The Opportunity Youth Forum: Seizing the Moment to Advance a Movement
Snapshot: 2020 Aspen Forum for Community Solutions Opportunity Youth Forum

ABOUT THE OYF NETWORK

The OYF network is home to 5.9 million 16 to 24-year-old youth

657,000 (11%) are opportunity youth, who are not in school and not working. Among OY:

• 24% are disconnected from high school
• 67% are disconnected from postsecondary education
• 9% are disconnected from the workforce

Based on 2019 ACS data

COLLABORATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Collaboratives vary in focus area, size and experience, adapting to meet the unique needs of their communities.

AREAS OF FOCUS

Collaboratives prioritized youth involved in or experiencing:

Justice system 65%
Foster system 61%
Homelessness 55%

SIZE

More than 10 years 12%
5-10 years 58%
Less than 5 years 30%

TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

BACKBONE CHARACTERISTICS

Backbone organizations are a critical component of the OYF network, providing a structure and team to coordinate the work of each collaborative.

TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS

Community based organization 24%
Intermediary 18%
Education institution 12%

BUDGET

BACKBONE BUDGET
Network median: $2.7M
Range: $65,000 to $125M

BUDGET DEDICATED TO OY
Network median: $350,000
Range: $50 to $5.8M

STAFF

BACKBONE STAFFING
Network median: 21 FTEs
Range: 2 to 12,000 FTEs

STAFFING DEDICATED TO OY
Network median: 3 FTEs
Range: 1 to 10 FTEs

TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

More than 10 years 24%
5-10 years 52%
Less than 5 years 24%

CORE VALUES

Equity, youth-led change, and community power building are foundational to OYF. Collaboratives advanced in equity from 2019 to 2020, building on the national racial justice movement, while pandemic restrictions limited direct engagement – making youth-led change and community power building more challenging.

All collaboratives incorporated explicit acknowledgement of racial equity or other community-specific disparities in planning.

Healing-centered organizing is an important component of youth-led change for OYF.

Most common healing-centered strategies:

• 68% of collaboratives provided training in youth organizing, advocacy, social justice or critical awareness
• 58% of collaboratives regularly incorporated celebration and positive acknowledgement
ORGANIZING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

The 2020 evaluation examined two dimensions of communities in the OYF network:

1) **Collaborative capacity**: the infrastructure and processes necessary for the collaborative to carry out its opportunity youth agenda

2) **Systems changes**: "shifts to the conditions that hold a problem in place"*—in this case, disconnected pathways and inequitable conditions that prevent young people from achieving education and employment outcomes


**COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY**

Remained strong in convening diverse members and promising in data use, with shifts in focus from external communication to internal capacity work, when comparing 2019 and 2020.

- **Leadership, planning and convening power**: 49% strong evidence, 82% some evidence
- **Data and learning**: 40% strong evidence, 79% some evidence
- **Raising awareness and strategic communication**: 28% strong evidence, 59% some evidence
- **Resources for the collaborative**: 26% strong evidence, 72% some evidence

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each capacity

**SYSTEMS CHANGES**

Remained the most advanced in programmatic changes on behalf of opportunity youth, with an increased focus on narrative change and data use, when comparing 2019 and 2020.

- **Programmatic change**: 49% strong evidence, 79% some evidence
- **Narrative change**: 40% strong evidence, 74% some evidence
- **Organizational change**: 32% strong evidence, 71% some evidence
- **Pathway improvement**: 31% strong evidence, 64% some evidence
- **Data use**: 26% strong evidence, 68% some evidence
- **Funding change**: 21% strong evidence, 52% some evidence
- **Public policy change**: 16% strong evidence, 39% some evidence

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each system

**Methods.** Findings come from the 2020 OYF Self-Assessment. Thirty-three collaboratives answered questions about their collaborative capacity and systems changes. The Assessment included indicators grouped into four types of capacities and seven types of systems changes, assessed on a four-point scale.

For more information about the OYF network: https://www.aspencommunitysolutions.org/opportunity-youth-forum/