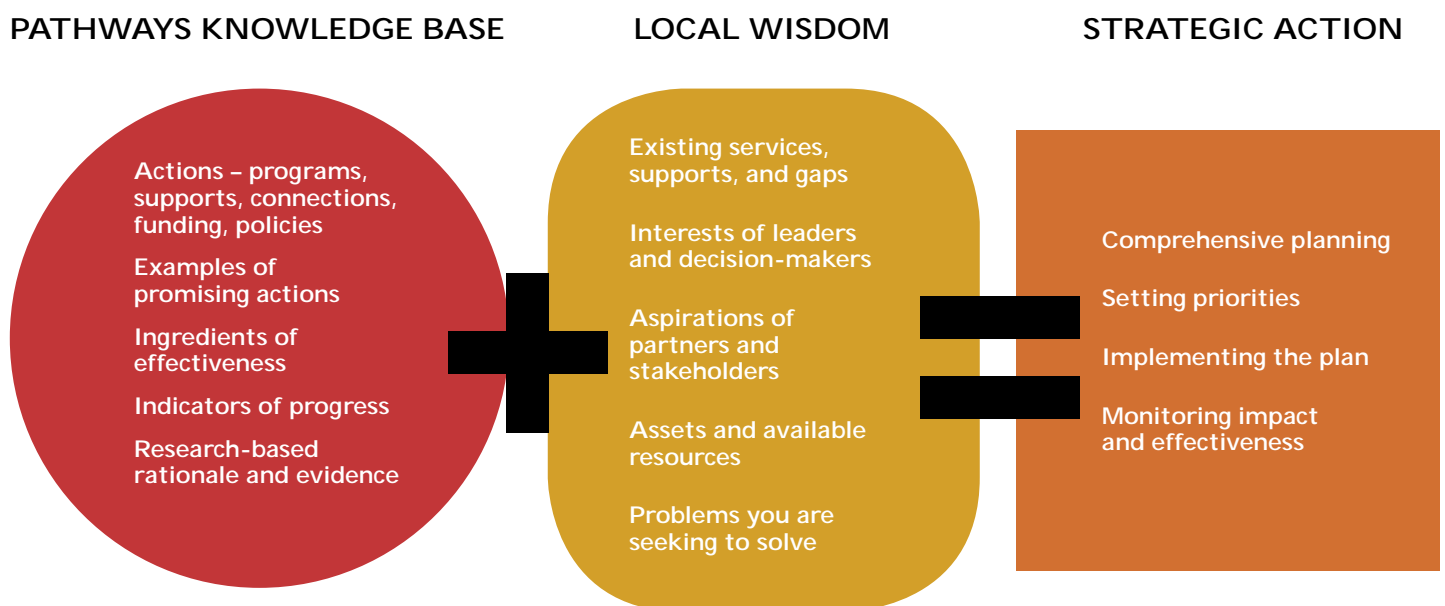
## Guide to the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood

The Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood assembles a wealth of findings from research, practice, theory, and policy about what it takes to improve the lives of children, youth and families, particularly those living in tough neighborhoods. By laying out a comprehensive, coherent array of actions, the Pathway informs efforts to improve community conditions within supportive policy and funding contexts.

The Pathways framework does not promote a single formula or program. Rather, our emphasis is on acting strategically across disciplines, systems, and jurisdictions to increase the number of young people who make a successful transition to young adulthood. The Pathway provides a starting point to guide choices made by community coalitions, services providers, researchers, funders, and policymakers to achieve desired outcomes for young people and their families.

### The Pathway Is Only One Piece

The Pathway offers guidance to communities which, in combination with local wisdom, provides a structure for planning and acting strategically.



## Pathway Components

Increasing the number of youth making a successful transition to adulthood is not the sole responsibility of any single agency or professional group; rather it is a shared community concern. Effective strategies require multiple actions at the individual, family, and community levels—as well as in state and national policies—to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors. Communities can increase rates of successful young adulthood by working effectively toward the following goals:

### GOALS

- 1 Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education**
- 2 Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects**
- 3 Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging and Engaging**
- 4 The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports**

The following components of the Pathway will help communities, funders, and policy makers to take **ACTION** to achieve these goals, to use **INDICATORS** to measure their progress, to identify the **INGREDIENTS** of effective implementation, to understand the **RATIONALE** connecting actions and results, and to examine the **EVIDENCE** documenting the effectiveness of the actions.



**Actions**  
specific strategies, activities, or steps taken to impact the quality and capacity of local services and supports, the availability of resources, or the policy contexts that contribute to the outcome



**Examples**  
program and policy initiatives illustrating how actions have worked elsewhere



**Ingredients**  
elements of how actions are implemented that make them effective



**Indicators**  
measures for targeting and monitoring the impact of actions and documenting progress toward the outcome



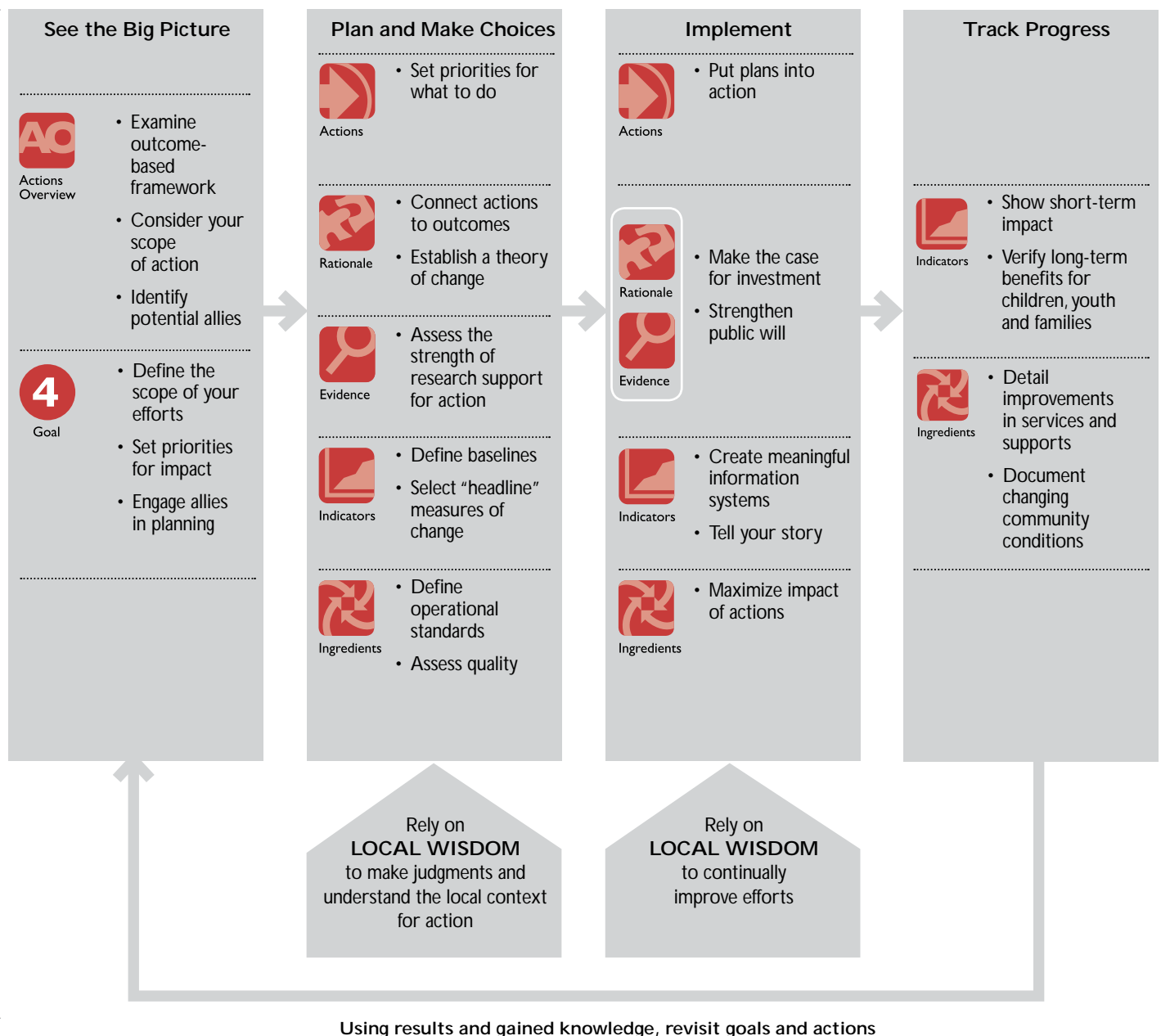
**Rationale**  
research-based reasons to believe that identified actions are likely to contribute to the desired outcome



**Evidence**  
research documenting that identified actions contribute to achieving the targeted outcome or conditions that lead to the outcome

## How to Use Pathway Components




The Pathway organizes an extensive collection of information as a starting point for effective action. It does not define a planning protocol. Change agents can make use of the Pathway in many ways regardless of where they are in the process of planning, implementation or working toward greater effectiveness of their current activities. The following diagram illustrates how the components of the Pathway can be useful as part of a typical strategic planning approach.





## Moving from Comprehensive Vision to Focused Action

How you use the Pathway will depend on your objectives and the role you play in efforts to increase the number of young people making a successful transition to adulthood. The Actions Overview presents a comprehensive framework illustrating the breadth of actions which contribute to the outcome. Communities certainly can't do everything worth doing all at once. The supporting materials within each goal help to focus on what it takes to act effectively within complex political and financial constraints. The Pathway provides a starting point for grappling with hard trade-offs and working to build the connections and infrastructure necessary to sustain change.

Goal	Actions	Ingredients	Indicators	Rationale	Evidence
1					
2					
3					
4					

## Possible Applications for the Pathway

While initiatives must draw on local wisdom to be effective, communities can act more strategically by learning from what has worked elsewhere and what appears promising. The Pathway can help users facing common questions and challenges, such as the following:

- ▶ **Current efforts do not seem to be achieving desired results. How can we use existing resources more effectively to achieve greater impact?**
- ▶ **New funds are available. Where is the additional investment likely to enhance results for children, families, and communities?**
- ▶ **How do we expand our partnerships and engage allies beyond a core group of service providers? How do we value informal supports and integrate them into our efforts?**
- ▶ **How do we convince policy makers and funders that taking action will reduce the harm caused by failures to strengthen supports to children and families that will optimize healthy development?**
- ▶ **How do we know the extent to which our efforts are achieving desired results? How can we track progress?**

### SCENARIO 1



Actions  
Overview



Rationale



Evidence



Indicators

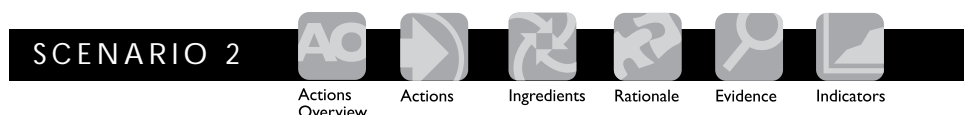


Ingredients

The mayor of a small city has committed to a new initiative to help the city's young people – especially those who are disconnected from its mainstream institutions and employment opportunities – to succeed and become productive citizens. She has turned to staff, selected service providers and community leaders to design the initiative. With the outcome defined, this group has decided to use the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood as a framework for finding common language, “seeing the big picture,” and determining the breadth of stakeholders who have a role to play in achieving the outcome.

The group begins with the **Actions Overview**, in combination with current information about local conditions, to create a “map” of existing institutions, services and supports and unmet needs. The group is likely to find this map of the terrain useful in working with decision-makers in public, philanthropic, educational and business organizations to define priority actions, establish criteria for investing resources, and define indicators for tracking impact. They use the **Rationale** and **Evidence** to make the case for taking the approach they decide on, and the **Indicators** to focus their evaluation efforts on a small number of indicators whose significance they can attest to as reflecting real progress and measuring what is likely to be most persuasive for key stakeholders, including the tax payers. Given the number of stakeholders likely to be involved in a city-wide effort, the planning group also uses the Pathway to promote clear, on-going communication based on a shared vision and understanding of what needs to happen to support youth in their transition to young adulthood.

Should the group decide to focus, especially or sequentially, on one, two or three of the four Goals that are part of achieving the Outcome, its members or staff will dig more deeply into the particular goal(s) to examine the range of actions that will contribute to achieving the goal(s), and the **Ingredients** that are key to making those actions effective.



A national foundation has for several years been investing in efforts to substantially increase the proportion of young people who make a successful transition to young adulthood. It has been funding a range of activities, most of them pilot programs, some of which have been highly successful and are being replicated. However, the foundation's leadership is not satisfied with the magnitude of its impact. It has decided to reassess its strategy, and is using the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood as a way of structuring its reassessment, finding a common language, and exploring the issues in moving beyond purely programmatic interventions.

The foundation's strategic planning group consults the Actions Overview to identify the boundaries of its interests, and decides it will work toward each of the four Goals identified by Pathways as contributing to the outcome.

It combines the **Actions** identified by the Pathway with current information about local conditions in three of the jurisdictions in which it has been working, to create maps of existing institutions, services and supports and unmet needs in each of these three sites. The group uses these maps of the terrain in working with decision-makers in public, philanthropic, educational and business organizations to identify the missing elements of their past strategy. One result may be that, in prioritizing among the Actions identified by the Pathway, the group decides on a focus that goes beyond the programmatic. This focus will lead them to invest in strategies to strengthen policies, systems, connections, relationships, infrastructure, and community and organizational capacity, including the creation of local mechanisms for monitoring the availability, accessibility, and quality of services, programs, and supports for youth, especially those who are disadvantaged and disconnected. Drawing on the information contained in the **Ingredients**, the foundation decides to provide more than grants to address the added challenges of this category of intervention. They will provide (directly or through intermediaries) technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and other forms of consultation and capacity building to states and communities.

The foundation uses the **Rationale** and **Evidence** sections of the Pathway to make the case for taking the approach it has decided on. It uses the Indicators to focus its evaluation efforts on a small number of indicators that reflect real progress on what is likely to be most persuasive for key stakeholders, including the tax payers. Given the number of stakeholders likely to be involved in a city-wide effort, the foundation also uses the Pathway to promote clear, on-going communication based on a shared vision and understanding of what needs to happen to support youth in their transition to young adulthood.

## Actions Overview, Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood





Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

## SUMMARY OF GOALS, ACTION AREAS, AND ACTIONS

### GOAL 1: Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education

#### A. Schools and other learning settings provide excellent teaching, promote engaged learning, maintain high expectations, and foster strong connections between youth and adults.

Schools and school districts have the knowledge, resources, and support needed to attract and retain effective principals and teachers (including excellent teachers for children who need them the most). Classrooms provide high expectations, good instructional practice, a supportive emotional climate for students, and a supportive professional climate for teachers.

States, districts, and unions remove impediments and create incentives to provide greater autonomy for individual schools; easing restrictions on staffing, curriculum, and categorical programs, accompanied by strong accountability for outcomes.

Schools and school districts establish and maintain data systems that measure attendance, instructional quality, classroom climate, and disparities in academic achievement. These data systems (including, but not limited to, those mandated by federal and state governments) provide widely-understood feedback to decision makers, practitioners, and parents.

Communities, states, the federal government, and philanthropists support efforts to connect students and families to schools and to health and social services, and to establish trust between schools and the communities their students come from; these efforts include the establishment of community schools.

#### B. Youth have multiple opportunities and diverse avenues to acquire academic, vocational, social, life, and resiliency skills.

Youth experience smooth transitions from middle school to high school and from school to work and post-secondary education.

Students who have dropped out of school have access to programs that offer options for further education and preparation for the workplace. These options include ways to complete their high school education, earn a high school diploma or GED, learn skills that are valuable in the work force, and develop social networks with caring adults and peers. Educators respect the motivation of older youth and adult learners to improve their lives through education and respond with relevant teaching tools and styles.

Policymakers incorporate flexibility into workforce development resources so that they can be used to meet the basic educational and job-readiness needs of people entering the labor force. Pre-employment programs for youth with low-level reading and math skills, for speakers of English as a second language, and for other disconnected youth include adult literacy education, supervised job placement, development of personal characteristics that help youth to stay employed, and training in "soft skills" or "life skills" such as punctuality, workplace expectations, and behavior management. Programs integrate culturally-competent perspectives and take explicit account of special needs of minority and high-risk youth.



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

Community-based organizations, local philanthropists, and other funders expand educational alternatives to traditional public schools. They provide youth with various opportunities and diverse avenues to develop knowledge, skills, and motivation using multiple strategies and varied structures. Settings include community organizations, businesses and other workplaces, community service placements, recreational and cultural institutions, work-study positions, after-school programs, as well as schools and community colleges. Leaders in these settings work to make education more engaging, more personalized, and more responsive to the needs of youth in low-income communities.

State and local policymakers broaden access to training programs provided by community colleges and other post-secondary institutions, making sure that the programs are affordable and sufficiently flexible.

Policymakers support integration or coordination of services and resources to make child care, transportation, health care, and other services that support employment more easily accessible and affordable to individuals engaged in workforce training.

**C. Policymakers focus coordinated workforce development resources on communities of concentrated poverty.**

**GOAL 2: Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects**

**A. Business, government, community organizations, and educational and training institutions partner to strengthen the connections between youth and good jobs.**

Local, state, and federal entities assure the funding and leadership to create systems that take responsibility for collaborative planning and coherent action aimed at expanding employment opportunities for youth in distressed urban and rural communities.

Community organizations partner with education institutions and business to encourage employers to hire qualified youth from tough neighborhoods.

**B. Community organizations, training programs, and public and private funders target job preparation to high-demand domains, where job numbers, wages, and advancement opportunities are increasing.**

Community organizations and training programs work with employers to determine the competencies required of workers, in order to match training strategies to those competencies.

Community organizations, training programs and public and private funders tie workforce development resources to regional economic development efforts.

**C. Communities strengthen social networks and supportive services that help youth to access good jobs.**

Schools, businesses, community colleges, and community organizations connect youth to social networks that provide employment information and offer support for obtaining, retaining, and advancing in good jobs. They establish job clubs and sponsor networking meetings and other



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



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informal gatherings that enable participants to share information about available work opportunities.

Communities improve young people's employment prospects by providing youth with opportunities for volunteering and internships; they also provide labor market experiences that create new points of access to jobs and expose job seekers to varied workplaces, job types, and working individuals.

Community organizations provide and coordinate employment-related services, in order to help youth navigate available services and obtain the skills and supports that connect them to the labor market.

Educational institutions and job training programs expand their understanding of how issues of race, ethnicity, and culture affect labor market outcomes and implement strategies to develop and support a culturally-diverse workforce.

### **GOAL 3: Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging, and Engaging**

#### **A. Through a wide range of activities, communities provide youth with opportunities to belong, learn new skills, grow, lead, receive support, participate in decision-making, and contribute to civic life.**

Youth-serving organizations make deliberate efforts to develop youth leadership and to encourage young people to participate in civic life; they integrate culturally and racially sensitive perspectives and create a climate of trust, respect and inclusion.

Communities provide young people with a variety of opportunities to explore interests, to develop and apply skills, to receive support and recognition, and to take responsibility for a broad range of roles in community life. These opportunities include after-school programs and community service.

Communities and policymakers support youth-serving organizations that serve as place-based anchors for youth by developing comprehensive approaches, implementing a variety of strategies, programs and activities adapted to the needs and assets of the youth and communities they serve.

To assure that an ample array of opportunities will be available, communities create local mechanisms for monitoring the accessibility and quality of programs for youth. Private and public funders support entities able to engage in orderly, coordinated community-wide programming, often by involving intermediary organizations that include researchers, practitioners, funders, and policy makers.



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Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



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## **B. Youth obtain support from parents and other caring adults.**

Communities encourage parents to stay engaged with their adolescent children.

Funders and local leaders support well-designed mentoring programs that connect young people to caring adults in one-to-one relationships that can augment the support youths receive from their families.

## **C. Communities work to incorporate and convey positive images of youth.**

National and local entities design public engagement campaigns to mobilize and support new priorities for public investment.

## **D. Youth obtain help to develop financial literacy, manage money, and build assets.**

A range of programs provide proactive financial education and counseling services to help young people become better managers of their money. Programs link financial literacy education to specific opportunities, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, Individual Development Accounts, and bank accounts, so that young people can immediately apply what they have learned. Programs that provide skills training in money management, credit management, consumer skills, financial literacy, and asset building make special efforts to reach low-income youth and youth transitioning out of foster care.

Financial literacy education is incorporated into workforce development and adult literacy programs, as well as into the development of high school curricula.

# **GOAL 4: The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports**

## **A. Systems serving vulnerable youth, including the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, exert a positive and strengthening influence on youth and their families.**

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts to provide comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving the employment prospects of high-risk youth.

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts to provide comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving the prospects of youth transitioning out of foster care and SSI.

- State and local agencies ensure that social workers, foster families, and extended family members remain connected to youth who leave foster care (Nelson, 2004).
- Schools and community agencies facilitate collaboration among stakeholders in order to provide young people in foster care with educational supports such as tutoring and counseling, with work experience, and with mentoring from supportive adults (Lewis, 2004).





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- States modify policies and funding (often with support from the federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which doubled the amount of funding available to states that expand services for youth who “age out” of the foster care system) so that youth can remain in foster care until they reach their twenty-first birthday and in order to expand the availability of supports to young people leaving the foster care system.
- Federal policymakers improve the transition process for child Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients by connecting them to Vocational Rehabilitation benefits, vocational training and employment opportunities, and health and mental health care (Loprest & Wittenburg, 2005). State and federal policymakers facilitate the coordination of benefits from SSI, Medicaid, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other sources to improve support for young people with special needs during the transition to adulthood (English, 2006).

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts aimed at improving health and mental health care for high-risk youth, particularly youth and their families involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

- Federal and state policymakers ensure comprehensive health and mental health care for all children and youth with coverage equivalent to current Medicaid benefits and with simplified enrollment (English et al., 2006). States that are unable to cover all children and youth assure benefits at least to
  - Children and youth through age 18 with family incomes at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level
  - Pregnant women at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, for prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care for at least 60 days after birth
  - Children with special needs and youth who have transitioned from the foster care system through age 20

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts to provide comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving the prospects of teen parents and their children.

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts that target reform of the juvenile justice system.

- State and local policymakers craft effective responses to vulnerable youth who are in trouble with the law by
  - creating diversion programs and additional opportunities in youth’s communities to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system
  - keeping youth in the juvenile justice system rather than in the adult criminal justice system
  - addressing what happens to youth when they are in the juvenile justice system to keep the system from harming them
  - increasing the chances that youth in the juvenile justice system will leave it with connections to caring adults and to educational and employment opportunities (Schwartz, 2003)
- States Improve outcomes for incarcerated juveniles by creating smaller facilities with highly trained staff, that incorporate a therapeutic approach (Ayelish, 2005).



Actions



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- Communities reduce the number of youth in confinement by expanding the use of in-home detention with intensive supervision and by expanding alternatives to detention through collaborative planning with the courts, law enforcement, and elected officials and through attention to data about youth and their offenses (Nelson, 2004).

**B. Community organizations actively find and engage disconnected youth, including those who are homeless, runaways, teen parents, school dropouts, immigrants, and English Language Learners.**

Community organizations offer outreach, support, and intensive forms of intervention to children and youth while they are in foster care. They assure that foster youth are effectively connected to services, supports, and opportunities, and they expand foster youths' access to college by providing mentoring, counseling, and assistance with tuition, books, and transportation.

Community organizations offer outreach and support as well as intensive forms of intervention to prevent homelessness and support homeless and runaway youth.

Community organizations offer outreach, support, and intensive forms of intervention to assist at-risk youth, especially those who have been involved with anti-social gangs, to become contributing members of the community.

Systems, institutions, and community organizations serving high-risk youth communicate and work effectively with one another.



Actions



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## RATIONALE FOR WORKING TOWARD THE OUTCOME OF THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO YOUNG ADULTHOOD

The strongest argument for investing in increasing the number of young people who make a successful transition to young adulthood may be economic. Nobel Prize-winner James J. Heckman writes that while much of his work as an economist has been devoted to demonstrating the impressive economic and educational return of early childhood interventions, his recent research indicates that early interventions are less productive if the investment in healthy development doesn't continue at least into the teenage years.

Heckman concludes that “sustained skill-building investments would go a long way toward shrinking, and in some cases eliminating, the nation’s worrisome racial disparities in academic achievement, drug use, and college attendance.” Although investments that begin in early childhood and continue through the transition to young adulthood are expensive, Heckman calculates they would ultimately save the United States tens of billions of dollars each year in reduced welfare payments and increased productivity (Heckman, 2007).

Economic benefits aren't the only reason to make sure more American youth have a successful young adulthood, however. By allowing a significant portion of the nation’s young people to face a severely limited future, we perpetuate a human tragedy. We raise the prospect of another generation of children born to parents who cannot provide for them financially, raise them effectively, and guide them toward a productive adulthood. We increase the likelihood that incarceration rates will remain high, with devastating personal and social consequences for individuals, families, and society in general. Because a high proportion of disconnected youth are persons of color, the continuing educational achievement gap between racial minorities and the rest of America—coupled with rapid demographic shifts and rising skill requirements for jobs that pay a decent wage—will calcify the income and social disparities that guarantee a two-tiered society.

The moral case for not abandoning these high-risk youth is equally compelling, say Wald and Martinez (2003). They found that the great majority of youth who experienced poor outcomes grew up in very poor households with little opportunity to succeed. Many were victims of abuse or neglect by their families and of failures by their schools, neighborhoods, and child welfare systems—conditions for which society is responsible.

Later in this Notebook we provide rationales for working toward each of the following goals:

- 1: Youth are prepared for employment and higher education
- 2: Youth have expanded labor market prospects
- 3: Youth have increased prospects of “belonging” to and engaging in civic life
- 4: The highest-risk youth receive effective services and supports

Here, however, we take up the reasons for a broad approach to working toward achievement of all four goals and the ultimate outcome: successful transition to young adulthood.

### THE DIMENSIONS AND URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM

Reliable estimates suggest that 5% to 7% of today’s adolescents will reach age 25 without successfully transitioning to independent adulthood. These young people are called “disconnected” because of their



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isolation from the labor force and strong social supports. Over half of the men will be in prison; the others will be mired in protracted spells of long-term unemployment. Among the young women, nearly all will have given birth by age 25 and will face the daunting challenge of raising their children alone and with little income. Many of the children born to these women will encounter serious problems, including an increased risk of placement in foster care (Wald & Martinez, 2003).

Almost all of these disconnected youth will spend much of their adult lives in poverty, unemployed or marginally employed. As a group, they will contribute little to the economy and will impose significant social costs, including criminal activity and the use of very expensive human services. Many will become negative role models for younger children and keep neighborhood crime and school failure rates high enough to ensure that businesses do not enter the most disinvested neighborhoods (Wald & Martinez, 2003).

Although most young people require support through the transition to adulthood, there is little systematic, coherent, reliable help for adolescents who aren't part of a network of families, friends, and community. Few disconnected youth have access to caring adults on a sustained basis, to the labor market, or to programs and services that promote personal development and convey high, positive cultural expectations. When these youth face the inevitable crises that accompany the transition to adulthood, they typically miss out on the guidance, support, and help (financial and otherwise) that other adolescents routinely receive (Wald & Martinez, 2003).

Compared to other young people, those who do not transition successfully to adulthood are likely to have one or more of the following characteristics (Wald & Martinez, 2003; NAS, 2002):

- Lower basic literacy skills and fewer years of formal schooling
- A history of behavioral problems that result in suspension, expulsion, and arrest
- Untreated mental illness, substance abuse, or other disabilities
- Residence in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, where a high proportion of residents are unemployed and few opportunities exist to have the experiences crucial to positive development
- Personal experience with child abuse or neglect and domestic violence
- Repeated racial and ethnic discrimination

Virtually all youth who are “disconnected” at age 25 begin the process much earlier. Between the ages of 14 and 17, the vast majority of them did not complete high school, became deeply involved in the juvenile justice systems, became an unmarried mother, and/or entered into foster care (Wald & Martinez, 2003).

All of these problems are especially acute today, when social forces are changing both the landscape of family and community life and what we expect of our young people. The paths to adulthood are less clear than ever before, as the informal supports that guided previous generations are eroded by high rates of family mobility; more single-parent families; the anonymity and chaos of larger schools; extensive media exposure to violence and the heavy use/abuse of drugs and alcohol; and neighborhood decay caused by economic decline, increasing crime, drugs, and poverty.

Consequently, many youth enter the labor market without the knowledge and skills they need—while today's complex, competitive world economy demands more of its workers academically, socially, and emotionally (NAS, 2002).



Actions



Ingredients



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## WE KNOW ENOUGH TO ACT EFFECTIVELY

The supports and services that high-risk youth require for a successful transition include those that touch them as soon as they begin disconnecting, while they are still minors: schools, after-school programs, athletics, arts programs, and interventions designed to prevent dropout, teen pregnancy, and delinquency.

But high-risk youth also need services and supports later, when they fall off the normal path to adulthood and need to reconnect. For instance, many high-risk youth battle feelings of shame, unworthiness, and inadequacy. They may find a greater sense of self-respect on the streets than in a low-paying job. They may be undermined by their relatives, friends, romantic partners, and neighbors. Many are ill-served by the institutions that are supposed to help them grow into successful adults, such as families, schools, and neighborhoods. They may need services that aren't available, have long waiting lists, or are provided in ways that do not meet their needs.

Thus, perseverance, opportunity, and a willingness to act are key ingredients for moving from disconnection to connection. Often, the change requires a personal transformation—a decision by the youth that he or she wants to change the situation no matter how difficult that may be to accomplish. The likelihood of transformation may increase with age, experience, fatigue with criminal activity, and increasing responsibilities. Whatever the reason, the decision must be quickly followed by opportunities to act and ongoing support to overcome the sense of inadequacy, to acquire job skills and education, and to stay connected once change begins to occur (Wald & Martinez, 2003).

Fortunately, as the content of this Pathway shows, the last two decades have produced interventions that prevent disconnection during adolescence and help young people reconnect between ages 18 and 25. As Douglas Nelson, president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, points out, we don't have to start from scratch. We already have the knowledge we need to make prudent and effective investments in the nation's most at-risk youth—investments that can help communities connect youngsters to opportunities that enhance the skills, knowledge, and relationships they need to make it as adults and investments that can help dysfunctional public systems improve results and spend resources more efficiently (Nelson, 2004).

## SOLVING THE PROBLEM MEANS MOVING BEYOND PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND SILOS

One of the things we know is that individual, circumscribed, and piecemeal remedies can't solve the problem of high rates of disconnected youth. Over the last five years, analysts, scholars, observers, and advocates in the field of high-risk youth have come to understand that:

- Many of the functions that improve outcomes for high-risk youth require action across programs, policies, disciplines and systems; and
- Because many of the major problems and solutions are place-based, geographically focused, synergistic efforts have a powerful potential to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors.

To succeed, therefore, efforts to reach already-disconnected youth and to prevent disconnection more broadly must build not only on community-based opportunity and effective programming but on a sturdy infrastructure. Unfortunately, most communities and states—and certainly the nation—lack systems to support disconnected youth and youth at risk of disconnection. Current efforts to help



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typically are incoherent, sporadic, unstable, unsustainable, and lacking continuity or progression. Many potentially effective interventions are unavailable or inaccessible, while others are of poor quality.

There is little research to draw on that *proves* the proposition that youth outcomes would improve if community groups had the capacity to perform cross-cutting functions. However, theory, experience, and expert opinion all suggest that to improve the odds for youth now at risk of an unsuccessful transition to adulthood communities should provide an ample array of opportunities that appeal to and meet the needs of diverse youth, with particular attention to programs, services and supports for the highest-risk youth. Whether these activities are packaged as teen pregnancy or delinquency prevention, job preparation, mental health, or youth development programs, they have the potential to give youth a chance to acquire skills and have the important experiences otherwise missing from their lives.

A National Academy of Sciences committee that studied community-based interventions for youth recommended that all communities put in place some locally appropriate mechanism (now missing in most communities)<sup>1</sup> that could increase the likelihood of having an ample array of opportunities and supports (NAS, 2002). Such an entity would create an infrastructure able to:

- Monitor the availability, accessibility, and quality of programs for youth
- Conduct regular assessments of the needs of youth and families and opportunities for meeting those needs
- Undertake community-wide programming that is orderly, coordinated, and evaluated in reasonable ways
- Help programs and agencies work together to achieve shared goals and to align policies and resources to support and sustain the persons, organizations, and institutions that have regular contact with high-risk youth
- Provide or arrange for cross-program and cross-system staff training and consultation
- Conduct campaigns to affect community norms and beliefs

Special efforts are needed to reach the many disconnected young people who live in disconnected communities—neighborhoods of concentrated poverty where essential institutions and resources are unavailable or inadequate. In these places, youth and their families often depend on institutions that consistently fail them. This is true not just for the child welfare and juvenile justice system, but also for schools, which so profoundly hold the key to adult success.<sup>2</sup> The importance of schooling is receiving increasing recognition among prominent youth advocates, who are urging the youth field to “reconcile its commitment to providing educational alternatives with its commitment to transforming education” (Pittman, 2004).

To substantially improve the odds of favorable outcomes for youth in these communities, some public or public-private entity must take *systemic and place-based* responsibility for setting strategic priorities and advocating for change.

<sup>1</sup> The organizing impetus to build a community infrastructure may come from the mayor’s office, a community coalition under government or philanthropic auspices, a community foundation, an intermediary organization, or an individual charismatic leader.

<sup>2</sup> The schools in these communities, often with minority-student enrollments of more than 90%, typically have serious shortcomings in teacher-student ratios, teacher quality, and availability of college preparatory courses. The most dramatic dropout problems are concentrated in 200 to 300 schools in the 35 largest U.S. cities, where fewer than half of the students who enroll in ninth grade graduate and even those who do graduate often lack the skills to succeed in the workforce or in higher education (Steinberg, *et al.*, 2004).



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

The capacity to assume community-wide accountability for community-wide efforts in a defined geographic area is even more important in these communities than elsewhere. At a minimum, this means taking responsibility for providing or working toward:

- Schools that keep students safe and employ teachers who know their students, have high expectations for their learning, and can equip young people with the skills they need to succeed in school, work, and life
- A wide range of opportunities for disconnected youth to re-connect to formal education, prepare for employment, and take advantage of expanded employment opportunities
- Access to a range of youth development programs that (a) honor and develop individual interests and talents in computing, video production, web design, music and performing arts, sports and fitness, creative writing, and other skills; (b) connect youth to caring adults; (c) allow youth to achieve mastery, apply what they are learning in ways that benefit others, and earn responsibility and recognition; and (c) give youth opportunities to connect to jobs, community service, and youth entrepreneurship opportunities
- Support to help parents maintain close ties to their adolescents and join with others in raising responsible, productive young people
- Access to high-quality health and mental health services, including specialized services as needed

Entities that can take responsibility for such a wide spectrum of activities in a defined geographic area are in for hard and complicated work. Moreover, the impact on individual lives may not be easy to see or to document in the short term. But when actions in many domains focus on a specific geographic area they can boost each other's effects and produce synergistic results.

For example:

Attendance rates, graduation rates, and math and reading test scores have improved through some school reforms—in some cases district-wide. Those improvements have a domino effect on rates of employment, crime, teen pregnancy, and civic engagement.

When relationships between adolescents and their families improve, teens are less likely to engage in behaviors that endanger their health (NICHD, August 1998).

When parents are helped to be supportive and caring and to monitor family rules, teens are more likely to succeed academically, psychologically, and in terms of their physical health (Child Trends, 2003).

Students who participate in community-based programs that build strengths, enhance knowledge, provide ongoing feedback, and build safe and trusting relationships achieve at higher academic levels, have higher expectations for graduating from high school and going to college, and are more optimistic about the future than non-participating peers (McLaughlin, 2000).

Young people who participate in civic activities tend to do better in school, have better psychological health, and engage in fewer risky behaviors (Moore & Zaff, 2003).

Students who graduate from high school are more likely at age 25 to: have a job; avoid using drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes; be in better health; and engage in civic and religious activities (Child Trends, 2003).



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

In summary, while the material that follows provides strong rationales for the actions needed to achieve specific goals of healthy youth development, we suspect there are many times when users of this Pathway will find the rationale for a wider vision and for more comprehensive actions to be especially relevant and powerful.

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# Overview: Rationale





Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

## DEFINING THE OUTCOME: INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

We urge communities, funders, program designers, and providers of services and supports to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts—to the fullest extent practical—by the results and outcomes experienced by young people. These are the results valued by the public and funders; these are the results that can most reliably guide the daily work of improving lives. These are the results the Pathways Mapping Initiative uses to define the successful transition to young adulthood, in the form of high rates of youth who are

- effectively educated
- embarked on or prepared for a productive career
- physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy
- active participants in civic life
- prepared for parenting

## THE DIFFICULTIES OF SELECTING GOOD MEASURES

As we have tried to identify the measurement tools that could help to document the impact of a wide range of interventions in the real world, we are aware of the many obstacles that make this such a difficult task:

- An immense gap exists between what communities want for children, youth, and families and what can be measured.
- It takes a long time before most changes in significant outcomes can be documented.
- Controversies continue about which are the most significant and reliable indicators of progress.
- Difficulties often arise in extracting reliable and comparable information from the patchwork of local, state, and federal systems that collect (but don't necessarily report) data.
- Even when measurable indicators exist, data on them are seldom collected for the populations that community-based efforts seek to affect.
- Even when relevant local data are collected, they are often hard to obtain from the agencies that collect them in a form that makes them useful to community-based groups that are trying to change outcomes.

Measuring outcomes that are relevant to the transition to young adulthood is particularly challenging because of the fundamental differences in the convictions among stakeholders about several approaches to documenting results.

## FOUR APPROACHES TO MEASURING IMPACT

I. One approach is derived from **the actions that are believed to contribute to the desired outcome**. That is the approach we have taken to our beginning efforts to identify useful indicators throughout this document. This approach suggests assessing how successfully the actions identified as contributors to the Outcome are achieving their intended impact:

- **by measuring conditions among youth**, such as the proportion of youth 18 to 24 in a defined community who are in school or productively employed. As a reminder of how



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contentious this category of outcomes measures can be, one needs only to consider the controversies surrounding the question of whether the effectiveness of education can be measured by standardized tests such as those required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

- **by measuring relevant community conditions**, such as the proportion of schools that have eliminated race-based achievement gaps; the availability of after-school programs, mentoring, and other opportunities; or the extent to which the community is engaged in monitoring the accessibility and quality of programs for youth.

## 2. A second approach posits that the best indicators of progress are measurements of **the characteristics of youth that predict the successful transition to adulthood**.

An excellent example of this approach was developed by Murnane and Levy (1996), who stress the importance a set of specific skills for successful entry into the adult labor market. They suggest measuring the following characteristics as core assets for both current and future well-being:

- A sense of safety and having one's basic physical needs met
- A sense of social security and attachment—confidence that one's emotional needs will be met (social connectedness)
- A sense of competence and mastery (a sense of personal efficacy and mastery motivation)
- A desire to learn and curiosity about one's world (intrinsic motivation)
- A sense of identity and meaning in one's life (personal and social identities)
- Positive self-regard and general mental health
- A positive sense of attachment to social institutions

## 3. A third approach would measure **the negative outcomes of failures** in efforts to provide youth and their families with the formal and informal supports and the services they need to succeed.

The Promising Practices Network, for example, suggests the following measures:

- Youths not using alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs
- Youths abstaining from sexual activity or not engaging in risky sexual behavior
- Youth not engaging in violent behavior or displaying serious conduct problems
- Youth not experiencing physical, psychological, or emotional abuse
- Youth not experiencing anxiety or mood disorders, such as depression

## 4. A fourth approach comes out of the National Research Council's work on Community Programs to Promote Youth Development (2002). After discussing at length the difficulties surrounding efforts to select a list of indicators of well-being and the outcomes of effective youth programs, the Committee produced a list of **assets that combine the three approaches described above**.

In drawing up its list, the Committee relied on three sources: theory, practical wisdom, and empirical research. Within the theory category, they drew on developmental theories from psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Within the category of empirical research, they reviewed three types of evidence: (1) evidence that particular characteristics are either positively related to other indicators of well-being or negatively related to indicators of problematic development; (2) evidence that particular characteristics predict positive indicators of adult well-being and of a successful transition to normative adult statuses; and (3) evidence that the experimental manipulation or training of particular characteristics produces changes on other indicators of either current well-being and adequate functioning or a successful transition into adulthood. Finally, they included practical wisdom as a



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source, because practitioners in both the prevention and youth development communities have done considerable work over the past 20 to 30 years that merits inclusion.

The Committee determined that the presence of the following assets predicted better current and subsequent well-being, that having more assets predicted better outcomes than having fewer assets, that the benefits of these assets appeared to accumulate, and that these assets seem to act as protective factors against getting involved in a variety of problematic behaviors:

#### **Physical development**

- Good health habits
- Good health risk management skills

#### **Intellectual development**

- Knowledge of essential life skills
- Knowledge of essential vocational skills
- School success
- Rational habits of mind—critical thinking and reasoning skills
- In-depth knowledge of more than one culture
- Good decision-making skills
- Knowledge of skills needed to navigate through multiple cultural contexts

#### **Psychological and emotional development**

- Good mental health, including positive self-regard
- Good emotional self-regulation skills
- Good coping skills

(National Research Council, 2002).

### **CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING MEASURES**

We believe that the following considerations should be kept in mind as communities select measures and approaches to assessment:

- The process of selecting and refining the best measures to use is a continuing one. The measures identified by PMI on the following chart are a starting point. They were selected because they were considered significant, reliable, understandable and relatively easy to assemble.
- It is essential to deepen the understanding of all stakeholders about the limits of what can be accurately measured and what can be clearly attributed to the specific activities of individuals, agencies, and programs. Even initiatives where no single program can by itself achieve desired outcomes can be judged at least partially by the results and outcomes experienced by children and families, as long as all involved recognize that results cannot be attributed to each agency's or each program's separate contribution.
- The best assessments of results do not rely on a single measure, but do focus on a limited, carefully chosen set of measures, which may include "sentinel indicators" of particular significance.



Actions



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Indicators



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- When effectiveness cannot be gauged directly by the results and outcomes experienced by children and families (as in initiatives that involve community-wide efforts, systems change, and complex interventions that combine changes in programs, policies, and systems), or when it is important to demonstrate early, visible gains while working it can be assessed indirectly.
  - Useful indirect or interim measures include changes in connections, capacities, behavior, attitudes, skills, toward long-term goals, information, participation, and satisfaction experienced by residents, clients, staff, etc.
  - When such indirect or interim measures are used, their relationship to results and outcomes experienced by children and families is clearly understood and documented.

### ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF HELP

PMI's work on identifying Indicators is only, at this point, intended to be suggestive. Much work is currently going on throughout the country to facilitate the processes of obtaining data and to identify measures that are ever more closely related to what stakeholders really need to know. One extensive listing of Indicators, with explanations of their significance, can be found at [www.childtrendsdatabank.org](http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org). Another useful source is the Search Institute's listing of "40 Developmental Assets<sup>®</sup>" that are considered essential to raising successful young people, located at [www.search-institute.org/assets](http://www.search-institute.org/assets).



Actions



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## STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMUNITIES SEEKING TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE REACH SUCCESSFUL ADULTHOOD

In December 2005, the Pathways Mapping Initiative convened some two dozen eminent researchers, experienced practitioners, and wise stakeholders for two days of Mental Mapping that would lay the groundwork for constructing the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood. (A list of participants is can be found in Appendix 6.)

These conversations recognized that as a society, we have made great progress in the last two decades toward understanding that the effectiveness of programs aimed at improving youth outcomes depends on program quality and that we can identify the ingredients of many effective programs. Community leaders, policy makers, and program managers are in a better position than in the past to assure that interventions and supports contribute to specified outcomes. However, the group also agreed that **programs and projects operating in isolation, individual best practices, and even islands of excellence are not likely to improve outcomes for a significant proportion of young people at highest risk.**

Rather, we concluded, reaching the goal of a successful transition to young adulthood for all youth requires **community-wide efforts, community-wide accountability, and the willingness of policy makers and funders to create a coherent and supportive infrastructure.** By connecting programs and resources across domains and by mobilizing the related contributions of multiple organizations, institutions, and disciplines, communities can aim to offer a range of opportunities that together are able to respond to young people's diverse needs and interests. Communities will thereby significantly raise the chances that youth will realize their own and society's hopes for their healthy and productive futures.

The Mental Mapping participants identified the following ten strategies as essential contributions to this end:

**1. Policymakers and planners at the state, city, and county levels must respond to the reality that many disconnected youth live in disconnected communities.** Youth in communities of concentrated poverty, both urban and rural, are often isolated from good jobs, consigned to failing schools, and denied access to key services, supports and opportunities. Improving the odds for youth in these communities requires that each community take systemic responsibility for bringing all of its youth successfully through the transition to adulthood. This means setting strategic priorities that go well beyond individual programs and aligning policies and resources to support and sustain the persons and organizations working directly with youth.

**2. Communities should put high priority on connecting youth to economic opportunities.** Key actions include involving employers in the process of connecting youth to specific jobs and careers and engaging employers in creating new partnerships and even new models of cooperation among employers, secondary schools, and community colleges.

**3. All youth-serving organizations should make deliberate efforts to develop youth leadership and to identify and leverage the strengths of young people.** They should connect young people to positive people, places, and opportunities and should support them in building assets. Deliberate efforts to develop youth



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

leadership—including continuing reinforcement, multiple opportunities, intensive training, and opportunities to participate in decision-making and in helping others—will allow young people to make significant contributions to their communities and to civic and political life.

**4. Effective work with youth and their families requires the ability to create trusting relationships and to ensure a climate of respect and inclusion.** An explicit recognition of race and ethnicity and a commitment to ending all forms of discrimination are pre-conditions to trusting relationships and a climate of respect and inclusion. In addition, focused training and support for all who work with youth, whether professionals or volunteers, are essential to promoting consistent, caring support and respect for and among young people, across institutions, and over sustained periods of time.

**5. Community leaders face difficult choices about whether and when to target efforts toward the most vulnerable youth or more broadly.** Leaders should be aware that creating separate programs to serve the highest-risk young people risks separating them from their more successful peers and stigmatizing them. At the same time, limited resources may necessitate targeting of those with greatest needs. When programs serve diverse groups of youth and families, they should incorporate outreach and support strategies to assure that the most vulnerable are included and retained. They may also need to employ more intensive forms of intervention to assure that the most vulnerable youth and families are effectively helped.

**6. All those involved in designing and operating programs and systems must take into account the challenges of each stage of young people's development.** The long period of adolescence and transition to young adulthood includes several developmental stages; approaches that are appropriate at one stage may be less effective at another.

**7. Community leaders should build public understanding and support for young people.** Improving community conditions for young people begins with developing supportive attitudes and behaviors among adults. Successful community initiatives incorporate resources and strategies to engage families, professionals, and additional adults in positive interactions with young people and to build public support of youth.

**8. Communities should recognize the continuing importance of parents in raising responsible and productive young people.** Communities can encourage and support parents to stay engaged with their children despite the challenges of adolescence, to convey shared values, and to guide positive achievement and appropriate behavior.

**9. Community coalitions should help local leaders and organizations, as well as parents, to convey consistent messages to young people.** Youth benefit when they hear messages that reflect uniform values in many places and from many individuals. This implies more than a public relations campaign; it is a matter of modeling and demonstrating shared priorities for engaging, supporting, appreciating, and inspiring youth.



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

**10. Policymakers and planners must recognize the uniqueness of every community and adapt approaches to the particular strengths, needs, and character of each place.**

Communities have their own histories, cultures, and assets. Successful efforts to support youth recognize and build on those attributes, while also applying information about what is working elsewhere and about the policy and funding structures that support effective action.

These ten strategies are reflected throughout the Actions and Key Ingredients that make up the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood.

GOAL

1

GOAL 1

## Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education

Schools and other learning settings have high expectations and powerful supports for engaged learning, excellent teaching, and strong connections between youth and adults

Youth have multiple, diverse opportunities to acquire academic, vocational, social, and life skills

Policymakers focus coordinated workforce development resources on communities of concentrated poverty.



### Actions

specific strategies, activities, or steps taken to impact the quality and capacity of local services and supports, the availability of resources, or the policy contexts that contribute to the outcome



### Examples

program and policy initiatives illustrating how actions have worked elsewhere



### Ingredients

elements of how actions are implemented that make them effective



### Indicators

measures for targeting and monitoring the impact of actions and documenting progress toward the outcome



### Rationale

research-based reasons to believe that identified actions are likely to contribute to the desired outcome



### Evidence

research documenting that identified actions contribute to achieving the targeted outcome or conditions that lead to the outcome





Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL 1

Youth Are Prepared  
for Employment and  
Higher Education

## **Actions with Examples: Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education**

### **A. Schools and other learning settings provide excellent teaching, promote engaged learning, maintain high expectations, and foster strong connections between youth and adults.**

Schools and school districts have the knowledge, resources, and support needed to attract and retain effective principals and teachers (including excellent teachers for children who need them the most). Classrooms provide high expectations, good instructional practice, a supportive emotional climate for students, and a supportive professional climate for teachers.

#### EXAMPLES

\* **First Things First**, a whole-district change model in the Kansas City, Kansas, School District, enrolls about 20,000 students; 79 percent of these students are members of minority groups and 74 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The model calls for reduced student-teacher ratios in math and reading classes at each grade level and pairs teachers with the same students for two or three years. It includes high academic and conduct standards at all grade levels; excellent instruction; incentives and consequences to spur changes in student performance; support for teachers in improving instruction; and increased authority over resources at the school level. It has identified three key features to ensure that students learn in a personalized, engaging context:

- Small learning communities (SLCs) organize students and teachers into groups that work together over several years.
- Intensive professional development prepares teachers to employ cooperative learning strategies and other techniques to increase student engagement.
- A Family Advocate System ensures continuity between home and school and involves families in their children's education.

First Things First has now been implemented in several additional urban school districts, including Houston and Kansas City, Missouri. [www.irre.org](http://www.irre.org)

\* When Chattanooga's local **Public Education Foundation (PEF)** asked how the city's many underperforming schools could be improved, residents answered: "Get a quality teacher in every classroom." In response, the schools decided to make that happen. Teachers were required to reapply for their jobs; 100 of them left as a result. Teachers and principals who remained underwent rigorous retraining, paid for in part by a five-million dollar grant. The community lent strong support to the school's improvement efforts; the local university offered a free master's program for teachers from the failing schools, the mayor's office provided



Actions



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GOAL 1

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bonuses for high-performing teachers, and the Bar Association offered teachers free legal services. The Urban League started an after-school literacy program, and volunteers encouraged and trained parents to read to their children at home. Today, 74 percent of the students test as proficient or advanced in reading. Turnover has been reduced, teacher quality improved, and the once-failing schools now outpace more than 90 percent of the schools in the state. [www.pefchattanooga.org](http://www.pefchattanooga.org)

- \* The **Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District (CMS)** seeks to eradicate the effects of poverty on student achievement by recruiting and retaining teachers and principals who have demonstrated success with high-poverty students in high-poverty schools. The CMS will provide incentives – including larger signing bonuses, pay for performance, tax-deferred annuities, and support of doctoral studies – for master teachers willing to serve in the most challenging schools. The initiative would also offer low-cost housing loans and repayment of teachers' college debt. In addition, the district is exploring legislation that would create special retirement credits for teachers working in designated schools. The district also aims to ensure that the best principals provide leadership to the most highly-stressed schools; incentives include large signing bonuses for principals coming into the district and a performance-based retention bonus that will be kept in a growth fund for three years. [www.americanprogress.org/issues/2005/02/b494131.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2005/02/b494131.html)

**States, districts, and unions remove impediments and create incentives to provide greater autonomy for individual schools;** easing restrictions on staffing, curriculum, and categorical programs, accompanied by strong accountability for outcomes.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The **Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)** operates a national network of open-enrollment schools in under-resourced communities throughout the United States. KIPP schools, most of which start with fifth-grade students and expand, one grade at a time, to enroll grades five through eight, are set up either as public charter schools or as public schools with increased autonomy from their school districts. They offer a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum, provide more school hours, and foster a strong culture of achievement and support. Ninety percent of KIPP students are African American or Latino, and over 80 percent are eligible for federally subsidized meals. Two KIPP high schools are now open and several more are projected to open in the fall of 2007. [www.kipp.org](http://www.kipp.org)
- \* **Green Dot Public Schools** has worked with parents and community leaders to transform large, failing high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District into clusters of small, successful charter schools. These schools serve a predominately low-income group of students, most of them Latino or African American. All schools operated by the nonprofit organization incorporate the same six tenets:
  - Small, safe, personalized schools
  - High expectations for all students
  - Local control with extensive professional development and autonomy
  - Parent participation
  - Get dollars into the classroom
  - Extended afternoon school hours

# Actions & Examples



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

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Youth Are Prepared  
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# Actions & Examples

Green Dot also ensures quality control by distributing recommended practices to all its schools and holding the schools accountable for either implementing those practices or demonstrating equal results with alternative practices. [www.greendotpublicschools.org](http://www.greendotpublicschools.org)

- \* **Making Middle Grades Work**, an initiative of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), is a network of schools, districts and states committed to a comprehensive improvement framework focused on a rigorous and challenging academic core curriculum for all students and on creating the teaching and learning conditions that support continuous improvement in student achievement. It seeks to ensure that students leave eighth grade with the knowledge and skills to succeed in ninth grade and a study plan that will prepare them to graduate high school and succeed in both higher education and future employment. To achieve these goals, Making Middle Grades Work promotes a challenging curriculum in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science; student engagement through real-world application of learned skills and the use of technology; highly-qualified teachers trained not only in academic content, but also in strategies for teaching the middle grades; and strong leadership at the school level. [www.sreb.org/programs/MiddleGrades/MiddleGradesindex.asp](http://www.sreb.org/programs/MiddleGrades/MiddleGradesindex.asp)
- \* **Talent Development High Schools** are a comprehensive reform model for large high schools facing serious problems with student attendance, discipline, achievement scores, and dropout rates. The model has been implemented in five neighborhood-nonselective high schools in the school district of Philadelphia, where more than 85 percent of students are African American and more than 80 percent are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals. The model includes organizational and management changes to establish a positive school climate; curricular and instructional innovations to prepare all students for high-level courses in math and English; parent and community involvement to encourage college awareness; professional development to support the recommended reforms; and intensive academic and personal supports for students. Success Academies, which are small learning communities that enroll ninth-grade students, are often located in a separate area of a larger comprehensive school and provide students with extended time for mathematics and language arts instruction. After the ninth grade, students can choose to enroll in a small Career Academy (see below), where their coursework integrates academic and career-related content. [www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs)
- \* **Career Academies** began 35 years ago with the aim of restructuring large high schools into small learning communities and creating pathways between high school and further education and the workplace. Since then, the Career Academy approach has taken root in an estimated 2,000 high schools across the country. Operating as schools within schools and typically enrolling 30-60 students per grade, Career Academies are organized around such themes as health, business and finance, and computer technology. Academy students take classes together, remain with the same group of teachers over time, follow a curriculum that includes both academic and career-oriented courses, and participate in work internships and other career-related experiences outside the classroom. Over time, improving the rigor of academic and career-related curricula has become an increasingly prominent part of the Career Academies agenda. [www.mdrc.org/project\\_29\\_1.html](http://www.mdrc.org/project_29_1.html), [www.ncacinc.org](http://www.ncacinc.org)
- \* The **Indianapolis Mayor's Charter Schools Initiative** has authorized charter schools in the city as a way to improve educational offerings available to students in low-income communities. With twelve charter schools operating in 2006, including replications of successful models such as the Knowledge is Power Program ([www.kipp.org](http://www.kipp.org)) and the Met schools initiated by the Big Picture Company ([www.bigpicture.org](http://www.bigpicture.org)), young people in the city have a broad array of options for earning a high-school diploma and preparing for



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



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Youth Are Prepared  
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postsecondary education and/or employment. Indianapolis' charter schools have high standards of accountability, and passing rates for charter school students has risen 25 percent in two years. In 2006, the Indianapolis Mayor's Charter Schools Initiative received an Innovations in American Government Award from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. [www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/home.htm](http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/home.htm)

**Schools and school districts establish and maintain data systems that measure attendance, instructional quality, classroom climate, and disparities in academic achievement.** These data systems (including, but not limited to, those mandated by federal and state governments) provide widely-understood feedback to decision makers, practitioners, and parents.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* Maryland's **Montgomery County Public School system** has been fearless in collecting data – both good and bad – and using it to drive decision making at every level. It instituted an accountability system that publicly reports individual school performance by subgroup, including racial/ethnic groups, socio-economic groups, students with disabilities, and English language learners. An integrated, web-based technology system provides teachers and principals with access to curriculum documents, lesson plans, diagnostic tools, and assessment data to monitor student performance and improve instruction. [www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/superintendent/docs/early\\_success.pdf](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/superintendent/docs/early_success.pdf)
- \* The **No Child Left Behind Act** requires state and local agencies to report student achievement data and dropout rates for each racial and ethnic group, for students who are enrolled in special education, and for English language learners. This legislation is based on the assumption that before achievement disparities among racial, language, and socioeconomic groups can be addressed, they must be made apparent. However, because state and local jurisdictions may use their own measures as long as the U.S. Department of Education approves them, data from different jurisdictions is not always comparable or fully revealing. An analysis of state-reported data by the Education Trust found that “the differences in state definitions and methodologies not only result in wide variations in the data but, in many cases, significantly understate the problems that many schools and students are facing.” [www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml)
- \* The **National Governors Association (NGA)** recommends that states immediately adopt and begin to implement a standard four-year, adjusted-cohort graduation rate that will allow disaggregated data on student outcomes to be reported and shared across states and districts. Such data is an important factor in understanding effective practices in eliminating racial disparities in graduation rates. NGA also recommends that states improve their capacity to collect and report additional data, in order to provide greater depth of understanding about the achievement gap and related issues (NGA, 2005). [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org)



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL 1

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Communities, states, the federal government, and philanthropists **support efforts to connect students and families to schools and to health and social services, and to establish trust between schools and the communities their students come from;** these efforts include the establishment of community schools.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* Oregon's **Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN)** initiative focuses on bringing together parents, schools, businesses, government, and non-profit community organizations to ensure student success and to close the achievement gap. The resulting SUN Community Schools offer services and supports to students and their families, including in-school support teams, after-school programming, and connections to social services. Although SUN schools were originally elementary and middle schools, the network has expanded to include several high schools. At the Robert Gray SUN School, which enrolls grades 6-8, students speak more than 20 languages. The school aims to forge strong connections between the school and surrounding communities; among youth, families, and neighbors from diverse backgrounds; between the school and social service agencies, and among participating social service agencies. It provides training in cultural competency, and its values and principles include acknowledging and addressing community strengths and challenges, uniting all aspects of community, and celebrating diversity. [www.sunschools.org](http://www.sunschools.org)
- \* The **Evansville-Vanderburgh School Community Council** in Evansville, Indiana, began as a single, full-service school launched by a school principal with support from the United Way of Southwestern Indiana; it was later expanded due to its success in improving student performance. During its first year as a full-service school, test scores at Cedar Hall Elementary School rose nearly 15 percent. In 2000, the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, with continuing help from the regional United Way, extended this model to other district schools, including middle and high schools. Today, the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Community Council comprises more than 70 community organizations—including the United Way, two local hospitals, social service agencies, and city and county departments. The council enables partners to better understand school, student, and family needs and to find ways to bring effective services and supports to school sites. The council has secured additional funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the Welborn Baptist Foundation and other local, state, and federal grants. An ongoing evaluation shows district-wide improvements in attendance and graduation rates. In addition, students who participate in after-school and summer programs for more than 30 days have higher reading and math grades and fewer absences than students who either do not participate or attend infrequently. [www.evscschools.com/AdminDefault.aspx?PortalId=f8b332a8-67bd-4e2c-b82e-4670bcd824d4](http://www.evscschools.com/AdminDefault.aspx?PortalId=f8b332a8-67bd-4e2c-b82e-4670bcd824d4)
- \* **George Washington Community School** in Indianapolis, Indiana, has successfully brought the community closer together through on-site neighborhood meetings. Once closed by the district, George Washington was re-opened as a community school in 2000, in response to intense community support. Today, working closely with community groups, the school serves grades 7-12 and collaborates with 49 local organizations to ensure that community needs are met on site. This collaboration includes mental and physical health consultation, day care, after-school programs, college-prep classes, and adult education programs. In the nearly

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six years after George Washington re-opened as a community school, standardized test scores have risen every year by an average of 10 to 15 percentage points, and sophomores, tested for the first time in 2003, outscored those in all of Indianapolis's traditional high schools.

[www.421.ips.k12.in.us/default.aspx](http://www.421.ips.k12.in.us/default.aspx)

- \* An array of experienced **community-based service agencies in Lincoln, Nebraska**, contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes for children, families, and neighborhoods by providing educational and recreational programs, physical and behavioral health services, housing referrals, and prevention programs. In many schools, available programs include adult literacy and GED classes, homeowner education, and financial fitness classes. Health, dental, and vision partnerships respond to many children's basic physical health needs. A leadership council with representation from across the community guides the effort.

## B. Youth have multiple opportunities and diverse avenues to acquire academic, vocational, social, life, and resiliency skills.

Youth experience **smooth transitions from middle school to high school and from school to work and post-secondary education.**

### EXAMPLES

- \* **Talent Development High Schools** place special emphasis on ensuring that students successfully transition to high school. Ninth-grade students are enrolled in Success Academies, often in a separate area of the school, and are given additional instruction time in English and mathematics (Kemple & Herlihy, 2004). [www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs)
- \* Students in **Boston Public Schools** who fail ninth-grade English or math have the opportunity to enroll in a special transitional "freshmore" year to strengthen their skills. Participating students are taught in small classes and are closely monitored by teachers to make sure they understand the subject matter. If they stay in school and are successful, they graduate in five years. [www.boston.com/news](http://www.boston.com/news)
- \* Students who enroll in **Early College High Schools** have opportunities to earn college credits as early as their sophomore year, while still attending high school. By the time they graduate from high school, they can earn enough credits to be awarded an associate's degree. [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org)





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**Students who have dropped out of school have access to programs that offer options for further education and preparation for the workplace.** These options include ways to complete their high school education, earn a high school diploma or GED, learn skills that are valuable in the work force, and develop social networks with caring adults and peers. Educators respect the motivation of older youth and adult learners to improve their lives through education and respond with relevant teaching tools and styles.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The Portland Public Schools contract with Portland Community College to provide **Gateway to College**, which offers students the opportunity to complete high school while concurrently earning college credit (CLASP audio conference, 2004). Oregon students may also earn a high school diploma or GED while learning skills in the building trade by participating in YouthBuild (see Goal 2). In addition to these programs, Oregon state law stipulates that state residents have a right to a publicly-funded education until they receive a high school diploma or reach age 21. Oregon school districts may establish alternative educational options within their systems or contract with qualified private providers. The programs must meet the state's common curriculum goals, academic content, and state testing requirements (Martin and Halperin, 2006). [www.gatewaytocollege.org](http://www.gatewaytocollege.org)
- \* The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) sponsors **Equipped for the Future**, an initiative that developed content standards for adult education. The standards outline what adults need to know and be able to do to fulfill their roles as workers, family members, and citizens. <http://eff.cls.utk.edu> (The National Institute for Literacy is a good source of adult literacy information and publishes an online literacy program finder at [www.literacydirectory.org](http://www.literacydirectory.org).)

**Policymakers incorporate flexibility into workforce development resources so that they can be used to meet the basic educational and job-readiness needs of people entering the labor force.** Pre-employment programs for youth with low-level reading and math skills, for speakers of English as a second language, and for other disconnected youth include adult literacy education, supervised job placement, development of personal characteristics that help youth to stay employed, and training in "soft skills" or "life skills" such as punctuality, workplace expectations, and behavior management. Programs integrate culturally-competent perspectives and take explicit account of special needs of minority and high-risk youth.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The **STRIVE** job readiness program helps people who have significant barriers to employment to find and retain good jobs by combining attitudinal training with fundamental job skills. It promises lifetime access to developmental and support services at no cost to participants or employers. [www.strivenational.org](http://www.strivenational.org)



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- \* The **Denver Workforce Initiative** developed the Work Readiness Index to help job seekers learn what is expected of them in the workplace and to help frontline managers deal with an ethnically and culturally diverse workforce.  
[www.aecf.org/publications/data/jobsandrace.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/jobsandrace.pdf)
- \* The **New Orleans Jobs Initiative (NOJI)** links unskilled inner-city residents to jobs that pay family-supporting wages, offer career-ladder opportunities, and provide benefits. NOJI focuses on the job growth sectors of manufacturing, construction, health care, and office work, which pay high wages to entry-level workers. NOJI has forged relationships among low-income residents, community organizations, business leaders, churches, and community college administrators. NOJI has also developed a specific soft skills curriculum, "21st Century Success Principles." [www.aecf.org/initiatives/fes/jobs/neworleans](http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/fes/jobs/neworleans)
- \* The **Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington** publishes a module called "Know Your Rights and Responsibilities," used on sites of the Casey Foundation's Jobs Initiative. The material uses hypothetical situations to demonstrate potential discrimination and personal responsibility.

**Community-based organizations, local philanthropists, and other funders expand educational alternatives to traditional public schools.** They provide youth with various opportunities and diverse avenues to develop knowledge, skills, and motivation using multiple strategies and varied structures. Settings include community organizations, businesses and other workplaces, community service placements, recreational and cultural institutions, work-study positions, after-school programs, as well as schools and community colleges. Leaders in these settings work to make education more engaging, more personalized, and more responsive to the needs of youth in low-income communities.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Diploma Plus**, developed by the Commonwealth Corporation's Center for Youth Development and Education in Massachusetts, provides a community-based alternative approach to high school completion and access to postsecondary education. Diploma Plus programs, which are usually established in small schools or community organizations, enroll a racially diverse group of students who are struggling academically or have dropped out of traditional schools. Most students come from families without a history of success in postsecondary education. The Diploma Plus program has two phases. In the Presentation phase, students complete assignments with clearly-defined standards and expectations and develop portfolios to document their academic progress. They must demonstrate competency based on those standards to make the transition to the second Plus phase. Students enrolled in the Plus phase participate in internships, college courses, and community service opportunities.  
[www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus/schools.html](http://www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus/schools.html)
- \* **Service learning** integrates community service and academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Service learning programs engage young people in activities in their communities and work to connect learning to curriculum in areas such as history, literature, and environmental science. Service learning helps students take

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responsibility for their own education, increases their motivation to participate in school activities, and prepares them for citizenship through involvement in civic action.  
[www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

**State and local policymakers broaden access to training programs provided by community colleges and other post-secondary institutions**, making sure that the programs are affordable and sufficiently flexible.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Community colleges** are an important and attractive source of higher education for many young people who don't see themselves as destined or prepared for university training. They put publicly funded higher education at close-to-home facilities, provide remedial education, and play a growing role in motivating and engaging youth to complete high school and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for employment and/or further education. Many students complete some or all of their high school coursework on a college campus. Community colleges primarily attract and accept students from the local community, and are often supported by the local community through property taxes. They grant certificates, diplomas, and Associates' degrees. Currently the five hottest community college programs are in law enforcement, registered nursing, licensed practical nursing, radiology, and computer technologies. [www.aacc.nche.edu](http://www.aacc.nche.edu)
- \* At Portland (OR) Community College, the **Gateway to College** program enrolls young people aged 16 to 20, many of them living on their own, who have dropped out of high school or have not succeeded in the traditional high school environment. On the community college campus, they complete high school diploma requirements while earning credits toward an associate's degree. Students enter the program with a "cohort term," taking all courses in a small group and preparing for the transition to college. According to program records, students maintain a 92 percent attendance rate in the program, and 80 percent of those who earn a high school diploma continue their college education after leaving. [www.gatewaytocollege.org](http://www.gatewaytocollege.org)
- \* **Early College High Schools** are designed to make higher education more accessible, affordable, and attractive by bridging the divide between high school and college at a single location. Students can accumulate two years of college credit while they are earning a high school diploma, and they receive guidance and support to help them complete these college-level courses. Students in early college high schools in urban Ohio communities begin taking and passing college classes in their freshman year of high school; they show greater interest in higher education than their peers in urban public high schools and often participate in service learning projects and internships. [www.earlycolleges.org/Index.html](http://www.earlycolleges.org/Index.html)
- \* With support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, **Jobs for the Future** is helping to establish 70 Early College High Schools, most of them in disadvantaged communities. For example, a partnership between the California Academy of Liberal Studies, a charter school in Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, supported by the National Council of La Raza, will provide extra instructional time and support to groups of students who enter with limited English proficiency, helping them to engage in college-level work by grade 10 or 11. [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org)



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- \* In the **Opening Doors Learning Communities** project at Kingsborough Community College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY) in Brooklyn, groups of about 25 students take three first-semester courses together. Instructors meet regularly as a team to integrate coursework and review student progress; a counselor works with students to address obstacles to attendance and academic success; and students receive extra tutoring and a voucher to purchase books. [www.mdrc.org/publications/410/overview.html](http://www.mdrc.org/publications/410/overview.html)

Policymakers support integration or coordination of services and resources to **make child care, transportation, health care, and other services that support employment more easily accessible** and affordable to individuals engaged in workforce training.

### C. Policymakers focus coordinated workforce development resources on communities of concentrated poverty.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Job Corps** centers provide disadvantaged youth ages 16 through 24 with comprehensive services and supports, including academic, vocational, and life-skills training; career planning and work-based learning; health care; and post-program placement and support. Job Corps programs were initiated in the 1970s, and continue to show positive results, including a wide range of positive schooling, criminal justice, and employment and earnings impacts among the approximately 72,000 youth enrolled in Job Corps programs at any given time during the late 1990s. [jobcorps.dol.gov](http://jobcorps.dol.gov)
- \* Federal **Youth Opportunities (YO)** grants were created by the Congress and operated in 36 low-income communities from 2000 to 2005, building systems to serve disadvantaged youth with the goals of raising high-school and college attendance rates and improving youths' current and long-term employability and earnings. YO programs were designed to be pervasive enough to reduce negative peer pressure against educational success and participation in the mainstream workforce. The program was successful in enrolling about one-third of youth in the neighborhoods they served. In several YO neighborhoods, employment rates for out-of-school youth improved at a greater rate than those in high-poverty neighborhoods nationwide (Edelman et al., 2006).



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## **Ingredients: Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education**

Gambone et al. (2004) found that these key ingredients characterized the **success of First Things First schools**:

- Better relationships between students and teachers and among staff;
- More students who felt engaged in school;
- Improved scores on the state reading assessment at all levels;
- Improved scores on state math assessments for elementary and middle school students; and
- More students who graduated from high school on time.

Eccles and Gootman (2002) identified the following **principles of “authentic instruction”** for teaching new skills, knowledge, understandings, and habits of mind:

- Activist construction of knowledge, in which students are asked to construct or produce knowledge;
- Disciplined inquiry, in which students are encouraged to engage in deep cognitive work that requires them to search for understanding and communicate their ideas and findings;
- Relevance of the material to the student and to the community culture;
- Differentiated instruction that recognizes individual differences in knowledge, interests, and learning styles; and
- Cooperative and interactive learning sessions that allow students to work with instructors and with each other to design learning activities.

**Successful after-school programs** for adolescents combine motivating activities, opportunities to develop talents and skills, and academic instruction that boosts their chances to be successful in school. In a study of the Extended-School Service Initiative, researchers from Public/Private Ventures found that after-school programs need to target and recruit young people who are failing courses and are disengaged from school. Programs that are most successful in engaging youth employ skilled leaders who create a positive social environment with warm, friendly adult-youth and peer relationships; the programs provide a supportive but challenging intellectual environment that stretches youth beyond their own expectations, encourages them to stay the course, and praises their accomplishments (Grossman et al., 2002).

In **effective community-based youth organizations**, young people find the following:

- A range of challenging but enjoyable activities;
- A safe haven from dangerous neighborhoods and streets; and
- Opportunities for engaged learning and social development (McLaughlin, 2000).

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**A considerable consensus suggests that schools and other learning settings that are effective in preparing youth for employment and higher education have the following attributes:**

- **They are open and welcoming to all young people.** Young people are able to enter school any day that it is open and are always given opportunities to learn. Schools and other learning programs welcome young people who have been attending school irregularly, who have dropped out of school, or who have been suspended, incarcerated, or detained in juvenile facilities.
- **They demonstrate respectful relationships with youth and their families.** Staff have time to build relationships with young people and their families and understand their strengths, needs, and circumstances. Staff involve youth and their families in identifying their own needs and defining solutions, and staff work with young people to help them resolve conflicts.
- **They have high expectations for youth.** Schools foster positive interactions among adults as well as students. Schools maintain high standards for learning, assist youth in achieving those standards, and celebrate students' academic and non-academic accomplishments.
- **They maintain high standards of quality.** Teachers and other school staff are well trained and educated in the subjects they teach; they have regular opportunities to interact with and learn from effective practitioners. Staff bring effective teaching approaches to the classroom and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of each student. Class sizes are small enough to allow personalized instruction, and learning facilities are clean, modern, well maintained and well supervised.
- **They are available to young people in their communities.** Programs are available in the locations where young people need them – in storefront locations, youth service centers, shelters, and residential areas. Programs take place at times convenient for youth, including afternoon and evening classes for those with work or family obligations.
- **They are connected to the world outside the classroom.** Schools and programs provide youth with opportunities to study important community issues and to pursue community-related projects. Schools and programs connect students with community assets and with local leaders who have something to teach. Students are provided with knowledge about careers and educational options that will enable them to pursue their talents and passions after high school.

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## **Indicators: Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education**

*Please note that our work on Indicators is only, at this point, intended to be suggestive.*

### **Indicators that assess outcomes by measuring conditions among youth, such as the following:**

- Educational achievement, including school completion
- Self-sufficiency, including employment, earnings, positive work ethic, and responsible management of finances

### **Interim indicators that assess community conditions, such as the following:**

- Students attend schools that maintain high expectations, provide powerful learning supports, and foster strong connections between adults and students.
- Youth have access to diverse avenues for acquiring academic, vocational, social, life, and resiliency skills.
- Youth experience smooth transitions from middle school to high school, and from school to work and post-secondary education.
- Students have access to post-secondary institutions that are flexible and affordable.

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## **Rationale: Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education**

# Rationale

**Academic success, which is associated with engagement in active learning, access to academic and other supports, and high expectations, is one of the most powerful predictors of both future and present well-being.** Academic success is linked to good mental health; school completion; ultimate educational and occupational attachment; prosocial values and behaviors; good relations with parents and prosocial friends; high levels of volunteerism; and low levels of involvement in risky sexual behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, and criminal activities (Eccles and Gootman, 2002; Child Trends, 2003).

**Completing high school is a key element of the transition to successful young adulthood:** young people who are high school graduates are more likely to be employed, have higher earnings, and are less likely to engage in risk-taking activities in their young adult years (Wald and Martinez, 2003). For youth in disadvantaged communities, however, the path to high school graduation is likely to be filled with obstacles. They must acquire academic skills and knowledge to meet high school graduation requirements, despite the poor preparation they may have had earlier in their schooling. Their high school years, a period of significant physical and emotional development, can also be adversely affected by cultural glorifications of sex and violence and the ready availability of alcohol and other drugs (Eccles and Gootman, 2002).

**Disadvantaged youth are often consigned to schools that fail them**—fail to keep them safe, to have high expectations for their learning, to connect them to successful adults, to provide them with the skills they need to be successful. According to a report from Jobs for the Future (Steinberg et al., 2004), close to half of the large high schools in the nation's 35 largest cities evidenced “weak promotion power,” defined as the ratio of twelfth graders to ninth graders over a four-year period. These schools lose as many as 50 percent of their students between ninth and twelfth grades (Steinberg et al., 2004). Even those who do graduate may not have developed the skills to be successful in the work force or in higher education: 40 percent of students entering community colleges nationally must take at least one remedial course when they enter. In urban community colleges, that proportion is often as high as 75 percent. The more remedial courses a student needs to take, the less likely he or she is to earn a degree (Adelman, 1999).

**Many students have difficulty attending school regularly and earning the credits needed to graduate because they do not experience a sense of belonging** in the schools they are assigned to. In a study of students who had dropped out of school, conducted for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, nearly half the young people who were interviewed reported being bored and disengaged from school and said their classes were not “interesting.” They also reported that they were not motivated or inspired to work hard in school. Nearly one-third reported repeating a grade before dropping out. These young people also reported that their schools did not do enough to help students when they had trouble learning (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

The achievement gap between white and Asian students and their African American and Hispanic counterparts, as well as the gap between low income young people and middle class youth overall



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# Rationale

has many causes. But it reflects – at least in part -- inequitable systems, with **resources such as quality teaching and counseling, materials, and facilities provided at higher levels to schools that serve students who need them less** -- students who are more likely to be white, middle class, and have a family history of participating in postsecondary education (Ed Trust, 2006).

**The consequences of the achievement gap threaten the country's economic and social future.** In the increasingly global, high tech economy, the skills needed for work and those required for postsecondary education are converging. Recent analyses of the reading and math skills required for success in the workplace reveal them to be comparable to those needed for success in the first year of college (ACT, Inc., 2006). Changes in the nature of the work force will require that employees be able to read, think, and work with others. As the nation's demographic makeup changes, with lower proportions of the population in the workforce, disparities in education outcomes can create a population of workers who are not prepared to participate in the high tech economy. If fewer African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students complete high school and even fewer succeed in postsecondary education, the divergent skill distribution among U. S. population groups becomes ever more troubling (Kirsch et al., 2007).

**Today's labor market provides fewer entry-level, career-oriented jobs for young workers,** typically those between the ages of 18 and 26. Employment prospects have become particularly bleak for youth with less than two years relative to the earnings of those who have college degrees. Hardest hit have been young men of color and from low-income communities. These trends in the youth labor market and the economy as a whole have placed increasing pressure on high schools to provide higher-quality opportunities that prepare their students for work as well as for higher education. (Kemple and Clayton, 2004).

Employers often indicate a preference for hiring young people who have had hands-on training and developed skills for the workplace. **Community colleges have become key partners in the effort to ensure that young people are educated and prepared for employment.** Many community colleges enroll young people who have not earned the credits required for high school graduation, and enable them to complete the coursework required to receive their diplomas and gain experience and skills needed for employment (JFF, 2005).





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## **Evidence: Youth Are Prepared for Employment and Higher Education**

Evidence

In 1996, school district leaders in Kansas City, Kansas, adopted First Thing First, a comprehensive school reform model focused on improved instructional practice, targeted professional development, structural changes in schools to support improvements, and increased support for staff. After a phased-in, district-wide implementation of First Things First between 1996 and 2003, evaluators (Youth Development Strategies, inc.) found that

- relationships had improved between students and teachers and among staff;
- more students felt engaged in school;
- attendance rose among middle- and high-school students;
- test scores improved on state reading assessments at all levels;
- scores improved on state math assessments for elementary- and middle-school students;
- the number of students who graduated on time increased (Gambone et al., 2004).

The **Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)** middle schools operate in under-resourced communities throughout the United States, offering a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum, more hours in school, and a strong culture of achievement and support.

- In a report issued in August, 2005, the Virginia Beach-based Educational Policy Institute (EPI) found that KIPP fifth-grade students made “large and significant gains” as compared to the average for urban public school students.
- In the 2005-2006 school year, more than half (59 percent) of KIPP fifth grade classes outperformed their local districts in reading/English language arts at the end of their first year in KIPP schools, as measured by state exams. Nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of fifth grade classes outperformed their district in mathematics.
- The average KIPP student who has been with KIPP for three years starts fifth grade at the 34th percentile in reading and the 44th percentile in math, as measured by norm-referenced exams. After three years in KIPP, these same students are performing at the 58th percentile in reading and the 83rd percentile in math. ([www.kipp.org](http://www.kipp.org)).

**Green Dot Public Schools** are successful charter high schools operating in the highest need areas of Los Angeles, working to improve failing high schools of the Los Angeles County Unified School District through School Transformation projects. It seeks to transform large, failing high schools into clusters of small, successful charter schools. The five Green Dot Schools that opened in Los Angeles prior to 2006 are achieving better results on California’s Academic Performance Index (API) and higher rates of graduation and entrance into postsecondary education than schools serving similar groups of students ([www.greendotpublicschools.org](http://www.greendotpublicschools.org)).

Schools that are part of the **Making Middle Grades Work** initiative of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) provide intensive literacy, mathematics, and science experiences; extra help for students who need it; a written program of study for high school; and more teachers with academic majors in English/literature, mathematics, or science. Eighth-grade students in schools





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that participated in the initiative for at least three years had statistically higher rates of achievement in reading and mathematics (Cooney and Bottoms, n.d.); this finding was true for African-American students and for students whose mothers had a high school education or less. All groups of students in the lowest quartile of achievement improved in reading. Teachers in schools that had been in the initiative for at least three years also reported that they had time to meet in teams to plan the curriculum; students in schools that implemented the design more fully reported an increase in real-world academic assignments that required higher-order thinking skills ([www.sreb.org/Programs/MiddleGrades/MiddleGradesindex.asp](http://www.sreb.org/Programs/MiddleGrades/MiddleGradesindex.asp)).

The **Talent Development High School** model provides “double dose” curriculum offerings in math and literacy; small learning communities in ninth and tenth grade “success academies”; and on-site curriculum coaches for math, English, and freshman-seminar teachers. An evaluation of year three of the Talent Development High Schools in Philadelphia showed that student attendance improved by 15 or more percentage points; the number of students who reached eleventh grade in the first two schools to implement Talent Development doubled; and course pass rates rose while suspensions, fires, and arrests declined (Spiridakis et. al, 2002). Many students had begun to close achievement gaps in reading and math. A later evaluation found that Talent Development Schools produced substantial gains in academic course credits and promotion and modest improvements in attendance for first-time ninth graders (Kemple and Herlihy, 2004; [www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs)).

**Talent Development Middle Schools** provide 90-minute classes in English/language arts, including literature and writing; monthly professional development seminars for teachers; and support for teachers from an in-class curriculum coach. In high-poverty, non-selective Philadelphia middle schools that used the Talent Development Middle School model, eighth-grade students were significantly more likely to be classified as at least “proficient” in reading than students in comparison schools. MacIver et al. (2004) found that 17 percent of the Talent Development students, but only 12 percent of the comparison students, were classified as “proficient,” while 63 percent of the comparison students but only 57 percent of the Talent Development students were classified as “below basic” in reading ([www.mdrc.org/publications/400/overview.html](http://www.mdrc.org/publications/400/overview.html)).

The **School Transitional Environment Project** was designed to facilitate successful adaptation to large middle and high schools, particularly for low-income, minority, and other disadvantaged students. Students were assigned to smaller units or “schools within a school,” with a homeroom teacher who provided administrative and counseling links between the students and the rest of the school and facilitated communication with parents. When compared to a control group of students in the same schools, project students were less likely to drop out of school, and 10th grade project students had significantly higher grades and fewer absences than controls. The results suggested that the program was particularly effective for students who were initially doing poorly in school (Felner and Adan, 1988; Felner et al., 1993; [www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/promising/programs/BPPI6.html](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/promising/programs/BPPI6.html)).

**Diploma Plus** sites are located in small schools and community organizations in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York City, and Baltimore to serve students who are struggling academically or have dropped out of traditional schools. An evaluation of Diploma Plus found that among students who left the program between 2002 and 2004, 62 percent had completed the program and 59 percent had obtained a diploma. In the program’s second phase, 81 percent of the students taking



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL 1

Youth Are Prepared  
for Employment and  
Higher Education

Evidence

college courses had passed one or more of the classes (Brigham Nahas Research Associates, 2005; [www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus/schools.html](http://www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus/schools.html)).

**Early College High Schools** bridge the divide between high school and college at a single location, in order to motivate students to pursue postsecondary education and to make higher education more accessible, affordable, and attractive. Early research by the Harvard Graduate School of Education indicates that students in early college high schools in urban Ohio communities begin taking and passing college classes in their freshman year of high school; they show greater interest in higher education than their peers in urban public high schools and often participate in service learning projects and internships (Wolk, 2005). At Dayton Early College Academy, for example, the school has achieved a 97-percent attendance rate, compared with an overall attendance rate of 86 percent in the Dayton Public Schools ([www.earlycolleges.org/Downloads/ECHS.brief.8x11.pdf](http://www.earlycolleges.org/Downloads/ECHS.brief.8x11.pdf)).

Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York, part of the City University of New York (CUNY), enrolls a diverse population that includes many immigrants. The college is working with MDRC to test student persistence and achievement in the **Opening Doors Learning Communities** project, in which cohorts of about 25 students take three first-semester courses together. MDRC's evaluation which assigns students who agree to participate in the study to either the learning communities program or a control group, found that Opening Doors students substantially outperformed control group students during their first semester at Kingsborough. One year after enrolling, the Opening Doors students were more likely to have completed their remedial English requirements; however, the students were no more likely to be enrolled at Kingsborough or elsewhere in the city. MDRC will follow students in the program for ten years (Bloom & Sommo, 2005; [www.apypf.org/forumbriefs/2005/fb052005.htm](http://www.apypf.org/forumbriefs/2005/fb052005.htm)).

An evaluation of **Job Corps** by Mathematica Policy Research showed continuing positive results, including a wide range of positive schooling, criminal justice, and employment and earnings impacts among the approximately 72,000 youth enrolled in Job Corps programs at any given time during the late 1990s (Schochet et al., 2000).

**Jobstart** was a youth employment and education program that targeted urban, low-income youth ages 17-21 who had dropped out of school. Developed as a demonstration and evaluated by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), it was implemented between 1985 and 1988 in 13 sites ranging from community-based organizations to schools to Jobs Corps Centers. It was designed to inform the nation's ongoing debate about how best to improve the employment and earnings prospects of low-skilled, economically disadvantaged young people, who otherwise live outside the economic mainstream. The program provided self-paced academic skills instruction; occupational skills training for specific jobs; and support services such as transportation, child care, incentive payments, and job placement assistance. Some variation in emphasis existed across program sites. Four years after participating in Jobstart, significantly more participants than controls (42 percent to 29 percent) had earned a GED or high school diploma. Participants were also significantly more likely to have a trade certificate or license, and participants who had not been arrested between age 16 and entering the program were significantly less likely to be arrested than controls (Cave et al., 1993; [www.mdrc.org/project\\_publications\\_32\\_60.html](http://www.mdrc.org/project_publications_32_60.html)).

GOAL

2

## Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects

Government, community organizations, business, and educational and training institutions partner to strengthen the connections between youth and good jobs

Community agencies, training programs and public and private funders target job preparation to high-demand domains, where jobs are expanding in number, wages and advancement opportunities

Communities strengthen social networks and supportive services that help youth to access good jobs

GOAL 2



### Actions

specific strategies, activities, or steps taken to impact the quality and capacity of local services and supports, the availability of resources, or the policy contexts that contribute to the outcome



### Examples

program and policy initiatives illustrating how actions have worked elsewhere



### Ingredients

elements of how actions are implemented that make them effective



### Indicators

measures for targeting and monitoring the impact of actions and documenting progress toward the outcome



### Rationale

research-based reasons to believe that identified actions are likely to contribute to the desired outcome



### Evidence

research documenting that identified actions contribute to achieving the targeted outcome or conditions that lead to the outcome



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL **2**

Youth Have  
Expanded Labor  
Market Prospects

## **Actions with Examples: Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects**

### **A. Business, government, community organizations, and educational and training institutions partner to strengthen the connections between youth and good jobs.**

Local, state, and federal entities assure the funding and leadership to create systems that take responsibility for collaborative planning and coherent action aimed at expanding employment opportunities for youth in distressed urban and rural communities.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* Under the leadership of the **Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development**, Baltimore has created a comprehensive, citywide youth development system. The city has a portfolio of programs designed to reconnect students who have dropped out of school, including a Career Academy program that combines job skills training with GED preparation and a Healthcare Careers Alliance program that provides skills development, paid training, on-the-job experience, and employment in one of the city's three major hospitals (Martin and Halperin, 2006). Programs in Baltimore's portfolio include a range of initiatives sponsored by Civic Works, an urban service corps program serving youth ages 17-25. Civic Works provides supported work experiences with team leaders who help youth develop skills for workplace success. Civic Works also supports a YouthBuild program that enables out-of-school youth to learn construction skills and study for their GED while building new housing for low-income families. [www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/2006/fb090806.htm](http://www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/2006/fb090806.htm)
- \* A Task Force on Poverty convened by the Center for American Progress in 2007 recommended that **the federal government establish an "Upward Pathway"** to enable disconnected youth to participate in a comprehensive program of education, service, and workforce training in high-demand sectors (including health care, energy independence, environmental protection, homeland security, affordable housing, and bridging the digital divide.) Youth participating in the Upward Pathway program would be able to re-enroll in secondary education (including GED and charter school options), and would receive services such as case management and career counseling to facilitate a seamless transition to the young person's next stage of employment or education, with follow-up support offered for up to two years after the young person completes the program. [www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/04/poverty\\_event.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/04/poverty_event.html)
- \* The **Youth Opportunity Grants (YO)** program was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor from 2000 to 2005. Though the program is no longer operational, it is an important example because it remains the most extensive national attempt to build comprehensive neighborhood systems serving disadvantaged youth in low-income sites across the country. To be eligible to apply for YO grants, neighborhoods had to have a poverty rate of 30 percent or higher. All YO sites served both in-school and out-of-school disadvantaged youth; about 95



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percent of participants were minorities. All had centers where youth could participate in activities and receive counseling and case-management services. Case managers—approximately 1,200 nationwide—worked with youth individually to set academic and employment goals and to provide mentoring, tutoring, and college and career exploration. By enrolling about a third of the youth in its neighborhoods, YO aimed to be pervasive enough to reduce negative peer pressures against educational attainment and mainstream economic participation.

The specific programs funded by YO grants varied from one site to another. In Memphis, participants who met job readiness goals received paid internships in support positions at local businesses and community colleges. Participants were able to attend counseling and support groups for alcohol and drug prevention; take parenting classes; participate in community service; join the YO choir; and compete on YO teams in basketball, chess, and video games. In Louisville, YO case managers worked with youth preparing to leave a juvenile corrections facility, and youth were permitted to serve alternative sentences in the YO center. In Denver, the YO center provided a site for serving school suspensions. Baltimore's two YO sites specialized in training and placing youth in food service, hospitality, customer service, and telemarketing, and also focused on dropout prevention; they partnered with community colleges and Morgan State University to administer a college-bound program (Edelman et al., 2006).

Community organizations partner with education institutions and business to encourage employers to hire qualified youth from tough neighborhoods.

### EXAMPLES

- \* The **Boston Private Industry Council (PIC)**, which serves as the city's Workforce Investment Board, has led the effort to provide summer jobs for students in the community. In 2005, the PIC connected 4,389 students to 922 different employers. Beginning in 1999, the PIC and a group of employers created Classroom at the Workplace, which targets students who have not yet passed the MCAS (the state's high school exit exam) and provides them with 90 minutes of instruction in literacy and/or math every day. Like other local Workforce Investment Boards and similar coalitions, they act as intermediary organizations to support employers who provide summer jobs for youth. Program staff interview youth, prepare and train them, and connect them to employers for summer jobs. Career specialists provide support for students and for employers, who benefit from having a source of employees who are interested in pursuing a career related to their business. [www.bostonpic.org](http://www.bostonpic.org)
- \* In Virginia, state officials responded to businesses' preference for hiring young people who had hands-on learning experience as well as academic instruction by establishing **Virginia's Pathway to Industry Certification**. The program encourages students to continue working toward high school graduation while taking industry-specific training courses at local community colleges. Students often continue their work at the community colleges following graduation from high school. The state has also established a Career and Technical Education Foundation to improve student perceptions of career training (Warner, in Kazis, 2005).

# Actions & Examples



Actions



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Rationale



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## B. Community organizations, training programs, and public and private funders target job preparation to high-demand domains, where job numbers, wages, and advancement opportunities are increasing.

Community organizations and training programs work with employers to determine the competencies required of workers, in order to match training strategies to those competencies.

### EXAMPLES

- \* A partnership among Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, and Cisco Systems led to creation of the **Cisco Networking Academy**, which trains entry-level workers for local high-tech jobs in Mayfair, California. [www.cisco.com/edu/emea/about/index.shtml](http://www.cisco.com/edu/emea/about/index.shtml)
- \* **Per Scholas** in the Bronx, New York, trains low-income residents to be computer repair technicians. In order to ensure that its graduates have the skills they need to get hired, Per Scholas consults closely with area businesses when it puts together its curriculum. These consultations can mean anything from asking employers what kind of certification they require to arranging for a company to train one of its instructors. Since 1998, Per Scholas has found jobs for close to 80 percent of the more than one thousand students who have graduated from Per Scholas. The program operates on an annual budget of just \$1.9 million, provided by the City Council and foundation grants. [www.perscholas.org](http://www.perscholas.org)
- \* **YearUp** provides a year-long, multi-dimensional training program for Boston-area young adults ages 18-23, aimed at enabling them to start careers in Desktop Support/IT Help Desk or Web Production and Programming. [www.yearup.org](http://www.yearup.org)
- \* Recognizing that health care will be a growing industry for many years, **Clarian Healthcare** in Indianapolis, Indiana, offers courses, programs, job fairs, and camps to train people for health care careers. [www.clarian.org/careers/development/educational\\_opportunities.html](http://www.clarian.org/careers/development/educational_opportunities.html)
- \* **Focus: HOPE**, a Detroit civil rights organization, prepares trainees for employment in the auto-related metalworking industry and has developed a continuum of training for entry- to mid-level occupations. <http://www.aspenwsi.org/publications/00-040.pdf>
- \* **Twin Cities RISE! (TCR!)** is testing a market-driven approach to job preparation and retention. TCR! offers participants long-term, intensive work skills training, education, and support services. When TCR! places a participant in a living-wage job, the company pays a training and development fee for the service. [www.twincitiesrise.org](http://www.twincitiesrise.org)





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**Community organizations, training programs and public and private funders tie workforce development resources to regional economic development efforts.**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The **St. Louis Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI)** sees MetroLink, the light rail system that runs through the city's urban core, as the ticket to connecting under-employed workers with good jobs. RJI recruits participants along the public transit corridor and plans a campaign to advocate for light rail, bus service, and reverse-commute programs. RJI works to increase both the supply and demand for skilled labor in St. Louis; to strengthen links among low-skilled youth and adults, employers, and training programs; to help hard-to-employ people find family-sustaining jobs; and to provide employers with a workforce that can keep their businesses productive. [www.usmayors.org/uscm/best\\_practices/bp98/06\\_1998\\_Connecting\\_People\\_To\\_Jobs!St\\_Louis\\_MO.htm](http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/best_practices/bp98/06_1998_Connecting_People_To_Jobs!St_Louis_MO.htm)
- \* The **Fenway Community Development Corporation** in Boston created the Walk to Work Program, which connected neighborhood residents to local jobs, targeting openings in the medical field. [www.fenwaycdc.org](http://www.fenwaycdc.org)
- \* When the **Port of Seattle** used public investment to fund its expansion, negotiated community benefits included first-source hiring agreements and apprenticeship slots. [www.portjobs.org](http://www.portjobs.org)
- \* HUD's **HOPE VI program** to redevelop deteriorated public housing into mixed income communities requires corollary resident benefits, such as job training. [www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/about](http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/about)

### C. Communities strengthen social networks and supportive services that help youth to access good jobs.

**Schools, businesses, community colleges, and community organizations connect youth to social networks** that provide employment information and offer support for obtaining, retaining, and advancing in good jobs. They establish job clubs and sponsor networking meetings and other informal gatherings that enable participants to share information about available work opportunities.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Career Academies** are organized as small learning communities for youth in grades nine through eleven or nine through twelve. They combine academic and technical curricula around a career theme and establish partnerships with local employers to provide work-based learning opportunities. Students participate in summer internships and have opportunities to apply their learning in on-the-job settings.
- \* **Metro Twin Cities Job Clubs** host guest speakers and offer group discussions on topics related to job search, providing an opportunity to network for job leads and gain support from other job seekers. [www1.umn.edu/ohr/img/assets/18904/jobclubs.pdf](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/img/assets/18904/jobclubs.pdf)



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- \* For 20 years, the **Boston Private Industry Council** has supported school-to-work initiatives, using its network of employers to provide summer and after-school jobs for Boston public high school students. [www.bostonpic.org](http://www.bostonpic.org)

**Communities improve young people's employment prospects by providing youth with opportunities for volunteering and internships; they also provide labor market experiences that create new points of access to jobs and expose job seekers to varied workplaces, job types, and working individuals.**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Youth Councils** (community coalitions formed to oversee the portions of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that apply to youth) bring together employers, community colleges, secondary schools, and other stakeholders to connect youth with the labor market. Stakeholders provide support and experiences that prepare youth for employment and often extend their work to include resources and programs beyond those contained in the WIA.
- \* The **California Workforce Investment Board's State Youth Council** has established a groundbreaking policy framework called "All Youth – One System," in which Youth Councils play a critical role in the workforce development of California's young people. The Youth Council Institute has provided technical assistance and training, as well as written guidance, to train Youth Councils in policy framework and to provide the Councils with capacity-building tools (California Workforce Association, 2005).
- \* The **Latin American Youth Center** in Washington, DC, has created programs that combine job readiness, life-skills training, and support services with supervised job placement. It operates two Ben and Jerry's PartnerShops, where young people learn basic business concepts and cash management and develop the customer service skills and personal characteristics that help them to stay employed. [www.layc-dc.org](http://www.layc-dc.org)

**Community organizations provide and coordinate employment-related services, in order to help youth navigate available services and obtain the skills and supports that connect them to the labor market.**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **San Diego Youth@Work** is a collaborative that coordinates and provides a full range of services and employment opportunities for youth in an underserved area of the city. It was developed through the Youth Opportunities Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. Partners include public school systems (both K-12 and postsecondary), the local Job Corps, the juvenile justice system, private sector businesses, community-based and faith-based organizations, and other youth-serving programs (Clymer et al., 2002). Other Youth Opportunities Programs have also brought together community stakeholders who worked to engage school systems, income support, child welfare, juvenile justice, Workforce Investment Boards, and child support programs (Harris, 2006). [www.sandiegoyouthatwork.com/generate/html/Youth/youth\\_connect\\_network.html](http://www.sandiegoyouthatwork.com/generate/html/Youth/youth_connect_network.html)





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- \* **YouthBuild** programs in low-income communities across the country engage young people in building and rehabilitating housing in their neighborhoods; they serve youth with multiple challenges, including substance abuse, criminal records, and mental health issues. The program provides instruction in academics, leadership, and career skills and fosters a family-like environment of high expectations and high standards. Students spend six to twenty-four months in the full-time YouthBuild program, alternating between the construction site and the alternative school. When they leave the program, they become members of a lifelong community of YouthBuild alumni. [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)
- \* The **United Parcel Service (UPS) School-to-Career Partnership**, a community-based initiative in Baltimore, engages youth in a work and learning experience designed to expand their opportunities for career and academic success. The partnership targets young adults aging out of the foster system, as well as other disadvantaged populations. Created to meet the needs of both employers and young participants, the partnership emphasizes the importance of long-term relationships as a key strategy for transforming youth into independent adults. For this reason, intensive case management, high expectations, and a focus on academic support and personal development are all included as vital program components (Yohalem & Pittman, 2001). [www.ccfy.org/toolbox/docs/ccfy\\_powerful\\_pathways.pdf](http://www.ccfy.org/toolbox/docs/ccfy_powerful_pathways.pdf)
- \* The **School-to-Career Partnership Program** in Providence, Rhode Island, which is sponsored by the Rhode Island Division of Casey Family Services and local public and private businesses, helps youth ages 16 to 21 who have been in foster care to secure and maintain employment, learn life skills, and continue their education. [www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org)

**Educational institutions and job training programs expand their understanding of how issues of race, ethnicity, and culture affect labor market outcomes and implement strategies to develop and support a culturally-diverse workforce.**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **YouthBuild** staff communicate with participants about race, racism, ethnicity, and their implications for participants and society; they have successfully created a highly diverse workforce. [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)
- \* The **National Foundation for Training in Entrepreneurship** includes a racial equity category on its score card (a tool to measure progress on a range of issues) and plans to examine hiring, firing, and advancement practices with a structural racism lens.
- \* **Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)** are explicitly addressing diversity issues on multiple levels of the organization. They are forming an African-American task force comprised of BBBS staff from across the country and an African-American advisory panel made up of non-BBBS staff; they have created budget lines to support the task force, advisory panel, and implementation of the plan. [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org)
- \* **Communities in Schools (CIS)** is developing a strategic plan to incorporate the racial equity framework into its internal organizational practices and its work in the field. This implementation will result in major changes to the organization at both the national and local levels. [www.ciskids.org](http://www.ciskids.org)



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## **Ingredients: Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects**

**Key ingredients of labor market connections that expand career opportunities for youth from tough neighborhoods include the following:**

- **They are accessible to young people where they live, where they learn, and where they congregate.** Young people have opportunities to learn about jobs and careers that interest them during the school day, after school, and in settings that serve youth who are not enrolled in school. Interesting, engaging activities that prepare youth for employment are incorporated into multiple programs and opportunities.
- **They provide high quality services and supports.** Organizations that provide labor market connections recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals who develop mutually respectful relationships with youth. Staff are responsive to the unique needs of individual young people and their families and are sensitive to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- **They serve employers as well as young people.** Staff develop and maintain strong, enduring connections with potential employers. Employers receive assistance in developing job placements for young people and in supporting and supervising them. Youth receive assistance as they search, apply, and interview for positions and as they develop job-related and interpersonal skills.
- **They are available to all youth in tough communities.** A variety of connections are available to meet the needs of all youth, including structured, full-time programs; school-to-career programs; and summer job programs. Organizations reach out to youth in disconnected communities, and special programs for vulnerable youth supplement those that are available to all.
- **They work to broaden the base of support for youth and their families.** Staff work to ensure that young people are connected to needed services and supports from other organizations and providers. Staff coordinate their efforts with other programs so that youth and their families are not overwhelmed by multiple case managers.
- **They help youth create social networks and relationships.** Staff take a personal interest in young people and work to build on each youth's strengths and interests. Staff help young people develop relationships that provide access to employment.
- **They are results-oriented.** Staff and employers judge the effectiveness of their work by their success in helping young people obtain and retain jobs and advance to positions with increased responsibility and earnings.

In a study of summer job programs for teens in Philadelphia, researchers found that **“support and guidance from adults at work”** is an essential ingredient that makes a job into a good developmental opportunity. (Short-term employment programs that provide few supports for youth had little impact on students' academic achievement, school behavior, or planning for

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college.) The researchers suggested that teen's supervisors be trained in coaching and mentoring skills so that they can support the developmental process (McLanahan et al., 2004).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has concluded that communities are most effective in expanding employment opportunities for youth in tough neighborhoods when they **provide access to a variety of job training approaches**, including:

- a "work first" strategy that focuses on job search and placement
- work readiness services that are oriented to quick employment with long-term supports after placement
- a comprehensive approach that includes recruitment, assessment, case management, soft and hard skills training, job placement, post-placement support, and promotion of a culture of work

The ingredients of labor market strategies that Workforce Investment Board directors and Youth Opportunity project directors identified as most effective include the following:

- mobilizing community leadership and involving key public systems
- attracting and engaging key leaders in Youth Councils
- accessing resources from multiple systems to support service delivery, especially the education system, the WIA one-stop system, and the juvenile justice system
- making connections with education and post-secondary systems to enhance academic and post-secondary preparation
- developing or accessing alternative education programs for out-of-school youth (Harris, 2006)

The core elements that researchers most frequently identified as essential to supporting youth's successful entry to employment include:

- adult support and guidance
- engaging activities during non-school hours
- a variety of work experience opportunities that connect school-based learning to requirements for successful employment
- opportunities for youth to have a say in what they do and how it is done
- support during key transitions (Clymer et al., 2002)

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## **Indicators: Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects**

*Please note that our work on Indicators is only, at this point, intended to be suggestive.*

### **Interim indicators that assess community conditions, such as the following:**

- More employers have greater incentives to hire and retain youth from tough neighborhoods.
- More youth can access social networks, organizations, and institutions that provide employment; education; and support in obtaining, retaining, and advancing in good jobs.
- More youth can access training opportunities that tie workforce development to regional economic development and to high-demand industry sectors.
- More youth live in neighborhoods where adults convey a sense of efficacy and observe the routines, discipline, and regularity associated with work.

Indicators



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## **Rationale: Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects**

# Rationale

**Help in making connections to the labor force, which enable youth to find jobs and stay employed, are essential for youth who lack social support systems.**

This help is especially important for youth with low literacy levels, fewer years of formal schooling, a history of behavioral problems, untreated mental illness, substance abuse problems, or other disabilities. Connections, and help in making them, are also vital for youth who reside in neighborhoods where many residents are unemployed, as these youth are more likely to lack the role models and information systems that lead to good jobs (Wald and Martinez, 2003).

**Efforts to connect youth to the labor market can take the form of school-based programs, or they can create supports for young people who are out of school and disconnected from mainstream institutions.** Linkages that help youth establish and strengthen their connections to the labor market include school-to-career activities, work-based learning and service learning, internships and supported employment, and other approaches tailored to the needs of individuals.

**Work that rebuilds communities, that strengthens social bonds among neighborhood residents, and that enhances employment opportunities for adults also expands labor market prospects for youth.** Wilson (1987) argues that a loss of neighborhood employment opportunities, due to de-industrialization in the inner cities, has led to increases in poverty, joblessness, and social isolation. The behavior of adults in communities can influence adolescent behavior by providing adult role models and mentoring (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

**Effective work-based learning combines classroom instruction with hands-on learning and motivates young people to complete courses that are useful in the workplace.** Internships and summer jobs provide students with significant workplace experience and help them build the personal and interpersonal skills that prepare them for employment. Service learning opportunities engage young people in solving community problems, motivate youth to complete challenging tasks, and help students to apply their active learning to meet academic standards. ([www.work-basedlearning.org](http://www.work-basedlearning.org)).

**Schools that connect to employers and employment opportunities are able to compensate for the fact that many young people from high-poverty neighborhoods lack personal connections to the labor market.** Career Academy students, for example, reported higher levels of interpersonal support from their teachers, which helped them to develop closer relationships with employers. Career programs, technical programs, and schools also provide students with a broad array of career-awareness and development experiences both in and outside school, including work-based learning internships (Kemple with Scott-Clayton, 2004). The relationship between vocational teachers (who have often had industry experience) and employers also becomes an informal source of hiring information for employers and a channel for students (Rosenblum, 2001).



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**Youth Councils, schools, and other community groups create opportunities for interpersonal relationships between young people and adults who are experienced in the world of work.** They do this by organizing and staffing schools to increase opportunities for students to interact with teachers, especially teachers of career and technical education, and by structuring summer and other job opportunities to include mentoring as part of work site supervision.

**Mentoring can be a powerful source of connection to social networks and supports that help youth connect to the labor market.** Werner and Smith (1992) found that disadvantaged youth who “beat the odds” found emotional support outside their own families, often in a favorite teacher who became a role model, friend, and confidant.

# Rationale



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## **Evidence: Youth Have Expanded Labor Market Prospects**

Evidence

**Substantial improvements in the labor market prospects of young men have been documented among students in Career Academies**, with concentrated benefits among students who were at high or medium risk of dropping out of school when they entered the program. (Career Academies operate as small learning communities within larger public high schools in medium and large-sized school districts; they combine academic and technical curricula around a career theme and establish partnerships with local employers to provide work-based opportunities.) Although the Academies were no more effective than other options in moving youth into post-secondary education, students enrolled in Career Academies reported higher levels of interpersonal support from their teachers and peers than did students in the non-Academy comparison group (Kemple & Scott-Clayton, 2004). Researchers speculate that the power of these programs comes from the relationships and connections they create with employers who provide internships and jobs (Kazis, 2005).

When the participants in the **Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP)** (which enrolled disadvantaged ninth-grade students for an intensive intervention program during their four years in high school) were ready to graduate from high school, **the experimental group had statistically higher scores on 11 measures of academic and functional skills.** In the post-high school period, **QOP participants were more likely to have graduated from high school and enrolled in post-secondary education, less likely to have children, more likely to have received honors and awards, and more likely to have performed community service.** (QOP provided 250 hours per year each of education-related activities, development activities, and service activities. Youth received hourly stipends and bonuses for completing program components, and program staff worked closely with students to ensure that they continued to participate for the entire program period, even following students who stopped participating and working to re-engage them.) (Hahn et al., 1994)

Among graduates of **YouthBuild** (which serves low-income young people with multiple challenges, including substance abuse, criminal records, and mental health issues), **75 percent were either enrolled in postsecondary education or employed in jobs averaging \$10 per hour**, and 76 percent were not receiving food stamps, welfare, or unemployment benefits. 80 percent had not sold marijuana or hard drugs, been convicted of a felony, or spent time in prison. 70 percent were registered to vote and nearly half had voted. In-depth interviews with 57 randomly-selected graduates revealed that 65 percent believe they will live an average of 32 years longer than they had expected to live before joining YouthBuild (Hahn, et al., 2004). (YouthBuild provides a highly supportive, family-like environment with high expectations and high standards, instruction in academic areas, and leadership and career skills; the program engages participants in building and rehabilitating housing in their neighborhoods.)

**Job Corps Centers** provide disadvantaged youth ages 16 through 24 with comprehensive services and supports, including academic, vocational, and life skills training; career planning and



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL **2**

Youth Have  
Expanded Labor  
Market Prospects

work-based learning; health care; and post-program placement and support. Job Corps programs have shown a wide **range of positive schooling, criminal justice, employment, and earnings impacts** among the approximately 72,000 youth enrolled in Job Corps programs at any given time during the late 1990s. For the year ending in June 2005, 91 percent of Job Corps students were initially engaged in schooling, a job, or the military upon graduation. Of these, 66 percent were still in the placement six months later (Schochet et al., 2000).

Among low-income young people from high-risk families and neighborhoods, the positive effects of participation in **high quality community-based organizations** was documented by a study that found that youth participating in such organizations were 26 percent more likely to report having received recognition for good grades than youth in the general population. Youth who participated several days a week were twice as likely to report recognition for good grades. They were also nearly 20 percent more likely than other youth to rate their chances of graduating from high school as “very high,” and 20 percent more likely than other youth to rate their chances of going to college as “very high” (McLaughlin, 2000).

Evidence



GOAL

3

## Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging and Engaging

Communities provide youth with opportunities to belong, receive support, learn new skills, lead, make decisions, and contribute to civic life.

Youth obtain support from parents and other caring adults

Communities work to incorporate and convey positive images of youth.

Youth obtain help in developing financial literacy, managing money and building assets



### Actions

specific strategies, activities, or steps taken to impact the quality and capacity of local services and supports, the availability of resources, or the policy contexts that contribute to the outcome



### Examples

program and policy initiatives illustrating how actions have worked elsewhere



### Ingredients

elements of how actions are implemented that make them effective



### Indicators

measures for targeting and monitoring the impact of actions and documenting progress toward the outcome



### Rationale

research-based reasons to believe that identified actions are likely to contribute to the desired outcome



### Evidence

research documenting that identified actions contribute to achieving the targeted outcome or conditions that lead to the outcome



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL **3**

Youth Have Increased  
Prospects of Thriving,  
Belonging and Engaging

## **Actions with Examples: Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging, and Engaging**

**A. Through a wide range of activities, communities provide youth with opportunities to belong, learn new skills, grow, lead, receive support, participate in decision-making, and contribute to civic life.**

Youth-serving organizations make deliberate efforts to develop youth leadership and to encourage young people to participate in civic life; they integrate culturally and racially sensitive perspectives and create a climate of trust, respect and inclusion.

### EXAMPLES

- \* **Alianza Dominica**, a major youth-serving agency in the Washington Heights section of New York City, operates a Beacon program for community youth. (Beacons are community centers that are located in public school buildings and offer a range of activities and services to participants of all ages before and after school, in the evenings, and on weekends.) The Beacon's General Youth Council (GYC), open to all young people, teaches young people how to mobilize themselves and other resources to address critical problems they face, such as violence, drugs, poor education, and lack of job training and job opportunities. The GYC has coordinated forums on jobs and education, and regularly holds public meetings that enable young people to interact with candidates for public office. [www.alianzadom.org](http://www.alianzadom.org)
- \* Trainees in **YouthBuild Pittsburgh** gain leadership experience while working on construction projects with a crew of peers. They learn how city, state, and federal governments impact their communities, and their Youth Caucuses meet with elected officials at all levels of government. Trainees are also expected to join block clubs or other organizations that address community issues and local policies in areas where YouthBuild conducts its construction projects. YouthBuild Pittsburgh incorporates leadership development into the training program for all participants. [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)
- \* The City of Tempe, Arizona, sponsors an annual **Youth Town Hall** that brings together youth and community decision makers, including school board members, business leaders, and public service agencies. Youth Town Hall gives young people the opportunity to have direct impact on policies that affect them. Programs that have resulted from Youth Town Hall recommendations include teen leadership training, school-based counseling and life skills groups, a program to provide day care for children of teen mothers so the mothers can complete school, and expanded violence prevention programs in the city's high schools. [www.tempe.gov/SocialServices/myac.htm](http://www.tempe.gov/SocialServices/myac.htm), [www.nlc.org/iyef/program\\_areas/youth\\_development/4630.aspx](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program_areas/youth_development/4630.aspx)



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL 3

Youth Have Increased  
Prospects of Thriving,  
Belonging and Engaging

# Actions & Examples

- \* The **Community Change for Youth Development** initiative was designed by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) to increase basic developmental supports available to youth in their communities. In six sites around the country, the initiative brought together local institutional, human, and financial resources to build neighborhood capacity to support youth. In Kansas City, Missouri, the YMCA took a leadership role in working with youth and adults from individual neighborhoods to develop supports and opportunities for youth. Neighborhood Youth Councils enabled young people to take a leadership role in generating ideas for activities that would involve other youth. They developed their own speakers' bureaus; participated in community service activities; and organized fundraisers, field trips and social events. A case study of the Kansas City effort found that the Youth Councils were a key strategy for success, and that traditional youth-serving organizations, such as YMCAs, can serve effectively as lead agencies for community-based efforts to expand opportunities for youth. The study recommended that initiative designers build on local culture and effective community-level relationships to expand community support for youth (Hartmann et al., 2001).  
[www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/115\\_publication.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/115_publication.pdf)
- \* The **Hampton Coalition for Youth** was formed by the city of Hampton, Virginia, in 1990 to ensure that the city would focus on the needs of children and youth. The Coalition created a plan of action for investment in youth and has maintained that focus through the ensuing years. The Coalition, which has now become a city department, has developed major emphases on youth issues and policy. They have promoted developmental assets through a citywide Mobilization for Youth; developed a comprehensive system to promote youth civic engagement; and sponsored the Hampton Youth Commission, a youth-led 24-member commission that represents the ideas and opinions of young people to the City Council. As an outgrowth of a youth mapping project (see below) the city also employs two youth as part-time planners, giving youth an official voice in city government. The Hampton Youth Commission offers Youth Service grants of up to \$500 for projects designed to directly benefit the youth of Hampton and the broader community. The grants are provided to partnerships that involve youth and adults in their planning and implementation. Grant funds may be used for supplies, materials, and other costs of making the project a success. [www.hampton.gov/youth](http://www.hampton.gov/youth)
- \* **St. Louis Park, Minnesota**, a suburb of Minneapolis, is one of a number of communities that have taken action to support all youth in the Search Institute's Healthy Communities-Healthy Youth initiative. The initiative is based on a framework of developmental assets, experiences, and relationships that help young people to develop the competencies and capacities to become productive citizens. Their activities include the following:
  - Members of the high school basketball team read to children at the public library on Saturday mornings;
  - Congregations provide after-school and evening activities for children and adolescents; and
  - Businesses are adopting child-friendly and family-friendly policies and are sponsoring community activities that benefit young people.[www.search-institute.org/communities/hchy.html](http://www.search-institute.org/communities/hchy.html)
- \* **Youth mapping** initiatives are organized to involve young people in reaching out to their communities, interviewing adults who live and work there, and finding out about the resources available to them. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, youth were trained to go into the community and conduct interviews with adults, in order to find out where services and supports were located and where they were lacking. Community organizations use the



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Rationale



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information to advocate for increased services in areas of need. Youth, who learn valuable skills from the mapping process, also learn to see themselves as participants in a larger process of changing their communities for the better. [outreach.msu.edu/bpbriefts/issues/brief4.pdf](http://outreach.msu.edu/bpbriefts/issues/brief4.pdf), [www.nlc.org/iyef/a\\_city\\_platform/11429.aspx](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/a_city_platform/11429.aspx)

- In Detroit, Community YouthMapping data are made available to the public on “community kiosks” located in public libraries, city government buildings, and other public spaces. The kiosks provide information about community activities for youth, and they print out maps of how to access the resources. The city of Detroit’s Youth Services Division employs young people to help maintain and analyze the data collected through Community YouthMapping.
  - In Baltimore, the Community YouthMapping effort was designed to mobilize communities across the city. At the end of the mapping process, young people shared the information they had collected with the community by conducting “street corner Speakouts” and by participating in Baltimore’s Promise Summit, a citywide meeting of 7,000 people where each citizen was able to vote on five priority goals for youth in Baltimore.
- \* In Virginia Beach, Virginia, the **Youth Leaders in Action (YLA)** group includes 30 diverse youth from middle and high schools throughout the city. Members conduct community service projects and serve with adults on the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Youth Opportunities Team, and a statewide Community Builders Network. [www.america’spromise.org](http://www.america’spromise.org)

Communities provide young people with a variety of opportunities to explore interests, to develop and apply skills, to receive support and recognition, and to take responsibility for a broad range of roles in community life. These opportunities include after-school programs and community service.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **AfterSchool Matters (ASM)** is a non-profit organization initiated as a conscious effort by the mayor’s office to build a youth system in Chicago. It partners with the City of Chicago, the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services, the Chicago Public Library and community-based organizations. ASM works to create out-of-school opportunities, including apprenticeships with skilled professionals, for young people in schools across the city. These apprenticeships enable teens to develop more advanced skills and increased levels of responsibility over time, and offer stipends for higher levels of apprenticeships and summer employment. ASM complements school reform efforts in Chicago, such as smaller high schools and programs that connect businesses and nonprofits to schools. A pilot program created by the Chicago Public Schools connects ASM students at technical schools with local community colleges, where they receive additional technical training and earn college credit. ASM also operates drop-in centers in schools and community organizations and conducts intensive outreach in areas where there is a dearth of programming for teens. [www.afterschoolmatters.org](http://www.afterschoolmatters.org)
- \* **The After School Corporation (TASC)** began in 1998 with 25 programs in New York City. It has served more than 250,000 children in New York and beyond by funding,



## Actions



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monitoring, evaluating, and supporting more than 320 after-school programs in public schools, including 262 current programs. TASC programs are operated by 83 community-based organizations such as neighborhood settlement houses and the YMCA, with support from 30 partnering colleges and cultural organizations. TASC began with a challenge grant from the Open Society Institute (OSI). To date, TASC has leveraged more than \$425 million in public and private funds. Its quality after-school programs offer children a safe environment where they can participate in active, hands-on learning activities that are not always available during the school day. They can write a play, practice yoga, create a comic book, play soccer, plant a garden, dance, write a poem, or receive tutoring—and they have a chance to shine at any of these. The programs aim to strengthen and reinforce regular school-day learning and unlock young peoples' potential. [www.tascorp.org](http://www.tascorp.org)

- \* The Children's Aid Society's **CAS-Carrera** program is a comprehensive approach to teen pregnancy prevention. The program includes academic support, employment preparation and career awareness, comprehensive family life—sex education, self-expression in the arts, and individual lifetime sports. The program also provides comprehensive medical care, reproductive health counseling, contraception, and mental health services. [www.childrengaidssociety.org](http://www.childrengaidssociety.org)
- \* The **Teen Outreach Program (TOP)** is a school- and community-based program for students in grades 9 to 12. Although designed as a pregnancy prevention program, it focuses very little attention directly on sexual behavior and reproduction. Instead, it provides a school-based discussion curriculum focused on life skills, parent-adolescent communication, and future life planning, along with tutoring and an intensive community service component. TOP participants are recruited using program posters and school media and by facilitators who believe a particular young person at risk for pregnancy or school dropout. Classroom/group instruction involves small group activities and discussions on age/stage-appropriate topics of special interest to young people, allowing them to examine their values and master life skills within a supportive peer group guided by a trained adult facilitator. Community service offers participants a variety of service and volunteer roles, which provides youths with an opportunity to help others, reconnects young people to their communities, challenges them to learn new skills, and authenticates their strengths and talents. Participants average more than 40 hours of volunteer service per school year. TOP operates at approximately 400 program locations across the United States, the Virgin Islands, and the United Kingdom, reaching an estimated 20,000 youth. [www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/TeenOutreachProgram.htm](http://www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/TeenOutreachProgram.htm)
- \* **City Year**, a part of AmeriCorps, enlists young adults ages 17 to 24 in a demanding year of full-time service. During this year, youth work in diverse teams to address societal needs, particularly in schools and neighborhoods. The teams are diverse racially, ethnically, and by class and education. Team members work as tutors and mentors to school children; they reclaim public spaces and organize after-school programs, school vacation camps, and civic engagement programs for students of all ages. More than 1,100 corps members serve at 16 City Year sites across the United States and at one international site in Johannesburg, South Africa. In addition to its youth corps, City Year is committed to engaging business, civic, and government leaders to illustrate, promote, and expand the power of service to build a stronger democracy. [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org)
- \* **YouthBuild USA** is a national network of more than 226 local programs that collaborate to improve their outcomes and impact. In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16 to 24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. All YouthBuild participants

# Actions & Examples



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are poor, and many have had experience with foster care, juvenile justice, welfare, and homelessness. Participants spend 6 to 24 months in the full-time program, dividing their time between the construction site and the YouthBuild alternative school. Community- and faith-based nonprofit organizations sponsor most programs, although some are sponsored by public agencies. Primary support comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Having found that participants had a wide range of needs and could take advantage of a wide range of opportunities, YouthBuild has become increasingly comprehensive over time. In addition to its alternative schools and job training and pre-apprenticeship programs, YouthBuild places strong emphasis on leadership development, civic engagement, and community service. Its young people participate in personal counseling, peer support groups, and life planning processes; they make new friends, commit to a positive lifestyle, and pursue cultural and recreational activities together. Participating youth form a long-term mini-community, which they can continue to participate in for years. [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)

- \* Students in **Waupin, Wisconsin**, did a community assessment and identified the need for a warning light at a nearby railroad crossing. They worked with local elected officials and presented their case to the railroad commissioner, who turned down their request for lights but agreed to conduct a traffic study. A year later, warning signs were installed and physical obstructions at the crossing were removed (Melaville et al., 2006).
- \* The **Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP)** enrolls ninth-grade students in an intensive intervention program during their four years in high school. QOP provides young people with 250 hours each of education-related activities, development activities, and service activities. Youth receive hourly stipends and bonuses for completing program components, and program staff work closely with students to ensure that they continue to participate for the entire program period, even following up with students who stop participating and working to re-engage them.  
[www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/QuantumOpportunitiesProgram.htm](http://www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/QuantumOpportunitiesProgram.htm)

Communities and policymakers support youth-serving organizations that serve as place-based anchors for youth by developing comprehensive approaches, implementing a variety of strategies, programs and activities adapted to the needs and assets of the youth and communities they serve.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Beacons** are community centers located in public school buildings, which offer a range of activities and services to participants of all ages before and after school, in the evenings, and on weekends. Individual Beacons are managed by community-based organizations and work collaboratively with their host schools, community advisory councils, and a wide range of neighborhood organizations and institutions (Warren et al., 2002). Beacons offer children and adults a wide range of recreational programs, social services, educational enrichment, and vocational activities in four core areas: youth development programming, academic support and enhancement, parent involvement and family support, and neighborhood safety and community building. Beacons community centers have expanded from 12 original sites to more than 80 in New York City and to other communities across the United States, including Palm Beach





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County, Florida; Savannah, Georgia; and San Francisco, California.

[www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/services-afterschool-beacon.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/services-afterschool-beacon.html)

- \* The **Latin American Youth Center (LAYC)** is a multicultural, multi-purpose organization that supports youth and their families in Washington, DC, and two surrounding communities in Maryland. LAYC supports youth and families “in their determination to live, work and study with dignity, hope and joy,” and serves as a place-based anchor in the neighborhoods it serves. The organization provides a range of supports and activities with a youth development approach, including a YouthBuild program operated as a charter school and opportunities for youth to participate in community service, advocacy, social enterprise, mentoring, and career skills programs. LAYC provides this range of services and supports in a youth development context, supporting and celebrating individual youth and their shared Latino and Caribbean heritage. LAYC’s multicultural program mix is designed to span the entire youth engagement continuum. It helps youth, many of whom are first or second generation immigrants, to get their basic needs met, get engaged, and become advocates for themselves and their communities. LAYC provides youth with the opportunity to learn practical life skills through educational and employment opportunities. Central to the model is the connectivity among programs, allowing youth to pursue their own developmental path through the programs with the mentoring support of the LAYC staff, many of whom were once LAYC youth themselves. The center's range of programs—education, counseling, housing, employment, health services, arts, and recreation—exist not only for youth, but also for their extended families.

The outcomes for youth to which LAYC has committed itself include:

- Increased academic achievement and commitment to education, for both in-school and out-of-school youth;
- Acquisition of career skills and knowledge for immediate employment/financial purposes and long-term career development;
- Increased awareness of the community and engagement in improving it;
- Improved ability to initiate and sustain positive relationships;
- Adoption of healthy habits and avoidance of risky behaviors; and
- Increased ability to find positive solutions to the immediate needs of daily life.

[www.layc-dc.org](http://www.layc-dc.org)

To assure that an ample array of opportunities will be available, communities create local mechanisms for monitoring the accessibility and quality of programs for youth. Private and public funders support entities able to engage in orderly, coordinated community-wide programming, often by involving intermediary organizations that include researchers, practitioners, funders, and policy makers.



Actions



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## B. Youth obtain support from parents and other caring adults.

Communities encourage parents to stay engaged with their adolescent children.

### EXAMPLES

- \* **Plain Talk** was launched by the Annie E. Casey Foundation on the theory that “If you increase adult/teen communication about sex, and increase sexually active teens' access to contraceptives, you will decrease the number of unwanted pregnancies, STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and HIV/AIDS.” Parental involvement was viewed as a key component of the program. Plain Talk and Hablando Claro (the program name used in the Spanish-speaking sites) aimed at the following goals:

- To create consensus among parents and other adults about the need to protect sexually active youth by encouraging early and consistent use of contraceptives
- To give parents and other community adults the information and skills they need to communicate more effectively with teens about responsible sexual behavior
- To improve adolescent access to high-quality, age-appropriate, and readily available reproductive health care, including contraception
- To achieve these goals, Plain Talk sites engaged in the following activities:
- Community Mapping to obtain information on the community's attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs regarding teen sexual behavior
- Drawing on this information to recruit and involve residents in developing solutions
- Training resident volunteers to take the Plain Talk message door-to-door into schools, community centers, businesses, and just about anywhere they could find an audience to listen

The evaluation of Plain Talk by Public/Private Ventures found that the Plain Talk framework enabled communities to change the way adults communicated with teens about sex. More frequent communication was associated with improvements in the teens' sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; the youth who talked with adults, compared with those who did not, knew more about and were more comfortable with contraceptives, used contraceptives more often, used reproductive health services more frequently, and were less likely to have an STD or a pregnancy. [www.plaintalk.org](http://www.plaintalk.org)

- \* The **National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy** works to persuade parents of the important role they play in their adolescent children's lives. This work is based on research findings that close parent-child relationships not only help protect young people from early sex and pregnancy, but also help teens avoid violence, substance and alcohol use, and school failure. Overall closeness between parents and their children; shared activities; parental presence in the home; and parental caring, support, and concern are all associated with a reduced risk of early sex and teen pregnancy. Teens who feel closely connected to their parents are more likely to abstain from sex, wait until they are older to begin having sex, have fewer sexual partners, and use contraception more consistently. The campaign makes the case that even in a culture that bombards young people with conflicting and often confusing messages about sex and pregnancy, parents remain powerful. [www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/Parental\\_Influence.pdf](http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/Parental_Influence.pdf)





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Funders and local leaders support well-designed mentoring programs that connect young people to caring adults in one-to-one relationships that can augment the support youths receive from their families.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)** operates programs throughout the United States, matching youth with mentors who are carefully chosen, trained, and supervised. BBBS supports the development of long-term relationships between mentors and young people to promote positive development and social responsibility; mentors and students are expected to meet at least once each week for a minimum of a year. [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org)
- \* In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the **Black Achievers** program is an asset-based mentoring and education program that links successful African-American role models with young people from 8th grade through college. Through the Black Achievers program, young people are exposed to a range of opportunities and are encouraged to discover and explore their own passions. The success of the program has led America's Promise to name Harrisburg as one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People. [www.america'spromise.org](http://www.america'spromise.org)
- \* The **Amachi** initiative develops partnerships among faith-based organizations, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations to identify children of prisoners (including adolescent children) and match them with caring adult volunteers. Amachi was initiated in Philadelphia and has been expanded to encompass similar programs in many urban areas across the country. To strengthen their efforts in Philadelphia, Amachi is now working in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS), which provides an agency infrastructure and connections with churches, especially in the African American community. [www.amachimentoring.org](http://www.amachimentoring.org)
- \* **Penn VIPS** is part of the University of Pennsylvania's academically-based community service approach to engaging undergraduate and graduate students in joint service, learning, and research projects with public schools in West Philadelphia; projects include health promotion efforts and direct services to young people and their families. Penn VIPS's mentoring program is designed to bring West Philadelphia Middle School students to the University of Pennsylvania campus, where they interact with faculty, administrators, and staff. Mentors meet with mentees once a month for a ten-month period. The goal of the program is to expose mentees to a college campus and to help them set goals for their futures. Mentors form positive relationships with their mentees; they talk to them about the importance of education and setting goals and assist them in the selection of a high school. [www.upenn.edu/ccp/general/penn-vips-on-going-programs-3.html](http://www.upenn.edu/ccp/general/penn-vips-on-going-programs-3.html)

## Actions & Examples



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## C. Communities work to incorporate and convey positive images of youth.

**National and local entities design public engagement campaigns to mobilize and support new priorities for public investment.**

### EXAMPLES

- \* The **National League of Cities (NLC)** provides resources for communities of any size and governmental structure to help support a youth development agenda. NLC recommends that municipal policymakers:
  - Increase public awareness of the possibilities for youth;
  - Promote positive images of youth;
  - Lead community-wide visioning and collaboration processes;
  - Infuse youth development into all municipal operations;
  - Provide youth development programming; and
  - Coordinate services for youth.

[www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)
- \* The **Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth** is a network of more than 300 community foundations across the country, dedicated to strengthening the leadership capacity of such foundations to improve the lives of children, youth, and families. The Coalition works to educate community foundation staff and donors about effective practices in supporting children, youth, and their families, and the Coalition builds public will for programs and initiatives that develop the positive potential of young people. [www.ccfy.org](http://www.ccfy.org)
- \* Advocates of education reform and expanded supports for children, youth, and families in **Kentucky** framed the changes they were promoting as the cornerstone of economic development. According to the Finance Project, this enabled the advocates to get beyond traditional opposition to new spending—opposition based on racial bias and concerns about big government. They succeeded in obtaining public support for community-based health and social services and supports for children and youth and their families (Hayes, 2003).



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Prospects of Thriving,  
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## D. Youth obtain help to develop financial literacy, manage money, and build assets.

A range of programs provide proactive financial education and counseling services to help young people become better managers of their money. Programs link financial literacy education to specific opportunities, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, Individual Development Accounts, and bank accounts, so that young people can immediately apply what they have learned. Programs that provide skills training in money management, credit management, consumer skills, financial literacy, and asset building make special efforts to reach low-income youth and youth transitioning out of foster care.

### EXAMPLES

- \* Communities participating in the **Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI)** are developing Opportunity Passports for young people making the transition out of foster care. These Opportunity Passports including personal debit accounts; “matched” savings accounts that combine contributions from the youth themselves and from outside sources; and a range of locally developed benefits, such as access to mentors, job training and part-time jobs, and adult education (Nelson, 2004).

Financial literacy education is incorporated into workforce development and adult literacy programs, as well as into the development of high school curricula.

### EXAMPLES

- \* Participants in **YouthBuild Americorps St. Louis (YBSLA)** receive bi-weekly stipends, as well as stipends for transportation and meals during both classroom education and worksite training phases of the program. In addition, YBSLA created Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to allow participants to accumulate assets while they were in training and to encourage them to complete the program. Students accumulate financial incentives for meeting benchmarks that include perfect attendance, improvement on scores in basic skills, obtaining a GED, placement in a job or in school, and completing graduation requirements. Savings cannot be withdrawn until graduation requirements are fulfilled and can only be used to meet employment, career, or educational goals. [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)



Actions



Ingredients



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Rationale



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Prospects of Thriving,  
Belonging and Engaging

## **Ingredients: Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging, and Engaging**

A National Academy of Sciences study of community programs that promote youth development identified the following eight features of positive youth development settings:

- **Physical and psychological safety** – Staff create an atmosphere of physical and emotional safety.
- **Appropriate structure** – Staff develop and provide a consistent system.
- **Supportive relationships** – Staff care about and provide connections with youth.
- **Opportunities to belong** – Staff develop opportunities to instill a sense of belonging in youth.
- **Positive social norms** – Staff reinforce positive social behaviors.
- **Support for efficacy and meaning** – Staff develop an environment where youth matter and make a difference.
- **Opportunities for skill building** – Staff engage youth in learning opportunities.
- **Integration of family, school, and community efforts** – Staff create linkages between the different parts of youths' lives (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Others have identified similar ingredients of opportunities that are effective in helping youth to experience the sense of belonging and community that is essential for a successful transition to young adulthood:

- They **are readily accessible** to all young people in their communities. They are available to youth regardless of eligibility during the day, in the evenings, on weekends, and in accessible locations. Staff reach out to include vulnerable youth and those in disconnected communities.
- They focus on and **enhance the strengths of young people**. Youth are encouraged and supported in developing skills and talents and in pursuing their interests and passions.
- They focus on and **enhance the strengths of staff** who work with young people. Staff are trained and supported in engaging youth through positive interactions and opportunities to succeed. Staff make it a priority to develop relationships with youth and their families.
- They **respond to young people in the context of their families and communities**. Environments and programs are sensitive to the diverse cultural, educational, language, and values backgrounds of young people and their families. Staff reflect the unique diversity of the community and communicate with families and community residents in the languages they speak.
- They **encourage youth voice and choice**. Young people take leadership roles in planning projects and activities, and they develop and practice new skills in the process. Young people have choices about which activities they engage in and which roles they play.

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- They **engage youth in the life of their communities**. Youth are engaged in serving others, in understanding needs and issues of the community, and in advocating for the needs of community residents. Youth are supported in addressing issues of social justice and equity.
- Funders and administrators **are committed to consistent monitoring of progress**. Staff and youth engage in periodic reflection on the effectiveness of their work and their capacity to support youth.

Policymakers, funders, and program managers support youth-serving organizations as they **act on a deep understanding of how issues of race, ethnicity, and culture affect youths' sense of belonging**; they devise and implement strategies that integrate culturally and racially sensitive perspectives and interventions. They make resources available to build youth workers' skills in working with youth from diverse backgrounds and ensuring racially equitable outcomes for youth.

Policymakers provide ongoing sources of funding that support development toward positive youth outcomes by

- Providing **core funding** for a range of supportive programs aimed at increasing the number of youth who are positively engaged with their peers, with adults, and in their communities and who are on a path toward productive adulthood.
- Enabling youth-serving organizations to **blend funding** from a variety of sources that take a single-problem approach (drug abuse prevention programs, pregnancy prevention programs, dropout prevention programs, etc.) in order to support coherent, unfragmented programming.
- Providing **funding that supports an infrastructure** that can manage growth and development, human resources, and information technology.

**Leadership development** is integral to many youth development efforts in which youth learn to work collaboratively to achieve a goal or to create a successful product. Older youth often work with younger ones, developing and demonstrating leadership. Effective leadership development (which should not be confused with youth involvement) requires training, nurturance, and support from skilled adults.

**Community service** initiatives involve young people in activities designed to meet identified community needs. These initiatives are able to build unity, civic trust, and social capital, typically by uniting people from a wide variety of social, racial, economic, and educational backgrounds to serve side-by-side for the common good.

**Life skills training** is effective in helping youth develop the skills to be successful in new situations and to improve communication with peers and family members. Life skills training does this by helping young people to become familiar with new challenges, to learn to solve problems and resolve conflicts, and to make decisions about everyday life that will enable them to live independently.

Studies of successful **mentoring** programs agree on critical program practices:

- The screening process provides programs with an opportunity to select those adults most likely to be successful as mentors by looking for volunteers who can realistically keep their commitment and who understand the need to earn the trust of their young mentee.

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- Orientation and training ensure that youth and mentors share a common understanding of the adult's role while helping mentors develop realistic expectations of what they can accomplish.
- Ongoing support and supervision of the matches help pairs negotiate inevitable bumps in the relationship, so that the relationship has a chance to develop rather than dissolve prematurely. (Durability and persistence of the relationship are especially important; the longer matches last, the more positive effects mentoring has, but matches that ended in less than three months were found instead to harm youth.) (Sipe, 1999)

Studies of mentoring have shown that **effective mentors** share the following characteristics:

- They are a steady and involved presence in the lives of the youth with whom they work.
- They respect the views and desires of the youth with whom they work.
- They become acquainted, but not overly involved, with the youth's parent(s).
- They seek and use advice and support from program staff. (Sipe, 1999; Grossman & Johnson, 1999)

A review of **mentoring** studies found that the positive effects of mentoring were most likely to be found in programs that incorporated the following three key elements: effective screening of mentors, orientation and training of mentors, and ongoing support and supervision by the sponsoring agency (Tierney et al., 1995).

A meta-analysis of 73 evaluations of **after-school programs that aimed at improving young people's social and personal development** found that the following program elements were common to all of the effective programs (i.e., programs that yielded significant positive results, indicated by increased feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem; improvements in school bonding, positive social behaviors, school grades, and achievement test scores; and reduced problem behaviors and drug use):

- The presence of a sequenced set of activities for achieving skill objectives
- The use of active forms of learning
- The presence of at least one program component focused directly on developing personal or social skills
- The targeting of explicit personal or social skills (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007)

An in-depth study designed to identify the **key characteristics of after-school programs that lead to youth engagement and learning** found that the better the following tasks were done, the more deeply youth engaged and the more youth felt they gained from activities:

- Activities, and the groups engaging in the activities, must be well-managed. Four techniques emerge as particularly effective: 1) setting reasonable ground rules, with just enough structure to help activities run well; 2) providing ongoing positive reinforcement through encouragement and praise; 3) being consistent and fair in reinforcing expectations; and 4) remaining firm, but not harsh, when ground rules are broken.
- Positive adult support—both emotional and instructional—is critical to enhancing youth learning, engagement, and enjoyment. Adults provide emotional support for youngsters by forging trusting relationships somewhat similar to friendships or tutorships, learning about youth culture, allowing for informal socializing, and taking the time to talk with individual youth when special needs arise. Adults provide instructional support by giving careful one-on-one instruction, challenging youth to move beyond their current skill levels by attempting new tasks, and providing balanced feedback that includes a mix of positive reinforcement and critical assessments of progress.





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- Successful integration of youth input in the form of “youth voice and choice” (which seems to be particularly important for high-school age students) seems to depend on three techniques: 1) Instructors set clear expectations about the type of youth input and direction required; 2) Instructors remove themselves from the decision-making process and grant considerable responsibility to youth to craft their own unique project or solution; and 3) Instructors step back in to recognize progress and support next steps for carrying the project to completion (Grossman et al., 2007).

**Locating after-school programs in schools** that serve low-income families is an effective means of targeting low-income children. However, special efforts are required to enable programs to attract older youth and the highest-needs students in those schools (Grossman et al., 2002).

**Staff practices and behaviors** are a critical ingredient in after-school programs. Staff in high-quality programs set up physically and emotionally safe environments; in these surroundings, they heighten and sustain young people’s interest, presenting challenging activities and promoting learning and self-discovery in academic, social, and personal domains (Grossman et al., 2002).

No single program is likely to meet the needs of all youth in a community; their needs are too diverse, and their needs change over time. They are most likely to benefit if they and their parents are able to put together a **mosaic of positive experiences**, broadening their range of activities, widening their geographic horizons, and increasing their network of adults and peers. If there are several opportunities in their community that attract them, they can still be well served even though no one program seems to be engaging them intensively (Grossman et al., 2002).

After-school programs that are successful in attracting and working with **older and harder-to-serve youth**

- Provide increased staff and staff time available for outreach, recruitment, monitoring, and support
- Create collaborations with schools, probation and policy to recruit, refer and track youth’s progress
- Increase the amount of time that teens have access to the facilities and staff
- Make sure that the program provides ample opportunities for academic support, job training, and leadership development, often combined with providing stipends
- Recognize that older youth have distinct and diverse needs and interests
- Find that staff turnover interferes with achievement of the program’s purposes (Herera & Arbreton, 2003)

The tension between emphasizing “problem prevention” on the one hand, or “health promotion” and “youth development” on the other, is a false dichotomy. Successful after-school and youth development programs offer a compendium of services and supports that acknowledge **the interconnectedness of efforts to prevent problems and to support healthy development** (Wilson, 2001).

**Media and other messages** that are helpful in improving outcomes for youth share the following characteristics:

- They are respectful and contribute to youngsters’ positive self-image and self-worth.
- They make clear that adolescents are still developing and that their development will be enhanced if they are accepted and supported by the community.
- They convey that many youngsters are looking for ways to contribute to their communities, to find their place, and to make their mark in responsible ways.



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Funders or intermediaries who seek to enable or encourage local actions that improve outcomes for youth can usually optimize results by neither dictating to communities exactly what should happen on the ground, nor leaving communities entirely to their own devices. In a study of comprehensive community-based youth development efforts, Public/Private Ventures found that a middle ground of **providing a limited number of critical core concepts, but not a detailed blueprint**, was likely to be most effective. P/PV concluded that “one of the most critical external supports that can be brought to bear in a community attempting a change effort is a substantive framework—a set of ideas that is research based, yet understandable and easily communicated; helps local institutions and residents focus their thinking on already established community goals; and provides implementation guidance but is not prescriptive about implementation choices” (Watson, 2002).

When advocacy for expanded supports for children, youth, and families is framed as **the cornerstone of economic development**, advocacy gets beyond traditional opposition to new spending—opposition based on racial bias and concerns about big government and big spending (Hayes, 2003).

While good information is critical to effective policy making and plays a critical role in spurring large-scale change, **mobilizing support for change by building relationships and cultivating partners and champions is even more important** (Urban Seminar Series, 2003).

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## **Indicators: Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging, and Engaging**

*Please note that our work on Indicators is only, at this point, intended to be suggestive.*

At least four approaches to measuring progress toward the goal of increased prospects of thriving, belonging and engaging are worthy of attention. (These approaches are discussed in greater detail in the essay “Defining the Outcome: Indicators of Success,” located in the Overview section of this Notebook.)

The first would assess the outcomes among youth that show how successfully actions have been taken that were identified in this part of the Pathway as contributing to the Goal.

**Indicators that assess outcomes by measuring conditions among youth, such as the following:**

- More youth are voting.
- More youth participate in decision-making.
- More youth are engaged in community service.

The second would assess how successfully actions have been taken that were identified in this part of the Pathway as contributing to the Goal, by measuring community conditions.

**Interim indicators that assess community conditions such as the following:**

- More youth have opportunities to belong, lead, participate in decision-making, and contribute through community service.
- More youth obtain support from caring adults and institutions in the community through after-school programs, mentoring, and other opportunities.
- More programs and institutions reach out proactively to youth and their families.
- Communities are engaged in monitoring the accessibility and quality of programs for youth and are involved in orderly, coordinated, community-wide programming.

A third approach suggests that the best indicators of progress are measurements of the characteristics of youth that predict future success and well-being.+

A fourth approach would measure the negative outcomes of failed efforts to provide youth and their families with the formal and informal supports and the services they need to succeed.+

Indicators

+ See “Defining the Outcome: Indicators of Success” in the Overview section of this Notebook.



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## **Rationale: Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging, and Engaging**

# Rationale

Experiences in adolescence that include access to safe places, opportunities to master challenges, chances to gain age-appropriate skills and knowledge, and the development of close, trusting relationships with caring people on a daily basis provide young people with an appreciation of themselves as individuals with inherent and unique value and help them to acquire the competencies necessary for healthy and productive adulthood (Roth et al., 2000; Connell and Gambone, 2002).

### **Rationale for a youth development approach**

People, programs, and institutions that take a youth development approach understand young people as resources to be developed and link them with positive experiences and institutions in the community. Youth development programs often include life skills development, community service, and formal and informal activities that allow youth to nurture their interests and talents, practice new skills, and gain a sense of personal or group recognition. These activities often result in recognizable changes (Roth et al., 2000).

Youth development approaches can be made part of the work of a wide range of settings, both formal and informal. Youth development approaches engage a community's young people in understanding the issues and problems of life in that community and in learning how to make a positive difference in their own environments. As they participate actively in civic and community life, young people experience their own strengths and competencies and raise their aspirations for success in education and careers ([www.hampton.gov](http://www.hampton.gov)).

A long-term study of youth-serving organizations in urban neighborhoods found that organizations that succeed with urban youth share common features, including:

- Family-like environments
- Opportunities for active participation and real accomplishment
- Sensitivity to youths' realities and aspirations
- A view of youth as resources
- Flexibility to respond to crises and demands in young people's lives
- Connections to local neighborhoods and institutions
- Positive opportunities for practice and experience
- Positive messages that young people can hear and respond to (McLaughlin et al., 1994)

Young people's positive experiences with youth-serving agencies depend on the presence of skilled, well-trained youth workers. An evaluation of the New York City Beacons program found that the "youth development quality" of the Beacons environment made a difference in outcomes for young people. The Beacons sites where staff participated most frequently in professional development activities had the highest "youth development quality" and the best outcomes for young people (Warren et al., 2002).



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# Rationale

## Rationale for a community-wide approach

Adolescents who spend time in communities that offer them a wealth of developmental opportunities experience less risk and show evidence of higher rates of positive development. A diversity of opportunities where many different individual organizations provide community programs, each with its own unique objectives, design, approach, focus, and activities, is more likely to support broad adolescent development, attracting the interest and meeting the needs of a greater number of youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

## Rationale for mentoring

“Listening to the young people [participating in effective mentoring programs], one hears that, no matter what the program’s goals are, the primary benefit from their point of view is a wider sense of life’s possibilities and an increase in self-confidence. These new-found characteristics come from having a respected and knowledgeable older friend who sends the constant message, ‘Yes, you can.’ Beyond pursuing the specific aims of each program, the young people become more aware of the larger world, of their own capacities and proclivities” (Jaffe, 1999).

In addition to providing personal relationships and support, mentors often serve as role models and can introduce young people to connections and experiences in the broader community, especially to contacts for jobs and education.

## Rationale for after-school programs and activities

Effective after-school programs provide a range of developmental supports, opportunities, and activities staffed by skilled leaders. When young people can participate in a range of challenging and interesting activities, they have the chance to develop new skills and interests, build positive and supportive relationships with adults and peers, and develop a sense that they matter, as they make decisions and take on leadership roles. (Grossman et al., 2002).

Out-of-school-time programs can be located in community-based and youth-serving organizations, faith-based organizations, and other locations where young people feel physically and psychologically safe. Although these programs may include supports for academic learning, they are more than tutoring or “homework help” programs; they employ strategies that enable youth to build their capacities; develop healthy relationships; and pursue their talents, skills, and dreams. In addition, they provide opportunities for young people to belong, to lead, and to serve their communities (Warren et al., 2000).

Although adolescence is often seen as a time of separation and individuation, it is also a time when young people need to feel a sense of belonging and connection. After-school programs can provide a unique opportunity for forming relationships with both peers and adult mentors and can foster a sense of community. Significant relationships formed through after-school programs are among the essential ingredients for the long-term success of young people (Wilson, 2001).



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### **Rationale for efforts to improve financial literacy**

Research on the social and psychological effects of accumulating material assets—property, cash, equities and other investments—suggests that assets contribute to positive outcomes for young people; these outcomes include higher expectations and confidence about the future, longer-term thinking and planning, reduced participation in high-risk behaviors, and a higher degree of social connectedness. The positive effects of accumulating assets seem to be strongest in the most vulnerable populations (Youth Transition Funders Group, n.d.).

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## **Evidence: Youth Have Increased Prospects of Thriving, Belonging, and Engaging**

Evidence

The **New York City Beacons** initiative was evaluated through a collaboration of the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, and the Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs, and Community Health. The evaluation involved an intensive study of six Beacons sites, selected as a stratified random sample of the 40 sites then operating in New York City. Methods included youth surveys and interviews; interviews with lead agency and school staff, and site and activity observations. Overall, evaluators found that in sites with better youth-development quality, young people were more likely to:

- feel better about themselves at the Beacon;
- believe that youth of all races and ethnicities were valued at the Beacon;
- perceive that staff had high expectations for their behavior and performance; and
- report that the Beacon helped them learn leadership skills.

They were also less likely to report that they had:

- cut classes;
- hit others to hurt them;
- deliberately damaged other people's property;
- stolen money or other property; or
- been in a fight (Warren et al., 2002).

A study of **mentoring** programs by Public/Private Ventures compared youths participating in Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS) over the period of a year with youths who did not participate. The youths were between 10 and 16 years old and were 50 percent male; more than 50 percent were from an ethnic minority. In the study, which used an experimental design that randomly assigned youths to a control or treatment group, researchers found that when compared to non-participating youths, BBBS youths were less likely to:

- initiate drug and alcohol use;
- hit someone;
- skip a day of school or a class; or
- have lied to their parents.

Additional positive impacts were found for gender- and ethnic-specific subgroups of the participant's group (Tierney et al., 1995).

A review of **mentoring** studies found that programs that incorporated three key elements – effective screening of mentors, orientation and training, and ongoing support and supervision by the sponsoring agency – created solid mentoring relationships. In turn, these relationships improved mentee's attitudes toward school and their future relative to other similar youth, and often improved mentee behavior and performance as well. These improvements occurred regardless of whether the programs' explicit goals were to improve academic performance, decrease drug use, or strengthen friendships. The studies also show that programs with these elements decreased their participants' antisocial behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use, relative to their peers. Mentoring programs missing one or more of the three critical elements had more



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difficulty establishing good relationships in large numbers and did not produce the positive effects of mentoring (Sipe, 1996).

A study of **school-based mentoring programs** by Public/Private Ventures found that youth involved in school-based mentoring appear to receive some benefits from their involvement, but that benefits may be limited to those whose matches last longer than one school year. For others, researchers did not find improvements in any of the indices of academic performance or in relationships with parents and other adults (Herrera, 2004).

**Cal Learn** is a mandatory program for unmarried custodial teen parents in California who are under age 19, receive welfare benefits, and do not have a high school diploma or GED. Cal Learn provides case management services and other support services, and issues sanctions and bonuses according to school progress. A four-county evaluation found that rates of high school or GED completion were significantly higher for participants than for non-participants and that the positive impacts were greatest among teen parents who had dropped out of school (Mauldon et al., 2000).

The **National Guard Youth Challenge Program** serves high school dropouts ages 16 to 18 who are drug-free, unemployed, and not involved with the juvenile justice system. Participants are approximately 23 percent white, 21 percent Black, and 19 percent Hispanic, with sizable populations of American Indian and Asian youth; 21 percent of participants are female. The program combines a two-week introductory phase focused on developing physical and mental discipline with a 22-week residential phase emphasizing leadership, citizenship, community service, physical fitness, health and hygiene, job skills, and academic instruction. 70 percent of Challenge graduates earned a GED or high school diploma while in the program compared to an average pass rate of 41 percent for the same age group in adult education programs. Graduating Corps members improved 1.7 grade levels in reading and 1.8 grade levels in math. In the program's one year post-residential phase, youth are matched with mentors who help them re-enter their communities and implement a life plan ([www.ngyc.org](http://www.ngyc.org)).

A nationally focused, non-experimental study of **independent living programs for former foster youth** found that participants who had received skill training in all of five key areas—money management, credit management, consumer skills, education, and employment—were better able to hold a job for at least a year; better able to obtain health care if needed; less likely to go on welfare or to prison; and more likely to build a social network than youth who had not received such training. The principles of financial literacy and asset building apply to all youth, especially those from low income families (Cook, 1991).

An evaluation of the **Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP)**, where students were randomly assigned to an experimental or control group, found that the effects of QOP took two years to appear. By the time students were ready to graduate from high school, the experimental group had statistically higher scores on eleven measures of academic and functional skills. In the post-high school period, QOP students were more likely to have graduated from high school and enrolled in post-secondary education, less likely to have children, more likely to have received honors and awards, and more likely to have performed community service (Hahn et al., 1994).

A seven-city evaluation of the Children's Aid Society's **CAS-Carrera** program (a comprehensive approach to teen pregnancy prevention) found that pregnancy and birth rates for teen girls in the



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program were less than half of those of girls in the control group (Philliber Research Associates, 2001).

An evaluation of the **Teen Outreach Program** (a school- and community-based program focused on life skills, parent-adolescent communication, future life planning, and intensive community service), where participants were randomly assigned to either an intervention or a control group, found that fewer youth in the experimental group were suspended or arrested, dropped out, skipped school, failed courses, or became pregnant than students in the control groups. More youth in the experimental group used contraceptives and received academic awards (Allen et al., 1997).

A meta-analysis of 73 evaluations of **after-school programs that aimed at improving young people's social and personal development** found that youth programs in which activities are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit successfully increased participants' feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, positive feelings and attitudes toward school, positive social behaviors, school grades, and achievement test scores. They also reduced drug use and such problem behaviors as aggression, noncompliance, and conduct problems (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

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## The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports

Systems serving vulnerable youth, including the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, exert a protective and strengthening influence on youth and their families.

Community organizations actively find and engage disconnected youth, including those who are homeless, runaways, teen parents, school dropouts, immigrants, and English Language Learners.



### Actions

specific strategies, activities, or steps taken to impact the quality and capacity of local services and supports, the availability of resources, or the policy contexts that contribute to the outcome



### Examples

program and policy initiatives illustrating how actions have worked elsewhere



### Ingredients

elements of how actions are implemented that make them effective



### Indicators

measures for targeting and monitoring the impact of actions and documenting progress toward the outcome



### Rationale

research-based reasons to believe that identified actions are likely to contribute to the desired outcome



### Evidence

research documenting that identified actions contribute to achieving the targeted outcome or conditions that lead to the outcome





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## **Actions with Examples: The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports**

### **A. Systems serving vulnerable youth, including the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, exert a positive and strengthening influence on youth and their families.**

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts to provide comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving the employment prospects of high-risk youth.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* Programs funded under the **Workforce Investment Act (WIA)** represent one of the few federal funding streams available to provide comprehensive youth employment and youth development services to at-risk youth (Patel & Savner, 2003). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, effective Youth Councils work with Workforce Investment Boards to advocate on behalf of youth, make funding decisions, leverage resources for youth programming (especially for vulnerable youth), monitor and evaluate youth services, establish performance measures and standards, hold those who provide youth services accountable, and ensure that youth-serving staff have adequate training (Clymer et al., 2002).

[www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/act.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/act.cfm)

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts to provide comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving the prospects of youth transitioning out of foster care and SSI.

**State and local agencies ensure that social workers, foster families, and extended family members remain connected to youth who leave foster care (Nelson, 2004).**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The **California Permanency for Youth Project** seeks to ensure an enduring family relationship for youth who leave foster care. Individual youth are involved as participants or leaders in the process, which is designed to provide a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship; love, unconditional commitment, and lifelong supports; a legal relationship if possible; and the opportunity to maintain contact with important persons, including siblings. [www.cpyy.org](http://www.cpyy.org)



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**Schools and community agencies facilitate collaboration among stakeholders in order to provide young people in foster care with educational supports such as tutoring and counseling, with work experience, and with mentoring from supportive adults (Lewis, 2004).**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The **Casey School-to-Career Partnerships** link youth aging out of foster care to over 100 quality employers such as UPS, Home Depot, and Marriott. The program provides employment connections, case management for each youth employee, continuing education opportunities for all participants, and life skills training in areas such as financial management and meeting employer expectations. Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, these partnerships continue to grow as resources from corporations, local organizations, and public agency partners facilitate program expansion. [www.aecf.org/ChildFamilyServices/SchoolToCareer.aspx](http://www.aecf.org/ChildFamilyServices/SchoolToCareer.aspx)

**States modify policies and funding (often with support from the federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which doubled the amount of funding available to states that expand services for youth who “age out” of the foster care system) so that youth can remain in foster care until they reach their twenty-first birthday and in order to expand the availability of supports to young people leaving the foster care system.**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* In Iowa, one of the few states to extend foster care benefits to youth after the age of 18, the **Iowa Preparation for Adult Living** program extends Medicaid coverage for foster youth and provides them with a stipend of up to \$540 per month for living expenses. To be eligible, youths must work or go to school full time, and they cannot live with the parents from whom they have been removed. Youths can choose to participate in the program until they turn 21. [www.jimcaseyyouth.org](http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org)

**Federal policymakers improve the transition process for child Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients by connecting them to Vocational Rehabilitation benefits, vocational training and employment opportunities, and health and mental health care (Loprest & Wittenburg, 2005). State and federal policymakers facilitate the coordination of benefits from SSI, Medicaid, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other sources to improve support for young people with special needs during the transition to adulthood (English, 2006).**



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Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts aimed at improving health and mental health care for high-risk youth, particularly youth and their families involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

**Federal and state policymakers ensure comprehensive health and mental health care for all children and youth with coverage equivalent to current Medicaid benefits and with simplified enrollment (English et al., 2006). States that are unable to cover all children and youth assure benefits at least to**

- **Children and youth through age 18 with family incomes at or below 300% of the federal poverty level**
- **Pregnant women at or below 300% of the federal poverty level, for prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care for at least 60 days after birth**
- **Children with special needs and youth who have transitioned from the foster care system through age 20**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The state of **Arizona** enacted legislation ensuring that youth in foster care at age 18 have access to Medicaid benefits up to age 21, regardless of income (Yohalem & Pittman, 2001).

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts to provide comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving the prospects of teen parents and their children.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* Several states have created incentives to help teen parents continue their education. In **Illinois**, teen parents who are enrolled in postsecondary education can receive TANF benefits for up to 36 months without affecting their lifetime 60-month time limit on receiving benefits.

Public policies and private and public funding support community partnerships, coordination of services, and other efforts that target reform of the juvenile justice system.

**State and local policymakers craft effective responses to vulnerable youth who are in trouble with the law by**

- **creating diversion programs and additional opportunities in youth's communities to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system**
- **keeping youth in the juvenile justice system rather than in the adult criminal justice system**
- **addressing what happens to youth when they are in the juvenile justice system to keep the system from harming them**



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- **increasing the chances that youth in the juvenile justice system will leave it with connections to caring adults and to educational and employment opportunities (Schwartz, 2003).**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* A **Connecticut** legislative commission recommended changing State laws that automatically try 16-year-olds as adults, recognizing that “thousands of young people (are) being trapped in an adult system that, far from reforming them, too often turns them into hardened criminals” (*N.Y. Times*, 24 May 2007). Supported by research which shows that children who are processed through adult courts and who do time in adult jails fare worse in life and commit much more violent crime than children handled in juvenile courts, legislation currently pending would move 16- and 17-year-old offenders out of the adult courts and back into the juvenile justice system.

**States Improve outcomes for incarcerated juveniles by creating smaller facilities with highly trained staff, that incorporate a therapeutic approach (Ayelish, 2005).**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* The State of **Missouri** has created small regional corrections programs to allow incarcerated youth to remain close to their homes and families. In these facilities, young people are engaged in counseling and personal development programs, rather than punishment and isolation. The state’s approach has yielded exceptional rates of avoiding recidivism: 70 percent of youth released in 1999 avoided recommitment to a correctional institution for three years. Costs of the approach compare favorably with costs of less-effective programs in other states (McGarvey, 2005).

**Communities reduce the number of youth in confinement by expanding the use of in-home detention with intensive supervision and by expanding alternatives to detention through collaborative planning with the courts, law enforcement, and elected officials and through attention to data about youth and their offenses (Nelson, 2004).**

#### EXAMPLES

- \* Through the Casey Foundation’s **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)**, officials in Portland/Multnomah County, Oregon; Cook County, Illinois; and Sacramento County, CA were able to achieve significant reductions in admissions into juvenile detention facilities and significant improvement in the conditions of confinement. Additionally, Multnomah County was able to reduce racial disparities in the number of juveniles who were admitted to detention facilities (Nelson, 2004).
- \* The **CUNY CATCH (CUNY Alliance for Transitional Career Help)** program in New York City provides transitional services for young offenders, beginning with early intervention with inmates at the Rikers Island prison and continuing with education and training on community-based college campuses. Services provided on college campuses include pre-GED and GED preparation, college course enrollment, and job-search skills



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and employment services, as well as referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment, family counseling and crisis intervention ([www.lagcc.cuny.edu/catch](http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/catch)). CUNY CATCH reports a 95 percent success rate for students who have taken the GED test. Approximately 50 percent of participants enroll in college, and the rest receive job placement assistance (Nelson, 2004).

## B. Community organizations actively find and engage disconnected youth, including those who are homeless, runaways, teen parents, school dropouts, immigrants, and English Language Learners.

Community organizations offer outreach, support, and intensive forms of intervention to children and youth while they are in foster care. They assure that foster youth are effectively connected to services, supports, and opportunities, and they expand foster youths' access to college by providing mentoring, counseling, and assistance with tuition, books, and transportation.

### EXAMPLES

- \* **Treehouse** serves the physical, emotional, and educational needs of the over 15,000 King County (Washington) children with open case files at the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Since 1988, Treehouse has filled gaps that no other agency addresses, providing fees for extra-curricular programs and summer camp, educational support services, the wherewithal for full participation in the "everyday" activities of growing up, and clothing and supplies so that children can "fit in" at school. Today, Treehouse sends nearly 500 children to summer camp each year and has 15 tutors advocating for the needs of foster children in eight schools and tending to their educational requirements. Treehouse also runs an Educational Advocacy program that works hand-in-hand with schools and DSHS to bridge the gaps in services for foster children throughout King County. Treehouse was established through the volunteer efforts of several dedicated caseworkers, who saw that even the best foster parents with substantial personal and financial resources can seldom meet all the needs of a child whose world has been turned upside down and severely impacted by the realities of child abuse and neglect, including frequent transitions and dealing with the unknown on a daily basis. Soon reinforced with the contributions of local partners, Treehouse developed programs that tailored services to the specific needs of kids in foster care and that collected data on program impact; data collection helped set the foundation for the advocacy efforts in which Treehouse is now engaged. By establishing a visible source of youth services, Treehouse has expanded programs and advocacy to far better meet demands that outstrip its current capacity. Its community engagement model has been duplicated in other areas of Washington State and across the country.
- \* The **Treehouse Coaching-to-College** program helps King County youth ages 16 to 24 who are in foster care to graduate from high school and then navigate the appropriate post-secondary educational opportunities of their dreams. Services include, but are not limited to, simplifying the process of college application, identifying sources of financial aid, and accessing



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available scholarship funds. Treehouse staff train community volunteers to work one-on-one with youth to help them define their ongoing educational goals. Regular meetings with coaches help students identify and fine tune their unique educational goals. This process, in turn, provides the direction and impetus for students to master required academic skills, visit college campuses of their choice, and learn to apply for financial aid. In addition to providing a vital support system, Treehouse can also help Coaching-to-College students with up to \$4,000 per year in scholarship assistance.

- \* The **Treehouse Coaching-to-College Middle School Program** offers ongoing group workshops that meet at licensing agencies, group homes, and schools throughout King County. In sessions led by Treehouse education specialists, students discover new interests, learn about career options, and create personal roadmaps to help them reach their long-term goals. Along the way, participants learn essential life skills, including time management, healthy behaviors, conflict resolution, and self-advocacy. [www.treehouse4kids.org/index.htm](http://www.treehouse4kids.org/index.htm)
- \* **Silicon Valley Children's Fund (SVCF)** is a catalyst and partner with Santa Clara County to improve the lives of abused, abandoned, and neglected children in the county. It is the only provider of critical services and educational and enrichment programming not mandated by law. The Fund works to identify, develop, fund, and oversee model programs and services to help vulnerable children improve their future lives. Its **Youth Education Scholarship (YES™)** project promotes better outcomes for young people "aging out" of the child welfare system by helping foster youth fulfill their dreams of obtaining a college education.
- \* Cal State Fullerton's **Guardian Scholars** program supports students exiting the foster care system in their efforts to gain a college education. As wards of the court, these foster care youth emancipate at age 18 and are forced to make a difficult transition to adulthood, often without traditional family support. The Guardian Scholars program serves as a resource for these young adults by assisting in their development and equipping them with the educational and interpersonal skills necessary to become self-supporting community leaders, role models, and competent professionals in their selected fields. The Guardian Scholars program awards five-year scholarships and provides year-round on-campus housing, student employment opportunities, counseling, peer and faculty mentoring, post-graduation career planning and assistance, and experiences to nurture students in becoming active and socially responsible members of the community. [www.fullerton.edu/guardianscholars](http://www.fullerton.edu/guardianscholars)

Community organizations offer outreach and support as well as intensive forms of intervention to prevent homelessness and support homeless and runaway youth.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Larkin Street Youth Services** is a San Francisco-based nonprofit that works with homeless youth through 18 programs at 10 sites across the city. Larkin leadership has defined its intended impact as helping San Francisco Bay Area homeless youth between the ages of 12 and 24 permanently exit life on the street. Larkin's theory of change is premised on the belief that young people need to rebuild (or build) hope, optimism, and self-esteem in order to take advantage of the educational and employment opportunities that will allow them to leave life on the street. Larkin provides a continuum of services, which includes reaching out to kids on the street; addressing immediate needs for food, medical care, and emergency housing; offering

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transitional housing and case management; and building life skills. All of its programs are focused on meeting the specific needs of Larkin's target beneficiaries. In 2003, nearly 80 percent of the young people enrolled in its case management services exited life on the street (Colby et al., 2004). [www.larkinstreetyouth.org](http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org)

- \* **Urban Peak** works with homeless and runaway youth in Denver and Colorado Springs, Colorado, offering caring help and support. The organization provides outreach counselors who are often seen on the streets in places where youth congregate. The organization provides help with basic needs, including resources, referrals, screening, and help in reaching family members. At the shelter, Urban Peak provides food, showers, and a place to sleep; job counseling; health services including specialized health care, provided in collaboration with health care providers and dentists; education programs, including a GED program; and help in finding housing. [www.urbanpeak.org](http://www.urbanpeak.org)

Community organizations offer outreach, support, and intensive forms of intervention to assist at-risk youth, especially those who have been involved with anti-social gangs, to become contributing members of the community.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* **Homeboy Industries** and Jobs For a Future in East Los Angeles assist at-risk and formerly gang-involved youth in becoming contributing members of the community through a variety of services that respond to the youths' multiple needs. Founded and directed by Father Gregory J. Boyle, S.J., its free programs -- including counseling, education, tattoo removal, conflict resolution, financial responsibility and personal accounting, job training, and job placement -- enable young people to redirect their lives and provide them with hope for their futures. Homeboy targets and focuses on those segments of the community that find it most difficult to secure employment on their own -- former gang members, parolees, and at-risk youth. Through a collaboration with the Cathedral of Los Angeles, Homeboy offers a program for young people called Work Is Noble (WIN), in which young people are assigned to work at a local business in an area in which they have expressed interest, and Homeboy covers their salary. This arrangement has proven to be highly successful, as the young men and women are given the opportunity to work in a field that interests them while developing concrete skills that will help them continue to in the field. In turn, the businesses are able to make use of extra help at no extra cost. This program not only teaches young men and women that there are constructive alternatives to life on the streets, but also gives them real work experience, preferably in a company that may hire them after the program. Further, once placed in a work environment, the young people are surrounded by adults who are living examples of a commitment to earning an honest day's wage, and who can serve as mentors. [www.homeboy-industries.org](http://www.homeboy-industries.org)



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Systems, institutions, and community organizations serving high-risk youth communicate and work effectively with one another.

#### EXAMPLES

- \* Created by the federal Workforce Investment Act, **Youth Councils** provide a particular opportunity for communities to increase linkages among programs that serve vulnerable youth, including education, juvenile justice, and youth-serving agencies. Youth Councils can help maximize resources across agencies, identify and fill gaps in services, and help keep young people from “falling through the cracks” (Patel & Savner, 2003). Youth Councils provide a valuable forum for developing a comprehensive strategy for serving youth under VIA and for coordinating employment-related services with those from other youth-serving agencies. Youth Councils are most effective when they are able to coordinate education programs with other programs for youth (Patel & Savner, 2003).
- \* The **School-to-Career Youth Council** in San Diego County is a collaborative partnership among employers, educators, community-based organizations, parents, and youth. The Council is dedicated to providing a range of opportunities for youth ages 14-21, so that they can develop and reach their potential. The Youth Council reports to the San Diego Workforce Investment Board, which operates a decentralized system of youth centers throughout the large county, including a center located in a residential high school for youth in foster care. [www.sandiegowork.com/index.html](http://www.sandiegowork.com/index.html)
- \* **Youth Opportunity Boston** began as part of the Youth Opportunity (YO) program and is now operated by the Mayor’s Office of Jobs and Community Services. It serves court-involved youth with case management, educational support services, computer-based instruction, and GED classes, as well as providing referrals to alternative education programs, job readiness training, and transitional employment services. Each participating youth has an individual service plan. Despite the termination of federal funding for the YO program, the City of Boston has continued the program in collaboration with the Boston Police Department, Department of Youth Services, Adult and Juvenile Probation, the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office, and the Boston Public Schools. [www.bpdnews.com/2007/05/mayor\\_menino\\_gives\\_youth\\_oppor.html](http://www.bpdnews.com/2007/05/mayor_menino_gives_youth_oppor.html)
- \* The **Virginia Board of Education** has implemented new regulations to promote planning, cooperation, and communication between agencies, local school systems, the Department of Juvenile Justice, local detention centers, students, and their parents. The regulations require that schools permit students who exit juvenile justice facilities to enroll in school within two days of their release and that each school district appoint a re-enrollment coordinator to facilitate the process (National Collaboration for Youth, 2006).





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## **Ingredients: The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports**

Systems that serve vulnerable youth include public and private organizations that provide child welfare, juvenile justice, health, mental health, and special education services. **Key ingredients of effective systems serving this population include the following:**

- They make services available to youth and their families in locations that are safe and easy to reach. To reduce barriers to participation and encourage access, systems may locate services in close proximity to programs that serve a broader group of youth and families. Systems provide multiple ways for young people to gain access to essential services and supports, and systems work with organizations in the community to ensure that all appropriate services, supports, and opportunities are available to all who need them.
- They minimize barriers to giving young people the help they need. When possible, interventions take place in the early stages of a problem, before multiple risks accumulate and conditions reach “diagnosable thresholds.” Systems are designed to encourage programs to reach and serve vulnerable young people (e.g., teen mothers, youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, and young people with multiple risk factors). Youth can receive services without a formal diagnosis
- They reach out to young people and their families in disconnected communities. Services are responsive to the language, culture, values, and educational level of the community. To the extent possible, staff reflect the cultural norms and speak the languages of the community. Materials are easy to read and are written in the languages of the families being served.
- They recruit, train, place, and support staff who are committed to the success of the young people and families they serve. Staff have continuing access to training, supervision, and consultation that enable them to respond to the needs of individual youth. Staff have access to a range of resources and opportunities to serve youth.
- They seek to maximize continuity for vulnerable young people by enabling staff and programs to serve young people over time, minimizing “handoffs” or breaks in service and support. Staff and volunteers provide mentoring and support during periods of transition. As youth mature, systems create opportunities for smooth transitions through independent living programs and other supportive settings.
- They are accountable for the success of all youth that they serve. They use technology to track young people over time and to assess the impact of interventions. Staff and policymakers receive regular reports on the progress of youth who are served by the systems, and on the effectiveness of interventions.

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## **Indicators: The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports**

*Please note that our work on Indicators is only, at this point, intended to be suggestive.*

### **Indicators that assess outcomes by measuring conditions among youth, such as the following:**

- More vulnerable youth graduate from high school.
- More vulnerable youth are gainfully employed or are attending school, community colleges, or institutions of higher learning.
- More vulnerable youth are in consistent, stable living arrangements.
- More vulnerable youth perceive that they are receiving support and help from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Among immigrants, refugees, or English Language Learners, more youth are successfully engaged by effective helping programs and institutions.
- Among youth who have been arrested, fewer are re-arrested.
- Fewer vulnerable youth are using alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs.
- Fewer vulnerable youth are engaged in risky sexual behavior.
- Fewer vulnerable youth are engaging in violent behavior or displaying serious conduct problems.
- Fewer vulnerable youth are experiencing physical, psychological, or emotional abuse.
- Fewer vulnerable youth are experiencing anxiety or mood disorders, such as depression.

### **Interim indicators that assess community conditions, such as the following:**

- High-risk youth have access to sources of effective health and mental health care through multiple points of entry.
- High-risk youth have access to comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving their employment prospects.
- High-risk youth have access to comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving the prospects of a successful transition out of foster care or SSI.
- Teen parents have access to comprehensive supports and services aimed at improving their prospects and those of their children.
- Efforts are underway to improve outcomes for incarcerated juveniles by creating smaller, regional facilities with highly trained staff and a therapeutic approach.
- Community organizations offer outreach and support, as well as intensive forms of intervention, to prevent homelessness and support homeless and runaway youth.
- Community organizations offer outreach and support, as well as intensive forms of intervention, to assist at-risk youth, especially those who have been involved with anti-social gangs, to become contributing members of the community.
- Systems, institutions, and community organizations serving vulnerable youth communicate effectively with one another.
- Families of vulnerable youth are involved in making decisions about the institutions and systems that serve them.

Indicators



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- Efforts are underway to reform child welfare and juvenile justice funding, policies, and practices to prepare young people to be positive members of the community and to leave the child welfare and juvenile justice systems with connections to caring adults and educational and employment opportunities.
- Efforts are underway to enable community-based programs to incorporate outreach and support strategies aimed at assuring that the most vulnerable youth and families are reached by, included in, and retained by the high-quality services and supports they need.
- Benefits from Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other sources are coordinated to improve support for young people with special needs during the transition to adulthood.

# Indicators



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## **Rationale: The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports**

# Rationale

Vulnerable youth—those in foster care, those involved in the juvenile justice system, young teen parents, high school dropouts, and those with disabilities or other impairments—are among those least likely to make a successful transition to adulthood. Many of these young people lack connections to permanent family supports and must rely on public and private services for assistance and for opportunities to become self-sufficient.

Many of the youngsters who depend on the nation's state and local public systems and public policies have been routinely and consistently failed by these systems. For these youth to make a successful transition to adulthood, fundamental change in systems and policies is required.

Specifically,

- child welfare systems must help vulnerable youth heal and connect to strong families;
- juvenile corrections systems must treat youth fairly and help them find a new beginning;
- public schools must help young people gain the knowledge and skills they will need to become productive providers and citizens; and
- the health and mental health systems must provide the care that can help ensure vulnerable youth's physical and mental well-being (Nelson, 2004).

Youth growing up at “socio-demographic risk” (defined as living in poverty, with a single parent, with a parent without a high school diploma or GED, and with four or more children in the household) have an increased likelihood of suffering negative outcomes (Moore et al., 2000). Many young people who enter the special education, juvenile justice, child welfare, and mental health systems share these characteristics, regardless of the system(s) in which they find themselves. As public systems sort children, issues of race and class often affect decisions, and minority and poor children are most often assigned to the juvenile justice system (Schwartz, 2003).

Youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are vulnerable to a range of negative outcomes. Decisions by state and local policymakers to allocate public funding and other resources to support and serve these youth can significantly improve their life trajectories.

Youth who are in foster care are at risk of a broad range of poor outcomes. Many who leave foster care become homeless. According to the National Association of Social Workers, more than one in four youth in shelters had been in foster care during the previous year, and a high number had substance abuse problems and mental and physical health concerns (Park et al., 2005).

Youth who are confined in secure juvenile facilities, whether or not they have been charged with violent offenses, are at significant risk of failure when they exit (Nelson, 2004). Incarceration in juvenile facilities leads to a high rate of repeat offenses (Ayelish, 2005).

Although birth rates among teens are declining for every age group, 17 percent of all 15-year-olds will give birth by age 20, and one in five teen births are repeat births. African-American and



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# Rationale

Hispanic girls are more than twice as likely as white girls to become pregnant at least once before age 20 (Levin-Epstein & Greenberg, 2003).

Physical and mental health are key elements of youth development. If basic physical and mental health needs go unmet, it is difficult for young people to develop to their full potential. Yet many young people, especially those who are most vulnerable, lack access to adequate health and mental health care.

The number of young people who lack health insurance rises sharply with age. In 2004, 12.5 percent of 12 to 17-year-olds were uninsured, while 31 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds were uninsured. Among the poorest young people—those with incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level—23 percent of 12 to 17-year-olds and 45 percent of 18 to 21 year-olds were uninsured in 2004 (English et al., 2006).

For women, maintaining good health in adolescence and young adulthood is important not only for their own futures, but for the futures of their children. New data suggests that the most crucial factor in the high rates of very low birthweight and mortality among babies born to poor and minority women may be the health of mothers long before they become pregnant (Wise, 2007).

A greater proportion of children and youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have mental health problems than do children and youth in the general population.

As many as 50 percent of children in the child welfare system have mental health problems, and 67 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Additionally, there is a great need among youth from these systems for treatment of substance abuse disorders that sometimes co-occur with mental health problems (NCCP, 2006).

Young people with multiple needs often find it difficult to get the help they need from multiple public and private agencies, each with its own organizational structure and eligibility requirements for services. Communication and coordination among service providers can bridge gaps among agencies and programs, make more effective use of limited resources, and improve the quality and quantity of services to young people.



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## **Evidence: The Highest Risk Youth Receive Effective Services and Supports**

Evidence

In a study of 19-year-old youth from **foster care** systems in Iowa, Indiana, and Wisconsin, Courtney et al. (2005) found that, compared with youth who had left foster care before their 18th birthday, youth who were still in care at age 19 had progressed further in their education. These youth were more likely to have access to health and mental health services and had decreased risks of economic hardship and involvement in the criminal justice system. Females who were still in care at age 19 were less likely to become pregnant.

A nationally focused, non-experimental study of **independent living programs for former foster youth** found that participants who had received skills training in all of five key areas—money management, credit management, consumer skills, education, and employment—were better able to hold a job for at least a year; better able to obtain health care, if needed; less likely to go on welfare or to prison; and more likely to build a social network than were youth who had not received such training (Cook, 1991).

**Casey Family Services** provides counseling and support to children making the transition from foster homes to their birth or adoptive homes or to independent living. Social workers, foster parents, and kin resources remain connected to youth once they have left foster care. A 2001 study of Casey Family Services alumni found that 73 percent had graduated from high school or earned a GED; 48 percent had received postsecondary education; 68 percent were currently employed; and 61 percent were in regular contact with their foster, adoptive, and/or birth parents (Nelson, 2004).

The Silicon Valley Children's Fund created the **Youth Education Scholarship (YES)** program to help former foster children gain access to and be successful in postsecondary education. YES provides youth with funding for scholarships, books, food, and other necessities and offers comprehensive supports including outreach, mentoring, and counseling. Early results indicate that 85 percent of YES youth returned to college for a second year, compared with a national rate of 33 percent for foster youth, and 95 percent of YES youth have maintained a GPA of 2.0 or above (Nelson, 2004).

**CASASTART** served high-risk young adolescents ages 11 to 13, predominantly African-American or Hispanic, from severely disadvantaged neighborhoods. To be eligible, youth had to qualify as high-risk in one of three areas: school risk, family risk, or personal risk. Core components of the program included community-enhanced policing, case management, family services, juvenile justice intervention, after-school and summer activities, education services, mentoring, and incentives. An independent evaluation (Harrell, Cavanagh, & Sridharan, 1998, 1999) found that one year after program completion, CASASTART youths were significantly less likely to have used drugs in the past month; significantly less likely to report lifetime sales of drugs; and significantly less likely to have committed a violent crime in the year following completion of the program, when compared to youths in the control group.



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**Functional Family Therapy (FFT)** is a family-based prevention and intervention program conducted in clinic settings as an outpatient therapy to treat high-risk youth and their families. According to the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the FFT model combines and integrates clinical theory, empirically supported principles, and clinical experience. FFT targets adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 and provides up to 30 hours of direct service over a three-month period, including clinical sessions, telephone calls, and connections to community resources. FFT works with family members, including younger siblings of referred adolescents. According to Alexander et al. (2000), FFT reduces recidivism and/or the onset of offending between 25 and 60 percent more effectively than other programs and at cost levels well below those of other interventions.

**Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)** is an intensive, family-based treatment approach, usually housed within public or private mental health settings and originally designed to improve the antisocial behavior of serious juvenile offenders. More recently, it has also been used successfully with substance-abusing youth, youth with severe psychiatric crises, and youth with costly chronic health problems ([www.msts services.com](http://www.msts services.com)).

- Among the results of work with juvenile offenders: MST participants were engaged in less criminal activity, were less likely to be re-arrested, had fewer behavior problems and fewer days in out-of-home care, and had improved family relations compared to a randomized control group. Significant differences remained two and a half years after initial referral (Henggeler et al., 1993; Borduin et al., 1995). Results were similar, though effect sizes were smaller, in community-based replications of the original model (Henggeler et al., 1997).
- Among the results of work with substance-abusing or substance-dependent juvenile offenders: Compared to a control group receiving “usual services”, MST reduced self-reported alcohol and marijuana use, decreased days incarcerated, and decreased total days in out-of-home placement (Schoenwald et al., 1996). MST also increased youth attendance in regular school settings (Brown et al., 1999). Cost data from this study showed that the incremental cost of MST was offset by reduced incarceration, hospitalization, and residential treatment (Schoenwald et al., 1996). Moreover, at 4-year follow-up, MST participants engaged in significantly less criminal activity than did controls (Henggeler et al., 2002).
- Among the results of work with youths presenting psychiatric crises (suicidal, homicidal, psychotic): In comparison with psychiatric hospitalization followed by usual community services, MST- Psychiatry was significantly more effective at decreasing youth symptomatology, improving family relations, and increasing school attendance. Moreover, MST- Psychiatry resulted in a 72-percent reduction in days hospitalized and a 50-percent reduction in other out-of-home placements (Schoenwald et al., 2000).

The **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)**, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, sought to demonstrate that communities could improve their detention systems without sacrificing public safety. Three jurisdictions—Cook County (Chicago), IL; Multnomah County (Portland), OR; and Sacramento County, CA—worked to build a consensus about

- the appropriate use of secure detention and the elimination of its unnecessary use;
- reduction of the number of young people who fail to appear in court or who commit another offense while awaiting trial;





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- the more efficient use of limited juvenile justice resources; and
- ways to improve conditions and alleviate overcrowding in secure detention facilities.

Each of the localities achieved improvements in detention reform. Chicago and Portland reduced their daily detention populations by 37 percent and 66 percent respectively, while achieving improvements in relevant public safety outcomes. Multnomah County successfully reduced racial disparities within its detention population (Nelson, 2004).

Youth in custody of the **Missouri Division of Youth Services** live in small-group settings under the supervision of college-trained youth specialists who work to maintain a therapeutic environment throughout the facility. Youth also receive continuous case management during and after their confinement. A long-term recidivism study, compiled by the State of Missouri in February 2003, showed that 70 percent of the young people avoided either prison or probation for at least three years. The cost per bed in Missouri's therapeutic residential treatment facilities ranged from \$41,400 to \$55,000. (The cost in residential facilities for youth in Maryland and California is \$64,000 per bed and \$71,000 per bed, respectively.)

The **CUNY (City University of New York) Catch** program provides transitional services for young inmates returning from detention at Rikers Island to their home communities. The program provides outreach and programming for those who are detained and awaiting trial and support in the transition from jail to community-based campuses. They offer academic and vocational services, assistance, and referral services on local college campuses, including a GED preparation class that helps ex-offenders obtain the skills they need to get and keep a job. According to Nelson (2004), the program reports a 95-percent pass rate for students who take the GED test. About half of the participants enroll in college; the rest receive job placement assistance.

The **Self Center (School-Linked Reproductive Health Services)** program provided low-income, inner-city African-American teenagers in grades seven through twelve with contraceptive and reproductive health services linked to school-based educational services. They provided students with access to year-round, free, high-quality clinic services. Zabin et al. (1986) found that, compared with students from similar backgrounds in non-participating schools, significantly more girls in participating schools were likely to delay the start of sexual intercourse; both boys and girls showed a significant increase in contraceptive use at last intercourse; and significantly more students attended a health clinic before becoming sexually active and during the first months of sexual activity. By the program's third year, the pregnancy rate dropped 30 percent among the high school girls in the program schools, while it rose 58 percent among students in the non-program schools.

The **Montefiore School Health Program** enrolls more than 13,000 students, most of them poor, uninsured, and underserved, in the Bronx, New York City. The programs provide comprehensive primary care services and a strong emphasis on asthma care; they include reproductive health services, teen pregnancy and prenatal care, options counseling, family planning, and STD testing. Webber et al. (2003) found that schools served by the Montefiore School Health Program have better attendance than comparable schools without a health center program.

Students who participate in **The Bridge of Northeast Florida**, a school-linked health center that serves low-income African-American youth ages five to 18, have access to comprehensive educational, social, and health programs. A health clinic provides comprehensive medical services,

Evidence



Actions



Ingredients



Indicators



Rationale



Evidence

GOAL **4**

The Highest Risk Youth  
Receive Effective Services  
and Supports

as well as referrals for mental health counseling, dental and eye care, and WIC services. An evaluation (Will & Cheney, 2001) showed that youth involved with the program attended school more often, had higher grades, and were suspended less ([www.bridgejax.com](http://www.bridgejax.com)).

**Gang Prevention Curricula** were designed to prevent young adolescent youth from joining gangs and from associating with delinquent and violent peers. The curriculum was presented to eighth-grade students in Chicago middle schools in lower and lower-middle class areas with high gang activity. Following a series of 12 weekly classroom sessions, students were invited to participate in after-school recreational activities, including sports clinics, job skills/training workshops, educational assistance, and social activities. Researchers (Thompson & Jason, 1988) identified youth in experimental and comparison schools who were at risk of joining a gang but were not already gang members; at the end of the school year, results showed that experimental group members were less likely to become gang members than comparison youths ([www.ag.state.oh.us/citizen/pubs/education/Junior\\_High.pdf](http://www.ag.state.oh.us/citizen/pubs/education/Junior_High.pdf)).

Evidence

## APPENDIX I: THE PATHWAYS MAPPING INITIATIVE

The Pathways Mapping Initiative (PMI) provides a broad, deep, and coherent body of information as a basis for action to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, youth, and families.

PMI was established in 2000 as part of the Project on Effective Interventions at Harvard University and initially developed with support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation. It extends the wealth of current findings about what works by drawing not just on the traditional evaluation literature but on lessons from theory and practice. PMI organizes these findings in a coherent, contextual framework that shows how actions connect to intended impacts, illustrates the actions with specific examples, describes key ingredients of effective implementation, identifies indicators to measure progress, and provides rationale that makes the case for action and research evidence of effectiveness. .

PMI's work is based on the conviction that communities and funders should not have to start with a blank slate or scrounge, unaided, to uncover the rich lessons learned by others. We believe that communities will be able to act most effectively when they can combine local wisdom and their understanding of local circumstances with "actionable intelligence" from outside—the accumulated knowledge about what has worked elsewhere, what is working now, and what appears promising.

With support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, PMI has constructed three Pathways:

- the Pathway to School Readiness and Third Grade School Success.
- the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood
- the Pathway to the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

In addition, the Annie E. Casey Foundation directly constructed a Pathway to Family Economic Success.

Access to the Pathways is available at [www.pathwaystooutcomes.org](http://www.pathwaystooutcomes.org).

Each of the Pathways is designed to:

- **Give communities reliable guidance about what has worked elsewhere**—information these users can combine with their understanding of local conditions and opportunities to improve outcomes for children and families, especially those living in disinvested neighborhoods
- **Give philanthropic funders new ways of understanding what works** so they can think and act more strategically and coherently to improve outcomes for children and families
- **Create a forum** through which community experience can continuously inform and modify the knowledge base
- **Make it easier for an array of stakeholders to agree on plausible strategies** that hold promise to produce the child and family outcomes that the majority of citizens consider important – and thereby to leverage investment of energy and resources across disciplines, jurisdictions and systems

Our approach to harvesting the extensive and growing body of knowledge about what works follows a process we call Mental Mapping." The mental mapping process is similar to the Consensus Conferences convened by the National Institutes of Health. Both are attempts to move beyond reliance on isolated pieces of evidence and a narrow range of interventions that have proven their effectiveness. Instead, the mental mapping process systematically applies reasonable judgments and plausible interpretations to a preponderance of evidence culled from accumulated experience, theory, and research.

Mental Mapping has allowed us to identify:

- **Actions across systems and silos**, cutting across conventional boundaries to include actions in all domains that contribute to an outcome
- **Actions that include informal community supports** as well as contributions from formal helping systems
- **Actions that take account of policies and funding**—the broader context that supports or undermines local action
- **Key ingredients of effectiveness**, with a focus on how actions are implemented and the implications this holds for results and for "scaling up"

We believe that so much of what needs doing is not amenable to the program-by-program solutions now capturing the bulk of attention from those who are trying to become more intentional in their efforts. Mental Mapping has allowed us to assemble information about "what works" that goes beyond individual programs and practices to the strategies, connections among programs, and community-wide efforts that often are the keys to improved outcomes.

Although the Pathways Mapping Initiative draws from a larger universe of knowledge about "what works" than other approaches, much of what we do builds on other well-known work:

- Many of the actions and key ingredients identified as effective by Pathways are similar to the **best practices** and promising practices identified elsewhere. PMI's Pathways differ from most sources of information about best practices in that they place the practices within a larger, outcome-based context.
- Like the **theory of change** approach to program design and evaluation, PMI makes explicit the links among actions, the contexts in which actions occur, and intended outcomes.
- The Pathways suggest **indicators of progress** toward the goals and outcome that are significant, and will, over time, become increasingly easy for communities to assemble.
- Although we recognize the importance of governance, community engagement, and similar aspects of the **process of change**, PMI focuses on the *content* rather than the *process* of change in the belief that most users of Pathways already have access to assistance with the change process from many other sources.

## APPENDIX 2: MENTAL MAPPING AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING OUTCOMES

During the last decade, researchers and practitioners have learned much about how communities can act to improve the life chances of the individuals and families who live in America's tough neighborhoods. Most of that knowledge, however, comes in small, isolated, and disjointed pieces; arrives too late; is derived from a severely limited range of interventions; and fails to identify what really made the intervention work.

The Pathways Mapping Initiative (PMI) offers an alternative. It broadens the knowledge base about what works by applying reasonable judgments and plausible interpretations to a preponderance of evidence culled from accumulated experience, evaluation findings, and strong theory. PMI's information is developed, organized, and presented in a way that helps communities to think coherently and systematically, across systemic and disciplinary boundaries, about (1) the combination of actions needed to produce a desired outcome, (2) the key ingredients that make those actions effective, and (3) the community and policy contexts that influence effectiveness. The emphasis is not on specific programs but on actions that cut across them.

Our challenge has been to develop criteria and methods for identifying credible evidence about promising efforts, going beyond the circumscribed programs that can be evaluated with experimental methods. We sought to strike a balance between assessing what works by methods that are a poor fit with complex, cross-cutting, community based initiatives, and efforts that amount to little more than a champion's anecdotal accounts. The Mental Mapping process represents that balance.

### WHAT IS THE MENTAL MAPPING PROCESS?

Mental Mapping is a process similar to the National Institutes of Health (NIH)'s Consensus Conferences, which are "a vehicle for moving beyond the piecemeal presentation of evidence from diverse bodies of literature and for ensuring the unbiased synthesis of findings that can inform broader discussions of effective strategies." The goal of the process is not only to elicit useful information but also to make it easier for policy and program people to think about their work more rationally and coherently.

To do Mental Mapping, we convene groups of highly knowledgeable, experienced individuals, including researchers and practitioners, who are steeped in their respective fields and diverse in their perspectives and beliefs. Drawing on their accumulated wisdom, we ask them to review and add to the findings from research and to make explicit their "mental maps" of what works to reach the outcome under consideration. Participants are asked to respond initially to the question, "Considering the evidence from the research, theory, and experiences you have been exposed to, what actions are most likely to achieve the specific outcome under consideration (e.g., higher rates of school readiness, third grade school success, or successful transition to young adulthood)?"

As they respond, we encourage participants to dig deep and put on the table issues that might otherwise remain hidden. We want Pathways to stimulate action in areas that are typically neglected; we want to highlight the importance of filling gaps among interventions, services, and supports and forging connections between them. For example, when we asked Mental Mapping participants in school readiness sessions what interventions were most likely to help change

outcomes for the highest-risk, most disadvantaged families, they did not primarily recommend new programs. Rather, they emphasized the connections that must be built into existing programs and institutions to make it easier and more routine for child care staff, for example, to obtain the training and support to improve their skills, or to be able to mobilize developmental assessments of a child they are concerned about.

Because we take great care to ensure a rich mix of backgrounds and outlooks among Mental Mapping participants, we have been able to protect both the process and the product from bias. We distinguish claims for which there is strong consensus from those that fail to stimulate consensus, are drawn exclusively from a single program or organization's experience, or represent an idiosyncratic point of view, and we discard the latter.

PMI supplements the information generated by Mental Mapping meetings by asking other experts to fill any remaining gaps. We also field-test the information with groups of potential users to make sure it is readily understood, useful, and relevant.

## **WHAT HAS PMI DONE WITH THE MENTAL MAPPING FINDINGS?**

We have used the Mental Mapping process to construct three Pathways to better outcomes:

- the Pathway to School Readiness and Third Grade School Success.
- the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood
- the Pathway to the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

In addition, the Annie E. Casey Foundation directly constructed a Pathway to Family Economic Success.

Access to the Pathways is available at [www.pathwaystooutcomes.org](http://www.pathwaystooutcomes.org).

Four distinctive features of the Pathways are made possible by the use of Mental Mapping:

1. Pathways bridge disciplines. People know it takes more than family support services to strengthen families, more than child welfare services to keep children safe, more than the police to keep neighborhoods free of violence, and more than good preschool programs to get children ready for school. But there are few frameworks for drawing such cross-cutting conclusions. The diversity of Mental Mapping participants, and the mandate to think across boundaries, meant we were no longer looking at disciplinary domains and systems in isolation. Consequently, Pathways users see the many ways that communities can act effectively and explore those which are most useful to them.
2. Pathways identify the actions and strategies that contribute to specified outcomes and provide concrete examples from real places. We identify specific actions (services, supports, and other interventions) that are likely to achieve the stipulated goals and outcomes, including actions on the front lines, at the community level, and at the policy and systems level. We illustrate the actions with examples that feature real programs achieving real results. .
3. Pathways identify the key ingredients of effective actions. The Mental Mapping process helps us identify the key ingredients, or traits, that seem to characterize effective interventions—such as the extent to which interventions are family-centered, community-based, and culturally sensitive. This information broadens our knowledge not only about what works but

how it works. Being able to describe the essential elements with precision and in some depth, even in the absence of absolute certainty, makes it more likely that promising efforts can be taken to scale or transported successfully to new environments.

4. Pathways identify the elements of community and system infrastructures that support and sustain effective change over time. The Mental Mapping process identifies community and policy contexts that are essential to improving outcomes but don't attach to a single program or intervention. For instance, a hostile regulatory, funding, or accountability climate can seriously undermine the ability of organizations and community groups to take effective action or to develop the institutional characteristics that underlie more successful programs. This deeper level of analysis helps to clarify the limitations of individual programs and illuminate synergy in the work that cuts across domains.



## APPENDIX 3: LIST OF EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE	LOCATION	GOAL/ ACTION
After School Matters	Chicago, IL	3A
Alianza Dominica	New York City, NY	3A
Amachi	Philadelphia and other locations	3B
Arizona	Arizona	4A
Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development	Baltimore, MD	2A
Beacons	multiple locations	3A
Big Brothers Big Sisters	multiple locations	2C, 3B
Black Achievers	Harrisburg, PA	3B
Boston Private Industry Council	Boston, MA	2A, 2C
Boston Public Schools	Boston, MA	1B
California Permanency for Youth Project	California	4A
California Workforce Investment Board's State Youth Council	California	2C
Career Academies	multiple locations	1A, 2C
CAS-Carrera	New York City, NY	3A
Casey School-to-Career Partnerships	national program	4A
Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District	Charlotte, NC	1A
Cisco Networking Academy	Mayfair, CA	2B
City Year	multiple locations	3A
Clarian Healthcare	Indianapolis, IN	2B
Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth	multiple locations	3C
Communities in Schools	multiple locations	2C
Community Change for Youth Development	multiple locations	3A
Community colleges	multiple locations	1B
Community-based service agencies in Lincoln, Nebraska	Lincoln, NE	1A
Connecticut	Connecticut	4A
CUNY CATCH (CUNY Alliance for Transitional Career Help)	New York City, NY	4A
Denver Workforce Initiative	Denver, CO	1B

# List of Examples

<b>EXAMPLE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>GOAL/ ACTION</b>
Diploma Plus	Massachusetts	IB
Early College High Schools	multiple locations	IB
Equipped for the Future	national program	IB
Evansville-Vanderburgh School Community Council	Evansville, IN	IA
Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington	Washington, DC	IB
Fenway Community Development Corporation	Boston, MA	2B
First Things First	Kansas City, KS	IA
Focus: HOPE	Detroit, MI	2B
Gateway to College	Portland, OR	IB
George Washington Community School	Indianapolis, IN	IA
Green Dot Public Schools	Los Angeles, CA	IA
Guardian Scholars	Fullerton, CA	4B
Hampton Coalition for Youth	Hampton, VA	3A
Homeboy Industries	Los Angeles, CA	4B
HOPE VI program	national program	2B
Illinois	Illinois	4A
Indianapolis Mayor's Charter Schools Initiative	Indianapolis, IN	IA
Iowa Preparation for Adult Living	Iowa	4A
Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative	national program	3D
Job Corps	multiple locations	IC
Jobs For the Future	multiple locations	IB
Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative	multiple locations	4A
Kentucky	Kentucky	3C
Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)	multiple locations	IA
Larkin Street Youth Services	San Francisco, CA	4B
Latin American Youth Center	Washington, DC	2C, 3A
Making Middle Grades Work	multiple locations	IA
Metro Twin Cities Job Clubs	Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN	2C
Missouri	Missouri	4A

<b>EXAMPLE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>GOAL/ ACTION</b>
Montgomery County Public School system	Montgomery Co., MD	1A
National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy	national program	3B
National Foundation for Training in Entrepreneurship	national program	2C
National Governors Association	national program	1A
National League of Cities	national program	3C
New Orleans Jobs Initiative	New Orleans, LA	1B
No Child Left Behind Act	national program	1A
Opening Doors Learning Communities	Brooklyn, NY	1B
Penn VIPS	Philadelphia, PA	3B
Per Scholas	The Bronx, NY	2B
Plain Talk	national program	3B
Port of Seattle	Seattle, WA	2B
Public Education Foundation	Chattanooga, TN, and other locations	1A
Quantum Opportunities Program	multiple locations	3A
San Diego Youth@Work	San Diego, CA	2C
Schools Uniting Neighborhoods	Oregon	1A
School-to-Career Partnership Program	Providence, RI	2C
School-to-Career Youth Council	San Diego County, CA	4B
Service learning	multiple locations	1B
Silicon Valley Children's Fund	Santa Clara County, CA	4B
St. Louis Park, MN	St. Louis Park, MN	3A
St. Louis Regional Jobs Initiative	St. Louis, MO	2B
STRIVE	multiple locations	1B
Talent Development High Schools	Philadelphia, PA, and other locations	1A, 1B
Teen Outreach Program	multiple locations	3A
The After School Corporation	New York City and other locations	3A
Treehouse	King County, WA	4B
Treehouse Coaching-to-College Middle School Program	King County, WA	4B
Treehouse Coaching-to-College Program	King County, WA	4B

<b>EXAMPLE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>GOAL/ ACTION</b>
Twin Cities Rise!	Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN	2B
United Parcel Service (UPS) School-to-Career Partnership	Baltimore, MD	2C
Upward Pathway	national program	2A
Urban Peak	Denver and Colorado Springs, CO	4B
Virginia Board of Education	Virginia	4B
Virginia's Pathway to Industry Certification	Virginia	2A
Waupin, WI	Waupin, WI	3A
Workforce Investment Act	national program	4A
YearUp	Boston, MA	2B
Youth Councils	multiple locations	2C, 4B
Youth Education Scholarship (Silicon Valley Children's Fund)	Santa Clara County, CA	4B
Youth Leaders in Action	Virginia Beach, VA	3A
Youth mapping	multiple locations	3A
Youth Opportunities Grants	national program	1C, 2A
Youth Opportunity Boston	Boston, MA	4B
Youth Town Hall	Tempe, AZ	3A
YouthBuild	multiple locations	2C
YouthBuild Americorps St. Louis	St. Louis, MO	3D
YouthBuild Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh, PA	3A
YouthBuild USA	multiple locations	3A

## APPENDIX 4: CROSS-CUTTING INGREDIENTS OF EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Key Ingredients are the underlying elements that make certain services and supports effective in contributing to the successful transition to young adulthood. They matter because *how* interventions are implemented and *how* services are provided is as important as *whether* they are provided. For example, when professionals have the skills and time to be able to develop and maintain respectful relationships with the young people they work with, the chances that outcomes will improve go up significantly.

The ingredients of effective implementation are important not only to achieving outcomes but also to:

- Understanding which elements are essential to success, so that program models are not inadvertently diluted or distorted when they are expanded, scaled up, or replicated;
- Determining the extent to which actions now in place or being designed are likely to succeed; and
- Identifying elements of current actions that need to be added or modified.

Cross-cutting Ingredients that apply to all goals in this Pathway include:

Accessibility  
High Quality  
Effective Management  
Results Orientation  
Connections to and across Services and Supports  
Community Engagement and Social Networks  
Sustainability  
Funding

### ACCESSIBILITY

**Outreach and enrollment procedures** ensure that youth and their families can easily locate and reach needed services:

- Aggressive outreach attracts all who could benefit from the intervention.
- Outreach occurs at times and locations convenient to youth and their families, including locations where vulnerable young people congregate or pass through. Outreach includes efforts to reach young people and their families in disconnected communities.
- Materials are written in the language(s) of the community that is being served. To the extent possible, staff members speak those languages.
- Program design, materials, and staff reflect and respect the cultural norms of the community.
- Program requirements are simple, streamlined, and results-oriented.

Programs do all they can to make services **affordable**:

- Programs offer services at no cost and/or offer sliding fee scales to remove financial barriers.
- Programs obtain third-party payments on behalf of clients whenever possible.
- Within existing policy constraints, programs avoid burdensome eligibility requirements and asset thresholds.

Services emphasize **prevention** in addition to treatment and remediation. Where possible, interventions occur in the early stages of a problem, before multiple risks accumulate and conditions reach “diagnosable thresholds.” Individuals can receive services without a formal diagnosis.

Service systems work continuously with community entities to ensure that all appropriate **services, supports, and opportunities are available to everyone** who needs them and is eligible to receive them.

Systems are designed to provide **multiple entry points** to essential services and supports.

Systems are designed to encourage programs to **reach and serve vulnerable young people** (including teen mothers, youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, and young people with multiple risk factors) without limiting access to other populations.

Policies and payment mechanisms **maximize eligibility** for services among intended beneficiaries:

- Policies and payment mechanisms promote services for hard-to-reach and vulnerable young people without imposing eligibility requirements that limit access to other populations.
- Policies expand low-income youths’ eligibility for and access to all needed services and supports.
- Policies ensure that legal immigrants and their families are eligible for benefits, including full access to public education institutions.
- Third-party payers (including child care subsidies, S-CHIP and Medicaid) and public-private partnerships presume eligibility while youths’ and their families’ applications are under review, thus ensuring continuous coverage.

Means-tested programs (such as Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and child care subsidies) are under **continuous review** to assess trade-offs between targeting resources to those with the greatest need and achieving universal coverage.

## HIGH QUALITY

Services and supports are as **comprehensive** as necessary to be responsive to the needs of youth and their families. Programs are designed to meet the specific needs of individual young people and their families.

- To the extent compatible with their primary mission, programs mobilize a mix of formal and informal supports as well as therapeutic interventions.
- To the extent compatible with their primary mission, programs are flexible and broad-ranging. They provide long-term services for chronic difficulties, crisis intervention, and responses to evolving challenges in the same setting.
- Providers identify circumstances that prevent clients from using services and supports effectively and adopt practices that remove barriers (e.g., clients’ transportation, mobility, language, and child care needs).
- Program staff do not compartmentalize families’ problems.
- The focus, duration, frequency, and intensity of interventions, services, and supports are carefully calibrated to the needs, resources, and risk factors of young people, their families, and the community served.

Services and supports are **family-centered** and respond to the needs of individual children and families:

- Programs respond to individual young people in the context of their family and their community. Programs address the “whole person.”
- Services reflect the language, values, and cultural backgrounds of young people.
- Programs are characterized by mutually respectful interactions.
- Services engage youth and their families in positive activities and build networks of support while also addressing their problems.
- Whenever possible, assistance with problems is an integral part of all activities with young people and their families, including job preparation and training programs, support groups, and English as a Second Language or GED classes.

Service settings, procedures, and staff training and skills explicitly encourage the development of ongoing, **mutually respectful relationships** among staff and clients:

- Service settings are welcoming to families and cognizant of their diverse needs.
- Staff have time to build relationships with clients in order to thoroughly understand their strengths, needs, and circumstances. Staff involve families in identifying needs and solutions.
- Policies and practices for interacting with youth and families make them feel comfortable and safe in seeking help.

Programs are sensitive to clients with **diverse cultural backgrounds**, values, languages, education, and communities:

- They make efforts to attract staff who share the cultural heritage and speak the language of the youth and families they serve.
- They encourage staff to share with each other their experience and expertise regarding issues of culture and race.
- They target outreach and services to traditionally underserved young people and their families, who may have experienced racism and language barriers.

Policies and systems strategically address individual behaviors and institutional practices that are associated with the **inequitable distribution of services and disparities** in outcomes because of race or income. Systems invest money and time to address issues of social justice and equity.

## FOCUSED ON STRENGTHS

Services and supports are designed to **build on the strengths of young people, their families, and their communities**.

- Staff take time to learn individual young people’s skills and talents as well as their needs for services and supports.
- Young people have opportunities to develop their skills, talents, and passions as part of programs designed to serve them.
- Staff and young people intentionally work together to connect young people to positive individuals and institutions in the community.
- Programs encourage and support young people in serving their communities.



## EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Explicit **principles have been articulated** to guide decision making and practice.

The program's practices in **recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified staff** are aligned with intended results:

- Programs are mission-driven. Staff demonstrate a belief in the mission.
- Staff roles, training, and guidance reflect the skills, sophistication, and needs of staff as well as clients.
- Programs take measures to minimize staff turnover.

Administrative practices support **front-line discretion** while maintaining program quality, individual rights, and accountability:

- Young people and their families who present multiple needs and challenges are welcomed and engaged by staff.
- Staff help young people and their families prioritize interventions to avoid adding stress to vulnerable individuals and families.
- Staff coordinate services, such as family support and services to youth, to reduce duplication and improve effectiveness.
- Programs monitor their efforts to ensure that families are not overwhelmed by services and do not have multiple case managers.

Professional staff and others who provide support to young people and their families are **well trained and well supervised**:

- Staff have continuing access to training, supervision, and consultation that help them to acquire necessary knowledge and skills and to develop a rich repertoire of responses to unexpected circumstances.
- Staff feel supported by their colleagues and supervisors.
- Staff have easy access to consultation with and support from experts in mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, impaired family relationships, and adolescent development.
- Staff working with youth have the skills, support, and time to be sensitive to the needs of their families. Staff working with families and other adults have the skills, supports, and time to be sensitive to the needs of youth.

Systems have capacity for **ongoing, cross-program training and support** to front-line providers who work in settings and under auspices that serve vulnerable youth and their families.

## RESULTS ORIENTATION

To the extent practical, **effectiveness is gauged by the results and outcomes** experienced by young people and their families -- the results that the public and funders are most likely to value and that can most reliably guide program improvement.

- Regular assessment of impacts informs professional development, resource allocation decisions, and other efforts to ensure continuous improvement.
- The best measures of results are significant, reliable, understandable, and relatively easy to assemble.

- Assessments of results do not rely on a single measure, but do focus on a limited, carefully chosen set of measures that may include “sentinel indicators” of particular significance.
- Even initiatives where no single program can by itself achieve desired outcomes can be judged by results and outcomes experienced by children and families, as long as all involved recognize that results cannot be attributed to each agency’s or each program’s separate contribution.

When effectiveness cannot be gauged directly by the results and outcomes experienced by children and families (as in initiatives that involve community-wide efforts, systems change, or complex interventions that combine changes in programs, policies, and systems), or when it is important to demonstrate early, visible gains while working toward long-term goals, **impact can be assessed indirectly.**

- Useful indirect or interim measures include changes in capacities, behavior, attitudes, skills, information, participation, and satisfaction experienced by residents, clients, staff, etc.
- When such indirect or interim measures are used, their relationship to results and outcomes experienced by children and families is clearly understood and documented.

Community groups **assess the extent to which actions and key ingredients known to be associated with higher rates of youth who make a successful transition to young adulthood** are in place. They use this information to identify gaps and work toward filling them:

- Communities have the capacity to monitor program, neighborhood, and community-wide outcomes.
- Community groups track the availability, accessibility, and quality of services and supports (both formal and informal).
- Community groups track the availability of primary and preventive services in addition to crisis interventions.

## CONNECTIONS TO AND ACROSS SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Programs take responsibility for **forging connections** to and across services and supports:

- Staff have the capacity to link young people and their families with primary supports and services (e.g., housing, child care, jobs) and with specialized services.
- Staff communicate across programs and agencies, plan solutions jointly, agree on common objectives, and share responsibility for attaining goals.
- Program staff recognize the importance of building social connections, organizing and mobilizing community residents, and developing local leaders.
- Agencies coordinate services to minimize burdens on families, reduce duplication, and improve effectiveness.

Community groups work to share information about young people and to **guide them to entry points** for primary and specialized services and supports.

Systems are designed to connect young people with **basic supports, supportive networks, and specialized services.**

Systems develop policies and practices to **minimize administrative demands** on families:

- Client information is shared appropriately across programs to facilitate referrals and avoid duplication in obtaining data and histories. Services and supports use common eligibility definitions and determinations.
- Case management services are coordinated across programs.
- Fundraising methods promote community-wide planning and the appropriate coordination of services and supports.

**Training and supervision** are designed to cross disciplines and systems.

Systems **go beyond program boundaries** to collect and analyze data on the effectiveness of actions and strategies.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

**Young people participate actively** in community visioning, planning, service design, decision making, and neighborhood improvement efforts. Community groups prepare young people to participate confidently in community-wide planning and decision making and to use experts as needed to help shape and implement strategies.

Community activities and events **promote belonging, social connectedness, and the development of relationships** for young people.

To build bridges **across race, class, and language boundaries**, community initiatives:

- Explicitly recognize that racism, and class, income and language differences have traditionally limited the diversity of participants in the decision-making process; they identify and build on the assets of diverse people and groups who reside in the community.
- Promote a greater understanding of issues of race, language, culture, class, social justice, and equity.
- Foster opportunities to identify common ground and understanding across racial, language, cultural, and class lines within a community.
- Regularly assess how well they are addressing issues of social justice, equity, and diversity.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Stakeholders develop alliances at the local, state, regional, and national levels to maximize the chances of sustaining what works over time. Alliances that support leadership development, technical assistance, and funding are especially important.

Policies governing **supports for training, recruitment, retention, reimbursement, credentialing, licensing, and loan forgiveness** ensure an adequate supply of high-quality staff.

Systems support programs in early, ongoing efforts to identify **long-term funding sources** and leverage continuing public and private-sector support. Sustainability strategies encourage community engagement around issues that are priorities for children and families.

## FUNDING

Funding investments are made on terms and at levels that **ensure high-quality implementation**:

- Adequate, stable, predictable funding is available for services and supports that prevent problems, as well as for services provided in response to identified problems.
- Funding policies recognize the importance of strengthening service providers and community organizations by providing core funding for essential activities that cannot be supported through categorical projects or programs.
- Funding is available to respond to youth and their families at high social risk, as well as to those whose impairments or risks have biological roots.
- When new standards are applied or quality standards are raised, funding and other resources are available for technical assistance, training, and compliance monitoring.

Funding is **sufficiently flexible** that services and supports can be tailored to the needs of specific families and communities:

- Funding policies facilitate program efforts to integrate multiple funding streams for support services that touch two or three generations simultaneously.
- Funding is available to connect services across traditional categories (e.g., when a job training program manager finds that a youth in the program needs housing assistance or substance abuse treatment).
- Funding policies allow for “glue money” to promote a continuum of services and supports across disciplines and systems, networks of services, links between services, and on-going expert consultation for service providers.
- Funding policies are designed to assure the availability of temporary and emergency assistance (e.g., to prevent homelessness).

Funding is allocated through processes that are **simple, streamlined, and focused on achieving results** for young people, their families, and their neighborhoods:

- Rules for funding, reimbursement, and eligibility do not undermine the accessibility and effectiveness of services.
- Funding is available to produce information that is linguistically and culturally appropriate for families.
- Funding processes are coordinated to help families navigate and use helping systems; communicate effectively with staff; and make informed decisions about lifestyle choices, treatment options, and other aspects of services and supports.
- Funding policies take into account the greater need for intensive services among high-risk populations.

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# Sources

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We are grateful to the following individuals for their generous assistance in constructing and shaping the Pathway to Successful Young Adulthood (Organizations are listed for identification only and reflect the contributors' affiliation at the time of participation.)

The pound sign (#) denotes participation in a Mental Mapping Meeting on the Transition to Young Adulthood.

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# Sarah Brown, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy  
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Rosemary Chalk, National Academies Board on Children Youth and Families  
Ted Chen, W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
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 # Margaret Beale Spencer, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education  
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 # Adria Steinberg, Jobs for the Future  
 # Dorothy Stoneman, Youthbuild  
 # Michael Wald, Stanford Law School  
 # Ephraim Weisstein, Commonwealth Corporation  
 #Joan Wynn, Chapin Hall Center for Children, The University of Chicago

We are also grateful to the following individuals for their generous assistance in our explorations to understand the information needs of the field, and how the Pathways Mapping Initiative could most effectively contribute to meeting those needs. (Organizations are listed for identification only and reflect the contributors' affiliation at the time of participation.)

Andrea Anderson, ActKnowledge  
 Leon Andrews, National League of Cities  
 Mitch Arnowitz, Tuvel Communications  
 Tom Backer, Human Interaction Research Institute  
 Cindy Ballard, Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth  
 Geoff Biggs, Interface Family Children Services  
 Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Kids Count RI  
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 Peter Edelman, Georgetown University Law Center  
 Carol Emig, Child Trends  
 Kathleen Enright, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations  
 Frank Farrow, Annie E Casey Foundation and Center for the Study of Social Policy  
 Mark Friedman, Fiscal Policies Institute  
 Katherine Fulton, Monitor Institute  
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 Greg Shaw, Gates Foundation  
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